

Police Department

LOB #211:

ANIMAL SHELTER

Purpose

The Fairfax County Animal Shelter is part of the Animal Services Division of the Police Department. The shelter is committed to serving as an animal resource center, engaging the community in humane solutions and providing a safe haven for animals in need. To accomplish its mission and objectives, the shelter works closely with Animal Control. The wildlife biologist and wildlife management programs are also a part of the Animal Shelter Section.

Description

The Animal Shelter provides housing and care for stray, homeless or unwanted cats, dogs and small animals that are brought to the shelter by Fairfax County Citizens or by Animal Control Officers in the performance of their duties. The strategic focus of the Animal Shelter is to provide improved care, improved programs and improved services that reflect the expectations of the community, the Board of Supervisors, the Animal Services Advisory Commission, the County Executive and the leadership of the Fairfax County Police Department. The shelter has moved beyond providing only “pound” services or simply being a convenient option for disposing of unwanted domestic pets and is working towards becoming an animal resource center providing innovative solutions for the community. The shelter is currently able to state that no animal who is adoptable, treatable or able to be rehabilitated is euthanized for lack of space. The shelter continues to work towards developing the resources to treat and rehabilitate the most challenging companion animals. Adoption and redemption programs, while robust, do not provide a complete solution and the shelter must continue to seek resources for and development of innovative intervention programs designed to solve the problem at its source: aggressive spay neuter campaigns, humane education and citizen accessibility to programs and services that will help keep families and their pets together.

The Wildlife Management Specialist is responsible for the organizing, maintaining, and coordinating of the County’s Deer Management and Canada Geese Programs. Additionally, the Wildlife Management Specialist is responsible for educating and/or coordinating public education/outreach on all wildlife issues and serves as the main point of contact for the Board of Supervisors on all wildlife issues, and coordinates such activities with federal and state authorities.

Benefits

The Fairfax County Animal Shelter provides a safe haven for unwanted, abandoned or displaced pets. The shelter also provides a safe, reliable alternative for families in Fairfax County who cannot continue to care for their pets for a variety of reasons including financial, housing issues, lifestyle changes and medical concerns for both pets and humans.

The Fairfax County Animal Shelter provides resources for County residents who need help managing pets, have concerns or questions about wildlife or who wish to learn about animal-related issues.

Additionally, the shelter houses animals involved in court cases, and provides humane euthanasia for animals who are not safe to be placed in the community and for those whose owners request end of life euthanasia.

Police Department

Mandates

The Animal Shelter as part of Animal Services is mandated by the state of Virginia as part of the enforcement of Virginia Comprehensive Animal Laws, the Code of Virginia and the Fairfax County Code as they pertain to animal violations.

Trends and Challenges

Pet ownership in the United States is on the rise with 65 percent of households now owning pets according to the 2015-2016 American Pet Products Association National Pet Owners Survey. Pets are increasingly considered family members and families are spending more money on the care of their pets. With more pets in homes, and more families wishing to provide a higher standard of care for pets, the challenges to the Fairfax County Animal Shelter are to respond to more families in need and to provide greater resources to help families retain pets, while also providing a higher standard of care for pets in the shelter.

Trends in animal welfare include conducting open, conversation-based adoptions, provide a more enriching environment for pets while in shelter care, reducing length of stay in shelters through innovative marketing and promotions, and providing treatment and rehabilitation for otherwise adoptable animals. Fairfax County residents increasingly expect a higher standard of care for animals and an increased level of professionalism on the part of the staff and volunteers at the shelter.

Both increased adoptions and providing a higher standard of care have created challenges in funding. Vet care costs at the shelter have increased with an increased number of animals served at the shelter. In FY 2016, the first few months have shown a 10 percent increase in spay/ neuter costs while visits from the shelter veterinarian are running approximately 20 percent higher as compared to FY 2015. The existing budget was prepared with the expectation of less animals than are actually served, creating a gap in funding for spay / neuter of each pet prior to adoption and for basic care. In addition, the expectation that the shelter will provide a higher standard of care creates medical expenses for which there is not sufficient budget. Identifying and tapping revenue streams for these services provides a challenge for the shelter staff.

Fairfax County has been identified by national animal welfare experts as consistently employing best practices in animal sheltering. In 2014, Wayne Pacelle, CEO of the Humane Society of the United States, visited the shelter to congratulate staff and volunteers for being the largest County in the United States to achieve a live release rate of over 90 percent in a municipal shelter. Fairfax County Animal Shelter promotions have been featured in the Huffington Post, in Bark Magazine, in Animal Sheltering magazine and nationally on Fox Friends and Family. A study on a Fairfax County foster program conducted by former Outreach and Communications Director, Kristen Auerbach, has been selected for presentation at the Society of Animal Welfare Professionals this fall and in the spring Acting Director Barbara Hutcherson and Volunteer Coordinator Cindy Sbrocco will present on Managing Volunteer Expectations at the national conference of the Humane Society of the United States.

Police Department

Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
LOB #211: Animal Shelter			
FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$1,121,836	\$1,435,189	\$1,469,562
Operating Expenses	427,856	515,722	266,785
Total Expenditures	\$1,549,692	\$1,950,911	\$1,736,347
General Fund Revenue	\$1,016,492	\$1,179,402	\$1,136,240
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$533,200	\$771,509	\$600,107
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	27 / 27	31 / 31	32 / 32
Total Positions	27 / 27	31 / 31	32 / 32

Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Adoptions	1,371	2,271	2,646	3,042	3,498
Redemptions	1,289	1,250	1,191	1,200	1,200
Transfer Out	556	320	197	160	160
Live Release Rate (adoptions plus transfers minus owner requested euthanasias)	92.0%	95.0%	96.0%	97.0%	98.0%

The Animal Shelter has continued efforts to maintain a positive release rate for housed animals, reflected as the percentage of animals adopted, redeemed or transferred to other facilities, and reduce the need for euthanasia. Through effective partnerships to promote the fostering of housed animals, a comprehensive public information campaign, and a strong volunteer program, the shelter has been able to increase the positive release rate in recent years.