



## Transparency Report



# LOS ANGELES ANIMAL SERVICES SHELTER OPERATIONS & ANIMAL CARE

Released March 22, 2023



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## Key Terms

**ACA:** Animal Care Assistant

**ACT:** Animal Care Technician

**ACO:** Animal Control Officer

**Blue Alert:** one of three color-coded alerts issued by the shelters. It can be issued for medical reasons where animals who are not irremediably suffering but are deemed by medical staff as not responding well to a standard course of treatment or have illness or injuries that need treatment beyond stabilization. This can also be for neonates who require round the clock care and feedings. These alerted animals may be euthanized after 48 hours of the issued alert.

**CCP:** Citywide Cat Program provides individuals and community groups with resources to spay and neuter free roaming cats in the City of Los Angeles. The program includes education and outreach efforts, and trap-neuter-return (TNR), which humanely traps free roaming cats, spays or neuters and vaccinates them, and returns the sterilized, now healthier, cat back to their natural outdoor home.

**Euthanasia:** the act of putting to death painlessly

**FAS:** Fear, Anxiety, and Stress.

**FAS Alert:** formerly known as *Yellow Alert*, issued for animals who exhibit high levels of Fear, Anxiety, and Stress. These alerted animals do not have any euthanasia deadline compared to the others. However, they may be escalated into Red Alert status.

**Management:** Interim General Manager, Assistant General Manager, or Senior Management Analyst

**Orange Alert:** one of three color-coded alerts issued by the shelters. Animals alerted under this designation require more urgent medical care. New Hope Partners must opt-in to receive these alerts.

**Red Alert:** one of three color-coded alerts issued by the shelters. This can be issued for animals based on space limitations or for behavioral reasons. As management has stated that the shelters do not currently euthanize for space, this is done primarily for behavioral reasons. These animals may be euthanized 48 hours after the alert has been issued.

**Save Rate:** percentage used to measure if the shelters have achieved the no-kill benchmark of 90% or more. LAAS calculates this by subtracting Nonlive Outcomes from Live Intake and dividing it by Live Intake numbers. The department's calculation only factors in Cats, Kittens, and Dogs.

**TNR:** Trap-Neuter-Return humanely traps free roaming cats, spays or neuters and vaccinates them, and returns the sterilized, now healthier, cat back to their natural outdoor home.

**Volgistics:** Volunteer management software used by volunteers to sign up for shifts and by Volunteer Liaisons and Volunteer Program Coordinator to track completed shifts and volunteer hours.

**Woof Stat Report:** LA Animal Services department monthly statistics

## Executive Summary and Introduction

As part of our office's goal of providing transparency on City Hall, we are providing a transparency report on the Department of Animal Services (DAS) also known as Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) with a focus on **Shelter Operations and Animal Care**.

The department provides and oversees the care and enrichment of animals placed into their care. However, many issues impede the department's ability to maintain the gold standard level of service the animals deserve and the public have come to expect which were brought out to light publicly last year.

For example, due to staffing shortages and overcrowding of animals at our shelters, it is difficult for staff to maintain cleanliness for all animals throughout the day and provide enrichment for the animals. At the largest shelter (South LA), there were 446 animals at the shelter (358 were dogs) as of 1/18/2023 but staffing for Animal Care Technicians (ACTs) at South LA during the main shift (day shift) range from 8 to 13 ACTs working. Besides cleaning kennels and cages, ACTs also feed and give water to animals, and provide customer service to the public with animal intake and adoptions.

It is also important to note that on Page 91 of the department's FY23-24 budget proposal, the department states that staff shortages have led to insufficient animal care and deficiencies in customer service at our animal shelters including:

- Increased liability with dog bite injuries due to staff shortages.
- Difficulty maintaining clean kennels due to staff shortages.
- Inability to provide consistent exceptional customer service due to staff shortages.
- Animals housed with little enrichment to help them thrive during stressful kenneling for long periods of time.
- Inadequate staffing to operate six 24/7 Animal Services Centers.
- Difficulty completing daily rounds which are used to ensure animals are on an appropriate pathway for a positive outcome (i.e., adoption), return to owner or transfer to a rescue partner.

The purpose of this transparency report, which is not an audit, is to give the department, the public, and policymakers a detailed look and better understanding of the department's shelter operations and conditions. We would like to thank LAAS management, staff, and volunteers for their cooperation in the creation of this transparency report.

We hope that our report will be used to help address systemic issues the department is facing and aid policymakers in their decision making as it relates to policies and funding for the department.

## Scope

During the period of November 29, 2022 to January 31, 2023, the City Controller's Office spoke to LAAS management, staff, and volunteers, and visited each of the 6 City of LA animal shelters, which included a staff guided tour and subsequent unannounced visits.

The 6 animal shelters in the City of LA are:

- **East Valley** – 14409 Vanowen St., Van Nuys, CA 91405
- **Harbor** – 957 N. Gaffey St., San Pedro, CA 90731
- **North Central** – 3201 Lacy St., Los Angeles, CA 90031
- **South Los Angeles (Chesterfield Square)** – 1850 W. 60<sup>th</sup> St., Los Angeles, CA 90047
- **West Los Angeles** – 11361 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90064
- **West Valley** – 20655 Plummer St., Chatsworth, CA 91311

The information provided in this report are sourced from:

- Interviews with LAAS management, staff, and volunteers
- Reports provided by LAAS
- Shelter observations by City Controller's Office
- LAAS Department FY2023-2024 Operating Budget Proposal
- Payroll data from the City Controller's Office

## Key Findings

- **Animal Intake** – Pre-COVID (2017 to 2019), intake was increasing for all animals with the exception of dogs with the highest amount of intake in 2019 with 56,575 animals. The lowest intake for animals occurred during COVID (2020) with 30,977, however, intakes have been increasing since with 2021 intake of 37,492 animals and 2022 intake of 41,980 animals.
- **Animal Population** – Our animal shelters are overcrowded especially for dogs leading to doubling or tripling of dogs in the same kennel.
  - For example, at our largest shelter (South LA), there were 358 dogs as of 1/18/2023 but only 275 kennels. As of 1/18/2023, there were 5 out of 6 shelters that had dog populations greater than the number of kennels at their shelter.
- **Animal Care** – Per management, animals housed at the shelter require a baseline standard of care of 15 minutes daily, which includes providing food, water, and daily kennel and cage cleaning. These 15 minutes do not include enrichment (e.g. dog walking), assisting the public, or medical procedures.
  - **Feeding** – During our visits, we observed dogs and cats with food. However, there were instances where we observed small animals (rabbits and guinea pigs) with low amounts of hay in their tray.
  - **Water** – During our visits, we observed dogs, cats, and small animals with water. For dogs, we did observe some dirty water bowls or leaking water bowls that wet the floor with dogs inside the kennel. We also observed some small animals (rabbits and guinea pigs) with low levels of water.
  - **Cleanliness** – For dogs, we did come across clean and unclean kennels that had feces, urine, wet floors, and dirty water bowls. Cat cages were clean and well maintained. For small animals (rabbits and guinea pigs), cages needed some cleaning as we noted hay trays with feces and soaked urine padding.
- **Animal Enrichment** – Enrichment for staff is not a required task. Volunteers provide a vast majority of enrichment to animals.
  - For dogs, due to insufficient staffing, certified volunteers, and the overpopulation of dogs in our shelters, dogs may not be walked daily or for weeks. Certain dogs may not be taken out for months due to behavioral reasons. Playgroups at certain shelters have been implemented such as those provided by “Dogs Playing for Life” to provide enrichment and socialization for a large number of dogs at the same time vs. walking dogs one at a time.
  - Cats can be taken out of their cages and put in open Cat Rooms for cats to socialize with other cats.
  - Rabbits and guinea pigs can be put in playpens with tunnels, tubes, and toys.
- **Animals in Restricted Areas (Non-Public Facing)** – Adoptable animals housed in non-public facing areas such as isolation, quarantine, or recovery rooms are not always known or seen by the public unless listed on the LAAS website. Some shelters, however, display kennel cards of these animals in areas of high foot traffic to make them more visible to the public.
- **Animal Outcomes** – Adoptions constitute the highest number of outcomes at 17,210 in 2022. New Hope Placements came second at 8,368 and euthanasia came third overall at 6,342 (1,357 cats, 1,387 kittens, 835 dogs, and the remainder is all other animals such as sparrows, squirrels, hamsters, mice, raccoons, etc.).

- **Adoptions to the Public** – Adoptions to the public ranged from 19,538 in 2017 to 21,021 in 2019 which then dropped to 10,279 during the 2020 COVID pandemic and has since jumped up to 17,213 in 2022.
  - It is important to note that prior to COVID restrictions taking place in 2020, city animal shelters were open to the public 6 days a week without an appointment. However, since 2022, shelters are open 4 days a week without an appointment and 2 days a week with an appointment.
- **Euthanasia** – Euthanasia is the act of putting to death painlessly. It is performed in cases of irremediable suffering or for behavioral reasons. Management has stated that the shelters do not currently euthanize for space. However, during the Animal Services Commission meeting on January 10, 2023, management stated that if intake levels continue at their current pace or even increase, they may have to begin euthanizing for space.
- **Save Rate** – A no-kill shelter is a shelter that saves healthy, treatable, and rehabilitatable animals. As a benchmark set by the department, at least 90% of cats, kittens, and dogs entering the shelter are expected to be released alive to the owner (if lost), to a new home, or to a rescue partner. In 2022, dogs have consistently been at 90% or above the save rate. Cats were below 90% the entire year and kittens were below 90% for 7 out of 12 months of the year.
- **Color-Coded Alerts** – The department issues color-coded alerts to communicate which animals are most in need of help. The department's New Hope Partners program saves hundreds to thousands of animals who have been alerted. In 2022 alone, New Hope Partners rescued 2,256 dogs, 3,329 cats, 278 rabbits, and 298 other animals.
- **Bite Incidents** – In 2019, there were 94 bite incidents amongst employees, volunteers, and the public. In 2020, there were 41 bite incidents. In 2021, there were 52 and in 2022, there were 64.
- **Understaffing Issues: Staff Absences** – Staff absences are common and mainly due to vacation, holidays, leave without pay, sickness, COVID illness or exposure, family and medical leave, injuries on duty, and more. In 2021 and 2022, the percentage of hours worked compared to total workable hours for ACTs were 69.45% and 69.78% , respectively.
- **Understaffing Issues: Staff Vacancies** – In our meeting with management on 1/11/2023, the department stated they had 47 vacancies as of the end of December 2022. The department is using the Targeted Local Hire program to bring on Animal Care Assistants (ACAs) who train to become ACTs after 6 months as a trainee and then a 6-month probationary period. The department is requesting additional shelter staff to provide sufficient standards of care and enrichment for animals.
- **Volunteer Program** – Thousands of Angelenos volunteer with the department to assist in the care of the animals at the shelters, from walking dogs, cleaning cages, and providing enrichment to small animals. The process for volunteers to handle animals, however, can be lengthy taking several weeks or months depending on volunteer availability and volunteer opportunities.
- **Volunteer Applications** – In July 2022, the department received 1,528 volunteer applications (the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest month last year was June 2022 with 666 volunteer applications) which may be due in part to the July 14, 2022, LA Times article that discussed dogs not being walked.
- **Volunteers (Shifts) Worked** – In 2019, the department had the highest number of volunteer shifts worked at 12,311 shifts. However, it dropped in 2020 to 3,845 shifts and has since increased to 8,418 shifts in 2022.



- **Unique Volunteers** – On average, the East Valley shelter had the most unique monthly volunteers (166) in 2022, West LA came second with 124, North Central with 120, West Valley with 108, South LA with 90, and Harbor had the lowest with 84 unique volunteers each month.
- **Volunteer Hours** – In 2019, volunteers dedicated 94,059 hours to volunteering (the equivalent of 45.22 full-time employees) but then dropped in 2020 to 31,314 during the pandemic and has since climbed back to 91,544 in 2022 (44.01 full-time employees).
  - The type of volunteer shift with the most volunteer hours is “dog enrichment” with 33,902 hours followed by “boredom busters” with 13,927 hours.
- **Volunteer and Staff Relations** – Volunteers are heavily relied upon to provide enrichment for the animals. Management stated, however, that the department should not solely rely on the volunteers to provide enrichment. During our visits, volunteers were willing to discuss issues at the shelter, however, they wanted to remain anonymous due to fear of retaliatory action, such as suspension or termination. During our guided tours and unannounced visits, there was not a visible or obvious working relationship between staff and volunteers. This was often due to the short staffing of ACTs who are handling other shelter duties or are helping the public in the receiving area. Management also stated that relationships between staff and volunteers need to be rebuilt as there can be distrust between shelter staff and volunteers.
- **Spay and Neuter Program** – To assist the public with the costs of sterilizing their animals, LAAS has two programs available for companion animals owned by City of Los Angeles residents:
  - Discount Spay & Neuter Coupon Program – In 2022, 8,824 discount coupons were issued and 2,552 were redeemed.
  - Free Spay & Neuter Certificate Program – In 2022, 40,449 free certificates were issued and 17,428 were redeemed.
  - Per management, redemptions of vouchers are lower compared to issued amounts due to high demand for spay/neuter services and a shortage of veterinarians.
- **Operating Budget** – The department’s approved operating budget for the current fiscal year (FY22-23) is \$26,941,178 or 0.2% of the City’s total budget of \$11,755,048,415 for the current fiscal year. With understaffing issues, an increase in animal intake, and the inability to sufficiently and adequately operate city animal shelters, the department is requesting an operating budget of \$42,078,166 for next fiscal year, a 56% increase from the current fiscal year. In addition, this budget will help the department to maintain no kill status for all animals by focusing more on spay and neuter services for the public, remove all appointment requirements for visiting shelters, increase animal license processing, and increase animal enrichment activities.
- **Proposition F and the Northeast Valley Shelter** – Proposition F was passed by Los Angeles voters on November 7, 2000, which provided over \$150 million for the repair, expansion, replacement, and construction of animal care facilities. A portion of these funds was used to construct the seventh shelter, Northeast Valley Animal Care Center in Mission Hills. According to a 2008 audit of Prop F by the previous City Controller’s Office, they found that the Northeast Valley shelter was operating below its capacity and was not open to the public for adopting animals. Although the goal of Prop F was to provide facilities fostering public access to increase animal adoptions and community involvement, no additional operating budget was approved, and citywide budget cuts in fiscal year 2008-09 significantly impacted the department’s operations. As of today, the Northeast Valley shelter has still not been fully funded to operate as the seventh city animal shelter.

## Animal Intake

Intake is the first point at which LAAS receives an animal into their care. However, intake also includes animals taken in that were already deceased.

### Intake Policy

According to management, the department practices “managed intake” (not open intake) of animals in which surrenders require an appointment. This was implemented due to COVID restrictions. Prior to COVID, the shelters were able to accept animals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The only exceptions to the appointment requirements are sick, injured, or dying animals.

### Intake Statistics

After the initial intake medical exam, animals are then placed in a kennel or cage with the location depending on their status.

The Intake statistics in the monthly published Woof Stat Reports show the number of animals taken in by the shelters, whether alive or deceased according to species. For the following tables, the period of January 2022 through December 2022 was selected to observe potential fluctuations or other patterns throughout the first year after major COVID restrictions were lifted.

(These intake statistics differ from the Live Intake statistics used in the calculation of the Save Rate.)

Table 1. Number of intakes by species and by month for 2022 from LAAS Woof Stat reports.

	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
Dogs	1230	1108	1278	1288	1276	1354	1415	1354	1368	1334	1284	1435
Cats	594	483	588	690	835	923	1003	933	848	817	722	763
Kittens	116	129	457	1125	1632	1278	1061	1148	1100	787	514	230
Rabbits	56	66	67	105	161	132	92	135	58	77	70	60
Others	389	357	683	784	775	742	542	487	578	504	344	237
Total	2385	2143	3073	3992	4679	4429	4113	4057	3952	3519	2934	2725

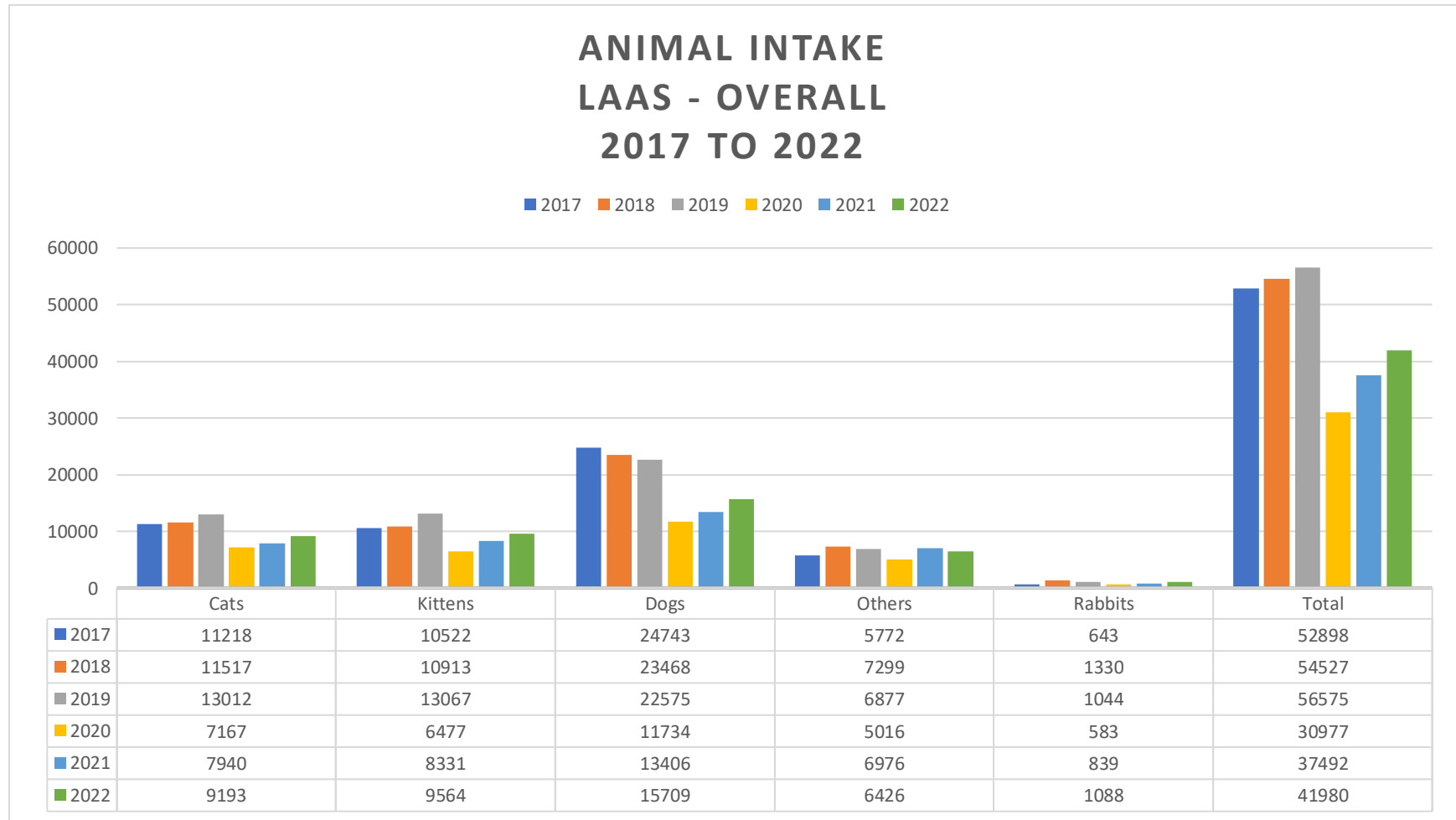
Table 2. Month-to-month changes in intake by species in 2022. Orange is a decrease. Blue is an increase.

	Jan-Feb		Feb-Mar		Mar-Apr		Apr-May		May-June		Jun-Jul		Jul-Aug		Aug-Sep		Sep-Oct		Oct- Nov		Nov-Dec	
	# Chg	% Chg	# Chg	% Chg	# Chg	% Chg	# Chg	% Chg	# Chg	% Chg	# Chg	% Chg	# Chg	% Chg	# Chg	% Chg	# Chg	% Chg	# Chg	% Chg	# Chg	% Chg
Dogs	-122	-10%	170	15%	10	1%	-12	-1%	78	6%	61	5%	-61	-4%	-85	-6%	-34	-2%	-50	-4%	151	12%
Cats	-111	-19%	105	22%	102	17%	145	21%	88	11%	80	9%	-70	-7%	-141	-14%	-31	-4%	-95	-12%	41	6%
Kittens	13	11%	328	254%	668	146%	507	45%	-354	-22%	-217	-17%	87	8%	-86	-7%	-313	-28%	-273	-35%	-284	-55%
Rabbits	10	18%	1	2%	38	57%	56	53%	-29	-18%	-40	-30%	43	47%	-80	-58%	19	33%	-7	-9%	-10	-14%
Others	-32	-8%	326	91%	101	15%	-9	-1%	-33	-4%	-200	-27%	-55	-10%	53	10%	-74	-13%	-160	-32%	-107	-31%
Total	-242	-10%	930	43%	919	30%	687	17%	-250	-5%	-316	-7%	-56	-1%	-339	-8%	-433	-11%	-585	-17%	-209	-7%

Dogs had the highest intake, followed by kittens, and cats.

Intakes increased for nearly all animals from March through April 2022. While decreases occurred for most animals from July to November.

Using the department's Woof Stat reports, we also compared intake totals from 2017 through 2022.

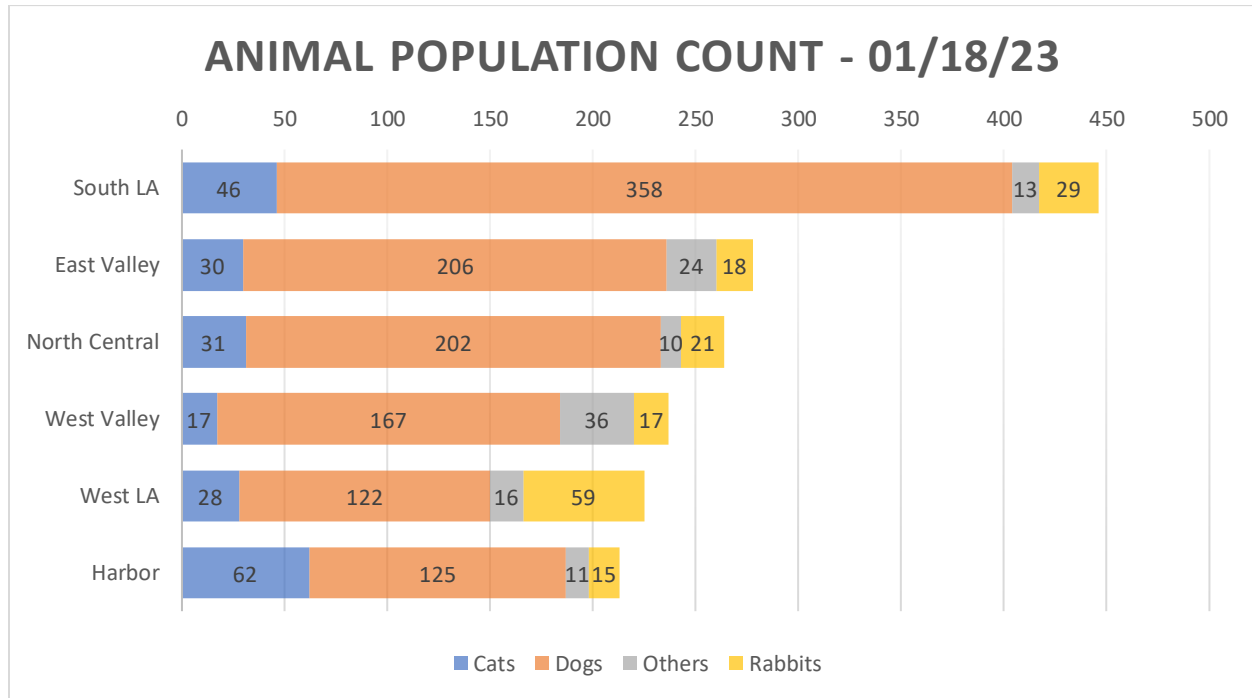


Pre-COVID (2017 to 2019), intake was increasing for all animals with the exception of dogs with the highest amount of intake in 2019 with 56,575 animals. The lowest intake for animals occurred during COVID (2020) with 30,977, however, intakes have been increasing since with 2021 intake of 37,492 animals and 2022 intake of 41,980 animals.

## Animal Population by Shelter

After the intake process, the animals are then housed in kennels and cages depending on their species and also their status, be it medical, behavioral, or even just healthy.

The population of animals housed at our six shelters can vary day-to-day. Based on the Kennel Inventory for 01/18/2023 provided by Management, the animal population by shelter is as follows:



Total Animal population by shelter:

- South LA: 446
- East Valley: 278
- North Central: 264
- West Valley: 237
- West LA: 225
- Harbor: 213

Overall department-wide population by animal:

- Dogs: 1,180
- Cats: 214
- Rabbits: 159
- Others\*: 110

**\*Others** can include birds, turtles, and other animals not listed.

## Shelter Overcrowding

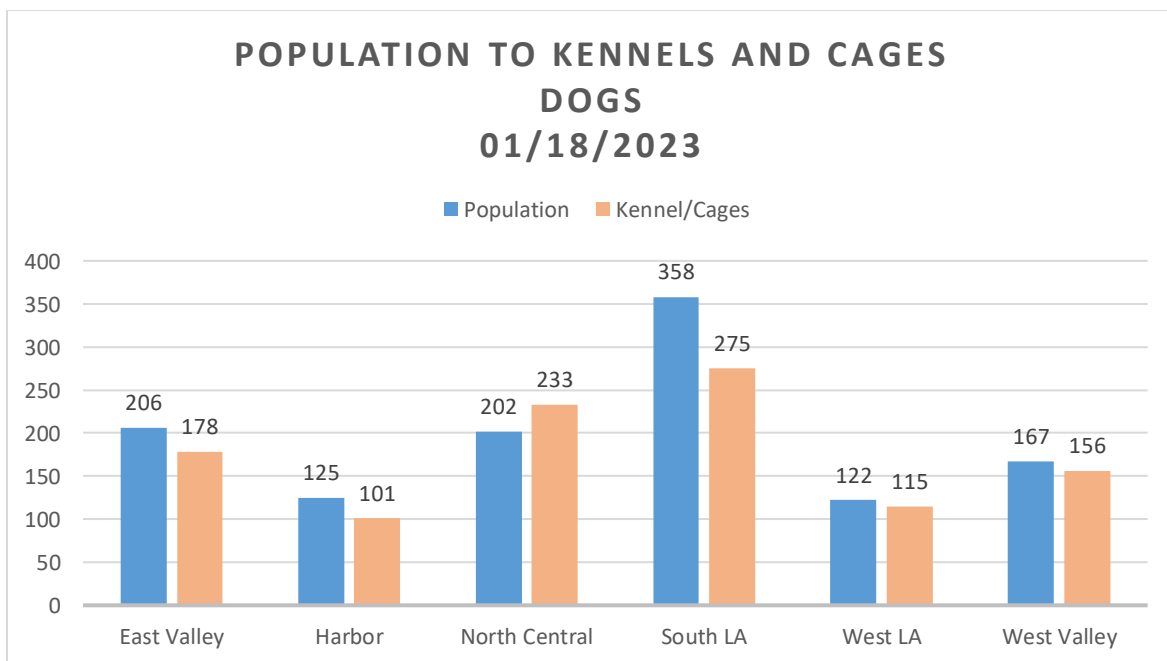
With the increased intake and lack of empty kennel and cage space, overcrowding is a major issue at the shelters.

We compared the shelter population from 01/18/23 to the Kennel and Cage counts provided by Management.

**Note:** The number of kennels and cages only include those that are intended for long-term housing and not for day use or short-term use, such as Grooming, Receiving, and Recovery Rooms.

### Dogs

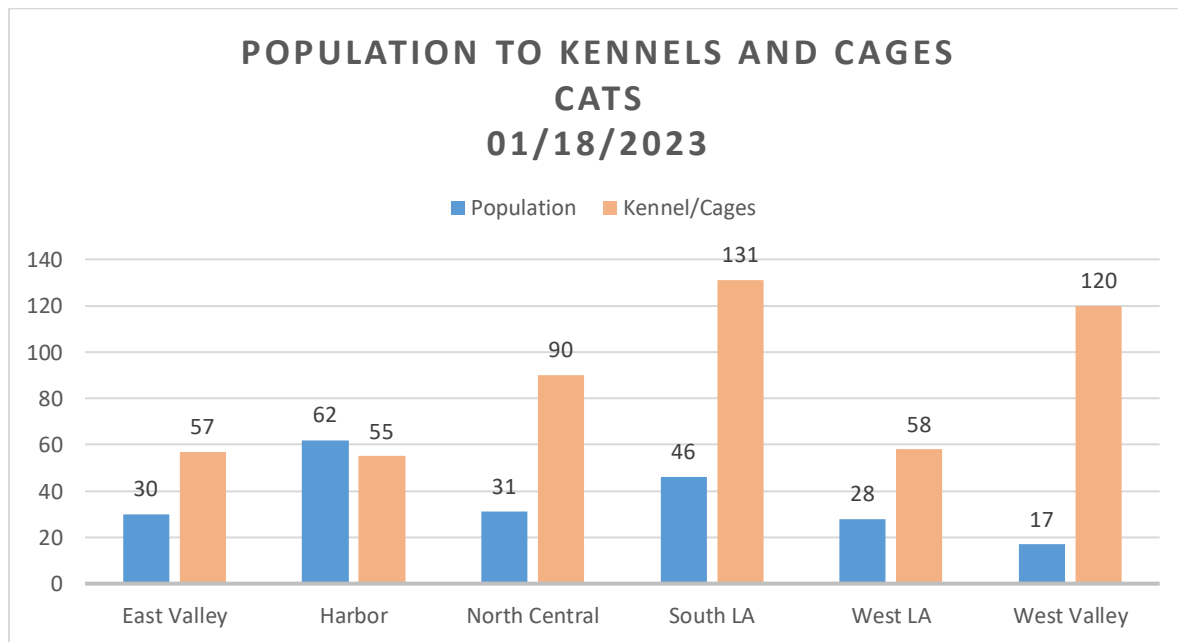
Shelter	Population	Kennel/Cages	Difference	% Occupied
East Valley	206	178	-28	116%
Harbor	125	101	-24	124%
North Central	202	221	19	91%
South LA	358	275	-83	130%
West LA	122	115	-7	106%
West Valley	167	156	-11	107%
Totals	1180	1046	-134	113%



- North Central has 233 kennels and cages however 12 are out commission and in need of repair.

### Cats

Shelter	Population	Kennel/Cages	Difference	% Occupied
East Valley	30	57	27	53%
Harbor	62	55	-7	113%
North Central	31	90	59	34%
South LA	46	131	85	35%
West LA	28	58	30	48%
West Valley	17	120	103	14%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>42%</b>



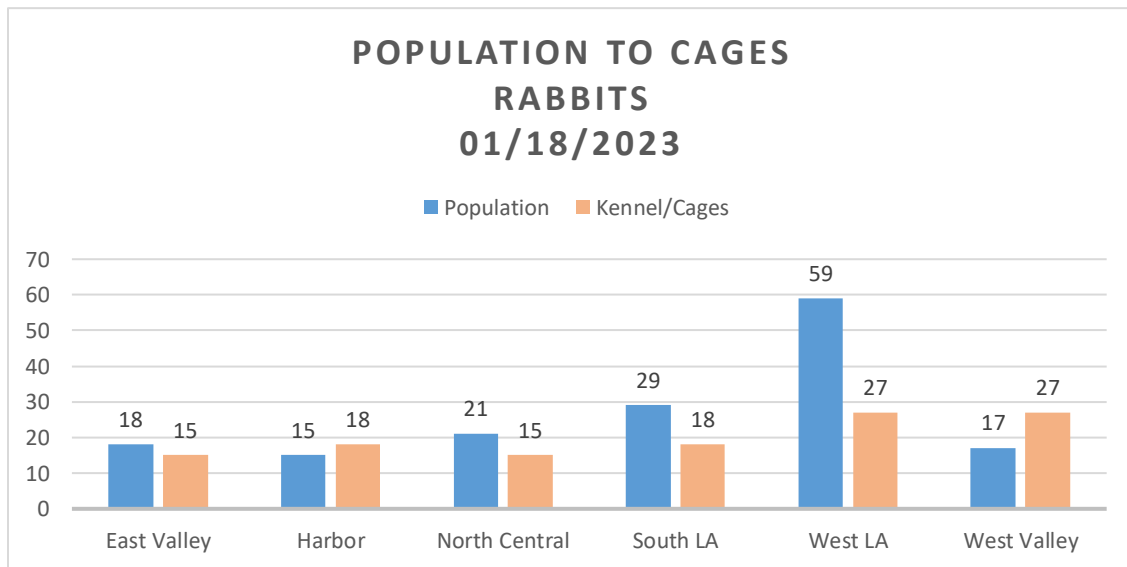
Cats have lower occupancy rates with Harbor being the only one over capacity.

During our unannounced visits on January 31, 2023, the cat population remained low across the shelters with numerous cages empty.

**Note:** The number of cages for cats only include those intended for long-term housing and not day use such as Community Cat Rooms or the Lobby Rolling Sets.

### Rabbits

Shelter	Population	Kennel/Cages	Difference	% Occupied
East Valley	18	15	-3	120%
Harbor	15	18	3	83%
North Central	21	15	-6	140%
South LA	29	18	-11	161%
West LA	59	27	-32	219%
West Valley	17	27	10	63%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>-39</b>	<b>133%</b>



**Note:** Rabbits can live together as bonded pairs in 1 cage.



## Animal Care

Per management, animals housed at the shelter require a baseline standard of care of 15 minutes daily, which includes providing food, water, and daily kennel and cage cleaning.

These 15 minutes do not include:

- Enrichment (e.g. dog walking)
- Assisting the public
- Medical procedures

Documentation or checklists for assignments are not widely used amongst the shelters. Checklists are sometimes completed at Harbor for feedings. North Central has a task log for staff on swing shift or graveyard. In addition, most of the shelters we spoke to have logs for supplemental feedings as required by each shelter's medical team.

## Feedings

From our interviews with staff at the end of the guided shelter tour, staff mentioned the following about animal feedings:

- Dogs are fed twice a day, in the morning and late afternoon, by staff.
- Cats are provided food and refilled throughout the day as needed by staff or volunteers.
- Rabbits are fed hay, pellets, and sometimes fresh vegetables by staff and volunteers.
- Shelter medical teams can require supplemental feedings in addition to regular feedings.

During fiscal year 2022-23, the \$304,000 food budget for animals was depleted down to between \$20,000 and \$30,000 in the first 5 months of the fiscal year. This caused the department to identify \$400,000 from the Animal Welfare Trust Fund to be allocated to the food budget. However, City Council approved \$400,000 from the General Fund to be provided for the department's food budget.

During our visits, we observed dogs and cats with food. However, there were instances where we observed small animals (rabbits and guinea pigs) with low amounts of hay in their tray.

## Water

Water is provided to all animals. Dogs in the outdoor kennels and kennels in the inside areas have auto-fill bowls.

For dogs and other animals without auto-fill water bowls, staff and sometimes volunteers provide these animals with water in either bowls or cage water dispensers.

During our shelter visits, we noted some dirty water bowls and leaking water bowls that wet the floor with dogs inside the kennel. Leaking water bowls are repaired by staff if they are able to or by the General Services Department (GSD). We also noted some small animals (rabbits and guinea pigs) with low levels of water.

## Cleanliness

*Copy and paste the following link into your browser for photos of shelter conditions during our visits:*

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1793cE68-OV-FPAfcbdi6liK-Opqd0d1J>

*Due to staffing shortages and overcrowding of animals at our shelters, it is difficult for staff to maintain cleanliness for all animals on a constant basis throughout the day. For example, at the largest shelter (South LA), there were 446 animals at the shelter (358 were dogs) as of 1/18/2023 but ACT staffing numbers at South LA during the day shift range from 8 to 13 ACTs working. Besides cleaning kennels and cages, ACTs also feed and give water to animals, and provide customer service to the public with animal intake and adoptions.*

### Dogs

According to staff, dogs' kennels are cleaned at least once daily by staff and experienced volunteers. Cleaning frequency, however, varies by location, staffing, and workloads. Due to staffing shortages and unavailability of dog walkers (usually volunteers), dogs can urinate or defecate anytime in their kennel if not taken out.

During our unannounced visits, we did come across clean and unclean kennels that had feces, urine, and dirty water bowls. Some kennels had wet floors either due to cleaning, urine, water leaking, or rain. Some kennels had beddings and blankets that were wet. Harbor had some kennels with mud inside after the rain. Some shelters used tarps to cover the outside kennels but were still not sufficient to protect dogs from the rain.

During another set of unannounced visits to all 6 shelters on January 31, 2023, similar conditions were observed from previous visits. Although, we observed clean kennels, we found kennels with feces and urine. One kennel was observed with feces in the auto fill water bowl. Wet kennels from cleanings and leaking auto fill water bowls were also observed.

### Cats

During our unannounced visits, cat cages were clean and well maintained by staff and volunteers.

### Small Animals (rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters)

According to staff, cages of small animals are to be cleaned once daily. During our site visits, cages of the small animals needed some cleaning as we noted hay trays with feces and soaked urine padding.

At South LA, we observed a mouse crawling on the walls. Per management, the department utilizes the City contracted pest control vendor to try and control the issues with pests.

Small animals get taken care of solely by volunteers. Staff members are rarely seen in the small animal room during the day although management stated that they care for the small animals during their graveyard shift. There have been instances where volunteers will come in and the small animal room will still be locked.

## Animal Enrichment

In addition to animal care, animal enrichment is a necessity for the animals taken in by the shelters.

On Page 4 of the LAAS FY23-24 Operating Budget Proposal, the department emphasizes the importance on enrichment for the shelter animals:

*Enrichment provides mental stimulation to maintain the mental health of the animals which has an impact on the behavior an animal exhibits in the shelter. Enrichment helps reduce stress and boredom and is especially valuable for animals that are in the shelter for extended periods. These activities could ultimately increase the likelihood of adoption for many shelter animals.*

*Some examples of enrichment are walks, social interaction (playgroups), and sensory stimulation.*

Management stated that enrichment for animals is not a required task for staff. Staff at all 6 shelters stated that volunteers provide the vast majority of enrichment to the animals.

The department in their FY23-24 budget proposal states that the amount of enrichment activities being provided for the animals is insufficient and animals were housed with little enrichment to help them thrive during stressful kenneling for long periods of time (Page 91).

Cats can be taken out of their cages and put in open Cat Rooms for cats to socialize with other cats. Rabbits and guinea pigs can be put in playpens with tunnels, tubes, and toys.

Animals may also be provided with toys inside their kennels or cage to provide mental stimulation. Rabbits are provided with chews so that they don't get bored and chew up newspaper and/or the cage bars.

## Dog Enrichment

For dogs, enrichment includes walks, being taken out to the play yards, and also participating in playgroups.

## Dog Walking

The department implemented the use of a dog walking app to better track enrichment activities and prompt staff and volunteers to know when dogs should be walked. In addition, staff and volunteers use the app to record behavioral notes on the dogs.

Due to insufficient staffing, certified volunteers, and the overpopulation of dogs in our shelters, dogs may not be walked daily. Some may not be walked for weeks and a few may not be walked for months as noted below per the dog walking app (updated as of 01/11/2023 at 10:40am).

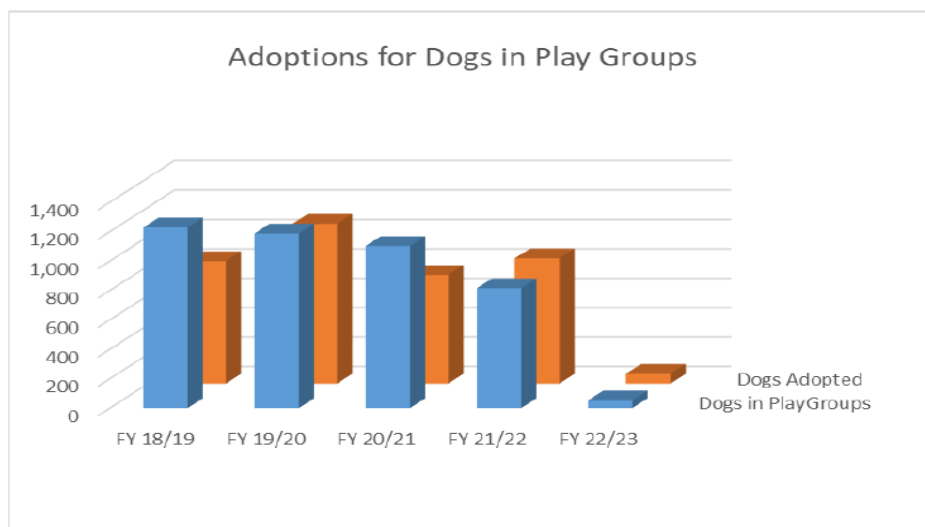
*Table 3. Number of dogs since their last month walked (by shelter) – LAAS Dog Notes App*

	East Valley	Harbor	North Central	South LA	West LA	West Valley	Total
<b>2022 Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>360</b>
July	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
September	—	—	—	1	—	3	4
October	—	1	—	—	—	2	3
November	3	2	1	4	1	6	17
December	42	37	87	75	44	49	334
<b>2023 Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>736</b>
January	158	82	110	232	61	93	736
<b>Total (by Shelter)</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>1096</b>

Certain dogs may not be taken out for long periods of time due to behavioral reasons. In our meeting with management, the department is working on a contract to hire a dog trainer to work with aggressive dogs. A draft Request for Proposal (RFP) is being prepared for “providing specialized training and enrichment for behaviorally challenged dogs”. The Contract funding would be for \$100,000.

## Playgroups

Playgroups provide enrichment and socialization with other dogs, which also helps reduce the stress of being at the shelter and increase their adoptability. They allow dogs to be out of their kennels, socialize with other dogs, and also can be a way to assess their behavior. Other playgroup benefits include showing the dog's true personality and displays of playfulness which can help increase their potential for adoption.



*Figure 1. Adoptions for Dogs in Play Groups (Source: FY23-24 Budget Proposal p.104)*

The department provided this bar graph chart to correlate the number of dogs in playgroups that got adopted.

Playgroups are done to a certain degree at the shelters:

- **East Valley**: depending on staff availability, run usually once on weekends.
- **South LA (Chesterfield Square)**: playgroups run by Dogs Playing for Life (DPFL)
- **North Central**: was run by volunteer liaison, currently run by experienced volunteers
- **West LA**: run by ACT Supervisors
- **Harbor** and **West Valley** did run playgroups previously but are currently not able to do so

**East Valley** and **South LA** are the only shelters that currently have yards properly configured to run playgroups.

For FY23-24, the department submitted requests with quotes from GSD for fencing and turf to remodel play yards at Harbor, North Central, South LA, West LA, and West Valley to configure or upgrade their play yards to be able to properly run playgroups.

Additionally, as part of their FY23-24 budget proposal, the department is requesting funding to create a playgroups team consisting of 1 ACT Supervisor and 7 ACTs to implement and run playgroups across all 6 shelters (pages 102 through 105).

## Animals in Restricted Areas (Non-Public Facing)

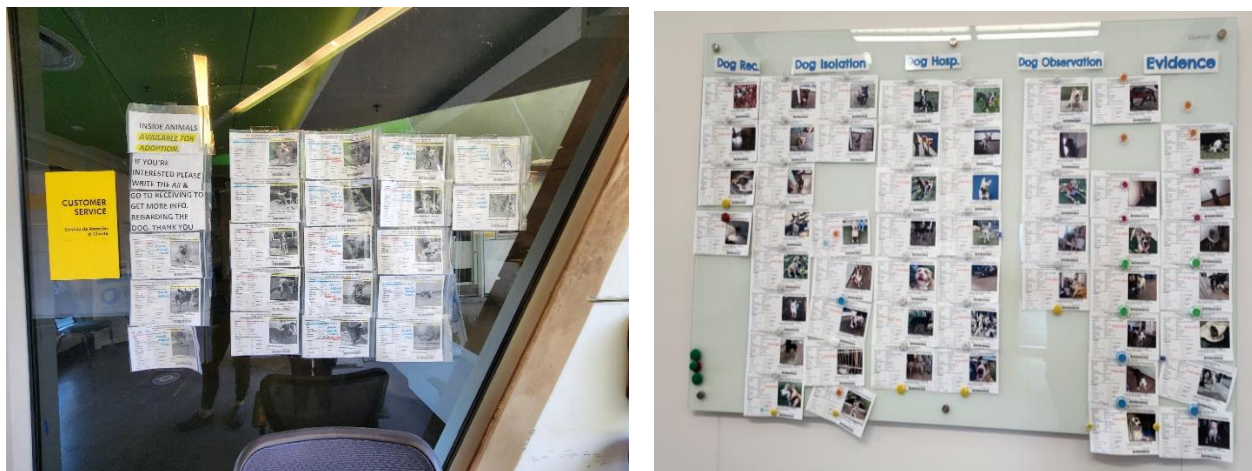
There are areas in the shelter that house animals not accessible or seen by the public. These rooms serve to house animals for medical or behavioral reasons. These rooms include:

- **Isolation Room** – animals who are sick and contagious (zoonotic diseases)
- **Quarantine Room** – animals who have a bite history, have safety concerns, or are being held for evidence
  - Animals in these rooms are usually quarantined for 10 days
  - Volunteers can only work with Evidence animals with Volunteer or ACT Supervisor permission
- **Recovery Room** – animals recovering from medical procedures or are older

During our site visits, we also noticed pop-up kennels with dogs in hallways in the back of the receiving area that are not public facing due to insufficient kennel space.

Animals in the aforementioned areas may be for available for adoption by looking on the LAAS website or asking shelter staff.

Some shelters, such as Harbor, South LA, and West Valley, publicly display the kennel cards of animals in these restricted or non-public facing areas on boards or areas that are visible to the public.



*Figure 2. South LA (left) and West Valley (right) showing kennels cards of animals in restricted areas.*

## Animal Outcomes

Animals under the care of LAAS can have various outcomes that result in no longer being under the department’s care. The ideal outcome for the animals is to be adopted and find permanent homes. For other reasons, however, this may not be the only outcome that happens to the animals.

In the monthly published Woof Stat Report, the **Outcomes** section list the different kinds of outcomes for the animals as a whole. For this analysis, we looked at year 2022.

Table 4. Number of outcome type for the department overall.

	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
Adoptions to the Public	1253	963	1035	1168	1307	1750	1963	1549	1418	1716	1491	1597
Best Friends	49	60	81	235	245	265	327	189	166	180	164	94
Died/DOA (euthanized)	172	150	180	203	212	235	176	202	221	167	150	138
Euthanized	318	281	459	553	708	703	716	688	656	582	397	281
Missing/Stolen/Escaped	4	1	17	2	2	10	5	9	9	5	5	2
New Hope Placements	493	426	735	1000	897	914	686	818	817	622	488	472
Redeemed	269	257	290	291	241	239	270	215	247	242	250	250
Released	118	77	135	243	329	173	202	293	205	198	210	129
Total	2676	2215	2932	3695	3941	4289	4345	3963	3739	3712	3155	2963

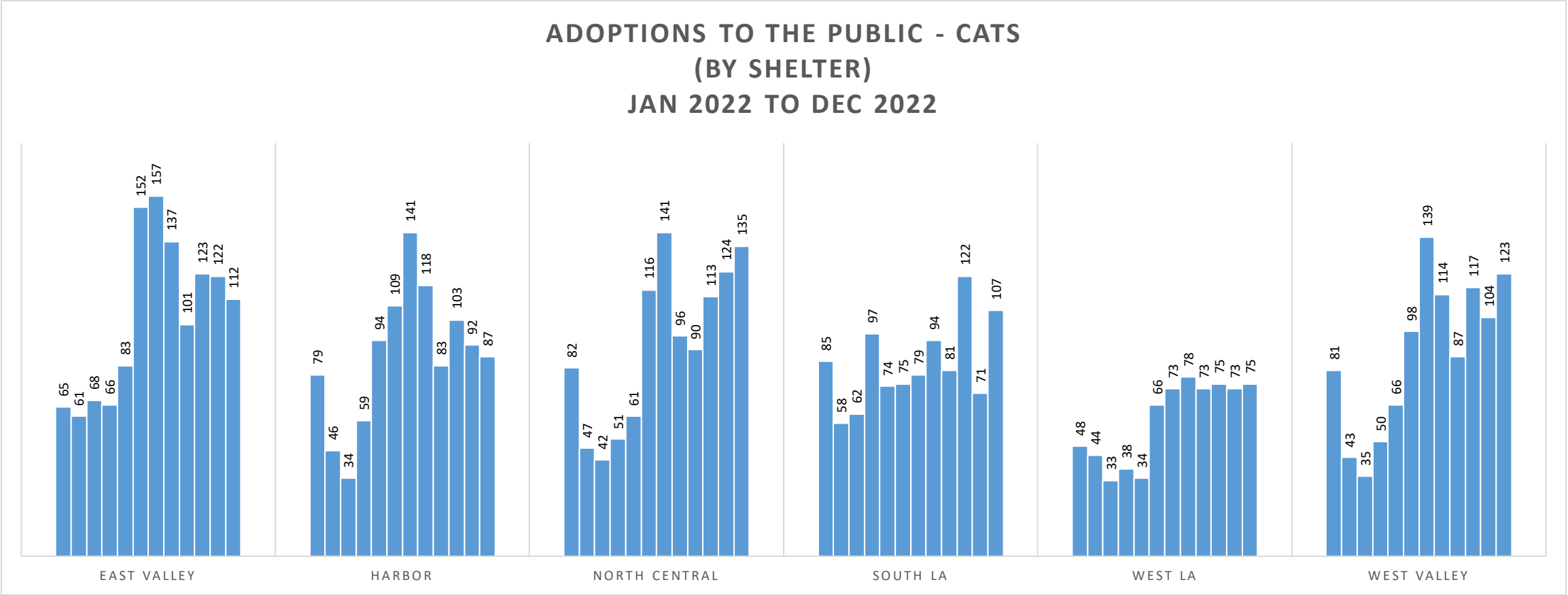
Table 5. Month-to-month change in outcomes for animals. Orange is a decrease. Blue is an increase.

	Jan-Feb		Feb-Mar		Mar-Apr		Apr-May		May-Jun		Jun-Jul		Jul-Aug		Aug-Sep		Sep-Oct		Oct-Nov		Nov-Dec	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg	Chg
Adoptions to the Public	-290	-23%	72	7%	133	13%	139	12%	443	34%	213	12%	-414	-21%	-131	-8%	298	21%	-225	-13%	106	7%
Best Friends	11	22%	21	35%	154	190%	10	4%	20	8%	62	23%	-138	-42%	-23	-12%	14	8%	-16	-9%	-70	-43%
Died/DOA (euthanized)	-22	-13%	30	20%	23	13%	9	4%	23	11%	-59	-25%	26	15%	19	9%	-54	-24%	-17	-10%	-12	-8%
Euthanized	-37	-12%	178	63%	94	20%	155	28%	-5	-1%	13	2%	-28	-4%	-32	-5%	-74	-11%	-185	-32%	-116	-29%
Missing/Stolen/Escaped	-3	-75%	16	1600%	-15	-88%	0	0%	8	400%	-5	-50%	4	80%	0	0%	-4	-44%	0	0%	-3	-60%
New Hope Placements	-67	-14%	309	63%	265	36%	-103	-10%	17	2%	-228	-25%	132	19%	-1	0%	-195	-24%	-134	-22%	-16	-3%
Redeemed	-12	-4%	33	13%	1	0%	-50	-17%	-2	-1%	31	13%	-55	-20%	32	15%	-5	-2%	8	3%	0	0%
Released	-41	-35%	58	75%	108	80%	86	35%	-156	-47%	29	17%	91	45%	-88	-30%	-7	-3%	12	6%	-81	-39%
Total	-461	-17%	717	32%	763	26%	246	7%	348	9%	56	1%	-382	-9%	-224	-6%	-27	-1%	-557	-15%	-192	-6%

As seen in the first table above, Adoptions constitute the highest number of outcomes at 17,210 for the year. New Hope Placements come in second at 8,368 and euthanasia outcomes are third overall at 6,342 in 2022.

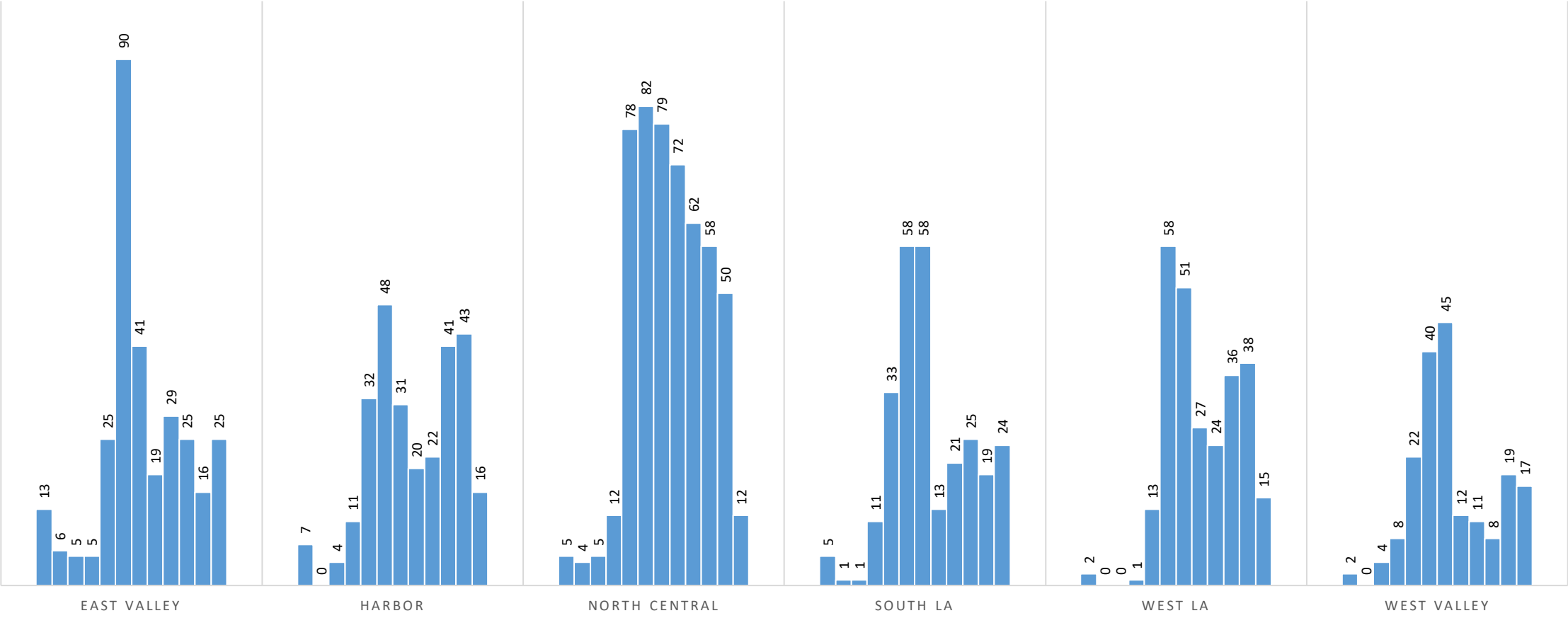
Adoptions to the Public by Animal and Shelter

Adoptions to the public by shelter for cats, kittens, and dogs (from Woof Stat reports). The Adoptions to the Public for Other animals is not present in the Woof Stat Report and was calculated by subtracting the sum of the numbers for cats, kittens, and dogs from the total number of Adoptions to the Public from the Outcomes for All Animals section in the Woof Stat Report.

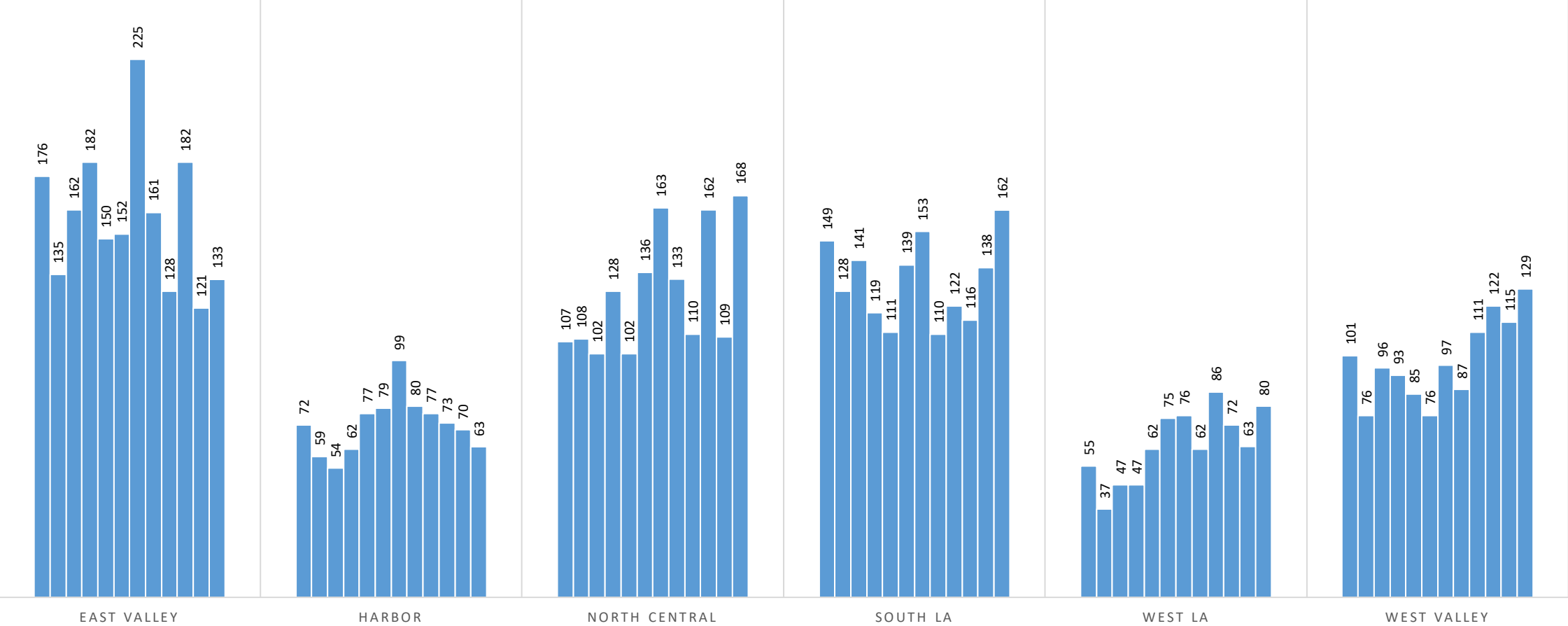




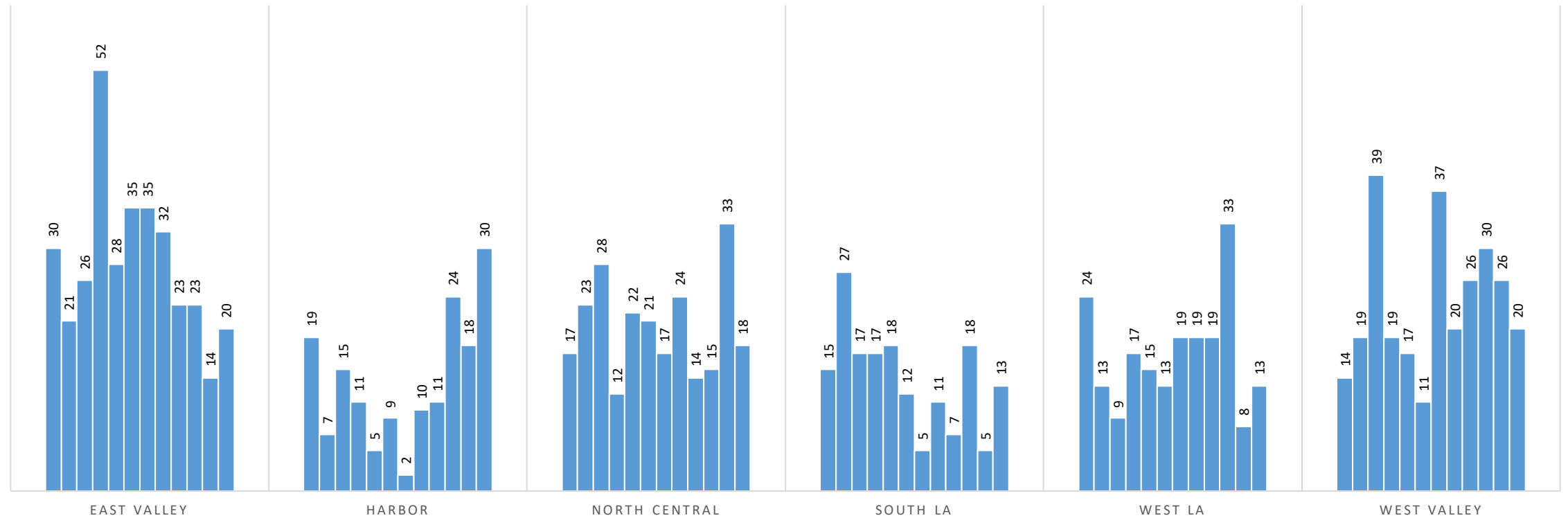
ADOPTIONS TO THE PUBLIC - KITTENS  
(BY SHELTER)  
JAN 2022 TO DEC 2022



ADOPTIONS TO THE PUBLIC - DOGS  
(BY SHELTER)  
JAN 2022 TO DEC 2022



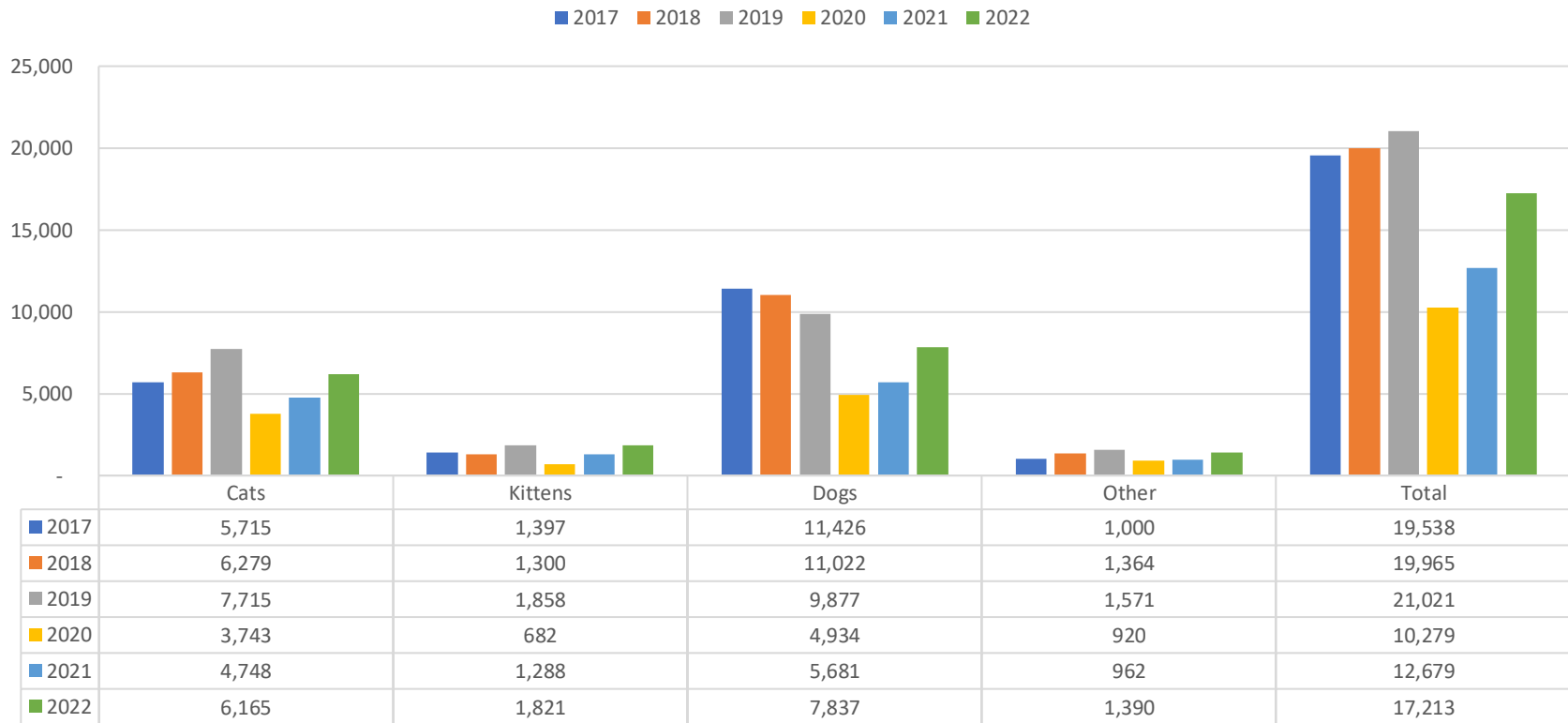
## ADOPTIONS TO THE PUBLIC - OTHERS (BY SHELTER) JAN 2022 TO DEC 2022



Total adoptions for LAAS Overall:

- Cats: 6,165
- Kittens: 1,821
- Dogs: 7,837
- Others: 1,390

## ADOPTIONS TO THE PUBLIC LAAS - OVERALL 2017 TO 2022



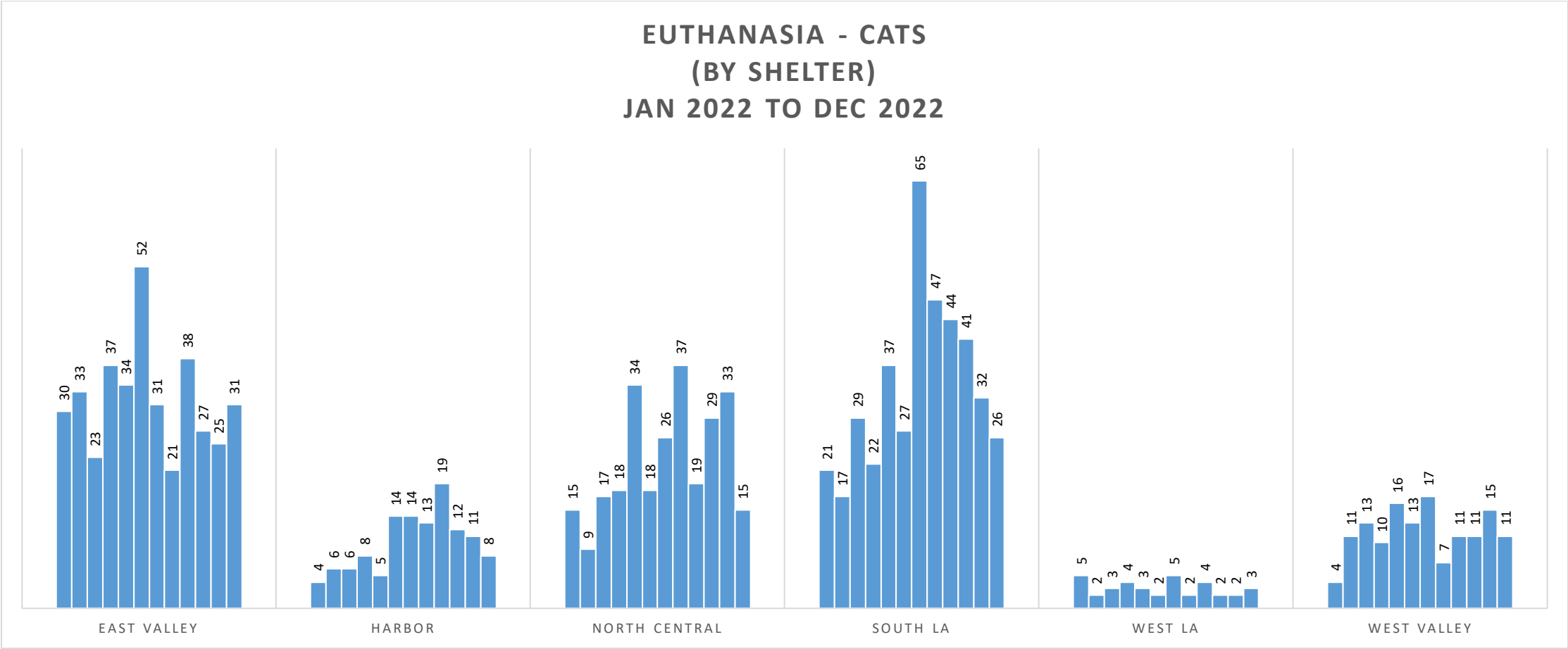
Overall adoptions to the public had increased prior to the pandemic years of 2020 until now. The only exception would be dogs, whose adoption numbers were decreasing from 2017 to 2020. Dog adoptions have been increasing since 2020 but still haven't reached pre-pandemic adoption levels. Despite the stay-at-home orders starting in 2020 due to COVID, 2020 was the lowest year of adoptions across species.

It is important to note that prior to COVID restrictions taking place in 2020, city animal shelters were open to the public 6 days a week without an appointment. However, since 2022, shelters are open 4 days a week without an appointment and 2 days a week with an appointment.

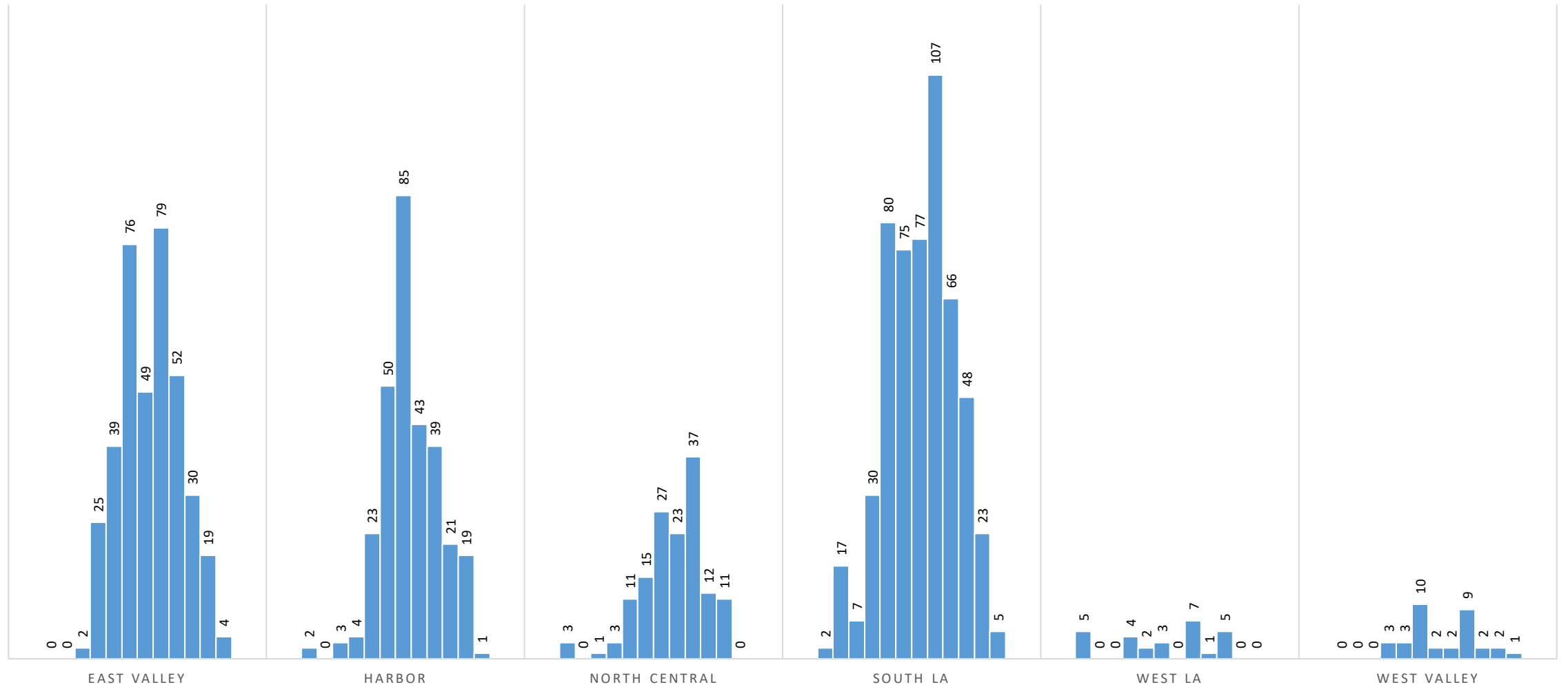
Euthanasia

Euthanasia is the act of putting to death painlessly. It is performed in cases of irremediable suffering or for behavioral reasons. Management has stated that the shelters do not currently euthanize for space. However, during the Animal Services Commission meeting on January 10, 2023, management stated that if intake levels continue at their current pace or even increase, they may have to begin euthanizing for space.

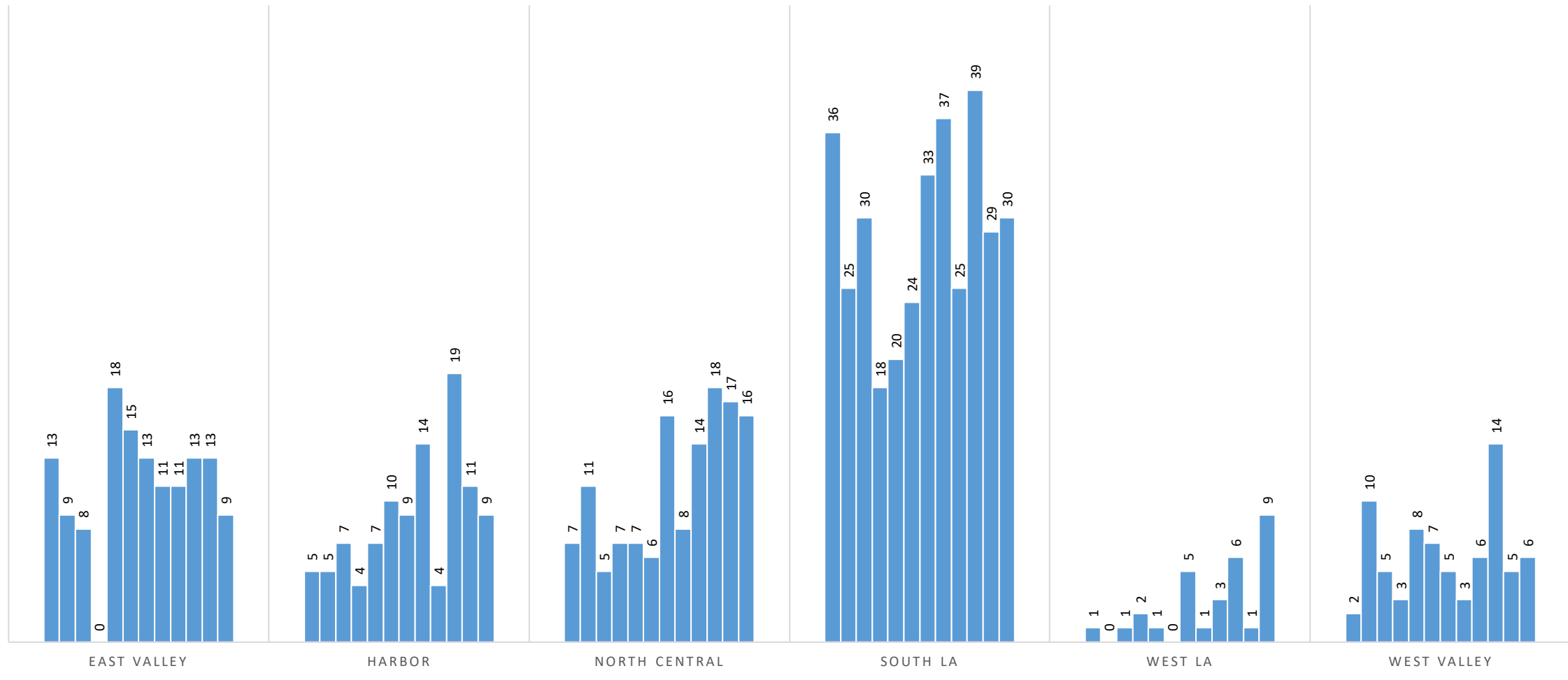
The following graphs are sourced from the Woof Stat reports and visualize the number of times euthanasia was performed by species (Cats, Kittens, and Dogs) and by shelter location. (Euthanasia for “Other Animals” is not present in the Woof Stat Report and was calculated by subtracting the total number of cats, kittens, and dogs euthanized from the total number of all animals euthanized for the year). Management defined other animals to include all species of animals ranging from sparrows, squirrels, hamsters, mice, raccoons, etc.



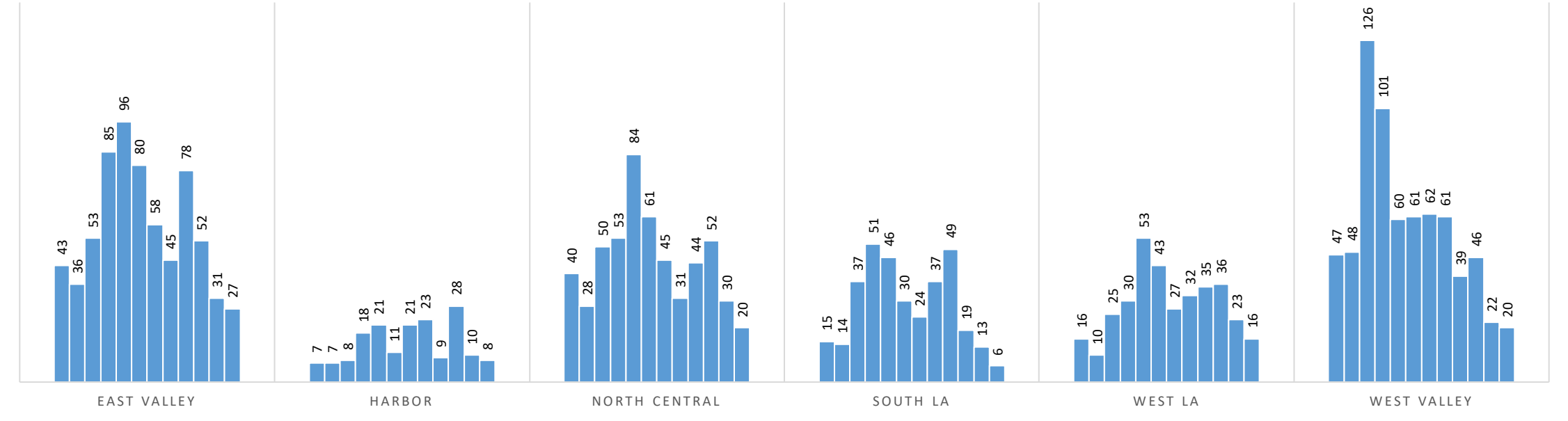
# EUTHANASIA - KITTENS (BY SHELTER) JAN 2022 TO DEC 2022



# EUTHANASIA - DOGS (BY SHELTER) JAN 2022 TO DEC 2022



EUTHANASIA - OTHERS  
(BY SHELTER)  
JAN 2022 TO DEC 2022



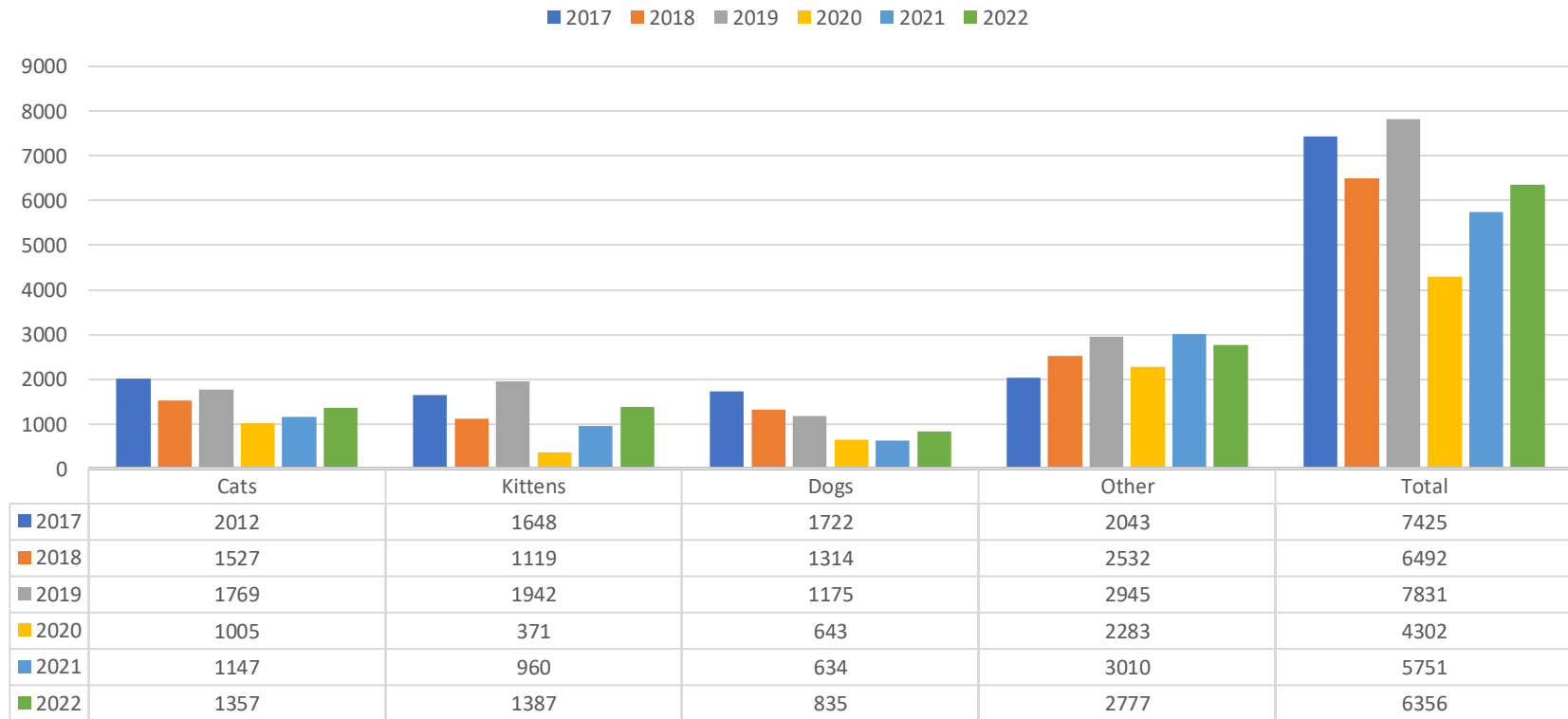
The Euthanasia total count for 2022:

- Cats: 1,357
- Kittens: 1,387
- Dogs: 835
- Others: 2,777

South LA had the highest number of euthanasia performed and West LA had the fewest performed. Kitten euthanasia appears to be cyclical with the majority occurring the spring and summer. Other animals had a significant number of euthanasia performed. West Valley had the most performed while Harbor had the fewest.



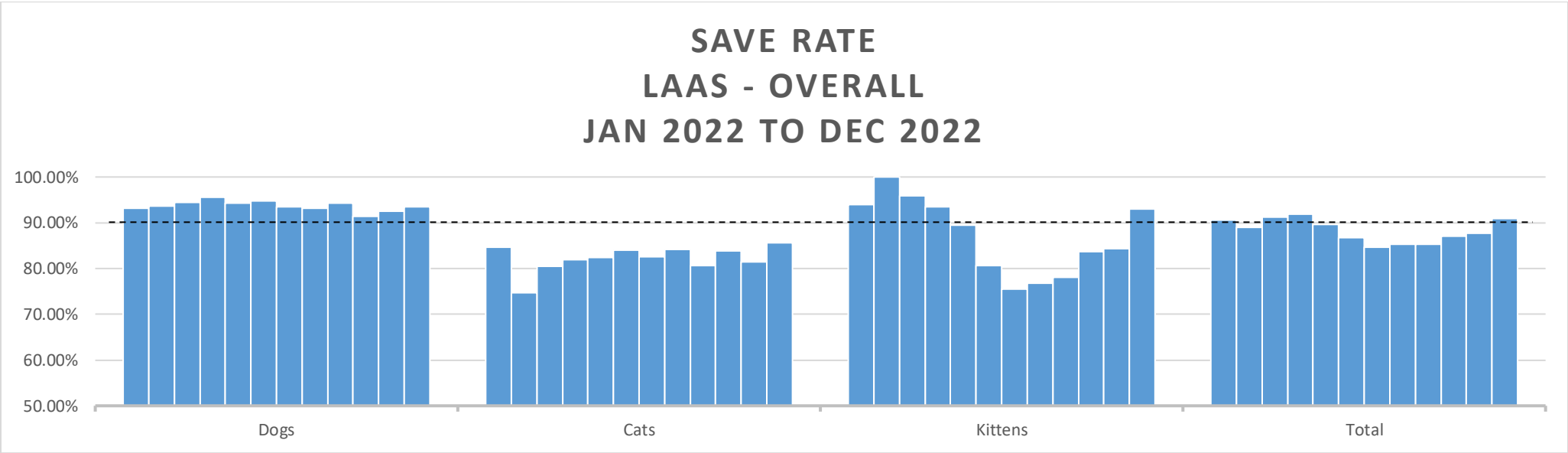
## EUTHANASIA LAAS - OVERALL 2017 TO 2022



Euthanasia occurred in higher numbers in the pre-pandemic years (2017 to 2019) but decreased at the start of COVID in 2020. However, from 2020 to 2022, euthanasia has been increasing yearly.

**Note:** The department only provided euthanasia stats for cats, kittens, and dogs. However, in the Woof Stat Report, the department provides a year-to-date total that is larger than the sum of cats, kittens, and dogs. The difference we included as “Other” animals.

Save Rate



A no-kill shelter is a shelter that saves healthy, treatable, and rehabilitatable animals. As a benchmark set by the department, at least 90% of cats, kittens, and dogs entering the shelter are expected to be released alive to the owner (if lost), to a new home, or to a rescue partner. <https://legacy.laanimalservices.com/no-kill/>

Although it is not official City policy, LAAS calculates their shelters’ save rates as part of their monthly Woof Stat Reports.

It is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Save Rate \%} = \frac{(\text{Live Intake} - \text{Nonlive Outcomes})}{\text{Live Intake}}$$

Nonlive outcomes consist of **Died in Care**, **Euthanasia**, or **Missing/Stolen/Escaped**.

LAAS applies this calculation only to cats, kittens, and dogs. In the past, LAAS had achieved no-kill status. However, the no-kill benchmark was achieved only 4 months out of the year for 2022.

Dogs have consistently been at 90% or above the save rate. Cats were below 90% the entire year and kittens were below 90% for 7 out of 12 months of the year.

## New Hope Program and Color-Coded Alerted Animals

LAAS implements the New Hope Program to partner with qualified 501(c)3 organizations to help animals housed at the shelters find permanent homes.

According to LAAS management, there are currently 333 organizations in the program.

The program received 44 applications in 2022.

- 19 of these organizations have been approved and are active as of 01/12/2023.
- The remaining applicants are still pending due to one or more of the following reasons:
  - Missing documentation
  - Not being registered with the State Attorney General's Office
  - Expressed interest but never provided an application

Approval of New Hope applicants can be almost immediate within 48 to 72 hours, depending on if all required documents are submitted at the same time.

Part of the New Hope Program are the New Hope color-coded alerts. According to the program's *Purpose, Policy, Procedure and Partnership* manual, the New Hope Red and Blue Alert list is intended to communicate to New Hope Rescue Partners which animals are most in need of help, to flag them for special consideration by rescuers. Once an animal is Red or Blue alerted, the animal may be euthanized after 48 hours. ***These alerts are only for New Hope partners who have the means and resources to rescue these alerted animals.***

The following criteria is given for the Red and Blue alerts:

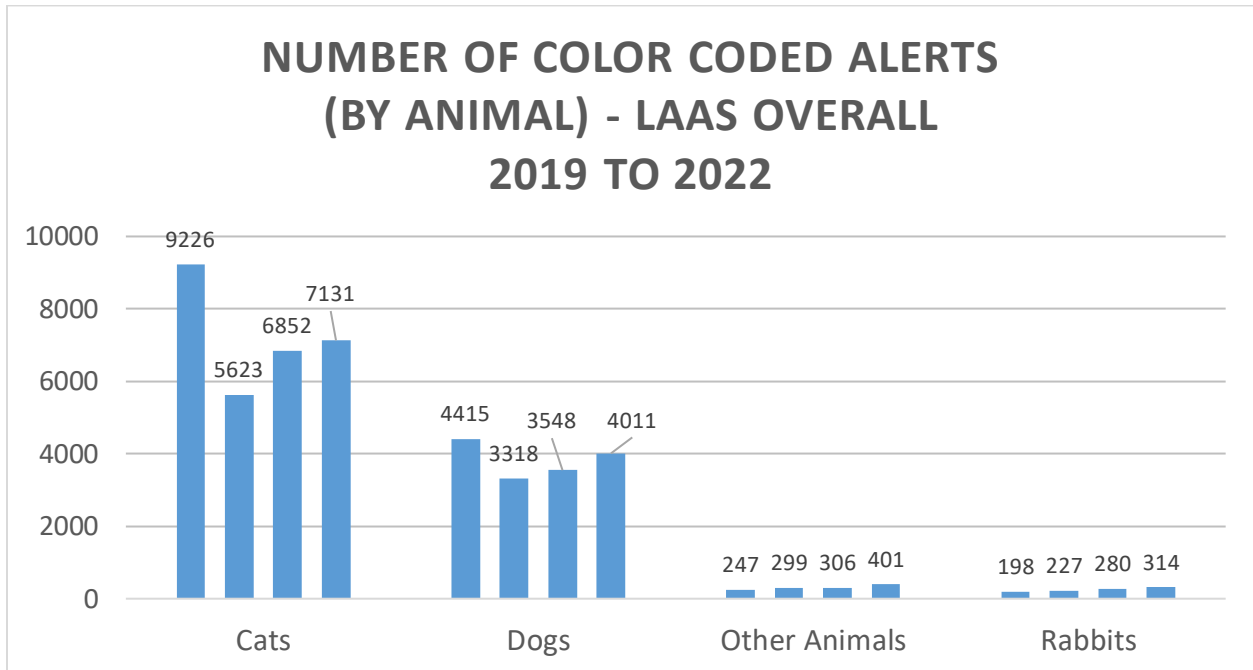
- **Red**
  - Space
    - Currently the department does not euthanize for space.
  - Behavioral – animals that demonstrate non-socialized behavior (aggression) or extreme fear or fear biting, as observed and reported by staff.
- **Blue**
  - Medical – animals who are not irremediably suffering but are deemed by medical staff as not responding well to a standard course of treatment or have illness or injuries that need treatment beyond stabilization.
  - Age – Neonates which need feeding and support, as well as geriatric animals
  - Lactation – Animal is lactating with young.
- **Orange**, is also for medical reasons, but are more urgent compared to Blue alerted animals. Management provided the following definition on 01/19/2023:

The intention of the Orange alert was to alert rescue partners with their own medical resources that the department had an animal or animals who needed immediate medical attention beyond what we are able to provide in our facilities. Unlike the Blue alerted animals, who have non-urgent conditions and can be networked until a suitable situation is found for them, Orange alerted animals need urgent medical attention and do not have time to be networked thus the requirement that these organizations have access to their own medical resources.

Only New Hope Partners, who opt-in, receive Orange alerts. As of 1/19/23, 31 rescue groups are on the list for Orange alerts. Continued high levels of fear, anxiety, and stress (FAS) can be harmful to both the physiological and emotional well-being of the pet. Pets with elevated FAS that cannot be reduced will need to leave the Shelter for a more suitable home as soon as possible or be put on the red list. Animals on the Elevated FAS Alert are available to LAAS New Hope Partners at a reduced rate. Please see attached for stats.

FAS Alerts are separate from the color-coded alerts and are for animals who have been observed exhibiting a high level of fear, anxiety, and stress.

Management provided data on these three alerts based on year, location, color-code alert, and outcomes.



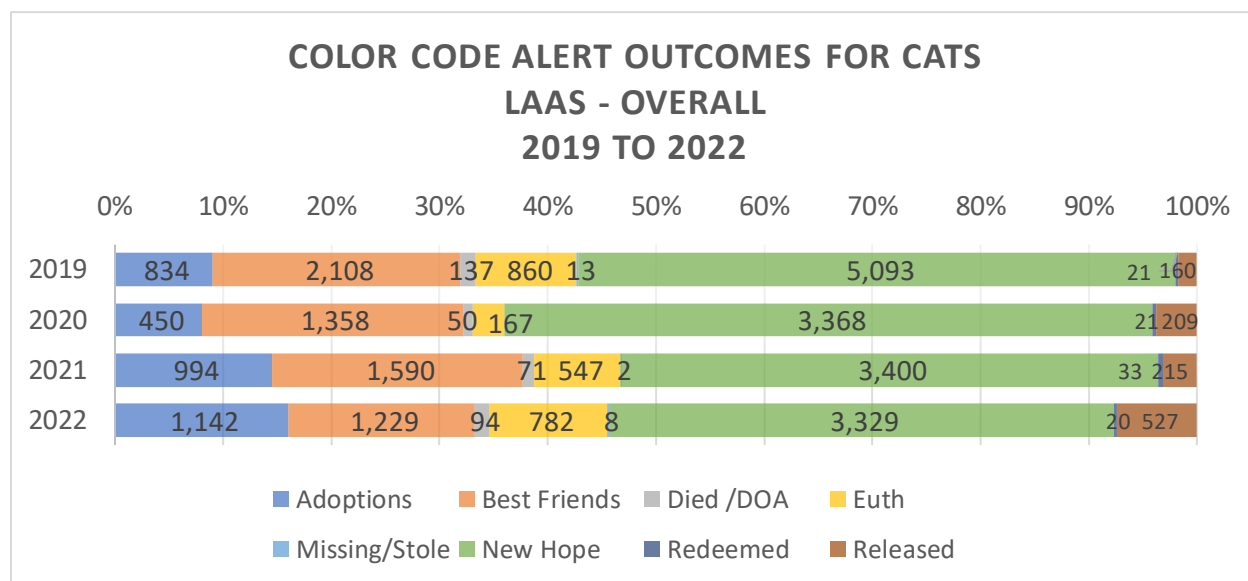
**Note:** Management confirmed that Kittens are included in the counts for Cats

Cats are the most alerted animals over the past 4 years. Cats and dogs are down from their peaks in 2019. However, the current trend shows a rebound from 2020 to 2022. Despite the pandemic, Other Animals and Rabbits have shown a steady increase in the number of alerts over the past 4 years.

The following discussion will show the number of color-code alerts issued by animal along with the outcomes for Cats, Dogs, Other Animals, and Rabbits.

## Cats

CATS								
Color Code Outcome	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
Adoptions	834	9%	450	8%	994	15%	1,142	16%
Best Friends	2,108	23%	1,358	24%	1,590	23%	1,229	17%
Died /DOA	137	1%	50	1%	71	1%	94	1%
Euth	860	9%	167	3%	547	8%	782	11%
Missing/Stole	13	0%		0%	2	0%	8	0%
New Hope	5,093	55%	3,368	60%	3,400	50%	3,329	47%
Redeemed	21	0%	21	0%	33	0%	20	0%
Released	160	2%	209	4%	215	3%	527	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,226</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5,623</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,852</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,131</b>	<b>100%</b>



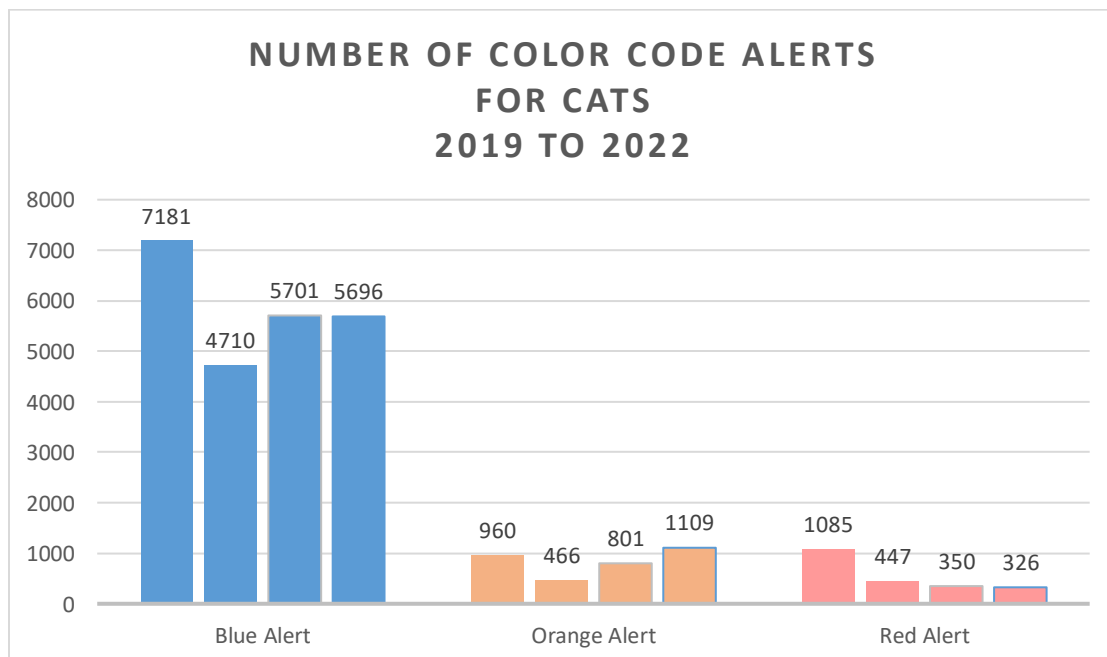
For cats, the highest number of color-code outcomes is rescue by New Hope partners, consistently being near or above 50% of total outcomes. Second highest outcome was animals moving to Best Friends facilities. It is important to note that at the end of 2022, Best Friends is no longer contracted with City of LA to run the Northeast Valley shelter and therefore might impact future outcomes.

Euthanasia as an outcome peaked in 2019 at 860 overall and dropped to 167 in 2020 but increased in 2021 to 547 and 2022 to 782.

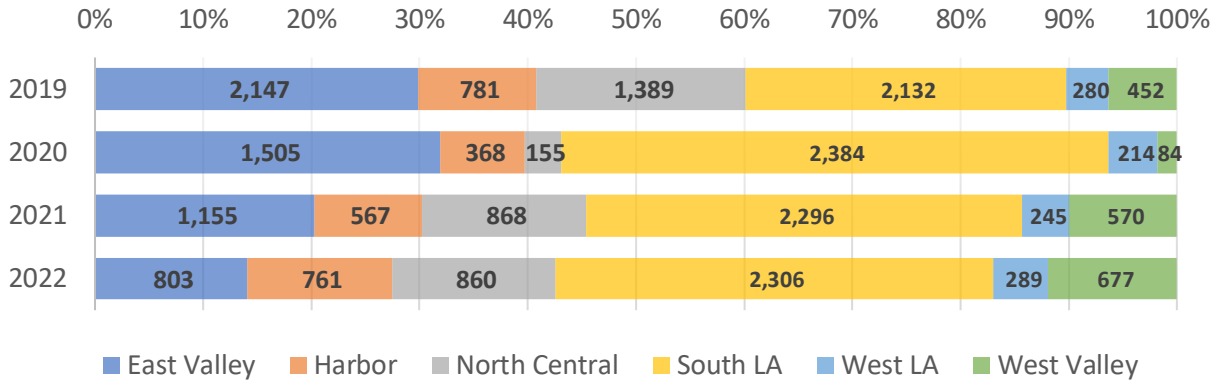
The following page details the outcomes by color-code alerts and by shelter location for cats.

- Blue alerts have the highest number of occurrences among the other color-code alerts.
- The highest occurrences of euthanasia occur under Orange alerts, reaching 40% (385) of Orange alert outcomes in 2019 and 28% (315) in 2022.
- Red alerts have decreased over time and the common outcome for these is rescue by New Hope partners.

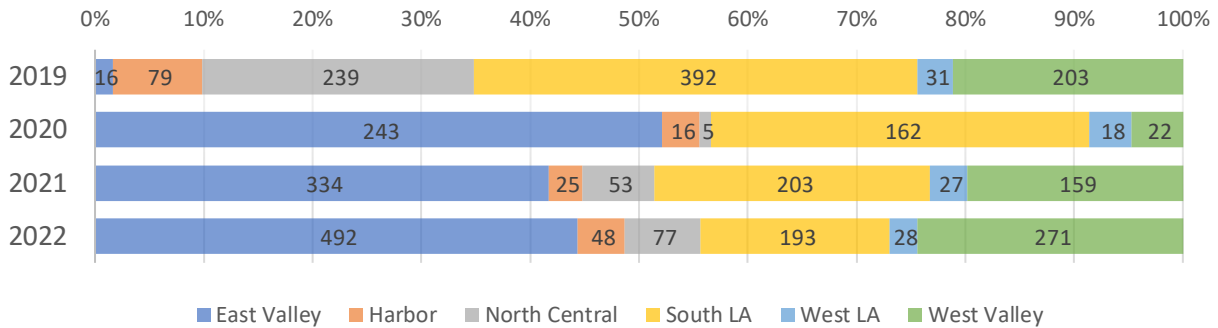
CATS								
Color Code Outcome	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
<b>BLUE ALERT</b>	<b>7,181</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4,710</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5,701</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5,696</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	784	11%	428	9%	947	17%	1,094	19%
Best Friends	1,614	22%	1,200	25%	1,376	24%	1,005	18%
Died /DOA	107	1%	33	1%	52	1%	61	1%
Euth	421	6%	97	2%	337	6%	467	8%
Missing/Stole	12	0%		0%	2	0%	8	0%
New Hope	4,090	57%	2,742	58%	2,745	48%	2,526	44%
Redeemed	18	0%	19	0%	30	1%	18	0%
Released	135	2%	191	4%	212	4%	517	9%
<b>ORANGE ALERT</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,109</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	27	3%	19	4%	42	5%	47	4%
Best Friends	295	31%	150	32%	210	26%	222	20%
Died /DOA	27	3%	17	4%	19	2%	33	3%
Euth	385	40%	60	13%	210	26%	315	28%
New Hope	198	21%	201	43%	314	39%	481	43%
Redeemed	3	0%	2	0%	3	0%	2	0%
Released	25	3%	17	4%	3	0%	9	1%
<b>RED ALERT</b>	<b>1,085</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	23	2%	3	1%	5	1%	1	0%
Best Friends	199	18%	8	2%	4	1%	2	1%
Died /DOA	3	0%		0%		0%		0%
Euth	54	5%	10	2%		0%		0%
Missing/Stole	1	0%		0%		0%		0%
New Hope	805	74%	425	95%	341	97%	322	99%
Released			1	0%		0%	1	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,226</b>		<b>5,623</b>		<b>6,852</b>		<b>7,131</b>	



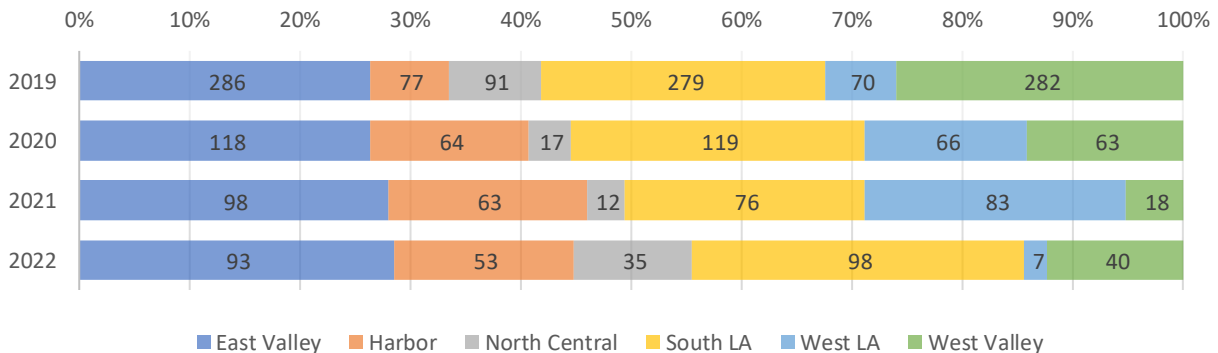
### NUMBER OF BLUE ALERTS FOR CATS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



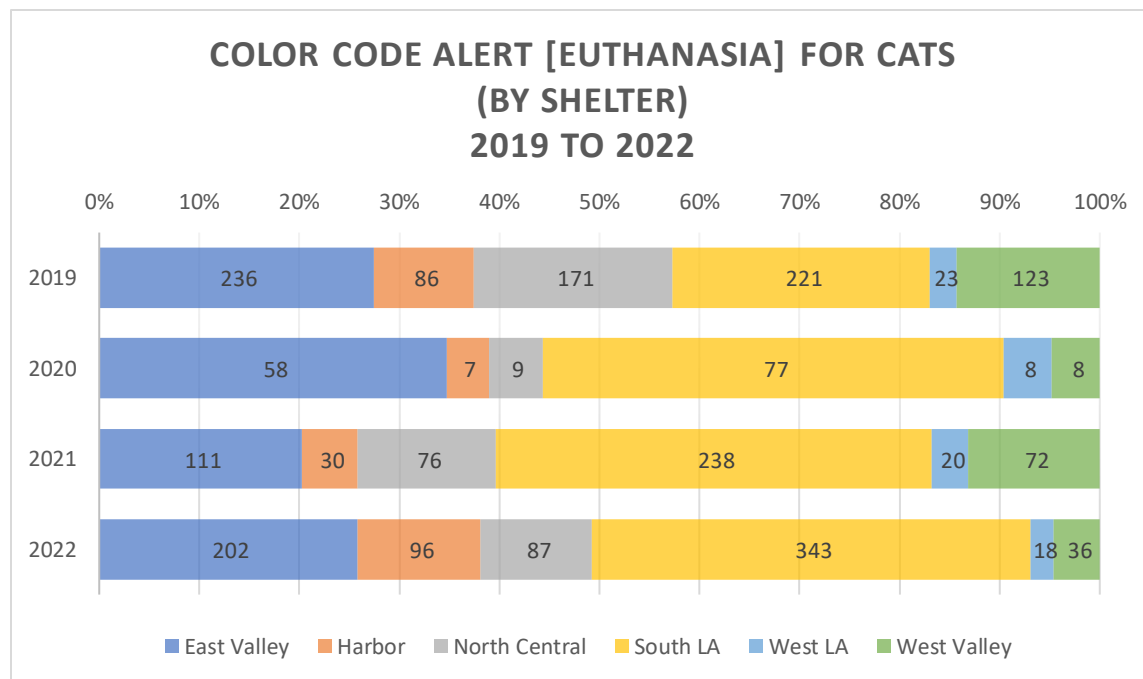
### NUMBER OF ORANGE ALERTS FOR CATS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



### NUMBER OF RED ALERTS FOR CATS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



## Euthanasia as an Outcome from Color-Code Alerts

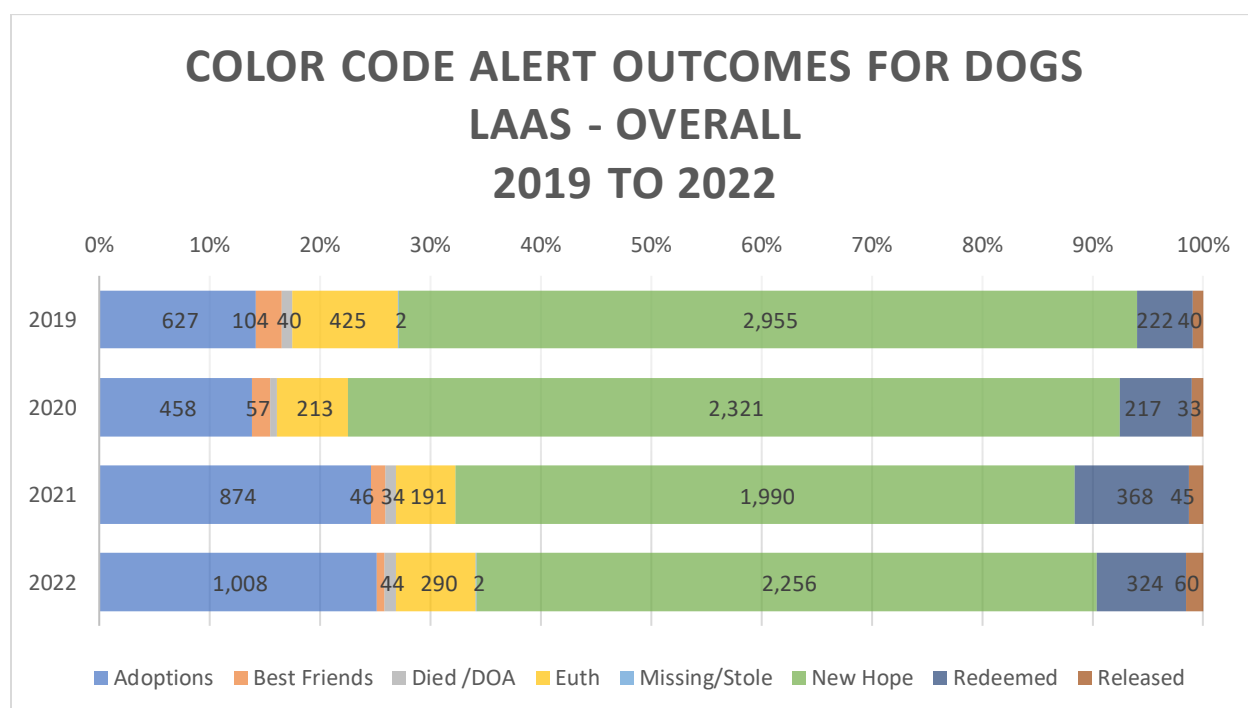


Euthanasia as an outcome for color-coded alerts was performed at higher rates at South LA and East Valley. Numbers had declined in 2020 but have rebounded and even returned or exceeded pre-pandemic levels in 2022.



## Dogs

DOGS								
Color Code Outcome	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
Adoptions	627	14%	458	14%	874	25%	1,008	25%
Best Friends	104	2%	57	2%	46	1%	27	1%
Died /DOA	40	1%	19	1%	34	1%	44	1%
Euth	425	10%	213	6%	191	5%	290	7%
Missing/Stole	2	0%		0%		0%	2	0%
New Hope	2,955	67%	2,321	70%	1,990	56%	2,256	56%
Redeemed	222	5%	217	7%	368	10%	324	8%
Released	40	1%	33	1%	45	1%	60	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,415</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3,318</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3,548</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4,011</b>	<b>100%</b>

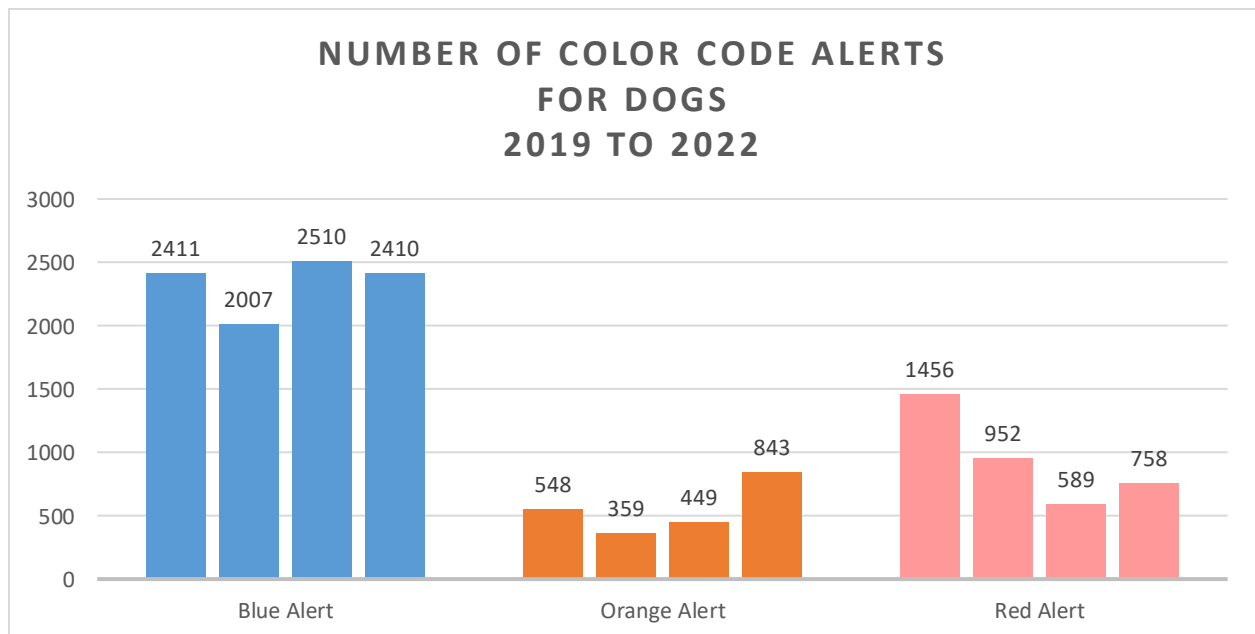


For dogs, rescue by New Hope partners constitute the vast majority of outcomes for each of the alerts, while adoptions came up second.

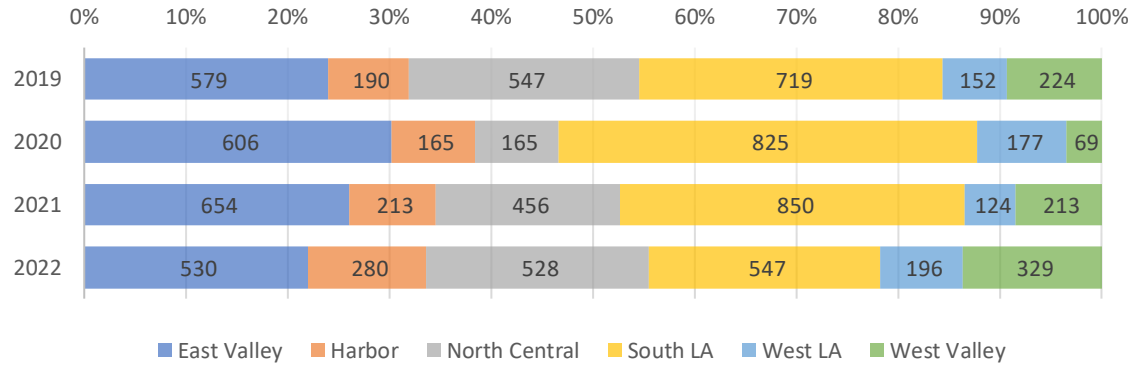
The table and graph below show more detail into the outcomes by color-code alert for dogs:

- For Blue alerts, adoptions, New Hope partners, and redemptions make up the highest number of outcomes for dogs.
- Euthanasia had higher numbers under Orange alerts compared to Blue or Red alerts.
- The trend for Blue alerts is constant. While Orange and Red alerts decreased in 2020 during the start of the pandemic and has increased since.

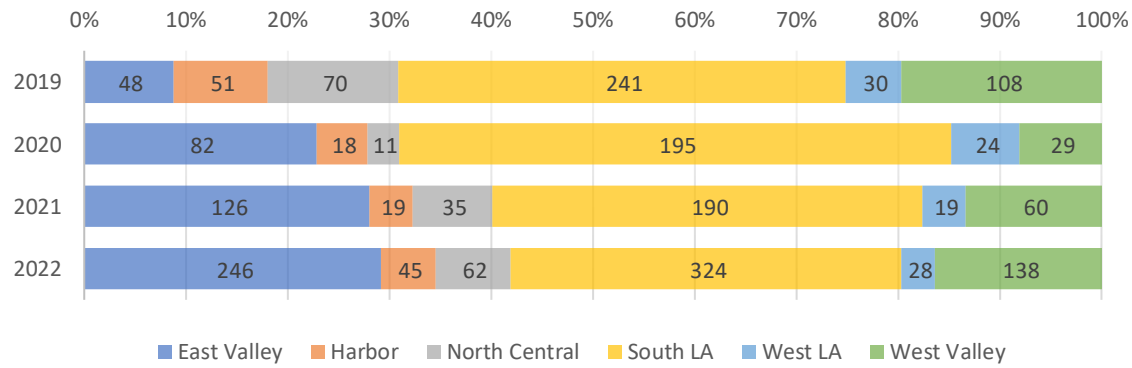
DOGS								
Color Code Outcome	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
<b>BLUE ALERT</b>	<b>2,411</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,007</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,510</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,410</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	540	22%	382	19%	790	31%	797	33%
Best Friends	62	3%	43	2%	38	2%	13	1%
Died /DOA	26	1%	12	1%	20	1%	19	1%
Euth	66	3%	44	2%	47	2%	35	1%
Missing/Stole	1	0%		0%		0%	2	0%
New Hope	1,476	61%	1,301	65%	1,221	49%	1,227	51%
Redeemed	205	9%	201	10%	357	14%	273	11%
Released	35	1%	24	1%	37	1%	44	2%
<b>ORANGE ALERT</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	43	8%	36	10%	61	14%	133	16%
Best Friends	33	6%	6	2%	6	1%	14	2%
Died /DOA	12	2%	7	2%	14	3%	25	3%
Euth	226	41%	93	26%	106	24%	157	19%
New Hope	215	39%	198	55%	249	55%	453	54%
Redeemed	14	3%	12	3%	9	2%	49	6%
Released	5	1%	7	2%	4	1%	12	1%
<b>RED ALERT</b>	<b>1,456</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>952</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	44	3%	40	4%	23	4%	78	10%
Best Friends	9	1%	8	1%	2	0%		0%
Died /DOA	2	0%		0%		0%		0%
Euth	133	9%	76	8%	38	6%	98	13%
Missing/Stole	1	0%		0%		0%		0%
New Hope	1,264	87%	822	86%	520	88%	576	76%
Redeemed	3	0%	4	0%	2	0%	2	0%
Released		0%	2	0%	4	1%	4	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,415</b>		<b>3,318</b>		<b>3,548</b>		<b>4,011</b>	



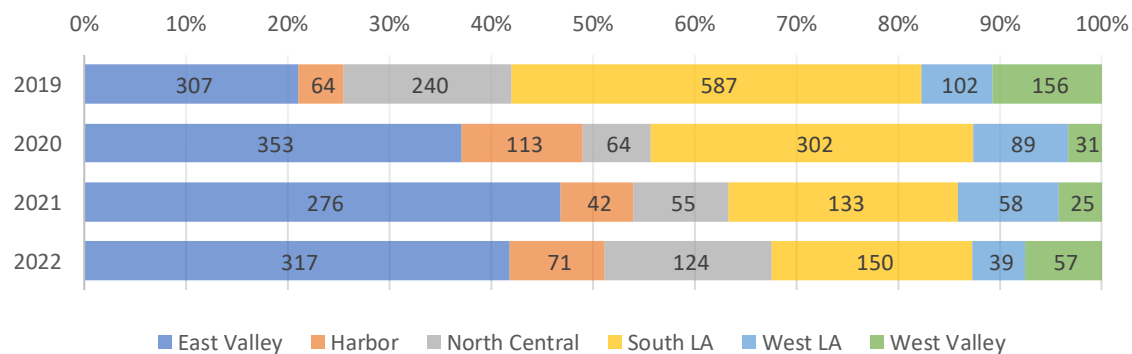
### NUMBER OF **BLUE** ALERTS FOR DOGS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



### NUMBER OF **ORANGE** ALERTS FOR DOGS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



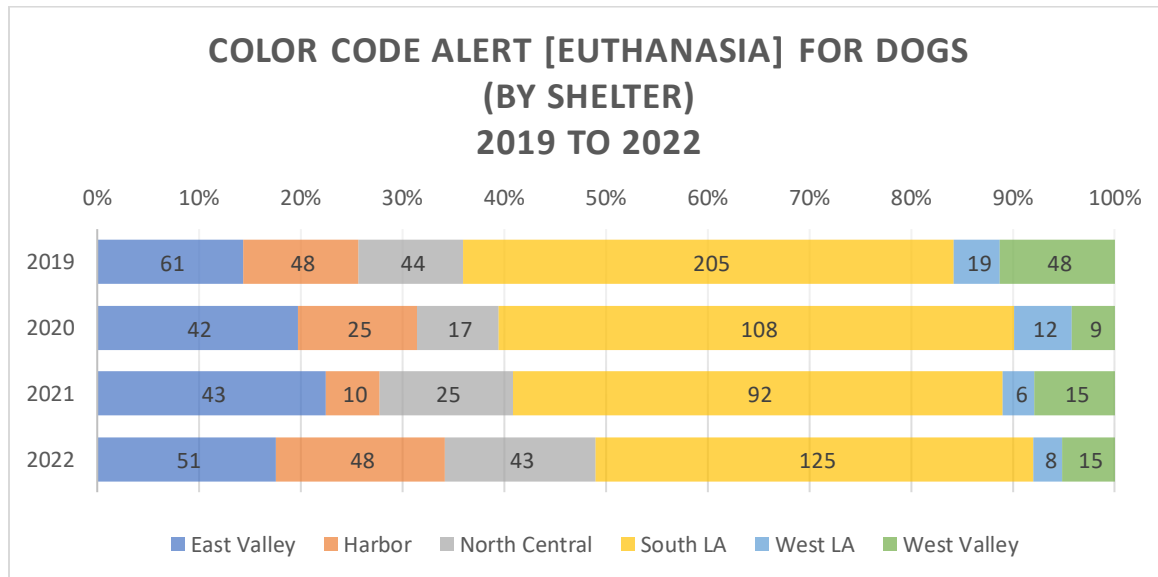
### NUMBER OF **RED** ALERTS FOR DOGS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



South LA and East Valley have issued the highest number of color-coded alerts.

North Central was behind South LA and East Valley in issuing Blue and Red Alerts. For Orange alerts, West Valley had the third highest number issued.

### Euthanasia as an Outcome

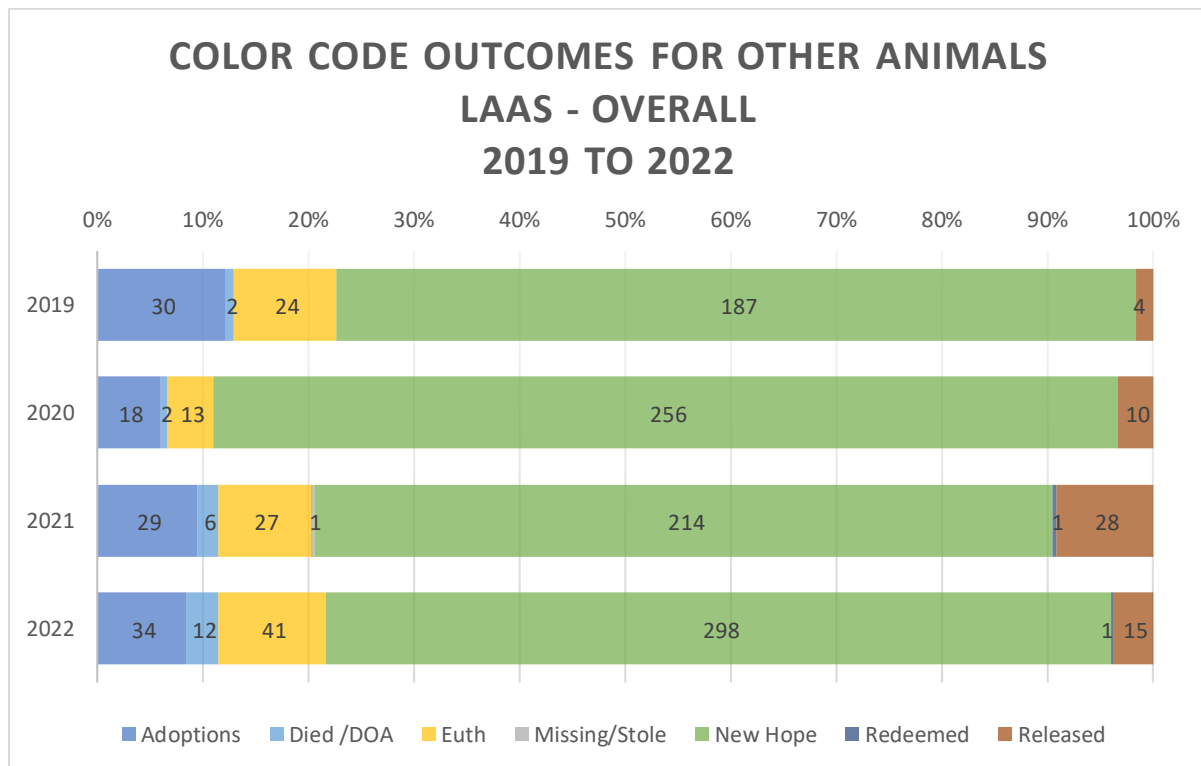


South LA had the highest number of euthanasia outcomes for color-coded alerts among the shelters followed by East Valley.

In 2022, Harbor (48) and North Central (43) nearly matched the number of euthanasia outcomes with East Valley (51).

## Other Animals

OTHERS								
Color Code Outcome	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
Adoptions	30	12%	18	6%	29	9%	34	8%
Died /DOA	2	1%	2	1%	6	2%	12	3%
Euth	24	10%	13	4%	27	9%	41	10%
Missing/Stole		0%		0%	1	0%		0%
New Hope	187	76%	256	86%	214	70%	298	74%
Redeemed		0%		0%	1	0%	1	0%
Released	4	2%	10	3%	28	9%	15	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>100%</b>



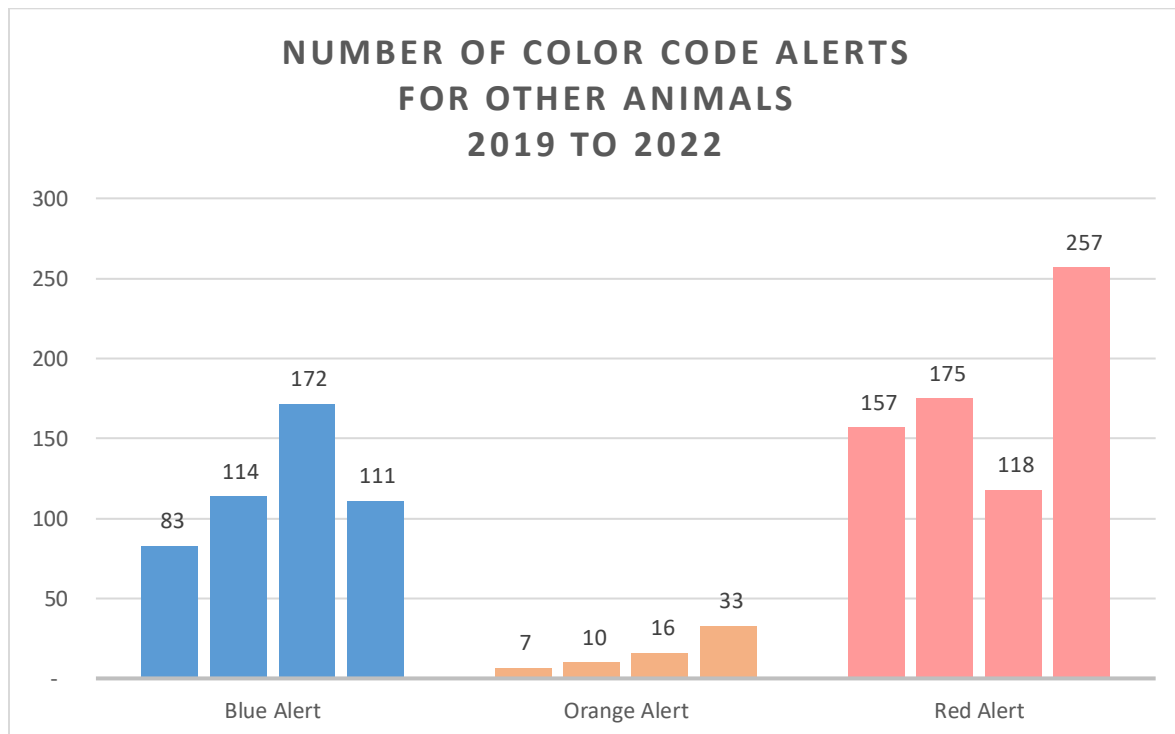
As with other species of animals, New Hope is the vast majority of outcomes with an occurrence of 70% or higher, followed by adoptions.

Euthanasia as an outcome is almost equal to adoption outcomes starting in 2021.

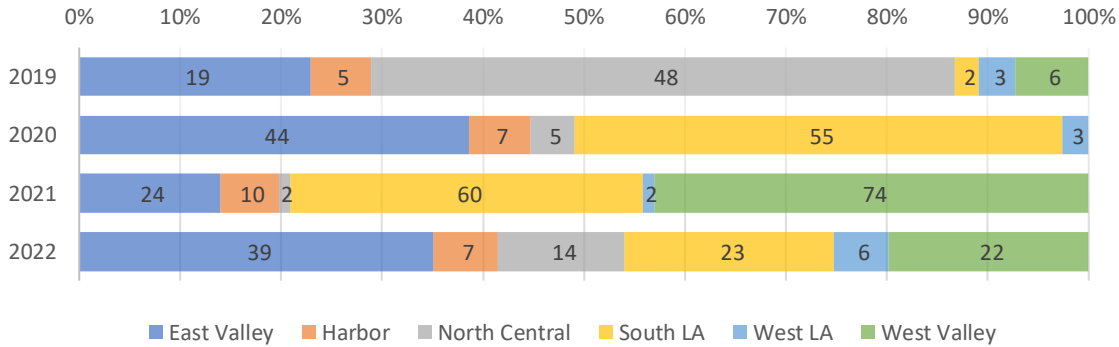
In the table below, though smaller in number than Blue and Red alerts, Orange alerts have been increasing over the past four years.

Red alerts remain high for Other Animals and doubling from 2021 to 2022.

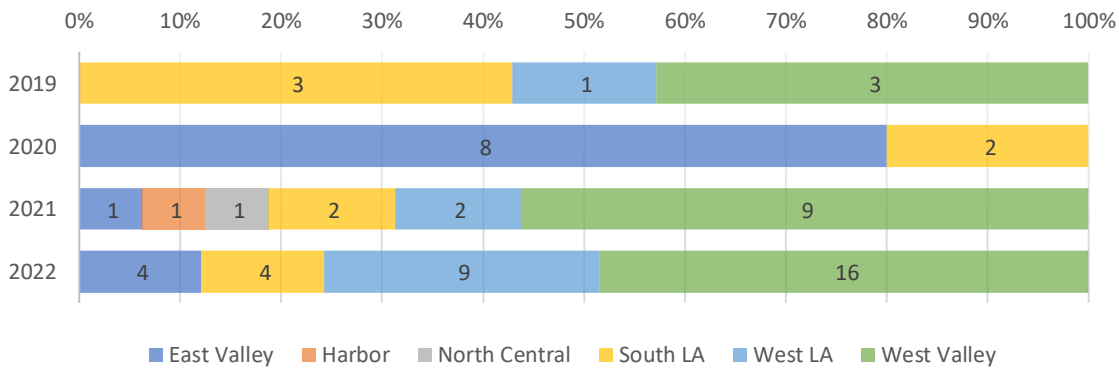
OTHERS								
Color Code Outcome	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
<b>BLUE ALERT</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	26	31%	8	7%	21	12%	23	21%
Died /DOA	2	2%	2	2%	6	3%	2	2%
Euth	5	6%	6	5%	25	15%	20	18%
Missing/Stole		0%		0%	1	1%		0%
New Hope	46	55%	91	80%	91	53%	53	48%
Redeemed		0%		0%	1	1%		0%
Released	4	5%	7	6%	27	16%	13	12%
<b>ORANGE ALERT</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	3	43%	2	20%	7	44%	4	12%
Died /DOA		0%		0%		0%	9	27%
Euth	4	57%	4	40%	2	13%	5	15%
New Hope		0%	3	30%	6	38%	12	36%
Redeemed		0%		0%		0%	1	3%
Released		0%	1	10%	1	6%	2	6%
<b>RED ALERT</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	1	1%	8	5%	1	1%	7	3%
Died /DOA		0%		0%		0%	1	0%
Euth	15	10%	3	2%		0%	16	6%
New Hope	141	90%	162	93%	117	99%	233	91%
Released		0%	2	1%		0%		0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>247</b>		<b>299</b>		<b>306</b>		<b>401</b>	



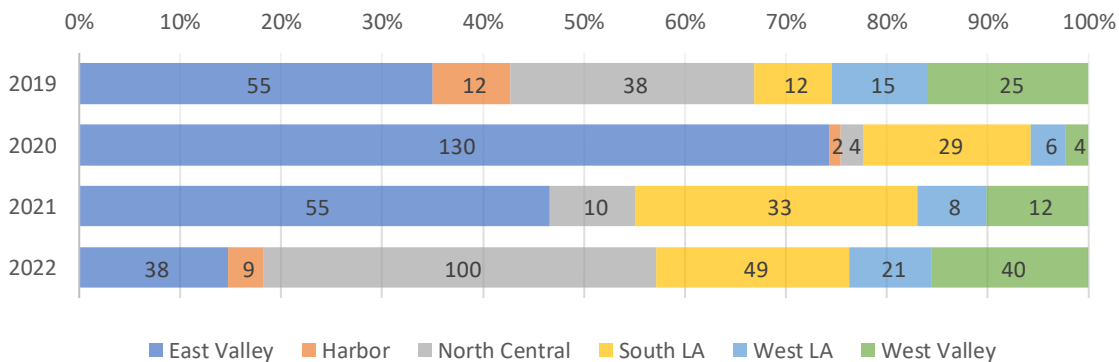
### NUMBER OF BLUE ALERTS FOR OTHER ANIMALS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



### NUMBER OF ORANGE ALERTS FOR OTHER ANIMALS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



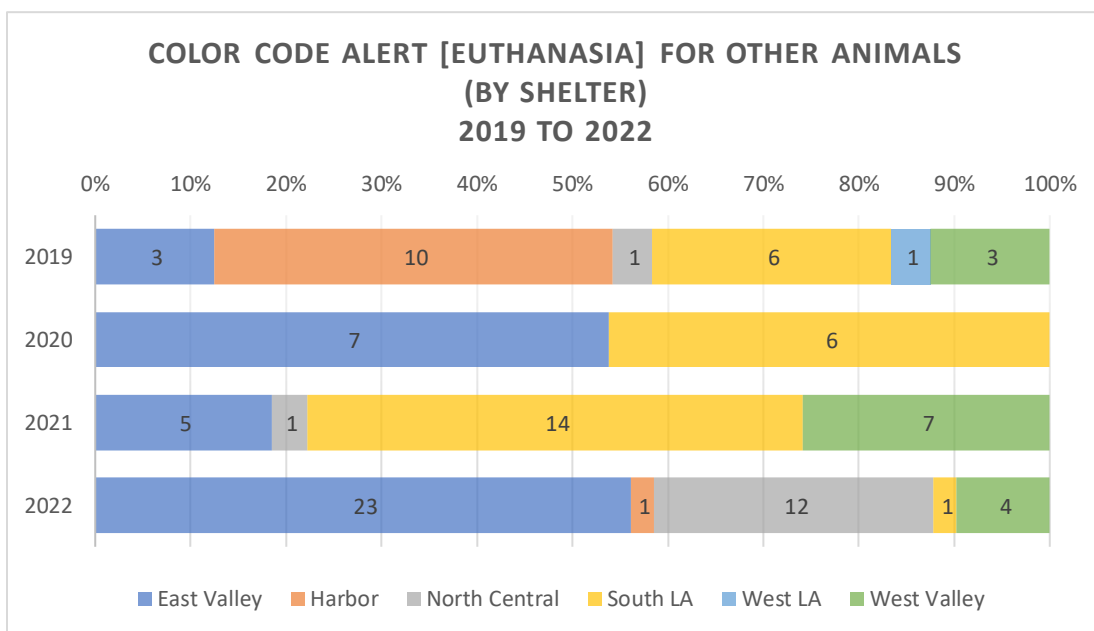
### NUMBER OF RED ALERTS FOR OTHER ANIMALS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



The number of alerts for Other Animals is smaller in comparison to Cats and Dogs. However, the same pattern is observed where the more populated shelters (South LA and East Valley) issue the most alerts.

However, in 2022, North Central issued the greatest number of Red alerts at 100 and West Valley issued the greatest number of Orange alerts at 16.

### Euthanasia as an Outcome



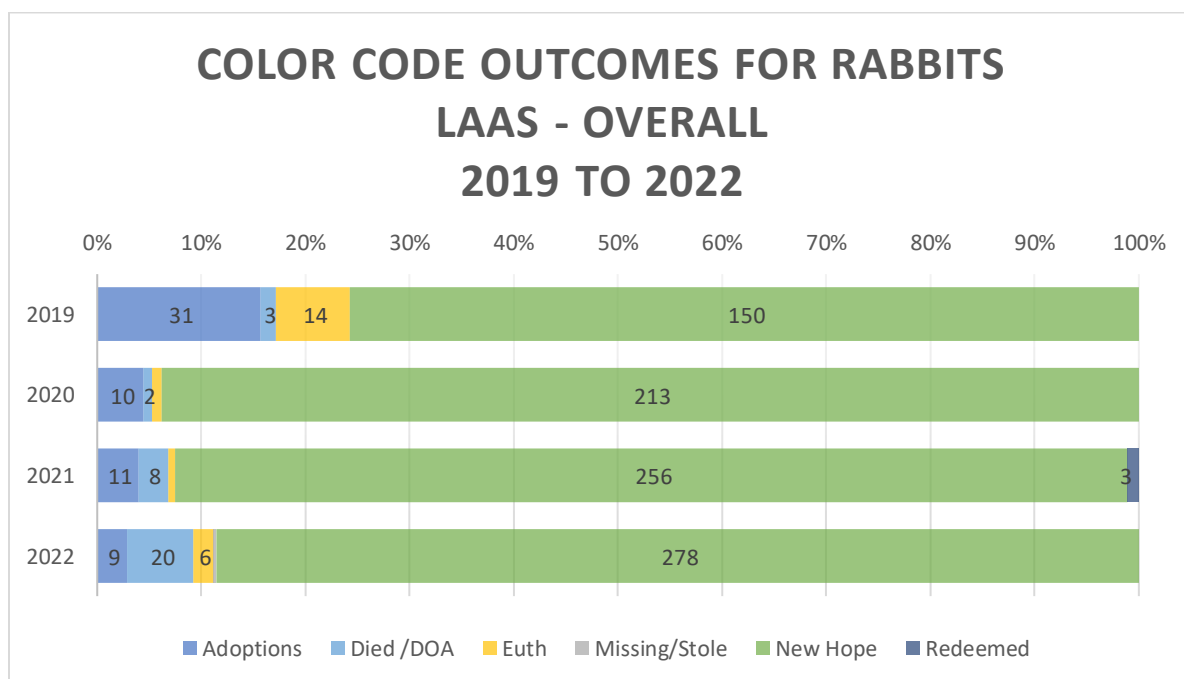
East Valley and South LA had the greatest proportion of euthanasia outcomes for Other Animals among the 6 shelters.

In 2022, North Central had the second most performed at 12 with East Valley having the most at 23.



## Rabbits

RABBITS								
Color Code Outcome	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
Adoptions	31	16%	10	4%	11	4%	9	3%
Died /DOA	3	2%	2	1%	8	3%	20	6%
Euth	14	7%	2	1%	2	1%	6	2%
Missing/Stole		0%		0%		0%	1	0%
New Hope	150	76%	213	94%	256	91%	278	89%
Redeemed		0%		0%	3	1%		0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>100%</b>

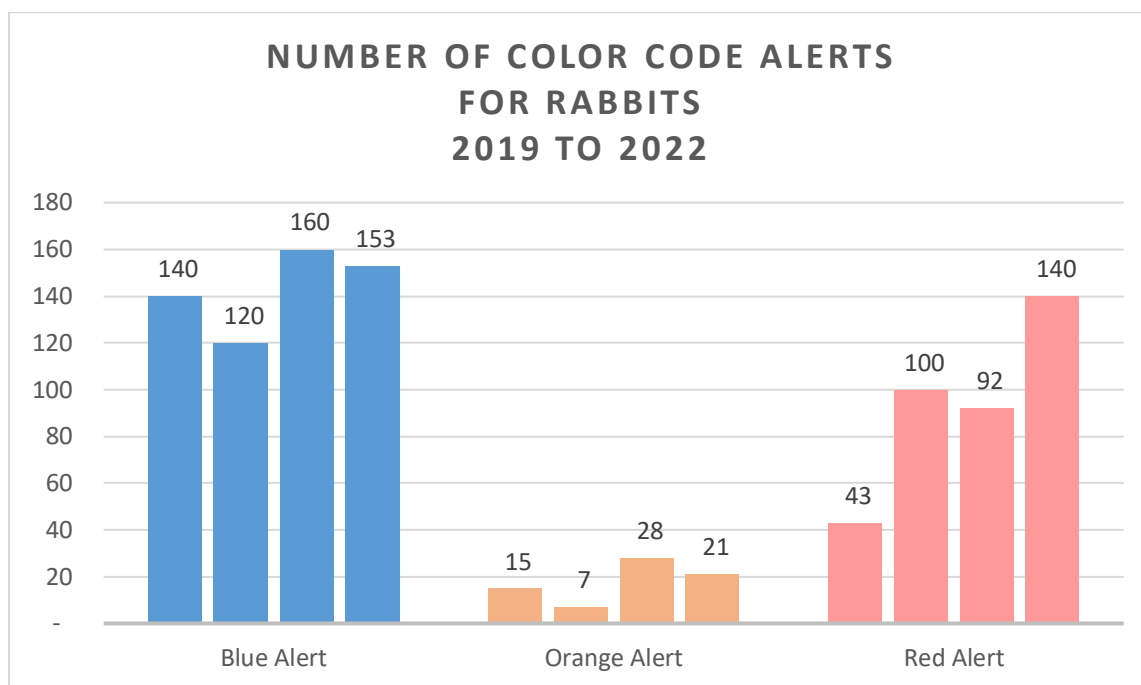


Rabbit color-coded alert outcomes were mainly New Hope outcomes from 2019 to 2022.

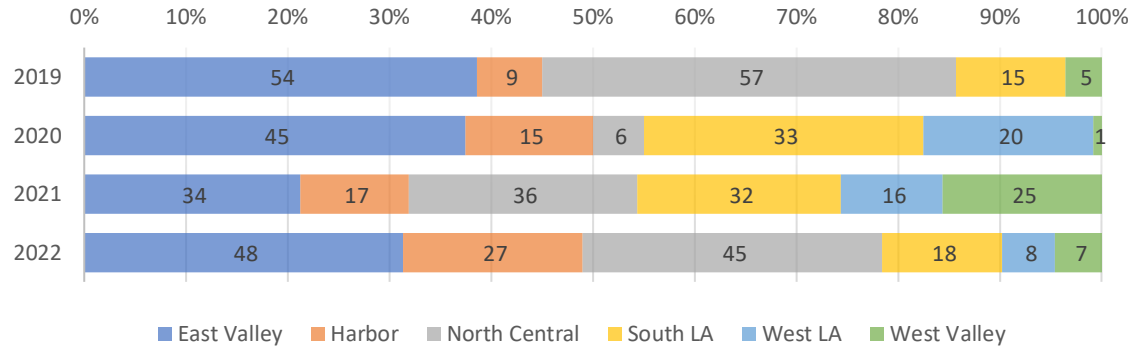
The number of Blue alerts remain high for rabbits decreasing only slightly from 2021 (160) to 2022 (153).

The number of Red alerts have increased over time with a current peak of 140 for 2022.

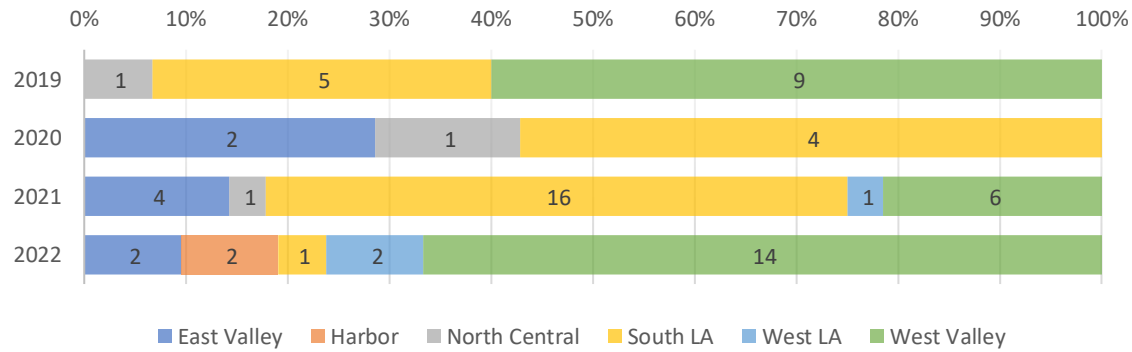
RABBITS								
Color Code Outcome	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
<b>BLUE ALERT</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	30	21%	10	8%	10	6%	4	3%
Died /DOA	2	1%	2	2%	8	5%	18	12%
Euth	3	2%	1	1%		0%	2	1%
Missing/Stole		0%		0%		0%	1	1%
New Hope	105	75%	107	89%	139	87%	128	84%
Redeemed		0%		0%	3	2%		0%
<b>ORANGE ALERT</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions	1	7%		0%	1	4%	2	10%
Died /DOA	1	7%		0%		0%	2	10%
Euth	11	73%	1	14%	2	7%	4	19%
New Hope	2	13%	6	86%	25	89%	13	62%
<b>RED ALERT</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>
Adoptions		0%		0%		0%	3	2%
New Hope	43	100%	100	100%	92	100%	137	98%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>198</b>		<b>227</b>		<b>280</b>		<b>314</b>	



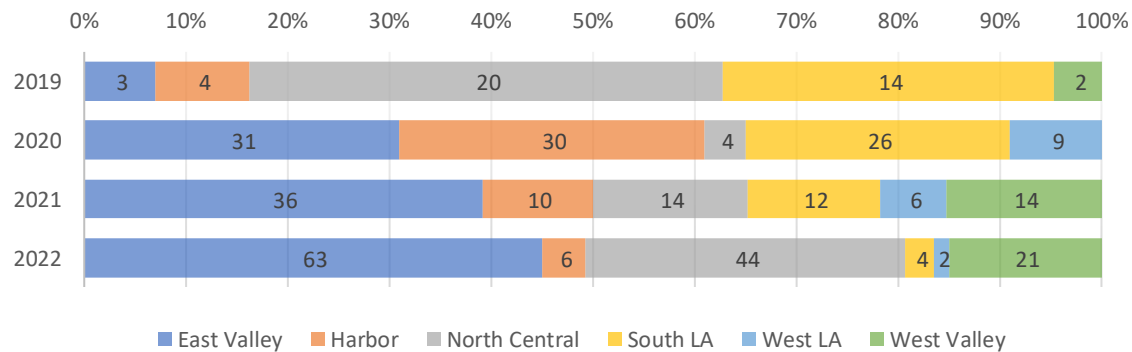
### NUMBER OF **BLUE** ALERTS FOR RABBITS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



### NUMBER OF **ORANGE** ALERTS FOR RABBITS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022

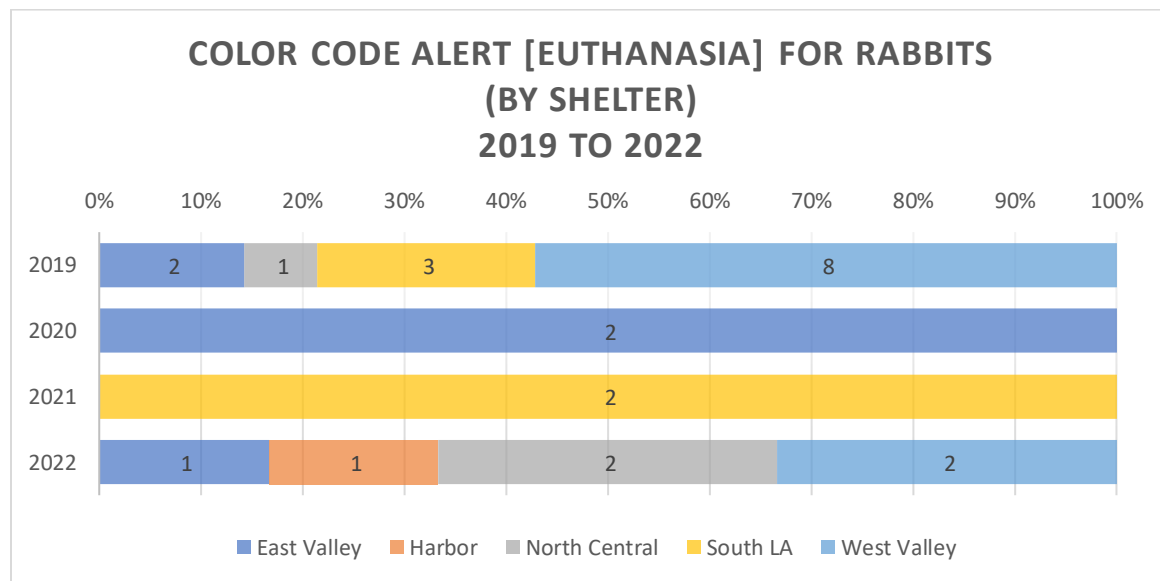


### NUMBER OF **RED** ALERTS FOR RABBITS (BY SHELTER) 2019 TO 2022



In 2022 for rabbits, East Valley and North Central issued the most Blue and Red alerts while West Valley issued the most Orange alerts.

### Euthanasia as an Outcome



Euthanasia of color-code alerted rabbits are not a common occurrence with maybe one or two occurring each year in recent years at the locations shown above.

## Repairs and Maintenance

The shelters have various facility issues during the course of their operations and the time to have these issues corrected vary depending on parts availability and the availability of GSD staff to come make the repairs.

Plumbing issues, such as leaking auto-fill water bowls, can take around a week to be repaired. At West Valley, minor repairs on these bowls are done in-house.

At times, ambient heating in the kennels were not working. During the January 10, 2023 Animal Services Board of Commissioners meeting, management stated that repairs on ambient heating could not commence until after the rain due to electrical work needing to be done.

Another noted issue were instances of broken guillotine doors in dog kennels that separate the back area of the kennel from the front area.

During our unannounced visits on January 31, 2023, a few kennels had guillotine doors closed with the dog kept in the front even though no cleaning was observed being done.

## Security

Although not a daily or weekly occurrence, shelter security was another issue brought up by shelter staff.

At South LA, break-ins have occurred where food had been stolen from the Community Room where Pet Food Pantries are done. There have also been encampment fires near the parking lot.

Harbor mentioned a break-in where someone had jumped over the fence in the back of the outdoor kennel area and had stolen a dog from one of the kennels allegedly using power tools to cut open the kennel door.

North Central had electricity and water being siphoned from their facility. Staff mentioned someone had climbed over the fence from the adjacent park to attach wiring and a hose.

West Valley did not mention any major security concerns. However, staff did mention there was one instance where they found someone in the Grooming Room's shower.

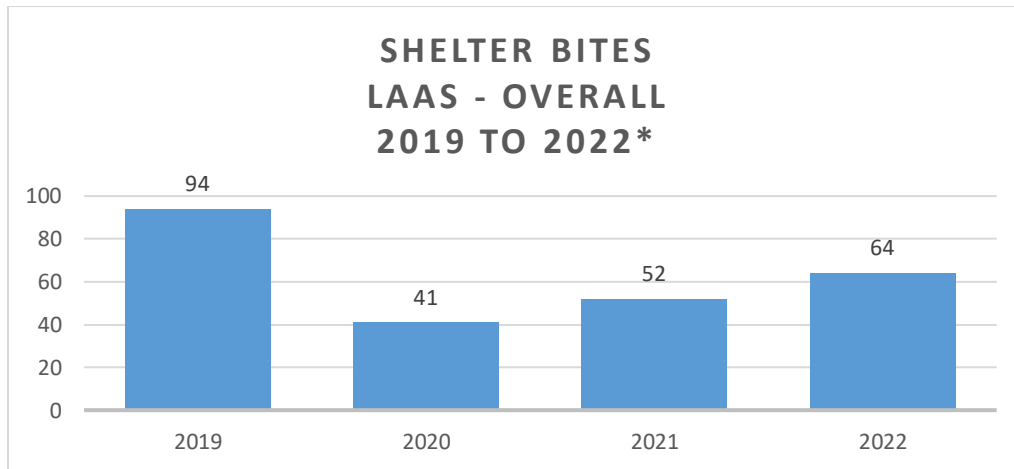
In their FY23-24 Budget request, the department is requesting funding to fund a contract that would provide security services at each shelter location (pages 129 to 131).

## Bite Incidents

Bites are always a potential occurrence when handling or interacting with animals.

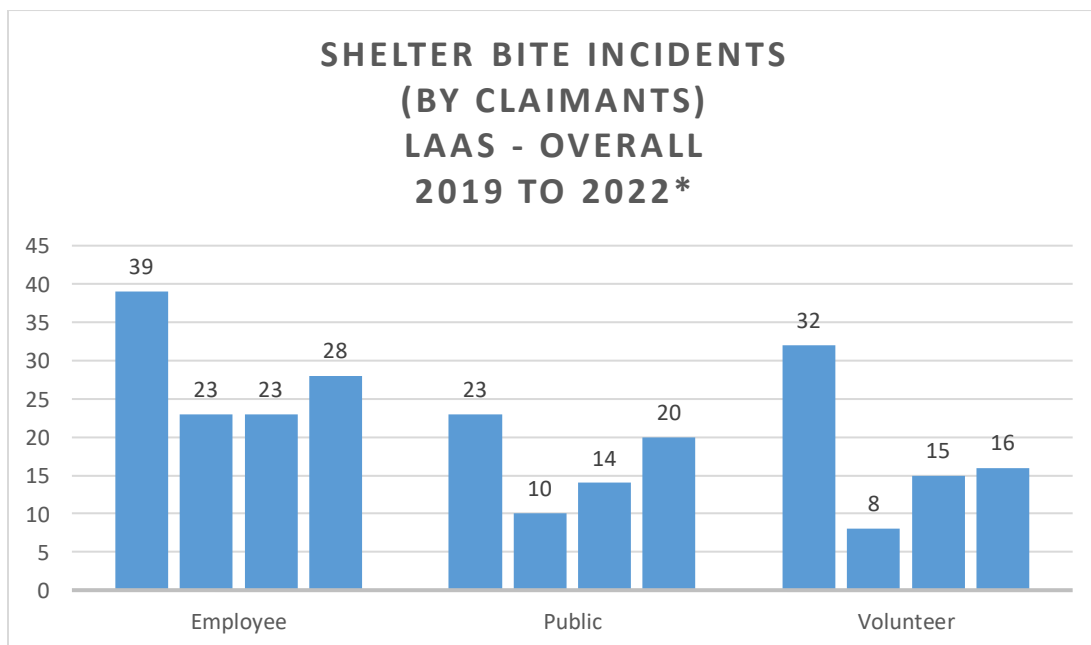
Part of the department's justification for their request in obtaining funding for additional ACTs includes a graph for Bite Incidents.

On January 17, 2023, management provided Bite Incident data for 2019 through October 27, 2022. The data included shows bite incidents by shelter, by claimant (employee, member of the public, or volunteer), and by severity.



*Figure 3. Number of bite incidents at all shelters by year. \*2022 includes data up to October 27, 2022.*

2019 had the highest number of shelter bite incidents. Bites went down during 2020 and have been increasing since.



*Figure 4. Number of bite incidents at all shelters by claimant. \*2022 data includes up to October 27, 2022.*

## Staffing

### Staff Operations

Per management: at a minimum, 2 ACTs must always be present at the shelters at all times.

There are 3 different work shifts in the daily operation of the shelter:

- Day shift – from 8am to 4pm
  - This shift has the most staff working (ACTs and ACT Supervisors)
- Swing shift – from 4pm to 12am
  - This shift has at least 2 ACTs working
- Graveyard Shift – from 12am to 8am
  - Overnight shift with at least 2 ACTs working

Per management, the reason for having at least 2 ACTs working between the hours of 4pm to 8am is due to “quiet time” for the animals so there is less foot traffic and the animals can rest.

During the course of the shelters’ operations, staff are assigned duties based on shelter needs for the day. These may be communicated in the form of assignment boards or assignment sheets, such as working the receiving desk or providing animal care. Shift huddles are also done at shelters to inform staff of issues of the day or reemphasize policies, such as the intake policy.

As was discussed in the Animal Care – Accountability section, there is no documentation specifically to document tasks completed.

During our visits, we did not notice a visible presence of staff in public facing areas (outside dog kennels or cat/small animal rooms). However, we did notice that volunteers were most visible in public facing areas. Most staff were observed inside in the receiving area.

### Staff Accountability

ACT Supervisors are responsible for shelter staff assignments and holding staff accountable to do their tasks. ACT Supervisors will do rounds or walkthroughs and perform spot checks to ensure tasks have been completed, including feedings and cleanings. Should a task not be completed, the ACT will be first spoken to by the Supervisor. Per management, supervisors and staff are encouraged and trained to adhere to the City’s progressive disciplinary policies and procedures.

Disciplinary actions of staff can lead to Notice to Corrects, suspensions, and discharge. Per management, these were the number of disciplinary actions for staff from 2019 to 2022:

- 2019: 15
- 2020: 5
- 2021: 8
- 2022: 4

## Understaffing Issues

Staffing to operate the shelters continues to be an ongoing challenge for the department. Shelters can be understaffed due to absences and also position vacancies.

As mentioned in the introduction of this report, the department states that staff shortages have led to insufficient animal care at shelters and deficiencies in Customer Service:

- Increased liability with dog bite injuries due to staff shortages.
- Difficulty maintaining clean kennels due to staff shortages.
- Inability to provide consistent exceptional customer service due to staff shortages.
- Animals were housed with little enrichment to help them thrive during stressful kenneling for long periods of time.
- Inadequate staffing to operate six 24/7 Animal Services Centers.
- Difficulty completing daily rounds which are used to ensure animals are on an appropriate pathway for a positive outcome (i.e., adoption), return to owner or transfer to a rescue partner.

## Staff Absences

Staff absences are common and mainly due to vacation, holidays, leave without pay, sickness, COVID illness or exposure, family and medical leave, injuries on duty, and more.

Using City Controller payroll records, we were able to calculate the percentage of total worked hours for ACTs and ACT Supervisors at shelters from 2019 to 2022. Worked hours include actual hours worked, overtime, and light duty work, and excludes staff absences noted above.

Position	Criteria	2019	2020	2021	2022
Animal Control Tech (ACT)	Total Workable Hours	283,177	278,596	267,854	254,073
Animal Control Tech (ACT)	Worked Hours	218,960	170,309	186,025	177,280
Animal Control Tech (ACT)	Worked Hours %	77.32%	61.13%	69.45%	69.78%
ACT Supervisor	Total Workable Hours	30,224	30,628	29,148	26,784
ACT Supervisor	Worked Hours	24,336	19,713	21,003	19,668
ACT Supervisor	Worked Hours %	80.52%	64.36%	72.06%	73.43%

2019 had the highest percentage of worked hours at 77.32%. Once COVID hit in 2020, that was the year with the lowest percentage of hours worked at 61.13% for ACTs. In 2021 and 2022, the percentage of hours worked increased for ACTs to 69.45% and 69.78% but is still about 7% lower than 2019. According to management, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there could be 40 employees off at any given time.

On the days of our guided tours, management provided the following attendance figures:

- East Valley 12/8/2022: 5 ACTs out of 7 ACTs, 3 ACT Supervisors
- Harbor 12/20/2022: 4 ACTs out of 6 ACTs, 2 ACT Supervisors
- West LA 12/20/2022: 2 ACTs out of 5 ACTs, No ACT Supervisors (out due to COVID)
- South LA 12/22/2022: 9 ACTs out of 10 ACTs, 1 ACT Supervisor
- North Central 12/22/2022: 8 ACTs out of 10 ACTs, 1 ACT Supervisor
- West Valley 12/27/2022: 4 ACTs out of 9 ACTs, 1 ACT Supervisor



On the dates of our unannounced visits, management provided the following attendance figures:

- North Central 1/07/2023: 2 ACTs out of 6 ACTs, 1 ACT Supervisor
- South LA 1/07/2023: 8 ACTs out of 13 ACTs, 1 ACT Supervisor
- East Valley 1/08/2023: 9 ACTs out of 10 ACTs, 2 ACT Supervisors
- West Valley 1/08/2023: 5 ACTs out of 8 ACTs, 1 ACT Supervisor
- Harbor 1/08/2023: 6 ACTs out of 8 ACTs, 1 ACT Supervisor
- West LA 1/08/2023: 4 ACTs out of 5 ACTs, No ACT Supervisors
- South LA 1/14/2023: 11 ACTs out of 13 ACTs, 1 ACT Supervisor
- North Central 1/31/2023: 5 ACTs out of 6 ACTs, 2 ACT Supervisors
- West LA 1/31/2023: 5 ACTs out of 6 ACTs, 1 ACT Supervisor
- South LA 1/31/2023: 11 ACTs until 3pm, 9 ACTs after 3pm, 5 ACA trainees, 2 ACT Supervisors
- West Valley 1/31/2023: 7 ACTs out of 13 ACTs, 2 ACT Supervisors
- East Valley 1/31/2023: 5 ACTs out of 6 ACTs, 4 ACA Trainees, 2 ACT Supervisors
- Harbor 1/31/2023: 5 ACTs out of 7 ACTs, 1 ACT Supervisor

### Staff Vacancies

The department is working on filling vacancies. In our meeting with management on 1/11/2023, the department stated they had 47 vacancies as of the end of December 2022:

- 4 Administrative Clerks
- 2 Senior Administrative Clerks
- 1 Veterinarian II
- 3 Veterinarian Technician
- 19 Animal Care Technicians
- 1 Animal Care Technician Supervisor
- 9 Animal Control Officers
- 1 Senior Animal Control Officer I
- 3 Senior Animal Control Officer II
- 2 Animal License Canvassers
- 2 Management Analysts

The department is using the Targeted Local Hire program to bring on Animal Care Assistants (ACAs) who train to become ACTs after 6 months as a trainee and then a 6-month probationary period.

The department currently has 22 Vocational Worker Animal Care Technicians (serving their initial 6 months of training) and 5 are Animal Care Assistants (serving their 6-month probationary period). They are assigned at each shelter location as follows:

- West Valley – 8
- South LA – 8
- East Valley – 4
- Harbor – 3
- West LA – 3
- North Central – 1

LAAS hoped to expand shelter open hours without an appointment to six days a week by January 2023 (Page 4 of the FY23-24 Budget proposal). However, due to current staffing levels, they have decided not to expand shelter hours since more staff and training are needed.

## Employment Level Reports (ELRs)

Employment Level Reports are submitted by various City departments to show staffing levels throughout the City's fiscal year (July through June). These reports show the number of authorized positions, the number of filled positions, and the number of vacant positions.

These reports are further explained in the annual proposed Mayor's Budget – Detail of Department Programs (Blue Book):

Departments routinely submit personnel authorization reports (Employment Level Report) for each of the 12 monthly periods to the City Administrative Officer to show the average level of employment and utilization of personnel that is contemplated with budgeted funds.

[\[2022-23 Proposed Mayor's Budget, Detail of Department Programs \(Blue Book\), Volume I, Page 11\]](#)

Management provided ELRs for the following Fiscal Years:

- FY2019-2020
- FY2020-2021\* (July 2020 – March 2021)
- FY2021-2022
- FY2022-2023\* (July 2022 – December 2022)

*\*Note: For FY2020-2021, management stated the ELRs for April through June 2021 were not able to be located as they not have been prepared due to staffing changes at the time.*

*FY2022-2023 is the current fiscal year and December 2022 is the latest one filed.*

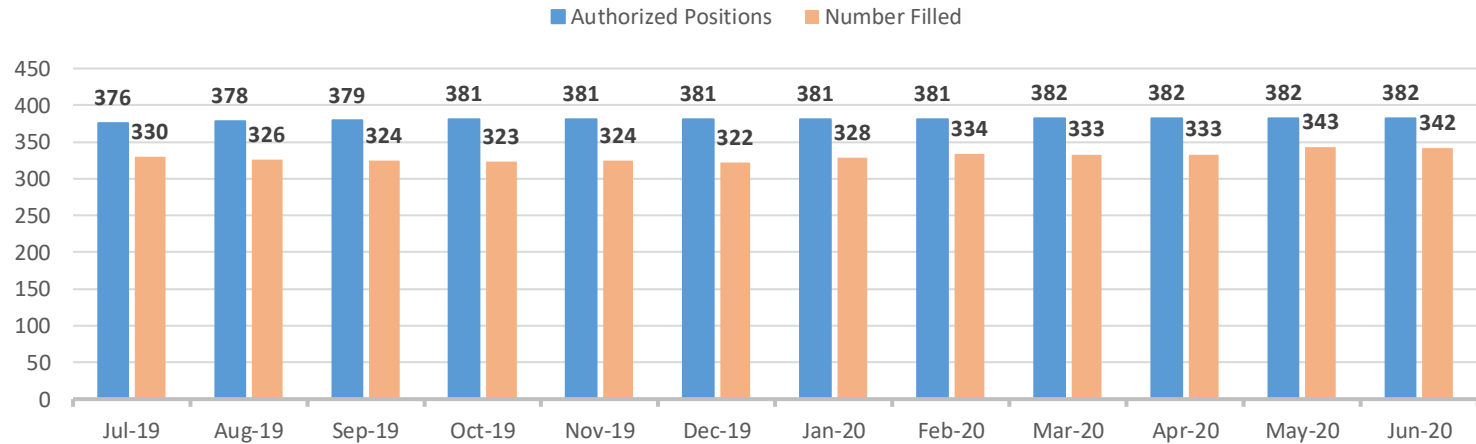
The following graphs present department staffing levels throughout each fiscal year referenced above. The graphs display the number of authorized positions relative to the number of positions filled.

The number of positions filled has consistently been below full staffing with the maximum number of filled positions at 343 against 382 authorized positions in May 2020 and a low of 288 filled positions against 355 to 357 authorized positions from April to June 2022.

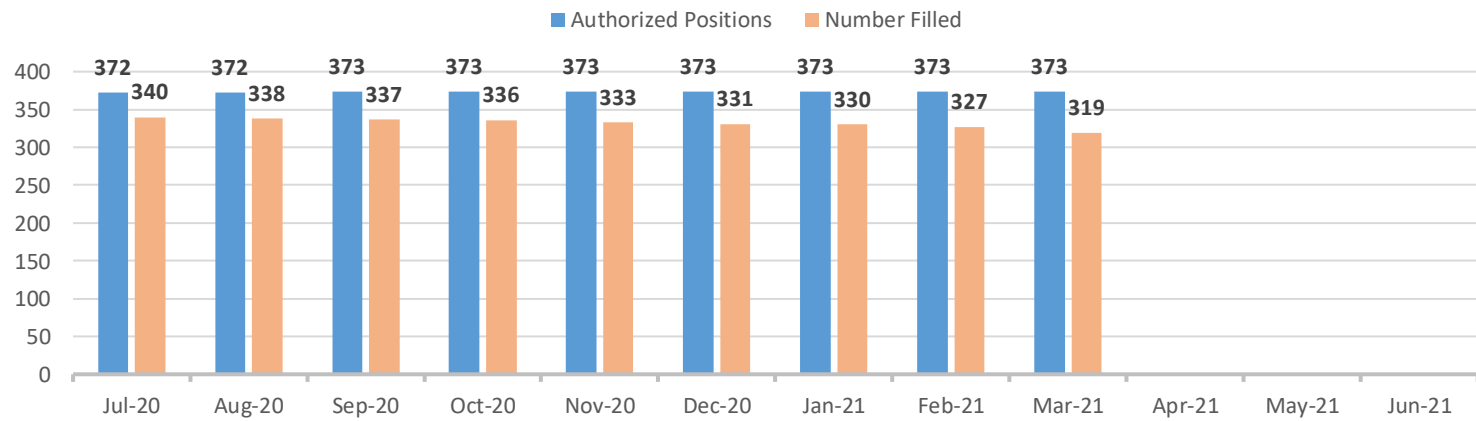
The number of Authorized Positions had decreased down to 355 during FY21-22. However, these are increasing again beginning this current Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

Despite the increase in the number of filled positions, there still remains 47 positions unfilled.

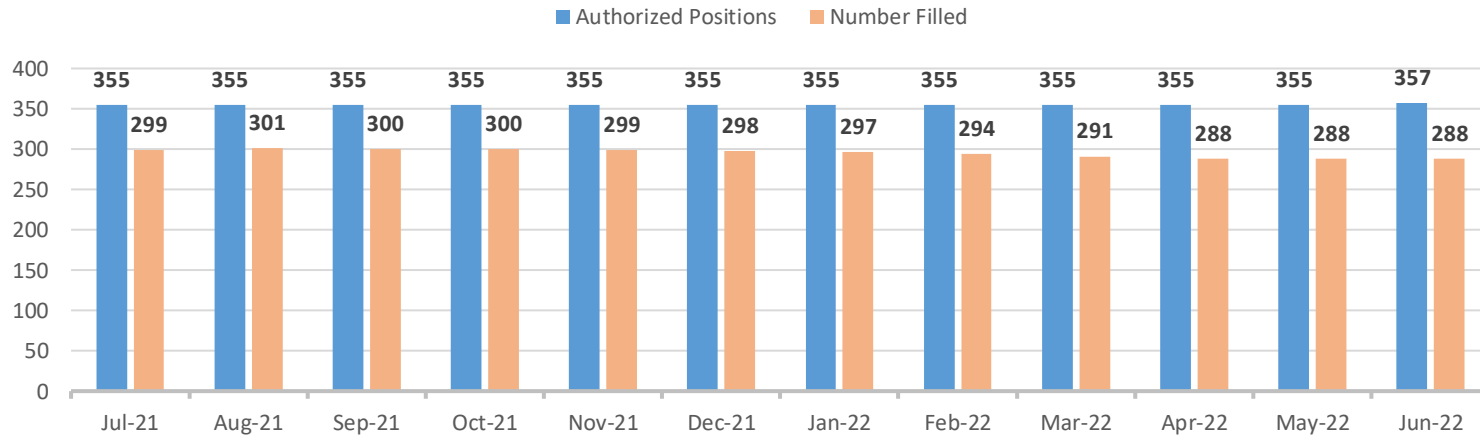
### STAFFING LEVELS - LAAS JULY 2019 TO JUNE 2020



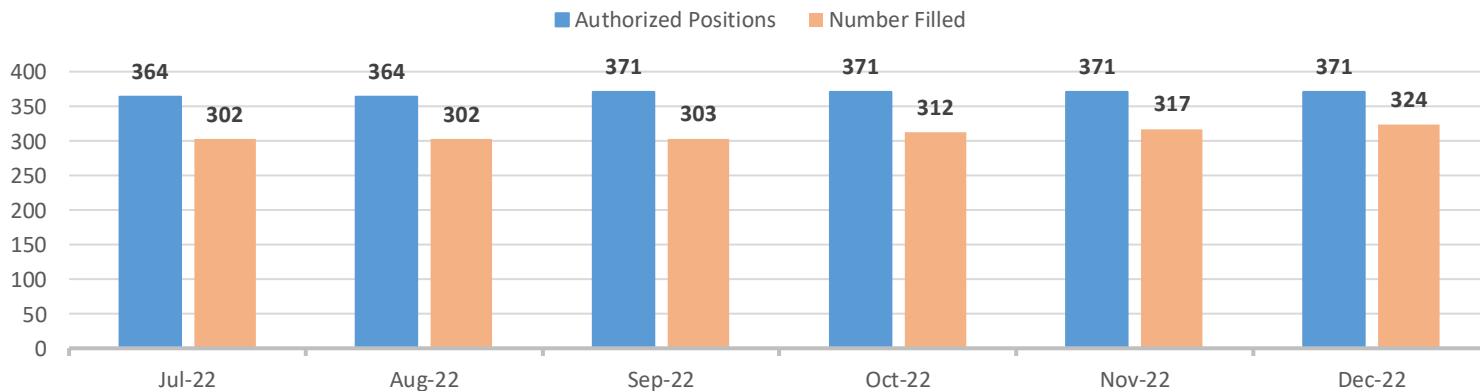
### STAFFING LEVELS - LAAS JULY 2020 TO JUNE 2021



### STAFFING LEVELS - LAAS JULY 2021 TO JUNE 2022



### STAFFING LEVELS - LAAS JULY 2022 TO DEC 2022



## Additional Staffing Proposals

According to management, the department is requesting additional shelter staff to provide sufficient standards of care and enrichment for animals.

The department's FY23-24 budget proposal includes requests for more ACT and ACT Supervisor positions:

### East Valley

- 4 ACTs – Shelter Operations
- 2 ACTs – Adoptions Counselors
- 1 ACT – Foster Team
- 2 ACTs – Pet Retention

### West Valley

- 1 ACT Supervisor
- 4 ACTs – Shelter Operations
- 2 ACTs – Adoption Counselors
- 1 ACT – Foster Team
- 2 ACTs – Pet Retention

### South LA

- 3 ACTs – Shelter Operations
- 2 ACTs – Adoption Counselors
- 1 ACT – Foster Team
- 2 ACTs – Pet Retention
- 2 Administrative Clerks (Half-Time)

### Playgroup Team

- 1 ACT Supervisor
- 7 ACTs

### Harbor

- 1 ACT Supervisor
- 3 ACTs – Shelter Operations
- 2 ACTs – Adoption Counselors
- 1 ACT – Foster Team
- 2 ACTs – Pet Retention

### North Central

- 2 ACT Supervisors
- 3 ACTs – Shelter Operations
- 2 ACTs – Adoption Counselors
- 1 ACT – Foster Team
- 2 ACTs – Pet Retention

### West LA

- 3 ACTs – Shelter Operations
- 2 ACTs – Adoption Counselors
- 1 ACT – Foster Team
- 2 ACTs – Pet Retention

## Northeast Valley (Mission Hills) Animal Shelter (42 positions)

We noticed in the FY2023-24 proposed department Budget that there were staffing budgets for the Northeast Valley shelter in Mission Hills which is not currently staffed by LAAS employees but is contracted out to animal welfare organizations to provide shelter services.

- 2 Senior Administrative Clerks
- 6 Administrative Clerks
- 1 Veterinarian II
- 4 Veterinarian Technicians
- 2 ACT Supervisors
- 21 ACTs
- 1 Senior Animal Control Officer I
- 5 Animal Control Officers

Should the department have funding to fully staff Northeast Valley, it would officially become the 7<sup>th</sup> shelter operated by LAAS.

## Mental Health

Due to the nature of the job, overworking, and media spotlight on shelter conditions and operations, employee morale and mental health have declined. Retaining employees can be a concern due to burn out and the overall health impact of the job. Understaffing often requires staff to work cover multiple roles and possibly work overtime which makes it difficult to maintain an adequate work/life balance.

Animal care workers have a higher suicide rate compared to other occupations. A 2015 study by the American Journal of Preventive Medicine found that animal rescue workers have a suicide rate of 5.3 in 1 million workers, the highest suicide rate among American employees.

## Volunteer Program

The department's volunteer program allows members of the public to assist in providing shelter care and enrichment for the animals and also provide operational support in the form of cleaning walkways, doing laundry, assisting in adoptions, and running the Pet Food Pantries.

In order to be able to handle animals, the volunteer program has several steps for a volunteer to complete before being certified and authorized to do so.

### Dog Handling

1. Complete a shelter service punch card:
  - a. 2 shifts of Shelter Support or Pet Food Pantry (highly encouraged)
  - b. 10 hours of non-contact dog Boredom Busters
  - c. 10 hours Dog Handling Assistant & Shadowing
2. Sign up and complete at least 2 Level One Dog Walking Classes
  - a. Pass Level One Dog walking quiz
  - b. Pass Level One Dog walking skills demonstration

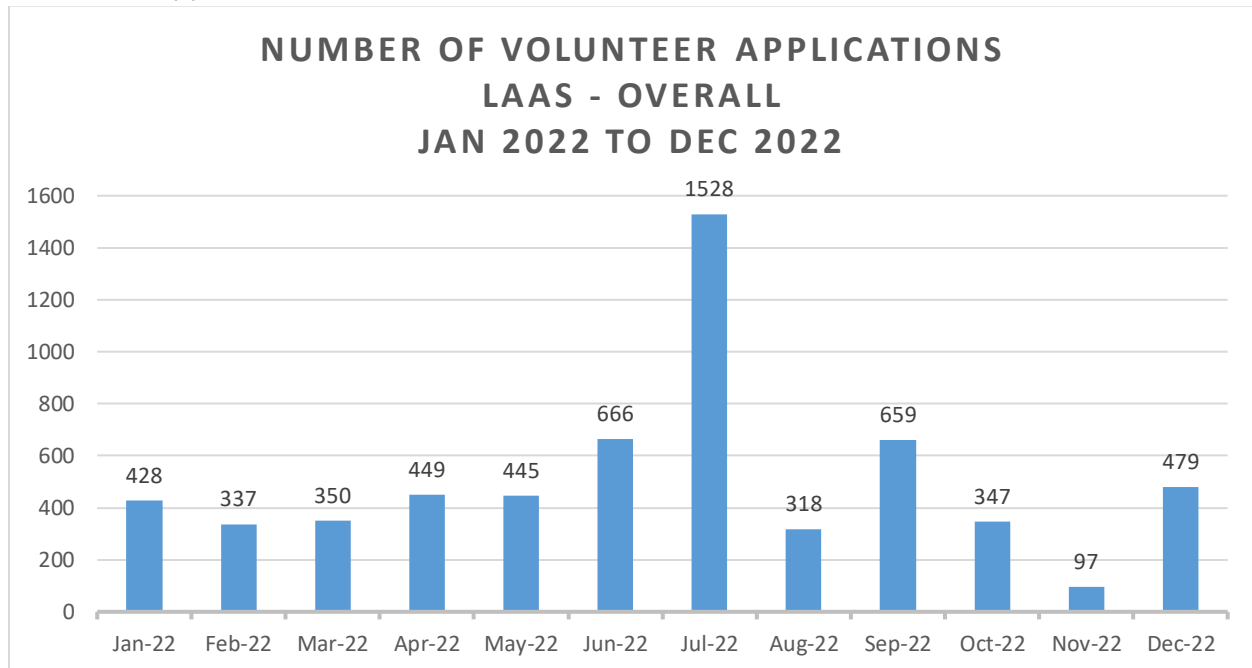
### Cat Handling (Pending Update)

1. Complete a shelter service punch card:
  - a. 4 shifts of Shelter Support or Pet Food Pantry
2. Sign up and complete at least 2 Cat Handling Classes
  - a. Pass Cat Handling quiz
  - b. Pass Cat Handling skills demonstration

### Rabbit Handling (Pending Update)

1. Complete a shelter service punch card:
  - a. 4 shifts of Shelter Support or Pet Food Pantry
2. Sign up and complete at least 2 Rabbit Handling Classes
  - a. Pass Rabbit Handling quiz
  - b. Pass Rabbit Handling skills demonstration

## Volunteer Applications



The first step before becoming a volunteer is to submit an application to the Volunteer Program.

Applications are relatively flat from January through May. An increase begins in June as expected due to school being on break and more kids being able to volunteer.

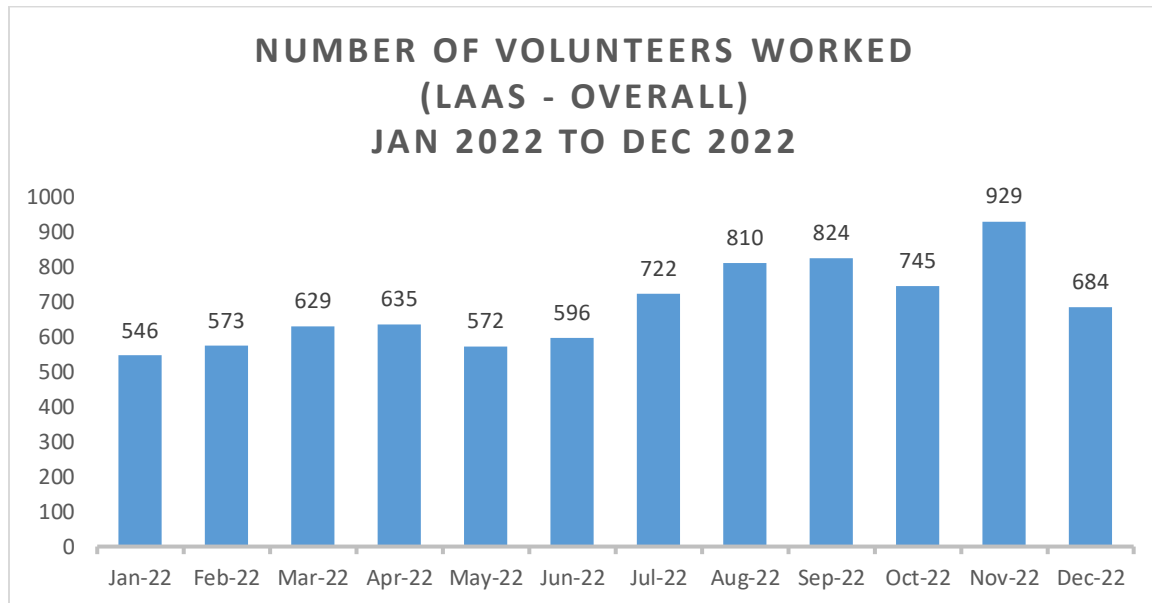
The nearly double increase in July may be due to the July 14, 2022 article in the Los Angeles Times about dogs not being walked. [*'It's inhumane': Dogs at L.A. animal shelters go weeks or months without being walked*].



## Woof Stats – Volunteer Program

### Number of Volunteers Worked

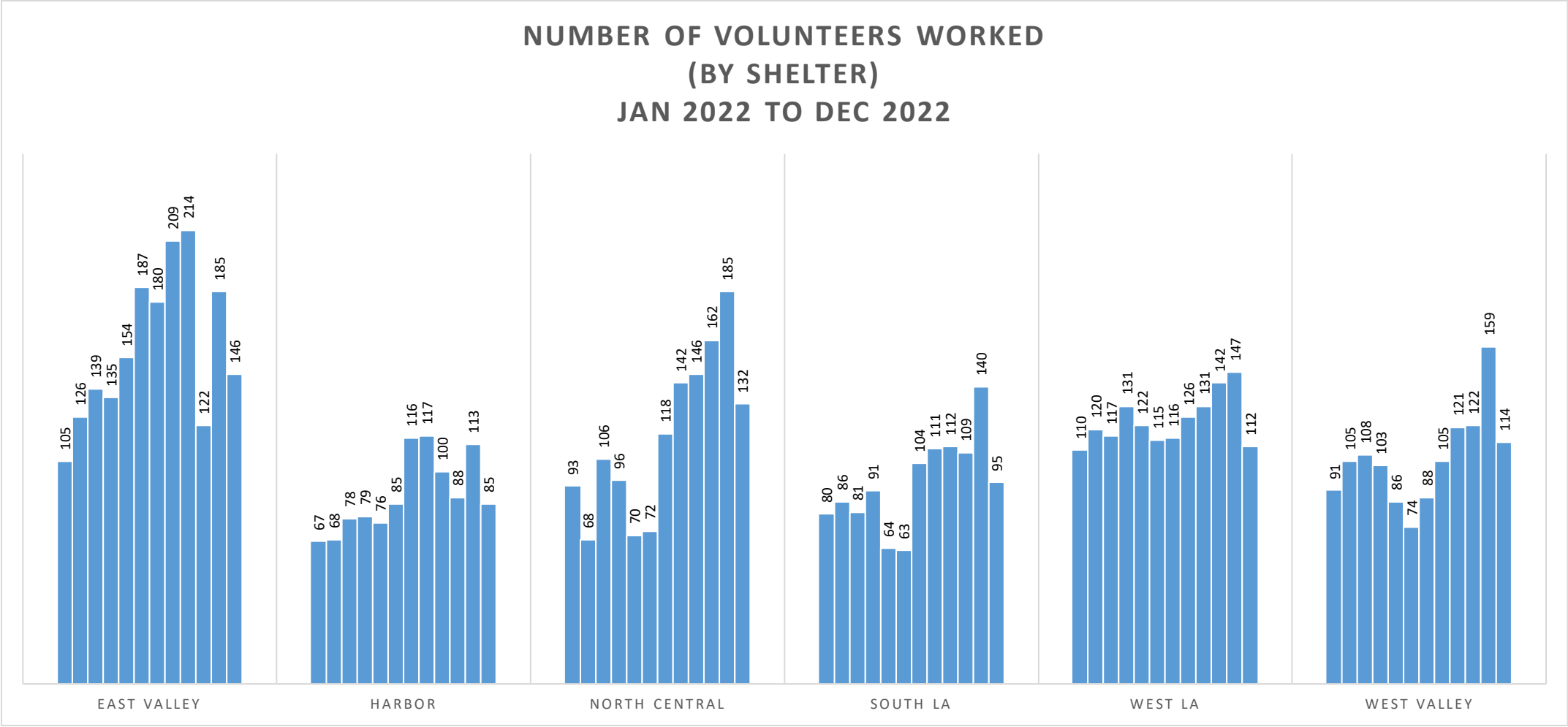
From the monthly Woof Stats, we analyzed two metrics relating to volunteers: Number of Volunteers Worked and Number of Volunteer Hours Worked for the 2022 Calendar Year.



The number of volunteers worked for the department overall starts to increase greatly in the summer of 2022 due to more student volunteers and due to the July 14, 2022 Los Angeles Times article. The greatest increase and peak for 2022 so far is in November of 2022 at 929 volunteers worked.

**Note:** Management stated that “Volunteers Worked” numbers are not unique individual volunteers but rather the number of volunteer shifts worked in that month. For example, one volunteer could have volunteered 30 days in a row in November and each shift would count as its own shift worked.

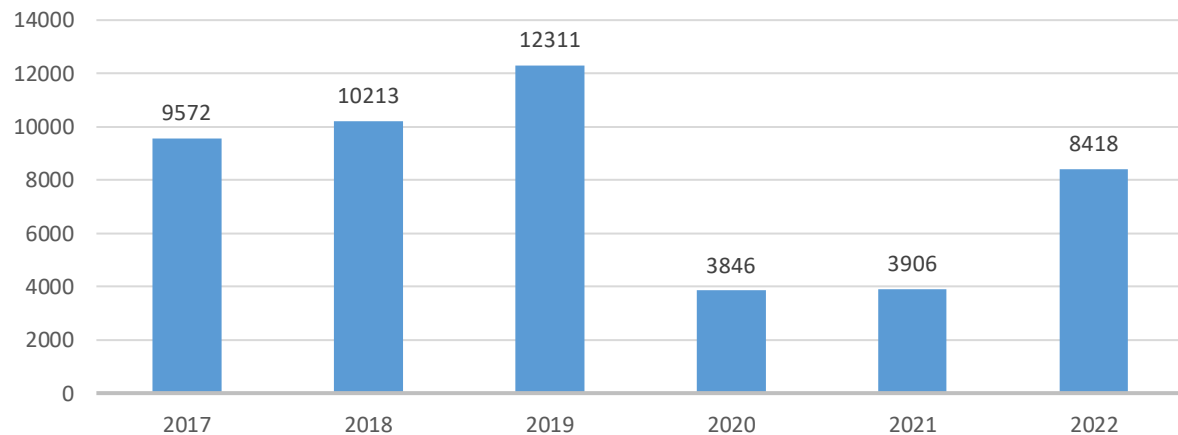
The graph below shows the Number of Volunteers Worked by shelter during 2022.



East Valley and North Central had the highest number of volunteer shifts worked followed by West LA and West Valley. Harbor and South LA had the fewest volunteer shifts.

November 2022 had a pretty big increase in volunteer shifts worked for most shelters.

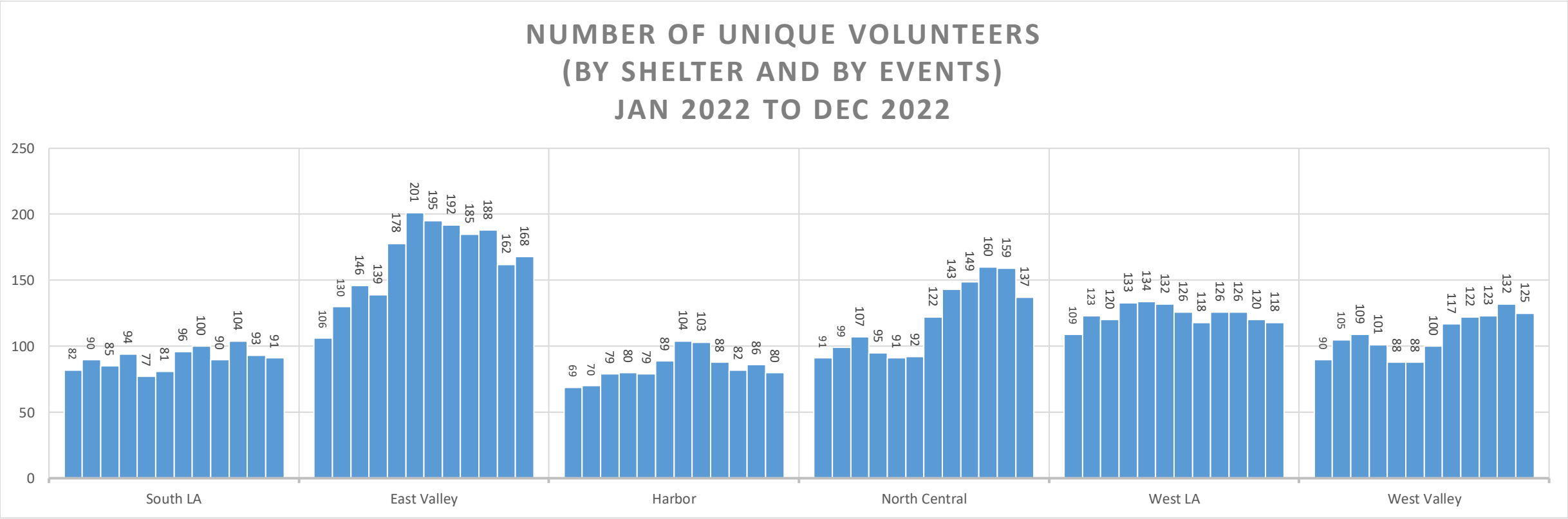
## NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS WORKED LAAS - OVERALL 2017 TO 2022



Comparing the pre-pandemic years (2017 through 2019), there was a substantial number of volunteer shifts worked, which reached its highest number in 2019 at 12,311.

Volunteer shifts dropped dramatically due to COVID in 2020 and impacting volunteer operations even through 2021. We see a large increase in 2022 compared to 2020 and 2021 but still lower than pre-pandemic levels of 2017 through 2019.

Unique Volunteers

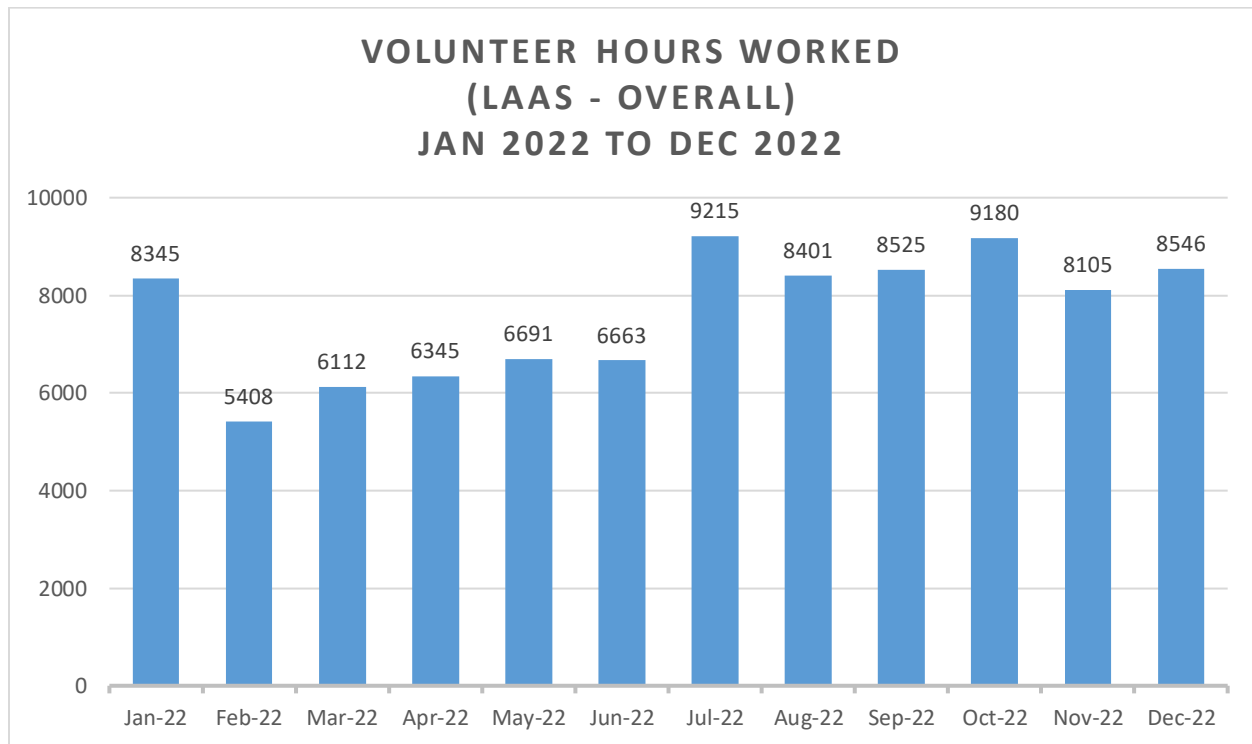


The previous metrics measured number of volunteer shifts. Unique volunteers are the number of unique individuals that volunteered at each shelter for each month. For example, if **Volunteer A** volunteered in January multiple times at South LA, that would count as one unique volunteer at South LA. If **Volunteer A** also volunteered at East Valley in January, that would count as one unique volunteer at East Valley.

Average monthly unique volunteers in 2022:

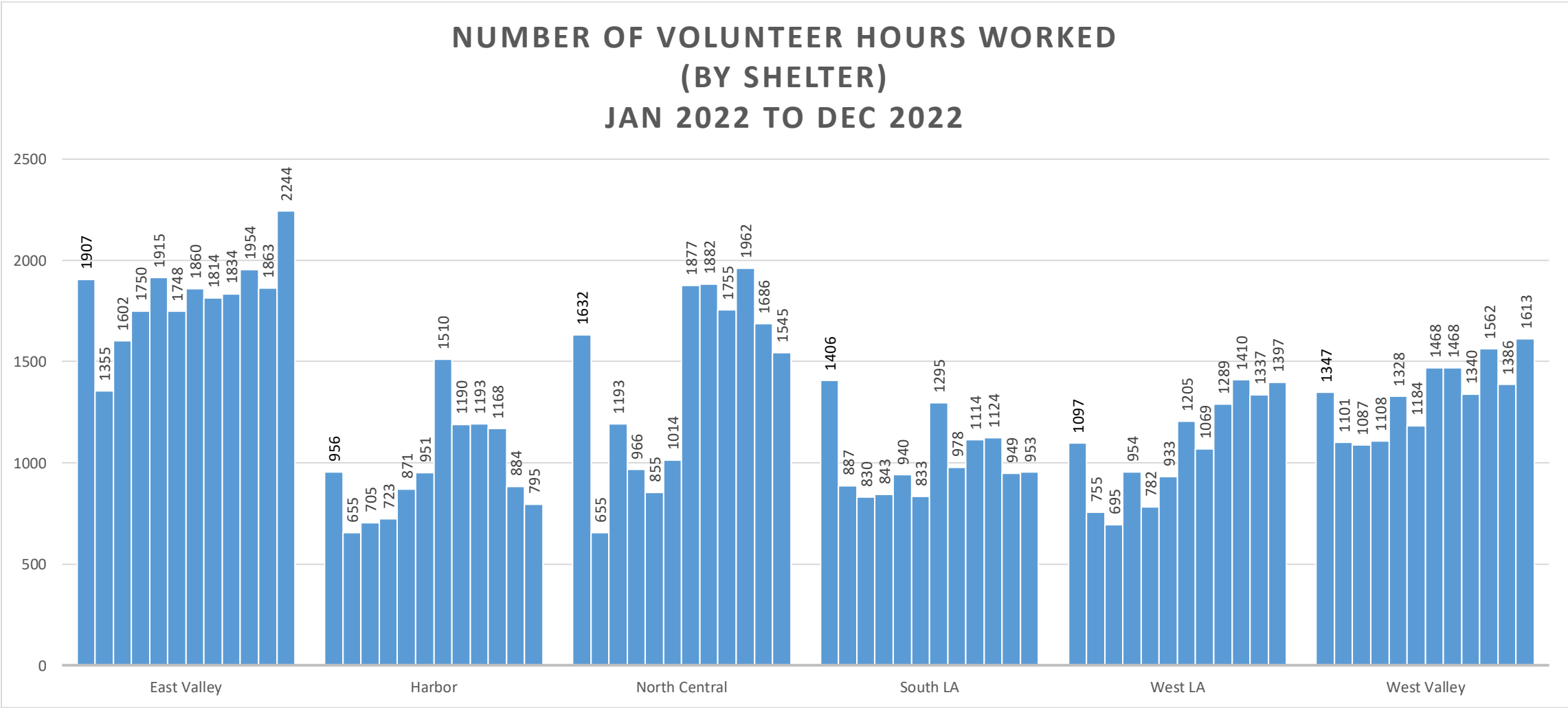
- East Valley: 166
- West LA: 124
- North Central: 120
- West Valley: 108
- South LA: 90
- Harbor: 84

## Number of Volunteer Hours Worked



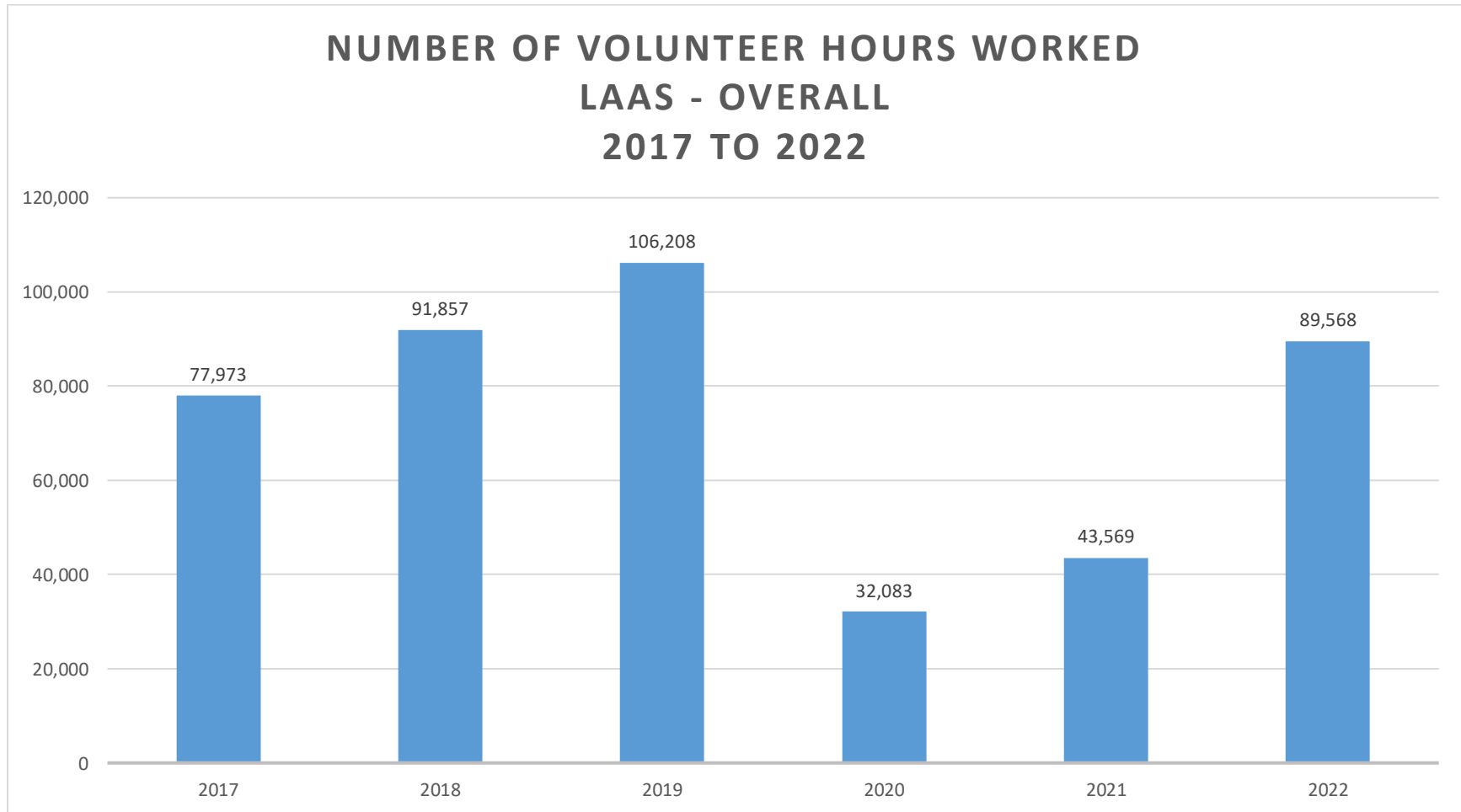
The number of volunteer hours worked increased dramatically in July 2022, which may be due to more student volunteers in the summer time and the LA Times articles in which it stated dogs were not being walked.

The number of volunteer hours worked in the graph below increased greatly in July. This may be due to summer student volunteers and the LA Times article in which it stated dogs were not being walked.



East Valley has the most overall hours worked at 21,846 while Harbor has the lowest number amongst the shelters at 11,601 hours.

Similar to the Number of Volunteers Worked, the Number of Volunteer Hours Worked follows a similar pattern, peaking at 106,208 hours in 2019 and a decrease in 2020. In 2022, however, hours worked nearly doubled from 2021 and have even surpassed 2017's number of hours.



## Volgistics – Volunteer Hours 2019 through 2022

The Woof Stat reports only show the total number of volunteer hours worked, not a breakdown of what those total volunteer hours consist of. We asked management to provide a breakdown of the assignment categories or shifts that make up the total volunteer hours and were provided with the ***Service by Assignment Category 2019-2022***. Management stated this report was generated using numbers from Volgistics, the department's Volunteer tracking program. The Service by Assignment Category reports provide a breakdown of volunteer hours for the period of January 2019 through December 2022.

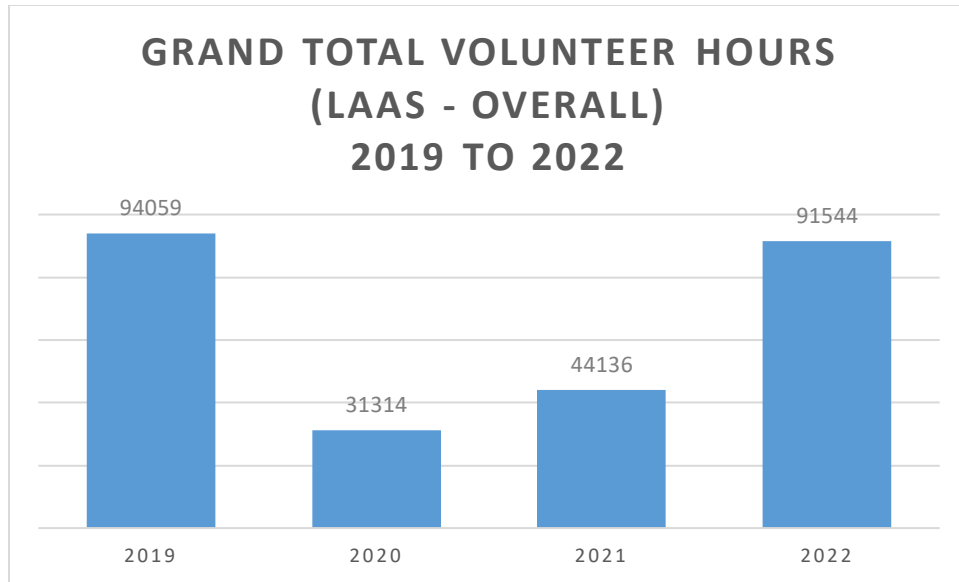
The report lists the following shifts or assignment categories:

- Events
- Dog Training
- Dog Enrichment
- Cat Training
- Cat Enrichment
- Rabbit Training
- Rabbit Enrichment
- Volunteer Orientation
- Shelter Tour
- Shelter Support
- Non-Contact Enrichment/Boredom Busters
- Pet Food Pantry

In addition, other shifts or assignment categories were provided below that showed volunteers who volunteered but did not pick a specific shift or assignment category:

- Volunteer Service other than what is listed
- None (no site)
- Uncategorized
- VEERT (Volunteer Equine Emergency Rescue Team)





When it comes to volunteer hours, the overall trend shows a close return to pre-COVID levels as shown in the chart above reflecting the sum of Grand Totals for years 2019 through 2022.

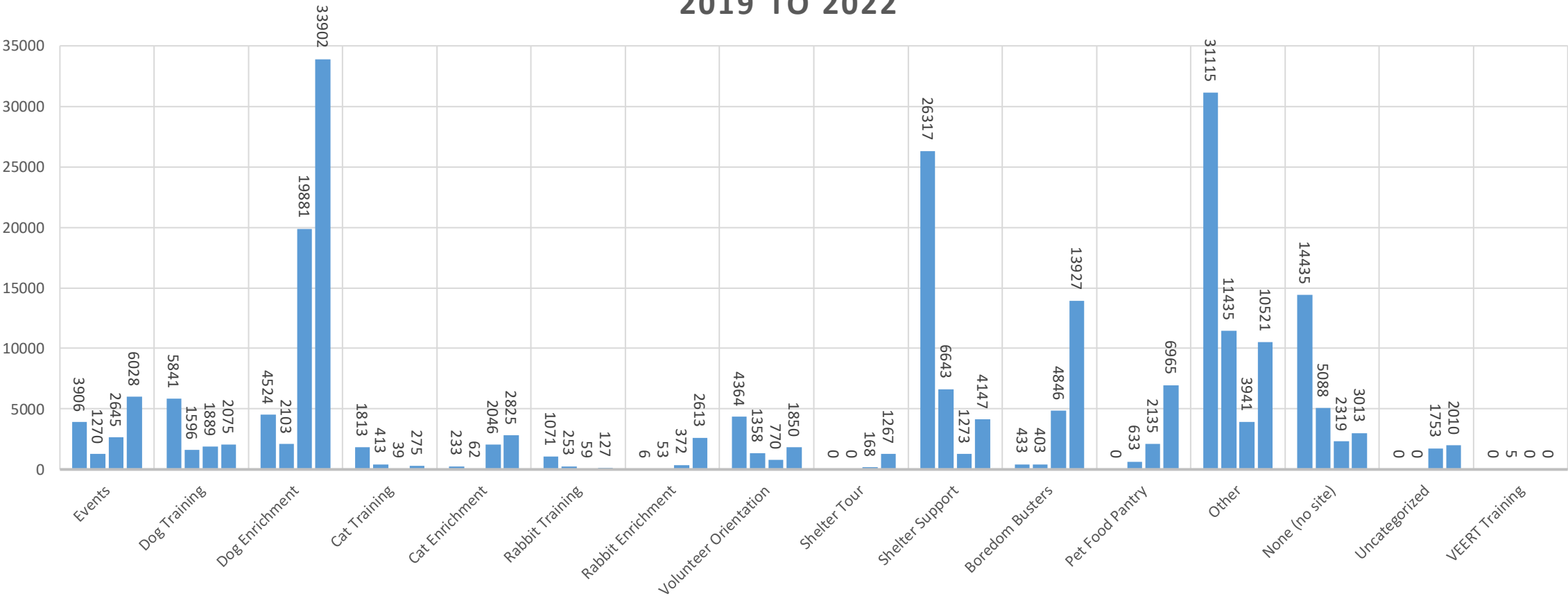
**Note:** We noted discrepancies between the Grand Total Hours provided in the Service by Assignment Category Volgistics report vs the department's monthly published Woof Stat Report as seen in the table below.

YTD	Woof Stat	Grand Total	Difference
2019	118,073	94,059	24,014
2020	32,083	31,314	769
2021	53,819	44,136	9,683
2022	89,568	91,544	(1,976)

On February 14, 2023, in response to questions regarding the discrepancies between the Woof Stat reports and Volgistics' Service by Assignment Category reports, management stated:

*"We have not been able to decipher the differences in reporting. We have not tracked Service by Assignment (New) reports before this request. The differences can be attributed to a number of variables including archiving of volunteers, returning volunteers, social media/remote volunteer work self-reporting, etc. Going forward, the department (Volunteer Program) can print both volunteer hours and Service by Assignment monthly to keep track of any changes."*

SERVICE HOURS BY CATEGORY ASSIGNMENT  
(LAAS - OVERALL)  
2019 TO 2022



According to management, in 2019, there weren't that many specific shifts or assignment categories so volunteers were booking hours to "Shelter Support" or "Other" for an array of shifts. For most assignment categories, we see an increase in volunteer hours from 2021 to 2022. However, training for animal handling has gone down over time with minor increases in 2022. Dog enrichment is the highest assignment category with the most volunteer hours.

## Volunteer and Staff Relations

Volunteers and staff work together at the animals shelters to help care and ideally get animals adopted into permanent homes.

From meetings with management, staff, and volunteers, it is widely agreed upon that volunteers are heavily relied upon to provide enrichment for the animals. Management stated, however, that the department should not solely rely on the volunteers to provide enrichment.

The Volunteer Program is currently run by 1 Director of Volunteer Programs and 6 Volunteer Liaisons (1 at each shelter).

However, the relationship between volunteers and staff can be tense. The Director of Volunteer Programs stated that there has been a difficult working relationship with some volunteers due in part to some of the changes the Director implemented starting in April 2022.

During our visits, volunteers were willing to discuss issues at the shelter. However, they wanted to remain anonymous due to fear of retaliatory action, such as suspension or termination.

Some of the issues raised by shelter volunteers were:

- Kennels not being properly heated in the winter nor cooled in the summertime.
- Kennels flooded or being filled with mud when it rains.
- Small animals not receiving the same amount of care and attention as cats and dogs. Cages seen not cleaned and hay and water not refilled.
- Staff not aware of small animals' gender (e.g. rabbits) when pairing or separating bonded pairs.
- Not being allowed in the restricted areas or non-public facing areas when they were previously allowed to do so to walk dogs and provide enrichment.
  - Volunteers have to ask permission from the Volunteer Liaison or ACT supervisor but sometimes due to short staffing that day, they may not be able to assist volunteers.
- Staff can be rude or indifferent at times to volunteers and the public.
- Volunteer process can be confusing on what steps are needed to handle animals.
- Volunteer process can be long to become a handler depending on availability and opportunities.
- Communication between volunteer liaisons and volunteers is sometimes lacking such as volunteers emailing volunteer liaisons and not receiving replies back for days or weeks.
- Volunteers showing up to the shelter to volunteer but there is no staff or anyone there to train the volunteer or provide guidance to the volunteer.
- Weekday volunteer hours make it difficult for those who work or go to school between 9am-5pm.
- Volunteers getting suspended or terminated and the lack of transparency in the disciplinary process for why they were suspended or terminated.
- Suspended volunteers not hearing back on next steps to be reinstated.
- Fear of retaliation for speaking up or reporting problems in the shelter. No effective mechanism for reporting problems at the shelters.
- The lack of cohesion and consistency in LAAS as a whole. Each shelter location is operated differently based on staff.

Some recommendations by LAAS volunteers are:

- Provide more transparency and streamline the volunteer on-boarding process to allow more volunteers to become certified to handle animals.
- Have more cohesion and consistency with both staff and volunteers working together
- Improve communication with volunteers and volunteer liaisons, which can be in the form of adding an additional volunteer liaison at each shelter.
- Work with small animal rescues to ensure there is proper training given to staff and to also increase public awareness for small animals.
- Permit volunteers to be escorted into the non-public facing, restricted areas to provide enrichment to the dogs housed there (if can safely be done).
- Allow volunteers to work shifts that are before or after hours and holidays to accommodate those who work during the day or normal shelter hours.
- Improve customer service and interpersonal skills of staff.
- Create an effective mechanism for volunteers to report shelter issues without fear of retaliation.
- Create remediation process and pathways to become a volunteer again for suspended or terminated volunteers depending on each situation.
- More funding and community outreach/education related to spay and neuter services.

During our guided tours and unannounced visits, there was not a visible or obvious working relationship between staff and volunteers. This was often due to the short staffing of ACTs who are handling other shelter duties or are helping the public in the receiving area. Management also stated that relationships between staff and volunteers need to be rebuilt as there can be distrust between shelter staff and volunteers.

## Spay and Neuter

Spaying and neutering of pets is required of all pet owners residing in the City of Los Angeles with few exceptions. LAMC 53.15.2(b)(2) is the City's ordinance for this requirement. Despite this, pet overpopulation continues to be a serious issue for the City. This can be seen with the current overcrowding at all of LAAS shelters.

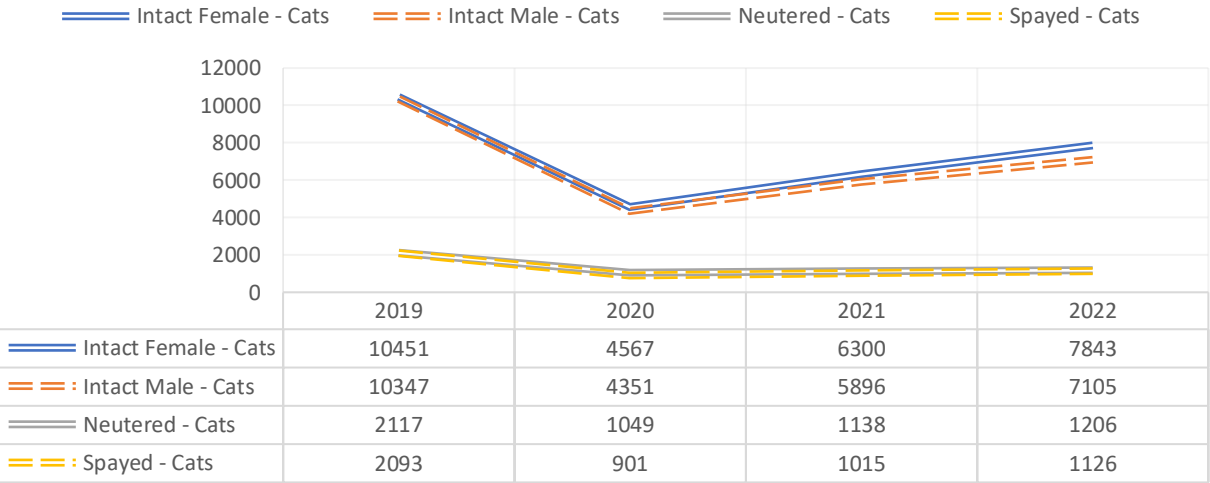
Management provided data that outlines intake according to animal species (cats, dogs, other animals, and rabbits) and spay and neuter status.

The data is from 01/01/2019 to 12/31/2022 for the shelters overall. As the graphs show on the next page, the majority of impounded animals are intact, which means they are not spayed nor neutered. Spayed and neutered animals are the lowest among each of the animals impounded.

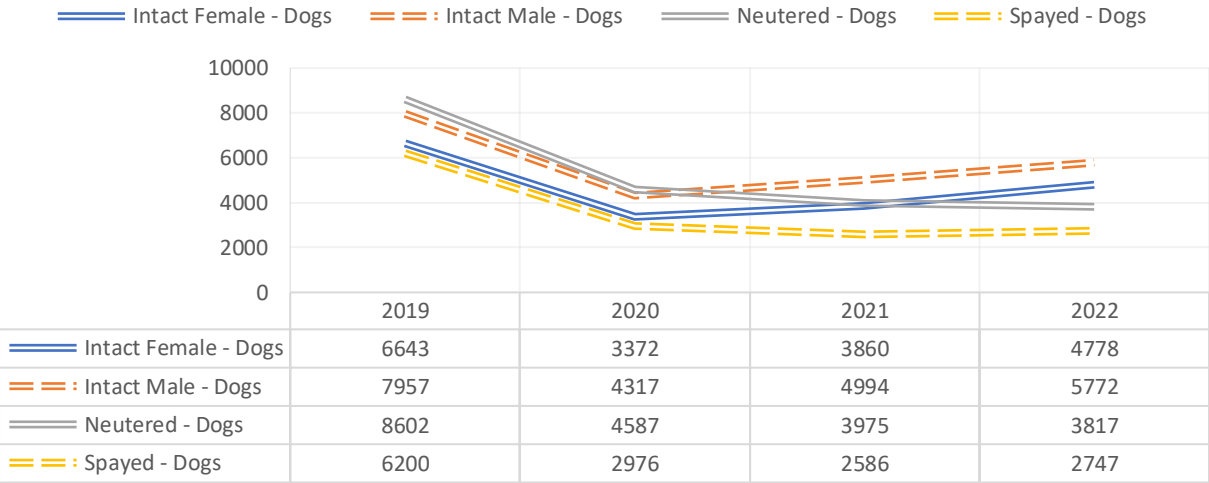
Cats had the highest number amongst all four with 10,451 intact females and 10,347 intact males impounded in 2019.

Significant decreases occurred in 2020 but this may be due to the limited intake and stay-at-home orders at the start of the pandemic.

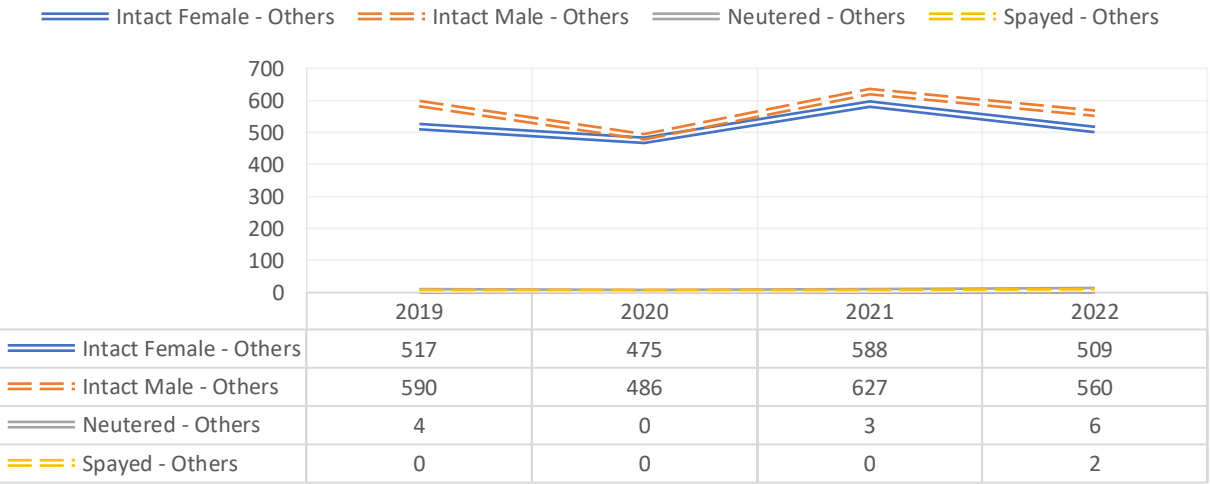
**IMPOUNDS BY SPAY/NEUTER STATUS  
CATS  
2019 TO 2022**



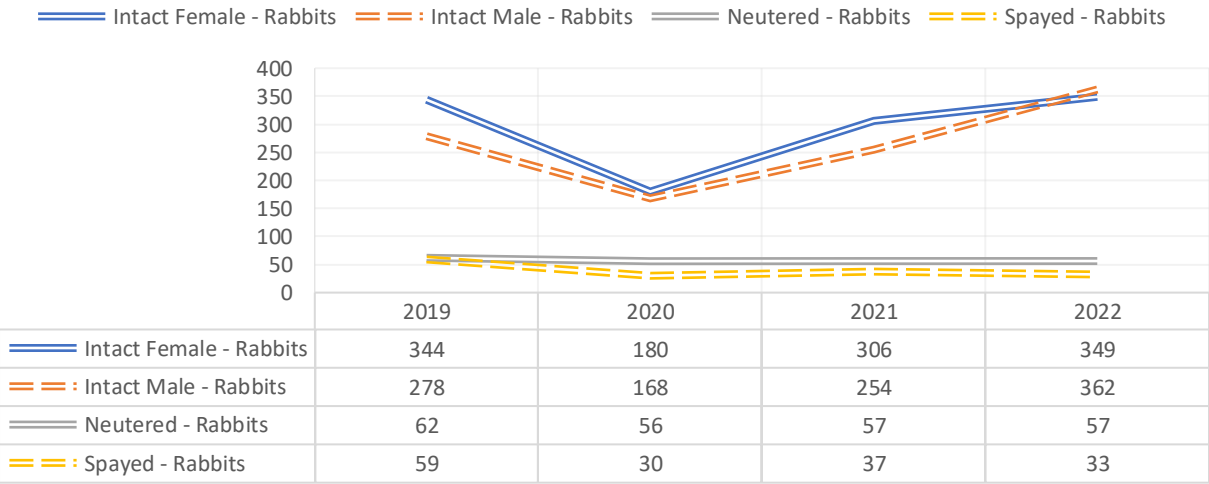
**IMPOUNDS BY SPAY/NEUTER STATUS  
DOGS  
2019 TO 2022**



**IMPOUNDS BY SPAY/NEUTER STATUS  
OTHERS  
2019 TO 2022**



**IMPOUNDS BY SPAY/NEUTER STATUS  
RABBITS  
2019 TO 2022**



## Spay and Neuter Program

Spay and Neuter services are contracted outside of LAAS through contracts with on-site vets and letters of agreement with Veterinary hospitals. The department is in the process of negotiating 2 mobile spay and neuter contractors.

The FY23-24 budget requests \$2.4 million to provide free and discounted spay and neuter services (page 224).

## Citywide Cat Program

The department launched the Citywide Cat Program in November 2022 to create a streamlined process for residents and partner agencies to obtain trapping permits for TNR services (trap, neuter, return) and to provide spay and neuter vouchers to the public for the sterilization of the City's free roaming cats.

There is currently \$500,000 set aside for the Citywide Cat Program.

The FY23-24 budget requests \$1.4 million to fully implement the Citywide Cat Program and reduce the number of unwanted non-spayed/neutered animals in the City and those entering into the Animal Services Centers (page 228).

To assist the public with the costs of sterilizing their animals, LAAS has two programs available for companion animals owned by City of Los Angeles residents:

- Discount Spay & Neuter Coupon Program
- Free Spay & Neuter Certificate Program

Each household is eligible for discounts for 3 dogs, 3 cats, and 3 rabbits.

Coupons and certificates may be used at any of the participating Veterinary Hospitals listed on the LAAS website (<https://www.laanimalservices.com/spay-and-neuter>) or on-site clinics at select City animal shelters listed below:

- **South LA (Chesterfield Square)** Spay & Neuter Clinic – operated by ASPCA
- **East Valley** Spay & Neuter Center – operated by Western University of Health Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine
- **Harbor** Spay & Neuter Clinic – operated by CAMP (Community Animal Medicine Project)
- **West Los Angeles** Spay & Neuter Clinic – operated by Shelter Vet (dba Value Vet, Inc.)
- **West Valley** Spay & Neuter Clinic – operated by Heaven on Earth Society for Animals

Based on the Woof Stats Report from January 2022 to December 2022, we analyzed the statistics provided under the **Spay and Neuter** section of the report. These are our findings:

***Table 6.** Number of Spay/Neuter surgeries performed by LAAS vets from Jan 2022 to Dec 2022 for LAAS (Overall)*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Cats	27	25	16	16	9	74	56	39	16	7	31	18	334
Dogs	12	35	19	29	15	19	18	13	4	19	10	7	200
Kittens	5	1	0	0	1	5	7	2	0	2	6	1	30
Rabbits	0	9	0	1	5	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	20
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>584</b>

Cats had the highest numbers of surgeries performed totaling 334 and the highest occurring in June with 74. Dogs had the second highest number at 200 and number were consistent through many months of the year. The month with the highest number performed for dogs was in February with 35 performed.



Number of Spay/Neuter Surgeries Performed by LAAS Vets by Shelter – 2022 YTD (Jan to Dec)	
<b>Cats</b>	<b>334</b>
East Valley	166
Harbor	9
North Central	10
South LA	144
West LA	1
West Valley	4
<b>Dogs</b>	<b>200</b>
East Valley	44
Harbor	1
North Central	16
South LA	138
West LA	0
West Valley	1
<b>Kittens</b>	<b>30</b>
East Valley	20
Harbor	0
North Central	0
South LA	10
West LA	0
West Valley	0
<b>Rabbits</b>	<b>20</b>
East Valley	8
Harbor	0
North Central	2
South LA	2
West LA	0
West Valley	8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>584</b>

By shelter, East Valley and South LA had the highest number of surgeries performed by LAAS vets for cats, kittens, and dogs. South LA had the most performed with 294 in total.

## Discount Spay and Neuter Coupon Program

This program provides pet owners a coupon to receive a discount off of sterilization surgery. This program is available to all City of Los Angeles residents regardless of income.

As of 01/18/2023, the Discount Spay and Neuter Coupon may not cover the entire cost of surgery but covers fees up to:

- \$30 for Cats (Male & Female)
- \$50 for Rabbit (Male & Female)
- \$50 for Dogs (Male & Female)

*Table 7. Number of Discounted Coupons issued and redeemed for 2022 from Woof Stats report*

	Issued	Redemptions
Jan-22	865	162
Feb-22	678	233
Mar-22	753	172
Apr-22	706	267
May-22	690	206
Jun-22	757	184
Jul-22	811	211
Aug-22	905	155
Sep-22	846	246
Oct-22	866	252
Nov-22	918	255
Dec-22	875	206
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9670</b>	<b>2549</b>

Redemptions are low compared to the number of certificates issued. It should be noted that certificates may not necessarily be redeemed in the same month they are issued.

**Note:** The totals differ from the YTD 2022 number provided in the December 2022 Woof Stat Report, which the department provided as **8,824** certificates issued and **2,552** redeemed.

## Free Spay & Neuter Certificate Program

The Free Spay & Neuter Certificate Program provides free sterilizations to City of Los Angeles residents whose annual combined household income is below HUD's Household Low Income limits.

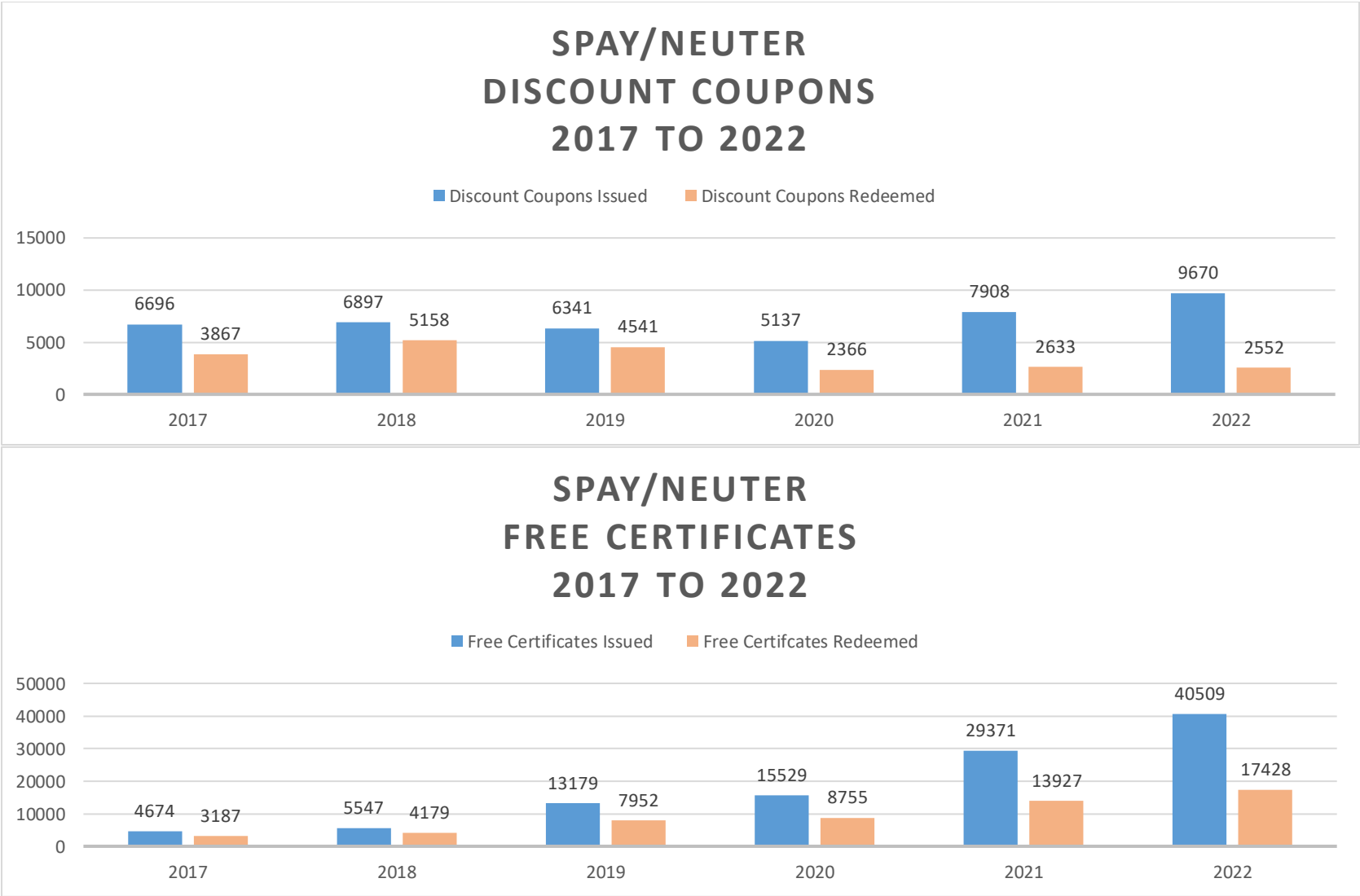
From the Woof Stat Reports for January 2022 through December 2022, we analyzed the number of free certificates issued and the number of redemptions.

*Table 8. Number of Free Spay & Neuter Certificates issued and redeemed from Woof Stats report*

	Issued	Redemptions
Jan-22	4445	976
Feb-22	3032	1295
Mar-22	3196	1502
Apr-22	2796	1544
May-22	2903	1456
Jun-22	3081	1323
Jul-22	3398	1325
Aug-22	3690	1151
Sep-22	3393	1464
Oct-22	3607	1624
Nov-22	3454	1934
Dec-22	3454	1834
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40449</b>	<b>17428</b>

Redemptions are low compared to the number of certificates issued. It should be noted that certificates may not necessarily be redeemed in the same month they are issued.

**Note:** The totals slightly differ from the YTD 2022 provided in the December 2022 Woof Stat Report, which the department provided as **40,509** certificates issued.



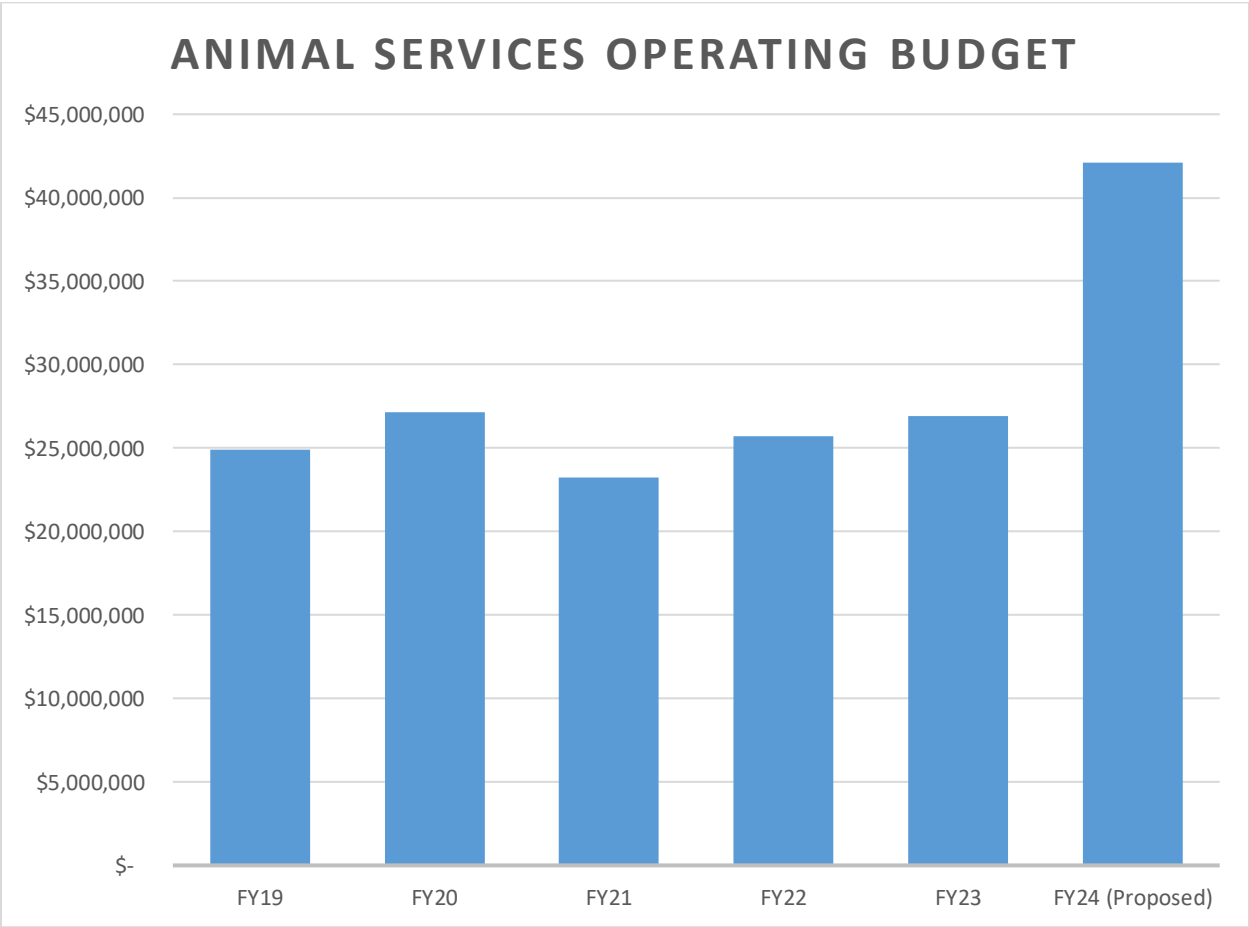
Comparing the YTD Totals for Years 2017 through 2022 from the Woof Stat Reports, the number of issued discount and free certificates for spay and neuter has increased in 2021 and 2022 compared to prior years. Spay and neuter discount certifications redeemed from 2020 to 2022 is much less than pre-pandemic years (2017 to 2019). Free spay and neuter certificates have increased yearly since 2017 to 2022, however, the number of redemptions are much lower than the number of issued certificates. Per management, the reason for low redemptions is due to a national shortage of veterinarians making it difficult to schedule veterinary appointments as there are more owners seeking appointments than there are appointments available.

Budget

- The department’s approved **operating budget** for the current fiscal year (FY22-23) is **\$26,941,178** or 0.2% of the City’s total budget of \$11,755,048,415 for the current fiscal year. The operating budget consists of salaries, expenses, and equipment.
  - This operating budget allows for up to 364 authorized positions (343 regular authorities and 21 resolution authorities) for the department which makes up 1% of the 34,421 total city employee budgeted positions for the current fiscal year.
- The department’s **total budget** for the current fiscal year (FY22-23) which includes operating costs AND costs for pensions/retirement, human resource benefits, building services, and other departmental related costs is **\$50,833,511** or 0.4% of the City’s total budget of \$11,755,048,415 for the current fiscal year.
- The department’s operating budget has averaged \$25,590,186 per year over the 5-year period of FY19 to FY23 with a \$3.9M decrease noted from FY20 to FY21. In addition, the current FY23 operating budget has still not caught up to the operating budget of FY20.
- With understaffing issues, an increase in animal intake, and the inability to sufficiently and adequately operate city animal shelters, the department is requesting an **operating budget** of **\$42,078,166** for next fiscal year, a 56% increase from the current fiscal year.
  - In addition, this budget will help the department to maintain no kill status for all animals by focusing more on spay and neuter services for the public, remove all appointment requirements for visiting shelters, increase animal license processing, and increase animal enrichment activities.

Budget data taken from City Controller approved budget reports. <https://controller.lacity.gov/budgets>

FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Adopted Operating Budget	Adopted Operating Budget	Adopted Operating Budget	Adopted Operating Budget	Adopted Operating Budget	Proposed Operating Budget
\$24,910,654	\$27,156,069	\$23,209,142	\$25,733,887	\$26,941,178	\$42,078,166



## Proposition F and the Northeast Valley Shelter

Proposition F was passed by Los Angeles voters on November 7, 2000, which provided over \$150 million for the repair, expansion, replacement, and construction of animal care facilities. A portion of these funds was used to construct the seventh shelter, Northeast Valley Animal Care Center in Mission Hills.

According to a 2008 audit of Prop F by the previous City Controller's Office, they found that the Northeast Valley shelter was operating below its capacity and was not open to the public for adopting animals. Although the goal of Prop F was to provide facilities fostering public access to increase animal adoptions and community involvement, no additional operating budget was approved, and citywide budget cuts in fiscal year 2008-09 significantly impacted the department's operations.

In addition, in fiscal year 2010-11, the department had their authorized positions reduced from 364 to 338. The department had the lowest number of authorized positions in fiscal year 2012-13 at 326. These reductions in positions slowly began to increase over time, peaking at 381 authorized positions in fiscal year 2019-20 but then positions were eliminated and decreased to 354 when positions were provided as offsets through the budget process and when employees took the Separation Incentive Program during the pandemic.

Under the recommendation of the CAO in fiscal year 2011-12, the Northeast Valley shelter was subsequently contracted out to Best Friends Animal Society pursuing a Public-Private partnership that was cost neutral to the City's General Fund.

The lack of authorized positions has made it difficult for the department to not only staff and operate the Northeast Valley shelter but also to operate the six existing animal care shelters. As such, our current six animal shelters are overcrowded and sufficient animal care and enrichment are lacking.

In their fiscal year 2023-24 operating budget request, the department is seeking funding to fully staff the Northeast Valley shelter. As of today, the Northeast Valley shelter has still not been fully funded to operate as the seventh city animal shelter.