Frequently Asked Questions

For the safety of our community and our staff, we are open **BY APPOINTMENT ONLY** for animal visits (both virtual and in-person), found animals, surrenders and Pet Pantry pick-ups. We have earned our ALX Promise certification to demonstrate how we are making every effort to keep our community safe. You can learn more about our current operating status [HERE](#).

Is the AWLA a City department?

- The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We are contracted by the City of Alexandria to provide animal control and stray sheltering services within city limits from the city-owned Vola Lawson Animal Shelter. We also provide additional services outside of the City contract, including adoptions, veterinary care, behavioral support, community services and events.

How is the AWLA funded?

- Our contract with the City of Alexandria provides funding for jurisdictional animal control and stray sheltering services, but **the majority of our funding comes from donations from our generous community**. In FY19, nearly ⅔ of our revenue came from donations and grants. Without this support from our community, we would not be able to go above and beyond to help animals in the city and across the region. We do not receive funding from national animal welfare organizations, including the ASPCA or the Humane Society of the United States. If you’d like to make a donation to help Alexandria’s Animals, you can learn more [HERE](#).

Is the AWLA a no-kill shelter?

- Yes, we are a no-kill shelter. That term can be a bit misleading, but a “no-kill shelter” is generally defined as one that finds placement for 90% or more of the animals in its
care. The AWLA exceeds those standards, finding placement for more than 96% of the animals that come to us. We work hard to find appropriate placement for every animal that comes to us, but we believe that if an animal is suffering from an untreatable illness or injury, or if an animal can not safely live in the community, euthanasia may be the most humane option for that animal.

However, we prefer not to use the term “no-kill” because we want to build positive, supportive and non-judgmental relationships with the shelters in our region. Because of our community’s support, we are privileged to have advantages that many shelters in the state do not, and we want to work with those shelters to help animals rather than creating barriers or placing limits on what they can do because of terminology. In doing so, we can not only help animals in the City of Alexandria but also assist shelters across the region.

What is an open-access shelter?

- No, the AWLA is an independent non-profit organization caring for animals in our community. We do not receive funding from national animal welfare organizations like the Humane Society of the United States, the ASPCA, the American Humane Association or the Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. The AWLA relies on donor support to help us provide a high level of shelter and care to our animal residents. All the funds we raise are used to operate the Vola Lawson Animal Shelter, care for our animal residents and provide community outreach and support.

How are you helping animals across the community?

- At the AWLA, our mission is to help not only animals in our facility but also throughout the city. We offer a variety of programs to provide support to pet owners and animal lovers, with the ultimate goal of helping cherished pets stay in the homes where they are loved. Read more about some of these programs
  Community Pet Pantry
  Behavior Assistance
Spay and Neuter Assistance

Vaccine Clinics

Animeals

Crisis Care

Grooming and Veterinary Assistance

**How long do animals stay with you?**

- Animals stay at the AWLA for different amounts of time based on their health, their behavior, how long it takes them to connect with an adopter and countless other factors. The average amount of time any animal spends in our facility is approximately 13 days; some animals will be adopted more quickly, and some may take longer. We **DO NOT** set limits on the amount of time an animal can stay with us. As long as an animal needs a home while they are waiting to find their family, we will provide that, and during their stay, we provide them with food, a safe place to sleep, veterinary care, socialization, enrichment and so much more. While we want to help every animal ultimately find a home, we are grateful for the opportunity to provide them with safe and loving shelter until that happens.

**Can I donate pet supplies?**

- Absolutely. We can always use pet supplies, including dry and canned food (including open bags of food), kitty litter, toys, treats and more. If you have items that you would like to drop off, we have a donation cart outside our building entrance every day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. We bring this cart inside regularly throughout the day to make sure nothing is sitting outside for too long, and we also bring it in in inclement weather. If you need a tax receipt for your donations, please call us at 703-746-4774.

If you are looking to purchase goods to donate to us, you can find a list of items that are always in need at the AWLA [HERE](#). Items on this list are pre-programmed to be delivered to the AWLA, or you can purchase them
elsewhere and drop them off in our donation cart during the times listed above.

*Please note that we cannot use pillows, sheets/comforters, knit blankets, used litter boxes or cat trees/scratchers, sleeping bags, human clothing, styrofoam products, rugs/carpets, newspapers or plastic bags.*

**What does it mean to be Fear Free ® ?**

- Every AWLA staff member is certified in Fear Free animal care, a training program developed by Dr. Marty Becker. This means we make extra efforts to observe sheltering and handling practices that will make pets most comfortable, reduce stress and hopefully keep our animal residents safer and healthier during their stay with us. We also take additional measures during this time to make sure each animal is ready to move into a home environment. This may include veterinary care, behavioral evaluations and training, specialized diets or housing, daily socialization and enrichment and so much more. If you’d like to learn how we are helping animals feel healthy and secure at the AWLA, [contact us](#).