

CAPACITY FOR CARE

Mendocino County
Animal Care Services

Capacity for Care - Purpose

- ▣ The purpose of the Capacity for Care Assessment was to find ways to process the animals through the shelter in a faster manner, maximize the use of current resources and improve the animals mental & physical conditions during their time at the shelter.

Capacity for Care - Introduction

- ▣ Capacity for care means meeting the needs of each animal admitted to the shelter, whether feral, friendly, stray, owner surrendered or young & old.
- ▣ Every shelter organization has a maximum capacity for care and the population in their care must not exceed that level.

Flow Capacity

- ▣ No amount of physical holding capacity will be sufficient to resolve issues with homeless and abandoned animals in a community.
- ▣ The goal is to have sufficient humane housing & care to support an optimal length of stay for the anticipated intake.
- ▣ Physical capacity below the required level or inadequate quality will result in constant overcrowding, compromised welfare, increased disease levels, greater cost and euthanasia.

Optimal Length of Stay

- ▣ The optimal length of stay is defined as the shortest possible time to reach the best possible “result” for each animal.
- ▣ Optimal length of stay is an average, not a time limit and includes sufficient time to evaluate the behavioral & medical requirements of each animal, perform any needed services (spay & neuter surgery) prior to adoption and make the animal available for adoption or rescue.

Optimal Length of Stay

- ▣ Holding animals longer is not itself a means to save lives and rushing to euthanasia is not a means to optimize length of stay.
- ▣ Reduced length of stay is linked to increased life-saving success.

Length of Stay Recommendations

- ▣ Monitor and function within shelter's optimum daily population of 48 dogs & 7 puppies and 24 cats & 15 kittens.
- ▣ Utilize the monthly C4C/Magic Number calculator to determine the in-shelter population.
- ▣ Identify or hire an "Animal Flow Specialist" to coordinate admission with owner surrenders, foster returns, feral cats, surgery scheduling, adoption and rescue.

Length of Stay Recommendations

- ▣ Have the “Animal Flow Specialist” conduct daily population rounds to ensure efficient and effective flow of animals and to identify animals needs/risks as soon as possible.
- ▣ Hold adoption specials to get optimum shelter population.
- ▣ Utilize a waiting list and schedule admissions for healthy owner surrendered animals & stray feral cats.

Length of Stay Recommendations

- ▣ Create coordinated communication amongst all employees so that the public receives the consistent message regarding what to do with underage kittens, healthy stray cats and where to look for their lost pets.
- ▣ Develop public messaging and web based resources providing positive alternatives to bringing healthy lost and unwanted animals to the shelter.

Length of Stay Recommendations

- ▣ Use portalized steel cages for primary flow of cats & kittens in adoption, holding, feral and isolation rooms.
- ▣ Purchase additional portals for steel cages that house cats & kittens.
- ▣ Manage dog population such that all dogs are housed in double compartment kennels for their entire stay.

Length of Stay

- ▣ The average length of stay for adult cats is 61 days and adult dogs is 39 days.
- ▣ Having the animals wait for spay & neuter surgeries and housing a population above the Capacity for Care are major contributors to the long length of stay for the shelter animals.
- ▣ The ideal length of stay should be 14 days or less.

Reducing Length of Stay

- ▣ Match the surgical availability at time of intake.
- ▣ Manage intake through scheduling the intake of healthy, stray cats and owner surrendered animals through the Animal Flow Specialist.
- ▣ Adjust the adoption process to be more welcoming and accessible.

Housing Recommendations - Cats

- ▣ Provide double compartment housing for all dogs & cats individually housed.
- ▣ Provide at least 18 square feet of housing per cat in the “Group” housing area.
- ▣ Provide minimum cat cage housing of 4’ feet long by 28” inches deep by 2’ high.
- ▣ Strive to be at 60-80% capacity.
- ▣ Utilize visual barriers/hiding places for cats in cages to reduce stress.

Housing Recommendations - Dogs

- ▣ House all available adoptable or stray dogs on a pathway to adoption in the inside kennels.
- ▣ Only allow public to have access to only the middle isle of the inside kennels.
- ▣ Place bedding, food & water on the side the public has access to.
- ▣ House overflow stray hold, confiscated dogs via Animal Control & Law Enforcement, aggressive dogs and bite quarantine dogs in the back kennels.

Adoption Recommendations

- ▣ Revise adoption requirements to not be as strict.
- ▣ Revise language on adoption process on website to be more welcoming.
- ▣ Ensure all marketing is short, positive and highlights a special quality about the pet.
- ▣ Create a tiered adoption fee schedule.
- ▣ Use holiday and theme adoption events to promote groups of animals

Adoption Recommendations

- ▣ Allow volunteers to take adoptable pets to pet friendly places in the community.
- ▣ Have dogs wear “Adopt Me” vest.
- ▣ Have business cards and shelter information made up for volunteers showing the adoptable pets.
- ▣ The above recommendations will results in more adoptable pets exposure to potential adopters in the community.

Cat Enrichment

- ▣ Provide all cats in caged housing a scratching surface.
- ▣ Provide all cats the ability to hide by covering a portion of the front of the cage with a towel.
- ▣ Provide an elevated bed or shelf with a towel or fleece blanket if possible.

Dog Enrichment

- ▣ Institute a daily quiet hour that closes off the kennels to all visitors & staff.
- ▣ Encourage volunteers to do quiet activities with dogs like sitting & reading or sitting in the sun & relaxing.
- ▣ Install sealed concrete in the front puppy play yard – this would allow this area to be disinfected properly.

Reducing Length of Stay Benefits

- ▣ Lower stress for cats & dogs.
- ▣ Reduced disease transmissions and injuries.
- ▣ Fewer animals requiring treatment.
- ▣ Improved behavioral presentation in kennels due to staff being in a position to conduct more routine obedience training with the dogs.

Reducing Length of Stay Benefits

- ▣ Additional time for staff to focus on customer service and other activities that enhance the animals behavior and improve the live release rate.
- ▣ Increased foot traffic associated with a more welcoming and attractive facility.
- ▣ Reduction in cost to Mendocino County due to sheltering animals for a shorter duration of time.

Holding Period – Owned Animals

- ▣ A legal notice to be mailed by certified mail to the owner, or keeper of such animal at their residence or regular place of business, if such **owner or keeper is known.**
- ▣ Such notice shall state that the animal has been impounded, shall give the date and place of impoundment, shall describe the animal, shall state that if the animal is not claimed within ten (10) days of the mailing of such notice, or a longer period if stated in such notice, and that such animal will be disposed of in accordance with county policy.

Holding Period – Stray Animals

- ▣ The required holding period for a stray dog or cat impounded pursuant to this Chapter shall be six (6) business days, not including the day of impoundment, except as follows:
- ▣ If the animal shelter has made the dog or cat available for owner redemption on one weekday evening until at least 7:00 p.m. or one weekend day, the holding period shall be **(4) four business days.**

Holding Period – Stray Animals

- ▣ If the animal shelter has fewer than three full-time employees or is not open during all regular weekday business hours, and if it has established a procedure to enable owners to reclaim their dog or cat by appointment at a mutually agreeable time when the shelter would otherwise be closed, the holding period shall be four business days, not including the day of impoundment.

Holding Period – Stray Animals

- ▣ Pursuant to Fd. & Agr. Code Section 17006, animals that are irremediably suffering from a serious illness or severe injury shall not be held for owner redemption or adoption.
- ▣ Except as provided in Fd. & Agr. Code Section 17006, stray dogs and cats shall be held for owner redemption during the first three (3) days of the holding period, not including the day of impoundment, and shall be available for owner redemption or adoption for the remainder of the holding period.

Holding Period – Stray Animals

- ▣ Newborn animals that need maternal care and have been impounded without their mothers may be euthanized without being held for owner redemption or adoption.

Holding Period – Feral Cats

- ▣ If an apparently feral cat has not been reclaimed by its owner or caretaker within the first three (3) days of the required holding period, shelter personnel qualified to verify the temperament of the animal shall verify whether it is feral or tame by using a standardized protocol.
- ▣ If the cat is determined to be docile or a frightened or difficult tame cat, the cat shall be held for the entire required holding period specified in Section 10.24.090 (A).

Holding Period – Feral Cats

- ▣ If the cat is determined to be truly feral, the cat may be euthanized or relinquished to a nonprofit, as defined in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, animal adoption organization that agrees to the spaying or neutering of the cat if it has not already been spayed or neutered.

Holding Period – Other Animals

- ▣ Holding periods for any rabbit, guinea pig, hamster, pot-bellied pig, bird, lizard, snake, turtle, or tortoise legally allowed as personal property impounded shall be held for the same period of time, under the same requirements of care, and with the same opportunities for redemption and adoption by new owners or nonprofit, as defined in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, animal rescue or adoption organizations as cats and dogs. Food and Agricultural Section 17006 shall also apply to these animals.

Holding Period – Owner Surrendered Animals

- ▣ The period for owner redemption shall be one (1) day, not including the day of impoundment.
- ▣ Pursuant to Fd. & Agr. 17006, animals that are irremediably suffering from a serious illness or severe injury shall not be held for owner redemption or adoption.
- ▣ Newborn animals that need maternal care and have been impounded without their mothers may be euthanized without being held for owner redemption or adoption.

Veterinarians

- ▣ In early 2017, the Animal Shelter established a contract with DVM Patricia Humphrey to be the primary part-time Veterinarian of record for Mendocino County.
- ▣ The Animal Shelter is currently working with a rotation (7) Veterinarians that work in the Clinic or Caravan.
- ▣ Starting July 1, 2017, the Veterinarians will start receiving per diem for their mileage to and from the Animal Shelter.