

2025

Washington State Animal Welfare Assessment



Report to the Legislature

As required by Budget Proviso ESSB 5950



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

2025 Washington State Animal Welfare Assessment

Report to the Legislature

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Acknowledgments

Building on prior Washington State animal welfare studies, legislative support, and the hard work of many in animal welfare sectors, this report is one step toward creating a foundation in animal welfare and a statewide launch point for progress benefiting the animals, people, and communities of Washington. The participation and support for this assessment statewide and nationally from those representing a variety of backgrounds, experiences, locations, perspectives, and professions is humbling and inspiring. There is a clear, united compassion and goal of improving animal welfare for the dogs and cats in Washington and, in effect, the communities where these animals live. This compassion often extends beyond Washington state borders.

Dr. Blair de Vries, WSDA Project Veterinarian, and Dr. Amber Itle, Washington State Veterinarian, would like to sincerely express their deepest appreciation to all the contributors to the Washington State Animal Welfare Assessment. Thank you to Representative Walen and fellow legislative “Fur Fighters” for sponsoring the proviso that funded this report. A special thank you to University of Washington Center for One Health Research (UW COHR), Dr. Anna Baines and Vickie Ramirez, who led the survey of animal care and control agencies and to Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Leslie Sprunger and Elaina Martin, who collected data about Washington state veterinary graduates and provided an aggregate of the findings for the assessment. The project accounted for over 170 points of contact, stakeholders, and subject matter experts from diverse animal sectors, organizations, agencies, and academia. Heartfelt gratitude for everyone’s dedication and contribution to improving the lives and welfare of animals and people of Washington state.

Executive Summary

Budget proviso [ESSB 5950](#) directed WSDA to complete a statewide assessment of current companion animal welfare issues. The concerns referenced in the Washington State Animal Welfare Landscape Analysis (2014) and Washington State Companion Animal Overview Case Studies and Strategies (2024) documents were used to inform some of the key objectives to benchmark how specific welfare measures have changed in the last decade and what gaps remain. The scope of the assessment was to capture animal welfare concerns from stakeholders and better understand contributing factors. The objectives of the animal welfare assessment were to:

- *Compile and synthesize existing data to identify the contributing factors impacting animal welfare issues. Including but not limited to, cat and dog population estimates, distribution, and ownership demographics.*
- *Assess the number and distribution of animal shelters and rescues, animal control agencies, and veterinary services.*
- *Capture current regulations, licensing and registration of animals, animal entities, and existing gaps.*

The project veterinarian leading the assessment collaborated with and contacted over 170 individuals from academia, extension, industry, rescue, animal care and control, and veterinary (e.g., shelter, regulatory, private, research) sectors. The WSDA contracted with the University of Washington Center for One Health Research (UW COHR) to create, conduct, and analyze a survey of animal care and control agencies. Over 300 animal welfare organizations within Washington state were identified, and there were 225 individual responses representing 161 organizations. Washington State regulations, other state animal welfare programs, funding options, potential solutions, and animal welfare-related literature within the scope of the assessment were reviewed. Key findings from the assessment identified several gaps and recommendations for future consideration.

The recommendations are based on primary emerging themes that appeared throughout the assessment identifying the need to: establish multi-disciplinary workgroups or task forces; establish standardized databases for data collection, sharing and reporting; expand regulatory oversight and infrastructure to address animal businesses and importation; secure additional funding and resources to support animal care, animal control, law enforcement, and community services; increase access to veterinary care; and establish animal welfare related outreach and educational resources. The suggested recommendations in the assessment are predicated on scientific literature review, interviews, available data, survey results, and models at local, state, and national levels. The recommendations are **not** listed in order of importance or priority.

Convene multi-disciplinary workgroups or task forces

In order to address each of these complex and often overlapping issues, multi-disciplinary workgroups or task forces should be established. Assemble a team of representatives from animal

welfare groups and stakeholders to build on this foundational work, collect more data, find and prioritize solutions, set measurable outcomes, and determine the best funding mechanisms.

Establish standardized databases for data collection, sharing, and reporting

Throughout the assessment, the need to build, update, and maintain databases to standardize data collection and sharing was evident across disciplines. This encompassed a wide range of needs including participation in databases like Shelter Animals Count, coordinating resource allocation, creating a rabies vaccine reporting system to protect public health, establishing a shared database for animal cruelty and neglect to streamline coordination between animal control and law enforcement, and an interagency database for state level data sharing.

Expand regulatory oversight and infrastructure

Compared to other states across the country, Washington lacks regulatory oversight of companion animals and the resources to enforce existing rules and laws. Washington state's northwest location with international, state, and oceanic borders brings opportunities and challenges impacting animal welfare due to international and interstate importation. Despite federal and state agencies having a regulatory role in importation, gaps in authority and coordination remain, especially at ports of entry where additional resources are needed. There is a need for an animal disease traceability system to track companion animals from their country or state of origin. There is also a clear need to establish a program for oversight, auditing of animal facilities, movement, sales, animal protection, animal care, and facilities programs, incorporating multidisciplinary, statewide collaboration. State import requirements should be updated to support the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service regulations.

Secure funding to expand animal care, animal control, law enforcement, and community services

Funding is needed to update facilities, add personnel, and improve veterinary access for animal care, animal control, and law enforcement to meet animal welfare needs. Key leaders and legislators should work to improve sustainable, long-term funding mechanisms to expand county-level services for more equitable resource distribution across counties. One recommendation is to award scholarships to support tribal officers, law enforcement, and counties without animal control officers/programs to attend the State's [Animal Control Officer Academy](#).

Washington has great models for animal wellness and community support programs that should be expanded. Current state programs offering services for people (e.g., food assistance, medical care, etc.) could include animal care supplies, animal food, and resources. There is an opportunity for additional subsidized funding for animal welfare programs to extend services (e.g., spay/neuter), mobile care, and/or create interagency mentorship opportunities. Further investigation to recognize what barriers prevent approved, licensed animal control and animal welfare agencies from providing services should be prioritized to identify resources, funding, or legislative amendments needed.

Increase access to veterinary care

Improving access to veterinary care was a consistent theme throughout the survey. Addressing veterinary workforce deficits, implementing incentives or programs to address debt load, and expanding educational opportunities were identified as needed. Some recommendations include increasing the veterinary class size at the Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, funding and expanding existing veterinary scholarship programs to incentivize work in underserved areas, creating new scholarship or loan forgiveness programs for veterinary professionals, modifying the Veterinary Practice Act to improve utilization of the existing veterinary technician and assistant workforce, and creating specialized shelter medicine training programs for veterinary professionals.

Establish animal welfare-related outreach and educational resources

While there is commendable effort statewide, the assessment found a disconnect between stakeholders, subject matter experts, and organizational leaders. A need to share information, resources, and training opportunities is a critical gap that should be closed. A common online landing page to house and maintain current information and connect resources should be prioritized. Lists and maps of county, regional, or statewide resources and services paired with a searchable platform for public use are needed. Printable and culturally relevant materials for animal welfare providers to share with diverse stakeholders are needed. Additionally, training resources and networking tools should be built for awareness of other providers in an area (e.g., city, county, region) and for opportunities to communicate and partner. Specific training for animal welfare organizations on how to interact with their community in an accessible, culturally relevant way would be beneficial.

The Washington Animal Welfare Assessment provides key background information, identifies crucial needs and gaps, and builds the foundation for next steps to improve the animal welfare system in Washington. The scope of the project deserves consideration for expansion and additional study including an animal welfare assessment of other species (e.g., other small mammals, horses, livestock); the needs and solutions for Washington state around access to and affordability of pet food, supplies, and care; public perspectives and needs around animal care, and the impacts of socioeconomics, culture, etcetera. Additionally, forward-leaning efforts should be made to collaborate with Washington's tribal communities to foster relationships, assess animal welfare needs, and create actionable solutions.

Animal welfare is complex with scientific, ethical, economic, cultural, social, religious, and political dimensions. Washington is diverse in its people, animals, communities, geography, and socioeconomics, adding layers of complexity to problem-solving. Building trusting relationships and working through collaborative governance is critical to improving animal welfare in Washington.

Introduction

The following budget proviso directed WSDA to complete a statewide assessment of current animal welfare issues. The proviso was written by supporting legislators and key stakeholders to address the broad scope and complexity of animal welfare problems facing dogs and cats referenced in the Washington State Animal Welfare Landscape Analysis (2014)¹ and WA State Companion Animal Overview Case Studies and Strategies (2024)² documents.

ESSB 5950, Sec. 311 (31) \$250,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 is provided to the department to complete an assessment of current animal welfare issues, such as animal abandonment, rescue organization operations, and veterinary services shortages and costs. The assessment may include an estimated fiscal investment and recommendations needed to improve the animal health and welfare system in Washington. The department must report on the assessment to the appropriate committees of the legislature by June 30, 2025.

Due to the complexities of animal welfare, crafting solutions will require a broader understanding of many of these issues. Therefore, this legislative paper will consist of background information including a literature review, a summary of other state welfare program models, existing veterinary workforce and incentive programs, proposed state/national veterinary and animal welfare legislative changes, an animal welfare survey, and pros and cons of key issues that will help inform future legislative actions. Subject matter experts in each field reviewed and contributed to the information and recommendations within this report for accuracy.

[World Organization for Animal Health \(WOAH\)](#) describes animal welfare as “a complex and multi-faceted subject with scientific, ethical, economic, cultural, social, religious and political dimensions.” The ‘[Five Freedoms](#)’ serve as the guiding principles to animal welfare defined as “the physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies.” This definition aligns with other definitions of animal welfare, such as the [Five Domains of animal welfare](#) from the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) and the [Animal Welfare Principles](#) established by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).

Throughout the Washington State Animal Welfare Assessment, it should be recognized that an individual’s values impact how animal welfare is defined for different groups. Those caring for animals may be more concerned about animal health and well-being, whereas others may be more focused on the emotional states of animals or experiences of pain, fear, or hunger. Some might

¹ Foucher, J. M. (2014). Washington State Companion Animal Landscape Analysis.

² Foucher, J.M., et al. (2024). Washington State Companion Animal Overview Case Studies and Strategies.

place more emphasis on the ability for an animal to experience natural behavior (e.g., cultural concerns about altering animals, feral cats). Every situation will have a trade-off for animal welfare, and it will be important to keep these factors in mind when reading through the report and considering actionable steps to address animal welfare to meet diverse needs.

Animal welfare is part of a greater One Health conceptual framework defined by WOA as “an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems.” Improving and maintaining quality animal welfare requires a One Health approach with community involvement and multidisciplinary efforts around the stewardship of animals, people, and the environment. This intrinsically interconnected topic is far-reaching, making it nearly impossible for animal welfare to not only impact animals but also people and their communities. The human-animal bond is important to community health and has been shown to help people live longer, happier, healthier lives.

Washington is diverse in its people, animals, communities, geography, and socioeconomics adding layers of complexity to problem solving. Even by focusing on dog and cat species, there remain broad, nuanced, and polarizing issues. Animal welfare is too extensive and influential to be unpacked and addressed alone or within the timeframe of the assessment. Peeling back the layers and finding solutions requires time, resources, dedication, representation, relationship, and collaboration between not only those living within Washington, but with those partnerships outside of state geographic delineations as well.

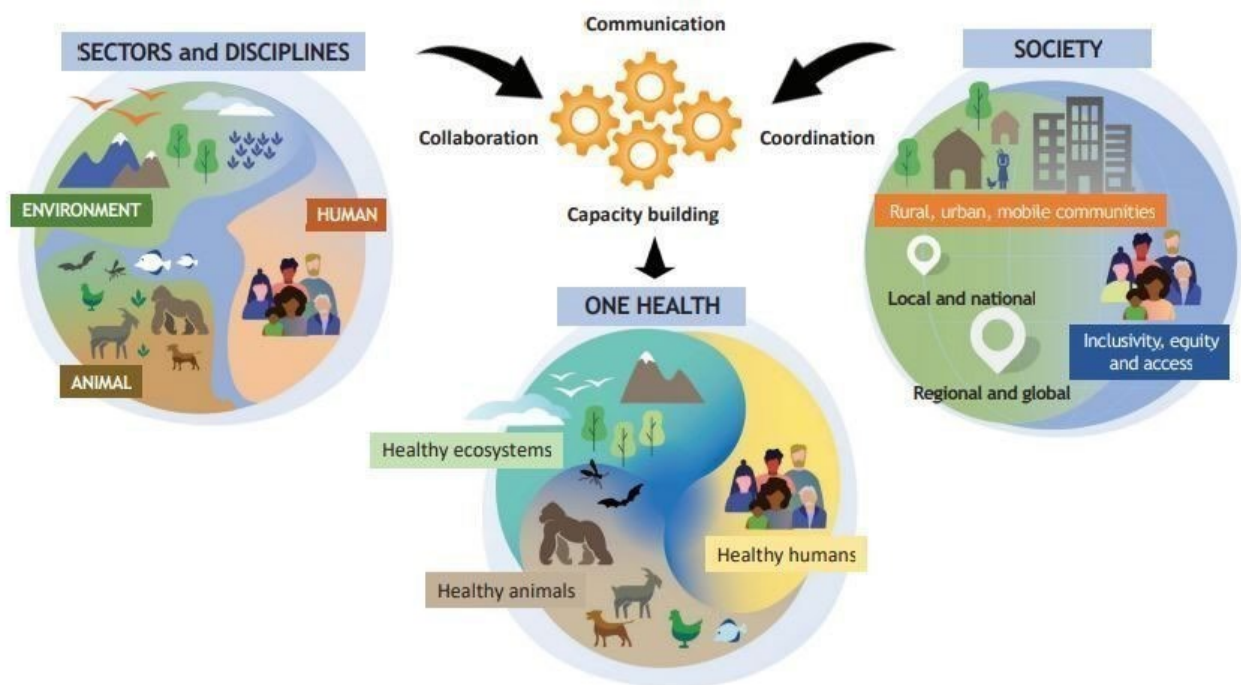


Image source: [What is One Health? | global One Health Community](https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/what-is-one-health)

Methods

Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) approached this report with a focus on understanding the current “state” of the companion animal welfare system in Washington concerning current systems, structures, and gaps. The Washington State Companion Animal Landscape Analysis (2014) and Washington State Companion Animal Overview Case Studies and Strategies (2024) documents, referenced for the proviso, were studied. Key legislators, who led the proviso, were consulted to understand the intent of the assessment and were kept informed of progress as the objectives and goals were defined. Based on this information, a project veterinarian was hired by WSDA to lead the assessment and started the project in September 2024. The WSDA and project veterinarian’s companion animal related networks were utilized in the beginning to identify subject matter experts (SMEs) from academia, extension, industry, animal care, animal control, and veterinary (e.g., shelter, regulatory, private, research) sectors (see Appendix A for SME and stakeholder lists). Meetings, interviews, and focus sessions between the WSDA project veterinarian and animal welfare SMEs were held during October 2024. These initial conversations reinforced the need for the assessment, informed the objectives, and advised on the data that needed to be collected. Before the meeting, all SMEs were sent a copy of the proviso and referenced documents for review. During the initial interview, SMEs were asked the following:

- Did you hear about this assessment prior to our conversation?
- What is your perspective on the assessment?
- Do you have any questions about the proviso, attached documents, or assessment?
- Do you have any concerns about the proviso, attached documents, or assessment?
- How could this project be beneficial?
- Is the WSDA on the right track with the approach to this assessment?
- Anything else that should be considered?
- What do you think are the key animal welfare issues or needs in Washington state?
- What data, if any, is currently collected about these issues?
- How can the data discussed be obtained to inform this project?
- Are you okay with being a point of contact/SME for this assessment?
- Is there anyone else the WSDA should contact?
- Anything else to discuss or comments?

Follow-up meetings and communication were scheduled as appropriate, and the project veterinarian was available to stakeholders throughout the duration of the assessment. In-person visits were offered, and six stakeholders requested in-person visits/meetings, with most preferring communication electronically or over the phone. Between 10/31/24 and 11/25/24, a draft of the project outline was defined, and SMEs provided feedback on the outline. The combination of reviewing the proviso, above mentioned animal welfare documents, conversations and feedback with legislators and SMEs, led to the main categories of the project: cat and dog population estimates, pet sourcing, demographics (e.g., pet owners, animal control, animal care agencies, veterinary professionals), and review of animal regulations and authorities (e.g., federal, state,

county). Also included from the information gathered in the initial stages were anticipated recommendations based on perceived gaps.

Once the outline was finalized (11/30/24), the following objectives and goal became apparent. These were outlined in the Concept Paper available to State legislators and stakeholders (12/18/24). See the Concept Paper in Appendix B.

“Objectives of the Animal Welfare Assessment

- *Compile and synthesize existing data to identify the contributing factors impacting animal welfare issues. Including but not limited to, cat and dog population estimates, distribution, and ownership demographics.*
- *Assess the number and distribution of animal shelters and rescues, animal control agencies, and veterinary services.*
- *Capture current regulations, licensing and registration of animals, animal entities and existing gaps.*

The goal with this assessment is to better understand the current demographics of Washington state companion animals and ownership compared to the resources serving these groups by county, collect data available in these areas, identify gaps based on this information, and propose solutions.”

November and part of December 2024 were also spent identifying the what, where, why, and how of the data collection phase. During the planning process, an absence of hard data and data collection discrepancies were discovered around animal care and animal control. Within the timeframe of the assessment, it was decided conducting a survey would be the most efficient option to attempt to gather as much information as possible about these entities and the animal welfare impacts. Economists and researchers with experience in One Health and animal welfare at Washington State University (WSU), Colorado State University, and the University of Washington Center for One Health Research (UW COHR) were contacted with the possibility of contracting their services to create and conduct a survey. The contracted organization was to include result analysis, interpretation, and a survey report on the animal care and control aspects of the assessment. This would allow the project veterinarian to focus on collecting data, hold additional meetings, conduct literature and regulation reviews, and evaluate other states’ approaches to animal welfare. Mid-December 2024, WSDA began the survey process with UW COHR, establishing a contract from January 1 to June 30, 2025, or upon completion of the work outlined in the contract, whichever came first. The survey was sent out on 02/03/25 and closed on 03/07/25 (see Survey section for survey methodology). While the survey was underway, data was collected and requested (e.g., from federal and state agencies, WSU College of Veterinary Medicine, American Veterinary Medical Association, Veterinary Care Accessibility Project, etc.). In February and March, this included collecting existing Washington State rules and regulations, literature, and news articles within the project scope for review.

Efforts were made to include marginalized, underrepresented communities, such as tribal nations. A letter was drafted, reviewed by the WSDA Tribal Liaison, and then sent electronically on 01/17/25 to

tribal chairs of the 29 federally recognized tribal nations in Washington. The letter introduced the assessment and offered an opportunity to collaborate and provide input. Contact information was provided with an offer to meet in person, virtually, over the phone, or to send replies via post or email. See Appendix C for a copy of the letter. One tribe responded to the letter via email and multiple SMEs reached out to contacts with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Reservation. Introductions were made electronically and a few discussions with designated members were carried out. Input was received from three tribes. Data collection and analysis were completed on 03/31/25. Data, interviews, and survey results were used to identify the main themes and compared to themes found in previous Washington animal welfare studies. Not all gaps had enough supporting data to make recommendations beyond additional study. Included in the discussion are controversial topics related to the main themes or where multiple stakeholders and SMEs expressed concerns.

In April 2025, the first draft of the report was written and then reviewed in early May. On 05/19/25, sections of the report needing additional SME input were sent out. The final draft, including the final survey report, was completed and sent on 05/30/25 for formatting and review before the deadline.

Report Limitations

WSDA recognizes the complexities and nuances of many issues under the broad scope of animal welfare. Aside from dogs and cats, other species (i.e., small mammals, horses, reptiles, farm animals, captive wildlife) were not evaluated during the assessment. Although efforts were made to include as much information representative of Washington as possible, not every animal welfare subject was addressed within the timeframe, nor is every demographic and pet population (e.g., owned, stray, community-owned, sheltered, etc.) represented. Many of these topics, often involving years of study and analysis, are condensed and summarized within the scope of the assessment and based on the data available or on information from collaborating partners. In the absence of data, national estimates were used, and collecting statewide demographic information or themes was prioritized. Thus, the report is a snapshot of animal welfare themes in Washington with information meant to bring foundational awareness and to be built upon.

Multiple modalities (e.g., email, phone call, in-person, virtual meetings, letter, survey, etc.) were utilized to include every county, tribal nation, and animal entity (regardless of business size), in Washington but that does not mean every organization and group was heard from or had access to the modalities used for communication. For example, the letter to the Nations and Tribes of Washington was sent electronically, and it is unknown how many received the letter. Also, only federally recognized tribal nations were included. See Appendix A, Table 2 for a list of tribal chairs. Further exploration of specific animal welfare barriers for tribal nations and marginalized/underserved communities is needed, as well as opportunities to improve outreach and collaboration. This will require more time and thoughtful relationship building than was possible for this report. Although some demographic information is covered, animal owners and the public were not directly involved in the assessment. The animal welfare needs or solutions befitting certain people, animal populations, organizations, or communities might not be reflected. More commonly

known animal welfare organization types are depicted (e.g., animal shelters, animal rescues, animal control), and not every animal operation is represented (e.g., animal foundations, pet shops, boarding facilities, grooming). See the Survey section for other limitations.

Animal Regulatory Agencies and Authorities

Regulatory agencies and veterinary professionals play a critical role in animal welfare and health through investigations, surveillance, prevention, and control of infectious diseases. Approximately 60% of known human pathogens and approximately 75% of emerging infectious diseases are potentially zoonotic (can be transmitted between humans and animals)³. Collaborative efforts are crucial for the safety and well-being of the people, animals, and environment in Washington. An absence of, or inefficiency in, regulation and enforcement creates vulnerability in the One Health framework with potentially devastating social, environmental, and economic costs. Awareness of the various agency roles, authority, and gaps is useful to create state policies to benefit animal and public health and welfare in Washington.

FEDERAL

Three key federal agencies interface with animal regulations: the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS), the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The responsibility to regulate animal health, welfare, or livestock diseases falls to the USDA APHIS and state agencies. It is important to note CBP, and CDC are not animal health regulatory agencies but do adhere to federal regulations. The primary role of CBP and CDC is to protect public health. The CDC regulates the importation of animals and certain animal products only when they pose a risk to human health. USDA APHIS Animal Care and CDC are the two federal agencies leading the oversight of international dog importation. The CDC is the primary federal authority for dogs imported into the United States and the only federal regulatory agency managing cat importations. USDA APHIS has specific requirements for dogs separate from CDC import requirements. Both agencies work closely and alongside other federal, state, and municipal agencies to safeguard the U.S. from zoonotic and foreign animal diseases.

The following section details the duties and regulations of each agency. This is not an exhaustive list of agencies or duties carried out by specified departments. Only information within the scope of the assessment and on the import of live dogs and cats is included.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024, February 29). About Zoonotic Diseases. CDC One Health. <https://www.cdc.gov/one-health/about/about-zoonotic-diseases.html>

United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS)

USDA APHIS [Animal Care](#) and [Veterinary Services](#) are two branches of USDA APHIS focusing on animal welfare, health, and regulatory oversight. Together, they protect both animal welfare and public health by enforcing regulations, preventing disease outbreaks, and ensuring ethical treatment of animals in various industries. These services operate at different levels—national, regional, and state—to ensure animal welfare and health across the country.

USDA APHIS Animal Care

USDA APHIS Animal Care is responsible for enforcing the [Animal Welfare Act \(AWA\)](#) and the [Horse Protection Act \(HPA\)](#). This agency ensures humane treatment of animals in research, exhibition, transportation, and commercial breeding by regulating facilities and individuals handling animals domestically and internationally imported for commercial purposes. Their duties include assuring compliance with federal animal welfare regulations, investigating complaints of animal mistreatment, and inspecting licensed and registered facilities under the AWA. Examples of regulated businesses involving dogs and cats are pet wholesalers, pet breeders (commercial), transportation carriers, and intermediate handlers. Registered facilities are inspected and regulated by USDA APHIS Animal Care staff covering regional and state territories. These inspectors enforce federal law under the AWA, not state or local government laws. For more information on requirements for licensing and registration or exempt businesses, see the [USDA APHIS Gray Book](#). More information on regulations under the AWA is found in the [USDA APHIS Blue Book](#). See a list of registered facilities in Washington [here](#). The AWA and AWA regulations do not apply to owned dogs not intended for sale after they are imported.

Internationally imported dogs at the time of entry into the U.S. must be 6 months old, examined by a licensed veterinarian in the country of export, free of disease, and in good health. They must also meet vaccination requirements for rabies and distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus, parainfluenza, and leptospirosis (DHLPP). Dogs must have valid [health and rabies vaccination certificates](#) as well as a USDA APHIS Animal Care dog import permit. Exemptions and additional requirements may apply. For complete details, see [How To Bring Dogs into the United States for Commercial Sale or Adoption](#).

USDA APHIS Veterinary Services (VS)

Although USDA APHIS VS does adhere to the [Animal Welfare Act \(AWA\)](#), authority to protect animal health comes from laws such as the [Animal Health Protection Act](#). A complete list of federal laws about VS authority are found [here](#). This division focuses on protecting and controlling economically devastating, foreign animal livestock diseases with economic or trade impacts. Regulating the import and export of animals to prevent disease transmission is part of this effort.

USDA APHIS VS may have additional requirements beyond other federal import requirements if a dog is departing from a country or region affected by an economically devastating disease (i.e., African Swine Fever (ASF), [New World Screwworm](#) (NWS)). Dogs are not usually inspected, but additional

documentation and follow-up might be required depending on the disease in question. For example, [African Swine Fever](#) is a disease of economic importance to pigs and has been surging across Asia, Europe, and the Dominican Republic in recent years. In response, USDA issued a [Federal Order](#) to establish additional requirements for dogs imported into the U.S. for resale from countries where ASF exists. ASF can be transmitted via ticks and on dogs' fur and bedding, which represents a possible pathway for the introduction of the disease.

Effective May 11, 2025, APHIS [restricted the importation](#) of live cattle, bison, and horses from Mexico through U.S./Mexico land border ports, due to the continued northward movement of New World Screwworm. APHIS will continue to allow the importation of [dogs from Mexico](#) if accompanied by a health certificate signed by a veterinarian trained and approved by the Mexican Competent Authority (SENASICA). The certificate must state that the animal has been inspected for screwworm within 5 days before shipment to the U.S. and the animal is either free from screwworm OR was found to be infested with screwworm, held in quarantine, and treated until free from screwworm before the certificate is issued and the dog is exported to the U.S.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is not an animal health agency but plays a critical role in enforcing federal regulations related to the importation of animals, animal products, and biologics into the U.S. as part of a large mandate the agency covers. The [Agriculture Programs and Trade Liaison](#) directorate with CBP Office of Field Operations speaks to the agricultural mission of the CBP, including preventing the introduction of [foreign animal disease and pests](#). Their primary responsibilities around animal importation include screening and preventing the entry of prohibited or diseased animals at U.S. borders, ports of entry, and airports. This is mainly by identifying incorrect, suspect, or falsified documentation to [ensure compliance with federal regulations](#). The CBP complies with CDC, USDA, and the destination State's animal entry requirements. If an imported animal does not meet health requirements, CBP may deny entry or require further examination by a licensed veterinarian at the port of entry. The [CBP Live Animal Imports](#) document provides more details on CBP's role, coordination with other agencies, and suggestions for improvement.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The [CDC Importation Program](#) regulates the entry of animals, animal products, and biologics into the U.S. to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases—those transmissible from animals to humans, such as rabies. While the CDC is not an animal health regulatory agency, it plays a critical role in public health protection by monitoring, researching, and guiding responses to zoonotic threats in collaboration with other federal, state, and county agencies.

Enforcing entry requirements for animals, including dog importation regulations, bans on high-risk species (e.g., African rodents), and quarantine measures for disease-prone animals with public health implications, is part of CDC oversight. Unique to CDC are the Animal Care Facilities (ACF). These ACFs are privately owned businesses, registered and regulated by CDC, and currently operate

at six locations (e.g., New York, Los Angeles, Miami) to inspect imported animals and enforce public health regulations. Only dogs traveling from high-risk countries for dog-maintained rabies virus variant (DMRVV) that are foreign vaccinated are required to make a reservation at an ACF. Currently, the two ACFs on the West Coast are in Los Angeles. CDC is in the process of registering more ACFs in San Francisco and Seattle.

Due to the public health implications of rabies, all imported dogs must meet CDC rabies vaccination requirements. The differences lie in whether the dog is imported from high-risk rabies countries or low-risk/rabies-free countries. Dogs from DMRVV high-risk countries need a government-endorsed *Certificate of Foreign Rabies Vaccination and Microchip* form, and a passing serology titer from a CDC-approved laboratory to avoid a 28-day quarantine at an ACF. Any dog that has been to a high-risk country in the last 6 months and is not vaccinated will not be allowed to enter the United States. Dogs from low-risk or DMRVV-free countries may enter without proof of rabies vaccination at any port of entry (air, land, or sea). In addition to similar health and age requirements, CDC requires all dogs to have a microchip for identification that can be detected with a universal scanner. For specifics and documentation requirements, see [Bringing a Dog into the U.S. | Importation | CDC](#).

The CDC does not require rabies vaccination or entry permits for imported cats, but recommends all cats be vaccinated against rabies. All cats must appear healthy upon arrival in the U.S. and follow the requirements of the U.S. destination state. No other federal agency has importation requirements for cats. See the [CDC](#) and [Federal Register](#) for more information. Although there is an emphasis on rabies, CDC can hold dogs and cats if they arrive unhealthy, and if there is any indication of zoonotic disease, can mandate testing and treatment. The traveler/owner/importer cannot refuse. These animals will be cared for at a CDC-registered ACF or an approved local veterinary clinic if the animal arrives at a port of entry without an ACF. Sending an animal back to the originating country is most often due to fraudulent paperwork. Often, sick animals remain in the U.S. upon recovery.

International movement

The CDC estimates 1.06 million dogs are imported annually into the U.S., with approximately 700,000 through airports and 300,000 through land border ports of entry (POE). However, this data is from 2019, and the CDC estimates these numbers have increased⁴. In 2024, about 450,000 dogs crossed land borders between Canada and Mexico into the U.S. This number does not include the number of dogs entering via air and seaports. CDC observed a 52% increase in the number of dogs ineligible for entry due to fraudulent documentation in 2020, for rabies certificates in particular, leading to a ban on the import of dogs from 113 countries in 2021⁵. As stated in the [U.S. Customs](#)

⁴ (2019). *Report in the Importation of Live Dogs into the United States*. United States Department of Agriculture. https://www.naiaonline.org/uploads/WhitePapers/USDA_DogImportReport6-25-2019.pdf

⁵ Stein, R. (2024, May 8). The CDC issues new rules for bringing dogs into the U.S., aimed at keeping out rabies. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2024/05/08/1249622314/cdc-rules-dogs-import-travel-international-rabies>

[and Border Protection \(CBP\) legislative report \(2022\)](#), CDC's temporary suspension of the importation of dogs from dog-maintained rabies virus variant (DMRVV) high-risk countries provided an added layer of control over the number of dogs imported to the U.S. from these DMRVV high-risk countries where rabies is endemic. The suspension has fostered partnerships with trade community entities to serve as intermediate handlers for live animal imports. Despite the decrease in international travel during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the number of dogs imported into the U.S. from all countries (i.e., not only from DMRVV high-risk countries) increased by 175 percent from 2019–2021⁶.

WSDA submitted Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) — asking for the number of dogs and cats (separately) internationally imported to Washington over the last 5 years (2020–2024), their country of origin, and Washington port of entry (POE).

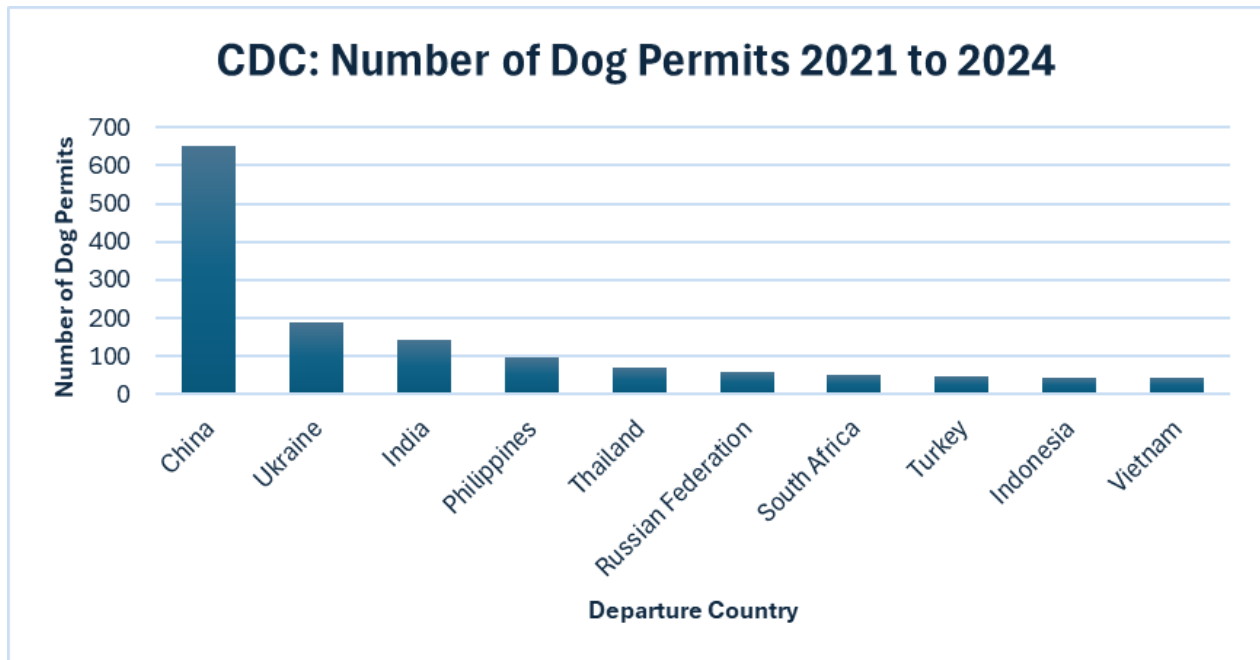
CDC does not collect data on the number of dogs imported into the U.S. from DMRVV low-risk or DMRVV-free countries. Data for cat importations is not collected as the CDC currently does not have mechanisms in place to track them. The [Animal Welfare Act](#) does not require permits for the commercial importation of cats into the U.S., thus, USDA APHIS does not have records of cat imports, nor does USDA APHIS require permits for owned pets or pets not used or resold for commercial purposes. Similarly, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) does not track shipments of dogs and cats. Therefore, there is no data for the international movement of cats, and available data is a gross underestimation of the true number of dogs arriving in Washington. There is no guarantee any animals arriving in Washington stayed, only that they entered the U.S. through a Washington port of entry.

From the records about Washington, CDC received dog permits from 65 different DMRVV high-risk countries, while USDA APHIS Animal Care has records from 23 different countries, including DMRVV-free countries, representing 6 continents. The CDC estimates 500 dogs a year are imported through SeaTac Airport from countries considered high-risk for DMRVV. Per CDC, *“This is a reasonable estimate but likely an underestimate.”* Although data is not collected on the number of dogs imported from low-risk or DMRVV-free countries, the CDC estimates an import ratio of 1:10. Using this ratio, it is assumed for every 500 dogs entering from high-risk DMRVV countries, roughly 5,000 additional dogs enter from DMRVV-free or low-risk countries. Over the five years, USDA APHIS Animal Care issued 1,630 dog permits for 5,430 dogs into Washington for commercial purposes (e.g., sold through pet retailers, online, or for profit).

Between 2021 and 2024, the CDC provided 1,771 dog import permits for those arriving in Washington state from DMRVV high-risk countries. This does not include the number of dog import

⁶ Miller, T. A. (2022). *Live Animal Imports*. Homeland Security U.S. Customs and Border Protection. <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/CBP%20-%20Live%20Animal%20Imports.pdf>

forms issued. Only one import form per dog, however, as stated before, due to falsified import forms and rabies certificates, the number is likely different. The chart below shows the top 10 DMRVV high-risk countries exporting dogs to the U.S. entering Washington out of the 65 countries.



Note: CDC and USDA permits are not the same.

There are few CVIs provided to the WSDA for internationally imported dogs and cats compared to the number received by federal agencies. The total number of permits received between 2020–2024 ranged from 14 to 98 per year, substantially less than the number of dogs recorded annually by federal counterparts. Health certificates in the WSDA database primarily include dogs internationally imported from South Korea. As with interstate movement, multiple animals could be included on one CVI.

Before entering Washington, the pet owner or importer is required to meet federal (USDA APHIS and CDC) and state entry requirements. The definition of “pet animal” can be found in the AWA. See the [USDA APHIS pet list](#) for pet travel requirements. Alternatively, if the dog is brought in for commercial sale or adoption, the importer is responsible for complying with federal and state import regulations.

STATE

Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA)

[The Animal Health Program \(AHP\)](#) at WSDA has a mission to protect and enhance animal health and welfare, promote the economic vitality of the livestock industry by minimizing exposure to animal diseases, and safeguard public health by identifying and limiting exposure to [zoonotic diseases](#). The

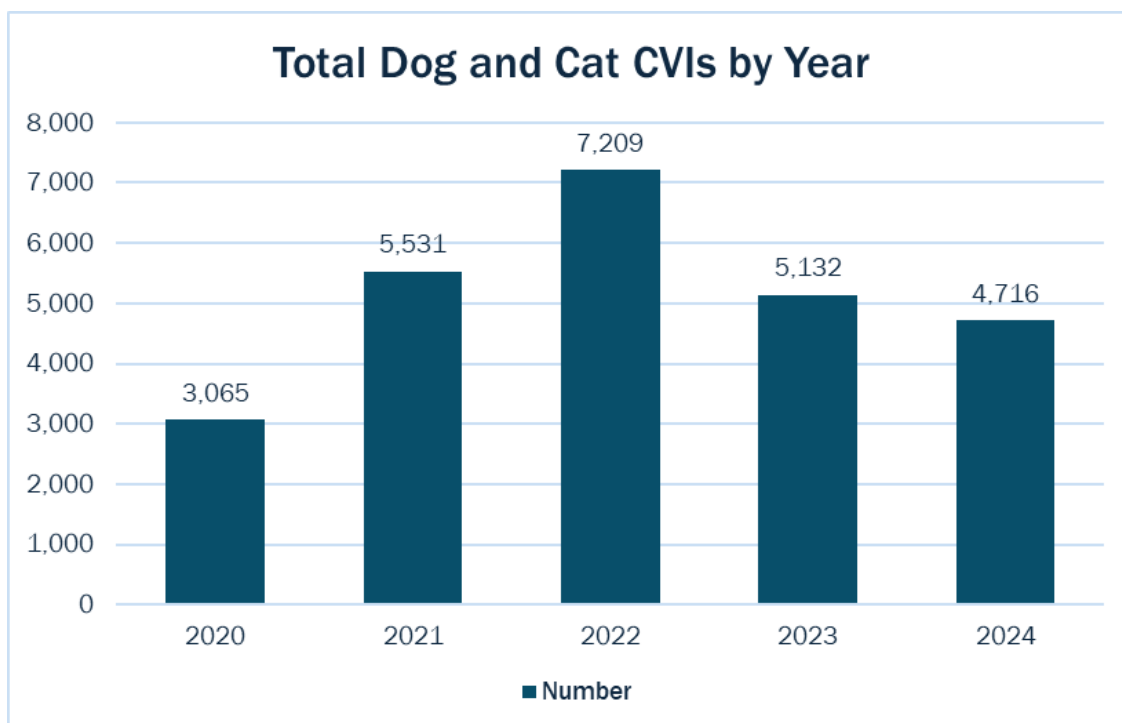
program, consisting of animal health, avian health, secure food supply, and animal disease traceability sections, functions collectively as an emergency rapid response program. The program works to detect, contain, and eradicate animal diseases while facilitating continuity of business and recovery. Under the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), the WSDA is the lead animal health regulatory authority for [animal importation](#) (16-54 WAC), [reportable diseases](#) (16-70 WAC), [quarantine](#) (16.36 RCW), and animal health testing and movement requirements ([16-86](#), [16-89](#), [16-80](#) WAC).

Interstate movement

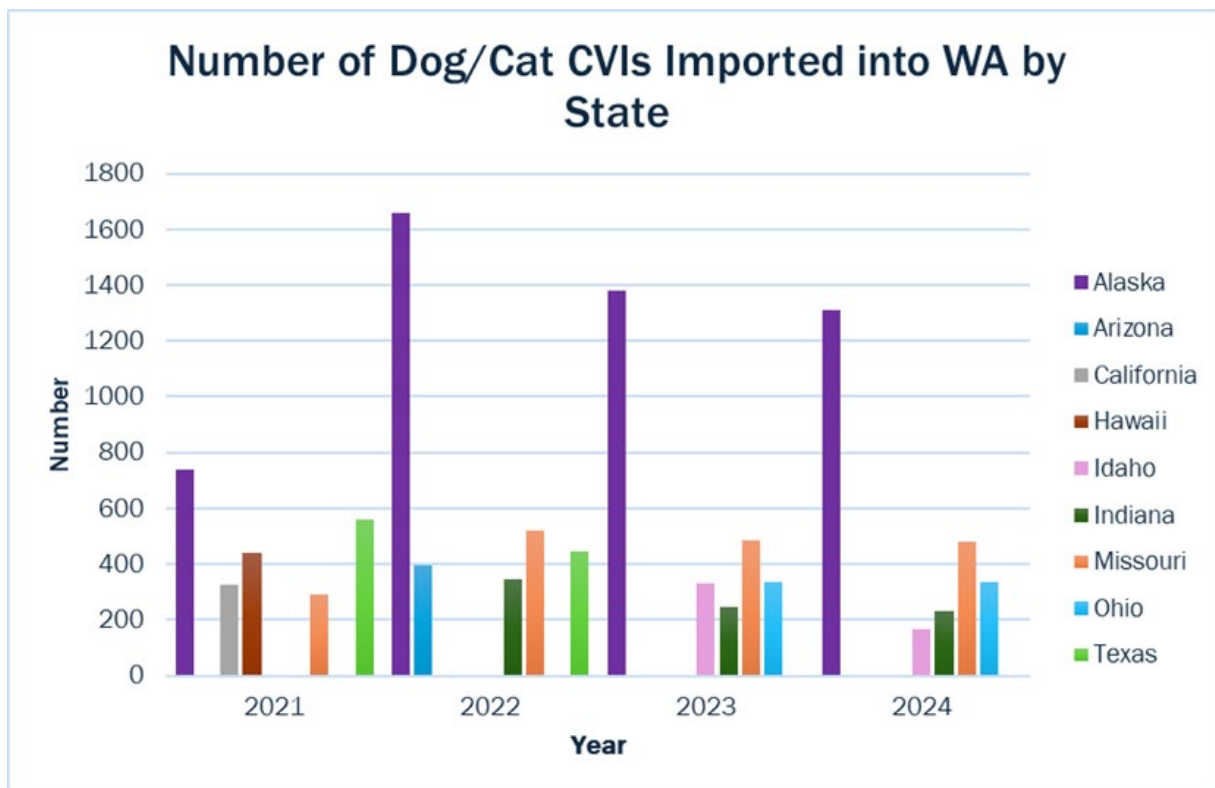
States enforce their animal importation laws and are subject to CDC and USDA APHIS regulations, and may implement stricter measures. Due to the zoonotic nature of many reportable diseases, some states have additional entry requirements or quarantine measures beyond federal mandates. [WAC 16-54-170](#) outlines the importation and testing requirements of dogs, cats, and ferrets.

Washington State requires dogs, cats, and ferrets to have a certificate of veterinary inspection (some international health certificates qualify), and those animals over ninety days old are required to travel with current rabies certificates. Dogs six months of age or older are required to have a negative heartworm test or be on heartworm preventative.

Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) team compiled certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs), animal health documents, submitted to the program from 2020-2024 from WSDA files and [GlobalVetLink \(GVL\)](#), a platform for filling out digital animal health forms. Over the last five years, there have been 25,653 CVIs documenting dogs and cats entering the state. The ADT estimates of the total number, approximately 90% are dogs and 10% are cats. The following charts provide a breakdown of this total by year and by the top five origin states.



One CVI does not equal one animal. All companion animal imports have an average of 2 animals on 70% of the CVIs traveling with their owners, and the other 30% of import health certificates contain 20 animals per certificate (unowned animals). The latter are animals going to zoos, animal shelters, animal rescues, or pet stores. With the majority of the 30% going to pet stores. These include other companion or exotic animal species besides cats or dogs.



This data does not reflect the total picture of the interstate movement of dogs and cats. Only the top 5 states by year are represented. Year 2020 was not included as a breakdown of CVIs by state was not available. Washington receives dogs and cats from the other 49 states, not only from those in the chart above. Although the CVI will indicate the origin state, it is unknown if a dog or cat originated from the U.S. or was internationally imported into another state. For example, Alaska reports a high number of international imports that are then imported interstate into Washington. WSDA is also aware of many dogs originating from Mexico instead of the state recorded on the CVI. It can be difficult to discern if Washington is the final destination or if animals are passing through . Determining which CVIs are falsified or contain incorrect information is also a challenge. Electronic CVIs help to decrease forged documents; however, non-compliance still occurs. There are likely more animals entering Washington than what the data represents, and numbers do not include other species (ex., rabbits, exotic pets, small mammals, etc.). It is important to note that CVIs only represent animals being imported legally and is likely a gross underestimation of companion animals being imported.

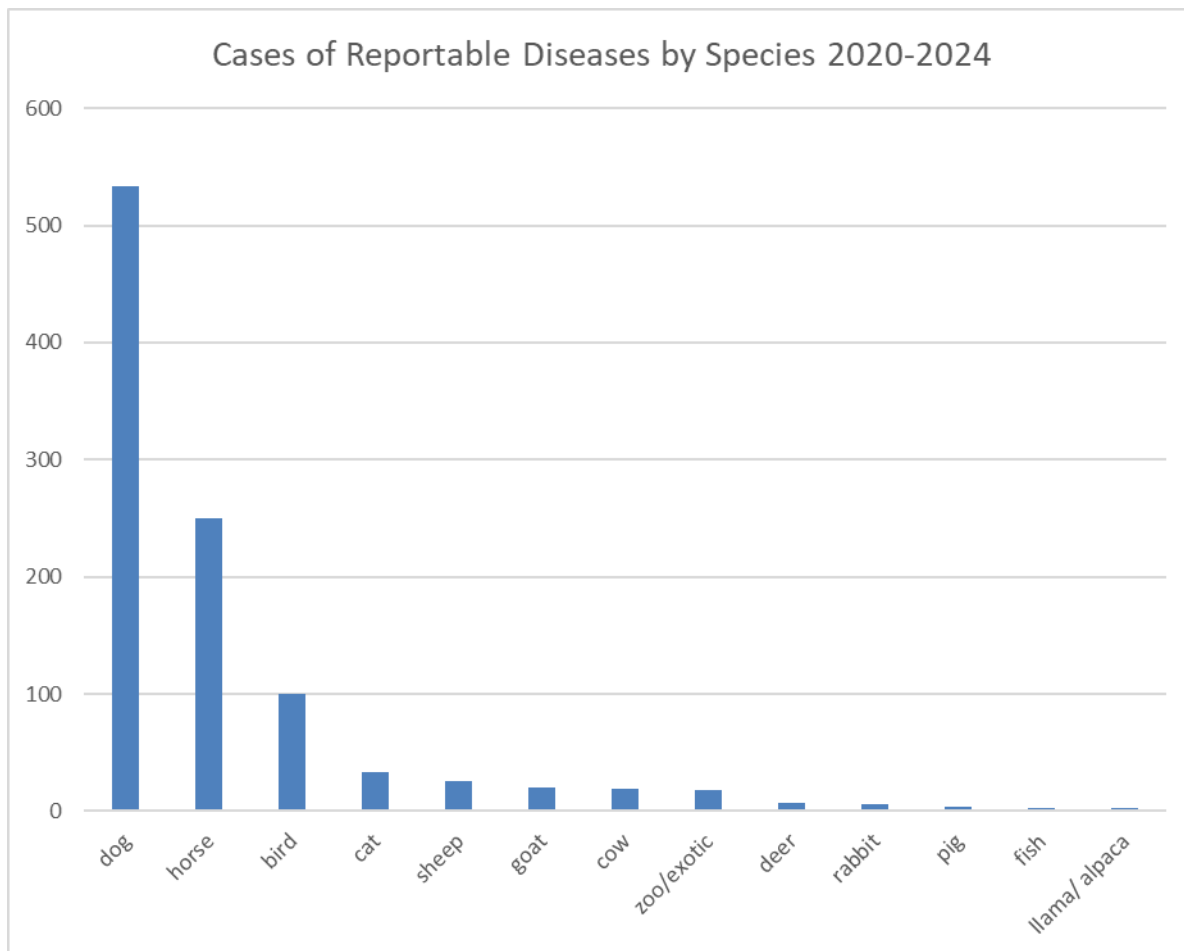
WSDA AHP compliance officers follow up on non-compliance with Washington's laws. Examples include missing, incomplete, and fraudulent CVI paperwork or complaints and concerns about illegal

importation. Depending on the infraction and number of offenses, enforcement is in the form of civil action, notifications of correction and intent, or monetary penalties. Notification of the violation and education to correct the issue are prioritized. WSDA does not have the authority to press criminal charges, prosecute, or revoke business licenses. Animal control or law enforcement may be asked to assist or take the case depending on the situation. The majority of small animal compliance cases at WSDA are dog cases involving out-of-compliance agencies or veterinarians for heartworm requirements as identified through audits on submitted CVIs. In 2024, 21 out of 52 (40%) dog investigations and had to do with dogs imported illegally into Washington. The majority of dog investigations are interstate imports, and approximately 8 (32%) of these were cases involving international dog importations.

WSDA relies on notifications from federal agencies, veterinarians, and the public about incoming animals and violations of Washington State import rules. Once an animal is in the state, if needed, WSDA can place a hold order or quarantine, or can return an animal to its origin state. Only certain federal agencies can return an animal to the departure country, and this rarely occurs.

Reportable diseases

Disease is an indicator of compromised animal health and poor animal welfare, causing pain, suffering, and even death. WSDA requires veterinarians and veterinary laboratories per [16-70 WAC](#) to report higher than expected events of diseased or dead animals, signs consistent with an animal disease from outside the U.S. (foreign animal disease), extremely contagious, or new and emerging diseases, zoonotic diseases, and/or those with significant economic impacts. The [WSDA Reportable Animal Disease \(RAD\)](#) tool is provided to help in the notification process of suspected or confirmed diagnoses of reportable diseases to WSDA, USDA, and Department of Health (DOH).

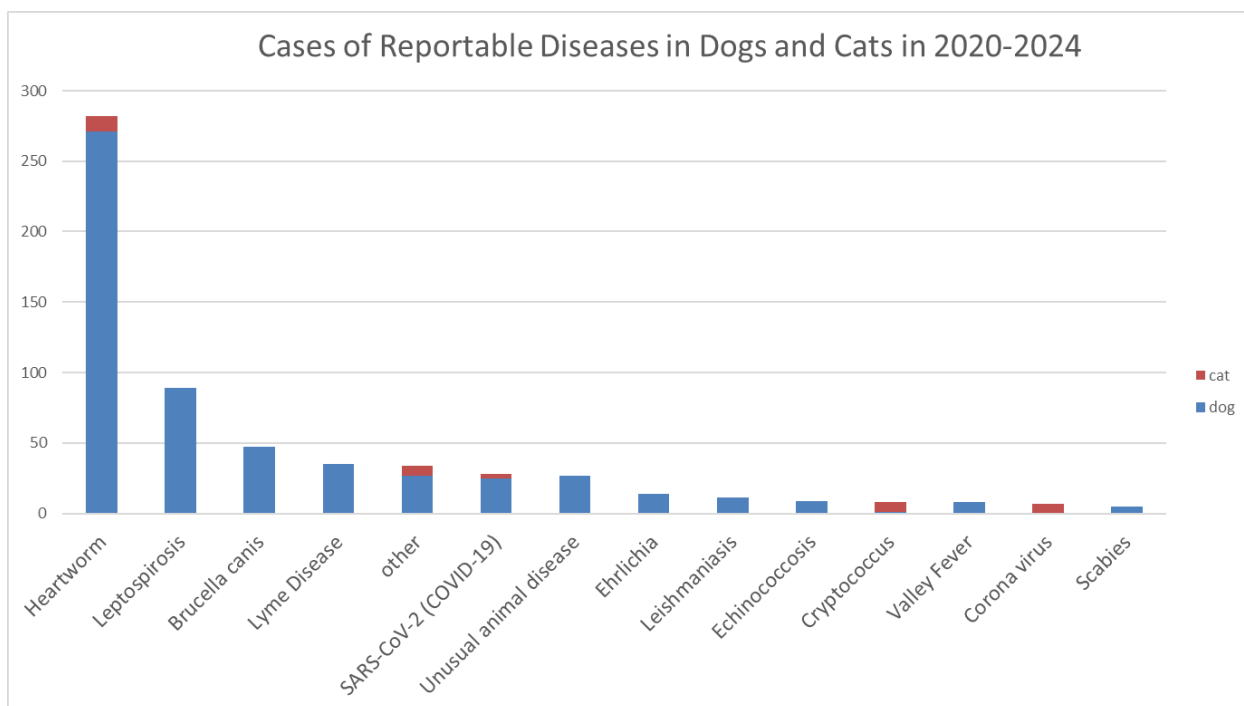


WSDA collects all reportable disease information in an in-house, “Animal Tracks” system that allows the AHP to monitor and track disease trends for all species. Cases of reports in the graph account for one premise/household with one or more lab-confirmed disease report(s) associated with a single disease event or outbreak. Of all the reportable disease cases to WSDA from 2020–2024, 52% were dogs, 24% in horses, 10% in birds (due to the avian influenza outbreak), and the remainder in other species including cats (3%), which speaks to the disease risks of companion animals in the state for both animal and human health.

Some reportable diseases are endemic or established in Washington, but are reportable to monitor state emerging and reportable disease trends. Other reportable diseases, such as foreign animal diseases, will trigger an immediate response from one of the WSDA veterinarians to initiate an animal health epidemiological investigation that may lead to containment, control, and eradication efforts. WSDA contacts the reporting veterinarian to make biosecurity, treatment or testing protocol recommendations and issue stop movement orders.

The AHP works closely with interagency partners in Washington on animal health and welfare issues that intersect with public health (e.g., DOH, local health jurisdictions (LHJs)) when a disease is zoonotic and environmental health (e.g., Department of Ecology, Department of Fish and Wildlife) when there is potential for disease spillover. [The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza](#) outbreak from

2022–2025 is a good example of this cross-agency collaboration. In 2025, three domestic cats were confirmed with HPAI after [ingesting contaminated raw pet food](#). Leptospirosis and *Brucella canis* are other examples of zoonotic diseases reportable to DOH. WSDA is required to report individual animal case reports with potential public health significance to DOH to safeguard human health from zoonotic disease. DOH shares case report information with LHJs for follow-up with people potentially exposed to recommend symptom watch and prophylactic medication as indicated, discuss preventive measures, and assist with laboratory monitoring or access to healthcare as needed. During this follow-up, public health collaborates with animal health partners to address both animal and human health considerations.

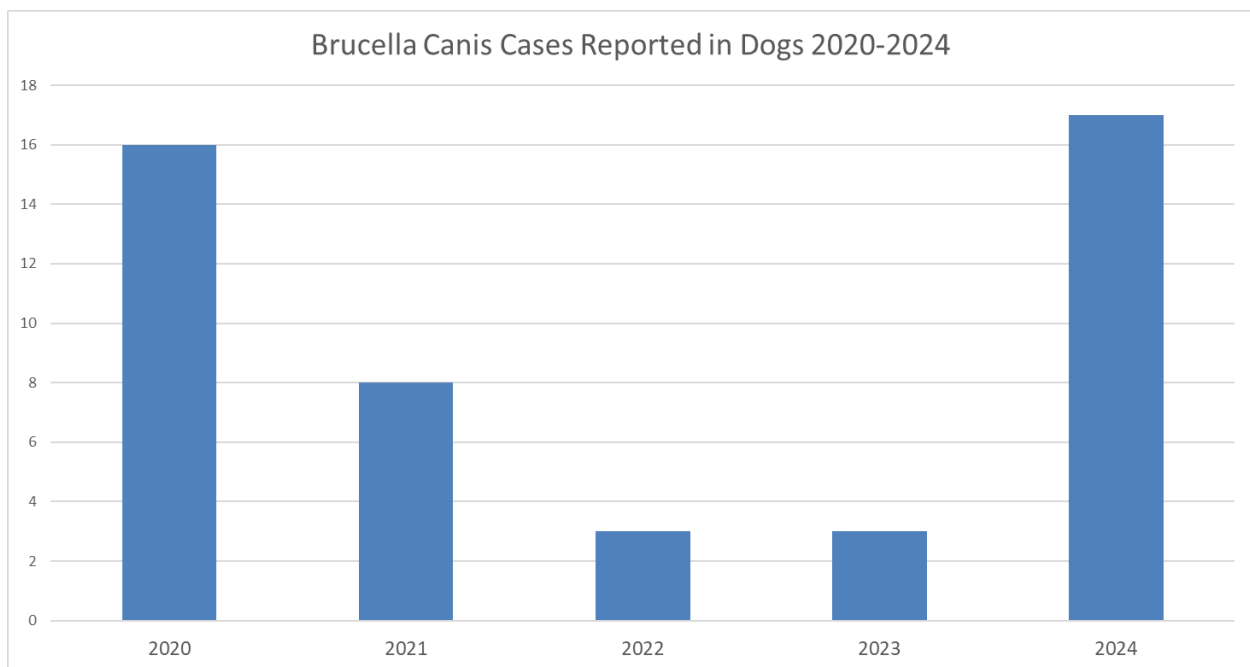


The graph above, demonstrating reportable diseases of dogs and cats, shows that heartworm is the most reported disease in Washington. Note that the “unusual animal disease” reflects cases of [canine respiratory disease](#) reported in 2023–2024. This is an example of how WSDA uses reports to monitor trends through time and geography to determine the animal health and welfare impacts, and if a disease is new or emerging in nature. Of the reportable diseases in companion animals in Washington, *Brucella canis* and heartworm are most commonly brought in through interstate or international importation of dogs.

WSDA’s rule in [WAC 16-54-065](#) prohibits the entry of any animal that is infected with or exposed to any infectious or communicable disease into Washington. The rule is consistent with WSDA’s statutory responsibility under [RCW 16.36.040](#) to prevent the introduction of infectious, contagious, communicable, or dangerous diseases affecting animals in this state. Often, import requirements will include animal health tests or vaccinations to protect Washington’s animals.

Canine Brucellosis

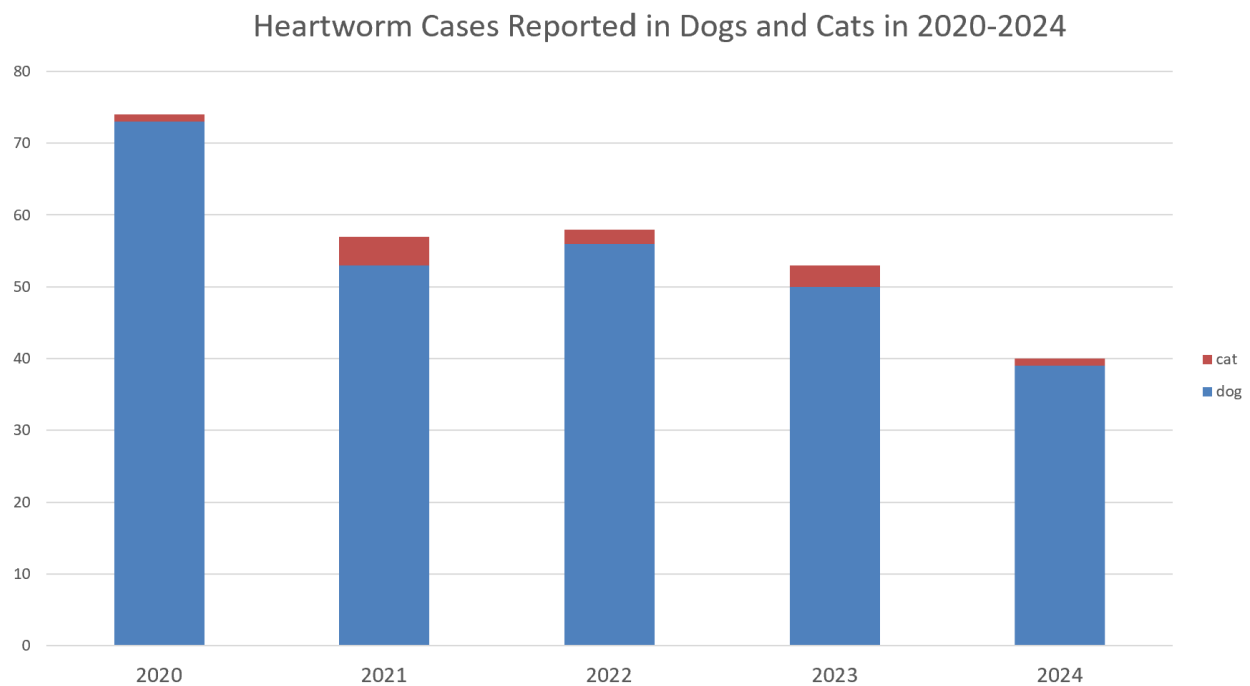
Canine (dog) Brucellosis, caused by *Brucella canis*, is a significant reproductive disease of dogs and can cause debilitating disease that results in costly treatments and euthanasia. The number of cases of dog brucellosis has increased in recent years in Washington. There is concern that increased importations of dogs originating from other parts of the U.S. or countries with higher prevalence of dog brucellosis are contributing to this increase. Of dog cases reported in Washington from 2005 through 2020, 54% originated from other U.S. states (TX, OK, GA, CA, AZ, NM, MT, HI), 23% originated internationally (Mexico, China, South Korea), 12% originated from dog breeders in Washington, and 12% had an unknown origin. Find more information here: [Best Practices for Brucella canis Prevention and Control USDA](#) and [Public Health Implications of Brucella canis Infections in Humans](#).



Heartworm

Although WSDA import rules require dogs six months of age or older to have a negative heartworm test or be on heartworm preventative, the disease continues to be the most reported disease of all animals for the last 5 years. The import rules were established a decade ago, around the time of Hurricane Katrina, to keep heartworm from becoming established in Washington. WSDA estimates heartworm is likely underreported. Only dogs, by law, have testing and medication requirements because [dogs are primary hosts for heartworm](#), and cats and ferrets, which are susceptible to heartworm infection but uncommon hosts, rarely develop the stage of heartworm that can be transmitted. Washington already has the mosquito vector needed for heartworm disease transmission. Reports peaked at 167 cases in 2019, but recent data suggesting persistent detections call into question whether the disease is becoming endemic in Washington's mosquito and animal population, likely in part due to illegal animal importation.

According to the [American Heartworm Society \(AHS\)](#), more than a million pets in the U.S. have heartworm despite the infection being preventable. Washingtonians adopt thousands of rescue dogs and cats every year, some with international origins and many with origins in the Southern U.S., where heartworm is common. This [AHS 2022 Map](#) suggests that heartworm is becoming established in Washington. For many years, the Washington State Veterinarian's Office has been tracking trends of the disease in the state. Almost every positive case includes travel history out of Washington and/or can be attributed to an adoption through a rescue. Many of these dog adopters are completely unaware of the positive status of the dog they adopt, and are confronted with expensive veterinary bills when the dog becomes clinically ill.



Monitoring disease trends, like dog Brucellosis and heartworm, allows WSDA to determine what rule changes or surveillance strategies are needed to prevent disease introduction and transmission. Endemic disease status signals that the disease is unlikely to be eradicated from the population, and actions or rules are adjusted to reflect those changes. Disease prevention, early detection, and reporting are key to protecting animal welfare in the state.

Animal welfare investigations for companion animals

In Washington, animal welfare, neglect, and cruelty investigations of companion animals occur at the local or county level, with animal control, local law enforcement or animal care organizations taking the lead. In Washington, WSDA veterinarians or investigators can aid in animal cruelty and neglect investigations when local resources are exhausted, but local law enforcement holds regulatory authority. A request can be submitted by law enforcement when local veterinarians cannot assist. The WSDA also provides [guides for veterinarians reporting cases of animal cruelty and neglect](#) for livestock. WSDA does not license or register, conduct inspections, or audit companion animal

entities (including pet stores, companion animal rescues, animal shelters, or breeding operations). There is no companion animal program or dedicated funding for these activities.

National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials (NASAHO) Survey

The role of state veterinarians across the country has traditionally been focused on livestock and agriculture, resulting in regulatory authority over animal welfare of companion animals to vary dramatically across the U.S. The National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials (NASAHO) is an organization comprised of the [state and territorial animal health officials of the United States](#). The mission of this group is to work collectively to safeguard animal and public health as well as the food supply by working with federal, state, and industry partners to develop science-based policies. State Animal Health Officials (SAHOs) or State Veterinarians are often responsible for reviewing, leading, and implementing best management practices, animal welfare rules, laws, standards, and programs.

In 2022, the NASAHO Animal Welfare Committee distributed a survey entitled “NASAHO Animal Welfare Investigations Survey,” to better understand the landscape of animal welfare regulatory authority around neglect/cruelty investigations in the U.S. The survey was distributed to all 50 State Veterinarians, with 41 responses. In 85% of participating states, local law enforcement or animal control has primary authority over animal welfare investigations and complaints. When an animal welfare complaint is filed, 75% of a state’s primary role is to support the local authority. Forty-five percent of State Animal Health Officials had no animal welfare authority over any species, with only 18% with any authority over companion animals. Over half of the states reported that their primary role with regard to animal care standards is providing outreach and education. In 25% of states, there is no funding for animal welfare investigative work, while the other 60% of states use general fund dollars that have been allocated for other purposes. States report differences in licensing various types of animal facilities (e.g., commercial animal agriculture premises, equine facilities, feedlots, etc.). Some states do license companion animal entities, including pet stores (47%), companion animal rescues (35%), animal shelters (61%), and breeding operations (34%). Licensing allows states to audit animal health records, conduct welfare inspections, and document concerns.

Four major themes persisted throughout the survey. First, SAHOs identified a need for a consistent national model to determine the right authority for animal welfare investigations. Departments of Agriculture and Boards of Animal Health are mandated with additional responsibility for companion animal programs without being given additional resources, competing with other critical regulatory functions being overshadowed by welfare investigations. Second, securing the funding and resources needed for investigations is critical to carry out the work. Most states report that although they have sufficient statutory and regulatory authority, they do not have the resources, time, staffing, or funding to regulate animal welfare. Welfare investigations are perpetually backlogged, time-consuming, and can take weeks, months, or even years to come to a complete resolution. Next, there is a need to establish designated training for animal welfare officers. This may require creating a dedicated position (e.g., Animal Welfare Operations Director at the state level) that can train others to provide assistance and subject matter expertise to law enforcement. Finally, SAHOs identified gaps in the lack of state standards of care for different animals (companion animals vs livestock). Minimum standards are not consistently required at the local/county level, and new animal welfare standards

are being passed by ballot initiative. The requirements for animal care are often vague, resulting in significant variability in how state animal cruelty laws are enforced between counties, potentially creating frustration for stakeholders.

Some states report successes in closing these gaps by securing legislative funding to establish a companion animal program at the state level. Those programs may have regulatory oversight, require licensing and/or registration of all companion animal entities, maintain a statewide database, conduct inspections, respond to animal welfare complaints, and conduct training of local/county-level animal welfare/control officers and veterinarians.

Washington State Department of Health (DOH)

The DOH works with others to protect and improve the health of all people in Washington. The Washington State Public Health Veterinarian position is currently located in the Office of Health and Science (OHS), reporting to the Director of OHS. Currently, only 37 states have designated State Public Health Veterinarians (SPHVs). An SPHV is a government-appointed veterinary professional responsible for overseeing the intersection of animal and human health within a state. They are veterinarians whose primary professional responsibility is the promotion of human population health. SPHVs play a critical role in surveillance, prevention, and control of infectious and zoonotic diseases. Effective surveillance, prevention, and control of these diseases requires expertise in both human and animal population medicine and maintenance of strong cooperative working relationships with state agricultural and wildlife health officials.

DOH supports WSDA and USDA APHIS in their animal importation and enforcement work by collaborating on cases of zoonotic diseases in imported animals to identify and educate exposed people (e.g., [Brucella canis](#)). [DOH does not enforce these regulations](#) but does maintain awareness of the requirements and communicates these to LHJs or individuals who inquire about the regulations. DOH has been involved in and supported LHJs in cases where dogs exposed to rabies were brought into the state. For a complete list of notifiable conditions and authorities, see [WAC 246-101-805](#) and [WAC 246-101-810](#).

Learn more about Washington's public health system here: [Washington's Public Health System | Washington State Department of Health](#).

COUNTY/LOCAL

Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs)

Washington state is a ["home rule" state](#), meaning that local health departments/entities (LHJs), which are local government agencies, have public health authority in their jurisdictions. In Washington, the governmental public health system consists of [35 local public health agencies or local health jurisdictions](#). These LHJs work with DOH and are governed by county legislative authorities or health districts. Local health boards and local health officers within these jurisdictions are responsible for preserving life and health. LHJ activities may include permitting and inspection of

animal businesses (see [Pet Business Program - King County, Washington](#)); collaboration with local animal control agencies/animal shelters on rabies or other zoonotic diseases; investigation of complaints or disease outbreaks linked to animals in public settings, including pet stores, flea markets, or other places where animals are displayed or sold; euthanasia of animals that need to be tested for rabies; and enforcement of DOH Washington Administrative Codes (WACs). Public health (DOH and Public Health–Seattle & King County) will need to maintain a relationship with CDC-registered Animal Care Facilities (ACFs) along with the state's [CDC Port Health Station](#) at SeaTac airport to address any zoonotic disease concerns in animals coming into the state. This may require additional staffing and resources from the state when the ACFs open in Seattle.

Animal Control and Local Law Enforcement (AC and LLE)

The primary enforcement of [the prevention and cruelty of animals](#) lies with the coordinated efforts of animal control, law enforcement, and partner agencies ([RCW 16.52.015](#)). City and county governments retain power at the local level and define the nature and scope of municipal services needed. As a result, there is variation in the way animal welfare laws and rules are enforced and how resources are allocated.

In preparation for the animal welfare assessment survey, 108 animal control and law enforcement agencies were identified as providing animal control or welfare services in Washington. These agencies did not necessarily have an animal control department, animal control officer, or animal control funding, but were required to provide those services regardless. There are an estimated 133 animal control officers statewide. Few of the tribal nations of Washington have an animal control officer or animal control department. Approximately four of the 29 federally recognized tribes in the state have an Animal Control Division or Animal Control Department with one animal control officer. Unless a tribe is contracted with local animal control, the responsibility usually falls to tribal police. Animal control and law enforcement agencies have crucial but distinct roles in protecting animal welfare and public safety. In many cases, animal control agencies collaborate closely with or are an arm of local law enforcement at the city or county level. Some counties in Washington have integrated animal control units within their sheriff's offices, where animal control officers (ACOs) work alongside sworn law enforcement personnel. Washington law states animal care and control agencies may enforce [Chapter 16.52 RCW: PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS](#) in a county or city only if the legislative authority of that area has entered into a contract with the agency to enforce Chapter 16.52 RCW. Additional information on Washington animal control administration and examples of local policies and contracts are found [here](#).

Even though AC and LLE share some responsibilities, the primary distinction remains, ACOs receive specialized training in handling and restraining animals and may not carry the same level of law enforcement authority (such as arrest powers) or equipment (like firearms) as police officers. Law enforcement agencies (police or sheriff's offices) have broader jurisdiction over criminal matters and are brought in when a situation involves clear criminal behavior, poses an immediate threat to public safety, or requires a search warrant. Law enforcement personnel receive comprehensive training in criminal investigations and have broad authority to enforce state and local laws, which can include arresting offenders for animal-related crimes. These different but overlapping functions ensure that

animal-related issues receive both specialized attention from animal control and the full force of criminal law from police when necessary. This dual approach aims to promote humane treatment of animals while safeguarding public safety across the state.

The [Washington Animal Control Association \(WACA\)](#) partners with [Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission \(WSCJTC\)](#), providing the only [in-person training](#) for animal control and law enforcement officers in the state. The [National Animal Care and Control Association \(NACA\)](#) has online certification and training programs.

The LINK

Animal control services are vital for the communities of Washington in part because of the correlation between animal and human abuse. The [National Link Coalition](#) is listed on the [Washington Federation of Animal Care and Control Agencies' \(WaFed\)](#) website as the most comprehensive list of animal and human [abuse resources](#). The site provides guidance, resources, and a [color-coded list](#) for identifying and reporting abuse in every state. A featured article from the [Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\) Law Enforcement Bulletin \(LEB\)](#) speaks to this link, relevant federal legislation, and the importance of a multidisciplinary, cross-reporting approach. This connection is seen on WA DOH webpages, and includes links to state laws about child and adult abuse in the 'other relevant RCWs' section for animal care, animal control, and veterinary professionals.

Together, federal, state, and county agencies and organizations work to protect and improve cat and dog animal welfare in Washington, but some gaps remain.

Demographics

When considering how best to address welfare for dogs and cats in Washington, it is important to factor in animal population size, origins of these populations, ownership demographics, access to care, and tribal perspectives. This foundational knowledge can help determine if resource allocations and solutions are appropriate and can establish benchmarks to assess the success of those solutions over time.

CAT AND DOG POPULATIONS

Limited data is available on dog and cat population numbers and pet overpopulation. Based on conversations with subject matter experts and animal welfare agencies, there is no known statewide survey or method in place for collecting this information. Therefore, an exact number of animals currently in the state or by county is not available. There is intake and outcome data, predominantly via animal care agency data, as well as national estimates available, largely based on the U.S. Census Bureau surveys. However, marginalized and underserved communities, where people and their animals might not interact with these establishments, are missed. For this reason, some organizations, such as [Pets for Life](#), conduct door-to-door community data collection, particularly in underserved locations.

Number of animals and pet-owning households nationally

The following data are national trends from the [2024 AVMA Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook](#), covering a variety of topics from pet population and owner demographics to spending on veterinary care. The American Pet Products Association (APPA) report looks at similar parameters with a focus on the pet industry. Both are national estimates, with comparable general trends.

A national estimate does not necessarily equate to accurate results of a particular state, nor county or city within a state, and provides a general picture. Unowned dogs and cats (such as populations cared for by shelters or stray animals) are not included in these estimates. Thus, exercise caution when interpreting the following information, especially on its own and without context. The [2024 APPA National Pet Owners Survey](#) reported 58 million households own dogs and 40 million own cats. In their 2024 Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) reported:

Statistic	Dogs	Cats
Percentage of U.S. households owning	45.5	32.1
Total number of U.S. households owning	59.8M	42.2M
Average number per pet-owning household	1.5	1.8
Total number in the U.S.	89.7M	73.8M

In the same survey, the AVMA said the following about pet populations and pet ownership trends for the United States:

*"From 1996–2024, the dog population has steadily increased, from 52.9 million to a new peak of 89.7 million. That's after taking a slight dip in 2023 to 80.1 million in 2023 from 88.3 million in 2022. Meanwhile, the cat population has remained relatively stable in size, from 59.8 million in 1996 to 73.8 million in 2024. The peak population happened in 2006 with 81.7 million cats. The number of pet-owning households logically follows the same trend, with dog owning households increasing at a faster rate—from 31.3 million in 1996 to 59.8 million in 2024—than cat-owning households, which went from 27 million to 42.1 million in that same timeframe."*⁷

⁷ Kent, M. (2024). 2024 AVMA Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook. American Veterinary Medical Association.

The APPA also reported an increase in overall pet ownership between 2023 and 2024, attributing the change to Gen Z. This generation leads in multi-pet ownership; 70% of Gen Z pet owners have two or more pets⁸.

Number of animals and pet-owning households in Washington

World Population Review is one of the few sources offering a breakdown of pet ownership statistics by state. The website lists the [Forbes Advisor](#) and the AVMA Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook as its references. In 2025, the total Washington households owning a pet is reported as 62.7% (2.1 million). This percentage can be further divided into:

Statistic	Dogs	Cats
Percentage of Washington households owning	42.8	30.5
Average number per pet-owning household	1.5	1.8

Note: World Population Review ownership percentages refer to the percentage of total Washington households that own some form of pet, at least one dog, or at least one cat. Many households have multiple pet types. Idaho has the highest dog ownership rate at 58.3%. Vermont has the [highest rate of cat ownership](#) at 44.6%⁹.

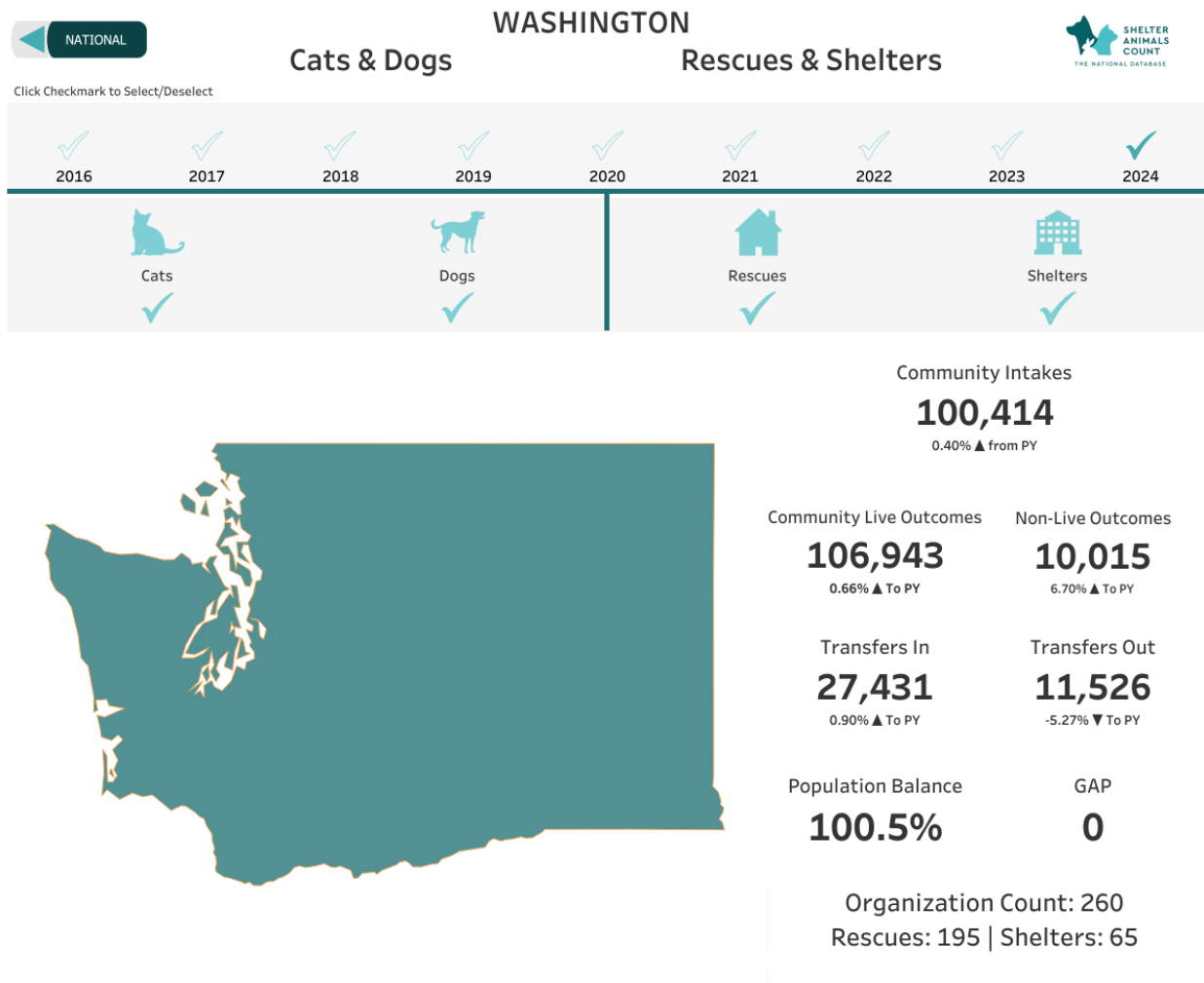
Number of shelter/rescue animal intakes in Washington

In 2024, twenty-six percent of the total number of animal rescues and shelters in Washington, partnering with [Shelter Animals Count](#) (a national animal sheltering organization database) contributed data. Statewide, there were 40,868 dogs and 59,546 cats (100,414 total) recorded as [community intakes](#). These are unowned animals entering a sheltering animal care agency and do not include transfers. The years 2021 and 2022 saw increased community intakes of 6–11% from 2020, with a roughly 2.5% community intake decrease from 2022–2023. Intake numbers remained steady, with less than a 1% difference between 2023 and 2024.

⁸ (2025). *Manufacturers & Pet Product Brands Industry Trends and Stats*. American Pet Products Association (APPA). <https://americanpetproducts.org/industry-trends-and-stats>

⁹ Pet Ownership Statistics by State 2024. World Population Review. Retrieved February 6, 2025, from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/pet-ownership-statistics-by-state>

State Animal Welfare Statistics Dashboard



Washington sheltering organizations saw a [population balance](#) of 100.5% in 2024. This means the shelter animal population in Washington was stable. There were almost the same number of animals coming into shelters (intakes) as left shelters (outcomes). However, this data was reported from approximately a quarter of the total sheltering animal care agencies in the state and might not be representative of the population balance statewide or at the county level.

“[Shelter Animals Count’s national dataset](#) is a combination of actual and estimated intake and outcome numbers for cats and dogs derived from organization-level data reported to Shelter Animals Count from over 6,000 organizations. Accuracy of estimated data is highest at national aggregation. State-level data has a higher level of uncertainty and is intended for general informational use only.” For more information: [State Level Animal Welfare Statistics Dashboard - Shelter Animals Count](#).

ANIMAL OWNERSHIP

Ownership behaviors and trends are important to consider. Understanding where pet-owning households acquire cats and dogs and perspectives on human-animal relationships can help identify and implement solutions to animal welfare needs. Additionally, it is important to understand how other variables impact an owner's decisions because animal welfare ties closely with community welfare.

Based on the [Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program](#), as of 2024, [Washington state has a population of about 8 million](#) people, making it the 13th most populated state in the country. King, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, and Clark counties are the most populated in Washington. Of the roughly 3 million households statewide, approximately 38% are below the [ALICE \(Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed\) threshold](#). The [ALICE threshold](#) is defined as the minimum average income a household needs to afford basic costs, calculated for all U.S. counties. Ten percent of these households earn below the [Federal Poverty Level \(FPL\)](#) while 28% earn above FPL but not enough to afford basic expenses (e.g., housing, food, childcare, transportation, health care, etc.). According to the [State of ALICE in Washington 2025 Report](#), “[t]his rate placed Washington 15th among all states and the District of Columbia (with 1st representing the lowest rate of hardship).” Using the AVMA Pet population formula from the Pet Ownership and Demographic Sourcebook, there are approximately 2 million animals in the state living in households below ALICE.

Despite the steady increase in pet populations, [average annual spending on veterinary care per household](#) declined by 4% between 2023 and 2024. Dog owners' veterinary expenses decreased by 7% to \$580, while cat owners saw a 6% increase, averaging \$433. Overall, veterinary care accounted for about one-third of total pet-related expenses, with the remaining two-thirds spent on items such as food, medication, and toys.

Similarly, socioeconomic factors into animal acquisition and is one of many variables (such as culture) influencing [worldviews](#) and affecting people's perceptions and decisions about animals and animal welfare.

Sources: Where are Washington's dogs and cats coming from?

Knowing which sources contribute to Washington's pet populations is essential when addressing animal welfare issues. Each source type comes with pros, cons, and potential animal welfare concerns. Many factors influence this depending on the community, current resources, and socioeconomic factors. These variables affect how much is initially spent (cost) when acquiring a cat or dog. Data specific to Washington is not widely collected.

Socioeconomics and impacts on dog ownership

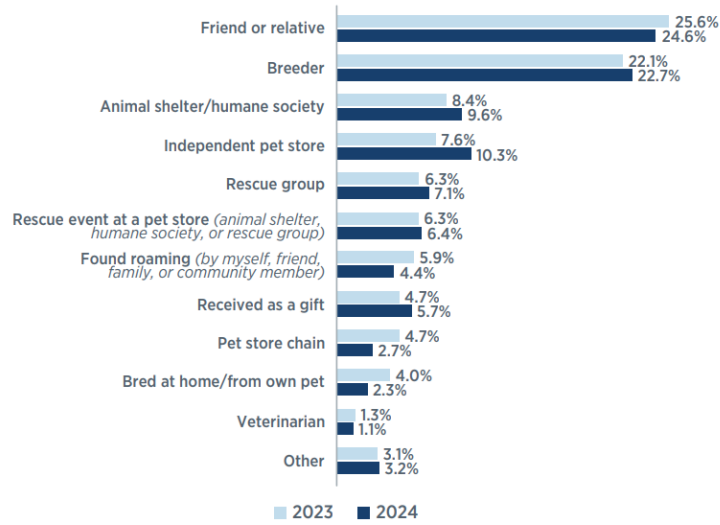
A study published in 2024 surveyed dog-owning Americans to find out where they got their dog and what happened if they had lost a dog. The results found the proportion of people who acquire a dog from friends and family increases as income level decreases. From this study, 19 percent of people

earning >\$150K, compared to 44 percent of those earning <\$15K annually, got a dog from friends and family. Those earning \$75K+ most commonly went to a breeder, pet store, or online, followed by a shelter or rescue as the second most common source. As this study focused on specific locations, the results do not represent the entire U.S.¹⁰

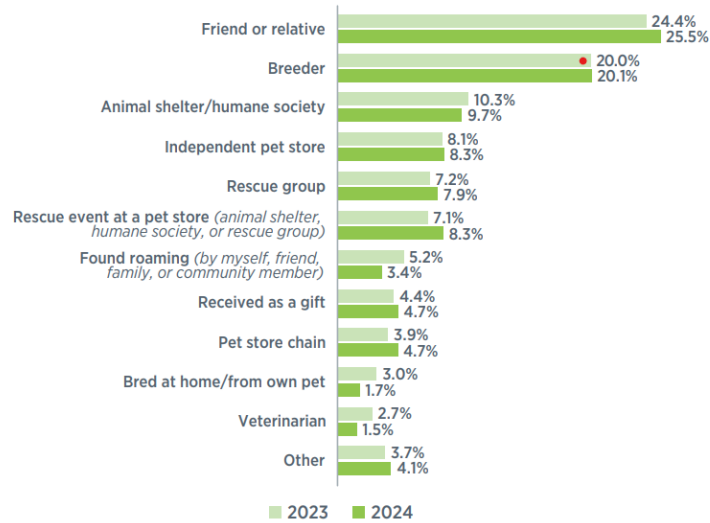
According to the 2024 AVMA survey, of pet owners who acquired a new dog in the prior two years, the most common source reported was a friend or relative, followed by a breeder. The most common source for cat owners was also a friend, but about 20% indicated that the cat was found free roaming. Additionally, the survey reported the purchase price was \$100– \$499 for 27.4% of respondents, while the majority paid nothing, indicating the pet was a gift or was found.

¹⁰ Todd, Z. (2025, January 29). *Psychology Today*. Where Do People Get Their Dogs From? <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/fellow-creatures/202501/where-do-people-get-their-dogs-from?msocid=2e46fb33f75d68421edbefeff67069ce>

Source of dogs acquired in the past two years, as reported in 2023 and 2024

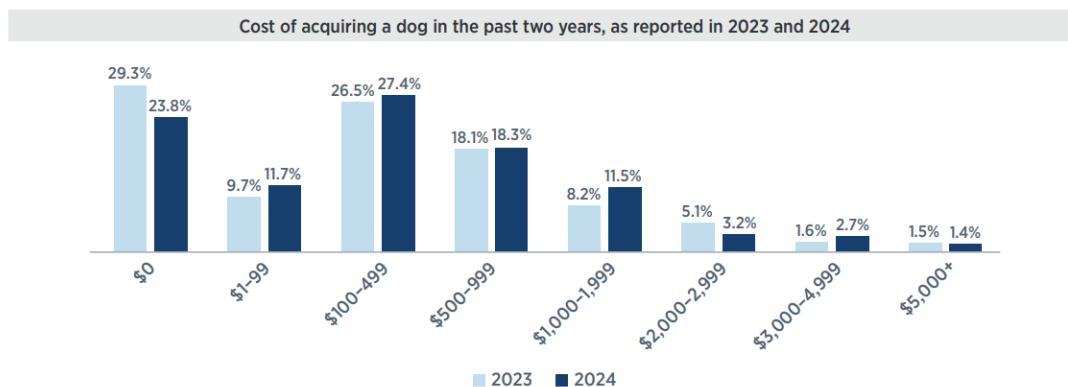


Source of cats acquired in past two years, as reported in 2023 and 2024

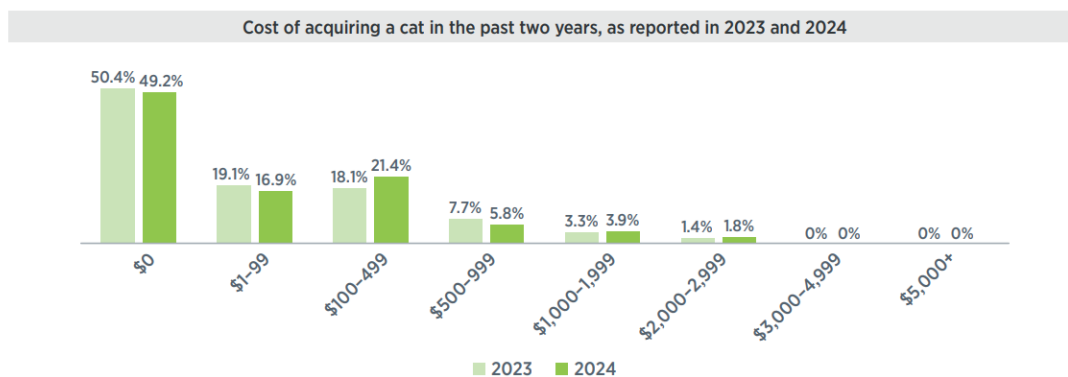


To address the possibility that owners acquired more than one pet in the past two years, owners were asked for the source of the last dog or cat they acquired.

Source: 2024 AVMA Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook (see Footnote 7)



To address the possibility that pet owners acquired more than one dog in the past two years, owners were asked how much they paid for the last dog they acquired.



To address the possibility that pet owners acquired more than one cat in the past two years, owners were asked how much they paid for the last cat they acquired.

Source: 2024 AVMA Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook (see Footnote 7)

Note: This represents a trend and is meant to provide insight into these topics, but state and county-level data could yield a different result.

Transportation and relocation

Trends in pet ownership impact animal movement, and animal movement affects population numbers. Movement can be intrastate (e.g., animal transferred within a state), interstate (e.g., animal transferred within a country from one state to another), or international (e.g., animal imported from outside the U.S.).

Transportation does not only encompass sale/resale. Transport services have long been essential to caring for unowned animals to improve welfare. A few examples:

- Increase chances of adoption or sale:** Areas with an overpopulation of cats and dogs or shelters and rescues at or over capacity can transport them to locations where there is higher demand for pets.

- **Resource needs:** Not all animal welfare agencies provide the same services or services at the same frequency. Transport allows animals to receive essential care (e.g., spay/neuter, medical care for more complicated cases).
- **Natural disasters:** Wildfires (such as those in Los Angeles, California in 2024), hurricanes, tornadoes, etc., have been a catalyst for transporting unowned animals from affected areas to other cities, counties, or states for care and adoption.

The relationships between partnering organizations and well-planned transport programs are paramount to ensure the best animal welfare possible. Some examples of animal welfare concerns of poorly executed animal transportation are increased stress during transport, potential for disease transmission to other animals (or people), introduction of disease or reintroduction of an eliminated disease, and knowingly or unknowingly transporting a pregnant animal¹¹. The Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) includes guidelines around animal transport in the [Guidelines for Standards of Animal Care in Animal Shelters](#) document. The [OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code](#) has recommendations for a myriad of species depending on transport type (air, land, or sea).

ANIMAL CARE ORGANIZATIONS

The [animal welfare glossary](#) on the Shelter Animals Count (SAC) website, a non-profit national animal sheltering database, contains commonly used terms in animal welfare. They define two main animal welfare organization (AWO) categories:

- **Sheltering:** Entities that intake animals into their care (e.g., animal shelters, rescues, and sanctuaries)
- **Non-sheltering:** Those that do not specifically intake or house animals but provide animal services (e.g., mobile spay/neuter, animal control). View a full list of definitions [here](#).

When compiling the initial list of animal care entities for the assessment survey, 220 in-state organizations were identified after removing duplicates. In comparison, SAC has 260 (195 rescues and 65 shelters) that have contributed data since the database was founded. The number of organizations serving Washington is not exact and is subject to change. There are likely more rescue and volunteer groups, as well as other agencies providing animal welfare-related services. However, the number is consistent with what is recorded by national entities, like SAC, and can be built upon. From this information, SAC provides a collaborative account, beyond estimates, of animal sheltering and community services data to positively impact animals and communities. According to the Washington State Department of Health, 29 of these animal welfare agencies are licensed to provide veterinary services to low-income households per [SB 5004-2019-20](#). The Best Friends Animal Society website mapped 21 low-cost clinics, 21 voucher or assistance programs, and 3 mobile

¹¹ [AVMA Axon]. (2024). *Dogs as pets: Responsible sourcing and welfare* [Video]. AVMA Axon. <https://axon.avma.org/local/catalog/view/product.php?productid=327>

clinics¹². Veterinary clinics not partnered with a non-profit were not included. Appendix D has a link to this tool, which includes other maps, such as a state-level transportation connection map.

Even in counties where there are animal health and welfare resources, there may be areas of a county where people are unable to access or afford basic services for themselves, let alone their animals. This is why it is beneficial to have sheltering and non-sheltering organizations in communities statewide and access to their community outreach programs and animal services, such as client education and resources for low-cost (or free) animal food, supplies, and medical care.

State-level data

— Washington

Average Adoptions:

Dogs – 158

Cats – 309

Average Community Intakes:

Dogs – 193

Cats – 317

State Data:

Number of Orgs Reporting – 260

Shelters – 65

Rescues – 195

Per Capita Data:

Adoptions – 12.0

Community Intakes – 13.1

Non-Live Outcomes – 1.3

State-level Data Methodology

Average Adoptions = Total adoptions in the state/Total # of organizations in the state

Average Community Intakes = Total community intakes in the state/Total # of organizations in the state

Adoptions per capita = Total adoptions/State population *1,000

Community intakes per capita = Total community intakes/State population *1,000

Non-live outcomes per capita = Total non-live outcomes/State population *1,000

“[Shelter Animals Count’s national dataset](#) is a combination of actual and estimated intake and outcome numbers for cats and dogs derived from organization-level data reported to Shelter Animals Count from over 6,000 organizations. Accuracy of estimated data is highest at national aggregation. State-level data has a higher level of uncertainty and is intended for general informational use only.”

See the Survey section for more information related to Washington’s animal care and animal control.

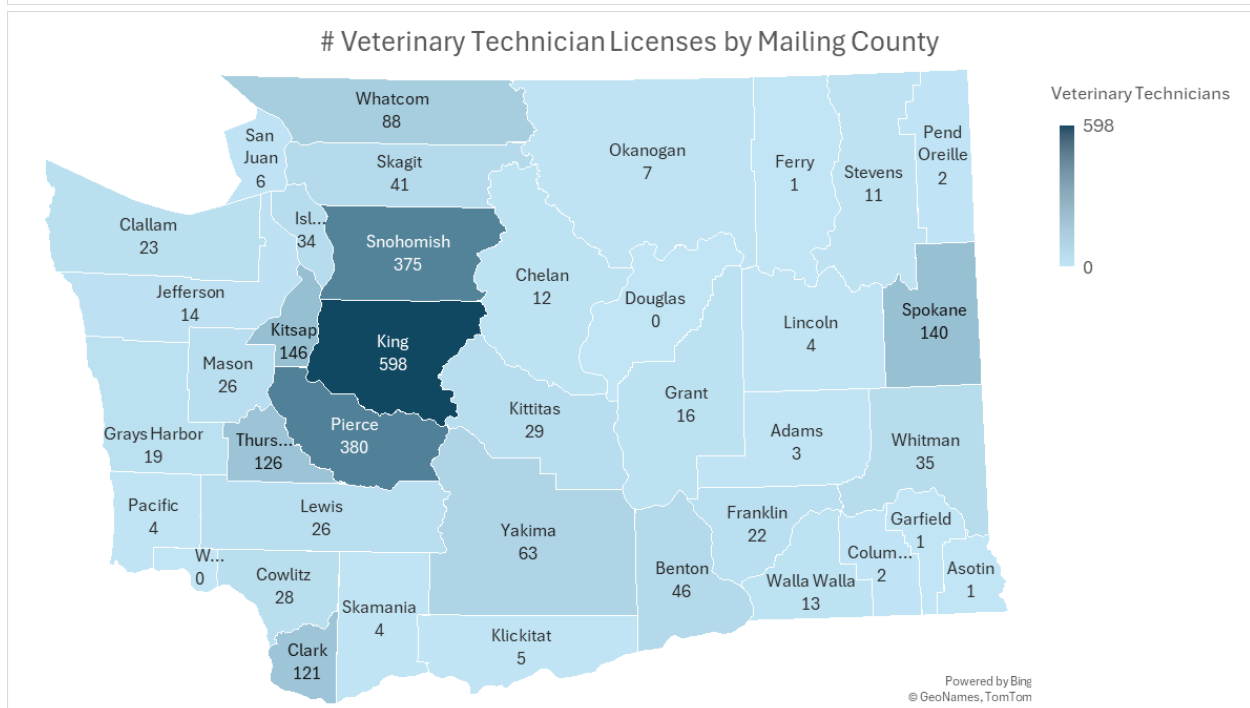
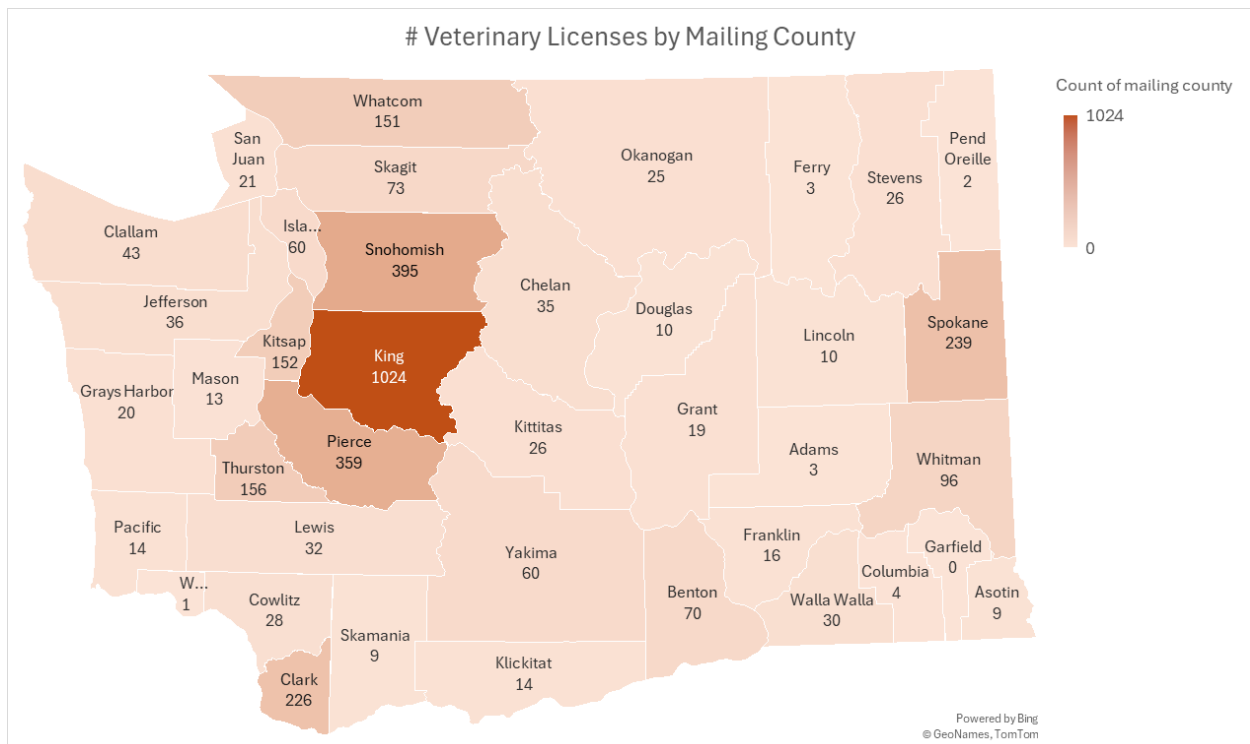
¹² Best Friends Animal Society (n.d.). *Tools for Shelters and Rescues*. Best Friends Network Partners. <https://bestfriends.org/network/resources-tools/tools>

VETERINARY PROFESSIONALS

Numbers and distribution

According to the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), the state has 4,711 active veterinary licenses. 3,543 of those licenses are associated with a Washington mailing address. There is a total of 2,747 active veterinary technician licenses, 2,483 with a Washington mailing address. The remaining number of licenses have a mailing address in another state, country, or incomplete data. Without additional information, it is difficult to break down the exact number of veterinary professionals in Washington or by county, as the mailing address might not be the same as the county or state where a veterinary professional lives or works.

The [Veterinary Care Accessibility Project \(VCAP\)](#) provides the number and statewide distribution of veterinary employees and veterinary hospitals. This information is from ESRI and US Census data. Although VCAP focuses on companion animal care, this information does not identify the practice type, specialization, or species focus. The [DOH](#) began implementing the collection of all health care professionals' demographic information on January 1, 2025, per the Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB 1503) [here](#). This data could be used to identify trends and fill data gaps around veterinary professionals including specialty, if currently practicing, and practice location.



The Washington State Association of Veterinary Technicians (WSAVT) conducted a Salary Survey report (2022). *“Due to the chronic compensation issues for Veterinary Technicians and the rapid changes to standard industry wages, the WSAVT has decided to invest in a salary survey that will take place every 2 years. This will allow us to collect and share this important data. This survey was sent to all Licensed Veterinary Technicians in Washington.”* 720 respondents resided in Washington and *“include licensed veterinary technicians, unregistered veterinary assistants, practice managers,*

academician, veterinary technician students, receptionist, and other veterinary medical professionals.” For the full report, including demographic and workforce data, see the [WSAVT Salary Survey report \(2022\)](#).

Animal welfare is a core aspect of the veterinary profession. Each student graduating from a veterinary or veterinary technician program takes a professional oath as an outward commitment and acknowledgement of their responsibility to public health and society by protecting animal health and welfare and preventing animal suffering. Washington has one accredited [veterinary school](#), four accredited [veterinary technician programs](#) at five different locations, and one National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA)/[Approved Veterinary Assistant \(AVA\) program](#). Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC) and Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine (WSU CVM) are investigating the potential of a partnership for an embedded licensed veterinary technician (LVT) training program at WSU.

Workforce trends

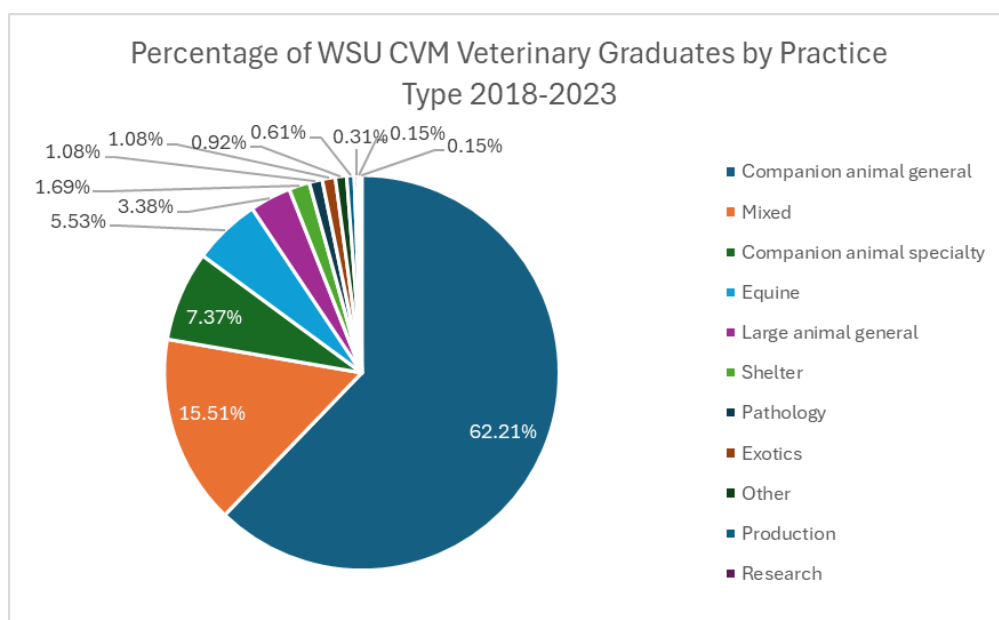
Based on the AVMA’s national [cat and dog population trends](#), it seems there is an increased need for and expected growth of veterinary services. However, pet population numbers do not consider other factors affecting demand, such as the cost of care, disposable income, or pet owners’ perceptions of the value of veterinary care. These and many other factors, such as access to care, drive pet owner spending and how often an owner would seek care for their pet. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) predicts a faster-than-average, 19% projected employment growth for veterinary professionals between 2023–2033, mostly to replace workers choosing different occupations or retiring (see [here](#) and [here](#)). The Brakke Veterinary Workforce Forecast project found the current veterinary institutions are sufficient to meet demand for veterinary services driven by pet ownership, available disposable income, and consumer spending on veterinary services to 2035¹³. Beyond 2035 is where the number of veterinarians could outpace demand. As stated in the study, this is aggregate, national-level data on companion animal veterinarians and might not reflect workforce needs at the state-level or in other locales (e.g., rural communities) or professional focus (e.g., food animal, specialists).

The 2025 AVMA report on the Economic State of the Veterinary Profession surveyed all graduating veterinary professionals in 2024 with an overall response rate of 81.7% for U.S. schools and 28.4% for Caribbean schools, with a total of 3,173 respondents providing data for analysis. Nationally, between 2020–2024, almost three-quarters of new veterinary graduates accepted a position in companion animal practice (e.g., cats, dogs, rabbits, hamsters, etc.). Of those accepting an

¹³ MacLachlan, M. J., Volk, J., & Doherty, C. (2025). Incorporating model selection and uncertainty into forecasts of economic conditions in companion animal clinical veterinarian labor markets. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 263(2), 240-247. Retrieved Jun 4, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.24.09.0624>

internship, 76% focused on companion animals. Aside from new graduates, companion animal practices employed the largest number of veterinarians. Regardless of practice type, a majority of respondents were recorded as living and working in suburban areas. The majority of veterinarians never considered leaving the profession; however, there continues to be an opportunity for retention efforts as 8.6% contemplated leaving¹⁴.

WSU CVM provided aggregate data collected by veterinary students on WSU Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) 2018–2023 graduating classes. Information was gathered based on online presence, such as LinkedIn profiles, clinic websites, and clinic social media. Graduates with no online information were not included. Between 2018–2023, there were 776 veterinary graduates from WSU CVM. Data from 651 of these graduates was available to determine the practice area. Approximately 30% (205 out of 674) were initially employed in Washington in this time frame. King, Spokane, and Pierce counties employed the most WSU CVM veterinary graduates.



Nationally, and in the state, the number of veterinary establishments has increased. Between 2009–2022, the number of veterinary establishments (brick and mortar) increased 18.5% nationally. Washington had roughly 11% increase to 855 veterinary establishments between 2012–2021¹⁵.

¹⁴ McCulloch, K., MS, Doherty, C., DVM MBA CBV, & Ouedraogo, F. B., PhD (2025). *AVMA Report on the Economic State of the Veterinary Profession*. American Veterinary Medical Association.

¹⁵ Clarridge, C., & Mallenbaum, C. (2024, May 13). *Washington's pets need more vets*. Axios Seattle. <https://www.axios.com/local/seattle/2024/05/13/vet-shortage-seattle-washington>

Survey: Washington State Companion Animal Welfare Needs Assessment

SURVEY OF ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS AND ANIMAL CONTROL AGENCIES

JUNE 2025

SURVEY INTRODUCTION

An Animal Welfare Needs Assessment Survey was designed to capture high-level information from every animal welfare organization and animal control agency in Washington to better understand current trends, resources and needs in the companion animal welfare landscape. Targeted animal welfare organizations included shelters, rescues, and sanctuaries while animal control services included those with regulatory authority or the ability to enforce animal welfare-related code violations. The survey content and objectives were based on prior Washington State animal welfare research and case studies, as well as interviews with state legislators, key stakeholders behind the assessment proviso, and animal welfare subject matter experts statewide. The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) contracted with the Center for One Health Research at the University of Washington (UW COHR) to help with survey creation, dissemination, analysis, and interpretation.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Identification of Organizations

In an effort to reach the greatest number of animal-related organizations that serve Washington, multiple searches were conducted to generate a comprehensive list including contact information. To identify animal welfare organizations, two searches were conducted with the [Washington State Department of Health—Facility Search](#). In the first search, “Drug Animal Control/Humane Society Registration Sodium Pentobarbital” was selected as “Facility Type” and in the second search, “Veterinary Service/Animal Control Agency and Humane Society Registration” was selected. The national database of [Shelter Animals Count](#) was also searched for all participating organizations in Washington and the [Best Friends](#) Animal Society website was searched for all of the society’s network partners in Washington. To capture additional organizations, a Google search for “Pet rescue Washington state” was also performed and any organizations not yet included were added to the list. To identify animal control services, the National Link Coalition website was searched for all services in Washington.

In addition to web-based searches, WSDA provided a list of subject matter experts (SME) in animal welfare who provided a list of organizations in Eastern Washington, contacts associated with the Landscape Analysis (2014) key agencies and animal control officers.

After duplicates were accounted for, a total of 345 organizations across the state were identified to be invited to participate in the survey. Of this number, 108 were identified as animal control (AC), 220 identified as animal welfare organizations (AWO), and 3 were tagged as both AC and AWO.

Contact information for each organization was also identified through the search process. Where available, email addresses were added to the list. If no email was available, phone numbers were obtained, or it was noted that the website had a 'Contact Us' feature or a Facebook page.

Survey Development

A draft of survey questions was developed by WSDA and UW COHR based on the initial outline created by the WSDA which included topics and themes of interest to key animal welfare stakeholders and those identified in prior interviews with SMEs. This draft was then reviewed by SMEs from both animal control agencies and animal welfare organizations, and the SME feedback was incorporated. While the focus of the survey was on dogs and cats, some survey data on animal welfare organizations that only serve other species was collected. However, those organizations were only asked a subset of the survey questions.

A consideration during survey development was to not take too much of the respondents' time, both out of respect for their effort as well as ensuring the survey would be completed and returned. To this end, the results of this survey should be viewed as a first step to future work with these communities.

The survey included both quantitative, or closed-ended, and qualitative, or open-ended components. Quantitative response formats included multiple choice, check all that apply, and short free text boxes where estimated numeric values could be entered. Qualitative questions were asked either to provide more context following a quantitative question, or separately to allow the respondent to freely explain their thoughts on a subject or question.

Once the survey instrument was finalized, it was entered into an electronic data capture platform (REDCap) supported by UW for administration. The survey was created in English only and incorporated skip logic so respondents would only be asked questions relevant to their organization.

Inclusion criteria for participating in the survey was any individual employed or volunteering at an organization providing animal care and/or animal control services to Washington. Organizations based outside of Washington were included in the survey so that we would have an idea of both regional and national programs serving the state.

In order to receive the questions pertaining to their organization's focus (AWO or AC), respondents first selected whether the organization they work with was an animal control service or agency, an animal welfare organization that provides intake/outcome (e.g., receives relinquished animals and fosters/transfers/adopts out), or an 'other animal-related organization'. This option was described as an organization that is not shelter-related, and examples provided included organizations that

support feral cat colonies or provide free veterinary care or pet supplies for low income/homeless populations.

Respondents affiliated with animal welfare organizations only received questions relevant to their work, those associated with animal control organizations only received questions relevant to their work, and all only received questions about the species they serve.

Those who selected 'other animal-related organization' received an abbreviated survey as they do not work in pet intake/adoption or animal control (though, as noted above, they may help ACs and other AWOs with veterinary care or other services). Those who did not select dogs or cats as species that their organization served also received an abbreviated version of the survey.

Survey Administration

Survey administration took place in February and March of 2025. An email with a recruitment letter describing the project and survey link was sent to the comprehensive list of identified organizations from the UW email system on 02/03/25. On this same day, WSDA sent the survey link to SMEs and to the animal welfare assessment stakeholder list via email, as well as met with legislators and stakeholders for a project update and to encourage sharing the survey with others.

In the text of the recruitment letter, recipients were encouraged to forward the email to anyone they knew working in the field of animal welfare or animal control. This form of "snowball sampling" helped identify organizations not found in the original organization identification phase. On 02/12/25 the recruitment email and survey link were distributed again to SMEs and stakeholders via the WSDA Office of State Veterinarian through the GovDelivery system, a communication platform for government agencies which also includes veterinarians and other subscribers such as emergency management and animal health stakeholders.

The initial sending of emails to the list had a number of bounce back messages with individuals no longer at organizations and email addresses no longer in use.

While the survey was active, efforts were made to either connect with someone at each identified organization or conclude that the organization was no longer in practice. Efforts included:

- Emails sent every 1.5 weeks.
- Internet searches for alternative email addresses.
- Phone calls to all organizations to get email addresses of those who could complete the survey.
- Messages to organizations utilizing 'Contact Us' features of their websites.
- Messages through Facebook messenger if possible.

We originally intended to close the survey on 02/28/2025, but we found that several counties did not have any representation and that some larger AWOs had not yet responded, which could make the numeric data poorly representative. We opted to extend the survey closing date by one week and

made a concerted effort to reach out by phone to get as many responses as possible. The electronic survey was closed on 03/07/25 and no further responses were collected.

Throughout the survey period, the team was open to supporting the completion of the survey through alternative methods (via phone call or in person) in the event that there were internet access or knowledge barriers, but no organizations requested either phone call or in person administration of the survey. When organizations were called, all provided an email for an individual that would be able to complete the survey.

The survey team intentionally decided to allow for as many responses per organization as submitted. The premise behind this decision was that in larger organizations, some staff or volunteers in one department may have different knowledge than another department, or even from the executive director or chief executive officer of the organization. This decision allowed for richer data but also the challenge of analyzing conflicting data provided for the same agency. Our steps to address discrepancies are outlined below in “*Survey Analysis.*”

Survey Analysis

Data were exported from the REDCap platform as a CSV file and cleaned and summarized using R statistical software. Descriptive statistics were performed, and visuals were generated to summarize the findings.

A handful of entries contained invalid responses and were excluded from analyses. A few respondents also entered more than one organization name in the same survey submission. Since the survey was designed to collect data from a single organization at a time, the corresponding quantitative data was excluded. However, qualitative data for these submissions was still analyzed.

Most statistics and data summaries are presented on an individual respondent level (rather than an organizational level) since the goal of this survey was to get high-level data from as many respondents as possible. For the handful of visuals that are presented on an organizational level (county maps of resources), discrepancies between respondents associated with the same organization were resolved through recoding the responses. The decision was made that if any representative from an organization indicated that a resource was provided by their organization, the resource was counted in the visual as provided.

For the maps displaying organizational response numbers by county, the county used was the county of the organization’s address. If the organization had physical locations in more than one county, a single county was selected to represent the organizational response for the map.

For the qualitative data, thematic analysis of free text was analyzed by two coders using Excel. Themes were identified as those leading to reoccurring patterns of meaning and were extracted posteriori (no codes were created prior to the start of thematic analyses), and free text was categorized into the themes created. As many comments in the free text had multiple themes, most responses were tagged with multiple codes.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Demographics

Of the 345 organizations on the original list, 18 organizations were either confirmed or assumed defunct through bounce backs or no browser or social media presence. Additionally, another 8 were deemed to be multi-site organizations or merged organizations under one primary central responding unit. Of the remaining 319 organizations on the list (some of which may or may not be still providing services), 140 responded to the survey. An additional 21 organizations completed the survey who were not included on the original list.

A total of 225 individuals who reported working with an animal-related organization that serves Washington started the survey. However, only 167 individuals completed all sections of the survey they were presented with. The 225 individuals that started the survey corresponded to 161 unique organization names (83 animal welfare organizations, 43 animal control agencies, 3 that fall into both categories, and 32 'other animal-related organizations').

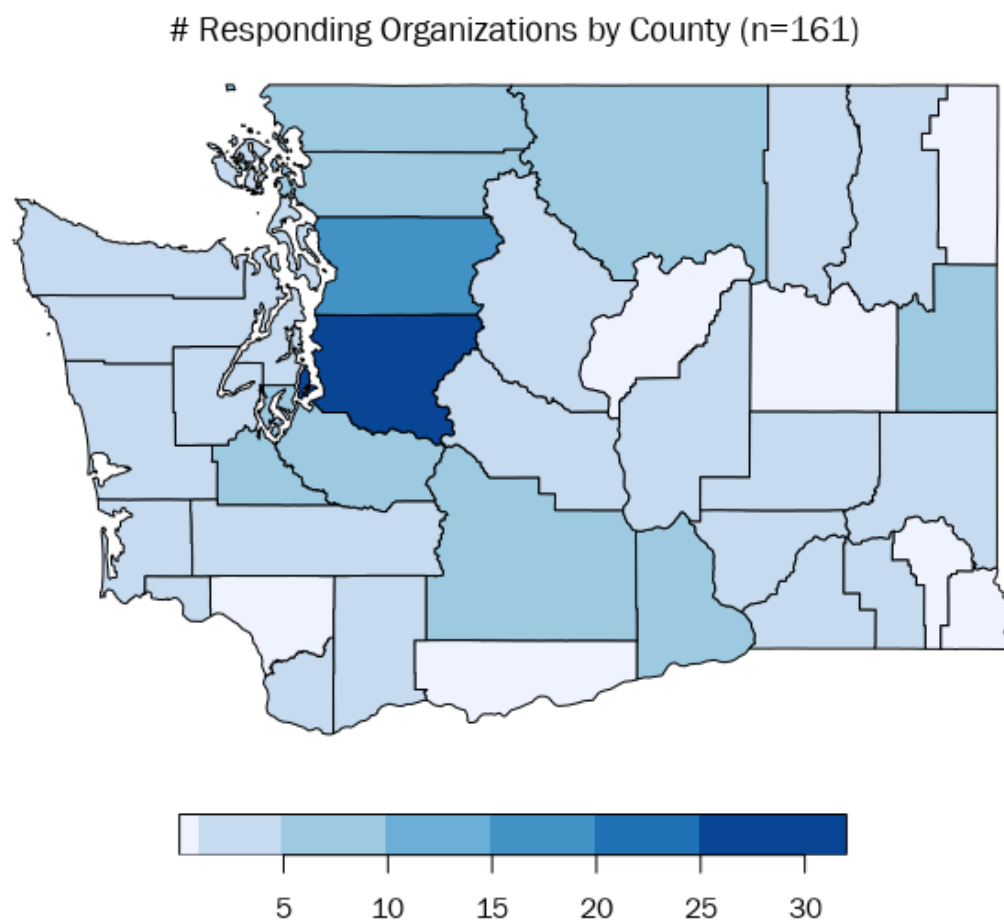


Figure 1. Total number of organizations that responded to the survey by the county they are based in.

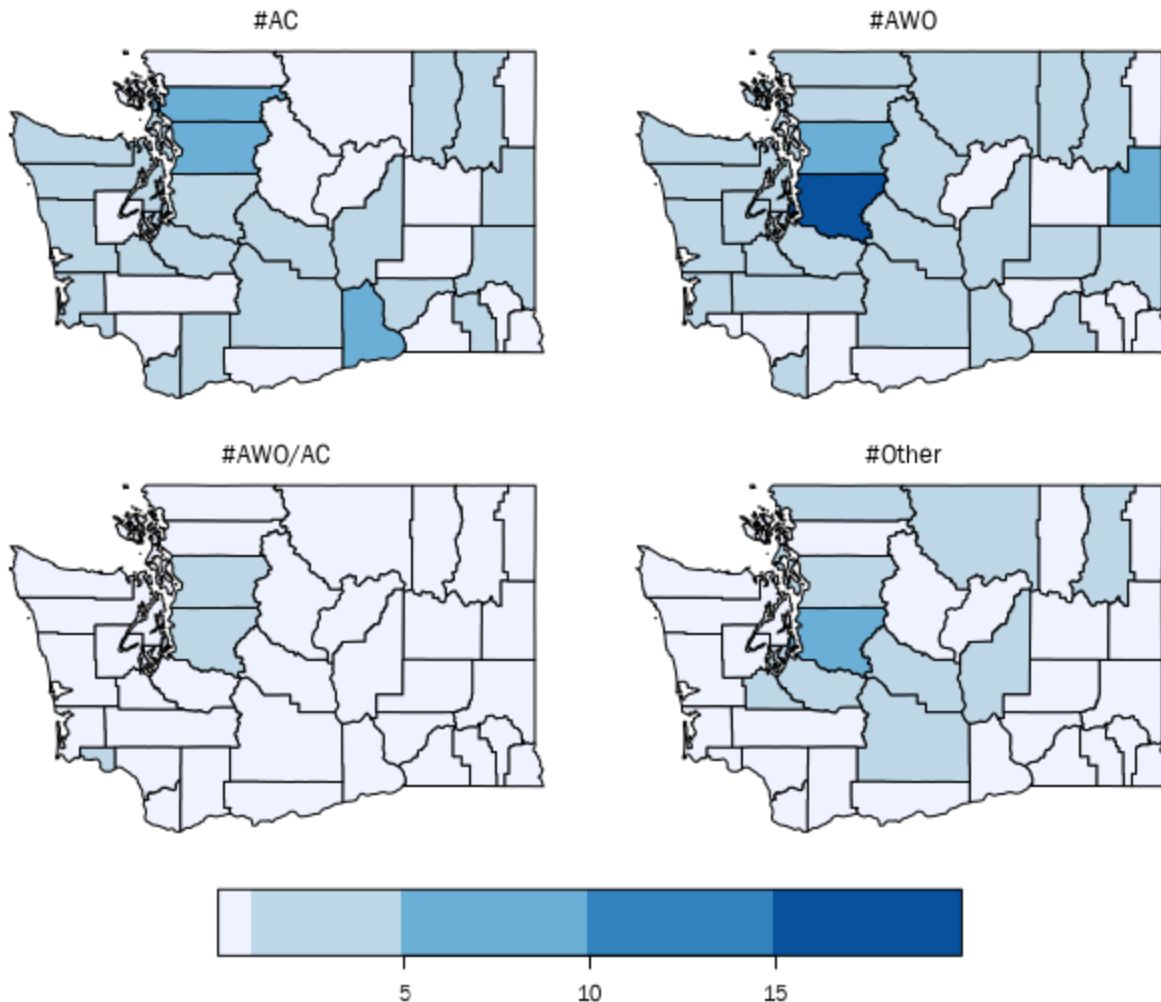


Figure 2. Number of organizations that responded to the survey by organization type based on the county they are located in

Figure 2 shows the counties represented by survey responses. For the purposes of these maps, the county from the organization's address was used (rather than all counties the respondent indicated that their organization serves). Of the 39 counties in Washington, the survey had no AC responses from 15 counties and no AWO responses from 11 counties. Seven counties had no responses from either AC or AWO representatives (Asotin, Cowlitz, Douglas, Garfield, Klickitat, Lincoln, and Pend Oreille counties). Many organizations indicated they provided services to counties and tribal lands outside of where they are based, but it is unclear what types of services are provided in each area (e.g., whether it is transferring animals for adoption or providing full service veterinary care, or anything in between).

Up to 5 individuals completed surveys for a single AWO, up to 4 for a single 'other animal-related organization' and up to 2 for an AC service. The majority of respondents who work for an AWO work with a shelter or rescue organization (96%) and nearly all respondents reported the organization they work for is based in Washington (99%).

When asked about their role, respondents most commonly selected staff/operations (40%) followed by volunteer (31%) and over half reported having been in their role for over 5 years (56%). When asked which species their organization works with, dogs were selected by the most respondents (89%) followed by cats (84%). Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that their organization serves species other than dogs or cats (see Figure 3 below).

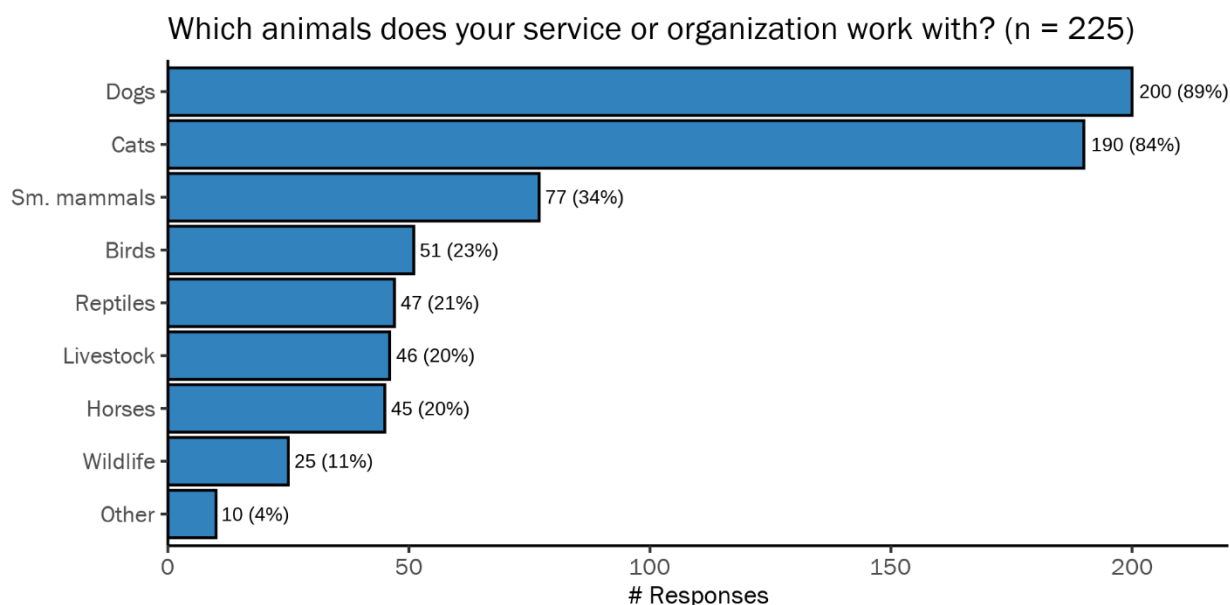


Figure 3. Reported species served across all respondents

Respondents that indicated they work with an animal welfare organization or animal control service (not those who selected 'other animal-related organization') were invited to complete additional questions on the details of their organization. One hundred and seventy-five people completed these questions. The majority of respondents reported that the organization they work for has existed for over 10 years (86%) and has served Washington for over 10 years (82%). Seventy-one percent of respondents reported the organization they serve has a brick and mortar/building and 33% reported that the organization is foster based.

When asked to select which best describes the type of organization they work with, sixty-seven percent selected non-profit and 26% selected government-run animal services. Twenty-four respondents (14%) reported that their organization is affiliated with other organizations including national organizations.

Communities Served

When asked to select the geographic level that their organization serves, respondents associated with an AWO most commonly reported that their organization serves the county (78%) followed by the city (62%), then state (37%), region (25%), country (10%), and lastly other countries (6%). However, respondents associated with AC services reported serving the city at the highest frequency

(64%) followed by county (51%), region (9%), state (2%) and country (2%). No AC services reported serving at an international level.

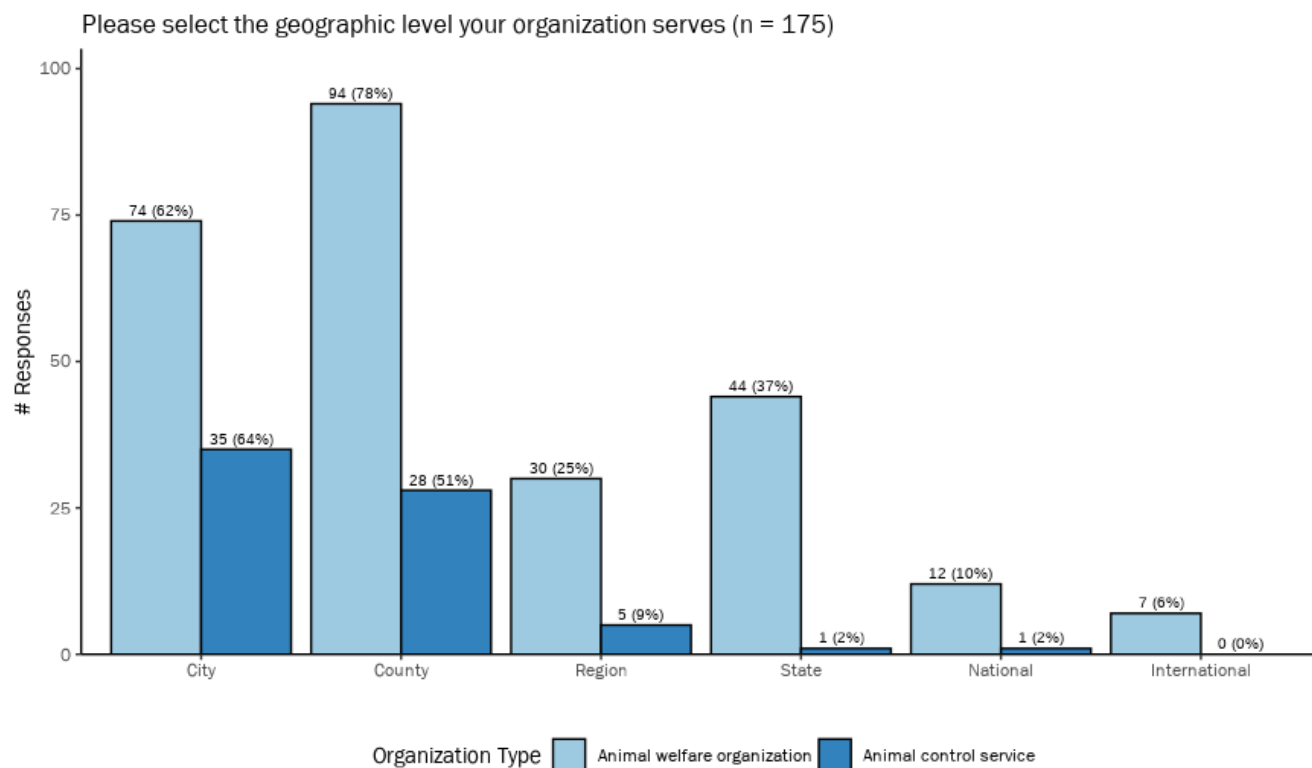


Figure 4. Geographic level served by organization type

TRIBAL RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Thirty-eight percent of respondents associated with animal welfare organizations (46 individuals corresponding to 30 organizations) and 16% of respondents associated with animal control services (9 individuals corresponding to 6 agencies) reported that their organization serves tribal communities. Only one respondent indicated they were from tribal-led organization.

Table 1. Services provided on Tribal Lands at the organizational level

Tribe	AC	AWO	Tribe	AC	AWO
Chinook Nation*	0	0	Quileute Tribe	0	0
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	1	8	Quinault Indian Nation	0	3
Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation	0	2	Samish Indian Nation	0	0
Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	0	6	Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe	0	1

Cowlitz Indian Tribe	1	0	Shoalwater Bay Tribe	0	2
			Skokomish		
Duwamish Tribe*	0	0	Indian Tribe	0	2
			Snohomish Tribe		
Hoh Indian Tribe	0	0	of Indians*	0	0
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe	1	0	Snoqualmie Tribe	0	0
Kalispel Tribe of Indians	0	1	Snoqualmoo Nation*	0	0
			Spokane Tribe		
Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe	0	0	of Indians	0	4
Lummi Nation	0	4	Squaxin Island Tribe	0	3
Makah Tribe	0	0	Steilacoom Tribe*	0	0
			Stillaguamish Tribe		
Muckleshoot Indian Tribe	0	0	of Indians	1	1
Nisqually Indian Tribe	1	0	Suquamish Tribe	0	1
			Swinomish Indian		
Nooksack Indian Tribe	0	2	Tribal Community	0	2
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe	0	1	Tulalip Tribes	1	1
Puyallup Tribe of Indians	0	3	Upper Skagit Tribe	0	2

*Non-federally recognized tribe; all others are federally recognized

Table 1 above shows the tribes served at the organizational level. Some respondents did not name specific tribes, and instead wrote responses such as “Seattle area tribes,” and could not be included in the analysis. Of the 33 Nations and Tribes of Washington state (as noted by the American Indian Studies Department at the University of Washington), six recognized tribes and all five non-federally recognized tribes had no responses indicating services were provided to them from either animal welfare or animal control organizations. Only three tribes (Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, and the Tulalip Tribes) had responses from both animal welfare and animal control organizations. All other tribes had responses from either one or the other.

Services Provided & Utilization

Respondents from AWO, AC, and ‘other animal-related organizations’ were asked which services their organization provides, and the most commonly selected options were intake of surrendered animals from owners (64%), adoption (63%) and spay/neuter (61%).

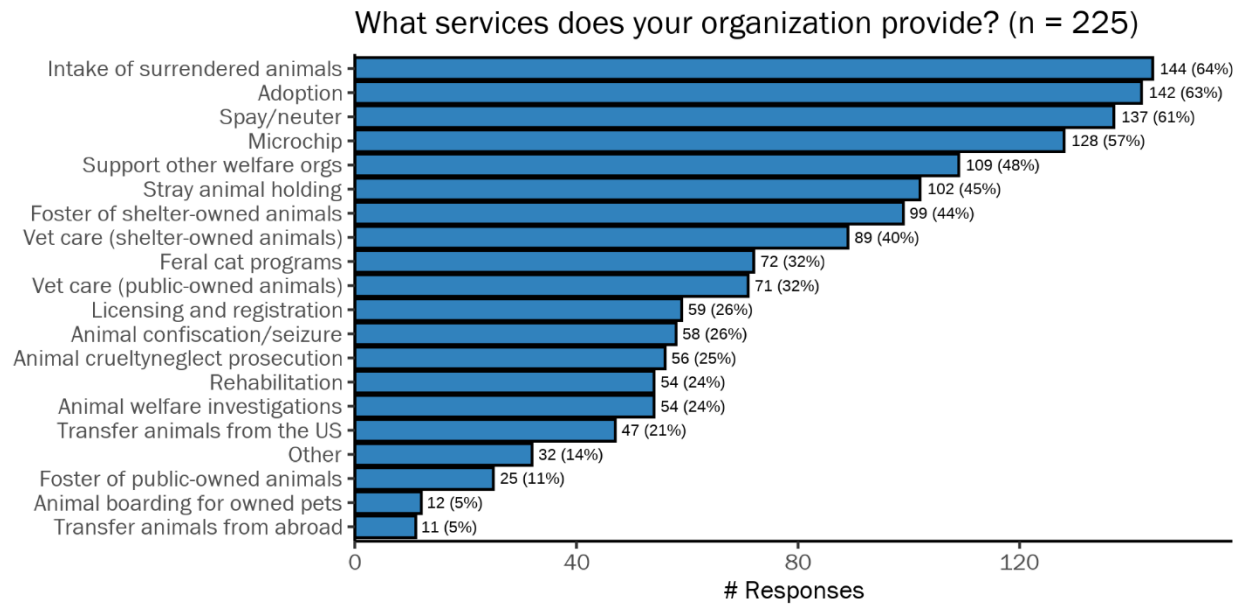


Figure 5. Reported services provided across organization types by frequency

When asked if any services their organization provides are underutilized, 45 respondents (20%) responded 'yes', and spay/neuter was cited most frequently as underutilized (40%).

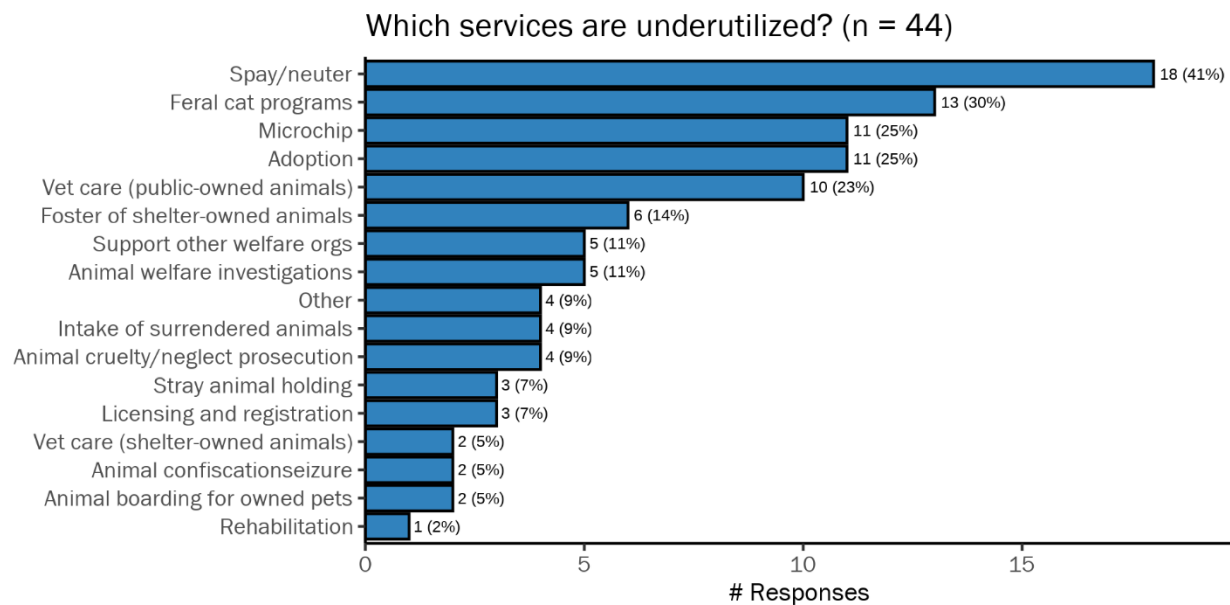


Figure 6. Reported underutilized services

REASONS FOR SERVICE UNDERUTILIZATION

A follow up, open-ended question asked participants ***why they thought that the services were underutilized***. Several themes emerged including a lack of public awareness and lack of public understanding of the importance of the services provided. The quotes below are representative of common responses provided by multiple respondents.

LACK OF PUBLIC AWARENESS

Most respondents identified that the public were not aware of the resources provided or the processes in place to get those services. Most responses were similar to this comment provided:

“Animal services like spays and neuters are often underutilized due to a combination of factors, including lack of awareness about their benefits, cost concerns, and misconceptions about the procedures and resources we have to help them such as grants we receive.”

Some of the smaller organizations lack the staff or volunteers to do the marketing needed to make their services more known in the community. One respondent stated:

“Some animal service institutions do not do enough publicity work, resulting in many residents not knowing their existence and specific service content. For example, some small animal rescue organizations do not have enough funds and manpower for extensive publicity. Relying only on a small number of volunteers to post information on social media is difficult to reach more people in need.”

LACK OF PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF IMPORTANCE OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED

Distinct from the response above where the public is perhaps not aware of the organization or the resources, this response referenced an overall lack of knowledge or a lack of a sense of urgency about the welfare issues. One respondent stated:

“The public doesn't understand how important it is to get animals vaccinated, unfortunately Parvo has hit our community pretty badly.”

On the topic of pet care being a low priority, one representative from an animal welfare organization indicated that:

“[There is] very little interest in [their] county to spay/neuter dogs or even get the[m] microchipped.”

OTHER REASONS FOR UNDERUTILIZATION OF SERVICES

Other themes for why services are not being utilized included that even when subsidized, pet owners still cannot cover the remaining costs, barriers caused by the distance to services and lack of transportation as well as difficulties with scheduling. One respondent referenced multiple themes in their response:

“The current clinic setup uses a voucher program where the services are subsidized by partner organizations (in part or in full) but spay/neuter is scheduled out at a future date. This creates potential scheduling and transportation issues for the families who need these services and are trying to access them.”

HOW TO IMPROVE SERVICE UTILIZATION

Participants were then asked, **what would improve service utilization?** Some interpreted this question as what their organization would need to provide additional services (included further down in this report), but when we looked at the responses to what would increase the utilization of current services, one key theme emerged repeatedly: public outreach and education.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

There was a general consensus for the need for more marketing outreach for public awareness, whether that was additional funding to have staff that promoted the organization through different channels or knowledge about how to share their resources into the community.

Public education is another theme that is threaded throughout the responses to all open-ended questions in the survey. Some responses simply stated, “public education,” but others were more specific in saying education pertaining to the benefits of spay and neutering, the benefits of vaccines, and the health impacts of poorly planned backyard breeding. One respondent suggested a three-pronged approach to animal welfare improvements stating that:

“Engaging with local communities and offering resources to prevent neglect or abuse before it happens can reduce the number of animals needing rescue. Working together with your local shelter for programs such as free pet health clinics, education on responsible pet ownership, and providing support for pet owners in need can prevent some of the most extreme cases of abuse.”

TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

When AWO and AC respondents were asked if their organization had or utilized a transportation program, which was described as including transportation of animals between shelters as well as support to clients to access care, 85 respondents (49%) selected ‘yes’. When asked to select the option that best describes the program at their organization, transportation of animals between shelters and fosters (85%) was most selected followed by the pick-up and drop-off of pets (31%), and transportation for client/animal for care at site (27%).

While almost 50% of respondents indicated that their organization offered transportation services, transportation vehicles for clients and animals were a common theme in a subsequent question asking about what resource(s) would make it easier to do their jobs (discussed below).

Organization Resources & Needs

CURRENT RESOURCES, FUNDING NEEDS AND BUDGET

All respondents associated with an animal welfare organization or animal control agency were invited to complete this section. One hundred and twenty-eight people responded. Over half of respondents (53%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “I am able to fully carry out my duties at work with current resources.” When asked how their program was funded, respondents associated with animal welfare organizations most commonly selected fundraising/community donations (88%) and non-governmental grants (54%), while those associated with animal control services selected ‘other’ (57%) or state funding (39%). Respondents who selected ‘other’ were asked to describe their funding and the most common sources described were the city (23%) and county (18%).

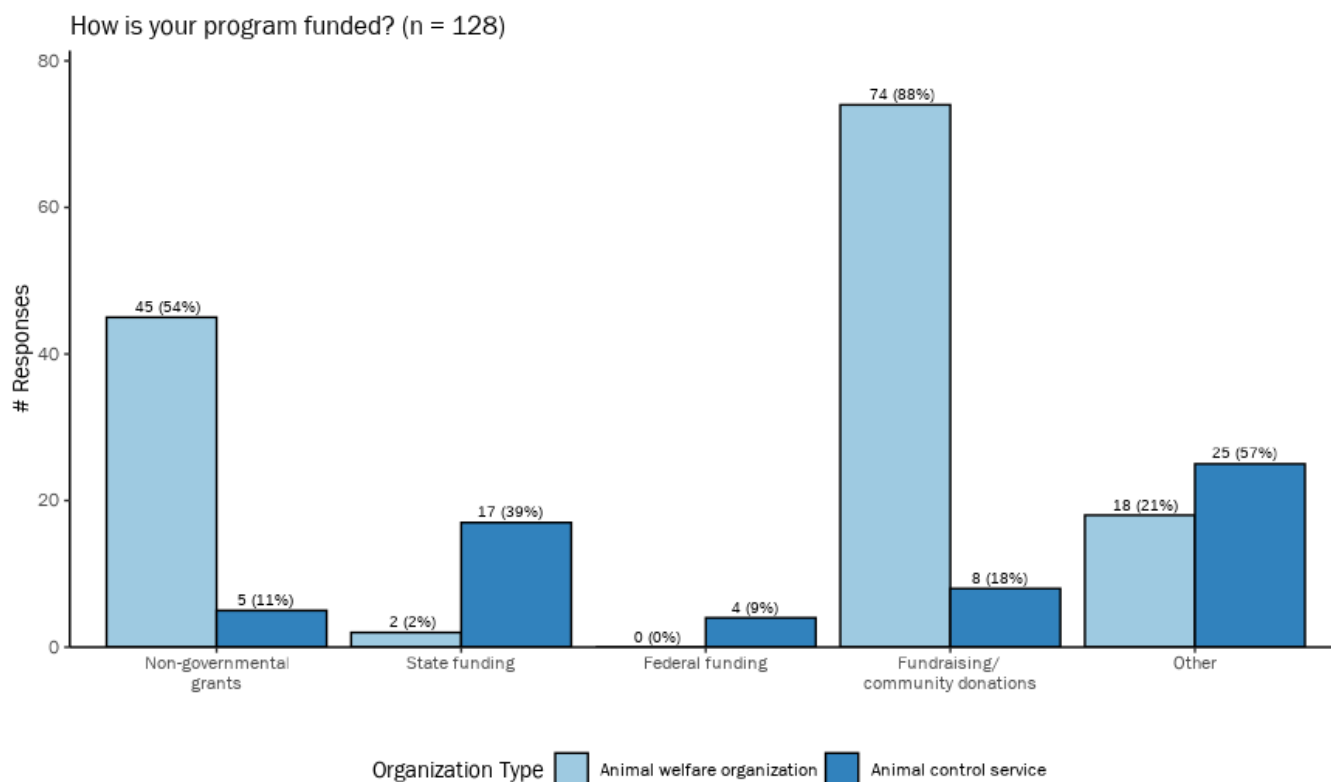


Figure 7. Funding mechanism by type of organization

Eighty-nine percent of respondents reported that additional funding is needed. Respondents associated with animal welfare organizations most commonly selected veterinary access as the best investment for additional funding (41%), followed by additional personnel (31%) and updated facilities (22%). Respondents associated with animal control services selected updated facilities at the highest frequency (41%) followed by additional personnel (29%).

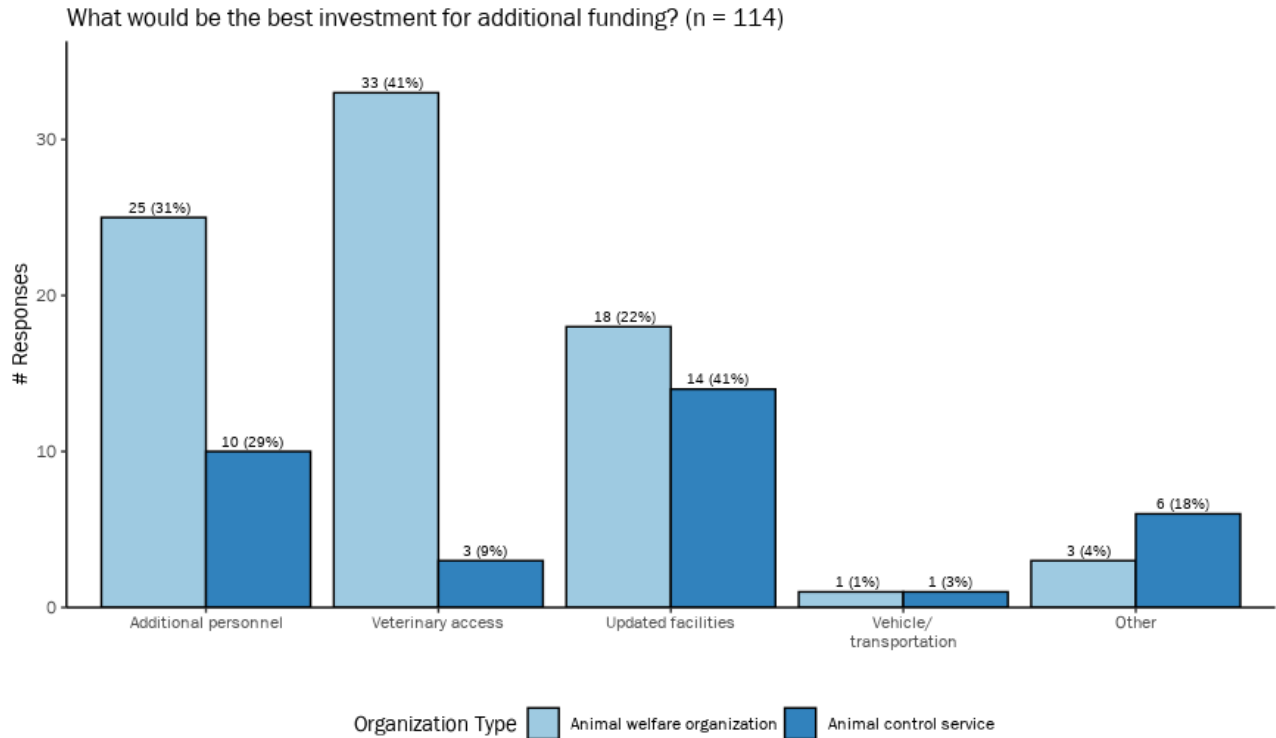


Figure 8. Best investment for additional funding by organization type

Respondents were asked for their organization’s approximate budget and most either selected that it was less than \$100,000 (35%) or over \$500,000 (30%).

ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP(S)

When asked, “**Which relationships are essential to do your job?**”, respondents most commonly selected work with a veterinarian (83%). Shelter partnership (62%) and government (37%) were also selected by many (Table 2).

Table 2. Relationship deemed as essential by respondents

Which relationships are essential to do your job? (No. (%))	N = 128
Work with a veterinarian	106 (83%)
Government (city, county, state, federal assistance)	47 (37%)
Tribal relationship	16 (13%)
Shelter partnership	79 (62%)
Other	21 (16%)

If respondents selected 'other', they were asked to describe the other essential relationships. Partnerships among rescues were referenced most commonly. One respondent stated:

"Shelters are overcrowded and not able to take in the majority of dogs in need. Rescues do a lot of the heavy lifting without any of the funding or resources that shelters receive. The majority of our dogs never see the inside of a shelter because they are transferred from rescue to rescue. Many parts of WA do not have shelters that are accessible (see note above) so rescues do the 'boots on the ground' work here."

Community donations and volunteers were also noted as being important relationships. These relationships include community partnerships (co-organizing events, spreading awareness), volunteer/foster parent relationships, and donor relationships.

Other important relationships noted included animal control officers from surrounding communities, private industry, staff and media.

Legislative Impact: SB 5004

Both respondents affiliated with animal control agencies and animal welfare organizations were asked whether [Senate Bill \(SB\) 5004](#) impacted the services they provide at their facility, and if so, how. SB 5004, passed in April 2019, expanded the types of services that could be provided to low-income pet owners by municipal and nonprofit shelters from microchipping, vaccinations, and sterilization to any medical procedure within the scope of practice of a veterinarian or veterinary technician. This bill also expanded the ability of shelters to provide emergency medical services to any animal and permits shelters to provide care for any sick animal up to 30 days post-adoption.

Of the 128 respondents, 21% reported that SB 5004 impacted services provided at their organization, while 23% said it did not impact services, and 55% said it was not applicable as no veterinary services are provided. In the free text follow-up question asking how services were impacted, 24 respondents indicated that the bill affected them positively, two neutrally, and three negatively.

POSITIVE IMPACT

For those respondents that answered positively, the majority indicated that SB 5004 allows their organizations to serve those they previously could not. One respondent said:

"We are now able to provide veterinary care to owned animals and return them to their homes rather than have them surrender for adoption."

This bill was very helpful for those with minimal veterinary services, such as the island areas. One shelter staff stated:

"Being on a WA State ferry dependent island with only one veterinary office open four days a week. The cost of veterinary care is unaffordable and inaccessible when needed for many. Our animal shelter has been able to assist those with a financial need and others in

emergencies when no other local care is available. This bill has saved the lives of pets in crisis and allowed others to stay in loving homes when owners could not otherwise afford necessary care.”

The bill was also helpful as now shelters were able to provide spay and neuter services. One shelter staff wrote:

“We have been able to help our community and partners provide very much needed spay and neuter services so we can impact and reduce animal population, which therefore impacts the animal intakes of our own animal shelter and those around us.”

One organization wrote that it has allowed them to apply for grants previously not accessible to their organization which they now use to offset some costs to low-income clients.

MIXED OR NEUTRAL IMPACT

Three respondents had mixed or neutral feelings toward the bill. One indicated that they have served a few more families, but that management has chosen not to engage.

Two others stated that they would like to do more, but funding is still an issue. One wrote:

“We feel we have more ability to support our pets after adoption when medical issues come up. We do not currently have the staff and funding to expand this to provide services for other publicly owned pets yet.”

The other wrote more about this issue:

“There is an overwhelming need for the services, but we are limited by hiring challenges to keep the clinic staffed, and then being limited to only income qualified clients means our clinic cannot support itself with a mix of full-pay and subsidized clients, therefor relying on community donations to cover the substantial gap in budget.”

NEGATIVE IMPACT

Three respondents indicated that the bill impacted their organization negatively since it limited those they can serve. One respondent wrote that while they have opened more services to low-income households, they have had “less individuals sign up for [their] vaccine clinics due to not having low-income status.” Another organization said that they “used to be able to help individuals who were close to the income guideline and now [they] cannot so it has affected [sic] business negatively.”

Organization-Specific Questions

Respondents were tracked to different sets of questions based on whether they indicated the organization they worked with was considered an AC or AWO.

ANIMAL CONTROL & SHERIFF'S OFFICES RESPONSES

Respondents who indicated they were associated with an animal control agency were invited to complete this section. Fifty people responded.

When asked to select the top three most common calls they respond to regarding dogs, participants selected at large/stray/roaming animals the most frequently (79%) followed by noise complaint/nuisance (56%) and dog bite (56%).

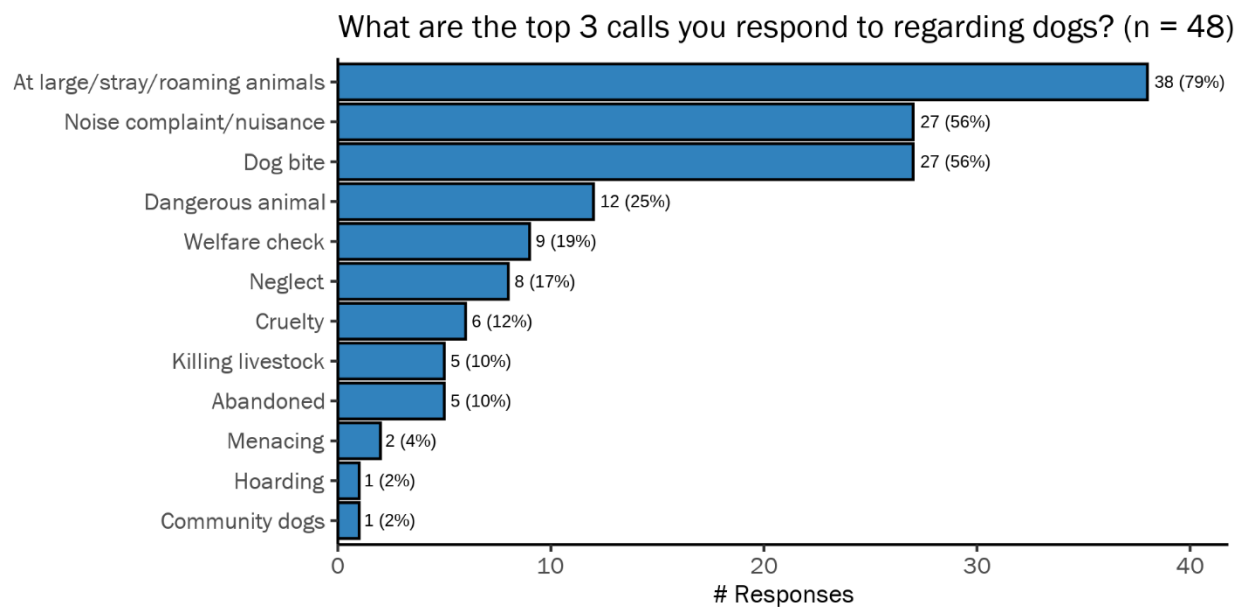


Figure 9. Most common reasons for animal control calls or cases regarding dogs

When asked to select the top three most common calls they respond to regarding cats, participants most commonly selected at large/stray/roaming animals (62%), neglect (57%), and abandoned (48%).

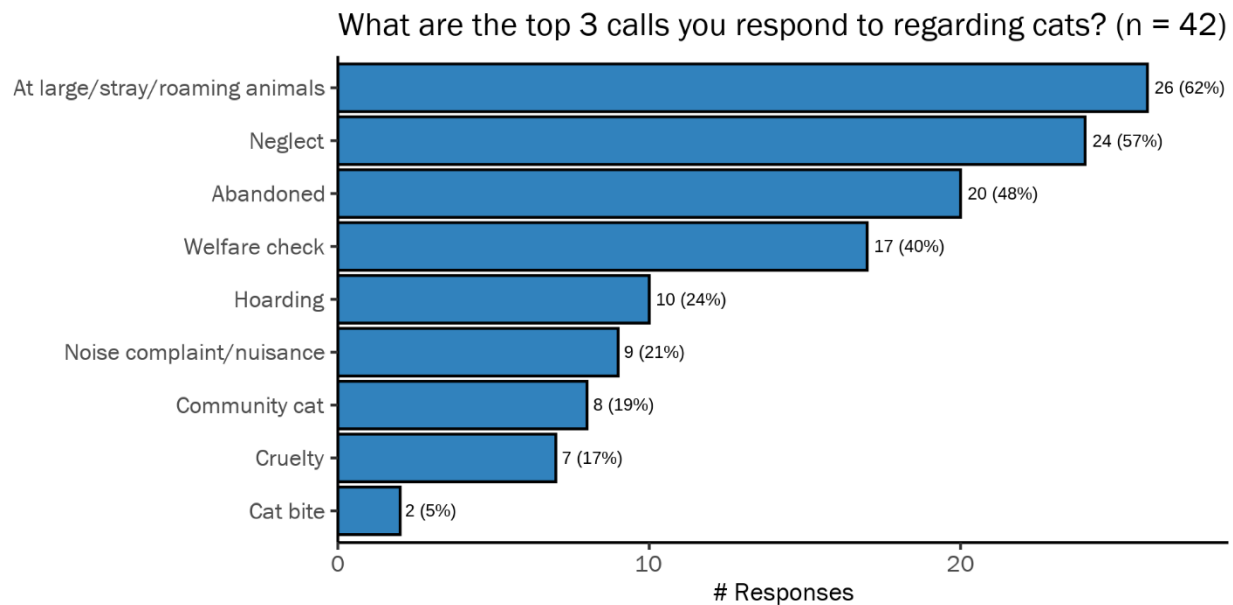


Figure 10. Most common reasons for animal control calls or cases regarding cats

Respondents were also asked to estimate the number of bite and cruelty/neglect cases in 2024 as well as whether or not that number was increased or decreased from 2023. For bite investigations, the median estimate was 25 investigations (IQR: 11, 100) and 39% of respondents reported that was an increase from 2023, 27% reported there was no change, 20% were not sure, and 14% reported it as a decrease. For cruelty/neglect investigations, the median estimate was 20 investigations (IQR: 5, 90) and 40% of respondents reported that was an increase from 2023, 25% were not sure, 19% reported no change, and 17% reported it as a decrease.

Almost half of respondents (49%) reported that their organization has a veterinarian that assists with animal welfare cases while 37% report that it depends on the case and 14% do not have a veterinarian that assists. Those who indicated that it depended on the case were asked to expand. Most indicated that a veterinarian was brought in for cruelty/neglect cases (care of animal or for criminal prosecution) or in the case of animal injury, and one indicated a veterinarian was brought in for general wellness/chip scanning. One respondent indicated that the lack of training and funding makes it hard to access veterinary care, and another indicated that since the animal shelter in their community shut down that they now have to depend on community rescue organizations for any veterinary support.

Eighty-four percent of respondents reported that there are other codes, in addition to state and federal jurisdiction, that they must enforce. Forty-one percent reported those were city codes, 20% county codes, 2% city and county codes, and 37% did not specify.

ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION RESPONSES

Respondents who indicated they were associated with an animal welfare organization were invited to complete this section. Ninety-eight people responded. Participants were asked to select the top three reasons for dog intake at their organization. Stray/found animal was selected the most frequently (68%) followed by abandoned (47%).

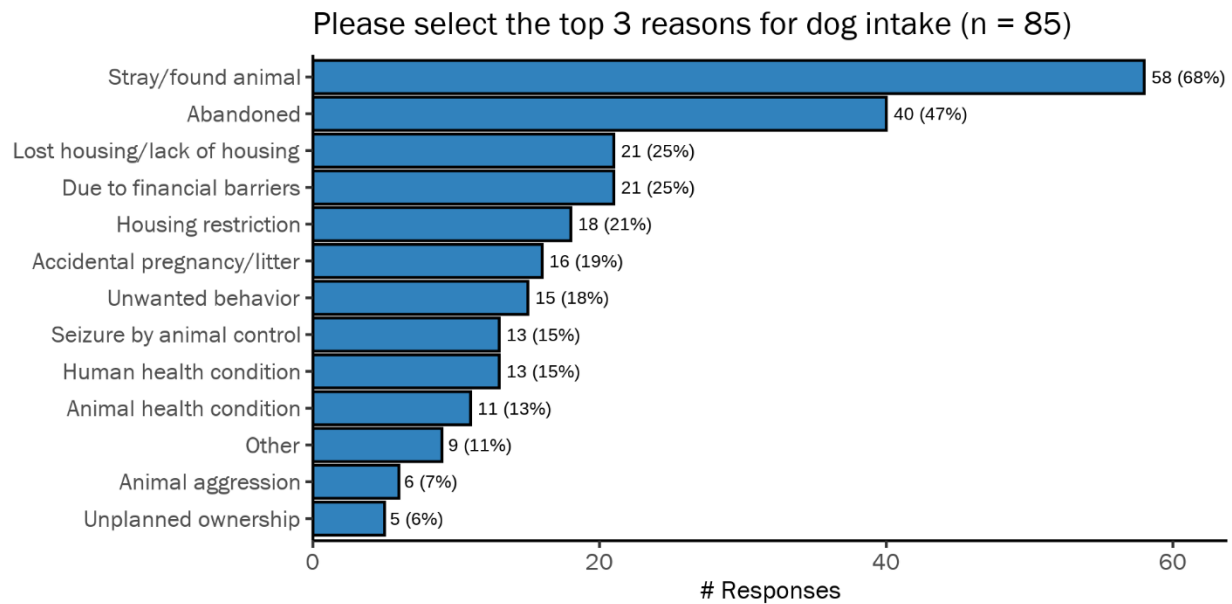


Figure 11. Top reasons for dog intake at animal welfare organizations

When asked the same question for cat intake, respondents most commonly selected stray/found animal (79%), accidental pregnancy/litter (44%), and abandoned (40%).

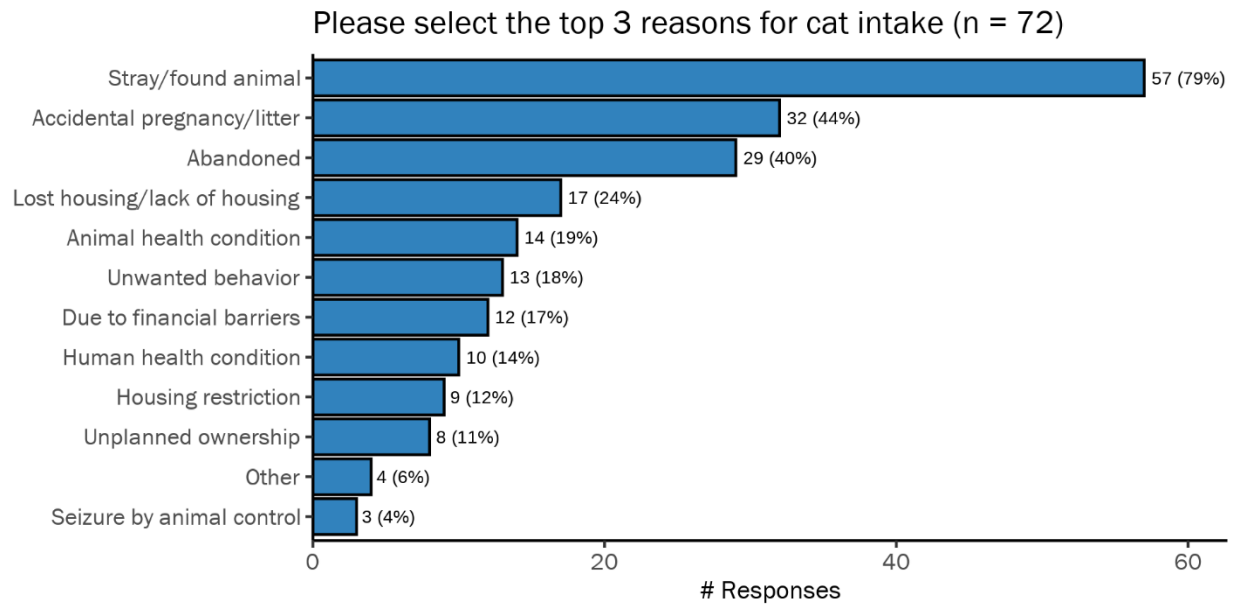


Figure 12. Top reasons for cat intake at animal welfare organizations

When asked where the dogs that their organization intakes come from, most respondents (93%) whose organization serves dogs reported from their city/county. Fifty-one percent reported they take dogs being relocated from other shelters in the state, 22% from other shelters out of the state, and 5% from out of the country. Of the 44 respondents whose organizations accept dogs from more than one of the above, 84% reported the majority of dogs come from within the state.

Ninety-seven percent of respondents whose organizations serve cats reported that they take in cats from their city/county, 30% from other shelters in the state, 11% from other states, and 1% from other countries. Of the 23 respondents whose organization accepts cats from more than one of the above, 91% report the majority of cats come from within the state.

Of 89 respondents whose organization serves dogs, 77 (87%) reported that their organization is at capacity for dogs. The median estimate by respondents for dogs their organization serves per year was 250 (IQR: 115, 750) and the median for stray/found dogs was 51 (IQR: 20, 212) which was increased from 2023 according to over half of respondents (57%). A median of 59 dogs were estimated to have been surrendered in 2024 (IQR: 20, 196) which was also increased according to over half of respondents (55%) and the median number of dogs adopted in 2024 was 156 (IQR: 69, 500) with 40% of respondents reporting this as an increase and 33% reporting it as a decrease.

Of the 75 respondents whose organization serves cats, 42 (56%) reported that they are at capacity for cats. These respondents reported that their organization serves a median of 650 cats per year (IQR: 200, 1500). They estimate 120 cats (IQR: 29, 344) were stray/found in 2024 which was reported as an increase by 52% of respondents. A median of 165 cats were estimated to have been surrendered in 2024 (IQR: 46, 374). Forty-four percent of respondents reported this was an increase, while 21% reported no change. A median of 350 cats (IQR: 133, 790) were estimated to

have been adopted in 2024 which 40% of respondents reported as an increase and 30% as a decrease.

Overall Resources by County

To better visualize resource distribution across the state, 8 key components of the survey were pulled and tallied by county. The distribution is based on which counties the respondents indicated their organization serves and which services they provide and resources they have. The tallied 8 resources were then summed to generate a “resource score” to enable the visualization below. While these initial images generated from our high-level survey can help visualize resource distribution across the state, advanced analyses of the geographic distribution of services taking into account human and animal populations could enable more accurate allocation of future resources as well as highlight possible opportunities for resource sharing.

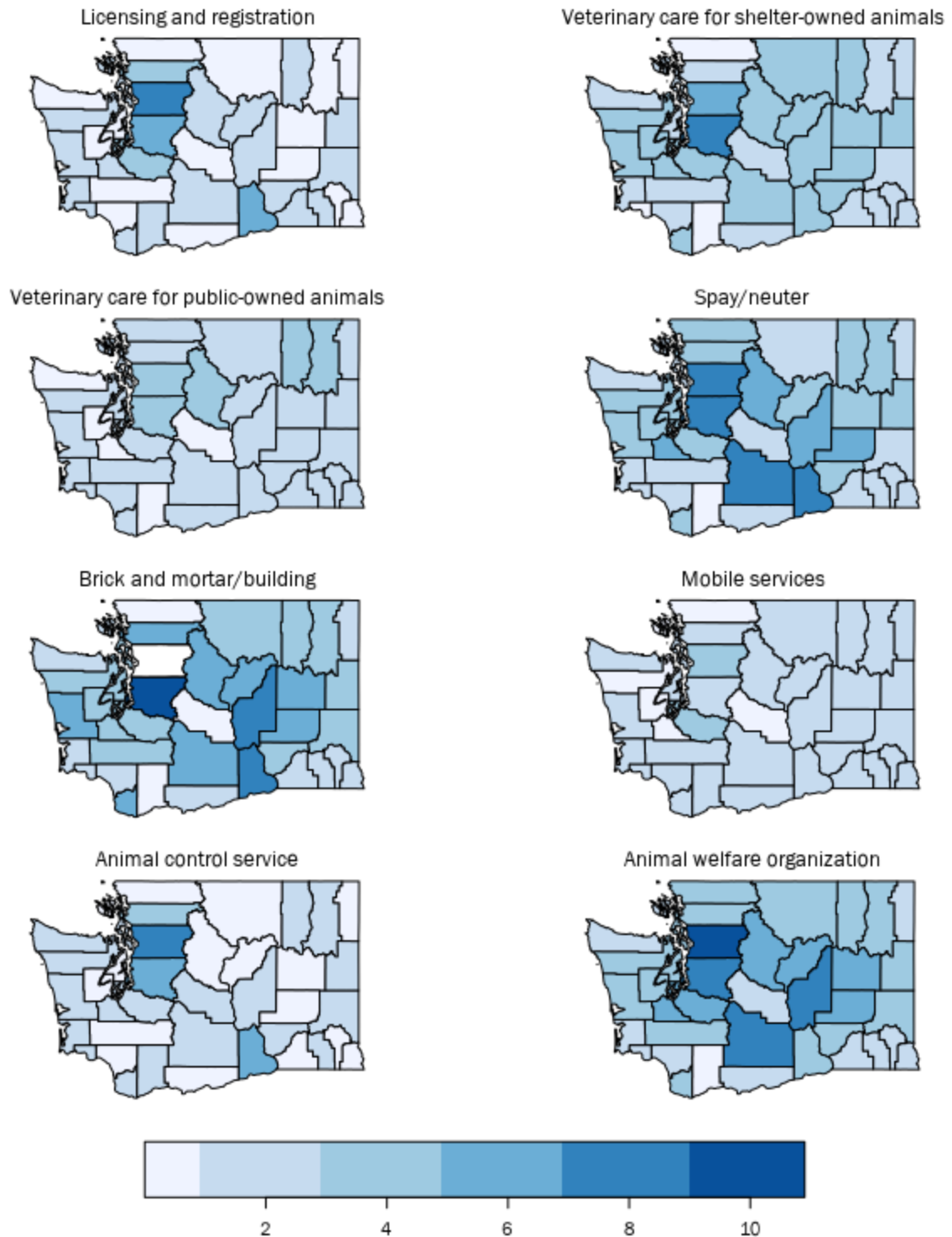


Figure 13. Resources available by county based on which counties each respondent reported that their organization serves and the services those organizations reportedly provide

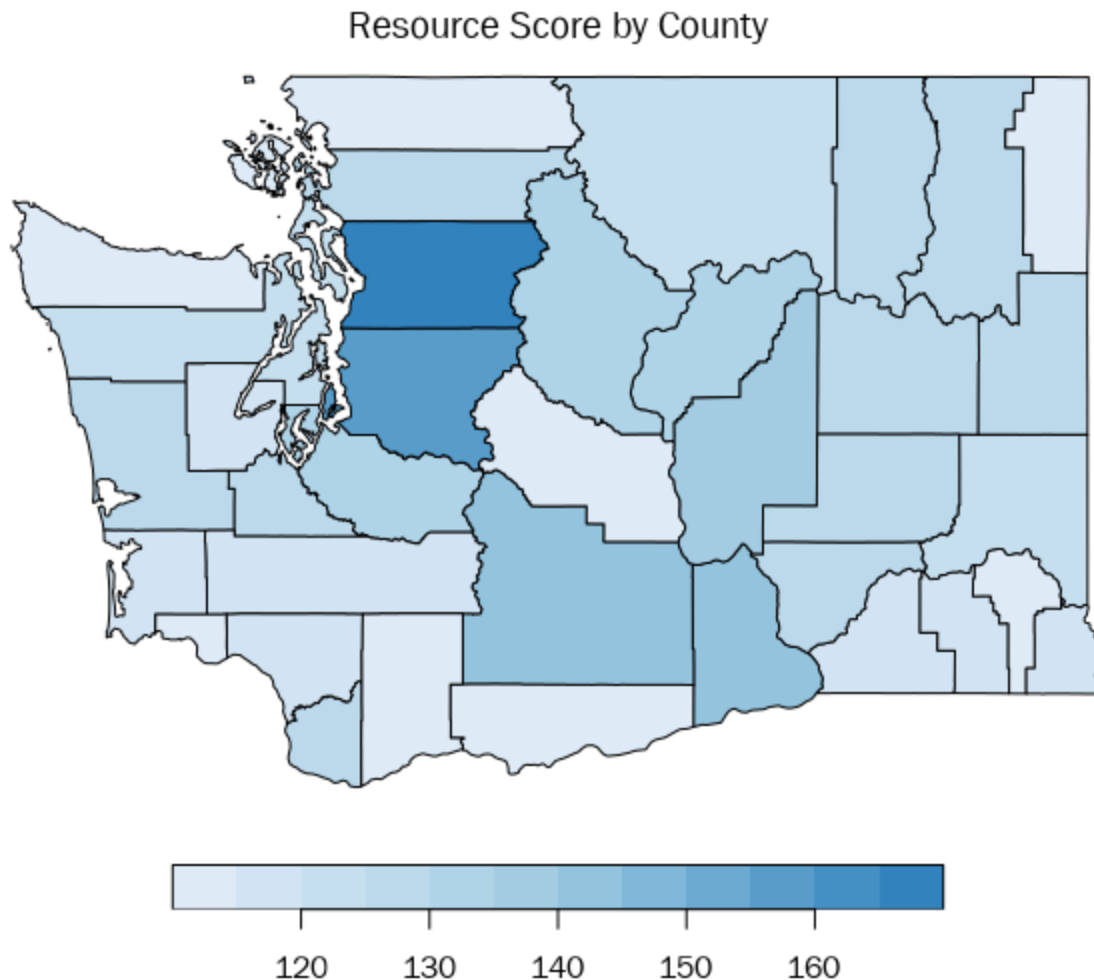


Figure 14. A sum of all resources presented in Figure 13 was calculated to enable a “resource score” by county

Qualitative Responses

There were four open-ended questions in the survey to elicit more in-depth responses. These free text areas provided an opportunity for participants to provide any length of response, and thus each individual response contained several different themes. The questions included:

1. What is/are the greatest animal welfare needs in the area your organization serves?
2. What one resource do you feel most supports the work you do?
3. What additional resources would make it easier to do your job?
4. Do you have any additional thoughts you want to share?

The results of the thematic analysis are described below. The themes represented come from free text from both animal welfare organizations and animal control officers/sheriff offices taking on

animal control roles, and come from staff members, volunteers, and board members. Each question had a different number of responses, and this number is noted in the corresponding question heading.

While each selected quote represents common themes derived from multiple responses, the content of every statement is not always supported by the quantitative data and may be in conflict with other open-ended responses. Disconnects in responses could represent a lack of communication across organizations working in the same regions.

WHAT IS/ARE THE GREATEST ANIMAL WELFARE NEEDS IN THE AREA YOUR ORGANIZATION SERVES? (N=124)

The responses indicated three major themes around the greatest animal welfare needs in the area that their organization serves. These included: **need for low-cost spay and neuter services, need for low-cost veterinary care, and need for expanded shelter capacity.**

NEED FOR LOW-COST/FREE SPAY/NEUTER, TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN

Limited or no access to free or low-cost spay and neuter services (including trap-neuter-return services) was the most common response to this question and was also a theme that carried through the other open-ended responses throughout the survey. Respondents noted that limited access to these services was the primary cause of overpopulation, increased strays and ‘dumping’ (abandonment) of animals, and the most cited reason for additional funding needs. One respondent replied that the greatest animal welfare need in their area was the

“...ability to access low-cost spay and neuter clinics not just for shelters and rescues but also for the community in general.”

Respondents from most counties in the state that responded to this question indicated the spay/neuter challenges, but others in more rural areas indicated an absolute lack of spay/neuter services. One respondent stated that, *“There are no low cost spay and neuter resources in our area for the general public.”*

NEED FOR LOW-COST/FREE VET CARE/ VACCINATION

The second most common response was the need for low-cost or free veterinary care for both shelter and rescue organizations, as well as for pet owners. General wellness and vaccination needs were cited in multiple responses, but also the need for additional funding for advanced medical services. One animal welfare organization mentioned “Our rescue takes medical dogs which often require thousands in medical care,” while another rescue stated:

“Stray cats and dogs often have diseases or injuries, such as skin diseases, parasitic infections, and traumatic injuries. They need professional medical teams and facilities to provide diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation care, including preventive measures like vaccination and sterilization.”

Several respondents indicated that there is inequity in the state across counties with regards to access to low-income/free veterinary services. One respondent stated:

“Equalization of pet medical resources: In the Washington area, there may be an uneven distribution of pet medical resources in some areas. Pet owners in some remote or low-income communities have difficulty obtaining timely, high-quality and reasonably priced pet medical services. More mobile pet medical vehicles and community pet clinics may be needed to fill the resource gap and provide basic medical services such as vaccination, treatment of common diseases, and health checkups to ensure the health of pets.”

And finally, throughout the survey there was a theme of the general cost of veterinary care being too high for the community to cover. Some mentioned the high cost of limited veterinary clinics both on the islands and in rural Washington. One respondent stated, *“The cost of vet care and wait time for appointments is outrageous.”*

NEED FOR ADDITIONAL SHELTERS AS WELL AS SUPPORT FOR EXISTING SHELTERS

There was a strong theme throughout the free text responses of both the need for new shelters, as well as the need for improving shelters to meet the need of the current animal population. Many shelters and rescues indicated that while there is a great need, they are at (or over) capacity and cannot take in more animals. One shelter respondent stated:

“[There is] Not enough shelter space for the hundreds of cats and dogs that need a safe place to go, but we cannot take them in due to current overcrowding and lack of space.”

Another representative from an animal welfare organization indicated that resources for new shelters and rescues are needed in under-resourced areas of the state.

“The majority of our dogs are transfers from rural WA (Yakima, Selah, Harrah, and reservation areas). There are no resources out there — no animal control, no shelter, no oversight.”

Some respondents scoped out to include the larger forces leading to animal relinquishment and “dumping” (leaving animals in both visible, such as released on the streets, or in secret, such as in a rural field). According to one respondent, dumping has increased in the last few years.

“Owners do not want to pay the surrender fees to animal shelters and abandon their dogs in our city.”

One respondent noted the importance of resources for the community:

“Resources to help pet owners keep their pets. Veterinary costs have increased, housing allowing pets has decreased. If people have temporary illnesses, displacement issues, there is nowhere to take their pets. Shelters are full, so dumping has increased. We need to find ways to help people through these issues so they can keep their animals and prevent dumping, overcrowded shelters [sic].”

OTHER GREATEST ANIMAL WELFARE NEEDS

Other themes that arose from the question included the need for public education about the importance of spay/neuter, vaccines and wellness care, the need for animal resources such as food and behavioral training, the need for more/enforced laws and regulations, the need for more resources for cat colonies, and more training and licensing of staff.

WHAT ONE RESOURCE DO YOU FEEL SUPPORTS THE WORK YOU DO (N=125)

When asked about the single resource that best supported the work they did, most were able to highlight the one most important resource while a handful of respondents highlighted multiple resources. The top three most useful resources cited were: **funding, collaboration; and volunteers.** The second tier of most frequently reported essential resources included **staff** and **veterinary care.** A number of other responses were provided ranging from six respondents to single respondents.

FUNDING, COLLABORATION, AND VOLUNTEERS

The majority of respondents indicated that funding was the most useful resource they had to help them do their work. Funding sources mentioned included public and private grants, city and government earmarks, and private community donations.

The second most common resource cited was collaboration and partnership with other organizations in the community. This was most often collaboration with animal shelters in their community but also with rescue organizations.

The third most cited resource of importance was community volunteers which included those serving as fosters.

STAFF AND VETERINARY CARE

Staff and veterinary care were tied for the fourth most important resource supporting the work being done in AWO and AC. Veterinary care included the veterinarians on staff, as well as those in the community that organizations partner with to meet the needs of the animals in the area.

OTHER RESPONSES

A number of other responses were cited as the one resource that helped organizations do their work. Listed in order from most frequently cited (after those listed above) to least, resources included: organization's leadership and management team and technology/social media, access to spay and neuter, having sufficient space in shelter, holding adoption events, having laws on the books/police in community/having an adequate vehicle, and public education campaigns.

WHAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES WOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO DO YOUR JOB? (N=124)

Respondents were asked what additional resources would make it easier to do their jobs. Responses included: **funding, shelter improvements, more animal control officers, more spay/neuter services, more fosters, and more veterinary care in rural areas.**

FUNDING

When asked about what resources would help with the job, the overwhelming response was funding (44). Some respondents simply said “funding,” but others were more specific about what the funds would support, including more general staff, more medical/clinical/licensed staff, funding to improve medical equipment and supplies, and funding for transportation vehicles.

Some were specific about the support that they thought would be most helpful. Six individuals mentioned that Washington support in the form of county contracts would be most beneficial. One respondent stated that *“a county contract to assist with the overhead cost of supporting strays and county impounds”* would support their programming.

Some indicated that their organization would benefit from more accessible grants, indicating that not being a big-name organization limited their ability to win grants. One small non-profit stated:

“Most grants focus on programs and not the day-to-day operations. We specialize in animals that are injured, sick, aging or have behavior problems, so they need more care.”

BETTER SHELTER FACILITIES/DEDICATED SHELTER/SPACE

Both shelter responses and rescue responses highlighted the need for better and bigger shelter facilities, a second shelter or any facility — either shelter or just holding — at all in some counties. Responses from shelter staff and volunteers lamented that they were overpopulated and had to turn animals away, whereas many rescues named shelters as the problem and which led them to be overpopulated as well. The overlap in comments was the plea to just “[Have] rescues/shelters able to take animals.”

MORE ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS

Seven respondents indicated the need for more animal control officers. One animal welfare respondent in all capital letters “ANIMAL CONTROL IN THE COUNTY” and one AC respondent stated:

“I have been the only officer for almost 20 years. With an ever growing county it would be nice to have additional officers.”

One AC respondent also indicated it would be helpful if ACO classes were offered on the east side of the state.

MORE SPAY AND NEUTER

As noted above, the need for spay and neuter services was noted as a common theme throughout the survey. A few respondents suggested that there be *“state-level coordination of S/N mobile response,”* as well as have the *“State of Washington allowing humane society's [sic] to spay/neuter animals for anyone, not just low income.”*

MORE FOSTERS

Many noted the need for foster homes to support the overpopulation of dogs in shelters, as well as support those animals that do not thrive in shelter settings. One respondent stated that *“We can only*

save the amount of dogs we have available fosters.” Another respondent indicated that there needed to be a large marketing/outreach campaign that would:

“[Reach] more people to let them know fosters are needed, a campaign that ‘sells’ fostering and makes people think, ‘Hey, maybe I could do that.’”

TRAVEL VETS, MORE LOW-COST VET CARE AVAILABLE IN RURAL SETTINGS

There was an overall interest in more access to low-cost veterinary care in all locations. One animal rescue respondent said that it would help if:

“More vet clinics locally [would be] willing to provide reduced fee services. More than a 10% discount. We used to get 50% but as more and more privately owned clinics are purchased or merged with corporations, we lose discounts.”

Another respondent highlighted the need for veterinary care in veterinary care deserts saying:

“Traveling mobile veterinarians coming to our rural county with spay/neuter and basic vet services (rabies vaccinations, treatment of mild illnesses/injuries) [would help their organization].”

OTHER NEEDS

Other needs that respondents cited that would make their jobs easier included community education and programming (including how to be more responsible pet parents), stricter pet ownership laws, collaboration between agencies, available temporary holding facilities for emergency situations, better human housing resources that allow for co-sheltering, animal behavior support, and elderly pet resources.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS FROM RESPONDENTS (N=78)

The final questions asked for any additional thoughts respondents had that they wanted to share. These final thoughts ranged from reiterating and reinforcing financial needs (including financial resources needed for veterinary care, spay and neuter, TNR, insurance, improved shelter, food and wages), increased regulation, reduction of barriers to animal care, animal adoption, animal breeding and imports, overpopulation, education, and other related topics. The responses below highlight some of the additional thoughts that respondents had, unorganized and in no ranked order:

FUNDING RELATED

- *Funding for municipal shelters in Washington must be allocated. Too often, we are the first services to face cuts, and elected officials have little understanding of our role in public health and safety, social services, and as first responders. Elected officials need to recognize that there is a person at the other end of the leash and address one issue; both must be considered together. Animal welfare professionals should be included in the conversation regarding low-income housing, domestic violence shelters, substance abuse, emergency response, and other social issues and inequities.*

- *Better working conditions (more personnel, higher wages) would help a great deal.*
- *Unless you are actually in the trenches, so to speak, it is impossible to fully understand animal rescue. It is demanding, 24/7, gut wrenching, keeps you up at night, what nightmares are made of and is truly the most rewarding thing you will ever do in your life. BUT begging for money, giving your own money, and fundraising non-stop shouldn't be the norm to keep animals safe, warm, healthy, and adoptable. We can all do better.*

COLLABORATION

- *We need to rethink how shelters and rescues work individually and together. For example, perhaps shelters need to become the major source of veterinary care for all animals being rehomed rather than housing them as a significant priority (since the return rates are high, compatibility cannot be assessed, animals get stressed with long stays etc.).*

ANIMAL NUMBERS

- *The drive to increase adoption numbers in shelters through managed intake and free adoptions is causing pressure in the community that many rescues are forced to address.*
- *Post Covid, the increase in dog rehoming, dumping, accidental litters has greatly increased. Many rescues are shutting their doors — unable to emotionally and financially handle the massive increase in rescue need. We get owner surrender requests DAILY. Not enough money, not enough fosters, etc.*
- *We have lost ground on the quality of services and the types of animals we are able to help. Behaviors and medical conditions that were reasonably accommodated 2 years ago are cause for euthanasia today. Local animal control services routinely recommend turning stray animals loose due to lack of space to house them.*

OVERSIGHT OF RESCUES

- *I also think there needs to be oversight/accreditation with groups that call themselves rescues. Shelters have a great deal of responsibility to work within established best practices such as safety, cleanliness, and placing animals in responsible homes. However, we see some pet stores acting as "rescues" and contributing to the problem. Specifically, not ensuring spay/neuters happen prior to adoption. I was disappointed to learn that language was not included in recent bills that passed a few years ago.*

VETERINARY ACTIVITIES

- *One of the biggest issues for me is the restriction of even basic veterinary activities to licensed techs only. Certified assistants are very restricted in what they can do without supervision which means significantly higher staffing costs, especially in light of the severe shortage of licensed technicians.*

ANIMAL CONTROL AND LAWS

- *Animal control officers are often very understaffed and serve a large population. I single handedly serve a city with a population of 18,500. [A neighboring city], has 3 ACO's for a total population 233,530.*
- *X County is in dire need for adequate animal ordinances that can protect and create sustainable programs to reduce animal cruelty and neglect affecting cats and dogs in its community.*
- *ACO's should be fully commissioned officers and have the same rights/benefits/protection that patrol officers do. There are many ACO's (myself included) that work as a one person unit. We ALL need help. They need to budget in more ACO's across Washington, with higher wages. We deal with the same population as patrol officers do, with the same dangers, for a much lower pay.*
- *We had a levy on the ballot to support and bring animal control back into service, but the public voted it down but still complain on the lack of animal control services. It is a problem but no funding for it.*

HUMAN SOCIAL SERVICES

- *There also needs to be legislation to protect renters and their pets. More and more landlords are not allowing pets because people are desperate and they can get away with it.*
- *Animals will never be better if humans aren't better. The welfare of animals is directly linked to the welfare of humans. We need more funding for programs that help humans be better pet owners, give them resources for their pets, and helps them keep their pets.*

OTHER

- *By addressing these key areas-policy reform, education, collaboration, and resource investment-animal welfare services can be better utilized and more effective in tackling the challenges outlined. But it has to start at the state level.*

SURVEY DISCUSSION

Key Findings

The findings of this survey highlight key challenges and needs in companion animal welfare in Washington state. A recurrent theme throughout the open-ended responses is a need for low-cost spay and neuter services. This is brought up in both the context of population management of free roaming animals as well as for owned pets. The issue of overpopulation is reinforced through the leading cause of AC cases and AWO intakes for both dogs and cats: at large/stray/roaming/found animals.

An interesting finding is that despite the strongly indicated deficit throughout the responses, spay and neuter services were also the most frequently cited underutilized service. As suggested by respondents in the free text follow-up questions, one possible reason for this conflicting data is that even in cases where services are provided, there is a lack of public awareness and understanding of importance.

Low-cost veterinary care for owned, rescue, and shelter pets was another highly cited need in both the AC and AWO responses. Small AWOs look to private clinics and animal shelters for veterinary care since they cannot afford veterinary staff but note that even infrequent care can be cost prohibitive. AC respondents indicated that emergency veterinary care is needed for the injured and sick animals they manage. Other respondents wrote of the need for low-cost veterinary care for owned animals to support essential vaccination for disease prevention and spay and neuter to prevent overpopulation. Increasing access to veterinary care was also mentioned as a mechanism for keeping pets with their owners and reducing the number of pets in shelters.

Increased public education on topics such as the importance of spay and neuter, vaccination and how to be good pet-parents was also frequently suggested by organizations. There is a need from both small and large AWOs to do outreach and marketing in the community to share information on the services they offer. Small AWO organizations indicated they did not have the staff needed for full marketing and outreach (which also affects their capacity to fundraise).

In Short

- High need for spay/neuter resources
- High need for low-cost veterinary care for owned, rescued and shelter animals
- Over half of AC/AWO respondents cannot carry out their duties at work with the current resources
- Nearly 90% of respondents indicated additional funding is needed
 - AWO cite veterinary access a priority need
 - AC cite larger facilities a priority need
- Need for additional shelter space:
 - Majority of shelters at capacity for dogs
 - Over half of shelters at capacity for cats
- Seven counties had no AC or AWO responses
- Eleven tribes had no AC or AWO responses
- Most positively impacted by SB 5004
- Need for more Animal Control Officers
- Need for relationship building across organizations

Over half of AC and AWO respondents report that they cannot carry out their duties at work with the current resources. Over three quarters of AWO respondents report that they are at capacity for dogs and over half report that they are at capacity for cats. Nearly 90% of respondents indicated that additional funding is needed. Access to veterinary care was most often selected as the best investment for additional funding by AWO respondents and updated facilities with more space to hold animals was most often selected by AC respondents. Another theme most often referenced by ACs was the need for more Animal Control Officers and funding for Sheriff's offices that now respond to animal welfare calls in lieu of ACOs.

The abundance of at large/stray animals noted above, as well as lack of sufficient spay and neuter resources, is a particular challenge for communities where shelters and rescue organizations cannot take additional animals due to being overcapacity. Many respondents called for new shelters or shelter renovations to meet this need.

On occasion, responses from individuals about services available/not available in a region conflict with other responses received. Organizations may not be aware of other groups providing services in the same region. Additionally, there may be a disconnect between what services AC and AWO organizations have the capacity to support. Undercurrents of frustration between different types of organizations have some respondents placing blame on other organizations.

Limitations

Individuals were asked to self-select their organization into type (AWO, AC, or 'other animal-related organization'). For four organizations, individuals chose different types for the same organization. This may be due to respondent error, or the fact that their organization acts as both an animal welfare organization and an animal control agency. During analyses, responses were divided by the organization type selected by the respondent, and this may not be how the organization would self-identify. Respondents could not select that their organization was both AC and AWO. While this was a conscious decision by the survey team to keep the length of the survey short, organizations that were in fact both AWO and AC were not able to complete all relevant survey questions unless the survey was completed twice.

Because we hoped to elicit as much information as possible, there were multiple responses from many organizations and not all responses from individuals working with the same organization were in agreement. In analyses, we assumed if a response was provided from one individual (such as a service provided) but not from another at the same organization that it was a service provided. If one respondent mistakenly reported their organization provided a service that it did not provide, this could be wrongly presented in an organization-level map. Now that this high-level assessment has been completed, future studies should home in on specific questions with one individual that can best answer for the organization as a whole.

We are aware that some identified organizations did not complete the survey, and that there are likely many other organizations that were not identified who also did not complete the survey. For those organizations that we know of that did not complete the survey, reasons such as staffing,

access to internet, and language barriers could have led to not completing the survey. For those organizations that we do not know of, not having an internet presence, a marketing team, or those not working in close proximity to other organizations that would have forwarded the survey invite could have kept those organizations off the radar. Future studies should include travel to the counties to talk to the AWOs and ACs that we are aware of, and a deep dive into communities to learn about other organizations and to help get those viewpoints.

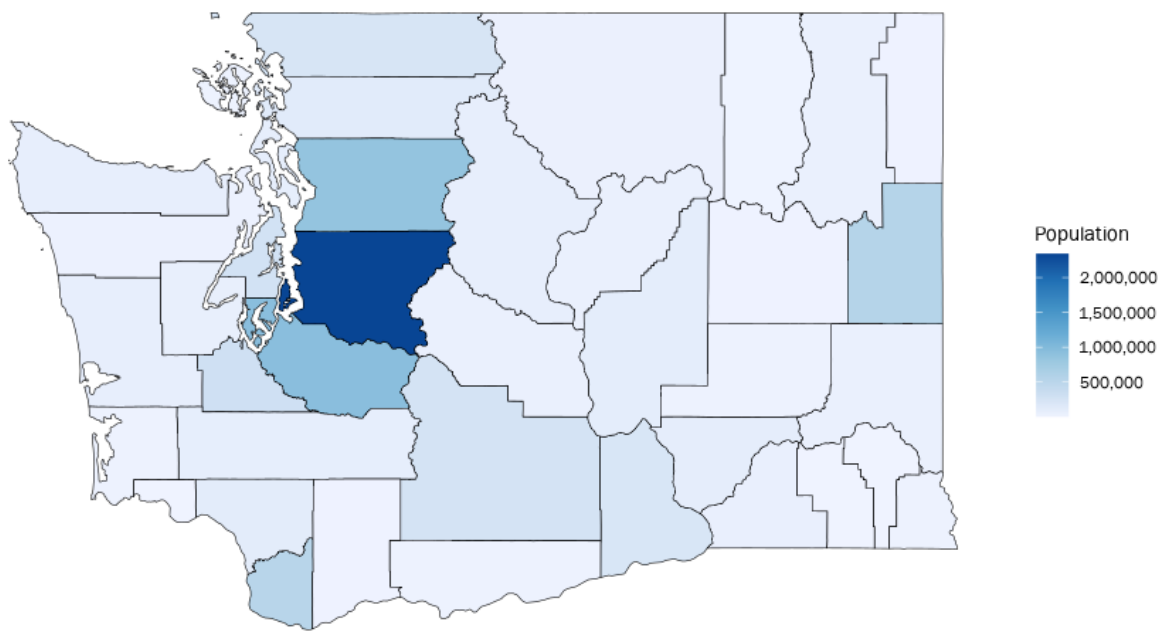
In the survey, we ask which services the respondent's organization provides and which counties they serve, but not which services they provide in which counties. It is not safe to assume that all services are provided in all the counties they serve. An example of this is that a shelter in County A may have reported that they provide spay and neuter services, microchipping, and licensing and registration and that they serve Counties A and B. However, County A may transport animals from County B for adoption purposes, but may not provide any of the other services they offer to County B.

For the questions around whether animal welfare organizations take in animals from their local area or from other regions, it is important to note that even if an organization reports they take in animals from their city or county, those animals still may not have originated in Washington. They could have been previously relocated from out of state or out of country.

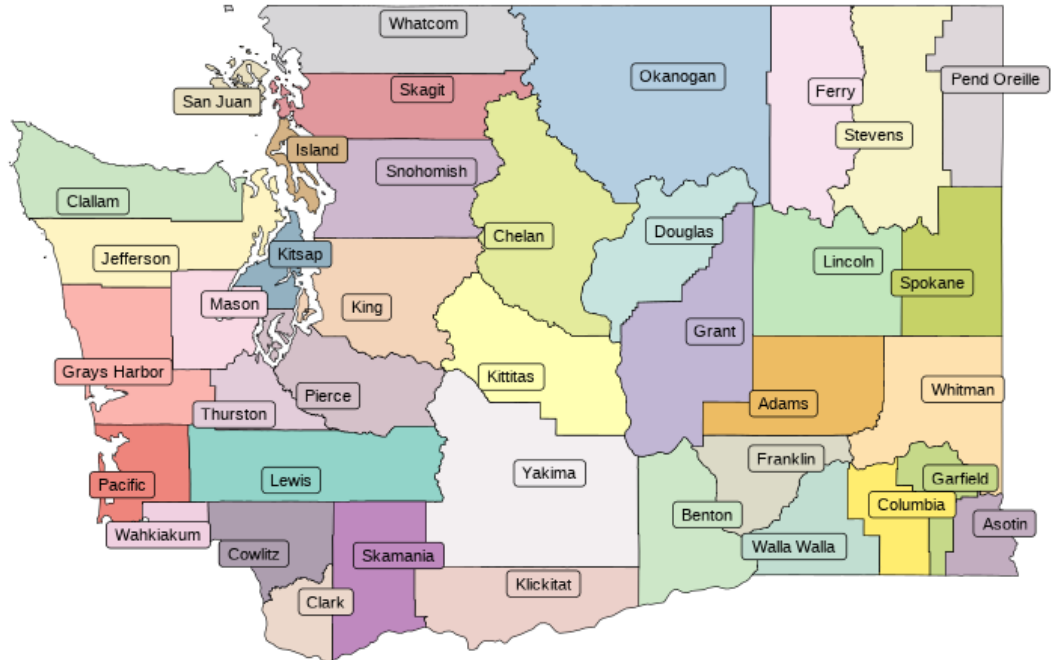
Finally, it is important to remember when looking at the maps of resource distribution across the state that the needs are also not uniform across counties. We expect to see greater resources in areas with higher human and companion animal populations.

Figures for Reference

Washington State Population by County



Washington State Counties



SURVEY APPENDICES

Subject Matter Experts						
Agency	Name	Organization	Position	Contact Information	Response Y/N	Sent
Animal Control	Tim Anderson	Regional Animal Services of King County (RASKC); Washington Animal Control Association (WACA)	Manager; Treasurer	tim.anderson@kingcounty.gov	N	X
	Sarah Hock	Joint Animal Services; Washington Federation of Animal Care and Control Agencies (WAFed)	Executive Director; President	sarahjh@jointanimalservices.org	Y	X
Animal Welfare	Jennifer Bennett	University of California Davis - Koret Shelter Medicine Program	Director of Shelter Medicine Access to Care	icbbennett@ucdavis.edu	N	X
	Katie Kuehl	University of Washington- One Health Clinic; Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine	Veterinary Director; Professor	k.kuehl@wsu.edu	Y	X
	Radha Ganesan	Entrepreneur	Shelter Medicine and High Volume Spay/Neuter Veterinarian	rganesan.dvm@gmail.com	Y	X
	BJ Andersen	Wenatchee Valley Humane Society	Executive Director	bjandersen@wenatcheehumane.org	N	X
	Jeanine Foucher	Team Okanagan Animal Rescue (TOAR)	Consultant	foucher.jeanine@gmail.com	Y	X
Other	Madi Roy	Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA)	Economist	mmroy@agr.wa.gov	Y	X
	Amber Itle	Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA)	State Veterinarian	aitle@agr.wa.gov	Y	X

Organizations Represented	
6dogrees Rescue	Mount Vernon Police Department
A to Z Rescue	Murci's Mission Animal Rescue
Aberdeen Police Department	No Nuts Club
Adams County Pet Rescue	Noah's Pet Project
Alley Cat Project	North Beach Progressive Animal Welfare Society
Alternative Humane Society	Northshore Veterinary Hospital
American Animal Management Center	Northwest Spay Neuter Center
American Humane	Oasis for Animals
Anacortes Police Department	Okandogs
Animal Emergency Care	Okanogan County Animal Foster Care Association
Animal Foster Care Cat Shelter	Okanogan Regional Humane
Animal Protection Organization	Old Dog Haven
Animal Shelter	Oly Camp Kitties
Arlington Police Department	One Health Clinic
ASPCA	Orcas Animal Protection Society
Becks Place	Pacific Rim Rescue
Benton County Canine Shelter	Pasado's Safe Haven
Blue Mountain Humane Society	Path of Hope Rescue
Bunanza Rabbit Rescue Ranch	Paws of Bainbridge Island North Kitsap
Burien Cares Animal Shelter	Paws of Grays Harbor
Caring Hearts 4 Paws	Pawsitive Alliance
Center Valley Animal Rescue	PawsWithCause
City of Benton City	Progressive Animal Welfare Society Companion Animal Shelter
City of Colville	Pullman Police Department
City of Dayton	Redmond Fall City Animal Hospital
City of Ellensburg	Regional Animal Services of King County
City of Long Beach	Rescue4all
City of Prosser	Rocket Rescue
City of Ridgefield	Rompin Paws Rescue
City of Sultan	Save a Forgotten Equine
Clallam County Sheriff's Office	Save-a-Mutt

Clark County Animal Protection and Control	Saving Grace Rescue Inc
Collar of Hope	Saving Great Animals
Columbia Basin Pet Rescue	Seattle Animal Shelter
Colville Valley Animal Sanctuary	Seattle Area Feline Rescue
Community Cat Coalition	Seattle Humane
Concern for Animals	Seattle Parrot Rescue
Dog Gone Seattle	Seattle Veterinary Outreach
Doney Coe Pet Clinic	Sedro Woolley Police Department
Edmonds	Skagit County Sheriff Office
Emerald City Pet Rescue	Skamania County Sheriff's Office
Everett Animal Services aka Everett Animal Shelter	Smidget Rescue
Federal Way Police Department	Snohomish County Animal Services
Feline Friends	South County Cats
Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Project	South Pacific County Humane Society
Ferry County Sheriff	Spay Neuter all Pets Snap
Foreclosure Pets	Spay Neuter Northwest
Forever Home Dog Rescue	Spokane County Regional Animal Protection Service Scraps
Forget Me not Animal Shelter	Spokane Humane Society
Forgotten Dogs Rescue	Spokanimal
Franklin County Sheriff	Stevens County Animal Outreach
Fur Ever Yours Dog Rescue	Stevens County Emergency Management
Grant County Sheriff's Office	Team Okanogan Animal Rescue
Grays Harbor County Sheriff's Office	The Kitty Rescue
Greyhound Pets Inc	The NOAH Center
Hands 'N Paws Animal Assistance	The Pit Bull Pen
Harbor Association of Volunteers for Animals	Toppenish Police Department
Homeward Pet Adoption Center	Tri-Cities Animal Services
HSUS Rural Area Veterinary Services	Valhalla Canine Rescue
Humane Society for Southwest Washington	Valley Spay and Neuter
Humane Society for Tacoma and Pierce County	Vashon Island Pet Protectors
Humane Society of Jefferson County WA	Wags to Riches Animal Rescue Sanctuary
Humane Society of Mason County	Wahkiakum Animal Advocates Group
Humane Society of Skagit Valley	Wahkiakum County
Island County Sheriff's Office	Washington Alliance for Humane Legislation

Jefferson County Sheriff's Office	Washington Alaskan Malamute Adoption League
Joint Animal Services	Washington Animal Rescue League
Josies Misfit Ranch	Washington Health Outreach
Kindred Souls Foundation	Washington State Animal Response Team
Kitsap Humane Society	Welfare for Animals Guild Wag
Kitten Rescue of Mason County	Wenatchee Valley Humane Society
Kittitas County Friends of Animals	West Columbia Gorge Humane Society
Kitty Kat Haven	West Richland Animal Compliance Officer
Lake Stevens Police Department	Whatcom Humane Society
Lakewood Police Department	Whidbey Animals Improvement Foundation
Little Dog Rescue	Whitman County Humane Society
Main Street Mutt	Who Let the Dogs Out
Meow Cat Rescue	Yakima County Sheriff's Office
Metro Animal Services	Yakima Humane Society
Mill Creek Police Department	Yakima Valley Pet Rescue
Motley Zoo Animal Rescue	

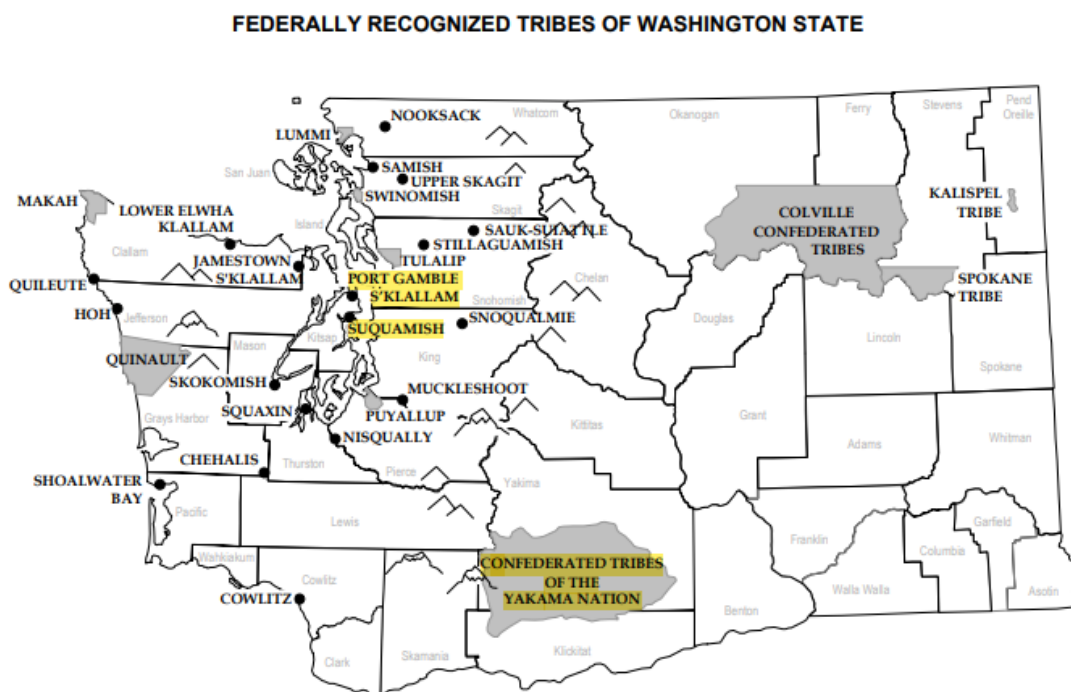
First Nations and Tribes' Perspectives

Native American perspectives on dogs and cats are as varied as the tribes themselves, blending deep-rooted cultural traditions with modern challenges in animal welfare. The information here is second-hand from communication via email, phone calls, or meetings with representatives from three tribes and is not meant to represent all animal welfare perspectives and needs for the nations and tribes of Washington. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the themes from those who did respond, as others could be facing similar issues, or the themes align with common threads statewide.

Much like other areas of animal welfare, identifying and applying solutions is often nuanced and complicated. There is the overlap of culture, human welfare, environmental impacts, and available resources to consider, as well as tribal sovereignty. Meaning American Indian tribal nations have the political status of nations while geographically located within territorial areas of the U.S. Tribal nations have relationships with federal and state governing bodies. The [Washington Tribes](#) website explains, “*Tribal law, federal law, and state laws define government’s responsibilities, powers, limitations and obligations. Tribal sovereignty allows tribal nations autonomy to govern, exercise jurisdiction and protect and enhance the health, safety and welfare of tribal citizens within tribal territory.*” No matter the approach, it is encouraged to ensure the American Indian Nations of Washington are at the table for animal welfare conversations and decision making. Form working relationships, then partnerships, with respective tribal leadership and utilize current well-established

partnerships with native communities to take into account the differing opinions on ethics, values, and solutions. Partnering to address animal welfare needs while cognizant of not pushing ideals on the tribe and the situation.

Input from all [29 federally recognized tribes](#) was requested through letters asking for input with emphasis on owned and community-owned dogs and cats of tribal members and reservation community members. Suquamish Tribe, Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe, and Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation provided important insight.



In the letter to the tribal chairs, the following questions were asked:

1. What are the tribe's main animal welfare needs?
2. What proposed solutions or resources are needed to address those concerns?
3. What veterinary services (in-state or out-of-state programs) are currently available to the tribe?

Suquamish Tribe

The [Suquamish Tribe](#) is located on the Port Madison Indian Reservation in Kitsap County on approximately 7,657 acres and is allocated in two parcels, the Indianola Parcel and the Suquamish Parcel, with a [population of about 8,000](#). Key areas of concern include high veterinary costs, lack of access to spay/neuter programs, and the number of spay/neuter appointments available.

The large population of feral cats and stray or roaming dogs is a problem. High veterinary costs for routine services (e.g., veterinary exam and spay/neuter procedures) as well as additional out-of-pocket costs for tribal members utilizing local spay and neuter programs are a barrier to accessing these services. Appointments for low-income spay/neuter fill quickly, and no mobile clinics are offering free or low-cost spay and neuter or wellness programs for the reservation.

To address these needs, the respondent suggested a trap, neuter, and release (TNR) or relocation program for feral cats. There is interest in enhancing relationships with local rescue and animal care organizations and having more organizations providing spay/neuter clinics, with particular interest in mobile clinics. Increasing the low-income qualification limit so more tribal and reservation members could utilize spay/neuter services was also mentioned.

The tribe partners with [PAWS of Bainbridge Islands and North Kitsap](#), where grants from the [Suquamish Tribal Foundation and the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribal Foundation](#) are available to provide for the full cost of cat or dog spay/neuter for all Suquamish and S'Klallam tribe members.

Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

Located along the Port Gamble Bay near Hood Canal, the [Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe](#) has over [1,200 members](#) and a reservation [population of approximately 500](#).

A Tribal Officer described Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe as *“an innovative, forward-moving Tribe helping the community members grow and strive through changing times.”* Needs around animal control, animal food and supplies, and veterinary care were discussed. There is a pet code, but enforcing it is an issue. He said the following:

“Under the Tribe’s code, owners are responsible for providing the appropriate supervision and care of the animal, including all necessary food, water, housing, vaccinations, and medical care. The Tribe’s main welfare needs are to provide resources for pet owners and enforcement protecting animal cruelty. Animal control helps communities by enforcing animal-related laws, investigating cruelty and neglect cases, rescuing animals in distress, and providing resources for pet owners, ultimately promoting animal welfare and public safety. Cases that have happened on the reservation have been due to the owners not having the funds to provide all those necessary items. Once resources are provided, neglect cases may be reduced. Because of not having an animal control designated enforcement on the Port Gamble reservation, humane procedures have not been practiced with handling vicious animals. There are no resources to contain the animals. Kennels or a temporary holding area is needed. Officers currently do not have equipment or training to rescue animals from dangerous situations, such as neglect, abandonment, or accidents. Including removing animals in a high-risk situation to quarantine and assess medically.”

“Looking over all the Tribe’s cases from 2017 to present, there have been 4 animal removals due to attacks, 10 animal cruelty calls were reports of owners killing their dogs or animals removed because of abuse, and 107 calls of service to animal complaints. The Tribe has never had a contract with anyone to assist with animal calls. Officers have had to personally find resources while on duty or they have personally adopted pets to save pets because there was no resource and did not want

anything bad to happen with the animal.” He went on to say Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe does not provide veterinary services, and a contract for a veterinarian is needed. Many animals are not spayed, neutered, or vaccinated.

The Tribe has looked into numerous grants and contracting options with the county for animal control services without success. Partnerships have been important and help from local humane societies has been invaluable. The Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe is in the process of sending a tribal officer to the state’s [Animal Control Officer Academy](#). In his interactions with other tribes, he has come across similar animal welfare needs and suggested it would be a great start if the state fully covered tuition for tribal police officers to attend the Animal Control Officer Academy. Expanding the Animal Control Officer Academy to provide additional training throughout the year and on the eastern side of the state was discussed, as well as more consistent funding specifically for agencies providing services to tribes. Additional public outreach and education to know what local partnerships and resources are available to tribes was also recommended.

Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation

The 1.13-million-acre reservation with a [population of about 30,000](#) in Southcentral Washington is home to the [Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation](#). It is common to have individually owned and community-owned animals, and it is home to a large wild horse population.

Currently, the Yakama face problems with an overpopulation of cats and dogs compared to what the Tribe and local resources can support. As a tribal representative said, *“this is worsened by those living off the reservation who may know the large rural area and tribal laws can make it less likely they will be caught and charged. Frequent animal ‘dumping’ or abandonment of unwanted or unowned cats, dogs, and livestock is difficult to control over such a large, rural area contributing to the large animal numbers, estimated to be in the thousands. Often animals found abandoned on tribal lands are pregnant, have litters, or are animals with behavioral or medical problems. There are also diseases, such as [parvovirus \(parvo\)](#), commonly seen on the reservation, taking an economical and social toll. The high cost of pet food and fewer options for local veterinary care complicates problems for many living on the reservation, not just tribal members.”* After COVID-19, multiple veterinary clinics closed on the reservation and now there is one clinic offering limited services approximately one day a week. Fewer clinics and increased veterinary costs make it difficult for essential care needs to be met. If there is an emergency, tribal members and Yakima County residents must travel at least an hour or more to the nearest small animal emergency clinic in Pasco. *“Many residents try to take care of all animals as best they can. Yakima Humane Society used to take dogs from the reservation but have stopped within the last few years.”* The above factors make it difficult to address animal welfare needs, especially if a community faces barriers with accessing and affording resources (e.g., food, healthcare) for people. In addition to the concerns over the size of the community animal populations are reports of illegal activities (e.g., animal fighting) and a lack of resources (e.g., funding, animal control programs, personnel) to control and enforce animal welfare regulations. The Yakama Nation is not contracted with off-reservation county/city law enforcement or animal control; therefore, they do not have jurisdiction on the reservation. Combined

with a large, rural area, more people and programs are needed to close these animal welfare gaps. Separately, multiple tribal representatives mentioned animal overpopulation combined with conflicting values, goals, and objectives on how to manage wildlife (in particular wild horses) and a need for stronger regulations, which impact environmental and economic resources for the tribes.

Some ideas for solutions include having more veterinary clinics or mobile wellness services on the reservation. Continuing to partner with organizations that could provide low-cost spay/neuter incentives and increase access to these services. The Nation has worked with organizations providing donations of pet food and pet supplies, along with human welfare services. It was reported that these interactions have decreased. There is interest in reestablishing consistent partnerships with organizations offering essential pet food and supplies, including vaccinations and dewormer, and help with providing animal housing and fencing for tribal members. As well as establishing a tribal humane society and animal control program that can partner with and work alongside local animal care and animal control agencies to bridge gaps in services and oversight. They stated many local and county animal shelters, rescues, and animal control agencies are over capacity and cannot provide additional services to tribal and reservation members or even to people not living on the reservation. Some people and animals have not interacted with veterinarians or other animal care agencies before; therefore, there is an opportunity to build relationships and provide community animal health and welfare outreach and education.

In addition to the one veterinary clinic, *“the Yakima Valley Pet Rescue (YVPR), Pawsitive Alliance, Forgotten Dogs, 15/10 Foundation and the Feline friends of Samamish have stepped up and offer one to two, three-day spay and neuter clinics in Harrah, WA by YVPR each month. Many clinics offer free spay and neuter for tribal member pets. The Yakama Nation (YN) Housing Authority is partnering with Rescue Angels and YVPR to help with the overpopulation (e.g., trapping and rehoming of violent or misunderstood feral dogs that inhibit children from using playgrounds). The YN Pahto Transit will provide rides to and from the spay and neuter clinics if needed. Hats off to all the volunteers that help with these clinics.”* The following are some agencies that have worked with the Yakama Nation as well: Caring Hearts 4 Paws Rescue (Olympia), Animal Angels (Ellensburg), Red Rose Animal Rescue (Rochester), Washington German Shepard Rescue, Spokanimals (Spokane), Pacific Rim Rescue and Pronto (Benton City), and Wags to Riches. Additional information on organizations that serve tribal communities can be found in the Survey results.

Discussion

Accumulated data and background information were based on interviews of animal regulatory agencies and authorities, demographic information, tribal perspectives, survey results of animal care and control agencies, and an animal welfare-related literature review. The discussion section will use themes identified by the acquired information to outline gaps in Washington State regulations, showcase other state animal welfare programs, share funding mechanisms or models, and propose recommendations to inform solutions. Key areas of focus discussed here include data collection and sharing, importation and ports of entry, regulatory governance, animal control and care agencies, and access to services.

Data collection and sharing

Data standardization, collection, and sharing are critical for making data-driven decisions, benchmarking progress, and measuring outcomes. Maintaining records is essential for assessing and protecting human and animal health, operating animal welfare agencies, managing population and community decisions, and determining what animal welfare policies are working. There is a significant amount of unknown data about Washington's animal populations, and having a database to combine with data from other animal welfare sectors in the state could provide metrics for informing constructive solutions for the people and animals of Washington state.

Need: Standardized databases for data collection, sharing, and reporting

Dog and cat population and demographic data specific to Washington state are not widely collected. There is likely an underestimation and underrepresentation of the dog and cat population sizes, and incomplete demographics for stray or feral animals and underserved, marginalized communities. Currently, there is no known survey or other data collection modality to obtain the true number of Washington dogs and cats. Although animal care, animal control, and other animal-facing agencies might collect data around animal population and demographics separately, the systems used, and data collected are not standardized. In addition, some communities might not be interfacing with these services and providers, or there are variations in what, why, and how information is collected.

The total number of organizations on Shelter Animals Count (SAC), included in the National and State Animal Welfare Statistics Dashboards, is a combination of participating and non-participating shelters and rescues. Participation varies every year as data submission is voluntary. For 2024, 68 of the 260 Washington state organizations (26%) provided some or all data for the year. SAC data collection skews towards more shelters than rescues (the organization breakdown is 63% of shelters in the state and 14% of rescues). SAC is a reputable database referenced in multiple data collection reports pertaining to this assessment. Therefore, having more universal, consistent participation and standardized reporting mechanisms is key to accurately capturing various segments of animal entities and populations represented in Washington.

Currently, information is not shared in real time between federal agencies or local and state agencies. There is no central database. Local, state, and federal agencies use different databases to capture information that may be incompatible or collect inconsistent information. An example at the local (city and county) level is the collection of animal cruelty/neglect data. Again, [the Link between people and animal abuse](#) solidifies the importance of collecting and sharing information across agencies to address and enforce these cases properly. As an animal control subject matter expert (SME) stated:

“The FBI collects animal cruelty data, but it is not accurately reported. In 2016, the FBI’s National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) began collecting detailed case information on animal cruelty incidents from participating law enforcement agencies. Not every law enforcement agency

reports data to NIBRS, and animal control agencies or humane organizations, not recognized as law enforcement agencies, often investigate animal cruelty, resulting in unreported data.”

As one SME put it, “there is a shared interest to capture data on the true number of dogs and cats currently in Washington and being transferred into Washington from other states and countries, as well as their health and vaccination status.” For example, this assessment provides strong evidence that a portion of animal organizations are importing animals from other states or countries instead of focusing on dogs and cats already in need of help within Washington. It is important to have data to better understand why demand for dogs and cats is not being met in the state and why it may be more advantageous or cost-effective for individuals or groups to bring animals in from outside Washington instead of working with those in areas that are underserved or with pet overpopulation.

[Recommendations](#)

It is recommended to combine currently collected animal care and control information with ownership demographics (e.g., U.S. Census, ALICE reports, Veterinary Care Accessibility Project, etc.), veterinary professional data, and information about animal welfare challenges and barriers, where available. Consider partnering with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) to obtain Washington-specific data or apply their pet population formula to data from the U.S. Census or data from other organization databases interacting with feral animal populations (e.g., [ClinicHQ](#)). Doing so would help obtain more complete animal population and demographic information. Another option is to include statistics from sheltering databases, AVMA Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook, Washington State Department of Health data on veterinary professionals (including newly collected demographic data), and data from veterinary technician and professional programs. Combining this information would be a step closer to a comprehensive snapshot of animal welfare needs in Washington state.

With over half of Washington households owning a pet, human and animal welfare tend to go hand in hand. The [ALICE threshold](#) is one example; if 38% of Washington households cannot afford or are struggling to afford basic needs for their families, they are likely facing the same challenges with meeting needs for their pets. Partnering with organizations already involved in community outreach to underserved or marginalized communities could help provide data, as well as conduct surveys alongside providing services. This [Pets for Life Community Outreach Toolkit](#) provides information on the importance of and uses for data mapping, as well as other community outreach and program topics. Pets for Life has a database with information collected over time through their door-to-door, community-led outreach. Although data collected fills gaps in information from underserved communities, this form of data collection can be a resource and time-intensive process.

Creating a task force or study group to regularly review and study these and other data points is suggested for an adaptable, long-term approach. It is recommended to factor in varying perspectives and human-animal relationships, as well as public opinion about animal welfare. This can include, but is not limited to, socioeconomic, population size and distribution, cultural, and religious demographics. The importance here is to create an understanding of the relationship between

people, animals, and communities that informs animal welfare decisions. This relationship can vary depending on the species, worldviews, etc., impacting perceptions.

Need: Interagency data sharing

Sharing import permits or associated data is not a regulatory mandate, and federal agencies do not have authority under current federal law to notify others (e.g., state and local agencies) when animals are imported into Washington. Local and state agencies must either request data and information from federal entities or have an interagency memorandum of understanding (MOU). Federal, state, tribal, and local coordination with other organizations may differ, and it is best to consult with individual government entities on current practices or protocols. There is consensus across state and federal agencies that the number of dogs entering Washington annually is grossly underestimated, and it is concerning to know there is an unknown number of other small animal species (e.g., cats, rabbits, ferrets) traveling to or through the state. Not having a shared or real-time reporting system in place between agencies (federal or state, or local) compounds the problem.

CDC mandates that all CDC-registered Animal Care Facilities (ACF) comply with state and local laws. Aside from documented permits, health certificates, and some information on animals from DMRVV high-risk countries, little denominator data is collected. CDC collects limited data on dogs arriving from low-risk/rabies-free countries. CDC does not collect data on cats. Collecting more denominator data and sharing importation documents would be helpful to monitor trends or outbreaks.

Recommendations

A possible first step is creating an interagency database, even as a pilot, at the state level for data collection, information sharing, and real-time notification. Currently, the RAD system at WSDA notifies DOH only for the animal diseases listed in [WAC 246-101-805](#), but could be expanded. Increased sharing could be highly beneficial and help bridge needs around interagency communication and collaboration in areas such as animal movement, disease traceability, and response. It is difficult to address zoonotic diseases, complaints, or non-compliance if there is no communication and notification of the movement of dogs and cats in the first place. An interagency database would complement response efforts or investigations and could be used to assess additional areas of need, make improvements, or gather key data for the state.

Regulatory Agencies and Authorities

The intent behind knowing and understanding the gaps in regulatory authority is not to place blame but to inform decisions at state and local levels to bridge gaps where possible and continue to foster interagency collaboration for the betterment of our state and country. Therefore, recommendations will focus on what can be done at the state or county levels to close Washington's regulatory gaps to safeguard animal and public health.

International and Interstate Importation Coordination

The animal importation process is complex. Even though pet owners and importers must comply with federal and state entry requirements, the federal government is responsible for enforcing only what is authorized by federal law. Only state and local governments have authority to regulate state and local laws. These variances and gaps pose animal, public, and community health risks as well as potential economic impacts. There is inconsistency across federal and state agency requirements, such as microchips, tests, and vaccines, as well as authority and enforcement.

The three federal agencies (CBP, CDC, USDA APHIS) that have oversight of animal health regulations vary in scope, authority, and resource allocation. There are 328 CBP (air, land, and sea) [ports of entry \(POEs\) into the United States](#). Of those, [Washington has 12 POEs](#), with the majority located west of the Cascade Mountains. CBP mandate is broad, and the agency must screen all agricultural products imported into the U.S., which leads to variation in how CBP handles animal importation. In general, CBP is not set up or equipped (e.g., supplies, training) to inspect live animals or be more involved. USDA APHIS VS has [Animal Import Centers](#) in Miami and New York, but these are for species other than cats and dogs. Not all POEs have staff, inspectors, or veterinarians from every federal agency responsible for live animal imports to enforce live animal importation laws. CDC's primary role is to mitigate zoonotic disease risk to humans, not animal health. It is the only federal agency with companion animal entry requirements and animal care facilities accepting dogs and cats.

The majority of internationally imported dogs and cats are not inspected by any agency unless there is a reason for inspection. A few key points:

- USDA APHIS AC airline and facility inspections take place in cases of repeat non-compliance or notification of ill animal(s).
- CDC does inspect CDC-registered ACF, and USDA APHIS does have authority to assist.
- USDA APHIS AC does not have authority or means to hold an animal or return the animal to the country of origin. As a result, the animal may be allowed entry regardless of meeting requirements.
- CDC only denies entry to cats and dogs that do not meet CDC entry requirements.
- USDA APHIS AC oversees the transportation of animals for commercial sale [after](#) animals arrive in the United States.

There are welfare concerns around animal transportation standards. Issues such as stress, sanitary conditions, exposure to heat or cold, and protective measures for pregnant animals. The Association of Shelter Veterinarians and the American Veterinary Medical Association are two of many organizations with guidelines for animal transportation. Delving into transportation issues was not part of the assessment, but warrants further review.

Cats and dogs are obtained from many sources. Emphasis should be placed on prioritizing the needs of Washington state's animals and communities. This does not mean stopping interstate or international transport but asking how we can support those already here to better support those outside of the state. Like the oxygen mask analogy. It is difficult to help others if we are unable to help ourselves. When animals are imported, it is worth considering how those animals can be

supported throughout the process while protecting communities and animals already here. Likewise, addressing how Washington state can uplift and promote individuals and businesses with responsible animal welfare practices instead of those prioritizing profit over welfare.

Federal Ports of Entry (POEs) and Animal Care Facilities (ACFs)

Need: Increase resources for live animal imports at POEs

Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) has authority and regulation over interstate animal movement but does not have staff at ports of entry to enforce state entry requirements for internationally imported animals. The WSDA and local governments rely on notification of incoming animals with reportable disease from veterinarians and federal agencies. Animals imported into the state from other states or out of the country may bring with them diseases that are not endemic (prevalent or native) to Washington state. These diseases have the potential to infect other companion animals, livestock, or people. Once a disease is introduced, it can be difficult and expensive to eradicate, increasing the risk of a disease becoming established or endemic.

[New World Screwworm \(NWS\)](#) is one example of what federal, state, and local partners are working tirelessly to keep out of the U.S. due to the devastating effects NWS has on livestock, [pets, wildlife, and, in rare cases, people](#). On [May 11, 2025, USDA suspended live animal imports](#) of cattle, bison, and horses through POEs along the southern border due to rapid northward spread of NWS in Mexico. Dogs are allowed to be imported with a verified veterinary certification of screwworm inspection. However, both federal and state agencies reported violations by animal rescues importing dogs (and cats) illegally into Washington state from places such as Mexico. Considering how many animals live in Washington homes or are in close contact with people, introducing NWS would be an animal and public health risk.

The majority of cases of dog [Brucellosis](#) in Washington occur in dogs imported interstate or internationally (see Regulatory section), with a much higher prevalence of the infection. Dog owners unknowingly adopt these animals with incurable disease and are exposed to zoonotic disease. Dog brucellosis leads to serious health consequences, even resulting in a dog's euthanasia, and poses a risk to other dogs and people. Additionally, there is no federal regulation in place to protect pregnant animals from flying. There have been cases where a stressed, pregnant dog whelped in flight and exposed people and other animals to brucellosis (see Footnote 11).

Dogs coming from dog-maintained rabies virus variant (DMRVV) high-risk countries have the most entry requirements yet with many POEs and few personnel, facilities, and resources compared to the number of imports, the CDC stated, *"there are cases where animals are picked up and leave the POE before any inspection can take place."* Screening of documentation, not animals, may be all that occurs. When comparing interstate data and data collected from other agencies, it is apparent most dogs and cats entering Washington through international means are not inspected, recorded, and notification of animal arrivals or data is not shared with WSDA. While CDC regulates the international importation of cats to ensure they appear healthy on arrival, there is no federal agency

that oversees the welfare of cats beyond the specifications in the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). Meaning aside from a cat appearing healthy, there is no vaccine, dewormer, or health certificate requirement for cats traveling from countries at high-risk for zoonotic disease at the federal level.

As discussed in the Demographics section, dogs and cats are entering from at least 65 countries and the remaining 49 American states. Animals involved in interstate movement could also have originated outside the country. CDC ACFs opening near SeaTac airport (projected Summer 2025) will help fill a need for more screening of dogs from DMRVV high-risk countries. Based on Washington's geographic location, more animals are expected to arrive from Asia with zoonotic diseases of public health and livestock concern once CDC-registered ACFs begin taking reservations in Seattle for dogs from DMRVV high-risk countries. ACFs might also house other sick animals, those needing additional care, or facilities might offer other, public-facing services, such as boarding, increasing the potential risks of disease spillovers. Therefore, it is essential to promote cross-agency communication, coordination, and ensure enough resourcing and personnel to meet the demands.

Recommendations

The success of the ACF's operations and the protection of animal and public health fall heavily on local health jurisdictions (LHJs). According to SMEs, currently, King County LHJs, where the CDC ACFs will be located, do not have adequate staffing and resources to address increased case loads. LHJs will be expected to take an active role in a coordinated response to diagnosed zoonotic disease in an imported animal. In most LHJs, there is a combination of Communicable Disease—Epidemiology staff and Environmental Public Health staff who work on zoonotic disease issues; however, the majority of LHJs do not employ any staff with veterinary knowledge or experience. For zoonotic diseases, local public health is largely aimed at investigating human cases of zoonotic disease without much capacity to address prevention. More training, personnel, resources, and support are needed to empower local jurisdictions to handle these animal-related public health activities.

Of concern is the increased number of dogs from DMRVV high-risk countries arriving at ACFs near SeaTac airport without having state-level enforcement of rabies law in Washington¹⁶. Disease outbreaks are not only bad for animal welfare but also have massive economic impacts. Since 2015 CDC has seen 4 cases of rabies. One case can cost an estimated \$270,000 for investigation and rabies medical follow-up, or up to \$11.6 million if exposure results in a human death (see Footnote 11). Most implementations of rabies law come from cities and counties. Some city or county governments have a rabies control ordinance to enforce vaccination requirements or require proof of rabies vaccination to get a pet license. In Washington, registration or licensing requirements for dogs and cats fall to city and county jurisdictions. Funding and resources to investigate rabies cases in the

¹⁶ (n.d.). Rabies Vaccination Requirements for Dogs, Cats, and Ferrets. Washington State Department of Health. <https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/illness-and-disease-z/rabies/rabies-vaccination-requirements-dogs-cats-and-ferrets>

state are lacking. Public health and animal control agencies expressed a need for recommendations for following up on rabies cases, which usually fall to LHJ. Some examples include additional funding and resources to help subsidize rabies cases, especially for pet owners, or the many cases of outdoor cat rabies exposure. Another is to improve the rabies reporting process (see [WAC 246-100-197](#)) by creating a system or database where rabies vaccination status can be verified. This could be helpful when investigating bite or rabies exposure cases.

Importation of dogs and cats can be a legitimate and low-risk activity if done with certain oversight and in numbers that do not result in overburdening animal shelters or other publicly funded services. In addition, animals and their owners need assistance in times of emergencies and natural disasters. When done well, Washington can continue interstate and international welfare efforts with partnering organizations in a way that protects and enhances the human and animal welfare of Washington and, in turn, the country.

Regulatory Governance

Need: National and state companion animal traceability program

Maintaining and managing an accurate and timely animal health database to provide immediate animal disease traceability (ADT) is needed for companion animals. In the event of an outbreak, without a system in place to trace, identify, or match dogs and cats to their paperwork, the investigation and tracing required to address the situation promptly and effectively would be negatively impacted. Slowing response efforts could put more animals and people at risk for exposure to disease or illness.

CDC's microchipping requirement for all imported dogs is helpful, however, dogs falling under USDA APHIS Animal Care do not have a microchip requirement. Overall, there is little to no traceability of individual companion animals from country or state of origin, through points of commingling or sale, or to the final destination. Once an animal is permitted entry to Washington from an international destination, that animal is under local and state government authority and regulation. Currently, there is no requirement for official individual animal identification (e.g., universal microchip) of companion animals upon arrival in Washington.

In meetings with federal agencies, non-compliant individuals and animal care organizations utilize federal loopholes and Washington state exemptions to animal entry requirements at border crossings. Animals then stay and are adopted or sent to other states for sale. A few examples from CDC and USDA APHIS Live Dog Import:

- *“There are rescues flying dogs into Canada, then transporting them into the United States via land border crossings or targeting travelers to take animals across borders for them as ‘owned’ animals only to be resold at their destination.”*
- *“Busloads of dogs come to Washington state without live dog import permits and vaccine regulations are not being fulfilled.”*

- *“Port shopping is not uncommon. Animals are brought in late at night or to locations with less staff.”*
- *“Scams still happen. Someone will purchase an animal online, show up to the airport for their purchased dog and either there is no dog, or it is a completely different dog than they were expecting.”*

There are cases where dogs are substituted for dogs previously approved to be on the permit. Original information is kept on the permit, compromising the ability to trace animals and know the number of dogs imported. Not only are these examples illegal, but they also compromise the safety and welfare of the animals transported and the people or animals exposed to the transported dog or cat, potentially carrying harmful diseases and parasites. Owners adopting animals that are not well-socialized or have health concerns are more likely to relinquish them, or they could end up as stray animals, placing strain on other animal welfare entities (e.g., animal care and control agencies), communities, and resources.

Recommendations

The WSDA Animal Health Program (AHP) manages the health requirements for all animals entering the state, including companion animals. A possible solution could be expanding the current Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) Program to include additional companion animal data. WSDA has an existing database for livestock species that requires individual official identification for animal movement. This ensures Washington’s resident animals are protected from the introduction of diseases by verifying the health history and vaccination status of animals before entering the state. Integrating companion animal movement information into the WSDA traceability database will allow the AHP to be proactive in quickly identifying companion animal movement trends for disease risk management and coordinating movement information with federal, state, and local agencies.

Similar to CDC, Washington could incorporate microchipping (using universal microchips) into import regulations to improve matching documents with animals, consequently increasing identification of forged importation documents and tracking. Microchipping offers significant benefits for disease tracking and regulatory oversight. When a pet is scanned, the unique ID can be quickly linked to a registry that may include vaccination history and other health data. This allows veterinarians and public health officials to rapidly determine an animal’s disease status during outbreaks (for instance, rabies). Registries that collect microchip data can provide valuable insights for public health monitoring. This data helps in assessing vaccination coverage and evaluating the effectiveness of disease prevention programs. While the U.S. does not mandate a single national standard, many organizations endorse ISO-compliant microchips (15-digit, 134.2 kHz), which facilitate international travel and regulatory compliance. This helps ensure that pets moving across borders adhere to vaccination and health requirements. Overall, microchipping not only increases the likelihood of reuniting lost pets with their owners but also strengthens disease surveillance and regulatory measures essential for public and animal health.

Need: Program for oversight, auditing of animal facilities, movement, and sales

Combined with the gaps in data sharing between state and federal agencies, it is challenging to understand the scope of illegal importation. Illegal importation and animal smuggling are concerning for animal welfare and public safety. Considerations around levels of demand for pet cats and dogs, consumer behavior, as well as other factors (e.g., financial motives) spurring international and interstate import of dogs and cats are important. This is alarming considering the number of animals coming to or through Washington from an unknown origin with unknown health conditions. Considering 62.7% of Washington households are estimated to own a pet and the estimated thousands of dogs arriving in Washington each year, there are a lot of animals needing services and support that currently do not have adequate regulatory oversight.

Across agencies, fraudulent paperwork is all too common and difficult to track. Incomplete, incorrect, or falsified paperwork is the primary reason for denying entry or requiring enforcement. Despite international and interstate import regulations for companion animals, illegal importation continues to be a problem. Exemptions for privately owned pets in state and federal import requirements have led to individuals and animal care organizations falsifying records to claim an animal(s) is privately owned, only to be allowed entry or illegally smuggled in and reselling or adopting out the animal(s) in Washington or elsewhere. There is no control or way to know if a veterinarian from the departure country is certified, or if the animal has been examined or vaccinated. It is also difficult to determine if paper interstate certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs) are falsified, and, since owned animals are exempt from the heartworm testing and CVI requirements (WAC 16-54-170), interstate import numbers are likely higher than reported. All cases of repeat non-compliance involving dog and cat movement investigated by the WSDA animal health investigators were connected to animal rescues. WSDA can take civil action, and in cases of animal welfare or human concern, would need to involve law enforcement for any criminal action.

Regional and state USDA APHIS Animal Care (AC) team emphasized the importance of awareness of gaps in federal authority of USDA APHIS AC licensed businesses and the importance of collaborating with local jurisdictions and agencies to create regulations and aid with complaint investigations. USDA APHIS AC staff spoke to the loopholes in regulating, enforcing, and following up on complaints at federally licensed and registered facilities, particularly for those facilities currently not covered by federal, state, or local jurisdictions. This is especially needed because, per the [USDA APHIS 2024 Impact report](#), the Animal Care team, with about 200 staff nationwide, is already responsible for:

- More than 17,500 licensees and registrants.
- Conducted over 9,700 inspections.
- Issued 2,295 import permits covering 6,089 dogs.

The need for more public education and regulations around breeders, animal dealers, and rescues was discussed. Most commercial breeders are located in the Midwest; Washington has only one or two dog breeders registered with USDA APHIS AC. A quick online search of dog and cat breeders yields far more results, and puppies and kittens can be found advertised on yard signs, online (e.g.,

Craigslist, Facebook, websites), at public markets, or in front of stores. Part of the lack of registered facilities is attributed to exemptions. Facilities with 4 or fewer in-tact, breeding females do not have to comply with USDA APHIS AC, leaving room for many breeders, intentional or not, to breed animals with little to no oversight.

As with other areas of federal regulation, whatever does not fall under federal authority per federal law is diverted to state or local management. The following examples were used by USDA APHIS:

- **Pet retailers:** Almost all dog and cat retailers fall under the face-to-face sale exemption from USDA APHIS oversight based on AWA regulations. Pet retailers are only covered if selling and shipping.
- **Shelters and rescues:** Rarely covered by AWA regulations. Private shelters and rescues are almost entirely exempt, as are those run by state and local government. Only those that do sight-unseen sales would require registration with USDA APHIS Animal Care.
- USDA APHIS Animal Care under AWA regulations rarely covers pet retailers, shelters, and rescues, yet these are the groups most commonly importing animals and where there are the most issues.

Washington State does not provide a definition for commercial dog breeder but does have [RCW 16.52.310](#) limiting the number of dogs in custody, required conditions, and penalties. There are some exemptions as well. No licensing, registration, or facility inspection provisions are mentioned. For comparison, Michigan State University College of Law has a [table of commercial pet breeders' laws](#) (dog breeders). Washington State does not have laws pertaining to cat breeders. [Washington State Department of Revenue](#) requires anyone selling a dog to register with the department and file excise taxes. Michigan's laws separate entry requirements for owned pets from those imported to a registered animal shelter in Michigan, an animal imported to a pet shop, or a large-scale dog breeding kennel. See [MDARD—Dogs](#) and [MDARD—Cats](#).

WSDA does not license, register, or have regulatory authority over breeders of any species. In Washington, the most likely governance of dog and cat breeders is at city or county levels, if at all. King and Pierce counties are examples where a [license](#) or [public health permit](#) is required for animal or pet businesses. In particular, businesses involving animals that are sold from situations such as curbside sales/storefront sales, flea markets, websites, non-commercial breeders/puppy mills, and rescue organizations create more instances where regulatory agencies would be unable to conduct traceable investigations if needed for zoonotic disease issues. Aside from a couple of LHJs, inspections or audits do not exist to ensure these entities are adhering to any animal welfare standards that similar animal welfare organizations must follow.

[Recommendations](#)

One possible solution to address the gaps in regulatory oversight of companion animal entities and importation is the addition of animal welfare divisions or programs at the state or local levels. A state program allows equal application, access to resources, and the ability to amend and strengthen current regulations for importation and traceability. For example, incorporating additional vaccines,

tests, or treatments to [Washington's dog and cat import requirements](#), particularly for those animals imported for resale (e.g., animal shelters/rescues, kennels, pet stores), would support USDA APHIS regulations and animal welfare needs for animals brought in for commercial purposes. Since there is limited regulation for cats, this would be a step towards improved standards for cats as well.

There are U.S. states with programs focusing on animal welfare, spay/neuter initiatives, and cruelty prevention. Some states have established a Division of Animal Welfare to encompass animal protection and animal care, and facilities programs. Funding would allow the main animal health regulatory authority in the state to fully enforce and protect dogs and cats that currently fall under unfunded mandates. State animal welfare programs typically handle licensing and inspections for pet shops, animal rescues, and related businesses, as well as enforce state animal welfare laws and promote standards for humane treatment in both companion animal and livestock contexts. At the state level, this division would have regulatory authority to enforce current laws and provide support and collaboration in other areas of animal welfare.

Ballot measures have become increasingly more ambitious in the last decade, requiring State Animal Health Officials to take the lead on animal welfare policies in their states. Some examples include [HB 3871](#) (funding mechanism for animal welfare initiatives) and [Senate Bill 1076](#) (animal breeding and rescue licensing program) in Oregon. In these examples, the Department of Agriculture is required to enact the associated programs.

Another animal care agency licensing program is Oregon's [Animal Rescue Entity Program \(ARE\)](#), created to ensure animal rescue entities, as defined by the bill, are compliant with record-keeping and licensing requirements. The pros and cons of any of these programs should be weighed, as well as any unique considerations for Washington. For instance, the program was started to help protect the animals and people of the state by regulating animal care businesses, however, the mandate did not receive enough funding, resulting in increased registration fees for these animal care groups to cover costs. This article from the [East Oregonian](#) highlights some of the frustrations and concerns from ARE-licensed animal facilities. Federal partners pointed out *"exemptions from Oregon state requirements for those entities licensed with USDA APHIS Animal Care as well as loopholes for those collecting donations has created unintentional consequences that should be considered if Washington were to create a similar program."* State compliance is in support of creating a program, *"if Washington State adopted something like [Oregon Senate Bill 883 of 2019](#), then WSDA would have the authority to correct the actions of those very few rescues that exploit the current system. The ability to suspend or revoke a business license and/or non-profit status would soon lead to 100% (or nearly) compliance with our current health regulations and create a healthier environment for our animals."* Points of contact and SMEs expressed concern about how state funding would be obtained and the need for consistent funding to support initiatives for long-term improvement of the Washington animal health and welfare system. Likewise, there is a balance between supporting reputable and responsible businesses and enforcing regulations for those who are compromising the health and safety of people and animals.

Several states are introducing, passing, or implementing similar programs to address the same animal welfare concerns. Colorado created a [Division of Animal Welfare](#) for the already existing Bureau of Animal Protection (BAP) and the Pet Animal Care and Facilities Act (PACFA) Program through [House Bill 24-1458](#). The division protects the well-being of companion animals and livestock by providing resources to stakeholders and the public, handling animal neglect or cruelty complaints, animal care facility or caregiver complaints, and licensing animal care facilities.

- From the [Bureau of Animal Protection \(BAP\)](#) website, the Bureau of Animal Protection (BAP) was first created in 1990 when the Colorado legislature reenacted the Animal Protection Act. The bureau's mission is to conduct outreach and education and administer and enforce the provisions of the Animal Protection Act to prevent the neglect, mistreatment, or abandonment of domestic and companion animals in Colorado.
- The [Pet Animal Care and Facilities Act \(PACFA\) Program](#) webpage states, PACFA is a licensing and inspection program dedicated to protecting the health and well-being of pet animals in facilities throughout Colorado. Examples of licensed facilities include animal rescues, boarding/training, pet transporters, pet grooming, and breeders (small and large scale).

PACFA collects and publishes annual animal shelter and rescue statistics; however, Washington already has a portion of known animal shelters and rescues partnered with national database, [Shelter Animals Count \(SAC\)](#). By encouraging other animal care organizations to regularly participate, data can be utilized, shared, and compared at state and national levels, with the potential of creating [coalitions](#) to compile data for specific areas or needs. SAC is looking to create a similar national database for animal control, which could be helpful for interagency collaboration.

USDA APHIS Animal Care recommended [Virginia's Animal Care program](#) through the Office of Veterinary Services as a model for working alongside LHJs to bridge gaps in federal and state oversight of animal care and control entities. The program's registries and reporting requirements were highlighted as helpful for addressing welfare needs related to animal businesses and importation.

Animal Control

Need: Additional resources and funding

A common theme in survey responses (see Survey section) for animal control officers (ACOs)/sheriff's departments was more funding for animal control officers and animal control departments/programs, citing larger facilities as the funding priority. Both animal control, law enforcement, and animal care agencies indicated a need to identify and remove barriers to an animal control officer's ability to respond to and enforce animal cruelty/neglect and animal bite cases. Dog bites are still too common. The [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) states about 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs each year, most of them children who are more likely to be severely injured. The [number of dog bite claims has increased nationally by over 47%](#) between 2015 and 2024. Access to veterinary care in animal cruelty investigations was also noted as a barrier for those involved. These all too familiar topics continue to be as relevant as ever.

The lack of local resources (e.g., funding, holding facilities, equipment) and officers trained in animal control can lead to public health concerns and risks (e.g., animal bites and disease spread). Communities without animal control programs or ACOs rely on partnerships or contracts with city and county animal care and control agencies or law enforcement that may already have a broad mandate over a large area. Regional Animal Services of King County (RASKC) is one of the largest animal service organizations in Washington. As stated on their website, [RASKC “ACOs respond to more than 5,000 calls each year in both unincorporated King County and our 24 contract cities, covering nearly 1,100 square miles and a population of more than one million people.”](#) Even counties with animal control programs and resources expressed a need for more funding, resources, or amendments to current regulations. Other counties have had less success in obtaining the funding and personnel needed to support an animal control officer/program and provide such services.

There are similar appeals from tribal nations for funding and support to start tribal animal control programs, have tribal animal control officers, and more partnerships with city and county animal control. Some tribal nations emphasized the importance of funding and access to training, facilities, and equipment to humanely address animal control-related calls for the safety and well-being of the animals and people involved. Without the necessary resources or personnel, law enforcement and communities may rely on other methods to address animal control cases. As one concerned tribal respondent said, “[Law enforcement] gives absurd advice to reservation residents to just shoot the dogs. I am waiting for some yahoo to take this advice and unknowingly kill human adults or accidentally shoot children.” This also speaks to the need for forward-leaning efforts to collaborate with Washington’s tribal communities to foster relationships, assess animal welfare needs, and create actionable solutions in a culturally meaningful way.

Recommendations

Not every Washington county or tribal nation has an animal control officer, an animal control program, or law enforcement/personnel trained and equipped to address animal control calls. Consistent funding is a common concern. As one animal control officer put it, “[Pet] license revenue is the primary funding source for municipal animal shelter and animal control agencies. It is estimated less than 20% of all owned dogs and cats have required pet licenses. When license compliance rates are compared with the estimated dog and cat population the lost revenue is tremendous.” Increasing pet licensing numbers alone would be a substantial benefit. Some municipalities provide incentives, discounts, or community education and outreach to improve pet licensing compliance. The effectiveness of these efforts was not reviewed in this assessment.

To address some of the above animal welfare needs and help with gaps in law enforcement, there are states that have created or are looking to establish animal protection programs incorporating multidisciplinary, statewide collaboration. The [Office of Animal Protection bill](#): S.F. 1163 (Senate) / H.F. 1816 (House) was introduced in Minnesota for the 2025–2026 legislative session with an emphasis on strengthening enforcement of animal cruelty laws. Minnesota’s proposed program was

also used as an example in the WA Companion Animal Case Studies and Strategies Document (2024).

Michigan state amended the [Dog Law](#) to provide [creation of local animal control agencies](#), establish animal control programs, and fund necessary expenses in animal control, as well as animal control standards. State support could help create and maintain animal control services for areas of Washington that currently do not have the resources. An incentive for tribal communities that might not be eligible for certain programs is to have a scholarship or fully cover the cost for tribal nations wanting to send a tribal police officer or other designee to [Washington's Animal Control Officer Academy](#). Having another animal control officer academy on the eastern side of the state would also be beneficial.

Animal Care Agencies

Interviews with subject matter experts (SMEs), survey responses, and data results did not necessarily yield new themes. The results did confirm which issues were most important to respondents and where to direct efforts. There were anticipated themes from initial interviews and/or addressed in the Washington State Animal Welfare Landscape Analysis (2014) and WA State Companion Animal Overview Case Studies and Strategies (2024) documents that were **not** apparent in the Washington Animal Welfare Assessment (2025) survey results. This highlights the nuances of animal welfare and suggests a potential shift in animal welfare needs and gaps over time, or differing interpretations of needs depending on the area (e.g., county) and current resources available. For example, the survey did not identify a need for intrastate/regional transport programs, the need to train more veterinarians or licensed veterinary technicians, or the need to create a state, federal, and county partnership model for spay and neuter efforts. However, many survey respondents proposed different solutions such as reducing transportation barriers for owned animals to/from clinical care visits; increasing access to veterinarians and traveling veterinarians/technicians; and expanding community mobile or regional animal wellness clinics providing spay and neuter services. See the Survey section for more details.

Need: Expand animal wellness and community support services

One of the largest themes of the assessment, spanning interviews, data collection, previous state studies, and survey results, is the continued need for increased access to affordable veterinary care and spay/neuter resources for owned, sheltered, and stray or feral animals. Where funding is concerned, many sheltering animal care organizations' responses (see Survey section) indicated the need for additional facility space but cited prioritizing access to veterinary care. As in prior Washington State studies, animal care agencies called for more mobile or regional animal wellness clinics providing high-quality, high-volume spay and neuter (HQHVSN), preventative medical care, and public education. Many respondents also discussed the dire need to expand these services across the state, focusing on under-resourced communities. All respondents wrote about increased funding to help current programs expand services offered, areas served, number of patients seen, etc. This was often tied together with the need for more veterinarians and veterinary technicians. All

three tribal nation representatives spoke to the overpopulation of dogs and cats and how increased access to and affordability of spay/neuter services, veterinary care, or other service programs (e.g., feral cat programs, pet food, and essential animal supplies) are high priorities for their communities.

Recommendations

Veterinary services

Washington state has a variety of animal care organizations and programs carrying out important work for the welfare of animals and the communities where they live. Supporting current efforts with subsidized care funding or funding for programs, such as community dog and cat or wellness and spay/neuter programs, could be a big lift and allow for program expansion. Incorporating local governments by providing funding for counties to direct towards those services, especially where they currently do not exist, is another option. Investing in the programs and organizations providing these services is a preventative measure to reduce overall strain on welfare organizations, communities, and help keep pets with their households. See the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' (ASV) position statement on HQHVSN [here](#).

A state-run spay and neuter fund or incentive program could be piloted in counties with the greatest need and eventually grow to a statewide model. A solid plan for funding and support to have it function as intended and meet demand will be necessary. One example of a statewide spay/neuter grant, also mentioned in previous Washington State animal studies, is through the [Washington Federation of Animal Care and Control Agencies \(WAFed\)](#), where a portion of [Spay-Neuter-Adopt license plate](#) fee funds the grant. [Colorado](#), [Massachusetts](#), and [Michigan](#) are examples of programs with a few different funding mechanisms. In addition to spay and neuter, other services such as animal control officer training, vaccinations, and more are offered. Funds from these programs go towards entities providing these important services in their communities or to individuals as vouchers.

As helpful as incentives, funding, and amendments can be, having enough people to carry out the services is essential. Additional training and experience are often required for veterinary professionals practicing shelter medicine and for HQHVSN services. These skills are vital to meet staffing and financial needs for animal welfare agencies. Such training could also help veterinary practices and their communities with efficiency and reach more clientele by learning and applying models such as team utilization, spectrum of care, small animal population management, and safe, efficient surgery techniques commonplace in shelter spaces. The American Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) offers a variety of training and educational resources to veterinary students and veterinary professionals. The [ASPCA Spay/Neuter Alliance Veterinarian Training Program](#) is one of the only in the country offering HQHVSN training, and only licensed veterinarians meeting the qualifications, such as employment in the HQHVSN field or shelter medicine, may apply. Therefore, there is an opportunity to establish and support a program in Washington state to provide veterinarians and veterinary technicians with additional training in HQHVSN and, eventually, other

training as well. This could happen by collaborating with associations, academia, and organizations with expertise in education and training.

When developing state or county-level support, consider not limiting funding to animal shelters or non-profits, or a specific service. Limiting the scope of eligibility would exclude certain agencies, such as tribal entities. Start with prioritizing areas where an overpopulation of animals is identified or is greater than the resources that can be provided. This is where encouraging participation in databases and networking platforms can be useful in coordinating resource efforts and providing information on areas of strength or improvement for the shelter and rescue parts of animal welfare efforts. Coalitions can be formed to coordinate interstate needs and communicate important information to determine fund allocation and planning. The more organizations that participate, the more accurate aggregate data will be available to inform these decisions at state and county levels.

Another recommendation is to refrain from placing a financial or means threshold to increase access to veterinary services and defer to organizations providing those services to make the determination. A few local programs in other states offer spay/neuter services to all pet owners. For example, some municipalities in California (like certain counties in the Los Angeles area) have implemented universal spay/neuter clinics through their animal services departments. These local initiatives are not necessarily a statewide program, but they are publicly funded programs available to all residents regardless of income. In Colorado, some cities' animal control departments host free or heavily subsidized spay/neuter clinics open to everyone. These are funded through local government budgets (or combined with grant money) and do not impose an income qualification.

Multiple respondents from the survey and SMEs suggested amending [RCW 18.92.250](#), allowing approved, licensed animal control and animal welfare agencies to provide veterinary services to the public with tailored pricing based on income bracket. Before making any amendments, determining why 29 of these agencies, and not more, are providing services could be beneficial, as well as how those below the poverty and ALICE thresholds would be prioritized. There might be other reasons why more agencies are not offering veterinary care services.

Community programs

There is an opportunity to support programs already providing incredible services to their communities and state by either expanding their outreach or mentoring other agencies, and establishing services in underserved locations in Washington. These might be [feral cat](#) community programs or [coalitions](#), expanding mobile and regional units, wellness clinics, and food/supplies for people and their animals (e.g., [The One Health Clinic](#)) or supporting veterinary subsidies (e.g., [WSAHF – Washington State Animal Health Foundation](#)).

Community engagement is important to support animal care providers and for long-term sustainability. Another community program example is the [Mobile Access Partnership](#) out of Kansas involving Kansas State University's Shelter Medicine Program. National programs with extensive experience in rural, underserved, and tribal communities are [Pets for Life](#) and [Rural Animal](#)

[Veterinary Services \(RAVS\)](#) through Humane World for Animals, or [Human Animal Support Services \(HASS\)](#).

Tribal nations are an example of the importance of an interconnected approach to assessing and addressing animal welfare needs. [Native American views on dogs](#) and cats intertwine with tradition. Dogs, with their historical roles as protectors, companions, and spiritual guides, remain deeply valued, even as communities face challenges like stray populations and limited resources. Cats, although a later introduction, are also cared for under the broad umbrella of community animal welfare. Through collaborative efforts that honor both ancient traditions and contemporary needs, many Native American tribes are working to ensure that all community animals receive the care and respect they deserve. Partnerships between tribal nations and animal welfare groups play a key role in creating systems that address local animal care needs and build long-term capacity on reservations. Some examples include:

- **[Reservation Animal Rescue \(RAR\) Program](#):** Operated under Partnership with Native Americans (PWNA), RAR supports tribes by organizing mobile spay/neuter and vaccination clinics. In one documented instance, [Midwestern University's mobile clinic](#), working with local tribal partners like the San Carlos Apache Reservation, spayed/neutered and vaccinated dozens of animals in a single visit, reducing stray populations and curbing disease spread.
- **Comprehensive Tribal Animal Control:** Some tribes have developed detailed animal control laws that recognize community dogs as free-roaming yet family-owned animals. These laws help establish humane standards and proactive responses to safety and welfare issues. They also foster a system where animal care is integrated into community services.
- **Collaborative Grant Programs:** External agencies, like [ASPCA, have partnered with Native communities](#) to provide grants that fund animal shelters and support the creation of pet-friendly co-housing spaces and veterinary services.
- **[Animal Emergency Care \(AEC\) Veterinary Wellness Clinics](#):** A thriving and collaborative [community wellness project](#) that provides resources and removes barriers to veterinary care for vulnerable populations and tribes in need all over Whatcom County. Patients may receive wellness exams, vaccinations, parasiticides, microchips, and pet food/supplies. Attending families are connected to information about additional resources (including spay/neuter services) available to communities that would otherwise find care inaccessible or unaffordable.

These examples show that by combining community values with veterinary practices, tribal organizations and their external partners are working together to create sustainable, culturally respectful solutions for pet care on reservations. As previously stated, a thoughtful, multifaceted approach is needed to collaborate and walk alongside Washington's tribal communities and animal welfare needs. It is recommended to continue conversations with the nations and tribes of the state by reaching out to tribal leadership, such as the tribal committee of natural resources, to foster relationships, assess needs, and create actionable steps to address gaps. Only three tribal nations are represented, and although their needs and concerns are real, additional follow-up is needed along with input from other tribes. Consider including internal and external animal care and control

organizations with established programs and relationships in these communities in the conversation. This could help when building relationships between local agencies and tribes and in the areas of community involvement and education, data collection, establishment, or expansion of programs appropriate to the various needs of each nation or tribe.

Veterinary Professionals

Veterinary professionals are part of the critical fabric to strengthen communities, protect animal health and welfare, ensure food safety, and safeguard the public from zoonotic disease. Veterinarians are stewards of animal welfare and play a critical role in early disease detection, make science-based recommendations, and provide lifesaving services, medications, and vaccines. For years in Washington state, there has been a trend of fewer veterinarians serving farm animal species and companion animals in rural communities and other areas with decreased access to veterinary care. Strategies for solving the veterinary workforce deficits are multi-dimensional and may require a combination of debt reduction strategies, incentives, recruitment and retention programs, and legislative changes.

Although the national-level projected forecast for veterinary professionals is encouraging, this data focuses on companion animal care. There are known sections of Washington in need of veterinary professionals to provide care in rural communities to companion animals and livestock alike. The previously mentioned [Veterinary Care Accessibility Project \(VCAP\)](#) provides a snapshot of dog and cat veterinary care accessibility. There are counties where the veterinary care accessibility score aligns with the county, such as Yakima County, with a poor score of 17 out of 100. Scores range from 0 (care is nearly inaccessible) to 100 (care is very accessible)¹⁷. For example, the nearest small animal emergency clinic is in Pasco, WA, over an hour away for most of Yakima County's residents. The Yakima-based emergency clinic had to close, citing a lack of veterinarians within the county and in neighboring counties¹⁸. Another factor to consider is staffing ratios at veterinary establishments¹⁹. The ratio will vary depending on practice type and efficiency. Veterinary businesses can calculate this ratio²⁰ and use it as one variable when evaluating practice efficiency and staffing needs. All of these examples are to stress, like many aspects of welfare, the need for multiple data metrics in various contexts to be analyzed and discussed when making decisions. Then, consult with a variety of

¹⁷ The Veterinary Care Accessibility Project. VCAP. <https://www.accesstovetcare.org/>

¹⁸ Ferolito, P. (2023, December 30). Yakima Pet Emergency to close operations Dec. 31, citing a lack of veterinarians. Yakima Herald-Republic. https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/yakima-pet-emergency-to-close-operations-dec-31-citing-a-lack-of-veterinarians/article_44747d9a-a6ac-11ee-8b75-abafcbac5ac1.html

¹⁹ Ouedraogo, F. B., Weinstein, P., & Lefebvre, S. L. (2023). Increased efficiency could lessen the need for more staff in companion animal practice. Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, 261(9), 1357-1362. <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.23.03.0163>

²⁰ American Veterinary Medical Association (2023, September 7). Just one thing: Getting to the right staffing ratio. Public Now. <https://www.publicnow.com/view/E2D06F96F2CC7AD0FF1EE39F135B2B1A013C61EF?1694101659>

subject matter experts before implementing change, to take care not to overestimate demand and underestimate supply for services.

There is limited data on veterinary technicians nationally and in Washington state. The Washington State Association of Veterinary Technicians ([WSAVT Salary Survey](#)) is a great start. More veterinary technician and other veterinary professional national and state-level data is needed in general.

Need: Address educational debt

Debt is still a concern. The 2025 AVMA economic report found nationally “38.5% of graduating veterinarians had a DVM debt burden of \$200,000 or more, while 16.6% had debt of \$300,000 or more. Average DVM debt of new graduates increased in 2024 at a slightly faster rate than compensation, resulting in an increase in the average debt-to-income ratio. Continued efforts to create tools, scholarships, and strategies to reduce debt levels across the profession will benefit veterinary students, veterinarians, and the profession as a whole.” From the same report, the average starting salary for veterinarians in full-time private practice was \$131,210 (see Footnote 14). The difference in average salary between rural and urban companion animal practice was not reported. Nationally, there are programs and funding in place for the recruitment and retention of veterinary professionals and debt relief. These are geared towards rural practice and veterinary practice areas considered a high priority, such as food animal medicine, public health, and public service. These grants and programs are not always available and are often extremely competitive. Programs and incentives for those practicing companion animal medicine or for veterinary professionals other than veterinarians are uncommon, therefore, examples (predominantly rural and large animal) with potential to be expanded or modified to fit the needs of Washington’s dog and cat populations will be highlighted.

Veterinary technicians and other veterinary professionals employed full-time by government organizations or non-profit entities may qualify for [Federal Student Aid \(FSA\) Public Service Loan Forgiveness \(PSLF\)](#). PSLF forgives the remaining balance on Direct Loans after 120 qualifying monthly payments under a qualifying repayment plan. U.S.-based government organizations at any level (federal, state, local, or tribal) qualify as do non-profit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. See [qualifying public services](#).

USDA NIFA has the Farm Bill funded [Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program \(VMLRP\)](#) that helps offset debt incurred during professional school when veterinarians serve in identified, underserved shortage areas. The Washington State Veterinarian works with academic, public service, and private sector veterinarians and stakeholders to nominate the shortage area designation for livestock and public practice veterinarians annually. NIFA determines the number of shortage areas allowed to be designated by the state based on livestock demographic data. Currently, there are six [Washington counties](#) designated (Grant, Klickitat, Whitman, Whatcom, Stevens, Asotin, Okanogan). However, the program is currently under a federal funding freeze. Depending on the [area type](#), a mixed animal veterinarian could qualify if the minimum private or public practice requirements are met, allowing for other animal species to receive veterinary care in

underserved areas. Washington has not been successful using current strategies with recruitment efforts or filling the livestock veterinarian needs in those specified counties for many years. The USDA NIFA also offers the [Veterinary Services Grant](#), providing the Education, Extension, and Training (EET) grant to qualified entities to increase access to veterinary services through education, recruitment, and retention of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and students of those professions. There is also the [Rural Practice Enhancement \(RPE\) grant](#) through USDA NIFA to help provide tools, equipment, and resources to expand rural veterinary practices and services.

States nationwide have adopted different models that should be considered to inform next steps in Washington. Montana state recently passed [HB 860 – Provide for veterinary training loan program](#), for veterinary students committing to practice in underserved areas of rural Montana, and prioritizes Montana residents. A specific species or practice focus is not a requirement. For undergraduate students, [Colorado State University](#) has the Food Animal Veterinary Career Incentive Program (FAVCIP). Students receive specialized training in livestock medicine and management, preparing them for careers in food animal veterinary medicine. This model could be applied to other specialized areas of veterinary medicine, such as careers in shelter medicine.

Several other states, like [Minnesota](#) and [Vermont](#), have established incentive programs to attract and retain veterinarians, particularly in underserved or rural areas. These programs often offer financial assistance, such as loan repayment, to encourage veterinarians to practice in regions with critical needs. Colorado State University (CSU) has a [Veterinary Education Loan Repayment Program](#). Established in 2017, this program selects up to six qualified veterinary applicants annually to receive loan repayment assistance. Participants must commit to working in rural communities within Colorado, addressing both large and small animal needs. There is still a food animal component, but it is not exclusive to food animal practice. The program's council utilizes NIFA-designated shortage areas from the VMLRP and is open to suggestions for alternative locations. This has the potential to bridge gaps at the state level that might not be available or filled by national means. Some eligibility considerations include whether the licensed veterinarian is or was a Colorado resident, the veterinarian's interest and commitment to practicing in a rural community, and prioritizing applicants with connections to a rural community or applicants graduating from CSU's College of Veterinary Medicine.

[Kansas State University](#) is one of 9 schools participating in the [Farm Journal Foundation's Veterinary Workforce Solutions Program](#). The program is supported by the Zoetis Foundation and takes a holistic approach to supporting veterinary students in various areas, including student debt and financial planning, business management, and rural community engagement. [K-State Today](#) had this to say about the success of the program, *"As of September 2024, 89 students have been accepted into the program, and 98% of graduates are fulfilling or have met their loan obligation through service in a Kansas rural county. Ninety-four percent of previous graduates who completed their four-year obligation remain in a qualifying county. Seventy-seven percent remain in the original*

*practice and community they entered after graduation*²¹.” Kansas State and the AVMA delegates spoke about the importance of recruiting in rural and underserved communities, as most entering the veterinary profession solidify their interest in pursuing these careers by high school. Tied into all of this is the lack of diversity within the profession.

Many marginalized communities are not represented in the veterinary industry. Yet these individuals, with knowledge of rural or underserved communities and an understanding of cultural differences impacting those living and working in these areas, could help improve and enrich community access, outreach, and relationships. In 2020, Kansas State University received funding to create [SPRINTS](#), a summer program for high school and college students identifying as tribal, Native American, or Indigenous to explore a career in veterinary medicine.

As helpful as loan forgiveness and incentives are, addressing debt is not the only factor impacting whether veterinarians move to and stay in underserved or rural communities, regardless of species focus. Including other lifestyle factors is a long-term recruitment and retention strategy. At the 2024 AVMA Leadership Conference, delegates called for the AVMA Board to take actionable steps around veterinary recruitment and retention, particularly in rural communities. These steps could apply to other underserved areas or veterinary professionals as well, and include:

- Identifying factors impacting veterinarians in rural practice using data-driven resources.
- Review other health professions for potential model programs.
- Identify artificial intelligence that could meet the needs of rural practitioners (e.g., medical record keeping software).
- Member benefits from AVMA-affiliates that could meet the needs of rural veterinarians.
- Strategies to enhance utilization of veterinary workforce teams to support those in rural practice²².

Recommendations

Addressing food animal and public sector demands is important; however, current strategies are not working to address underserved areas and rural veterinary practice to include companion animals in Washington. It is worth considering a state-funded program to close the gap. Most of the examples are related to large animal medicine and public practice, as those are where gaps were identified across the country. However, there is a shift toward addressing veterinary care for other animals in these areas, and these could be used as models for other areas of practice and gaps in veterinary care. More work is needed to see how these could be tailored to support Washington communities,

²¹ Coy, R. (2025, February 24). *College of Veterinary Medicine announces new Veterinary Training Program for Rural Kansas awards*. K-State Today. <https://www.k-state.edu/news/articles/2025/02/kstate-veterinary-students-selected-to-practice-in-rural-kansas-and-have-loans-forgiven.html>

²² Nolen, R. S. (2025, February 4). *AVMA leaders discuss how to strengthen rural veterinary medicine*. National Association of Federal Veterinarians. <https://members.nafv.org/news/Details/avma-leaders-discuss-how-to-strengthen-rural-veterinary-medicine-249991>

and it is recommended to include other veterinary professionals, aside from veterinarians, in the solutions.

A better understanding of how a statewide program could support additional incentives by establishing a workgroup would help identify and understand barriers and gaps while exploring key strategies and solutions to expand the veterinary workforce to improve access for all. In 2025, [EHB 1705 Washington State Legislature](#) convened a workgroup to study and recommend strategies to recruit, train, and retain large animal veterinarians. Consider expanding this effort to include companion and mixed animal practitioners in underserved, rural communities.

Washington could consider expanding upon the Federal VMLRP program to identify shortage areas for rural companion animal veterinarians and create state-funded incentives. Utilizing multiple data metrics and allowing nominations of other areas that otherwise might not be represented in current data could prove helpful for addressing access to care and incentives for veterinary students eventually practicing in those locations. The data suggests disparities between the geographic areas where rural companion animals and livestock veterinarians may be needed to improve access to care, suggesting separate shortage nomination assessments are needed. For example, if only the VMLRP map is used to identify need, counties such as Yakima, Okanogan, or Pacific might be missed. These counties are not identified as needing food animal veterinary care, but are categorized as nearly inaccessible for dog and cat veterinary care.

In addition, legislation can help address veterinary workforce demands in Washington state by supporting the expansion of current programs, such as funding to increase the WSU CVM veterinary student class size to allow for 20 additional spots for Washington residents. State support helps cover the difference between in-state tuition and the education cost per student per year. See the [WSVMA legislative flyer](#). Consideration around recruitment from rural, marginalized, or tribal communities could help to build long-term capacity and access to care in underserved areas.

Washington state does have a food animal veterinarian scholarship program providing incentives to graduates of WSU CVM to focus on food animal health services (see [Chapter 28B.121 RCW](#)). However, this is currently unfunded and has potential to be expanded to include other veterinary professionals or underserved areas, geographically or by practice focus, in the state.

Veterinary Professional Associate (VPA)

A proposed solution, that is often contentious, is to increase access to veterinary medical services by establishing a role between a veterinary technician and a veterinarian, the VPA. This mid-level practitioner would require a master's degree in veterinary care, allowing graduates to diagnose, prescribe, and perform surgery, among other duties, most of which fall under a veterinarian's job description. These would have to be carried out under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian who would be legally liable for the VPA's acts or omissions. A VPA is not the same as a physician's assistant with regard to training, responsibilities, or regulation, and there are mixed results for the

success of these positions in human healthcare systems²³. [Colorado passed proposition 129](#) in November 2024, and its State Board of Veterinary Medicine is in the process of rulemaking, with the law taking effect on January 1, 2026. Colorado State University (CSU) finalized the curriculum for a VPA master's program in early 2025, and currently, the curriculum only focuses on dogs and cats. CSU plans to start the [first class in fall of 2025](#). The creation and implementation of a VPA to solve any perceived or realized need for veterinary care is controversial. See Appendix D for various association positions and more information.

Recommendations

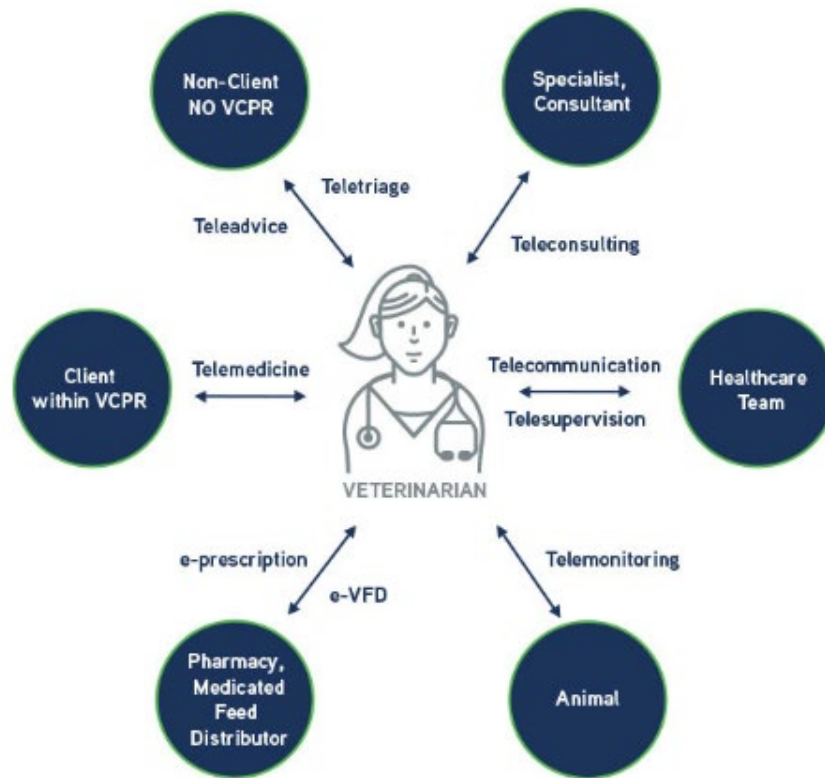
Revising and clarifying limitations within Washington State's Veterinary Practice Act ([RCW 18.92 Veterinary Medicine, Surgery, and Dentistry](#)) has the potential to improve veterinary professional utilization, especially for veterinary technicians, and increase access to services for their patients and clients. [Washington Veterinary Board of Governors \(VBOG\)](#), part of the WA DOH regulating veterinary healthcare professionals and facilities, is currently working with veterinary professionals, key stakeholders, and the public to revise [animal care health tasks](#) and supervision requirements.

The North American Veterinary Technician Association ([NAVTA surveyed veterinary technicians](#) nationally, while the [WSAVT also surveyed those in Washington State](#). These surveys found veterinary technicians wanted to prioritize recruitment, retention, and utilization efforts before considering other options (e.g., veterinary professional associate). Along these lines, NAVTA is working on the [Veterinary Nurse Initiative \(VNI\)](#) as a means to standardize credentials nationally, define the scope of practice, create title protection for veterinary technicians, and establish a professional identity as veterinary nurses. Similar initiatives could be implemented for other professionals.

Technology

Utilizing technology can complement the care and services provided to animals and people, depending on how it is applied. For example, telehealth is already ingrained in any veterinary discipline using technology to remotely communicate animal education, health, or care information. Telehealth is broken down into other categories, such as telemedicine, depending on who is involved in the communication. The following graphic showcases how the subcategories of telehealth function in veterinary medicine. The definition of each type is found [here](#).

²³ American Veterinary Medical Association (2024, July 17). AAVSB, VMG surveys find lack of support for midlevel practitioner. AVMA. <https://www.avma.org/news/aavsb-vmg-surveys-find-lack-support-midlevel-practitioner>



Source: [AVMA website](#)

Other technological applications of technology, such as artificial intelligence, were not investigated. For more information on the technology as it pertains to veterinary care, see Appendix D.

Since COVID-19, there has been significant attention around telemedicine, the veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR), and the laws relevant to them. Depending on the position, state laws and regulations are viewed as either a barrier to increasing access to veterinary care (by requiring VCPR to be established by a veterinarian in-person before telemedicine use) or favorably, by maintaining the in-person VCPR requirement (the laws are protecting the health and well-being of an animal and the community). Examples of the latter include off-label drug use, antimicrobial use in animals, zoonotic disease prevention, and maintaining a safe, healthy food supply. See Appendix D for more information and some position statements.

Recommendations

It is important to note that even with changes at the state level, veterinarians must comply with federal VCPR requirements. By federal definition, a valid VCPR cannot be established solely by remote or electronic means; however, once set up, telemedicine can be used to maintain VCPR with some exceptions (e.g., certificates of veterinary inspection). The Veterinary Board of Governors (VBOG) is currently reviewing Washington State law related to VCPR. More information on VBOG or their meeting times and minutes [here](#).

Outreach and Education

Need: Standardized outreach and education resource platform

Another common theme throughout the assessment was the opportunity for animal welfare organizations (including veterinary services) to use technology and available networking tools for awareness of other providers in an area (e.g., city, country, region) and create opportunities to communicate and partner. Communication and collaboration help to increase accessibility and provide a route for organizations to ask others for help or advice with situations or cases that they are equipped to handle. In conversations with most animal welfare stakeholders, part of their longevity and success was attributed to partnerships in the community, while those expressing more challenges with funding and resources were often tackling many animal welfare issues on their own.

The Washington Case Studies document, some survey respondents, and numerous stakeholders pointed out, incorporating inclusive, support-based community engagement models is essential. Part of this is acknowledging the intersectionality of the relationship and needs of animals and people by promoting partnerships between entities serving both groups. Not only for supplies and medical care, but as an opportunity to continue providing public education and training. Assessment survey respondents also expressed the need for additional public awareness around pet care and local resources available.

Meetings with subject matter experts and survey results highlighted a need to increase public awareness of the roles, functions, regulatory authority, processes, and resources available to various federal, state, and municipal agencies. Public health, especially LHJs, receive calls and emails from citizens regarding animal issues such as stray animals, animal hoarding, suspected neglect or cruelty (e.g., rescue organizations, curbside sales), and requesting low-cost vaccination and sterilization resources. Tribal nation and animal care agency input spoke to the opportunity to increase awareness of what, where, and how many animal organizations there are locally, and the services these businesses provide. This tied into an expressed need to enhance and create consistent local relationships/partnerships or contracts with those offering services to address human and animal welfare issues. Continuing public education about animal-facing public health matters (e.g., humane animal care, animal bites, zoonotic disease, responsible animal sourcing/buyer awareness campaigns) was also expressed.

Recommendations

An option is to fund and support education efforts and encourage best practices about animal welfare (e.g., animal care, veterinary care, spay/neuter, responsible pet sourcing, etc.) at the local, county, and state levels. If new regulations are enacted, then educational resources are needed to increase awareness and compliance. Many ideas for outreach and education efforts were highlighted in interviews and the survey, including:

- Listing local, responsible breeders and animal care agencies, and how to choose from and support a reputable source/business.
- Increasing awareness of diseases in Washington versus other places (e.g., other states or countries commonly importing to Washington) with links to importation and transportation information and precautions.
- County, regional, or statewide resource list/map of animal welfare providers, services, veterinary care, and animal food/supplies, including mobile vet locations, and schedules.
 - Create a searchable platform for public use.
 - Printable options for animal welfare providers to share.
- Guides for how to care for dogs and cats (including animal cruelty/neglect, bite prevention) and the importance of preventative veterinary care.
- Marketing training for animal welfare services to interact with their community in an accessible way.

Finally, connecting the public, tribal communities, agencies, and organizations to available training across a wide array of animal welfare-related needs should be included.

Relationship Building and Collaboration

The call for collaboration across all sectors to successfully address these broad, and at times, complex animal welfare issues is a unanimous sentiment and a common theme throughout the assessment. As recommendations are considered, it will be important to continue consulting with subject matter experts and periodically update and reassess Washington state's animal welfare needs. Workgroups that convene to tackle these complex issues should consider these important questions:

- How can we collaborate to connect areas of need with areas of underutilized resources?
- What steps can be taken to build trusting relationships with transparency between animal care and control agencies, law enforcement, tribal nations, and local jurisdictions within a county and nearby counties?
- How can we facilitate regular, in-person or virtual regional meetings and/or focus group discussions for representatives within and across disciplines to network and brainstorm ideas for population management or other key animal welfare issues in an area/region?
- Outside of in-person meetings, how can we utilize a technology platform (e.g., Slack) for regular networking, communication, mentorship, and coordination?

In light of the complexities and project time frame, the study took a broader look at companion animal welfare issues. The Washington Animal Welfare Assessment provides key background information, identifies crucial needs and gaps, discusses possible solutions, and builds the foundation for next steps to improve the animal welfare system in Washington. The scope of the project deserves further consideration for expansion and additional study, including an animal welfare assessment of other species (e.g., other small mammals, horses, livestock); the needs and solutions for Washington state around access to and affordability of pet food, supplies, and

veterinary care; and the impacts of socioeconomics, culture, public perspectives, etc. on animal welfare. Additionally, forward-leaning efforts should be made to collaborate with Washington's tribal nations and marginalized communities to foster relationships, assess animal welfare needs, and create actionable solutions.

Summary of Recommendations

Welfare gaps and solutions often intersect. Yet within the overlap, each entity has specific roles and perspectives that can be as varied as the issues, professions, and communities themselves. The interconnectedness between animals, people, and communities requires interdisciplinary viewpoints, adaptability, creativity, and collaboration to pave the way toward the common goal of quality animal welfare for Washington. The following recommendations are not meant to be exclusive solutions, but rather reflect ideas shared throughout the course of the assessment and are **not** in order of importance. Each should be considered with equal weight to determine feasibility and prioritization. Additional details and examples of recommendations can be found in the Discussion.

-
- *Convene multi-disciplinary workgroups or task forces*
 - *Establish standardized databases for data collection, sharing, and reporting*
 - *Expand regulatory oversight and infrastructure to address animal businesses and importation*
 - *Secure additional funding and resources to support animal care, animal control, law enforcement, and community services*
 - *Increase access to veterinary care*
 - *Establish animal welfare-related outreach and educational resources*
-

Convene multi-disciplinary workgroups or task forces

- Convene workgroups or task forces with representatives from animal welfare groups and stakeholders established to build on this foundational work, collect more data, find and prioritize solutions, set measurable outcomes, and determine the best funding mechanisms.
- Collaborate with Washington's tribal communities to foster relationships, assess animal welfare needs, and create actionable solutions. There is an opportunity to assess and gather information from other areas of the state with little to no county response. There were no survey responses from animal care and control agencies in 7 counties and for 11 tribes.
- Establish a multidisciplinary workgroup or task force to investigate veterinary workforce needs, especially in underserved, rural areas. Better identification and understanding of barriers and gaps, and exploring key strategies and solutions, may provide more insight into how a statewide program could support additional incentives to expand the veterinary workforce and improve access for all.

- Review other medical professions for examples and expand to cover data collection and solutions involving other veterinary professionals aside from veterinarians.
- Evaluate training options and opportunities for needed veterinary specialists or specific focus areas (e.g., shelter veterinarians and HQHVSN training), applications for artificial intelligence and technology, and diversifying the veterinary profession.
- Consider funding and expanding upon current studies or workgroups to include companion and mixed animal practitioners in underserved, rural communities.

Establish standardized databases for data collection, sharing, and reporting

- Encourage participation in reputable databases to coordinate resource efforts and provide information on areas of strength or improvement for the shelter and rescue aspects of animal welfare efforts.
- Create standards to improve the rabies reporting process and rabies vaccine reporting and verification. This could be helpful when investigating bite or rabies exposure cases.
- Create a system or database for animal cruelty and neglect offenders to help animal control officers and law enforcement with animal cruelty and neglect investigations.
- Initiate conversation with Washington State Patrol (WSP) to sort out a way to ensure animal control agencies, not part of a police department, have a mechanism to submit animal cruelty cases to [the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System \(NIBRS\)](#) and collaborate with WSP to encourage agencies identifying animal cruelty cases to report the data via NIBRS.
- Create an interagency database, even as a pilot, at the state level for animal importation and disease data collection, information sharing, and real-time notification.

Expand regulatory oversight and infrastructure to address animal businesses and importation

- More training, resources, and support to empower local jurisdictions to handle animal-related public health activities.
- Establish a national and state companion animal traceability program, such as expanding the current WSDA Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) Program to include companion animals.
- Increase resources and personnel for live animal importation oversight at Washington ports of entry.
- Establish an animal welfare division or program for oversight, auditing of animal businesses/facilities, movement, and sales. An additional program or division could be created within the WSDA to encompass animal care and facilities programs, incorporating multidisciplinary, statewide collaboration.
- Amend [Washington's dog and cat import requirements](#) to include additional vaccines, dewormer, microchipping, tests, or treatments particularly for those animals imported for resale (e.g., animal shelters/rescues, kennels, pet stores) to support federal and state regulations and animal welfare needs for animals brought in for commercial purposes.

Secure additional funding and resources to support animal care, animal control, law enforcement, and community services

- Work to improve or subsidize current funding mechanisms (e.g., pet licensing) and brainstorm other reliable funding sources.
- Provide scholarship/funding to support tribal officers, law enforcement, and counties without animal control officers or an animal control program to attend [Washington's Animal Control Officer Academy](#). Create a scholarship or fully cover the cost for tribal nations wanting to send a tribal police officer or other designee to animal control officer training as an incentive for tribal communities that might not be eligible for certain programs.
- Fund and support a second animal control officer academy in Washington state.
- Establish an animal protection agency to support animal control programs, animal control standards, animal control investigations, and funds for necessary expenses in animal control. State support could help create and maintain animal control services for areas of Washington that currently do not have these resources while ensuring authority and enforcement remain at the city and county levels.
- Prioritize funding around accessing veterinary care, additional personnel, and updating facilities for animal care and control agencies, law enforcement, and community services.
 - Specifically, the need for more animal wellness and HQHVSN clinics (including mobile and regional options), public education, and/or the creation of interagency mentorship opportunities.
 - Support current efforts with subsidized funding or funding for animal welfare programs to expand services. Investing in the programs and organizations providing these services is a preventative measure to reduce overall strain on welfare organizations, communities, and help keep pets with their households.
 - Incorporate local governments by providing funding for counties to direct towards these services, especially where they currently do not exist.
 - Consider not limiting funding to animal shelters or non-profits, or a specific service. Limiting the eligible scope would exclude certain agencies, such as tribal entities.
- Amend [RCW 18.92.250](#), allowing approved, licensed animal control and animal welfare agencies to provide veterinary services to include those below the ALICE threshold, or consider removing the income requirement.
 - Determine why 29 of animal care/control agencies, and not more, are providing services could be beneficial and how households below federal poverty and ALICE thresholds would be prioritized.
- Create a state-run spay and neuter fund or incentive program.
 - Expand [Washington Federation of Animal Care and Control Agencies \(WAFed\)](#), where a portion of [Spay - Neuter - Adopt license plate](#) fee funds the grant.
 - [Colorado](#), [Massachusetts](#), and [Michigan](#) are examples of programs with a few different funding mechanisms. In addition to spay and neuter, other services such as animal control officer training, vaccinations, and more are offered. Funds from these

programs go towards entities providing these important services in their communities or to individuals as vouchers.

- Review current state programs offering services for people (e.g., food assistance, medical care, etc.) to see which could be expanded to include animal resources (e.g., animal supplies, animal food, and shelter).

Increase access to veterinary care

- Support the expansion of current programs, such as funding to increase the Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine veterinary student class size or another program for veterinary technicians or veterinary assistants.
- Fund and expand the Washington state food animal veterinarian scholarship program (see [Chapter 28B.121 RCW](#)) to include other veterinary professionals and practice areas, prioritizing underserved areas.
- Create a scholarship program for veterinary technicians and other veterinary professionals.
- Create a scholarship program for undergraduate students from marginalized, rural, and/or underserved communities.
- Establish and fund a program to introduce high school and college students to veterinary medicine and veterinary professional tracks. Incorporate a scholarship or full ride for students from marginalized, underserved, or rural communities.
- Modify the Veterinary Practice Act to improve utilization of veterinary technicians and veterinary assistants.
- Establish and support a program in Washington state to provide veterinarians and veterinary technicians with additional training in HQHVSN and shelter medicine by collaborating with associations, academia, and organizations with education and training expertise in these areas.

Establish animal welfare-related outreach and educational resources

- Offer training/resources to animal welfare organizations in each county on how to market their services to and interact with the public in an accessible, culturally relevant way.
- Fund and support education efforts about animal welfare (e.g., animal care, veterinary care, spay/neuter, responsible pet sourcing, etc.) at the local, county, and state levels. Tailoring messaging to the varying perspectives/worldviews around animal welfare topics.
- Create county, regional, or statewide resource list/map of animal welfare providers, services, veterinary care, and animal food/supplies, including mobile vet locations, and schedules.
 - Create a searchable platform for public use.
 - Printable options for animal welfare providers to share.
 - Include public education information (e.g., humane animal care, bite prevention, responsible pet sourcing, and importance of preventative veterinary care).
- Encourage use of technology and available networking tools for awareness of other providers in an area (e.g., city, county, region) and opportunity to communicate and partner.

The recommendations within this report demonstrate the far-reaching implications and influence of animal welfare on the animals, people, and communities. There are many contributing and carrying out important work statewide, yet as seen throughout the assessment, there are more layers of information to uncover and opportunities to collectively improve and advance Washington's animal welfare systems.

Conclusion

The Washington Animal Welfare Assessment provides key background information, identifies needs and gaps, and builds the foundation for next steps to improve the animal welfare system in Washington. Animal welfare is complex with scientific, ethical, economic, cultural, social, religious, and political dimensions and will require collaborative governance and relationship building to solve collectively. Establishing multi-disciplinary workgroups or task forces to address each of these often-overlapping issues will be needed to build on this foundational work, collect more data, and find and prioritize solutions for the key gaps identified. Washington must take steps to establish standardized databases for animal data; expand regulatory oversight and infrastructure; increase access to veterinary care; secure funding to expand animal care, animal control, law enforcement and community services; and establish culturally relevant animal welfare-related outreach and educational resources. This assessment highlights the important collective call to action for legislators, animal welfare organizations, regulatory agencies, and stakeholders to take steps to improve welfare for animals, people, and communities in Washington.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: POINTS OF CONTACT, STAKEHOLDERS, AND SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

Table 1: Points of Contact, Stakeholders, and Subject Matter Experts

Points of Contact, Stakeholders, and Subject Matter Experts					
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Tribal Nations	Philip	Rigdon	Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	Dept. of Natural Resources Deputy Director	phil_rigdon@yakama.com
	Dustin	Best	Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	Law & Justice Chair, Veterans Chair, Omak District Representative	dustin.best.cbc@colvilletribes.com
	Jeff	Muhlhauser	Quinault Indian Nation	Animal Control Supervisor	360-276-8215, ext. 1031

	Micheal	Bradshaw	Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe	Officer Port Gamble Fish and Wildlife	mbradshaw@pgst.nsn.us
	Leon	Ganuelas	Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	Program Manager	leon_ganuelas@yakama.com
	Scott	Crowell	Suquamish Tribe	Director of Dept. of Community Development (DCD)	scrowell@suquamish.nsn.us
	Shenowah	Purser	Suquamish Tribe	DCD Administrative Assistant	spurser@suquamish.nsn.us
	Vickie	Cole	Suquamish Tribe	Housing Program Manager	vcole@suquamish.nsn.us
	Debra	Byrd	Yakama Nation	Animal rescuer	debra_byrd@yakama.com

Table 2: Washington Tribal Chairs

Washington Tribal Chairs			
Tribe	Chair First Name	Chair Last Name	Email
Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation	Dustin	Klatush	dklatush@chehalistribe.org
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	Jarred-Michael	Erickson	jarred.erickson.cbc@colvilletribes.com
Cowlitz Indian Tribe	William "Bill"	Iyall	wiyall@cowlitz.org
Hoh Indian Tribe	Darlene	Hollum	Darlene.Hollum@hohtribe-nsn.org
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe	W. Ron	Allen	rallen@jamestowntribe.org
Kalispel Tribe of Indians	Glen	Nenema	cholmes@kalispeltribe.com
Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe	Frances	Charles	frances.charles@elwha.org

Lummi Nation	Anthony	Hillaire	anthonyh@lummi-nsn.gov
Makah Tribe	Timothy J. "TJ"	Greene, Sr.	timothy.greene@makah.com
Muckleshoot Indian Tribe	Jaison	Elkins	jaison.elkins@muckleshoot.nsn.us
Nisqually Indian Tribe	Ken	Choke	choke.ken@nisqually-nsn.gov
Nooksack Indian Tribe	Rosemary	LaClair	chair@nooksack-nsn.gov
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe	Amber	Caldera	ambers@pgst.nsn.us
Puyallup Tribe	Bill	Sterud	bill.sterud@puyalluptribe-nsn.gov
Quileute Tribe	Douglas	Woodruff Jr.	doug.woodruff@quileute-tribe.com
Quinault Indian Nation	Guy	Capoeman	Guy.Capoeman@quinault.org
Samish Indian Nation	Tom	Wooten	tomwooten@samishtribe.nsn.us
Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe	Nino	Maltos	nmaltos@sauk-suiattle.com
Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe	Quintin	Swanson	qswanson@shoalwaterbay-nsn.gov
Skokomish Indian Tribe	Charles "Guy"	Miller	gmliller@skokomish.org
Snoqualmie Indian Tribe	Robert	de los Angeles	bobde@snoqualmi-tribe.us
Spokane Tribe of Indians	Greg	Abrahamson	grega@spokanetribe.com
Squaxin Island Tribe	Kristopher	Peters	kpeters@squaxin.us
Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians	Eric	White	ewhite@stillaguamish.com
Suquamish Tribe	Leonard	Forsman	lforsman@suquamish.nsn.us
Swinomish Indian Tribal Community	Steve (Rudy)	Edwards	sedwards@swinomish.nsn.us
Tulalip Tribes	Teri	Gobin	trgobin@tulaliptribes-nsn.gov
Upper Skagit Indian Tribe	Jennifer	Washington	jenniferw@upperskagit.com

Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	Gerald	Lewis	gerald_lewis@yakama.c om
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APPENDIX B: CONCEPT PAPER

Concept Paper — Washington State Animal Welfare Assessment (WA SB 5950)

de Vries, Blair (AGR)

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Washington State Animal Welfare Assessment

Introduction

During the 2024 Legislative session, \$250,000 of the general fund, for fiscal year 2025, was provided to the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Animal Services Division to complete an assessment of current animal welfare issues, such as animal abandonment, rescue organization operations, veterinary services, and costs. The assessment may include an estimated fiscal investment and recommendations needed to improve the animal health and welfare system in Washington. The department must submit a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by June 30, 2025.

Purpose

The proviso was written by supporting legislators and key stakeholders to address the broad scope and complexity of animal welfare problems in companion animals statewide referenced in the Washington State Animal Welfare Landscape Analysis (2014) and WA State Companion Animal Overview Case Studies and Strategies (2024) documents.

Project Description

Objectives and Goals

- Compile and synthesize existing data to identify the contributing factors impacting animal welfare issues. Including but not limited to, cat and dog population estimates, distribution, and ownership demographics.
- Assess the number and distribution of animal shelters and rescues, animal control agencies, and veterinary services.
- Capture current regulations, licensing and registration of animals, animal entities and existing gaps.

The goal with this assessment is to better understand the current demographics of Washington state companion animals and ownership compared to the resources serving these groups by county, collect data available in these areas, identify gaps based on this information, and propose solutions.

Methodology and Timelines

To understand the current “state” of the companion animal welfare system in Washington, WSDA conducted meetings with animal welfare subject matter experts from academia, extension, industry, rescue, animal control, and veterinary (shelter, regulatory, private, research) sectors. These interviews reinforced the need for the assessment, informed the objectives, and categorized the data needed in essential areas.

Focus sessions with subject matter experts are held to identify key quantitative data collected within the state and by whom. Where an absence of hard data is discovered, electronic and in-person surveys/interviews will be conducted to obtain this information as well as pertinent qualitative data to close confirmed gaps. Survey questions will be developed and reviewed with academic partners and subject matter experts then tailored to specific audiences to address each category. Marginalized, underrepresented communities, such as tribal nations, will be prioritized for in person visits to remove participation barriers. Animal welfare researchers/academic partners have been consulted and will be contracted to assist in survey development and facilitation, statistical data analysis, and graphic presentation as needed.

Due to the complexities of animal welfare, crafting solutions will require a broader understanding of many of these issues. Therefore, the final legislative paper will consist of background information including a literature review, a summary of other state welfare program models, existing veterinary workforce and incentive programs, proposed state/national veterinary and animal welfare legislative changes, and pros and cons of key issues that will help inform future legislative actions. Gaps will be identified and recommendations provided for further study or solutions where appropriate.

Anticipated Recommendations

- Animal welfare providers
 - WA Animal Shelters, Rescues, and Veterinary Services
 - Consistent, comprehensive data collection
 - Animal inventory database
 - Intrastate/regional transport programs
 - Help animals and clients travel to and from service providers
 - Shelter and rescue purposes
 - Mobile or regional animal wellness clinics providing high-quality, high-volume spay and neuter (HQHVSN), preventative medical care and public education
 - Funding to help current programs expand services offered, area served, number of patients seen, etc.
 - Expanding mobile spay/neuter or low-cost care programs
 - Veterinary Workforce
 - Improve recruitment, utilization, and retention of veterinarians and veterinary technicians
 - Increase Washington State University (WSU) College of Veterinary Medicine's in-state class size
 - Support for an embedded licensed veterinary technician (LVT) training program at WSU in partnership with Spokane Falls Community College
 - Rural veterinarian and veterinary technician recruitment/retention incentive program
- Regulation and oversight
 - Animal control officers/sheriff's departments
 - Funding for animal control programs in each county
 - Propose funding mechanisms in areas with known pet overpopulation

- Identify and remove barriers to an animal control officer's ability to respond to and enforce animal cruelty and animal bite cases
 - Local jurisdiction partnerships with a veterinarian to assist with animal cruelty investigations
 - Create and implement a database for animal cruelty convictions and rabies vaccination
- WSDA
 - Animal Welfare Program within Animal Services to assist under resourced counties with investigations, and respond to companion animal disease reports
 - Funding to expand animal disease and traceability, available for livestock, to include companion animals
 - Expand existing database to license/register breeders, rescues and shelters and make accessible across state agencies - interagency database
- USDA
 - State, federal, and county (+/- city) partnership model to align state and federal regulations making it easier to respond to and enforce animal welfare complaints.

As data is collected gaps and suggestions will adjust accordingly. However, the call for collaboration across all sectors to successfully address these broad, and at times, complex animal welfare issues is already a unanimous sentiment. Through a data driven approach, this project will confirm what and where the animal welfare needs are to inform the recommendations. Thereby directing the collective passion around resolving animal welfare issues in a sustainable and engaged manner with lasting, positive results.

Contact Information

Blair de Vries DVM | Project Veterinarian

Animal Services Division | Washington State Department of Agriculture

Cell: (509) 504-0476

Amber J Itle VMD MS | State Veterinarian

Animal Services Division | Washington State Department of Agriculture

Cell: (360) 961-4129

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO NATIONS AND TRIBES OF WASHINGTON STATE

01/17/2025

Dear Tribal Chair,

During the 2024 Legislative session, \$250,000 of the general fund was provided to the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Animal Services Division to complete an assessment of current animal welfare issues, such as animal abandonment, rescue organization operations, veterinary services, and costs. The assessment may include an estimated fiscal investment and recommendations needed to improve the animal health and animal welfare system in Washington. The Department must submit a report to the appropriate legislative committees by June 30, 2025.

The focus of the assessment is on dogs and cats but that does not preclude us from mentioning areas of significant animal welfare need for other species, including livestock or horses. The goal of this assessment is to better understand the current demographics of Washington State companion animals and ownership compared to the resources serving these groups by county (ex. spay/neuter programs, animal control, veterinary services, etc.), collect data available in these areas, identify gaps based on this information, and propose solutions.

To ascertain tribal perspectives, resource needs, and access to veterinary services, I am requesting the following feedback:

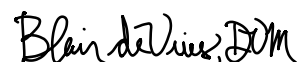
- 1) What are the tribe's main animal welfare needs?
- 2) What proposed solutions or resources are needed to address those concerns?
- 3) What veterinary services (in-state or out-of-state programs) are currently available to the tribe?

Tribal input is valuable as the report could include recommendations that become bills or policy positions that could provide resources or impact Washington's Tribal Nations and their animals.

If needed, please forward to whoever is the best point of contact. I would be happy to host a meeting (in-person or virtual) or phone call to receive feedback or answer any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



Blair de Vries DVM | Project Veterinarian
Animal Services Division | Washington State Department of Agriculture
Cell: 509.504.0476 | blair.devries@agr.wa.gov

APPENDIX D: ADDITIONAL READING AND REFERENCES

Regulatory

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Control of Communicable Diseases; Foreign Quarantine: Importation of Dogs and Cats - <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/05/13/2024-09676/control-of-communicable-diseases-foreign-quarantine-importation-of-dogs-and-cats>

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United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS)

USDA APHIS Laws and Regulations: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/laws-regs>

Animal Welfare Act:

Regulations - <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/media/document/17164/file> (Blue Book)

Licensing and registration - <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/graybook.pdf>
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<https://www.nal.usda.gov/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare-act>

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USDA APHIS 2024 Impact Report: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/aphis-impact-2024.pdf>

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2024 U.S. Animal Protection Laws Rankings - <https://aldf.org/project/us-state-rankings/>

Compendium of U.S. Animal Protection Laws (Washington) - <https://aldf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Animal-Protection-Laws-of-Washington-2023-Animal-Legal-Defense-Fund.pdf>

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Hill's Pet Nutrition 2024 State of Shelter Pet Adoption Report - https://www.hillspet.com/content/dam/cp-sites/hills/hills-pet/en_us/general/documents/shelter/shelter-equity-state-of-pet-adoption-2024.pdf

Shelter Animals Count (SAC) Data Dashboards: <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/explore-the-data/data-dashboards>

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Tackling the Veterinary Professional Shortage (Mars Veterinary Health) - <https://marsveterinary.com/tackling-the-veterinary-professional-shortage/>

How to boost retention (AVMA) - <https://www.avma.org/blog/chart-month-how-boost-retention>

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<https://www.dvm360.com/view/next-gen-technologies-that-are-transforming-animal-healthcare>

Wired for wellness: The tech revolution in pet health - <https://www.aaha.org/trends-magazine/publications/wired-for-wellness-the-tech-revolution-in-pet-health/>

Veterinary Innovation Council - <https://veterinaryinnovationcouncil.com/>

Coalition for Connected Veterinary Care:

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/telehealth-telemedicine-veterinary-practice/coalition-connected-veterinary-care>

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Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR) Position Statements

Association for Animal Welfare Advancement (AAWA) - <https://theaawa.org/position-statements/>

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Washington State Veterinary Medical Association (WSVMA) <https://wsvma.org/presidents-message-defining-the-vcpr-in-a-telehealth-post-pandemic-world/>

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Colorado General Assembly – 2024 Colorado Ballot Analysis - Proposition 129
<https://leg.colorado.gov/ballots/establishing-veterinary-professional-associates>

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American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) <https://www.avma.org/advocacy/workforce-what-best-safe-quality-animal-care/veterinary-midlevel-position-mlp>

National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) - <https://navta.net/head-to-tail-w-steve-dale/no-pas-needed/>

Washington State Association of Veterinary Technicians (WSAVT) - <https://www.wsavt.org/news/mid-level-practitioner-statement>

Shelter Medicine Education and Training Resources

Association of Shelter Veterinarians

https://www.sheltervet.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=53:training-opportunities&catid=20:site-content&Itemid=152

Association of Shelter Medicine Veterinary Technicians <https://www.asmvt.org/ce-events>

Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association <https://www.hsvma.org/education>

University of Florida <https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/continuing-education/>

Relevant RCWs and WACs

Title 16 RCW Animals and Livestock <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?Cite=16>

Title 16 WAC Department of Agriculture <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=16>

Animal control agencies and humane societies <https://doh.wa.gov/licenses-permits-and-certificates/facilities-z/animal-care-and-control-and-humane-society/laws>

Veterinarian <https://doh.wa.gov/licenses-permits-and-certificates/professions-new-renew-or-update/veterinarian/laws>

Veterinary technician <https://doh.wa.gov/licenses-permits-and-certificates/professions-new-renew-or-update/veterinary-technician/laws>

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