

## SHAP CONDEMNS REPORTS OF COMPANION ANIMALS TAKEN FROM UNHOUSED INDIVIDUALS

**Santa Fe, NM**, May 22, 2025 — the Street Homeless Animal Project (“SHAP”), a privately funded 501(C)(3), recognized by various institutions for its excellence in the field of animal protection, is deeply disturbed by recent developments in the local community targeting homeless people and their companion animals.

In recent weeks, the organization was made aware of reports that some individuals in the community have expressed intentions to take companion animals from members of the homeless population. To separate a companion animal from their owner is not only a theft of property, but a violation of basic humanity.

People experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and often hesitate to report crimes out of fear of criminalization or retaliation. Companion animals provide emotional support, safety, and connection to many individuals in the unhoused community. Targeting people already facing extreme hardship by attempting to separate them from their beloved animals is an act of cruelty and injustice.

What began as harmful rhetoric has reportedly escalated into action. The organization has been informed of an incident in which an individual unlawfully took a companion animal from a person experiencing homelessness. According to reports, the individual drove up to the animal while its owner was momentarily distracted, opened their car door, and departed the scene with the animal. Such unauthorized and vigilante actions have no place in a lawful and compassionate society.

SHAP condemns all forms of vigilantism and urges community members to respect the legal and moral rights of all individuals, regardless of housing status. The protections and obligations of the law apply equally to all individuals, regardless of housing status; no one is above the law, and no one is beneath its protection.

The organization reminds the public that stealing a dog or any companion animal is a criminal offense under New Mexico law. Depending on the circumstances of the offense, one may violate numerous criminal laws, including but not limited to Larceny – NMSA 1978, § 30-16-1, Concealing Lost or Stolen Property – NMSA § 30-16-6, and Cruelty to Animals – NMSA § 30-18-1. Taking a companion animal may also expose the offender to concurrent civil liability for conversion, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and the potential award of punitive damages.

If you witness someone taking a companion animal from a homeless person, or you suspect that someone you know was involved in taking a companion animal from a homeless person, SHAP strongly encourages you to call 9-11 for emergencies or contact the Santa Fe Police Department’s non-emergency line at 505-428-3710.

**SHAP stands firmly against animal abuse in all forms.** *We do not condone or tolerate cruelty to animals, whether committed by individuals who are housed or unhoused. If you witness animal abuse, please call 911 for emergencies or contact the Santa Fe Police Department’s non-emergency line at 505-428-3710. Compassion for all living beings is central to our mission and values.*