

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

692



**FROM:** Executive Office

**SUBMITTAL DATE:**  
July 27, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Response to the Grand Jury Report: County of Riverside – Blythe Animal Services

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** That the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Approve with or without modifications, the attached response to the Grand Jury's recommendations regarding County of Riverside – Blythe Animal Services.
- 2) Direct the Clerk of the Board to immediately forward the Board's finalized response to the Grand Jury, to the Presiding Judge, and the County Clerk-Recorder (for mandatory filing with the State).

**BACKGROUND:** On July 13, 2010, the Board directed staff to prepare a draft of the Board's response to the Grand Jury's report regarding County of Riverside – Blythe Animal Services.

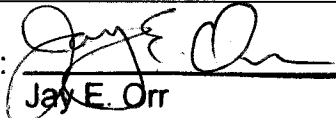
Section 933 (c) of the Penal Code requires that the Board of Supervisors comment on the Grand Jury's recommendations pertaining to the matters under the control of the Board, and that a response be provided to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court within 90 days.

90dayresponsef11blytheanimal07.10

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

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

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

BY:   
Jay E. Orr

**County Executive Office Signature**

- Policy
- Policy
- Consent
- Consent

Dep't Recomm.:  
Per Exec. Ofc.:

SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Community Health Agency

Department of Animal Services – Blythe Animal Shelter

**FINDINGS:**

**Finding Number 1:**

**During inspection of the dog kennel, staff informed grand jury members that the entire kennel had been exposed to the parvovirus. At least two dogs had tested positive for this highly contagious and deadly disease. Staff stated this was the second outbreak at this facility. When questioned as to why sick animals had been placed in the same kennel with healthy animals, staff responded they have no separate quarantine area.**

**Response:**

**X** Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

Canine parvovirus is endemic in Riverside County. The Blythe shelter records individual parvo cases in dogs and puppies every month of the year. Certain breeds may be more susceptible than others to this disease and the infection can be more severe. The incubation period is as long as two weeks. The dogs that tested positive for parvo had an average age of five months. The average stay before these animals exhibited symptoms was less than the average incubation period, which by definition means the animals came to the shelter already infected. With respect to staff's response to parvo questions, perhaps some level of miscommunication occurred.

Although quarantining newly impounded animals for fourteen days is the gold standard of animal husbandry, such an application at the Blythe shelter and even at the soon to open replacement facility is impractical and impossible due to facility constraints.

**Finding Number 2:**

**Parvovirus is a highly contagious disease, almost always fatal to dogs. Once parvo has been introduced into an area, the virus can live on surfaces such as: floors, walls, cages and food dishes, as well as dirt and grass. People can also transmit the virus on their hands, clothing and shoes. Hand sanitizers and disinfectant trays or mats (for footwear) should be used to limit the transfer of the virus. None were present at this facility. Jurors were directed to a closet in the office and told to use a household disinfectant spray for clothing and shoes.**

**Response:**

- X Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

It is true that parvovirus is highly contagious. For this reason the kennels themselves and the surrounding environment is disinfected daily with commercially supplied parvovirus labeled products. Signage has been posted to communicate the potential risk (See Finding 3 below).

**Finding Number 3:**

**No signs warning of the presence of parvo were posted and verbal notice was not given until after jurors were inside the kennel.**

**Response:**

- X Respondent agrees with the finding.

The Department has posted canine parvovirus signage throughout the Blythe shelter as a result of this finding. The signage describes the virulence of this virus as well as the precautions animal owners should take in preventing spread of disease.

**Finding Number 4:**

**Upon entering the area where cats are housed, jurors observed a cage with paperwork lying on top indicating the presence of a cat, however, the cage was empty. When questioned, staff stated that they were unsure of the cat's location and possibly the "work release girl" had taken it. (The Riverside County Department of Probation Alternative Sentencing Program allows some individuals to "volunteer" in exchange for a reduced sentence).**

**Response:**

- X Respondent agrees with the finding.

The cat in question was removed from its cage during routine cleaning by a work release program participant. At the time of inquiry by the jury members, the employee questioned was not in the animal care area and unaware of the status of the cat.

**Finding Number 5:**

**Inspection of the euthanasia room revealed a refrigerator and cabinets, which although outfitted with hasps and locks, were not locked. Contents included vaccines, euthanasia drugs, syringes and other medical supplies. This area is adjacent to the cat room and accessible**

**to work release workers. The controlled substance log was being kept in the administration area.**

**Response:**

**X** Respondent partially disagrees with the finding.

Respondent disagrees with the suggestion that the euthanasia drugs are not kept under lock and key. When jury members requested to see the euthanasia drugs, the Field Lieutenant had to be summoned to the shelter on his mandatory furlough day to unlock the safe which was locked within a cabinet in a nonpublic room. The controlled substance log may be kept in any office location. The only prescription is that it be "available for review." Additionally, there is no Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) or veterinary board requirement indicating that vaccines, medical supplies and other veterinary products are to be kept under lock and key. There is no veterinary board requirement for the segregation or security of syringes. However, the new Blythe facility contains a secure treatment area that will be for staff only. All needles, syringes, and sharps containers will be maintained and secured in this area.

**Finding Number 6:**

**Inspection also revealed two cats housed in cages in the euthanasia room. Staff stated the cats had been in the shelter for some time and were living in the euthanasia room because the cages were larger than the cages in the cat kennel area.**

**Response:**

**X** Respondent agrees with the finding.

From time to time, these cages are utilized for feral cats, expectant cats, mothers with litters and as long-term enrichment for cats with extended residence due to their larger size. These cages are covered during the euthanasia process. The department agrees that a better location should be found for cats and the replacement facility anticipated to open in September 2010 provides improved cat accommodations.

**Finding Number 7:**

**The office assistant works alone on the shelter premises, in an isolated area, from 4:00 – 7:00 one night a week, to accommodate pet turn-in and pick-up. This practice jeopardizes the safety of a county employee in a violation of Board of Supervisors Policy C-27, "Workplace Violence, Threats and Securities."**

**Response:**

- X Respondent agrees with the finding.

The Blythe animal shelter is staffed by three employees. The Board of Supervisors has approved one additional employee for the new Blythe facility. The additional employee will allow the Department to schedule staff in compliance with Policy C-27 and maintain one evening a week to provide service to the public. The new Blythe facility is scheduled to be open in mid-September 2010.

**Finding Number 8:**

**The Blythe Animal Shelter is in need of many repairs; however, a new facility is being built in the City of Blythe. It is located a few blocks off the main thoroughfare. The projected completion date is late 2010.**

**Upon entering the dog kennel, it was immediately apparent the facility was infested with cockroaches. Staff stated this has been a problem for some time. Efforts to exterminate them have been hindered by the presence of animals, which prohibits the use of effective poisons. The infestation was present in all three buildings, as well as the shipping container where extra food is stored.**

**Response:**

- X Respondent agrees with the finding.

The modern state-of-the-art new facility should effectively eliminate this problem. The department will make every effort to ensure that no infested material will be brought to the new facility.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Recommendation Number 1:**

**Sick animals must be quarantined to prevent spreading the parvovirus and other contagious diseases. Riverside County Department of Animal Services Policy No. 300-03, "Quarantine Guidelines," states in part: "doors leading into the Quarantine rooms will be locked at all times."**

### **Response:**

**X** Respondent disagrees with recommendation.

To clarify, the intent of the quarantine policy is specific to rabies quarantine and is not intended to establish isolation for contagious disease. The Policy No. 300-03 refers to rabies quarantine measures with regard to animal bites and scratches prescribed by the State of California and not general infectious disease control measures. The replacement facility is designed with a combined rabies quarantine and contagious disease isolation area for animals impounded. This precaution will not eliminate the incubation and subsequent potential outbreak and kennel contamination by animals not exhibiting symptoms of contagious disease at time of impound. For this reason, animal kennel areas are disinfected daily with parvocidal products to ensure control of such contaminants.

### **Recommendation Number 2:**

**Blythe Animal Shelter personnel should immediately install disinfecting trays or mats outside all entrances and exits to enable visitors and staff to disinfect their footwear prior to entering and exiting each building at the facility. Dispensers containing hand sanitizer should be installed in the kennel areas as well as in the office.**

### **Response:**

**X** Respondent partially disagrees with recommendation.

The use of hand sanitizers is encouraged throughout the facility and available at the transition from each room and animal area. There are a total of six hand sanitizers throughout the facility for public use.

Disinfectant footbaths are not as effective as they may seem. Numerous studies have indicated that unless the footbath is meticulously maintained, it can be virtually ineffective. Daily disinfectants with commercial products designed for the animal shelter environment is the best practice for disease control. This procedure has been proven to be effective as there has been no wide spread outbreaks in the community as a result of people visiting animal shelters.

**Recommendation Number 3:**

**Signs warning of the danger of spreading parvo and importance of disinfecting should be posted outside and inside the facility to clearly inform all entering of the hazard prior to exposure.**

**Response:**

**X** Respondent agrees with the recommendation.

The recommendation has been implemented and signs have been posted throughout the facility.

**Recommendation Number 4:**

**No animals should be removed from the facility without proper authorization and processing of paperwork. Individuals in the work release program should be supervised at all times.**

**Response:**

**X** Respondent agrees with recommendation.

The Department agrees with the recommendation and has implemented a procedure by which work release participants are required to check in with the assigned supervisor on an hourly basis for a review of the work completed during that time.

**Recommendation Number 5:**

**All vaccines, euthanasia drugs, syringes and other medical supplies should be kept locked except when being used. The controlled substance log should be locked in a safe when not in use. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 21, Food and Drugs, 1301.71(a) requires all registrants provide effective controls and procedures to guard against theft and diversion of controlled substances.**

**Response:**

**X** Respondent partially agrees with recommendation.

Respondent agrees with recommendation relative to the controlled substances themselves and is in compliance. There is no requirement to keep controlled substance logs under lock and key. There is a requirement for the logs to be available for review. Therefore, the department disagrees with this portion of the recommendation to secure the log.

The department disagrees with the recommendation to secure the medical supplies in the same way controlled substances are secured. These supplies

remain itemized and kept in accordance with the Department of Consumer Affairs and scientific controls. However, the new Blythe facility contains a secure treatment area that will be for staff only. All needles, syringes, and sharps containers will be maintained and secured in this area.

**Recommendation Number 6:**

**No animals should be housed in the euthanasia room. Euthanasia should never be performed in front of live animals. County of Riverside, DAS Euthanasia Standard Operating Procedure states, in part: "...euthanasia will not be performed in sight of another animal."**

**The larger cages should be relocated outside the euthanasia room. "While animals do not 'know' they are about to euthanized, they do recognize that they are in an unfamiliar environment and efforts should be made to reduce stress prior to euthanasia." (Humane Society of the United States Animal Services Consultation Report, 2005)**

**Response:**

**X** Respondent disagrees partially with recommendation.

The Department agrees with the recommendation that animals be shielded visually from the euthanasia process. The DAS Euthanasia Standard Operating Procedure is consistent with the recommendation. Due to facility limitations, the larger cages within the euthanasia area have been utilized periodically out of necessity. When euthanasia is performed, these cages are adequately distanced from the process both physically and visually.

The new Blythe facility will eliminate the need to house any animals in the euthanasia area.