



Lessons learned from Covid-19

Animal Control

Stats Pre- Covid-19, During Covid-19, and Now

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•	2018 (pre Covid-19)			
•	Intake (at large, owner surrender, return, foster)	2217		
•	Outcome (adoption, RTO, rescue, foster)	2038		
•	Euthanize (behavior, feral, medical, age)	204		
•	Euthanasia Request	289		
•	Disposal Request	286		
•	Phone Calls	28,678		
•	Activities	4007		
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•	2019 (pre Covid-19 mitigation)			
•	Intake (at large, owner surrender, return, foster)	2013		
•	Outcome (adoption, RTO, rescue, foster)	1891		
•	Euthanize (behavior, feral, medical, age)	216		
•	Euthanasia Request	273		
•	Disposal Request	273		
•	Phone Calls	28,696		
•	Activities	3790		
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•	2020 (during Covid-19 mitigation)			
•	Intake (at large, owner surrender, return, foster)	1860		
•	Outcome (adoption, RTO, rescue, foster)	1729		
•	Euthanize (behavior, feral, medical, age)	197		
•	Euthanasia Request	182		
•	Disposal Request	256		
•	Phone Calls	24,241		
•	Activities	230		
			2021- June 30 21 (Now/getting back to a new normal)	
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			• Intake (at large, owner surrender, return, foster)	1028 (projected to be 2056)
			• Outcome (adoption, RTO, rescue, foster)	947 (projected to be 1894)
			• Euthanize (behavior, feral, medical, age)	89 (projected to be 178)
			• Euthanasia Request	68 (projected to be 136)
			• Disposal Request	141 (projected to be 282)
			• Phone Calls	27,370 (based on last 6 months)
			• Activities	3162 (based on last 6 months)

- Intake took a slight dip in 2020.
- No drastic changes in euthanasia numbers.
- Despite minimal staffing, business went on as usual, and animals kept moving through.
- Phone calls took a slight dip in 2020.
- Enforcement was handled mainly by phone.
- We haven't found a way to track social media traffic.

Covid-19 Mitigation

- Created a line of succession for the positions at Animal Control
- Realized the need to streamline our daily operation. Proposed taking lunches at the same time to concentrate our work force and reduce contact with casuals who may have to be used to replace full time employees.
- Closed the building except for by appointment to adopt or redeem.
- Closed the kennels and cancelled all visits. Social media could be used to view animals.

- We reduced adoption fees by half and extended the full price return policy to 3 months. (This was also in part to bypass the typical “foster” program. Citizens who wanted to foster could adopt and take full responsibility for the animal and could return the animal for a full refund within 3 months.)

- All interactions were done through the lens of social distancing both internally and externally.
 - Plexi-glass was installed.
 - All incoming animal transactions were handled through the drop off cages to eliminate unnecessary traffic in the lobby
 - Lines of acceptable distance were taped off on the floors.
 - The public was allowed to come into the lobby masked on an appointment basis.
 - Animals were redeemed through the drop off cages after paperwork was done in the lobby. This lessened contact between our staff and the public members.

- Officers mitigated calls by use of phone and email. The public was seemingly understanding of us being short staffed and understood the requirements of social distancing. Our enforcement staff was hit hard, often only having one officer on staff at a time.
- Our front desk/intake staff was also hit hard. We had a casual run the show for over a month with little help. She did a great job.
- Telecommuting was an option for a few positions, but since we provide a public service, it didn't work well for Animal Control.

What did we learn?

- Appointments work! Transactions are done efficiently. People are happy to have “their time” and not compete for a turn.
- Receiving animals through the drop off cages works! Information is relayed to the appropriate people and not said twice. Eliminates unnecessary traffic in the lobby.
- Reducing opening hours works! Animals are less stressed. Staff has more continuity without a rotating shift for lunches. All prep work is done beforehand and appointments are scheduled for every 15 minutes between 2:00-5:30. Phones are open between 9am – 6pm.

Going forward

- We will have inconsistent attendance because of Covid-19 requirements at schools, daycares, and our own borough policy.
- Appointments work! We will keep our appointment based services at the shelter. It's efficient and the scheduling can be adjusted if needed due to staffing.
- Intake through the "back" works. Receiving animals through the drop off cages throughout the day has worked very well. They are safe and contained until the booking room is open for an intake. We have plans to create an intake room to make this a smoother process.

Going forward

- Videos, social media, and technology works. Because we could no longer have personal viewing of animals due to social distancing requirements, detailed videos were made and were viewable on phshelter.com and social media. We are continuing this trend.
- Visiting hours between 2:00-5:30 works. The animals were noticeably less stressed during the shelter closure. Because of this, when we opened our doors to the public, we limited the hours and limited the number of animals that could be viewed. Ideally we would only display animals who are available for adoption, but because of the limitations of our shelter, we are only able to offer viewing to the first four kennels.

Going forward

- We have installed a kiosk in the lobby where all of the animals are available for viewing through phshelter.com. (petharbor) The public seems to be comfortable with using it and it's working well.
- We installed an automated door locking system with a buzzer to control who had access to the building when we were closed for Covid. The buzzer allowed us to let people in for appointments without going into the lobby. We still use some of the features of this system. It automatically opens at 2:00 and locks at 5:30 but will allow us to buzz someone in when needed.

Considerations

Covid is still affecting our staff and our operation. Our system is working and is adaptable to staffing variations which seems to be an ongoing problem.

- At what point will we be safe to have “in person” visits with the animals again?
- Because of the lack of interaction, is it still inline to keep the adoption costs at half price with an extended return period?

Interestingly, across the Nation, shelters have reached many of the same conclusions when making their way through the Covid Pandemic. There was no textbook on how to do this and no way of knowing what to expect next.

After the emergence, when shelters met online through conferences and expos, they shared their stories. Amazingly, they were much the same. Limited access, limited hours, virtual visits, appointments for services, etc. And across the board, shelter managers are saying, “why haven’t we done this all along?” and “ we aren’t going back!...this works!!”