

ANIMAL WELFARE PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Amanda E. Beal
Commissioner

Randy Charette
Deputy Commissioner



18 Elkins Lane
Augusta, ME 04333

(207) 287-3200
www.maine.gov/dacf

Maine's Animal Welfare Program Review for 2021

Our Mission: The Animal Welfare Program (AWP) ensures the humane treatment of animals through communication, education, and enforcement of animal welfare laws.

What we do: AWP develops and implements policies and programs to effectively address animal cruelty complaints; inspects and licenses animal shelters, pet stores, kennels, and animal research facilities; and enforces the licensing of dogs.

Staff:

Field staff

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| • District Humane Agent Aroostook County | Chrissy MacFarland |
| • District Humane Agent Washington, Hancock Counties | Douglas Radziewicz |
| • District Humane Agent Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset Counties | Rachel Welch |
| • District Humane Agent Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, Kennebec Counties | Vacant |
| • District Humane Agent Franklin, Oxford, Androscoggin Counties | Angela Rogers |
| • District Humane Agent York, Cumberland Counties | Vacant |

Office Staff

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| • Director | Liam Hughes |
| • Secretary Associate | Leonard Goodine |
| • Office Associate II | Danielle Trask |
| • Planning and Research | Reginald Manter |
| • Assistant State Veterinarian | Rachael Fiske DVM |

A Word from the Director

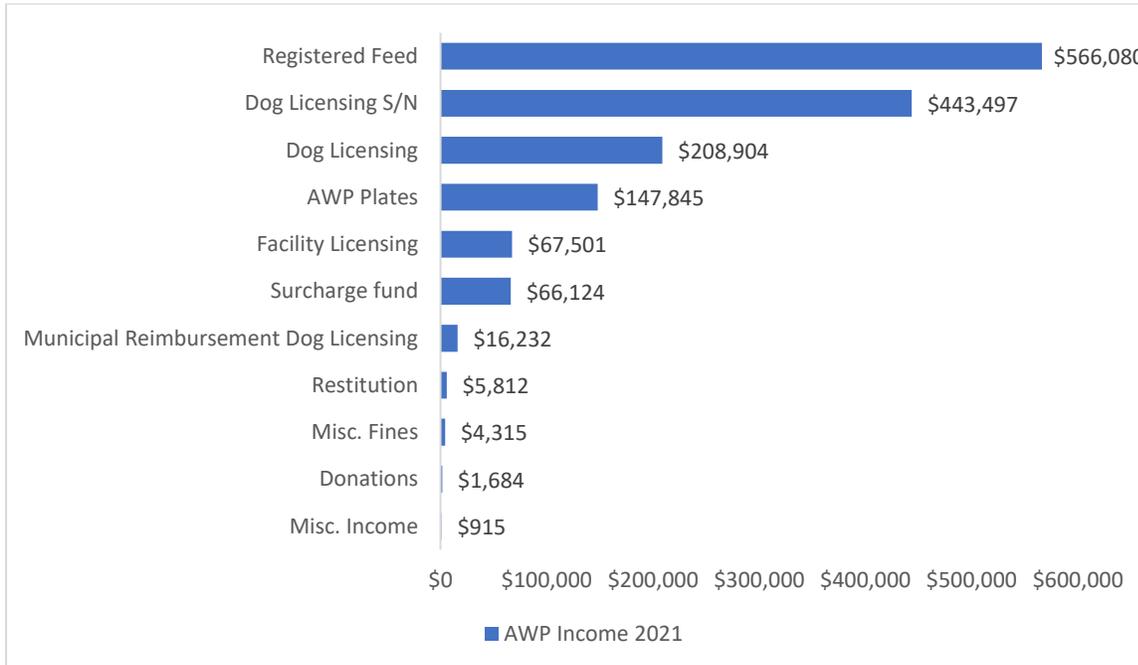
The Animal Welfare Program (AWP) faced significant challenges in 2021 even as we made measurable progress and managed a growing workflow. Internally, resource constraints that already existed were worsened by COVID-related conditions related to delayed animal registrations, extended animal stays, and more. These trends had the effect of increasing expenses while decreasing revenue for an already-stretched program. Externally, possession hearings in the courts were delayed by the pandemic, and our animal sheltering partners were hit by the kind of staffing and resource shortages experienced throughout the COVID economy. There is no doubt that this “perfect storm” resulted in lower levels of service and responsiveness than what we aspire to. Nevertheless, AWP continued to respond to hundreds of animal cruelty violation complaints and worked to maintain good communications with our stakeholders and partners regarding animal seizure planning and support. I applaud the hard work and dedication of AWP staff and our animal sheltering partners. They are crucial to ensuring humane treatment of animals in the State of Maine.

Liam Hughes, Director, Animal Welfare Program

Funding for the Animal Welfare Program

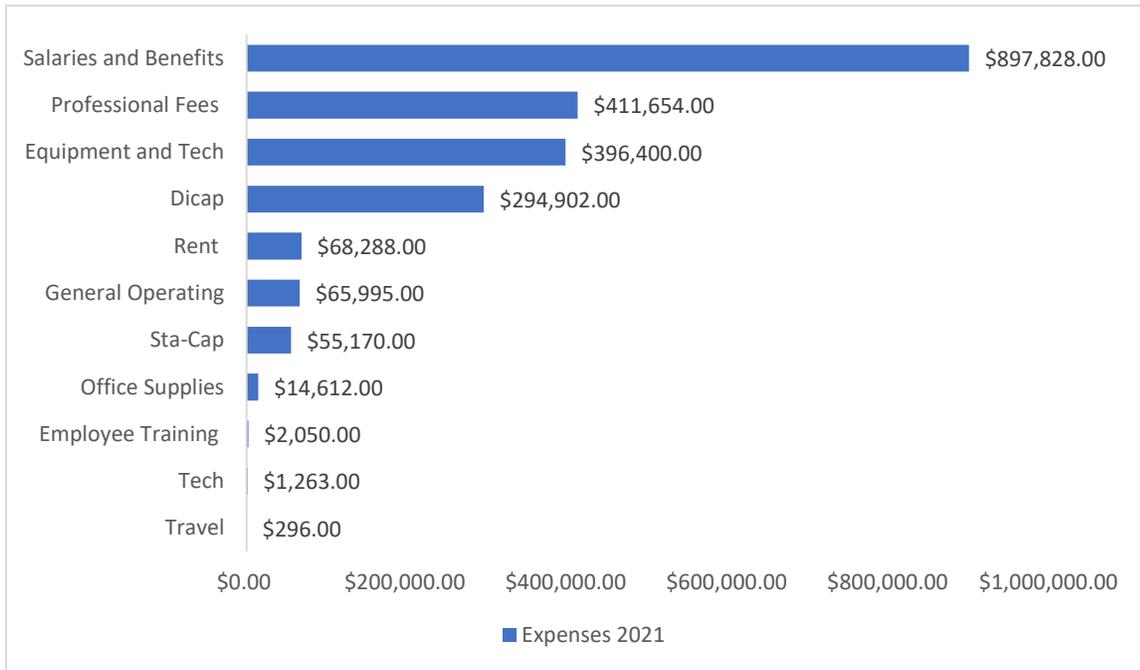
Note: AWP financial data is collected and reported on a fiscal year (July1-June 30) basis. Program data is collected and reported on a calendar year basis. Unless labeled FY 2021, data on the following pages cover the period between January 1-December 31, 2021.

Income FY 2021



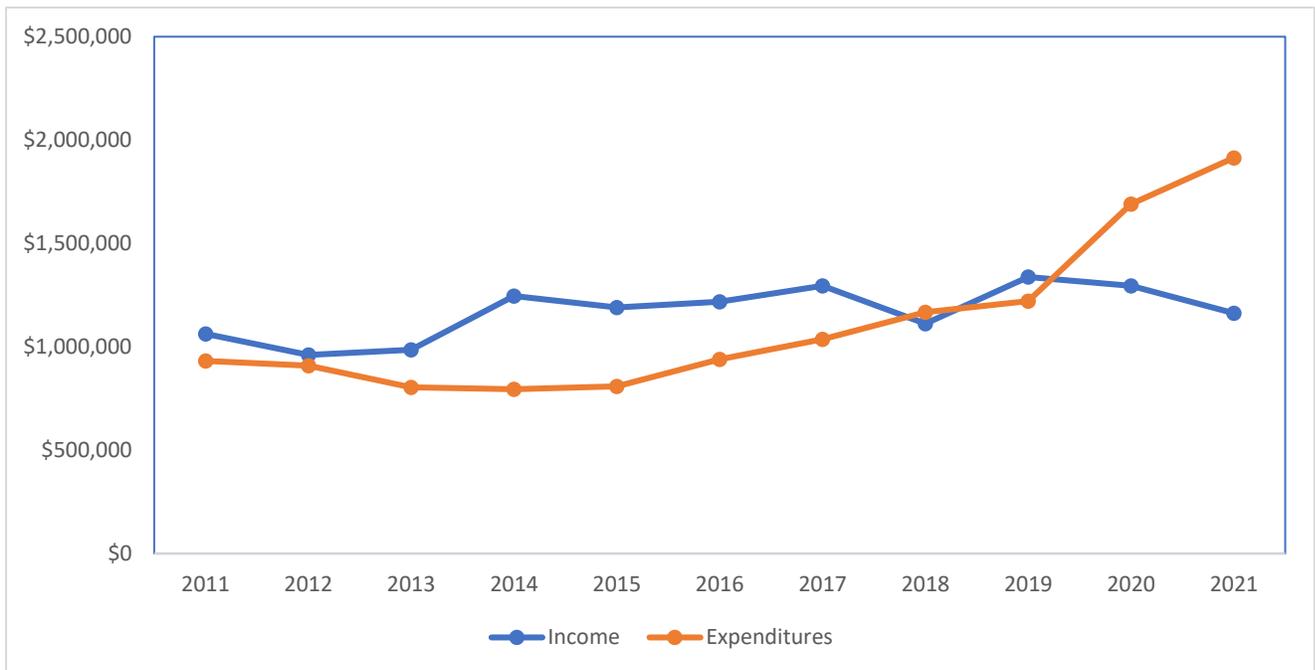
	AWP Income 2021
Registered Feed	\$566,080
Dog Licensing S/N	\$443,497
Dog Licensing	\$208,904
AWP Plates	\$147,845
Facility Licensing	\$67,501
Surcharge fund	\$66,124
Municipal Reimbursement Dog Licensing.	\$16,232
Restitution	\$5,812
Misc. Fines	\$4,315
Donations	\$1,684
Misc. Income	\$915

Expenditures FY 2021



	Expenses 2021
Salaries and Benefits	\$897,828.00
Professional Fees	\$411,654.00
Equipment and Tech	\$396,400.00
Dicap	\$294,902.00
Rent	\$68,288.00
General Operating	\$65,995.00
Sta-Cap	\$55,170.00
Office Supplies	\$14,612.00
Employee Training	\$2,050.00
Tech	\$1,263.00
Travel	\$296.00

Pandemic-Era and Structural Revenue Challenges



As a program that operates wholly on other special revenue, AWP has been careful to live within its means. Although program expenses have been on the rise year after year, responsible stewardship helped us accumulate comfortable cash reserves over the last decade, which in turn allowed us to entertain some programmatic expansions as well as one-time special projects.

Over the last two years, however, external forces have upended our business model. Some of those forces are pandemic-related and may improve over time. COVID-era backlogs in the courts meant we have been holding seized animals for longer than has been typical. Longer stays—frequently for sicker animals—has meant our seized animal expenses have more than doubled, from \$121,606 in FY2019 to \$330,947 in FY2020 and \$313,619 in FY2021. These spikes in program costs have hit at precisely the moment pandemic-driven delays in animal registrations have depressed income. Last year’s revenues were down \$174,472 from our 2019 peak.

COVID-driven trends ate into our cash reserves, but it might be reasonable to expect these trends to self-correct as the pandemic abates. Other forces are structural and will not correct on their own. Most acutely, our cost for salaries, fringe, and other personal services have increased in line with recent State mandates and trends by approximately \$120,000. An additional \$202,000 increase has been proposed so the program can fulfill the recommendations of the Animal Welfare Taskforce. However, there has not been a corresponding and offsetting change in our fee structure, nor has there been support from the General Fund.

The Department and the Legislature will need to collaboratively address this structural shortfall to ensure the continued operation of the program.

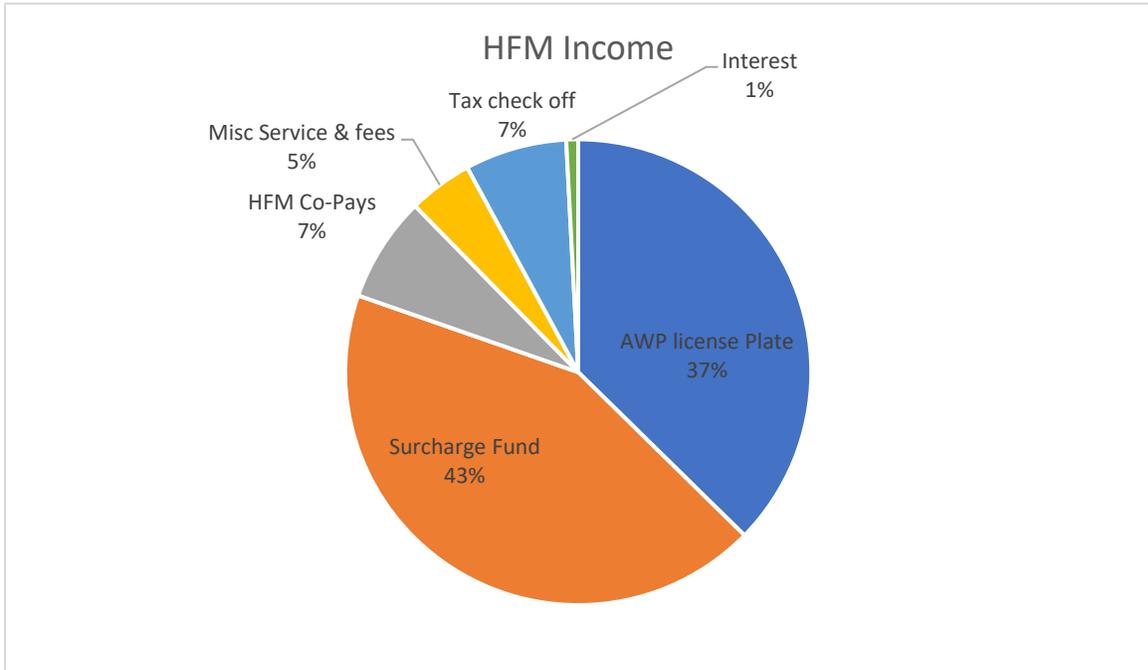
Companion Animal Sterilization (Help Fix ME)

Since 2005, AWP has operated the Companion Animal Sterilization Fund, otherwise known as the Help Fix ME program (HFM). HFM was established to encourage qualified pet owners to sterilize their cats and dogs. HFM decreases euthanasia rates in animal shelters by reducing the number of animals in the shelters and making them more likely to be adopted.

The HFM program is primarily voucher-based. Income-eligible Mainers can request a voucher that can be used at participating clinics to have their pet spayed or neutered. In that model, the onus is on pet owners to find appointments with participating providers. Even before the pandemic, veterinary participation was diminishing, costs were increasing, and underserved communities in Maine often lacked the resources to provide surgeries. Pandemic-related forces further decreased the supply of veterinary services while increasing the costs of veterinary care, meaning eligible pet owners with vouchers often struggled to find vets with whom to use their vouchers. At the beginning of 2021, AWP extended our model by working directly with clinics to help provide services to underserved communities by offering vouchers for scheduled clinics. This was a successful adjustment to the program. It has helped clinics and shelters get the needed resources for the underserved communities. In calendar year 2021, over 5,300 vouchers were issued with a value of over \$526,000, and 3,700 animals were altered.

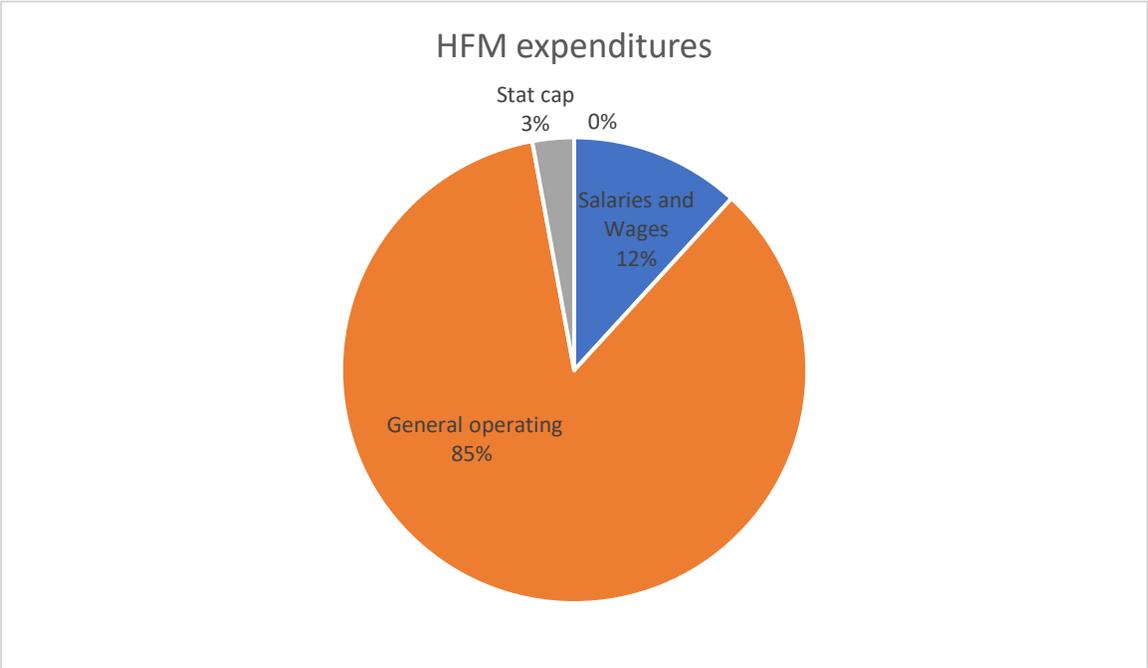
DACF began evaluating the program in mid-2021 and worked with stakeholders and veterinarians to look for ways to improve the program that had not seen significant changes in many years. AWP surveyed the veterinary community for program feedback as part of this effort. We improved the way vouchers are processed for payment, and we increased reimbursement for surgeries by 50% beginning in 2022.

HFM Income FY 2021



	HFM Income
AWP license Plate	\$147,845
Surcharge Fund	\$170,140
HFM Co-Pays	\$28,920
Misc Service & fees	\$17,600
Tax check-off	\$28,004
Interest	\$3,263

HFM Expenditures



	HFM expenditures
Salaries and Wages	\$32,714
General Operating	\$236,733
Stat Cap	\$8,008

Animal Shelter Survey

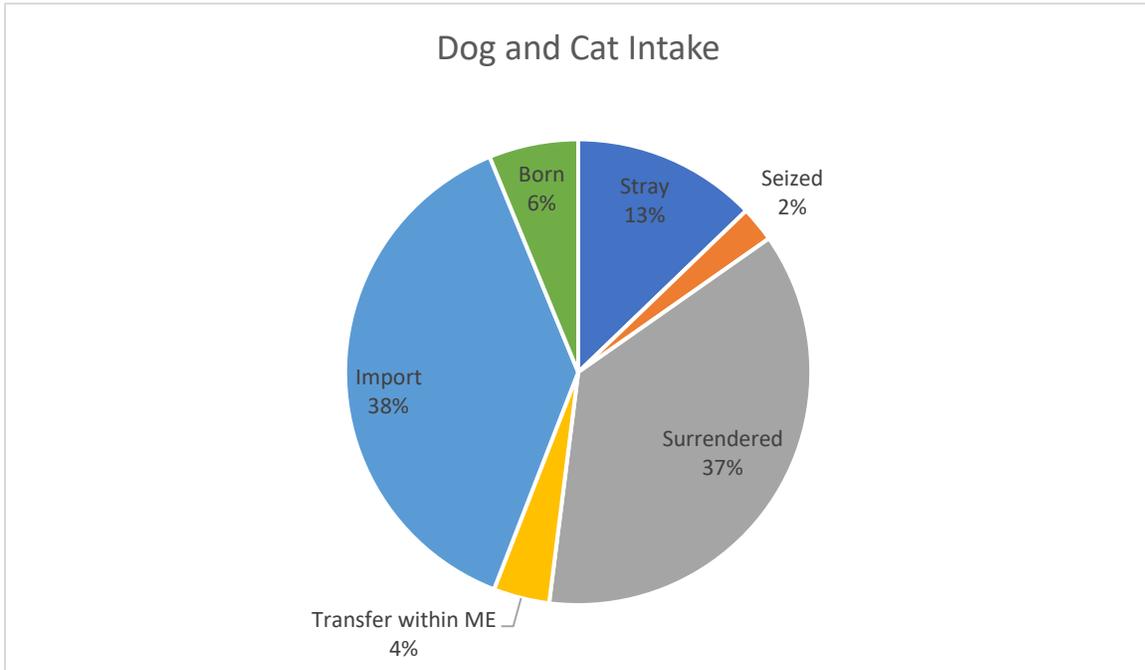
The AWP has surveyed all licensed animal shelters in Maine for the past ten years, gathering extensive data on euthanasia rates and live release rates.

These two measurements have been the most common and universal metric to count. These data points shed light on how the animal shelters of Maine have changed over the past two decades. These two metrics provide vital data, but they fail to capture the many changes in animal sheltering as we know it, missing much of the vital work shelters are doing in the communities they serve.

Currently, there is a larger stakeholder discussion on the local, state, and regional levels about how animal sheltering has evolved from "the pound" to a place for lost animals to safely land. Many shelters focus on rehoming pets and are viewed as adoption centers. The most significant change in how animal shelters operate is how much community outreach they provide. Community outreach has positively impacted how shelters have educated their community and evolved with the changing times. The metrics, data, and key performance indicators shelters have identified to measure community outreach and impact in the current animal welfare/ animal shelter landscape continue to evolve.

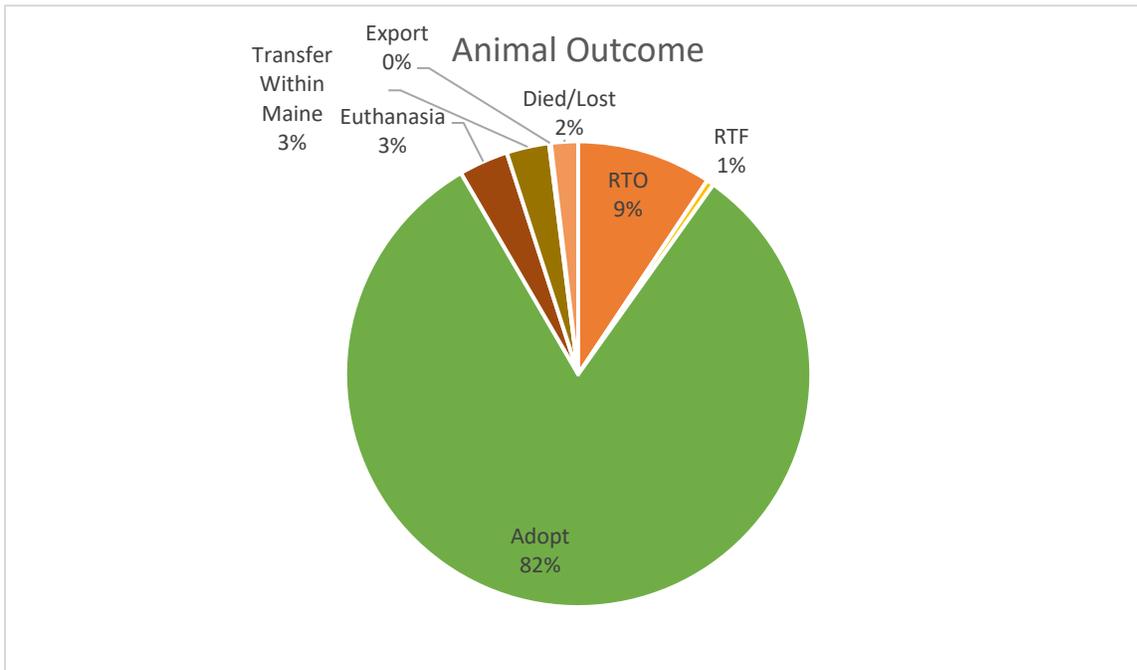
In this year's Animal Shelter Survey, we added new categories to give a better idea of the happenings at the local animal shelters and rescues. In the intake section, seized animals now have their own category, and these can be classified as animals seized by Law Enforcement, Animal Control, or the State. Transfers of animals are now being separated to differentiate between animals transferred from shelter to shelter within Maine and animals imported into Maine for adoption. The outcome section now includes Return to Field (RTF) for feral cats and separates the transfer of animals within the state and transferred out of Maine. These new categories provide useful information about what is happening in the animal shelters of Maine and how they are serving their community's needs.

Intake



	Dog and Cat Intake	Dog	Cat
Stray	2706	2025	681
Seized	520	259	261
Surrendered	7764	1894	5870
Transfer within ME	823	131	692
Import	8012	5650	2362
Born	1312	177	1135

Outcomes



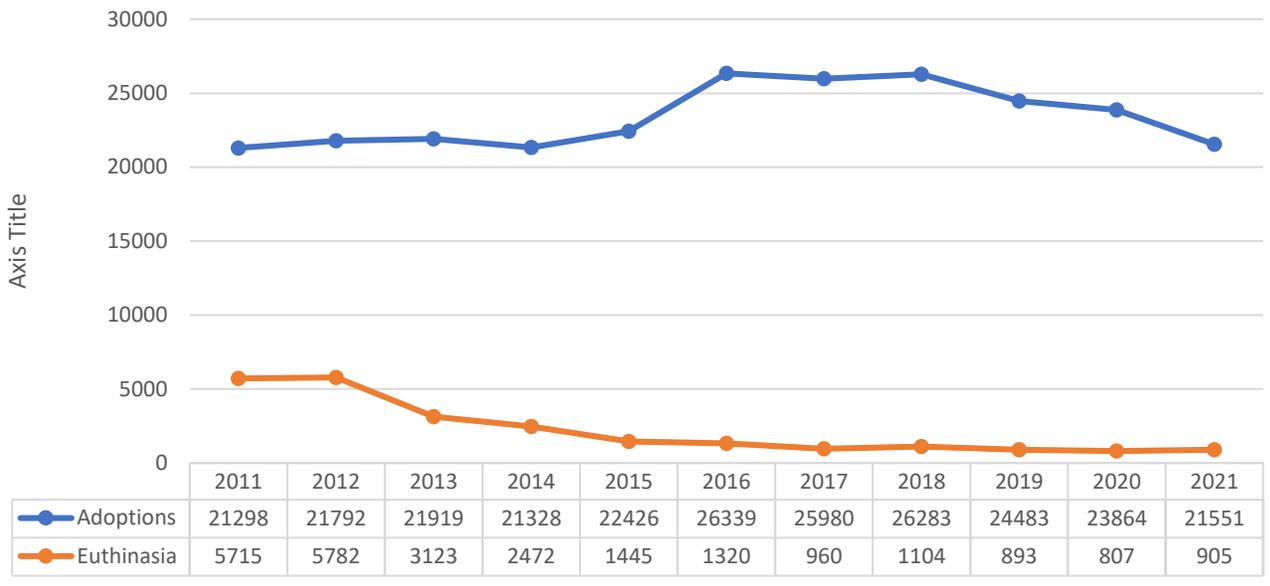
	Animal Outcome	Dog	Cat
RTO	2463	1782	681
RTF	133	0	133
Adopt	21551	7463	14088
Euthanasia	905	248	657
Transfer Within Maine	780	75	705
Export	33	27	6
Died/Lost in Care	495	37	458

Yearly changes

RTO – Return to Owner

RTF – Return to Field

Live Release vs Euthanasia



Licensed Animal Facilities within Maine

AWP is responsible for the licensing and inspection of all animal shelters, pet stores, boarding kennels, breeding kennels, and research facilities in the State of Maine. In 2021 there were 550 of these facilities in Maine, categorized as follows:

- Animal Shelters & Rescues – 143
- Boarding Kennels – 221
- Breeding Kennels – 140
- Pet Stores – 34
- Research Facilities – 12

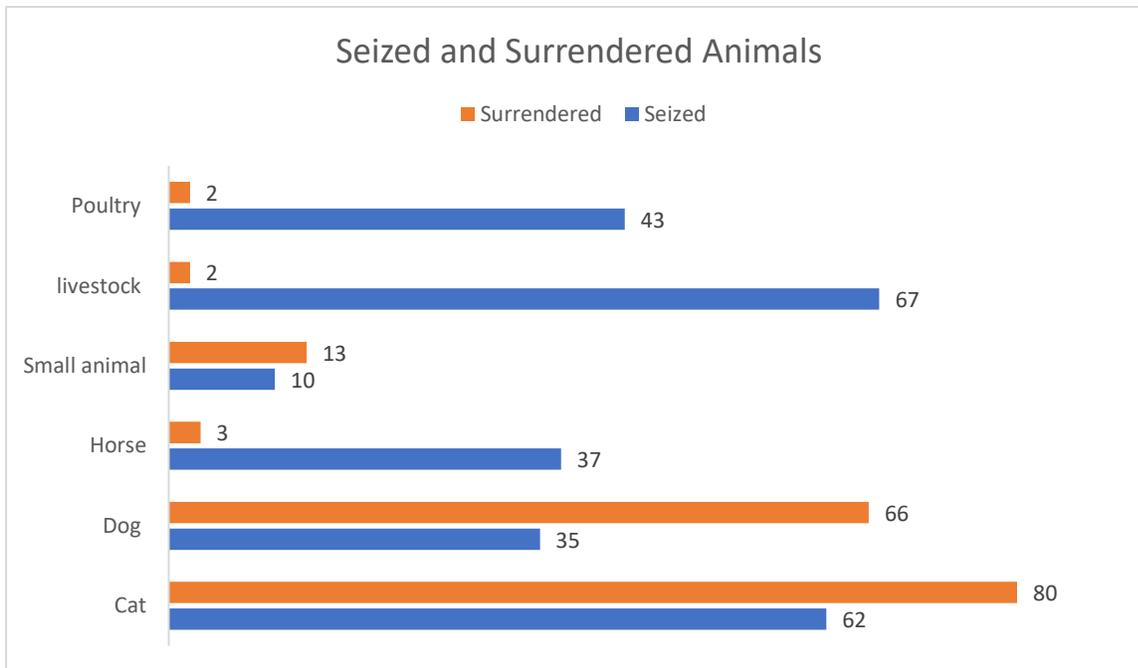
AWP Humane Agents work with these facilities to maintain compliance and prevent disease outbreaks.

COVID-19, staffing, scheduling issues, and cruelty cases have slowed inspection response time. AWP is always working on improving inspection times and responses. Some of the more prominent cruelty cases that Animal Welfare has investigated over the past few years resulted from problems discovered during facility inspections.

In 2021, AWP submitted changes to existing rules to help improve the operation of animal facilities. These changes include adding a definition for Capacity for Care, requiring medical records and examinations for animals held at the facilities for more than six months, clarifying which records can be submitted electronically, defining who is responsible for maintaining the facility license, and defining who is responsible for maintaining isolation areas for imported dogs and cats. These rules were approved and became effective in January of 2022. Humane Agents, when doing inspections, will spend the next year educating licensed animal facilities on their responsibilities and what they need to do to comply if any violations are found.

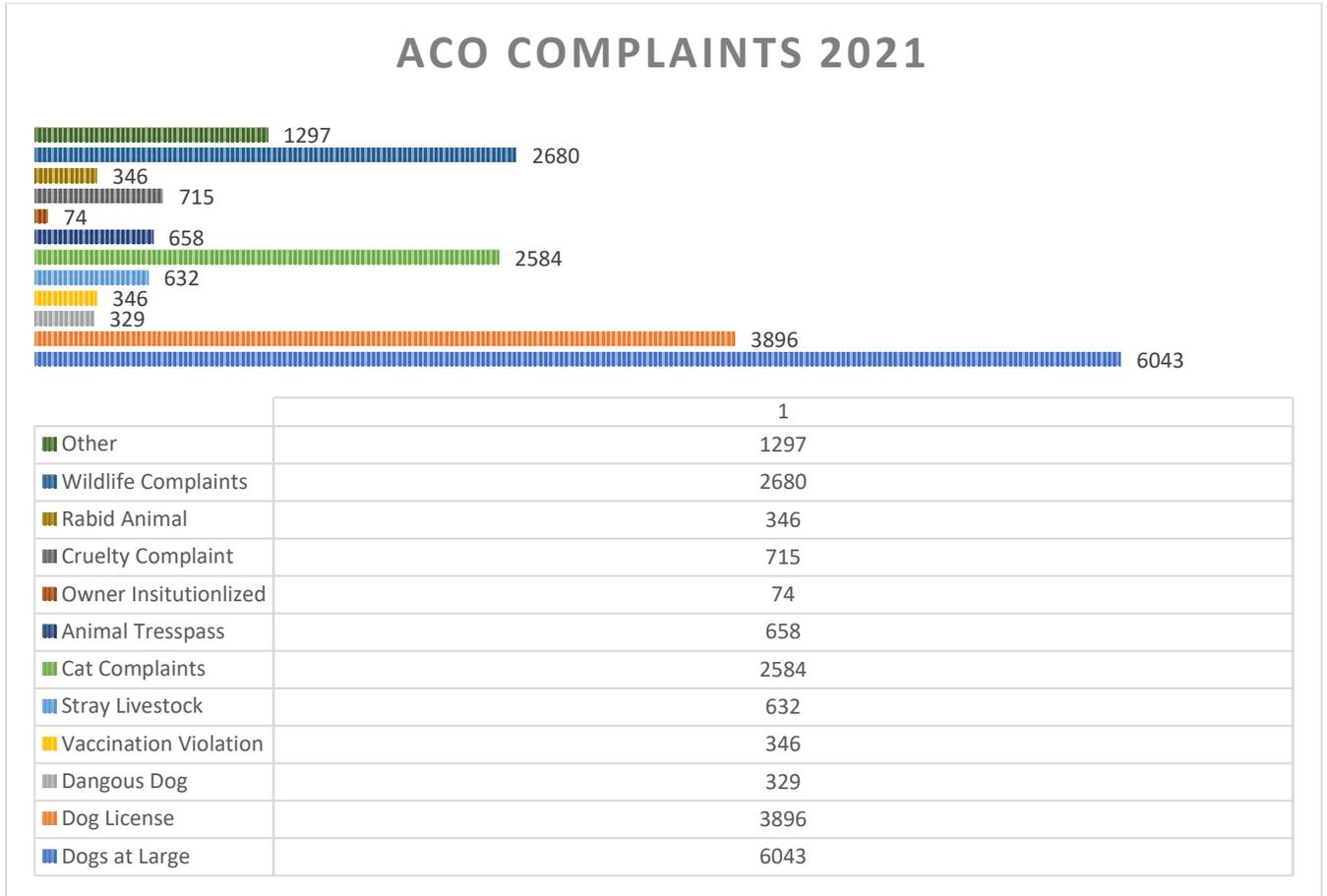
Cruelty investigations

In 2021, the AWP office dispatched 287 complaints to Humane Agents. Many of the 287 complaints we responded to involved more than one type of violation. For example, reports might list improper care, shelter, living conditions, sustenance, or lack of medical care on a single complaint. Agents provide advice to owners about proper care, available veterinarians, sources of feed, and will often check back even when a case is closed just to make sure the animal and the owner are doing well. Complaints included animal care facilities operating without a license (27) and requests for AWP staff to assist Animal Control Officers (ACO) and law enforcement agencies dealing with animal welfare issues (49). Dogs and cats are the most typical basis of a complaint, but Humane Agents also spend time working with farmers on livestock issues. Humane Agents use community policing methods when enforcing the animal welfare laws and have had great success in educating animal owners on their responsibilities as an animal owner. Many of the complaints are resolved using education. Only a few require tougher enforcement actions, such as summoning for violations or seeking a court order to remove the animals.



Animal Control Officer (ACO) Reporting

This is the fourth year of collecting and reporting data on ACO complaints. This information shows the different types of complaints Maine ACOs are responding to and helps AWP plan for future training and look for potential issues that need to be addressed through rule, law, or procedural changes.



ACO Training

We have been redeveloping a three-phase training for Animal Control Officers. Phase I covers core competencies, Phase II provides practical hands-on training, and Phase III is field training that allows new ACOs to ride along with and learn from more experienced colleagues. Due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns, in-person training for ACOs has been on hold. However, since early 2020, we have offered Phase I training on-line. We plan to introduce the reworked Phases II and III later in 2022 when in-person training can safely resume.

Animal Welfare Advisory Council (AWAC)

In October of 2021, Governor Mills appointed ten new members to AWAC. Their first meeting was held on November 18, 2021. The board has already taken an active role in discussing animal welfare-related legislation. They are also considering strategies to improve funding, animal control services, and dog licensing.

The AWAC members are:

1	Kim McLaughlin	Represents Municipal Interests
2	Garth Russell	Animal Control Officer
3	Katie Lisnik	Represents Licensed Animal Shelters
4	Frank Billings	Represents Licensed Boarding Kennels
5	Heidi Neal	Represents Licensed Pet Shops
6	Kathleen Benard	Owner of a Pet and Represents the Interests of the Public
7	Bonnie Martinolich	An Attorney with Experience in Animal Welfare Law
8	Jessica Matulis, DVM	Veterinarian who is or has been Licensed to Practice in the State
9	Vacant	A Cooperative Extension Agent or Specialist
10	Casey Cole, DVM	Experience in Equine Care
11	Julie Ann Smith	Experience in Livestock Representing a Statewide Farming Organization
12	Vacant	Represents a State-based Animal Advocacy Group
13	Darlene Farr	Holds a Kennel Licensed Issued Under Section 3923-C
14	Sharon St. John	Represents Licensed Breeding Kennels