Summary Statistical Report:
December 2008*

Animal Services Department, Orange County,
North Carolina

Introduction

This is the Animal Services Department's monthly statistical report for the month of December 2008. 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 Shelter 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 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 Shelter).
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 reason was feral, with 42 cats euthanized for this reason. This number made up 49 percent of all cats

euthanized during the month and 31 percent of all animals euthanized. For dogs, the primary reason for euthanasia for the month was behavioral, with 24 dogs euthanized for this reason. This made up 51 percent of the dogs euthanized and 18 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 Shelter 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 Shelter.[1] The figures needed to make this calculation are provided by table *B.1 Monthly Dispositions: December 2008*.

[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.

For the month, there was a total of 188 "live releases," consisting of 132 adoptions, 17 transfers and 39 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 330 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 276 "placeable" animals. To find the "live release rate," we must then divide the total number of "live releases" (188) by the total number of potentially placeable animals whose disposition was decided in the month (276)—and as can be seen in Table *B.2 Live Release for Placeable and Recovered Animals*, the rate is 68 percent for the month of December.[2]

Finally, several observations can be made with respect to adoptions. By comparison with November 2008, there is an increase in the number of adoptions (132 vs. 90), and an increase in the number of "live releases" (188 vs. 169). When compared with December in 2007, there was also an increase in adoptions for the month (132 in December 2008 vs. 125 in December 2007), as well as an increase in the total number of live releases (188 vs. 174).

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

[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.

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 Shelter. 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 summer months, the numbers are traditionally much higher than in other months of the year. In December, for instance, 556 animals were sheltered. Whereas this is similar to the number sheltered last December (433), it is much lower than the number sheltered last July (737). Other winter months typically show even larger differences, as can be seen by the number we sheltered last March (398).

Similarly, this December 324 animals were admitted to the shelter—a large number that equates to more than 10 animals per day over that thirty-one-day period. During the last twelve months, the number of animals admitted to the shelter has been as low as 229 (March 2008) and as high as 522 (July 2008).

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 Shelter 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 this fiscal year that differential became $5 for sterilized dogs and cats and $30 for intact dogs and cats.

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.

Other legislative options include an extra redemption fee for intact animals recovered from the Animal Shelter, 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.

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, 42 feral cats were euthanized, and they comprised 49 percent of all cats euthanized during the month (and 31 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, keeping the total for the year at twenty (20).[3] There were nineteen (19) positive rabies tests in Orange County for 2007.

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

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 eight (8) 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 statistics compiled by our Animal Control Division. As is ordinarily the case, the majority of these vaccinations—903 out of a total of 996 vaccinations—continue to be performed at veterinary establishments. In addition, another ninety-three (93) animals were vaccinated at our Animal Shelter prior to their adoption or recovery.

No low-cost rabies vaccination clinics were held in December, but more are expected to scheduled during the first part of 2009. In 2008, 1159 animals have been vaccinated at nineteen clinics. Seventeen total clinics were held during 2007—and 1157 dogs and cats were vaccinated as a result. Details and further information about upcoming low-cost clinics will become available at 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

There have been events and challenges that have affected animal disposition numbers this month. Most notable of those was our annual Home for the Holidays adoption drive. Staff, volunteers and adoptable animals participated in multiple adoption events, as well as three area parades. Staff also produced outreach geared toward bringing animals home this holiday season (both reclaiming current animals and acquiring new ones).

Still a factor in disposition numbers 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 not only adoption numbers, but also 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

As a very young department that only came into existence in 2005, Animal Services continues to develop new ways in which to better serve the animals and citizens of the county. As suggested in our discussion of pet overpopulation, there are a number of initiatives that must be taken to effectively address the underlying problem of pet overpopulation. These include the creation of a spay/neuter fund and an effective program to address feral cats, among others, and steps are being taken toward those goals by the department in coordination with the Animal Services Advisory Board.

Also, on behalf of its citizens the County has committed itself to building a new animal services facility. With the opening of this facility at the beginning of 2009, for the first time Animal Control, the Animal Shelter, and Administrative staff will be housed under the same roof. In addition to providing some true economies of scale, and better allowing the coordination of animal services, it is expected that this facility will help to overcome one of the major inhibitions to our placement efforts—namely, the inhibition that members of the public have toward earlier generations of shelters which are often perceived as dreadful places.

As it is being designed as a resource center that is an attractive public destination, the new facility is expected to have a very positive affect on the number of adoptions, transfers, community outreach programs, public visitors—and much more. With its innovative and modern design, this new facility will become a community asset and help further staff efforts to deliver integrated and coordinated animal services to the citizens of Orange County. As well, it is intended and expected to enhance our adoption activities and increase our average rate of "live releases" at the same time as it enables our staff to

work with community stakeholders to more effectively address and ultimately resolve the pressing problem of pet overpopulation.

STANDARD MONTHLY STATISTICS: DECEMBER 2008

A. Overview Statistics

A.1 Demographics: December 2008

	Animal Control		From Public		Total Incoming	Percent of Total
	Strays (1)	Surrender	Strays	Surrender		
Carrboro	3	1	9	8	**21**	6.5%
Chapel Hill	6	1	26	29	**62**	19.1%
Hillsborough	11	10	4	18	**43**	13.3%
Orange County	58	69	19	19	**165**	50.9%
Other County	5	0	10	8	**23**	7.1%
Unknown	0	0	10	0	**10**	3.1%
Total	**83**	**81**	**78**	**82**	**324**	**100.0%**

Strays	**161**	**49.7%**	Animal Control	**164**	**50.6%**
Surrenders	**163**	**50.3%**	Public	**160**	**49.4%**

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

A.2 Shelter Activity: December 2008

	Dogs	Cats	Others	Total
In Shelter Custody as of December 1, 2008	96	127	9	**232**
				+
Total Admitted December 2008	182	125	17	**324**
Sheltered in December 2008	278	252	26	**556**
				-
Dispositions for December 2008 (1)	163	158	9	**330**
Remaining in Shelter Custody on January 1, 2009 (2)	**115**	**94**	**17**	**226**

(1) Includes corrections to previous month

(2) Within Shelter: 114 dogs, 88 cats, 16 other
In Foster Homes/ Pet Stores: 10 dog, 6 cats, 1 other

B. Animal Sheltering Statistics

B.1Total Disposition: December 2008

	Dogs	Cats	Others	Total	% of Total Dispositions
Reclaimed	33	5	1	39	**11.82%**
Adopted	66	63	3	132	**40.00%**
Transferred (1)	14	3	0	17	**5.15%**
Euthanized	47	86	3	136	**41.21%**
Died	2	1	1	4	**1.21%**
Other	1	0	1	2	**0.61%**
Totals	**163**	**158**	**9**	**330**	**100.00%**

(1) Transferred to Rescue Service

B.2 Live Releases for Placeable and Recovered Animals: December 2008(1)

	Dogs	Cats	Others	Total	% of Total Dispositions
Reclaimed	33	5	1	39	**14.13%**
Adopted	66	63	3	132	**47.86%**
Transferred (1)	14	3	0	17	**6.16%**
Totals	**113**	**71**	**4**	**188**	**68.12%**

(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 54, and removing these animals from the total number dispositioned leaves 276 "placeable" animals.

(2) Transferred to Rescue Service

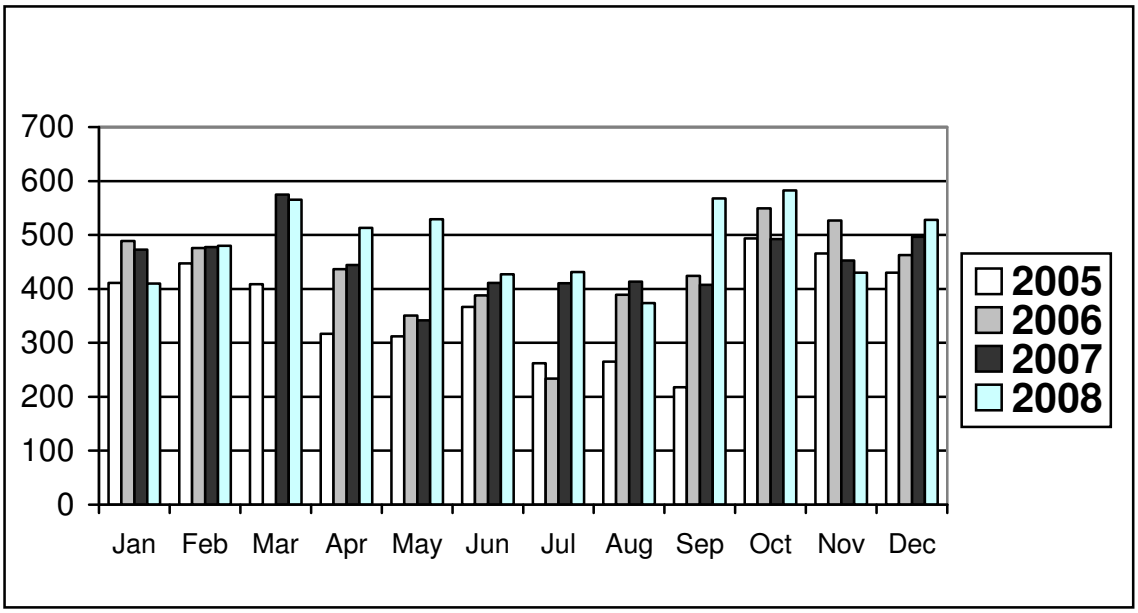
B.3 Reasons for Euthanasia: December 2008

	Dogs	% of Total Euthanized By Reason		Cats	% of Total Euthanized By Reason		Others	% of Total Euthanized By Reason
Age	4	**8.51%**	Age	2	**2.33%**	Age	0	**0.00%**
Behavioral (1)	24	**51.06%**	Behavioral (1)	23	**26.74%**	Behavioral (1)	1	**33.33%**
Feline Leukemia	0	**0.00%**	Feline Leukemia	2	**2.33%**	Feline Leukemia	0	**0.00%**
Feral	0	**0.00%**	Feral	42	**48.84%**	Feral	0	**0.00%**
Heartworm	0	**0.00%**	Heartworm	0	**0.00%**	Heartworm	0	**0.00%**
Medical (2)	8	**17.02%**	Medical (2)	11	**12.79%**	Medical (2)	1	**33.33%**
Pregnant	0	**0.00%**	Pregnant	0	**0.00%**	Pregnant	0	**0.00%**
Owner Request	3	**6.38%**	Owner Request	0	**0.00%**	Owner Request	1	**33.33%**
Space	8	**17.02%**	Space	6	**6.98%**	Space	0	**0.00%**
Totals	**47**	**100.00%**		**86**	**100.00%**		**3**	**100.00%**

(1) "Behavioral" includes a wide range of behavioral issues that December 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 December 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 2008(1)



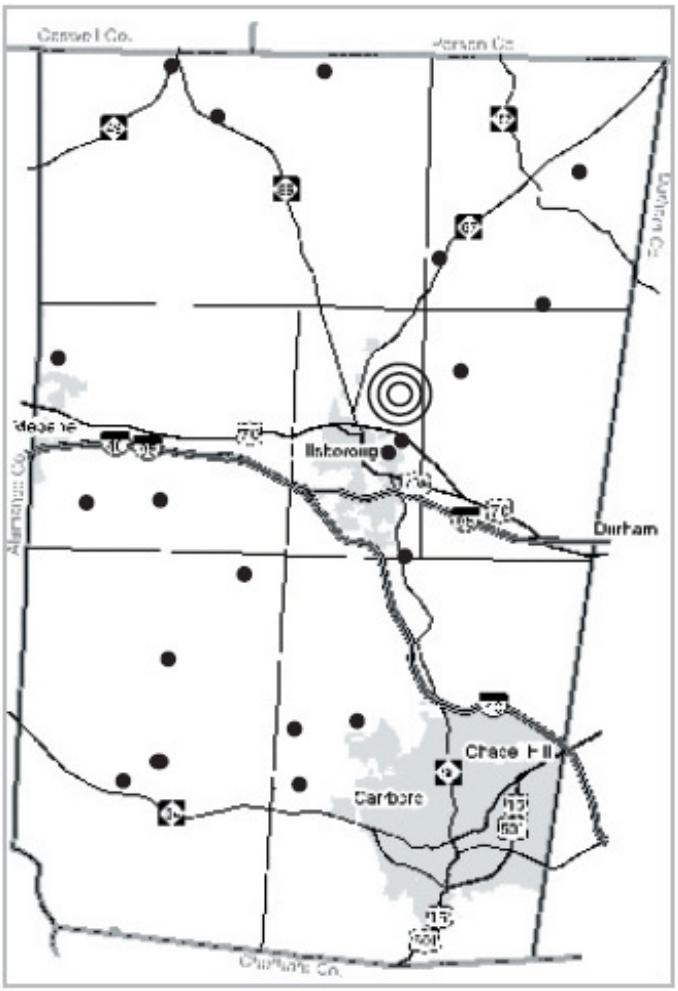
(1) Information for March 2006 is not available.

C. Animal Control Statistics

C.1 Rabies Exposures Investigated and Positive Cases: December 2008

	Dogs	Cats	Other	Total
Exposures Investigated	0	0	8	**8**
Tested Positive	0	0	0	**0**

C.2 Rabies Statistics: December 2008



Orange County

Latest case(s) ● Previous 2008 cases

Total Rabies Exposures Jan 1- December 31, 2008: 20 (1)
Total Rabies Exposures Jan 1- December 31, 2007: 19

(1) One of the positive rabies cases did not include any suspected exposure and is therefore not shown on the map.

C.3 Rabies Vaccinations: December 2008

	Dogs	Cats	Other	Total
Vaccinated at Shelter	53	40	0	**93**
Vaccinated at Vet Clinics	421	482	0	**903**
Vaccinated at Rabies Clinics	0	0	0	**0**
Total Vaccinations	**474**	**522**	**0**	**996**

C.4 Year to Date Rabies Vaccination Clinic Numbers

Rabies Clinics 2008					
#	**Date**	**Dogs**	**Cats**	**Total**	**Location**
1	2/13/2008	13	5	18	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
2	2/16/2008	60	15	75	Chapel Hill (New Hope Fire Station #2)
3	2/20/2008	6	5	11	Hillsborough (Animal Control)
4	2/23/2008	50	27	77	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
5	4/16/2008	106	21	127	Hillsborough (Gov't Services Annex)
6	4/16/2008	17	9	26	Hillsborough (Animal Control)
7	4/19/2008	59	44	103	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
8	4/23/2008	34	17	51	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
9	6/11/2008	24	15	39	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
10	6/18/2008	26	7	33	Hillsborough (Fairview Park)
11	6/18/2008	71	38	109	Hillsborough (S. Cameron St)
12	6/21/2008	54	29	83	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
13	8/20/2008	32	14	46	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
14	8/27/2008	14	2	16	Rougemont (Paws and Claws Kennels)
15	9/24/2008	18	28	46	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
16	9/27/2008	41	44	85	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
17	9/27/2008	74	36	110	Hillsborough (Gov't Services Annex)
18	10/22/08	18	25	43	Chapel Hill (Animal Shelter)
19	10/29/08	44	17	61	Hillsborough (Animal Control)
	Grand Total	**761**	**398**	**1159**	
	Percent	65.66%	34.34%		