

# Manatee County Animal Welfare Survey Summary

August 2022

Manatee Community Foundation  
ManateeCF.org

2820 Manatee Avenue W  
Bradenton, FL 34205



# A Legacy of Supporting Animals

Donors who are passionate about animal welfare partner with Manatee Community Foundation for their philanthropy. Through their giving, we have a long history of supporting gains for pets, therapy animals, other domestic animals and wildlife. Examples of investments made through our grantmaking include:

- Free spay/neuter services for dogs & cats
- Heartworm/veterinary services for dogs & cats waiting for adoption
- Capital support for projects sheltering dogs & cats, marine animals, and therapy animals
- Feeding/veterinary care for horses and dogs providing quality therapy to adults and children with trauma or disabilities
- Bird and native wildlife rehabilitation/rescue, ongoing care if non-releasable
- Protection for K9 units in the Bradenton Police Department
- Care for senior pets



# Purpose of Animal Welfare Survey

Those with knowledge of animal welfare in Manatee County were invited to share their perspectives and experiences with us to help us better understand opportunities to make a difference as Manatee Community Foundation:

- Identifies opportunities to better support animal welfare gains and organizations through legacy funds designated to support animals in Manatee County.
- Communicates opportunities to donor advisors who care about animal welfare.
- Brings Manatee County residents and animal welfare organizations together to discuss their aspirations for a more compassionate community.
- Shares information and opportunities with other local foundations.



# Distribution & Respondents to Survey

Manatee Community Foundation shared a link to the online survey with local animal welfare organizations serving Manatee County and through various digital communication, including an e-newsletter and social media.

Residents shared the link on the NextDoor app.

- 493 respondents completed the survey.
- The majority of respondents that completed the survey self-identified as *not* being associated with a specific animal welfare organization.
- Based on survey responses, the majority of respondents are more familiar with animal welfare issues in Manatee County impacting dogs and cats than with animal welfare issues impacting other domestic animals or wildlife.
- Of organizations completing the survey with animals in care, the majority are providing care for dogs and cats. Other animals in the care of local animal welfare organizations include domestic birds, small domestic animals other than dogs/cats, horses, large domestic animals other than dogs/cats, horses, and native wildlife.
- Some local organizations are caring for exotic animals.



# Participating Organizations

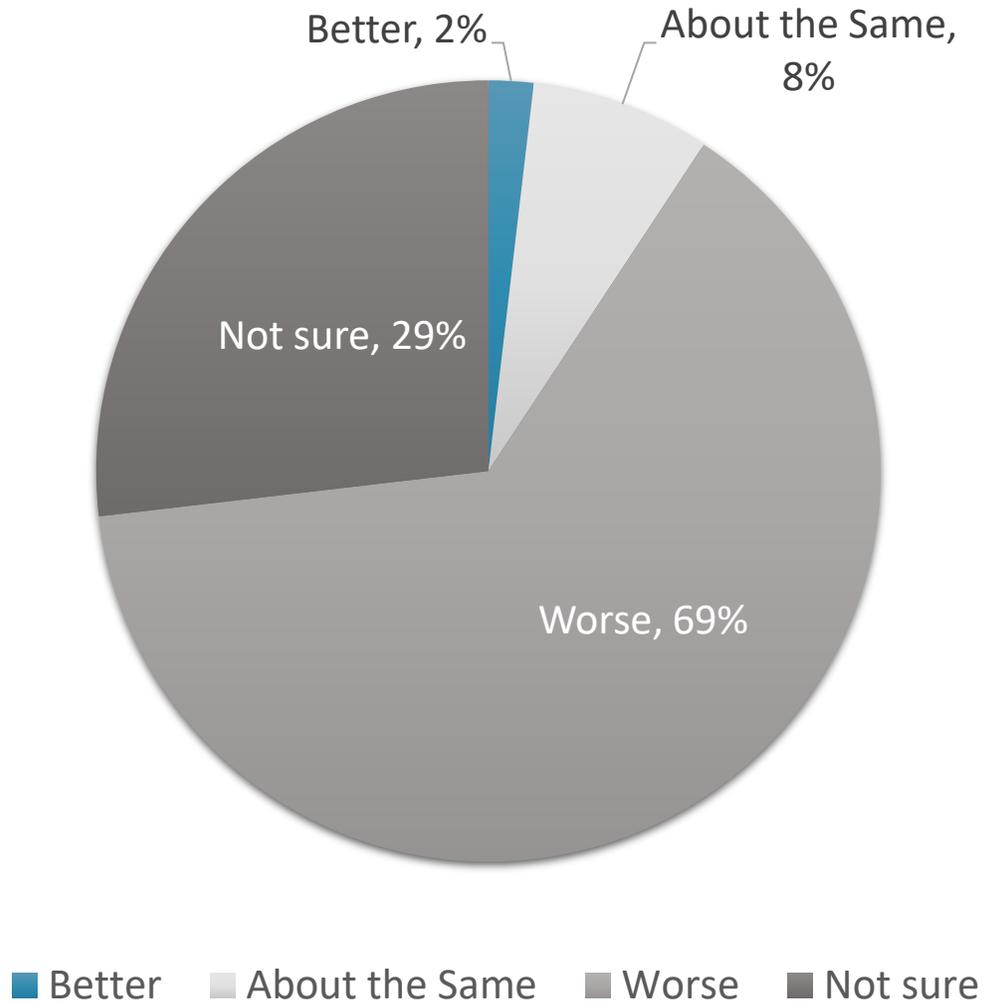
The following organizations were among those listed by respondents who identified themselves as representatives of local animal welfare agencies:

- Cat Depot
- Farmhouse Nature & Animal Sanctuary
- Friends of Manatee County Animal Services
- Golden Retriever Rescue Mid-Florida
- Humane Society at Lakewood Ranch
- Humane Society of Manatee County
- Manatee County Animal Services
- Moonracer Animal Rescue
- Nate's Honor Animal Rescue
- Sarasota Dolphin Research Program
- Save Our Seabirds
- Vintage Paws Sanctuary
- Wildlife Inc.



# State of Animal Welfare

Respondents were asked, "Overall, is the state of animal welfare in Manatee County better, worse, or the same as it was before the pandemic?"



# Comments from Animal Welfare Organization Representatives

*During Covid there were an enormous number of adoptions but now the reality is that many should not have adopted because of the responsibility a pet entails, so many are being relinquished to shelters. Especially now that many people are no longer working from home.*

*Extraordinary dedication by animal welfare professionals and volunteers continues, though and mostly offsets facility issues, creating my "about the same" assessment.*

*In relation to wild birds. We have roughly the same # of phone calls about distressed and injured birds, and same number of birds admitted to our avian hospital. In terms of domestic pets (cats and dogs specifically) I believe the state of animal welfare is worse.*

*We're seeing larger monetary donations and more interest in meeting our animals, but we're also seeing an increase in people wanting to surrender animals to us.*

*Many owner surrenders due to housing issues and loss of employment. The continuous growth of our county has stretched the shelter and employees thin.*

*Since the Pandemic, we have seen an increase of owner surrenders, strays because of the cost of living, inflation, can't afford the medical costs, etc.*

# Comments from Animal Welfare Organization Representatives

*The number of animals being relinquished has increased dramatically.*

*Severe overcrowding due to people being unable to keep their dogs and cats due to financial burdens or losing their homes.*

*During the pandemic animals were adopted and the shelter was almost empty. Now it's overcrowded and understaffed.*

*There are a lot of requests to take in dogs and cats that people can no longer take care of. More and more dogs being dumped out in the country.*

*Overwhelming number of stray and feral cats; not enough education and research in how actions impact results for animals.*

*As with many dog and cat rescues our rescue is seeing an influx of people needing to rehome animals such as guinea pigs, birds, ferrets as well as farm animals including pigs, chickens and goats.*

*More people are returning to work and returning the animals they adopted during the pandemic.*

# Comments from Animal Welfare Organization Representatives

*Development all over the county has disrupted the welfare of the wildlife that has lived in those areas. Removing trees has caused bird nests to be disturbed resulting in baby birds to fall and die. There are fewer and fewer pristine areas for the displaced wildlife to go resulting in the elimination and reduction of some species and less areas to release the rehabilitated wildlife. Today, more baby animals, more injured, and more sick birds, mammals and reptiles are coming into the rehabilitation center due to the increase in development of native lands in the county.*

*Every rescue and nonprofit works very hard and should be very admired for their commitment and dedication. It can be extremely rewarding and some days difficult. Each one is a blessing for all they do.*

# Pet Surrenders & Reducing Homeless Dogs/Cats

If you have knowledge of pet surrenders in Manatee County, check the **TOP TWO reasons** pet owners are surrendering their animals.

- 53% of respondents selected “cost of owning a pet, including food, general health care, and vaccination” as one of top two reasons for surrender
- 49% of respondents selected “eviction or housing issue” as one of top two reasons for surrender
- 29% of respondents selected “unsure”



# Pet Surrenders & Reducing Homeless Dogs/Cats

What could make the **biggest difference** to reduce the number of homeless dogs/cats in Manatee County?

- 57% of respondents selected “more widespread, low cost or free spay/neuter services” as one of the two most important ways to make a difference
- 55% of respondents selected “providing support services (low-cost vet care, behavior support, food, etc.) that encourage people to keep their pets” as one of the two most important ways to make a difference



# Dogs/Cats: Resources & Collaboration

Respondents were asked about animal welfare organizations that largely specialize in caring for dogs/cats.

- Do these organizations have the resources and capacity to meet current needs?
  - Never: 42% of respondents
  - Sometimes: 34% of respondents
  - Often: 4% of respondents
  - Not sure: 21% of respondents
- Do these organizations support each other and work well together to advance goals?
  - Never: 2% of respondents
  - Sometimes: 39% of respondents
  - Often: 23% of respondents
  - Not sure: 36% of respondents

Some survey respondents shared that their answers were based on what they read or see online, not on personal experience.



# Domestic Animals Other Than Dogs/Cats: Resources & Collaboration

Few respondents had perspectives about animal welfare organizations that largely specialize in caring for domestic animals other than dogs/cats.

- Do these organizations have the resources and capacity to meet current needs?
  - Unsure: 75% of respondents
  - Never: 13% of respondents
  - Sometimes: 11% of respondents
  - Often: 1% of respondents
- Do these organizations support each other and work well together to advance goals?
  - Unsure: 83% of respondents
  - Never: 1% of respondents
  - Sometimes: 9% of respondents
  - Often: 7% of respondents



# Birds/Wildlife Rescue & Rehab: Resources & Collaboration

Few respondents had perspectives about animal welfare organizations that largely specialize in caring for domestic animals other than dogs/cats.

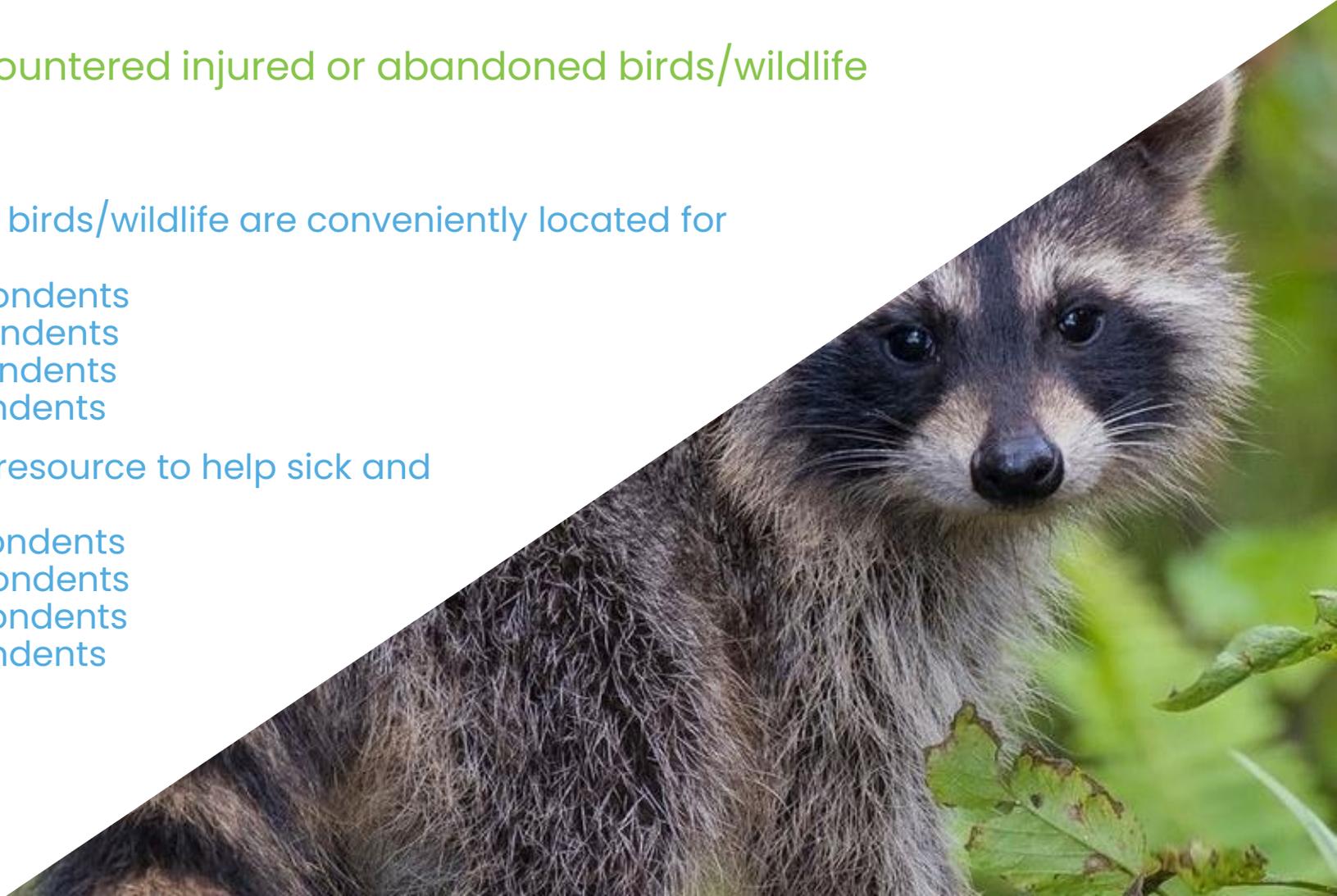
- Manatee County has sufficient resources for sick and injured birds/wildlife rescue and rehabilitation.
  - Not sure: 42% of respondents
  - Do not agree: 37% of respondents
  - Somewhat agree: 8% of respondents
  - Agree: 3% of respondents



# Birds/Wildlife Rescue & Rehab Services

234 respondents, or 45%, have encountered injured or abandoned birds/wildlife in the area.

- Locations to drop off sick and injured birds/wildlife are conveniently located for Manatee County residents.
  - Not sure: 45% of respondents
  - Do not agree: 41% of respondents
  - Somewhat agree: 12% of respondents
  - Agree: 2% of respondents
- The community knows how to find a resource to help sick and injured birds/wildlife.
  - Not sure: 37% of respondents
  - Do not agree: 40% of respondents
  - Somewhat agree: 20% of respondents
  - Agree: 3% of respondents



# Birds/Wildlife Rescue & Rehab Services

If you have knowledge about sick and injured birds/wildlife in Manatee County, check the top TWO reasons wildlife rehabilitation are needed.

- **Insufficient land for wildlife/ increased urbanization**  
51% of respondents named as one of top two
- **Collision with vehicles**  
33% of respondents named as one of top two
- **Non-vehicular human-related causes, including contact with substances such as insecticides\***  
19% of respondents named as one of top two
- **Non-human related annual injury or sickness**  
8% of respondents named as one of top two
- **Encounters with domestic pets\***  
4% of respondents named as one of top two

\*Several respondents that represent wildlife rescue/rehab organizations selected these choices as one of top two



# Other Comments:

Some respondents commented on the challenges associated with Manatee County Animal Shelter's requirement to accept all surrendered animals, leading to a perpetual issue with inadequate space and capacity to meet the demand.

*No matter the impulse to collaborate, the bottom line is that the financial pie is finite—there is never enough money to cover all the needs. This reality always creates the perception that any money sacrificed to a collaborative partnership is done so at the expense of your own organization. Despite this potential outcome, there are many collaborations in our area, proving that the welfare of the pets is still the foremost issue on everyone's agenda.*

*All county animal (wild and domestic) organizations should form a group to meet and work together; discussions on how to make Manatee County a better place for the increase in humans and how they can live better with and among all of the animals.*

Thank you for  
your participation.

Your care for animals  
is valued.

Visit [ManateeCF.org](http://ManateeCF.org) or call  
or (941) 747-7765 to get connected.

