



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 17, 2023

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Lesner 
County Administrator

Re: **2022 Pima Animal Care Center – Safety Report**

Attached please find the 2022 Pima Animal Care Center (PACC) – Safety Report that summarizes data related to outcomes and bites in the community and at PACC from 2012 to 2022. PACC's Director, Monica Dangler, recently reviewed the historical community bite data. PACC has seen roughly a 15 percent decrease in bites in Pima County since 2012 due to policies and procedures that have been implemented to protect public, staff, volunteers and foster caregivers, while simultaneously creating a humane community.

PACC is a national leader in animal welfare implementing programs and policies geared towards achieving a 90 percent save rate. In 2022, PACC took in nearly 17,000 pets and saved 90.6 percent of those entering the shelter. As a large, open-admission shelter, euthanasia will, at times, be necessary. Pets that are medically suffering and cannot be treated as well as those that pose an immediate public safety threat are humanely euthanized. Nevertheless, thanks to PACC's medical and behavioral support teams, every single pet receives an individualized evaluation and disposition.

I believe the Board will be pleased to see that PACC continues in this positive trajectory.

JKL/dym


Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Monica Dangler, Director, Pima Animal Care Center

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 13, 2023

To: Jan Leshner
County Administrator

From: Monica Dangler 
Director of Animal Services

Re: **PACC Animal Safety Report**

I am writing to share the 2022 Safety Report for Pima Animal Care Center. In 2022, PACC took in 17,134 pets and saved 90.59% of the pets who entered the shelter system. Over the last ten years, PACC has been collecting data on shelter euthanasia; animal placement through adoption and rescue; the number of people injured for any reason in the shelter; and the number of bites in the shelter and in the community. PACC has seen roughly a 15% decrease in bites in Pima County since 2012 due to policies and procedures that have been implemented to protect the public, staff, volunteers and foster caregivers.

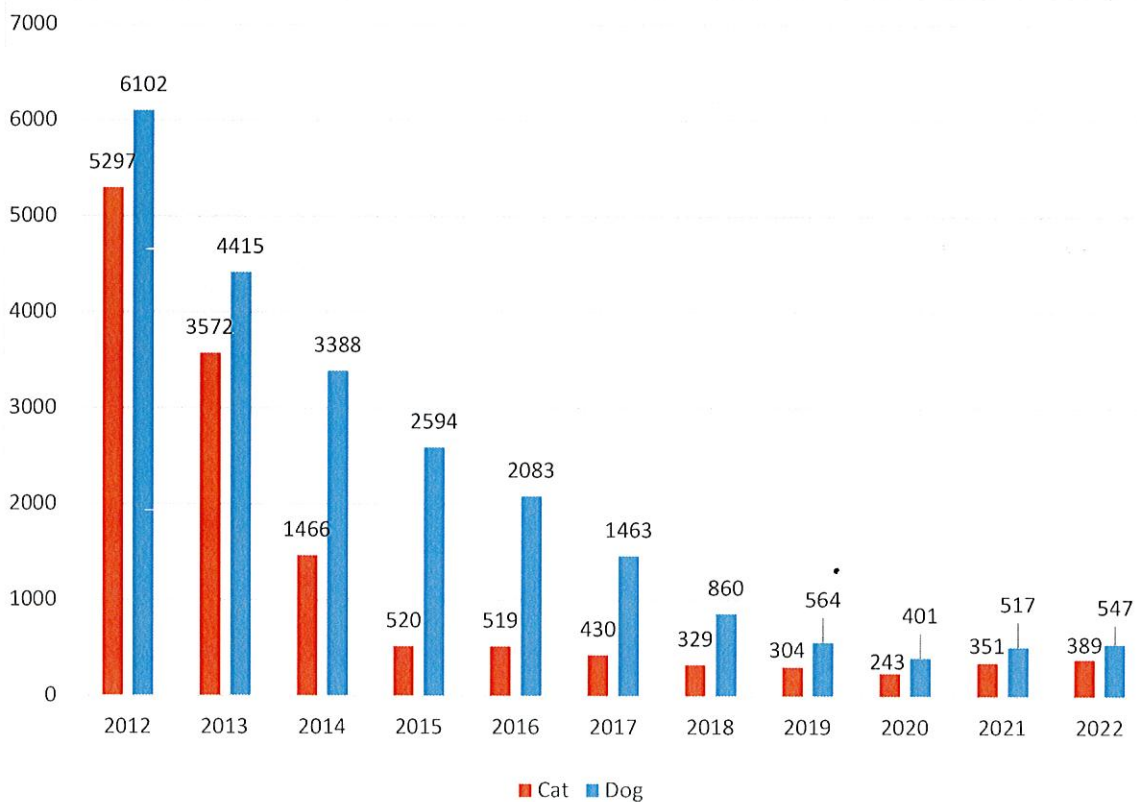
The attached report shows the data related to outcomes and bites in the community and at PACC from 2012 to 2022. Overall, safety in the facility is increasing, based on the number of bites in relation to the continued growth of staff and the volunteer team. It is also worth noting, that as PACC has become more transparent with not only the community, but also the volunteers we have seen volunteers more freely self-reporting bites as they do not fear retaliation. The report includes a more detailed summary of the information shared here. As PACC continues to make strides in providing comprehensive safety training to staff and volunteers and building volunteer-driven programs to increase behavioral support to the shelter and owned dogs and cats, we anticipate future data confirming that public safety and lifesaving are consistent and in Pima County, we continue to work to create a safe, humane community.

Pima Animal Care Center 2022 Safety Report

For the past 10 years, Pima Animal Care Center (PACC) has led the country in lifesaving animal sheltering. PACC programs and policies are geared toward helping families reunite with their pets, keep their pets, or create new families with pets, all with public safety in mind. By role modeling animal sheltering best practices, PACC has managed to achieve roughly a 90% or higher live release rate. In 2022, PACC placed more than 15,591 pets in the community.

Every individual pet that comes into PACC receives an individualized medical and behavioral evaluation, and the vast majority are placed in community members' homes. However, as Pima County's only high-volume, open-admission shelter, it is inevitable that euthanasia is necessary in limited circumstances. PACC humanely euthanizes animals that are medically suffering and cannot be treated as well as those that pose an immediate threat to public safety. The intent of this memorandum is to describe PACC's process for dog placement as well as to review historical community bite data and efforts to safely place pets in our community. We will demonstrate that there has been no significant increase in recorded animal bite incidents over the last 10 years in Pima County; indeed, recorded animal bites decreased from 2,943 in 2012 to 2,452 in 2022. This decrease is despite an increase in population and dramatically reduced rates of euthanasia by PACC. (See Figure 1)

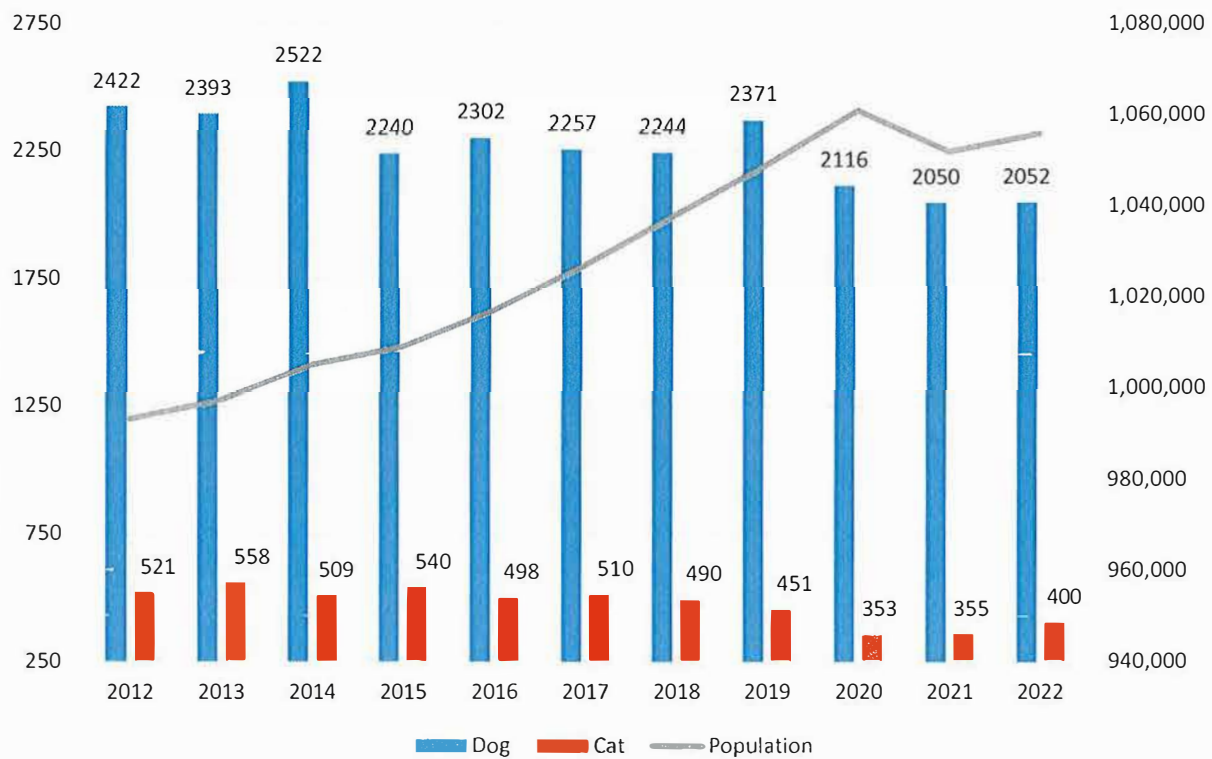
Figure 1: PACC Euthanasia 2012-2022



Animal Bites in Pima County and at PACC: Figures 2, 3, and 4 below include a multi-year comparison of bites in the community, bites in the shelter, and bites of adopted dogs. PACC selected time ranges based on the available years for each data point. There are no significant changes in any of these categories and PACC continues to monitor data closely to look for trends.

Please note that for the purpose of this analysis the word ‘bite’ indicates a legally reportable incident where an animal’s tooth breaks skin. Animal bites are legally reported and biting animals are quarantined due to possible rabies exposure. Bites may or may not represent “aggressive” behavior and often happen accidentally as dogs engage in play behaviors with humans and other pets. Dogs commonly use their mouths as a communication tool (much as they also use their tails), and reportable bites simply indicate that a dog’s tooth has broken skin on a human; thus, a bite is not necessarily an indicator of “aggression.” For example, puppies and young dogs may unintentionally bite during play while learning appropriate behaviors, and dogs that are fearful or under-socialized may defensively snap at a person if they are uncomfortable. In addition, the stress and confinement of dogs and cats living in a kennel 23+ hours a day may result in undesirable jumpy/mouthy and reactive behaviors that can lead to biting in play or exuberance. None of these behaviors are abnormal per se or would be the sole rationale for euthanasia as long as the bite injury is minor.

Figure 2: Number of total reported cat and dog bites in Pima County from 2021-2022.



In 2022, there were 118 dog bites that occurred on PACC premises, reflecting an increase over the past two years as a result of a higher dog census in shelter. Dogs are regularly handled by both staff and volunteers. PACC has benefitted immensely from volunteer support in recent years as the population of dogs residing in the shelter has risen. Staff and volunteers provide enrichment, exercise, and training to animals residing in the shelter and are imperative to lifesaving and reduced euthanasia at PACC.

In recent years, PACC has implemented a variety of measures to minimize dog and cat bites on campus and continues to develop new protocols and training. PACC has training and ongoing support for volunteers and staff to minimize bites and other safety incidents involving cats and dogs in the shelter. The use of playgroups and daily handling observations to document observed behavior help staff and volunteers determine the safest way to handle pets. Volunteers and staff have access to an application that provides all documented behaviors and handling requirements. In addition, notes concerning special in-shelter handling needs are posted on the dog kennel doors to make it easy for volunteers or staff

to access prior to interacting with a dog. PACC’s dog behavior and enrichment team determines if any additional or different tools or approaches are needed to safely handle an animal and ensures those items are available at each kennel entrance. Emergency safety equipment including additional leashes, cat gloves, air horns, and break sticks are placed strategically throughout the facility and are checked weekly. PACC leadership also has regular meetings about safety incidents that have occurred in shelter and methods and new protocol to prevent these in the future. The extensive safety protocols in place at PACC have resulted in a very low rate of bite incidents on premises. In 2022, PACC admitted a total of 10,475 dogs and recorded 118 bites on premises, translating to a 1.1% incident rate.

Figure 3: Number of animal bites on PACC premises, by calendar year.

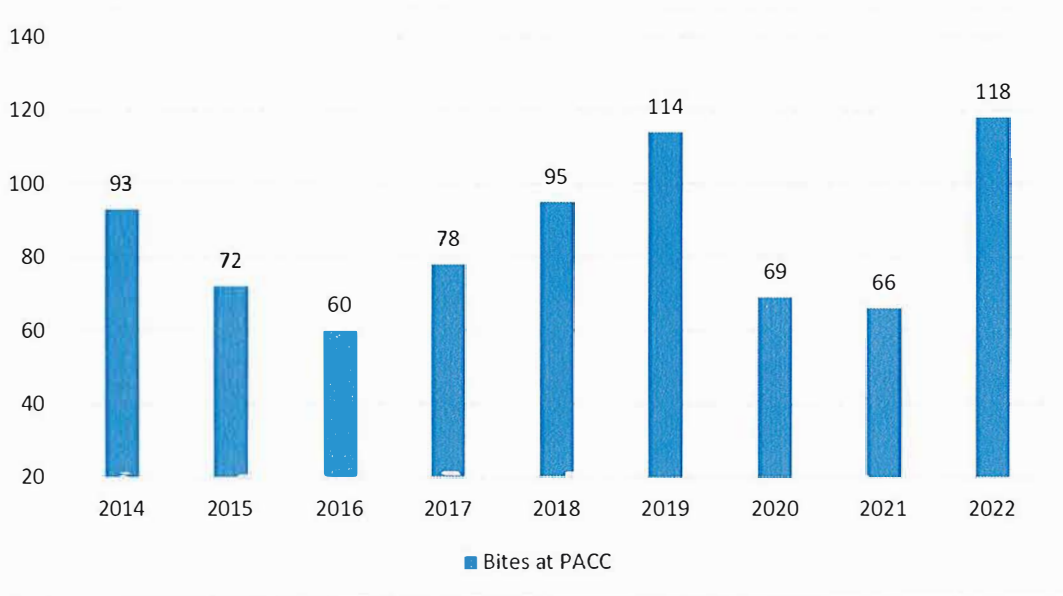
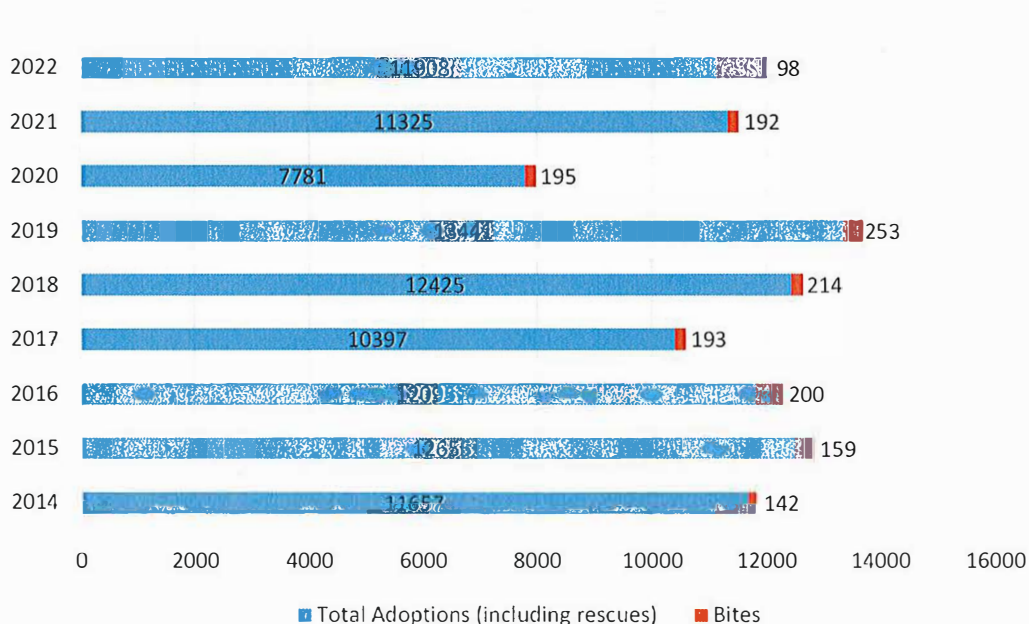


Figure 4: Number of bites involving adopted dogs and total number of dog adoptions, by calendar year.



Ms. Leshner

January 13, 2023

Re: PACC Animal Safety Report

Page | 4

Dogs at PACC are, at times, euthanized for biting and other aggressive incidents reported by owners or victims. These situations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if euthanasia is necessary. Most of the dogs brought to PACC as a result of a bite incident were not adopted from a shelter or rescue, but are instead often unsterilized, unvaccinated dogs that were bought or otherwise obtained in the community. As the only open-admission shelter for Pima County, PACC is mandated to take these dogs and humanely euthanize them when they are considered an immediate threat to public safety.

PACC has a dedicated behavior and enrichment team consisting of staff and volunteers who provide rehabilitation to fearful, under-socialized, and untrained dogs who enter the shelter. When evaluating dogs with behavioral histories for potential placement, the team looks at bite severity, circumstances of the incident surrounding the bite, and the overall temperament of the dog. Dogs with more serious bites and histories are euthanized immediately, but other dogs may have potential live outcome options. Specialty volunteer programs like the Decompression and the TOP Dogs training programs work to rehabilitate high-risk dogs. For those dogs with behavioral histories or challenges that cannot be reasonably accommodated in-shelter, PACC works with rescue partners who are able to provide longer-term rehabilitation and training to place dogs successfully into homes.

Community Placement Process: PACC takes in approximately 10,000 dogs and puppies annually. The vast majority of these are friendly, healthy pets without behavioral challenges. These pets all find homes, and for those community members who want to save a dog or cat with a special medical or behavioral need, PACC has pets for them, too. PACC's goal is that every pet receives an individualized assessment and a chance at life when public health or safety is not being put at risk. As a result, the Pima County community commonly supports PACC by adopting and fostering pets with special medical or behavioral needs.

Adopters and fosters receive in-person counseling by trained staff about the pet they are considering so that they fully understand the pet's known behavioral and medical history. Additionally, they receive copies of all written medical and behavioral notes recorded in the shelter before signing an agreement acknowledging that they received this information. For dogs or cats with any bite history or in-shelter behavioral challenges, adopters receive counseling from supervisory staff on the animal's history and on managing common behavior challenges and preventing bites.

Summary: Despite an increase in Pima County's population and a dramatic reduction in euthanasia over the past 10 years, there has been no significant increase in animal bites in the community. Indeed, the data actually shows that recorded bites have decreased by more than 16% in the past 10 years. PACC continues to closely monitor data surrounding animal aggression and dog bites to ensure that any concerning trends or issues are identified and addressed immediately. In 2023, PACC expects to re-launch new and improved dog handling requirements and training. Additional safety communication tools are also being developed for use in the 3rd quarter. The Board's leadership and your support as County Administrator have been critical to the continued progress of animal welfare in this community. PACC is thankful for your continued support and that of our community.