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## Recent Progress and Continuing Concerns at Gwinnett Animal Welfare

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Gwinnett Animal Advocacy Alliance <gwinnettanimalshelteradvocates@gmail.com>

Fri, Sep 25, 2026 at 11:56 AM

To: Lindsey Jorstad <Lindsey.Jorstad@gwinnettcounty.com>, Katrina Helman <Katrina.Helman@gwinnettcounty.com>  
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Katrina and Lindsey,

I wanted to reach out regarding several recent developments at Gwinnett Animal Welfare. I'm copying Glenn and the Board of Commissioners because these issues relate not only to shelter operations, but also to the broader capacity and pet-overpopulation crisis our county is facing.

First, I want to acknowledge several positive developments we have noticed.

Thank you for making an effort to reach out to the media and for sharing information through both the Gwinnett County Government and Animal Welfare social media pages about the shelter's critical capacity situation. We have consistently asked for greater public awareness of what is happening at the shelter, and we appreciate seeing the County use its own platforms to bring visibility to the problem.

We also want to thank the County for launching the Steve and Julie Helman Pet Vaccine Clinics, providing Gwinnett residents with free vaccinations and microchipping. These are important preventive resources for our community, and we are glad to see them being made available.

The public response to the County's announcement is also worth noting. The post received hundreds of reactions and comments and was shared hundreds of times. **That level of engagement demonstrates that animal welfare is an issue Gwinnett residents care about and want their County government to address.**

We hope the County will build on that interest by investing in additional prevention initiatives—particularly accessible spay/neuter programs that address pet overpopulation before animals ever enter the shelter system. We also need legislation addressing backyard breeding and would like the Board to reconsider the ordinance I requested last year to prohibit the retail sale of commercially bred dogs and cats in pet stores. These are all issues that contribute to the crisis we are seeing.

There are, however, several areas where we believe additional action and communication are still needed.

One thing we would very much like to see is a dedicated public post from the shelter whenever animals are given euthanasia deadlines. There are currently 13 dogs with a euthanasia deadline of Tuesday, September 29. Volunteers and advocates have been doing much of the heavy lifting to alert the public when animals become urgent. The County needs to use its considerable reach to alert residents as well so they have an opportunity to step up and help.

Sometimes an older individual post for an animal is updated to indicate that the animal now has a deadline, but that is not enough. Many residents will never see that update.

I've attached an example from DeKalb County Animal Services. When multiple dogs are facing a euthanasia deadline, DeKalb makes a dedicated public post identifying the animals, the deadline, and ways the community can help. They also provide ongoing updates leading up to the deadline so the public knows which dogs remain at risk and where help is still needed.

**If the public doesn't know these animals are at risk, they cannot help.**

I also want to thank the shelter for accurately identifying "Shelter overcrowded" as the euthanasia reason for Xavier and Sawyer. Accurate euthanasia reporting was one of the first issues we raised when GAAA began advocating in July 2024. Based on our review of the County's published euthanasia reports, the last time "Shelter overcrowded" was listed as a euthanasia reason prior to Xavier and Sawyer was January 17, 2024—months before GAAA was even formed.

Transparency is critical. If dogs are being euthanized because the shelter does not have sufficient capacity, the public needs to know that. If overcrowding deaths are recorded under other categories, we cannot accurately measure the scale of the capacity and pet-overpopulation crisis or determine whether the solutions being implemented are working.

We have also noticed what appears to be an increase in animals being picked up rather than residents being directed to leave stray animals where they were found. That is progress, and we want to acknowledge it.

Unfortunately, yesterday a resident publicly reported a very different experience. According to her post, she contacted Gwinnett Animal

Welfare regarding a mother cat and kittens born outside her home and was told the shelter was at capacity and to “take them outside.” She also described the interaction as rude. I have attached a screenshot of her post.

We understand that capacity creates extraordinarily difficult circumstances for shelter staff. However, telling residents to leave animals outside does not solve the underlying problem. It also leaves residents who are trying to do the responsible thing without a meaningful solution. This is precisely why we continue to emphasize that managed intake cannot be the long-term solution to pet overpopulation. Prevention has to be part of the solution.

Finally, we have been hearing reports that panleukopenia may currently be present at the shelter. Is there currently a confirmed or suspected case or outbreak of panleukopenia at Gwinnett Animal Welfare?

If so, please notify the public. If panleukopenia is currently present at the shelter, fosters, adopters, rescues, and residents who already have cats need sufficient information to take appropriate precautions.

We recognize the positive steps that have been taken recently, and we want to acknowledge progress when we see it. At the same time, there is still significant work to be done.

Thank you,  
Melissa



Dekalb County Animal Services

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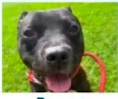
18 dogs. One deadline. And every one of them needs someone to say yes.... [See more](#)

URGENT: HOMES NEEDED

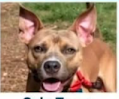
The following dogs have been scheduled for euthanasia on Thursday, September 24 at 7PM. They need long-term placement, whether through foster, adoption, or a rescue. Come to 3280 Chamblee Dunwoody Road, Chamblee, GA for more information.



Opaline



Bravon



Solo Tenny



Gravity



Chico



Corsage



Sorena



Dionysus



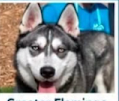
Oreo



Tazzy



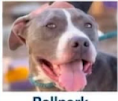
Musician



Greater Flamingo



Hawfinch



Ballpark



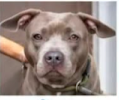
Rilophy



Marvel



Gojo



Grace

 223

 57

 335



[View more comments](#)

E

Emma Hernandez

Beaver Ruin/Steve Reynolds · 4h · 🌐

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Unfortunately I haven't found a shelter for this little family, I'm still working on it, because they were born outside my house, and when I called Gwinnett animal shelter, a rude woman answered me and told me take them outside we are at capacity, and I understand that, there are many animals, BUT why she says that, if she works at a shelter with animals, the WORLD needs more humans with empathy with animals, and fewer people like her.



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