



Delaware Animal Services



Annual Performance Report 2025



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Division of Public Health

Office of Animal Welfare

April 2026

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DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Division of Public Health

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND..... 2

DAS TURNS TEN..... 3

2025 DATA OVERVIEW..... 4

2025 HIGHLIGHTS..... 5

STORIES FROM THE FIELD..... 9

BACKGROUND

The Delaware Animal Services (DAS) program is the statewide law enforcement unit within the Office of Animal Welfare (OAW). OAW is located in the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health (DPH).

Vision and Mission

DAS is committed to creating a safe community that celebrates the human-animal bond, where animals are free from abuse and neglect, every pet has a home, and animal caretakers have access to the tools and resources needed for their companions. DAS serves residents and animals statewide in the areas of:

- animal cruelty prevention and enforcement
- dog control
- dangerous dog management
- dog licensing
- rabies control
- animal emergencies
- barking dogs.

Our mission is to make our Delaware communities safer for animals and the public through the professional delivery of animal-related services, innovative problem solving, and cooperative partnerships. DAS reunites lost pets with their families, promotes responsible pet ownership; and tirelessly works to create safer, more compassionate communities for all residents.

DELAWARE ANIMAL SERVICES TURNS TEN!



Left to right: Captain Philip Dixon, Captain Ervin Smith, Captain Rebecca Stratton. Photo Credit: Office of Animal Welfare

Delaware Animal Services (DAS) was created in 2015 to centralize animal law enforcement at the state level to provide professional, consistent, and cost-effective delivery of service. At the same time, animal care and sheltering needs associated with law enforcement activities would be obtained, through contract, with a local non-profit organization with expertise in animal sheltering and placement.

Today, this model has proven to be a success. Achievements to celebrate include stronger protections for animals, uniform enforcement of laws by trained and certified officers, easier pet-reunification for lost pets, expanded services for the public, and top-notch care for animals.

A small but mighty team of 26 full time officers and seven part-time officers work 365 days per year, including after hours for emergencies. They handle over 20,000 calls for service per year, including complex investigations involving animal cruelty and dangerous dogs. They also rescue and intake 3,500 to 4,000 animals in need annually, providing them safety and second chances from the most dire of circumstances.

Rescued animals are entrusted to the care of the Brandywine Valley SPCA (BVSPCA) which serves as OAW's shelter partner. Dogs, cats, and a variety of small animals, birds, and reptiles that are recovered by DAS receive proper housing, medical treatment, and tender care before being reunited with owners or adopted. With progressive programs and a lifesaving focus, BVSPCA has a 94% live release rate and offers a host of low-cost or free services to the community.

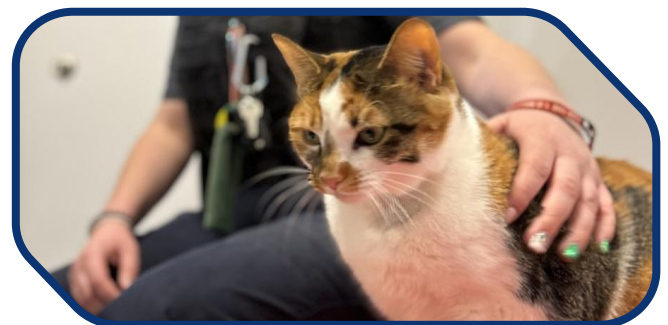
Between 2015 and 2025, DAS responded to nearly 200,000 calls for service and rescued 35,000 animals who were lost, abused, or abandoned. Delaware Animal Services plays a vital role in reuniting lost pets with their families, promoting responsible pet ownership, and tirelessly working to create safer, more compassionate communities for all residents.

Contact Information

Animalservices.delaware.gov

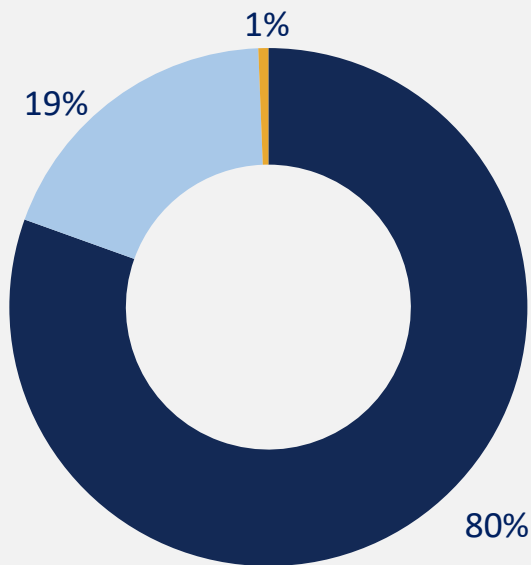
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Delaware Animal Services · 2025 Data Overview

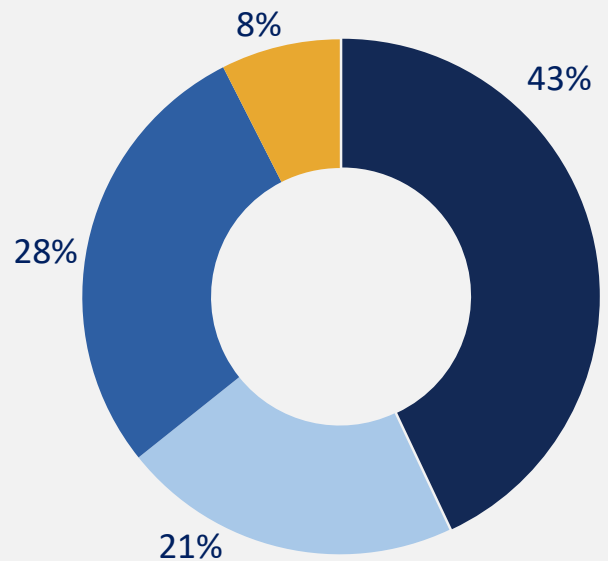
ANIMAL INTAKE BY SPECIES, DELAWARE ANIMAL SERVICES, 2025



- 2,974 DOGS (80%)
- 698 CATS (19%)
- 23 OTHER SPECIES (1%)

Source: Delaware Division of Public Health, Office of Animal Welfare, 2025

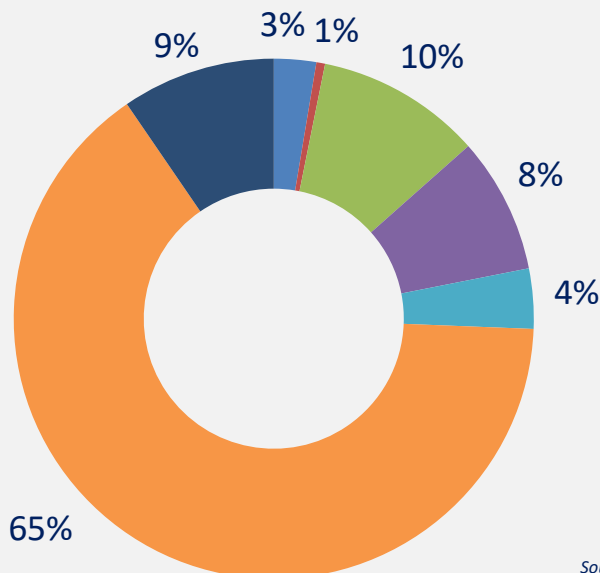
NEW CALLS FOR SERVICE TO DELAWARE ANIMAL SERVICES, BY LOCATION, 2025



- NEW CASTLE COUNTY (43%)
- KENT COUNTY (21%)
- SUSSEX COUNTY (28%)
- CITY OF WILMINGTON (8%)

Source: Delaware Division of Public Health, Office of Animal Welfare, 2025

ANIMAL INTAKE BY SOURCE, DELAWARE ANIMAL SERVICES, 2025



- STRAY (65%)
- SAFEKEEPING (10%)
- UNOWNED/ENDANGERED (9%)
- SEIZURE (8%)
- SURRENDER (4%)
- BITE QUARANTINE (3%)
- DANGEROUS DOG (1%)

Source: Delaware Division of Public Health, Office of Animal Welfare, 2025

NUMBER OF SERVICE CALLS BY CATEGORY, 2025

Figure 1. Number of Service Calls to Delaware Animal Services from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025.

CATEGORY	New Castle County	Kent County	Sussex County	City of Wilmington	TOTALS
Administrative Activity	433	388	427	23	1,271
Police/Agency Assist	331	189	184	91	795
Public Assistance/Education	2,314	941	1,106	226	4,587
Animal Cruelty	231	130	168	97	626
Animal Control	4,900	2,841	3,606	1,067	12,414
Case Follow Up	1,221	1,350	1,537	194	4,302
Proactive Patrol	1,278	1,122	1,482	107	3,989
Rabies Control	1,335	408	920	104	2,767
Total Activity	12,043	7,369	9,430	1,909	30,751
New Calls for Service*	9,111	4,509	5,984	1,585	21,189

*Excludes administrative, follow up, and proactive patrols
 Note: Some calls for service involve multiple categories, but only one can be assigned.

Source: Delaware Division of Public Health, Office of Animal Welfare, 2025

CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITY

Court, arrests, search warrants, reports, and other administrative responsibilities.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Stray dogs, dangerous dogs, barking dogs, housing, and welfare enforcement.

ANIMAL CRUELTY

Abuse, abandonment, cruel neglect, or animal fighting.

CASE FOLLOW UP

Supplemental investigative activities on prior complaints, gathering evidence and information, monitoring animal health and welfare, and public safety.

PROACTIVE PATROL

Aimed at preventing and reducing animal incidents and improving relations between officers and the communities they serve.

POLICE/AGENCY ASSIST

Calls from police, Fire/EMS, Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, and others that request assistance with animal emergencies.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE/EDUCATION

Information, education, resources, and referrals regarding animal-related complaints.

RABIES CONTROL

Investigation and enforcement of potential human exposures to rabies, quarantine of animals, and capture and transportation of rabies specimens for testing.

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

30,751 Total Activity

21,189 New Calls for Service

3,695 Animal Intake

- 2,974 Dogs
- 698 Cats
- 23 Other species

1,457 Dogs Returned to Owner

33,910 Dog Licenses Sold

* * *

CRIMINAL CHARGES & CITATIONS:

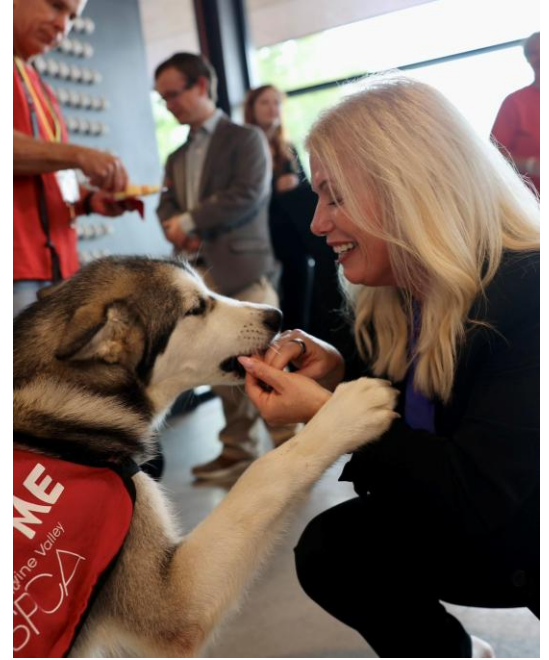
- 252 Animal Cruelty Charges
- 2,156 Dog Control/Rabies Violations
- 57 Dangerous Dogs
- 154 Rabies Specimens Transported to Delaware Public Health Laboratory in Smyrna, DE for testing
- Countless resources provided to Delawareans, such as pet food, dog houses, crates, bedding, and connection to low cost community services.

Source: Delaware Division of Public Health, Office of Animal Welfare, 2025

Animal Abuse Offender List, Spring 2025



Left to Right: Brandywine Valley SPCA representative Christina Motoyoshi, Office of Animal Welfare, Patrick Carroll, Humane Animal Partners, Brandywine Valley SPCA representative, Representative Kimberly Williams, Senator Nicole Poore, Governor Matt Meyer, Tatiana Copeland, Photo Credit: Delaware State Senate Democrats



Right: Senator Nicole Poore, Photo Credit: Delaware State Senate Democrats

The Delaware Animal Abuse Offender List was created in 2025 by an act of the Delaware General Assembly and signed into law on August 21, 2025. Sponsored by Senator Nicole Poore, Senate Bill 174 was written to protect animals from those who pose a risk to their welfare. The list contains information regarding adult individuals who are convicted of misdemeanor and felony crimes against animals in Delaware. The Animal Abuse Offender List is a public resource to help entities and individuals involved in the adoption, sale, or placement of animals to identify offenders during the vetting process. [Animal Abuse Registry List – Division of Public Health](#)

Animal Abuse & Human Violence Symposium, Spring 2025

OAW staff participated in the **Animal Abuse and Human Violence Symposium** hosted by the Delaware Domestic Violence Council on April 7, 2025, in New Castle, DE. Attendees included lawyers, judges, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations involved with domestic violence, child protection, and animal welfare. The conference examined the link between animal cruelty and human violence, and how awareness can lead to services and policies that better protect people and pets. OAW Executive Director Christina Motoyoshi, DAS Chief Mark Tobin, and Investigative Supervisor Phillip Dixon served on the "Prosecution of Animal Cruelty" panel. The panel identified ways to remove barriers and secure successful case outcomes.

Dog Licensing: New Online Platform, Spring 2025

In April 2025, OAW launched a new, user-friendly online dog licensing platform through its partnership with DocuPet. The modernized system offers streamlined pet registration and includes DocuPet's complimentary 24/7 HomeSafe® lost pet service, which helps reunite lost pets with their families using uniquely coded tags and an online profile.

Dog licensing is required in Delaware for dogs six months and older and must include a valid rabies vaccination. The goal is to increase compliance with vaccination and licensing laws, get more lost dogs home, and promote responsible pet ownership.

Pet owners can register at stateofdelaware.docupet.com

Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health
Office of Animal Welfare



Photo Credit: DocuPet

OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

Delaware Animal Services (DAS) officers participated in events throughout Delaware to connect with residents and provide education on rabies prevention, dog bite prevention, dog licensing, pet emergency preparedness, spay/neuter programs, and more.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH
NEWARK, DE



REHOBOTH BEACH
CHRISTMAS PARADE

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Wyoming Peach Festival

Wyoming, DE

New Castle County Trunk or Treat

New Castle, DE

Rehoboth Beach Christmas Parade

Rehoboth Beach, DE

Holiday Parades

Claymont, Rehoboth Beach, Dagsboro, Bridgeville and Greenwood

PUBLIC SAFETY

Wilmington Police Department Community Resource Fair, September

Canby Park, Wilmington

First Responders Day

Delcastle Recreational Park, Wilmington, DE

National Night Out

Multiple locations, DE

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Nellie Stokes Elementary School

Camden, DE

Long Neck Elementary School

Millsboro, DE

Phillip C. Showell Elementary School

Selbyville, DE

Brandywine Valley SPCA Critter Camps

Multiple locations, DE

Delaware Animal Services Academy



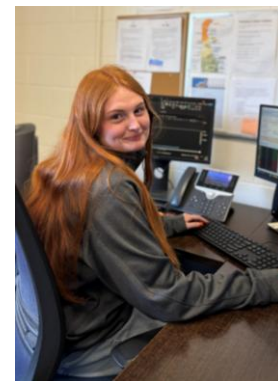
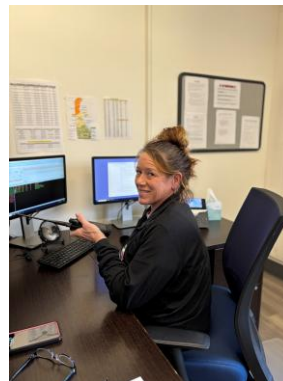
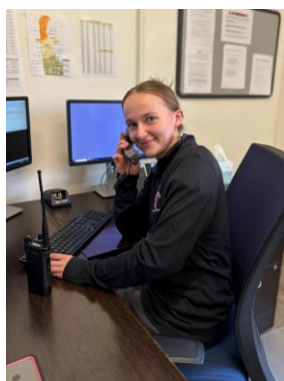
Front Row: Kara McTeer, Skylar Ceballos, Olivia Reyes, Dana Fish, Back row: Justin Gray, Dustin Giger, Carrie Frey, Emma Selekman, Israel Colon, Jacob Tilley, Photo Credit: Office of Animal Welfare

In 2025, DAS officers participated in a variety of trainings to meet certification standards, sharpen skills, and meet job demands. Notable training programs for 2025 included:

- Trauma-Informed Training for Animal Welfare Officers
- Courtroom Procedures
- Animal Cruelty and Fighting Investigations
- Chemical Capture and Immobilization Training
- Taser, ASP, OC Spray & Handcuffing Recertification

The Delaware Animal Services Academy training program for new officers ran two sessions in 2025, one in the winter and one in the fall. The training prepared 21 animal welfare officers for their roles with enforcement agencies including Delaware Animal Services (DAS), the Delaware Department of Agriculture, and City of Dover Police Department. The Academy is a collaboration between DAS and Wilmington University’s Center for Law, Justice and Society, created to provide a robust training program specifically designed for animal welfare officers which meets and exceeds state certification requirements. Over four weeks, officer recruits take a variety of classes including: laws of arrest, search and seizure; animal cruelty; blood sports; de-escalation techniques; defensive tactics; report writing; animal first aid; animal handling; courtroom procedure; and more. Classes are taught by certified police instructors, veterinarians, and animal welfare experts. After graduation, trainees undergo hands-on field training and a test before becoming certified animal welfare officers.

Dispatch Operations



Above: Delaware Animal Services Dispatchers at work.

Dispatchers play a vital role in DAS operations. They answer emergency and non-emergency calls for service seven days a week which are then prioritized and dispatched to officers in the field. The dispatch unit handles over 25,000 calls and emails per year—fielding inquiries across animal control, cruelty investigations, public education, rabies control, and emergency response. Dispatchers also conduct regular communications and safety checks on officers while working in the field, and are a lifeline if officers are in peril. Beyond dispatching, staff serve as the first point of contact for the public, providing resources and referrals for wildlife, lost pets, shelter services, and crisis situations.

When a Rescue Becomes a Crisis



In October 2025, DAS officers responded to a New Castle townhome and were alarmed to discover nearly 100 dogs, cats, and pocket pets living in deplorable conditions. The owner of the townhome, the operator of an animal rescue, was charged with multiple counts of animal cruelty.

A team of DAS officers triaged the animals, collected evidence, and coordinated transport. Tragically, not all of the animals survived. The majority, however, were rehabilitated and adopted through partner Brandywine Valley SPCA.

One by one, the surviving animals found their way to new homes.

Photo Credit: Brandywine Valley SPCA / Office of Animal Welfare



From Abandoned to Adopted

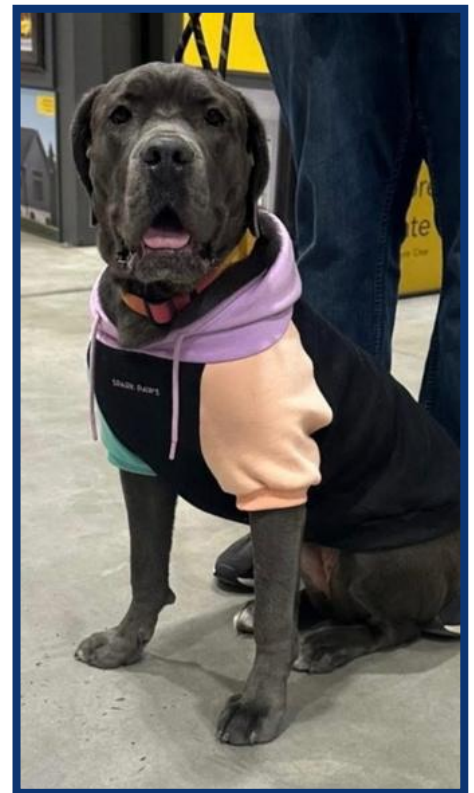


Minnie was just a puppy when she was abandoned and tied to a tree in a wooded area of Kent County. She managed to chew through her tether and make her way to the roadside, where a sharp-eyed Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) employee spotted her and contacted Delaware Animal Services. Animal Welfare Officer Aryanna Johnson responded and safely got the pup out of harm's way.

She transported Minnie to shelter partner Brandywine Valley SPCA, where a dedicated team began the careful work of helping her heal physically and emotionally.

With patience, socialization, and training, Minnie transformed. The frightened puppy which had once been left behind began to thrive. She gained weight and confidence and developed an irresistible personality.

She found her forever home after meeting her current owner during a training session - a moment that perfectly captured why this work matters.



Clockwise from Left: Minnie, Animal Welfare Officer Aryanna Johnson, Minnie as a puppy, Minnie full grown, Photo Credit: Brandywine Valley SPCA / Office of Animal Welfare

Survivors of Neglect



In June 2025, Delaware Animal Services (DAS) received a tip about animals living in poor conditions in a Kent County residence. After conducting a welfare check, officers obtained and executed a search warrant. They found 21 cats, two dogs, and one dead animal living among excessive trash, debris, pests, and their own waste. The severely neglected animals suffered from malnourishment, skin conditions, flea infestations, and upper respiratory infections. DAS officers seized the animals from the horrendous environment they were forced to endure. The owner was charged with 10 counts of cruel neglect and 15 other violations.

The animals were taken to the Brandywine Valley SPCA where they finally received the kindness and care they deserved. Each received medical attention and the time needed to heal. Happily, all the animals recovered fully and were adopted into loving homes.

Photo Credit: Brandywine Valley SPCA / Office of Animal Welfare



Found in the Dark



A Good Samaritan contacted DAS after hearing barking and crying for three days but was unable to locate the source despite multiple attempts. Officer Alexis Meding arrived on the scene to assist. The homeowner noted that when she was near the woodshed, the crying stopped. Together, Officer Meding and the homeowner searched for nearly an hour before discovering a small dog wedged on its side in the shed, behind the large woodpile and the wall.

Officer Meding carefully removed layer after layer of stacked wood to free the canine. The dog was alive but had endured days of freezing temperatures, darkness, and fear. They surmise the dog may have been looking for a warm place to escape the cold and fell behind the pile and became stuck.

Once freed, the small, white dog was transferred to Brandywine Valley SPCA, where shelter staff affectionately named him Snowmiser. He recovered fully from the ordeal and was adopted later that month.



Top: dog wedged between wall and wood; Center: Woodpile where dog was found; Bottom: Snowmiser after being rescued.