



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR &  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Ann Dunn  
Animal Services Director

**SUBJECT:** Animal Services Update

**DATE:** April 26, 2021

City Administrator  
Approval

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Ann Dunn".

Date  
Apr 27, 2021

### INFORMATION

The purpose of this informational memorandum is to provide an update on restructuring activities at Oakland Animal Services (OAS), as it shifts from a shelter-based to a community-based model. The overarching goals for the restructuring are: to address inequities in animal welfare; increase accessibility of services to our community; provide access to veterinary care to pet guardians with limited resources; improve outcomes for animal cruelty investigations; and, reduce shelter intake by providing proactive support and meaningful alternatives.

### RESTRUCTURING ACTIVITIES

#### **Increase Accessibility:**

With no additional resources, OAS has increased open hours from 20 hours per week to 42 hours per week. OAS is now open seven days per week from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM, with morning hours used for animal care and shelter cleaning. Phone lines are now answered 35 hours per week, as compared to 14 hours under the previous management. Additionally, the routine work hours of Animal Control Officers (ACO) were previously 7:00 AM to 6:30 PM. They have been changed to staggering shifts between 7:00 AM to 9:30 PM to provide ACO flexibility to respond to calls that come in between 6:30 PM and 9:00 PM without the need for overtime. OAS continues to respond to emergency calls from 9:30 PM to 7:00 AM by an ACO on standby.

#### **Address Inequities:**

OAS has shifted its focus to addressing systemic racism in animal welfare, which has historically resulted in significant barriers and made it difficult for Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) individuals and families to have and keep companion animals.

OAS has shifted from a punitive model which relied heavily on animal seizure and now focuses on supporting people with limited resources. ACOs are now given discretion to differentiate between cases of true neglect and situations where a loving animal guardian needs support.

Recognizing that a primary reason people surrender animals is due to lack of access to affordable veterinary care, through grant funding, OAS now provides veterinary services to unsheltered pet guardians through monthly veterinary clinics at Community Cabin and Safe RV sites. Additionally, OAS has just received a second grant to be used for quarterly veterinary clinics, to alternate between Districts 6 and 7.

Through a collaboration with East Bay SPCA and Friends of Oakland Animal Services, OAS provides free spay/neuter for community cats at spay/neuter clinics held at EBSPCA six times per year.

OAS's new programs to provide access to veterinary care are meeting a small fraction of a huge unmet need in our community. Growing these programs, and making them sustainable, are essential to supporting a significant and growing number of families who can't afford veterinary services.

Where OAS had previously relied heavily on emergency veterinary services, spending over \$10,000 per month, due in large part to chronic vacancies in the veterinary staff, OAS now has a stable veterinary team and has reduced spending on emergency services by over 80%. By shifting these resources from emergency to preventive care, OAS is able to keep more animals out of the shelter and continue to build community-serving programs.

### **Prosecute Animal Cruelty:**

In the last year, ACOs have received proper training on investigating animal cruelty cases, resulting in:

- Eight officers attended an 80-hour training at the Animal Law Enforcement Academy.
- All ACOs now meet the standards for California Certified Animal Control Officer status.
- The two most senior officers have undergone 8-hour training on Interview and Interrogation for First Responders.
- All ACOs have attended a 4-hour training on forensics and evidence.

ACO animal cruelty cases have resulted in:

- The first Felony Animal Cruelty conviction in over five years.
- 15 pending Felony charges.
- Two pending charges of sexual assault on an animal.
- One large-scale seizure of cockfighting birds and paraphernalia.

### **Minimize Shelter Intake:**

OAS has implemented a number of programs to keep animals out of the shelter by providing alternative services. These include:

***Support to Keep Pets in their Homes:*** Individuals who contact OAS to surrender their pets are routinely asked if there is any reasonable support OAS can provide to prevent the need for the animal to be surrendered to the shelter. Support includes behavior advice, veterinary care, free food and other supplies.

***Home to Home:*** When people have no choice but to surrender their animals, but have some time before they must do so, OAS's Home to Home program provides them with an online platform and tools to rehome their pets themselves, with OAS as a backup if they are unable to do so in time.

***Lost & Found:*** With over 60 percent of OAS animals coming into the shelter because they were found by community members, only 10 percent of lost animals historically have been reunited with their guardians. OAS is now making a significant effort to get lost pets back home.

- ACOs have been provided microchip scanners and cell phones so that they can contact guardians while still in the field, reuniting animals with their families without the need to bring them to the shelter.
- OAS regularly posts lost animals on our website, NextDoor, and online lost and found sites.
- Lost & found efforts have resulted in double the rate of lost dogs being returned home.

***Finder Foster:*** For lost animals without a microchip, individuals who find those animals are asked if they would be willing to foster them so that the animals don't need to stay in the shelter. This program has resulted in over 90% of finder-foster animals being reunited with their guardians or adopted by others without ever spending time in the shelter.

### **SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS OF OAKLAND ANIMAL SERVICES**

OAS works in close collaboration with its nonprofit partner, Friends of Oakland Animal Services (FOAS), to provide services that would not be possible through the City's budget alone. These programs greatly expand the capacity to get animals out of the shelter quickly, including:

***Cat Foster Program:*** This program focuses primarily on the over 800 medically fragile kittens that come into the shelter each year. Most kittens go directly from foster to adoption without staying in the shelter.

***Dog Foster Program:*** This new program focuses primarily on big dogs who would have been euthanized in the past. In most cases, these dogs receive some behavioral support to become good companions.

***Working Cat Program:*** This program provides safe relocation options for outdoor cats who are in habitats that are unsafe.

***Part-Time Veterinarian:*** Since July 1, 2020, FOAS has funded a half-time veterinarian to augment the single full-time staff veterinarian. This has greatly increased the capacity of the veterinary team to quickly care for shelter animals and makes it possible for OAS to provide community-serving veterinary care.

***Adoption and Outreach:*** FOAS-funded staff have primary responsibility for improving our adoption process through meaningful matchmaking and post adoption support, as well as through making our adoption process more accessible.

### **LIVE RELEASE RATE**

The OAS live-release rate, the percentage of animals who have a positive outcome, has been steadily increasing since the OAS transition from OPD in 2014. The live release rate for 2020 was 89%, or just shy of the 90% threshold that is considered an animal welfare industry measure of success, particularly for an open-admission shelter.

Respectfully submitted,

*Ann Dunn*

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ANN DUNN  
Director, Animal Services

For questions, please contact ANN DUNN, DIRECTOR, at (510) 535-5604.