MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR MARCIA MAYEDA

The last 18 months have been transformational in the field of animal welfare, and it required our Department to completely reinvent essential services. Thanks to the leadership, commitment, and compassion of DACC team members we rose to this challenge and emerged stronger and better positioned to be animal resource centers for our communities.

In this report you will read how DACC adapted its programs to meet the physical distancing and public health requirements in response to the pandemic, and how these new programs have reaped enormous benefits for the animals and people we serve. These programs have been adopted as our standard operating procedures and will continue as best practices even when the health crisis is behind us.

I cannot adequately express the pride and gratitude I have for our outstanding leadership team and every person who collaboratively worked to meet this challenge. It is a testament to their commitment to our mission and I am honored to serve as their leader. I have every confidence we will rise to whatever new challenges are presented in the future and continue to lead the way for serving the people and animals in our communities.
Providing Animal Services During a Pandemic

BACKGROUND

On March 16, 2020 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors ordered all County buildings closed to the public to reduce transmission of COVID-19. Because the Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) is an essential service that protects public safety and animal welfare, the Department implemented protocols to comply with the County order while maintaining our ability to provide these essential services. These new protocols have been very successful, and have been incorporated as standard operating procedures to be maintained when the County ends its closure order.

County animal care centers (ACCs) continue to admit animals that are:
- sick or injured
- dangerous
- in urgent need of rehoming
- seized pursuant to criminal investigations
- belong to people experiencing homelessness and need temporary boarding

All seven Animal Care Centers remained open throughout the pandemic, serving the public by appointment for on-site visits and 24/7 through our Communications Centers and on-line service requests. Animal Care Centers continue to reunite pets with their owners, transfer pets to Adoption Partners and adopt pets into new families.
Managed Intake
STREAMLINING SERVICES, IMPROVING OUTCOMES

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, DACC moved to a Managed Intake model for admitting animals into the ACCs. DACC reached out to animal sheltering organizations across the country such as the Human Animal Support Services (HASS) group, UC Davis Koret shelter medicine program, ASPCA, Best Friends, and other industry experts to learn and adopt best practices to maintain essential services. As a result, the animal welfare industry has re-envisioned animal sheltering best practices. The former practice of receiving animals into animal care centers without some measure of control had to be refined to provide better animal population management and customer service. DACC has greatly improved outcomes for animals by partnering with the community to identify alternatives to admission for stray and unhoused pets. This has also allowed us to provide better care for pets for whom sheltering is the best or only option because more resources are available for their care.

DACC recognizes that some animals must be immediately brought to an animal care center for their own safety or the safety of the public. Animals that pose a safety threat are immediately and safely admitted. Animals that are sick or injured are accepted immediately so medical assistance can be provided. Additional situations may include an owner’s sudden and complete inability to provide care, animal cruelty and neglect cases, and other special circumstances. DACC established same day appointments to address these special circumstances.
Necessary Changes to Services Bring Unexpected Benefits

**APPOINTMENT-BASED AND CURBSIDE SERVICES**

During COVID-19, DACC implemented appointment-based and curbside services to accommodate the need to admit, adopt, return, and foster animals while observing physical distancing and closure requirements. Aside from allowing continuity of essential services, these changes have also greatly improved customer service and the ability to provide enhanced care to animals at the ACCs. DACC continues to provide appointment-based and curbside services because these changes have eliminated the long in-person customer waiting lines of the past. Every visit to an ACC is unique, and by using appointments to provide services DACC staff can better anticipate and plan for community needs. This gives DACC the ability to provide the attention and resources necessary for the best chance of a positive outcome for the people and pets we serve.

In addition to the benefits to customers, appointment-based services has improved the welfare of animals housed at our animal care centers. Prior to the COVID-19 closures, visitors could enter and wander freely through the buildings housing animals, which allowed viewing of animals at any time. After a few months of appointment-based services, it was noted that the animals were calmer, less stressed, and able to relax during the day. Dogs barked less and were able to nap during the day, and cats hid less frequently.

"We noticed that respiratory illnesses in cats and dogs decreased by over 50%. This is attributed not only to fewer animals in the care center, but also fewer people and a more controlled environment, contributing to a calmer and healthier experience for animals."

**DR. FUMIE YAMAMOTO**
**SENIOR VETERINARIAN**
Many times, pet owners don’t want to relinquish their pet but believe they have no options. In these cases, we recommend and offer resources such as referrals to free or low cost veterinary services, training and behavior assistance, free food and supplies, or other support to help keep the pet in the home.

*The most common reasons for pet surrender in Los Angeles County are medical care costs and housing issues.*

Other times pet owners are frustrated with behavioral problems or lack the resources to fix fencing or address other one-time or temporary needs, such as lack of food and supplies due to financial strain. Under Managed Intake, DACC staff discuss these concerns with owners and offer them resources to solve their issues and allow them to reconsider surrendering their pets.

*The best option for both people and pets is almost always for pets to remain in their current loving home.*

If a pet owner is still unable to keep their pet, DACC provides advice to owners about how to rehome their pets without having to surrender them to an animal care center. This can be a less stressful outcome for both pets and their owners. Managed Intake also saves DACC’s limited animal housing space for animals who have no other options. If the owner is unable to rehome their pet on their own, DACC will always accept the pet and seek the best possible outcome for that animal. DACC also assists pet owners experiencing homelessness or other serious but temporary situations, such as severe illness or domestic violence, by referring pet owners in need to resources for pet friendly housing, social services, free veterinary treatment, or free temporary pet boarding.
Managed Intake
GIVING LOST ANIMALS A BETTER CHANCE OF FINDING THEIR FAMILIES

Studies show that most stray animals are found within a few miles of their homes, and methods other than animal care center intake may more quickly and more economically reunite these lost pets with their families. DACC encourages people who have found lost pets to first attempt reuniting pets with their families by:

- Scanning for a microchip to identify owner contact information
- Using neighborhood and social media apps to publicize found pets
- Posting fliers in the neighborhood

When finders are not successful or are unable to make these efforts, DACC will accept the animals to ensure the safety of both animals and the public.

“Managed intake is the future of compassionate animal sheltering that allows us to assist the community and turn our in-care center focus to help the animals that need our help the most.”

MELISSA MCCORMIC
BEHAVIOR AND ENRICHMENT MANAGER

Managed Intake
A NEW WAY FOR COMMUNITY CATS

Healthy, adult, free roaming cats are now deferred from admission because they are thriving in their current environment. Many cats who appear stray have a home with free access to the outdoors. Bringing these cats to an animal care center removes them from their home, and owners generally don’t look for them at animal care centers. Unfortunately, the return to owner rate for owned cats is less than five percent nationwide. Other times, a home or group of homes is providing food and water to unowned neighborhood cats. These cats have established themselves as part of their neighborhood and do not need animal care center assistance. Any cats or kittens that are malnourished, ill, injured, or require assistance are welcomed at DACC so they can receive the care they need.

Prior to Managed Intake, approximately 50% of impounded cats were euthanized. That number has dropped to 31% because we are educating the public to allow healthy, adult cats to remain where they live.
Managed Intake
KITTENS

DACC launched a “Got Kittens?” campaign to address the seasonal influx of kittens into animal care centers. By educating the public about identifying whether kittens are truly abandoned by their mother and in need of immediate assistance or can stay where they are until they are old enough to be spayed or neutered and placed in a home. This approach is healthier for kittens and improves their chance to later be successfully adopted. If the kittens cannot be reunited with their mother, DACC provides fostering supplies to community members who care for them until they are old enough for adoption through DACC or other resources. Underage kittens impounded without their mothers are in fact the most common reason for animal euthanasia, and DACC is preventing the unnecessary impoundment and likely euthanasia of kittens by educating the community and expanding its foster program.
Managed Intake

A YEAR OF DATA SHOWS DRAMATIC CHANGES

A year of operating under Managed Intake has provided extensive data to indicate the success of this model. Intake among all seven County animal care centers has decreased by 46%. In fiscal year 2019-2020, 46,135 animals came into the care centers. In fiscal year 2020-2021, only 24,856 animals were impounded. Fewer incoming animals means that staff and volunteers are able to dedicate individual time and attention to assess, care for, and socialize the animals most in need. Improvements have been noted across our efforts, from behavior to medical to adoption programs.

By focusing resources on the animals in the care centers and providing individualized attention, we have seen positive outcomes for housed animals increased to 64% for cats and remained at 88% for dogs.

These outcomes made possible by organizations like the ASPCA's Pee Wee Kitten Program, Helen Sanders Cat Paws donations of foster supply kits, Petco Love, and the 389 Adoption Partner organizations who partner with DACC to increase lifesaving.
Managed Intake
FOSTER PROGRAM

DACC has greatly expanded its animal fostering program. More community members than ever before are providing foster homes for animals in need. Foster homes provide a more enriching environment for the animals than a care center kennel, give DACC staff more information about the animals’ personalities and suitably for placement, and free up space at the ACCs for other animals. DACC has implemented online foster volunteer training and program management to make it easy for more animal lovers to become foster volunteers. Foster caretakers play a crucial role, providing temporary homes for hundreds of cats, dogs, and other small animals. This provides socialization, individualized care, and increased opportunities for adoption. Foster homes also increase the community's involvement in finding placement solutions for animals.

To sign up to foster an animal, go to https://animalcare.lacounty.gov/become-a-foster-caretaker/
Veterinary Care

REDUCTION IN ILLNESS DUE TO LOWER STRESS

Elective medical procedures such as spay and neuter surgeries continue today while medical supplies remain in good supply. Public vaccine clinics were initially suspended as well but have resumed, and will continue by appointment only. Appointments are self-scheduled via the DACC website. The veterinary staff continue to provide medical exams to incoming animals and provide prompt and necessary medical treatment.

As a result of managed intake and appointment-based services, a significant decrease in respiratory disease was recorded in DACC’s animal population.

- Canine infectious respiratory disease complex (CIRDC) rates decreased by 53%, from 2,301 cases in 19-20 to 1089 in 20-21.
- Feline infectious respiratory disease complex (FIRDC) rates decreased by 82%, from 3,316 cases in 19-20 to 584 cases in 20-21.

Fewer animals in the animal care centers means the animals are calmer and less stressed, which leads to less incidence of respiratory illness. The medical teams can now focus on providing care to the animals that are sick and injured when they come into the care centers.
Public Safety
EMERGENCY RESPONSE

DACC responds to emergencies throughout our service area in Los Angeles County. Warmer temperatures and drier conditions mean the threat of wildfires remains constant. Prior to managed intake, the animal care centers operated at full capacity during fire season, limiting the ability for the Department to receive animals evacuated during an emergency. With managed intake, the animal care centers operate at a capacity that allows us to better respond to the community’s needs during a disaster.

“DURING THE BOBCAT FIRE, A COMMERCIAL BREEDING FACILITY WITH OVER 200 ANIMALS NEEDED ASSISTANCE WITH EVACUATION AND TEMPORARY SHELTERING. DACC WAS ABLE TO HOUSE THE ANIMALS AT THE SEVEN ANIMAL CARE CENTERS, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE BEFORE MANAGED INTAKE”

DANNY UBARIO
CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR
Public Safety
UNWAVERING FIELD RESPONSE

DACC animal control officers respond 24 hours/day, seven days a week to protect communities from dangerous animals; rescuing sick and injured animals; investigating animal cruelty, abuse, neglect, and illegal animal fighting; assisting city and county partners; assisting local law enforcement; removing deceased animals from public areas; enforcing local and state animal ordinances; and reuniting lost pets with their owners. Under Managed Intake, DACC officers make every effort to reunite stray pets while still in the field and help community members with solutions to keep their pets in a healthy and safe home. As the first line of contact for community pet issues, officers act as an information source and help direct community members to programs and resources.

National Recognition for Best Practices
DACC was invited to present at national conferences on Managed Intake and appointment-based services.


Services
PET LICENSING

DACC suspended its field license enforcement operations and reassigned officers to perform these duties from the ACCs at the onset of COVID-19. Enforcement continues through mail, email, and telephone contact with pet owners. Online licensing has been expanded so pet owners can license their pets without the need to physically come to an ACC. These practices will continue.

Pay by Phone at:
(877) U-PAY-PET or (877) 872-9738
The Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control is proud to provide essential services in line with its mission of leading the nation in protecting people and animals through compassionate care, community education, proactive intervention, and effective enforcement. Our staff are committed, courageous, and will always find ways to continue to help animals and ensure public safety no matter what unforeseen obstacles arise. DACC will maintain the new ways of providing services that have greatly improved outcomes for animals and enhanced services to pet owners. These include Managed Intake, providing resources to pet owners in need, and focused appointment-based services.

DACC acknowledges with gratitude the partnership and collaboration of the following organizations that provided generous support, guidance and partnership. Thank you for your commitment to the animals and people of Los Angeles County.

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)  
Annenberg Foundation  
Annenberg PetSpace  
Association for Animal Welfare Advancement (AAWA)  
Best Friends Animal Society  
CalAnimals  
California Community Foundation  

Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)  
Human Animal Support Services (HASS)  
Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation  
Maddie’s Fund  
Petco Love  
Petsmart Charities  
Rita Earl Photography  
UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program  
VCA Charities

"Implementing a County-wide managed intake program that meets today’s best practices at one of the world’s largest sheltering systems was a Herculean effort that has been closely watched and celebrated by the animal welfare community at large. This moment in animal welfare history will be marked by the bravery and leadership exemplified at Los Angeles County Animal Care Centers."

Cynthia Karsten, DVM, DABVP (Shelter Medicine Practice)  
KORET Shelter Medicine Program, UC Davis

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