Southern Pines Animal Shelter

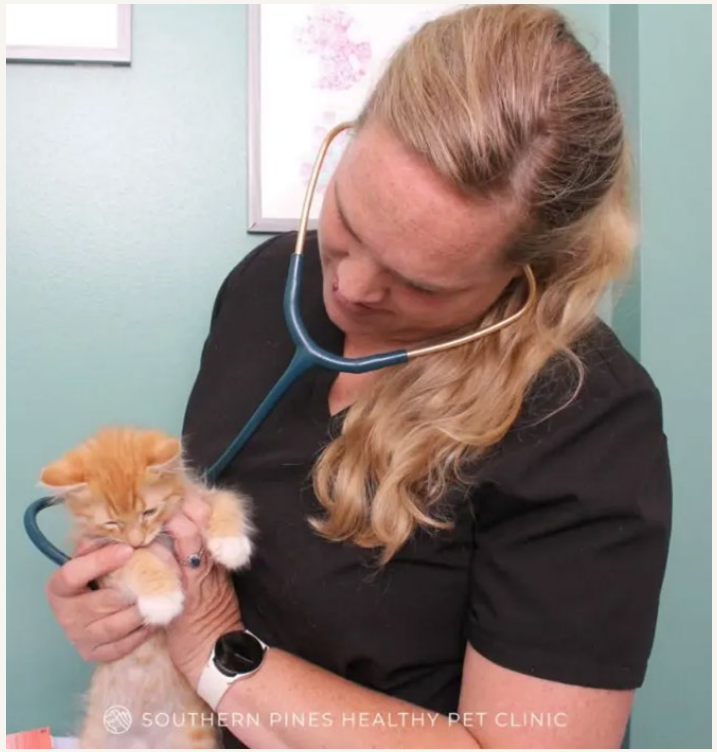
Beyond Animal Control: Building Community-Based Animal Welfare Programs

A practical framework for mayors, boards, supervisors, law enforcement, animal control, and shelter partners

Honey Habanero
Adopted October 2026

Dr. Alicia Fortenberry

Medical Director



Carrie Paris

Finance Director

1952 - Forrest County Humane Society was founded with a special focus on serving Hattiesburg and the surrounding communities

1984 - Shelter opens at current location

2001 - Name updated to Southern Pines Animal Shelter

2009 - Opened a low cost Spay and Neuter Clinic

2011 - Opened our first Second Chance Thrift Store
Starting transporting animals North from the shelter

2016 - Created the Southern Pines EmBark Transport Program

2017 - Shelter reached No-Kill Status

2021 - Rebranded our clinic to be the Southern Pines Healthy Pet Clinic

2023 - Expanded into a new Surgery Center and increased our low cost Wellness Services
Opened our second Second Chance Thrift Store

2025 - Shelter underwent a kennel renovation project through Greater Good Charities

2026 - Opened our third Second Chance Thrift Store

Our Mission

To nurture the bond between people and pets through **community**, **compassion**, and **collaboration**.

Our Vision

To forge a path toward sustainable, responsible, and community-driven lifesaving.

Our Values

Be kind
Work together
Help animals
Change our world

Pearl
Adopted June 2025

The answer is not “more intake”

Success is resolving animal-related problems safely, humanely, and efficiently.

Protect people

Respond to bites, dangerous animals, cruelty, neglect, injured animals, and genuine public-safety concerns.

Help animals

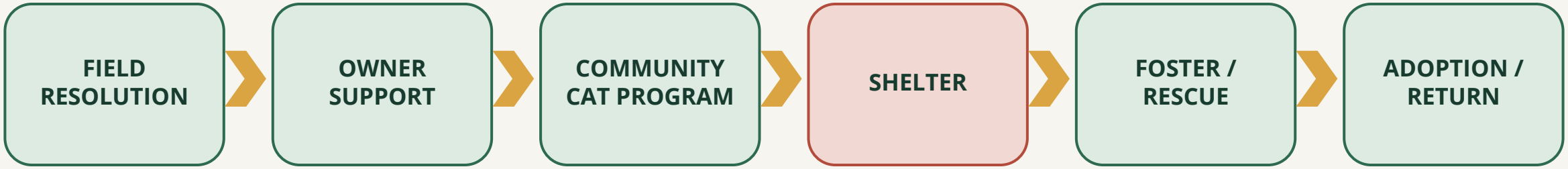
Match each animal with the least restrictive, most humane pathway that meets the actual need.

Use resources wisely

Reserve limited kennels, staff time, veterinary care, and tax dollars for cases that truly need sheltering.

Think: problem solved — not animal collected.

A modern system uses multiple pathways



Shelter intake is only one tool.
It is not the default answer to every call.

Build policy, contracts, and partnerships around the whole pathway.

The reality is, we cannot do this alone.

This is a community-wide issue, and you will need the support of your community to make a positive, proactive impact.

Ask for their help and support and make it as easy as possible for them to do so.

Try to remove as many barriers as possible for people to adopt or foster animals as they enter your care.

Possible Barriers:

- Home Checks / Vet Checks
- Requiring a Fenced Yard for Adoption
- Strict age, income, or household requirements
- Delaying application processing or requiring multiple interviews

The “First 48” Reunification Period

To help increase the likelihood that lost pets will be successfully returned home, **we encourage any finders to contain and keep found animals for at least 48 hours**.

Historically, less than 5% of lost pets who are brought to Southern Pines are reclaimed.

One shelter’s “First 48” program found that 78% of the found animals never came to the shelter and were either reunited or rehomed.

During the “First 48” period, finders should be actively working to reunite the found pet by getting the animal scanned for a microchip, posting on social media, utilizing the Petco Love Lost database, and checking with neighbors.

We may be able to provide them with bagged donated dry food as needed with the potential for other resources as supplies allow.

Animal control officers are community problem-solvers

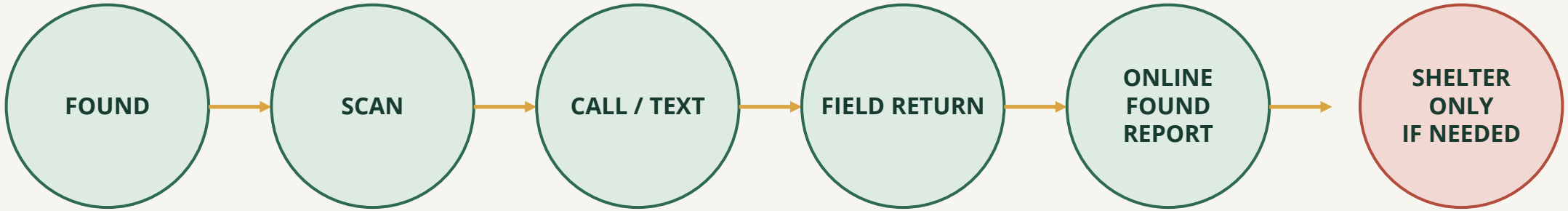
- Scan for microchips and return animals in the field when appropriate
- Educate and resolve nuisance issues before they escalate
- Connect residents to spay/neuter, vaccination, food, and veterinary resources
- Document found location precisely. This is especially important for community cats
- Use enforcement where public safety, cruelty, or repeated non compliance requires it
- Bring animals to shelter when sheltering is the appropriate intervention

A New Metric For Success:

Instead of measuring success by the number of animals off the street. Also consider:

1. How many problems were resolved in the field?
2. How many cats were fixed and returned to their communities?
3. Have repeat calls decreased?
4. Are we helping animals stay in their homes?

Return-to-owner should begin before the animal reaches a kennel



Every successful field return saves kennel space and reduces stress.

Support animal control officers and shelter staff with microchip scanners, clear found-pet procedures, social media access, and accessible owner contact.

Contextualized care: solve the problem in front of you

The “right” intervention depends on the animal, family, resources, and realistic options.

FOOD CRISIS

Short-term food support may prevent surrender.

FENCE PROBLEM

A repair or tether alternative may solve repeated roaming.

MEDICAL BARRIER

Subsidized basic care may keep the pet safely at home.

UNPLANNED LITTERS

Accessible spay/neuter addresses the upstream cause.

Sometimes the lowest-cost intervention is also the best welfare outcome.

Prioritize animals who truly need sheltering

- Injured, ill, or suffering animals
- Cruelty, neglect, abandonment, or disaster cases
- Dangerous animals and bite/public-safety cases
- Animals with no safe alternative after reasonable options are explored
- Young or vulnerable animals who cannot safely remain where found

> **Managed intake ≠ turning animals away**
> Managed intake means triage, conversation, alternatives, scheduling when appropriate, and maintaining a safe pathway for animals with urgent needs.

Priority should follow need. Not simply who arrives first.

What is a Community Cat?

The “community cat” title includes any unowned cat whether the cat is feral, friendly, born into the wild, and even lost or abandoned pet cats. Some community cats are routinely fed by one or more community members, while others survive without human intervention. Whatever a cat's individual circumstances, the term "community cat" reflects the reality that for these cats, "home" is within the community rather than in an individual household. These cats have found a source of food and shelter just as other wild animals have. Experts now believe the best option is to keep these cats where they are unless serious problems are documented.

Community cats can thrive in their familiar environment.

Community cats: healthy outdoors is not automatically an emergency

The preferred strategy is targeted sterilization and return, instead of routine impoundment.

1 • Best option: TNR/SNR

Trap or shelter-neuter-return: sterilize, vaccinate as appropriate, ear-tip, and return eligible cats to their original location.

2 • If resources are limited

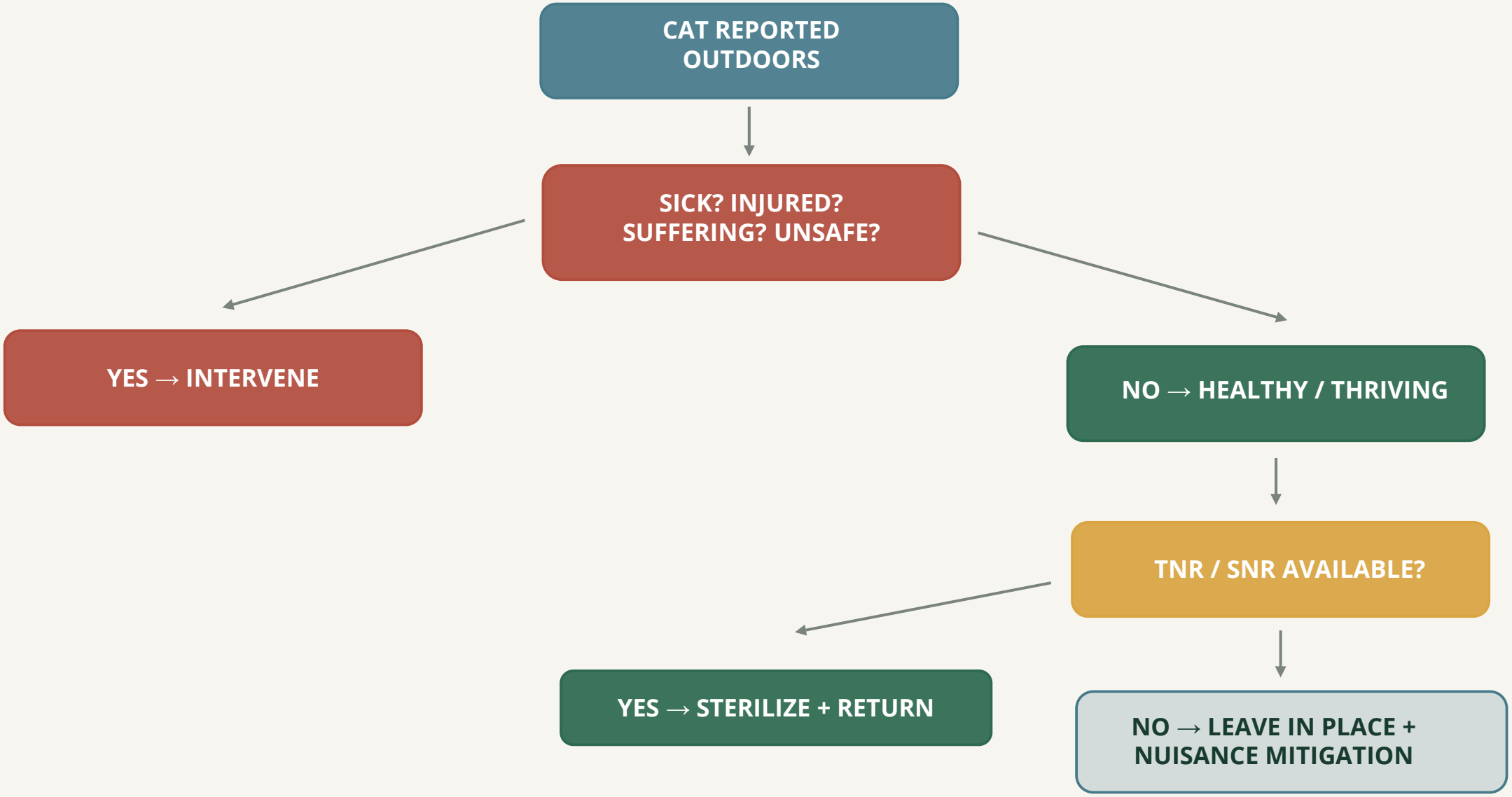
Do not create a worse outcome by routinely trapping healthy, thriving cats only to hold them in an already-full facility.

3 • Intervene when needed

Prioritize sick, injured, suffering, orphaned/too-young, unsafe-location, cruelty, or serious unresolved nuisance cases.

In most situations, leaving a healthy cat in its current location is not only intentional but also considered best practice.

A practical community-cat decision tree



A cat complaint does not necessarily require cat removal

Common complaints

- Cats under porches
- Garbage access
- Spraying / fighting
- Feeding conflicts
- Cats in gardens
- Repeated litters

Problem-solving tools

- Sterilization
- Feeding-location changes
- Secure trash
- Humane deterrents
- Exclusion / barriers
- Caregiver engagement

Escalate when needed

- Injury or illness
- Cruelty / neglect
- Immediate hazard
- Unresolved serious nuisance
- Legal/public-health concern

Resolve the complaint at the source whenever possible.

Education is Just as Important

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS FOR UNWANTED BEHAVIORS

While TNR helps to reduce the most unwanted natural cat behaviors like reproducing, fighting, and spraying, there are other natural behaviors that can be disruptive. Thankfully, there are multiple simple, safe, and effective solutions!

scan for more solutions

Trashcans & Food

- Place a tight lid on your trashcan, or keep trashcan in a storage shed.
- Only feed cats enough food that they can eat within 15-30 minutes to prevent attracting pests.
- Coordinate with neighbors to ensure cats aren't being overfed.

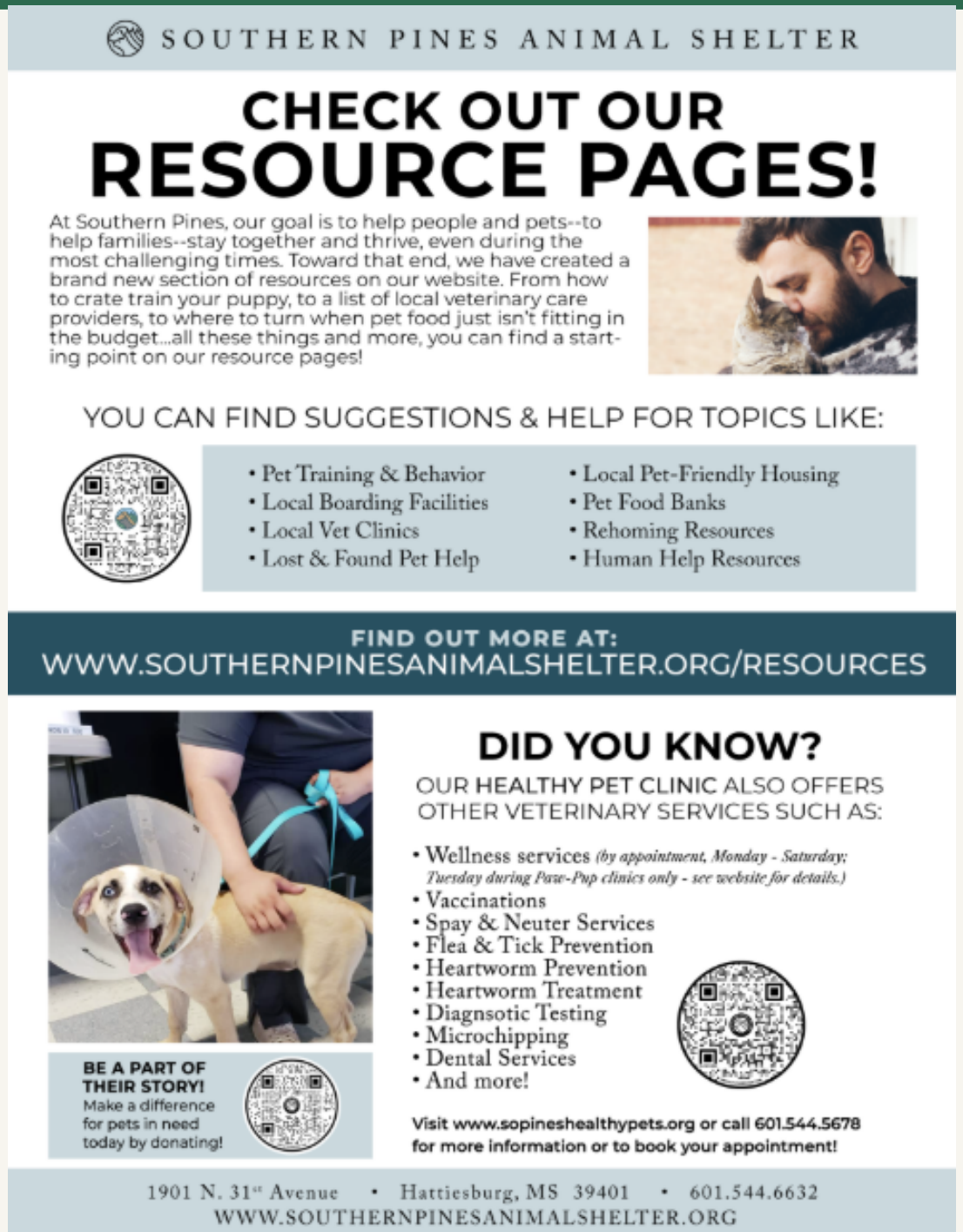
Garden, Porch, & Shed

- Physically block or seal the location cats are entering with chicken wire or lattice fencing.
- Scatter fresh citrus peels, coffee grounds, tobacco, or oils of lavender, lemongrass, citronella around the area.
- Slightly bury upside down plastic carpet runners, scat mats, or metal forks in high traffic garden areas.

Compile Community Resources

Create flyers to distribute with information and links to community resources.

- Community Cat Flyers/Information
- What to Do if You Find Kittens
- General Lost and Found Pet Resources
- Spay/Neuter Information for local Vets or Clinics



Build an Online Directory

Giving people a place to go online with resources available to them has been incredibly helpful for our community. We are able to provide them with a simple web address or link and they have a wealth of information available to them. This can be a low-cost way to provide community support.

PET-FRIENDLY HOUSING

Moving with pets? Check out our list of local, pet-friendly housing communities

FIND OUT MORE

PET FOOD RESOURCES

A list of local organizations that may be able to provide pet food assistance.

FIND OUT MORE

REHOMING RESOURCES

Some resources & tips to help you rehome a pet yourself

FIND OUT MORE

HUMAN HELP

If you are in need of assistance, this comprehensive list of local resources may be able to help

FIND OUT MORE

Capacity for care: kennels are not the same as capacity

PHYSICAL SPACE → **TRUE CAPACITY**

STAFF × VETERINARY × HOUSING × ISOLATION × CLEANING × OUTCOMES

Your functional capacity is limited by the weakest part of the system.

If you can house 100 animals but can only appropriately care for 70, your capacity is closer to 70.

When intake exceeds capacity, the whole system degrades

Break the cycle with managed intake, faster pathways, prevention, and partnerships.

Length of stay is a welfare metric AND a budget metric

10 DAYS

10 animal care days

food • cleaning • staffing • medical • housing

30 DAYS

30 animal care days

≈ 3× the daily care burden for that animal

Moving animals through the shelter system efficiently and effectively helps save more lives.

Prevent disease at the front door

Medical care begins at or before intake.

Why intake vaccination matters

Shelters concentrate susceptible animals. Delayed prevention gives infectious disease more opportunity to spread.

Use veterinary protocols

Core vaccination, parasite control, examination, testing, and isolation decisions should follow written veterinary protocols.

Prevention is cheaper than an outbreak

INVEST UP FRONT

- Vaccines
- Cleaning protocols
- Isolation / cohorting
- PPE when indicated
- Daily population rounds

OR PAY DURING AN OUTBREAK

- Treatment costs
- Longer stays
- Closed adoption areas
- Staff time
- More exposure + risk

Disease control is an operational necessity, not just a medical task.

Mississippi: Build best practices around state laws and local ordinances

STATE LAW

Mississippi requires rabies vaccination for dogs and cats age 3 months or older in the circumstances described by state law.

State law also addresses animal cruelty, enforcement, and certain municipal/county authority.

LOCAL LAW

Cities and counties may have additional ordinances, hold periods, licensing rules, nuisance provisions, dangerous-dog rules, and contract obligations.

IMPLEMENTATION

Before changing intake, community-cat, field-return, or enforcement practices, review the actual ordinance and contract with local counsel and public-health partners.

Know the Law. Follow Best Practices. Build Sound Protocols.

Build sterilization into the process

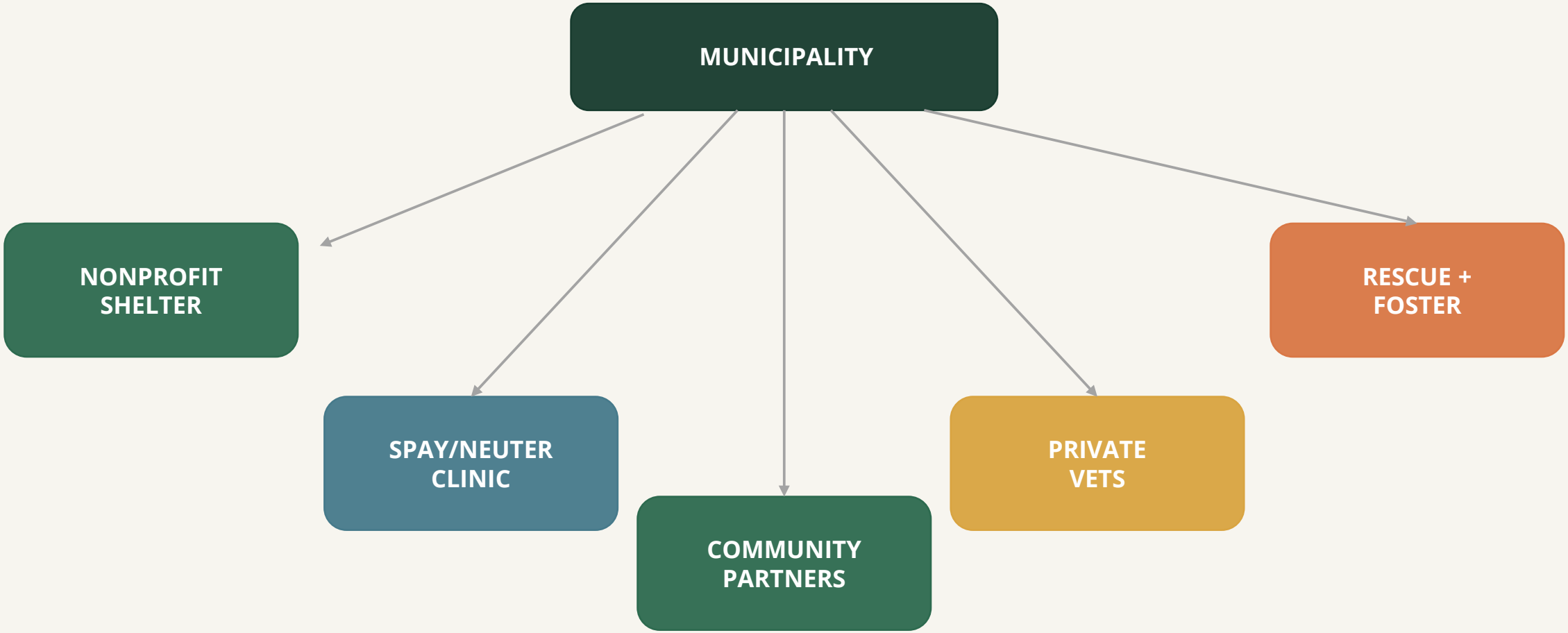
Best practice

Complete sterilization before adoption when feasible and appropriate, so the shelter does not contribute to future unplanned litters.

When capacity is limited

Use a veterinarian-approved, legally compliant pathway such as foster-to-adopt or scheduled surgery rather than losing track of the animal.

Municipal government does not have to provide every service itself



Think outside the box. Find service providers and experts within your community to partner in order to provide essential services

Design contracts around outcomes, responsibilities, and capacity

Instead of only…	Add…
“Take every animal we bring.”	Priority categories + managed pathways
“$X per impound.”	Funding for prevention + outcomes
“Keep animals until adopted.”	Length-of-stay expectations + pathway planning
“The shelter handles it.”	Defined roles for city, county, nonprofit, vet, rescue
“Send us totals.”	Transparent monthly dashboard + capacity triggers

A good contract prevents predictable conflict before the shelter is full.

Don’t Reinvent the Wheel

Instead of trying to do everything yourself, **invest in the organizations, rescues, shelters and community groups already putting in the work and doing it well.**

Don’t create resources from scratch - reach out to shelters and national organizations and ask for help.

We are all stronger together.

Strong community buy-in allows shelters, rescues, and local municipalities to work together to create lasting solutions that helps to keep pets with their families and save more lives.

Key references

Use these as starting points for policy development and veterinary/legal review.

Association of Shelter Veterinarians	**Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, Second Edition (2022)** sheltervet.org/guidelines-for-standards-of-care-in-animal-shelters
ASPCA	**Position Statement on Responsibilities of Animal Shelters** aspca.org/about-us/aspca-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-responsibilities-animal-shelters
ASPCA	**Position Statement on Community Cats** aspca.org/about-us/aspca-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-on-community-cats
Mississippi Code	**Title 41, Ch. 53 (Rabies Control); Title 97, Ch. 41 (Cruelty to Animals)** law.justia.com/codes/mississippi/

Local ordinances and contracts vary. Confirm requirements for the specific city or county before implementation.

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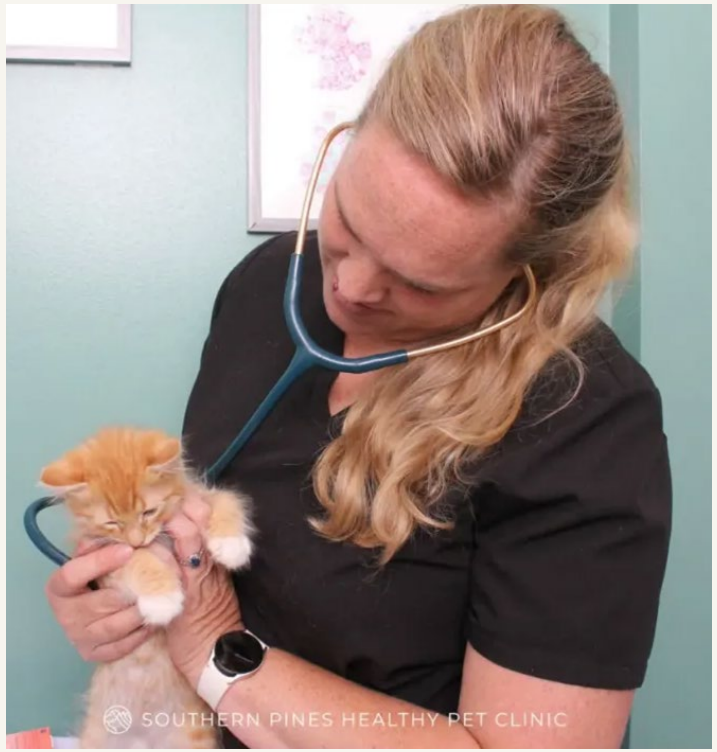
Medical Director



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