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Summer 2024

Animal Tales

Covey's Corner

Hello! Thank you for making time to read this edition of Animal Tales. As you read through the following pages, I hope you'll see the dedication our staff bring to work every day to meet people where they are and to find the best possible outcomes for the animals and situations that are brought to us for help.

I know people wonder what happens to the animals in the shelter when the weather shuts everything down, but rest assured our staff is here no matter what. When dangerous dogs wreak havoc in your neighborhood, know that we're dedicated to addressing the public safety issues at hand. And you can be confident that our staff are trained to respond to emergency situations and communicate in ways and languages that work for each individual client. Well, the human clients anyway... we haven't yet learned to speak fluent dog or cat, but we're great at reading body language and behavior in animals!

We are grateful for your kind words, happy pet reunion stories, and generous donations. Support from our community encourages us to continue to be our best professional selves every day for the pets and people of Washington County!

Sincerely,

Randy Covey,
Animal Services Manager



Jellybean and one of his favorite people stop by the shelter to pick up the pup's very first dog license. Dog licensing is just one of the many services our team is dedicated to doing efficiently and with care.

Well trained and ready to go

We are dedicated to continuing to learn, evolve and look for new and better ways of doing things. There isn't a week that goes by at Washington County Animal Services when someone isn't working toward a certification, participating in a webinar, attending or presenting at a conference, or otherwise actively seeking out new information and continued education.

Below are just some of the ways our staff continue to expand their knowledge to better care for the people and pets of Washington County.

Fear Free® Shelter Program

Most of our staff, including our administrative specialists, have completed the Fear Free® Shelter Program. This helps us all understand the importance of creating an environment throughout our shelter that prevents and alleviates fear, anxiety and stress for the animals that enter our building.

Emergency preparedness training

We take emergency preparedness very seriously. Staff from across all areas of Animal Services take emergency preparedness courses through FEMA, actively participate in disaster preparedness exercises, and some of our staff even have hands-on training focused on helping large animals like horses and livestock in a disaster. We want to be ready no matter what comes our way!

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Communicating with kindness and respect

There are many different reasons someone might have a conversation with Animal Services staff. Some of these can be very stressful, such as getting bit by a dog, trying to find a lost pet or reporting suspected animal neglect. Other community members come to us for more “everyday” reasons, like renewing a dog license.

No matter how or why you need to contact us, we are dedicated to meeting your request or concern in a way that reflects our values.

We are dedicated to having respectful conversations

Our animal care team, administrative specialists, Animal Services officers and other staff are trained to have challenging conversations respectfully and with professionalism. While we must be firm on policies, laws, codes and regulations, you can expect information to be provided to you in a dignified manner even in the most difficult situations.

We are dedicated to sharing information in helpful ways

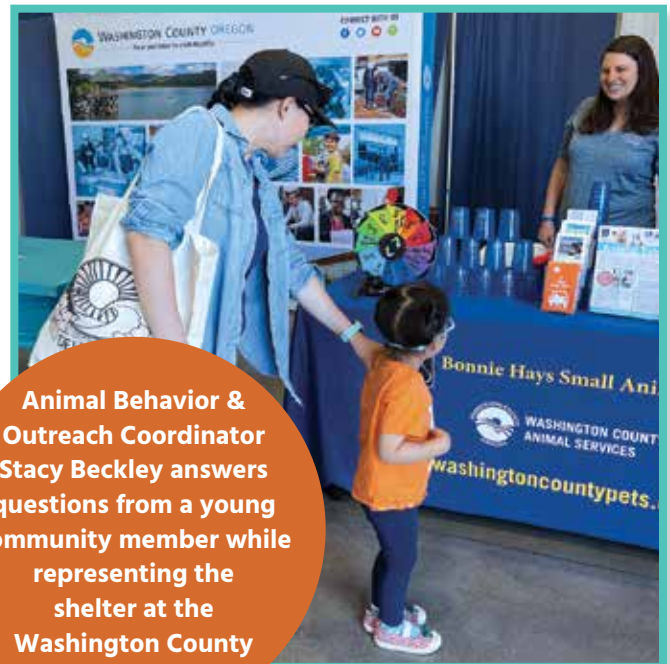
We know there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to sharing and understanding information. For that reason, we try to meet people where they are and find ways to communicate that are helpful to the individuals we are serving.

Senior Administrative Specialist Jenna Draggoo shares her starting point. “I want to make sure I understand exactly what someone is looking for and what they are asking, so that I can do my best to help them.” For Draggoo, who is bilingual, this can also mean assisting visitors in Spanish when it’s helpful for them. If a language outside of English or Spanish is needed, we also have access to interpretation services to meet the communication needs of clients.

We are dedicated to transparency and acknowledging past experiences

We may not always be able to share all the details about a specific situation, but we can be transparent about our processes.

We understand some people have previous experiences with law enforcement or other shelters that make them hesitant to speak with an Animal Services officer or reluctant to reach out to us for help. We don’t take this personally.



Animal Behavior & Outreach Coordinator Stacy Beckley answers questions from a young community member while representing the shelter at the Washington County Fair.

Animal Services officers have different approaches to their individual conversations. Animal Services Officer Teresa Rush acknowledges the importance of being consistent and firm when enforcing animal-related codes. But she also knows it’s important to address the reservations people might have when meeting with an officer. She uses a technique called “road mapping” to give a verbal outline to the community members she meets so everyone involved knows where the conversation is going. She’s also not afraid to address fears someone might have, such as that their dog might be taken from them. “This allows people to pay attention to the conversation,” she explains. “I do my best to remain calm, non-accusatory and nonjudgmental,” adds Rush. “I don’t want to make things more intense than they need to be.”

We are dedicated to being a resource

We want to help people find solutions to their animal-related problems, even if those solutions don’t always involve us. We must use our time and resources to fulfill our primary mandates, like caring for strays and investigating animal abuse and neglect. This means there are services we can’t provide. However, when this is the case, our goal is to respectfully explain our limitations while offering referrals, resources and ideas for solutions.

Thank you in advance for trusting our staff to respond to your questions and concerns in a respectful manner with an eye toward finding the best possible outcome.

Well trained and ready to go

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Training in compassion fatigue and trauma

We care about our team at Animal Services. Staff members dig into important topics like compassion fatigue and work-related exposure to trauma (vicarious trauma) in their continued education. With the support of their supervisors, staff from various areas of our agency took part in an eight-week interactive online course focused on compassion fatigue strategies through the University of Florida Shelter Medicine Program.

Professional conferences

Although attending professional conferences is not a frequent activity for our staff, it is a form of continuing education that has left a lasting impact.

Certified Veterinary Technician Natasha Hines talks about her time at the Humane Society of the United States' Animal Care Expo in 2023 with enthusiasm. "It was great to hear so many different perspectives. It's also inspiring to see the 'big picture' of animal welfare. Seeing how much others care about their work keeps me motivated on days that are challenging."

Hines also expresses gratitude when she thinks about her time at the conference. "Hearing from people about their experiences at other organizations also makes you realize how lucky you are to work at a place like our shelter."



Certified Veterinary Technician Natasha Hines cuddles with a dog between educational workshops at the 2023 Animal Care Expo.

Maddie's University: Community-centered field services

When Field Services Supervisor Stacy Smejkal applied for a community-centered field services course with Maddie's University, she wanted to explore ways for her and the officers she supervises to be more proactive. Maddie's University is well known for their innovative education programs in the animal welfare field. Smejkal knew that even if our Animal Services officers couldn't do everything presented by leaders from across the industry in the four-week course, she would still be inspired to try something new.

"No matter how exceptional and professional our Animal Services officers are, there are always more tools they can put in their toolkits," said Smejkal.

This was also an opportunity for our field services supervisor and one of our officers to work together. Animal Services Officer Teresa Rush applied for and was accepted into the course alongside Smejkal. Officer Rush is an enthusiastic lifelong learner with certificates in everything from animal shelter behavior management to disaster response. She was drawn to this course because she wants to learn how to get resources and information to people before enforcement becomes necessary.

We are grateful for the dedication these staff members have shown to exploring new ways to help the people and pets in our community.

Animal Services staff work alongside other agencies from across the state at an emergency preparedness training.



Dedicated to getting pets home

Getting lost pets back to the people who know and love them is a top priority for us. Sometimes this looks like an Animal Services officer providing a wayward pup with an immediate ride home after seeing their dog license or scanning them in the field and finding a registered microchip. Other times, an animal shelter technician might spend time searching through lost pet reports and social media posts to connect an injured stray cat or dog with the family desperately searching for it.

Here's how we get those pets home

Every animal that arrives at our shelter is checked immediately for identification, scanned for a microchip, and a photo is taken for our website. While the animal is at our facility, our team continues to work to identify the owner and get the lost pet back home.

Staff spend time reviewing lost and found reports, checking for matching pets in our database, searching social media groups for lost animal posts matching shelter animals, and responding to calls, emails and walk-in inquiries regarding lost and found pets. Our administrative specialists contribute to the effort by attempting to reach owners of animals through the mail and by phone or email, if we have that contact information.

Even if the information connected to a pet's microchip, dog license or ID tag is inaccurate or out of date, our skilled team will follow leads provided by those items in hopes of finding an owner.



Jordan and his human share an emotional reunion at the shelter.



Shepherds Woody and Snoopy are reunited with their people after sneaking away from their ranch. They were found running along a road by a Good Samaritan who brought them to the shelter.



Bandit is reunited with his owner after she saw his photo on our website. This adventurous cat got lost when he and his feline buddy, Smokey, pushed the screen out of a window and made their escape. Smokey returned home. However, Bandit didn't. And worse, he got injured. Bandit was found by a Good Samaritan who brought him to the shelter where we worked with a local veterinary clinic to get him the care he needed while looking for his owner.

What happens when a pet can't be reunited with its family

If a reunion isn't possible, we remain dedicated to finding the best possible outcome for the animals in our care. We work with transfer partners to find homes for adoptable animals, provide finders with an opportunity to adopt if no owner comes forward, and occasionally work with previous caretakers or other people familiar with the pet to find an appropriate home. Humane euthanasia is only considered if the animal is a danger to the public or if it is suffering from an illness, injury or condition that can't be treated or managed.

Plan ahead for your own happy reunion

We are proud of each reunion that takes place thanks to our team's efforts! You can help your pet get back home if it is ever lost by placing a collar with ID on them, microchipping cats and dogs, licensing your dog, checking regularly to make sure your contact information is up to date on all of your pet's identification, and routinely inspecting your fence and gates for possible escape routes for a curious dog.



When a stray pet is brought to our shelter, we do everything we can to reunite them with their family. But when we can't, we offer the option for the person who brought the animal to us to adopt them if they would like. That's what happened when this puppy was adopted by her finder.

Getting Mr. Lovey home for a loving goodbye

Sebra Oden was worried when she realized her senior cat Mr. Lovey was missing. The cat had shown up in her yard 15 years earlier. Although he had a big (and sometimes aggressive) attitude, he'd made himself at home over the years. Mr. Lovey was selective about the people and animals he associated with. He frightened a few neighborhood dogs into crossing the street to avoid him, while also befriending the neighborhood mail carrier.

When Sebra heard that our website has a page where anyone can view stray animals located at the shelter, she checked it for Mr. Lovey. Although she didn't see him posted, the website led her to a page where she could file a lost pet report. The level of detail she provided in that report ultimately allowed us to reunite her with her cat quickly.

Shortly after Mr. Lovey's disappearance, we received a call from a community member about an injured cat on a busy roadway. We dispatched an Animal Services officer to the scene while our staff immediately went to work trying to determine if the cat might have a known owner.

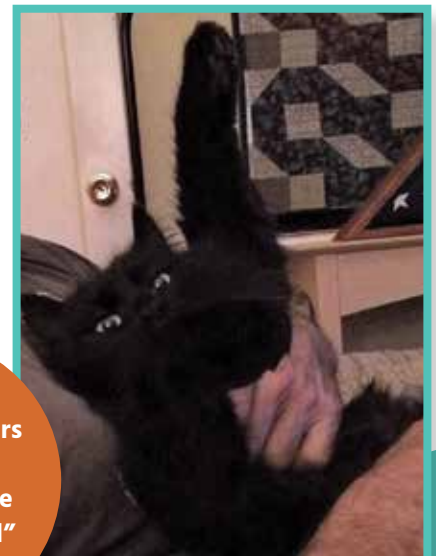
Our number one goal with any stray pet is reunification. But when a stray animal is injured, our staff are also dedicated to involving the animal's family at the earliest opportunity so they can be involved in the animal's care and make the best possible decisions for the pet they know so well.

Staff read Sebra's lost pet report for Mr. Lovey detailing the sun-bleached black hair on his back and the green collar he was last seen wearing, and they knew to call her right away.

Sebra took Mr. Lovey to the vet, but because of his injuries and possibly the added stress of his age, he died shortly after the reunion. While this isn't the outcome anyone would have hoped for, Sebra had nothing but gratitude for our team at Animal Services for getting Mr. Lovey back to her and allowing her to have closure.

When asked about saying goodbye to her companion of over 15 years, Sebra reflected, "He was very selective, and it was my house that he picked. But he was a good old boy, and it was really powerful to be with him at the end and to see him out."

Mr. Lovey in his younger years enjoying the company of one of his "selected" people.



We're here no matter the weather



Officers prepare to deliver pet supplies to severe weather shelters.

From winter storms to summer heat, you can count on our committed staff to be responsive and show up for the people and pets of Washington County. Although there are times when we close to the public, staff are at the Bonnie Hays Animal Shelter 365 days a year to ensure the stray pets of our community receive care. Even when we are closed due to icy roads or similar conditions, Animal Services officers will respond to urgent requests for help as we are safely able to do so. This includes delivering supplies to severe weather shelters to help them be more pet-friendly.

An animal care staff member looks back at January's storm

by Megan Luckenbach, Animal Shelter Technician

Remember that ice storm we had this year in January? It feels like it happened so long ago! The ice storm hit the Pacific Northwest on January 12 and lasted a little over a week, impacting everyone in the area.

At Washington County Animal Services, staff from all areas of the shelter showed up to provide essential services to the animals and community. Some of our fluffy-coated dogs had no problems with the weather. But our smallest dog friends wore sweaters to stay comfortable during potty breaks outside. We also made sure to give the cats staying at the shelter extra love and care as well!

Our efforts to reunite pets with their families never stopped either. Even though Washington County buildings were closed for a number of days, we were excited and grateful to reunite 12 dogs and two cats with their families between January 11-20. Being able to get all those pets back home was one of my driving forces to make sure I made it into the shelter.

Even in the worst weather, our entire team, including administrative specialists, Animal Services officers, shelter technicians and management, are all dedicated to caring for the animals at the shelter and reuniting them with their families as quickly and safely as possible.



Shelter dogs Rooster and Zoey didn't let the cold weather bother them during their playtimes.



Enriching a pet's time at the shelter

Caring for the pets at our shelter means more than just making sure kennels are clean and animals are fed. Our animal care staff observe the pets staying with us, learn about them and look for ways to reduce their stress. This includes offering our furry shelter visitors physical, social, mental and sensory enrichment. These activities include playtime, puzzle/slow feeders, Kongs, lick mats, offering new smells and sounds, and even creating hiding spaces.

Our staff know it's important to pay attention to animals' individual preferences when offering enrichment. An animal's body language and other behavior can tell our staff how they feel about a specific toy or activity. Animal shelter technicians keep notes and communicate with each other about a pet's likes and dislikes.

Staff also consider known behavior or health concerns before offering enrichment. Not all options are safe for every pet. We are grateful for our donors who send enrichment items to the shelter through our Amazon Wish List. This allows us to have a variety of options to choose from!

Although no shelter can compete with the care of a loving and invested owner, we are proud of our team for their dedication to providing individualized enrichment for the animals at our shelter while we work to get them back home.

A dog staying with us enjoys a Kong. This toy can be stuffed with dog food, making it a favorite form of enrichment for many of our shelter visitors.



Animal Shelter Technician Annika Maulit offers enrichment to a cat in the form of playtime.



Continued collaboration for cats

Our shelter veterinarian and certified veterinary technicians (CVTs) care deeply about providing excellent medical care for the animals at Bonnie Hays. But the limitations of our facility and small size of our medical team mean we can't provide veterinary services for owned animals onsite.

In fall 2021, we began working with our Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland (ASAP) partners at Cat Adoption Team (CAT) in Sherwood to find a way to increase affordable spay and neuter surgeries for owned cats in our county. We found that by sending our veterinarian and CVTs to Spay & Save surgery days already established at CAT, we were able to help increase the number of surgeries that could take place. Spay & Save was established by ASAP to reduce the number of cats and kittens coming into shelters by offering affordable spay/neuter options for cats belonging to community members. Both organizations have worked to keep this collaboration going strong over the past three years!

There are veterinary staffing challenges across the country. It is not easy to find the professionals needed for spay/neuter surgeries. Pooling resources to provide high quality, high volume spay/neuter services for pet cats on a regular basis offers additional sustainability when it comes to veterinary staffing for this purpose. Even with our limitations, we are dedicated to doing what we can to help local cats and the people who love them.

Our staff veterinarian and a veterinarian from Cat Adoption Team work alongside each other to provide high quality, high volume spay and neuter surgeries for cats in Washington County.



Is your pet's microchip registered?

Microchips help us reunite hundreds of lost pets with their families each year at the Bonnie Hays Animal Shelter!

A microchip is a permanent form of identification that is placed under your pet's skin by a veterinarian or their staff. When detected by a scanner, the microchip provides a series of numbers that can be used to look up who a pet belongs to. But for a microchip to help a lost pet make it back home, it must be registered.



Animal Shelter Technician Joey Burghardt scans a dog for a microchip. This is one of the first things we do when a lost pet arrives at our shelter.



Stiles and Indy enjoy a happy reunion with their family the very same day they arrived thanks to their registered microchips!

Many people assume their pet's microchip was registered by their veterinarian, the organization they adopted from, or their breeder. This isn't always the case. You might have to register the microchip yourself.

How to register a microchip or verify the contact information associated with it:

- Get your pet's microchip number. This number may be in your vet records or your adoption paperwork. If you can't find the number, your veterinarian's office can scan your pet for the chip and give you the number. You can also stop by Animal Services with your pet and we'll scan it for you!
- Go to PetMicrochipLookup.org and enter the microchip number. This database from the American Animal Hospital Association will provide you with the company to contact regarding the chip.
- Call or go to the microchip company's website to register the chip or update your information. There is usually a fee to register the chip. You may want to create a secondary registration on a website like 24PetWatch.com (formerly Found Animals free microchip registration database). You should also call us at 503-846-7041 to add your pet's microchip information to our records at Animal Services.

Scotch and his family were reunited less than a day after the cat arrived at the shelter. Scotch was microchipped, which was pivotal for this quick reunion!



Our team was able to get Eddie back home the same day he arrived at the shelter thanks to his microchip!



In addition to checking to make sure your pet's microchip is registered, make sure they are also wearing a collar with an ID tag. A microchip can help an animal make it back home once the pet arrives at an animal shelter or veterinarian's office. But your neighbors will first look for a collar and tag if they find your furry friend, which will get them home faster and without a detour to the shelter!

Reducing fear in fearful situations

Medical care provided in a shelter is different from the care your pet receives at their veterinarian's office in many ways. One of the biggest differences is there is no owner present here. This means there is no one to tell our shelter veterinarian a pet's medical or behavior history and no familiar face to comfort the animal during the exam or treatment.

Receiving veterinary care under the best circumstances can be scary for a pet. One can only imagine that being in an unfamiliar environment makes things even harder for some animals. This makes it even more important for our dedicated and caring medical team to take every opportunity to utilize fear-free and low-stress handling techniques.

You may be familiar with some of the methods used at the shelter because you have seen them utilized at your own pet's vet appointments. First and foremost, our staff approach fearful animals with care. They pay careful attention to the animal's body language and their own body positioning. Staff also revisit pets who would benefit from having time to calm down before an exam, offer special treats to distract animals during procedures, and use products like Feliway and Adaptil. These synthetic pheromones can help some cats and dogs to feel a sense of calmness.

They also use some techniques you're more likely to see in shelter environments. When possible, our medical team performs cat exams before working with dogs. The idea is to reduce the chance of a cat being upset by the scent of an unknown dog. They also look for the least stressful way and route to move an animal from its kennel to the area where the medical procedure is taking place.

Knowing that strangers can be scary, our medical team sometimes talks to or gives treats to animals as they walk through the kennels with the hope that the pets will have a positive association with them if or when medical care is needed. They may also use the "phone a friend" method of asking a non-medical staff member to help them with an animal. Some dogs and cats have a favorite staff member, even after only a couple of days in our building!

Although it's not always possible to eliminate fear completely, we are dedicated to doing what we can to help.



Spray cheese in the shape of a heart is just one way our veterinary team shows their love to (and distracts) shelter pets during medical procedures.

Our veterinarian and certified veterinary technician are assisted by an extern from Portland Community College's veterinary technician program. The extern does her part to keep the exam positive by offering a special treat while our staff check that the cat is healing following surgery a few days earlier.



Donations: Friends of the Animals

October 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024

Every effort was made to ensure accuracy. Please accept our apologies for any errors or omissions.

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Many of our generous donors ask that their donations be made in honor or memory of a special person or pet. We list them all here together in recognition of the human-animal bond and our regard for our loved ones who are with us as well as those who have passed. We so appreciate these gifts and the many ways that people and pets touch our lives.

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We would like to extend a special thank you to everyone who donated toys, treats and other goodies to our shelter animals through our Amazon Wish List! You make it possible for our staff to continue to provide individualized care and enrichment for pets staying with us.

Thank you!



Bonnie L. Hays

SMALL ANIMAL SHELTER

WASHINGTON COUNTY

1901 SE 24th Avenue, MS 53
Hillsboro, OR 97123

Help us care for the pets and people of Washington County by making a donation.

Donations help us continue to reunite lost pets with their people, rescue stray and injured animals, investigate animal abuse and neglect, and provide specialized veterinary care for animals temporarily staying with us.

Donate online, in person, over the phone or using the enclosed envelope. You can even make a gift to the animals in honor of a special pet or person in your life.

A general donation allows us the flexibility to use your gift where there is the greatest need. However, if you would like your donation used for a specific service, please contact us at Animal_Services@washingtoncountyor.gov to discuss donation options. **Thank you for your generosity and continued support!**



Marigold was brought to our shelter with an urgent condition that required our veterinary team to perform an emergency surgery. Donations from the community allow us to provide veterinary care to stray pets in need like Marigold.

Animal Tales is a publication of Washington County Animal Services & the Bonnie L. Hays Small Animal Shelter

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