



**BERTHA W. HENRY**, County Administrator

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**TO:** Mayor and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

**THRU:** Bertha W. Henry, County Administrator

**FROM:** Henry Sniezek, Director, EPGMD

**DATE:** January 2, 2019

**SUBJECT:** Best Friends Shelter and Field Assessment for Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Division

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Earlier last Spring, the new leadership of the Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Division (ACAD) requested a customized shelter operations and field services assessment from Best Friends Animal Society's Shelter Outreach team. The assessment was sought as a tool and road map to enhance shelter policy, programs, and operations to assist in achieving the County's "No Kill" goals. Best Friends offered to conduct the assessment free of charge to the County. The Board approved the letter of commitment with the Best Friends Animal Society on September 25, 2018. Best Friends' staff has more than 40 years of combined experience in sheltering, field operations, community outreach, animal behavior and organizational leadership and as part of the assessment they agree to provide ongoing support to ensure new programs and practices are sustainable and successful.

The assessment was performed on November 1-3, 2018 and the results were provided to ACAD on December 20, 2018. The assessment included a review of shelter operations, including organizational culture, internal communications, customer service, shelter policies, staff structure, population and animal care and behavior designed to identify specific areas of need to help implement best practices in animal welfare. It is noted that, independent of the assessment, but complimentary to it, ACAD staff also prepared a draft update to the agency's "No Kill Strategic Plan." The draft update was shared with the community in October, 2018 and opened for comments through December 7, 2018. ACAD staff is currently working on incorporating community comments into a final updated Plan, and the Best Friends assessment recommendations will also be considered for incorporation into the updated Plan.

## **Conclusions and Accolades**

The assessment concludes: *“Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center is strategically primed to achieve and sustain no-kill and has the support of the Board of County Commissioners and the community to do so.”* The assessment also highlighted work performed by ACAD *“...that is going notably well and can serve as a model for other communities.”*, including staff that are caring, genuinely want to achieve no-kill, go above and beyond for the animals and provide overall great client services.

## **Recommendations for Improvement**

The assessment also identifies twenty (20) opportunities for improvement. Management fully accepts these recommendations and plans to implement all the recommended enhancements. Staff has made significant progress on many of the recommendations since the assessment in November and is committed to developing a comprehensive implementation strategy with the support of Best Friends.

Please see the attached EXHIBIT 1 for detailed responses to each recommendation.

cc     Monica Cepero, Deputy County Administrator  
          Andrew Meyers, County Attorney  
          Leonard Vialpando, Deputy Director, EPGMD  
          Lauralei Combs, Director, Animal Care and Adoption

## EXHIBIT 1

The following is ACAD's progress on each of Best Friends recommendations.

**Recommendation 1:** *"Saving kittens: The population most at risk of dying in the shelter is kittens. The following points focus on industry best practices to reduce intake and increase positive outcomes for kittens."*

**Progress:** Agree. We also recognize that the establishment of a full-scale community cat program is essential to saving lives. In addition, we are planning a marketing/media campaign with urgent messaging to our community prior to the arrival of another kitten season. ACAD hired a new Community Cat Coordinator, Carrie Gipson, in December 2018, to focus solely on developing new rescue partners, reestablishing relationships with existing community cat groups, and streamlining suitable and easily attained free sterilizations and vaccinations to all our TNR residents. The Division has also hired a new Foster/Rescue Coordinator, Amanda Kruczynski, in December 2018, to focus on underage kittens; long-stay felines and canines; pets with medical issues or recovery needs; pets with behavior challenges, including fearful, under-socialized animals who are not able to be handled in the shelter environment, and those pets who decline in the shelter environment. Currently Amanda is working with Marketing/Media team member, Lisa Mendheim, to develop a "Kitten Campaign" with local networks ABC, NBC, CBS and Spanish network, Telemundo. Outreach includes social media postings, flyers in all libraries, plus integrating volunteers to distribute information in all 31 cities in Broward County.

**Recommendation 2:** *"Capacity for care: Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center is operating above capacity for care"*

**Progress:** Agree; however, the animal population provided in the assessment included approximately 180 animals that were not in the shelter at the time as they were actually outplaced with fosters. As of 12/21/2018 the current pet population at the shelter is at 466 (262 cats and 204 dogs). While the current shelter population is over capacity, staff is making every effort to increase adoptions and fosters while reducing intake to bring the shelter population in line with the capacity limits. In the meantime, staff assignments have been updated to provide the Best Friends recommended staffing levels dedicated to the care of animals.

**Recommendation 3:** *"Sanitation and safety: Adequate standard operating procedures (SOPs) and protocols exist for proper and humane sanitation and safety. However, due to the high standing population and inadequate staffing positions, these SOPs and protocols are unable to be followed."*

**Progress:** Completed. Staff assignments have been updated to provide the Best Friends recommended staffing levels dedicated to the care of animals.

**Recommendation 4:** *“Enrichment: While it is obvious that the staff care a great deal about each individual animal, enrichment is not something that the animals are receiving due to lack of adequate staffing levels. We recommend increasing kennel staffing levels and incorporating enrichment, which can be simple and free, into the daily routine.”*

**Progress:** Completed. Staff assignments have been updated to provide the Best Friends recommended staffing levels dedicated to the care of animals and eight additional part-time kennel workers will be assigned to assist. In addition, a new hire, Enrichment Supervisor, Melissa McCormic will focus on expanding daily playgroups based on the model set up by Dogs Playing for Life. With volunteer participation and the proposed staffing levels, our goal is “every dog, every day, will get out to play.” This will decrease stress levels in the shelter by expending the dogs’ physical and mental capacity daily. With the adjusted staffing, comes the ability for in-kennel enrichment as well. ACAD has recently received a generous donation of Kongs that will be utilized alongside of cardboard treat puzzles and scent tubes to further stimulate the dogs and lower stress levels. Together the staff and volunteers are working to ensure every dog in our care is provided as many enrichment opportunities as possible.

**Recommendation 5:** *“Reclaim fees: The current schedule of fees for citizens to reclaim their pets, which was put in place to promote responsible pet ownership, is ineffective in achieving that goal and is a major barrier to achieving and sustaining no-kill in the community.”*

**Progress:** Agreed. Staff will work on a proposal to potentially reward those owners who claim promptly during the stray time by not imposing reclaim fees at all, and having fees accrue only after a defined "courtesy" period has expired - whether that be after the stray time or some other established time period.

**Recommendation 6:** *“Transfer from other municipalities: There are several communities within the county that transfer animals into the Broward facility. These municipalities have their own animal control programs and facilities and may or may not have had an MOU with Broward”*

**Progress:** Agree. Staff will work on this issue in a collaborative manner that respects municipal objectives.

**Recommendation 7:** *“Managed intake: The shelter is doing managed intake for owner surrenders, an industry best practice to reduce intake and better manage population flow. To increase owner retention, intake staff need more resources to offer the public.”*

**Progress:** Agree. Staff will work on providing the referenced resources. It is noted a Board agenda item has been prepared (tentatively scheduled for January 8, 2019) to accept a \$50K grant from PetSmart to obtain additional resources (e.g. pet food, collars, crates, training, etc.) during the intake process to encourage retention.

**Recommendation 8:** *“Communication and culture: Communication and culture were identified as priority areas for improvement. There is an unintentional lack of internal transparency and a loss of rationale behind decisions as they make their way down the chain of command.”*

**Progress:** Agree. Communication is of utmost importance to leadership and that all staff feel a part of the Broward County Animal Care team. Meetings are now held weekly with the Director in small groups. Supervisors and Program Coordinators have their own meeting with leadership separately. The Director also participates in weekly meetings with Customer Service and Animal Care staff. Monthly meetings are held with the Veterinarians and the Director.

**Recommendation 9:** *“Post-adoption follow-up and returns: Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center has excellent client services and adoption policies and practices. However, they do not have robust post-adoption follow-up and support to ensure maximum retention of the animals adopted.”*

**Progress:** Agree. Staff is working on developing a follow-up system and mechanisms, for empowering staff with the time and resources to address issues that may arise. Such mechanisms are intended to include training volunteers to staff a “hot line” for new adopters for follow-up and answer questions to assist new adopters.

**Recommendation 10:** *“Volunteer and foster programs: The shelter has the necessary infrastructure to dramatically improve their volunteer and foster programs. A well-run volunteer program provides the shelter with an immense amount of help to support the staff and animals at the shelter, and a well-run foster program would increase capacity and improve the overall health of the animals.”*

**Progress:** Agree. Since June 2018, new hire Carolina Segarra, our Volunteer Coordinator, has on boarded 220 new active volunteers. We are excited to move forward in partnership with Best Friends mentorship program to bring our community volunteer program to the highest level of best practices!

**Recommendation 11:** *“Training for dispatchers: Many of the calls being dispatched to the field officers come through the county’s 311 system. It became obvious rather quickly that the individuals taking these calls had not received adequate training.”*

**Progress:** Agree. We will be reaching out to our 311 supervisory team to meet and discuss triage questions and consider standardizing a listed of specific questions that should be asked for each call type by the call takers. Additionally, Field Services will be requesting the option of adding an in house dispatch position to work either in conjunction with or in place of the 311 call center for triage and dispatch of incoming calls.

**Recommendation 12:** *“Officers as transporters: Officers act as transporters daily, bringing animals from the shelter to pet supply stores that act as adoption centers for the animals. This takes a considerable amount of time from the officers, which results in either animal control complaints being backlogged or officers rushing through calls to clear as many as they can before being pulled off the road to do transports.”*

**Progress:** Agree. Field Supervisors will begin evaluating call types and time spent on calls in the field to ensure that efficient time management is taking place and that unnecessary calls are not being responded to. Officers will continue to assist with transport of animals in an

effort to support the shelter's goal of working with our community partners to help animals find homes, however it will be made clear to Officers that the transports are viewed as a lower priority call. Additionally, shelter staff is currently utilizing volunteers for animal transport as well and will call on Field Services only when volunteer support is unavailable.

**Recommendation 13:** *"Mandated training for officers: Florida state law 828.27(4)(a)(1) mandates that all animal control officers receive 40 hours of approved training to become a certified officer and then, according to 828.27(4)(a)(3), they must receive four hours of continued education every two years to maintain their status. Most officers claim to have not received the required training or much, if any, training at all in the past several years."*

**Progress:** Agree. Staff is arranging the training for Spring 2019 and putting in place standard operating procedures to ensure the required training is provided annually.

**Recommendation 14:** *"Getting community support: There is ample opportunity to engage the community in a diversified development strategy to assist with some of the costs necessary for Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center to achieve and maintain no-kill. Currently, the program project coordinator is limited to seeking funds via grant applications, but there are huge missed opportunities by not utilizing her skill set in soliciting funds from individuals and community foundations."*

**Progress:** Agree. As recommended, we will expand our partnerships and develop a fundraising plan to engage the community in assisting us with some of the costs in achieving and maintaining no-kill. Just recently we hosted a community fundraiser for a non-profit partner for our play yard that raised more than \$27,000. We plan to do more events with the community to benefit our animals. We will look closely at the suggested documents and work with BF in creating and implementing a development strategy.

**Recommendation 15:** *"Transport program: While other recommendations throughout this assessment need to be implemented to resolve the root causes of the dog overpopulation situation, transporting animals north to no-kill communities can help address the immediate need."*

**Progress:** Agree. We have partnered with Doobert rescue transport (a Best Friend partner) and St. Hubert's to help us organize and transport pets to Northern no-kill shelters. Doobert is working to get more commercial transporter companies to provide more high-volume transfer options here in Southern Florida. Funding is an issue for our shelter, currently searching for grants to help us acquire the funding to transport pets.

**Recommendation 16:** *"Strategic spay/neuter services: Being able to provide free or low-cost spay/neuter of owned animals is key to reducing the population of homeless animals in the community and a cornerstone to reducing shelter intake. Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center is helping to provide this service to citizens through the online voucher program, but there is a missed opportunity with the pop-up mobile clinic that the county pays for through a contract with a local animal welfare organization."*

**Progress:** Agree. The schedule and locations for the existing mobile clinic operated in partnership with the Humane Society of Broward will be adjusted to allow for stationing in strategic areas to allow maximum impact based on statistical data. In addition, the feasibility of operating a low cost spay/neuter clinic from the existing Animal Care and Adoption building as well as the purchase and operation of an RV-based mobile spay neuter operation are being explored.

**Recommendation 17:** *“Community outreach and engagement: The shelter needs to increase the level of engagement with the local community and create inroads to build relationships.”*

**Progress:** Agree. Staff now holds quarterly ‘Town Hall’ meetings that all of the community is invited to. In addition, we now facilitate monthly meetings with volunteers and staff that include the Director. Moving forward, Coordinators will be attending meetings in the community monthly.

**Recommendation 18:** *“Public perception of animal control: According to most, if not all, field officers and staff in general, the community’s current perception of animal control needs to be improved.”*

**Progress:** Agree. A primary focus for 2019 will be “Changing the Narrative” as ACAD staff promote the positive contributions the agency has made and will continue to make in the community to promote responsible pet ownership and keep animals in their homes. In addition, field officers will be given the opportunity to attend community-based meetings to discuss animal control issues within that particular area and improve relations between the officers and the community. Officers will also be given time to meet residents and dogs in dog parks handing out free supplies and informational materials to residents waiting in line at vaccination clinics and other community events.

**Recommendation 19:** *“Role of animal control officers in the field: Within the ranks, there are differences of opinion on how to approach animal control field operations. Some favor a more balanced approach, attempting to aid residents in solving problems, while others rely strictly on enforcing the law.”*

**Progress:** Agree. The chain of command will be strengthened through recent reassignments and new hires. The new supervisory staff will be required to spend time on the road with various officers to get a sense of their philosophical beliefs and build relationships between supervisors and field officers. A renewed focus on strategies that solve the problems that generated the calls, through collaborative brain-storming among field staff as well as the provision of additional resources such as pet food, simple medications, doghouses and tools to fix broken fences in each vehicle for officers to freely distribute to those in need.

**Recommendation 20:** *“Focused marketing: We recommend the implementation of a focused marketing strategy to engage the entire community in achieving and sustaining no-kill. Marketing efforts need to contain calls to action to give citizens tangible ways to get involved in achieving and sustaining their community’s no-kill status.”*

**Progress:** Agree. A primary focus for 2019 will be “Changing the Narrative”, as ACAD staff promote the positive contributions the agency has made and will continue to make. The resources provided by Best Friends marketing experts and within the local community will be utilized for this purpose.





## Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center Shelter and Field Assessment

Best Friends Animal Society's shelter outreach team provides customized assessments and support for individual animal shelters and the communities they serve. Through the outreach program, each community can receive a shelter operations and/or field services assessment designed to identify specific opportunities to build road maps for programming and impactful lifesaving based on best practices in animal welfare. Ongoing support is offered and available to ensure that new programs and practices are sustainable and successful. Our outreach team uses a collaborative approach to each shelter partnership and believes that every shelter should have the opportunity to determine its own organizational needs based on lifesaving impact in that community. As a rule, we avoid a "one size fits all" approach because, just like every individual animal, each shelter and its community has its own individual personality and needs.

On November 1–3, 2018, members of the Best Friends shelter outreach team did a three-day assessment of shelter and field operations at Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center. This report includes the findings and recommendations for Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center by the shelter outreach team. Areas where improvement is needed are highlighted and followed by Best Friends' recommendations. Recommendations are based upon proven and successful policies and programs, as well as studies, research and fact-based practices. Once these recommendations are accepted by Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center leadership, staff at Best Friends are eager to work with Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center to create an implementation plan and schedule periodic meetings to discuss progress and challenges.

### Defining the opportunity

Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center is striving to achieve and sustain no-kill. In 2012, the Board of County Commissioners commissioned the development of a strategic plan, with the goal of Broward County becoming a no-kill community. The board resolution provided the framework and showcases community support to achieve this mission.

Current leadership has drafted a new strategic plan that highlights specific priorities previously established by the board, builds on current strengths of the agency, and updates the strategic priorities with new and updated goals and objectives necessary to achieve and maintain a no-kill community. While there has been significant turnover in the leadership and staff at the agency in the past several years, our team observed some of the most talented and dedicated staff who genuinely want to achieve this goal and feel the shelter is in a prime position to do so.

While many recommendations will be incorporated into this report, the top-priority identified needs are a strong focus on the population most at risk of dying in the shelter (kittens), population management, assuring adequate staffing positions to properly care for the animals, and reducing the current standing population through positive outcomes.

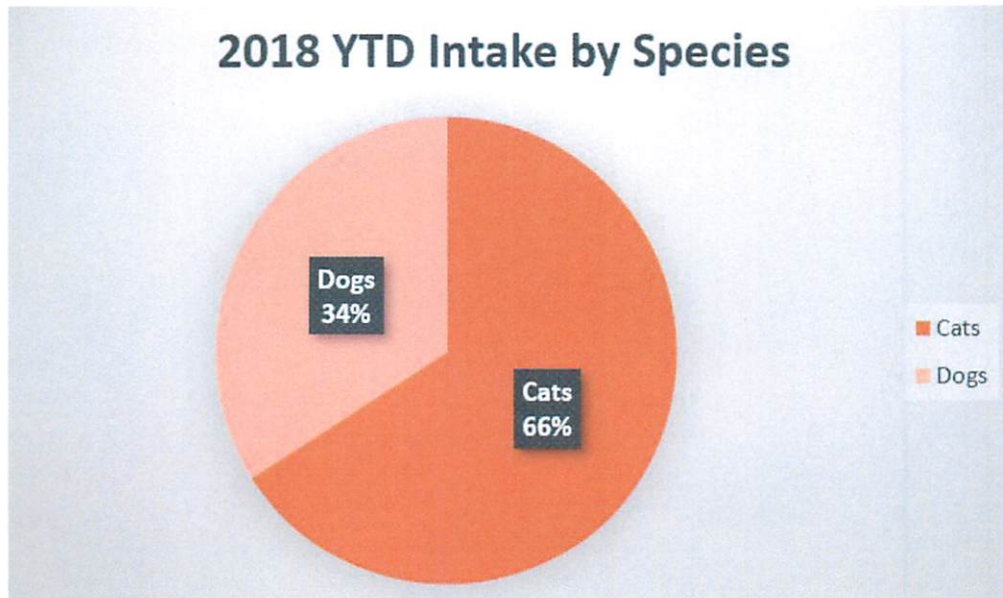
## Demographic information

Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center serves a population of 1,847,121 people spread out over 1,323 square miles. This makes Broward County the second most populous county in Florida and the 15<sup>th</sup> in the country. The county is made up of 31 different municipalities, several of which have their own animal control programs and ordinances. Nationally, the 2017 median income was \$61,372 and Broward County's median household income is estimated at \$52,954. A 2014 estimate places 15% of the county's population living at or under the poverty line.

The annual operating budget for FY2017 was \$6,013,820, which results in a per capita spending of \$3.26. For comparison, Miami-Dade County has a population of 2,751,418 and spends \$9.40 per capita through its \$25,850,000 annual budget. Miami-Dade County has only 1.5 times as many people as Broward County, but spends four times as much on animal control.

## Shelter data

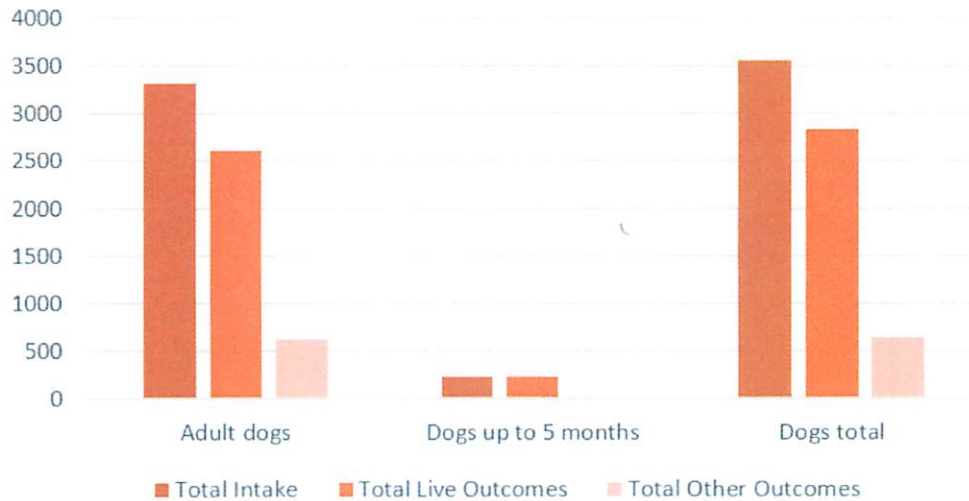
For 2018 year to date (YTD), Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center has taken in 10,479 dogs and cats. Of those, 3,556 were dogs and 6,923 were cats.



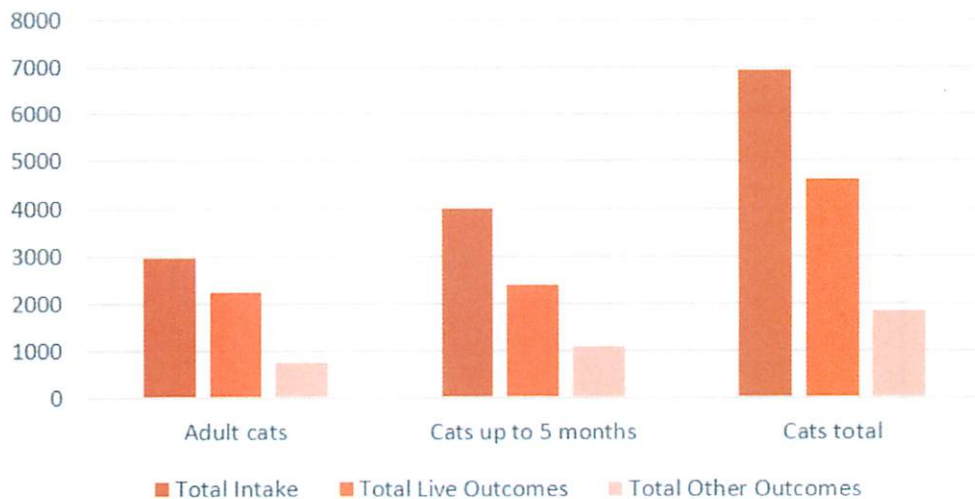


The overall 2018 YTD save rate for Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center is 76.3% for dogs and cats entering the shelter. Broken down further by species, dogs have an 82.2% save rate and cats a 73.2% save rate. Broken down further by age, adult dogs have a save rate of 81.2%, dogs up to five months of age have a save rate of 96.1%, adult cats have a save rate of 74.6%, and cats up to five months of age have a save rate of 72.3%. This data shows that cats up to five months of age are the most at-risk population in the shelter.

### Dogs



### Cats



### Accolades

Before diving into specific recommendations, it is only appropriate to highlight several aspects of Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center, and their staff, for work that is going notably well and can serve as a model for other communities.

1. The staff working throughout the organization are a caring team who are invested in both the agency and the community. They genuinely want to achieve no-kill and go above and beyond for the animals. We observed a great interest and potential for internal growth in this highly talented and motivated team.
2. We observed overall great client services from the staff. The intake team is resource-oriented, following industry best practices to try and keep animals with their families and reduce intake through empathetic conversation. Adoptions are great in philosophy and practice, again following industry best practices of conversation-based open adoptions.
3. We observed great baseline protocols for each department.
4. Regarding intake protocols, the veterinary technicians do an excellent job of vaccinating all animals immediately upon intake and before the new intakes are exposed to the general population, which is vital to improving the individual animal's ability to ward off disease and overall shelter disease management.
5. The medical team has created an ideal flow for cats, grouping them on intake and isolating them by contagion or medical concern.
6. They have updated the voucher system, allowing citizens to obtain low- or no-cost spay/neuter vouchers for their pets in less than three minutes and print the vouchers at home. A huge asset to the community and a key contributor to reducing overall intake at the shelter, this updated system resulted in 13,400 animals getting altered last year and should be utilized as a model for other communities.
7. A recent policy implemented has the customer service representatives coming in one hour before opening to the public to spend time with the animals and get to know their individual personalities. This practice greatly increases employee satisfaction, provides the animals with enrichment, and increases the number of ideal adoption matches.
8. The new Lunch Buddies program is a great and innovative way to give dogs a break from the shelter and showcase them for adoption while engaging the community and volunteers.

## Recommendations

During our visit, we met with most members of the leadership and supervisory teams and had the opportunity to shadow staff members throughout the organization. The following recommendations are some identified opportunities for improvement, as well as potential solutions to challenges identified by staff. An attempt has been made to prioritize these recommendations based on impact and ease of implementation.

1. **Saving kittens:** The population most at risk of dying in the shelter is kittens. The following points focus on industry best practices to reduce intake and increase positive outcomes for kittens.

- A full-scale community cat program will drastically reduce the overall number of cats entering the shelter and the number of kittens being born in the community. This shelter-based program, based on the trap-neuter-return (TNR) method of population management, is effective at reducing the number of these cats, reducing shelter admissions and shelter deaths, saving taxpayers money and providing a public health benefit to the community. In such programs, unowned, free-roaming cats deemed healthy enough to qualify for the program are sterilized, vaccinated and returned to their original location. Best Friends has a [comprehensive resource](#) to guide you through the process and support implementation.
- Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center has great information on their website for citizens who find kittens. Getting this information to citizens via other channels will increase community knowledge and reduce kitten intake. Some relatively easy and inexpensive ways to do so are utilizing current media allies; having volunteers distribute this [informative poster](#) from Alley Cat Allies in public places, particularly in high-intake areas; and incorporating billboards on this topic into the existing campaign managed by a local advocate. The information on the website should also be shared with citizens by dispatchers and field officers to prevent unnecessary impoundment of kittens from the field.
- Good Samaritans who find kittens bring them to the shelter because they believe that is what they are supposed to do. Intake staff have conversations with citizens about putting the kittens back where they were found (if viable) or turning the citizens into foster families. Intake staff need to be empowered with physical resources to provide to citizens who are willing to foster to increase the conversion rate of these conversations and reduce kitten intake. Along with turning citizens who find kittens into fosters, we highly recommend implementing a program to turn all good Samaritans into fosters for all segments of the incoming population.

2. **Capacity for care:** Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center is operating above capacity for care\*. By exceeding the shelter's capacity for care, animals are housed in tighter living conditions, which elevates stress and arousal levels, which suppresses immune systems and increases likelihood of disease and cross-contamination. These symptoms of over-crowding were observed during the assessment, as was a strong focus on the current high save rate as a result of exceeding the shelter's capacity.

It is commendable that Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center is focused on giving every animal a chance at life and ensuring the freedom from being euthanized for time and space reasons. However, other critical aspects of population management (mentioned below) need to be implemented to ensure the Five Freedoms are being met for each individual animal throughout the animal's stay at the shelter. This is not possible when operating above capacity for care, and there is not a solid plan for increasing positive outcomes.

The Five Freedoms are:

- Freedom from Hunger and Thirst: By ready access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigor.



- Freedom from Discomfort: By providing an appropriate environment, including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease: By prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- Freedom to Express Normal Behavior: By providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- Freedom from Fear and Distress: By ensuring conditions and treatment that avoid mental suffering.

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*\*Capacity for care refers to how many pets a shelter can house while still providing them with appropriate care, veterinary attention, adequate space, stress relief and caregiver attention, not simply how many cages and kennels a facility has.*

At the time of the assessment, Broward's standing population/kennel inventory was at 358 cats and kittens in care and 266 dogs, or 624 total animals (on-site). When the Best Friends team reviewed the number of physical cages, kennels and communal spaces (118 double-sided kennels for dogs and 218 cat spaces), it was determined that a total population number closer to 375-450 would be most appropriate. As demonstrated below, this would continue to allow for some double kenneling of litters and/or animals who house better in pairs or groups, while maintaining appropriate kennel space/sizing and sanitation standards (see [ASV Guidelines 2010](#)).

Numeric demonstration for quantitative approach to on-site capacity based on physical space and 30%\* threshold of double/multi-kenneling:

- 118 dog kennels x 30% double kennel threshold = 35 + 118 or **153** dogs maximum\*
- 218 cat cages and communal spaces x 30% double kennel/litter threshold = 65 + 218 or **283** cats maximum\*
- Total capacity for 153 dogs + 283 cats and kittens = **436** animals on-site

*\*The percentage used should vary based on data analysis of litters vs. single intakes over a given time period.*

As previously noted, capacity for care goes beyond the simple aspect of physical space. It also largely depends on level of enrichment activities and/or human interaction, as well as the ability to deliver and maintain health and sanitation standards, which form the overall quality of life. Each of these aspects requires adequate workforce in the form of staff and volunteers. With a standing population observed at ~ 40% over quantitative capacity thresholds, animal care staffing levels also appear to be inadequate for Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center, and this is creating additional quality of life challenges.

Here are a few examples (which will be elaborated upon later): the staff's inability to remove animals from or separate animals in kennels during sanitation due to lack of space and time; a lack of staff and volunteer time dedicated to both in and out of kennel enrichment activities; an observed population of ~ 35-40% of animals requiring treatment for remedial shelter diseases such as kennel cough and URI, with staff only having the

ability to medicate SID or once per day. This lack of enrichment, effective cleaning protocols, and regular treatments only perpetuates suppressed immunity, which delays recovery, increasing the risk of cross-contamination and spread of disease throughout the population, can be cause for behavior deterioration and increased length of stay, ultimately decreasing available capacity for new intakes without making life or death decisions.

Outlined below is a numeric demonstration of appropriate staffing levels compared with current levels. It's based on inventory figures at the time of the assessment and uses the assumption that each animal requires at least 15 minutes of basic care for cleaning, feeding, medicating, and daily enrichment (a qualitative approach to capacity).

Current standing population/inventory:

**358 cats and kittens in care, 266 dogs, or 624 total animals (on-site)**

Related staffing requirements:

**624 animals x 15 minutes of care per day = 9,360 minutes of care per day**  
**9,360 minutes / 8 hour shifts = ~19-20 staff members on shift per day dedicated to care**

Current staffing levels dedicated to care:

- Full-time positions on org chart:  
**2 Animal Care Supervisors, 14 Animal Care Specialists (including 1 vacancy)**  
**7 Customer Service Representatives (CSRs)**  
**2 Veterinary Technicians**  
**1 Behavior/Enrichment Program Specialist (vacant)**  
**19 Total Staff Members focused solely on animal care**
- Average staff members on shift per day:  
**1 Animal Care Supervisor, 5-6 Animal Care Specialists**  
**2 CSRs (available for care needs)**  
**1 Veterinary Technician**  
**1 Behavior/Enrichment Program Specialist**  
**10-11 Total Staff Members**

Based on the above calculation, staffing levels are insufficient for the current number of animals on-site and should be increased if the kennel inventory is expected to be maintained. An additional remedy would be to continue placing an emphasis on the volunteer workforce to off-set the staffing needs to a degree, including related costs, and deliver the necessary quality of care. Taking into consideration volunteer reliance concerns, fiscal constraints and/or likely budget restrictions, we recommend that if Broward County cannot increase staffing, then leadership should take a combination of *quantitative and qualitative approaches*, and through increased positive outcomes and intake reduction, aim to reduce its current kennel population over time. This is numerically demonstrated as follows:



*Qualitative approach:* 11 staff members on shift per day dedicated to care x 8 hour shifts = 5,280 minutes of care / 15 minutes of care per animal = 352 animals in care

*Quantitative approach:* Total max capacity for 153 dogs + 283 cats and kittens = 436 animals on-site

Combined approach:

No more than 436 animals due to total physical capacity limits

No more than 352 animals in care based on staffing numbers

Desired kennel inventory = 350–430 maximum animals on-site

3. **Sanitation and safety:** Adequate standard operating procedures (SOPs) and protocols exist for proper and humane sanitation and safety. However, due to the high standing population and inadequate staffing positions, these SOPs and protocols are unable to be followed. Improper sanitation increases the likelihood of cross-contamination and the spread of disease, which results in sick animals and increased medical costs. Staff are unable to follow best practices for humane animal care, which is to remove the dogs from the kennels prior to cleaning. This is a safety risk for the staff, inhumane and stressful for the dogs, and does not allow them to use proper disinfectant products.

We recommend reducing the current population through adoption and other positive outcomes and creating SOPs for capacity to always allow for safe, humane and proper disinfection of the shelter. In addition, we recommend doing a professional workload analysis, keeping in mind that in the field of animal welfare, it often appears as though an agency is not understaffed because in caring for living beings, staff will stretch themselves to the breaking point to provide the minimum care for each animal. This does not equate to adequate staffing levels, and it contributes to overtime, burnout and staff turnover, all of which cost the agency more in the long run.

4. **Enrichment:** While it is obvious that the staff care a great deal about each individual animal, enrichment is not something that the animals are receiving due to lack of adequate staffing levels. We recommend increasing kennel staffing levels and incorporating enrichment, which can be simple and free, into the daily routine. Enrichment also plays a key role in increasing the adoptability of the animals and preventing the behavioral problems that can be created in a shelter environment.

There is a volunteer who is working with the volunteer coordinator to implement a cat enrichment program and Best Friends will leverage one of our internal experts to work with them to ensure success. Adequate staffing levels will also ensure that individual animal notes are updated during the animal's stay at the shelter, which is critical for adoptions and safety. The following are links to resources to assist with providing enrichment:

- [Enrichment for shelter dogs](#)
- [Dog enrichment](#)
- [Kennel enrichment](#)
- [Enrichment on a Dime \(webinar\)](#)



- [Enrichment for shelter cats](#)
  - [Hiding places for cats](#)
  - [Best Friends Animal Society's \*Humane Animal Control\* manual, chapter on shelter cat enrichment](#)
  - [Best Friends Animal Society's \*Humane Animal Control\* manual, chapter on shelter dog enrichment](#)
5. **Reclaim fees:** The current schedule of fees for citizens to reclaim their pets, which was put in place to promote responsible pet ownership, is ineffective in achieving that goal and is a major barrier to achieving and sustaining no-kill in the community. Making it financially challenging or near impossible for citizens to reclaim their animals creates a negative perception of the shelter in the community, inhibits the shelter staff's ability to engage and educate individuals on responsible pet ownership, and does not prevent the individual from obtaining a new pet from another source. We recommend allowing and empowering staff to waive fees on a case-by-case basis to stop this ineffective cycle.
6. **Transfer from other municipalities:** There are several communities within the county that transfer animals into the Broward facility. These municipalities have their own animal control programs and facilities and may or may not have had an MOU with Broward. It was unknown if formal agreements were in place, yet no revenue is generated from these intakes. Taxpayers in those jurisdictions are not paying the county for these services; instead, they pay for the local services. Broward should closely examine any agreements they may have in place and build a contract that includes fair compensation for taking animals from other areas if they choose to continue the practice.
7. **Managed intake:** The shelter is doing managed intake for owner surrenders, an industry best practice to reduce intake and better manage population flow. To increase owner retention, intake staff need more resources to offer the public. The staff have compiled a list of their top needs based on their research and knowledge of what most citizens need in order to refrain from relinquishing their pet. Some of the items are relatively inexpensive and can be obtained through donations, such as flea and tick treatment, collars and leashes.

Other things, such as medical care, can be obtained through working with the local veterinarians who already participate in the SNIP program to offer services at a reduced cost and/or offering some of those services in-house at the shelter. We were told there is grant funding allocated for pet retention, and we recommend utilizing those funds to acquire some of the most-needed resources.

Another concern that was raised is that residents who want to relinquish their pets have the option of dropping off their pets at their local sheriff's department. The sheriff then calls animal control to come pick up the animals. This practice results in an unmanaged intake with very little information obtained about the animal. We strongly urge that this practice be discontinued immediately.



In addition, the shelter will intake strays six days a week, seven hours a day — the same amount of time the facility is open for adoptions. We recommend reducing the intake hours, so the shelter is more focused on getting animals out rather than taking them in. We also recommend shoring up resources for educating the public on what to do when they find a stray.

With the size of the service area, impounding a stray animal and bringing him to the shelter is often an impediment to the animal getting home. However, we have trained the public to do this, so we need to retrain them and encourage community members to help stray animals find their way home without bringing them to the shelter. Ways to do this include posting the animal's photo on social media, driving around the area where the animal was found and asking people in the area if they know where the pet lives, and having the pet scanned for a microchip at a local animal hospital.

By offering these resources and limiting the hours for stray intake, overall intake at the shelter will be drastically reduced and more animals will be reunited with their families. More information can be found in Best Friends Animal Society's *Humane Animal Control* manual in the chapters on [intake diversion](#) and [delayed or diverted intake](#).

8. **Communication and culture:** Communication and culture were identified as priority areas for improvement. There is an unintentional lack of internal transparency and a loss of rationale behind decisions as they make their way down the chain of command. Leadership is making strides to support the team in areas such as cross-training, but there is a breakdown in communication and a lack of staff input and buy-in. Staff are not clear as to why cross-training is happening; they simply get a letter saying that they are cross-training and must do it.

In addition, there is an “us vs. them” division in the team between the director and her staff from Austin and the rest of the staff at the shelter. The ideas and programs that leadership want to institute at Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center are in line with industry best practices and will drastically help the shelter. However, the staff are feeling disconnected and not part of the process. This gap can be bridged by bringing them into the fold and instituting department meetings and daily huddles, as well as all-staff meetings, to increase collaboration.

There is also a disconnect with field and kennel staff. Having officers stationed at intake is helping to bridge that gap, but we recommend that other steps be taken as well, such as having them shadow each other, including sending shelter staff into the field to ride along with the officers for a shift. Again, to avoid the confusion that happened with cross-training, the purpose of this needs to be fully communicated in advance, and staff should be given the opportunity to provide feedback. To transform the culture into one in which staff feel more valued, we also recommend instituting a plan for professional growth and development for employees.

Finally, during our time at the shelter, a decision was made about a particular dog that did not follow the standard operating procedure, which resulted in a negative impact on the staff directly involved and spiraled to impact all staff. In such instances, we recommend that the director convene with staff involved, allow them to be part of the discussion if possible, and assure that they all hear the rationale directly from leadership to avoid miscommunication.

Other recommendations to help with communication and culture:

- Solidify unity of command: make sure all decisions are clearly conveyed and understood down the chain and ensure that all questions and issues follow the correct path back up the chain.
- Host structured monthly meetings for all staff.
- Ensure that management and supervisors are briefed individually in private prior to the meetings, so that the person leading the meeting has a full understanding of what is being discussed. Methods of engaging the staff during the meeting should also be explored.
- Host daily briefings and roll-call for field officers.
- Create monthly reports outlining important stats and stories, then distribute them to the entire staff via email and posts on bulletin boards.
- Include the rationale behind policy changes and encourage feedback from staff.
- Increase internal transparency (e.g., share the training budget, allocations and the rationale behind the staff selection process; share the bureaucratic process for equipment orders; keep staff updated and follow through).
- Provide management, supervisory and leadership training, or coaching for all of those acting in a supervisory capacity.

9. **Post-adoption follow-up and returns:** Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center has excellent client services and adoption policies and practices. However, they do not have robust post-adoption follow-up and support to ensure maximum retention of the animals adopted. We recommend implementing a follow-up system and empowering the staff with the time and resources to address issues that may arise. Follow-up resources should include training classes, a behavior help line or consults, and recommendations for online resources, books and videos. Ideally, the shelter would be able to follow up with all adopters, but until the bandwidth to do so can be established, we recommend starting with the animals who have behavior challenges.

Additionally, adoption staff have struggles during conversations with prospective adopters about returns. Feeding into the stigma or public perception of a returned animal always being the fault of the animal breaks down trust between the community and the shelter, and ultimately reduces adoptions or placements. Providing training for the CSRs or staff members and volunteers who perform adoption counseling will give them the tools they need to navigate the conversations. It may also be helpful to implement a foster-to-adopt program for animals returned within a short window. This will not only help put prospective adopters at ease with less commitment, but will also give staff the ability to pose these quick returns as foster situations and “information gathering in an environment outside of the shelter.”

10. **Volunteer and foster programs:** The shelter has the necessary infrastructure to dramatically improve their volunteer and foster programs. A well-run volunteer program provides the shelter with an immense amount of help to support the staff and animals at the shelter, and a well-run foster program would increase capacity and improve the overall health of the animals. Both programs will engage the community and garner support.

The new volunteer coordinator is making great progress with the volunteer program, and Best Friends Animal Society would like to offer Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center the opportunity to partake in our robust volunteer mentorship program.



Through this program, our experts will assist the shelter in implementing industry best practices for volunteer recruitment, engagement and retention, as well as utilizing volunteers in all aspects of operations.

In addition, the current process for bringing new volunteers onboard is preventing the agency from engaging additional community members. Understandably, there are requirements for new volunteers, but the current delay in the county's ability to process the background checks in a timely fashion is having a negative impact on the shelter's ability to save money, maintain and increase lifesaving, and engage the community. We recommend a review of the current requirements and the exploration of alternative methods for processing applicants, such as outsourcing it if the county cannot expedite the background checks.

Below are some resources to assist with these vital programs and, again, we encourage working with our mentorship program:

- Best Friends [volunteer resource](#)
- Additional Best Friends volunteer resources can be found [here](#)
- Best Friends [foster resource](#)
- Best Friends Animal Society's *Humane Animal Control* manual, chapter on [volunteer programs](#)
- Best Friends Animal Society's *Humane Animal Control* manual, chapter on [foster programs](#)

11. **Training for dispatchers:** Many of the calls being dispatched to the field officers come through the county's 911 system. It became obvious rather quickly that the individuals taking these calls had not received adequate training. Many calls did not contain the proper information for the officers to fully address the call. If bringing all dispatch in-house is not an option, we recommend creating a structured training program for the 911 dispatchers receiving animal-related calls.
12. **Officers as transporters:** Officers act as transporters daily, bringing animals from the shelter to pet supply stores that act as adoption centers for the animals. This takes a considerable amount of time from the officers, which results in either animal control complaints being backlogged or officers rushing through calls to clear as many as they can before being pulled off the road to do transports. Either way, officers assigned to transport feel rushed, which results in the officer being forced to do just enough to clear the call and not providing a long-term solution to the problem that caused the complaint to be made in the first place. This practice should be discontinued and/or additional transport staff should be hired.
13. **Mandated training for officers:** Florida state law 828.27(4)(a)(1) mandates that all animal control officers receive 40 hours of approved training to become a certified officer and then, according to 828.27(4)(a)(3), they must receive four hours of continued education every two years to maintain their status. Most officers claim to have not received the required training or much, if any, training at all in the past several years. Those with no records to support the training requirement would be mandated to repeat the basic 40-hour class sponsored by the Florida Animal Control Association (FACA).

During our visit, there was no one on staff who could produce records to indicate that the training requirements had been met by any of the officers currently on staff. We



recommend contacting representatives of FACA to schedule the necessary training required for each officer to ensure current certification or recertification if necessary.

14. **Getting community support:** There is ample opportunity to engage the community in a diversified development strategy to assist with some of the costs necessary for Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center to achieve and maintain no-kill. Currently, the program project coordinator is limited to seeking funds via grant applications, but there are huge missed opportunities by not utilizing her skill set in soliciting funds from individuals and community foundations.

The community wants to support the amazing work of the shelter and allowing residents to contribute gives them critical buy-in to supporting the mission and allows for the expansion of much-needed lifesaving programming. Therefore, we recommend creating and implementing a development strategy. More information on how municipalities can engage in fundraising can be found in Best Friends Animal Society's *Humane Animal Control* manual, in the chapter on [fundraising for government-funded shelters](#).

15. **Transport program:** While other recommendations throughout this assessment need to be implemented to resolve the root causes of the dog overpopulation situation, transporting animals north to no-kill communities can help address the immediate need. Many of the dogs in Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center appear to fit the criteria for what receiving shelters are looking to import. A well-functioning transport program will alleviate operating above capacity for care for dogs, give the shelter the ability to focus on long-term solutions, and bring animals to areas where there is a need for adoptable dogs.
16. **Strategic spay/neuter services:** Being able to provide free or low-cost spay/neuter of owned animals is key to reducing the population of homeless animals in the community and a cornerstone to reducing shelter intake. Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center is helping to provide this service to citizens through the online voucher program, but there is a missed opportunity with the pop-up mobile clinic that the county pays for through a contract with a local animal welfare organization. The shelter has data showing the highest-intake areas in the county, which are often those with the least amount of resources, such as affordable vet services and transportation. The mobile clinic, however, does not go to those locations. We recommend looking into this current contract/program and working to revise it, so the mobile clinic is stationed in strategic areas to allow maximum impact based on statistical data.
17. **Community outreach and engagement:** The shelter needs to increase the level of engagement with the local community and create inroads to build relationships. Best Friends Animal Society's *Humane Animal Control* manual has a comprehensive chapter on community outreach and engagement that can be found [here](#). Also, the Humane Society of the United States has a thorough guidebook, *Pets for Life*, that's available for download on their website and is considered a valuable resource as well.
18. **Public perception of animal control:** According to most, if not all, field officers and staff in general, the community's current perception of animal control needs to be improved. Field officers would greatly welcome the opportunity to attend community-based meetings to discuss animal control issues within that particular area and improve



relations between the officers and the community. Officers could also spend time meeting residents and dogs in dog parks handing out free supplies and informational materials to residents waiting in line at vaccination clinics and other community events. More information about community engagement for field officers can be found in Best Friends Animal Society's *Humane Animal Control* manual, in the chapter on [community engagement strategies](#).

19. **Role of animal control officers in the field:** Within the ranks, there are differences of opinion on how to approach animal control field operations. Some favor a more balanced approach, attempting to aid residents in solving problems, while others rely strictly on enforcing the law. The officers we spent time with were on each end of the spectrum; very little middle ground was observed. We recommend switching up the teams so that officers can see how others are performing their daily duties successfully.

The lack of adherence to a chain of command contributes to the problem of lack of consensus in how to approach field operations. Supervisors should plan to spend time on the road with various officers to get a sense of their philosophical beliefs. This will also aid in building relationships between supervisors and field officers, which is greatly needed. Regardless of where they stand, all officers should focus on strategies that solve the problems that generated the calls they are responding to, rather than just clearing the calls.

Many calls that officers respond to are to the same locations for the same reasons. We recommend discussing these situations as a group to identify creative ideas on how to respond better to the problems at the location, in order to avoid simply doing the same thing over and over. In many cases, additional resources for the officers would be required. Items such as pet food, simple medications, doghouses and tools to fix broken fences would be necessary for officers to have in each vehicle to freely distribute to those in need.

20. **Focused marketing:** We recommend the implementation of a focused marketing strategy to engage the entire community in achieving and sustaining no-kill. Marketing efforts need to contain calls to action to give citizens tangible ways to get involved in achieving and sustaining their community's no-kill status. Best Friends has marketing experts standing by ready to assist, and here are a few additional resources:
  - Join the [Best Friends Digital Community](#) to have access to prerecorded webinars from public relations and marketing experts, along with the ability to connect with others around the nation.
  - Read the Best Friends resource on [media relations for animal organizations](#).

## Conclusion

Best Friends Animal Society's mission is to bring the nation to no kill by 2025 – and as such, is committed to helping shelters across the nation improve their shelter operations for the safety and well-being of the animals in their care, and to help them achieve a no kill community. Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Center is strategically primed to achieve and sustain no-kill and has the support of the Board of County Commissioners and the community to do so.

Best Friends Animal Society stands by ready to assist with strategy and implementation of the above recommendations provided leadership is in full support.

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### **About Best Friends Animal Society**

Best Friends Animal Society is a leading national animal welfare organization dedicated to ending the killing of dogs and cats in America's shelters. In addition to running lifesaving programs in partnership with more than 2,500 animal welfare groups across the country, Best Friends has regional centers in New York City, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Salt Lake City, and operates the nation's largest no-kill sanctuary for companion animals. Founded in 1984, Best Friends is a pioneer in the no-kill movement and has helped reduce the number of animals killed in shelters nationwide from 17 million per year to about 1.5 million. That means there are still more than 4,100 dogs and cats killed every day in shelters, just because they don't have safe places to call home. We are determined to get that number to zero by the year 2025. Working collaboratively with shelters, rescue groups, other organizations and you, we will end the killing and Save Them All. For more information, visit [bestfriends.org](https://bestfriends.org).