



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of Public Health
Office of Animal Welfare



2023

YEAR IN REVIEW

Office of Animal Welfare

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Christina Motoyoshi

Executive Director
Office of Animal Welfare

In 2023, the Office of Animal Welfare (OAW) celebrated 10 years of dedication to animal protection and promoting the human-animal bond in Delaware. Reaching this milestone is a testament to the determination of legislators, government leaders, and advocates who shared a vision to create the OAW in 2013. It is also a direct reflection of the work of our talented and passionate staff, and the support of our community partners.

Before OAW was established within the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, programs for pets were fragmented or non-existent, leading to frustration and confusion. A more coordinated effort was clearly needed to oversee programs and address companion animal issues.

OAW's formation drastically improved animal welfare services. There now is one centralized office that streamlines response, processing, and enforcement duties. OAW has made tremendous strides in reducing animal homelessness and suffering, elevating professionalism of enforcement, and making our community safer for people and pets. In addition, thanks to our shelter partner, the Brandywine Valley SPCA, more animals see positive outcomes than ever before.

We look forward to continued progress and to serve as a vital resource for Delawareans for years to come.

Warm regards,

C. Motoyoshi

Some of our major accomplishments in the last 10 years include:

- Establishing [Delaware Animal Services \(DAS\)](#), the first statewide animal welfare enforcement unit
- Launching a statewide [Lost & Found pet registry](#) to reunite lost pets with their owners
- Implementing training and certification regulations for animal welfare officers
- Developing a comprehensive shelter oversight program and conducting inspections
- Overhauling dog licensing to increase accessibility and compliance
- Revamping the [State Spay & Neuter Program](#) to improve accessibility and expand reach
- Expanding the Delaware Animal Response program to assist pets in disasters
- Holding animal abusers accountable through strong enforcement of cruelty laws
- Advocating for legislative changes to improve animal protections, enhance public safety, and reduce animal homelessness

TRIBUTE HONORS OFFICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE

FOR 10 YEARS OF SERVICE TO DELAWAREANS

The Delaware 152nd General Assembly honored the Office of Animal Welfare's (OAW) 10 years of service with House Concurrent Resolution 81, sponsored by Rep. Kimberly Williams (D-19) and Sen. Jack Walsh (D-9). OAW was created within the Division of Public Health (DPH) to protect the health, safety, and welfare of companion animals and to centralize services.

"For 10 years now, the Office of Animal Welfare has worked to improve the quality of life for pets and people across our state and their efforts deserve recognition," Rep. Williams said. "Through their collaboration with local animal shelters, rescues, and the veterinary community, they have not only made Delaware a more humane and compassionate place, but have also played a pivotal role in making our state the first no-kill animal shelter state."

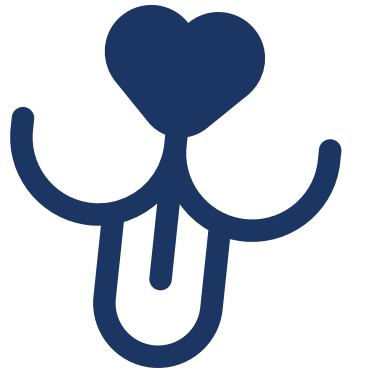


Photo provided by Alexis Wrease/Delaware Senate.

Pictured from left

Front Row: Chief of Delaware Animal Services Mark Tobin, DPH Director Steven Blessing, Rep. Williams, Sen. Walsh, and Rep. Sherry Dorsey Walker.

Second Row: Spay & Neuter Program Coordinator Melody Purdy, OAW Deputy Director Joanna Miller, and Rep. Bryan Shupe.

Third Row: OAW Executive Director Christina Motoyoshi, Officer Kelly Gorczyk, Lt. Jessica Kramer, Officer Jenelle Leib, and Lt. Tammy Moseley.

Top Row: Captain Philip Dixon, Captain Rebecca Stratton, Sgt. Andrew Price, and Captain Ervin Smith.

NEW LEGISLATION TO PROTECT PETS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS



In spring 2023, the Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence LINK Committee drafted a package of three bills to protect pets and domestic violence victims and recommended them to the Delaware General Assembly. The Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence LINK Committee is a multi-disciplinary team of leaders working collaboratively to raise awareness of the link between animal abuse and domestic violence and identify solutions to protect animals and human victims of violence. OAW serves on this committee. Governor John Carney signed the bills in June 2023. The new laws include:

84 Del. Laws Ch. 49 (formerly Senate Bill No. 70) sponsored by Sen. Nicole Poore, provides for pets to be included in protection from abuse (PFA) orders. It also adds the following acts against a person's companion animal or service animal to the definition of abuse for PFA proceedings: engaging in cruelty; inflicting physical injury; and engaging in a course of alarming or distressing conduct.

84 Del. Laws Ch. 50 (formerly Senate Bill No. 71) sponsored by Sen. Stephanie Hansen, requires law enforcement agencies, the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF), and the Delaware Department of Justice to report suspected animal cruelty to the Office of Animal Welfare that is discovered while performing their responsibilities in child welfare cases. This Act also provides immunity to people who in good faith, report suspected animal cruelty.

84 Del. Laws Ch. 51 (formerly House Bill No. 95) sponsored by Rep. Krista Griffith, requires Family Court to award possession and provide for the care of companion animals when dividing marital property after considering the well-being of the companion animal.

To aid staff from DSCYF in the mandatory reporting requirement, OAW has provided education on how to recognize and report animal abuse. Likewise, animal welfare officers have received formalized training from the Office of the Child Advocate on recognizing child abuse and how to make a report. This cross-disciplinary training and awareness among front-line workers is an important step in stopping abuse within the family.

Law Passes to Enhance Shelter Standards Requirements

In August 2023, Governor Carney signed Senate Bill 129, sponsored by Sen. Walsh and Rep. Williams, to update protections for shelter animals to reflect national best practices (16 Del. Code §3001F). The Act also fills in gaps in existing law, such as requiring that animals be vaccinated against rabies before adoption, and setting written standards for feeding, husbandry, sanitation, and disease control.

“In the thirteen years since the original law was enacted, best practices in animal sheltering have continued to evolve and so should our laws,” said Dr. Natalie Titus, Veterinary Advisor for OAW. “For instance, we know that addressing behavioral needs is an important part of the overall care and well-being of an animal. As a result of this law, each shelter must have protocols in place to provide behavioral enrichment for animals as they await adoption.”

OAW held stakeholder meetings to receive input on the changes, which were supported by all Delaware shelters. All Delaware animal shelters are inspected annually to evaluate compliance. Inspection reports are online at dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/oaw/animalshelterinsprpts.html.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

SPAY NEUTER PROGRAM: BEING FIXED IS FABULOUS!

Since 2014, the Office of Animal Welfare (OAW) has managed the State Spay & Neuter Program, making possible the sterilization of over 35,000 pets, and vaccination against rabies of 27,000 pets. The Program aims to reduce animal homelessness and enhance public health by providing assistance to low-income pet owners for the sterilization and vaccination of their pets. It also provides grants to non-profit animal shelters and rescues to subsidize sterilization of homeless animals.

To better meet the demand for assistance, in 2021 Delaware lawmakers passed an important piece of legislation to provide substantially more funding for the State Spay & Neuter Program. House Bill 263, sponsored by Rep. Williams and co-sponsored by Sen. Walsh and Rep. Andria Bennett, collects pet food manufacturing fees paid by companies that sell pet food in Delaware. The \$317,950 of additional funding generated in Fiscal Year 2023 allowed OAW to increase assistance to low-income pet owners and support to local nonprofits.

Learn more about the Spay & Neuter Program by visiting [FixedandFab.com](https://www.fixedandfab.com).



1,756 CATS
SPAYED/NEUTERED



774 DOGS
SPAYED/NEUTERED



1,806 PETS
VACCINATED AGAINST RABIES

33

VETERINARY SURGERY PROVIDERS

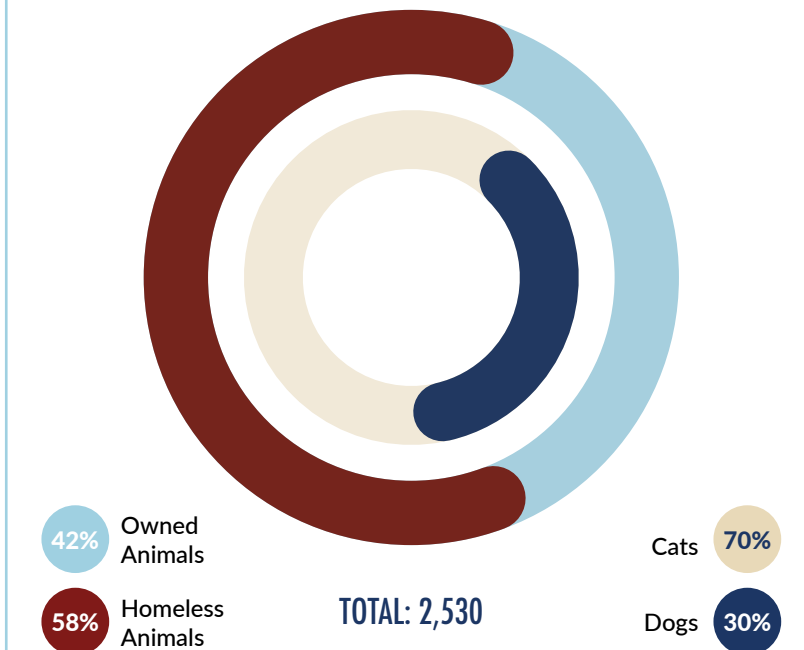
23

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
THAT RECEIVED GRANTS

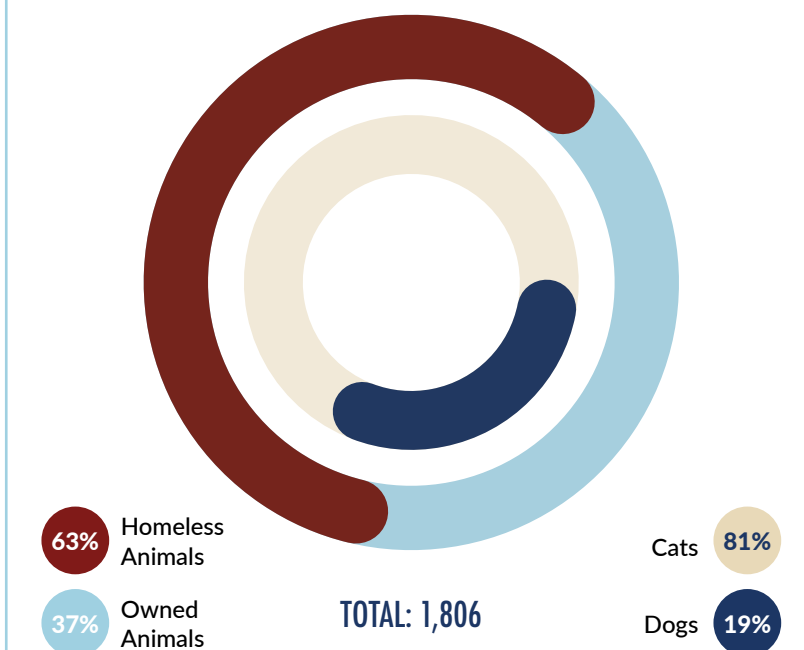
1,864

DELAWARE RESIDENTS WHO
RECEIVED ASSISTANCE

PERCENTAGE OF STERILIZATION SURGERIES FOR LOW-INCOME OWNED PETS AND NON-PROFIT HOMELESS ANIMALS, DELAWARE, JULY 1, 2022 TO JUNE 30, 2023



PERCENTAGE OF RABIES VACCINATIONS ADMINISTERED FOR LOW-INCOME OWNED PETS AND NON-PROFIT HOMELESS ANIMALS, DELAWARE, JULY 1, 2022 TO JUNE 30, 2023





Tyler is one of many cats that was helped, thanks to a grant from the Animal Welfare License Plate Fund. He was found by a good Samaritan in the Wilmington area and brought to Faithful Friends Animal Society (FFAS) as part of a Trap Neuter Vaccinate Return project. Through the grant, Tyler was neutered and vaccinated. Because he was so friendly, he was placed in FFAS' adoption program.

The Animal Welfare License Plate is a specialty plate available through Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles. Delaware drivers can purchase this plate to show their animal pride, with proceeds supporting spay and neuter projects in the community.

For more information, visit de.gov/pawplate.



Photo: Office of Animal Welfare

VANESSA BEFORE



Photo: Warner Bros. Discovery

VANESSA AFTER

PUPPY RESCUED FROM CRUELTY CASE FEATURED IN PUPPY BOWL

Vanessa was just a puppy when she was rescued by Delaware Animal Services in August 2023 from extreme neglect. She and 33 other small breed dogs were found living in deplorable conditions at a Lewes, Del. home. Her owners were charged with multiple counts of misdemeanor animal cruelty. As you can see from the before and after pictures, she is doing much better and thriving in her forever home! Proudly representing Delaware, Vanessa joined rescued puppies from across the country in participating in Puppy Bowl XX as a member of Team Ruff from Brandywine Valley SPCA. The Puppy Bowl is an annual TV show on Animal Planet that airs on Super Bowl Sunday, on which adoptable puppies compete for the "Lombarky" Trophy. The show promotes adoption and features the life-saving work of animal welfare organizations. Vanessa showed her athleticism by scoring two touchdowns for Team Ruff as they beat Team Fluff for the trophy.

DELAWARE ANIMAL SERVICES: A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS



The front-line team of animal welfare officers from Delaware Animal Services (DAS) work tirelessly to help animals in need and keep Delaware's communities safe. DAS officers enforce laws related to animal cruelty, dog control, dangerous dogs, and rabies control. In addition, DAS provides education on the humane care of animals and connects pet owners to community services.

In 2023, DAS experienced an increase in calls for service. Calls have trended upward in recent years, with the exception of 2020 due to the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Between 2018 and 2023, calls for service increased 22%. Likewise, animal intake has risen 25% since 2018, primarily the result of stray dogs and seizures of abandoned and neglected animals. Coupled with a nationwide slowdown in the number of adoptions in 2023, it was a challenging year for DAS officers and Brandywine Valley SPCA (BVSPCA). Despite the challenging conditions, DAS worked collaboratively

with BVSPCA to prioritize those pets that needed urgent sheltering. DAS provided information and resources to non-urgent situations that could be resolved through corrective actions, education, or access to low-cost resources.

Not all cases can be resolved through access to resources or sheltering. In some circumstances, it is necessary for law enforcement to intervene, stop the cycle of violence, and hold abusers accountable. In 2023, 367 animals were seized for animal cruelty and welfare concerns, resulting in 99 criminal charges of animal cruelty.

When not responding to calls for service, DAS officers conduct proactive patrols and participate in community events to increase the safety and protection of residents and their pets.



NUMBER OF SERVICE CALLS BY CATEGORY, DELAWARE, 2023

CATEGORY	TOTALS
Admin Activity	1,396
Police/Agency Assist	1,279
Public Assistance/Education	3,740
Animal Cruelty	846
Animal Control	13,927
Case Follow Up	4,404
Proactive Patrol	4,924
Rabies Control	2,862
Total Activity	33,378
New Calls for Service*	22,654

*Excludes admin, follow up and proactive patrols

Note: Some calls for service involve multiple categories, but only one can be assigned. Table contains calls per calendar year.

Source: Delaware Division Of Public Health, Office Of Animal Welfare, 2024

CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITY

Court, arrests, search warrants, reports, and other administrative responsibilities.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Stray dogs, dangerous dogs, housing, and welfare enforcement.

ANIMAL CRUELTY

Abuse, abandonment, cruel neglect, or animal fighting.

CASE FOLLOW UP

Supplemental investigative activities on prior complaints, gathering evidence and information, monitoring animal health and welfare, and public safety.

POLICE/AGENCY ASSIST

Calls from police, Fire/EMS, Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, and others that request assistance with animal emergencies.

PROACTIVE PATROL

Aimed at preventing and reducing animal incidents and improving relations between officers and the communities they serve.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE/ EDUCATION

Information, education, resources, and referrals regarding animal-related complaints.

RABIES CONTROL

Investigation and enforcement of potential human exposures to rabies, quarantine of animals, and capture and transportation of rabies specimens for testing.

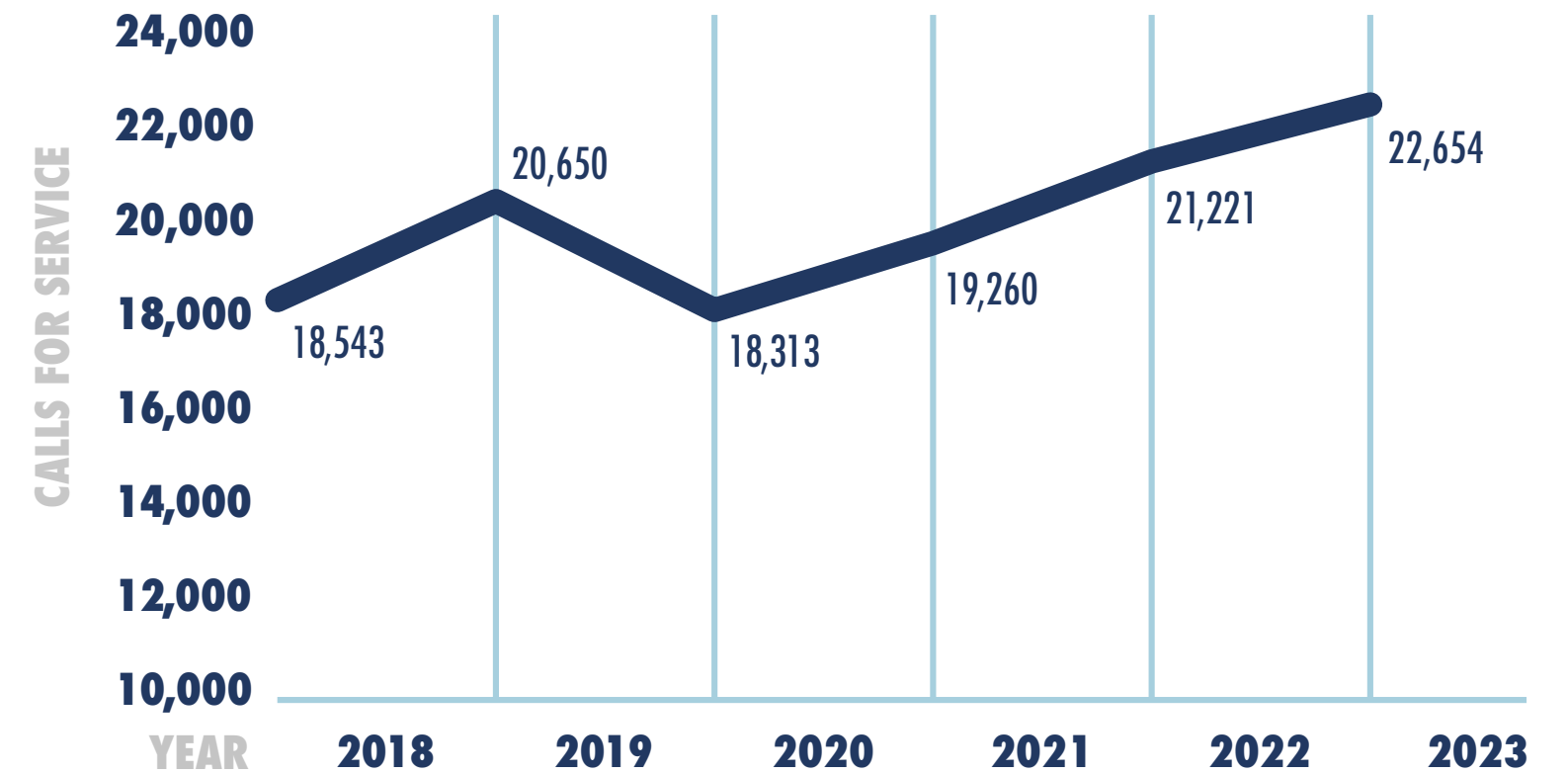
2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- 22,654 Calls for Service
- 4,547 Animal Intake
 - 3,588 Dogs
 - 959 Cats
- 1,901 Dogs Returned to Owner
- 29,848 Dog Licenses Processed

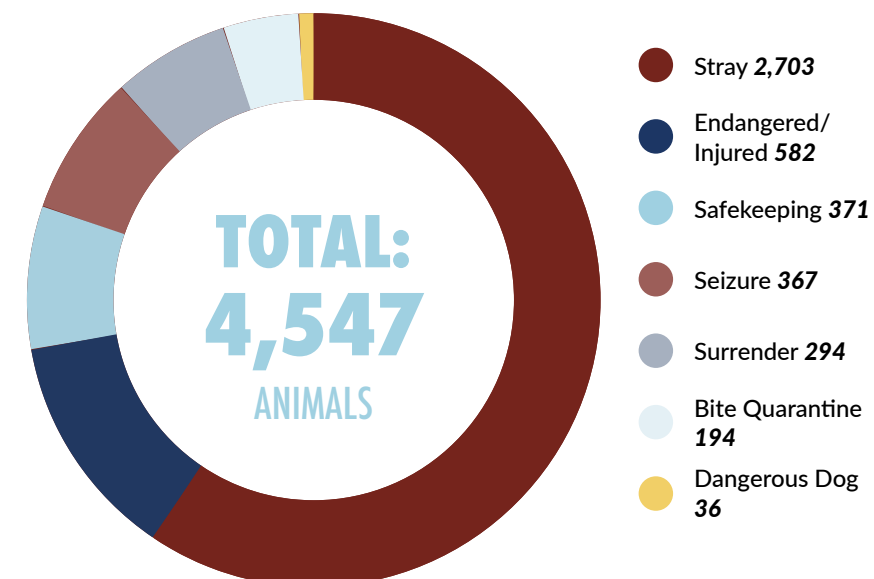
CRIMINAL CHARGES AND CITATIONS:

- 99 Animal Cruelty and Animal Fighting
- 1,943 Dog Control/ Rabies Violations
- 68 Dangerous Dogs
- 155 Rabies Specimens Transported to Public Health Lab for testing
- Countless Resources provided to Delawareans, such as pet food, dog houses, and bedding.

NUMBER OF CALLS FOR SERVICE BY YEAR, DELAWARE, 2018-2023

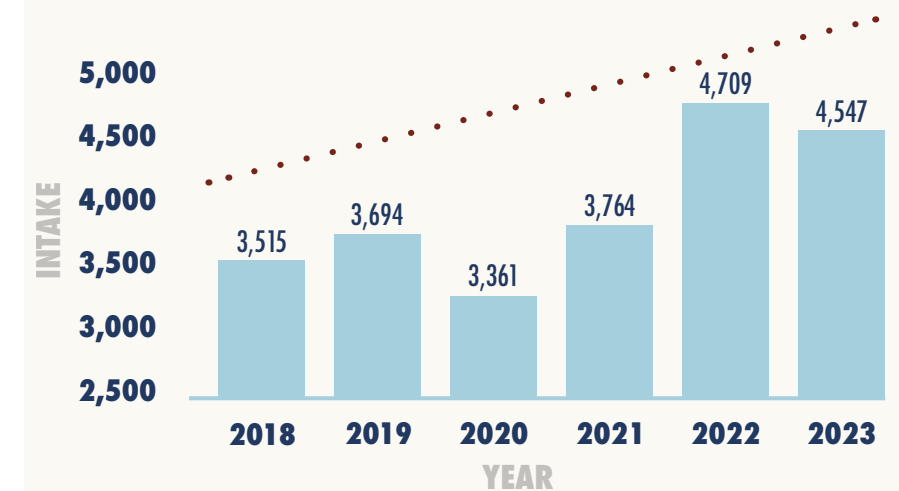


ANIMAL INTAKE BY SOURCE, DELAWARE 2023



Intake for dogs and cats

ANIMAL INTAKE BY YEAR, DELAWARE 2018-2023



All data sources: Delaware Division Of Public Health, Office Of Animal Welfare, 2024



DARRY BEFORE

DARRY AFTER

SIX SUSPECTS CHARGED IN DOG FIGHTING

In 2023 on a cold January evening, OAW officers and the Delaware State Police (DSP) responded to a complaint of suspicious activity at a Seaford residence. They discovered multiple people at the property who were actively engaged in dog fighting. DSP took the suspects into custody. OAW rescued 17 dogs and charged six men with felony animal fighting. The dogs, some in critical condition, received medical care at BVSPCA. Twelve dogs survived, recovered, and were adopted. Darry was the last dog adopted, finding his forever home one year after his ordeal. Darry, pictured above, was scarred and frightened when rescued that night. He also had significant medical needs, and his recovery took time. Today, he is a spoiled and beloved pet! Happy tails, Darry!

To report a suspected case of animal abuse, neglect, or fighting contact OAW at:

302-255-4646

delawareanimalservices@delaware.gov
animalservices.delaware.gov



Delaware Senator Stephanie Hansen addresses new animal welfare officers at their graduation from Delaware Animal Services Academy at Wilmington University. Photo credit: Paul Patton, Wilmington University

WILMINGTON UNIVERSITY AND OAW INTRODUCE TRAINING ACADEMY

In the fall of 2023, DAS partnered with Wilmington University's Criminal Justice Institute to host an Animal Welfare Academy. For years, OAW has sent new officers to training classes offered by Wilmington University, but this was the first time an Academy was designed specifically for animal welfare law enforcement. Six officers from DAS and one from the Delaware Department of Agriculture graduated at the October 2023 ceremony.

Officer recruits took a variety of classes, covering topics including laws of arrest, search and seizure; animal cruelty; blood sports; de-escalation techniques; defensive tactics; report writing; animal first aid; animal handling; courtroom procedure; and more. Certified police instructors, veterinarians, and animal welfare experts taught the classes.



Photo credit: Paul Patton, Wilmington University



Sometimes the smallest animals can find themselves in terrible situations. This tiny kitten fell 20 feet into a storm drain during a torrential downpour. Thankfully, a good Samaritan heard the kitten pitifully meowing and called the DAS hotline. An officer arrived, and the two worked together to lift the heavy grate. They were able to fish the kitten out using a net and some rope. Though wet and scared, the kitten was given a second chance and adopted weeks later.

Photo Credit: Office of Animal Welfare



On a bitter winter day in 2023, DAS was dispatched to a call about a dog trapped in a swimming pool. Spirit, a Labrador retriever, had gotten loose from his home and decided to take a swim in a neighborhood pool. However, he became trapped with no way out of the frigid water. The officer worked quickly to get Spirit out of the pool and rushed him to BVSPCA, where he was treated for hypothermia. He was reunited with his very grateful owner who acknowledged that if it were not DAS' swift response, he might not have had the chance to be reunited with his cherished pet.

Photo Credit: Office of Animal Welfare



WILE E. BEFORE



WILE E. AFTER

WILE E. ADOPTION STORY

A distress call about a sick dog marked the beginning of an inspiring journey toward recovery. DAS received a call from a Smyrna resident in November who had found a stray dog in poor condition. Officers arrived at the scene to find a pitiful sight – a severely underweight dog, lying curled up in a small enclosure. The kind people who found him had done their best to provide safety, but the dog's condition was dire. He was emaciated, covered in sores and scabs, and missing most of his hair. Weak and unable to stand, the officers acted swiftly to secure him on their truck and transport him to the shelter.

He suffered from sarcoptic mange, a contagious and debilitating skin disease that causes intense itching and pain. It is commonly found in neglected animals. One of the responding officers was so moved by the dog's resilience that she affectionately named him Wile E. for his resemblance to a coyote. After two months of dedicated medical treatment and care, Wile E. made a complete transformation. Happily, the handsome boy was adopted in January 2024, and started the new year in his forever home filled with love, care, and compassion.

Photo Credit Both Photos: Brandywine Valley SPCA

DELAWARE ANIMAL RESPONSE



The Delaware Animal Response (DAR) program, managed by OAW since 2016, is a resource for pet owners and their animals in times of crisis. In September 2023, Tropical Storm Ophelia posed a threat to the region, leading Division of Public Health, Office of Preparedness to establish a reception center in Millsboro, Del. Reception centers are safe gathering places for people displaced from their homes as a result of an emergency or disaster. Information about the emergency is shared and resources are made available for short-term needs. Because many displaced people in disasters also have pets, DAR was on hand with pet food and supplies that might be needed for an overnight stay in a hotel, for instance, as well as information about longer term housing options for pets. Thankfully, flooding was not extensive, and no pet owners needed assistance.

When not responding to disasters, DAR staff and volunteers prepare for emergencies by completing training, attending multi-agency preparedness meetings, participating in drill exercises, providing education to the community, and maintaining supplies and equipment.

In 2023, DAR participated in several community events in order to raise awareness, such as Wilmington Police Department Community Resource Fairs, Harrington Heritage Days and Health Fair, and Delaware Veterinary Medical Association conference, to name a few. DAR representatives attended trainings such as the Delaware Emergency Management Agency's annual hazardous materials training workshop, Public Health Emergency Preparedness Symposium, and even spent time educating children through BVSPCA's Critter Camps.

For more information on pet preparedness, visit ready.gov/pets

“As major storm events become more frequent, they pose a very real threat to the community. All families should have a plan and a go-kit in case of emergency that includes pets.

- Joanna Miller, OAW Deputy Director

Photo Credit: Office of Animal Welfare

Photo Caption: Edward Bamberger and Lieutenant Tammy Moseley share pet preparedness information at a Wilmington Police Department Community Resource Fair.



DELAWARE OFFICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE STAFF

Christina Motoyoshi
Executive Director

Joanna Miller, LVT
Deputy Director

Mark Tobin
Chief, Delaware
Animal Services

Philip Dixon
Investigative Supervisor

Michael McCants
Management Analyst

Melody Purdy
Spay & Neuter Program
Coordinator

Samantha Saville
Administrative Specialist

Ervin Smith
Investigative Supervisor

Rebecca Stratton
Investigative Supervisor

Natalie Titus, DVM
Chief Veterinary Advisor

Front Cover Photo Credit: Dog: Brandywine Valley SPCA, Cat: Office of Animal Welfare | Back Cover Photo Credits: Brandywine Valley SPCA