

HOUSTON PETSET QUESTIONNAIRE 2019  
CANDIDATE: NICK HELLYAR FOR HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL, DISTRICT C



[Houston PetSet](#) is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to ending the homelessness and suffering of companion animals and elevating their status in society. Houston PetSet works to achieve its mission by focusing its efforts in six key impact areas including spay & neuter, transport & rescue, community service & education, cruelty prevention, research, and advocacy. In addition, Houston PetSet provides annual grants to animal welfare-related organizations in the Greater Houston area. By providing critical funds and collaborating with strategic partners, Houston PetSet seeks to end the crisis of animal homelessness in our community.

On behalf of Houston PetSet, our partners, and those in the animal welfare community, we thank you in advance for taking the time to provide your responses to this questionnaire. It is important to note that Houston PetSet will **NOT** be endorsing any candidate in any municipal race and will be using this completed document as a resource for groups and individuals that are interested in learning more about your candidacy. Your responses will be posted to our website and will be accessible for all.

The current animal homelessness population presents a public health and public safety issue that affects the quality of life of many Houstonians. The Houston PetSet questionnaire includes questions covering general animal welfare, city services, and partnerships. **We ask that you complete this questionnaire (by filling in your answers via Microsoft Word) and return it to [marketing@houstonpetset.org](mailto:marketing@houstonpetset.org) no later than July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.**

Sincerely,

**Tena Lundquist Faust**  
**Co-President**

**Tama Lundquist**  
**Co-President**

### **Animal Welfare**

1. To what extent have you been involved with any animal welfare issues, including rescue, spay & neuter, foster, transport programming, legislation, and anti-cruelty?

Answer:

Having worked in the District I office at City Hall, I understand that animal welfare issues and stray animals are of much concern to residents. On City Council, I will work tirelessly to address these concerns. I have given a forever home to four rescue cats. As a pet owner and animal lover, animal welfare is a cause close to my heart.

2. Do you have a plan to address underserved areas that need low cost spay & neuter programming and other veterinary services?

Answer:

The City should expand partnerships with other local governments and the non-profit community, to expand efforts in underserved areas, as well as increase vet participation to reopen the City's shuttered facility. Again, having worked in the District I office, which represents the east side of Houston, I am very familiar with the need for low cost spay & neuter programs in lower income parts of our city. We partnered with local groups, such as Barrio Dogs, to combat this problem, but much more must be done.

3. Do you have, or have you ever had in the past, a companion animal? If so, was it a rescue animal?

Answer:

I have had many pets since I was a child, including a golden retriever named Duke, a yellow lab named Jackson, and I currently live with my cat, Rhys, whom I rescued in 2013. I have also provided forever homes to three other cats.

**Quality of Life/Public Safety/Public Health**

4. What impact, and how will reducing the stray animal population improve the quality of life of all Houstonians, if any?

Answer:

Reducing the stray animal population in Houston is a public safety concern. We can improve the quality of life for both Houstonians and our animals by giving stray animals a home and focusing heavily on low cost spay & neuter programs. Both would lower the risks of dog attacks and disease, and reduce animal-vehicle collisions.

5. How do you plan to work with communities that have historically reported high rates of stray animals? Please describe below.

Answer:

As in all areas of government, data should drive our efforts. Efforts with high concentrations of strays should be targeted for both spay/neuter and rescue efforts.

6. How do you plan to address animal homelessness and the stray population citywide?

Answer:

We need to improve education aimed at residents, particularly in areas with large stray populations, as well as spay/neuter and rescue efforts. I would also like to focus heavily on increasing funding for no-kill shelters.

**City of Houston Services**

7. Do you have a strategy to address overcrowding in the city animal shelter? If so, please describe below.

Yes  No

Additional Comment:

I will work with Houston's animal welfare experts to find the most effective and efficient way to address the overcrowding in our animal shelter. BARC and the Harris County Animal Shelter should continue educating residents on how they can help with our animal overpopulation problem, such as spaying/neutering their pets and fostering pets without homes.

8. Should BARC (City of Houston animal shelter) receive additional funding based on budget comparisons to national standards and peer cities? If so, how much and how would you increase the department's overall budget?

Yes  No

Additional Comment:

The City has serious financial problems at the moment. While I am open to finding additional money in the budget for BARC, partnering with other local governments, the non-profit community and seeking grant funding may be more realistic in the short term.

9. Will you commit to expanding intake hours for animal surrenders at the city shelter?

Yes  No

Additional Comment:

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10. Will you commit to funding additional Animal Control Officers to respond to 311 and BARC calls?

Yes  No

Additional Comment:

I am open to doing so, if the budget allows.

11. What is your plan to address animal abuse, including dog fighting (and cock fighting) in the City of Houston and how would you involve the community to assist in this effort?

Answer:

We should not tolerate animal abuse or fighting. Those involved should be punished accordingly, and the public should be educated about the legal ramifications of engaging in such conduct. I was upset that State Representative Sarah Davis' dog-tethering bill did not make it to the Governor's desk this legislative session. This is something I would like to advocate for in the future. Due to a lack of animal control officers, getting the community to assist in uncovering dog fighting and cock fighting is essential. We need to provide the community with information on how to report animal abuse, and as a Council Member, I will be a champion on this issue.

12. There are a number of duplicative services (ex. animal control services, investigative/enforcement, wellness services, etc.) that are offered between the City and County. Do you believe in the existing model, based on geography OR would you explore other options? If you would explore other options, what specific options do you have in mind?

Yes  No

Additional Comment:

Our existing model may not be the most efficient way to provide animal welfare services to such a large geographic area. As long as our city faces animal abuse and overpopulation, we must explore other options that can improve our ability to provide adequate and sufficient services and protect our pets. One option that may be considered is strengthening the partnership between the City and the County to provide more joint services. An example of this is the Houston Police Department's partnership with the Harris County Sheriff's Office in creating the Harris County Joint Processing Center to streamline inmate processing and avoid duplication of services.

**Partnerships**

13. Would you support a partnership with local animal welfare organizations to address the growing issues relating to animal welfare? What specifically would you propose?

Yes  No

Additional Comment:

The City should always seek to partner with its large pool of community resources and organizations that are devoted to improving animal welfare.

14. Are you familiar with the six key impact areas of Houston PetSet? How would your administration support Houston PetSet's impact areas?

Yes  No

Additional Comment:

I am fully supportive of the six key impact areas of Houston PetSet, and as the Council Member for District C, I will be an ally to this organization. I will fight to see the key impact areas implemented in Houston, and I will maintain an open-door policy to ensure that animal welfare organizations and advocacy groups have the opportunity to participate in our city's decision-making process. I also aim to increase awareness about animal issues and services to residents, which I believe will have a large impact in the community. I will always fight to stop animal abuse and ensure that our pets have a safe home.

**City of Houston Ordinance/Advocacy**

15. Would you support a local ordinance that prohibits apartments or home owners' associations from banning specific dog breeds?

Yes  No

Additional Comment:

As a condo owner in Houston, I have had my dogs attacked and injured by dogs on the "banned breed" list. I do understand that owners have a lot of responsibility in these kinds of incidents, but I would need to see data that disproves the higher risk of aggressiveness from certain dog breeds.

16. Will you support the creation of a local ordinance that better defines and creates a higher standard of shelter for animals?

Yes  No

Additional Comment:

I will always support legislation/ordinances that raise the standard of care for animals in our city, including the dog-tethering bill that I referenced previously.

17. Will you support a local ordinance that bans the sale of dogs from breeders and puppy mills in retail locations within the City of Houston?

Yes  No

Additional Comment:

We need to ensure that all breeders abide by the strict regulations set forth to ensure that this is not an abusive process. I got one of my dogs from a local breeder, and it was a caring process that led to bringing home a great dog. I know there are breeders that love animals and love the work they do, but there are those who abuse our current system and abuse animals. There should not be a ban on all local breeders, but they should follow very strict rules that protect animals.

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18. Would you support mandatory microchipping for dogs and cats in the City of Houston?

Yes \_\_\_ No X

Additional Comment:

In future, please contact Houston PetSet if you would like information or educational materials relating to the subjects above.

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