Summary Statistical Report:
December 2009*

Animal Services Department, Orange County,
North Carolina

Introduction

This is the Animal Services Department's monthly statistical report for the month of December 2009. Each month a standard set of summary statistics are generated regarding our core or essential services and activities. These are essential for purposes of effective management and administration in different program areas, in both our Animal Control and Animal Sheltering Divisions. At the same time, these statistics are an invaluable tool in communicating to various stakeholders, the general public and our elected officials and County management the scope and extent of animal services.

Notably, these monthly statistics provide a basis for thinking about sheltering practices in a broader context. Adoption and euthanasia numbers must be understood in the context of a multitude of other influential factors, including the number of animals that come into Orange County's Animal Services Center and the availability of medical and behavioral resources. By far the greatest factor influencing sheltering practices in our own community and others is that of "pet overpopulation," a community-wide problem consisting of a large number of animals for whom there are no homes. As we continue to push forward to find better and more innovative ways in which to improve, we must remember that all of these factors work together to create the broader challenge we must address as a department, a county, and a community.

Standard Statistics

Each of our monthly reports contains various statistics that summarize the various activities of the County's Animal Services Department. These are standard statistics insofar as for a given month, such as December, they report on the same core or essential services. They are all presented at the end of the narrative portion of this report.

Some statistics capture the overall effort of all staff as they work together to provide integrated and coordinated animal services to the citizens of Orange County. These include:

1. *A.1 Monthly Demographics* (which shows from where and how animals arrived at Orange County's Animal Shelter).
2. *A.2 Monthly Shelter Activity* (which shows total animal intakes and dispositions).

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Other statistics are more specific in summarizing the services and activities of our department's Animal Sheltering and Animal Control Divisions. These include:

Animal Sheltering

1. *B.1 Monthly Dispositions* (which reports the dispositions of all animals sheltered in a given month)
2. *B.2 Live Release for Placeable and Recovered Animals* (discussed in detail in the following sections).
3. *B.3 Reasons for Euthanasia* (which reports the specific reasons for which animals were euthanized in a given month)
4. *B.4 Volunteer Hours* (reports volunteer hours and how they compare to previous months and years)

Animal Control

1. *C.1 Rabies Exposures Investigated and Positive Cases* (which reports positive rabies tests and related investigations conducted by Animal Control Officers).
2. *C.2 Rabies Statistics* (showing positive cases year-to-date and by comparison with previous years).
3. *C.3 Rabies Vaccinations* (which reports the number of vaccinations given by area veterinarians, at low-cost vaccination clinics organized by our department, and at Orange County's Animal Services Center).
4. *C.4 Year to Date Rabies Vaccination Clinic Numbers* (which shows the number of dogs and cats vaccinated to date during the current year at the County's low-cost rabies vaccination clinics)

Together, these monthly statistics provide a convenient summary of our critical services and activities. In a very transparent manner, they describe the efforts of our staff in delivering field services, sheltering animals whose dispositions they must ultimately decide, and programs such as our volunteer program that, among other things, is responsible for public outreach activities and dog walking.

Statistical Development

The summary statistics provided in our monthly reports are not static. They must be subject to change as our services are redefined, our practices evolve, and we produce the most useful statistical information. A good example of change is table *B.3 Reasons for Euthanasia*. Staff captured and encouraged the reporting of this information to make adoption figures, as well as the reasons for euthanasia, more meaningful and transparent. It does matter greatly whether a behaviorally sound and healthy animal is euthanized as a result of space limitations or an animal is euthanized because it is aggressive or infirm.

In the month of December, for example, the most common cat euthanasia reasons were medical and feral, with 24 cats euthanized for these reasons. This number made up 62

percent of all cats euthanized during the month and 26 percent of all animals euthanized. For dogs, the primary reasons for euthanasia for the month was medical, with 22 dogs euthanized for this reason. This made up 43 percent of the dogs euthanized and 24 percent of all animals euthanized for the month.

Also, we anticipate further development of the euthanasia categories that are used to report such information. Of special note is the generation of more specific information concerning the medical and behavioral reasons for euthanasia—not only because this clarifies the difficult decisions that staff must make on daily basis but because such information enables us to discuss whether there are specific programs that may be offered to reduce the rate of euthanasia of certain animals.

Finally, our intention is to link specific monthly reports such as this one to data about trends in our services and activities. What we foresee is a related set of graphs showing monthly data over time that enable us to identify and evaluate trends in key services and activities in relation to policies, practices and our own mission. As allowed by time in the coming year, these graphs will be prepared and they are expected to be presented along with reports of standard statistics for a given month.

Adoptions and "Lives Releases"

The placement of healthy and behaviorally sound animal companions is one of the foremost objectives of Orange County's Animal Services Department. The direct placement or "re-homing" of small animals, cats and dogs occurs through our own adoption program. In addition, many companion animals are transferred to "placement partners"—that is, non-breed as well as breed specific rescue organizations for cats and dogs (as well as other animals)—for their final placement on the basis of additional effort and evaluation by these various animal organizations.

Adoptions and transfer are two of the three elements of what can be referred to as "live releases." Animal companions recovered by their owners or a custodian—usually if not always "stray" animals brought to Orange County's Animal Services Center either by one of our Animal Control Officers or a member of the public—form the third element of animals that are released alive.

Using this basic formula, it is possible to calculate the total (or absolute) number of animals that are released alive from Orange County's Animal Services Center.[1] The figures needed to make this calculation are provided by table *B.1 Monthly Dispositions:*

[1] It should be said that we are using "live release" rather than "placement" for two very specific reasons as well as because it has become a convention in the field of animal welfare since the appearance of the Asilomar Accords (http://www.asilomaraccords.org/). One reason is that it includes all animals that are not euthanized, i.e., transfers to placement partners and returns to owners and custodians as well as direct adoptions. The other reason is that it does not presume that an animal transferred to placement partners is, in fact, "re-homed." In the absence of feedback data from these organizations, which is desirable and an objective toward which we are working, there is no way to know what decision they have ultimately made about the disposition of a particular animal.

December 2009. For the month, there was a total of 187 "live releases," consisting of 124 adoptions, 26 transfers and 37 returns to owners or custodians.

Moreover, it is possible to determine the rate of live release for placeable animals and animals that have been recovered for a given month. Placeable animals do not include animals surrendered by their owner for euthanasia (usually due to illness, infirmity or a behavior problem); feral cats (as these are typically not placed); animals that died before arriving at the shelter or in our custody as a result of an "untreatable" injury or illness; or animals that are being held for a bite quarantine or court case. The number of placeable animals is determined by subtracting animals surrendered for euthanasia, feral cats, deceased animals, and court and bite holds from the total number of animals dispositioned in a given month.

For the month of December, there were 282 total animals dispositioned. When we remove the animals on bite and court holds, animals surrendered for euthanasia, the feral cats and those animals that arrived dead or died of an untreatable injury while at the shelter, we are left with 256 "placeable" animals. To find the "live release rate," we must then divide the total number of "live releases" (187) by the total number of potentially placeable animals whose disposition was decided in the month (256)—and as can be seen in Table *B.2 Live Release for Placeable and Recovered Animals*, the rate is 73 percent for the month of December.[2]

Several observations can be made with respect to adoptions for the month. By comparison with November 2009, there is a increase in the number of adoptions (124 vs. 97), and an increase in the number of "live releases" (187 vs. 157). When compared with December in 2008, there was a slight decrease in adoptions for the month (124 in December 2009 vs. 132 in December 2008), but a very comparable live release number (187 vs. 188).

Likely contributing to the overall decrease in adoption and live release numbers is the overall decline of the economy. The Triangle area of North Carolina saw the effects of this later than some other areas, but is beginning to see the results of economic decline take effect throughout. This affects not only adoption rates, but the public's ability to reclaim animals as well. It also affects transfer numbers to placement partners, as many of those organizations are volunteer-run nonprofit organizations that are also feeling the effects of the economy and are therefore unable to move animals as quickly through their organizations, and are even, in some cases, being forced to downsize.

[2] In earlier monthly reports, this was referred to as the "adoptable placement rate" versus the "gross placement rate," insofar as the latter was determined on the basis of all animals dispositioned in a given month.

Pet Demographics and Overpopulation

It is often said that pet problems are people problems, and that pet overpopulation is a community problem. These insights very much apply to our own circumstances and they help create a broader perspective in which to understand our own sheltering statistics.

More specifically, the number of animals that are sheltered in a given period of time is itself not caused by or a direct function of our sheltering operations and practices. The number of unwanted animals in our communities (sometimes referred to as "surplus" pets); the extent to which cats, rabbits and dogs alike are spayed or neutered rather than allowed to remain intact and reproduce; the strength of norms and customs of responsible pet ownership; the scope and strength of animal regulations and their effective enforcement; and other such "variables" are what affect the number of animals that are sheltered in our own and other communities.

Monthly and Seasonal Variations

Month by month there are significant changes in the numbers of cats, dogs and other animals that are sheltered at Orange County's Animal Services Center. In very general terms, there is a significant "spread" in the number of animals that are sheltered each month, which reflect the seasonal nature of pet demographics and animal sheltering in our own and other communities.

During the peak winter months, the numbers are traditionally much lower than in other months of the year. In December, for instance, 397 animals were sheltered. Whereas this is fewer than the number sheltered last December (556), it is higher than the number sheltered in January (253). Similarly, this December 233 animals were admitted to the shelter—a large number that equates to over 7 animals per day over that thirty- day period.

Moreover, it should be underscored that the "live release rate" for a given time period is determined by the number of animals that are sheltered as well as the total number of animals that are adopted, transferred, or recovered by their owner. It may well be that there is a very high percentage of animals that are released alive in a given month but that the absolute number is lower than in other months because of the number of animals that come to the shelter.

Addressing Pet Overpopulation

To work toward the desideratum of ending euthanasia as a means of population control, it is thus essential to positively impact the number of animals that come into Orange County's Animal Services Center in the course of the year. Essential to this is progressive legislation that is enforced in an effective, fair and reasonable manner. A starting point is what is sometimes referred to as "differential licensing"—that is, licensing or registration fees that are much lower for spayed and neutered animals than

for intact animals. Orange County has had differential licensing for many years, and in 2007 that differential became $5 for sterilized dogs and cats and $30 for intact dogs and cats.

Other legislative options include an extra redemption fee for intact animals recovered from the Animal Services Center, which can be refunded if they are sterilized within a given time period, and permit systems that require a permit for dogs and cats that are going to be bred. Staff and the Animal Services Advisory Board expect to develop these programs and others as part of a strategic spay/neuter plan that is being drafted and will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration.

No less essential is a community spay/neuter program for animal companions such as dogs and cats that promotes responsible pet ownership and enables all community members to spay and neuter their own pets. The development of the Community Spay/Neuter Fund during the past year, in coordination with the Animal Services Advisory Board, has been a major accomplishment for the Animal Services Department. Funded by an increase in the differential licensing fee for unaltered pets, this fund will allow the Animal Services Department to work with several existing programs to promote Spay/ Neuter and responsible pet ownership throughout Orange County in the coming months and years.

In 2008, Animal Services, with assistance from the Department of Social Services, partnered with AnimalKind's "The $20 Fix" to offer low-cost and no-cost spay/neuter surgeries to pets of qualifying households in Orange County. It is the hope of Animal Services and Orange County that this program will increase the number of pets that are spayed and neutered in the County, and in turn help eliminate the ongoing problem of pet overpopulation we face as a community. More information and an application can be found online at www.animalkind.org.

Moreover, there is an overwhelming need to address the deep-seated problem of feral cats in Orange County. Month after month feral cats (as defined by their community history and/or observed behaviors in the context of the shelter) are one of the largest groups of animals euthanized. In December, 10 feral cats were euthanized, and they comprised 26 percent of all cats euthanized during the month (and 11 percent of all animals euthanized).

In fact, euthanasia of feral cats is not a "shelter problem," but rather a community problem, and it needs to be addressed as such. There is a great need for initiatives in the area of public education to raise awareness insofar as euthanasia is the end result for most of these creatures, and their presence must be considered in relation to the risk of rabies, given the ongoing and endemic nature of so-called "raccoon rabies" in our County and region. Thus addressing the problem of feral cats has also been a major objective for the County's Animal Services Department, and will be included in the Community Spay/ Neuter Fund's program scope, beginning next fiscal year.

These are illustrations of the kinds of positive and proactive approaches that are needed to address the problem of pet overpopulation as a community problem. In working to reduce the number of unwanted animals that must be sheltered in our own communities, we would also expect improvements in some of the outcomes of our sheltering practices. We should all look forward to the day when there are very good numbers of adoptions and "live releases" but no less notable ongoing decreases in the number of animals that come to our shelter.

Rabies Cycle, Rabies Prevention and Rabies Control

With respect to rabies control—historically a core function of animal control—there is a continuing concern about positive rabies tests based upon public reporting and our surveillance of possible exposures of people and/or their pets. Table *C.1 Rabies Exposures Investigated and Positive Cases* shows that this month there were no positive rabies tests in Orange County in December. This keeps the total for the year at twelve (12), which includes five (5) raccoons, four (4) bats, two (2) foxes, and one (1) skunk. In 2008, there were twenty (20)[3] positive tests. There were nineteen (19) positive rabies tests in Orange County for 2007.

Our own public education activities stress that pet owners not only need to be sure that their pets are vaccinated and licensed but that a dog or cat with a current rabies vaccination must receive a booster shot within seventy-two (72) hours of any exposure to rabies. Unless an exposed pet with a current vaccination receives a booster shot within that time frame, the requirements of North Carolina law is the same as for an unvaccinated animal—namely, euthanasia or a six (6) month quarantine. In this regard, staff stresses the immediate reporting of any possible contact to animal control and/or public health authorities to ensure the health of all members of a household—human and pet alike.

As can also be seen from the table on rabies exposures, Animal Control Officers investigated three (3) cases in which there were possible rabies exposures. Usually, these are cases involving known or suspected contact between a domestic small animal such as a dog or a cat and a wild animal such as a raccoon, as well as whether there is indirect contact between a human and pet member of a household in these situations. But our Animal Control Officers are also responsible for bite reports involving dogs and cats (as well as other animals) and a human victim. In these cases, it is a legal requirement and public health precaution that a dog or cat biting a human being be contained and observed for a period of ten (10) days—thereby ensuring that the bite victim was not exposed to the rabies virus.

Efforts to ensure current vaccination, for the welfare of pets and the people with whom they come into contact, are ongoing and activities in this area are captured by vaccination

[3]There was a positive rabies results from December 2008 that is not counted in this total as there was no suspected human exposure.

statistics compiled by our Animal Control Division. As is ordinarily the case, the majority of these vaccinations—936 out of a total of 1042 vaccinations—continue to be performed at veterinary establishments. In addition, another one hundred and six (106) animals were vaccinated at our Animal Services Center prior to their adoption or recovery.

No low-cost rabies vaccination clinics were held in December, but a total of 1084 animals were vaccinated at the ten clinics held in 2009. There are ten low-cost clinics scheduled for 2010 and all but two are being held at the new Animal Services Center. For information about upcoming clinics, visit http://www.co.orange.nc.us/animalservices.rabies.asp.

All of these activities—public education and outreach, investigations and enforcement, and providing low-cost vaccination clinics—are critical given that Orange County continues to be affected by the epidemic of "eastern raccoon rabies" that began in the latter half of the 1990s.

Special Monthly Notes

During the month of November, the department kicked off its annual Home for the Holidays campaign, designed to raise awareness of adoptable animals during the holiday season. The campaign continued throughout December with several outreach and public awareness events. This year, the campaign kicked off with guided tours, refreshments and several handouts and freebies for customers. Adoption events were held throughout the month and the department also participated in two Holiday parades.

In December, the department also hosted its first annual Canned Pet Food Drive, where cans of dog and cat food were collected from the public from December 7 – 12 to help those in need during the Holiday Season. Animal Services partnered with Orange Congregations in Mission (OCIM), who delivered the donated food to community residents in need, and also offered a free picture with Santa on Sunday, December 13th for anyone who donated four cans or more during the drive.

Another notable accomplishment was that the Center's in-house spay and neuter suite went into operation during the month of December. The suite, which is designed to allow the Center the ability to spay and neuter its own adoptable pets rather than send them to other establishments for such service, will be beneficial to the department and animals in many ways. It will not only save in transportation and staff time, but will also reduce the risk associated with transporting animals for surgery (and potentially exposing them to outside elements). Future plans also include educational opportunities for the public, as the suite is designed with a picture window that will allow visitors to view surgeries in process.

A notable factor in disposition numbers still again this month is the overall economic downturn that North Carolina and other regions have experienced. As has been discussed

in professional publications and reviewed on national news coverage, this economic burden has forced many people to give up things they once were more able to afford, including pets. Our impression is that this may not only be affecting adoption numbers, but also owner surrenders, reclaim rates and the ability for people to provide different levels of care such as spaying and neutering pets. Despite the economy's effects on businesses of all kinds, adoption and reclaim numbers have stayed moderately level, in part due to staff's dedicated work in areas such as outreach, visibility, awareness, and education.

Conclusion

Animal Services continues to develop new ways in which to better serve the animals and citizens of the county. With the opening of the new Animal Services Center in June of 2009, the department expects to be able to better meet the needs of the community and more effectively and efficiently in the long run. The creation of the new facility has been a priority in the planning and time of the department since its creation, and this realization will finally allow other activities to move further into the front as the department fine tunes and adapts to meet the needs of the county and community.

Pet overpopulation continues to be a problem in Orange County and beyond, and one that the Animal Services Department is dedicated to addressing on a long-term basis. As suggested in our discussion of pet overpopulation, there are a number of initiatives that must be taken to effectively address the underlying problem. These include the creation of a spay/neuter fund and a strategic plan to remedy pet overpopulation, and steps are being taken toward those goals by the department in coordination with the Animal Services Advisory Board.

STANDARD MONTHLY STATISTICS: DECEMBER 2009

A. Overview Statistics

A.1 Demographics: December 2009

	Animal Control		From Public		Total Incoming	Percent of Total
	Strays (1)	Surrender	Strays	Surrender		
Carrboro	6	1	3	3	**13**	5.6%
Chapel Hill	5	4	24	24	**57**	24.5%
Hillsborough	9	0	10	10	**29**	12.4%
Orange County	57	24	7	24	**112**	48.1%
Other County	0	0	5	7	**12**	5.2%
Unknown	0	0	9	1	**10**	4.3%
Total	**77**	**29**	**58**	**69**	**233**	**100.0%**

Strays	**135**	**57.9%**	Animal Control	**106**	**45.5%**
Surrenders	**98**	**42.1%**	Public	**127**	**54.5%**

(1) "Strays" under Animal Control Demographics also includes quarantined animals that have not been surrendered.

A.2 Shelter Activity: December 2009

	Dogs	Cats	Others	Total
In Shelter Custody as of December 1, 2009	50	109	5	**164**
				+
Total Admitted December 2009	147	76	10	**233**
Sheltered in December 2009	197	185	15	**397**
				-
Dispositions for December 2009 (1)	150	121	11	**282**
Remaining in Shelter Custody on January 1, 2010 (2)	**47**	**64**	**4**	**115**

(1) Includes corrections to previous month

(2) Within Shelter: 47 dogs, 63 cats, 4 other
In Foster Homes/ Pet Stores: 0 dogs, 1 cat, 0 others

B. Animal Sheltering Statistics

B.1Total Disposition: December 2009

	Dogs	Cats	Others	Total	% of Total Dispositions
Reclaimed	34	3	0	37	**13.12%**
Adopted	54	70	0	124	**43.97%**
Transferred (1)	11	6	9	26	**9.22%**
Euthanized	51	39	1	91	**32.27%**
Died	0	3	1	4	**1.42%**
Other	0	0	0	0	**0.00%**
Totals	**150**	**121**	**11**	**282**	**100.00%**

(1) Transferred to Rescue Service

B.2 Live Releases for Placeable and Recovered Animals: December 2009(1)

	Dogs	Cats	Others	Total	% of Total Dispositions
Reclaimed	34	3	0	37	**14.45%**
Adopted	54	70	0	124	**48.44%**
Transferred (1)	11	6	9	26	**10.16%**
Totals	**99**	**79**	**9**	**187**	**73.05%**

(1) Live Releases include all animals that are not euthanized, i.e., transfers to placement partners, returns to owners and custodians, and direct adoptions. The "live release rate" is calculated by dividing the live releases by the total number of *placeable* animals. To calculate placeable animals, we must remove the animals surrendered for euthanasia, feral cats, animals that arrive dead or die in our custody, bite quarantine animals, and animals that have been confiscated from the total number of animals dispositioned. For December, this number was 26, and removing these animals from the total number dispositioned leaves 256 "placeable" animals.

(2) Transferred to Rescue Service

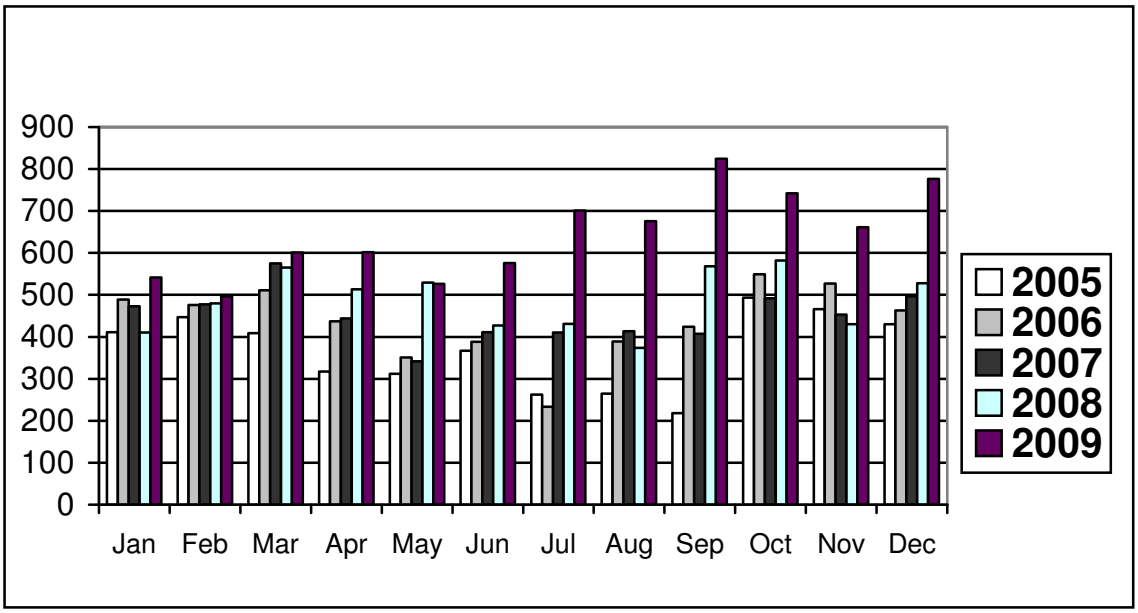
B.3 Reasons for Euthanasia: December 2009

	Dogs	% of Total Euthanized By Reason		Cats	% of Total Euthanized By Reason		Others	% of Total Euthanized By Reason
Age	1	**1.96%**	Age	0	**0.00%**	Age	0	**0.00%**
Behavioral (1)	15	**29.41%**	Behavioral (1)	5	**12.82%**	Behavioral (1)	0	**0.00%**
Feline Leukemia	0	**0.00%**	Feline Leukemia	0	**0.00%**	Feline Leukemia	0	**0.00%**
Feral	0	**0.00%**	Feral	10	**25.64%**	Feral	0	**0.00%**
Heartworm	2	**3.92%**	Heartworm	0	**0.00%**	Heartworm	0	**0.00%**
Medical (2)	22	**43.14%**	Medical (2)	14	**35.90%**	Medical (2)	0	**0.00%**
Pregnant	0	**0.00%**	Pregnant	1	**2.56%**	Pregnant	0	**0.00%**
Owner Request	6	**11.76%**	Owner Request	2	**5.13%**	Owner Request	1	**100.00%**
Space	5	**9.80%**	Space	7	**17.95%**	Space	0	**0.00%**
Totals	**51**	**100.00%**		**39**	**100.00%**		**1**	**100.00%**

(1) "Behavioral" includes a wide range of behavioral issues that may prevent an animal from being available for adoption to the public. These issues vary widely between cats, dogs and other animals, and can include aggression, lack of socialization, severe kennel stress or other factors that make the animal a risk if placed back into the community.

(2) "Medical" includes a wide range of conditions and diseases that may prevent an animal from being available for adoption to the public due to unsound health. These conditions range in severity and differ greatly between cats, dog and other animals. Additionally, because we test animals for certain diseases as a standard protocol, these are often more easily identifiable and thus can be separated as a specific condition statistic. For example, the "Feline Leukemia" category above is listed separately, though it is a medical condition.

B.4 Volunteer Hours: December 2009



C. Animal Control Statistics

C.1 Rabies Exposures Investigated and Positive Cases: December 2009

	Dogs	Cats	Other	Total
Exposures Investigated	0	0	3	**3**
Tested Positive	0	0	0	**0**

C.2 Rabies Statistics: December 2009

Total Rabies Exposures Jan 1- December 31, 2009: 12
Total Rabies Exposures Jan 1- December 31, 2008: 20

C.3 Rabies Vaccinations: December 2009

	Dogs	Cats	Other	Total
Vaccinated at Shelter	57	48	1	**106**
Vaccinated at Vet Clinics	445	491	0	936
Vaccinated at Rabies Clinics	0	0	0	0
Total Vaccinations	**502**	**539**	1	**1042**

C.4 Year to Date Rabies Vaccination Clinic Numbers

Rabies Clinics 2009					
#	**Date**	**Dogs**	**Cats**	**Total**	**Location**
1	2/20/2009	15	22	37	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
2	2/21/2009	71	31	102	Chapel Hill (New Hope Fire Station #2)
3	4/29/09	134	40	174	Hillsborough (Government Services Center)
4	5/1/09	43	12	55	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
5	6/20/09	91	46	137	Chapel Hill (Animal Services Center)
6	6/26/09	73	53	126	Chapel Hill (Animal Services Center)
7	9/24/2009	83	41	124	Hillsborough (Government Services Center)
8	9/27/2009	77	80	157	Chapel Hill (Animal Services Center)
9	10/30/09	29	34	63	Chapel Hill (Animal Services Center)
10	11/07/09	70	39	109	Hillsborough (Government Services Center)
	Grand Total	**686**	**398**	**1084**	
	Percent	63.28%	36.72%		