



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

Executive Summary

This annual report provides an overview of the operational highlights and achievements of Santa Barbara County Animal Services (SBCAS) for FY 2023-2024, the second year of the five year, fair-share (per capita) contracts with each of our seven city partners and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians. 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 to our non-profit partners and generous volunteers.

In summary, during FY 2023-2024:

- SBCAS brought 5,589 animals into care, an increase of 400 over the prior fiscal year, and 939 more than FY 2021-2022.
- Adoptions surpassed 2,700, an increase of 359 over the prior fiscal year, and 853 more than FY 2021-2022.
- Traditional foster placements were up 48% over last year, with over 2,800 pets spending time out of the shelter during recovery from a medical condition, while awaiting alteration surgery, or for a short break.
- The Doggy Day Trip fostering program facilitated over 2,400-day trips for sheltered dogs, demonstrating significant community involvement.
- Over 20,000 volunteer hours were generously provided by individual community members; far more than pre-pandemic. This was an additional 36% increase from the prior fiscal year.

Animal Services Operational Highlights - Fiscal Year 2023-2024:

1. Sheltering Summary

During COVID 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 are illustrated for a five-year period.

During FY 2023-2024, the total number of live animal intakes (5,589) have increased by 7.7% from the prior fiscal year (5,189), with the biggest increase being stray pets (4,310) brought to the shelters, an increase of 8.5%.

In addition to ongoing efforts to reduce strays, which include free microchips for pet owners, amplification of stray messaging through Next Door, and increased community education and resources through team member presence at events throughout the county, SBCAS has also established a Stray Animal Task Force that has begun to engage nonprofit and jurisdictional partners in understanding the

reasons that pets become lost, and finding solutions. We will continue to provide our city partners with outreach ideas and resources to empower them to positively impact the pets and people they serve.

ANIMALS ENTERING SBCAS SHELTERS BY FISCAL YEAR

	FY1920	FY2021	FY2122	FY2223	FY2324
TOTAL	5,422	4,355	4,644	5,189	5,589
Born	65	52	100	85	83
Community Cat	-	19	197	259	273
Confiscated	193	183	234	224	248
Disaster	110	-	50	23	13
Owner Surrender	858	705	588	479	491
Returned	209	125	128	124	131
Stray	3,963	3,217	3,319	3,974	4,310
Transfer	24	54	28	21	40

In FY 2023-2024, total live outcomes for animals exiting the county shelters (5,450) also correspondingly increased by 8.3% from the prior fiscal year. Changes to public shelter hours to include Sundays and the extension of hours until 6:00 PM from 5:00 PM, along with increased involvement at community events and increased media engagement, drove shelter adoptions to increase by 15.3% to nearly 3,000. Despite the significant increase in total live animal intakes, non-live outcomes only rose slightly from the prior year, leading to an overall increase in the live release rate for the year to 90.3% from last year’s 90.1%.

ANIMALS EXITING SBCAS CARE BY FISCAL YEAR

	FY1920	FY2021	FY2122	FY2223	FY2324
TOTAL	5,699	4,234	4,697	5,031	6,038
Adopted	2,562	1,720	1,860	2,354	2,713
Community Cat	-	36	224	282	291
Died	94	75	78	125	167
Escaped	3	6	3	5	6
Euhvanized	522	323	417	369	406
Missing	4	2	5	-	9
Owner Redemption	1,414	988	1,107	1,181	1,590
Return to Wild	281	244	98	91	147
Transferred	819	840	905	624	709

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, SBCAS continues to focus on increasing foster program structure and support. In partnership with the Santa Barbara Animal Care Foundation, a \$15,000 grant from Pedigree Foundation allowed the purchase of additional foster supplies. The foster program has enabled us to meet the increased need of pets in the community, while also maintaining manageable shelter census counts within the facility and staffing levels.

Last year SBCAS launched several new types of foster options: 1) foster to adopt allowing pets to be in a home while awaiting spay/neuter, 2) “safety net” fostering aimed at housing owned pets while their family is going through a temporary crisis such as hospitalization, with the intent of returning the pet within a given timeline, and 3) our “doggy day trip” foster program that allows anyone to come check a dog out of the shelter for a few hours. The Doggy Day Out program is so successful that it has been

featured in the VCA Charities Dog Day Out Starter Workbook, and Director Aguilar was invited to showcase the effort for Cal Animals, the state animal association.

SBCAS FOSTER PLACEMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR

	FY1920	FY2021	FY2122	FY2223	FY2324
TOTAL	1,192	840	946	2,123	5,277
Adopt	1	-	115	484	843
Day Trip			19	197	2,423
Hospice	3	8	2	3	12
Medical	-	-	290	814	243
Neonate	-	-	-	210	834
Overnight				24	245
Safety Net				4	9
Shelter Break				21	444
To Place				12	224
Unknown	1,188	832	520	354	-

3. Community Engagement

SBCAS believes that people are the solution, so we engage and empower them. In addition to increased foster opportunities, SBCAS has continued embracing volunteers to help us meet the requirements of our mandates and expectations of our communities. Through expansion of the clinic volunteer program, the addition of a second volunteer foster coordinator, and expansion of available volunteer orientations per month, the hours volunteers give to support animal sheltering operations have continued to climb (by 31.7% from the prior fiscal year) to over 20,000 hours.

Fiscal Year	Vol. Hours	Change %
19-20	11,611	1.5%
20-21	6,002	-48.3%
21-22	8,606	43.4%
22-23	15,931	85.1%
23-24	20,981	31.7%

In FY 2023-2024, SBCAS also increased participation at events held in all of our partner jurisdictions, bringing adoptable pets to over four dozen public events including such as the Buellton BBQ Bonanza, Santa Maria Night Out, and Flower Fest in Lompoc. Other events included Spay/Neuter collaborations in Guadalupe and New Cuyama, and vaccination clinics in Lompoc, Santa Maria, Guadalupe, Cuyama, and Santa Ynez.

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 2023-2024.

- Extension of shelter operating hours for all facilities 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, with a focus on things that keep pets safe: vaccinations, licenses, microchips, wellness, alterations, housing, and care.
- Transition of licensing to a third-party, Docupet, to expand available pet licensing services, improved customer service, and minimize pet licensing costs for the County.
- A \$200,000 grant was awarded to SBCAS by California for All Animals to hire a Pawsitive Care Coordinator whose goal is to work with human services agencies across the County to

identify how pet companionship may be barrier for people to access county services, and then work to identify solutions. This grant period ends in Spring 2025 and will be reported on in the corresponding annual report.

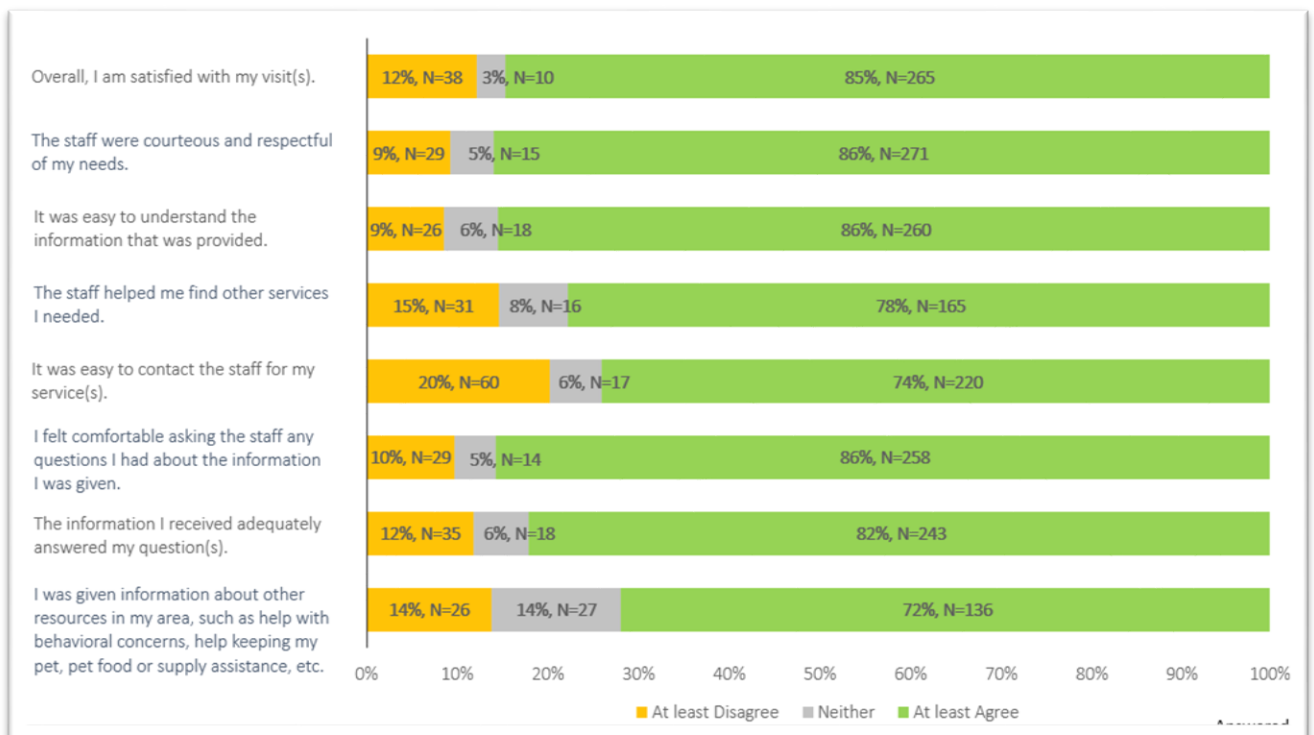
As SBCAS plans for FY 2024-2025, there are many exciting projects being evaluated, including:

- A redesign of the Santa Barbara County Animal Services website to improve access to services and information, coupled with utilization of Search Engine Optimization to connect with more constituents and what they are actually searching for.
- Development of a mutual aid safety net foster program to allow community members to house pets during times of crisis.
- Collaboration with government and nonprofit Human Services agencies to meet the needs of pet owners based on the initial work of our grant-funded Pawsitive Care Coordinator.

Customer Service:

During FY 2023-2024, SBCAS distributed a customer service survey to over 3,500 customers. Overall satisfaction from respondents about SBCAS services increased from 78% to 85% from the prior year, with similar increases in all areas of the survey except for wait time. Despite increases in customer visitations to our shelters, we continue to see high satisfaction in part because with the implementation of volunteer greeters to welcome customers and answer questions.

Additionally, SBCAS modified its the phone system approximately 18 months ago, which has resulted in a substantial reduction in abandoned calls from 35% to 20% in FY 2023-2024. SBCAS continues to seek additional answering service solutions, and thanks our dedicated staff for assisting the numerous visitors and callers to our county animal shelters each day.



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-profits 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 (K-9 PALS), SBCAS operates pet resource centers at each County-operated animal shelter. Based solely on donations, SBCAS was able to distribute over 28,000 pounds of pet 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 Board approved MOUs since 2017 and we are 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-9 PALS, Santa Barbara County Animal Care Foundation, and Shadow's Fund. These partners provide invaluable support directly to the pets in the care of the shelter.