

Department of Animal Sheltering

Mission

The mission of the Department of Animal Sheltering (DAS) is to serve as an animal resource center for the community, and to provide temporary shelter and care for owner surrendered, injured, sick, or stray animals until they are redeemed, adopted, or euthanized as required by the Comprehensive Animal Laws of Virginia and the Virginia State Veterinarian.

Connection to the Countywide Strategic Plan

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted the first-ever Countywide Strategic Plan on October 5, 2021. The Countywide Strategic Plan serves as a road map to help guide future work, focusing on the 10 Community Outcome Areas that represent the issues of greatest importance to the community, and uses our One Fairfax equity policy to invest in people and places that have limited access to opportunity. On February 20, 2024, the second Annual Report on the work of the strategic plan was released to the public. The report contains point-in-time progress highlights for each of the community outcome areas, plus three data dashboards and data stories that are being replicated across all of the outcome areas, and a number of additional initiatives to embed the elements of the plan within department-level work. The report also includes a Year Three Implementation Model, which will engage hundreds of County subject-matter experts to identify and champion the specific strategies that will move forward to implementation under the guidance of the Board of Supervisors. For more information on the Countywide Strategic Plan, please visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan. The Department of Animal Sheltering primarily supports the following Community Outcome Areas:



Community Outcome Area	Vision Statement
Effective and Efficient Government	<i>All people trust that their government responsibly manages resources, is responsive to their needs, provides exceptional services and equitably represents them.</i>
Safety and Security	<i>All people feel safe at home, school, work and in the community.</i>

Focus

DAS accepts every companion animal regardless of age, health, or behavior. Last year, the department took nearly 4,000 animals into the shelter's care and touched the lives of over 1,000 more through the shelter's wide range of community-based programs and services. The department is committed to providing the highest quality of care for the animals, while also working to increase pet retention and access to pet services.

In Fall 2023, DAS opened a second campus in Lorton, Virginia. The Lorton Campus allows the department to substantially grow the geographic reach and increase the impact of DAS services for the residents of Fairfax County. In addition, the second shelter supports more families through adoption and provides a hub for essential services including behavior and training support, veterinary medical care, pet supplies, and other critical services that help keep pets together with their families.

Surrender Prevention, Intervention, and Wellness Programs

The top three reasons for owners relinquishing their pets to Fairfax County Animal Shelter are housing issues, behavioral challenges, and lack of access to care. DAS has several programs to support keeping families together with their pets including free behavior and training support, free and low-cost veterinary care, and the Community Pet Food Pantry. DAS is working with County and community partners to address the lack of affordable pet-friendly housing. Last year, DAS supported more than 1,000 families with these services.

The Friends of Fairfax County Animal Shelter

The Friends of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter (Friends) is a nonprofit organization that has partnered with the department since 2005. Financial support from Friends helps the department follow industry best practices or meet state mandates to maintain a live release rate of over 90 percent. These emergency and specialized programs cannot be sustained by the General Fund and are provided because of the financial support from Friends or donations. Among the critical services that DAS provides to the community are parasite prevention, trap/neuter/return, emergency or special medical treatment, and dental care.

DAS Operating Cost Increases

DAS is experiencing challenges consistent with other shelters across the country due to economic factors, such as lack of access to veterinary care and lack of affordable pet friendly housing that are contributing to increased animal intake and length of stay and the slowing pace of adoptions. Animal intakes have increased 24 percent from FY 2019 to FY 2022, and the length of stay for dogs has increased 60 percent for the same timeframe. Operating costs continue to increase. From FY 2022 to FY 2023 there was a 24 percent increase in the cost of medical supplies and a 10 percent increase in the cost of food. This increase is intensified by the increase in length of stay for dogs which means significantly more meals served for that population. The increasing animal intake numbers and length of stay drives up the average daily population, putting greater demands on staffing levels for Capacity for Care. Capacity for Care (C4C) is an animal welfare industry standard formula to assess meeting the needs of every animal admitted to a shelter, regardless of how they came in, when they came in, or their age, health status, and personality. Every sheltering organization has a maximum capacity for care based on staffing levels, housing capacity, and other factors.

Consolidation of Animal Control Services

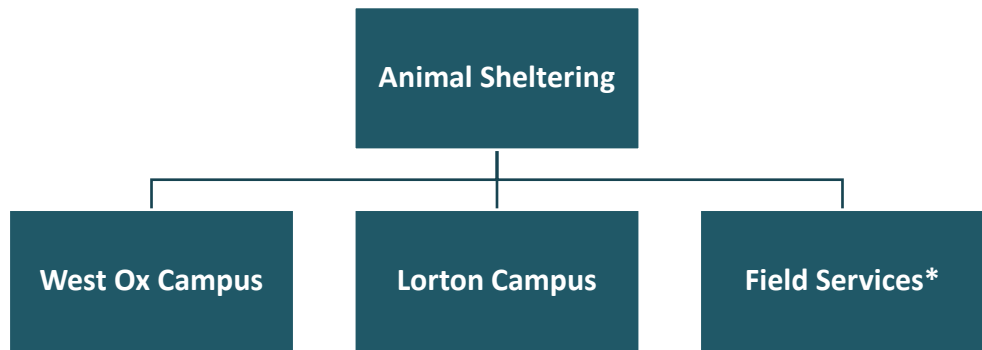
In Fairfax County, the Police Department is currently responsible for enforcing County ordinances and state laws that pertain to animals and their welfare. The animal control services are comprised of 32 sworn Animal Protection Police Officers who investigate animal cruelty complaints, investigate attacks or bites involving animals, respond to emergencies involving sick or seriously injured animals, remove stray animals from streets and public areas, and respond to reports of dog attacks on livestock. The goal is to maintain a safe community and minimize threats of physical and health-related incidents. Animal Protection Police Officers perform animal control functions while animal shelter staff and volunteers perform animal intake, care, and outreach functions. The Police Department also employs three full-time Naturalists to provide deer management services. The Wildlife Management Program, including the Deer Management Program, will continue without interruption under the Department of Animal Sheltering with continued oversight from the Fairfax County Police Department for the archery and sharpshooting programs.

With the ongoing evolution of animal services, the Department of Animal Sheltering and Police Department reviewed the current organizational structure of animal services. In order to increase service delivery and build on the recent advances in the County, it is recommended that animal care and control be consolidated under the Department of Animal Sheltering. This recommendation was presented to the Board of Supervisors at the January 30, 2024, Safety and Security Committee

Department of Animal Sheltering

meeting. The Police Department will continue to provide assistance with complex criminal investigations while the Department of Animal Sheltering will be responsible for the enforcement of proper care, treatment, protection and control of animals. It is anticipated that this transition will take 18 to 24 months with full implementation beginning in FY 2026. Therefore, the FY 2025 Advertised Budget Plan includes a position transfer from the Police Department for the creation of a Chief Animal Control Officer in the newly established Field Services division to begin this work. The move of the remaining funding and positions from the Police Department will be included in the FY 2026 Advertised Budget Plan.

Organizational Chart



* This division is new beginning in FY 2025 and will be responsible for animal control services which is being moved from the Police Department.

Budget and Staff Resources

Category	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Adopted	FY 2024 Revised	FY 2025 Advertised
FUNDING				
Expenditures:				
Personnel Services	\$2,270,994	\$4,381,328	\$4,381,328	\$4,681,548
Operating Expenses	805,906	1,262,358	1,948,688	1,251,858
Capital Equipment	73,905	0	0	0
Total Expenditures	\$3,150,805	\$5,643,686	\$6,330,016	\$5,933,406
Income:				
Dog Licenses	\$397,753	\$704,783	\$423,177	\$423,177
Animal Shelter Fees	233,131	246,483	283,024	288,684
Total Income	\$630,884	\$951,266	\$706,201	\$711,861
NET COST TO THE COUNTY	\$2,519,921	\$4,692,420	\$5,623,815	\$5,221,545
AUTHORIZED POSITIONS/FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE)				
Regular	63 / 63	63 / 63	63 / 63	64 / 64

FY 2025 Funding Adjustments

The following funding adjustments from the FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan are necessary to support the FY 2025 program:

Employee Compensation \$169,540

An increase of \$169,540 in Personnel Services includes \$91,143 for a 2.00 percent market rate adjustment (MRA) for all employees and \$65,622 for performance-based and longevity increases for non-uniformed merit employees, both effective July 2024. The remaining increase of \$12,775 is included for employee pay increases for specific job classes identified in the County's benchmark class survey of comparator jurisdictions.

Position Transfer to Support Field Services Division \$134,180

An increase of \$134,180 and 1/1.0 FTE position is associated with a position transferred to Agency 96, Department of Animal Sheltering, from Agency 90, Police Department, to support the first phase of the consolidation of the Department of Animal Sheltering and animal control services. A corresponding adjustment is included in Agency 90, Police Department, for no net impact to the County. The remaining funding and positions will be moved as part of the FY 2026 Advertised Budget Plan with full implementation on July 1, 2025.

As part of the January 30, 2024, Safety and Security Board of Supervisors Committee meeting, the Police Department and the Department of Animal Sheltering proposed the consolidation of animal care and control under the Department of Animal Sheltering. This proposal supports local and national benchmark comparators and industry best practices, and more importantly, will result in greater efficiency, improved service delivery, cost savings, and better alignment with the County's One Fairfax policy.

Contract Rate Increases \$34,775

An increase of \$34,775 supports a contract rate increase for the providers of mandated and non-mandated services.

Department of Vehicle Services Charges \$225

An increase of \$225 in Department of Vehicle Services charges is based on anticipated billings for fuel, maintenance, and operating-related charges.

Reductions (\$49,000)

A decrease of \$49,000 reflects reductions utilized to balance the FY 2025 budget. The following table provides details on the specific reductions:

Title	Impact	Positions	FTE	Reduction
Reduce Operating Budget due to Efficiencies and Cost Savings	As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the County's shift to a hybrid in-office and telework policy, the Department of Animal Sheltering has realized efficiencies and cost savings in general office supplies such as non-local travel, cleaning chemicals, and equipment and furniture. It is not expected this reduction will have a negative impact on agency operations.	0	0.0	\$49,000

Changes to FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan

The following funding adjustments reflect all approved changes in the FY 2024 Revised Budget Plan since passage of the FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan. Included are all adjustments made as part of the FY 2023 Carryover Review and all other approved changes through December 31, 2023.

Carryover Adjustments **\$686,330**

As part of the FY 2023 Carryover Review, the Board of Supervisors approved funding of \$686,330 in Operating Expenses due to encumbered carryover.

Position Detail

The FY 2025 Advertised Budget Plan includes the following positions:

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SHELTERING – 64 Positions			
1	Animal Shelter Director	1	Facility Attendant I
2	Animal Shelter Deputy Directors	2	Animal Care Specialists III
1	Chief Animal Control Officer [1T]	5	Animal Care Specialists II
4	Management Analysts II	17	Animal Care Specialists I
5	Management Analysts I	2	Volunteer Services Program Managers
4	Administrative Assistants IV	1	Volunteer Services Coordinator II
14	Administrative Assistants III	1	Volunteer Services Coordinator I
1	Administrative Assistant II	1	Human Services Coordinator III
1	Communications Specialist I	1	Human Services Coordinator II
T	Denotes Transferred Position(s)		

Performance Measurement Results by Community Outcome Area

Effective and Efficient Government

Staffing

In 2024, DAS has 63 staff supporting both campuses. As shelter services are expanded and refined to meet the needs of the community, staff are stretched extremely thin. However, staff remain dedicated to the mission of DAS and are compassionate towards the animal and human residents of Fairfax County. In a recent national survey among animal shelters, staffing deficits were cited as the biggest barrier for securing positive outcomes for shelter animals.

Volunteers

In-house volunteers play a critical role in improving the lives of shelter pets, enhancing shelter operations, and expanding the reach of department programs. Volunteers contributed 21,388 hours in 2022, which offsets 10 full time positions. In 2022, the team of pet foster parents welcomed 645 pets into their homes, which reduces the strain on shelter staff and resources. At any given time, anywhere from 20 to 50 percent of the animals in the department's care are placed in foster homes.

Safety and Security

Rabies vaccinations are required by state codes and local ordinances to promote public health and safety. DAS provides rabies vaccines prior to adoption to all eligible dogs, cats, and ferrets and to community animals through free and low-cost vaccine clinics and wellness services. In 2022, DAS provided 707 rabies vaccines through our Pet Resource Center program, 477 through our Trap, Neuter, Return program, and 1,227 to animals in the shelter's care.

The animal shelter does not euthanize any animals that are treatable, adoptable, or healthy, and DAS has a consistent live release rate of over 90 percent. DAS sustains the high live release rate by implementing progressive sheltering policies and programs, maintaining a robust volunteer and foster program, providing excellent veterinary care, behavior and training support, having a strong social media presence, and delivering essential community outreach programs. In 2022 the department saved 3,144 animals' lives through adoption and reunification.

Indicator	CY 2020 Actual	CY 2021 Actual	CY 2022 Estimate	CY 2022 Actual	CY 2023 Estimate	CY 2024 Estimate
Effective and Efficient Government						
Inclusive Community Engagement						
Volunteer hours worked	8,321	7,413	16,000	21,388	20,000	20,000
Safety and Security						
Following Laws and Regulations						
Total animal intakes	2,999	3,060	3,500	4,325	4,500	4,500
Positive release rate	92%	88%	90%	93%	90%	90%
Percent of stray dogs returned to owners	80%	77%	80%	93%	90%	90%

Note: The Department of Animal Sheltering collects and reports performance data based upon calendar year rather than fiscal year. The Performance Measurement table therefore reflects calendar year information.