

The Virgin Islands Consortium

The Humane Society of St. Thomas Introduces Temporary Protective Measures During Coronavirus Pandemic

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Staff Consortium **March 17, 2020**



Due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, and in accordance with National Animal Health and Welfare Organizations' recommendations that shelters reduce the number of animals in care, effective immediately the Humane Society of St. Thomas is limiting intake of both owned and stray animals until at least the end of March, a release the HSSTT issued Tuesday evening made known.

"We will continue to serve the people and pets of St. Thomas through Adoptions, Fostering, Transports, and other services," the society said.

To maximize its ability to save lives, HSST is urgently asking for help from the St. Thomas community. The society said:

1. "For the safety of our staff and the public, we are limiting public access to our campus. While we rely on volunteers to care for our animals, volunteer hours must be scheduled ahead of time. At this time, all volunteers must be 18 years or older. All visitors and volunteers to the campus must sign in. Access to our kennel areas is restricted to staff only. Please do not visit the Humane Society if you have any symptoms of illness. To better accommodate and protect our staffing and clients, we will be adjusting hours to Monday-Saturday 11am-5:30pm to allow additional appointments for adoptions. We will be closed to the public on Sundays until further notice."
2. "All owner surrender and stray intakes will be by appointment only. Appointments must be made in advance by calling 340-775-0599. The Humane Society will accept only limited numbers of animals on a case-by-case basis."
3. "Foster, Volunteer, and Advocate. If you are interested in volunteering or fostering please contact our shelter ASAP. We need foster homes to help immediately reduce our shelter population. Schedule a shift as a dog walker. Tech savvy people can help promote our animals online with videos and pictures. Please contact our shelter for more information on how you can help."
4. "If you see a healthy-looking adult stray dog, please do not pick it up and bring it to the shelter. Currently, we have no capacity to care for these animals. We encourage the community to feed stray dogs where they are for now. If a stray animal is injured, very young, or otherwise in distress, please call the Humane Society before bringing the animal to the shelter."
5. "Kitten and Puppy Season" is starting now. To prevent an influx of puppies and kittens to the shelter, it is urgent to spay and neuter feral and companion animals as soon as possible. If you have pet or are feeding strays, please take advantage of our "Fix Dem All" spay and neuter program. All St Thomas vet offices are participating in the program and charge only a \$15 co-pay per animal. Traps are available to rent at the shelter. If a pet needs transportation to/from a vet office for spay/neuter, we will try to help. Please call the Humane Society for details. Again, to better accommodate and protect our staffing and clients, we will be adjusting hours to Monday-Saturday 11am-5:30pm to allow additional appointments for adoptions. We will be closed to the public on Sundays until further notice."
6. "Adopt. Adoptions are free for animals that have been in our care for 6 months or longer! The Humane Society has many wonderful pets looking for homes. Now is a great time to add a new pet to your family. Please look at our Facebook page for photos and information about all the adoptable dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens. We ask that you call the shelter to make an appointment to meet an animal at 340-775-0599."
7. "Donations are always appreciated. We are in great need of Purina Cat Chow Complete, cat litter, Purina Puppy Chow, Purina Dog Chow, newspapers, liquid hand soap, bleach, Odo-Ban, black heavy duty contractor bags, airline approved soft carrier travel bags, and 400 series airline approved hard dog kennels."

The Humane Society said that it's important to know that, so far, there are no cases of dogs or cats becoming sick from the new coronavirus in the USVI. "There is also no evidence of people catching the virus from dogs or cats. However, it is always a good

idea to practice basic hygiene when interacting with animals, and to wash your hands frequently. Don't forget to stock up on pet food supplies for your pets," the society said.

If you cannot care for your pets, due to illness or any other reason, create a plan for family, friends, or neighbors to properly care for your pets, or placed in the care of a boarding facility, according to HSSTT.

The Humane Society of St. Thomas said it is not able to board owned pets.

Businesses on St. Thomas that may be able to board animals include Canines, Cats, and Critters (340-693-7780), Veterinary Centers of the VI (340-777-7788), and The Kennel Club (340-777-2582).

The Humane Society of St. Thomas is implementing these measures during this challenging time in order to save as many lives as possible, to ensure the humane care for the animals in its custody in the face of expected staffing shortages, and to protect human lives.

If you have questions or concerns, email Annette T Zachman and Dr. Heidi Stout at HSSTT.BOD@GMAIL.COM or call (340-473-7278).