

Madera County Animal Services: Trend Divergence in Calls For Service and Total Intakes (2018-2025)

An independent review of California Public Records Act Animal Shelter information.

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Executive Summary

This report examines eight years of Madera County Animal Services (MCAS) operational data obtained through the California Public Records Act to evaluate trends in Calls for Service and shelter intakes between 2018 and 2025.

Calls for Service increased from 2,955 in 2018 to 4,127 in 2025, a 39.7% increase, while total shelter intakes declined from 5,812 to 2,889 animals, a 50.3% decrease. Although both measures declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, Calls for Service recovered to exceed pre-pandemic levels, while shelter intakes remained substantially below baseline levels.

This report documents a significant divergence between increasing public demand for Animal Services and declining shelter intake. It does not identify the causes of these trends, but it does provide an evidence-based assessment of operational changes using publicly available records.

Key Findings

- Calls for service increased **39.7%** from 2018 to 2025.
- Shelter intakes declined **50.3%** in the same period.
- Calls for service increased while shelter intakes declined substantially over the reporting period, resulting in a pronounced divergence between public demand for service and shelter intake.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to examine longitudinal trends in Madera County Animal Services Calls for Service and shelter intakes between 2018 and 2025 using publicly available records obtained through the California Public Records Act. By evaluating changes in service demand alongside shelter intake data, this report seeks to provide an evidence-based assessment of operational trends over the eight-year study period.

Scope

This report examines annual Madera County Animal Services (MCAS) Calls for Service and shelter intake data for calendar years 2018 through 2025. The analysis is limited to aggregate

operational data obtained through the California Public Records Act and focuses on long-term trends in service demand and shelter intake.

The report includes annual Call for Service totals, changes by call category, total shelter intakes, and comparisons between Calls for Service and shelter intake over the eight-year reporting period. It does not evaluate individual incidents, response times, enforcement actions, staffing levels, shelter capacity, budget expenditures, or the operational policies that may have influenced observed trends.

Methodology

This report employed a descriptive longitudinal research design to examine changes in Madera County Animal Services (MCAS) Calls for Service, shelter intakes, and outcome trends between calendar years 2018 and 2025.

Data Sources. Data were obtained directly from Madera County through the California Public Records Act (PRA) and analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis to identify changes over time.

Data Analysis. To ensure valid year-to-year comparisons, the analysis included only Call for Service categories that were consistently reported beginning in 2018. Several new call categories were introduced by MCAS during 2024 and 2025. Because comparable historical data for these categories did not exist, they were excluded from the analysis to avoid artificially inflating total call volumes in the later years and to preserve an "apples-to-apples" comparison across the eight-year study period.

For analytical consistency, the "Abandoned Animal," "Confined Stray Animal," and "Loose Stray Animal" call classifications were combined into a single category titled "Stray/Abandoned Animal." These call types represent substantially similar field responses and were consolidated to provide a consistent measure throughout the reporting period.

Changes between the baseline year (2018) and the final study year (2025) were calculated using the standard percent change formula:

$$\text{Percent Change} = ((\text{Final Value} - \text{Initial Value}) \div \text{Initial Value}) \times 100$$

This report is descriptive in nature and is intended to document observable operational trends. The analysis does not establish causal relationships between changes in Calls for Service, shelter intake, staffing levels, operational policies, or other external factors.

Findings

Calls For Service

Calls for Service were analyzed according to call type/category and reported total items for each calendar year (Figure 1). Certain call categories were excluded from the data set, as these

categories were not present or showed zero counts for the first five years of data. “Stray/Abandoned Animal” is the combination of three line item categories that appeared separately in the raw data, including: Abandoned Animal, Confined Stray Animal, and Loose Stray Animal. However, since the workload and response to each of these calls is materially similar, and the trends likewise were similar, they were combined for reporting clarity.

Figure 1

Overview of Annual MCAS Calls For Service (2018-2025)

Call Type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Animal Bite	89	91	60	77	74	125	108	125
Animal Cruelty	96	54	35	26	36	39	38	25
Dead Animal P/Up	475	628	501	471	584	609	590	592
Injured Animal	110	169	134	185	238	266	298	296
Vicious Animal	231	247	147	130	211	272	319	307
Stray/Abandoned Animal	1033	1373	759	833	1228	1413	1321	1383
Animal Welfare	197	273	241	261	303	350	301	343
Dog Barking	145	138	104	114	113	141	166	192
Dog Complaint	207	254	265	343	344	419	367	375
Loose Livestock	110	165	110	154	137	174	139	90
Other Issue	262	248	186	173	165	391	567	399
Total	2955	3640	2542	2767	3433	4199	4214	4127

Trend Changes in Calls for Service

From 2018 to 2025, nine of the eleven Call Type categories recorded percentage increases ranging from moderate to exceptional gain (Figure 2). Categories that experienced the most substantial increases included: Injured Animal (+169.1%), Dog Complaint (+81.2%), and Animal Welfare (74.1%). Two of the eleven categories showed marked decreases over the reporting period, including: Animal Cruelty (-74.0%) and Loose Livestock (-18.2%). The increases observed across most Call for Service categories reflect greater demand for Animal Services responses during the study period and may also reflect changes in community animal populations, reporting behavior, or other operational factors.

Figure 2

Trend Changes in Calls for Service: 2018 (Baseline) to 2025

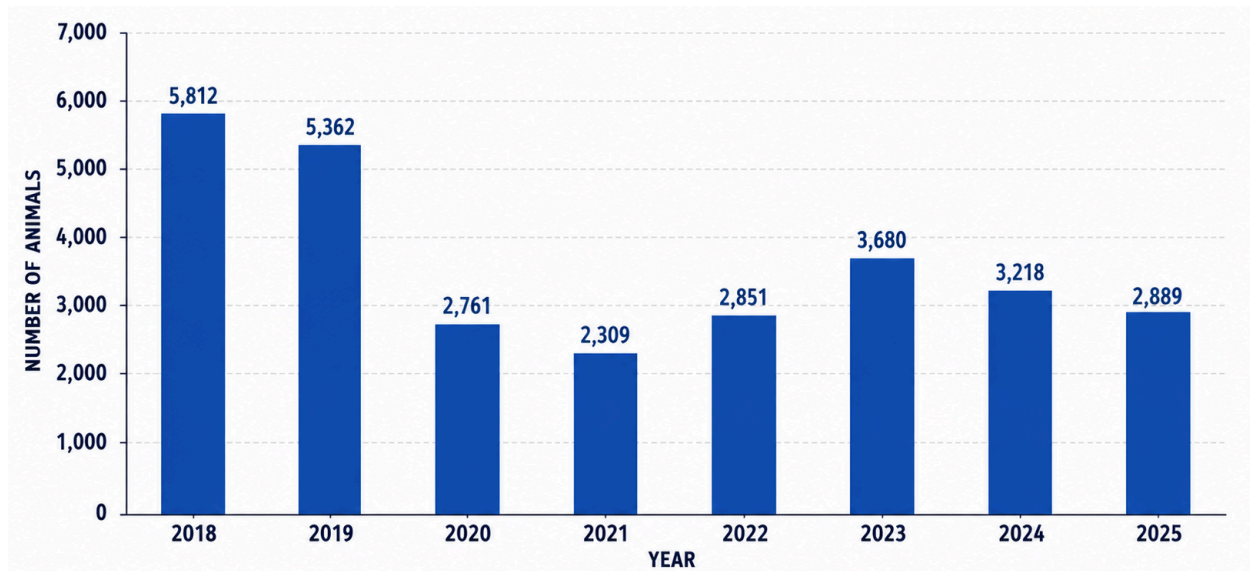
Call Type	2018	2025	Percent Change
Animal Bite	89	125	+40.4%
Animal Cruelty	96	25	-74.0%
Dead Animal Pickup	475	592	+24.6%
Injured Animal	110	296	+169.1%
Vicious Animal	231	307	+32.9%
Stray/Abandoned Animal	1,033	1,383	+33.9%
Animal Welfare	197	343	+74.1%
Dog Barking	145	192	+32.4%
Dog Complaint	207	375	+81.2%
Loose Livestock	110	90	-18.2%
Other Issue	262	399	+52.3%
Total Calls for Service	2,955	4,127	+39.7%

Intake Overview

Total shelter intakes followed a markedly different trajectory than Calls for Service. Annual intakes declined from 5,812 animals in 2018 to 2,889 in 2025—a reduction of 50.3% (Figure 3). Although intake levels partially rebounded following the COVID-19 pandemic, they never returned to baseline for the remainder of the study period.

Figure 3

Total MCAS Intakes (2018-2025)

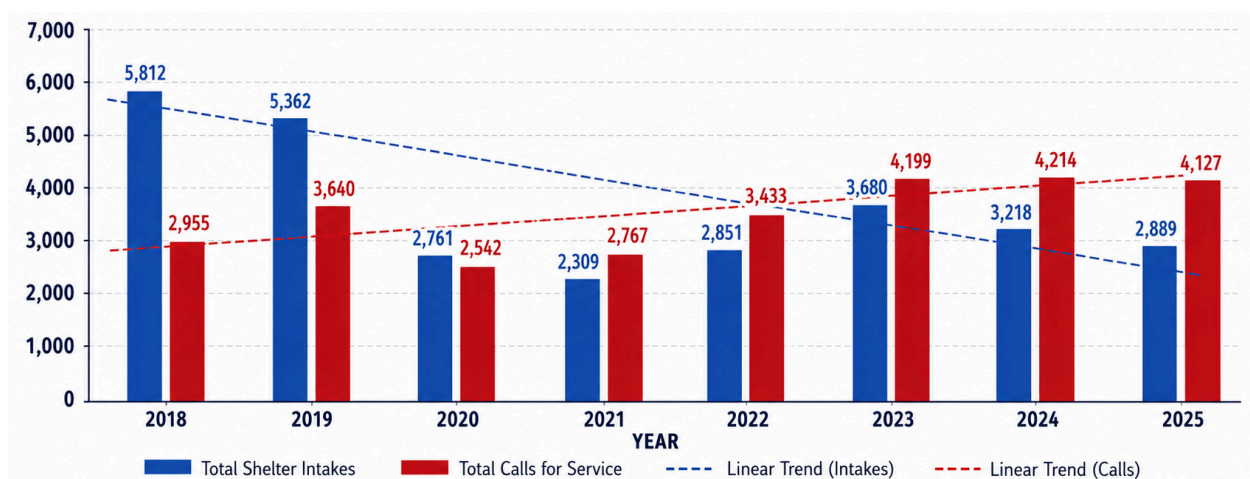


Trend Divergence of Service Calls and Intake

Across the reporting period, total Calls for Service increased by 39.7% while total shelter intakes decreased by 50.3%. While both Calls for Service and shelter intakes dipped during the COVID-19 pandemic years (2020-2021), the two measures followed markedly different trajectories afterward. Calls for Service recovered rapidly and exceeded pre-pandemic levels by 2023, remaining above 4,100 annually through 2025 (Figure 4). Shelter intakes, however, never returned to pre-pandemic levels and remained approximately one-half of their 2018 volume. The resulting divergence suggests that increasing public demand for animal services did not correspond with increased shelter intake over the study period.

Figure 4

Trend Analysis of Calls For Service and Total Intakes (2018-2025)



Limitations

This analysis is subject to several limitations. First, Call for Service classifications changed during the reporting period, requiring the exclusion of categories introduced in 2024 and 2025 to maintain consistent year-to-year comparisons. Second, similar stray animal call classifications were consolidated into a single "Stray/Abandoned Animal" category to improve comparability across all study years for responses and workload that were materially similar.

This report relies on aggregate annual operational data and does not evaluate individual incidents, response times, enforcement actions, staffing levels, shelter capacity, budget expenditures, or operational policies that may have influenced observed trends. Finally, this study is descriptive in nature and documents observable changes over time; it does not establish causal relationships between Calls for Service, shelter intake, or other operational factors.

Conclusion

Between 2018 and 2025, Madera County Animal Services experienced a substantial increase in Calls for Service (+39.7%) while reporting a substantial decline in shelter intakes (-50.3%). Although both measures temporarily declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, their long-term trajectories diverged, with Calls for Service recovering to exceed pre-pandemic levels while shelter intakes remained well below their 2018 baseline.

The data presented in this report do not explain the reasons for this divergence. Rather, they document a significant operational trend using publicly available records obtained directly from Madera County. These findings establish a factual baseline for future evaluation of Animal Services operations. Continued public access to standardized operational data will allow future analyses to better evaluate changes in service demand, shelter intake, and operational performance.

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

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