



AGENDA REPORT

TO: Edward D. Reiskin
City Administrator

FROM: Ann Dunn
Director, Department of
Oakland Animal Services

SUBJECT: Informational Report on Oakland
Animal Services' Operations

DATE: March 9, 2022

City Administrator Approval

Date:

Mar 10, 2022

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report and Presentation From Oakland Animal Services Regarding the Status of Its Operations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Informational Report represents the first of planned semi-annual presentations to the Life Enrichment Committee to apprise Councilmembers on the progress of the Department of Oakland Animal Services (OAS) in its overarching goals for shifting from a shelter-based to community-based model and addressing historic inequities in addressing the needs of people with animals in Oakland.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

This Informational Report provides an update on the Informational Memo provided to the City Council on April 26, 2021, regarding the goal of OAS to restructure its budget and operations to provide improved and accessible services.

OAS has shifted its focus from a shelter-based model to a community-based model, allowing OAS to operate as a human services organization by focusing on the people in Oakland who most need support. This approach allows OAS to address 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. To this end, OAS has moved from a punitive model which relied heavily on animal seizure, and now focuses on supporting people with limited resources, making adoptions more accessible, and outreaching directly to underserved neighborhoods, while still ensuring crimes against animals are pursued and prosecuted.

Accessibility of Services

For many years, OAS was only open to the public on a limited basis, at just 20 hours per week. Now, OAS is open to the public seven days per week, from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm, with morning hours used for animal care and shelter cleaning. Appointments are encouraged, but not

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required. An appointment-based system provides an opportunity to speak with people and offer support, with the goal of keeping pets with their families whenever possible.

To increase access to adoptions, OAS is open for walk-in adoptions Thursdays from 12:00 pm to 7:00 pm, and Friday to Sunday from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm. The adoption process seeks to remove obstacles to adoption for Oakland residents with limited resources and/or online access.

Animal Control Officers are available from 7:00 am to 9:30 pm, and on standby at all other hours.

For the first time, OAS is now in the City of Oakland website (<https://www.oaklandca.gov/departments/animal-services>).

Improvements to Animal Control Operations

Historically, Animal Control agencies have removed animals from low-income families to be rehomed with a family of means. To address historic inequities, Officers now differentiate between willful neglect and loving families who need support, and now have the tools to address both. For example, Animal Control Officers continue to receive training to protect the rights and dignity of people. Recent continuing education courses include a total of 12 hours focused on the laws governing search and seizure under the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States and preparing search warrants. Where appropriate, Animal Control Officers provide resources such as food, shelter, and education to elevate the quality of life for the animal and build a rapport with the family. By taking this approach, OAS has seen a 23% reduction in animal seizure in 2021, as compared to 2019, prior to initiating these changes. The relationship built with animal owners streamlines the delivery of supportive services and time is reallocated to investigate animal cruelty and public safety issues.

In 2021, Animal Control Officers investigated 313 animal bites and 681 reports of cruelty or neglect. Cruelty/Neglect cases that rise to the level of a felony are extreme cases of willful harm. Prior to 2020, cruelty investigations would be resolved by seizure of the animal. Seizure is an important part of the process but does very little to stop the cycle of abuse since another animal could be immediately acquired. In 2020, all of the Animal Control Officers were sent to the Animal Law Enforcement Academy which provided them the skillset to conduct thorough investigations that could be referred to the District Attorney for prosecution. Successful prosecution is the best tool to interrupt the cycle of abuse due to the conditions that, if convicted, abusers may not own animals. In 2021, 20 such cases were referred to the District Attorney for prosecution.

Recognizing that dog barking complaints can lead to housing insecurity for renters, Animal Control has shifted to a holistic approach when handling these complaints. Understanding that many barking dog complaints are due to minor neglect, Officers evaluate the likely cause and seek to educate the owner on how simple changes to the living conditions and available stimulation may reduce the nuisance and improve the life of the dog. When barking situations are not easily resolved, neighbors are invited to take part in mediation provided by SEEDS conflict resolution center.

Animal Control Officers have expanded their level of service for injured wildlife. Through training and partnership with Yggdrasil Urban Wildlife Rescue, volunteers are able to transport injured wildlife that would have previously been euthanized to appropriate rehabilitation facilities.

As a point of clarification for a frequently asked question, Animal Control Officers are not funded through the Oakland Police Department (OPD) budget, nor are there any positions at OAS funded through OPD. Emergency calls for service related to injured or dangerous animals are routed through OPD non-emergency dispatch, but responded to by Animal Control Officers. In very limited cases, OPD Officers respond to calls for animals that threaten public safety when Animal Control Officers are unavailable.

Update on Restructuring

The OAS budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 sought to improve the overall structure of the organization, using existing resources, by eliminating a senior management and other vacant positions to be able to add a mid-level Animal Care Attendant Supervisor, as well as a second full-time Veterinarian and third Registered Veterinary Technician. An organizational chart is attached.

With the ongoing support from Human Resources, the hiring process for the Animal Care Attendant Supervisor and Veterinarian positions are well underway. The Registered Veterinary Technician position is filled.

The following is a summary of the status of all OAS positions, demonstrating that OAS is expected to have all but one available position filled during this Fiscal Year. The delay in the remaining position is the result of an OAS-initiated request to revise the classification.

	Budgeted FY 21/22	Filled	Vacant	Frozen	Estimated Full- Staffing
Director	1	1	0	0	Complete
Assistant to the Director	1	1	0	0	Complete
Executive Assistant to the Director	1	1	0	0	Complete
Administrative Assistant	0	0	0	1	Frozen
Animal Control Officers	8.5	8.5	0	1	Budgeted Positions Complete
Animal Control Supervisor	1	0	1	0	August 2022
Animal Care Attendants FTE	6	6	0	0	Complete
Animal Care Attendants (TPT) FTE	3	1.5	1.5	0	June 2022
Animal Care Supervisor	1	0	1	0	April 2022
Public Service Representatives	3.5	2.5	1	0	May 2022
Veterinarian	2	1	1	0	April 2022
Registered Veterinary Technicians	3	3	0	0	Complete
Total	31	25.5	5.5	2	

Access to Veterinary Care

Since December 2021, OAS has received two separate grants, for a total of \$110,000.00, to provide access to free veterinary care for low-income pet guardians. The first is for pet guardians who are experiencing homelessness. OAS is working in collaboration with the Department of Human Services and service providers at Oakland's Community Cabin and Safe RV Sites, as well as providing services to unsheltered people outside of the City sites, with a special focus on the large community along Wood Street, in West Oakland.

The second grant is to provide veterinary services to pet guardians of East Oakland, targeting neighborhoods where OAS experiences the highest animal intake.

Additionally, OAS is seeing a growing number of people at OAS seeking urgent care for their animals. To date, services to provide access to veterinary care have helped nearly 700 people and their over 1,000 animals.

In February 2022, OAS received a \$20,000 grant to launch a pilot program to provide free dog training classes for approximately 250 residents of East Oakland, with classes to be held at Verdesse Carter Park beginning in April 2022.

The need in the community for these services far exceeds our ability to address them. All of the services described above are currently only possible due to outside grant funding. While OAS is seeking additional funding to be able to continue providing veterinary services to owned animals, it is unclear at this point whether such funding will be available.

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 are primarily focused on animal lifesaving:

Cat Foster Program: This program focuses primarily on the over 900 medically fragile kittens that come into the shelter each year.

Dog Foster Program: Launched in June 2020, this program primarily focuses on big dogs who would have been euthanized in the past. With the shelter often operating at full capacity for dogs, with nearly 450 dogs in foster in 2021, this program greatly expands our ability to help dogs who need more time and support to get adopted.

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

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.

Dog Behavior Support: This program provides support for staff, volunteers, fosters and adopters to better help dogs with behavior issues and supports playgroups and enrichment for shelter dogs.

Getting Lost Animals Home: This new position is to help reunite lost/stray animals with their families, as well as to broadly provide free microchips and ID tags, to make it easier to reunite animals should they ever come into the shelter.

Intake and Outcome Data

The following sections highlight key data points related to intake and outcomes over a three-year period. The drivers for cat and dog intake, and issues associated with each species, are quite different. Cat intake is largely the result of reproduction due to an extreme shortage of affordable spay/neuter resources. Dog intake is largely made up of stray/lost animals, combined with owner surrender, mostly as the result of people losing their housing or being unable to find affordable housing that allows pets. This is particularly true for large dogs, as even “pet friendly” housing mostly prohibits large dogs and/or requires deposits or monthly pet rent that makes it cost prohibitive for many renters.

Takeaways for 2021:

Animal intake is increasing: After a nearly 30% drop in intake in 2020 as compared to 2019 (consistent with a national trend related to COVID 19), intake in 2021 was back to 96% of pre-pandemic levels. Because intake was so low in 2020, 2019 is used below as a baseline for pre-pandemic activity.

Transfer opportunities are decreasing: Historically, far more animals were transferred to rescue partners, organizations such as East Bay SPCA, who bring OAS animals into their adoption programs, than were adopted through OAS. For reasons that are multi-faceted and beyond the control of OAS, and consistent with statewide and national trends, OAS has seen a drastic reduction in transfers to rescue organizations in 2021. This is especially true for dogs, with just 24% transferred in 2021 as compared to 48% in 2019. This puts immense pressure on OAS to increase adoptions.

Dogs

Year	Intake #	Transfer #	Transfer %
2019	2,808	1333	47.50%
2020	1,870	753	40.30%
2021	2,297	551	24.00%

Cats

Year	Intake #	Transfer #	Transfer %
2019	2,119	862	40.70%
2020	1,642	547	33.30%
2021	2,444	857	35.10%

Adoptions have increased significantly: The number of adoptions are far greater than in previous years. Dogs adoptions in 2021 increased by 56% over 2019, and cats adoptions increased by 25% in the same period. Additionally, new policies seek to remove barriers to adoption, such as eliminating the requirement for online applications or appointments, to

increase in the number of adopters from Oakland who are Black, Indigenous and people of color.

Dogs

Year	Intake #	Adopt #	Adopt %
2019	2,808	399	14.20%
2020	1,870	391	20.90%
2021	2,297	907	39.50%

Cats

Year	Intake #	Adopt #	Adopt %
2019	2,119	867	40.90%
2020	1,642	882	53.70%
2021	2,444	1,151	47.10%

Euthanasia is at the lowest rate in OAS' history, with euthanasia for dogs in 2021 cut by more than 50% from the previous year: There will always be a need for euthanasia, to end the suffering of animals that are found severely sick or injured, or for dogs who threaten public safety.

Reduction in dog euthanasia can largely be attributed to the creation of the foster program for big dogs, funded by FOAS, as well as a greatly improved adoption program. Even with the significant reduction in euthanasia we still need to improve our ability to help dogs with behavior issues and/or who don't do well in the shelter environment. **While this reduction in the euthanasia rate is a significant accomplishment for the OAS team, it will also be very challenging to sustain if intake continues to increase as is projected.** Regardless, we will continue efforts to improve operations and increase lifesaving.

Dogs

Year	Intake #	Euthanasia #	Euthanasia %
2019	2,808	465	16.60%
2020	1,870	282	15.10%
2021	2,297	166	7.20%

Cat euthanasia is lower than the two previous years, consistent with a low euthanasia rate for cats for many years at OAS. The biggest challenge is the number of newborn kittens brought to OAS by well-meaning people. When separated from their mothers, baby kittens have a high mortality rate. In addition to increasing spay/neuter to reduce cat reproduction, we need to do a better job of educating the public about the importance of leaving kittens with their mothers until they are old enough to be weaned.

Cats

Year	Intake #	Euthanasia #	Euthanasia %
2019	2,119	200	9.40%
2020	1,642	159	9.70%
2021	2,444	190	7.80%

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

This item is for informational purposes only and does not request action by the City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT

This item is for informational purposes only and does not have any fiscal impact.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

This item is for informational purposes only and did not require public outreach.

COORDINATION

This item is for informational purposes only and did not involve coordination.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: This item is for informational purposes only and has no economic impact.

Environmental: This item is for informational purposes only and has no environmental impact.

Race & Equity: Considerations of race and equity have been foundational for the restructuring of OAS to operate as a human services organization by focusing on the people in Oakland who most need support. Historically, Animal Control practices have relied heavily on punitive measures, particularly for people who love their animals but lack the resources to provide veterinary care, disproportionately impacting BIPOC communities. Current practices seek to make adoptions more accessible and to direct our limited resources to underserved neighborhoods. For example, veterinary clinics for East Oakland residents are situated in neighborhoods where the City is focusing its violence prevention efforts.

It's estimated that approximately 1 in 10 people experiencing homelessness are pet owners, and that the lack of shelters or affordable housing that allows pets is a major barrier to people exiting homelessness. Additionally, research has shown that having the companionship of an animal helps people who have experienced trauma, including children who are exposed to ongoing violence, by building confidence and resiliency.

While we have provided access to veterinary care through a grant-funded pilot program for animals of people who are unsheltered, as well as specifically for residents of East Oakland, this is an essential service for a growing number of people in our community, most of whom are BIPOC. Creating a sustainable model to provide such services is a high priority.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report and Presentation From Oakland Animal Services Regarding the Status of Its Operations

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

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Dunn

ANN DUNN
Director, Department of Oakland Animal
Services

Reviewed by:
Betsy Lake, Assistant City Administrator

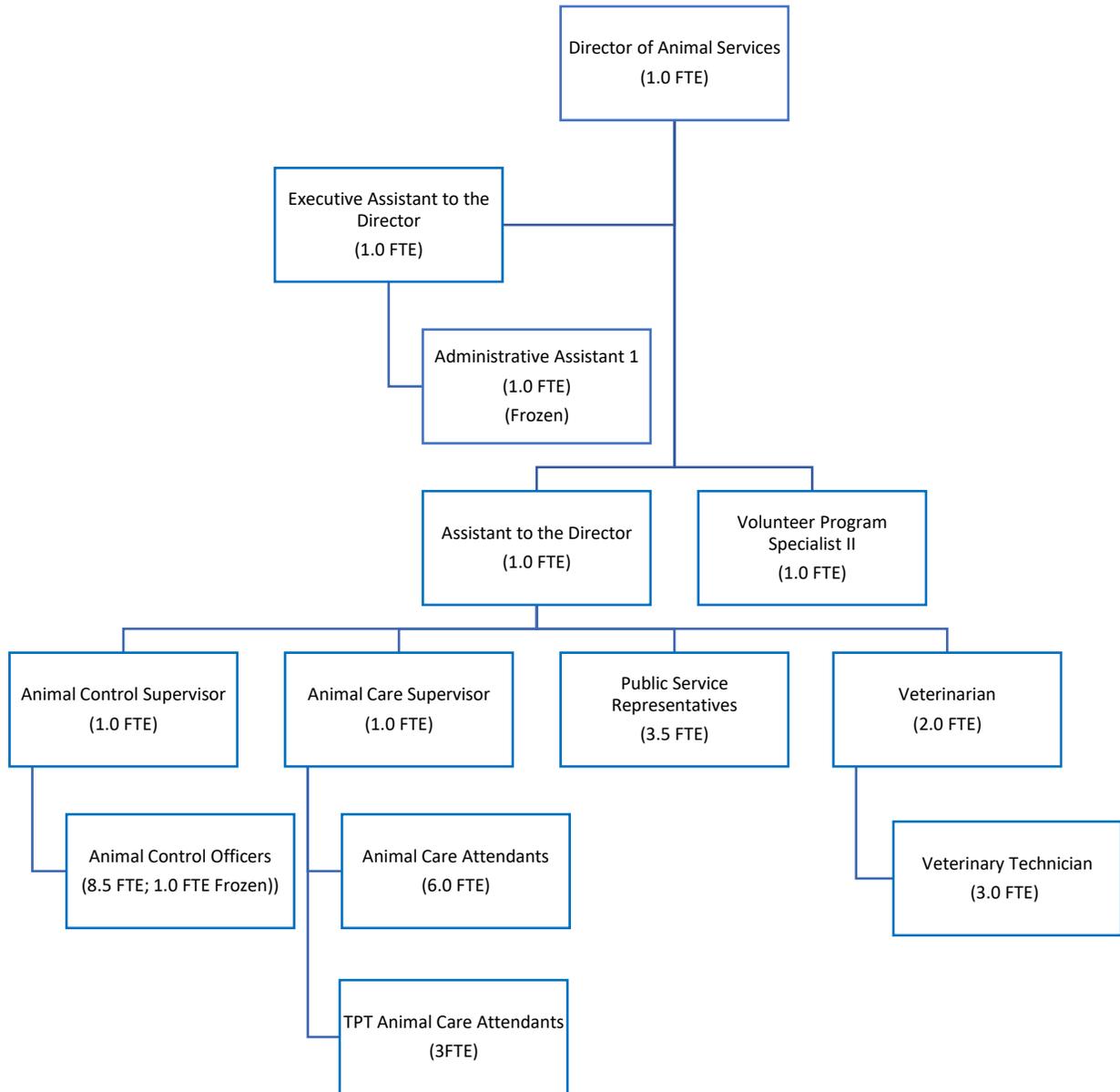
Prepared by:
Ann Dunn, Director

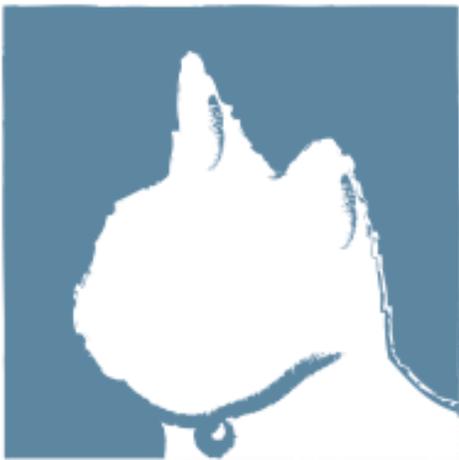
Attachments (2):

A: Oakland Animal Services Organizational Chart

B: Presentation – Status of Oakland Animal Services' Operations

Oakland Animal Services





OAKLAND ANIMAL SERVICES

Helping People and Animals in Oakland

Restructuring to a Community-Based Model



- Increase Accessibility
- Address Inequities in Animal Welfare
- Provide Access to Veterinary Care
- Increase Lifesaving for Shelter Animals



Increased Accessibility to Services

Increased open hours:

- From 20 hours, 6 days per week
- To 42 hours, 7 days per week

Flexible appointments available

Increased Animal Control Hours from 11.5 to 14.5 per day (with standby for all other hours)

Accessible Adoptions



Open for Walk-In Adoptions

Thursdays: 12:00-7:00PM

Friday-Sundays: 12:00-3:00PM

- No appointments needed
- Focus on removing barriers to adoption for all Oakland residents



Improvements to Animal Control Services

- Supporting low-income families to keep their pets
- Differentiating between limited resources and neglect
- Improved training on animal cruelty investigations
- Holistic approach to dog barking complaints
- Expanded services for injured wildlife

OAS Staffing

	Budgeted FY 21/22	Filled	Vacant	Frozen	Estimated Full-Staffing
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Access to Veterinary Care



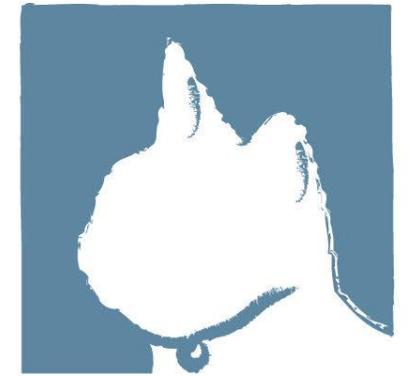
Monthly Outreach Clinics

- For pet guardians experiencing homelessness
- For Residents of East Oakland
- Over 1,000 owned animals helped

Outcome Team

- Kitten/Cat Foster Program
- Working Cat Program
- Hard-to-Place Dog Foster Program
- Rabbit Foster Program
- Transfer Coordinator
- Adoption Team
- HASS Coordinator

Friends of
OAKLAND ANIMAL SERVICES



C A R E • V O L U N T E E R • D O N A T E

Intake and Outcome Data 2019-2021

Trend: Intake is increasing

In 2020, intake dropped by 30% compared to 2019 (consistent with a national trend related to COVID-19)

Intake in 2021 was at 96% of 2019

Trend:
Transfers are
decreasing

Dogs

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Contact

Emergency: (510) 777-3333

Non-Emergency: (510) 535-5602

www.oaklandca.gov/departments/animal-services