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DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC WORKS

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August 1, 2000

City Council
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members In Session:

SUBJECT: REPORT-BACK ON CITY ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL CENTER

LOCATION AND COUNCIL DISTRICT:

Council District 1

RECOMMENDATION:

This report recommends that Council approve in concept:

- Forming a City Animal Care and Control Center oversight team; and
- Securing a credible organization or individual to complete an audit of the Center's policies, practices, and procedures.

COUNCIL CONTACT: Thomas V. Lee, Deputy City Manager, 264-5704

FOR COUNCIL MEETING OF: August 3, 2000

SUMMARY:

This report is in response to issues raised by three private citizens at the July 25, 2000 Council meeting as to the care and treatment of animals at the City's Animal Care and Control Center.

COMMITTEE/COMMISSION ACTION:

None.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The City's Animal Care and Control Center is home to 25.5 dedicated, highly qualified employees who work every day to provide humane and compassionate treatment to animals. During the last fiscal year alone, this team of professionals:

- Served 18,000 animals;
- Found homes for over 2,200 animals;
- Responded to 21,900 telephone calls for service to animals in the field; and
- Coordinated and responded to 90,500 calls to the Center for service, assistance, or information (as well as an additional 7,600 calls fielded after-hours by City Operator staff).

Currently, an average of 70 volunteers donate their time and energy to the Center's animal residents. These volunteers contribute over 3,000 hours per year to the Center, or the equivalent of 1 ½ full-time positions. Since the volunteer program's inception almost four years ago, over 200 volunteers have participated. Their commitment is valued and appreciated by the Center's entire staff. Many of these volunteers are long-term volunteers, coming back year after year to contribute.

For the most part, based on their feedback, staff believes the experiences of these volunteers have been very positive. However, three private citizens appeared before the Council on July 25, 2000 and expressed concerns as to the care and treatment of animals at the Center. Staff takes these concerns very seriously, and have reviewed each and every one carefully.

Although Appendix 1 (attached) provides factual information in response to these concerns, staff believes that the specific allegations raised point to a set of broader issues related to the operation of the Center. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Timely processing and proper veterinary care of animals sheltered at the Animal Care and Control Center, particularly within the sick, quarantine, and isolation buildings;
- Adequate staffing levels and employee morale at Center to ensure appropriate care for animals;
- Appropriate use of monies collected from spay/neuter deposits, donations, and other sources; and
- Existence of Center policies to ensure proper care and treatment of animals.

The citizens testifying recommended an external audit of the Center. Staff recommends and supports this process. An external audit would certainly provide fresh input as to how specific

incidents could be dealt with differently in the future, and how the issues identified above could best be examined and tackled whenever necessary and appropriate.

Staff recommends that a reputable, experienced consultant -- ideally, the Humane Society of the United States -- administer this audit, with oversight by a team of individuals selected for their ability to be credible stewards for an honest assessment of the Center. If the Humane Society is not available, then staff is prepared to retain a consultant knowledgeable in this field to perform the audit. The oversight committee would be responsible for thoroughly reviewing the intended scope of services for the consultant, overseeing its implementation by the consultant, and reviewing the results. Potential team members might include:

- The Director of the City of Sacramento's Zoo,
- The Director of the County of Sacramento's Animal Care and Regulation Department,
- The President of the Animal Control Directors Association,
- The Executive Director of the Sacramento Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals,
- A representative of the Humane Society of the United States,
- The County Health Officer who oversees veterinary care at the Center,
- A representative from the Sacramento Valley Veterinary Medicine Association, and/or
- A representative from the U.C. Davis School of Veterinary Medicine.

This is certainly not an exhaustive list.

Staff envisions a scope of services for the audit consultant to include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- Review existing animal intake, treatment, and adoption policies and procedures and ensure that they conform to current law, are in line with industry standards, include specific timeframes as well as personnel responsible, and are appropriately communicated to Center staff;
- Recommend additional policies, procedures, and related staff training as necessary;
- Review accounting and financial management procedures related to Center activities;
- Review both manual and electronic record-keeping and documentation procedures (and staff usage of these procedures) for appropriateness and overall effectiveness; and
- Analyze Center workload and appropriateness of staff levels.

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Staff would like to return to Council within 30 to 45 days to provide more specifics as to potential consultants, the cost, and timeline of an audit like this one.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

None.

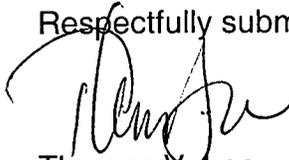
POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:

None.

ESBD CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable since no goods and services are being purchased.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas V. Lee
Deputy City Manager

RECOMMENDATION APPROVED:



ROBERT P. THOMAS
City Manager

APPROVED:



Michael Kashiwagi
Director of Public Works

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Issue or Concern Raised by Citizens Testifying	Related Information Provided by Staff
<p>Female dog who became impregnated at the Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The female and male dogs were owned by two brothers residing at the same address. These brothers were facing felony animal cruelty charges as the animals were living in deplorable conditions in the rear yard and garage of the brothers' residence. Animal Care Services was called to the scene, and the dogs were impounded and taken to the Sacramento Emergency Veterinary Clinic for evaluation. They were then transported to the Center as a special hold (evidence) until disposition of the criminal proceedings. ➤ As both dogs were from the same residence, they were placed in the same kennel in the Center's quarantine area on October 1, 1999, both for companionship and to limit the possibility of the pair spreading any potential canine diseases to other sheltered animals at the Center. Grouping animals from the same residence is a common shelter practice. ➤ Both dogs were in the quarantine area of the Center for a period of about eight months. The Center is required by law to hold animals in such cases until a judge has issued either an order of release or an order of destruction for the animal. The District Attorney's Office did not notify the Center of any such order. It is not sufficient to merely photograph or record written descriptions of the animal's condition in order to free the animal for adoption or euthanasia, as the animal's owner could later be cleared of any charges and be eligible to have the animal returned to him/her. The Center must wait for the official order. ➤ Although the Center did not receive word from the District Attorney's Office as to the orders on these animals, Center staff should have been more proactive in following up with District Attorney staff to bring about a resolution for these animals. It is the responsibility of a staff member to make this happen, and it did not occur in a timely fashion. ➤ Puppies were born to the female dog on March 25, 2000. Puppies under six to eight weeks may be vaccinated, but are still partially protected by maternal antibodies. It is the goal of the Center to vaccinate adoptable puppies, but this practice was postponed due to lack of Animal Care Technician staff. ➤ On May 26, 2000, a staff member attempted to contact the owners of the two dogs to determine whether they could be relinquished to the Center. The owner of one of the dogs and the mother of the owner of the other dog agreed to relinquishment. State law mandates a two-day holding period for owner-relinquished animals. The animals were held for five days before release, and transferred to the main kennels (male and female) for adoption. The male dog was euthanized on June 8, 2000, and the female dog and her six puppies were released to an animal rescue organization on June 9, 2000.

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<p>Treatment of Dalmatian sheltered at the Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The dog was processed and examined by an Animal Care Technician at approximately noon on the day of its arrival (July 16, 2000 via the Night Drop Building). The Animal Care Technician recorded that the animal was inactive and appeared to be ill, and placed it in the Center's Sick Building. It should be noted that despite claims by a citizen that the animal was held in a 1' x 2' metal cage, the animal was actually placed in Kennel S-13, which measures 4' x 7 ½' in its interior run, and 4' x 8' in its exterior run. ➤ On July 17, 2000, a non-staff member observed the dog in the Sick Building lying on the floor with a bloody discharge. She contacted an Animal Care Technician. The non-staff member asked the Animal Care Technician if the animal had been hit by a car. The Animal Care Technician responded that the dog had symptoms of Parvo virus (an extremely deadly and contagious animal disease of which a bloody discharge is the major symptom) and would have to be euthanized once she secured approval from her supervisor. ➤ The dog was euthanized that same day.
<p>Treatment of a cat housed at the Center with a mouth tumor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A male cat was brought to the Center's counter on June 29, 2000 just after 11:00 a.m. The cat was designated as a feral cat, and thus automatically placed in the cat quarantine area. ➤ On Saturday, July 1, 2000, a non-staff member inquired about the cat as it appeared to have a broken jaw. ➤ A Senior Animal Control Officer transported the cat to the Sacramento Emergency Veterinary Clinic. The veterinarian's resulting diagnosis was that a bone tumor penetrated the cat's mandible. ➤ The veterinarian euthanized the cat.
<p>Treatment of a cat with a neck injury at the Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ On June 6, 2000, a black male cat arrived at the Center via the Night Drop Building. An Animal Care Technician processed the cat and placed him in the Cat Sick/Quarantine Building due to visible scars from an old injury. ➤ A second Animal Care Technician observed the cat's condition in the cage and recorded "neck injury" on the animal hold card. ➤ On June 8, 2000, a non-staff member observed the cat. At her request, the cat was transported to the Sacramento Emergency Veterinary Clinic for evaluation. The examination performed by the veterinarian indicated that the cat had multiple bite wounds on its back from an old injury as well as severe ear mites. ➤ The cat was returned to the Center on June 9, 2000, with the determination from the veterinarian that the cat had old injuries and was scratching its ears due to ear mites. Medications were prescribed to alleviate the ear mite problem. ➤ The Center's Manager spoke to a contracted veterinarian on July 26, 2000. This veterinarian reviewed the original diagnosis on the cat and stated that based on this review, the cat was stable enough to have remained at the Center for

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Staffing levels	<p>the four-day hold period (as was done at the time).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Center currently has 25.5 employees. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Senior Animal Care Technician, • 5.5 Animal Care Technicians, • 2 Senior Animal Control Officers, • 10 Animal Control Officers, • 1 Chief Animal Control Officer, • 1 Administrative Technician, • 1 Accounting Technician, • 3 Typist Clerk IIs, and • 1 Typist Clerk III. ➤ Center staff are bolstered by the efforts of a core of volunteers, which currently total about 70. These volunteers offer companionship and care for the animals, clean cages, and perform other supervised duties. ➤ The Center currently has two vacant Animal Care Technician (ACT) positions, and one vacant Senior Animal Care Technician position. The Center is currently in the process of testing and reviewing applications for each of these positions with the goal of getting them filled as quickly as possible. ➤ The Center's Manager believes that this current staff shortage due to vacancies, together with a new law that requires the shelter to perform euthanasia by injection rather than carbon monoxide, have indeed contributed to decreased morale at the shelter. The use of carbon monoxide allows a physical and emotional distance between staff conducting euthanasia and animals. Intravenous injection of sodium pentobarbital – the current alternative required by law – is more stressful for both staff and animals as it requires holding/restraining of animals. In order to help address this challenge (which is faced by shelters statewide), the Council recently approved an additional 1.5 FTEs for Animal Care Technicians. Additionally, the Center's Manager is currently working to offer training and counseling options to Animal Care Technicians to reduce this emotional burden wherever possible and increase morale.
Spay/Neuter Account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Anyone wishing to adopt an animal from the City's Animal Care and Control Center must pay both an adoption fee as well as a spay/neuter fee as part of the adoption process. If the animal is in good health and old enough for the spay/neuter surgery, the animal is transported to a contract veterinarian for the spay/neuter procedure. The owner then picks up the animal at the veterinarian once this is complete. If the animal either is too young for the spay/neuter surgery or has an illness that prevents the surgery at that time, then the animal is placed in the Foster Care Program and released to the new owner, who leaves behind the spay/neuter deposit.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Once the animal is old enough or well enough to be spayed or neutered, the owner takes it to the veterinarian of his/her choice to have the surgery done. Once the owner provides a spay/neuter certificate for the adopted animal, the owner is then reimbursed a specified amount for the procedure out of this account. If this proof is not provided within the timeframe provided by law, however, then the fees in the account are forfeited to the City. These forfeited fees must be used for spay/neuter-related programs, including education, outreach, and training programs. ➤ For an unknown administrative reason, the Spay/Neuter Account was mistakenly closed at the end of fiscal year 1996/97. Funds from spay/neuter fees have now been identified, and the account has been reestablished with close to \$100,000 in funds. Regardless of the specific fund within the City where they were located, these dollars were always used only for the purposes they were intended. Staff can provide specific and detailed expenditure information related to these fees and the Spay/Neuter Account upon request.
<p>Veterinary care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Center's goal is to provide humane and compassionate care for each and every animal that enters the Center. ➤ Animal Care Technicians and Animal Control Officers are trained to recognize animals for evidence of medical instability or signs of obvious pain, make regular rounds throughout the Center to constantly observe animals in every part of the Center, and arrange for transport of animals in need of medical attention to veterinarians promptly and compassionately. ➤ A Sick and Injured Animal Policy, which clearly identifies procedures for dealing with sick and injured animals brought to the Center, is currently in draft form and being reviewed by the County Health Officer. Please note that state mandates already specify procedures for dealing with animals that are injured (those reported or discovered out in the field who have been hit by cars or are otherwise injured). In these cases (including injured animals brought to the Center), officers are required to immediately transport the injured animal to a veterinarian for evaluation and treatment. Additionally, any severely injured or extremely sick animal observed by staff at the Center is humanely euthanized.