

July 10, 2025

Zachary Williams

Chief Operating Officer/ Executive Assistant
DeKalb County Government
Decatur Georgia, 30030

Jack Lumpkin

Deputy Chief Operating Officer
DeKalb County Government
Office of Public Safety

Subject: Report on the Audit of DeKalb County's Animal Shelter Operations operated by LifeLine Animal Project. Audit conducted by Animal Shelter Consulting LLC.

Dear COO Williams and DCOO Lumpkin:

DeKalb County's Department of Public Safety, Police Services, and Animal Control Division issued RFQ 24-3003821 to engage an Animal Shelter Consultant for a comprehensive management audit of the DeKalb County Animal Shelter, operated by LifeLine Animal Project under contract #113039. The purpose of this audit was to evaluate current shelter operations and identify opportunities to strengthen compliance with contract #113039, County procedures, industry practices, and the standards necessary to pass both monthly and unannounced Georgia Department of Agriculture Animal Welfare inspections. The audit also aimed to ensure adherence to the Georgia Animal Protection Act (O.C.G.A. § 4-11-2), which mandates the welfare, protection, and humane treatment of animals.

In accordance with DeKalb County, Georgia - Code of Ordinances Organizational Act Sec. 10A (Independent Internal Audit), the Chief Audit Executive is responsible for coordinating and monitoring audit related work performed by external consultants or other organizations under contract. The development of the RFQ requirements and the selection of the consultant were completed prior to notification of the Office of Independent Internal Audit (OIIA). OIIA began its monitoring and oversight of audit-related activities following the award of the contract to the selected vendor.

Animal Shelter Consulting LLC was the successful vendor for RFQ 24-3003821 and was awarded the audit contract in February 2024.

A review of the vendor proposal and other supporting information shows that the vendor appears to have experience performing similar evaluations of animal shelters across the country, including New York City Animal Care & Control, one of the largest animal sheltering

systems in the country, and Austin Animal Center, the largest “no-kill” sheltering system in the country.

As per the RFQ vendor response, the selected consultant evaluated the operations of the LifeLine Animal Project using the following better standards and criteria:

- ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)
- HSUS (Humane Society of the United States)
- AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association)
- NACA (National Animal Care and Control Association)
- ASV (Association of Shelter Veterinarians)
- AAWA (Association for Animal Welfare Advancement)
- AFP (Association of Fundraising Professionals)
- NCNP (National Council of Nonprofits)
- NHRA (National Humane Resources Association)
- NARC (National Association of Regional Councils)
- Federal, State, and Local Codes, Laws, and Regulations related to animal care and control.

According to the consultant’s report, the day-to-day operations of DCAS are overseen by the shelter director, who reports directly to Rebecca Guinn, CEO of LifeLine Animal Project. The shelter director manages a team of 87 employees across six departments: administration, animal care, community support, foster, placement, and shelter medicine. The DCAS staff’s efforts are further supported by a robust volunteer program, which includes approximately 1,200 registered volunteers. In 2023, DCAS admitted 5,239 dogs, 2,176 cats, and 215 other animals, achieving a live release rate of 89% for dogs, 99% for cats, and 75% for other animals.

To fully understand the consultant’s observations and assessment of the shelter’s capacity to care for animals, the report should be read in its entirety. The consultant identified several key challenges in DeKalb County Animal Shelter operations, as categorized by the consultant under the following areas:

- PART I. Organization Overview
- PART II. Facility (Exterior & Interior)
- PART III. Operations
- PART IV. Animals
- PART V. Animal Veterinary Medicine
- PART VI. Volunteers
- PART VII. Marketing, Public & Community Relations
- Other Areas of Consideration: Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses

OIIA'S SUMMARY

The following summary, **prepared by the Office of Independent Internal Audit (OIIA)**, presents an overview of the key findings and recommendations resulting from the recent consultant review of animal shelter operations. This summary highlights several areas where current practices and facility conditions present notable challenges to effective animal care, operational efficiency, and compliance with best practices. The detailed consultant report that follows provides all comprehensive observations, supporting photographic evidence, and specific examples of the issues identified. The back of the report also highlights concerns the consultant had with the conduct of the audit. **In addition, the report includes management's formal response and action plans to address these issues and implement corrective measures.**

PART I: ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Issue: The animal shelter **lacks a long-term strategic plan** with defined goals for capacity, operations, and facility improvements, which limits the ability to plan effectively for future needs and challenges.

Recommendation: Create a long-term strategic plan with specific goals for capacity, operations, and facility improvements.

PART II: FACILITY (EXTERIOR & INTERIOR)

FACILITY EXTERIOR

1. Overgrown Greenery, Insufficient Lighting, and Limited Visitor Seating Reduce Safety and Comfort

Issue: Overgrown greenery near the shelter entrance creates potential hiding spots, and inadequate lighting on exterior walls leads to poor visibility during evening hours, compromising the safety of staff and volunteers. There is also a lack of seating areas for visitors at the front of the building.

Recommendation: Trim all overgrown greenery to eliminate hiding spots, increase lighting on all exterior walls to enhance security and visibility, and provide additional seating areas for visitors at the building entrance.

2. Lack of Sunshades Exposes Visitors and Pets to Weather

Issue: Visitors and their pets are exposed to direct sun, rain, and other harsh weather elements while waiting outside the shelter due to the absence of sunshades or weather protection.

Recommendation: Install sunshades to offer adequate protection for visitors and pets at the shelter entrance and waiting areas.

3. Insufficient Pet Waste Disposal Facilities

Issue: The shelter lacks enough pet waste stations and garbage bins, leading to improper disposal of pet waste and unsanitary conditions around the building façade.

Recommendation: Install at least two pet waste stations with garbage bins on either side of the building façade to promote responsible pet waste management.

4. No Dog Hitching Facilities for Visitors

Issue: There are no designated dog hitches along the front of the building, making it difficult for dog owners to securely attach their pets' leashes while visiting the shelter.

Recommendation: Install dog hitches at various points along the front of the building to provide convenient and secure options for pet owners.

5. Insufficient Parking Capacity for High Traffic Volume

Issue: The existing parking lot is unable to accommodate the high volume of visitors, leading to congestion and inconvenience.

Recommendation: Engage County leadership to discuss and implement solutions for increasing parking capacity to better support shelter operations and visitor demand.

6. Pet Waste Stations Not Checked or Replenished Daily

Issue: Pet waste stations are not consistently checked or replenished, resulting in overflowing bins and unsanitary conditions on the shelter grounds.

Recommendation: Implement daily checks and replenishment procedures for all pet waste stations to maintain cleanliness and hygiene.

7. Building Grounds Not Kept Free of Tripping Hazards and Garbage

Issue: The building grounds are not always well-organized, with garbage and tripping hazards present, creating safety risks and detracting from the facility's appearance.

Recommendation: Ensure the grounds are routinely inspected and that all tripping hazards and garbage are promptly removed to maintain a safe and organized environment.

8. Use of Mulch as Ground Cover Presents Safety and Sanitation Risks

Issue: Mulch is currently used as ground cover in play yards, which poses significant safety and sanitation risks due to difficulty in cleaning and the potential to harbor pests or debris.

Recommendation: Replace mulch with safer, easier-to-clean surfaces such as concrete or artificial turf in all play yard areas.

FACILITY INTERIOR

1. Animal Housing

a) Inadequate Animal Housing

Issue: The animal housing areas within the DCAS facility are largely inadequate for animal health and well-being, with cramped and unsuitable spaces lacking sufficient lighting and

soundproofing.

Recommendation: Redesign cramped and unsuitable housing, and add additional suitable housing to provide adequate space, lighting, and soundproofing.

b) Double-Stacked Cages

Issue: The use of double-stacked cages reduces sanitation and increases stress for animals housed in the facility.

Recommendation: Replace double-stacked cages with single-compartment housing to improve sanitation and reduce animal stress.

c) Use of SPLOST Funding

Issue: There is available funding within SPLOST to improve animal housing; however, the Department of Agriculture does not classify the facility as largely inadequate, which may affect the urgency or prioritization of improvements.

Recommendation: Utilize available SPLOST funding to improve and enhance animal housing, regardless of external classification.

2. Drainage Issues

a) Pooling Water and Floor Slope

Issue: Poorly sloped floors and inadequate drainage systems in animal housing areas result in pooling water, creating unsanitary and unsafe conditions.

Recommendation: Re-slope floors in housing areas to prevent pooling water and install proper drainage systems.

b) Funding and Completion Timeline

Issue: Funds will be allocated to correct drainage issues, with input from engineers, users, and administrators. Project completion is still pending.

Recommendation: Allocate necessary funds and complete drainage system improvements prior to October 1, 2025.

3. HVAC Maintenance

a) Filthy Ceiling Grilles and Filters

Issue: Filthy ceiling grilles and HVAC filters were observed, indicating insufficient cleaning and poor air quality.

Recommendation: Increase the frequency of HVAC filter changes and ensure regular cleaning of ceiling grilles.

b) Allocation of Additional Maintenance Funds

Issue: Additional maintenance funds have been allocated within the current budget for enhanced HVAC and ceiling grille cleaning, but ongoing monitoring is necessary.

Recommendation: Continue enhanced HVAC and ceiling grille cleaning using the allocated funds and regularly monitor the effectiveness of these improvements.

4. Lighting

a) Non-Public Lighting Upgrades Needed

Issue: Non-public areas of the facility require lighting upgrades to improve safety and operational efficiency.

Recommendation: Upgrade non-public lighting to meet current standards and operational needs.

b) NCAE Lighting Recommendation

Issue: The recommendation of the NCAE regarding facility lighting improvements (both public and non-public areas) is pending evaluation and funding in the County's Lighting Replacement Plan.

Recommendation: Add the NCAE lighting recommendation to the DeKalb County Lighting Replacement Plan for evaluation and potential funding.

5. Noise Reduction

a) Excessive Noise Levels

Issue: High noise levels in certain areas contribute to increased stress for animals and staff; current noise mitigation is inadequate.

Recommendation: Use soundproofing materials and partition high-noise areas to mitigate stress for animals and staff.

b) Review of NCAE Noise Reduction Recommendation

Issue: The NCAE's recommendation to use soundproofing materials and partitions requires review with noise reduction experts prior to implementation.

Recommendation: Review and implement the NCAE noise reduction recommendations with the aid of noise reduction companies.

6. Sanitation Practices

Issue: Cleaning and sanitation practices throughout the facility do not meet the standards required for an animal shelter.

Recommendation: Improve cleaning and sanitation practices facility-wide to ensure compliance with required animal shelter standards.

PART III: OPERATIONS

I. POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND PRACTICES FOR PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE), PERSONAL SAFETY, AND ANIMAL HANDLING NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

1. Employee Policy Manual – Chemical Safety and Safety Data Sheets (SDS)

Issue: The Employee Policy Manual does not adequately reference Safety Data Sheets (SDS) or provide guidance on the safe handling, storage, and use of hazardous chemicals.

Recommendation: Revise the Employee Policy Manual to include comprehensive information on SDS, with clear instructions on accessing, using, and responding to chemical hazards as required.

2. Standard Operating Procedures Manual – Personal Safety

- **a) Enforcement of PPE Use**

Issue: Current SOPs do not include sufficient enforcement mechanisms or penalties for non-compliance with the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Recommendation: Revise SOPs to implement and clearly communicate penalties for non-compliance with required PPE use.

- **b) Hazard Reporting and Safety Data Sheets (SDS)**

Issue: SOPs lack specific examples of workplace hazards and do not sufficiently explain the purpose, use, or emergency procedures related to Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

Recommendation: Expand SOPs to include detailed examples of hazards, clarify the importance of SDS, and explain when and how to use them, including emergency response actions.

- **c) Safety Training and Refresher Courses**

Issue: There is no structured program for regular or refresher safety training on SDS, chemical hazard protocols, or emergency response procedures.

Recommendation: Provide regular and refresher safety training sessions for staff on SDS, chemical hazards, and emergency response protocols.

- **d) Specific Safety Practices for Euthanasia Room and Hearing**

Issue: Staff may not be consistently following critical safety protocols, such as keeping euthanasia room doors closed during procedures and refraining from headphone or Bluetooth device use, potentially compromising emergency awareness.

Recommendation: Conduct regular safety training to reinforce requirements for keeping euthanasia room doors closed and prohibiting the use of headphones or Bluetooth devices, ensuring all employees maintain emergency awareness.

3. Standard Operating Procedures Manual – Animal Handling Methods

Issue: Staff lack sufficient hands-on training in animal handling, which could impact safety and animal welfare.

Recommendation: Invest in and provide comprehensive hands-on animal handling training for all staff to enhance their skills and ensure safe, effective practices.

II. ANIMAL FEEDING PRACTICES AND ADMINISTERING MEDICATION

1. Animal Feeding Practices

Issue: Not all animals are being provided with the highest quality diet appropriate to their life stage, potentially affecting their health, stool quality, and the overall cleanliness and visitor experience in the shelter.

Recommendation: Ensure all animals are fed the best quality diet the shelter can afford,

appropriate to each animal's life stage, to promote better health, improved stool quality, and a cleaner environment.

2. Administering Medication

Issue: Medication is being placed in food trays and given to animals in their kennels or cages, leading to instances where medication is not consumed and is instead discarded, resulting in ineffective treatment.

Recommendation: Discontinue the practice of placing medications in food trays left in kennels or cages, and implement more effective medication administration methods to ensure animals reliably receive their prescribed treatments.

III. FUNDING AND BUDGET

Forensic Audit of LifeLine Animal Project Financials

Issue: There is a concern regarding potential commingling of funds within the LifeLine Animal Project's financial activities, and current financial oversight may not sufficiently address this risk.

Recommendation: DeKalb County should consider conducting a forensic audit of LifeLine Animal Project's financials, as permitted under the contract, to examine for possible commingling of funds and ensure financial integrity.

IV. RETENTION, RECOGNITION AND DISCIPLINE, AND RECOGNITION

Issue: The current Employee Policy Manual does not address the disciplinary process or provide guidance on employee recognition, which may result in inconsistent handling of employee performance and limited staff motivation.

Recommendation: Revise the Employee Policy Manual to include clear procedures for the disciplinary process and establish guidelines for employee recognition to promote consistency and encourage positive staff performance.

V. FEES, MONEY HANDLING, ACCOUNTING, FORMS

Issue: The Standard Operating Procedures Manual does not include guidance or procedures for the handling or accounting of money, increasing the risk of financial mismanagement or errors.

Recommendation: Revise the Standard Operating Procedures Manual to include a comprehensive section outlining procedures for handling and accounting of money to ensure proper financial controls and accountability.

VI. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND PLANNING - DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Issue: LifeLine does not have a comprehensive emergency plan that meets the requirements of the contract/RFP No. 18-500477, including collaboration with DeKalb Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), disaster protocols, and procedures for various emergencies.

Recommendation: Develop and implement a comprehensive emergency plan in collaboration with DEMA, addressing disaster preparedness elements such as phone/radio contact, animal evacuation and care, and manual processes during computer downtime.

PART IV: ANIMALS

I. ASSESSMENT OF CAPACITY TO CARE

Issue: LifeLine Animal Project is not meeting its Capacity for Care standard, as animals are only fed and cleaned twice daily and daily animal inventories are not being performed due to insufficient staffing and workload imbalances. This leads to inaccurate shelter population records and misalignment with Petpoint data.

Recommendation: Hire additional staff to address workload imbalances and improve the staff-to-animal ratio, enabling the resumption of daily animal inventory checks to ensure accurate shelter records and compliance with best practices.

II. ANIMAL ENRICHMENT AND WELL-BEING

Issue: Animals at DeKalb County Animal Services operated by LifeLine receive limited enrichment, primarily restricted to time outside of their cage or kennel, due to the high animal population exceeding the facility's capacity for care.

Recommendation: Expand and implement daily animal enrichment programs—including activities such as playtime, puzzles, and sensory stimulation—to promote animal well-being and improve quality of life.

II. ANIMAL TRANSFER AND TRANSPORT

Issue: There are significant concerns regarding how LifeLine Animal Project records animal transport transactions in its financial records, raising questions about accuracy and transparency.

Recommendation: Engage a forensic accountant to conduct a thorough review of the animal transport accounting process to ensure proper financial recording and compliance with best practices.

PART V: ANIMAL VETERINARY MEDICINE

I. INTAKE EXAM ISSUES

Issue: Intake exams are currently conducted in high-traffic or noisy areas, increasing stress for animals. Additionally, intake cages are not always adequately sized for the animals being examined.

Recommendation: Relocate intake exams to quieter, low-traffic areas to reduce animal stress, and replace intake cages with larger, appropriately sized enclosures to improve animal welfare during exams.

II. CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AND LOGS NEEDS TO BE ENHANCED

Issue: LifeLine currently uses a three-ring binder with loose-leaf sheets to record controlled substances, which poses risks to the accuracy, security, and integrity of these records.

Recommendation: Invest in and implement a dedicated Veterinary Controlled Substance Logbook to ensure secure, accurate, and compliant recordkeeping for controlled substances.

PART VI: VOLUNTEERS

I. VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT - NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

Issue: The current volunteer management program at DCAS lacks a comprehensive and updated Volunteer Manual, does not provide in-depth training in cleaning, sanitation, animal behavior, and handling, and lacks an appropriate management structure for overseeing volunteers.

Recommendation: Overhaul the volunteer management program by rewriting and enhancing the Volunteer Manual, introducing comprehensive training on cleaning and sanitation, animal behavior, animal handling, and emergency response, and establishing a management structure with at least one full-time staff member for every 80 volunteers.

OTHER AREAS TO CONSIDER: SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

1. Effectiveness of No-Kill Resolution and Contractual Euthanasia Mandate

Observation: The current implementation of DeKalb County's 2017 No-Kill Resolution and the contract mandate for euthanasia "only when absolutely necessary" may lead to unintended consequences, such as the compromise of animal care in pursuit of a high live release rate. There is concern that efforts to achieve marketing goals may conflict with humane animal care standards.

Recommendation: Management and County Commissioners should review the effectiveness of the No-Kill Resolution and contractual mandates and assess whether the pursuit of a high live release rate is compromising animal care or leading to conflicting priorities.

2. Alignment of LifeLine Mission with County and Animal Services Goals

Observation: There is uncertainty regarding whether the mission and objectives of LifeLine Animal Project fully align with those of DeKalb County and DeKalb County Animal Services. There is also concern that the mission may be leveraged more for marketing than for the primary goal of sheltering and saving animals.

Recommendation: Management should evaluate and ensure that the mission of LifeLine Animal Project aligns with the County's priorities and is not being exploited for marketing advantages at the expense of core animal welfare objectives.

3. Feasibility of Shelter Operations and Organizational Structure

Observation: It is unclear whether LifeLine Animal Project (LAP), DeKalb County, or another third party is best positioned to provide effective animal shelter services. The suitability and

effectiveness of LAP's organizational structure and executive management for operating a large animal shelter are also in question.

Recommendation: The County should conduct a feasibility study to determine the most effective organizational model for animal shelter operations—whether managed by the County, LifeLine Animal Project, or a different third party. The study should also assess the potential benefits of the County managing its own facility, including the impact on efficiency, operational control, financial oversight, and community involvement.

OIIA CONCLUSION

The detailed consultant report, including management's full response and implementation timelines, follows in the subsequent sections. OIIA will conduct a follow-up review before the end of the year to assess progress on the corrective actions. It is our hope that these recommendations will help the County address current challenges and drive continuous improvement in animal shelter operations and the care provided to the community's animals.

Sincerely,



Lavois Campbell, CIA, CISA, CFE, CGA

Chief Audit Executive

CC:

Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Robert Patrick, Board of Commissioners District 1

Michelle Long Spears, Board of Commissioners District 2

Nicole Massiah, Board of Commissioners District 3

Chakira Johnson, Board of Commissioners District 4

Mereda Davis Johnson, Board of Commissioners District 5

Ted Terry, Board of Commissioners Super District 6

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Tanja Christine Boyd-Witherspoon, Chairperson, Audit Oversight Committee

Adrienne T. McMillion, Vice -Chairperson, Audit Oversight Committee

Lisa Earls, Audit Oversight Committee

Michael Lopata, Audit Oversight Committee

Petrina Bloodworth, Audit Oversight Committee

Dr. G. Leah Davis, CEO's Chief of Staff

Zachary L. Williams, Chief Operating Officer/ Executive Assistant

SHELTER EVALUATION

DEKALB COUNTY



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Animal Shelter Consulting Services for the Department of Police Services and Animal Control of DeKalb County



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PART I. Organization Overview

- Mission & Vision
- Location
- Oversight & leadership (committees, commissions, advisory board)
- Strategic or long-term plan

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According to Georgia law, the state code that defines the provision of an animal shelter in a county is O.C.G.A. ("Official Code of Georgia Annotated") § 4-11-2 which falls under the "Georgia Animal Protection Act". According to § 4-11-2 (2) "Animal shelter" means any facility operated by or under contract for the state, a county, a municipal corporation, or any other political subdivision of the state for the purpose of impounding or harboring seized, stray, homeless, abandoned, or unwanted dogs, cats, and other animals; any veterinary hospital or clinic operated by a veterinarian or veterinarians which operates for such purpose in addition to its customary purposes; and any facility operated, owned, or maintained by a duly incorporated humane society, animal welfare society, or other nonprofit organization for the purpose of providing for and promoting the welfare, protection, and humane treatment of animals.

DeKalb County Animal Services and Enforcement is one of six departments that fall under the umbrella of DeKalb County Office of Public Safety. The mission of the DeKalb County Office of Public Safety is to provide the highest quality public safety services to the citizens of DeKalb County, Georgia. Directed by Chief Joseph "Jack" Lumpkin, deputy chief operating officer of public safety, the office is made up of the following:

- DeKalb County Police Department
- DeKalb County Fire Rescue
- DeKalb County Animal Services and Enforcement
- DeKalb 911 Emergency Communications Center
- DeKalb Emergency Management Agency (DEMA)
- DeKalb County Medical Examiner's Office.

The day-to-day operations of DCAS fall under the leadership of the shelter director who reports directly to the Lifeline Animal Project CEO, Rebecca Guinn. The shelter director oversees a staff of 87 employees (divided into six departments: administration, animal care, community support, foster, placement, and shelter medicine). The work of the DCAS staff is supplemented by a volunteer program that has approximately 1,200 registered volunteers.

In 2023, DCAS took in 5,239 dogs, 2,176 cats, and 215 other animals and had a live release rate of 89% for dogs, 99% for cats, and 75% for other animals.

Mission and Vision

The animal shelter (i.e. DeKalb County Animal Services (DCAS)) is managed by LifeLine Animal Project. LifeLine Animal Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Atlanta, GA., whose *mission is the ending the shelter euthanasia of healthy and treatable animals*. LifeLine provides humane care for the animals at the shelter, veterinary care including spay/neuters, pet adoptions, animal reclaims, volunteers, foster homes and rescue group coordination. Lifeline has managed the animal shelter at DCAS since 2013, spanning 11 consecutive years.

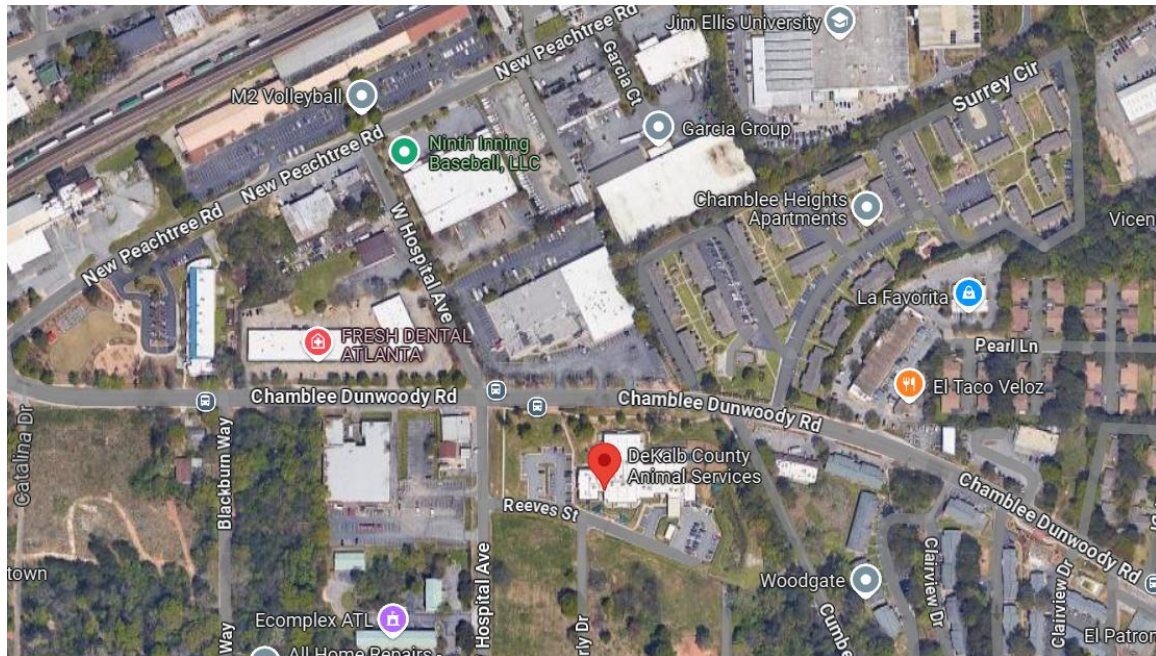
The shelter operations for DCAS is contracted to LAP per Contract Document No. 1132039 in response to Request for Proposal (“RFP”) 18-500477, Animal Shelter Operation Services for DeKalb County Georgia between DeKalb County, Georgia and Lifeline Animal Project (“LAP”). The agreement made on December 28, 2018 automatically renews every January 1st for a period of five calendar years ending December 31, 2023, unless terminated per the termination provisions of the Contract. The County pays LAP an amount not to exceed \$20,384,555. This Contract can be extended by a *Change Order*. (A 4% annual increase is built into the Contract per Attachment A of the Cost Proposal Form.)

Year	Annual Total Price
1	\$ 3,882,000
2	4,056,480
3	4,237,939
4	4,426,657
5	4,622,924

Location

DeKalb County Animal Services is located at 3280 Chamblee Dunwoody Road in Chamblee, GA (30341). Chamblee is a city in northern DeKalb County, Georgia, approximately 15 miles northeast of Atlanta. The population of Chamblee was 30,164 as of the 2020 census. As of the 2020 census, the population of DeKalb County was 764,382, making it Georgia's fourth-most populous county. Decatur is the county seat of DeKalb County.

Source: Wikipedia



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Oversight and Leadership

DeKalb County Animal Services is comprised of two separate, operational entities, both of whom report separately to the Public Safety Director.

- 1) **DeKalb County Shelter.** Operations of the DeKalb County Shelter are contracted to Lifeline Animal Project. All operational services performed by Lifeline are reviewed by the Public Safety Director via written monthly reports, DeKalb County Animal Advisory Board Meetings, conference calls, and visits to the shelter.
- 2) **Animal Enforcement Services.** Tamica Pack coordinates field services for DeKalb County Animal Enforcement Services (AES). DeKalb County Animal Enforcement Services provides operational field responses for various animal related areas of interest. Such services include answering and responding to calls for services regarding animals, investigations of complaints, seizure of animals in appropriate circumstances, citation issuance, court attendance, etc. All DeKalb County Animal Enforcement Services are employees of DeKalb County and AES is budgeted 26 staff members who report to the Public Safety Director through Ms. Wallen, a Management Analyst II for AE DeKalb County Office of Public Safety.

DeKalb County, GA Code of Ordinances, Chapter 5 – ANIMALS, Sec. 5-32. Animal services advisory board defines the governing authority of DeKalb County to create and appoint the animal services advisory board to be composed of thirteen (13) citizens of DeKalb County. The chief executive officer shall appoint six (6) members, and each commissioner shall appoint one (1) member. All members shall be either an active community leader with a demonstrated concern for animals or represent an animal welfare organization. An appointment member will serve a term of three (3) years until their successors are appointed and qualified.

The DeKalb County Animal Advisory Board has the following duties and functions:

- (1) To encourage, promote, and develop the humane and healthy treatment of animals in DeKalb County;
- (2) To advise DeKalb County Animal Services and Enforcement and the governing authority on issues pertaining to the welfare and treatment of animals in DeKalb County;
- (3) To assist DeKalb County Animal Services and Enforcement with the implementation of a long-term plan that improves practices, service delivery, efficiency, and facilities pertaining to animal services in DeKalb County;

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(4)To identify additional strategies that may improve the lives of animals in DeKalb County;

(5)To assist DeKalb County Animal Services and Enforcement in investigating and securing grants and funding for animal services in DeKalb County; and

(6)To cooperate with and improve communications between animal advocacy groups, animal professionals, and local governments for the purpose of creating a comprehensive safety net of services, lifesaving measures, and animal population management activities.

Strategic or Long-term Plan

None.

PART II. Facility (Exterior & Interior)

- Shelter exterior (appearance / grounds / parking / signage (external/directional)
- Building lighting, safety & security
- Facility Maintenance
- Facility size (design / buildings / square footage / rooms /
- Animal housing (# of kennels, cages, condos & community rooms)
- Shelter environment (conditions, sound control, sound-level readings & odors)
- Building Security
- Heating, Ventilation & Air Quality
- Surfaces & drainage

Shelter Exterior / Shelter Grounds and Appearance



DeKalb County Animal Shelter is one large building. The square footage is unknown.

Although the street address for DCAS is identified as 3280 Chamblee Dunwoody Road (an important corridor connecting Peachtree Boulevard with Buford Highway), the vehicular entrance to the facility is located off of Hospital Avenue/Reeves Street.

The front of the shelter faces west to a public parking lot. Additional staff parking is located on the southeastern portion of the property facing Reeves Street and is only accessible through a secure gate. To the rear of the building, on the easternmost side, is a grassy walking trail that loops around a small wooded area. The northeastern portion of the grounds features several, outdoor play yards, all fenced in.

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The public-facing grounds are well-maintained* and feature numerous plants and trees and an expansive lawn which provide a nice aesthetic for the main/public entrance into the facility. Two benches are in front of the main entrance (each sits two adults comfortably). Two more benches are located on the northwestern quadrant of the facility. One bench is located along an exterior, northern wall around the corner from the building entrance, while another sits beneath a large tree closer to Chamblee Dunwoody Road.

*Maintenance is provided by DeKalb County Facilities Maintenance.

The front of the building can be busy with people and animals (both leashed and in crates/boxes).

The non-public exterior grounds to the rear of the building were disorganized, with a myriad of items strewn about. (Please reference *Outdoor Play Yards and Walking Trail*.)

Entryway(s)

DCAS has two primary means of entrance:

- “Adoptions” facing west toward the parking lot;
- “Reclaim & Intake” facing west towards the parking lot.

Both entrances are marked with signage on the door canopy hanging above the door. The façade has nice ‘curb appeal’ with shrubs and plants along the front wall.



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Shelter Parking

There are three separate and distinct parking areas at DCAS:

Area 1: Public parking offers 39 parking stalls with two-(2) accessible parking spaces.

Area 2: Intake parking offers 4 parking stalls and one-(1) accessible parking space;

Area 3: Staff parking offers 23 parking stalls and one-(1) accessible parking space.

The evaluator observed 80-100% of parking stalls in all areas (Area 1,2 & 3) were regularly occupied during shelter hours of operation. The public parking area (Area 1) was quite busy with vehicular traffic, parked cars, people walking about, and dogs on leashes and animals in crates.



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Signage (External and Directional)

External

The façade of the building is marked with two signs:

- The Susan E. Neugent Pet Adoption Center
- DeKalb County Animal Services

The building signage is not really visible from Chamblee Dunwoody Road.

The only directional/ identification sign located on the building grounds is a sign located on Reeves Road that directs people to turn Left to access “adoptions” and “lost & found pets”, or continue straight to access “check-in step 2” (i.e. intake).



External

The evaluator did not visualize any directional signs to the shelter along Chamblee Dunwoody Road.

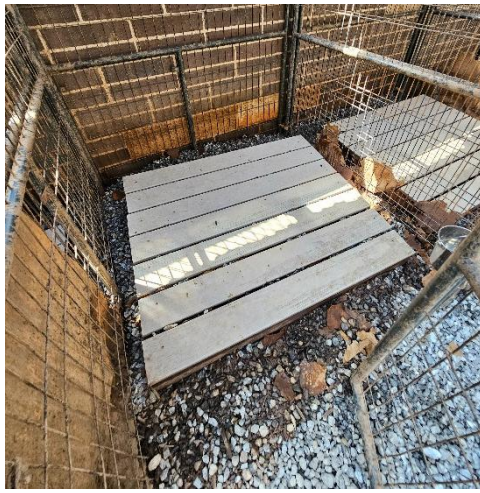
Outdoor Play Yards and Walking Trail

On the exterior of the eastern side of the building is an area containing outdoor kennels (for dogs whose indoor kennel is being cleaned) along with several outdoor play yards. On the southeastern portion of the property is a grassy walking trail that loops around a small wooded area.

The evaluator observed that crates and other debris were dumped in the wooded area inside the walking trail. Although the walking trail had a Pet Waste Station, it did not contain any bags to dispose of waste and remained in this state for the entire four-day on-site visit. The evaluator also observed staff leave items – such as cleaning supplies (scrub brushes, buckets, crates, cardboard, etc.) strewn about the kennel/play yard area. These can pose a tripping hazard resulting in injury to staff and volunteers.



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Mulch is used as ground cover in the outdoor play yards. Mulch as a ground cover at an animal shelter poses numerous challenges and health risks. Here is a list of some of those challenges and risks:

- Ingestion of mulch can result in blockage of the GI tract or splintering of the wood that can perforate GI walls.
- Mulch is also a choking hazard.
- Some dogs can be allergic to the color dyes or chemicals used in mulch that help achieve their color. (For example, recycled wood waste that might have previously been pressure-treated with chemicals like chromium, copper, and arsenic.) This can cause skin rashes or dermatological issues.
- Mulch retains water which attracts insects. Ticks, for example, thrive in wet or humid conditions, so rainfall and moist areas can increase tick populations.
- Mulch is extremely difficult to clean and disinfect. As the photo above clearly illustrates, a dog's wet stool can be seen on the mulch. This was stepped in and tracked by volunteers and staff for the entire four-day site visit. That is what is visible. (More about this under Part IV. Animals > Cleaning and Sanitation).

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Sallyport

The Sallyport is a multi-functional area that serves as a covered space for animal control vehicles to unload their cargo. It also provides storage for bags and cans of animal food, along with other various items.

Additionally, this area houses two freezer units for the disposal of animal bodies. To the east of the Sallyport, there are additional outdoor kennels; however, the evaluator noted that these kennels were disorganized. Various items were leaning against the chain-link fence, some of which posed tripping hazards, creating a liability for the organization.



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Lighting, Safety and Security

The Shelter Director was not sure if DCAS had a building alarm system.

DCAS utilizes an IP security camera system from Avigilon that provides 61 interior and exterior focused cameras. Feeds are stored for 90-days before being overwritten with new footage. Directors and managers have access to the system, which is IP-based on a computer in the Shelter Director's Office.

The evaluator visited the facility in the evening and early morning when the sun was down to inspect the conditions in darkness. While a street lamp at the southeastern corner provides ample lighting to illuminate the front entrance of the building, the northern part of the facility is dark. Also, there is a shrub on the southern side of the *Reclaim & Intake* entrance where someone could hide.



DCAS utilizes a FOB/Badge that allows/restricts access to certain areas of the building.

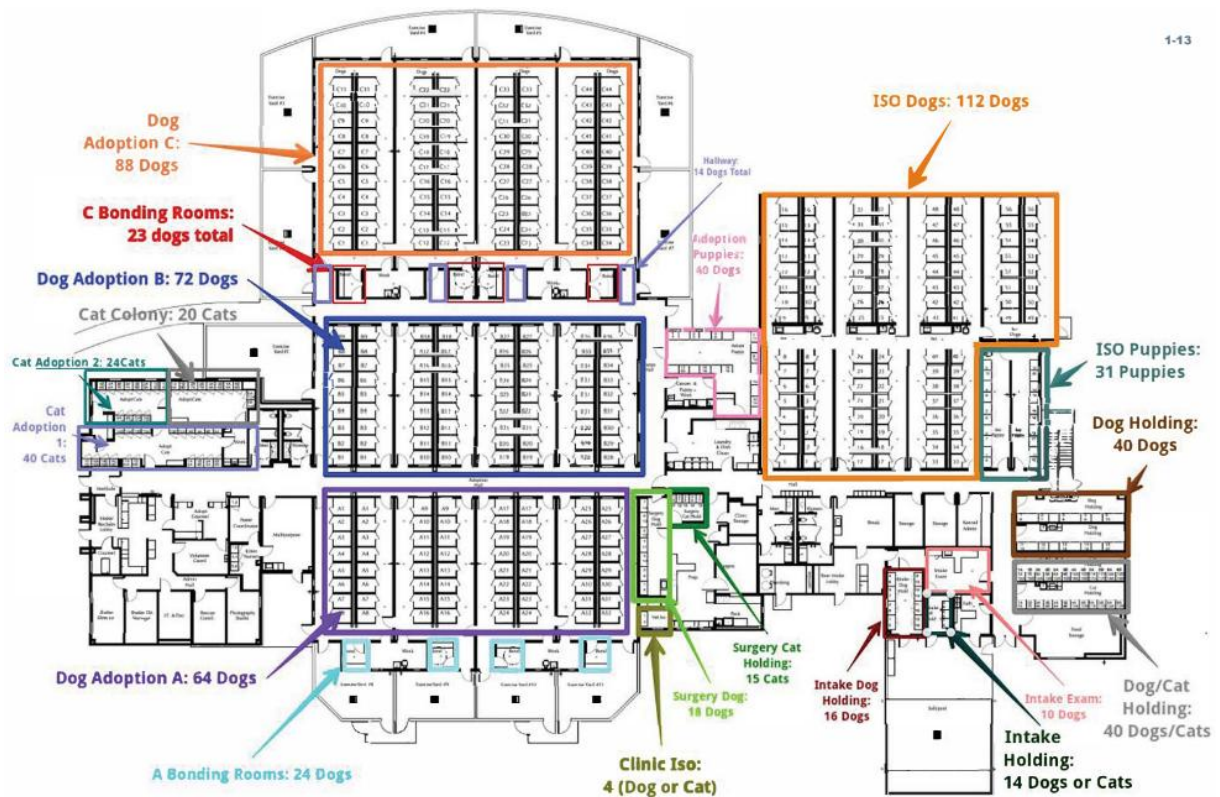
PART II. Facility RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To enhance the safety of staff and volunteers arriving at the shelter during evening hours, it would be beneficial to trim any overgrown greenery that might create hiding spots. Furthermore, increasing the lighting on all exterior walls would significantly improve visibility and security. Consider offering more seating areas for visitors at the front of the building.
2. Contemplate installing sun shades to offer protection for visitors and pets.
3. Install at least two *Pet Waste Stations* with garbage bins, on either side of the building façade.
4. Consider installing dog hitches at various points along the front of the building allowing dog owners to attach their pet's leash.
5. Additional parking is required to handle the high traffic volume at the shelter, necessitating discussion at the County leadership level.
6. Pet Waste Stations should be checked daily and replenished as needed.
7. Management must ensure that the building grounds are well-organized, and promptly dispose of any tripping hazards and garbage.
8. The use of mulch as a ground cover is questioned. Although some shelters around the country do utilize mulch in play yards, it is a practice that carries with it significant risks and challenges.

Shelter Interior

The following diagram shows the interior space of the facility.
The shelter has space for:

- Animal housing (public and non-public)
- Administrative and meeting space
- Storage
- Veterinary Clinic & Medical Care
- Common areas (public and non-public)



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Animal Housing

Animal housing in an animal shelter should meet the needs of the animals, provide an environment that is conducive to maintaining animal health, be easy to clean, and allow for staff to care for the animals safely and efficiently:

- **Size and type:** Housing should be double-compartment and meet the needs of most animals for up to two weeks. Individual rooms are good for cats that are likely to stay longer than 10–14 days. Indoor/outdoor kennels for dogs are preferred and should be at least 4 ft wide by 10–12 ft long. Each housing area must provide sufficient space to allow each animal, regardless of species, to make normal postural adjustments.
- **Materials:** Primary enclosures should be made of durable, smooth, and impervious materials that are resistant to corrosion and rough handling. Less durable materials, like wood, can be used for perches, climbing structures, and resting areas.
- **Comfort:** Provide a variety of surfaces, thermal control, and good air quality.
- **Behavior:** Allow animals to express normal behaviors, such as hiding, walking, running, jumping, scratching, and playing.
- **Health and safety:** Protect animals from disease exposure and provide clean food and water.
- **Flexibility:** Design housing areas as multiple small pods so that space can be adapted to changing needs. For example, large kennels can be subdivided into smaller kennels for short periods of crisis.

Public Side

Room #	Intended Purpose	Housing Available
Cat Room 1	Adoptable Cats	40 cages
Cat Room 2	Adoptable Cats	24 cages
Cat Colony Room	Adoptable Cats	20 cages + 5-6 free roaming cats
A1	Dog Bonding	4 cages
A2	Dog Bonding	9 cages
A3	Dog Bonding	7 cages
A4	Dog Bonding	4 cages
C1	Dog Bonding	5 cages
C2	Dog Bonding	4 cages
C3	Dog Bonding	9 cages
C4	Dog Bonding	5 cages
30 C1-11	Adoptable Dogs	22 kennels
29 B1-B9	Adoptable Dogs	18 kennels
31 B10-18	Adoptable Dogs	18 kennels
33 B19-27	Adoptable Dogs	18 kennels
35 B28-26	Adoptable Dogs	18 kennels
32 C12-22	Adoptable Dogs	22 kennels
36 C34-44	Adoptable Dogs	22 kennels
34 C23-33	Adoptable Dogs	22 kennels
40 A25-32	Adoptable Dogs	16 kennels
39 A17-24	Adoptable Dogs	16 kennels
38 A 9-16	Adoptable Dogs	16 kennels
37 A 1-8	Adoptable Dogs	16 kennels
41	Dog Bonding	4 cages
43	Dog Bonding	9 kennels
44	Dog Bonding	7 kennels
46	Dog Bonding	4 kennels
48	Adoptable Puppies	40 cages
Hallway B-C	Adoptable Dogs	14 cages

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Non-Public Area

Room #	Intended Purpose	Housing Available
60	Iso 1-16	32 kennels
61	Iso 17-32	32 kennels
62	Iso 33-48	32 kennels
59	Iso 49-56	16 kennels
63	Iso	7 kennels + 4 cages
64	Iso	23 cages
77	Holding	20 cages
78	Holding	20 cages
79	Holding	20 cages
80	Holding	20 cages
75	Cat Intake	14 cages
75	Dog Intake	16 cages
Intake	Intake Area	12 cages
36 C34-44	Adoptable Dogs	22 kennels

Rows highlighted in **light red** indicate housing that is questionable or not suitable

The animal housing areas within the DCAS facility are largely inadequate. Most of these areas are situated on the non-public side of the building. For example, Dog Holding Rooms #77 and #78, along with Cat Holding Rooms #79 and #80, which are currently being used to house dogs, are long and narrow. The hard materials used in their construction amplify the sound of barking, creating a reverberation that results in high decibel levels. This noise can cause significant stress for the dogs. Many of the dogs exhibit signs of anxiety, such as trembling, retreating, cringing, panting, licking their lips, turning their heads away, or stiffening their bodies. Additionally, the double-stack housing makes it difficult to clean the dog areas properly, and some of these rooms lack natural lighting. Lack of natural light negatively impacts a dog's mood, appearance, and circadian rhythms.

Isolation Puppies Rooms (#63 and #64) are also areas that are completely unacceptable to house animals. Many of the primary enclosures are small (48" w x 44" d), have hard surface materials that reverberate and amplify sounds, and lack natural lighting and proper drainage.

Similar to the holding rooms for dogs and cats, both the dog and cat intake rooms at DCAS are long and narrow. The walls of these rooms amplify sounds, which can make an animal's first experience entering the shelter system very stressful. Unfortunately for many of the dogs, they will be moved to other housing areas that continue to provide an anxiety-inducing living experience.

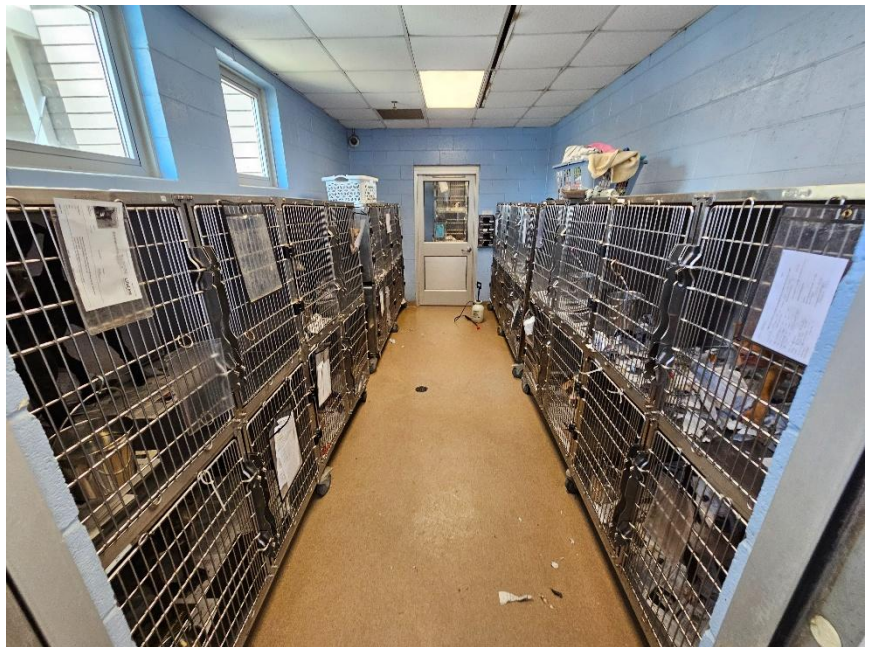
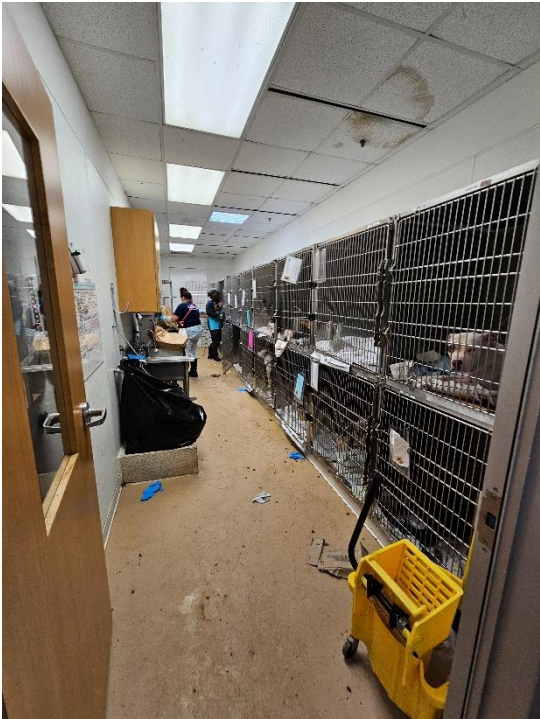
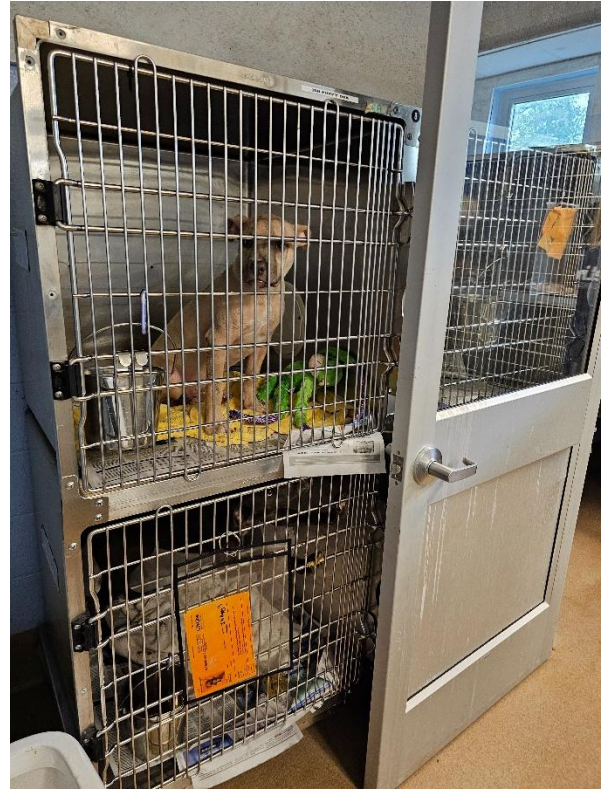
Some of the housing areas on the public side of the facility that are not ideal housing for animals include:

The Isolation Puppies Room (#48) is poorly designed, with stainless steel cages lined along the exterior walls. Cages facing each other in the main aisle are only 80 inches apart, while those along the back wall are just 54 inches from the cages in the aisle. Given that respiratory droplets from a sneeze can travel between 10 and 30 feet, this room is at a high risk for the spread of diseases such as upper respiratory infections or canine influenza. Additionally, the noise levels in this room are concerning, with the evaluator recording sounds exceeding 112 dBA for extended periods.

Many of the dog bonding rooms are inadequately sized to accommodate the number of dogs placed in them. Issues like doors opening directly into the cages, animals stacked three high, and the loud noises from barking dogs or people entering the room can jeopardize the mental and physical well-being of the animals housed in these areas.

Twenty-nine percent of the animal housing on the public side and **fifty-four percent** on the non-public side are **compromised and unsuitable for maintaining the mental and physical health of the animals**. Keeping animals in these conditions raises serious concerns about whether LAP is merely warehousing them.

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Facility Maintenance

DeKalb County Facilities Maintenance is responsible for providing maintenance to the building. Lifeline must submit a work order which is done through the County's Intranet Portal.

Common areas in the public section of the shelter, including hallway floors, windows, ledges, and windowsills, are cleaned by Cleanstar National, Inc. Cleanstar is a janitorial service and commercial cleaning company based in Atlanta, GA. Unfortunately, Cleanstar's cleaning and sanitation practices do not meet the standards required for an animal shelter. In fact, many of Cleanstar's methods may actually increase the likelihood of disease and pathogen transmission within the shelter. Cleanstar staff were observed multiple times stepping in and spreading animal waste (feces and urine) throughout the building on the soles of their shoes or with a broom or mop.



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Facility Size

The total square footage of the building is unknown despite requests of LAP leadership and DeKalb County officials.

* It is troubling and unacceptable that the CEO of LAP is unaware of the square footage of the building used to house animals. Providing adequate housing for animals depends on ensuring a specific amount of square footage per animal. Having and utilizing this knowledge is crucial for delivering care and housing that meets industry best practices. It is evident from this evaluation that the CEO of LAP is not providing adequate housing conditions for the animals in its care.

Shelter Environment

The animal shelter environment and its perception by the general public are influenced by various factors. Some of the most significant factors, although not exclusive, include:

- Size of animal housing
- Quantity of animals being housed
- Lighting
- Odors
- Temperature
- Flow into, around, and out of the building
- Physical condition of floors, walls, and ceiling"
- Cleanliness
- Orderliness

By examining each area by function (as described under Shelter Interior), the evaluator rated each area using the following scale:

Good	Green
Fair	Yellow
Poor	Red
Unacceptable	Dark Red

For cells that are split into two fields, the first color represents the worst condition in the range, while the second color represents the best condition. For example, the lighting on the non-public side ranges from unacceptable to fair. The non-public side consists of multiple rooms. Room #63, the Isolation Puppies Room, uses dimly lit fluorescent lights (unacceptable), while the Isolation Dog area has brighter fluorescent lights. However, fluorescent lighting and lack of natural lighting are not ideal conditions for animals in a shelter environment.

Area	Public		Non-public
Size of animal housing	Green		Red
Quantity of animals being housed	Yellow	Green	Dark Red
Lighting	Yellow	Green	Red
Odors	Yellow		Red
Temperature	Green		Green
Flow into, around, and out of the building	Yellow	Green	Red
Physical condition of floors, walls, ceiling	Yellow	Green	Red
Cleanliness	Red	Green	Red
Orderliness	Red	Green	Red

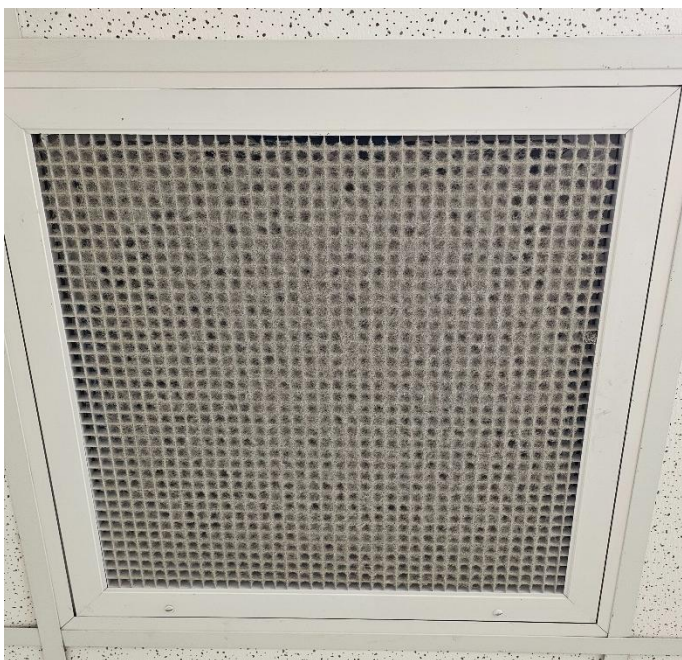
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HVAC

Temperatures inside the building, while it does feel cold for human visitors (as noted by the number of staff who wore long sleeve shirts or hoodies underneath their company t-shirts) are within the acceptable range for animal housing. (Please see *Temperature Readings* later in this section.)

The one area that the evaluator consistently observed throughout the building was the filthy ceiling grilles and filters. Staff states that filters are changed every quarter, but conditions inside an animal shelter warrant that filters be changed at least once a month, if not more frequently. The ceiling grilles must also be cleaned and sanitized to prevent the spread of harmful pathogens.

Clogged filters decrease the efficiency of an HVAC system. Pathogens accumulate and circulate throughout the air system, placing all animals and people at risk for disease transmission and inhalation of contaminated air.



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Surfaces & Drainage

While the majority of dog housing areas had adequate drainage in both their individual kennel and in the walkways in front of their kennels, there were notable exceptions.

Those exceptions are:

- Dogs housed in units placed in the adoptions hallway,
- Dogs housed in the two-story stainless steel cage systems in #41, 43, 44, 46, 48, 77, 78, 79, 80
- Dogs housed in #63

The evaluator also observed liquids pooling in various spots throughout the dog housing areas, meaning the floors are not properly sloped. Most pathogens prefer a moist environment, and if they happen to have slipped past the chemical disinfectant and mechanical removal, they will happily persist for hours or days in a damp area.

Fatal bacterial pathogens have been found in pools of water that lingered in kennels, even after thorough cleaning and disinfection. In one shelter outbreak, these pathogens were detected in the disinfectant dispensing system itself. It's crucial to pay close attention to drying surfaces that are uneven, as water can pool even after using a squeegee. This concern is heightened in humid climates, where evaporation may be slow. To ensure effective sanitation, it's essential to provide drying tools, such as squeegees, towels, and paper towels, along with proper training on how to use them.

Sound Readings



Sound Control in an animal shelter is a major concern since dog barking can produce loud decibel (dBA) levels which can induce stress in dogs and cats, as well as reduce the amount of time a person may visit animals in their housing area.

Sound readings in cat rooms ranged from a low of 41 dBA to a high of 76 dBA. High readings occurred when an individual entered the room and the door closed or when dogs could be heard barking in their housing areas.

Readings in dog areas ranged from a low of 55 dBA when no one was in the room and there was not any activity, to a high of 114 dBA. High decibel readings typically were the result of a person entering the dog housing area and one dog reacting which initiated a chain reaction causing many, if not all, dogs in that area to bark.

The design (materials, shape, and proximity to hard surfaces) as well as quantity of dogs and propensity to bark all play a major factor in sound readings in a room. There were several dog housing areas in the non-public side of the shelter that had consistently high and prolonged decibel readings that make these rooms either unacceptable or highly questionable as areas to house as many dogs as are currently being housed.

Dogs being housed in #63, 77, 78, 79, 80. **These rooms are not designed to house a large quantity of dogs, nor should they.**

Dogs in these areas are constantly exposed to activity that triggers “chain reaction barking” with readings in the 110+ dBA for prolonged periods of time. These intermittent periods of barking last throughout an entire 12-hour day. These high noise levels result in many dogs housed at DCAS being highly agitated, stressed, and fearful, which manifests into undesirable behavioral and physical issues*.

** Physical health: Stress can increase the risk of heart, respiratory, gastrointestinal, and skin conditions. It can also lead to slowed wound healing and susceptibility to infection.*

Mental health: Stress can lead to anxiety, which can cause behavioral issues like excessive barking, destructive behavior, and pacing.

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Temperature Readings

Per AVMA recommendations for dogs and cats, the ambient temperature is above 60 degrees Fahrenheit and below 80 degrees Fahrenheit, with the relative humidity between 30-70%.

The evaluator took both ambient room temperature and surface temperature reading throughout the entire facility and found the ranges as follows:

The range of room temperature in animal housing areas ranged from a low of 70 degrees Fahrenheit to a high of 73 degrees Fahrenheit.

The range of relative humidity in animal housing areas ranged from a low of 50% to a high of 56%.

The range of surface temperature ranged from a low of 64 degrees Fahrenheit to a high of 72 degrees Fahrenheit.

All temperature readings and humidity levels were within the acceptable range to house animals.

It should be noted that Lifeline does not control the room temperature, which is set, maintained, and controlled by the County. This would only be a concern if there were an issue with temperatures outside the acceptable range and the County was not responsive promptly.

PART III. Operations

- Hours of operation
- Policies, procedures & practices
- Funding/budget
- Organizational structure, staffing, & management
- Staff training, compensation, benefits
- Job descriptions, goals & expectations
- Retention, recognition, & discipline
- Uniforms
- Fees, money-handling, accounting, forms
- Software & record-keeping
- Programs & services
- Customer-service
- Emergency Procedures & planning
- Animal intake (procedures & identification)
- Lost & Found
- Adoptions
- Statistical data
- Occupational Safety & Health standards & compliance

Hours of Operations

DeKalb County Animal Services is open to the public seven-(7) days a week, excluding government holidays*.

Day	Open	Close	Hours
MON	11:00 AM	7:00 PM	8.0
TUE	11:00 AM	7:00 PM	8.0
WED	11:00 AM	7:00 PM	8.0
THUJ	11:00 AM	7:00 PM	8.0
FRI	11:00 AM	7:00 PM	8.0
SAT	11:00 AM	7:00 PM	8.0
SUN	11:00 AM	7:00 PM	8.0
TOTAL # OF HOURS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC			56.0

*DCAS is closed to the public in observance of the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

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United States Counties with population sizes comparable to that of DeKalb County:

County	State	Population
Jefferson	Kentucky	772,144
Suffolk	Massachusetts	768,425
DeKalb	Georgia	762,992
Monroe	New York	748,482
El Paso	Colorado	744,215

Louisville Metro Animal Services (Jefferson County, KY)

Day	Open	Close	Hours
MON	12	6	6.0
TUE	12	6	6.0
WED	12	6	6.0
THUJ	12	6	6.0
FRI	12	7	7.0
SAT	12	6	6.0
SUN	12	6	6.0
TOTAL # OF HOURS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC			43.0

Animal Rescue League of Boston (Suffolk County, MS)

Day	Open	Close	Hours
MON	CLOSED		0.0
TUE	1	6	5.0
WED	1	6	5.0
THUJ	1	6	5.0
FRI	1	7	5.0
SAT	1	6	5.0
SUN	1	6	5.0
TOTAL # OF HOURS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC			30.0

** visits on Tuesday are by appointment only*

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Rochester Animal Services (Monroe County, NY)

Day	Open	Close	Hours
MON	12	4	4.0
TUE	12	4	4.0
WED	12	4	4.0
THUJ	12	4	4.0
FRI	12	4	4.0
SAT	12	4	4.0
SUN	12	4	4.0
TOTAL # OF HOURS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC			28.0

El Paso Animal Services (El Paso County, CO)

Day	Open	Close	Hours
MON	11	6	7.0
TUE	11	6	7.0
WED	11	6	7.0
THUJ	11	6	7.0
FRI	11	7	7.0
SAT	11	6	7.0
SUN	11	6	7.0
TOTAL # OF HOURS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC			49.0

	Organization Name	County	Total Hours/Week
1	Lifeline Animal Project	DeKalb, GA	56.0
2	El Paso Animal Services	El Paso, CO	49.0
3	Louisville Animal Services	Jefferson, KY	43.0
4	Animal Rescue League	Suffolk, MS	30.0
5	Rochester Animal Services	Monroe, NY	28.0

	Average		41.2
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LAP (DCAS) offers the most available hours of operation.

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Policies, Procedures, and Practices

Shelter operations at DCAS are guided by seven documents:

- 17-page Lifeline Animal Project *Employee Policy Manual*
- 36-page Lifeline Animal Project *Standard Operating Procedures Manual*
- 26-page *Intake Department Training Manual*
- 22-page *Animal Care Specialist Training Manual*
- 28-page *Placement Department Training Manual*
- 16-page *Community Support Training Manual*
- *Lost-Found Intake Adoption Procedures*

The *Employee Policy Manual* is a comprehensive document that provides clear reference for expectations covering items from an employee's workplace conduct to benefits to legal compliance. This document is typically used to create consistency in performance and protect the company from potential legal issues by defining employee rights and responsibilities. The Table of Contents for the LAP manual covers Employment Policies, Expectations and Standards, Work Environment, Pay-Related Information, as well as Benefits. This document was last revised July 2014.

Although this document contains a section titled "C. Safety and Health", the manual makes no reference to the Safety Data Sheets ("SDS"). SDS are documents that provide information on how to safely handle, store, and use a hazardous chemical or substance. Given the amount of chemicals, stored at and handled by staff, as well as the potential for exposure and consequences of exposure, we highly recommend this section be revised with reference to SDS and how they can be accessed.

The *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* is a documented set of instructions outlining the exact steps an employee needs to take to complete a task consistently, efficiently, and safely. They also help maintain uniformity when the same task is performed by different employees. The Table of Contents for the SOP covers 20 different areas:

- Hours of Operation
- Animal Intake
- Housing Decisions After Intake
- Limiting Transmission of Disease
- Animal Care While at DCAS
- Spay/Neuter Surgery
- Disposition of Animals
- Adoptions
- Return to Home (RTH)
- Shelter-Neuter-Return
- Rescue Transfers
- Euthanasia
- Volunteer Program
- Foster Program
- Records Retention
- Personal Safety
- Animal Handling Safety
- Animal Bite Procedures
- Client Services
- In-Kind Donations

While many of the written policies and manuals align with industry best practices, the actual implementation often deviates from the instructions.

The section titled "*Euthanasia*" includes a crucial rule stating, "The euthanasia room doors shall remain closed at all times when euthanasia is being performed."

Unfortunately, the evaluator observed a situation where the employees performing euthanasia left the euthanasia room door open, with controlled substances in syringe needles left on the table. This practice is unacceptable and could have serious negative consequences for Lifeline and its employees.

The section titled *Personal Safety* lists several rules that are mandatory:

- “Listening to headphones or wearing Bluetooth devices is not allowed at any time. All employees must be able to hear their surroundings in case of an emergency.” The evaluator observed six employees wearing Bluetooth earbuds while working. Additionally, some employees left radios on in animal areas, playing loud and non-relaxing music for the animals. This rule is not being enforced
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) as described below: goggles, safety glasses, and gloves must be worn when working with chemicals...” The evaluator observed a situation in which an employee, who was not wearing any type of eye protection, had Rescue Disinfectant splash into his eyes. He was able to use the Eye Rinse Station to rinse out his eye. However, the employee, his supervisor were NOT familiar with the Safety Data Sheets and did not know how to handle the situation. (The evaluator intervened and consulted the SDS and reported the situation to management so they would be aware of the risk to the employee.) This is a considerable risk and liability to the organization.
- “Report all injuries to your supervisor immediately.” (See situation described above. Although the employees supervisor was aware of the situation, the supervisor was unable to offer any meaningful assistance to the employee and her inability to seek help or support from her supervisor, placed this employee at risk.

The section titled *Hazards and Hazardous Substances* lists several non-specific rules that are general in nature. For example, “Report all hazards to a supervisor immediately,” should be expanded to list examples of hazards. The bullet point reference to Safety Data Sheets should be expanded to explain the importance of SDS and when and how to utilize them, as well as how to respond in an emergency situation.

Although the SOP contains a section titled *Animal Handling Safety*, it was obvious from observing both employees and volunteers at DCAS over the four-day on-site visit, that animal handling is a vulnerable spot for Personal Safety as well as for proper care of animals in the care of Lifeline Animal Project. The evaluator observed numerous situations in which an employee did not properly restrain/pick-up/handle an animal which compromised the safety of both.

The manual also includes the following Appendices:

- DCAS Intake Procedures Manual
- DCAS Animal Care Manual
- Shelter Dog Play Group Manual
- DCAS Placement Manual
- Community Support Manual
- Volunteer Manual
- Dog Foster Manual
- Cat Foster Manual
- Community Service Program SOP
- Safety Net Foster
- How to Break Up a Dog Fight
- Animal Handling Safety
- Shelter Clinic to CAC Clinic Transfer Protocol
- Enrichment Protocol
- Foster Adoption Protocol
- DCAS to CAC Transfer Protocol
- Notice of Impoundment Letter Sample
- Digital Medical Write-Up Form
- Behavior Write-Up Form
- Lifeline In-Kind Donation Form

NOTE: The printed Appendices (in red above) were not included as part of the document request and therefore could not be reviewed nor evaluated.

The *Intake Department Training Manual* is a comprehensive document provides instruction on the cleaning and sanitation practices, the care, handling, and feeding of animals, and the intake processing of animals upon entering DCAS. The Table of Contents for the manual covers Roles and Responsibilities, Types of Intakes, Physical Intake, Data Entry, Sanitation and Upkeep, Resources and an Appendix titled “Animal Leveling Criteria (<this document was not received as part of the Information Request).

Although the *Dog Intake* section of the Manual is, “on paper”, sound and thorough, the actual environment where the Intake examinations are being conducted is far from an environment that minimizes stress to the animals. The exam room is in such close proximity to the Intake kennels that the room can often be filled with high decibel barking (85 dBA and above) emanating from the adjacent room, which is further exacerbated by staff playing stress-inducing music at loud volumes. **In addition to the noise, the evaluator found that staff regularly enter this room when exams are taking place which adds to the noise and activity for an animal in an unknown environment. Lifeline Animal Project is not providing or maintain an environment that is conducive to maintaining animal health (physical, mental and emotional).** It is important, however, to recognize that the staff assigned to this area, perform their intake exams as outlined in the manual and try to do the best they can in the environment they have.

The section titled *Sanitation and Upkeep* states, “Intake staff are responsible for cleaning the intake exam room, cat and dog intake areas as well as the Sally Port.” The evaluator observed animal feces and urine on the intake exam room that was not cleaned and disinfected in a timely manner, resulting in staff members stepping in and spreading animal waste to other areas of the shelter. This is a significant risk due to the transmission of harmful pathogens and the risk of a disease or viral outbreak.

The section titled *Disinfectant/Detergent Application* could benefit by explaining the difference between a detergent and a disinfectant, and why both are so important to a clean and sanitary shelter environment.

We recommend that Lifeline Animal Project invest in providing hands on training for all staff, which will further increase their animal handling ability as outlined in the section titled *Animal Handling Methods*.

While the manual does include a section on *Body Condition Scores*, staff shared that they did not apply this to animal files or notes. The body condition score is critical to understanding an animal’s health, especially if it stays in the shelter system for an extended period of time.

The *Animal Care Specialist Training Manual* is a comprehensive document providing instruction on the cleaning and sanitation of animal cages and kennels, feeding and medicating animals, and the walking, training and enrichment of animals. The Table of Contents for the manual covers Roles and Responsibilities, Dog Kennel Daily Duties, Cat Care Daily Duties, Feeding, Cleaning, Medication, and Resources (with 8 sub categories).

While the section titled *Feeding*, instructs proper feeding practices, the evaluator did observe that between 25-50% of animals in the shelter, particularly those in the non-public side of the building had loose or wet stool that would score between 4-7 on the fecal scoring scale (please reference chart on page (xx +2). Dog feces that score a 6 or 7, is extremely hard to clean and sanitize, and transmits far easier. The evaluator observed staff stepping in (a 6/7-rated) feces/urine and then transmitting that feces/urine on the soles of their boots throughout the facility. The facility is at high risk for transmission of a disease or virus because of its poor cleaning and sanitation practices.

Many pets are fed a mush, some staff refer to as “meatballs” which is a combination of water with wet dog food mixed with dry dog food and formed into meatballs. The evaluator questions whether the wet food is the primary reason for so much loose and wet stool at DCAS. All animals should be fed the best quality diet the shelter can afford, appropriate to the life stage of the animal. Good quality diets are generally more costly, but are more readily digestible, and tends to produce less stool volume and better consistency, making clean-up easier and the environment more pleasant for visitors.

The Feeding practices at DCAS may be the primary reason behind the challenges and difficulty staff has with Kennel Cleaning. On paper, the *Cleaning* section is appropriate. It is the application of such practices, and likely the Feeding practices, that are having a profound impact on cleaning.

The section titled "*Administering Medication*" is very general in its description and could benefit greatly from providing more specific instructions on this practice. One concerning issue is that medications are placed in an animal's food, which is then placed inside a paper tray and given to the animal in its kennel or cage. The problem is that on different days, the food trays with the medication are being collected and thrown away without the animal consuming the medication. This has been observed by several volunteers and a few staff members for a long time. This practice puts the animals at greater risk of not recovering from their ailments and is also a waste of financial resources.



SCORE	SPECIMEN EXAMPLE	CHARACTERISTICS
1		· Very hard and dry · Often expelled as individual pellets · Requires much effort to expel from body · Leaves no residue on ground when picked up
2	IDEAL 	· Firm, but not hard, pliable · Segmented in appearance · Little or no residue on ground when picked up
3		· Log shaped, moist surface · Little or no visible segmentation · Leaves residue on ground, but holds form when picked up
4		· Very moist and soggy · Log shaped · Leaves residue on ground and loses form when picked up
5		· Very moist but has a distinct shape · Present in piles rather than logs · Leaves residue on ground and loses form when picked up
6		· Has texture, but no defined shape · Present as piles or spots · Leaves residue on ground when picked up
7		· Watery · No texture · Present in flat puddles

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The *Placement Department Training Manual* is a collection of quasi-job descriptions that provide an overview and daily tasks for various positions responsible for the placement of animals. The Table of Contents for the manual covers Uniforms and Break Procedures, Placement Manager, Adoption Supervisor, Adoption Counselor, Volunteer Coordinator, Rescue Coordinator, Foster Supervisor, Dog Foster Coordinator, Cat Foster Coordinator, Cat Care Coordinator, Photographer & Social Media Coordinator, and Client Care Ambassador.

Funding/Budget

The only financial statements provided were a *2023 Profit & Loss Budget vs Actual* and one page of the *AES Budget for Fund 100, Dept 04200*. A profit & loss is a financial statement that provides a snapshot of how much an organization is making (revenue) compared to how much is being spent (costs and expenses). Simply put, the P&L shows LAP's business revenue minus costs and expenses, for the calendar year 2023.

We highly recommend DeKalb County **consider having a forensic audit performed on Lifeline Animal Project's financials (as afforded under the Contract, Article Iv. General Conditions, D. Right to Audit.)** The primary reason is to examine if there is commingling of funds

Commingling of funds is the act of mixing funds that belong to one party with funds that belong to another party. Commingling of funds is the act of mixing funds that belong to one party with funds that belong to another party. Commingling can lead to legal and ethical problems and can obscure the line between what belongs to one party and what belongs to another

Several factors raise suspicion over the commingling of funds:

1. Lifeline holds two separate contracts with two separate counties for the provision of animal shelter operations. Funds from the operations of one county are not to be used for the operations of another county, or for the benefit of LAP.
2. Lifeline maintains its own operations (Community Adoption Center) while also managing two other buildings (DeKalb and Fulton County)
3. Animals are transferred into, and out of, DeKalb County Animal Shelter to the Lifeline Community Adoption Center. The CEO of LAP verbalized that there is an exchange of funds between the two separate entities, but financial documentation was not provided.
4. Other operational areas – such as the provision of marketing and media services, have the potential of fund utilization from one county to another, or to benefit the work of the Community Adoption Center.

Nationally, the operating budgets for animal shelters typically range from \$350 to \$600 per animal. However, DCAS has an exceptionally high cost of \$786.54 per animal. This means that **LAP is managing DCAS at a cost per animal that is 31% higher than the maximum average, indicating significant inefficiency.**

Organizational Structure, Staffing and Management

Lifeline Animal Projects employs 89 people to operate the DeKalb County Animal Services. 88 of the employees are dedicated to DCAS, while the CEO of LAP works at another location and splits her time and duties between three organizations/locations (DeKalb County Animal Services, Fulton County Animal Services, and Lifeline Animal Project).

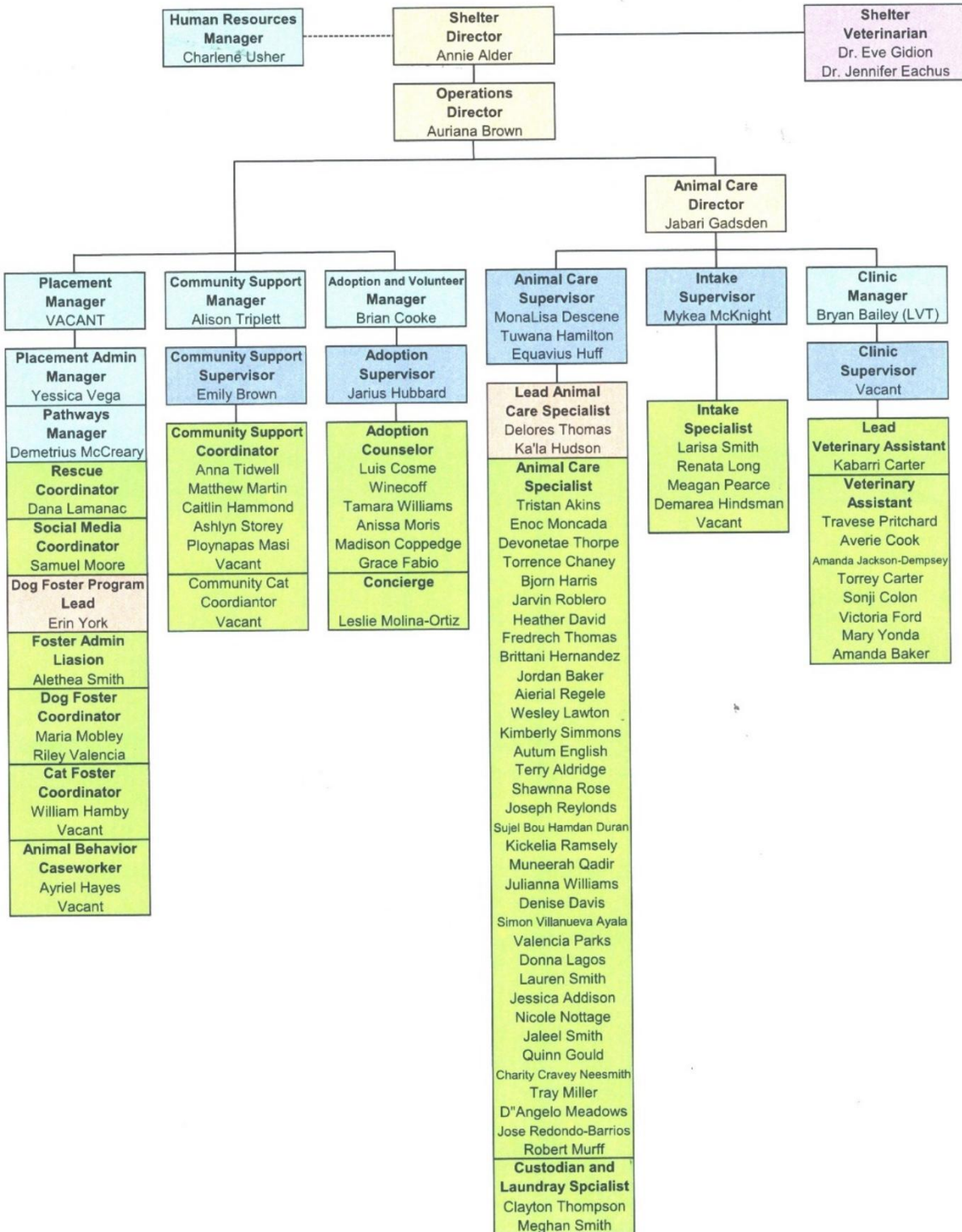
Employees by department are as follows:

	Department	# Employees
1	Administration	3
2	Community Support	7
3	Placement	13
4	Foster	6
5	Animal Care	47
6	Shelter Medicine	12

An organizational chart for DCAS appears on the following page.

DCAS Organizational Chart

1-4



Staff Training

Staff are trained according to their specific roles through manuals, policies, and on-the-job training provided by department supervisors. However, many staff members have reported that their on-the-job training primarily involved working alongside others who hold the same job title and learning from them. Some even mentioned not receiving any formal training at all. Observations by the evaluator confirmed that many Animal Care Staff members were not adhering to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). In fact, several practices at DCAS pose risks to the health and safety of both animals and people, and compromise the cleanliness and sanitation of the facility.

The inappropriate practices among animal care workers are worsened by the lack of active management from department supervisors. This situation arises because supervisors are overwhelmed with their own numerous tasks. In fact, the entire operation of DCAS is burdened by an excessive workload, leading to insufficient time and staff to effectively manage responsibilities.

Compensation and Benefits

The compensation of employees at LAP ranges from an entry-level worker (i.e. Animal Care Specialist, Foster Administrative Liaison, Adoption Counselor) at \$33,280/year to a highly professional position (i.e. Veterinarian) at \$135,000/year.

Entry-level salaries are very competitive with other similar entry-level salaries in DeKalb County.

Employer	Position	Annual Salary
Target	Guest Advocate	\$ 33,280
Wal-Mart	Stocker	\$ 29,120
McDonald's	Crew Team Member	\$ 31,200

In addition to basic and supplemental insurances, LAP also offers:

- Paid time off for full- and part-time employees,
- Excused, unpaid time off
- Eight paid holidays
- A retirement plan (401k) after one year of employment
- Employee referral bonus program
- ZayZoon pay advance services
- Purina for Professionals discount program for pet supplies
- Discount pet adoptions
- Free wellness veterinary care and discount sick/injured care
- Discount pet care through our VAC partners
- Paid CE for Veterinarians and Licensed Veterinary Technicians

Benefits are competitive with other similar entry-level salaries in DeKalb County.

Job Descriptions, Goals & Expectations

Only four job descriptions were provided:

1. Shelter Veterinarian
2. Clinic Supervisor
3. Clinic Lead
4. Animal Shelter Veterinary Assistant

Job descriptions typically follow a standard format consisting of 10 sections, as outlined below:

- Position
- Department
- Reports to
- Summary
- Essential Job Functions
- Qualifications
- Education and/or Experience
- Language Skills
- Certifications, Licenses, Registrations
- Work Environment

The job descriptions provided are adequate as long as all positions have a description. Individual goals and expectations were not clearly defined. Most staff interviewed were unaware of their objectives beyond task completion. Some staff expressed uncertainty about the evaluation process and their eligibility for pay increases. The orientation and onboarding may need to be reexamined if many staff members are confused about expectations and performance evaluations.

The only goals the evaluator received were *Financial Goals and Objectives* which list three goals:

#1 Reduce animal intake at the shelter by 5%

#2 Reduce cruelty/neglect cases by 5%.

#3 Employee Development – Create a Highly Skilled & Diverse Workforce.

The evaluator has reason to believe that there may be additional areas with goals and objectives that were not provided for this evaluation, and the staff may not be aware of their existence. Goals and objectives are essential for an organization as they provide clear direction and purpose. They align everyone's efforts toward a shared vision, motivate employees, enable performance measurement, and facilitate resource allocation. Ultimately, these factors contribute to the organization's success and growth. If goals and objectives are lacking at the organizational, departmental, or individual employee levels, it is highly recommended that LAP develop them.

Retention, Recognition and Discipline, and Recognition

Employee retention is crucial for an animal shelter as it leads to increased productivity, higher employee engagement, improved morale, reduced staffing costs, a stronger company culture, and possibly even increased revenue.

The average length of employment at DCAS by department:

Rank	Department	# Employees	Avg Length of Employment
1	Administration	3	5y 0m
3	Community Support	7	1y 6m
5	Placement	13	10m
6	Foster	6	6m
4	Animal Care	47	1y 1m
2	Shelter Medicine	12	2y 0m

The *Employee Policy Manual* does not have a section outlining the Disciplinary process at LAP. The only two references about discipline are:

Part III. Expectations and Standards, *Any employee who exhibits such behavior will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.*

And

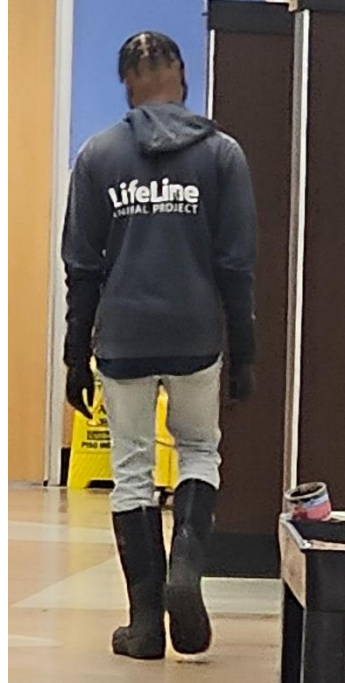
Part II. Employment Policy, A. A. Employment-At-Will, *Georgia is an employment-at-will state. Employment with LifeLine is at-will. This means that neither you nor the organization has entered into a contract regarding the duration of employment. You are free to terminate employment at any time, with or without reason. Likewise, LifeLine has the right to terminate any employee, or otherwise discipline, transfer, or demote him/her at any time, with or without reason, at the discretion of the organization.*

The *Employee Policy Manual* does not have a section outlining Recognition at LAP.

Section E. Performance of the *Employee Policy* defines the process for formal performance assessments as, *As a part of LifeLine’s formal performance assessment, you can expect to receive written evaluations from your immediate supervisor. An initial performance evaluation will be completed after three months of continuous employment. Thereafter, evaluations will be completed each year.*

Uniforms

The *Employee Policy Manual* does not have a section outlining Uniforms. However, staff does wear Lifeline branded T-shirts.



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Fees, Money handling, Accounting, Forms

The list of fees below is similar to what other comparable shelters charge. While some individual fees may be lower than those of other comparable shelters, others are higher. However, all fees are within the expected range.



FEE SCHEDULE

Description Fee Service	Fee
Impoundment	
Impounded – altered	\$ 30.00
Impounded - unaltered	\$ 60.00
Impounded Livestock	\$ 30.00
Impounded Livestock with trailer	\$ 65.00
Surrender fee residents and non-residents	\$ 35.00
Boarding per day	
Domestic	\$ 10.00
Livestock	\$ 15.00
Quarantine – flat fee	\$ 200.00
Animal Trap - refundable	\$ 20.00
Adoption	
Dogs	\$ 85.00
Cats	\$ 65.00
Dogs over 7 years old	\$ 40.00
Adoption of dog or cat to person over 55 years old	\$ 40.00
Registration	
Registration altered animal	\$ 10.00
Registration altered animal three (3) year	\$ 25.00
Registration unaltered animal	\$ 25.00
Registration unaltered animal three (3) year	\$ 60.00
Late registration ** more than 60 days	\$ 10.00
No proof of rabies vaccination	\$ 10.00
Dangerous animal	\$ 250.00
Potentially Dangerous animal	\$ 250.00
Vet administrative fee per registration	\$ 1.50

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The *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* does not have a section outlining the handling or accounting of money. There are only two references to money in the *Standard Operating Procedures Manual*: page 15 discusses the collection of adoption fees, and page 17 discusses reducing or waiving fees. Otherwise, staff does not receive specific instructions about the handling or accounting of money and fees, or how to close out a register at the end of the day or the daily deposit of funds.

The *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* and any of the *Department Training Manuals* lack a section detailing the various forms, their locations, completion instructions, and filing procedures.

Software and Recordkeeping

LAP utilizes Petpoint. PetPoint is a cloud-based data management system that helps animal welfare organizations manage shelter operations. It's designed to help track animals, including how they enter care, their details, and their care and outcome. PetPoint is a top 10 animal management system in the U.S.

The *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* has one page (27) dedicated to Records Retention.

Programs and Services

In addition to the basic care, feeding, housing, and adoption of animals, Lifeline Animal Project offers the following programs and services to the operations of DeKalb County Animal Services:

1. Lost & Found Animal Services and Support
2. Housing of Impounded Animals (from Animal Enforcement Services)
3. Pet Licensing
4. Rehoming Support ^
5. Take 48 Program ^
6. Friendly Finder ^
7. Pet Food Bank
8. Shelter-Neuter-Return
9. Transfer to Rescue Partners
10. Foster Program
11. Pets for Patriots
12. Volunteer Program

^ Intake Diversion Program

There are additional programs and services that Lifeline Animal Project offers that are outside the contractual services, and therefore not listed here.

The current number of programs and services provided by LAP is appropriate for the community's size. However, due to ongoing concerns regarding many of its core operational services, LAP must prioritize addressing and strengthening these areas.

Customer Service

Customer service is crucial for an animal shelter because it directly impacts their ability to find homes for animals by creating a positive experience for potential adopters, encouraging them to return and recommend the shelter to others, ultimately leading to more successful adoptions and fewer animals remaining in the shelter.

The evaluator observed the staff during in-person interactions and phone calls. Overall, the customer service provided was generally good to excellent. However, there were a few instances where a staff member seemed short or curt with a shelter visitor.

Emergency Procedures and Planning

None.

Statistical Data

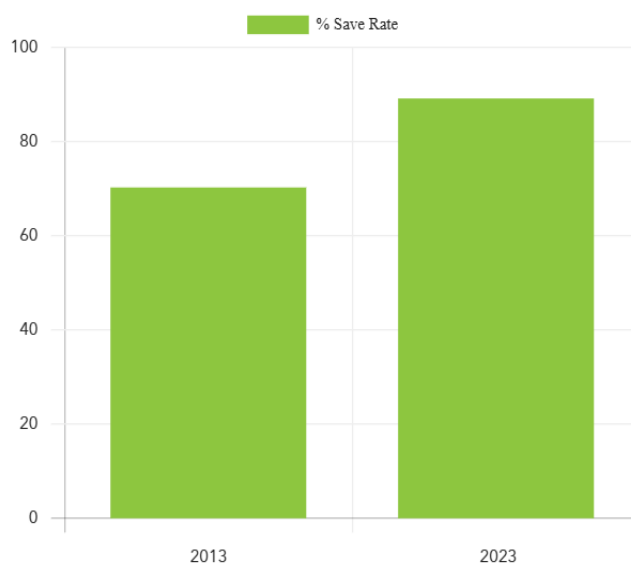
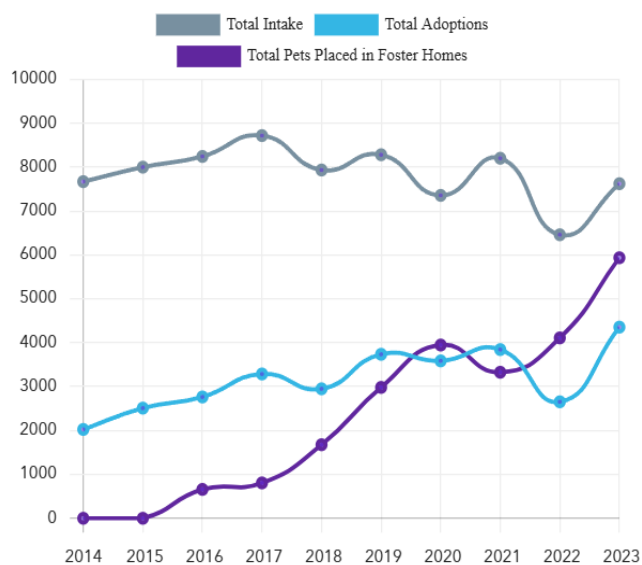
The only data sets that DeKalb County Animal Services publishes appears on the following webpages:

1. <https://dekalbanimalservices.com/at-risk/>

This page will publish the *current dog population* (updated daily) as well as the *target goal*.

2. <https://dekalbanimalservices.com/about/>

LifeLine, which has been managing the animal shelter at DCAS since 2013, made history in 2019 by saving over 90% of all animals for the first time ever. This is thanks to our amazing community of pet lovers, adopters, fosters, volunteers and donors. 90% and above is the national no-kill benchmark. However, LifeLine's focus isn't about achieving a specific number or percentage, it's about saving every healthy and treatable animal and making decisions that are best for every individual pet that comes into care.



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Occupational Safety & Health Standards and Compliance

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is important because it ensures that employees have safe and healthy working conditions:

- **Sets standards:** OSHA sets and enforces standards to protect workers from hazards. For example, OSHA requires employers to provide medical and exposure records for workers.
- **Provides training:** OSHA offers training, education, and assistance to help employers comply with OSHA standards.
- **Enforces anti-retaliation:** OSHA enforces the anti-retaliation provisions of the OSH Act and other federal whistleblower laws.
- **Protects workers' rights:** OSHA protects workers' rights, such as the right to refuse unsafe tasks.
- **Reduces injuries and illnesses:** OSHA focuses its resources on reducing injuries, illnesses, and deaths in the workplace.
- **Increases employee productivity:** A healthy working environment can lead to increased employee productivity

A Safety Data Sheet (SDS) is a document that provides information about the safe handling of a chemical or hazardous substance:

- **Purpose:** SDSs are used to inform workers and emergency personnel about the proper procedures for handling or working with a chemical.
- **Content:** SDSs include information such as physical data, toxicity, health effects, first aid, reactivity, storage, disposal, protective equipment, and spill/leak procedures.
- **Who prepares them:** SDSs are produced by the manufacturer or importer of the chemical.
- **Availability:** SDSs should be available for every chemical or product used in the work area. They can be saved and accessed as physical or electronic copies.
- **Updates:** SDSs are routinely updated by the manufacturer or supplier, so it's important to have the most recent version on hand.
- **History:** SDSs were formerly known as Material Safety Data Sheets

As described on page xx, there was a situation involving an employee's exposure to a chemical substance that highlighted LAP's uncertainty in responding appropriately. This represents a significant risk and liability for LAP.

PART IV. Animals

- Animal handling
- Capacity for care
- Feeding & nutrition
- Population management & inventory
- Animal records
- Cleaning & sanitation
- Viral & disease control and containment
- Animal housing conditions (including temperature & humidity readings)
- Animal enrichment & well-being
- Behavior evaluations
- Fostering
- Adoptions (including off-site adoptions)
- Lost & Found
- Animal transfer & transport
- Animal control activities
- Animal inventory

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Animal Handling

Animal handling is crucial for an animal shelter because it directly impacts the well-being of the animals in their care, promoting their physical and mental health, increasing their adoptability by reducing stress and fear, and ensuring the safety of both staff and potential adopters by managing animal behavior through proper handling techniques.

Key reasons why proper animal handling is important in a shelter:

Reduces stress and anxiety

Animals in shelters are often already stressed due to their environment and separation from their previous homes; good handling practices can minimize further distress by understanding their body language and using calming techniques.

Improves adoptability

A well-handled animal is more likely to appear friendly and approachable to potential adopters, leading to a higher chance of finding a permanent home.

Enhances health and welfare

Proper handling allows for easier veterinary care, monitoring of health conditions, and the ability to identify potential behavioral issues.

Staff safety

Knowing how to appropriately restrain and handle animals prevents injuries to shelter staff and volunteers.

Socialization and training opportunities

Positive interactions through proper handling can help socialize animals and prepare them for life in a new home by teaching basic commands.

Behavioral assessment

Skilled handlers can observe an animal's behavior during handling to better understand their temperament and identify potential issues.

Important aspects of good animal handling in a shelter:

- **Understanding animal behavior:** Recognizing signs of fear, aggression, and stress in different species.
- **Positive reinforcement techniques:** Using rewards and praise to encourage desired behaviors
- **Gentle restraint methods:** Applying appropriate pressure and control to minimize discomfort
- **Respecting personal space:** Giving animals the opportunity to retreat if needed
- **Consistent handling:** Maintaining a routine to help animals feel secure

During the four-day on-site evaluation, the evaluator observed that several staff members from different departments had difficulty handling, leashing, and walking dogs, particularly larger ones or those that were highly stimulated. In some instances, the evaluator was concerned that either the dog or the staff member could have been injured. The two areas of greatest concern that LAP needs to address with its staff are understanding and interpreting animal behavior, as well as developing animal handling skills and techniques.

Capacity for Care

Every animal shelter has what is referred to as a *maximum capacity for care*. The animal population in a shelter must not exceed that level. Factors that determine capacity for care include:

- the number of appropriate animal housing units;
- staffing for programs or services;
- staff training;
- average length of stay;
- total number of reclaims, adoptions, transfers, release, or other outcomes.

As one can see from the list above, many factors can impact the capacity for care. The National Animal Control Association (NACA) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS 2010) recommend **a minimum of 15 minutes of care time per day for feeding and cleaning each animal housed in the shelter** (9 minutes for cleaning and 6 minutes for feeding).

The following chart is a breakdown of the number of animals at DCAS over four-days of the evaluation (7/10-7/13) of this evaluation period:

	Mon 9/16	Tue 9/17	Wed 9/18	Thu 9/19
All Cats	84	97	100	94
All Dogs	610	593	588	592
Total	694	690	688	686

** foster pets do not count towards total as they are not in the building*

Total amount of time needed at DCAS:

	Mon 9/16	Tue 9/17	Wed 9/18	Thu 9/19
Total Dog & Cat	694	690	688	686
x 15 minute/pet	10,410m	10,350m	10,320m	10,290m
Equivalent hours*	174h	173h	172h	172h

** rounded up*

With an average of 690 dogs and cats in the shelter per day for the period September 16-19, **a minimum of 172 – 174 hours of care is needed** just to **meet the feeding and cleaning needs of the entire dog and cat population** at DCAS for those days.

The following table is a breakdown of animal care staff who worked each of the four days

	Mon 9/16	Tue 9/17	Wed 9/18	Thu 9/19
AM shift	12	16	16	19
PM shift	9	8	8	8
Total	21	24	24	27

8 hour shifts (AM shift is 7 AM-4 PM, while PM shift is 12 PM-9 PM).

Hours needed vs staffing hours provided (AM Shift)

	Mon 9/16	Tue 9/17	Wed 9/18	Thu 9/19
Hours needed	174	173	172	172
Hours provided	96	128	128	152
Difference	-78	-45	-45	-20

Hours needed vs staffing hours provided (PM Shift)

	Mon 9/16	Tue 9/17	Wed 9/18	Thu 9/19
Hours needed	174	173	172	172
Hours provided	72	64	64	64
Difference	- 102	- 109	- 108	- 108

Both shifts

	Mon 9/16	Tue 9/17	Wed 9/18	Thu 9/19
Hours needed	174	173	172	172
Hours provided	168	192	192	216
Difference	- 6	19	20	44

It's important to note that LAP had a total of 21-27 animal care workers scheduled per day during the evaluation period. However, these workers are divided into two different shifts that overlap for four hours. Each shift is responsible for feeding and cleaning each animal housing area. As a result, **LAP is not meeting its Capacity for Care**, as animals are fed and cleaned twice per day.

If AM and PM shifts are combined, LAP meets the Capacity for Care on three out of four days, **but does not meet Capacity for Care on one day.**

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Feeding and Nutrition

As page 10 of the Standard Operating Procedures Manual states, Feeding twice daily is standard policy for all Lifeline shelters unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian.

The majority of the dog population at DCAS is fed a mix of dry and wet Purina brand dog food, while the majority of cats are fed a mix of dry and wet Purina brand cat food.



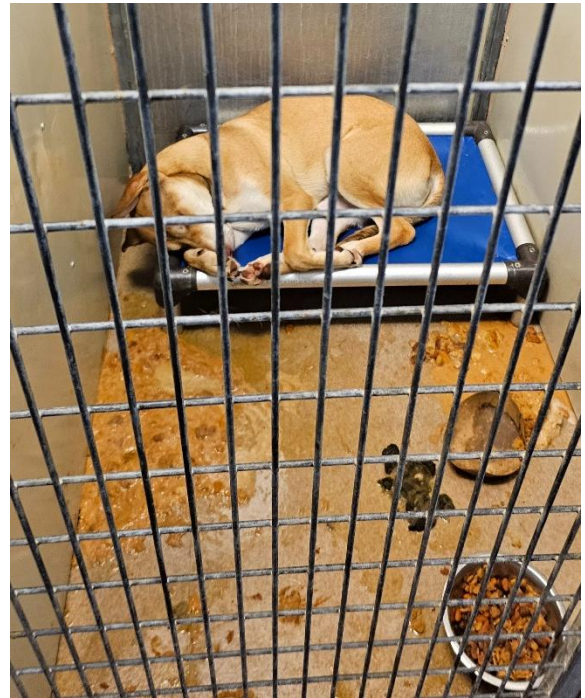
AAFCO approval

Purina claims that all of its dog food formulas meet or exceed AAFCO's nutrient profile standards.



Unfortunately, the diet provided to the dogs at DCAS is leading to a significant number of animals experiencing loose or wet stools, typically scoring between 4 and 7 on the fecal scoring scale. This issue is further worsened when dogs step in and smear feces throughout their kennels or cages.

Additionally, staff members may inadvertently step in, or even touch the mess, transferring organic waste to other surfaces. As a result, the shelter is at a high risk for an outbreak.



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Population Management & Inventory

Population management is crucial in an animal shelter because it ensures that the number of animals within the facility stays within the shelter's capacity for care, preventing overcrowding, reducing stress on animals, and maximizing the chance of finding homes for each individual by minimizing their length of stay, ultimately leading to better animal welfare and more lives saved.

Key points about population management in animal shelters:

Capacity for care

Every shelter has a limit to how many animals it can properly care for based on space, staff, and resources. Exceeding this capacity can lead to poor living conditions and compromised animal health.

Reduced length of stay

Effective population management aims to decrease the time an animal spends in the shelter, increasing their chances of adoption and minimizing stress from prolonged confinement.

Improved animal welfare

By managing population levels, shelters can provide better care and attention to each animal, ensuring their physical and mental well-being.

Increased adoption rates

When there is less overcrowding, potential adopters have a wider selection of animals to choose from, potentially leading to more successful adoptions.

Cost efficiency

Proper population management can help to reduce the overall cost of running a shelter by minimizing the need for excessive food, medical care, and staff overtime.

Strategies for population management in animal shelters:

Spay and neuter programs

The most effective way to control animal population growth is by preventing unwanted pregnancies through spaying and neutering.

Managed intake

Implementing procedures to carefully evaluate animals coming into the shelter to ensure only those truly in need are admitted.

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Community outreach

Educating the public about responsible pet ownership and the importance of spaying and neutering to prevent pet overpopulation.

Foster care programs

Utilizing foster homes to provide temporary care for animals, particularly those requiring special needs, freeing up space in the shelter.

Aggressive adoption campaigns

Promoting adoption events and utilizing various marketing strategies to find homes for animals quickly

Due to LAP's struggles with meeting its Capacity for Care, the quality of care and attention provided to the shelter's animal population is inadequate, compromising both their physical and mental well-being.

Effective population management and monitoring should involve conducting a daily animal inventory to ensure accurate records of the shelter population and to verify that these records align with the data in Petpoint. However, staff have indicated that they no longer perform this inventory due to the time it consumes. The decision to discontinue the animal inventory suggests that the animal population at DCAS is too high and that LAP is not sufficiently staffed to carry out this essential task.

Animal Records

Upon reviewing random pet records within PetPpint, as well as some hard copies, it seems that staff is recording sufficient information about the pets. Volunteers and staff are commended for taking high quality, well-compositioned photographs of pets for their records.

Cleaning & Sanitation

Cleaning and sanitation are critical in an animal shelter because it prevents the spread of infectious diseases among the animals, protects staff and visitors, creates a welcoming environment for potential adopters, and overall contributes to the health and well-being of the animals in care by maintaining a clean and hygienic space.

Disease Prevention:

Animals in shelters often come from diverse backgrounds and may carry diseases, so proper cleaning and disinfection significantly reduce the risk of transmitting illnesses between animals through shared surfaces and environments.

Public Perception:

A clean shelter with minimal odors creates a positive impression on potential adopters, increasing the likelihood of animals finding homes.

Staff and Volunteer Safety:

Regular sanitation protects staff and volunteers from exposure to zoonotic diseases.

Stress Reduction:

A clean environment can help reduce stress levels in animals, as they are less likely to be exposed to harmful bacteria and parasites.

Parasite Control:

Cleaning helps to prevent the spread of parasites like roundworms and coccidia which can easily contaminate a shelter environment if not properly sanitized.

Compliance with Regulations:

Most animal shelters are subject to local regulations regarding sanitation standards, which need to be adhered to for proper operation.

Cleaning and sanitizing, although often used interchangeably by shelter staff, are two distinct processes that work together. Cleaning removes dirt and other substances from surfaces, while sanitizing reduces/eliminates, the number of germs on those surfaces.

Cleaning

Removes dirt, dust, crumbs, and germs from surfaces using soap or detergents and water. Cleaning can be done for aesthetic, hygienic, functional, safety, or environmental protection purposes.

Sanitizing

Reduces the number of germs on surfaces to levels considered safe by public health codes or regulations. Sanitizing is done with weaker bleach solutions or sanitizing sprays.

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The only mention of cleaning or disinfecting in the Standard Operating Procedures Manual is a brief three-sentence paragraph about cleanliness on page 10. Additionally, there is a page dedicated to sanitation and upkeep in the Intake Specialist Manual (page 15), the Animal Care Specialist Training Manual (page 12), and the Clinic Department Training Manual (page 7). However, the Volunteer Manual does not reference cleaning and disinfecting at all.

Given the critical importance of cleaning and sanitizing in a shelter environment and its impact on various aspects of operations, it is wholly unacceptable that LAP does not allocate more time and resources to this process in its instructional manuals, or to the actual practice of cleaning and disinfecting. Based on observations of staff performing these tasks, it is clear that LAP is not equipped to perform this task necessary to produce a clean and sanitary environment and is at high risk for a disease or viral outbreak.

LAP uses Rescue (Accel), an Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide (AHP) cleaner which is a one-step Disinfectant Cleaner to remove dirt, grime, mold, mildew, blood, urine, fecal matter, and other common soils found in animal housing areas in an animal shelter. Rescue prevents outbreaks and kills a broad-spectrum of pathogens in five minutes and is gentle on users, animals, material, and the environment.

Sadly, the cleaning and disinfecting performed by staff is the second-most significant liability (only behind Capacity for Care) observed by the evaluator. Here are some of the problematic cleaning and disinfecting practices that were observed:

- Staff were not consistent in wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – especially while using chemical product
- Staff is unaware of Safety Data Sheets (SDS)
- Some animals were kept in their cages during the cleaning process.
- At times, staff were simply spraying Rescue onto the animal housing surface, expecting the foam to do all of the work without any use of a brush to scrub away waste.
- Staff were observed using a high-pressure stream of water to wash away feces, which only was being splattered and scattered onto surfaces up to (at least visibly) 6 feet away.
- We observed staff step in animal feces and track the waste on their soles while they walked to other areas in the shelter.
- Staff were observed taking soiled blankets and towels out of an animals' cage/kennel then walking some distance to place it in a bin, only to drop waste on the ground in the transportation process.
- Staff were observed placing equipment on top of areas with feces and urine.

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- Although staff members indicated that they perform deep cleaning daily, the condition of the facility (as shown in the photos in Part 1) demonstrates that the shelter has not undergone a thorough deep cleaning in years. Deep cleaning involves several steps: first, cleaning with soap or detergent to suspend dirt and grease, which does not kill harmful microorganisms or completely remove dirt and grease; next, applying a degreaser, which is a more powerful soap/detergent specifically formulated to penetrate layers of dried body oils and other greasy debris; and finally, using a chemical disinfectant to eliminate harmful microorganisms. This process requires staff to manually remove organic matter using scrub brushes and other cleaning tools.

These photos show the tops of cages covered in hair, dander, dust, dirt, and likely many harmful pathogens

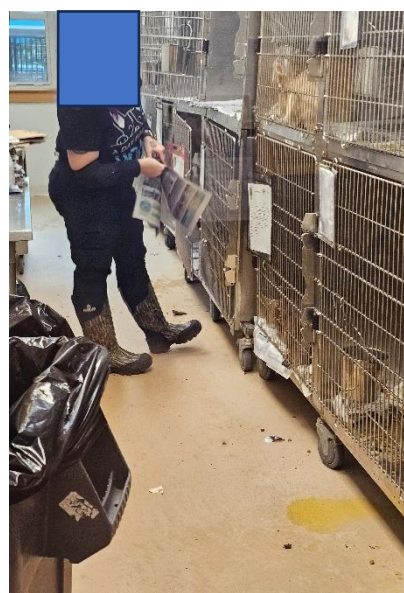
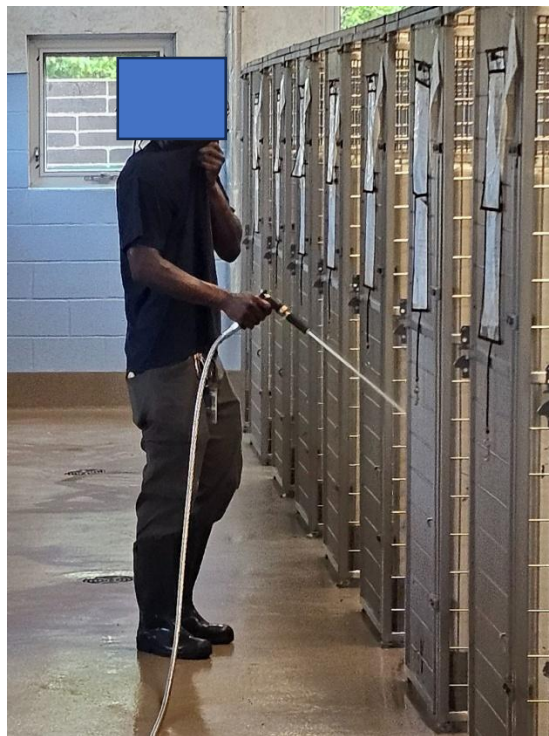
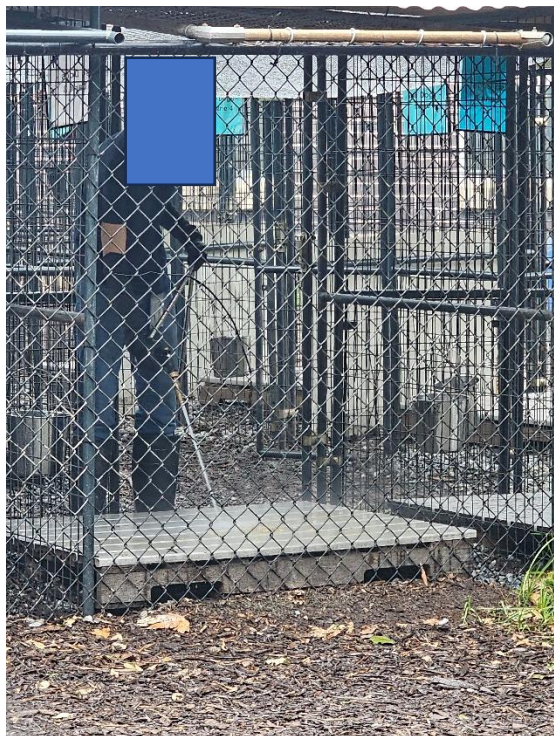


These photos show filters (floor and ceiling) that are completely covered in hair, dander, dust, and dirt,



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In the photo below (L), an animal care worker is using a high-pressure hose to wash loose fecal matter off a raised platform in an outdoor kennel. However, the loose stool was not physically removed as it should have been. Using the high-pressure hose only spread the fecal matter onto the chain link fence, into surrounding kennels that had already been cleaned, and onto the mulch. This action puts other dogs at risk of contracting diseases or viruses from harmful pathogens that are being aerosolized.



In the photo above (R), an employee uses his hand to place his shirt over his nose and mouth while he rinses out a kennel. In the photo (L), an employee is surrounded by pools of urine and spattered fecal droppings all over the floor. This employee, and others who came and left the room, also stepped in and tracked harmful pathogens throughout the facility.

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PPE and Cleaning Tools

The purpose of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is to minimize the risks that shelter employees face from potential hazards. This includes protecting personal clothing from contamination, preventing exposure to skin and mucous membranes, and reducing the transmission of pathogens between animals and employees. PPE consists of:

- Eye protection
- Ear protection (when using a loud high-pressure system)
- Gloves
- Boots
- Booties (shoe covers)
- Nose/mouth protection
- Pooper scooper and shovel
- Scrub brushes (handheld and telescoping)
- Squeegees
- Buckets

During the on-site evaluation, it was noted that staff and volunteers were inconsistent in wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). Additionally, some cleaning tools, such as brooms, mops, and squeegees, were in such poor condition that they were nearly useless, compromising the staff's ability to clean and sanitize effectively. The evaluator frequently observed scoops and shovels dirty with waste, leaning against the wall.



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Viral & Disease Control Containment

Control and containment of viruses and diseases relies on two main factors: a vaccination schedule and parasite control, along with proper cleaning and disinfecting products and practices.

While LAP provides a vaccination schedule and parasite control that align with industry standards, there is significant room for improvement in the written guidelines for cleaning and sanitation. It is imperative that the entire organization strengthen the effectiveness of their cleaning and sanitation practices to ensure the safety of its animal and people population.

Please refer to the earlier sections for more information about LAP's challenges in preventing the spread of viruses and diseases within the shelter environment, which poses a significant risk for potential outbreaks.

Animal Enrichment & Well-being

Enrichment is crucial for animals in an animal shelter because it helps to significantly reduce stress, boredom, and negative behaviors by providing mental and physical stimulation, mimicking natural behaviors, and promoting overall well-being while they wait for adoption, making them more adoptable by improving their mood and behavior in a confined environment

Sadly, the only form of enrichment that animals receive would be time outside of their individual cage or kennel. This is in part because of the large animal population being housed at DCAS **which exceeds the capacity for care**. Staff simply does not have enough time given the tasks they must finish in their work day. Working at an animal shelter and rarely – if ever – having the time to interact with animals outside of feeding them impacts morale and employee retention.

Dogs, if they are fortunate, get out of their kennel (and in some cases, a small cage) to be placed in a outdoor play yard, or for the more fortunate ones, they receive an individual walk. While the evaluator was informed cats get out of their cages, not once over the four day site visit, were any cats observed having time to roam around on the ground.

The volunteer program utilizes a leveling system to determine which volunteers have the requisite number of hours and ability to handle dogs which may be

Animals at DCAS suffer from a myriad of issues that surely impact their mental and physical well-being:

- Some dogs are housed in cages too restrictive for their size
- Many animals lack regular socialization, and positive stimulation and exercise
- Sound readings in certain areas of the facility create a stressful environment
- Staff plays inappropriate music at loud levels which induces stress
- The evaluator has concerns that the diet, which consists of a “mush” (dry food, mixed with wet food, which is further watered down), is leading to a high percentage fo the animal population suffering from gastrointestinal disorders, and exacerbating the already lax cleaning and sanitation practices

For these reasons, the evaluator feels LAP is warehousing animals. Warehousing animals in an animal shelter is when animals are kept in cages for long periods of time in crowded, filthy, or substandard conditions.

Behavior Evaluations

During the evaluation period, DCAS was not conducting behavior evaluations due to vacant positions. The evaluator was unable to observe any dogs being evaluated during the on-site evaluation.

Fostering

Fostering animals is crucial to an animal shelter because it creates more space for other animals in need by providing a temporary home for animals awaiting adoption, allowing them to receive individualized care and socialization, which ultimately increases their chances of finding a permanent home, and helps reduce stress levels within the shelter environment; essentially, fostering helps save more lives by opening up capacity for new arrivals.

The following chart* details the number of dogs and cats in foster care for each of the four days of the evaluator's on-site visit:

	Mon 9/16	Tue 9/17	Wed 9/18	Thu 9/19
Cats	128	121	119	133
Dogs	57	82	94	91
Total	185	203	213	224

* Information provided by the Shelter Director.

A guide or manual for *Foster Care* was not provided.

Adoptions

Adoptions are crucial to an animal shelter because they directly save the lives of pets in need by providing them with a loving home, freeing up space to help more animals coming into the shelter, and reducing the overall pet overpopulation issue by preventing the need for breeding new pets; essentially, each adoption creates the opportunity for another animal to be rescued and given a second chance at life. Adoptions...

Reduces euthanasia rates:

Shelters often have limited space, so when a pet is adopted, it allows them to take in another animal who might otherwise be euthanized due to overcrowding.

Helps control pet overpopulation:

By choosing to adopt, (in theory) it lessens the breeding of more pets, which helps to reduce the number of unwanted animals entering shelters.

Provides a second chance for pets:

Many pets in shelters have been abandoned, lost, or surrendered due to various circumstances and deserve a loving home.

Supports shelter operations:

Adoption fees help fund the shelter's operations, allowing them to provide care for other animals in need.

The adoption of animals at DCAS is done using a three-pronged approach:

1. Adoption from animals within the shelter system
2. Adoption of animals directly from foster care
3. Adoption of animals from individuals looking to rehome (external site)

According to data provided by LAP, the following number of pets have been adopted from DCAS over the past three calendar years:

	2021	2022	2023	Avg
Cats	1,743	1,062	1,403	1,403
Dogs	2,060	1,552	2,978	2,197
Other	39	39	33	37
Total	3,842	2,653	4,414	3,636

The evaluator observed the adoption of three different pets. In each case, the staff followed the adoption process outlined on page 15 of the Standard Operating Procedures Manual. The only difference among these instances was the level of information provided and the friendliness of the adoption counselors. One counselor was warm and personable, while another was cold and unwelcoming. The contrast in experiences between the two counselors was significant. These interactions play a vital role in shaping reviews, encouraging return visits, fostering word-of-mouth referrals, and enhancing the overall brand image of LAP and DCAS.

Lost & Found (“Return to Home”)

A lost and found system is crucial to an animal shelter because it provides the primary opportunity to reunite lost pets with their owners, fulfilling the shelter's primary goal of returning animals to their homes rather than having to place them up for adoption or euthanasia; essentially, it's the most effective way to minimize the number of animals that remain in the shelter for extended periods. Keys to Lost & Found...

Reuniting families:

When a pet is lost, the owner is often distraught and desperate to find it, so a robust lost and found system allows the shelter to quickly connect the animal with its rightful family.

Reducing shelter overcrowding:

By efficiently reuniting lost pets, the shelter can avoid unnecessary intake of animals that could be returned to their owners.

Ethical responsibility:

Animal shelters have a moral obligation to make every effort to reunite lost pets with their owners, especially considering the emotional distress involved.

Microchip scanning:

A well-functioning lost and found system relies heavily on microchip scanning, allowing for rapid identification of the owner when a pet is brought to the shelter.

Community outreach:

A strong lost and found program encourages community members to bring in found pets and report missing animals, increasing the chances of successful reunions.

Unfortunately, the evaluator was unable to observe a Lost & Found/Return to Home scenario. This situation is not uncommon, as observing this activity can be partly a timing issue. Additionally, we know that reclaiming a pet is not a daily occurrence at animal shelters. In fact, available data shows that only a small percentage of lost pets are reclaimed from shelters, typically ranging from 10% to 30% for dogs and less than 5% for cats. This indicates that the chances of finding a lost pet in a shelter are relatively low. Page 17 of the Standard Operating Procedures Manual provides a three-paragraph overview of the process. However, this process could be improved with a step-by-step guide.

Residents can also access very basic information about lost pets on the website at: <https://dekalbanimalservices.com/services/>

Animal Transfer & Transport

Animal transport is crucial for animal shelters because it allows them to move adoptable pets from areas with high shelter populations to regions with high adoption demand, effectively reducing overcrowding, increasing the chances of finding homes for animals, and ultimately saving lives by minimizing the need for euthanasia due to space constraints; essentially, it helps match available animals with potential adopters in areas where they are most likely to be adopted quickly. Keys to Animal Transport...

Key points about animal transport:

Overpopulation relief:

Shelters in regions with high pet populations can transfer animals to areas where there are more potential adopters, alleviating pressure on their facilities and resources.

Increased adoption rates:

By moving animals to places with higher adoption demand, shelters can find homes for more animals that might otherwise struggle to get adopted.

Lifesaving measure:

Transporting animals can be a critical tool to reduce the number of animals euthanized due to overcrowding.

Collaboration between shelters:

Animal transport programs often involve partnerships between multiple shelters, allowing them to share resources and expertise to maximize the impact of their efforts.

Special needs considerations:

Transport programs can also be used to move animals with special needs to shelters that are equipped to provide the necessary care

According to staff, animal transfers occur for one of three reasons:

1. Transfer (out) to a rescue organization
2. Transfer (out) to Lifeline Animal Project's Community Adoption Center
3. Transfer (out) for medical care

The evaluator observed two separate animal transports on two different days. The only and biggest concern is that animal crates are held down by bungee cords. While a bungee cord can be used to tie down an animal crate during transport, it's not considered the most secure option and should be used with caution, as they might not

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be strong enough to properly secure a heavy crate, especially in the event of sudden stops; it's generally recommended to use dedicated pet crate tie-down straps or utilize the vehicle's built-in tie-down points when possible.



While a bungee cord can be used to tie down an animal crate during transport, it's not considered the most secure option and should be used with caution, as they might not be strong enough to properly secure a heavy crate, especially in the event of sudden stops; it's generally recommended to use dedicated pet crate tie-down straps or utilize the vehicle's built-in tie-down points when possible.

The financial accounting concern regarding animal transport from the facility is significant. At question is the manner in which LAP records these transactions in its books. A forensic accountant is needed for a thorough examination.

PART V. Animal Veterinary Medicine

- Animal monitoring and daily rounds
- Vaccination protocols and schedules
- Intake exams
- Controlled Substance Logs
- Sick animal procedures and practices (pain management & emergency medical plan)
- Medical (equipment & supplies)
- Spaying & Neutering
- Surgery & Anesthesia
- Euthanasia procedures & practices (environment, selection criteria, body storage & disposal)

Zoonoses

Shelter medicine at DCAS is guided by xy documents:

- 32-page *Clinic Department Training Manual*
- 27-page *Clinic Protocols*
- 2-page *Vaccination and Deworming Guidelines*
- 1-page *Daily Medical Rounds*

The *Clinic Department Training Manual* is a comprehensive document that provides thorough guidance (including supporting photographs and illustrations) and step-by-step instructions covering some areas related to animal veterinary-medical care. This document is intended to provide authoritative information on animal care, diagnosis and treatment of common diseases, surgical procedures, drug administration and cleaning and sanitation guidelines. The Table of Contents for the *Clinic Department Training Manual* covers Commitment to Health, Veterinary Technician and Veterinary Assistant Roles, Shelter Medicine Operations, Spay and Neuter Surgery. This document was last revised November 2021.

Although the *Clinic Protocols* is a separate document from the *Clinic Department Training Manual*, the two documents are meant to provide overall guidance to the day-to-day veterinary medical care of all animals housed at DCAS. The Table of Contents for the *Clinic Protocols* covers 17 different aspects of treatment:

Diarrhea/Giardia Protocol	Spay/Neuter Complications
Kitten Diarrhea Protocol	Sedating Healthy Dogs
PARVO/PANLEUK Protocol	Sedating Healthy Cats
URI/Nasal Discharge – CAT	Dog Fight
Dog Kennel Cough/Nasal Discharge/Pneumonia	Heartworm Treatment
Limping/Lame	Behavior Write-up
Ear Infections	Chill Protocol
Dog Urinary Tract Infection	Dosing Charts
Cat Urinary Tract Infection	

Dr. Susan Brosman is the Director of Medical Services for all of LifeLine's clinics. However, Dr. Eve Gidion and Dr. Jennifer Eachus are the two veterinarians for DeKalb County Animal Services. Aside from the two vets, the clinic is comprised of 11 staff.

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Animal Monitoring and Daily Rounds

Animal health and behavior at DCAS are continuously monitored through a series of levels during their stay at the facility. The Clinic Team is responsible for diagnosing, caring for, and treating all animals at DCAS. Additionally, anyone on staff or who volunteers can provide observations and feedback about an animal's health by scanning the QR codes located on the back of their FOB/badge.



Each of the two QR Codes links to an internal google dogs form that an individual can complete which is placed on a “write-up list” and later reviewed by the Shelter Clinic Team who will determine next course of action.

In addition to observations made by staff and volunteers, rounds are completed twice per day at DCAS – one in the morning, and another in the afternoon. This round is conducted by either the Clinic Manager or the Operations Director, who takes notes of animals with medical conditions. Animals requiring emergency care are brought directly to the clinic.

With the large number of animals housed at DCAS every day, a significant amount of staff time and financial resources are dedicated to medical care. Conducting a medical round alone requires a staff member to walk through each animal housing area, observe the animals, consult and take notes, and record the information in the 24 Pet Care system, which takes several hours.

One of the more inefficient practices at DCAS is the preparation and administration of medicine to animals, which is addressed under *Sick Animal Procedures*.

Vaccination protocols and scheduling

A vaccination schedule and protocols are crucial in an animal shelter because they significantly reduce the risk of infectious disease outbreaks among the high-turnover population of animals. This protects both the shelter animals and the wider community by preventing the spread of potentially deadly illnesses like parvovirus and panleukopenia, as well as common diseases like kennel cough and upper respiratory infections. This is especially important considering the less-than-desirable housing conditions and close proximity of animals at DCAS. These conditions likely lead to increased exposure to diseases within the shelter. A well-designed vaccination program is a critical tool for maintaining a healthy shelter population and facilitating successful adoptions of healthy pets.

Vaccines, as well as treatment of internal parasites, are guided by the *Vaccination and Deworming Guidelines* document.

Upon take, animals receive the following:

DOGS		CATS	
DAPPv		FVRCP	
Bordatella		Pyrantel	
Pyrantel		Flea Spray	
Heartworm prevention		Liquid Capstar For smaller kittens or heavy flea infestation	
Flea Spray		Panacur/Ponazril	
Bravecto topical		Felv/FIV Testing Done during spay or neuter	
Liquid Capstar For younger puppies with heavy flea infestation		Microchip If a microchip was not detected when scanned	
Heartworm Test For any puppy over 6 months			
Microchip If a microchip was not detected when scanned			
PUPPIES		KITTENS	
Receive DHPP boosters every two weeks until 16-20 weeks		Receive FVRCP boosters every two weeks until 16-20 weeks	
Dewormed every two weeks with Pyrantel until they are started on their monthly heartworm medication (			

The vaccination and deworming schedule are consistent with the recommendations of national bodies such as the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program, and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

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Intake Exams

Intake examinations at DCAS are crucial because they provide an initial assessment of an animal's health, allowing staff to identify any immediate medical needs, potential infectious diseases, and behavioral concerns, which enables them to provide proper care, prevent the spread of illness within the shelter population, and ultimately increase the animal's chances of a successful adoption by identifying any necessary treatment or special considerations.

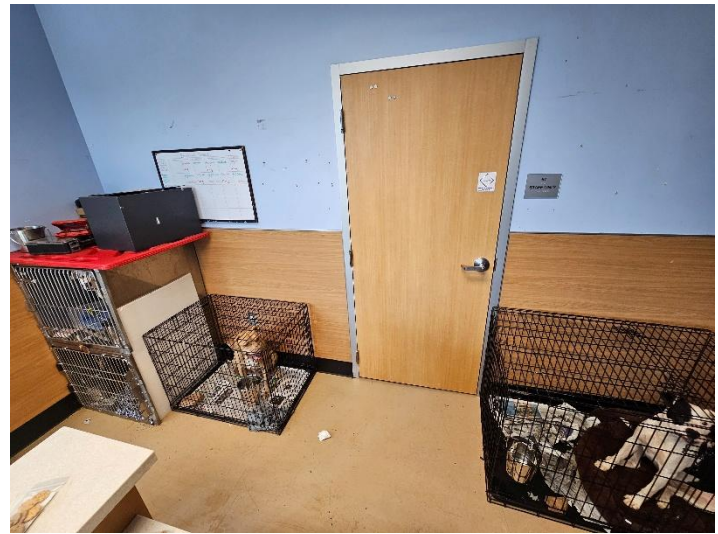
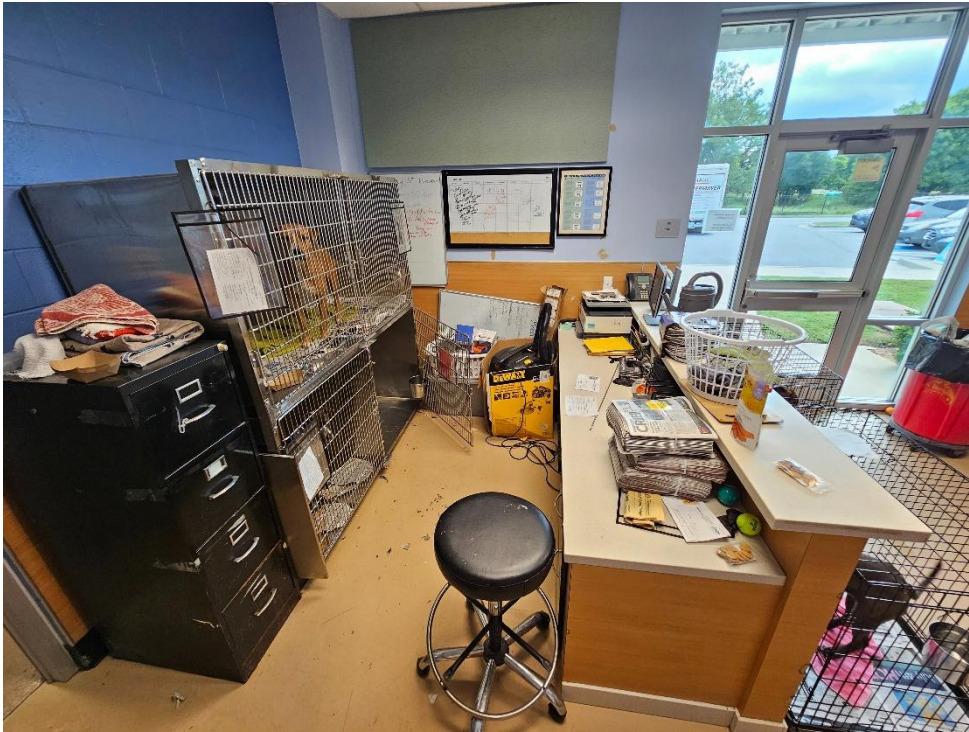
Unfortunately, the area where animals receive vaccinations, deworming, and other medicines is cramped, noisy, and sometimes disorganized and dirty. Shelter staff regularly enter this area, interrupting the workflow and causing undue stress to animals. Some treatments, such as intranasal Bordetella and Flea Spray, are not being properly administered, which compromises the health of all animals in the shelter system. The evaluator questions whether staff conducting intake examinations have been properly trained in the administration of vaccinations, medicines, and preventatives.



The Intake Room for DCAS is overcrowded and disorganized, with OSHA violations. The walkway leading to Intake has stainless steel cages on wooden pallets strewn against the wall.



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Many of the dogs housed in *Intake* are in cages too small for their size and barely allow the animal to sit or stand normally (without their head touching the top of the cage), or turn normally. Many dogs were unable to sit, sleep, and eat away from areas of the cage where they defecate and urinate. LAP is not housing animals in a manner sufficient to meet the physical and behavioral needs of animals. **This is an unacceptable practice.**

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This page is exempt from disclosure of the Open Records Request Act as it contains sensitive information regarding the location and storage of Controlled Substances as regulated by the Georgia Drugs and Narcotics Agency (GDNA) and Title 21 United States Code (USC) Controlled Substances Act (United States Drug Enforcement Administration).

Controlled Substances and Logs

Georgia law requires that controlled substances be stored in a secure area and in accordance with certain guidelines:

- **Practitioners**

Practitioners must take care to protect controlled substances and records from theft or loss. They must also ensure that drugs are stored in a neat and orderly manner, and that drugs requiring refrigeration are stored properly

Controlled substances at DCAS are stored in a wall-mounted safe in the Clinic Area, which is a secure room accessible only by a key FOB assigned to Clinic Staff and upper management. Access to the safe is limited to the veterinarian, the Clinic Manager, and the Animal Care Director, who have access to a separate wall-mounted safe containing keys to the safe that holds controlled substances. The storage of bottles of controlled substances in active use is separate from the storage of bottles of controlled substances in inventory (not in active use).



While Clinic Staff does a good job of documenting and managing all controlled substances in the building and in accordance with laws and regulations, the department has a major weakness in the storage of the logs by keeping them in a storage cabinet that can be accessed by any clinic staff, or member of staff who is granted access to the area. The implications of a lost or stolen controlled substances log can have a profound negative impact on operations at DCAS since this must be immediately reported to GDNA and the US DEA.

We highly recommend LAP invest in and begin using a Veterinary Controlled Substance Log Book and eliminate the use of a three-ring binder with loose-leaf sheets of paper containing controlled substances.

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Please refer to *Part III Operations under Policies, Procedures, and Practices* for information on the unacceptable practice of leaving the Euthanasia Room door open while controlled substances were unattended in the room.

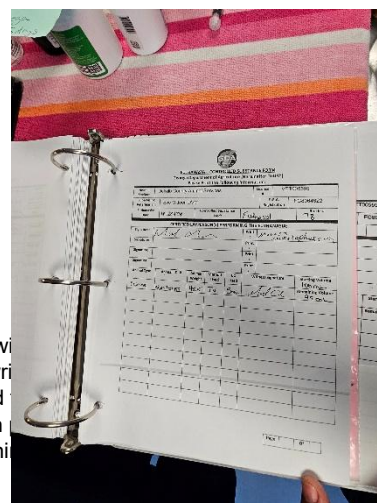
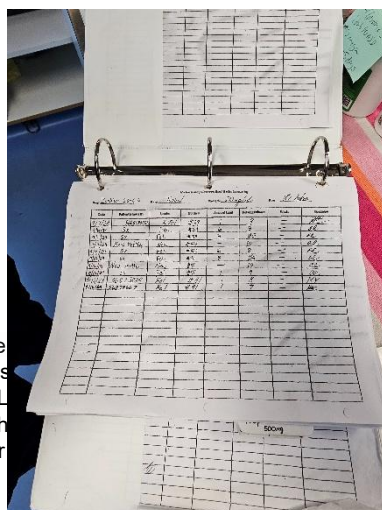
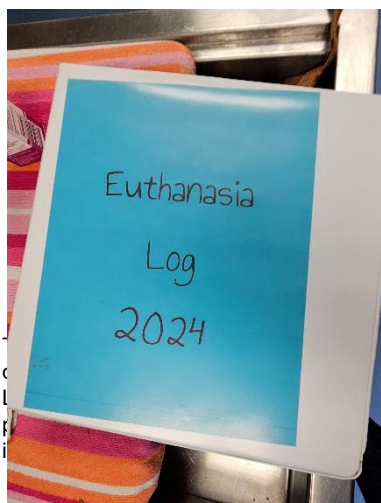
Lifeline Animal Project provided the following list of controlled substances being used and stored at DCAS:

- Midazolam (Schedule IV)
- Hydromorphone (Schedule II)
- Ketamine (Schedule III)
- Propofol (not scheduled under the CSA)*
- Buprenorphine (Schedule III)
- Butorphanol (Schedule IV)
- Zorbium (Schedule III)
- Euthanasia Solution (Schedule II)

* *Controlled Substances Act (CSA)*

The following list of drugs was found in locked storage inside the Clinic:

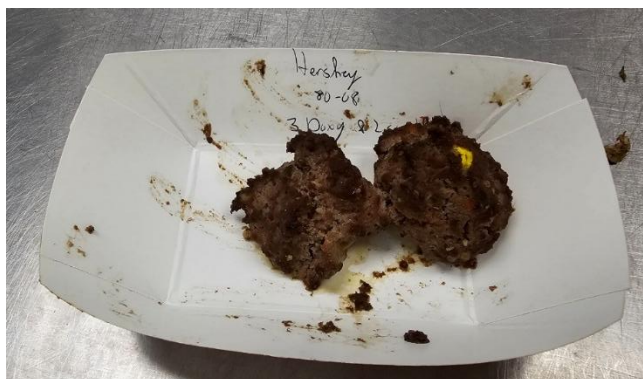
- Apomorphine (not scheduled under the CSA)
- Hydromorphone (Schedule II)
- Propofol (not scheduled under the CSA)
- Acepromazine (not scheduled under the CSA)
- Torbugesic (Schedule IV)
- Ketamine (Schedule III)
- Midazolam (Schedule IV)
- Buprenorphine (Schedule III)
- Dexdomitor (not scheduled under the CSA)
- Meloxicam (not scheduled under the CSA)*
- Carprofen (not scheduled under the CSA)*
- Zorbium (Schedule III)
- Rompun/Xylazine (not scheduled under the CSA)
- Tramadol (Schedule IV)



Sick animal procedures and practices / Pain management

Proper medical management and health care for shelter animals is recognized as an absolute necessity and includes attention to the overall well-being of all animals in the shelter system. A proper shelter medical program includes veterinary supervision and the participation of trained staff to provide evaluation, preventative care, diagnosis and treatment in a timely manner.

The Clinic and the Veterinary Team are strengths of the organization, but they also have limitations that hinder their ability to provide effective care and treatment to the animal population at DCAS. As mentioned in Part III. Operations, under Policies, Procedures and Practices, the administration of medications for treatment of illness and pain management is inconsistent. The photo below is just one example of many instances where animals did not ingest their medication, which was then collected and disposed of by animal care staff. The management of medicine distribution is a failure and does not support animal health or their ability to regain and maintain physical health. This lack of care contributes to a shelter population that struggles to maintain a healthy pet population every day.



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Medical Equipment and Supplies

Exam tables
Surgery tables (x2)
Autoclave
Centrifuge
Anesthesia machines
Sedation tanks
Endotracheal tubes
Laryngeal Scopes
IDEXX Catalyst Machine

Warming pads
Microscope
Surgical Instruments
Humidifiers
Nebulizers
Crash cart
Standard vet-medical equipment
needed to perform job (too many to list)



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Spay and Neuter

Spay/Neuter surgeries at DCAS is guided by two documents:

- Pages 14-30 of the *Clinic Department Training Manual*
- Pages 13-14 of the *Clinic Protocols*

DCAS performs sterilization surgery on dogs and cats in its care, and owners have the option to sterilize their pet if it comes into the care of DCAS (lost or impoundment). Lifeline Animal Project offers affordable vet care which includes spay/neuter surgery ranging between \$90-175.

Sterilization surgery is performed in the operating room of the Clinic (see photo on previous page) in a modern setting with appropriate equipment and supplies.

Spaying and neutering pets is crucial to achieving "no kill" status because it directly controls pet overpopulation, preventing an influx of unwanted animals into shelters which would otherwise lead to high euthanasia rates; by sterilizing pets, you significantly reduce the number of homeless animals needing adoption, allowing shelters to focus on saving more lives instead of managing large litters of puppies and kittens.

Spay/Neuter surgeries at DCAS are aligned with best practices outlined in The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' 2016 Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs, with three notable exceptions:

1. Transportation of animals (specifically, proper confinement of animals)
2. Animal handling
3. Infectious disease control procedures

All three have been noted and reported in other Parts of this report.

Surgery and Anesthesia

Surgery and anesthesia are covered in the Clinic Department Training Manual on pages 17-30 and align with best practices outlined in the *2020 AAHA Anesthesia and Monitoring Guidelines for Dogs and Cats* published by the American Animal Hospital Association.

Euthanasia procedures and practices

Please refer to *Part III Operations under Policies, Procedures, and Practices* for information on the unacceptable practice of leaving the Euthanasia Room door open while controlled substances were unattended in the room.

The evaluator did not receive any specific materials related to the policies, procedures, and practices for the performance of euthanasia at DCAS. However, pages 22-24 of the *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* provide a general outline of the process and some do's and don'ts. This three-page outline does reference the AVMA guidelines* for euthanasia which is what we used as reference for observing euthanasia practices at DCAS. * AVMA *Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2020 Edition*

Euthanasia Room

"All euthanasia is performed in a small, locked room located in the southeastern corner of the building with easy access to the sallyport (where two freezers for body storage are located). The room contains a very small stainless steel table used for performing euthanasia. When two staff members are present in this room, it becomes crowded. Despite this, the staff accommodates volunteers to witness euthanasia and be present during an animal's final moments. While we appreciate LAP's efforts to maintain transparency in the euthanasia process, we question whether the room is appropriately sized to allow more than two people in the room. This small, confined space could pose a safety hazard for both staff and animals. We highly recommend relocating euthanasia to another room if witnesses are going to be present."

Selection Criteria

Animals are considered for euthanasia based on numerous factors: physical, mentally or emotional suffering with a poor prognosis, when the animal is deemed to pose a real danger to other animals or the public, or when it faces a lengthy and painful recovery, or has an incurable affliction. Additional factors such as behavior patterns, reactivity, energy level, bite/safety risk, food aggression, how an animal shows in a kennel/cage, as well as previous history, temperament, ability to cope in the shelter, ability to handle, court requirements, and resources available to LAP, all play a factor.

Two members of shelter management must sign off on all euthanasia, while a weekly "Pathways" meeting is held where seven staff review each animal's case to determine if there are other resources that can be offered to help an animal get placed.

The evaluator felt that the staff often prioritized saving animals, even in cases where the animals posed some risk to the general public. This contributes to the shelter's overcrowding issues, which some people may see as "warehousing animals".

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Body Storage and Disposal

Once an animal is determined to be deceased, it is placed in a black plastic bag and then transported outside the euthanasia room to one of two freezer units located underneath the sallyport. The temperature of both the walk-in freezer and the floor freezer were measured between -5°F and 0°F.

Bodies are picked up on a regular basis for disposal.



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Zoonoses

A zoonosis (zoonotic disease or zoonoses -plural) is an infectious disease that is transmitted between species from animals to humans (or from humans to animals).

Some common zoonotic diseases in animal shelters include:

- Cat scratch disease (CSD): A bacterial infection caused by *Bartonella henselae*, which is carried in the saliva of infected cats and in cat fleas. CSD is usually transmitted to humans through scratches, bites, or when a cat licks an open wound.
- Leptospirosis: A bacterial infection that can cause liver and kidney failure in dogs, and can cause severe headache, vomiting, pneumonia, and kidney failure in people.
- Ringworm: A common zoonotic disease in both cats and dogs.
- Salmonellosis: A bacteria that can be carried by reptiles and amphibians, such as iguanas, turtles, snakes, frogs, and toads.
- Campylobacteriosis: A bacterial infection that may or may not cause diarrhea in dogs and cats, but causes diarrhea in people.
- Giardia infection: A common zoonotic disease in both cats and dogs.

The best way to prevent zoonosis in an animal shelter is to maintain strict hygiene practices, including regular hand washing, proper cleaning of animal enclosures, thorough disinfection of surfaces, routine parasite and disease screening of animals, and ensuring all staff and volunteers are educated about zoonotic diseases and proper handling procedures.

Please reference *Part IV, Cleaning and Sanitation* for more details about Zoonosis.

PART VI. Volunteers

- Activity
- Hours, schedule & shifts
- Policies, procedures, practices
- Volunteer management
- Volunteer duties, job descriptions, expectations, recognition and reviews
- Training (process, manual, development)
- Meetings
- Volunteer management software
- Volunteer-staff relationship

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The volunteer program at DCAS is guided by a 20-page document called the Volunteer Manual. While this manual provides an overview of the volunteer experience at DCAS, it lacks specific details about volunteer tasks and responsibilities. The Table of Contents for the Volunteer Manual covers Volunteer Opportunities, Volunteer Training and Levels, Volunteer Policies and Guidelines, Volunteer Code of Conduct, and Helpful Links & Resources. The manual dedicates more pages (3) to marketing and promoting LAP than it does to any other subject for volunteers. This gives the appearance that Lifeline prioritizes maintaining its reputation and brand over the well-being of people or pets.

The only requirements for volunteers are that they commit to a minimum of six (6) hours a month and wear the volunteer t-shirt and apron they are assigned at their first mentor shift. Volunteers schedule and record their own duties and hours in the volunteer database and are required to clock in using the mobile website/app or by using the tablet located in the volunteer and event coordinator's office.

The volunteer program at DCAS is supervised by the Adoption and Volunteer Manager, who oversees the entire volunteer program, as well as the adoption Supervisor, Adoption Counselors (x5), and Concierge. According to a 29-page Volunteer Roster, it would appear that DCAS has approximately 1,200 volunteers. However, the DCAS website, which redirects to the Lifeline website, lists 1,324 volunteers providing 35,652 hours in 2023. It seems that the numbers being cited are a combination of hours for both facilities, as the Fulton County Animal Services website also redirects to this same page (URL). Therefore, it appears that Lifeline Animal Project has combined data from two separate entities, with two separate contracts, into one data point for Lifeline. **This raises concerns over LAP's ability to separately manage information, data, and funds between the two contracts – DeKalb County and Fulton County.**

Furthermore, an individual managing more than 1,200 individuals as well as the adoption team is set up for failure. According to most management experts, a manager can effectively manage around 5-6 direct reports, with anything significantly above that considered "too many" to manage effectively, often referred to as exceeding a healthy "span of control." Managing such a large, diverse team of individuals generally leads to a manager spending more time wrangling people than guiding them.

LAP must address the structure of its organization so that staff and volunteers are not managed by the same position.

During the on-site evaluation, the evaluator noticed that volunteers had almost complete autonomy over their job duties and did not receive any guidance from the Adoption and Volunteer Manager. This is a significant weakness for the organization, as many volunteers (as well as staff) had difficulty handling animals and practiced unclean and unsanitary behaviors, putting the health of the animal population at DCAS at greater risk.

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Activity (Opportunities)

Lifeline provided two separate documents that address volunteer opportunities at DCAS. One document is titled “Volunteer Opportunities” and lists 18 different jobs (which is what is listed on the website), while a list of “Volunteer Opportunities” within the Volunteer Manual lists 13 on-site and 11 off-site. Clarification on opportunities was sought from the (then) Volunteer Coordinator, who replied, “both,” when asked which of the two Volunteer Opportunities is the correct one. Based on the combination of both lists, it appears there are 23 volunteer opportunities.

1. Administrative Assistant
2. Adoption Event (Off-site)
3. Animal Enrichment
4. Animal Exercise
5. Behavior Program
6. Cat Socialization
7. Cleaning & Health
8. Clinic
9. Community Cat
10. Community Outreach
11. Content
12. Digital Matchmaker
13. Dog for the Day
14. Foster Parent
15. Foster Program
16. Group Host
17. Laundry Attendant
18. Lifeline Ambassador
19. Matchmaker
20. Media
21. Transport
22. Volunteer Mentor
23. Weekend Warriors

Volunteer management

Managing volunteers effectively is crucial for a non-profit organization because it allows the organization to maximize the value of volunteer contributions, ensuring smooth operations, achieving their mission, building strong community relationships, and retaining volunteers by making them feel valued and appreciated, ultimately increasing the organization's capacity to deliver services.

Key reasons why volunteer management is important:

Increased efficiency

Well-managed volunteers can perform tasks more efficiently, freeing up staff time to focus on other critical aspects of the organization.

Improved morale

When volunteers feel valued through proper management, including recognition and clear communication, they are more likely to stay engaged and committed.

Stronger community relations

Volunteers often act as ambassadors for the organization, spreading its message and attracting more support when they have positive experiences.

Enhanced capacity

With effective management, volunteers can take on significant roles, expanding the organization's ability to deliver services.

Volunteer retention

By providing proper training, clear expectations, and opportunities for growth, organizations can keep volunteers engaged and reduce turnover.

Mission achievement

By strategically utilizing volunteers, non-profits can better achieve their goals and objectives.

What does effective volunteer management include?

- **Recruitment:** Identifying and attracting suitable volunteers for specific roles.
- **Onboarding and training:** Providing new volunteers with necessary information and skills to perform their tasks effectively.
- **Clear communication:** Keeping volunteers informed about their responsibilities, expectations, and upcoming events.
- **Matching volunteers with tasks:** Assigning roles that align with individual skills and interests.
- **Recognition and appreciation:** Acknowledging volunteer contributions through public recognition or other methods.
- **Feedback and evaluation:** Regularly soliciting feedback from volunteers to improve the volunteer experience

Based on observations of volunteers, interactions with approximately a dozen volunteers over four days, and a sit-down meeting with the Adoption and Volunteer Manager (who was about to leave the position), the evaluator identified several weaknesses in the program. These weaknesses include onboarding and training, recognition and appreciation, and feedback and evaluation. However, the most significant issues are twofold: volunteers are not actively managed, and the volunteer program is too large to be effectively overseen by one employee, who also shares responsibilities with the management of the adoption team.

We recommend a comprehensive overhaul of the volunteer management program at DCAs. This should include a complete rewrite and enhancement of the Volunteer Manual, the introduction of more in-depth training in cleaning and sanitation, animal behavior, and animal handling, and the establishment of a management structure with a ratio of one full-time staff member for every 80 volunteers.

LAP should prioritize better animal care and population management over focusing on its brand and image.

Volunteer software

LAP utilizes Volgistics software* to schedule and track volunteer activity. Volgistics software helps manage volunteers through the entire volunteer cycle. Organizations can customize fields and options to fit their unique needs.

Volunteers can also log in by utilizing the Become a Volunteer tab under Volunteers on the LAP website. The DCAS website URL: <https://dekalbanimalservices.com/how-to-help/> redirects to the Lifeline Animal Project website when an end-user clicks on the *Volunteer* button.

** Per the Adoption and Volunteer Manager*

Hours, schedule & shifts

Scheduling shifts for volunteers at an animal shelter is crucial because it ensures consistent care for the animals by guaranteeing a reliable number of people are present to perform necessary tasks like feeding, cleaning, socializing, and exercising the animals during designated times, preventing disruptions to their routine and overall well-being, while also allowing for efficient management of volunteer availability and skill sets.

Key reasons for scheduling volunteer shifts:

Animal welfare

Consistent care is essential for the animals' health and happiness, and a scheduled volunteer presence ensures that needs are met regularly throughout the day.

Task distribution

By assigning specific tasks to different shifts, the shelter can effectively manage workload and ensure all areas are properly attended to.

Volunteer engagement

Knowing their schedule and responsibilities helps volunteers feel valued and committed to their role.

Staff support

A well-organized volunteer schedule alleviates pressure on paid staff by providing reliable assistance with daily operations.

Skill matching

Scheduling allows for matching volunteers with tasks that best suit their skills and experience level.

Efficient use of time

With a set schedule, volunteers can maximize their time at the shelter by focusing on assigned duties.

Communication and coordination

A structured schedule facilitates clear communication between volunteers and staff regarding daily tasks and any necessary updates.

Volunteers are responsible for scheduling and recording their own volunteer duties and hours in *Volgistics* (volunteer database). The Adoption and Volunteer Manager was asked to produce a report on volunteer hours but did not do so.

To maximize its volunteer base, LAP should schedule volunteers based on the organization's needs rather than solely on individual availability.

Policies, procedures and practices

None. Although the Volunteer Manual does not have an explicitly labeled set of policies, it does contain several small sections that essentially function as policies, which are:

1. Drugs and Alcohol
2. Smoking
3. Accident or Injury
4. Age requirement (Family-Friendly Service)
5. Privacy and Confidentiality
6. Communications Etiquette
7. Escalating Concerns or Complaints

The Manual also includes a *Volunteer Code of Conduct*.

The manual focuses more on volunteer behavior and compliance issues than it does on animal care, handling, and the personal safety of its volunteers. While it's important for LAP to set expectations for volunteers and reduce risk to the organization, they must also provide clear job duties and expectations (procedures and practices), which this manual lacks. This further confirms that Lifeline prioritizes maintaining its reputation and brand over the well-being of people or pets.

Volunteer job descriptions

None. Volunteer job descriptions include one to two sentences providing an overview of the position (essentially a job summary), but they lack important sections such as:

- Qualifications, skills and experience
- Job performance expectations
- Purpose
- Working conditions
- Training provided
- Reporting to

Training

Training volunteers at an animal shelter is crucial because it ensures that volunteers can safely and effectively care for animals, understand their behaviors and properly interact with them, recognize potential health issues, be familiar with the importance of proper cleaning and sanitation practices, ultimately maximizing the chances of successful adoption and improving the overall well-being of the animals in the shelter's care; without proper training, volunteers could unintentionally harm the animals or hinder their adoption process.

Volunteers are trained using a myriad of methods, including:

- In-person classes
- YouTube videos
- Printed documents
- Mentoring

In addition to this training, LAP assigns volunteers to different levels based on the amount and type of training they have received, as well as the number of hours they have volunteered at the shelter. There are three levels available: Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3.

Meetings

Volunteer meetings are crucial for an animal shelter because they provide a platform to coordinate efforts, address concerns, train new volunteers, share updates on the shelter's needs, and ensure everyone is working towards the same goals, ultimately maximizing the impact of volunteer work and providing the best care possible for the animals in their care; without regular communication, vital information could be missed, leading to potential gaps in animal care and less efficient operations.

Key reasons why volunteer meetings are important for animal shelters:

Effective communication

Meetings allow for clear communication of important information like new policies, upcoming events, animal needs, and available volunteer opportunities.

Training and development

New volunteers can be properly introduced to shelter protocols, animal handling techniques, and specific tasks during meetings, ensuring they are prepared to contribute effectively.

Feedback and concerns

Volunteers can raise any concerns or suggestions they have regarding animal care, operations, or the overall volunteer experience, allowing for continuous improvement.

Team building and morale

Regular interaction with fellow volunteers can boost morale, foster a sense of community, and encourage collaboration.

Task assignment and coordination

Meetings can be used to assign specific tasks to volunteers based on their skills and availability, ensuring efficient use of manpower.

Raising awareness and advocacy

Volunteers can be briefed on current issues facing the shelter and how they can help advocate for animal welfare within the community.

The Adoption and Volunteer Manager does not offer any type of formalized meetings with the body of volunteers.

Volunteer staff relationship

Feedback from approximately a dozen volunteers (during the on-site visit) indicates that the relationship between the volunteers and upper management at LAP is strained, and for valid reasons. Many of the issues documented and discussed in this report have already been raised with executive management at LAP and/or DeKalb County leadership. There is a growing frustration among the volunteers that their concerns, some of which are quite apparent, are not being addressed promptly, if at all. This has led to diminished trust in County leadership and the CEO of LAP. Many remain doubtful that issues of overcrowding, animal care, and shelter management will be properly addressed.

PART VIII. Marketing, Public & Community Relations

- Plan
- Activity
- Staffing
- Image, brand, reputation, logo
- Community relationships, collaborations & partners,
- Media contacts
- Humane education & other outreach efforts
- Social media

Plan

None.

Activity

Lifeline has a lot of traditional and social media activity which they track and measure. In addition to the number of followers of LAP and DCAS on social media platforms (which is managed by LAP), the organization cites these statistics:

- 2,778,425 people reached through Lifeline FB and IG in 2023
- 859,000 video views on TikTok in 2023
- 23,102 members in the Adoptable Pets of Lifeline FB group
- 187+ local and national news mentions in 2023
- 412 media mentions of Casper the Sheep Dog
- 221 mentions tied to a story about overcrowding first appearing on National Public Radio
- 171 individual shelter dogs marketed in *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *DeKalb FreePress*, and *Dunwoody Crier*, for example
- 21,617 average monthly users in 2023
- 68,284 average page views in 2023
- Digital billboard ads promoting adoption specials and fostering
- Interior bus cards used on Marta buses

Google Reviews

1,447 reviews. 4.3 star rating.

Yelp Reviews (*claimed*)

79 reviews. 3.2 star rating.

Yelp Reviews (*unclaimed*)

61 reviews. 3.5 star rating.

Indeed Reviews

65 reviews. 2.5 star rating.

Glassdoor Reviews

43 reviews. 2.4 star rating.

Better Business Bureau

2 reviews. 1.0 star rating.

2 complaints closed in last 3 years

1 complaints closed in last 12 months

Staffing

There is ambiguity as it relates to the responsibility of tasks between Lifeline Animal Project as a separate entity and Lifeline Animal Project as a service provider contracted to DeKalb County. Lifeline Animal Project has these seven-(7) positions:

1. Chief Marketing Officer
2. Creative Director
3. Digital Marketing Manager
4. Public Relations Manager
5. Social Media Manager
6. Events Manager
7. Marketing and Media Coordinator

All seven of the positions listed above, work remotely, and “they are in and out of the different locations,” according to the CEO of LAP. However, the only employee at DeKalb County Animal Shelter in the Marketing Team, and not listed above, is a Social Media Coordinator (SMC). The SMC, who works at DCAS, handles daily content (primarily posts and responses) for social media along with animal photography. The SMC participates in the Lifeline Animal Project strategy meetings so that he can act as a liaison between DCAS and LAP.

According to staff and verified by the Social Media Coordinator, the Social Media Manager and the Marketing and Media share a small office at DCAS, although during the evaluator’s four-day on-site visit, neither of these two positions were at DCAS nor were their names or titles ever mentioned.

According to the CEO, there is a line item in the DCAS contract budget for “Management Services,” which goes toward:

- marketing,
- website,
- project management and oversight,
- veterinarian oversight,
- all accounting functions,
- all IT and data management,
- some HR functions and oversight,
- fundraising and development,
- volunteer and foster management support,
- community outreach support.

Brand

LAP has several policies related to communications:

- Communications and Media Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Social Media Process & Procedures
- Marketing Crisis Planning Protocol
- Brand Style Guide (2021)
- Ambassador Tool Kit Guide

The Brand is maintained by a comprehensive Brand Style Guide, which is consistent with that of a major marketing firm. This Guide provides details regarding use of:

- Logos
- Colors
- Typography
- Photography
- Styling
- Creative
- Iconography
- Digital and social
- Voice and tone
- Formats

An interesting aspect of the *Lifeline Communications and Media Policy* under Website Policies is that it reads like a legal disclaimer designed to protect the interests of Lifeline. However, this information is in an internal document only available to staff, and not available for public consumption.

For example, the fifth bullet point under WEBSITE POLICIES reads, “Use of the websites is at the risk of the individual user, and the individual user assumes full responsibility for all costs that arise out of its use.” The statement goes on to release Lifeline from any responsibility, which would be language consistent for a Contract between two parties, yet the individual user of the website is never made aware of any of these policies.

The evaluator questions if the disclaimers made in these internal documents should be published on the website so that readers are aware of the risks.

The Brand is maintained by the comprehensive Brand Style Guide

Unfortunately, DCAS lacks a distinct brand because LAP uses the County to promote its own branding.

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Community Relations, Collaborations and Partnerships

Partnerships and collaborations are crucial for animal shelters because they allow them to expand their reach, access more resources, share expertise, and ultimately help more animals find loving homes by leveraging the strengths of different organizations, businesses, and community members, which is especially important considering the high volume of animals often needing care in shelters; this can include fundraising, volunteer recruitment, specialized medical care, adoption events, and public awareness campaigns.

Key reasons why partnerships are important for animal shelters:

Increased funding and resources

Collaborations with businesses, foundations, and individuals can provide vital financial support for shelter operations, including veterinary care, food, and facility maintenance.

Wider adoption network

Partnering with other shelters, rescue groups, and pet adoption agencies can significantly increase the pool of potential adopters for animals in need.

Community outreach and education

Collaborating with local businesses, schools, and community groups allows shelters to spread awareness about responsible pet ownership, spay/neuter programs, and adoption options.

Specialized services

Partnerships with veterinary clinics, trainers, and behaviorists can provide specialized care for animals with medical needs or behavioral challenges, increasing their adoptability.

Volunteer recruitment and engagement

Collaborating with volunteer organizations can help recruit and manage a larger pool of volunteers to support shelter operations.

Advocacy efforts

Working with other animal welfare organizations can strengthen advocacy efforts to promote legislation and policies that benefit animals.

Examples of beneficial partnerships for animal shelters:

Local pet stores

Providing space for adoption events, offering discounted pet supplies for adopted animals

Veterinary clinics

Discounted veterinary services for shelter animals, training for shelter staff on animal health

Corporate sponsorships

Financial donations, employee volunteer programs, marketing campaigns

Community organizations

Collaboration on fundraising events, outreach programs, and educational initiatives

One of Lifeline Animal Project's greatest strengths is its skill in marketing and effectively conveying a well-crafted narrative about its mission and values. This is achieved through various communication channels that the organization both controls and manages.

- Ambassador Program
- Volunteer Program
- Rescue Partners (a 56-page list of partners, with approximately 500 partners)
- Media Partners
- Social Media Platforms and Pages
- Outward-facing programs and services (i.e. Pets for Patriots, Friendly finder)

Most of these are referenced in other sections of this report.

Media Contacts

Lifeline Animal Project has an extensive list of media contacts spanning eight pages. The number of traditional and social media stories produced about Lifeline Animal Project and DeKalb County Animal Services is above average for an animal shelter. The marketing and communications team at Lifeline is a key strength of the organization, effectively supporting the mission of DeKalb County Animal Services.

- 41 local media company contacts
- 7 county newspaper contacts
- 10 national media company contacts
- 25 DeKalb County contacts
- 12 calendar contacts

Humane Education and Other Outreach Efforts

None.

Please also reference the Community Relations, Collaborations and Partnerships section.

Social Media

Lifeline maintains numerous social media accounts on different platforms and pages:

1. Lifeline Animal Project Facebook (60K followers)
2. Lifeline Animal Project Instagram (47K followers)
3. Lifeline Animal Project TikTok (36K followers)
4. Lifeline Animal Project X (4.9K followers)
5. DeKalb County Animal Services Facebook (94K followers)
6. DeKalb County Animal Services Instagram (23K followers)
7. Fulton County Animal Services Facebook
8. Fulton County Animal Services Instagram
9. Adoptable Pets of Lifeline

According to the Social Media Coordinator, the average post made by DCAS averages 3,000 - 8,000 views. The goal is to post on Facebook and Instagram one-two times per day, as anything greater than two could alter the algorithm for posts and reduce their reach and therefore efficacy. (The internal goal is to have one post per month exceed 33,000 views.) Another goal is to post 1 video per week on Instagram.

The Social Media Policy of Lifeline, under 6. BE KIND, states, "Posts or comments that resort to name-calling, bullying, blaming, shaming, or are disrespectful to any person are not tolerated, will be removed and could result in temporary or permanent banning from this page depending on severity and frequency."

Strengths

We proudly acknowledge and celebrate these remarkable strengths of DCAS

1. Clinic staff and operations
2. Compassion and dedication of employees
3. Partnerships and collaborations to help save pets
4. Extensive volunteer base who help with operations
5. LAP's brand and marketing mastery

Weaknesses

The following is a list of opportunities for improvement and areas to focus on

1. The volume of animals being housed at DCAS. Providing adequate housing for a large number of animals each day presents significant challenges that need careful management to ensure their well-being and success. The current levels warrant attention, as they may not be sustainable in the long run. Addressing these challenges could help prevent any negative impact on other areas of operations. (The volume of animals housed at DCAS raises an important question for the County: Are the service provider's (LAP) efforts to maintain a high live release rate leading to decisions or actions that compromise animal care to achieve marketing goals? Additionally, can the goals of a high live release rate and humane animal care coexist? Or does the pursuit of one standard inevitably result in compromising the other?
2. The poor conditions of many animal housing areas.
3. The feeding (diet) and medicating of animals is requires attention.
4. Cleaning and sanitation techniques and practices.
5. Does the mission of Lifeline Animal Project align with that of DeKalb County and DeKalb County Animal Services? The County should consider whether the primary goal of sheltering and saving animals is being exploited for the marketing advantage of Lifeline Animal Project.
6. Which organization is best positioned to offer the most effective animal shelter services: the County, LAP, or a different third party?– The County should assess whether the organizational structure and executive management of LAP are effective and suitable for operating a large, complex animal shelter, following best practices for animal care and housing? Is it possible for the County to successfully manage and operate its own facility while using best practices, all within the same budget as outsourcing? This approach could enhance efficiency, improve control over operations and finances, and foster greater community involvement.
7. The current structure and management of the volunteer program could benefit from improvements to increase its chances of success.

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The list of documents provided in hard copy format per our *Request for Information*.

Document	Pages
Lifeline Employee Manual	17
Standard Operating Procedures Manual	36
Intake Depart Training Manual	26
Animal Care Specialist Training Manual	22
Placement Department Training Manual	28
Community Support Department Training Manual	16
DeKalb County GA Code of Ordinances	23
Official Code of Georgia Annotated	19
Rules and Regulations of the State of Georgia Dept of Agriculture	23
DeKalb Org Chart	3
Lifeline 2021-2024 P&L Statement	2
Shelter Hours of Operation	1
Management Systems Applications	1
Lost and Found, Animal Intake & Animal Adoption Procedures	3
Cleaning and Sanitation Chemicals	1
Fee Schedule	1
Sample Work Schedule	3
DCAS Yearly Intakes	2
Building Diagram	1
Programs and Services	16
Volunteer Roster	29
Volunteer Manual	21
Marketing Support & Communications Info & Stats	28
Ambassador Tool Kit Guide	18
Lifeline Animal Project Brand Style Guide	26
Lifeline Media Contacts	8
Clinic Dept Training Manual	32
Clinic Protocols	27
Job Description: Shelter Vet	2
Job Description: Clinic Manager	2
Job Description: Clinic Supervisor	3
Job Description: Clinic Lead	2
Job Description: Animal Shelter Vet Asst	2
Vaccination and Deworming Guidelines for Dogs and Cats Entering DCAS	2
Clinic Medical Equipment List	1
Controlled Substances Stored at DCAS	1
Daily Medical Rounds	1

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Document	Pages
List of Field Services Staff, Title, Compensation	1
AES Org Chart	1
DeKalb County Animal Enforcement Services SOP Manual	283
Overview and Guide to Document Submission	
DeKalb County, GA Code of Ordinances Chapter 5 – ANIMALS	23
Rules and Regulations of the State of Georgia Subject 40-13-13	18
Job Description: Animal Control Supervisor	3
Job Description: Animal Control Officer Master	4
Job Description: Animal Control Officer Superior	3
Job Description: Animal Control Officer	3
Field Operations Weekly Schedule May 18-24	1
AES Calls FY 2021-2024	352
Voting Precincts	1
Incorporated Cities within DeKalb County	1
List of ACO Vehicles	1
Equipment Onboard ACO Vehicles	1
ACO staff training and certifications	1
Animal Services Mission Statement	1
Animal Services Financials	1
Animal Services Performance Measures	1

Please note: In our Information Request Packet, we state, “we conduct our review based on being supplied hard copy files. No exceptions.”.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

ALLEGATION CONCERNS

DeKalb County's Chief Operating Officer (COO) and other county officials were made aware that during the evaluation process, our office received an extraordinary number of phone calls, voice and email communications from various individuals alleging mismanagement and retaliation by Lifeline executives, as well as poor conditions of animal housing and care of animals at the shelter. This issue was first brought to the attention of the DeKalb County COO and officials in an email dated March 22, 2024, and again on April 3, 2024. The topic was also discussed twice in Zoom meetings with DeKalb County officials.

Given the volume and gravity of these communications, we suggested that a thorough investigation into these concerns would be prudent. However, since investigating these allegations was outside the scope of our services and would require significant time and additional funding—necessitating an addendum to our work—the County repeatedly declined to pursue this matter. Consequently, our company was instructed not to investigate these serious allegations, which means the County may be missing out on crucial information.

DISPARAGEMENT OF WORK

During (and after) the evaluation process, multiple individuals—including employees, volunteers, and County employees—brought to our attention – in confidence for fear of retaliation - that the management of LifeLine Animal Project was actively trying to discredit the evaluation conducted by our company. These actions resemble some of the allegations (specifically, retaliation from LAP executives) made by advocates mentioned above (*Allegation Concerns*). Our experience with shelter evaluations has shown that when shelter management engages in "shift blaming," they are evading responsibility for their actions by attributing blame to other parties and circumstances.

It should be noted that the CEO of LAP was unable to meet with the evaluator because she was "too busy." The only interaction between the evaluator and the CEO occurred during an unplanned, surprise meeting in a back storage room. During this meeting, the CEO posed questions about the evaluator's critical observations regarding LAP. This encounter felt more like an "ambush" or a fishing expedition, as if the CEO was trying to gather information to prepare countermeasures.

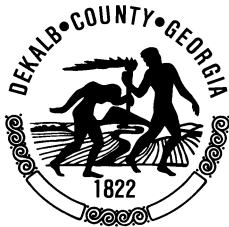
The CEO of LAP claims that much of the data included in this report is inaccurate. However, much of this information is sourced directly from LAP staff, and in cases where it is not, it has been provided by DeKalb County.

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Lastly, the CEO of LAP claims, "LifeLine had no contact with the evaluator before the onsite visit." However, email communications and Zoom meetings with the CEO of LAP provide evidence to the contrary.

DRAFT REPORT

A draft version of the report was delivered to DeKalb County on October 30, 2024, as requested. The report was subsequently shared with Lifeline Animal Project, allowing them to prepare responses in advance to counter and discredit critical findings before the final report was issued. By providing the draft report to Lifeline Animal Project in advance of the final report, DeKalb County compromised the confidentiality and objectivity of the report, violating its understanding with our company. This raises concerns about the impartial oversight of the shelter.



Office of Public Safety DeKalb County, Georgia

Joseph H. "Jack" Lumpkin, Sr.
Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Director of Public Safety

Police Department
Interim Chief Gregory Padrick

Fire Rescue Department
Chief Darnell Fullum

DEMA
Interim Director Cary Hollis

E-911 Communications
Director Carina Swain

Animal Services
Director Natasha Wallen

Medical Examiner's Office
Director Beoncia Loveless

June 13, 2025

Lavois Campbell
Chief Audit Executive
Office of Independent Internal Audit
1300 Commerce Drive, Suite 300
Decatur, Georgia 30030

RE: Management Response to DeKalb County Animal Shelter Evaluation Report Conducted by an External Consultant

Dear Mr. Campbell:

In accordance with DeKalb County, Georgia – Code of Ordinances / Organizational Act Section 10A- Independent Internal Audit, this is our response to the audit named above provided in this document. As required by the ordinance, our response includes **1)** a statement regarding our agreement or disagreement along with reasons for any disagreement, **2)** our plans for implementing solutions to issues identified, and **3)** the timetable to complete such plans.

If you have any questions about this response, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Joseph H. "Jack" Lumpkin, Sr.
Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Director of Public Safety

PART I FINDINGS - ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Recommendation

i. Long Term Strategic Plan needed

The consultant recommends that **LifeLine Animal Project** (here after referred to LifeLine):

- Create a **long-term strategic plan** with specific goals for capacity, operations, and facility improvements. (Page 9)
- Include metrics for evaluating progress and accountability at regular intervals.

Management Response

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☒ Agree ☐ Disagree	LifeLine response on Res.P 6. <i>LifeLine does, in fact, have a strategic plan that encompasses its DeKalb County operations. In addition to the No-Kill Resolution passed by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners in 2017, on December 12, 2023, the Board of Commissioners formally committed to supporting and implementing the Animal Services Advisory Board's five-year plan, "Common Sense Solutions: Plan for a Better Tomorrow" to "address shelter space, staffing needs, resources and support for pet families, to develop new legislation, and to reduce court-held animal delays." The evaluator did not request or review this plan. The Advisory Board's process and planning documents also included a data analysis and survey of current conditions impacting the shelter that is far more comprehensive than the evaluator's report. The evaluator conducted no such analysis.</i> <i>Finally, DeKalb County has allocated \$10 million in future funding to increase operational capacity, expand the physical sheltering capacity through both short-term and longer-term capital investments, and, in partnership with LifeLine, proactively address some of the root causes that are causing animals to pour into the shelter. None of these plans, even initiatives currently underway at the time of the evaluation, are mentioned in the report.</i>	Plan Adopted (December 2023-2028) Completion date Prior to (December 31, 2027)

DeKalb County Management Additional Response:

Moving forward, the Administration will collaborate with the Governing Authority-appointed Animal Services Advisory Board to incorporate appropriate and relevant performance metrics into the Board of Commissioners December 2023 adopted Resolution "Plan For A Better Tomorrow". The State of DeKalb Animals (SODA) review of May 16, 2025 detailed process accomplished in less than 16 months of that 60 month Strategic Plan. The Governing Authority of DeKalb County committed \$12.7 million in operating and capital funds in fiscal year 2025 to support animal care and welfare. The Administration will work with the Governing Authority appointed Animal Advisory Board LifeLine and the Animal Enforcement Services to delineate responsibility for accomplishing specifics of the "Plan for A Better Tomorrow".

PART II FINDINGS - FACILITY (EXTERIOR & INTERIOR)

I. FACILITY EXTERIOR – Exterior maintenance improvement is needed. The facility exterior is managed primarily by DeKalb County Facilities Management Department (Page 20).

Recommendation

The consultant recommends LifeLine and County management implement the following:

1. To enhance the safety of staff and volunteers arriving at the shelter during evening hours, it would be beneficial to trim any overgrown greenery that might create hiding spots. Furthermore, increasing the lighting on all exterior walls would significantly improve visibility and security. Consider offering more seating areas for visitors at the front of the building.
2. Contemplate installing sunshades to offer protection for visitors and pets.
3. Install at least two Pet Waste Stations with garbage bins, on either side of the building façade.
4. Consider installing dog hitches at various points along the front of the building allowing dog owners to attach their pet's leash.
5. Additional parking is required to handle the high traffic volume at the shelter, necessitating discussion at the County leadership level.
6. Pet Waste Stations should be checked daily and replenished as needed.
7. Management must ensure that the building grounds are well-organized and promptly dispose of any tripping hazards and garbage.
8. The use of mulch as a ground cover is questioned. Although some shelters around the country do utilize mulch in play yards, it is a practice that carries with it significant risks and challenges. Replace mulch with safer, easier-to-clean surfaces such as concrete or artificial turf.

Management Response

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☒ Partial	LifeLine Response 1., 2. 3. 4. 6. Other exterior facility recommendations in the report, such as the trimming of greenery found objectionable and the installation of sunshades, pet waste stations, and dog leash hitches, readily can be accomplished by the County if desired. 5. – No Response provided by Lifeline 7. LifeLine will work to better maintain the non-public exterior areas wherever possible, and DeKalb County already is providing additional resources to that end. In the recently renewed contract agreement, LifeLine will be overseeing the work of the cleaning contractor previously managed offsite by the County's Facilities Management team and can utilize this contractor to better maintain the non-public exterior grounds. With the shelter operating at 300% of its designed animal capacity, however, and the limitations on available storage areas, the challenge is formidable and likely cannot be completely overcome without additional storage units, which LifeLine has frequently requested from DeKalb County. 8. Currently at its own expense, LifeLine is exploring alternative solutions [to mulch], such as gravel, but there is no ideal solution without extensive capital improvements by the County. Even so, LifeLine recommends longer-term expansion investments to alleviate the need for these outdoor holding areas altogether.	Prior to July 17, 2025.
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: The Administration partially agrees with, and also disagrees with, several of the NCASE-specific recommendations. To each of those recommendations our response is as follows: 1. Crime Prevention Recommendations: The DeKalb County Police Department conducted a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design		

(CPTED) survey using their certified staff. All recommended improvements will be fully implemented between **July 15, 2025**.

2. **Sunshades:** Installation of sunshades will be completed prior to **July 15, 2025**.
3. **Pet Weigh Stations:** Two pet weigh stations will be installed before **July 15, 2025**.
4. **Dog Hitches:** This recommendation is **rejected** due to prior incidents wherein individuals left animals tethered overnight at the shelter, which raised animal safety and welfare concerns.
5. **Additional Parking:** A limited number of additional parking spaces will be added by **July 30, 2025**, in coordination with the operational activation of the overflow building.
6. **Daily Pet Waste Stations Check:** This recommendation will be implemented as proposed prior to July 15, 2025.
7. **Ongoing Practice:** This recommendation is already being carried out by management to the extent feasible within staffing and operational limits.
8. **Play Yard Surface Material:** The recommendation to use concrete is rejected. The recommendation to use artificial turf is **accepted after Facilities Management found a new & improved 'cooling' turf called the T-Cool System**, which maintains a surface temperature up to 50% cooler than normal artificial turf. This system is projected to be in place **July 15, 2025**.

(II) FACILITY INTERIOR – Areas of needed improvement

Recommendation

The recommendation of the NCAE will be added to the DeKalb County Lighting Replacement Plan, where it will be evaluated and funded if appropriate.

- **Improve Animal Housing** (Pg 22 – 26) – “*The animal housing areas within the DCAS facility are largely inadequate*”:
 - Redesign cramped and unsuitable housing, [and add additional suitable housing] to provide adequate space, lighting, and soundproofing.
 - Replace double-stacked cages with single-compartment housing to improve sanitation and reduce stress.
 - There is available funding within SPLOST that will be utilized to improve and enhance this area of concern. The Department of Agriculture does not classify the facility as largely inadequate.
- **Resolve Drainage Issues:** (Page 31)

- Re-slope floors in housing areas to prevent pooling water and install proper drainage systems.
- Funds will be allocated to correct the drainage systems as determined by engineers, users, and the administrators of DeKalb County. Those improvements should be completed prior to October 1, 2025.
- **Enhance HVAC Maintenance** – *“filthy ceiling grilles and filters”* observed: (page 30)
 - Increase the frequency of HVAC filter changes and ensure regular cleaning of ceiling grills.
 - Additional maintenance funds were allocated within the current budget to facilitate enhanced HVAC cleaning of ceiling grilles. Improvements are already being realized.
- **Non-public lighting** (Page 29) – *Agree changes to lighting [are needed], which likewise can be upgraded by the County.*
 - The recommendation of the NCAE will be added to the DeKalb County Lighting Replacement Plan, where it will be evaluated and funded if appropriate.
- **Reduce Noise Levels:** (Page 32)
 - Use soundproofing materials and partition high-noise areas to mitigate stress for animals and staff.
 - The recommendation of the NCAE to use soundproof materials and partition high-noise areas will be reviewed with the aid of noise reduction companies.
- **Sanitation Practices** (page 27) – *“cleaning and sanitation practices do not meet the standards required for an animal shelter”*: **Improve cleaning practices throughout facility to enhance sanitation.**

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management’s Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☒ Agree ☐ Disagree	LifeLine Response 1.Improve Animal Housing. Shelter Capacity - <i>LifeLine is in full agreement with this statement. As noted above, the shelter was designed originally to hold only 221 dogs, less than half the size that is</i>	December 31, 2025

	currently needed. The ongoing, large population of dogs mandatorily held in court cases reduces the optimum capacity to only 28% of what is actually needed. The need for DeKalb County's investment in continued expansion of sheltering facilities, however, is urgent and acute. The extraordinary challenges impacting animal care in the current facility will persist because the facility is too small, by design, to accommodate the growing animal sheltering needs of DeKalb County. DeKalb County's planned expansion project, which broke ground on November 21, 2024, will help alleviate some of the adverse conditions described in the report, but additional expansion projects will be needed to address the growing volume of people and pets needing support. Animal Cages...The Georgia Department of Agriculture, however, which inspects the shelter monthly, has approved all of these cages as acceptable housing. Nonetheless, LifeLine is aware and agrees that holding dogs in stainless-steel cages is not the best practice. The cages are far more stressful for the dogs and more challenging for their caretakers, but there is no alternative housing available. 2. Resolve Drainage Issues. A construction flaw in some of the flooring increases challenges for cleaning. Upgrade or improvement County responsibility. 3. HVAC system and maintenance, which is likewise overburdened by the number of animals in the shelter. County personnel maintain this system and can increase scheduled maintenance as necessary. 4. Changes to non-public lighting [are needed], which likewise can be upgraded by the County 5. Noise level- Isolation areas were deemed too small, poorly ventilated, and unsuitable for housing animals. Design and function in some of the dog	
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	<i>housing areas contribute to noise levels the evaluator found unacceptable.</i> 6. Sanitation Practices. <i>LifeLine will be taking over the management of this [cleaning] contractor and can ensure personnel are properly trained for working in the shelter environment.</i> <i>Cleaning and sanitation at the DeKalb shelter are routinely noted as satisfactory by state inspectors, although LifeLine admittedly has struggled on occasion at the highest population levels to meet state standards. Animal waste is a part of animal sheltering, and the building's inadequacy will continue to impede ideal cleaning and sanitation processes. Some of the challenges with cleaning and animal handling, such as the 50-pound dogs housed in cages that sit at eye-level, will be alleviated when the expansion project is completed. DeKalb County will need to make additional facility investments, however, to accommodate the demands and needs of DeKalb County's pets and people.</i>	
DeKalb County Management Additional Response:<i>The Administration agrees with the NCAE recommendations and LifeLine's responses to enhance the Facility Interior, but not the statement that animal housing areas within the DCAS facility are largely inadequate. Specific recommendation action plan are numbered below.</i> <i>1. There is available funding within SPLOST that will be utilized to improve and enhance this area of concern. The Department of Agriculture does not classify the facility as largely inadequate.</i> <i>2. Funds will be allocated to correct the drainage systems as determined by engineers, users, and the administrators of DeKalb County. Those improvements should be completed prior to October 1, 2025.</i> <i>3. Additional maintenance funds were allocated within the current budget to facilitate enhanced HVAC cleaning of ceiling grilles. Improvements are already being realized.</i> <i>4. The recommendation of the NCAE will be added to the DeKalb County Lighting Replacement Plan, where it will be evaluated and funded if appropriate.</i> <i>5. The recommendation of the NCAE to use soundproof materials and partition high-noise areas will be reviewed with the aid of noise reduction companies.</i> <i>6. The recommendation of the NCAE is accepted with the notation that funds were allocated in the current budget to improve the cleaning practices and disinfection within the Shelter.</i>		

PART III FINDINGS - OPERATIONS:

I. POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND PRACTICES for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Personal Safety, and Animal Handling Needs Improvement. (Page 38)

Recommendation

The consultant recommends LifeLine and County management implement the following:

Given the amount of chemicals stored at and handled by staff, as well as the potential for exposure and consequences of exposure, **we highly recommend this section [of Employee Policy Manual]** be revised with reference to Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and how they can be accessed. SDS are documents that provide information on how to safely handle, store, and use hazardous chemicals or substances.

Standard Operating Procedures Manual - Personal Safety (Page 38 – 42, Page 78)

- Revise SoP's to implement penalties for non-compliance with use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Revise SOP's: "Report all hazards to a supervisor immediately," should be expanded to list examples of hazards. The bullet point reference to Safety Data Sheets should be expanded to explain the importance of SDS and when and how to utilize them, as well as how to respond in an emergency.
- Provide regular safety training on the use of Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and chemical hazard protocols and respond to emergencies. Conduct refresher courses periodically to reinforce training.
- In addition, provide regular safety training on:
 - Euthanasia room doors shall remain closed at all times when euthanasia is being performed.
 - Listening to headphones or wearing Bluetooth devices is not allowed at any time. All employees must be able to hear their surroundings in case of an emergency."

Standard Operating Procedures Manual - Animal Handling Methods (Page 42)

- Recommend that LifeLine invest in providing hands-on training for all staff, which will further increase their animal handling ability as outlined in the section titled **Animal Handling Methods**.

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☒ Agree ☐ Disagree	LifeLine Response <i>LifeLine is implementing changes to its staffing structure in 2025 to strengthen training for staff at every level of the organization:</i> <i>LifeLine is restructuring its teams, adding additional supervisors as necessary in animal care and reducing the number of direct reports for each supervisor, to increase oversight and accountability and provide better training, mentoring, and support for its entire workforce.</i> <i>With the help of outside management and human resources consultants, LifeLine is implementing a ten-week training program for all directors, managers and supervisors to focus on coaching, training, and developing skills of new and current team members; decision making; communication effectiveness; and leadership development.</i> <i>LifeLine is providing more extensive animal care and animal handling skills training, and ensuring every animal care team member receives exemplary training, with checklists and goals, as part of the 2025 training program. Recognizing the need to fortify its management and training structure in the face of the dramatically increased workload, LifeLines leadership team began working on the 2025 staffing and training plan before the NCASE shelter evaluation began and long before the evaluation report was submitted. The ten-week training program is scheduled to commence within the first quarter of 2025.</i> <i>Additionally, LifeLine is developing a more robust internal communications platform and has added an administrative manager to update and maintain Standard Operating Procedures, organization policies, and training manuals and curriculums,</i>	August 31, 2025

	<i>and ensure consistent and accessible communication with all staff.</i> • <i>LifeLine will implement the evaluator's recommendation that the Employee Policy Manual be revised to include a reference to Safety Data Sheets (SDS), described as "documents that provide information on how to safely handle, store, and use a hazardous chemical or substance." (p. 38).</i> • <i>Currently, the Safety Data Sheets are kept in binders located in the employee break room and in the administrative area near the front of the building, and all personnel are instructed on their use. LifeLine will ensure that all staff are familiar with the SDS system and their location. The evaluator also described an incident when employees performing euthanasia left the room door open, in violation of written policy. It is unclear from the report whether the door was left open during the actual euthanasia process or whether the door was left open so that the evaluator could observe the procedure.</i> • <i>LifeLine has relaxed enforcement of the policy that staff do not wear headphones or earphones because of the excessive environmental noise levels, as noted elsewhere in the report. The policy prohibiting the use of these devices will be amended to allow their use in one ear only, which will also address the evaluator's complaint that staff listen to "stress-inducing music at loud volumes."</i>	
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: <i>The Administration agrees with the vast majority of NCASE's recommendations. We also agree with the ongoing LifeLine Response to the NCASE's staff improvement recommendations. The LifeLine staffing upgrades are ongoing and expected to be operational (staffed and trained) prior to August 31, 2025.</i>		

II. ANIMAL FEEDING PRACTICES (PAGE 43) AND ADMINISTERING MEDICATION (PAGE 44)

Recommendation

(a) **All animals should be fed** the best quality diet the shelter can afford, appropriate to the life stage of the animal. Good quality diets are generally more costly, but are more

readily digestible, and tend to produce less stool volume and better consistency, making clean-up easier and the environment more pleasant for visitors.

(b) **Medications should not be placed in an animal's food**, which is then placed inside a paper tray and given to the animal in its kennel or cage. medication is being collected and thrown away without the animal consuming the medication.

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☒ Partial	LifeLine Response <i>(a)... LifeLine will ensure all animal care staff are adhering to the feeding protocols established by LifeLines veterinary team.</i> <i>(b) LifeLine has a system in place to alert the veterinary team whenever a specific dog doesn't consume the medication in the food. This system, developed by the veterinary team, is the most efficient and safest method to deliver medication, avoiding staff from being individual handled and administering it to each dog requiring medication.</i>	July 17, 2025
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: The Administration agrees with the NCASE recommendation and LifeLine's response in II(a)-Animal feeding practices. The Administration disagrees with the NCASE recommendation in II(b): Medications should not be placed in an animal's food as well as cites the State of Georgia licensed veterinarian's approval of the current procedure.		

III. FUNDING AND BUDGET (PAGE 47)

Recommendation

We highly recommend DeKalb County consider having a Forensic Audit performed on LifeLine Animal Project's financials (as afforded under the Contract, Article Iv. General Conditions, D. Right to Audit.) The primary reason is to examine **if** there is a commingling of funds.

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☒ Disagree	LifeLine Response <i>LifeLines contract with DeKalb County is a fee-for-service contract. LifeLine does not hold or manage any funds belonging to DeKalb County. The organization is simply compensated for providing a service, as is the case with Fulton County. The factors alleged by the evaluator as raising "suspicion" are entirely irrelevant.</i> <i>LifeLine is an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is independently audited annually and its annual IRS Form 990s are available to the public on its website and through the GuideStar nonprofit organization database. LifeLines financials are reviewed in depth quarterly by its Board of Directors' Finance Committee, which is currently chaired by a managing partner in a large Atlanta area accounting firm. Past LifeLine Board Finance Committee Chairs during LifeLines tenure in DeKalb County include the CFO of one of the largest law firms in Atlanta, a partner at a global management consulting firm, and the former COO of DeKalb County. Though not required, LifeLine maintains completely separate accounting for its two County contracts, including separate payrolls and separate bank accounts.</i>	N/A
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: <i>LifeLine does not receive DeKalb County funds other than monthly contract service amounts. Thus, the Governing Authority's approved contract with LifeLine delineates those amounts. We will work with the County OIA to determine any future actions.</i>		

IV. RETENTION, RECOGNITION AND DISCIPLINE, AND RECOGNITION (PAGE 53)

Recommendation:

LifeLine Employee Policy Manual should be revised to include Disciplinary process and employee recognition.

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☒ Partial	LifeLine Response <i>LifeLine does have employee recognition programs, more recently, the Lifesaving Champion Awards, in which employees nominate their co-workers for exemplifying one of LifeLines core values.</i>	Prior to July 17, 2025.
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: <i>LifeLine does have an employee recognition program which includes Lifesaving Campion Awards and an employee "Kudos" bulletin board. The recognition program could be more robust. LifeLine is updating its Employee Manual and that process will be complete prior to July 17, 2025. Moving forward, Lifeline will enhance explanations of the Disciplinary process in the revised manual.</i>		

V. FEES, MONEY HANDLING, ACCOUNTING, FORMS (PAGE 55)

Recommendation:

The consultant recommends that LifeLine management revise the Standard Operating Procedures Manual to include a section outlining the handling or accounting of money.

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☒ Disagree	LifeLine Response <i>This is false. LifeLines CFO and finance team provide written instructions on the handling of fees, and managers and supervisors in the relevant areas receive training from LifeLines finance team. Similarly, the evaluator misstates that the department training manuals lack a section "detailing the various forms, their locations, completion instructions, and filing procedures." (p. 56) This information is</i>	N/A

	contained in the DCAS Community Support Manual, which the evaluator declined to review.	
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: The Administration disagrees with the NCASE assertion that the handling or accounting of money was not properly covered by LifeLine policy and procedures. The recommendation was standard protocol prior to the NCASE evaluation. The suggested protocol was in existence at the time of the on-site evacuation. Moving forward, LifeLine is encouraged to also include the suggested material within the SOP as recommended by the consultant.		

VI. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND PLANNING - DISASTER PREPAREDNESS (PAGE 60)

Recommendation:

It is recommended that LifeLine develop a comprehensive Emergency Plan **as required** by the contract/ RFP No. 18-500477, which states:

In collaboration with the County's Department of DeKalb Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), the selected vendor shall implement a disaster preparedness plan for the shelter to include the following in the event of a disaster:

- *phone/radio contact and protocol*
- *animal evacuation and care*
- *Paper/manual processes during computer down time*

We also recommend that the plan:

- o Include protocols for chemical spills, injuries, and disease outbreaks.
- o LifeLine conduct regular drills to test and improve emergency response capabilities.

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☒ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Partial	LifeLine Response: NONE	Prior to June 15, 2025.

DeKalb County Management Additional Response: *A dated Emergency Plan did exist at the time of the on-site visit, but apparently was not reviewed. That document has been updated with the assistance of DeKalb Emergency Management Agency (DEMA). DEMA has also assisted LifeLine in developing a site specific Emergency Disaster Preparedness Plan. The revised Emergency Procedures plan will be in operation prior to **June 15, 2025.***

PART IV FINDINGS - ANIMALS:

I. ASSESSMENT OF CAPACITY TO CARE (PAGE 67)

Recommendation:

LAP is not meeting its Capacity for Care, as animals are fed and cleaned twice per day.

Effective population management and monitoring should involve conducting a daily animal inventory to ensure accurate records of the shelter population and to verify that these records align with the data in Petpoint. However, staff have indicated that they no longer perform this inventory due to the time it consumes.

It is recommended that LifeLine and County Management:

Increase Staffing Levels (Page 72):

Hire additional staff to address workload imbalances and improve the staff-to-animal ratio to allow for conducting a daily animal inventory to ensure accurate records of the shelter population.

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☒ Disagree	LifeLines Response <i>For the number of animals in care during the on-site visit, the evaluator calculated that 172-174 staff hours were needed each day to meet the minimum standard, and on one day during the visit, LifeLine came up six hours short, primarily because of absent staff. On the remainder of the days during the visit, LifeLine exceeded the minimum staffing hours required by as much as 44 hours.</i> <i>The evaluator's doubled calculation, however, is not supported by any of the authorities cited above and apparently assumes that LifeLine is the only organization in the country that feeds animals twice a day – a common protocol notwithstanding the evaluator's erroneous interpretation.</i> Animal Inventory Count (Page 72) <i>Contrary to the evaluator's statement under the subheading "Population Management and Inventory," LifeLines animal care management team does conduct a daily animal inventory. The evaluator does not specify which staff member "indicated" that he or she did not perform the inventory, and therefore, it is</i>	Results TBD in 2026 (State of DeKalb Animal Review).

	<i>not clear if performing inventory was part of that specific staff member's responsibilities. Nonetheless, the inventory is performed daily by the animal care management team.</i>	
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: <i>The Administration agrees there are too many animals being turned into the shelter. The Administration along with Shelter Management and the Animal Advisory Board continue to work daily to reduce the population of the shelter via various initiatives to return animals to their owners before they enter the shelter, fostering of animals, rescue agencies referrals, etc. The administration disagrees with the calculation of the evaluator and suggest that the LifeLine minimum standard cited by the evaluator is at least the norm, but typically surpassed. Shelter population control will be assisted in the future via the opening of overflow buildings and specific ordinance and policy DeKalb County policy enhancements.</i>		

II. ANIMAL ENRICHMENT AND WELL-BEING (PAGE 80)

Recommendation

It is recommended that LifeLine management expand animal enrichment programs:

The only form of enrichment that animals receive would be time outside of their individual cage or kennel. This is in part because of the large animal population being housed at DeKalb County Animal Services (DCAS) operated by LifeLine, which exceeds the capacity for care. Implement daily enrichment activities, such as playtime, puzzles, and sensory stimulation.

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☒ Disagree	LifeLine Response <i>The evaluator's assessment of animal enrichment omits any description of the involvement of volunteers, who play a substantial and well-organized role in providing animal enrichment. LifeLines volunteer program, described below, is structured so that volunteers acquire the training and experience necessary to work with animals exhibiting varying degrees of behavior and socialization.</i>	N/A

DeKalb County Management Additional Response: *The Administration agrees with LifeLine that the value of the volunteers were not appropriately recognized or credited in the consultants report.. We also urge LifeLine to continue efforts to enrich animal well-being as the Shelter's population is reduced given DeKalb County policy enhancements of the DeKalb County animal care and welfare system.*

II. ANIMAL TRANSFER AND TRANSPORT (PAGE 86)

Recommendation

The financial accounting concern regarding animal transport from the facility is significant. At question is the manner in which LAP records these transactions in its books. **A forensic accountant is needed for thorough review of this process.**

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☒ Disagree	LifeLine Response <i>With no basis in fact, the evaluator gratuitously raises a "financial accounting concern" over the manner LifeLine "records these transactions in the books." (p. 87) There are no monetary transactions involved in transferring animals to outside rescue groups or to Lifelines' own adoption center. In fact, the transport vehicle pictured in this section is owned, operated, and insured by LifeLine at its own expense.</i>	N/A
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: <i>The Administration agrees with LifeLine. The NCASE's recommendation appears to be an adoption of the position voiced by several critics, who constantly wrote emails to NCASE and DeKalb County stakeholders. Moving forward, the Administration will consult for advice from the Office of Independent Audit.</i>		

PART V FINDINGS - ANIMAL VETERINARY MEDICINE

I. INTAKE EXAM ISSUES (PAGE 92)

Recommendation

The consultant recommends that Intake Exams are relocated:

- o Conduct exams in quieter, low-traffic areas to minimize stress for animals.
- o Replace intake cages with those that are larger and appropriate for the size of the animal.

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☒ Partial	LifeLine Response <i>These are physical limitations of a facility too small to accommodate the number of animals coming in and with no storage capacity. LifeLine agrees that the intake area is not sufficient for the shelter's volume. Additionally, the evaluator cites the temporary cages in intake as too small and an "unacceptable practice." (p. 93) The evaluator fails to mention, however, that animals are kept in these cages only temporarily for intake, then moved within a short period of time into the main kennel areas. LifeLine agrees that the intake cages are inadequate, but the limitations of the facility afford no better solution.</i>	Prior to July 17, 2025
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: <i>The Administration partially agrees with NCASE's assessment and concurs with LifeLine's position that animals are promptly moved from smaller cages, which are permitted under Department of Agriculture policies, to appropriate kennel areas. The upcoming activation of the overflow buildings, expected in part prior to July 17, 2025, will further help alleviate the concerns identified by NCASE.</i>		

Also, it is **important to note** that if NCASE's recommendations were applied in a strictly literal manner, the DeKalb County Animal Shelter would be **unjustly classified** as inadequate, **despite** meeting regulatory standards and actively implementing improvements. The Department of Agriculture inspected the Shelter on May

II. CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AND LOGS NEEDS TO BE ENHANCED (PAGE 94)

Recommendation

The consultant **highly recommends** LifeLine invest in and begin using a Veterinary Controlled Substance Logbook and eliminate the use of a three-ring binder with loose-leaf sheets of paper containing controlled substances.

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☒ Agree ☐ Disagree	LifeLine Response None	July 17, 2025
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: The Administration agrees with the NCASE's recommendation, but the official Code of Georgia Annotated appears to provide the employed veterinarian the discretion to determine such processes. Moving forward, the Administration will request the DeKalb Law Department for an opinion, while requesting LifeLine to request the veterinarian to implement the consultant's recommendation.		

Part VI Findings - Volunteers

I. VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT - Needs improvement (Page 107)

Recommendation

- a. **Volunteer manual and training** - We recommend a comprehensive overhaul of the volunteer management program at DCAs. This should include a complete

rewrite and enhancement of the Volunteer Manual, the introduction of more in-depth training in cleaning and sanitation, animal behavior, and animal handling, and the establishment of a management structure with a ratio of one full-time staff member for every 80 volunteers.

In addition, they offer comprehensive training on animal handling, sanitation practices, and emergency response.

b. Volunteer job description – We recommend that LifeLine management revises the volunteer job descriptions to include more than one to two sentences which provides only an overview of the position (essentially a job summary). The description should be revised to include important sections such as:

- Qualifications, skills and experience
- Job performance expectations
- Purpose
- Working conditions
- Training provided
- *Reporting to*

Management Response:

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☒ Partial	LifeLine Response <i>a. His recommendation for a “comprehensive overhaul of the volunteer management program” is rooted in a substantially flawed understanding of the actual program. His additional recommendation of requiring one full-time employee for every 80 active volunteers would require an unnecessary, cost-prohibitive expenditure of resources for seven additional volunteer coordinators, who, in the cramped facility, would have nowhere to work.</i> <i>While the organization declines the recommendation to add seven additional volunteer coordinators, LifeLine has already addressed the structural issue identified by the evaluator of having a single manager over both the adoption and volunteer programs. This pilot effort aimed to leverage the strengths of a specific manager to increase volunteer engagement in adoptions and pet matchmaking. While the program did provide essential volunteer support for the adoption process, there were concerns about the oversight of the volunteer program. This has been corrected with a new,</i>	Prior to July 17, 2025.

	<i>dedicated volunteer coordinator, reporting directly to LifeLines Director of Volunteer Services, to provide training and coaching to volunteers, be available during work hours for questions or concerns, and act as the liaison between the volunteers and shelter operations.</i> <i>Additionally, LifeLine already is revising its volunteer manual. The manual, however, which is the only volunteer resource reviewed by the evaluator, is designed to introduce volunteers to LifeLine, provide an overview of the program, and outline the organization's written volunteer policies. It is not designed as a training manual, which appears to be the evaluator's primary criticism. Volunteers undergo an extensive training program before volunteering independently.</i> <i>b. Job description enhancement LifeLine Response:</i> <i>None.</i>	
DeKalb County Management Additional Response: The Administration agrees with several aspects of NCASE's recommendations and notes LifeLine's responses to other elements that are more feasible and reasonable in practice. 1. LifeLine is currently revising its Volunteer Manual in alignment with NCASE's recommendations. The updated manual will include revised job descriptions and a clearly outlined volunteer training program. 2. LifeLine has already implemented a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator position, a newly created role that works collaboratively with other management staff to support and grow the volunteer program. 3. The recommendation to adopt a staffing ratio of one full-time staff member for every 80 volunteers is considered unsubstantiated and impractical. The Administration does not support this portion of NCASE's recommendation.		

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS - (WEAKNESSES TO ADDRESS) AND QUESTION FOR THE COUNTY (PG. 127)

Recommendation

1. **Management and County Commissioners should review the effectiveness of the DeKalb County's 2017 No-Kill Resolution** and the contractual mandate that LifeLine euthanize animals "only when absolutely necessary because of the health, well-being or behavior of the animal." (DeKalb County RFP No. 18-500477, Statement of Work, p 13)

The volume of animals housed at DCAS raises an important question for the County: Are the service provider's (LAP) efforts to maintain a high live release rate leading to decisions or actions that compromise animal care to achieve marketing goals? Additionally, can the goals of a high live release rate and humane animal care coexist? Or does the pursuit of one standard inevitably result in compromising the other?

2. **Management should consider whether the mission of LifeLine Animal Project aligns with that of DeKalb County and DeKalb County Animal Services?** The County should consider whether the primary goal of sheltering and saving animals is being exploited for the marketing advantage of the LifeLine Animal Project.
3. **The County should conduct a feasibility study to determine which organization is best positioned to offer the most effective animal shelter services:** the County, LAP, or a different third party? – The County should assess whether the organizational structure and executive management of LAP are effective and suitable for operating a large, complex animal shelter, following best practices for animal care and housing?

Is it possible for the County to successfully manage and operate its own facility while using the best practices, all within the same budget as outsourcing? This approach could enhance efficiency, improve control over operations and finances, and foster greater community involvement.

Management Agreement	Description of Management's Action Plan to Address Finding	Estimated Timeline to implement Action Plan
☐ Agree ☒ Disagree	LifeLine Response <i>Amidst record-high intake, LifeLine readily acknowledges the nearly insurmountable challenges of caring for 700 animals in a building originally designed for half that number, and for barely a third of the number of dogs in care. The evaluator, however, does not acknowledge the inadequacy of the building for the service LifeLine is mandated to provide.</i>	Undetermined

	<i>Erroneously questioning whether the mission of DeKalb County and DeKalb County Animal Services aligns with LifeLine, the evaluator continues, “The County should consider whether the primary goal of sheltering and saving animals is being exploited for the marketing advantage of LifeLine Animal Project.”</i> <i>First and foremost, LifeLine vehemently rejects the concept that lifesaving and humane care are mutually exclusive or incompatible. Recognizing the enormous challenge posed by the current facility and volume, LifeLine is committed to improving operations where needed to achieve the lifesaving goals of the organization, the community, and DeKalb County. “Humane care” that results in the death of hundreds of healthy or treatable, adoptable animals is not humane. LifeLine strongly encourages DeKalb County to reject this dichotomy posed by the evaluator as decidedly inhumane and discount the evaluation accordingly.</i> <i>The evaluator’s suggestion that DeKalb County might better manage and operate its own facility is implicitly premised on the false notion that DeKalb County will accept killing its way to a more manageable workload. LifeLine acknowledges the operational challenges within its control and is already working to improve animal care, particularly in the areas of cleaning and sanitation, through regimented staff and leadership training, increased accountability, and transparency. The organization remains dedicated to lifesaving initiatives and humane care for all animals. LifeLine urges DeKalb County to continue supporting facility improvements and expansion, as well as the lifesaving strategies that reflect the County’s and community’s commitment, and LifeLines promise, to the animals.</i>	
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DeKalb County Management Additional Response

The Administration and the Board of Commissioners have consistently reviewed the impact of the 2017 No-Kill Resolution and will continue to do so. The Governing Authority remains committed to aligning its goals, objectives, and policies with the interests of DeKalb County stakeholders. In December 2023, the Board of Commissioners adopted via resolution an Animal Advisory Board’s Plan for a Better Tomorrow for 2023-2028.

The Project Administrator finds no evidence that LifeLine is exploiting the No-Kill designation for marketing purposes. While it is true that DeKalb County could operate its own shelter independently, the Project Administrator does not recommend pursuing that course of action at this time.