



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager *SHH*

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

DATE: July 1, 2024

SUBJECT: **Austin Animal Center Capacity Challenges- Closing Intake**

It is critical that we share the crisis point that the Austin Animal Center (AAC) has reached, resulting in the need to close intake from the public until further notice. Starting July 2, the AAC will no longer accept owner surrender and healthy stray animals. AAC will take critical emergencies only via Animal Protection Officers, including animals that present a clear public safety risk or are experiencing life-threatening illness or injury.

Background

For several years, the AAC has been at or above capacity for the medium to large dog population. Between June 24 and June 26, AAC impounded 149 cats and dogs. During the same period, only 124 cats and dogs were either adopted, rescued, or put in a foster home. On average, AAC impounds 14 more animals every week than it is able to find outcomes for, such as foster, adoption, or rescue. This month, the capacity challenges have begun impacting both small dog and cat populations as well, despite limiting daily intake hours to 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Previous memos detailing these challenges and steps taken to address them were issued on [March 29, 2024](#), [May 8, 2024](#), and [May 23, 2024](#).

In hopes of finding assistance, AAC shares the following information daily with our partnering rescue organizations, including:

- AAC's current capacity status
- Information about animals available for foster or adoption
- Reminders that we are offering rescue organizations:
 - \$500 for pulling a dog that opens a large kennel;
 - \$250 for small dog transfer; and
 - \$50 for cat transfers.

AAC continues to take steps to create space, including:

- Sending dogs to and identifying additional boarding facilities that can house impounded animals. Currently, 24 AAC dogs are in private boarding facilities at cost of \$5,000-\$6,000 per week;

- Contracting extra days with a high volume spay/neuter veterinarian to expedite surgeries;
- Continuing a VIP adoption program which gives dog adopters a trial period with support from the shelter;
- Continuing the finder-to-foster program to help community members with found pets;
- Utilizing two additional temporary positions to assist with foster program coordination;
- Hosting and promoting adoption and fostering such as the foster [matchmaking event](#) held this past Saturday, June 29; and
- Waiving adoption fees.

AAC asks that residents who need assistance with an injured or loose animal take the following steps:

- Call 311, advise them that you need assistance with an injured or loose animal, and ask to speak with an Animal Protection Officer.
- Wait for the Animal Protection Officer to pick up the animal. Do not bring the animal to the shelter.
- If you have found a loose pet that is not injured, please visit AAC's [Lost & Found Pet website](#) for guidance.

AAC is committed to reopening intake as soon as appropriate kennel space is available for all populations of animals. We have reached a critical juncture and my team, and I are struggling. We care deeply for these animals and want them all to find homes. But, quality of life is important too. If closing intake combined with promoting outcomes does not result in appropriate space, then AAC will have no choice but to move forward with euthanasia notices as described in City Code Chapter [3-1-26](#).

AAC remains open for adoption and reclaim, Monday through Sunday from 11am to 7pm. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 512-978-0565.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
CMO Executive Team
Pilar Sanchez, County Executive, Travis County