

requirements to control their messaging, rather than letting others drive the conversation through their FOIA request.

It is recommended that shelters report their data on Shelter Animals Count ([shelteranimalscount.org](http://shelteranimalscount.org)), a national database of sheltered animal statistics. For more information, see [Appendix O](#), “Shelter Animal Data Collection.”

## Communication and social media

An easy-to-use, mobile-friendly website and an active social media presence are vital tools for an animal services department’s success. These critical communication tools will work in tandem to keep your community up to date regarding hours, adoption promotions, animal services’ needs, emergencies and, most important, opportunities for the community to assist in your work.

These days, there is a very real expectation from the public that your department is using social media to communicate. A large portion of the U.S. population, after all, are daily users on at least one social media platform. Here are four reasons why your department should maintain an active social media presence:

1. It’s the fastest and cheapest communication tool. It only takes a few minutes to publish something on a social media site, and the response is nearly instantaneous. The real-time nature of social media makes it ideal for updating your community quickly about new animals available for adoption, recent adoptions, special events or emergencies that require community support.
2. It builds a relationship with your audience, so they can unite around your cause. As long as your community knows you on social media, it doesn’t matter if your brick-and-mortar location exists off the beaten path. You can build a strong relationship with your followers by posting quality content that’s easy to understand, is visually interesting to consume, and furthers your mission. Social media provides a platform for educating the public about your cause, and also for listening to their comments and questions.
3. It drives targeted traffic to your website, your primary communication tool. You might have the most beautiful, easy-to-use website, but without social media to point people there, few people would see it.
4. It’s key to providing good customer service. Your department may not be selling anything, but you rely on the community to help you find families for homeless animals. Everyone is a potential adopter and the quicker you can answer their questions to get an animal out the door, the sooner you can help another animal. Of course, it’s not enough to simply post content on your social media page and walk away. Your followers want to engage with you and they expect their questions to be answered in a timely manner.