



Communications Office - Media Release

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For Immediate Release

Animal Shelter Dog Kennels Under Quarantine Due to Distemper

CORRECTION: A previous release stated that the Animal Shelter is closing. That is not the case. See below for details.

ALACHUA COUNTY, FL - May 16, 2019 - Alachua County Animal Services recently documented 6 dogs with canine distemper virus infection, and these were humanely euthanized to minimize virus transmission to other dogs. The remaining 100 or so dogs in the shelter are now in quarantine for at least 2 weeks and will be monitored for infection. The Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine is assisting with testing and implementation of a management strategy that maximizes life-saving. Updates will be provided as more information becomes available.

The shelter is closed for dog adoptions and is not accepting owner surrendered dogs during this quarantine period. Unowned dogs and dogs that are a risk to public safety that must be brought into the shelter are being housed in a separate area from the quarantined population.

Canine distemper virus is carried by local wildlife including raccoons, foxes, skunks, and coyotes. That coupled with a large population of unvaccinated or under-vaccinated dogs that have exposure to wildlife, or areas frequented by wildlife, causes strays and dogs allowed to run at large to contract the virus and bring it with them to our facility. In accordance with our standard operating procedures, each animal is vaccinated against distemper upon admission to the facility. But if the animal has not previously been vaccinated, it can take up to 2 weeks before any significant immunity is achieved.

Cats are not at risk for infection by canine distemper virus, and the shelter is open for cat adoptions.

This situation indicates that canine distemper virus is circulating in the community. Dog owners should consult with their veterinarian to insure that their dog is properly vaccinated.

We respectfully ask for the public's patience as we deal with this problem. If you pick up a stray dog please notify Animal Services so that we can document it, check against our lost reports, and arrange for it to be scanned for a microchip. If you can foster it for a few weeks please let us know.. If that is not possible ask your friends and family if they would be willing to do so. Other nearby shelters and rescue groups may also be able to assist you.

For more information regarding these and other options please contact us at 352-264-6870. During this time the shelter will continue to be open Tuesday-Saturday 10:30am - 5:30pm for cat adoptions, license renewals, and to answer questions. Meanwhile our field services team will continue to respond to matters affecting public safety and animals in immediate danger 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have a disability and need an accommodation in order to participate in a County program, service or public meeting, please contact the Alachua County Equal Opportunity Office at (352)374-5275 at least 2 business days prior to the event. TTY users, please call 711 (Florida Relay Service).

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