



NEWS RELEASE

Young-Williams Animal Center launches centralized animal welfare services

Young-Williams Animal Center has launched a new consolidated animal welfare service that will provide animal care and control for the City of Knoxville and Knox County with a community-based approach to helping people and pets.

Young-Williams Animal Services will be under the umbrella of Young-Williams Animal Center – already the longtime municipal shelter for the city and county – and will manage animal field service duties with a proactive approach that focuses on education and assistance for pet owners for long-term change rather than relying on citations and seizures. Animal control previously had been the responsibility of the Knoxville Police Department and Knox County Sheriff's Office, and leadership at both law enforcement agencies supported the shift to the subject matter experts in animal welfare.

“We will meet pet owners where they are, without judgment, to achieve the best possible outcomes for pets and their people,” Young-Williams Animal Center CEO Janet Testerman said. “More than 40% of those who surrender a pet do not wish to and have typically hit a life hurdle that has forced them to consider relinquishing their beloved companion. Now we can connect owners to immediate resources and solutions to keep more pets in their homes and out of the shelter.”

Animal Services Officers will protect the public health and safety of the community and its pets by providing a range of services including:

- Reconnecting lost pets with an owner.
- Providing a range of resources to pet owners and their pets.
- Offering education and community outreach.
- Investigating an animal bite or safety concern.
- Responding to animal-related issues.
- Investigating concerns of animal cruelty or animal welfare.

Starting on April 1, community members should report animal-related concerns by calling 865-407-2229. In the case of an emergency, call 911 for dispatch of an Animal Services Officer. Examples of emergencies include a bite that requires medical attention, an aggressive animal that is loose with people in immediate danger or a pet that is in a life-threatening situation.

Online reporting is encouraged through young-williams.org/animal-services for non-emergent animal welfare concerns such as a constantly barking dog.

The reporting process will include prompt service, timely follow-up and thoughtful action. The Animal Services team will respond with a solutions-driven and respectful approach whether a citizen is reporting a concern about an animal or a pet owner in need of resources to comply with local laws.

“Our Animal Services team received training through the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA) as well as through other Field Services experts and agencies, so they are well equipped to manage field services, whether it’s responding to a stray animal or a potentially dangerous dog,” Director of Young-Williams Animal Services Rachel Ide said. “Residents can expect prompt service and solution-driven action that benefit the pet and owners.”

The mission of Young-Williams Animal Services is to lead the community to end pet homelessness, promote animal welfare and enhance the human-animal bond through community empowerment, education and proactive services for both pets and humans.

Centralized animal welfare services will benefit the community because:

- Animal Services operations shift from an emphasis on citations and seizures to aiding and assisting pets and their owners, which results in increased compliance of animal welfare laws and a decrease in complaint-driven calls.
- Centralized animal services is a proven strategy nationwide that provides efficient response and follow-up.
- Law enforcement agencies can focus more attention and resources on their core mission of reducing crime and keeping communities safe.
- Uniting the efforts of animal welfare organizations and law enforcement agencies improves efficiency and outcomes.
- Young-Williams Animal Center is an experienced animal welfare agency and one of the country’s preeminent shelters. The leadership and staff are equipped to manage animal services.

For information regarding lost and found pets, pet resources, local ordinances and additional Animal Services information, visit young-williams.org/animal-services.