

PETA's Animal Shelter Intake Policy

PETA's Animal Shelter and Community Animal Project practice a true open-admission policy. We never turn animals away regardless of their age, history, breed, physical condition, or temperament. Our shelter does not have a waiting list or charge a surrender fee, and our staff is available 24/7, including to respond to after-hours emergencies and pick up and transport surrendered animals. We often take in aggressive or feral animals rejected by other shelters as unadoptable. We also offer free end-of-life services to community members who want to end the suffering of their ill, aged, or injured animal companions but who cannot afford to pay the fees charged by private veterinary practices.

PETA's shelter accepts animals from dozens of jurisdictions in the Commonwealth, often "filling in" for animal shelters that don't take in cats at all or that have intake policies so restrictive that people are left with nowhere to turn when they need help. Many of the jurisdictions that we serve are low income.

PETA's shelter, like all shelters in the Commonwealth and beyond, has been significantly affected by the ongoing crisis caused by a nationwide veterinary workforce shortage, which has increased the number of homeless and unwanted animals, since more people than ever are unable to afford the rising cost of veterinary care when it's available, which isn't always the case. Many clinics stopped providing spay/neuter services at the height of the pandemic, causing unwanted litters to flood already overburdened shelters. Many shelters also drastically reduced their intake to compensate for reduced staffing and/or new public health protocols yet have not returned to previous intake rates. In places where taxpayer-funded shelters are no longer open-admission, as in Norfolk and Virginia Beach, the burden has shifted onto those like PETA's shelter that remain open to all and that never turn away animals in need. In 2025, more than 100 behaviorally unsound, ailing, and even actively dying animals were referred to PETA by area shelters and veterinary clinics. Some of the dangerous dogs we euthanized had been adopted out by area shelters that declined to take those animals back.

Please note: Almost without exception (such as after hours, when facilities are closed), PETA immediately transports stray animals to the municipal animal shelter in the jurisdiction in which they were found to increase the chance that they will be reclaimed. We also routinely transfer adoptable animals to regional partners with a strong record of finding permanent adoptive homes and subsidize their medical care, as needed.