

LEGISLATION & PUBLIC POLICY: *For Animal Welfare*

Saving Lives Conference
Boise, Idaho
September 20, 2025

SHELTER POLICIES AND WHO MAKES THEM

WHAT ARE SHELTER POLICIES?

Shelter policies are the *written* procedures outlining how shelter staff must perform their job duties in a variety of situations.

A shelter's policies dictate how animals are cared for, adoption procedures, impoundment requirements, volunteer duties, and all other aspects of shelter operations.

Animal control functions are defined largely by state law and narrowed by local ordinance.



TYPES OF POLICIES

- Federal Laws & Rules
 - Passed by Congress or delegated to federal agency
- State Law
 - Statutes adopted by each state legislature
- Local Ordinance
 - Laws that apply locally adopted by city councils and county government
- Shelter Policies
 - Set by director and/or governing entity

PROBLEMATIC POLICIES: BARRIERS TO LIFESAVING



- Prevention of Trap/Neuter/Vaccinate/Return Programs
- Breed Discrimination
- Maximum Hold Times
- Euthanasia Criteria (or lack thereof)
- Others?
- Also: Failure to have written policies

STATE LAW

Highly impactful on the responsibilities of animal control and the framework for shelter operations.

- Defines local responsibility
- In Idaho, only dogs require impoundment
- Minimum 5 days stray hold
- Provides for basic standards of care for impounded animals



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government has ultimate responsibility for Animal Control and Sheltering

- Provides most of the funding for these functions
- Adopts ordinances for local animal control
 - Licensing Requirements
 - Leash/Tethering Laws
 - Pet Limits
- Ultimately responsible for how a shelter implements laws and ordinances

WHO IS IN CHARGE?

- Public Shelters
 - Elected Officials of Governmental Entity
 - City Council Members
 - County Council/Commission
 - Special Service District Board
- Private Shelters
 - Board of Directors for the non-profit
 - Elected Officials of contract governmental entity (if any)



**WHO ARE THE DECISION
MAKERS?**

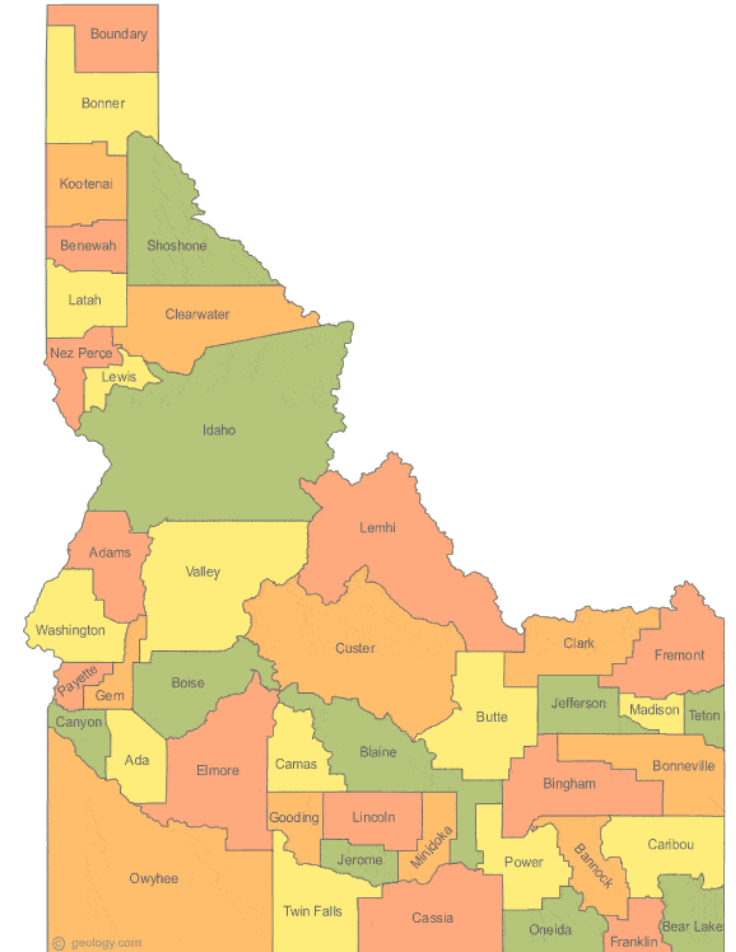
IDAHO STATE GOVERNMENT



- Governor of Idaho
 - State Executive
 - Department of Agriculture
 - Division of Animal of Animal Industries
- Idaho Legislature
 - 35 Member State Senate
 - 70 Member State House of Representatives
 - Annual Session, January to mid-March
- State Courts
 - Supreme Court
 - Court of Appeals
 - District Courts

IDAHO COUNTIES

- Three-Member Commission Form of Government
 - All Idaho Counties
 - Represent districts, but elected at-large
 - Both executive and legislative functions
- Partisan elections occur in even numbered years
- County Sheriff's are required to impound stray, unlicensed dogs
 - Often sheltering is done through contract
 - Cat impoundment not required by law



IDAHO CITIES & TOWNS

- Mayor / Manager / Council Forms of Government
- Council size determined by city/town
 - Some elected at-large
 - Most elected from districts
- Non-partisan elections occur in odd-numbered years
- Many cities directly administer animal control and sheltering, but in Idaho the law does not require



IDENTIFYING YOUR LOCAL OR APPOINTED OFFICIALS

- Which municipality do you live in?
 - City, Town, or County
- Two Functions
 - Animal Control
 - Animal Sheltering
- Municipal Website
 - Call and ask!
- vote.idaho.gov



ENGAGING IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

DEVELOP A PLAN

- What policy needs to be changed? Which level of government is responsible?
- Rally support, create a collation of community partners
- Use the media, both traditional and social
- Find an elected official ally
- Tell your story, share your passion



CONTACTING POLICY MAKERS



- Email
 - Elected officials listed on local government website
 - Identify the policy and change you are advocating
- Phone
 - Leave a message!
- In person
 - Request a meeting
 - Speak during public comment

WORKING WITH POLICY MAKERS

- Goal is Education; Know Your Argument
- Utilize Your Elected Ally
 - Relationship with colleagues helps overcome objections
- Utilize Community Partners
- Public Input is Crucial
- Ensure policy makers hear the support for change
- Do NOT be adversarial; NEVER give misinformation



OVERCOMING BUDGET OBJECTIONS

- Lifesaving does not automatically increase budgets
 - Offsetting Fees
 - Encourage Donations
- Seek alternate forms of revenue such as grants
- Be creative
 - Shelter/Rescue Logo Merchandise
 - Fundraisers
 - Shelter Specific Non-Profit
- Effort to save taxpayer money is noticed, and often rewarded, by elected officials

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Organize your Network
- Presence at Community Events
- Run for Office
- Vote!!!



POLICY CHANGE CASE STUDY



DAVIS COUNTY ANIMAL CARE & CONTROL



- Suburban County with 330,000 residents
- 15 Cities served by 1 Animal Services Agency
- Approximately 2,500 cats enter shelter each year
- Prior to 2014
 - Save Rate for Cats between 30% and 40%
 - Local Ordinances Prohibited TNR

THE POLICY PROBLEM

- Community Cat Caregiver confronted by Animal Control Officer
 - Told the community cats must be impounded
 - No positive outcome option from shelter under current policies
 - Caregiver immediately set forth to make change



THE POLICY SOLUTION

- Implement TNVR throughout Davis County
 - State of Utah has permissive Community Cat Act
 - Best Friends Animal Society provides CCP support
 - Shelter leadership interested in policy change



THE PROCESS

- Caregiver met with Shelter Director to explain TNVR and the state's Community Cat Act
 - Contacted Best Friends/other community partners
 - Each city had to change their local ordinance to expressly allow TNR/SNR
 - Shelter Director, Best Friends, and Caregiver met with each city council
 - Local newspaper covered the effort

THE OUTCOME

- TNVR implemented in 14 cities
 - Initial pilot, supported by Best Friends, has transitioned to shelter run program
 - Community cat caregivers now engage with animal control
 - Davis County ACC has maintained a no-kill status since 2015



THANK YOU!

Arlyn Bradshaw

arbradshaw@gmail.com