



Pet Support Services Field Services Delivering Food and Supplies

Overview

To best support community members and their pets, integrate the distribution of food and pet supplies into field services initiatives as a part of community outreach. Field Services Officers are often the first point of contact a community member has with animal services, and in situations where a person is struggling to care for their pet, providing immediate relief with food and supplies can help stabilize a situation while options for more [proactive or long-term support](#) are identified. This process helps keep more people and pets together, reducing unnecessary pet surrender and improving the relationship between the public and animal services.

Supply Options for Field Services Vehicles

- Small bags of pet food
- Treats
- Collars
- Leashes
- Indoor pet crates
- Kongs or other enrichment toys
- Flea and tick prevention
- Fence repair kits (screws, wire, etc)
- Straw (for cold weather climates)
- *Tip: When possible, allow Field Service Officers to utilize shelter donations for redistribution in the field.*

External Options for Food and Supply Delivery

- **Partner** with local food pantries, pet stores, veterinary offices, friends-of groups, and other service providers. They may be able to provide officers with donated food or supplies to keep in vehicles and have a system available to deliver supplies to pet owners directly.
- **Integrate volunteers** into the delivery process by providing access to food and supplies, liability waivers, and a process where the public may submit a [digital form](#) request. Volunteers can directly track resolved or changed tasks and whether additional support is needed.

Supporting Research and Resources

- [Animal welfare deserts: human and nonhuman animal inequities](#) (Reese & Li, 2023)
 - *This source supports the notion that there is an intimate connection between lack of access to human resources and lack of access to pet resources, further making the case that people and pets should be helped together when populations are distressed, and that helping one helps the other.*
 - "The study concludes that the **overlap between human economic distress and pet resource deserts presents a threat to the goals of One Health**. Potential policy solutions are proposed to address inequities in the distribution of animal welfare resources."
- [Goodbye to a Good Friend: An Exploration of the Re-Homing of Cats and Dogs in the U.S.](#) (Weiss et al., 2015)
 - "Services that might have helped pet retention were examined for the lower income category since the services listed were all described as free or low cost. The service that was selected most commonly as something that might have helped respondents was free or low cost veterinary care (40%). Other service options were free or low cost training or behavior help (34%, more common for dog owners), access to pet friendly housing (33%), free or low cost spay/neuter services (30%), **free or low cost pet food (30%)**, free or low cost temporary pet care or boarding (30%) and assistance in paying pet deposits (17%)."
- [The Impact of Pets on Everyday Life for Older Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (Applebaum et al., 2021)
 - "It is estimated that at least 50% of older adults in the U.S. have pets"
 - "Our findings suggest that pets may be an important source of support and normalcy for older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, and most view them as family members. Our results also provide useful insights of **potential challenges older pet owners may face in the event another pandemic or similar hardship occurs**. The pandemic's disruption may have revealed more of the nuanced benefits (e.g., emotional support) and disadvantages (e.g., another stressor) of pet ownership among older adults. Findings suggest the pandemic has increased worry among older adults caring for pets and as a result, **older adults with pets may benefit from special assistance during public health emergencies**. For example, to mediate these concerns, families, friends, and communities may **provide assistance with safely procuring pet supplies and food**, support for pets with behavioral issues, or making arrangements for contingency care in the event of owner illness. We recommend incorporating consideration of pets into family social services, particularly for economically vulnerable older adults, with the goal of keeping multispecies families together through adversity."
- [Pets for Better Wellbeing: Mars Pet Nutrition North America 2022 Report - Better Cities For Pets™](#) (Mars Pet Nutrition, 2022)
 - "When pet parents struggle, here's what they say would help them keep their pets: **short-term support for pet costs including food (35%)**, pet-friendly housing options (29%), and affordable training for pet behavior issues (24%)."