



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 2, 2024

CONTACT:

Mal Schwartz, Chief Executive Officer
mal@sheltersunited.com

First-Of-Its-Kind Veterinarian of Record Program Will Improve Access to Care

CARMEL, CA — Shelters United, a group purchasing organization that allows animal welfare groups to purchase animal care supplies and products at discounted prices, is building a first-of-its-kind Veterinarian of Record Program to increase access to care for shelter pets and improve relationships between veterinarians and animal rescues.

Approximately 1.2 million pets are adopted annually from more than 5,000 pet rescue organizations across the United States. These rescues rely on a veterinarian of record (VOR) to provide care for pets awaiting adoption and to purchase necessary prescription medications. Currently, there is no VOR model to help veterinarians and rescue organizations work together in a productive, symbiotic, and sustainable way.

To explore the relationships between veterinarians and animal welfare organizations, and to determine the causes of potential frustrations, the University of Florida's online graduate shelter medicine program conducted a survey of U.S. veterinarians and animal welfare organizations in 2022. The survey revealed pain points that can derail the critical relationship between a potential VOR and an animal welfare organization.

“Healthy veterinarian of record relationships enable animal shelters and rescues to fulfill their missions while maintaining good welfare for the animals in their care,” explained Terry Spencer, DVM, MEd, program director and adjunct assistant professor at the University of Florida. “Anecdotally, we frequently hear shelters and rescues complain that their local veterinarians do not understand their needs. We also commonly hear veterinarians complain that shelter and rescue leadership does not understand their concerns about how these relationships function. This study was the first formal attempt to explore these interactions so we could better understand what is leading to these frustrations between the partners.”

At completion, the Veterinarian of Record Program will include a Veterinarian of Record Toolkit, an online education course, and a state-by-state resource directory. PetSmart Charities has contributed to the funding of the Veterinarian of Record Toolkit, which will launch in late 2024.

“The Veterinarian of Record Toolkit will make an impact to the many rescues and shelters that struggle to find veterinary services for the pets in their care,” said Robyn Jaynes, DVM, director of veterinary affairs at PetSmart Charities. “The veterinary shortage experienced by shelters and rescues is partly due to many veterinary practitioners lacking familiarity working in shelter medicine. We’re proud to support this collaboration between Shelters United and the University of Florida to foster these mutually beneficial relationships. Moving forward, veterinarians will be better equipped to take on the rewarding work of animal welfare.”

Shelters United is seeking additional funding for the remaining Veterinarian of Record Program resources.

“With additional funding, we will build tools designed to overcome the challenges inherent in the veterinarian of record and rescue relationship,” said Mal Schwartz, founder and CEO of Shelters United. “This program will help to bridge these gaps and motivate more veterinarians to engage in veterinarian of record relationships with their local animal shelters, which will help more rescue pets get the care they need.”

If you are interested in providing funding for the Veterinarian of Record Program, contact Mal Schwartz directly at mal@sheltersunited.com.

To receive program updates, including a notification when the toolkit becomes available, visit sheltersunited.com/vet-of-record-connect-interest.

+++++

About Shelters United

Shelters United is a cooperative buying program exclusively for nonprofit animal welfare organizations. Shelters United provides savings to more than 2,200 animal welfare organizations, which adopt out 1.7 million pets annually. Members saved over \$5 million on \$40 million in purchases in 2023. Learn more about Shelters United at sheltersunited.com.