

204
**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



FROM: EXECUTIVE OFFICE

SUBMITTAL DATE: June 10, 2003

SUBJECT: 2002 - 2003 Grand Jury Report: Department of Animal Services

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board instruct the Department of Animal Services to forward to the Executive Office - within 30 days - a draft of the Board's response to the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury that pertain to the Department's operational areas; and direct the Executive Office to submit draft responses to the Board within 60 days.

BACKGROUND: The attached report has been issued by the Grand Jury

Section 933 (c) of the Penal Code requires that the Board of Supervisors comment on the Grand Jury's recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the Board, and that a response be provided to the Presiding Judge of Superior Court within 90 days.

Draft responses received from the affected department will be consolidated and presented for the Board's consideration; the response ultimately approved by the Board will then be forwarded to the Grand Jury as required by statute.

Attachment
F:\USERS\IDGRANT\GJURY\30dayanimalservices.doc

TONY CARSTENS
Deputy County Executive Officer

- Consent
- Policy
- Consent
- Policy

FINANCIAL DATA: N/A
CURRENT YEAR COST
NET COUNTY COST

ANNUAL COST:
IN CURRENT YEAR BUDGET: Yes/ No/
BUDGET ADJUSTMENT FY: Yes/ No/

SOURCE OF FUNDS:

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE.

County Executive Officer Signature

Department Recommendation:
Per Executive Office:

Prev. Agn. ref.

Dist

AGENDA NO.

3.9



RIVERSIDE COUNTY GRAND JURY

(909) 955-8990 OFFICE • (909) 955-8989 FAX

May 28, 2003

Riverside County Board of Supervisors
4080 Lemon Street
Riverside, CA 92501

Subject: 2002-03 Grand Jury Report: Department of Animal Services

Dear Board Members:

Please note that Penal Code Section 933 et seq., specifies that you respond within ninety days. Further, it specifies that this report be kept confidential for a minimum of two working days prior to public release. The contents of this report will be made public after the close of business May 30, 2003.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Bowers".

Robert Bowers, Foreperson
2002-03 Riverside County Grand Jury

RB:gs
Attach.

2002-2003 GRAND JURY REPORT

Department of Animal Services

Background

The mission and responsibility of the Department of Animal Services (DAS) is to "protect and serve the people and animals of Riverside County through programs that provide for public education, humane sheltering, responsible pet ownership, and progressive law enforcement."

The DAS was a division within the Health Services agency until 1999, when it became a department. The department employs 104 personnel serving throughout the county and has an annual budget of over \$5 million funded by the county general fund and fees for such services as licenses and pet adoption. A large percentage of Riverside County homes have at least one domestic animal as a pet (usually a cat or dog). The Riverside County Integrated Project shows that the County's population will increase at a steady rate over the next 20 years. As the County's human population increases, so may the population of domestic animals, greatly increasing the workload and responsibility of the DAS.

The DAS has six basic programs:

1. A field operation program in which animal control officers (ACO) regularly deal with animal bites, injured, sick, and stray animals as well as protecting animals from abuse and neglect by their owners. DAS employees may assist the California Department of Fish and Game in controlling dangerous animals such as bears or mountain lions.
2. A shelter program in which the DAS manages animal shelters in Riverside and Blythe. There are two additional shelters under contract for dogs and cats located in San Jacinto and Lake Elsinore, and a temporary shelter for large animals (such as cattle and horses) in Nuevo.
3. A program for licensing dogs and inoculating them for rabies.
4. A spay-neuter clinic for preventing the rapid growth of the population of unwanted dogs and cats.

5. A DAS educational program to inform children in the public schools about the responsibilities of caring and feeding of animals, as well as the dangers associated with stray animals.
6. A volunteer program in which individuals work in the shelters and in the educational programs, assisting the department's professional staff.

Findings

1. In late 2002, more than 70 horses were seized from one location because of allegations that the animals were suffering severe neglect. The horses were turned over to DAS for care at a temporary animal shelter in Nuevo. The unexpected and unbudgeted cost to DAS is estimated to be \$100,000 before the horses may be available for adoption or moved in a legal manner.
2. The DAS must cope with situations involving groups of large animals (such as horses or cattle) on an average of four to five times per month. This includes cattle that stray onto a highway or horses that are malnourished and suffering from neglect. Training is sporadic as incidents occur.
3. The DAS owns four stock trailers that can transport large animals. Parts of this equipment (such as loading ramps) have not always been in safe operating condition.
4. According to the Director of the Center for Equine Health at U.C. Davis, "West Nile Virus is expected to be a threat throughout the state this summer." The virus may be lethal to horses and is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. The cost for vaccinating a horse for West Nile Virus is between \$75 - \$100 for the set of two shots.
5. The DAS states that informing students (K-12) about the responsibility of caring for animals often aids in reducing problems of animal abuse and over population.
6. Each year taxpayer money is spent to cope with pet over-population problems. Increased public awareness for the spay-neutering of pets will result in fewer unwanted animals and eliminate the need to euthanize.

Recommendations

Board of Supervisors
Department of Animal Services

1. Provide permanent training to the schedule for Animal Control Officers (ACO) in the handling of multi-animal incidents involving large animals (such as cattle and horses) and ensure that stock trailers are always maintained in proper operating condition.
2. Inform the horse owners in Riverside County of the serious dangers of West Nile Virus, provide information on the need for vaccinating, and be prepared to participate in control or eradication programs with other county and state agencies. Information should be provided on the DAS website and/or newspaper articles.
3. Vaccinate all horses and mules under the control and care of the DAS for West Nile Virus.