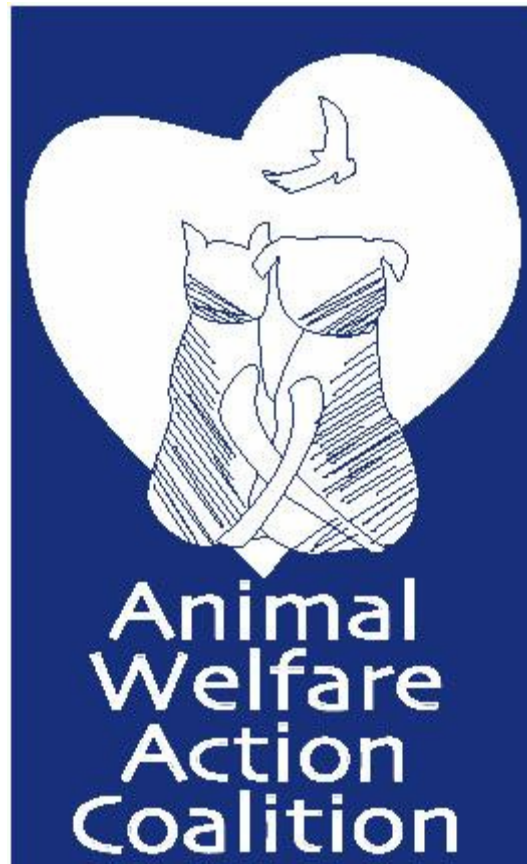


Animal Welfare Action Coalition Needs Assessment and Action Plan

Challenging the Community to View Animal Care as a Measure of Humanity.



"The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them; that's the essence of humanity."

- George Bernard Shaw

Bloomington and Monroe County, Indiana

March 2005

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I. Introduction and Brief History

Formed as an umbrella organization in May 2004, the Animal Welfare Action Coalition (AWAC) draws different resources from each of its contributors in an effort to achieve one common goal: to improve the lives of animals in Monroe County. The Coalition encourages a cooperative effort among the many groups to address and improve animal-related issues.

The historic and progressive step forward in the Monroe County animal community will draw from each of the diverse groups' strengths. By pooling all resources and enhancing communications among local animal welfare agencies, together we can develop a strategic vision for animal care that will include several goals such as:

- To end the pet overpopulation crisis facing our community, and in the interim, to maximize alternatives to the euthanasia of healthy animals;
- To address the human impact on and appropriate care of wildlife;
- To foster collaboration with the local veterinary and local business communities;
- To continue to foster collaboration and coordination among the groups working on animal welfare issues.

AWAC includes community leaders and representatives from Bloomington Animal Care & Control, Monroe County Animal Management Commission, Pets ALIVE, the Monroe County Humane Association, WildCare, Inc., Rescue Farm, Inc., and the local veterinary community. Other groups and individuals also actively participate on a periodic basis.

II. The Vision and Broad Community Goals

The Coalition has three fundamental objectives for measuring its success:

- Create an atmosphere of respect and care for all animals and engage the community to make animal welfare a priority.
- Ensure attention to the rehabilitation and care of injured wildlife and minimize their displacement.
- Eliminate euthanasia as a means of population control for companion animals from all public and private shelters or rescue groups in Monroe County by 2010.

III. Current Animal Welfare Resources & Programs

Animal Control Commission

The City of Bloomington Animal Control Commission (ACC), a branch of the Department of Public Works, is a citizen advisory board responsible for formulating, adopting and implementing policies and standards for humane treatment and control of all animals in the city. The ACC reviews the decisions and actions of the senior animal control officer in enforcement-related matters and makes recommendations to the mayor on necessary ordinances concerning the care, treatment and control of animals.

Animal Management Commission

The Monroe County Animal Management Commission (AMC) is a county commission comprised of appointees from the Monroe County Commissioners, Bloomington Animal Care & Control, Monroe County Sheriff's Department and the Animal Control Commission. The AMC reviews county ordinances

related to animal welfare and makes recommendations to the County Council and Monroe County Commissioners. The AMC also reviews appeals related to ordinance violations.

Bloomington Animal Care and Control

The Bloomington Animal Care and Control (BACC) is the principal provider of animal-related services for Bloomington and Monroe County. It is primarily involved in sheltering stray and unwanted animals, connecting lost companion animals with their homes and maintaining a pet adoption and fostering program. Other significant activities of BACC include educating the community about animal care and behavior and producing an educational TV series called *Pets Without Partners* which features companion animals available for adoption. BACC is also responsible for enforcing animal control ordinances, investigating cruelty and neglect cases, and providing 24-hour emergency rescue for injured animals.

Monroe County Humane Association

Launched in 1956, the Monroe County Humane Association (MCHA) is a nonprofit, animal welfare organization that advocates and works for the welfare of all animals in Monroe County. Through education programs, the Spay/Neuter Assistance Program (SNAP), community outreach, microchip clinics, KIND News sponsorships and Very Important Paws (VIPaws) visiting animal programs, the MCHA strives to attain a vision of “promoting respect and responsibility for all animals.” The MCHA also provides direct financial assistance to the Bloomington Animal Shelter through its Shelter Fund and Olivia Animal Abuse Fund.

Pets ALIVE

Pets ALIVE is a Bloomington-based, non-profit organization dedicated to ending pet overpopulation in South-Central Indiana through the operation of a regional, low-cost Spay/Neuter Clinic. The Pets ALIVE Clinic specializes in high-quality, affordable spay/neuter services for healthy cats and dogs, as well as vaccinations and microchipping at the time of surgery. This clinic serves a 22-county area through its Transport Outreach and Resources Program, which includes free transport service for partnering animal welfare groups throughout South-Central Indiana.

Rescue Farm, Inc.

Rescue Farm, Inc. is a no-kill animal shelter located in Ellettsville, Indiana. Their mission is to end euthanasia of adoptable animals. Both dogs and cats are available for adoption; however, the emphasis is on cats. Upon arrival, all animals are spayed or neutered, vaccinated wormed and flea treated. Cats are tested for feline AIDS and leukemia. Sick or injured animals are given all necessary medical treatment until they become adoptable. Rescue Farm’s animals may be viewed online at www.rescuefarm.org or you may schedule a visit to the farm to see the animals in person.

Feral Friends, Inc.

Founded in 2005, the Whiskers Foundation is a volunteer-driven group dedicated to improving the lives of feral cats and reducing their overpopulation through humane trap/alter/return efforts and education. The group provides assistance with trapping, spay/neuter and vaccinations for feral cats that are returned to the location where they were originally trapped. The focus of these efforts is persons with large cat colonies, mobile home communities, homeowner associations and apartment management actors.

WildCare Inc.

WildCare Inc.'s efforts are dedicated toward helping wildlife with the eventual goal of releasing these animals back in their natural habitat. WildCare Inc. offers professional care to sick, injured and orphaned wild animals in Monroe County as well as many counties throughout the state. It also provides educational programs and information regarding the natural history of wildlife and the preservation of habitats. Located on the west side of Bloomington, WildCare Inc.'s new rehabilitation facility can accommodate hundreds of animals at a time. Some special areas include separate avian and mammal nurseries, a reptile room, special care, triage and educational areas.

The Veterinary Community

The efforts of the local veterinary community have been and will continue to be an invaluable asset to AWAC and the Bloomington area. Their commitment to assisting local animal welfare and animal care organizations goes well beyond the basic requirements of their profession. Moreover, their input during the development of this action plan helped enhance the perspective from which AWAC worked to address the animal welfare needs of the community.

Local Business Community

Privately-owned kennels, animal supply stores, animal care providers and other related local businesses play an integral role in continuing to improve animal welfare within our community. Although their contributions are often overlooked, these local businesses make an immeasurable difference in preserving and enriching the overall quality of life for animals in the Bloomington area. The additional shelter capacity, food, pet supplies, pet care, donations and various other resources provided by these businesses create a more complete network for addressing the quality of life for animals in our community.

IV. Needs Assessment and Action Plan to Achieve the Vision

In our efforts to improve the lives of animals in Monroe County, AWAC members have collaborated to assess community needs and produce an action plan. This plan is intended to guide the direction of action for the most fundamental needs for improving animal welfare in our community. Through the process of devising a comprehensive strategy, AWAC has identified 13 points of emphasis for animal welfare enhancement which are presented below.

Before illuminating the 13 points, it should be acknowledged that much of the responsibility for implementing this action plan rests with the organizations represented within AWAC. The coalition serves as a mechanism for pursuing, coordinating and maintaining an environment that fosters accountability and continuity in fulfilling its mission. This plan represents the product of AWAC's pursuit and coordination of improved animal welfare in our community. In an effort to ensure animal welfare efforts continue to evolve in our community, AWAC intends to assemble committees to oversee the continuation and expansion of the efforts set forth in this plan.

1. Foster Program

A foster program for the Bloomington area exists through the City of Bloomington Animal Care and Control Shelter. However, there is presently a notable disparity between the number of animals in need of foster care and the number of foster care providers. As a result, AWAC has set a goal to strengthen and expand the shelter's program in order to better meet the needs of the animals and the community. Specifically, the Coalition has identified 8 action steps that will help to fulfill this goal:

- Identify new people who can foster animals both long and short-term.
- Promote the regular foster parent orientations and classes that are held monthly at the shelter.
- Continue to maintain a current binder at the shelter featuring all foster animals and create duplicate binders for offsite events and placement at veterinary clinics.
- Ensure every foster animal is on petfinder.com.
- Make sure the shelter bulletin board features all available shelter animals AND find ways to ensure the public is aware of this board.
- Increase the number of foster pets that are present at offsite events.
- Create a foster program brochure as well as a procedural manual.
- Promote adoption of foster animals to keep the cycle flowing.

2. Shelter Capacity Alternatives Program

In light of the City of Bloomington Animal Care and Control Shelter consistently filling its animal capacity, AWAC intends to create and implement a system to maximize the alternatives available in situations where a lack of space would lead to euthanasia as the solution. Through the Coalition's efforts in this area, 7 action steps have been formulated to complete this program:

- Complete a list of alternative means for occasions when the shelter is at capacity.
- Secure 2 or 3 lead volunteers to help identify and utilize alternatives on short notice.
- Identify locations to take animals in temporarily when the shelter is full and compile a list portraying each location's capabilities/facilities along with contact information.
- Identify volunteers to assist with animal transport needs.
- Locate new people who can be potential "emergency" foster guardians.
- Identify volunteers willing to clean kennels, feed animals or perform other chores at offsite kennels as needed.
- Communicate the list of alternatives to all shelter staff, volunteers and other necessary groups of individuals.

3. Spay/Neuter Program

Under the goal of ensuring that every animal that leaves the Shelter is spayed/neutered, AWAC has established 4 action steps and seen them through to fruition:

- Establish new adoption fees to cover spay/neuter costs incurred by the Bloomington Animal Shelter.
- Enlist veterinarians to assist in a low-cost spay/neuter program.
- Incorporate a rotating bi-weekly clinic at the shelter.
- Establish a permanent low cost spay/neuter clinic (Pets ALIVE, February 2005).

For the goal of educating the community about the need for spaying/neutering animals to combat overpopulation, 6 action steps were identified:

- Promote availability of low-income spay/neuter assistance.
- Identify all current spay/neuter programs within the area.
- Identify gaps in education efforts and determine how to create a more comprehensive education effort.
- Develop an ongoing public relations campaign for newspaper, radio and public television promoting the benefits of spaying/neutering animals.
- Establish a calendar of community outreach programs pertaining to the spay/neuter issue.

- Create a public relations/advertisement program highlighting upcoming outreach program events/activities with an appropriate planning calendar.

Finally, in regard to assessing the need for a mobile spay/neuter clinic, AWAC has vowed to concentrate its efforts on supporting the new Pets ALIVE permanent facility, and revisit the mobile clinic evaluation in 2006.

4. Education Program

Increasing the awareness of general animal welfare issues is the goal for the education program activities. Specifically, AWAC has arrived at 4 action steps to fulfill this objective:

- Identify existing efforts that focus on educating the public about animal welfare issues.
- Develop a coordinated plan to increase the overall animal welfare awareness within the community.
- Identify who will lead the efforts for education/outreach on this topic and determine what resources are needed to most effectively do so.
- Expand education outreach efforts beyond the current target groups.

5. Pet Retention Program

Through development of a focused program to reduce the number of animals given up for behavioral reasons, AWAC hopes that pet retention will improve. For this program, AWAC identified 5 action steps needed to successfully create and implement it:

- Identify who leads the effort and what resources are needed to meet needs.
- Emphasize acclimating dogs to their environment through teaching them basic commands and how to interact with other dogs, other animals and/or people.
- Develop a strong matchmaking system.
- Advise and educate the public about common pet problems.
- Strengthen relationships with community veterinarians and animal trainers in an effort to better address physical and behavioral animal issues.

6. Animal Legislation

Animal legislation is an ever-evolving process of identifying and addressing the most current and relevant regulatory needs to preserve the welfare of animals. As a result, AWAC has committed to reviewing animal legislation annually and introducing changes as necessary. To do this, 7 action steps have been established:

- Identify the applicable legislative committee.
- Determine the animal welfare issues of the community.
- Meet with appropriate political bodies to discuss legislation suggestions/issues.
- Draft legislative language.
- Develop public relations/public comment period on proposed legislation.
- Meet with appropriate political bodies to draft legislation.
- Organize lobbying bodies to produce successful passage of legislation.

7. Feral Cats – Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) Program

The introduction of a Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) program to the Bloomington area is intended to reduce cat overpopulation and euthanasia rates. AWAC has established a 4-phase process for introducing the TNR program:

Phase I: A brochure and general informational materials will be developed which will address what a feral cat is, what can be done if an owner or non-owner identifies feral cats, and what the options are for dealing with feral cats. The process for this phase has been broken down into 5 actions:

- Determine budget and fundraising needs to maintain feral cat efforts.
- Establish protocol by which shelter staff can deal with feral cats.
- Recruit volunteers to work on the feral cat issues.
- Develop a plan to deal with controversy and opposition to feral cats.
- Create a voicemail line at the shelter for feral cat calls/questions.

Phase II: Under a pilot project, cats that are brought to the shelter, and are specifically identified as feral, will be spayed/neutered, vaccinated and relocated to an assigned feral area.

Phase III: As a pilot project separate from shelter activities, inquiries will be taken from people who have feral or stray cats. Assistance with trapping, spay/neuter and vaccinations will be provided if the cats are returned to the location where they were originally trapped. The target audience will be persons with large cat colonies, mobile home communities, homeowner associations and apartment management actors.

Phase IV: Upon successful completion of the pilot projects, announce to the public their full scale implementation and seek long term funding sources.

8. Public Relations/Marketing Plan

The goal of the public relations and marketing plan is to develop a coordinated plan to improve marketing collaboration among AWAC organizations and maximize community awareness of current animal welfare events and issues. AWAC has identified 6 action steps to reach this desired result:

- Decide how to coordinate and disseminate information (i.e. planned events, publicity efforts) to all AWAC members.
- Determine public relations/marketing communications messages.
- Decide how to coordinate and disseminate information to the public.
- Take action to implement decisions made on internal and external information sharing.
- Establish two calendars for promoting issues - one AWAC internal and one for public viewing.
- Evaluate whether an AWAC website is a feasible option, and if so, establish the website as the central source for information sharing.

9. Disaster Plan

In the event of a natural disaster, such as a tornado or flood, swift and decisive action is required to ensure the safety of all animals – from the household pet to shelter animals. To accomplish this, AWAC intends to develop a plan to address a disaster that destroys or causes evacuation of the shelter, as well as develop a plan to address animal-related issues in the event of a community disaster.

10. Maddie's Fund

Maddie's Fund is yet another means through which AWAC's can work to achieve its goal of ending euthanasia as a means of animal population control. Established in 1999, Maddie's Fund has spent more than \$50 million to save dogs and cats and aid community collaborations of no-kill organizations, traditional shelters, animal control agencies and veterinarians in reaching their no-kill goals.¹ The completion and implementation of the goals within this action plan will enable AWAC members to seek financial support from Maddie's Fund by demonstrating its commitment to enhancing the overall animal welfare within our community.

AWAC has outlined a 6 stage process for demonstrating eligibility for assistance through Maddie's Fund, which follows:

- Review and summarize application process and requirements.
- Identify players in gaining assistance.
- Determine the specific funding needs.
- Identify pre-application steps necessary before applying to Maddie's Fund.
- Implement the established pre-application steps.
- Develop the application/proposal and submit it to Maddie's Fund.

11. Increased Return-to-Owner (RTO) at Shelter

The fundamental goal of increased RTO is to reunite more lost pets with their owners. To improve the RTO efforts, 5 action steps have been developed:

- Ensure that all animals adopted are microchipped for identification purposes.
- Develop a public relations campaign to encourage microchipping family pets.
- Create a financial assistance program to increase opportunities for microchipping pets.
- Establish a public service announcement campaign to promote calling the shelter if a pet is lost.
- Address ordinance changes that would encourage microchipping, especially for animals RTO'd.

12. Increased Adoptions

The goal of increasing adoption rates may seem obvious, but in truth, this goal is extremely difficult to sustain success with because of the variability involved with animal adoption. Nonetheless, 3 primary action steps have been established to help the community to continue efforts to increase animal adoptions and adoption rates:

- Utilize marketing efforts to improve adoption rates, and emphasize the marketing strategy needs to reach members of the community that have traditionally been neglected in marketing efforts.
- Identify obstacles to increasing adoptions and create a plan to either eliminate or get beyond them.
- Analyze annual fluctuations in adoptions rates and attempt to identify significant trends. If possible, gather similar information for the regions surrounding Bloomington and do a comparison analysis.

13. Wildlife Care

In respect to wildlife care, AWAC has established 2 primary objectives:

¹ Maddie's Fund website (10-5-04): <http://www.Maddie'sfund.org/aboutus/maddie.html>

- (1) To build a new pre-release caging systems based on state federal requirements; and
- (2) To improve wildlife education efforts in Bloomington and surrounding communities.

The 3 steps developed for the new caging efforts include:

- Identifying the greatest needs of different caging types.
- Securing funding for these efforts.
- Enlisting area builders to help with the projects.

To meet the education objective, the following 5 steps were developed:

- Increase and strengthen education programs offered to both school children and adults both with onsite activities as well as outreach efforts.
- Continue to develop new interactive programs.
- Reevaluate program fees and establish new ones.
- Develop a public relations / advertisement campaign to inform the public of education opportunities.
- Secure funding for onsite education displays.

V. How Citizens and Businesses Can Help

The success of AWAC and its members is largely reliant upon the community at large to assist in providing the best environment for the improvement of animal welfare. Any and all members of the community can help to promote a safe and healthy environment for all animals through a variety of avenues which include:

- Spaying/neutering animals.
- Making donations of money, food, supplies, land, etc.
- Volunteering at shelters and/or animal welfare organizations.
- Becoming an animal foster parent.
- Helping with animal education activities.
- Promoting/sponsoring animal welfare events.
- Adopting, rather than buying pets.

This list is by no means exhaustive, but is meant to demonstrate just a sampling of the little things that each individual can do to have a large effect on improving animal welfare. The *Contact Information* section of this action plan offers a number of organizations and individuals that can be contacted to obtain further information on how to contribute to AWAC's fulfillment of its stated goals.

VI. Summary and Challenge to the Community

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

- Mahatma Gandhi, Indian Statesman and Philosopher

AWAC was created to help unite the animal welfare actors and efforts within the Bloomington area for the purpose of maximizing the collective impact of these efforts on the Bloomington animal population as well as the community. Through this collaborative effort, it is hoped that an atmosphere of respect and care for all animals will be created and the community will be more engaged in making animal welfare a priority.

As has been demonstrated by this plan, there are numerous organizations and individuals that have been, and will continue to be, the foundation of animal welfare preservation within our community. More importantly though, this plan demonstrates that these organizations and individuals are not satisfied with the degree of impact they have been able to achieve to this point and are always seeking methods for improvement. These organizations are largely dependent upon the generosity of the community to not only maintain current efforts, but also drive the creation of new ones.

So, the challenge to the Bloomington community is for citizens to do whatever they can, big or small, to assist AWAC in achieving its goals for improved animal welfare. If someone is willing but unable to find opportunities to help, the City of Bloomington website offers a variety of suggestions and contacts for ways to make a difference. These contacts along with a brief description of opportunities can be found at <http://www.bloomington.in.gov/egov/docs/1073675281793.htm#Animals>.

VII. Contact Information for AWAC and Participating Organizations

- 1. Animal Welfare Action Coalition (AWAC)**
Julio Alonso, Director of Public Works, City of Bloomington
City Hall Room 130, 401 North Morton Street
Bloomington, IN 47404
Phone: 812.349.3410
Fax: 812.349.3520
Email: Alonsoj@bloomington.in.gov
- 2. City of Bloomington Animal Control Commission (ACC)**
Website: www.bloomington.in.gov/boards.php
- 3. City of Bloomington Animal Care and Control (BACC)**
3410 Old S.R. 37 South
Bloomington, IN 47402
Phone: 812.349.3492
Fax: 812.349.3440
Website: www.bloomington.in.gov/animalshelter
- 4. Monroe County Humane Association (MCHA)**
P.O. Box 1334
Bloomington, IN 47402-1334
Phone: 812.333.6242
Email: mcha@bluemarble.net
Website: www.monroehumane.org
- 5. Pets ALIVE**
6522 Empire Road
Bloomington, IN 47401
Phone: 812.824.1 FIX
Email: petsalive@bluemarble.net
Website: www.petsalivespayneuter.com
- 6. Rescue Farm, Inc.**
7070 North Mt. Tabor Road
Ellettsville, IN 47429
Phone: 812.935.7070
Email: catsanddogsandgoatsandchickens@msn.com
Website: www.rescuefarm.org
- 7. WildCare Inc.**
5970 West State Road 48
Bloomington, In 47404
Phone: 812.323.1313
Email: info@wildcareinc.org

8. Monroe County Animal Management Commission

301 N. College Avenue

Bloomington IN 47404

Phone: 812.349.2585

Fax: 812.349.2828

Website: www.co.monroe.in.us/sheriff/AnimalManagement.html

9. Feral Friends, Inc.

Bloomington, IN

Phone: 812.322.0065

For further information on volunteer opportunities with animal welfare organizations, contact the Bloomington Volunteer Network at 349-3430.

This document is the result of eight months of discussion, input, research and collaboration among the listed groups and other interested community members. Special appreciation is extended to Sean Merrill, a Service Corps Intern from the Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs assigned to the City of Bloomington Department of Public Works.