



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
ANIMAL CARE DIVISION
2400 SW 42nd Street • Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312 • 954-359-1313

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 27, 2022

TO: Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Board of County Commissioners

THROUGH: Monica Cepero, County Administrator 

THROUGH: Leonard Vialpando, Director
Resilient Environment Department 

FROM: Emily Wood, Director
Animal Care Division 

SUBJECT: Follow-up to July 17, 2022 Newspaper Article on Animal Care Division (ACD)

As you may be aware, a newspaper article regarding the Broward County Animal Care Division was published in the July 17, 2022 edition of the Sun-Sentinel. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide additional information regarding the best practices utilized by Broward County's Animal Care referenced in the article.

Animal Care utilizes industry-leading best practices as published in peer-reviewed animal services industry journals and in position statements from professional and educational associations, including the National Animal Care and Control Association, The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement, and the American Veterinary Medical Association. ACD staff are dedicated, caring professionals that practice compassionate, rational, and informed decision making to maximize the resources available to serve the community.

Animal Care utilizes several layered approaches to respond to the needs of community members and their animals. The subject of the article, the shelter site, is only one of the tools available. Other tools available include pet rehoming assistance, low-cost veterinary wellness, subsidized or free access to spay/neuter surgery, staff response in the community to concerns, free pet supplies to those in need, and so much more.

As with any physical structure, the shelter site has physical limitations on capacity (183 dogs and 256 cats); exceeding those limitations is perilous for both the animals housed within its walls and the staff and visitors that would be subject to the resulting contamination and uncomfortable temperatures. The undesirable outcomes associated with an over capacity of animals in the shelter were derided in various newspaper articles and op-ed pieces from 2019, as well as the 132-action item audit prepared by the County Auditor in 2020.

In response to the audit, several national industry leaders were brought in to assess the shelter and provide guidance on reforms needed to ensure that shelter capacity is maintained while fulfilling community needs to the maximum extent possible. These industry leaders include the University of Florida (UF) in conjunction with Maddie's Fund, Best Friends Animal Society, American Pets Alive, and the University of California (Davis) Koret School of Shelter Medicine. These reviews and assessments resulted in a recommendation to use "Managed Intake" at the shelter to triage incoming animals. The rationale behind Managed Intake is based on the latest in animal care best practices¹ that, through research, has established the following regarding impounding animals in a centralized shelter facility:

- Bringing a lost animal to the shelter means it may be housed far from where they're lost and therefore is more likely to result in them being permanently separated from their family.
- Shelter capacity is a limited resource, and exceeding capacity leads to increased disease, increased stress, increased euthanasia for pets as well as increased staff risk and turnover.
- Animals impounded by other jurisdictions may not be impounded using Animal Care practices nor following County Ordinances.
- "Managed Intake" is the recommended industry standard best practice (see Animal Care intake practices in Attachment A).
- Should the shelter reach capacity i.e., be "full," our ability to respond to the exigent needs of sick, injured, and dangerous animals, as well as those in compromised situations, would be severely limited.

In addition to physically sheltering animals, Animal Care offers many other tools and mechanisms to assist families and animals in need that are leveraged through the Managed Intake process. These best practices, which allow ACD to care for more animals than those safely housed in the shelter, include:

- Foster Homes/Store Partners Programs – As of July 20, 2022, ACD has 606 animals in impounded care while housing 231 of these animals physically in the shelter (to maintain capacity for exigent circumstances involving sick or injured animals and for hurricane preparedness sheltering needs). The remaining animals are housed and cared for through ACD's programs that provide foster homes or adoption in pet store partner facilities, with an additional 91 homes supported by ACD field intervention today.
- Non-Shelter Owner Assistance - In an effort to assist owners in keeping their pets, ACD offers a variety of services to individuals having a challenge caring for an owned animal including behavioral counseling, supplies (food, crates, dog houses), on site veterinary care, vouchers for veterinary care, and veterinary reimbursement. ACD also provides an online platform to assist people in rehoming their own pet (avoiding a shelter stay with its attendant risks).

¹ Hurley, Kate, "[The Evolving Role of Triage and Appointment-Based Admission to Improve Service, Care and Outcomes in Animal Shelters.](#)" *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 04 March 2022

- According to Matt Bershadker, President and CEO of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), *“Efforts to address animal homelessness often focus on helping animals in shelters, but this research and our own community-focused programs show we need to focus just as much on keeping pets from entering shelters in the first place, specifically by helping owners access critical resources.”* Bershadker further stated *“When pets are kept out of shelters, it not only protects those animals, but keeps families together, and frees up critical shelter space and supplies for other animals in need.”*
- The research referenced in the quote above indicates that *“When pet owners with incomes lower than \$50,000 were asked which service might have helped them the most, the majority indicated free or low-cost veterinary care (40%). Other resources indicated were free or low-cost training or behavior help (34%), access to pet-friendly housing (33%), free or low-cost spay/neuter services (30%), free or low-cost pet food (30%), free or low-cost temporary pet care or boarding (30%) and assistance in paying pet deposits for housing (17%).”*
- Non-Shelter Assistance for Found Animals – Should an individual find an animal, Animal Care provides support and resources to house the animal with the finder, if they are willing. We strongly recommend at least three days, based on national return-to-home data². ACD will scan the animal for a microchip, provide food and supplies if necessary, and offer online tools to reunite the animal with their owner, who is statistically likely to be nearby. Sick, injured, and dangerous animals are automatically impounded by ACD.
- Municipal Support - Animal Care actively engages Broward’s cities and towns who impound animals to support them to return animals to their homes and to best care for the animals they have chosen to take custody of, providing training and equipment, again in keeping with data and best practices regarding reuniting lost pets with their families. (ACD officers respond to calls in all of Broward County to enforce Broward County Ordinance, and Animal Care will always transfer custody of sick, injured, or dangerous animals from municipal jurisdictions to the County immediately.)

These are just some of the best practice tools used as part of the Managed Intake process to care for impounded animals as an alternative to sheltering.

For the benefit of the Board, Attachment B includes a chronology of events at Animal Care, Attachment C is a briefing sheet on ACD and the services they provide, and Attachment D is an infographic from the ASPCA aggregating research regarding pressures on pet owners.

I trust this information will serve as a resource to you, as you may hear from any member of the public with questions about our practices. For additional information, please see the [Get the Facts](#) portion of the Animal Care website where you can find other resources including current County Audit progress. If any Commissioner desires a personal briefing on this information, I am at 954-357-9752 (emwood@broward.org).

² Kremer, Tom, [“A New Web-Based Tool for RTO-Focused Animal Shelter Data Analysis,”](#) *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 25 May 2021