

Pet Ownership & Licensing

Led by: Director of Emergency Management & Community Safety

Service Description

Pet Ownership & Licensing provides citizen education on responsible pet ownership and regulates owners under the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw. Animal care services are offered to ensure the health and well-being of recovered animals until they can be reunited with their owners or adopted into new homes.

Service Updates

Key Service Results

Pet Ownership and Licensing ensures the safety and well-being of Calgary's pets, housed and lost, and the community at large, while addressing the shelter capacity concern to improve services for animals.

A successful adoption event was held in November 2023 where 75 cats and 14 dogs were adopted. This event was an opportunity to create awareness of Animal Services' shelter and available animals looking for new homes. (Initiative 1)

To improve the safety of Calgarians, a Program Coordinator has been hired to develop youth educational programs for delivery at schools to reduce dog bite occurrences. This program will begin in the Spring of 2024. This Coordinator will also lead the development of a foster network to house animals under our Safe Keep Program in foster homes, reducing time in our facility and improving the welfare of these animals. (Initiatives 2, 7, 8)

The service moves forward to replace its online payment and shelter management system with a more intuitive system, enabling improved tracking of lost pets, communication with customers, and variable licensing rates. It will also include facial recognition technology and push notifications for localized incidents.

Service Challenges

Pet Ownership and Licensing faces challenges with a 17% annual increase in impounded animals and a decline in the animal return-to-owner rate from 78% to 35% over the last five years. This is attributed to rising pet care costs and a lack of pet-friendly housing for renters, impacting the shelter's capacity. While partnership agreements with other rescue groups can provide some support, conflicting priorities continue to result in limited numbers of adoptable animals being transferred. This increased workload, both physically and mentally for shelter staff, and required the hiring of additional limited-term employees.

To address these challenges, the service is considering facility renovations to create additional kennel space following Canadian Shelter Guidelines, increasing communications and marketing around the service while highlighting the importance of pet licensing and its benefits, permanently reopening Animal Service's adoption program and introducing a new foster program.

Trends & Potential Uncertainties

Pet owners in Calgary are facing several challenges, including increased veterinary costs, housing difficulties and licensing issues. Calgarians looking to surrender their animals are met with a waitlist of up to eight weeks. This is due to The Humane Society following the Capacity 4 Care model, leaving owners with little choice but to find alternative homes themselves or simply allowing the animal to go free in hopes it will be taken in by a shelter, including Animal Services, vet clinics, or new homes.

Animal Services is seeing an increasing number of dogs and cats that were likely released pets, many of which require expensive medical treatments or surgeries. This has led to citizens looking to The City for support in record numbers.



Measuring Our Performance

Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

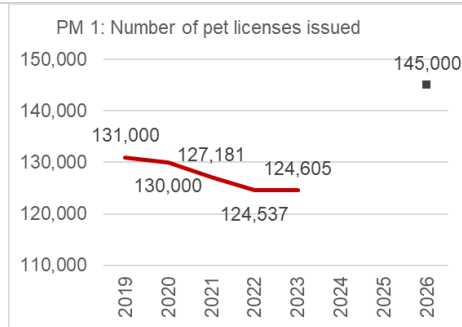
→ Progressing as planned

⊖ Not progressing as planned

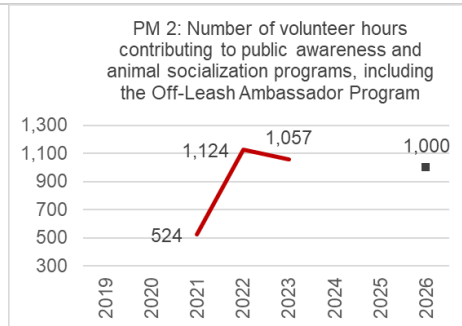
Performance Measures

Story behind the numbers

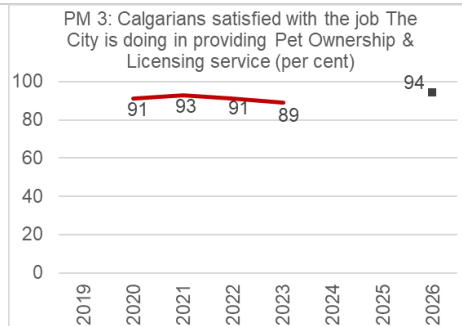
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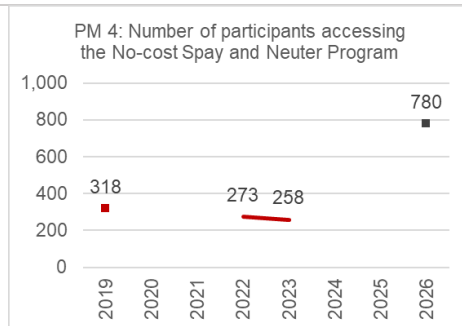
In today's economy, pet owners may face a dilemma whether to prioritize their pets' license fees or other essential expenses such as groceries, mortgage/rent and utilities.



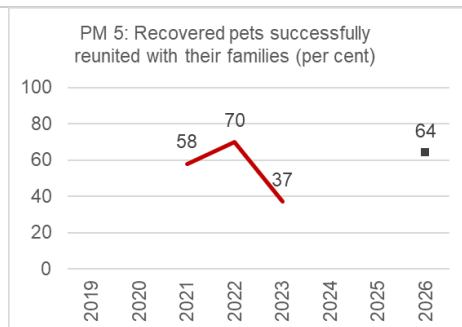
The Off-Leash Ambassador Program has shown resilience, maintaining high volunteer engagement despite leadership turnover and a slight decrease in volunteer hours compared to 2022. The program's estimated economic value this year is \$24,734.



Pet Ownership & Licensing has received high levels of citizen satisfaction, as reported in the 2023 Spring Survey of Calgarians. This satisfaction level has demonstrated consistency, remaining relatively stable when compared to the 2022 survey results.

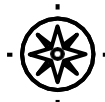


The No Cost Spay Neuter Program needs to continue its focus on cats. The shelter has experienced a significant increase in the number of stray cats being admitted due to running at large. The best recourse to the overpopulation of cats is to have them spayed or neutered.



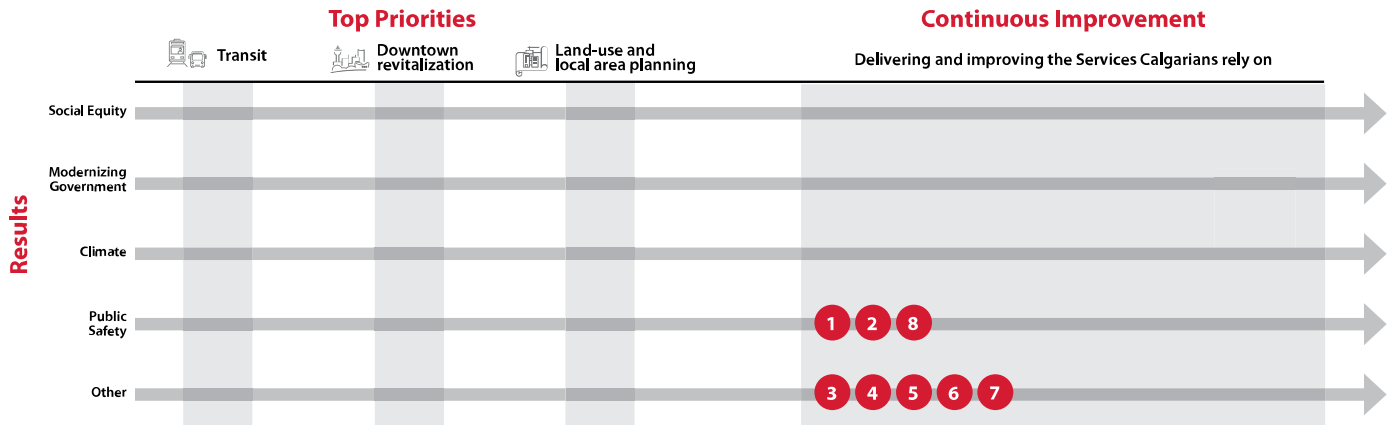
Due to the current economic situation, fewer owners have claimed their pets or are relinquishing their pets as strays with no intent of redeeming.






Progress on Service Delivery

Alignment with Council Refined Priorities and Result Areas



Legend Completed Progressing as planned Not progressing as planned Not started Initiative number

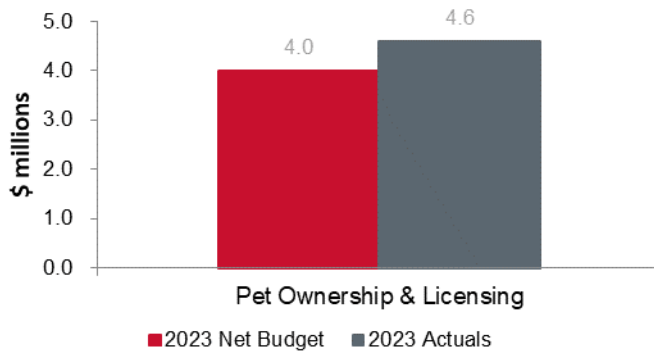
Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
1 Promote responsible pet ownership practices through increased community outreach, advocacy and engagement.	Communications is actively running campaigns through various channels such as media (print, radio and TV), social media, Calgary.ca and City employee channels to increase animal adoptions, promote partnerships and to remind citizens of the importance of pet licencing.	
2 Enhance community safety by increasing collaboration with our partners to implement dog bite prevention and dog safety education to Calgarians.	A Program Coordinator was hired in 2023 with an emphasis on developing a Dog Bite Prevention Program. The program's development included collaborating with the Calgary Humane Society to ensure there is no redundancy and increase education for students. The program aims to attend schools in April 2024, where metrics will start to be collected.	
3 Promote bylaw compliance and mitigate impacts to surrounding communities by delivering education and awareness to Calgarians on Livestock Emotional Support Animals and urban agriculture practices.	Pet Ownership & Licencing is committed to responding to all inquiries for support regarding Livestock Emotional Support Animals and urban agriculture practices. This includes reviewing educational and training opportunities that will promote bylaw compliance.	
4 Expedite animal reunifications and increase compliance with the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw by communicating the value of pet licencing.	Although reunifications have dropped in 2023, Pet Ownership & Licencing is working to increase Calgarians' awareness of pet unification through animal licencing. This includes increasing knowledge of the services and programs offered by Animal Services. Community Safety Peace Officers continue to assist with following up on non-compliant Calgarians and highlight the importance of licencing their pets and all the benefit that entails.	
5 Improve responsiveness and access to virtual services by modernizing the technical infrastructure supporting the Animal Licencing Management System.	The ALPO/Chameleon replacement project is experiencing a delay in moving forward, due to challenges of completing the proof of concept to be compliant with The City of Calgary's Information Technology Standards.	
6 Build employee resiliency by delivering training and resources to support mental health and wellness.	Pet Ownership & Licencing recognizes that working with shelter animals and their owners can be challenging. To support staff, the service will be making an eight-week online course available in February 2024. The course, offered by the University of Florida's Shelter Medicine Program, focuses on stress, burnout, empathic strain and moral distress.	
7 Enhance animal health and well-being at the Animal Services Centre by strengthening coordination with our partnering agencies that support pet rescue and safe keeping.	Pet Ownership & Licencing is working with Parachute For Pets to provide extra resources to assist in the pet safekeeping for rough sleepers. Parachute for Pets provides support for vulnerable Calgarians before their pets are turned into shelters. This will alleviate the stress on the facility's capacity issue and reduce the animal's length of stay.	

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
8 Promote animal and community safety by streamlining and expediting processes that establish nuisance and vicious dog designations.	The streamlined process is now fully operational with improved designations, with help from the law department.	



Service Updates on Financial Performance

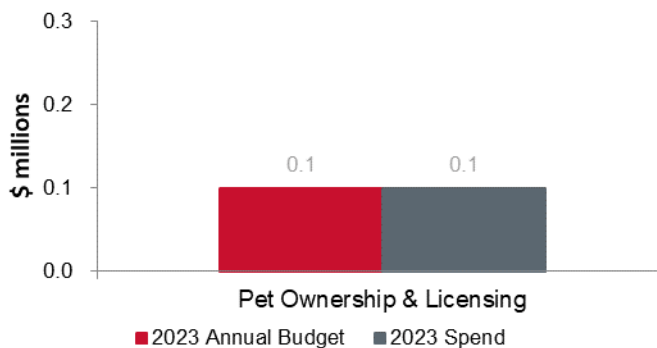
Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of December 31, 2023



Operating Budget Updates - 2023 net operating budget vs actuals:

Pet Ownership & Licensing has unfavourable operating variance of \$0.6 million. The primary driver of the variance was an increased need in limited term Shelter support staff and resources due to increase in impounded animals, and decrease of redemption by owners.

Capital Budget and Spend as of December 31, 2023



Capital Budget Updates - 2023 total capital budget vs 2023 spend:

Pet Ownership & Licensing has spent 85.6 per cent of the 2023 approved capital budget.

Year-to-date, the capital expenditures includes major projects focus on modernization of government through technology initiatives such as the ongoing investment in the One City Coordinated Records Management System (OCRMS) program; for which spending is on track with total budget for 2023. Annual acquisition and life cycle of equipment required for shelter and kennel staff being done under a larger program for which Bylaw Education & Compliance is the steward.