



MEMORANDUM

TO: Animal Advisory Commission

FROM: Don Bland, Chief Animal Services Officer
Austin Animal Services Office

DATE: May 6, 2022

SUBJECT: Response to Information on Reported Space Crisis

The purpose of this memo is to provide additional information and clarification following the discussion at the April 11, 2022, Animal Advisory Commission meeting regarding space issues at the Austin Animal Center (AAC).

Accounting for Wildlife in Euthanasia

The data presented indicated that the number of pets (cats and dogs) euthanized had increased dramatically in March 2020 and hovered around 70 to 90 pets the last two years. It appears this data includes count of all animals euthanized including gravely injured wildlife and wildlife at risk of rabies exposure. The following is the breakdown of euthanized pets March since 2019:

| March | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|-------|------|------|------|------|
| Cats | 8 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Dogs | 7 | 10 | 7 | 7 |
| Total | 15 | 20 | 18 | 19 |

With this clarification, the correct data was added to the graph that showed all the data year-over-year on Attachment A.

Transfers and Intakes

The transfer amount for March 2022 included out-of-state transports, which accounted for 32 animals. The 155 animals that were transferred to in-state, regional partners, illustrates the downward trend experienced since 2019. The overall number of AAC intakes greatly outpaced the overall number of outcomes that occurred at the same time. There were 69 more intakes than outcomes for the month. AAC, like most shelters in the southern United States, is experiencing a trend of intakes outpacing outcomes. In a recent Big Dog Masterclass summit presented by Maddie's Fund and Human Animal Support Services, Steve Zeidman, Pet Health, gave an overview of data collected from shelters and stated that "...there are more animals in shelters across the nation than there were in 2019."

Volunteers at AAC

Volunteers catalogue the hours they contribute to a web-based database called Volgistics. The AAC has utilized this system since 2016 and tracks volunteer hours broken down by shifts listed in the system. Since the start of this year, 414 volunteers have donated more than 11,000 hours of service to AAC. At least 275 new volunteers completed their initial onboarding training, and 512 people attended an orientation introducing them to AAC programs. AAC continues to recruit volunteers and also sends out sporadic requests to volunteers when help is needed, either at the shelter or through foster. This is done through social media posts and offsite events where recruitment is conducted. The unit has also implemented specialty programs for shelter animals. Some of the programs implemented include the following:

- Cat Pawsitive Clicker training – AAC became Cat Pawsitive certified in March 2020. This positive reinforcement clicker training empowers our volunteers and fosters to make a huge impact in the lives of our most vulnerable population of cats (shy, timid, overstimulated, or bored and exuberant).
 - One of our volunteers recently entered the Jackson Galaxy High-five contest, showcasing her AAC foster cat learning to high-five through our Cat Pawsitive training, and she was awarded a \$3,000 grant to donate back to us to help support this valuable program.
 - 15 Cat volunteers have advanced through the training process to clicker train our cats this year.
- Cactus Cats – these shy/timid, fearful, or prickly cats receive focused marketing support through Website and social media and volunteer support through the clicker training.
 - 40 Cactus Cats have been adopted from the program
- Implemented Foster Match-Making events and have had 11 events since July 2021 that highlights long-stay and behavior dogs.
 - Dog volunteers assist with each of these events by conducting customer interactions, creating marketing materials and being adoption ambassadors.
- Hold regular Dog Enrichment Trainings/Prep Parties, which have ensured our dogs receive consistent in-kennel enrichment. 57 volunteers have been onboarded in the past 6 months for this specific role.

Fostering with AAC

At the beginning of the pandemic, the community helped the AAC by fostering animals at a substantial rate. However, as restrictions eased, and individuals were called back to work, some of these animals were returned. Currently, there are 234 animals in foster, which represents 118 different foster homes. In January, inactive members were removed from the foster database, but AAC still has 810 members of the community who are approved fosters. AAC sends foster request on a regular basis, but many of our approved fosters are interested in specific types of animals, which does not always coincide with AAC needs. Dogs are featured on the public Trello board and the information is regularly updated to reflect current population. Over 45 medium/large dog request have gone out since November 2019. The need for foster care providers and the process for participation is posted regularly to our social media. Also, many of these homes foster cats with kittens or litter of kittens during the peak “kitten” season. Since kitten season is cyclical, AAC regularly sees our foster numbers increase during the Spring and Summer months. The following two graphs shows the number of fosters with at least one shelter animal, each month, since 2015 and the number of animals in foster each fiscal year since 2015:

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| January | 100 | 159 | 192 | 194 | 355 | 200 | 280 | 150 |
| February | 100 | 144 | 162 | 194 | 305 | 200 | 243 | 160 |
| March | 110 | 152 | 134 | 176 | 299 | 400 | 210 | 140 |
| April | 135 | 202 | 162 | 188 | 316 | 420 | 200 | 118 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| May | 190 | 290 | 218 | 230 | 400 | 368 | 200 | n/a |
| June | 224 | 336 | 243 | 272 | 380 | 340 | 240 | n/a |
| July | 212 | 270 | 227 | 275 | 310 | 370 | 250 | n/a |
| August | 165 | 249 | 222 | 295 | 335 | 380 | 240 | n/a |
| September | 150 | 223 | 188 | 268 | 315 | 340 | 240 | n/a |
| October | 184 | 234 | 183 | 342 | 310 | 340 | 200 | n/a |
| November | 190 | 194 | 178 | 554 | 305 | 325 | 180 | n/a |
| December | 151 | 210 | 172 | 518 | 250 | 280 | 191 | n/a |
| Total | 1911 | 2663 | 2281 | 3506 | 3880 | 3963 | 2674 | 568 |

| Year | Animals sent to Foster |
|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 2015 | 2,413 |
| 2016 | 3,020 |
| 2017 | 2,590 |
| 2018 | 2,507 |
| 2019 | 3,169 |
| 2020 | 2,831 |
| 2021 | 2,494 |
| 2022 | 1,193 |

Social Media Posts

Regarding social media, in late March, one of the three volunteer coordinator positions was reclassified into a marketing position to bring the ASO marketing and communication team to a total of two full-time positions. In a review of the 107 Instagram posts from March 2022, most, if not all posts, had multiple intentions, including foster/volunteer recruitment or showcasing a pet for adoption. As such, one post may be represented in more than one of the following categories (example: Our weekly “Faces of AAC” posts featuring staff also featured adoptable animals.) The following is a breakdown of posts for March 2022:

- Adoptable pets: 42
- Found strays: 20
- Faces of AAC: 4
- Cactus Cats: 4
- Foster recruitment: 11
- Volunteer recruitment: 1
- Volunteer appreciation: 7
- Post-adoption updates: 7
- Donation requests: 3
- Adoption specials or promotions: 5
- Wildlife: 2
- Event promotions: 3
- Weather-related: 4
 - Cold Weather Shelters activated for City of Austin
 - Wind advisory / close your gates
 - Storm safety for pets
 - Closing early to allow staff to get home before tornados touched down

- FYIs: 8
 - Lights Out, Texas
 - Rabies info after bat released in movie theater
 - February stats
 - Announcing summer shelter hours
 - Community spay/neuter funding
 - Community Cats program
 - Cat enrichment
 - What to do if you find kittens

Sunday Closures

The data provided at the meeting showed the potential impact of being closed on Sundays. The decision to close on Sundays was not an easy one but, given the current staffing situation, ASO had exhausted all options to provide adequate, daily coverage for the entire shelter. We understood there would be an impact to being closed on Sundays. The data Animal Services Office (ASO) leadership considered not only adoptions, but also overall outcomes and overall intakes. Data regarding the number of intakes and outcomes from 2016 through 2021, and the average intake and outcome per day were analyzed. ASO was aware that there would be some level of impact but selected a day with the least impact. Attached is a screenshot that shows the overall total number of outcomes since 2016 through 2021. Data for 2022 was not included since that was when Sunday closures began and that would skew the numbers. In the end, Sundays were chosen because they had, on average, the least number of intakes and the second least number of outcomes. Attachment B and C show the data ASO used in the decision making.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 512-978-0565.

cc: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager