Chairperson's Report – 2025/2026

HAWS Annual General Meeting – 26 August 2026

Good evening and thank you for being here.

It is always an important occasion when we come together as members of HAWS. The AGM gives us an opportunity to look at the year that has passed, recognise what has been achieved, acknowledge the challenges we continue to face, and look ahead to the future of HAWS.

This has been a year of enormous challenges, but also one of significant progress. And when I look back over the past year, I believe there is a great deal for HAWS and its members to be proud of.

A Year of Resilience

The year began with one of the most difficult periods HAWS has faced.

Between August and October, HAWS was faced with a serious Canine Distemper Virus outbreak. Despite every effort made by our team, 290 dogs from our communities, had to be humanely euthanised. It was devastating for our staff, our volunteers and everyone involved in their care.

It was a stark reminder of the consequences of inadequate vaccination and the enormous responsibility that comes with animal welfare.

But even during this incredibly difficult period, HAWS continued to operate and continued to care for the animals that needed us.

There were also some very significant firsts for HAWS during the year.

For the first time in our history, HAWS now has two qualified Inspectors on our team — Razah, who has been with HAWS for 14 years, and Cassidy, who has been with us for three years.

We were also fortunate to retain the same Vet. In the animal welfare sector, retaining good Vet professionals is not easy, and the continuity, this gives our clinic is enormously valuable.

And then, thanks to the incredible support of Lighthouse2Lighthouse, HAWS was able to purchase its first X-ray machine. This was made possible by the R300,000 raised through the Lighthouse2Lighthouse fundraiser, in which HAWS was one of the 3 elected beneficiaries.

That machine has already become an invaluable part of our clinic. We see vehicle-related injuries to cats and dogs on a daily basis, and our X-ray machine is certainly working overtime.

The Scale of the Work We Do

Sometimes I think it is easy to forget just how much work happens at HAWS every single day.

During the year, our clinic treated **6,094 animals** — an average of 508 animals every month.

Of those, **1,661 treatments were funded by HAWS** for owners who could not afford the cost, even at our greatly reduced rates.

We sterilised **953 animals**, of which **475 were done free of charge**.

We administered **1,434 vaccinations**, of which **620 were done for free** - that includes the **245 free vaccinations** during our October 2025 community outreach programme in Zwelihle, Mount Pleasant and Hawston.

We found homes for **158 cats and 144 dogs** — 302 animals in total.

And **789 animals** came into the Pound, which HAWS manages on behalf of the Overstrand Municipality.

Behind every one of those numbers is an animal that needed somebody to care.

The HAWS Clinic

Our clinic is, in many ways, organised chaos.

We accept walk-in emergencies, and with an average of 508 animals being treated every month, there is never really a quiet day.

The clinic operates with a small but incredibly dedicated team consisting of our veterinarian, veterinary nurse, veterinary technician, veterinary administrator, receptionist and cleaner.

The financial reality of the clinic is challenging.

The clinic loses, on average, around **R100,000 every month**, largely because we treat animals belonging to people who simply cannot afford veterinary care.

There is sometimes an expectation that because HAWS is an animal welfare organisation, veterinary treatment should automatically be free. Unfortunately, it cannot be.

Every unpaid account ultimately has to be funded through a donation or a fundraising initiative.

HAWS receives no funding from National Government or the local municipality towards running the clinic, yet we have to employ qualified staff and maintain the medicines, equipment and standards required to operate a veterinary clinic.

Keeping those doors open is, and will continue to be, a major challenge.

Our Facility and Our Future

Our current facility is ageing and is increasingly not fit for purpose.

We have major drainage and sewerage problems underneath the buildings, and over the past three years HAWS has spent almost **R1 million on maintenance** simply keeping the existing facility operational.

The Committee has therefore recently taken the first step towards exploring the possibility of a new HAWS facility.

I want to stress that this is exactly that — **exploring the possibility**. No final decision has been made. There is a great deal of work that needs to happen before any decision can be taken, including feasibility, costs, funding and planning.

But we need to start somewhere.

And a new facility is not about having more animals.

It is about providing a better quality of life for the animals already in our care.

It is about creating a facility that is fit for purpose, where our staff can work more efficiently, where our clinic can function in accordance with SAVC specifications and SA Health Products Regulations.

We also need to recognise that there will never be enough capacity, at the kennels or in the clinic, while the number of unwanted animals continues to grow.

The People Behind HAWS

HAWS is not its buildings.

It is not its clinic.

It is not its X-ray machine.

HAWS is its people.

We currently have 19 full-time staff, and they are the backbone of this organisation.

Every day they arrive and clean cages, feed animals, care for sick and frightened animals, administer medication, identify animals that need medical attention and make sure the day-to-day operation of HAWS continues.

Many trusts and foundations refuse to fund ordinary running costs, but without staff there is no HAWS.

We are also incredibly fortunate to have volunteers who have been committed to HAWS for many years. They arrive every day, in all weather, to walk our dogs. They sit in the cattery and socialise our cats. They give the animals attention, affection and stimulation while they are in our care.

Our foster families are equally important. They take in litters of kittens and puppies and help us get them ready for their forever homes. We never have enough foster families — but we could not function without the ones we do have.

And our two Inspectors, Razah and Cassidy, represent an important step forward for HAWS. Their qualifications and legal authority strengthen our ability to respond to animal welfare complaints, investigate cruelty and take appropriate action where animals are in distress.

The Financial Reality

Our Treasurer will deal with the detailed financial statements, but I believe members also need to understand the bigger picture.

It costs approximately **R500,000 every month** to operate HAWS.

That includes our staff, approximately R100,000 a month in clinic medication, food, petrol, maintenance and all the other costs involved in running the organisation.

Our two charity shops contribute approximately **R150,000 per month**.

Rental income contributes around **R38,000 per month**, and clinic income approximately **R100,000 per month**.

The balance has to be found through donations, fundraising, events and the generosity of our supporters.

And this is where the true work of the Committee comes in.

The Golf Day, Long Table Dinner, Clash of the Chefs, Cake & Coffee Mornings and our two annual street collections are not simply social events. They are an essential part of keeping HAWS financially sustainable and in the last financial year these initiatives **raised R438 000**.

They also keep HAWS visible in our community, keep us front of mind and give people some insight into what it takes to run HAWS.

All of these fundraising initiatives are initiated and executed by the HAWS Committee.

Protecting the HAWS Name

There is another part of our financial sustainability that I believe is incredibly important — and that is our reputation.

HAWS has been around for **58 years**.

Over those years, we have built something that is enormously valuable: trust.

People donate to HAWS because they trust us to manage their money responsibly. People remember HAWS in their wills because they believe the organisation will continue to do what it was established to do.

HAWS is managed according to the laws and requirements governing an NPO, and we take our responsibilities around good governance and responsible management very seriously.

Our reputation is one of our greatest assets, and protecting it is one of the most important responsibilities of the Committee.

We have seen the extraordinary generosity of people who have remembered HAWS in their final wishes, including the late Mr Anthony Blee and the late George and Cathy De Braak, whom have all included HAWS in their Testamentary Trusts.

We are eternally grateful to every person who leaves a legacy to HAWS.

And to every donor who supports us month after month — thank you.

Every donation matters.

HAWS Beyond Our Own Gates

I also want to recognise that HAWS – as a welfare organization- is in a unique and fortunate position.

Because of our 58-year history, our reputation and the careful management of our resources, we are able to do something that many smaller welfare organisations simply cannot.

We pay our staff on time every month.

We pay our suppliers in full every month.

And our animals have never missed a meal.

We recognise that this is something to be grateful for, and with that good fortune comes a responsibility to help others where we can.

In January, when Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary in Stanford, was devastated by wildfires, our clinic team immediately responded.

They went out to assist with a critically ill tiger. HAWS donated essential medical supplies during the treatment and evacuation of the big cats, and after the initial crises, Razah returned to assist with the rescue and evacuation of smaller wildlife, including rabbits and tortoises.

HAWS also supports Caledon Animal Welfare with goods that they can sell through their charity shop to raise much-needed funds.

We participate in vaccination and sterilisation drives in Gansbaai, and we perform BARC's sterilisation work every week at our clinic. And we donate books that we can't sell to Love 4 Pets in Struisbaai, to sell at their weekend market book stall.

As a member of the Cape Animal Welfare Forum, we assist other welfare organisations with sterilisation and, where we have capacity, take in animals that they simply do not have space for.

HAWS is fortunate — and we believe that where we can help, we should.

Education – Breaking the Cycle

We also recognise that if we are ever going to change the future of animal welfare, education has to form part of the solution.

Since our education programme began in January 2024, we have recorded more than **2,400 participant engagements**, and during this past financial year, we conducted **13 education activities across seven schools and community organisations**.

By teaching the next generation about responsible pet ownership, sterilisation, vaccination, compassion and respect for animals, we hope that some of the mistakes we deal with every day will not be repeated by the next generation.

Rescue deals with today's problem. Education gives us an opportunity to change tomorrow's.

The Challenges Ahead

Despite all that we have achieved, the challenges facing HAWS are growing.

More animals are being surrendered or simply abandoned.

Backyard breeding continues to produce unwanted litters of puppies and kittens.

Too many owners still do not sterilise their pets.

People sometimes take on an animal without fully understanding that a pet comes with a financial and long-term commitment.

The Canine Distemper Virus outbreak was a devastating reminder of the consequences of inadequate or no vaccination.

Our capacity is also limited — both physically and financially.

The number of animals coming into HAWS continues to exceed the number of homes we can find for them.

And in an established community like Hermanus, finding sufficient adoptive families is not easy. We don't have a constant influx of new residents looking for pets, while the number of unwanted animals continues to grow.

We also have an active community food programme through which we help 145 severely impoverished families supplement the food they provide for their animals, on a monthly basis.

HAWS currently distributes approximately **two tons of dog and cat food every month**, while also supporting neighbourhood-based feeding projects, like Anna Van Niekerk in Hawston and the Maria- Anita Pieterse's soup kitchen in Mount Pleasant, she feeds the people, we feed the animals.

Fundraising is becoming harder too. Families are under financial pressure, disposable income is limited and more charities are competing for a smaller pool of available donations.

Perhaps our biggest organisational challenge is that HAWS receives **no operational funding from our Municipality or from National Government**.

We also need stronger enforcement of the existing municipal by-laws relating to responsible pet ownership, sterilisation and the number of animals permitted on a property.

HAWS cannot solve the animal welfare crisis on its own.

We can sterilise. We can vaccinate. We can educate. We can rescue. We can treat.

But unless people take responsibility for their animals, and unless existing laws are properly enforced, the cycle will continue.

Looking to the Future

This Committee recognises that we are only the custodians of HAWS at present.

One day, we will hand this organisation over to a younger generation.

Our responsibility is to hand it over **in a better position than we received it in**.

That means ensuring that HAWS is sustainable — not only in terms of the services we provide, but also financially.

It means protecting the reputation that has taken 58 years to build.

It means continuing to manage our resources responsibly.

And it means starting to think seriously about what HAWS needs to look like for the next generation.

That is why the exploration of a new facility is important.

Not because we want more animals.

But because we want a better quality of life for the animals in our care.

Not because we want a bigger building.

But because we need a facility that is fit for purpose.

Not because we want to spend money.

But because we need to make sure that the money we do spend creates the greatest possible benefit for the animals and the people caring for them.

Our clinic is not ideal or fully compliant. A fit-for-purpose clinic would allow our team to work more efficiently and, ultimately, more effectively. Our current facility does not comply with several SAVC specifications, but every year we get closer to being perfectly compliant.

We have much work to do before we know exactly what the future facility might look like.

But we need to start somewhere.

Thank You

And finally, I want to say thank you.

Thank you to my fellow Committee members for the time, energy and commitment you give to HAWS.

Thank you to our Treasurer – Anthony - and bookkeeper Mellissa for a job well done.

Thank you to every volunteer who walks a dog, socialises a cat, helps at an event, gives donations or simply gives their time because they believe in what HAWS does.

Thank you to Dr Vicky and her amazing clinic team.

Thank you to every member of staff who arrives every day to care for our animals.

And thank you to Rinaldi Meyer, who manages our facility and carries an enormous responsibility.

Just last Sunday, while most people were at home enjoying their Sunday lunch, Rinaldi, Dr Vicky and the clinic team were at HAWS sterilising **28 animals**.

That is the level of commitment that exists within HAWS.

Thank you to our donors — including the many people who prefer to remain anonymous.

Thank you to everyone who supports our fundraising events, buys something at our shops, puts money into a collection tin, makes a monthly donation, leaves a legacy or simply tells someone else about HAWS.

We all do this because we love animals.

In a perfect world, there would be no need for an animal welfare organisation.

But we don't live in a perfect world.

And until we do, HAWS will continue to be here for the abused, the abandoned, the neglected and the sick animals within our communities.

After 58 years, that remains our purpose.

And it remains our privilege.

Thank you.