



## Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Toni J. Taber, CMC  
City Clerk

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** December 3, 2024

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**SUBJECT: San José Animal Care and Services Audit Report**

**Recommendation**

As recommended by the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee on November 14, 2024, accept the report on the San José Animal Care and Services audit.

CEQA: Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action. (City Auditor)

[Neighborhood Services and Education Committee referral 11/14/2024 - Item (d)4]



**Office of the City Auditor**

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**Report to the City Council  
City of San José**

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**ANIMAL CARE & SERVICES:  
ADDRESSING CAPACITY  
CONSTRAINTS AND  
UPDATING SHELTER  
PROTOCOLS WILL HELP  
IMPROVE ANIMAL  
OUTCOMES**

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**Report 24-06  
November 2024**

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November 7, 2024

Honorable Mayor and Members  
Of the City Council  
200 East Santa Clara Street  
San José, CA 95113

**Animal Care and Services: Addressing Capacity Constraints and Updating Shelter Protocols Will Help Improve Animal Outcomes**

Opened in 2004, San José Animal Care and Services (ACS) is a full-service animal services shelter. The shelter provides a myriad of animal-related services such as animal licensing, adoptions, stray animal intake, medical services for shelter animals and some community animals, and field response for animal-related issues in the community.

In October 2023, the City Council directed an audit of ACS because of community concerns about shelter operations and the high number of animals in the shelter. The direction included multiple areas of concern related to shelter operations: a comparison with industry standards for animal care and veterinary services; reporting of data, including accuracy of key shelter metrics; relationships with rescue groups and volunteers; licensing; facility design; and services provided to neighboring jurisdictions.

**Finding 1: The San José Animal Shelter Is Over Capacity and Needs a Long-Term Strategy to Address the Demand for Shelter Space.** The on-site animal population has frequently exceeded the ACS housing capacity, which has impacted the shelter's ability to provide daily care to shelter animals and staff morale. We found:

- Point-in-time counts in July and August 2024 showed that while the shelter capacity is roughly 500 animals, there were about 700 animals on-site.
- Animal intakes have decreased, but the average length of stay has increased.
- Due to capacity constraints, ACS lacks space to prevent disease spread and promote animal welfare.
- The shelter should develop a multi-pronged strategy to address the supply and demand for shelter space in the context of their overall budget and staff availability.
- ACS should continue to expand active population management efforts, including diverting kittens from intake, increasing opportunities for adoption and rescue, and expanding spay and neuter services.

**Recommendations: ACS should:**

- Determine current shelter capacity and assess whether additional kennel space is required.
- Reassess the kitten nursery to divert kittens from the shelter.
- Formalize pathway planning in the shelter and increase opportunities for adoptions, rescue, and spay and neuter services.

**Finding 2: Improvements in Animal Care Protocols and Recordkeeping Will Enhance Shelter Operations.** ACS protocols generally align with select Association of Shelter Veterinarians' (ASV) Guidelines. However, there are areas where ACS can update its internal protocols and ensure staff is appropriately trained. We found:

- The ACS Manual is outdated and does not align with ASV Guidelines or actual shelter practices around disease management and other daily care activities.
- Recordkeeping at the shelter was not always complete, making it difficult for supervisors to assess whether animals' daily needs were being met.
- Updated procedures to track and access supplies can improve inventory management.

**Recommendations:** ACS should:

- Update the ACS Manual to reflect ASV Guidelines in various operational areas within the shelter.
- Define supervisory responsibilities over shelter operations.
- Provide ongoing training on shelter protocols, recordkeeping, and inventory management.

**Finding 3: Additional Disaggregation of Metrics and Better Data Management Can Enhance Transparency of Shelter Operations.** ACS makes a large amount of shelter data publicly available through the ACS dashboard and the City's Open Data Portal. We found:

- Additional disaggregation of the reported outcomes and other metrics can enhance transparency and provide information about what may be driving trends in shelter outcomes.
- Better data management can improve data reliability and transparency for shelter operations.

**Recommendations:** ACS should:

- Provide additional disaggregated reporting on length of stay and shelter outcomes.
- Update data management protocols, including assigning staff to manage data quality processes.

**Finding 4: San José Animal Care and Services Can Enhance Its Engagement Efforts With Rescue Groups to Improve Animal Outcomes.** Since FY 2018-19, the number of animals rescued by rescue groups has significantly declined. We found:

- Rescue groups report having capacity constraints, and in an auditor-conducted survey of rescue groups, only 40 percent of respondents rated working with ACS as positive.
- Daily emails sent out to rescue groups are missing critical information about animals; only 44 percent of survey respondents reported receiving sufficient information to make rescue decisions.
- Funds from the Guardian Angel Program (GAP) are used inconsistently.

**Recommendations:** ACS should:

- Designate a single point of contact to coordinate with rescue groups.
- Update communications to rescue groups to include complete and accurate information.
- Develop guidelines for the use of gift and GAP funds.

**Finding 5: Improvements in the Volunteer Program Can Aid in Providing a Coordinated Approach to Care at the Shelter.** Volunteers at ACS play a role in enhancing animal care through enrichment activities and assisting with other tasks. We found:

- Seventy-eight percent of respondents to an auditor-conducted volunteer survey reported they would recommend volunteering at ACS to a friend or family.
- Volunteers have 45 days to complete lengthy training requirements; however, not all trainings are relevant for all volunteers.
- The current volunteer management software does not meet ACS' or its volunteers' needs, particularly around tracking hours and scheduling shifts.

**Recommendations:** ACS should:

- Assess and update training requirements and make non-essential trainings optional.
- Consider options for alternative volunteer management software solutions.

**Finding 6: Licensing Compliance and Access to Equity-Based Services Can Be Improved.** The Municipal Code requires that all dogs and cats be licensed after being vaccinated for rabies. The Municipal Code also requires that the term of the license align with the length of the rabies certificate. We found:

- In March 2024, almost 60 percent of active animal licenses exceeded the validity of the animals' rabies certificate.
- Currently, the process for issuing new licenses and renewals is labor-intensive and takes a significant amount of administrative staff time.
- While ACS offers license fee exemptions to seniors, application forms are only available in English and applications cannot be completed online.
- Other jurisdictions provide some low-cost medical services to underserved communities to encourage licensing; San José does not provide these regularly.

**Recommendations:** ACS should:

- Consider contracting out the administration of licensing.
- Align future license terms with rabies vaccination expiration dates.
- Increase availability for low-cost medical services in the context of overall budget considerations.

**Finding 7: San José Animal Care and Services Has Begun Implementing Maddie's Fund Recommendations but Work Still Remains.** A 2022 consult report provided by the Maddie's Million Pet Challenge resulted in over 200 recommendations to improve shelter operations. We found:

- While ACS has made progress towards implementing some of the recommendations, work still remains.
- However, in some cases, recommendations may be outdated or not in line with current ACS practices.

**Recommendations:** ACS should:

- Prioritize remaining relevant recommendations and designate an individual to monitor and track them moving forward.

**Finding 8: Services to Contract Jurisdictions May Exceed Those Provided to San José Residents.** ACS currently has contracts to provide animal care services to Cupertino, Milpitas, and Saratoga. We found:

- For Priority 2 and 3 service calls, the agreements provide for a higher level of service than for San José residents.
- Revenue calculations for the Cupertino and Saratoga agreements included cost elements that were not included in the Milpitas agreement.
- Tracking activity and costs can ensure consistency in future agreements and help guarantee they reflect the level of services provided.

**Recommendations:** ACS should:

- Consider aligning San José performance goals with contract jurisdictions.
- Track activity and costs to determine if revenues reflect levels of service.

This report has 39 recommendations. We plan to present this report at the November 14, 2024, meeting of the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee of the City Council. We would like to thank the Animal Care and Services Division of the Department of Public Works for their time and insight during the audit process. The Administration has reviewed the information in this report, and their response is shown on the yellow pages.

Respectfully submitted,



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This report is also available online at [www.sanjoseca.gov/audits](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/audits)

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# Background

In October 2023, the City Council directed the City Auditor to conduct an audit of San José Animal Care and Services (ACS). The direction noted that because of community concerns about shelter operations and the high number of animals in the shelter, an objective assessment of ACS was needed. The audit direction included:

1. *A comparison of ACS operations against industry standards for:*
  - a. *Staffing and protocols for animal care and veterinary services, paying special attention to protocols for infectious and transmittable diseases.*
  - b. *Engagement with and utilization of volunteers and rescue groups, including onboarding, training processes, and transferring animals to rescue partners.*
  - c. *Key shelter metrics such as lengths of stay, live release and euthanasia rates, condition of animals on intake, the number of animals turned away at intake, the number of animals transferred to rescue partners, and other outcome details. Availability of services to the public for stray animal intake, spay/neuter programs, TNR (trap, neuter, and release), programs, and adoption services.*
  - d. *Staffing and protocols for facility maintenance, cleaning, and record keeping.*
2. *Opportunities to improve compliance with animal licensing through an equity lens, maximize the number of vaccinated pets, and whether residents' ability to pay affects these outcomes.*
3. *Levels of service provided against agreements with neighboring jurisdictions.*
4. *Evaluate how the existing Shelter/Rescue Working Group can review available data and inform strategies to improve shelter operations and maximize live outcomes.*
5. *Dashboards shared with the public on shelter operations; the most relevant metrics, how regularly they're updated, and methods of data collection.*
6. *Community outreach regarding ACS services.*
7. *Progress toward implementing the 2022 Maddie's Fund "Shelter Consult" observations and recommendations.*
8. *Progress toward implementing the 2022 Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters from the Association of Shelter Veterinarians.*
9. *Evaluate whether the shelter design is meeting the needs of animals and the community.*

### **San José Animal Care and Services**

ACS is a full-service animal services shelter and operates as a division within the Department of Public Works. ACS' mission is to "[...] provide a welcoming and humane place for animals and those who care for them; to protect, educate and serve the public; to develop programs that improve the lives of people and animals; and to create opportunities for our community and supporters to help us succeed."

The shelter is located at 2750 Monterey Road and is open seven days per week. The facility opened to the public in 2004.

#### **Exhibit I: San José Animal Shelter**



Source: ACS website.

### **Shelter Services**

ACS provides a number of services to San José, Cupertino, Milpitas, and Saratoga residents. These include field services such as stray animal pick up and transport and responding to calls for service; adoptions for dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs and other small animals; pet or owner surrender of sick or injured pets or stray animals; and a Trap, Neuter, and Release (TNR) Program.<sup>1</sup> Since 2023, the shelter also has a foster program which allows residents to temporarily take care of animals in their homes.

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<sup>1</sup> The TNR program allows residents to trap and bring feral/community cats to ACS for no-cost spay/neuter services.

## Exhibit 2: Pictures of Animals at the Shelter



Source: Auditor photos from shelter walkthrough.

ACS is also responsible for regulating pet licensing. California state law requires all dogs above the age of four months be licensed after proof of rabies vaccination has been provided. The San José Municipal Code requires that dogs and cats be licensed.<sup>2</sup>

### Budget & Staffing

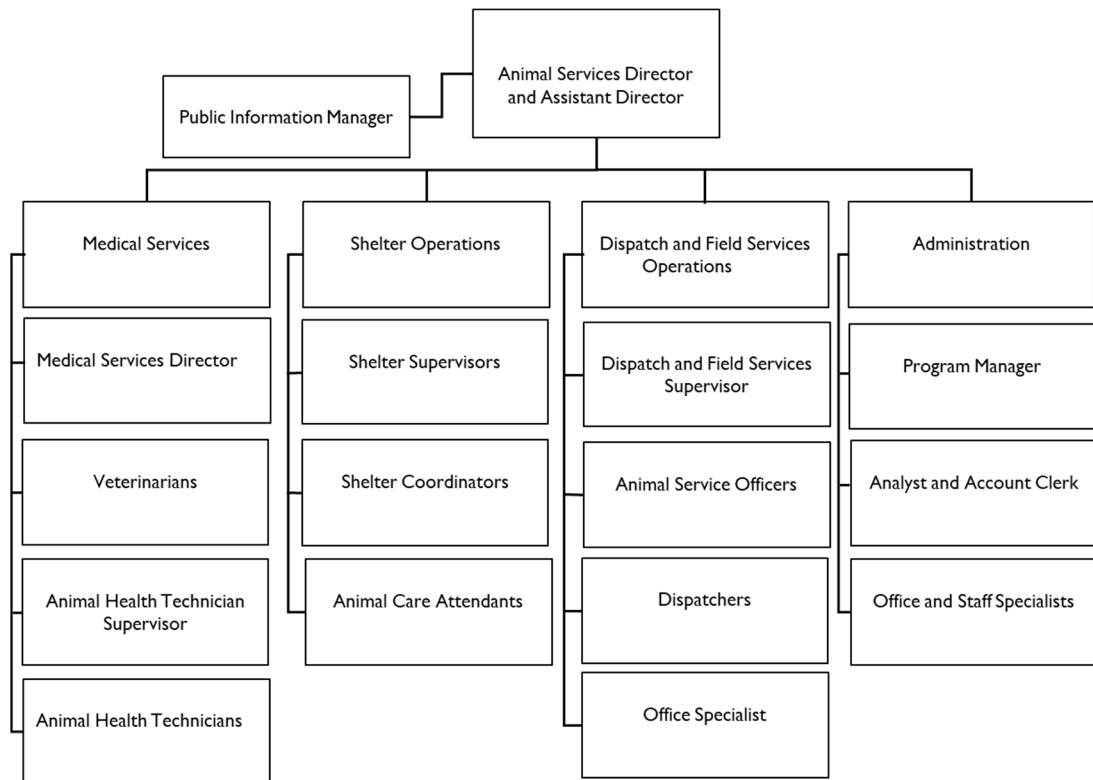
ACS is operationally divided into four sections—Medical Services, Shelter Operations, Field Services, and Administration.

- *Medical Services:* Services provided include daily medical care for animals, surgeries for treatable conditions for adoptable animals, and spay and neuter for shelter animals and in some cases for outside animals.

<sup>2</sup> Per California state law (Health and Safety Code, §121690), “Every owner of a dog, after the dog attains the age of four months, shall no less than once every two years secure a license for the dog as provided by ordinance of the responsible city, city and county, or county [...]”. Similarly, the San José Municipal Code, §7.20.500 requires that “Every person who owns, maintains, or boards a dog or cat, four (4) months of age or older, must cause that dog or cat to be vaccinated and revaccinated with a state-approved anti-rabies vaccine within the time periods prescribed by state law or regulation [...]”.

- *Shelter Operations:* Staff manage the shelter and provide customer service to residents to take in stray animals, care for the welfare of animals while they are in the shelter (including feeding, cleaning, and enrichment), manage adoptions, work with volunteers and rescue groups, and perform other activities.
- *Dispatch and Field Services:* This unit provides field and dispatch services to respond to residents needing help with stray, injured, lost, dead, nuisance or dangerous animals.
- *Administration:* Staff provide customer service for licensing, oversee contracts and purchase orders for vendors, and manage agreements with neighboring cities.

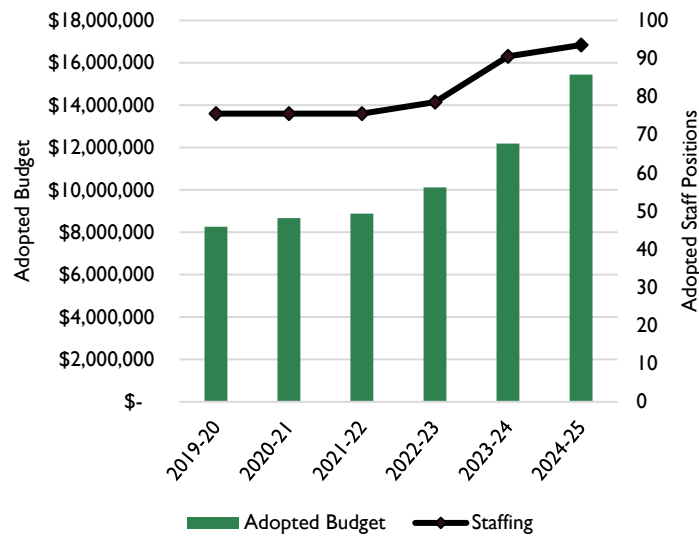
**Exhibit 3: ACS Has Four Staff Sections**



Source: Auditor summary of high-level ACS' organizational structure.

The 2024-25 Adopted Operating Budget is \$15.4 million, which supports 94 positions along with other shelter operations and services. The ACS budget has nearly doubled over the past six years.

#### Exhibit 4: Staffing Levels Increased in the Past Two Fiscal Years



Source: FY 2019-20 to FY 2024-25 Adopted Budgets.

ACS staffing increased from 76 in FY 2019-20 to 94 positions in FY 2024-25. Most additions have been within the last two fiscal years. For example:

- In 2023-24, ACS added staffing to provide a night shift at the shelter. The goal of this was to provide 24-hour care at the shelter. The primary purpose of this shift is to provide support to younger animals and to reduce the reliance on alternative solutions.
- In 2023-24, ACS hired a Public Information Manager to coordinate outreach and social media presence.
- In 2024-25, the shelter added an additional veterinarian position to increase the surgical capacity for the TNR program and a Senior Systems Application Programmer position to provide technical support for the shelter.

#### *Volunteers Enhance Animal Care Staffing and Services*

ACS has a volunteer program, where volunteers can contribute to providing care to animals in the shelter. Volunteers are typically tasked with providing enrichment opportunities for animals (e.g., time outside cages, dog walks, supervising dog play groups, monitoring specialized cases, providing observation notes). They sometimes interact with the public to speak about their experience with specific animals. Some volunteers are part of the shelter's foster program. The program temporarily places animals with foster volunteers, where animals can be cared for outside of the shelter environment. Foster volunteers especially help with kittens that can receive specialized care in a foster home.



### **The Shelter Has a Case Management System to Track Animal Trends and Manage Operations**

Chameleon is ACS' case management system for reporting, documenting animal care, and managing shelter operations. For instance, staff administer treatments to animals, report on shelter metrics, and identify animals available for rescue based on Chameleon reports. This case management system also supports new license issuance and renewals. Additionally, Chameleon links to Pet Compass,<sup>3</sup> which allows members of the public to view animals in the shelter's care to locate lost pets or find animals available for adoption. There are many features and capabilities in Chameleon to support staff in managing its animal data, and ACS relies on Chameleon to assist staff in supporting shelter operations and services.

### **The City Provides Animal Services to Some Local Jurisdictions**

In addition to services in San José, the animal shelter has contracted with the cities of Cupertino, Milpitas, and Saratoga to provide shelter and field services. The current agreements are for three years, with two options to renew.<sup>4</sup> These are discussed in more detail in Finding 8.

#### **Exhibit 5: Agreements to Provide Animal Services to Neighboring Jurisdictions Amount to Over \$1 Million Dollars**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>FY 2024-25 Contracted Revenues</b>	<b>Contract End Dates</b>
Cupertino	\$330,730	June 30, 2027
Milpitas	\$551,616	June 30, 2026
Saratoga	\$178,880	June 30, 2027
Total	\$1,061,226	

Source: Auditor summary of San José animal services agreements with the cities of Cupertino, Milpitas, and Saratoga.

### **Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters**

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) has created guidelines for standards of care within animal shelters. The guidelines are designed to provide:

- *A set of common standards for the care and welfare of companion animals in shelters based on scientific evidence and expert consensus,*
- *Guidance that helps animal welfare organizations reduce overcrowding, stress, disease, and improve safety,*

<sup>3</sup> Link for Pet Compass: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/6703c042c7534f5fb2999c57227fda13>

<sup>4</sup> Revenues under the agreements increase by 4 percent each fiscal year.

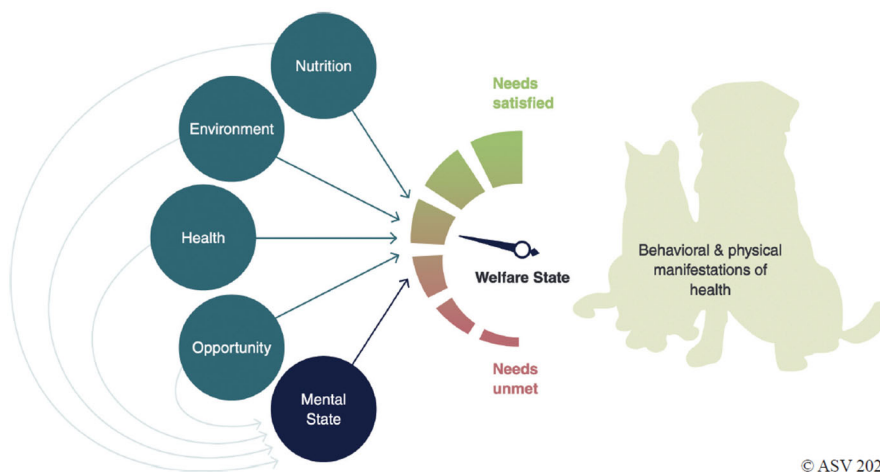
- A tool for animal welfare organizations and communities to assess and improve their shelters,
- References for creating regulations and statutes around sheltering, and benchmarks for organizational change,
- Guidance for animal housing in existing facilities and priorities for the design of new construction, and
- A living document that responds to developments in shelter medicine and animal care research and practice.

The original guidelines were first published in 2010 with the most recent edition published in 2022. Per the guidelines, the second edition “Ke[pt] the intent and format of the original document, while incorporating important updates based on the growing body of animal sheltering science and recommendations rooted in practical experience.”

The intended audience of these guidelines are organizations of any size or type that provide temporary housing for companion animals. The ASV Guidelines are divided into actionable statements and use an “*unacceptable, must, should, or ideal*” format.<sup>5</sup> The 2022 ASV Guidelines are divided into 13 sections or areas of care, including management and recordkeeping, population management, facilities, sanitation, and medical health.

The guidelines also describe the five domains of animal welfare as shown in Exhibit 6.

**Exhibit 6: The Five Domains of Animal Welfare**



Source: ASV Guidelines. Note that the welfare state gauge illustrated in this exhibit is as an example of animal needs. It is not intended to reflect the condition of animals at ACS.

<sup>5</sup> **Unacceptable** indicates practices that need to be avoided or prevented without exception; **Must** indicates practices for which adherence is necessary to ensure humane care; **Should** indicates practices that are strongly recommended, and compliance is expected in most circumstances; **Ideal** indicates practices that are implemented when resources allow.

### **Maddie's Fund Million Pet Challenge**

In 2022, ACS requested that Maddie's Million Pet Challenge (MMPC)<sup>6</sup> conduct a review of the shelter and provide recommendations on improving shelter operations. The review included an assessment of programming; observation of processes, including intake and flow of animals; an assessment of the facility and use of spaces; length of stay; and other shelter operations. The final report included recommendations ranging from shelter operations, intakes and outcomes, to medical and infectious diseases protocols.

### **Shelter Overcrowding Is a Nationwide Problem**

Shelters across the country appear to face an overcrowding problem. According to a recent report, by Hill's Pet Nutrition—2024 State of Shelter Pet Adoption Report,<sup>7</sup> there were an estimated 6.5 million cats and dogs that entered shelters and rescues in 2023. The population of shelter animals increased by 900,000 since 2021, resulting in an ongoing capacity crisis. The report stated many reasons for why this issue is growing, including financial constraints, economic and physical access to veterinary care, and housing restrictions. Shelters we benchmarked also are experiencing overcrowding with many shelters at capacity. A recent audit conducted by the Austin City Auditor's Office (Austin Animal Center) noted that the shelter had to close its intake of new animals due to overcrowding.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Maddie's Million Pet Challenge is a collaboration between Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida, the Koret Shelter Medicine Program at the University of California-Davis, Team Shelter USA, and Open Door Veterinary Collective.

<sup>7</sup>[https://www.hillspet.com/content/dam/cp-sites/hills/hills-pet/en\\_us/general/documents/shelter/shelter-equity-state-of-pet-adoption-2024.pdf](https://www.hillspet.com/content/dam/cp-sites/hills/hills-pet/en_us/general/documents/shelter/shelter-equity-state-of-pet-adoption-2024.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>[https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Auditor/Audit\\_Reports/Austin\\_Animal\\_Center\\_September\\_2023.pdf](https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Auditor/Audit_Reports/Austin_Animal_Center_September_2023.pdf)

# Finding I      **The San José Animal Shelter Is Over Capacity and Needs a Long-Term Strategy to Address the Demand for Shelter Space**

## Summary

The on-site animal population has frequently exceeded the ACS housing capacity in 2024. This has impacted the shelter's ability to provide daily care to the animals and staff morale. To ensure that the shelter operates within its capacity for care, the shelter should develop a multi-pronged strategy to address the supply and demand for shelter space. Because animals are housed in areas not intended for housing animals and the shelter lacked space to prevent disease spread, ACS should assess shelter capacity to determine whether additional kennel space is required and create a long-term strategy to fund shelter improvements or expansion. ACS should also continue to expand its active population management efforts, such as evaluating limiting intake hours; reassessing the kitten nursery and diverting kittens from the shelter; increasing opportunities for live outcome through adoptions, rescue groups, and foster care; identifying additional spay and neuter opportunities; and ensuring each animal has a clear pathway out of the shelter.

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## The On-Site Population Exceeded the Shelter's Housing Capacity

On auditor-selected point-in-time counts in July and August 2024, the total on-site animal population exceeded the shelter's housing capacity.

ACS has an estimated capacity to humanely house 171 dogs, 315 cats, and 24 rabbits or exotic animals, for a total of 510 animals.<sup>9</sup> As shown in Exhibit 7, the shelter housed about 250 dogs on selected days—46 percent over the shelter's capacity to house dogs. While the shelter appeared to have sufficient housing for cats on the days selected in March and April 2024, cat kennels were 36 percent overcapacity on selected days in July and August.

### **ASV Guidelines**

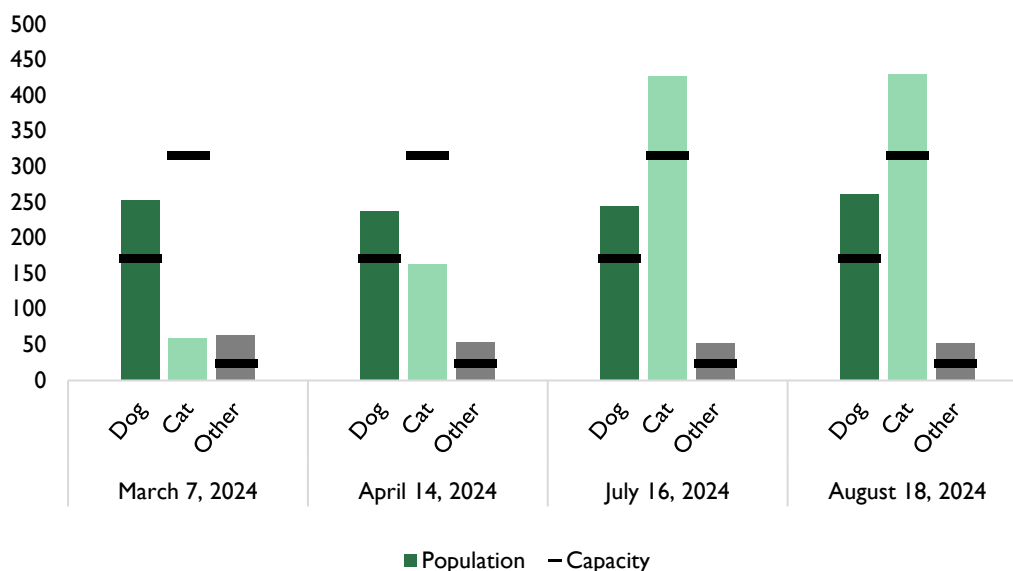
*Operating beyond an organization's capacity for care is unacceptable and can compromise animals' living conditions, population health, and wellbeing.*

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<sup>9</sup> We should note that the shelter does not maintain a daily capacity estimate for available humane housing by species. Audit staff estimated this capacity based on a kennel count using ACS' shelter map.

ACS also housed more rabbits and other animals (e.g., birds, turtles) than what the facility is intended for (about 55 animals in 24 kennels, or over two times as many animals as available kennels).

### Exhibit 7: ACS On-Site Animal Population Frequently Exceeded Housing Capacity



Source: Auditor analysis of Chameleon inventory reports and auditor estimates of ACS housing capacity. Inventory reports were pulled on March 7, 2024 at 10:48 a.m., April 14, 2024 at 7:05 a.m., July 16, 2024 at 5:24 p.m., and August 13, 2024 at 7:00 a.m. The population excludes animals that were off-site or present for a one-day procedure. Estimated holding capacity excludes areas of the shelter that were not originally designed to house animals permanently.

### The High Volume of Animals Impacts ACS' Ability to Provide Daily Care and Affects Staff Morale

The number of animals housed at the shelter impacts staff's workload. Based on ACS estimates and industry standards for time spent on daily tasks, care attendants would not have enough time to meet the feeding and cleaning needs of all the animals housed at the shelter when it is over capacity. When the animal population exceeds staff's capacity to meet each animal's needs, ACS compromises the physical health and overall welfare of each animal.

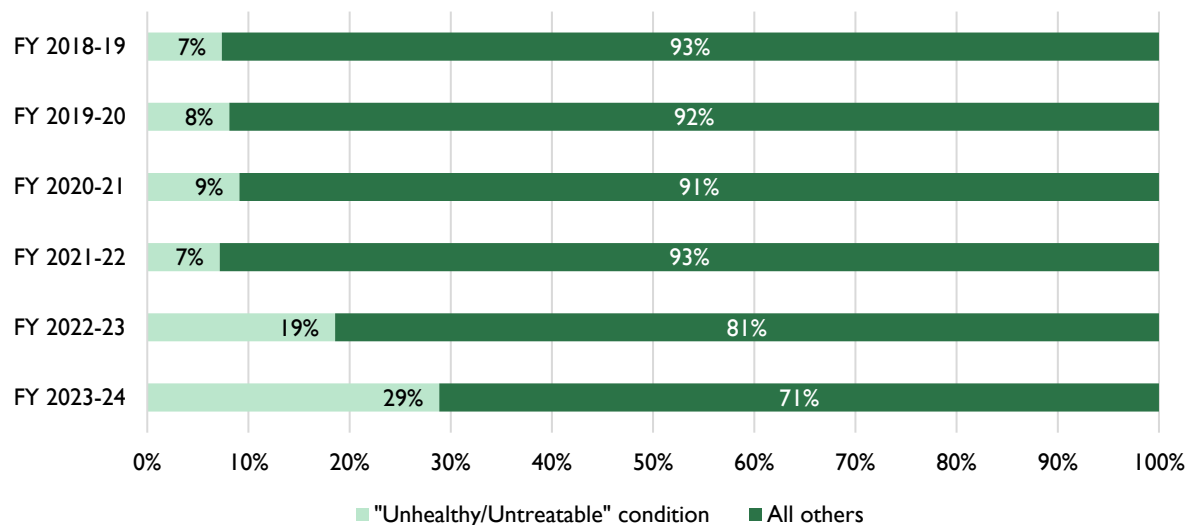
The number of animals also impacts medical staff's existing workload, which can contribute to delays in administering treatments at intake. In a limited sample of animal intakes in 2024, there were instances in which animals did not receive their vaccines, parasite treatments, or comprehensive physical exams on the day they entered the shelter. This may occur when all available medical personnel are attending to animals already at the shelter, and thus a health technician is not actively staffing intake.

#### ASV Guidelines

*Shelters must administer core vaccines and parasite treatment at intake, and should perform a comprehensive physical exam.*

Medical staff's workload is also exacerbated when the shelter accepts a higher number of unhealthy animals into the shelter (see Exhibit 8). With a higher proportion of sick animals at the shelter, the medical staff becomes responsible for providing treatments and checkups to more animals on a daily basis. Some medical staff shared feeling overwhelmed with the volume of animals they need to attend to.

**Exhibit 8: The Proportion of “Unhealthy/Untreatable” Animals Admitted Into the Shelter Has Increased**



Source: Auditor analysis of Chameleon intakes data for FYs 2018-19 to 2023-24.

Note: An “unhealthy/untreatable” intake condition is based on the 2022 WeCARE Pet Evaluation matrix and the ACS procedure and query code on these conditions.<sup>10</sup> The designations captured consist of animals with health and behavioral assessments as aggressive, “unhealthy/untreatable” behavior, feral, medical-emergency, medical-severe, nursing kittens, and an “unhealthy” category.

<sup>10</sup> The WeCARE Alliance consists of a group of six shelters in Santa Clara County (including San José). The WeCARE Pet Evaluation matrix establishes common definitions for assessing an animal's condition and what constitutes an “unhealthy/untreatable” condition. Staff report this is their criteria for making “unhealthy/untreatable” designations.

### Capacity Concerns Can Be Driven by an Increase in How Long Animals Stay in the Shelter

The overall demand for shelter capacity at ACS has increased in recent years. Since FY 2018-19, ACS intake volume has been trending downwards compared to FY 2018-19 levels. However, animals are remaining in the shelter's care for longer.

The number of animals at a shelter on a given day depends on a shelter's intake volume and animals' length of stay. As shown in Exhibit 9, assuming a shelter takes in the same number of animals per day, the shelter's daily population increases as animals' length of stay increases. To maintain a constant number of animals in a shelter, a shelter may decide to care for fewer animals that require longer stays, or it may shorten the average length of stay and take in more animals.

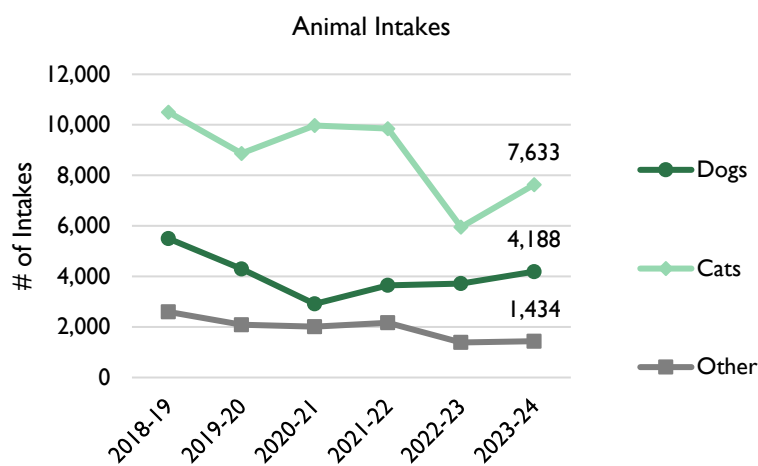
#### Exhibit 9: When Animals Remain in a Shelter's Care for Longer, the Shelter's Daily Animal Population Increases

Average admissions per day	Average length of stay (days)	Average daily population (animals)	Admissions per year (animals)
10	7	70	3,650
10	14	140	3,650
10	21	210	3,650

Source: ASV Guidelines.

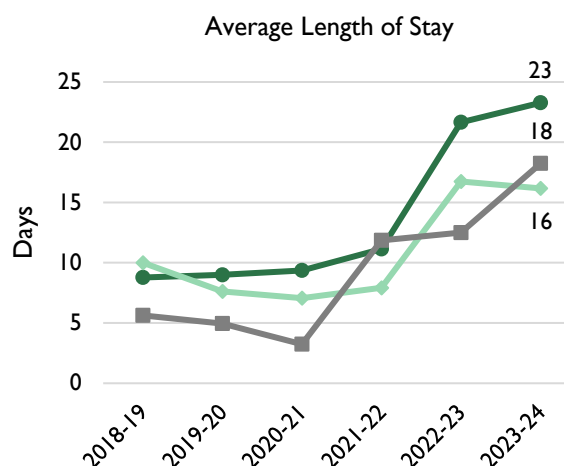
When increased length of stay is not entirely offset by reducing daily admissions, a shelter's daily population may nonetheless increase. For ACS, the overall average length of stay has increased significantly, from 7 days in FY 2020-21 to 19 in FY 2023-24. The difference between dogs and cats has grown over time, with dogs having a significantly longer average length of stay (as shown in Exhibit 10). Larger dogs have a greater average length of stay than smaller sized dogs.

### Exhibit 10: Animal Intakes Have Decreased, but Average Length of Stay Has Increased



Source: Auditor analysis of Chameleon intakes data for FY 2018-19 to FY 2023-24.

Note: The analysis excludes cats that were trap, neutered, and released through the spay/neuter clinic (see also Finding 3 that touches on staff data entry consistency). Other includes birds, rabbits, livestock, and other animals.



Source: Auditor analysis of Chameleon length of stay data for FY 2018-19 to FY 2023-24.

Note: Length of stay data for some animals that had been involved in the foster program is not included due to staff data entry practices for the foster program. Other includes birds, rabbits, livestock, and other animals.

Per ASV Guidelines, staying at a shelter for weeks can cause chronic stress on an animal, and reducing length of stay is critical in maintaining animal welfare in shelters.

#### ASV Guidelines

*Decision-making and animal movement must optimize length of stay.*

### ACS Should Assess Whether the Shelter Meets the Needs of Animals and the Community

The current shelter capacity does not provide adequate housing space to meet the demands of the animals at the shelter. According to ASV Guidelines, shelters must have appropriate housing in terms of quantity and design. In addition, sufficient space in an enclosure provides animals with more control of their environment and interactions, while also helping with personnel safety, cleaning, and disease transmission.

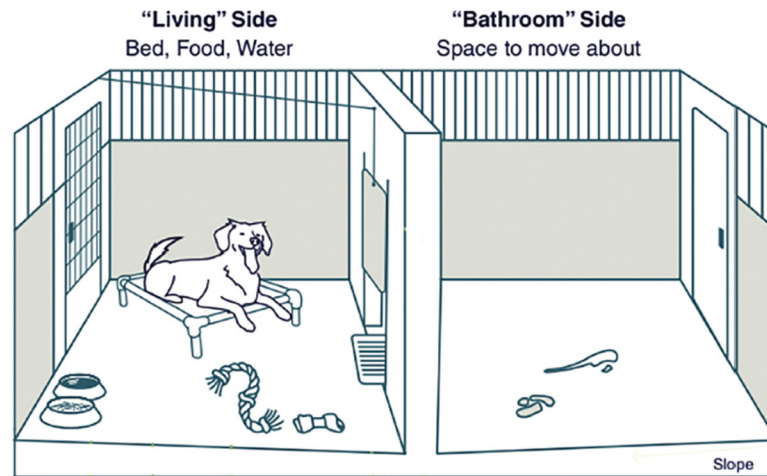
#### ACS Lacks Space to Prevent Disease Spread and Promote Animal Welfare

ACS' existing on-site population exceeds the shelter's housing capacity. As a result, animals are housed in areas not intended for long-term housing, such as crates in the intake area, outdoor kennels, and penned areas meant for interested



adopters to meet animals. In addition, some multi-compartment kennels intended to house one dog are halved to house two dogs (see Exhibit I I for example of a multi-compartment enclosure). Staff noted that they are aware that these are not ideal situations for the animals, but also need to find space for animals coming into the shelter. Staff also report limited space to perform intake and surgical procedures.

### Exhibit I I: Multi-Compartment Enclosures Are Ideal for Housing Animals



Source: ASV Guidelines.

In addition, the shelter has limited space to isolate animals with infectious diseases such as ringworm, parvovirus, and panleukopenia, which can spread rapidly through the shelter. Some of these diseases can be fatal for animals.

We reviewed a sample of cats that died at the shelter during FY 2023-24 from one of these infectious diseases to determine whether they were isolated prior to dying. We found that many had not been isolated in a specific room.

Although ACS staff reported panleukopenia and parvovirus as common diseases for a shelter outbreak, ACS only recently began isolating cats with panleukopenia<sup>11</sup> in a separate room in June 2024.<sup>12</sup> Even then, the isolation room is intended to house rabbits or exotic animals. Similarly, dogs with

#### ASV Guidelines

*Shelters must be able to isolate infectious animals from the general population to prevent disease from spreading.*

<sup>11</sup> Panleukopenia is a contagious and potentially fatal disease for cats. Symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting, lethargy, loss of appetite, and dehydration. Panleukopenia can spread to other cats through a cat's feces, body fluids, and contaminated items.

<sup>12</sup> Staff report that in previous years, rooms with panleukopenia-positive cats were shut down for quarantine. However, sick cats remained in the same room as healthy cats. Because the sick cats were not isolated in a separate room, this created a risk of continuously exposing healthy cats with panleukopenia.

parvovirus<sup>13</sup> are housed in the shelter's euthanasia room kennels, which are only intended for temporary housing before a euthanasia procedure.

Having sufficient space to isolate for disease is essential. Per the ASV Guidelines, shelters must be able to isolate infectious animals from the general population to prevent disease from spreading.

ACS does not meet some of the ASV Guidelines on shelter design in other areas as well.

- Rooms reserved for animals under investigation can be used to house animals from the general population. Conversely, animals with bite history may be housed in non-investigation rooms.
- There appeared to be minimal noise controls in place, which can impact the wellbeing of animals and staff.
- There appeared to be limited visual and auditory separation between species. Lack of separation can create stress on animals, particularly for prey species (e.g., cats may be prey for dogs).

ACS must take measures to ensure its on-site population remains within its capacity for care. Additionally, ACS should review its animal inventory trends to determine whether additional kennel space is necessary. As an example, the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program provides guidance for shelters on estimating the required physical holding capacity by using daily average intake levels and holding periods.<sup>14</sup>

### **ACS Has a Reported \$2.5 Million in Deferred Maintenance, With a Facility Condition Assessment Underway**

According to the City's 2024 Status Report on Deferred Maintenance and Infrastructure Backlog,<sup>15</sup> ACS has a reported deferred maintenance backlog of \$2.5 million.<sup>16</sup> Public Works' Facilities Management Division noted that this figure may underestimate the facility's maintenance needs, as it may only encompass the cost of replacing the shelter's HVAC system. The HVAC system has not been replaced since the shelter opened in 2004. Per Public Works, major capital replacements are usually needed within 20 to 25 years of a building's life.

<sup>13</sup> Parvovirus is a highly contagious disease for dogs. Signs of parvovirus can include lethargy, loss of appetite, vomiting, and diarrhea. Parvovirus can spread through direct contact with infected dogs, feces, or virus-contaminated surfaces.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/calculating-shelter-capacity>

<sup>15</sup> The Status Report on Deferred Maintenance and Infrastructure Backlog report analyzes the unfunded infrastructure and ongoing maintenance needs over a 5-year period for 14 programs in the City.

<sup>16</sup> In FY 2023-24, Public Works estimated spending \$565,650 of General Fund Capital funding to cover the cost of replacing the shelter's roof and sewer pipes and for electric repairs. In addition to re-budgeted funds, the City budgeted one-time funding for \$250,000 for FY 2024-25 to cover various capital improvements, including HVAC upgrades, new appliances, lighting, and kennel door hardware.

Work orders related to the HVAC system note that there have been several complaints of rooms being too hot or cold. As an example, ACS staff reported switching cats and rabbits between rooms due to temperature concerns. An HVAC system serves multiple purposes in an animal shelter. Humane and comfortable temperatures for animals range between 64 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Proper ventilation is also important for the wellbeing of animals and personnel, and limiting the spread of diseases by removing heat, odor, airborne microbes, and pollutants.

A facility condition assessment by a consulting firm is currently underway, with the report expected to be published in late 2024. Per the agreement, the report will include a cost analysis assessment to determine the shelter's building condition, forecast future capital costs, and identify critical repairs or safety conditions.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1: San José Animal Care and Services should assess its shelter capacity and determine the number of animals the shelter can adequately care for using holding capacity by species and staff's capacity for care.**
- 2: San José Animal Care and Services, using data such as trends in intake requests and animal inventory, should assess San José's shelter needs to determine whether additional kennel space is required and create a long-term strategy to fund kennel improvements or expansion.**
- 3: San José Animal Care and Services should review the shelter's facility condition assessment once completed, and identify priority needs and funding requirements for these improvements.**

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### **ACS Should Pursue a Multi-Pronged Strategy to Better Manage the Demand for Shelter Space**

The ASV Guidelines state that shelters must practice active population management, or the process of planning services for each animal in the shelter's care. Population management takes into consideration the shelter's ability to care for the animal population.

#### **Monitor and Adjust Intake Hours to Allow Staff to Address Needs of Animals Within the Shelter**

Despite the shelter being overcapacity, in June 2024, San José had the most intake hours among benchmarked jurisdictions, as shown in Exhibit 12. Most other jurisdictions opened at least three hours later than San José and offered an average of 42 hours for intake each week.

## Exhibit 12: Among Benchmarked Jurisdictions, San José Had the Highest Intake Hours

	Animal Intake Hours per Week	Intake Opens
San José	70	7:00 a.m.
City and County of San Francisco	59.5	8:30 a.m. (by appointment)
Contra Costa County	37	10:00 a.m.
Oakland	44	11:00 a.m.
Los Angeles County	36*	11:00 a.m.
Santa Clara County	40	12:00 p.m.
City of Sacramento	35	12:00 p.m.

Source: Auditor summary of animal shelter websites as of June 2024.

\* The Los Angeles County website states that its Animal Care Centers and related services are open to the public from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from Monday to Saturday. Its care centers provide limited services on Sundays and continue to admit stray animals.

In October 2024, ACS changed its intake hours, reducing its overall intake hours to 49 hours per week and pushing back its intake hours to 10:00 a.m. By reducing intake hours to the public, shelter staff can address the needs of animals already at the shelter before turning their attention to accepting more animals.

ACS staff noted that pushing intake hours later in the day will allow care attendants to complete daily feeding and cleaning. Additionally, aligning the intake hours with medical staff's availability can help ensure that someone is available to administer core vaccines, treatments, and provide a comprehensive physical exam for every animal at intake. ACS should continue to monitor shelter and staff capacity and adjust intake hours accordingly.

### ACS Should Reassess Maintaining a Kitten Nursery

San José's admission of newborn kittens under eight weeks old into its kitten nursery differs from industry standards and most benchmarked jurisdictions. The UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program and Maddie's Fund Consult generally do not recommend having an in-shelter kitten nursery. Newborn kittens have an increased risk of contracting infectious (and sometimes fatal) diseases and require 24-hour care by personnel. Instead, these groups recommend diverting underage kittens from intake, such as placing them in foster or leaving the kittens with their mother in the community. Benchmarked jurisdictions that do not maintain an overnight nursery reported making

#### UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program

*In-shelter kitten nurseries are not recommended.*

euthanasia decisions when they could not locate a foster home or staff member to care for the kittens, or if the kitten comes in sick.

Despite industry guidance on diverting intake, ACS admits newborn kittens into the shelter during kitten season.<sup>17</sup> On select days during the 2024 kitten season, there were about 70 kittens (16 percent of the shelter's cat population) housed in the kitten nursery during the day or overnight.<sup>18</sup>

Staff from some jurisdictions reported that they do not house newborn kittens at their shelters because of nurseries being difficult to manage and resource intensive, and newborn kittens having low survival rates. ACS staff noted that the volume of kittens they care for during the summer months reduced staff morale.

The ASV Guidelines state that shelters must balance admission decisions with the shelter's "ability to provide appropriate outcomes, minimize length of stay, and ensure the shelter remains within its capacity for care." The Maddie's Fund report recommends diverting all underage kittens from the shelter.<sup>19</sup>

### **ASV Guidelines**

*An animal must only be admitted if the shelter can provide the care they require.*

### *Better Outreach Can Inform the Community About When Stray Kitten Intervention Is Appropriate*

ACS can proactively inform the community through social media when kitten season is approaching. The ACS website provides information on leaving stray kittens alone and observing from a distance before a concerned resident should intervene. While ACS had a few social media posts to promote this information for the 2024 kitten season, many kitten season posts were related to adoptions or advertising foster trainings. ACS' draft communication plan also noted challenges in developing timely messaging for kitten season. To reduce the number of kitten litters brought into shelters, UC Davis recommends informing the public on appropriate steps by providing information on the shelter's website, social media pages, and through press releases.

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<sup>17</sup> According to UC Davis, cat breeding increases between April and September. During this time of the year, known as kitten season, there is an influx in the community's kitten population.

<sup>18</sup> Although the kitten nursery room has space for 10 kennels, we observed during site visits that most kitten litters in this room were kept in plastic bins for warmth. The UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program does not recommend in-shelter kitten nurseries, and neither UC Davis nor the ASV Guidelines provide detail on whether housing kittens in plastic bins is appropriate. ASV Guidelines recommend that an animal's primary enclosure be structurally sound, safe, and prevent injury and escape. Enclosures must provide enough space for the animal to stand, walk, sit, and lay down. For newborn kittens specifically, UC Davis emphasizes keeping kittens warm.

<sup>19</sup> The Maddie's Fund report recommends implementing a Wait 'Til 8 program, meaning waiting until kittens are eight weeks old before they are admitted to the shelter.

**Recommendations:**

- 4: San José Animal Care and Services should develop a plan to transition away from or reduce intake of newborn kittens. The plan should address:**
- a. The shelter’s capacity to care for kittens in-house, including a comparison of the kitten nursery costs and related live outcomes,**
  - b. Guidelines for when diversion or overnight care of newborn kittens at the shelter is appropriate, and**
  - c. Pathways when the volume or condition of kittens exceeds the capacity for in-house care, including potential foster care, rescue, or euthanasia.**
- 5: San José Animal Care and Services should update the shelter’s outreach strategy to educate the community through social media and other channels on what to expect before and during kitten season and when intervention with community cats is appropriate.**

**ACS Should Formalize Pathway Planning for Shelter Animals**

ACS does not currently have formal protocols to designate or evaluate an animal’s progress toward an outcome while at the shelter or in foster. UC Davis recommends designating a pathway plan right from intake. Pathway planning, or proactively anticipating the care an animal will need to achieve an outcome, is recommended by the ASV Guidelines to minimize length of stay.<sup>20</sup>

Currently, animals at ACS are not formally placed on a targeted pathway out of the shelter. For example, animals can be made available for adoption, foster care, and rescue groups simultaneously, but without an assigned pathway. Without a clear pathway or action items for each animal, it can be difficult for ACS staff to determine how to prioritize animal-related tasks and ensure animals achieve an appropriate outcome.

<sup>20</sup> Examples of pathways include identifying animals for foster care, rescue, adoption, and euthanasia.

ACS also does not have protocols to conduct population rounds for assessing each animal's pathway. While there is no documented guidance on population rounds, staff report reviewing a list of the animals at the shelter every week, which can help identify animals in need of rescue. Separately, staff also report scheduling unaltered animals for a spay or neuter surgery based on expressed adoption interest and animals' length of stay.

### **ASV Guidelines**

*The entire shelter population must be regularly assessed by management to ensure that each animal has a clear plan and is on track to achieve its designated pathway.*

ASV Guidelines and UC Davis recommend performing population rounds to reassess animals' pathways, including for animals in foster care. Assessing each animal's pathway regularly can help ACS staff prioritize specific tasks, while also reducing length of stay.

Action items resulting from a population round can include:

- Scheduling an animal for a spay or neuter surgery,
- Asking for a staff or community member to take in the animal for foster,
- Boosting an animal for potential adoptions through social media,
- Contacting rescue groups that may be interested in picking up the animal, or
- If placements for live outcome are not feasible, making euthanasia decisions.

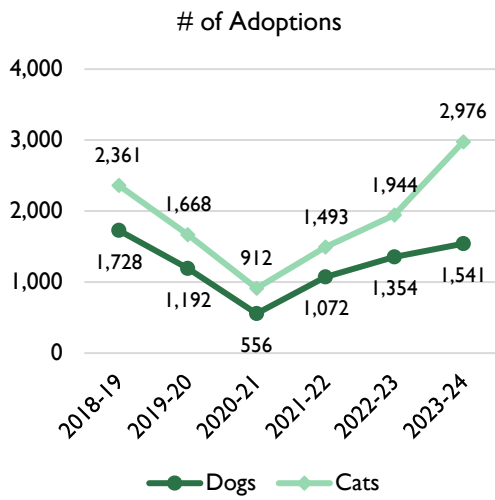
### *Increase Adoption and Rescue Opportunities*

In recent years, the number of adoptions has increased and has recovered after a decline between FY 2018-19 and FY 2020-21. ACS staff report success from adoption events, and they have also held promotions where adoption fees were waived.

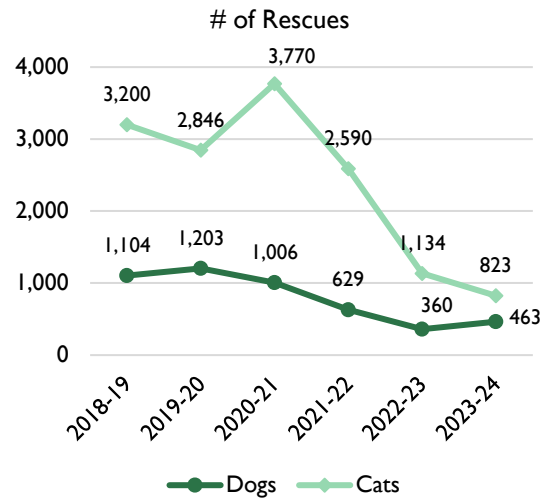
During their consult, Maddie's Fund highlighted ACS' PetSmart Offsite Adoption Center as a positive in the adoption program at ACS. The FY 2024-25 Budget also established one-time funding of \$200,000 to offer "pop-up" adoption events to bring adoptable animals closer to residents that may be farther from shelter. Maddie's Fund and ASV Guidelines advise shelters to increase adoptions through various avenues, such as through marketing, having accessible hours for working families, and holding adoption and outreach events that reach the entire community.

However, the recent success of the adoption program has been offset by a significant decrease in the number of animals being taken from the shelter by rescue groups. (See Finding 4 for additional detail on ACS' rescue strategy).

### Exhibit 13: Number of Adoptions Have Been Increasing but Rescues Have Fallen



Source: Auditor analysis of animals adopted from FY 2018-19 to FY 2023-24 using outcomes data from Chameleon. The graph excludes animals in the “other” category, including rabbits, birds, and rodents.



Source: Auditor analysis of animals rescued from FY 2018-19 to FY 2023-24 using outcomes data from Chameleon. The graph excludes animals in the “other” category, including rabbits, birds, and rodents.

Using various outcome avenues (e.g., both adoption and rescue outcomes) represents a comprehensive shelter strategy to secure a live placement for the animal. By providing more live outcome opportunities, ACS can reduce animals’ length of stay, route more animals out of the shelter, and move closer to the shelter’s capacity for care.

#### *Finalize Formal Decision-Making Process Around Euthanasia*

ACS staff reported instances in which euthanasia decisions for unhealthy and untreatable animals are delayed. Staff expressed concerns about community backlash on internal euthanasia decisions. According to ASV Guidelines, “euthanasia decisions are based on a shelter’s ability to support the welfare of the individual animal in the context of the population, available resources, and the community.” Delaying euthanasia decisions may extend an animal’s suffering at the shelter, use shelter resources on animals without an identified live outcome, and put shelter staff and the community in danger.

#### **ASV Guidelines**

*Aversion to euthanasia is not an excuse for crowding and poor welfare.*

ACS staff have drafted an update to their euthanasia protocol to include more specific situations in which animals may be considered for euthanasia. The draft protocol also provides more detail on the process for delaying euthanasia



decisions. One benchmarked jurisdiction has a policy that it will grant requests to extend an animal's euthanasia date only if the shelter has additional holding capacity and the animal has an identified placement. The ASV Guidelines note that having clear, consistent, and transparent protocols on making euthanasia decisions can mitigate stress on personnel. It should be noted that California Assembly Bill 2265, if passed, may create additional requirements for euthanasia decisions made by animal shelters.<sup>21</sup>

**Recommendations:**

- 6: To ensure that each animal has an identified path out of the shelter and to reduce its length of stay, San José Animal Care and Services should formalize pathway planning protocols that include:**
  - a. Identifying potential pathways (e.g., adoption, rescue, or euthanasia) for animals entering the shelter and their pathway changes and document that in the Chameleon case management system,**
  - b. Formalizing steps that staff should take for an animal to achieve its intended pathways (e.g., schedule a spay or neuter surgery, network with rescue groups, promote as an adoption candidate), and**
  - c. Assigning supervisory or management staff to conduct regular (e.g., daily) assessments of animals' progress towards their pathway.**
- 7: San José Animal Care and Services should finalize the shelter's draft euthanasia protocol to:**
  - a. Provide clear criteria on when euthanasia may be considered, and**
  - b. Formalize the process for granting requests to delay euthanasia decisions.**

**Formalize Oversight of the Foster Care Program and Establish Targets for Final Outcomes**

In addition to the shelter's on-site animal population, ACS does not establish pathways or targets to achieve final outcomes for animals in the shelter's foster care program. As of July 2024, ACS reported there were over 650 animals in

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<sup>21</sup> If passed, shelters would be required to post a daily list of cats or dogs scheduled for euthanasia on shelters' websites or social media pages 24 to 72 hours before the scheduled procedure. The bill would also amend Section 17005 of the Food and Agricultural Code to add that "no animal should be euthanized if it can be... released to a qualified nonprofit animal rescue or adoption organization." Additionally, while the bill would amend Section 17006 to read that "no animal be euthanized by a public animal control agency or shelter," the section would not apply to animals with serious illness, severe injuries, dogs determined to be vicious, and newborn animals impounded without their mothers.

foster care. According to the shelter's foster inventory report, about 30 percent of the 650 animals had been in foster care for over 100 days.<sup>22</sup> According to staff, some of the animals that have been in foster care for over 100 days were:

- Too young for adoption,
- Bad behavior history and under investigation, or
- Fostered with the intention of adoption.

We also noted instances in which animals died while in foster care, ran away, or moved out of state with their foster caretakers. Despite these animals no longer being alive or within the ACS jurisdiction, they remained in the ACS foster inventory report.

Currently, ACS does not have formal protocols for staff to regularly check on the status of foster animals or determine if foster animals should be made eligible for adoption. Some foster animals that are eligible for adoption do not appear on Pet Compass for potential adopters to see them. For animals on a foster-to-adopt track, there are also no formal deadlines or timeframes for when a foster caretaker must finalize their decision to adopt.

Lastly, staff do not account for animals in foster in a uniform manner. Some are included in a Chameleon foster inventory report, others are in a spreadsheet maintained by staff or in a binder for kitten fosters held by medical staff. Rabbits or other small animals do not appear to be followed up on. The foster inventory report for tracking animals is also not always complete or accurate. Not all foster animals are included in the report, and the number of days an animal has been out to foster can be incorrect or unclear.

#### **Recommendation:**

- 8: To ensure the welfare of animals in foster care, San José Animal Care and Services should develop policies to:**
- a. Track the status and location of all fostered animals in a uniform report,**
  - b. Establish pathway plans for animals in foster,**
  - c. Accurately track the number of days animals stay in foster care and create limits for how long they can be in foster homes without being adopted, and**
  - d. Document timelines and expectations for when foster caretakers must return to the shelter for medical appointments.**

<sup>22</sup> Due to staff data entry practices, the shelter's foster inventory report may yield inaccurate information on the number of animals in foster and days spent in foster.

### Identifying Additional Spay and Neuter Opportunities Can Reduce Animal Intakes and Improve Population Management in the Shelter

Staffing constraints at ACS limits the shelter's ability to provide spay and neuter surgeries for shelter animals, community cats, and owned pets. Sterilizing these three groups can make shelter animals more readily adoptable and decrease the local animal population that needs shelter services.

<b>Shelter and foster animals</b>	<p>Despite performing thousands of surgeries annually, half of the animals on-site on auditor-observed days were not spayed or neutered.<sup>23</sup> Natural turnover within the shelter means that some portion of the animals in the shelter will not be spayed or neutered. Many shelter animals sent to foster were not fixed, and they did not have a documented date to return for a spay or neuter surgery in their Chameleon records. However, based on ACS' Foster Manual, the shelter should be altering adult animals before they go out to foster.</p> <p>Per state law, animals must be spayed or neutered before adoption. Being unable to fix animals that have an interested adopter, whether the animal is housed on-site or in foster, creates a barrier in finalizing an animal's adoption out of the shelter.</p>
<b>Community cats and owned pets</b>	<p>Some jurisdictions provide more spay and neuter opportunities for community cats and pets owned by the public. ACS currently provides TNR appointments one day per week and does not currently provide spay and neuter services for owned pets. In comparison, two of the six benchmarked shelters that offer weekly TNR provide the service two to four times a week. Some benchmarked jurisdictions also report offering spay and neuter services for pets. ACS staff report that they have been unable to expand their TNR program or offer spay and neuter for owned pets due to staffing constraints.</p>

The number of medical staff needed to perform surgeries limits the spay and neuter services that ACS provides for on-site shelter animals and the local population. In addition to needing a veterinarian to perform a surgery, ACS staff report that a registered veterinarian technician helps to administer anesthesia, and non-licensed health technicians assist with surgery preparation and post-surgery care. In the Adopted FY 2024-25 Operating Budget, ACS was budgeted for 4.40 full-time equivalent veterinarians<sup>24</sup> and 8.80 full-time equivalent health technicians. However, ACS reported that at the time of the audit, only two of their health technicians were licensed as registered veterinarian technicians (RVT). As such, at the time of the audit, even in cases where there was a

<sup>23</sup>It should be noted that some of these animals are kittens that are not old enough for surgery, and some unaltered animals with prolonged lengths of stay have behavioral or medical conditions.

<sup>24</sup>As of October 1, 2024, there was a vacancy to fill one full-time equivalent veterinarian position. Excluding the Medical Services Director, there were two full-time veterinarians, and the remaining veterinarians worked part-time.

veterinarian on-site to perform surgeries, there may not have been an RVT scheduled to assist with surgeries.

In September 2024, as part of the Annual Report process, the Administration recommended that City Council approve another four health technicians, with the goal of enhancing the shelter's surgical capacity. ACS should continue monitoring the need for additional medical staff to increase surgical capacity.

While budgeting for more medical staff gives ACS the financial means to allocate for more surgical capacity in-house, ACS reported challenges in recruiting from a limited pool of qualified candidates. Likewise, UC Davis found that a shortage of veterinary medical staff affects California shelters' ability to recruit and retain veterinarians and registered veterinary technicians.<sup>25</sup>

One way that shelters can maximize access to spay and neuter services is through partnerships with clinics. ACS currently has contracts or purchase orders with three outside vendors to supplement the surgeries performed by in-house medical staff. We should note that agreements for two of these vendors expired in June 2024 and were not renewed until October 2024, leaving a three-month gap in the vendors' services. Staff also report that they will begin a request for proposal process in 2025 to solicit vendors to provide spay and neuter services.

#### *Information on Scheduling for TNR Appointments Online Should Be Updated*

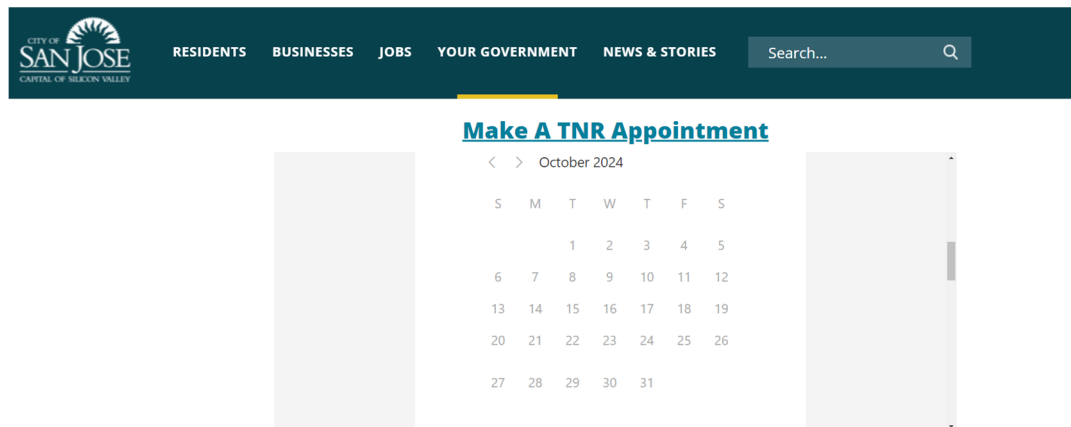
At the time of the audit, the instructions on the ACS website to book a TNR appointment did not reflect the shelter's booking process. Depending on the medical condition of the cat, a community member must book an appointment with the shelter to bring in a cat for TNR. Currently, ACS provides free TNR appointments on Wednesdays, which can range around 13 to 30 cats.

The ACS website directed people to an appointment booking system, as shown in Exhibit I4. However, there were no appointments made available. Instead, an interested party was expected to email the ACS TNR email, which is not disclosed on the ACS website.

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<sup>25</sup> UC Davis made recommendations to the California Legislature to address the shortage of veterinary professionals. The recommendations included supporting legislation that allows for out-of-state veterinarians to practice in California, provide tuition assistance for veterinary students, reduce student loans, and expand the role of registered veterinary technicians.

#### Exhibit I4: ACS' Outdated Webpage Instructions on TNR Appointments



Source: ACS Community Cats and TNR webpage as of October 2024.

#### Recommendations:

- 9: To increase the level of spay and neuter services for community cats and shelter animals, San José Animal Care and Services should work with the Finance Department and the City Attorney's Office to contract with outside service providers for spay and neuter services.
- 10: To provide accurate information to the public, update the San José Animal Care and Services website with the current process for a community member to book trap, neuter, and release appointments for community cats.

## Finding 2      Improvements in Animal Care Protocols and Recordkeeping Will Enhance Shelter Operations

### Summary

ACS protocols around medical care and disease prevention generally align with select ASV Guidelines. However, there are several areas where the ACS Manual should be updated to align with these guidelines or current shelter practices. ACS should ensure all policies reflect updated guidelines and the shelter's current practices in disease management, communicate policy changes to personnel, and train personnel in high-risk areas of disease management on a recurring basis. Additionally, daily care activity records indicate that daily feeding, providing water, cleaning, and enrichment may not have been provided to every animal. To address this, ACS should train personnel to record daily care activities completely and consistently, formalize supervisors' responsibilities to confirm all animals' daily needs were attended to, and require supervisors to observe personnel to ensure tasks are completed appropriately. Updated procedures to track and access supplies can also improve inventory management.

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### ACS Must Incorporate Changes to Disease Management and Daily Care Practices Into the Shelter's Outdated Manual

The written protocols in the ACS Manual address many of the updated ASV Guidelines. Nonetheless, there are areas where ACS should update its protocols to align with industry standards and ACS practices. It should be noted that the existence or absence of written protocols do not always represent the actual practices occurring at the shelter.

### Disease Detection and Isolation

Select ASV Guidelines	Included in ACS Manual
Shelter <b>must</b> provide all personnel the information and training needed to recognize and protect themselves against common zoonotic diseases	<b>Included</b>  The ACS Manual contains information for shelter personnel to protect themselves against zoonotic diseases. For select zoonotic diseases, the manual also includes clinical signs for humans and animals and transmission methods.
During an outbreak, animal care staff <b>should be</b> educated on the clinical signs of the disease of concern and	<b>Partially included</b>  ACS protocols provide information on recognizing panleukopenia, but not for parvovirus or ringworm. It should be noted that the panleukopenia protocol is a

on the process for alerting medical staff	<p>separate protocol that is not included in the ACS Manual.</p> <p>Protocols on the process for alerting medical staff of concerning symptoms are inconsistent. Health technicians are instructed to tag animals with abnormal symptoms for VET CHECK in Chameleon. In contrast, a different protocol for completing impound records instructs staff to communicate concerns on a veterinary board, which is an outdated practice at the shelter.</p>
Isolation rooms <b>must</b> be clearly labeled to indicate current use and necessary precautions	<p><b>Partially included</b></p> <p>ACS' more recent protocols for ringworm and panleukopenia outline rooms designated as isolation rooms, the staff responsible for designating additional rooms for isolating ringworm, and the personal protective equipment (PPE) required in these rooms.</p> <p>However, other, older cleaning protocols do not include or identify these areas as isolation rooms.</p>

### Cleaning

The ACS Manual addresses some of the select ASV Guidelines around sanitation.

Select ASV Guidelines	Included in ACS Manual
Shelter <b>must</b> have a sanitation plan for all locations in which animals are present	<p><b>Not included</b></p> <p>Animals are housed in locations that are not listed in the ACS Manual or in cleaning assignments.</p>
Spot cleaning <b>should</b> be conducted at least daily when an animal will remain in the same enclosure	<p><b>Included</b></p>
Enclosures <b>must</b> be completely sanitized before being occupied by a different animal	<p><b>Partially included</b></p> <p>While protocols for cat cleaning state that unoccupied enclosures must be completely cleaned, the ACS Manual does not outline how staff should confirm that a kennel has been fully cleaned and is ready for a new animal. Staff shared different ways that they would confirm complete sanitization.</p>
Sanitation practices <b>should</b> be observed regularly to ensure consistency with written protocols	<p><b>Not included</b></p> <p>The ACS Manual does not include information on regularly observing personnel responsible for cleaning.</p>

	The ACS Manual has specific steps on diluting cleaning solution, disinfectant contact time, and using PPE. Given the specificity of these instructions, observations by supervisors can be useful to confirm personnel follow these instructions for the safety of the animals and themselves.
Sanitation <b>should</b> proceed in an order that minimizes both the risk of pathogen transmission from infected animals and the exposure of vulnerable animals	<b>Included*</b>
Appropriate PPE <b>should</b> be used in each area and disposed of or sanitized before proceeding to care for other animals	<b>Included*</b>
Protective garments <b>must</b> be changed between handling each animal when there is a high risk for disease transmission	<b>Included*</b>

\*Included for dogs and cats, and not included for other animals.

### Vaccines and Treatments

ACS protocols for intake assessments and ongoing treatments generally met select ASV Guidelines. Although these protocols exist, it should be noted that intake treatments do not always occur. Refer to Finding I for more information on the shelter's staffing capacity for care.

Select ASV Guidelines	Included in ACS Manual
The intake assessment <b>must</b> include confirmation of the animal's estimated age, sex, physical description, and the presence of any identification and microchips	<b>Partially included</b>  While the ACS Manual directs staff to enter information about age, sex, and the presence of microchips, it does not include intake instructions to enter some elements of physical description into Chameleon. However, in reviewing Chameleon records, staff record information about the animal's species, breed, and color.
Adult animals <b>must</b> be vaccinated with core vaccines at or before intake	<b>Included (dogs and cats)</b>  Shelter staff reported beginning to vaccinate animals at intake in 2023.



Puppies and kittens housed in shelter facilities <b>must</b> begin core vaccinations at or before intake starting at 4 weeks old and <b>must</b> be revaccinated every 2 weeks until 20 weeks old	<p><b>Partially included</b></p> <p>The ACS Manual specifies that core vaccines begin at 4 or 5 weeks old, rather than the recommended 4 weeks old. The ACS Manual also states that revaccinations for puppies and kittens end at 16 weeks old, rather than the recommended 20 weeks old. Per the Manual, rabies vaccines are administered at intake if the animal is at least 12 weeks old, as recommended by the ASV Guidelines.</p>
All dogs and cats <b>must</b> be treated for roundworms and hookworms at intake, starting at 2 weeks of age	<p><b>Included</b></p>
When medical treatment is necessary, it <b>must</b> be provided in a timely fashion	<p><b>Partially included</b></p> <p>The ACS Manual includes directions on administering vaccines and parasite treatments at intake and on a recurring basis. However, parasite treatment protocols have some conflicting information with the shelter's intake protocols. Additionally, the Manual does not include health technicians' responsibility in administering veterinarian-prescribed treatments.</p>
Shelters <b>must</b> provide species-appropriate preventive health care; this includes implementing protocols that strengthen resistance to disease and minimize exposure to pathogens, such as vaccination, parasite control, good nutrition, and appropriate handling and housing location.	<p><b>Partially included</b></p> <p>The ACS Manual has information on vaccines, parasite treatment, and nutrition for dogs and cats. However, the Manual does not have information about appropriate handling and housing location by species.</p>
Medications and treatments <b>must</b> be administered only by prescription or in accordance with written protocols provided by a veterinarian	<p><b>Not included</b></p> <p>The protocols do not include information about administering treatments (other than core vaccines and a parasite treatment) prescribed by the shelter's veterinarians. Despite the absence of a protocol, it should be noted that health technicians perform treatment rounds twice a day.</p>
Trained personnel <b>must</b> visually observe the health and well-being of every animal at least once every 24 hours	<p><b>Not included</b></p> <p>Although the ACS Manual does not include information about performing visual health checks daily, a health</p>

	technician is usually assigned to perform daily visual checks on animals. Note that the objective of a visual health check round is different from population rounds discussed in Finding 1.
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### Nutrition

The ACS Manual includes information about providing food and water to animals daily.

Select ASV Guidelines	Included in ACS Manual
Food that is consistent with the nutritional needs, health status, and species of the individual animal <b>must be</b> provided at least daily	<b>Included</b>
Healthy puppies and kittens as well as lactating and pregnant animals <b>must</b> be fed small amounts frequently or have food available through the day (i.e., free-choice)	<b>Included</b>
Fresh, clean water <b>must</b> be available to animals unless there is a medical reason for water to be withheld for a prescribed period of time	<b>Included</b>
Food intake <b>must</b> be monitored daily	<b>Included</b>
Body condition and hydration status of animals <b>must</b> be monitored	<p><b>Partially included</b></p> <p>The medical intake and health check protocols in the ACS Manual instruct staff to weigh animals, record the animals' body condition, and check for dehydration. However, the health check protocols reference using health check cards, which is not a current practice at the shelter.</p> <p>Feeding protocols also instruct care attendants to observe when animals have not eaten and to notify the medical staff. However, the feeding protocols state to place nutrition concerns on a veterinarian board, which is not a current practice at the shelter.</p>

### Exercise and Enrichment

The ACS Manual does not include information about providing daily exercise and enrichment. Despite the absence of protocols in these areas, staff and volunteers report providing these opportunities regularly. As discussed later in this finding, ACS can identify specific animals in need of exercise and enrichment through a more uniform recordkeeping process.

Select ASV Guidelines	Included in ACS Manual
Enrichment <b>must</b> be given the same significance as other components of animal care, such as nutrition and medical care, and is never considered optional	<b>Not included</b>
Positive social interaction, mental stimulation, and physical activity that meets each animal's needs <b>must</b> be provided daily, outside of the activities of feeding and cleaning	<b>Not included</b>
Dogs <b>must</b> be provided with daily opportunities for activity outside of their kennels, unless doing so creates an unmanageable risk to the health or safety of people or other animals	<b>Not included</b>
Cats <b>must</b> be offered regular opportunities to express natural behaviors, including physical activity and exploration	<b>Not included</b>
Shelters <b>should</b> provide all animals with opportunities to engage in healthy social contact with people and other animals of the same species	<b>Not included</b>
Shelters <b>should</b> optimize human and animal safety by limiting the number of dogs in playgroups based on competency of personnel, play yard size, individual dog	<b>Not included</b>

behavior, and shelter resources	
A broad range of positive socialization experiences <b>must</b> be provided to puppies and kittens	<b>Not included</b>

### ASV Guidelines

*Protocols should be reviewed and updated regularly.*

During the audit, ACS did not appear to have an established process to review and update their protocols regularly. Many protocols in the ACS Manual have not been revised in several years, some dating as far back as 2008.

A few protocols in the ACS Manual describe

practices that are no longer relevant at the shelter, such as communicating health concerns through a board.

ACS should update their protocols to document the shelter's adherence with ASV Guidelines and alignment with the shelter's current practices. Further, developing a timeline to review the ACS Manual regularly for changes can help ACS maintain up-to-date protocols.

#### II: San José Animal Care and Services (ACS) should:

- a. **Update the ACS Manual to align with the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines as they relate to disease detection and isolation, cleaning, vaccines and treatments, nutrition, and exercise and enrichment. San José Animal Care and Services should review the ACS Manual on a recurring basis to incorporate changes to operations and industry standards as appropriate.**
- b. **Alternatively, adopt the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines as its primary manual and develop systems to ensure compliance with the Guidelines in the areas listed in (a). San José Animal Care and Services should review these systems on a recurring basis to incorporate changes to operations and industry standards as appropriate.**

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## Access to Updated Protocols and Recurring Trainings Can Ensure Personnel Adhere to Industry Guidelines

### **Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines**

*All personnel must have access to up-to-date protocols.*

Staff and volunteers shared concerns that changes to protocols are not clearly communicated across the organization. Operational changes are sometimes communicated through email. Other times, staff and volunteers learn of changes through word-of-mouth. Staff mentioned they were not initially provided copies of the ACS Manual, or did not have access to information on some shelter procedures.

The ASV Guidelines note that shelter protocols are critical for ensuring daily operations are consistent with an organization's policies. Creating a repository to easily access protocols, as well as standardizing how protocol changes are communicated, can ensure that personnel across the shelter are informed of ACS' most up-to-date protocols.

### **Recurring Training and Supervision in Disease Prevention Can Reduce the Risk of Spreading Infectious Diseases**

As discussed previously, ACS should update some sections of the ACS Manual pertaining to disease detection, isolation, and prevention to align with ASV Guidelines or current practices. Additionally, ACS should train and supervise personnel in these areas on a recurring basis. Animals housed in shelters are subject to an increased risk of infectious disease. As such, it is important for staff to be knowledgeable in detecting and preventing health concerns to protect animals' health.

Examples of disease management include being able to recognize animals with suspected diseases, isolating sick animals from the general population, sanitizing shelter areas to remove pathogens, using PPE to reduce the spread of disease, and vaccinating animals at intake and on a recurring schedule.

Although ACS has several protocols that reference these aspects of disease management, the shelter does not appear to formally train staff in all of these areas. Despite many staff starting at ACS within the last two years, some staff recalled receiving minimal initial training.

Opportunities to educate personnel on infectious diseases	
<b>Onboarding</b>	Onboarding tasks do not appear to cover trainings on common infectious diseases at ACS.
<b>Access to ACS Manual</b>	Even in cases where the ACS Manual already addresses components of disease management at the shelter, this information may not have been provided to staff. One staff member mentioned that they did not receive a copy of protocols when they began working at ACS.
<b>Recurring training and observation</b>	ACS management indicated that due to limited time, they have not been able to prepare trainings to remind staff of how to recognize diseases and limit its spread. The ASV Guidelines recommend recurring observations to ensure sanitation tasks are completed appropriately.

#### *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*

One area where management can ensure that personnel comply with existing ACS protocols and industry standards is in properly using PPE. PPE includes gloves, shoe covers, and gowns. When used appropriately, PPE acts as a physical barrier to reduce the spread of disease.

Most staff appeared to use PPE. However, we observed some instances of care attendants and health technicians not wearing or changing PPE, despite guidance and posted signs (such as those in Exhibit 15) requiring this.<sup>26</sup> ACS staff and volunteers also shared concerns of colleagues not using PPE appropriately.

<sup>26</sup> We performed shelter walkthroughs five times during the audit. In four of these visits, we documented observations of staff not wearing or changing PPE.

**Exhibit 15: Example of PPE Instructions Posted on Doors**



Source: Auditor photos of signs posted on cat room doors. Instructions in the left photo state that personnel must wear gloves, gown, and shoe covers upon entrance. Instructions in the right photo state to wear full PPE for morning cleaning, and booties (i.e., shoe covers) and gloves for all other interactions.

Using PPE appropriately is relevant for any personnel working directly with animals at ACS. It applies to care attendants cleaning kennels, feeding animals, and admitting animals into the shelter; health technicians administering treatments; and volunteers providing enrichment opportunities to animals.

The importance of using PPE as directed by ACS protocols is just one example where ACS can provide additional training. Consistent with ASV Guidelines, Maddie's Fund Consult recommended providing training and supervising staff until staff demonstrate proficiency in their tasks, such as in cleaning or setting up kennels. Maddie's Fund also noted that while supervision may lessen over time, point-in-time observations can ensure that staff continue to perform tasks correctly.

**Recommendations:**

- 12: San José Animal Care and Services should develop policies to require supervisory staff to perform regular observations and provide feedback to personnel in each area of shelter and medical operations, including proper cleaning, feeding, and handling animals with personal protective equipment.**
- 13: To keep personnel informed of their responsibilities in disease management at the shelter, San José Animal Care and Services should provide recurring trainings in high-risk operational areas**

identified by shelter management. Areas should include using and changing personal protective equipment, identifying infectious disease symptoms in animals, and the steps and responsible parties for communicating and responding to infectious disease concerns.

- 14: For staff to have access to up-to-date protocols, San José Animal Care and Services should create a repository of all policies and protocols and make them easily accessible to all staff. Supervisors should also review protocols relevant to staff's daily tasks with new staff during onboarding and when assigned to new job responsibilities.
- 15: To keep personnel informed of protocol changes, San José Animal Care and Services should formalize a standard operating procedure to communicate protocol changes to relevant personnel through emails, staff meetings, and other means.

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### **Consistent Recordkeeping Can Better Ensure Daily Care Is Provided for All Shelter Animals**

Recordkeeping at the shelter to support day-to-day shelter operations was not always complete or accurate. This was the case for daily care recorded through the ACS kennel services dashboard and animal locations in Chameleon. San José Animal Care and Services relies on this data for carrying out various responsibilities, such as:

- Providing medical treatment,
- Documenting animal care,
- Locating animals, and
- Tracking kennel cleaning.

Inaccurate or missing animal records can impact the care an animal receives. Per the ASV Guidelines, shelter animal identification and the maintenance of animal records are essential for shelter operations.

### **Verifying the Kennel Services Dashboard Is Accurate and Complete Can Help Confirm Every Animal's Daily Needs Are Met**

ACS maintains a kennel services dashboard that contains daily information on feeding, kennel cleaning, and enrichment activities provided by staff and volunteers. The dashboard shows which animals received care and which animals need to be attended to, and the location of animals in the shelter.

When the dashboard reflects accurate information, it can help shelter supervisors and coordinators ensure that every animal was accounted for in daily care. The

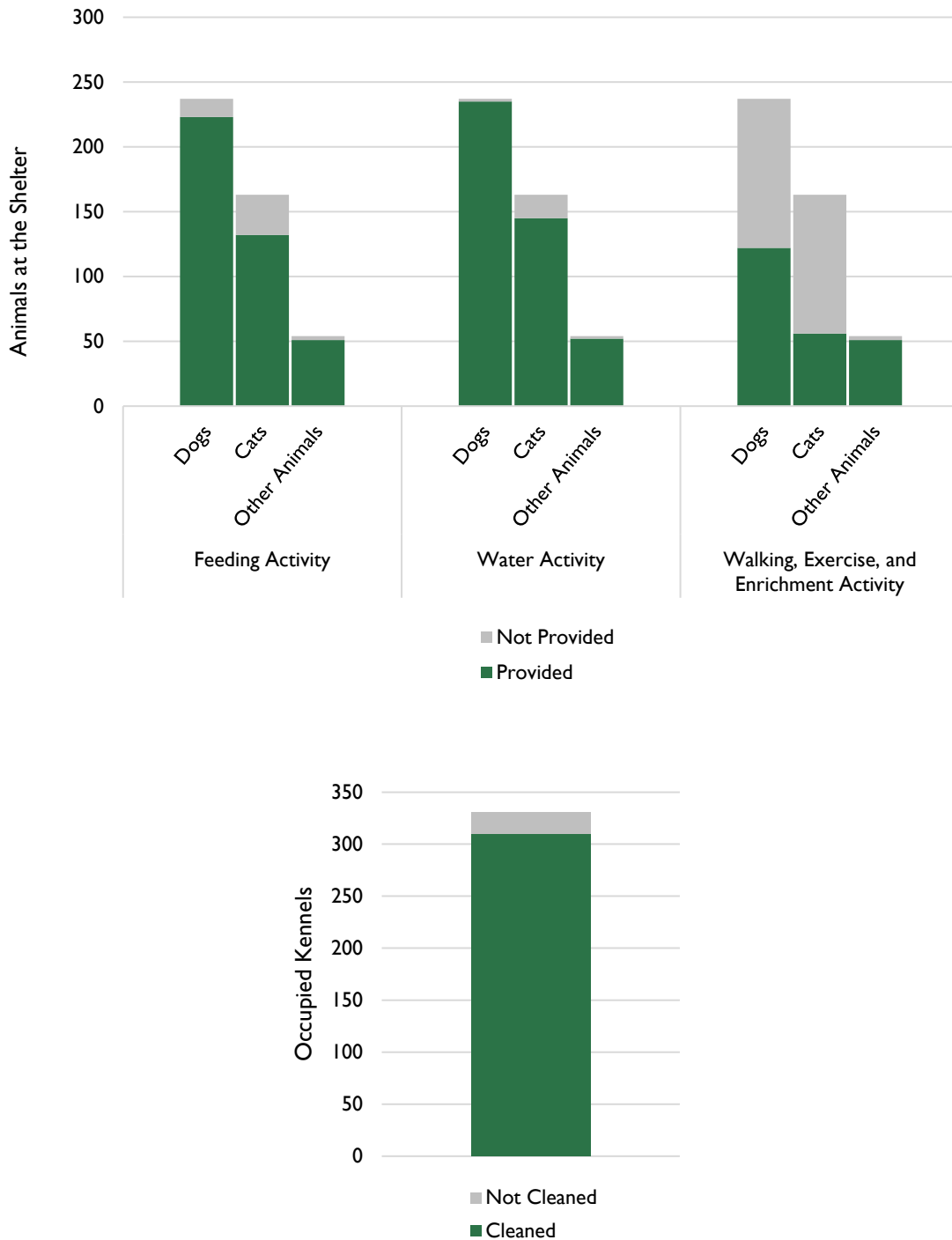


dashboard can also be useful for supervisors to confirm that care attendants and volunteers complete their assigned tasks by the end of their shifts.

Conversely, when the dashboard does not reflect accurate information on daily care activity, supervisors cannot quickly or reliably discern if all animals at the shelter received daily feeding, kennel cleaning, and enrichment.

In a limited review of this data, it does not appear that personnel recorded providing daily care to all animals. However, it is not clear whether these animals had not received the appropriate care because ACS needs to improve how it maintains records on such care for its animals.

### Exhibit 16: Daily Care for Every Animal Does Not Appear to Be Documented



Source: Auditor analysis of ArcGIS Kennel Services Dashboard data and Chameleon inventory reports for animals at the shelter on April 16, 2024. Similar results were found when analyzing animal care activity at the shelter on August 12, 2024.

While the care activity data may be subject to data entry issues, volunteers shared concerns of seeing dirty kennels. The audit team made similar observations during our site visits.<sup>27</sup>

Exhibit 17: Examples of Unclean Dog Kennels



Source: Auditor photos of feces in kennels during site visits.

The kennel services dashboard relies on personnel recording care provided to an animal through a QR code, as well as having accurate kennel locations in Chameleon. The data may indicate incomplete care due to the reasons listed in the table below.

<b>Personnel did not scan the QR code after completing a task</b>	Supervisors shared that personnel may get pulled away to assist with a different matter and forget to record when they have completed providing care to an animal. A volunteer also stated they do not use the QR codes to record when they clean a kennel.
<b>Personnel did not provide care to all animals</b>	In this instance, ACS may not have sufficient staff to provide daily care for all the animals at the shelter.
<b>Dashboard draws from inaccurate kennel locations in Chameleon</b>	The QR code system depends on an animal’s kennel location in Chameleon. If an animal’s location in Chameleon is inaccurate, the care provided for that animal may not appear in the daily activity data.

Incomplete daily care records, regardless of the reason, can be mitigated by supervisory review of the services dashboard. Shelter supervisory staff are expected to confirm that all animals were provided daily care and review the dashboard for completeness. However, this responsibility is not documented in ACS policies.

<sup>27</sup> Site visits were conducted in the morning and afternoon.

Additionally, there are no written instructions on remedial actions when care is not recorded by a certain timeframe. Formalizing a process to confirm the activity for all animals on the dashboard is completed daily can ensure that assigned personnel are properly scanning the QR code, completing their tasks on time, and correcting kennel location discrepancies between the care personnel provided and care being recorded.

### **The Shelter Can Take a Uniform Approach to Record and Provide Daily Exercise and Enrichment Activity**

ACS personnel do not uniformly track exercise and enrichment activity in a single system. This can result in duplicated work by personnel and inconsistent information about whether an animal's needs have been met.

Shelter personnel track exercise and enrichment activity for animals in multiple systems, such as the QR code system, shared spreadsheets, and physical binders. These systems are not set up to sync or update with one another whenever care is provided, which can result in staff and volunteers duplicating work or not providing exercise or enrichment to the animals. For example:

- A volunteer may record walking a dog in a spreadsheet, but not scan the QR code. This would result in the dog appearing as though it had not been walked in the kennel services dashboard data. A shelter staff member that is reviewing the dashboard may then see that this dog needs to be walked and will take the dog out, even though the volunteer had already completed this task for the day. The staff member could have used this time to take out an animal that was not yet provided an exercise or enrichment opportunity that day.
- Conversely, a shelter staff might record walking a dog by scanning the QR code, but not update the dog walking spreadsheet. In this case, a volunteer referring to the spreadsheet would identify the same dog as needing to be walked, rather than using their time to walk a different dog that had not been taken out that day.
- The dog walking spreadsheet used by volunteers may not include all dogs at the shelter. Relying on an incomplete list creates the risk that a volunteer may be unaware of dogs that need to be walked.

Having consistent and reliable information on exercise and enrichment activities can help staff and volunteers direct their efforts to animals still needing exercise or enrichment opportunities. Consolidating exercise and enrichment activity for animals into one system will also enable supervisors to quickly and reliably confirm that all animals had their daily needs met.

### **Other Recordkeeping Issues Can Impact the Shelter's Ability to Ensure the Care of Animals**

Incomplete or inaccurate information in other areas can also affect the ability to track, monitor, and provide timely care for animals under the shelter's care. For example, kennel locations for animals at the shelter are not always accurate. In a sample of 23 animals, the audit team found that two animals were not located in their kennel assigned in Chameleon.<sup>28</sup>

#### **Recommendations:**

- 16: To ensure feeding, providing water, cleaning, enrichment, and kennel location information is properly recorded, San José Animal Care and Services should improve recordkeeping by developing protocols and training staff around timely data entry.**
- 17: San José Animal Care and Services should formalize and document shelter coordinators and supervisors' areas of responsibilities in oversight and monitoring daily animal care activity. This should include reviewing relevant reports to ensure daily care is provided to all animals and following up if animal care has not occurred.**

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### **Opportunities Exist to Improve Inventory Management**

Shelter staff report that they try to keep a three months' worth of supplies (e.g., food). However, there are no procedures around managing general shelter supplies. Staff have commented that knowing what has been ordered for the week would be helpful to prevent double ordering.

In 2024, the City Manager's Office created an inventory tracker for shelter operations staff. Shelter supervisory staff were provided access to this tool via e-mail in May 2024. It tracks supplies needed for shelter operations. Per the City Manager's Office staff, the intent was for staff to review it on a regular basis to guide ordering decisions. It does not appear that this inventory tracker tool is currently being utilized by staff.

#### *Controlled Substances*

The shelter's *Controlled Substances* policy does not always reflect the current processes. The policy's stated purpose is to ensure compliance with California

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<sup>28</sup> Multiple shelter staff noted that being unable to locate an animal, which could result in being unable to administer timely treatments for an animal. Being unable to locate animals at the shelter also impacts external stakeholders. Some of San José Animal Care and Services partner organizations expressed concern about shelter staff being unable to locate animals that the partner organization wanted to rescue or provide medical services.

and Drug Enforcement Agency laws regarding purchasing, dispensing, and recordkeeping of controlled substances.

The policy requires staff to track controlled substance usage via a controlled drug disposition log. The policy also requires staff to track incoming controlled substances through a controlled drug incoming log. Per staff, access to controlled substances is available only to certain staff through means such as a keypad code. There are several access layers depending on the storage location of the controlled substance and the staff member.

Examples where staff practices did not align to the policy, or the policy did not address current practices include:

- Staff did not always consistently complete applicable fields in the controlled drug incoming log (e.g., missing signature entry, entries with missing quantity on hand).
- The policy does not specifically make reference to usage of the keypad codes for access, though this is part of the current process.
- The policy does not mention that only staff with the appropriate credentials should handle controlled substances. Similarly, it does not accurately specify which staff members should have access to certain controlled substance storage locations (e.g., per staff, certain storage locations are only for medical staff).
- The policy references a verification process to ensure that controlled substances are inventoried at the beginning and end of each euthanasia shift. However, it was not clear if this was a current practice.
- The policy does not address purchasing requirements though that is part of the policy's purpose.

ACS should update the *Controlled Substances Policy* to reflect the current practices. The updates should be in accordance with state and other applicable laws. Staff should also be trained on the policy expectations.

**Recommendation:**

**18: To ensure better inventory and recordkeeping management, San José Animal Care and Services should:**

- a. **Develop procedures and train staff around tracking inventory for shelter operations, and**
- b. **Update the Controlled Substances Policy to align with current practice and in accordance with state and other applicable laws, clarify staff access levels, and train staff on the policy.**

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## **Finding 3      Additional Disaggregation of Metrics and Better Data Management Can Enhance Transparency of Shelter Operations**

### **Summary**

ACS makes a large amount of shelter data publicly available through the ACS dashboard and the City's Open Data Portal. Additional disaggregation of the reported outcomes and other metrics can enhance transparency and provide staff and the public with information about what may be driving trends in shelter outcomes. For example, in recent years the number of animals categorized as "unhealthy/untreatable" at intake has grown, which has contributed to a decline in the overall live release rate. Reviewing the average and median lengths of stay for dogs and cats can help identify whether there are subsets of animals with long shelter stays. Insights such as these can help ACS management focus their efforts on pathway planning for such animals, such as identifying them for potential rescue. Better data management also can improve data reliability and transparency for shelter operations.

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### **Additional Disaggregation of Metrics Can Provide Helpful Insights**

Additional parsing of shelter metrics can provide further insights into shelter activities and shelter outcomes. For example, aggregate live release rate data may not provide staff or the public with information about what may be driving trends in shelter outcomes. Similar considerations for other metrics can yield additional insights that can help better inform shelter strategies.

#### **Disaggregating Live Release Rate Data Can Supply Different Insights Into Shelter Outcomes**

The overall live release rate has declined in recent years—from 91 percent in FY 2020-21 to 83 percent in FY 2023-24.<sup>29</sup> This has occurred for both dogs and cats. For cats in particular, the decline has been significant, dropping from 90 percent in FY 2020-21 to 78 percent in FY 2023-24.

As noted in Finding 1, there has been an increase in recent years of animals being admitted to the shelter designated with an "unhealthy/untreatable" condition.<sup>30</sup> These include instances where owners bring their pet to the shelter for

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<sup>29</sup> Live release rate refers to the percentage of animals that leave the shelter alive (e.g., adopted, rescued, returned to owner).

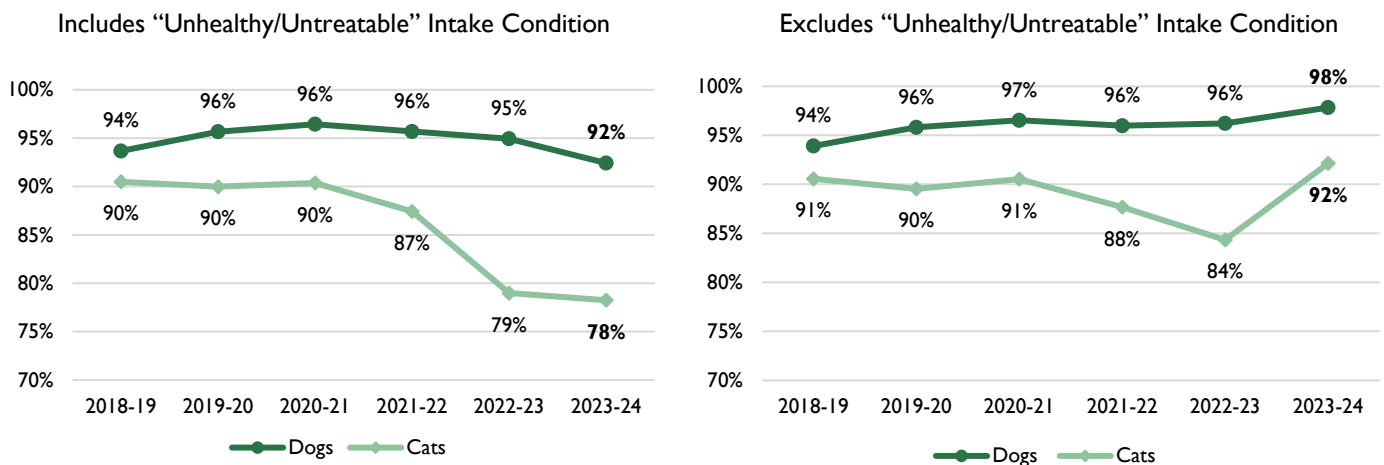
<sup>30</sup> An "unhealthy/untreatable" intake condition is based on the 2022 WeCARE Pet Evaluation matrix. The WeCARE Alliance consists of a group of six shelters in Santa Clara County (including San José). The WeCARE Pet Evaluation matrix establishes common definitions for assessing an animal's condition and what constitutes an "unhealthy/untreatable" condition.



euthanasia. The percentage of “unhealthy/untreatable” animals taken into the shelter has grown from less than 10 percent of admitted animals between FY 2018-19 through FY 2021-22 to 29 percent in FY 2023-24.

When disaggregating the data to look at the live release rate excluding animals with “unhealthy/untreatable” conditions at intake, the trends appear much differently than the aggregate results, particularly in the last two years (see Exhibit 18). Such insights can help ACS management focus their efforts on pathway planning for these animals, such as identifying them for potential rescue groups. This can also aid in transparency about what is happening within the shelter and what may be driving outcomes.

**Exhibit 18: Live Release Rates Have Been Impacted by Growth in Intake of “Unhealthy/Untreatable” Animals**



Source: Auditor analysis of Chameleon outcomes data for FY 2018-19 to FY 2023-24.

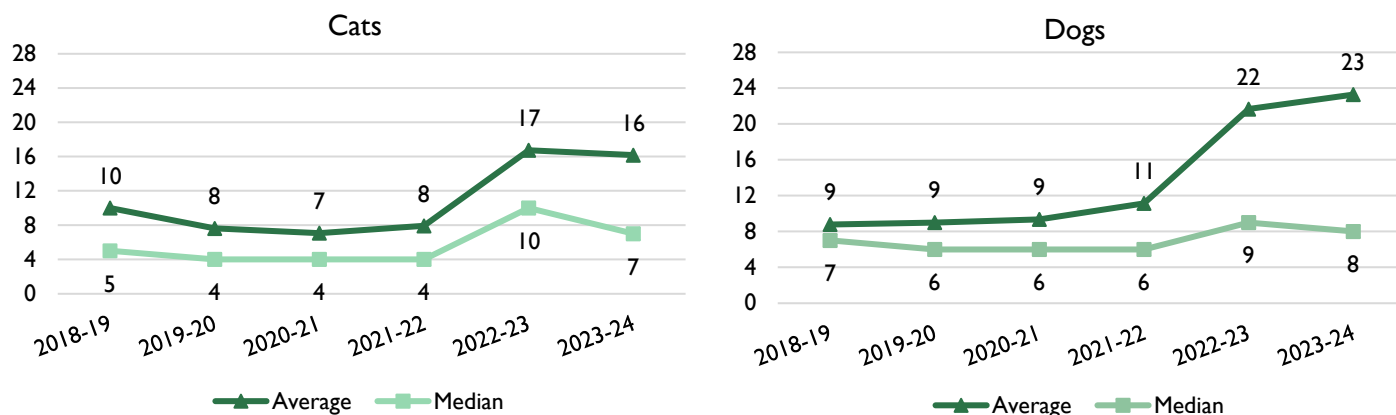
Note: An “unhealthy/untreatable” intake condition is based on the 2022 WeCARE Pet Evaluation matrix, and the ACS procedure and query code on these conditions. The designations captured consist of animals with health and behavioral assessments as aggressive, “unhealthy/untreatable” behavior, feral, medical-emergency, medical-severe, nursing kittens, and an “unhealthy” category.

### San José Animal Care and Services’ Length of Stay Reporting Could Be Enhanced

The average length of stay for animals has increased in recent years. This has been the case for both dogs and cats. The increase has been more significant for dogs, rising from 9 days in FY 2018-19 to 23 days in FY 2023-24.

When comparing the trend using the median length of stay, the story is different (see Exhibit 19). The median length of stay for dogs has remained relatively stable, varying between 6 and 9 days over those same years. As averages are affected by outliers, the divergence between the two metrics can provide insight into whether a subset of animals drive overall trends. This can also provide insights to management about how best to develop pathways for positive outcomes for animals with long stays in the shelter.

### Exhibit 19: Length of Stay for Cats and Dogs by Average vs. Median Present Different Views (Days)



Source: Auditor analysis of Chameleon length of stay data for FY 2018-19 to FY 2023-24.

Note: Length of stay data for some animals in the foster program are not included due to varying staff data entry practices for the foster program.

Like San José, most benchmarked jurisdictions track the average length of stay, but Contra Costa County and Oakland reported using a median.<sup>31</sup> However, only one jurisdiction made their length of stay metric publicly available on their shelter statistic site. ACS does not currently make length of stay data available on its public operations dashboards; however, it is reported in the City's Adopted Operating Budget.

Further, ACS length of stay reporting only calculates for species (dogs, cats, and others) and by their shelter intake type. Per the ASV Guidelines, length of stay should also be calculated by other factors, such as age. Other considerations presented by Shelter Animals Count<sup>32</sup> and Maddie's Fund respectively include examining length of stay by foster vs. in-shelter populations and dog size.

#### San José Makes a Large Amount of Shelter Data Publicly Available

Compared with other jurisdictions, ACS makes more shelter data publicly available.<sup>33</sup> Examples include:

- **Public Operations Dashboards (intakes and outcomes):** These dashboards are available on the shelter's website. They include shelter intakes, animal outcomes, the overall live release rate, and live release

<sup>31</sup> Contra Costa County reports their length of stay metric as both a median and average.

<sup>32</sup> Shelter Animals Count is a non-profit organization that provides a database for animal shelter statistics and includes data definitions. See <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/>.

<sup>33</sup> San José's website has disclaimer and glossary pages for the public operations dashboards, which include definitions. There were a few definitions that needed to be corrected or clarified. Staff have since made these corrections.

rate by animal type. Public Works information technology staff manage these dashboards, and they report that they update these dashboards weekly through a manual refresh.

- **Open Data Portal:** ACS also posts exportable intakes and outcomes data through the City's Open Data Portal. This platform includes more details than what is on the public operations dashboards. For example, it includes animal ID level intake/outcome data. Public Works information technology staff manage the programming behind the dataset, and report this data is updated nightly.

Of the six jurisdictions we benchmarked, only the City of Sacramento and Los Angeles County had interactive public dashboards. Further, only two had animal ID level intake/outcome data available for the public to view or download. These were the same two jurisdictions with the interactive public dashboards.

It should be noted that State Senate Bill 1459, if passed, may bring additional reporting requirements for San José beginning January 1, 2026.<sup>34</sup>

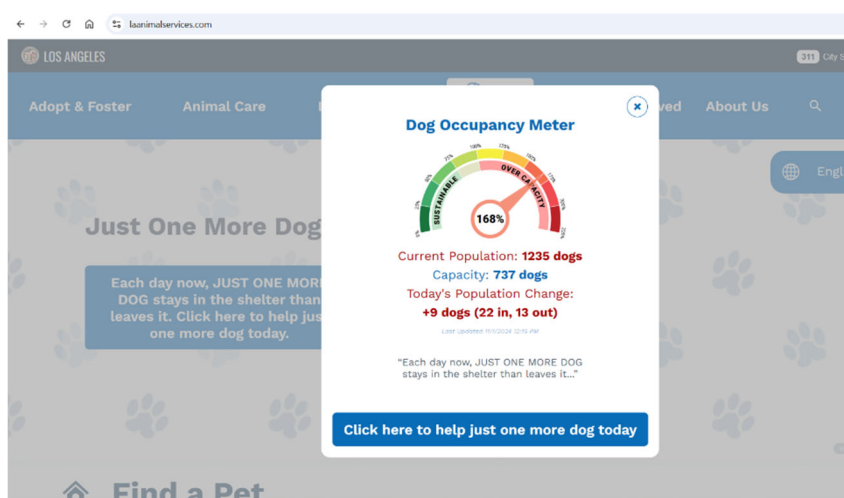
### *The Shelter Can Make Shelter Capacity Available to the Public*

For ACS, shelter capacity may be another relevant data point to make publicly available. It would allow the public to see and decide on whether they want to bring the animal to the shelter or not. Further, it would increase transparency on the shelter's capacity level. One example is that of the City of Los Angeles' Animal Services website, which has a dog occupancy meter window.

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<sup>34</sup> Public animal shelters would be required to update any data that they make available on their internet website at least once per month. The shelters would be required to publish information on the number of animals taken in during the prior month with separate categories for dogs, cats, and other animals; the source of intake, such as a relocation from another shelter or from the field; and outcomes for animals over the prior month, including adoptions, returns to owners, transfers to rescue organizations, euthanized animals, died in care, or dead upon arrival. San José already publishes monthly data on its public dashboards, but staff may need to make adjustments or further delineate the data to meet the requirements.

## Exhibit 20: Los Angeles' Dog Occupancy Meter



Source: City of Los Angeles' Animal Services website.

### Recommendation:

- 19: To provide context and information about shelter operations, San José Animal Care and Services should:**
- Provide additional data on length of stay in public and/or internal reports, which may include median as well as average stay, and broken down by age or other factors, and**
  - Include other considerations that can be presented in public and internal reports, such as information on shelter capacity, the impact of unhealthy or untreatable animal intakes on live release rate, or other considerations.**

## San José Animal Care and Services Data Management and Controls Can Be Improved

ACS' Chameleon report queries and data practices can be inconsistent or incorrect. This can impact the accuracy of reporting, which can affect transparency and decision making. Examples of inconsistent report queries and data practices include the following.

Reporting Concern	Detail
<b>Length of stay report query</b>	The average length of stay report query includes entries where the animal arrived at the shelter already deceased. The report also includes entries associated with animals brought in under the TNR Program, which are not expected to stay in the shelter. <sup>35</sup>
<b>Intake reporting</b>	ACS uses a special report for reporting “unhealthy/untreatable” animal intake trends. The query criteria for these conditions doesn’t align to the criteria that staff have reported they use and should be reviewed.
<b>Foster animal tracking</b>	Staff track foster data for adoptable and non-adoptable animals differently in Chameleon. This affects how consistently the data gets captured. For example, some foster animals are included in length of stay reporting and others are not. Per staff, Chameleon has a feature to better track foster animals, and ACS aims to enable that feature in 2025.
<b>Misaligned data entries</b>	Staff can make data entries that do not align. For example, staff can identify an animal as one species, but in a sub-category they can identify it as another. Also, intake type and condition when compared to what the animal’s outcome was does not always make sense. Further, a few animals had more than one record of being euthanized or deceased. Staff report that there are ways to restrict some data entry actions in Chameleon, and that they have done so in the past.
<b>Trap, Neuter, and Release (TNR) tracking</b>	It is not clear how consistently staff track TNR services to distinguish whether the shelter is providing it as a public service versus as a sheltering function. Per Shelter Animals Count, if treated as a <i>sheltering function</i> , these animals should be included in intake and outcome metrics. Shelter Animals Count advises that TNR as a <i>public service</i> should not be included in intakes and outcomes data.
<b>Blank or overwriting of fields</b>	Important fields in Chameleon, such as the field used for populating the animal counts used in metric calculations and public dashboard reporting, can be overwritten or left blank.

Staff have also commented on Chameleon data entry quality issues and a lack of protocols for consistent usage of Chameleon fields.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Chameleon data entry training for staff appears to be minimal.

### **Designated Staff Is Needed to Manage the Shelter's Data Quality Processes**

There is no designated individual to manage the shelter's data quality processes. This includes managing or checking the report queries for accuracy. According to staff, a regular review of data entry quality also does not occur.

Public Works information technology staff provide support to ACS along with their other duties. They have emphasized the importance for there to be ACS staff to track report modifications and manage data practices at the shelter. This is particularly important because of the number of Chameleon reports that track different aspects of operations (around 200 at the time of the audit and reduced recently from over 1,000 per staff). Inconsistent queries underlying shelter data can impact overall counts.

### **Some Key Data Access Controls Are Not in Place**

Chameleon users are assigned the same default password, and there is no prompt to update it. There are also minimal access controls on who can enter or edit data in Chameleon. This may contribute to the limited control over the quality of data. It should be noted that Chameleon does allow users to review a trail of updates made on an animal (e.g., see who last moved the animal).

The Government Accountability Office's *Standards for Internal Control for Federal Government* (known as the Green Book) provides guidelines and principles for an effective internal control system.

- Management designs control activities over the information technology infrastructure to support the completeness, accuracy, and validity of information processing by information technology (Green Book 11.09).
- Security management includes access rights across various levels of data and system software, and management designs control activities to protect an entity from inappropriate access and unauthorized use of the system (Green Book 11.12).

Moreover, City Policy 1.7.6 *Information and Systems Security* establishes the governance and management of information systems for the City. It refers to the

<sup>35</sup> The ASV Guidelines have referenced Shelter Animals Count as a resource for shelters around reporting and record keeping practices. Shelter Animals Count tracks live admissions only and excludes TNR provided as a community service from its intakes and outcomes national database.

<sup>36</sup> The animal size field is an example of a field that we observed that isn't used consistently. In some cases, this field can be used to indicate the animal's size (e.g., large, x-large). In other cases, it can be used to indicate its age (i.e., kitten, puppy).

City's Security Standards Handbook for the building, operation, and maintenance of the City's information technology systems and data. The Handbook provides password requirements for information systems, including that first-time passwords must be set to a unique value for each user and that they must be changed upon first log-in. Appropriate access controls are needed to support the quality of animal shelter data.

**Recommendations:**

- 20: To improve data reliability, better manage reports, and further ensure animals are appropriately accounted for, San José Animal Care and Services should assign an individual or individuals to oversee data management. The responsibilities should include:**
- a. Updating and training staff on procedures around data entry protocols, and implementing a process for Chameleon data to be regularly reviewed and data issues to be addressed,**
  - b. Working with the Chameleon vendor to assess whether there are standard controls to reduce data entry errors,**
  - c. Identifying the most relevant Chameleon reports to inform data reporting and operations, and ensuring data queries are accurate, and**
  - d. Establishing a process to track changes made to Chameleon reports and the public dashboards.**
- 21: To ensure appropriate data controls, San José Animal Care and Services should establish Chameleon access permissions, document who should have access to what in Chameleon, and establish default password protocols in alignment with the City's Information and Systems Security Policy.**

## **Finding 4      San José Animal Care and Services Can Enhance Its Engagement Efforts With Rescue Groups to Improve Animal Outcomes**

### **Summary**

Since FY 2018-19, the number of animals taken by rescue groups has declined. In an auditor-conducted survey, rescue groups reported having capacity constraints. Additionally, only 40 percent of respondents rated working with ACS as positive. ACS can better communicate about available animals for rescue as only 44 percent of respondents reported receiving sufficient information to make rescue decisions. Currently, there is no designated point of contact for rescue coordination, and the daily emails sent to rescue groups is missing critical information, such as age, weight, and medical and behavioral assessments. To help offset medical and other animal-related costs, San José offers financial assistance to rescue groups through the Guardian Angel Program (GAP). However, the use of GAP funds has been inconsistent and ACS should develop guidelines on funding usage and tracking.

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### **The Number of Animals Rescued by Rescue Groups Has Decreased Over the Years**

The number of animals taken by rescue organizations has seen an overall decline of 68 percent<sup>37</sup> in the past six fiscal years. In FY 2018-19, there were about 5,000 animals sent to rescues. In FY 2023-24, that number dropped to about 1,600 animals. The decline was across all animals, but it was most pronounced among cats. In FY 2020-21, more than 3,700 cats were rescued whereas there were 823 in FY 2023-24. Rescue groups play an important role in providing a caring environment for animals outside of the shelter and placing them in adoptions, especially those with medical or other needs.

According to ACS, in recent years they have shifted their focus towards adoption as the primary outcome for animals. This has resulted in a significant increase in adoptions (as described in Finding 1), though it has not fully offset the decline in rescues.

Reduced rescue engagement may also be partly explained by a decrease in capacity among rescue partners. Forty percent of respondents to an auditor-conducted survey reported a decrease in capacity in the past five years. Notably, capacity concerns appear to have impacted groups that pull cats and kittens (56 percent reported a decrease in capacity) more so than those who pull dogs and

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<sup>37</sup> The number of animals sent to rescue increased in FY 2020-21 before decreasing again in the following fiscal year.



puppies (38 percent reported a decrease). While the number of animals rescued has decreased significantly, the shelter has not seen a similar decline in the number of rescue groups with whom it works with. There was an overall 14 percent decrease from 121 to 104 rescue groups in the past six fiscal years.<sup>38</sup>

Other municipal shelters have also stated that moving animals to rescues has become increasingly difficult post-pandemic, and shelters like San Francisco and Los Angeles County are sending animals, particularly dogs, to groups outside of California.

### Rescue Groups Report Varying Experiences With ACS

In the auditor-conducted survey, rescue groups reported having varying experiences working with ACS. Roughly 40 percent of respondents rated their experience as good or excellent. Results varied across rescue groups. Only 24 percent of respondents that rescue cats and kittens rated their experience as good or excellent, compared to 46 percent of dog and puppy rescue groups.

#### Exhibit 21: Survey Respondents Were Asked About Their Overall Experience Working With ACS



Source: Auditor-conducted survey of rescue groups. Responses from rescue groups that take other animals like rabbits and birds are excluded from the results.

Note: The rescue survey results were filtered by partners that pull cats or kittens and dogs or puppies. There are partners that rescue all types of animals, and their responses overlap between the two groups.

The City engaged with rescue groups through a Shelter Working Group in 2023. However, there were no actionable outcomes from the meetings and the results from the survey show that not all rescue groups were aware of the meetings. These meetings were

#### Survey comment about the Shelter Working Group

*There was no follow-up on the issues raised; there was no increase in transparency as a result of the rescues' input.*

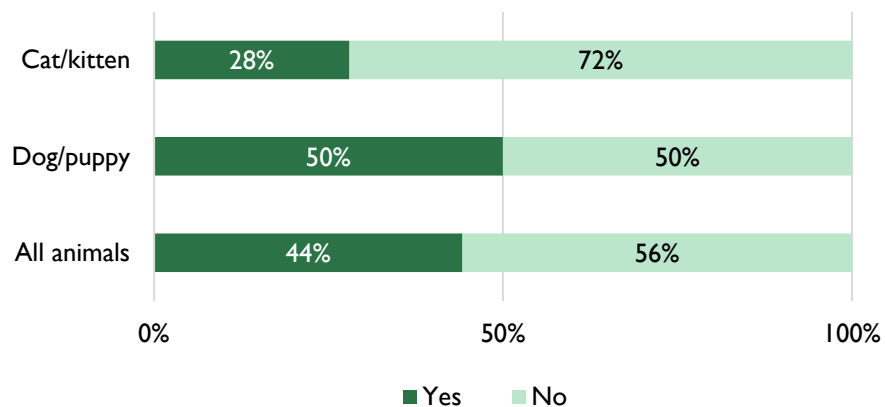
<sup>38</sup> The number of rescue groups that work with ACS has fluctuated in the past six fiscal years, but there has been an overall decline.

held in early 2024 but were discontinued.

### **Better Communication Can Help Rescue Groups Make Decisions About Rescuing Shelter Animals**

In the survey of rescue groups, more than half of respondents reported that they do not receive sufficient information to make rescue decisions. Only 28 percent of respondents that focus on cat and kitten rescues responded that they receive sufficient information to inform decisions on animals.<sup>39</sup>

#### **Exhibit 22: Survey Respondents Were Asked Whether They Receive Sufficient Information From ACS to Inform Their Decisions on Animals**



Source: Auditor-conducted survey of rescue groups. The results are divided by the type of animal that groups rescue, and they overlap for rescue groups that take more than one type of animal.

Note: All animals include rescue groups that pull other animals like rabbits and birds along with dogs and cats.

ACS sends daily automated emails (called a “needs rescue” list) to rescue groups. However, the list may not provide sufficient information for groups to make rescue decisions. The needs rescue list misses basic data such as age and weight, and more detailed information about medical and behavioral issues or the reason why the animal needs rescue.<sup>40</sup>

The “needs rescue” list is also lengthy (containing 130 animals at times) and includes all animal types. It is not tailored to reflect the species of animal that groups may be interested in rescuing. For example, groups that specialize in dogs would have to look through the available cats and kittens. Additionally, some rescue groups also specialize in certain breeds, such as large German Shepards,

<sup>39</sup> The rescue survey results were filtered by partners that pull cats or kittens and dogs or puppies. There are partners that rescue all types of animals, and their responses overlap between the two groups.

<sup>40</sup> The “needs rescue” email only retrieves information from one part of the animal profile on Chameleon, and medical and behavioral notes are stored in different parts of the profile.

but would need to look through all types of dog breeds in the “needs rescue” list.<sup>41</sup>

In addition, the daily “needs rescue” notifications are sent to over 300 individual email addresses and there is no designated individual(s) in ACS that is responsible for updating this roster to ensure that it reflects the correct contact information for active rescue groups.

At the time of the audit, ACS did not have a designated point of contact responsible for rescue engagement.<sup>42</sup> ACS has relied on two shelter coordinators, who, along with other responsibilities, are tasked with coordinating with rescue groups and responding to emails from them. Other shelters, including San Francisco and Contra Costa County, have a designated staff member, rescue coordinator, or a liaison for rescue engagement.

### **Recommendations:**

- 22: To improve rescue engagement and communication, San José Animal Care and Services should develop a communication protocol that includes an assigned point of contact(s) from the shelter and timeframes for responding to inquiries. The protocol should be shared with rescue groups.**
- 23: To ensure the rescue group roster is current, San José Animal Care and Services should assign staff to regularly update rescue group contacts.**
- 24: To ensure appropriate information about rescue animals is provided to relevant groups, San José Animal Care and Services should update its current process to notify rescue groups on available animals by:**
  - a. Tailoring the “needs rescue” list to relevant recipients (e.g., dogs/puppies vs. cats/kittens) or providing self-service options to rescue groups, and**
  - b. Including complete and accurate information about animals, such as age, weight, and medical and behavioral assessments.**

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<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that rescue groups can use Pet Compass to find out information about shelter animals in addition to or to complement the “needs rescue” list.

<sup>42</sup> ACS hired a part-time rescue coordinator from March to May 2024. As of August 2024, ACS was recruiting for a full-time rescue/foster coordinator. This is a temporary position funded through June 30, 2025, and is subject to further extension as appropriate. The required duties include establishing and maintaining connections with rescue partners, identifying animals accessible for rescue, and overseeing the foster program.

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### Gift Funds Are Not Used or Recorded Consistently

The shelter allows public gifts and donations on its website. Part of these are used to fund a program called the Guardian Angel Program (GAP). According to ACS' website, GAP funding supports:

- *Enrichment programs for the pets in our care,*
- *New pet parents and foster pet parents,*
- *Community events, and*
- *Medical expenses of the pets in our care and for partner rescue organizations and fosters parents sharing in the care of our pets in need.*

ACS provides these funds at the request of rescue partners to pay for or subsidize medical procedures and other related services. Rescue groups complete a request form for funds prior to the service, known as a GAP certificate, which is sent to shelter staff for approval. Payments are made directly to medical providers using City procurement cards (p-cards).

#### The GAP Program Needs to Be Formalized

There are no internal guidelines outlining the purpose of the use of the gift funds, including the dollar limits on funding or timelines for payments.<sup>43</sup> ACS also does not track the individual GAP expenditures because they are made through City p-cards.

Staff reported that program funds up to \$1,000 may be provided to rescue groups. However, the standard rescue agreement states that GAP funds can be requested for up to \$500 for dogs or cats, and \$250 for other animals. Additionally, the GAP certificate states that the funds are meant for medical purposes, even though we observed funds provided for behavioral intervention in dogs.

We saw some examples where funds were provided or used for purposes that conflicted with what was described in various available GAP documents. Specifically, we saw an example where funds were used to buy items that wouldn't generally qualify for medical purposes. Funds were also provided to an organization that rescues large dogs with behavioral issues.

Lastly, rescue groups that receive these grants do not report on the outcome of the animals that were provided services. Reporting back to the City on such outcomes would allow ACS to review the efficacy of the program and make changes if necessary.

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<sup>43</sup> Surveyed rescue groups expressed concerns about delays in processing the GAP funds to medical providers.

Having guidelines on what the GAP program is, how the funds would be used, the dollar limits, and the outcome of the animals is also important for transparency and consistency.

**Recommendation:**

- 25: To ensure consistency and transparency, San José Animal Care and Services should develop guidelines on the use of gift and Guardian Angel Program funds to include the following:**
- a. Maximum funds allowable per award,**
  - b. Purposes for the use of these funds,**
  - c. Method and timeline for making payments to providers,**
  - d. A process to track expenditures, and**
  - e. Require recipients of funds to report annually on animal outcomes.**

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**San José's Agreements With Rescue Groups Are Outdated and Most Rescue Groups Did Not Have Current Agreements on File**

The City's current standard agreement for rescue groups, last revised in 2014, contains some outdated information about when animals become available for rescue and the low-cost spay and neuter services available at the shelter. Additionally, the agreement does not include standard City agreement language around indemnification, adherence to current laws, or being current on their 501(c)3 status. The agreement can also provide more guidelines on the use of GAP funds. At the time of the audit, ACS was working with the City Attorney's Office to revise agreement terms, but this was yet to be completed at the time of the audit.

It appears ACS also does not have current rescue agreements with some groups on file. Specifically, a sample test of 10 groups that pulled the largest number of animals in FY 2022-23 showed only 1 out of 10 identifiable agreements on file. Staff told us that the San José rescue agreements might have been overwritten when a different agency with a joint sharing agreement uploaded their documents to San José's database.<sup>44</sup> Having a formal agreement allows for clear expectations on roles and responsibilities, adherence to City rules, and indemnification of the City from liability.

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<sup>44</sup> The Chameleon case management system is shared with the Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority (SVACA) and it contains rescue agreements from both entities.

**Recommendation:**

- 26: San José Animal Care and Services should revise its agreement with rescue groups to include availability of gift funds and standard City terms, such as indemnification. Once the agreement is updated, ensure that all rescue groups have current signed agreements on file.**

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## **Finding 5      Improvements in the Volunteer Program Can Aid in Providing a Coordinated Approach to Care at the Shelter**

### **Summary**

Volunteers at ACS play a role in enhancing animal care through enrichment activities and assisting with other tasks. Seventy-eight percent of respondents to an auditor-conducted survey reported they would recommend volunteering at ACS to friends or family. Volunteers have 45 days to complete lengthy training requirements to begin volunteering. Despite the lengthy requirements, the training materials cover zoonotic and infectious diseases only for certain animals and are missing critical information on sanitation protocols. In addition, the current volunteer management software does not correctly track volunteer hours nor provide management or volunteers adequate tools they need for scheduling.

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### **Volunteers Enhance Shelter Operations, However the Onboarding Process Can Be More Efficient**

As of June 2024, ACS had about 130 active volunteers.<sup>45</sup> Volunteers generally appeared satisfied with their experience at the shelter. According to an auditor-conducted survey of current and former volunteers, the majority of respondents reported that they would recommend volunteering at ACS to friends or family.<sup>46</sup> Volunteers enhance staff's work in the shelter, providing enrichment and support to animals through dog walking, cat socialization, kitten nursery upkeep, and small animal care. They also assist staff in the medical room and with laundry and dishes.

#### **Survey Results for Volunteer Satisfaction**

78 percent of respondents reported that they would recommend volunteering at ACS to friends or family.

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<sup>45</sup> Volunteer numbers are counted based on those who log their hours on the volunteer management software. However, there are volunteers who do not log their hours, and are not part of the 130-count generated by the software.

<sup>46</sup> The survey did not include all former volunteers because of limitations of the current volunteer management software.



### The Current Onboarding Process Can Be More Efficient

The current process to begin volunteering at ACS can be lengthy due to the application process and current training requirements.

#### *There Were More Than 360 Pending Volunteer Applications in July 2024*

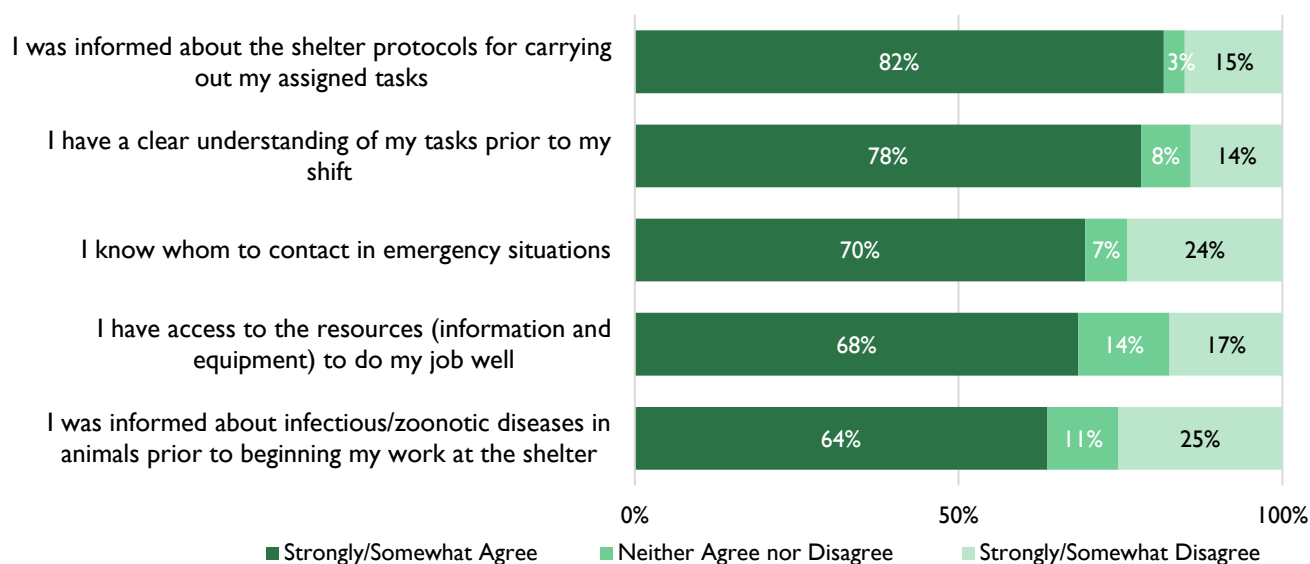
The first step to volunteering at the shelter is completing a volunteer application online. In July 2024, there were over 360 pending applications that were waiting to be reviewed and processed. There were some pending applications from July 2023. ACS has noted that applications are reviewed based on staff availability for training volunteers.

Some of the outstanding applicants were minors, between the ages of 14 and 17. These applicants require a guardian application to be submitted in addition to the regular application. However, ACS does not regularly notify the minor applicants to remind them about the guardian application requirement.

#### *Volunteers Generally Reported a Positive Onboarding Experience*

Volunteers that responded to the auditor-conducted survey generally agreed that ACS informed them about shelter protocols and ensured that volunteers had a clear understanding of each task prior to their shift. More than 80 percent of respondents reported being informed about shelter protocols for carrying out their task, and 78 percent reported having a clear understanding of their tasks prior to their shift.

### Exhibit 23: Survey Respondents Were Asked to Rate ACS Training and Onboarding



Source: Auditor-conducted survey of the volunteers.

Note: Volunteers were asked: "Thinking about the content of the trainings provided, onboarding included, please rate your experience in the following categories."

### Training Requirements Can Be Refocused to Reduce the Time It Takes for a Volunteer to Begin Service

Once a volunteer application is processed, volunteers must complete required trainings within 45 days before they can begin assisting with tasks at the shelter.

#### Exhibit 24: ACS Volunteer Flyer Outlining the Expectation to Complete Trainings Within 45 Days



Source: Screenshot from the San José Animal Care and Services volunteer flyer. Training expectation is highlighted.

Per ACS requirements, all volunteers must successfully complete the following training programs to be able to assist with any activities that involve handling animals.

#### Exhibit 25: Volunteer Training Requirements Before Volunteers Begin Work at the Shelter

Training Topic	Hours
Orientation video	0.25 hours (13 minutes)
Fear Free Shelter training	5 hours
Maddie's University Customer Service	1.5 hours
Pet-specific classroom training	1.5 hours
Hands-on training (shadowing) session	3 hours
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.25 hours</b>

Source: Auditor summary of volunteer training requirements from the ACS Volunteer Handbook.

Note: Volunteers can begin helping with laundry and dishes before completing the pet-specific classroom training or the hands-on training.

While ACS volunteers are asked to complete 11.25 hours of initial training, other shelters only require about 2-3 hours of training before volunteers may begin work. Some elements that should be reassessed include:

- *Overlap among some of the required trainings.* For example, the five-hour Fear Free Shelter training includes basic animal handling skills and behavioral signs of distress in animals. This can overlap with the pet-specific trainings.
- *There is no distinction between necessary and desirable trainings.* ASV Guidelines say that shelters must provide training for each shelter task. However, not all trainings may be needed for each volunteer. For example, the Maddie's University Customer Service training might not be needed for all volunteers since most of them do not interact with shelter visitors.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the scope of the current trainings, the trainings are missing some key information. The zoonotic and infectious disease training covers cats but does not include dogs or kittens in the kitten nursery. It also does not include sanitation protocols for the kitten nursery.

ACS is currently reevaluating the relevancy of all training requirements. There are also few "how-to" posters around the shelter to show volunteers how to carry out shelter tasks, as recommended by the Maddie's Fund consult.

### **Volunteers Can Receive More Regular Feedback and Updates on Shelter Protocols**

The ACS Volunteer Handbook states that volunteers receive periodic evaluations to review their performance. This is to allow volunteers and supervisors to make changes and enhance the relationship between volunteers and staff. However, there is currently no process of providing regular feedback to volunteers and shelter staff have noted that they do not provide any ongoing feedback to volunteers. In the past year, only 39 percent of respondents to the volunteer survey reported having received feedback.

Lastly, ACS does not have policies on how to communicate changes in shelter protocols with volunteers. The ASV Guidelines recommend ongoing training for all personnel and access to written protocols. As an example, the Front Street Animal Shelter in Sacramento provides a short training every six months to remind volunteers about current protocols.

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<sup>47</sup> Many volunteers are engaged in activities that may not involve interactions with shelter visitors.

**Recommendations:**

- 27: To make the volunteer onboarding and application process more efficient, San José Animal Care and Services should:**
- a. Develop timeliness targets to process volunteer applications, and
  - b. Simplify the process for minor applicants by combining the minor and guardian applications.
- 28: To ensure a complete and efficient training experience for volunteers, San José Animal Care and Services should:**
- a. Revise the training materials to include essential trainings only for tasks performed by volunteers based on the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines,
  - b. Make overlapping content (e.g., Fear Free Shelter training) optional,
  - c. Add dog and kitten specific zoonotic and infectious disease protocols in the existing training, and
  - d. Create and display "how-to" posters around the shelter to explain what steps should be taken for each volunteer-related task.
- 29: To ensure that volunteers are provided key shelter protocols on an ongoing basis, San José Animal Care and Services should formalize communication protocols to inform volunteers about updated shelter practices and protocols, and provide informal feedback to volunteers on services provided.**

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**The Current Volunteer Management Software Does Not Meet ACS' or Volunteer Needs**

The current volunteer management software does not correctly track volunteer hours, nor does it provide adequate scheduling tools. It also allows a limited number of users, making the historical data about past volunteers and their hours unavailable.

Staff have reported the application is not a useful tool to determine the number of volunteers helping in each shift or the number of hours they contribute. Part of the problem is that volunteers may not use the software appropriately. Volunteers often forget to sign in or out at the

47 percent of the respondents in the auditor-conducted survey reported finding the volunteer management software difficult to use and 4 percent noted that they do not use the software at all.

beginning or end of their shifts. Unless they do this, there is no way to tell how many total hours were worked.

Staff have also reported challenges with setting customized timeframes for different volunteer tasks. All morning shifts, for instance, must be set for the same duration regardless of the task. Consequently, opportunities can incorrectly appear to have scheduling conflicts, and the software does not allow volunteers to commit to tasks with conflicting times. It is also not a regular practice to update volunteers when the shelter needs additional assistance. This can potentially create gaps in care, as volunteers would have to rely on shelter staff to receive up-to-date information about shelter needs and activities.

The current software subscription expires in March 2025. ACS can begin assessing their software needs and reviewing other volunteer management systems to possibly change the software when the subscription expires.

**Recommendation:**

- 30: To provide a better volunteer experience and improve management of the volunteer program at the shelter, San José Animal Care and Services should assess alternate volunteer management software solutions to better log and track volunteer hours and schedule shifts.**

## Finding 6      Licensing Compliance and Access to Equity-Based Services Can Be Improved

### Summary

The San José Municipal Code requires that all dogs and cats be licensed after being vaccinated for rabies. The license term ranges from one to three years and the Municipal Code requires that the term of the license align with the length of the rabies certificate. However, in March 2024, almost 60 percent of active animal licenses exceeded the validity of the animals' rabies certificate. The process for issuing new licenses and renewals is a manual and cumbersome process that takes significant amount of administrative staff time. In addition, ACS was a year behind on issuing administrative citations for delinquent accounts. ACS does offer license fee exemptions to seniors, however, the process can be made easier as it needs to be done manually and application forms are only available in English. We recommend that ACS assess whether it can contract out the administration of licensing, align license terms with rabies vaccination expiration dates, and determine if it can make other low-cost services available to residents to encourage licensing and vaccination.

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### Temporary Licenses Make up a Large Part of San José Licenses

As of March 2024, there were over 65,000 active animal licenses in ACS's database. Of these, roughly 59 percent were marked as temporary. A license is marked as temporary when the license term exceeds the validity of an animal's rabies vaccination certificate. Under state law<sup>48</sup> and the San José Municipal Code, proof of a *current* rabies vaccination is required to license a pet, and all dogs and cats must be licensed upon proof of a rabies vaccination.<sup>49</sup>

According to the San José Municipal Code §7.20.560:

*The administrator may issue a license for a period not to exceed three (3) years for dogs or cats that have attained the age of twelve (12) months or older, and who have been vaccinated against rabies **provided the license period does not extend beyond the validity for the current rabies vaccination** [emphasis added].*

ACS currently has no process to follow-up with pet owners about their expired vaccination certificate for temporary licenses and will only follow-up for renewal

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<sup>48</sup> State law only requires licensing for dogs.

<sup>49</sup> The dog license fee ranges from \$25 to \$65 depending on the expiration of the rabies vaccination and whether the animal is altered. Similarly for cats the license fee ranges from \$20 to \$40 depending on the rabies vaccination term and whether the animal is altered.

when the license term ends. In many instances, we found current valid licenses with expired rabies vaccination periods that were over two-years old. Twenty-eight percent of the over 65,000 animal licenses of the animal licenses had rabies vaccination certificates that had been expired for three years, and 275 animal licenses were identified as having a rabies certificate that had been expired for at least four years.

Other jurisdictions we spoke to do not have temporary licenses and align their license terms with the rabies vaccination validity.

### **Almost Half of Veterinary Businesses Located in San José May Not Regularly Submit Proof of Rabies Vaccination as Required**

As of March 2024, about 30 veterinarians had submitted rabies certificates to ACS. However, the Business Tax Certificate database lists more than 60 veterinarian businesses in San José. This means that potentially more than 50 percent do not regularly submit rabies vaccination certificates to ACS.

The Municipal Code requires veterinarians to submit rabies vaccination certificates to the City. The purpose of this is to provide an additional avenue for the City to ensure that pets are licensed. According to the Municipal Code:

*If the veterinarian who vaccinates the dog or cat is located within the city, the veterinarian must submit a current and valid rabies vaccination certificate to the administrator within thirty (30) days from the date that the dog or cat was vaccinated.*

Because administrative staff spend a large amount of their time processing licenses and renewals (described in the next section), ACS staff reported that current staff capacity limits any outreach to veterinarians.

### **Recommendations:**

- 31: To comply with the San José Municipal Code and state law, San José Animal Care and Services should align license terms with the expiration of the rabies vaccine.**
- 32: To improve compliance around rabies vaccine submissions, San José Animal Care and Services should increase outreach to veterinarians to submit these certificates.**

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## **San José's Licensing Process Is Manual and Labor Intensive**

San José's current license issuance and renewal process is manual and time consuming. Administrative staff report spending a majority of their time during the day processing license issuance and renewals.

For new licenses, residents either proactively request a license from ACS or some veterinarians inform ACS when a pet has received a rabies vaccination. This process is described below.

### Exhibit 26: The License Issuance and Renewal Process Is Cumbersome

<b>New Licenses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff receive rabies vaccination certificates either from veterinary businesses or from residents seeking a license. Residents can apply for a new license in person, through the City website, or by mail.</li> <li>Administrative staff verify owner information and check to confirm whether the owner is a San José resident by looking up their address. They also cross check the phone number, address, and name to determine whether the owner is already in the system and whether they have paid the required fees or are listed under a different ID.</li> <li>Once the information is entered into Chameleon, staff generate a notice about the requirement to license pets. Residents have 30 days to comply.</li> </ul>
<b>Renewals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff run a monthly report to identify which licenses are due for renewals. They cross-check the information in this report with data in Chameleon to verify that the fee has not been paid under a different ID, the status of the owner has remained unchanged (such as a change in address) or if the pet has died.</li> <li>Staff then generate a renewal notice to mail to the resident. Residents have 30 days to comply.</li> </ul>
<b>Late Notices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One reminder is sent after either a new license or renewal notice. Staff track the dates in an internal spreadsheet. They save copies of the initial notices and manually check whether these have received responses.</li> <li>Residents have 30 days to make the payment and license their pet after each of the notices.</li> </ul>
<b>Administrative Citations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff issue administrative citations to residents that fail to respond to the initial notice and the reminder. These are tracked in an internal spreadsheet, and staff manually check the spreadsheet against current licenses to determine if citations need to be sent.</li> </ul>
<b>Mailing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All communications are printed for mailing. Notices and invoices are folded and stuffed in envelopes using a machine specifically designed for this purpose.</li> <li>A staff member from ACS transports these letters to City Hall on a regular basis to be mailed.</li> </ul>

Source: Auditor summary of licensing and renewal documents and staff interviews.

### The Follow-up Process for Licenses and Renewals Is Inefficient

Because of the volume of licenses and the cumbersome process, ACS staff has a delayed timeline for issuing new licenses and renewals, as well as the fines and citations for non-compliance.<sup>50</sup>

As described in Exhibit 26, a resident has 30 days to license their pet or renew a license after ACS sends its first notice. A total of two notices are sent, with residents given 30 days to comply after each of the notices. However, despite

<sup>50</sup> According to ACS, staff sent approximately 89,000 notices and late reminders for new licenses and renewals in 2023. This would calculate to over 7,000 notices and late reminders per month.



administrative staff spending a majority of their time on licensing, these notices can be delayed and can range from 30-60 days longer than expected.

The process to issue administrative citations is even more delayed. As described in Exhibit 26, if no payment is received after multiple reminders, then an administrative citation is sent. The pet owner has 30 days to pay the citation and any additional fines/fees. If the pet owner remains delinquent, ACS can forward the citation to the Finance Department's Accounts Receivable/Collections group. However, ACS is a year behind on issuing administrative citations for delinquent accounts. As of September 2024, ACS was working on issuing administrative citations for delinquent accounts for May 2023.

Essentially, a resident could have received the initial notice for a license over a year before the Finance Department would be notified to collect on delinquent accounts. According to internal Finance Department policies, there is a three-year statute of limitations in the State of California to collect most debts. Therefore, expediency to begin this process is important.

Other jurisdictions, such as the cities of Sacramento, Oakland, and Contra Costa County, have been using an outside vendor to manage their licensing process. Staff from Sacramento noted being able to switch staff from administration of licensing to other tasks due to this change. Considering this option would allow staff to focus on other shelter tasks, such as outreach to veterinarians or other activities.

### **Recommendations:**

- 33: To allow administrative staff to refocus on other shelter activities and tasks, San José Animal Care and Services should consider options to contract for outside licensing administration.**
- 34: To allow the City to begin its follow-up process for delinquent accounts related to licensing, San José Animal Care and Services should issue outstanding administrative citations in a timely manner.**

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## **Equity-Based License Exemptions and Services Are Limited**

San José offers a license exemption for cat and dog owners 65 years or older.<sup>51</sup> There were over 5,000 animal license fee exemptions for seniors as of March 2024.<sup>52</sup> A valid driver's license or government identification is required for proof

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<sup>51</sup> There are also exemptions for law enforcement and service dogs.

<sup>52</sup> We should note that we observed that amongst the exemptions, there were 24 residents that were identified to have received multiple exemptions. We provided this list to ACS staff to correct.

of age. San José, Cupertino, and Saratoga allow one free license per household, and the pet must be spayed or neutered. Milpitas allows one free license per household regardless of whether the pet has been spayed or neutered.

However, the ACS animal licensing form, which includes a section for senior exemptions, is only available in English. Further, seniors can only request the exemption either by mail or in person. The online option is not available for this purpose.

### **Other Jurisdictions Provide Exemptions for Other Groups and Additional Low-Cost Services to Underserved Communities**

Other jurisdictions provide exemptions to veterans or disabled veterans in addition to exemptions for seniors to encourage residents to license their pets. While San José exempts seniors, there are currently no exemptions for veterans or other communities.

The *2024 State of Shelter Pet Adoption Report* by Hill's Pet Nutrition highlighted that concerns about the cost of pet ownership are the top barrier to adoption, and 84 percent of respondents it surveyed said that veterinary care is the most expensive part of owning a pet. Pet licensing requires that a pet be vaccinated for rabies on a regular schedule, and making some of these services accessible may encourage residents to license their pets.

Oakland and Sacramento reported that they provide access to low-cost veterinary services, such as free vaccinations and spay and neuter services. These include:

- A free or sliding scale spay and neuter service for dogs and feral cats,
- Low-cost veterinary services and resources,
- Free vaccination and microchipping services to pets of unhoused residents at encampments, and
- Free licensing available for low-income residents.

San José has an agreement with the Humane Society of Silicon Valley (HSSV) for use of ACS' facility. The agreement also requires that HSSV provide some low-cost services, such as spay and neuter. However, it does not specify the number or how often these services will be provided. According to the agreement:

*HSSV shall provide [...] Free or low cost spay and neuter services and other medical procedures for dogs and cats to underserved communities in San José, including pets belonging to people residing in specific zip codes, housing projects, and pets belonging to the homeless.*

According to ACS staff, these low-cost services are not provided regularly. Since January 2024, HSSV has held one event for veterinarian services at the shelter. ACS staff reported that the event was supposed to be for HSSV clients, not necessarily focused on San José residents.

Working with HSSV to regularly provide these services would allow underserved residents to access these services and potentially increase licensing.

**Recommendations:**

- 35: To increase language accessibility for all (including seniors for purposes of requesting exemptions), San José Animal Care and Services should translate the licensing form and incorporate the senior exemptions into the online form.**
- 36: To increase access to underserved communities and align with other jurisdictions, San José Animal Care and Services should:**
  - a. Consider additional license fee exemptions for veterans or disabled veterans in addition to senior exemptions, and**
  - b. Review options to provide free or low-cost veterinarian services for owned pets through either grant opportunities and/or working with Humane Society Silicon Valley to determine a regular schedule to provide these services.**

## **Finding 7      San José Animal Care and Services Has Begun Implementing Maddie’s Fund Recommendations but Work Still Remains**

### **Summary**

The Maddie’s Fund Consult report of 2022 resulted in over 200 recommendations to improve shelter operations. While ACS has made progress towards implementing the recommendations, work still remains to be completed. In some cases, recommendations may be outdated or not in line with ACS practices. ACS should set targets and prioritize the remaining recommendations and designate an individual to track progress across the different areas of shelter operations.

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### **ACS Can Set Targets and Priorities for Implementing Maddie’s Fund Recommendations**

In June 2022, Maddie’s Million Pet Challenge provided a consult to ACS, consisting of a two-day visit where consultants reviewed shelter operations and met with ACS leadership and staff. The report also referred to resources and best practices. The final consult report contained over 200 recommendations or opportunities for improvement across all aspects of the shelter’s operations.

Initially, ACS began internally tracking the progress of the recommendations, but that was not the case at the time of the audit. According to ACS, this was because staff shifted their focus to work on aligning their internal protocols to the most recent ASV Guidelines, which were released after the Maddie’s Fund consult in July 2022.

The consult report incorporates best practices and industry standards, including the ASV Guidelines, that were in place at the time of the consult. However, not all recommendations made by the consult report may be applicable for ACS. For instance, the report suggests allowing non-urgent intake of animals through appointments, but the shelter is currently prioritizing intake of unhealthy animals due to shelter overcapacity. Additionally, the report recommends that the shelter use TikTok to create and post videos of animals with the help of staff and volunteers. Currently, the use of this platform is not on the list of recommended social media platforms by the City Manager’s Office of Communications.

ACS has considered many of the recommendations as “completed,” even though some had merely been considered for implementation. It can be helpful to distinguish between important industry “must-haves” from the “nice-to-haves” to

create a strategic roadmap for implementation and focus on recommendations that align with the shelter's current operations.

ACS can also benefit from developing a priority implementation schedule for any remaining recommendations that align with the ASV Guidelines, and assigning an individual to track the progress of these recommendations.

**Recommendation:**

- 37: To assist in the implementation of any remaining recommendations from the Maddie's Fund Shelter Consult, San José Animal Care and Services should:**
- a. Prioritize the relevant recommendations that align with Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines and shelter operations and develop target dates for implementation of those recommendations, and**
  - b. Designate an individual to monitor and track implementation status, including identifying any roadblocks or next steps to completion.**

## **Finding 8      Services to Contract Jurisdictions May Exceed Those Provided to San José Residents**

### **Summary**

ACS currently has contracts to provide animal care services to Cupertino, Milpitas, and Saratoga. In some areas, including for responses to Priority 2 and 3 calls, these agreements provide for a higher level of service than for San José residents. Some costs that were included in the Cupertino and Saratoga revenue calculations were not included in the Milpitas agreement. We recommend that ACS considers aligning performance expectations across jurisdictions to match San José's targets. ACS should also formalize and track activity and costs to ensure consistency in future agreements, as well as to determine whether the agreements accurately reflect the cost of services provided.

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### **San José Animal Care Agreements With Contract Jurisdictions Provide for a Higher Level of Service in Some Areas**

In some areas, San José's agreements with the cities of Cupertino, Milpitas, and Saratoga to deliver animal care services provide for a higher level of service than for San José residents. Performance targets for Priority 2 and 3 calls for service are higher for the contract jurisdictions as shown in Exhibit 27.

Priority 2 calls are non-emergency calls, which include animal bite reports, investigations, confined animals, animals in traps, and agency assists. Priority 3 calls are categorized as those that do not pose an immediate threat to public health and safety, and includes calls for service for loose and dead animals.

**Exhibit 27: Contract Jurisdictions Have Higher Performance Targets for Priority 2 and 3 Calls for Service**

	Contract Jurisdictions	San José
<b>Priority 2</b>	Respond within <b>6 hours</b> for <b>80 percent</b> of the calls received between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. <sup>53</sup>	Respond within <b>8 hours</b> for Priority 2 calls. No similar time frame restrictions specified or percent target.
<b>Priority 3</b>	Respond within <b>12 hours</b> for <b>75 percent</b> of the calls received between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. <sup>54</sup>	Respond within <b>36 hours</b> for Priority 3 calls. No similar time frame restrictions specified or percent target.

Source: Auditor summary of agreements with contract jurisdictions, ACS Field Operations Policy and Procedures, and staff interviews.

We should note that for Priority 1 calls (calls for aggressive dogs, injured or sick animals, animal rescues, and other emergencies), the performance target for San José is higher than the contract jurisdictions. For San José, the target is 96 percent of calls responded to within one hour, whereas the target is 85 percent for the contract jurisdictions.

During FY 2023-24, the percentage of calls meeting the response time target for Priority 1 calls was similar across all jurisdictions. However, for Priority 2 and 3 calls, the percentage of calls responded to within 8 and 36 hours (San José's target), was lower in San José than for the other jurisdictions (see Exhibit 28).

**Exhibit 28: FY 2023-24 Completed Calls for Service and Performance Vary Across Jurisdictions**

	Priority 1		Priority 2		Priority 3	
	Total Calls	% of calls within 1 hour	Total Calls	% of calls within 8 hours	Total Calls	% of calls within 36 hours
<b>San José</b>	<b>1,919</b>	<b>96.8%</b>	<b>3,298</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>2,627</b>	<b>56.8%</b>
<b>Milpitas</b>	164	98.8%	132	87.9%	436	99.8%
<b>Cupertino</b>	55	96.4%	58	79.3%	155	100.0%
<b>Saratoga</b>	34	94.1%	38	92.1%	101	100.0%

Source: Auditor summary of San José Animal Care and Services Chameleon Activity Statistics & Response Times FY 2023-24 report.

Note: Actual performance targets vary across jurisdictions. This chart uses performance targets for San José residents for comparison purposes. The calls only capture service requests from the public (designated as sequence 1 calls) and not follow-up responses by field services staff.

<sup>53</sup> For calls received between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., staff are supposed to respond by 7:00 p.m. the following day. Staff report that the 80 percent target does not apply to these set of calls.

<sup>54</sup> For calls received between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., staff are supposed to respond by 11:00 p.m. the following day. Staff report that the 75 percent target does not apply to these set of calls.

There are additional areas where the agreements with the contract jurisdictions may allow for a higher level of service. For example, ACS staff are expected to provide bite or attack incident reports to the appropriate code enforcement official in the contract jurisdiction within 5 business days. For San José residents, there is not a similar specific incident report completion timeframe.

### **Some Costs for Providing Services to a Contract Jurisdiction Were Not Fully Captured**

The revenue calculation for the Milpitas agreement did not include all the costs that were included in the revenue calculations for the Saratoga and Cupertino agreements. These include:

- Some costs associated with officer/dispatcher responses to animal service calls,
- Capital improvements, and
- Outside services (e.g., MedVet emergency medical services).

The agreement with Milpitas occurred earlier than the other two and these costs were not captured. If similar costs were included in the Milpitas revenue calculations, we estimate this would increase the revenue to the City under the agreement. Also, in some cases there was not complete supporting documentation underlying the costs included in the agreements.

### **ACS Should Track Activity to Assess Whether Contracts Cover Costs of Services Provided**

In FY 2023-24, contract jurisdictions accounted for 5.3 percent of the roughly 13,200 animals taken into the shelter. They accounted for about 10.2 percent of the more than 16,000 overall service calls.<sup>55</sup>

In comparison, for FY 2024-25, the contract jurisdictions will pay just over \$1 million, or about 6.9 percent of ACS' total operating budget of \$15.4 million. Further tracking of activity and costs can ensure that future agreements accurately account for services provided.

### **Recommendations:**

- 38: To ensure fairness of service delivery provided to residents, San José Animal Care and Services should consider aligning performance services and metrics with what is provided to the contract jurisdictions or revisit what is offered to other jurisdictions.**

<sup>55</sup> This includes all service calls, including follow-ups. Exhibit 28 only includes the first response to Priority 1-3 calls.



- 39: To ensure that San José's cost analysis for services provided to neighboring jurisdictions is appropriate and consistent across the jurisdictions, San José Animal Care and Services should:**
- a. Formalize and track activity and costs to determine whether agreements accurately reflect the level of service, and**
  - b. Improve documentation for the cost analysis for the agreements, such that all costs and activity levels are included.**

# Conclusion

San José Animal Care and Services (ACS) is operating above its capacity of care which impacts the quality of care provided to shelter animals and staff morale. The shelter should assess its capacity and take a multi-pronged approach to expand its active population management efforts. This includes continuing to evaluate animal intake hours, reassessing its intake of newborn kittens, and increasing spay and neuter services. The shelter also needs to improve its recordkeeping and animal care protocols, and ensure that these are appropriately communicated to staff. Further, ACS can enhance its transparency of shelter operations by disaggregating the results of some performance metrics and improving data access controls and procedures around data management. Additionally, current engagement with rescue partners and volunteers can be better enhanced to improve the outcome of animals. Also, to ensure that ACS complies with the City's Municipal Code as well as state law, staff should align dates of animal licenses with the expiry of rabies vaccination certificates. The City should also explore expanding assistance programs by providing low-cost veterinary services or working with other groups to increase access. Finally, residents of contract jurisdictions may receive higher levels of service compared to San José residents. The City should consider aligning performance expectations to ensure equal level of services for City residents and track activity and costs to determine if revenues reflect levels of service.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Finding 1: The San José Animal Shelter Is Over Capacity and Needs a Long-Term Strategy to Address the Demand for Shelter Space**

Recommendation #1: San José Animal Care and Services should assess its shelter capacity and determine the number of animals the shelter can adequately care for using holding capacity by species and staff's capacity for care.

Recommendation #2: San José Animal Care and Services, using data such as trends in intake requests and animal inventory, should assess San José's shelter needs to determine whether additional kennel space is required and create a long-term strategy to fund kennel improvements or expansion.

Recommendation #3: San José Animal Care and Services should review the shelter's facility condition assessment once completed, and identify priority needs and funding requirements for these improvements.

Recommendation #4: San José Animal Care and Services should develop a plan to transition away from or reduce intake of newborn kittens. The plan should address:

- a. The shelter's capacity to care for kittens in-house, including a comparison of the kitten nursery costs and related live outcomes,

- b. Guidelines for when diversion or overnight care of newborn kittens at the shelter is appropriate, and
- c. Pathways when the volume or condition of kittens exceeds the capacity for in-house care, including potential foster care, rescue, or euthanasia.

Recommendation #5: San José Animal Care and Services should update the shelter's outreach strategy to educate the community through social media and other channels on what to expect before and during kitten season and when intervention with community cats is appropriate.

Recommendation #6: To ensure that each animal has an identified path out of the shelter and to reduce its length of stay, San José Animal Care and Services should formalize pathway planning protocols that include:

- a. Identifying potential pathways (e.g., adoption, rescue, or euthanasia) for animals entering the shelter and their pathway changes and document that in the Chameleon case management system,
- b. Formalizing steps that staff should take for an animal to achieve its intended pathways (e.g., schedule a spay or neuter surgery, network with rescue groups, promote as an adoption candidate), and
- c. Assigning supervisory or management staff to conduct regular (e.g., daily) assessments of animals' progress towards their pathway.

Recommendation #7: San José Animal Care and Services should finalize the shelter's draft euthanasia protocol to:

- a. Provide clear criteria on when euthanasia may be considered, and
- b. Formalize the process for granting requests to delay euthanasia decisions.

Recommendation #8: To ensure the welfare of animals in foster care, San José Animal Care and Services should develop policies to:

- a. Track the status and location of all fostered animals in a uniform report,
- b. Establish pathway plans for animals in foster,
- c. Accurately track the number of days animals stay in foster care and create limits for how long they can be in foster homes without being adopted, and
- d. Document timelines and expectations for when foster caretakers must return to the shelter for medical appointments.

Recommendation #9: To increase the level of spay and neuter services for community cats and shelter animals, San José Animal Care and Services should work with the Finance Department and the City Attorney's Office to contract with outside service providers for spay and neuter services.

Recommendation #10: To provide accurate information to the public, update the San José Animal Care and Services website with the current process for a community member to book trap, neuter, and release appointments for community cats.

**Finding 2: Improvements in Animal Care Protocols and Recordkeeping Will Enhance Shelter Operations**

Recommendation #11: San José Animal Care and Services (ACS) should:

- a. Update the ACS Manual to align with the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines as they relate to disease detection and isolation, cleaning, vaccines and treatments, nutrition, and exercise and enrichment. San José Animal Care and Services should review the ACS Manual on a recurring basis to incorporate changes to operations and industry standards as appropriate.
- b. Alternatively, adopt the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines as its primary manual and develop systems to ensure compliance with the Guidelines in the areas listed in (a). San José Animal Care and Services should review these systems on a recurring basis to incorporate changes to operations and industry standards as appropriate.

Recommendation #12: San José Animal Care and Services should develop policies to require supervisory staff to perform regular observations and provide feedback to personnel in each area of shelter and medical operations, including proper cleaning, feeding, and handling animals with personal protective equipment.

Recommendation #13: To keep personnel informed of their responsibilities in disease management at the shelter, San José Animal Care and Services should provide recurring trainings in high-risk operational areas identified by shelter management. Areas should include using and changing personal protective equipment, identifying infectious disease symptoms in animals, and the steps and responsible parties for communicating and responding to infectious disease concerns.

Recommendation #14: For staff to have access to up-to-date protocols, San José Animal Care and Services should create a repository of all policies and protocols and make them easily accessible to all staff. Supervisors should also review protocols relevant to staff's daily tasks with new staff during onboarding and when assigned to new job responsibilities.

Recommendation #15: To keep personnel informed of protocol changes, San José Animal Care and Services should formalize a standard operating procedure to communicate protocol changes to relevant personnel through emails, staff meetings, and other means.

Recommendation #16: To ensure feeding, providing water, cleaning, enrichment, and kennel location information is properly recorded, San José Animal Care and Services should improve recordkeeping by developing protocols and training staff around timely data entry.

Recommendation #17: San José Animal Care and Services should formalize and document shelter coordinators and supervisors' areas of responsibilities in oversight and monitoring daily animal care activity. This should include reviewing relevant reports to ensure daily care is provided to all animals and following up if animal care has not occurred.

Recommendation #18: To ensure better inventory and recordkeeping management, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Develop procedures and train staff around tracking inventory for shelter operations, and
- b. Update the Controlled Substances Policy to align with current practice and in accordance with state and other applicable laws, clarify staff access levels, and train staff on the policy.

### **Finding 3: Additional Disaggregation of Metrics and Better Data Management Can Enhance Transparency of Shelter Operations**

Recommendation #19: To provide context and information about shelter operations, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Provide additional data on length of stay in public and/or internal reports, which may include median as well as average stay, and broken down by age or other factors, and
- b. Include other considerations that can be presented in public and internal reports, such as information on shelter capacity, the impact of unhealthy or untreatable animal intakes on live release rate, or other considerations.

Recommendation #20: To improve data reliability, better manage reports, and further ensure animals are appropriately accounted for, San José Animal Care and Services should assign an individual or individuals to oversee data management. The responsibilities should include:

- a. Updating and training staff on procedures around data entry protocols, and implementing a process for Chameleon data to be regularly reviewed and data issues to be addressed,
- b. Working with the Chameleon vendor to assess whether there are standard controls to reduce data entry errors,
- c. Identifying the most relevant Chameleon reports to inform data reporting and operations, and ensuring data queries are accurate, and
- d. Establishing a process to track changes made to Chameleon reports and the public dashboards.

Recommendation #21: To ensure appropriate data controls, San José Animal Care and Services should establish Chameleon access permissions, document who should have access to what in Chameleon, and establish default password protocols in alignment with the City's Information and Systems Security Policy.

### **Finding 4: San José Animal Care and Services Can Enhance Its Engagement Efforts With Rescue Groups to Improve Animal Outcomes**

Recommendation #22: To improve rescue engagement and communication, San José Animal Care and Services should develop a communication protocol that includes an assigned point of contact(s) from the shelter and timeframes for responding to inquiries. The protocol should be shared with rescue groups.

Recommendation #23: To ensure the rescue group roster is current, San José Animal Care and Services should assign staff to regularly update rescue group contacts.

Recommendation #24: To ensure appropriate information about rescue animals is provided to relevant groups, San José Animal Care and Services should update its current process to notify rescue groups on available animals by:

- a. Tailoring the “needs rescue” list to relevant recipients (e.g., dogs/puppies vs. cats/kittens) or providing self-service options to rescue groups, and
- b. Including complete and accurate information about animals, such as age, weight, and medical and behavioral assessments.

Recommendation #25: To ensure consistency and transparency, San José Animal Care and Services should develop guidelines on the use of gift and Guardian Angel Program funds to include the following:

- a. Maximum funds allowable per award,
- b. Purposes for the use of these funds,
- c. Method and timeline for making payments to providers,
- d. A process to track expenditures, and
- e. Require recipients of funds to report annually on animal outcomes.

Recommendation #26: San José Animal Care and Services should revise its agreement with rescue groups to include availability of gift funds and standard City terms, such as indemnification. Once the agreement is updated, ensure that all rescue groups have current signed agreements on file.

**Finding 5: Improvements in the Volunteer Program Can Aid in Providing a Coordinated Approach to Care at the Shelter**

Recommendation #27: To make the volunteer onboarding and application process more efficient, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Develop timeliness targets to process volunteer applications, and
- b. Simplify the process for minor applicants by combining the minor and guardian applications.

Recommendation #28: To ensure a complete and efficient training experience for volunteers, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Revise the training materials to include essential trainings only for tasks performed by volunteers based on the Association of Shelter Veterinarians’ Guidelines,
- b. Make overlapping content (e.g., Fear Free Shelter training) optional,
- c. Add dog and kitten specific zoonotic and infectious disease protocols in the existing training, and
- d. Create and display “how-to” posters around the shelter to explain what steps should be taken for each volunteer-related task.

Recommendation #29: To ensure that volunteers are provided key shelter protocols on an ongoing basis, San José Animal Care and Services should formalize communication protocols to inform

volunteers about updated shelter practices and protocols, and provide informal feedback to volunteers on services provided.

Recommendation #30: To provide a better volunteer experience and improve management of the volunteer program at the shelter, San José Animal Care and Services should assess alternate volunteer management software solutions to better log and track volunteer hours and schedule shifts.

### **Finding 6: Licensing Compliance and Access to Equity-Based Services Can Be Improved**

Recommendation #31: To comply with the San José Municipal Code and state law, San José Animal Care and Services should align license terms with the expiration of the rabies vaccine.

Recommendation #32: To improve compliance around rabies vaccine submissions, San José Animal Care and Services should increase outreach to veterinarians to submit these certificates.

Recommendation #33: To allow administrative staff to refocus on other shelter activities and tasks, San José Animal Care and Services should consider options to contract for outside licensing administration.

Recommendation #34: To allow the City to begin its follow-up process for delinquent accounts related to licensing, San José Animal Care and Services should issue outstanding administrative citations in a timely manner.

Recommendation #35: To increase language accessibility for all (including seniors for purposes of requesting exemptions), San José Animal Care and Services should translate the licensing form and incorporate the senior exemptions into the online form.

Recommendation #36: To increase access to underserved communities and align with other jurisdictions, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Consider additional license fee exemptions for veterans or disabled veterans in addition to senior exemptions, and
- b. Review options to provide free or low-cost veterinarian services for owned pets through either grant opportunities and/or working with Humane Society Silicon Valley to determine a regular schedule to provide these services.

### **Finding 7: San José Animal Care and Services Has Begun Implementing Maddie's Fund Recommendations but Work Still Remains**

Recommendation #37: To assist in the implementation of any remaining recommendations from the Maddie's Fund Shelter Consult, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Prioritize the relevant recommendations that align with Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines and shelter operations and develop target dates for implementation of those recommendations, and

- b. Designate an individual to monitor and track implementation status, including identifying any roadblocks or next steps to completion.

**Finding 8: Services to Contract Jurisdictions May Exceed Those Provided to San José Residents**

Recommendation #38: To ensure fairness of service delivery provided to residents, San José Animal Care and Services should consider aligning performance services and metrics with what is provided to the contract jurisdictions or revisit what is offered to other jurisdictions.

Recommendation #39: To ensure that San José's cost analysis for services provided to neighboring jurisdictions is appropriate and consistent across the jurisdictions, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Formalize and track activity and costs to determine whether agreements accurately reflect the level of service, and
- b. Improve documentation for the cost analysis for the agreements, such that all costs and activity levels are included.



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# **APPENDIX A**

## **Audit Objective, Scope, and Methodology**

The mission of the City Auditor's Office is to independently assess and report on City operations and services. The audit function is an essential element of San José's public accountability, and our audits provide the City Council, City management, and the general public with independent and objective information regarding the economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of City operations and services. In accordance with the City Auditor's Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 Audit Work Plan, we have completed an audit of Animal Care and Services. The audit was conducted in response to an October 2023 request from multiple members of the City Council.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The objective of this audit was to assess various aspects of Animal Care and Services' operations and comparisons against industry standards.

We sought to understand the relevant internal controls over shelter operations and have performed the following to achieve the audit objectives:

- To understand industry standards and best practices, we reviewed the following:
  - 2022 Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines
  - The Shelter Animals Count guidance around shelter metrics calculations and definitions
  - National Animal Care & Control Association's guidelines on kennel staffing standards
  - The Asilomar Accords on shelter data measurement standards
  - WeCARE Alliance Pet Evaluation Matrix
- To understand laws, regulations, and City policies relevant to the audit objectives, we interviewed staff from the City Attorney's Office and reviewed:
  - Relevant San José Municipal Code and California Health and Safety Code sections
  - Information and Systems Security Policy (City Policy Manual §1.7.6)
  - City's Information Security Standards Handbook
- To understand shelter operations, we:
  - Reviewed ACS internal policies and procedures on shelter and medical operations, inventory management, volunteering, and foster animals
  - Shadowed ACS staff to understand daily workload and how staff conduct feedings and kennel cleanings
  - Interviewed staff in the following areas:

- ACS management and administration
  - Medical services
  - Shelter operations
  - Shelter field services
  - Public Works Information Technology
  - Public Works Facilities
- Sampled 20 animal records from February to June 2024 to review occurrence and timeliness of intake treatments and intake exams
  - Sampled ten dogs, ten cats, and three rabbits to track whether kennel locations were accurate, and the animals were traceable using the information noted in Chameleon
  - Assessed the capacity of the shelter using available kennel maps and comparing to animals that were at the shelter on March 7, April 17, July 16, and August 13, 2024. Dates were selected based on available data
  - Compared ArcGIS data for daily feeding, water, cleaning, and enrichment against Chameleon inventory records on April 16 and August 12, 2024. Dates were selected based on available data
  - Reviewed facility maintenance work orders submitted between January 1, 2019 to June 27, 2024 by ACS to Public Works Facilities Division
  - Reviewed the agreement with Pride Industries One Inc., who contracts with ACS to provide shelter cleaning services
- Reviewed the Maddie's Fund Shelter Consult report for ACS conducted in July 2022 as well as the current status of the recommendations using ACS' internal tracking sheet. We also interviewed a member of the Maddie's Fund Shelter Consult.
  - To understand ACS dashboard and performance data as well as overall recordkeeping and data management in ACS, we reviewed and assessed Chameleon queries for the following metrics:
    - Number of animals taken into the shelter (intakes) and condition of animals at intake
    - Live release rate
    - Average length of stay by type of animal
    - Number of animals adopted and rescued by type of animal
    - Number of animal licenses issued as of March 2024
    - Types of animals and days in foster
    - And other animal-related metrics
  - Assessed data reliability and identified concerns with the Chameleon data that was used to perform audit analyses relating to animal shelter metrics and other related animal information/data. This data was used in the audit analysis because this is the database that

staff use and rely on for management and tracking of animals in the shelter. Finding 3 has specific recommendations to improve future data management.

- To understand ACS budget and staffing, we interviewed staff from the City Manager’s Budget Office and:
  - Reviewed ACS staff tenure to understand staff experience using the City’s human resource management system
  - Reviewed ACS expenditures for contracted services for six years using the City’s financial management system
- To understand how ACS interacts with rescue groups, we:
  - Using SurveyMonkey, completed a survey of ACS rescue groups. Surveys were sent out to 297 emails that were signed up to receive daily email blasts on animals available for rescue from ACS. Seventy-one rescue groups responded for a response rate of twenty-four percent
  - We sampled 10 rescue groups that did the most rescues in FY 2023-24 to determine whether the groups had a current agreement with ACS
  - Reviewed the sufficiency and consistency of information provided to rescue groups in the daily “needs rescue” list, including a review of the email lists
  - Reviewed the granting and disbursement process for the ACS Guardian Angel Program (GAP)
  - Interviewed select rescue group representatives
- To understand how ACS manages its volunteer program, we:
  - Using SurveyMonkey, completed a survey of ACS volunteers. Surveys were sent to 862 current and former volunteers. 170 responses were received for a response rate of 20 percent
  - Reviewed onboarding and training materials provided to volunteers, pending applications, internal trackers for dog walking and cat socialization, and the management software used for volunteer shifts and recording hours
  - Interviewed select volunteers
- To understand compliance with the City’s Municipal Code requirements, we compared veterinarians that have current business licenses in the City’s Business Tax database to ACS’ internal list of veterinarians that provided vaccination information to the City in 2022
- To understand services San José provides to other jurisdictions we:
  - Reviewed current agreements with the cities of Cupertino, Saratoga, and Milpitas as well as the underlying cost analysis for each of these agreements and actual services provided identified in Chameleon
  - Reviewed ACS’ completed calls of service data from Chameleon for FY 2023-24

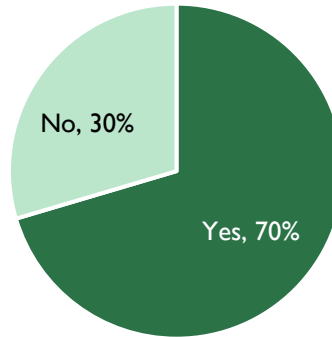
- We reviewed ACS' community outreach efforts and strategies by reviewing the draft community outreach plan, the status of Maddie's Fund recommendations as they relate to the outreach strategy, and available information on the City's website and social media
- Reviewed ACS agreements with and interviewed staff from the Humane Society of Silicon Valley
- Benchmarked the following jurisdictions to understand the shelter services provided, service levels as well as performance metrics:
  - Los Angeles County
  - City and County of San Francisco
  - City of Oakland
  - Contra Costa County
  - Santa Clara County
  - City of Sacramento

We would like to thank the Animal Care and Services and the Information Technology divisions of the Public Works Department for their time and insight during the audit process.

# APPENDIX B

## Rescue Survey Results

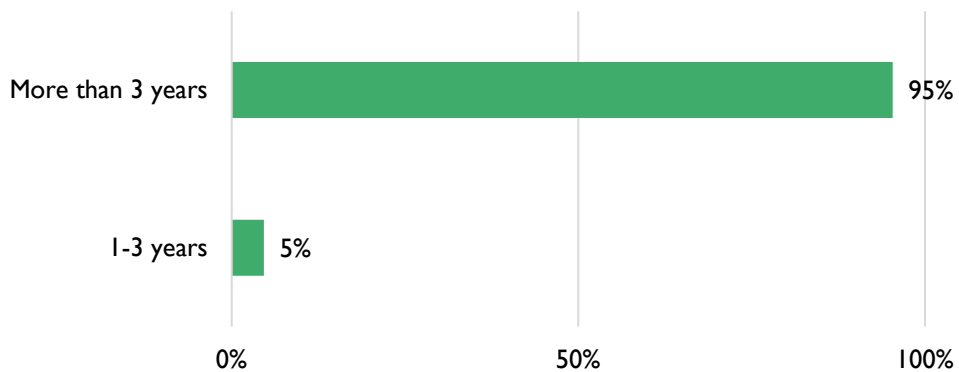
**Are you currently working with the San José ACS?**



Number of respondents = 71

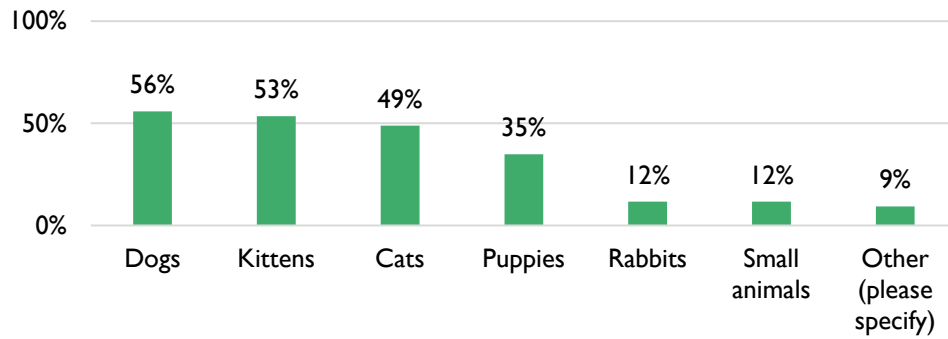
Note: Respondents who answered "no" were directed to the last question, which asked why they stopped working with Animal Care and Services. Those who answered "yes" proceeded to the following questions and were not asked the last question.

**How long have you worked with the San José ACS?**



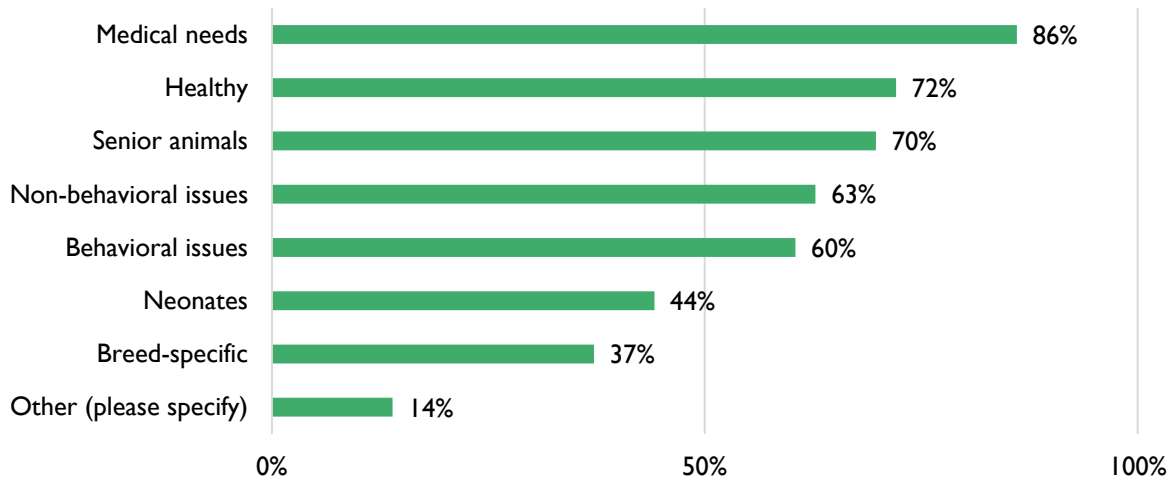
Number of respondents = 43

**What type of animals do you rescue? Please select all that apply.**



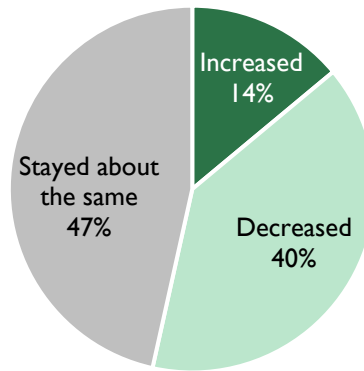
Number of respondents = 43

**What condition of animals do you rescue? Please select all that apply.**



Number of respondents = 43

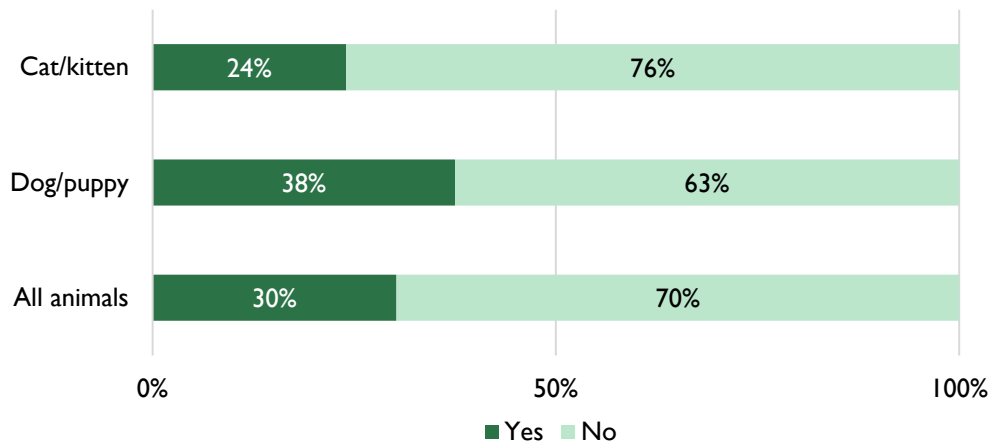
**Has your organization's capacity to rescue animals change over the past 5 years?**



Number of respondents = 43

Note: The sum of the percentages exceeds 100 percent due to rounding.

**Thinking about the method of communication with the San José ACS, do you have a single point of contact for questions regarding animals at the shelter?**

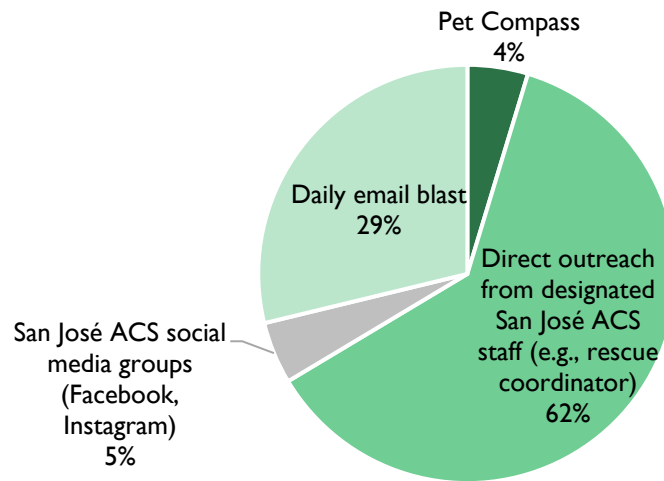


Number of respondents = 43

Note: The responses were filtered by rescue groups that primarily pull cats or kittens and dogs or puppies based on question 3. All animals include rabbits and birds as well as cats/kittens and dogs/puppies.



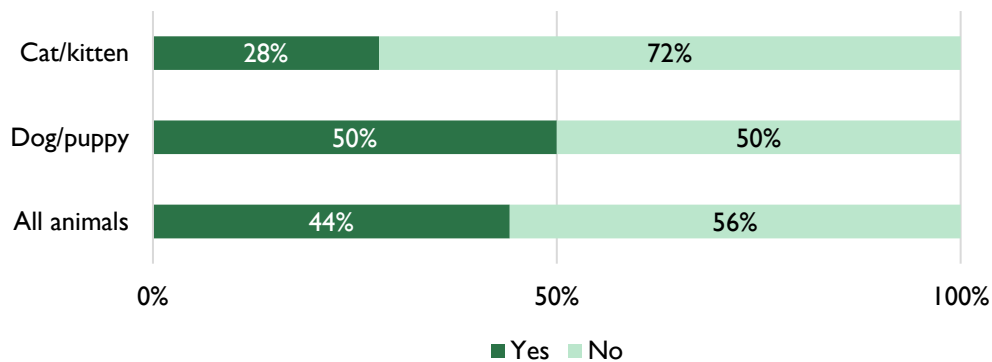
**How would you like to be informed about the available animals at the San José ACS? Please rank the most preferred to least preferred method of communication.**



Number of respondents = 43

Note: The graph shows the most preferred form of communication in percentages.

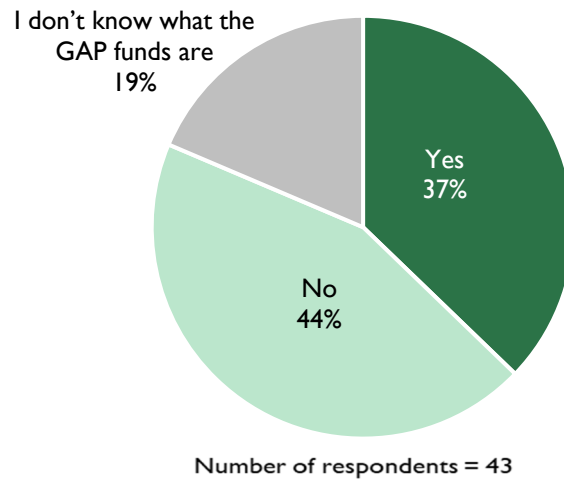
**Do you receive sufficient information from the San José ACS to inform your decisions on animals?**



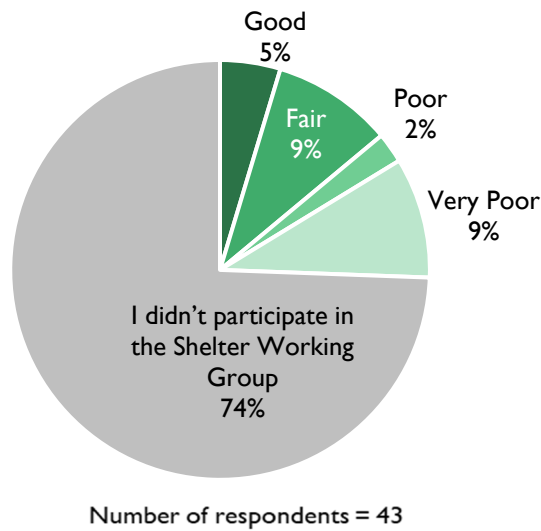
Number of respondents = 43

Note: The responses were filtered by rescue groups that pull cats or kittens and dogs or puppies based on question 3. All animals include rabbits and birds as well as cats/kittens and dogs/puppies.

**Thinking about the Guardian Angel Program (GAP) funds offered by the San José ACS, does it inform your decision to rescue?**

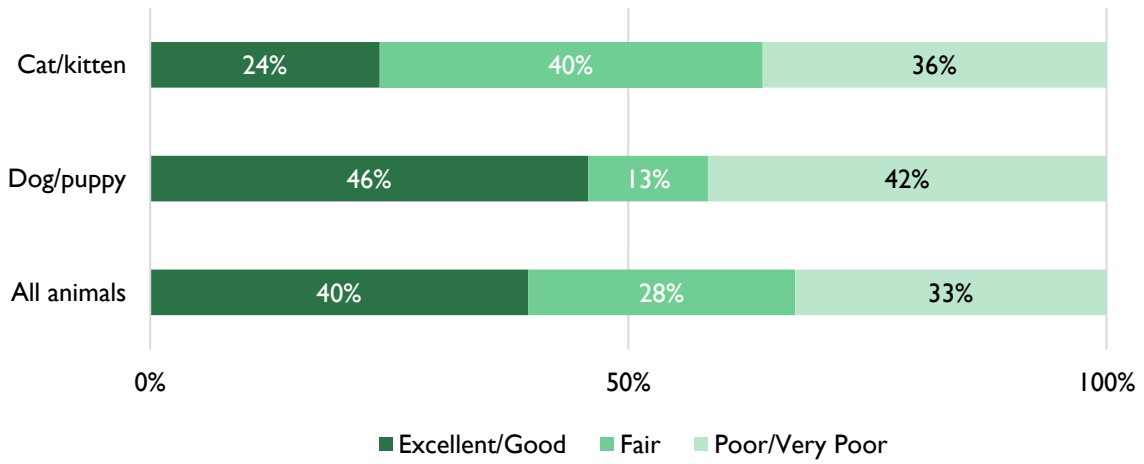


**Thinking about the recent city-organized Shelter Working Group, please rate your experience participating in that group.**



Note: There were no respondents who rated "excellent". The sum of the percentages do not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Please rate your overall experience of working with the San José ACS in rescue operations.**

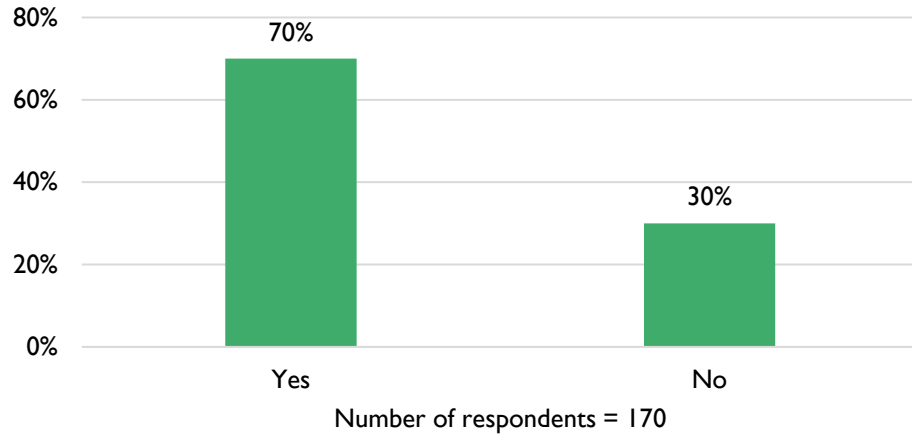


Note: The responses were filtered by rescue groups that pull cats or kittens and dogs or puppies based on question 3. All animals include rabbits and birds as well as cats/kittens and dogs/puppies.

# APPENDIX C

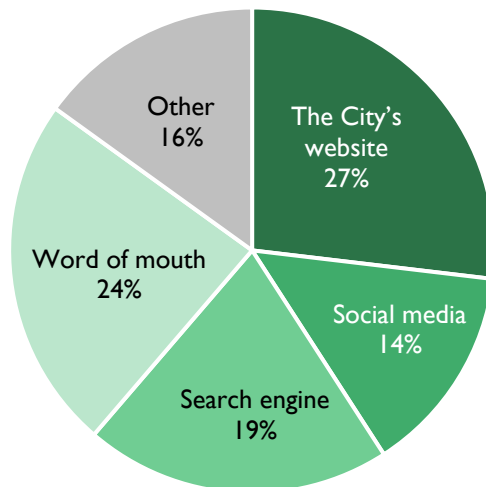
## Volunteer Survey Results

### Are you currently volunteering with the SJACS?



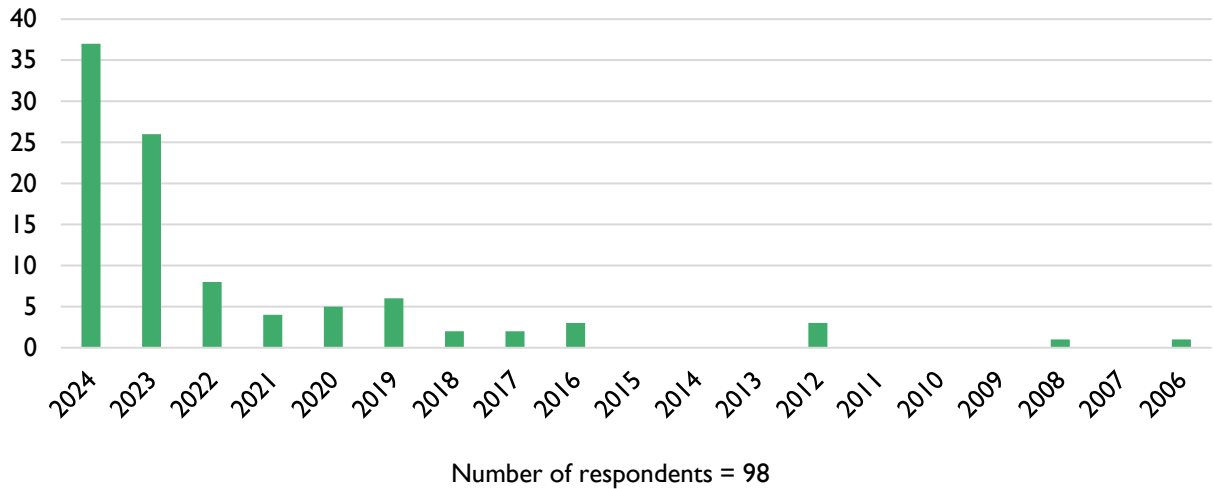
Note: Respondents who answered "no" were directed to the last question, which asked why they stopped volunteering at the Animal Care and Services. Those who answered "yes" proceeded to the following questions and were not asked the last question.

### How did you hear about the volunteering opportunity?

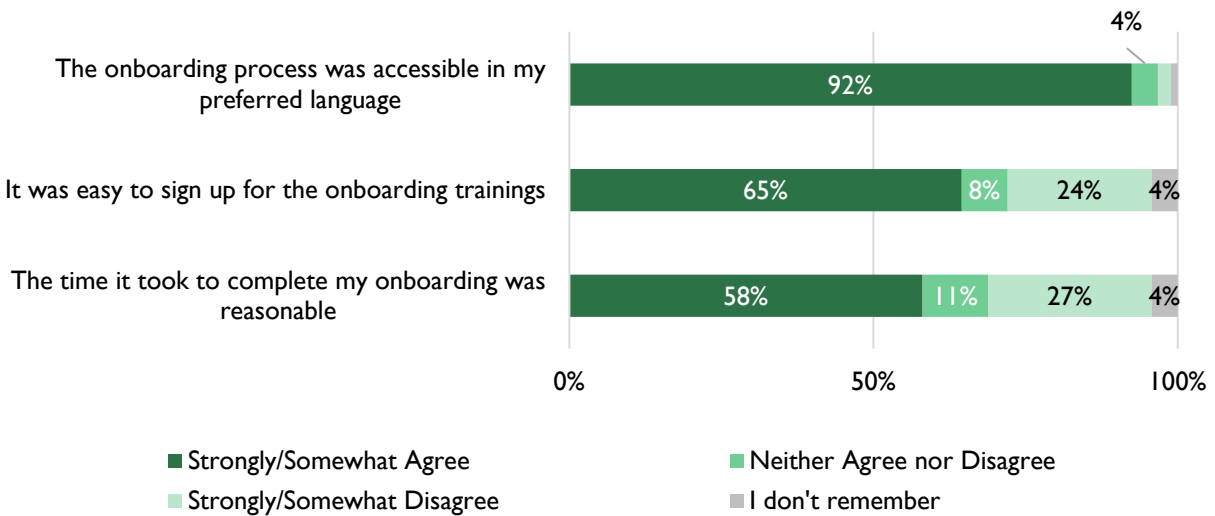


Number of respondents = 93

### When was your onboarding?

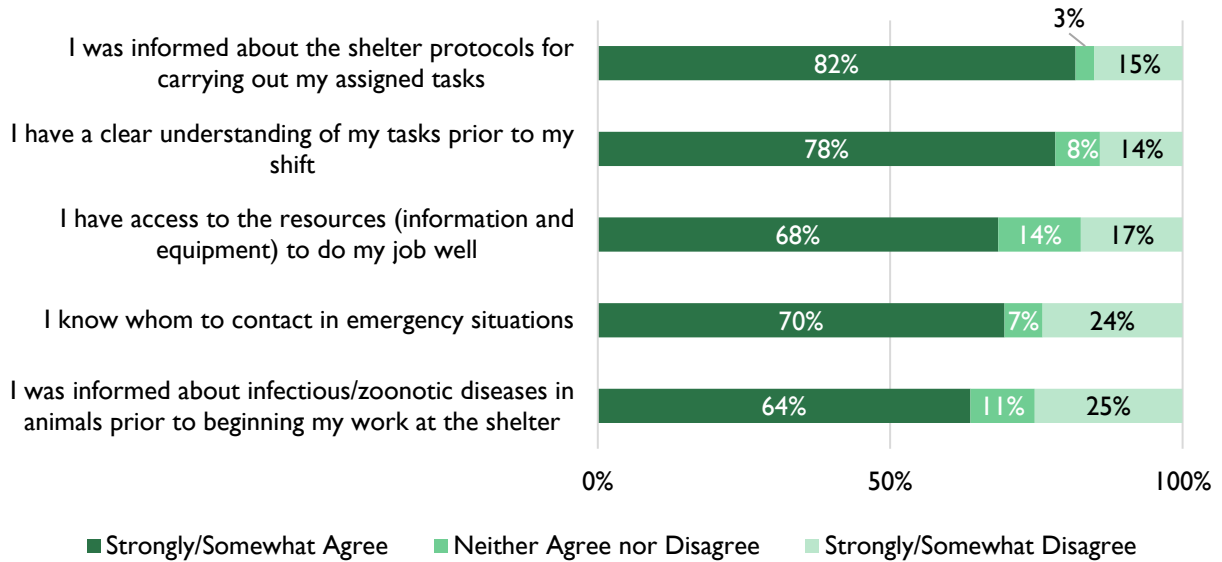


**Thinking about the onboarding process, how would you rate your experience in the following categories? The onboarding process includes the Orientation video, Fear Free Shelter Program and Maddie's University trainings.**



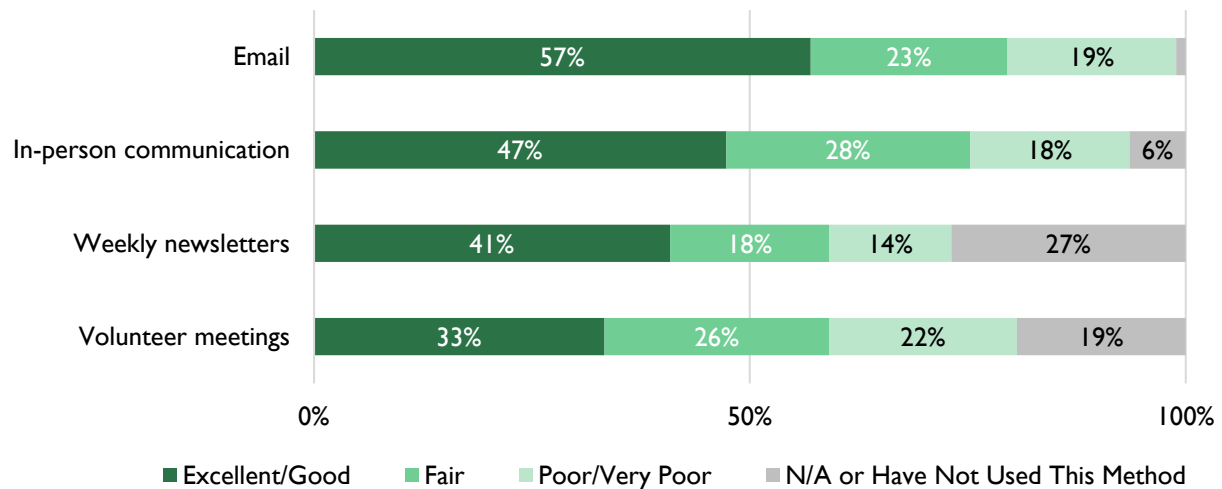
Number of respondents = 93

**Thinking about the content of the trainings provided, onboarding included, please rate your experience in the following categories:**



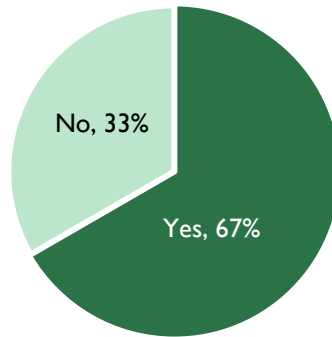
Number of respondents = 91 to 93 depending on the question

**How useful are the following methods of communication to stay up-to-date about relevant volunteer information?**



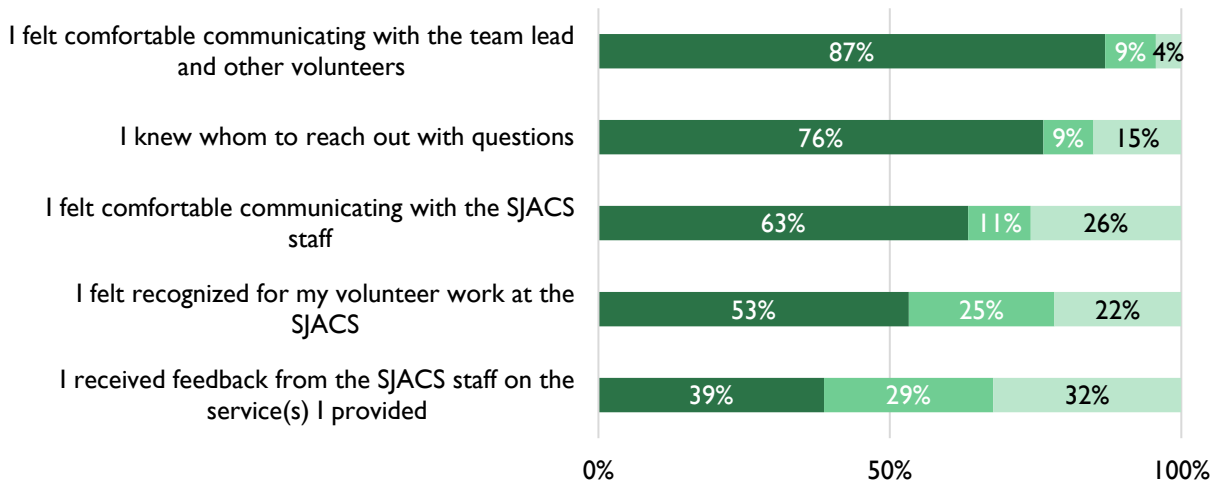
Number of respondents = 93

**Are you informed about the days/times the SJACS is in need of volunteers?**



Number of respondents = 93

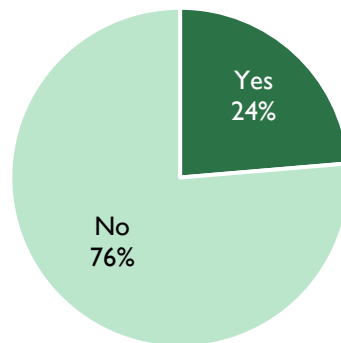
**Thinking about the volunteer service(s) you provided at the SJACS in the past year, how would you rate the following statements?**



■ Strongly/Somewhat Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Strongly/Somewhat Disagree

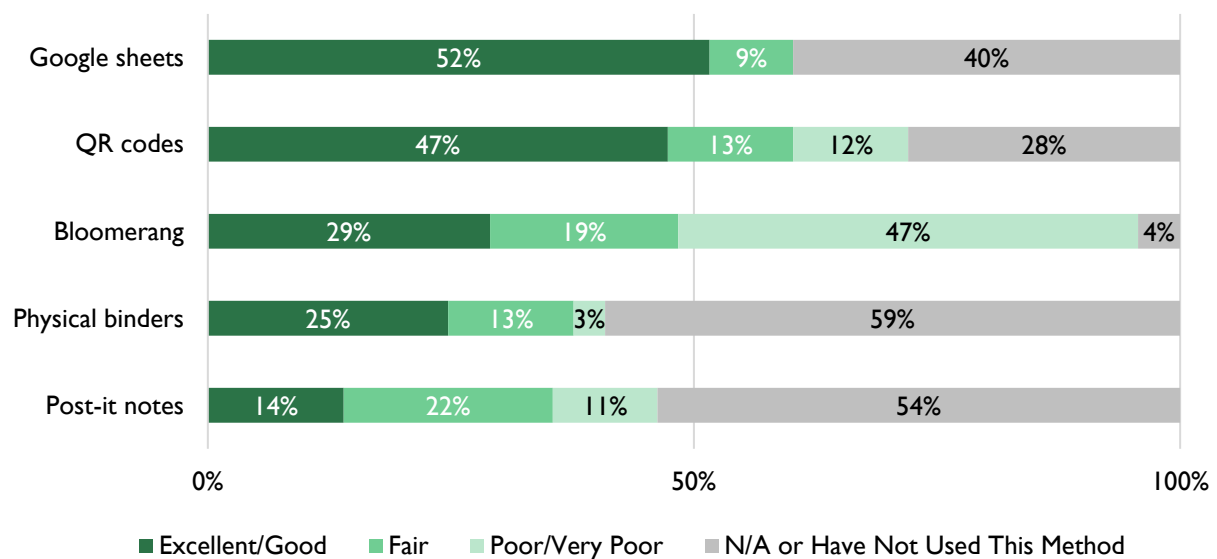
Number of respondents = 92 to 93 depending on the question

**Thinking about the volunteer service(s) you provided at the SJACS in the past year, were you asked to do tasks outside of your assigned or stated responsibilities?**



Number of respondents = 93

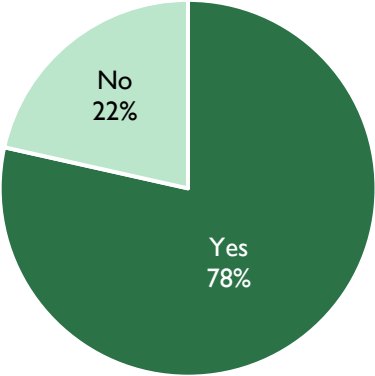
**How would you rate the ease-of-use of the following scheduling and reporting systems?**



Number of respondents = 93



**Would you recommend volunteering at the SJACS to friends and family?**



Number of respondents = 93

# Memorandum

**TO:** Joe Rois  
CITY AUDITOR

**FROM:** Matt Loesch

**SUBJECT: SEE BELOW**

**DATE:** November 4, 2024

Approved



Date:

11/6/2024

**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO THE CITY AUDITOR ON AUDIT OF ANIMAL CARE & SERVICES: ADDRESSING CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS AND UPDATING SHELTER PROTOCOLS WILL HELP IMPROVE ANIMAL OUTCOMES**

The Administration has reviewed the Audit of Animal Care & Services and agrees with the eight (8) findings and thirty-nine (39) recommendations identified in the Audit Report. The Administration's specific response to each of the City Auditor's recommendations is provided below, along with target dates for implementation.

## **BACKGROUND**

The objective of the audit was to assess the performance and services of the Department of Public Works Division of Animal Care and Services (ACS). The audit focused on nine specific areas of service delivery and compliance. The Administration welcomes this review of ACS in its twentieth year of service to our community.

This audit reviews ACS as we find ourselves amid the national crisis experienced by all shelters<sup>1</sup>. ACS is not immune from the challenges. ACS intake rates are trending upward, as are the numbers of animals who arrive to ACS with medical conditions that are Unhealthy and Untreatable. Costs for veterinary care continue to rise and many potential pet parents cite lack of affordable pet-friendly housing as a barrier to adopting from the shelter-particularly when it comes to large dogs. Kittens continue to heavily tax shelter resources and ACS's kitten intake has spiked 30% in this past fiscal year. This has left animals at the shelter for longer periods of time, while they await adoptive homes or to be accepted for transferred to another shelter or rescue partner.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.hillspet.com/content/dam/cp-sites/hills/hills-pet/en\\_us/general/documents/shelter/shelter-equity-state-of-pet-adoption-2024.pdf](https://www.hillspet.com/content/dam/cp-sites/hills/hills-pet/en_us/general/documents/shelter/shelter-equity-state-of-pet-adoption-2024.pdf)

ACS prioritizes the well-being of the animals, the accessibility and quality of service delivery, and the relationships with community partners. Through the support of the Council, the Administration has positioned the City to make additional advances in animal outcomes by including additional resources in each of the last three proposed budgets by the City Manager and the items referenced in the City Auditor's report. We have invested with intentionality and are well positioned to implement the recommendations included herein.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE**

**Recommendation #1:** San José Animal Care and Services should assess its shelter capacity and determine the number of animals the shelter can adequately care for using holding capacity by species and staff's capacity for care.

**Administration Response 1:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 1:** ACS will review the physical space of the facility, Association of Shelter Veterinarians' (ASV) Guidelines, and number of staff available in various roles to develop a number of animals of specific medical and behavioral conditions to identify the capacity of care numbers both in the shelter and San José owned animals in the foster care program.

**Target Date for Completion 1:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #2:** San José Animal Care and Services, using data such as trends in intake requests and animal inventory, should assess San José's shelter needs to determine whether additional kennel space is required and create a long-term strategy to fund kennel improvements or expansion.

**Administration Response 2:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 2:** ACS will review and include in the next annual report for the Neighborhood Services & Education Committee in December 2025.

**Target Date for Completion 2:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #3:** San José Animal Care and Services should review the shelter's facility condition assessment once completed, and identify priority needs and funding requirements for these improvements.

**Administration Response 3:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 3:** ACS will work with the Department of Public Works Facilities Division to review the recently completed condition assessment and present the findings and recommendations to the City Manager's Budget Office.

**Target Date for Completion 3:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #4:** San José Animal Care and Services should develop a plan to transition away from or reduce intake of newborn kittens.

The plan should address:

- a. The shelter's capacity to care for kittens in-house, including a comparison of the kitten nursery costs and related live outcomes,
- b. Guidelines for when diversion or overnight care of newborn kittens at the shelter is appropriate, and
- c. Pathways when the volume or condition of kittens exceeds the capacity for in-house care, including potential foster care, rescue, or euthanasia.

**Administration Response 4a/4b/4c:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 4a/4b/4c:** ACS will develop a written plan to transition away from or limit the intake of newborn kittens that includes the three parts of the recommendation and present it to December 2025 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee.

**Target Date for Completion 4a:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 4b:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 4c:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #5:** San José Animal Care and Services should update the shelter's outreach strategy to educate the community through social media and other channels on what to expect before and during kitten season and when intervention with community cats is appropriate.

**Administration Response 5:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 5:** ACS will prepare a media and outreach calendar and accompanying content types for kitten season 2025 that will plan to run through August 2025.

**Target Date for Completion 5:** March 31, 2025

**Recommendation #6:** To ensure that each animal has an identified path out of the shelter and to reduce its length of stay, San José Animal Care and Services should formalize pathway planning protocols that include:

- a. Identifying potential pathways (e.g., adoption, rescue, or euthanasia) for animals entering the shelter and their pathway changes and document that in the Chameleon case management system,
- b. Formalizing steps that staff should take for an animal to achieve its intended pathways (e.g., schedule a spay or neuter surgery, network with rescue groups, promote as an adoption candidate), and
- c. Assigning supervisory or management staff to conduct regular (e.g., daily) assessments of animals' progress towards their pathway.

**Administration Response 6a/6b/6c:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 6a/6b/6c:** Through its work with City Manager's Office Customer Service Team, ACS will document an intake checklist, decision flowchart, and appropriate oversight responsibilities from the management team at ACS.

**Target Date for Completion 6a:** June 30, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 6b:** June 30, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 6c:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #7:** San José Animal Care and Services should finalize the shelter's draft euthanasia protocol to:

- a. Provide clear criteria on when euthanasia may be considered, and
- b. Formalize the process for granting requests to delay euthanasia decisions.

**Administration Response 7a/7b:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 7a/7b:** ACS will finalize the draft policy revision that identifies the criteria for euthanasia and the process required for requests to delay euthanasia decisions.

**Target Date for Completion 7a:** March 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 7b:** March 31, 2025

**Recommendation #8:** To ensure the welfare of animals in foster care, San José Animal Care and Services should develop policies to:

- a. Track the status and location of all fostered animals in a uniform report,
- b. Establish pathway plans for animals in foster,
- c. Accurately track the number of days animals stay in foster care and create limits for how long they can be in foster homes without being adopted, and
- d. Document timelines and expectations for when foster caretakers must return to the shelter for medical appointments.

**Administration Response 8a/8b/8c/8d:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 8a/8b/8c/8d:** The foster families in our community are a critical component to ACS' ability to navigate the shelter population crisis over the last two years. The City Manager's Budget Office has approved an overstrength Foster & Rescue Coordinator position which at the time of publication is in the recruitment process. For recommendations A and D, ACS will develop a report for the status and location of all foster animals and document timelines and expectations for inclusion in the foster caretaker packet of resources. For recommendation B, ACS will develop a check-list and process that aligns to the in shelter animals for pathway planning. For recommendation C, ACS will use the reporting prepared for recommendation A, along with the tools created with recommendation 6, to regularly track, check-in, and keep the foster families in line with the limits established. For recommendations B & C, budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints. The possibility of making the overstrength Coordinator could be a consideration to help with recommendation B & C.

**Target Date for Completion 8a:** June 30, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 8b:** June 30, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 8c:** June 30, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 8d:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #9:** To increase the level of spay and neuter services for community cats and shelter animals, San José Animal Care and Services should work with the Finance Department and the City Attorney's Office to contract with outside service providers for spay and neuter services.

**Administration Response 9:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 9:** There is a definitive need for affordable spay and neuter services in our community, for both owned and un-owned pets. ACS will work with community partners to assess a demand level of spay and neuter services that needs to be available in the community. With the Department of Finance and City Attorney's Office, ACS has extended two of the three agreements with private vendors for the remainder of the current fiscal year. In the coming winter season, the City will be advertising a solicitation for contract spay and neuter services with a goal of awarding multi-year agreements for both owned and un-owned community cats. With the community stakeholder outreach, ACS will assess the funding needed to meet the demand and publish that at the December 2025 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 9:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #10:** To provide accurate information to the public, update the San José Animal Care and Services website with the current process for a community member to book trap, neuter, and release appointments for community cats.

**Administration Response 10:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 10:** ACS will update the website to reflect the current process to book a spay and neuter appointment as part of the trap, neuter and return process.

**Target Date for Completion 10:** March 31, 2025

**Recommendation #11:** San José Animal Care and Services (ACS) should:

- a. Update the ACS Manual to align with the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines as they relate to disease detection and isolation, cleaning, vaccines and treatments, nutrition, and exercise and enrichment. San José Animal Care and Services should review the ACS Manual on a recurring basis to incorporate changes to operations and industry standards as appropriate.
- b. Alternatively, adopt the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines as its primary manual and develop systems to ensure compliance with the Guidelines in the areas listed in (a). San José Animal Care and Services should review these systems on a recurring basis to incorporate changes to operations and industry standards as appropriate.

**Administration Response 11a/11b:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 11a/11b:** ACS will employ a hybrid of recommendation A and B. ACS will accept the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' (ASV) Guidelines and denote an exception or detailed difference for any guideline which ACS will adopt a specific different policy. For each category of the ASV Guidelines, ACS will identify a review iteration that ACS will use to review and reassert or adjust procedures. ACS will report out at the December 2025 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting the status of this recommendation.

**Target Date for Completion 11a:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 11b:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #12:** San José Animal Care and Services should develop policies to require supervisory staff to perform regular observations and provide feedback to personnel in each area of shelter and medical operations, including proper cleaning, feeding, and handling animals with personal protective equipment.

**Administration Response 12:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 12:** Through the implementation of recommendation 11, ACS will denote a daily, weekly, monthly type review cadence denotation for those staff members that supervise and lead staff performing the tasks identified in the ASV Guidelines and ACS specific policies or procedures.

**Target Date for Completion 12:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #13:** To keep personnel informed of their responsibilities in disease management at the shelter, San José Animal Care and Services should provide recurring trainings in high-risk operational areas identified by shelter management. Areas should include using and changing personal protective equipment, identifying infectious disease symptoms in animals, and the steps and responsible parties for communicating and responding to infectious disease concerns.

**Administration Response 13:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 13:** ACS will continue to train new employees in the necessary protective measures in disease management with the inclusion of trainings and procedure sign offs to denote completion. The ACS Medical Director will communicate to the shelter staff the iteration cadence recommended for typical disease type and the procedures for anything novel or disease adaptation that warrants new or modified procedures. This will be included in an ACS procedure & policy repository in recommendation 14.

**Target Date for Completion 13:** December 31, 2025



**Recommendation #14:** For staff to have access to up-to-date protocols, San José Animal Care and Services should create a repository of all policies and protocols and make them easily accessible to all staff. Supervisors should also review protocols relevant to staff's daily tasks with new staff during onboarding and when assigned to new job responsibilities.

**Administration Response 14:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 14:** ACS has begun the process of modernizing its policies and procedures. With the response to recommendation 11, this will streamline the need to create many new procedure documents. ACS is exploring a couple platforms for the procedure and policy repository that will maximize availability for staff and ease communication. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 14:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #15:** To keep personnel informed of protocol changes, San José Animal Care and Services should formalize a standard operating procedure to communicate protocol changes to relevant personnel through emails, staff meetings, and other means.

**Administration Response 15:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 15:** As part of the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14, ACS will include a standard operating procedure when updates are made to include the most effective mode of communication and inclusive of relevant staff. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 15:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #16:** To ensure feeding, providing water, cleaning, enrichment, and kennel location information is properly recorded, San José Animal Care and Services should improve recordkeeping by developing protocols and training staff around timely data entry.

**Administration Response 16:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 16:** As part of the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14, ACS will include a task completion requirement of expected data entry timeliness. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 16:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #17:** San José Animal Care and Services should formalize and document shelter coordinators and supervisors' areas of responsibilities in oversight and monitoring daily animal care activity. This should include reviewing relevant reports to ensure daily care is provided to all animals and following up if animal care has not occurred.

**Administration Response 17:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 17:** As part of the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14, ACS will include a responsibility matrix with daily, weekly, monthly-type iteration detail and which team member is responsible. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 17:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #18:** To ensure better inventory and recordkeeping management, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Develop procedures and train staff around tracking inventory for shelter operations, and
- b. Update the Controlled Substances Policy to align with current practice and in accordance with state and other applicable laws, clarify staff access levels, and train staff on the policy.

**Administration Response 18a/18b:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 18a/18b:** For recommendation A, as part of the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14, ACS will include an inventory procedure for general shelter goods. This will include a responsibility matrix with daily, weekly, monthly-type iteration detail and which team member is responsible and vendor list. The tool noted in audit report was a proof concept that was meant for ideation and might be adapted for implementation. For recommendation B, ACS will update the written policy to align to current procedures, ensure that it is in alignment with applicable laws, and document that any staff who has access to Controlled Substances at the shelter are

trained on the updated procedure. The revised policy will be included in the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 18a:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 18b:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #19:** To provide context and information about shelter operations, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Provide additional data on length of stay in public and/or internal reports, which may include median as well as average stay, and broken down by age or other factors, and
- b. Include other considerations that can be presented in public and internal reports, such as information on shelter capacity, the impact of unhealthy or untreatable animal intakes on live release rate, or other considerations.

**Administration Response 19a/19b:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 19a/19b:** ACS is proud of the fact that the available animal data is industry leading. ACS will include additional data points on the public dashboards on the ACS website (recommendation A) and in the ACS Annual Report to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee each December (recommendation B).

**Target Date for Completion 19a:** June 30, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 19b:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #20:** To improve data reliability, better manage reports, and further ensure animals are appropriately accounted for, San José Animal Care and Services should assign an individual or individuals to oversee data management. The responsibilities should include:

- a. Updating and training staff on procedures around data entry protocols, and implementing a process for Chameleon data to be regularly reviewed and data issues to be addressed,
- b. Working with the Chameleon vendor to assess whether there are standard controls to reduce data entry errors,
- c. Identifying the most relevant Chameleon reports to inform data reporting and operations, and ensuring data queries are accurate, and
- d. Establishing a process to track changes made to Chameleon reports and the public dashboards.

**Administration Response 20a/20b/20c/20d:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 20a/20b/20c/20d:** In fiscal year 2024-2025, Council approved an addition of a Senior System Applications Programmer, in part, to be lead on setting up data procedures for ACS. At time of publication, that position is in the recruitment process. For recommendation A, as part of the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14 and data input procedures noted in recommendation 18, ACS will include a data hygiene review with the policies and procedures for reviewing and cleaning the data throughout Chameleon. For recommendations B, ACS will outreach to the Chameleon vendor. For recommendation C & D, ACS will review the list of reports for operations and publication, establish an iteration schedule to review currency, and note the changes implemented in the ACS Annual Report to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee each December. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 20a:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 20b:** June 30, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 20c:** June 30, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 20d:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #21:** To ensure appropriate data controls, San José Animal Care and Services should establish Chameleon access permissions, document who should have access to what in Chameleon, and establish default password protocols in alignment with the City's Information and Systems Security Policy.

**Administration Response 21:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 21:** As part of the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14, ACS will include a Chameleon system access and permission policy, including password protocol in compliance with the Information and Technology Department system security requirement. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 21:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #22:** To improve rescue engagement and communication, San José Animal Care and Services should develop a communication protocol that includes an assigned point of contact(s) from the shelter and timeframes for responding to inquiries. The protocol should be shared with rescue groups.

**Administration Response 22:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 22:** As part of the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14, ACS will document a communication protocol with our community partners. ACS will work with community partners to assess the right mode, method, and frequency to engage rescues. As ACS is a 7 day a week operation, a single point of contact person is not appropriate for all services. ACS anticipates that the protocol will identify a single point of contact system to ensure consistency and availability. With the community stakeholder outreach, ACS will assess the funding needed to meet the requirements and will publish that protocol at the December 2025 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 22:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #23:** To ensure the rescue group roster is current, San José Animal Care and Services should assign staff to regularly update rescue group contacts.

**Administration Response 23:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 23:** ACS, as part of the establishment of the protocol noted in recommendation 22, will include the iteration cycle inquiring their confirmation of the contact information from the rescue partner and the staff assigned to the task. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 23:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #24:** To ensure appropriate information about rescue animals is provided to relevant groups, San José Animal Care and Services should update its current process to notify rescue groups on available animals by:

- a. Tailoring the "needs rescue" list to relevant recipients (e.g., dogs/puppies vs. cats/kittens) or providing self-service options to rescue groups, and
- b. Including complete and accurate information about animals, such as age, weight, and medical and behavioral assessments.

**Administration Response 24a/24b:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 24a/24b:** ACS, as part of the establishment of the protocol noted in recommendation 22, will work with community partners to assess and identify the most effective mode of outreach and information needed to notify rescues of particular animals that need their services. Since their needs vary, ACS needs rescue community to guide the outcome of the developed platform to meet most of the rescues needs, most of the time. ACS will report out on the updated process at the December 2025 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 24a:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 24b:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #25:** To ensure consistency and transparency, San José Animal Care and Services should develop guidelines on the use of gift and Guardian Angel Program funds to include the following:

- a. Maximum funds allowable per award,
- b. Purposes for the use of these funds,
- c. Method and timeline for making payments to providers,
- d. A process to track expenditures, and
- e. Require recipients of funds to report annually on animal outcomes.

**Administration Response 25a/25b/25c/25d/25e:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 25a/25b/25c/25d/25e:** ACS welcomes the opportunity to modernize the Guardian Angel Program, make the process more streamlined, and objective. ACS will work with the City Attorney's Office and other City Departments to review other programs that are similar in nature and ensure that any improvements are fit within appropriate municipals codes and laws. When complete, ACS will include the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 25a:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 25b:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 25c:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 25d:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 25e:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #26:** San José Animal Care and Services should revise its agreement with rescue groups to include availability of gift funds and standard City terms, such as indemnification. Once the agreement is updated, ensure that all rescue groups have current signed agreements on file.

**Administration Response 26:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 26:** ACS has been working with the City Attorney's Office on various revisions. ACS will publish a revised agreement inclusive of the terms noted in the recommendation and reach out to all active rescues to provide them the new version to acquire their signature for our records. ACS will store the signed agreement in a repository that will be available for staff to confirm rescues are current on proper documentation.

**Target Date for Completion 26:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #27:** To make the volunteer onboarding and application process more efficient, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Develop timeliness targets to process volunteer applications, and
- b. Simplify the process for minor applicants by combining the minor and guardian applications.



**Administration Response 27a/27b:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 27a/27b:** ACS is blessed with an abundance of community members that step forward and are willing to lend a hand. As noted in the audit writeup, ACS and our volunteers have many challenges with the volunteer application and registration platform. The existing platform does not allow for easy communication to and from staff or the ability to join a guardian application with a minor's application. ACS has a desired solicitation to go to the Finance Department to solicit for a new platform. Should that initiate in the first six months of 2025, ACS should have an improved platform available and in use by the end of 2025. The development of reasonable application targets and joint applications have a dependance of the volunteer platform replacement.

**Target Date for Completion 27a:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 27b:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #28:** To ensure a complete and efficient training experience for volunteers, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Revise the training materials to include essential trainings only for tasks performed by volunteers based on the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines,
- b. Make overlapping content (e.g., Fear Free Shelter training) optional,
- c. Add dog and kitten specific zoonotic and infectious disease protocols in the existing training, and
- d. Create and display "how-to" posters around the shelter to explain what steps should be taken for each volunteer-related task.

**Administration Response 28a/28b/28c/28d:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 28a/28b/28c/28d:** ACS will revise the training materials for volunteers aligned to the ACS adoption of the ASV Guidelines as noted in the Administration's response to recommendation 11 and post them in the repository (as part of the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14) and make available to volunteers and prospective volunteers. For recommendations 28 A, B, and C, ACS will create a volunteer checklist that will be on file for each volunteer that identifies what the volunteer's training level allows for them to be tasked with by the ACS Staff.

Additional staff may be needed to develop and help with implementation of the revision as the existing volunteer support is lead by a single person administering and scheduling volunteers. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.



**Target Date for Completion 28a:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 28b:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 28c:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 28d:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #29:** To ensure that volunteers are provided key shelter protocols on an ongoing basis, San José Animal Care and Services should formalize communication protocols to inform volunteers about updated shelter practices and protocols and provide informal feedback to volunteers on services provided.

**Administration Response 29:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 29:** As part of the procedure and policy repository from recommendation 14, ACS will determine an effective way to inform relevant volunteers of the locations of ACS policies and procedure plus the updates that happen over time. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 29:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #30:** To provide a better volunteer experience and improve management of the volunteer program at the shelter, SJACS should assess alternate volunteer management software solutions to better log and track volunteer hours and schedule shifts.

**Administration Response 30:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 30:** As noted in the response to recommendation 27, ACS has a solicitation in process with the Finance Department with the scope noted in this recommendation. If this procurement is let out in the first six months of 2025, ACS is hopeful that a new solution will be use by the end of the 2025.

**Target Date for Completion 30:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #31:** To comply with the San José Municipal Code and state law, San José Animal Care and Services should align license terms with the expiration of the rabies vaccine.

**Administration Response 31:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 31:** ACS will confirm that a fractional year can be entered into the Chameleon database to reflect the time it takes from the vaccine administration and the information getting to ACS. ACS will evaluate the fiscal impact of this adjustment and will work with City Manager's Budget Office to note the change in procedure as adjusting to license issuance to a full year will result in reduced revenue for ACS. This will be reflected in the fiscal year 2025-2026 budget.

**Target Date for Completion 31:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #32:** To improve compliance around rabies vaccine submissions, San José Animal Care and Services should increase outreach to veterinarians to submit these certificates.

**Administration Response 32:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 32:** ACS will communicate to each of the veterinarians listed in the business tax system to confirm if they administer rabies vaccines to animals in San José and remind them of the municipal code requirement to submit the rabies certificates to ACS within thirty (30) days.

**Target Date for Completion 32:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #33:** To allow administrative staff to refocus on other shelter activities and tasks, San José Animal Care and Services should consider options to contract for outside licensing administration.

**Administration Response 33:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 33:** ACS will work with the Finance Department and City Attorney's Office to develop a solicitation to test the private market for available licensing services and what part of the staff work could be offset by the provided service. As this recommendation implies to have licensing staff to attend to other tasks, likely additional resources may be needed to complete this recommendation. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 33:** June 30, 2026

**Recommendation #34:** To allow the City to begin its follow-up process for delinquent accounts related to licensing, San José Animal Care and Services should issue outstanding administrative citations in a timely manner.

**Administration Response 34:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 34:** ACS staff has been giving as many chances as possible for a license holder to get current on their license fees. Staff will prioritize the most delinquent accounts first to transmit citation, while ACS explores the outsourced licensing model included in recommendation 33.

**Target Date for Completion 34:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #35:** To increase language accessibility for all (including seniors for purposes of requesting exemptions), San José Animal Care and Services should translate the licensing form and incorporate the senior exemptions into the online form.

**Administration Response 35:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 35:** ACS aims to serve our community with accessible language and make participation in our services easy. ACS will translate the licensing form into the standard languages used by the City for other community services. ACS will evaluate the inclusion of the senior exemption information into the online form with the existing licensing platform. If it is not possible in the existing platform, ACS will include that requirement in a solicitation of another platform.

**Target Date for Completion 35:** June 30, 2025

**Recommendation #36:** To increase access to underserved communities and align with other jurisdictions, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Consider additional license fee exemptions for veterans or disabled veterans in addition to senior exemptions, and
- b. Review options to provide free or low-cost veterinarian services for owned pets through either grant opportunities and/or working with Humane Society Silicon Valley to determine a regular schedule to provide these services.

**Administration Response 36a/36b:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 36a/36b:** For recommendation 36a, ACS will work with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office to determine the abilities and limitation of

licenses and identify the projected revenue impact of fee waivers to veterans and disabled veterans. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

For recommendation 36b, ACS will require further analysis before firm commitments can be set. ACS will work with community partners to assess a demand level for private veterinarian service and how best ACS can work with community partners to develop options to provide free or low-cost veterinarian services that meets the community's needs. ACS will reach out to the Humane Society Silicon Valley to assess their ability to support a regular schedule of these services. ACS publish will options at the December 2025 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting.

**Target Date for Completion 36a:** June 30, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 36b:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #37:** To assist in the implementation of any remaining recommendations from the Maddie's Fund Shelter Consult, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Prioritize the relevant recommendations that align with Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines and shelter operations and develop target dates for implementation of those recommendations, and
- b. Designate an individual to monitor and track implementation status, including identifying any roadblocks or next steps to completion.

**Administration Response 37a/37b:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Yellow - 37a/37b:** As noted in the audit report the Maddie's Fund Consult resulted in several hundred recommendations, some of which do not align to the shortly later published Association of Shelter Veterinarians' (ASV) Guidelines. ACS staff will identify the not yet implemented recommendations that do comply with the ASV Guidelines and schedule them for implementation. As ACS will be implementing ASV Guidelines not included in the Maddie's Fund Consult, an ACS staff member will be assigned to each recommendation or guideline. ACS will report out at the December 2025 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting the status of this recommendation. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 37a:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 37b:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #38:** To ensure fairness of service delivery provided to residents, San José Animal Care and Services should consider aligning performance services and metrics with what is provided to the contract jurisdictions or revisit what is offered to other jurisdictions.

**Administration Response 38:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 38:** ACS will evaluate the impact of adjusting San José performance services and metrics to those of the three contract cities. ACS will report out at the December 2025 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee. Budgeted resources may need to be identified for parts of this scope and would be addressed in the City's budget process within the context of other City Council priorities and budgetary constraints.

**Target Date for Completion 38:** December 31, 2025

**Recommendation #39:** To ensure that San José's cost analysis for services provided to neighboring jurisdictions is appropriate and consistent across the jurisdictions, San José Animal Care and Services should:

- a. Formalize and track activity and costs to determine whether agreements accurately reflect the level of service, and
- b. Improve documentation for the cost analysis for the agreements, such that all costs and activity levels are included.

**Administration Response 39a/39b:** The Administration agrees with this recommendation.

**Green - 39a/39b:** ACS will work with the City Manager's Budget Office and City Attorney's Office to evaluate the costs tracking for services provided to all jurisdictions and the agreement terms included in the agreements with other jurisdictions. ACS will include a section of its annual report each year to detail the costs and activity level for each jurisdiction. ACS will report out at the December 2025 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee.

**Target Date for Completion 39a:** December 31, 2025

**Target Date for Completion 39b:** December 31, 2025

## CONCLUSION

The Administration appreciates the City Auditor's thorough review of the Animal Care & Services. The Administration is committed to addressing these recommendations promptly to improve services to the animals in our care, the relationships with community partners, and the well-being of our staff.

ACS acknowledges that the current shelter crisis is a community challenge that requires a community response. Therefore, we recommend the creation of a Community Action Committee to assist ACS with the deliberations and development of solutions for four specific auditor recommendations (9, 22, 24, 36b). Those recommendations include increasing the availability of spay and neuter services, including Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR); expanding rescue organization partnerships and standardizing the two-way flow of communication and information sharing; and growing the availability and access to low-cost veterinarian services. The formation of this solution-oriented working group will leverage city and community resources to better serve the animals under our care. This Community Action Committee should be tasked with working with staff and the relevant community partners to meet monthly through 2025 and report to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee in December 2025 adjacent to the ACS Annual Report.

Progress updates will be provided to the City Auditor's Office on a semi-annual basis.



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