



# Fairfax County Animal Services

## Standard Operating Procedure



<b>Title:</b>	Intake Policy		
<b>SOP:</b>	# 201		
<b>Section:</b>	Customer Care		
<b>Effective Date:</b>	5/19/2025	<b>Replaces/Rescinds:</b>	All Previous
<b>Issued &amp; Approved by:</b>	Reasa Currier	<small>DocuSigned by:</small>  <small>CF1080CB27B6427...</small>	Director, Fairfax County Animal Services

### I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish and outline the Fairfax County Department of Animal Services (DAS) procedures for the intake of animals.

### II. POLICY

It is the policy of DAS to take in stray animals in need, to manage the intake of owner surrendered companion animals when the owner is no longer able or willing to keep the pet, and to house and care for companion animals that have been seized or taken into custody by DAS Field Services. This policy extends only to Fairfax County residents and animals found in Fairfax County.

Stray animals are held at the Shelter either 5 full days (found with no identification) or 10 full days (found with identification) before the Shelter assumes ownership.

### III. PROCEDURE FOR INTAKE OF STRAYS

#### A. Stray Dogs

1. DAS accepts all stray dogs found in Fairfax County.
2. Upon intake, Customer Care staff shall create a custody record in the Shelter management software system.
3. Staff will scan for a microchip on intake if it is safe to do so. If a chip or any other identification is found, staff will make every effort to notify the owner that the dog is at the shelter.
4. Finders will be given the option to hold the pet in their home for the stray period. DAS may provide supplies to help if needed, if available.
5. Staff will check lost reports to search for an owner.
6. The dog shall be taken to "Receiving," where Animal Care staff will assess whether the dog appears healthy or needs immediate medical attention. Vaccines may be postponed if the dog is seriously injured, obviously ill, or unable to be safely handled. If able to, staff will give Bordetella and distemper vaccines, a dewormer, and flea and tick treatment.

7. All relevant medical and behavioral information, including a photo of the dog, will be entered into the Shelter management software system.

#### B. Found Cats

1. DAS will assess found cats' circumstances to determine if shelter intake is appropriate.
2. If staff determine the cat should be taken in, Customer Care staff shall create a custody record in the Shelter management software system.
3. Staff will scan for a microchip on intake if it is safe to do so. If a chip or any other identification is found, staff will make every effort to notify the owner that the cat is at the shelter.
4. Finders will be given the option to hold the pet in their home for the stray period. DAS may provide supplies to help if needed, if available.
5. Staff will check lost reports to search for an owner.
6. The cat shall be taken to "Cat Receiving" where Animal Care staff will assess whether the cat appears healthy or needs immediate medical attention. Vaccines may be postponed if the cat is seriously injured, obviously ill, or unable to be safely handled. If able to, staff will give a distemper vaccine, a dewormer, and flea and tick treatment.
7. All relevant medical and behavioral information, including a photo of the cat, will be entered into the Shelter management software system.

C. DAS may accept other stray companion animals, including small mammals, reptiles, and birds (other than wildlife). Intake procedures and custody records are the same as for dogs and cats except there are no intake vaccinations.

D. DAS may accept stray or abandoned poultry and livestock. Intake procedures and custody records are the same as for dogs and cats except there are no intake vaccinations.

#### **IV. PROCEDURE FOR INTAKE OF OWNER SURRENDERED PETS**

- A. DAS accepts owner-surrendered pets from residents of Fairfax County by appointment. The preferred method for surrender requests is via email to the Shelter's main email address. Surrenders without an appointment are possible if approved by the Customer Care Manager, Animal Care Manager, or their designee. DAS may temporarily halt the acceptance of owner-surrendered pets due to capacity or health concerns.
- B. Residents who want to relinquish a pet to the Shelter will be asked to confirm Fairfax County residency, and provide information about their pet, including species, age, medical and behavioral history and reasons for surrender. If the pet was adopted from another shelter or rescue, the resident will be asked to return the pet to that

organization. If that is not possible or if there is a legitimate and urgent safety concern, DAS will expedite the surrender request.

- C. Residents requesting surrender of a pet will be counseled on other options and where needed will be provided information on medical, behavioral or training resources to help them keep their pet if possible.
- D. In cases of serious medical or behavioral concerns, residents requesting surrender of a pet may be required to surrender the pet as an owner request for euthanasia. Please reference DAS SOP #309 “Euthanasia Procedure” for additional information.
- E. When a pet is relinquished to the Shelter:
  - 1. Customer Care staff shall request the owner fill out a behavior profile and provide all available medical documentation prior to surrender if possible.
  - 2. Customer Care staff will do an initial inspection of the animal to determine its health and overall temperament. Relevant information will be passed to Animal Care staff prior to them taking custody of the animal, especially regarding a history of aggression and/or urgent medical issues to ensure safe handling at hand-off.
  - 3. All cats, dogs, rabbits, and ferrets will be scanned to determine if they have a microchip unless it is unsafe to do so. All species will be examined for types of identification unless it is unsafe to do so.
  - 4. All residents surrendering a pet must sign the ‘Bite Disclosure’ form, as required by Virginia state law, indicating whether or not the pet has bitten in the past.
  - 5. The animal shall be taken to “Receiving” or “Cat Receiving” as appropriate, where Animal Care staff will assess whether the animal appears healthy or needs immediate medical attention. Vaccines may be postponed if the animal is seriously injured, obviously ill, or too stressed for staff to safely handle. If there are concerns about the animal’s welfare, staff will notify their supervisor immediately. Supervisors will evaluate and pass the information on to the Field Services Division of DAS if warranted.
  - 6. If able to, staff will give species-appropriate intake vaccinations as needed.
  - 7. All relevant medical and behavioral information, including a photo of the animal, will be entered into the shelter management software system.