



Animal Population Control Efforts

What questions did the review look at?

- ▶ How effectively is the New York City Department of Health (DOHMH) implementing and overseeing its animal population control efforts?
- ▶ Should DOHMH consider approaches tried elsewhere?

Why does it matter for New Yorkers?

New York City's animal population control program is intended to limit the number of unwanted stray dogs and cats by promoting low-cost or free spay and neuter services. These efforts help reduce shelter overcrowding and improve animal welfare.

The review found that DOHMH established a free or low-cost spay and neuter program, in compliance with City law. However, DOHMH has not been proactive in controlling animal populations overall and lacks a comprehensive strategy for evaluating whether its efforts are working. DOHMH relied on a single funding source (dog licensing surcharges) and has not sought other public or private funding, which limits the reach of the program. Between FY2022 and FY2024, DOHMH collected just \$951,000 in dog licensing surcharges, falling short of the \$1.5 million that was anticipated to be collected. The ASPCA subsequently performed 6,733 sterilizations during FYs 2023 to 2025, 37% fewer than its 10,660 target.

The review also noted other possible strategies, including grants or reimbursements for other providers and Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs for community cats. However, without a broader strategy and adequate funding, shelters may continue to face high intake levels and high costs.

What changes did the agency commit to make following the review?

- ▶ DOHMH agreed to explore additional funding avenues for the animal population control program, including by petitioning the City Council to amend Section 17-812 (Animal Population Control Fund) to add mandatory revenue streams to support the Program.
- ▶ DOHMH agreed to increase reporting on performance measures and work with the ASPCA to ensure compliance with all contractual reporting requirements, including to submit required reports for a lower-than-expected number of sterilization surgeries.

REVIEW FINDINGS



DOHMH has established a free and low-cost spay and neuter program.



DOHMH spent just \$316,000 during FYs 2022 through 2024 on animal control, compared to nearly \$54 million yearly on shelter operations.



Dog licensing surcharge revenue fell far short of expectations.



ASPCA performed 6,733 sterilizations from FY2023–FY2025, or 37% below target.



DOHMH has not established performance metrics or evaluation criteria to assess outreach efforts by the ASPCA.

Review Recommendations		Agency Response
1	Spearhead a re-evaluation of the City’s overall approach to animal population control and develop a new strategy for reducing all major drivers of animal shelter intake across the City, including an evaluation of what resources are needed to reduce dependence and spending on shelter services.	DISAGREED
2	Require ACC to track the causes of intakes based on owner relinquishments and develop strategies for reducing this source of shelter intake.	DISAGREED
3	Focus on reducing community cat populations by considering a range of new options, including a formal assessment of the viability of introducing City-funded TNR programs with appropriate oversight and control measures.	DISAGREED
4	Improve public awareness and enforcement of free-roaming cat regulations, including a formal system to track and document enforcement-related activities for pet owners whose cats are found to be roaming outside. DOHMH should exercise its authority under Section 23-309 to establish a specific 311 service request category for free-roaming cats.	DISAGREED
5	Develop a strategic plan to ensure that dog licensing outreach and education events are appropriately distributed across all five boroughs to improve awareness Citywide and increase dog licensing rates.	DISAGREED
6	Explore additional funding avenues as permitted under Section 17-811, including by petitioning the City Council to amend Section 17-812 (Animal Population Control Fund) to add mandatory revenue streams to support the Program.	AGREED
7	Develop, formalize, and implement a monitoring plan for the ASPCA contract and establish specific, clear, and measurable key performance indicators that are publicly reported and that support an overall effectiveness of the Program.	PARTIALLY AGREED ¹
8	Ensure that the ASPCA submits required reports for a lower-than-expected number of sterilization surgeries.	AGREED ²
9	Consider conducting surveys on a periodic basis of New York residents to help determine the effectiveness of the Program in reducing the unwanted stray animal population and to identify areas for improvement.	DISAGREED

¹ Although DOHMH stated that this recommendation is “not needed,” the response indicates partial agreement in that it agreed to “formalize a monitoring plan that is consistent with the contract scope of services and can consider making spay neuter numbers public.”

² Although DOHMH stated that it partially agrees with this recommendation, the response “acknowledges that the number of sterilization surgeries has been lower than budget” and “generally agrees with the recommendation to increase reporting on performance measures and will work with the ASPCA to ensure compliance with all contractual reporting requirements.”