



# 2019 IMPACT REPORT



# THE START OF A LIFE-SAVING JOURNEY

1926



Since 1926 the Animal Rescue League of Iowa (ARL) has been a safe haven for animals who have had nowhere else to turn. Over the course of nearly a century, more than 1 million abused, abandoned, neglected, unwanted, and even very loved animals have found refuge within our doors – whether those doors were in the small house in the middle of Des Moines, IA, when we were first founded or the variety of buildings since. While our organization’s mission, focus, and impact have evolved over the years, one thing has remained the same: our commitment to help animals.

About 10 years ago, the ARL was at a crossroads. More than 20,000 animals were arriving at our doors each year, our building was too small, and while adopting animals from shelters was continuing to grow in popularity, we knew we could not adopt our way out of the pet overpopulation crisis facing our state, and the nation. We wanted and needed to save more lives, but it wasn’t going to be easy and we wouldn’t be able to do it alone. So we set out on a journey to reduce euthanasia, increase lives saved, and reduce the need for pets needing to seek shelter in the first place.



# A DECADE WORTH OF PROGRESS

2008  
NEW BUILDING  
(ARL MAIN)

The first step that needed to happen was very clearly to build a more suitable facility to accommodate all of the animals that needed our help – from the smallest mouse to the largest horse and all of the cats, dogs, and other animals in between. We were committed to continue to be there for animals in need, even when other shelters turned them away. Thanks to thousands of generous donors, we opened our doors to our new 43,000-square-foot animal shelter in 2008, including a 12,000-square-foot barn, and 1-acre paddock.

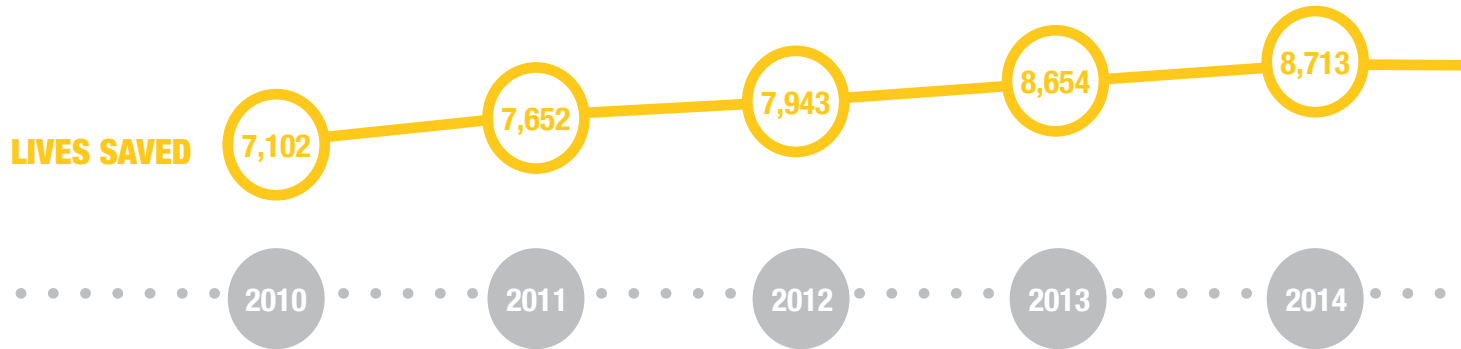
The shelter included separate dog and cat areas, 2 dog training rooms, a state-of-the-art medical suite that included 2 surgery suites with 2 tables in each, and 4 dental stations. It also included a grooming room, a retail store, a Humane Education classroom, a Caternity suite and Kitten NICU for new and expecting cats and their babies, a Purriiatrics suite for geriatric cats, medical recovery and ICU rooms, and so much more. Over the past 10 years we have also expanded our ARL Main campus to include an indoor horse training arena (which doubles as large-scale animal rescue housing), a 2-story cat housing unit called the Clowder House, 2 dog parks, feral cat housing, and many other continuous improvements to the facility and animal living quarters.



But that was just the start. With the new building, we were then able to develop, enhance, and expand programs that served both animals and the people who love them – all to reach that goal of saving more lives. As community support increased, so did the programs and services we were able to offer, and so did the lives we were able to save together. The building became an inviting destination for all to visit, adopt, and learn.

The next few pages highlight our journey in the years since opening the new building and our record year of lifesaving in 2019, but we're not done yet. Toward the end you'll see where we're headed, and with your continued support, we are confident that the records we set in this decade will be the floor, not the ceiling, of what we're able to accomplish for animals in the next decade.

# SAVING LIVES THROUGH UNIQUE PROGRAMS & IMPROVEMENTS



## NEW PROGRAMS & IMPROVEMENTS

### HUMANE EDUCATION

Youth programs promote pet safety & responsibility

### CRUELTY INTERVENTION

Programs assist and train law enforcement to intervene in cruelty, hoarding, neglect, and abuse situations

### CRISIS FOSTER

Provides shelter for pets when guardians experience domestic violence, fires, floods and military deployment or other temporary events

### DISASTER RESPONSE

Programs assist animals in crisis both locally and nationally during natural disasters

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

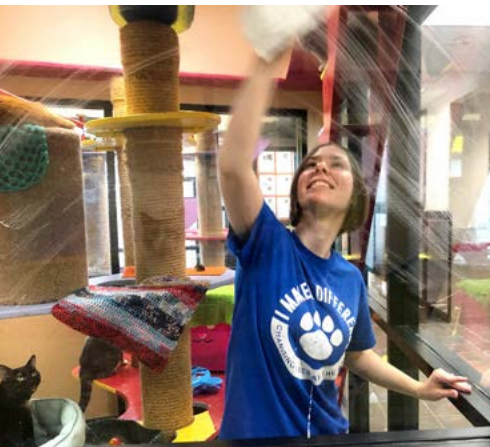
Provides free and low-cost spay/neuter, vaccination, and microchip services for low-income and senior pet owners in targeted areas

### FOSTER PROGRAMS

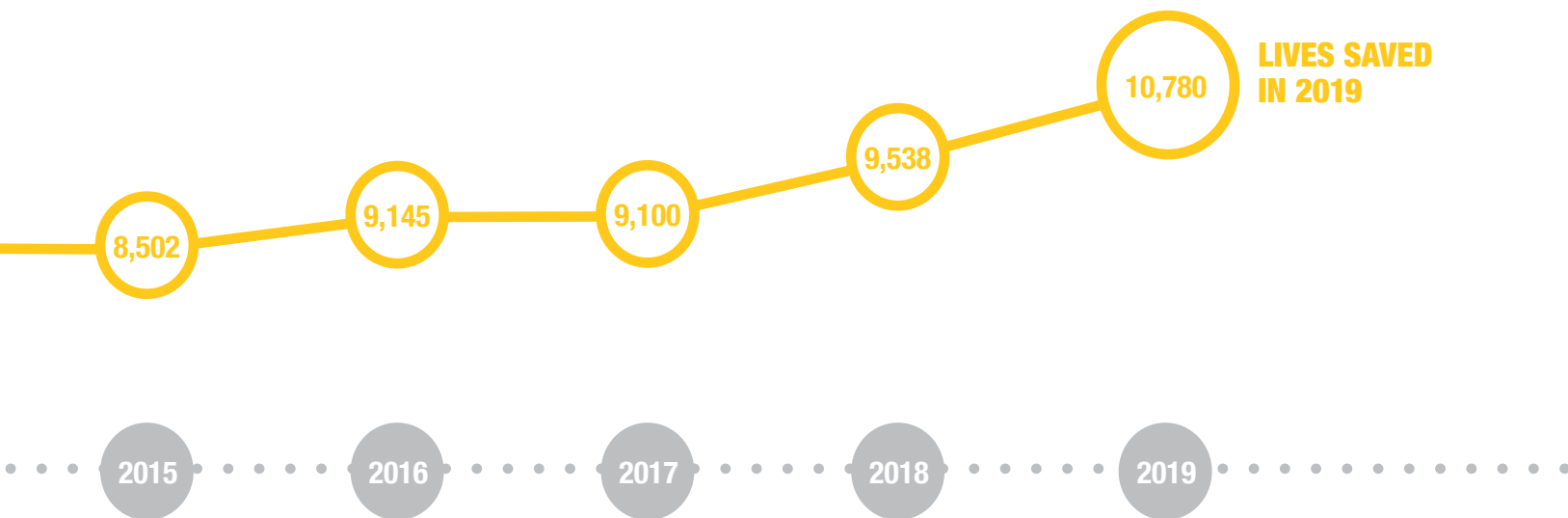
Provides a home-like environment for pets who are too young or too sick for adoption or who need a break from the shelter

### TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN

Program works to reduce the overpopulation of community cats and eliminate euthanasia of healthy feral cats







**LIVES SAVED  
IN 2019**

**ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICES**

Contracts with cities and counties to provide enforcement and offer services to pet owners

**PRISON PROGRAM**

Provides animal training and care for pets who need 24/7 attention, and inmate re-entry career training

**EXPANDED VETERINARY STAFF**

Allows treatment of more medical conditions and ability to perform community outreach spay/neuter

**STATE AND LOCAL LEGISLATION**

Works to improve the lives of companion animals

**DOG TRAINING CLASSES & PET BEHAVIOR HELPLINES**

Builds stronger relationships between pets and people through positive reinforcement, to keep pets happily in their homes

**THERAPETS PROGRAM**

Offers animal companionship through visits from ARL-certified volunteer-pet teams

**EXPANDED AND BREED-NEUTRAL ADOPTION**

Programs make pet ownership more accessible through Name Your Price events and policies that look at every animal and every adopter as an individual

**PARTNERSHIPS WITH KEY RESCUES ACROSS STATE**

Enables transfers of animals when it's in their best interest, and sharing of lifesaving ideas and practices







Nova and Lily enjoy  
some hay in the barn  
at ARL Main

[LEARN MORE >](#)



# MAKING AN IMPACT ONE BY ONE

## ADOPTIONS

4,487	Cats
2,254	Dogs
563	Small Pets
126	Barn Pets
<b>7,430</b>	<b>Total</b>

## OFF-SITE ADOPTION LOCATIONS

10	Adoption locations
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## SECOND CHANCE RANCH

126	Barn pets adopted
96	Barn pets cared for from cruelty situations

## ANIMAL CONTROL (DES MOINES)

10,794	Dispatched trips
10,400	Animal Control Officer staff hours
6,499	Animals handled
425	Citations issued

## CRUELTY INTERVENTION (OUTSIDE OF DES MOINES)

431	Animals rescued from cruelty
208	Cases/investigations
5	Law Enforcement Trainings
300	Law Enforcement Training attendees
26	Trained volunteers for emergency response

YEAR  
**2019**  
IN REVIEW

## COMMUNITY-OWNED PETS

1,878	Pets returned to owners
1,131	Spay/neuter surgeries through free and low-cost spay/neuter programs
1,958	Pets microchipped
807	Pets receiving veterinary assistance
90	Pets in Crisis Foster
891	Pets receiving food assistance

## FOSTER

414	Foster homes
1,569	Pets in foster homes

## VOLUNTEER

1,656	Volunteers
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## OPERATION CATSNIP (TNR)

615	Cats through program
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## PETS TRANSFERRED

857	Pets transferred out
214	Pets transferred in

## IN THE COMMUNITY

2,135	TheraPets visits
106	TheraPets teams
89	Facilities hosting TheraPets visits
10,719	Humane Education experiences
1,371	Students who received pet safety training
2,731	Students who received Pet Responsibility Program

## PET BEHAVIOR SERVICES

88	Training classes
961	Dogs that received behavior help (phone calls and consultations)
202	Cats that received behavior help (phone calls and consultations)

## MEDICAL

4,858	Spay/neuter surgeries for ARL animals
1,968	Dental procedures
265	Laboratory procedures
47,670	Medical treatments given

JANUARY 2019 - DECEMBER 2019  
**ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF IOWA**

INTAKES <sup>1</sup>	DOG	CAT	SMALL	BARN	TOTAL <sup>3</sup>
Stray/Impound	2,641	3,927	90	71	6,729
Owner Surrender	1,455	2,650	501	76	4,682
Transfers In	35	35	91	53	214
Other	60	131	51	2	244
<b>Total Intakes</b>	<b>4,191</b>	<b>6,743</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>11,869</b>

OUTCOMES <sup>1</sup>	DOG	CAT	SMALL	BARN	TOTAL <sup>3</sup>
Adoptions	2,254	4,487	563	126	7,430
Transfers Out	91	614	110	42	857
Return to Owner	1,541	301	11	25	1,878
Return to Habitat	0	615	0	0	615
Euthanized <sup>2</sup>	309	640	28	3	980
Died in Care	20	221	27	0	268
<b>Total Outcomes</b>	<b>4,215</b>	<b>6,878</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>12,028</b>
<b>Live Release Rate</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>90%</b>

**Reasons for Euthanasia**

The ARL looks at every animal as an individual and not a number and determines a treatment or rehabilitation plan. We only euthanize animals that are dangerous or suffering, and only after we have exhausted all other humane and responsible options. We do not euthanize for space and there are no time limits on the animals in our care.

*Note:* We have attempted to make this report as easy to understand as possible, but if you have any questions, please contact [arl@arl-iowa.org](mailto:arl@arl-iowa.org).

<sup>1</sup> Does not include wildlife; @e partner with several wildlife rehabilitation organizations to care for wild animals brought to us.

<sup>2</sup> Does not include owner-requested euthanasia.

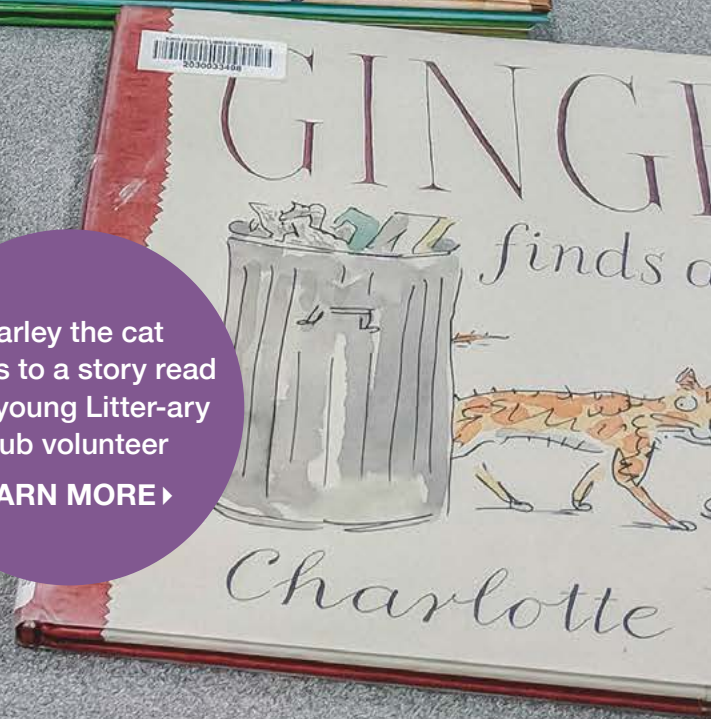
<sup>3</sup> The number of intakes will not necessarily equal the number of outcomes over the course of a year. The difference represents a net increase or decrease in the number of animals in our care at the beginning of the period and at the end.





Harley the cat  
listens to a story read  
by a young Litter-ary  
Club volunteer

[LEARN MORE ▶](#)







# TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN: OPERATION CATSNIP

As part of the ARL's partnership with the city of Des Moines, we continue to work on ordinance improvements with city staff, city council, and Des Moines Police. In late 2018, the Des Moines City Council voted unanimously to approve an ordinance change, and we lobbied for changes to allow for a trap-neuter-return (TNR) program to humanely and effectively reduce community/feral cat colonies in the city. It was a huge step forward for the cats in our community, and on March 1, 2019, the ARL launched our TNR program, Operation CatSnip.

In just nine months, the program has already made a big impact in the city of Des Moines. As of Dec. 31, more than 600 healthy community cats were spayed/neutered, vaccinated, ear-tipped, and returned to the communities where they'd already been living and thriving – improving their lives and preventing more generations from taking their place.

YEAR  
2019  
IN REVIEW



# 100,000 SPAY/NEUTER SURGERIES

In October 2019, the ARL hit a huge spay/neuter milestone. Since 2000, more than 100,000 pets have been spayed/neutered through the ARL. That number includes shelter animals and animals that are part of our community outreach and trap-neuter-return programs. Those spay/neuter efforts have gone a long way toward curbing pet overpopulation in central Iowa and have prevented countless animals from entering the shelter system.



# SAVE 10K: A SUCCESS

We started the year with a challenge to our team to save more pets than ever before – with a goal of 10,000 lives saved. That meant more pets adopted to new families, more pets transferred to our rescue partners when it's in their best interest, more lost pets returned to their owners and more community cats trapped, neutered and returned to their natural habitat. We're happy to say we not only met our goal, but exceeded it with 10,780 lives saved, making 2019 a record-breaking year for ARL pets! While working toward this goal, we also celebrated monthly milestones. For the first time ever, in August, we exceeded 1,000 animals saved in a one-month period. We exceeded that number again in December.





# 2019 PET RESCUES & ASSISTS IN OUR COMMUNITY

2019 was a year of large-scale rescues, making it one of our most challenging years on record. It put our entire team to the test. Here are some major rescues we assisted with in 2019:

## APRIL

The ARL rescue team assisted in removing 26 cats and kittens from a 1-bedroom apartment in Des Moines. All reeked of urine and many were suffering from injuries and infections.

## APRIL

Just one week later, we were called to an even worse situation in a single-family home in Des Moines. All 24 cats and kittens rescued were suffering from untreated medical conditions, and many of the kittens were struggling to stay alive.

## JUNE

A month later, we faced our most challenging rescue operation in more than a decade. Over 13 days, our team removed 380 cats – 186 living and 194 deceased – from a property in Madrid. The buildings were filled with feces and garbage, and the air quality was so bad we had to wear respirators and protective suits and were only allowed inside for 30-minute intervals. We built large temporary apartments in our horse arena so the cats could be housed together, and each was evaluated medically and behaviorally and placed on a track to the adoption program that best suited them. It was weeks before any of the cats were healthy enough to go up for adoption.

## JUNE

The ARL's Mobile Response Team was deployed to Audubon County to help remove 13 dogs in need of veterinary care from a property in Exira. All were very shy and many had skin infections and other medical issues. The dogs received medical and behavioral rehabilitation before entering our adoption program.

## JULY

The ARL rescue team was called to a Des Moines home in our fourth cat hoarding case in 10 weeks. Again we needed protective suits and respirators because of toxic conditions. We removed 42 cats and kittens, all severely infested with fleas.

## NOVEMBER

The ARL team rescued 26 animals crammed in a small, feces-filled house in Des Moines. The 21 dogs and five cats and kittens were crawling with fleas and reeking of urine. Nearly all the dogs had skin infections and many needed extensive behavioral rehabilitation before being placed for adoption.

## DECEMBER

ARL, the Animal Legal Defense Fund and The Wild Animal Sanctuary, along with other partnering organizations, conducted a massive rescue operation at Cricket Hollow roadside zoo in Manchester, IA. More than 500 animals – ranging from exotics to wildlife to domestic animals – were rescued from deplorable conditions over two separate days. The ARL took in nearly 200 of those rescued for treatment, rehabilitation and eventual adoption or sanctuary placement.

## LOOKING AHEAD: **BIG GOALS, BIG IMPACT**



### **CATS ARE STILL A CHALLENGE**

Over the years community attitudes toward dogs have largely evolved to what is now represented by the millions of dogs who live happily as members of their human family, but we still have a ways to go with cats.

When a lost dog arrives at the ARL, there is a nearly 40% chance it will get reclaimed by its family. When a lost cat arrives at the ARL, there is less than 5% chance it will get reclaimed due to a variety of factors, including that it may have never had a family to begin with. Kittens can become pregnant as young as 4 months old and can have up to 5 litters every year. The average number of kittens in each litter is 5, which means that a cat as young as 4 months old can have as many as 25 kittens in just 12 months – and that doesn't account for their kittens' offspring.

On an average day, the ARL can have well over 1,000 cats in our care. Through expanded spay/neuter, foster, and adoption programs, our goal is to elevate how cats are viewed in society and save more lives.



### **AFFORDABLE PET-FRIENDLY HOUSING**

The lack of affordable pet-friendly housing in our community is the biggest reason why dogs and cats are surrendered to the ARL by families who love them every single day. While there are a lot of rentals that call themselves “pet-friendly,” the majority of them still have restrictions or requirements that are not inclusive to a growing number of people and their pets. These can include size, weight, or breed restrictions, excessive pet deposits or monthly pet rent, cat declawing requirements, or many other things that make finding a place to rent with a dog that is over 25 pounds or a cat with all of its digits a challenge, if not impossible.

Through working with landlords, property developers, and other policymakers, our goal is to make housing more accessible for responsible pet owners who also make great tenants.



### **PROGRESSIVE LEGISLATION & POLICIES**

Over 67% of families own pets, so we cannot help pets without also considering the role that humans play in the equation. Whether it's protecting pets from their abusers, protecting pet owners from unfair regulations, or protecting people from dangerous offenders, many of the pet issues we face also have one or many elements involving people and needed human services.

Going forward we need to expand the legalization of trap-neuter-return programs in central Iowa and funding for community cats, remove discriminatory breed specific legislation, and create partnerships with health and human services agencies involving mental health treatment and rehabilitation as well as human shelters and other crisis agencies. Through working in cooperation with city, county, and state and other policymakers we can bridge the gap between helping animals and helping people.





**FILL  
HIGH-IMPACT  
VOLUNTEER  
NEEDS**

**ACCESS  
TO AFFORDABLE  
& HIGH VOLUME  
VETERINARY CARE**

As veterinary costs continue to rise, we need to develop solutions to bridge the gap between income restrictions and the cost of both routine and unexpected veterinary care.

**COMMUNITY-BASED  
ANIMAL CONTROL  
SERVICES**

Starting in 2020 we are taking the word “Control” out of “Animal Control Services” to better illustrate the “education and resources first (vs. enforcement first)” approach we take to protecting animals and people in the communities we serve.

**EXPANDED  
ADOPTION  
ACCESSIBILITY  
FOR WESTERN  
SUBURBS**

**ANIMAL RESCUE  
GROUPS WORKING  
TOGETHER**

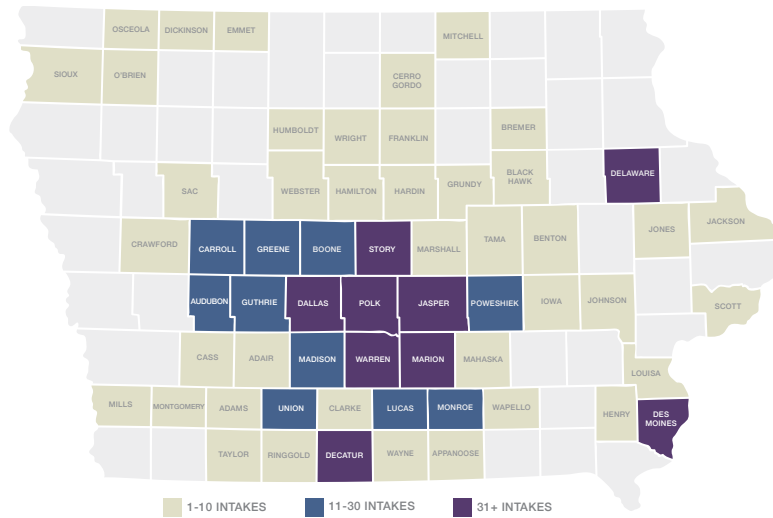
The competition and divisiveness in our industry directly inhibits all of our ability to save more lives.

**REDUCE  
THE NEED FOR  
ANIMAL SHELTERING**

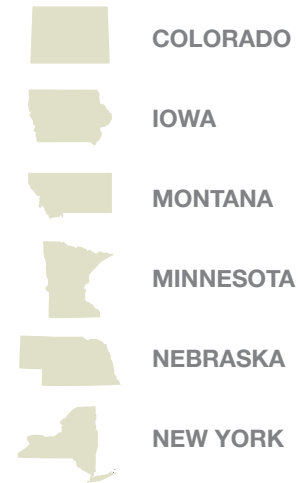
More than half of the pets that arrive in our care were surrendered by their owners. Our goal is to continue to expand our programs and services to aid pet owners so that they can keep their pets in their homes when it's the right thing to do.



## 2019 INTAKES BY COUNTY



## 2019 INTAKES BY STATE



## YOUR DONATION SAVES LIVES

All of the lifesaving work that has been done over the past decade would never have been possible without donations from people like you who care about animals. There is still so much more work to be done, and with your donation, together we can save even more lives over the next decade. You can be the miracle for abused, abandoned, and homeless pets.

## WAYS TO DONATE

Below are just some of the methods you can use to Be the Miracle.

- ONE-TIME DONATION >
- DONOR ADVISED COMMUNITY FUND >
- LOYAL FRIENDS CLUB MONTHLY DONATION >
- ENDOWMENTS >
- TRUSTS AND WILLS >
- STOCKS >

For other ways to give, visit [ARL-iowa.org/OtherWaysToGive](http://ARL-iowa.org/OtherWaysToGive) or send an email to [arl@arl-iowa.org](mailto:arl@arl-iowa.org)

For questions or comments about the Animal Rescue League of Iowa or Tailwaggers, please contact (515) 262-9503

**ARL Main**  
5452 N.E. 22nd St  
Des Moines, IA 50313

**ARL West**  
1500 22nd St  
West Des Moines, IA 50265

**ARL North, PetSmart**  
1715 Delaware Ave  
Ankeny, IA 50021

