

VENTURA COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES

Saving Lives Each And Every Day

2019 Annual Report &
10-Year Trend Analysis



Cover Photo by:

Mike McSween
@RescueFotos



A message from the Director



Jackie Rose

It is my pleasure to present our first Ventura County Animal Services Annual Report and to highlight the amazing work done by our staff and volunteers. I had the great fortune of joining VCAS this past year in May of 2019 and am thrilled to work with so many highly dedicated and talented people. I am truly impressed with the exceptional work our staff and volunteers do each and every day!

This report highlights the comprehensive services provided by VCAS and illustrates the tremendous progress we have made over the past ten (10) years. The animal welfare industry has traditionally followed the "animal control" model which focuses primarily on the impound of stray animals and the enforcement of public safety regulations. Over the years VCAS has transitioned to an "animal services" model dedicated to fostering the well-being of animals and people in our communities. We have developed creative programming devoted to life-saving efforts and have successfully achieved 90% or greater live release rate for animals entering our shelter. Such programming includes the expansion of our adoption services, the establishment of our Pet Retention and Working Whiskers programs, and the growth of our Volunteer Programs. We have placed a greater emphasis on the education and support to pet owners through our Field Services. We are extremely proud of our progress and are looking forward to continued enhancements over the next several years.

One of the most exciting changes is our hope to build a new shelter to replace our almost 40-year-old Camarillo Campus. While we are still in the very preliminary planning stages of this project, we have met with industry experts to help design a new facility to meet the needs of this ever-changing field. We are committed to providing exceptional care to thousands of animals for the next 40 years and are looking forward to the creation of a facility that meets this goal.

Lastly, I am extremely grateful to everyone who supports our daily efforts. We could not do our jobs without the amazing support of our community. Thank you to each and every one of you who have volunteered, donated, or supported our life-saving mission in any way, shape or form.

With gratitude,

Jackie



About Us

Ventura County Animal Services (VCAS) offers a wide array of programs and services to the residents and animals of Ventura County. These services include animal sheltering, pet adoptions, lost & found, field services, cruelty investigations, pet licensing, low-cost vaccination clinics, volunteer and foster opportunities and emergency disaster response.



VCAS operates two open admission, life-saving, municipal animal shelters in the County of Ventura. The Camarillo Shelter, the main shelter, is located between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara Counties and houses the Administrative Offices and Veterinary Hospital. The Camarillo Shelter has a 400-animal capacity which can increase to over 900 during declared natural disasters.

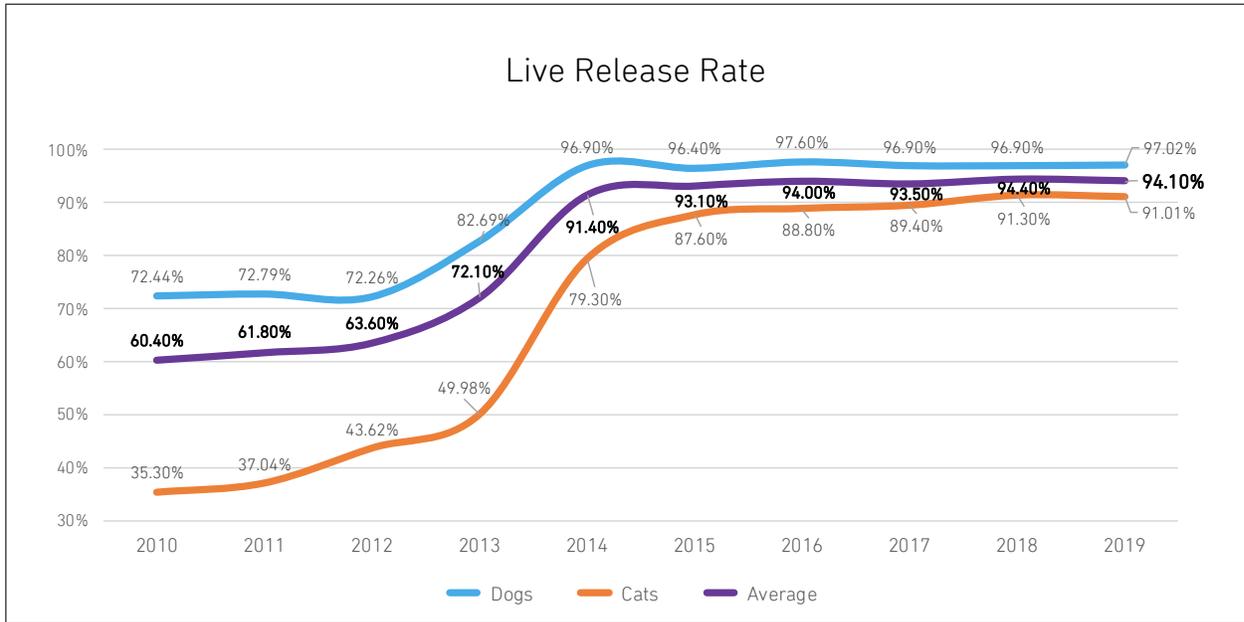
The Simi Valley Animal Shelter is located three miles from Moorpark College and can house 40 animals. The Simi Shelter is a smaller facility offering many of the same services as the Camarillo Shelter, such as the intake of stray and surrendered animals, pet adoptions, pet licensing, and the reclaim of lost animals.

VCAS provides contract services to the residents of Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Simi Valley, Ventura, and all unincorporated areas of Ventura County. VCAS is dedicated to improving the lives of the animals in their care, and to safeguard the community through rabies suppression and the sheltering of stray animals.

2019 Highlights



11,708	TOTAL ANIMAL INTAKE
8,465	Stray Pets
1,463	Surrendered pets
2,316	Lost Animal Reunited
5,726	Pet Adoptions
55,633	Pet Licenses Processed
112,641	Volunteer Hours



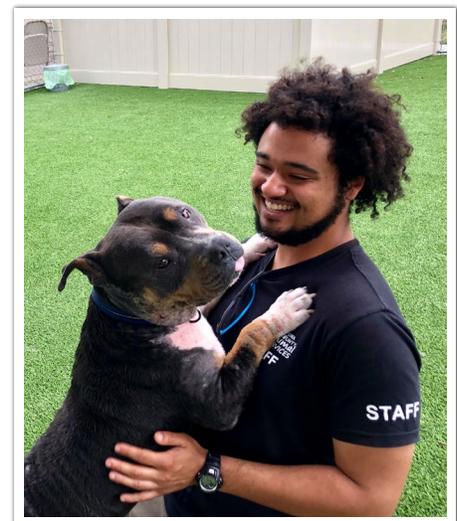
Live Release Rate (LRR) is the percent of animals leaving the shelter by means other than euthanasia or natural death. VCAS has sustained a Live Release Rate of 90% or higher since January 2014.

In 2012, Ventura County Animal Services embarked on an unprecedented life-saving mission that changed the very foundation of our department. **We ended the humane euthanasia of healthy, adoptable or treatable animals!** This meant that animals entering our shelter system no longer had a time limit. They were no longer “at-risk” due to lack-of-space or their length-of-stay. As a result of this change, however, our shelter was now at a constant state of overcapacity. But we were not deterred! We pushed forward! We succeeded!

Over the next few years we created new programs essential to our new mission. We utilized the no-kill equation as a roadmap to saving lives. We created new positions such as an Animal Behaviorist to assess and address behavior concerns, a Foster Coordinator to place shelter animals with temporary foster parents, a Marketing Manager to tell our story and advertise shelter pets, a Rescue Coordinator to work with non-profit animal rescue groups, and a Volunteer Coordinator to recruit and manage the hundreds of animal-loving individuals who, quite literally, **we could not operate without!**

In 2014, after 18 months of vigorous, non-stop program building, grant writing, and policy making, we passed a 90% Live Release Rate, but our goal was much more than a number; it was sustainability. To maintain this exceptional level of life-saving practices, we needed community support and positive collaboration with all stakeholders within the county. And we have done that! We have forged dozens of partnerships in the community and we are extremely proud of what we have accomplished.

We are 100% committed to life-saving practices and are extremely proud of the progress we have made over the past six years.



Volunteering

Volunteers are 100% essential to our live-saving efforts! They are the lifeblood of dozens of shelter programs and they have enhanced every department at Ventura County Animal Services with their dedication and compassion. Without volunteer support we could not function the way we do. Though it would be impossible to list every way volunteers impact the shelter, we would like to recognize a few programs are 100% based on volunteer support:



VCAS Volunteer Program (Established 2011)

This is the main volunteer program at VCAS where people make a difference in the daily lives of our animals. This program feeds into every other volunteer-based program. Volunteering is easy and there are many ways you can help. Learn more at www.vcas.us/Volunteer.



VCAS Bunny Brigade (Established 2009)

This program has no equal at VCAS or across the nation! Our Bunny Brigade is a 100% volunteer-run team who are responsible for every aspect of rabbit welfare from intake to adoption. They provide exceptional care for all rabbits who enter our shelter system and are highly knowledgeable and extremely dedicated! Join the brigade. Learn more at www.vcas.us/BunnyBrigade.



VCAS EVRT Team (Established 1985)

EVRT is the Emergency Volunteer Rescue Team. This is an on-call emergency volunteer group who are activated by VCAS during declared disasters. This team assists in the evacuation of livestock and domestic animals during declared emergencies.



Animal Services Foundation of Ventura County (Established 1986)

The Animal Services Foundation of Ventura County is dedicated to fundraising activities on behalf of VCAS. Our board consists of dedicated and compassionate individuals who help to support our daily efforts to provide the highest quality of care to our animals. Learn more at www.VCASfoundation.org.



Foster Care Program

VCAS Foster Care Program (Established 2014)

Truly dedicated and selfless members of the county open their homes and hearts to shelter pets in need. Some take on whole litters of kittens who need around-the-clock feedings while others provide a quiet space for stressed animals to rest, recover or rejuvenate. Learn more at www.vcas.us/Foster.



VCAS Humane Education Program (Established 2016)

This youth education program is managed by a single, dedicated volunteer who works with local schools to provide education regarding the wellbeing and welfare of animals. This program culminates with a field trip to the Camarillo Animal Shelter where they continue their learning with hands-on animal experience.



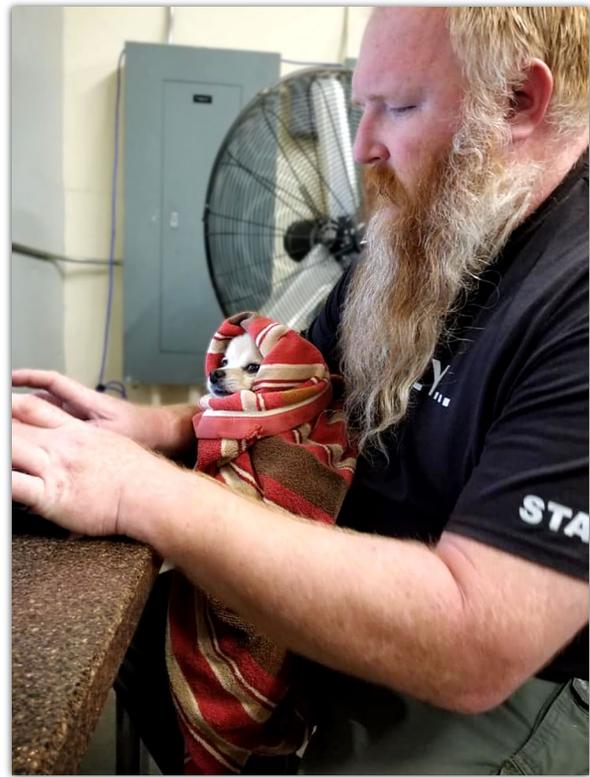
VCAS Rescue Readers Program (Established 2018)

This innovative program provides an opportunity for children ages 4-14 to read to shelter pets as an enrichment activity. There are many benefits to this program. Children gain confidence from reading aloud while animals benefit from the social interaction. Learn more at www.vcas.us/RescueReaders.

New Arrivals

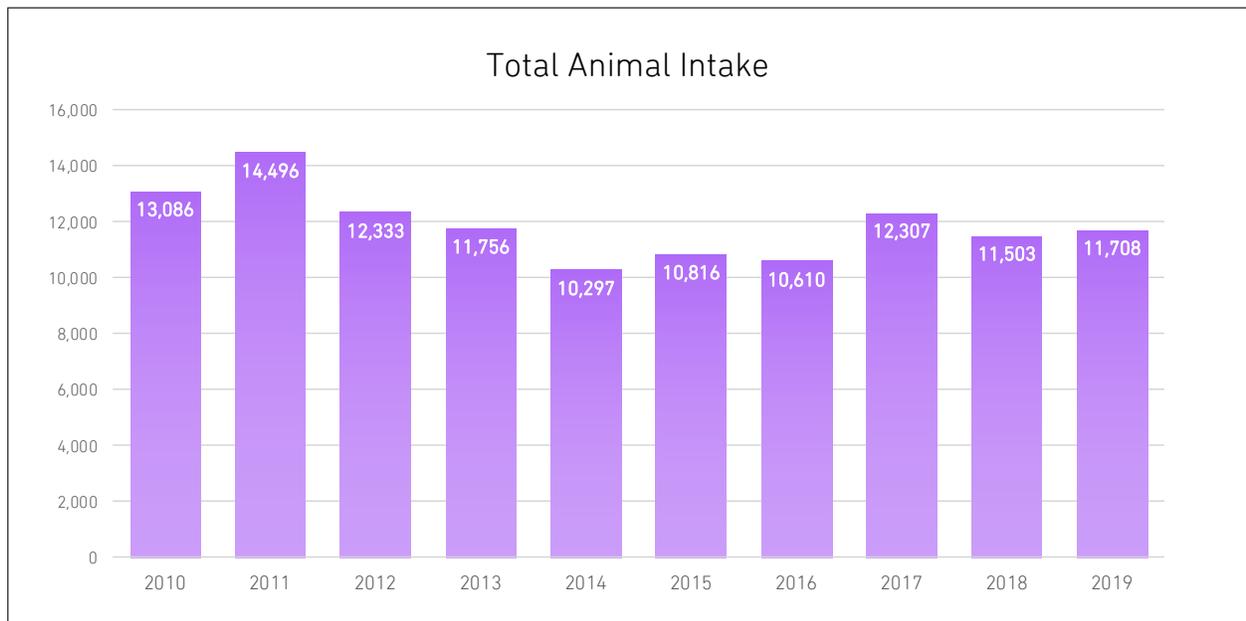
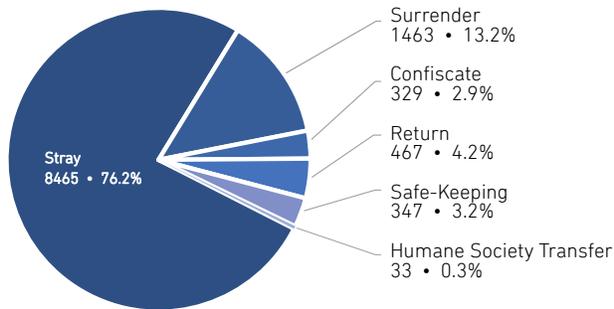
Ventura County Animal Services is an open admission municipal shelter. We accept all domestic animals within our jurisdiction.

Entering the shelter system can be a frightening experience for many animals. However, from the moment an animal arrives, they are in very loving and experienced hands. Our compassionate staff are trained to work with a multitude of animal species and breeds, from tiny kittens to 150-pound Rottweilers. If animals arrive presenting with an immediate medical condition or injury, our amazing VCAS Veterinary Team provides care and treatment to stabilize their condition.



VCAS also admits injured wildlife and works with local wildlife rehabilitation centers who provide continued care.

2019 Animal Intakes: 11,707 Total

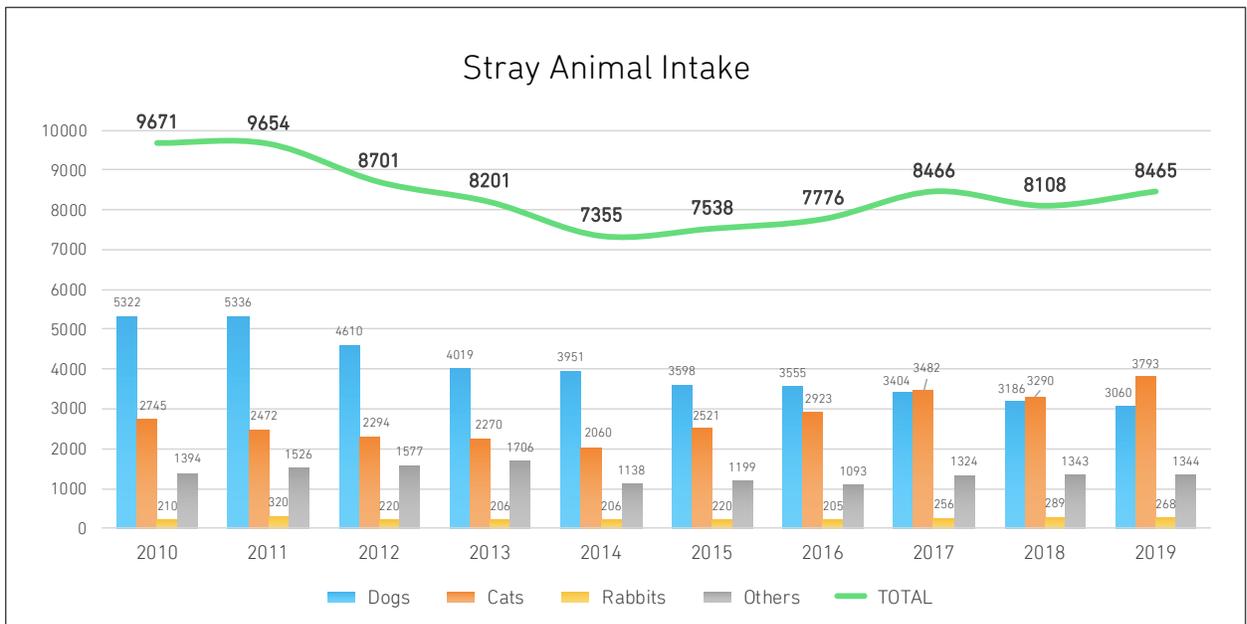


Stray Animals

Stray animals are those brought in by Animal Control Officers or by Good Samaritans. In 2019, stray animals made up approximately **76%** of animals arrivals.

Upon intake, all animals are scanned for a microchip, vaccinated, photographed, weighed, and flea-treated by a fully-trained and compassionate Animal Control Officer. The information they record is uploaded to their pet profile on our VCAS website. Their profile consists of the animal's name (if they came in with one), breed, color, gender, age, size, weight, arrival date, available date, city found and kennel number.

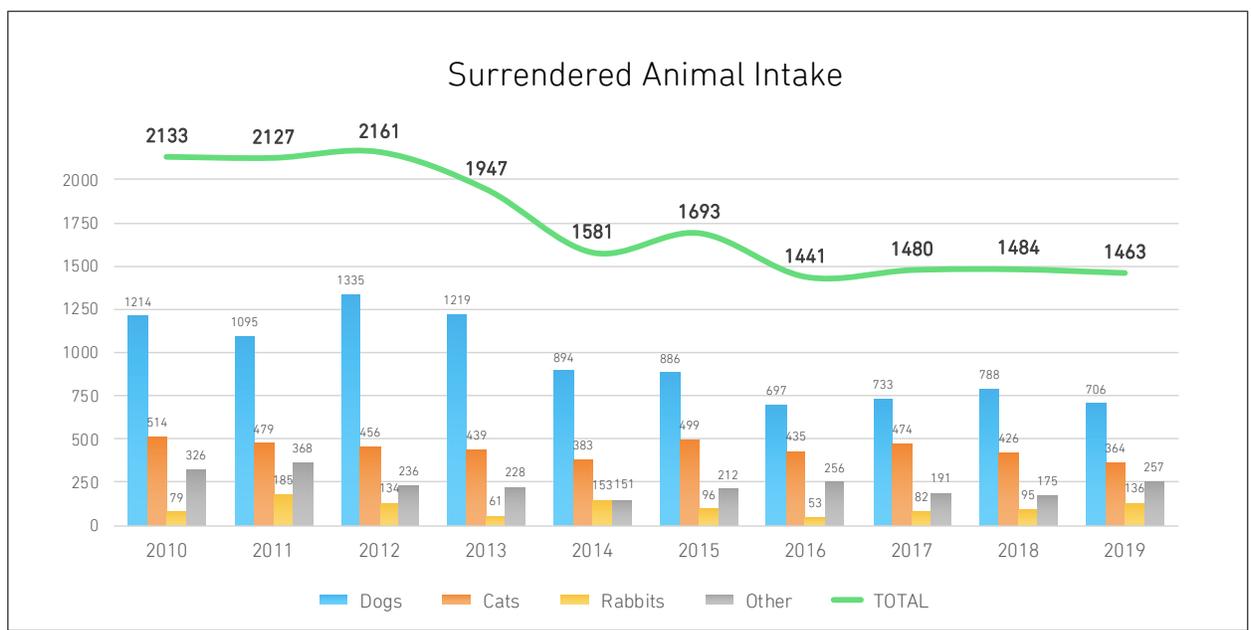
Animals who arrive without identification (i.e. ID tags, license tag, microchip) are made available for adoption five days after arrival. Animals who arrive with identification are made available for adoption 10 days after arrival.



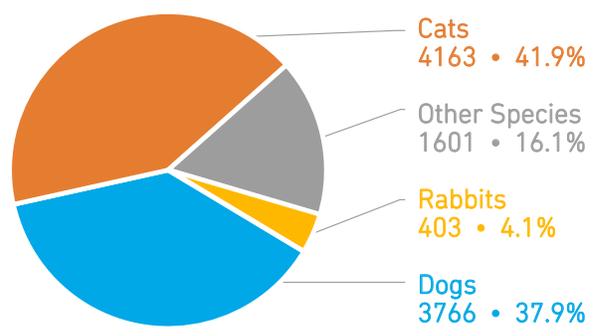
Surrendered Animals



The surrender of an animal is one of the most difficult decisions a pet parent can make. The reasons for surrender are complicated and vary. The most common reason someone surrenders a pet is due to medical issues where the owner is unable to afford the cost associated with a specific issue or for the continual maintenance of a chronic condition. The second most common reason for surrender is related to housing. Such situations may include breed restrictions within a rental unit, loss of job or financial distress, relocation, and costly pet deposits and additional monthly fees.



2019 Intake of Stray & Surrendered Pet by Species: 9933 Total



Pet Retention

In an effort to reduce the number of animals surrendered to VCAS, we have developed a Pet Retention program. This program has been highly successful in helping thousands of people keep their pets who would otherwise have needed to surrender them.

Our Pet Retention program diverted **1,785** animals in 2019 by offering animal owners available resources and short term assistance. If this program did not exist, VCAS would have received all 1,785 animals. This program was

initially funded through a generous grant from the Petco Foundation and is currently being sustained by our Animal Services Foundation of Ventura County.



The Story of Linda and Tucker



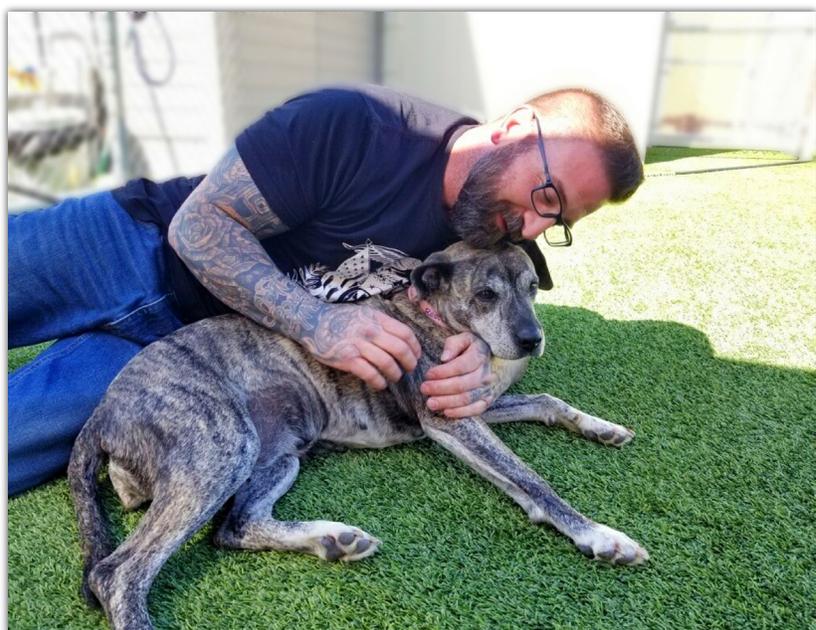
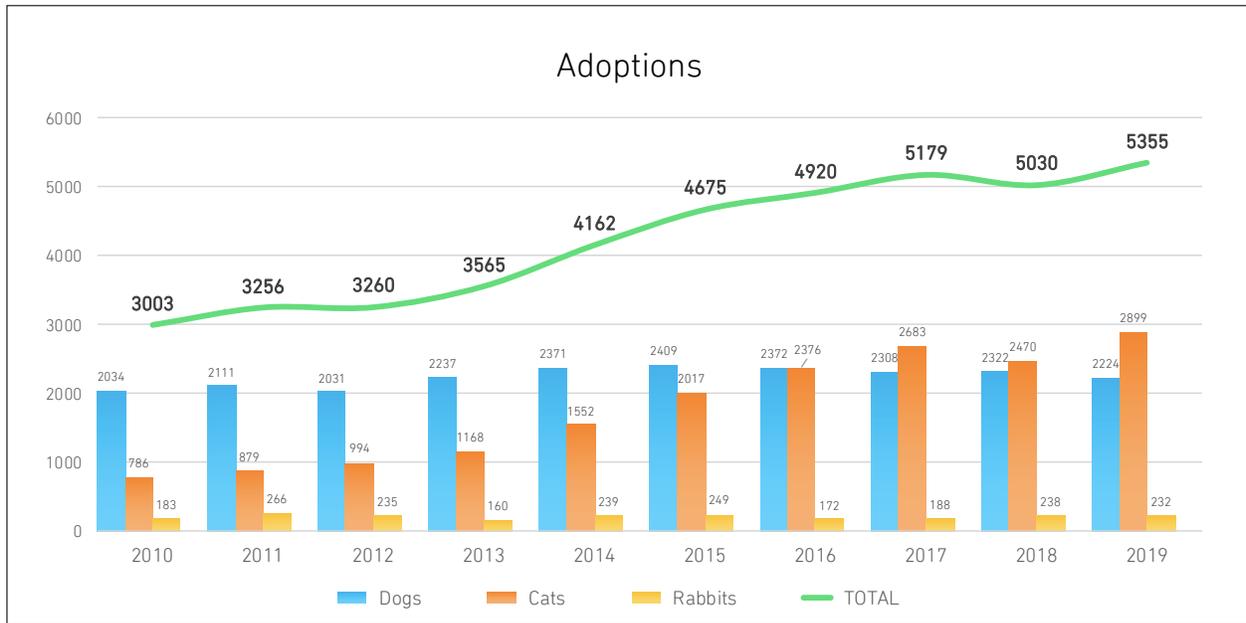
Linda (left) came to Ventura County Animal Services to surrender Tucker. He kept escaping from her yard through a number of holes in her fence and ending up on the streets where she was afraid he would be hit by a car. Linda was unable to repair her fence and she didn't want Tucker to be injured, or worse. She made the very difficult decision to surrender Tucker for his own safety.

When Linda arrived at VCAS, she met Katie (right), our Pet Retention Coordinator. At that time, Linda did not know about our Pet Retention Program. After a short conversation, Katie delivered the good news that we could actually help her keep Tucker! Katie went to Home Depot and purchased the supplies needed to fix Linda's fence. She drove out to her home with wood and nails and went to work. After she was done with repairs, Tucker was unable to escape. As a result of Katie's hard work, Tucker no longer needed to be surrendered.

Tucker was just 1 of the 1,785 animals who we were able to keep with their families in 2019.

Adoptions

VCAS is dedicated to finding forever homes for the hundreds of animals we care for each day. All adopted dogs, cats and rabbits leave the shelter spayed/neutered, vaccinated, microchipped and flea-treated. The owner receives a copy of their pet's medical record, certificate of sterility, and a list of local veterinarians who are willing to provide a free first veterinary exam. The adoption packet also contains various discounts from local businesses.

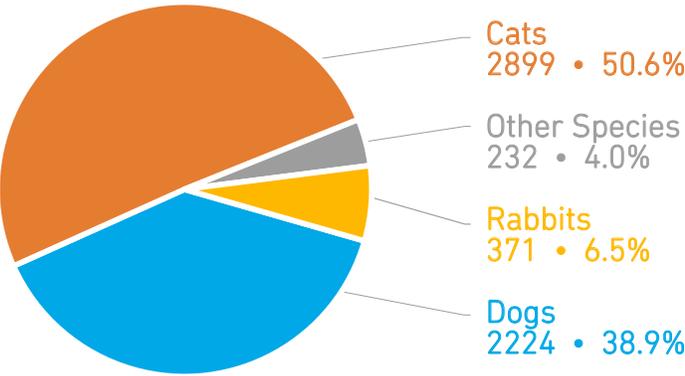


Adoptions

We are very pleased to see the number of pets adopted from VCAS has steadily increased over the years. More Ventura County residents are filling their homes with loving animals from Ventura County Animal Services.



2019 Adoptions By Species: 5726 Total



Reunited

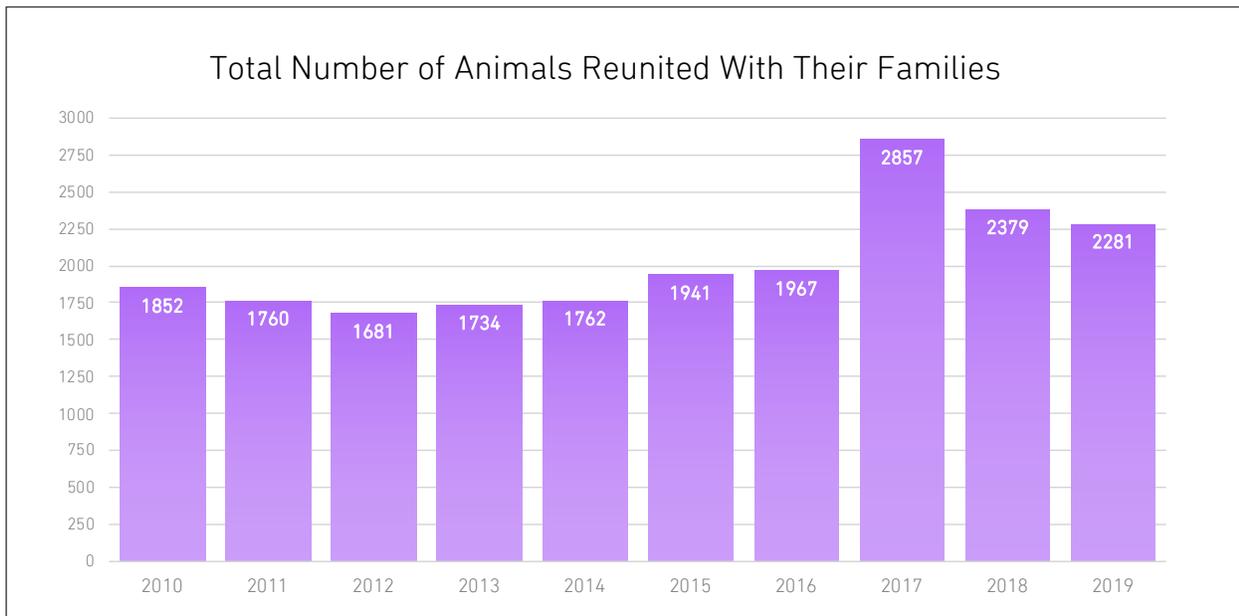
There is nothing better than reuniting a lost pet with their family! Over the years VCAS has had the pleasure of reuniting thousands of people with their cherished companions. We have successfully reunited tens of thousands of animals with their owners over the years, some of whom had been separated by as little as a few hours, to as many as several years!



Robert flew in from Ohio to reclaim his now 19-year-old cat, "Chebon" after seven years apart! "The Dodo" picked up this story after we live-streamed the reunion on Facebook. This story has been viewed over 26 million times by animals lovers around the world.

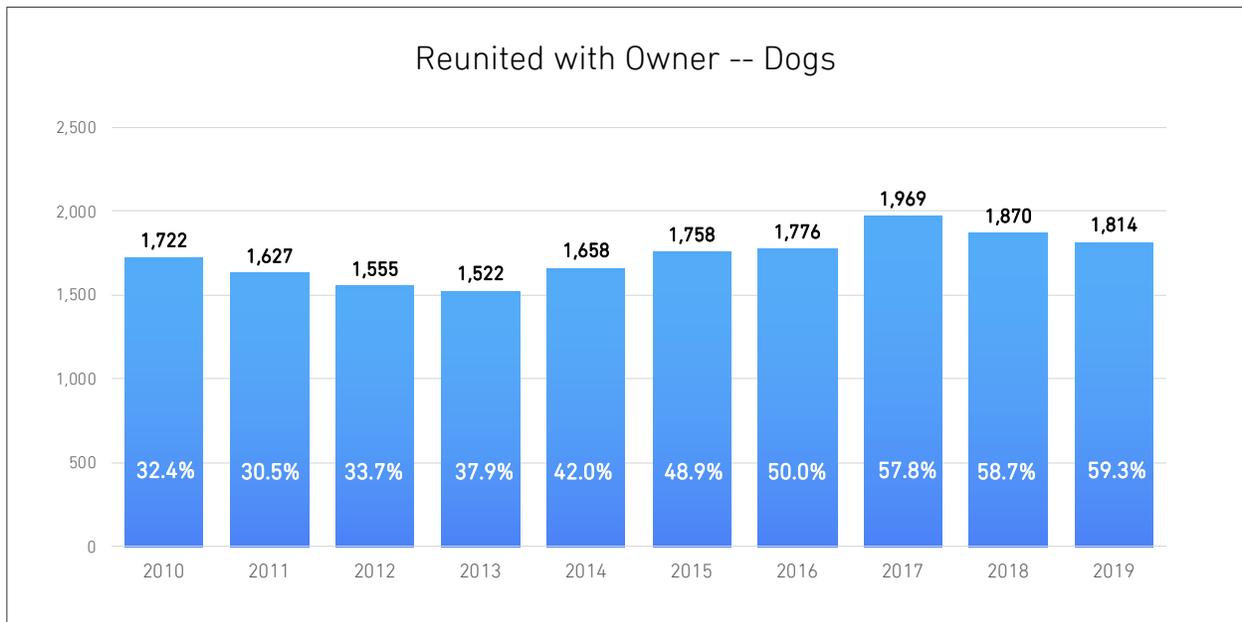


"Buddy" a 2-year-old Yorkshire Terrier was happily reunited with his mom because of a microchip implant. He was missing for 10 months. His mom drove from Los Angeles to pick him up. We were all crying tears of joy!

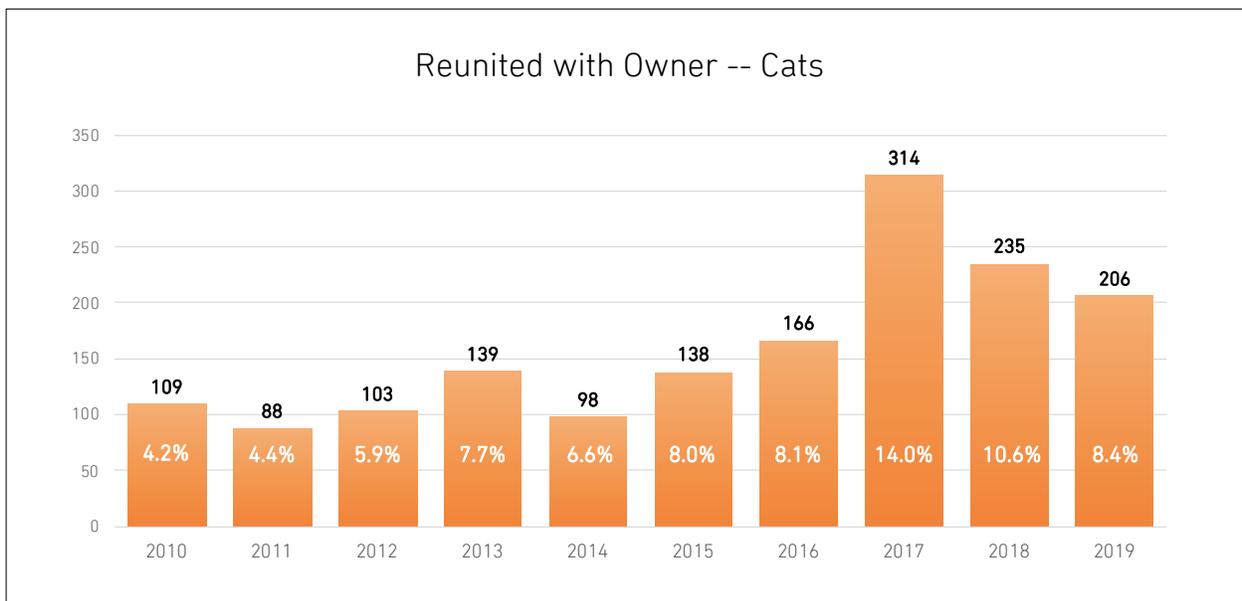


Reunited

When animals arrive with an ID tag or microchip implant, all efforts are made to contact the owner, including, but not limited to, phone calls, emails and letters to the address on file. VCAS relies on owners to actively search for their lost pets at local shelters, post lost pet fliers in their community, and publish lost pet information online. We have provided a step-by-step action plan on our shelter website to help owners find their lost pets.

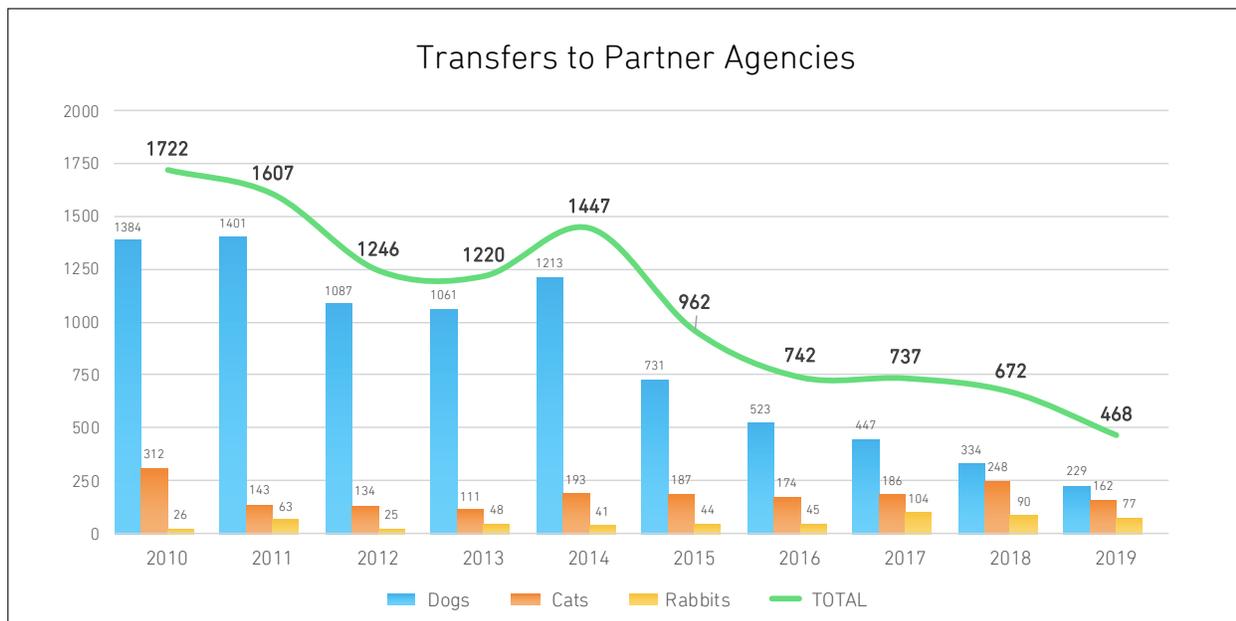


The national average for dogs being reunited with their families is **26%**. In 2019, VCAS reunited as astonishing **59.3%** of the stray dogs brought into the shelter! We are **very** proud of this high return-to-owner rate!



In contrast to dogs, the return-to-owner rate for cats is much lower. This is due to numerous factors, including indoor/outdoor cats whose owners may not realize their cats are missing for an extended period of time. We are, however extremely proud to exceed the **5%** National Average return-to-owner rate for cats. VCAS was able to reunite **8.4%** of stray cats in 2019. We continue to explore new innovative ways of increasing the number of cats reunited with their families.

Transfers to Partner Agencies



Ventura County Animal Services partners with over **130** animal welfare agencies in an effort to find alternative placements for many of our animals. These partnerships are extremely important as they provide additional resources for us to find loving homes for many of the animals who require our service. Some of these organizations are breed specific while others focus on shelter pets in need of medical or behavioral assistance. We are very grateful to these groups who help to find homes for our animals.



Leslie, from **Surfcat Cafe & Adoptions**, is seen here in our veterinary hospital picking up an injured cat to bring into her care. This organization primarily focuses on cats who are sick, injured, older or who have special needs.



Maripat, from **All For Love Animal Rescue (AFLAR)**, is seen here embracing Diva. AFLAR primarily focuses on large-breed dogs who often have emotional and/or behavioral issues. These are often the most difficult dogs to find homes for.



Katherine, from the **Friends of Milo Foundation**, is seen here transferring two older dogs into her care. This organization primarily focuses on older, smaller breed dogs who often have age-related illnesses making them more difficult to place.



Foster Care

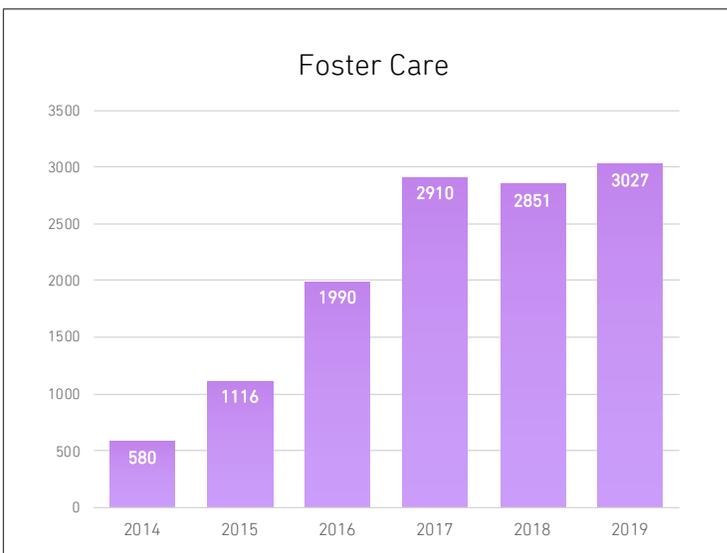
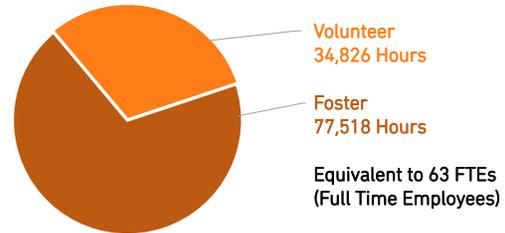


The Foster Care program at VCAS has been nothing less than a game-changer for a wide variety of animals in need. We often need foster homes for animals who are sick, injured, older, terminally ill or who simply need a quiet place to rest and rejuvenate. In 2019, over **3,000 animals** entered our VCAS Foster Care program. Most of those animals were underage or underweight kittens, many of whom required around-the-clock bottle feeding by dedicated volunteer foster parents in the community.

Our VCAS Foster parents donated over **77,000** hours to animals in need. This number represents **70%** of the total volunteer hours provided by these selfless individuals!

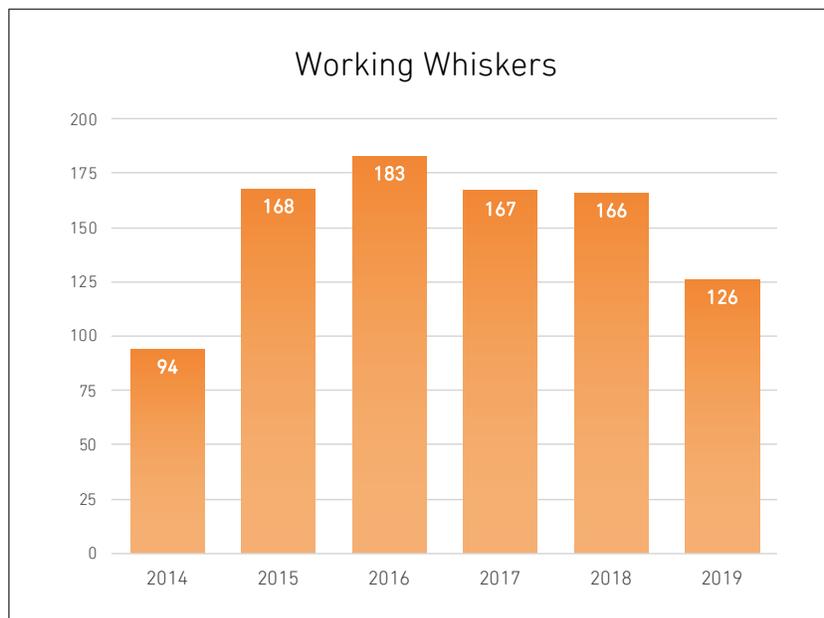
Consider becoming foster parent. Learn more at www.vcas.us/foster.

Volunteer Hours: 112,344 Total



Working Whiskers

Ventura County Animal Services is no stranger to innovation. When we needed an alternative placement for feral cats who could not be returned to the area from which they came, we created our own program, the Working Whiskers program!



This program provides these cats the opportunity to do what they love doing -- hunting and living outdoors in open areas such as barns, horse stables or garden sheds.

Those adopting a working cat apply through a formal process to ensure they meet the requirements for adopting a feral cat. They must be able to provide shelter, food and water and have the ability to trap their working cat and take them for regular Veterinary check-ups.

All Working Whiskers cats are spayed/neutered, vaccinated, microchipped and ear-tipped (a surgical procedure whereby the tip of the cat's ear is removed while under anesthesia). Ear-tipping is an easy way to tell the difference between a working cat who is a member of an established colony or another stray cat who has entered the area. Learn more about this program at www.vcas.us/WorkingWhiskers.



Working Whiskers cats patrol the Cal Lutheran campus, keeping the rodent population in check.

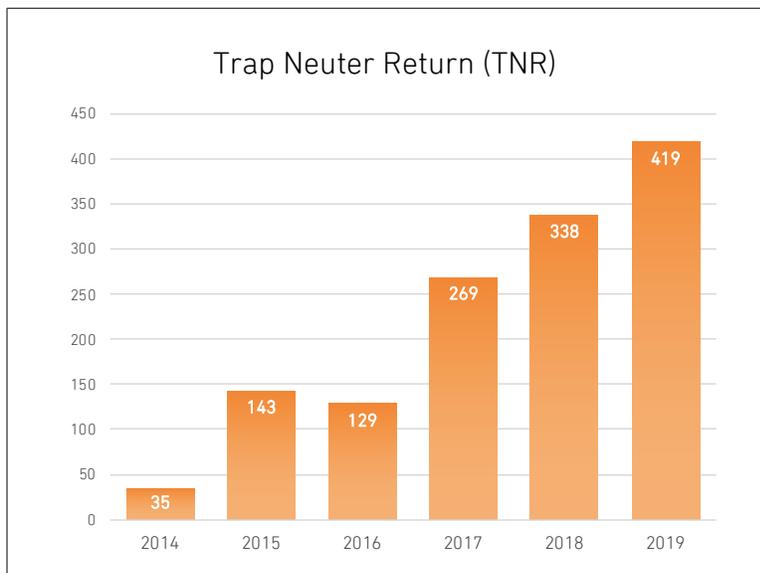


Mark Jacobsen, Cal Lutheran University's director of facilities management, locks up a "cat condo," home to one of CLU's new rodent-fighting team. Photos courtesy of the Thousand Oaks Acorn.

TNR Surgical Services

VCAS is proud to be a part of a coordinated TNR (Trap Neuter Return) effort to help reduce the overpopulation of outdoors cats living in our community. The purpose a TNR program is to trap these cats, provide spay/neuter services and return them back to the community from which they came. VCAS coordinates this TNR effort with the Ventura County Community Cat Coalition and Good Samaritans to provide essential spay and neuter services.

All cats brought to VCAS for TNR are first scanned for a microchip to determine if there is an identified owner. While under anesthesia for their spay/neuter surgery, our Veterinary Team vaccinates them, implants a microchip, provides flea treatment and ear-tips them before returning them to the area from which they were trapped. If the area is unsafe for return, such as being too close to a busy street, the cats will enter our Working Whiskers program where they will live out their lives in open areas providing chemical-free rodent protection.



TNR is the only proven method of controlling the feral cat population.

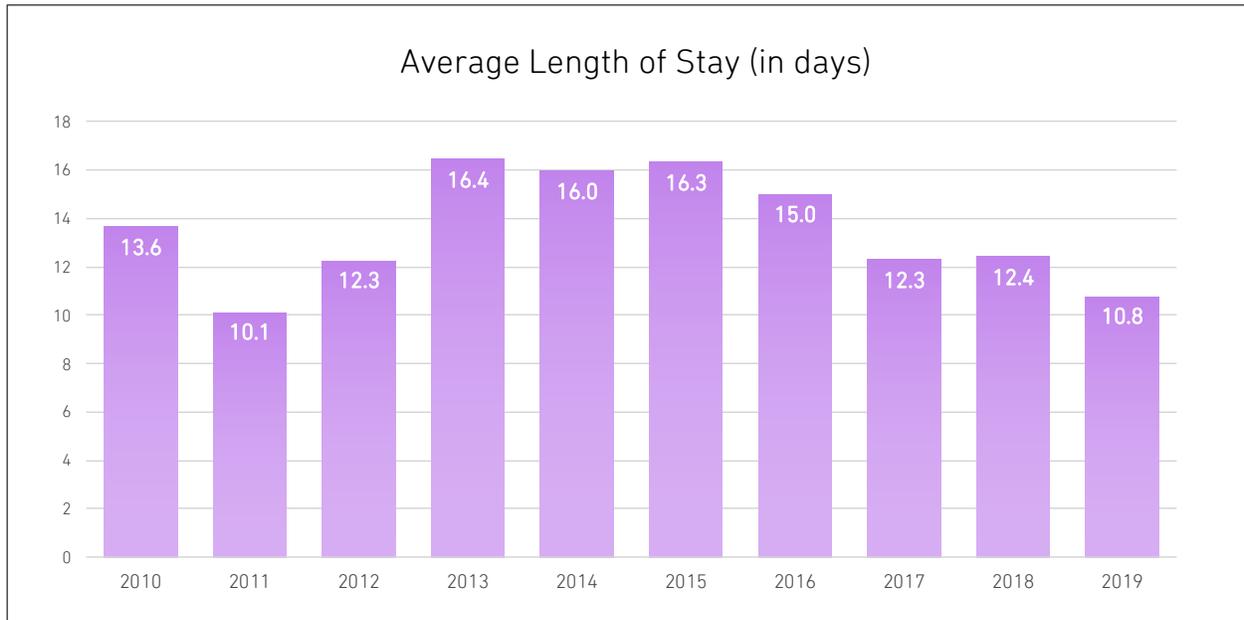


An outdoor cat with a tipped-ear, indicates the cat is part of an established colony and is already spayed/neutered, vaccinated, and microchipped.



Length of Stay

The amount of time an animal spends in a kennel, known as length-of-stay, is a key component to daily population management of the animals in our care. The longer animals are housed in proximity to other animals, the greater the likelihood of becoming physically ill and or emotionally compromised. The steady decline in length-of-stay since 2015 can be contributed to the increase of foster parents who generously open their homes to shelter pets in need. Other activities have contributed to this steady decline, including our pet retention program, adoption promotions, and proactive redemptions where shelter personnel actively search for the owners of lost pets. Enrichment also plays a vital role in the care of our animals and helps us maintain



their health and emotional wellness while at the shelter as we work to find their new home. Staff and volunteers work together to ensure that all animals receive daily interaction and exercise, have a comfortable living area, and have exposure to new toys and activities all in an effort to reduce fear and stress.



Marketing

Social Media and Marketing are key components to the success of our life-saving programs and have played a large part in decreasing the average length-of-stay by reuniting lost pets with their families and promoting shelter pets for adoption. VCAS has developed a robust social media and marketing team composed of staff and volunteers who use their talents to promote shelter pets and organize adoption events for the community. This group has dramatically increased adoptions and has helped reduce our shelter's overall length-of-stay. The VCAS Marketing Team heavily utilizes a variety of social media platforms to help carry our message to the world.



This team focuses on adoption events/promotions, community engagement activities, individual pet promotions and donor cultivation. This team is very effective in offsite adoption events, creating public service announcements, engaging in humane education, and sharing animal-related resources. Our VCAS Marketing Team also utilizes live streaming technology to provide an interactive component where viewers can ask questions live and actively participate in events and activities.



Bunny Yoga! It must be hoppy hour.



Remy's special Valentine's Day event!



It's St. Pawtrick's Day at VCAS!



VCAS dogs showcased on CBS-2 in Los Angeles.



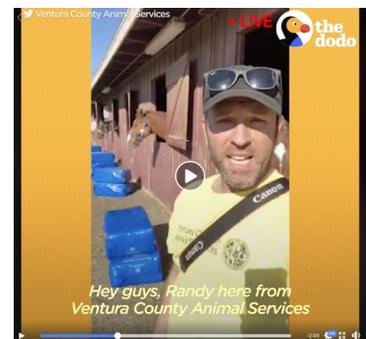
Individual pet promotional videos.

OFFICIAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS:

- www.Facebook.com/VCAAnimalServices
- www.Facebook.com/VCAAnimalServicesMedical
- www.Facebook.com/VCASBunnyBrigade
- www.Facebook.com/VCASCallawayCats
- www.Facebook.com/VCASAdoptablePets
- www.instagram.com/VCAAnimalServices
- www.instagram.com/VCASBunnyBrigade
- www.instagram.com/VCASRescueReaders
- www.twitter.com/VCAAnimalService
- www.twitter.com/BunnyBrigade
- www.periscope.tv/VCAAnimalService
- www.youtube.com/VCAAnimalServices



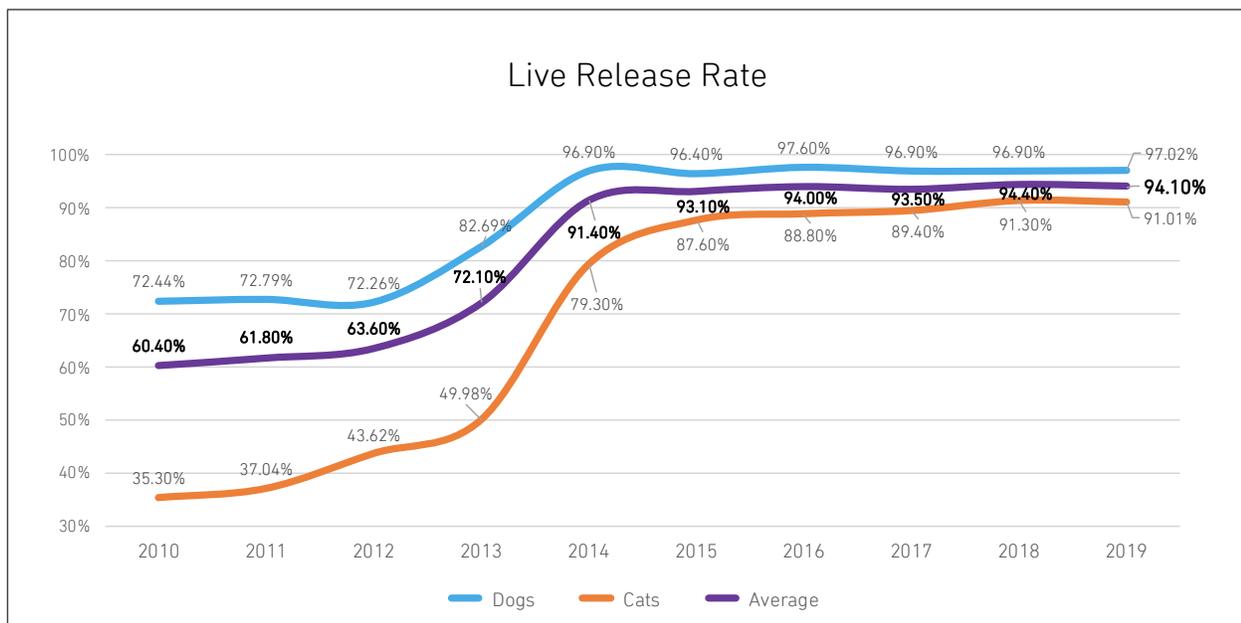
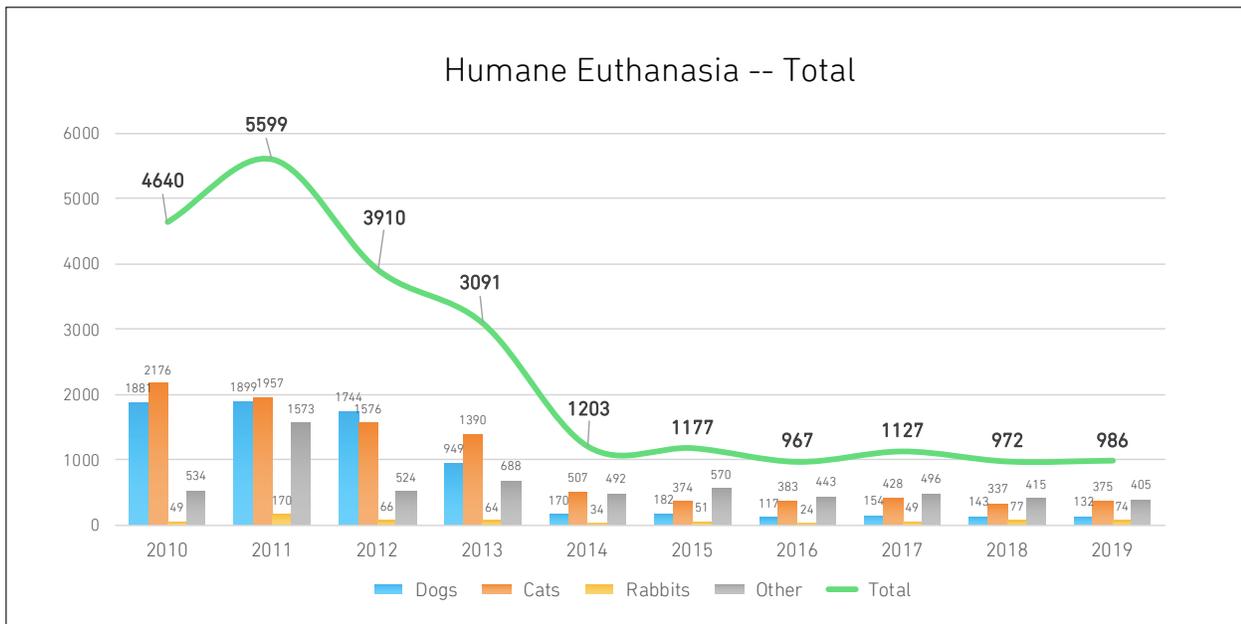
Professional pet portraits by volunteers.



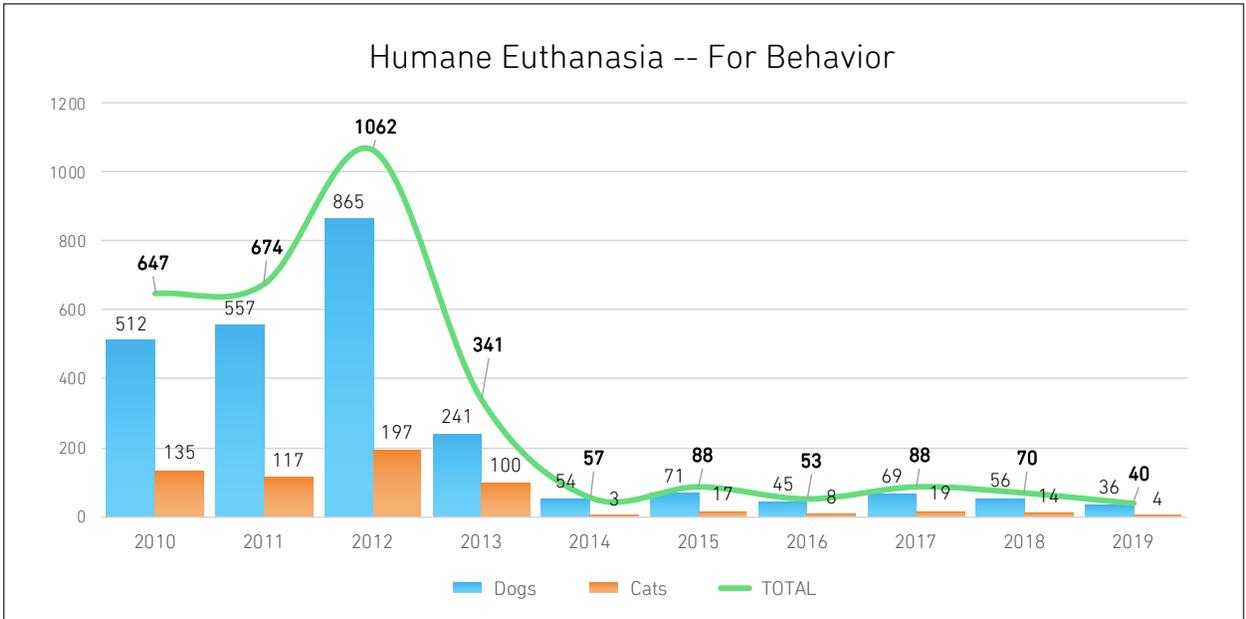
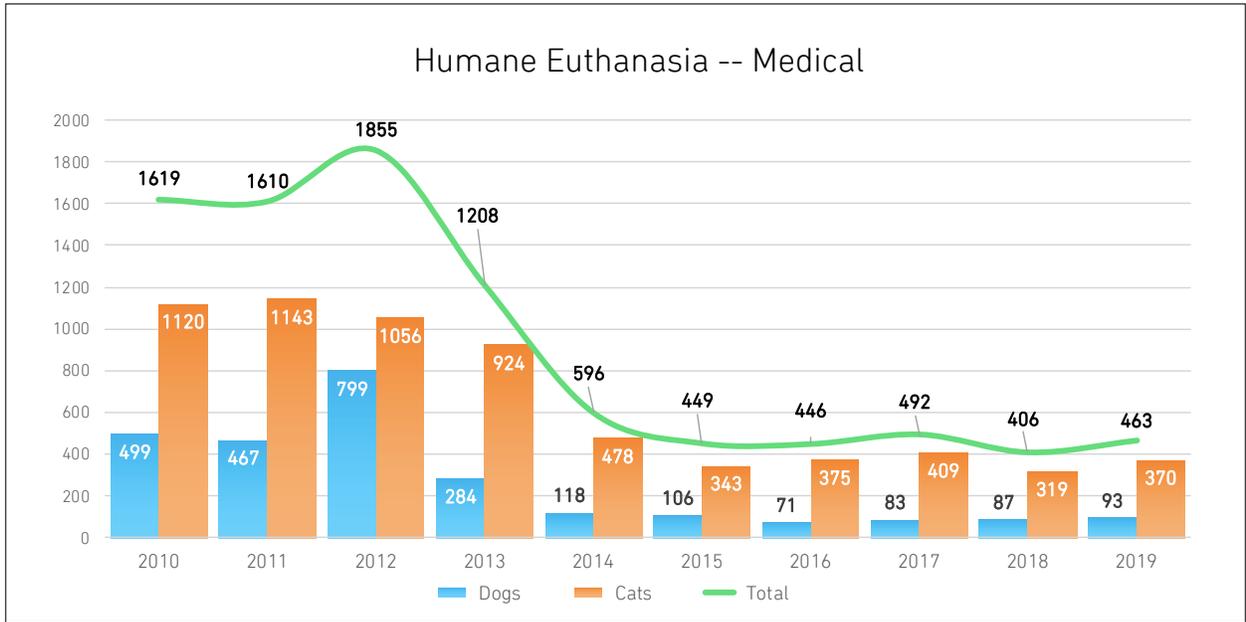
Maria Fire updates on capacity of care.

Humane Euthanasia

VCAS is committed to life-saving activities and works tirelessly to ensure that all animals receive the highest level of care at all times. As indicated by the charts below, our continued commitment to progressive and innovative programming is designed to ensure that no healthy or adoptable animal is euthanized for any reason including lack of-space, length-of-time or breed specification. As a result, our humane euthanasia rate has **dramatically** decreased. We are extremely proud to have achieved and maintained a 90% or higher Live Release Rate for the past five (5) years. Unfortunately, however, a small percentage of animals who enter our shelter present with severe medical conditions for which they are suffering and/or behavioral concerns that pose a safety risk to the public. For such animals, VCAS staff compassionately provides humane euthanasia in a loving and respectful manner.



Humane Euthanasia

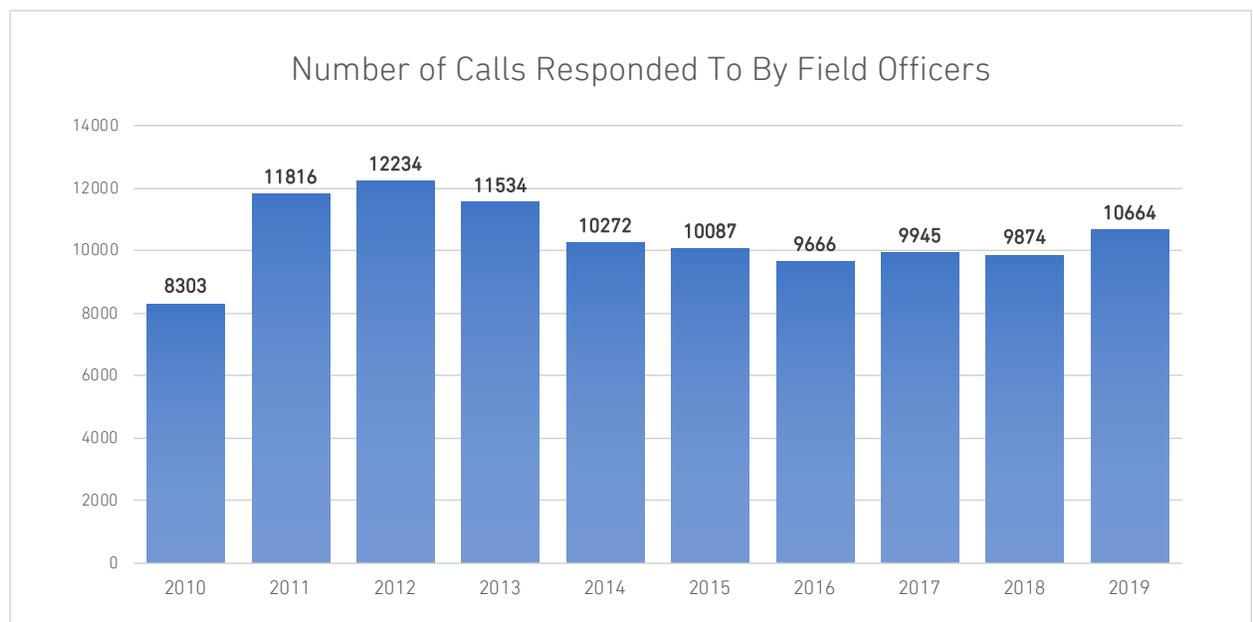


Public Safety

Our front line team of Animal Control Officers are the face of Ventura County Animal Services out in the community. These seasoned officers are tasked with the safety of the citizens and animals of Ventura County.

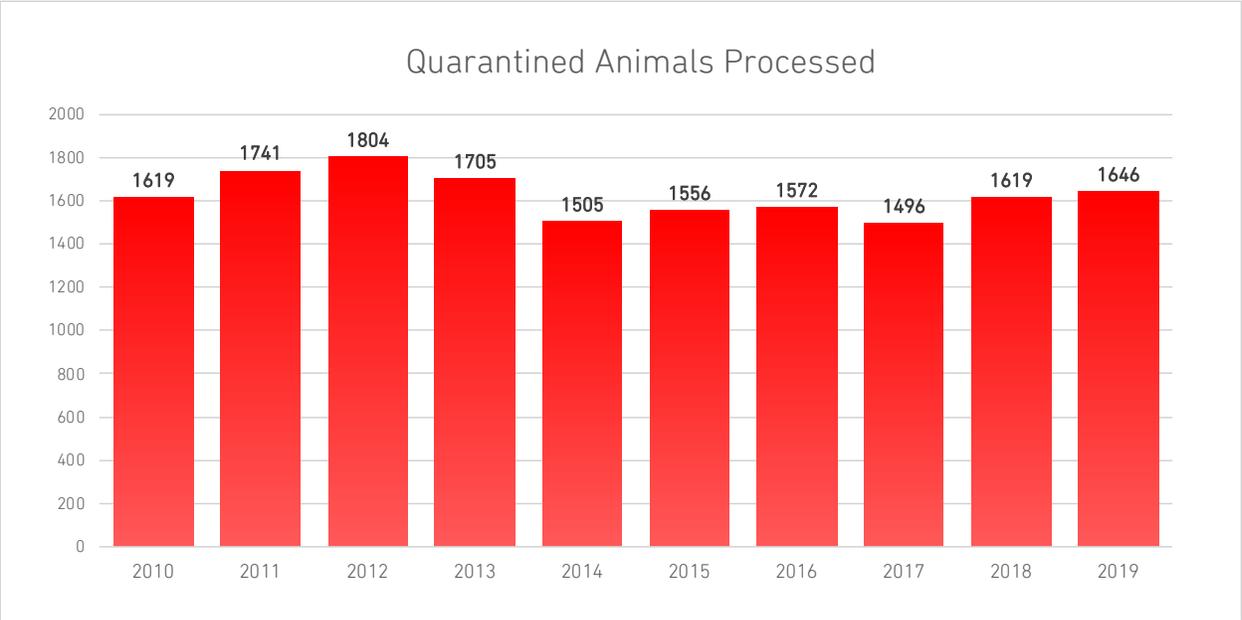
In 2019, our field officers responded to over 10,000 calls for assistance. These calls include, but are not limited to, the capture of loose dogs, rescuing injured wildlife, welfare check of animals, and the investigation of animal cruelty and neglect complaints. Our Animal Control Officers also respond during declared natural disasters such as the Thomas Fire, Hill Fire, Woolsey Fire and most recently the Maria/Easy Fires.

During declared emergencies, our Field Staff and Shelter Staff are supplemented by the Emergency Volunteer Rescue Team (EVRT). These volunteers work side-by-side with our staff to help rescue small domestic animals as well as livestock.

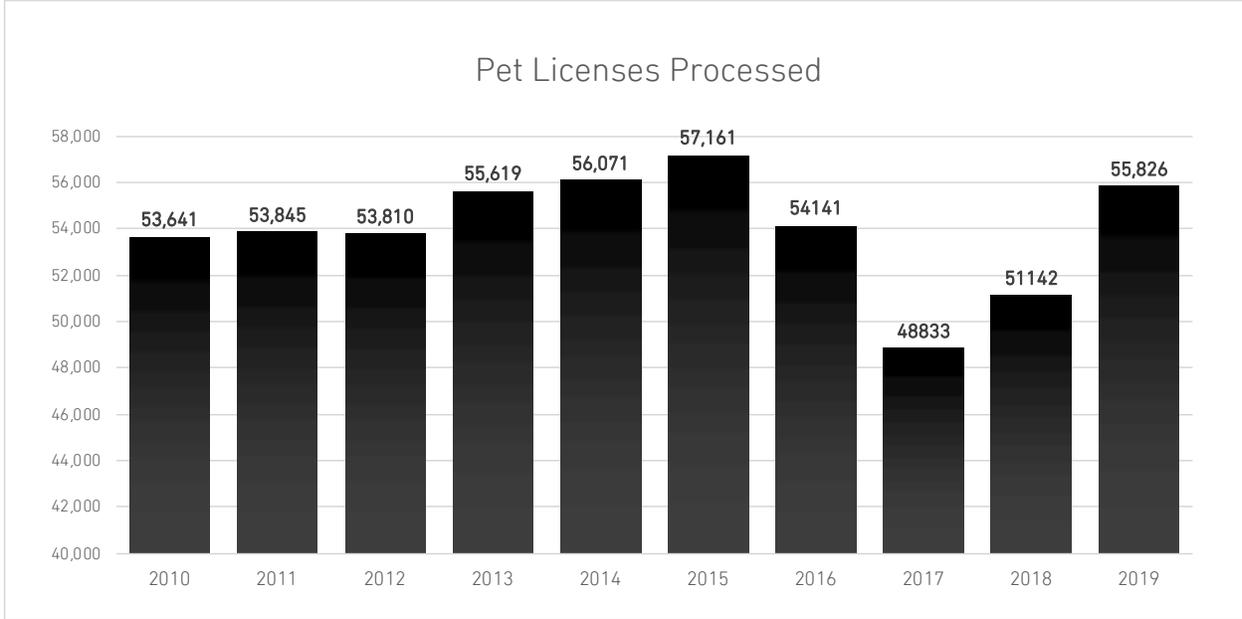


Public Safety

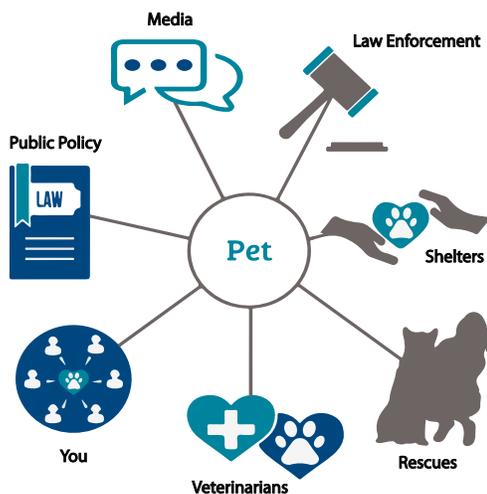
The suppression of the rabies virus is a key mandate for Ventrua County. If an animal bites or scratches someone and it breaks the skin, that animal must be quarantined. Quarantine allows that animal to be observed for possible signs of rabies. Rabies is a deadly virus that can be passed from animal to human via saliva entering the body through a bite or scratch that breaks the skin. Once symptoms of rabies appears, it is often too late and it is fatal. This is why the quarantine of animals is so important against the spread of this deadly disease.



A pet license is proof that an animal is vaccinated against the rabies virus. Pet licenses are available at both shelters and in various locations throughout the county. VCAS offers an incentive for animal owners to spay/neuter their pets by discounting the license fee for animals who are altered.



Socially Conscious Animal Community



Ventura County Animal Services has joined a growing number of animal welfare organizations across the country in adopting a new sheltering framework. This model is called Socially Conscious Sheltering (SCS).

This framework aligns with our core values of being an organization that encourages cooperation and collaboration with all stakeholders (elected officials, community members, private veterinarians, transfer/rescue partners, law enforcement, non-profit organizations, local businesses, volunteers and other animal welfare agencies). We wish to promote a positive culture of mutual respect and support.

The Socially Conscious Sheltering model and the No-Kill movement are not mutually exclusive. VCAS utilized the no-kill equation to help guide us on our initial journey. Through it, we created many new positions and programs to increase our live release rate. We are excited to embrace the newly created SCS model to help us continue these efforts.

WHAT IS SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS SHELTERING?

Socially Conscious Sheltering is a compassionate, transparent and thoughtful model for animal welfare organizations. There are eight (8) tenets of Socially Conscious Sheltering:

-  1. Place every healthy and safe animal.
-  2. Ensure every unwanted or homeless pet has a safe place to go for shelter and care.
-  3. Assess the medical and behavioral needs of homeless animals and ensure these needs are thoughtfully addressed.
-  4. Align shelter policy with the needs of the community.
-  5. Alleviate suffering and make appropriate euthanasia decisions.
-  6. Enhance the human-animal bond through safe placements and post adoption support.
-  7. Consider the health, wellness and safety of animals for each community when transferring animals.
-  8. Foster a culture of transparency, ethical decision making, mutual respect, continual learning and collaboration.



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