

HOW LONG HAS THE CHEYENNE ANIMAL SHELTER BEEN IN BUSINESS?

The Cheyenne Animal Shelter was founded nearly 50 years ago by a concerned group of local citizens eager to provide animal welfare services to the homeless and unwanted animals in the community. In 1974, the Shelter took over operations from the local “dog pound” and began helping reunite lost animals with their owners and finding new loving homes for those who were homeless or abandoned. In the early 1980s, the Shelter reached an agreement with the City of Cheyenne and Laramie County to also take over animal control services. Today, the Shelter cares for over 6,000 pets including puppies and kittens, cats and dogs, bird, rabbits and a variety of other critters.

WHO OVERSEES THE CHEYENNE ANIMAL SHELTER?

The Cheyenne Animal Shelter is an independent non-profit corporation that is overseen by a volunteer board of directors. Don Kremer is the Chief Executive Officer charged with managing day-to-day operations. The Shelter is not a City or County department. Rather, pursuant to contracts, the Shelter provides the essential animal control and animal shelter services that the City and County must provide to the community. Both the City and County have ex officio members of the Shelter Board.

WHAT SERVICES DOES THE SHELTER PROVIDE?

Pursuant to the City and County contracts, the Shelter operates as an open-intake community shelter that also provides animal control services. The Animal Control Officers are professionally trained personnel authorized by the City and County to enforce the City Code and related State and County animal regulations. The ACOs investigate animal-related complaints, capture stray animals, keep animals belonging to law enforcement detainees, and pick up smaller dead animals, among other tasks. They provide these services on a 24/7/365 basis. The Shelter must equip and train the ACOs as well as purchase and maintain ACO vehicles.

ACO Statistics

Call Responses	Total	4077	<u>City</u>	3091 (76%)	<u>County</u>	986 (24%)
Animal Intakes	Total	1723	<u>City</u>	996 (58%)	<u>County</u>	727 (42%)

As an open-intake community shelter, all animals placed under its care receive housing, sustenance and medical care. The source of animal intakes includes animals from the ACOs, court holds, stray drop-offs by citizens, owner surrenders, and transfers from other facilities. As an open-intake facility, the Shelter does not turn away animals based on age, breed, disposition, health, injuries or other factors that may impact the adoptability of the animal. Rather, the Shelter staff works hard to find forever homes for every adoptable animal and has a live release rate of over 92% for dogs and over 85% for cats.

The Shelter also provides an array of community services such as Trap-Neuter-Release, the Big Fix, feral and barn cats programs, and also provides care for pets of people facing medical or

other emergencies. In fiscal year 2017-18, the Shelter received animals from the following sources:

<i>Total Animal Intakes (includes out of county)</i>		<i>6379</i>	
<u>Type</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>County</u>	
Owner Surrender	744	80	
Adoption Return	72	7	
Clinic & Other	306	47	
Wildlife	44	4	
Stray Drop-off	2674	357	(47% total)
ACO Intakes	996	727	(27% total)

FACT: Approximately 75% of the total animals that come through the Shelter’s doors for care are a result of State and Local laws and regulation, primarily animals running at large. The City and County enforce those laws through the Shelter and the ACOs. They are responsible for the cost of these services.

WHY DOES THE CHEYENNE ANIMAL SHELTER OVERSEE ANIMAL CONTROL OPERATIONS RATHER THAN THE CHEYENNE POLICE DEPARTMENT OR LARAMIE COUNTY SHERIFF?

The Cheyenne Animal Shelter can provide dedicated animal control services to the City of Cheyenne and Laramie County much less expensively than these government entities. Additionally, the ACOs operate out of the Shelter and can better coordinate with Shelter staff regarding the shelter, medical, and other needs of animals.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO OPERATE THE SHELTER?

In fiscal year 2017-18, the Shelter had total expenses of over \$2.3 million of which a little over \$300,000 was the cost of providing animal control services. But we need to add another ACO to maintain adequate 24/7 coverage as well as a dispatcher to make the ACOs more efficient. The majority of the approximately \$2 million in sheltering and animal care costs is for employee salaries; although, the Shelter is under-staffed, and the employees underpaid.

WHY DOES THE SHELTER NEED MORE MONEY?

Over the past eight years, the amount of the City and County contracts, which total approximately \$723,000 per year, has not increased, while the cost of animal control services and everything it takes to care for these animals has. The contract revenue pays for less than one third of the Shelter's total annual expenditures; yet, approximately 75% of the total animals that come through the Shelter's doors are a result of being an Open-Intake Shelter as required by the City and County Contracts. Per the most recent audited financial statement, the value of these services to the City and County is approximately \$1.8 million. Simply put, the contracts do not come close to covering the cost of services the Shelter provides to the City and County.

The amount sought is not the full cost of the services provided. We understand that these changes will have to be incremental given the City and County's budget constraints. Nevertheless, we firmly believe it is in the best interest of everyone to work together to find a way for the Shelter to continue to provide these essential community services, while ensuring the sound financial future of the Shelter.

HOW HAS THE SHELTER BEEN COVERING THE DEFICIT?

Fortunately, the Cheyenne Animal Shelter has generous and dedicated donors and a foundation that helped bridge the gap. During the last 8 years of tight budgets for the City and County, these groups have subsidized the City and County obligations during difficult financial times. Covering this deficit caused other problems, however. We need to make repairs to the building, replace necessary equipment, and increase the wages and benefits to market value for our dedicated staff, among other issues. In addition, the Foundation's endowment did not grow like it should because the interest was used for operations. When we took a hard look at the numbers, it became apparent that the situation is not sustainable and the City and County must pay an amount much closer to the actual cost of services in order to put the Shelter on a sound, sustainable financial footing.

DON'T YOU HAVE A LOT OF MONEY IN RESERVES?

No. The Shelter does not currently have any significant operating or building improvement reserves due to the deficits accumulated over the last several years. The Cheyenne Animal Shelter Foundation has funds, the bulk of which were contributed by four major donors, which are held as an endowment at the direction of these donors. Only the income from these investments can be used for operations. More importantly, the goal of the Foundation is to increase the endowment to assist in the long-term development, growth and operation of the Shelter. Unfortunately, because of the amounts required to subsidize the City and County, the Foundation's endowment did not increase in principal value this past year for the first time since its creation. It is time for the City and County to honor its obligations to its citizens and help erase the deficit created on their behalf.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T GET THE FUNDING YOU ARE ASKING FOR?

We appreciate the recent proposal by the City Council to increase the contract amount by \$107,000, however as we described above, this amount is still far short of what we need to cover our costs under our contract with the City and County. To put it bluntly, if the City and County do not increase the amount they pay for the cost of the services the Shelter provides, then the contracts cannot and will not be renewed. In essence, the Shelter is subsidizing the City and County because we are the only local facility able to handle the volume generated by these contracts. We do it for the critters, but this arrangement is not financially sustainable.

If the contract is cancelled, the Shelter would explore transitioning to a typical animal rescue and the City and County would have to cover the entire cost of animal care and control services for close to 5,000 animals a year.

While we understand this increase in the contract may not happen this budget session, it will have to occur in the very near future—ideally before the next budget session. This is a problem that will not go away and cannot simply be ignored. This may require the City and County to consider new funding sources, but, the budget implications for the City and County are much more dire than the scope of the current proposal.

We do not want the contract to be cancelled. We do not want animals to suffer. Yet, it takes money to provide these services and we cannot continue to subsidize local government. We hope the City and County can appreciate the gravity of the moment and will act accordingly. If you agree, we encourage friends of Cheyenne Animal Shelter to voice your opinion to the Mayor, City Council, and County Commission.