

Madera County Animal Services: Shelter Intake, Outcome, and Length of Stay Trends (2018-2025)

An independent review of publicly available and requested Animal Shelter data.

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Executive Summary

This report examines long-term trends in animal shelter operations at the Madera County Animal Shelter using annual aggregate data from 2018 through 2025 obtained through the California Public Records Act. The analysis evaluates changes in shelter intake, animal outcomes, and average length of stay to establish an objective historical record of shelter operations over the eight-year reporting period.

The data show that annual shelter intake declined by 50.3% between 2018 and 2025. During the same period, annual adoptions declined by 69.8%, Other Live Releases declined by 62.0%, and the euthanasia rate increased from 17.7% of annual intake in 2018 to 39.6% in 2025. Average length of stay also declined, indicating that animals generally spent less time in the shelter before reaching an outcome.

This report is descriptive in nature and does not attempt to determine the causes of these trends. Rather, it documents how shelter intake, animal outcomes, and average length of stay changed over time using official records provided by the Madera County Animal Shelter.

Key Findings

- Shelter Intake: Declined by **50.3%**
- Annual Adoptions: Declined by **69.8%**
- Annual Other Live Releases (including transfers): Declined by **62.0%**
- Euthanasia Rate: Increased from **17.7%** of intakes in 2018 to **39.6%** in 2025.
- Average Length of Stay: Decreased by **35.6%**

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to examine long-term trends in animal shelter operations within Madera County by analyzing annual shelter intake, outcome, and average length of stay data from 2018 through 2025. Specifically, this report evaluates changes in the number of animals entering the shelter, the proportion of animals leaving through adoption, euthanasia, and other live release pathways, and the average length of stay prior to disposition.

The objective of this analysis is to present historical operational trends using publicly available records without advocating for any particular policy position or management practice. By presenting these data in a standardized and transparent manner, this report seeks to provide residents, policymakers, and community stakeholders with an objective understanding of how shelter outcomes have changed over the reporting period.

Scope

This report is limited to aggregate annual operational data provided by the Madera County Animal Shelter in response to a California Public Records Act request. The analysis covers the eight-year period from calendar year 2018 through calendar year 2025.

The report evaluates three primary operational measures:

- Annual shelter intake volume;
- Annual shelter outcomes, including adoptions, euthanasia, and other live releases; and
- Average annual length of stay for sheltered animals.

To facilitate meaningful comparison across years with substantially different intake volumes, outcome percentages are calculated as a proportion of annual shelter intakes. These percentages provide a standardized measure of shelter outcomes independent of fluctuations in total intake.

This report does not evaluate individual animal records, species-specific outcomes, medical conditions, behavioral assessments, staffing levels, budgetary considerations, kennel capacity, or compliance with state or federal regulations. Likewise, this report does not attempt to determine the causes of observed trends. Rather, it documents historical patterns reflected in the available data.

Methodology

Data Sources. Data analyzed in this report were obtained directly from the Madera County Animal Shelter pursuant to the California Public Records Act (Government Code § 7920 et seq.). The County provided annual aggregate statistics for shelter intake, adoptions, euthanasia, other live release outcomes, and average length of stay covering calendar years 2018 through 2025. These source data may be viewed at the link attached to this report.

Data Analysis. Outcome rates were calculated by dividing the annual number of animals within each outcome category by the total annual shelter intake. Expressing outcomes as percentages of intake allows for consistent comparison across years despite significant variation in the total number of animals entering the shelter. Trend analysis consisted of descriptive statistical comparisons of annual totals and calculated outcome rates over the eight-year reporting period. No predictive modeling, inferential statistical testing, or causal analysis was performed. All findings presented in this report are descriptive in nature and are intended to summarize observed changes within the data provided by the County.

Findings

Annual Shelter Intakes and Outcomes

The aggregate data provide an overview of the number of animals entering the shelter each year and the primary methods by which those animals exited the shelter. Figure 1 summarizes annual shelter intake and outcome data reported by the Madera County Animal Shelter for calendar years 2018 through 2025. The reported outcomes include adoptions, euthanasias, and "Other Live Releases."

The "Other Live Release" category includes animals transferred to rescue organizations or other agencies, returned to their owners, released through service-out dispositions, and wildlife that is released back into their natural habitat.

Figure 1

Total Intakes and Outcomes by Year (2018-2025)

Year	Intakes	Adoptions	Euthanasias	Other Live Releases
2018	5812	2155	1031	2482
2019	5362	1039	998	3253
2020	2761	582	531	1755
2021	2309	547	373	1232
2022	2851	668	687	1405
2023	3680	570	1264	1675
2024	3218	614	1368	1300
2025	2889	651	1144	942

Shelter Intake Trends

Annual shelter intake declined substantially over the eight-year reporting period. The shelter received 5,812 animals in 2018 compared to 2,889 animals in 2025, representing an overall decline of 2,923 animals (50.3%) (Figure 2). The most significant single-year reduction occurred between 2019 and 2020, when annual intake decreased by 48.5%. Although intake volumes increased modestly during 2022 and 2023, those gains were temporary and remained well below pre-2020 levels. By 2025, annual intake had returned to approximately one-half of the volume reported at the beginning of the study period.

Figure 2

Intake Trends: Year-Over-Year and 2018 Baseline Change

Year	Annual Intakes	Change from Previous Year	Change from 2018 Baseline
2018	5,812	—	—
2019	5,362	-450 (-7.7%)	-450 (-7.7%)
2020	2,761	-2,601 (-48.5%)	-3,051 (-52.5%)
2021	2,309	-452 (-16.4%)	-3,503 (-60.3%)
2022	2,851	+542 (+23.5%)	-2,961 (-50.9%)
2023	3,680	+829 (+29.1%)	-2,132 (-36.7%)
2024	3,218	-462 (-12.6%)	-2,594 (-44.6%)
2025	2,889	-329 (-10.2%)	-2,923 (-50.3%)

Adoption Trends

Annual adoptions declined substantially over the eight-year reporting period. The Madera County Animal Shelter reported 2,155 adoptions in 2018 compared to 651 adoptions in 2025, representing an overall decrease of 1,504 adoptions (69.8%).

Because annual shelter intake also declined significantly during the study period, adoption outcomes were further evaluated as a percentage of annual intake (Figure 3). The adoption rate decreased from 37.08% of all animals entering the shelter in 2018 to 22.53% in 2025. After declining sharply between 2018 and 2019, annual adoption rates generally remained between approximately 19% and 24% of total shelter intake, with the exception of 2023, when the adoption rate reached a study-period low of 15.49%.

Although annual adoption totals fluctuated modestly after 2020, the proportion of animals adopted never returned to the level observed at the beginning of the reporting period.

Figure 3

Annual Adoption Rates (2018-2025)

Year	Total Intakes	Total Adoptions	Rate
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2018	5812	2155	37.08%
2019	5362	1039	19.38%
2020	2761	582	21.08%
2021	2309	547	23.69%
2022	2851	668	23.43%
2023	3680	570	15.49%
2024	3218	614	19.08%
2025	2889	651	22.53%

Euthanasia Trends

Annual euthanasia totals declined through 2021 before increasing substantially beginning in 2022. The shelter reported 373 euthanasia outcomes in 2021, compared to 1,368 in 2024, before declining modestly to 1,144 in 2025.

Because annual shelter intake changed significantly across the study period, euthanasia outcomes were evaluated as a percentage of annual intake (Figure 4). The euthanasia rate remained relatively stable between 2018 and 2021, ranging from 16.15% to 19.23% of annual shelter intake. Beginning in 2022, however, the euthanasia rate increased each year, reaching 42.51% of annual intake in 2024 before declining slightly to 39.60% in 2025.

Figure 4

Annual Euthanasia Rates (2018-2025)

Year	Total Intakes	Total Euths	Rate
2018	5812	1031	17.70%
2019	5362	998	18.60%
2020	2761	531	19.20%
2021	2309	373	16.20%
2022	2851	687	24.10%
2023	3680	1264	34.30%
2024	3218	1368	42.50%
2025	2889	1144	39.60%

Although the total number of animals entering the shelter (intakes) declined substantially over the reporting period, the proportion of animals leaving the shelter through euthanasia increased during the latter half of the study period. By 2024, approximately two out of every five animals admitted to the shelter were reported as euthanasia outcomes.

Other Live Release Trends

In addition to adoptions, the Madera County Animal Shelter reported various "Other Live Release" categories, which includes animals transferred to rescue organizations or other agencies, returned to their owners, released through service-out dispositions, and wildlife that is released back into their natural habitat.

Annual Other Live Release totals declined substantially over the eight-year reporting period. The shelter reported 2,482 Other Live Releases in 2018 compared to 942 in 2025, representing an overall decrease of 1,540 animals (62.0%).

When evaluated as a percentage of annual shelter intake, the Other Live Release rate reached a study-period high of 63.56% in 2020 before declining each subsequent year (Figure 5). By 2025, Other Live Releases accounted for 32.61% of annual shelter intake, representing the lowest proportion observed during the study period.

Figure 5

Annual Other Live Release (2018-2025)

Year	Total Intakes	Other Live Release	Rate
2018	5812	2482	42.7%
2019	5362	3253	60.67%
2020	2761	1755	63.56%
2021	2309	1232	53.35%
2022	2851	1405	49.28%
2023	3680	1675	45.52%
2024	3218	1300	40.4%
2025	2889	942	32.61%

The decline in Other Live Release outcomes occurred concurrently with increasing euthanasia rates during the latter half of the reporting period. While these data demonstrate changes in the

distribution of annual shelter outcomes, they do not identify the operational or policy factors contributing to those changes.

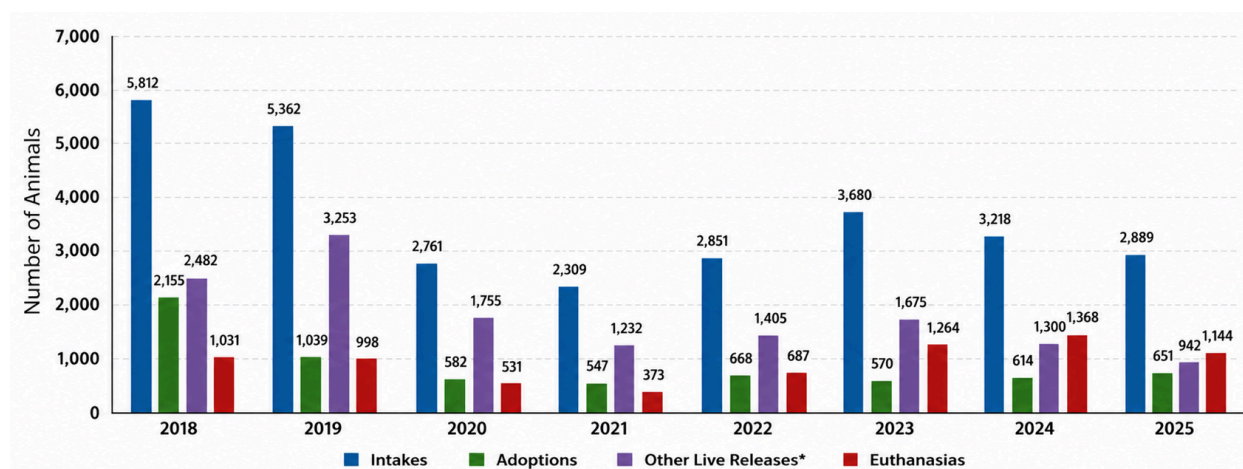
Overview of Shelter Outcomes

Figure 6 provides an overview of the number of animals entering the Madera County Animal Shelter each year and the three primary outcome categories: Adoptions, Euthanasias, and Other Live Releases.

Overall, annual shelter intake declined substantially between 2018 and 2025. During the same period, both adoptions and Other Live Releases also declined. In contrast, annual euthanasia totals increased during the latter half of the reporting period despite fewer animals entering the shelter. The following sections examine each of these trends in greater detail.

Figure 6

Shelter Intakes, Adoptions, Other Live Releases, and Euthanasias by Year (2018-2025)



Average Length of Stay

Average length of stay measures the average number of days an animal remained in the shelter before reaching an outcome.

The average length of stay generally declined over the eight-year reporting period (Figure 7). Animals remained in the shelter an average of 29.2 days in 2018 compared to 18.8 days in 2025, a reduction of 10.4 days (35.6%). The shortest average length of stay occurred in 2020 at 13.7 days, while the longest occurred in 2018 at 29.2 days.

Figure 7

Average Length of Stay (2018-2025)

Year	Length of Stay (Days)
2018	29.2
2019	17.8
2020	13.7
2021	26.5
2022	19.6
2023	20
2024	15.9
2025	18.8

Although the average length of stay varied from year to year, the data do not indicate a long-term increase in the amount of time animals remained in the shelter. Instead, the overall trend shows that animals generally spent fewer days in the shelter before reaching an outcome.

Limitations

This report is limited to aggregate annual data provided by the Madera County Animal Shelter in response to a California Public Records Act request. Because the County provided annual summary statistics rather than individual animal records, this analysis cannot evaluate outcomes by species, breed, age, medical condition, behavior, or reason for intake.

Additionally, this report does not evaluate shelter staffing levels, available kennel capacity, veterinary resources, budgetary factors, rescue organization participation, or changes in shelter policies or operational practices that may have influenced reported outcomes. As a result, this analysis identifies trends within the available data but does not determine the causes of those trends.

Finally, the reported outcome categories reflect the classifications or combined data from multiple classifications used by the Madera County Animal Shelter. This report assumes those categories were reported accurately and consistently throughout the study period but does not independently verify the underlying records or reporting methodology.

Accordingly, observed changes in intake, adoption, euthanasia, and other live release trends should not be interpreted as evidence of any specific policy decision or operational practice without additional supporting information.

Conclusion

Between 2018 and 2025, the Madera County Animal Shelter experienced substantial changes in both shelter intake and animal outcomes. Annual shelter intake declined by 50.3% over the eight-year reporting period. During the same period, adoptions declined by 69.8%, Other Live Releases declined by 62.0%, and annual euthanasia totals increased by 11.0%.

When evaluated as a percentage of annual shelter intake, the data show an even more pronounced shift in shelter outcomes. Adoption rates remained well below 2018 levels throughout the study period, while the proportion of animals leaving the shelter through Other Live Release pathways steadily declined after 2020. At the same time, the euthanasia rate increased substantially, rising from 17.7% of annual intake in 2018 to 39.6% in 2025.

The report also found that average length of stay generally decreased over the reporting period. Rather than indicating animals were remaining in the shelter for increasingly longer periods of time, the available data show that animals, on average, reached an outcome more quickly than they did at the beginning of the study period.

This report does not attempt to explain the operational, financial, or policy decisions that may have contributed to these trends. Instead, it establishes an objective historical record of shelter intake, outcomes, and average length of stay using publicly available information and official records obtained through the California Public Records Act. Understanding why these trends occurred will require additional information beyond the aggregate data analyzed in this report.

Source Documents

Animal Shelter Aggregate Data (2017 *partial data set*, 2018-2025 *complete data set*) from Madera County Public Records Act Request #60023:

<http://madtowndata.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/60023-PRA-Records-Animal-Services-Shelter-Statistics-and-Operational-Data-4897-1751-0327-1.pdf>

About Madtown Data Project

Madtown Data Project is an independent research initiative dedicated to collecting, analyzing, and publishing information from public records, official statistics, and other verifiable sources. Our mission is to make complex public information more accessible, understandable, and useful for residents, policymakers, and community leaders throughout California's Central Valley.

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