
Adoption Process and Adopters Welcome Policy

Updated: March 2026

Purpose

This policy aims to standardize the adoption process to ensure fair and equal access to all York County SPCA (YCSPCA) animals. This policy applies to members of the public and volunteers and is the same for all species. The YCSPCA operates on a first come first served basis to decrease the length of time each animal spends in the shelter. We are an animal welfare organization and our decision to move to a first-come first-serve basis has the animals' best interests at the core. The shelter is a layover in the adoption process, and we believe that getting an animal into its adoptive home quickly is best for our animals.

Adoption Procedure

The following procedure will apply to all animal adoptions to ensure a manageable and consistent adoption process.

General Interest in Adoption

Every animal at the YCSPCA deserves a loving, permanent home. If you have made the lifesaving decision to adopt a pet, please complete the YCSPCA's adoption questionnaire. Once a member of our team reviews and approves your adoption questionnaire, please visit our website to view all pets that are available for adoption. Visit www.ycspca.org/adopt for more information. Please note that these listings are updated in real-time and change often.

Applying for a Specific Animal

To adopt a specific animal from the YCSPCA, you must first be approved for adoption. Once approved, you can select from one of the pets that are currently available for adoption or keep checking our website and social media pages until you see an animal that tugs at your heartstrings. An approved adoption questionnaire will be valid for one year and must be renewed yearly if your desire to adopt continues. Approved adopters can indicate their interest in adopting a specific pet through the following communication channels:

Online Adoption Questionnaire. If you are completing an adoption questionnaire online, you can indicate your interest in a specific pet on your adoption questionnaire. We prioritize applicants who are already approved for adoption.

Call and leave us a message. Our phone number is (717) 764-6109 ext. 9002. When you call, please include your name, phone number, and the pet you are interested in. Due to high call volumes and limited staffing capabilities, we cannot always answer the phone.

In-person notification. The YCSPCA is open for public browsing Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 12 to 4 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Adoption Wait List

Although every pet at the YCSPCA is terrific and deserves a loving permanent home, “highly adoptable” pet often gets multiple adoption inquiries.

Once the YCSPCA makes the pet available for adoption, the status change will appear on our website in real-time. Over time, the adoptable pet will also be posted on Petfinder and our social media channels. We encourage eager adopters to regularly check our website and social media because new animals are posted frequently.

The YCSPCA WILL NOT hold any pet for any member of the public. We operate on a first-come, first-serve basis. We will place at least three adopters on each available pet before we remove the pet’s listing from our website. Only the first potential adopter will be scheduled to meet the pet. If the first adopter withdraws interest, we will move on to the second. If the second adopter withdraws interest, we will move on to the third and so on. If no match is made from the pet’s initial adoption waiting list, the pet will be made available again and reposted to our communication channels, and the first-come, first-approved process will resume.

Adopters Welcome Philosophy

The YCSPCA supports the Adopters Welcome Philosophy, which was first introduced by the Humane Society of the United States. Adopters Welcome removes the barriers that often exist between customers and adopting an animal. It focuses on the innate belief that people are more good than bad, and we need to trust their intentions for adopting a YCSPCA animal. This policy promotes adoption as the best way to save animal lives. The intention is to attract adopters by removing barriers and increasing adoption opportunities for the animals in our care. We believe that adoption counseling is important for success and having open and honest conversations with pet owners will lead to increased adoptions and positive placements.

The York County SPCA Believes in:

1. Supporting Renters Instead of Policing Them.
We alert adopters to the fact that pet policies and requirements may exist and trust them to take it from there. If the home address is an apartment complex that we already know has pet policies or breed restrictions, we alert the pet parent that these policies exist.
2. Promoting Veterinary Care without Requiring Proof.
We talk to adopters about the vaccines and medical procedures provided to the animals in our care. We explain how vaccines and veterinary care can help new pets (and pets at home), live happy, healthy lives.
3. Treating all Dog Breeds Equally.



We treat all dogs as individuals and evaluate each dog based on history, observation, interaction, and behavioral assessment.

4. Welcoming Pets as Gifts.

We support gift adopters by helping the gift giver find the best match for their recipient.

5. No Meet and Greet Required.

We let the adopter decide. If the adopter doesn't want to introduce the dogs at the York County SPCA then we provide written tips and counseling on how to gradually introduce a new pet in the home.

On special occasions, YCSPCA staff will require a meet and greet for certain dogs on a behavior and enrichment plan.

6. Allowing Adopters to Determine Who is Present for the Meet.

We do not hold up the adoption process by requiring all household members to be present for a meet. As part of the adoption conversation, we encourage everyone to be present but leave it up to the adopter.

7. Using Persuasion, not Punishment, to Address Declawing.

If the adopter asks about declawing, we introduce adopters to effective alternatives like nail caps, scratching posts, and scratching deterrents. We promote declawing as a last resort and remind adopters that we are here to help if problems arise at home. We encourage adopters considering declawing to adopt cats that are already declawed.

8. Supporting Homes Long-Term.

It is essential to support families post-adoption. We stay connected with adopters and encourage updates. Our goal is to keep the pet in the home.

9. Helping Pets Live Happily with People of All Ages.

We do not discriminate based on age. We share insight on all animals that are being considered for adoption. We are transparent with adopters about concerns and remind pet parents that how an animal behaves in the shelter doesn't guarantee behavior in the home. We encourage adopters of all ages to have a plan for their pets if they are no longer able to care for them.

10. Supporting Spay and Neuter of Pets at Home Without Requiring it.

If pets at home are not spayed or neutered, we discuss the low-cost services provided by the YCSPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic. We share the benefits of spay/neuter and take the time to answer questions or concerns.

The YCSPCA believes that if we remove these barriers and work together with adopters, we will make strong matches between our adopters and their new pets.

There are a few circumstances when the YCSPCA will deny an adopter:

- The adopter is on our Do Not Adopt (DNA) List
- The YCSPCA humane society police officer denies the adopter
- The adopter is currently homeless
- The adopter is currently using the York County SPCA Pet Food Pantry services.
- After a documented warning, the adopter violated our Shelter Code of Conduct.



- The adopter has demonstrated a pattern of behavior that would indicate animal hoarding tendencies.

There are a few circumstances when the YCSPCA will deny an adoption:

- An animal that is listed as a *single-animal-only* will not be adopted into a home with other animals.
- An animal with the *no dogs attribute* will not be adopted into a home with dogs.
- An animal with the *no cats attribute* will not be adopted into a home with cats.
- An animal with the *no apartments attribute* will not be adopted into an apartment home.
- Animals with the *bonded pair attribute* will not be separated for adoption.
- An animal with the *fenced yard required attribute* is a flight-risk and will only be adopted into a home with a fence.
- An animal with the *no small animals attribute* will not be adopted into a home with small animals.
- An animal with the *no small kids attribute* will not be adopted into a home with children under the age of 13.
- An animal with a bite history will not be adopted into a home with children under the age of 13.
- An animal with documented issues with major restraint issues will not be adopted into a home with children under the age of 13.
- An animal with documented resource guarding will not be adopted into a home with children under the age of 13.
- An animal with a special diet or special medical need will not be adopted into a home where the prescribed diet and medical care cannot or will not be maintained.
- All animals (except farm animals, working cats and cats designated as indoor/outdoor) will be adopted to indoor homes.

Return Policy

The YCSPCA supports a no-fault 60-day return policy in which adopters can find a better match. The initial adoption fee can be put towards the adoption of another shelter pet. If the adopter chooses not to adopt another animal their original adoption fee can be refunded if the owner requests a refund within three days of return. Refunds will only include the original adoption fee and will not include add-on services such as optional bloodwork or purchased pet supplies. The adopter is encouraged to provide the YCSPCA with more information on the observed behavioral traits of the adopted pet, which will allow the YCSPCA to make a better match for future prospective adopters.

Rehoming Policy

Occasionally, adoptions do not work out. The YCSPCA empowers and supports adopters in identifying an alternative home for the pet so the pet can avoid the shelter. This includes

allowing adopters to adopt another pet from our organization. YCSPCA staff encourages former adopters to contact us with the new owner's information so that we can update our internal records. The YCSPCA encourages former adopters to share microchip information with the new owner, and the YCSPCA can provide them with the resources to update it. When we support our adopters in re-homing their pets without returning them to the shelter, we free up space, time, and funds to support future pets in need.

