



ALACHUA COUNTY NEWS



ANIMAL SHELTER EMERGENCY INTAKE SHUTDOWN

Animal Shelter Emergency Intake Shutdown

June 29, 2022

7 p.m.

ALACHUA COUNTY, FL - Due to crisis-level overcrowding and low staffing levels, the Alachua County Animal Resources and Care (AR&C) Shelter will immediately cease taking both owner surrenders and healthy, free-roaming animals. This temporary closure will be in place until the animal population aligns with the shelter's capacity for care. The shutdown will allow staff time to work with the animals in their care to assess their behavior and match them with adopters. It will also allow staff the time to focus on foster care and continue working with rescue partners to assist in transfers.

"I am ordering this shutdown for the sake of the animals and our staff. We are seeing nationwide staffing shortages, and unfortunately, Alachua County is not immune," Alachua County Manager Michele Lieberman said. "Working at the animal shelter, particularly when severely overcrowded, is physically and emotionally exhausting for existing staff doing their best to take care of the animals."

"I fully support the Manager's decision. The number of animals at the shelter exceeds the staff's capacity to provide humane care," said Alachua County Commission Chair Marihelen Wheeler. "The overcrowding crisis must be addressed for the welfare of the animals and the health of our dedicated staff."

"I support this action. Shelters nationwide are challenged by too many animals, understaffing, and inadequate space," explained Dr. Cynda Crawford, the Director of the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine. "For many shelters, we have utilized this temporary emergency shutdown strategy to focus shelter resources on community placements of the animals in their care. This strategy has successfully returned shelters to a more balanced state resulting in good animal care and staff welfare."

The shelter will remain open to the public for adoptions and reclaims. The Animal Resource Officers will continue to respond to calls from the community concerning public safety. Residents should call 911 in the event of an emergency. The shelter staff will still be available to assist animals (brought in by bystanders, not owners) needing immediate veterinary treatment.

If you find a free-roaming pet and choose to get involved, please attempt to locate the owner. Here are some tips for reuniting pets with their owners:

- Think LOST, not STRAY. Many animals never return home because the finder assumes the animal has been abandoned or dumped when the animal has just accidentally gotten out.
- Their owner may be frantically looking for their pet but doesn't know the best way to go about it. Pets that have been out for even a short time may start to look neglected and may appear frightened or skittish, giving the impression that they were abused or abandoned.
- Secure the pet, look for any injuries, and provide water. Note the exact location you found the pet. If possible, walk the pet around the neighborhood, asking others if they recognize it.
- Check for an identifying rabies tag or name tag. Call and text the owners OR call AR&C with the rabies tag number.
- Check for a microchip at any vet clinic.
- Take a photo of the pet in good lighting. Get a front-on nose shot that shows the pet's face and complete a "Found Pet" form on <https://24petconnect.com/>.
- After filling out the "Found Pet" form, please also post the found pet on your neighborhood and local lost and found social media pages.

- Gainesville Pet Finder is one of Alachua County's main Lost and Found Facebook groups
- along with <https://NextDoor.com>, where you can post specific to your neighborhood.
- Do not mention gender or collar details. Remember, the goal is to locate the owner, not re-home the pet immediately. If you are contacted by another person directly claiming to be the owner, ask for proof of ownership before returning the pet. **If you aren't sure what to do, contact AR&C for assistance.**
- Post signs in the neighborhood. Include a photo and your contact info.

Alachua County Animal Resources and Care is grateful for the community's support and understanding during this temporary shutdown, and we will alert the public when the shutdown is lifted.

For more information, contact Alachua County Communications Director Mark Sexton at 352-264-6979 or msexton@alachuacounty.us.

If you have a disability and need an accommodation in order to participate in a County program, service or public meeting, please contact the Alachua County Equal Opportunity Office at (352) 374-5275 at least 2 business days prior to the event. TTY users, please call 711 (Florida Relay Service).

[VISIT THE ALACHUA COUNTY WEBSITE](#)

This County News Update is sent by the Alachua County Communications Office

CONTACT: Mark Sexton, Communications Director

PHONE: (352) 374-5204; CELL: (352) 283-2317

EMAIL: msexton@alachuacounty.us

