



October 16, 2023

The Honorable Michael L. Thurmond  
DeKalb County Chief Executive Officer

Via e-mail: [CEOMichaelThurmond@dekalbcountyga.gov](mailto:CEOMichaelThurmond@dekalbcountyga.gov)

Dear Mr. Thurmond:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)—and our nearly **10,000** members and supporters in DeKalb County—to **thank you for your compassion for animals and for considering rescinding dangerous and inhumane “no-kill” policies** at the DeKalb County Animal Services shelter, operated through a contract with LifeLine Animal Project. Such policies are disastrous for both animals and residents. I hope the information herein is useful as you work to ensure safe and humane policies at the county facility.

As you noted in a [recent interview](#), *preventing* animals from ending up homeless is the **only humane and sustainable solution** to this crisis. Your community isn't alone—others across the country are grappling with the same issues, created by irresponsible owners and those who breed animals for profit. Exasperated with pouring more tax dollars into collecting, housing, and transferring or euthanizing the huge number of animals who are born unwanted, many communities have passed laws that require residents to have dogs and cats sterilized or to purchase breeding permits that can help offset the cost of animal control. Elected officials in [Gadsden, Alabama, recently passed emergency legislation](#) that requires residents to have their animal companions spayed or neutered to reduce the number of neglected and homeless animals who suffer alone outdoors and endanger residents. Floyd County, Georgia, recently [passed a similar measure](#). **We urge DeKalb County to take equally meaningful legislative action.**

Regarding “no-kill” policies, the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association issued a compelling statement that explains, **“The no-kill movement increases animal suffering and threatens public health with unintended consequences”**<sup>1</sup> [*emphasis added*] because, in part, animals are turned away from shelters that are full, dangerous dogs are released into the community or warehoused indefinitely, and animals are left to “languish in cages until they die to avoid euthanasia.”<sup>2</sup>

The disastrous and deadly consequences of “no-kill” policies are being seen [across the country](#). After a publicly funded self-professed “no-kill” animal shelter in Florida *twice* refused to accept a pack of starving, neglected dogs from a resident—claiming that the facility was “full”—the dogs mauled and killed [postal carrier Pamela Rock](#). In Dallas, after a woman was mauled to death by a pack of roaming dogs, DallasNews.com opined that the city's director of animal services, who was eventually removed, “focused on the shelter's live release rate—that is, the number of dogs [who] make it out alive—to the exclusion of common sense,”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>ColoVMA.org, “Colorado Veterinary Leaders Approve Statement Supporting Socially Conscious Animal Communities,” April 9, 2019, <https://www.colovma.org/advocacy-news/colorado-veterinary-leaders-approve-statement-supporting-socially-conscious-animal-communities/>.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>“It's Time for Dallas Animal Services Chief Jody Jones to Go,” *The Dallas Morning News*, May 16, 2016, DallasNews.com (attached).

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leaving animals on the streets, where they were suffering and attacking people, instead of risking an increase in the shelter's euthanasia statistics.

Such policies are deadly for animals as well. Recently in Las Vegas, where the publicly funded animal shelter has “no-kill” policies, a Chihuahua—who had been left outside the facility by their owner after the facility had refused to accept them—had to be euthanized after they were [run over in the facility's parking lot](#). In Louisiana, a Rottweiler who had been refused by a publicly funded facility with “no-kill” policies was found evidently unresponsive [in a crate abandoned behind a levee](#) on a hot day. The dog died before emergency treatment could be provided.

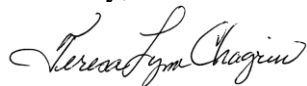
In July, it was reported that the city shelter in Austin, Texas—which is frequently touted as a “model” by “no-kill” campaigners—had been [refusing to accept animals for the past year](#). Despite turning away the majority of animals, the facility is chronically crowded and under fire. After a city council member visited the facility in June, she said she left with a stomachache and stated, “I wouldn't want my worst enemy to be treated in that condition.”<sup>4</sup> She said she had witnessed stressed and frustrated dogs warehoused “at the truck port behind the center”<sup>5</sup> in the heat, imprisoned in tiny wire crates to which they were reportedly confined “for more than 23 hours a day.”<sup>6</sup>

A humane model exists. The tenets of the **socially conscious sheltering model** have been adopted by the [Suncoast Humane Society](#) in Florida, the [Monadnock Humane Society](#) in New Hampshire, and several high-profile shelters in California as well as via resolutions in [Los Angeles County](#), California, and [Davis County](#), Utah, among others. These principles are detailed in the attached factsheet, “Socially Conscious Animal Sheltering: A Humane, Responsible Approach.”

Recently, elected officials in Sumter County, Florida, [scrapped the county shelter's “no-kill” policies](#) in favor of a socially conscious sheltering model. **Commissioners called the “no-kill” plan a “failure” and a “disaster.”**

Please let me know if PETA can assist you by providing examples of policies and ordinances that have helped in other communities. Thank you again for your compassion for animals and your hard work for the residents of DeKalb County.

Sincerely,



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#### Attachments

- PETA, “Socially Conscious Animal Sheltering: A Humane, Responsible Approach”
- *The Dallas Morning News*, “It's Time for Dallas Animal Services Chief Jody Jones to Go”

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<sup>4</sup>Britny Eubank, Isabella Basco, “Councilmember Mackenzie Kelly Raises Concerns About Overcrowding at Austin Animal Center,” KVUE.com, June 13, 2023, <https://www.kvue.com/article/life/animals/austin-animal-center-overcrowding-kelly/269-8bb566ab-5157-40f3-b899-56c0a9322573>.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*