

Ledy VanKavage

Best Friends Animal Society works with animal shelters across New Mexico to improve operations and increase lifesaving. Through our extensive work we have noticed the hundreds of miles driven each day by numerous animal control trucks at 45 New Mexico Animal Shelters. Often these trucks are dispatched long distances to pick up a stray pet and then drive long distances to bring the pet back to the shelter, without even trying to reunite the pet with its owner in the field. The pet owner then has to drive long distances to pick up the pet. If the Department promulgated rules encouraging Animal Control entities to reunite pets with their owners in the field it would greatly reduce emissions and increase lifesaving. Last year 10,018 dogs and cats were killed in New Mexico animal shelters, and many of their bodies were cremated-also resulting in more emissions. By impacting the way these 45 New Mexico animal shelters and their hundreds of trucks operate, you would help reach your goal of less emissions quicker.

<https://bestfriends.org/no-kill-2025/animal-shelter-statistics>

Return-to-Home Programs: Saving Lives by Reuniting Lost Pets with Their Families

Reuniting lost pets with their people is one of the most critical roles for shelters across the country. A solid return-to-home program encompasses everyone on the shelter's team. Animal control officers return lost pets in the field (instead of bringing them to a shelter); intake staff scan stray pets for microchips; volunteers manage lost-and-found social media pages and support given by platforms like Petco's Love Lost. Best Friends Animal Society endorses collaborative and robust return-to-home programs.



WHAT DOES A RETURN-TO-HOME PROGRAM LOOK LIKE?

- Equip animal control officers to support return-to-home programs in the field.
- Host low-cost or free microchip clinics in the community and offer microchipping to the public as a service at shelters.
- Develop foster-finder programs to keep pets in the neighborhoods where they were found until their owners can be located. Allowing finders of stray animals to temporarily foster the animals until owners can be located keeps animals in their community and relieves stress in the shelter population.
- Use technology to allow community members to search for their lost pets online and place a hold on the animal if found, so they can reclaim the animal before the pet is adopted by someone else.
- Allow the waiver of return-to-home (redemption) fees and citations when they present barriers to reunification of pets with their people.
- Allow owners to look for their lost pets anytime shelter staff are on-site, not just during normal business hours.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF RETURN-TO-HOME PROGRAMS?

- Greater sense of community
- Increased lifesaving of animals through reunification
- More efficient use of shelter resources
- Better relationship between animal control officers and their community