Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 823.151, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

823.151 Lost or stray dogs and cats.—
(1) The Legislature finds that natural disasters, such as hurricanes, may result in an increase in owned dogs and cats becoming lost or stray. The Legislature further finds that dog and cat owners statewide should be afforded the opportunity to quickly and reliably claim their lost pets. It is therefore declared to be the public policy of the state that animal control agencies and humane organizations shall adopt policies and procedures to help return lost cats or dogs to identified owners.

(2)(a) A public or private animal shelter, humane organization, or animal control agency operated by a humane organization or by a county, municipality, or other incorporated
political subdivision that takes receivership of any lost or stray dogs or cats shall adopt written policies and procedures to ensure that every reasonable effort is made to quickly and reliably return owned animals to their owners. Such policies and procedures shall include:

1. Upon intake, screening of lost or stray dogs and cats for identification, including tags, licenses, implanted microchips, and tattoos.

2. A process for matching received lost or stray dogs and cats with any reports of lost pets received by the shelter from owners.

3. Public notice of lost or stray dogs and cats received, provided at the shelter or on the Internet, as appropriate, within 48 hours of the animal’s admission.

4. Reasonable efforts to notify identified owners of lost or stray dogs and cats within 48 hours of identification. Such reasonable efforts may include, but are not limited to, attempts to contact identified owners by telephone, by electronic mail, by United States mail, or by personal service at the owner’s last known phone number and address.

5. Notice to the public of the shelter’s location, hours, fees, and the return-to-owner process posted on the Internet, with the shelter’s business hours posted outside the shelter facility and recorded on the shelter’s telephone answering system message.

6. Access for owners to retrieve dogs and cats at least 1 weekend day per week and after 5:00 p.m. 1 weekday per week, provided that complying with the requirements of this subparagraph does not require an increase in total operating
7. Direct return-to-owner protocols that allow animal control officers in the field to directly return lost or stray dogs and cats to their owners when the owners have been identified.

8. Procedural safeguards to minimize the euthanasia of owned dogs and cats. Such safeguards shall include, but are not limited to, record verification to ensure that each animal to be euthanized is the correct animal designated for the procedure and proper scanning for an implanted microchip using a universal scanner immediately prior to the procedure.

9. Temporary extension of local minimum stray hold periods after a disaster is declared by the President of the United States or a state of emergency is declared by the Governor, if deemed necessary by a local government in the area of the declaration.

(b) Records related to this section and maintained by a public or private animal shelter, humane organization, or animal control agency operated by a humane society or by a county, municipality, or other incorporated political subdivision must be made available to the public pursuant to chapter 119.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.