

# MAYOR'S OFFICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE

ANNUAL REPORT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2020



Mayor's Office of  
Animal Welfare

Photo credit for all adoptable animals: Animal Care Centers of NYC  
Ladie (front cover) and Blue (back cover) are available for adoption at [Animal Care Centers of NYC](#).

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is issued to the Mayor and the Speaker of the City Council in accordance with Local Law 204 of 2019, which mandates annual reporting on the city's animal welfare service and program needs for all five boroughs. This is the first such report, covering calendar year 2020. This report was published on January 1, 2021.

The author thanks the many animal welfare organizations who contributed to the final report. In particular, the author thanks Animal Care Centers of NYC, The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and Best Friends Animal Society for their help. Many of the photographs in this report feature animals who are available for adoption at Animal Care Centers of NYC at the time of the report's release.

Lace is available for adoption at [Animal Care Centers of NYC](#).





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## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear New Yorkers,

This report comes during a global awakening to our complex relationship to animals. Human consumption of animals from crowded and unsanitary fur farms, animal agriculture operations, and wildlife markets has proven to not only be inhumane but dangerous to our health. Moreover, the events of 2020 have made clear that the animals in our social environment both affect and are affected by our experience of COVID-19 - animals have contracted COVID-19 from close contact with their sick human caregivers and have also suffered the economic fallout of the pandemic as their guardians choose between paying for veterinary care or other bills.

On the positive end, the cats and dogs with whom we share our homes have kept us company while we abide by stay at home orders, and record numbers of people have fostered and adopted from our animal shelters. We are thrilled at the rate New Yorkers have shown up to support shelter animals, and we hope to maintain this unprecedented engagement from the community into 2021.

At a time when every piece of PPE was precious, the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare also ensured that our essential workers in animal welfare could continue their activities safely. Animal shelter workers, veterinarians, wildlife rehabilitators, and people distributing emergency pet food were supplied with face coverings, gloves, isolation gowns, and face shields to keep performing their heroic and critical work.

For 2021, the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare has been working to ensure fair recovery for NYC is inclusive of animals. We find it more important than ever to highlight that all struggles are connected – we

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cannot address animal shelter intake without confronting poverty, we cannot address animal cruelty without engaging criminal justice reform, and we cannot address humane education without discussing equity and excellence in our public schools. The progressive framework for a fairer city is one that includes animals and recognizes the interconnected nature of the fight for justice for all New Yorkers. Our Mayor said it best in 2019 when he signed into law the creation of the Office of Animal Welfare:

*“If our relationship with animals isn’t right, then our relationship with the earth isn’t right and our relationship with each other as human beings isn’t right...The humane concept is about all of us and it’s about everything.”*

– Mayor Bill de Blasio

Sincerely,



Christine Kim  
Director  
Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare

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## COVID-19 PET RESPONSE PLAN

In recognition of the new challenges faced by New York City's animal guardians as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare and NYC Emergency Management mobilized its partners within the Animal Planning Task Force (APTF) to work collaboratively on a strategic response to help people and animals in crisis.

The unified coordination culminated in the launch of the NYC COVID-19 Pet Hotline and Resource Desk. The first of its kind in the country, the Pet Hotline serves as an information, planning, referral and service coordination resource for NYC residents who need support for their pets during the pandemic.

### **About the NYC Emergency Management's Animal Planning Task Force (APTF)**

APTF is a working group of governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations that are involved in emergency animal response and recovery operations. The APTF balances the health and safety needs of people and their companion and service animals in emergencies by providing rescue, shelter, veterinary care, adoption and fostering services.

The APTF collaboration is coordinated by NYC Emergency Management. Nonprofit partners include American Red Cross, Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC), Animal Haven, ASPCA, Best Friends Animal Society, Bideawee, HSUS, Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, New York State Animal Protection Federation, NYC Veterinary Emergency Response Team, and PAWS NY. Government agencies include Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, NYPD, Department of Homeless Services, Public Engagement Unit, and NYC Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare.





## Background

The pandemic has mainstreamed the One Health concept, a transdisciplinary approach to public health which recognizes the interchange between human health, environmental health, and animal health. One Health is generally thought of as relating to broad systems – for example, human consumption of wildlife and its impact on ecosystems and its contribution to zoonotic diseases. For the NYC COVID-19 Pet Response Plan, the APTF applied One Health to a more micro scale – looking at the exchange between an individual human’s health, their home, and the animals with whom they share that home.

Prior to the development of the COVID-19 Pet Response Plan, ACC, the City’s contracted provider of animal sheltering services, was the sole responder to calls regarding animals who had been left alone in an apartment because their human had either died or been hospitalized due to COVID-19. APTF’s goal for mobilization was to reach people and pets across the spectrum of COVID-19 impact and create a broader safety net for people and animals in need during the pandemic.

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The COVID-19 Pet Response Plan includes two tiers of services:

- Tier 1 - COVID-19 Pet Hotline: The public-facing platform where all cases are received, and mild to moderate cases are handled.
- Tier 2 - Resource Desk: Internal referrals of cases requiring more in-depth case management or emergency retrieval and boarding.

The following components make up the COVID-19 Pet Response Plan across the two tiers of services:

1. Outreach and education to reach animal guardians prior to crisis
2. Direct case management for people and animals in crisis
3. Transport of animals to a suitable environment for caregiving
4. In-home care for animals
5. Reunification of people and animals, or permanent placement to an external party.

Services are available in all LL 30 languages.

## **Tier 1 - NYC COVID-19 Pet Hotline**

The COVID-19 Pet Hotline was established as the point-of-entry into the two-tiered service system. The hotline is staffed by ASPCA employees and serves as an information, planning, referral and service coordination hub for NYC residents who need support for their animals during the pandemic. Hotline operators can help mitigate callers' concerns about a variety of topics including but not limited to:

- Concerns about the role animals play in COVID-19 transmission;
- Planning for animals in the event of an emergency hospitalization;
- Connecting to pet relief resources such as subsidized emergency veterinary care and free pet food and supplies;
- Temporary emergency boarding or animal surrender services.

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During the first wave of COVID-19, the hotline provided support April 20 - October 4, 2020. During that time, the team assisted over 19,000 NYC animals. The majority of calls were made in English (>10,000), followed by Spanish (approximately 1,100). The majority of calls also originated from the Bronx and Brooklyn, and referrals to the hotline were made mainly by word of mouth, Facebook, and other social media platforms. Early on, a Notify NYC text alert generated a significant call volume, and a smaller number of referrals were made to the hotline through 311. The pet hotline flyer was also distributed at Grab and Go food distribution sites and shared by electeds, connecting constituents in their communities to these much-needed services.



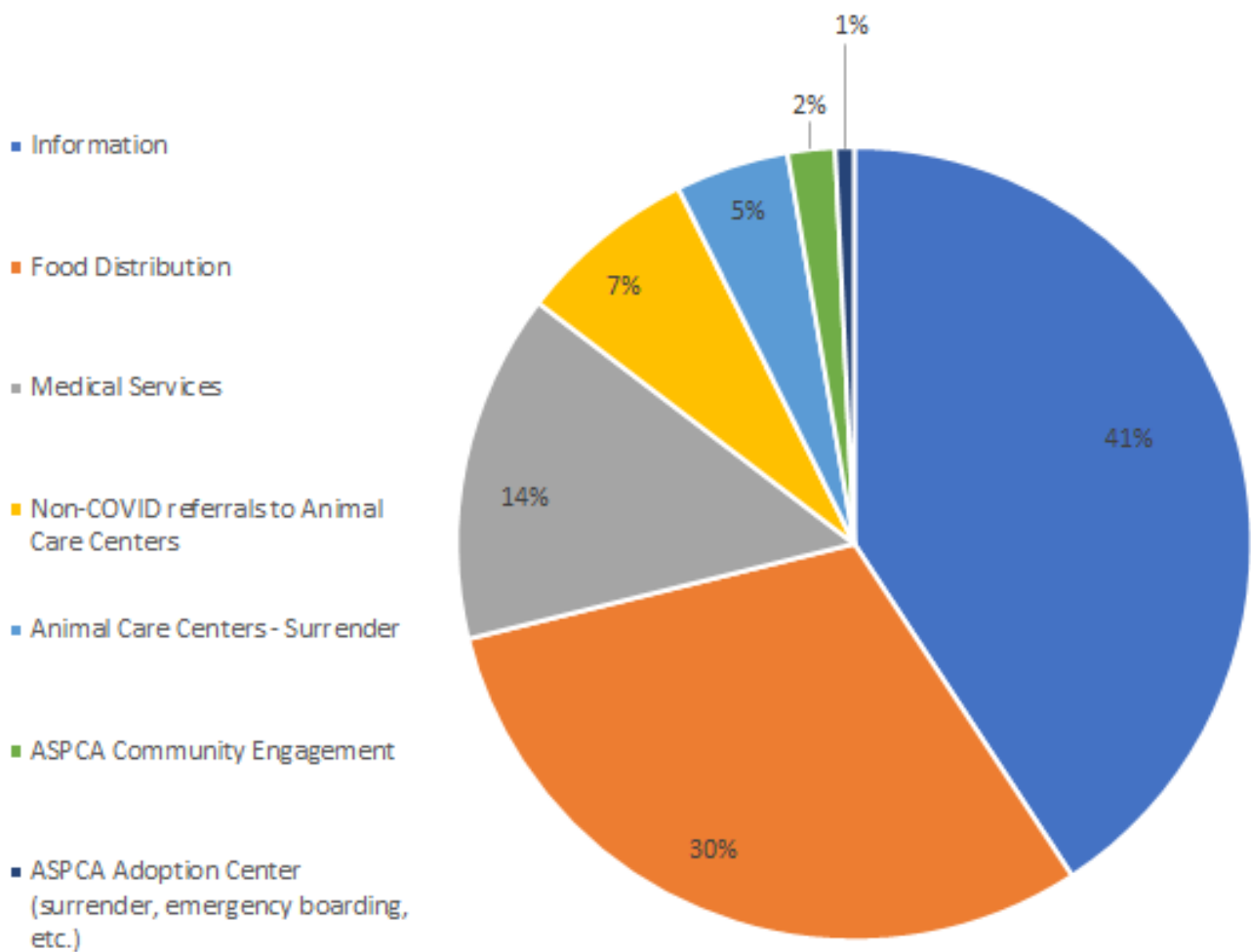


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## COVID-19 Pet Hotline Cumulative Statistics for First Wave Operations April 20 - October 4, 2020

- 11,379 cases
- 19,207 animals assisted
  - 10,121 cats
  - 8,817 dogs
  - 269 other animals (including birds, fish, lizards, guinea pigs, and hamsters)

### Interventions:



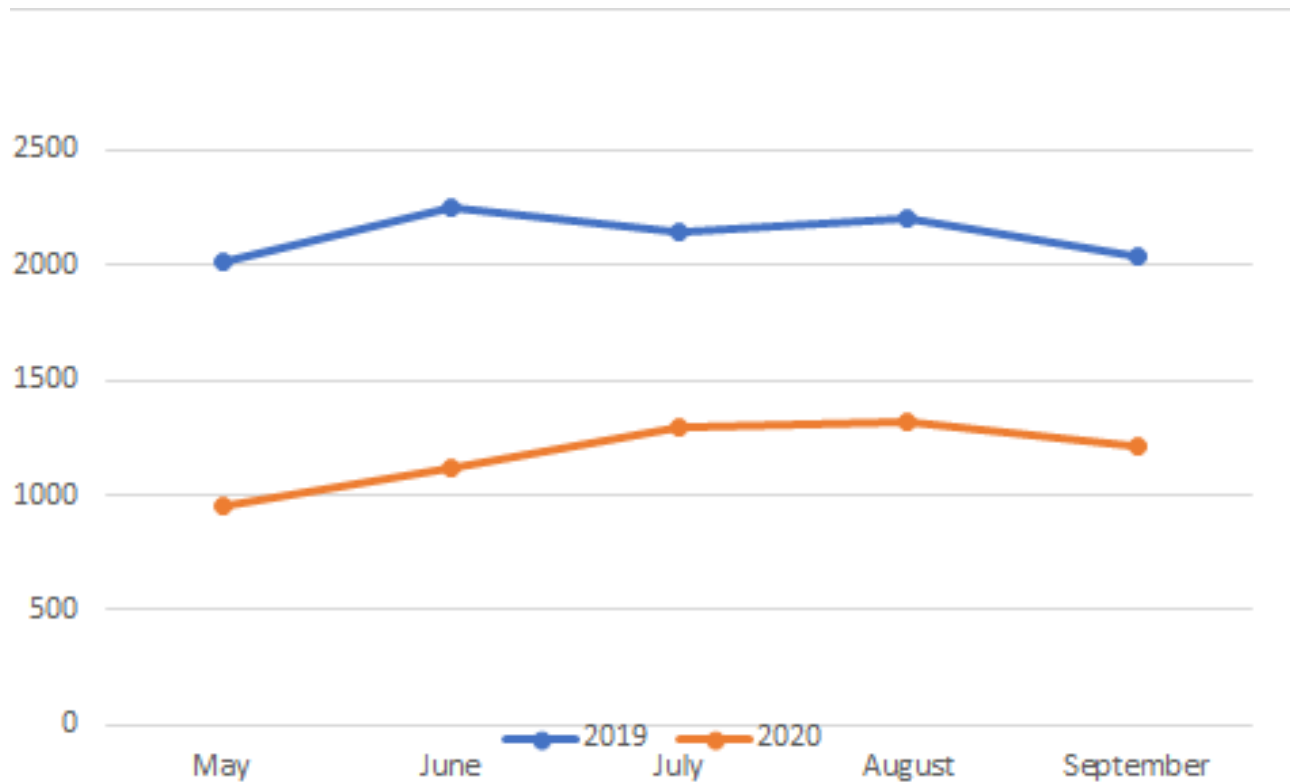
The hotline was re-established on December 7, 2020 to support New Yorkers with animals through the second wave of COVID-19.

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## Tier 2 - Resource Desk

Cases requiring higher levels of support such as emergency retrieval, in-home pet drop-in services, or emergency boarding that cannot be accommodated at the ASPCA's shelter are internally referred to the second tier of services called the Resource Desk, which is staffed by employees of ACC and Animal Haven. HSUS also played an instrumental role in the development of the Resource Desk and provided critical operational support. During the first wave of COVID-19, the Resource Desk managed 339 cases. While the COVID-19 Pet Response Plan was in operation, ACC's shelter intake declined dramatically, suggesting that the safety net put in place was an effective tool for diverting or preventing surrender to the municipal shelter.

### ACC Intake 2019 & 2020



For more information on ACC's intake, please see the [Lifesaving Statistics](#) on their website.



# FAIR RECOVERY AND COMPANION ANIMAL WELFARE

## About the Roadmap

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed deep inequities across social determinants of health. As important parts of our social systems, companion animals have been and will continue to be affected by the COVID-19 crisis as well – particularly those with human caregivers who will face the social and economic impacts for years to come. The Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare extends the Administration's goal for a fair recovery to animal welfare in NYC.

Members of the NYC Emergency Management's Animal Planning Task Force have united under the Fair Recovery and Companion Animal Welfare working group to rebuild the landscape of animal welfare in a way that contributes to a stronger and more equitable city. To this end, the working group's strategy to support the recovery of companion animal welfare in NYC is outlined in the Fair Recovery and Companion Animal Welfare Roadmap, which focuses on three key principles:

Rudy is available for adoption at [Animal Care Centers of NYC](#).



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- Keep People and Pets Together
- Quality Care for All
- Prioritize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

*Members of the Fair Recovery & Companion Animal Welfare Working Group:*  
ACC, ASPCA, Best Friends Animal Society, Bideawee, HSUS, Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare

## Guiding Principles

### Keep People and Pets Together

Companion animals are a part of households across race, age, and income demographics. Resources to care for animals, however, are not spread out so evenly. Animal care and animal shelter surrender rates are directly tied to availability, accessibility, and equitable distribution of resources.

### Key Initiatives:

- **Pet-Accessible Housing:** MOAW is studying the impact of pet policies in housing on the municipal animal shelter intake rate. To encourage keeping people and pets together, MOAW is also identifying and developing resources to help housing providers implement pet-accessible policies.
- **Community Behavior Support:** Behavior is one of the top reasons for animal shelter surrender. By making expert behavior guidance available to the public, free of charge, and in multiple languages, we commit to helping all New Yorkers understand the animals with whom they share their lives and homes. While these virtual behavior events and resources are available to all, outreach targets the most vulnerable communities and guardians of dogs with the greatest behavioral needs.
- **ACC Community Pets Programming:** The Community Pets Program is a compassionate outreach initiative with a simple goal: keep pets with their human families by providing access to necessary animal health and welfare resources. ACC's Community Pets Program works within Bronx and Queens neighborhoods to identify pet owners in need and assist them in keeping their pets. Free vaccine clinic events, dog training classes, and spay/neuter services are just some of what ACC offers.

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## Quality Care for All

COVID-19 exposed our city's most painful disparities, including access to medical care. As New York City's animal lovers know, the health and welfare of people and their animals are tied together. There is urgency in bringing affordable, quality healthcare to every New Yorker and to build upon programs to increase access to quality companion animal care as an extension of our outreach to the city's hardest-hit communities.

### Key Initiatives:

- **ASPCA Community Veterinary Centers:** ASPCA will be building a network of Community Veterinary Centers to provide low-income pet owners in underserved communities with access to basic veterinary care, including vaccinations and spay/neuter surgery. The first ASPCA Community Veterinary Center opened in the South Bronx in the spring of 2020, which will be followed by Brooklyn in early 2021, with an additional site to come.
- **Integrated Service Delivery:** MOAW applies the One Health approach to the local and micro scale, recognizing the interconnection between the health of New Yorkers, their pets, and the neighborhoods and homes in which we live. We commit to organizing integrated human and animal service resource fairs for the hardest-hit communities and building on previous initiatives to work across City agencies to deliver both human and animal care for the most complex human-animal welfare issues.



Kai is available for adoption at  
[Animal Care Centers of NYC](#).

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## Prioritize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

To create a stronger, safer, and fairer City for everyone, we each have a responsibility to deepen our understanding of oppression and act on undoing racism in ourselves and within our communities, including within the animal welfare movement. Animal welfare must become a more diverse and inclusive movement, and animal advocates must be good allies to other social justice advocates and people of color.

### Key Initiatives:

- **Diversifying the Workforce:** To ensure animal welfare professions reflect the diversity of the New York City communities which are served, we commit to building more intentional workforce development pipelines to good paying animal welfare jobs with opportunities for advancement.
- **Promote Social Learning and Collective Introspection:** Disparities, structural racism, and implicit bias affect us all. The Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare will share resources for the animal welfare community to learn about how racial injustices have shaped the physical and social geography of the city. We will also provide a platform for community members to share, reflect on personal experiences, and develop an understanding of both the root causes and effects.
- **Reduce Bias:** Companion animal welfare operations can harbor bias, including within systems that facilitate rescue, adoption, and prosecution of animal crimes. We strive to reduce bias of who is deemed "worthy" of having an animal by building on the current open adoptions model utilized by ACC and the community engagement/criminal justice partnership between the ASPCA and NYPD. Community engagement and resource delivery are key to reforming systems that traditionally confuse poverty for neglect and abuse.



Photo credit: Wag!



## ANIMAL SERVICES FOR TEST & TRACE SAFE SEPARATION PROGRAM

On October 26, 2020, NYC's Test & Trace Corps and Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare launched their partnership with Wag! to help patients care for their companion animals while they safely separate to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The Take Care program of the NYC Test & Trace Corps ensures that anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts receive all the resources necessary to safely separate in a hotel or at home to stop the spread of the virus. The Test & Trace Corps coordinates Wag!'s companion animal services through a Resource Navigator or when booking a hotel room. Through Wag!'s generous donation of services, participating patients are then provided with free dog walking or other pet drop-in services to ensure they can remain safely separated.

From October 26 - December 31, 2020, Test & Trace has made 24 referrals to Wag! for patients with animals.



## ANIMAL HOARDING WORKING GROUP

In late 2019, MOAW convened a diverse group of public and private partners from fields including animal welfare, mental health, and law enforcement for a series of roundtable discussions on animal hoarding. The purpose of these discussions was to identify and foster cross-disciplinary partnerships to address animal hoarding and the chronic mental health conditions of which hoarding is a symptom.

In January 2020, the discussions culminated in the first assembly of the animal hoarding working group. The group was convened for a single high-profile case with a long history of engagement at the ASPCA. The resolution of this case required the collaboration of the ASPCA, Adult Protective Services, NYPD, and the nonprofit JASA, as well as the consult of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Department of Buildings.

The successful interagency response resulted in the retrieval of 39 sick and malnourished cats and 15 birds, as well as coordination of medical and mental health services for the homeowner. The animal hoarding working group will be convened again in spring 2021.



**NYC**

picnic

Like all New Yorkers,  
deer know where to  
find a good meal.

**Please don't feed  
NYC's wildlife.**

**wildlife  
NYC**

Office of the Mayor

## PROJECT YEAR 4 DEER POPULATION CONTROL STUDY RESULTS

### Background on White-Tailed Deer

White-tailed deer are a part of New York State's rich ecosystems and are greatly valued by many New Yorkers. However, at high population levels deer can pose significant challenges to human health and safety through deer-vehicle collisions and associations with tick-borne illnesses. They are also a serious threat to forest health and can impact other native wildlife that depend on this habitat. Within New York City, populations of white-tailed deer are growing and expanding in the Bronx and Staten Island. Just like New Yorkers, deer prefer to live in areas with lots of food options and plenty of space. That's what makes the abundance of greenery and shelter found in these boroughs' parks and greenspaces so attractive.

Without active management, deer populations are expected to increase and further impact available habitats. The City has implemented an integrated, non-lethal, site-specific management plan that will allow experts to take immediate steps to reduce future impacts of an over-abundant deer population.

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## Background on the City's Non-Lethal Deer Impact Management Program

The City's non-lethal, site-specific Deer Impact Management Plan, launched in May 2016, includes the following elements:

- Sterilization Study focused on male deer and designed and implemented with consideration for the nature of these animals and their reproductive patterns. As of April 2020, 93% of the antlered males on Staten Island had been sterilized.
- Traffic Safety Measures to reduce deer-vehicle collisions including signage, and education.
- Extensive Public Education focusing on safely coexisting with deer in an urban environment, including driver education to reduce deer-vehicle collisions, public health education to reduce the incidence of tick bites and tick-borne illnesses, and environmental education to discourage feeding and encourage the planting of deer least-preferred plants.
- Natural Resource Protections including new fences around planted forest, tree guards on new trees, deer least-preferred plantings and further protective measures.
- Impact Monitoring to understand the problems that deer can cause and to measure the success of the Deer Impact Management Plan. The City is monitoring the number and location of collisions between vehicles and deer, the presence of ticks and the incidence of tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease, the impact of deer on the health of forests and greenspaces, the number and location of deer carcasses, and the deer population, including their death rate, birth rate, and total deer numbers.

The logo for Wildlife NYC, featuring the words "wildlife" and "NYC" in a sans-serif font, with "NYC" in a smaller font size below "wildlife".

wildlife  
NYC

A close-up photograph of a deer's head, focusing on its large, velvet-covered antlers. The background is a blurred, warm-toned forest scene.

# Slow down.

Deer can appear suddenly and without warning, so watch your speed.

Visit [nyc.gov/wildlife](https://nyc.gov/wildlife) for more tips about living safely with deer.



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## Year 4 Population Control Study Results

The study's fourth population estimate, conducted in January 2020, estimated approximately 1,555 deer in the borough, an approximate 24% reduction in Staten Island's deer population since January 2017. In addition, the estimate shows an approximate 84% decrease in fawn births since the program began.

Between 2019 and 2020, results showed the greatest drop in population since the program began, the largest rate of decrease. The first population assessment, conducted in January 2017, estimated approximately 2,053 deer living in Staten Island. In January 2018, study results estimated an overall population of 1,884 deer on Staten Island which dropped to approximately 1,737 the following year. The most recent estimate, from January 2020, shows approximately only 1,555 deer.

Most significantly, the results depict a clear relationship between the number of sterilized bucks and the decline in fawn births. There has been an annual decrease in the number of deer born since the sterilization study began that closely mimics the number of deer sterilized by year.

The initial study ran for three project years from 2016 to 2019. In 2019, Parks awarded a new five-year contract White Buffalo, Inc. to continue the population control study in order to preserve the high percentage of sterilized males. The City is currently in Project Year 5 of the Non-Lethal Deer Impact Management Plan, which runs from July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021. Year 5 field operations are underway as this report is being written, beginning on December 6, 2020 and scheduled to continue through January 31, 2021.







## BRINGING MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES TO NYC'S ANIMAL WELFARE COMMUNITY

To combat higher levels of psychological distress and suicide in the animal welfare community, MOAW and Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC are conducting outreach to promote Thrive in Your Workplace (TWP) to veterinary practices and animal welfare employers.

TWP is a free program that supports local employers with bringing mental health support to the workplace. Using an evidence-driven assessment and toolkit, TWP helps to shape workplace mental health strategy that takes both employee wellbeing and organizational priorities into account, and provides technical assistance to implement workplace mental health programs and policies.

At the time of this report's release, two major animal welfare organizations in NYC are participating in TWP, affecting approximately 1,100 animal welfare workers between the two employers.

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## CONCLUSIONS

This report is an overview of the major projects undertaken by the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare in 2020. Because of the nature of the COVID-19 crisis, programs and services related to the City's COVID-19 Pet Response Plan are the dominant needs across all five boroughs. The "Fair Recovery and Companion Animal Welfare" plan outlined in this report also provides a roadmap for the Office's work moving forward to ensure a fair recovery for NYC is one that is inclusive of people and companion animals in need.

MOAW's work is a result of successfully coordinating our fellow government agencies, elected officials, advocacy organizations, and providers who have committed themselves to protecting the animals who enrich our lives and inhabit our physical and social environments. By working together, we can make NYC a more humane city, and one that includes animal welfare in the de Blasio administration's vision for a fairer city.



Marshmallow is available for adoption at  
[Animal Care Centers of NYC](#)



Mayor's Office of  
Animal Welfare

