

Empowering the Victoria Community to Care for Animals: Addressing the Gaps in Services for  
Pet Guardians Experiencing Poverty and Homelessness

By

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## **Abstract**

Victoria, BC has one of Canada's highest per-capita homelessness populations. With visible pet ownership among this group, their experience is intensified by rising living costs, scarce affordable and pet friendly housing and limited access to animal-related supports. Partnering with the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA) as it shifts toward a community-care model, this project examined how local services can better support vulnerable guardians, reduce stigma, and strengthen supports. Using a mixed-methods design, data was collected in the Spring of 2025 from 33 service users and 8 service providers through trauma informed, accessible questionnaires, supplemented by publicly available organizational information. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively, while qualitative responses underwent thematic analysis, resulting in 11 themes and 10 subthemes that highlighted strong emotional bonds and reciprocal relationships, substantial structural barriers particularly veterinary costs and access and widespread appreciation for low-barrier compassionate services. Service providers reported diverse offerings but faced chronic limitations including funding shortages, veterinary capacity constraints, foster shortages, and geographic barriers. These findings led to the development of the Victoria Pet Survival Guide. This guide is purposefully written in plain language, intended to be available digitally and physically accessible as a resource consolidating information on veterinary care, pet-friendly housing, emergency boarding, food banks, and lost and found supports. The project identifies opportunities for expanded services, cross-sector collaboration, mobile and low-cost veterinary initiatives, and broader advocacy to reduce systemic barriers. Together, this work provides a practical tool and strategic direction for improving community-based animal welfare supports and helping keep people and their pets together.

## **Executive Summary**

### Introduction

Victoria, British Columbia (B.C.) faces one of the highest per-capita homeless populations in Canada, and rising living costs, scarce affordable and pet-friendly housing, and limited access to information make it especially difficult for low-income and unhoused pet guardians to care for their animals. This project supports The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' (BC SPCA) shift toward a community-care model by identifying how services can better meet the needs of vulnerable guardians, reduce stigma, and strengthen the human-animal bond. Although Victoria has several animal-welfare resources, they are fragmented, hard to find without technology or insider knowledge, and often uncoordinated across service providers. By surveying pet guardians accessing services, and service providers, the project aims to highlight existing supports, address service gaps, and create an accessible Victoria Pet Survival Guide that consolidates essential information. Grounded in the BC SPCA's mission and its five essential freedoms for animal well-being, this work seeks to reduce unnecessary surrenders, keep people and pets together, and guide the organization's future community-service priorities.

### Methodology and Methods

This project used a mixed-methods approach to understand how services for pet guardians experiencing poverty and homelessness in Victoria can be improved. By combining quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from open-ended responses the project captures both service patterns and lived experiences. The survey was intentionally designed to be trauma-informed, accessible, and respectful, prioritizing participant autonomy, confidentiality, and safety, with options for verbal or written participation and safeguards to minimize the influence of existing services relationships. Data was collected from 33 service users accessing BC SPCA community linked programs and from 8 service providers across animal welfare, veterinary, housing, and social service sectors, supplemented by publicly available organizational information to build a comprehensive resource list for the Victoria Pet Survival Guide. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively, while qualitative responses were examined using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to identify recurring barriers, service gaps, and priorities. This resulted in 11

themes and 10 subthemes that together offer a detailed picture of current supports and unmet needs for vulnerable pet guardians in Victoria.

## Key Findings

Service user and provider questionnaires revealed the strength and reciprocal nature of the human-animal bond among low-income and unhoused pet guardians in Victoria. Respondents emphasized companionship, love and mental-health benefits while identifying veterinary costs, limited access to care, and daily caregiving demands as major challenges. Thirty-three service users participated, describing reliance primarily on food bank assistance, valuing friendly and non-judgmental staff, and requesting expanded hours, mobile outreach, and low-cost spay/neuter and veterinary services. Eight service providers reported offering diverse supports from free vet care and rescue to grants and pet-friendly sheltering. They faced significant limitations including funding shortages, veterinary capacity constraints, foster shortages, and geographic barriers. Providers expressed interest in collaboration and inclusion in a Pet Survival Guide, though many showed hesitancy based on their capacity limitations. Thematic analysis across all data identified consistent patterns: the depth of human-animal bond, structural barriers to care, appreciation for low-barrier compassionate services and clear gaps in veterinary access, service hours, and pet-friendly housing, all of which informed the development of the Victoria Pet Survival Guide.

## Knowledge Mobilization and Recommendations

The Victoria Pet Survival Guide was developed based on the results of the questionnaires as a practical accessible tool to help low-income and unhoused pet guardians navigate local supports, using publicly available information and insights from the research to structure sections on veterinary care, pet-friendly housing, emergency boarding, food banks and lost and found services. The guide incorporates plain-language design, “quick tips” and both digital and print distribution strategies to ensure broad accessibility with disclaimers noting that information may change and should be updated annually. Future directions include using this model across BC SPCA regions, adapting it to local community needs and gaining service user feedback, and exploring service expansion such as short-term emergency boarding, accessible grooming stations, microchip clinics, mobile spay/neuter, and food-bank services, and strengthened cross sector collaboration. The research also underlines opportunities for advocacy and humane education to reduce barriers

in housing, sheltering, and social service systems while supporting vulnerable guardians caring for their pets.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Victoria, BC has one of Canada's largest homeless populations per capita, with increasing living expenses, low vacancy rates, lack of affordable housing and limited pet friendly housing (Victoria Homelessness et al., 2023). With these factors in mind, inspired by the human animal bond, this project aims to help lead the BC SPCA towards its strategic plan goals, shifting from its current sheltering model toward a community care model. By asking pet guardians who are experiencing poverty and homelessness where services and assets can improve in Victoria BC, a snapshot analysis was conducted. The Greater Victoria area is made up of 13 municipalities. This project will focus on the municipality distinctions of Victoria, due to its high density of homeless populations where there is a visible pet guardianship within this community and most resources are accessible by foot or bus. With animal welfare at the core, this work aims to decrease stigmas of pet guardianship within this community while making known the resources available and providing service improvement recommendations to help alleviate stresses on the BC SPCA and vulnerable pet guardians alike.

By working with the BC SPCA, this project will encourage that society's five essential domains (previously freedoms) are upheld in pet guardianship. By surveying key service providers, community members and stakeholders, this project hopes to address lacking services for low income and homeless pet guardians and assess existing services through the creation of an accessible, comprehensive, and user-friendly Victoria Pet Survival Guide for the most vulnerable people and their pets.

### 1.1 Defining the Problem

Victoria, BC has one of Canada's largest homeless populations with increasing living expenses and limited pet friendly housing (Victoria Homelessness, 2023). One of the main issues is that currently, the community outreach services offered by the BC SPCA are limited to emergency boarding, food banks, and when funds allow, low income spay and neuter. Phone calls are received daily for assistance with rising vet costs, their own hospitalization and treatment, and lack or loss of housing. With financial limitations, many guardians turn to surrender or euthanasia to relieve distress on them and their pets. From 2023-2025 on average 70% of animals surrendered

to the BC SPCA Victoria Community Animal Centre by their guardians were for these reasons (BC SPCA Shelter Buddy Report, 2026). As the BC SPCA implements their 2025-2030 Strategic Plan and shifts their focus on helping BC's most vulnerable animals, they are looking for ways to help solve these problems, decreasing guardian surrenders and keeping families and their pets together (BC SPCA Strategic Plan 2025 – 2030, n.d.)

This geographical area of Victoria has existing animal welfare assets, however there is a lack of linking and communications of these resources. The BC SPCA has identified and is aware of services for pets of low-income and homeless populations; however, there is not a comprehensive resource that works to ease the information sharing and bridge organizations and their offerings. The BC SPCA understands that with the overextension of existing service programs, availability of access to information is often hidden by like organizations. By discussing and getting service providers consent to share information about their programs in a Victoria Pet Survival Guide, the BC SPCA hopes to have an accredited tool to share with pet guardians who come to them in need.

One of the main barriers described to BC SPCA staff daily by service users is finding information on resources that are currently is available. Without insider knowledge, a computer or smart phone, these resources can be extremely difficult to find. Pet guardians are assumed to rely on social service providers, such as Our Place, for verbal information. Specifically, those with low income who do not currently access such service providers often due to the stigma associated with them, have little access to information. The data presented here relies primarily on anecdotal information from BC SPCA staff members, as there is currently no systematic or high-quality data collection to accurately assess the scope of this issue. Furthermore, there is a significant lack of data examining the intersections of this work and the characteristics of the communities that access these services. In addition, formal feedback mechanisms for service users are not in place, limiting opportunities for individuals to share critiques, experiences or ideas of the services provided.

## 1.2 Project Client

The BC SPCA was formed in 1895 with a mission of “protecting vulnerable animals and mobilizing communities so animals and people thrive together (“History of the BC SPCA,” n.d.). The BC SPCA's activities are guided by a vision to “inspire and mobilize society to create a world in which all animals enjoy as a minimum, five essential domains (previously freedoms):

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst;
2. Freedom from pain, injury, and disease;
3. Freedom from distress;
4. Freedom from discomfort; and
5. Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being.” (“What Are the Five Freedoms?,” n.d.)

The BC SPCA is the only animal welfare organization in B.C. with the authority to enforce animal cruelty laws under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA Act). They are the largest animal welfare organization in North America and the largest animal sheltering society in the world. With 31 centre locations across B.C., they shelter “abused and homeless animals, until they are adopted into new homes,” have two veterinary hospitals, two spay and neuter clinics, rehabilitate wildlife, have a provincial Animal Helpline, conduct animal cruelty investigations, advocacy and education for youth and adults and other key activities across B.C.

As the primary and largest animal welfare organization in BC, this project will centre on their animal centre in Victoria BC. The research is shaped by the author’s dual role as both a graduate researcher and an employee of the BC SPCA as the Victoria Community Animal Centre Manager from since December of 2021. In 2025, this location alone assisted 1000 animals through direct care and community programs, offered food security to 5000 meals through pet food bank programs with 8 community partners, helped 40 low-income pet guardians spay and neuter their animals, responded to 1700 new animal cruelty complaints, and housed 50 animals as a part of their emergency boarding program.

In their 2025-2030 strategic plan, the BC SPCA is moving from the model that “the BC SPCA is the best at caring for animals” to “the community is the best at caring for animals.” With the focus change to community outreach and services, sheltering and enforcement will be for only the most vulnerable animals. In response, a new Community Services division, and newly created positions: the Regional Community Services Facilitators, will be working across the province to fulfil these goals. Working with the Victoria BC SPCA Animal Centre provides a snapshot of where the BC SPCA should focus its community programs (“BC SPCA Strategic Plan 2025 – 2030,” n.d.).

### 1.3 Project Objectives, Research Questions, and Scope

#### Primary Question:

How can resources and services be improved for pet guardians experiencing poverty and homelessness?

#### Secondary Questions:

1. What resources and services are available for pet guardians experiencing poverty and homelessness?
2. How are different service providers coordinating to meet client needs?
3. What are the identified gaps in services?

### 1.4 Organization of Report

Following this introduction, the report is organized to provide both academic grounding and practical relevance to the unique challenges faced by low-income individuals and those facing homelessness as pet guardians in Victoria, BC.

Chapter 2: Establishes the context for the study by outlining essential background information. It includes an overview of the patterns and issues faced by people experiencing homelessness, the importance of pet ownership, the barrier and stigmas faced by pet owners in these groups under the guide of BC SPCA specific animal welfare priorities.

Chapter 3: Reviews the existing literature, situating the project within broader discussions of homelessness, pet guardianship, and animal welfare.

Chapter 4: Provides a detailed description of the research methodology explaining how data was collected to capture the lived experiences of service users and providers in Victoria.

Chapter 5: Summarizes and analyzes findings from questionnaires completed by both service users and providers. Presents the thematic analysis of the questionnaires for both service users

and providers. These findings highlight the financial and emotional pressures that often lead guardians to crisis as well as the gaps in accessible information about available resources.

Chapter 6: Analyzing the findings of the questionnaires. Identifying existing animal welfare assets in Victoria and examining the lack of communication and coordination among organizations. This section also describes the criteria used to develop a framework for bridging these resources with particular attention to accessibility barriers such as reliance on insider knowledge, technology, or stigmatized social service providers.

Chapter 7: Introduces the mobilization of the data with the creation of the Victoria Pet Survival Guide. Offers recommendations for implementing the framework and associated standards. Drawing on the literature review and questionnaires proposes strategies to strengthen collaboration among service providers and create tools to replicate the Victoria Pet Survival Guide in other regions – offering an accredited resource designed to share information openly and empower pet guardians in need.

## 2.0 Background

### 2.1 Reality: Victoria's Homeless Population

Lack of adequate housing and homelessness in Victoria is, like in every city across the country, a challenge. According to the 2025 Greater Victoria Point-in-Time (PIT) Count there were a total of 1749 individuals who met the criteria for homelessness (*2025 Greater Victoria Point in Time Homelessness Count and Survey – Community Social Planning Council, n.d.*). The report also acknowledges that homelessness is difficult to quantify due to the hidden aspect of homelessness, those who are not currently connected to services, are highly transient, are incarcerated or hospitalized, or are precariously housed. Because of this, the official reported counts are under-representative of the true face of homelessness in any community. In Canada as a whole, the report concludes that it is estimated that 300,000 Canadians experience homelessness in a year, and 35,000 Canadians on each night (Housing, 2025). The PIT Count (2025) provides insight into the main causes of homelessness in Greater Victoria. It highlights the intersectional identities of respondents and the challenges they face including, substance use (80%), mental health (64%), physical disability (53%), and illness (50%). Although not captured in this PIT, the 2023/2024 PIT 8.2% of respondents identified pets as a barrier to finding housing, the top three reasons being identified as high rents, low incomes, and lack of available options (Victoria Homelessness et al., 2023). With these statistics, there is a clear connection, particularly between mental health, lack of resources, and substances use to chronic homelessness.

The Street Survival Guide created by the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (the Coalition) was used as a reference resource to build upon their work and inspire the design of the Victoria Pet Survival Guide. The first Street Survival Guide was published in 2013 by a group of volunteers with street-life experience with its final iteration published in 2022. It contains more than 80 resources including housing, food, laundry, harm reduction services and more. Unfortunately, only two organizations were listed under “Pet Care” (Victoria Homelessness, 2022). At the time, the BC SPCA had contact list of over 20 service providers that were excluded from the Street Survival Guide. This information provides a starting point to look deeper into offerings by local food banks, animal shelters and associations, emergency shelters, and transitional housing and the lack of linking between organizations.

## 2.2 More than Just a Pet: Why Having a Pet Matters

Companion animals make a significant impact in the lives of humans, especially those living with mental illness, trauma, and addictions. As discussed by Taylor et al., 2004 people who have experienced attachment disorders due to childhood developmental trauma cannot build the necessary trust required for interpersonal relationships, however, they are capable of attachment to animals who allow for unconditional love and non-judgmental acceptance (p. 354). This experience is common among those living with addictions, mental illness, and poverty. From the statistics discussed above, these three factors intimately knit together. The relationships built with companion animals may be a person's first real and secure attachment.

In addition to this, animals also provide a sense of responsibility for another, creating a situation where pet guardians can begin to make better choices for themselves to provide care for their pets (Taylor et al., 2004). Pet guardianship and its responsibilities also allow the space for guardians to view themselves as "good" (Irvine et al., 2012). This self-reflection as a good person is vital for those who are often condemned by society at large as criminals and/or drains on the system. With a lifetime of such labels imposed upon them, these often become internalized and self-fulfilling. With companion animals, these ideas are challenged, internal strengths are discovered and self-esteem is planted.

Pet guardianship has also been shown to reduce suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among the homeless (Taylor et al., 2004) as well as "improve motivation, sensory modulation, attention, concentration, social interaction, responsibility and emotional well-being" of those with mental health issues (Slatter et al., 2012). Slatter et al. also discusses the impact that companion animals have in assisting guardians to reintegrate into mainstream society. Animals allow for the skill building required socially, interpersonally, and internally for people to begin the process towards long-term stability and healing.

## 2.3 Barriers and Stigma faced by Low-Income and Homeless Pet Guardians

Unfortunately low-income, and homeless individuals come up against many systemic barriers when owning and caring for pets. As many shelters, programs, agencies, and landlords do not allow pets, their guardians will choose not to access services or housing to keep their animals (Taylor et al., 2004). The authors also explore the inability to access health care for guardians, as emergency rooms and other medical services also do not allow pets in their facilities. Because of this, guardians will put off seeking needed medical care for themselves. Veterinary care for their

animals creates another barrier for this population. As Veterinary care can be expensive and often travel is required, many cannot afford to seek the treatments they would want for their pets.

Stigma creates further barriers for individuals, as the public often assumes that those who are homeless or who live on low-income are incapable of caring for their animals (Irvine et al., 2012). Irvine et al. in interviews with people experiencing homelessness demonstrate that this community is fully committed to their pets; they spend almost 100% of their time with their animals and will ensure that their pets are fed first, at times going without meals themselves to ensure their pets are well fed. When pet care is available, guardians will utilize these services.

According to Taylor, Williams, and Gray (2004), those who are homeless and own pets do so out of companionship and to combat isolation. While some dogs may provide protection and warmth, this is not one of the significant reasons people choose to own pets. While dogs are the most popular pets, specific breed or size of dog does not seem to be a factor in pet guardianship. Additionally, they note, many homeless and low-income individuals choose to own cats, and even rats.

#### 2.4 Animal Rights and Freedoms

In highlighting the benefits of pet guardianship for low-income populations, this section reiterates the importance of animal welfare. The five domains (previously freedoms) of the BC SPCA should always be maintained. Animals should have: freedom from hunger and thirst; freedom from pain, injury, and disease; freedom from distress; freedom from discomfort; and freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being (BC SPCA, n.d.). In supplying these resources through a community map and guide, the hope is to promote these freedoms of animals living in low-income and homeless populations, increasing quality of life for not only the animal, but the guardian.

### 3.0 Literature Review

While historically limited, the scholarly literature on pet guardians experiencing homelessness has grown considerably in recent years. The literature is multidisciplinary spanning psychology, ethnography, occupational therapy, social distress and homelessness, child psychiatry, sociology, animal welfare, and veterinary science. Common keywords include: homelessness, pet guardianship, companion animals, human-animal bonds, housing, housing policy, Victoria homelessness/statistics, and numerical data. Research activity in this area has increased notably in the past five years in the United States and United Kingdom, creating a broader awareness of this topic. Across disciplines, the literature consistently shows the importance of pet guardianship in the homeless community and aims to de-stigmatize it. Prominent contributors include Leslie Irvine, Daniel Bisgrove, Nick Kerman, Michelle Lem, Heidi Taylor, and Harmony Rhoades.

Empirical studies most commonly include qualitative interviews, surveys, and point in time counts to examine the interactions between homeless pet guardians and their animals. A recurring focus is how pet guardianship helps construct positive personal identities and provides meaning and stability in otherwise precarious circumstances (Irvine, 2012; Irvine et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2004). Some of the earliest research on this topic by Taylor, Williams and Gray (2004) found that companions animals help foster secure attachment that allows for unconditional love and non-judgmental acceptance, promotes a sense of responsibility, decreases suicidal ideation, improves decision making, enhances resilience and contributes to a reduction in substance abuse. Since then, over 40 publications over a 20-year period reiterate similar findings, with approximately 90% confirming the mental health benefits associated with pet guardianship among people experiencing homelessness.

Despite these benefits, access to services, housing and healthcare remain a significant problem. Approximately 15% of studies examined in this review highlight the systemic barriers faced by homeless pet guardians including exclusion from shelters, housing and medical services often associated with service provider policies or lack of respite support (Slatter, Lloyd & King, 2012; Lem, 2016; Howe & Easterbrook, 2018; Scanlon et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020; Ramirez et al., 2022; Rullán-Oliver et al., 2023; Scanlon, McBride & Stavisky 2021; Dolan et al., 2025; Ward et al., 2024; Kurkowski & Springer, 2024; Rullan-Oliver et al., 2023; Ramirez et al., 2022). They

show the extent to which pet guardianship impacts the ability access medical care and other services; and interventions that health professionals can implement to reduce barriers caused by animal companionship (Slatter, Lloyd & King 2012). This research goes back as far as 1994 survey where Singer, Hart and Zasloff concluded that participants stated a preference for being rehoused. Their surveys indicated 93% of men and 96% of women said that housing would not be acceptable if pets were not allowed. It also highlights that 61% of the men and 33% of the women surveyed stated they would be willing to live anywhere pets were allowed except in a shelter (Singer, Hart & Zasloff. 1994). Most of the participants had been refused housing because they had pets. Attempts to rehouse homeless individuals who have pets are likely to be unsuccessful unless accommodation for pets is included. Howe & Easterbrook (2018) highlight that, although the cost of pet ownership limits access to services, pet guardians found this as a worthwhile cost for the companionship, sense of responsibility, resilience, and reduction of substance abuse

In response to these challenges, recent literature increasingly frames the human- animal bond through the lens of “One Health” approach. Although long recognized conceptually, this framework has gained renewed prominence in recent years, emphasizing the interconnectedness of human health, animal welfare, and environmental and social systems (BC SPCA, 2025). A 2024 review by Kurkowski and Springer synthesized studies proposing or implementing interventions to improve outcomes for both animals and their guardian, identifying joint human- animal clinics and interdisciplinary partnerships as the most promising models. Yang et al (2021) reviewed Student Health Outreach for Wellness (SHOW) clinic in Phoenix, AZ who piloted the integration of veterinary care within human healthcare setting for homeless pet guardians. They explored the human animal bond of patients, noting an increase in human medical care access.

In addition to documenting benefits for guardians, research consistently challenges assumptions that animals living with unhoused people experience poor welfare and physical health. While much of the literature has focused on outcomes for guardians, more recent studies have begun to address gaps related to animal health and welfare. Irvine, Kahl & Smith, (2016) demonstrates that this community spends almost 100% of their time with their animals and will ensure that their pets are fed first, at times going without meals themselves to ensure their pets are well fed. Williams and Hogg (2016) compared 50 dogs owned by homeless people with 50 owned by people living in a home and found that dogs owned by homeless people were healthy animals,

less likely to be obese and had fewer behaviour issues such as aggression to strangers and separation anxiety when compared to dogs owned by people living in a conventional home. A study in 2022 by Scanlon, Hobson-West, Cobb, McBride, and Stavisky reiterate welfare and health of dogs compared favourably to conventionally owned pets. However, they also noted that 61.9% had behavioural concerns, most commonly separation-related distress, introducing the need for behavioural support in addition to veterinary care and pet friendly services. King et al. (2024) reported animals living with homeless guardians were well cared for, and physically healthy, but struggled with separation distress. French et al. 2021 assessed the body condition scores of over 946 companion animals in Canada and found an average score of 5.4/9, comparable to animals seen in general companion animal veterinary practice.

Recent research exploring barrier to veterinary care in Canada are relevant to this study. A study by Rausch et al. (2025) shows that Canadian organizations use tools like low-cost services, pop up clinics, transportation assistance, payment plans, and multilingual services to address barriers to veterinary care, but most of these are employed by only about 20% of providers. Efforts primarily target financial and geographical barriers, with limited focus on cultural or disability-related challenges. Few organizations formally gather community feedback, supporting the need to build capacity for addressing intersecting barriers. These findings provide a baseline for improving equitable access to animal healthcare in Canada. In an additional project, Rausch et al (2025) explore how Canadian organizations develop and evaluate programs to improve access to veterinary care and engage communities. Results identified a wide variation in program initiation, evolution and evaluation practices reflecting the complexity of access to care and the limitations on resources that hinder further community engagement. Findings highlight the need for inter-organizational knowledge sharing and capacity building to support community-based evaluation and ensure programs are effective and equitable.

Local data from the Greater Victoria Point in Time (PIT) count provides statistics and numerical data about the local homeless community. It shows that 8% of those who participated could not find permanent housing because of pets, and 5% did not stay in shelter because of pets (Coalition et al., 2023). These statistics are surprisingly low; however, they are not a full representation of the community. It is estimated the 10-25% of homeless people own pets;

however, the PIT count does not collect this data. These margins show that more research needs to be conducted to represent the community more accurately.

## 4.0 Methodology and Methods

This project employed a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to address the primary research question: “How can resources and services be improved for pet guardians experiencing poverty and homelessness in Victoria, BC?” Quantitative survey items captured the prevalence and distribution of key issues (e.g., types of animals, use of services, identified needs), while open-ended questions elicited richer accounts of lived experience, perceived barriers, and service gaps from both service users and providers. This design was selected to generate both an empirical snapshot of existing services and gather an understanding of how those services are accessed, experienced, and coordinated in practice.

Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis approach (2006) provides a guide for how the responses are interpreted, offering a framework for identifying patterned meaning across participants’ responses. This process, moving from familiarization and inductive coding through to theme construction, review, and refinement, supports an analysis that stays close to participants’ experiences.

This project received ethics certification from the University of Victoria. The ethics number is: 24-0231.

### 4.1 Survey Instrument Design

The survey was designed with the potential vulnerability of participants in mind. The priority was to develop an intentional, trauma-informed, and respectful experience for participants who may be considered vulnerable due to their engagement with low-income outreach services. Although the overall risk of participant vulnerability is low, given that the survey does not ask invasive or personal questions, safety, choice, and empowerment are prioritized throughout the design. Questions focus solely on their relationship with their pets and their experiences with services rather than on individuals’ histories or circumstances. Participants are reminded that their responses are confidential, that they can stop anytime and that their responses will not affect their access to services. By centring autonomy, minimizing potential triggers, and emphasizing the value of participants’ voices, the survey aims to be minimally intrusive while supporting a sense of agency and respect.

The BC SPCA also placed a strong emphasis on accessibility to ensure that all service users could participate comfortably and confidently. Questionnaires were written in clear, plain language to support understanding and reduce risk of confusion or distress, particularly for individuals who may have varied literacy levels or for whom English is not a first language. To further increase accessibility, participants were offered the option to provide verbal responses with the support of trained volunteers. This approach removed barriers related to writing ability, physical limitations, or discomfort with written formats and allowed individuals to engage in the way that felt most natural and safe for them. By combining accessible design with flexible response options, the BC SPCA aimed to create an inclusive process that respected participants' diverse needs and upheld trauma-informed principles.

The survey design incorporates multiple safeguards to protect vulnerable participants and minimize potential influence from existing service relationships. Recruitment was conducted by BC SPCA volunteers who have not previously participated in or volunteered with the programs under study and who have signed the organization's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy. This added step reinforces participant anonymity and reduces the likelihood of perceived pressure to participate. Service users were approached in person at the BC SPCA Victoria Centre Food Bank, Vets for Pets and during animal redemption from Emergency Boarding. Although existing connections with service providers and some service users exist, all participants are clearly informed through the initial contact script and consent for that participation is voluntary, that services will not be affected by their decision, and that they may withdraw at any time. Interested service users received a verbal invitation outlining the study's purpose, followed by a physical consent form; once consent was provided, participants received the questionnaire and were given access to a private booth to complete it independently, or verbally with a volunteer if preferred. Completed questionnaires were deposited into a secure drop box, which remained sealed until all data collection was finished to further protect participant confidentiality and prevent any possibility of linking responses to individual service users. Only the research team accessed the sealed box, and data were anonymized immediately upon retrieval. These safeguards ensured participants' privacy was upheld, that their involvement remains voluntary and the influence of existing service relationships is minimized throughout the research process. The documents related to these safeguards can be found in Appendices B-D.

## 4.2 Data collection

Service user data was collected through a questionnaire (Appendix E) with people accessing existing BC SPCA community programs, including the Pet Food Bank, and Vets for Pets and the Emergency Boarding program. Between April 30- June 30, 2025, thirty-three questionnaires were collected at five scheduled Pet Food Bank and two Vets for Pets events; although two emergency boarding clients were approached, both declined to participate. Participants were recruited in person by research volunteers, who explained the project, obtained written consent, and then administered the questionnaire verbally or provided a paper copy for those who preferred to complete it themselves.

The questionnaire included close-ended questions about:

- Types and numbers of animals, and basic animal characteristics
- Use of and access routes to services (e.g., food banks, veterinary care)
- Frequency and nature of support received (e.g., food, veterinary care, financial assistance)

It also contained open-ended questions exploring:

- The human–animal bond, perceived benefits, and challenges of guardianship
- Existing services and suggestions for improvement
- Additional resources or support that would be helpful, including views on a resource list or guide.

This combination of question types allowed for descriptive quantitative profiling alongside thematic exploration of service users' priorities, constraints, and ideas for change.

Two online questionnaires were distributed to organizations providing relevant services, including animal welfare organizations, veterinary clinics, food banks, homeless shelters, and transitional housing providers. An initial invitation to participate was sent to forty-three identified service providers using an existing BC SPCA contact list, with invitations delivered by email and accompanied by an information letter and consent form. Eight organizations completed the first questionnaire, representing a range of activities such as free veterinary clinics, low-cost spay/neuter programs, rescue and rehoming, grant funding for veterinary care, and pet-friendly transitional housing.

The first questionnaire gathered:

- Organizational profiles (services offered, target populations, frequency of services)
- Access pathways (referral routes, appointment systems, drop-in models)
- Promotion, partnerships, and funding sources
- Perceived limitations and future goals for service improvement.

A second, shorter questionnaire was then sent to providers who indicated interest in having their services listed in the Victoria Pet Survival Guide, focusing on logistical information (location, eligibility, hours, access requirements) and alignment with BC SPCA animal welfare standards where applicable. Because only four organizations completed this second survey, public information from websites and other documents were also reviewed to compile a comprehensive and accurate asset list for the guide.

A smart practices approach was considered, but the information was lacking. No Canadian city has a program that focuses specifically on pet guardians experiencing homelessness and their pets. Various organizations have services listed, but like the Coalition's Street Survival Guide, show a small percentage of what is available.

#### 4.3 Data Analysis

Survey data from both service users and service providers were analyzed using a mixed methods approach to capture both measurable patterns of services and the experiential insights shared by participants. Quantitative responses from closed ended questions were examined using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages to summarize key themes of the sample and patterns in service utilization and delivery. Variables examined included types and numbers of animals, access to services, organizational service offerings, and the frequency and types of support provided. Where appropriate, cross tabulations were conducted to explore relationships between selected variables. Given the relatively small sample size the quantitative analysis was exploratory and aimed at identifying patterns.

Open ended responses from both service users and providers were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Responses were reviewed multiple times to support familiarity with the data; inductive codes were then generated to capture recurring ideas about participants' experiences with current services, the barriers they encountered and the supports they felt were

missing. These codes were organized into broader themes that reflected shared experiences and priorities among service users and providers. Representative quotations were selected to illustrate each theme.

To supplement the provider survey responses, publicly available organization documents and websites were reviewed to confirm service details and support the development of the Victoria Pet Survival Guide (Appendix A). Bringing together the quantitative and qualitative findings provided a more complete picture of the services available in Victoria BC and the gaps that affect pet guardian experiencing poverty and homelessness.

Qualitative data from the questionnaires were transcribed into Excel, and iterative coding was conducted to identify propensities of themes, which were then developed into codes and subcodes, resulting in 11 final themes and 10 subthemes

#### 4.4 Reliability and Validity: Establishing Credibility

Several limitations are important to acknowledge in interpreting the findings of this study. First, the surveys were administered exclusively to people with lived experience (PWLE) who were already accessing BC SPCA community programs. This sampling approach, while practical and ethically sound, means that individuals who are unaware of these services, and who may face the greatest barriers to access, were not represented in the data. Their absence limits the comprehensiveness of the picture that can be drawn about the full scope of need in Victoria.

A related concern is the potential for self-selection bias among participants. Those who hold particularly strong positive or negative views about the programs may have been more motivated to participate in the survey than those whose experiences fall somewhere in the middle. As a result, neutral or ambivalent perspectives, which may represent a significant portion of service users' experiences, are likely underrepresented in the findings.

On the service provider side, the contact list used for recruitment was drawn from organizations known to the BC SPCA, which does not constitute an exhaustive inventory of service providers in Victoria. Organizations operating outside of the BC SPCA's existing network may have been overlooked or have geographical barriers, and their services are therefore absent from the findings and from the asset mapping that informed the Victoria Pet Survival Guide. Furthermore, service providers across the sector are already operating well beyond their capacity,

which contributed to a low response rate of only eight respondents. This small sample, while yielding rich and relevant information, limits the extent to which provider perspectives can be generalized.

As previously mentioned, the author plays a dual role as both a graduate researcher and an employee of the BC SPCA. This positionality carries the potential for organizational bias, particularly in how programs and services are perceived and represented. While steps were taken throughout the research process to minimize this influence, including the use of independent volunteers for recruitment, it remains a limitation worth noting. Equally it could be considered a benefit to the research, particularly in terms of how research has been mobilized to support the development of the Victoria Pet Survival Guide

The absence of Emergency Boarding clients from the survey data represents a particularly significant gap. Emergency Boarding clients were identified as among the most vulnerable service users; however, none chose to participate when invited verbally by volunteers at the end of their emergency boarding agreements, when they were redeeming their animals. According to the BC SPCA, the most common reasons for Emergency Boarding in Victoria are loss of housing, domestic violence, hospitalization, treatment, and natural disaster. Consequently, the loss of housing, which the BC SPCA states is the most common reason for boarding in Victoria among low-income and unhoused pet guardians, is significantly underrepresented in the results.

Finally, the survey instrument, while intentionally accessible and trauma-informed, did not capture detailed information on pets' medical histories or spay and neuter status. Inclusion of these variables in future studies would provide a more granular understanding of the urgency of specific programs, particularly around spay and neuter services, veterinary care, and housing-related supports. The survey also does not capture the guardian's personal or demographic information such as living circumstances or location, income, gender, or ethnicity. As a result, the findings are limited in their ability to assess differential needs, inequities in access to services, or geographic variations, which constrains the generalizability of the results and highlights an important area for future research.

In terms of delimitations, this study was intentionally scoped as a snapshot, engaging with participants accessing BC SPCA community programs between April and June 2025. This time-

bounded approach provides a focused and consistent dataset, and the use of survey sampling techniques lends the findings to a degree of generalizability within this population. However, the snapshot design also means the findings reflect a particular moment and set of conditions that may not be fully representative across seasons or years.

The months of April through June were deliberately selected to maximize participation. Mild weather conditions were expected to support service access and reduce barriers for both guardians and their pets. Had data collection occurred during periods of extreme weather, heavy rainfall or intense heat, access to services may have been reduced, and experiences related to weather-based barriers may have featured more prominently in the findings. This seasonal decision was made intentionally to support higher turnout, but it introduces a temporal limitation in the findings' applicability across the full calendar year.

The overall sample size remains small, restricted to those who were actively accessing services during the study window. This is an acknowledged delimitation of the study design rather than an unanticipated gap, and it is reflective of the realities of conducting community-based research with vulnerable populations.

Finally, questionnaires were chosen over interviews as the primary data collection instrument in order to streamline the process and reduce burden on participants and volunteers. While this decision improved accessibility and efficiency, it also meant that richer qualitative narratives that might more powerfully illustrate the depth of human-animal bonds and help to destigmatize pet guardianship within these communities were less fully captured than they might have been through in-depth interviews.

## 5.0 Findings: Questionnaires

Thirty-three questionnaires were completed by service users between April 30<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. Four dates for questionnaires were completed at the BC SPCA Pet Food Bank, while two days were at Vets for Pets. Although there were two emergency boarding cases during the surveying time, the participants opted not to participate.

From the questionnaires, responses were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively in order to understand the intersections of the animal guardians, their experiences with the services, and evaluate gaps in service. The findings below are taken mostly from open ended questions; some participants skipped questions or did not include quantitative details about their households and pets.

Table 1 shows that a diverse range of animal types are represented among those cared for by service user participants.

TABLE 1 ANIMALS ACCESSING SERVICES

<b>Types of Animals</b>	<b>Number of Animals</b>
Dogs	24
Cats	24
Birds	9
Rabbits	4
Gerbil	1
Rats	1
Bearded Dragon	1

Figure 1 shows how animals became a part of service user participants' families with most having been animals rescued.

**FIGURE 1 HOW PETS BECAME PART OF THE FAMILY**

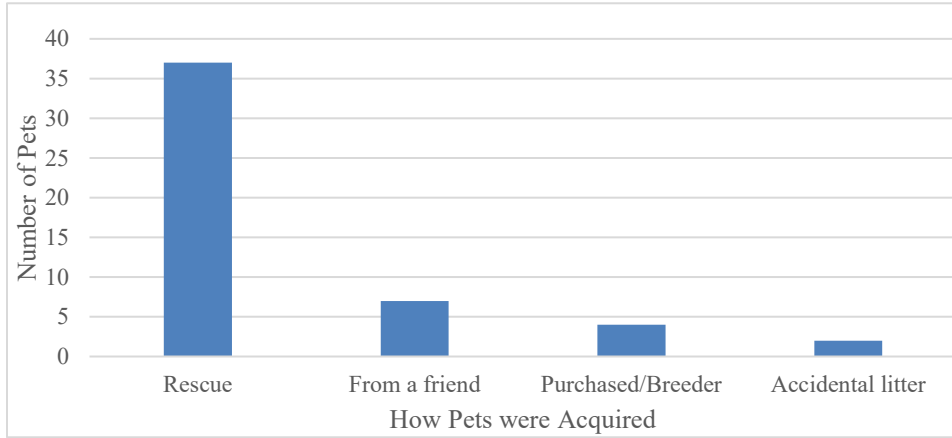


Figure 2 breaks down the age groups of the animals represented in the findings, we use the BC SPCA's age grouping recommendations that align with common veterinary practices labelling animals adults between 1 and 7 years old, and Senior at 8 years old and over.

**FIGURE 2 PET AGE GROUPS**

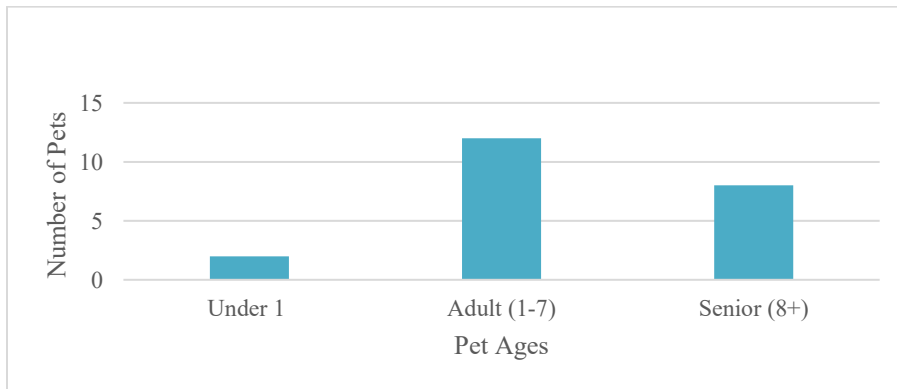
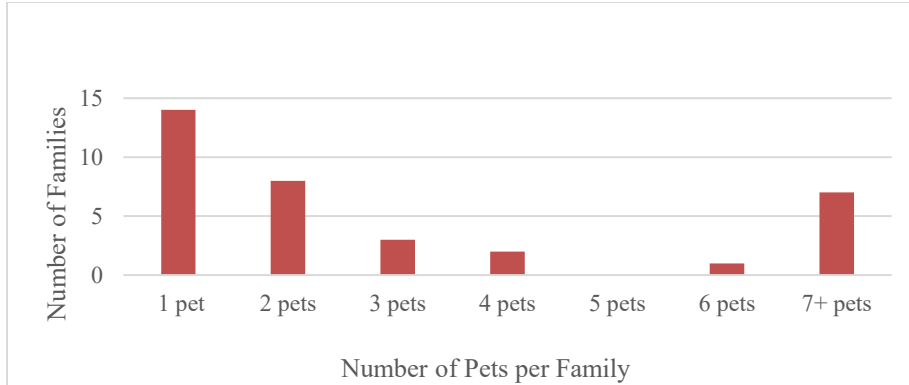


Figure 3 examines how many animals are cared for by each participants family unit, with most families caring for one pet.

**FIGURE 3 NUMBER OF ANIMALS PER FAMILY**



Responses about what guardians love about their pets most frequently referenced love and affection, followed closely by companionship. Additional commonly reported themes included comfort, protection, family connection, and pet’s ability to make their guardians laugh. Smaller but still present findings included exercise support, fulfillment and help fighting addiction and substance use.

When describing how pets make life better, similarly the most frequently answered benefits were companionship, love, and mental health support. Other noted contributions included exercise, comfort, joy, motivation, and a sense of purpose. Less frequent but still identified themes included warmth, hope, sobriety support, therapeutic value, accountability, safety, responsibility, completeness, and life saving impact. Figure 4 compiles respondents answers to the question “How do pets make life better?” in a term frequency visualization.



for Pets location, home visits, cat litter and outreach or mobile food bank were each mentioned twice. Single mention suggestions included services to help with vet bills, dental care, better notices about when services occur and additional locations throughout greater Victoria (Langford, Sidney, Sooke).

Most respondents reported not using any other services for their pets, while others noted using vet services or pet washes. When asked what additional services their pets need, the most frequent request was for low-cost spay and neuter support (7 mentions). Other commonly identified supports needed include vaccines, vet checks, emergency vet information, financial grants or subsidies for vet care, bathing stations, medication, and nail trimming. Single mention needs included diagnostic vet care, dental care, rabbit specific vet care, emergency shelter or fostering, dog walking or care, clinic outside of the current location, behaviour training, affordable or pet friendly housing, microchipping, and flea treatment.

Most respondent indicated the resource list would be helpful (11 people). Additional single mention responses noted that the list would be helpful, specifically for spay services and home visits. Only one respondent reported that the resource list would not be helpful. Many respondents skipped this question.

A service provider questionnaire was sent out to forty-three service providers including animal welfare organizations, homeless shelters, transitional housing, veterinary clinics, and food banks. Several service providers responded to the letter of introduction, letting us know they either did not have the capacity to respond, or that their services were currently overburdened and would like to be excluded from the study. Four additional organizations completed consent forms but did not complete the questionnaire. Eight responses were collected from service providers ranging in free veterinary care, animal rescue, granting bodies, food banks, transitional housing.

From the questionnaires, no two organizations were alike. They included organizations that:

- Provide free veterinary care, like physical exams, vaccinations, parasite control, and minor ailments.
- Rehome abandoned and surrendered animals, help with spay and neuter when possible.
- Offer low cost spay/neuter, vaccination, and microchipping.

- Offer grants to BC Society of Transition Houses to support boarding and offsite sheltering for pets belonging to survivors of intimate partner violence, also offers webinars on canine behaviour for transition housing staff, and policy packages for pet friendly sheltering models.
- Offer grants for low- income individuals with urgent and emergency veterinary expenses.
- Spay and neuter feral cats and offer “oops program” where guardians spay parents in exchange for the kittens being surrendered.
- Supplies pet food, accessories, and litter when available.
- Offer transitional housing with pet-friendly units and applies for pet boarding and financial support.

Service users could access services in various low barrier ways including:

- Drop in at a monthly clinic that is free.
- Email, Facebook message.
- Booking an appointment online/over the phone, subsidized spay/neuter at \$75, sometimes free if urgent need.
- Registration with BC Transition House, case worker applies for the grant.
- Veterinary clinic applies on guardian’s behalf.
- Come in during open hours for supplies and food.
- Email or phone call.

Figure 5 represents how frequently services are offered, with most occurring daily or as requested.

**FIGURE 5 FREQUENCY OF SERVICES**

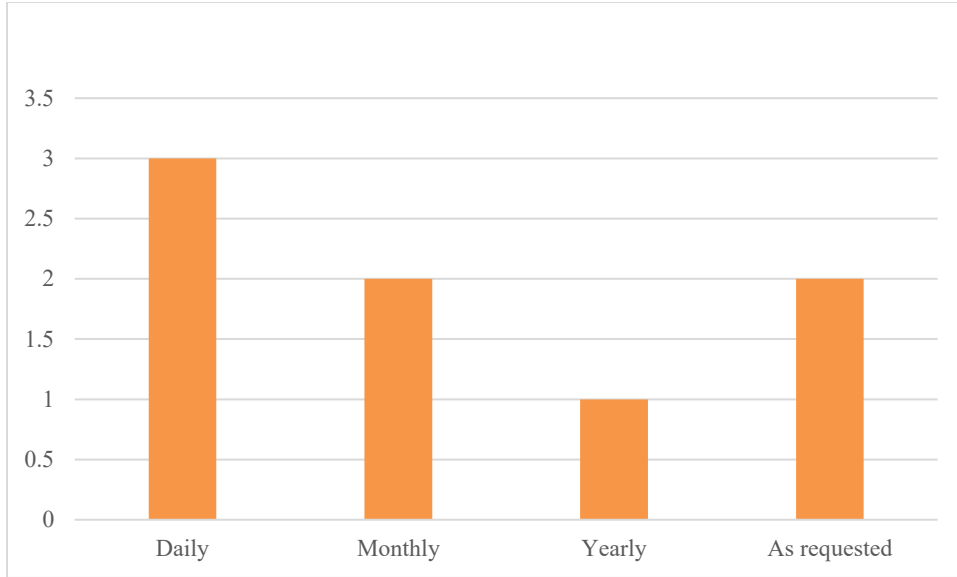
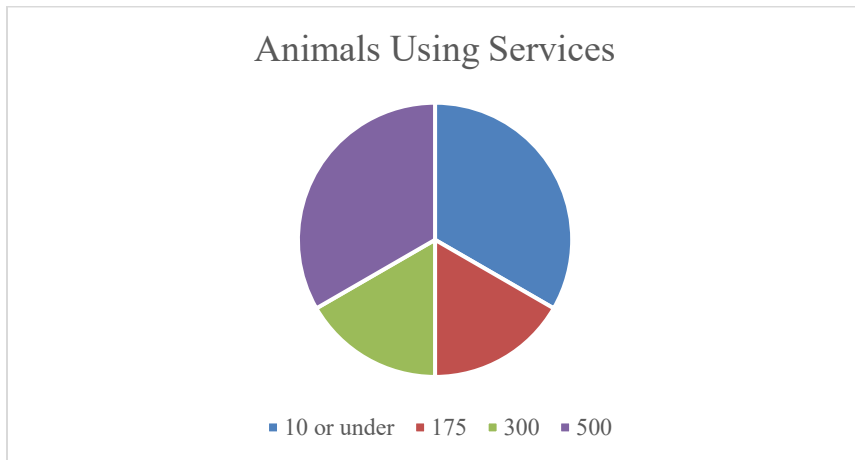


Figure 6 illustrates the number of animals supported annually by each service provider, with a combined total of 1495 animals supported in Victoria. Two service providers supported 10 or fewer animals per year, one supported approximately 175 animals, one supported 300 animals and two supported 500 animals annually. Two participants did not respond to this question.

**FIGURE 6 NUMBER OF ANIMALS USING SERVICES**



The primary promotional material used by service providers is their website (62%) followed by social media (50%), partner organizations (37.5%) , traditional media (radio, print) (25%), and word of mouth (25%). 37.5% used external resources, with 50% using external resources like BC SPCA website, pamphlets at vet clinics, and charitable organization databases.

Programs are funded by donations (75%), service fees (25%), grants (25%), with 12% government funded.

Three of eight organizations had existing formalized partnerships, with four out of eight working with other groups more collaboratively. Seven out of eight express interests in future partnerships. Prominent partner organizations include other animal rescues, BC SPCA.

38% of participants are interested in having their services listed in a Pet Survival Guide, with 63% needing more information.

Most service providers expressed funding as a limitation to their services. Additional limitations include:

- Vet services (unable to provide diagnostics, bloodwork, spay/neuter)
- Financial, lack of funding, decrease in donations
- Foster capacity (unable to bring animals into care without a foster home)
- Publicity
- Trust building with clients
- Vet participation, increasing vet costs
- Pet owner compliance
- Geographic area
- Stigma
- Lack of volunteers
- Limited supplies

Multiple service providers noted they wish there were more low cost spay and neuter. An additional common goal was to extend program specific veterinary services beyond wellness exams to surgical services and complicated cases, and to extend their support in rural communities. Less frequently noted additional service goals include:

- Pet friendly housing
- Animal sheltering
- Cover full vet costs and all vet procedures, not just urgent
- Offering an updated free pet food and discounted pet medical services list
- More pet friendly housing/sheltering

To gather information for the project's key deliverable, the Victoria Pet Survival Guide, a second questionnaire was distributed to service providers to gather logistical information on their programs. Only four organizations responded.

From the four responses, most participants were highlighting services in pet friendly sheltering, transition houses, and access to vet care. For animal sheltering organizations, a few qualifying questions were asked to ensure they were in line with the best practices of the BC SPCA. This only applied to two respondents. All were following the five freedoms, positive reinforcement, Canadian standards of Care in Animal Sheltering. One highlighted that as a high-volume clinic, Fear Free practices are not always possible, and restraint is sometimes used.

With this limited information, a review of publicly accessible information on services was conducted to find basic information on location, hours, access, qualifications and contact information to build the asset guide found as Appendix A.

## 5.1 Thematic Analysis and Codes

In transcribing the participants' quotations, a thematic analysis approach was used to identify patterns that appeared consistently across the questionnaires. Themes were developed from responses that expressed the same sentiment at least twice, with most themes emerging five or more times. A full list of themes, subthemes and codes can be found in Appendix I.

Overarching theme descriptions:

1. Strength of human animal bond: Pets provide emotional, mental, and practical support, often described as lifesaving.
2. Reciprocal nature of pet guardianship: Guardians have strong identity as caretakers, rescue and care for other animals, put their pet's needs first even if they must make substantial sacrifices to their own needs.

3. Structural barriers to care: cost, access to vet care and daily care challenges create ongoing strain.
4. Value of low-barrier compassionate services: Friendly, nonjudgmental staff and accessible support are highly appreciated.
5. Gaps in service provisions: Need for expanded hours, more locations, low-cost vet care, and additional supportive services.
6. Diversity of Services provided: Organization offers a wide range of supports, including free low-cost veterinary care, microchipping, rescue and rehoming, surrender support, emergency -care grants, pet friendly housing supports, feral cat programs, food, and supply distribution, and boarding for survivors of violence.
7. Multiple Low-Barrier entry points: Services are intentionally accessible through drop-in clinics, email, Facebook messaging, online and phone booking, case worker referrals, vet clinic applications, and walk in hours.
8. Frequency and volume of services: Providers operate high-volume programs with monthly clinics, ongoing supply distribution and seasonal spikes in demand that stretch capacity.
9. Partnerships, promotion, and funding: Organizations rely heavily on community networks, donations and collaborative relationships for promotion and sustainability with limited funding.
10. Limitations and barriers: chronic funding shortages, declining donations, limited veterinary capacity, foster shortages, volunteer gaps, rising vet costs, stigma and geographic barriers restrict service delivery.
11. Service gaps and future goals: Providers want to expand low-cost spay/neuter, surgical and complex veterinary care, emergency support, pet friendly housing, sheltering options, rural outreach, and public information resources.

## 5.2 Summary

### **Service User Findings:**

Respondents cared for a variety of animals (24 dogs, 24 cats, 9 birds and a few others). Guardians emphasized the strong human-animal bond, citing love, companionship, and mental health benefits as primary positives, while vet related challenges (cost and access were the most

common difficulties. Most learned about services through friends or support organizations with food assistance being the most represented support. Feedback highlighted appreciation for friendly, non-judgmental staff and suggested improvements like extended hours, mobile outreach and low-cost spay and neuter services. Additional needs included affordable veterinary care and emergency resources. Overall, the resource list was considered helpful by most respondents.

### **Service Provider Findings:**

Respondents represented diverse services such as free veterinary care, low-cost spay/neuter, animal rescue, grants for vet care, and pet friendly transitional housing. Most organizations rely heavily on donations (75%) and face significant limitations including funding shortages, lack of veterinary capacity for complex procedures, foster shortages, and geographic barriers. Common goals include expanding low-cost spay/neuter programs, offering full veterinary coverage, and increasing pet friendly housing options. Promotion primarily occurs through websites and social media with interest in partnership and inclusion in a Pet Survival Guide. A second questionnaire received only four responses, focusing on sheltering and vet care. Overall service providers express strong interest in collaboration but are constrained by resources and capacity. Due to limited questionnaire responses, publicly accessible information was reviewed to gather logistical details for inclusion in the Victoria Pet Survival Guide.

## 6.0 Discussion and Analysis

The findings from this research illustrate how resources and services can be strengthened for pet guardians experiencing poverty and homelessness in Victoria. The themes that emerged from participants' responses translate directly into actionable opportunities for the BC SPCA to deepen community supports, strengthen relationships with service users and providers, and improve the overall wellbeing of animals in the Greater Victoria area. The questionnaire results offer a detailed view of the current landscape of community animal services and the lived realities of the people who rely on and provide them. Service users' accounts reveal daily pressures and unmet needs that are often absent from broader conversations about animal welfare, while also showing the resilience, care and commitment that shape their relationships with their pets. Many themes identified in the literature review, particularly the centrality of the human- animal bond, were echoed and amplified here, reinforcing the emotional, practical, and sometimes life-saving role pets play for individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness.

### 6.1 Answering the Research Questions:

Primary Question:

How can resources and services be improved for pet guardians experiencing poverty and homelessness?

The questionnaire results present a noticeable disconnect between service users and service providers, specifically in communication and feedback. While providers are offering what they believe the community needs and have animal population control and basic medical needs at the forefront of their services, much of which is highly valued by users, such as low-cost veterinary care and access to food supplies, the realities for Victoria's pet guardians are far more nuanced. Their needs are determined by individual capacity, and the significant barriers they face daily. Service users suggest the following improvements for the BC SPCA Food Bank:

- More/longer hours of operation
- Evening services for those who work during the day to be able to attend
- More stable cat litter availability
- Mobile or delivery options
- More locations expanding to the Saanich Peninsula and West Shore
- More notice/information about services

For Vets for Pets, service users suggest:

- Different location
- Home visits
- Diagnostic care
- Rabbit specific care
- More notice/information about services

Secondary Questions:

1. What resources and services are available for pet guardians experiencing poverty and homelessness?

From the providers who responded to the questionnaires, there is a diverse range of resources and services available to pet guardians including: free vet clinics, low-cost spay and neuter, microchipping, animal rescue and rehoming, grants for emergency vet care and compassionate boarding, emergency boarding, free pet food and supplies, and pet friendly human sheltering. From the existing contact list the BC SPCA supplied, publicly accessible information showed more service providers in line with the areas described. Other resources found not represented in the respondents include veterinarians with payment plans and financing, emergency vet care, pet insurance, pet friendly long-term low-income housing, pet friendly campgrounds, lost and found pet agencies, supportive pet care, and grants for general vet care. The information listed in the Victoria Pet Survival Guide highlight current resources available for pet owners in Victoria. This does exclude services that opted not to be included based on questionnaire response to being over capacitated. As the guide focuses on keeping people and pets together, resources for surrendering and rehoming your animals are currently excluded.

2. How are different service providers coordinating to meet client needs?

Providers are coordinating informally but interested in further collaboration. Most of this coordination includes listing services on their websites, referring service users as needed, rescues utilizing vet care, and granting bodies working with transition houses and veterinary clinics. Few had formalized relationships or worked closely with other like organizations. There are gaps between people focused service providers (housing, sheltering, foodbanks) and animal focused

service providers (rescues, clinics), however case managers and social workers often connect with animal services as needed to support keeping their clients and pets together.

### 3. What are the identified gaps in services?

While the primary focus on answering this question was on services and programs that users and providers wish existed, a few gaps in service delivery surfaced. The most glaring being that most service users learned of services through word of mouth, friends, or support workers, while most service providers primarily share information on their programs electronically. With service providers already overburdened and experiencing limited funding, the disconnect in communication may also prove that services are not being utilized or be made aware of those most in need.

Some areas service users identified as gaps are:

- Grooming, specifically bathing stations and nail trimming
- Low-cost training opportunities
- Daycare/dog walking/temporary care
- Low-cost dental care
- Microchipping

Service providers on the other hand identified these gaps:

- Emergency vet care
- Ability to handle complex medical cases
- More pet friendly housing, sheltering options
- More boarding (long term) options

Both agreed that the following were areas that could be expanded:

- More low-cost spay and neuter options
- Low-cost diagnostics, specialty surgery
- Rural community support

### 6.2 Impact of Service:

The depth of guardians' relationships with their animals was emphasized in each questionnaire response. Respondents highlighted the fulfillment and sense of family their animals

provide. One guardian shared, “After my spouse died, he gives me someone to talk to.” Another noted, “everything is better with her, she motivates me to get out of bed, get out of the house, she cuddles me when I’m sad and makes me smile.” The therapeutic impact of pets was stressed by many: “it’s very therapeutic having a pet, when feeling down or alone they bring companionship.” Others described their animals as constants during times of crisis: “They fulfill my life, give me love and protection and give me a sense of family.” As one participant put simply, “I like her more than people, would be completely lonely without her.”

Although mentioned less frequently, several respondents also described how their pets support routines and the meaningful role in managing addiction and substance use. One guardian explained, “I am on disability, she gets me out to walk her, makes me stay sober and helps with my anxiety.” A number of participants described pets as a life-saving presence. This sentiment appeared more often than expected, with participants sharing powerful statements: “they totally saved my life, if not for [name redacted], I would not still be alive;” another saying “they give me a reason to live. Getting up every day with a purpose” and “They give me hope, they keep me alive, give my life meaning and unconditional love.”

A closer look at the quantitative data provides additional insight into the circumstances of animal guardians and shows the identities as caretakers and the reciprocal relationship between guardians and their pets. Of the 64 animals represented more than 74% had been rescued in some form one participant explained, “I rescued both, one was going to be put down, the other had an uncertain future” they continue to explain their philosophy on rescue “it is an important role to take care of animals in need...having a pet does, not just on a micro but a macro level. We need to think big picture on how compassion for animals spreads to compassion for each other. We can learn lots about ourselves owning animals.” Another respondent rescued their dog from an “83-year-old that wanted a puppy and he had cancer and she pulled him down.” Several respondents were also accessing food for animals they were temporarily helping to care for, such as a guardian who shared “I am watching my friends two small dogs since she has become homeless and struggling.”

The reciprocal nature of these relationships was striking. Many guardians described feeding their animals before themselves or making substantial financial sacrifices to ensure their pets received necessary care. One participant shared, “We have a mutual care and affection. She

had two surgeries for torn cruciates. Cost a lot of money, I had to sell my truck, did bottle drives and spent everything I had.” Another noted, “The cost is stressful, but I will always find a way to fulfill her needs because she is my whole life. If I must buy food for her, I will do it but starve myself for it. BC SPCA makes me able to eat better since I don’t buy the food for my dog as often.”

Although spay and neuter support was one of the most common gaps discussed, most animals in the sample were adults or seniors, with juvenile pets under one year representing the minority. Household pet numbers also reflect responsible population management, with most guardians caring for one or two animals. Those with more animals frequently described rescuing or temporarily caring for additional pets. Intersecting identities emerged throughout the responses, with participants describing themselves as single mothers, animal lovers, advocates, and caregivers. These roles affect both their challenges and their commitment to the animals in their lives.

Services like Vets for Pets and the BC SPCA support pet guardians, as one guardian shared, “Being able to supplement the food I can afford is invaluable and most appreciated.” Another explained, “I’m a single mom on disability, money is tight, so it gives a little ease in my life.” The volunteers who make these services possible have made a strong positive impression “They are a group of dedicated people that actually care about animals and help make people’s lives easier” another notes “They’re all around amazing & to be able to keep my pet healthy which has me happy all around.”

### 6.3 The System of Services: Overburdened but Growth Focused

The service provider data paints a clear picture of a community animal service landscape which is both committed and constrained. Across organizations, demand for support continues to rise, yet the capacity to meet that demand remains uneven and heavily dependent on donations, volunteer labour, and informal partnerships. The frequency of services delivered (Figure 6), and the number of animals supported (Figure 7) demonstrate that providers are already operating beyond their capacity, particularly requiring veterinary intervention, emergency support, and care.

The volume of animal accessing services illustrates the essential role of providers for guardians experiencing poverty and homelessness. Many providers noted that their ability to take in animals is directly tied to foster availability, volunteer capacity, and funding, three areas

consistently identified as strained. The dependence on donations and grants further highlights the precarity of these programs, with only 12% receiving government funding. This funding structure leaves organizations vulnerable to fluctuation in public giving and wider economic pressures, which several respondents linked to recent decreases in donations and rising veterinary costs.

Promotion and outreach strategies vary widely, with most organizations relying on their website and social media to communicate available services. While these channels are accessible for many, they may not reach individuals without internet access who rely on front line human service providers and community knowledge to access information. This is especially important as most service users learned about the services through friends or support services like Our Place and social workers with only 19% of people finding them through online sources suggests a disconnected communication system. This disconnection may contribute to service gaps, duplication, or confusions among guardians seeking help.

Interest in being listed in a Pet Survival Guide reflects the demand for centralized information. While 38% expressed immediate interest, the 63% who requested more information indicates both openness and uncertainty tied to concerns about information accuracy and updates, capacity, and the possible increase in demand that accessible visibility might bring. Only three of eight organizations reported having formalized partnerships, though four more described working collaboratively in less structured ways. All (seven of eight) expressed interest in future partnerships implying a readiness for coordinated approaches. The prominence of the BC SPCA as an existing partner shows strong outreach and the potential for leading and connecting service providers on more collaborative initiatives. Building stronger networks could support shared resources, cross-referrals, and more consistent standard of care across the region.

The limitations identified by providers points to systemic barriers and sector-specific pressures like funding shortages, veterinary costs and limited access to diagnostics, blood work and spay/neuter services were among the most frequently cited barriers. These limitations directly affect the quality and scope of care organizations can provide, particularly for guardians whose animals require more than basic wellness support. Other limitations, such as stigma, trust building with clients, geographic location and lack of volunteers demonstrate the intersection of animal welfare with social inequities. Trust building challenges reflect the realities of collaborating with individuals who may have experienced discrimination, institutional harm, or inconsistent access

to services. For example, organizations serving urban settings have higher access with public transit, while there is a lacking rural access in the area outside of Victoria city limits.

Despite limitations, service providers expressed clear aspirations for growth. Many expressed interests in expanding low-cost spay/neuter options, increased access to surgical and complex veterinary care, and the ability to support rural communities. Less frequently mentioned but still significant goals included pet-friendly housing, expanded sheltering options and the ability to cover full veterinary costs rather than only urgent needs. These aspirations support the needs expressed by guardians in the service user responses, reinforcing the shared perception of gaps in the current system.

The second questionnaire, though limited to four respondents, provided important logistical information for the development of the Victoria Pet Survival Guide. Respondent primarily represented pet friendly sheltering, transition houses, and veterinary access programs. For animal sheltering organization, additional screening confirmed alignment with the BC SPCA best practices including adherence to the Five Freedoms, positive reinforcement, and Canadian Standards of Care. One high volume clinic noted that Fear Free practices were not always possible showing the unfortunate realities of high demand environment.

Due to the limited response rate from providers, publicly available information was used to supplement the responses and ensure the asset guide included accurate details on location, hours, access requirements and contact information. This process further highlighted the variability in how organizations present their services and the need for centralized user- friendly resource.

## **7.0 Knowledge Mobilization and Future Directions**

### **7.1 Research in Action: Developing the Victoria Pet Survival Guide**

Using the BC SPCA's existing contact list of local service providers, logistical information was gathered from publicly available sources and compiled into the Victoria Pet Survival Guide (Appendix A). A guide was selected because it can be easily accessed both digitally and in print, meeting the needs of service providers who prefer online resources while also supporting service users who often rely on word of mouth and physical materials. Distributing the guide through Vets for Pets, the BC SPCA Food Bank, the Victoria Community Animal Centre, and participating service providers will help improve communication and navigation of available supports, while still respecting the capacity limitations of partner organizations.

The themes and service gaps identified through the questionnaires informed the structure of the guide. Based on the programs currently available, the service provider feedback in expanding to broader communities and service users' needs across the Greater Victoria area, the guide expanded beyond Victoria municipality borders but are still accessible by bus. The guide includes the following sections to help guardians quickly identify appropriate supports:

- Veterinary Care: Free Vet care, Low-Income Vet Care, Emergency Vet Care, Financial Aid and Payment Plans.
- Pet Friendly Shelter and Housing: Short urgent free sheltering and long term, low-cost, subsidized and market value long term rentals.
- Emergency Boarding: Services for animal care urgent circumstances like hospitalization, natural disaster, domestic violence, and sudden loss of housing.
- Pet Food Banks: Human food banks that have pet items.
- Lost and Found Pets: Where to look for your pet, Animal Control services and volunteer based reuniting services.

“Quick Tips” are included throughout the guide as brief educational prompts to introduce innovative programs, encourage proactive planning, or highlight underused resources. These tips cover topics such as pet insurance, pet-friendly campgrounds, and the importance of microchipping. These are practical tools that can help guardians maintain stability and prevent crises.

To support accessibility for a wide range of users, the guide underwent a plain-language review. This process ensured that the content was easy to understand and that users could quickly locate pertinent information.

## 7.2 Implementation Strategy

The Victoria Pet Survival Guide is intended to serve as a practical resource for service users, service providers, and social programs and community-based programs. Printed copies will be distributed to all service providers who participated in the questionnaire and a digital copy will be shared with the full BC SPCA Victoria contact list. To ensure accessibility, a public digital copy will also be made available online on the BC SPCA Victoria Community Animal Centre's website for anyone to download, print and share as needed.

Two disclaimers have been added to the guide to clarify scope and limitations:

1. This is a Resource Guide Only: All information was gathered from publicly accessible websites. Not all details may be up to date. The BC SPCA is not responsible or liable for any inaccurate or outdated information in the Pet Survival Guide.
2. Service Providers Updates: Service providers who wish to be added to or removed from the guide can contact [Victoria@spca.bc.ca](mailto:Victoria@spca.bc.ca).

As services evolve, this document will require periodic (recommend annual) updates to remain accurate and useful. Ongoing revisions will help ensure the guide continues to reflect resources and emerging needs.

BC SPCA staff should review the guide so they are familiar and research the listed providers to build on understanding and answer questions that may arise from service users.

Continued community-based approaches should be made to receive feedback on the guide, its format, and contents. A suggested form can be found in Appendix J for follow up questionnaires.

## 7.3 Future Directions for Research

The BC SPCA's newly hired Regional Community Services Facilitators can also use this model as a tool for relationship-building and promoting animal welfare in communities without a physical BC SPCA centre to support animal guardians in need who may have limited resources. Likewise, Community Animal Centres can adapt this model to create their own localized versions

for their webpages. Each community has distinct needs and priorities, for example while Victoria may benefit from resources like dog-wash stations, communities in Dawson Creek may require pet-friendly warming spaces during the winter months. This emphasizes the need for the BC SPCA to continue to gather feedback from service users to help fill service gaps and empower communities through their involvement. This guide provides a flexible framework that can be tailored to reflect the realities of each community.

#### 7.4 Other Opportunities Suggested by Research

As discussed, the gaps identified by the questionnaires bring forward several opportunities to expand and enhance services. With organizational capacity in mind, the following recommendations represent potential areas for future development and collaboration. Some of these are more aspirational, and would require further research, cost analysis, and staffing consideration to determine organizational feasibility.

1. Short Term Emergency Boarding: Explore broadening the Emergency Boarding program to include short-duration (up to 8 hours) care for qualifying candidates. This could provide daily enrichment, exercise and temporary support for guardians who cannot safely leave their animals unattended due to housing implications. Eligibility considerations may include housing status (ex. homelessness, group housing), animal temperament (safe for staff and volunteers to handle without a full behavioural assessment), and the reason for boarding (ex. medical appointments, grocery shopping, housing appointments).
2. Accessible Dog Wash and Grooming Stations: Consider developing accessible grooming infrastructure at the centre, as a public U-Bath station, to support community members who lack access to bathing facilities for their pets.
3. Service Provider Collaboration: Strengthen cross-sector collaboration through regular meetings, symposiums, or a service-provider fair. This could be coordinated to coincide with existing events such as Vets for Pets meetings and symposiums to maximize participation and impact.
4. Microchip Clinics: Offer low-barrier microchip clinic (could also be a part of the service provider fair) to increase pet identification, and reunification rates, particularly for individuals facing financial or housing instability.

5. Animal Kind Training: Offer low-barrier fear free and positive reinforcement dog training opportunities with BC SPCA accredited trainers on areas like basic manners, loose leash walking, socialization and more. These sessions would provide consistent, low barrier opportunities for guardians to build confidence and knowledge on the complex behavioural needs of their pets.
6. BC SPCA Veterinary Hospital: Given that access to full service veterinary care was identified as one of the most significant needs by both service providers and service users, there is an opportunity to explore expanding BC SPCA veterinary services to the Island Region. Establishing a veterinary hospital, modelled after the BC SPCA Vancouver and Penticton Animal Hospitals and operating with market value pricing could directly address some of the root causes that lead vulnerable animals to enter BC SPCA care. A local hospital could increase access to essential low-cost veterinary services for community members; support spay and neuter initiatives across the island and meet the veterinary needs of Community Animal Centres. In doing so, it may also reduce the overall operational costs for Island centres by decreasing reliance on external veterinary providers.
7. Community Services Cruiser: To expand access to spay and neuter services across a broader range of communities the BC SPCA could explore the development of a multi-service mobile unit. This vehicle could function as both a mobile spay and neuter clinic and a mobile food bank, increasing access to essential services in areas that currently face significant barriers. A mobile model offers a more affordable and flexible alternative to establishing a full veterinary hospital. The cruiser could be deployed seasonally across the province, serving northern and interior communities during the summer and fall months and supporting the Lower mainland, Fraser Valley and Island regions during the winter and spring. This approach would significantly improve rural accessibility, particularly in regions where the current community spay and neuter model is limited by the absence of local veterinary partners or clinics.

In addition to service expansion, the research also points to areas where advocacy and education could play a meaningful role, including:

- Pet friendly People Services: Advocate for increased pet-friendly policies across emergency sheltering, housing programs, medical and social services to reduce barriers for individuals who rely on these supports.
- Quarterly Community Humane Education Sessions: Offering regular education opportunities for vulnerable animal guardians focusing on practical, accessible topics such as navigating veterinary care within financial limitations, advocating for their animal's needs, basic grooming, pet first aid, nutrition, and myth busting around spay/neuter and microchipping. These sessions would provide consistent, low barrier opportunities for guardians to build confidence and knowledge while caring for their pets.

## 8.0 Conclusion

The BC SPCA is entering a period of meaningful and exciting change. The organization is shifting toward a community-centred model that helps keep animals and their guardians together, ensuring that shelter space is reserved for the most vulnerable animals. By prioritizing community services, the BC SPCA is beginning to address the root causes of animal welfare concerns in ways that support, rather than exert power over, people facing crisis or instability.

This project created an opportunity to examine the diverse groups of services and resources available in Victoria, BC: what exists now, how these services interact, where gaps remain and where new or expanded supports could make a difference. Through the questionnaires, the experiences of both service users and service providers were explored. The responses emphasize the strength of the human-animal bond, the life-changing impact of pet guardianship, and the deep reciprocity between guardians and their animals. They also revealed the extraordinary lengths guardians go to care for their pets, as well as the significant efforts service providers make, often stretching limited resources to support animals and the people who love them.

Beyond capturing a snapshot of animal welfare services in Victoria, this research established a framework that other organizations and communities can adapt. It offers a model for addressing communication gaps between service users and providers and for improving the accessibility of essential resources.

The literature reviewed emphasized how services are evaluated, how vulnerable animal guardians are often stigmatized, and the importance of the human-animal bond. However, it offered few actionable frameworks. By taking a knowledge-in-action approach, this project helps fill that gap by translating research into practical tools and guidance.

The creation of the Pet Survival Guide reflects this intention. Designed with a diverse group of people in mind, it aims to equip social-service providers with clear, accessible information to better support community members in crisis who rely on their own companion animals. Alongside the guide, several creative forward-looking recommendations are offered to encourage the BC SPCA to think beyond traditional models as it pioneers a community-services approach to animal welfare in British Columbia and internationally.

In closing, this project reflects a pivotal moment in the BC SPCA's evolution toward a truly community-centred model of animal welfare. By grounding the work in the lived experiences of both service users and providers, it highlights not only the strengths and gaps within Victoria's current service landscape but also the profound value of the human–animal bond that motivates so much of this work. The Pet Survival Guide and accompanying recommendations offer practical, people-focused tools that can be adapted across regions as the organization continues to innovate and expand its community services. As the BC SPCA moves into this next chapter, the insights gained here provide a strong foundation for building more accessible, compassionate, and collaborative support that helps keep animals and their guardians together, fostering reciprocal relationships that promote wellbeing for all.

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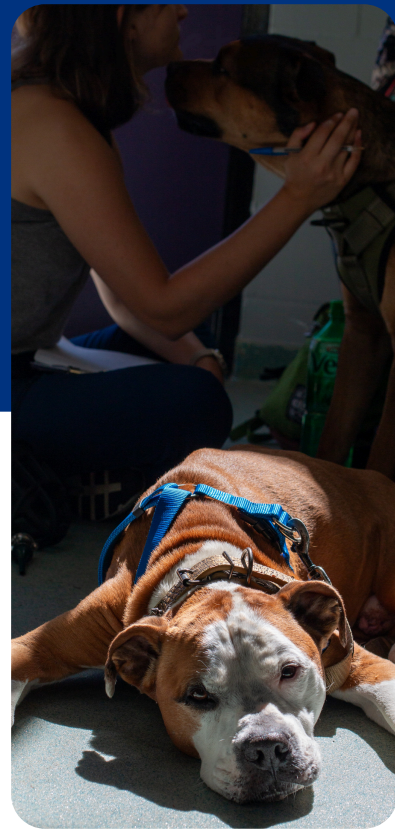
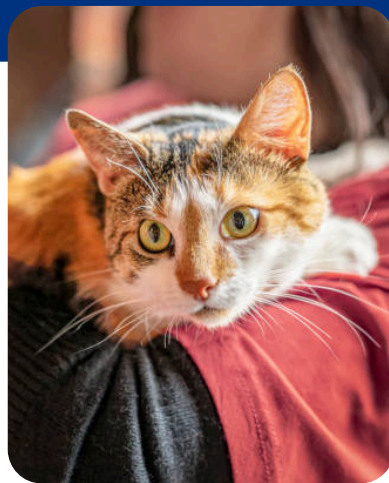
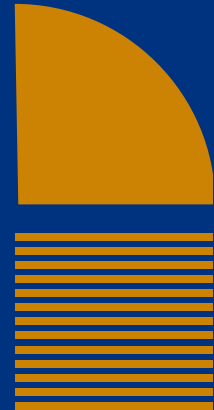
## **Appendices**

### A. Pet Survival Guide

See next page for the 12 page guide.

# Victoria Pet Survival Guide

*Helping people and animals  
when they need it most in  
Victoria BC.*



250-388-7722



[victoria@spca.bc.ca](mailto:victoria@spca.bc.ca)

**BCSPCA**  
SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

# This is a Resource Guide Only

The BC SPCA is not responsible for any wrong or missing information in the guide. We will update the information as needed. If you want to add a service or have new information, please contact us.

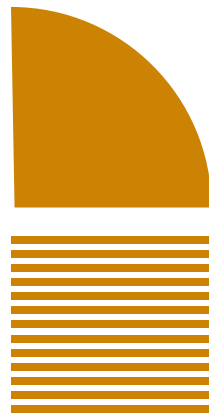
## Goal

We want to help people and pets stay together. This guide is here to support people who are having a hard time, including those facing crisis, homelessness, or money problems. It shares ways to care for your pet during tough times. Giving up your pet is not the only choice



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# Veterinary Care

## Free Vet Care

**Vets for Pets | [vetsforpets.ca](http://vetsforpets.ca) | [victoriavetsforpets@gmail.com](mailto:victoriavetsforpets@gmail.com)  
3150 Napier Lane, BC SPCA Victoria Gym**

The clinic happens on the second Sunday of every month. You can sign up at 9 AM. The clinic is open from 10 AM to 12 PM. Pets can get shots, deworming, and help for simple ear, eye, or skin problems.



## Low Cost Vet Care

**Harbour Vet Clinic | [harbourvet.ca](http://harbourvet.ca) | 250-580-2322 | 811 Bay St.**

By appointment vet care including: shots, check-ups, small surgeries and tests, spay and neuter for cats and dogs.

## Vet Costs Aid

**Balfour's Friends Foundation | [Balfoursfriends.com](http://Balfoursfriends.com)**

This program helps pay for important vet care when a pet is sick or hurt. It can help with check-ups, lab tests, X-rays, medicine, and surgery. To apply, talk to the vet clinic that is caring for your pet. Check the website to see who can get this help.

## Payment Plans

Some vet clinics work with payment companies to help people afford their pet's care. Local vets accept a few different financing options, such as:

LendCare | Online Application Needed | [info.lendcare.ca/pet-care-financing](http://info.lendcare.ca/pet-care-financing) | Option at all VCA Canada Clinics)

iPet Card | Online Application Needed | <https://ifinancecanada.com/petcard-veterinary-financing/> | Option at vet clinics like Elk Lake Veterinary Hospital

# Veterinary Care

## Emergency Vet Care

If your pet needs help right away, these hospitals can treat emergencies. This includes things like injuries, trouble breathing, eating something poisonous, bad vomiting or diarrhea, seizures, collapsing, strong pain, bleeding, or problems going to the bathroom

**Central Victoria Veterinary Hospital | 250-475-2495 | 760 Roderick St.**  
Open 24 Hours, no appointment necessary, wait times vary and they see those in urgent need first.\*Accepts LendCare

**West Coast Animal Veterinary Emergency Specialty Hospital (WAVES)**  
**78-562-9437 | info@wavesvet.com | 947 Langford Pky**  
Open 24 Hours, no appointment necessary, wait times vary and they see those in urgent need first.



Pet insurance can help you when your pet gets sick or hurt. You pay a small amount each month, and the insurance can pay 80% for sickness and accidents covered. We recommend PetSecure (<https://www.petsecure.com>).

What they say: "We will help you when you need us most. If your pet gets sick or has an accident, we can help pay for tests, X-rays, medicine, surgery, and more, so your pet can feel happy and healthy again."



# Pet Friendly Shelters

**When people lose their homes, it can be hard to find places that allow pets. This makes it tough for families and their animals to stay together. Here are some emergency options that might help.**

Shelter	Gender/Age	Services	To Secure a Spot	Accessibility
Out of the Rain Shelter 1450 Elford St. 250-415-3856	All, Youth 15-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year- round mats</li> <li>• Laundry</li> <li>• 3 meals</li> </ul>	In person at 8:00pm. No access after 2am.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheelchairs</li> </ul>
First Met Church 923 Balmoral Ave <i>*Pandora Seasonal</i> 755 Pandora 250-388-7112	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year Round mats</li> <li>• Temporary mat</li> </ul>	Waitlist (In person/phone) 7am-8:30pm at 919 Pandora Ave. Check In 8:45 pm 919 Pandora ave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bike</li> <li>• Wheelchairs</li> <li>• Cart</li> </ul>
Rock Bay Landing 535 Ellice St. 250-383-1951	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bed,</li> <li>• Shower</li> <li>• Laundry</li> <li>• 3 meals</li> </ul>	Waitlist in person or by phone from 6am until full. Check in 9pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bike</li> <li>• Wheelchairs</li> <li>• Cart</li> </ul>
PHS Arbutus Shelter 2916 Douglas St. 250-360-0093	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bed,</li> <li>• Shower</li> <li>• Laundry</li> <li>• 3 meals</li> </ul>	Waitlist, in person or by phone 8am-5pm. Check in at 5pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bike</li> <li>• Cart</li> </ul>
Our Place Society My Place Shelter 1240 Yates St. 778-265-0809	All (Transitional Supportive Housing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bed,</li> <li>• Shower</li> <li>• Laundry</li> <li>• 3 meals</li> </ul>	Referral only, see Outreach worker at Our Place Society at 919 Pandora Ave.	All case by case
Our Place Society Russell Place 225 Russell St. 250-388-7112	All (Transitional Supportive Housing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bed,</li> <li>• Shower</li> <li>• Laundry</li> <li>• 3 meals</li> </ul>	Referral only, see Outreach worker at Our Place Society at 919 Pandora Ave.	All case by case

# Pet Friendly Housing

**For longer-term help, you can look at these homes that cost less or give extra support.**

Housing	Eligibility	Housing Type	How to Apply	Size of Apartments
BC Housing Registry	Singles, Persons with disabilities, families, seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subsidized Housing (rent geared to income)</li> <li>Supportive Housing</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/rental-housing/subsidized-housing">https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/rental-housing/subsidized-housing</a> or: BC Housing Assistant 604-433-2218 or toll free 1-800-257-7756	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studios</li> <li>1 Bedroom</li> <li>2 Bedrooms</li> <li>3 bedrooms</li> <li>4 bedrooms</li> </ul>
Victoria Cool Aid Society	Singles, Persons with disabilities, 19+, seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subsidized Housing (rent geared to income)</li> <li>Affordable Market Value</li> <li>Supportive Housing</li> </ul>	In Person: Referrals through Vancouver Island Health Authority.  Online: <a href="http://www.coolaid.org">www.coolaid.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studios</li> <li>1 Bedroom</li> <li>2 Bedrooms</li> <li>3 bedrooms</li> </ul>
Pacifica Housing	Singles, Persons with disabilities, families, seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable Market Value</li> <li>Supportive Housing</li> </ul>	<a href="https://pacificahousing.ca/apply-for-housing.php">https://pacificahousing.ca/apply-for-housing.php</a> : or reception@pacificahousing.ca or 250-385-2131	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studios</li> <li>1 Bedroom</li> <li>2 Bedrooms</li> <li>3 bedrooms</li> <li>4 bedrooms</li> </ul>
Capital Region Housing Corporation	Singles, Persons with disabilities, families, seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subsidized Housing (rent geared to income)</li> <li>Affordable Market Value</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.capitalregionhousing.ca/find-home/applying-housing">https://www.capitalregionhousing.ca/find-home/applying-housing</a> or crchrental@crd.bc.ca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studios</li> <li>1 Bedroom</li> <li>2 Bedrooms</li> <li>3 bedrooms</li> <li>4 bedrooms</li> </ul>
Greater Victoria Housing Society	Singles, Persons with disabilities, families, seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subsidized Housing (rent geared to income)</li> <li>Affordable Market Value</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.greatervichousing.org/tenants/prospective-tenants/">https://www.greatervichousing.org/tenants/prospective-tenants/</a> or 250-386-3434 or rentals@greatervichousing.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studios</li> <li>1 Bedroom</li> <li>2 Bedrooms</li> <li>3 bedrooms</li> <li>4 bedrooms</li> </ul>

# Pet Boarding

## BC SPCA Victoria

**Call the BC SPCA Animal Helpline at 1-855-622-7722.**

The BC SPCA can give free, short-term care for pets when people are in crisis. This helps pet owners have time to get better, find a home, or make a plan for their pet. In Victoria, pets can stay for up to 14 days. Crises can include going to the hospital, losing your home, leaving because of a fire or flood, or escaping violence. We help as much as we can, depending on space.

## Elder Dog

**[elderdog.ca](http://elderdog.ca) | 1-855-EDOGCAN (1-855-336-4226) | [info@elderdog.ca](mailto:info@elderdog.ca)**

Their goal is to help older adults stay at home and keep their dogs. Volunteers help make dog care easier so people and pets can stay together. ElderDog can:

- Care for pets for a short time if the owner is in the hospital
- Help seniors walk their dogs
- Pick up or drop off dog food
- Do small cleaning tasks for the dog
- Help with brushing or nail clipping
- Drive pets to the vet or groomer

## Recovery Tails Society

**[recoverytailssociety@gmail.com](mailto:recoverytailssociety@gmail.com) OR  
Calling | 778-892-4083 | 8am-8pm**

They give free pet care for people going to substance-use recovery programs. This helps you focus on getting better while your pets stay safe, loved, and well cared for. Currently for cats and dogs.



# Pet Boarding

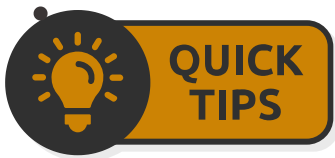
## Warm Hearts Pet Safe Haven

[warmheartspetsafehavens.org](http://warmheartspetsafehavens.org) |

These grants must be applied for by service providers or transition houses. They work to give safe places for pets leaving domestic violence. Warm Hearts Pet Safe Havens gives Pet Safe grants.

These grants can:

- Help transition houses pay for pet boarding at a vet clinic, pet boarding place, or animal shelter
- Give up to \$1,000 per pet for this care



There are a few pet-friendly campgrounds in the Greater Victoria area. They include:

### **Goldstream Park Campground: 2470 Golden Gate Rd. Langford**

1-800-689-9025 | <https://bcparks.ca/goldstream-park/>

Reservable with limited first-come, first-served tent sites with drinking water, picnic areas, and showers. Rates range from \$13 to \$40 per night.

### **SMONEĆTEN Campground: 10740 McDonald Park Rd. North Saanich**

1-877-737-3783 | <https://reservation.pc.gc.ca/>

Reservable with limited first-come, first-served tent sites with drinking water and picnic areas. Open only May 15 to September 30. Rates are approximately \$20 per night.

### **Island View Beach Regional Park, Homathko Road in Central Saanich**

250-478-3344 | <https://www.crd.ca/parks-recreation>

All sites at Island View Beach Campground must be reserved; there are no first-come, first-served sites. Drinking water, toilets, picnic areas, \$25 per night.

# Pet Food Banks

Location	Supplies Available	Opening Hours
<p>BC SPCA 3150 Napier Ln 250-388-7722 victoria@spca.bc.ca <a href="http://spca.bc.ca/locations/victoria/">spca.bc.ca/locations/victoria/</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supplies for one week can be handed out</li> <li>• Dog food, wet and dry</li> <li>• Cat food, wet and dry</li> <li>• Cat litter</li> <li>• Rabbit and small animal food</li> <li>• Leashes, harnesses and collars</li> <li>• Carriers, beds, toys and more.</li> </ul>	<p>Wednesdays from 1-3pm. *Available by request 7 days a week 10am to 5pm.</p>
<p>Fateh Care Charity 1-587-889-2700 Wecare@fatehcare.com <a href="http://www.fatehcare.com">www.fatehcare.com</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily fresh food for human consumption; fresh fruit and veggies, bread, milk, yogurt, etc.</li> <li>• Limited Pet supplies, but available by request</li> </ul>	<p>Mobile delivery, available by request.</p>
<p>Mustard Seed 250-953-1588 625 Queens Ave. <a href="mailto:foodbank@mustardseed.ca">foodbank@mustardseed.ca</a> <a href="http://Mustardseed.ca">Mustardseed.ca</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily fresh food for human consumption; fresh fruit and veggies, bread, milk, yogurt, etc.</li> <li>• Various pet supplies, cat and dog food wet and dry.</li> </ul>	<p>Monday to Friday 9am-1pm (Closed on the 3rd and 4th Thursday of each month)</p>
<p>St. John the Divine Food Bank 250-383-1679 1611 Quadra St. admin@stjohnthedivine.bc.ca <a href="http://stjohnthedivine.bc.ca">stjohnthedivine.bc.ca</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Menu of staple food and hygienic items or choose pre-made hamper of items ready to take home.</li> <li>• Limited pet supplies.</li> </ul>	<p>Open Tuesdays and Fridays 10am-12pm, please only use food bank once per month.</p>
<p>Goldstream Food Bank 250-474-4443 761 Station Ave. goldstreamfoodbank@gmail.com <a href="http://goldstreamfoodbank.org">goldstreamfoodbank.org</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food hampers for 5-7 days available. Primarily staple food and hygienic items.</li> <li>• Limited pet supplies.</li> </ul>	<p>Photo ID or utility bill required to access (Westshore residents only). Tuesdays and Wednesday first three weeks of every month. 9-11:45am.</p>

# Lost and Found Pets

Where to turn when your animal has become lost or missing.



## CRD Animal Shelter

**5401 Patricia Bay Hwy | 250-658-5745 |  
crdanimalshelter@crd.bc.ca**

Stray animals from Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich, Langford, Sooke, Sidney, View Royal, Colwood, Highlands, Metchosin, and the Gulf Islands are brought here. Their main goal is to help pets get back home. They also sell pet licenses.

## Victoria Animal Control

**564 David St | (250) 414-0233**

Stray animals from Victoria, Esquimalt, and Oak Bay are brought here. Their goal is to help pets get back home. They also sell pet licenses and make sure animal bylaws are followed.

## ROAM- Reuniting Owners with Animals Missing

**roambc.org | 778-977-6260, 778-977-6265 | info@roambc.org**

ROAM helps people find their lost pets on Southern Vancouver Island. ROAM is run by volunteers. They help by:

- Giving phone numbers so people can report stray or hurt animals
- Looking for, catching, or reporting lost, stray, abandoned, abused, or surrendered animals



## QUICK TIPS

Permanent ID like microchips and tattoos can help reunite you with your animal more quickly. Register your pet with the [BC Pet Registry today!](#)

# Thank You

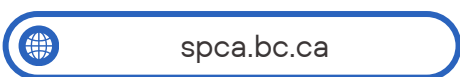
*Thank you for thinking of your animal first, we hope that this guide has helped you in your time of need.*



**Need more  
Help or Have  
Questions?**



Feel free to reach  
out to us!



**BCSPCA**  
SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS



## B. Volunteer Forms

### a. Letter of Initial Contact/Recruitment Research Volunteers

Hi XXX,

We're reaching out to ask for your help with an important project called *"Empowering the Victoria Community to Care for Animals: Addressing the Gap in Services for Pet Owners Experiencing Poverty and Homelessness."* This project is with the BC SPCA and the University of Victoria, led by the BC SPCA Victoria Centre Manager and UVic student, Emma Hamill towards her completion of her Master of Arts degree with supervision by Assistant Professor Dr. Tamara Krawchenko. This initiative aims to improve how we serve pet owners in our community, and we'd love your involvement.

To better understand service user experiences, we're going to use a questionnaire to gather feedback on services like emergency boarding, the food bank, and Vets for Pets. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity are maintained, we are looking for volunteers who have not previously been involved with these programs to recruit participants. This will also minimize the potential for any undue influence, to safeguard participants from feeling obligated or pressured to join the study.

Volunteers would be asked to:

1. Follow a script of initial contact to gauge service user interest in participation.
2. Review the informed consent form with them.
3. Allow them sufficient time to read and ask questions regarding the consent form before they provide their informed consent to participate.
4. Provide participants with the appropriate questionnaire and ensure they are given a private and comfortable space to complete the survey without distractions.
5. Direct participants to the drop where they can submit their completed questionnaires securely.

We are looking for volunteers to help in this capacity the following days:

- BC SPCA Food Bank, 3150 Napier Lane, Wednesday (Insert Date), from 1-3pm
- Vets for Pets, 919 Pandora Ave, Sunday (Insert Date) from 10am-12pm
- Emergency Boarding, 3150 Napier Lane, (Insert Date and time as scheduled).

If you are interested, have any questions or need more information, please don't hesitate to reach out. We truly value your interest in supporting this research, and we'd be grateful for your help.

Warm regards,

Emma Hamill | Graduate student | Centre Manager, Victoria BC SPCA (she/her)

School of Public Administration, Faculty of Community Development

ehamill@spca.bc.ca

Ph. 250-516-1781

## **b. Volunteer Agreement for Research**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to the following terms and responsibilities in my role as a volunteer for the “Empowering Victoria Community to Care for Animals: Addressing the Gaps in Services for Pet Owners Experiencing Poverty and Homelessness” conducted by Emma Hamill, ~~as a~~ part of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria under the supervision of Assistant Professor Dr. Tamara Krawchenko ([tamarakrawchenko@uvic.ca](mailto:tamarakrawchenko@uvic.ca)). Emma Hamill is also the Victoria Animal Centre Manager for the BC SPCA, the organization who is the client for this research represented by Adrienne McBride, the BC SPCA’s Senior Director of Animal Flow ([ambride@spca.bc.ca](mailto:ambride@spca.bc.ca)).

### **1. Confidentiality and Anonymity**

I agree to uphold the confidentiality and anonymity of all research participants. I acknowledge that I will adhere to the BC SPCA privacy and confidentiality agreement to ensure that participants' personal information remains secure and confidential throughout the research process.

### **2. Qualification for Third Party**

I agree that I have not volunteered with these programs prior (Food Bank, Vets for Pets, Emergency Boarding), and am volunteering with this group as a research volunteer, and will make this known to minimize any undue influence

### **3. Recruitment and Informed Consent**

I agree to use the provided recruitment script to ensure consistent and accurate communication with potential participants. If a participant agrees to take part in the research, I will:

- Review the informed consent form with them.
- Allow them sufficient time to read and ask questions regarding the consent form before they provide their informed consent to participate.

### **4. Data Collection Process**

I agree to provide participants with the appropriate questionnaire and ensure they are given a private and comfortable space to complete the survey without distractions. I will also direct participants to the drop where they can submit their completed questionnaires securely.

### **5. Ethical Conduct**

I will ensure that all interactions with participants are conducted ethically, respectfully, and in accordance with the guidelines set forth for the study. I will treat all data with the utmost care, ensuring that no identifying information is disclosed or misused.

### **6. Voluntary Participation**

I understand that participation in the research is voluntary for both myself and the participants, and I will ensure that participants are aware of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

By signing below, I confirm that I understand and agree to the above terms and responsibilities.

---

**Volunteer Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## C. Participant Forms

### a. Script of Initial Contact/Recruitment for Food Bank and Vets for Pets Users

Hi XXX,

I hope you and your pet doing well. I would like to ask you to help the BC SPCA with a project *“Empowering the Victoria Community to Care for Animals: Addressing the Gap in Services for Pet Owners Experiencing Poverty and Homelessness.”*

We want to know how we can make our programs better for people in our communities. Would a resource that lists places you can access help for your pet be helpful? This is what we would like to learn by creating a “ Street Pet Survival Guide.”

We would like to learn about your experience with our food bank and vets for pets by asking you to fill out a questionnaire. Your answers will not be shared with others but will help the staff understand how we can make programs and supports better.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to reach out. We would welcome learning about your experiences and ideas.

Warm regards,

Emma Hamill | Graduate student | Centre Manager, Victoria BC SPCA (she/her)

School of Public Administration, Faculty of Community Development

ehamill@spca.bc.ca

Ph. 250-516-1781

Dr. Tamara Krawchenko | Assistant Professor (she/her)

School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

TamaraKrawchenko@UVIC.ca | HSD326 | +1 (250) 721-6442

**b. Letter of Initial Contact/Recruitment for Service Providers**

Hi XXX,

I hope this message finds you well. I am reaching out to invite your participation in an important UVic research project titled “Empowering the Victoria Community to Care for Animals: Addressing the Gap in Services for Pet Owners Experiencing Poverty and Homelessness.” This project is being conducted as a part of the requirements for my Master of Arts degree in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria, under the supervision of Assistant Professor–Dr. Tamara Krawchenko and in collaboration with the BC SPCA.

Our goal is to survey both animal welfare service users and providers to better understand the availability, impact, benefits, and gaps in services for pet owners who are experiencing poverty or homelessness. By gathering insights from key service providers, community members, and stakeholders, we aim to address service gaps and assess existing resources through the creation of a comprehensive, accessible, and user-friendly Street Pet Survival Guide designed to support vulnerable individuals and their pets.

As a service provider with valuable expertise, your input would be an invaluable contribution to this study. Specifically, we are inviting you to participate in a confidential online survey focused on the current state of services, their effectiveness, limitations, and the demand for support. If you are also interested in having your services included in the Street Pet Survival Guide, a secondary questionnaire will be provided to gather detailed information on how users can access your services.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. Should you have any questions or require further information about the study, please don't hesitate to reach out. If there is someone else within your organization who might be more suited to participate, we would greatly appreciate any recommendations.

Sincerely,

Emma Hamill | Graduate student | Centre Manager, Victoria BC SPCA (she/her)  
School of Public Administration, Faculty of Community Development  
ehamill@spca.bc.ca  
Ph. 250-516-1781

Dr. Tamara Krawchenko | Assistant Professor (she/her)  
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria  
TamaraKrawchenko@UVIC.ca | HSD326 | +1 (250) 721-6442

**c. Letter of Second Contact/Recruitment for Service Providers**

Hi XXX,

Thank you for completing the first questionnaire and expressing interest in being included in the “Street Pet Survival Guide.”

Our goal with the second questionnaire is to address service gaps and assess existing resources through the creation of a comprehensive, accessible, and user-friendly Street Pet Survival Guide designed to support vulnerable individuals and their pets. This questionnaire will gather information on accessing your services, like your location, hours, and contact information.

For animal welfare organizations, this questionnaire will also ask qualifying questions on your organization to ensure that it aligns with the BC SPCA. To be included in the Street Pet Survival Guide animal welfare organization will need to ensure animals' 5 freedoms are met, practice Fear Free Sheltering, use R+ training, and use the Standards of Care in Animal Sheltering.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. Should you have any questions or require further information about the study, please don't hesitate to reach out. If there is someone else within your organization who might be more suited to participate, we would greatly appreciate any recommendations.

Sincerely,

Emma Hamill | Graduate student | Centre Manager, Victoria BC SPCA (she/her)  
School of Public Administration, Faculty of Community Development  
ehamill@spca.bc.ca  
Ph. 250-516-1781

Dr. Tamara Krawchenko | Assistant Professor (she/her)  
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria  
TamaraKrawchenko@UVIC.ca | HSD326 | +1 (250) 721-6442

#### **d. Participant Consent Form -Service Users**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “**Empowering Victoria Community to Care for Animals: Addressing the Gaps in Services for Pet Owners Experiencing Poverty and Homelessness**” that is being conducted by Emma Hamill, as a part of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria-under the supervision of Assistant Professor Dr. Tamara Krawchenko ([tamarakrawchenko@uvic.ca](mailto:tamarakrawchenko@uvic.ca)). Emma Hamill is also the Victoria Animal Centre Manager for the BC SPCA, the organization who is the client for this research represented by Adrienne McBride, the BC SPCA’s Senior Director of Animal Flow ([ambride@spca.bc.ca](mailto:ambride@spca.bc.ca)).

#### **Purpose**

Victoria, BC has one of Canada’s largest homeless populations per capita, with increasing living expenses, low vacancy rates, lack of affordable housing and limited pet friendly housing (Victoria Homelessness, 2023). With these factors in mind, inspired by the human animal bond, this project aims to help lead the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA) towards its strategic plan goals, shifting into a community care model instead of its current sheltering model. By asking pet owners who are experiencing poverty and homelessness where services and assets can improve in Victoria BC, a snapshot gaps analysis will be conducted. With animal welfare at the core, this work will aim to decrease stigmas of pet ownership within this community while making known the resources available and providing service improvement recommendations to help alleviate stresses on the BC SPCA and vulnerable pet owners alike. By working with the BC SPCA, this gaps analysis and asset mapping will encourage that the society’s five essential freedoms are upheld in pet ownership. By surveying key service providers, community members and stakeholders, this project hopes to address lacking services for low income and homeless pet owners and assess existing services through the creation of an accessible, comprehensive and user friendly Street Pet Survival Guide for the most vulnerable people and their pets.

#### **Participant Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you use the following animal welfare services:

- BC SPCA Food Bank;
- BC SPCA Vets for Pets Food Bank;
- or Emergency Boarding.

#### **Participant Involvement**

If you agree to participate in this research, your participation will entail 15 minute survey. Questionnaires will be done in person, you will have a private space to complete the form and completed forms will be submitted into a drop box and they will not be reviewed until all questionnaires are submitted.

#### **Compensation**

There is no financial compensation for your participation in this study.

#### **Power Relationship**

As a service provider, the BC SPCA and Emma Hamill can be perceived to have a power position over service users who could feel obligated or pressured to join the study. BC SPCA services, programs, employment will not be affected in any way whether participants choose to

participate or not. The benefits, and safeguards below have been put in place to minimize undue influence. The client will not know who participated in the research project.

### **Benefits**

Participants will have the opportunity to provide their insights, knowledge, and experiences about existing services in animal welfare. This research has the potential to inform service development, improvements and decrease barriers to accessing these services.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without consequence or explanation. BC SPCA services, programs, employment will not be affected in any way whether participants choose to participate or not.

You have an absolute right to: (1) withdraw at any time for any reason; (2) not to provide a reason or rationale for withdrawing. If you choose to withdraw at any point, your questionnaire will be shredded and safely recycled, and if electronic copy has been made it will be deleted.

### **Anonymity**

Your name and information and your pet's information will not be disclosed in the research outputs (e.g., academic articles). To ensure your identity remains anonymous during the recruitment and submission process, BC SPCA volunteers have been selected to recruit and distribute the questionnaire to you. When your questionnaire is completed, it will be returned to a drop box, and they will not be reviewed until all questionnaires are submitted.

### **Confidentiality**

The confidentiality of your data will be protected. The resulting research (articles, report) will not identify you or your pet by name or characteristics.

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study can be shared with others in the following ways: published articles, theses, books, presentations at scholarly meetings and conferences, and class workshops, and community presentations. Potential theses produced with this research will be available online through the University of Victoria's D-space.

### **Use of Data**

Paper based questionnaires completed will be scanned into an electronic copy using a protected scanner on the BC SPCA network. Once uploaded, physical copies will be shredded and recycled in the BC SPCA locked recycling. The electronic questionnaires will be stored in an electronic form on a secure password protected BC SPCA laptop. Data from this study may be stored until January 2035. After this date, data will be disposed of by deleting electronic copies of responses. The data collected from this study may be used by the investigators for future scholarly research building on/expanding on the current project. It will not be used for any other purpose whatsoever. Results from future studies may be shared with others in the following ways: published articles, thesis, books, presentations at scholarly meetings and conferences, and class workshops, and community presentations in participating municipalities. Any future use of data obtained through the survey will be bound by the terms outlined in this form (dissemination, confidentiality, disposal, anonymity).

## **Disposal of Data**

Data from this study may be stored until March 2035. After this date, data will be disposed of by deleting electronic copies of survey responses.

## **Contacts**

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include the researcher. Her name and contact info are provided at the top of this form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

## **Participant Consent and Signature**

- Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your access to further services.
- Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
- Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

---

Participant Signature    Date

---

Printed Name of the Participant signing above

### **e. Participant Consent Form- Service Providers**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “**Empowering Victoria Community to Care for Animals: Addressing the Gaps in Services for Pet Owners Experiencing Poverty and Homelessness**” that is being conducted by Emma Hamill, as a part of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria, under the supervision of Assistant Professor Dr. Tamara Krawchenko ([tamarakrawchenko@uvic.ca](mailto:tamarakrawchenko@uvic.ca)). Emma Hamill is also the Victoria Animal Centre Manager for the BC SPCA, the organization who is the client for this research represented by Adrienne McBride, the BC SPCA’s Senior Director of Animal Flow ([ambride@spca.bc.ca](mailto:ambride@spca.bc.ca)).

#### **Purpose**

Victoria, BC has one of Canada’s largest homeless populations per capita, with increasing living expenses, low vacancy rates, lack of affordable housing and limited pet friendly housing (Victoria Homelessness, 2023). With these factors in mind, inspired by the human animal bond, this project aims to help lead the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA) towards its strategic plan goals, shifting into a community care model instead of its current sheltering model. By asking pet owners who are experiencing poverty and homelessness where services and assets can improve in Victoria BC, a snapshot gaps analysis will be conducted. With animal welfare at the core, this work will aim to decrease stigmas of pet ownership within this community while making known the resources available and providing service improvement recommendations to help alleviate stresses on the BC SPCA and vulnerable pet owners alike. By working with the BC SPCA, this gaps analysis and asset mapping will encourage that the society’s five essential freedoms are upheld in pet ownership. By surveying key service providers, community members and stakeholders, this project hopes to address lacking services for low income and homeless pet owners and assess existing services through the creation of an accessible, comprehensive and user friendly Street Pet Survival Guide for the most vulnerable people and their pets.

#### **Participant Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you provide services in animal welfare, such as:

- free vet care;
- subsidized vet care;
- vet care with payment plans;
- pet friendly shelters and transitional housing;
- compassionate boarding;
- and pet food banks.

#### **Participant Involvement**

If you agree to participate in this research, your participation will entail 15 minute survey. If you agree to participate in the secondary survey for service information dissemination, you will participate in an additional 15 minute survey.

#### **Compensation**

There is no financial compensation for your participation in this study.

#### **Power Relationship**

As a service provider, the BC SPCA and Emma Hamill can be perceived to have a power position over other service providers who could feel obligated or pressured to join the study. BC SPCA services, programs, employment will not be affected in any way whether participants choose to participate or not.

The client will not know who participated in the research project and will not have access to the raw identifiable data.

### **Benefits**

Participants will have the opportunity to provide their insights, knowledge, and experiences about existing services in animal welfare. This research has the potential to inform service development, improvements and decrease barriers to accessing these services.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without consequence or explanation.

You have an absolute right to: (1) withdraw at any time for any reason; (2) not to provide a reason or rationale for withdrawing. If you choose to withdraw at any point, your questionnaire will be permanently deleted.

### **Anonymity**

Your name and information will not be disclosed in the research outputs (e.g., academic articles). Anonymity may be compromised because we will be naming the name of your organization in our report and a potential student thesis. Therefore, people intimately familiar with your organization may be able to ascertain your identity, even if your identifying characteristics, such as your name, are removed or altered.

### **Confidentiality**

The confidentiality of your data will be protected. The resulting research (articles, report) will not identify you or your pet by name or characteristics. The resulting research (articles, report) will not identify you by name, but will identify you by organization unless you request otherwise.

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study can be shared with others in the following ways: published articles, theses, books, presentations at scholarly meetings and conferences, and class workshops, and community presentations. Potential theses produced with this research will be available online through the University of Victoria's D-space.

### **Use of Data**

The electronic questionnaires will be stored in an electronic form on a secure password protected BC SPCA laptop. Data from this study may be stored until January 2035. After this date, data will be disposed of by deleting electronic copies of responses. The data collected from this study may be used by the investigators for future scholarly research building on/expanding on the current project. It will not be used for any other purpose whatsoever. Results from future studies may be shared with others in the following ways: published articles, thesis, books, presentations at scholarly meetings and conferences, and class workshops, and community presentations in participating municipalities. Any future use of data obtained through the survey will be bound by the terms outlined in this form (dissemination, confidentiality, disposal, anonymity).

### **Disposal of Data**

Data from this study may be stored until March 2035. After this date, data will be disposed of by deleting electronic copies of survey responses.

## Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include the researcher. Her name and contact info are provided at the top of this form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

## Participant Consent and Signature

- Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your access to further services.
- Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
- Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Please check the relevant box below indicating your preferences for organizational identification:

"I agree to be identified in the research results by my organization:"

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ or No \_\_\_\_\_

---

Participant Signature      Date

---

Printed Name of the Participant signing above

D. Privacy policy

See next page.

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# Privacy & Confidentiality of Personal Information Policy

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THE BRITISH COLUMBIA SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Updated: October 2018

The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA) is committed to adhering to the principles of PIPA (Personal Information Protection Act), PIPEDA (Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act), CASL (Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation) and any other applicable legislation to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the personal information of donors, members, employees, directors, volunteers, clients and other stakeholders. The BC SPCA values the trust of those we deal with, and of the public, and recognizes that maintaining this trust requires that we be transparent and accountable in how we treat the information individuals choose to entrust with us.

During the course of our various activities, events, and through the conducting of our programs and services, the BC SPCA gathers and uses personal information to carry out its work and other day-to-day activities. It is reasonable for a person to expect the BC SPCA to carefully protect the personal information it collects and that any other use other than those for which it was collected, will be disclosed, and subject to consent.

### **Scope of Policy**

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, and volunteers who may have access to personal information through the Society's records and information systems. Any personal information provided to the BC SPCA is collected, used and disclosed in accordance with applicable legislation.

### **Contact Information**

Questions, inquiries, concerns, or complaints relating to the BC SPCA's policy on the treatment of personal information should be emailed to BC SPCA Privacy Officer at [privacy@spca.bc.ca](mailto:privacy@spca.bc.ca). Further information on privacy and your rights in regard to your personal information may be found on the website of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada at [www.privcom.gc.ca](http://www.privcom.gc.ca).

### **Definition of Personal Information**

Personal information includes any factual or subjective information, recorded or not, about an identifiable individual. This includes information in any form, such as:

- Name, age, marital status, ID numbers, and other biographical information;
- Contact information including mailing address, phone and email address;
- Giving history, banking or credit card information.

### **Accuracy**

To the extent reasonably practical, personal information of individuals will be as accurate, complete, and up to date as is necessary for the purpose for which it is to be used.

### **Use of Personal Information**

The BC SPCA is firmly committed to data privacy. We do not sell, rent or exchange any personal information we collect.

We do communicate with our supporters via mail, email, and telephone notifications of events, news, bulletins, updates in addition to e-receipts, solicitations and acknowledgements of donations, where express

or implied consent has been provided. We do use email addresses to define target audiences on social media for the purpose of sharing messages from the BC SPCA.

A supporter may always opt-out of receiving all, or specific, communications through a variety of tools as outlined below.

### Use of Credit Card and Banking Information

The BC SPCA recognizes that, for the purposes of donations or purchases, supporters may provide us with their banking or credit card information. We only use this information to process the transaction as intended by the supporter.

Credit card transactions processed offline are processed through Level 1 PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) service providers and payment gateways. Our credit card processing service providers and payment gateways are reviewed annually, or whenever a provider is changed. We register with Sysnet PCI Compliance Manager annually (Merchant ID: 8029147322).

Credit card transactions processed online through our website are passed through a secure third-party provided SSL verified connection to adhere to industry standard privacy and security standards.

### Retention of Information

The length of retention will vary in relation to the nature of the information collected. Any confidential materials and personal information will be kept with appropriate security when necessary. Care is used in the disposal or destruction of personal information to prevent unauthorized parties from gaining access to the information.

### Removal from our Database or Mailing List

Should you ever wish to be removed from our database or solicitation mailing list or to discuss your communication preferences and options, please contact us at [donations@spca.bc.ca](mailto:donations@spca.bc.ca) or at 604-681-7271 or 1-800-665-1868 and we will be happy to oblige your requests.

### CASL (Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation) and Electronic Communication

The **2014 Canadian Act** relating to commercial electronic messages (CEM) places a variety of parameters on electronic messages:

- **Express consent** – When sending to those who have given express consent (subscribed) to receive email communications from the BC SPCA we must identify the sender and include an option to unsubscribe
- **Implied consent** – When sending to those who have given implied consent by making a transaction (donation, purchase, adoption) or who has a relationship with the BC SPCA as a member or volunteer the BC SPCA may send communications for up to two years from the date of their last transaction, or the end of their relationship, as long as we identify the sender and include an option to unsubscribe
- **Easy access to unsubscribe:** Every electronic publication we send our supporters has an unsubscribe feature. You may 'opt-out' from receiving e-communications or update your specific subscriptions at any time by utilizing the unsubscribe feature in any of these emails. You may also update your email subscriptions by clicking Update subscription in the footer of our website ([spca.bc.ca](http://spca.bc.ca)).

Unsubscribing from emails is to happen without delay when possible, otherwise it must be rectified within 10 business days after receiving notice of withdrawal.

- **Share with care:** This Act also applies to sharing. If staff, contractors, and volunteers are planning to share one of our emails or web pages through email or direct messaging on social media, they must comply with CASL. Under CASL you should only share with people you have a personal relationship with, or those who have a publicly listed business email (as long as the content relates to their business. e.g. sharing an advocacy concern with your MLA, or SPCA Certified information with a farmer). A “personal relationship” requires that the real identity of the individual who claims a personal relationship is known by the other individual involved in such a relationship (as opposed to instances where a virtual identity or an alias is used). Using social media or sharing the same network does not necessarily reveal a personal relationship between individuals. The mere use of buttons available on social media websites – such as clicking “like”, voting for or against a link or post, accepting someone as a “Friend”, or clicking “Follow” – will generally be insufficient to constitute a personal relationship for the purposes of sending an email or direct message to that person.

For more information, please visit the federal government’s [FightSpam website](http://fightspam.gc.ca) (<http://fightspam.gc.ca>) and the [CRTC website](https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/internet/anti.htm) (<https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/internet/anti.htm>).

## Website

Our website ([sPCA.bc.ca](http://sPCA.bc.ca)) is operated by the BC SPCA for the benefit of our community members and those interested the delivery of our programs and services and to those interested in supporting the work of the BC SPCA. It is free for use by individual web users, and no registration is required.

**Cookies:** “Cookies” are bits of information sent to your computer from a website through your browser program. Cookies help you access pages faster and allow our server to recognize you as you move from page to page. *If you choose not to accept cookies, some sections of our site – such as making online donations, signing petitions or signing up for emails – may not be available to you.* The BC SPCA only reads cookies specifically written for our site and does not use cookies to track a user’s Internet history on other issues. We use cookies to better understand how our site is used and to make sure our information and dynamic content are served correctly. Aggregated data collected by the BC SPCA may from time to time be provided to our sponsors and underwriters.

**Links:** To provide users with more information on various issues, we may provide links to third party websites. However, we do not control those websites and their use of data, or necessarily endorse their viewpoints.

## Responsibility for Confidentiality

All staff, contractors, and volunteers have a legal obligation to protect personal information obtained in the course of duties with the BC SPCA. All reasonable measures must be taken to ensure that personal information is collected, used, and disclosed only in circumstances necessary to conduct the business of the Society. Personal or confidential information will only be used, shared, or disclosed with other persons or individuals where consent has been provided and/or in accordance with applicable legislation as identified. Any confidential materials and personal information should be maintained under lock and key and appropriately discarded. The legal obligation to protect personal information does not end with the cessation of the individuals duties with the BC SPCA, but continues in perpetuity.

## 4

### Breach of Confidentiality

Individuals will be held accountable for breaches of confidentiality. Breaches of confidentiality include, but are not limited to, intentional and unauthorized access to, use and/or disclosure of, confidential information. Intentionally viewing confidential information that is not necessary to perform an individual's role is considered a breach of confidentiality even if that information is not disclosed to another party. Confidential information must not be discussed in any physical location where others, not entitled to receive that information, are present and likely to overhear, unless required in order to fulfill one's professional role, by law, or with permission from an authorized individual.

Examples of possible breaches include, but are not limited to, the following:

- unauthorized access of a cruelty investigation file
- unauthorized viewing or modifying of an adoption application or animal's file
- telling friends or family identifiable information about a potential adopter, donor, or person of interest in a cruelty investigation
- leaving file storage areas unlocked when they should be locked
- sharing a password with a co-worker so that she can log into a computer system
- being away from the desk while logged into an application containing personal information without locking your computer

All BC SPCA staff, contractors and volunteers have a responsibility to report suspected or known breaches of confidentiality without fear of reprisal. If it is established that a breach of confidentiality has occurred, those individuals deemed responsible may be subject to corrective action, or sanctions, up to and including termination of their employment or volunteer relationship with the BC SPCA, cancellation of contract or services, withdrawal of privileges and/or legal action.

#### Safeguards

All staff, contractors and volunteers are required to be familiar and abide by this policy. A signed *Privacy and Confidentiality Agreement* is a requirement for all staff, contractor and volunteer positions which may have access to personal information.

#### Legal Disclaimer

Though we make every effort to preserve user privacy, we may need to disclose personal information when required by law and wherein we have a good faith belief that such action is necessary to comply with a current judicial proceeding, a court order or legal process served on our society.

October 2018



By my signature below, I acknowledge that I have read and will abide by the **BC SPCA Privacy & Confidentiality of Personal Information Policy**. I further understand it is my obligation to ask questions if anything contained in this policy is unclear to me.

---

*Signature*

---

*Name*

---

*Date*

Contractor       Volunteer

---

*Relationship to the BC SPCA*

## E. Questionnaires

Below are the questionnaires for each participant group.

### **Questionnaire for Service Users:**

Thank you for helping us learn how we can make life easier for people and pets. Here is information that is important for you to read!

**Consent:** By completing and submitting this survey, you are consenting to participate voluntarily. Your participation is confidential, and you may withdraw at any time without consequence.

**Data Handling:** We will not share your name or information with anyone if you decide to help us by answering the questions. Your answers will help us learn how to better support pets.

1. What type of pet do you have (how old, breed etc.)? How did they end up being your pet?
2. Tell me about him/her? What do you most love about your pet?
3. How does having your pet make your life better?
4. What is hard about having a pet?
5. How did you find out about (Food bank, emergency boarding, Vets for Pets)?
6. Has (Food bank, emergency boarding, Vets for Pets) helped your pet? How? What more does your pet need?
7. What do you like about (Food bank, emergency boarding, Vets for Pets)?
8. What would make it better/easier for you to use these services?
9. What other services has your pet used?
10. What other services does your pet need? What services do you wish were offered to support your pet?
11. We want to know how we can make our program better for people in our communities, would a resource that lists places you can access help for your pet be helpful?

### **8.2 Questionnaire 1. For Service Providers:**

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your insights are important to us. Before you proceed, please read the following information:

**Consent:** By completing and submitting this survey, you are consenting to participate voluntarily. Your participation is confidential, and you may withdraw at any time without consequence.

**Data Handling:** Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. Data collected will be used for research purposes only and will be shared with the BC SPCA offering feedback and on local programs.

1. What services or support do you offer pet guardians?
2. Do you offer services or support to low income and homeless pet guardians? If so, what services and support?
3. If yes, how do low income and homeless pet owners access your services?

4. How often are your services provided?
5. How many pets access your services annually?
6. How do you promote your services?
7. Do you currently have your services listed in any external resources? If yes, which ones?
8. How are your programs funded?
9. What limitations does your program face?
10. What services do you wish you could offer?
11. Do you work in partnership with other organizations? Would you be interested in more collaboration with local animal welfare service providers? If, yes, in what ways do you or would like to collaborate?
12. Would you be open to having your services listed in a Pet Survival Guide to reach more people in need?
13. If you answered yes or that you would like more information above, what is the best email to reach you for follow up in the Pet Survival Guide?

### **8.3 Questionnaire 2 for Service Providers:**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a second survey. Your insights are important to us. Before you proceed, please read the following information:

**Consent:** By completing and submitting this survey, you are consenting to participate voluntarily. Your participation is confidential, and you may withdraw at any time without consequence.

**Data Handling:** Data collected will be used for asset mapping a Street Pet Survival Guide to be shared with clients in need at like organizations (BC SPCA, Vets for Pets). The map will be digital and online and will be shared with all service providers participating in the survey for their own distribution.

1. What organization name would you like listed in the Victoria Pet Survival Guide?
2. What animal welfare services would you like to share in the Victoria Pet Survival Guide?
3. How can clients access these services?
4. Is there an application process?
5. Is there a fee? If so, what is the cost?
6. What are your hours of operation?
7. Where are you located?
8. Anything else we should know about your programs?
9. *Animal Sheltering Organizations: Complete this part if you are involved with the direct care of animals.*
10. My organization believes in and follows the five freedoms of Animal Sheltering, including:

Freedom from hunger and thirst  
 Freedom from pain, injury, and disease  
 Freedom from distress  
 Freedom from discomfort  
 Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being

Yes/No

11. My organization follows Fear Free practices. Yes/No
12. My organization uses kind, reward-based training methods (positive reinforcement). Yes/No
13. My organization uses the Canadian Standard of Care in Animal Sheltering. Yes/No

F. Certificate of Approval for Ethics

See next page.



## Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: <b>Tamara Krawchenko</b> (Supervisor)	<b>ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER: 24-0231</b> Expedited review - delegated
PRINCIPAL APPLICANT: <b>Emma Hamill</b> <b>Master's student</b>	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 12-Mar-2025
UVIC DEPARTMENT: <b>Public Administration PADM</b>	APPROVED ON: 12-Mar-2025
	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 11-Mar-2026

**PROJECT TITLE: Empowering Victoria Community to Care for Animals: Addressing the Gaps in Services for Pet Owners Experiencing Poverty and Homelessness**

**RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS:**

Adrienne McBride - Client, (Position Title) Senior Director of Animal Flow, BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA)

**DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: None**

**DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:**

- tcps2\_core\_certificate.pdf - 26-Aug-2024
- Hamill Emma BC SPCA Academic Research Partnership MOU - signed 10 Dec 2024.pdf - 17-Dec-2024
- 8. Questionnaire Drafts.doc - 17-Dec-2024
- 2. Sept 2024 Hamill Emma MACD Project Proposal.docx - 07-Jan-2025
- Script of Initial Contact- Service Users.doc - 10-Mar-2025
- Letter of Initial Contact- Service Providers.doc - 10-Mar-2025
- Letter of Initial Contact-Recruitment Research Volunteers.doc - 10-Mar-2025
- Reserach Volunteer Agreement.doc - 10-Mar-2025
- Privacy and Confidentiality of Personal Information Policy - October 2018.pdf - 10-Mar-2025
- 8567\_BCSPCA\_PPA.pdf - 11-Mar-2025
- Hamill\_Emma\_BC\_SPCA\_Academic\_Research\_Partnership\_MOU\_-\_signed\_10\_Dec\_2024\_(1)\_(1).pdf - 11-Mar-2025
- March 2025 Updated- Hamill Emma MACD Project Proposal.docx - 11-Mar-2025
- Letter of Second Contact- Service Providers.doc - 11-Mar-2025
- Consent form- Service Users.doc - 11-Mar-2025
- Consent form- Service Providers.doc - 11-Mar-2025

### Conditions of approval

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.

**Amendments**

To make changes to the approved research procedure in your study, please submit "Amendments" or "Annual renewal with amendments" form. You must receive research ethics approval before proceeding with your amended protocol.

**Renewals**

Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

**Project Closures**

When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.

### Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria's policies for research involving human participants.

Dr. Sandra Gibbons  
Chair, Human Research Ethics Board

Dr. Cindy Holder  
Vice-chair, Human Research Ethics Board

Certificate Issued On: 12-Mar-2025

G. Terms/codes descriptions here

**1. Strength of Human Animal Bond:**

Subtheme: Emotional connection

Codes: Companion, family, best friend, love and affection, companionship, family connections, comfort, joy, laughter, warmth, sense of completeness

Subtheme: Mental Health and Wellbeing:

Codes: Mental health support, therapeutic value, hope, motivation, purpose, sobriety support, lifesaving impact.

Subtheme: Physical and Practical Benefits

Codes: Exercise support, safety, protection, accountability, responsibility.

**2. Reciprocal nature of pet guardianship:**

Codes: Pet sitting, rescue animals from worse situations, animals needs first, use all financial resources to ensure animal care, feed animals before themselves.

**3. Structural Barriers to Care**

Subtheme: Veterinary barriers:

Codes: Cost of vet cars, access issues, difficulty obtaining appointments, need do f spay and neuter services

Subtheme: Daily Care Challenges:

Codes: Constant need to be present, worry about pets being alone, food needs, responsibility burden, risk of pet running away, pet hygiene, cost of supplies.

**4. Value of low-barrier compassionate services**

Codes: Positive experiences, Friendly staff and volunteers, non-judgmental environment, accommodating service, accessible hours, kindness, proximity, affordability

## **5. Gaps in Service Provisions**

Subtheme: Veterinary needs:

Codes: different Vet's for Pets Location, home visits, low-cost spay/neuter, vaccines, vet check, emergency vet information, diagnostic care, dental care, rabbit specific vet care, medication, flea treatment

Subtheme: Supportive services:

Codes: more hours of operations, after-hour services, more stable cat litter availability at food banks, outreach/mobile food bank, additional locations, bathing stations, nail trimming, emergency shelter/fostering, dog walking/care, behaviour training, pet friendly housing, microchipping

## **6. Diversity of Services provided:**

Codes: Free vet care, low-cost spay and neuter, microchipping, animal rescue and rehoming, surrender support, grants for emergency vet care, grants for transition houses, behaviour webinars for housing staff, policy packages for pet friendly sheltering, feral cat spay/neuter programs, pet food and supply, transitional housing with pet friendly units, boarding support for survivors of violence.

## **7. Multiple low-barrier entry points:**

Codes: drop-in clinics, email contact, Facebook messaging, online booking, phone booking, case worker referral, vet clinic applying on guardian's behalf, walk in open hours.

## **8. Frequency and volume of services:**

Codes: monthly clinics, daily services, ongoing supply distribution, high volume of animals served, seasonal and episodic spikes in demand.

## **9. Partnerships, promotion, and funding:**

Codes: Reliance on community networks and donations, service fees, grants and limited government funding, depend heavily on external support and collaborative relationships.

## **10. Limitations and barriers:**

Codes: Insufficient funding, decrease in donations, limited vet capacity. Lack of foster homes, publicity challenges, difficulty building trust with clients, rising vet costs. Pet owner compliance issues, geographic limitations, stigma, lack of volunteers, limited supplies.

## **11. Service gaps and future goals:**

Subtheme: Desire to expand veterinary support:

Codes: Vet expansion, more low-cost spay/neuter, ability to provide surgical services, ability to handle complex medical cases, full vet coverage, expanded emergency support.

Subtheme :Housing and shelter expansion:

Codes: More pet friendly housing, sheltering, boarding options, rural community support.

Subtheme: Resource development:

Codes: free pet food lists, discounted medical services, improved public information.