

City of Denton

Animal Services Review

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Carrie Ducote, MS
Principal Consultant





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Introduction

Between September 30th and October 3rd, Carrie Ducote of Shelter Savvy completed a four day review of City of Denton Animal Services (DAS) at the Linda McNatt Animal Care & Adoption Center. That time was spent meeting with and working alongside staff to understand the operations of DAS.

This document provides the findings and recommendations for improvements to the operations of DAS based on the information gathered.

Since every area of the shelter's operations and future plans were evaluated, outlining each recommendation at length would lead to a lengthy and likely indigestible document. Instead, this document includes the most apparent needed changes to bring the shelter in line with nationally recognized best practices in animal shelters followed by links to additional information on external sites. These best practices will include proven strategies based on evidence-based research and are in line with the recommendations put forth by the National Animal Care and Control Association and Association of Animal Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters.

About City of Denton Animal Services (DAS)

Denton Animal Services operates out of the Linda McNatt Animal Care and Adoption Center, located at 3717 N. Elm in Denton, Texas. The shelter opened in February 2015, thanks to the efforts of the Denton Animal Support Foundation (DASF), who raised \$2 million to help fund construction of the facility.

The Linda McNatt Animal Care & Adoption Center includes a vet clinic, care areas, and an adoption center. As a municipal shelter, Denton Animal Services must accept all animals surrendered by residents, regardless of breed or condition. The shelter must also accept animals rescued as stray or abandoned, and those seized for abuse or neglect in the City of Denton as well as Denton County

About Shelter Savvy

Carrie Ducote began her journey in animal welfare in 2007 as a volunteer at her local animal shelter, where she quickly developed a passion for the field. She spent four years as the Adoption Manager at the Atlanta Humane Society and one year as the Operations Manager at the Georgia SPCA. In 2015, Carrie joined Best Friends Animal Society, where she spent eight years consulting with shelter leadership across the country to reduce euthanasia rates.

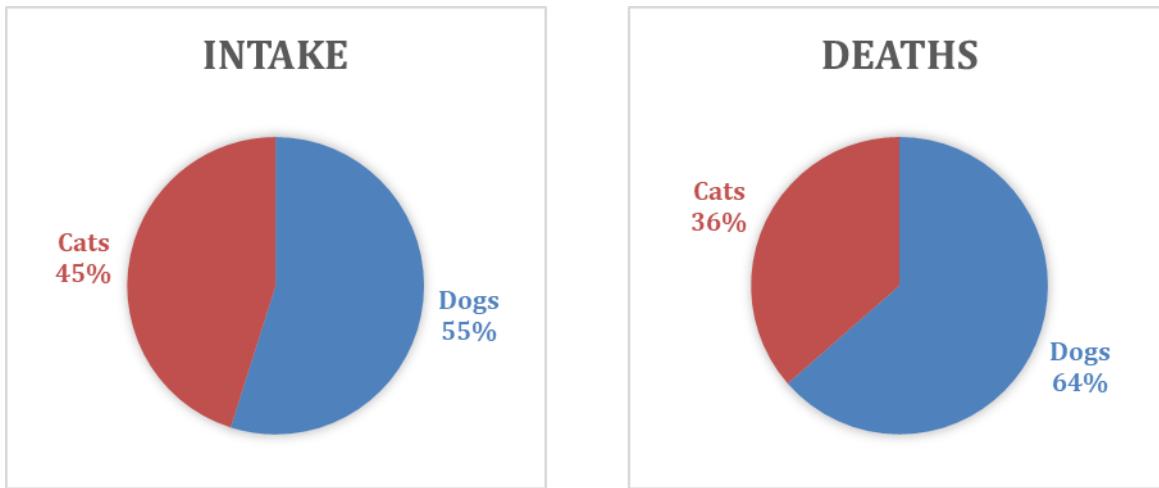
She has completed on-site reviews at Horry County Animal Care Center in South Carolina, St. Lucie County Humane Society in Florida, and Hall County Animal Shelter in Georgia in addition to several other shelters nationally.

She holds a bachelor's degree in biology, a master's degree in animal studies (anthrozoology) and institutional certificates in animal services executive leadership and cat lifesaving from Southern Utah University.

Demographics

DAS provides sheltering and enforcement services to the entire City of Denton, 150,353 residents spanning 100 square miles in addition to providing sheltering services for Denton County. The Animal Services Division directly reports up to one of the Assistant City Managers. The average household income in Denton is \$92,581 with a poverty rate of 15.73%. The FY24 annual budget for the Division of Animal Services was \$3,472,782.

Shelter Data



Between September 2023 and August 2024, DAS took in 2,566 dogs and 2,108 cats for a total of 4,577 intakes excluding wildlife and pocket pets (rabbits, guinea pigs, wildlife, etc). For this assessment, I focused on cats and dogs.

The save rate* for cats was 87%, and for dogs, it was 81% leading to an overall save rate of 84%, up from 46% in 2015. To meet the nationally recognized benchmark for a no-kill designation, a shelter must achieve a 90% save rate. Only animals deemed medically or behaviorally unsafe—typically no more than 10% of intakes—should not leave the shelter alive to maintain no-kill status.

Nationwide, increased owner surrenders and stray intakes, combined with stagnant adoption and rescue rates, have contributed to [declining save rates](#) for dogs in recent years. The graphs above show a similar story at DAS, with dogs making up 55% of the intakes and 64% of the deaths or non-live outcomes. For this reason, much of my assessment was focused on decreasing intake and length of stay for dogs.

*I am most comfortable with the save rate calculation which is $(\text{intakes} - \text{non-live outcomes}) / \text{intakes}$ divided by intakes but others prefer to use the live release rate which is live outcomes divided by all outcomes. The difference in these calculations results in a different percentage based on which formula is being used. More details on the calculations [here](#).

Strengths

Before diving into the results of the shelter review and specific recommendations, it is appropriate to take time to call out the specific policies and procedures that DAS is doing well and should be used as a model for other shelters.

- **Open Adoptions:** DAS has an open adoption policy and has removed barriers such as home checks and vet checks sometimes seen at other shelters. [Open adoption policies](#) increase adoptions and community relations.
- **Morale:** The staff and volunteers at DAS demonstrate strong loyalty and commitment to the organization's leadership and mission. They are confident in their teamwork and share a clear understanding of the shelter's direction and goals.
- **Behavior Position:** The FY 25 budget has two additional Animal Care positions and an additional position focused on behavior. This will allow for more holistic behavior evaluations and more frequent playgroups.
- **Foster to Adopt Kittens:** Kittens weighing between 1.5 and 2 pounds are not yet eligible for sterilization surgery. They are offered on the adoption floor as foster-to-adopt, with the clear expectation that the adopter return the cat for surgery once they are big enough. This approach helps free up traditional foster homes and allows smaller kittens to move into adoptive homes sooner.
- **Foster Program:** DAS Staff has built a robust network of volunteer foster homes to care for the hundreds of kittens entering their care each year.
- **Renovation:** The city is finalizing plans for a large renovation of the shelter, which the citizens approved in the 2023 bond program. [The renovation](#) will include indoor/outdoor dog runs and portalized cages for the cats and address several functionality and efficiency challenges.

Defining the Opportunity

A recurring theme from initial meetings, the on-site visit, and survey feedback was the high turnover in leadership, which has led to frequent policy changes and confusion about the division's goals and mission. Although the current Director, Nikki Sassenus, is relatively new to the role, she has been with the city for several years in other capacities. The team trusts her and believes she is committed to their best interests. With stable, dedicated leadership now in place, DAS is well-positioned to make sustainable progress in adopting best practices to enhance animal care and increase lifesaving efforts.

Staff Survey

An anonymous online survey was created and emailed to all 25 DAS staff members and four contract veterinary staff. I received 15 responses, a 52% response rate, which is an indication that the respondents were eager to share their opinions in this format.

In an attempt to get the highest possible response rate, the survey was kept short and included just three questions listed below with summarized responses:

- **What is DAS doing well?** Denton Animal Shelter excels in compassionate animal care, strong teamwork, and outstanding customer service. The shelter is committed to continuous

improvement, effective adoption promotion, and community engagement, creating a positive impact for both animals and people.

- **What does DAS need to improve?** Denton Animal Shelter could improve by enhancing communication and consistency across departments, addressing staffing shortages, and increasing accountability at all levels. These improvements would help ensure smoother operations, clearer protocols, and a higher standard of care for animals.
- **Do you feel valued for the work you do at DAS?** 60% or 9 out of 15 of the respondents said they do feel valued for the work that they do, with the other 40%, or 6 out of 15, especially the self-identified medical team, feeling undervalued and pushed aside.
- **Key phrases from survey responses:**
 - Our director's favorite saying is "we all row the boat".
 - We are strong because our leaders are strong. I am extremely proud to work for this organization!
 - We need more staff to be able to meet the growing need of the City.
 - People do not follow SOP's and there is no repercussions because the supervisors have to catch them in the act.
 - The lack of consistency leaves staff with unclear directions and confusion.

The survey results paint a picture of an organization that is doing good work in animal care and committed to improving their operations but is facing challenges in staffing and internal communication. While many individuals feel valued for their contributions, there is a clear need for improved communication and recognition, particularly of the medical team. Addressing these issues could continue to improve morale, collaboration, and overall effectiveness of DAS.

Culture & Staff Training

The strongest indicator of lifesaving success in a municipal shelter is a positive culture of lifesaving among staff and volunteers. Such a culture ensures humane treatment of animals, high staff morale, and community trust. Comprehensive staff training is equally important, as it guarantees high-quality animal care, safety, and adherence to standards. Together, these elements are essential for the efficient operation and success of the shelter.

At DAS, a strong lifesaving culture is evident. During my time there, an officer found a microchipped cat in poor condition in a drain. Despite the cat's registered owner being deceased, the officer located the veterinarian who had previously treated the cat. The vet agreed to provide care for the cat's injuries and rehome it. The officer's persistence in securing a positive outcome for the animal is commendable.

As noted in the survey, there is confusion among staff regarding updated protocols, as well as frustration over the lack of consensus on procedures. When policies are updated, not all staff members are receiving the information.

At the end of February 2023, shelter management implemented the Wednesday closures to focus on staff training, development, and communication.



Staff regularly attend both national and local animal sheltering conferences and are connected to national organizations to stay current with best practices.

Recommendations

- **Communication:** Ensure SOPs are regularly updated and easily accessible to all staff. When a procedure is changed, communicate it to every staff member and follow up to confirm understanding and compliance.

Dog Housing & Behavior Management

Intelligent housing design for dogs while in the shelter and management of their behavioral needs are both forms of enrichment. Enrichment is crucial for shelter dogs as it provides mental stimulation and physical activity, reducing stress and preventing boredom-related behaviors. It helps improve dog's overall well-being and mental health, making them more adoptable by showcasing positive behaviors. Enrichment activities also aid in socialization and training, preparing dogs for successful integration into their new homes.

All dogs are housed in single sided kennels and brought to outdoor runs while their kennels are being cleaned. The kennels were clean and well-attended during my visit and each dog had some sort of chew toy in their kennel. Each kennel is being scrubbed first with dishwashing detergent and followed up with the disinfectant Rescue. Part of the upcoming renovation includes the addition of double sided dog kennels to make cleaning easier.

Formal SAFER behavior assessments are conducted on dogs with questionable behaviors. I was not able to observe one of these tests during my visit. Behavior assessments are used to quickly collect information; however, shelters are stressful, unnatural environments. While the concern about adopting dogs that may bite is understandable, the ASPCA's position statement states that "Behavior assessments have not been proven highly accurate or precise when used to predict aggression after adoption."

When talking about lifesaving in an animal shelter, the focus should be on reducing length of stay. Dogs and cats who become ill and require long stays in isolation during medical treatment take up space, resources, and can have long term consequences due to the isolation. Behavior issues acquired during pets' long stay at the shelter decrease adoptability and lead to euthanasia. Reducing stress for shelter animals boosts their immune system and decreases the frequency of illness in addition to [reducing the occurrence](#) of long term behavior issues.

Currently, dog playgroups are operated by DAS staff when time allows, typically once per week. The Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) supports well-managed playgroups. By adopting daily playgroups, DAS can enhance the physical and mental well-being of the dogs in their care, ultimately increasing their chances of finding forever homes.

Playgroups offer numerous benefits for shelter dogs:

- **Exercise and Enrichment:** Dogs can burn off energy and engage in mental stimulation, leading to calmer behavior in their kennels.

- **Natural Behaviors:** Dogs can exhibit and practice natural social behaviors, improving their overall well-being.
- **Reduced Stress:** Interaction with other dogs helps reduce stress and anxiety, making them more relaxed and approachable for potential adopters.
- **Improved Social Skills:** Dogs learn to interact appropriately with their peers, which can be beneficial in a home setting.
- **Behavioral Insights:** Staff can observe dogs' interactions, gaining valuable insights into their personalities and behavior, aiding in more accurate matchmaking with adopters.

It is reasonable to assume that eliminating behavior assessments and increasing playgroups will lead to decreased euthanasia for behavior reasons, which could lead to overcrowding. Labeling euthanasia decisions accurately—whether for space or behavior—is crucial. Policies to decrease behavior-related euthanasia should be paired with recommendations to reduce length of stay and increase adoptions to avoid space-related euthanasia.

Recommendations:

- **Discontinue Formal Behavior Assessments:** Formal behavior assessments are inaccurate and time consuming. Studies (see further information below) have consistently shown behavior assessments to be inaccurate predictors of post-adoption behavior, and most shelters have discontinued their use in favor of observation notes. Behavioral information should be gathered through surrender forms and detailed observations from staff and volunteers in various settings (e.g., playgroups, vet exams, walks, foster care). This approach provides more accurate behavior predictions for adopters and frees the new behavior staff to focus on playgroups.
- **Daily Playgroups:** Utilizing staff to run daily playgroups instead of perform behavior assessments will increase dog's adoptability without decreasing DAS' ability to identify and flag potentially dangerous dogs. Refer to [Dogs Playing for Life](#) for more information on the benefits of playgroups and specific considerations for implementation.
- **Limited Dish Soap Cleaning:** If a dog is not showing symptoms of an upper respiratory infection and his kennel is free of feces, cleaning time can be cut down by eliminating the dishwashing soap and scrubbing steps. Scrubbing should be used to remove feces or for dogs showing signs of URI to eliminate any nasal fluid that has stuck to the wall.

Further Information:

- [Enrichment for shelter dogs.](#)
- [Kennel enrichment.](#)
- [Enrichment on a Dime \(webinar\)](#)
- Best Friends Animal Society's Humane Animal Control manual, [chapter on shelter dog enrichment](#)
- American Pets Alive! [blog post](#) on Behavior Assessments
- Fear Free Pets [article](#) "Why Behavior Evaluations in Shelters Can Be Misleading"
- Journal of Veterinary Behavior [study](#) "What is the evidence for reliability and validity of behavior evaluations for shelter dogs? A prequel to "No better than flipping a coin"

- National Canine Research Council [article](#) "No better than flipping a coin: Reconsidering canine behavior evaluations in animal shelters"
- Maddie's Fund® Dog Handling [Handbook](#)

Cat Housing

In animal shelters, proper cat housing plays a critical role in supporting both the physical and emotional well-being of cats. Cats are highly sensitive animals, and stress in a shelter environment can negatively impact their behavior, health, and adoptability. Housing that promotes comfort and minimizes stress can lead to healthier, more relaxed cats, improving their chances of adoption. Additionally, thoughtful design and cleaning protocols reduce disease transmission and create a more efficient workflow for staff.

Shelters must balance cleanliness with the cats' need for familiarity, enrichment, and security. As research evolves, shelters are moving toward practices that prioritize feline well-being, such as using double-sided kennels, portals, and spot cleaning methods. The right housing setup helps cats adjust more easily to shelter life and maintain their normal behavior, which is key to their overall health and adoption success.

Currently, cats in DAS are housed in single-sided kennels, with adoptable cats visible to the public through a glass wall. During cleaning, each cat is moved to a temporary holding kennel while their primary kennel is emptied and sanitized. Afterward, the holding kennel is also sanitized between uses. Fractious or feral cats are given mammal dens to hide in. L-lysine is sprinkled over each cat's food each day.

An upcoming renovation will introduce new double-sided, portalized housing, which will improve the cats' living environment by giving them more space and better separation between areas for food, rest, and litter.

Recommendations:

- **Spot Cleaning:** Research shows that minimizing disruptions to a cat's environment can significantly reduce stress. Instead of removing the cat and sanitizing the entire kennel daily, leave the cat in place and only clean soiled areas. Leave clean bedding and items that smell like the cat to provide a sense of comfort and stability. More information [here](#).
- **Portals:** If the renovation is delayed, [adding portals](#) to the existing kennels is recommended. Portals create a connection between two kennels, giving the cats more room and allowing staff to separate food and litter areas. This also makes cleaning easier and reduces stress for the cats.
- **Enrichment:** Enrichment is crucial for keeping shelter cats mentally and emotionally healthy. Providing toys, scratching posts, and regular human interaction can improve their well-being and behavior. [Enrichment for shelter cats](#)
- **Stop L-Lysine:** While lysine supplementation for feline URI has been commonplace for many years, a [2015 study](#) reviewing existing literature showed no evidence of benefit and it is no longer recommended.

Further Information:

- [Hiding places for cats](#)
- Best Friends Animal Society's Humane Animal Control manual, [chapter on shelter cat enrichment](#)

Intake & Medical

In animal shelters, intake protocols refer to the standardized procedures followed when an animal first enters the shelter. These processes typically include physical examinations, vaccinations, identification, and decisions regarding next steps like foster placement or medical care. Medical protocols outline how an animal's health is managed throughout their stay, including vaccinations, diagnostics, surgeries, and treatment plans. These protocols are essential to protect the health and well-being of both the animals and staff, prevent the spread of infectious diseases, ensure timely medical intervention, and streamline operations. Effective intake and medical protocols also help maximize limited resources, foster public trust, and improve outcomes for animals—particularly for those needing foster care or medical treatment.

DAS contracts its surgery and medical staff through Relief Services for Veterinary Practitioners (RSVP). This partnership provides the shelter with a veterinarian and four veterinary assistants five days a week, along with two intake technicians working five days a week.

All animals entering DAS are processed through the intake clinic immediately. Animals deemed friendly receive vaccines and a basic health exam administered by RSVP's veterinary assistants. However, due to concerns for staff safety, fractious cats (those that are too stressed or aggressive) do not receive vaccines or medical treatment at intake.

Combo tests for Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), as well as heartworm tests for dogs, are only performed during surgery under anesthesia.

Anyone who finds underage kittens is instructed to bring them into the shelter to enter the foster care system, which is managed by a foster/volunteer coordinator. This program has placed hundreds of kittens into foster homes this year, significantly boosting positive outcomes for these vulnerable animals.

Recommendations:

- **FeLV/FIV Testing:** DAS should stop routine combo testing at intake. Instead, testing can be offered for a fee at the time of adoption to anyone with concerns about exposure to other household cats. This aligns with [best practices](#) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- **Heartworm Testing:** DAS should perform heartworm testing as soon as possible after intake, even if it requires drawing blood from awake dogs. Early diagnosis can improve treatment outcomes.
- **Kitten Intake:** DAS should encourage people to leave found kittens in place and allow time for their mother to return, as premature separation can reduce the kittens' survival chances. This requires [public outreach and education](#) through the shelter's website, dispatchers, and front desk staff. Training should focus on guiding finders to monitor the kittens and reunite them with their mother whenever possible.

- **Intake Staff:** Animal Care Technicians can be trained to perform intake duties such as vaccinations, deworming, and basic health exams. Veterinary assistants are not required for these tasks, and shifting these responsibilities will reduce costs while maintaining service quality.
- **RSVP Contract:** Outsourcing medical services offers both advantages and challenges. On the one hand, DAS avoids the difficult process of recruiting and retaining veterinarians amid a national shortage. However, the shelter leadership has less control and accountability over outsourced staff compared to in-house employees. While some staff desire a transition to in-house medical personnel for better continuity across departments, this comes with significant risks and my recommendation is to continue with the contract. If DAS cannot successfully recruit veterinarians, service levels could decline, and altering the contract structure may introduce operational uncertainty.

Community Cat Programming

A community cat program focuses on managing unowned, free-roaming cats through practices like Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), where cats are humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, and then returned to their original location. This program is important in shelters as it mitigates nuisance behaviors by free-roaming cats, helps control the cat population in the community, reduces shelter intake, and prevents the euthanasia of healthy cats. By managing community cat colonies, shelters can keep space in their shelter for indoor placement owner surrendered cats, instead of on free-roaming cats that are thriving outdoors and do not need to be rehomed.

DAS officers do not actively trap cats, but residents can trap cats themselves and bring them to the shelter to be impounded. If the cat is not friendly enough for adoption, the cat is referred to the barn cat program, which has successfully found placements at barns, warehouses or other suitable locations. In some cases, the stray cat may be sterilized and returned to the place where it was trapped, but this is not happening consistently. Even when TNR was requested, the front desk tells caregivers that all cats deemed unadoptable go to the barn cat program. Friendly stray cats are never returned and are put up for adoption regardless of any current cat housing space concerns.

Recommendations:

- **Return Eligible Cats:** All healthy stray cats should be returned to the location where they were found, regardless of behavior. A cat of healthy weight, free from visible signs of injury or illness should be assumed to be thriving outdoors. Many cat owners allow their cats to go outside and picking up and rehoming cats that are already doing well where they are is a waste of resources and separates people from their pets which goes against DAS' mission.
- **End Relocation or Euthanasia of Healthy Stray Cats:** Relocating or euthanizing healthy stray cats is costly, ineffective and should not be a service that DAS provides. Community cats can be a true nuisance to residents and DAS staff need to have time to evaluate and address those behaviors to resolve resident's nuisance complaints without removing the cats. Instead, those struggling with nuisance cat behavior should use deterrents to haze the cats and discourage them from continuing the nuisance behavior.
- **Eliminate the Stray Hold on Cats:** With a return-to-owner rate of just 3%, most stray cats are held for the 72-hour stray hold without being reclaimed. Eliminating this hold would allow impounded

stray cats to be sterilized the day after intake and returned to their trapping location two days later. Even if an owned cat is impounded, releasing it back to where it was found offers a better chance of it finding its way home than housing and rehoming it through the shelter. The code should be revised to permit live outcomes before the 72-hour hold ends, while ensuring that euthanasia decisions for stray cats are only made after the full hold period.

Further Information:

- Refer to the National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA) position on managing outdoor cats [here](#).

Adoption

Adoption programs at municipal animal shelters involve finding new homes for animals that have been surrendered, lost, or rescued. Adoption is typically how most animals leave the shelter. Not only does adoption benefit the animal by getting it out of the shelter environment, it also supplies the community with sterilized and vaccinated pets. Most people in the community interact with the shelter for the first time to adopt, and a positive experience during this process is the opportunity to create a new volunteer, donor, or advocate. In the last year, 1,314 dogs and 1,567 cats were adopted from DAS.

Adopters are instructed to view the adoptable dogs and cats through viewing windows and instructed to sign a waiver prior to meeting with an animal. Due to space constraints, many adoptable dogs are housed in the stray area which is closed to adopters. Photos and descriptions of these dogs are taped to a wall near the adoptable dogs for adopters to view.

DAS currently uses Petpoint, an animal management software specifically designed for animal shelter management. The shelter's listed hours are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10am to 5pm with the shelter closed on Sundays and Wednesdays. Staff training and deep cleaning is done on Wednesdays.

Recommendations:

- **Allow Adopters to View All Animals:**
 - Permit adopters to view all animals not on court or bite hold and those that aren't dangerous, including those during their 72-hour stray hold. If someone is interested in adopting an animal on stray hold, they should be asked to return on the day the hold ends to complete the adoption, with the understanding that the animal could still be reclaimed before the end of the stray hold.
 - Allowing adopters to view all friendly dogs in the building will increase medium/large dogs' exposure to adopters. Exposure to adopters is especially important for medium/large dogs as they are a priority for lifesaving programs like adoption. Adopters connect with dogs through body language, which cannot be replicated by looking at photos.
- **Extend Adoption Hours:** Extend adoption hours into the evenings at least few days a week to accommodate community members with traditional work or school schedules. This extension is likely to increase engagement from potential adopters and volunteers. Consider opening on

Wednesdays, even if only for reclaims at first, to decrease length of stay. The opening time during the week could be pushed back to 11 or 12 to accommodate time for staff training as these are generally not busy times.

- **Eliminate Waivers:** Asking interested adopters to sign waivers before meeting with any animal is an unnecessary step between people choosing to adopt and the adoption getting finalized. The city attorney should double check that this is necessary and helpful as I've never seen another shelter with this requirement.

Further Information:

- Best Friends' [Adoptions Playbook](#).

Euthanasia & Population Management

Euthanasia in animal shelters is the humane process of ending an animal's life to prevent suffering, address behavioral challenges, or manage overcrowding when no other options are available.

At this time, DAS has a euthanasia protocol, but not a formally adopted our outlined policy for how euthanasia decisions are made. Currently, DAS is developing a euthanasia decision flow chart accompanied by a written policy. During my visit, I was able to review drafts of these materials. However, because there was a temporary pause on euthanasia, I did not observe the decision-making process firsthand.

DAS has partnered with Best Friends Animal Society on a pilot pathway-planning program, though the program has not yet been formally launched. Additionally, the staff is not currently conducting daily rounds.

Recommendations

- **Formalize Proactive Pathway Planning:** Designate at least one staff member from each area to monitor the progress of every animal to prevent delays or oversight. Ensure each animal has a clearly defined outcome (adoption, foster, rescue, etc.), and coordinate this outcome during daily rounds or pathway planning meetings. Monitoring each individual's progress through the shelter will decrease length of stay and the need for euthanasia due to space constraints.
- **Euthanasia Transparency:** Finalize and publish the euthanasia decision flow chart and policy on the DAS website for public access, detailing when and how decisions are made. Implement a euthanasia decision form to document the rationale, background, and authorizations for each decision. Attach these forms to the animal's record in PetPoint to ensure they are easily accessible and searchable.

Further Information:

- [Webinar: "Counting All Paws: Mastering Daily Population Rounds"](#)
- [Daily Rounds Playbook](#)

Conclusion

City of Denton Animal Services is already aligned with best practices in many areas and demonstrates



significant potential to align with all nationally recognized best practices in animal sheltering. With stable leadership now in place, DAS is well-positioned to implement meaningful changes that will improve both staff efficiency and animal welfare. The planned renovation will address physical space issues, while adjustments to intake, adoption exposure, community cat programming and dog behavior management will enhance operational efficiency and lifesaving efforts.

By focusing on consistent communication, proactive pathway planning, and innovative animal care strategies, DAS can further increase its save rate, reduce stress on animals and staff, and strengthen its relationship with the community. If these recommendations are followed, the shelter will be well on its way to achieving sustainable success in its mission to provide compassionate care to animals and serve the City of Denton effectively.

Disclaimer: Shelter Savvy reports are based upon observations and information available at the time of the review of DAS operations. I do not claim (1) that I have discovered any or all existing or potential hazards or (2) that DAS or operations are in compliance with any law, rule or regulation. I assume no responsibility for the control or correction of hazards and do not warrant that the implementation of any of my recommendations will result in (1) the elimination of any unsafe conditions or (2) compliance with any standards, codes, ordinances, regulations, statutes or laws.