



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Don Bland, Chief Animal Services Officer *Don Bland*
Austin Animal Services

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager

DATE: June 26, 2023

SUBJECT: **Council Member Kelly's Memo of Concerns at Austin Animal Center**

This memorandum is in response to the memorandum Council Member Kelly sent to Interim City Manager Garza on June 12, 2023 about her concerns at the Austin Animal Center (AAC).

We are excited to report that between June 11, 2023, and June 18, 2023, AAC received 259 animals and found outcomes for 390 animals. This is the first time in several months that outcomes have exceeded intake. We appreciate the support from our volunteers, partners, staff, and the community for coming together to assist us in our time of need.

When the AAC opened in 2011, it had enough space to accommodate 309 dogs and 165 cats. As of the week of June 12, 2023, the center had 562 dogs and 669 cats. To maximize space, when all designated dog kennels are occupied, the AAC has been forced to utilize non-kennel areas to house impounded dogs. In the past, these areas have included the facility's truck port, a large conference room, hallways and in some instances, offices. These dogs are housed in large crates and have limited area to move comfortably. Although these measures are meant to be temporary, the reality is that some of the dogs will stay in these crates for a number of weeks. When available, AAC will also utilize half of the non-public kennels designated for rabies quarantine cases and law enforcement cases to maximize space.

Since last summer, AAC had to utilize the truck port to house crates. The area was cooled by Portacool evaporative cooling fans AAC was able to attain. However, when staff tried to utilize the cooling fans this summer, they did not work. Animal Services Office (ASO) is working with Building Services Department (BSD) to replace the fans but there is currently no set delivery date. Additionally, BSD will attempt to fix the broken fans to facilitate a habitable temperature in the area.

ASO is currently in the process of converting an indoor storage room into additional surgery recovery kennel space for large dogs. In preparation for the eventual construction, the room was empty. With the recent heatwave, staff moved the dogs housed on the truck port into this space. The number of dogs the room can hold is limited but since available space is already maximized, there is not currently another option. Due to the extreme heat and cooling equipment problems, Animal Services staff published emergency heat related foster pleas on social media in hopes of generating interest to help alleviate space. The community responded and ASO was able to creatively find space to move dogs out of the storage room. At the beginning of the week there were more than 40 dogs in crates, but because of adoption, fostering, and community and staff support, only 10 dogs remain crated.

Status of the space recommendations from the Animal Advisory Commission

In 2021, the Animal Advisory Commission created a working group to develop recommendations on space. Their report was provided to the Commission on August 9, 2021. Staff provided a response to the report, and it was included as backup for the meeting. Ultimately, the Commission voted to send the recommendations to the City Council. The working group recommendations can be found [here](#) and the staff response can be found [here](#).

It has been almost two years since this report was produced. ASO's contracted community spay/neuter partner, Emancipet, has been able to increase the number of surgeries that they can perform each month and are on track to be at pre-pandemic levels this quarter. The ASO conducted surgeries have never been a roadblock to ensuring an animal goes home. Excluding animals that are on some type of hold (stray, medical or law enforcement) AAC has 65 surgical candidates available for surgery. This includes 24 cats and 37 dogs over 40 pounds, and four dogs under 40 pounds. Depending on the day of the week, ASO's in-house veterinarians will do 18-40 spay/neuter surgeries a day, plus all other lifesaving surgeries and emergencies as necessary.

Frequency of walks for dogs

The ASO rabies quarantine kennels (located in the 600 wing) consist of 40 non-public kennels utilized for dogs who are under rabies observation, or law enforcement holds (trial cases and serious bodily injury cases). As mentioned, some of these kennels are used for space management and hold available dogs. The following is a breakdown of the current population in the Rabies Quarantine building:

- Ten animals are currently off hold/quarantine and are walked by our paid dog walking staff. These dogs are also provided in-kennel enrichment.
- Seven dogs that cannot be walked are being held for rabies quarantine observation.
- Five dogs that cannot be walked are being held for serious bodily injury investigations.
- Sixteen dogs are on court hold with active investigations, depending upon the type of hold/investigation. Some of these may be walked by staff when the center is not open to the public.

All dogs receive in-kennel enrichment. Each of the kennels in this building have inside/outside access for the animals. Based upon the State of Texas rabies quarantine rules that ASO must follow, limited staff is allowed into the quarantine facility, and access for the public or volunteers is prohibited by law.

Large Adult Dog's Report

The following chart shows the number of large dog intakes that occur each month and the number of large dogs that are adopted, returned to their owner, and transferred each month for the last two fiscal years.

Intake of Large Dogs vs Large Dog Adoptions/RTOs/Strays and Surrenders/Transfers

FY22	Total Intake	Strays and Surrenders	Adoption/RTOs	Transfers
October	421	387	290	38
November	432	400	293	72
December	476	432	326	44
January	401	367	260	57
February	336	303	223	41
March	390	354	246	57
April	394	335	254	57
May	398	347	241	51
June	360	320	242	52
July	409	357	258	32
August	461	422	306	49
September	355	324	214	48
FY23	Total Intake	Strays and Surrenders	Adoption/RTOs	Transfers
October	412	370	234	52
November	357	315	217	29
December	383	344	197	20
January	388	354	237	29
February	358	324	185	24
March	389	352	214	30
April	405	360	189	24
May	404	356	143	35

Over the last year and a half, the intake of large dogs continue to outpace outcomes- even after the ASO restricted intake in September of last year. ASO will continue to waive fees as we work to find forever homes for all animals.

Please contact me at 512-978-0521 or don.bland@austintexas.gov should you have any questions.

CC: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager