



**ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
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**NEWS RELEASE** *for Immediate Release*

**No. 2024 – 062**

**April 5, 2024, 7 a.m.**

**St. Mary's County Animal Shelter Announces Temporary Pause to Adoptions  
& New Animal Intakes Due to Outbreak of Respiratory Illness**

**LEONARDTOWN, MD** – The St. Mary's County Animal Adoption & Resource Center is announcing a **temporary pause to adoptions and non-emergency animal intakes**, in response to a sudden outbreak of a contagious upper respiratory illness impacting several of the Center's dogs. Testing has been conducted to verify the illness type and severity; results are pending.

Symptomatic animals are being immediately quarantined, tested, and are receiving treatment. Deep cleaning and personal protective equipment protocols are also in effect for all Shelter staff to reduce the risk of further transmission. Operations will continue to be driven by veterinary medical professionals and best practices in shelter medicine.

**The facility will remain on *emergency admissions only* status until further notice** to manage and contain the outbreak. The date of reopening will be dependent on the last, new report of a symptomatic animal, and will be announced to the public based on how the outbreak progresses.

**If you find a stray dog**, please visit: [www.stmaryscountymd.gov/LFpets](http://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/LFpets) and/or call our Animal Control Division at (301) 475-8018. Animal Control Officers are available to assist with microchip scanning and are working to return found pets home and prevent shelter intakes.

**If you can foster a stray animal**, please email [Volunteer@stmaryscountymd.gov](mailto:Volunteer@stmaryscountymd.gov).

Shelters nationwide are experiencing increased animal infection rates. Many shelter dogs come in as strays with preexisting illnesses, malnourishment, cruelty experiences, or other maladies, which make them more susceptible to severe illness. This, in addition to the overall rise overall in the number of animal intakes (strays, surrenders, etc.) increases the risk of transmission and outbreak. While shelter overcrowding has become the norm nationwide, this can be changed with help from the community. St. Mary's County Animal Services encourages pet owners to spay/neuter their animals, be responsible pet owners, and consider fostering an animal in need.

For more information on the St. Mary's County Animal Adoption & Resource Center, please visit: [www.stmaryscountymd.gov/AnimalShelter](http://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/AnimalShelter) or follow at: [Facebook.com/smcanimalservices](https://www.facebook.com/smcanimalservices).