



Session Schedule

*ALL SESSIONS WILL BE HELD AT THE WENATCHEE CONVENTION CENTER
ALL SPEAKERS AND TOPICS ARE TENTATIVE AT THIS TIME*

Wednesday, September 23

5:00 pm-6:30 pm

Welcome Reception

Join us at Epoc Game Lounge for an informal gathering to kick off this year's Conference.

Thursday, September 24

7:30 am -8:30 am

Coffee and Pastries with the Exhibitors

After checking in, head to the exhibit hall for a coffee and pastries and explore exhibitors showcasing new products, solutions, and interactive experiences for animal welfare professionals.

8:30 am -10:30 am

General Session *The Power of Us: Building Capacity for Challenging Times* – Jose Ocano

This interactive keynote invites participants to pause, reconnect, and reflect on how they want to show up in the face of uncertainty, conflict, and change.

Through reflection, conversation, and practical experiences, participants will explore the gap between the reality they are experiencing and the future they hope to create. Together, we'll examine how self-awareness, connection, and intentional action can help us navigate difficult moments without losing sight of what matters most.

Using Hatching's experiential approach, this session helps participants strengthen their capacity, deepen their understanding of themselves and others, and identify the commitments that will guide them moving forward.

10:30 am -10:45 am

Exhibit Break

Take a coffee break in the exhibit hall and collect stamps in the Passport game for a chance to win exciting prizes!

10:45 am -11:45 am

Animal Control Track Case Study in First Degree Animal Cruelty Investigation – Mike Carlson, Vice President, WA State Animal Fighting Task Force and Samantha Moore, President, WA State Animal Fighting Task Force

This presentation is designed to help animal welfare professionals feel more confident handling those situations, both externally and internally. Drawing from real-world experience in animal welfare marketing and communications, including leading a full organizational rebrand, we will share practical tools for responding to public concerns with empathy, clarity, and transparency.

Lifesaving Programs Track Behavior Pathway Resources - Tools of the Trade – Dr. Miranda K. Workman, PhD, CAWA, Director, Shelter Behavior Education & Outreach, ASPCA

Behavior-focused pathway planning and outcome decision-making are challenges faced by every animal shelter. Without tools to guide those processes, it can be overwhelming to address those challenges on a case-by-case basis for every dog and cat admitted to your shelter. Dr. Miranda K. Workman from the ASPCA's Behavioral Sciences Team will introduce a group of behavior pathway resources developed to guide pathway planning and outcome decisions with your shelter's behavioral capacity for care in mind.

Community Centered Track They Love Their Cats Too: Meeting Homeless Pet Owners Where They Are– Whitney Bowerman, Founder, Oly Camp Kitties

Oly Camp Kitties was founded in Olympia, Washington to serve homeless cat owners who are often unable to access traditional animal welfare services due to barriers like transportation, instability, and distrust of institutions. Through years of outreach in encampments and transitional settings, the organization has developed a low-barrier, judgment-free approach centered on meeting people where they are.

Leadership Track Combating a Toxic Work Environment Through Systemic Change – Sarah Hock, Executive Director, Joint Animal Services

In animal welfare, lifesaving outcomes are directly tied to the health of the workplace culture. Yet many organizations struggle with environments shaped by fear, poor communication, conflict avoidance, or a lack of accountability—conditions that drain staff morale and undermine the very mission they work so hard to achieve. This workshop explores how leadership behaviors, systemic structures, and outdated processes can unintentionally create toxic dynamics and why repairing these systems is essential for staff stability, community trust, and sustainable lifesaving.

Through real-world examples of transforming an organization once defined by hostility, sabotage, burnout, and disengagement, participants will learn actionable strategies to identify toxicity early, establish transparent communication pathways, strengthen accountability practices, and implement tools such as job description reviews, culture agreements, and external audits. This session emphasizes that systemic change is a long-term investment—but one that can rebuild trust, create psychological safety, and empower animal welfare professionals to thrive in the lifesaving work they are called to do.

11:45 am -1:30 pm

Lunch

Join us for a networking lunch

1:30-2:30 pm

Animal Control Track *Emotional Intelligence on the Front Lines: A Critical Skill for Animal Control Officers* – Sarah Hock, Executive Director, Joint Animal Services

Animal control officers regularly respond to emotionally charged situations involving people in crisis, yet emotional intelligence is rarely treated as a core field skill. This session explores how self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and communication can improve de-escalation, compliance, decision-making, and outcomes for both people and animals.

Lifesaving ProgramsTrack *Kitten College. Small Program, Huge Impact*– Marnie Russ, Founder, President, National Kitten College

Kitten College: Small Program, Huge Impact explores how shelters and rescues can improve outcomes for neonatal and underage kittens through foster-based, protocol-driven programs. Participants will learn practical strategies for building foster networks, developing care protocols, streamlining intake, engaging veterinary teams, and using data to increase lifesaving capacity.

Attendees will leave with actionable tools and a scalable framework to launch or strengthen kitten programs, demonstrating how even small organizations can make a significant impact.

Community Centered Track *Managed Intake: Tools, Decisions, and Community Impact*– Olivia Straubhar, Intake Manager, Seattle Area Feline Rescue

This session covers the realities of running an intake program: how cats are accepted and moved through the system, and the tools that make it work. I'll walk through how I make capacity decisions and balance all the moving pieces.

We'll also get into the emotional and ethical weight of saying no, and how selectivity in intake is a privilege that shapes those decisions. Finally, we'll look at how managed intake organizations fit into the broader welfare ecosystem, and why intake management is an overlooked factor in rescue sustainability.

Leadership Track *What's Your Superpower?* – jme thomas, Executive Director, Motley Zoo Animal Rescue

Animal welfare organizations are facing an unsustainable reality: too many groups are trying to do everything independently while resources continue to shrink. This session explores how shelters, rescues, trainers, and other organizations can strengthen the entire system by focusing on their unique strengths and collaborating intentionally rather than duplicating efforts.

Participants will examine how specialization can reduce costs, increase capacity, improve adoption success, and move animals into homes more quickly. Topics include partnerships between shelters and rescues, shared training resources, reducing returns through behavior support, and building community-wide solutions instead of organization-centered ones.

At its core, this session is a candid conversation about the biggest challenge facing animal welfare: moving beyond competition and brand identity to create a collaborative system where organizations, and the animals they serve, can truly thrive.

2:30 pm -2:45 pm

Exhibit Break

Take a break in the exhibit hall for some afternoon goodies.

2:45-3:45 pm

Animal Control Track *LEADing the Pack at the Crime Scene: Animal CSI for Officers* – Dr. Josh Fisher

In this fast-paced session, animal care and control professionals will learn how to “lead the pack” when the call turns into a crime scene. Using real-world scenarios, we will walk through how to secure and organize an animal crime scene, balance animal welfare needs with evidence preservation, and avoid common mistakes that weaken cases. Attendees will leave with simple, field-ready checklists for notes, photos, and sketches, plus practical tips for working with veterinarians, law enforcement, and prosecutors so that what happens on scene holds up in court.

Lifesaving ProgramsTrack *Revisiting Ringworm: Practical Strategies for Better Care*– Dr. Sarah Hicks, Outreach Veterinarian, UW- Madison Shelter Medicine Program

Ringworm can quickly become an operational challenge in shelter settings...but it doesn't have to. This session highlights key updates to the University of Wisconsin Shelter Medicine Program Ringworm Guidebook, focusing on what's changed and how it translates into day-to-day practice. We'll cover practical approaches to diagnosis, treatment, and management that support good patient care, reduce length of stay, and minimize spread. Designed for medical staff, leadership, operations, and care teams, this session emphasizes realistic, effective strategies that can be implemented across a range of organization types.

Community Centered Track *Sustainable Solutions for Animal Cruelty Cases*– Sierra Teas, Animal Welfare and Field Services, Joint Animal Services and Bekka Kraai, Positive Outcomes Coordinator, Joint Animal Services

Just as important, this session focuses on internal communication. When public pressure rises, staff and volunteers often feel it first. We will cover ways to keep teams informed, supported, and aligned so they feel confident in the organization's response rather than burned out by it. Strong internal communication is key to maintaining morale and trust across your team.

Leadership Track.– *From Comment Sections to Headlines: Practical PR for Animal Welfare Professionals* – Lauren Green, Director of Marketing and Communications , Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County

Animal welfare organizations are used to passionate communities, but in today's world that passion often shows up in comment sections, reviews, and headlines. These moments can be opportunities to build trust, but they can also feel overwhelming when criticism escalates or misinformation spreads.

4:00 pm -4:45 pm

Affinity Group Sessions

Join the different Affinity Groups for interaction and connection – Animal Control Officers, Operations Managers Affinity Group, Volunteer Affinity Group, Transport Affinity Group

5:30 pm -7:30 pm

Networking Dinner

Join us for this year's Conference dinner.
Enjoy great food, great music, and great company.

Friday, September 25

8:00 am -9:00 am

Coffee and Pastries with the Exhibitors

Kick off day 2 with coffee and pastries and networking.

9:00 am -10:30 am

General Session *Delivering Excellence* – Dr. Josh Fisher

Delivering excellence in animal control and animal welfare goes far beyond technical skills; it requires professionalism, consistency, judgment, and intentional service in every interaction with the community, partners, and colleagues. This session focuses on what excellence looks like in modern animal services and how individual staff members and organizations can elevate daily operations without losing compassion or credibility. Participants will examine how expectations, communication, leadership presence, and decision-making directly impact public trust, officer safety, animal outcomes, and organizational reputation. Using real-world examples from animal control and sheltering environments, this session connects frontline work with broader organizational goals such as accountability, transparency, and community engagement. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of how excellence is demonstrated during routine calls, difficult conversations, enforcement actions, and high-visibility incidents, and how small, consistent choices can either strengthen or undermine public confidence. This session is designed for both frontline staff and supervisors who want to build resilient teams, improve service delivery, and align daily actions with the mission and values of animal welfare work.

10:30 am -10:45 am

Exhibit Break

Take a coffee break in the exhibit hall and collect points in the game for a chance to win exciting prizes!

10:45-11:45 am

Animal Control Track – *Forensics in Veterinary Medicine* – Dr. Vicky Smith

Description coming soon

Lifesaving Programs Track *Legacy vs. Logic: Rethinking a Traditional Animal Services Model*- Audrey Lodato, Senior Director, Best Friends Animal Society

For 150 years, animal services has operated under a model that positioned shelter intake as the primary solution for any pet in need, creating a legacy of institutional habits that can be difficult to break. This session dives into the historical roots of animal services to understand why our systems were built this way and, more importantly, how we can move past them. Together, we'll spend time reimagining animal services without the weight of the past.

Community Centered Track *Workshop: Closing the Gap - Expanding Access to Spay and Neuter through Collaborative Strategies*– Jamie Case, Director, Northern Tier Shelter Initiative, ASPCA

This interactive workshop explores how shelters and community partners can use intake data to identify system pressures and expand access to spay and neuter services for animals entering and moving through shelter systems. Participants will examine intake trends, operational barriers, and collaboration opportunities to develop more coordinated, data-informed strategies.

Leadership Track *Caring For Those Who Care* – Nick Hobbs Doyle, Shelter Operations Manager, SCRAPS

Through real-world stories from my professional experience, this session explores healthy and practical ways to cope with the emotional challenges of working in animal welfare. Attendees will leave with strategies for building resilience, maintaining a positive outlook, and finding humor even in difficult situations. While conferences often focus on the complex issues facing our organizations, this presentation shifts the focus to the people doing the work, recognizing the importance of supporting our own well-being so we can continue making a difference for animals and our communities.

12:00 pm

Lunch/Closing Session

Join us for lunch, closing remarks and final prize drawings.