

For Immediate Release
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COMMUNITY SUPPORT URGENTLY NEEDED AS TACOMA ANIMAL SHELTER CONTAINS CANINE UPPER RESPIRATORY ILLNESS

The Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County is in urgent need of support from the community with stray/lost pets, adoptions, fosters, and donations.

TACOMA, WA – Starting in May, over 31 dogs have shown signs of canine pneumovirus at the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County with 15 dogs currently being treated at the shelter.

The non-zoonotic virus is highly contagious amongst dogs and rodents, and is not transferable to humans or cats. Signs of the virus include but are not limited to coughing, discharge from the eyes or nose, and abnormal breathing.

“Several other shelters across the nation have experienced increased cases of canine respiratory illnesses this year,” said Leah Turner, chief operating officer at the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County. “Our priority is to ensure a safe and healthy environment for the dogs in our care and in our community.”

The shelter has been quarantining affected dogs and following proper procedures outlined by the shelter’s veterinary team. Due to an increase in cases, the shelter is implementing a managed intake strategy in alignment with guidelines from veterinary experts and nationally recognized disease control best practices.

Therefore, effective immediately and until further notice, the shelter will stop taking in any additional stray, lost, or owner-surrendered dogs. The community is asked to help decrease the number of dogs coming into the shelter by holding onto a lost or stray dog if found. The shelter will only accept lost or stray dogs in emergency circumstances (i.e., dangerous behavior or requiring immediate medical care). Information on what to do when finding a lost pet and how keeping a lost pet out of a shelter environment is most ideal can be found at www.thehumanesociety.org/lost-pets.

“The best way to prevent the spread of the disease is by quarantining affected dogs, and limiting the number of dogs who enter the shelter,” said Turner. “If a lost pet is currently at the shelter, owners will still be able to pick them up.”

The community is also being urgently asked to open up their homes to a pet in need by adopting or fostering. The shelter currently has over 35 adoptable dogs waiting for a loving home. All adoptable pets have been deemed healthy by the shelter’s veterinary team and have not exhibited any symptoms of upper respiratory illness. To view all adoptable shelter pets, please visit www.thehumanesociety.org/adopt. Every adoptable pet has had a wellness exam from shelter veterinary staff, been spayed or neutered, received their initial vaccines, and is microchipped with national registration.

Not looking to adopt? Foster homes are urgently needed to help care for the dogs currently receiving treatment as well as for the many healthy shelter pets waiting to be adopted to help clear up space.

“Shelter pets need the community’s help now more than ever,” says Lindsey Heaney, communications manager at the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County. “If you have space and love to spare right now, even for a temporary time, please consider fostering or adopting.”

The community can also help by donating to support the shelter’s lifesaving medical efforts and to continue caring for the many pets in need: www.thehumanesociety.org/donate. The shelter is in immediate need of the following supplies:

- Unopened bags of dog food
- Gently used dog collars and leashes
- Plastic pet travel crates
- Training/pee pads
- Reusable cleaning gowns
- New or gently used towels

Donated items can be brought to the shelter during Adoption Center hours Tuesday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. or purchased on the shelter’s Amazon and Chewy wish lists: www.thehumanesociety.org/ways-to-give/donate-items.

About the Humane Society for Tacoma and Pierce County

One of the oldest animal welfare organizations in the nation, the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County, cares for around 10,000 animals every year and maintains multiple humane programs. Dedicated to "Making Happy Happen," the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County works tirelessly to protect animals, support pet owners, and enhance relationships between animals and people. Learn more at www.thehumanesociety.org.

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