

Implementation of a Street Based Veterinary Clinic: One Year Later

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Introduction

As of January 2020, there were roughly 10,979 individuals experiencing homelessness in Arizona, and over 1,000 people live in an encampment outside the Human Services Campus (HSC) known as “the zone.” About 25% of homeless individuals care for a pet. To meet the veterinary needs of this population, Street Medicine Phoenix (SMP), partnered with Midwestern School of Veterinary Medicine to establish a street based veterinary clinic.

Methods:

Veterinarians and vet students followed SMPs healthcare teams on foot at outreach events. If patients had pets, the pets were offered physical exams/check-ups and vaccinations. Vaccinations offered included the following: Rabies, DAPP (Distemper, Adenovirus, Parainfluenza, and Parvo), FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Feline Calicivirus, and Feline Panleukopenia), and Bordetella. Supplies such as food, treats, and leashes were also distributed.

Since March 2022, SMP Mobile Veterinary Clinics have seen 122 unique animals and have administered 269 vaccinations.

Pet vaccination, particularly rabies, is required for access to the Human Services Campus, meal centers, and transitional housing.



Results:

Between March and December 2022, there have been 10 mobile veterinary clinics. Students and veterinary preceptors saw 122 unique animals and have given 269 vaccinations. Medications such as Pyrantel, Benadryl, Hydrocortisone, and Carprofen have also been commonly prescribed. Some conditions encountered include: dermatitis, ocular discharge, lethargy, trauma, and otitis.

	Vaccines Administered		
	Dogs	Cats	Total
Rabies	80	5	85
DAPP	86	0	86
FVRCP	0	7	7
Bordetella	5	0	5
Pyrantel*	30	4	34

*Pyrantel is a de-wormer and not a vaccine.

Discussion:

Aside from the obvious benefit to the animals, our intervention had a positive unintended consequence. Pet vaccination allows individuals to access social services such as shelters and kitchens because these locations require pets to be up to date on vaccinations. Therefore, mobile veterinary clinics allow people to access the services they need to get off the streets. One patient interviewed by SMP was able to get off the street and into an apartment as a direct result of his dogs receiving the rabies vaccine.

Conclusion:

Mobile veterinary clinics provide an effective and convenient means of veterinary care for pets of people experiencing homelessness while enabling owners greater access to social services.



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