

FY 2026-2027 BUDGET QUESTION
Response to Request for Information

DEPARTMENT(S): Austin Animal Services;

CBQ NO.: 103

REQUESTED BY: (District 6) Krista Laine

DATE REQUESTED: Wednesday, July 29, 2026 1:08 PM

DATE POSTED:

REQUEST:

What are the city's current standards for humane care for animals at the shelter? Do we currently meet those standards 100% of the time, and if not, what would it cost to do so?

RESPONSE:

Austin Animal Services is committed to providing humane care for every animal in its custody. Humane care encompasses more than providing food, water, and shelter; it also includes timely access to medical care, behavioral assessment and enrichment, daily sanitation, appropriate exercise and socialization, safe housing, and sufficient staffing to meet each animal's physical and behavioral needs while facilitating timely movement to positive outcomes.

Austin Animal Services' humane care standards are informed by nationally recognized sheltering best practices, including:

- Daily food, water, and sanitation;
- Appropriate veterinary care and disease prevention;
- Behavioral assessment, enrichment, and opportunities for exercise;
- Safe housing that minimizes stress and disease transmission;
- Opportunities for adoption, foster, transfer, or return to owner as quickly as appropriate; and
- Adequate staffing to safely and humanely care for animals throughout their shelter stay.

Austin Animal Services provides essential daily care for every animal in its custody. However, the department cannot consistently achieve all elements of sheltering best practices during periods when the animal population exceeds the shelter's operational capacity.

Because dog intake has exceeded positive outcomes for several consecutive years, the shelter has experienced sustained overcrowding. To continue accepting and caring for animals, Austin Animal Services has utilized temporary housing solutions, including pop-up crates and non-public isolation or overflow kennels. While these spaces allow the

department to maintain open-intake operations during periods of increased demand, they are not intended as long-term housing solutions and require additional staffing to ensure animals receive appropriate exercise, enrichment, behavioral support, medical monitoring, and daily care.

As a result, sustained overcrowding affects the department's ability to consistently provide the level of individualized care associated with sheltering best practices, including behavioral enrichment, training, social interaction, and timely movement to positive outcomes.

Expanding animal housing capacity would allow Austin Animal Services to better manage population fluctuations, reduce reliance on temporary housing solutions, and more consistently maintain humane standards of care. Accordingly, staff supports a proposed \$3.0 million bond investment to address the Austin Animal Shelter's capacity limitations. Once the expanded shelter capacity is designed, the staffing needed to operate the expanded facility can be identified and the associated operating costs estimated.