

MEDIA RELEASE

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Domestic Violence Awareness Month: Pet Safety Is Family Safety

Rancho Coastal Humane Society's Animal Safehouse Program helps remove a barrier to safety for survivors and their pets

ENCINITAS, Calif. — October 2026 — October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness about domestic violence and the resources available to help individuals and families find safety. For many people experiencing abuse, the safety and well-being of their pets are an important part of that decision.

Abuse can extend beyond a partner to include threats, intimidation, or harm directed at pets. Concern for a pet's safety can make it more difficult to seek shelter or leave an abusive situation, particularly when safe temporary care is not readily available.

Rancho Coastal Humane Society's Animal Safehouse Program (ASP) provides temporary, confidential, no-cost housing and veterinary care for pets while their families access safety and support services. By helping keep pets safe, ASP helps remove one of the barriers survivors may face when seeking safety for themselves and their children.

Research highlights the importance of including pets in domestic violence services. In a 2021 nationwide survey conducted by the Urban Resource Institute's People and Animals Living Safely (PALS) program and the National Domestic Violence Hotline:

- 97% of respondents said keeping their pets with them was an important factor in deciding whether to seek shelter.
- 50% said they would not consider shelter for themselves if they could not bring their pets.
- 91% said their pets' emotional support and physical protection were significant to their ability to survive and heal.

These findings demonstrate why pet safety should be part of safety planning and why access to temporary pet care can make a meaningful difference.

Domestic violence affects people across communities, regardless of age, income, education, or background. In San Diego County, 15,298 domestic violence calls

were made to law enforcement in 2024, according to the San Diego Domestic Violence Council. Calls to law enforcement represent only one measure of domestic violence and do not capture every person experiencing abuse.

For survivors, leaving may involve navigating safety concerns, housing, finances, children, and other responsibilities. When pets cannot accompany them into emergency shelter, finding a safe place for their animals can be an additional challenge. Domestic violence service providers work to support survivors through these complex decisions, and partnerships with animal welfare organizations can help expand their options.

“Pets are family, and their safety matters,” said Chelsea England, Animal Safehouse Program Director of Rancho Coastal Humane Society. “Survivors should not have to navigate the safety of their pets alone while trying to access support. Through our Animal Safehouse Program, we provide temporary care for pets so families can focus on their safety and next steps, with the goal of reuniting them when it is safe to do so.”

ASP works with domestic violence service providers and other community partners to coordinate temporary pet care. The program is designed to help families stay connected to their pets while they work toward a safer future.

If you or someone you support is experiencing domestic violence and needs help arranging temporary care for a pet, contact Rancho Coastal Humane Society’s Animal Safehouse Program at 760-753-6476, or email safehouse@sdpets.org. Referrals and inquiries are welcome.

For confidential domestic violence support, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233, or visit thehotline.org.

About Rancho Coastal Humane Society

Rancho Coastal Humane Society is dedicated to saving lives of abandoned companion animals, promoting adoption into loving homes and offering education programs and support services that inspire and strengthen the human-animal bond. A valued resource in the San Diego Community since 1960, Rancho Coastal is a member of the San Diego Animal Welfare Coalition and abides by the pledge that no healthy, treatable animal will ever be euthanized for time or space. Visit SDPets.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).