

Charleston Animal Society Announces New Partnership with Berkeley County

In a bold step to enhance animal care and respond to increasing regional growth, Charleston Animal Society has entered a partnership with Berkeley County to manage operations at the Berkeley Animal Center. Berkeley County Council voted to approve the partnership at the County Council meeting in May. The new partnership will take effect July 1, 2025.

The move comes at a critical time for the Tri-County area, where rapid population growth is placing increased pressure on animal care and control.

“Our region is growing fast, and that includes a rising population of dogs and cats,” said Charleston Animal Society President and CEO Joe Elmore. “By joining forces with Berkeley County, we can better serve our communities, reduce duplication of services, and respond more efficiently to the needs of animals and residents alike.”

Combining efforts will streamline services, reduce confusion in communities that span multiple counties, and create a single, cohesive system for animal care across county lines.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Carolina Tails* was at the press conference that announced the new partnership and spoke with County Supervisor Johnny Cribb and County Councilwoman Amy Stern.

CAROLINA TAILS: What are you most excited about with this new partnership?

AMY STERN: The extra programs, such as spay-neuter, that Charleston Animal Society is going to be able to provide to the public in Berkeley County that we as a government haven't been able to do. Up to this point, we've only been able to spay-neuter our own shelter animals. I am also excited about adding education and summer camps so that we can get kids involved with our shelter.

CT: What is the most important thing that you wanted to point out with this arrangement?

JOHNNY CRIBB: It's hard to find a negative in this. I think animal care is going to improve in the county. And as Amy said, we'll see a greater focus on prevention. If you're running an organization or a government or anything and all you're doing is treating the problem, you're going to run out of money, time, energy, and everything else before you fix it. So, you've got to get to the root cause. We know what the root cause is, and the Animal Society is in the big leagues when it comes to dealing with the root cause.

CT: It seems that this is about two strong organizations forming a partnership to become even stronger.

AMY STERN: Charleston Animal Society is obviously one of the leading advocates for animals in our region. When SLED, a statewide agency, has a cruelty case, who do they go to go to? Charleston Animal



Berkeley County Supervisor Johnny Cribb announces the new partnership between Berkeley County and Charleston Animal Society at a May 28, 2025 press conference.

Society. So now, with our Detective DiFalco with cruelty investigations, it's just one more tool in our toolkit to be able to do something even bigger and better for our animals.

CT: If someone from Berkeley County is reading this article, they might wonder what is going to change. Can you address that?

JOHNNY CRIBB: I believe things will change quite a bit in the future and in a positive direction. We have about 10 full-time employees at Berkeley Animal Center and Charleston Animal Society has 90. So, our employees are now part of a team where they have a career path with specialties. We took a different approach that we're still going to be engaged -- we're not retreating, we're not leaving, but we're like, “we need a partner to do this,” and I think we found the best partner.

CT: Is this “forward thinking” by taking a regional approach?

JOHNNY CRIBB: Charleston Animal Society has 30 Berkeley County residents working for them already. They have Berkeley County residents on their board. In this area, we all work together — Charleston County, Berkeley County, Dorchester County, and all the municipalities. When we all get flooded or we're all in traffic gridlock and everything else, we find regional solutions. Animals don't know about borders between counties. When they're stranded, they're stranded. I do think, three months from now, six months from now, a year from now, Berkeley Animal Center will be a lot better than if we would've stayed with the status quo. With this unanimous decision of County Council, we believe the future is much brighter. 🐾