

ROWAN ANIMAL TALK

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Hi Rowan County Animal Shelter Advocate!

I started as the Animal Services Director approximately 3 months ago. I have been on a self-education mission and dealing with day-to-day issues ever since. The challenges of this job are daily and stretch far and wide. It was never my intention coming in that I would do anything but move forward cautiously. I think we may be getting ready to see some turning points soon, though. Over the last couple of days, there have been a lot of questions because we euthanized “32 cats in one day.” I want to talk to you about that and other things. This is the start of a new monthly newsletter, Rowan Animal Talks, published to answer questions that you may have. Here’s my first go at it!

- Bob Pendergrass

DOES ANIMAL SERVICES HAVE A VETERINARIAN ON STAFF?

Getting a vet hired has been a struggle. We have advertised through the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Association of Shelter Veterinarians, and reached out to veterinary schools. After reflecting on the duties advertised in relation to the lack of applications received, we have revised the job description to reflect that the vet will provide advice to management—not to *be* the management.

HAVE ANY SHELTER POLICIES BEEN CHANGED OR UPDATED?

We have made some minor changes in how we treat euthanasia decisions by involving team decision-making in some situations. However, the fact that we do not have a vet in-house nor a vet tech even during the interim has slowed things down. We have not changed our length of hold policy much yet. We are working closely with rescues and extending some hold times on a case-by-case basis. Keeping large numbers of animals in a small area is problematic for disease control. On top of that, a shelter takes in animals daily that come from unknown parameters of origin. A few years ago, we had a major Pan Leukopenia outbreak at the shelter. This is something that many shelters like us have dealt with and fear greatly. When this happens, many cats die outright, you euthanize all the rest, shut down intake for a while, and your reputation that allows you to adopt out animals goes away for a long time. While I do feel that we can liberalize our population dynamics because of the new cat wing, I am cautious until we have a vet in-house daily.

DO YOU ALLOW VOLUNTEERS?

A volunteer program is forthcoming. We are short-staffed at this time and having a quality volunteer program involves training time. We are working daily with many volunteers from our rescue partners and we can’t say enough how much we appreciate their tireless efforts to assist. We are primed to start taking some in-house volunteers in July. Our initial goal is to have about four volunteers to assist with introducing adopters to animals, cleaning, checking inventory, and managing outreach efforts.

IS THERE A FOSTER PROGRAM IN PLACE?

This is—and has been—done through our rescue contacts. They do a great job!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ADDRESS THE CAPTURE OF FERAL ANIMALS?

We are using two new soft-capture nets as needed, mainly for feral animals where it is needed most.

WHY ARE ROWAN COUNTY’S EUTHANASIA NUMBERS SO HIGH?

Rowan County Animal Shelter is actually among the very *lowest* in the state for euthanasia and arguably the

lowest if you factor population figures in the mix (the lowest euthanasia counties also have the lowest populations). Part of why the public believes our numbers to be so high is the fact that we share our statistics publically. I think if you look around at other agency practices, you will quickly confirm what I am telling you to be true. No one else does this. The hard and true documentable facts are that we euthanize fewer animals than almost any other public shelter in the state. Despite the hailstorm of criticism we receive, we need to move forward. We can focus a lot of time and effort on public relations, or we can focus that same effort on saving animals lives. I prefer to save lives.

WHAT ABOUT THE RECENT EUTHANSIA OF 32 CATS?

We have had, as all shelters do in the summer, an increase in intakes, especially cats. Two individual situations in the past few weeks have brought in 40 cats, mostly adults that are harder to place. Thursday, June 9th, we were short-staffed and did not get to daily euthanasia, therefore Thursday's numbers were added to Friday's numbers (31 cats total). I understand the criticism because that large number is hard to swallow. But it is a daily total and not reflective of overall totals (noted below):

TOTALS FOR APRIL 2016*			
	Intake	Adopted	Euthanized
04/03-04/09	97	61	2
04/10-04/16	58	86	1
04/17-04/23	63	37	2
04/24-04/30	106	49	2

TOTALS FOR MAY 2016*			
	Intake	Adopted	Euthanized
05/01-05/07	133	91	6
05/08-05/14	92	75	4
05/15-05/21	113	86	2
05/22-05/28	146	109	6

*A common question is why do the numbers not add up across the lines. There are several reasons. Week to week animals may carry over. Owners may redeem the animal. Some, unfortunately, are DOA, etc.

Early June 2016 Euthanasia Details

- 06/01-06/04 5 cats euthanized
- 06/05 0 euthanized
- 06/06 1 cat came in severely injured (in shelter <24 hrs)
- 06/07 11 cats total : 9 for time (in shelter 14 days), 2 came in severely injured (in shelter <24 hrs)
5 dogs total : 3 quarantine end (in shelter >10 days), 2 for time (in shelter 14 days)
- 06/08 2 cats total : 1 quarantine end (in shelter >10 days),
1 came in severely injured (in shelter <24 hrs)
- 06/09 2 cats total : 2 cats came in severely injured (In Shelter <24 hours)

It is my intention to expand our standard stay length in the future, but we need more staff/volunteers, especially a vet. Our efforts are still seeing high levels of animals saved (look at our state rankings on the following page) and it keeps us safe for health concerns. We may even change to a fill-to-capacity standard in the future, but definitely not without a vet's daily advice and assistance.

ANY OTHER THOUGHTS?

We are an open door, public service, public owned agency. We have been criticized for not following a policy other local agencies have adopted, specifically shutting the door on owner surrenders due to an increase in volume of seasonal intakes. My experience does not allow me to see the value in that, even if we could do it (I am not sure our public mandate allows it). Almost all of the daily, big volume situations are a result of owner surrenders. What happens to those animals if they are refused? At best, I suspect that many would be dumped, making the problem worse instead of better. I am not willing to swallow that pill.

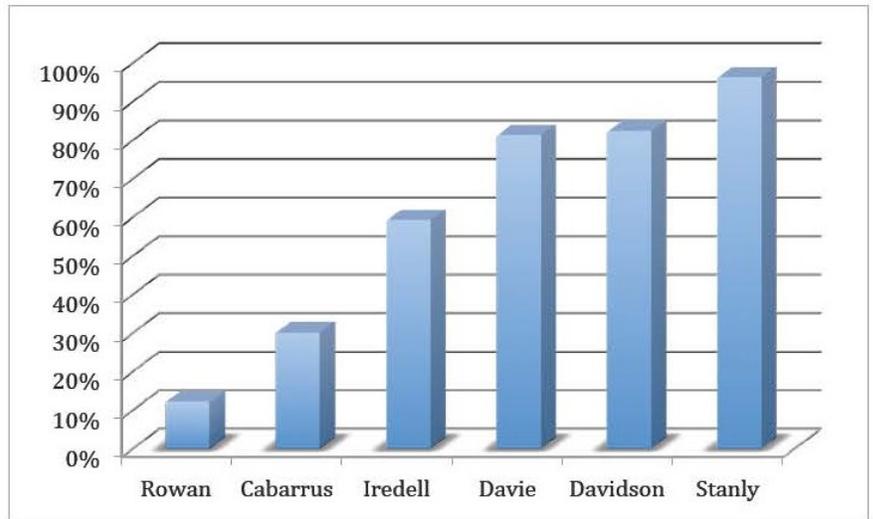
QUICK FACTS

The average percentage of cat euthanasia's of the five surrounding, contiguous counties including Rowan was 60%. In 2015, Rowan County euthanized the least amount of cats at 12% while Stanly County euthanized the highest amount of cats at 95%.

Source: NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Science

*All averages of the five counties include Rowan, therefore tabulation is based on six units.

PERCENTAGE OF CATS EUTHANIZED in 2015



2015 STATE RANKINGS EUTHANASIA: CATS & DOGS

The charts below show state rankings for euthanasia of cats and dogs. Rowan County had the third lowest total percentage of euthanasia's in the state. Please note the number of intakes in Rowan County compared to the bottom two counties. In the past month, we have experienced as many intake cats as Brunswick and Swain Counties experienced in a whole year.

Excerpt of the five counties with the **lowest** percentages of euthanasia's in 2015:

County	Intake Cats	Euthanized	Percentage	Intake Dogs	Euthanized	Percentage	Total Percentages
68. Buncombe	2511	281	11%	3285	455	14%	13%
69. Haywood	740	103	14%	1341	161	12%	13%
70. Rowan	2538	304	12%	2030	90	4%	9%
71. Brunswick	32	0	0%	37	0	0%	0%
72. Swain	48	0	0%	88	0	0%	0%

Excerpt of the five counties with the **highest** percentages of euthanasia's in 2015:

County	Intake Cats	Euthanized	Percentage	Intake Dogs	Euthanized	Percentage	Total Percentages
1. Tyrrell	123	115	93%	90	55	61%	96%
2. Anson	441	423	96%	872	541	62%	90%
3. Stanly	796	763	96%	763	500	66%	81%
4. Burke	2162	1998	92%	1839	844	46%	71%
5. McDowell	502	454	90%	711	405	57%	71%



HOW DO YOU SAVE 100 KITTENS OR PUPPIES?



SPAY/NEUTER!

Low-cost spay/neuter available through www.nopetleftbehindrowan.com