



Mayor's Office of
Animal Welfare

2023 Annual Report

Director's Note

In 2023, I had the privilege of speaking with New Yorkers attending BX Pets Day, meeting with veterinarians and veterinary students at a free pet vaccine clinic in downtown Manhattan, spending World Migratory Bird Day with bird watchers on Randall's Island, joining community leaders and the New York Police Department (NYPD) at a Harlem Dog Fashion Show, celebrating with nonprofit organizations cutting the ribbons on new animal welfare-centered facilities in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, tagging along with a therapy dog team working wonders at the Asylum Application Help Center, and so much more.

New York City faced many challenges in 2023, and so did animal shelters, rescuers, and guardians. Given that animal issues are so often inseparable from human ones, it is no surprise that as we continue to work toward a more equitable economy we must continue to work to keep pets and people together.

But, as I am lucky enough to witness regularly, New York City is full of smart, compassionate people who care for, appreciate, and are making progress for animals, companion and otherwise. The Adams Administration is committed to fostering a more humane city for all and will continue to engage with these dedicated community members and with government agencies to do so.

Thank you to all who contributed to this report and to all who work to improve animal welfare in New York City.

Alexandra Silver

Director, Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare (MOAW)

This report is issued to the Mayor and the Speaker of the City Council in accordance with Local Law 204 of 2019, which mandates annual reporting on the City's animal welfare service and program needs for all five boroughs.



*Clockwise from top right:
Bronx Community Cats at the Friends of
4 Parks' BX Pets Day; Positive Tails pet
vaccine clinic; bird-watching with NYC
Audubon and Randall's Island Park
Alliance; NYPD Patrol Borough
Manhattan North Harlem Dog Fashion
Show; Bideawee new shelter grand
opening in Chelsea; Flatbush Cats'
ribbon-cutting celebration for the
Flatbush Veterinary Clinic; ribbon-cutting
celebration for NYC Second Chance
Rescue's new shelter in Long Island City;
a Good Dog Foundation therapy team
visiting the Asylum Application Help
Center.*



Companion Animals

In New York City, as is the case across the country, there is a profound need for more companion animal adopters and foster families, as well as for additional efforts to help keep people and pets together.

Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC), the 501(c)3 nonprofit organization contracted by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) to operate the City's animal shelter system, takes in all kinds of species, but primarily cares for companion animals. ACC had a challenging 2023, and responding to high populations,¹ ran reduced-fee adoption promotions and asked New Yorkers seeking to relinquish cats--and later dogs--to delay drop-off if possible, offering multiple surrender prevention resources to support animal guardians. It is clear that raising awareness about and increasing pet adoption, volunteer/foster participation, and resources for animal guardians is essential, as is addressing the root causes of animal homelessness.

The Adams Administration promoted pet adoption and fostering in newsletters and on social media platforms throughout the year, and welcomed dogs available for adoption to City Hall for a staff "Howliday Celebration." In June, MOAW presented a Mayoral Citation to Petco Love at "Paws in the Park," a large-scale, multi-organization adoption event in Union Square sponsored by the national nonprofit and Petco Health and Wellness Company. A few months later, MOAW was back at Union Square for the annual New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM) Pets and Service Animals Preparedness Fair, which encourages animal guardians to include their pets in emergency plans. (NYCEM also continues to facilitate the Animal Planning Task Force, which consists of government agencies and nonprofits involved in emergency animal response and recovery operations). ACC was able to provide free microchips for the fair, and through a partnership with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City and Bond Vet, a volunteer veterinarian was available to administer them at no cost to dogs on the spot. Microchips, inserted under the skin, can be key to reuniting lost animals with their families. It is a message MOAW conveyed at a City Hall Public Safety Briefing ahead of July 4th, when addressing companion animal issues surrounding fireworks.



MOAW is frequently contacted about stray and feral cats and supports coordination among government agencies and the community to address this population. MOAW works closely with remarkable organizations and volunteers caring for and working to humanely reduce the number of cats on streets across the five boroughs, and encourages New Yorkers interested in caring directly for these "community cats" to learn best practices from organizations with expertise in the subject.

Several nonprofit organizations that provide care for community cats in New York City and that assist individual volunteers are among the animal welfare groups that were awarded City Council discretionary funding in 2023. At the end of the year, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) awarded a contract to the Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition (BBAWC), a leading New York City cat rescue organization, for trap-neuter-release (also known as trap-neuter-return, or TNR) services to help manage community cats across NYCHA developments.

Addressing street cat overpopulation requires a multifaceted approach, and it is essential that New Yorkers who have cats get them spayed or neutered and not let them roam outside. (New York City law requires that owned

¹ Details on population figures for cats, dogs, rabbits, and guinea pigs—some surrendered by owners, others arriving as strays—are available on [ACC's website](#), and ACC annual reports required by Local Law 59 of 2011 are available through the [Government Publications Portal](#).

cats who are allowed outdoors be spayed/neutered). MOAW recognizes that affordable spay/neuter resources in New York City—for both owned and community cats—are limited and continues to explore ways to improve accessibility.

In May, MOAW and the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit (CAU, under which MOAW is housed) partnered with NYCHA and the Ravenswood Resident Association on an animal-inclusive wellness resource fair at Ravenswood Houses in Queens. The nonprofit organization Neighborhood Cats participated, setting up a table to share information and offer residents "mini scholarships" to cover registration fees for their online trap-neuter-return (TNR) training workshops. Another nonprofit, Pets Are Wonderful Support (PAWS) NY, tabled with information on their programs aimed at keeping pets with their guardians. Just a couple of months earlier, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) presented CAU Bronx Borough Director Alina Dowe with a Humane Heroes Award, in recognition of her working during 2022 to bring a pet resource fair to Edenwald Houses in the Bronx.



Though shelters for people experiencing homelessness and domestic violence are not required to accommodate pets, they are required to accommodate service and approved emotional support animals (ESAs). Human Resources Administration (HRA) and Department of Homeless Services (DHS) staff receive training on both service animals and ESAs through New Employee Orientation. Both are also covered during DHS Introduction to Disabilities, which the Department of Social Services (DSS) Office of Disability Affairs is actively providing to DHS and provider staff.

In March, the DSS Office of Disability Affairs facilitated an online event entitled *ARF! (An Animal Resources Forum): Guidance and Resources for Working with Clients and their Animals*. Representatives from MOAW and several nonprofit organizations—ACC, the ASPCA, My Dog Is My Home, Positive Tails, Animal Haven, and the Urban Resource Institute (URI - which runs the People and Animals Living Safety [PALS] program at some shelters)—participated in this informational panel for agency staff and providers who serve clients with service animals and ESAs. Some of these organizations also take part in the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence (ENDGBV) trainings on Domestic Violence and Companion Animals, which are included in the Family Justice Center (FJC) Core training series for new FJC and partner/community staff.

The ASPCA also partners with NYPD on animal cruelty trainings and investigations, assisting with forensics and animal care. The NYPD Animal Cruelty Investigation Squad (ACIS), a unit in the NYPD Detectives Bureau, conducts training for all recruits in the Police Academy as well as in-service training, and trainings for other agencies if requested. In 2023, NYPD made 132 animal cruelty arrests.²

Meanwhile, significant capital projects moved forward at ACC locations across New York City in 2023. These welcoming new facilities will improve conditions for animals and better serve New Yorkers, as well as help attract more adopters, volunteers, and staff.

² <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/reports-analysis/animal-cruelty.page>.

N.B., while included under the *Companion Animals* section of this report, animal cruelty cases can involve other types of animals.

In the spring, ACC and New York City broke ground on the Animal Care Center in the Baychester neighborhood of the Bronx. The 50,000-square-foot Center is anticipated to be completed in 2025, and will bring a long overdue resource to the borough and its residents.

Queens, too, has lacked its own full-service animal shelter, something that will change in 2024 with the opening of the state-of-the-art Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal Care Center in Ridgewood. As Deputy Commissioner at the New York City Department of Veterans Services (DVS) and former City Council Member, the late Paul Vallone was a dedicated public servant and advocate for animals, committed to ensuring each borough has a full-service animal shelter.



Bronx Animal Care Center Groundbreaking

Work on ACC's Manhattan Pet Adoption Center—which is next to the existing Manhattan Animal Care Center in East Harlem—also advanced in 2023 and will be opening soon. In East New York, the Brooklyn Animal Care Center is on its way to undergoing a much-needed total renovation.

These new facilities are essential and will unquestionably improve animal welfare in New York City. They will be most successful, however, if all levels of government and community organizations simultaneously advance efforts to keep pets with the people who love them. Reflecting the importance of this approach, in 2023 Mayor Adams appointed Christine Kim, founder of My Dog Is My Home—a national nonprofit that highlights and helps preserve the bonds between people experiencing homelessness and their companion animals—to ACC's Board of Directors. Kim also served as the first Director of the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare.



A New Yorker shares her lived experience of homelessness at a 10th anniversary celebration for the nonprofit organization My Dog Is My Home. MOAW presented a Mayoral citation to the organization at the event.

On the legislative front, in 2023 the New York City Council passed Local Law 54, banning the sale of guinea pigs in New York City pet stores, which were already

prohibited from selling rabbits, as well as cats and dogs from certain sources. Guinea pigs remain available for adoption in New York City, at ACC and elsewhere. A state-wide ban on the sale of all cats and dogs in New York pet stores is set to take effect in December of 2024.

Wildlife

As Mayor Adams has noted, Flaco, the Eurasian eagle-owl who left the Central Park Zoo for the wider city in 2023, “captivated New Yorkers and reminded us of the beautiful wilderness that exists in our bustling urban landscape.” While Flaco's story was unique—and his loss tragic—we are fortunate to share the five boroughs with many avian species and other wildlife, and we must work to protect them.

The New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks) has a dedicated Wildlife Unit which promotes coexistence between people and urban wildlife, a message communicated on the [WildlifeNYC website](#). The Wildlife Unit:

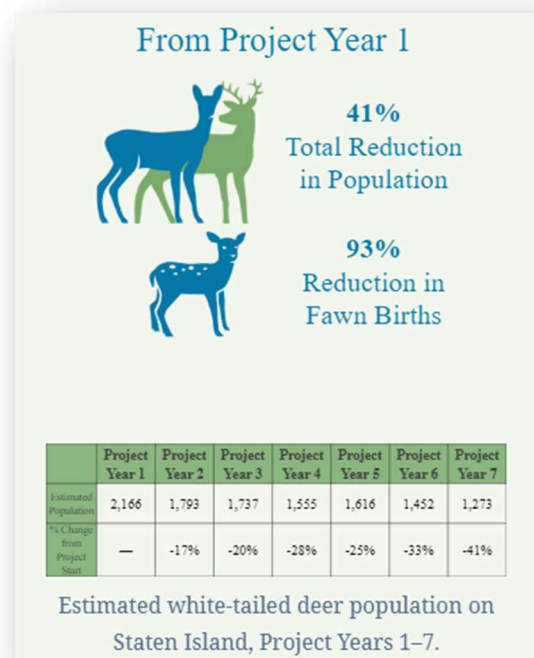
- Monitors and protects endangered and threatened shorebirds such as piping plovers, least terns, and common terns at the **Rockaway Beach Endangered Species Nesting Area (RBESNA)**.
- Engages community scientists—via the **Raptor Nest Monitoring project**—to monitor the nests of breeding birds of prey, allowing NYC Parks to assess rodenticide usage and reduce secondary poisonings of raptors.
- Conducts **research on local mesopredators** such as coyotes and red foxes, and partners with other research institutions to learn more about urban wildlife in New York City.
- Coordinates New York City’s innovative **Deer Impact Management Plan**, now in its eighth year. The plan includes humane, non-lethal solutions and involves five parts: traffic safety measures, public engagement and education, a population control study using sterilization, natural resource protection, and impact monitoring.



Staten Island’s 2023 deer population estimate is 1,273, which is a 41% decrease since Project Year 1, and there has been a 93% reduction in fawn births. The recently completed Project Year 7 saw the lowest number of deer-vehicle collisions (DVCs) reported to NYPD out of every project year, and the lowest number of deer carcasses collected by New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY). There has been a 60% decrease in DVCs and a 62% decrease in deer carcasses collected.³

Another team, NYC Parks’ Natural Resources Group (NRG), within the Division of Environment and Planning, works to protect, restore, expand, and manage New York City’s natural spaces and green infrastructure to maximize their ecological and social benefits for all New Yorkers. In 2023, NRG staff:

- Monitored **forest impacts from deer herbivory**, especially impacts on rare, threatened, and endangered plants. Based on five years of monitoring from their deer enclosure study, they are finding that the state-rare species American tiger lily and strawberry bush have greater flowering rates within enclosures compared to outside. Both species are valuable food sources for pollinators (such as the eastern tiger swallowtail butterfly) and songbirds (such as finches).



³ More information is available in NYC Parks’ [Managing Deer Impacts on Staten Island StoryMap](#).

- Hosted, in partnership with Natural Areas Conservancy and New York Restoration Project, a **Celebrate Salamanders** event at Manhattan's Highbridge Park to connect local communities to wildlife in their own neighborhood/"backyard."
- Completed a study to understand how **habitat connectivity** will be enhanced by the inclusion of wildlife passages under Travis Avenue in Staten Island when it will be raised (construction is set to start in 2024). NRG road mortality surveys revealed a seasonal spike in wildlife killed on the road in early summer and spatial concentrations by the habitat transition zones and the bridge over the tidal creek. NYC Parks aims to monitor road mortality following construction to evaluate the efficacy of wildlife passages and fencing to reduce road mortality.
- Joined NYC Audubon and the American Littoral Society on the **Harbor Herons Survey** of nesting wading birds in New York Harbor (the Harbor), which has been ongoing since 1982. Due to the abandonment of Subway Island in Jamaica Bay, South Brother Island is now the second largest remaining wading bird nesting location in the Harbor. Nesting is being impacted by loss of habitat due to sea level rise, harassment and disturbance by humans, and predation by mammals associated with people like raccoons.

Raccoons, like white-tailed deer, are native to New York. To reduce the risk of rabies exposure to people, pets, and other animals, and reduce the risk of rabies outbreaks among dense raccoon populations, in 2014, the NYC Health Department, in coordination with the United States Department of Agriculture, Cornell University, and NYC Parks, began an oral rabies vaccination (ORV) program to vaccinate raccoons in New York City. This preventative approach is conducted using Raboral V-RG™ baits, small packets which contain a liquid vaccine and coated with an attractant made of fishmeal. In May 2023, a low-flying helicopter was used to distribute the vaccine over parks, wooded areas, and non-populated areas in Staten Island. Later in the year distribution was done in Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan by hand-tossing and fixed bait stations strategically placed in several parks and wooded areas.



The WildlifeNYC website has a page dedicated to raccoons, which provides helpful information about our wild neighbors—including the fact that healthy raccoons can be seen day or night. Only sick or injured raccoons should be reported to 311.

In parks, Urban Park Rangers respond to animal conditions and reports of sick or injured wildlife (as well as reports of domestic animals). A response to an animal condition may include removing the animal from the park and transporting it to a wildlife rehabilitation facility or other animal care center, relocating wildlife to another location in the park, disposing of a deceased animal, or monitoring an animal to determine if further action is needed.

From January through November 2023, the Urban Park Rangers responded to 1,317 animal conditions, including:

- 929 responses to native species such as grey squirrels, Canada geese, gulls, ducks, raccoons, opossum, and many others;
- 274 responses to domestic animals including dogs, cats, chickens, guinea pigs, and more;
- 79 responses to introduced animals such as red-eared sliders, mute swans, and starlings; and

- 19 responses to exotic animals such as pythons, peafowl, a softshell turtle, and an alligator.

New Yorkers eager to connect to the natural world can join the Rangers' free Weekend Adventure programs across New York City. Activities include wildlife observation, birding, and seal watches, among others.

Farmed Animals

Each year, billions of animals are kept in inhumane, unsanitary conditions and killed for food in the United States. Nearly all farmed animals live in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), also known as factory farms.⁴ The Adams Administration is pursuing a variety of bold initiatives to build a healthier and more sustainable food system, which will inevitably have a positive impact on animal welfare.

In 2023, the NYC Health Department launched the “Eat A Whole Lot More Plants” campaign, aimed at helping New Yorkers reduce their risks of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. NYC Health + Hospitals continued to offer plant-based dishes as the primary dinner and lunch option, and the Lifestyle Medicine Program at NYC Health + Hospitals, which helps patients transition to a healthful plant-based dietary pattern and make other positive lifestyle changes, expanded to four sites. Plant-Powered Fridays, which feature nutritious plant-based dishes as the primary menu item, continued in NYC Public Schools.

During Earth Week 2023, Mayor Adams pledged to reduce emissions from food purchases across city agencies by 33% by 2030. (New York City's first integrated greenhouse gas inventory, released at the same time, showed that food is the third largest source of emissions).⁵ To meet this target, city agencies are working to reduce emissions from ruminant meats and dairy, which have the highest emissions by far,⁶ and increase their procurement of whole plant-based and low-carbon foods (such as fruits and vegetables, grains, and legumes). Mayor Adams also invited the private sector to join New York City in this effort, through the NYC Plant-Powered Carbon Challenge (PPCC). The PPCC calls upon businesses to reduce their food carbon footprint by 25% by 2030 through plant-forward menus and plant-based default programs.

Such efforts will have benefits for people, the planet, and animals. New York City further aims to improve animal welfare by continuing to defend Local Law 202, passed by the City Council in 2019, in court. New York City is working toward enforcement of the law, which bans force-fed products. (Foie gras is produced by force-feeding geese or ducks).



⁴ The Sentience Institute has estimated 99% in the US: [Sentience Institute | US Factory Farming Estimates](#), April 11, 2019.

⁵ “[Mayor Adams Commits to Reducing City’s Food-Based Emissions by 33 Percent by 2030 After Releasing new Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Incorporating Emissions From Food](#),” April 17, 2023.

⁶ Good Food Purchasing Data dashboard (see Environmental Sustainability), Mayor’s Office of Food Policy, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/foodpolicy/good-food-purchasing/citywidedata.page>