



2024 Annual Report

Director's Note

We saw several milestones for animal welfare in New York City in 2024. The long-awaited, state-of-the-art animal care center opened in Queens. A pet-friendly pilot program for families transferring from a domestic violence shelter to a transitional housing facility launched in the Bronx. The New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) marked ten years of partnership addressing animal cruelty across the five boroughs. The 2022 New York State Law banning the sale of dogs and cats (and rabbits, already covered by NYC law) in pet stores took effect.

But 2024 also saw several challenges for animal welfare in NYC. Nonprofit organizations and advocates shared many of their concerns at a City Council hearing in September, for which the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare (MOAW) also provided testimony. As we stated then, "The well-being of animals does not exist in a vacuum; it is both impacted by and impacts many factors, and it is linked with the well-being of people. Animal shelters, rescue groups and individual rescuers in New York City and across the country are experiencing challenges that reflect broader issues. When we talk about animal rescue, we are talking about financial pressures and housing challenges facing animal guardians. We are talking about veterinary workforce shortages and lack of access to resources for people with pets."¹

Addressing animal welfare issues requires a holistic approach and collaboration. One of MOAW's key functions is liaising with both community members and government agencies, and clear communication is essential. In 2024 MOAW relaunched its newsletter and added a Resources tab to its website, with new pages on outdoor cats and trap-neuter-return (TNR) as well as on adopting and fostering companion animals in NYC. We will continue to build the site so all New Yorkers can access and share important information that can help build a more humane city.

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

Alexandra Silver
Director, Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare

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.

¹ Written Testimony of Alexandra Silver, Director of the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare, City Council Health Committee Hearing on The State of Animal Rescue and Introduction 1018, September 13, 2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/animalwelfare/downloads/pdf/MOAW-Animal-Rescue-Testimony-9.13.24.pdf>.

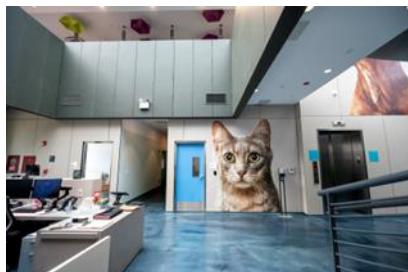
Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) Capital Projects

In 2024, the City and Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC)—the nonprofit organization contracted by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to operate the City's animal shelter system—opened two new facilities, including the first full-service animal shelter in Queens.

City officials, ACC, and the family of the late NYC Department of Veterans Services Deputy Commissioner and City Council Member Paul Vallone cut the ribbon on the beautiful **Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal Care Center** in September. The 50,000 square-foot building offers pet adoptions, surrender prevention resources, lost and found assistance, and community-centered pet initiatives.



Located at 1906 Flushing Avenue in Ridgewood, the center features a kitten nursery, outdoor dog play yards, open roam cat rooms, an education center, a wellness wing for sick animals as well as private counseling rooms for owners needing assistance with their pets. The state-of-the-art building has space for approximately 300 animals and includes a retractable roof that lets in fresh air, as well as other enhancements for the well-being of the animals. The project included clean-up of the site, and ACC participated in the New York State Department of Environmental (DEC) Brownfield Cleanup Program. ACC was awarded the 2024 Big Apple Brownfield Award for Innovative Purpose for this facility.²



² "City Opens First Ever Full-service Animal Shelter in Queens," <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/press/pr2024/city-opens-first-ever-full-service-animal-shelter-in-queens.page>

As big a milestone as this was, the Queens center wasn't the only ACC capital project completed in 2024. In October, Deputy Mayor Meera Joshi joined ACC, DOHMH, the NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC), and local community leaders to celebrate the completion of ACC's new **Manhattan Pet Adoption Center**. The 2,500-square-foot center is located at 323 East 109th Street—next to the existing Manhattan Animal Care Center—and involved converting a former garage into a modern, welcoming space to connect dogs and cats with their future families.³

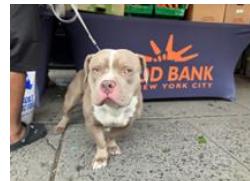


Meanwhile, construction of a Bronx Animal Care Center—which, like the Queens center, will bring a long overdue resource to the borough and its residents—is underway. A full renovation of the Brooklyn Animal Care Center, which closed as the Queens facility opened—is also in the works. The Bronx and Brooklyn two-story, state-of-the-art facilities will include medical areas, dog runs, parking lots and other amenities for animals and visitors.

Keeping Pets and People Together and Addressing the Root Causes of Animal Homelessness

In addition to ensuring full-service animal shelters in every borough and building better facilities, efforts to prevent animals from needing shelter at all, and to keep people and beloved pets together, are essential to improving both animal and human well-being in New York City.

Several organizations, including ACC, are working to connect New Yorkers with much-needed pet care resources, and the importance of partnerships can't be overstated. In September, MOAW stopped by the Food Bank For New York City's Community Kitchen in West Harlem for their *Pet Hunger Awareness Day* dog and cat food distribution event with PetSmart Charities. Representatives from the ASPCA, a



³ "City Opens Expanded Manhattan Pet Adoption Center on East 109th Street," <https://www.nyc.gov/site/ddc/about/press-releases/2024/pr-102824-ACC.page>.

longtime partner of the Food Bank For NYC, were also on site.

Earlier in 2024, Mayor Adams appointed Aleah Simpson to ACC's Board of Directors. Years before working to help families stay together through the *Pets for Life* program at the Humane Society of the United States, Simpson had helped build ACC's pet surrender prevention program.

Both the new Queens animal care center and ACC's forthcoming Bronx facility include plans for veterinary clinics that could help New Yorkers get necessary medical care for their pets, preventing them from having to surrender them. Meanwhile, in 2024, the ASPCA opened a Queens Community Veterinary Clinic for residents of several underserved zip codes.

As noted in MOAW's September 2024 testimony before the City Council Health Committee—and attested to by many New Yorkers—access to affordable veterinary care, including spay/neuter services, has been a major challenge for animal guardians, shelters, and rescues. This has been an issue across the country. One of the factors, as highlighted in a research article published in October 2024, is a shortage of nonprofit veterinarians and veterinary technicians.⁴



In March, Mayor Adams met with Long Island University College of Veterinary Medicine student Shania Allison, recipient of a scholarship (facilitated by the Administration and made possible by an animal-focused charity and Harlem Week) aimed at increasing diversity in veterinary medicine.

"Animal rescue is part of a larger ecosystem, and in addition to improved facilities and promoting pet adoption and fostering, we must do what we can to prevent animals from needing shelter and rescue in the first place. Leaders in the animal-sheltering field across the country are emphasizing the importance of keeping pets and people together, thereby reducing shelter intake. Doing so means helping animal guardians access resources, and doing our best to adjust policies so that they reflect our understanding that pets are family."

*-MOAW Director Alexandra Silver,
September 2024 City Council testimony*

In New York City, DOHMH funds low-cost spay-neuter services for pet owners through the Animal Population Control Fund. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has also funded some spay/neuter surgeries, working with the Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition to help manage the unowned, outdoor cat population across developments. In 2024, 252 cats at 18 different NYCHA properties were trapped, neutered or spayed, and either adopted out (if they were friendly) or released back to the property (if they were feral).

Like difficulties accessing veterinary care and other resources, housing challenges have major impacts on animals and their families. Given this connection, in 2024 MOAW joined the newly created Tenant Protection Cabinet, which brings together multiple agencies and offices to support renters in New York City.

⁴ "The Nonprofit Veterinarian Shortage: Who Will Care for the Pets Most in Need?" Journal of Shelter Medicine and Community Animal Health 2024, 3: 75. <http://dx.doi.org/10.56771/jsmcah.v3.75>. The article notes "compelling evidence for a crisis in these essential services for the most vulnerable animals: those in shelters, free-roaming community cats, and pets belonging to families that are struggling to access veterinary care. This nonprofit veterinary vacancy rate depletes already limited options to provide low-cost services to pet parents at a time when the economic climate, overcrowded shelters, and increasing cost of veterinary care create a greater need for more accessible services."

On the temporary housing front, the City marked a milestone in 2024. In May, the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) partnered with the Urban Resource Institute (URI) to open a new transitional housing facility in the Bronx featuring a pilot program for families who are experiencing homelessness with pets and transferring from a domestic violence shelter.⁵ URI has long been a leader in helping people and pets in crisis stay together, operating multiple pet-inclusive domestic violence shelters that are funded and overseen by the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA). The partnership with DHS marked an important development for companion animals, the people who love them, and the broader animal welfare community in New York City.



While most shelters do not allow pets, more than 500 assistance animals (service animals and emotional support animals) were accommodated in DHS shelters in 2024.⁶ Over the year, the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS) Office of Disability Affairs provided training on service and emotional support animals to 2,737 DSS/HRA/DHS and provider agency staff as part of New Employee Orientations and the Introduction to Disabilities Trainings.

Pet Adoption and Sales Bans

ACC and the many other animal shelters and rescue groups across New York City have no shortage of loving dogs and cats in need of homes.⁷ MOAW continues to promote pet adoption as well as fostering, adding a dedicated resource page on the topic to the MOAW website in 2024.

The “Puppy Mill Pipeline Act,” the 2022 state law banning pet stores across New York from selling cats and dogs (and rabbits)⁸ that took effect December 15, 2024, will hopefully contribute to an increase in pet adoption.

On the local level, a bill aligning the City's pet shop law with New York State law passed in December with overwhelming support in the City Council. Local Law 132 of 2024 goes beyond pet stores, further stipulating that “Animals shall not be sold or held for sale in a dwelling in which a person lives [also stated in the City's Health Code] or at any other location that is not licensed therefor.”

⁵ “First-Ever Pet-Inclusive Homeless Shelter in New York City Piloted at New Bronx Site,” May 2, 2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dhs/about/press-releases/Pet-Inclusive-Homeless-Shelter-2024.page>.

⁶ DSS as a whole accommodated a larger number of assistance animals, as this figure does not include animals in shelters contracted by NYC HRA.

⁷ Details on population figures for cats, dogs, rabbits, and guinea pigs—both intakes and placements—are available on ACC's website, www.nycacc.org, and ACC annual reports required by Local Law 59 of 2011 are available through the Government Publications Portal.

⁸ New York City law already prohibited pet stores from selling rabbits as well as guinea pigs.



Addressing Animal Cruelty

In 2024 the NYPD and the ASPCA marked ten years of partnership addressing animal cruelty across the five boroughs. They announced that working together, with NYPD taking the lead on enforcement and the ASPCA assisting with forensics, animal care, and other support, they have helped more than 5,000 New York City animals who were victims of suspected cruelty. They noted that another 1,600 animals have been helped through NYPD referrals to the ASPCA's Community

Engagement team, which can connect pet owners with resources when a criminal case is not being pursued.⁹

All police officers can respond to animal cruelty complaints, but NYPD also has a specialized unit under the Detective Bureau, the Animal Cruelty Investigation Squad (ACIS), that can handle cases that require further investigation. There were 158 animal cruelty arrests in New York City in 2024, the highest number in at least five years.¹⁰

Wildlife

In April, MOAW participated in a panel discussion at New York University entitled *Wild Animals in Urban Spaces: How Cities Can Promote Wild Animal Welfare in the Built Environment*, which followed the release of a policy brief led by NYU's Guarini Center on Environmental, Energy and Land Use Law.¹¹ The brief includes examples from New York City (such as the existence of a dedicated office of animal welfare and requirements for bird-friendly building materials) and identifies many opportunities for NYC and other municipalities to simultaneously improve human, environmental, and wild animal well-being.

Many people don't think of wildlife when they think of New York City, but we are fortunate to share our home with a variety of species, several of which are featured on the WildlifeNYC website, nyc.gov/wildlife.

In 2024, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks) opened the Arverne East Nature Preserve, 35 acres along the Rockaway waterfront that include five different maritime

"By establishing the new Arverne East Nature Preserve, we're not only protecting our natural environment but also providing fresh opportunities for New Yorkers to engage with the rich diversity of plant and animal life that enriches our city. As custodians of over 10,000 acres of natural areas across the five boroughs, Parks is committed to maintaining strong, ecologically vibrant public spaces, helping local wildlife thrive while making our city more beautiful, resilient, and livable."

-NYC Parks Commissioner Sue Donoghue

⁹"5,000 Suspected Victims of Animal Cruelty Treated in NYC as ASPCA, NYPD Celebrate 10 Years of Lifesaving Partnership," April 9, 2024, <https://www.aspca.org/about-us/press-releases/5000-suspected-victims-animal-cruelty-treated-nyc-aspca-nypd-celebrate-10>.

¹⁰ NYPD semi-annual reports, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/reports-analysis/animal-cruelty.page>

¹¹ White, A., Sebo, J., Franks, B., Minelli, A., Wyman, K. M., Krupa, D., Morris, V., Sims, T., Caplan, A. L. (2024). *Wild Animal Welfare in Local Policies on Land Use and the Built Environment*. Guarini Center on Environmental, Energy and Land Use Law. <https://www.guarinicenter.org/document/wild-animal-welfare-in-local-policies-on-land-use-and-the-built-environment>

ecosystems supporting shorebirds, songbirds, and monarch butterflies.

Shorebirds are among the animals that NYC Parks' dedicated Wildlife Unit works to protect. The team:

- 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). In 2024, 12 pairs of piping plovers nested at Rockaway Beach and successfully fledged 12 chicks, achieving a productivity rate of 1.00. Although this rate is below the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's goal of 1.5 fledged chicks per pair, it marks a notable increase from the 2023 season, despite having fewer breeding pairs.
- 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. A total of 68 rodent-consuming raptor nests were monitored in 2024. The observed species were red-tailed hawks, Cooper's hawks, great horned owls, eastern screech owls, peregrine falcons, bald eagles, and American kestrels. A total of 106 juveniles successfully fledged from these nests. These numbers are not comprehensive, but rather serve as a minimum number of identified nests and fledglings.
- 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. Throughout 2024, a pair of coyotes was consistently seen exploring Central Park together. Central Park is one of several parks where the Wildlife Unit monitors animals using game cameras. By monitoring where coyotes are active in the city, the Wildlife Unit can provide tips on coexistence to areas that are more likely to encounter coyotes.
- Coordinates New York City's innovative **Deer Impact Management Plan**, which launched in 2016. 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 2024 deer population estimate is 1,187, which is a 45% decrease since Project Year 1, and there has been a 95% reduction in fawn births. The recently completed Project Year 8 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 75% decrease in DVCs and a 70% decrease in deer carcasses collected.¹²

Another NYC Parks team, the Natural Resources Group (NRG), contributed comments to the update on New York State's Species of Greatest Conservation Need using internal NYC Parks' plant and wildlife species data and observations that have been continually updated by NRG staff over the last forty years. Among their recommendations for 2024 were:

- adding the Northern dusky salamander to Species of Potential Conservation Need
- adding the bee genera *Andrena*, *Alictid* and *Colletes* to Species of Potential Conservation Need to collect more data on their status statewide
- elevating the Black-crowned night heron as a High Priority Need according to the most recent analysis by NYC Bird Alliance

¹² More information is available in NYC Parks' Managing Deer Impacts on Staten Island StoryMap:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8fa5999839ad4f29a718a9d7c91cfab1>

NRG also connected local communities to wildlife in their neighborhood by hosting an Earth Day salamander tour at Manhattan's Highbridge Park in collaboration with the NYC Parks' Urban Park Rangers.

NYC Parks, along with DOHMH and the Wildlife Conservation Society, leads the NYC One Health Animal Working Group, which brings together representatives from local, state, and federal agencies and organizations committed to the health and welfare of our shared environment. The 2024 meeting, attended by more than 20 partners (including MOAW), focused on climate change and the varying effects it can have on our native plants and wildlife, as well as on companion animals.