

# VENTURA COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES

Saving Lives Each And Every Day



Meghan Schade Photography  
@mschadepphoto



## 2020 Annual Report

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## A message from the Director...

JACKIE ROSE

Dear Friends,

Wow, what a year this has been for us all during these unprecedented times! I would like to share with you a number of enhancements and modifications we were able to accomplish despite these challenging times and provide an update regarding some of the changes we have made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, we created new processes and procedures to ensure a safe environment for all shelter guests and made significant modifications to the shelter itself as we adapted to this new environment. These changes included the following:

- Created an appointment-based pet adoption system which resulted in thousands of pet adoptions since the pandemic began.
- Transitioned our adoption counseling process to virtual services, providing phone consultation and matching of animals with potential adopters prior to them coming to the shelter to officially meet their new best friend and completing the adoption paperwork.
- Implemented a telemedicine process to allow our foster caregivers access to our veterinarians for medical consultation without having to come to the facility, unless absolutely necessary.



- Implemented a text messaging mobile app, so shelter guests can safely wait in their vehicles until they are paged.
- Promoted the use of our online licensing system and established a drop-box at the Camarillo Shelter.
- Unfortunately, to accommodate these changes, we suspended services at our Simi Valley Shelter and consolidated all staff to the Camarillo facility in order to provide these enhanced services.

Second, as part of our ongoing commitment to continual performance improvement, we addressed several areas of service and made the following changes unrelated to COVID-19:

- Restructured our Canine Behavioral position and created two (2) new additional positions! We now have two (2) Canine Care Coordinators and one (1) Feline Care Coordinator. These positions are charged with helping to ensure that all dogs and cats receive daily enrichment, behavioral assessments, and work closely with VCAS staff and rescue

transfer partners to ensure they have a clear pathway to finding a loving family.

- Made numerous modifications to the Camarillo Shelter to provide better housing for the animals and established an office-based Adoption Counseling Center to facilitate better customer service and adoption counseling.
- Established a VCAS Safety Committee and enhanced our security at the shelter to help provide greater safety to staff, volunteers and the public.
- In an effort to increase public safety, we successfully sought the approval from the County of Ventura Board of Supervisors to amend the County Ordinance requiring veterinarians to report rabies vaccinations to VCAS and revised processes to accommodate this change.
- We launched PetHub Smart Tags to help increase the opportunity for lost pets to be quickly reunited with their owner and avoid having to come to the shelter. These tags replaced the old metal pet license tags and feature unique QR codes which allow a finder to immediately access owner information and contact them directly to reunite them with their pet. These new tags are available at time of licensing (at no additional cost to the pet owner) or may be obtained prior to license renewal for a modest fee of \$10.00.
- Successfully negotiated new five (5) year contracts with the cities that we serve: Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Simi Valley and Ventura.
- Established a new partnership with Mercy House, the agency that operates two homeless shelters in Ventura County, to provide veterinary care to the animals living at the shelters with their owners.
- Launched a new and enhanced website that offers increased user accessibility and improved technology.
- Established partnerships with seven (7) local pet supply businesses. These partnerships allow shoppers the option of purchasing additional pet food items at the time of check out. This extra food is collected by our Field Officers and taken to the Camarillo Animal Shelter to help stock our Pet Food Pantry. This critical pet food helps families in our community who may be choosing between feeding themselves and feeding their pets.
- Additionally, we helped to provide pet food to seniors through our partnership with [Ventura County Area Agency on Aging](#) during COVID-19 stay-at-home orders.

Third, and arguably most important, we provided care to almost 5,500 animals at our shelter, adopted out over 2,600 animals to new and loving families, reunited over 1,000 lost pets with their families, transferred over 650 animals to our transfer/placement partners, and maintained an average live release rate of 94.4%. Additionally, our Pet Retention program provided services to over 1,150 animals, thus helping pet owners keep their pets and not have to surrender them to the shelter. Finally, our field officers responded to almost

8,500 calls in the community.

As you can see, we have been busy this past year, but none of this would have been possible without our incredible staff and volunteers! I am extremely proud of our team and am honored to have worked with them this past year. As essential workers, our staff have worked tirelessly since the start of the pandemic. Our Dispatch Team and Field Officers continued to respond to all needs in the community and the staff who provide direct services to the animals and people who come to the shelter, have been there every day to fulfill our mission. Additionally, many of our volunteers have continued to support us by providing loving foster homes for animals in need, coming to the shelter to walk dogs and socialize cats, feeding/enriching our bunnies, doing laundry, helping with pet food distribution to the community from our Pet Food Pantry, assisting with rabies vaccination clinics and fundraising activities, and engaging in the other numerous daily activities.

Lastly, I know that many of us have personally struggled this past year. Whether we have been directly impacted by a loved one who contracted COVID-19, had changes to our work life, had our children attending school virtually, faced or continue to face economic challenges, limited our contact with family and friends, and/or felt impacted by the various restrictions imposed to help us all stay safe, we have all felt the pains of 2020. Nonetheless, the ongoing support of VCAS throughout this year has been truly amazing and we are so very grateful!

In closing, thank you all for helping us get through this past year. We pulled together, fought through 2020 and are ready to take on 2021. I wish you all a healthy and safe year ahead and I look forward to things to come in new year!

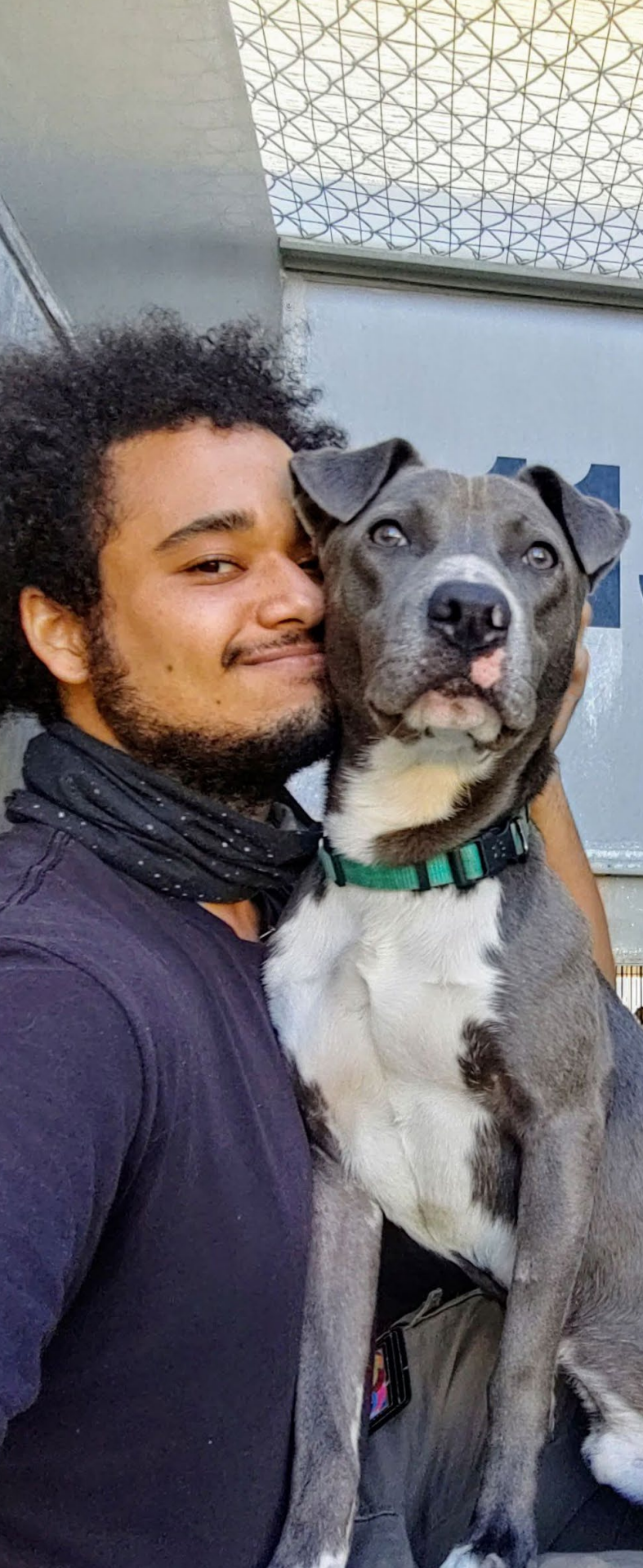
Jackie Rose



Director



Meghan Schade Photography  
@mschadepphoto



## About Us...

Ventura County Animal Services (VCAS) provides an array of services to the residents and animals of Ventura County. Some of these services include, pet adoptions, lost & found, rabies suppression, animal sheltering, access to field services, cruelty investigations, low-cost vaccination clinics, pet licensing, volunteer and foster opportunities and emergency disaster response.

VCAS operates two open-admission, life-saving, municipal shelters. The main shelter is located in Camarillo and houses the Administrative Offices and Veterinary Hospital. The Camarillo Shelter has a 400-animal capacity which can more than double during declared natural disasters.

The second shelter is the Simi Valley Animal Shelter. This smaller facility and can house up to 40 animals and offers many of the same services and programs as the Camarillo Shelter, such as the



WE PLACED  
**94.4%**  
OF THE ANIMALS  
IN OUR CARE.

intake of stray, pet adoptions, pet licensing, and the reclaim of lost animals by their owner.

VCAS provides contract services to the residents of eight (8) cities within the county: Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Simi Valley, Ventura, and all unincorporated areas of Ventura County. VCAS is dedicated to improving the lives of the animals in their care, and to safeguard the community through the shelter of stray animals and suppression of the rabies virus.

## 2020 Highlights

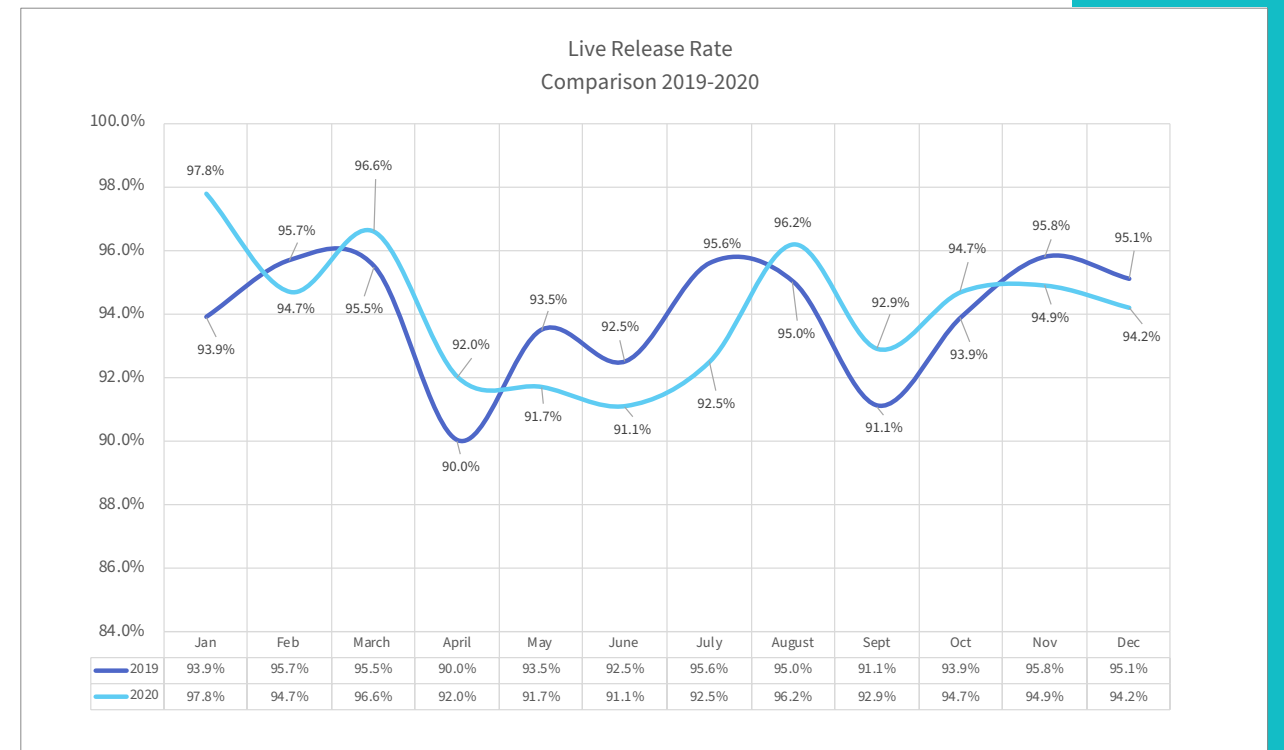
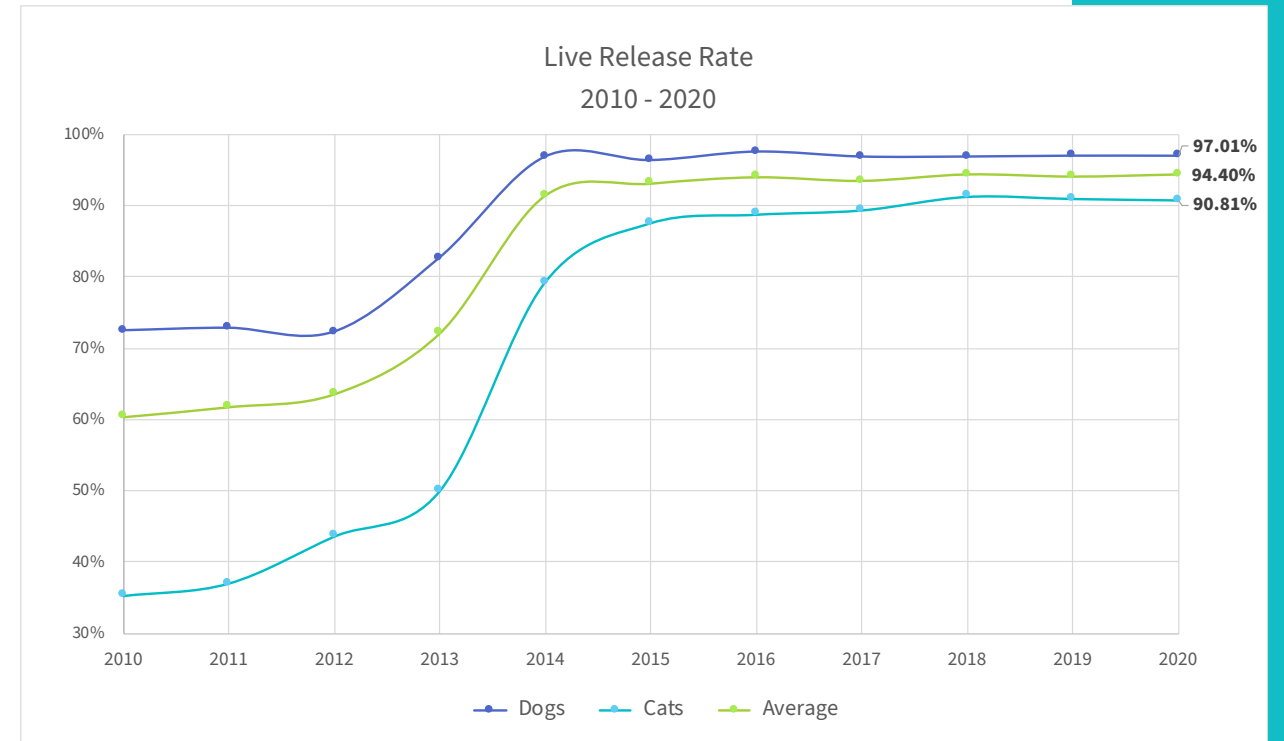
5,443	<b>TOTAL ANIMAL INTAKE</b>
4,330	<b>Stray Pets</b>
526	<b>Surrendered Pets</b>
1,057	<b>Lost Animals Reunited</b>
2,644	<b>Pet Adoptions</b>
39,257	<b>Total Phone Calls Received</b>
47,793	<b>Pet Licenses Processed</b>
47,835	<b>Volunteer Hours</b>



## Our Live-Saving Mission...

VCAS embarked on an unprecedented life-saving mission nine (9) years ago that changed the very foundation of our department. We ended the humane euthanasia of healthy, adoptable or treatable animals. Animals entering our shelter no longer had a time limit. Animals were no longer “at-risk” due to lack-of-space or their length-of-stay. As a result, our shelter capacity began increasing. Over the next few years, we created numerous programs and positions to help animals find a pathway to a positive outcome.

Just two (2) years after embarking on this journey, VCAS passed a **Live Release Rate of 90%**, but the goal was much more than a number; it was sustainability and quality of care. To maintain this exceptional level of life-saving practices, we needed community support and positive collaboration with stakeholders within the county. Since that time, we have forged strong partnerships within the community and we are extremely proud of the work we have accomplished together.



# Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to our life-saving efforts! They are the lifeblood of dozens of shelter programs and they have enhanced every department with their dedication and compassion. Without volunteer support, we could not function the way we do. Though it would be impossible to list every way volunteers impact the shelter, we would like to recognize a few programs that depend on volunteer support:

 **10,858**  
Volunteer Hours Donated



# Volunteer Programs



## VCAS Volunteer Program (Established 2011)

This is the main volunteer program at VCAS where volunteers make a difference in the daily lives of animals in our care. This program feeds into every other volunteer-based program. Volunteering is easy and there are many ways to help. Learn more at [www.vcas.us/Volunteer](http://www.vcas.us/Volunteer).



## VCAS Bunny Brigade (Established 2009)

Our Bunny Brigade is a 100% volunteer-run team who are responsible for every aspect of a rabbit's welfare, from intake to adoption. They provide exceptional care for all rabbits who enter our shelter system and are highly knowledgeable and extremely dedicated! Learn more at [www.vcas.us/BunnyBrigade](http://www.vcas.us/BunnyBrigade).



## VCAS EVRT Team (Established 1985)

The Emergency Volunteer Rescue Team (or EVRT) is our department's on-call emergency volunteer group. They are activated by VCAS during declared disasters. This team assists in the evacuation of livestock and domestic animals. If you are interested in joining this emergency response team, learn more and sign-up at [www.vcas.us/EVRT](http://www.vcas.us/EVRT).



## Animal Services Foundation of Ventura County (Established 1986)

The Animal Services Foundation of Ventura County is a 501c3 non-profit organizations dedicated to fundraising activities on behalf of VCAS. Our board consists of compassionate individuals who help to support our daily efforts of providing the highest quality of care to our animals. Learn more about our Foundation at [www.VCASfoundation.org](http://www.VCASfoundation.org).

# Volunteer Programs



## VCAS Foster Care Program (Established 2014)

VCAS Foster Parents are truly dedicated and selfless. They open their homes and hearts to homeless animals in need. Some foster parents take on litters of kittens needing around-the-clock feedings while others provide a quiet space for stressed animals to rest, recover or rejuvenate. Learn more about our VCAS Foster Care program at [www.vcas.us/Foster](http://www.vcas.us/Foster).



## VCAS Humane Education Program (Established 2016)

This youth education program is managed by dedicated volunteers who work with local schools to provide education regarding the wellbeing and welfare of animals. This program culminates with a field trip to the Camarillo Animal Shelter where they continue their learning with hands-on animal experience. This program was placed on a temporary hold as schools began closing due to COVID-19.



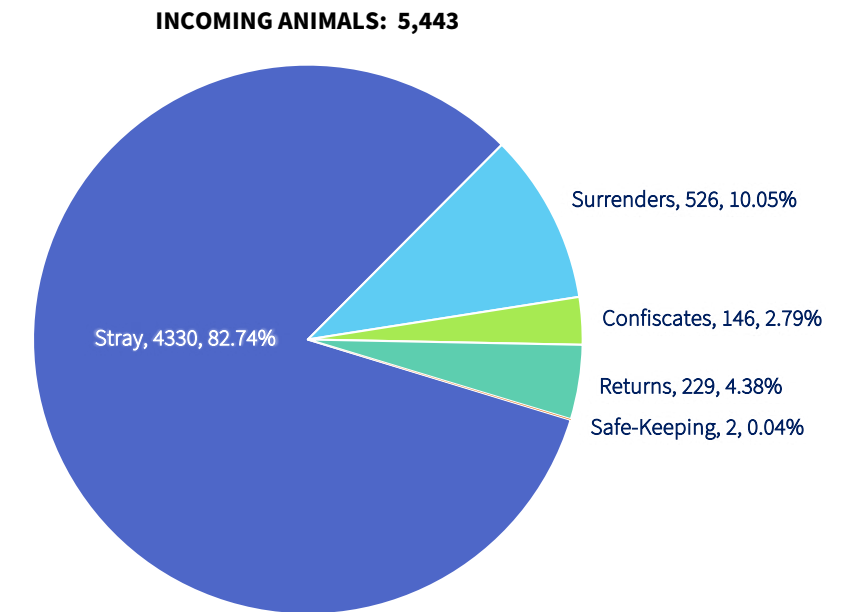
## VCAS Rescue Readers Program (Established 2018)

This innovative program provides an opportunity for children ages 4-14 to read to shelter pets as an enrichment activity. There are countless benefits to this program. Children gain confidence from reading aloud while animals benefit from the social interaction. Learn more at [www.vcas.us/RescueReaders](http://www.vcas.us/RescueReaders). This program was placed on a temporary hold as quarantine measures were put into place.

# New Arrivals

Entering the shelter system can be a frightening experience for many animals. But, from the moment an animal arrives, they are in very loving and experienced hands. Our compassionate staff are trained to work with a multitude of animal species and breeds, from tiny kittens to 150-pound Rottweilers. If an animal arrives with an urgent medical condition, our skilled VCAS Veterinary Team provide care to stabilize their condition. VCAS also cares for injured wildlife and works with local wildlife rehabilitation centers who provide continued care.

In 2020, **82%** of animals entering our care were strays, and **10%** of animals were surrendered to us by their owners.





## Stray Animals

Stray animals are brought to VCAS by Animal Control Officers or by good Samaritans. In 2020, stray animals made up approximately **82%** of the animals admitted to our care. Upon arrival, animals are scanned for a microchip, vaccinated, photographed, weighed, and treated for parasites by a fully-trained and compassionate Animal Control Officer. Their information is uploaded to their online pet profile on our website where we hope their parents will see and recognize them. Their profile consists of the animal's name (if they arrive with one), breed, age, gender, color, size, weight, arrival date, adoptable date, and city in which they were found.

Stray animals arriving without identification (ID/license tags, microchip) are generally made available for adoption five (5) days after arrival. Animals who arrive with identification are made available for adoption ten (10) days after arrival.

After the animal intake procedure is complete, they are placed in kennels where they are provided food, water, bedding, and toys. Music is piped into the kennels and consists of a preselected mix of nature sounds and classical-type music proven to calm animals.



## Surrendered Animals

Giving up one's cherished animal is a decision pet parents do not make lightly. The reasons behind this decision are complicated and vary greatly. The most common reason someone surrenders a pet is due to medical issues where the owner is unable to afford the cost associated with a specific medical issue or for the continual cost of a chronic condition. The second most common reason for surrender is related to housing. Such situations may include breed restrictions within a rental unit, loss of job or financial distress, relocation, and costly pet deposits with additional monthly fees.

Although VCAS has a very successful pet diversion program, some animals do enter our care via surrender making up **10%** of our total intake. When this occurs, VCAS personnel gather as much information about their pet as possible. This information is used to help find the best match with a new family.





## Pet Retention

In 2016, VCAS developed a Pet Retention program to help reduce the number of animals surrendered by their owners. Over the past five (5) years, we have helped **5,790 animals** stay with their families. If it were not for this program, all of these animals would have entered the shelter system. VCAS is committed to providing the community with resources and assistance to help as many people keep their loving pets as possible and avoid the need to surrender.

In 2020, our Pet Retention program diverted an astonishing **1,182 animals** by providing pet parents available resources and short term assistance. This program is funded and sustained by the Animal Services Foundation of Ventura County, our 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to fulfilling our life-saving mission.

Whether it is an owned animal or stray pet, bringing an animal to a shelter should be a last resort. VCAS encourages anyone who is contemplating pet surrender, to please explore resources close to home.

If you, or someone you know, is in need of Pet Retention services, please visit [www.vcas.us/petretention](http://www.vcas.us/petretention) or contact us at [keepmypet@ventura.org](mailto:keepmypet@ventura.org).



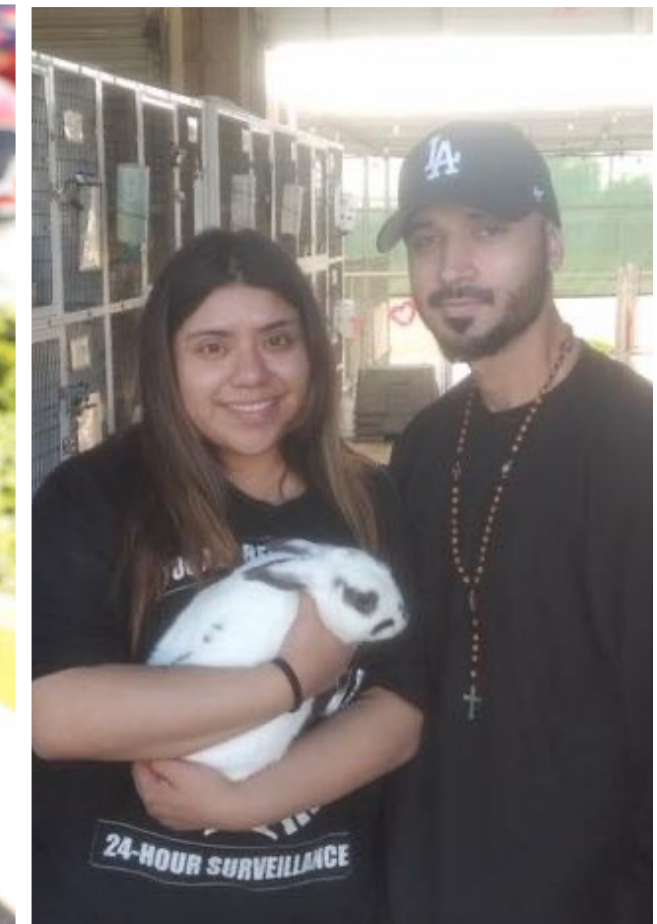
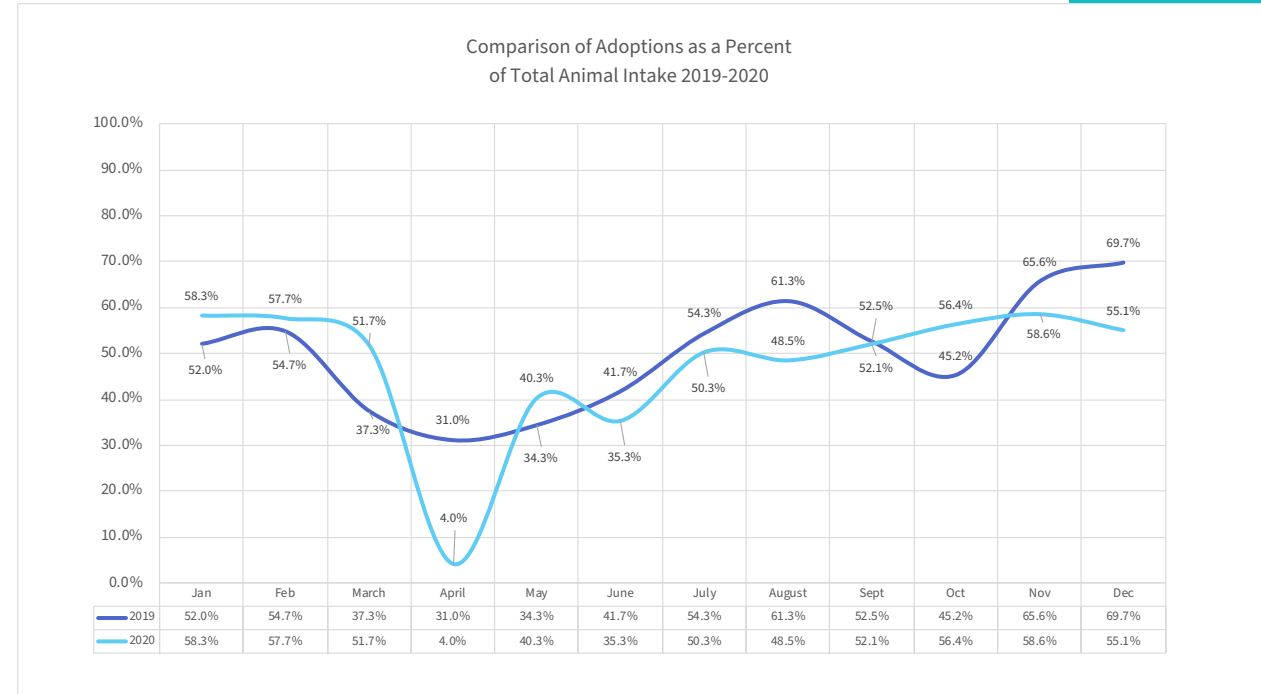
## Adoptions

Our adoption process has changed since the start of the pandemic. Adoption counseling now occurs virtually, over the phone. Interested adopters speak with our adoption counselors and if they feel that the animal they are considering would be a good fit for their family, they are scheduled to come to the shelter to meet the animal and, hopefully, take them home the same day. This one-on-one model has resulted in thousands of adoptions.

Prior to animals leaving our care, they are spayed/neutered, vaccinated, microchipped and flea-treated. Pet parents receive a copy of their pet's medical record, certificate of sterility, and a list of local veterinarians who are willing to provide a free first veterinary exam. The adoption packet also contains various discounts from local businesses who offer special deals for those who adopted an animal from VCAS.

To learn about our new adoption process in its entirety, please visit [www.vcas.us/adoptionprocess](http://www.vcas.us/adoptionprocess).







Reunited after 1 year,  
6 months apart!

# Reunited

Reuniting a lost pet with their family is a wonderful feeling! We have had the pleasure of reuniting tens of thousands of people with their cherished companions, some of whom had been separated for as many as ten (10) years.

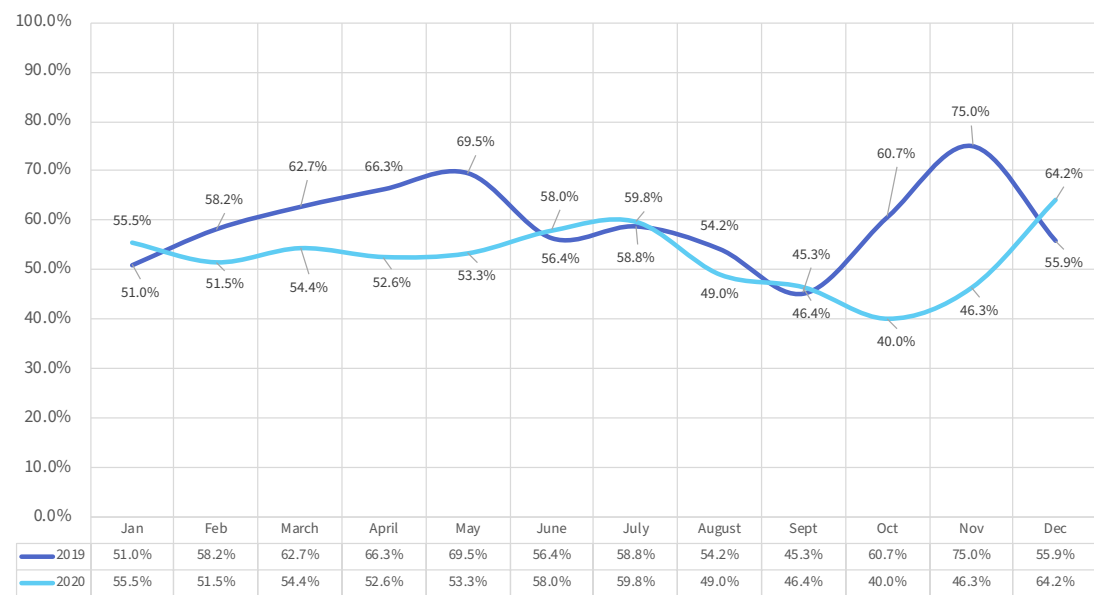
All efforts are made to contact the owner of a lost pet, including, but not limited to: phone calls, emails and letters based on available contact information. However, VCAS also relies on owners to actively search for their lost pets. We have provided a comprehensive action plan on our shelter's website to help owners find their lost pets. Please visit [www.vcas.us/lostandfound](http://www.vcas.us/lostandfound) to view these resources.

In 2020, VCAS was able to reunite **52.6%** of stray dogs with their owners ( compared to the national average of 26%). We are **very proud** of this statistic. Unfortunately however, while our return to owner rate of **5.9% for cats** was slightly higher than the national average of 5%, we continue to focus on ways to help cats find their way back home. In fact 66% of cats who are reported "missing" actually return home on their own, if left undisturbed.

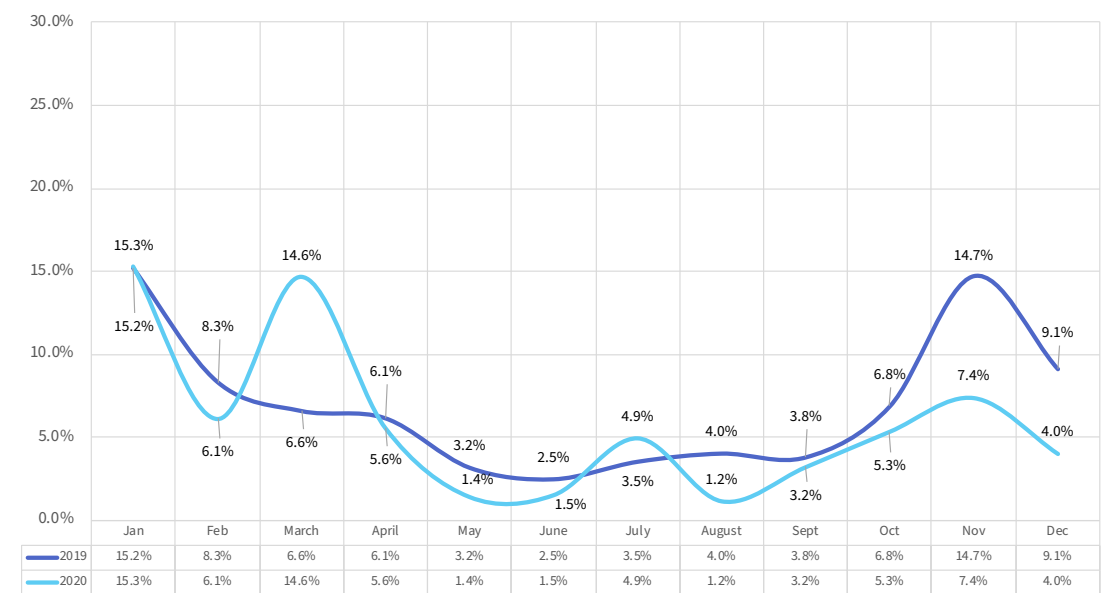
In light of these compelling statistics, VCAS is asking community members to observe these 'community cats.' If you see a healthy/happy cat, allow them to find their way home. In contrast, cats who appear sick/injured, unkempt/thin should be brought to VCAS for immediate care.

**1,057** **962**  
**Animals Reunited with** **75**  
**Their Owners** **3**  
**17**

Percent of Stray Dogs Returned to Their Owner  
Comparison 2019-2020



Percent of Stray Cats Returned to Their Owner  
Comparison 2019-2020



## Pet License Tag Upgrade!



In September 2020, Ventura County Animal Services upgraded from the old, metal license tags, to PetHub Smart Tags. This state-of-the-art “Smart Tag” features a unique QR code that, when scanned by a smart phone, will display the information pet owners want to share with the person who found their lost pet. This new Smart License Tag will allow pets to come home faster if they ever become lost.

Most smartphones already have QR Code readers built into the software that runs the phone’s camera. Someone who finds a lost pet simply holds their phone’s camera up to the QR code and a link will appear which takes them to the pet owners’ contact information. There’s no need to download a separate app to scan these codes.

Pets currently licensed can upgrade to a PetHub tag. Visit [www.vcas.us/licensing](http://www.vcas.us/licensing) to purchase a new tag or to learn more about pet licensing.



## Transfer Rescue Partners

When we have harder-to-place animals, we sometimes turn to our transfer rescue partners to help find alternative placements. We partner with over 130 animal welfare agencies. These partnerships are extremely important as they provide additional resources for us to find loving homes for animals who require our service. Some of these organizations are breed specific, while others focus on shelter pets in need of medical or behavioral assistance. Our rescue partners transfer animals into their care who are: geriatric, visually impaired, incontinent, have cancer, have mobility issues, or who have behavior concerns.

In 2020, **658** shelter pets were transferred into the care of partner groups. Almost all of our transfer rescue partners are foster-based, meaning when an animal leaves the shelter in this way, they immediately go into a home setting where they can relax in a lower stress environment while awaiting adoption.

One such special-needs dog, named Charlie, came into the shelter. Charlie was a 15-year-old chihuahua who had been found as a stray. This poor guy had cataracts, missing fur across his whole body, evidence of kidney disease and digestive concerns. His quality of life was poor. This is where our rescue partners save lives!

We put out a call, and a rescue transfer partner stepped in who often provides assistance for these super seniors who need a warm bed, some loving TLC, and continued medical





treatment. Since his transfer, Charlie has had a good appetite but is slow to gain much-needed weight. But the kind souls who are caring for him are undeterred. After additional testing and new medications, Charlie is now slowly gaining weight! His foster parent said, "He is a very content little guy and seems to be enjoying the good life in his foster home."

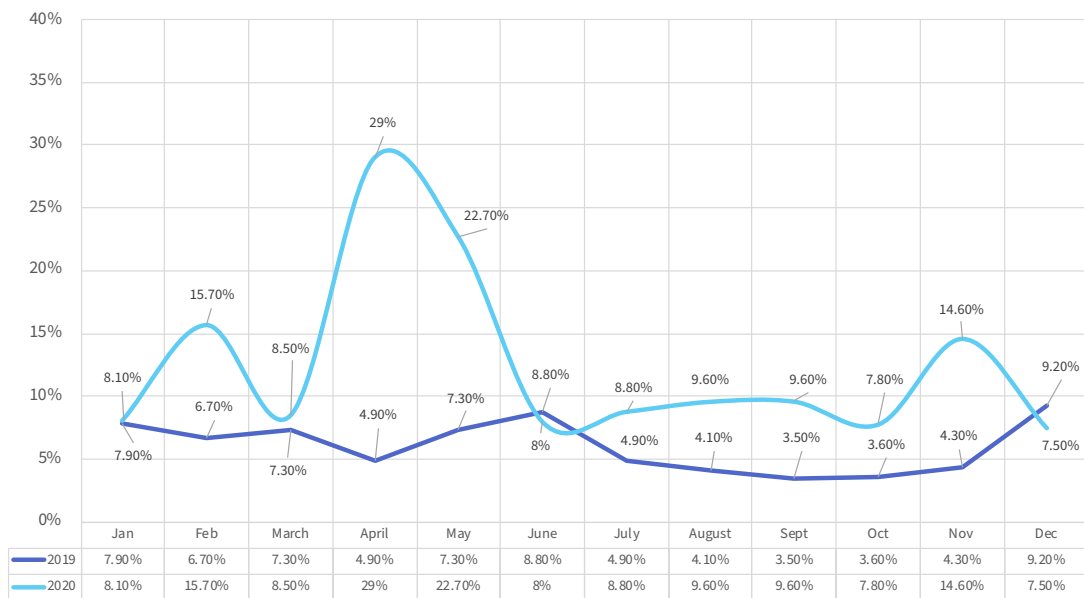
We fully appreciate all the off efforts of our rescue partners and we could not be a lifesaving organization without their dedication.


**658**

**Animals Transferred to a Partner Agency**

-  **299**
-  **156**
-  **95**
-  **108**

Percent of Animals Transferred to Rescue Partners  
Comparison 2019-2020



Charlie, 15





## Foster Care

Our VCAS Foster Care Program has been a game-changer for a number of animals in need. Animals sometimes come into our care who are sick, injured, older, terminally ill or who simply need a quiet place to rest and rejuvenate. In 2020, over **1,100 animals** entered our VCAS Foster Care program. Most of those animals were underage or underweight kittens, many of whom required around-the-clock bottle feeding by dedicated volunteer foster parents in the community.

VCAS Foster parents are trained, determined and dedicated to healing and comforting animals who arrive in rough shape. We often depend on VCAS Foster Families to nurse animals back to health.

 **36,977**  
Foster Care Hours  
Donated

 **1,125**  214  
Animals Entering  807  
Foster Care  19  
 85

These before and after photos illustrate the amazing work of our strong and mighty VCAS Foster Parent Team. Visit [www.vcas.us/foster](http://www.vcas.us/foster) to learn more about our Foster Care program.

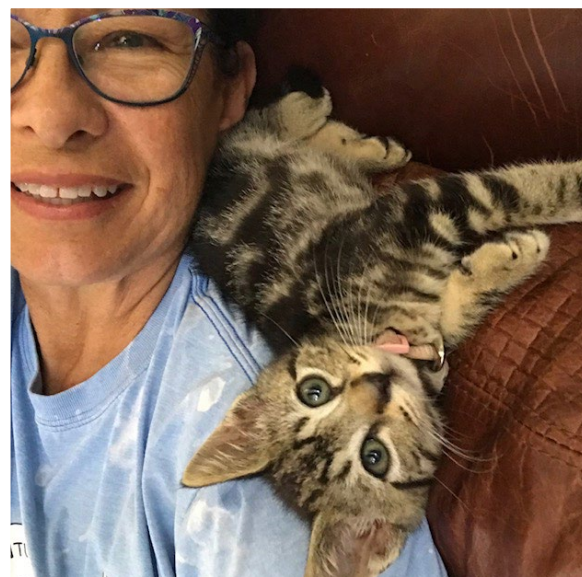


# Fostering



# Saves Lives

# Fostering



# Saves Lives



## Working Whiskers



The VCAS Working Whiskers Program (formerly the Barn Cat Program) provides a pathway for community/feral (wild) cats who cannot be returned to the area from which they came because either the area is unsafe (i.e. near a busy road) or because the animal did not thrive there. This program allows members of the community to adopt these cats, knowing they will never be

able to handle them or treat them like domestic house cats. But they will be able to provide them the opportunity to continue doing what they love, and what they are familiar with: living outdoors in open areas such as garden sheds and barns.

Those adopting a working cat must be able to provide their cats with shelter, food and water, and have the ability to trap their cats for regular check-ups by a veterinarian who has the ability to do an exam on feral cats.

These working cats leave VCAS spayed/neutered, vaccinated, microchipped and ear-tipped (a surgical procedure whereby the tip of the cat's ear is removed). Ear-tipping is an easy way to differentiate between a working cat who is a member of an established colony, or another stray cat who has entered the area from outside.

To learn more about this program, please visit [www.vcas.us/workingwhiskers](http://www.vcas.us/workingwhiskers).

 **50**

**Working Whiskers  
Cats Placed**

 **86**

**Trap Neuter  
Return Cats**

## Trap Neuter Return (TNR)

TNR (or Trap Neuter Return) is the only proven method of controlling the overpopulation of community/feral (wild) cats. TNR is the process by which community/feral cats are trapped by members of the public, spayed/neutered, microchipped and returned to the community where they can live out their lives in the environment they were successful in without the possibility of having more litters. Cats who have been spayed/neutered also have the tendency to keep unaltered cats from entering the area. VCAS is proud to be able to provide the essential spay/neuter services for those who have humanely trapped these cats in the community. VCAS coordinates this TNR effort with the [Community Cats Coalition Serving Ventura County](#) to provide this service.

When these cats arrive at VCAS, they are scanned for a microchip to determine if there is an owner. While under anesthesia for their spay/neuter surgery, the VCAS Veterinary Team vaccinates, treats for parasites, and ear-tips each cat. Ear-tipping is the process by which a small portion of the cat's right ear is removed. This is an easy indicator the cat is already spayed or neutered and is part of an established colony, and does not need to be trapped again. If the area from which the cat was trapped is unsafe for return, the cat may enter our [VCAS Working Whiskers](#) program which allow members of the community to adopt a feral/community cat to live out their lives in open areas. An application process ensures these cats are placed in appropriate locations with owners who fully understand their responsibility to these cats.





## Length of Stay

A key component to daily population management is tracking the number of days animals are in our care. The longer animals are housed in proximity to other animals, the greater the likelihood of becoming sick and or emotionally compromised. Length-of-stay has declined steadily over the past seven (7) years. This decline can be contributed to a number of factors, including: adoption matching, pet adoption promotions, enrichment activities, advertising shelter pets on social media and actively searching for the owners of lost pets.

Animal enrichment plays a key role in the care of our animals and helps us maintain their health and emotional wellness while we work to find their new home. Staff and volunteers work side-by-side to ensure that

all animals receive daily interaction and exercise, have a comfortable living area, and have exposure to new toys and activities all in an effort to reduce fear and stress.

Our new Animal Care Coordinators have developed some innovative enrichment programs which include the use of some unique tools like Lickmats and Sniffle mats, both of which utilize food as a medium. The science behind these activities tells us that animals who are well-enriched have a greater likelihood of finding their forever home.



# Humane Euthanasia

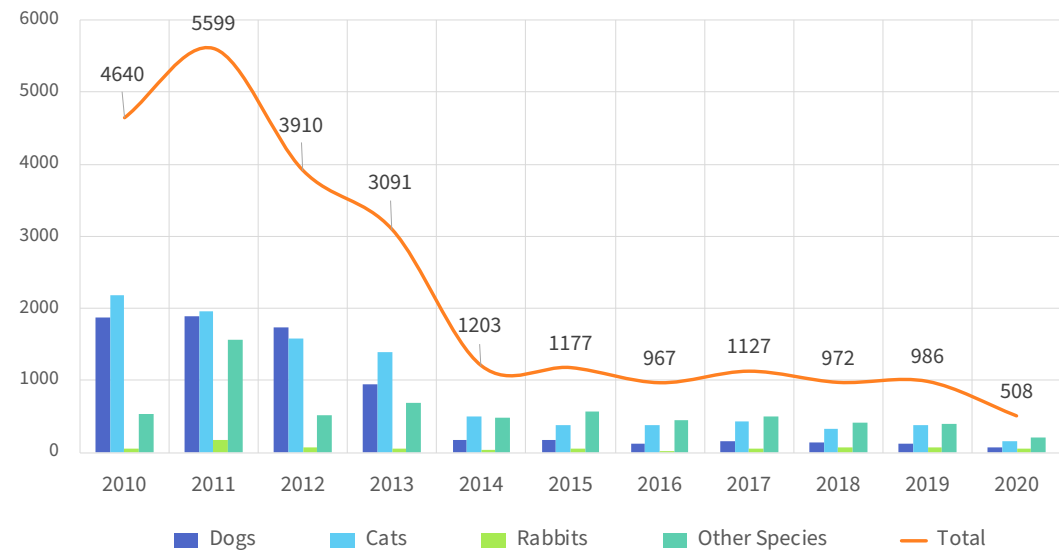
VCAS is 100% committed to saving lives! We work diligently to ensure all animals receive the highest level of care and that all pathways for a live outcome have been explored. We are delighted to report the overall humane euthanasia rate at Ventura County Animal Services has greatly decreased as a result of our continued commitment to progressive and innovative programming. No healthy, adoptable, or treatable animal is euthanized for any reason including length-of-time, lack of space, or being a specific breed.

A small percentage of animals who enter our shelter, however, present with severe medical conditions for which they are suffering and/or have behavioral concerns that pose a safety risk to the public. For these such animals, VCAS staff compassionately provide humane euthanasia in a respectful, loving and peaceful manner.

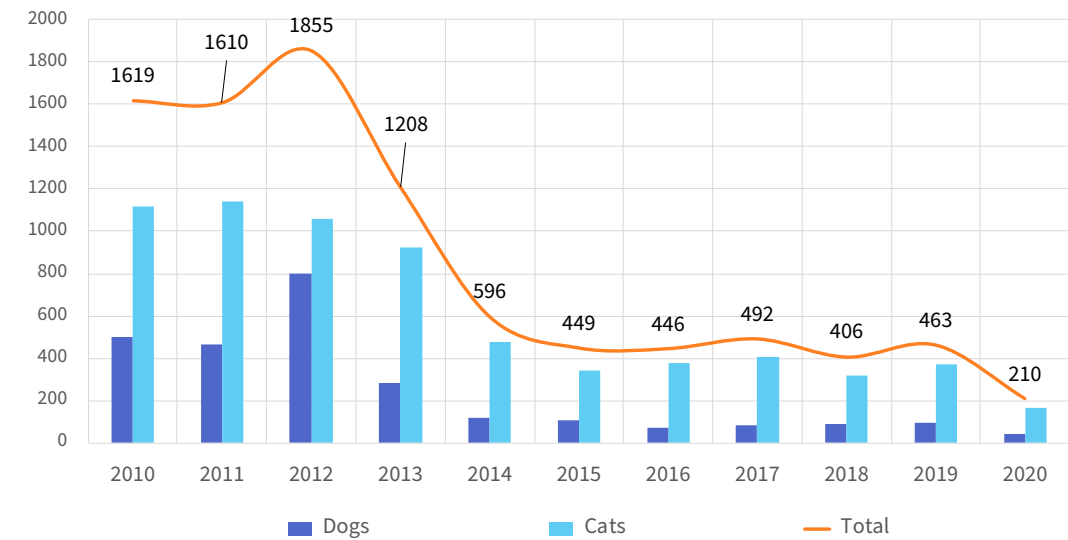
We are extremely proud to have achieved a **Live Release Rate of 97.0% for dogs** and **90.8% for cats in 2020** and are thrilled to have maintained a **90% or higher overall Live Release Rate since 2014** despite the number of animal intakes remaining steady over the past many years.

IN 2020,  
WE PLACED  
**94.4%**  
OF THE ANIMALS  
IN OUR CARE!

Total Humane Euthanasia

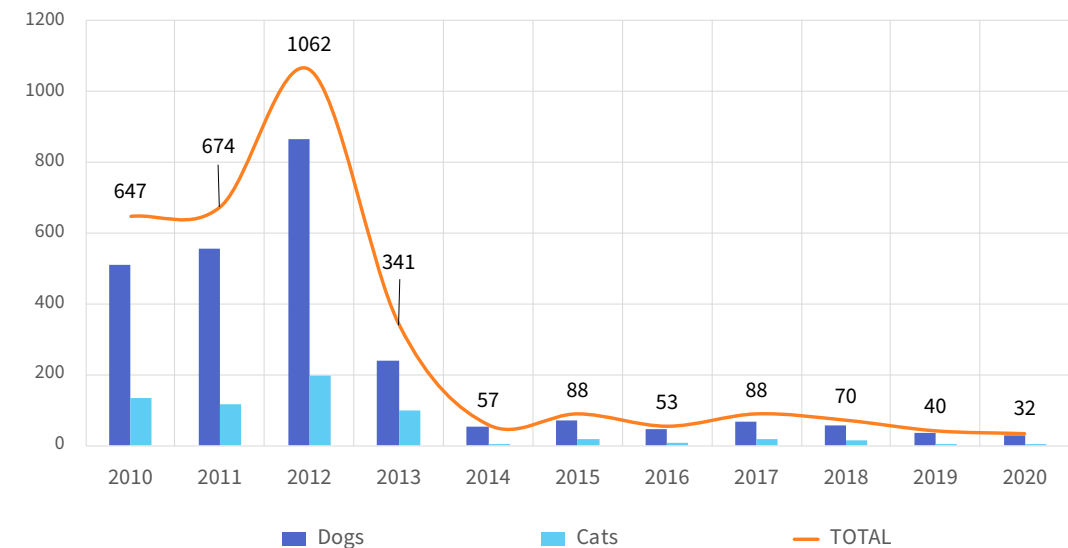


Humane Euthanasia -- Medical



**32** 30 2  
 Humane Euthanasia (Behavior)  
 0 0

Humane Euthanasia -- For Behavior



## Field Services

Our Field Team of Animal Control Officers (ACOs) responded to an impressive **8,434 calls for assistance** in 2020, that's **23 calls per day!** These Officers are tasked with keeping our community safe and enforcing animal related laws and ordinances. These experienced officers do much more than catch loose dogs. They are our front-line team who understand animal behavior and how to work with all varieties of animals found in our county.

Our Animal Control Officers are also first responders during declared natural disasters. They are deployed to affected areas when animals need to be rescued or transported to safety. Our officers work side-by-side with members of our Emergency Volunteer Rescue Team (EVRT) to help transport animals and keep them safe until the crisis has ended.

This front-line group also responds to barking/nuisance complaints, performs welfare checks, investigates potential animal abuse/neglect cases, and much more!



**8,434** Calls Responded to by an Animal Control Officer

<b>1,726</b> RABIES QUARANTINES	<b>414</b> LOOSE AGGRESSIVE DOGS
<b>285</b> BARKING COMPLAINTS	<b>260</b> NUISANCE INVESTIGATIONS
<b>843</b> DECEASED ANIMAL PICKUPS	<b>78</b> CRUELTY INVESTIGATIONS
<b>841</b> LEASH LAW PATROLS	<b>3,611</b> OTHER CALLS FOR SERVICE
<b>376</b> WELFARE CHECKS	<small>EXAMPLES: Public Assistance, Setting Traps, Compliance Checks, Animal Bite Report Taken, Aggressive Dog Pick-up, Safekeeping Pick-up, etc.</small>

## Public Safety

Safety is a critical priority at VCAS. One of our most important mandates is the suppression of the deadly rabies virus here in Ventura County. When an animal bites or scratches someone and it breaks the skin, by law that animal must be quarantined. Quarantine is a period of observation where staff look for possible signs of rabies. Rabies is a zoonotic disease which means it can be passed from animal to human via saliva entering the body through a bite or scratch. Once symptoms of rabies are observed in a human or animal, it is often too late and is fatal. This is why the quarantine of animals is vital in the fight against the spread of rabies.

Proof of a dog's vaccination against rabies is mandatory in the state of California, and proof of vaccination comes in the form of a pet license tag. These tags can also help lost animals find their way home; especially the new PetHub tags which have a unique QR code that can be accessed from any smartphone.

For more information about pet licensing and to obtain a Ventura County Animal Services pet license tag, please visit [www.vcas.us/licensing](http://www.vcas.us/licensing).

**47,793**  
Pet Licenses Processed





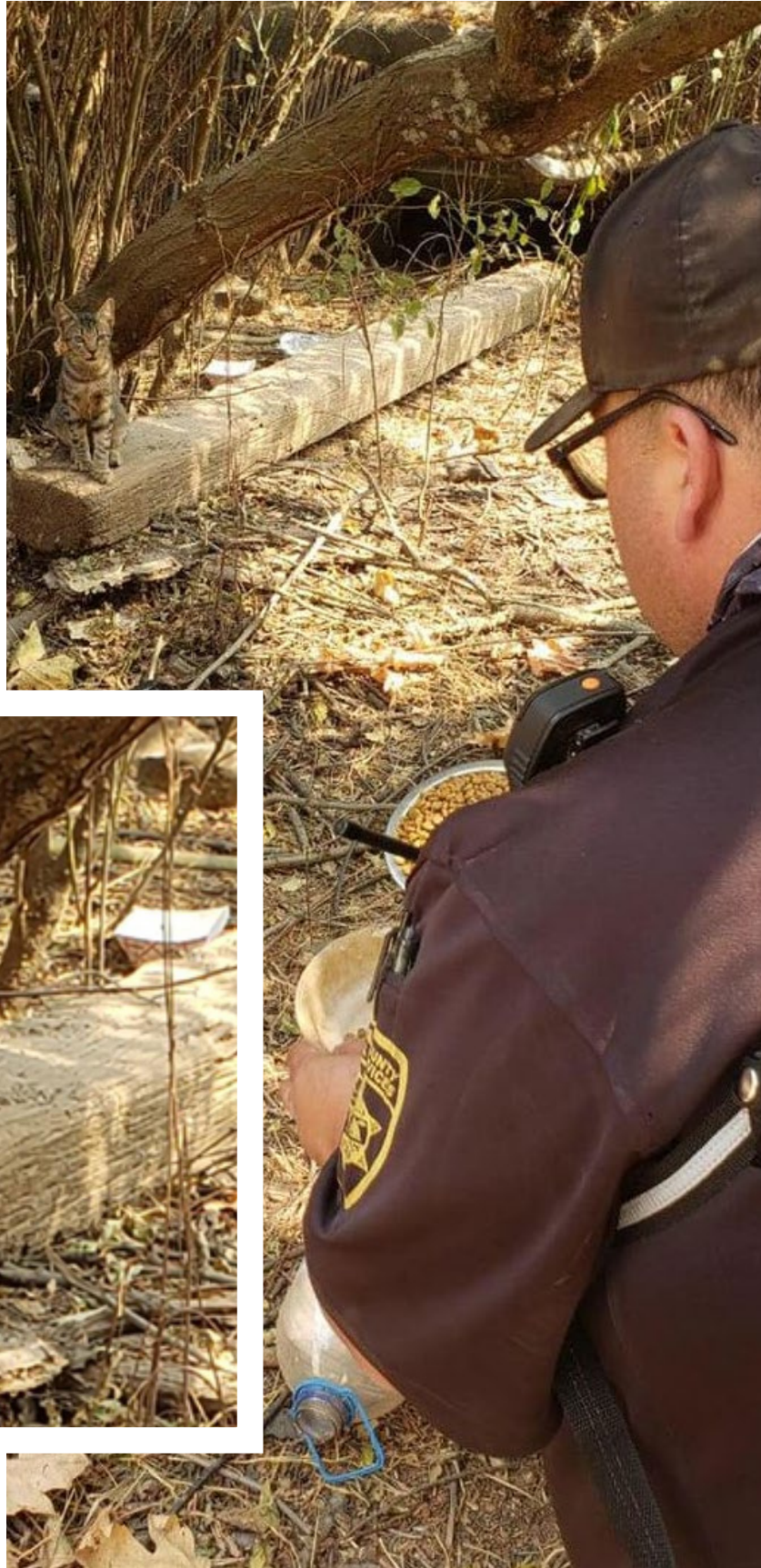
## North Complex Fire

Mutual Aid Effort  
Butte County, CA  
September 2020

Ventura County Animal Services provides mutual aid to neighboring communities during declared disasters. Such aid was rendered in September 2020 during the North Complex/Camp Fires in Butte County, CA. This historic wildfire devastated over **320,000 acres** in Northern California from August to December. VCAS deployed two veteran Animal Control Officers to help rescue and reunite lost animals with their owners. Officers Tony Ochoa and Fernando Serratos journeyed 450 miles to Butte County, California where their disaster service experience was quickly put to use. These officers gained first-hand experience during the 2013 Spring Fire, 2017-18 Thomas Fire, 2018 Hill/Woolsey Fires, and the 2019 Easy/Maria Fires.

Conditions within the evacuation zone were harsh at times. Although the fire had passed in the areas where they were deployed, the ground below their feet sometimes crackled, where the fire continued to smoldered. But Officers Ochoa and Serratos pushed through and **rescued hundreds of animals during their 16-days relief effort.** However challenging were the physical conditions, the toughest job was informing families that their beloved pet was found deceased.





Officers Ochoa and Serratos developed feeding schedules to keep abandoned animals fed until their owners could return for them. Officer Tony Ochoa (left) is seen trying to feed one of hundreds of community cats in the area. Officer Fernando Serratos (below) is feeding and caring for livestock whose owners had to quickly evacuate.

For **sixteen (16) days**, these dedicated officers zigzagged across the county, responding to numerous calls for assistance. Through their efforts, hundreds of frightened animals were fed, provided fresh water, transported for medical care and reunited with their families.





## Bunny Brigade

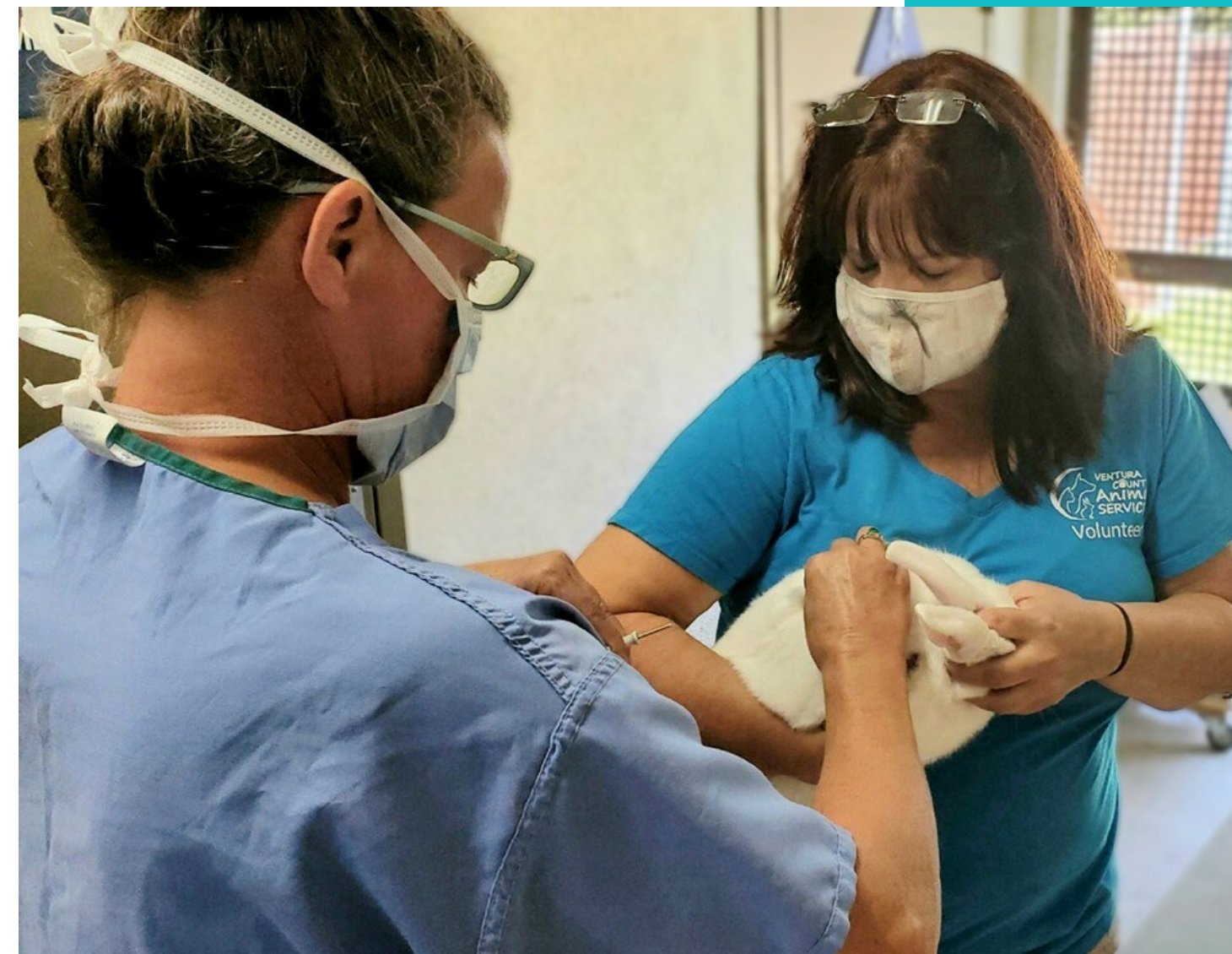
Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHDV2)  
Response Effort  
May 2020

This past year, California saw the emergence of a deadly and highly contagious illness specific to rabbits, called Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV2). In response, our amazing VCAS Veterinary Team, led by Managing Veterinarian Dr. Heather Skogerson, developed a plan to protect the rabbit population at VCAS. With guidance from the [House Rabbit Society](#), and in partnership with our own [VCAS Bunny Brigade](#) volunteer group, the VCAS Veterinary Hospital implemented several new protocols, including a strict ten-day quarantine for all incoming rabbits, the vaccination of shelter rabbits, and the requirement to vaccinate the personal

rabbits of staff, fosters, and volunteers.

Obtaining the vaccinations was no easy feat, but thanks to the [Animal Services Foundation of Ventura County](#), the 501(c)(3) non-profit arm of VCAS, and local veterinary and rescue partners, we made it happen! Though RHDV2 is newer to the US, it has been prevalent overseas, where vaccines have been created, approved, and successfully implemented. The vaccines are allowed for import and emergency use with a special permit even though they are not licensed in the United States.

The VCAS Veterinary Team jumped into action to immediately vaccinate all shelter rabbits on-site. They also partnered with the Bunny Brigade to host two (2)



reduced-cost clinics to vaccinate **93 rabbits** owned by VCAS staff, fosters, and volunteers to ensure the mutual safety of our shelter rabbits as well as those of our team. To date, we have witnessed no side effects or issues from the vaccines.

In tandem with these efforts, our Bunny Brigade volunteers worked diligently with our rescue partners across the state who took in dozens of our vaccinated rabbits so that they could find homes more quickly and help reduce the risk of an RHDV2 outbreak at VCAS. This would not have been possible without the team's commitment to vaccinating our shelter rabbits and the dedication of our volunteers, who transported rabbits hundreds of miles with socially distant protocols. So many bunnies have found loving homes as a result!

As part of our newly implemented rabbit quarantine process, all incoming rabbits are housed in a separate and secure isolation room within the VCAS Veterinary Hospital for 10 (ten)

days, where they are examined and vaccinated. All handling and cleaning are conducted by staff wearing PPE who do not interact with the regular rabbit population.

For homes with rabbits, the best way to protect your fluffy family members from RHDV2 is through a combination of the following: annual vaccinations, indoor housing, and bio-security measures (visit [www.rabbit.org/rhdv/#how-to-protect](http://www.rabbit.org/rhdv/#how-to-protect) for more information.) Please note that RHDV2 is not contagious to humans or other animals. Rabbits can, however, contract the disease from anyone who comes in contact with contaminated objects, animals, feces, or insects.

RHDV2 continues to spread through the state in both domestic and wild rabbits. Our team is working together, staying vigilant, and taking all precautions to keep our rabbit population safe.









Meghan Schade Photography

## VENTURA COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES

Camarillo Animal Shelter 600 Aviation Drive, Camarillo, CA 93010  
Simi Valley Animal Shelter 670 W. Los Angeles Ave., Simi Valley, CA 93065  
www.vcas.us | 805.388.4341 | info@vcas.us

      
@VCAnimalServices

## Join the VCAS Family

There are many ways to join the VCAS family and take part in our life-saving journey! Adopting a shelter pet or pledging to adopt from reputable sources is a great start. If your home is already full, please consider making a donation. Your gift helps ensure our life-saving programs have supplies needed to keep our animals safe, healthy and happy until they have found a loving home.

Below are a few pathways to giving which may be of interest to you, a family member, a school/church group or community club looking to make a difference:

1. Visit [www.vcas.us/Donate](http://www.vcas.us/Donate) to make a quick monetary gift.
2. Visit [www.VCASFoundation.org/Donate](http://www.VCASFoundation.org/Donate) to make a donation in memory or honor of a friend, family member or cherished pet.
3. Visit [www.vcas.us/AmazonSmile](http://www.vcas.us/AmazonSmile) prior to shopping on Amazon and a percentage of the cost of some purchases will get donated to our non-profit Foundation.
4. Visit [www.vcas.us/AmazonWishList](http://www.vcas.us/AmazonWishList) to select specific items we need.

Items purchased from our Amazon Wish List can be shipped to:

Ventura County Animal Services  
600 Aviation Drive  
Camarillo, CA 93010

For a complete list of ways to help, including volunteer and foster opportunities, please visit [www.vcas.us/ways-to-help](http://www.vcas.us/ways-to-help).

Thank you all for your dedication to our life-saving mission! We could not do what we do without your ongoing support!

Be well and stay safe -  
Ventura County Animal Services



# JOHN DEVER

## Always In Our Hearts



John Dever was a deeply dedicated VCAS volunteer who passed away in 2020. He had a soft spot for large-breed dogs and would often take them on walks and hikes. John was a mentor to new volunteers and a foster parent to numerous shelter pets. We are happy to have been a part of what brought him joy.

John, we will miss you! You will always be in our hearts!

Your Ventura County Animal Services family.

