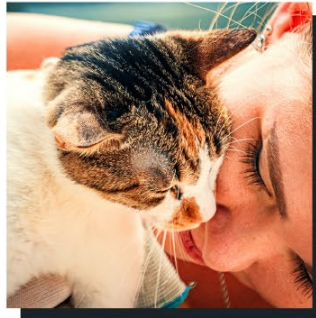
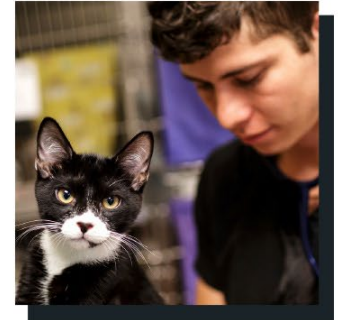
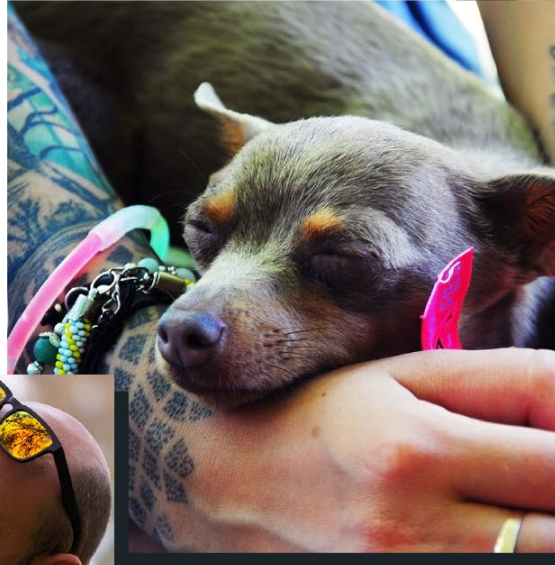
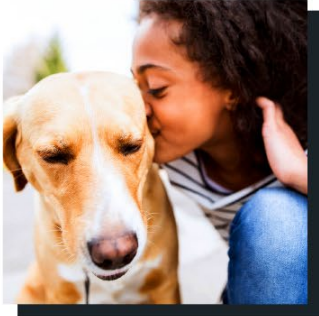
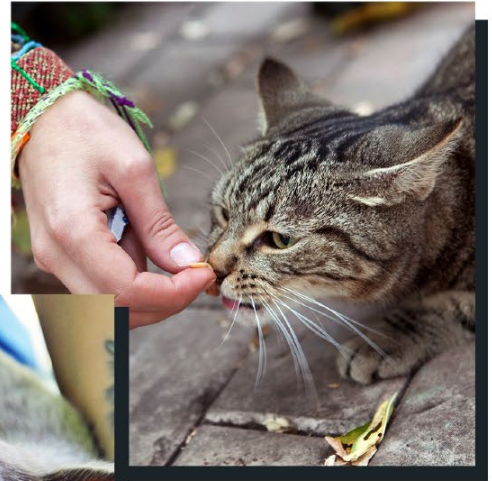




MADDIE'S[®]
**MILLION PET
CHALLENGE**



June 2024

Feasibility Study

Cochise County Animal Control Division

Cochise County, Arizona



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Introduction to Maddie's Million Pet Challenge Process

Maddie's Million Pet Challenge (MMPC) is a partnership between Team Shelter USA, the University of Florida and University of California at Davis shelter medicine programs and Open Door Veterinary Collective (maddiesmillionpetchallenge.org). MMPC awarded the City of Douglas and Cochise County a pro bono consult and research was completed before the onsite visit that included review of the Arizona State Statute and recently passed laws, local ordinances, available historical statistical trends, website and social media along with meetings with leadership. MMPC also networks with Best Friends and met with them to learn about upcoming plans to help the City of Douglas.

During the onsite visit, the MMPC team spent time at the Douglas Animal Shelter, met with leadership, staff and an area non-profit to learn more about the processes in place for field services and from the point of shelter intake to outcome. During the onsite visit, the MMPC team met with county and field services leadership, animal control officers, toured the Tovreaville Road and Tailtopia property locations and visited the Benson County shelter. The MMPC team also networked with regional and national organizations and placed more than 18 of the 27 pets at the City of Douglas shelter, showing the great potential to increase live outcomes.

This initial report is written for and to leadership and all recommendations are based on research and/or successful programs in Arizona and nationwide and in line with all reputable national animal welfare organizations. In addition to the Maddie's Fund partners, these best practices include the Association of Shelter Veterinarians *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters* and the *Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs*, the National Animal Control Association (NACA), the ASPCA, the Humane Society of the United States, Best Friends and Fear Free Sheltering. Human Animal Support Services (HASS) also published an online playbook with a plethora of information and training opportunities that should also be utilized and can be found here: <https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/hass-playbook/> (see Resources).

This report should be considered an addendum to *The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters*, written by the consultant, where additional research and detailed information can be found. Several copies were provided to leadership. The updated ASV guidelines checklist can also be used to track recommendations and progress with contract shelters:

<https://www.sheltervet.org/assets/guidelines/2022-ASV-GL-Checklist.pdf>.

Purpose

Cochise County has requested the assistance of Maddie's Million Pet Challenge to determine the best way to provide animal control and sheltering services for the community. Options are status quo, allocating county funding to retrofit, improve and/or expand current contract shelters, creating a county shelter

either using the USDA grant to retrofit the Tovreaville Road location in Bisbee, purchasing the Tailtopia location in Sierra Vista or building a new facility in a yet to be determined location.

Information regarding specifics about the County operating a shelter will not be reviewed in detail in this report since it is not yet applicable but high-level recommendations and industry standards for sheltering pets in confinement are included under Key Considerations. This is important since County leadership must ensure that contract shelters are operating with humane practices and that the County is solution - driven and contributing to improvements instead of creating unnecessary overcrowding and inefficient practices.

Key Considerations

Ongoing Goals

1. *Capture pertinent data to make informed decisions regarding all resource allocation with modern day shelter software*
2. *Create a shelter-specific Facebook and website page to post lost and adoptable shelter pets in real time*
3. *Create a budget and collaborate with area non-profits to provide subsidized spay/neuter for target populations*
4. *Develop links to resources so the Animal Control Officers (ACOs) can provide that information to pet owners and constituents in need so all options are exhausted prior to a shelter intake*
5. *Provide a full-time staff person for the City of Douglas shelter to provide basic animal care*
6. *Discontinue transporting free roaming, non-enforcement, visually healthy dogs in a populated area for the purpose of shelter intake*
7. *Discontinue transporting visually healthy cats and kittens for the purpose of shelter intake*
8. *Commit to lifesaving programs with the shortest length of stay in partnership with the City shelters*
9. *Reserve euthanasia for large, community unsafe dogs and medical cases beyond resources/hope*

Options

OPTIONS	PROS	CONS
1. Status Quo	No additional funding needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming is not as efficient and impactful as it can be so Status Quo should not be considered. • The City of Douglas is not providing baseline sheltering care with 50% of the canines and 86% of the felines euthanized in 2023 that included many healthy, adoptable pets.
2. RECOMMENDED Keep current city shelter contracts but update field services practices and provide funding for humane housing retrofit, expansion and/or staffing. Consider contracts with Bisbee or Sierra Vista shelters for Palominas and Herford residents.	This is the most cost-efficient option and can enhance the animal welfare service delivery for all county residents since there are multiple locations. Humane housing and care improves the mental well-being of pets in confinement and placement chances and is safer and more efficient for staff while reducing infectious disease transmission and risk of euthanasia. Humane housing and appropriate care of shelter pets attracts more community support and volunteers and reduces complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need novel funding since the re-use of the USDA grant is not yet determined.
3. Retrofit Tovreaville Road facility and add spay/neuter clinic	USDA funding already secured and the opportunity to design a Pet Resource Center with humane housing when all options to intake are exhausted. Spay/neuter capacity desperately needed in the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bisbee is not an ideal location. • It is extremely difficult to find high-volume spay/neuter surgeons with 18 general veterinary positions (paying much higher salaries and bonuses than a municipality) for every veterinarian looking for a job in 2024 in the US. • Since the Humane Society of Southern Arizona is no longer considering operating the shelter, the county would have to fund and manage the entire operation, not currently allocated. Shelters across the country are struggling to find and keep staff so staffing an entire shelter would be exceptionally challenging.

<p>4. Purchase Tailtopia</p>	<p>Double-sided indoor/outdoor runs and play yards already in place. The retrofit for cats, intake, adoption rooms and spay/neuter would not be as expensive as building from the ground up or retrofitting a building.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of the USDA funding is not yet determined. If not approved, the county would have to fund the \$1.5 million purchase and then create the staffing infrastructure and manage the entire operation, with the budget for that not currently allocated. Additional costs would for the retrofit of spaces for cats and a spay/neuter suite. • Duplication of live outcome programs for foster and adoption that would be in close proximity and in direct competition with the Sierra Vista city shelter. • Shelters across the country are struggling to find and keep staff so staffing an entire shelter would be exceptionally challenging. • The road to the property would have to be paved at a considerable expense and potential washout area addressed to avoid flooding.
<p>5. Select a site and build a new facility</p>	<p>A modern-day Pet Resource Center could be built in line with industry best practice standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of the USDA funding is not yet determined and would provide a small percentage of the needed budget. Once the MMPC team has accurate statistics, a general ballpark estimate can be provided. • The county would have to create the staffing infrastructure and manage the entire operation that is not currently allocated. • There is no one centrally located city that can provide balanced services to all citizens in the county. Shelters across the country are struggling to find and keep staff so staffing an entire shelter would be exceptionally challenging.

Figure 1: Summary of Options

Data and Technology

Cochise County is faced with a challenging issue with respect to animal welfare service delivery due to the great distance between cities within the county. This makes the options and recommendations difficult since there is no one ideal location to create a centralized Pet Resource hub. The goal then is to answer several key questions using 2023 data:

1. *What cities, zip codes or zones account for the greatest number of enforcement calls?* This question is different from the number of shelter intakes since pets may be transported to another city, zip code or zone for the purpose of shelter intake.
2. *What cities, zip codes or zones account for the greatest number of canine intake? Feline intake?*
3. *With respect to #1 and #2, what is the ratio of owner surrenders to free roaming (healthy vs injured/enforcement/sick, etc)?* This is important because healthy free roaming cats should only enter a shelter if they are in need. The recommended pathway is spay/neuter/rabies vaccinate/identify as sterilized and returning them to their original home location.
4. *What are the protocols with regards to shelter intake for healthy, non-enforcement canines and felines?*

Data to answer these questions is not yet compiled so email requests have been made to county leadership to ascertain the following data that is currently on individual paper records in the county system and contract shelters. Once this data is ascertained, a heat map showing the highest population of people vs enforcement calls vs shelter intake can be created that will make the decisions regarding available options much easier. Moving forward, it is imperative that this data be tracked so that program impact can be monitored and improvements made when needed. Requests included:

Shelter Intake Information:

1. Data separated by species and age (under or over 4 months)
2. Location where the pet was surrendered or found (This is very important since ACOs are driving pets long distances. Just because they go to Benson, for example, doesn't mean they were from or found in Benson. The county needs to know where the most pets are from so that may be a zone or zip code, depending on how those are tracked.
3. Free roaming healthy, no issues
4. Free roaming sick/injured
5. Free roaming enforcement case like aggression, cruelty, etc.
6. Owner surrender and reason

Outcome Information

1. Outcome of each pet per City contract shelter by species
2. Number of animals euthanized by a county ACO by species
3. Number of owner surrendered pets taken to a non-profit since not reflected in any City statistics, by species

Cochise County leadership should consider utilizing a shelter software called Shelter Luv to capture all enforcement data, pet information, community programs and shelter intake data (shelterluv.com). The City of Douglas is in the process of implementing this software as well so all information, historical data

and reports can be accessed easily in real time for field services, sheltering and community programs. In addition, this software can auto-upload information to increase the reunification, adoption, transfer and lifesaving.

Several other important metrics and processes are crucial for the development of the best animal welfare system, most impactful intervention/prevention, development of an appropriate budget, staffing, program implementation and improvement. These include but are not limited to:

- ACO call types/outcomes by ACO, and any timeframe tracked so leadership can easily analyze trends on a daily/weekly/monthly/annual basis and year over year
- The Shelter Animals Count data matrix that provides an excellent reporting system and can be auto-populated through Shelter Luv: https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/BasicDataMatrix_SAC.pdf.
- Creating an animal welfare specific website page and a Facebook page to post lost dogs or pets for adoption (County can turn the comments off if concerned about engagement; however, this can be a good way of communicating with the public). The website page can have all the basic information and any resources available in the area that can decrease enforcement calls and includes but is not limited to:
 - All local veterinary clinic addresses and phone numbers in the county
 - Subsidized spay/neuter programs (Cochise County Humane Society for those who qualify, Border Animal Rescue, ASAVET Charities, Southern Arizona Humane Society, etc.)
 - What to do if you lost your pet: <https://www.pvastx.org/lostpets>
 - What to do if you've found a pet: See the First 48 program at Cabot Arkansas which has been adopted by many municipal shelters across the country since the pandemic: <https://cabotanimalsupportservices.com/program/helping-pets-get-home/>
 - Don't Kit-nap Kittens <https://www.azhumane.org/events/dont-kit-nap-kittens/>
 - Found a Kitten Outside? Here's how to determine what to do <http://www.kittenlady.org/FPACa>
 - Identifying Kittens That Need Help: <https://ocgainesville.org/kitten-shelter-diversion>
 - Supportive self-rehoming such as [Home-home.org](https://www.home-home.org) and other ways owners may find an adopter for their pet if needed

Public Policy

A redlined document with ordinance revision recommendations has been provided to county leadership along with the following general summary of what to include and what not to include in an ordinance. The City of Douglas is also going through this process with the help of national animal welfare attorneys from Best Friends Animal Society, who may also have additional input.

ORDINANCE REVISION RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to Include	Reason
Requirement for all entities utilizing shelter services to abide by the same ordinances in line with Best Practices	Ordinances in line with Best Practices are universal. Variations in ordinances within a community creates unnecessary inefficiencies.
Anti-tethering	Tethering dogs as a means of housing/restraint is considered inhumane.
Sterilization if dog is designated dangerous	Sterilized pets are less likely to roam to find a mate. Testosterone is linked to aggression and levels lowered when neutered. Nursing mothers are more likely to protect their pups.
Provision for community cats (exclude from leash law)	It is a societal norm for cats to have access to the outdoors or live exclusively outdoors.
Guidelines for feeding community cats and decreasing risk for wildlife	Community cats should be fed at regular times, in containers that are removed after cats eat and in areas least likely to attract or interfere with wildlife.
Define community cat	Any unowned free roaming cat that may be cared for by one or more residents of the immediate area who is/are known or unknown; a community cat may or may not be feral. Community cats that are ear tipped are sterilized and have received at least one vaccination against rabies. Community cats are exempt from any licensing, stray, abandonment and at-large provisions directed towards owned animals. A community cat may also be defined as a cat 'found' outside that is brought to an animal shelter and not yet sterilized/ear tipped.
Define community cat caregiver	A person who provides care, including food, shelter or medical care to a community cat, while not being considered the owner, custodian, harbinger, controller or keeper of a community cat or to have care or charge of a community cat. Caregivers must make every effort to minimize the impact on local wildlife, feed the proper quantity of food for the number of cats in appropriate food containers, discard food containers daily and feed only on their property or with the permission of another landowner (city, state or federal public property).

	Community cat caregivers shall not be deemed to own, have custody, care or control of community cats. Community cat caregivers may redeem community cats from the shelter without proof of ownership and are exempt from any charges and/or fees.
Exclude Return-to-Field program from abandonment clause	The intent of an abandonment clause is to protect pets from being left in an unfamiliar place. A Return-to-Field program involves returning community cats to their home location where they were already cared for.
Housing bite quarantine only if owner unknown (pending dangerous dog investigation is at the discretion of the director)	Shelter space should be reserved for stray pets with no other options or part of an enforcement case. Owners of pets in need of quarantine from a single incidence should be responsible for the quarantine arrangements.
3-day stray hold for dogs over 5 months to live outcome	Most stray dogs are reclaimed by their owners within the first 3 days and LOS leads to negative consequences. Nationally only 20% of stray dogs are reclaimed through a shelter.
No stray hold for kittens and puppies under 5 months to live outcome	Kittens and puppies are at high risk of contracting an infectious disease at the shelter and are not part of the reunification pool. LOS leads to negative consequences.
No stray hold for cats over 5 months to live outcome	Nationally less than 5% of stray cats are reclaimed through a shelter. Studies show that cats are 7 to 13 times more likely to find their way home from the street or find another home when compared to a shelter (Ref Lord and Owen). Trap and euthanize is ineffective at decreasing community cat numbers. LOS leads to negative consequences.
Foster during stray hold	Overall, most of shelter population will not be reclaimed. LOS leads to negative consequences.
Cap on adoption fees	Low adoption fees correlated with lower LOS.
Provision to waive adoption fee	Fee waived adoptions correlate to LOS. Fees do not correlate to responsible pet ownership or human-animal bond.

Financial incentive for services with reclaim (spay/neuter, rabies vaccination and microchip)	Fees, fines and citations prior to reclaim for a stray at large and not part of an enforcement case is a barrier to reclaim. Offering incentive for services is beneficial for pet, owner, shelter and field services and provide sustainable resolution.
Allowance for spay/neuter agreement	If pre-adoption spay/neuter not possible, LOS leads to negative consequences.

Recommendations to Exclude	Reason
Memorandum of Understanding or contracts with shelters not linked to number of animals admitted	Shelter space should be reserved for public and animal safety cases and pets with no alternatives.
Field Officers do not convenience transport owner surrenders or healthy community cats for the purpose of shelter intake	Field Officers should focus on public and animal safety and proactive community programs.
Breed Specific Legislation	No evidence that physical characteristics are linked to aggression
Pet Limits	Not correlated to responsible pet ownership or hoarding risk
Regulation of community cat colonies or caregivers	Does not promote partnership efforts with caregivers and feeders, positions animal control entity as the enemy. Resources wasted with no positive outcome.
Mandatory spay/neuter for the general public AVMA and ASPCA agree	No evidence that mandatory spay/neuter linked to decreasing shelter intake, creates a punitive action with no resolution, risk of increasing shelter intake. (AVMA and ASPCApro.org)

Figure 2: Chart from page 57 in *The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters*

Capacity for Care and Managed Coordinated Intake

Capacity for Care means there is ample space, staff, volunteers and resources to care for pets in appropriate spaces, provide humane care for both their physical and enrichment needs in confinement with programs and policies that lead to the shortest length of stay. Currently, there are no dog or cat housing units at the City of Douglas shelter that meet basic industry standards so if the option of status quo with City shelters is chosen, assistance with retrofitting this campus is a *high priority*.

With ample staff/volunteers/resources, the recommendation is to stay within 80% of the maximum physical pet spaces through proactive and lifesaving programs in order to have space for pets with no other options, emergencies, enforcement cases, etc. The idea of ‘open admission’ should be replaced with Managed Coordinated Intake as accepting all pets into the shelter overwhelms the system, leads to overcrowding, etc. and the associated negative consequences such as otherwise preventable infectious diseases, negative behaviors associated with fear, anxiety, stress and frustration and high euthanasia rates.

All pets in confinement must be provided with enough space to turn around, lay down and make normal postural movements without risk of laying in their own urine and feces. Double-sided compartments are the industry standard for both canines and felines since it provides an area for a pet to sleep and eat and an alternate area to relieve themselves if needed.

Intake and outcome hours are part of the traditional animal control and sheltering structure that is grossly unbalanced and destined for failure. Currently, at the contract shelters, there are more hours for intake between field services which is 24/7 and the public than outcome hours. While the shelter must focus on public and animal safety, live outcome hours must be longer than intake hours for the shelter to operate within Capacity for Care and have available space for true public and animal safety risks.

Managed Coordinated Intake is now recognized as the only way to effectively provide services for the community and operate within Capacity for Care:

- National Animal Control Association position statements highlighting the importance of managed coordinated intake and the benefits of community cat programs that provide more effective services for constituents: <https://www.nacanet.org/category/position-statements/>
- Position statement by the National Animal Control Association: <https://www.nacanet.org/naca-guideline-on-appointment-based-pet-intake-into-shelters/>
- Recommendation by Best Friends Animal Society: <https://network.bestfriends.org/education/manuals-handbooks-playbooks/managed-intake-or-admissions-training-playbook>
- Recently published article by Dr. Kate Hurley; [The Evolving Role of Triage and Appointment-Based Admission to Improve Service, Care and Outcomes in Animal Shelters](https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.809340) Front. Vet. Sci., 04 March 2022 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.809340>

Community-Minded Field Services

The county employs an outstanding field services team of ACOs that welcomes programs to help pet owners and caregivers. Each vehicle should have a supply of handouts with information about any local services and help. All ACOs should complete the online Best Friends Field Services training program offered pro bono and can be part of onsite training offered to the City of Douglas.

Shelter intake protocols should be revisited in several categories. First, there are no true benefits to shelter free roaming, visually healthy cats and this practice should be replaced by opportunities for constituents to use a subsidized spay/neuter program.

Second, free roaming dogs who are not in danger or causing a public or animal safety issue and are in a populated area should be left in their own neighborhoods. Studies have emerged during the pandemic showing that those dogs are typically close to home and go home yet when taken to a shelter, have a very small chance of reunification (see **Resources**). Alternately, Good Samaritans should be encouraged to help find the dog's owner through local canvassing and social media sites such as NextDoor and Ring apps and offered food and supplies to do so. If the County utilized ShelterLuv software, lost and found animals could automatically be uploaded to Petco Love Lost to increase reunification.

Lastly, owner surrenders should only be transported if there are extenuating circumstances, an owner emergency such as hospitalization, incarceration, death, etc. and instead offered opportunities to find a placement for their pet or offered supplies such as food if the issue is food insecurity, for example.

These policy changes can ensure that the ACOs and shelters are reserved for true public and animal safety issues. Key resources include the National Animal Control Association (nacanet.org) and Best Friends <https://network.bestfriends.org/education/manuals-handbooks-playbooks/field-training-programs-playbook>.

The MMPC team also recommends that shelter intake hours be shorter than outcome hours and weekends are reserved for live outcome with emergency intake only.

Community Programs

Safety Net/Subsidized Spay Neuter

A goal should be established to ensure that no pet enters the shelter unless all other options are exhausted. Many people are willing to foster short term if they know they have support, a specific timeline and will be provided with supplies, vaccines and spay/neuter. If the County cannot immediately provide all that support, the constituent should at least be asked to delay the intake until an outcome pathway can be established, whenever appropriate. This process is often called Safety Net.

The MMPC team has recommended that the City of Douglas utilize an online platform called Home to Home that links owners needing to place their pets and interested adopters or foster volunteers (home-to-home.org). Once that is in place, the County ACOs may refer owners for that service in order to prevent a shelter intake.

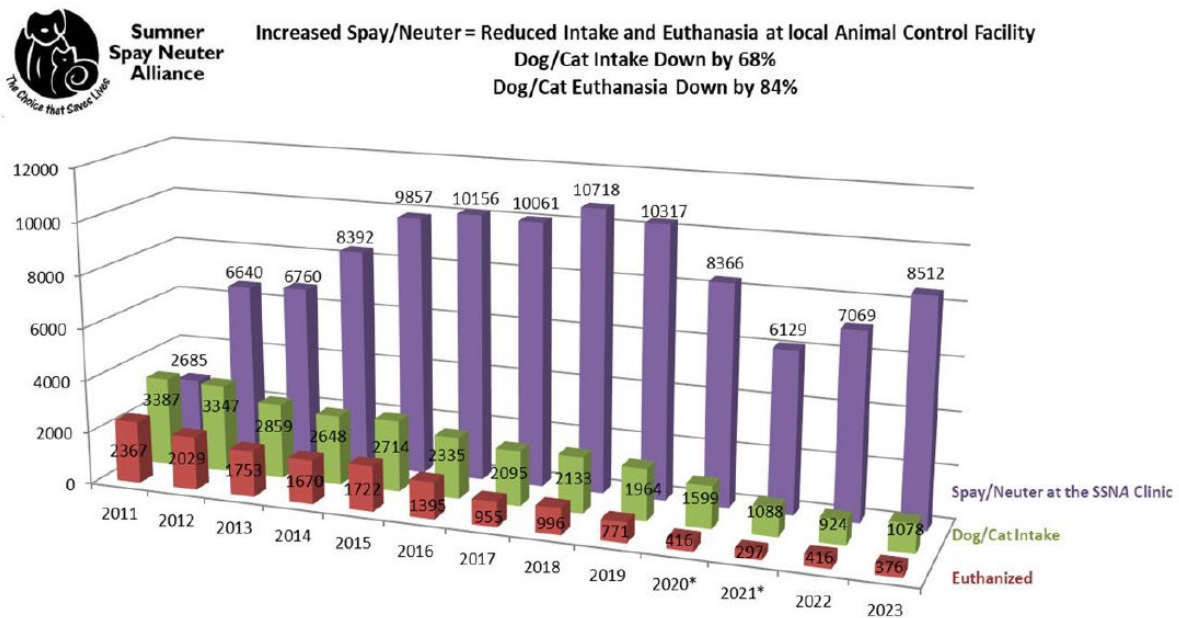
The importance for every municipality to subsidize spay/neuter and veterinary care and set up programs to exhaust all options to a shelter intake cannot be over emphasized. These programs are laser-focused on the root causes of enforcement calls and shelter intake and correlate with reducing both. Most pet owners will spay/neuter if it is accessible regardless of cultural differences and geographic locations. Stakeholders in Cochise County describe spay/neuter events with lines of pet owners exceeding the capacity of the event each time. There are several concerning resource deserts in the county including no full-service veterinary clinic in the City of Douglas.

Currently, many pet owners in Cochise County take their pets to Mexico for spay/neuter and veterinary care. However, effective August 1, 2024, the Center for Disease Control will change requirements for pets entering the US from Mexico which will greatly and negatively impact this and makes these subsidies all

the more important at this time: <https://www.cdc.gov/importation/bringing-an-animal-into-the-united-states/required-forms-for-importing-dog-united-states.html>.

Targeted spay/neuter groups include those pets at risk of entering a shelter and/or a long length of stay if they do. These groups include cats with access to the outdoors, pets belonging to socioeconomically challenged individuals and large breed dogs. Access to spay/neuter correlates with reducing shelter intake (see page 1 in the *Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters*).

Research by Peter Marsh (see **Resources**), suggests that at least 10 subsidized surgeries for pets belonging to high risk groups per 1,000 constituents will help reduce shelter intake. For the Cochise County with 126,000 people that means 630 feline and 630 canine surgeries per year. Cats allowed access to the outdoors are in addition to that and a starting point to budget for surgeries should be the number of free roaming cats entering all shelters in the county.



The Sumner Spay Neuter Alliance Clinic in Gallatin, TN performed 105,659 spay/neuter surgeries from July 2011 through December 2023. Our mission is to reduce the shelter intake and euthanasia of dogs and cats by making high quality, low cost spay/neuter services available to residents of our community.

*Intake and euthanasia numbers were provided by Sumner County Sheriff's Office, Division of Animal Control.
2020 and 2021 numbers were impacted by the Covid pandemic.

Figure 3: Shows the direct inverse correlation of targeted spay/neuter on both intake and euthanasia. This is repeated in many communities across the country. Additional examples can be found in *The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters*.

Public-private partnerships have the potential to create the most impactful programs for communities so Cochise County is strongly encouraged to pursue partnerships with the following organizations that the MMPC team learned about during the onsite visit. This is not a complete list but includes:

- ASAVET Charities non-profit spay/neuter program may be interested in using the surgery suite at the City of Douglas shelter

- Cochise County Humane Society has a trap/neuter/release (TNR) partnership with the Humane Society of Southern Arizona for cats
- Cochise County Humane Society subsidizes 50% of the cost of spay/neuter for elderly, low-income pet owners and veterans, as funds allow
- Border Animal Rescue has a subsidized spay/neuter program

Community Cat (Free Roaming Cat) Program

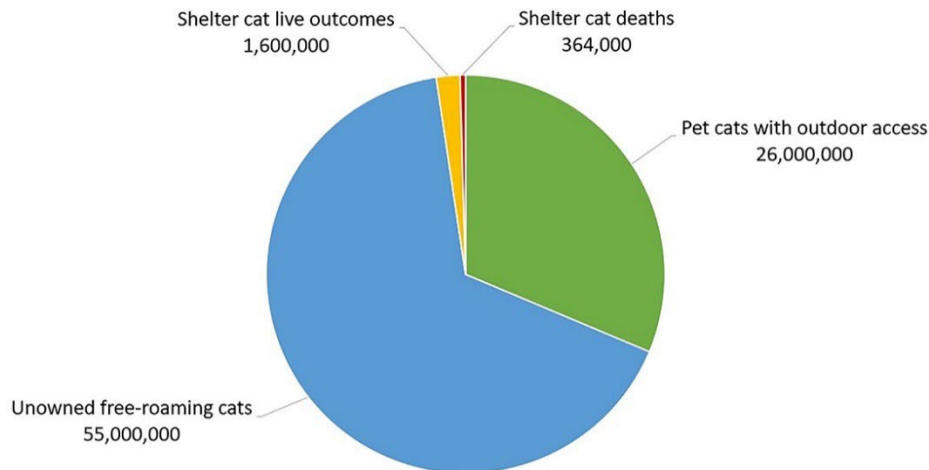


Figure 4: Compares the estimated number of free-roaming cats (unowned and owned) compared to the number of cats entering and dying in shelters in the U.S. (Source: Front. Vet. Sci., 08 March 2022 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.847081>)

In the traditional animal control and sheltering system, cats outside were considered ‘stray’ and the public was trained to take the cats to an animal shelter for the purpose of reunification. These cats are often called ‘community cats’ and may be socialized or unsocialized.

Unfortunately, this flawed intake system did not take into account that approximately half of American cat owners allow their cats access to the outside and were not actually lost. In addition, this foundational practice has resulted in a reunification rate of less than 2% nationally or a 98% failure rate. As a result, the state of Arizona statute was recently amended and a stray hold requirement for free roaming cats not required if they enter a shelter. This means they can go directly to spay/neuter/rabies vaccine/identification.

The only effective plan for healthy free roaming cats is to link owners and caregivers with subsidized spay/neuter, rabies vaccination and ear tip (or tattoo) to identify the cat as sterilized and return them to their original home location. A healthy body weight and coat are evidence that the cat has adequate food sources. Free roaming cats should only be admitted to the shelter if they require medical care or part of an enforcement case (See the Community Cat chapter in *The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters*).

Ensuring healthy free roaming cats are sterilized and staying in their original home location benefits all stakeholders since it:

- Decreases the number of unwanted births and overall number of community cats
- Simultaneously increases community immunity against rabies as there are less cats but a higher percentage who are vaccinated
- Decreases the negative impact on wildlife
- Decreases shelter intake of cats and waste of resources for a cat not in need of assistance beyond spay/neuter/rabies vaccination
- Eliminates nuisance behaviors associated with mating
- Prevents the formation of colonies of cats

For constituents who say they do not want the cats returned to their neighborhood, a conversation regarding the specifics of what is happening is warranted so assistance can be offered. At least one person, but most likely, several neighbors, are feeding cats outside so removing one cat will not resolve the issue the complainant has. It may be that there are too many intact cats congregating so a targeted spay/neuter effort is needed. In other situations, there may be a simple solution or steps the constituent may take so cats are not attracted to their house.

An overwhelming amount of evidence supports the practice of keeping healthy sterilized free roaming cats in their original home location as the most effective cat management program for all stakeholders. Some examples are:

- An article summarizing the latest research by Dr. Kate Hurley and Dr. Julie Levy (Front. Vet. Sci., 08 March 2022 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.847081>)
- A webinar by the Million Cat Challenge team: <https://youtu.be/9FVHcYTXrgI>
- Best Friends Animal Society (<https://resources.bestfriends.org/advocacy/community-cats>)
- The National Animal Control Association(<https://www.nacanet.org/animal-control-intake-of-free-roaming-cats/>)
- The Humane Society of the United States (<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/community-cat-program>)
- Human Animal Support Services (<https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/?s=community+cats>)

Basic Canine Housing and Enrichment

Cochise County leaders must be educated and familiar with industry standards for housing pets in confinement, regardless of what option is selected. As per the Association of Shelter Veterinarians, pets in confinement must have ample space and double-compartment housing is preferred. The functional design purpose of a divider door between the 2 compartments is to provide separation between bed/food/water and a place to eliminate. It also provides safety measures for both staff and the animals. These doors should be kept open except during sanitation.

The City of Douglas shelter is in desperate need of retrofitting as there are no housing units in line with industry standards. The City is considering estimates to retrofit the original dog kennel area or the warehouse on the back of the property. If Option 2 is selected, the City and County have the opportunity to each allocate funding in the most efficient way. Retrofitting the warehouse would be the preferred decision and then the current dog runs could be used for cats so they would be housed in separate buildings.

References for basic design for pets in confinement include but are not limited to:

1. Association of Shelter Veterinarians *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal* <https://ismcah.org/index.php/jasv/article/view/42/19> (page 14)
2. *The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters* (page 23)
3. Unlimited online resources provided by shelter specific architects

Key design features for dogs in confinement include:

- Indoor/outdoor runs with the indoor section temperature controlled
- Room for a soft bed (such as kurandabed.com) that can be disinfected
- Room for bed, food and water to be placed on the inside part of the run
- Ample air exchange to minimize odors and infectious disease transmission, an ongoing challenge when pets are housed in confinement together
- Oversized plumbing
- Durable surfaces that can withstand harsh disinfectants daily

Key enrichment practices:

- Appropriately designed fenced-in play yards are mandatory. Playgroups have been proven to reduce the length of stay and stress hormones in dogs and increase adoptions in shelters (dogsplayingforlife.com). Shade must be provided for people and pets and small kiddie pools should be provided as well as water buckets attached to the fence so there is a constant water source.
- In-kennel enrichment is non-negotiable

Feline Housing and Enrichment

We now know that keeping a cat in confinement with less than 11 square feet is linked to stress and results in upper respiratory infections. These infections can be eliminated by providing ample housing and short lengths of stay in a stress-free environment. If stainless steel cages are used and under 11 square feet, portals should be installed <https://www.sheltermedicine.com/services/facility-design/portals-opening-the-door-to-lifesaving/>.

The purpose of double-compartment housing is for the cat to have their bed/food/water on one side and their litter box on the other. The portal should only be closed to spot clean one side while the cat is housed in the enclosure. A full disinfection should happen once the cat has left the enclosure.



Figure 5: Shows a double compartment cage set up with the litter box and food/water/bed in separate spaces.

Basic in-cage enrichment for cats includes a soft bed, a disposable scratching pad, toys, cat nip pillows, etc. Kuranda towers for cats, which can be disinfected in between use are excellent when housing cats in dog runs: <https://kuranda.com/cat-products>.

Medical Care and Surgical Programs

If any shelter, public or private, accepts a pet into their care, they are obligated to provide basic preventive care (vaccinations, deworming, flea/tick control), ample housing and nutrition, a clean, Fear/Stress-Free environment and spay/neuter.

Medical care is dependent on a shelter's resources, access to a veterinarian and medical supplies, potential partners who can assist and the severity of the problem. With advanced injuries and illness, euthanasia may be the best option but at no time should a shelter not address a medical issue.

The outcome and disposition of pets at contracted City shelters should also be the responsibility of the County. Access to subsidized veterinary care and spay/neuter for owned pets will reduce the number of medical cases entering shelters.

Cochise County has very few private practices and subsidized spay/neuter program capacity is limited. On a positive note, the City of Douglas recently purchased the veterinary clinic attached to the current shelter which has an excellent, ready-to-use spay/neuter suite with holding cages/kennels, 3 anesthesia machines and an autoclave. Potential partnerships are currently being developed with the hope that a variety of visiting spay/neuter teams can use the clinic so that all shelter pets are spayed and neutered prior to adoption and the City can offer spay/neuter for the public.

While this is the goal for any shelter, many are struggling with capacity so the recommendation is to send them to the adopter intact with an appointment to get spayed or neutered and track that program. The City of Douglas has done that in the past but assumed that pets were not spayed or neutered since adopters did not return for their \$200 deposit. However, this was not confirmed with the adopter so the compliance rate is unknown. Regardless, holding the animals in the shelter in order to wait for sterilization is not feasible or recommended.

Live Outcome Opportunities

Return to Owner (Dogs)

Recent research shows that 70% of dogs at large were found in their own neighborhoods. As discussed, keeping dogs in their neighborhoods provides the best opportunities for them to make it home. Information on the website should be easily accessible when someone finds a dog explaining all the steps to take including walking the dog around the neighborhood and checking for a microchip. Many municipalities have installed microchip scanners at police or fire stations to make it easy for a constituent finding a dog to check for a chip.

Petco Love Lost can increase pet reunification which also integrates with Ring Doorbell and NextDoor app. Sign up at the following link: https://petcolove.fluxx.io/user_sessions/new

The First 48 program in Cabot, Arkansas is an excellent program that has been adopted by many municipal shelters across the country since the pandemic: <https://cabotanimalsupportservices.com/program/helping-pets-get-home/>.

Other programs, like the one at the Port St Lucie, Florida police department have a 75% return to owner rate partly due to ACO protocols that reunite a large percentage in the field. This program is profiled in *The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters*.

As discussed, ACOs should post lost dogs (or those who may be available for adoption) on a designated animal service Facebook page. This will not only increase reunification but has proven to increase adoptions at the City shelters.

Human Animal Support Services has an excellent guide for Lost and Found that can be downloaded and shared on both the County's animal services website and Facebook pages: <https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/blog/5-kits-infographics-tools-lost-pets-home/>



Figure 6: Sample infographics available from HASS toolkits

Research shows that the majority of people reclaiming their dogs have salaries higher than \$60,000. Fear of high fees and fines surely prevents some owners from reclaiming. The County website information should make it clear that fees and fines will be waived or reduced in lieu of compliance with spay/neuter, vaccinations and microchip because reunification is a primary goal. This has been added to the recommendations for ordinance revisions. Certifying staff to provide the rabies vaccines will streamline this process as well.

Adoptions

In the traditional, flawed animal welfare system, there are typically no barriers for a pet to enter confinement in a shelter but many barriers for them to leave alive. This system leads to overcrowding and a host of negative sequelae. *Adopters Welcome* by the Humane Society of the United States should be mandatory reading for every organization involved in adoptions:

https://humanepro.org/sites/default/files/documents/Adopters_Welcome_Manual_5-15-2020.pdf

The key elements of a welcoming adoption program are to (1) make the right match, (2) set the expectations for the adoption (the 3-3-3 guide is excellent <https://www.adoptapet.com/blog/adoption/3-3-3-rule-for-dogs>) (3) provide the basic information about the pet, (4) answer or get answers to the questions from the adopter, (5) provide advice post-adoption when needed.

Low and fee waived adoptions are recommended as they correlate with lower lengths of stay. Higher fees correlate with higher lengths of stay but do not correlate with a 'better' adopter.

The most successful programs include:

- Engaging online advocacy
- Convenient hours/days of operation including weekends
- A welcoming environment
- A user friendly, efficient system
- A team of staff and volunteer

Staff and Volunteers

The people to pet ratio in a shelter is part of the Capacity for Care. Shelters must have baseline staffing so pets receive ample nutrition/meals, clean environments, enrichment needs met and programs implemented so they have the shortest length of stay. Volunteers can be a crucial help to enhance the care of shelter pets, relieve some of the workload for staff and should be welcomed to assist in all capacities.

The number of staff needed are dependent on programming between sheltering and community programs, partnerships and a volunteer force but the Association of Shelter Veterinarians recommends the following formula for kennel staffing alone (to provide basic morning sanitation, spot cleaning throughout the day and twice daily feeding only). This can be roughly calculated by using the formula: *number of animals in the shelter per day x 15 minutes per animal=number of minutes per*

day. This does not include time spent doing general sanitation including laundry, food preparation, dishes, mopping common areas, yard clean up, assisting public visitors with reclaims and adoptions, playgroups and enrichment, etc. Nor does it include time spent handling calls for service.

As discussed, the County should provide a full-time animal care staff person for the City of Douglas. There are 8 ACOs bringing animals into that shelter and only 3 of those are responsible for all daily care while simultaneously answering calls for service creating a huge imbalance.

All shelter and field teams should complete Fear Free training which is offered online, on demand and at no cost. This should be recommended to volunteers as well and is also free for them:

<https://fearfreeshelters.com/>.

When data regarding ACO call types are provided, a further analysis of the appropriate number of ACOs needed can be discussed. These decisions must be based on the number and types of calls that potentially have a different intervention, such as a subsidized spay/neuter opportunity for a free-roaming cat, providing assistance for an owner to keep their pet. Distance between calls should also be considered.

Budget Development and Collaboration

While there is no budget benchmark norm for animal control and sheltering, every organization needs to ensure that they are providing the programs discussed. It is not always feasible to look at other area organizations as many are not budgeted appropriately. For example, the City of Douglas is far below baseline with no allocations for purchasing all the food that is needed for shelter pets or enough staff to care for them properly and oversee live outcome programs. A summary of the foundational programs include:

1. Pet Resource Services with proactive community programs that include access to spay/neuter, veterinary care and Safety Net to keep pets in their homes and ensure a shelter intake is the last and only option.
2. Partnership and collaboration with area animal welfare organizations.
3. A community-focused field services team that ultimately provides assistance and prevents the cycle of need, reserving punitive approaches for true perpetrators of cruelty and neglect.
4. Shelter intake protocols that include immediate advocacy for reunification or placement, preventive care and a plan for spay/neuter.
5. Humane housing with appropriate care and enrichment.
6. Basic medical care for minor issues.
7. Reserving euthanasia for medical cases beyond hope or resources and large, community-unsafe dogs.

This newly developed budget calculator is an excellent tool for creating a baseline budget: <https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/the-hass-budget-calculator/>. Once requested statistics are provided to the MMPC team, further assistance will be provided with budget development.

However, the most successful communities have strong public-private partnerships. It is crucial that all municipalities and non-profit animal welfare organizations collaborate as this can drive down the funding needs of each. Many large, national funders require partnerships as a condition of grants as it leads to the most efficient use of resources while streamlining help for the community. Some examples are jointly funded spay/neuter programs that each organization markets in the same way, supportive self-rehoming

information across all website pages with consistent messaging, a private non-profit organization hosting a foster program for a municipal shelter, etc. The possibilities are endless and partnerships should be explored outside of the animal welfare sector as well.

Cochise County is an expansive and therefore challenging county to provide animal welfare services. There are no perfect answers that balance each area so the goal should be what options make the most sense. Current City shelters already have the basic infrastructure in place to provide sheltering services. Creating a single county-run shelter is a massively expensive initial capital investment with ongoing operational costs that does not address the needs of the entire county. Concentrating resources on proactive programming that includes Pet Resource services, Safety Net and subsidized access to veterinary care and spay/neuter is a much wiser investment.

Moving Forward

The MMPC team would like to thank the shelter leadership and staff for their time during the consult visit and willingness to improve the field services and operations with contract shelters. The MMPC team is available to discuss additional topics moving forward including ordinance revisions, budget and staffing levels as well as facility improvements and design. Once the 2023 statistics are provided, further analysis can be done and additional recommendations made.

The pro bono MMPC consult program includes one year of mentoring, coaching and networking and the team looks forward to helping the City of Douglas and Cochise County in any way possible in collaboration with Best Friends.

#ThankstoMaddie

General Resource List

National Animal Welfare Organizations

- Association of Shelter Veterinarians (sheltervet.org)
- Best Friends (bestfriends.org)
- Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity (careawo.org)
- Fear Free Shelters (fearfreeshelters.com)
- Human Animal Support Services - HASS (humaneanimalsupportservices.org)
- Humane Society of the United States (hsus.org and animalsheltering.org)
- Jessica Dolce Compassion Fatigue (jessicadolce.com)
- Maddie's Fund (maddiesfund.org)
- Maddie's Million Pet Challenge team (maddiesmillionpetchallenge.org)
- National Animal Control Association (naca.net)

National Statistics

- Best Friend Dashboards (<https://bestfriends.org/no-kill-2025/animal-shelter-statistics>)
- Shelter Animals Count (<https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/>)
- American Pet Products Association Survey 2021-2022: <https://humanepro.org/page/pets-by-the-numbers> FFA Cessed 3/29/22

Guidelines

- *Adopter's Welcome*, by the Humane Society of the United States
<https://humanepro.org/page/adopters-welcome-manual>
- 2020 American Association of Feline Practitioners guidelines (Informational webinar by Dr. Julie Levy, Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program, University of Florida, <https://youtu.be/KdsMiZjwdpo>)
- Human Animal Support Services (HASS) Playbook
<https://www.humaneanimalsupportservices.org/hass-playbook/>
- Shelter Care Checklists: Putting ASV Guidelines Into Action
https://www.aspcapro.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/2022-asv-gl-checklist_0.pdf
- The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' 2016 Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs
<https://avmajournals.avma.org/view/journals/javma/249/2/javma.249.2.165.xml>
- The Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters
<https://www.aspcapro.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/asvguidelinessecondedition-2022.pdf>

Surrender Prevention and Safety Net

- Those surrendering needed temporary help (<https://www.aspca.org/about-us/press-releases/more-1-million-households-forced-give-their-beloved-pet-each-year-aspca>)
- Home to Home (<https://home-home.org/>)
- Rehome by Adopt-A-Pet (<https://rehome.adoptapet.com/>)

- Rehoming Comparison Tool (<https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/wordpress/files/2021/03/Rehoming-Tool-Comparison-1-27-21.pdf>)
- PetPoint.com, Points of Care for tracking Safety Net data (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBvr9XF42FA>)

Foster Care

- HASS Intake to Placement Tool Kit (<https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/toolkit/intake-to-placement/>)
- Doobert/FosterSpace (<https://www.doobert.com/>)

Community Cat Programming

- Informational webinar by the Million Cat Challenge team: <https://youtu.be/9FVHcYTXrgI> by Dr.'s Kate Hurley and Julie Levy entitled [Rethinking the Animal Shelter's Role in Free Roaming Cat Management](#)
- Best Friends Animal Society (<https://resources.bestfriends.org/advocacy/community-cats>)
- The National Animal Control Association (<https://www.nacanet.org/animal-control-intake-of-free-roaming-cats/>)
- The Humane Society of the United States (<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/community-cat-program>)
- Humane Animal Support Services (<https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/?s=community+cats>)

Managed Admission; Appointment Based System

- Best Friends Managed Intake or Admissions Training Playbook (<https://network.bestfriends.org/education/manuals-handbooks-playbooks/managed-intake-or-admissions-training-playbook>)

Portal instructions

- Puppies https://shor-line.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Puppy_Portal-1.pdf
- Cats <https://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/?r=cat-portals-order-information-and-instruction-for-installation>

Canines (How to help large dogs in shelters)

- Big Dog Master Class <https://maddiesmillionpetchallenge.org/big-dog-master-class/#1648138892891-049ac83b-f195>

Dog Play Groups

- Dogs Playing for Life (dogsplayingforlife.com)
- Shelter Playgroup Alliance for small playgroups (sheltdogsplay.org)

Adoptions

- Adoptapet (adoptapet.com)
- Adoptimize (adoptimize.com)
- The 2021-022 American Pet Products Association Survey showed that only 40% of dogs and 43% of cats are adopted from an animal shelter or rescue group
- <https://humanepro.org/page/pets-by-the-numbers>
- Why people went to breeders after shelter/rescue
<https://modernmagazine.com/articles/best-friends-animal-society-survey-exposes-why-people-opt-adopt-or-not/108382>.
- Conversations from the Field: Journey to Open Adoptions by Chrissy Sedgley
<https://youtu.be/TAYAojqDH4o>
- Is Your Adoption Process Really Working by Sue Cosby
https://aspc.zoom.us/recording/play/NAvZ9ClE0sAAhmE-V_TcWq1TSn5kAa6n4HgPJMixYyMKBSINpAuxfWSIWPxfnm6?continueMode=true
- Petfinder.com

Shelter Donation Programs

- Kuranda dog and cat beds (Kuranda.com)
- Kong (<https://www.kongcompany.com/kong-cares-application/>)
- Cat Scratchers (<https://imperialcat.com/giveback.php>)

Recommended Reading

- [The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters](#)
- [Animal Behavior for Shelter Veterinarians and Staff](#)
- [BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Shelter Medicine: Principles of Health and Welfare in a Multi-animal Environment](#)
- [Every Nose Counts: Using Metrics in Animal Shelters](#)
- [Field Manual for Small Animal Medicine](#)
- [High-Quality, High-Volume Spay and Neuter and Other Shelter Surgeries](#)
- [Infectious Disease Management in Animal Shelters](#)
- Infectious Disease Control <https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/shelter-services/disease-management/>
- [Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff](#)
- Replacing Myth with Math, Peter Marsh
(http://www.shelteroverpopulation.org/Books/Replacing_Myth_with_Math.pdf)
- Reference for Large Scale Social Change [Switch by Dan and Chip Heath](#)

Return to Owner (RTO) Research

- Dallas, Texas: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2021.669428/full>

Rescue/Transfers Research

- Pasco County, FL <https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/blog/county-shelter-transfer-partners/>

Staffing

- Field Services <https://www.nacanet.org/determining-field-staffing-needs/>
- Kennel cleaning and feeding <https://www.nacanet.org/determining-kennel-staffing-needs/>

Networking and Information

- [ASPCApr Newsletter and Blog](#)
- [Association of Shelter Veterinarians Private Facebook Group](#)
- [Greater Good](#)
- Human Animal Support Services - HASS (<https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/>) sign up for weekly Zoom calls and working groups
- [HSUS Animal Sheltering Blog](#)
- [Maddie's Fund Chew on This Blog](#)
- Maddie's Pet Forum (<https://forum.maddiesfund.org/home>)
- [Shelter Medicine Veterinarians Private Facebook Group](#)
- [UF Shelter Medicine Newsletter](#)

Education and Certification

- Compassion in Balance Program (<https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/continuing-education/compassion-in-balance-cib-program/>)
- Fear Free Shelter Certification (<https://fearfreeshelters.com/>)
- National Animal Control Association (<https://www.nacanet.org/>)
- Maddie's University (<https://university.maddiesfund.org/>)