

KOREAN  
TREAT

Chewy rice cakes are a versatile delight, Page 31A



BROWARD SCHOOL BOARD  
FIRES SUPERINTENDENT AGAIN

Board voted unanimously Tuesday to oust Vickie Cartwright, after a previous board fired her in November, Page 13A



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# Miami Herald

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Miami-Dade's  
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# No room in the kennel



**A visit to Miami-Dade  
Animal Services.**

Learn more about the spike in population last year and best practices if you find a lost dog.

**MEET THE  
SHELTER BOSS**

Bronwyn Stanford had been an administrator with DCF before taking the helm at Miami-Dade's pet shelter, 5A

**WANTING TO  
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Five important questions to ask yourself if you are considering bringing a shelter pet into your home, 5A



**Interested in adopting  
a pet? Here's help.**

You can see what's available at Miami-Dade Animal Services.



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Viserys attends a press conference at the Miami-Dade Animal Services Pet Adoption & Protection Center in Doral.

# Miami-Dade’s stray dog problem: Shelter’s so full Animal Services is turning some of them away

BY DOUGLAS HANKS  
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Miami-Dade County’s animal shelter was so full at the end of last year that even police officers were told not to expect help with stray dogs that they found roaming the streets.

“The shelter has reached a critical point in dangerous overpopulation,” Kathleen Labrada, assistant director of Animal Services, wrote in a Dec. 2 email. “The Department is unable to respond to 15’s involving contained stray dogs, whether in a police car or at a station.”

The shelter administrator was referring to a law enforcement code for police requests for help with an animal in laying out new rules for how the county’s Animal Services Department would respond.

During a nationwide surge in homeless pets as a result of pandemic disruptions, Miami-Dade’s tax-funded shelter in Doral is struggling — and sometimes failing — to meet demand for kennel space. It hit a record 507 dogs in November and continued to report high numbers of canines in custody as 2023 began.

“Every day I am in crisis,” Animal Services Director Bronwyn Stanford during an interview in the \$15 million shelter Miami-Dade opened in 2016.

The trends are adding to the pressure on Stanford, the newcomer to Miami-Dade County government, appointed by Mayor Daniella Levine Cava in November 2021. More than a year after starting the \$198,000-a-year job, the former child-welfare ad-



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Thanos, a 140-pound Canary mastiff, rests at the Miami-Dade Animal Services Pet Adoption & Protection Center in Doral.

ministrator is facing backlash from a non-profit supporter of Animal Services and an employee union, which complains of stressful conditions and management missteps.

**HOW MIAMI-DADE HANDLES STRAY DOGS**

But the highest source of friction remains the shelter’s less-welcoming approach to stray dogs, which began early in the pandemic when residents were discouraged from bringing homeless dogs and cats to the Doral facility as many Miami-Dade government facilities closed their doors and limited services.

Along with the directives to Miami-Dade police, county operators have told

“**THE SHELTER HAS REACHED A CRITICAL POINT IN OVERPOPULATION.**

*Kathleen Labrada, assistant director of Animal Services*

frustrated residents that dog catchers won’t be sent to retrieve canines wandering the streets.

“If you cannot take care of the dog, you can let it go back out and hopefully it will find its way back home,” an operator for Miami-Dade’s 311 helpline told a caller late last year who was asking the county to pick up a dog she found loose in the neighborhood.

The operator also encouraged the caller to try to find the owner, or consider a trip to the shelter to see if the county would take in the animal.

The audio was provided by the Pets Trust, an advocacy group pushing the county to spend more sterilizing animals.

“So you want me to leave the dog in the street?” the caller responded.

ed. “That’s crazy.”

While surrendered pet cats pose challenges for Animal Services, stray cats aren’t much of a problem because Miami-Dade’s long-standing policy is to sterilize homeless felines and place them back onto the streets. Stray dogs aren’t considered safe on the streets for the public or for themselves, leaving Miami-Dade to either take them in or encourage people who find them to take action themselves.

As 2023 began, Animal Services issued new instructions to 311 operators designed to make the help line more welcoming to people dealing with stray





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Miami-Dade Commissioner Kionne McGhee and Mayor Daniella Levine Cava give dogs love during a press conference at Miami-Dade Animal Services.

FROM PAGE 3A

# PETS

dogs. Operators will process stray-dog reports, and the Doral shelter has resumed accepting stray dogs after population numbers dropped in January, said Flora Beal, public affairs manager for Animal Services.

But residents showing up in Doral with a stray will usually be asked to go back home with it and try to find the owner, then offered free pet supplies and a second appointment for turning in the dog as long as kennel space remains available, Beal said.

“If there’s no way they could possibly keep the dog, then we’re more than likely going to take it in,” Beal said. “But if the population goes back up again, we can’t. It’s day to day.”

Miami-Dade has a “no-kill” policy for its shelter, which bans euthanizing animals for space purposes. The policy, along with the County Commission’s 2020 passage of “Save Charlie” legislation, limits euthanasia to health issues and severe behavioral concerns. In 2021, Miami-Dade reported only about 300 shelter dogs were euthanized, out of more than 8,500 taken in by the facility.

The shelter prioritizes kennel space for dogs from enforcement actions, such as those rescued from animal-cruelty investigations or inhumane conditions. As intake slows, Miami-Dade sees its shelter population recede as daily adoptions are able to make dents in the numbers.

The latest population count for dogs was 407, about 20% below November’s peak but still close to what the shelter considers full, Beal said. But emergency kennel measures are no longer needed, such as the dog crates set up in conference rooms during the fall spike.

On a recent visit to the shelter, some cages were empty in the glass-walled room reserved for smaller and medium-sized dogs. Princess, a beige terrier, stood up as visitors entered, but Cameron, a chocolate-colored bulldog, stayed lying on his paws, staring out to the cages across from him.

A short walk away, frantic barking greeted the tour in the kennels reserved for the largest dogs. In the dusty window of one dog’s pen, a shelter worker had scrawled: “Play with me!”

Several cages down,

Brie, a black boxer weighing 100 pounds, was eager for attention, leaping near the top of the pen door. A printed note on her cage offered a mix of encouragement and advisory to would-be owners: This strong, sweet beauty “needs an Experienced Handler who will take the time to train her.”

The campaign to keep homeless dogs in their neighborhoods reflects the grim outlook for a large dog taken to a municipal shelter, where demand for adopting bigger breeds is low and chances are slim an owner will end up reuniting with a lost pet.

“We’ve worked so hard to train our community to bring their stray dogs to us and not think of us as this harsh euthanasia place. But I’m not sure we’ve done our community a good service in that,” said Emily Wood, director of Broward’s Animal Care and Adoption Division, which runs the county’s pet shelter. “If an animal comes here, there’s a 17% chance they’ll get home. Even if we weren’t full.”

Tasha, a 65-pound terrier mix, has been waiting in Doral for adoption since June. Found as a stray, she was spooked by Miami-Dade’s shelter from Day One, said Barbara Delgado, an Animal Services employee giving Tasha her daily time in a play area outside the kennels.

“She was so fearful,” Delgado said. “Now she’s so sweet.”

While the start of the pandemic sparked some households to take in new pets, overall adoption numbers dropped in Miami-Dade County from about 16 a day in 2019 to 12 in 2020. Statistics through October show the daily adoption figure dropped more in 2022, to just 10 dogs finding new homes on an average day. Meanwhile, 19 new dogs came in on an average day last year.

As shelters decline to pick up found dogs, residents are complaining of strays becoming neighborhood fixtures.

Caprice Brown said she’s worried about the larger dogs that run loose in her Liberty City neighborhood when she’s walking Tyrese, a Maltese-Shih Tzu mix. Her repellent of choice: a spray can of air freshener.

“That runs them off,” said Brown, a former cafeteria worker for Miami-Dade schools. “I’m trying to protect myself, and my dog.”

At the Redland Dog Sanctuary, the non-profit is housing about 60 dogs, a



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Tasha plays outside with a volunteer at Miami-Dade Animal Services.

surge from the couple of dozen that would be there on a typical day before the COVID-19 pandemic, said Amy Spadaro, the group’s president. “We get them tied to our fence, because our address is on the website. We’ll find crates of puppies outside,” she said. “We’re doing all we can. It’s a really sad situation.”

Shelter managers cite multiple factors making it harder to keep dog populations manageable, among them:

- **Housing market:** The surge of rents last year gave landlords more leverage to turn away tenants with pets or tighten the rules on the size of dogs allowed. “Landlords are a big issue,” said Cherie Watcher, vice president of marketing for the Humane Society of Broward County. She said the nonprofit recently took in an 82-pound bulldog that would be fine for apartment life if allowed. “He listens and rarely barks. He waits by the door when he wants to go out,” she said. “The owner surrendered him. And the reason is the landlord said no pets.”
- **Sterilization ‘deficit’ during the pandemic:** In 2020, Miami-Dade and other governments paused or cut back on sterilization procedures for dogs and cats, and veterinary clinics faced shortages on anesthesia, medical gear and other supplies needed to spay and neuter dogs and cats. That’s likely led to more pet births in the subsequent years, adding to the pressure on shelters. “There was a deficit in spaying and neutering over

“

**IF THERE’S NO WAY THEY COULD POSSIBLY KEEP THE DOG, WE’RE MORE THAN LIKELY GOING TO TAKE IT IN. BUT IF THE POPULATION GOES BACK UP AGAIN, WE CAN’T.**

*Flora Beal, Animal Services public affairs manager*

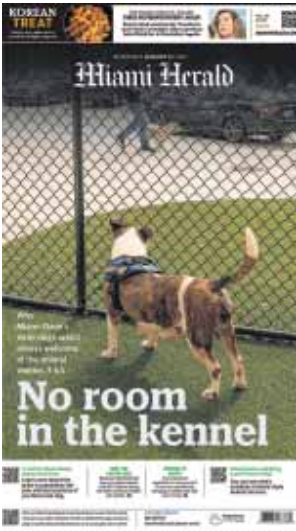
the pandemic,” said Wood, the Animal Care director in Broward.

- **Full shelters elsewhere:** Before the pandemic, Miami-Dade relied on sending large dogs out of Florida, where they were more likely to be adopted, utilizing a network of non-profits and rescue transport groups in the Northeast and Canada. The pandemic disrupted that option. In 2019, an average day saw Miami-Dade transport nine dogs somewhere else. In 2022, that figure plunged to four a day — the lowest in at least six years. “It’s pretty dire out there right now,” said Ric Browde, president of Wings of Rescue, a nonprofit that pairs shelters with too many dogs with shelters and rescue groups willing to take them. He said one well-regarded Pennsylvania shelter that usually can take in large dogs is more crowded than ever. “They might have 10 kennel spaces available this week,” he said. “Where they’d have 80 spaces two or three years ago.”
- **Staffing shortages:** Miami-Dade’s Animal Services Department saw

the same kind of job vacancies plaguing other county departments, including Transportation, where bus service was reduced for a shortage of drivers. The discount spay-and-neuter clinic at the Doral shelter is “Closed Until Further Notice,” according to the Animal Services website, with limited appointments offered only at the county’s Homestead clinic. Animal Services plans to reopen the Doral sterilization clinic in mid-February once it brings another veterinarian onto the schedule, Stanford said.

To compensate for staffing shortages, Stanford tapped volunteers from other county departments to spend time working at the Doral shelter. She also converted an Animal Services position to focus solely on recruiting entry-level shelter workers, including developing future workers by promoting the jobs to high school students.

She gave a 5% pay increase for some kennel positions and switched them to be on the “Dog Enrichment Team,” with a



## About the cover

Samantha, who at more than 300 days was the dog at the shelter the longest as of December, watches as owners and pets pass by at Miami-Dade Animal Services. Photo by Sydney Walsh, swalsh@miamiherald.com.





Bronwyn Stanford, who heads up Miami-Dade's pet shelter. She joined Miami-Dade Animal Services after being a longtime administrator with the Florida Department of Children and Families.

# ‘You’ve got animals constantly coming at you’ Shelter head on her new job

BY SEBASTIAN MADIGAN  
Special to the Herald

One of the first things that Bronwyn Stanford realized when she took over the helm of Miami-Dade Animal Services was that rescuing and caring for lost cats and stray dogs was strikingly similar to dealing with children who needed homes or protection.

As a longtime administrator with the Florida Department of Children and Families and Children’s Home Society, Stanford was bracingly familiar with the hardships borne by those who had suffered abuse, neglect or abandonment. Upon joining the county’s animal shelter in November 2021, she saw the needs as all too common.

“The issues are so much the same — getting kids really good homes, getting animals really good homes,” Stanford said in an interview.

Stanford oversees the county’s \$15 million shelter, which opened in 2016 and has an annual budget of \$33 million. Not only is there the constant movement of dozens of animals in and out of the facility, but she oversees 280 em-

ployees, who in turn manage as many as 250 volunteers. During much of 2022 and into the new year, the shelter has been overwhelmed with animals to the point it had to stop accepting new ones.

She lamented that there are “never enough foster parents or animal adopters” and said it’s imperative to reduce the amount of time that animals and children spend in shelters or foster homes. Remaining long in either setting is “not ideal,” Stanford said.

**‘WAY MORE DIFFICULT’ THAN HER DCF JOB**

It didn’t take her long to realize the the job at the animal shelter is “way more difficult,” she said, than the posts she held at DCF.

“I think it’s because you’re dealing with life and death more,” Stanford said. “I dealt with that there, too, but I will tell you that there’s so much scrutiny. You’re in the public eye whatever you do.”

She pondered that comment for a moment. “I don’t mind being watched,” she added. “You’re always going to do the right thing for the right reasons. I just think



A stray kitten at Miami-Dade Animal Services in Doral.

that you’ve got animals constantly coming at you.”

A former attorney and prosecutor who was raised in East Brunswick, N.J., and earned a law degree from Stetson University College of Law, Stanford acknowledged that, even after working for the troubled and scandal-ridden DCF, it took courage to assume the stewardship of Animal Services. The agency has been bedeviled over the years by controversies of its own and subject to the fierce emotional responses — and sometimes irrational passions — of people who love animals.

**PETS RETURNED AFTER COVID ADOPTIONS**

The timing of Stanford’s move to the county shelter in Doral was especially difficult coming during the COVID pandemic.

“Almost the minute I started, we were just coming off COVID here and we were already over capacity in a month,” she said. “We already had not enough space for the animals. They were coming in at an alarming rate. I’ve been in crisis mode since I got here.”

Stanford has had a lifelong interest in caring for

SEE STANFORD, 6A

## Five questions to ask before deciding if you’re ready to adopt a shelter dog

BY DOUGLAS HANKS  
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If you think your home is ready to adopt a dog or cat, what’s the next step?

Here are five question to answer:

● **1. Have you tried fostering a dog or cat first?** Municipal kennels usually are eager to have people take in cats and dogs even if it’s not on a permanent basis. Serving as a foster home for a dog or cat can also be a good training run for adopting a pet full-time.

● **2. Are you planning to move?** Housing is the No. 1 reason owners surrendered their dogs, according to data collected between 2018 and 2020 by 24Petwatch, a microchip company. As the rental market tightened in 2021 and 2022, shelter managers reported tenants finding it harder to secure homes where the owner allowed pets. So even if your current living situation allows for a dog, consider whether you might be apartment hunting in the future. And it wouldn’t hurt to confirm a landlord’s existing pet-friendly policy will continue. “It’s not just: Are you going to move?” said Flora Beal, public affairs manager for Miami-Dade County’s Animal Services Department. “It’s also: Have you checked with your landlord first?”

● **3. Would an older dog be the best fit?** Some rescue groups are dedicated solely to senior dogs, a label that the American Animal Hospital Association applies for dogs and cats that have passed through 75% of their expected lifespan. Advocates for older dogs point out they’re likely to be fairly mellow and predictable in temperament, compared to younger ones. Especially if the other option is a dog closer to the puppy stage. Still, an older dog likely means a faster arrival of health issues that often come with advanced age.

● **4. Are you happy to add pet expenses to your budget?** Owning a dog isn’t cheap, but neither are restaurants, vacations and many hobbies. So file pet ownership under life enrichment but with the responsibility that comes with caring for a new household member. A 2022 survey by Rover, which runs an online listing for dog walkers, found dog owners reported recurring canine expenses of \$40 to \$290 a month. The widest range within that budget: dog food, from \$18 monthly for kibble to nearly \$200 for refrigerated gourmet offerings. Note: The list of core dog expenses doesn’t include boarding for trips away from home, which runs \$35 to \$60 a day for top Rover.com listings in the Miami area.

● **5. Have you spent some time at a shelter first?** Most municipal shelters have active volunteer programs, where people are trained to help walk and socialize dogs living there. It can be a good way to get to know various dogs up for adoption, too, while helping brighten day-to-day conditions for animals even if one doesn’t come home with you.

**HOW TO HELP WITH STRAY PETS IN MIAMI-DADE**

**To adopt a pet:**  
[www.miamidade.gov/global/service.page?Mduid\\_service=ser159925122910773](http://www.miamidade.gov/global/service.page?Mduid_service=ser159925122910773)

**To foster a pet:**  
[www.miamidade.gov/global/service.page?Mduid\\_service=ser1599345590627984](http://www.miamidade.gov/global/service.page?Mduid_service=ser1599345590627984) or [ASDFoster@miamidade.gov](mailto:ASDFoster@miamidade.gov)

**To volunteer:**  
[www.miamidade.gov/global/service.page?Mduid\\_service=ser159839177136735](http://www.miamidade.gov/global/service.page?Mduid_service=ser159839177136735) or [VolunteerASD@miamidade.gov](mailto:VolunteerASD@miamidade.gov)

**To donate:**  
<https://www.miamidade.gov/global/animals/donations.page>

**To report animal cruelty:**  
Please call 311

Douglas Hanks: 305-376-3605, @doug\_hanks



An American Bulldog mix was found as a stray and was available for adoption.



Fiji waits for adoption in her kennel at Miami-Dade Animal Services.



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FROM PAGE 5A

# STANFORD

animals.

“From the time I was a little girl, all I wanted was to take care of animals,” she said. “I was the kid that was always bringing animals home.”

Esther Jacobo, who worked with Stanford at DCF, said she wasn’t at all “surprised that Bronwyn was called to be the leader of an agency that rescues and takes care of pets.”

**A PASSION FOR HELPING CHILDREN, ANIMALS**

“From the beginning,” Jacobo said, “it was clear that Bronwyn not only had a passion for helping families and children but she had a passion for helping animals. She had several cats and she often showed us photos of the cats in outfits that she picked especially for their personalities.”

Some years ago, while living in Miami Beach and serving as managing director for DCF’s Southern Region, Stanford often drove through Overtown on her way to work and would see dozens of stray cats and kittens. “I’d drop

off food for them,” Stanford said, because the colony of cats was living in a neighborhood that could scarcely sustain it.

“A lot of times they’d have kittens. I’d grab them and spay and neuter them, or I’d pay a trapper to spay and neuter them. I just started taking it on myself to rescue them and find good homes for them.”

Some of the cats ended up in her apartment. Some are still there, although she would not say how many. “A few,” she conceded. “I wasn’t taking tons of them home.”

In 2017 Stanford decided to start an organization, CJPaws, to help stray animals. “I came up with the name and I love it,” she said. “It stands for Compassion, Justice and Protection for the Animals We Save.”

Three years later, when she accepted the directorship of Animal Services, Stanford handed over the reins of CJPaws to avoid a conflict of interest.

Stanford’s initiatives at the shelter include:

- Daily walks or play

time for dogs.

- The creation of a “canine enrichment specialist” who trains shelter staff to deal with unruly dogs to make them more adoptable.
- Adding a nonprofit arm, Pets Thrive in 305, and a development director. There’s a fundraising gala planned for May 20. Tables for eight will be available for \$5,000.

“This is a great shelter, but I’m really trying to make a lot of changes here,” Stanford said. “I want to create a great culture with the employees. ... Some of the changes we’ve made have come from them.”

Dahlia Canes, an animal-rights activist based in Cutler Bay, compliments Stanford’s efforts.

“She listens to suggestions and solutions brought up by different individuals or groups,” said Canes, who runs the nonprofit Miami Coalition Against Breed Specific Legislation, which advocates against laws banning pit bull terriers and similar mixed breeds.

“She has a heart of gold, works tirelessly and is damn smart. I hope people will realize that the situation with dogs and cats in Miami-Dade County is at an all-time drama high.

She is doing the best she can with what she has.”

Not all such activists are as effusive. “Personally, I believe when she came into the position of director she came with the best intentions and many plans,” said Chelsea Palermo, a longtime critic of the Miami-Dade shelter.

“I have seen very few of those plans actually come to fruition. I have worked with her countless times with many empty promises and minimal results. I do not believe this is all her fault. There has been a lot of pushback from other members of the administration.”

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said she is proud of Stanford’s progress in the midst of a “national shelter crisis.”

“First and foremost, she loves animals and is personally deeply committed to their welfare,” the mayor wrote in an email.

“Bronwyn has successfully managed the highest daily population in the last quarter while experiencing staffing shortages that she is aggressively addressing.”

In addition, Levine Cava said, Stanford has “developed a solid leadership team focused on building trust and strong

community partnerships while enhancing Miami-Dade’s Animal Services mission to save, protect, and care for our pets.”

Stanford has adopted three pets since she started working at Miami-Dade Animal Services: two kittens, Paxton and Zoe — the latter came with a skull fracture and brain damage — and a Chihuahua named Parker, found in a canal in the Everglades.

“Alligators were in the canal, and little Parker was swimming for her life,” Stanford recalled being told later. “A couple walking along the canal saw this and the gentleman jumped in to save Parker.”

The little dog, stressed and afraid, was taken to the Redland Dog Sanctuary. During a visit, Stanford picked up the Chihuahua and held her. The sanctuary’s director, Newton Siquira Jr., “told me that that was the first time the dog stopped shaking” since being found, Stanford said.

A few days later, she took Parker home.

“She is the perfect dog for me because she is small, does not bark, and gets along with my cats,” Stanford said. “She is the perfect condo dog!”

FROM PAGE 4A

# PETS

focus on walking and playing with dogs twice a day at the shelter.

She also shifted the shelter to an intake system designed to discourage people from leaving dogs there. Known as “managed admissions,” it’s endorsed by the National Animal Care and Control Association and establishes what’s basically a waiting period for surrendering a pet.

When someone arrives to give up their dog or cat, they’re provided information on how they might be able to continue providing a home for an animal, or takes steps on their own to find it an owner. Animal Services then gives them a second appointment to actually turn over the pet to Miami-Dade if they want to go through with it.

“It puts a little more onus on the person dropping off the dog,” Stanford said. “If you had a dog to surrender, wouldn’t it be better for you to post it first on Facebook and Next-door?”

“If you find a dog, we’ll say, ‘Hey, we’ll give you a kennel, we’ll give you food, we’ll give you everything: Are you willing to foster for a few weeks? Can you hold onto the dog?’ ” Stanford said.

“That’s one less dog that comes into the shelter,” she said. “It frees up space so that we can focus on the animals that are really in need. An animal that is part of a cruelty case, or found on I-95 at risk — whoever brings that dog in, we’re going to say, ‘Oh, that’s an emergency.’ We’ll take that dog.”

The new reluctance by Animal Services to seek out stray dogs or accept surrendered pets has added fodder to Stanford’s critics.

Yolanda Berkowitz is one of the county shelter’s most active private benefactors. Her foundation, Friends of Miami Animals, funds improvements at the shelter and dog transports through Wings of Rescue.

She said under Stanford, it’s been difficult to continue coordinating transports, pet-food drives and other efforts with Miami-Dade because of new restrictions on communicating with staff and a general reluctance to accept help.

“The director has told me I’m her only point of contact,” Berkowitz said. She said that’s a change from the previous director, Alex Muñoz, when Berkowitz would coordinate efforts with various administrators and shelter staff.

In an Oct. 24 email to Levine Cava, Berkowitz called Stanford’s tenure “catastrophic” by limiting intake and sabotaging



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As of December, Samantha had been at Miami-Dade Animal Services the longest, more than 300 days.

efforts by non-profits. On Tuesday, Berkowitz called Miami-Dade “the cornerstone” of animal welfare and said she wants to keep helping Animal Services.

“I’m going to continue doing this work,” she said.

SeAdoreia Brown is the president of the local American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees chapter that represents kennel workers at Animal Services. She said employees have complained about dire working conditions as the facility reached maximum capacity, and of management not prioritizing improving the situation for staff. While she credited Stanford for making progress on filling va-

cancies, Brown said morale remains a problem.

“A lot of the folks feel they don’t get the support from leadership,” Brown said. “So naturally they leave and go to other places in the county.”

Michael Rosenberg, a longtime critic of Animal Services, is the founder of the Pets Trust advocacy group. He said the shelter hitting capacity with its dog population reflects a broader failure of Miami-Dade to invest in widespread dog and cat sterilization efforts.

“They’re not attacking the root of the problem, which is over-population,” he said.. “They’ve got to spay and neuter 100,000 animals a year to get on

top of the situation.”

Stanford said she agrees Miami-Dade needs to ramp up spaying and neutering, and that she’s got plans for more sterilization events in 2023. She acknowledged staffing has been a huge challenge. “I think we managed it as well as possible,” she said.

On Berkowitz’s criticism, Stanford said she’s made it easier for nonprofits to help with the shelter’s work, including by converting a daunting eight-page liability waiver to a single sheet that’s helped expand Miami-Dade’s rescue network. “I’ll partner with anyone. I go out in the community,” she said. “I’m always up for listening to people’s ideas and solutions.”

One of the longest stays in the shelter belongs to Samantha, a brown-and-white bulldog brought in as a stray in early 2022. Out for a walk in a blue “Adopt Me” vest with Beal, Samantha sits for a beef treat and gets praise for not pulling on the leash and staying calm among visitors.

“Such a good girl, Samantha,” Beal said. “Amazing.”

*Freelance writer Sebastian Madigan contributed to this report.*

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