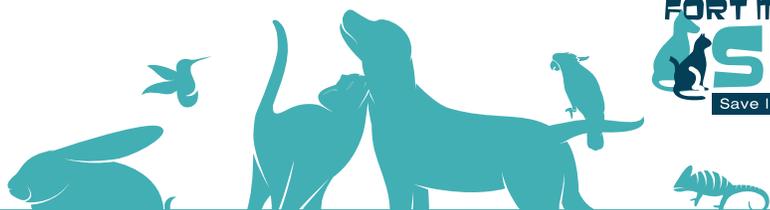


# Pet Owner Impact Survey

IMPACT OF THE WILDFIRE ON PET OWNING HOUSEHOLDS

6 MONTHS POST WILDFIRE



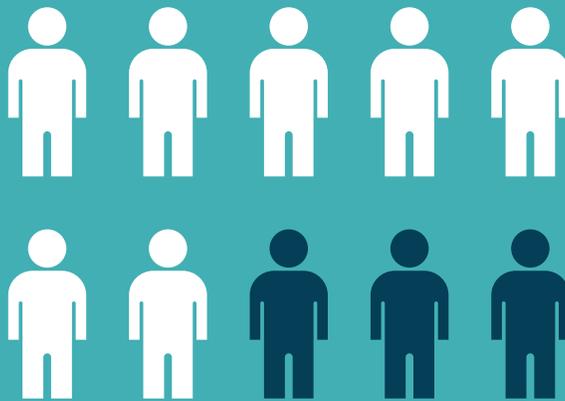
## PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

The Fort McMurray SPCA is undertaking a series of surveys intended for current or previous pet owners living within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. The Fort McMurray SPCA is gathering information from community pet owners regarding their post wildfire re-entry experiences. This data will help the organization to gather more information about the ongoing needs of pet owning individuals, pet owning families and role that companion animals are fulfilling in rebuilding resiliency for residents in our community.

Multi pet households are common in RMWB

**6.5 out of 10**

survey respondents have more than one pet in their household

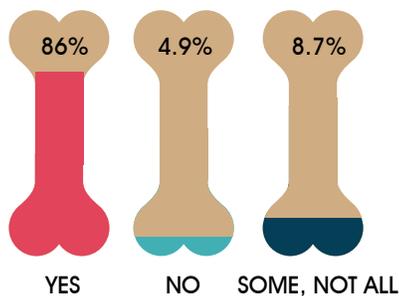


## companion animal health & safety

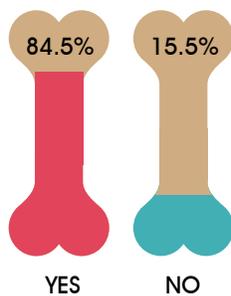


Determining whether our region's companion animals are up to date with their vaccinations and pet identification was another area addressed by this survey. Experts agree that widespread use of vaccinations protect companion animals from highly contagious and deadly diseases, improve a pet's overall quality of life and reduce the spread of diseases prevalent in wildlife, such as rabies and distemper, which infect unvaccinated pets. Vaccinations prevent diseases that can be passed not only from animal to animal but also from animal to human. Having pet identification can also help reunite lost animals and their owners more efficiently during emergencies, disasters or if they go missing from their household.

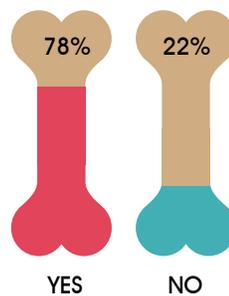
Are your pets spayed/neutered?



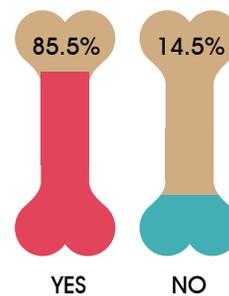
Pets up to date with Rabies vaccination?



Pets up to date with annual vaccinations?



Do you have pet identification?



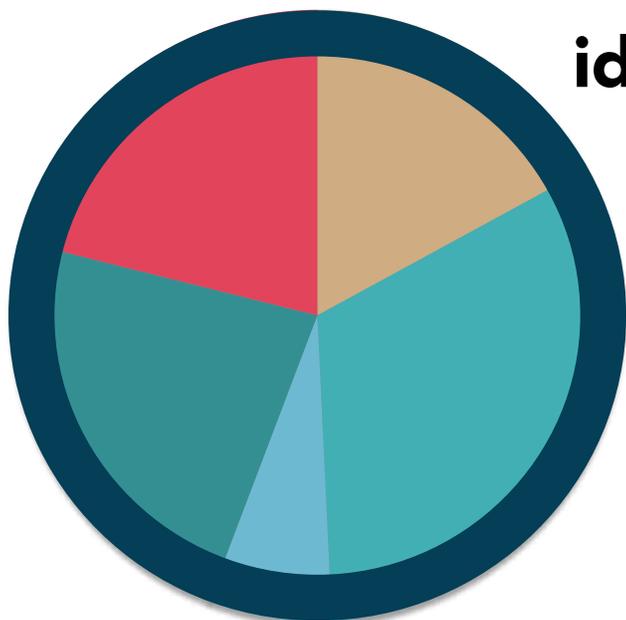
Assuming on average that 6.5 out of 10 households have at least 2 pets, over 6370 animals in the RMWB are not spayed/neutered and more than 20,000 companion animals are not up to date with their Rabies or annual vaccinations. Approximately the same number do not have any pet identification. While it is unknown how many of the companion animals live in rural versus urban areas, 92% of survey respondents live within the urban area of the RMWB indicating that further consideration to promoting the FMSPCA's Northern Animal Management & Education program (NAME) for both urban and rural residents may have impactful benefits on both community health and safety as well as improved health guards for companion animals living within the region.

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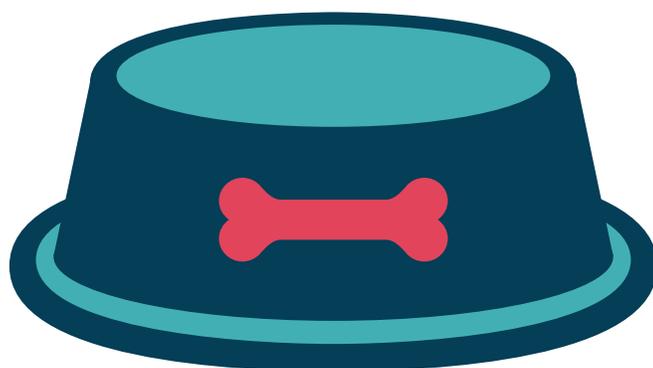
6 MONTHS POST WILDFIRE

## what forms of pet identification do you have for your pet?



- Personal Identification Tag/Nametag (76.5%)
- Microchip (55%)
- Rabies tag (50%)
- City License Tag (40.5%)
- Tattoo (15.5%)

## additional supports for pet owning families through the FMSPCA Pet Food Bank



37% of survey respondents were aware of the support pet owning households can receive through the Fort McMurray SPCA Pet Food Bank program.\*

17% of respondents accessed the pet supplies provided to the region through this program post-wildfire and 3.5% of the respondents accessed the program more than once.\*

When asked what challenges they faced as a pet owning household in the RMWB 13% of respondents indicated that providing pet food and supplies was an ongoing challenge and 21% indicated that they would wish to see food and supplies for pet owning households in need continue on a longer term basis.

\*these number are in addition to the thousands of pounds of food and supplies provided to rural communities through this program.

# Pet Owner Impact Survey

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6 MONTHS POST WILDFIRE



In response to pet owning households that lost their homes or were experiencing other stresses post-wildfire, the FMSPCA began accepting no cost surrenders to support pet owners and reduce further impacts on companion animals in the region. The 22 week program saw over 215 companion animals surrendered to the FMSPCA.

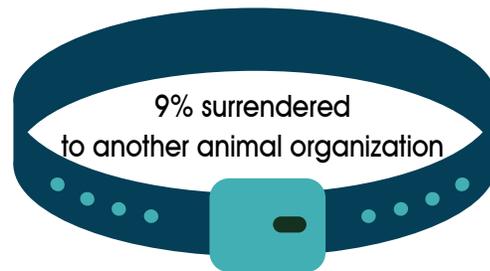
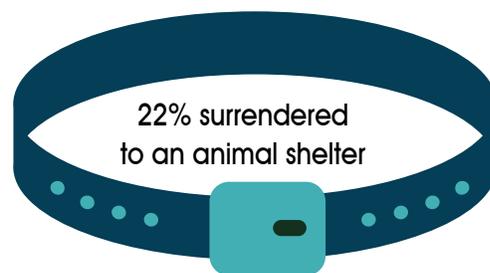
(almost 10 animals per week)

5% of respondents indicated that they had to re-home their companion animal(s) post-wildfire

Reasons impacting re-homing companion animals post-wildfire, respondents were asked to choose all that applied:

- 41% - Change in family circumstances
- 43% - Could not secure pet friendly accommodation post wildfire
- 22% - Could not continue care
- 14% - Change in work schedule or employment impacted ability to keep pet
- 8% - Had to relocate from region and could not take pet

**in contrast to respondents who had to re-home or surrender their pets, 24% of respondents indicated that they are thinking of adding an additional pet to their household.**



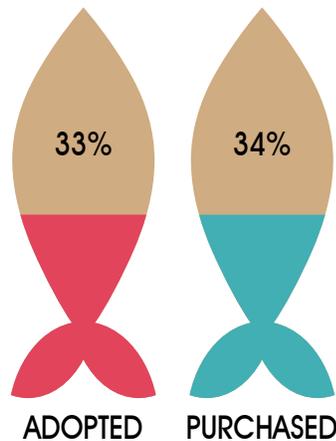
17% of respondents indicated that they have become new pet owners post-wildfire

# Pet Owner Impact Survey

IMPACT OF THE WILDFIRE ON PET OWNING HOUSEHOLDS

6 MONTHS POST WILDFIRE

Studies from other disasters including Slave Lake indicated low pet adoption rates post disaster. With 17% of respondents indicating that they had become new pet owners post-wildfire, our survey sought to identify why and how they had become new pet owners in addition to what if any benefits companion animals provided to pet owning households during and post-wildfire.



## Tell us why you became a new pet owner post-wildfire

- 37% - For companionship, prevent loneliness
- 30% - Mental health benefits
- 24% - Social interaction
- 19% - To benefit our children

## 99.6% of respondents feel that companion animals have positive benefits

"No matter what kind of day I've had, they are happy to see me when I get home"

"I could not imagine my life without animals."

"A pet provides unconditional love and support no matter how you are feeling or what circumstances you may be going through."

"My dog is like a silent therapist. I can talk to her and know the secrets won't be re-told to anyone. There is something special about knowing she is there for me. Coming home to a big doggie hug is the best part of my day!"

"She has made our house a home! We love her and don't know what we would do without her presence"

"Pets bring out a gentle side in us all, whether we're young or old, they provide us with unconditional love. And my dog also gets my butt outside too"

"Having a dog has greatly impacted my mental health. It has helped me with depression, and helped me get out of the house more."

"They give my son something to focus on and care for when he is stressed and they provide comfort for the whole family."

"Adopting my dogs from the FMSPCA are the two best things I have ever done. They are resilient animals that show me I can get up and face everyday no matter if it's a good one or a bad one."

# Pet Owner Impact Survey

IMPACT OF THE WILDFIRE ON PET OWNING HOUSEHOLDS

6 MONTHS POST WILDFIRE

**87% of respondents feel pet companionship provided direct benefits to their well-being since the wildfire**

Common themes in respondent comments included helping with anxiety and depression, stress relief, emotional support, stability, comfort well being, unconditional love, overcoming fear

"Seeing how they have adapted to all the change and move forward helps inspire me to do the same"

"There were times when my pets gave me the will to live and move forward"

"Loving little family member - helped him heal, and he helped me."

"I think my dog is the only reason I have been able to recover emotionally from the wildfire."

"They were the reason I got up every day in the month of May"

"My two dogs have been my security blanket through the emergency and aftermath. They are a calming/soothing presence in my life."

"I know my pet counts on me for their needs, so that has made me try to re-adjust quicker to provide them a normal lifestyle. In return, that has helped me return to somewhat of a normal lifestyle sooner."

"When I'm stressed out or just not being myself my dogs are more affectionate"

"During evacuation and being in the unknown, they were the only thing that kept us laughing and smiling at first."

"I felt strong for my dog - she needed me to be her constant during all the changes (location, new people & surroundings). She gave me something positive to focus on."

"Having my dog around makes me feel safe & calm. She makes me feel reassured that everything will be okay."

"Having our dog has helped both my children and I with anxiety"

"They have been a constant part of our family for 10 years, so having them with us during the wildfire was like having the companionship of family."

"We thought we had lost our dog in the fire. When he was rescued and returned to us our kids were better. They felt safer in all the chaos when he was with us again."

"Calming feeling when near my cat."

"During the evacuation, my cat was one of the few things that kept me calm while I was in camp waiting to hear if our house was still around. After he has been such a source of comfort and stability for me."

"My dog was the only thing I was able to save from my house before we were evacuated. We lost everything in the fire, and it was a very emotional time. My dog provided emotional support throughout the entire process with just her presence. It was a huge stress relief to just be able to take her out for walks and try to get my mind off the difficult times."

"Positively impacted my mental health - gave me a sense of home when I was displaced."

"Husband is a city firefighter and they help with his PTSD"

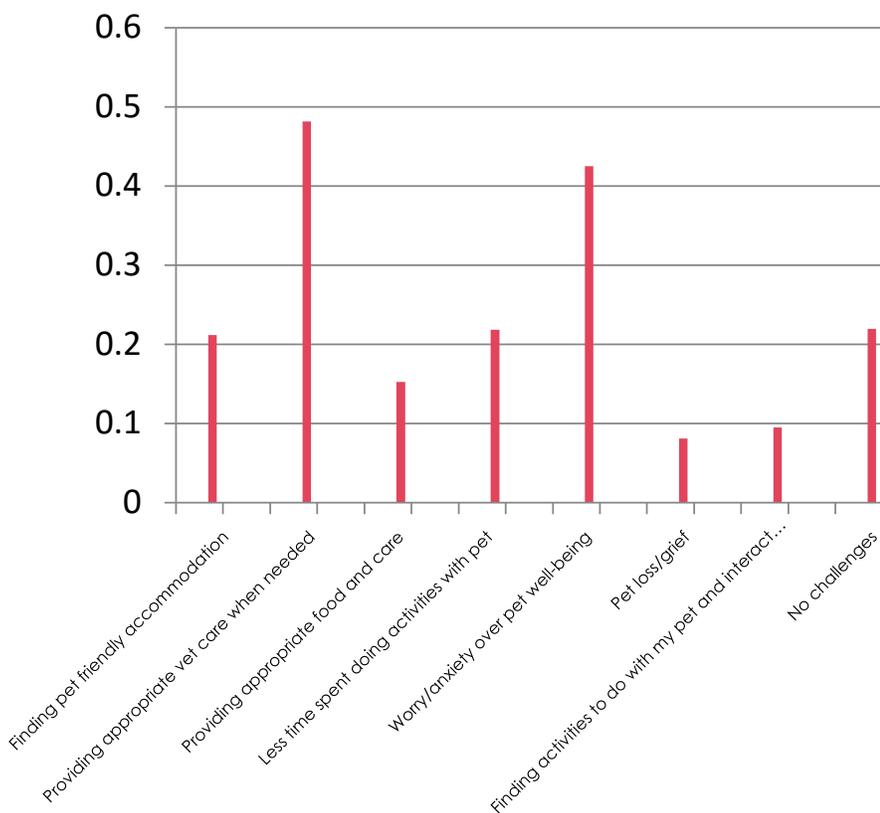
# Pet Owner Impact Survey

IMPACT OF THE WILDFIRE ON PET OWNING HOUSEHOLDS

6 MONTHS POST WILDFIRE

Understanding the important social and emotional support that companion animals provide to pet owning households, challenges and concerns over meeting pet needs can add further stress to individuals and families who see their pets as dependent family members.

## What challenges have you faced in meeting your pet's needs since the wildfire if any?



22% of pet owning households experienced challenges finding pet friendly accommodation post wildfire

20% of respondents are challenged by or spending less time doing activities with pet family members

14% of respondents continue to be challenged by providing pet family members with appropriate food and care supplies

Biggest challenges pet owners feel they are facing:



48% are concerned about ability to provide appropriate vet care for their pets

Respondent comments further reveal concerns about:

1. Lack of access to AFTER HOURS vet care
2. Inability to afford vet costs due to financial strain both post-fire and due to economy
3. Length of time to access vet services locally
4. Stress and cost to have to travel out of community especially during winter season to be able to access/afford services needed



39% have worry or anxiety over their pet's well being

Respondent comments further reveal concerns about:

1. Lack of access, affordability and wait times for veterinary care in-community
2. Anxiety pets are experiencing post wildfire and how to help them including loss of one pet in multi-pet households affecting both humans and pet family members experiencing depression and grief
3. Emerging behavioural or health issues in pets post-wildfire and ability to be able to access and afford care needed or lack of access to training courses to resolve issues

# Pet Owner Impact Survey

IMPACT OF THE WILDFIRE ON PET OWNING HOUSEHOLDS

6 MONTHS POST WILDFIRE

## As a current/previous pet owning household are there any services or supports you feel are important to have access to?



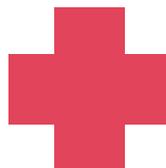
**85%** of respondents feel that veterinary service supports are needed

Respondent comments further reveal concerns about:

1. Lack of access to AFTER HOURS vet care and lack of access to vet care 24/7
2. Inability to afford vet costs due to financial strain post-fire to provide care needed to pet family members
3. Alternative options for non-emergency vet care for spay/neuter surgeries and vaccinations
4. Boarding and kenneling facilities are insufficient for size of pet population and no options for cat boarding



**39%** of respondents want supports for improving their pet's identification (microchips, ID tags)



**20%** of respondents would like to have access to pet grief counselling

**38%** of respondents would like more pet friendly socialization opportunities

Respondent comments further identify desire for:

1. Access to dog parks where there are small dog areas
2. Indoor dog park to help pets and people stay active during winter months, or provide pet training opportunities
3. Access to places in each community to take your pets out for socialization opportunities



**20%** of respondents would like to have access to long term (6-12 months) of pet food and supplies

### additional comments/requests:

1. An emergency number for help if needed, a number to call if you can't get to your pets
2. Pet care: information on dealing with PTSD in animals, more off leash areas, more pet sitting services.
3. Emergency services: community pet rescue plans, vet records available through any vet office across province/country
4. Spay/Neuter clinics at a reduced fee/FREE in-community vaccinations

# Pet Owner Impact Survey

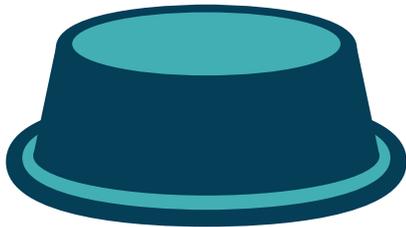
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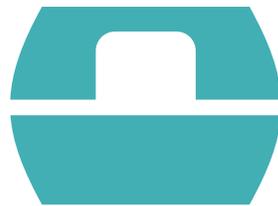
## Do you have an emergency plan for your pet(s) in the event of an evacuation?



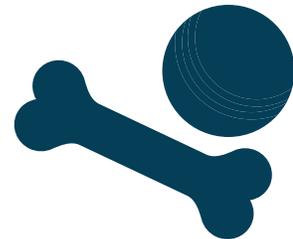
Only 63% of respondents indicated that they have an emergency plan for their pet family members



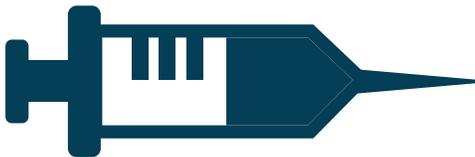
92% indicated they have emergency pet food



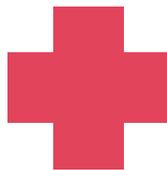
72% indicated they have a pet crate/carrier



62% indicated they have essential care supplies



57% indicated they have veterinary records



35% indicated they have medications/supplements  
28% indicated they have pet first aid supplies



33% indicated they have alternative housing for pets