

St. Croix Animal Welfare Center Faces Closure of Critical Services After Loss of Government Contracts

Without \$225,000 in government funding, the SCAWC has halted intake of unwanted animals and ended its free spay/neuter program. The shelter now faces tough decisions on resource allocation, urging the community to step in with donations and support

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The St. Croix Animal Welfare Center (SCAWC) announced on Friday the termination of two critical contracts with the U.S. Virgin Islands government, leaving the organization in a precarious financial position and forcing it to reduce its services significantly.

The contracts, which expired on September 30, provided essential funding for the center's operations, including its open-door policy for taking in every animal brought to the shelter and its

spay/neuter program.

According to a statement from the center, despite multiple attempts to communicate with government officials, the SCAWC has not received any indication that these contracts, worth a combined \$225,000, will be renewed. The organization's \$175,000 contract, which covered the costs of food, medical care, housing, and staff for 250 animals per year, required the shelter to accept all animals, including aggressive stray dogs, feral cats, and neglected or abused animals in need of long-term care. However, the center said it actually handles between 2,500 to 3,000 animals annually, far exceeding the government-funded capacity.

In its statement, the SCAWC expressed devastation over the loss of these contracts, warning that without the funds, it would no longer be able to maintain its open-door policy. "This contract often put us in the position where we had to decide between inhumane animal hoarding or humane euthanasia to create space for the never-ending stream of unwanted pets," said the organization, highlighting the difficult choices they face in the absence of funding.

The center's \$50,000 contract, which supported its spay/neuter program, also expired. Over the past year, the SCAWC altered 998 community animals, including 340 cats and 498 dogs, according to the statement. The program provided free services to the community, but the actual costs of the procedures far exceeded the funds allocated by the government. "We consistently continued this free program at our own expense, which unfortunately we can no longer financially sustain," the center stated.

Without renewed funding, the SCAWC said it will be forced to close its intake department, meaning that animals will only be accepted on a case-by-case basis. The organization has directed residents to bring unwanted animals to the Department of Agriculture. SCAWC also announced that it can no longer offer free spay/neuter services except during privately funded events.

The SCAWC has urged the community to step in by [making donations](#), volunteering, and contacting government officials to advocate for the center.

The shelter's immediate focus will now shift to caring for the animals already in its custody, with priority given to those deemed most "adoptable." "What little funding we have must be allocated to helping the animals in our care," the center said, calling on the community for support.

SCAWC said volunteer opportunities are also available. The center has asked the public to contact local government leaders, including Agriculture Commissioner Louis Peterson Jr., to advocate for the continuation of vital services.