



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023

Executive Summary

Beginning in FY 2022-23, Santa Barbara County entered into new five-year, fair-share (per capita) contracts with each of the seven city partners and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians with a goal of reducing General Fund subsidy by year five for animal services within the cities and unincorporated county. This report provides an overview of the Santa Barbara County Animal Services (SBCAS) operational highlights and achievements during the first year of those contracts. The annual report focuses on three key areas: sheltering summary, foster programming, and community engagement, with strategic planning updates for each of these focus areas.

The number of animals entering the sheltering system has increased year-over-year for the previous five years (with the exception of during the COVID-19 pandemic where low numbers were experienced overall). However, even with the increase in animals sheltered experienced during this fiscal year, foster placements and adoptions have also increased correspondingly thanks largely in part to our non-profit partners and generous volunteers.

In summary, during FY 2022-23:

- SBCAS brought 5,189 animals into care, an increase of 545 animals over the prior fiscal year, and over 834 more animals than FY 2020-21.
- Adoptions surpassed 2,300; an increase of approximately 500 over the prior fiscal year, and 634 more than FY 2020-21.
- Foster placements were up 124% over last year, with over 2,100 pets spending time out of the shelter during recovery from a medical condition, while awaiting alteration surgery, or for a short break.
- Nearly 16,000 volunteer hours were generously provided by individual community members; far more than pre-pandemic. This is an 85% increase from the prior fiscal year.

Animal Services Operational Highlights - Fiscal Year 2022-23:

1. Sheltering Summary

During the COVID-19 pandemic there was a sharp increase in adoptions and an equal or greater decrease in animals needing shelter. To contextualize current fiscal year statistics in comparison to pre-pandemic operations, the following data illustrates a five-year period.

The total number of live animal intakes (5,189) in FY 2022-23 have increased by 11.7% from the prior fiscal year, with the highest increase being stray pets (3,974) brought to the shelters, an increase of 19.7%. Efforts to reduce strays have included free microchips for pet owners, amplification of stray messaging through Next Door an online neighbor network, and increased community education and resources through team member presence at events throughout the county. In May of 2023, SBCAS began providing city partners with outreach ideas and resources to empower them to positively impact the pets and people they serve.

Animals Entering Shelter by Fiscal Year

| | FY 18-19 | FY 19-20 | FY 20-21 | FY 21-22 | FY 22-23 |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Total | 6,283 | 5,422 | 4,355 | 4,644 | 5,189 |
| Born | 3 | 65 | 52 | 100 | 85 |
| Comm.Cats | 0 | 0 | 19 | 197 | 259 |
| Confiscated | 354 | 193 | 183 | 234 | 224 |
| Disaster | 108 | 110 | 0 | 50 | 23 |
| Owner Surrender | 993 | 858 | 705 | 588 | 479 |
| Returned | 148 | 209 | 125 | 128 | 124 |
| Stray | 4,658 | 3,963 | 3,217 | 3,319 | 3,974 |
| Transfer | 19 | 24 | 54 | 28 | 21 |

Total live outcomes for animals exiting the county shelters (5,031) increased by 7.1% from the prior fiscal year. With the reopening of the shelters for walkthrough visitors, and robust marketing campaigns and events, adoptions increased by 26.6% in FY 2022-23. Despite the increase in total live animal intakes, non-live outcomes were relatively flat from the prior year, leading to an overall increase in the live release rate for the year to 90.1% from last year's 89.3%. It is important to note that during FY 2022-23, SBCAS also transitioned from Asilomar reporting standards, which do not include owner requested euthanasia, to a more transparent "Noses In – Noses Out" reporting standard that includes all non-rabies vector animals.

Animals Exiting Shelter by Fiscal Year

| | FY 18-19 | FY 19-20 | FY 20-21 | FY 21-22 | FY 22-23 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Total | 6,299 | 5,699 | 4,234 | 4,697 | 5,031 |
| Adopted | 2,311 | 2,562 | 1,720 | 1,860 | 2,354 |
| Community Cat | 0 | 0 | 36 | 224 | 282 |
| Died | 83 | 94 | 75 | 78 | 125 |
| Escaped | 0 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| Euthanized | 510 | 522 | 323 | 417 | 369 |
| Missing | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 0 |
| Owner Redemp | 1,792 | 1,414 | 988 | 1,107 | 1,181 |
| Return to Wild | 395 | 281 | 244 | 98 | 91 |
| Transferred | 1,206 | 819 | 840 | 905 | 624 |

2. Foster Programming

SBCAS recognizes that no matter how nice a shelter is, it is still a temporary shelter. To continue striving for the most humane environment for pets in our care, this year, SBCAS focused on increasing a foster program structure and support. This foster program has enabled us to meet the increased need of pets in the community, while also maintaining shelter census counts within designed facility levels.

The "Foster-To-Adopt" program allows pets to go home the same day with an adopter while awaiting spay/neuter or receiving ongoing medical treatment. This year, SBCAS added day trip and overnight foster options, which

allow members of the public to take a future pet on a hike, out to lunch, or home for a weekend. “Safety Net” fostering is another new program aimed at housing owned pets while their family is going through a temporary crisis such as a hospitalization, with the intent of returning the pet within a given timeline.

With the introduction of these additional foster programs, SBCAS has seen a substantial increase (124%) in total foster placements (2,123) this year.

Foster Placements by Fiscal Year

| | FY 18-19 | FY 19-20 | FY 20-21 | FY 21-22 | FY 22-23 |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Total | 1,000 | 1,192 | 840 | 946 | 2,123 |
| | 997 | 1,188 | 832 | 520 | 354 |
| ADOPT | 0 | 1 | 0 | 115 | 484 |
| BOARDING | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| DAY TRIP | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 197 |
| HOSPICE | 3 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 3 |
| MEDICAL | 0 | 0 | 0 | 290 | 814 |
| NEONATE | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 210 |
| OVRNIGHT | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 |
| SAFETY NET | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| SHELT BRK | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| TO PLACE | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 |

3. Community engagement

During FY 2022-23, SBCAS hired a local community leader, Jill Anderson, to resurrect the volunteer program post-pandemic. Ms. Anderson has focused on building a core of dog walking volunteers as a strategic place to start. In early 2023, SBCAS was able to fill a full-time, Volunteer Coordinator position, and further open opportunities for volunteers to take on impactful roles across SBCAS. Additionally, several non-profit partners (K-9 PALS, Santa Barbara Animal Care Foundation, and Shadow’s Fund) worked together to install day yards, and resume playgroups in an effort to create a more humane environment to house pets. Volunteer leads have also now been identified for the rabbit and cat programs, and they have begun onboarding additional new volunteers so that we can further support overall animal care welfare improvements in the coming year.

| Fiscal Year | Vol. Hours | Change % |
|-------------|------------|----------|
| 18-19 | 11,439 | - |
| 19-20 | 11,611 | 1.5% |
| 20-21 | 6,002 | -48.3% |
| 21-22 | 8,606 | 43.4% |
| 22-23 | 15,931 | 85.1% |

Strategic Actions:

SBCAS continues to evaluate its practices and implement improvements aligned with the vision presented to the County Board of Supervisors on May 18, 2021. Notable enhancements related to service delivery and future innovations have been highlighted here for FY 2023-24.

In October 2022, SBCAS implemented a comprehensive evaluation process for positive outcomes for animals, complemented by a live release checklist. This checklist serves as a formal guide to evaluate every opportunity for a

positive outcome for animals with behavioral concerns. Since its introduction, this checklist has been utilized over twenty times, resulting in successful live outcomes for nine dogs that would have previously been euthanized without being given a chance for a live outcome. This checklist ensures that our volunteers and partners are notified of actions and decisions, and given an opportunity to intervene. Coupled with two weekly behavioral evaluation meetings that include a variety of team members, dogs are given all possible considerations for a live outcome.

As a commitment to transparency, SBCAS has also enhanced its communication externally through the implementation of monthly reports and the establishment of stronger collaborations with nonprofit partners, volunteers, and fosters. These efforts have also enabled SBCAS to identify support systems for our most challenging-to-place pets.

Other public service improvements and expanded community outreach in FY 2022-23 include:

- The Lompoc shelter reopened partially in January 2023 and is on track for a full reopening in Fall 2023.
- Camp HOPE returned to the Santa Maria shelter, creating opportunities for community youth to learn about responsible pet care, careers with Animal Services, and coexisting with wildlife. A minicamp in Lompoc is in its planning phases.
- Concerted efforts to develop media relationships have resulted in a cadence of positive stories in the Santa Maria Times, KEYT, KSBY, Santa Barbara Independent, Santa Barbara News Press, and more. Additionally, a handful of brief radio spots were recorded about adoption, foster, and volunteer opportunities, and are in rotation on KSNI 102.5, KPAT 95.7, and KSMA 99.5.
- The development of a volunteer marketing team has increased engagement on social media and expanded outreach through the addition of NextDoor and TikTok accounts, while simultaneously building capacity for attendance at community events and increased offsite adoption opportunities.

As SBCAS plans for FY 2023-24, there are many exciting things in the works:

- An evaluation is underway to extend shelter hours of operation to six days per week, with extended hours open to the public that would result in an estimated 50% increase in our adoption hours.
- A relaunch of the Project PetSafe campaign, established in 2011, is expected with a focus on things that keep pets safe: vaccinations, licenses, microchips, wellness, alterations, housing, and care.
- A plan to contract a third-party licensing service (Docupet) is being evaluated to expand available pet licensing services, improved customer service, and minimize pet licensing costs.
- A redesign of the Santa Barbara County Animal Services website is underway to improve access to services and information, coupled with utilization of Search Engine Optimization to connect with more constituents and what topics they are actually searching for.
- A collaborative effort is being planned with Santa Barbara Community Services Department to better identify ways to serve people and pets who are experiencing homelessness and crisis.
- An increase in SBCAS adoption events in partnership with local cities are being planned for FY 2023-24, such as the Buellton BBQ Bonanza, Santa Maria Night Out, and more.

Community Service:

During FY 2022-23, SBCAS distributed a customer service survey to over 3,500 customers. While responses indicated an overall positive experience with 85% of respondents rating their adoption experience a 5/5 rating, specific feedback has indicated a need to improve communication avenues for the public. The recently installed VOIP system has provided us with an opportunity to gather data on the volume of calls incoming to SBCAS and we expect to complete a full analysis of communication needs and opportunities in the 2nd quarter of FY 2023-24.

Additionally, we recently conducted a follow up survey sent to over 200 adopters who had welcomed a dog into their care with a prior behavioral concern. Of the responses we received, only one person shared any kind of disappointment with their pet's behavior, and nearly everyone was appreciative of the information and support they received to transition the animal from shelter-to-home. One such story embodies the appreciation we heard: "We cannot express our gratitude enough to Santa Barbara County Animal Services for helping us find our cherished companion! From the moment we saw her picture online and read the provided description, we knew she would be a perfect fit for our

family. Meeting her at the shelter and spending quality time with her allowed us to establish a deep connection. The thoughtful gift bag we received, including essentials like food, a collar, a leash, and a pet blanket, showed us the level of care SBCAS puts into each adoption. The kindness and happiness of the staff made the process even more enjoyable. Over a year and four months later, she has become an integral part of our lives, bringing immeasurable joy to our family. Thank you, SBCAS!"

Acknowledgments:

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and our community partners for their continuing support and cooperation in our mission to treat every pet as an individual and to give them every opportunity for a happy future. Together, we are making a significant difference in the lives of these incredible animals and the people who care for them.

Through our partnerships with non-profit organizations across the County, primarily with Companion Animal Placement Assistance (CAPA), Community Awareness Responsibility Education (C.A.R.E.4Paws), Bunnies Urgently Needing Shelter (BUNS) and K-9 Placement and Assistance League (K9PALS), SBCAS operates pet resource centers at each shelter. Based solely on donations, SBCAS was able to distribute about 17,000 pounds of cat food and 10,000 pounds of dog food this past year. Additionally, we were able to provide pet owners with supplies like litter, leashes, beds, treats, and jackets to assist and to support the care of animal companions within their home environment.

For many years, SBCAS has worked closely with a number of non-profit partners to improve the quality of life for pets living in animal shelters across the County. Animal Shelter Assistance Program (ASAP Cats) and BUNS have been providing voluntary services and supplies under a Board-approved MOUs since 2017 and we are eternally grateful for their support and assistance in caring for felines, rabbits and guinea pigs. In addition, we received support through coverage of veterinary services, behavior training specialists, and pet supplies from CAPA, K-9PALS, SBCACF (Santa Barbara County Animal Care Foundation, Santa Maria), and Shadow's Fund (Lompoc). These partners provide invaluable support directly to the pets in the care of the shelter.