



Our Animals

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The San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

201 Alabama Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 | (415) 554-3000
Founded April 18, 1868

Our Mission

Our mission is to ensure every companion animal has access to quality medical care, compassionate shelter, and a loving home.

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CEO's Message:

Shelters across our state are doing everything they can to keep up with the astonishing number of dogs, puppies, cats, and kittens streaming through their doors every day. This challenge can sometimes feel insurmountable, with staff and resources stretched to the limit. Yet, amid this crisis, there is hope—if we work together.

In this issue of *Our Animals*, you'll learn how free and low-cost spay/neuter programs, preventative veterinary care, and other animal-welfare programs are the pathway to solving the overpopulation crisis. When shelters are adequately resourced, they can offer programs that help keep animals safe, healthy, and in their homes. We'll share what we're doing to address this statewide challenge and the many ways you can help.

We'll also introduce you to Randall Adviento, our Shelter Manager who's working on the front lines with animals in need. You'll meet Madison, an 80+ pound Great Pyrenees who's now loving life with donor, volunteer, and former SF SPCA Board Chair Jennifer Chung. And you will also hear from members of our community about the love and lessons animals bring to their lives.

We are so grateful to you, our SF SPCA community. Your support enables us to devote our resources to tackling the current overpopulation crisis head-on, so animals in California can find and remain in their forever homes.

Thank you for being there with us for animals.

Jennifer Scarlett, DVM
CEO

Solving the Overpopulation Crisis for Animals and Shelters

Animal shelters are bracing under the weight of overwhelming demand, and we're calling for all hands on deck in the race to save lives. According to the U.S. data experts at Shelter Animals Count, an estimated 245,000 additional dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens were in shelters during the 2023 holiday season compared to the same time in 2022.

There are multiple contributing factors to this overpopulation crisis, but the most devastating is the ongoing veterinarian shortage that's decimating access to care nationwide. "It's a vicious cycle for shelters," said San Francisco SPCA CEO Jennifer Scarlett, DVM. "The increase in intake affects animals in their care and depletes resources from programs that prevent overpopulation."

How did we get here?

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, widespread community spay/neuter programs led to a decline in the numbers of animals in shelters. This allowed many shelters to direct more resources to community services like free and low-cost spay/neuter and vaccination programs that keep animals healthy and in their homes.

COVID-19 interrupted that progress, deferring an estimated 2.7 million spay/neuter surgeries. Without spay/neuter intervention, just one female dog's or cat's offspring can be the source of more than 10,000 puppies or kittens over a 5-year reproductive lifespan. Today, shelters struggle to manage years of unchecked population growth.

As if overcrowding weren't enough—shelters, veterinary practices, and pet guardians alike face a crisis in access to care. Veterinarians are leaving the field, and there are not enough new vets to keep up with demand. Many shelters are left understaffed and unable to provide essential veterinary care, including the spay/neuter surgeries required by California law for animals to be adopted. According to a 2023 survey led by the SF SPCA, approximately 60% of our state's shelters could not fill budgeted veterinary positions.

Currently, an estimated 200 veterinarians are needed to adequately staff California shelters. The medical-staff shortage also impacts veterinary services available to



An estimated 6.5 million cats and dogs entered shelters last year, according to Shelter Animals Count.

communities. "A lot of animals end up in shelters because their guardians aren't able to access spay/neuter," said Chief Medical Officer Jena Valdez, DVM. "Or their animals get sick because they're unvaccinated. Sometimes, they surrender them to the shelter because they believe that's a place where the animals may receive care."

Healthy shelters, healthy pets, and healthy communities

Shelters are able to provide more value to communities when they're not overstretched. "Ideally, a shelter is not only providing for animals, but also all of the resources that help keep those animals in the home," said Chief of Rescue and Welfare Anne Moellering. "At the SF SPCA, we're incredibly fortunate. With the private funding we have, we can attune ourselves more to the welfare of animals." Animals in our shelter and throughout our city have access to the SF SPCA



California shelters are filled to the brim with large dogs like these two hopeful Huskies.

system of care, including our Community Veterinary Clinic, free and low-cost spay/neuter, free monthly Mobile Vaccine Clinic, and full-service hospital, where San Francisco pet guardians can apply for financial aid. At the SF SPCA, we also have the resources to provide behavioral support and educational materials to our community, in addition to advocacy work on behalf of animal welfare statewide.

Partnering with local governments

When local governments and shelters work together, they can help create a wider safety net for animals in the community and promote public programs to help more animals stay in their homes, with access to medical care, pet food, and pet-friendly housing.

In San Francisco, the SF SPCA partners closely with San Francisco Animal Care and Control. We regularly intake animals from their facility, especially those in need of medical care. “San Francisco is really lucky to have two entities supporting our city, so animal homelessness is not in epidemic proportions here,” said Shelter Manager Randall Adviento.

Lending a hand to California’s Central Valley shelters

Through the California Humane Animal Transfer Team (CHATT) program, we collaborate with shelters in California’s Central Valley to help relieve overcrowding, bolster veterinary resources, and expand public spay/neuter

programs. Twice weekly, our staff travels to partner shelters to bring kittens, cats, puppies, and dogs back to the SF SPCA for adoption. Many arrive in need of medical and/or behavioral care and require time to adapt to city life.

“Our partners are telling us that half of their intake right now is puppies and kittens,” said Dr. Valdez. “That shows that the extreme overcrowding we’re seeing right now is because of limited access to spay/neuter.” We address this need by offering full-fee, low-cost, and free spay/neuter clinics and vaccine clinics onsite in the Central Valley. “It is an extremely valuable asset that we can help shelters manage their populations,” said SF SPCA Veterinarian Emily Young, DVM. “Animals are showing up every single day. We’re able to help get them healthy enough to be spayed/neutered, and adopted.”

Advocating for animal welfare

Animal overpopulation and lack of access to veterinary care require changes to our current animal-care systems. Most recently, we lobbied successfully for AB 1399 and SB 669, new legislation that will address these problems.

AB 1399 allows for the use of veterinary telemedicine in California to alleviate barriers to veterinary care, improve pet retention, and extend shelter capacity. SB 669 authorizes Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs) to administer vital vaccines under offsite veterinarian supervision, so

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Making a Difference: Always There for Animals

RANDALL ADVIENTO

Shelter Manager

How long have you worked at the SF SPCA?

I just hit my 15-year milestone!

Do you have pets?

Our beloved white poodle named Mochi recently passed away at 15 years old. Adopted from the SF SPCA, he was a shining example of the love and joy a pet can bring to your life.

What one word embodies the SF SPCA for you?

Versatile.

What led you to a career in animal welfare?

I was studying at UC Davis for electrical and computer science, and I wasn't sure if I wanted to pursue that. One summer, I volunteered at the SF SPCA, and my supervisor at the time said, "Oh, we need to hire him." I started off as an Animal-Care Associate, and that's the team I now manage. I love it here. I couldn't imagine working anywhere else.

What's a typical day for you like at the SF SPCA?

The Shelter Manager oversees compassionate care for all our shelter animals while providing a safe and clean environment for everyone. This includes feeding, cleaning, intake procedures, overseeing hundreds of volunteers, and ensuring we remain current with shelter best practices. It takes a lot of teamwork to house this many animals.

The work we do can be very taxing and emotionally charged. I help ensure people are taking care of themselves and remind them we can always have a positive outlook. I do a lot of the animal behavioral training as well, like helping



Randall loves working hands-on with animals and can't imagine working in any other career.

staff out when they're working with a dog who's really scared. I might coach them: hey, try a low body posture, avert your eyes, use a soft voice, or toss treats.

What are some other ways the adoption center serves the San Francisco community?

We create a lot of opportunities for people to find their careers. Many of our staff were former volunteers. They either stay in adoptions or find success in other departments at the SF SPCA. It's given me joy over the years to help people find their careers, and I'm proud of all the lives that we have impacted.

What else do you want people to know about the SF SPCA?

We will always be here to support you however we can. Our door is always open. 🐾

BE A PART OF THE SF SPCA COMMUNITY

The SF SPCA is full of people, like Randall, who are passionate about animal welfare. Explore our rewarding career and volunteer opportunities at:

sfspca.org/join-our-community



OVERPOPULATION CONTINUED

free and low-cost vaccine clinics can operate more easily to better serve animals and their communities.

On January 12, 2024, SF SPCA RVTs held their first such vaccine clinic, and we have already developed a playbook for use by shelters and vet practices statewide. “We want to ensure these laws are fully implemented,” said Dr. Scarlett. “If we give an example to other shelters and RVTs, they will feel confident to move forward.”

How you can help

Shelters are on the front lines of the crises in overpopulation and access to care, so one of the most important things you can do right now to help animals is to support your local shelter.

In addition to donations, many shelters have volunteer programs and offer a variety of ways to get involved.

If you're thinking of adopting, large dogs are especially in need of homes. “Overpopulation in the Central Valley is mostly large dogs,” said Chief of Rescue and Welfare Anne Moellering. And despite common perception, she said, “many big dogs do extremely well in the city, as long as you have access to somewhere you can take them for a walk.”

Fostering also provides relief for overcrowded shelters. “Animals do so much better in a foster placement,” said

Shelter Manager Randall Adviento, “because they start to build trust and develop relationships with people.” The socialization skills the animals learn while in foster care help increase their chances of adoption.

You can also host a donation drive for needed supplies or simply offer kind words of appreciation to hard-working shelter staff.

Together, we can make the world a better place for animals and humans. Supporting your local shelter and its community programs helps keep pets in their homes and saves lives. “High-volume spay/neuter and high-volume vaccinations are going to get to the root cause of these crises,” said Dr. Scarlett. “With help from the community, shelters will get back up on their feet and be able to offer these services to the community once again.”

Save the date

For one month beginning August 12, 2024, SF SPCA is participating in Clear the Shelters, a nationwide pet-adoption and donation campaign that helps find loving homes for animals in need. Visit our adoption center during this time, and we will waive adoption fees for all animals aged five months and older. If it isn't the right time to adopt, please consider donating to our Clear the Shelters Fund, which enables the SF SPCA to save lives and find forever families for homeless animals. 🐾



Who Will Care for Your Pets After You're Gone?

Cats and dogs enrolled in the Sido Pet Protection Program receive exceptional care and attention while the SF SPCA works to place them in loving homes.

Scan the code to learn more.



sfspca.org/sido



Madison Finds Her Forever Home



After receiving critical medical care and physical therapy, Madison (right) is now loving life with fellow SF SPCA “foster fail,” Molly (left).

Soulful-eyed Madison, a snowy-white Great Pyrenees, arrived at the SF SPCA underweight and with a severe hip injury, most likely due to being hit by a car. She was transferred to us when a partner shelter was unable to provide the level of medical care Madison desperately needed.

Our veterinary team made quick work of repairing the damage to her hip ball-and-socket joint and then set her up with a physical-therapy plan to build up strength and muscle. Madison looked forward to her sessions and leaned in for human contact on her walks.

A lucky break for Madison

Large dogs, especially those with special needs, are less popular with adopters, so Madison faced an uphill journey to find her forever home. Fortunately for her, she was selected to appear onstage with other adoptable animals at the 2019

SF SPCA Gala. It was there that donor, volunteer, and former SF SPCA Board Chair Jennifer Chung spotted her.

“She was this big polar bear,” said Jennifer. “She was so nervous; she just buried her head in the legs of the guy who brought her up. They had to carry her off stage like a lamb with a cone on her head. I do not remember this, but my friend sitting next to me said she heard me say under my breath, ‘I want that dog.’”

After dinner, Jennifer asked about Madison, but hesitated to commit. She and her family had recently lost a dog, and they were all still grieving. After the gala was over, Madison returned to the shelter, where she languished in her slow recovery. A concerned staff member approached Jennifer and asked if she might consider fostering.

Madison comes home

Jennifer and her family agreed to foster Madison. “When we first brought her home,” Jennifer said, “she was so fearful. It didn’t feel like she was familiar with being inside, and I don’t think she had ever gone up or down stairs. I would take her on a walk, and she would suddenly just stop, she was so terrified. I would have to pick her up sometimes and carry her home—and she’s a big dog.”

Several weeks into fostering, Jennifer knew she couldn’t let Madison go. “She was always so hungry for love,” Jennifer said. “She would lean against you and look up at you with those sad eyes. There was just no way I could give her up.”

Today, Madison is thriving both physically and emotionally. A healthy 80-plus pounds now, she runs, pivots, and plays fearlessly with her dog friends. She confidently explores the neighborhood on walks with the family and loves everyone she meets. Fostering and adopting have been unexpected gifts for Jennifer and her family. “Seeing a dog through the recovery process and how the time, energy, and love you put in directly translate into healing, happiness, and health—it’s been one of the most rewarding experiences ever.”

Looking for your pet soulmate?

If you’re ready to welcome a furry friend into your heart, look no further than the SF SPCA. Visit sfspca.org/adoptions to meet our dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens who can’t wait to find their forever homes. 🐾

WANT MORE HAPPY TAILS?

Follow us on social media to read more of our amazing adoption stories



Facebook:
[@sfspca](https://www.facebook.com/sfspca)



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Sponsorships like yours help provide food, shelter, enrichment, behavior training, and veterinary care for one animal—which costs an average of \$2,000, from source shelter to their forever home.

Scan to sponsor an animal in need!



sfspca.org/sponsorme



SFSPCA

Celebrating the Human-Animal Bond

Stories of the love we share with pets are as unique as the people who tell them and the animals who inspire us. Here, our donors, staff, and volunteers share the pets who live in their hearts and homes.

Asheley and Molly

Animal-Assisted Therapy Volunteer

I adopted Molly from the SF SPCA in April of 2019. After meeting a few other dogs, I knew Molly and I were a match the moment we met. As a first-time dog owner, I've learned the importance of being flexible and prioritizing Molly's needs for walks and socialization, especially being in an urban setting. In return, Molly provides me with unconditional love and companionship. Last year, we joined the SF SPCA Animal-Assisted Therapy team, visiting care centers and spreading joy. Sharing Molly's love with others enhances their lives and enriches mine immensely as well, filling it with pride and happiness.



Antti, Hanna, Meeko, and Missy

Adopters

Adopted from the SF SPCA, Meeko filled the void left by our beloved cat Leevi. Meeko's early days, under the wing of our other cat, Simo, took an unexpected turn with Simo's passing. Enter Missy, also from the SF SPCA, a serendipitous find from Fresno. Their connection was instant and profound, reflected in their mutual support and play. Each with distinct personalities, they've become irreplaceable in our lives. They're attuned to our feelings and provide us with comfort and joy. Meeko and Missy's relationship showcases the deep, intuitive bond pets can share with each other and their human companions.

Amanda and Beau Cadeau

Volunteer and Donor

Losing my Husky, Wolfie, was devastating, yet through volunteering at the SF SPCA, I found Beau, proving that it's possible to love again. Beau's vibrant personality reminds me that love is infinite, and honoring past loves does not diminish new ones. He enriches my life daily, being a delightful presence during my home-based work and an ambassador of goodwill in the neighborhood. Though he's only three years old, Beau had been adopted six times before we met. It was as if he was waiting for me—and me for him. Beau reminds me to embrace the moment. He is indeed a “handsome gift” from the universe.



Tom and Guinness

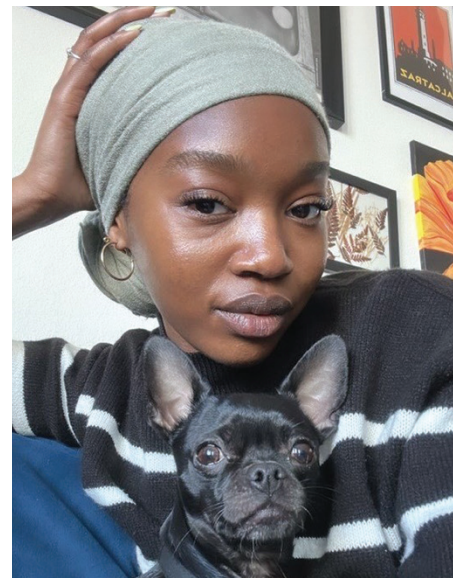
Legacy Society Member and Donor

Our dog, Guinness, embodies the mantra “Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff.” His pure joy when he returns home and reunites with us illustrates the simplicity of happiness. For Guinness, life’s pleasures are treats and love, teaching us the essence of unconditional affection. Adopted as a puppy, his cheerful demeanor has brightened our lives and made him a local Starbucks mascot. His arrival followed the passing of a family pet, showing us life’s continuities and the joy of new beginnings. Guinness, named for his coloring and our Irish roots, has been a loving, guiding presence, reminding us of the joys in everyday moments and the profound bond between humans and their pets.

Ngozi and Kai

Staff Member

Kai, my curious Chihuahua, teaches me to see the world with wonder and fascination. His explorative nature is a constant delight, offering a fresh perspective on life. Kai connects me with my community, making me more outgoing and social. His warm and friendly demeanor has made him a beloved figure wherever we go. Our paths crossed unexpectedly at an adoption event, while searching for a different dog. Kai's intelligence and sweetness stood out, capturing my heart instantly. He wasn't the pet I planned to find, but he turned out to be the perfect companion, enriching my life with joy, friendship, and endless discovery.





201 Alabama Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
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Pet Talk

Thoughtful Care for Our Aging Pets

Join Dr. Melanie Ellis, SF SPCA Hospital Medical Director, as she shares insights and helpful tips on caring for our aging pets.

Wednesday, July 24, at noon

Event hosted on Zoom.
Register at sfspca.org/pettalk.

