

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

560



**FROM:** EXECUTIVE OFFICE

**SUBMITTAL DATE:**  
July 29, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report from the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) of the Riverside County/City Animal Shelter

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** That the Board of Supervisors refer the HSUS audit report of the Riverside County/City Animal Shelter to a select committee (approved by the Board on Jan. 27, 2004, agenda item 3.2) for review and recommendations on how to improve operations at the shelter in Riverside and elsewhere in the county.

**BACKGROUND:** On Dec. 16, 2003, agenda item 3.2, the Board of Supervisors directed the Executive Office to solicit proposals for an independent, expert audit of the Riverside County/City Animal Shelter. A request for proposals (RFP) was distributed to national and local organizations with expertise in assessing animal control operations.

Staff from the County Executive Office, the County Purchasing Department and the City of Riverside reviewed several proposals and recommended that HSUS conduct the audit. The Board approved the recommendation on Feb. 10, 2004, agenda item 3.4.

(Continued on Page 2)

*Dan Martinez*  
Dan Martinez, Principal Management Analyst

<b>FINANCIAL DATA</b>	Current F.Y. Total Cost:	\$ 0	In Current Year Budget:	N/A
	Current F.Y. Net County Cost:	\$ 0	Budget Adjustment:	N/A
	Annual Net County Cost:	\$ 0	For Fiscal Year:	N/A

<b>SOURCE OF FUNDS: N/A</b>	Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Requires 4/5 Vote	<input type="checkbox"/>

**C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE**

County Executive Office Signature *Rhonda King*

- Dept't Recomm.:  Policy
- Per Exec. Ofc.:  Policy
- Consent
- Consent

Prev. Agn. Ref.: 12/16/03 Item 3.2; 1/27/04 Item 3.2; 2/10/04 Item 3.4 | District: All | Agenda Number:

**ATTACHMENTS FILED  
WITH THE CLERK OF THE BOARD**

16.3

**Board of Supervisors**

**Form 11: Audit Report from the Humane Society of the United States  
(HSUS) of the Riverside County/City Animal Shelter**

**Page 2**

**BACKGROUND (Continued)**

HSUS auditors focused primarily on three components: 1) Shelter operations and facilities, 2) management and administration and 3) animal control field services. Before visiting the shelter, HSUS auditors reviewed hundreds of documents covering shelter policies, procedures, budget, organizational structure, goals, spay/neuter services, adoption services, euthanasia, field services, demographics, community outreach, agreements and overall shelter operations. Auditors also reviewed comments from the community about the shelter before their visit.

The HSUS audit team consisted of four (4) consultants and an HSUS manager who coordinated audit activities. The site visit was conducted between April 27 and April 30 of this year. A methodical review of all shelter and field services activities included interviews with shelter personnel, Board staff, and members of the community.

The HSUS audit team summarized some of its findings to county staff at the end of the site visit. The team's major concerns and the steps taken by the department since the site visit are listed below.

**1. Animal Services trucks must have air-conditioning systems installed for animals' safety and well-being.**

The Board of Supervisors approved funding in the current budget to replace all swamp coolers with air conditioners on the animal-control boxes in all animal services trucks. The replacements began on July 19, 2004.

**2. Proper tracking and secure storage of drugs at the shelter.**

The appropriate tracking procedures and logs are now in place for all controlled substances arriving and being dispensed at all shelter facilities. All controlled substances are now stored in secure areas with a minimum of two locks, and are accessible only to authorized personnel.

**3. Cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces at the shelter is substandard.**

A deep cleaning of the shelter has been completed and labor-management teams are reviewing kennel-cleaning procedures to continue the improvements. The shelter's night shift will be eliminated August 5, 2004 to concentrate kennel staff into effective cleaning teams. Eliminating the night shift (between 9:30 pm and 4:00 am, seven days per week) allows animals to rest at night, making them healthier and more regular in their digestive cycles. A cleaning checklist has been implemented to assist supervising kennel attendants in maintaining quality assurance during every shift.

**(Continued on Page 3)**

**Board of Supervisors**

**Form 11: Audit Report from the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) of the Riverside County/City Animal Shelter**

**Page 3**

**BACKGROUND (Continued)**

**4. Euthanasia – Staff not conducting proper death verification. HSUS recommends inserting a needle (heart stick) through the chest cavity into the heart. The heart stick will move until the heart stops beating, confirming the animal's death.**

The procedure used at the time of the audit was to check vital signs, breathing and reflexes. A stethoscope was used to confirm death prior to placing the animal into a container. Once full, containers would be moved into the freezer morgue area.

The Department of Animal Services requested the opinion of Dr. Allan Drusys, an independent veterinarian. Dr. Drusys has 10 years' experience advising Riverside and Orange counties on issues that include animal cruelty and euthanasia. Dr. Drusys' advice has been used to generate policy for the departments as well as expert testimony during court hearings.

Dr. Drusys believes a heart stick is unnecessary and could be misinterpreted if witnessed by untrained individuals. Dr. Drusys recommends placing euthanized animals out of other animals' sight for a period of time before using existing death verification procedures to confirm the death of the animal.

The Department of Animal Services has incorporated Dr. Drusys' recommendation into its euthanasia policy. The department's new policy includes 1) placing the animal out of site of other animals; 2) applying the euthanasia drug; 3) placing the animal in holding area, out of sight of other animals; and 4) waiting at least 15 minutes (a sufficient time for death to occur) before verifying the death of the animal using existing death verification procedures.

**5. Air exchange system needs to be upgraded at the shelter.**

Facilities Management is installing new coolers to bring the air exchange rate up to HSUS' recommended standard. The air exchange upgrades are scheduled to be made by July 30, 2004. The project's total completion, including duct work, is expected by mid-August.

**6. More parking spaces are needed at the shelter.**

Facilities Management negotiated a lease with the Metropolitan Water District and used deferred-maintenance funds to pave a new employee parking area at the shelter to free up the limited spaces for customers in front of the building.

The complete audit report, with findings and recommendations from HSUS, will be delivered to the county by Aug. 6, 2004. Kim Intino, HSUS manager and lead auditor, will summarize the audit finding in a presentation to the Board with this agenda item.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) believes that the objective examination of shelter procedures and operations is best accomplished through independent consultations. The HSUS is the nation's largest animal protection organization, and is uniquely positioned to evaluate the effectiveness of local animal care and control services, offer recommendations, and provide assistance with implementation.

Recognizing the need within the animal sheltering community for professional, standardized analysis, The HSUS has developed the professional Animal Services Consultation (ASC) program, a service created to effectively assist local animal care and control agencies (both municipal and nonprofit) in managing their way to success.

In December 2003, The HSUS was asked to provide a proposal for a review of the Riverside City/County Animal Shelter. The HSUS submitted a proposal for a comprehensive review and evaluation of its current operations, services, and programs with an eye to the future. A site visit was conducted April 27-30, 2004.

Each HSUS ASC is tailored to meet the client's needs by utilizing a team of experts to conduct an assessment of services and suggest feasible solutions, as may be necessary, to a wide breadth of problems. To assist the County of Riverside, The HSUS utilized a team with specific expertise within the field of animal care and control. The team for this consultation included the following HSUS representatives:

**Kat Brown, HSUS Consultant**  
*Shelter Facilities and Operations*

**Penny Cistaro, HSUS Consultant**  
*Shelter Facilities and Operations*

**Bill Hein, HSUS Consultant**  
*Management and Administration*

**Linda Haller, HSUS Consultant**  
*Field Services and Animal Control*

**Kim Intino, HSUS Manager, Animal Services Consultation Program**  
*Site Coordinator/ Report Development*

Along with this final report, we have compiled a reference materials binder, which contains sample forms, relevant articles, studies, and other information to help further support our recommendations.

**Notes:**

*Included in this report are many recommendations, some requiring substantial change, and we understand that it can be overwhelming. To start, we suggest reviewing the report several times and forming a task force in order to prioritize the recommendations (See section 2, Task Force). You will find that some of the recommendations can be implemented immediately with just a change in process, while others may take months or even years. It will be an ongoing process.*

*By nature our reports focus on areas that need improvement, but the observations throughout this report are not meant to be critical; rather they should be viewed as “this is where we are now, and this is where we want to go.” In addition, we do our best to also highlight areas that are commendable. Unfortunately, some agencies that have received evaluations have been unfairly besieged due to individuals and groups taking observations and recommendations out of context and using them to target individual shelter staff. Most of the issues discussed in this report are not uncommon in sheltering agencies around the country, and The HSUS urges those reading the report to use it as a tool, not a weapon.*

*We would like to add that the observations and recommendations made in this report should in no way be used to lay blame at the feet of the Riverside City/County Animal Shelter staff members. Although every shelter has its mix of marginal, satisfactory and exceptional employees, they are most often working with little or no oversight, training and equipment, and yet are still getting the job done. It is the responsibility of the county, in conjunction with shelter management to make the suggested changes.*

*Please note that hereafter the Riverside City/County Animal Shelter will be referred to as “RCCAS or “shelter.” “Senior management” refers to the director and operations chief. The “management team” refers to the director, operations chief, staff analyst (who was also interim administrative services officer and interim executive assistant), and senior accountant. “Supervisor” refers to any non-management position that oversees an area such as shelter services, office/support services, and animal control services.*

*The HSUS would like to thank the people involved with the County of Riverside and the Riverside City/County Animal Shelter for their assistance and cooperation with The HSUS ASC team. We have been extremely pleased to assist in their efforts to improve programs and services for both the animals and humans within their community, and remain available as a continued resource in the coming months. We would also like to note that certain concerns expressed by The HSUS ASC team had been addressed or were in the process of being addressed by the county at the time of report delivery. With that in mind, The HSUS respectfully presents the following report.*

## 2.0 TASK FORCE

The development of a task force to review this document and create a working plan of action is a very important step to take. After reading this report, the task force should recommend priorities and action items with due dates. The document the task force develops then becomes RCCAS's working document to implement the recommendations in this report. The structure of people selected for this task force is critical.

This process will help RCCAS prioritize and plan for the future, with not only this report, but with other changes and plans for RCCAS down the road. This process has been used successfully with other agencies that have received evaluations.

The recommendations included in this report are based on what we believe are best practices in the field of sheltering. County of Riverside officials and RCCAS management, in concert with the task force, should prioritize and weigh each recommendation against available resources and decide whether or not that recommendation is to be implemented or used as a departure point for what is realistic for them.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Put together a committee of no more than seven members that are willing to commit up to four months and who work well in group settings. It is important to appoint unbiased individuals to the task force. The task force should include the following:
  - A shelter staff representative
  - A veterinarian with a strong shelter medicine background
  - A member of the advisory board
  
- Other members may include:
  - An individual with legal strength
  - Public health officials
  - City budget officials
  - Community members with expertise in short-term and strategic planning
  - Those interested in animal welfare, but without personal agendas
  
- ✓ If the agenda is not moving forward due to disagreement, strongly consider hiring a professional facilitator.
  
- ✓ Convey the responsibilities of the task force, which include:
  - Reviewing the report
  - Using a form, divide up and prioritize each recommendation <sup>1</sup>

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1 Task force matrix example

This process allows the agency, through the task force, to evaluate the recommendations as they relate to each other.

- ✓ Develop a reporting mechanism so the recommendations of the task force can be presented and RCCAS can begin to implement the changes.
- ✓ Create written guidelines outlining expected behavior and conduct for task force members. These guidelines should include stipulations if meetings are missed.
- ✓ A memorandum of understanding (MOU) should be created that outlines the above sections and the role and outcome of the taskforce. All task force members should be required to sign the MOU so it is understood that the task force is to be a professional undertaking.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

The RCCAS is located in a very large county (600 square miles) in the fast-growing Southern California area east of San Diego where over one half the land mass is desert. It takes up to 4 hours to drive from one end of the county to the other. The county board of supervisors (BOS) is discussing plans to build a new, more centrally located animal services complex in the future.

The animal shelters located in the cities of Indio and Blythe are run under the management of RCCAS, as is animal control for the city of Hemet, which provides field services only for the San Jacinto area. Other neighboring cities (Corona, Moreno Valley and Norco) run their own shelters. Two additional non-profit shelters contract for animal control services with Riverside County, but provide their own housing.

The study of the HSUS team was limited to RCCAS; therefore, the observations in this report refer to this shelter exclusively. However, because all three facilities are under the management of RCCAS and ultimately, Riverside County, The HSUS team suggests applying the information in the recommendation and discussion sections to the other existing facilities, as well as to any new facilities.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.0 SHELTER MAINTENANCE

#### 3.1 SHELTER EXTERIOR/ GROUNDS/ LANDSCAPING

##### **Observations:**

The shelter is located in an industrial area on the edge of residential areas off of a main (4-lane) thoroughfare leading out of the city of Riverside. Neighboring structures include a waste disposal truck yard and an expansive modular unit sales company.

The shelter is a single story building of block construction and is painted white with blue trim. It occupies approximately 30,000 square feet in an elongated manufacturing type building that was converted from a perfume factory to an animal shelter approximately nine years ago. Records belonging to the county are independently stored in another 22,000 feet on the east side of the same building. The RCCAS Spay Neuter Clinic (SNC) is a converted dock that, from a distance, looks like a dim, recessed entrance to a garage. The entire lot is approximately 2 1/3 acres. Traffic in and around the building is from other businesses as well as from visitors to the shelter and county employees utilizing the records retention facility.

The landscaping in the front of the building was neat and of a layout conforming to the surrounding environment. The small trees and plants were consistent with the local flora. There was a row of shrubbery below the lobby window and an island with a concrete sign that read Riverside City and County Animal Shelter. It was barely visible due to the growth of the plants

on the island in front of the entrance to the shelter. There was not any additional landscaping. Though relatively clean and neat, except for some donations stacked in the corner, the grounds appeared uninviting because they were dominated by the road, the driveway, the parking area, and the long white wall that runs the entire length of the front of the building.

The south side of the building has a “dock area” that was used as the employee entrance and had stacks of plastic bags containing shredded paper. The dumpster area and the rear driveway were cluttered with old crates, a sink, cabinets and other equipment. The employee parking lot had horse trailers parked in a corner, and old boards and trash that had accumulated as a result of wind and rain. A large amount of donated dog and cat food was being stored outside. This may have been causing a rodent problem as several bags had been chewed (See Fig.1-2).



Figure 1



Figure 2

There is one access road on the south side of the shelter, and the edge of it was cluttered with unused items, broken equipment, cages, traps, food, unopened boxes, and buckets. The public is allowed access through a front, remote access security gate, but animal control officers (ACO) must enter from the back of the building and drive around to the receiving area entrance. This same entrance is used by the public to surrender large numbers of animals or problem animals, and this is also the location for the animal disposal freezer, pickup of deceased animals, and hosing and cleaning of field service trucks (See Fig. 3). Because there is so much activity in this area, and it is the only place where officers have access to a hose and drain for cleaning of the inside of the vehicles, backups and slowdowns often occur during busy times of the day.



Figure 3

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ The area to the south side of the building needs significant cleaning and regular maintenance. Discard unused and damaged tools, equipment and crates. Consider closing in part of the area in the back of the building to create a space specifically for storage of crates, canned food, and other needed items.
- ✓ The front of the building should be painted to be more appealing to the public and to distinguish it from the other buildings. A large, colorful, animal-related mural could be created by a local artist or schoolchildren.
- ✓ The management team should reevaluate how or where another wash area for the trucks can be installed. If not feasible, procedures should be implemented that keep the current area clean and safe after washing out field service trucks.
- ✓ The landscaping should be maintained by either facilities maintenance or a private contractor.
- ✓ Senior Management should conduct a daily walk around the exterior of the facility to determine if any safety, litter or maintenance problems exist.

**Discussion:**

A county's animal shelter is the heart of its animal care and control program, and facilities should be maintained so that they are attractive and inviting to visitors. Animal control, with its law enforcement aura, has traditionally been perceived as cold, bureaucratic, unresponsive and far from user-friendly. First impressions are lasting, and as visitors approach the shelter, the impression they receive should be one of warmth and welcome. An orderly and neat environment within and without the animal shelter sets the tone, gives a message to the public and a boost to staff as to the professional nature of animal welfare work.

## **3.2 EXTERNAL DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE**

**Observations:**

There was no directional or informational signage on any major roadways leading to the building on any approach to RCCAS. As mentioned, the sign in front of the agency was small and unnoticeable relative to the size of the building and plant growth. Large block printing on the outside of the building identified the SNC, but there was no comparable signage for the entrance to the animal shelter.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ The county should ensure that directional signage (similar in quality and style to other professional municipal signage) is available and clearly visible at all intersections near the facility.
- ✓ Large, professional, permanent signage, readable from the street, should be affixed to the front of the building for the shelter and the SNC.

- ✓ A sign indicating the entrance to the building and hours of entry should be affixed on or around the main doorway.
- ✓ The sign in the island should be enlarged and the plants should be trimmed regularly.
- ✓ Develop educational signs or banners with changing messages for display throughout the year, or a sign with room for a changing message like: June is Adopt-a-Cat Month, or Spay or Neuter Your Pet, We Can Help.
- ✓ Improving the signage on the building to help the public see the SNC entrance would also be helpful. The small signs posted for hours of operation need to be enlarged and put at all public entrance doors.

### **Discussion:**

One of the most common disconnects involves citizens not knowing where the shelter is. Not only should a shelter be inviting to the public, but it should also be easy to locate and provide necessary information upon arrival. Sharing knowledge with citizens is a critical component of client service and promotes trust in how their tax dollars are being utilized.

## **3.3 PARKING AREAS/ WALKWAYS**

### **Observations:**

Parking at RCCAS was very limited. There were twenty-three parking spaces in front of the building, eight of which were for the public. The surface of the parking area was paved asphalt and was in good shape. There was an uneven dip in the pavement that ran across the driveway to the north of the shelter entrance and created an unsafe surface. When driven at moderate parking lot speed, the underside of the vehicle scraped the pavement. Handicapped spaces and ramps were provided in both front and back parking lots and the front entrance can accommodate a wheelchair.

The cement parking lot in the rear of the building had thirty-five parking spaces. The parking situation dictated that slots be designated for city and county vehicles. There were 21 city and county animal control vehicles as well as two horse trailers parked in the rear parking lot.

Employees did not have a designated parking area. They parked in front of the building as space allowed, then in the back of the building.

In addition there was street parking across the street from the shelter, but only on one side and it had to be shared with other area businesses. Overflow parking was at the end of the driveway in approximately 30 yards of ungraded, unfinished dirt on both sides of the street.

Curbs were marked for fire zones, and a fire hydrant was on the curb in front of the shelter, however, fire zones and signage in the parking area/driveway were not observed. Large

spotlights mounted on the roof and directed into the parking lot provided adequate lighting in the back. Some faded parking lines were noted.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop and enforce a parking policy that requires staff to park in designated areas in the back of the building leaving convenient parking for the public, shelter rescue groups, and volunteers during operating hours.
- ✓ All public parking areas should be denoted by stand-alone, upright signage.
- ✓ All parking lines should be repainted in all parking areas.
- ✓ A second handicapped parking space should be established in the front of the building. Statutes regarding disabled parking requirements should be checked.
- ✓ Repair the indentation in the surface of the parking lot. If drainage is the issue, appropriate underground piping may be advisable.

**Discussion:**

It is important to make the effort to provide convenient parking and shelter access so that potential adopters, volunteers and others will return to the shelter.

### **3.4 WASTE DISPOSAL/STORAGE**

**Observations:**

The relatively new dumpster was located at the east end of the property within the fenced area, and did not have any abnormal odors. Waste was removed by county waste management three times per week.

Although this was not observed, it was reported by staff that the dumpsters are overfilled on a regular basis particularly during the weekends when there is no service for three days.

Storage of dog and cat food (which is mixed in large gray pushcarts) occurs in a room attached to the loading dock on the north side of the building. Stacks of donated bagged food covered the floor to a height of 3-5 feet. Other storage of donated food, traps, carriers and cages was in the alley on the south side of the building near the dumpster outside the receiving room. The food and equipment appeared in general disarray.

Numerous storage closets are located off operations areas and employee hallways. The storage areas are managed by the individual supervisor who stored purchased items in the closet. The kennel storage closets held the mops, squeegees, soap, sponges, gloves, etc. The clerical storage held pens, pencils, notepads, paper, etc. In addition, in each of the cat rooms in the kennels, one or two of the cages was used for storage of newspaper, feeding and watering supplies, and daily cleaning equipment.

Records were stored in an area above the business office, in which it was difficult to move around freely. Numerous reconfigured computers donated from another county department were stored close by in another small room.

The shelter storage was generally haphazard, cluttered and appeared to have cursory accountability (except for the clerical area), or organization. Miscellaneous items such as mops, crates, cages and buckets were found in disrepair at the door near receiving and in the closets outside the dog kennels. The fenced in area near the dumpster was stacked over 6 feet high with crates and cages that appeared to have been forgotten.

The pervasive odor of dead and decomposing animals was obvious in the dog kennels and in the areas around the receiving room and walk-in cooler/cold room.

Sharps containers were evident in receiving, the euthanasia room, and SNC in at least two places. When the sharps container in the receiving area was handled, the container was approximately one third full, very sticky, dirty and dusty, and discolored with what appeared to be rust. It was difficult to determine if the standard operating procedure (SOP) for returning full sharps containers to the SNC in exchange for a new container was being followed.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Increase dumpster size or number of pick ups to prevent rodent infestation. Because the volume of refuse increases in the spring and summer, consider seasonal ordering.
- ✓ Establish an inventory for shelter supplies. Remove broken, obsolete and unused equipment.
- ✓ Cat cages should be utilized for housing animals and not for storage. Stock a push cart for the daily cat cleaning, feeding and watering supplies, moving it from cat room to cat room. If more than one attendant routinely cleans the cat rooms, acquire more than one cart.
- ✓ Organize the various storage areas with signage and assign accountability.
- ✓ Discard open bags, excess and expired dog and cat food.
- ✓ Consider politely turning away or donating dog/cat food that cannot be used within one week of arrival.
- ✓ Mix the food in small quantities to prevent staleness and rodent infestation in the food room(s).
- ✓ Establish an area and procedure for the removal, cleaning and storage of items that have been deposited outside the receiving room.
- ✓ Finish the construction of the records storage room on the second floor to permit organization of licenses, receipts, adoption paperwork, etc. If this is not feasible, relocate

records to a more functional location.

- ✓ Store uninstalled computer equipment in a locked room on the first floor to prevent tampering and ensure proper storage climate.

**Discussion:**

Good storage habits will save time and expense in searching for what is needed. Staff will benefit from having what they need on hand in an environment that is clean and orderly. The volume of waste increases significantly in the spring and summer and needs can be adjusted for the busy season. Do not be afraid to throw out what you may never use.

### **3.5 BUILDING SECURITY**

**Observations:**

Security arrangements included the presence of a security guard in the front lobby during open hours. However, he was unfamiliar with the shelter as well as with RCCAS policies and procedures. There was a night time alarm system and security cameras in 8 locations throughout the shelter. A double thick Plexiglas front security window with holes and a solid cement wall on the side surrounded the clerical staff in the lobby. The staff had difficulty hearing the clients and seeing activities through the glass and around the wall, and had to shout to call the next person in line.

The security camera placement was appropriate: the exits to the building, the receiving area, the shipping dock, the lobby and the cages in the lobby, and the SNC. A single security monitor split screen was in the accounting area above the clerical offices. A second monitor screen in the administration office was inoperative.

The alarm system was set up to detect peripheral as well as movement within the shelter. The security system was monitored by Wilco Alarm. The billing cycle reflected minimal activity on the account.

The after hours procedure was to set the alarm before leaving the building. If the alarm went off after hours, it was triggered to alert the sheriff who would inspect the shelter and notify the operations chief.

At opening, the alarm was disarmed and staff would enter the building. Since night staff arrived at midnight, the building and staff occupants were vulnerable to entry from Monday through Friday midnight until 5:00 a.m., when housekeeping staff arrived.

The security guard left at 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. Staff remained at the shelter until 7:30 p.m to do final release of spayed and neutered animals. Therefore, the building and occupants were vulnerable during those times.

On weekends, the shelter was closed at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday and was closed all day on Sunday. Again the building and its occupants were vulnerable to a break-in after closing during those times.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Replace the security guard with an animal control officer or a uniformed kennel attendant in the front office lobby to greet clients as well as maintain order in the area during regular business hours.
- ✓ Expand the alarm system so it will alert the occupants of breach of security or tampering of outside doors while they are in the building.
- ✓ Remove the Plexiglas from the lobby receptionist windows. Install three panic buttons in the front office under each corner of the adoption/front office desk. The buttons should notify in-house dispatch and sheriff/police immediately. Consider removing the side cement wall and replacing it with the Plexiglas.
- ✓ The security camera screen should be moved to the dispatch office where it will be monitored on a regular basis. A second and third operative monitoring station should be set up in the administration office and the briefing room.
- ✓ Reports from Wilco Alarm about the time of day the arming and disarming of the alarm system should be acquired and monitored.
- ✓ Court referral /community service workers should only work in the shelter when they are adequately supervised by staff.

**Discussion:**

Because day-to-day operational concerns often receive the most immediate attention in shelters, building security and precautions to ensure general staff and public safety often take a back burner. These issues must remain a priority, and any problems must be regularly pinpointed, addressed, and resolved before a crisis occurs.<sup>3</sup>

However, efforts should be made to strike a balance between adequate staff safety and unencumbered client/staff interactions. In addition, the safety of the animals in the shelter should be a priority. In California, an animal shelter is considered a “depository” that is required to safeguard the personal property of the owner/guardians of the animals in the facility. The governmental agencies have an obligation to assure reasonable efforts are made to keep the animals safe and secure.

### **3.6 GENERAL SAFETY ISSUES/ OSHA**

#### **Observations:**

The safety SOP was a boilerplate county document. The paperwork packet consisted of instructions, workers compensation lost time report, acknowledgement form, industrial injury medical service order, workers compensation employee claim and immediate supervisors report of employee injury.

The interim supervising ACO was also a newly designated safety officer. She attended monthly safety meetings, during which the injuries and accident reports were discussed, at the county building. However, the safety protocol as described by the safety officer did not include any investigation into reported accidents or injuries. Staff was invited to attend specialized training when applicable or in the incidence of multiple injuries. She orchestrated bi-annual evacuation drills and was working on a disaster plan for RCCAS.

The Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) book was in the administration office outside the clerical offices. However, when asked, staff did not know where it was located, as is required for reaction to an emergency.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires emergency eyewash stations, secondary container labeling, personal protective equipment (PPE), and an "Employee Right to Know" station. There were three faucet eyewash stations, one in the euthanasia room, one in the food preparation area, and one in the employee hallway outside dog kennel C. Neither of the first two stations was in working order; the third was not tested. There were no squeeze bottle eyewash stations mounted the walls. The secondary containers were not labeled, some staff wore latex gloves and masks, while others did not, and earplugs were absent. The "Employee Right to Know" station was non-existent. There was three first aid kits observed throughout the building. Workers compensation forms were being substituted for accident report forms.

The automatic dilution dispensers were inoperative outside the dog kennels and in the receiving area. The cleaning agent Triple II, a bactericidal, was being used by individual staff persons at varying strengths. One employee reported to The HSUS team that a cat suffered a skin burn from the use of the full strength Triple II during cleaning.

Cages stacked 3 high (65 inches off the floor) in the cat rooms were a safety issue for kennel attendants who were short in stature because they may attempt to stand on a ladder or chair in order to reach. Also, on at least three occasions, wet floors were noted without wet floor signs in public and restricted areas, and buckets with dirty water and mops remained in the same place during the entire site visit.

Within the main dog kennel area, the average noise level measured was between 83 and 98 decibels (dBA), with an average reading of 86 dBA. These sound levels were intermittently uncomfortable to visitors and animals during the site visit. The decibel level of loud music played on radios in the kennels during cleaning was not measured but was noted as excessive by The HSUS team. There were no sound baffles in the shelter.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ The management team should investigate the reported accidents or injuries on the job. Managers and supervisors should brainstorm how these accidents may have been prevented and assign action items to prevent reoccurrence.
- ✓ Create accident report forms to be used instead of worker's compensation forms.
- ✓ Convene a safety committee made up of various staff that meets monthly to do a walk through and make suggestions for improving safety in the facility.<sup>4</sup>
- ✓ Repair or replace the eyewash stations. Install wall-mounted squeeze bottle eye wash stations within 20 feet of all areas where chemicals are mixed or used. According to OSHA, "where the eyes or body of any person may be exposed to injurious corrosive materials, suitable facilities for quick drenching or flushing of the eyes and body shall be provided within the work area for immediate emergency use."<sup>5</sup>
- ✓ Remove, repair or replace the automatic dilution dispenser outside the kennels.
- ✓ To avoid tripping or falling hazard, make sure that items (food bags, mop buckets, rain gear, etc.) are stored properly when not in use.
- ✓ Reconfigure cat cages so they are stacked less than three high.
- ✓ RCCAS senior management should call upon the county's safety and/or risk management team to conduct a thorough safety audit of the facility. This will help to identify areas that may be problematic and can provide guidance on measures needed to bring the agency's safety program into full compliance with local and federal guidelines.
- ✓ Clearly label all secondary containers.<sup>6</sup>
- ✓ Require earplugs, gloves, goggles and other PPE for staff during cleaning and feeding to stay in compliance with OSHA regulations. The importance of policies regarding this protection should be stressed to all staff on a regular basis.<sup>7</sup>
- ✓ Continually evaluate the sound levels in the dog kennel area.<sup>8, 9, 10</sup> Request that kennel attendants keep the radio volume at a moderate level while cleaning. Install noise reducing panels (sound baffles) which should be mounted above all dog kennel areas. These panels refract sound and help to weaken the sonic signal before it reaches the ear. Such panels must be specifically designed for application in a kennel environment; and

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4 HSUS *Animal Sheltering Magazine*, "Safety Insurance Checklist," January/February 1998

5 OSHA Standard Number [1910.151](#)

6 Cornell University Environmental Health and Safety

7 OSHA Fact Sheet, "Personal Protective Equipment"

8 Lawrence A. Gates, "HVAC/ Noise and Odor Concerns"

9 *Shelter Pages 2004*, "Noise Reduction Products," page 104

10 *Pet Services Journal*, "Controlling Noise in the Kennel," May 2003

must be included in routine cleaning procedures to prevent the collection of dust and housing of germs.

- ✓ Explore avenues to prevent the dogs from viewing each other, which would lessen barking and reduce noise levels. One idea is to fasten opaque acrylic PVC panels to the bottom half of the dog kennel doors. This type of plastic can be cut to fit and is said to be resistant to nail damage, urine and chemical disinfectants.
- ✓ A safety training plan must be developed, and followed up, with ongoing instruction and supervisory commitment to maintain safety as a priority. Proper documentation of all training should be maintained in the employee's personnel file.
- ✓ Safety and training information provided to new employees could be incorporated into a "Safety Training Manual." This manual may include:
  - How to read a MSDS
  - Location of the "Right to Know" station
  - How to use the security system
  - Locations of emergency exits
  - Locations and use of safety equipment such as eye wash stations and fire extinguishers
  - Proper secondary labeling of hazardous materials
  - Use of PPE
  - Zoonoses transmission and prevention
- ✓ Types of safety training to be provided at the time of hire should include topics such as:
  - Animal handling
  - Proper lifting
  - How to complete an accident report
  - How to report a maintenance problem
  - Where to go for emergency medical treatment
  - How to safely perform a decapitation
  - Zoonosis prevention
- ✓ RCCAS must maintain and update an "Employee Right to Know" station to include:
  - MSDS
  - Accident report forms
  - Where to seek emergency medical treatment
  - Safety hazard reporting and maintenance request forms
- ✓ There are additional safety resources available through the Internet. Examples include:
  - MSDS Online:  
<http://www.msds-online.com>

- Cornell University:  
<http://msds.pdc.cornell.edu/msdssrch.asp>
- OSHA:  
<http://www.osha.gov>

**Discussion:**

Employee and public safety must be taken seriously in any work environment, and it is the employer’s responsibility – and legal and ethical obligation – to ensure the safety and welfare of employees and the visiting public. This is achieved by providing a safe environment, proper training, necessary equipment, and appropriate accountability protocols.

To some degree, noise is inevitable in all animal shelters regardless of size. Noise, however, can not only present a danger to staff, it also plays a significant role in forming the public’s opinion of an animal shelter. Additionally, the short- and long-term effects of noise on the animals — many of which are stress-related — must also be strongly considered.

The barking of dogs is generally the greatest source of noise, but many other factors also contribute. Advancements in the design of shelters, and the materials incorporated in them, have served to help to reduce the noise in many animal care and control agencies.

OSHA has strict regulations regarding acceptable decibel levels (particularly on a continual or routine basis) to protect employees. Their guidelines state that when employees are exposed to 85 decibels or higher on an eight hour time-weight average, ear protection must be available and a general hearing conservation program instituted.

To deter long-term hearing loss, Consumer Reports® developed a set of recommendations based on the findings of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders, which states the following relating to sound levels:

Category	Decibel Level	Examples	Recommendations
Dangerous	About 110 dBA and up	Firearms; fireworks and jet engines at close range; loud concerts or music clubs	Always use ear protection
Harmful	About 100-110 dBA	Chainsaw; snowmobile; loud aerobics class	Protect ears when exposure exceeds 15 minutes
Potentially Harmful	About 85-100 dBA	Circular saw; loud string trimmer or power blower; motorcycle at high speed; loud wedding reception; loud	Ear protection recommended, especially for regular, lengthy exposure

		mower; loud vacuum cleaner	
Relatively Safe	About 85 dBA or less	City traffic noise; hair dryer; electric string trimmer or mower; quiet vacuum cleaner; noisy dishwasher; noisy air conditioner	Ear protection not needed

### 3.7 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES/ DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

**Observations:**

RCCAS followed the county issued emergency procedures. The designated safety officer conducted bi-annual evacuation exercises. A map was provided to supervisory staff indicating the exits. Staff members were informed to evacuate according to verbal instructions from their supervisor. The most recent evacuation drill was successfully executed but there was no plan for animal evacuation.

Fire extinguishers were in the hallways in public and restricted areas and were up to date. The county maintained records on renewal. However, there was no map of fire extinguisher location and many staff did not know where the fire extinguishers were kept. There was one pull fire alarm located off the front public hallway. No others were observed.

The verbal instruction for dealing with threatening individuals was to call 911.

RCCAS followed the county issued disaster plan, which was available in the bookshelf outside the operation/administrative offices. The safety officer, who had just inherited the position when the previous safety officer left the agency, was unaware of the contents of the disaster plan and had not been trained in procedures for disaster. No smoke detectors or emergency generators were observed by The HSUS team.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Senior management should create procedures regarding emergency evacuations that include both staff and animals. They should be posted and communicated to all staff members. The local fire and police departments should be good resources for this.<sup>11</sup>
- ✓ A phone tree should be developed to communicate to staff when a critical incident occurs, for call-in or stay-at-home advice.
- ✓ Senior management should prepare staff and volunteers for a disaster in the community so they will be armed with the necessary knowledge, training and equipment to put the plan into action. If these have not been prepared prior to an incident, the plan will not work.<sup>12</sup>

11 OSHA Fact Sheet, “Emergency Exit Routes”

12 HSUS *Disaster Planning Manual*, “Animal Facilities” and “Community Planning”

- ✓ Make sure the disaster procedures manual is dated to ensure that the forms and contact information is kept up-to-date.
- ✓ Have representatives of the local fire company walk through the entire building to familiarize them with the layout in case they have to respond to a fire.
- ✓ RCCAS staff should actively participate in any drills performed by the county emergency management office.
- ✓ Install a lock box on the outside of the building that holds a working key. This will allow the fire or police department to enter when no one is there. Coordinate placement of the box with local fire and police officials so they are aware of the box.
- ✓ Ask fire company representatives or a fire marshal to make recommendations on number and location of fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, and other fire safety issues. Following these recommendations should be a top priority.
- ✓ Make sure the staff is trained in the location and proper use of fire extinguishers.
- ✓ If RCCAS does not already have them, make it an eventual goal to have smoke detectors, which sound an alarm at a central station so that there is fire protection during the hours that the shelter is closed.
- ✓ If RCCAS does not already have one, make it an eventual goal to have an emergency generator in the event of a power outage.

### **3.8 FACILITY MAINTENANCE**

#### **Observations:**

Riverside County Public Works personnel were responsible for periodic inspection and maintenance of the mechanical systems, parking areas, exterior maintenance (i.e. painting and roof repair), and electrical, plumbing, and structural issues. The HSUS team was told that repair requests are phoned in and will be responded to within 48 hours.

Daily maintenance such as emptying trash and cleaning the public areas, offices, windows and floors, was the responsibility of a Riverside County housekeeping contractor. Three housekeepers (2.5 FTE's) completed this work from 5 a.m. until noon, Monday through Friday.

The HSUS team noted many general maintenance issues in the facility such as broken, hanging and stained ceiling tiles, signs of rodent infestation in food storage areas, cracked and chipped cement in the kennels, inoperable windows, lights burnt out in work area, peeling wall paint throughout the kennels and deteriorated caulking around banks of cages in the receiving area.

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Significantly, there was incomplete construction in the storage areas on the second floor causing a health and safety hazard. In general, it appeared as though maintenance issues were routinely ignored.

During The HSUS team site visit on April 29, 2004, the county maintenance staff began replacing the over fifty ceiling tiles that were falling down or missing throughout the facility. We found that the process of getting those tiles replaced began on March 10, 2004. We were told the delay occurred because the ceiling tiles needed to be ordered.

Open access to a catwalk throughout the office and in the employee hallways created a getaway for cats that escaped containment. In fact, the staff recounted the story of a stray cat that was loose in the building for over a month, hiding in the second floor catwalk, and coming down at night to eat food. Eventually, the stench created by the urine and feces in the area became a nuisance. Finally, the cat was recaptured when he became overweight and fell through the fiberglass ceiling tiles.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Complete the construction of the second floor storage areas including the area where the uninstalled computer equipment is kept.
- ✓ Close off access to the catwalk area by installing doors and doorways.
- ✓ Consider having a full time building engineer/facilities maintenance person assigned to the facility.
- ✓ Consider reducing the amount of housekeeping staff and increasing budget for kennel staff to complete housekeeping type activities like emptying the garbage, changing lights, dusting, etc.
- ✓ Establish a preventive maintenance schedule for the facility with the county. Regular preventative maintenance should be scheduled to anticipate and address problems before they arise.
- ✓ Develop and implement a SOP for routine walk-throughs with each supervisor recording areas of need. To prevent misunderstanding, the maintenance requests and/or work order system should be implemented by staff members who are going to do the work.
- ✓ Clean and re-paint the kennel walls and doors that are still in good condition.
- ✓ Repair the caulking on the bank of cages in the receiving room.
- ✓ Repair damaged cracked, gouged cement and corners in the kennel area.
- ✓ Replace all discolored and damaged ceiling tiles.
- ✓ Replace the broken equipment closets that were in the hallways outside the dog kennels.

## **4.0 SHELTER INTERIOR DESIGN AND LAYOUT**

### **4.1 HUMAN SERVICE AREAS**

#### **4.11 RECEPTION/LOBBY**

##### **Observations:**

The general layout of RCCAS is adequate but current utilization was not impressive given the potential for making this shelter an inviting place to visit.

Due to building design, the main entrance and lobby of the shelter was small and became crowded with only a few visitors present. The facility's single public entrance/exit presented a challenge when animals were entering and exiting at the same time. The Plexiglas wall made the customer service experience awkward, overwrought and unprofessional.

The HSUS team observed 10-12 people standing in line outside the lobby when the doors were opened on the days of site visit. Requests for vaccinations, spay/neuter, animal adoptions, animal surrenders, dog licenses, lost/found animal inquiries and other customer service functions were all processed from one line in the lobby beginning weekdays at 10 a.m. That means that dogs and cats were in line for an extended period of time (up to 30 minutes) while waiting for help. While The HSUS team was visiting, a dog who had just killed a mother cat stood in line behind the man who had been feeding the cat and brought the DOA cat into the shelter. He was also turning in 5 underage kittens that were now orphaned. The dog remained intent and aroused by his proximity to the kittens for the 20 minutes it took the client to get help from the office staff. This could have become a safety issue for the nearby people and animals had the dog attempted another attack.

The crowded conditions in the lobby were exacerbated by the presence of the following items: the lost & found station, a bank of stainless steel cages for holding incoming animals, a rack of literature about licensing, and eight chairs. A line was formed around the corner, away from the reception staff and down the public hallway.

Although RCCAS supplied The HSUS team with several different informational brochures, the brochure wall rack was mostly empty and a greeting card solicitation cluttered the door. The only sign posted that listed fees and policies was located behind the plexiglas barrier, behind the seated office clerks. The sign did not include boarding fees.

The public hallway while clean and orderly, had outdated, unprofessionally framed news clippings hung along the path to the kennels.

##### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Provide public seating where the line will be forming. Provide a system for taking numbers if needed to allow people to wait outside or in another close by area.

- ✓ There should be an abundance of educational materials neatly displayed in the front reception area.<sup>13</sup> Information regarding rabies vaccination, spay/neuter, local and state laws pertaining to animals, responsible pet ownership, behavior and training, list of local veterinarians, and upcoming events such as rabies vaccination clinics should be available. Take advantage of materials made available by several national organizations, including The HSUS. Be sure that they are all stamped with the name and address of RCCAS.
- ✓ Remove the stainless steel cages from the lobby.
- ✓ Assign a greeter at the front door to welcome people and expedite their requests for service. This greeter can separate dogs and cats or isolate dogs that may be a public safety risk.
- ✓ Equip the kennel attendants with mobile radios that can be used to call them to the front counter to receive an animal from the public.
- ✓ Improve the signage in the public areas, including publishing the costs of redemptions, boarding, spay/neuter, etc.
- ✓ Signage listing the hours of operation should be installed outside with the logo of the RCCAS prominently displayed so that it may be read from an automobile driving by in the parking lot.

### **Discussion:**

An animal shelter's lobby provides the first impression for incoming visitors and can create a lasting positive effect. Readily accessible customer service is important in setting a pleasant tone. A cheerful, helpful staff member or volunteer will also have a favorable impact on the visiting public, and the organization will be thought of by the community as "user friendly" and "professional." Providing written materials to the public is an easy way to educate.

Although we understand that RCCAS was trying to be efficient by having animals in stainless steel cages in the lobby, it often creates issues such as odors, animals being stressed in high traffic areas, and theft.

## **4.12 OFFICES/DISPATCH AREAS**

### **Observations:**

The offices included 13 cubicles in the business office, the director's office, the operations chief's office, and the staff analyst's office, which was shared by the office services supervisor. In addition, there were 3 more cubicles upstairs that housed the accounting staff.

The dispatch office consisted of 3 desks where field assignments, bite case processing, hearings and communication with the ACOs in the field took place.

These areas were well organized and fully functioning during the HSUS team visit.

### **4.13 HANDICAPPED ACCESS**

#### **Observations:**

Doorways in the public hallways were wide enough for wheelchairs. Disabled individuals may have difficulty getting in and out of some doorways, particularly in the cat kennel area.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Disabled individuals using wheelchairs, walkers, canes, etc, should be given personalized attention while in the facility, to help prevent any potential safety issues.

### **4.14 INTERNAL SIGNAGE**

#### **Observations:**

The HSUS team noted many handmade signs (some in plastic envelopes, some laminated, some mere sheets of paper) throughout the shelter on the front door, kennel doors, office doors, bulletin boards, and cabinets. On the front door, there was too much signage. In the kennel areas, there was too little signage. Directional signs were small and not located in direct view. Finding our way around was challenging as the evacuation map was inaccurate and not to scale.

Rooms had numbers affixed to them but incorrect signs or no signs at all to indicate their function. For example, there was a sign on one room that read “dog isolation” when it was actually being utilized as dog quarantine. Also, what appeared to be the main cat adoption or as (often referred to) the “available now” room off the public hallway was labeled “miscellaneous animals.” There was also a computer generated paper sign on the wall above the windows to that room that said, “Kittens Available Now,” but there were predominately adult cats in the room.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Place a welcome sign on the front door to greet the visitors when they enter.
- ✓ Provide clear directional signs that identify where the public should go to such as “Dog Adoption” or “Cat Adoption.”
- ✓ Remove all handmade signs, evaluate their messages, and if necessary replace them with professional ones.
- ✓ As with exterior signage, interior signs should contain the RCCAS logo to increase brand recognition.
- ✓ Interior signage must be clear, noticeable and preferably, standardized with a common color, shape and size.
- ✓ Ask several persons, such as other county employees, who are unfamiliar with shelter

operations and the facility's layout, to critique the informational and directional signs within the facility. These persons should remain anonymous and use signage to complete a variety of routine customer oriented activities, such as attempting an adoption, reclaiming an animal and humane trap rental. Make modifications based on that review.

## 4.2 ANIMAL SERVICE AREAS

### 4.21 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Cleaning equipment and miscellaneous items such as bowls, litter boxes, and bags of food were stored on top and inside of cages, leaning against walls, kept under tables and stacked in corners of various rooms. RCCAS had cabinets in various rooms but no real organizational equipment for storing and arranging such supplies. All animal areas lacked proper ventilation and the general layout was poorly suited for the prevention and isolation of disease. Animals remained in the receiving area much longer than necessary, and often without food and water.

- ✓ Animals should not be housed long term (4 hours maximum) in the receiving area. Food and water should be immediately available upon placement in a receiving area cage or run.

### 4.22 VENTILATION/TEMPERATURE (HVAC)

#### **Observations:**

Temperatures varied from room to room, with differences in temperature the greatest in the afternoon in the cat rooms. We learned that the HVAC system that was installed 9 years ago was ineffective. Approximately 4 years ago, another system of swamp coolers was installed on the roof, but the capacity of the coolers was inappropriate for the size of the building. During our meeting with the county health department administrator, The HSUS team was told that a new system was in the process of being purchased. We cautioned the county and the RCCAS senior management to research the number of hourly air exchanges to assure the health and comfort of the animals as well as the public.

The temperature in the cat rooms was the coldest in the building and ranged from 61 degrees to 66 degrees throughout the visit. The record breaking heat during the visit was coincident with the coolest interior temperature of 61 degrees.

The interior dog kennel area was approximately 73 degrees during the day and in the morning the temperature was 75 degrees. Temperatures naturally rose during the night when the system was off, making the morning the warmest time of day. The perceived warmth was exacerbated by the stagnant air in the rooms.

The receiving area was one of the warmer rooms in the building with a temperature of 79 degrees at 3:00 p.m. on a day when the exterior temperature was over 100 degrees. The grooming room also remained warm with a temperature of 75 degrees. The odor of urine and

feces was prevalent in both areas. The odor from the chill room (where animal carcasses were temporarily stored) was noticed in the front of the building by The HSUS team on more than one occasion.

The vent louvers throughout the building were extremely dusty and grimy, reflecting a lack of cleaning and/or routine maintenance of the system. When inquiries were made about maintenance protocols, The HSUS team was told that it was handled by county maintenance workers.

Minimal information was provided to The HSUS team regarding overall ventilation and temperature control systems within the facility. During the site visit, overall temperature levels seemed comfortable with the exception of the noticeably cool temperatures in the cat rooms.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The HVAC system purchased to replace the current one should be the appropriate size rated to exchange air 12 to 15 times per hour. To be effective, air ventilation systems must be run continuously 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.
- ✓ A maintenance plan regarding all heating and air conditioning equipment, including preventative maintenance, must be created and adhered to. All air handling units should be inspected immediately to determine if they are operating efficiently and if any repairs are required. Filter replacement will keep the system working efficiently and effectively.
- ✓ Inexpensive temperature/humidity monitors are available in many electronic stores, and should be purchased and rotated to monitor animal housing. Temperature and humidity readings should be recorded in a log twice daily, and fluctuations or inconsistencies should be brought to the attention of management.
- ✓ Filters in shelters must be changed much more often than in a home or business. Vents, air ducts and filters should be cleaned and/or changed every 2-4 weeks or replaced when no longer repairable.

### **Discussion:**

Heating, cooling, and humidity control systems should be serviced regularly as part of a facility's preventive maintenance program and a means of circulating the air must always be in operation in all animal housing areas. These are crucial - not only to provide for the animals' health and comfort, but also for that of the staff and visiting public.

## **4.23 CAT HOUSING**

### **Observations:**

Cat housing consisted of a grouping of 6 separate, open to the public, cat rooms, a miscellaneous animals/ available now (to be called "available now") room, a feral room, and an isolation room. The maximum capacity was approximately 120 adult cats throughout the facility. All the cages, except for the 6 in the "available now" room were Shor-line stainless steel, stacked 2 – 3 high

against the wall in banks of 5-8 cages dependent on the configuration and size of the room. The rooms were unmarked but the arrangements were as follows:

Kennel Numbers In the Cat Room	Number of Banks in the Room/How High	Size and Number of SS Cages	Total Number of Cages in the Room	Number of Cages Used as Storage for Supplies
1) K374 – K408	2 stacked 3 high	21 X 21 X 28 <i>15</i>		
		33 X 28 X 28 <i>4</i>	19	2
2) K358 – K371	2 stacked 2 high	46 X 28 X 28 <i>4</i>		
		33 X 28 X 28 <i>3</i>		
		28 X 28 X 28 <i>1</i>	12	2
3) K334 – K351	2 stacked 2 high	46 X 28 X 28 <i>4</i>		
		33 X 28 X 28 <i>3</i>	11	1
4) K386-K393	1 stacked 2 high	21 X 21 X 28 <i>8</i>	8	1
5) K312 – K329	2 stacked 2 high	Same as #2 above	12	1
6) K	1 stacked 2 high	21 X 21 X 28 <i>4</i>		
		46 X 28 X 28 <i>2</i>	6	
Isolation K286 – K302	3 stacked 2 high	33 X 28 X 28 <i>1</i>		
		46 X 28 X 28 <i>3</i>		
		21 X 28 X 28 <i>8</i>		
		21 X 21 X 28 <i>8</i>	19	3
Feral Cat K-1 – K 42	2 stacked 3 high	21 X 21 X 28 <i>42</i>	42	3

The 6 grouped cat rooms held both available and stray cats side-by-side in the same room. All rooms were open to the general public for viewing both stray and adoptable cats and kittens. The isolation and feral cat rooms were not supposed to be open to the public without an escort, but on two separate occasions, the feral cat room door was propped open. The rooms were generally dirty and dusty. The tops of the banks appeared to not have been cleaned in several weeks, and there was newspaper and spilled food in the corners of many of the cat rooms. The storage cages were cluttered with open food containers, water jugs, disinfectant spray bottles, dishes and litter pans. There was a general impression that the isolation and feral cat rooms were not being cleaned well due to cob webs attached to the wall and ceiling behind the doors.

In many cat rooms the cat cages were arranged so that cats were facing one another thereby increasing incidence of cross contamination and stress. In some cases, large cats were housed in small cages. The litter pans were all one size and were also too small for some of the larger cats.

The receiving area contained 2 large banks of cages stacked 3 high. In this room, The HSUS team saw a variety of animals, dogs, cats, a rabbit, an owl housed next to each other.

### **Recommendations**

- ✓ Rearrange the cage banks in the cat rooms to reduce the amount of face to face housing.

Because most of the rooms are small, options are limited to placing cage units in a variety of “back to back” configurations.

- ✓ Housing set up should allow for adequate separation of species.
- ✓ Stack cages no more than two high.
- ✓ Size of cat should be taken into consideration when selecting size of caging and cage items, such as litter pans.
- ✓ Transfer to larger cages the cats who are available and staying longer.

## 4.24 DOG HOUSING AREAS

### **Observations:**

Dog housing areas consisted of four separate kennel areas divided into 3 kennels (named A, B and D) that were open to visitors, one locked isolation kennel (named C), and a fifth room that held five puppy pens, all along a public hallway. There was also a quarantine area and a quarantine/isolation area (rooms 100 and 101) located along an employee hallway that was off limits to visitors unless escorted by RCCAS staff.

The public kennel areas housed dogs of all ages that were stray as well as those available for adoption. The quarantine/isolation and isolation kennels housed a combination of bite case dogs, dogs being held as evidence for court cases, and sick dogs. The isolation kennel area housed sick dogs.

In general, the runs in most of the dog kennel areas were set up in face to face rows with a four foot aisle between them. There were two styles of runs in the dog areas: the small single dog T-kennel runs (approximately 4 feet wide X 8 feet long X 3.5 feet deep) stacked 2 high, usually 12-18 inches off the floor, and the larger T-kennel runs on the floor (approximately 3 feet wide X 10 feet long X 6.5 feet high).

The configuration of stacked wall T-kennel runs to floor T-kennel runs varied from dog kennel area to dog kennel area. There was a bank of T-kennel runs stacked one atop the other on the entire perimeter of kennel A with a total of 16 floor runs and 30 wall runs. Kennel B had the bank of runs at both ends of the room with a total of 18 wall runs and 16 floor runs in 2 rows of 8. Kennel D also had wall runs at both ends for a total of 12 wall runs and 3 rows of 6 floor runs for a total of 18 floor runs. In kennel C/isolation there was one end of the room with 6 wall runs and two rows of 6 floor runs.

All the floor runs were T-kennel style consisting of a cement floor and a roof of chain link. The dividers between the runs were cement block at the bottom. Most of the runs had guillotine style doors which allowed the dogs access to the other side of a separate indoor run. The two sides of the run were separated by a galvanized metal cover over the gutter that ran the length of the row of runs. The resulting gap between the divider and floor allowed food, feces, fur, air, insects and

other unacceptable entities to be trapped underneath and inside. This was true in the banks of T-kennel wall runs as well. The gates of the run doors on either side were padlocked closed. There was a flush valve at the end of each row of stationary T-kennel runs.

The dog kennel areas were generally overcrowded, dirty and in disrepair. Cleaning equipment was stored on the floors or was leaned against the walls. The hoses were wrapped at the end of the aisle on the valve handles for the flush apparatus. In most rooms, large cob webs were present in the corners. Run walls were soiled with a layer of oil, hair and dirt and appeared light yellow and brown in color (See section XX, Disease Control and Sanitation). There were plastic cage card holders hanging from many of the run doors, some of which were empty even though the run was occupied. Many cards were torn, stained and/or crumpled.

The flooring consisted of an epoxy sealant with abrasive over concrete. One hallway had just been redone with a slip-resistant abrasive. The sealant on some of the other concrete floors appeared to have been worn away and was slippery. Some floor run gates were pulled away from the concrete and broken bolts were exposed. In other areas such as in kennel A, the concrete was cracked, chipped and pitted.

Floor drains were present in most of the animal housing areas, often littered with food and fur. With the T-kennel runs, the system works when the waste is flushed down the drain, however, the drainage of the wall T-kennels was poor. The HSUS team observed food and fur in the drains, around the gutter and near the pipes leading down the back of the kennels. The pipes looked like they were leaking at the joints in many places, with dirt and grime obvious. Furthermore, it appeared that staff was unaware that they should pick up the metal cover to check the drainage and assure the most basic sanitation. When lifted, these covers revealed a most disgusting accumulation of bodily fluids, food, fur and other unidentified matter that was a harbor for contagious disease.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Repair or replace kennel gates that are broken. Repair chipped and pitted concrete.
- ✓ Mount cleaning equipment on walls to avoid floor clutter and possible tripping hazards.
- ✓ Repaint the walls in the kennels with epoxy paint.
- ✓ Replace plastic sleeves with impervious (stainless steel) cage card holders.
- ✓ To improve the situation in the facility, consider having the floors in the animal housing areas redone with the higher grade abrasive as a safety precaution. Some of the flooring will require repair of the cracked and pitted areas. Consider a hand-applied epoxy finish, which is often used in the shelter environment and can be quite durable when properly installed. Several flooring manufacturers now carry newer materials (such as granular epoxy finishes) which are very smooth, easy to clean, and non-skid. This type of flooring will also reduce the build-up of bacteria and reduce the incidence of slip-and-fall accidents. All of these factors make good flooring well worth the investment.

- ✓ Wall T-kennel drainage should be repaired and/or replaced, especially on the 2nd tier.

**Discussion:**

Other urgent needs of animal sheltering facilities often cause flooring and drainage issues to be put on a back burner. However, proper flooring and drainage in an animal shelter can be a powerful tool in the fight against disease, odors, and safety-related hazards for animals, staff, and the visiting public.

## 4.25 SMALL ANIMAL/WILDLIFE/EXOTIC HOUSING

**Observations:**

There was no small animal housing at RCCAS. The HSUS team was informed that small animals (hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, chickens, etc.) went to the Ramona Shelter where proper housing was available. We observed a rabbit held in a standard size (28 X28X48) stainless steel cage in the receiving area for 4-5 hours; then the rabbit was moved to the grooming room to await transfer to an outlying satellite shelter with the resources to handle these animals. Occasionally, small mammals were available for rehoming in the “available now” room.

Housing for wildlife and exotics did not exist at the Riverside Shelter. Those animals would be temporarily placed in the Shor-line cages in the receiving area or grooming room. They would then be transferred to one of the outlying shelters that had the expertise and facilities needed to rehabilitate and adopt (if applicable) those species.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Appropriate temporary housing for exotics and wildlife should be established in the grooming room, including hamster, guinea pig, and rabbit housing with nesting boxes, and bird cages.<sup>14</sup>
- ✓ Examples of traditional and non-traditional caging and the species of animals that may be housed in them follows:
  - Aquariums: various sizes; useable for both aquatic and terrestrial amphibians and reptiles, as well as small exotics like hedgehogs and prairie dogs. With any aquarium, make sure there is a tight-fitting screen or other suitable top, with a device or system for locking the top down.
  - Household Storage Containers: various sizes; clear and opaque plastic; usually with snap-on lids that can be perforated for ventilation; suitable for amphibians, reptiles, small exotics.
  - Livestock Equipment: watering troughs for cattle and other livestock, either in plastic or metal; suitable for larger aquatic or terrestrial reptiles; non-climbing mammals.

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14 HSUS *Animal Sheltering*, The Complete “How To” Series, “How to Temporarily House Wild Mammals”

- Commercial Wire Cages for Mammals: various sizes and configurations; manufactured for use with rabbits, guinea pigs, ferrets; they provide suitable housing for small to medium-sized exotics for whom glass may not be the best choice, like sugar gliders and flying squirrels.
  - Commercial Cages for Birds: various sizes; cages that allow horizontal movement as opposed to tall narrow shapes are preferable; be aware of gauge of bars when housing large parrots. Gauge is used to determine the thickness and strength of the bars. Large parrots can easily bend or crush small gauge bars.
  - Miscellaneous/Other: In the event that an animal too large for caging discussed above has to be housed, freestanding sectional dog pens and large dog crates can be used.
- ✓ Protocols for caring for various common exotic and wildlife species brought to the shelter should be developed. Staff should be trained in how to care for these animals until they are transferred.<sup>15</sup>
  - ✓ Once proper sanitation and animal procedures are in place, consider keeping the exotics at RCCAS and making them available for adoption.

### **Discussion:**

In most animal shelters in California, animals other than dogs and cats are being offered to the public for adoption. With this offering, of course, comes the opportunity to educate the public about what it takes to care for these species as well as sharing an expanded humane ethic with the community.

There is no single correct or best approach to housing for exotics and wildlife; however, there are commercial cages that will work well, and shelter-built enclosures that are as serviceable. Whatever space is available or dedicated to this use should have a fair degree of flexibility so that the shelter employees can accommodate the needs of whatever animal they find in their care. Because of the nature of these animals and the fact that they are easily stressed, any holding space or spaces should be located out of high traffic and noisy areas in the shelter, with no public access. In addition, staff access is best restricted to those persons responsible for the care of exotics and wildlife. To a degree, these spaces should also function somewhat as quarantine and/or isolation areas, allowing some control of potential medical problems.

## **4.26 FARM ANIMAL/EQUINE HOUSING**

### **Observations:**

Farm animal and equine housing did not exist at RCCAS. These animals were transferred immediately to an outlying shelter where livestock could be housed.

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15 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Answering the Call of the Wild," March/April 1998

However, according to a statement made by a staff member, 190 roosters were brought to the shelter as a result of a cock fighting raid on Saturday May 1, 2004, the day after The HSUS team completed its site visit. The team was informed that the birds were left in cardboard carriers without appropriate housing, food or water until that Monday. Because The HSUS team was not present to witness this event, its validity cannot be ascertained. However, the concern about levels of animal care made in that statement echoed similar concerns written during the public comment portion of this evaluation.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ If RCCAS does not have adequate housing for seized farm animals, especially in a seizure related to state law, then the animals should not be housed there.
  
- ✓ Written plans should be developed to address future livestock raids. Evaluate how many of the various types of animals can be properly housed at the shelter. When resources are stretched beyond the agency's ability to respond, consider placing the animals in RCCAS custody, but leaving them on the original property to be monitored by ACOs. Also, network with surrounding shelters, animal activists and volunteers to provide assistance when needed.
  
- ✓ It is the responsibility of senior management to assure that animal care staff has the support it needs to address the basic needs of animals in emergency situations.

**Discussion:**

The community expects the animal shelter to set the standard for minimum standards of animal husbandry. The results of the shelter's failure to meet those minimum standards include low staff morale, public criticism, and loss of credibility.

## **4.27 ANIMAL EXAM/ MEDICAL ROOM**

**Observations:**

The exam/medical room was down the hall from the receiving area off the staff break room and had been converted into a locker/utility room. An exam table had been removed, lockers had been installed and the cabinets, sink and counter space remained available in the room.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Reestablish and equip that room as an exam room (See section XX, Isolation and Separation).

**Discussion:**

It is an essential obligation of a 21<sup>st</sup> century animal shelter to provide basic vaccinations, examinations and oversight of medical issues in a professional manner. A critical aspect of managing the animal population, using isolation and separation to keep animals as healthy as possible, must include an initial triage and exam process for all animals upon entry.

## 5.0 SHELTER OPERATIONS

### 5.1 GENERAL OPERATIONS

#### **Observations:**

RCCAS staff members were helpful, pleasant and showed a general regard for shelter operations during the four day site visit. Most staff appeared to be agitated and worried, but tried to communicate with us about their concerns. A few staff members alerted us to some potentially serious issues regarding the activities and decisions of senior management, particularly as those decisions related to the care of the animals. Operational segregation was noticeable and there was a feeling of tension among divisions such as the ACOs, the SNC, the office/clerical staff, and the kennel attendants, whose work area was often referred to as “back there.” Considering the recent chain of events and community criticism of RCCAS, The HSUS team found staff trying to do their best under very trying circumstances.

The resignation of the SNC veterinarian was seen by some as signaling the demise of the strongest RCCAS program and threatened the professional medical oversight of animal care. The veterinarian appeared to have provided solid, pragmatic and scientific advice that was either ignored or implemented half-heartedly by the management team or senior management.

Overall, the animal flow process and other animal operations were disorganized and unstructured. Animal care staff lacked proper training for many of the daily tasks for which they were responsible and an overall lack of training was apparent. Coupled with the structural and maintenance issues already noted, the lack of SOPs had resulted in unnecessary stress for the staff and animals, an increased incidence of disease, an elevated level of criticism of other divisions by some RCCAS staff and an isolation of the animal care staff. Senior management seemed uninformed, unprepared and possibly unwilling to deal with the significance of the breakdown. Leadership and accountability were sorely lacking in the animal care areas outside the SNC. The infrastructure for change or update of policies and procedures was grossly insufficient. Each division seemed to be left to its own devices in organizing its area. Some divisions did better in this environment than others. Predictably, the animal care staff was most adversely affected.

#### 5.11 HOURS OF OPERATION

#### **Observations:**

Hours of Operations:           Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
                                          Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
                                          Closed Sunday

On a trial and voluntary basis, the shelter had been open the last Sunday each month from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for the last 2 months. According to staff, commitment to this was to last through spring.

Adoptions, redemptions, and lost and found transactions could all take place up until 7 p.m. The late pick up for the SNC could occur until 7 p.m. as well.

Each operational division had a different schedule of hours. The common denominator was that they were all on a 9/80 schedule which meant that they would work 9 hours per day and then get a Friday or a Monday off every other week. A synopsis of the schedules is as follows:

Field Services: Weekdays either 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. or 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., skeleton staff on Saturdays, emergencies only on Sundays. Rotating on call schedule after 7:30 p.m. for swing shift (until midnight) and graveyard (from midnight to 7:30 a.m.).

Clerical: Weekdays 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. or 9:45 a.m. to 7:15 pm (with ½ hour lunch), skeleton staff on Saturdays and voluntary staffing one Sunday a month.

Animal Care: Weekdays 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (euthanasia), 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., 10:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. and 12 a.m. to 10 a.m., skeleton staff on Saturdays and Sundays.

Spay/Neuter Clinic: Weekdays 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Administrative Staff: Weekdays 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. or 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. with 9/80.

Staff really liked the 9/80 scheduling as it provided them with a long weekend every other week. In order to accomplish this scheduling, it meant that there was a skeleton staff of employees on weekends supplemented by as many as 20 or more work release individuals assigned to the animal care work.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The HSUS team believes the current hours of shelter operation are sufficient.<sup>16</sup>
- ✓ Overall, staff hours need to reflect better scheduling on Saturdays and Sundays.
- ✓ More kennel staff should be scheduled on Saturday and Sunday to address work release supervision.
- ✓ More ACOs should be scheduled on Saturday and Sunday to make contacts with owners/complainants/bite quarantines.
- ✓ Most staff liked the 9/80 shift. But, it is not in the best interest of the public or the animals in the care of RCCAS to continue a schedule that compromises the health and well being of the staff and animals, as well as the mission of providing excellent customer service to the public. If feasible, the 9/80 shift could be discontinued. It seems more reasonable, however, that the shelter should simply hire part-time people to more adequately cover the skeleton shifts and allow for proper breaks between shifts.

- ✓ Work release help should be supplemental to animal care staff on weekends, just as it is during the week with a ratio that is adequate to provide close supervision. The standard of animal care on the weekends will influence how RCCAS is viewed by the public because more of the public will visit on weekends.

**Discussion:**

The hours of operation of animal shelters throughout the US includes long hours on weekends, usually their busiest visiting and adoption times. Despite the difficult nature of animal welfare work, employees who work at an animal shelter need to embrace the “retail” culture of adopting animals to the public.

Convenience is a major factor in choosing a source for a new pet, which is why shopping mall pet shops, neighbors, and relatives are often more popular sources than animal shelters. An agency’s hours should allow it to compete for a segment of the adoption market by being accessible during those hours most convenient for the general public.

Many animal control contacts can be made in the field on the weekends, particularly Saturday. In addition, licensing inspectors and officers will likely find people at home on the weekends.

## **5.12 TELEPHONE SYSTEM**

**Observations:**

The phone system, consisting of 13 incoming lines and 42 desk sets, was a very good, functional system. During open hours, the clerical staff members were competent and organized. Their system told them how many calls were waiting and sequenced them in the order received. There was a voice mail message that referred calls to an answering service for after hours emergencies. The PA system sounded scratchy and garbled in some areas and its use was infrequent and limited to the kennel/receiving areas.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ As indicated above, the kennel staff should be called to the front lobby or receiving area on a regular basis. Staff should be able to be contacted regardless of location and the PA system should work throughout the building. Another option might be a mobile radio communication (Nextel) system like the one that ACOs currently have.
- ✓ While the public is on hold, they hear music. Instead the caller should be hearing educational material or facts about the shelter.

## **5.13 COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT**

**Observations:**

The computer system at RCCAS was networked through the county. The Chameleon software was installed 2 years ago and seemed to work very well in integrating the various animal modules throughout the shelter. There were 37 computer stations throughout the building.

The IT issues were handled by the county. However, the office supervisor and one of her assistants became very adept at Chameleon and offered weekly training and updates on the system. In addition, this assistant was skilled at Crystal report writing which made it possible for her to draw much information from the Chameleon database.

There was a backup system that copied daily to a tape that needed to be changed weekly.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Install a Chameleon kiosk in the front office, at city hall and in the county building that links to the RCCAS website and the internet and shows photos of animals who are lost or up for adoption.
- ✓ There should be two backup systems: a daily snapshot and daily data backup. Those tapes should be monitored and changed daily to assure the backup is functioning.

## **5.14 GENERAL RECORD-KEEPING/SHELTER STATISTICS**

**Observations:**

RCCAS saved hard copies of records dependent on its internal and county record retention policies. With the Chameleon system installation 2 years ago, the records are now available in the computer system. However, hard copies of receipts, daily receipt reconciliation and other records are kept as needed.

The adoption form that was used by the animal care staff duplicated that of the office staff. There were very few other forms developed in-house.

Report writing functions such as daily inventory, adoption and euthanasia statistics, etc. were available through the Chameleon software and critical in keeping track of animals at the shelter.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Monthly and annual statistical reports should be run and posted for distribution to the county, the volunteers, the media and all staff to view.

## **5.15 INCOMING ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION AND PROCEDURES**

**Observations:**

There was an informational sheet describing categories of animals brought into the shelter. Members of the public surrendering an owned animal were given two choices on the statement of owner's release form they signed: 1) request euthanasia or 2) request for impoundment and possible adoption. Stray animals were handed over to the shelter without paperwork. However, the citizen's name and address is taken and entered via Chameleon. There was a \$20 fee for surrendering an animal and a \$30 fee if the owner surrender was picked up by the ACO.

A cage card was created via Chameleon and given to the kennel attendant who picked up the animal from the front lobby. If an attendant was not available, the animal would be placed in a bank of stainless steel cages in the lobby until the attendant arrived. No personality profiles were filled out on the animals, although that is available in a Chameleon module.

The kennel attendant would take the animal back to the receiving area, conduct an extremely basic exam which consisted of simply looking the animal over and determining age and sex. Then he/she would make a plastic collar, scan for microchip, take a photo in the grooming room next door, print the completed cage card and place the animal in a cage.

If the animal was a stray and had a tag or microchip, the information was put on the record. All paperwork indicated that the animal might be euthanized if not able to be placed for adoption.

There was no area for night time drop off of animals.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Consider discontinuing charging a surrender fee.<sup>17</sup>
- ✓ Office staff should make out collars with basic information when they store the record in Chameleon.
- ✓ Office staff should take pet profile information. A form on a clipboard could be filled out while the person is in line or waiting for help. The information could be entered later if office is too busy.
- ✓ A second station should be set up for taking Cham Cam photos near the front lobby when possible (perhaps in the underutilized food prep room). Animals should be scanned for microchip and have collars applied at that time.
- ✓ Kennel staff or ACOs should immediately notify office staff if they see a stray animal has a collar, tag or microchip and that should be placed on the record. It should be the responsibility of the office staff to call the possible owner.

## **5.16 LOST AND FOUND PROCEDURE**

**Observations:**

A “What To Do If Your Pet Is Lost” checklist was provided to the public that described the steps one should take if a pet was lost. This included where to check in the shelter, a list of other area shelters, as well as what to do in the neighborhood.

The found cards were displayed outside the front door so people could determine if their animal was being held by a member of the public. Inside the front lobby hallway, a board displayed

cards of animals that were lost, however the cards were not very well marked. A binder held the kennel cards of animals that were brought in dead on arrival.

Citizens could give lost/found information over the phone or in person. The HSUS team watched people walk by the postings and wait in line to be directed to the kennels. Sometimes people didn't stop at the front counter at all and just walked by both lost and found stations.

When people identified an animal in the shelter as theirs, they had to stand in line for the next available office assistant. Information about where the animal was lost was matched with where the animal was found. The claimant had to show picture ID and pay all applicable fees including license and extra fees for fertile dogs and cats.

The redemption fees were progressive:

	1 <sup>st</sup> Impound	2 <sup>nd</sup> Impound	3 <sup>rd</sup> Impound	Daily Board Fees
County	\$30	\$50	\$75	\$7
City	\$20	\$25	\$30	\$5
State fees for fertile dog or cat	\$35	\$50	\$100	

Dog licenses were required for redemption along with proof of rabies vaccination.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ The greeter position in the front lobby during business hours should communicate the goals of the agency and assist in reuniting owners with lost pets.
- ✓ Enforce the rule that notices placed on the lost/found bulletin board must be dated. Discard notices after 30 days so the board does not become outdated and ineffective.
- ✓ Remove the personal information from the found cards, replace it with a number they can bring to the front desk, and have shelter staff make the contact.
- ✓ In an effort to increase the numbers of stray animals reclaimed by their owners, The HSUS team recommends that:
  - A standardized procedure be implemented for capturing lost or found animal information and cross checking it against reports already on file. Because the general public is poorly educated on breed identification, an initial cross check system should rely on only a few physical factors such as coat color, hair length (in cats), gender and weight (in dogs). If the initial cross check produces a possible match, other factors such as age, location lost/found, breed, etc. should be used.
- ✓ There should be one or more persons responsible for the daily checking of lost reports against the animals in the facility.
- ✓ People should be required to fill out a lost report before being allowed to look at the animals. Then if a person claims he found his pet at the shelter, the information on the

lost report can be used to determine if in fact the animal may be his.

- ✓ The owner must be asked to provide proof of ownership - not just personal identification. The proof could be photos, veterinary records, licenses, bills of sale, breed registries, etc.
- ✓ Review and update the current lost and found reports, requesting more specific information. Continue using a single report for each animal which makes it easier to file, track, and remove once the animal is found.
- ✓ A binder system should replace the current board system: the lost and found reports should be kept in separate three-ring binders with pictures if available; two (one lost and one found) for dogs and two (one lost and one found) for cats. Each binder would be sub-divided by sex. For example, the lost dog binder would be divided by lost male and lost female dogs. This is a simple and easy-to-follow system that may increase return-to-owner rates.
- ✓ The HSUS team commends RCCAS for applying progressive redemption fees for repeat offenders and agrees with additional state fees for unsterilized animals. Contact the state department to work on creating an additional incentive for spay/neuter by returning a portion of the extra state fee to the owner upon presentation of proof of the surgery.
- ✓ Consider making microchipping mandatory before reclaim for a first ordinance violation, and requiring spay or neuter on a third ordinance violation.
- ✓ Consider development of a long-term program for working closely with persons who have lost a companion animal. Many animal care and control agencies have had overwhelming success doing so, with the outcome being better customer service and increased return to owner rates. Well-trained volunteers could be used to assist office staff with:
  - Greeting people
  - Assisting visitors in completing lost reports
  - Escorting pet owners through the shelter
  - Ensuring that visitors review the “dead on arrival” and “found pet” reports
  - Providing advice and counseling on how best to look for their pets
  - Maintaining and updating both the lost and found files
  - Performing daily lost and found checks on stray animals in the facility
  - Performing daily cross checking on stray animals in the facility with the “lost and found” listings in the local newspaper
- ✓ Because Chameleon software/Cham Cam/ Pet Harbor are available at RCCAS, citizens should be advised to look for their animal online.
- ✓ Integrate all other county shelters on Chameleon and provide information for all shelters online if that is not being done.

- ✓ A lost pet hotline available through the night time or after hours answering service or at a separate number could also help people who are searching for their pet.

**Discussion:**

Support from the community begins with providing good service. People who have a good experience at the shelter will become volunteers and donors.

Allowing someone to first look through the facility for his animal prior to completing a report allows a dishonest citizen to walk through the facility, choose an animal that he wants to say was his and attempt to falsely claim it. Also, it is a liability to have personal information on the found cards publicly available.

Because the general public has poor capabilities when it comes to the proper identification of a found dog or cat by breed, reliance on such information to accurately match lost reports with found reports usually results in a low percentage of successful reclamations.

An example of penalties for animal control ordinance violations is as follows: <sup>18</sup>

<b>First Offense</b>	\$50 and microchip
<b>Second Offense</b>	\$75 and microchip
<b>Third Offense</b>	\$150 and microchip and animal must be spayed or neutered and a secure enclosure must be provided for the animal
<b>Fourth Offense</b>	\$200 and microchip and animal must be spayed or neutered and a secure enclosure must be provided for the animal
<b>Fifth/Successive</b>	\$500 and seizure
<b>Failure to comply with a written order</b>	\$100

## 5.17 BITE CASE PROCESSING

**Observations:**

The bite case desk was in the dispatch office. All bite reports were channeled to the bite investigator who arranged for an officer to quarantine the animal out in the field. The bite report or “Rabies Control Investigation Report” was thorough and well designed. Both the city and the county implemented “Potentially Dangerous Animal Restraint Order” protocol that required containment and muzzling when off the property after 2 incidents. The citizen could file for a hearing to appeal the restraint order.

Bite reports were taken by any staff person who answered the phone. This expedited the bite reporting and provided better service to the public.

Since the RCCAS was under the jurisdiction of the Community Health Agency, the paperwork

was maintained at the shelter as well as sent to the communicable disease exposure unit. When necessary, the health department laboratory was notified to check a specimen for rabies.

**Recommendations:**

None

## 5.18 JOB DESCRIPTIONS

**Observations:**

The job descriptions for employment at RCCAS were available through the Internet. Many of the job descriptions did not require animal shelter, veterinary hospital, boarding kennel, or other animal care related experience (except in the case of the veterinary assistant position, which allowed substitution of experience for an RVT certificate). They were basic county job descriptions, broadly defining job duties and responsibilities, not specific to an animal shelter. The descriptions for kennel attendants, SNC staff, the animal services staff, including the animal license inspector positions, were more specific to animal issues.

The job description for the kennel attendant was particularly misleading. It stated the kennel attendant was also a field officer and could perform all the duties of the field officer.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Job descriptions for work in an animal shelter should be specific to the environment. All the job descriptions should be tailored to reflect more directly the type of work and what is expected. A survey of other municipal and county shelters would provide some ideas for specific job duties requirements.<sup>19</sup>
- ✓ Update all job descriptions with an accurate synopsis of work and minimum qualifications.
- ✓ A willingness checklist can help to prepare the individual for the intensity of the animal sheltering experience. This checklist should include things like euthanasia, the smells, noise and physical danger posed by working with animals with no known history.
- ✓ At least one year's experience in working or volunteering with animals should be required for hire in an animal shelter.
- ✓ Develop job standards that will be specific about measuring success in job competence, performance and completion.

**Discussion:**

Animal welfare and protection is a very demanding line of work. The environment can be noisy, smelly and dangerous. The individuals with whom we deal are often upset, emotional and can be difficult. Success in animal sheltering begins with hiring the right people to do the job.

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19 Sample job descriptions

Job descriptions are a way to screen potential employees. Those who have experience in animal welfare work are apt to be more successful in the job and be able to do what is required. In the hiring/interviewing process, be prepared to give the interested party complete and accurate information about what they can expect.

## 5.19 STAFF UNIFORMS

### **Observations:**

Uniforms were required for kennel attendants, ACOs and licensing inspectors. The uniforms were khaki colored shirts with shirtsleeve insignias from RCCAS, a badge, a nametag (first initial, last name) and green or olive colored pants with black closed-toe shoes. The ACOs and license inspectors were the neatest and most professional looking.

It was difficult for the HSUS team to distinguish ACOs from kennel workers because their uniforms were identical. Sometimes the kennel attendants would wear a smock or remove their shirts during cleaning. The interim supervising ACO wore a white uniform shirt. Some had nametags, some had badges, and others did not have either.

Some kennel attendants left their shirttails out and wore pants that were low riding. The uniforms were neat and professional-looking when pants were pulled up and tails tucked in.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Change the kennel attendant staff uniforms to distinguish them from that of ACOs.
- ✓ Require staff to abide by dress code for neatness.

### **Discussion:**

RCCAS management should hold themselves and the staff to the highest standard of appearance. Adequate resources must be made available so employees can present themselves to the public in the most professional manner possible. A neatly presented, practical uniform specifically designed for direct animal care work enhances the professionalism and helps to improve public respect. This includes appropriate outerwear, such as jackets or sweatshirts to be worn in cool or rainy weather.

The importance of client service and supervision in an animal shelter environment cannot be understated. Consumers expect and demand professional, knowledgeable sales people. Shelters require that visitors to the shelter be supervised in order to minimize injuries to both animals and people. Therefore, it is important that the visiting public be easily able to recognize a member of the agency's staff.

## 5.2 ANIMAL CARE AND HANDLING

### 5.21 DOG/CAT CARE

#### **Observations:**

There seemed to be a general lack of concern for the animals' comfort. Although the HSUS team does not think neglecting the animals' needs was intentional, the following examples show an unawareness or in some cases, disregard for basic standards of care.

The HSUS team noticed that frequently when the dog kennels were cleaned, the dogs were on one side of the T-kennel runs for several hours (as early as 3 a.m. until 10 a.m., but it would depend on how many people were on the shift) without any water. In the receiving area, animals were often left for some time without food or water. The team observed cat bowls that were dry when the animal care attendant cleaned the cages at 9 a.m. The water bowls were only partially filled when The HSUS team witnessed cat room cleaning.

The lobby kennel, which is next to the main entrance, was visible to the staff in the lobby/reception area; however, nobody seemed to notice the animals that were placed in there. A dog that was brought in on Wednesday morning at opening was still in that cage 2 hours later without attention, food or water.

No dogs in any kennel runs were given blankets or resting benches except for the dogs in isolation. There were no toys or treats given to animals during the time of The HSUS team site visit. The only amenity was that the puppy pens had shredded paper. The HSUS team observed the dogs pacing, crying and whining from being bored or stressed. Many dogs were depressed, lethargic and frightened, and not getting up when people walked by. The cats were also not provided with anything to lie on and hiding boxes were not provided for frightened or feral cats.

Sick dogs, injured dogs and dogs quarantined for biting or aggressive behavior all were being housed in the isolation areas. The noise level was high.

Some of the animals were brought into the receiving area of the shelter at the end of the day shift by officers who were leaving at 5 p.m. and would not be placed in their permanent kennels until the arrival of the kennel staff at midnight. On two separate occasions, animals were in the receiving area for 12 to 18 hours without water.

Overall, housing conditions were overcrowded, or housing was too small for the animal.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ SOPs need to be created and implemented to provide staff with direction on the proper way to house and care for the animals. To ensure consistency, a supervisor should be responsible for making "spot checks" to confirm that all aspects of the SOPs are being carried out.<sup>20</sup>

- ✓ Make sure that animals do not go without access to water for extended periods of time.
- ✓ Limit the number of dogs to one per kennel, 2 maximum. Temperament needs to be assessed, and sex determined before placement together.
- ✓ Only dogs under 25 pounds should be placed in the smaller T-kennels.
- ✓ Supply resting benches for each dog run and some form of bed for cats. If blankets are used, each animal should get one, not just the animals available for adoption. Benches, blankets and towels should be washed and disinfected daily.
- ✓ Cat hiding boxes should be supplied for shy, frightened, or feral cats.<sup>21</sup>
- ✓ Ensure that animals who are recuperating from injuries or illness have a quiet place to rest during their treatment or recovery period. If kept awake and on guard, their recovery periods may be lengthened or even compromised. These animals should always be separated from other animals (and by species) and moved to a quieter, less stressful area of the building. (See sections 4.23 & 4.24, Dog Housing and Cat Housing).
- ✓ Performance measures should include animal care staff ability to maintain minimum standards of care for sheltered animals.
- ✓ Supervisors and/or senior managers should perform a daily walk through, holding staff accountable.
- ✓ Toys should be provided to dogs and cats, especially puppies and kittens. Volunteers often are anxious to promote and provide this kind of effort.
- ✓ Exercise and socialization should be given to all animals that have had behavioral and health evaluations. This may be done by volunteers once the program is strong.

### **Discussion:**

The quality of animal housing is one of the most important aspects of preventative health care and disease control. Any animal in a shelter environment will experience some level of stress due to the change of environment, separation from family, and the daily handling by strangers. Cats and kittens are particularly susceptible to stress when removed from familiar surroundings. When subjected to the sounds of barking and whining of puppies and dogs, cats can experience extreme distress.

In order for the animals to maintain their sociability in the shelter environment, some toys and amenities are recommended. These enhancements also signal to the community that the animal caretakers will take extra time to assure the animals' needs are being met.

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21 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "How To" Series, "How to Set Up a Comfy Cat Cage"

Shelter animals must be housed in a way that minimizes stress, provides for their special needs, affords protection from the elements, provides adequate ventilation, and minimizes the spread of disease and parasites.

## 5.22 SMALL MAMMAL/WILDLIFE/EXOTIC CARE

### **Observations:**

A rabbit came to the shelter and remained in receiving for 24 hours without the appropriate food, water or housing. No litter pan, hay or hiding box was provided. There were not any chew blocks available for the rabbit nor was it provided with any toys.

Because the receiving area is open to all incoming animals, it is likely that dogs were allowed to approach rabbit cages causing excitement and panic. Staff did not seem to be sensitive to this issue.

No exotics or wildlife were being housed long term on the property at the time of the site visit. However, an owl and baby ducks were observed in the receiving room and photograph room, respectively, apparently waiting to be relocated to another facility. The owl was in a barren cage, which was partially covered to minimize stress, but no perch, food or water was observed. It was not determined whether the ducks had received adequate attention.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Rabbits and guinea pigs should be provided with untreated wood blocks for chewing.
- ✓ All animals, regardless of species, must be cleaned, fed and watered daily. Proper food and comfort items must be supplied once an organization takes on the commitment of housing these animals, even temporarily. Research the care and feeding of small animals so that when the public visits, RCCAS has created the appropriate environment.<sup>22</sup>
- ✓ Provide proper training for all staff and volunteers on reducing and/or preventing stress in animals.

### **Discussion:**

All animal shelters today must house and care for exotic, unusual, and fad animals including birds, snakes, reptiles, fowl, fish, rabbits, gerbils, hamsters, guinea pigs, and other small mammals. Because RCCAS is not adequately equipped to handle exotics, small animals, or wildlife, it appears to struggle with many of the same “ever-changing” housing issues for these animals that other shelters across the country are facing. However, these animals have special housing and care needs that must be addressed.

## 5.23 FARM ANIMAL/EQUINE CARE

### **Observations:**

Equine and farm animal care was handled by the Ramona and/or Norco Animal Shelters who have barn and pasture.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Staff should cross train to the outlying shelters so as to be aware of proper care of equine and farm animals. Members of the public will ask questions about care.

## 5.24 ANIMAL HANDLING

### **Observations:**

RCCAS does not have a policy statement on humane animal handling. Many unintentionally rough, unskilled or inefficient techniques were witnessed during the site visit. The kennel attendant staff gives a general impression of being in need of proper animal handling training and supervision.

During cleaning, dogs are moved to the opposite side of the guillotine door by calling them to the other side, which did not require much handling from the staff. During the cleaning process, cats, including non-fractious ones, were observed being forced into the corner of their cages by the staff person who was pulling the soiled newspaper from underneath the cat. Some staff chose to clean the cages while the cats were in them due to their fear of handling the cats.

It was not uncommon for catch poles to be used to restrain dogs in order to take the photo. Photos of cats, even friendly ones, were taken through the cage bars. The photos observed in the Pet Harbor looked as though the animals might be dangling slightly from a catch pole. Although not witnessed, the set up in the room puts the animals on a stage, so they would need to be lifted (at least the small ones) to get up there. Since the staff demonstrated their desire to not handle the animals, there was concern among The HSUS team members about how they were being lifted onto the stage.

The HSUS team did not observe any animal being moved using a control pole or net. Muzzles were available, but were never observed being used during the site visit. Leashes were used on most of the dogs, and cats were moved in wire mesh cages. Most staff did not seem interested in interacting with or speaking to the animals, and carried the cages like cargo, swinging them back and forth.

General animal handling, use of equipment such as control poles and muzzles, carrying an animal, restraining cats in bags, dog restraint, what to do in case of a dog fight, and handling injured animals was covered in the kennel handbook.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Arrange an animal handling, restraint, and behavior assessment training program based on the application of policies and procedures that will provide all members of the staff

with the pragmatic information and skills necessary to perform their jobs. The HSUS, National Animal Control Association (NACA), American Humane (AH), and other national and local groups offer animal handling and restraint seminars, textbooks, and videotapes.

- ✓ Animals are never to be free-lifted from the ground or hung using a control pole. Every animal's body weight must be well supported prior to lifting.
- ✓ Use plastic carriers instead of wire mesh cages to transport cats, wildlife and exotics.
- ✓ Structure the staff training program to include weekly training objectives. At the end of each week, in order to evaluate progress, apply some kind of assessment tool such as a quiz, to provide the trainee with feedback and to point out objectives needing more focus.
- ✓ Develop and supervise a system to ascertain that animal handling and restraint policies, procedures and training programs are continually reviewed and updated, in practice as well as in writing.
- ✓ Immediately inspect all control poles to ensure that cables are smooth, release appropriately, and have intact bite sleeves. All bent poles should be discarded to ensure staff and animal safety.
- ✓ Ensure that a high-quality cable cutter is available and easily accessible to allow for the quick removal of any defective control pole cable release mechanisms.
- ✓ Place all handling equipment on a weekly (at a minimum) maintenance program that includes the immediate repair or removal of any faulty equipment.
- ✓ To facilitate responsible animal care and control while assuring staff safety, we recommend that kennel attendant staff have ready access to the following animal handling equipment at minimum and receive instruction on its proper use.

Capture gloves - These can be critical in preventing injuries to both humans and animals, and in ensuring that animals are handled humanely. Gloves are a wise investment; they should be sized to fit snug, made of a penetration-resistant material, and lined with a puncture-resistant material. Welder's gloves, while similar in appearance, do not offer the needed protection, and lend a false sense of security. Do not use garden gloves as bite protection.

Crates, cages and cardboard carriers - Many sizes and types of cages and crates should always be available for a variety of situations. Cardboard carriers can be used for many purposes, including transportation of diseased or dead animals, to provide a quiet environment for animals undergoing the euthanasia process, etc.

Caging and transfer systems for unsocialized cats - Trap transfer cages, and squeeze cages are essential equipment for animal care and control. These caging systems

provide for the anesthesia, euthanasia, or transfer of feral and unsocialized cats without need for any human handling or intervention whatsoever.

Feral cat handling systems - Designed to provide an alluring “safe place” for feral and unsocialized cats to hide, these versatile cages allow for the field pick-up, daily care, cage cleaning, monitoring, treatment, transfer, anesthesia, or euthanasia of feral or unsocialized cats without handling.

Nets - Nets are essential pieces of equipment that can enable any staff to handle a variety of animals with minimal need for restraint. Nets should be sturdy, at least twice as deep as their diameter, and flat on the end instead of round. Many nets allow for the capture and removal of un-socialized cats with little difficulty.<sup>23</sup>

Leashes - Leashes serve many purposes, and should be more readily available for all staff. A number of manufacturers offer sturdy rope-type leashes at a nominal price.

Muzzles - Commercially manufactured muzzles are available from many animal equipment companies in a range of sizes to fit dogs and cats.

Pole syringes and blow guns - These devices allow for humane chemical immobilization of fractious, feral, unsocialized or aggressive animals without physical handling.

Stretchers - Most animal stretchers have plastic or vinyl covers designed to help transport injured, anesthetized, or sedated animals safely and comfortably. Many come with a cover that fits over the prone animal, attaching to the stretcher with a material, such as Velcro.

Towels and blankets - These items can be used for a multitude of purposes, including capturing small animals, covering cages and traps, and providing comfort to animals housed within transport compartments.

- ✓ Because shelter staff tends to be the biggest vectors for the transmission of disease, disease prevention and control should be a concern when touching and transporting animals. Staff should always sanitize their hands between handling animals and should refrain from holding animals against their clothing during transport. Leashes and other items used in transporting animals should be disinfected between each animal.
- ✓ Ensure that staff is properly trained in the event that they must handle fractious animals.

### **Discussion:**

Some training areas in animal handling and restraint may seem elementary - especially for “seasoned” staff - but if the staff has not been provided adequate information relating to basic concepts, they will not recognize the underlying reasons for correct animal handling techniques and procedures. As a result of staff’s lack of awareness of basic principles, inappropriate

techniques will be passed on from each employee generation to the next. The same might be said for many, if not all, aspects of a modern animal care and control program. The staff needs to know not only the right techniques, but also the rationale behind them.

Control poles, which have become a standard piece of equipment for most animal control departments, are designed as a defensive or protective safety tool for guiding fractious animals, and not for offensive maneuvers against animals, or as a matter of routine, convenience, or speed.

The routine use of control poles cannot be substituted for professional animal capture and handling skills. Although staff safety is an important priority, the humane handling of animals must also be ensured, and stress for both the animal and handler should be eliminated whenever possible. Training and guidance by qualified animal care and control experts would greatly reduce the incidence of use of the control pole.

The HSUS team recognizes that standard professional animal handling equipment (such as high quality gloves, nets and caging) can be relatively expensive. However, the proper equipment is well worth the investment for the staff as well as the animals needing care. We strongly recommend that RCCAS invest in their staff by regularly allocating resources and funding for organization wide training opportunities and appropriate animal handling equipment.

## **6.0 VETERINARY/ MEDICAL/ HEALTH ISSUES**

### **6.1 GENERAL SHELTER MEDICINE/ HEALTH CARE**

#### **Observations:**

Written procedure stated that if an animal is sick or injured upon arrival a supervisor is to be notified. However, the procedure had not been updated to include the system observed by The HSUS team. When an animal arrived at the shelter with an obvious injury or illness or began to display symptoms of an infectious disease during his or her stay, a veterinary evaluation worksheet was generated through Chameleon. These worksheets were placed in a basket located in the receiving area in order for the veterinarian to know which animals were to be examined. Once examined the veterinarian was to complete the evaluation worksheet with a diagnosis, prognosis, treatment plan and prescription.

Overall the veterinary evaluation sheets lacked detail and did not address the type or extent of the injury or sickness, or clearly outline a treatment plan for the animal. Often the veterinarian would simply make the notation “ok to keep” and not document the animal’s condition or prognosis. For example, two evaluation worksheets stated that the animals had been attacked by another animal. Although the veterinarian prescribed medication, instructions on how to treat the wounds were not included and there was no information to describe the injuries. Of the thirteen evaluation worksheets reviewed only one provided a written diagnosis, accompanied by a treatment plan and a prescription. The HSUS team did not observe any instruction being given regarding relocating the animal to an isolation area.

The notation in an animal’s medical record through Chameleon would indicate that there was a charge for medication but not the type of medication nor why the animal was being treated. The animal treatment sheet was filed by date in the clinic. This system resulted in animals that had multiple evaluation sheets not having their medical history connected.

An injured animal picked up in the field by an ACO may be taken to an outside veterinarian for treatment and returned to the shelter with an assessment and treatment plan. One such animal’s veterinary evaluation worksheet indicated through an arrow pointing to the words “took to outside vet. got meds” that the animal was to be medicated. Staff would have to assume that the animal would be medicated with what was prescribed by the outside veterinarian and refer to that medical sheet.

There were no written procedures in place for handling sick animals housed in the shelter. Written procedures referred to a system that was in place prior to Chameleon being implemented and that procedure was vague, only stating, “Check any vet slips attached to see if medication is needed. If needed, write the appropriate information on the dry erase board.” When an animal was placed on medication a treatment history sheet was completed by the veterinarian that instructed staff which medication to use, the strength, and how often to administer. An animal’s treatment sheet was kept in a manila envelope in the SNC. The treatments were administered by the SNC staff Monday through Friday or Monday through Thursday, due to a 9/80 schedule. On alternate Fridays and weekends the kennel staff was to perform treatments. Clinic staff

expressed concern that treatments were not being completed on weekends and alternate Fridays. In reviewing 55 treatment sheets for a 4 week period, 20% of the animals had not received treatments. Every missed treatment was on a weekend or an alternate Friday. None of the treatment sheets provided information regarding the animal's ongoing condition or response to the treatment. Less than 4% of the treatment sheets reviewed had a final disposition of the animal.

The public did not receive a copy of an animal's medical record upon adoption of the animal. Staff expressed concern that adopters were often not told that the animal they have adopted is sick and will be going home on medication.

If an owner is redeeming a lost animal who was treated by an outside veterinarian, medication may be given, but without written instructions. Owners are told to follow up with their own veterinarian. Staff expressed concern to The HSUS team that medications are overlooked and not accompanying animals when they go home.

The veterinarian on staff in the SNC while The HSUS team was on site had been hired to perform spay and neuter surgeries and not to conduct medical examinations on shelter animals. In 1999 the veterinarian averaged 525 surgeries per month with that number increasing to 590 in 2003. It is important to note that in 1999 the spay/neuter veterinarian examined an average of 70 shelter animals per month with that number increasing to 188 in 2003. The first three months of 2004 the average number of surgeries was 587 per month and 157 examinations of shelter animals per month. The average month consisted of 17 work days.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Management, in concert with an additional staff veterinarian hired specifically to work within the shelter (with potential to work part-time in the SNC), should develop and implement written protocols to assess, provide and monitor the needs of all sheltered animals particularly the sick and / or injured animals for veterinary care (See SOP template CD ROM).
- ✓ Each animal's medical record should include information that documents:
  - the animal's overall condition upon arrival
  - any symptoms noted
  - the veterinarian's diagnosis
  - the resulting treatment plan(s) and care protocol(s)
  - the animal's response to treatment(s)
  - the animal's condition over time.
- ✓ Staff must closely monitor and document the changing needs of animals undergoing treatment, including observations relating to appetite, behavior, urination and defecation. This information should be maintained on the animal's cage for easy access and assessment.
- ✓ All medical treatments should be meticulously documented in chronological order and kept as part of the animal's permanent record. These records should be available to all

staff in order to monitor recurring conditions, note any potential trends or to understand the success or failure of previous treatment protocols.

- ✓ Adopters must be adequately advised of the condition of a potential adoptee and copies of all of the animal's medical records should be given to the adopter. The adopter in turn can present this to his or her veterinarian for ongoing care and treatment.
- ✓ RCCAS should assist its veterinarian(s) in establishing some formal means of continually gaining access to new and cutting-edge information relating to shelter medicine. Animal shelter practice is a new and unique field of veterinary medicine, and is one which brings with it topics, procedures, and dilemmas which do not arise in other veterinary practice situations. Staying in touch with new innovations will help ensure that staff stays up-to-date, well trained, and able to make necessary modifications to protocols as needed.
- ✓ A network of veterinarians interested in and familiar with animal shelter practice has been developed and a specialized training conference for shelter veterinarians is presented annually. The staff veterinarian(s) should be encouraged and financially supported to network with other shelter veterinarians, in order to maintain and improve the level of veterinary care available to the animals within RCCAS.<sup>24</sup>

### **Discussion:**

It is crucial that the care of all animals be monitored and treatments provided when necessary in order to: a) control the occurrence of diseases and parasites in the shelter; b) best protect the health and comfort of the animals; c) protect the public's health; d) provide overall humane care and treatment of sheltered animals; and e) engender public trust in the level of care provided for their homeless animals.

The responsibility of caring for Riverside County's stray and homeless animals is a serious one. It brings with it a responsibility to individually assess the health status and special needs of every animal admitted to the shelter soon after admission, and to provide care for those needs throughout the animal's stay at the shelter.<sup>25</sup>

Animal shelter practice is a new and unique field of veterinary medicine, and is one which brings with it topics, procedures, and dilemmas that do not arise in other veterinary practice situations. Staying in touch with new innovations will help ensure that staff stays up-to-date, well trained, and able to make necessary modifications to protocols as needed.

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24 *Animal Shelter Veterinarian*, A Publication of the Association of Animal Shelter Veterinarians, [www.shelternvet.com](http://www.shelternvet.com)

25 *Health Care for Sheltered Animals*, by Leslie Sinclair, DVM, Director of Companion Animal Care, HSUS Animal Care EXPO, 1997

## 6.2 DISEASE CONTROL AND SANITATION

### **Observations:**

The disease control and sanitation methods observed by The HSUS team were found to be inadequate, ineffective and unacceptable. The overall environment in the animal housing areas, including caging and work stations, was quite dirty. It was the opinion of The HSUS team that the lack of appropriate cleaning methods jeopardized the health and welfare of the animals in the care of RCCAS.

Although written protocols for the cleaning of dog kennels existed, the procedures outlined were vague and lacked specific instructions. HSUS team members observed staff cleaning the dog kennels. Dogs were transferred to one side and the guillotine doors closed. Sometimes staff would forget to re-open them or leave animals closed on one side for extended periods of time, reason unknown. In some cases there would be dogs closed off on each side.

Kennels were not scooped; they were simply hosed with plain water to direct any feces, urine or food into the drain, located in the rear of the cage. Once that was completed the employee sprayed disinfectant on the kennel walls and floor, but not the cage doors or the dividing ledges and bars. A deck brush was used to scrub the floor and walls of the kennel but not the doors, dividing ledges and bars. Additionally, staff did not scrub the length of the kennels. Staff members explained that once or twice a week they would spray the kennels with the disinfectant, but scrub with a degreaser resulting in the chemicals being mixed. Staff was aware that the disinfectant should remain in contact with the surface for 10 minutes prior to rinsing the kennel.

An appropriate disinfectant, a quaternary called Triple II, and a standard degreaser were applied through foam sprayers that were preset to dispense the correct dilution of water to product. The scrub buckets and spray bottles were filled from a wall unit that was set to dispense the correct dilution of water to cleaning product. Staff was unaware of what the correct dilution was for the product that they were using and stated they relied on the automatic system. They assumed the dispensers were correctly set, but were unaware of how to set the dispensers or the unit. The different foam sprayers were not marked to identify which cleaning product they contained. One staff member relied on knowing the difference between the smell of the disinfectant versus the degreaser as a means of identifying which one was in which bottle.

The dog runs are T-kennels. These types of kennel systems have rear drains that run the length of the row of runs. These drains are covered with a removable cover and require cleaning and rinsing with the removal of any debris on a daily basis. The kennel staff did not clean these drains and The HSUS team found the drains in both the dog kennels and caging systems to be coated with layers of a sludge consisting of hair, feces, food and dirt (See Figs. 4-7).



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

The walls directly under the guillotine doors and the ledges between runs showed a heavy layer of grime. The run walls at the guillotine door had an excessive amount of oil build-up which is caused by a dog's body rubbing against the sides of the run and inadequate cleaning (See Figs. 8-11).



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

Particularly disconcerting to The HSUS team was that dogs and puppies were allowed to remain in their own feces for unnecessarily extended periods of time. Runs and cages were not “spot cleaned” throughout the day. Staff did not remove feces prior to feeding. The dogs and pups had their food bowls placed next to their own waste.

RCCAS procedures stated that is preferable to clean the cat cages with the cat still in it. If that was not possible then the procedure went on to outline a detailed, informative method for the proper cleaning of a cage. The HSUS team observed the cleaning of the cat housing areas on three different occasions. The extent to which the cage was cleaned varied depending upon the condition of the individual cage. Sometimes the newspaper would be removed. Most often the process consisted of the litter being swept out into a metal dust pan while the cat remained in the cage. The litter pan would be removed and replaced with fresh litter along with fresh food and water. Although procedure stated that cats are not to be given previously used bowls or litter pans, the litter, food and water were more often than not provided in the same container as before. In the cases where it was necessary to remove the cat, he was placed in a large holding cage. The staff would spray the cage floor and walls, but not the ceiling or door with a disinfectant solution and immediately wipe the cage dry. The cat was then returned to his cage and another cat was placed into the holding cage without it being disinfected. This process was repeated throughout the cleaning process. Staff wore exam gloves during the cleaning process but did not change them between cats.

One cat cage had dried feces on the bottom of it. The staff member used the metal dust pan to scrape the feces off with such force that the cage bank rocked, causing distress to the cats housed in the cages. Without disinfecting the dust pan the staff member continued with the cleaning process.

The floors were swept and mopped with the disinfectant, but staff failed to sweep and mop under the cages.

Loud music blared throughout the morning cleaning process in both the cat room and dog kennels.

Staff was observed cleaning cages in the receiving area by quickly spraying with a disinfectant solution and immediately wiping dry. The cage doors and the outer areas of the cages and floor in this room were coated with a thick film of grime, dried feces and other contaminants. Heavy layers of dust, dirt and animal hair was prevalent on all surfaces in the animal related areas (See Figs. 12-13).



Figure 12



Figure 13

Food and water bowls and litter pans were cleaned with a product called Sunlight pot and pan dishwashing liquid. Staff explained that they use the dishwashing liquid because, “It cuts the grease better than the green stuff they used to use” and “It doesn’t chap their hands.” One staff member stated that they do not mix bowls with litter pans during the washing process but The HSUS team members observed a sink full of both bowls and litter pans soaking together. Although it appeared to The HSUS team that there were adequate numbers of stainless steel bowls, there were some plastic food and water bowls being used in the cat areas.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ All the kennels need a deep cleaning to address major sanitation issues.
- ✓ Clean and sanitize the gutters and drains inside the floor and wall kennels. Devise protocol to check and clean these gutters and drains on a bi-weekly basis.

It is recommended that the shelter staff adopt the following cleaning protocol for the dog kennels on a daily basis (once animals are transferred to the other side of their kennels) (See SOP template CD ROM):<sup>26</sup>

- ✓ Remove the animal bedding and all food and water containers from the run.

- ✓ Remove all solid organic waste (feces, hair, etc.) by scooping it out. The scoop must be disinfected between each run by rotating two scoops in a bucket of disinfecting solution; use one scoop, place it in the bucket, use the other scoop and then place it in the bucket, and so on.
- ✓ Rinse away urine with water.
- ✓ Using a (clean) stiff bristled scrub brush along with a solution of detergent/disinfectant (following manufacturer's instructions), scrub all surfaces within the run including the floor, sides, resting board, and top. Gates on the runs should be cleaned and scrubbed on a daily basis. Attention must also be given to the drainage system in place.
- ✓ Allow solution to stand per the manufacturer's instructions. Occasionally also utilize a degreaser. Degreaser should never be mixed with the disinfectant but used separately.
- ✓ Thoroughly rinse all surfaces, including drains, with a steady stream of hot water.
- ✓ Dry the run completely using a squeegee and good ventilation prior to returning animals to kennels.
- ✓ Regularly clean and disinfect other areas including the aisles, walls and ceilings, as they can accumulate bacteria, disease, and odor.

Many of the sanitation and disease control considerations mentioned in the "dog cleaning" section also apply to cats. We recommend the following protocol for the cat housing areas:

- ✓ Remove cat(s) to a clean cage. (If portable carriers, transfer cages, or alternative caging are to be used, each must be similarly disinfected between uses). Cats should never be let out of cages to run loose during cleaning procedures. It is important to note that the cat cages should not be cleaned one by one, but rather all the cats in a section should be moved to other cages or their portable carriers at once in order to expedite cleaning of that section.
- ✓ Remove all bedding. If newspaper is used, dispose of it. If blankets, rugs or towels are used, they must be washed, disinfected and replaced daily.
- ✓ Remove food/water dishes and litter pans. Wash and disinfect all prior to reusing, even if by the same cat. If litter pans are to be used for the same cat, scooping solid waste (replacing litter when necessary) can be acceptable if the box is relatively clean. This can only be done if the litter scoop is unfailingly disinfected between

each use. This can be accomplished by rotating two litter scoops in a bucket of disinfecting solution; use one litter scoop, place it in the bucket, use the other litter scoop and then place it in the bucket, and so on.

- ✓ Scrub all surfaces well, including the cage door, with an appropriate disinfectant solution. Allow solution to stand per manufacturer's instructions.
- ✓ Wipe cage dry; replace newspaper and bedding; replace clean litter pan; replace food and fresh water; place cat(s) back into dry cage.
- ✓ Clean walls, floors, between and tops of cages, windowsills and all other surfaces within the room.

NOTE: Kirk's Current Veterinary Therapy, Volume XIII has a brief and concise review of the different disinfectants available, their properties, antimicrobial spectrum, advantages and disadvantages.<sup>27</sup>

- ✓ Ensure that employees know the correct dilution ratio for all products used and that for their safety and the safety of the animals, they are followed.
- ✓ Post written instructions detailing the directions for using the automatic dispensing system above it to ensure that staff is properly using the equipment.
- ✓ Continue using a hose proportion regulator<sup>28</sup> such as a HydroFoamer Sprayer to dispense disinfectant when cleaning the kennel areas. This is a relatively inexpensive piece of equipment that accurately dilutes chemicals to a desired dosage. This equipment also puts air into the chemical as it sprays out, allowing it to foam as it runs down the walls, thus helping to leave the disinfectant in place for a suggested minimum of 10 minutes before rinsing.
- ✓ All kennels and cages must be thoroughly disinfected daily, by scrubbing with a disinfectant proven specifically effective against various bacteria and viruses common in a shelter environment. Chlorine bleach or quaternary ammonium products are the two disinfectant choices most common in shelters. However, bleach is not a soap or detergent. If bleach is used as the primary disinfectant, areas must be scrubbed with a detergent prior to applying bleach. Disinfectants, on the other hand, do act as a detergent and their use eliminates the added step of bleaching. Scrubbing a kennel first with a disinfectant and then bleaching that same kennel is not a cost-effective or efficient way to clean and disinfect the kennel areas. It is also advisable to rotate disinfectants, for example use a disinfectant Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and use bleach Tuesdays

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27 *Kirk's Current Veterinary Therapy*, Volume XIII, "Disinfection and Antiseptic Use in Small Animal Practice" pp 258-262

28 [www.petedge.com](http://www.petedge.com)

and Thursdays. The theory behind rotating disinfectants is that it keeps viruses from becoming immune.

- ✓ Disinfectants must be mixed according to the specific manufacturer instructions. Once applied, disinfectants must be allowed to remain in contact with the surface for the specific length of time recommended by the manufacturer before rinsing. Instructions for proper dilution and time requirements are listed on the product containers. Specific instructions to staff about dilution and contact time should be posted in all areas where disinfectants are mixed and used. In addition, a thorough degreaser should be used to remove oil and surface film.
- ✓ In general, staff should receive extensive and ongoing training in proper sanitation and disinfection methods, and should be closely supervised to ensure proper sanitation. Everyone should be cleaning the same way according to RCCAS protocol. Kennels should be cleaned from ceiling to floor, and all cage doors, etc., should be manually scrubbed. It is false economy — and a potential source of infection — to clean the walls of a run only to the height of the dog inhabiting the run. If any one section of the shelter is left unsanitized, disease can be easily transmitted.
- ✓ Plastic (porous) items (such as food bowls, water dishes, and litter pans) cannot be properly disinfected. Once scratched, plastic becomes porous and can harbor disease spreading bacteria. All plastic food and water bowls and litter pans should be replaced with stainless steel, or disposable paper products which can be discarded daily. Stainless steel is easy to disinfect and durable, making it ideal for shelter use. To be adequately disinfected, cat carriers must be non-porous plastic. Disposable litter pans can be purchased in bulk through a paper supply warehouse. Steam table pans, which can be used as litter pans can be purchased through commercial kitchen supply stores. Animal Care Equipment and Services (ACES), Inc. also sells stainless steel litter pans.<sup>29</sup>
- ✓ Before introducing any item (blankets, pooper scooper, toys, dishes, litterboxes, etc.) to a new animal, make sure it has been properly disinfected.<sup>30</sup>
- ✓ Music level should be lowered considerably during cleaning. Classical or soft rock music may be played very low throughout the day.<sup>31</sup> Lights and music should be shut off at night after last cleaning shift. All of these issues affect stress and disease management.

### **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Having discussed the proper procedures for cleaning the shelter on a daily basis it is of the utmost importance that the shelter experiences a thorough deep cleaning prior to instituting the daily protocols. Dirt, grime and dust coated most surfaces in rooms housing animals and adjoining workstations. Cages, kennels, drains, floors, counters, cabinets and tables were all

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29 Animal Care and Equipment Services, Inc, [www.animal-care.com](http://www.animal-care.com), 1-800-338-ACES

30 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, “How To Series, “How to Clean Kennel Items”

31 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, “Roll Over for Beethoven,” November/December 2002

covered in a long standing layer of grime. Most alarming was the level of gross matter in the drainage systems.

- ✓ RCCAS should develop a plan that would outline a schedule for the heavy duty cleaning of each room. The cleaning of all surfaces of every animal related space must be addressed. Floors, walls, ventilation screens, windows, blinds and doors must be scrubbed and disinfected. Cages and kennels must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Using a degreaser to first cut the layer of grime will be necessary which should then be followed by the disinfectant.
- ✓ When an animal is removed from a cage or run, the area should be thoroughly cleaned before another animal is placed inside.

The accumulation of dirt within the shelter is heavy. This cleaning process will be time consuming. It will require an organized, structured procedure and close supervision to the detail of the task at hand.

### **DOG KENNELS**

There are approximately 163 kennels and cages located throughout the facility. It is advisable that the deep cleaning process of these be done in stages and systematically, one room at a time, one row at a time.

- ✓ Temporarily shift dogs through the guillotine door to the back side of their runs.
- ✓ Lift the drain covers, manually clean the drain and as necessary scoop the accumulation of gross matter from the drainage system.
- ✓ Spray all the kennels in the row, (including the drain, drain cover, kennel ledges, bars and kennel doors) with a detergent/degreaser. Allow the detergent/degreaser to sit for the manufacturer's suggested time. Using a firm bristle brush, scrub each kennel and its drain cover and drain. Ensure that all layers of grime have been removed from every surface.
- ✓ Rinse and spray with the disinfectant, allow the disinfectant to sit for the appropriate length of time, rinse and squeegee.
- ✓ Shift dogs back to their original kennel.
- ✓ Repeat process until all the cages and kennels in the room have been done.
- ✓ Scrub the floors, taking extra care to scrub and disinfect the floor under each cage.

- ✓ Develop protocols to ensure that the drains are being cleaned and disinfected on an ongoing, routine basis. Consider a system that would require that each time the kennel / cage is emptied, the drain cover is lifted and the drain and both sides of the drain cover are scrubbed and disinfected.
- ✓ On a daily basis hose the drain from one end to the other with the disinfectant.

### **CAT ROOMS**

There were 131 cages for cats. These were located in rooms where there were multiple banks of cages enabling the cleaning process to be done in stages.

- ✓ Remove the cats from one bank of cages and place in another bank or temporary holding carriers when necessary. Cover the temporary holding cages with towels to minimize the cat's stress.
- ✓ Spray each bank of cages with a detergent/degreaser. Allow the detergent/degreaser to sit for the manufacturer's suggested time. Using a scrub sponge or stiff brush, scrub each cage, including the cage door and the top of the cages. Ensure that all layers of grime have been removed from every surface.
- ✓ Rinse and spray with the disinfectant, allow the disinfectant to sit for the appropriate length of time, rinse and wipe dry.
- ✓ Scrub the floors, taking extra care to scrub and disinfect the floor under each cage.
- ✓ Wash and disinfect the walls, doors, windows and window ledges.
- ✓ Use a system similar to the one outlined for deep cleaning the cat rooms to clean other animal related areas, such as the receiving and grooming rooms.

### **Discussion:**

There is no excuse for neglecting basic cleaning in an animal shelter. Because many animals come to a shelter in a compromised state of health, it is imperative that animal care and control agencies attain and maintain a healthy environment. Infectious disease transmission is one of the most difficult animal health issues faced by shelters. The effect of infectious diseases on shelter animals can be limited by providing a clean environment; by limiting the transfer of viruses and bacteria from one animal to another (for example, carefully cleaning cages between uses, washing hands); by identifying and treating any diseases animals may have when they arrive at the shelter; and by using both vaccination and stress reduction to bolster an animal's immune system.

Staff appeared to also lack access to the guidance, training and knowledge necessary to properly clean and disinfect the shelter. Communication with staff must go beyond instruction of task, and

should include an explanation of why operational procedures are to be done the prescribed way. In reality, the effectiveness of disinfection is more a function of time, effort and thoroughness than anything else. For instance, effective cleaning of the cage requires not only a good scrub brush, but also a dedicated individual. Cleanliness plays a major role in disease control, comfort of the animals, and public opinion. This, in turn, positively affects adoptions and the agency's overall reputation.

While it is impossible to totally prevent the spread of disease, it is possible to dramatically reduce it. Circumstances and finances may affect the choice of cleaning materials and methods, but a daily cleaning schedule must be maintained without fail. Any area of a shelter in which animals are housed (or through which animals pass) must be cleaned and disinfected daily. This includes, but is not limited to, the animal holding rooms, the euthanasia room, the workstations, kitchens and the front office.

### **6.3 ISOLATION AND SEPARATION**

#### **Observations:**

The dog kennels consist of four separate dog kennel rooms which contain both double-sided T-kennel runs and double-sided cages. There is one room for housing litters of puppies. Additionally, there are two smaller rooms; both had been designated for dog quarantine, although the actual use was inconsistent. One room had been separated into two sections with each section having four double-sided T-kennel runs. The other room has four -sided T-kennel runs and a bank of ten cages of varying sizes.

Kennels A, B, and D were designated for dogs that were: a) chosen to be immediately available for adoption, b) stray dogs being held through their mandatory stray period and c) surrendered dogs being held for their mandatory holding period. Kennel C was designated for sick and contagious animals. The two quarantine rooms were designated for bite cases, nursing mothers, and injured dogs.

Although staff indicated that rooms had designated uses, The HSUS team observed sick animals in areas with healthy dogs, bite quarantine dogs housed in areas with geriatric and/or injured dogs and nursing mothers. Aggressive, but otherwise healthy stray dogs were housed in kennel C, the isolation kennel.

The areas housing cats had a similar system. There were six rooms for cats that were chosen to be immediately available for adoption, stray cats being held through their mandatory stray period and surrendered cats being held for their mandatory holding period. There were two additional cat rooms, one designated for feral cats and the other for sick and contagious cats. There was also a room referred to as "available now." Again, as with the dogs, The HSUS team observed sick cats in rooms with healthy cats. It was unclear where a healthy cat that may have bitten would be housed.

There was a room that accessed the feral cat room. Staff stated that it was once an exam room but mentioned some type of a leak which resulted in the room being abandoned as a functioning

space. It appeared to The HSUS team that it had become a catch all room for various items that had no other designated storage place. It did have a small bank of lockers that, according to staff, some kennel attendants used to put their things. This room had become a pass-through room to the feral cat room and adjacent cat areas.

The kennel orientation manual was very vague with regard to the placement of animals within the shelter. There was instruction to staff to use the “immediately available cattery” and the “immediately available kennel” but no instruction or direction as to which rooms / kennels those might be. For dogs the manual instructs staff to “locate an open kennel and place it inside.” The manual indicated that snappy dogs, if not under quarantine, can be placed in general population with a red kennel card on the kennel. The HSUS team did not observe a red kennel card in any kennel area.

The public did not have access to kennel C or the two quarantine areas, the feral cat room or the cat quarantine room. Pictures of animals housed in those rooms were to be posted on the doors, however, The HSUS team observed only one photo on kennel C door.

Some staff could identify which animals should be housed in which areas but were at a loss about what to do when those areas became full. Staff members stated they would look for an open kennel in one of the other “off limit” areas. The HSUS team observed animals with kennel cough and undergoing treatment housed in kennel A, which was to house healthy animals.

Written procedures for the housing and separation of animals did not exist. Although there may be an informal designation of rooms, staff appeared uninformed and confused regarding animal placement within the facility. The HSUS team did not observe supervision or guidance being given to staff in reference to this matter.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ RCCAS must review the overall layout of animal housing areas and make it a priority to achieve the isolation and separation of animals in its facility in order to protect the health and well being of the animals (Also see section 8.0, Adoptions).
- ✓ Explore the concept of healthy hold areas for new arrivals. Recently arrived healthy dogs and cats would be placed in these areas. This would give the animals time for the vaccine to take effect and also time for staff to evaluate the behavior and temperament. After a minimum of two days, cats and dogs that have been evaluated and approved for adoption would be moved from the healthy hold areas to the adoption areas. There should be more kennels / cage space for healthy hold than for adoptions.
- ✓ Daily evaluations should be performed to move healthy animals from the healthy hold area into the adoption area or remove animals that are no longer considered good candidates for adoption.
- ✓ Animals available for adoption should be separated from animals that are going through their mandatory stray holding period and surrendered animals that are not candidates for the adoption program. Once a stray animal has completed the required holding period,

the animal should be evaluated for adoption and if the animal is a candidate for adoption he can then be transferred to the kennel section designated for animals available for adoption.

- ✓ To facilitate the well-being of all animals we are making the following recommendations relating to housing (See discussion section for detailed explanation):

### **DOGS/PUPPIES**

- Kennel room A should be the area for all dogs available for adoption;
- The puppy room should be for puppies available for adoption;
- Kennel rooms B and D should be healthy hold for surrendered and stray dogs;
- Kennel C should be the sick / isolation area for sick / contagious dogs;
- The quarantine room with the eight double-sided dog kennels should be bite quarantine, aggressive dog holding and for dogs who may have a non upper respiratory medical condition such as mange;
- The second quarantine room should be used as a “special needs room” for the geriatric and injured dogs and nursing mothers only. This room should be as quiet and stress free as possible to allow these animals the environment most conducive to their welfare.

### **CATS/KITTENS**

- The miscellaneous “available now” room should be the room for all cats/kittens available for adoption;
- Designate the area that houses the six cat rooms as healthy hold for all surrendered and stray cats;
- Designate one room within those six as the “special needs room” for the geriatric and nursing mothers only. As stated above, this room should be as quiet and stress free as possible to allow these animals the environment most conducive to their welfare. Another of these six cat rooms could be converted to a small animal room with a specialized habitat for small animals and birds, if feasible;
- Continue to utilize the feral cat room as the room to house feral and bite quarantine cats or cats that may have an injury or medical condition such as ringworm. Ensure protocols are in place to evaluate cats who may not be feral and who, once calm, can be moved to healthy hold. In order to keep staff safe and reduce stress on the cats during the cleaning process, either an ACES feral cat handling system<sup>32</sup> or cages that minimize handling<sup>33</sup> should be used for quarantine cats. These cages should be locked at all times and the animals should remain in the same cage for the duration of their stay. These cages should be clearly marked “QUARANTINE;”
- Continue to utilize the cat isolation room as the room to house sick cats.

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32 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, “Feral Cat Handling System,” May/June 1999  
33 Snyder Manufacturing Co., [www.snydermfg.com/prodframeset.html](http://www.snydermfg.com/prodframeset.html)

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- ✓ Consider utilizing the feral cat access room as an incoming examination and temporary hold room for cats. Given its proximity to the cat housing areas and its ample cabinet and counter space (with a sink) it is an ideal examination room. Housing cats in areas where dogs are located is highly stressful and frightening for cats. Providing a quiet, non-threatening environment for incoming examinations will ease their transition into the shelter. As mentioned in Section 7.5, Euthanasia Room/Environment, a bank of cages from the euthanasia room could be moved to this location for temporary holding of cats and kittens.
- ✓ Consider housing wildlife and exotics in the grooming room. This room has the potential to have a fair degree of flexibility in order to accommodate the needs of whatever animal may be received and require temporary care. Because of the nature of these animals and the fact that they are easily stressed, this room is an out of the way space that would meet the need for a quiet, low traffic area. Wildlife and exotics have unique housing and care needs that challenge shelters, but still must be provided. Assess the types and numbers of exotic and other unusual animals who are regularly sheltered at the facility. Base decisions regarding the amount of space and types and sizes of cages on whether or not any of these animals will be placed for adoption, held for a limited stray period or transported offsite. The cages in this area can easily be partitioned from the space used to groom animals. Additionally the cages housing wildlife and exotics can be covered temporarily with a towel to block view and reduce stress while an animal is being bathed.
- ✓ As outlined in Section 5.15, Incoming Animal Identification and Procedures, the digital photos of incoming animals can easily and quickly be done in the receiving / exam areas during the incoming evaluation process.
- ✓ All kennels and cages must be clearly marked (i.e. adoption, feral, quarantine, etc.)
- ✓ Housing areas should allow for (and policies should require) that all animals be separated in the following manner:
  - Dogs must always be separated from cats
  - Sick or injured animals must always be separated from healthy ones
  - Puppies and kittens must be separated from adults (unless nursing)
  - Males must be separated from females
  - Dangerous animals must be separated from all others and from the public
  - Nursing animals must be separated from all others
  - Animals with special needs should be isolated from all others
  - Wildlife, exotics and livestock must be separated from all others and from the public
  - Animals available for adoption must be separated from animals who are not available

### **Discussion:**

The concept of isolation and separation allows an agency to manage the animal population more effectively, and in the process protects the public and insures a healthier environment for the animals. The isolation and separation concept is as follows:

1. Evaluation and vaccination at intake. (See section 6.5, Vaccination Protocol for vaccination exceptions)
  - If sick, housed in isolation for the stray period.
  - If a bite case or aggressive, held in quarantine.
  - If healthy and possibly adoptable, held in healthy hold for at least two days.
2. After an animal is determined to be healthy and adoptable, he should be moved from healthy hold to adoptions. If there is no room in adoptions, the decision to euthanize an animal must be made. (See section 7.1, Selection Criteria)

There needs to be a place where all incoming animals are triaged, which is the euthanasia/treatment/receiving room. It should be a priority to do this the day the animal comes in. After the staff examines an animal, he would be housed in healthy hold, quarantine, or (sick) isolation depending on the outcome of his exam. The healthy hold area would allow the animal time to acclimate to the shelter and time for the staff to observe and evaluate the animal. If a dog were considered adoptable and healthy, he would be moved from healthy hold to the designated adoption kennels. This area would be the only kennel area where the public could go to view adoptable animals. Cats would be moved from healthy hold to the adoption cages after it is determined that they are adoptable.

If a stray animal coming in through the triage process is determined to be aggressive, unpredictable or being held for quarantine, the animal would be housed in the current quarantine dog area or in the cat quarantine. If this area is full and the animal is not sick, he would be held in this area until the stray period is complete, where only the staff has access. Quarantine cages must be marked appropriately so staff knows which animals are being held for quarantine. This healthy hold area is an “off view” area and the public would only be allowed in if escorted. This would reduce liability.

If a sick dog or cat is brought in and needs to be held for the stray period, or there is a dog or cat that got sick during his stay at the shelter, and the agency feels they have the staff and budget to attempt treatment, the animal would be housed in isolation areas for both dogs and cats thereby minimizing the spread of disease and sickness. This would help in keeping the general population healthy. However, this said, the HSUS team feels that in this facility, the infrastructure cannot support the treatment of animals for illnesses such as URI, kennel cough, etc. without a second veterinarian dedicated to the care of the shelter animals. Many animals that come in sick have been treated for their stray period and that treatment that is continued beyond their stray period is hit or miss.

The isolation and separation concept of managing the animal population will: 1) provide the staff with the space flexibility needed, 2) protect the public from potential bites, 3) protect the agency from unnecessary liability issues, 4) allow staff to make better euthanasia decisions, and 5) allow

the agency to present adoptable animals to the public instead of every animal regardless of its adoptability.

In order for the isolation and separation concept to work, it must be strictly adhered to. Some organizations make the mistake of bending the rules by not using space as it is designated. There may be times when the healthy hold cages/runs are full and instead of making a decision to euthanize an animal that has been at the facility to make room, some agencies make the mistake of placing a healthy animal in the isolation room. This negates the entire reasoning and benefits that result from the isolation and separation concept by exposing healthy animals to sick ones.

The quality of animal housing is one of the most important aspects of preventative health care and disease control. Any animal in a shelter environment will experience some level of stress due to the change of environment, separation from family, and the daily handling by strangers. Cats and kittens are particularly susceptible to stress when removed from familiar surroundings. When subjected to the sounds of barking and whining of puppies and dogs, cats can experience extreme distress.

Shelter animals must be housed in a way that minimizes stress, provides for their special needs, affords protection from the elements, provides adequate ventilation, and minimizes the spread of disease and parasites. Animals that are stressed or recuperating from injuries or illness must have a quiet place to rest during their recovery period. Most often these areas are identified as a “special needs room” where these animals will receive the specialized care necessary for both their mental and physical well-being.

## 6.4 FEEDING PROTOCOLS

### **Observations:**

The RCCAS receives a large amount of donated food from a variety of sources in addition to what is purchased. The HSUS team observed that this food is then mixed together in very large bins and this mixture of several different brands and types of foods are then fed to the shelter animals.

RCCAS procedures stated cats and kittens should be free fed once a day either adult dry or kitten dry food unless special instructions had been indicated. Kittens under 4 months were to be fed a mixture of wet and dry food. The HSUS team observed cats and kittens being fed during the morning cleaning process. All received the mixture of donated and purchased foods described above. Only one orphaned litter of 4 week old kittens received canned food. A mother cat with a litter of six 4 week old kittens had only dry food available. Young kittens upon arrival at the shelter did not receive food and staff commented that they were out of canned food.

Dogs were fed dry food twice daily, once at the start of the grave yard shift and again at approximately noon. The HSUS observed two nursing mother dogs receiving only the dry food mixture. RCCAS feeding protocol stated that sick and old dogs should be fed wet food although the old and sick animals observed by The HSUS team received only dry food.

The food bowls were filled to capacity and placed in the kennel. Attention was not paid to the dog's size or individual requirements. The food was left in the kennel for an extended period of time with the majority of the dogs spilling it throughout the kennel, resulting in a high volume of food being wasted.

Dogs that are to be receiving additional food or have special instructions for feeding are to have their information written on a dry erase board located in the receiving area. One extremely thin dog had a notation on his paperwork that he was to be free fed but he did not have food available to him in his kennel, nor was there a notation on the grease dry erase board.

There was not a system in place to monitor and record an animal's eating habits. From The HSUS team's observation all animals, without consideration of their age, health or physical condition were fed the mixture of the various brands and types of donated and purchased food.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ All animals should be fed in amounts appropriate to their nutritional needs. RCCAS should train staff to monitor and document the appetite and food intake of sheltered animals and adjust an animal's diet accordingly. Animals who consistently consume the entire amount of food offered to them in a short period of time should be offered a greater volume of food per feeding; and animals without an appetite should be examined by the veterinarian. The body condition and weight of animals should also be documented and monitored, in order to detect nutritional problems.<sup>34</sup>
- ✓ A kennel environment is an extremely stressful situation for an animal and can dramatically impact his or her appetite and dietary needs. It is vital that an animal eat while in the shelter's care and inducements often need to be used to encourage and entice an animal to eat. For puppies and dogs most often dry food (specially formulated for their ages), mixed with hot water, adding enough canned food to make a paste or gravy is sufficient. Cats and kittens may require strained baby food or canned tuna or chicken.
- ✓ Establish a feeding schedule to feed animals multiple times a day according to their age and nutritional needs.
  - Puppies less than 12 weeks should be fed four times daily or every 6 six hours. 12 weeks to 6 months should be fed 3 times a day or every 8 hours. Dogs 6 months and older should be fed twice daily.
  - Kittens less than 12 weeks should be fed canned food 4 times daily or every 6 hours. 12 weeks to 6 months should be fed canned food 3 times daily or every 8 hours, with access to dry food. Cats 6 months or older should have dry food available at all times. Since cats, on an average, like to eat 14 small meals a day it is advisable to leave dry food available all day long. Take into account that cats with access to "free food" must be monitored for eating.

- ✓ Many animals, particularly cats, arriving or having difficulty adjusting to “life in a shelter” will discontinue eating. This can lead to or is indicative of a serious health concern.
- ✓ Establish feeding protocols for nursing mothers to include feeding a high calorie, high protein diet (usually canned kitten or puppy food) 3 times a day.
- ✓ Establish protocols to ensure geriatric animals and those with dental problems are fed soft food accordingly.
- ✓ Special care should be given to closely monitor animals that are malnourished or have special health requirements.
- ✓ Observe during feeding time to make sure that dogs are not guarding the food of the others that share their kennel. Remove food possessive dogs and house them separately and perhaps reevaluate their adoptability.

### **Discussion:**

Establishing a system to oversee dietary habits is of the utmost importance, and staff should be trained to monitor and adjust an animal's diet accordingly. Procedures should include a system that allows staff to monitor food intake, special needs, feeding behaviors, and eliminations of animals.

When housing multiple dogs in a kennel, consideration must be given to “food aggression.” Even dogs that may not be aggressive may display dominance when it comes to food. Multiple dogs or puppies in a kennel can lead to cases of dogs / puppies not being allowed to eat by their more dominant cagemates. Some dogs and puppies may overeat, leaving less than enough for the others. Additionally, free feeding can lead to fights over food at a time when staff is unavailable to intervene.

Generic pet foods are not recommended. Often, the nutrients in generic pet foods are not readily available for digestion and absorption by an animal. Recent tests have shown that puppies and kittens that were fed generic pet foods had a greater incidence of illness, improper growth, and other physical abnormalities and required one-and-one-third times as much food per pound of weight gained.

All shelter animals regardless of their length of stay should receive a good quality balanced diet that is appropriate for their life stages, their health, age and physical condition. Use only products that are made by major national pet food companies and are 100 percent nutritionally complete. Because animals are in a stressful situation, they are more susceptible to digestive upsets from poor quality foods and changes in brands. Feeding one brand exclusively, especially a premium brand, cuts down greatly on the number of animals who experience gastrointestinal problems while at the shelter, as well as the amount of waste matter produced.<sup>35</sup>

## 6.5 INCOMING ANIMAL EXAMINATIONS/ ASSESSMENTS

### **Observations:**

RCCAS procedures required that an animal be examined for injury or illness and any abnormalities be reported to a supervisor or lead person. The incoming animals did receive a passing visual exam to determine if they were injured or obviously sick. Physical examinations were not conducted. RCCAS animal processing procedure stated that animals are to be weighed upon arrival but of the 15 records reviewed, 7 animals did not have a weight listed in their record.

Most activity occurred in the receiving room late in the afternoon when the officers were all returning to the shelter. The majority of the animals were vaccinated upon arrival; but all were vaccinated prior to leaving the receiving area. Dogs received an intranasal Bordatella and an injectable DA2PP, cats received an injectable RCP. Staff expressed concern that vaccines were often reconstituted and left in the syringe from one day to the next or left on the counter at room temperature for extended periods of time. The staff veterinarian was responsible for training new staff on how to properly vaccinate.

Puppies under 4 months of age were dewormed. Protocol stated that all animals are to be banded with an identification band, blue for male and white for female. The HSUS team observed approximately 40% of the animals without an identification band. All animals are to be scanned for the presence of an identifying microchip.

A cat was brought into the receiving room in a wire carrier. The carrier was placed on the examination table, uncovered, and left. The cat was clearly displaying signs of distress and became extremely agitated when a staff member lifted a small dog onto the table and placed the dog next to his carrier. When the cat reacted to this the staff member moved down the table a bit but did not remove the dog from the table or remove the cat from his carrier to place him in a cage.

The HSUS team observed the incoming assessment process for a small shaggy dog. The dog received his vaccination, identification band and microchip scan. He did not receive a physical examination. The dog was then transferred to a cage in kennel A. The next day a staff member was showing the dog to an interested rescue group person. HSUS team observed the person bring to the attention of the staff member the fact that the dog was missing an eye. In reviewing the animal's records it was not noted that he was missing an eye.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Every animal that arrives at a shelter should be evaluated and examined as soon as possible after his / her arrival by a staff member trained and qualified to perform animal assessments. Ideally, the person performing incoming animal health evaluations would be a veterinarian or a licensed and experienced veterinary technician. However, in most shelters this staffing level is not financially viable. When this is the case it is critical that staff members be specifically trained to perform these assessments (See SOP Template CD ROM).

- ✓ Each animal should receive a methodical and comprehensive examination. Staff should be thorough and meticulous in every aspect of the physical examination. While staff may lift the lip to estimate an animal's age, it is important to also examine the mouth. When examining the mouth for example, it is important that not only are the teeth examined but also the gums, roof of the mouth and throat. A small ulcer on the roof of the mouth, (easily overlooked), can indicate a more serious health problem. Therefore it is vital that staff understand the attention to detail.
- ✓ Incoming evaluations and examinations should include the following:<sup>36</sup>
  - A systematic physical examination to determine if medical treatment or isolation from healthy animals is required or if there is a condition requiring a veterinarian's attention.
  - Vaccinations and deworming
  - External parasite treatment if necessary
  - The animal's incoming weight
  - Attention to basic grooming needs / concerns
  - Scanning for microchip identification
  - An identification band to identify him internally
  - Any identifying features or abnormalities
- ✓ It is important that there be documentation of all examination findings, (even if all is normal), and any procedures performed, vaccinations given, etc. It is recommended that RCCAS develop and implement an easy to use form for recording the results of the examination. This form will assist staff in the examination process to insure that they have not overlooked an area or forgotten a step. Having documented findings of an animal's condition upon arrival will also assist staff and the veterinarian later during an animal's stay in determining if a condition developed while the animal was at the shelter or was pre-existing.
- ✓ Examination and assessment of animals is also crucial to the adoption process. Adopters must be adequately advised of the condition of a potential adoptee in order to determine whether the adopter can provide the care required by a particular animal. All copies of an animal's medical history while in the shelter must also be provided to the adopter who in turn can present this to his or her veterinarian for ongoing care and treatment.

## 6.6 VACCINATION PROTOCOL

### **Observations:**

Staff stated to The HSUS team that the veterinarian was responsible for the training of new employees in the proper procedure for vaccinating animals. The animal processing procedure stated, "With the exception of dogs under quarantine, dogs that are staying over the 5-day hold should be given the Bordatella vaccine. Animals that are in quarantine or pregnant must not be vaccinated." That is the only statement regarding vaccinations. In a memo dated August 24<sup>th</sup>

2003 the staff veterinarian recommended the use of intranasal Bordatella and injectable DA2PP in dogs and injectable RCP in cats.

The procedure manual stated, “All puppies under the age of 4 months must be wormed orally with Anthelban at a dosage of ½ cc per 10 pounds.” This procedure was not observed by The HSUS team.

Staff was observed administering an intranasal Bordatella vaccine and an injectable DA2PP to dogs correctly; however, The HSUS team was unable to observe a cat vaccination.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Review vaccination policy with a veterinarian and adhere to it. Provide written protocols and train staff accordingly. Protocols should mandate the documentation of all vaccination procedures for each animal to include the date of administration, the specific agents contained in the vaccine, the specific form of such agents (i.e., modified live virus, killed virus, bacterin, etc.), the manufacturer of the vaccine, the serial number and expiration date of the vaccine, the site of the vaccination (i.e. “right shoulder”), and the route of administration (i.e. subcutaneous, intramuscular, intranasal injection).
- ✓ Healthy animals should be vaccinated the day of intake. If the animal is obviously sick, injured, a pregnant stray, less than six-weeks of age, or otherwise not a consideration for adoption, the animal should not be vaccinated (this includes rabies vaccinations) and should be isolated for the stray period.

### **Discussion:**

It is very important to realize that vaccinating is only one strategy in preventing infectious diseases and it is just one tool in a disease prevention program. Many animals, in the stress of a shelter environment, will not mount effective immunity despite being vaccinated with the best vaccines. Many vaccines do not actually prevent initial infection; they just prevent significant symptoms from developing. Some animals may spread infectious viruses despite showing no symptoms themselves. Some vaccine immunities can be overwhelmed by a high enough “challenge dose” of the infectious organism. It is too convenient to blame the vaccine when there is a disease problem. It is critical to also consider animal husbandry practices, disinfection procedures, quarantine and isolation protocols, and animal handling practices.

## **6.7 STERILIZATION SERVICES**

### **Observations:**

At the time of The HSUS site visit RCCAS provided low-cost sterilization services to the general public and all shelter animals, once adopted, were sterilized by the staff veterinarian prior to going home with the adopter.

If a shelter animal was determined to be too sick to undergo the surgery, the animal was sent home with medication and a date to return for the sterilization surgery. Adopters would sign a contract which stated that they promised to bring the animal back and understood that RCCAS

had the right to seize the animal if he is not returned for the surgery. If the animal is not brought back as scheduled or taken to a private veterinarian for the surgery, an officer is sent to the adopter's house. Although the follow-up process was time consuming, staff stated it was successful and the compliance rate was high.

Surgeries were performed on a 9/80 schedule resulting in an overwhelmingly busy surgery list every other Monday. Public surgeries were not scheduled on Mondays.

The RCCAS SNC was operating with one veterinarian who had achieved an extremely high and efficient surgery rate. In 1998 the daily average number of surgeries was 21.5 with a year end total of 4,546 surgeries. In 2003 that number grew to a daily average of 35.4 with a year end total of an amazing 7,015.

### **Recommendations:**

The RCCAS is to be commended for its commitment to ensure that all animals adopted from the shelter are sterilized prior to leaving and to provide low-cost surgeries to the general public.

- ✓ The HSUS strongly encourages the RCCAS to continue its involvement in a low-cost spay /neuter program with the general public. These types of programs and services successfully address the serious overpopulation of companion animals.

## **6.8 VETERINARY RELATIONS**

### **Observations:**

Through discussions with staff The HSUS team was concerned to learn that the perceived opinion of the veterinary community was that animals adopted from or housed at the shelter were generally thought to be in poor health and physical condition. Staff was of the belief that veterinarians were reluctant to treat animals. This was because adopters returning a sick animal would often state they were advised by their veterinarian to return the animal to the shelter for fear that it was suffering from parvo or from feline distemper.

A free veterinary check is offered for new adopters through the Orange Belt Association. Adopters have three days to take advantage of this offer and can take the animal to a veterinarian of their choice. Although the pre-adoption counseling sheet states, "Most area veterinarians will honor this free check up," a list of participating veterinarians was not included for the adopter.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ In addition to addressing the animal care issues of concern to the veterinary community, The HSUS recommends that the RCCAS staff veterinarian coordinate a regular working group with the private veterinarian community to educate them about the services of RCCAS and to maintain a good relationship with open communication. Issues to collaborate on could include zoonotic disease control, cutting edge sterilization programs, post-adoption health care issues, rabies protocols, vaccination procedures and assisting with general staff training.

**Discussion:**

Veterinarians are considered to be the “animal experts” by the majority of the general public, and their participation is critical to successfully resolving community animal control issues. Providing a high level of health care management of shelter animals and adopting out healthier animals is the first step to improving the reputation of the animal shelter within the veterinary community. Regularly seeking advice and feedback from private veterinarians can be extremely helpful to overall agency programs.

## 6.9 ZOONOSES

**Observations:**

The RCCAS kennel orientation manual has a detailed and informative section regarding zoonotic disease concerns for Riverside County. Although the information is informative it does not provide direction or protocols to staff regarding the isolation, quarantining and handling of animals that have bitten. When discussing zoonotic training with staff members they unanimously stated that they had not received any training and were unfamiliar with the written information.

Upon hire, employees receive pre-exposure rabies vaccinations. A letter is sent to each employee with a deadline by which to have their titer checked. It is then left up to them to follow up. Unfortunately, employees had not consistently followed up with their titer checks.

Employees are also instructed to have a TB test done periodically. The same process is in place for this testing; letters are sent out to employees informing them to have the test done and it is their responsibility to follow through.

Due to concerns expressed by the Riverside Department of Health laboratory technicians regarding the preparation and preservation of animal specimens, a very comprehensive procedure outlining the preparation of laboratory specimens was implemented in October 2000. However, this procedure extensively detailed the paperwork portion of the process and did not provide instruction on how to safely and properly remove the animal’s head or how to safely package the specimen for transport. The officers prepared the specimens by removal of the head with a guillotine knife device. This tool was located outside in the drive-through area. This procedure was not observed by The HSUS team.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop formal training and provide written information (in addition to rabies) to all staff regarding zoonoses.<sup>37</sup>
- ✓ Implement a process whereby pre-exposure vaccinations, titer checks and TB tests are documented, monitored and followed through.
- ✓ Written procedures regarding the act of decapitation should be established and enforced.

Provide training to staff members performing the decapitation.

- ✓ Written procedures regarding the examination, care, monitoring, and follow up of animals in quarantine should be established and enforced.
- ✓ A daily supervisory check should be performed for all quarantine animals and comments should be noted on the animals' 10-Day Observation Report attached to the animal's run or cage door.
- ✓ Disinfect any areas and equipment that come in contact with quarantined animals.

### **Discussion**

The quarantining of animals is an area of animal care and control that has an extremely high potential for exposure to liability. It is crucial that quarantine programs and protocols receive a high priority by RCCAS. The handling of bite cases must be performed with extreme care and sensitivity. In many instances, the animal care and control agency is caring for an animal with a known owner, who is typically very attached to (and emotional about) the companion animal and his or her well being during the stay. At the same time, a bite victim is involved, and often this person is physically - or even emotionally - scarred and needs to be reassured that the quarantine process is taken seriously. Therefore, the mishandling of such cases exposes any animal shelter to potential hard feelings as well as liability.

## 7.0 EUTHANASIA

For further information on euthanasia, please refer to the enclosed HSUS *Euthanasia Training Manual*.<sup>38</sup>

### 7.1 SELECTION CRITERIA

#### **Observations:**

RCCAS had written euthanasia protocols and procedures. These procedures were written in August of 1996 and updated in September 2003.

In the section for selection criteria the list of criteria is preceded by the statement, “It is important to note that kennel management and disease protocol utilize herd management techniques. What is best for the entire “herd” or kennel is considered above what is best for an individual animal. Thus, the following selection criteria are used.”

Selection criteria included categories for emergency and routine euthanasia and reasons such as severe medical condition or contagious illness, health, temperament, age, aggression, appearance, and overcrowding. Other reasons for performing euthanasia were at the owner’s request, by court order, and in the case of a wild hybrid cross.

The procedure also stated, “Good health and temperament are two main reasons for keeping animals and should always be considered important first steps in the evaluation process. In addition, special animals (i.e. small dogs, purebreds, unusual traits and if the animal has a potential adopter) are reasons for holding some longer than others.”

If a supervisor is unavailable to select animals, the most senior animal control officer shall make the selection. Selection shall be based upon medical notes by the shelter veterinarian and by relevant reasons and criteria stated in this manual.

During The HSUS team site visit, the decisions for the selection of animals for euthanasia fell to one person. This staff person stated the daily kennel inventory of who was in the shelter was the tool that she preferred to use to “whittle down” the list to determine which animals had the potential to be euthanized. There was a second inventory that the software produced, a daily evaluation report, but she felt that that list was too detailed because it printed every note that was in the animal’s record.

She stated that the decisions were based upon an animal’s age, health, temperament, physical condition and available space. Once she was through determining who had the potential to be euthanized she stated she would then check with the staff member responsible for the rescue program to determine if there was the availability or option of rescue for that animal. She stated that the decisions were made by a group.

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38 *The HSUS Euthanasia Training Manual*, 2002, Rebecca H. Rhoades, DVM

However, discussions with other staff members contradicted other information. The HSUS team was told. The HSUS team was told that decisions were not part of a group participation process and that animals were chosen from the list by date while sitting in front of the computer, not through any evaluation process. If an animal did not have a hold for a possible owner, a rescue group, or was not one of the animals in the “immediately available” kennels, the animal would probably be scheduled for euthanasia.

In reviewing the lists of animals for euthanasia, The HSUS team noted that the vast majority of the animals euthanized during the site visits were euthanized for “time and space” or health. The staff member responsible for the decisions explained that “time and space” go hand-in-hand as a reason. This was because after the stray hold “time” had passed, if there was not any adoption hold or public interest in the animal, there would be no mandated reason to continue to keep the animal. Furthermore, since the shelter was always crowded, there was no “space” left either. So, the animal was euthanized for the reason “time and space.”

This explanation contradicted the earlier statements that animals were evaluated based upon their age, health, temperament and physical condition. In addition, an evaluation was not conducted to determine whether that particular animal had the potential to be a better candidate for adoption rather than an animal who had been in the “available immediately” kennels for a length of time.

According to annual statistic reports, in fiscal year 2002/2003 over 59% of the dogs were euthanized for time and space while just 17.1% were euthanized for behavior. For the same time period only 24.91% of the cats were euthanized for time and space and 22.05% were euthanized for behavior.

While observing euthanasia The HSUS team asked the euthanasia technicians whether the euthanasia of a feral cat listed on the euthanasia list had been performed. Staff explained that they had determined that the cat was not feral and as a result the cat was going to be held for potential adoption. Similarly, a dog had been signed off for “time and space” but the euthanasia technicians decided he was highly adoptable and did not euthanize him. When questioned the staff stated that the person making the euthanasia list doesn’t always examine the animals, so if they decide they want to hold an animal they can go ahead and do so.

The HSUS team observed an adult malamute mix being euthanized. The animal appeared to be in good health. The dog was observed to be calm, quiet and reserved although clearly stressed by the situation. The dog willingly submitted to the handling by staff. Staff was able to easily muzzle and lift the dog onto the table for the injection. The dog did not, at any point, struggle or give any indication that he was less than cooperative. When The HSUS team questioned the person who had selected the animal for euthanasia why he was being euthanized, The HSUS team was told because a staff person stated she “hadn’t liked the way the dog looked at her.” The dog’s temperament had not been evaluated, he was simply euthanized.

The HSUS team did not at any time during the site visit observe the staff person responsible for determining the euthanasia list interacting with the animals.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ A shelter's responsibility is to protect the public and provide a safe haven for unwanted and lost animals. Animals are individuals, and each should be evaluated on an individual basis both daily and prior to euthanasia. While this is often difficult, the volume of surplus animals and lack of appropriate homes necessitates that this be done as fairly and compassionately as possible. This evaluation should be performed by a well trained, skilled and experienced animal care professional in a position of authority, preferably in consultation with other key trained and knowledgeable staff members of an organization.

Once an animal has completed his or her stray period, a determination regarding disposition should be made without delay. If a dog or cat is not a candidate for adoption, euthanasia should take place immediately to make room for new arrivals that may be made available for adoption.

- ✓ Consider eliminating “time” as a reason for euthanizing an animal.
- ✓ Review the animals currently available for adoption on a daily basis. Monitor their health, temperament and behavior to ensure they are still good candidates for adoption. Just because an animal is available for adoption does not mean he or she can’t be euthanized if another animal is better suited or has a better opportunity for adoption. Conversely, just because an animal’s hold time is up, does not mean it should be euthanized without evaluating adoptability (See section 8.1, Selection Criteria/Behavioral Assessments).
- ✓ Develop criteria that will clearly document the reasons for and numbers of animals being euthanized. Differentiate between those who had potential to be placed if additional resources were available and those who did not.
- ✓ Consider establishing categories similar to the following when developing protocols to determine an animal’s potential:

CATEGORY	STATUS	EUTHANASIA
Adoption Potential	Animals who, given the space, time, staff, money or availability of an appropriate home could live well in a new home.	...is most often due to a lack of resources and / or appropriate homes.
Medical -- Treatable	Animals in good physical condition with treatable, non-contagious medical conditions such as skin problems, bad flea or mite infestations, a broken limb, abscess, or problems that could be fixed with treatment and / or time.	...is most often a result of lack of resources, space or time to treat the animal.

Medical -- Contagious	Animals in good physical condition with a medical condition such as an upper respiratory infection, kennel cough, ringworm or a less severe case of mange that may be very treatable but highly contagious in a shelter environment.	...is most often not only because of the symptoms of the illness, but also to prevent contamination of others.
Physical Condition	Animals in general poor overall condition and/or health (for example, old, thin, weak).	...is often the eventual result as these animals are often poor candidates for adoption placement due to the extensive medical rehabilitation necessary.
Unweaned -- Too Young	Animals that are too young to survive on their own or in a shelter setting, needing extensive care and socialization.	...is often the result due to the labor-intensive nature of care and lack of foster homes.
Breed	Animals of breeds that are banned or at an increased risk in a community (such as areas where dog fighting occurs).	...may be performed if no other options are available.
Behavior Problems	Animals with behavior problems such as chewing, inappropriate urination, separation anxiety, timidity, destructiveness, or lack of socialization.	...is generally due to a lack of an appropriate placement that will provide a commitment to adequate training, socialization, and the proper environment.
Kennel-Stress	Animals with a marked change in behavior due to stress as a result of an extended stay in the shelter.	...is generally performed for humane reasons to prevent further suffering.
Space	Animals who would continue to make good adoption candidates but whose cage space is needed for others.	...is generally necessary when space in the shelter is unavailable and room must be made for other animals.

Inappropriate for Adoption	Certain species of animals, or animals with a serious condition that is not suitable for rehabilitation.	...is appropriate even if the resources (space, time, money, staff, and isolation) and a potential home is available.
Medical -- Untreatable	Animals with a terminal illness or injury, severe chronic illness, or other serious medical condition.	...is appropriate to eliminate ongoing suffering for the animal.
Temperament Issues	Animals that are extremely shy, timid, high-strung, stressed, or distressed.	...is generally necessary due to an unlikely chance for successful adjustment into a new home.
Aggressiveness	Animals that are showing signs of aggression, have attacked another animal or person, or have a history of aggression.	...is generally appropriate for humane, safety, ethical and liability reasons.
Feral or Unsocialized	Animals that have not and cannot be handled and do not adjust to the shelter setting.	...is generally appropriate for animals with no hope of socialization.
Court Order	Animals that have been ordered for euthanasia at the direction of a judge, hearing officer or other public official with that authority.	...is performed to comply with this ruling.

- ✓ To evaluate an animal for adoption or euthanasia, shelters should consider not only variables such as age, health, temperament, physical condition, behavior and available space, but must also address many other questions such as:
  - What are the prospects for providing this animal with a quality life?
  - Is the animal in pain or distress and is there hope of alleviating this pain to allow for a quality of life?
  - Does keeping this animal in his or her present condition present health or safety risks to other animals or people?
  - Given the fiscal and practical limitations faced by this organization, does keeping this animal alive reduce that ability to care humanely for other animals?

### **Discussion:**

An animal should not be euthanized simply because the required hold time is up. Other factors, such as age, health, behavior, and physical condition come into play when determining whether an animal may stay in the adoption kennels. If one (or more) of those factors is an issue, then that is the reason for euthanasia. Unfortunately, most commonly in large shelters like RCCAS, it may be the competition for space in the adoption areas that is a determining factor, or the animals' continued adjustment to life in a cage. However, if an otherwise adoptable animal has finished its stray hold, but is being considered for euthanasia due to space, it should be compared to the animals already in the adoption area to be sure that perhaps it is not a better candidate for adoption.

Decisions regarding the adoptability or the euthanasia of animals within the animal shelter are the most difficult for staff to deal with. Progressive and well-run animal shelters recommend a standard adhering to the organization's mission statement.

The HSUS team acknowledges the volume of animals received at peak times of the year and there may often be a need to euthanize animals for space. However, by managing the animal population better, staff can make more informed euthanasia decisions based on health, behavior, temperament, physical condition and their potential to be adopted, other than just by hold periods and space.

## **7.2 EUTHANASIA PAPERWORK**

### **Observations:**

The euthanasia protocols and procedures stated, "Each evening, Monday through Friday, the senior animal control officer over the kennels or designee shall select animals to be euthanized the next day." The procedures outlined in detail the process to follow to determine that an animal does not have hold a or any extenuating reason that he could not be euthanized. Once it has been verified that an animal may be euthanized, the animal's record in the computer is updated. The word "euth" is placed in the outcome box, along with the reason for euthanasia and the animal information category is updated. After this process is completed for all animals scheduled for euthanasia, the senior animal control officer will print a pre-euthanasia list and sign the animals off for euthanasia. The procedure stated that the person signing the animal's paperwork off is to initial the date and write "OK to PTD" (put to death) on the paperwork. The HSUS team observed the use of a red stamp with "OK to PTD" and a line for the person's initials in a red circle. The procedure stated the list was to be provided to the euthanasia staff by 6:30 a.m. the following morning.

The procedure manual had a detailed checklist for the euthanasia staff to follow prior to euthanizing any animal. The procedure stated, "Every employee participating in euthanasia shall check each other off "verbally and out loud" reading the list for each animal. It is imperative that we follow the list."

The HSUS team observed the staff conducting euthanasia over the course of three days. The staff worked from the euthanasia list. Staff consistently verified each animal that was

brought into the euthanasia room matched the list and the animal's paperwork. The HSUS team noted that approximately 60% of the animals brought to the euthanasia room were not wearing an identification band; however, every animal's paperwork contained a digital picture of the animal that clearly confirmed the animal's identity. Staff did verbally exchange the animal's identification number and the staff member responsible for the paperwork in the room without fail verified that the handler had scanned the animal for a microchip. The staff person responsible for the paperwork was the one responsible for completing the animal's record in the computer and writing on the back of the animal's paperwork, the date, time, their initials and the amount of euthanasia solution used.

The staff person responsible for the paperwork was logging the drug usage. The sodium pentobarbital drug log consisted of loose sheets that (once the bottle was empty) were returned to the senior ACO's office. It was detailed and indicated the bottle number and lot number, a line for the employee to print his/her full name and sections for statistical information split between city and county. There were sections for logging the number of cc's to start and once the euthanasia was completed the finish number. It also required:

- The date
- The impound number
- Kennel number
- Dog / cat / other
- Weight
- Number of cc's used
- Amount remaining
- Method injected, ic, ip, ic (incorrectly written)
- Req euth
- Euth by
- Held by
- Remarks

The daily supply of controlled drugs (sodium pentobarbital, telazol and ketamine) and the xylazine were kept in a locked cabinet in a rusty, battered toolbox. The tool box was not secured to a shelf in the cabinet. The door to the euthanasia room was unlocked.

The HSUS team member reviewing the central drug storage and drug records was startled at the lax approach to drug storage and record-keeping surrounding the controlled substances within the facility.

On January 21<sup>st</sup> 2004 the organization had in storage 250 bottles of sodium pentobarbital, (each bottle contains 250 ml.). The controlled substance log indicated in the space labeled "drug" that it was Fatal Plus™. The log also had spaces to write in "initial amount" and "strength." "Initial amount" was blank and "strength" was incorrectly completed by writing in 250 ml instead of the actual strength, which was 392 mg/ml.

The controlled substance log sheet required the following information:

- Date
- Signature (which only contained initials)

Procedure  
Beginning amount  
Amount used / received  
Amount remaining  
Bottles taken  
Bottle numbers  
Where purchased / invoice # (usually blank or someone's initials)

The controlled substance log sheet only indicated the drugs being removed from storage. There was no record of the empty bottles being returned or correlating drug use records being returned.

The corresponding invoices and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) order forms were not with the controlled substance log nor was information documented. The daily use records were located in the storage cabinet. These records were in a loose, haphazard pile, in complete disorder and disarray. The records dated back years.

The records show that on January 28, staff from the Indio shelter removed 15 bottles of Fatal Plus™ and another 12 bottles again on March 24. However, The HSUS team could not locate record of the 15 outstanding bottles being used or returned.<sup>39</sup>

The controlled substance logs for ketamine and telazol were kept in the same poor manner. Of particular concern to The HSUS team was that the controlled drug logs for ketamine were located in a cabinet in the euthanasia room. These daily use log sheets were dated from March of 2001 through December of 2003. The controlled substance log sheets kept with the main storage indicated that ketamine continued to be disbursed without any records of the ketamine that had previously been given out. When the veterinarian was questioned about the daily use records for ketamine he did not know where they were stored or how they were handled.

In reviewing the records of ketamine use and in speaking with staff, it appeared that ketamine use in the euthanasia process had discontinued (See section 7.3, Methods).

Of great concern to the HSUS team was the manner in which the supply of sodium pentobarbital was stored. The sodium pentobarbital, ketamine and telazol were being stored in large metal storage cabinets, secured with small locks. These cabinets were located in a highly trafficked office that was observed to be always open, even at 4:30 in the morning.

A review of the records showed that a periodic check (July '03, October '03, February '04) was conducted to verify that the number of bottles listed to be in storage were actually in storage. However, there was no system in place to verify the use or the return of controlled substance drug log sheets. In reviewing the records it was difficult to decipher who had signed the drugs out or who may have conducted the count because initials rather than a clear signature had been written.

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39 Instructions for sharing sodium pentobarbital  
[http://www.hsus2.org/sheltering/general/drug\\_shortage\\_continues.html](http://www.hsus2.org/sheltering/general/drug_shortage_continues.html)

The drug records for the SNC were kept in a manner that was confusing to The HSUS team. The controlled substance log sheet used to record the drugs being received was a log sheet for daily use and not an inventory log. It contained the date the drugs were received, the supplier and invoice number along with the number of bottles received. The ketamine and diazepam (valium) information was on the same sheet. There was no other information provided on that sheet. The drugs were kept in a locked drawer in the surgery prep room.

What was most confusing was the manner in which the drug inventory was documented. The running inventory of the ketamine and diazepam was maintained on the daily use log sheet. The total number of bottles of both drugs in storage was written on the top of the log sheet. As a new bottle was opened it was subtracted from the total on the same line that the amount of drugs being used on an individual animal was written. The bottles of ketamine and diazepam were not numbered and did not have an individual log sheet.

When the veterinarian was asked about the DEA required biennial inventory for the controlled substances for the organization he stated that an inventory was not done.

California is not a direct licensing state. Shelters cannot purchase controlled substances without a cooperating veterinarian or registered veterinary technician on staff (Business and Professions Code section 4840(c)). A veterinarian must purchase sodium pentobarbital for a shelter's use with his / her DEA license. A veterinarian does not need to be on premise, or necessarily employed by the organization; however, the veterinarian must be working in conjunction with the shelter in order for the shelter to use the drugs.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The HSUS team commends RCCAS for having detailed procedures in place for the verification of which animals were to be euthanized. These procedures outlined both the process of which animals were to be scheduled and the verification of those animals prior to their euthanasia. Staff took care to verify that each animal brought to the euthanasia room was scanned for a microchip and matched the paperwork and picture prior to euthanizing the animal. Continue with this process.
- ✓ RCCAS should reconsider its usage of the term "put to death" and the use of a red stamp with the verbiage "OK to PTD." Staff commented to The HSUS team regarding the callousness of the term. Consider use of the correct terminology, "Ok to euthanize."
- ✓ It is imperative that RCCAS immediately come into compliance with the DEA regulations surrounding the storage, recordkeeping, inventory, use, and disposal of all controlled substances. Recordkeeping requirements include records of the drugs purchased, received, distributed and dispensed. This closed system allows a controlled substance to be traced from the time it is ordered to the time it is dispensed to the ultimate user, (the animal) and log sheets returned (See sample SOP template CD ROM).<sup>40</sup>

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40 Sample DEA inventory sheet

- ✓ Controlled substance inventory log sheets<sup>41</sup> must include the name of the controlled substance along with its form, strength and size. The log sheet would then individually list the bottles of the drug with the following information:
  - The date distributed
  - The identification number assigned to that individual bottle by the shelter upon receipt from the supplier. The numbers must be consecutive.
  - The lot number located on the bottle
  - The expiration date located on the bottle
  - The signature of the person removing the bottle from storage
  - Which department will be using the drug
  - The date the empty bottle was returned
  - To whom it was returned
  
- ✓ The individual daily use controlled substance log sheet<sup>42</sup> must include the name of the drug, bottle number, the form, strength, size, lot number and expiration date. Additionally it must include the:
  - Date the drug was used
  - Animal identification number
  - Animal description
  - Signature, not initials, of person administering
  - Number of cc's used
  - Remaining balance
  
- ✓ These records must be kept together in one location and maintained for two years. Periodic inventories must take place and a biennial inventory must be done. A biennial inventory must be signed by the person performing, witnessed and include:
  - Registrant
  - DEA number
  - "C" number (also called schedule number), which indicates level of control placed on each drug. For example telazol and sodium pentobarbital are a C- II (schedule II) and diazepam (valium) is a C IV (schedule IV). The lower the number, the greater level of control placed on the drug.
  - Controlled drug name
  - Type/ size
  - Lot or batch number
  - Quantity
  
- ✓ The central supply of controlled substance must be stored in a floor safe cemented into the floor, a safe bolted to the floor or a safe weighing more than 750 pounds.

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41 Sample controlled substance inventory log sheet

42 Sample controlled substance daily log sheet

- ✓ Access to the central controlled substance supply must be limited to supervisors, veterinarians and licensed veterinary technicians.
- ✓ Daily use drugs must be stored in a double locked cabinet bolted to the wall or a small wall safe bolted into a cabinet mounted to a wall.
- ✓ Daily use storage of controlled substances should be limited to supervisor, veterinarians, licensed veterinary technicians and euthanasia technician.
- ✓ State regulations require that controlled substances carried in a vehicle be kept in a locked metal box that is securely fixed to the inside of the vehicle. Behind or under a seat out of plain view is most advisable.
- ✓ To determine the effectiveness of good security RCCAS should ask the following questions:
  - How many employees have keys to the locking device to the central cabinet containing the controlled substances? The daily use cabinet?
  - Is there a list of employees who have access?
  - When was the last time the keys or locking devices were changed?
  - Do you change the locking device after an employee who had access to the controlled substances leaves the shelter?
  - Who is authorized to order controlled substances?
  - Is there a review of what and how much is being ordered on a routine basis?
  - Where are blank DEA 222 forms kept and who has access to those forms?
- ✓ The digital camera is an excellent tool for verification of animals but it is equally important that the animals be properly identified through the use of identification bands.
- ✓ The procedures should be amended to reflect the current practice with the digital camera.

### **7.3 EUTHANASIA METHODS**

#### **Observations:**

RCCAS had detailed procedures and protocols for staff to follow when performing euthanasia. The procedures for the injection process were detailed and provided step by step instruction. These instructions are broken down to cat, kitten, dog, puppies, and unweaned puppies and kittens. For all other species staff is instructed to contact a supervisor.

The procedure manual outlined the supplies to have readily available and the work necessities, such as blankets, cat carriers, catch poles, nets and a scale. All these items were missing from the room.

The HSUS team observed euthanasia over the course of three days. HSUS team observed staff performing intravenous injections on adult dogs. Each dog, regardless of the animal's behavior or temperament, was muzzled and lifted onto the table. In all cases the staff members performing the intravenous injection was skilled and performed an accurate injection. There was very little need for verbal communication between the two and it was apparent that the staff had worked together as a team on numerous occasions.

After each dog the table was sprayed with a disinfectant and wiped off.

The HSUS team observed staff with a young black lab / hound mix in the euthanasia room. The pup was clearly fearful and apprehensive about his situation. His ears were back, his tail was tucked and when staff reached down for him he backed away and growled. Staff reacted to his behavior by putting a catch pole on him, (which he calmly accepted), and proceed to direct his head into a corner of the wall. While one staff member held him pinned to the wall a second staff member pulled out his rear leg and injected him in the rear leg muscle with a pre-euthanasia sedative. He was then placed in a cage and staff removed the catch pole. Although the catch pole technique for restraint was performed correctly, The HSUS team feels that the level of restraint was not necessary in this particular situation.

The HSUS team observed four cats being euthanized by an intraperitoneal injection. Three cats were euthanized in the euthanasia room and one was euthanized in the feral cat room. The cats euthanized in the euthanasia room were euthanized by a single person both holding and performing the injection. In each instance, the cat was lifted by his scruff while his rear feet remained on the cage floor. Staff counted the ribs down the right side, inserted the needle, aspirated and injected. The cat was set back down and left. The cage was devoid of newspaper, towel, blanket or covering. In closing the cage door, inevitably it was slammed.

A cat, euthanized in the feral cat room, was given a pre-euthanasia injection of xylazine by sliding a pole syringe through the cage door. Staff stated they "tried to hit the muscle" but it wasn't always possible. Staff competently administered the pre-euthanasia injection; however, the dosage the cat received was the amount a twenty-pound animal would require, approximately 15 pounds more than the cat actually weighed. Although estimating weight is not an uncommon practice in shelters, animals should be weighed prior to euthanasia and the correct dosage calculated with "dosage for effect criteria" considered. If an animal, such as a feral cat, cannot be weighed, care must be taken to more accurately estimate weight. The front of this cat's cage was covered with newspaper to keep him calm. Once sedated, the cat was lifted out and staff counted the ribs down the right side, inserted the needle, aspirated, and injected. The cat was returned to the cage.

The HSUS team was concerned with the location of the injection site surrounding an intraperitoneal injection. While the right lower lateral abdominal area is acceptable, staff

appeared to be injecting outside the acceptable injection site. The risk of hitting a major organ, such as the liver in this case, is high.

The needle size used for all euthanasia was a 19-gauge needle. This is an unnecessarily large gauge needle for intravenous and intraperitoneal injections.

The HSUS team observed the staff handling the animals seemingly without regard for the animal's individuality. The HSUS team observed processes that did not address concern for the behavioral or physiological needs of the animals. Each dog was muzzled and lifted onto a table. Each cat was scruffed. These handling techniques may be a result of what can be referred to as "herd euthanasia," having a fixed, almost mechanical way of performing euthanasia and the desire to "hurry up and get it done." There may also be (false) concerns relating to staff safety around all animals. While some animals may require additional handling and caution, most do not. Staff members who are trained in the compassionate handling of animals based upon the individual temperament is essential to the process. The HSUS team felt that staff was unaware of options and choices available to them during the euthanasia process.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Provide advanced behavior training for all staff performing euthanasia and establish appropriate procedures to minimize stress based on the behavior status of the animal to be euthanized.
- ✓ Supervisors and even senior management should closely monitor euthanasia procedures on an ongoing basis, and develop a comprehensive plan to continually provide euthanasia training on a regular basis.
- ✓ Review the euthanasia protocol and procedure manual to ensure the contents are current to operating procedures and drugs being used during the euthanasia process.
- ✓ Ensure the pre-euthanasia drug charts are accurate and reflect the drugs being used.
- ✓ Ensure the appropriate equipment for use in the euthanasia room is present and available for use.

### **Discussion:**

One of the most critical responsibilities for those in the animal care and sheltering field - and the function that is often most demonstrative of an organization's level of compassion and concern - is an agency's commitment and ability to provide the most humane death possible when euthanasia is necessary.

The word euthanasia is of Greek origin and means "good death". In order to provide a humane death, the euthanasia process must result in painless, rapid unconsciousness followed by cardiac and/or respiratory arrest and ultimately death. The 2000 American Veterinary Medical

Association's Panel on Euthanasia states that any technique used should "minimize distress and anxiety experienced by the animal prior to loss of consciousness."<sup>43</sup>

The use of sodium pentobarbital and proper administration of that drug by an injectable method do not in and of themselves ensure a humane death. The manner and route, by which the drug is injected as well as the circumstances surrounding the administration of sodium pentobarbital, have a great impact on the humaneness of the procedure. Simply requiring euthanasia by injection is no guarantee that the manner in which the drug is being applied is humane or compassionate. It is a binding obligation of shelter administrators to evaluate current euthanasia procedures frequently, ensure that animals are being properly handled, and verify that employees are competent, compassionate, and properly trained.

The HSUS also believes strongly that there should be two people involved in the euthanasia process: one to hold and calm the animals and another to inject. Intravenous (IV) injection (within the vein) is considered to be the most rapid and reliable method of performing euthanasia by injection when it can be administered without causing fear or distress in the animal. It may be administered by intraperitoneal (IP) injection (within the peritoneal cavity) to cats, kittens, and puppies if IV injections are difficult or impractical. Intracardiac (IC) injections (within the heart) are acceptable only for animals that are unconscious or deeply anesthetized. Because intrahepatic (IH) injections (within the liver) have not yet been sufficiently studied, the HSUS cannot recommend IH as an acceptable route. Questions remain regarding the accuracy of injection, organ sensitivity to pain, suitability for multiple species, and smooth induction into unconsciousness.

It is critical that staff who perform IP euthanasia be well trained, and fully aware that the success of this process is largely controlled by the environment. It is also crucial that management ensure that animals are placed in the proper environment immediately following an IP injection. Animals that are handled, startled, or unable to remain calm and quiet following an IP injection may go through an unpleasant period of excitement and disorientation, discouraging the ultimate success of this technique. Animals who have received an IP injection should be placed in an environment that lacks external stimulus, such as light, sound and touch. A quiet, dark place, preferably a small carrier covered with a blanket, is most appropriate.

The 2000 American Veterinary Medical Association's Panel on Euthanasia states that any technique used should "minimize distress and anxiety experienced by the animal prior to loss of consciousness." This stress and anxiety can be minimized by technical proficiency and humane handling of the animals to be euthanized. Such humane handling is accomplished by staff that is knowledgeable about animal behavior, demonstrates respect, compassion, and sensitivity for the animals, and is committed to providing animals with a dignified death. It also requires consideration of the animals' behavioral, physical, and physiological responses to the process, as well as to the drugs used.

There are many factors involved in providing a humane death for an animal. Technical skill and knowledge regarding drugs and equipment is a necessity; however, an understanding of the

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43 2000 Report of the American Veterinary Medical Association *Panel on Euthanasia*

emotional investment on the part of staff members is equally important. Team work, support, patience, attitude and an understanding of one's convictions and personal commitments to the job are all involved in giving an animal a dignified death.

In most animal shelters, there are generally two types of animals received: a) well socialized animals that are tame and friendly; and b) unsocialized animals that are fractious and frightened. Friendly animals yearn for human contact, and proper euthanasia is performed by holding and comforting the animals while a painless injection is given in the vein and the animal loses consciousness. Fractious animals fear human contact, and proper euthanasia minimizes handling by proficiently administering anesthetics and releasing the animal to become unconscious in a dark, quiet and safe enclosure.

Access to pre-euthanasia drugs is crucial during euthanasia procedures in the animal care and control setting. Training in their appropriate use is also fundamental. For example, it is not uncommon to hear people (wrongly) interchange the terms sedation, tranquilization, and anesthesia. In order to humanely administer pre-euthanasia drugs, it is imperative to understand the differences between these words and to know which pre-euthanasia drugs offer what effects:

*Sedation* refers to the state resulting from the administration of a drug which calms an animal but does not affect his ability to feel pain and which causes some drowsiness or sleepiness. The most common sedative used for pre-euthanasia in combination with other drugs is Xylazine, often referred to by the brand name, Rompun (although there are other Xylazine products available). Xylazine alone does not anesthetize animals and therefore should not be used alone prior to an IC injection.

*Tranquilization* refers to the state resulting from the administration of a drug which depresses the sensation an animal feels but does not render him unconscious; tranquilization does not generally cause drowsiness or sleepiness, although it may allow an animal to relax to the point of sleepiness. An example of a commonly used tranquilizer in the shelter environment is Acepromazine.

*Anesthesia* refers to the state resulting from the administration of a drug that produces a loss of sensation or feeling. Examples of anesthetic agents are: Tiletamine-Zolezepam (Telazol) or a mixture of Ketamine/Xylazine. Both of these combinations offer anesthesia and allow for an IC injection when properly administered.

All three of these levels can be appropriate for use prior to euthanasia, depending on the circumstances. However, the level of sedation, tranquilization, or anesthesia provided by any drug or drug combination is dependent on many factors, including animal body weight, animal health condition, dose used, route by which the drug is administered, and other factors. New pre-euthanasia drug combinations and techniques are continually being explored. Management should establish protocols to include the use of pre-euthanasia drugs and evaluate these procedures routinely to keep pace with emerging research, opinions, and options.

It is also imperative that the death of each animal be absolutely verified prior to disposal. All eye reflexes are absent by the early part of stage IV of anesthesia, and even a strong beating heart

can be relatively difficult to palpate in some animals. Therefore, cardiac standstill (placing a needle into the heart and assuring the cessation of movement) and, preferably, rigor mortis (rigidity) are the only two sure methods of verifying death.

Choosing the right needle diameter and length is as important as selecting the right drug for euthanasia. A needle that is too wide or too long can cause the animal unnecessary pain during injection. Needle selection should be based on such factors as species, size, and breed of the animal; type of injection; volume of injection; and viscosity (thickness) of the fluid being injected.

The following table lists the common ranges for the various sizes and species of animals:

**Common Needle Sizes for Various Methods of Injection**

Species/Size	Subcutaneous (SQ)	Intramuscular (IM)	Intravenous (IV)	Intracardiac (IC)
Dog/Large (over 60 lbs)	20-22G x 1"	20-22G x 1"	20-22G x 1"	18-20G x 1½"
Dog/Medium (30-60 lbs)	20-22G x ¾" or 1"	22G x ¾"	20-22G x ¾" or 1"	18-20G x 1" or 1½"
Dog/Small (15-30 lbs)	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾"	20G x 1" or 1½"
Puppy (under 15 lbs)	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	20-22G x ¾" or 1"
Cat	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 1"
Kitten	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	25G x ¾"	25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 1"
Rabbit	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾"

## 7.4 CARCASS DISPOSAL

### **Observations:**

Euthanized animals were placed in metal barrels that were put into a chill room. A rendering service picked the up the animals twice a week and transported the bodies to a rendering plant.

The metal barrels were rusted, extremely dirty and had a very pungent smell. The room itself also appeared as if it hadn't been cleaned in quite some time. There were animals on the

floor as well as in barrels, which were haphazardly placed in the room. The body of a snake was on the floor. The floor was streaked with dirt and a layer of grime.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Replace all metal barrels with heavy duty plastic barrels that can be easily washed and disinfected.
- ✓ Establish a routine cleaning schedule for the chill room.
- ✓ Consider installing racks in the chill room or purchasing a freezer for animals that must be kept as evidence in a cruelty case, rather than the floor.

## **7.5 EUTHANASIA ROOM/ ENVIRONMENT**

**Observations:**

RCCAS has a room that is used only as a euthanasia room. The room had two large banks of cages, one along the back wall leading to the chill room and the other on the right behind the door as you enter the room. Each bank had two 48" x 48" cages on the bottom and four 24" x 24" cages on top. A counter with upper and lower cabinets and a sink ran the entire length of the left side of the room. A computer was on a small table to the left of the entrance door. A stainless steel table was located in front of the back bank of cages. A dividing curtain could be pulled across the room to separate the table and back bank of cages from the front bank. The room also contained a small refrigerator for the health department specimens. The room was well lit over the table but other areas seemed dim and grey.

There was an external sign indicating that euthanasia was in progress, although judging from staff's behaviors, The HSUS team got the impression that it was not given any attention since on three separate occasions various staff, including upper management, just walked in without regard to what may be going on in the room.

The euthanasia drugs were kept in a padlocked toolbox that was lifted in and out of the cabinet when the drugs were needed. Supplies were kept in the cabinets. Needles for day use and used syringes were kept in a multi-compartment plastic tray. Clippers were available but staff stated they were rarely used. Supplies for cleaning the clippers were not observed.

On the counter was a huge Rubbermaid container overflowing with used, dirty, collars (See Fig. 14). Staff explained that they had been saving them for the SNC to give away, but the clinic wasn't doing that anymore.

The cabinets contained supplies but also a wide variety of junk, items such as coffee cups, old scanners, papers, and even a collection of empty mint tins.

The room and everything in the room, (with the exception of the table where euthanasia was performed), was filthy. The container holding the needles and used syringes was splattered with

dried euthanasia solution; the air vent was caked with hair and dirt, all surfaces in the cabinets and drawers were covered in a layer of dust and dirt (See Figs. 15-19). The floor had a heavy layer of grime around the edges. The refrigerator had dried blood streaked on one of the shelves.



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

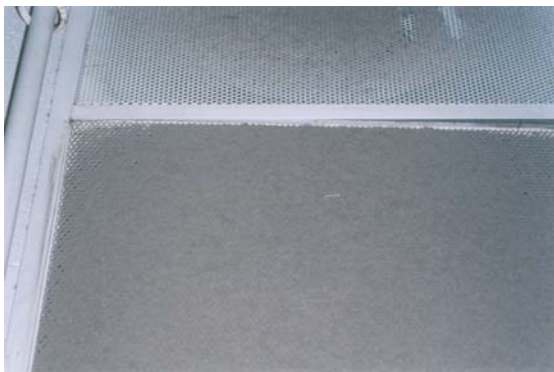


Figure 18



Figure 19

The air in the room permeated with stench from the chill room, which is located immediately next to the euthanasia room. Staff set out two barrels from the chill room in the enclosed area outside the chill room and adjacent to the euthanasia room to place animals during the euthanasia process. After all the euthanasia was completed the barrels would be moved back into the chill room.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ RCCAS is very fortunate to have a large room that can be solely used for euthanasia. This is a luxury many shelters do not have. RCCAS should immediately conduct a thorough and exhaustive cleaning of the entire euthanasia room. This cleaning process should include all cabinets and drawers and ceiling vents.
- ✓ Examine the contents of the cabinets and remove unnecessary items.
- ✓ Reevaluate the need for two banks of caging in the euthanasia area. Consider removing the caging along the back wall and installing a set of washable shelves. The removed bank of cages could be utilized in the suggested animal examination room (See section 6.3, Isolation and Separation). The shelves could be used to place dogs after the dog has been intravenously injected and is unconscious but death has not been verified in order for the animal to be placed in the chill room. Cats in their covered carriers could also be placed on the shelves. Install an additional curtain to block the view of these animals from live animals entering the room or being housed in the remaining bank of cages.
- ✓ Re-paint the euthanasia room and provide some wall decorations to brighten it up. Perhaps allow staff to paint a mural in memory of animals that were euthanized there.<sup>44</sup>
- ✓ Reiterate to staff the purpose and importance of the external sign indicating that euthanasia is taking place so that the room's occupants will not be disturbed. Stress the importance of respecting this notice to staff. Any staff violating this should be reprimanded.

### **Discussion:**

The euthanasia room should be the quietest, most respected, least interrupted and most relaxed room in an animal shelter. Cats and dogs immediately pick up on the ambience of the room and the people in it. While animals do not “know” they are about to be euthanized, they do recognize that they are in an unfamiliar environment and efforts should be made to reduce stress prior to euthanasia. Animals generally will relax and feel more trusting if the environment is pleasant and they are comforted and reassured.

For the benefit of both the animals and the staff, a euthanasia room should be made to look and feel warm, comfortable, clean, and peaceful. It should be a medium sized room that is not cramped or so large that an animal feels like it is exposed and vulnerable. The room should be well-lit. It should be warm, dry and clean and have a professional atmosphere. Not formal, or sterile, just professional. The floors and tables should be easy to clean and they should always be cleaned between animals. If anesthetized dogs must lie on the floor, they ought to be covered. Cats should be in covered cages or carriers. Consider pictures or posters to help lend a cheerful atmosphere.

Even the staff's movements will go a long way toward allaying animals' fears. Calm, gentle, slow movements are preferred and do much to relax the animals and reduce stress. If a

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44 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, “What a Difference a Little Color Makes,”  
September/October 2001

euthanasia room is noisy to the point of distraction, the animals will likely respond in kind. They will be difficult for staff to handle, and the quality of the euthanasia process will diminish accordingly.

## **7.6 EUTHANASIA TECHNICIANS/ TRAINING**

### **Observations:**

Staff stated to The HSUS team that a former supervisor was a state certified instructor and that he had certified the staff. The certification process consisted of staff members taking a test and performing an intravenous injection in front of the veterinarian. Staff members told The HSUS team a couple of other staff had gone to a class “somewhere off site for a couple of days” and had been certified through that class. Staff stated that, once certified, the follow up training consisted of the more experienced of the two in the euthanasia room at the time continuing the training.

The HSUS team asked the staff performing euthanasia questions about the euthanasia process, anesthesia and anatomy. Staff had difficulty responding to these questions. For example, certain staff could not answer questions regarding: a) what the four stages of anesthesia are; b) what are the three eye reflexes and how to use the animal’s eye reflexes (or lack of) to determine where the animal is in the continuum of anesthesia as it relates to the euthanasia process; c) what the peritoneum is; d) what organs to avoid during the intraperitoneal injection; e) what the word aspirate means; f) what is the name of the vein they use during an intravenous injection; g) the different pre-euthanasia anesthesia drugs and dosages.

By placing cats back into uncovered, large, stainless steel cages, banging cages, playing music and talking loudly, staff demonstrated a clear lack of knowledge surrounding how the environment significantly effects how easily (or poorly) an animal will lose consciousness once given an intraperitoneal injection.

The staff demonstrated and acknowledged a lack of understanding of the various drugs that were available for pre-euthanasia anesthesia. When asked, one staff member stated that to reconstitute telazol he would add 1cc of xylazine to the telazol. This would mix to 10cc of the drug (telazol). The correct procedure for reconstitution is to add 5cc of sterile water for a reconstitution of 5cc of telazol. The euthanasia manual instructs staff to follow the packing instructions. Staff stated telazol is not used because it takes too long for the animal to “go down.”

The written drug chart in the euthanasia room for ketamine instructs staff to mix 1cc xylazine to a 10cc bottle of ketamine for a total of 11cc. The procedure manual instructs staff to use 2cc of xylazine to a 10c bottle of ketamine. The drug records consistently show a beginning balance of 12cc but not what was added to bring the beginning balance to 12cc. Staff stated they no longer use the ketamine because they have to “log it and that takes too long.”

There are written procedures in the euthanasia procedure manual for both large and small animal xylazine; however, the charts posted in the euthanasia room do not include xylazine. Staff was unaware of which strength to use or the differential dosing of the two. Staff was observed by the HSUS team to sedate an animal using (large animal) xylazine. The dog, weighing approximately 45 pounds, received a dose of 2cc. The dog experienced a seizure resulting in severe convulsions. The dog had received a dose for a 200-pound animal.

The HSUS team observed on six separate occasions within 30 seconds of completing an intravenous injection, staff tapping the outside of an animal's eye, checking the animal's heartbeat with a stethoscope and placing the animal's body into a barrel. The HSUS team requested that staff remove one dog's body from the barrel. Once removed, the team member determined that the animal's corneal eye reflex was not present, verifying that the animal was unconscious and in stage four, medullary paralysis. Once verified, the HSUS team performed a cardiac check by inserting a needle attached to a small syringe into the heart. This check confirmed that the animal still had a strong heartbeat.

The euthanasia protocol and procedure manual was not available in the euthanasia room.

California is a certification required state. Section 2039 of the California Code of Regulations reads:

(a) In accordance with section 4827 (d) of the code, an employee of an animal control shelter or humane society and its agencies who is not a veterinarian or registered veterinary technician (RVT) shall be deemed to have received proper training to administer without the presence of a veterinarian, sodium pentobarbital for euthanasia of sick, injured, homeless, unwanted domestic pets or animals, if the person has completed a curriculum of at least eight (8) hours as specified in the publication by the California Animal Control Directors' Association and the State Humane Association of California entitled "Euthanasia training Guidelines" dated October 24, 1997 that include the following subjects:

- History and reason for euthanasia
- Humane animal restraint techniques
- Sodium pentobarbital injection methods and procedures
- Verification of death
- Safety training and stress management for personnel
- Recordkeeping and regulation compliance for sodium pentobarbital

At least five (5) hours of the curriculum shall consist of hands-on training in the humane animal restraint techniques and sodium pentobarbital injection procedures.

(b) The curriculum shall be provided by a veterinarian or an RVT or an individual who has been certified by the California Animal Control Directors' Association and the State Humane Association of California to train persons in the humane use of sodium pentobarbital as specified in their publication entitled "Criteria for Certification of Euthanasia Instructors in the State of California" dated September 1, 1997.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ The HSUS strongly recommends that all staff involved in the euthanasia process at RCCAS receive euthanasia training facilitated by a certified euthanasia trainer for the state of California as soon as possible.
  
- ✓ Additionally, all supervisors should be required to attend, in order to teach new staff in the proper techniques for dosing sodium pentobarbital, routes of administration, pre-euthanasia anesthesia, anatomy, pharmacology of the drugs used, and accurate determination of death by establishing cardiac standstill prior to disposal. A veterinarian may provide the basic injection training, although an instructor familiar with the different injection methods and types of animals presented for euthanasia in a shelter environment will be the most effective trainer for teaching staff the options and handling techniques, in addition to the emotional aspects involved.

**Discussion:**

It is a binding obligation of shelter administrators to evaluate current euthanasia practices and procedures frequently, ensure that animals are being properly handled and verify that employees are competent, compassionate and properly trained. Euthanasia should be entrusted to the most conscientious and qualified personnel only; never to a person who is careless, indifferent to animal suffering or untrained in animal behavior and euthanasia techniques. Employees must be able to cope emotionally with euthanizing large numbers of animals while maintaining a concern for the well-being of each individual animal.

There are many factors involved in providing a good death for an animal. Technical skill and knowledge regarding drugs and equipment is a necessity; however, an understanding of the emotional investment each staff member has in the process is equally important. Team work, support, patience, attitude and an understanding of one's convictions and personal commitments to their job are all involved in giving an animal a dignified death.

## 8.0 ADOPTIONS

### 8.1 SELECTION CRITERIA /BEHAVIORAL ASSESMENTS

#### **Observations:**

Anyone that was checking in an animal was allowed to place the animal in the “available immediately” areas. According to the kennel orientation manual, there was a list of criteria for the animals that were placed in these areas and it began with, “They should be the most highly adoptable animals as possible. RCCAS will then make a commitment to those chosen animals and treat them for simple illnesses; therefore it is important that staff choose those animals from a marketing standpoint.” Some traits to be considered were health, youth (8 weeks-7 years), small size, purebred, shorthaired, altered, declawed, unique color or markings, and extremely friendly.

There were two areas designated for animals that staff considered immediately available for adoption; the miscellaneous “available now” room for cats and the seven “immediately available” runs in kennel A for dogs. If the animals were already altered, they could go home immediately. Staff determined the adoption cost of the animal based upon the animal’s weight and whether the animal had already been altered.

Staff had not received any training regarding behavioral assessments of animals and stated there were no behavioral assessments conducted prior to the animals being kenneled. The interim senior ACO stated that there was no one on staff who had the knowledge or was comfortable enough to conduct a behavioral assessment. Staff was unaware of how a dog may react to having a toy or food removed from him. Animals may be observed while interacting with the public and if the interaction was inappropriate staff might intervene. The interim senior ACO expressed that she was uncomfortable handling / evaluating cats.

The bottom portion of an animal’s paperwork stated (in bold, underlined, capitalized letters), “All animals are subject to evaluation to determine adoptability.”

Which animals are available for adoption can be confusing for the public to determine. With the exception of animals placed into quarantine, the feral cat room or C kennel, all animals were on public view, therefore unless an animal displayed aggression, he would be considered available for adoption.

Occasionally, an area dog trainer would be asked to provide a behavioral assessment for a specific dog, but this was done on a purely subjective basis. A volunteer dog trainer for RCCAS conducted a temperament evaluation for a dog identified as a wolf/dog hybrid. Her written assessment when commenting on his food aggression stated, “I have no doubt he would be willing to bite.” The written assessment was in the form of an email from the trainer to a rescue group seeking placement for this dog. In addition, the euthanasia guidelines stated that wolf/dog hybrids were to be euthanized.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ As outlined in Section 6.3, Isolation and Separation, The HSUS team strongly recommends the separation of animals available for adoption from animals that are not available for adoption. This is because it can be problematic to let the people choose an animal that may be aggressive or simply unsuitable for their lifestyle or living situation. When a person chooses an inappropriate animal and is told he cannot be adopted, even the most qualified customer service representative can be challenged by the (potentially) explosive situation that may result.

However, The HSUS team realizes it may not be feasible to discontinue allowing people to place a hold on a stray animal; it helps expedite adoptions and seems to be working well. It may continue to be practiced as long as, 1) the isolation and separation concept (regarding sick, aggressive, or otherwise unadoptable animals) is unfailingly adhered to, and 2) view is restricted only to the adoption and healthy hold areas.

In addition, at the time RCCAS implements a behavioral evaluation program, if it still elects to allow stray and other animals in healthy hold to be seen by the public, it must ensure that ALL the animals in public view, regardless of availability, have been evaluated and deemed adoptable. Please contact The HSUS for further assistance.

- ✓ The HSUS team recommends that each animal be evaluated based on a combination of behavior and overall health. Staff should be careful not to make unfounded judgments about what the public will find appealing. Although age, breed, and size may factor into some decisions, people have various types of preferences and offering a diverse selection is key. In certain cases, factors such as age or color may play a role, but decisions should not be based on a single factor. The current minimum age guideline of 7 years in the kennel manual is quite limiting for the older animals and the public. Many people do consider an older animal as the most appropriate choice for their lifestyle.
- ✓ Only after other changes are made should a formal behavioral assessment system be developed. The HSUS team suggests that before implementing behavioral assessments, RCCAS should first implement both the isolation and separation changes in section 6.3, Isolation and Separation and the recommendations in section 7.1, Euthanasia Selection Criteria.
- ✓ After these recommendations are put in place and have been working well, The HSUS team strongly recommends that RCCAS contact The HSUS for instruction regarding behavioral assessment training for staff to aid with the development of protocols and procedures for effectively and appropriately evaluating the behavior of all animals being considered for adoption. Provide staff with appropriate training required to perform behavioral assessments.<sup>45, 46, 47</sup>

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45 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Putting Your Behavioral Evaluation Program to the Test," September/October 2003

46 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Assess With Success," November/December 2003

47 [www.suesternberg.com/programs/03assessapet.html](http://www.suesternberg.com/programs/03assessapet.html)

- ✓ A standardized behavioral assessment for dogs and a training evaluation for puppies less than 6 months of age to assist with the selection process of dogs available for adoption can provide valuable information regarding:
  - A dog's personality and particular needs related to the personality and breed
  - His / her temperament and any particular problems related to the temperament
  - His / her ability to interact and socialize with people
  - Level of submission or dominance
  - What training style would be best suited for the dog
  - Food or possession aggression
  - Energy or activity level
  - Response to physical control and physical examination
  - The type of home that would be meet the needs of the individual dog
  - A cat's personality and particular needs related to personality and breed
  - His / her temperament and any particular problems related to the temperament
  - His / her ability to interact and socialize with people
  - Response to physical examination
  - The cat's comfort level with handling and grooming
  
- ✓ Carefully evaluate the reason for surrender when considering making surrendered animals available for adoption. When the behavioral assessment system is put in place it should be applied to surrendered animals as well as strays.
  
- ✓ Track the reasons owners give for surrendering or returning their animals in order to help reduce relinquishment.<sup>48</sup> Knowing why people are relinquishing their pets can help RCCAS determine what type of community outreach is needed. Are owners having difficulty with pet behavior problems? If so, RCCAS may want to consider developing materials to help owners resolve basic behavior problems.<sup>49</sup> Such information can be highly publicized within the community and get pet owners the information they need before they get frustrated and turn over their pets to the shelter. Understanding what causes relinquishment can help RCCAS create intervention programs to help keep people and their pets together for life.
  
- ✓ Consider testing cats for feline leukemia/feline infectious peritonitis as part of the adoption selection process. Not only does it save an adopter from falling in love and taking home a sick animal unknowingly; but it also provides a good, unbiased screening tool.
  
- ✓ Close attention must to be paid to the animals available for adoption. Each day they should be evaluated to ensure that they continue to be happy, healthy and well adjusted to life in the kennel. If their behavior or health deteriorates they should be removed from the adoption area. In addition, as new animals arrive, the ones that would be good candidates for adoption should be compared to the ones already available for adoption. Space is always limited, and if a new arrival is perhaps a better candidate for adoption

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48 Sample return form

49 HSUS "Pets for Life Behavior Tip Sheets" on CD ROM

than an already available animal that has not generated any interest from potential adopters, the new arrival should be given the opportunity for adoption.

- ✓ Be sure to regularly review, revise and adhere to written adoption guidelines, such as those currently in place for wolf/dog hybrids. In addition, The HSUS team believes that placement decisions should be made with careful attention to behavioral evaluations, and not just to breed.

### **Discussion:**

A behavioral assessment program cannot be created on the fly; clear and well-thought-out written policies, procedures, forms, communication techniques, and accountability measures should be implemented. Behavioral programs must be unique to each shelter's situation, staff time and expertise, and it is inappropriate – or even irresponsible – to simply attempt to take and apply an already existing program in an effort to mold it to make it fit.

The behavioral health of an animal in the custody of an animal care and control agency is as important as his or her physical health. A behavioral assessment of animals is also extremely crucial to the adoption process and its success. It assists with the determination of the type of home that will best meet the needs of the individual animal. Additionally, it provides potential adopters with information to assist them in determining the appropriateness of a particular animal for their home and / or if they can meet the needs of a particular animal.

The accurate assessment of the behavioral status of an animal allows a shelter to provide adequate care for that animal, to improve that animal's likelihood of adoption, and to potentially place that animal in an appropriate adoptive home. Additionally, behavior assessment also plays a key role in enhancing the safety of staff members and the general public, and greatly reduces adoption liability.

The wolf/dog hybrid issue is a controversial and tricky one, as it is often difficult in a shelter setting to confirm whether or not the animal is indeed a hybrid. Making a decision about an animal based solely on the belief that it is a hybrid, could have serious repercussions with regard to safety and public perception. However, if the decision is based on the behavior of the animal, it can be supported by actual behavioral evaluation results instead of someone's belief or opinion.

## **8.2 ADOPTION PROCESS AND POLICIES**

### **Observations:**

Those interested in adopting an animal were free to walk through the facility on their own. Staff was often unavailable for assistance. The public's only reference was the information located on the animal's cage card. This offered the animal's age, sex and breed. When someone was interested in a particular animal he/she usually had to return to the front entrance and ask for help. The front office staff would then page a kennel attendant to meet the person in the kennel area.

If the animal was still being held through the stray period the person was given a sheet of paper identifying which animal they wanted and informing them that the animal would be held for one hour on the day that he / she becomes available. Any number of holds could be placed on the same animal for additional one-hour blocks of time after the initial hold. The person must then return on that date to complete the process during that one hour time frame. If that person did not come back in time, the animal would be available to the person who had the next one hour block. The animal was placed on hold without a pre-adoption counseling questionnaire being completed.

If the animal was available, staff was observed handing interested parties a clip board with a pre-adoption counseling questionnaire and asking that it be filled out. Once the questionnaire was completed staff reviewed it to confirm all questions were answered to their satisfaction and that it was signed. The potential adopter was then directed back to the front office to complete the process. The adopter then completed a similar form but did not receive any counseling or adoption information. Staff in the front office stated the only requirement to adopt was that the person be 18 years of age.

There did not appear to be any “busy” time in the kennel areas or any one point where there was a large influx of people visiting. In general there appeared to be very manageable numbers of visitors for the number of available kennel staff to assist. Staff was not observed interacting with the potential adopters. Discussion and counseling regarding a particular animal did not take place. Although there was one visitation room, next to the dish washing room, The HSUS team did not observe the public and animals interacting or notice any other get acquainted area. There was one small room that contained a desk and computer located between kennels A and B. Staff said it used to be an adoption room, but had been turned into a computer station so staff could input information without having to leave the kennel area. However, The HSUS team did not see it being used at all for either purpose during the site visit.

The pre-adoption questionnaire offered basic information to the adopter about the program but it was very limited and it appeared to The HSUS team that staff was using this questionnaire as the sole means to educate the potential adopter. The questionnaire explained to the potential adopter, “While we don’t want to discourage anybody from adopting a shelter animal, it is important that you understand the potential problems with the adoption of such.” It goes on to explain that many of the animals are stray, their health and temperament cannot be guaranteed, and that there are incubation periods for diseases.

The questionnaire asked fundamental yes/no questions regarding home ownership, landlord approval, financial stability, intent and commitment. It went on to explain that special attention will need to be given to small children and pets. Children, other family members and current pets were not required or requested to meet with the adoptee prior to the adoption being completed. Dog/dog introductions were discouraged to avoid transmitting diseases in the shelter to the owned dog.

The questionnaire informed adopters that adopted animals could receive a free examination through the Orange Belt Association within three days. There was no explanation as to what the Orange Belt Association is, only that most area veterinarians will honor this free examination.

The questionnaire also stated that they should separate this animal from other animals in the house for two weeks so their current pet doesn't become ill and they should make annual visits to their veterinarian to keep vaccinations up to date. The shelter offered free problem solving classes twice a week.

The questionnaire stated that RCCAS "reserves the right to deny the adoption to any parties based on the needs or requirements for the particular animal." However, The HSUS team did not observe any discussions regarding the needs or requirements of any particular animal. Adopters had 7 days to return the animal for a full refund minus the altering fee.

RCCAS had guidelines on pages 11-13 of the general orientation manual that were to serve as discussion points with potential adopters. These guidelines expanded upon the questionnaire and discussed animals being adopted for the right reasons and not due to pressure of euthanasia or feeling sorry, and that animals should be companions and not gifts, guard dogs, barn animals or used for resale or consumption. It also covered spay/neuter requirements.

The procedure outlined the format for the adoption counselor to follow when someone is interested in adopting an animal. It included assisting with the questionnaire and animal selection by asking and answering questions about the adopter, interacting with the animal and discussing specifics, and informing about spay/neuter, licensing and fees.

The manual also offered some breed specific information to the employee so that he/ she could counsel someone who may be interested in a specific breed. It advised the employee to let a potential adopter know that for example, huskies and malamutes are well known chicken and cat killers or border collies are very active and don't work well in homes where there are no cattle or sheep to herd. It advised staff to review the negatives as well as the positives of certain breeds.

The adoption fee was \$20.00. That included the basic vaccinations, canine Bordatella and DA2PP and feline RCP. Puppies under 4 months will have already been de-wormed. A rabies vaccination was an additional \$6.00, licensing an additional \$8.00 and a microchip was \$10.00 if done at the time of adoption, otherwise it was \$15.00. There was a fee to have the animal altered which ranged from \$14.00 for a male cat to \$86.00 for a large female dog.

All animals were altered prior to going home. In general, the pick up was scheduled for the following day. The SNC was on a 9/80 schedule so animals were altered Monday through Friday one week and Monday through Thursday the next.

If an animal was sick and could not be altered, the animal was sent home with medication "on contract" with a surgery date scheduled as explained in Section 6.7, Sterilization Services. The adopter was required to pay for the medication when the animal was picked up from the SNC. Clinic staff expressed concern that many times the adopters were unaware that they would be required to pay for the medication. This oversight resulted in the adopters being upset or angry and questioning why they were getting a sick animal or why they had to pay for medication when the animal got sick at the shelter.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ A consistent adoption counseling process needs to be implemented with a full-time staff person in charge as an adoption supervisor. In addition, an adoption assistant position should also be developed. These positions may be able to be created by better utilizing current staff, potentially in conjunction with the position that handles the rescue program.
- ✓ The adoption supervisor and adoption assistant would be responsible for working with potential adopters to help them select the right pet for their lifestyle and would work with the adopters through the entire process, including approving the adoption paperwork. The adoption counselors can then provide the subsequent follow-up after adoption to ensure a smooth transition into the new home.
- ✓ Make sure these adoption counselors have a desire to help people and that they are the friendliest, most outgoing members of the staff. Provide training to staff and volunteers on communication techniques for working with the public in difficult situations.
- ✓ Ensure that all staff involved in the adoption program be intimately familiar with the animals available for adoption, as well as with companion animals in general. They are crucial to helping make a quality, life-long match between pet and adopter.
- ✓ Once an adoption counseling process has been developed, try and provide as many private, quiet adoption counseling areas as possible to encourage discussion relating to the adoption. Consider returning the use of the computer room between kennels A and B to a get acquainted room and an area to complete final paperwork. In a pinch, the benches in the kennel hallways could provide an adequate counseling area.
- ✓ To better ensure that animals are placed in an environment that is compatible with their individual needs, and adopters are matched with animals that suit their interests and lifestyles, consider revising the adoption questionnaire to include general questions about why they are interested in adopting an animal, if they had a particular type in mind, (if yes to describe), and what personality traits they were seeking. Some examples would be:
  - Experience level of potential adopter:
    - First time owner
    - Has had one or two pets
    - Knowledgeable and experienced
    - What type of behavior problems have they experienced in the past and how did they resolve them?
  - Household activity level:
    - Grand central station
    - Couch potato
    - Somewhere in between
  - Availability to exercise the dog:
    - Minimal exercise during the week / lots of exercise on the weekends

Go running 3 miles a day with adopter  
Long morning and evening walks  
Three 15 minute walks a day

➤ Cat issues:

Prompting the exercise question with a statement about cat behavior such as, “Cats are known for their long daytime naps; however, they still need exercise, how will you provide for this?” is an easy way to approach the outdoor quandary. To address the declaw dilemma, “Scratching is typical cat behavior, how have you considered dealing with it?” is an innocent way to approach the subject.

- ✓ The adoption questionnaire should be friendly and contain open-ended questions to encourage discussion and to help the staff make a better match. The process should be a counseling session, not a test.<sup>50</sup>
- ✓ Develop and implement an interactive program whereby staff and volunteers work with the public to match their lifestyle with individual animals in the shelter that are known to have the traits / characteristics the potential adopter is seeking.<sup>51</sup> A person who is active and enjoys running can be directed towards sporting breeds in the shelter. A first time dog owner can be steered away from the dominant, untrained dogs and directed towards the calmer, well mannered dogs. Animals with special needs that were discovered during the behavioral assessments or training evaluations such as a shy, submissive urinator can be placed with an experienced owner in an environment that will provide the confidence building and socialization necessary to develop the dog’s full potential as a companion animal.
- ✓ Consider developing attractive, easy-to-read, cage cards that include detailed observations by staff and volunteers (once the volunteer program is up and running). This can also include results of behavioral assessments once that program is implemented. The behavioral assessment results should always be part of an animal’s permanent record. The adoption information card should be very descriptive and informative about each animal available for adoption.<sup>52, 53</sup>
- ✓ It would help to have a log sheet—perhaps included as part of a new, easy-to-read, cage card—where staff (and eventually volunteers) can write their observations about the animals’ traits and behavior. This will assist all staff in making good matches.<sup>54</sup>
- ✓ Continue the process of allowing people to put a one hour hold on a stray animal to be applied the day it becomes available. If not currently done, extend this offer to people who find and relinquish strays. Update the information sheet (perhaps make it a two part form) to include a clear explanation of the RCCAS stray hold period, the behavior and

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50 Sample adoption questionnaires  
51 [www.emilyweiss.com](http://www.emilyweiss.com), Matchmaker program  
52 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, “How To” Series, “How to Write a Cage Card”  
53 Sample cage cards  
54 Sample behavior observations sheets

health evaluation process, and instructions for them to follow if the animal becomes a candidate for adoption. All interested parties should fill out an adoption questionnaire prior to placing a hold and then give them one part of a two part form that leaves the ball clearly in their court to call the shelter by a certain time and day to check on the adoption status of the animal.<sup>55</sup> If the animal is made available for adoption and the finder calls, the adoption application will be applied to the animal and an adoption can take place. These processes provides finders first right of refusal on adoptions, and frees up staff time.

- ✓ Re-evaluate and update the current written policies and guidelines used to assist the staff in determining methods of counseling potential adopters and the means of determining the appropriateness of an adoption.
- ✓ Ensure that adoption policies and fees are consistent and sufficient and that all staff follows those guidelines. Evaluate whether or not adoption fees should be increased.
- ✓ Institute a procedure for checking potential adopters against a list of people who have histories of animal problems, cruelty convictions, etc. to ensure that staff are not adopting to known irresponsible or abusive pet owners.
- ✓ Collect and review adoption applications, contracts, release agreements, and animal profile sheets from as many shelters as possible. Incorporate the best ideas into newly created forms.<sup>56</sup> Avoid asking the public to complete multiple forms that are similar.
- ✓ Develop an SOP that requires staff to clearly explain to adopters about the nature of an animal's illness, type of medication, and cost involved at the time medication is given to the adopter. However, The HSUS team suggests not charging for medication.
- ✓ Develop a "Homecoming Packet" for new adopters. Include information such as:
  - The animal's medical records and information on the free vet exam listing the participating veterinarians
  - Feeding /diet
  - Health concerns
  - The initial introduction to the new home and other animals
  - Training issues and classes, any information from trainers in the community who work with the shelter
  - Local ordinances and laws governing the community
  - Where to go for help
  - Recommended books on behavior and training
  - A list of supplies and necessities
  - What to do if they have lost an animal
  - Any coupons or discounts from businesses who support the shelter

## **Discussion:**

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- 55 Sample adoption status forms
  - 56 Sample miscellaneous adoption forms

A sound adoption program incorporates policies and guidelines designed to assist with responsible matchmaking. A good decision is one that is based upon:

- 1) Information presented by the applicant
- 2) The appropriateness of that animal to that environment
- 3) An adoption counselor's good judgment, common sense, and willingness to look at each situation individually

Part of a progressive adoption program is to teach adoption counselors not to think in terms of "catching potential adopters in a wrong answer." While it is important to have guidelines that are in place to protect the animals and ensure that each adopted animal is placed in a responsible home and sterilized, it is also important to "make the right match." Staff must be trained to evaluate potential adopters and teach adopters to be responsible pet owners. This can be tricky and selection of the right staff members to be adoption counselors is crucial. We encourage the organization to look for people who are excellent communicators, who are genuinely able to enjoy the process of talking with people and helping them make decisions regarding the correct type of pet for their family.

A comprehensive, interactive adoption program will better serve the needs and interests of both the animals in the care of RCCAS and the people who come to adopt suitable companions. The staffing and resources dedicated to implementing a comprehensive adoption program clearly need expansion in order to meet this goal. However, by identifying what the organization hopes to achieve, it can easily identify the resources needed to accomplish it, work those needs into the organization's list of priorities, and then phase in the various aspects of the program as resources are made available.

The purpose of an adoption program, whether conducted by a private animal-protection agency or a municipal animal control agency, should be to find responsible, lifelong homes for animals suitable as companions. Such matchmaking requires knowledge of both the animals to be placed and their prospective adopters. The goal of any adoption program is not to place as many animals as possible but to place animals in appropriate homes that provide the animal a safe, caring home for life.

The HSUS believes strongly that it is not a kindness to animals for an agency to place them in homes where they will fail to receive adequate care and companionship, food, water, shelter, or veterinary care when necessary. Nor is it a benefit to the community for an agency to place animals where they will be allowed to roam the streets, violate animal control laws, or add their offspring to the surplus of unwanted animals who already burden the community.

When seeking to place homeless animals into new homes, shelters face stiff competition from pet stores, breeders, and sources of free animals. According to a survey by the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association, only 20 percent of cat and dog owners obtained their animals at shelters. The rest took in strays, bred their own animals, or acquired pets through friends, relatives, breeders, newspapers, and pet stores.

Taking a cue from these statistics, shelters are examining ways to break down historical barriers that stand in the way of relationships with veterinarians, dog trainers, groomers, social service workers, breed placement groups, breeders, and neighborhood free-roaming cat caretakers. Not only can these people amplify and complement existing shelter services, they can also boost a shelter's image in the community as a reliable source of new animal companions. Studies have shown that prospective pet owners generally stay away from an animal shelter for a variety of reasons:

- 1) Ignorance of the surplus animal problem
- 2) Impulse buying and impulse accepting
- 3) Perceived quality of animals
- 4) Unfamiliarity with the animal shelter
- 5) Misconceptions about the animal shelter
- 6) Inconvenience of hours and/or location of the shelter

Shelters cannot hope to overcome these obstacles easily because many preconceived notions about shelters and shelter animals are so deeply rooted in the American psyche that they are taking decades to change. But other problems may have more achievable solutions, perhaps something as basic as noting any improvements made and helping to correct a shelter's lack of visibility (or negative image) in the community. Increasing adoptions, however, demands careful regard for the adoption process in an effort to ensure that healthy animals are placed in responsible homes.

Although certain adoption criteria (such as whether or not a landlord will allow pets) are absolute, most are meant to serve as guidelines, enabling counselors to work within each set of circumstances individually. One of the keys to program success is to have consistent approaches, policies, and procedures in order to avoid any false allegations that the agency is either arbitrary or discriminatory. Evaluation of potential adopters can be based on three basic criteria: 1) commitment to the life and needs of the animal; 2) compassion and a desire for mutual companionship; and 3) capability of providing the essentials of a healthy, happy life for the animal.

The adoption process should be a positive, friendly, and educational process and never an opportunity to either "get an animal out of the shelter" or for the "adoption police" to find fault with a person's lifestyle. But there are certain circumstances under which a requested adoption should not occur. Because potential adopters often initially view a refusal as a rejection or accusation, counselors must be honest and direct, as well as courteous and understanding. If done appropriately, explaining the rationale for adoption denial can serve as an educational experience, and not a demeaning one. When staff fails to do this correctly, the potential adopter leaves without a true understanding of the message and will simply acquire an animal elsewhere.

Animal shelters should be aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities regarding the adoption of any animal. Good adoption policies will help your agency make the best decisions for the animals being adopted and will assure the community that all potential adopters are treated fairly and equally. Exceptions to enacted policies should not be made without consultation with a supervisor and/or a home visit.

### 8.3 ADOPTION FOLLOW-UP/COMPLIANCE

#### **Observations:**

Other than the follow up that is done if an animal is not returned for the scheduled spay/neuter surgery RCCAS does not have an adoption follow up program.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ There should be a follow up on all adopted animals. When possible, assign a staff person (or volunteer when the program is strong) who will be responsible for making the calls. One way to do this is to have 31 folders in a file cabinet numbered 1-31, which correspond to the days of the month. If RCCAS decides that two weeks, for example, is a good period of time to wait to follow up, the adopters' paperwork can be put in the numbered folder that corresponds with the date he/she should be called. Every day, the paperwork should be pulled out of that corresponding folder and calls should be made to the adopters. In addition, phone calls are also a friendly way to follow up on health and behavior concerns and catch problems before they result in an animal being returned.
- ✓ Take advantage of The HSUS's free pet behavior tip sheets (See section 8.1 Selection Criteria/Behavioral Assessments), which can be used to help counsel adopters on particular behavior issues they may be having with their new pet. RCCAS can put their own contact information on the back of these sheets, which can be e-mailed or snail mailed to adopters.
- ✓ Maintain a list of area dog trainers and behaviorists that can be given as a reference if an adopter is having a behavior issue with a newly adopted pet. This list can also be used for those who call the shelter perhaps thinking about relinquishing a pet due to behavior issues.<sup>57</sup>
- ✓ Suggest that adopters send a photo and keep RCCAS informed on how their pet is doing. Post and rotate photos on an adoption bulletin board in the lobby.

### 8.4 COMMUNITY ADOPTION PARTNERS

#### **Observations:**

California Food & Agriculture law sections 31108 (b) (dog) and 31752 (b) (cat) state any stray dog / cat "that is impounded pursuant to this division shall, prior to the killing of that animal for any reason other than irremediable suffering, be released to a nonprofit, as defined in Section

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57 [www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com) (Association of Pet Dog Trainers)

501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, animal rescue or adoption organization if requested by the organization prior to the scheduled killing of that animal. In addition to any required spay or neuter deposit, the pound or shelter, at its discretion, may assess a fee, not to exceed the standard adoption fee, for animals released.”

RCCAS’s program had been under close scrutiny and severe criticisms from the public, which included accusations that the conditions for the animals in the shelter were deplorable and the RCCAS would not work with qualified 501 (c) (3) groups.

During The HSUS site visit, in accordance with the law, RCCAS was working with breed specific and rescue groups / organizations (Note: The term “rescue” will hereafter be replaced with “breed placement,” except where directly quoted.) within the community and the surrounding areas in the placement of animals.

Contradictory and confusing information surrounding the rescue program was given to The HSUS team. The team was told that there were applications on file for each group but that there were no written agreements between RCCAS and the breed placement groups, there were no criteria for the group but references were checked, and breed placement group kennel inspections could be done but were not.

The supervising kennel attendant had been coordinator for the breed placement program for approximately six months. When asked, she stated she had not received any information, guidance, direction or training surrounding the breed placement program. When asked if she had received any written guidelines or written policies, procedures or protocols she stated she had not. However, when she looked through files in the kennel office she located the guidelines, the policy and the protocols.

The program coordinator stated she had spent the previous few months mending fences with groups they had worked with in the past. One action that had been taken was to place a “rescue wall” in the long public hallway of the facility showcasing animals that had been taken from RCCAS by breed placement groups and subsequently adopted into new homes.

Breed placement groups were charged for the spay /neuter surgery, the rabies and microchip. If the animal was previously altered they were charged \$5.00 for the animal.

The goal for RCCAS was to “place 100% of our adoptable animals in new homes. We intend to use the help of rescue groups and other humane organizations to achieve this goal.”

The written statement regarding breed placement stated that outside groups must:

- 1) Accept all liability and ownership for each animal rescued
- 2) Meet or exceed the minimum liability insurance levels required (homeowners/group)
- 3) Agree to pay the spay / neuter fee in effect at the time of adoption
- 4) Have a minimum of one year’s experience in rescuing animals
- 5) Not be a breeder or a commercial kennel operator who plans to sell the animal for profit.
- 6) Complete an animal rescue adoption contract for each rescue

- 7) Provide three photographs of the rescue group's facilities or written verification from an animal control/humane officer that the group is acceptable.

A hold may be placed on the animal for the time period the breed placement group representative needs to leave his / her home and arrive at the shelter. Cases requiring special consideration may be discussed with the director / designee.

The contract between RCCAS and the outside groups had the groups agree to:

- 1) Maintain facilities acceptable to RCCAS
- 2) Remit the appropriate spay / neuter deposit to RCCAS
- 3) Not assign the agreement to any other group without permission
- 4) Make its facility open to RCCAS to reclaim the animal in the group's custody
- 5) Not have RCCAS provide personnel or financial support to the group
- 6) Be liable for all injury or damage caused by animals referred to the group by society including the liability of RCCAS
- 7) Indemnify and hold the city and county of Riverside and all employees and representatives harmless from all damage or injury, including attorney fees and all cost of the litigation caused by animals transferred by the RCCAS
- 8) Accept a specific animal and to solicit, evaluate and accept adopters of the described animal
- 9) Have RCCAS agree to transfer the animal described to the group according to the agreement

There were different internal policies available:

The policies in the general orientation manual stated, "The volunteer services coordinator oversees breed placement volunteers and groups, acts as staff liaison and works closely with the supervising ACO of the kennels. The volunteer services coordinator is responsible for the communication between the breed placement groups, foster volunteers and other volunteers. The supervising ACO of the kennels is responsible for determining whether animals are eligible for foster or breed placement."

The policies The HSUS team was given by a staff member was from the policy and procedure manual and stated the kennel supervisor will be the liaison between RCCAS and the breed placement groups and volunteers and that all breed placements will be coordinated through the kennel supervisor.

There were also two sets of internal guidelines for the program:

The first (from general orientation manual) said if an employee knows an animal is marginally adoptable (i.e. elderly, too young, medicals problems etc.) they may call a breed placement group in advance with permission from the supervising ACO for the kennels. It continued with in most cases where an animal is considered adoptable, the general public should have a chance to adopt the animal prior to breed placement groups or other shelters being called. Adoptable animals should remain in the shelter for a minimum of two days following the stray period before a breed placement group is called.

The second (from policy and procedure manual) said the public has the first chance at adopting an animal. But, if during a visit to the shelter a group sees an animal they wish to save they can inform staff. Staff will write on the impound card to call before PTD (put to death). If the animal is available for adoption and staff feel it is not highly adoptable the breed placement group may save the animal at that time. Breed placement groups may be called prior to euthanasia. RCCAS has the right to inspect the facility and the inspection may be done without notice.

The volunteer services coordinator was responsible for the off site adoption program. The volunteer coordinator trained volunteers to conduct the off site adoptions. Animals for off site adoptions were chosen by the supervising ACO for the kennels.

Cats were housed at PetSmart and available seven days a week. Volunteers were regularly scheduled at PetSmart but were not there full time. In their absence the employees of PetSmart conducted the adoptions. The volunteer coordinator trained both the volunteers and the employees of PetSmart to perform adoptions according to the adoption policies outlined in section 8.2, Adoption Process and Policies.

Dogs were available at PetSmart twice a week for four hours. Volunteers were on site at that time. If volunteers were not available the volunteer services coordinator was on site.

Periodically, in addition to PetSmart, other off site activities take place. These include Petco, Albertsons (a grocery store), and community events such as health fairs, Orange Blossom day and Date Palm day. The volunteer services coordinator and adoption volunteers were always available at these events.

Animals shown at PetSmart and adoption events were altered prior to leaving the shelter so that they would be available to immediately go to their new adoptive home.

The HSUS team was not made aware of any written protocols and procedures regarding the off site adoption program.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Change all references of “rescue” and “save” to breed placement or adoption. The terms “rescue” and “save” imply that animals are in jeopardy at the shelter. In reality, the shelter has rescued or saved the animals from their prior situations and the breed placement groups are assisting with the adoption of those animals.
- ✓ California state law is very explicit in its requirement that shelters, in their efforts to reduce the number of animals being euthanized, work with breed placement groups and adoption organizations. It is imperative that RCCAS continue to work with groups or adoption organizations in order to be in compliance with the law. However, that should not be interpreted to mean that in order to do so RCCAS would compromise the welfare of the animals in their care and release them without regard for the qualifications of the group or organization.

- ✓ The HSUS team was pleased to see that RCCAS had developed protocols and procedures along with contractual requirements for the qualified groups with whom they work. RCCAS should consolidate and update the various policies, protocols and procedures and to best meet the needs of the animals at RCCAS.<sup>58, 59, 60</sup>
- ✓ RCCAS should update and complete all the necessary paperwork for the groups they are currently working with and continue to do so with any new groups. RCCAS should also maintain a written record of each group with whom they work. Since most groups often are comprised of several individuals, one must ask, who is the group's main contact person, who is in charge, and who will be picking up the animals?
- ✓ RCCAS should develop and document eligibility requirements for breed placement groups and adoption organizations. Questions that should be considered include:
  - Is RCCAS willing to transfer to only groups or would individuals be considered?
  - Does the adoption partner need to be an established 501 (c) (3) or will a qualified and reputable breed placement group / individual be considered?
  - What is the overall mission statement / goal of the breed placement partner and does it match those of RCCAS?
- ✓ Once compiled and re-written, all breed placement policies and forms should be presented to all interested parties and consistently followed.
- ✓ RCCAS should develop and document animal housing and care standards for breed placement partners in order to ensure adequate animal care will be provided.
- ✓ RCCAS should site inspect every placement facility prior to the transfer of animals. If the group has numerous locations, each one should be inspected. Inspections should be done initially and yearly to ensure compliance.
- ✓ Reconsider the requirement that animals be held past their stray period prior to contacting breed placement groups. RCCAS may want to consider contacting the groups while an animal is still in the mandatory holding period. This option would enable the adoption partner time to facilitate the animal's pick up without requiring special consideration and without extending an animal's time in the stressful shelter environment. When animals are euthanized for lack of space it would be in the best interest of all animals to free up desirable adoption kenneling space as quickly as possible thereby providing other animals the much needed space and potentially the extra time needed to be adopted.
- ✓ The off site adoption processes should be committed to writing with clear policies and procedures.
- ✓ Clearly defined agreements with off site adoption locations should be implemented. Formal agreements insure that all expectations are clearly understood and agreed upon regardless of which personnel from either side are involved.

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58 Placement partner guidelines example

59 Placement partner application example

60 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Placement Partner Application Form," March/April 2004

- ✓ Ensure that adoption counseling training is provided to all adoption volunteers and any participating employees at the off site adoption locations.

### **Discussion:**

In many communities animal shelters have forged formal working relationships with placement partners. In these relationships, animals of a particular breed, type or special need are transferred between a shelter and a rescue group. In order for these relationships to work properly, there must be clearly stated expectations and a written formal agreement executed between all parties. Prior to the release of an animal to a placement partner a shelter must be assured that the transfer is in the best interest of the animal and community.

It is always preferable for various groups involved in animal care, sheltering and control efforts within a community to work well together. However, differences of opinion, philosophical disagreements, and mission based differences and high emotions often stand in the way of complete harmony. Clearly, community opinion is significant to the overall perception of an organization, and ultimately the success of its animal care programs and services.

RCCAS should be commended for its efforts at assigning a staff member to act as a liaison to work with outside groups and adoption organizations. The first steps at “fence mending” are the first steps at developing a cooperative working relationship with local animal groups and interested parties. Additional work must be done in order to make the relationship mutually beneficial and sustainable.

## **8.5 FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT**

### **Observations:**

In speaking with staff, The HSUS team was told there was not a foster care program in place. The HSUS team was also told that staff and select members of the public could foster animals. They then become foster volunteers but not necessarily organizational volunteers. The HSUS team was given the impression that select members of the public were friends of the staff.

The staff member responsible for the supervision of the foster program stated that she had not received any training or guidance regarding the program and had not seen or been given guidelines or procedures for the program. She was working on the development of a program but felt that it was a time consuming program. The staff member stated that she was “just winging it.” However the following day during a second discussion the employee stated that after her initial discussion with The HSUS team she had returned to the kennel office, as she had regarding breed placement groups, looked through old files and located the foster care guidelines. She stated she would familiarize herself with them and begin using them.

The foster care program guidelines The HSUS team received stated that “the program plays an integral part in saving the lives of puppies and kittens who would other wise be put to sleep.”

They outlined the care required for the animals and the responsibilities of being a foster parent. Medical care was provided through RCCAS but no information was given regarding what that medical care would be. Although food and special diets may be acquired through the shelter, the foster parent was expected to cover most of the feeding expenses.

The remaining guidelines would not be adequate for a first time foster parent without an accompanying orientation and training session. For example, the guidelines discussed how to stimulate elimination for a kitten and that litters should be weaned onto solid food at 4-5 weeks of age, but lacked the detail that is most often necessary for a novice and did not address the range and myriad of questions a beginner would have. Other issues covered were: potential illness and death, feeding, space considerations, sleeping arrangements, and general care.

It also stated if there was a medical concern that the foster parent must make an appointment with the staff veterinarian but does not provide information on what to do in case of an emergency.

The foster care application asked basic information regarding housing, moving, other pets, allergies, daily animal care and veterinary care. The foster care contract stated that the foster family would provide care as per the foster guidelines, not be provided any financial support from RCCAS, be liable for any injuries/damages caused by the animal, indemnify and hold harmless the city and county, follow proper adoption procedures if interested, and return the animal by a specific date.

Two sets of unweaned kittens were relinquished to the shelter and it was noted in their records that they had been placed into foster homes during The HSUS site visit.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The HSUS strongly recommends that RCCAS immediately evaluate its current foster program and overall effectiveness. To be successful, a foster care program requires a high level of supervision and maintenance. A foster care program must be expertly supervised or it will quickly spiral out of control. Like an adoption program, a foster program must have a goal, and agencies utilizing a foster program should start by asking themselves the following questions:
  - Are you fostering animals primarily to open up cage or kennel space in your shelter?
  - Can the organization meet the operational expenses?
  - How long a period is considered foster care? At what point does it become an adoption?
  - Will there be space for the animal when it is time to return to the shelter? If not, how will the space situation be addressed?
  - How many animals and what types can be in foster care at one time?
  - Which animals will be placed into foster care?
  - How will animals that have special needs and that require special care be handled and monitored?
  - How will animals that require behavior modification be handled and monitored?
  - How will animals with an injury or illness be handled?

- ✓ When evaluating the foster program consider the level of management that will be required to maintain it. Management of a foster care program includes:
  - A record keeping system to keep track of animals and foster homes
  - A volunteer base from which to pull foster coordinators and care givers
  - Criteria regarding which animals should or should not be fostered
  - Determining the qualifications required of potential foster parents
  - Soliciting help from community veterinarians
  - Organizing foster parent orientation and training
  - Updating the current foster caregiver application and agreement form
  - Determining the source of funding for supplies, vaccines and medical treatment
  - Providing guidance, detailed instruction sheets and advice for foster parents
  - Schedules for preventative medical care, vaccinations, etc.
  - Monitoring the health and well being of foster animals by visiting homes and calling the foster parents periodically
  - Determining the foster family's role (if any) in assisting with the adoption of the animal
  - Ensuring that RCCAS has the appropriate liability insurance and developing a disclaimer to protect your organization in case a fostered animal injures a foster family member
  
- ✓ RCCAS should also carefully answer the following questions:
  - Do you have the time, staff, and resources needed to maintain a foster program?
  - Can your organization afford the general operational costs?
  - Can your organization provide food, litter pans, and everything else that's involved in caring for an animal in foster care?
  - Do you need to set up some sort of revenue source that can provide for the care of fostered animals?
  
- ✓ In addition, records for animals in foster care should be fully updated with the pertinent information. Files must be organized to ensure that animals in foster homes can be monitored easily. Each animal's record should contain the following information:
  - Reason for fostering
  - Foster home contact information, name, address, telephone number
  - Date animal went to home
  - Expected date to return
  - Medical information, vaccination schedule, veterinary history
  - Any treatment given by foster family
  - All communications with foster family
  - Ongoing progress and status of animal

### **Discussion**

Generally speaking, fostering is the placement of special-case animals into temporary homes until they are suitable for adoption. A foster care program can increase an animal shelter's responsible adoptions, decrease the numbers of animals euthanized, boost employee morale, and enhance public relations within the community. Or, unfortunately, a foster program can drain a

shelter's limited resources, cause the organization to lose sight of its mission, and even jeopardize the lives of shelter animals. In order to maintain control, management must set realistic goals, develop strong policies and procedures, and adhere to them. All foster programs must have criteria for carefully choosing foster animals and caregivers. Always remember that fostering is not a solution to pet overpopulation or irresponsible pet ownership.

It is extremely important to understand that a foster care program can't save all the animals, replace a cramped facility, or mend holes in organizational policies. However, when a foster care program is managed correctly, it can greatly assist your organization, the animals in its care, and even your community. It can give certain animals an improved chance of adoption, provide a caring home environment for animals, and lift the spirits of staff and volunteers who confront the tragedies of pet overpopulation every day. However, no organized foster program should be based on emotional impulses. Everyone needs to be on board and everyone involved must agree on both the concept as well as the practice.

These are difficult concepts, but ones that must be addressed in order to develop realistic expectations for how the program will function successfully. An effective program is more than just getting an animal out of the shelter. To operate a constructive and positive foster care program, time and resources need to be devoted to the program and RCCAS must be prepared to provide the oversight necessary to keep the program running effectively.

## 9.0 COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS

### 9.1 PROMOTION/ SOCIAL MARKETING

#### **Observations:**

The standard operating procedure for handling day to day media inquiries was to direct them to the volunteer services coordinator who also served as the education & public information contact for the facility. The relationship with local media consisted primarily of interaction with the daily local newspapers, *The Press Enterprise* and the *Riverside County Recorder*, and a cable television station, Channel 33. Since Riverside is in relatively close proximity to the Los Angeles media market, the local media are somewhat overshadowed by the media giants of the larger metropolitan area.

During the time of The HSUS site visit, the relationship between RCCAS and *The Press Enterprise* could be called adversarial at best. A reporter at the newspaper has recently been running a series of articles critical of the operations at RCCAS. Detractors of RCCAS have been contacting the reporter to provide information about their interaction with the staff (animal control services seemed to be a less contentious area which was met by overall public approval), complaints about facility conditions, and also the perceived dismissal of their offered services. Despite this, both *The Press Enterprise* and the *Riverside County Reporter* still run photos of pets available for adoption at RCCAS. However, the volunteer services coordinator and other administrative staff at RCCAS often referred to their current media relations as “so-so,” largely based on soured relationships with *The Press Enterprise*. They claimed preferential treatment was afforded to the local humane society.

Cable Channel 33 airs a series every Wednesday evening called “Pet Parade” that features adoptable pets and is hosted by the volunteer services coordinator. The PSA video “Cats in Crisis” was a commendable effort to alert the community to the shelter’s overabundance of felines and encourage people to adopt a cat in need. No mention was made by staff regarding opportunities offered by radio.

Positive public relations are generated on “Second Chance Day,” a day during which RCCAS and San Bernadino County shelter do not euthanize any animals and promote this as a chance to save a life through adoption. Open houses are also conducted with some regularity at RCCAS.

RCCAS has participated in high profile events such as health fairs and community celebrations such as American Pet Expo, held in April at the Orange County Fairgrounds in Costa Mesa, the Date Palm and Orange Blossom festivals, and Downtown Wednesday Night. However, they were not present for the last event during our visit, ostensibly due to recent adverse press coverage. Staff hopes to rejoin the event once the critical coverage wanes.

They also have established a contest called “Art for the Animals” whereby original artwork of pets is solicited from the general public. First, second and third place prizes are awarded in three age categories: 12 years of age and under, 13 – 19 years of age, and adults over the age of 20 years. The artwork is then auctioned off to the highest bidder. They also offer a “Santa Paws” photo opportunity for the public with donations accepted to benefit the shelter.

“Dogtoberfest,” a pet walk/pet fair offered by the shelter each October, and sponsored by local businesses, raises money for the shelter’s spay/neuter fund and educational materials. It’s held in various highly visible locations such as Fairmont Park and offers many pet-related diversions.

The shelter produces a calendar that features shelter-sponsored events that are slated to take place during the year along with information about the shelter staff. The shelter sells these calendars for \$8.00, which is tax deductible as it is considered a donation to the organization. RCCAS also holds an annual rummage sale.

Other forms of community outreach consisted mainly of off-site adoption programs such as those conducted at PetSmart, Petco and Albertson’s grocery store. The volunteer services coordinator has been trying to acquire a “presentation van” or some other large vehicle to promote the off-site adoption program.

Community services include spay/neuter for the general public offered through the RCCAS SNC (including a “Free Spay/Neuter” campaign financed by the board of supervisors) and low cost rabies vaccination clinics.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ To learn more about promotion and social marketing, RCCAS management should consider enrolling in on-line courses offered by Humane Society University.<sup>61</sup>
- ✓ Encourage media to educate the public on ways to address animal overpopulation through proactive means and to make it clear that the problem is community generated.
- ✓ Put a system into place to a) monitor and analyze data from current programs; b) collect relevant information about and from the community and target constituencies; and c) monitor the effectiveness of new and existing efforts.
- ✓ RCCAS should bring together interested individuals as well as representatives from organizations who may be interested in public education and outreach within the county to assess current programming and immediate needs for public education, marketing, and outreach programs.
- ✓ As the agency undertakes a more formal planning process, the utilization of a “marketing mindset” to look at the attitudes and behaviors to be influenced, will identify target population segments that needs to be reached. Surveys and other types of input can be used to determine how programs might be designed to motivate for change, and

monitoring the outcomes of all efforts should be integral to the overall planning process.

- ✓ The county and RCCAS must recognize the importance of good public relations during the agency's growth process and ensure that the community's interests are heard on a timely basis, and that all media inquiries are handled both pro-actively and responsibly.
  - An effort should be made to re-establish ties with the daily newspaper. One way to generate better relations would be to offer the newspapers some positive story lines to cover.
  - A media "push," including radio, should be orchestrated to highlight and accentuate the positives the RCCAS has to offer to the community; especially the low cost spay/neuter opportunities and rabies clinics.
  - A regularly published newsletter distributed to staff, media and supporters would be helpful to the organization.
  - To improve outreach to the community, consider inserting flyers in the water bills or other county mailers to citizens that would educate on basic animal care, highlighting spay and neuter programs, and information on licensing.
  - If feasible, The HSUS team encourages the acquisition of a presentation van as a way to maintain visibility in the public eye since these vans in essence are traveling billboards promoting shelter services.

### **Discussion:**

One of the shortcomings in traditional education efforts is when we believe that if we simply tell people the "right" thing to do they will change. Although some do, most don't.

Social Marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole.<sup>62</sup>

Education or promotion includes public relations (publicity, media relations and community relations) direct marketing (Web site, direct mail), and personal outreach (presentations, one-on-one). Promotion is part of marketing, but marketing includes much more. Social marketing encompasses analysis, planning, testing, execution, and evaluation of integrated programs designed to influence people to trade their old ideas, beliefs, and behaviors for new ones. Social marketing compliments, but does not replace legislative or legal efforts.

Social marketing borrows the techniques that companies use to influence people to buy goods and services. Although there may be some adaptation in a nonprofit setting, social marketing is based on proven approaches.

Business definitions of marketing focus on the principle of exchange. People and organizations freely give something to get something, usually money for a product or service. Social marketing is built on exchange too, because we are asking people to adopt new behaviors and they will expect something in return. They may get physical, emotional, convenience, monetary or other benefits or they may avoid consequences by adopting the new behavior.

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62 Philip Kotler, Ned Roberto, and Nancy Lee, *Social Marketing: Improving the Quality of Life*

Behavior change is the bottom-line for social marketing and for animal protection advocates. Henry Spira said, “Bring about meaningful change one step at a time; raising awareness is not enough.” If people are aware of the need to spay or neuter their animals, but have not found the time to do so, we have not succeeded.

Although compelling education and communications can be highly motivating, promotion is more powerful when combined with appropriate product, price, and place elements. For example, a humane society wants to increase shelter adoptions. The organization launches some top-notch publicity, advertising and direct mail (promotion). However, the humane society has many sick animals (product), the shelter is hard to get to and uninviting (place) and the adoption fee is prohibitive for some community residents who might otherwise provide good care (price). Unfortunately, the humane society will likely fail in its effort to significantly increase adoptions not because of poor promotion, but because of other marketing factors.

Note that marketing is not just about the targets for your programs. You can use your marketing mindset to think about achieving behavior change from donors, volunteers, alliance partners, the media, your co-workers and more. Any time you are trying to change someone’s behavior; you can use social marketing thinking and actions to get better results.

### **Why Do We Need to Understand Promotion and Social Marketing?**

A recent survey of more than 200 animal care and control agencies, conducted jointly by two graduate students, one at Stanford University Graduate School of Business and the other at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, points to “community engagement” as one of the distinguishing factors in those organizations that have been successful in capping or reducing the surplus pet problem in their communities.<sup>63</sup>

This finding is not surprising, given that in recent years some public and private non-profit agencies that are interested in both serving and changing behaviors within their communities have broadened their traditional education or public information programs to employ strategies that focus more on an understanding of the needs and interests of potential consumers of their message or programs.

In an effort to accomplish as much as they can with limited resources, most agencies try to approach all issues and all people with the same tools, with the result being that the effort is so broad or generic that it impacts almost no one. Or, they implement “good ideas” from other agencies that, while potentially effective with certain audiences and certain issues, aren't really getting at the most important target audiences and issues for their own communities.

Public buy-in is crucial for long-term improvements. The agency’s mission, combined with input from the community (in order to understand its needs), should guide the development of programs that will impact positively on community trends. Local animal care and control

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63 Salman, M.D.; New, J.; Scarlett, J.; Kass, P.; Ruch-Gallie, R.; Hetts, S.; “Human and Animal Factors Related to the Relinquishment of Dogs and Cats in 12 Selected Animal Shelters in the United States,” *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 1(3), 207-226, 1998

agencies must pay close attention to: a) the importance of listening to and collecting information about the community; b) the need to view community outreach and public engagement as integral to the agency's overall purpose and programs rather than simply as an add-on accomplished via a few public service announcements and/or a presentation for children; c) the importance of having a coordinated plan for influencing the community; and d) a common understanding of agency goals, and the different roles people play in achieving these.

When it comes to the broad issue of promotion, there is no shortage of ideas for new materials and programs that could assist RCCAS in delivering its messages. Extensive sample materials, ranging from individual brochures to PSAs to comprehensive campaigns, have been prepared by animal control agencies across the country. The National Association on Humane and Environmental Education (NAHEE) is the youth education division of The HSUS, and along with *Animal Sheltering* magazine, reports on educational efforts of animal care and control agencies. Model programs and ideas are featured at both The HSUS Animal Care Expo and the American Humane's annual conference.

Increasingly, local governments are recognizing that today's animal control problems and their potential solutions are highly complex. With more people living in less space, and the growing perception of pets as family members or even surrogate children, public expectations concerning animals are changing. Neighborhood disputes, personal responsibility conflicts, maintenance of property values, and various quality-of-life concerns are as much a part of today's animal control issues as vicious dogs and rabies.

Consequently, animal care and control programs are shifting increasingly to a service orientation, designed not only to enforce laws and remove homeless animals from the streets, but also to promote standards for responsible pet ownership, assist in dispute resolution, and work to identify and reduce or eliminate the sources of animal problems in the community.

### **Using Promotion and Social Marketing**

As RCCAS grows and works to redefine itself in a manner that meets the current and future needs of the people and animals in Riverside County, the guidance and support of the county regarding community outreach will be critical. The following trends are contributing to the evolution of the traditional animal shelter into more of a "community resource center" and a temporary haven for animals on their way back to lifelong homes:

- Returning animals to their original owners. Some shelters are increasing return to owner rates by heightening the visibility of their services, giving "free rides home" to tagged animals, streamlining lost-and-found reports and sharing them with other shelters, microchipping animals to complement license-tag identification, and working with retailers such as PetsMart to list lost and found animals at computer kiosks in stores and shelters. In the future, better inter-agency communication and Web site listings will continue to increase the number of reunions between people and their pets, and to decrease the number of animals filling shelter kennels and cages.
- Focusing on population controls. Even in communities where accidental breeding

and pet overpopulation are not as severe as they once were, aggressive sterilization programs are still critical to continue the decrease in population numbers. To make a real dent in long-term numbers, a few shelters subsidize spay/neuter surgeries for all pet owners, not just adopters, who would normally be unwilling or unable to pay for the procedure. Mobile spay/neuter clinics are also reaching more pet owners in low-income neighborhoods.

- Enacting animal care and control legislation. Clear and consistent animal care and control laws, and effective enforcement of those laws, are obviously critical to maintaining public safety and protecting animals from abuse and neglect. But they are also important ingredients in educating the public about responsible pet caretaking. Even the more routine efforts of ACOs and other field personnel add up to a huge difference in the way communities perceive and respond to animals. Local leash and waste-disposal laws can go a long way toward keeping non pet owners happy and making communities more pet friendly.
- Targeting rental housing. Because "landlord doesn't accept pets" has become a common reason for relinquishment, many shelters are seeking to tear down the metaphorical fences that stand between pets and people in rental units. By providing information and advice to property managers and helping pet owners find appropriate rental housing, shelters can help more people hold onto their companion animals.<sup>64</sup> In terms of adoptions, the numbers speak for themselves: Researchers say that if all rental housing units permitted pets, about 6.5 million more animals could be placed in new homes.
- Collaborations. Both municipal agencies and private organizations will be more successful if they involve citizens and other animal groups in their programs. Many shelters have already initiated such partnerships, working with breed placement groups to find more homes for animals, partnering with free-roaming cat caretakers to identify and reduce cat colony numbers through TTVARM programs (trap-test vaccinate-alter-release-monitor), and involving volunteers in socializing and training shelter animals.<sup>65</sup> Veterinarians and other animal professionals are working with shelters to identify behavior problems or lifestyle issues while also promoting shelter animals and services.
- Making the case for funding and resources. Effective animal care and control services must begin with sufficient funding from local governments.<sup>66</sup> Staff training, proper equipment, and a sanitary shelter are the basic essentials. But local leaders who truly want to increase the number of animals available for adoption, while decreasing the numbers euthanized, are now recognizing the importance of devoting resources to providing adequate staff and development of innovative programs that increase return-to-owner rates and strengthen people's

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64 HSUS brochures, "Profiting from Pets" and "13 Steps to Finding Rental Housing That Accepts Pets"

65 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Teaching Manners for Life," January/February 2000

66 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Show Me the Money," May/June 2002

relationships with their pets.

- Preserving the bond. In seeking to keep pets and people together, some organizations have launched programs that provide temporary assistance to pet owners who are ill or elderly, or to those who have been displaced from their homes. In some areas, victims of domestic violence can turn to shelters for temporary boarding of their pets. In others, pet owners who have lost their jobs or are experiencing other financial setbacks can turn to pet food-banks at local shelters for help. Community organizations have been established specifically to help people living with HIV/AIDS to obtain veterinary services, in-home pet care, and re-homing services for pets.
- Providing behavioral assistance. Shelters around the country are beginning to stave off relinquishments by providing free or subsidized behavior training and advice. The new push to address such issues as house-soiling and other destructive behaviors includes pet-parenting classes, pre-adoption counseling, and behavior training. Shelter studies reveal a clear need for such programs, indicating that many people who surrender animals are unaware of effective methods for dealing with routine behavior issues.<sup>67, 68</sup>
- Working with sheltered animals. By making animals comfortable during their stay<sup>69</sup> and keeping their minds occupied through light training and stimulating toys, shelters around the country are seeing noticeable differences in the mental health of their furry residents. Dogs that otherwise might languish in their kennels are learning basic commands during walks and feeding times - and showing off their newfound education to potential adopters. Because the dogs take what they learn with them to their new homes, stress-reduction and behavior programs are not only increasing adoptions but also reducing return rates.
- Ensuring the best environment possible. As shelters develop programs and services to extend their outreach to the general public, they are also redesigning their physical structures to make facilities more comfortable for the animals in their care. New designs now include more elements intended to reduce noise, increase sunlight, and add a touch of home to dog kennels and cat rooms. By making use of windows, mirrors, plants, high-quality ventilation systems, and sound absorption materials, shelters can create a more relaxing and stimulating environment for animals, employees, volunteers, and visitors.
- Becoming a true community resource. In the same way that shelters have rallied around the spay/neuter message, they are now beginning to market a broader message about the important roles companion animals play in human lives. Pets

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67 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Minding Their Manners, Teaching People and Their Pets," March/April 2000

68 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Help! My New Cat is Peeing Outside His Litter Box," November/December 2001

69 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "How To" Series, "How to Set Up a Comfy Dog Kennel"

have become an integral part of the family in an increasing number of households, but many pet owners still have more casual relationships with their companion animals. Through media campaigns and creative marketing strategies, shelters can raise public awareness of their services and of the value of animal companionship.

### **Public Relations**

Most shelters focus their public relations efforts in three areas; publicity, media relations, and community relations. Publicity primarily refers to newspaper, radio and television coverage prompted by an event, but it can also be generated by the shelter itself. Media relations connotes a relationship with the media that encourages news organizations to promote the shelter's objectives. And community relations is the most direct form of public relations because every time your staff interacts with the public, any time your agency hosts an event, and every time you mail a newsletter to a member, you're engaging in community relations.

RCCAS must be ready whenever a crisis strikes that may bring negative publicity to their door. Animal shelters must be seen as a safe haven within their community. Conflicts relating to animal care and services (legitimate or otherwise) depicted primarily in the local media tend to lead only to further divisiveness among those involved, rather than resolution. And, by providing the public with only a rough sketch rather than the full clear picture, ongoing negative publicity has the potential to lead to increased animal abandonment by an untrusting public.

The best way to address an image problem is to show the public, through actions in everyday service, that the department cares about animals and is committed to their protection. To do so also means not only producing good press but also demonstrating consistency, kindness, and timeliness in dealing with the public's concerns. When animal care and control professionals take pride in their work, the public clearly notices. The best "PR" for the agency is ensuring that the community receives the highest level of service when dealing with RCCAS and the animals receive consistent, high-quality care.

This being said, the fact remains that the very nature of animal control work is such that it creates conflict. The department must have the time and staff to be able to turn around reporters' requests almost immediately. With the advent of on-line media, reporters are often working under the constant pressure of imminent deadlines. Broadcast reporters generally need to conduct on-camera interviews by early afternoon, in order to be able to: a) transport the videotape back to the station; b) allow for editing; and then, c) air the story that evening. It is extremely beneficial to have an appointed spokesperson available who has been well-trained to respond to media inquiries. Reporters, readers and viewers are likely to remember a face or a name they've seen before and will, over time, come to respect that person as an authority on that subject matter. Responding to media inquiries on a timely basis, asking about deadlines, and making every effort to accommodate the deadlines will also likely lead to a stronger relationship with reporters and will give them a sense that they are dealing with professionals who understand and respect their needs.

It is important for animal care and control officials to understand the role of the media. The media provides entertainment, disseminates public information, and acts as a watchdog for the community. A publicly funded animal control agency is likely to be scrutinized by reporters,

and the combination of the public's interest in animals and society's fascination with political scandal contributes to a news organization's desire to publish or air any stories related to animal care and control. Any activity or situation appears more sinister when reporters are blocked or stories are recorded by undercover camera. On the other hand, a camera crew that is welcomed to the shelter, given a thorough tour by a shelter director or manager, and encouraged to ask questions is more likely to be inclined to portray an objective or even positive portrait of the shelter and the shelter staff.

Considering what has transpired to date, it may not be easy to improve the relationship with the newspapers. But RCCAS must show that it is making every possible effort to improve its operations and image and that it truly cares for the animals and the community.

## 9.2 VOLUNTEERS

### **Observations:**

RCCAS had a volunteer program in place that was supervised by the volunteer services coordinator. They have an established process of selecting and screening volunteers that begins with a volunteer application form. They have approximately 38 active volunteers in place, who are principally involved in off-site pet adoptions, although some volunteers were observed in the shelter.

There are five levels of volunteers and four of them are identified by color-coded uniforms: The Omega I (beginning level) volunteers are not usually supplied with any uniform. They wear street clothes because the majority of their duties do not involve working at the shelter. The other four levels, Omega II through Alpha are supplied with colored smocks with the color indicative of their volunteer level. Nametags or guest badges were supplied to all levels of volunteers, including Omega I, and they are occasionally supplied with white smock uniforms for their appearances outside the shelter, such as off site adoptions. Volunteers advance through these levels by a display of competency, achievement and commitment.

There is a volunteer handbook on-site and copies are distributed to volunteers. The handbook contains instructions on kennel and cage cleaning procedures for dogs and cats, feeding protocols, safety instructions, room by room (receiving, grooming, etc.) procedures, dog walking instructions, instructions for treats, blankets and toys, animal handling protocols, outreach adoption standards, foster care and even a section on "what to do when you have nothing to do."

The volunteer applications include detailed questions about interests, areas of special ability, educational background, and advise applicants that they may be subject to a criminal background check. The application requests a list of personal references, prior volunteer experiences and emergency contact information, as well as a disclaimer, liability waiver, availability chart, and code of confidentiality. It also contains a form for the parents of minor volunteers to give permission for their children to volunteer.

RCCAS actively recruits volunteers via visitations at high schools and colleges. Some recruitment is performed during off-site adoptions.

Volunteers generally set their own schedule determined by their availability. Observations made by the volunteer services coordinator determined in large part where volunteers were needed. Orientations were conducted once a month and training was usually accomplished by job shadowing employees or other more experienced volunteers. Volunteers' conduct and performance were generally monitored by kennel staff, but the volunteer services coordinator sporadically monitored volunteers and followed-up and tracked progress on new volunteers. Actual volunteer job descriptions were not in evidence although the volunteer handbook covered procedures fairly well.

Although RCCAS and the volunteer services coordinator would like to conduct exit interviews, they are rarely performed. He also mentioned volunteer retention as being a significant problem and that most volunteers tend to drift away rather than depart suddenly as a result of dispute or disciplinary action.

Volunteers are rewarded or recognized by annual volunteer dinners. Volunteers of the Year are recognized by having a large, framed, color photo prominently hung in a public hallway at the shelter. The county board of supervisors also presents awards to volunteers in recognition of their achievements.

**Recommendations:**

Although the RCCAS has a fairly well established volunteer program and the education & volunteer services coordinator takes pride in it, some alterations may be in order. For volunteer section recommendations, please refer to the enclosed volunteer guide.<sup>70</sup>

- ✓ Designate a staff member whose primary responsibility would be to train new volunteers in the various tasks for which they will be responsible. This person could also formulate an established plan or test to advance more productive volunteers to the next level. In addition, regularly scheduled interviews with volunteers might boost morale and keep them functioning instead of allowing them to drift away. Finally, a reward or "perks" system might be implemented to maintain interest on the part of volunteers.
- ✓ Staff needs to "buy-in" to a volunteer program. They must be involved with planning the program and need to see how volunteers will help them in their job, rather than create more work for them.
- ✓ Meet with staff to determine their comfort level with volunteers. Address any concerns they may have by creating policies that put staff at ease.
- ✓ Remember that most of the people who volunteer know only that they want to help animals. They may have little or no understanding of the actual work your shelter does or the philosophical issues surrounding animal sheltering. Volunteers are your ambassadors and they need all the information they can get to assist visitors at the shelter. The

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70 McFarland, Betsy "Volunteer Management, A Guide for Animal Care Organizations," The Humane Society of the United States, 2003.

volunteer handbook serves as an invaluable resource that volunteers can refer to time and again during their service with your organization. So, in addition to the current basic rules and policies, make sure that the pages of that manual contain:

- Goals of RCCAS and the goals of the volunteer program
  - Services RCCAS provides
  - RCCAS's philosophy on complicated issues such as intakes, adoption and euthanasia
  - General information about RCCAS, including operating hours and important phone numbers
  - RCCAS policies such as adoption procedures and holding periods
  - A brief history of RCCAS and its achievements
- ✓ Create volunteer jobs that are meaningful! If volunteers aren't made to feel like an important part of the agency, they will leave.
  - ✓ Improve recruitment efforts, especially for volunteers at the kennel attendant level. The University of California at Riverside is a major educational institution in the area. College students can make great volunteers, especially if their curriculum study includes animal or humane studies. Also, volunteer organizations for retirees can be a great asset. Thirdly, if there is a military base in the vicinity, this could be of benefit as military personnel receive recognition for assisting their communities. Remember: You don't need a job for every person that wants to volunteer. You just need a volunteer for every job you need to fill.

### **Training**

- ✓ In addition to an orientation, all volunteers need a formal training class that will give them the basics they need to work in the shelter. Some shelters choose to have a mandatory animal handling class during which all new volunteers learn the basics of the shelter operation and how to handle the animals. Once that training is complete, the volunteers are then trained on their specific job assignment. For example, a dog walker will have different training requirements than a volunteer adoption assistant. It's important to tailor the training to the job that needs to be done.
- ✓ Post instructions as much as possible. Be detailed. It's worth the time because it will keep volunteers from making mistakes. It will also make the volunteers feel more autonomous because they won't have to bother staff every time they forget how to complete a task such as mixing the cleaning solution or completing licensing paperwork. Even though volunteers are trained, they are not there full time like the staff so it will take them longer to get the hang of things. They will often need reminders. The "How To" sheets published in *Animal Sheltering* magazine are great for this purpose.
- ✓ Keep in mind the more you increase a volunteer's responsibilities, the more time staff members will have to spend training the volunteer. Once the program has stabilized, consider using well-trained volunteers to teach new volunteers the ropes. This will not only alleviate staff pressure, but will provide a growth opportunity for your seasoned

volunteers.

### **Supervision**

- ✓ Provide a clear chain of command for your volunteers. Volunteers need to know whom to report to within the organization, and that person needs to be available to the volunteer.
- ✓ Set high expectations for your volunteers. Don't be afraid to challenge them. Volunteers usually leave their assignments because they are underused, not because they are overworked.
- ✓ Deal with volunteer problems right away. Your volunteers and paid staff will respect you for it. Document volunteer performance and keep a record in the volunteer's file.
- ✓ From time to time, problems with volunteers are bound to occur. However, if you take the time to create a solid program, you will have fewer problems and the problems you do have will be easier to solve. Remember that it is perfectly acceptable to fire a volunteer when necessary.
- ✓ Keep in mind that volunteers will need to know much of what the staff needs to know when issues arise or there is a change in shelter policy. Be sure to keep the volunteers informed about current events related to RCCAS's operations.
- ✓ As volunteers leave the program, consider conducting exit interviews. This information will assist the volunteer coordinator in improving the program and help to address problems, which may have lead to the volunteer's departure.

### **Discussion:**

While the long list of benefits offered by a volunteer program is immediately compelling, the pitfalls of a poorly conceived and/or poorly managed program can be crippling. Difficulties involving volunteers are rarely brought about solely by the volunteers themselves; they nearly always occur because a shelter lacks sufficient structure for the program or the resolve to manage volunteers effectively.

Volunteers who are not properly trained may make mistakes and alienate staff members. Some volunteers may become disillusioned and leave if the program isn't well structured and their role within the organization is not clear. If this happens, they may spread the word in the community about their bad experience with your organization. In addition, to keep staff and volunteers from feeling alienated, staff must be on-board with the volunteer program and roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined.

The volunteer coordinator should act as the human resources department of a volunteer program. The volunteer coordinator works with the staff to identify which job functions can be fulfilled by volunteers. The coordinator creates volunteer job descriptions, sets goals, implements training programs, and provides ongoing program evaluation. It's important to remember that the day-to-day management and training of individual volunteers falls primarily on the shoulders of the

managers and staff members working side-by-side with them. While the volunteer coordinator can lay the foundation for a successful program, he or she cannot be expected to individually manage, train, and evaluate every volunteer in the program. That's why frontline managers and staff must be committed to managing and working with volunteers, and why your organization needs to ensure that staff support the program.

It is crucial that staff and volunteers have a mutual respect for one another, and see themselves as part of a team—working together for the benefit of the animals and the community. Just as crucial is that volunteers understand the hierarchy of leadership, who is in charge, and who has the final say in all shelter matters. A well-run volunteer program can be an organization's best publicity in the community, and happy workers its best ambassadors.

Remember: the purpose of your volunteer program is to help you help the animals. Determine when you want volunteers and how many you need at one time and recruit accordingly. Having volunteers come in whenever they want may work when there are only a handful of volunteers; however, this can become problematic as a program grows. If you have too many volunteers at one time, you'll overwhelm the staff, volunteers will get in the way, and they won't feel needed. Or, you will have big gaps where you don't have any volunteer help at all.

Volunteer recognition is a daily on-going task. The more integrated the volunteers are and the more meaningful work they are assigned, the more motivated they will be. A well-run volunteer program is your best volunteer motivator and recognition.

While RCCAS exists to serve the community, a volunteer program exists to serve RCCAS. It's important not to lose sight of the goal of the program and to maintain control so it works to help the operation, not hinder it.

### 9.3 HUMANE EDUCATION

#### **Observations:**

RCCAS has a formal education program that it utilizes; however, funding is not officially provided for it. Solicitation of donations to support educational programs are sought by the volunteer services coordinator, but he is discouraged by the fact that these donations are summarily deposited in the general fund and are difficult to retrieve for their intended purpose. The primary educational programs are conducted by a uniformed animal services education officer and shelter mascot dog. Curriculum consists of in-school visits and the *KIND News* program, and is generally geared to responsible pet ownership, understanding of animal related ordinances, the importance of spay/neuter of domestic pets and safety around dogs.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The use of mass media would be of benefit in these educational endeavors. Radio call-in shows and column space donated by area newspapers could provide an outlet for commonly asked questions or a forum for educational outreach. Meetings could be held in schools and other designated community areas for purposes of educating the public.

- ✓ The HSUS team applauds RCCAS for implementing a humane education program. Check the following resources for more ideas.<sup>71, 72, 73</sup>
- ✓ Designate a restricted account to track and release money raised or donated specifically for education purposes.

## 9.4 RELATIONS WITH AREA ANIMAL SHELTERS/ORGANIZATIONS

### **Observations:**

Relations with other organizations in the area are in disarray. The local humane society is viewed as an adversary. Breed placement groups have taken their complaints to the media. Owners of lost pets wearing identification have documented difficulty in retrieving their companion animals. Other humane organizations have voiced complaints about uncooperativeness and an unwillingness to accept help on the part of RCCAS.

In reading public comment and during conversations at the site visits, The HSUS team encountered a number of both detractors and supporters of the organization and director, as is usually the case. The team understands that the truth of people's statements, either pro or con, usually lies somewhere in between their polarities and can be interpreted or embellished by the speaker subject to his or her own personal agenda's goals. However, the ultimate responsibility for public perception of an organization rests with the director, as he/she sets the tone for other representatives to follow in terms of action, response or reaction.

There reportedly have been little or no efforts on the part of shelter management to re-establish ties with other organizations outside of an ACO who is working diligently to restore relations with area breed placement groups.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Senior management and staff must make every effort to communicate with and restore cooperative atmospheres, within reason and within the bounds of the law and shelter operational feasibility, with every other shelter, breed placement group, humane society and organization in the area.
- ✓ Find a program (such as mobile spay/neuter) on which RCCAS and another agency can agree and work cooperatively.

### **Discussion:**

Poor relations, especially for long periods of time, with other like-missioned groups can spell disaster for any organization. Shelter leaders must possess a sense of community awareness in order to see this situation developing and take steps to control the damage that would inevitably erupt.

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71 National Association for Humane and Environmental Education program and materials catalog 2004, [www.nahee.org](http://www.nahee.org)

72 *An Animal Care and Control Professional's Guide to Classroom Presentations*

73 HSUS *Animal Sheltering Magazine*, "The Character Connection," September/October 2001

This is not to say that every demand made by other groups must be accommodated, but a sincere effort must be made to hear them out and see what compromise can be reached. If a change in operational structure is necessitated, so be it. If a shelter staff member must be given the additional responsibility of being the sole contact for a breed placement group or another shelter to maintain good communications, then that should happen.

In cases like these, senior management bears the ultimate responsibility of the success or failure for community relations.

## 9.5 CLIENT SERVICE

### **Observations:**

Overall, client service seemed to be handled fairly well. Although there was no training manual or procedures guide, the staff was cognizant of its importance to the smooth running of the organization. In listening to phone conversations both at the front desk and in the administrative offices, staff seemed to be responsive to client needs and questions. Staff was courteous without being saccharine, quick in getting to the point, and prompt in response.

Each department is responsible for its own customer service needs. Riverside County also provides classes and training in certain areas including client service. The staff was also provided with Verbal Judo training through an outside agency.

The HSUS team found this particular section of service to be well within accepted norms of the industry.<sup>74</sup>

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ As previously mentioned in section 3.5, Building Security, the Plexiglas partition should be removed.

### **Discussion:**

The HSUS team was told the Plexiglas was installed after some particularly fractious incidents involving customers at the front desk. However, every shelter has its share of irate customers. In fact, every industry or store that has to deal with the public has them. But the irate are usually a small percentage of the people we deal with and we find the majority of shelter customers are not this way. If a client service representative can maintain professionalism and calmly defend policy, oftentimes other customers present will pass along what they've witnessed to other members of the community and commend the employee and organization for handling the situation with dignity and grace under fire.<sup>75,76</sup>

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74 For additional client service examples, contact The Denver Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado  
75 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Customer Service: How Can It Help You?"  
November/December 1996  
76 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "When Stress Turns Into Distress," March/April 1999

## 9.6 WEB SITE

### **Observations:**

The RCCAS has an attractive and functional web site. The site is quite extensive, interactive and easy to follow. It has pages on animal control, lost pets, county ordinances, tips for new pet owners (both dog and cat), answers to frequently asked questions, spay/neuter, vaccination services and pricing, adoption pricing, license fees, directions to the shelter, phone numbers, hours of operation, information on volunteer and education services as well as links to other web sites. It also features photos and bios of adoptable pets that can be updated at a moments notice.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ RCCAS should begin using the free services of Pet Finder, the PetShelter Network ([www.petshelternetwork.com](http://www.petshelternetwork.com)), Pets911.com, and other “virtual shelter” online services. These online Web sites are dedicated to helping homeless companion animals find new homes by hosting hundreds of networked animal shelters and rescue organizations nationwide. Each offers RCCAS the opportunity to promote its animals and services to those around the country. In addition, most of these agencies have incentives or services available to shelters that use their sites. For example, ten percent of PetShelter Network advertising gross revenues are distributed among participating shelters.
- ✓ RCCAS should provide a section to direct people to alternative resources in the community for wildlife issues and pet veterinary care emergencies when RCCAS is closed and unable to assist.
- ✓ Provide links to sponsor’s web sites.

## 9.7 FERAL CATS

### **Observations:**

RCCAS handles feral cats and has a written SOP. The cats enter the shelter, are logged as feral animals on Chameleon, and are held in the cat quarantine section for five days. Customers are allowed in the area only under staff supervision. Demand for humane traps provided by the shelter for control of feral cat populations is usually higher in the summer than it is during the winter months. Humane traps are provided at no charge to the public but they are subject to a waiting list. Ear crops are used to identify cats that are in the TNR program. Management of feral cat colonies on county lands is subsidized by county government. There are some recurring sporadic problems with feral cats on city lands, but county lands hold the majority of the feral cat population.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Refer to Community Approaches to Feral Cats for more detailed information on dealing with feral cat issues.<sup>77</sup>

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77 Margaret R. Slater, “Community Approaches to Feral Cats; Problems,

- ✓ Keep accurate records of feral cats and kittens handled by RCCAS and their disposition. Over time this data will help RCCAS determine where resources are currently going and where they might be more useful.

**Discussion:**

Though neither euthanasia nor trap-neuter-release is the prescription for every community, each has its time and place. In some communities, both approaches are used to address different circumstances. Humane advocates will no doubt continue the debate over feral cat management, but for now many shelters are finding that working with TNR programs are an effective way to build bridges between the animals, the animal care and control agency, and the public.<sup>78, 79, 80</sup>

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78 *Alternatives, and Recommendations*  
*JAVMA*, Vol 222, No 1, January 1, 2003, “Evaluation of the Effect of a Long-Term Trap-Neuter-Release and Adoption Program on a Free-Roaming Cat Population”

79 *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 5(4), 285-298, “The Effects of Implementing a Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Program in a Florida County Animal Control Service”

80 *JAVMA*, Vol 212, No. 2, January 15, 1998, “Free Roaming and Feral Cats —Their Impact on Wildlife and Human Beings”

## 10.0 FIELD SERVICES/ANIMAL CONTROL

### 10.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

For more information on Field Services and Animal Control, please refer to the enclosed *Animal Control Management* (ICMA) book.<sup>81</sup>

The HSUS team interviewed the RCCAS interim supervising ACO as well as senior level and other ACOs. The HSUS team also conducted field observations by riding with ACOs while they performed routine duties. The HSUS team commends RCCAS for its equipment, initial training, record keeping, forms, interagency relationships and vehicles. RCCAS has all the basic components necessary for an effective field services program. Riverside City and County should be commended for the pro-active programs relating to spay and neuter. It is imperative that county government understands that lowering animal control costs hinges on pro-active programs that reduce the number of animals born, and outreach programs to citizens that improve animal care conditions.

Based upon the interviews and field observations, The HSUS team does have concerns related to field training, euthanasia in the field, animal handling and care of animals on the trucks, and sanitation of the vehicles. There are also concerns in regards to the proper storage of controlled drugs in the vehicles.

#### **Discussion:**

A professional animal care and control program protects animals and people alike, and improves the quality of life in a community. An organized program is within the reach of any community, large or small. To be successful, however, it must be a formal program with sufficient budgetary allocations, managed by a competent, professional staff.

Animal control enforcement and animal rescue are often thankless tasks and, although the situation has improved dramatically in recent years, ACOs still find themselves continually battling the cultural stereotype of the “dog catcher.” However, animal rescue and enforcement programs provide a life-saving service to the animals on both an immediate level (assisting individual animals) and through education (as a vehicle for motivating change in public attitudes and behaviors).

From rescuing animals to educating the public, ACOs must spend their days juggling multiple tasks and responsibilities to ensure the safety of the entire community. Not only is it their job to protect animals from people and people from animals, they must also simultaneously promote their peaceful coexistence. To that end, ACOs must learn to balance compassion with reason;

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81 *Animal Control Management, A Guide for Local Governments*, International City/County Management Association, 2001.

mastering the art of dealing with difficult people while also humanely handling frightened or injured animals.

Animal care and control agencies that are unable to respond to animal emergencies not only fail the animals in need, but also develop poor images in the eyes of the public, who expects its emergencies to take priority. Members of the public also place a similar value on the agency's ability to "do something" when they hear of violations of anti-cruelty laws. However, the public has a much more difficult time understanding the need for, let alone funding of, effective enforcement of leash laws, licensing requirements, nuisance response and quarantine programs — unless they themselves are facing immediate problems with dogs running at large, a child who has been bitten, or a companion animal who has been lost. Nonetheless, these enforcement efforts may be even more far-reaching in terms of their impact on the overall welfare of animals in the community than animal rescue and cruelty prosecution combined.

Animal control laws relating to issues such as leashing, licensing, vaccinating against rabies, preventing a pet from becoming a nuisance, etc., define the basic responsibilities for which communities hold pet owners accountable. If such laws are not adequately enforced or taken seriously by the agency authorized to enforce them, the message to the people is that they do not need to take these basic responsibilities seriously themselves. In contrast, in communities where such laws are routinely enforced, the general level of overall responsibility for all pets in the community increases, and expectations for individual owners increases as well. Additionally, if enforcement of these laws is undertaken with the focused goal of educating the public as to how and why to "do the right thing" rather than solely issuing citations, the public perception of animal control programs will also be much more "animal and people friendly." Successful methods and techniques employed in progressive field services programs include: educational consultations with careful follow-ups, "fix-it" tickets, vaccination and licensing clinics, identification tag promotions, "free rides home," and animal control bicycle patrols.

## **10.2 OFFICER SAFETY**

### **10.21 GENERAL SAFETY ISSUES/ OSHA**

#### **Observations:**

There was a risk management department for the county which had a safety group that met once a month. The interim supervising ACO acted as the safety manager for the department of animal services.

Field operations had a large meeting area and work room. Noise levels were normal and not a safety concern. ACOs were provided protective eyewear to use while doing euthanasia in the field. Written guidelines were provided.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The position of safety manager should be assigned to the position of shelter operations chief, not the position of interim supervising ACO.

## 10.22 OPERATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND FIELD OFFICER TRAINING

### **Observations:**

The RCCAS field operations department had a section in the policy and procedure manual that covered equipment use and maintenance, search warrants, completion of paperwork, trapping, use of controlled substances in the field, nuisance complaints, dangerous animals and quarantine procedures. When staff members were questioned regarding animal handling and care, they responded they were allowed to bring animals into the shelter whenever they felt necessary. Most of the procedures were dated for 2000 and 2001 and the latest update was done in September 2003. Current procedures appeared thorough, although not all procedures were observed in practice. The HSUS team did observe morning briefings during which procedure changes were discussed, and provided in writing to the ACOs.

However, there were several areas where procedures were insufficient or absent. For example, no written procedures or protocols could be found relating to keeping animals cool during the summer months, or regarding the basics of providing food and water to animals on the trucks or when brought into the shelter. No information was found to confirm that staff received any training on animal health and first aid, or how to deal with animals experiencing heat stroke. Staff did confirm that animals had died from heat in the trucks while in transit. Also lacking was a written procedure on scanning animals for microchips. When asked if ACOs scan for microchips, they said yes, but this was not witnessed in the field. There was also a lack of procedures involving sanitation and cleanout of the vehicles. Inspection of several of the trucks revealed contaminants of hair and fecal matter still in the truck cages (See Fig 20).



Figure 20

There were procedures in the manual that were no longer valid, such as Field Service Procedure #327, Animal Loading Ramp Procedures. Loading ramps were no longer being used.

ACO training was referenced in Field Service Procedure # 303 written April 2002. New hire training consisted of:

1. Book Training, which included review of municipal codes.
2. In House Training, which included euthanasia training and animal handling.

3. Field Training, which was a minimum of two weeks. This involved daily and weekly evaluations. There was written testing of material and there must be a final signoff by the senior supervisor as well as the director.
4. ACOs were required to be trained under State Statute 832-Required Training in Arrest and Firearms.

Review of ACO personnel files did document euthanasia training for ACO staff as well as other certificates for different training programs.

Bite Procedures:

RCCAS reports to the Health Department. As such they are responsible for rabies control and infectious disease control involving animals to humans as stated in H&S 120125. The animal services department had several procedures in place for impounding animals that have bitten (procedure #302), procedures for home quarantine and when an animal is not found (SOP #310 and #313), and procedures for processing potentially dangerous dogs as a result of the dog bite. There was also a procedure for forwarding the information to the health department authority (SOP #332). These procedures overlapped in some of the protocols, and were scattered throughout the policy manual.

Euthanasia Procedures:

Title 16 CCR.2039 Sodium Pentobarbital/Euthanasia Training only requires that persons performing euthanasia in the state of California have completed a “curriculum of at least eight (8) hours as specified in the publication by the California Animal Control Directors Association and the State Humane Association of California entitled “Euthanasia Training Curriculum” dated October 24, 1997, that includes the following subjects:

1. History and reasons for euthanasia
2. Humane animal restraint techniques
3. Sodium pentobarbital injection methods and procedures
4. Verification of death
5. Safety training and stress management for personnel
6. Record keeping and regulation compliance for sodium pentobarbital

ACOs were observed euthanizing animals in the field and the technique was considered to be acceptable.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Staff needs to be trained on how to cool off animals that may be suffering from heat because of having been stressed during pursuit or locked in a confined area.
- ✓ Procedures need to be implemented stating that all staff are required to immediately provide food and water to animals brought into the shelter or kept on the trucks for extended periods of time.
- ✓ The ACOs as well as all euthanasia staff should be re-certified on a yearly basis for euthanasia. It is recommended that staff be trained on the current methods of euthanasia through The HSUS *Euthanasia Training Manual*.

- ✓ Upon off loading of animals, the truck cages need to be disinfected and hosed out.
- ✓ All dogs and cats should be scanned for microchips. Written policy should be enacted immediately, staff trained on how to scan, and procedures put in place outlining monthly checks on the scanners to ensure they are working properly.
- ✓ Senior management should review all quarantine procedures to determine if they can be condensed for ease of understanding.
- ✓ Policy and procedure manual should be kept in the vehicles for easy reference.

**Discussion:**

Although overall operating policies and techniques were acceptable, humane standards of care must be given consistent attention and euthanasia skills updated for the benefit of human safety as well as to minimize stress on the animals. The daily care and euthanasia of animals in shelters will always be issues of public concern. Therefore, it is up to government agencies as well as humane societies that are open admission facilities to ensure the highest standards of care for all animals at all times.

## **10.23 COMMUNICATIONS/DISPATCH**

**Observations:**

The dispatch department was set up in a room that measured approximately 15 square feet. This room was airy with work stations to seat three dispatchers. There was a pass through window into the field services room that allowed for easy accessibility to one of the senior ACOs or interim supervisor. The clerical area or “business room” was located just outside of the field services office and dispatch. This room was approximately 30 feet wide by 40 feet long and was set up with 12 cubicles to provide privacy for each employee who was taking phone calls and performing other tasks such as licensing checks and follow up. The dispatching department is part of the clerical area and is supervised by an office supervisor who is assisted by two office assistant III persons.

Two years ago, RCCAS installed the Chameleon software system along with an 800 megahertz radio system and Nextel two way paging phones for added backup and communication with the ACOs. Chameleon software support and Nextel phone services were provided through the local vendor, while internal county support was provided for the radio system. As dispatch staff receives calls, they are entered into the chameleon dispatch system where it assigned the call a priority code, and event number. Although The HSUS team was provided a copy of the dispatching procedures, they were not dated, nor did they include any reference to priority coding of calls. The only reference to priority calls was found in RCCAS field service manual policy number 317, Stand-By Duties, section IV, which lists the types of calls for response during stand-by duty.

The HSUS team observed dispatching from the perspective of both the dispatchers and the ACOs. The clerical employees taking phone calls were cross-trained to take complaints and

answer questions regarding licensing and adoptions and other general questions regarding the department operations. Calls taken by clerical staff were inputted into the computer system and then forwarded to dispatchers for routing to ACOs on the road. This department seemed well organized.

There was a minimum of two dispatchers assigned to the dispatch area during the shift. Calls were answered from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. When the shelter is closed (after hours, Sundays and holidays), calls are taken by members of local law enforcement who receive a roster that lists which ACO is on call with contact information for that person.

ACOs were assigned calls based on their area assignments. The computer system was being utilized to provide printouts of follow up cases and lower priority calls were being assigned based on calls received by the office assistants. Priority calls were dispatched to ACOs for response as soon as received. The HSUS team observed emergency calls being dispatched along with ACOs requesting assignment of additional calls or asking to assist other ACOs when their assignments were completed. Once a call was completed ACOs notified dispatchers of the status of the call, so it could be updated in the computer before the ACO's return.

During the site visit, it was very apparent that the dispatch department and ACOs were effective in time management in the field regarding call response. This was determined by how the ACOs handled calls and provided information to the dispatchers and by the availability of clerical support for ACOs to assist with inputting animal information and report information into the computer before ACO arrival back at base.

During fiscal year 2002-2003 the city ACOs responded to 14,354 requests for service. Under the contract with the city, a minimum of 5 ACOs must always be available to respond to calls in the city. Based on a normal work year of 260 days, and allowing for an average 10 days of vacation time, ACOs assigned to the city are responding to an average of 11 calls per day. During the same time frame county ACOs responded to 18,263 requests for service or an average of 6 calls per day that, according to staff, is representative of a normal day. The reduction in the number of calls being handled can in part be explained by the amount of drive time into some of the areas by the ACOs assigned to the county. However, the HSUS team was told that ACOs were being assigned other tasks at the shelter because of staff vacancies.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ The current computer system should allow for all calls to be prioritized.
- ✓ Statistics should be available on all areas from where calls are coming. Management should review these statistics to determine what kind of educational or enforcement programs may benefit the areas, and then designate work teams to spend time in the areas focusing on problem resolution.
- ✓ Fill staff vacancies in ACO positions or in other positions so existing ACOs can respond to the public.
- ✓ Encourage senior ACOs to work more in the field assisting other ACOs with calls.

**Discussion:**

Field response time is very important when dealing with animal care and control issues. The public does not call animal services unless they have a problem and usually that problem has escalated to what the public feels is an emergency. Therefore, no matter what type of call is being responded to, it must be a priority. Filling vacancies of ACOs and other critical positions will help eliminate complaints from the public regarding lack of response by the ACOs, and will improve overall ACO response.

## **10.24 EQUIPMENT/ VEHICLES/ UNIFORMS**

**Observations:**

The HSUS team would like to commend RCCAS for the variety of equipment that is provided to its ACOs. The ACOs maintain the basic animal handling equipment and supplies necessary to competently, safely, and humanely perform field services duties. The senior ACO issues equipment to each individual ACO. During the site visit, the senior ACO provided The HSUS team with an ACO equipment list. Upon receiving this list, The HSUS team conducted a spot check of ACO vehicles and found that all the vehicles in operation carried most of the items on the equipment list and the equipment was functional and in good repair. There were some basic items in the trucks that were not listed on the equipment list, such as the ACO Manual. When asked about the manual, ACOs referenced the manuals in the office. ACOs were carrying the 2004 California Animal Laws Handbook.

New cages had arrived during the site visit and staff stated that if they needed a piece of equipment to better enable them to do their job, it was usually provided.

RCCAS had a fleet of 21 vehicles that were used to perform animal control. It was noted that all vehicles were replaced when mileage reached 100,000 miles. The age of the trucks were 1999 and older models. Each was equipped with a modular animal transport bed to allow segregation of sick, injured or aggressive animals. Although some of the trucks were equipped with swamp coolers, they were not all functioning, and some had been blown off by high winds. All the vehicles were white in color, and other than decals on the driver's side door indicating "Riverside County Animal Control" in small letters, had no other markings (See Figs. 21-22). Each ACO was assigned a vehicle to use while on duty unless it was in for maintenance.

RCCAS also has two horse trailers and a collapsible livestock fence for use when dealing with farm animals. The older horse trailer is used to haul supplies and is no longer used to transport animals because of its design. The other trailer was in good working condition and staff was observed training on how to hookup and pull the trailer.



Figure 21



Figure 22

ACOs were trained in chemical capture techniques and written procedures were in place. The HSUS team verified that drug use and situations of use were being properly documented and that certifications and other paperwork for ACOs were current. These files were kept in the field services office and were arranged by ACO. One ACO on each shift was assigned to carry the equipment into the field to assist other ACOs as necessary, and this process was witnessed during the site visit. The drugs are currently being transported in a bag that is kept in the back compartment or in the cab of the truck.

Each ACO was provided an adequate number of uniforms. ACOs were allocated both long pants and shorts for wear during summer months. Uniforms were traditional type animal control uniforms with dark colored slacks and a tan shirt with shoulder patch. Badges were worn on the shirts, with nametags. Senior ACOs were identified from line staff by wearing white shirts instead of the tan colored shirt. During the site visit, the ACO's were in uniform and presented a good public image.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Air conditioning must be immediately installed in the back of every animal control vehicle.
- ✓ The protocol for drug storage should be reviewed. The sodium pentobarbital must be kept in a locked box that is secured in a locked compartment of the truck.
- ✓ All vehicles should be marked with the agency's name and provide a logo and phone numbers for visibility to the public. Contact information for the spay/neuter and rabies clinic could also be included.
- ✓ RCCAS senior management should consider providing more training to ACOs.
- ✓ Compare current ACO equipment supply with the following suggested list:

Animal Handling Equipment

- restraint pole(s);
- cable leashes;

- regular leashes;
- long-handled net;
- capture gloves;
- disposable gloves;
- heavy rubber gloves;
- plastic carriers;
- raccoon/cat trap;
- dog trap on wheels;
- trap transfer cage(s);
- animal stretcher with wheels;
- blankets (for scared, trapped, and injured animals);
- lead shank—large animal;
- animal grasper;
- fowl leg grasper;
- horse halter;
- rope halter (cow/horse);
- rope (cotton);
- snake tongs and snake bag;
- plastic bat container

#### Health and Safety Items

- waterless disinfectant;
- biohazard protective kit;
- first-aid kit for animals;
- first-aid kit for people;
- thermometers;
- eye wash;
- hand wipes;
- hand warmers;
- safety glasses and hard hat;
- life jacket;
- fire extinguisher;
- flares/triangles

#### Food and Comfort Items for Animals

- towels (cloth and paper);
- squeak toy/ball;
- bottled drinking water;
- dog food;
- dog treats;
- cat food;
- cat treats;
- sweet feed in coffee can, to make noise to alert equine and farm animals;
- food and water bowls

### Tools

- bolt cutters;
- shovel;
- pocket knife;
- ice scraper and snowbrush;
- regular screwdriver and Phillips screwdriver;
- hatchet;
- snow shovel;
- duct tape;
- masking tape;
- tool box;
- garbage bags;
- crowbar

### Record-keeping Forms and Educational Materials

- complete animal control laws, including abbreviated versions for the public;
- citations;
- summons;
- mileage log sheet;
- metal citation/warning and metal ticket books;
- license reminder postcards;
- license applications;
- trap agreements;
- dog tag ID;
- deer tags for deer hit by cars;
- door notices;
- business cards;
- incident reports;
- bite reports;
- microchip scanner;
- map to shelter;
- sample lost/found fliers;
- general responsible pet owner information handouts;
- stapler/staples

### Investigation Devices

- 35-millimeter camera;
- Polaroid camera;
- video camera;
- tape recorder;
- note paper;
- Tufts Animal Care and Condition scales for dogs;
- horse conformation chart;
- Henneke body scoring chart;

- horse weight tape;
- cattle weight tape;
- large envelopes for evidence;
- small and large plastic zipper-lock bags for evidence;
- stickers/labels (for labeling evidence);
- indelible markers;
- pens

#### Weather and Vision Aids

- binoculars;
- flashlight & batteries;
- magnetic flood light;
- raincoat;
- heavy gloves;
- boots;
- waterproof tarp;
- sunglasses

#### Communications Equipment

- handheld radio that connects to dispatchers;
- cellular telephone;
- pager

#### Miscellaneous

- deodorizing spray (for skunk and other odors);
- air freshener;
- high-quality, up-to-date maps of areas covered, kept in a ring binder;
- disinfectant for cleaning cages and equipment;
- a clean uniform

## 10.25 LAW ENFORCEMENT BACKUP AND RELATIONS

### **Observations:**

ACOs stated that when needed, the law enforcement community was responsive to their calls for assistance with hostile or uncooperative pet owners. No police assistance was requested while The HSUS team rode with ACOs. ACOs who had been assigned in the city and then the county did comment that response time for police assistance in the city was faster than in the county. ACOs try to assist and respond to police requests as quickly as possible to maintain and improve working relationships.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Continue to strengthen the relationship with local law enforcement through good communication, cross training and timely response to requests for assistance. Some communities have a representative of animal control address law enforcement somewhere in the cycle of training once every year or two. The purpose is to explain the role and

abilities of animal control, answer questions, and thank the police for their continued support.

### **10.3 EMERGENCIES/AFTER HOURS**

#### **Observations:**

Emergency field services are available after-hours through a rotating emergency duty ACO system. This system requires the ACO assigned to be the after hours response person for the week to work a regular shift of 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and then from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. as emergency duty ACO. The emergency ACO handles emergency calls as they are dispatched via a pager or cell phone contact through police dispatch once RCCAS dispatchers leave at 5:00 p.m.

The only emergencies that an ACO responds to at night include: stray bite in which ownership of the animal cannot be established, injured stray animal, sick stray animals, loose livestock, assistance to other law enforcement agencies, dog attacking livestock, exotic animal at large, vicious or guard dog at large, or severe dog bite.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Dispatchers should begin work at different times of the day so as to cover each other longer and later in the day. The hours may be 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. to provide better service to the public as well as to officers in the field. This would include offering dispatch, field and bite investigation services on Saturday when many people are home and when many bites occur.
- ✓ The office staff could do the same, thereby providing live service to the public for a longer period of time daily and at the same level throughout the week.
- ✓ Field Service supervisors should look at establishing a second shift that works from 2:30 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. to cover regular calls and emergencies. ACOs should be scheduled a regular 5 day, 8 hour per day work week instead of the current 9/80 shift that is being utilized.
- ✓ Review the Federal Fair Labor Standards Policy. RCCAS may be in violation of having ACOs work on call all night, and not get an eight hour break between work shifts.

#### **Discussion:**

Adding to and changing the current swing shift would allow for greater flexibility, and better response time to the public. Even though shift differential may have to be paid, there would probably be savings in overtime costs and staff burnout. Dispatching could still be handled through the answering service and local police. With the current number of staff it is not productive to have teams that work five 9 hour shifts that all end at the same time and only one emergency ACO after 5 p.m. At 11 p.m. the emergency ACO can be put in-service for emergencies. This would provide for accountability for the ACO and allow for increased call response.

Traditionally, animal control problems are very heavy in the evening hours when: a) more people are “out and about” noticing strays and unconfined animals; b) commuter traffic results in an increase of accidents involving animals; c) people just coming home from work are either noticing their own animal has disappeared, or accidentally let them loose; and d) persons returning home find notices of animal control violations and then contact the agency to discuss the complaint.

In county positions with good benefit packages, the temptation is to hire people who may have no real investment in the mission of the animal shelter. The 9/80 scheduling seemed to encourage the predominance of entitlement as opposed to a stake in the success or service delivery of the agency.

## 10.4 JOB DESCRIPTIONS

### **Observations:**

The HSUS team requested and received copies of all job descriptions for RCCAS. There were six classifications of field employees at RCCAS: operations chief, ACO Supervisor, senior ACO, ACO, and animal license inspector. Additionally, the office assistants were classified at level II or III. These persons were cross trained to answer phones and dispatch calls. All the job descriptions seemed adequate to the responsibilities performed by each job class. The organizational chart provided to The HSUS team was adequate and showed a clear chain of command for the ACO. In addition, job descriptions were appropriate for the supervisory levels shown on the organizational chart.

As mentioned previously (See section 10.2, General Safety), The HSUS team was concerned that the interim supervising ACO was handling safety issues for the shelter.

An issue raised by ACOs was that they felt general training was lacking.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Senior management must ensure that staff members are performing their job responsibilities as written and make necessary updates and changes.
- ✓ Senior management must seek proper continuing education training for all staff, including themselves.
- ✓ The county must ensure that senior management staff members are performing their job responsibilities as written and work in conjunction with senior management to seek out and make available appropriate training programs for them.

### **Discussion:**

RCCAS is a large animal services organization that handled and sheltered over 23,000 dogs, cats, wildlife and miscellaneous animals during the last fiscal year. Shelter management is a specialized field not often readily recognized by county officials; therefore, senior management must have adequate training and knowledge to run an animal shelter the scope of RCCAS.

## 10.5 FORMS/RECORDKEEPING

### **Observations:**

RCCAS provided The HSUS team with a variety of forms such as those used to track ACO field activity, warning notices, citations, quarantine of rabies suspects, nuisance complaints, dangerous animals and seizure of animals. All forms reviewed seemed adequate and useful; however, there were different forms for the different laws of the city, county and state. For example, there is a quarantine fee for the county, but not for the city. Some forms were in both English and Spanish to assist ACOs and the public when dealing with an issue.

While reviewing forms and copies of standardized brochures, The HSUS team noted that there were no dates of production or revision on some of the forms, brochures, and other printed materials. For example, regarding the “official notice” form one copy provided (pink in color) had a revised date of 11/99, while another version (green in color) had no date. Yet the green colored “official notice” appeared to be more comprehensive and the more current document in use. The “The Benefits of Licensing Your Dog” brochure has a lot of information for the public and a method of applying for a license, but the form did not address any late fees as referenced on other forms.

Record keeping was done both manually and by computerized generated reports. Pickup complaints and responses were entered into the computer by the dispatchers as well as the ACOs. ACOs also generate case files through computer documentation. Hard copies of paperwork are reviewed by senior ACOs and then forwarded for follow up to the appropriate person or department. Cases were kept in file drawers and were filed by case number.

Statistical information and printed reports were being generated from the information being input into the computer. Reports can be generated on a daily, monthly and yearly basis. Printouts of monthly workload were provided by percentage of completion. This showed production by the shelters, but did not give a good picture of the number of complaints and how many were actually being handled by shelters. Reports on trends could be easily created through the computer system. The HSUS team did not receive any information regarding statistics produced in this manner.

The HSUS team reviewed files for court, which were stored in the field operations main office. There appeared to be no written format as to what was required in the files.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Review forms to ensure all forms have current information consistent with other forms. Use terms such as “euthanize” instead of “destroy” or “put to death.”
- ✓ Establish a checklist of what is needed to complete a case file for court.
- ✓ Design a report that shows prior year comparisons so trends can be reviewed.

### **Discussion:**

Consistent, clear messages are very important in educating and encouraging the public to do what is right. In most cases, people have not educated themselves about animal laws in their communities. Correct information provided in a neat and concise manner can be very effective in assisting the public and encouraging them to do what is required to correct a situation.

## **10.6 OFFICER ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES**

### **Observations:**

RCCAS ACOs work primarily on one shift that starts at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 5:00 p.m. There is one ACO assigned to a swing shift that begins at 10:30 a.m. and ends at 8:00 p.m. ACOs are assigned to particular zones depending on work load and staff shortages. During the shift, ACOs complete a daily activity log but they also must advise dispatch of their location time and end time after each call. These procedures are all outlined in SOPs #316-318 and # 324. The senior ACO reviews the ACO activity logs and monthly statistics that are kept for each ACO on a daily basis. The senior ACOs provide incentives to ACOs to encourage “friendly competition” and improve work performance.

When asked if management ever attends officer briefings, staff indicated to the HSUS team that though managers had been at a couple of briefings, it was not a regular thing. Management confirmed that they did not attend the briefing on a regular basis. Information to line staff was passed along by the supervisors.

While ACOs are on the road, they communicate to dispatchers to request information or advise them of the status of a call. This allows for faster data input on the less involved calls, but also allows for dispatchers to keep better track of ACOs for safety issues. In addition, if ACOs are not assigned to their normal zone, dispatch is able to provide updated information regarding the call being handled by an ACO. This is possible because of the Chameleon computer software installed at RCCAS about two years ago.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Update current procedures that outline the process of providing dispatchers with summary information for the call status.
- ✓ Senior management needs to look at ways to improve communications with all line staff. Line staff must also feel that they can communicate issues with management and expect the problems to be resolved.

## **10.7 ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCE REVIEW**

### **Observations:**

Riverside City and County animal ordinances were last revised in 2003. The HSUS team found that the ordinances adequately covered a wide variety of areas with no glaring deficiencies in scope other than the lack of cat licensing, including differential licensing for neutered vs. intact cats. They seemed to be adequate for the public safety and humane issues facing Riverside City

and County. However, there were several issues raised by staff regarding the ordinances and enforcement.

The areas The HSUS team found in need of clarification or expansion are as follows:

1. The HSUS team was told that RCCAS enforced both the ordinances in the unincorporated areas of the county as well as the city ordinance for animals. Though the ordinances overlap in most areas, there are differences. This presents problems and at times confusion to the public. For example, the county allows for a maximum of 10 dogs unless you have a kennel permit and one acre of property. The city ordinance has no regulations on the number of dogs. Staff stated that as a result of this, persons were moving into the city with large numbers of dogs and breeding them. The only statute that can be used to address this concern is cruelty under Penal Code 597 or possible noise abatement 8.10.
2. Another issue was the sale of animals except dogs and cats. City Code 8.14.030 gives authority to the shelter to dispose of animals after the holding periods. Under County Code 6.04.060 any bovine, horse, mule, or burro for disposal must be reported to the local "health ACO" as required under the Agricultural Code Section 17003. These animals can then be adopted or auctioned. This is also the case under 6.04.090 for other livestock animals impounded by the county.

All livestock was turned over to the brand inspectors for auction, and they can then sell to recuperate their boarding costs. They may sell to whomever they want and if the horses are not sold they are disposed of however they deem appropriate. Staff has concern that once these animals are taken to Norco or the city fairgrounds they are being sold for slaughter, instead of attempts being made to adopt them. The HSUS team reviewed documents and photos that were sent during the public comment period, but did not witness this process.

3. Cats were allowed to be at large as long as they were sterilized, otherwise there were no other regulations regarding cats. Review of the state statutes food and agriculture code Division 14.5 #31751 through 31752.2 addresses cat holding periods based on temperament of the cat and sterilization status.

The HSUS team rode with different ACOs in different parts of the county during the four-day site visit. The ACOs patrolled and enforced ordinances in their particular zone of the county and the city, which gave them the opportunity to develop knowledge of the citizens and animals in that area. During the ride-alongs, the ACOs made numerous contacts with citizens who had complained or were being complained about. The ACOs and citizens had a good rapport and in some cases knew each other by name. The ACOs were helpful, treated all ordinance violators with respect, and offered assistance to persons who needed it.

The HSUS team was provided a copy of a criminal citation form, which was used to issue violations in lieu of or in addition to impoundment of their animals. The HSUS team was provided with FY 2002-03 fiscal year statistics. According to the numbers provided, 1,245

citations were issued for both the city and county. However the number reflected on the City/County total sheet was 1,292. Based on 32,671 having been handled by the city and county ACOs, there was an average of one (1) citation for every 25 complaints handled.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Since there was so much overlap with the Riverside City and County respective ordinances, it is recommended that a review board examine the ordinances and consider joining them so there is one animal ordinance for the city and the county.
- ✓ Consider revising ordinance to allow horses and other livestock to be adopted rather than sold or auctioned.
- ✓ The RCCAS must preserve public trust in all decisions made, especially those concerning animal welfare.
- ✓ Consider adopting cat control ordinances.<sup>82</sup>

### **Discussion:**

Animal shelters must be seen as a safe haven within their communities. They have a responsibility to make humane decisions regarding the animals in their care. The act of selling or auctioning animals is contrary to the mission statements of animal care and control agencies, including that of RCCAS, which mentions words such as “protect and serve,” “humane sheltering,” “responsible pet ownership,” and “respect, concern and compassion for all.”

Conflicts relating to animal care and services (legitimate or otherwise) depicted primarily in the local media tend to lead to further divisiveness among those involved, rather than resolution. And, by providing the public with only a rough sketch rather than the full clear picture, any ongoing negative publicity has the potential to lead to increased animal abandonment by an untrusting public.

Successful animal control is a combination of education and enforcement. The key to success is striking a balance between the two. Many animal control agencies apply too much enforcement and too little education. Others don't enforce and are therefore ineffective. Although The HSUS team's site visit was only a small slice of time in the activities of RCCAS, it appeared the ACOs did a good job of interacting with the public and enforcing the ordinances.

## **10.7 LICENSING**

### **Observations:**

#### Dogs:

Rabies vaccinations were required to get a dog licensed within the City and County of Riverside. The license was issued based on the rabies inoculation status of the animal. The county offered

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82 HSUS “Guide to Cat Law, A Guide for Legislators and Humane Advocates”

monthly rabies vaccination clinics to residents, which is commendable. The clinics were held on Saturday at the RCCAS SNC. The HSUS team did not receive the number of animals vaccinated per session, or the number of dogs licensed in the county. The clinics were publicized via ACOs and license canvassers handing out flyers around the neighborhoods.

According to the organizational chart provided to The HSUS team, RCCAS had 6 (six) positions allocated for license inspectors and they were supervised by the senior ACOs. However, there were only 4 license inspectors at the time of The HSUS team site visit. The inspectors were authorized to issue citations in the county (the city does not have license inspectors), and they canvassed areas in pairs. The HSUS team was told that there were no procedures on how canvassing was done and that, previously, inspectors would work in designated areas and rotate through the areas. However, the lead inspector currently decides where they will work.

The city county license fees are designed to encourage persons to sterilize their dogs. Licenses can be purchased for one to three years and there is a substantial cost savings for sterilized dogs. For example, a one-year license for a sterile dog is \$8.00, while an unsterilized dog license will cost \$50.00 for a one-year period. There are also discounts provided to senior citizens over the age of 60. As a further incentive to purchase a license, a late fee is imposed after 30 days of when the license is due.

Licenses can be purchased through the mail. Reminders were sent out and follow up letters were sent to persons who have not complied with an initial reminder. After a second letter, an inspector would make a home visit.

#### Cats:

Under both city and county codes cats are required to have rabies vaccinations but licensing is not required. The County Code has optional licensing for cats. License information was only provided regarding dogs, so The HSUS team could not determine how many persons were licensing cats.

Licenses were also required for pot-bellied pigs and service dogs were provided with a special license.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The management team should develop a procedures manual for the license canvassers and ensure that they are focusing their work in areas efficiently.
- ✓ City/County officials should establish a mandatory identification and registration program for cats.<sup>83, 84</sup>

#### **Discussion:**

Cat ownership has surpassed dog ownership in the United States.<sup>85</sup> Mandatory cat registration helps communities solve numerous problems. It can help lost cats from being unnecessarily

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83 *Naca News*, "Licensing Makes Great Cents"

84 HSUS "Cat Licensing Fact Sheet"

85 [www.petdata.com](http://www.petdata.com)

euthanized. In communities that register cats, every lost cat that is registered by a responsible owner can be returned home. Cat registration and identification are essential before communities can enforce laws that require cats outdoors to be supervised or to be spayed or neutered.

Canvassing is an effective way to educate pet owners and inform them of licensing requirements. There are many local government agencies that believe animal licensing tax programs should be expected to generate a significant portion of the animal control agency's budget. Actually the major benefits of a well run licensing program are that the animals are identified and hopefully, with the right fee structure, the majority are sterilized. This can save an animal control agency tens of thousands of dollars in reduced response to citizen complaints, reduced numbers of animals impounded, and reduced housing costs. It also expedites the process of getting a lost animal with a tag on back to his owner, with a citation when necessary, to reinforce to owners the importance of being responsible for their cats.<sup>86, 87</sup>

## 10.9 DOG FIGHTING

### **Observations:**

RCCAS would prosecute dog fighting cases under penal code 597.1. According to RCCAS field staff, RCCAS does not receive a lot of calls involving dog fighting. If they do receive a call, they investigate as normal and then refer the case to the prosecuting attorney's office. In the past the dog fighting issue has been ignored because of other charges.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Every ACO should be sent to dog fighting investigation workshops. These workshops move around the country and can be brought within driving distance of RCCAS so no overnight travel or airfare would be required. The HSUS can provide contact information for future dog fighting investigation training courses.
- ✓ Join the HSUS National Illegal Animal Fighting Task Force (NIAFTF). The task force has been an effective tool in uniting law enforcement, ACOs, prosecutors, judges, government investigators, and government officials from across the United States via the Internet.

### **Discussion:**

The investigation of illegal animal fighting activities by local law enforcement, animal control, and humane agencies is frequently difficult, frustrating, and unsuccessful. The lack of success is most often due to circumstances beyond the control of the investigating agency. Because of the specialized nature of the criminal activity, participants are often scattered over a wide area involving multiple jurisdictions. The broad distribution of participants may present certain difficulties unless the investigation effort is tightly coordinated among a number of law enforcement agencies.

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86 *Naca News*, "Mo' Licenses Mo' Fees Mo Money!?", September/October 2003

87 *HSUS Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Taking License With an Ad Campaign," September/October 1999

The HSUS has created extensive materials to help local agencies educate both the public and local law enforcement about the crime and animal suffering involved in illegal animal fighting. These educational materials will assist RCCAS— whether it is working on its own or with others — in starting a campaign to eliminate illegal animal fighting from the community.<sup>88, 89</sup>

In recent years, The HSUS has seen an unprecedented increase in both illegal cockfighting and dog fighting activities. This tortuous “blood sport” results in anguish and acute suffering and pain for those animals that are forced to fight. In addition, dog fighting is a dehumanizing and degrading activity, a serious offense to the sensibilities of a civilized society, and certainly an offense warranting a felony penalty.

Dog fighting is a sadistic “contest” in which two dogs, specifically bred and trained to fight, are placed together for the purpose of attacking and mauling each other. The momentum for this activity stems largely from a desire to “be the toughest,” to earn money for their owners, and to entertain spectators. Fights average nearly an hour in length and often last more than two hours. Dogfights end when one of the dogs is no longer able or willing to continue. The injuries inflicted and sustained by dogs participating in dogfights are frequently severe, even fatal. The pit bull terriers used in these fights have been specifically bred and trained for fighting and are unrelenting in their attempts to overcome their opponents. These dogs have extremely powerful jaw muscles. This crushing produces severe bruising, deep puncture wounds, and often, broken bones. Dogs who survive a fight often die of blood loss, shock, dehydration, exhaustion or infection, hours – or even days – after the fight.

## **10.10 INVESTIGATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT**

### **Observations:**

RCCAS has handled a large number of animal issues, having received over 40,000 requests for service in fiscal year 2002-2003. These requests for service involve everything from nuisance animals to loose, aggressive animals. Policies and procedures have been developed to expedite response time, ensure consistent enforcement and encourage complainants to help resolve the issue. SOP # 318 states “The importance of achieving a favorable first impression with a citizen cannot be over stressed. It is at this initial contact point where the credibility and reputation of the Department of Animal Services and the County of Riverside are the most critical.” This attitude by ACOs was observed by The HSUS team when performing routine calls for service. The ACOs made contact with complainants by phone and in person to advise them of the outcome of situations or the status of a case.

Noisy animal cases are handled through affidavit and educational material. Based on information returned to the department, a hearing ACO may hear the case to assist with resolution.

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88 *Illegal Animal Fighting, A Law Enforcement Primer for the Investigation or Cockfighting and Dogfighting*  
89 *Animal Fighting: The Final Round* video

Cruelty and neglect investigation was outlined in SOP# 305. This was a detailed procedure on how to investigate and obtain a search warrant. Though the HSUS team did not witness this procedure during the visit, the same format was used to investigate and document other types of calls. ACOs asked appropriate questions and documented facts based on each case as outlined in SOP #314.

Cases requiring corrective action were documented by the ACO leaving an official warning notice with the owner, indicating what needs to be done and a follow up date, per SOP #331.

ACOs advised The HSUS team that education is the first attempt in correcting a situation unless it is a severe case. Then if that fails, ACOs will issue citations. Discretion is allowed based on each case and what needs to be corrected. Of concern to the ACO's regarding prosecution of these cases, is the lack of veterinary support for necropsies and expert testimony, should the case go to court. Staff reported to The HSUS team that there were no local veterinarians in the community willing to take time to appear in court on a case.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The management team needs to make sure there is adequate staff to support field investigations and enforcement operations. It is crucial to have a veterinarian to assist with exams, necropsies, and court testimony. Some suggestions are:
  - Contact the California Veterinary Medical Association and explain the need
  - Invite local veterinarians to the shelter
  - Meet one on one with local veterinarians
  - Consider providing compensation for veterinarians' time in court
  - Be sure to thank those veterinarians who participate

### **Discussion:**

RCCAS appears to be making every effort to apply balanced enforcement with education.

## **10.11 ANIMAL CONTROL CONTRACTS**

### **Observations:**

RCCAS had agreements with two non-profit organizations, Ramona Animal Haven and Animal Friends of the Valleys, according to contracts provided to The HSUS team. The shelters were contracted to provide shelter, care and disposal of dogs and other domestic animals within the area of Riverside County. Both shelters were compensated based on the number and type of animals sheltered.

According to general information provided by staff, working relationships with the non-profit shelters was good. Staff did indicate that a contract had ended with another shelter where livestock used to be taken. ACOs now had to deliver livestock more than 45 minutes away, instead of to the closer facility. Staff did not elaborate to The HSUS team as to why the contract was not renewed.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Based on the number of large animals impounded in FY 2002-2003 (177), administration should review all contracts with outside shelters for the housing and care of livestock and miscellaneous farm animals should there be a need to house large numbers of these types of animals for court cases involving cruelty or cockfighting.

## **10.12 WILDLIFE ISSUES**

**Observations:**

Although wildlife calls were to be handled by the Game and Fish Division, RCCAS handled a variety of wildlife calls during the year. According to statistics provided for fiscal year 2002-2003 RCCAS impounded 2,425 “other animals.” The statistical reports do not distinguish if the “other animals” category is wildlife or wildlife and exotics. According to staff, the most prominent types of wildlife handled were opossums, raccoon, skunks, snakes, turtles, and birds that were injured or in a home or causing a public safety issue. RCCAS did work with the local game and fish department, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and USDA and wildlife rehabilitators, depending on the nature of the animal involved. Injured wildlife or venomous snakes may be euthanized in the field. Healthy wildlife was relocated if possible. RCCAS did provide a very general brochure on urban wildlife.

Under certain circumstances, RCCAS provided traps for cats and wildlife. There is a humane cat trap agreement that must be completed for cats and cat trapping notification signs were provided. There was a non-refundable fee associated with the trap. The maximum time a person may trap was 10 days over a 30- day period. Traps for wildlife were distributed based on availability and the nature of the problem.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ RCCAS should consider providing more detailed information regarding local wildlife.<sup>90</sup> As mentioned in section 9.6, Web Site, put a link on the RCCAS website to reference local wildlife experts or reference The HSUS wildlife department.

**Discussion:**

There are several alternative methods of dealing with nuisance wildlife. It would be more cost effective and a better use of time to have informational material available to mail out or refer citizens to instead of sending an ACO out on nuisance wildlife calls.

## 11.0 GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP

### 11.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

RCCAS is a county facility that operates Riverside County's Department of Animal Services and houses approximately 12,000 dogs and 9,000 cats per year. It is a division under the supervision of the Community Health Agency which provides services to a human population of 1,037,850.

The animal control or field services department responds to over 40,000 animal-related complaints per year. California is in the midst of a fiscal crisis with budget restraints being imposed at all levels of state government.

### 11.2 ARTICULATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL VISION, MISSION, AND PLANNING

#### **Observations:**

The agency had a mission statement which read, "We will 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. We promise to do so with respect, concern and compassion for all." Vision statements were not in evidence.

Strategic and long-term planning was discussed at a workshop that was held in December 2003 at the request of a county supervisor. The director was charged with formulation of a plan and its ultimate execution. The plan was reviewed twice a year for progress reports and revision. These efforts were spurred in large measure by the adverse coverage RCCAS was receiving in the local newspaper. Public surveys had been conducted annually over the last few years that focused mainly on shelter condition and customer service. However, the use and/or impact of the information was not made evident. There was no mention or articulation of any market research.<sup>91</sup>

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The county board of supervisors should divide the strategic plan into stages that correspond to a timeline, arranging priority for items of immediate, mid-range and long-term needs and goals. The director should be charged with implementing portions of the plan by the prescribed time-lines. The board should also provide an accurate standard by which to measure any progress in the strategic or long-term plan and hold the animal services agency and its director accountable. This gives the board a measuring device by which to gauge the director's efficiency in accomplishing prescribed tasks.<sup>92, 93</sup>

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91 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Selling Your Organization's Message," January/February 1999

92 HSUS *Shelter Sense*, "Strategic Planning In The Animal Care and Control Shelter," February 1993

93 Sample strategic plan

- ✓ The creation of a vision statement is strongly suggested.<sup>94, 95</sup> If publicized, it would show the community that RCCAS is striving (by its writing and implementation) to become an accountable, responsible resource to the community. It also would give further impetus to the county board, director and staff to look to the future instead of merely dealing with the status quo.

### **Discussion:**

A mission statement should articulate vision. Remember that a mission statement comes from the head, but vision comes from the heart. A mission statement is a general statement of the agency's purposes. It states what the agency actually does, not what they hope they will do. It states why the agency exists, what their most important services are, and what they believe in. The mission is a statement of basic services and priorities designed to reach the visionary place. This place is where the organization's highest ideals and core values are shared by all. The vision illuminates rather than limits.

An important component of strategic planning is the development of action plans which provide the detail to the strategic goals and that typically incorporate the following components:

- The specific steps or actions required for each priority.
- Who will be held accountable for seeing that each step or action is completed?
- When these steps or actions are to be carried out?
- What resources need to be allocated in order to carry them out?
- What feedback mechanisms are needed to monitor progress within each step?

Without a detailed plan to work towards its goals, RCCAS will be able to focus on basic issues as it has in the past, but will not move progressively forward to achieve all that it wants to accomplish. Creating the steps can be difficult. Everyone involved with RCCAS has his or her own best guess as to what the correct programs and methods are.

Participation in the planning process should be as broad as possible. The document is important, but just as important is inclusiveness. The plan should be reviewed each year for progress and modification. Some ideas won't work and some new ideas will be developed. A plan does not lock an organization onto a path. There are always new routes and shortcuts that the organization may want to explore.

As a tool, the mission and vision statements will help keep RCCAS on track. When reviewing projects for the organization, go back to the mission and vision and determine if the project fits with the mission. If a project does not fit, don't do it. The organization cannot just adopt the newest idea of the day recommended by whoever thinks it would be a good idea.

Remember that organizational changes do not implement themselves – people make them happen. For effective day-to-day management to occur one does not simply make staff and volunteers adhere to the board's organizational plan and priorities but must insure that workplace goals are completed together, one step at a time. The commitment to make improvements

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94 Sample vision statement  
95 Sample mission statement

throughout the agency must be tempered with a caution that progress will not necessarily occur quickly.

## **11.3 INFRASTRUCTURE & SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

### **Observations:**

RCCAS had an organizational chart dated April 1, 2004. It was reportedly restructured by the current director. The chart was standard in design with the director listed at the top, followed by administrative support staff, SNC personnel, other management positions, Hemet, Indio and Blythe facility staff, ACOs, license inspectors, and kennel attendant personnel.

The chart was well delineated and easy to follow. Personnel in each department were listed by name and position with vacancies included. The chain of command was clear and concise.

### **11.31 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

#### **Observations:**

The HSUS team was informed, and was able to confirm, that RCCAS performed evaluations on new hires at three and six months, on the first year anniversary, and thereafter on a yearly basis on the date of hire. The roles of the kennel attendants, SNC staff, clerical and administrative support staff were well defined and accountability was tracked through job descriptions and quality and quantity of work performed. Administrative and operational positions up to and including the county board of supervisors also seemed well defined. Shelter leadership was on-site and appeared physically accessible.

There were two time clocks on the premises, one located near the back door and the other adjacent to the copy machine near the employee break room. All employees were hourly with the exception of the director and operations chief. Staff appeared to be busy with tasks and the team did not observe employees lounging around the premises.

### **11.32 OPERATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND TRAINING**

#### **Observations:**

The agency did have a policy and procedure manual maintained on-site. It was located in the administrative offices. The HSUS team was informed that the satellite shelters also had copies on-site for their staffs. The manual consisted of an introductory section followed by policy and procedures for administration, financial, field services, shelter services and volunteer services. There was a heading for the SNC but that section was not included.

Each subheading was given a numerical ID (100 Implementation of New Policies and Procedures, 101 Dress Code, 102 Public Relations, etc.) and contained a date of last revision.

According to the dates on the documents, these procedures had been written from 2000 – 2003. They had been compiled primarily by the director but upon inquiring, The HSUS team was informed that all levels of staff were involved and some sections had been written by other administrative and supervisory personnel.

There were several sections listed as “pending,” including sections on Rescue and Not for Profit Requirements, Daily Euthanasia Log, Animal Protection Hold, and Adoption Policy. Also, some procedures, such as veterinary protocol, were not updated. On the whole, it was a comprehensive document, well thought out and easy to use. The detail was clear and concise. Staff was trained to do their jobs according to the protocol contained within and employees knew where it was located.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ In addition to the single copy of the policy and procedure manual on file in the administrative offices, more copies should be available in other areas where employees can “ready reference” if problems are encountered.
- ✓ Complete all pending sections of the procedural manual.
- ✓ Update procedures as necessary.
- ✓ SNC procedures should be prepared by clinic staff, reviewed by administration and included in the document.

**Discussion:**

Written SOPs are important because they convey management’s philosophies, communicate policies and appropriate procedures, translate the agency’s philosophies and desires into action, and they are invaluable communication tools for efficiently running operations within departments and interrelated departments. In addition, they should serve as guides for training new and existing employees, they help prevent difficulties in performing duties due to lack of understanding or inconsistent approaches from personnel changes, and they serve to ensure compliance with regulatory agencies such as OSHA and DEA.

Staff needs clear expectations and directions so they can succeed or fail. It is unfair to fire or discipline staff for not doing something they had no idea they were supposed to do. In addition, the staff needs to know not only the right way to do things, but also why it is important.

The HSUS team recognizes the benefit of “on the job” training, which should be one part of a comprehensive training program. Any training for staff in all aspects of animal care and control, formal or otherwise, is an investment well worth the cost.

## 11.33 COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS SYSTEM

### **Observations:**

Pay rates at RCCAS were set by union representation, with the exception of the director and department supervisors. Raises were provided via a standard percentage system rather than merit increase. The benefit package included sick and vacation time, health and dental coverage and retirement, and every employee spoken to agreed that the benefits system was “excellent” or “wonderful.”

Overall, there were no complaints voiced about the wage and compensation package, which appeared to be satisfactory; although the cost of living in southern California can be substantial.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Review salaries for kennel attendants to be sure they are representative of similar positions in the area. The Society of Animal Welfare Administrators compiles a helpful survey.<sup>96</sup>

### **Discussion:**

Kennel attendants are often undervalued and underpaid, even though in many ways they are the backbone of the organization. In order to recruit and retain qualified staff, salaries and benefits must remain competitive.

## 11.4 STABILITY AND LEADERSHIP

### **Observations:**

During The HSUS team’s meeting with representatives of the board of supervisors and county government, one of their primary concerns was financial issues and state government cuts.

From a staff perspective, relations with county government were perceived as positive while relations with city government were described less favorably.

It was The HSUS team’s impression that senior management did not have close interactions with or give positive feedback to the people who worked for them, especially the kennel attendants and ACOs. They appeared to avoid the animal areas and seemed content with the distance.

The director seemed unfamiliar with the activities of staff that worked in the animal holding areas, euthanasia procedures being one example. During the four days of the site visit, the team did not see her in any of the animal areas. She was also unfamiliar with parts of the building, answering one question by stating she had never been in the area referenced. Overall, the director gave the impression she preferred to handle issues of public and political nature, rather than being concerned about what was going on with the animals, which is where the heart and soul of the organization resides.

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96 Society of Animal Welfare Administrators, [www.sawanetwork.org](http://www.sawanetwork.org)

The operations chief appeared vague and evasive when asked specifics about shelter operations. He seemed to display a defensive demeanor when he couldn't give a quick, definitive answer or when discussing concerns about observed deficiencies in operations. He often mentioned understaffing as though it was the solution to every problem and referred to the fact that he had progressed through the ranks of animal control to his present position, that he was just "one of the boys" and young in age, as if that explained his unfamiliarity with operations.

Of concern was the level of experience required for the position of operations chief. The minimum requirements were 4 years of experience, including two years management experience, and a high school diploma. The position of animal services director required 4 years of experience and a Bachelor's degree.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Senior management should become more familiar with, more closely supervise and occasionally participate in all aspects of operations including cleaning kennels, euthanasia, field services and the spay/neuter clinic.
- ✓ The management team should take advantage of courses offered by national animal welfare organizations such as The HSUS, SAWA, and American Humane regarding shelter management, operations and administration.
- ✓ Senior management should join and become involved with the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators.
- ✓ The county should review job descriptions for senior management and consider increasing educational requirements for the operations chief. Also, allowing substitution of additional experience in lieu of minimum education for both positions would increase the standard qualifications.

### **Discussion:**

When senior management gets involved with all aspects of shelter work, it usually boosts morale of staff members. If they are willing to pitch in wherever needed, it shows staff that they will not ask someone to perform a task that they themselves are not willing to do. It's a way to gain respect.

Senior management must learn to reach out and cooperate with other groups and people, admit mistakes and move on in a constructive fashion. To adopt a defensive stance or put distance between oneself and a problem does nothing to resolve the issue.

The care and safety of all animals being brought into the shelter should be the primary responsibility of the operations chief. Both the operations chief and animal services director should be familiar with all operations and have the management skills to know how to deal with problems and conflicts which will arise; at the very least they should have the foresight and innovation to search out experts in the field or utilize the availability of other organizations to discuss situations.

## **11.5 ANIMAL CONTROL ADVISORY BOARD/COMMITTEE**

### **Observations:**

The RCCAS had an internal advisory board consisting of one city council member, one county supervisor and two private citizens, one residing in the city and one in the county. They meet four times per year with the director and operations chief, and their meetings are public. Information covered at the meetings is taken back to the facility for implementation by the director and operations chief. Information is also relayed to the city council and county supervisors via their representatives. Topics discussed concern animal control issues and the animal services department's performance in the community. Follow up information is provided by the shelter director and operations chief at the next meeting.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Invite representatives of local media to the meetings to generate and disseminate coverage of the topics.

## **11.6 DEFINITION AND RECOGNITION OF AGENCY'S ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY**

### **Observations:**

The organization is well known within Riverside County. It runs all animal control operations within the county and the field services department seems to project a positive image. Also, its low cost SNC and vaccination clinics are highly visible and used by the community with frequency. Finally, the organization has done a reasonable job of promoting itself through educational efforts, off-site adoptions, appearances at public events, its web site, and adoptable animal features in local media. Unfortunately, the unfavorable media coverage it has received probably has had a negative effect on awareness and public perception.

Tracking of complaints about the agency shows that they have actually decreased in recent years. According to staff, when the current director took control they had been receiving an average of ten complaints per week. Now they report complaints are infrequent.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Maintain current shelter promotion efforts and research ways to expand. Examples would be reestablishing a presence at Downtown Wednesday Night and holding community or neighborhood meetings to distribute literature and answer questions about shelter services.
- ✓ Seek out additional businesses to sponsor off-site adoptions to increase awareness and reach people that may not visit the shelter or pet related stores.

## 11.7 COMMUNITY INTEREST GROUPS

### **Observations:**

Community interest groups consisted primarily of breed placement organizations, other shelters and spay/neuter groups. Some of them were very vocal and not shy about taking their complaints to the press. Various complaints ranged from resources made available to RCCAS that were being ignored or turned away; overall non-cooperation on the part of RCCAS with breed placement groups; allegations that groups were contacted to pick up animals from RCCAS only to find upon their arrival that the animals had been euthanized; sick animals being adopted to the public; and instances of animals bearing ID and rabies tags brought to the shelter with no effort made by staff to contact the owners as to the whereabouts of their pet.

Overall, the relations between RCCAS and outside groups seemed to be in a state of disrepair. There was serious concern expressed on the part of shelter employees, especially those in mid-management. However, they perceived the issue to be dismissed by those in senior management.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ A good faith effort must be made, especially by senior management and supervisors, to reach out to those groups that have expressed problems and arrange meetings. If genuine concern is expressed publicly by shelter management instead of defensive responses or denial, progress can be made to address complaints and reach a compromise.
- ✓ Develop shared goals with breed placement groups and strive to improve communication and coordination with each of them.
- ✓ Promote and encourage a spirit of cooperation between shelter staff and volunteer groups as well as with breed placement and humane organizations, and make it a policy to view them as part of a team with common goals and concerns.
- ✓ Utilize every available resource through association with these organizations. Form a network of organizations in partnership, and support the programs and goals of each. They will reciprocate and the efforts of all will be expanded and strengthened.
- ✓ Keep the county informed of activities with local groups. Encourage the county to acknowledge efforts and lend assistance where feasible.

### **Discussion:**

The problems facing every animal care and control agency throughout the country are many. The throngs of homeless or unwanted animals that end up in shelters are not generated by the shelters themselves, but are symptomatic of a serious community problem. For this reason, animal care and control problems must be addressed in a holistic sense by the entire community and not just by those individuals or organizations with a particular affinity for animals or concern for their well-being. Emotions run high where homeless and stray pets are involved. Serious attempts must be made to reduce friction between RCCAS and local groups so that community may be educated and the animals may benefit.

## 12.0 HUMAN RESOURCES

### 12.1 PERSONNEL/POLICIES

#### 12.11 STAFFING LEVELS

**Observations:**

Senior management repeatedly expressed concern about the number of employees at the shelter. They felt they did not currently have enough staff on-site to adequately perform the required job duties. They said this was due in large part to county budget issues.

The staff, during the time of our visit to RCCAS, consisted of 85 employees with 16 vacancies and one position listed as interim. If they were fully staffed to their expectations, it would amount to 102 employees, broken down as follows:

- 1 director
- 1 operations chief
- 1 veterinarian
- 3 veterinarian assistants  
(1 vacant vet assistant)
- (1 vacant executive assistant to the director)
- (1 vacant administrative services officer)
- 1 staff analyst II
- 1 senior accountant
- 1 accounting technician I
- 1 accounting assistant II
- 1 volunteer services coordinator
- 2 supervising animal control officers  
(1 vacant supervising animal control officer)
- 1 interim supervising animal control officer
- 4 senior animal control officers  
(1 vacant senior animal control officer)
- 25 animal control officers  
(8 vacant animal control officers)
- 19 kennel attendants  
(1 vacant kennel attendant)
- 6 license inspectors
- 3 office assistants, III
- 13 office assistants, II  
(2 vacant office assistants, II)
- 1 data entry operator, II

The HSUS team agrees that 102 employees is necessary and within the range of similar sized shelters.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ The county should do everything possible to appropriate funding for personnel as soon as possible. When appropriate, an intensive effort should be made to fill those positions that have been frozen or otherwise deleted to bring the facility to a full operational level.
- ✓ A total of two full-time veterinarians is needed, one to perform spay/neuter surgery and one to manage health care of shelter animals. If not feasible, perhaps the second veterinarian could work part-time.

**Discussion:**

A comparative study of other like-sized facilities in California, Arizona and Nevada and their staffing levels and operational budgets might prove helpful. Some of these figures might be available through SAWA.

## **12.12 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

**Observations:**

The employee handbook is referred to as an “MOU” or Memorandum of Understanding. It is also called the “By-Laws Book.” It is a small book which each employee receives upon orientation, a two day process conducted by the Community Health Agency. Full-sized copies are also available in the Administration offices.

It is compiled and produced by the union which represents shelter workers and represents a joint effort between the union and the county. It is 76 pages in length and the glossary and index contained in it provide ready access to pertinent topics. It contains information on grievance procedures, acceptable attire for the job, sick, overtime and vacation information.

It does not contain information or a guide as to what is to be maintained in employee files.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Since this MOU is a guide to staff, it may be a good idea to include some specifics to senior staff on what specifically should be retained in employee files. The MOU should be reviewed periodically, if it isn't already, by the union and shelter workers to ensure that it is current, up to date and represents their concerns accurately. It is a living document and therefore subject to change and revision.

## **12.13 STAFF GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

**Observations:**

The grievance procedure at RCCAS was part of Riverside County's official procedure book that would apply to any county employee and was labeled as a disciplinary appeal procedure. The steps consisted of: 1) notice of the disciplinary action to the employee, 2) appeals and waivers process available to the affected employee, 3) steps involved in a hearing procedure, including who may be present, witnesses, documentation, etc., and 4) a comprehensive section on hearing procedures for major disciplines. It appeared as though everyone was aware of the process,

especially appeals procedures, as several employees had recently appealed disciplinary actions and had won their grievance appeals.

Some of the staff expressed displeasure with the process and felt that their complaints against higher ups in the organization would go unheeded. In fact, they stated they feared repercussions from management if they filed complaints against them.

Although the discipline and grievance procedures were well-outlined in a step-by-step manner, it seemed as though this was intended for use by supervisors and those higher up in the chain of command to discipline subordinates. There was not anything in evidence regarding a line worker's rights to file complaints against those in a supervisory capacity and to protect them against possible reprisals.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ A method of complaint and protection should be developed for those lower in the ranks.
- ✓ A clear and thorough delineation of the chain of staff and how it works should be made to all employees. This should especially point out how and who to address grievances to as well as alternate channels for grievances should the first alternative prove unresponsive.

## 12.2 STAFF TURNOVER

**Observations:**

Although no percentage could be provided by management on the amount of employee turnover they had experienced, they did determine that the highest turnover rate was among kennel attendants and ACOs.

Among the reasons cited for attrition in these two areas were promotions to other positions on the part of kennel attendants and ACOs growing tired of on-call and overtime.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Developing an “advancement by performance and job knowledge scale” by which kennel technicians can progress would be one way to maintain their interest and provide incentive for continued education. Much like clerical personnel, they could progress through Level III (basic) to Levels II and I with higher pay scales designated for each level with Level I being almost equivalent to a supervisory position.
- ✓ For animal control personnel, some sort of rotation into different positions may take some of the monotony out of their jobs and leave more time for family and hobby-related pursuits with regular weekends off. For example, they may work two or three months with an on-call status and then rotate for a designated time to a desk, file or dispatch position.

**Discussion:**

Turn over in these areas is not uncommon at any animal care facility. Entry-level positions can challenge people's perceptions of animal sheltering, which are vastly different from the reality of the job. It is often more difficult than what people expect.

## **12.3 HIRING/ FIRING/ DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

**Observations:**

The hiring process was handled largely through a joint effort between the county and the shelter. The county advertises the available positions and then sorts through the applications received from mailed or hand delivered resumes and those acquired through the Resumex system, a computerized system operated through the internet. The county then sends a list of approved applications to the shelter. The applications are reviewed by supervisory staff members who then conduct the interviews and make the final determination on new hires.

Disciplinary actions are initiated by supervisory staff in conjunction with the county human resources department and shelter management. The steps of the grievance procedure are listed above.

The county also conducts instruction on the disciplinary process and procedure. Progressive disciplinary policy is adhered to and was included in the employee handbook.

The disciplinary process is outlined in a manual that is available on-site. Instruction about the process is also provided upon hiring by the agency.

**Discussion:**

It is admirable that the county takes on the responsibility of reviewing the initial applicants and then sending only those people they deem qualified over to the shelter for further interviews. It is also commendable that the county assumes responsibility for instructing new hires on personnel procedures that are outside the realm of shelter duties. This saves shelter personnel valuable time and resources in the search for acceptable candidates.

## 13.0 FINANCIAL ISSUES

*Please note: This section of the report should not be construed as an audit of the financial accountability or budgets of the RCCAS. The HSUS believes such an audit is beyond the scope of this evaluation.*

### 13.1 GENERAL FINANCIAL ISSUES

#### **Observations:**

Although the budget provided to The HSUS team was coded and line-itemed as to usage, it was not broken down into departmental stages, although one could glean departmental usage by line-item designation.

Annual growth for the shelter budget had been on the decline due to budget adjustments necessitated by the state. Circa 1999, significant increases in operational money were implemented. However, since that time, only incremental increases, addressed on an “as needed” basis, have been experienced.

The county paid for 47% of clinic and shelter services at RCCAS while the city funded 53%, based on animal population. The county also paid for 79% of field services while the city funded 21%. Overall the county paid for 65% of operations while the city funded 35%.

The RCCAS ending budget for fiscal year 2003-04 was \$7,532,852, which translates to a per capita spending of \$7.26. Prior to this report being completed, the fiscal year 2004-2005 budget was approved at \$8,734,202, which translates to a per capita spending of \$8.42. Sixty-four percent or \$3.39 million is allocated for personnel and salary costs. \$1.88 million is dedicated to services, supplies and other charges.<sup>97</sup>

It is worth mentioning that even during fiscal year 2003-2004, when the per capita spending was slightly above the high end of the recommended figure, the RCCAS staff had several vacancies.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The HSUS team applauds the county for approving the fiscal year 2004-2005 budget to the above referenced level and for drafting a list of priority spending items<sup>98</sup> to include maintaining and increasing staffing levels and expanding spay/neuter efforts. Other suggested spending items are:
  - Sufficient veterinary staff to fill spay/neuter, shelter health management and investigations and enforcement needs (as mentioned previously).

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97 Human population and Riverside County fiscal year budget figures were according to the California Department of Finance website and calculations made by the county’s senior management analyst.

98 As communicated to the ASC manager by the county’s senior management analyst after the site visit.

- Much-needed physical improvements to the facility and vehicular fleet that directly benefits the animals and thus their adoptability factors and the shelter's image.
  - Acquisition of a presentation van that would raise visibility and public awareness of the shelter and its role in the community.
  - An expanded public relations/media campaign or blitz that the organization desperately needs to upgrade its image.
- ✓ The county should continue to pay close attention to the management of the RCCAS budget. It is of concern that even at an adequate funding level, the shelter was allowed to operate with staff vacancies.

### **Discussion:**

According to page 3 of the ICMA book, "An effective community animal care and control program will cost at least \$4 per person per year. In some jurisdictions, animal care and control budgets are as high as \$7 per person per year." It is excellent that RCCAS is over the \$7 level. Nonetheless, keep in mind that the \$4-7 is a guideline and is not static. Just because the high end number has been reached, it may not necessarily mean the budget is sufficient or is being properly appropriated.

This new budget will be beneficial to the organization in many ways. Since the last major budget increase was experienced in 1999, the facility had become used to the increased levels of staffing and therefore a certain level of efficiency. A prolonged duration with a pared-down budget damages morale, which is an essential element to animal welfare success. Furthermore, RCCAS has a large physical plant and many animals entrusted to its care. The staff was working very hard to complete the job. An expanded budget could allow them to improve performance, and subsequently, communications with disaffected groups that complain about the shelter.

## **13.11 FINANCIAL POLICIES**

### **Observations:**

The director and management team (the director, operations chief, staff analyst and senior accountant) outlined the financial policies for RCCAS. They meet monthly to review the budget and finances. The agency is allowed to and does accept donations. These are routinely placed in the county general fund which commingles with other funds. The facility staff is working on tracking donations with a new computer program. They complained that donated funds are hard to access once they are deposited in the general fund. An official form must be filled out and filed with the county to begin the process of re-obtaining cash donations dedicated for shelter use.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The county should either open an account specifically for charitable donations made on behalf of the shelter or allow the agency to open an account and report on deposits and withdrawals to the county. Or, in order to make donations more attractive to potential contributors, make provisions for a foundation run by a private board of directors with a

501 (c) (3) designation. The foundation could be accountable to the Community Health Agency as well.<sup>99</sup>

### **Discussion:**

In the area of finances, the three primary tools most board of directors use for controlling and staying informed about the organization's financial status are:

- Specific written policies governing handling, use and access to organizational funds and assets. It is critical that there be a strict set of policies to insure internal control on the handling of incoming revenues, deposits, accounts payable and accounts receivable.
- Regular (generally monthly) written financial reports to the board.
- More detailed analysis and oversight by a finance committee.

The most common financial policies adopted by charitable organizations are:

**Investment Policies.** These deal with the assets of the organization and are designed to help board members, staff, and outside advisors understand the organization's goals and the financial risks the organization is willing to take to achieve these goals. The proper investment of an organization's financial reserve is a significant aspect of financial management. Key issues to be covered include the investment objectives, risks and return; investment guidelines and constraints; allocation of assets; and monitoring and control procedures.

**Internal Controls Policy.** These comprise the plan of the organization to safeguard its assets, check the accuracy of its accounting data, promote efficiency, and encourage standardized management practices. An internal control system is designed to detect and correct human error. This policy addresses mail handling, check signing and processing, cash receipts, bank reconciliations, accounts receivable, etc.

**Purchasing Policies.** These serve as a tool to maximize available resources and generally cover selecting vendors, negotiating prices, documenting purchases, separating responsibilities for purchasing. Consideration is given to supplies, small and large equipment, service contracts, consulting, travel and conferences. This is usually a fairly broad policy so frequent changes are not necessary.

**Unrestricted Current Net Assets Policy (formerly called reserves or a reserve fund).** The board of directors often set goals for optimal fund levels and to define circumstances where these funds might be used. The unrestricted current net assets provide a cushion for organizations in times of unanticipated losses, changes in financial position, and revenue delays.

## **13.12 BUDGETING, BOOKKEEPING, FUNDING AND STABILITY**

**Observations:**

An agency audit is performed annually by the Community Health Agency and presented to Dr. Gary Feldman, Director of the Community Health Agency. There had been some questions regarding handling of petty cash but a clean bill of health was presented. Audits are performed in February/March of each year.

Operational funding is provided entirely by city and county government augmented by small amounts of private donations. The HSUS team got the impression from many sources that the board of supervisors is excellent in supporting the animal services division. The supervisors are responsive to shelter needs and looks at the organization as an important factor in the public health and safety equation.

Comments from the public indicated concern over an amount of money that was intended for shelter use, but was believed to have been returned to the county.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ An external review of the shelter audit may give the agency more credibility and accountability in the public eye, assuring them that funds are being spent appropriately and efficiently.
  
- ✓ A push should be made to acquire as much funding from the private sector as possible, including not only appeals to the general public but also to foundations, wills and estates.

**Discussion:**

In this time of budget cuts and downsizing, when animal control organizations are in need of more funding, private sector endeavors can prove successful. Animals in need are a great draw for donations. Some people may say that they already give through their tax dollars, but where animals are concerned it becomes an extremely emotional issue. RCCAS should turn to the private sector to achieve its goals or expand services and operations and in the process, improve its image and name recognition. However, increased fundraising efforts come with increased responsibility for diligent financial management.

