



# ANIMAL SERVICES

STRATEGIC PLAN



2020-2024



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# ABOUT ANIMAL SERVICES

The Animal Services Department was established on November 1, 2019. The department was previously named Animal Control, a division within Central Services Department. When the new department was created, three full-time positions were added to become a total of 12 full-time and 5 part-time team members that comprise Animal Services.

*We are Athens-Clarke County Animal Services, an open admission shelter and compassionate team of animal welfare professionals. Through our Field Services, we aim to protect community members and neglected animals by enforcing laws and educating the public. Through our Adoption Center, we provide quality care and seek positive outcomes for all animals that come through our doors. We are a resource for our community and work to keep people and their pets together where possible.*

As a department, we aim to embody these values:

## COMPASSIONATE

We demonstrate concern for the welfare of all animals in our community and within our care.

## APPROACHABLE

We strive to be a resource to our community and engage in thoughtful discussions with those we serve.

## ACCOUNTABLE

We hold each other accountable in honoring our commitment of service to animals within our care and community.

## TRANSPARENT

We openly communicate internally and externally by fostering clear communication channels.

## KNOWLEDGEABLE

We seek continuous learning opportunities to infuse best practices within our organization.



# OUR PARTNERS

In October 2019, a stakeholder group, comprised of representatives from AthensPets, Athens Area Humane Society, Athens Canine Rescue, Campus Cats, Three Paws Rescue, and Circle of Friends, partnered with ACCGov staff to develop this strategic plan. They volunteered their time over several sessions to the process, and we would like to thank them for their tremendous work and expertise.



Athenspets



ATHENS AREA  
*Humane*  
SOCIETY





# DEVELOPING OUR PLAN

ACCGov staff partnered with key external stakeholders from rescue organizations within our community to create this strategic plan. Beginning in October 2019, staff and external stakeholders met separately to complete a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. The results were then combined to produce a comprehensive SWOT Analysis. Using the SWOT Analysis results, external stakeholders and staff met several times between November 2019 and January 2020 to craft strategic goals, strategies, and initiatives to accomplish in the next five years.



# SWOT ANALYSIS

Stakeholders and staff met separately in October 2019 to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT Analysis) of Animal Services. The results were combined and used during the strategic planning process to assist our partners with identifying goals and strategies that helps us capitalize on our strengths and mitigating our weaknesses, while maintaining awareness of external threats and seizing opportunities. See Appendix B for the complete SWOT Analysis.

<h2>STRENGTHS</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive community in Athens</li> <li>• Athenspets</li> <li>• Barn Cat Program</li> <li>• Cat Shelter– physical setup</li> <li>• Recent support from County</li> <li>• Dedicated Staff</li> <li>• Color Coding for Difficulty Level of Dogs</li> <li>• Potential in Foster Programs</li> <li>• Relationships with Rescues &amp; Volunteers</li> </ul>	<h2>WEAKNESSES</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understaffing / turnover / hiring process &amp; time</li> <li>• Lack of on-site vet/medical expertise</li> <li>• Staffing</li> <li>• Euthanasia procedures</li> <li>• Lack of SOP's</li> <li>• Ordinances</li> <li>• Intake procedures / lack of vaccinations</li> <li>• Training and lack of educational opportunities</li> </ul>
<h2>OPPORTUNITIES</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athenspets (Spay/Neuter Program)</li> <li>• Setting up Food Bowl Program &amp; Monthly Shot Clinic</li> <li>• AAHS (Targeted Spay/Neuter)</li> <li>• Require Pet-Friendly Designation for New Affordable Housing</li> <li>• Adoption and Pet Retention Counseling</li> <li>• Campus Cats (and Barn Cat Program)</li> <li>• Easily accessible educational opportunities</li> <li>• UGA (college Community)</li> </ul>	<h2>THREATS</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obstacles to Spay / Neuter</li> <li>• Volunteer / Rescue Burnout from Last 17 Months</li> <li>• Lack of Shelter Med at UGA</li> <li>• Rescues Deferring to Other Shelters</li> <li>• Lack of Backyard Breeding Laws/ Proliferation of Backyard Breeders</li> <li>• Reputation</li> <li>• GDA Changes that Negatively Impact Operations</li> <li>• Possible Economic Downturns</li> <li>• Warmer Weather/Climate</li> </ul>

**GOAL 1:** Create a caring environment where animals are evaluated by trained animal care professionals upon arrival and receive the medical and behavioral support they need, in order to produce the most positive outcome possible for each animal.

**Strategy A:** Develop a seamless intake process that consistently provides standardized care to the animals upon arrival and evaluations that lead to improved and individualized care.

**Initiatives:**

- I. Create separate intake and entrance areas to decrease stress, disease transmission, and opportunities for confusion.
- II. Develop a streamlined intake system to prevent incomplete processes and maintain operational efficiency.
- III. Develop protocols and SOPs, fully train staff, spot-check for compliance, and update as necessary.



Pictured: Interim Director, Selah Gardiner, with Badger

- a. Accomplish immediate medical assessments to encourage disease control and to identify any animal needs.



Pictured: Maddie Miller, an Animal Services Caretaker , administers a vaccine during intake.



**GOAL 1:** Create a caring environment where animals are evaluated by trained animal care professionals upon arrival and receive the medical and behavioral support they need, in order to produce the most positive outcome possible for each animal.

**Strategy B:** Ensure sufficient staffing, training, and resources to maintain a healthy and humane shelter that provides for the welfare, enrichment, and socialization of the animals for the duration of each animal's tenure at the shelter.

**Initiatives:**

- I. Develop protocols and SOPs, fully train staff, spot-check for compliance, and update them regularly.
  - a. Develop cleaning and disinfection protocols to minimize disease spread and maximize animal comfort and health.
  - b. Ensure appropriate behavioral and mental health by creating and implementing an enrichment schedule and developing protocols to prevent behavioral deterioration.
  - c. Develop behavioral testing protocols and become proactive in the timely testing and evaluation of animals at the shelter.
- II. Assess existing housing facilities in order to pinpoint problems and fix deficiencies.
- III. Evaluate current staffing, equipment, and supplies and make changes needed to achieve appropriate standard of care.
- IV. Identify and provide socialization opportunities to improve the behavior and well-being of the animals in our care.
- V. Improve the volunteer program through engagement, appreciation, communication, and training.



Pictured: Residents of Animal Services socializing in playgroups (Dogs Playing for Life).

**GOAL 1:** Create a caring environment where animals are evaluated by trained animal care professionals upon arrival and receive the medical and behavioral support they need, in order to produce the most positive outcome possible for each animal.

**Strategy C:** Ensure consistent appropriate, timely, and individualized medical care to resolve illnesses and injuries early, reduce disease spread, minimize pain and discomfort, and prevent the exacerbation of existing problems.

**Initiatives:**

- I. Develop protocols and SOPs, fully train staff, spot-check for compliance, and update as necessary.
  - a. Develop checklists for medical conditions and perform daily medical rounds to ensure optimal level of animal care.
  - b. Create protocols for quarantine, including designating areas for the various quarantine needs.
  - c. Develop medical protocols and evaluate current services and inventory of purchased medical supplies to determine what is needed to achieve appropriate medical care.
  - d. Provide clear protocols for staff to follow in determining whether an animal needs outside medical care.
  - e. Establish protocols to communicate health concerns and issues to partners and fosters.
- II. Track medical records to address needs in a timely manner, including through acquisition of new shelter management software.
- III. Evaluate and pursue potential options for obtaining veterinary support.



Pictured: Frances, a former Animal Services resident, adopted in Oct 2019  
Photo Credit: Athenspets, Inc.



Pictured Left to Right: Jolene and Figous, former residents of Animal Services, adopted Jan. 2020  
Photo Credit: AthensPets, Inc.

## **GOAL 2: Protect the safety of both animals and residents by reducing the number of needy and homeless animals in the community and improving legal compliance.**

**Strategy A:** Improve legal compliance to achieve better outcomes in our community.

### **Initiatives:**

- I. Research a variety of legal approaches and best practices to develop recommendations for potential changes to local ordinances, emphasizing innovative solutions for Athens-Clarke County.
- II. Prepare and publish clear, bilingual, written statements online and in handout form of the expectations for animal care in Athens-Clarke County, including information on how to access copies of the laws.
- III. Enhance current and test new processes for encouraging more compliance through in-person interaction.
- IV. Schedule regular continuing education / training sessions on animal welfare and laws for and among ACC Animal Services, Attorney's Office, Police Department, Fire Department, Sheriff's Office, Code Enforcement, and other professionals.
- V. Research and decide on a plan of action to encourage correction of issues that led to the impounding of an animal prior to returning the animal to the owner.



Pictured: Juan De Leon, an Animal Control Officer with Animal Services



## **GOAL 2:** Protect the safety of both animals and residents by reducing the number of needy and homeless animals in the community and improving legal compliance.

**Strategy B:** Improve the level of community knowledge about and compliance with proper animal care, interactions with domestic and non-domestic animals, and how to get help when needed.

### **Initiatives:**

I. Prepare and publish clear, bilingual, online resources and handouts concerning the programs available in ACC to help community members comply with their obligations with respect to animals.



Pictured Above: Lance, a former Animal Services resident, rescued in Oct 2019  
Photo Credit: Athenspets, Inc.

II. Develop a solutions-based outreach program to provide interactive information and resources to the community, prioritizing high-needs populations.

III. Provide resources to adopters and the general public to take the Animal Welfare Class or other educational initiatives designed to improve outcomes for people and their pets.

IV. Improve Animal Service's accessibility and approachability, sharing who we are and what we do with the community in person and via online interfaces.

V. Provide information and education about "trap-neuter-return" programs and proper care of community cats, online, in person, and over the phone.

VI. Explore and, if appropriate, implement a dog registration program.



Pictured: Hot Dawg, one of Animal Services residents, available for adoption as of January 30, 2020

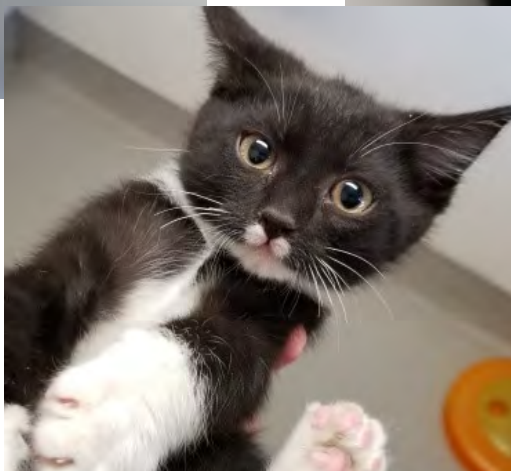
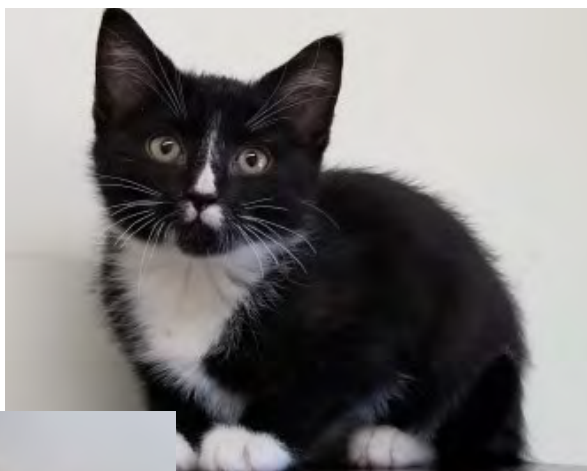


## **GOAL 2:** Protect the safety of both animals and residents by reducing the number of needy and homeless animals in the community and improving legal compliance.

**Strategy C:** Improve community access to needed resources through private and public partnerships.

### **Initiatives:**

- I. Improve access to and utilization of low or no cost spay/neuter surgeries, including a spay/neuter clinic, vaccine and microchip clinics, and pet food pantry programs, both at the shelter and in targeted high-needs communities.
- II. Explore options to identify and partner with additional parts of ACCGov and other national, regional, and local public and private organizations.
- III. Identify and apply for community-assistance grants.
- IV. Research ways to improve and increase local “trap-neuter-return” and provide sufficient funding to reduce homeless and community cat populations through non-lethal and humane measures.
- V. Study appropriateness of expanded Animal Services hours to better meet community needs.



Pictured from L to R: Seymour, Speedy, and Bumblebee, current Animal Services residents, available for adoption as of Jan. 2020  
Photo Credit: Athenspets, Inc.

## GOAL 3: Maximize positive and safe outcomes for all animals.

**Strategy A:** Maximize efforts to reunite lost pets with owners and keep them in homes where they are appropriately cared for.

### Initiatives:

- I. Identify and purchase the technology needed by Animal Control Officers in the field to obtain timely and accurate information regarding animals and cases.
- II. Explore mechanisms by which community members can expedite the process of reuniting lost pets with their owners.
- III. Explore potential for pet-friendly designation with the Housing and Community Development Department for affordable housing that is funded or subsidized by ACCGov.
- IV. Prepare and publish clear, bilingual, online resources and handouts, as well as provide “talking points” for use by shelter staff on common issues (e.g., lost or found animals, community cats, after hour’s assistance trapped or injured wildlife, and low cost and free spay/neuter assistance).
- V. Develop a proactive return-to-owner program with defined procedures and uniform parameters that staff is trained to follow.
- VI. Develop a reclaim fee schedule that incentivizes responsible ownership and explore the possibility of a reduced fee schedule program.



Pictured: Tamera, a former Animal Services resident, adopted November 2019.  
Photo Credit: Athenspets, Inc.

## GOAL 3: Maximize positive and safe outcomes for all animals.

**Strategy B:** Increase positive outcomes for impounded animals that become available for rehoming.

### Initiatives:

- I. Increase successful adoptions through an approach that encourages and educates all community members on becoming adopters, and evaluate and adjust adoption processes to support great matches.
- II. Review and, if appropriate, revise the current procedures by which animals leave the shelter to achieve more positive outcomes and experiences for adopters and rescue partners.
- III. Enhance relationships with current rescue partners, including learning about their needs and working proactively to help them help us.
- IV. Develop rescue partnerships with non-local rescues and shelters, including providing clear and consistent behavioral and medical protocols for the animals; timely assessments, medical testing, and response rates; and transfers to out-of-state organizations.
- V. Develop a fee schedule that provides for flexibility and all-inclusive adoption fees.
- VI. Improve ACCAS's online presence to market available pets and engage potential adopters and fosters.
- VII. Collaborate with applicable law enforcement departments to explore the creation of a jail dog program.
- VIII. Review and enhance the current foster program.



Pictured: Bill Dunston, a volunteer walking and socializing Damu, one of Animal Service's resident dogs  
Photo Credit: AthensPets, Inc.



## GOAL 3: Maximize positive and safe outcomes for all animals.

**Strategy C:** Make humane and evidence-based euthanasia decisions when necessary.

### Initiatives:

- I. Develop clear and transparent protocols for deciding when to euthanize an animal for behavioral or medical factors or for lack of space, including consulting with a shelter medicine expert for potential disease outbreak.
- II. Develop medically and legally sound protocols and SOPs for euthanasia procedure for all animals, whether cats, dogs, livestock, or wildlife.
- III. Fully train staff, spot check for compliance, and update as necessary.
- IV. Develop and publish transparent statistics that accurately reflect all outcomes.



Pictured Above: Lance, Herby, Wanda, and Finnigan, former Animal Services residents, rescued in Oct 2019  
Photo Credit: Athenspets, Inc.



Pictured: Danielle Danka, Animal Control Officer, with Tsunami, a former resident of Animal Services adopted in Oct. 2019  
Photo Credit: AthensPets, Inc.



# Want to Get Involved?

• **ADOPT** • **FOSTER** •  
• **VOLUNTEER** •

**Visit our website at [www.accgov.com/AnimalServices](http://www.accgov.com/AnimalServices) to learn more about how you can help.**

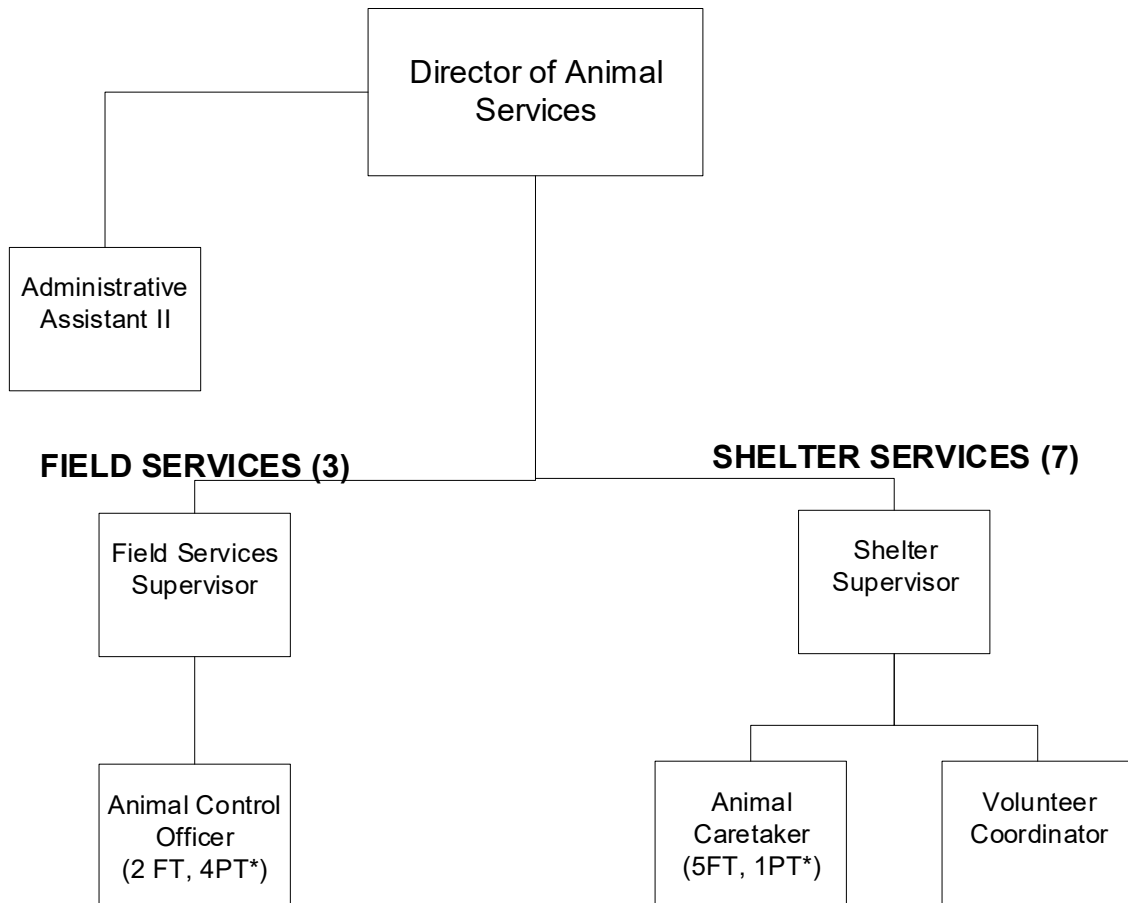


**All animals pictured above are available for adoption as of publication. If you are interested in adopting, please contact our Adoption Center at (706) 613- 3540.**



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# APPENDIX A: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



# APPENDIX B: SWOT ANALYSIS

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## STRENGTHS

- Supportive community in Athens and ACCUG
- Athenspets
- Barn Cat Program
- Cat Shelter- physical setup/iso space
- Support (recent) from the county
- Dedicated Staff- wants to succeed with tools (new staff especially open to change, old staff interested but beaten down)
- Color coding for difficulty level of dogs
- Potential in foster programs (DDO, Enrichment)
- Relationships with rescues, volunteers
- Dog play yards
- New signage for cats
- New division/organization

## WEAKNESSES

- Understaffing / turnover / hiring process & time
- Lack of on-site vet/medical expertise
- Staffing
- Euthanasia procedures
- Lack of SOP's
- Ordinances
- Intake procedures / lack of vaccinations
- Training and lack of educational opportunities
- Programs lack resources, knowledge (not able to answer common questions), communication, supplies info
- Lack of data transparency
- Adoption process & inflexibility on fees
- Cleaning protocols



# APPENDIX B: SWOT ANALYSIS

## WEAKNESSES (CONTINUED)

- No preventative to cats and dogs
- Care for all animals
- Relationships with and mentality towards volunteers & rescues
- Lack of fulltime ACO's (on-call issues)
- Organization of data/paperwork (internally or externally)
- No protocols on classification of dangerous dogs
- No protocols on adopting to repeat offenders
- Reclaiming process
- Designated cat quarantine area not correctly used
- Transport quarantine
- No puppy quarantine
- Lack of leadership
- Dog runs (i.e., outdated)
- Resistance to change
- Lack of communication- shelter management to rescues, shelter management to staff
- Disregard of ordinances/misunderstanding of discretion
- Dissemination of menial tasks (dishwasher!)
- No staff supervision
- Leadership often not present
- ACO's driving to Walmart to buy supplies- no adv. Ordering
- Not using other ACC Depts as a resource
- Lack of understanding of laws/hw to read laws/when laws are mandatory)
- Not using inmates or community service workers for menial tasks
- Historical distrust between ACO's and caretakers/ misunderstanding of staff goals on both sides
- ACCAS website

# APPENDIX B: SWOT ANALYSIS

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## OPPORTUNITIES

- Athenspets (Spay/Neuter Program)
- Setting up Food Bowl Program & Monthly Shot Clinic
- AAHS (Targeted Spay/Neuter)
- Require Pet-Friendly Designation for New Affordable Housing
- Adoption and Pet Retention Counseling
- Campus Cats (and Barn Cat Program)
- Easily accessible educational opportunities
- UGA (college Community)
- Transports
- Jail Dog Program (there is space at our jail)
- Collaboration with other ACC departments
- Partner shelters and more than we currently use
- Inmates and community service workers (court-ordered)
- Collaboration with other non-animal non-profits (pet food, meals on wheels, domestic violence)
- Amount of volunteers
- MOAS' mobile vaccine clinic and microchips
- Grants available
- Community involvement
- Volunteer dedicated to matching lost/found reports on social media and animals at ACCAS
- Attend national conferences
- Prepare FAQ responses (food programs, feral cats, etc.)
- UGA- shelter med program and/or S/N surgery
- Donation to AS sub-fund
- Animal welfare class
- Outreach/Education re: s/n (e.g., schools)

# APPENDIX B: SWOT ANALYSIS

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## THREATS

- Obstacles to spay/neuter:
  - 1) Resistance,
  - 2) Culture,
  - 3) Poverty,
  - 4) Transportation,
  - 5) Schedule availability,
  - 6) Capacity
- Volunteer/ rescue burnout from last 17 months
- Lack of shelter med @ UGA
- Rescues deferring to other shelters (due to inconsistent vaccination protocols, etc.)
- Lack of backyard breeding laws/proliferation of backyard breeders
- Reputation
- GDA changes that negatively impact operations (state- level laws, abandonment, etc.)
- Possible economic downturns
- GDA attitude towards feral cats
- Immigration issues
- Warmer weather/climate = more breeding seasons/heartworm
- College student pet abandonment fact vs. myth
- Rural issues (farm animals, culture) resource desert

# **Animal Services**

**125 Buddy Christian Way**

**Athens, GA 30605**

**706-613-3540**

**[www.accgov.com/AnimalServices](http://www.accgov.com/AnimalServices)**