

Request for Decision

Title	Sheltering Approach for Stray or Unwanted Cats and Dogs
Proposed Motion	There is no proposed motion.
Administrative Recommendation	Administration recommends that Council review the information in this Request for Decision and provide direction on next steps with respect to sheltering services for unwanted or stray companion cats and dogs.
Previous Council / Committee Direction	<u>October, 25, 2022 Regular Council Meeting</u> Motion 392/22: That Council direct Administration to provide information and recommendations regarding sheltering services for unwanted or stray companion cats and dogs no later than the December 13, 2022 Regular Council Meeting.
Report	<p><u>Background Information</u></p> <p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sturgeon County has a Dog Control Bylaw passed in 2015 that requires dogs to be licensed in all Sturgeon County hamlets and subdivisions. The Bylaw also addresses dogs at large, dog maximums, and behaviours. Sturgeon County does not have a Cat Control Bylaw. Research indicates that this is the case in several other Alberta rural municipalities. The challenges with a Cat Control Bylaw are the Animal Control resources and tools needed for enforcement. Municipalities have focused on education and responsible pet ownership. Sturgeon County Animal Control receives calls regarding stray and unwanted cats and dogs in which there are circumstances when these cats or dogs may require temporary holding, sheltering, medical services, and paths to adoption. Animal Control has used the Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) to provide these services in the past, but more recently EHS has been challenged to continue to accept stray and unwanted cats and dogs without a formal funding arrangement that provides for the associated resourcing costs (food, shelter, medical, staffing). Second Chance Animal Rescue Society (SCARS) has recently opened a satellite location in Morinville which is also being used to assist with animal adoption from their Athabasca location.

Stray or Unwanted Cats

- Local governments receive many complaints regarding free-roaming cats which may or may not have an owner.
- Organizations willing to take in cats focus on rehoming and will not accept feral animals.
- Another approach for stray cats is trap-neuter-return (TNR). Stray/feral cats are captured in a live trap, neutered/spayed by a veterinary clinic, and then returned to their previous location.
- Sturgeon County generated 38 incidents related to cats in 2021 and 35 incidents in 2022 as of October 31.
- As there is no process for Animal Control to manage sheltering cats, specific numbers related to sheltering are not available.

Stray or Unwanted Dogs

- Sturgeon County entered into a contract with Parkland County Kennels effective July 27, 2022, as they are integrated with Parkland County Enforcement and have processes in place specific to after-hours admissions (gate and key card access, guaranteed staffing levels for next day follow up, etc.). Sturgeon County has used this service for dogs that are brought to the kennel by Sturgeon County Peace Officers. This service has been used three times since the inception of the agreement.
- The agreement with Parkland County Kennel is a fee-for-service model with shelter fees of \$22.50 per day and \$80.00 per transportation to a veterinarian for medical care. Owners are required to pick up their dog and pay any related costs, thus no charges to Sturgeon County. Parkland County is facing challenges accepting unwanted or stray cats and dogs.
- Prior to entering into the contract with Parkland County, Enforcement Services reached out to several kennels within the County for kennel space for one dog. The businesses contacted indicated they could not guarantee a kennel space, were not interested, or did not meet the County's operational requirements (after-hours access).
- Sturgeon County works primarily with the EHS to manage stray dogs, but the arrangement with the EHS has not been formalized. Sturgeon County provides an annual donation of \$2,500 to the EHS.
- Sturgeon County generated 213 incidents related to dogs in 2021 and 224 incidents in 2022 as of October 31.
- In 2021, 15 dogs required sheltering, and to date in 2022, 14 dogs required sheltering.

Service Considerations

- Several factors were considered, such as breadth of programming, willingness to provide services, reasonable distance to Sturgeon County, and reduced administrative burden on Sturgeon County Animal Control Officers.
- Breadth of services included:
 - 1 guaranteed dog kennel;
 - 2 guaranteed cat kennels;

- After hours and weekend access;
- Appropriate medical care for cats and dogs during holding;
- Ability to separate unhealthy from healthy cats and dogs;
- Option to pay fee for service for additional dog or cat kennel;
- Ability to handle the administration associated with owner tracing and payment for care of cats or dogs for the duration of the holding period;
- Social media site to assist reconnecting cats or dogs with owners;
- Adoption service for unclaimed cats or dogs;
- Ability to provide behaviour modification if required;
- Ability to provide a Trap – Neuter – Return (TNR) program for feral cats;
- Program available to support feral cat placement.

Service Delivery Partners

- EHS is willing and able to enter into a contract for services with Sturgeon County to provide kennel services along with the needed supports for stray or unwanted companion cats or dogs.
- EHS provides contract services for several municipalities as well as the public.
- Kennel services for the County would be dedicated along with associated administrative services including admission, vaccination, behavioural assessment, owner tracing, and processing of payments for cat or dog holding.
- SCARS could be used on a fee-for-service basis to assist with short-term holds (less than 24 hours) for cats or dogs where the owner has been located.

Options

Option 1: No formal contract – animal control case by case management

- Funding would be included in the Enforcement budget and would be used on a case-by-case basis to work with animal rescues, animal fosters, and veterinarians to shelter or provide medical care to various stray or unwanted cats and dogs.
- The Animal Control Officer would operate within current staffing allocation and manage exceptional circumstances in need of Animal Control Officer intervention involving reimbursement to fosters, payment to animal rescues for services rendered or spay/neutering if required.

Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Animal Control Officer would support the issues associated with sheltering stray or unwanted cats or dogs in the County. ▪ Animal Control Officer would provide owner tracing of cats or dogs. ▪ Minimal cost and in alignment with the volumes of stray and unwanted cat and dog incidents.
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Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not provide dedicated kennel spaces for one dog and two cats. Does not provide full services including medical, after-hour and weekend access, and administrative services. Would require more Animal Control Officer time to resolve exceptional incidents.
Estimated Annual Total	\$10,000.00

Implications:

Organizational

- Funding would be included in the Enforcement budget and would be used on a case-by-case basis to work with animal rescues, animal fosters, and veterinarians to shelter or provide medical care to various stray or unwanted cats and dogs.
- Animal Control Officer services would be required to operate within current staffing levels to manage exceptional circumstances on an as needed basis.

Financial

- The financial impact of this decision would be an allocation of \$10,000 to the Protective Services budget.
- Should this be approved by Council, this funding could be provided one-time from Reserves and reassessed in Budget 2024.

Recommended Motion for Option 1:

That Council approve an allocation of \$10,000 from the General Operating Reserve to the Protective Services budget in 2023 to manage exceptional animal control issues by working with animal rescues, animal fosters and veterinarians to shelter or provide medical care to various stray or unwanted cats and dogs.

Option 2: Contract with Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) for kennel services and contract with Second Chance Animal Rescue Society (SCARS) for temporary holding of less than 24 hours.

Provider	Services	Annual Fixed Costs	Estimated Annual Variable Costs	Estimated Annual Costs
EHS	Monthly 1 Dog Kennel Monthly 2 Cat Kennels	\$6,600.00		\$16,800.00
	Vaccination and administrative costs up to 60 cats or dogs		\$10,200.00	
SCARS	Temporary holding (less than 24 hours)		\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00

Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides dedicated kennel spaces for one dog and two cats. Using 10 day hold period for cats and dogs this provides an estimated 36 dog stays and 73 cat stays with EHS.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides full services including medical, after-hour and weekend access and administrative services.
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not provide spay or neutering services to cats for a trap-neuter-return program needed to reduce cat overpopulation. Costly option given the volumes of stray or unwanted cat and dog incidents.
Estimated Annual Total	\$21,800.00

Organizational

- Funding would be included in the Enforcement budget and would be used to contract dedicated kennel services from the Edmonton Humane Society and temporary holding services (less than 24 hours) from Second Chance Animal Rescue Society.
- The Animal Control Officer would have resources available to manage exceptional circumstances.

Financial

- The financial impact of this decision would be an allocation of \$21,800 to the Protective Services budget.
- Should this be approved by Council, this funding could be provided one-time from Reserves and reassessed in Budget 2024.

Recommended Motion for Option 2:

That Council approve an allocation of \$21,800 from the General Operating Reserve to the Protective Services budget in 2023 to contract with the Edmonton Humane Society and Second Chance Animal Rescue Society to provide kennel services and temporary holding for cats and dogs.

Option 3: Contract with Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) for kennel services and trap-neuter-return services as well as contract with Second Chance Animal Rescue Society (SCARS) for temporary holding of less than 24 hours.

Provider	Services	Annual Fixed Costs	Estimated Annual Variable Costs	Estimated Annual Costs
EHS	Monthly 1 Dog Kennel Monthly 2 Cat Kennels	\$6,600.00		\$24,300.00
	Vaccination and administrative costs up to 60 cats or dogs		\$10,200.00	
	TNR Feral Cats – up to 30 females		\$7,5000.00	
SCARS	Temporary holding (less than 24 hours)		\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00

Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides dedicated kennel spaces for one dog and two cats. Using 10 day hold period for cats and dogs this provides an estimated 36 dog stays and 73 cat stays with EHS.
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	<table border="1"> <tr> <td></td><td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides full services including medical, after-hour and weekend access and administrative services. Provides spay or neutering services to cats for a trap-neuter-return program needed to reduce cat overpopulation. </td></tr> <tr> <td>Cons</td><td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most costly option given the volumes of stray or unwanted cat and dog incidents. </td></tr> <tr> <td>Estimated Annual Total</td><td>\$29,300.00</td></tr> </table> <p><u>Organizational</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding would be included in the Enforcement budget and would be used to contract dedicated kennel services and access to a trap-neuter-release service from the EHS as well as temporary holding services (less than 24 hours) from SCARS. The Animal Control Officer would have resources available to manage exceptional circumstances including trap-neuter-release services. <p><u>Financial</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The financial impact of this decision would be an allocation of \$29,300 to the Protective Services budget. Should this be approved by Council, this funding could be provided one-time from Reserves and reassessed in Budget 2024. <p>Recommended Motion for Option 3: That Council approve an allocation of \$29,300 from the General Operating Reserve to the Protective Services budget in 2023 to contract with the Edmonton Humane Society and Second Chance Animal Rescue Society to provide kennel services, trap-neuter-return services and temporary holding for cats and dogs.</p> <p><u>External Communication</u> Sturgeon County website updates are continuing to occur regarding Animal Control, providing information pertaining to found dogs, submission of an animal-related complaint, dog ownership, keeping other animals (hens and roosters), responsible pet ownership, nuisance dogs, and vicious dogs.</p> <p><u>Relevant Policy/Legislation/Practices</u> Bylaw 1352/15 – this Bylaw focuses on Dog Control in Sturgeon County including dogs being at large, licensing of dogs and dog behaviour. <i>Animal Protection Act</i> – this Act provides the authority for Alberta SPCA Officers to take an animal into custody if distressed or abandoned. Conditions of abandonment include left more than 24 hours without adequate food, water, or shelter.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides full services including medical, after-hour and weekend access and administrative services. Provides spay or neutering services to cats for a trap-neuter-return program needed to reduce cat overpopulation. 	Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most costly option given the volumes of stray or unwanted cat and dog incidents. 	Estimated Annual Total	\$29,300.00
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides full services including medical, after-hour and weekend access and administrative services. Provides spay or neutering services to cats for a trap-neuter-return program needed to reduce cat overpopulation. 						
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most costly option given the volumes of stray or unwanted cat and dog incidents. 						
Estimated Annual Total	\$29,300.00						
Implication of Administrative Recommendation	<p><u>Strategic Alignment for all Options</u></p> <p>Thriving Communities – Creating positive community well-being by providing opportunities for residents to enable quality of life for companion animals that are stray and without a home.</p> <p>Operational Excellence – Supports future-focused thinking by responding to resident needs in finding alternative supports of stray companion animals.</p>						

Alternatives Considered	All options are provided to Council for consideration in the Report section above.
Implications of Alternatives	Implications of all options are provided to Council for consideration in the Report section above.
Follow up Action	<p>Should Council provide a decision, follow-up action will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide continued improvements to the Animal Control section of the Sturgeon County website (Community Services, Corporate Communications, ongoing). 2. If Option 1 is approved, Administration will work with Financial Services to ensure funding is added to the Protective Services Budget (Community Services; Financial Services, January 2023). 3. If Option 2 or 3 are approved, Administration will draft and execute an agreement for services (Community Services; Procurement, January 2023).
Attachment(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attachment 1: Additional Analysis: Stray or Unwanted Companion Animal Sheltering
Report Reviewed by:	<p>Chris Wells, Director, Community Services</p> <p>Reegan McCullough, County Commissioner – CAO</p>

Strategic Alignment Checklist

Vision: *Offering a rich tapestry of historical, cultural, and natural experiences, Sturgeon County is a municipality that honours its rural roots and cultivates desirable communities. Uniquely situated to provide world-class agricultural, energy, and business investment opportunities, the County prioritizes responsible stewardship and dreaming big.*

Guiding Principles: Collaboration | Accountability | Flexibility | Excellence | Safety | Future Readiness | Affordability | Innovation

Community Outcome	Not consistent	Consistent	N/A
Planned Growth			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internationally competitive to attract, grow and sustain diverse businesses; tenacious focus on new growth and innovation 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern broadband and digital capabilities 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low cost, minimal red-tape regulations 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliable and effective infrastructure planning; comprehensive land use and infrastructure planning 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Thriving Communities			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beautiful, surprising places with high standards; integrated natural spaces & trail systems; healthy and resilient 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging cultural, historical, and civic amenities; strong community identity and pride 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe, welcoming, and diverse communities; small community feel and personal connection; commitment to high quality of life 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental Stewardship			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean air, land, and water; Carbon neutral municipal practices; circular economy opportunities 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation of natural areas and agricultural lands; enhanced greening and biodiversity; safekeeping ecosystems 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable development; partnerships with industry and others to drive emission reductions 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Collaborative Governance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predictable and stable external relationships; volunteer partnerships 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaningful connections with Indigenous communities 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing community consultation and engagement; transparent and action-oriented decision making based on sound rationale 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respectful and informed debate; clear and supportive governance processes 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Operational Excellence			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged and effective people – Council, Admin and Volunteers; continuous learning and improvement mindset; nimble and bold, with strong leadership 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality cost-effective service delivery; robust procurement and operational practices and policies; asset management and performance measurement; careful debt and reserve stewardship; long-term financial planning and sustainability 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future focused thinking to proactively respond to emerging opportunities and challenges 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative revenue generation and service delivery models integrated strategic and business planning 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>