



# ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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## Animal Care and Control Citygate Progress Report August 4, 2009

In FY 05-06, Citygate Associates conducted a management review of the Sonoma County Animal Care and Control (SCACC) Division. The report was presented to the Board of Supervisors in June 2006. A report of progress was given to the Board of Supervisors by the then Animal Care and Control Director on May 1, 2007. It details action taken on recommendations since December 2006. No further reports have been completed nor presented to the Board.

This report details actions accomplished on 31 remaining recommendations that were not completed as of May 1, 2007. The period between June 2006 and the present have been marked by a lack of consistent leadership. After the retirement of the long time Director in June 2006, there was a six month period when there was no Director. In July 2006, an Interim Director was engaged for three months while the search was underway to select a permanent Director. The new Director started in November 2006 and left in December 2007. There was a period of seven months with no acting Director. In August 2008, an Interim Director was hired on a part-time basis (twenty-hours-per-week). A permanent Director for SCACC has been hired, starting on July 14, 2009.

While many of the items in the Citygate Management Report are complete, there are items that are ongoing and partially completed due to lack of available funding. This management report has been a valuable tool for Animal Care and Control to take charge of setting priorities and future planning. We plan to segue many of the items into the FY09/10 and FY10/11 Animal Care and Control Strategic Plan as an ongoing short term and long term plan. The Department will report out the results for the strategic plan on an annual basis to the Board of Supervisors.

The following recommendations have been completed to date:

### **Recommendation III-5**

Provide back-up personnel for animal picture taking

**Status:** Completed and on-going

Photos of all animals are taken by staff (Animal Control Officers, Registered Vet Techs) upon the animal's arrival/intake at the shelter. Volunteers retake photos when the animal becomes adoptable. The photos are then sent to the Volunteer Coordinator and he posts them to Chameleon.

Once a photo is posted to Chameleon, it is then automatically uploaded hourly to PetHarbor, the lost and found pet web site ACC uses.

### **Recommendation III-8**

Aggressively institute customer service training

Status: Completed

Basic customer service training was conducted in 2006 by Human Resources. Quarterly sessions were conducted during 2007 by the Director. Annual customer service training is a component of the Strategic Plan.

**Recommendation III-9**

Conduct sensitivity and diversity training

Status: Completed and on-going

Training was conducted during 2007. Annual sensitivity and diversity training is a component of the Strategic Plan.

**Recommendation III-11**

Implement Phone Tree

Status: Completed

The English and Spanish versions of the phone tree system are operational. The maintenance of the system continues to need adjustments to maximize efficiency of customer service. Difficulty we face with the phone tree is that it occasionally malfunctions which requires us to work closely with Communications to reformat the entire tree structure.

**Recommendation IV-3**

Explore public sector partnerships and consolidation of animal control and sheltering

Status: Completed and on-going

Partnerships have been established with various groups, including: Sonoma County Humane Society, Coins to Help Abandoned and Neglected Equines (C.H.A.N.G.E.) Program, Pets Lifeline in Sonoma, Forgotten Felines, and other animal rescue groups. This is a component of the Strategic Plan.

**Recommendation IV-4**

Increase hours of contract veterinarian

Status: Completed

The veterinarian's hours have been increased from 15 hours per week, to 27 hours per week, effective August 2007, to meet the needs of the organization. We will continue to assess the need for veterinarian hours over the next year by reviewing shelter statistics and through the development of the 2010/2011 budget.

**Recommendation IV-8**

Replace cat and small animal cages

Status: Completed

Twenty-two stainless steel cat cages purchased with funds provided by the former volunteer non-profit association were delivered in January 2009. An additional twenty-two cages purchased by the County will be delivered in August 2009.

**Recommendation IV-9**

Strengthen the safety program, including training and updates to the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

Status: Completed

IIPP has been updated. Basic safety issues have been addressed, training topics identified, and MSDS updated. Mandatory all-staff safety meetings will continue to be held regularly.

**Recommendation V-1**

Add two Animal Control Officer (ACO) positions and one dispatch position, or three ACO positions (increase current staffing level from 11 officers to 13 with a dedicated dispatcher or increase to 14 officers if dedicated dispatcher is not deployed.)

Status: Partially complete

An ACO was hired in August 2008; another was hired in December 2008. These two hires filled recent vacancies but did not fulfill the recommendation of increasing the staffing level from 11 to 13 officers due to budget shortfalls. There are currently a total of 11 ACOs and 1.75 (FTE) ACO Field Supervisors. The dispatch position has not been permanently filled. We are currently staffing dispatch with a scheduled rotation of animal control officers and a back up of administrative staff (when needed), 8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. The City of Santa Rosa Police Department dispatch takes after hours calls from the public within their city limits and contacts our staff by cell/home phone. The Sonoma County Sheriffs Department dispatch handles all other after hour calls and contacts our staff by vehicle/portable radio and/or cell/home phone.

This recommendation will continue to be evaluated, and the dispatcher position possibly filled, as resources are available.

**Recommendation V-3**

Dedicate one staff member to dispatching officer calls or rotate among the officers.

Status: Partially Complete

It is currently being filled by rotating Animal Control Officer staff. This will be evaluated as resources are available.

**Recommendation V-4**

Order the next two officer vehicles with four-wheel drive

Status: Completed

The organization currently has one four-wheel drive vehicle, which has been deemed appropriate for the operation. A second four-wheel drive vehicle will not be needed at this time.

**Recommendation V-10**

Study the feasibility of integrating Santa Rosa animal control dispatch with the Sheriff's Office

Status: Study of feasibility completed.

The Sheriff's Department cannot absorb these duties without adding another dispatch position and upgrading equipment. Additional resources will be needed in order for Animal Control Officer activity to be monitored by the Sheriff's Department from 4:00 PM to 7:00 AM. The Sheriff's Department suggested that there was a possibility that the cost for absorbing the dispatch activity for SCACC could be shared with the Parks and Probation Departments. The actual cost still needs to be determined. Until adequate resources are available, this cannot be done.

**Recommendation V-11**

Change the title of the Animal Regulation Officer to Animal Control Officer

Status: Completed

**Recommendation VII-1**

Consider Contra Costa County's medical program for possible implementation

Status: Completed

The current Shelter Veterinarian came from Contra Costa Animal Services in 2007 and the program has been implemented. In addition, the UC Davis Shelter Medicine Program completed an agency evaluation and made recommendations for shelter disease control, feeding, housing and medical care. These recommendations have been implemented.

**Recommendation VII-2**

Consider implementing Santa Barbara and Contra Costa Counties' "temperament" testing methodology

Status: Completed

Dogs are temperament tested using a combination of two nationally recognized assessment programs:

1. The "best standards" of Sue Sternberg, founder and director of *Rondout Valley Animals for Adoption*, a not-for-profit, open admission animal shelter in upstate New York, and the founder of the *Community Animal Shelter Association (CASA)*, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to pet owner outreach, safe animal adoptions, and quality of life at animal shelters around the world, and;
2. Safety Assessment For Evaluating Re-homing (S.A.F.E.R.) methodology, a canine aggression assessment tool originally developed by Dr. Emily Weiss, C.A.A.B., and now a program of the ASPCA.

These two nationally recognized programs provide appropriate canine temperament assessment for Shelter dogs.

When testing "power breeds" (Pit Bulls, Mastiffs, Rottweilers), some Bay Area Doglovers Responsible About Pit Bulls (BADRAP) recommendations are added. All test results are recorded in Chameleon in the dog profile and are summarized in a web memo and have proved effective.

**Recommendation VII-3**

Contact Contra Costa County regarding their education program and incorporate their resources and materials into the County's program

Status: Completed

The Sonoma County education program materials are in line with those of Contra Costa County and the animal care industry as a whole. The components of the education program cover:

- responsible pet ownership
- safety around animals
- humane treatment of animals
- the importance of spay/neuter
- the overall welfare of animals

Implementation of this program will be incorporated with the Strategic Plan.

**Recommendation VII-4**

Examine newly opened Bay Area shelters to identify possible modifications of the small animal holding areas

Status: Completed

Small animals are now held in a covered, secure get-acquainted area of the shelter.

**Recommendation VII-5**

Visit the Santa Barbara County shelter and incorporate its approach to using volunteers

Status: Completed

Although the Volunteer Coordinator was unable to visit the Santa Barbara shelter due to funding resources, shelter staff did visit comparable shelters in Northern California. Since October 2006, we have visited the Contra Costa and Sacramento City volunteer programs, the Humane Society of Sonoma County, Marin Humane Society, San Francisco Animal Care and Control, and Pets Lifeline in Sonoma. We have revamped the volunteer program, including improving volunteer training and defining volunteer responsibilities. This has led to improved staff/volunteer coordination and relations. Sonoma County Animal Care and Control is now operating at comparable standards in its volunteer program.

**Recommendation IX-4**

A shuttle program should be considered relative to its possible effectiveness in Sonoma County

Status: Completed

A shuttle program is not a practical option at this time. Currently there are neither personnel nor is there funding available to support this. A shuttle program is something we will continue to look at in the future, within the context of department goals, priorities, personnel and funding.

**Recommendation IX-7**

Implement an outreach and advertising program to inform citizens of available spay/neuter programs

Status: Completed

Marketing for spay/neuter events has included: mass flier distribution (to target areas such as mobile home parks, etc.), dog license insert, radio, television, print media (including Latino media), and internet advertising. As funding is available more advertising will be done. This will be ongoing as part of the Strategic Plan.

**Recommendation X-3**

Develop an outline for the public education program to include attainable goals

Status: Completed

SCACC provides a public education program (see VII-3: Contact Contra Costa County regarding their education program and incorporate their resources and materials into the County's program) and (X-7: Recruit and train public education program presenters). The new Director will assess the current program and develop a plan for further improvement as funding becomes available. This is a component of the Strategic Plan.

**Recommendation X-7**

Recruit and train public education program presenters

Status: Completed and on-going.

Depending on the presentation requested, one or more of the following staff members presents the education program, the Volunteer Coordinator, Shelter Supervisor, Animal Technicians, Field Supervisors, or Field Officer. Volunteers are used to assist with related events, i.e. Ag Days. At these events, an officer takes an animal control truck, the volunteer coordinator or shelter supervisor takes the MAC, and volunteers assist with the pets taken and children attending.



The following recommendations are on-going or pending and will be evaluated by the new Director for further course of action:

**Recommendation III-3**

Split the office supervision and accounting/budgeting functions into two positions.

Status: On-going

The Accounting Technician was assigned responsibility for too many functions. Because of this, some accounting/budgeting functions have been contracted out to the county Auditor's office. Implementation and management of the Chameleon computer program and the phone tree were added to the workload of this position and these assignments have now been delegated to other personnel. This will be evaluated by the new director.

Recommendation: The new Director will assess the current staff resources and reassign duties to existing staff in the areas of: staff supervision, licensing management, customer service, phone tree, voice mail and dispatch.

**Recommendation III-4**

Upgrade the computer-based animal tracking system.

Status: On-going

The Chameleon software program went live July 2007. At the present time, the program is not fully functional because mandated reports and other related information were not created before the program went live. Adequate funding was not properly designated for this project. Due to the lack of a functioning program, we were unable to show transparency, produce reports, etc. Reliable information is not available for management purposes, response to public inquires, and timely reporting to government agencies. It was not until January 2009 that the Division was able to post reliable FY 07-08 shelter statistics on the web. The Division is two years late in completing two reports due to the State. Currently, reports from data entered since the beginning of FY 08-09 for Field Services are not available. These reports are used to evaluate services performed in the field and track the demand for services.

In May 2009, the Ag Commissioner arranged for ISD to perform a comprehensive assessment of the Chameleon software program to improve efficiencies, identify and classify data issues, identify reporting problems, and implement staff training. This is currently underway and due for completion by end of July 2009.

Recommendation: Implement the recommendation in III-3 (Split the office supervision and accounting/budgeting functions into two positions). Evaluate funding needs for staff training, creation of mandated and other needed reports to serve our customers, and additional services from ISD as needed.

**Recommendation III-10**

Expand and redesign the front office and public counter area

Status: On-going

An architect experienced in shelter design has been retained to conduct a Facilities Needs Assessment report. A draft of results from this assessment is currently being reviewed by Animal Care and Control staff, the Agricultural Commissioner, and County Architect staff. A final report should be completed by August 2009.

Recommendation: Based on the report, make changes where possible by focusing on no or low cost options. Determine implementation of other changes based on availability of funding.

**Recommendation IV-1**

In the short term, make major repairs to concrete floors and remodel some of the cat holding rooms. Provide shutters on the west side of the dog kennels, and add a modular barn.

Status: On-going

The cat room floors have been refinished and the dog kennels have been re-caulked. Additional work is suspended until the architect's Facilities Needs Assessment report is completed.

**Recommendation IV-2**

Build a new shelter and administrative facility, exploring community partnerships for provision of animal service.

Status: On-going

The Facilities Needs Assessment Report will address a remodel of the existing facility to bring it in line with current shelter standards. During the fall of 2008 there were exploratory discussions with the Director of the Humane Society of Sonoma County (HSSC) regarding a possible partnership for the use of both facilities. At the current time, there is a transition of leadership in both organizations. Partnerships have been established with various groups, including: Sonoma County Humane Society, Coins to Help Abandoned and Neglected Equines (C.H.A.N.G.E.) Program, Pets Lifeline in Sonoma, and other animal rescue groups.

Recommendation: This will be explored further by the new Director.

**Recommendation IV-5**

Phase out the use of inmate labor in the shelter

Status: On-going

Three Animal Care Assistants (ACA) were hired in November 2008, to replace three Extra Help positions. A Lead ACA position budgeted for in 2008-2009 was not filled, and this position was eliminated with the 2009-2010 budget. The Division is evaluating the effectiveness of the current staffing levels to manage the shelter without the use of inmate labor. Inmate help was reduced from 12 to 6. This will be evaluated over the next few months.

Recommendation:

Change time of opening to the public to 12:30 PM (from 12:00 noon), allowing an extra half hour to complete feeding and cleaning, prior to public arrival. Additionally, change closing time on Wednesdays to 5:30 PM (from 7:00 PM), and Saturdays to 5:30 PM (from 5:00 PM). This change would facilitate the most efficient use of staff, make the hours of operation consistent throughout the week, and facilitate the elimination of inmate labor. It also meets the Hayden Bill requirements of either being open on a weekend day or late on a weekday. We will also look at accommodating the public by accepting appointments.

**Recommendation V-7**

Separate the staff lunch/break room from the officer work area

Status: On-going

An architect experienced in shelter design has been retained to conduct a Facilities Needs Assessment report. A draft of results from this assessment is currently being reviewed by Animal Care and Control staff, the Agricultural Commissioner, and County Architect staff. A final report should be completed by August 2009.

**Recommendation VIII-2**

Report animal impounds and dispositions and compare with other shelters

Status: Pending, Refer to III-4 (Upgrade the computer-based animal tracking system).

The ISD audit is currently evaluating project challenges and needs. Until adequate funding is available to insure that the Chameleon software is fully functional and adequate staff is in place, there is no way to generate applicable reports. Once this audit is completed and adequate funding is available, these reports will be completed for comparison.

**Recommendation X-6**

Obtain Board approval of the public education program goals, objectives and financing

Status: Pending

A plan will be developed for Board approval.