

# ANIMAL WELFARE PROGRAM

## ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2025



MAINE DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE  
CONSERVATION  
& FORESTRY**



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## Maine's Animal Welfare Program Review for 2025

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 dog licensing.

### Staff as of December 31, 2025:

#### *Field Staff*

- Acting Field Supervisor Chrissy MacFarland
- District Humane Agent, Aroostook County Richard Guilbault, Jr.
- District Humane Agent, Washington, Hancock Counties Douglas Radziewicz
- District Humane Agent, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Rachel Welch  
Somerset Counties
- District Humane Agent, Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, Megan Anderson  
Kennebec Counties
- District Humane Agent, Franklin, Oxford, Androscoggin Erica Tompkins  
Counties
- District Humane Agent, York, Cumberland Counties Nicole Doyle
- District Humane Agent, Inspections Reginald Manter

#### *Administrative Staff*

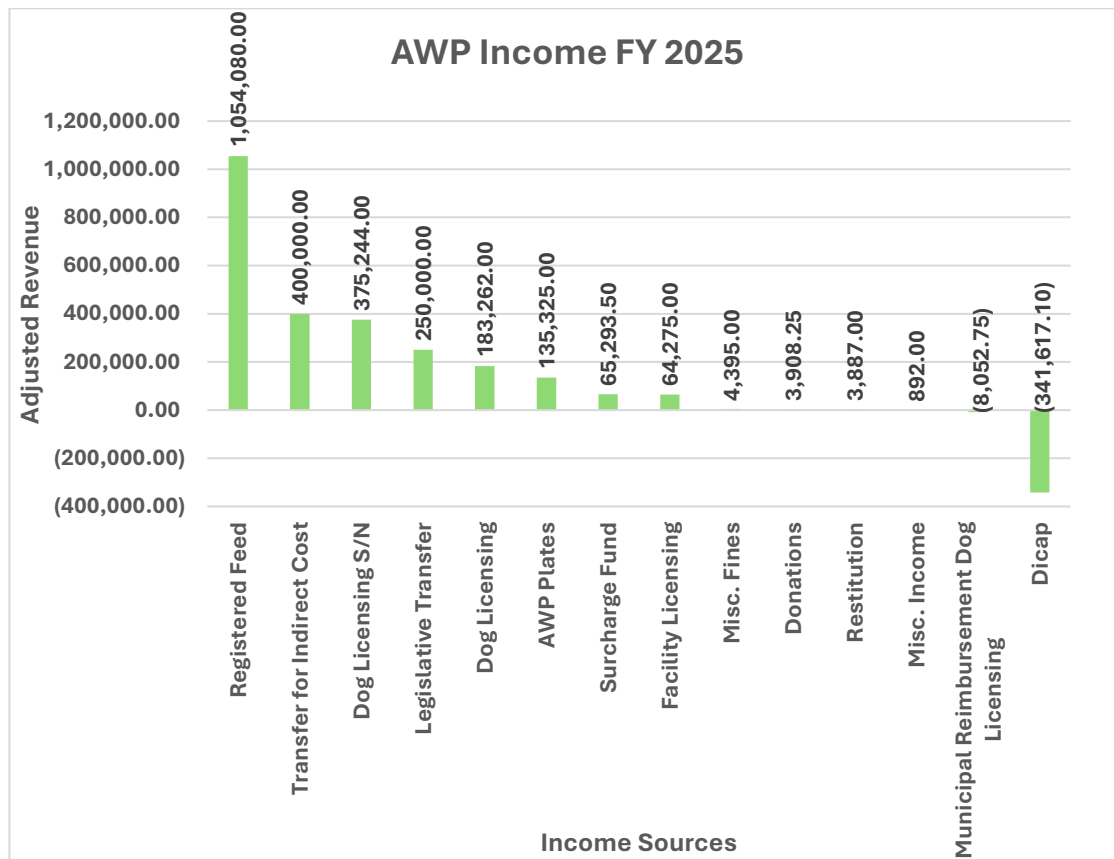
- Director Ronda Steciuk
- Secretary Associate Samantha Dawson
- Office Associate II Danielle Trask
- Planning and Research Assistant Connor Egan
- Assistant State Veterinarian Rachael Fiske, DVM

## A NOTE ON THE DATA USED IN THIS REPORT

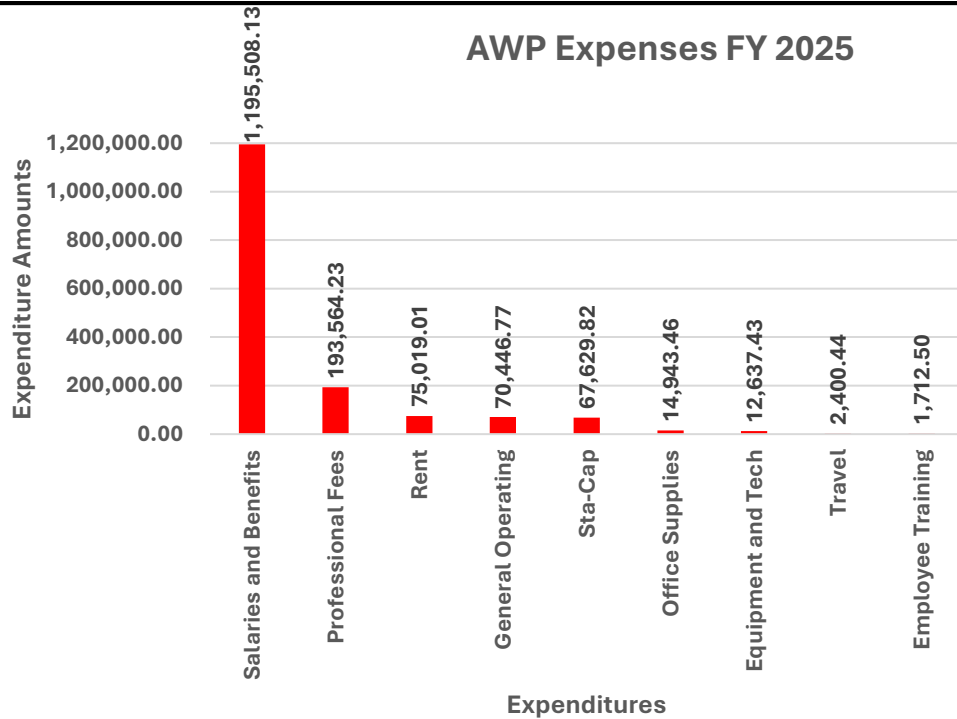
Financial information for the Animal Welfare Program is collected and reported in alignment with the State of Maine fiscal year, which ends on June 30 each year. Program information relies in part on data collected from shelters, municipalities, and other partners and is reported on a calendar-year basis. Unless labeled FY 2025, the data on the following pages cover the period from January 1 to December 31, 2025.

## AWP FINANCIALS

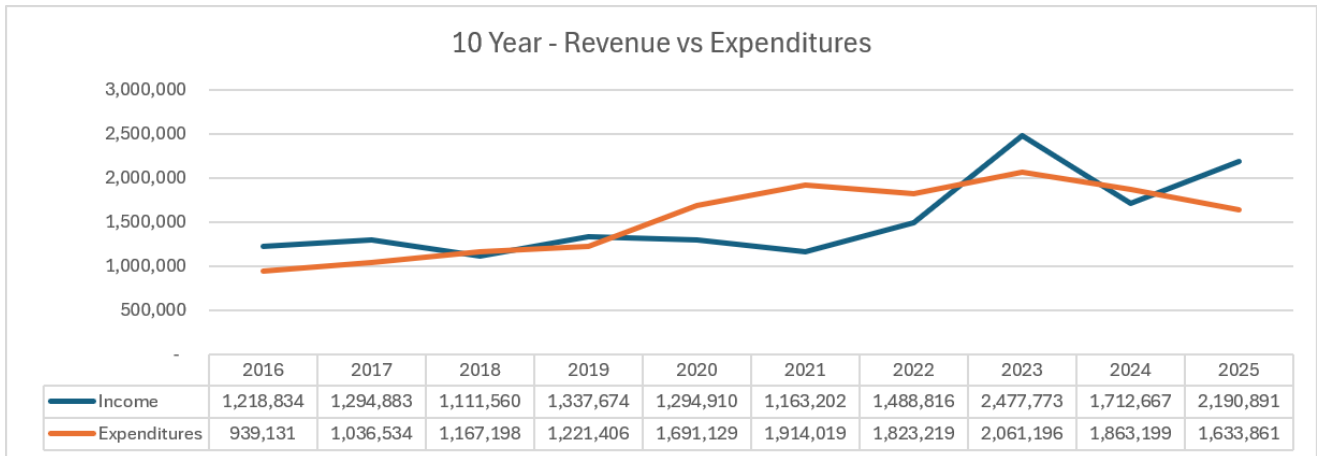
AWP's financial picture in 2025 improved compared with recent years. The program resolved a large-scale cat seizure case that had drained resources for more than two years due to its sheer size and duration. The program received a \$650,000 one-time General Fund appropriation in FY 23, and, along with a \$400,000 working capital advance from DACF to help temporarily cover those costs, that allowed AWP to operate without a deficit. While the charts and graphs below appear to show a significant surplus in 2025, the revenue includes that temporary working capital advance, which will be repaid over time. Factoring for this, the AWP financials remained net positive, but to a lesser extent than the graphs and tables suggest.



| Income:                                                                                                                                                           | Amount              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Registered Feed                                                                                                                                                   | 1,054,080.00        |
| Transfer for Indirect Cost*                                                                                                                                       | 400,000.00          |
| Dog Licensing S/N                                                                                                                                                 | 375,244.00          |
| Legislative Transfer                                                                                                                                              | 250,000.00          |
| Dog Licensing                                                                                                                                                     | 183,262.00          |
| AWP Plates                                                                                                                                                        | 135,325.00          |
| Surcharge Fund                                                                                                                                                    | 65,293.50           |
| Facility Licensing                                                                                                                                                | 64,275.00           |
| Misc. Fines                                                                                                                                                       | 4,395.00            |
| Donations                                                                                                                                                         | 3,908.25            |
| Restitution                                                                                                                                                       | 3,887.00            |
| Misc. Income                                                                                                                                                      | 892.00              |
| Municipal Reimbursement Dog Licensing                                                                                                                             | (8,052.75)          |
| Dicap                                                                                                                                                             | (341,617.10)        |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                                                                                      | <b>2,190,891.90</b> |
| * \$400,000 Transfer for Indirect Cost was an internal loan made to AWP to assist in covering cost of prior Wales cat case. This amount is required to be repaid. |                     |



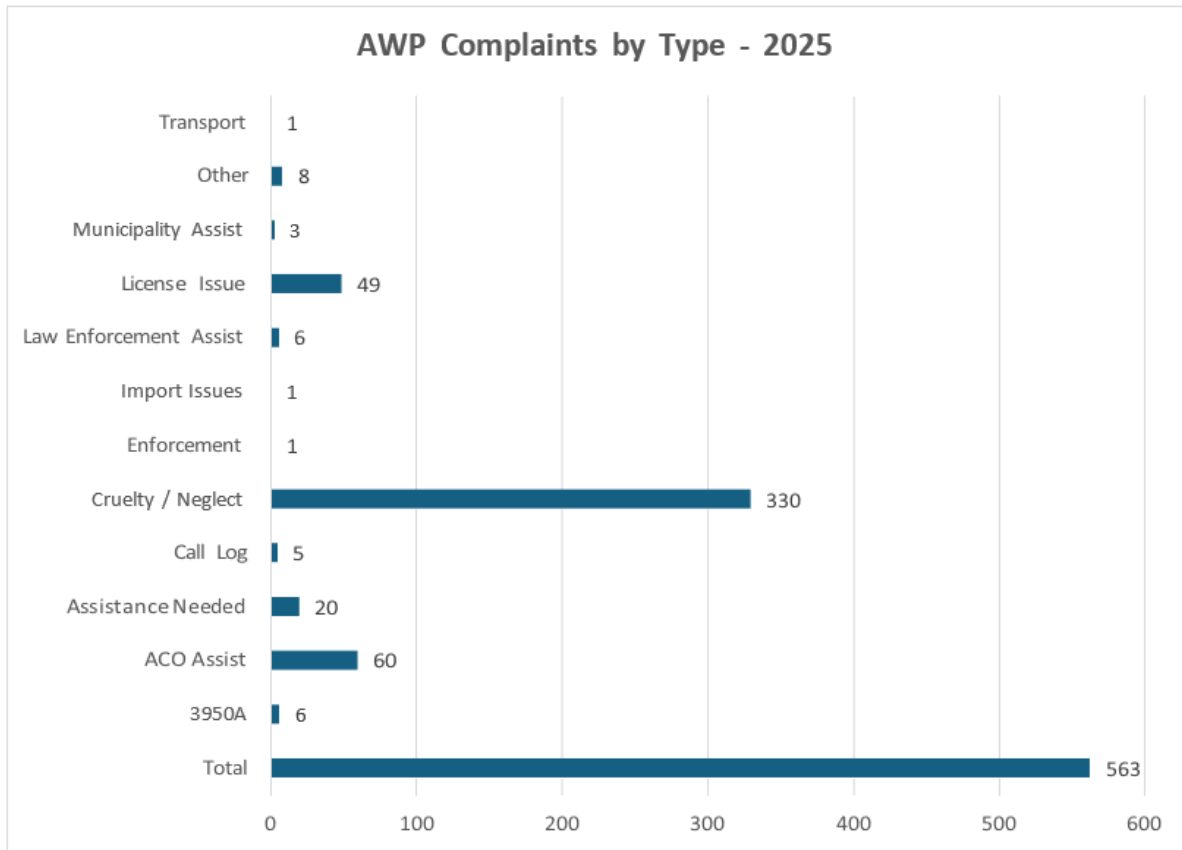
| Expenses:             | Amount              |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Salaries and Benefits | 1,195,508.13        |
| Professional Fees     | 193,564.23          |
| Rent                  | 75,019.01           |
| General Operating     | 70,446.77           |
| Sta-Cap               | 67,629.82           |
| Office Supplies       | 14,943.46           |
| Equipment and Tech    | 12,637.43           |
| Travel                | 2,400.44            |
| Employee Training     | 1,712.50            |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>1,633,861.79</b> |



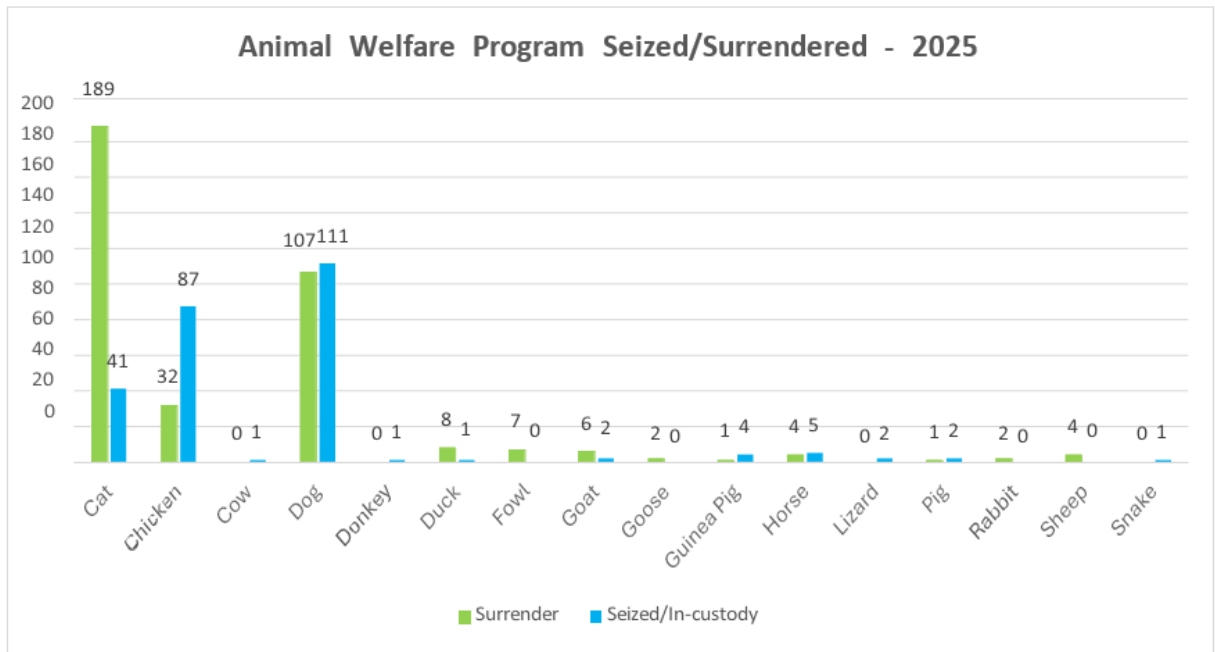
## **CRUELTY INVESTIGATIONS**

In 2025, the AWP office dispatched 563 complaints to Humane Agents, a 9.75% increase over 2024 and an 82% increase over 2023. Many of the complaints we responded to involved multiple types of violations. For example, reports might list improper care, inadequate shelter, poor living conditions, insufficient sustenance, or a lack of medical care under a single complaint. Agents advise owners about proper care, available veterinarians, and feed sources. They will often check back, even after a case is closed, to ensure the animal and the owner are doing well. Dogs and cats are the most common subjects of complaints, but Humane Agents also spend time working with farmers on livestock issues. Humane Agents use community policing methods when enforcing animal welfare laws and have had great success educating animal owners about their responsibilities. Agents use education to resolve many of the complaints. Only a few require tougher enforcement actions, such as summoning for violations or seeking a court order to remove the animals.

The management of an increased caseload with our current staffing of seven District Humane Agents, one of whom is dedicated to inspecting licensed facilities, is unsustainable. To continue providing quality, comprehensive service and enforcement for the growing human and animal populations in Maine, AWP will require increased field staffing, and the Department is advancing budget requests that reflect this reality.



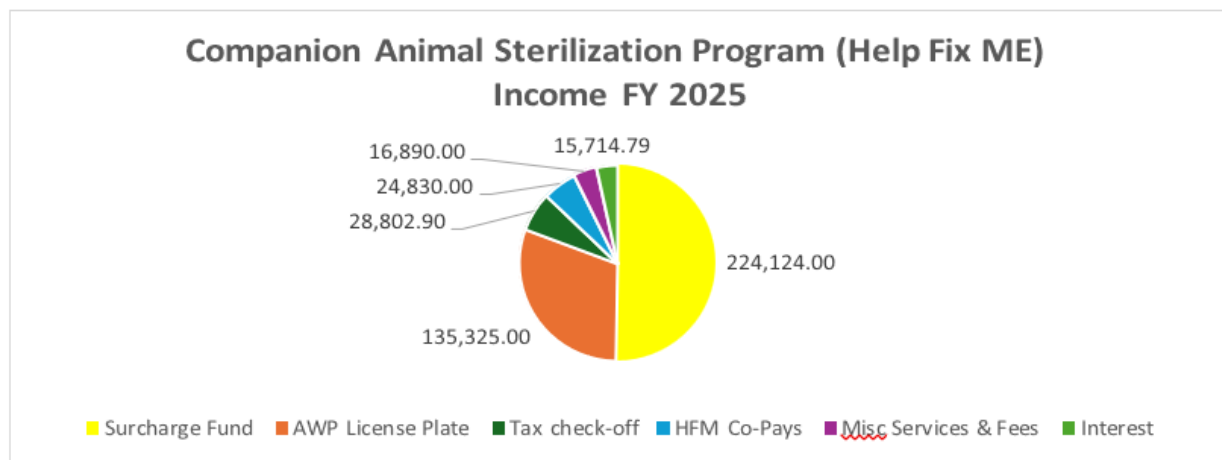
| Case Type              | Number of Cases |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 3950A                  | 6               |
| ACO Assist             | 60              |
| Assistance Needed      | 20              |
| Call Log               | 5               |
| Cruelty / Neglect      | 330             |
| Enforcement            | 1               |
| Import Issues          | 1               |
| Law Enforcement Assist | 6               |
| License Issue          | 49              |
| Municipality Assist    | 3               |
| Other                  | 8               |
| Transport              | 1               |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>563</b>      |



## COMPANION ANIMAL STERILIZATION PROGRAM: HELP FIX ME

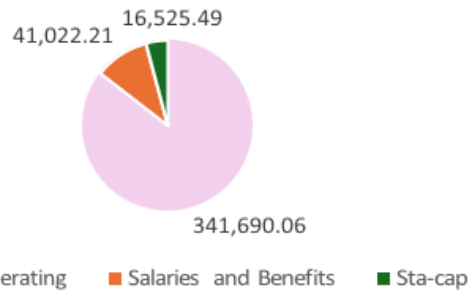
Since 2005, AWP has been operating the Companion Animal Sterilization Fund, best known as the Help Fix ME (HFM) program. Established to encourage qualified pet owners to sterilize their cats and dogs and to help cover the cost of those sterilizations, HFM reduces the number of animals in shelters. This reduction helps to decrease euthanasia and increase adoptions. Since 2009, Help Fix ME has helped pet owners spay and neuter over 26,000 animals. For the past five years, the adoption rate in Maine shelters has been 95%, while the euthanasia rate is around 3%. In comparison, in 2011, the adoption rate was 73%, and the euthanasia rate was 27%. This can be attributed in part to the success of Help Fix ME and to changes in best practices in sheltering.

In 2024, the Legislature directed DACF to seek a third-party program administrator for HFM. With input from stakeholder groups, while working within the budgetary realities and procurement constraints of State programs, AWP developed a request for proposals seeking an external entity to assume program administration. No eligible entities applied. Nevertheless, AWP has continued to administer the program successfully. While we continue our efforts to ensure prompt delivery of applications and vouchers to participating providers and pet owners, the sporadic nature of revenue requires occasional closure of the program's voucher applications and distribution programming. When the program has outstanding vouchers that approach the available fund balance, distribution must cease until additional revenues are received.



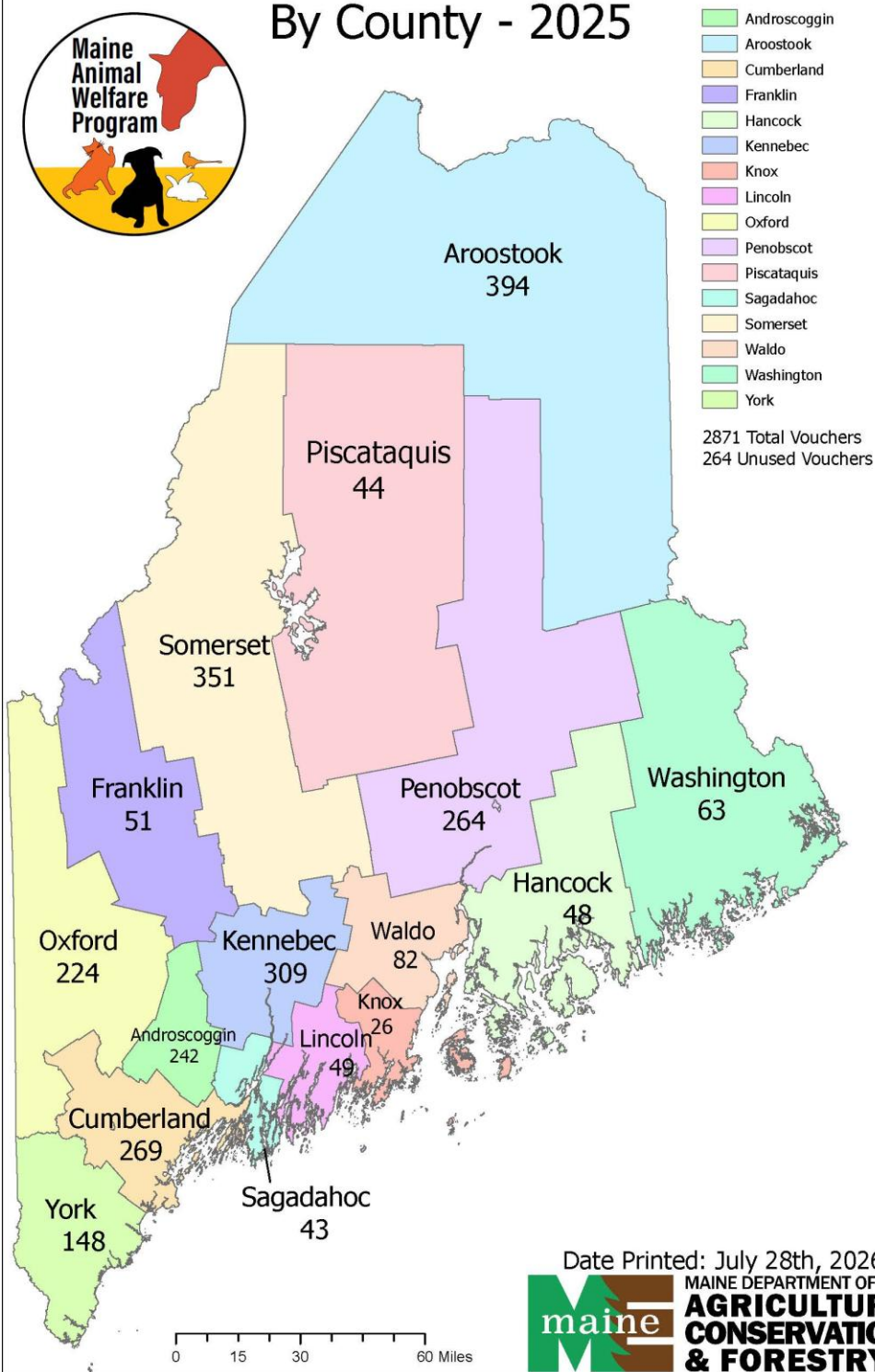
| Income:              | Amount            |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Surcharge Fund       | 224,124.00        |
| AWP License Plate    | 135,325.00        |
| Tax check-off        | 28,802.90         |
| HFM Co-Pays          | 24,830.00         |
| Misc Services & Fees | 16,890.00         |
| Interest             | 15,714.79         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>445,686.69</b> |

## Companion Animal Sterilization Program (Help Fix ME) Expenses FY 2025



| Expenses:             | Amount            |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| General Operating     | 341,690.06        |
| Salaries and Benefits | 41,022.21         |
| Sta-cap               | 16,525.49         |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>399,237.76</b> |

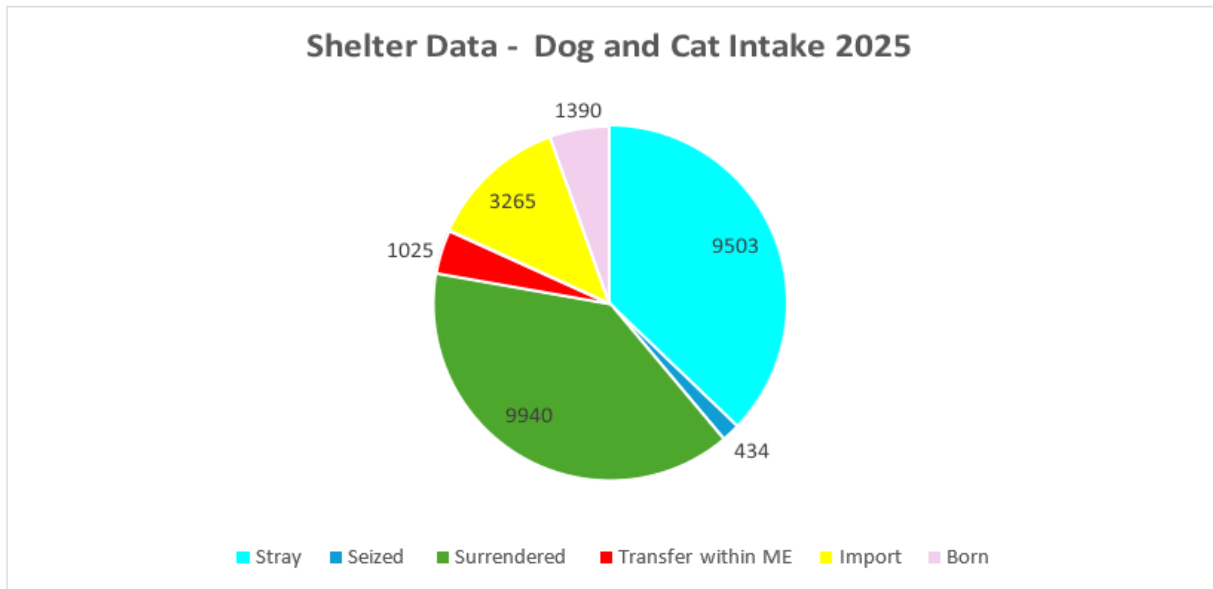
# Help Fix ME Vouchers Paid By County - 2025



| <b>Help Fix ME Vouchers</b> |                           |                            |                        |                          |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>County</b>               | <b>Number of Vouchers</b> | <b>% of Vouchers Given</b> | <b>% of Population</b> | <b>Population (2025)</b> |
| Androscoggin                | 242                       | 8.42%                      | 8.23%                  | 116,487                  |
| Aroostook                   | 394                       | 13.71%                     | 4.70%                  | 66,609                   |
| Cumberland                  | 269                       | 9.36%                      | 22.42%                 | 317,222                  |
| Franklin                    | 51                        | 1.77%                      | 2.17%                  | 30,824                   |
| Hancock                     | 48                        | 1.67%                      | 4.04%                  | 57,171                   |
| Kennebec                    | 309                       | 10.76%                     | 9.12%                  | 129,067                  |
| Knox                        | 26                        | 0.90%                      | 2.90%                  | 41,117                   |
| Lincoln                     | 49                        | 1.70%                      | 2.58%                  | 36,595                   |
| Oxford                      | 224                       | 7.79%                      | 4.26%                  | 60,346                   |
| Penobscot                   | 264                       | 9.19%                      | 11.16%                 | 157,967                  |
| Piscataquis                 | 44                        | 1.53%                      | 1.23%                  | 17,409                   |
| Sagadahoc                   | 43                        | 1.49%                      | 2.68%                  | 37,979                   |
| Somerset                    | 351                       | 12.23%                     | 3.64%                  | 51,620                   |
| Waldo                       | 82                        | 2.85%                      | 2.87%                  | 40,693                   |
| Washington                  | 63                        | 2.19%                      | 2.21%                  | 31,334                   |
| York                        | 148                       | 5.15%                      | 15.72%                 | 222,434                  |
| Unredeemed for Payment      | 264                       | 9.19%                      | N/A                    | N/A                      |
| <b>TOTALS</b>               | <b>2,871</b>              | <b>100.00%</b>             | <b>100.00%</b>         | <b>1,414,874</b>         |

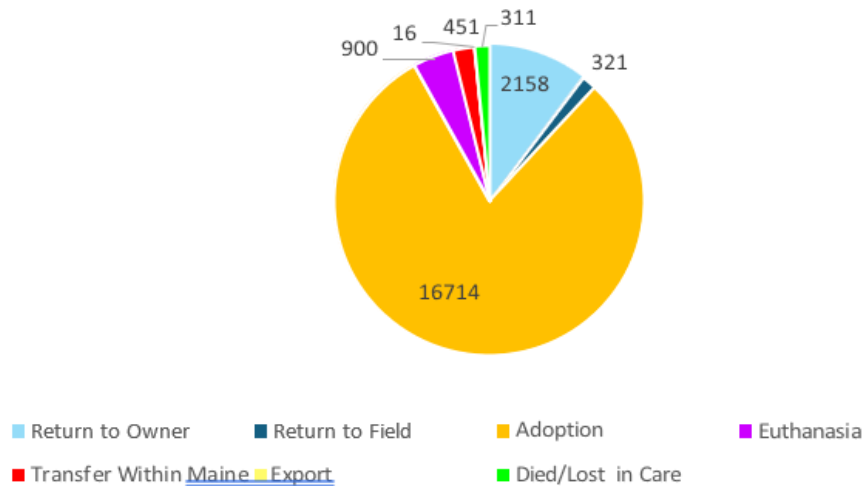
## SHELTER SURVEY DATA

AWP has surveyed all licensed animal shelters in Maine since 2011, collecting extensive data on euthanasia and live-release rates. These data points shed light on how Maine's animal shelters have changed over the past two decades, providing vital data. However, beyond our survey, AWP also acknowledges changes in animal sheltering and the critical work shelters do in their communities.



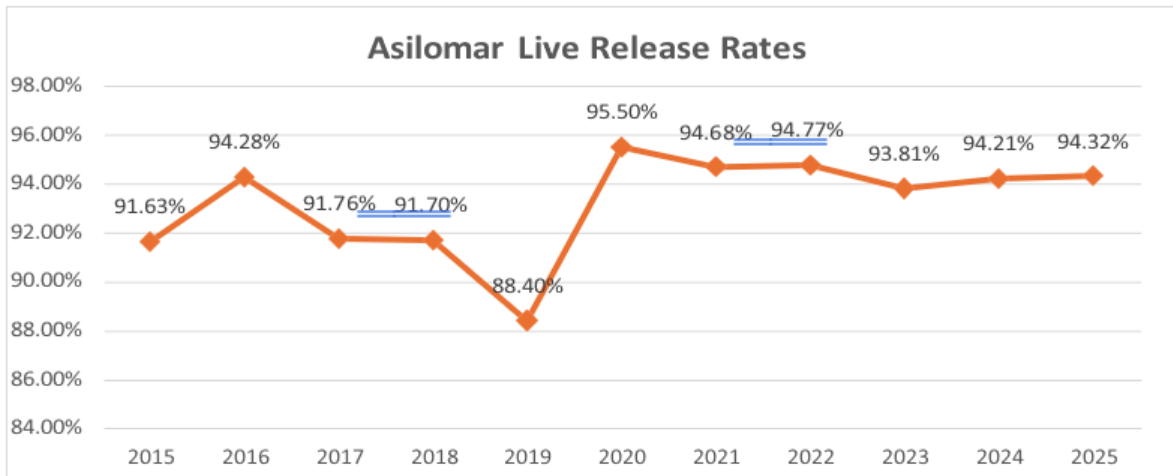
|                    | Animal Intake | Dog   | Cat    |
|--------------------|---------------|-------|--------|
| Stray              | 9,503         | 2,406 | 7,097  |
| Seized             | 434           | 287   | 147    |
| Surrendered        | 9,940         | 2,662 | 7,278  |
| Transfer within ME | 1,025         | 251   | 774    |
| Import             | 3,265         | 2,730 | 535    |
| Born               | 1,390         | 119   | 1,271  |
| TOTALS             | 25,557        | 8,455 | 17,102 |

## Shelter Data- Dog and Cat Outcome 2025



|                       | Animal Outcome | Dog          | Cat           |
|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Return to Owner (RTO) | 2,158          | 1,474        | 684           |
| Return to Field (RTF) | 321            | 0            | 321           |
| Adoption              | 16,714         | 5,744        | 10,970        |
| Euthanasia            | 900            | 353          | 547           |
| Transfer Out of Maine | 451            | 144          | 307           |
| Export                | 16             | 13           | 3             |
| Died/Lost in Care     | 282            | 29           | 253           |
| <b>TOTALS</b>         | <b>20,842</b>  | <b>7,757</b> | <b>13,085</b> |

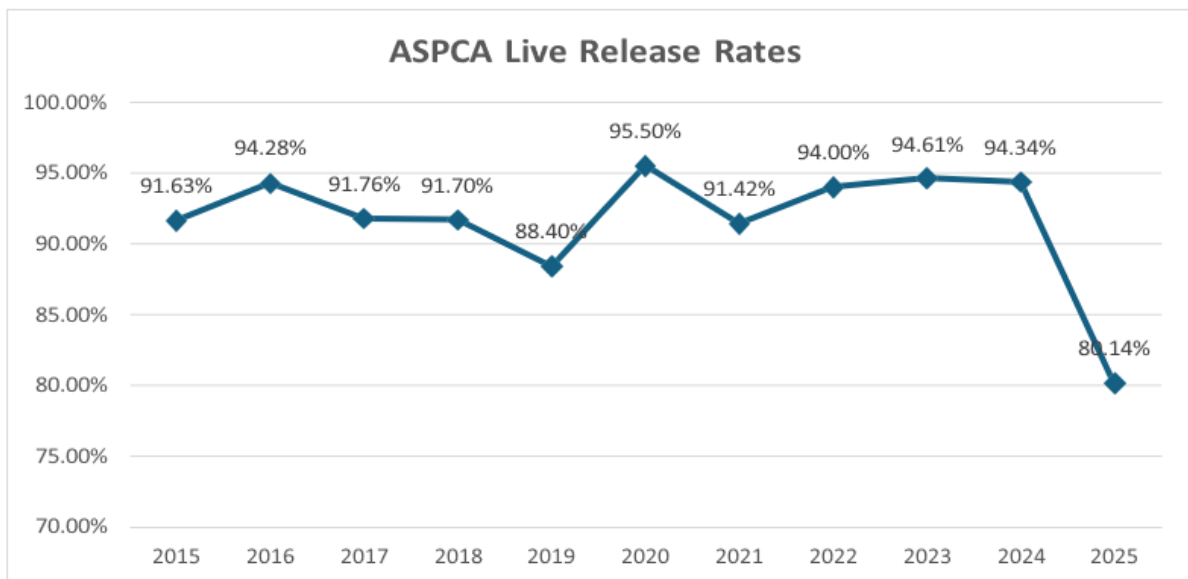
Over the past year, shelters increasingly reported feeling the strain of rising demand for their services, including local animal surrenders, likely due to families facing greater economic uncertainty and a lack of pet-friendly housing. The charts below illustrate these shelter challenges. The Asilomar Live Release Rate chart, calculated from live and total outcomes, shows that Maine's shelters are still doing a great job of preventing euthanasia for adoptable animals. The ASPCA Live Release Rate chart, calculated by using live outcomes related to total intake, shows that our shelters are holding animals longer, reflecting lower adoption rates and higher intake. While they are continuing to prevent unnecessary euthanasia, more time and resources are being used towards that outcome.



While the ASPCA live release rate has declined significantly, Maine shelters still show a 94.32% Asilomar Live Release rate which is the live release rate as a total of all outcomes.

Formula:

$$\frac{\text{Live Outcome}}{\text{Total Outcome}}$$

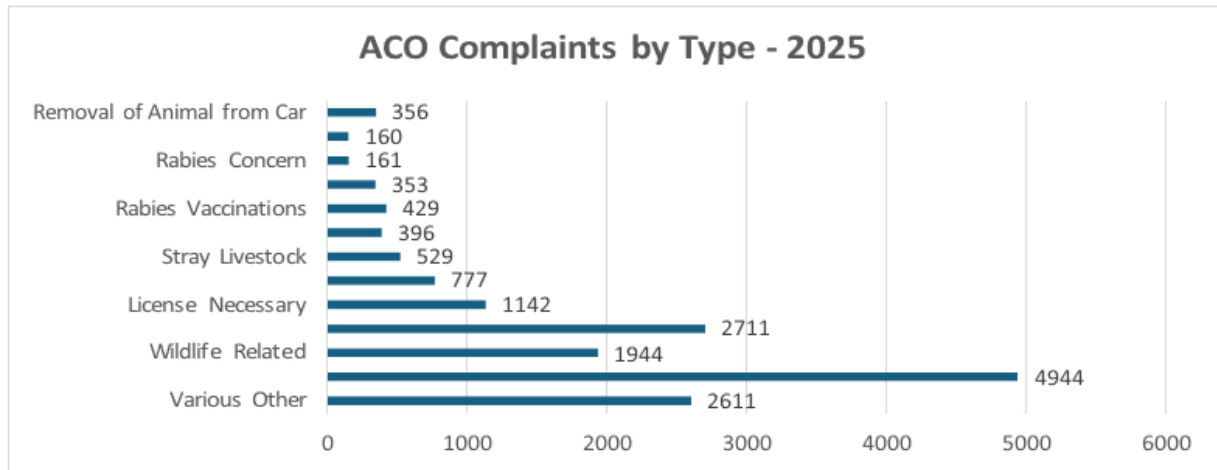


Formula:

$$\frac{\text{Live Outcome}}{\text{Total Intakes}}$$

## ACO/MUNICIPALITY SURVEY DATA

2025 is the sixth 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. As with the Animal Shelter survey, the Department revamped the survey presentation and collection process in 2023 to improve the response rate. Dogs at Large remain the most common type of complaint for ACOs.



|                            |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Dogs at Large              | 4,944  |
| Wildlife Related           | 1,944  |
| Cat Complaints             | 2,711  |
| License Necessary          | 1,142  |
| Cruelty to Animals         | 777    |
| Stray Livestock            | 529    |
| Animal Trespass            | 396    |
| Rabies Vaccinations        | 429    |
| Dangerous/Nuisance Dogs    | 353    |
| Rabies Concern             | 161    |
| Owner Institutionalized    | 160    |
| Removal of Animal from Car | 356    |
| Various Other              | 2,611  |
| TOTAL                      | 16,513 |