

This article is written for municipalities with a service contract with the York County SPCA:

Beginning January 1, 2026, the York County SPCA has updated its stray canine intake policy. This update provides a straightforward process for when you find a dog that needs help.

What to do if you find a stray dog in your community:

Your first step should be to contact your municipality's animal control officer, the Pennsylvania state dog warden, or your local police department. These professionals can often respond quickly and may already have information about a missing dog in your area.

If the dog shows any signs of aggression, do not approach it. Warning signs can include growling, snarling, stiff posture, lunging, raised hackles, or a hard stare. Only trained personnel should handle dogs that show these behaviors. Keeping distance protects you and the dog from unnecessary stress or injury.

If the dog appears calm and you can safely secure it, you may bring the dog to the York County SPCA between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., seven days a week. Use a leash. Use a crate or carrier if you have one. When you arrive, leave the dog in your vehicle and check in with the staff in the lobby. You will be asked for your driver's license, the exact location where you found the dog, and a brief description of the dog's condition and behavior. You will also fill out a short intake form. These details help reunite lost pets with their families.

Once the information is verified, staff will guide you through transferring the dog from your vehicle to the shelter entrance. This helps ensure the dog enters the building safely and calmly.

If you need to surrender your pet, you must follow the separate owner surrender process. This process starts with an application. It helps match owned pets with appropriate resources and keeps space available for stray dogs who may need urgent care or sheltering.

This policy supports a safer, more consistent experience for you and the animals in your community. It gives you clear steps to follow, helps lost pets return home faster, and ensures that residents who want to help a found dog know exactly what to do. For more information, contact your municipal office or visit the York County SPCA website.