



Yolo County Civil Grand Jury

2025-2026

Continuing Progress Yolo County Animal Services

Released: Jun 18, 2026



120 W Main Street, Suite A
Woodland, CA 95695
grandjury@yolocounty.gov
(530)406-5088

<https://www.yolocounty.gov/living/grand-jury>

This page is intentionally blank.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Resolution.....	4
2	Description.....	5
2.1	Abstract.....	5
2.2	Background.....	6
3	Methodology.....	9
4	Discussion.....	10
3.1	Volunteer Program and Support.....	11
4.1	LAFCO 2012 and 2013 Studies.....	12
4.2	Grand Jury 2023-2024 Report and Responses.....	12
4.3	Grand Jury 2024-2025 Report and Responses.....	12
4.4	Yolo Animal Services Planning Agency.....	12
4.5	Yolo County Request for Information.....	13
4.6	Morale at YCAS.....	15
4.7	Possible conflict with the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act.....	15
4.8	Some services not provided to all parts of Yolo County.....	15
5	Findings.....	17
6	Recommendations.....	18
7	Commendation.....	20
8	Responses.....	21
8.1	Required Responses.....	21
8.2	Invited Responses.....	21
9	Acronyms.....	22
10	Glossary of Terms.....	23
11	Bibliography.....	24
12	Disclaimer.....	25

1 RESOLUTION

The Yolo County Civil Grand Jury 2025-2026

Approves by Resolution the Yolo County Animal Services Report

WHEREAS, the 15 members of the 2025-2026 Yolo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) conducted investigations and prepared an investigative report; and

WHEREAS, as is customary, the Grand Jury's specialized committees were each given primary responsibility for determining the investigation strategy, conducting interviews, gathering evidence, and producing reports; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

1. The Grand Jury finds the foregoing recitals are true and correct.
2. By adoption of this Resolution, the Grand Jury hereby approves the report, with the member count as shown below.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Grand Jury this 12th day of May 2026, as follows:

AYES: 13 Jurors
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: 2 Juror

Signed,
Richard Zeiger
Richard Zeiger, Foreperson

2 DESCRIPTION

2.1 ABSTRACT

The Yolo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) completed an investigation of organizational and operational changes at the Yolo County Animal Services (YCAS) facility as well as reviewed responses to the “2024-2025 Grand Jury Report on Animal Services”. The Grand Jury reviewed the long-term difficulties at the shelter caused by underfunding, aging facilities, heavy reliance on volunteers for operational effectiveness, the small size of the facility compared to the size of the community served, and the number of animals for intake.

In response to last year’s Grand Jury report, there has been some continued progress with respect to the volunteer program including website changes, additional training materials, and continued implementation of the [tiered system called “PAWS”](#) (Pet Adoption and Wellness Services) that indicates staff and volunteer proficiency level in working with animals as well as the animals themselves in terms of behavior and ease of handling.

The Grand Jury finds that some of the organizational and operational changes reflect “Continuing Progress”. Overall, however, the YCAS staff acknowledged the “patchwork” approach that has been necessary in responding to the shelter’s physical shortcomings within the facility. Despite operational hurdles, including the age of the facility, YCAS has been able to obtain grants and community backing resulting in increased funding and continued volunteer interest. Such hurdles have made it a continuing challenging situation at YCAS, but as the title of the report indicates, the Grand Jury still found “Continuing Progress” toward improving operations.

Figure1: Yolo County Animal Services Facility



Aerial of YCAS facility, south of Gibson Road at 2640 E. Gibson Road. The “Job Site” area noted reflects proposed location for “Clinic in a Can” described below.

2.2 BACKGROUND

The YCAS facility is located at 2640 E. Gibson Road in Woodland. The facility serves over 216,000 residents in the incorporated cities and the University of California, Davis (UCD) campus, as well as the unincorporated areas. The facility primarily consists of a 4,800 square foot main building (built in 1970), a 3,000 square foot dog kennel area (built in 1974), and a 2,900 square foot cat annex building (built in 2003). There is a barn used for large animals at the back of the facility.

Figure 2: Yolo County Animal Services Barn



Yolo County Animal Services, barn at rear of their facility, located at 2640 E. Gibson Road, Woodland.

There is also a trailer procured and retrofitted by the UCD Veterinary Shelter Medicine program, used by veterinary staff at the YCAS facility site which has been outfitted for small animal surgery. Cat housing in the cat annex includes two-sided “cat condos” to facilitate easier cleaning, reduced stress, and provide more space. Dog kennels are typically chain-link fencing on concrete with an elevated bed area within the kennel. YCAS also utilizes a mobile trailer for spay/neuter events.

The original 1970s era buildings were concrete block on slab construction which have outdated heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) resulting in less-than-ideal air circulation. Windows, HVAC, flooring, and drainage at the facility have evolved in a limited, “patchwork” fashion to improve conditions for animals and staff, as funding and other conditions have allowed from time to time.

The “Clinic in a Can” is a structure that, when operational, will include a surgery suite, a recovery pad, a wet table (a specialized treatment table designed to handle water, fluids, and debris during procedures), and an exhaust fan. The structure was delivered in January 2026 and is not yet properly installed. YCAS is working with the Department of Community Services to facilitate the installation based on engineering, permitting, and installation of the necessary infrastructure, including the electrical improvements. This unit, shown in Figure 3, will replace the existing older trailer currently used for medical surgeries.

Figure 3: Yolo County Animal Services “Clinic-In-A-Can”



Yolo County Animal Services, "Clinic in a Can", pending installation, located at 2640 E. Gibson Road, Woodland.

In the last four years, the management of the YCAS facility has gone through continuing transition, including:

- In October 2022, the shelter’s management and oversight shifted from the Yolo County Sheriff’s Office (Sheriff) to the County Administrator’s Office (CAO);
- In February 2024, the CAO assigned YCAS operations to the Department of Community Services;
- In March 2025, the Board appointed a new County Administrative Officer; and
- In August 2025, a new director of the Department of Community Services was hired by the County, overseeing YCAS as one of its divisions.

These management changes are beginning to improve the organization and operations of the facility.

Figure 4: Animal Services Facility



Yolo County Animal Services, located at 2640 E. Gibson Road, Woodland.

Over the last several years, the PAWS tiered system has facilitated pairing of experienced staff and volunteers with appropriate dogs for walks and other interactions such as meeting potential adopters. Staff and volunteers are ranked based on skills and level of training and experience. Dogs are rated as blue, orange, or purple from least to most challenging. In this manner, staff and volunteers are appropriately matched with dogs for walks and other interactions such as during meetups for potential adoptions. This is important as there have been many dogs rated “purple” (i.e., most challenging) received into the YCAS facility, post-pandemic, with a recent influx of challenging dogs received over the last year.

Veterinary standards, and the knowledge base surrounding shelter design, construction, sanitation, and animal health have evolved considerably since the 1970s. The hardworking YCAS staff, volunteers, and the broader Yolo County community agree that changes are overdue. In order to move toward greater conformity with today’s industry standards, changes are needed.

Figure 5: Mobile Spay and Neuter Trailer



Mobile SNIP trailer used for Spay and Neuter services, located adjacent to 2640 E. Gibson Road, Woodland.

Multiple groups in Yolo County would like to have a fully modern new facility in the County. However, available County funding limits any substantial changes to the facility at this time, thus smaller piecemeal efforts continue to be pursued to improve on-site conditions where possible. An updated guideline for care in animal shelters can be found at the [Journal of Shelter Medicine & Community Animal Health](#) website.

3 METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury's approach toward investigating YCAS was comprised of:

- Touring the YCAS shelter at 2640 E. Gibson Road, Woodland on two occasions: November 4, 2025 and on February 4, 2026;
- Reviewing a variety of publicly available documents, including: 1) the 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report on Animal Services and the responses; 2) the 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report on Animal Services and the responses; 3) the Yolo County Animal Services Study, August 2012, prepared by the Yolo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO); 4) the Yolo County Animal Services Governance Study, September 26, 2013, prepared by LAFCO and the University of California, Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program; and 5) the Journal of Shelter Medicine & Community Animal Health website;
- Conducting exploratory interviews with six YCAS staff, including managers, as well as volunteers who had history and experience in the field and at the shelter site;
- Watching recorded video presentation of the February 10, 2026 Yolo County Board of Supervisors (Board) meeting with respect to Animal Services service models, along with public comment; the CAO staff presentation February 18, 2026 at the Yolo Animal Services Planning Agency (YASPA) regarding the Yolo County Joint Powers Authority (JPA) governance options; the March 24, 2026 Board meeting where the YCAS staff provided a presentation update on YCAS operations and process improvement efforts; and the April 14, 2026 Board meeting discussing physical YCAS on-site improvements to facilitate installation of the "Clinic in a Can";
- Reviewing newspaper articles (*the Davis Enterprise*, dated November 11 and 15, 2025) with respect to the YCAS facility and the volunteer program;
- Requesting and reviewing further documents from key YCAS personnel including budget, organizational chart, and training materials;
- Reviewing the [Hayden Act](#), a California law, adopted in 1998, to improve the treatment of companion animals in public shelters and reduce the occurrence of euthanasia; and
- Examining social media and websites including: [Yolo County Animal Services](#), [Yolo County Animal Services Volunteer Program](#), best practices in the [Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters](#), [Friends of Yolo County Animal Services](#), and [YCAS Volunteers](#).

4 DISCUSSION

Currently, YCAS provides animal control and sheltering for the County, serving the cities of Woodland, Davis, West Sacramento, Winters, the unincorporated areas of Yolo County, and the UCD Campus. YCAS operates a municipal, open-admission animal shelter in Woodland, and provides pet adoptions, rescues, licensing, spay/neuter services, medical treatments, and low-cost vaccinations for dogs and cats.

The YCAS 2023, 2024, and 2025 operational statistics are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 indicates intakes including strays and those relinquished by their owner. Table 2 displays outcomes such as adoptions, animals returned to owner and shelter euthanasia. Both adoptions and return to owner are indicating increases from 2023 to 2025, with euthanasia seeing some reductions in the last two years.

Table 1: YCAS 2023, 2024 and 2025 Operations – Intakes

Intakes	2023	2024	2025	Percent Change 2023 to 2025
Strays	2,783	2,877	3,094	11.2%
Dogs	1,390	1,384	1,462	5.2%
Cats	1,393	1,493	1,632	17.2%
Relinquished by Owner	384	438	562	46.4%
Dogs	166	251	281	69.3%
Cats	218	187	281	28.9%

Source: [Yolo County Animal Services Website statistics](#) for 2024, 2025.

Source: Yolo County Board Agenda [Mar 24, 2026 attachment](#) for 2023.

Table 2: YCAS 2023, 2024 and 2025 Operations - Outcomes

Outcomes	2023	2024	2025	Percent Change 2023 to 2025
Adoptions	1,519	1,777	2,008	32.2%
Dogs	631	760	803	27.3%
Cats	888	1,017	1,205	35.7%
Returned to Owner	774	858	873	12.8%
Dogs	716	733	805	12.4%
Cats	58	125	68	17.3
Shelter Euthanasia	424	288	354	-16.6%
Dogs	122	116	117	-4.1%
Cats	302	172	237	-21.6%

Source: [Yolo County Animal Services Website statistics](#) for 2024, 2025.

Source: [Yolo County Board Agenda Mar 24, 2026 attachment](#) for 2023.

The Grand Jury believes the YCAS budget will need to be increased annually to address the recent growth in animal intake at the facility.

3.1 VOLUNTEER PROGRAM AND SUPPORT

The prior 2024-2025 Grand Jury report investigated the volunteer program in further detail. On November 15, 2025, *The Davis Enterprise*, published an article titled “Volunteers, director talk state of Yolo County Animal Services” describing a recent firing of a volunteer from the program and thus the current Grand Jury decided to again explore the volunteer program at the YCAS facility.

The YCAS has implemented changes to their website since last year including improvements to the volunteer webpage to make it easier for volunteers to sign up. YCAS utilizes the “Better Impact” volunteer portal as a method to train volunteers, as well as the use of one-on-one mentoring with task sign off sheets for determining progress of volunteers. YCAS has also continued implementation of the PAWS tiered system to appropriately match dogs based on their behavior to staff and volunteers based upon their level of experience. This is important to ensure staff or the volunteer are capable of handling the dog during potential interactions with other dogs and/or visitors for potential adoptions.

YCAS is in the process of developing comprehensive written standard operating procedures including a revised volunteer handbook, comprehensive safety policies, and required training on animal behavior for staff and volunteers, which YCAS indicated would be available in mid-April 2026. Volunteers trained to do pet adoptions will be given full access to, and training for, the individual animal record database that contains individual animal records to ensure volunteers are fully aware of any documented animal behavior and health records.

4.1 LAFCO 2012 AND 2013 STUDIES

The 2012 LAFCO report “*Yolo County Animal Services Study*” provided a useful background on the conditions and difficulties at the YCAS facility. The follow-up 2013 LAFCO report “*Yolo County Animal Services Governance Study*” provided additional valuable information.

4.2 GRAND JURY 2023-2024 REPORT AND RESPONSES

Title: Moving Forward

The [2023-2024 report](#) focused on recent changes at that time, including the clear advantages and uncertainties associated with those changes. The report noted five upcoming/in process changes which would likely determine a new baseline level of service from YCAS. Those changes included: 1) the formation of the YASPA and the JPA entity, 2) Reassignment of YCAS to the Department of Community Services; 3) unused space formerly belonging to the probation administration being added to the YCAS facility; 4) proposed development of new annex space just south of the Probation Ancillary building; 5) the County contract with UCD Veterinary Medicine not being renewed. The report also acknowledged an environment of poor morale at YCAS.

4.3 GRAND JURY 2024-2025 REPORT AND RESPONSES

Title: A Review of the Volunteer and Safety Programs

The [2024-2025 report](#) focused on the lack of safety programs at the shelter for staff, volunteers, and the animals. The report also focused on the number of volunteers, the volunteer program, and the application process to become a volunteer at the shelter. Recommendations focused on improving the sign-up process for volunteers, better formalizing the overall volunteer program, the need for procedural and safety training for volunteers, and adoption of a set of safety standards for the volunteer program.

4.4 YOLO ANIMAL SERVICES PLANNING AGENCY

The YASPA, a JPA, was established in 2020 to focus on planning and improving regional animal services which the 2012 LAFCO report strongly advocated. The County and its incorporated cities including Davis, West Sacramento, Winters and Woodland, formed the YASPA, a planning agency to study operational and program options to adequately service the community and enhance animal welfare and shelter operations through joint, informed decision-making.

4.5 YOLO COUNTY REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The YASPA, in coordination with Yolo County, decided to explore options for providing a quality animal services program that would potentially allow them to manage costs for both the County, UCD campus, and the incorporated cities. As a result, a [Notice of Request for Information \(RFI\) 2025-0001](#) for YCAS was released on August 25, 2025, with a due date of October 24, 2025 (extended to Nov. 20, 2025). The County of Yolo facilitated the RFI inviting qualified organizations to respond. Respondents were asked to provide professional services for animal care operations in the County, including those for:

- overall management of shelter operations,
- acceptance and care of animals,
- tracking all animal intake, redemption of animal to owners, adoptions, euthanasia, disposal, veterinary care for small and large animals,
- spay/neuter and rabies vaccine services for small and large animals,
- rescue programs, foster care, and
- implement volunteer services program,
- community education program, fundraising, special event production, and
- animal welfare law enforcement and related field services.

Four responses were received, as well as a letter of interest from UCD School of Veterinary Medicine. Those four responses included those from: Best Friends Animal Society, Animal Community Alliance, Unleashing the Possibilities, and Jenee Rawlings. The UCD letter of interest indicated capacity to provide clinical services to YCAS shelter animals to accommodate 200 male dogs/year, 250 female dogs/year, and 550 cats/year for the Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program. The TNR Program is specifically for feral cats and has proven the most humane and effective method for managing feral cat populations. The feral cats are humanely trapped, spayed/neutered and vaccinated and the returned to their original location, thereby breaking the breeding cycle and mating behaviors.

On February 10, 2026, County staff gave a Board presentation about JPA governance models for animal services and requested the Board provide direction on potential next steps. The analysis highlighted how transitioning the current YASPA JPA to a different model could present opportunities to engage in shared governance to improve outcomes. On February 18, 2026, the County staff gave a similar presentation to YASPA. The Board and YASPA are currently reviewing the proposal. The next meeting for YASPA is scheduled for May 20, 2026.

YCAS is contractually responsible for providing the incorporated cities of Davis, West Sacramento, Winters, and Woodland, as well as the UCD campus, with animal services. Table 3 shows the calls for service for Fiscal Year 2024-25, as well as the current agreements with the different cities and UCD, which expire in June 2026, based on information provided in the RFI. Each agreement details the services the County provides relating to animal services. Total program costs to the cities and UCD is based on a three-year rolling average of 1) the number of animals housed; and 2) the number of calls for service received from each jurisdiction, which accounts for the differences in contract amounts. The services Yolo County provides to its partner cities include, pick up of stray

animals, rabies control, response to vicious animals, responding to animal complaint reports, and other similar services. The County provides similar services to the unincorporated areas within the County, in total covering 1,015 square miles.

Table 3: Calls for Service and Animal Services Agreements

Area	FY 2024/2025 Calls	Current 3-Year Agreements per year ¹	County of Yolo Budget	Avg. Cost per Call
U.C. Davis	178	\$68,721	N/A	\$386
City of Davis	1,064	\$604,576	N/A	\$568
City of West Sacramento	2,674	\$949,029	N/A	\$354
City of Winters	279	\$86,068	N/A	\$308
City of Woodland	2,890	\$1,184,000	N/A	\$409
County of Yolo	1,668	N/A	\$1,300,000	\$779
No Response Areas ²	399	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	9,161	\$2,892,394	\$1,300,000	\$457

1. Amounts are less any licensing/fee revenues received during the service period. Current 3-year agreements expire in June 2026. Source: JPA Analysis, presented at the February 10, 2026 Board meeting.

2. The “No Response Area” designation, according to the County, was used to capture 399 response calls that didn’t have a jurisdiction assigned, these were located throughout the County but appear to be a geocoding issue related to the calls, particularly in the more remote areas of the County. Costs for those responses are included in the County of Yolo costs.

The County of Yolo general fund covers costs associated with animal services provided to the unincorporated areas of the County. The total budget for animal control services for FY 2024-25 was \$5,032,358, with a net County cost of approximately \$1.3 million for calls for service. The current FY 2025-26 budget is \$5,865,694. The increase in funding, however, has not been reflected in improvements to the facility.

At the conclusion of the February 10, 2026 Board meeting, the Board asked the YCASP to continue to explore the possibility of having its own governance structure and that YCASP members go back to their respective agencies for feedback. On February 18, 2026, YASPA held a meeting of their JPA and County staff provided the same presentation. The minutes have not been posted as of early May.

4.6 MORALE AT YCAS

Volunteers told the Grand Jury that they were enthusiastic about working with the animals at the YCAS shelter. They said that this work was their reward for volunteering. However, they also mentioned that they received little recognition from YCAS for their volunteer work. They described friction, poor communication issues with YCAS personnel, and poor communication between staff and volunteers. Volunteers voiced that they were unclear on how to provide suggestions, received little feedback and uneven training, and did not receive adequate continuing education/training or updates on operations. They also indicated a general feeling of isolation from overall operations. Volunteers specifically noted that they wished staff would spend more time working with the volunteers.

Some YCAS staff mentioned that coordination and communication between volunteers and staff was not ideal. The Grand Jury learned that YCAS had developed a website for volunteers that included much useful information, such as a volunteer handbook, training materials, safety information, volunteer signup sheets, and information about YCAS activities. However, volunteers indicated that they had not accessed the website. Since volunteer training is often done peer-to-peer, experienced volunteers do not direct newcomers to the resources at the website, because they are unaware of the updated resources. YCAS has also established a chat for volunteers on WhatsApp. Although the website urges use of the chat, neither volunteers nor staff mentioned the App to the Grand Jury.

YCAS staff noted that there was difficulty in getting volunteers to use the online sign up. However, staff did not provide any information on how they were encouraging its use. When asked about volunteer recognition, staff said it was mostly individual conversations with volunteers and that the YCAS Facebook page recognized volunteers, but the Grand Jury could find little evidence of this.

4.7 POSSIBLE CONFLICT WITH THE FEDERAL FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT

The Grand Jury received information that there may be some paid staff who also volunteer at the shelter, performing the same duties they do as a volunteer. This may be in conflict with the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Code of Federal Regulations, 29 CFR 553.103, states that employees may volunteer hours of service to their public employer or agency provided *“such services are not the same type of services which the individual is employed to perform for such public agency.”*

4.8 SOME SERVICES NOT PROVIDED TO ALL PARTS OF YOLO COUNTY

YCAS provides Animal Control services to all of Yolo County. However, other services, such as adoption events, spay/neuter and vaccine clinics, and educational outreach have been almost entirely focused on the cities of Woodland and Davis. The result is that approximately 40% of the population of Yolo County has not been receiving these services.

In particular, although the city of West Sacramento has a population approximately equal to that of Woodland or Davis, YCAS has made little effort to engage with West Sacramento. There has been almost no outreach to city officials, private business, or non-profit organizations to facilitate such services. YCAS is missing the opportunity to recruit volunteers as well as people to foster animals.

Education about the importance of spay/neuter and rabies vaccination is not being provided. There are some large parking areas in West Sacramento that are unused for much of the year that could be used for clinics. There are several animal-related businesses that might be willing to host adoption clinics. There are secondary and post-secondary schools that might have students interested in being shelter volunteers or volunteers at community events.

In addition, there has been almost no educational outreach to more rural parts of the county, where public service concerning the importance of spay/neuter and rabies control might be important.

5 FINDINGS

The Grand Jury developed a matrix of facts, leading to both findings and recommendations that were prepared. Based on those facts, the following findings and recommendations were developed during our investigation.

The Grand Jury makes the following findings:

- F1. The failure to provide funding sufficient to keep pace with the increase in intake and service calls has resulted in inadequate housing for animals.
- F2. The YCAS facility places a great deal of reliance on volunteers for day-to-day operations. Volunteers are often trained by other volunteers. Staffing for the busiest operational days (Saturdays) is often facilitated through volunteers.
- F3. YCAS's use of an outdated policy manual and lack of standard operating procedures had led to the lack of a formal hands-on training program has resulted in inadequate training for some volunteers.
- F4. The lack of weekday evening and Sunday availability is a disincentive to potential adopters who may have difficulty visiting on weekdays or during the limited Saturday hours. Although hours are being expanded on Tuesday evening, adoption hours have not been expanded based on the website.
- F5. Staff have made progress in implementing some of the recommendations from last year's Grand Jury report, such as improvements to the website, highlighting volunteer opportunities, and receipt of the "Clinic in a Can" unit for medical activities, however the unit is still not operational.
- F6. YCAS's emphasis on outreach to the cities of Woodland and Davis has resulted in nearly 40% of the county's population being neglected when it comes to animal care education, adoption events, and spay/neuter and vaccine clinics.
- F7. YCAS's lack of a formal volunteer recognition program and their failure to foster and encourage staff-volunteer interaction has resulted in poor coordination of volunteer activities, inadequate training of volunteers, and poor volunteer morale.
- F8. YCAS's failure to verify County employment conflicts for volunteers may have violated the Fair Labor Standards Act.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Jury makes the following recommendations:

- R1. The Yolo County Board of Supervisors should increase funding for YCAS to keep pace with Yolo County population growth and the number of animals received at the facility.
- R2. The Department of Community Services should prioritize planning, expedite permitting coordination, and the completion of infrastructure for the “Clinic in a Can” to be operational to provide a more modern facility for spay/neuter operations by December 31, 2026.
- R3. YCAS staff should implement the new Policy and Operations Manual, currently the manual preparation is in progress and expected for completion in Mid-April. As of May 12, 2026, it has yet to be released. YCAS staff should implement comprehensive training of staff and volunteers on the manual by November 30, 2026.
- R4. The YCAS facility should schedule an adequate number of paid employees working on the weekend, to serve the community for animal adoptions, increase adoptions, and reduce the length of stay for animals.
- R5. YCAS should expand weekend and evening hours, opening on Sunday, with appropriate YCAS staff, supported by volunteers, and expand some evening hours, as appropriate, particularly in the Summer, to increase the ability for adoptions to occur more quickly. The facility should consider closing to the public on a weekday, rather than Sundays.
- R6. YCAS should develop better ways to foster interaction among volunteers and between volunteers and staff. Examples may include:
 - Providing a regular newsletter aimed at both staff and volunteers, that presents information about the shelter, staff and policy changes, and volunteer activities.
 - Maintaining a suggestion box, paper or online, that can be used anonymously
 - Conducting regular meetings of staff and volunteers who perform the same duties, e.g., dog walkers, kennel cleaners, kitten socializers. These may include a combination of general discussion and volunteer training.
 - Encouraging use of the WhatsApp channel by both volunteers and staff to keep everyone updated on latest information.
- R7. YCAS should develop a program to formally recognize volunteers and their achievements. Examples based on efforts that have been successful for other similar programs include:
 - Annual volunteer appreciation events.
 - Recognition of volunteer milestones such as hours worked, years of volunteering, or becoming a Purple Paw. These could include a certificate, a pin, or mention in a newsletter or social media.

- Recognition of personal milestones such as birthdays, graduations, weddings, etc.
 - Photo Identification, laminated badges with lanyards for those who work directly with the public.
 - Showcasing individual volunteers on social media, in newsletter, or at adoption events.
 - Providing volunteers with free or at-cost items such as T-shirts or caps.
 - Nominating volunteers for local volunteering awards, such as the Yolo Community Foundation's Philanthropy Awards.
 - Having an on-site bulletin board for posting information for and about volunteers.
- R8. YCAS should verify that employees who are also serving as volunteers are not in conflict with the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- R9. YCAS should work to include the city of West Sacramento in education and outreach programs. Suggestions include:
- Work with the city and the private sector to hold spay/neuter and vaccination clinics in suitable locations in the city, e.g., Sutter Health Park parking lots, and local schools.
 - Work with local animal-related businesses, restaurants and outdoor venues to hold adoption events.
 - Work with local schools and colleges to recruit volunteers.
 - Have Animal Control officers participate in the Arthur Turner Library Trucktopia which showcases public & private sector vehicles.
 - Develop outreach programs to recruit people willing to foster animals.
 - Explore partnering with professional baseball teams, e.g., River Cats and/or Athletics on educational and other outreach events.
- R10. Identify opportunities to do education and outreach in rural areas. This could include:
- Identify local events where YCAS or volunteers could participate and provide educational materials.
 - Identify local locations for posting educational materials, such as libraries or post offices.

7 COMMENDATION

The partner organizations and volunteers who support the YCAS should be commended for their tireless work and dedication toward improving the current situation at the shelter. The volunteers are often relied upon for the daily needs of the animals which would likely not be met for such things as daily walks. Without the support of the volunteers at the facility and the overall spirit of volunteerism found within the community, the animals would be largely impacted.

The shelter management has been successful in obtaining \$337,000 in grant funding toward the “Clinic in a Can” program to facilitate veterinary care at the shelter. The “Clinic in a Can” has now been delivered and will include a surgery suite, recovery pad, wet table, exhaust fan. That said, prior to use, the “Clinic in a Can” still needs to be installed at the site, including the installation of necessary infrastructure, which YCAS is facilitating in concert with the Department of Community Services.

The 2024-2024 Grand Jury found that the shelter’s process for signing up new volunteers was cumbersome, unresponsive, and ineffective. YCAS has launched a new website, www.yoloshelter.org which includes information about the shelter and adoption, as well as a new online portal for volunteer registration. However, the volunteer registration page does not link to the actual volunteer website, which has much more information about volunteer opportunities, volunteer duties, and volunteer sign up.

Hours of operation of the shelter have been extended to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays, per the recent March 24 Board presentation which is helpful. However, as of April 6, 2026, the expanded hours were not reflected on the website which shows the following for adoptions: Monday thru Saturday 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. for dogs, and Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for cats.

The Grand Jury understands that the shelter is overwhelmed and understaffed, and we are thankful to all for the ongoing dedication to the animals by the staff, volunteers, and partners who continue to contribute to the well-being of the animals at the shelter.

8 RESPONSES

Recommendations from a Civil Grand Jury are not binding on the public agency being investigated. However, the governing body of any entity must respond to the Civil Grand Jury findings and recommendations within 90 days of report issuance, and an elected official or agency head must respond to the Civil Grand Jury findings and recommendations within 60 days. The next year's Civil Grand Jury may then evaluate and report on the required responses.

8.1 REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933(c) and 933.05, the following response are required from the following elected county officials within 90 days of receipt of this report:

Entity	Findings	Recommendations
Yolo County Board of Supervisors	F1-8	R1-10

8.2 INVITED RESPONSES

The Grand Jury invites the following staff members to respond within 60 days of receipt of this report:

Entity	Findings	Recommendations
Director of Yolo County Department of Community Services	F1-8	R1-10
Director of Yolo County Animal Services	F1-8	R1-10
Yolo County Administrative Officer	F1-2	R1-2

Responses must be submitted to the presiding judge of the Yolo County Superior Court in accordance with the provisions of Penal Code section 933.05. Responses must include the information required by section 933.05.

9 ACRONYMS

TERM	DESCRIPTION
BOARD	Yolo County Board of Supervisors
CAO	Yolo County Administrator’s Office
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning
JPA	Joint Powers Authority
LAFCO	Local Area Formation Commission
PAWS	Pet Adoption and Wellness Services
RFI	Notice of Request for Information
SPCA	Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
TNR	Trap-Neuter-Return
UCD	University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine
YCAS	Yolo County Animal Services
YASPA	Yolo Animal Services Planning Agency

10 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERM	DESCRIPTION
BOARD	Board of Supervisors for Yolo County
THE HAYDEN ACT (SB 1785)	Amended State Law in 1998 to significantly enhance animal welfare by extend holding periods for stray pets to 4–6 business days and created a policy that no adoptable or treatable animal should be euthanized and also mandated that shelters provide veterinary care and allow non-profit and/or rescue animal organizations to adopt animals scheduled for euthanasia.
PAWS	The PAWS Tiered System has been implemented over the last several years to identify skills and level of training of staff and volunteers, and place them with the appropriate dogs, which are also rated, based on size and behavior.
TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN	The Trap-Neuter-Return is a program is specifically for feral cats. The program has proven the most humane and effective method for managing feral cat populations. Cats are humanely trapped, the feral cats are spayed/neutered and vaccinated and the returned to their original location, thereby breaking the breeding cycle and mating behaviors. Cats can typically be identified as spayed/neutered ferals – where they usually have one ear “tipped” or “notched.”
UCD SCHOOL OF VETERINARY MEDICINE	The University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, on January 28, 2026, changed its name to the UCD Joan and Sanford I. Weill School of Veterinary Medicine.
YOLO ANIMAL SERVICES PLANNING AGENCY	Collaborative partnership between Yolo County and the cities of Davis, West Sacramento, Winters, and Woodland, formed to evaluate and improve regional animal services.

11 BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Animal Politics substack, <https://animalpolitics.substack.com> “Ryther Law Group Fires Hayden Act Warning Shots at California Shelters”. Article Written by Ed Bocks, February 18, 2026.

The Davis Enterprise, *Volunteers, director talks state of Yolo County Animal Services*, by Rebecca Wasik, November 11, 2025, Updated November 15, 2025.

Local Area Formation Commission, *Yolo County Animal Services Study*, August 2012.

Local Area Formation Commission and UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program, *Yolo County Animal Services Governance Study*, September 2013.

Yolo County Civil Grand Jury 2023-2024 Report; *Yolo County Animal Services – Moving Forward*, Yolo County Grand Jury, June 2024.

Yolo County Civil Grand Jury 2024-2025 Report; *Yolo County Animal Services – A Review of the Volunteer and Safety Programs*, Yolo County Grand Jury, June 2025.

Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, the Association of Shelter Veterinarians, 2022. *Vol. 1 No. S1 (2022): The Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, Second Edition | Journal of Shelter Medicine and Community Animal Health*

Vanguard News Group, February 16, 2026. Yolo County Animal Shelters Served with Cease-and-Desist Demands Alleging Violations of State Law.

Yolo County Animal Shelter Website, February 2026. *Yolo County Animal Shelter*.

Yolo County Animal Services, Dog Volunteer, Mentor Checklist, Updated October 17, 2025.

Yolo County Animal Services Operational JPA Analysis, Cities of Davis, West Sacramento, Winters, and Woodland, UC Davis, and the County of Yolo, Yolo County Administrator’s Office, Draft, February 2, 2026.

12 DISCLAIMER

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.