

Positive News for Pets In Spite of Downed Economy

Fort Myers, Florida, 1/11/10—While the past year has been economically rough for many people, it has been even worse for many of Lee County's pets. Numerous animals found themselves homeless when their owners lost their jobs or houses to foreclosure. There is reason for hope, however, if one takes a look at year-end reports from Lee County Domestic Animal Services and its programs aimed at reducing euthanasia and improving the lives of animals.

The agency achieved a 32% overall decline in euthanasia in 2009 compared to 2008 statistics. The number of feral cats euthanized dropped an impressive 47%. Total animal intake decreased by 24%. In 2008 12,377 animals were taken in and provided care compared to 9,437 in 2009. This was a particularly difficult accomplishment for a shelter that must take in all strays, pets of owners who have no other options, and pets confiscated for abuse.

LCDAS credits the positive statistics to the many proactive programs implemented within the last nine to 18 months. Among these are the Community Pet Pantry Program which supplies pet food to owners who cannot afford to feed their pets so they will not be surrendered to area shelters; a Spay/Neuter Program for pets of owners receiving public assistance; a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Program for feral cats; and Foster Care and Pet Placement Partnership Programs which provide temporary care and shelter for pets until they can be adopted. These programs have begun the long process of reducing the county's pet overpopulation problem and offer options other than euthanasia for many of the animals who do enter the shelter.

With owners struggling to afford the pets they have, it is not surprising that adoptions are down at many shelters. LCDAS, however, saw an 11% increase in cat adoptions in 2009 and dog adoptions remained about the same.

Lee County Domestic Animal Services will continue these life-saving programs and practices with the long-term goal of reducing euthanasia and placing more pets into loving, life-long homes. For more information about Spay/Neuter Programs or the T-N-R Program call 533-9234. Information about the Community Pet Pantry, Foster Care and Pet Placement Partnership Programs, pets for adoption, or to make a tax deductible donation to the Lee County Animal Care Trust Fund call 533-7387 or go to www.LeeLostPets.com.