

Position Paper - Fort Worth Animal Shelter

Executive Summary:

Our goal is to make Fort Worth one of the most pet-friendly in the nation. To accomplish that goal, the Fort Worth Animal Care & Control's mission is to find loving homes for all our shelter pets, protect them from neglect and cruelty, and promote humane awareness and compassion. Our purpose is to also decrease the number of unwanted and stray dogs and cats in the city, to encourage responsible animal ownership and to protect the city's public health, safety and welfare.

For the past several years the City of Fort Worth has been focused on increasing its animal shelter live release rate. The City has demonstrated its commitment to this effort by successfully implementing several new initiatives that have had positive results.

Those include:

- Medical Treatment Ward
- Volunteer Program
- Stray Team
- Enhanced preventive medicine protocols at the shelter
- Developed outdoors enrichment areas
- Expanded the Trap Neuter Release (TNR) program for community cats by creating a coalition of volunteers and non-profit organizations.
- Established low/no-cost spay/neuter programs with partner organizations as a means to reduce pet overpopulation and the number of animals abandoned at area shelters.
- Development of the Cowtown Crashpads, the shelter's foster program.

Additional projects that are in-process:

- Bond package shelter expansion.
 - Groundbreaking is expected in early 2016.
- The City enjoys strong partnerships with a diverse group of animal welfare agencies, including more than 100 local animal rescue groups. Efforts have been made to enhance these partnerships and provide incentives for rescue groups to make our shelter a desired partner. Part of these efforts include

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providing spay/neuter, vaccinations, and microchip services at no cost for every animal taken from our shelter by a rescue group.

- Increase pet licensing by enhancing options for all residents.
- Review and update of all animal-related city ordinances.

Much has been accomplished, but there is much more to do. Our efforts to date have resulted in a significant increase in our shelter live release rate from 30% in 2009 to a high of 85% in October 2015. FY 2015 sustained an average rate of 77%.

Healthy, adoptable animals are now finding new homes; however, we continue to strive to save more shelter animals with illness, injury or temperament issues that are potentially manageable or treatable with additional time and resources.

Below is a detailed overview of the City's ongoing plan to increase live outcomes with accomplishments to date specific to each objective.

The Plan:

GOAL # 1 – Reduce the number of animals coming to the shelter

Strategy 1.A. – Increase and promote Spay/Neuter

- a. Strengthen ordinances promoting S/N
- b. Ensure no adopted animal leaves the shelter unaltered
- c. Enhance and expand community S/N resources

Progress...

- ✓ Passed ordinance in 2009 requiring all pets be altered unless owner obtains an intact pet permit
- ✓ Spay/Neuter clinic built and opened Feb. 21, 2009 as part of shelter operations
- ✓ Continuing the partnerships with Texas Coalition for Animal Protection (TCAP) and the Spay Neuter Network to provide low/no-cost spay/neuter services in zip codes where the highest number of animal shelter intakes originate

Strategy 1.B. – Increase Licensing, Rabies Vaccination Rates & Micro chipping

- a. Increase percentage of animals with I.D. to prevent/shorten shelter stays
- b. Increase herd immunity – rabies

Progress...

- ✓ Established partnership with TCAP to provide low-cost vaccination clinics every Tuesday evening at the Fort Worth animal shelter.
- ✓ All animals adopted from shelter have City license and microchip prior to release.

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Strategy 1.C. – Implement Feral Cat Trap/Neuter/Release (TNR) Program

- a. Limit numbers of feral cats coming into shelter

Progress...

- ✓ A new TNR policy was adopted in 2012 with program implementation in 2013.
- ✓ Currently expanding the partnerships for program effectiveness to include Panther City Feral Cat Coalition.

GOAL #2 – Provide excellent care and a healthy environment for animals housed at the shelter

Strategy 2.A. – Enhanced Preventive Medicine / Vaccination Program at Shelter

- a. Reduce risk of shelter-acquired illness

Progress...

- ✓ Vaccinating every dog for Bordetella and Distemper at intake.
- ✓ Vaccinate all cats at intake or at surgery (ferals)
- ✓ Providing parasite treatment for all pets upon arrival at shelter

Strategy 2.B. – Medical Treatment Ward celebrated its first year of operations in October 2015. The MTW has provided non-stop services to hundreds of pets throughout this first year.

- a. Treat minor illness (i.e. kennel cough and others)
- b. Provide isolation ward for minor infections and illnesses

Progress...

- ✓ Continued partnership with the Community Foundation of North Texas (CFNT) for donation management of the program.

Strategy 2.C. – Bond Package – Shelter Expansion

- a. Construction documents have been finalized for the addition of approximately 100 kennels and outdoor exercise facilities for the animals.

GOAL #3 – Find owners or identify adoption or rescue homes for every animal coming to the shelter

Strategy 3.A. – Increase Reclaims and Rescues

- a. Provide assistance for financial hardships as barrier to reclaims.
- b. Provide incentives for rescue groups to expand work with City.
- c. Expand social media presence to promote real-time technology to connect reclaims, adopters and rescue groups.

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Progress...

- ✓ Provide free spay/neuter and vaccinations for all rescued animals prior to pick up (or animals can be brought back for services)
- ✓ Volunteers have developed a Facebook page that highlights available animals and consistently communicates directly with potential adopters and rescue groups

Strategy 3.B – Increase shelter pet adoptions

- a. Satellite adoption center(s)
- b. Mobile adoption expansion
- c. Expand community partnerships/promotions

Progress...

- ✓ Created national model in partnership with PetSmart Charities and private donors to establish two satellite adoption centers inside PetSmart stores
- ✓ Implemented several discount promotions and participate in PetSmart Charities quarterly national adoption events.
- ✓ Mobile adoption vehicle
- ✓ Several innovative marketing/promotion efforts include:
 - City of Fort Worth water bill inserts
 - Ambassador Henry, a rescued lab from the shelter has a Facebook page that promotes adoption and responsible pet ownership; attends community events, and school class rooms.
 - Ambassador Scout, an adopted cat from the shelter appears on the shelter's Facebook Page in support of responsible pet adoption and attends appropriate community events on behalf of all shelter cats.
 - Furrever Friday adoption promotion in partnership with the Fort Worth Police Department celebrated 100 shelter pet adoptions in September 2015.
 - Expanded our social media reach to include Instagram and Pinterest
 - In 2015 launched a strategic marketing and education campaign entitled "Fence Them In." The campaign's main message to residents is to fence, license and vaccinate your pet. The campaign is being conducted in a joint effort by Fort Worth Animal Care & Control, Code Compliance and the Fort Worth Police Department.
- ✓ Pet Finder / Petango web site participation.
- ✓ Regional annual adoption events to include Clear the Shelters with sponsor NBC Universal and Shelter Pets Rock.

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Strategy 3.C – Created the Cowtown Crashpads foster program

- a. Developed a business plan for foster program
- b. Developed operational guidelines and procedures
- c. Continue to recruit and train volunteer foster families
- d. Monitor the program for retention, animal care, etc.

CONCLUSION:

Fort Worth has much to be proud of in the area of animal welfare and great strides have been made in recent years, but there is more work to do.

We encourage advocates to participate in all of these efforts through volunteering at our shelter or at one of our PetSmart adoption centers, donating to our medical treatment ward project, our pet adoption programs and/or participating with viable non-profit rescue organizations to expand community capacity that will assist the City in further increasing its live release rate.

The Fort Worth animal shelter's live release rate is climbing. Through partnerships with other local groups, individuals and agencies, we are committed to further improving our live release rate and saving the lives of animals abandoned at our shelter.