



# HITCHCOCK ROAD

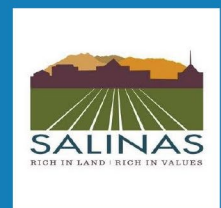
## Animal Services



# 2025–2028 Strategic Plan



A Joint Powers Agency (JPA) between  
the County of Monterey and the City of Salinas



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# A Message from Our Administrator and Board of Directors Chair

At Hitchcock Road Animal Services (HRAS), our mission is to ensure a high-quality of life for animals and people in the county through our programs and services. As a Joint Powers Agency (JPA) between the County of Monterey and the City of Salinas, we are dedicated to advancing animal well-being and promoting public health in all that we do.



With our mission guiding our work, HRAS has just completed a comprehensive strategic planning process. The HRAS Board prioritized conducting an extensive community engagement process to identify community priorities and needs. This process consisted of conducting focus groups with HRAS staff, HRAS volunteers, animal-serving organizations in Salinas and throughout Monterey County, the HRAS Advisory Committee, community members from across the county, and an interview with the CEO of CalAnimals.

We are pleased to note that many of the strategies and activities identified in this strategic plan are already in practice and align with best and promising practices. The strategic plan also includes areas for enhancement. The plan prioritizes strengthening animal services, expanding community engagement and partnerships, and establishing sustainable funding to enhance operations—all with the goal of creating a county where both animals and people can thrive. The final product incorporates the range of input we gathered and reflects our values, ambitious goals, strategies, and activities that will guide HRAS's direction over the next three years and beyond.

We hope that this strategic plan is shared widely throughout the county to increase awareness about the range of excellent services and programs offered by HRAS and encourages community members to check us out and get involved! We invite everyone to share our excitement for this next chapter of HRAS and our ongoing commitment to ensure a high-quality of life for animals and people through the range of services and programs offered at HRAS.

Best regards,

*Cynthia Burnham*

**Cynthia Burnham**, HRAS Animal Services Administrator

*Glenn Church*

**Glenn Church**, Chair, HRAS Agency Board of Directors Supervisor, District 2, County of Monterey Board of Supervisors

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# About Us

**Hitchcock Road Animal Services (HRAS)** is the result of a Joint Powers Agreement between the County of Monterey and the City of Salinas. HRAS provides a range of animal services to areas that are unincorporated in Monterey County, the City of Salinas, the City of Del Rey Oaks, the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, the City of Greenfield, the City of Marina, and California State University Monterey Bay. Each year, the HRAS shelter houses approximately 4,000 animals—including dogs, cats, rabbits, and other small pets (e.g., birds, guinea pigs, hamsters). HRAS strives to provide the highest-quality animal services while addressing the needs of the county and ensuring community health.



# Our Mission and Vision

## Mission Statement

*Ensure a high-quality of life for animals and people through education, compassion, pet retention, advocacy, collaboration, and effective enforcement in Monterey County.*

## Vision Statement

*Animals and people thrive in Monterey County.*

The [Five Freedoms](#) and [Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters](#) informed a common understanding of shelter best practices and helped shape the strategic plan.

The [Five Freedoms](#) are long-standing and widely recognized principles in animal well-being that ensure both the mental and physical well-being of animals. The codified Five Freedoms are as follows:

1. [Freedom from Hunger and Thirst](#) by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor.
2. [Freedom from Discomfort](#) by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. [Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease](#) by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. [Freedom to Express Normal Behavior](#) by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. [Freedom from Fear and Distress](#) by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

For more information, please visit the Animal Humane Society's webpage on the Five Freedoms.

The [Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters](#) aim to serve as a resource for the care of shelter animals, such as providing a set of common standards for animal care and well-being and guidance on ways to reduce common shelter challenges. For more information, please read [The Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters](#).



# Our Services

## Animal Sheltering

HRAS provides compassionate care for animals in need of shelter. Every animal brought into the shelter receives nutritious food, clean water, a clean space to stay, and necessary medical treatment. The staff are committed to addressing the needs of every animal while they wait to be reunited with their owner, adopted into a new home, or transferred to an animal rescue partner.



## Lost and Found

HRAS strives to get as many lost pets back home as possible. To make it easy, HRAS offers a texting platform where community members can receive information related to lost and found pets without coming into the shelter, which aims to reunite the animal with their family. When lost animals are brought to the shelter, HRAS staff scan for a microchip, administer vaccinations, photograph the animal, and begin the process of reunification. Lost and found

reports can be submitted by community members and viewed both in person and online, with listings updated hourly to provide timely and accurate information to the community.



## Licensing

HRAS is responsible for enforcing local and state rabies vaccination requirements for pets. HRAS offers easy and accessible licensing and renewal services for animals their geographic service area through a partnership with DocuPet. Having an up-to-date pet license ensures that a pet has its state-mandated rabies vaccine and helps identify owners of lost pets. HRAS, through DocuPet, enrolls the pet into a 24/7 lost pet service, providing a more efficient reunification process that does not require the animal to enter the shelter.

## Education Programs and Collaborations

Educational efforts include providing resources to pet owners, posting information on social media, and attending local community events throughout Monterey County. HRAS also partners with other organizations and local providers—for example—to offer low-cost community spay/neuter clinics for owned pets and feral cats.



## Adoption

HRAS offers in-person adoption services, so community members have the opportunity to meet available animals in the shelter and ensure compatibility with their existing pets through supervised meet-and-greet sessions. All adopted animals are spayed/neutered, vaccinated with initial essential vaccines, and microchipped to support a healthy start in their new home. Resources related to behavior and veterinary support are also provided to ensure a successful relationship between the adopted pet and the new family.



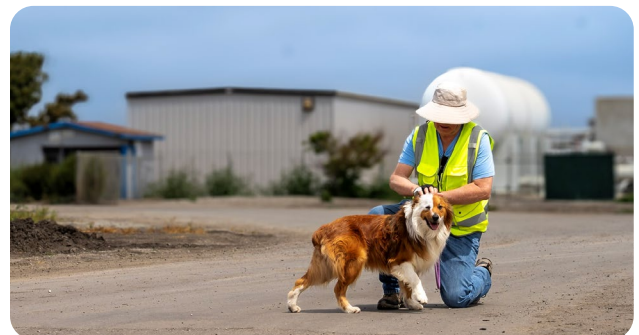
## Field Services

HRAS animal control officers (ACOs) are trained to respond to various animal-related concerns throughout unincorporated Monterey County and the City of Salinas. ACOs enforce state and local animal well-being laws and ordinances; pick up stray, injured, and aggressive animals; and investigate noise disturbances, animal bites, potential rabies exposures, and cases of animal neglect and abuse. They also work with and educate community members regarding proper ways to care for and shelter pets at home. Their work is central to the well-being and protection of community members and animals and promotes responsible pet ownership.



## Volunteer and Foster Programs

HRAS offers a range of opportunities for community members to engage with and support the shelter. Volunteers can walk dogs, socialize with cats, assist at adoption and education events, help with daily tasks like cleaning kennels and feeding animals, and contribute to administrative and social media tasks. Participants of the foster care program provide a temporary but secure home for animals that may be too young to be adopted, have special medical or behavioral needs, or need a break from the shelter environment. Foster homes provide the animals with the care and attention they need to thrive. Through participation in the volunteer and foster programs, community members not only contribute to the shelter animals but also have opportunities to build meaningful connections with the greater Monterey County community.



# Strategic Planning Process

The HRAS Strategic Plan was developed through a comprehensive and collaborative process to identify and clarify the shelter's direction over the next three years and beyond. This effort involved a thorough review of promising and best practices in animal care, a review of strategic plans from peer shelters, and extensive input from a range of community stakeholders and partners. Raimi + Associates was contracted to lead the strategic planning process and established a Strategic Planning Team (SPT), made up of the HRAS' Board of Directors, to oversee the process.



As part of the environmental scan, the SPT reviewed strategic plans from similar organizations as well as industry promising and best practices in the areas of operational excellence, policy and governance, community engagement and retention, animal well-being and outcomes, and data-driven decision making. This information supported the SPT in identifying core topic areas—many of which were already in operation at HRAS—to include in the strategic plan.

Raimi + Associates worked closely with the SPT to design a community engagement plan to gather input from a range of stakeholders. Raimi + Associates then conducted focus groups with HRAS staff, the HRAS Advisory Committee, HRAS volunteers, community members from across the county, representatives from animal-serving organizations in Monterey County and the City of Salinas, and conducted an interview with the CEO of CalAnimals—an association of California's animal welfare organizations. These conversations were summarized for the SPT and informed further discussions about community priorities and positioning the shelter to deepen and expand its impactful role throughout the county.



# Goals + Strategies

## 1. Deliver the Highest-Quality Animal Services

**Strategy 1.1** Ensure high-quality animal intake management and/or support pet retention practices

**Strategy 1.2** Enhance practices that support animal well-being

**Strategy 1.3** Expand use of data to guide long- and short-term decisions and proactively communicate with partners and the public

## 2. Expand Community Engagement and Partnerships to Enhance Animal Well-being and Ensure Community Health

**Strategy 2.1** Expand education to communities throughout the county and prioritize outreach to hotspots based on data

**Strategy 2.2** Increase the volunteer base to support high-quality services

**Strategy 2.3** Expand support and training to retain volunteers

**Strategy 2.4** Develop inclusive, culturally responsive messaging and targeted outreach strategies to increase visibility and advance strategic priorities

**Strategy 2.5** Strengthen and initiate strategic partnerships to address community needs

## 3. Establish Sustainable Funding to Enhance Operations

**Strategy 3.1** Secure sustainable funding

**Strategy 3.2** Ensure the highest-quality facility management practices and shelter operations

**Strategy 3.3** Improve staff recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts

**Strategy 3.4** Expand facility as staffing and resources allow to ensure high-quality services

**Strategy 3.5** Advocate for more effective countywide animal well-being policies



# HRAS Goals + Strategies

## GOAL 1

### Deliver the Highest-Quality Animal Services

Provide high-caliber, compassionate services to improve animal well-being and meet community needs.

#### **Strategy 1.1** Ensure high-quality animal intake management and/or support pet retention practices

- a. Track animal identification information at the time of intake and provide timely, accessible, and transparent processes for returning pets to their owners
- b. Improve resources and information for pet owners to prioritize pet retention
- c. Expand education and support to increase pet retention and animal well-being, which may include free pet identification, supplies, and resources for pet owners
- d. Place owner-surrendered animals without behavioral challenges immediately up for adoption
- e. Work towards developing a community-based Stray Cat and Dog Management Plan

#### **Strategy 1.2** Enhance practices that support animal well-being and community health

- a. Work to reduce the average length of stay for the animals in the shelter and increase the overall live release rate
- b. Address shelter animals' emotional and physical needs based on evolving animal well-being research and accepted best practices
- c. Provide appropriate housing and equipment for animals in the shelter to promote sanitation, space, and stress reduction practices and protocols
- d. Implement pet and stray vaccination and microchip requirements

**Strategy 1.3 Expand use of data to guide long- and short-term decisions and proactively communicate with partners and the public**

- a. Improve consistency and timeliness of recordkeeping to improve accuracy of metrics
- b. Refine and identify areas to capture data and build out recordkeeping to inform decision making
- c. Develop and refine recordkeeping and maintenance process
- d. Identify data that can be shared publicly to support transparency and foster community trust

## Outcomes

- Maintain high-caliber animal well-being services, treatment, and facilities
- Increase pets returned to owner
- Improve data collection and transparency

## Metrics

- Average length of stay by species and age group
- Live release rate by species
  - Number of adoptions
  - Number of animals returned to owner
  - Number of animals transferred to rescue partners
- Number of animals euthanized by reason
- Foster-to-adopt conversion rate



## GOAL 2

### **Expand Community Engagement and Partnerships to Enhance Animal Well-being and Ensure Community Health**

**Strengthen community engagement activities, volunteer opportunities, and partnerships to promote responsible pet ownership, expand community support for HRAS, enhance service coordination, improve animal well-being, and maintain the health of the community.**

#### **Strategy 2.1 Expand education and prioritize outreach to hotspots based on data**

- a. Develop and disseminate educational resources related to responsible pet ownership
- b. Expand efforts with schools and youth programs to teach humane education and responsible pet ownership and caregiving
- c. Plan community engagement events and messaging campaigns, especially related to the importance of spay/neuter operations

#### **Strategy 2.2 Develop inclusive, culturally responsive messaging and targeted outreach strategies to increase visibility and advance strategic priorities**

- a. Publicize services using a mix of traditional and digital media to increase visibility and educate the community
- b. Utilize social media platforms and neighborhood news applications to publicize volunteer opportunities and shelter events
- c. Tailor outreach campaigns to advance strategic priorities, including promoting shelter adoptions
- d. Partner with trusted organizations and veterinarians to conduct outreach activities and share information with residents
- e. Share accomplishments with community members
- f. Increase effectiveness of educational and outreach programs by adjusting outreach tactics based on community feedback and other evaluation data



### **Strategy 2.3 Increase the volunteer base to support high-quality services**

- a. Enhance opportunities and reduce barriers to volunteer engagement
- b. Reduce and streamline Health Department requirements for onboarding for volunteers

### **Strategy 2.4 Expand support and training to retain volunteers**

- a. Establish consistent and standardized training approach and protocols for new volunteers, including enhancing volunteer shadowing opportunities
- b. Promote and encourage volunteer shift opportunities to allow more outside-the-shelter enrichment time

### **Strategy 2.5 Strengthen and initiate strategic partnerships to address community needs**

- a. Collaborate with community organizations to increase access to free- to low-cost veterinary care, especially for communities with the highest need
- b. Expand partnerships with local veterinary programs to address veterinary services shortage
- c. Formalize relationships with various animal-serving organizations to provide services, share resources, and offer educational opportunities
- d. Strengthen partnerships with rescue agencies and community partners to provide low-cost and accessible spay/neuter opportunities, expand adoption and owner redemption services, and increase rescue transfer rates—all to reduce pet overpopulation and euthanasia

## **Outcomes**

- Enhance community awareness and education to improve pet care and animal well-being
- Increase volunteer and community engagement
- Expand culturally responsive outreach
- Expand and strengthen relationships with community partners

## **Metrics**

- Number of community engagement events and social media interactions
- Number of active volunteers
- Types of volunteer opportunities available
- Total of volunteer hours
- Number of partnerships by service type



## **GOAL 3**

### **Establish Sustainable Funding to Enhance Operations**

**Establish sustainable funding sources to strengthen operations and ensure high-quality services.**

#### **Strategy 3.1 Secure sustainable funding**

- a. Diversify funding sources
- b. Improve and expand opportunities throughout the community to increase financial donations

#### **Strategy 3.2 Ensure the highest-quality facility management practices and shelter operations**

- a. Explore options to enhance hours, services, and programs to better meet animal and community needs based on resources available
- b. Explore expanding veterinary services to provide critical animal care for pet owners
- c. Prioritize operating within the capacity of the shelter's facilities and evaluating the safety and well-being of animals in the shelter (especially when taking in animals with severe behavioral and medical issues)

#### **Strategy 3.3 Improve staff recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts**

- a. Work with the County to improve the recruitment and hiring processes to recruit and retain talented staff
- b. Support the need to increase staffing to meet the animal service needs of both the community and HRAS
- c. Promote and encourage a working environment that supports staff well-being

### **Strategy 3.4 Expand facility as staffing and resources allow to ensure high-quality services**

- a. Address space limitations by identifying opportunities to increase capacity as staffing and resources allow
- b. Seek capital funding to establish a satellite location in South County, once community needs, services, and facilities are evaluated

### **Strategy 3.5 Advocate for more effective countywide animal well-being policies**

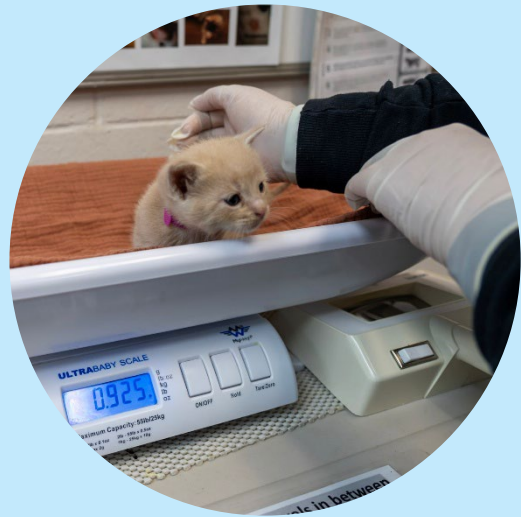
- a. Strengthen and refine HRAS's policies, procedures, and protocols to address gaps in animal well-being, meet community needs, and abide by regulatory standards
- b. Advocate at multiple levels of government for policies and ordinances that advance animal well-being goals and are consistent across jurisdictions

## **Outcomes**

- Increase funding and diversity of funding sources
- Strengthen facility infrastructure and operations to meet community and animal well-being needs
- Improve policy alignment across jurisdictions to reduce inefficiencies and establish a standard for animal well-being

## **Metrics**

- Number of community member donations received
- Number of community spay/neuter, microchipping, and vaccination services
- Staff retention rate
- Description of wellbeing activities offered for staff





# Acknowledgments

## Strategic Planning Team

- Glenn Church, *HRAS Board Chair, County of Monterey Board of Supervisors, District 2*
- Dennis Donohue, *HRAS Board Vice-Chair, City of Salinas Mayor*
- Kimbley Craig, *Former City of Salinas Mayor*
- Nick Chiulos, *Alternate Director, Assistant County Administrative Officer of Monterey County*
- Sonia M. De La Rosa, *Director, County Administrative Officer of Monterey County*
- Rene Mendez, *Director, City of Salinas City Manager*

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- Joel Holloman, *Animal Care Technician II*
- Leah Gast, *Sr. Animal Care Technician*
- Gabriela Gonzalez, *Principal Office Assistant*
- Petra Lewis, *Animal Services Supervisor, Shelter*
- Valiska Lujan, *Animal Services Supervisor, Field*
- Laura Ramos, *Registered Veterinary Technician*
- Sade Rivera, *Office Assistant II*
- Debiann Watanabe, *Veterinarian*

## Health Department Representatives

- Elsa Jimenez, *Director of Health*
- Miriam Mendoza-Hernandez, *Finance Manager*

## Members of the JPA

- Karla Tinajero, *HRAS Treasurer*
- Robert Brayer, *HRAS Counsel*

## Advisory Committee

- Mike Richards, *Chair*
- David Alexander, *Vice Chair*
- Mary Arnold
- Liz Camacho
- Julia Nix
- Susan Salcedo

## Volunteers

- John Bradford
- Adelina Bonano
- Bill Buffalo
- Sohee Cho
- Corinna Close
- Aramenta Hawkins
- Jacquie Ives
- Kathy Long
- Christine Riise
- Angie Roeder

## Animal-Serving Organizations

- Scott Delucchi, *SPCA Monterey County*
- Lora James, *SNIPbus*
- Laurie Machado, *Animal Friends Rescue*
- Rosemary Soto, *South Coast Animal Rescue*

## Community Members

- Melissa Bispo
- Scarlett Bispo
- Esther Malkin
- Kristina McCafrey
- Delia Leal
- Ivana Ranansky
- Corinna Zaglmayr

## CalAnimals

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- Sarah Perez, *Intermediate Researcher*

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