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Animal Services Limits Visitations at Shelters Adoptions Allowed – and Have Spiked During COVID-19

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2020 – Animal Services is limiting the number of guests inside its lobbies to five people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Visitors to the adoption bungalows are kept to less than 10, including staff members. Those mandates started earlier this week.

Adoptions are still allowed, but employees are reminding visitors that they must stay 6 feet from each other as they line up outside. Licensing officers are politely enforcing the rule – and blue, painter’s tape markers have been placed on the concrete as visual reminders of proper social distancing.

Riverside County Animal Services’ employees are described as essential workers and remain at the shelter to care for the roughly 600 pets in the county’s four shelters that need food, clean kennels and proper veterinary care.

“We are practicing social distancing as best we can in the shelter environment, but we must remain here to care for people’s stray pets and those animals eagerly waiting for an adopter,” said Director Dr. Allan Drusys, who is also the county’s chief veterinarian. “I couldn’t be prouder that our team members are showing up in force to remain as the unsung heroes for other people’s pets.”

Dr. Drusys added that officers continued their request for service. Also, he said an interesting phenomenon is transpiring during the local and state mandates during the coronavirus era: adoptions appear to be spiking.

“We’ve noticed many visitors coming to adopt,” Dr. Drusys said. “Although we cannot directly say COVID-19 is causing this, it does make some sense considering that so many people are not at work and so many school-aged children are at home. It appears families are flocking into our shelters to find that perfect comfort pet.”

As one example, on St. Patrick’s Day, 90 dogs and 11 cats were adopted, transferred to rescue partners or returned to their owner, which is much more than normal for a weekday in March.

“We are doing everything we can to keep employees and our visitors safe,” said Jackie Schart, an animal services chief who oversees shelter operations. “I have been happily blown away at how bustling our adoptions are during these coronavirus times.”

Earlier today, Riverside resident Amy Hutto, showed up early hoping she could adopt a 4-month-old Maltese. She wasn’t alone. Four other families had their sights set on the same pooch. Ms. Hutto, an ultrasound technician whose husband is serving overseas with the U.S. Navy, was the winner of lottery. “I needed some company,” she said.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES

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