

# Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE December 9, 2022

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **Dallas Animal Services Plan to Address Increase in Upper Respiratory Illness**

You may be aware that shelters, private vet clinics, and boarding facilities across the region are [seeing a spike in upper respiratory infections](#) (URI), including canine influenza virus (CIV). Unfortunately, Dallas Animal Services (DAS) is also seeing cases within our shelter, and we are preparing to alter our operations to aggressively address this illness.

Though URI is rarely life-threatening in dogs, it spreads quickly and is challenging to contain in an animal shelter, doggy day care, or boarding kennel environment. This is an especially difficult hurdle to overcome as DAS is at capacity and has been since March 2022. URI in dogs is much like the human flu virus: most experience mild to moderate symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, lethargy, and congestion that resolve with rest and hydration within 1-2 weeks. In rare cases, dogs can develop secondary infections such as pneumonia that require additional treatment.

The DAS Management Team has been working with the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine Shelter Medicine Program experts, including Dr. Sandra Newbury, to build an ambitious plan to create a 'clean break' and stop the spread of illness. This plan requires DAS to divide its building, staffing, and supplies in half and operate two completely independent shelters within one building. It will be taxing on the team, but we understand the importance of addressing this promptly to avoid endemic illness in our shelter. We are committed to doing everything within our power to stop this illness in its tracks and save as many lives as possible.

For this plan to succeed, DAS needs to slow intake of dogs and rapidly increase the number of dogs leaving our building. DAS is preparing a large push to engage our community to empty two adoption rooms (150 large dogs) between Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, via adoption, foster, and rescue placement. These dogs have been exposed to URI, but not all show illness symptoms. To incentivize Dallas area residents to provide a temporary home for these dogs, Friends of DAS is offering a \$150 stipend to any fosters or rescue partners that pull high need dogs this weekend. Additionally, DAS will continue to provide all veterinary care for foster dogs until they find a permanent home.

While we will be working to delay the intake of healthy dogs until the illness has been eradicated from the building, they will continue taking in dogs that are sick, injured, or a risk to public safety. Owners who must surrender their dogs are being encouraged to update their vaccinations before they surrender and we are connecting them with free and low-cost options.

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We believe it is important that all residents engaging with DAS during this time be fully informed and able to assess the risk of taking home an exposed pet or dropping off an unexposed pet at the shelter. As a result, DAS' messaging to the public will be transparent, honest, and empathetic. We anticipate that this direct messaging may upset some residents and we ask for your support in our ongoing efforts to maximize lifesaving and public safety while combatting this illness.

DAS is also working to inform the public that these illnesses are spreading in the community outside of the shelter at a rapid rate and their owned dogs are at risk. DAS is encouraging residents to isolate their dogs until cases decrease and to avoid taking pets to doggy daycare, dog parks, pet stores, and boarding facilities.

This challenge is significant but not insurmountable with the continued support of City Leadership and the community. The experts are confident that our plan can stop this illness from spreading further within our building, but we cannot succeed alone.

I encourage each of your offices to share materials on #DoggyDistancing and our upcoming #150for150 campaign this weekend with your constituents to help the cause.

Thank you for being a part of the Dallas90 Team!



[Melissa Webber \(Dec 8, 2022 10:53 CST\)](#)

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Director, Dallas Animal Services

c: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
Chris Caso, City Attorney  
Mark Swann, City Auditor  
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary  
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge  
Kimberly Bizer Tolbert, Deputy City Manager  
Jon Fortune, Deputy City Manager

Majed A. Al-Ghafry, Assistant City Manager  
M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira, Assistant City Manager  
Dr. Robert Perez, Assistant City Manager  
Carl Simpson, Assistant City Manager  
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