



**Best Friends
Animal Society**

City of Augusta Animal Services

Shelter Operational Assessment Report

March 2024



Prepared by the Best Friends National Shelter Support Team

Introduction

Best Friends Animal Society's national shelter support team provides customized assessments and support for individual animal shelters and the communities they serve. Through Best Friends' municipal and shelter support program, each community (if applicable) receives a shelter operations and field services assessment designed to identify specific areas of need and help implement best practices in animal welfare. Ongoing support is also provided to ensure that new programs and practices are sustainable and successful. Our team uses a collaborative approach to shelter partnerships 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.

From March 26-28, 2024, members of the Best Friends national shelter support team conducted a shelter assessment for City of Augusta Animal Services. This document provides the findings and recommendations for the operating programs at Augusta Animal Services (AAS) to ensure the shelter is operating in line with national best practices. Areas where improvement is needed was highlighted and followed by recommendations based on nationally recognized proven strategies for success in shelter operations.

Once the recommendations are accepted by city and shelter leadership, staff at Best Friends will work with shelter leadership to create an implementation plan and schedule periodic meetings to discuss progress and challenges. Funding and operational mentorships sufficient to support these changes will be provided by Best Friends Animal Society at no cost to the shelter, as outlined in the offer of support document provided.

About Best Friends Animal Society

Best Friends Animal Society is a leading animal welfare organization working to end the killing of dogs and cats in America's shelters and make the country no-kill in 2025. Founded in 1984, Best Friends is a pioneer in the no-kill movement and has helped reduce the number of animals killed in shelters from an estimated 17 million per year to around 400,000 last year. Best Friends runs lifesaving programs across the country, as well as the nation's largest no-kill animal sanctuary. Working collaboratively with a network of more than 4,700 animal welfare and shelter partners, and community members nationwide, Best Friends is working to Save Them All®. For more information, visit bestfriends.org.



Demographic Information

Augusta Animal Services provides sheltering and field services to Richmond County, Georgia. The total service area has a population of approximately 207,000 and covers an area of 329 square miles. Richmond County's median household income is \$50,605 with 18.4% of the population living below the poverty line. The 2024 budget for animal control and shelter fees is \$1,863,960, with annual per capita on animal control at \$9.02.

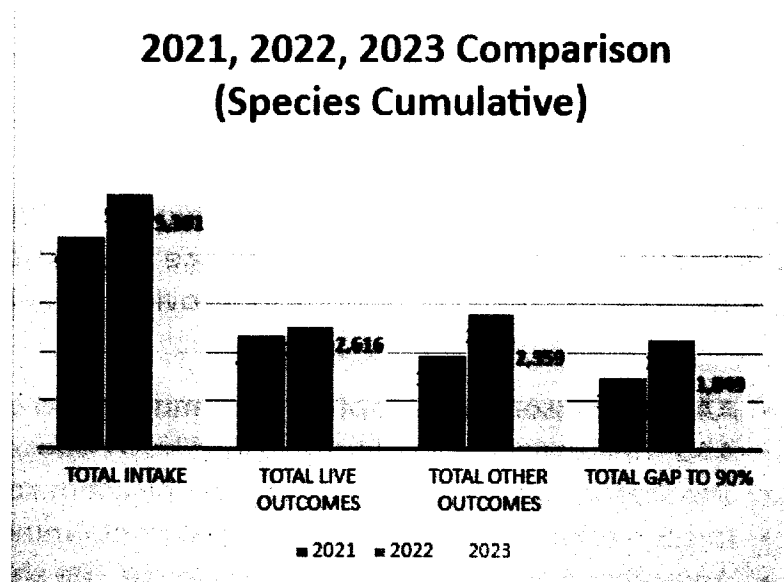


Defining the Opportunity

Augusta Animal Services has a history as a high-volume shelter with limited positive outcomes for animals. The shelter currently ranks No. 32 nationwide in shelters with the highest lifesaving gap, and it ranks No. 1 in Georgia.

However, there are ample opportunities to increase live outcomes for the animals in care and to improve operational programming to better support the community through programmatic and philosophical changes. These opportunities can help bring the shelter in line with industry best practices and help them achieve and maintain a save rate of 90% (the benchmark for no-kill).

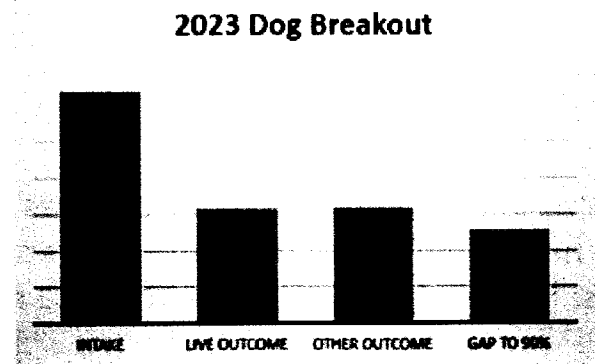
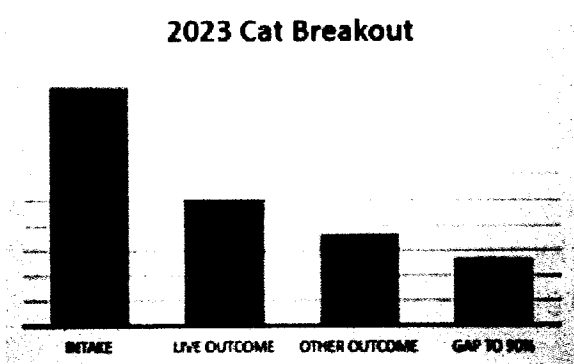
2021, 2022, 2023 Comparison
(Species Cumulative)



Shelter Data

Using 2023 as a full-year baseline, the agency took in 5,101 — 3,200 dogs and 1,901 cats. (These numbers represent an 8% increase in dog intake and an 18% decrease in cat intake from 2022.) The shelter occasionally takes in other species of animals (livestock, wildlife or other noncompanion animals). But for this assessment, Best Friends focused on dogs and cats.

Augusta Animal Services' overall 2023 save rate (the percentage of savable animals leaving the shelter alive) for dogs and cats was 53.8%. The nationally recognized benchmark to be a no-kill shelter is a 90% save rate, so this data shows a lifesaving gap of 1,849 dogs and cats who must be saved to achieve no-kill status. Broken down further by species, the save rate for dogs was 49.5% (with a lifesaving gap of 1,295 dogs), and the save rate for cats was 60.9% (with a lifesaving gap of 554 cats).



Kudos

Before diving into specific recommendations, we extend kudos to the Augusta Animal Services (AAS) team for work being done to reduce the numbers of animals being euthanized and for coming up with creative methods for providing live outcomes for animals.

- AAS has reasonable adoption fees and limited barriers to adoption.
- AAS runs specials on adoptions and hosts adoption events.
- The staff demonstrates a high level of trust in volunteers.
- Rescue relations are solid and pathway planning volunteers are a great asset.
- Animal control is working well alongside the shelter team.
- The staff is open to getting more information on training.
- AAS requires scheduled owner-surrender appointments to reduce unnecessary intake.
- AAS is willing to remove reclaim fees to ensure fees are not a barrier to lifesaving.
- Cat portals, which are in place, show initial steps to cat housing improvements.

Euthanasia protocol

We feel it is necessary to separately address current euthanasia practices at Augusta Animal Services from the rest of our assessment due to serious concerns we have the process observed. Euthanasia protocols at the shelter require immediate attention and refinement to ensure compassionate care for animals in their final moments. It's essential to address shortcomings in current practices, such as the lack of compassionate handling during euthanasia procedures. Measures should be taken to prioritize the comfort and dignity of animals, which include pre-euthanasia sedation options, choosing appropriately sized needles for patient size, proper handling, and ensuring staff awareness and respect during the process.

- We recommend that AAS leadership assess the effectiveness of the current dosing of euthanasia solution. If it appears that the staff must consistently administer additional doses, an adjustment must be made by adding an extra milliliter to the calculation. This adjustment, such as 1 milliliter per 10 pounds of body weight plus an additional milliliter, ensures a more humane, swift process for euthanasia, thereby prioritizing the animal's welfare. During our assessment, we observed one particular euthanasia where a dog was not given enough solution to be fully euthanized, which then required additional injections that caused undue stress to the dog.
- It is essential to adhere to American Veterinary Medical Association ([AVMA](#)) guidelines for ensuring that animals are not left alone at any time during the process and are closely monitored for confirmation of death. Staff members told us during our assessment that the animals are often moved to the outside sally port holding area prior to death during euthanasia procedures.
- We recommend the inclusion of signage on the door, "EUTHANASIA in Progress", for privacy and staff awareness.
- The table should be cleaned between each procedure because this helps to remove stress pheromones, which can be scary for the next pet on the table.

Euthanasia protocol (continued)

Please refer to Section 10 of the ASV (Association of Shelter Veterinarians) guidelines and ASV checklists for more specific, comprehensive euthanasia information.

A formalized process for euthanasia decision-making (that includes regular meetings to identify and intervene with at-risk animals) is lacking and must be developed in order to ensure that animals with the potential for a live outcome are not killed unnecessarily. This process should prioritize interventions based on the length of stay, with specific protocols for longer-stay animals to increase opportunities for live outcomes. Examples could include waiving the adoption fee, highlighting for social media exposure, prioritization for foster care, and prioritization for out-of-kennel enrichment opportunities with volunteers. We recommend a pre-euthanasia checklist to ensure all live outcome options are explored and meaningful euthanasia subtypes should be established to address at-risk populations.

Staff training on these subtypes and periodic reviews of euthanasia reports will facilitate the implementation of interventions and increase live outcomes. Additionally, proactive population management strategies should be employed to reduce the need for reactive euthanasia decisions when capacity is reached. By addressing these issues and implementing comprehensive euthanasia protocols, the shelter can ensure the humane treatment of animals and increase the chances of live outcomes.

Operational Assessment and Recommendations

The following sections include on-site observations, common information from interviews with staff members, and our recommendations.. Recommendations are followed by a comprehensive list of resources to be used for implementation in conjunction with Best Friends' ongoing support. To increase the organization's lifesaving capacity, the recommendations are presented in order of priority:

1 Intake diversion and managed intake

2 Animal flow and length of stay

3 Lifesaving programs

4 Biosecurity and medical processes

5 Staff training and communications

6 Access to spay and neuter

Intake diversion and managed intake

Due to the improper animal intake management at Augusta Animal Services, there is no relief from the constant flow of animals entering the facility. The staff, facility, and its lifesaving programs cannot adequately manage the current level of animal intake, which results in insufficient quality of care, staff burnout, and high rates of euthanasia. Controlling the flow of animals entering the facility will be crucial to the success of AAS lifesaving programs, as well as successful implementation of the recommendations listed in this report.

Intake policies

We recommend an evaluation of current intake practices and work to bring them in line with national best practices. Implementing a managed intake program, which involves regulating and scheduling all intake procedures, is crucial. While we applaud AAS for their current efforts to schedule owner surrenders, there is more that can be done to better serve the public and further reduce intake. Managed intake will allow the shelter to control the timing and method of intake and focus on the "how" and "when" rather than strictly on "who" is admitted. This is a cornerstone best practice that will give AAS the ability to implement other lifesaving programs to fully support their community and achieve no-kill status. For more information, refer to Best Friends Animal Society's Humane Animal Control manual in the chapters on [intake diversion](#) and [delayed or diverted intake](#).

At the present time, animal services officers accept owner surrenders in the field. This practice not only increases the number of animals entering the shelter (when other options may exist) but it also perpetuates the mentality that animals are disposable. Animal services officers should work with owners to find solutions outside of surrender by calling upon shelter and community resources as needed. If alternative options are not available, residents should seek surrender options through the shelter's managed intake program. Making it easy to surrender a pet decreases the likelihood that pet owners seek another alternative rather than surrender. Additionally, allowing owner surrender pickups takes up valuable time that otherwise could be spent on responding to priority calls or proactive field work.

Customer service

The current process for animal intake lacks consistency and personal engagement, with residents often left waiting at the back door without staff guidance or support. A consistent approach to client services, with appropriate counseling and an offer of resources, is essential to reducing unnecessary animal intake. We recommend AAS provide customer service training and managed intake training for all staff, as well as ensure public facing staff members have a good understanding of available public assistance resources.

Owner surrender support

We recommend adjusting current practices to ensure that the top priority for the client service staff is to keep the animal in the home whenever possible.

We recommend engaging with members of the public who call to make an appointment to surrender their pets. This is the perfect opportunity to gather more information regarding the reason for surrender, which can result in solving problems that remove barriers to the owner keeping the animal. If that is still not possible, the shelter now has more information with which to work on creating a positive outcome path for the animal. Right now, the only information collected is name, address, breed of animal, etc., with no attempts made to solve problems or share resources that might help keep the animal in the home or enable the individual owner to rehome the animal. Training and additional materials related to supported self-rehoming, pathway planning, and intake diversion can be provided to support staff for making this change.

AAS staff members working on intake must be transparent with individuals about what relinquishing animals to the shelter really means. Drop-off forms should be updated to include a box to check off to be notified if their animal is in danger of being euthanized. This will drive home the fact that euthanasia is a potential outcome in addition to staff members verbalizing that it's a possibility. Any system in place must ensure that if the box is checked, the previous owner will be notified and given the option to reclaim the animal free of charge if the animal is in danger of being euthanized.

In addition, more resources for increasing owner retention should be made available to the public. These resources should include Adopt a Pet flyers to encourage finding a new home for pets without having them enter the shelter, materials to assist with behavior issues, and supplies such as food, vaccines, leashes, and collars (which can be acquired via donations). Other resources, including medical care, can be obtained by working with the local veterinarians to offer services at a reduced cost and/or offering them at the shelter, where and when appropriate. By offering resources and limiting the hours for stray intake, overall shelter intake at the shelter will drastically reduce, and more animals will be reunited with their families.

Return to owner programming

While AAS does have the ability to return animals to their owners, much more can be done to locate the owners of impounded stray animals and reunite pets with their owners. The national average return-to-owner (RTO) rate for dogs without a microchip is 22%.* In 2023, AAS' overall RTO rate for dogs was less than 12%.

*https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39601754/

Recommendations:

- Ensure that policies are supportive of return-to-owner programming and barriers are limited. [This playbook](#) and other resources that follow can be used to increase RTO efforts.
- Explore the option of creating a lost-and-found map to aid in return-to-owner efforts. [This article](#) details successful mapping programs and how to get started.
- An engaged volunteer program would also support an increase in RTO by finding matches on lost-and-found social media pages or canvassing neighborhoods from which stray dogs were impounded.
- With the current open hours of 12-5 p.m., Monday through Saturday, owners looking for lost pets are limited to a small window of time for reclaims. This leads to unnecessary extended shelter stays that risk spreading disease, causing undue stress on both the family and the animal, and resulting in additional costs to taxpayers. To keep the shelter population down, we recommend training all staff on conducting reclaims so that all staff members can perform this vital function (even when the shelter is closed to the public). In many agencies, on-call officers are brought in during on-call hours to conduct owner reclaims and adoptions.
- Appropriate RTO efforts should also be employed by animal services officers in the field. In addition to creating and implementing a field return-to-owner SOP for the field services team, we recommend all officers receive field return-to-owner training, which Best Friends is willing to provide.
- We recommend shoring up resources for informing people about what to do when they find a stray or lose a pet. With the size of the service area, impounding and then bringing a stray animal to the shelter is often an impediment to the animal going home. We recommend encouraging 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 neighbors if they recognize the animal, and having the pet scanned for a microchip at a local animal hospital.
- We recommend implementing a [finder to foster program](#) and having staff members ask community residents to hold lost pets in their homes for the duration of their stray hold, instead of bringing them to the shelter. AAS can offer supplies such as crates and pet food for support. This gives the animal a better chance of making it home while it cuts down on unnecessary shelter intake.

Animal flow and length of stay

In addition to controlling the flow of animals to the shelter, it is imperative that AAS focus on pathway planning for each animal and then work to reduce average length of stay for impounded animals.

Stray hold period

We recommend implementing a county ordinance change to implement a 72-hour (three-day) stray animal hold. This is considered a standard stray hold period because the likelihood of owners reclaiming pets after this interval is low. While the current five-business-day hold may seem beneficial for maximizing the chances of reuniting lost pets with owners, it can inadvertently strain shelter resources and overcrowd facilities, leading to increased stress, potential health risks for the animals, and a higher loss of life. And, in spite of the current stray-hold period, the return-to-owner rate for dogs at AAS is still 10% below the national average, suggesting that programmatic changes (such as extending hours of operation and implementing more progressive return-in-field programs) would be more beneficial to reuniting lost pets with their families than an extended stray-hold period alone.

A 72-hour hold period creates a reasonable time frame for owner reclamation efforts while alleviating the burden on shelters and promoting more efficient animal care practices. This proposed amendment reflects a proactive approach to animal welfare management, and it emphasizes the importance of finding a balance between safeguarding the well-being of stray/lost animals and ensuring the effective operation of shelter facilities.

- To determine the success of a 72-hour stray hold in increasing live outcomes for pets, we recommend that AAS identify the median time to owner reclaim. Additionally, using systems like [Petco Love Lost](#) will enable AAS to facilitate quick reunions, a crucial step toward enhancing the welfare of shelter animals and increasing the chances of a live outcome for all stray animals.
- Removing stray holds entirely for unidentified stray cats (those without tags or microchips) is becoming more common across the industry. Stray holds for cats do not increase return-to-owner rates and they increase the likelihood of stress and disease for the cat population at the shelter. We recommend that AAS consider removing the stray hold for unidentified stray cats and move toward return-to-field or another live outcome as quickly as possible.

Hours of operation

Shelter hours for adoption are limited to just 24 hours a week, which includes being closed on Sundays. These hours are not conducive for a robust adoption program because many community members have traditional work or school schedules. The shelter closes at 5 p.m. daily, with adoptions ceasing at 4 p.m. so that the staff can perform closing duties. We encourage AAS to extend adoption hours into a few evenings a week, with the ultimate goal of being open for adoptions every night of the week, as well as on Sundays.

By being open on both weekend days, the shelter could significantly increase the number of adoptions and overall lifesaving. The shelter could then be closed on one or two weekdays to allow staff and volunteers to have days off. Staff and volunteers who care for the animals when the shelter is closed to the public should also be fully trained in processing reclaims and adoptions, so that animals can be reclaimed or adopted any time someone is in the building.

Behavior evaluations and handling: Canine behavior assessments

Behavior assessments are used in an attempt to quickly collect information; however, shelters are stressful, unnatural environments for animals, which often cause animals to display behavior that doesn't reflect their natural state. Because behavior assessments have often proven to be inaccurate, most shelters are discontinuing their use and, instead, relying on observation notes.

The ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) has released a [position statement](#) on the use of behavior assessments for shelter dogs that states: "Behavior assessments have not been proven highly accurate or precise when used to predict aggression after adoption."

Current industry best practice is to utilize behavioral programs focused on enrichment, with priority placed on getting the animal out of the shelter as soon as possible. Utilizing a comprehensive enrichment program and strategic foster placements for animals with behavior concerns results in more successful predictions of their behavior outside of the shelter. Obtaining behavioral information through surrender forms and detailed observations from staff and volunteers in a variety of settings (play groups, vet clinic exams, walks, foster care, returns, etc.) would allow AAS to provide potential adopters with more accurate predictions of an animal's behavior. In addition, adopters should always be given a disclaimer that an animal's behavior in a home setting can be drastically different from behavior inside a shelter.

While some animals should not be adopted because of behavior, the number of dogs euthanized for behavior at AAS is substantial – 486 from August 16, 2023, through March 27, 2024. Euthanasia based on behavior accounted for 53% of all dog euthanasia during this time period. The ineffectiveness of the current process is the likely cause of many of these animals being killed unnecessarily. More positive outcomes for the animals entering the shelter can be generated by pivoting to a more organic information gathering process than the current pass/fail model of behavior assessment.

Behavior evaluations and handling: Animal handling

Observation sheets, conveniently placed under kennel cards, serve as valuable tools for capturing behavior and other information. By implementing the use of observation sheets or QR codes linked to an online platform, shelters can facilitate better continuity of care and communication between shelter and volunteer teams. This comprehensive insight aids in the tailoring of care and enrichment activities to suit animals' unique needs and enhances their overall well-being and prospects for adoption.

To address stress upon intake, AAS should prioritize low-stress handling techniques, such as using treats and towels to provide comfort and security. We recommend all staff complete training in Fear Free Shelters programs to further enhance their ability to minimize stress and anxiety in shelter animals, promote their well-being and support lifesaving.

When transporting cats, staff members should utilize dens or carriers to minimize stress and injury. Carriers should also be covered with a towel, blanket, or sheet. Staff and interested volunteers should receive training on fear-free cat handling to ensure the well-being of both cats and personnel during handling and cleaning procedures.

Pathway planning and daily rounds

From the time of intake, it is important that each animal has a plan in place that centers on the goal of a positive outcome. The goal is to move each animal toward a positive outcome as quickly as possible by considering all pathways (fostering, adoption, transfer, return-to-owner, etc.). We recommend that AAS implement daily population management rounds, which help to streamline animal flow, enhance department collaboration and communication, and reduce average length of stay. By engaging representatives from all departments, these rounds facilitate collaboration, communication, and proactive decision-making. Through streamlined animal flow and proactive population management, the shelter can significantly decrease the average length of stay for animals. This reduction not only minimizes stress and illness but also fosters more positive outcomes for shelter residents.

In conducting population rounds, it's crucial to address AAS's current housing practices, particularly dog housing. The predominant use of double compartment housing, not fully utilized during the assessment, poses challenges for staff efficiency and shelter capacity management. Housing dogs on both sides of guillotines does not allow for low-stress cleaning practices. This leads to decreased efficiency and potential overcrowding. Minimizing this practice without compromising lifesaving should be a priority. Furthermore, proactively focusing on reducing the average length of stay would enable AAS to operate with a lower daily inventory.

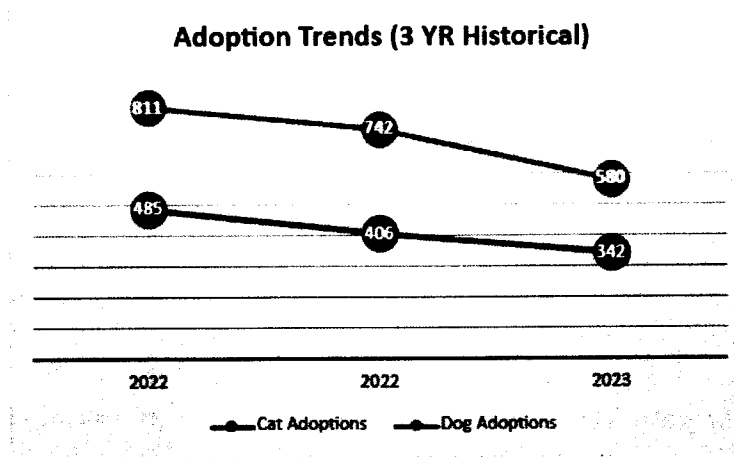
- Review the webinar presentation "Counting All Paws: Mastering Daily Population Rounds" and the Best Friends operational playbook for practical assistance.
- Consider on-site training workshops offered by the Best Friends national shelter medicine team to learn how to implement population management strategies.

Lifesaving programs

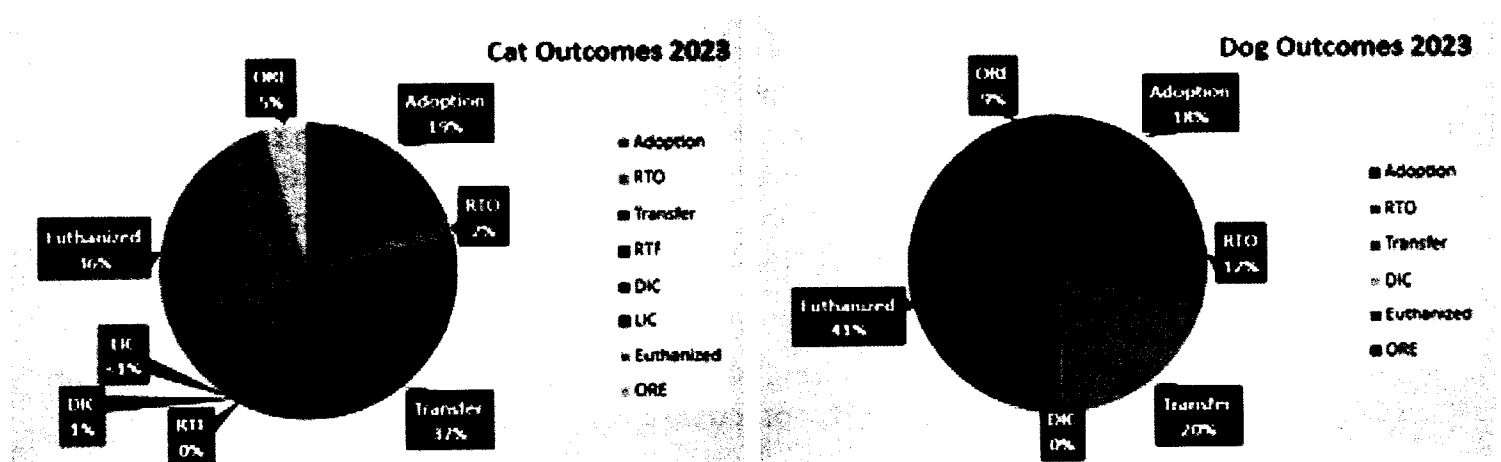
Due to leadership’s lack of awareness of national standards, Augusta Animal Services is not utilizing many nationally recognized best practices. Best Friends recommends in-depth, continued training for all staff on nationally proven best practices. A program should be developed at the county level to facilitate this learning.

Adoptions

We recommend that AAS work to increase local adoptions to support lifesaving at the shelter and engagement with the community. The following chart shows how adoptions at AAS have been decreasing each year.



Historically, AAS has relied heavily on rescue transfers and transport to secure positive outcomes. In 2023, transfers accounted for 49% of all live outcomes for dogs and cats. The following charts show a breakout of outcome types by species.



While we commend AAS' effort to find positive outcomes through transport, a heavy reliance on rescue transfers and transport is not a long-term, sustainable solution. Transporting animals outside of the local community, while a seemingly quick solution to a full shelter, can actually harm AAS' relationship with the community.

Transferring animals out of a community, rather than placing them back into it, results in residents obtaining pets (often unsterilized) from sources other than the shelter. Sterilizing, vaccinating, and microchipping pets entering the shelter and then offering them for adoption in the community is a more sustainable and long-term lifesaving strategy. AAS should seek to increase its community outcomes until such time that transports are no longer necessary.

Recommendations:

- We recommend placing a priority on increasing adoptions through fee-waived and off-site adoption events and marketing efforts. Contacting local radio and television stations combined with a focused strategy for social media, is an effective way to share information on available animals and drive more traffic to the shelter. Some agencies have begun holding targeted off-site adoption events in the communities from which the most animals are impounded. By placing animals back into those areas, AAS is supporting community engagement while ensuring the public has an opportunity to adopt sterilized, vaccinated, microchipped animals.
- The viewing and adopting of animals from AAS is limited to its adoption area, despite the fact that many animals in the stray area are eligible for adoption. We recommend that AAS allow viewing of all animals in the facility, except those on bite-holds and cruelty cases. Additionally, we recommend that AAS utilize reservations (pre-adoption holds) for pets not yet finished with their stray-hold time. In the case of isolated animals, even they can be adopted by allowing adopters to take their pets' medications home with them. All of this aids in reducing length of stay and increasing adoptions.
- To reduce length of stay, free up space, and allow families to take their new pets home the same day, we recommend allowing pets to go home as a "foster to adopt", where the adopter takes the pet to a spay/neuter appointment to avoid having the pet spend any more time in the shelter than necessary. This is especially important for pets remaining in the shelter over a weekend, which could potentially result in euthanasia for space. Many shelters in Georgia successfully allow foster to adopt programs with appropriate measures and agreements in place to ensure pets are spayed and neutered.
- Another avenue for increasing adoptions is a system to move easier to adopt animals out of the shelter more quickly. These "fast track" pets (those deemed highly adoptable by means of a customized matrix) would be spayed or neutered the day after the stray hold is up so that upon adoption they can leave the shelter immediately. These pets are also immediately placed into adoption areas as we know the "fast track" pets will get adopted much faster, freeing up a kennel space. The overall concept is to get the pets out we know will leave quickly in an effort to make more room for those who will likely have a longer length of stay.

Foster programming

A comprehensive foster program can help AAS reduce the on-site animal population, promote individual animal welfare, and reduce the burden on shelter staff. This can then allow staff to focus on improved care and enrichment for the pets on-site at the shelter. Foster for targeted populations (like neonatal kittens or medical cases) provides lifesaving care that might not be possible or feasible in the physical shelter. It is imperative that foster programs be properly supported and a structure be put in place to support foster caregivers.

Currently, Augusta Animal Services leverages relationships with rescue groups to manage foster homes. Best Friends recommends bringing a foster program in-house to the shelter in order to better manage bandwidth and lifesaving possibilities.

With a foster program, a system must also be in place to keep track of continued preventative care (or ongoing medical rechecks) and for foster pets to be promoted for adoption and transfer, so that they do not become “lost in the system.”. A system of remote rounds, ideally performed at least weekly, can help track all pets in foster care and function similar to physical daily population rounds, though the animals are listed in a report rather than observed in person.

Volunteer programming

A well-run volunteer program provides a shelter with an immense amount of help to support the staff and animals. Increasing volunteer support at AAS, through public communication efforts and formalization of the existing volunteer program, should be considered a priority to support the success of lifesaving programs and increase quality of care for shelter animals.

Currently, Augusta Animal Services has a small group of dedicated volunteers essential to the operation. We advise AAS to formalize this program, designate clear parameters, and assign a lead volunteer to help manage the program.

Further recommendations:

- Targeted marketing with skill-based volunteer position descriptions will help the recruitment of new volunteers, ensure needed support, and set expectations for new volunteers.
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- Volunteer management software, such as [Volgistics](#) or [Better Impact](#), would be a great addition to help coordinate the program, volunteer engagement, and retention.
- Another strategy to increase volunteers is to include the volunteer coordinator in daily shelter rounds so that needs can be clearly communicated and the volunteer program can be leveraged in pathway planning. These daily rounds are crucial to ensure departments are working collaboratively to save the most lives possible.
- The resources at the end of this report, in conjunction with support from Best Friends, can be used to formalize the existing volunteer program and focus on increasing lifesaving impact.

Enrichment

At the present time, there isn't any formal enrichment program for dogs at AAS. Daily enrichment, including in-kennel and out-of-kennel activities, is as essential as food and water to an animal's overall well-being. It plays a key role in reducing fear and stress levels.

Enrichment also supports the adoptability of the animals and the prevention of behavior problems. For those reasons, we recommend incorporating a simple and free enrichment program into the daily care routine for dogs and cats.

Recommendations:

- By integrating in-kennel enrichment into cleaning routines and establishing formalized schedules for playgroups and out-of-kennel time, shelters can ensure all animals receive adequate mental and physical stimulation. Volunteers play a crucial role in implementing enrichment programs, which fosters a sense of responsibility among all shelter staff for each animal's well-being.
- In promoting open adoptions for strays, shelters should prioritize visibility, interaction, and enrichment for these animals. Strays should receive equal promotion, walking opportunities, and enrichment as other shelter residents. Open adoptions, coupled with scheduled spay/neuter and a foster-to-adopt system, provide viable pathways for rehoming strays while ensuring transparency about potential reclaiming.
- Additionally, we recommend [Dogs Playing for Life \(DPFL\)](#) training to support positive interactions and outcomes for all shelter dogs. DPFL will be hosting a training session in Columbia, South Carolina, in May. Best Friends would be willing to cover the costs of having select AAS staff members participate.

The following resource section offers valuable guidance on implementing enrichment programs tailored to shelter dogs and cats, and it emphasizes the importance of mental and physical stimulation for their well-being. These resources complement the shelter's efforts to enhance organic behavior assessment, enrichment, and adoption processes to ultimately improve outcomes for shelter animals.

Housing

There is an immediate need for AAS to focus on ensuring basic comfort for all dogs in the shelter. Our assessment revealed a lack of beds or bedding and limited or no access to outdoor areas. This places significant stress on the animals, which can lead to anxiety and discomfort.

Installing timed lighting systems would be an ideal addition. At a minimum, all housing lights should be turned on immediately upon staff arrival and then turned off as a final duty before leaving for the day. We noticed that many dogs and cats remained in dark rooms until they were discovered during morning medication or cleaning routines.

Capacity for care, beyond just listing cage and kennel capacity, also refers to how many pets a shelter can house and still provide them with appropriate care, veterinary attention, adequate space, stress relief, and caregiver attention. Capacity for care goes beyond measuring physical space but is also dependent on the level of enrichment activities for the animals, how much they interact with humans, and the shelter's ability to deliver and maintain health and sanitation standards – all of which help to form quality of life.

To reduce euthanasia due to space, we encourage AAS to utilize cages that are being left empty to maximize capacity without compromising care. A critical factor in determining and maintaining capacity for care is maintaining and assessing population data. This includes being able to populate a daily census, and determine length of stay for every subpopulation of animal (dogs, puppies, cats, kittens) because this information is needed to calculate [adoption driven capacity](#).

We were excited to see the portals installed in cat rooms. In addition to this, all cats should have access to soft resting areas and hiding spots, such as [feral dens](#) or cardboard boxes. For comprehensive guidance on feline housing (including detailed recommendations), please refer to [this comprehensive article](#) on feline housing guidelines.

Client services and community support

In order to foster a more community-oriented approach, the shelter must address a lack of meaningful interaction and communication at various points of contact in the shelter. For instance, adoptions are hindered by front desk staff lacking knowledge about the animals available for adoption. By implementing population rounds, the staff would be familiarized with all animals available for adoption, ensuring they are not overlooked or forgotten.

One promising avenue for collaboration is tapping into the military community, as mentioned by both shelter staff and volunteers. Additionally, field officers can benefit by engaging more with the community, which fosters trust, encourages collaboration, and improves compliance rates. To facilitate these efforts, the shelter can draw upon resources from Best Friends Animal Society's [Humane Animal Control Manual](#) and the Humane Society of the United States' [Pets for Life Toolkit](#). Hosting regular vaccination clinics and making pet food available during normal business hours can further demonstrate the shelter's commitment to serving the community and addressing its needs.

Cat lifesaving

While AAS does have a community cat program in place with a third-party organization, the lifesaving effectiveness of this program can be increased. Taking into consideration staff bandwidth and surgery capacity, as well as keeping in line with best practices, we recommend that AAS immediately stop intake of all healthy outdoor cats (regardless of socialization level) and instead divert them through trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR). Cat impoundment should be limited to sick or injured stray cats and those involved in bite cases. The limited number of stray cats impounded by the shelter should be sterilized, vaccinated, and (whenever possible) be returned to their original location. This has a direct and immediate impact on lifesaving in the shelter, and it effectively addresses community complaints by offering humane solutions through nuisance mitigation.

Regardless of whether incoming stray cats are friendly or unsocial, leaving them in their outdoor homes is often the best course of action. By doing so, we secure a positive outcome for the cat and preserve the bonds formed between community cats and the individuals who love and care for them. Catching and removing cats from their outdoor environment has not proven to be a reliable form of population management. When cats are removed, resources become available for other cats and wildlife, who then enter the territory and exhibit what is best described as the vacuum effect, information on which can be found [here](#).

More specific recommendations follow:

- Best Friends recommends that field services officers and shelter staff immediately stop the intake of healthy outdoor cats and kittens. The position of the National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA) on the management of outdoor cats can be found [here](#).
- Part of comprehensive community cat programming involves community outreach to educate the public about the program and its effectiveness, as well as the ineffectiveness of less humane alternatives. We recommend that AAS prioritize public messaging around the community cat program that includes shareable print material in both English and Spanish.
- We recommend that AAS provide staff, volunteers, leadership, community members, and partners with comprehensive training on the benefits of and need for stray cat intake diversion as part of a full-scale community cat program. All staff should also receive training on outdoor cat nuisance mitigation and kitten diversion programming to increase successful conversations with the public. Best Friends has abundant resources and assistance available to help.
- We also recommend the updating of intake guidelines for staff and volunteers to include collection of relevant information from residents on cats that must be impounded. Collecting such information empowers shelter personnel to engage in productive conversation on why cats should not automatically be brought to the shelter, why they may be returned to the field, and the overall intentions behind community cat programs. Sample SOPs and intake forms can be provided.
 - Additionally, all shelter policies should be updated to prioritize return-to-field (RTF) programs for all eligible community cats and to emphasize that removing them from their outdoor homes is often not the best option.

Kitten intake diversion

While it is common for neonatal kittens to make up the most at-risk population in animal shelters, the problem can be reduced drastically by limiting the impounding of kittens to those who are sick, injured or truly orphaned. Community members who find kittens should be counseled (by shelter and field services staff) on how to determine if the kittens are truly orphaned, guided on how to reunite healthy kittens with their mother, and (if it is determined that the kittens should be impounded), encouraged to take part in a finder-to-foster program. Both kitten intake diversion programs (using [“Wait Until 8” protocols](#)) and finder-to-foster programming support positive outcomes for kittens and cats in the community and in the shelter system.

All staff and trained volunteers should speak with finders about returning the kittens to the location where they were found. If reunification with the mother cat is not possible, they should ask finders to foster the kittens. During kitten season, a successful technique is to station a staff member or volunteer at intake to provide this counseling. In [our neonatal kitten toolkit](#), you can find infographics (in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#)) that can guide finders through the process of determining if intervention is necessary. To increase the conversion rate of these conversations and reduce kitten intake, staff and volunteers should be provided with the training and physical resources to share with potential fosters.

To encourage fostering, kitten care kits, [such as these](#), can be provided, and they also should be available to field service officers to give to residents who find kittens in the field. Long before the residents arrive at the shelter with a cat or kittens, public-facing communications pieces and social media information should be in place to set expectations. In addition to a finder-to-foster program, developing a dedicated foster base for this population will provide further support.

Biosecurity and medical processes

Biosecurity

Biosecurity measures play a critical role in safeguarding the health of shelter animals and preventing the spread of contagious diseases. It is essential for staff to employ personal protective equipment (PPE) when handling animals, particularly high-risk populations such as pediatric animals and new intakes. During our assessment, we did not see any staff member or volunteer using PPE.

At a minimum, staff members handling animals should be wearing gloves, which should be changed between handling animals from different kennels. Additional PPE, including body coverings and foot protection, is recommended for higher-risk situations. Dedicated footwear or shoe covers are also advised, especially in areas where infectious disease is a concern. New intakes and young animals lacking vaccination history are particularly susceptible to infectious diseases, posing a risk to other animals, even if they appear healthy. Therefore, the use of PPE should be considered for all animals, especially during periods of infectious disease outbreaks or when there is concern about disease in the community.

Biosecurity encompasses various measures, including PPE, staff disease surveillance, animal movement, handling procedures, and sanitation protocols. It is crucial to implement biosecurity practices consistently, especially for high-risk populations, such as pediatric animals, animals with unknown vaccination history, or those arriving from areas with known infectious diseases. Prioritizing proactive population management strategies can help mitigate the risks associated with prolonged shelter stays and improve overall outcomes for shelter animals.

Additionally, observation periods should be established for animals with known disease exposure, with appropriate PPE utilized. To minimize disease transmission, animals should be handled in a specific order, from healthy to exposed to sick. By implementing comprehensive biosecurity measures and adhering to recommended protocols, AAS can effectively protect the health and well-being of the animal population.

Adherence to [AAHA vaccine guidelines](#) is crucial for mitigating infectious diseases in shelter animals. We recommend that AAS follow the following guidelines. Animals with unknown medical history should be vaccinated upon intake with (at minimum) FVRCP or DA2PP vaccines. Administer booster vaccinations of FVRCP and DA2PP every two weeks for pediatric animals less than 20 weeks old. Animals 18 weeks and older require a single booster at a two-week interval. Proper vaccine handling and storage in animal shelters are essential to safeguard animal health and prevent the spread of disease. We recommend that AAS ensure that the following metrics are being met at the shelter: For potency maintenance, vaccines require storage temperatures between 35°F to 45°F. Dedicated vaccine refrigerators, regular temperature monitoring, and organization of vaccines by expiration dates are recommended. See this [storage and handling guide](#).

Sanitation

In order to minimize chemical usage and enhance the health and well-being of shelter animals, AAS' sanitation practices must be reevaluated. Currently, the predominant use of bleach as a disinfectant poses several challenges. While bleach can be effective when properly diluted and used with appropriate contact time (10 minutes), bleach is rendered inactive in the presence of organic matter and may not effectively target certain viruses like parvovirus or ringworm. Additionally, alternative products such as enzymatic cleaners and trifectant have limitations and the odor can overwhelm animals, particularly cats.

Rescue/Accel (accelerated hydrogen peroxide) offers a more effective sanitation solution for all shelter areas. Rescue has demonstrated broad-spectrum efficacy against various pathogens, including bacteria, viruses, fungi, and spores, with a faster kill time (five minutes) and compatibility with organic material. Proper dilution and contact time are crucial for effective disinfection, and staff must be adequately trained on its application. Here is a [guideline](#).

Implementing the use of Rescue as the primary disinfectant will optimize sanitation protocols, reduce staff time, and increase disinfection efficacy. For instance, adjusting the parvovirus disinfection protocol to degreasing with Dawn, followed by three treatments with Rescue, and thorough drying, can expedite kennel turnover without compromising effectiveness. And when the process is complete, new animals can immediately be safely placed into kennels. Our parvovirus SOPs can be found [here](#).

To ensure consistent and effective disinfection with Rescue, staff must adhere to manufacturer guidelines for dilution and regularly monitor [dilutions](#) using [Precise-Indicators strips](#).

Comprehensive staff training and compliance with sanitation protocols are vital components of a successful infection control program. By transitioning to Rescue and ensuring proper implementation, the shelter can significantly improve sanitation practices, enhance the overall health and safety of its animal population, and gain back staff time for other needed duties.

Disease surveillance

Disease surveillance is a critical aspect of maintaining the health and safety of shelter animals. All staff must be proficient in recognizing the primary signs of common infectious diseases prevalent in shelter environments, such as diarrhea, vomiting, sneezing, coughing, and nasal discharge. Upon observing any of these signs, staff or volunteers should promptly notify the kennel supervisor or appropriate personnel. A standardized procedure outlining the timeline for notification and subsequent actions should be established and consistently adhered to by all staff members. Depending on the nature of the disease, isolation protocols may vary to include physical separation within the same space, utilization of designated isolation rooms, or implementation of signage and barriers.

Rapid identification and isolation of animals displaying signs consistent with disease are paramount. Animals demonstrating symptoms should be swiftly removed from the general population to minimize the risk of disease transmission. Ideally, these animals should be relocated to designated isolation areas or foster homes capable of providing appropriate care while mitigating risks to other animals. If feasible, rapid transfer to other organizations can also help safeguard the shelter population. In cases where isolation options are limited and rapid transfer is not feasible, humane euthanasia may be necessary to prevent disease spread.

It is imperative that AAS staff receive comprehensive training on disease recognition, isolation procedures, and the proper use of PPE. Clear communication channels and documented protocols facilitate swift and effective responses to disease outbreaks. Daily observation and monitoring sheets serve as invaluable tools for tracking animal health and identifying potential disease concerns. Additionally, standing orders and delegated responsibilities among veterinary technicians and assistants optimize the utilization of resources, ensuring efficient and effective care delivery while minimizing strain on professional staff. By implementing robust disease surveillance protocols and fostering a culture of accountability, shelters can proactively safeguard the health and well-being of their animal populations. Here is a highly-recommended webinar for staff training: [Disease Transmission and Prevention Webinar](#).

Respiratory disease

Though not witnessed during our evaluation, we were made aware that respiratory disease is a common occurrence at AAS. Stress directly correlates with the outbreak and severity of feline respiratory disease in animal shelters. Enrichment plays a key role in increasing feline health in shelters. When cats can't exhibit natural behaviors, the prevalence of stress and illness increases. Cats require a place to hide, scratch, and perch. Incorporating daily enrichment (which can be simple and free) into their routine supports their well-being in a significant way. Consistent in-kennel enrichment should be provided from the time of intake until departure.

We know that most upper respiratory infections in cats are spread more by fomites than droplets. Cats with mild clinical signs, including weepy eyes, mild ocular or nasal discharge, or the occasional sneeze, can be treated in their kennels with appropriate medications. This reduces stress by eliminating the need for the cat to become acclimated to a new environment or be transported. To reduce transmission of illness, this [provided chart](#) categorizes respiratory disease and minimizes movement accordingly. Staff are required to wear gloves and change between each animal to avoid carrying disease from one cat to another. Disposable gowns should be made available so that if a clinical cat is picked up, the staff member's clothes are not contaminated. These practices ensure that cats are not removed from public view and therefore still have the opportunity to be adopted. The adopter can be sent home with the remainder of the course of medication the cat would be receiving in the shelter. Additionally, a move toward intake diversion for stray cats, plus updates to the current community cat program, will keep the number of cats housed at the shelter low at any given time, which has the effect of reducing stress and illness.

Dogs, on the other hand, do transmit canine infectious respiratory disease complex (CIRDC) from one dog to another via droplets. We recommend that clinical dogs be moved to isolation, but as soon as they are no longer coughing and sneezing (a sign that their disease transmission risks go way down) they should be moved back to adoptions and they can finish their course of medications in their more permanent locations. If isolation in a separate room is not an option, every effort should be made to separate kennels, including putting barriers up as shields from droplets.

Staff training and communications

Training and onboarding

Providing a formal onboarding process and training program for staff will increase staff retention and lead to consistency in program implementation. We encourage AAS to implement a formal training program that includes specific training on programmatic efforts (managed intake, foster care, volunteers, adoptions, community cats, etc.), animal handling, customer service, and complaint mitigation. Ensuring that each new staff member receives consistent and comprehensive training will lead to more successful lifesaving programs and more knowledgeable staff.

Another strategy that agencies have found to be successful is using a tiered model of staff structure that allows for growth and upward mobility. For instance, having different levels of kennel techs (I, II and III) would provide staff with opportunities for professional growth and encourage a focus on training and development. Eligibility for promotion to the next tier gives staff a tangible upward path through the organization and supports retention rates and staff morale.

Internal communications

We recommend holding monthly all-staff meetings, not only to report changes to SOPs and programming, but to share successes and opportunities for improvement, relevant statistics surrounding organizational activities, and other updates. These meetings also give staff members an opportunity to hear about the priorities of each department and consider how they can better support each other in their daily work.

At these meetings, all staff should be encouraged to openly offer suggestions that could aid the organization in its lifesaving efforts, even if those suggestions are outside a staff member's "domain." This will help empower staff to think creatively and encourage personal and professional development.

Policies and procedures

Shelter protocols based on proven animal sheltering strategies are critical tools that ensure that daily operations stay consistent with organizational policies. Protocols must be developed and documented in sufficient detail to achieve and maintain the standards described in this document. They should be reviewed and updated regularly, and all personnel, including volunteers, must have access to them.

We strongly suggest a review of all shelter practices to ensure they are in accordance with the [Association of Shelter Veterinarians \(ASV\) Guidelines 2nd edition](#). (The guidelines are scheduled to be published in Spanish.) Share them with all staff and ask everyone to read chapters involving their areas of work. Provide staff with these [ASV videos](#), which further define some of the recommendations found in the guidelines. The [ASV guidelines checklist](#) is a good way to assess shelter operations. To guarantee compliance, ensure that staff are following the protocol as written when utilizing the checklist. Shelter management must routinely monitor and ensure compliance with protocols. We also recommend that AAS create a review policy to keep documents updated with the latest proven strategies.

Medical policies

We recommend that the medical team implement standing orders and train animal care staff to initially evaluate animals so veterinarians can focus solely on animals that require an elevated level of medical care. Veterinarian assistance need only be requested when cases are not progressing as expected or when cases fall outside of the guidelines. A guideline to follow is “highest and best use.” The term means utilizing staff members in ways that maximize their skills, talents, and potential, based on their licensing and allowable duties. Volunteers should be utilized for basic nonmedical procedures. Functioning in this way enables a shelter to offer care to the maximum number of animals while requiring fewer skilled professional staff resources, especially when they are limited.

The Best Friends national shelter medicine team has compiled a [medical protocol template library](#) that will help the AAS. These protocol templates, which are kept up to date with the latest shelter medicine research and evidence-based disease management in shelters, can be easily adapted. We recommend that AAS have the contract veterinarian read over the protocols and sign off on them for ease of use. Changes can be made as needed.

[Daily monitoring sheets](#) serve as vital records for tracking the health status of animals under the shelter's care. By systematically documenting observations such as appetite, hydration, and any signs of illness or discomfort, staff can promptly identify and address health concerns to ensure timely intervention and treatment (when necessary). Together, these tools form an integral part of the shelter's operational framework, facilitating effective management and compassionate care for the animals.

Access to spay and neuter

Access to spay/neuter services is extremely limited at Augusta Animal Services. Animals must be transported each week in small numbers to Athens Area Humane Society for surgery, a two-hour drive. In addition to there not being a high enough volume of surgical slots available, the travel time is a drain on staff time and resources. This also poses a significant challenge in addressing the need for population control and preventing unnecessary animal deaths. In response to the limited access to spay/neuter services, it is imperative to reassess existing ordinances to provide shelters with flexibility, particularly during challenging periods. Some ordinances may already include provisions for vouchers or deferred sterilization (which are often underutilized). However, in cases where such options are unavailable, shelters can employ alternative strategies, such as fostering-to-adopt placements until ordinances can be updated. Communities temporarily suspending sterilization-prior-to-adoption ordinances should use their alternate solutions as a pilot project to evaluate the impact on spay/neuter rates and assess the effectiveness of these alternative systems. Collecting and analyzing data will result in informed decisions regarding future animal welfare policies if resources continue to be limited.

Organizational leaders and city leadership should effectively communicate the current state of limited resources to community stakeholders, emphasizing the need for targeted efforts toward the most vulnerable animal populations. Ongoing program monitoring is essential to ensure its future effectiveness and success.

Strategic spay/neuter services, particularly for owned animals, are critical in reducing the population of homeless animals and shelter intake. Collaboration with nonprofits in and around the community for low-cost services is recommended, along with the potential establishment of a fund for individual donations to support this vital service. County funds invested in spay/neuter initiatives are likely to yield significant long-term benefits for animal welfare and community well-being. Additionally, to secure a much-needed full-time veterinarian for your shelter, it is imperative to offer a higher, competitive wage.

Resources

Euthanasia protocols

- [ASV position statement on euthanasia](#)
- [AVMA guidelines on euthanasia](#)
- [Canine pre-euthanasia sedation protocols](#)
- [Cat euthanasia guidelines and protocols](#)

Intake diversion and managed intake

- [Best Friends Managed Intake spotlight article](#)
- [Best Friends Managed Intake playbook](#)
- [Additional Intake and Community Services resource page](#)

RTO programming

- [Best Friends Beyond the Scanner: Advanced Field RTO webinar](#)
- [Best Friends Return to Owner playbook](#)
- [Best Friends Field Return to Owner playbook](#)
- [Humane Animal Control Manual Chapter on Return-to-owner strategies](#)

Animal flow and length of stay

- [Daily Rounds SOP template](#)
- [At-Risk Animals Training Playbook.](#)
- [Alternative Outcomes Training Playbook.](#)
- [Animal Flow Training Playbook](#)
- [Daily Rounds: Planning a Pathway Playbook.](#)
- [UCD: Daily monitoring of animal health and behavior](#)
- [Best Friends Length of Stay Manual](#)

Behavioral evaluations and handling

- [American Pets Alive! blog post on Behavior Assessments](#)
- [ASPCA statement on Shelter Dog Behavior Assessments](#)
- [Fear Free Pets article "Why Behavior Evaluations in Shelters Can Be Misleading"](#)
- [Journal of Veterinary Behavior study "What is the evidence for reliability and validity of behavior evaluations for shelter dogs? A prequel to "No better than flipping a coin"](#)
- [National Canine Research Council article "No better than flipping a coin: Reconsidering canine behavior evaluations in animal shelters"](#)
- [Maddies Fund® Dog Handling Handbook](#)

Lifesaving programs

Adoptions

- [Operational training playbook on Adoption.](#)
- [Removing Barriers to Adoption webinar](#)
- [Making the leap to fee-waived adoptions: Reduced fee adoptions and why they work](#)
- [PetSmart Charities' Rescue Writer™ AI tool for creating bios.](#)
- [Sample effective kennel cards](#)
- [Online learning course on Client Service and Barrier-Free Adoptions](#)

Resources (continued)

Foster and volunteer programming

- [Foundations of Volunteer Engagement](#)
- [Best Friends volunteer resources](#)
- [Foster Programs Training Playbook](#)
- **Best Friends Humane Animal Control manual chapter on [Foster Programs](#)**
- [Cat Foster Care Manual](#)
- [Kitten Foster Care Manual](#)
- [Dog Foster Care Manual](#)
- [HASS "Recruit More Fosters" Blog](#)

Enrichment

- [Enrichment for shelter dogs](#)
- [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**
- [Links to Enrichment Resources \(DPFL\)](#)

Housing

- **University of Wisconsin: [Facility Design, Shelter Animal Housing and Shelter Population Management](#)**

Customer service and community support

- **Best Friends webinar on [Community Engagement: The Lifesaving Philosophy](#)**
- [Social Media 101 webinar from Best Friends](#)
- [Managing Negativity in Social Media playbook](#)
- **Best Friends Humane Animal Control manual chapters on:**
 - [The Role of Animal Control in Local Government](#)
 - [The Role of Local Government in Animal Control](#)
- **Article on [outdated policies](#)**

Cat lifesaving and kitten intake diversion

- **Best Friends [Kitten Lifesaving Resources](#)**
- **Dr. Kate Hurley's webinar on [Kitten Intake Decisions](#)**
- [What to do if you find kittens flyer](#)
- **Best Friends webinar on [mitigating nuisance cat complaints](#)**
- [The Dilemma of the Friendly Outdoor Cat](#)
- **Operational training playbook on [Feline Housing and Enrichment](#)**
- [ASPCA resource: \[Hiding Places Mean Happier Cats\]\(#\)](#)

Resources (continued)

Biosecurity and medical processes

- [AAHA vaccination guidelines for shelter-housed dogs](#)
- [Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters](#)
 - [Checklist version](#)
- [Expanding Veterinary Capacity in Shelters](#)
- [2023 AAHA Technician Utilization Guidelines](#)
- [Operational training playbook on Disease Control: The Role of Sanitation Training Playbook](#)
- [Best Friends Cleaning and Sanitation Course](#)
- [Rescue brand cleaner reference sheet](#)
- [ASPCA Shelter Disinfectant Quick Reference](#)

Staff training and communications

- [Operational playbook on Culture Initiatives Playbook](#)
- [Jack Welch's Approach to Breaking Down Silos Still Works](#)
- [The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement's webinar "Building a Leadership Culture" of the series A Great Place to Work](#)
- [American Pets Alive Building a Positive Workplace Culture: Why It Matters and How to Do It](#) webinar
- ["Building a Leadership Culture"](#)
- [Best Friends Humane Animal Control manual appendix on Shelter Animal Data Collection](#)
- [Article on data mapping: Mapping Made Easy](#)

CONCLUSION

We believe that Augusta Animal Services has the potential to become a lifesaving resource to the community in a relatively short time. To do this, the recommendations in this assessment need to be strategically incorporated into the daily operations of AAS. Best Friends Animal Society stands by AAS ready to assist with strategy and implementation, provided that leadership and staff are all in full support.



Disclaimer: Best Friends' reports are based upon observations and information available at the time of the assessment of your operations. We do not claim (1) that we have discovered any or all existing or potential hazards or (2) that your business locations or operations are in compliance with any law, rule or regulation. We assume no responsibility for the control or correction of hazards and do not warrant that the implementation of any of our recommendations will result in (1) the elimination of any unsafe conditions or (2) compliance with any standards, codes, ordinances, regulations, statutes or laws.

