

**THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES  
ANIMAL SERVICES  
CONSULTATION PROGRAM**

**CITY OF DALLAS  
ANIMAL CONTROL DIVISION**  
Dallas, Texas

**The Humane Society of the United States  
2100 L Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037**

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# 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 program (ASC), a service created to effectively assist local animal care and control agencies (both municipal and nonprofit) in managing their way to success.

In October 2000, the City of Dallas Code Compliance Department sought proposals for a review of the City management and operation of its Animal Control Division. The HSUS submitted a proposal for a comprehensive review and evaluation of its current operations, services, and programs with an eye toward the future. A site visit was conducted August 13-15, 2001.

Each HSUS Animal Services Consultation is tailored to meet the client's needs by utilizing a team of experts to conduct an assessment of services and offer feasible solutions, as may be necessary, to a wide breadth of problems. To assist Dallas Animal Control (DAC), The HSUS utilized a team of six members with specific (and varied) areas of expertise within the field of animal care and control. The team for this consultation was comprised of the following HSUS representatives:

**Kate Pullen, HSUS Director of Animal Sheltering Issues**  
*Shelter Operations/Facilities Review/Adoptions*

**Ana Munoz, HSUS Consultant**  
*Shelter Operations/Veterinary Medical Issues/Euthanasia*

**Eric Blow, HSUS Consultant**  
*Field Services/Animal Control Review*

**Brian Glover, HSUS Consultant**  
*Field Services/Animal Control Review*

**John Snyder, HSUS Director of Program Management**  
*Management/Administration Review*

**Kim Roberts, HSUS Animal Services Consultation Program Manager**  
*Project Management*

While on site, the HSUS team observed daily operations and procedures, interviewed staff, government officials and others. Also as part of our comprehensive evaluation, The HSUS requested extensive background documentation from DAC, and these materials have been reviewed and

considered by the HSUS team members. Team members also solicited and/or verified information from a variety of other organizations. Additionally, an opportunity for written comments from the public were sought in advance of the visit, and many were received from interested individuals and groups. These, too, have been taken into consideration.

*The HSUS would like to thank everyone involved with DAC for their assistance and cooperation with The HSUS Animal Services Consultation team. We have been extremely pleased to assist the DAC 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. With that in mind, The HSUS respectfully presents the following report.*

## 2.0 SHELTER MAINTENANCE

### 2.1 GROUNDS/PROPERTY

#### **Observations:**

The Forney Rd. facility is located in an industrial section of Dallas. This facility was built in 1979. The exterior is a grey concrete facade enclosed by chain link fence with wire. There are two entrances: one for animal relinquishment, lost and found, cat adoptions, licensing, field services and general information, and a second for the dog adoption center. The public parking area seems adequate and there is a separate parking lot for staff and animal control vehicles. The facility is very institutional in atmosphere and there is nothing offering information or extending a welcome to visitors.

The Oak Cliff facility is at the end of a city road. It was built in 1960 and is slated for replacement with another facility, the size of which is yet to be determined. There is one entrance to the facility for all services: animal relinquishment, adoption, lost and found, and field services. This building, like most older facilities, has been retrofitted many times to accommodate the changing face and needs of animal control service delivery. This facility is more pleasing to the eye with welcoming murals inviting visitors inside. Although this is the older facility and is perceived by the staff and citizens as the poorer of the two, the HSUS evaluation team found it better maintained and more appealing to visitors. There were few directional signs to direct people to either shelter. The only directional signage for the Forney Rd. facility was one yellow sign that reads “Animal Adoption Center”. The Oak Cliff facility had signs that read “Animal Control Center”.

#### **Recommendations:**

Creating and maintaining a helpful, sympathetic, and community-oriented atmosphere and reputation should be an essential and constant goal for DAC. This agency has the potential to serve as a community resource center for the public and for animals needing services within the City. While the Oak Cliff facility is familiar to most long-term residents, additional directional signage is needed at both facilities to assist new residents or first-time visitors.

Improvements to facility signage can be undertaken with a minimal investment of resources, and we make the following recommendations:

- U Ensure that directional signage (similar in quality and style to other professional municipal signage) is available and clearly visible at all intersections near the facilities and at nearby intersections.
- U Post directional signs outside the main entrance that welcome visitors and indicate the hours of operation. Signage should include regular and emergency phone numbers.
- U Clearly identify the use and purpose of the main entrance.
- U Develop educational banners with changing messages for display throughout the year.
- U Like other municipal agencies, the City of Dallas should provide routine landscaping and

maintenance services for the exterior of the facilities.

- U Monitor the condition of the front entrance regularly for cleanliness and maintenance needs. Encourage and recognize staff members who show “ownership” of their workplace by cleaning up litter or assisting community volunteers.
- U Plant bushes, shrubs and flowers to soften the outside features of the Forney Rd facility.
- U Create small rest areas with benches where people can sit and talk or just relax.

## **2.2 BUILDING SECURITY**

### **Observations:**

According to DAC staff, the two facilities are served by the SAS alarm company (972-458-7600).

### **Recommendations:**

Because routine operational concerns often receive the most immediate attention in shelters, building security and safety precautions to protect the staff and the public often take a back seat.

- U Management should ensure that alarms are tested on a regular basis.

## **2.3 GENERAL SAFETY ISSUES**

### **Observations:**

In accordance with the Texas Workforce Commission’s Occupational Health and Safety Administration regulations, a “Hazard Communication Program” is required and must be functioning within the DAC facilities.

Several staff members related that the City of Dallas has provided basic safety training for agency employees. This training is meant to be offered upon initial employment and then updated periodically on an “as needed” basis. There is, however, no formal documentation maintained in either agency or employee files that shows training for basic CPR, First Aid, and the use of a fire extinguisher.

Staff either has not received adequate training in the importance of wearing personal protective equipment, or has not been held accountable for its proper use. Kennel workers were regularly observed cleaning in the kennels and cat rooms wearing gloves but without goggles or ear protection.

Staff at neither facility knew what Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) were or the location of the “Employee Right to Know” station. The Deputy Manager is responsible for OSHA compliance, and there was one black binder in his office. This binder, representing the “Employee Right to Know” data, contained material safety data sheets and important safety materials, but was not complete, not alphabetized (making location of information in an emergency unnecessarily difficult,) and not up-to-

date. For example, the MSDS binder did not contain information on many of the products or chemicals currently in use, such as the euthanasia solution Fatal Plus®. There was no current “Employee Right to Know” station at either facility.

**Recommendations:**

U Once a safety training plan has been developed, ongoing instruction and supervisory commitment must continue to maintain safety as a priority within DAC.<sup>1</sup> The DAC must update and maintain “Employee Right to Know” stations at both facilities. These should include items such as:

- < Material Safety Data Sheets
- < Accident report forms
- < Where to seek emergency medical treatment
- < Safety hazard reporting and maintenance request forms

U Information that must be provided to an employee on the first day could be incorporated into a “Safety Training Manual” that would include information such as:

- < How to read a Material Safety Data Sheet
- < Locations of the “Right to Know” stations
- < How to use the security system
- < Locations of emergency exits and fire extinguishers
- < How to report an injury or safety hazard
- < Employee responsibilities such as wearing personal protective equipment
- < Locations of eye wash stations and how to use them
- < Proper second labeling of hazardous materials
- < Emergency evacuation procedures
- < Use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)
- < Zoonoses prevention and transmission

U Types of training to be provided at the time of hire should include topics such as:

- < Animal handling
- < Proper lifting
- < How to complete an accident report form
- < How to report a maintenance problem
- < Where to go for emergency medical treatment
- < How to perform a decapitation
- < How to use safety equipment, such as a fire extinguisher
- < Zoonoses prevention

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<sup>1</sup>Marin Humane Society (Novato, CA) “Safety Policy Statement.”

U Regular, ongoing safety training must be a part of the City of Dallas OSHA compliance procedures and proper documentation of all training must be maintained in the employee's personnel file

**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.

Material Safety Data Sheets are important reference documents that address a variety of work-related hazards. They detail proper procedures for working with chemicals and substances and describe: a) physical properties; b) toxicology; c) health effects; d) first aid; e) storage requirements; f) protective equipment needed; and g) spill/leak protocols.

In addition to the Texas Environment Department's Occupational Health and Safety Bureau and the manufacturers themselves, there is a wealth of additional resources easily available through the Internet. For example, important safety information can be found at:

- < MSDS Online: <http://www.msdonline.com>
- < Cornell University: <http://msds.pdc.cornell.edu/msdssrch.asp>
- < Vermont SIRI: <http://hazard.com>
- < NIOSH: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh>
- < NIH Toxicology: <http://ntp-db.niehs.nih.gov>
- < OSHA: <http://www.osha.gov>

## 2.4 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

**Observations:**

Oak Cliff was the only facility that had posted emergency evacuation protocols. When staff members were asked about a formal emergency plan, none could not be pointed out.

**Recommendations:**

U DAC must put in place emergency procedures as part of the City of Dallas program. The Dallas Fire Department and Dallas Police Department. This plan must be communicated to the all staff members by city emergency management staff, and should have provisions for both staff and animals.

## 2.5 FACILITY MAINTENANCE

**Observations:**

The HSUS team members observed in the facilities a number of areas needing much closer monitoring, repair, and/or maintenance. Some were minor; others required simply more time and skill, and several had deteriorated to the point where they might require replacement. Examples include open cracks in the cement floors and a serious rodent infestation that has destroyed security wiring in the kennel walls.

The public service areas of the facility were found to be generally clean and orderly. Small, well maintained and strategically placed trash containers were found throughout the facility with minimal litter on the grounds. The public bathrooms were clean and well maintained. The large trash and recycling dumpsters were strategically located on the back of the property and away from public access areas to prevent obtrusive odors. However, there was an overwhelming odor encountered at the public entrance facility of the Forney Rd. facility which indicated a deficit in ongoing maintenance.

### **Recommendations:**

U In many agencies of similar size and scope of the DAC, responsibility for maintenance of the building and grounds is fulfilled by employment of a full-time maintenance person. Ideally, the city should consider the implementation of a facilities maintenance position to provide routine maintenance needed at both shelters.

At a minimum, management, in consultation with those responsible for maintenance, should walk through the agency on a regular basis to determine areas of need. Regular maintenance should be scheduled to anticipate and address problems before they arise.

In the meantime, The HSUS recommends that management:

U Meet with city officials to discuss the need for a timely response to crucial facility issues that impact routine operations or jeopardize safety.

U Establish with the city's maintenance personnel a comprehensive preventative maintenance program and schedule for all facility areas requiring systems maintenance. For example, prior to seasonal changes, a Standard Operating Procedure should be established to test and evaluate all HVAC systems for proper function.

U .Develop a follow-up program for maintenance requests or work orders that will provide assurance that all repairs will be effected within a reasonable time.

U Ensure closer supervision of maintenance needs relating to daily operations in all shelter areas, and ensure timely response to areas in need of repair or replacement. The employee responsible for overseeing kennel operations needs to closely monitor the conditions of animal housing areas and equipment to ensure a professional standard of care.

U Conduct annual internal evaluations of not only the maintenance services provided but also their oversight, and include written specifications regarding service levels for use in monitoring day-

to-day activities

**Discussion:**

An animal shelter is no different than any other municipal building, and requires constant monitoring as well as funds to adequately maintain the property. When the primary beneficiaries of the shelter maintenance service are animals who cannot verbalize complaints about conditions and practices, it is not uncommon for the shelter to deteriorate to a point requiring a major infusion of financial and physical attention. The city has a responsibility to ensure that the facility is kept in a manner that is functional, safe, and attractive, and that crucial equipment, such as HVAC systems, are maintained in good operating condition. Any shelter, but particularly a large shelter, requires attention to ongoing care and maintenance. Routine problems, such as drains clogging, guillotine doors not functioning properly, hoses breaking, and light bulbs burning out, are common and expected occurrences.

## **3.0 SHELTER INTERIOR DESIGN AND LAYOUT**

### **3.1 RECEPTION/LOBBY**

#### **Observations:**

The Forney Rd. reception area consists of an double entrance way secured by a locked iron gate. As you enter the facility you are faced with a overstuffed couch, an armoire and stacks of boxes (containing cage cards and assorted forms). On the walls are assorted pictures of domestic and wild animal - with no apparent meaning, or context to animal care or control.

There is a table with multiple copies of information sheets ranging from declawing to lost and found information. There are two bulletin boards hanging on the wall in the lobby that serve as lost and found boards. The public can post lost and found reports in the hope of finding a match. There is an L-shaped front counter with a variety of information signs on the wall behind it. Some of these signs are professional in appearance; others are confusing and, in some cases, inappropriate for a government agency. The signs and pictures in the adoption center were cluttered and meaningless in terms of education of the public. There were what appeared to be magazine pictures of animals taped to the wall. Behind the front desk was the animal control office with three desks and an area for forms and communication. Adjacent to the front desk are the administrative offices separated by a glass wall allowing the staff in the administrative area to observe activities at the front counter. There are also two public restrooms in the area.

During the HSUS team's three day site visit, one person was assigned to the front desk. At the time of the visit this person was in training and had been doing the front desk job for two weeks. She was often handling several situations at one time with no apparent backup. Staff related that there is no procedure in place to have backup staff on call in case the front desk becomes busy. The phones ring often, with no one answering the calls.

The staff person at the front desk took 10 calls/walk-in requests for humane traps in the course of one hour. There was only one trap available to be rented at the Forney Rd. facility. The person who was able to rent the one humane trap was in the facility for one hour while the staff person assisted others, took in dogs and tried to explain how the trap worked. During the demonstration of how the trap worked, the staff person apologized several times that the trap was not in the best working order and that an animal could escape. The patron renting the trap was visibly concerned about her safety if the animal trapped got out.

During animal relinquishment there did not appear to be any backup to assist. During one situation a person was relinquishing 5 dogs. The front desk person conducted all the paperwork and then took each dog back to a run - leaving the front desk unstaffed. This process took one hour.

#### **Recommendations:**

To make the lobby area more inviting and maintain its overall efficiency, we recommend the following:

- U The sofa and armoire should be removed. The boxes should be stored elsewhere - away from public view. The assorted pictures and signs should all be removed and literature on the table should be placed in a professional wall literature holder with proper labels so visitors can find the information they are seeking.
- U All of the signage on the wall should be evaluated by the management team and a decision made as to what information DAC wants to provide to its patrons. One large professional sign should be posted at the public entrance to the facility and should display information about the adoption process, costs, lost and found process, hours of operations etc.
- U Benches should be furnished so people can sit down while they wait for service or fill out forms.
- U Provide proper coverage at the front desk. Establish a written backup plan to provide staff on call for assistance when the front counter becomes busy.
- U Ensure that new staff are not left on their own before they are completely trained.
- U Have kennel staff on call for assistance in taking relinquished animals to a run.
- U Evaluate time frames for transactions and streamline those processes taking the most time.
- U At a minimum, two front desk attendants should be on duty at all times to respond to phone calls, greet visitors, assist with lost and found matching and perform computer data entry.
- U Thoroughly clean all of the public entrance areas as a routine procedure every morning before opening.
- U Inspect the front lobby and office area on a regular basis with a critical eye regarding items that should be discarded or reorganized..
- U Continually develop educational and informational materials for public use.
- U Make available a larger selection of educational materials and literature for visitors to take home. Many excellent items are available at bulk rates from The HSUS, American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), the American Humane Association (AHA), American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the National Animal Control Association (NACA), and other organizations.

**Discussion:**

An animal shelter's lobby provides the first impression for incoming visitors and can create a lasting positive effect. 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."

### **3.2 OFFICE/DISPATCH AREA**

### **Observations:**

At the Forney Rd. facility there is a machine that sends over all the calls for service that come into the 311 and 911 system for the City of Dallas. There are reams of paper that come through this system. The paper is divided according to calls - and placed into the corresponding basket in the animal control office. They are divided into cruelty, bite, or running-at-large cases. At the time of the HSUS visit there did not appear to be any oversight or review of these calls by any staff person or supervisor.

### **Recommendations:**

- U There must be some accountability for calls as they enter the system. Calls should be periodically reviewed to ensure that the most egregious and serious cases are being addressed.
- U Invite input from staff working in this area to guarantee that ongoing and constantly changing needs are consistently met.
- U Provide adequate storage systems for resources that need to be available and readily accessible.
- U To reduce clutter, carefully evaluate the area to determine whether some items can be discarded, stored off-site, or reorganized.
- U Include this area in the routine operational maintenance plan

## **3.3 INTERNAL DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE**

### **Observations:**

At both facilities, internal signs appeared to be non-existent. It is very confusing for visitors to navigate the facility. For example: if you arrive at the Forney Rd. facility and want to adopt an animal, you would enter the adoption entrance. However, if you want to adopt a cat, you must exit that part of the facility and enter through the main entrance as the funders have only provided for dog adoption from the other adoption wing.

If you enter the main entrance and want to look for a lost pet, you are sent back unescorted and allowed to wander into all the animal areas. There are no signs telling you what room you are in or directing you to the appropriate room.

During The HSUS site visit, team members spent extensive time in: a) the lobby - observing customer reactions upon initial entry; and b) the kennels - watching visitors looking at, or for, animals. Many of the visitors expressed that they were frustrated and considered the agency's communication of various protocols and procedures to be inadequate.

At both facilities, the public can walk freely through the animal housing areas in the various buildings without an escort or adequate directional signage. For the most part, persons walking through the kennel areas were often confused or disoriented by the overall layout of the buildings, and uncertain of the status of individual animals in each area (such as whether that animal is undergoing a stray-hold or is available for adoption). It is possible, and clearly, highly likely, that persons looking for a lost pet

could inadvertently miss the kennel area containing their animal.

**Recommendations:**

Adequate signage is mandatory in any buildings with public access, and we recommend that DAC management make it a priority to improve the signs that direct, inform and protect visitors. The HSUS team recommends that DAC:

- U Place a large welcoming sign in both foyers to “greet” the visitors and thank them for visiting.
- U Provide clear signs that identify each room or kennel area, and its use and purpose.
- U Replace any homemade signs with well designed, professional ones.
- U Ensure clear signage in all areas where the public is not allowed access.
- U Ensure that all quarantine areas and cages housing quarantined animals are well-marked at all times.
- U Ask several persons, such as other city employees, who are unfamiliar with shelter operations and the agency’s layout, to critique the informational and directional signs within each 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 any necessary modifications based on that review.
- U Draw a map (similar to the type used by hotels) that shows the layout of public access areas of each facility, including the various kennel areas and their purposes, that can be given to new visitors to assist them during their tour of the facility

### **3.4 VENTILATION/TEMPERATURE/HVAC**

**Observations:**

At the time of the HSUS visit, air conditioning was being installed in the animal holding areas of the Forney Rd. facility. It was unclear if the air conditioning system being installed would prevent healthy air from being contaminated with air from sick animal holding areas. Since there did not appear to be any system for separating healthy animals from unhealthy animals, the addition of air conditioning may keep it cooler in the animal areas but will do little to maintain the health of the animals. Vents throughout both facilities were filthy and did not appear to have been cleaned or the filters changed in many months. When a senior supervisor was asked about maintenance protocols, the HSUS team was told there were none.

Minimal information was provided to the HSUS team members regarding overall ventilation and temperature control systems within the two facilities. During the site visit, temperature levels overall seemed comfortable.

**Recommendations:**

U The temperature at “floor level” (which may mean cage-floor level for some animals) for infant, sick, or injured animals should be at least 75 degrees; for healthy adult animals, 65-70 degrees.

U Inexpensive independent temperature/humidity monitors are available in many electronic stores, and should be purchased and rotated to track each room of the shelter that houses animals, as well as food storage and euthanasia areas. Temperature and humidity readings should be recorded in a nearby log twice daily, and any fluctuations or inconsistencies brought to the attention of management. In addition, the temperature and humidity displayed on a freestanding outdoor monitor should be logged.

U Vents, air ducts and filters should be cleaned and/or replaced monthly.

### **Discussion:**

Heating, cooling, and humidity control systems should be serviced regularly as part of a facility's preventive maintenance program. These are crucial - not only to provide for the animals' health and comfort, but also for that of the staff and visiting public. A means of circulating the air must always be in operation in all kennel areas. Ideally, the air in buildings housing animals should be exchanged with outside air twelve to fifteen times per hour.

## **3.5 NOISE**

### **Observations:**

In both facilities, sound levels varied within the different animal housing areas. The dog kennel areas were quite noisy, with a range of 92-100 decibels (d.b.a.), (averaging approximately 95 d.b.a.. which was clearly uncomfortable for visitors during the HSUS site visit. In addition, loud radios were in use in some kennel areas. Staff did not wear ear protection during the cleaning of the animal housing areas.

### **Recommendations:**

To reduce noise levels within the two facilities for the animals, staff, and visiting public, we make the following recommendations:

U Install an adequate number of noise reducing panels (sound baffles) which can be mounted above all 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.<sup>2</sup>

U Continually evaluate the sound levels in the kennel area, and require earplugs for staff use during cleaning and feeding to maintain compliance with OSHA regulations. The importance of

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<sup>2</sup>Sample information on sound-reducing panels created specifically for the animal shelter environment.

policies regarding ear protection should be reiterated to staff.

U 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 period may be lengthened or even compromised. These animals should always be separated from other animals (and by species) and housed in a quieter, less stressful area of the building.

**Discussion:**

To some degree, noise is inevitable and therefore present in all animal shelters, regardless of size. Noise, however, can not only present a danger to staff, it also has significant impact on the public’s opinion of an animal shelter. Additionally, the short and long term effects on the animals, stress-related and other, must receive serious consideration.

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 reduce the noise in many animal care and control agencies.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (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,<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>4</sup> 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
<b>Dangerous</b>	About 110 d.b.a. and up	<i>Firearms; fireworks and jet engines at close range; Loud concerts or music clubs</i>	Always use ear protection
<b>Harmful</b>	About 100-110 d.b.a.	<i>Chainsaw; snowmobile; loud aerobics class</i>	Protect ears when exposure exceeds 15 minutes
<b>Potentially Harmful</b>	About 85-100 d.b.a.	<i>Circular saw; loud string trimmer or power blower, motorcycle at high speed; loud wedding reception; loud mower; loud vacuum cleaner</i>	Ear protection recommended, especially for regular, lengthy exposure

<sup>3</sup>Seibert, P.J., “Hazards in the Hospital” *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, Vol 204, No. 3, February 1, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> “Noise: Special Report.” *Consumer Reports*, September, 1999.

<b>Relatively Safe</b>	About 85 d.b.a. or less	<i>City traffic noise; hair dryer; electric string trimmer or mower; quiet vacuum cleaner; noisy dishwasher; noisy air conditioner</i>	Ear protection not needed
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### 3.6 FLOORING

**Observations:**

Although relatively new, the floors in the animal housing areas of the Forney Rd. facility appear to be unsealed concrete and in need of maintenance. In some areas, floors are cracked, stained and/or exhibiting a residue. The floors are rough with a broom finish. This roughness attracts dirt and bacteria and provides a surface that retains viruses and body grease, and makes cleaning and disinfecting more difficult.

**Recommendations:**

Other urgent needs of animal sheltering facilities often cause flooring issues to be put on a back burner. However, proper flooring 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.

U All floors in the animal housing areas must be sealed and coated with a nonporous material. A hand-applied epoxy finish 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

### 3.7 GENERAL ANIMAL HOUSING

**Observations:**

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 in environment, separation from family, and daily handling by strangers. Cats and kittens are particularly susceptible to stress when removed from familiar surroundings. When subjected to the sounds of the 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.

Current population management practices used in both facilities have resulted in significant and unnecessary levels of stress on the shelter animals. The HSUS well understands and appreciates the agency’s desire to shelter as many animals as possible. However, it is important to keep in mind that if the agency is not able to set a good example in caring for animals, it will have the potential to undermine any and every goal regarding humane principles within the community. When visitors observe, or even have a perception of, animals being kept in a less than adequate environment, it

broadcasts to the public a message that an agency does not provide - and perhaps does not feel that animals deserve - proper care.

At the time of the HSUS visit there was a stray dog that gave birth after she arrived at the Forney Rd. Facility. She was placed in the general population and given a bottom of a dog crate to lie in. Two days after she gave birth several of the puppies were found dead in the cage by HSUS team members.

### **Recommendations:**

U Much can be improved for sheltered populations through revisions to population management practices. Management should start by stepping back and reviewing the overall layout of animal housing areas. Ideally, public traffic should flow from the “least contagious” areas (such as those areas housing kittens and puppies) to the “most contagious” areas (such as those areas housing strays). Shelter staff (especially during cleaning and feeding) should follow these same patterns.

U As well as reviewing the various species and stages of immunity, special consideration should be given to effecting adequate separation of animals available to the visiting public (such as owner surrendered or stray animals) from those in need of restricted public access (such as protective custody cases and bite quarantine), and animals with high stress (such as pregnant or nursing females or injured/sick animals.)

U The HSUS strongly suggests that DAC stray animals be individually kenneled upon intake, away from those animals available for adoption. The design of the facility (with several distinct kennel areas) lends itself easily to this type of transition for sheltered dogs, allowing for at least one full kennel for individual stray dog housing (without public access) and one full kennel for dogs available for adoption

U Implementing the HSUS housing recommendations will make some kennels and cat cages unavailable during the improvement process, temporarily resulting in a reduction in the number of animals that can be housed. The benefits, however, clearly and heavily outweigh the risks. Although with proper planning, the majority of changes can be undertaken with minimal impact.

U In addition to the immediate housing and operational recommendations within this report, management should walk through the facility on a frequent and regular basis to determine areas of need. Consultation with an architectural consultant familiar with animal shelter design, thorough review of facility plans, and routine evaluation of the organization’s service growth and changing community needs can provide the agency with a progressive long term plan for necessary modifications that will take into account current and future budgeting parameters.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>HSUS information on animal shelter design and planning, including a listing of architects specializing in shelter design.

### 3.8 ANIMAL HOLDING

#### **Observations:**

DAC receives approximately 40,000 animals annually, with an average of 60% dogs and 40% cats. Around 75% of the animals received were reported as incoming strays, and 25% were surrendered by owners. According to reports available at the time of the HSUS site visit, approximately 3800 animals are received and housed specifically for rabies quarantine or 10-day observation.

The holding period for stray animals is 72 hours, not including the day the animal entered the facility. There appears to be some misunderstanding by different supervisors about the holding period for owner relinquished animals either at the facilities or in the field. The agency uses the term “delivered” to represent an animal brought to the shelter by a citizen whether it is a stray or an owned surrender. There is an interpretation of the term impounded as it reads in the Dallas City code as representing all animals brought to the facility or picked up in the field as “impounded” whether they are strays or owner relinquished.

#### **Recommendations:**

This practice of applying the law so liberally is creating severe animal management issues for DAC. Since they are in essence keeping every animal for the “stray” period, they are creating more of a housing problem than if they managed the animals in different ways.

U In order to accurately plan the size of the new shelter, animal handling practices should be established first. According to present senior management, several years ago the term “impounded” was applied to stray animals only and, according to the same staff member, the flow of animals was better and the criteria for decision making were clearer. This created a healthier environment and better results for the animals.

U The ability to make a decision about an owner relinquished animal that is in the best interest of the animal and the organization can be achieved by rewording the release statement. The current statement reads:

- < I am the owner of the animal described above. I hereby give the animal to the City of Dallas Animal Control. I understand that the animal may be sold, adopted, or humanely put to death.
- < I request that the animal be put to death because\_\_\_\_\_.
- < To the best of my knowledge, the animal has not bitten or scratched any person or animals within the past 10 days.
- < I am not the owner - please provide the following information.

The HSUS team recommends language such as:

“To the best of my knowledge this animal *has/has not* bitten anyone in the last 10 days.”

X \_\_\_\_\_

“I certify that *I do/do not* own the animal described below, and that I surrender all rights to property in this animal to the XX. For owned animals, I also certify that no other person has a right to property in this animal. I understand that I may not reclaim this animal, and that it may be placed in an adoptive home, or humanely euthanized, either immediately or if the XX determines that a suitable home cannot be found.” X \_\_\_\_\_

### **Discussion:**

Although specific housing capacity is impacted by a wide range of variables, the following generic formula is used to assess current holding capacity:

$$y = 365 \frac{(r n)}{a}$$

*365 is the number of days in a year*

*r is the number of runs or cages*

*n is the number of dogs/cats per run or cage*

*a is the average holding time in days*

*y is the approximate number of dogs/cats that can be housed per year<sup>6</sup>*

Relevant assumptions:

(1) Current cage space: As indicated in other parts of this report, a number of substantial deficiencies exist in the type of cages used for cats and in the management of dogs housed together in runs. In order to implement the recommendations made in this report, more separation and dedicated cage space for special purposes will be required, further reducing the overall holding capacity of the shelter. For the purpose of this analysis, however, we will use as our basis the total number of runs and cages which currently exist in the facility.

(2) Average length of stay: Given the variables of potential reclamation or adoption within the minimum holding periods, we have chosen an average holding period for all animals to be 5 days based on current historical data. While it is true that animals reclaimed or adopted prior to the conclusion of the minimum holding period, as well as those deemed “unadoptable” or “unbreakable” and euthanized upon arrival, will reduce the average length of stay, a number of other factors will increase it, including the following:

(a) The current hours of operation and the definition of holding periods in terms of “business days” imply that animals whose holding periods extend over a Sunday must be held an additional day;

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<sup>6</sup> American Humane Association’s formula for shelter size and design.

(b) Animals being held under cruelty investigations, rabies quarantines, bite investigations, etc. generally stay well past the minimum 6 days;

(c) Since many of the potentially "most adoptable" animals will be those surrendered with known histories, there will be a justifiable desire to keep some of these animals in order to find them new homes; and

(d) Often, pet placement partners or "rescue" groups need an additional day or two before they are able to pick up or find appropriate foster housing for animals they have committed to take from a shelter (although the latter might be mitigated by alerting rescue groups about the potential availability of animals during the mandatory holding period rather than waiting until the animal is definitely "available").

(3) Generally speaking, the number of animals needing sheltering services per year in a community will equal approximately 5-7% of the human population in the area served, whether the area is urban, suburban, or rural. Although the County, SPCA and various community adoption partners provide shelter for some of the city's animals, with an estimated human population of approximately one million, the City of Dallas should presently be prepared and able to responsibly handle at least 40,000-50,000 animals per year.

*Formula Application:*

Utilizing these numbers, the formula applied against the total number of holding areas for Dallas Animal Control is as follows:

***For Dogs:***

$$y = 365 \frac{(118 \times 1)}{5}$$

$$y = 8,614 \text{ dogs per year}$$

***For Cats:***

$$y = 365 \frac{(140 \times 1)}{5}$$

$$y = 365 \times 11.6$$

$$y = 10,220 \text{ cats per year}$$

Therefore, the maximum capacity of the current facility, with an average five day holding period, and limited to one animal per cage, is 8,614 dogs and 10,220 cats, for a total of 18,834 total sheltered animals.

### **3.9 DOG HOUSING**

**Observations:**

The Forney Rd. facility consists of three basic dog holding areas: the large housing area for the general population, the adoption area runs and the secured quarantine area runs. The total number of runs is 176 and all are indoor runs. There are two outside exercise areas off the main adoption runs that are used to provide outside exercise for the dogs in the adoption runs.

The Oak Cliff area has three areas as well: indoor/outdoor adoption runs, a quarantine area that also houses cats, and the general population area consisting of indoor only runs. There are also several outdoor “gang pens” for overflow that are currently being used for court holds. The total number of runs at the Oak Cliff facility is 115.

Each dog is given a stainless steel water bowl that free stands in the run. During feeding times a self feeder is attached to the run and removed after the dog has eaten. Most kennels do not contain resting boards and only a few small dogs or those with newborns were provided something to lie in or on. Cage doors and latches were operational in both facilities. None of the cages were locked.

Dogs within each section are housed facing each other, and at the time of The HSUS visit there was a specific sign on a dry erase board instructing staff not to double up animals. There have been many reports that it is not uncommon to have several (up to 4-5 ) dogs in each run.

Although relatively new, many of the Forney Rd. facility runs are in need of maintenance or repair. As is the case in many shelters, the lower portions of the cage-wiring itself are not strong enough to withstand chewing and have been bent in many cases. Also, external concrete walls in kennels were not adequately sealed.

The dog areas have trench drains at the rear of the runs and these drains are covered by grates. The grates are in disrepair and often were observed out of place or had fallen into the trench. The ends of the trench drains do not all have a drain cover. The combination of the existing grates and the lack of drain covers presents a serious potential for puppies and/or small dogs to fall into the drains and be swept into the sewer.

### **Recommendations:**

U If the Forney Rd. facility is going to be kept, it will be essential to establish a routine maintenance program to repair damaged chain link.

U The HSUS team recommends that all animal housing areas for the Forney Rd. facility be retrofitted to provide additional separation of the general population to promote better health.

U The HSUS team would recommend that, in concert with key staff and an expert in shelter design, the current facility design should be evaluated and retrofitted to provide a triage/incoming animal area with cages, as well as separate temporary, stray, adoption, quarantine and isolation areas for both cats and dogs.

U Put drain covers securely in place at the end of every trench drain.

U Implement secure trench drain grates that cannot be easily moved (or removed) from their location.

## **3.10 CAT HOUSING**

### **Observations:**

The cat adoption area at the Forney Rd. facility is located in the first room off the front lobby. The area is not a room but instead a corner of an area with concrete walls defining the diameter of the room. This area contains Formica cat condos. These are in poor condition, and in all of the cages the Formica is cracked and chipped exposing the particle board beneath. All of the cages in this room should be replaced since the current method of cleaning combined with the compromised Formica is a recipe for sick cats and an unhealthy environment.

The garage area which serves a drive in drop-off point for field vehicles also doubles as the main holding area for newly arrived cats and cats being evaluated for adoption. There are 16 cages in this area that are old wire-floored cages that were designed for laboratory animals. The remaining cages are Shore-Line stainless steel 24" x 24" cages.

Quarantined cats are housed with the quarantined dogs with a wooden door separating the species. There are cages in this area.

One storage room contains more of the laboratory cages used in the garage holding area, and this room is used for holdover. At the time of the HSUS site visit approximately 30 cats were housed in this area. These cats were being held for a court case (hoarder situation).

The rooms themselves provide adequate separation of species, affording cats a visual barrier as well as freedom from the noise of barking dogs in the kennel areas. Additionally, this arrangement allows for the isolation of feral, unsocialized, and unhealthy cats from public traffic.

Each cage was lined with newspaper, and disposable cardboard litter boxes were used to contain clay litter. Water bowls varied from stainless steel to paper bowls. The food bowls used were disposable cardboard. In general, the cages appeared inadequately cleaned, stained and unkempt. The rooms were disorderly, with piles of litter boxes, loose litter, dust and debris on the cage tops and underneath them on the floor.

The cats housed in the smaller cages were very difficult to see in the backs of the cages. Only the cats who were well socialized and seeking attention at the front of the cage were easily observed. With the limited size of the smaller cages, the HSUS team noted that it would be very difficult for staff to handle, restrain, or remove feral and unsocialized cats with common cat equipment such as nets, bags, or cat boxes. During daily care and cleaning, control poles were routinely used to restrain feral or unsocialized cats.

### **Recommendations:**

U Overall cat caging, room design, and concentration must be immediately reviewed and modified to allow for better management and care of cats sheltered at DAC. In addition to enlarging the size of the smaller individual caging to an ideal 3 feet x 3 feet (with 2 feet x 2 feet acceptable for temporary holding areas), the agency needs to improve and encourage public access to the cats who are up for adoption. In the long term, the three current cat rooms are too limited in size to adequately house the increased volume of incoming cats, and facility expansion or renovation is needed.

U The selection of stainless steel materials for caging is excellent, as it is easily disinfected if cleaned properly, and holds up well to years of use. The cat room locations and security are adequate to separate them from the dogs. It would seem appropriate, however, to isolate ALL stray and unsocialized cats from the general public in a more secure and private area. As was suggested earlier, the public should normally only have access to those cats available for adoption. Visitors looking for a lost cat could be escorted into the appropriate private areas. This will increase the comfort of cats being sheltered, reduce their levels of stress, and reduce potential for the spread of disease<sup>7</sup>.

To facilitate the well-being of cats, we make the following general recommendations relating to housing:

U Individual Cat Caging – Individual cages are preferred, and should be made of stainless steel, fiberglass, or other impervious material and should follow these guidelines:

- < Provide an area of at least 9 square feet (usually 3 feet by 3 feet) for each cat needing general housing, and a minimum of 4 square feet (2 feet by 2 feet) for cats needing temporary holding.
- < House no more than one cat in a cage, except for nursing mothers, young litters of kittens, or pairs of adult cats who have been admitted to the shelter from the same household. Larger caging, however, must be provided for these animals.
- < Provide platform perches for cat cages. Cats are “three dimensional creatures,” and perches expand the area of their cages for their use and comfort.

U Colony Cat Caging – If any cats are to be housed in a colony setting, stringent feline health programs must be in place. These must include:

- < Health measures - including provisions for isolation and monitoring of cats destined for colony housing, and screening, vaccination, and testing for contagious diseases (such as FeLv).
- < Adequate separation - including separation of unsterilized males from females, nursing mothers from all others except their own kittens, young kittens from adults except their mothers), and sick cats from healthy ones.
- < Regular monitoring - with assignment of staff to continually monitor all colony cats for signs of aggression, such as fighting behavior, submission, such as not eating, and any symptoms of illness, with immediate removal of at risk animals .
- < Acknowledgment of limitations - including understanding that cats in a colony setting must be provided adequate supplies, such as one litter box for every three cats, and at least as much space as would be provided in cages.

The HSUS team does not feel that DAC is ready to attempt colony cat housing at this time.

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<sup>7</sup> HSUS *Shelter Sense* Magazine “Caring for Cats in Your Shelter.” March, 1995.

U Unsocialized Cats – alternative locations must be available for housing unsocialized cats away from view of the public and other animals. These animals require special housing, care, and handling, including a quiet and escape-proof area to reduce stress.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, we make the following recommendations:

U Immediately implement new systems for managing cat populations based on stray, feral, adoptable and non-adoptable status.

U Immediately replace all smaller cages in the isolation room with larger cages to allow for adequate handling and holding of feral, unsocialized, and fearful cats.

U Immediately limit the use of the smaller cages to kittens and well socialized cats until replacement caging can be acquired.

U Phase out all smaller cages, and replace them with larger, more appropriate caging for cats.

U Review the existing facility's design, and plan on an expansion area to more appropriately house the increasing population of stray and homeless cats.

U Consider the purchase of cat caging that contains plexiglass gates to minimize the spread of disease that occurs through public handling. These types of cages display adoptable cats with a friendlier feeling of interaction between customer and cat while still providing a physical barrier between cats and people..

U Once cage sizes are expanded to a minimum of 9 square feet, provide platform perches for all cat cages. Giving the cats a means of exercise and a place to sleep away from their litter boxes will greatly improve their attitude and sense of well-being during their stay.

U Purchase an adequate number of "feral cat boxes," nets, and/or bags for humane cat handling and care.

U To reduce stress, allow cats to keep one specific comfort item with them during their stay, such as a fleece pad, blanket, towel, shoe box, or paper grocery bag. When stressed or fearful, cats by nature will choose to hide; and this will provide them with something to "crawl into and hide," satisfying that basic need. If a cat is moved from cage to cage, ensure that this item also travels to his or her new location.

U Immediately implement more humane handling procedures of cats, and specifically, immediately discontinue the use of catch poles to handle cats.

U Immediately implement more effective cleaning procedures.

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<sup>8</sup>HSUS *Animal Sheltering Magazine*, "Free-Roaming Cats." September/October, 1998.

### **Discussion:**

Historically, animal shelters have dedicated little space to the housing of cats in comparison to dogs during facility design. But with the increased popularity of cats as pets resulting in higher numbers of cats needing shelter and care in most communities, animal care and control agencies are having to renovate, reevaluate and rethink their programs and service areas for cats in order to provide adequate care. As a result, disease control, stress reduction, and responsible care and handling are extremely difficult - if not impossible - with the current space allocation and design in combination with the caging systems in use at the facility. Systems prevent humane handling with cat-related equipment, discourage easy viewing, generate stress from the close proximity to other cats, increase exposure to disease, fail to maintain adequate ventilation, and provide no vertical space for routine cat movements and posturing.

## **3.11 SMALL ANIMAL/EXOTICS/WILDLIFE HOUSING**

### **Observations:**

Although DAC helps species other than dogs and cats, minimal specialized housing arrangements exist for these animals. There is no area specifically dedicated for small animals and exotics. At the time of the HSUS site visit, there was a chicken housed in the cat holding area at Forney Rd. and duck housed in an outside run at the Oak Cliff facility. The only specific area for exotics was in the Forney Rd. cat isolation/quarantine area. At the time of the site visit there were no animals housed in the exotic area. While their intake numbers appear minimal, housing for species other than dogs and cats is still notably haphazard.

### **Recommendations:**

Given that DAC may need to house exotic and wild animals at least on a temporary basis, it is advisable to include a space designated for this function in any future facility. Although the potential variety of species is great, and their care needs may differ widely, it is not necessary to create a highly specialized area for such use. Whatever space is available or dedicated to this use should have, instead, a fair degree of flexibility so that the shelter 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.

U Normal professional design standards should provide a space that is easily cleaned and sanitized, adequately ventilated, adequately lit, heated and/or air-conditioned (with separate controls for the exotic/wildlife area), and able to be secured.

- U Shelving/Counters: Counters or similar surface areas and shelf units should accommodate caging such as aquariums, plastic tubs or sweater boxes, or commercial wire cages. Make sure that sufficient electrical outlets are present for the use of supplemental heating devices such as heating pads or lamps.
- U Cabinets/Closets/ General Storage: Provide adequate areas for the storage of non-perishable foods, bedding, feeding containers, cleaning supplies, and other items.
- U Appliances/Utilities: Provide a sink for cleaning, watering, and other uses. In addition, a microwave oven and small refrigerator are important tools for diet preparation.

U Caging/Enclosures: There is no single correct or best approach to caging for exotics and wildlife; there are commercial cages that will work well, and shelter-built enclosures that are as serviceable. Regardless of the cage source, these two considerations must be addressed by any cage, enclosure, or system of caging: 1) sanitation- cages should be made of materials that can be disinfected and cleaned easily on a frequent basis and 2) security- cages should be equipped with a method of locking or securing doors or openings to avoid the escape of animals.

Examples of traditional and non-traditional caging and the species of animals that may be housed in them follows:

- U Aquaria: 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.
- U 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.
- U Livestock Equipment: watering troughs for cattle and other livestock, either in plastic or metal; larger aquatic or terrestrial reptiles; non-climbing mammals.
- U 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.
- U Commercial Cages for Birds: various sizes; cages that allow horizontal movement as opposed to tall narrow shapes are preferable; be aware of gauge of wire or bars when housing large parrots and their allies.
- U Miscellaneous/Other: In the event that an animal too large for caging discussed above has to be housed, freestanding sectional dog pens can be of use, as can large breed dog training crates.

### **Discussion:**

All animal shelters today must house and care for exotic, unusual, and fad animals, including birds, snakes, reptiles, fowl, fish, rabbits, hamsters, gerbils, and other small mammals. Because DAC 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<sup>9 10 11</sup>.

In light of recent trends, it is clear that the DAC will handle increasing numbers of animals other than dogs and cats and must make facility improvements to provide for their unique needs and to provide them with security from the general public.

A separate indoor area, with adequate heating and ventilation, must be developed for both the holding and adoption (as appropriate) of “pocket pets” and other small animals received by DAC. In addition, if storage needs continue to exist in the short-term wildlife holding area, alternative housing for wildlife species must be reviewed immediately. To reduce their stress, wildlife species require visual and audio barriers from all other sheltered animals, and caging that allows for minimal handling. Wildlife should never be housed within the facility for longer than 24-hours, and should be safely transported to appropriate wildlife rescue agencies as soon as possible.

Caging requirements vary with each species, and specific statistical information should be gathered and carefully reviewed to identify the housing needs of the agency based on the average numbers and types of species received. An investment into the necessary caging is required to adequately provide for species other than dogs and cats and this caging must be carefully situated and monitored to minimize stress.

Decisions regarding a) the amount of space within the facility, and b) types and sizes of cages will play a role in determining holding, such as whether or not any of these animals will be placed for adoption; held for a limited stray period; transported offsite; or require extended stays during cruelty investigations. Some shelters (such as the Houston SPCA in Houston, Texas and the Humane Society

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<sup>9</sup>HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine “Wild Ones: Caring for Wild and Nondomestic Animals in Shelters,” March/April 1997.

<sup>10</sup> HSUS *Shelter Sense* Magazine “Rabbits in the Shelter,” October, 1994.

<sup>11</sup>HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, “Shelters and Wildlife” March/April, 1998.

at Lollipop Farm in Rochester, New York) have dealt with this issue by housing exotics and small mammals in areas with windows for public viewing, but no actual public contact.

### 3.12 QUARANTINE/ISOLATION AREAS

#### **Observations:**

DAC appeared to provide adequate space for the segregation of dangerous and quarantined dogs from the general public, but it had very poor arrangements for cats. At the Forney Rd. facility cats are housed next to the dogs separated by a wood door. At the Oak Cliff facility cats are housed in an area of dog runs with cats facing dogs and hear constant barking - a highly stressful situation.

Although sick animal housing exists, there are no written procedures or guidelines for the monitoring or management of animals housed in isolation, nor protocols relating to the identification and transfer of sick animals in need of isolation. During the HSUS site visit, a multitude of sick animals were being housed with the general populations in all areas of animal housing. Animals receiving prescribed veterinary treatment were also scattered throughout the shelter's areas.

#### **Recommendations:**

U For the reasons mentioned above, protocols and standard procedures relating to the use of specific areas (off limits to the public) should be established for: a) the housing of animals who are suspected of, or exhibiting signs of, disease; b) animals under observation for signs of rabies; and c) healthy animals who require housing away from the public, such as those under protective custody.

Included in revised protocols should be provisions requiring that:

U Animals in isolation for health concerns and those undergoing quarantine for rabies must never be rotated from cage to cage. These animals should remain in the same kennel or cage for the duration of their stay.

U All areas or equipment that has been in contact with quarantined and sick animals must be immediately disinfected.

U Written procedures regarding the processing, examination, care, monitoring, and follow up of animals in isolation for rabies quarantine or illness should be established and enforced.

U The strategic placement of handwash dispensers in all animal housing areas is also necessary to prevent the spread of disease. These should contain evaporative disinfectant and will help to minimize any human exposure to common fungal and parasitic zoonotic diseases, while also limiting the spread of upper respiratory infections among shelter animals<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup>HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Waterless Hand Sanitizers." November/December, 1999.

### **3.13 ANIMAL RECEIVING ROOM**

#### **Observations:**

There are no official animal receiving rooms at either facility. At the Forney Rd. facility the animal receiving area consists of a table in the garage bay in the same area that houses cats restricted from view. Dogs and cats are removed from the vans, dusted with Sevin in an effort to deflea them, scanned with a microchip scanner, though one was never available during observation and it had to be found several times. The animals are given a quick visual “once over” and either placed in a cage or /run, or taken to the euthanasia room.

At the Oak Cliff facility the process followed is the same, again with no official area designated for the very important function of intake.

#### **Recommendations:**

The new facility must be designed with a formal intake area that is large enough to house multiple animals, several staff members and will afford a clinic-like setting so that animals can be tested, vaccinated, evaluated and checked against lost reports. The Forney Rd. facility must be retrofitted to provide a more formal intake process. Some recommendations are:

- U Relocate the holding cats to another part of the facility.
- U Install walls where the chain link is now and create an intake area.
- U Install a bank of 15 stainless steel cat cages to serve as temporary housing for all incoming non-feral cats until they can be vaccinated, provided with a collar and id tag, treated with Frontline or similar product and moved to a permanent housing area.
- U Install 10 dog runs to temporarily house all incoming nonferal dogs from the front or from the field.
- U Assign staff and establish operating procedures that will ensure that the area is always adequately manned and that the animals are moved out of this area as quickly as possible.

## **4.0 SHELTER OPERATIONS**

### **4.1 HOURS OF OPERATION**

#### **Observations:**

DAC serves the City of Dallas 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with animal control and field services. The hours of operation for the two shelters are 8 am - 5 pm Monday - Saturday, and until 6 pm one day a week, Wednesday.

#### **Recommendations:**

U Both shelters should open later in the morning and stay open later during the day to facilitate more visits for adoption and identification of lost pets. More staffing will be needed to accomplish this.

U The front counter should be staffed from 8 am - 8 pm M-F so people who need assistance with traps, lost pets, etc can be served.

U The Saturday hours should be 10-4.

These changes will not only reduce organizational liability and staff stress, but also could greatly improve the organization's public image. All this will in turn enhance the agency's ability to place pets and return lost pets to owners.

#### **Discussion:**

DAC should be commended for being open on Saturdays. However, it is not enough. 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. The current hours do not allow successful competition for a segment of the adoptions "market." Accessibility during the hours that are most convenient for the general public will enable people to easily reclaim lost pets, surrender owned animals, deliver strays, receive advice and information and adopt animals. It is also important to allow adequate time for scheduled facility cleaning and animal care.

### **4.2 COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT/ GENERAL RECORD KEEPING/SHELTER STATISTICS**

#### **Observations:**

The City of Dallas has realized the importance of computers to its organization and operations, and has taken steps to respond to the technological changes required in businesses today. However, as is the case with several other projects, it appears that while computers have been a well intentioned addition to the organization, their use has been undertaken without a master administrative plan, adequate budget, staff training or supervision.

DAC has a somewhat decentralized approach to the overall management of its computer systems,

which has led to a lack of accountability and effective planning. Responsibility for onsite computers and response to in-house computer problems is assigned to the administrative assistant, but in practice, it is much less clear where this responsibility begins and ends.

The computerized dispatching is not presently used; rather, data is entered into the computer only after the actual calls or cases are completed.

Currently, animal statistics are compiled from manual daily records. The HSUS team asked for, but did not receive, animal care and shelter related statistical trends for the past several years. It was not clear whether these statistics were even readily available, and it appeared that data would have to be manually compiled from copies of annual reports from previous years.

Also, it is the general opinion of the HSUS team members that the numbers of animals handled cannot be accurate with the current method of accountability. There are daily worksheets that account for animals in and animals out but there does not appear to be any daily reconciliation of the animals on hand - nor any report.

### **Recommendations:**

U We recommend that DAC make it a priority to carefully review its computerization needs, systems, and support, and then take whatever steps necessary to resolve the supply/demand conflicts noted<sup>13 14</sup>. The competent and consistent use of sheltering software greatly reduces errors in euthanasia, holding, locating, tracking and matching animals to people.

In addition, we recommend that management:

U Not just transfer current manual processes and protocol to the computer program - this will simply computerize the current inadequate processes.

U Review overall the organizational access to computer systems and find funding to provide an adequate number of computers to meet ongoing staff needs.

U Continually evaluate the speed and effectiveness of computer systems. Establish a timetable for the regular upgrading of all computer equipment; and continually update all software to the most current versions available.

U Develop an annual budget line item to support continuing software and hardware upgrades as well as staff training updates. A commitment to technology is not a one-time expense. It requires an annual expenditure to remain current and effective.

U Periodically audit the data backup procedures to verify that the staff is properly switching tapes

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<sup>13</sup> HSUS *Animal Sheltering Magazine*, "Computerizing Your Shelter." May/June, 1997.

<sup>14</sup>HSUS *Animal Sheltering Magazine*, "Finding Software for Your Shelter," May/June, 2000.

for correct rotation.

- U Establish a disaster plan that includes offsite storage of daily, weekly, and monthly data.
- U Develop a computer training plan that requires all newly hired staff to acquire a solid working knowledge of the computer program prior to use. Human error is always to be expected, but can and should be minimized by promoting staff awareness of the reasons for - and importance of - accurate data input as a critical component in shelter operations.
- U Routinely emphasize the importance of accountability and accuracy to all staff members.
- U Identify, study and strive to understand where and why computer problems occur within the organization. It is important to recognize and distinguish between internal human errors and training needs, and technological issues external to DAC and inherent to the software.
- U Assign one staff member responsibility for overseeing the in-house system, and provide them with all resources necessary for them to become expert in this area. Basic responsibilities should include: a) staff training; b) monitoring data for accuracy; c) correction of any errors; d) generation of reports needed by shelter management; and e) maintenance of operating manuals, installation of new software versions, and full documentation of the use of the software.
- U Initiate generation of customized reports, and extract additional useful information stored in the organization's database.
- U Contact other organizations using similar software to gather input on computer needs and uses.
- U Conduct a complete paperwork audit to analyze DAC's needs and to determine what additional paper systems are necessary for operational efficiency and safety.
- U Consider the design and maintenance of separate paper systems in addition to the computerized records for certain key areas. These can serve primarily as a check and balance mechanism as well as backup for the computer program when critical information cannot be stored or retrieved by the software. Manual systems, especially in certain operations, can be easier and faster than computer systems in some instances.
- U Struggling with data entry for some of the details of shelter operations may not be the wisest use of resources
- U Improve utilization of resources and information available on the World Wide Web. The Internet has become an important tool for research and education and should be available to all animal care and control staff. For example, The HSUS maintains a web page at <http://www.animalsheltering.org> to provide resources for animal shelter professionals. Many animal care and control organizations now use virtual shelters, nonprofit management sites, breed rescue sites, and others as training and management tools. The ability to easily communicate with and ask questions of shelter professionals all over the country is an important resource for directors and

management staff. As with any other management tool, appropriate access and controls to prevent abuses must be in place.

U Develop a comprehensive policy on the proper use of DAC's computer system, internet resources and electronic mail. Such a policy is becoming increasingly common in business and sample policies are readily available

U Consider establishing a technical support position. This person should be someone who is competent in all phases of computer use and technology, shelter software, report writing, and web site design, and should be able to facilitate the fullest use of computer and automation technologies. While this has not historically been an important consideration for the animal care and control field, the increasing need for computers in shelter operations, investigations, fund-raising, finance and community outreach has made it an issue that animal organizations must begin to consider in terms of staffing.

U Furthermore, we cannot stress enough the importance of using statistics to help shape policies and protocols. DAC must become much more diligent about the accuracy of all information that it presents. There should be an agency-wide commitment to accuracy, professionalism and truth. Without accurate information, any statistics or reports generated are completely useless. While a lack of attention to statistics - or even a fear of the ramifications that might result from their distribution - is an increasingly common phenomenon in the animal care and sheltering field, it is one that concerns us greatly. To hear "I don't know" as an answer to a statistical question is not only unimpressive to the public and media, but also implies indifference to the severity of the many issues confronting shelters

In addition to the recommendations listed above regarding computer systems and support, we also recommend the following:

U Centralize manual log-keeping information, making it available and accessible to all members of the staff.

U Immediately require attention to statistical reporting, and retrain office and kennel staff on the proper procedures for logging all information about an animal into the database. Emphasize how much this can reduce staff time and effort when retrieving the data.

U Require systems and reporting mechanisms to confirm that all staff can easily determine an animal's location, his or her status and final disposition. By our very missions, this is an integral part of our service to animals and an issue of public trust for our communities.

U Carefully consider the format and types of statistical reports needed. Reports should be user-friendly and easy for the staff and public to follow and understand.

U Separate categories and species, such as cats from kittens, dogs from puppies, small mammals, exotics, and wildlife, etc., from all others in all reports. At a minimum, information should include:

- < dates and circumstances under which the animal was acquired, impounded, medically treated, adopted, or euthanized.
- < description of any and all medical treatment provided.
- < final disposition of the animal, including either a) the name of the person who euthanized the animal and the reason for euthanasia (if applicable); or b) the name and address of the adopting party (if applicable).

U Establish a system to clearly identify the “status” of animals entering the shelter. For example, animals with predetermined dispositions, such as lifelong companions surrendered for euthanasia, owned animals needing quarantine, and those dead on arrival, can then be added to or removed from certain monitoring formulas (if so desired and clearly stated).

U Monitor and track important issues and trends, such as, but not limited to, the number of adoptions, placements or fosters through purebred and other pet placement partners, the number of adoption refusals and the reasons for refusal, the number of adoption returns and the reasons for return, the number of surrenders of animals adopted through other agencies and the reasons for return, and the source and number of purebreds entering the shelter, euthanized and adopted. These items are frequently overlooked in shelter record keeping, but are very useful.<sup>15</sup>

U Analyze data from records above and use it as a guide in making policy decisions in the future, establishing trends; building a case for funding and personnel needs; and tracking the success and failure of various educational initiatives. Statistics for study should include, but not be limited to:

- < an analysis of your shelter's current animal populations and trends.
- < an examination of the reasons people give when they relinquish animals to your shelter.
- < an analysis of the demand for your organization’s existing programs.

A study of this data will help with efforts to develop ideas for future programs that will address the problems in your community and preserve the human-animal bond.

U Assemble long-term multi-year data and statistics to study trends over time. Many agencies can look retrospectively for 25 or more years and examine fluctuations in animal populations in a variety of categories. This is perhaps the most helpful method of monitoring community changes, evaluating agency programs, and developing responses to emerging problems. Without such long-term analysis, DAC is only guessing at what is happening in the city and guessing about the success of its response.

U Initiate the advantageous use of shelter statistics by emphasizing that the burden of responsibility for accurate animal handling figures must be shared by all members of the community. For example, rather than stating that “Dallas Animal Control handled XX stray and unwanted

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<sup>15</sup>Zawistowski, S., Morris, J., Salman, M., Ruch-Gallie, R., “Population Dynamics, Overpopulation, and the Welfare of Companion Animals: New Insights on Old and New Data.” *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 1(3), 193-206, 1998.

animals in 2001,” management should instead work with area groups to combine statistics that accentuate the public’s role in shelter numbers through language such as “The City of Dallas’ metropolitan community generated” XX stray and unwanted animals in 2001.”

U Become familiar with trends, in Texas and nationally, and stay informed about the work of the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPSP),<sup>16</sup> Research compiled by both the NCPSP and within the state can help put the statistics and problems within the City of Dallas in a broader perspective. Fluency in this type of analysis and information is not only extremely helpful for staff training, but also lends credibility and legitimacy to staff presentations, press conferences, and expert testimony at hearings. Monitoring national trends and studies is just as important as tracking what is happening in local cities and counties. This type of documentation can assist shelters in predicting trends and projecting changing needs.

### **Discussion:**

Computers represent a major investment and resource for any agency. The use of this technology, however, is not static, and it represents the constant need for a major commitment to invest in resources for ongoing maintenance, improvements and/or expansion. Shelter management software can be an extremely valuable tool for tracking information on many aspects of the organization’s work, but its use is fairly complex and can only be effective if it is used by fully trained personnel and monitored carefully.

It is important to remember that computers can only be as helpful as the actual information put into them, and accurate gathering and effective analysis of statistical information are fundamental components of a modern animal care and sheltering organization. Animal care and control agencies are capable of generating an inordinate amount of data on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis.

Prior to the advent of computers, there was little guidance regarding the do's and don'ts of record keeping, and the method of trial and error was all too common. Clear and concise reports based on reliable and valid data are necessary not only for supporting budgetary issues, but also to maintain accountability, effectively monitor operations, plan strategies and evaluate programs.<sup>17</sup>

A lack of clarity, and/or errors in record keeping or data presentation, can give the appearance of carelessness, apathy or even impropriety. On the other hand, clear and easy-to-follow reports of shelter statistics can be a valuable tool in defining the scope and specifics of many complex variables which compose the homeless animal problem - such as incoming purebreds - for the public, for governmental officials and for organizational policy makers.

## **4.3 INCOMING ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION**

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<sup>16</sup> National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy ([www.petpopulation.org](http://www.petpopulation.org)).

<sup>17</sup>Wenstrup, J., Dowidchuk, A., “Pet Overpopulation: Data and Measurement Issues in Shelters” *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 2(4), 303-319, 1999.

**Observations:**

The current system of providing an animal with a blue string with a metal identification tag upon entry to the facility is archaic and must be curtailed. There were tags on cage floors, hanging on cage doors, caught on trench drain covers, and left in empty runs after the animal was removed. Since the metal tag is currently the only means of identifying an animal, problems relating to the location of animals arise daily. With the addition of the new software system, Chameleon, DAC will need to reevaluate the entire animal identification process prior to implementing the new system.

**Recommendations:**

- U Plastic identification collars should be placed on each animal.
  
- U Make sure collars are affixed in such a way to ensure that pertinent identification information is visible, and remove any dangling ends. Ensure that collars are placed flush to the animal's neck – tight enough to prevent the collar from slipping off the animal's neck, but loose enough to allow room for two fingers to slide easily underneath the band.
  
- U Develop a new cage card system to ensure that every cage front contains pertinent information regarding each individual animal housed. Cage cards should include the animal's record number, an inclusive description (breed, mix, colors, identifying features), and other relevant information such as behavioral characteristics and observations about health.
  
- U Ensure that the cage card stays with each animal, especially while being transferred from one cage or area to another.

## **4.4 LOST AND FOUND PROCEDURES**

**Observations:**

There are no formal lost and found procedures at either shelter. If people call about a lost pet they are instructed to visit the shelters or listen to the hotline. When a person does visit the facilities to look for a lost pet, they are instructed to walk through the kennels to search for their pet. According to written operational procedures, no person is to be allowed unescorted in the stray kennels, yet this practice occurs frequently. If a person does not find their pet, they are instructed to fill out a lost pet card and post it on the bulletin board in the main lobby. This card must be updated by the citizen within 10 days or the card is placed in a basket on the front counter. Several staff members commented that sometimes a motivated staff member would check the board when a stray came in to see if there was a match, but this simple procedure is not part of any process or written job description.

There is an information sheet at the front counter with the name and phone numbers of other local shelters, and it offers some information on how to find a lost pet. This information, however, is lost in the myriad of other information sheets on the counter.

According to the policy manual, the following is required for citizens to reclaim a lost pet:

- < Valid identification to prove owner is of legal age

- < \$7 fee for animals brought to the shelter by a good Samaritan
- < \$33 fee for any spayed or neutered pet
- < \$48 fee for any unspayed/uneutered pet with \$15 refunded if the owner provides proof of spay or neuter surgery within 60 days of refund
- < Registration fee of \$7 for an animal under 6 months of age or any animal that resides with an owner 65 years of age or older
- < \$20 fee for unspayed or unneutered dog or cat
- < Acceptance of a court citation for violation of the Leash Law, vaccination law, and/or registration law

### **Recommendations:**

DAC should be doing much more to facilitate the return of stray pets to their owners and should be doing a much better job of providing this service to the citizens of Dallas.

With the addition of an animal intake process with trained staff providing oversight, and with the benefit of a procedure that is functional, DAC could add a thorough lost and found process. In the animal intake room accurate information could be gathered about the animal: correct breed or mix, sex and neuter status, collar and or identification, etc. After this information is entered into the computer, the data on the animals would be correct. Proper training of staff must be aggressive, well documented and well supervised. If the information is incorrectly entered into the system the rest of the process will fail.

After this process is in place and working well, DAC could then add a position dedicated to matching lost pets to lost reports. Lost reports could be accepted by phone and entered into the computer system and it would be the responsibility of that persons to match the reports to the animals in house. This process would raise significantly the number of animals returned to their owners.

In an effort to increase the numbers of stray animals reclaimed by their owners, The HSUS recommends that:

- U The owner be asked to provide proof of ownership - not just personal identification. The proof could be photos, vet receipts, etc.
- U Require persons looking for a lost pet to complete a thorough lost report prior to walking through the kennels.
- U Provide an area for pet owners to review found reports of all stray animals being held and cared for in private homes.
- U Ensure that visitors are aware of all locations that could potentially house stray animals and take measures to have staff members review those housing areas inaccessible to the public.
- U Reevaluate the current information flyer that details how and where to look for a lost animal, and make sure that a copy is given to every person who fills out a lost report.

- U Review and update the current lost pet forms, requesting more specific information.
- U Increase the fines to reclaim an unsterilized animal with the entire amount returned to the owner upon presentation of proof of the surgery.
- U Implement a sliding scale with escalating fees each time the animal is impounded.
- U 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. These programs use volunteers to:
  - < Greet people
  - < Assist visitors in completing lost reports
  - < Escort pet owners through the shelter
  - < Ensure that visitors review the “Dead on Arrival” and found pet reports
  - < Provide advice and counseling on how best to look for their pet
  - < Maintain and update both the lost and found files
  - < Perform daily lost and found checks on stray animals in the facilities

## 4.5 STAFF UNIFORMS

### **Observations:**

Staff either wore a blue t-shirt that identified them as members of the staff or were wearing the standard animal control officer uniform, and members of the supervisory staff were wearing business attire or a polo shirt and slacks. There were variations in the standard animal control uniform. One of the apparent misnomers is that DAC has 40 animal control officers. This is very misleading as it gives the impression that there are actually 40 officers on the street - which is far from the truth. Many animal control officers spend their days working the front desk and providing direct animal care.

### **Recommendations:**

(see Section 8.10 - Officer Uniforms)

## 4.6 ANIMAL CARE AND HUSBANDRY

### **Observations:**

During the HSUS site visit the team observed incoming dogs being placed in the general population without regard for age, size, health condition or reproductive status. It was noted that puppies were being placed next to sick adult animals and a nursing mother was observed in the general population with two obviously dead puppies. These puppies remained in the cage for an extended period of time despite obvious awareness of shelter personnel.

Cats, kittens, and other small animals - including a domestic duck at the time of the HSUS visit - are held in a large room that also serves as the intake room for incoming animals. Animal control officers pull their vans into this area to unload incoming animals, exposing all animals in this “holding area” to disease, vehicle fumes, barking dogs, and other stressful noise and activity. A member of the HSUS team found one kitten dead in this area during the visit. Additionally, as the euthanasia room is immediately adjacent to this room, all animals that are to be euthanized must enter through this area. Incoming animals and those on hold and due to be euthanized are all mingled in this room.

During the HSUS visit the cat adoption area had an overwhelming smell of urine, feces, and a musty, stale smell. The cat adoption area consists of three banks of cages in a very small room. No windows and no type of air exchange system was seen. Unrelated adoptable cats were housed together. Cats, solitary by nature, react to this situation with increased stress, and stress in turn exacerbates the dangers of exposure to contagious diseases such as feline leukemia and FeLv. Incoming animals were led to the rest of the animal holding areas through this room, exposing adoptable cats to barking dogs, injured or diseased animals and, again, increasing their levels of stress. Such conditions affect their immune system, making them far more susceptible to acute upper respiratory infections.

Cats in protective custody are housed in an area that appears to have been some type of receiving area or vehicle port. This area has no air exchange system or windows. There is a significant amount of old/discarded paperwork, empty buckets, carts, and construction materials. This area does not appear to have been cleaned for an extended period. It is dusty, making breathing difficult. Disinfection in this area would be impossible. Several cats in protective custody being held in this area had been living in small steel cages for several months. The size of the cages prevents cats from fully extending their bodies or standing. There is minimal space for a litter box or food bowl.

The key observations made during the HSUS site visit include:

- < Healthy and sick animals housed together throughout the facility
- < Animals being fed without regard for age, size, physical condition, pregnancy or lactating status
- < No toys, towels, or blankets available for the comfort and psychological health of the animals
- < No one person in charge of monitoring the status of animals within the facility
- < Quality of care appeared dependent on staff preference
- < Dogs were forced to lie on wet floors
- < Dead animals were visible to visitors in kennels

Animals, like humans, are sentient beings who deserve to live in a humane, disease-free environment. A shelter should provide appropriate housing areas, and animals must be housed in a way that minimizes stress and disease transmission.

### **Recommendations:**

U DAC management should step back and review the overall layout of animal housing areas at the Forney Rd. facility. Traffic patterns should be evaluated and troublesome issues addressed. Ideally, public traffic should flow from the “least contagious” areas, such as those housing kittens and puppies, to the “most contagious” areas, such as those housing strays. In addition, shelter staff

should follow the same patterns

- U Provide adequate separation of animals available for viewing by the visiting public such as owner-surrendered animals and strays, from those in need of restricted public access, such as protective custody cases. Also, management should consider providing a quieter, stress-free location for feral and unsocialized cats in need of temporary housing during the holding period.
- U Incoming area in the back should not be used as a holding area for animals.
- U Bedding should be provided for all animals in the shelter, and especially for ill, injured, very young or old animals, and nursing animals.
- U Toys should be available for the comfort and psychological health of the animals.
- U Surrendered animals should not be brought in through the cat adoption area.
- U Separate strays from animals ready to be adopted.
- U Perform “rounds” a minimum of four times per shift to check on animal status.
- U Do not house unrelated adult cats together.
- U Test all cats placed in adoption area for FeLv.
- U If it becomes absolutely necessary to place unrelated kittens together they should be tested for FeLv first.
- U Dogs must always be separated from cats.
- U Sick or injured animals must be separated from healthy ones.
- U Puppies and kittens must be separated from adults unless nursing.
- U Males must be separated from females.
- U Dangerous animals must be separated from all others, and from the public.
- U Nursing animals must be separated from all others.
- U Animals with special needs should be isolated from all others.
- U Wildlife, exotics and livestock must be separated from all others and the public.

**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 in 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 the 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. In addition to separating animals by species, efforts should be made to house them in “life-stage groups,” keeping animals with different stages of immunity, such as young animals, nursing mothers, sick or injured animals, and fully vaccinated adults, well separated within the shelter. Animals who are stressed or recuperating from injuries or illness must have a quiet place to rest during their recovery period.

In addition, kenneling strays in the same area with animals awaiting adoption can present a variety of problems including:

- < Increased potential for the spread of contagious disease, because stray animals of unknown origin may be incubating viruses but not yet exhibiting symptoms.
- < Unnecessary public traffic in areas housing strays, many of whom are relatively stressed upon intake and have yet to adjust to the kennel environment.
- < Confusion on the part of the public when attempting to determine which animals are available for adoption.
- < Anger and frustration if the public learns that the stray animal they fell in love with has been deemed by management to be unadoptable (for reasons relating to health, behavior, etc).
- < Significant stress on the part of staff members who must attempt to explain to those visitors that, although they are ready and willing to offer that animal a home, the agency deems it necessary to euthanize that animal instead.

One of the most important functions of a municipal animal care and control agency is to serve as a temporary safety net for the emergency care of owned and potentially owned injured animals who have been hit by cars, fallen from windows, been attacked by another animal, etc. These animals often have weakened immune systems and therefore a lessened resistance to disease. By allowing a dog or cat who is recovering from an injury (but otherwise healthy) to be “isolated” along with animals who may be carriers of disease will result in exposure that may compromise the health status of the entire shelter population.

Being in a shelter setting can be stressful for all animals, especially for those who are not healthy. The opportunity for peace, quiet, and, if possible, recovery, is crucial to their comfort. Extra effort should also be made to provide a comfortable environment for animals housed in isolation. For example, many dogs respond well to stress-releasing items such as appropriate chew toys, comfortable bedding, food-treats, etc.

## 4.7 BEHAVIORAL EVALUATIONS/EVALUATIONS FOR ADOPTION

### **Observations:**

The veterinary staff was designated as being responsible for evaluating animals for adoption. As the team observed such determinations being made, it appeared to be a largely subjective decision. There were written criteria available: if an animal had no nasal discharge, no skin problems, overt aggression or major injuries, the animal would be approved for adoption. Animals with conditions such as heartworms can be adopted as “waiver animals.”

Some cats were observed being held overnight for a ‘chilling out’ period. If they calmed down and could be handled the next day they were deemed adoptable.

The HSUS team did not observe any form of formal behavioral evaluation during the three-day visit at the Forney Rd. or Oak Cliff shelter.

### **Recommendations:**

U Develop a behavioral checklist for vet and kennel staff to utilize and share with each other and visitors. Such a list should include at a minimum:

- < Kennel acquisitions (behavior during entry into/removal from cages)
- < Canine: walking on leash
- < Body sensitivity
- < Taking temperature
- < Handling mouth
- < General attitude in health check room
- < Handouts recommended (for adopters)
- < A dog’s personality and particular needs related to the personality
- < His /her temperament and any particular problems related to temperament
- < His/her ability to interact and socialize with people
- < His/her ability to interact and socialize with other animals
- < Level of submission or dominance
- < The training style best suited for the individual dog
- < Food or possession aggression
- < Energy or activity level
- < Response to physical control
- < The type of home that would best meet the needs of the individual dog

U Cats should receive a similar evaluation, but limited to:

- < A cat’s personality and particular needs related to personality
- < His/her ability to interact and socialize with people
- < His/her ability to interact and socialize with other animals
- < The cat's comfort level with handling /grooming

< The type of home that would best meet the needs of the individual cat

U Establish a relationship with area animal behavior professionals that might work with the agency to develop a program for both evaluations and assistance with individual animals at the agency's facilities. Once resources are in place to undertake such an effort, the program could include valuable education relating to dogs, information that will assist in evaluating each animal under consideration, and whenever possible, a review strategy that utilizes a group or committee, eliminating both subjectivity and stress on the part of reviewers.

U Protocols must be developed to assess, provide for, and monitor the needs of all animals, and a thorough examination must be performed on animals admitted to DAC. Procedures should be in place not only to assess an animal's behavioral health on arrival and at key intervals during his or her stay, but also to maintain or improve upon their incoming behavioral health status<sup>18</sup>. Ongoing evaluation and treatment of animals is necessary, and the results of evaluations should be accurately and permanently documented in each animal's record. Paperwork documenting the results of the examination and the assessment of every animal's health status should be developed, and could be included on the back of the impound card, or on a separate but attached document.

U Acquire and train adequate staff to implement the new procedures.

U Recruit outside professionals (e.g. behaviorists, dog trainers, groomers, etc.) to assist with programs and procedures.

### **Discussion:**

Every animal that arrives at an animal shelter should be thoroughly examined by a staff member qualified to perform animal health and behavioral assessments. The current level of examination is insufficient to detect any but the most obvious health and behavioral disorders, and could lead to failures in recognizing and addressing some very serious conditions.

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 examination and assessment of animals is also crucial to the adoption process and its success. Potential adopters must be adequately advised of the condition of a particular animal to determine whether the adopter can provide the care required.

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 chances for adoption, and to potentially place that animal in an appropriate adoptive home. Additionally, behavioral assessment plays a key role in promoting the safety of staff members and the general public, greatly reducing potential adoption liability.

Determination of "adoptability" is one of the most important aspects of assessing, monitoring, and evaluating animals (see Section 6.1 - Euthanasia Selection Criteria). It is no longer true that only young, attractive animals appeal to the adopting public. As part of the initial and continuing animal evaluation, many factors should be considered before placing animals for adoption, such as, but not limited to: outward demeanor, history, age, temperament, general appearance, behavior problems, and

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<sup>18</sup> For more information, contact Sue Sternberg, 4628 Rt. 209. Accord, NY 914-687-7619

shelter space.

## 4.8 DOG AND CAT HANDLING

### **Observations:**

There are no written policies or procedures on how to handle animals. While some staff indicated that they received some formal and/or on the job training, there was no consistency nor any safety standards maintained in the handling of the animals.

Handling was generally rough and unprofessional. Catch poles (or control poles) were used on dogs unnecessarily and inappropriately. The team observed dogs being dragged if they were too scared to move voluntarily. Cats were routinely poled and a severely injured cat was poled several times, hanging by its neck. The use of poles to handle or move cats can cause severe injury or death.

The HSUS team observed an officer pick up an approximately fifty pound dog by the scruff and rump skin and place him roughly on a table. A rope was wrapped around the muzzle and the officer stood slightly to the side and in front of the animal to allow another officer to approach. Both officers could have been bitten if the dog had been aggressive or had acted out of fear.

During euthanasia the staff was observed holding the animal by the head. They did not restrain the body or maintain a hold around the neck. This method would prevent injury to both staff and animal. Direct handling of animals was minimal or at best, avoided. Staff often appeared fearful and uncomfortable handling animals. All cats were scruffed without body support to remove them from cages or they were not moved at all for cleaning.

### **Recommendations:**

- U Arrange outside professional training for all staff in the appropriate handling and restraint of animals and including responsible assessment techniques. The HSUS, National Animal Control Association (NACA), American Humane Association (AHA), and other national and local groups offer animal handling and restraint seminars, textbooks, and videotapes.
- U Design a structured on-the-job 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.
- U Structure the training program to include weekly training objectives. At the end of each week, in order to evaluate progress, apply some kind of assessment tool - a quiz, maybe - to provide the trainee with feedback and to point out objectives needing more focus..

- U Develop behavior assessment protocols and criteria for all staff as part of overall animal handling and restraint training.<sup>19</sup>
- U 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 provide for staff and animal safety. Immediately cease using and discard all makeshift control and syringe poles.
- U 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.
- U Place all animal handling equipment a weekly (at a minimum) maintenance program that includes the immediate repair or removal of any faulty equipment.
- U Reiterate to all staff that animals are never to be free-lifted from the ground or hung using a control pole and that every animal's body weight must be well supported prior to lifting.
- U Schedule and perform cat behavior and handling training for all employees who have contact with cats.
- U Acquire a sufficient number of cat transfer cages, towels, nets, cat bags, gloves, and syringe poles, and other cat specific equipment for immediate use in the handling of cats.
- U Immediately discontinue use of control poles to handle or move cats.
- U Immediately discontinue dragging dogs with poles. Use a stretcher or pick up with assistance and appropriate precautions.
- U Lift dogs by supporting body underneath, not by pulling up on their skin.
- U Immediately discontinue using poles to place animals on tables or in cages.
- U Use leashes for non-aggressive dogs and non-quarantined animals.
- U Use carriers to transport cats, wildlife, and exotics.
- U Develop 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.
- U Closely monitor and supervise staff to ensure that policy is strictly followed and enforced. Staff who do not follow protocol should be disciplined and/or terminated.
- U Additionally, to facilitate responsible animal care and control while assuring staff safety, we recommend that all staff in each facility have ready access to the following animal handling

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<sup>19</sup> Please refer to HSUS Animal Sheltering Magazine "IN Practice-Pet Temperament Status" September/October, 1996.

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 snugly, 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. Capture gloves are available from several companies. 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, squeeze cages, and feral cat handling systems 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 which 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 unsocialized cats with little difficulty.
- < Leashes - Leashes serve many purposes, and should be more readily available for all staff. A number of manufacturers offer nylon 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 securing 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.

### **Discussion:**

To a casual observer, situations such as those witnessed by the HSUS team can appear to be a result of apathy, callousness, or malicious intent. The inappropriate handling of animals can by no means be justified. It is important to note, however, that this type of animal handling is most commonly a result of inadequate training in animal behavior and appropriate animal handling techniques. Poor practices

may also be indicative of stress related to the nature of the work inherent to animal care and control.

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.

Most adult dogs are experienced with some form of restraint around the neck and usually respond submissively when pressure is applied around the neck (such as in the form of a leash or a control pole). But using a control pole on cats, who have virtually no experience with restraint around the neck, can quickly become injurious, if not fatal. Unlike most dogs who are relatively comfortable when restrained with a control pole, cats commonly struggle – often violently – when pressure is applied around the neck. This frantic movement can cause the loop on the end of a control pole to twist on itself and tighten. Unfortunately, to compound matters, when the loop twists, the cable release mechanisms then do not work properly. As a result, a cat has the potential to quickly become seriously injured, choke, or even suffocate. The results can be even worse when a control pole is applied around the abdomen. And, largely because cats tend to both: a) weigh less than dogs; and b) extend their claws while violently struggling during this type of restraint, there can be an unfortunate tendency to hang-carry cats by the neck with their body weight unsupported by a hand when attempting to transport them short distances on a control pole.

The HSUS position is that control poles should not be used for the handling or restraint of cats. In our opinion, the only exception to this might be in a situation where a cat is trapped in an area such as a sewer pipe where a control pole, due to its length, is the only hope for successful rescue. The use of a net is one of the most humane and effective means of capturing free-roaming unsocialized cats. Furthermore, several leading control pole supply companies do not mention the use of this device for cat handling and restraint. In practice, many devices (such as trap transfer cages) for cat handling have virtually rendered the control pole obsolete. This equipment, now readily available, allows for the daily care, handling, transfer and euthanasia of feral and unsocialized cats with literally no human handling necessary. It is important to note that the majority of animal care and control agencies, large and small, have replaced control poles with these tools (such as nets, gloves, and transfer cages) that are not only far more humane, but also much safer for both cats and animal handlers.

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

## **4.9 SMALL MAMMAL/WILDLIFE/EXOTIC HANDLING AND CARE**

### **Observations:**

During the HSUS visit the team observed an officer handle a raccoon with a pole incorrectly. The officer used the pole roughly and its use was not necessary to control the animal. This raccoon was brought into the euthanasia room hanging from a pole and was shoved into a cage. The animal was poled again around the abdomen and injected with Fatal Plus. The animal was poled once again to be placed inside the cage, however the animal escaped and ran loose in the room. The officer stressed the raccoon still more by poling it again and shoving it roughly into the cage.

Wildlife, if in good health and not at high risk for rabies, could be transferred to a licensed rehabilitator. The only information found regarding this was a leaflet from the Rogers Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at 1430 E. Cleveland Road, Hutchins, TX. 75145.

The HSUS team did not see any wildlife transfers during the onsite visit.

### **Recommendations:**

- U Acquire appropriate equipment such as humane traps, transfer cages and nets.
- U Train personnel in handling and care of this group of animals, zoonosis, behavior, etc.
- U Develop proper facilities for care: a separate area with little human traffic and no domestic animals.
- U Maintain supply of appropriate food for most common types of animals.
- U Provide appropriate medical care for exotics, wild animals, and small mammals.

## **4.10 FARM ANIMAL/EQUINE HANDLING AND CARE**

### **Observations:**

Large animals are handled and moved by the sheriff's department. Staff reported that animal control officers are sometimes called to help retrieve animals. The shelter is not set up to hold large farm

animals. The only farm animal seen during the visit was a white domestic duck. The duck was held in a small cage in the incoming/holding area. The duck had water and dry corn in its cage. HSUS did not see this cage cleaned while visiting the shelter nor did they see any staff member handle the animal. No written procedures were available.

**Recommendations:**

- U Acquire appropriate equipment for capture, handling, and care.
- U Provide appropriate training for personnel in farm/equine care and safety.
- U Develop appropriate facilities for most commonly seen animals (barn).
- U Keep appropriate food on hand.
- U Provide appropriate medical care to farm/equine animals.
- U Develop a working relationship with equine and farm animal rescue groups.

## 5.0 VETERINARY/MEDICAL/HEALTH ISSUES

### 5.1 GENERAL SHELTER MEDICINE/HEALTH CARE

#### **Observations:**

There is no daily monitoring of all animals in the shelter by qualified staff. According to the Forney Rd. veterinarian, the vet staff does not euthanize, nor are they in charge of the quarantine area. According to the DAC policy manual, the veterinarian is in charge of sick and injured animals, vaccinations, euthanasia, the quarantine holding area and assists the State Health Department.

The decision to euthanize appears often to be arbitrary. Something as simple as “fleas” was given by staff as a reason to euthanize, but dogs with heartworms can be placed for adoption. Animals with nasal discharge are routinely assumed to have distemper. Technicians were observed handling animals unnecessarily roughly. The handling technique observed was uniformly poor, increasing the potential for bites and scratches, and injury of animals. No gloves of the type required for adequate protection were observed. There were makeshift control poles and syringe poles, some held together with duct tape. There were no shields, feral cat handling systems or transfer cages observed during the visit. Staff indicated that this equipment is not available.

Although the veterinary area doors are equipped with a touch keypad entry system, Class III and IV drugs (Telazol, Ketamine, Valium and Butorphanol) could be accessible to the staff and the public when the veterinary staff leaves keys hanging in the lock. This was observed at the Forney Rd. shelter.

Staff expressed concern about the cost of using medication and were reluctant to use them routinely. Pain medication (Torbugesic, Butorphanol, Rymadil) was available according to the veterinarian. The HSUS team did not observe the use of pain medication for any animals during the visit. In fact, no procedures other than basic physical exams were observed. According to the veterinary staff, certain limited procedures can be preformed onsite as long as they can be accomplished with the use of injectable anesthetics. The HSUS team observed no such procedures.

The veterinarian at the Oak Cliff shelter has been there for approximately one year. During this time he has written manuals for euthanasia, rabies quarantine, cleaning procedures, feeding protocols, etc. These efforts, and others designed to improve conditions for the animals, appear to have been met with resistance from management and senior staff. The kennel staff was unaware that such manuals existed.

#### **Recommendations:**

U Pain management drug therapy in private veterinary practice and shelter medicine has been a standard of care for the past decade. If the expense of pain-relieving medications is considered prohibitive for the DAC, animals should be more closely monitored, and euthanasia should be considered more quickly in order to relieve suffering.

U Develop and implement protocols to assess, provide, and monitor the needs of animals for

veterinary care.<sup>20</sup> Documentation of all aspects of animal care must be maintained and carefully reviewed on a daily basis by a veterinarian or other person with knowledge of appropriate veterinary care for sheltered animals. Protocols should include a process for timely and careful evaluation of the health status of all animals residing in the shelter. A person qualified to perform such assessments should perform this evaluation.

U Develop and implement protocols for euthanasia.

U Train kennel staff to observe and document the appetite and food intake of sheltered animals, and to adjust diets accordingly.<sup>21</sup> 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 and those animals 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.

U Provide humane protocols for fragile orphaned newborn animals. These animals have very special needs, and immediate special care or euthanasia must be implemented. Orphaned newborn animals (less than 4 weeks of age) who obviously cannot eat on their own should be euthanized upon intake unless a dependable foster program is implemented.

U Establish a formal means of maintaining access to new and cutting-edge information relating to shelter medicine. Animal shelter practice is a 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 innovations will help staff to stay up-to-date, well trained, and capable of necessary modifications to protocols when required.

A network of veterinarians interested in and familiar with animal shelter practice has been developed<sup>22</sup> and a specialized training conference for shelter veterinarians is presented annually. The staff veterinarians should be financially supported and encouraged to network with other shelter veterinarians to maintain standards and enhance the quality of veterinary care available to the animals within the DAC facilities.

### **Discussion:**

Even the best shelter, by definition, will be an inherently unhealthy place. Animals enter from different locations with unknown medical histories and often few or no past vaccinations against disease. Animals who have been recently exposed to - and thereby capable of spreading - disease may show no symptoms upon initial examination during the incubation period. While it is impossible to totally prevent the spread of disease within the shelter setting, it is possible to reduce it. The need for good health care protocols is crucial, and the rationale is two-fold: a) to uphold the shelter's responsibility to care humanely for animals and b) to maintain the reputation of the organization as a well managed and effective community resource.

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<sup>20</sup> HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine "How to tell if a dog or cat may need veterinary care." March/April, 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Peninsula Humane Society's observation chart found in HSUS *Shelter Sense* Magazine, "Keeping Cats Healthy and Happy," March, 1995.

<sup>22</sup> *Animal Shelter Veterinarian*, A Publication of the Association of Animal Shelter Veterinarians.

## 5.2 DISEASE CONTROL AND SANITATION

### **Observations:**

The morning cleanup procedure the HSUS team observed was haphazard and confusing. It appeared that cleaning protocols were left to the individual's discretion. Some used their own special blend of cleaning agents; others were observed using nothing but water. Cleaning started at seven o'clock in the morning. The shelters opens to the public at eight o'clock, and this is not adequate time to clean the one hundred and seventy six kennels plus many cat and small animals cages at Forney Rd., nor the one hundred fifteen kennels plus cages at Oak Cliff.

Animal keepers do not remove animals from cages prior to cleaning. Healthy and injured animals; nursing mother and puppies; all are left in cages while they are cleaned. Feces were not removed prior to hosing kennels, instead they were hosed down toward the back of the kennels. Kennels were observed being cleaned only with water and were not dried.

Disinfectant N-464-N (product name not mentioned or known by users - they just pointed out a drum) is used only if animals are removed from cages or kennels due to death, redemption, or euthanasia. Then the floor is mopped, but it could not be ascertained whether disinfectant was used. N-464-N is not measured for proper proportions to assure effectiveness. One animal keeper does use a bleach and water solution, but animals are still present when the cages are hosed.

Nothing is scrubbed, and walls, chain link and grates are all covered with a black, oily, film. Dog bowls are not washed or disinfected. Cat litter boxes are rinsed and washed with household powdered Clorox bleach. Plastic litter boxes are being used; these cannot be cleaned or properly disinfected. Cat cages were also cleaned with a disinfectant staff could not identify. The same dirty water and rag was used to clean all of the cages. Cats were moved if space was available, otherwise cages were cleaned with cats in them.

Roaches were observed everywhere. Floors behind all the cages had old food, trash and dust.

On August 14<sup>th</sup>, the HSUS team noticed the vast majority of small animal cages in the holding area had not been maintained during the night shift. Feces were still present in a cage with a puppy and no fresh water or food was present. The same findings were noted with the dogs in the kennel.

Cages housing cats in protective custody appeared not to have been cleaned from the day before.

When asked to produce written documentation on animal care and cleaning procedures, the animal's keepers informed the HSUS team that no written paperwork was available. However, a HSUS team member noted that several staff members had signed a cleaning protocol just before the HSUS visit - even though the Oak Cliff veterinarian had written this protocol almost one year earlier.

### **Recommendations:**

U It is recommended that the shelter staff adopt the following cleaning protocol for the dog kennels on a daily basis (once animals are transferred from runs and cages):

- < Remove dog from kennel.
- < Remove the animal bedding, and all food and water containers from the run.
- < Remove all solid organic waste (feces, hair, etc).
- < 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.
- < Allow solution to stand for twenty minutes (or according to manufacturer's instructions).
- < Thoroughly rinse all surfaces with a steady stream of hot water.
- < Dry the run completely using 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.

U Many of the sanitation and disease control considerations mentioned above in the "dog cleaning" section also apply to cats. We recommend the following protocols<sup>23</sup> 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.
- < 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 and water dishes and litter pans. Wash and disinfect all prior to reusing. 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.
  
- < Scrub all surfaces well, including the cage door, with an appropriate disinfectant solution. Allow solution to stand per manufacturer 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, tops of and between cages, windowsills and all other surfaces within the room.

U Institute aggressive pest control

U Discard all plastic bowls, litter pans, and replace with stainless steel.

U Replace old Formica covered wooden cages with stainless steel in cat adoption room.

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<sup>23</sup>

HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine "How to Clean a Cat Cage," September/October 1997.

- U Cats held in protective custody need to be placed in larger cages better suited for long-term holding periods and this room must be cleared of all the old paper, trash etc. so it can be properly disinfected.
- U Provide waterless disinfectant soap dispensers with appropriate signage throughout the facility so that the staff and the public can disinfect their hand as they move from animal to animal.
- U All kennels and cages must be thoroughly disinfected daily, by scrubbing with a disinfectant proven specifically effective against bacteria and viruses common in a shelter environment. Chlorine bleach or quaternary ammonium products are the two disinfectant choices most common in shelters. 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.  
  
Note: Bleach is not only corrosive to objects such as metal caging and clothing, but also has potentially harmful consequences for all animals, especially for cats. Bleach fumes can be irritating to the mucosa of cats' nasal passages and upper airways, and may even cause potential damage. Experts speculate that bleach can weaken a cat's resistance to upper respiratory infections. Many alternate disinfectants help to combat disease and animal odors without the concerns associated with bleach.
- U 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.
- U Staff should receive extensive, ongoing training in proper sanitation and disinfection methods, and should be closely supervised to guarantee proper sanitation
- U 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
- U Mopping is not the most practical method of floor cleaning in a shelter. Any area that can be scrubbed and hosed should be cleaned in that manner. If mops are used, the water and disinfectant should be changed frequently, and mop heads laundered daily
- U DAC should strongly consider the use of a high pressure cleaner to routinely clean all the areas of the facility that house animals. In addition, a degreaser should be used to remove oil and surface

film.

U Plastic (nonporous) 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 that 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.

U Trash cans are also considered potential disease carriers, and liners will minimize the dirt and grime build-up in the cans. DAC should implement the use of liners and a cleaning protocol for the trash cans.

### **Discussion:**

Since changes relating to cleaning protocols will increase the amount of time it requires to perform needed routine work, additional staffing problems may need to be addressed..

## **5.3 FEEDING PROTOCOL AND FOOD STORAGE**

### **Observations:**

The HSUS team was told that on-the job training included instruction in feeding protocols: adult dogs fed once daily; dogs six months or younger should have food available at all times; cat food available at all times; kittens were to receive kitten food.

According to several animal keepers, they were told to give only one to two cups per dog. Cats were observed to be fed excessively and fresh food was placed on top of old food. HSUS team members noted that a 50 lb. dog received the same ration as a 20 lb. dog.

A two to three week old kitten was fed dry cat food and the water bowl was placed out of reach. An HSUS team member brought this to the attention of an officer. Several minutes later the dry food was replaced with a large quantity of adult canned food, but the water bowl was still out of reach for this very small kitten. Later that same kitten was found dead in its cage.

There is no written protocol regarding feeding or food storage. Feeding protocols were based on word of mouth and on the job training according to several animal keepers. Other staff stated that the veterinarian decides what to feed the animals. According to the veterinarian, officers and animal keepers made those decisions unless a specific diet might be needed.

HSUS team members did not find any prescription diets available for any animals with special dietary needs. There was no specific kitten or puppy food - despite on-the job training procedures stating that these should be fed appropriately. There were only two new containers of food, one for dogs and one for cats, found by the HSUS team members.

There is no storage facility. Food is stored in rubber trash cans with lids. The DAC policy manual states that all food is to be stored in metal containers with lids. The rubber containers were located next to an empty, dirty and non-functional freezer. The same room held the refrigerator used to keep specimens being sent to the lab for rabies testing. The area was disorganized, dirty, dusty, full of old dishes and cleaning supplies. Cabinets were full of miscellaneous dusty objects. Roaches were noted to be present in this area also.

The DAC policy manual states that, if there is more than one dog in a cage, food is to be scattered on the floor so that the submissive animals can eat. This can quickly become a dogfight. Dogs and keepers could become injured. Dogs will not receive adequate nutrition.

**Recommendations:**

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. The HSUS team recommends the following:

- U Dogs and puppies should be fed dry food (specially formulated for their ages), mixed with hot water. Canned food should be added to make a paste or gravy.
- U Puppies less than 12 weeks should be fed 4 times daily (or every 6 hours), and puppies who are 12 weeks to 6 months should be fed 3 times daily (or every 8 hours)
- U Puppies 6 months and older should be fed twice daily.
- U Adult cats should be fed dry food (specially formulated for their ages) and may be given additional canned food. Since cats tend to eat approximately 14 small meals a day, dry food should remain available to them all day long.
- U Kittens should also have access to dry food, but kittens less than 12 weeks should be fed canned food 4 times daily (or every 6 hours), kittens 12 weeks to 6 months should be fed canned food 3 times daily (or every 8 hours).
- U Kittens 6 months or older should be fed twice daily, with canned food offered in the morning only.
- U Nursing mothers should be fed a high protein diet that includes canned kitten or puppy food.
- U Geriatric animals, and those with dental problems, should be fed soft food.
- U Animals who are malnourished or have special health requirements should be given a specific diet and closely monitored.
- U The policy of one-two cups for all dogs does not apply and should be eliminated.
- U Food and water bowls must be positioned for easy and safe access by all animals.

**Discussion:**

The stress of a kennel environment, combined with his/her health and age at entry, can dramatically impact an animal's appetite and nutritional needs.

Observations relating to appetite can provide important feedback that relates to each animal's general health and continued adjustment to the shelter environment. If necessary, nutritional protocols may need modification to allow for extra (or less) food and special diets.

When housing multiple dogs in a kennel, consideration must be given to "food aggression." Some dogs who show no signs of aggression will display dominance when food is presented. If not monitored closely, some dogs and puppies will overeat while others are denied access. In addition, serious fights can occur at a time when shelter staff are not in the area and cannot intervene.

## **5.4 INCOMING ANIMAL EXAMINATIONS/ASSESSMENTS**

**Observations:**

Animals arriving at the shelter receive a light sprinkling of Sevin dust, are tagged and placed in a cage or kennel. No clear guidelines exist as to where to place incoming animals. According to the DAC policy manual, separate areas should be used for puppies, toy breeds, old dogs, females with litters, and sick and injured animals. In practice, young, old, and sick are all placed together.

Ill or injured animals, very young, or pregnant/lactating animals are brought to the veterinarian's attention for care instructions.

The HSUS team observed a severely injured cat, two ill dogs and three canine neonates in the euthanasia room. The team did not observe any action taken to alleviate their discomfort or to provide food or water. In some cases the animals had been in the room for several hours.

**Recommendations:**

The assessment of incoming animals should include:

- U Temperature and vital signs
- U General physical examinations
- U External parasites and treatments
- U Internal parasites, fecal examinations, and worming medications.
- U Routine vaccination protocols. (see Section 5.5 - Vaccination Protocols)
- U Routine testing procedures (such as heartworm and feline leukemia testing).
- U Basic grooming needs and concerns.

- U Establish a triage for incoming animals. For example, severely ill or injured animals should be checked immediately by the veterinary staff. If a veterinarian is not available, animals should be taken to an emergency veterinarian or euthanized immediately.
- U Vaccinate and worm upon entry, unless rabies quarantined.
- U Place in kennels according to species, age, size, sex, health, reproductive status.
- U Stop use of Sevin dust. Newer and better products, such as Advantage, are available<sup>24</sup>.
- U Bathe if needed.
- U Protocols should be implemented that mandate the documentation of physical examinations and findings. Copies of such documentation should be provided to both adopters and to the animal's new veterinarian after adoption.

### **Discussion:**

Parasite control has important implications for the health of individual animals in a shelter, as well as for the overall health of the shelter population. External parasites, if untreated, can result in serious consequences that will inevitably become more severe: a strain on an animal's well being, an inability to ward off other illness, and the further spread of disease.

In addition, many common parasites of dogs and cats present a health risk to staff members and to the general public who visit or adopt from an animal shelter. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has published guidelines for prevention of transmission of roundworms from pets to people. These guidelines should be considered when developing standard operating procedures for examination and assessment of the health status of animals selected for adoption<sup>25</sup>.

Routine parasite control measures should be established using a professional exterminator aware of the special needs of shelter pest extermination (and who uses products that are effective for eradication but harmless to sheltered animals and staff). In addition, the agency should consider implementing the use of one or more of the new flea products on the market. Staff should receive proper training in tick-removal, and remove and destroy all ticks on incoming animals.

## **5.5 VACCINATION PROTOCOL**

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<sup>24</sup>HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Controlling Fleas in Your Shelter: Can the Latest Advances Help?" May/June, 1997.

<sup>25</sup>Centers For Disease Control's "Recommendations for Veterinarians: How to Prevent Transmission of Intestinal Roundworms from Pets to People."

**Observations:**

During the three to five day holding period animals receive a physical exam. The veterinary assistant is responsible for bringing the animals to the veterinarian. If the animal is deemed adoptable, the veterinary staff will proceed and vaccinate. There are no written criteria however that define “adoptable”. The following are administered to dogs:

- < DHLPP and RV
- < Worming with Strongid T
- < Blood drawn and tested for heartworms with Difil test

No heartworm preventative is given for two weeks. At that time if the animal is still healthy the veterinary staff will administer Heartguard. It should be noted that the Difil test is antiquated and unreliable for the diagnosis and eventual treatment of heartworms.

If a cat is adopted it receives an FVR-CP vaccination, is wormed, and a FeLv test is done. Untested cats are placed together, thus increasing their risk of acquiring infectious diseases.

Animal records are then entered in Petwhere. Hard copies of the animal’s records, from intake to veterinary care, are written on small index cards.

If there is room in the adoption kennel area, animals are taken there. If not, they are returned to the general and incoming population.

**Recommendations:**

U At minimum all incoming animals need to be vaccinated at entry (do not wait 3-5 days) into the shelter with:

- < DHLPP (or similar), Bordatella, vaccinations for dogs and puppies.
- < FVR-CP (or similar) vaccinations for cats and kittens, preferably an intranasal vaccine.

U Strongly recommend the testing of all cats and kittens for feline leukemia upon entry so that the disease is not spread. Cats that test positive should not be vaccinated. Positive cats need to be isolated and after the holding period should be euthanized.

U Strongly recommend the testing of all dogs for heartworms. After the holding period dogs testing positive should be euthanized. An exception may be made if the dog is adoptable.

U The only exceptions to this protocol would be ill, injured or rabies quarantined animals.

U All incoming animals should be wormed upon admission with a general anti-parasitic medication such as Strongid T.

U During the animals stay in the shelter a fecal exam should be done to assess whether the animals have hookworms, tapeworms, etc. and should be appropriately treated for any found.

U All vaccination procedures for each animal should be recorded, and include the date and time of administration, the specific agents contained in the vaccine, the 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 vaccination (i.e., “right shoulder”), and the route of vaccination (i.e., subcutaneous, intramuscular, or intranasal injection)<sup>26</sup>.

### **Discussion:**

Management should consider utilizing intranasal vaccinations for cats and kittens using modified live virus vaccines for immediate immunity, rather than the subcutaneous routes of administration, which take longer to provide protective titers. In addition, vaccination of all incoming animals upon entry (versus just those found acceptable for adoption) will do much to help control the spread of disease in the general populations.

## **5.6 STERILIZATION SERVICES/VETERINARY SERVICE CONTRACTS**

### **Observations:**

There are no in house sterilization services available. Animals are transported to private clinics for sterilization. There were no transports observed by the HSUS team. When asked to provide a list of affiliated private clinics, neither the veterinarian nor the veterinary assistant could produce such a list.

Prepubescent sterilization is not common at DAC. Instead, it is up to the adopters to comply and sterilize their pets within a given time frame. According to the adoption contract, the adopter appears to be the one deciding when the animals will be sterilized.

DAC does not routinely send animals to private clinics for care, stating that the City would “get stuck with the bill.” It relies on the cooperation of private animal hospitals to sterilize dogs or cats or provide emergency care. Emergency care is given under special circumstances such as when the animal has identification.

According to the veterinary staff at Forney Rd., many local veterinary clinics are reluctant to accept animals from the shelter due to illness, injury or deaths of animals transported in animal control vans.

### **Recommendations:**

To improve the quality of adoptions and relationships with the veterinary community, The HSUS makes the following recommendations:

- U Create and implement a detailed animal assessment program with physical exam findings and behavior assessments documented for each animal at intake and throughout their stay at shelter.
- U Provide copies of medical records relating to each adopted pet that will provide crucial information to the veterinarian performing the surgery.
- U Closely supervise the follow-up requirements relating to sterilization and rabies, and

<sup>26</sup>

HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine “Feline vaccination protocols, AAFP” March/April, 1998.

aggressively pursue 100% compliance.

- U Consider offering rabies vaccination clinics for the privately owned pet community at a discounted rate on a routine basis (i.e. every first Saturday of the month), where the cost of the vaccine is covered as a minimum. Possibly recruit volunteer veterinarians to provide the service at the shelter or at their clinics.
- U Develop a working group to review current policies and procedures for sick and injured stray animals. This group should include the agency director, field supervisor, kennel supervisor, staff veterinarian, and a private veterinarian with an emergency medicine background.
- U Establish clear and specific criteria for the identification of animals that are to be transported to the emergency clinic, immediately euthanized, or held until the next day for treatment.
- U Provide basic stabilizing first aid training to all staff.
- U Identify a lead person within the agency who will serve as the liaison to the veterinary community.
- U In addition to addressing the animal care issues of concern to the veterinary community, future plans should include efforts to create and maintain stronger cooperative relationships with the local veterinary community. Included in this goal should be the education of the veterinary community about the general services and operations of the DAC.
- U The HSUS recommends that the staff veterinarian coordinate a regular working group with the private veterinary community to open lines of communication and promote a good working relationship. Regularly seeking advice and feedback from private veterinarians can be extremely helpful overall for agency programs. Issues to explore with them could include zoonotic disease control, cutting edge sterilization programs, post-adoption health care issues, rabies protocols, vaccination procedures and assistance with general staff training.

## 5.7 RABIES/QUARANTINE/ZOONOSES

### **Observations:**

There was no rabies specimen preparation observed during this visit, nor were there any specimens waiting for transport.

The quarantine area is not secure. The door was found unlocked several times during morning cleanup with no staff present. The attitude regarding this area appeared lax.

The quarantine log was not consistent. When asked who is responsible for checking the status of quarantined dogs the HSUS team member was given conflicting information. Animal keepers said officers are responsible; officers said the veterinarian is responsible; the veterinarian said officers are responsible.

According to the DAC policy manual, stray females with litters, sick, and injured animals should be placed in the quarantine area. This policy is not followed. Policy also states that unrelated animals on hold for rabies quarantine can be doubled if space is limited or unavailable.

Animals are not adequately separated from each other. Metal partitions do not provide enough isolation. During clean up there is run-off from one cage to another. A Boston terrier was observed shivering and cowering in a kennel next to a large barking dog.

The holding period for quarantine is ten days.

Information regarding zoonoses was not available according to staff members. When interviewed by HSUS, staff indicated that, once again, on the job training and word of mouth was the vehicle for learning, and that minimal training or information was provided. The HSUS team found no information on zoonoses or how to prevent them.

The only comments staff made regarding zoonoses concerned rabies and distemper. All dogs with any kind of nasal discharge, whether clear or purulent, were described by staff as having distemper and scheduled for euthanasia.

Staff was unaware of certain zoonoses diseases such as cat scratch fever, leptosperosis, toxoplasmosis or ringworm. They were unaware of transmission issues and demonstrated significant confusion regarding rabies.

### **Recommendations:**

- U Develop formal training and provide written information to all staff regarding zoonoses<sup>27</sup>.
- U Double gate or sanction off any cages in public-access areas that house quarantined animals.
- U Ensure that the kennels and cages housing dogs and cats in quarantine are clearly marked.
- U Never rotate animals in quarantine from cage to cage. These animals should remain in the same kennel or cage for the duration of their stay.
- U Disinfect any areas or equipment that comes in contact with quarantined animals.
- U Gates must remain locked at all times.
- U Rabies quarantine should only be used for that specific purpose. Ill, injured, and protective custody animals need to be housed within their own holding areas.

### **Discussion:**

There are generally two types of isolation housing within animal shelters: (1) a location that houses animals such as those owned animals undergoing rabies quarantine or protective custody, and stray

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<sup>27</sup>HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Protect Your Staff, Protect Yourself." March/April, 1996.

injured animals, away from the public; and (2) a location that isolates contagious animals or potentially contagious animals, such as animals who are coughing, sneezing, lethargic, or have high temperatures, from general animal populations.

Combining or maintaining areas for these animals with special housing or care needs will not prevent disease transmission, and may actually contribute to it in the long run. To compound matters, combining all of these categories of animals with general populations results in the further potential for disease spread and a high level of serious risk and liability relating to public safety.

The quarantining of animals is an area of animal care and control that has an extremely high potential for exposure to liability. Allowing the public access to animals undergoing quarantine (and who may show signs of aggression) is in violation of the rabies-quarantine guidelines set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians,<sup>28</sup>. If a person is bitten by an animal undergoing quarantine, the agency will have an enormous liability.

It is crucial that quarantine programs and protocols receive a high priority by the agency. 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.<sup>29</sup>.

## 5.8 HEALTH DEPARTMENT RELATIONS

### **Observations:**

It was reported that the health department visits the facilities once a year. The veterinarian could not provide information, reports, inspection certificates, citations or any type of records documenting these visits.

### **Recommendations:**

- U All certificates should be displayed within a frame in a location easily visible to both staff and the public.
- U Each visit should be appropriately documented and records should be retained for a minimum of three years unless otherwise specified.
- U DAC should have a copy of the health department regulations for animal facilities and should

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<sup>28</sup> Jenkins, Suzanne, VMD, MPH. *The 2001 Compendium of Animal Rabies Control*, National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians.

<sup>29</sup> HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "In Practice" on Indiana animal bite and quarantine materials and recommendations. March/April, 1998.

follow and exceed these minimum standards and use the recommendations as a baseline for improvement.



## 6.0 EUTHANASIA

### 6.1 SELECTION CRITERIA

#### **Observations:**

Animals brought into the shelter are currently held from three to five days, during which time the veterinarian examines them and a decision is made as to whether or not the animal is adoptable. At the end of the holding period they can be made available for adoption or euthanized.

There are no written guidelines for selection. Selection appeared arbitrary and subjective. If an animal has a nasal discharge, no matter what its appearance, the animal is euthanized.

If an animal enters the shelter severely injured, the lead officers can euthanize the animal. However, the HSUS team observed several instances where severely injured animals were ignored for many hours. When questioned staff stated that no one had made a decision yet or that no lead officer was present to euthanize. The HSUS team noted that both the veterinarian and the veterinary assistant were available at this time.

Animals were not observed being checked for tattoos or ear notches. Dogs were inconsistently scanned for microchips. No cats were scanned for microchips. If an injured animal is “owned,” (there is no criteria for determining this,) the policy manual states the animal should be taken to an outside veterinarian for treatment. Shelter staff stated that this does not happen often because “then we would get stuck with the bill.”

In summary, there are limited selection criteria for euthanasia and those are not consistently followed.

#### **Recommendations:**

U 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?

U Develop a plan for daily evaluation of both stray and incoming surrendered animals. Once an animal has completed his or her stray period, a determination regarding his or her disposition should be made.

U Provide euthanasia as soon as possible once an animal has been selected for euthanasia. These

animals should not have to wait until a convenient time for staff.

U Review the animals currently available for adoption on a daily basis. Monitor their health, temperament and behavior to ensure they are still candidates for adoption.

U 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.

U Consider establishing categories similar to the following when developing protocols to determine an animals 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.
CATEGORY	STATUS	EUTHANASIA

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 who 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 who 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 needing housing and care.
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, isolation) and a potential home is available
<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>EUTHANASIA</b>

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 who 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 who 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 who 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 who 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.

## 6.2 EUTHANASIA PAPERWORK

### **Observations:**

The lead officer kept a drug usage report and a controlled drug log. These logs were not bound, making it easy to remove records. Records are kept inside a wooden cabinet that could be locked with a padlock, but the cabinet was not always locked even when the officer was not present. The storage of other paperwork in this area makes it open to a wide variety of staff. The closet storing this additional paperwork also houses a safe that contains euthanasia solution. Only one bottle is kept in this safe. Officers said that the remainder is kept in the supervisor's office. The HSUS team did not observe storage of the solution in the supervisor's office. The closet containing the safe was not locked at all times.

### **Recommendations:**

Management overseeing the City of Dallas Animal Control facilities is ultimately responsible for the appropriate use of controlled substances and should verify that daily inventories are performed through regular spot checks of supplies and records. In order for the DAC to maintain compliance with state

and Federal requirements. The HSUS team recommends that:

- U The amount of controlled substances available and “in use” by individual staff be dramatically limited.
- U All purchasing and inventory details be carefully included and maintained in agency records.
- U All records relating to controlled substance use be carefully maintained in a secure location for a minimum of two years.
- U A biennial inventory of all controlled drugs be completed within both facilities.
- U Signatures and inventory updates be completed for all controlled drugs removed from the main supply.
- U Any empty bottles of controlled drugs be returned to the staff veterinarian, who should also review pertinent log sheets for accuracy.
- U Animal-related paperwork be reviewed prior to euthanasia to ensure that a) there are no possible owners or potential adopters; b) the animal has been held the appropriate stray holding period; c) there are no pending court proceedings or investigations, etc.
- U Controlled substance log sheets be maintained, which include:
  - < The drug’s shipment lot number
  - < The in-house assigned bottle number
  - < The drug type and name
  - < The drug’s strength, amount, and expiration date
  - < Use method (such as injection route)<sup>30</sup>
- U The amount (dosage) of sodium pentobarbital and pre-euthanasia drugs be accurately recorded on the animal’s paperwork.
- U An accurate inventory of euthanasia drugs be on hand to ensure an adequate supply.

**Discussion:**

The security and accurate record keeping of controlled drugs for euthanasia is a serious legal issue for animal care and control. Sodium pentobarbital is a Schedule II barbiturate, which means it is a federally controlled substance. It can only be purchased using a Drug Enforcement Administration

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<sup>30</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration’s Inventory Requirements and sample forms.

(DEA) registration and order form, and is subject to, and controlled by, federal and state security and record-keeping requirements.

Federal law requires that detailed records must be kept by anyone who uses sodium pentobarbital. Records should include information such as the date the drug was used; the name of the person using the drug; the species and breed of animal involved; the dosage of the drug; and the total amount of the drug on hand. Per federal law, these records must be kept in a bound logbook rather than anything with separating pages, such as a loose-leaf binder. Compliance with these procedures is not only important for the DAC, but for all shelters that have direct access to sodium pentobarbital and whose status could be potentially compromised if and when a problem comes to light.

## 6.3 METHODS

### **Observations:**

There was no written guideline or euthanasia manual available in the euthanasia room. A euthanasia manual was eventually found by a staff member at Oak Cliff. The Oak Cliff manual was in the possession of the veterinarian. The written protocols for exotics, farm animals, and wildlife were at best very basic and inadequate.

Intravenous and intraperitoneal injections with Sodium Pentobarbital were the only methods observed by the HSUS team.

There was no indication of knowledge of alternate intravenous routes to explore if saphenous vein fails. (e.g. lateral saphenous vein or jugular vein).

Consistently incorrect intraperitoneal placement was observed. The injection was being given under the sternum, most likely hitting the liver. An HSUS team member observed cats euthanized by this method. According to HSUS policy, this method has not been accepted as humane. It is believed that this technique causes pain due to the stretching of the liver capsule.

An HSUS team member observed two officers administering intravenous injections in to the cephalic vein, located on the dorsal surface of the front leg. Both officers exhibited skill with that particular injection route.

A third officer was observed using a makeshift syringe pole with a severely injured cat. The officer had to poke the cat twice before actually accomplishing the intraperitoneal injection. This cat was so severely injured it could not move much less strike out at anyone. The syringe pole was not necessary. This is another incident indicative of poor training and follow-up in animal handling techniques. The cage was not covered to limit stimuli and allow this cat to die with dignity.

Death verification is essentially non-existent. A perfunctory placement of the hand on the chest is the sole method that the team observed. The animal was then thrown into a cart on top of other euthanized animals.

**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 the 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. For euthanasia to be truly euthanasia, the animal should be as free from stress and anxiety as possible.

The HSUS recommends the injection of sodium pentobarbital, prepared specifically for use as a euthanasia product, as the preferred agent for the euthanasia of companion animals. This method, when properly performed, has been found to be the most humane, safest, least stressful, and most professional choice by The HSUS, The American Humane Association, the American Veterinary Medical Association, and the National Animal Control Association.

The use of sodium pentobarbital and administration of that drug by an injectable method, however, do not in and of themselves ensure a humane death. The manner and route by which the drug is injected, and 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 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>31</sup> This stress and anxiety can be minimized by technical proficiency and humane handling of the animals to be euthanized. Such humane handling is accomplished with 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 good death for an animal. Technical skill and knowledge regarding drugs and equipment is a necessity; but understanding and emotional investment on the part of staff members is equally important. Teamwork, support, patience, a healthy attitude and an understanding of one's convictions and personal commitments to the job are all involved in giving an animal a dignified death.

A shelter's responsibility, first and foremost, is to provide a safe haven for unwanted and lost animals. Animals are individuals, and each should be evaluated on an individual basis prior to euthanasia. While this is often difficult, the volume of surplus animals and lack of appropriate homes necessitates

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<sup>31</sup> "2000 Report of the American Veterinary Medical Association *Panel on Euthanasia*."

that this be done as fairly and compassionately as possible.

## **6.4 CHEMICAL RESTRAINT PROTOCOL**

### **Observations:**

The HSUS team did not observe chemical restraint. A protocol for the use of xylazine and ketamine on dogs and cats was found taped to the wall: maximum dose 1.0 mls/20 lbs.; adult cats 0.5 mls.; kittens 0.2 mls.; dogs 5 lbs. 0.2 mls. to 0.3 mls. and over 60 lbs. 3.0 mls.

No protocol was found for exotic, farm or other small animals. No other protocol or manual was available in the euthanasia room.

## **6.5 HUMANE RESTRAINT TECHNIQUE**

### **Observations:**

There are no manuals, guidelines, or pictures on how to handle animals. All animals get muzzled and/or poled. Staff were observed picking animals from cages or off the floor by the neck with the pole. Animals were muzzled and then held by mandibles placing staff in extreme danger. Cats were only observed being handled by the scruff of the neck or with a pole.

Staff exhibited limited ability to read animal temperament. They routinely used the maximum amount of restraint. Staff often appeared reluctant to touch the animals. There was no petting, talking, or comfort given to animals while being moved or during preparation for euthanasia.

### **Recommendations:**

(see Section 4.8 - Dog and Cat Handling)

## **6.6 CARCASS DISPOSAL**

### **Observations:**

Euthanized animals are placed in a cart. When the cart is full it is placed in a walk-in freezer. Animals are held under refrigeration until the sanitation department truck picks them up. No pick-up was observed.

## **6.7 EUTHANASIA TECHNICIANS AND TRAINING**

### **Observations:**

There is very limited training for euthanasia. Some officers indicated that they had two weeks of classroom instruction at the Animal Control Academy and then all on-the-job experiences. Other

officers stated that they had primarily-on-the job training, seminars and vet training at the shelter.

The HSUS team observed the following conditions at the Forney Road shelter (similar conditions were also observed at Oak Cliff):

- < There was no lead officer (nor one on call) to euthanize animals on the midnight shift
- < The team arrived at Forney Road at 7:40 am and observed that two feral cats and two 1-2 week old canine neonates had come into the shelter the night before between 6 pm and 10:49 pm. The cats had no food, water or litter. The puppies had no food water or bedding. Their serial numbers were #13368, #13572, #14734
- < Cages were dirty. None were cleaned before putting animals into them.
- < Two very ill dogs were brought in by an officer and were lifted into the cage with a pole. Animals were so ill they could barely move. Cage doors were slammed shut startling all the animals in the room.
- < The vet assistant arrived at 8 am, taking stray cat #14731 to the holding area. Nothing was done for the neonates, injured cat, or the two ill dogs
- < A severely injured cat (#13530) had arrived at 2 am. The cat had no food water or bedding. The HSUS team questioned why this cat had not been euthanized. Staff said that midnight shift had no lead officer to euthanize. The veterinarian came in and looked at the cat at 8:10, after being requested to do so by an HSUS team member and commented “ Cat, you are a mess” and then walked away. The veterinarian stated that she doesn’t get involved in euthanasia. She also stated that she didn’t have keys anyway and that the officer would put the cat to sleep when he got in. An officer came in at 8:30 to put the cat to sleep. The officer stuck the cat twice with a syringe pole, slammed the cage door, and walked away after making notes on kennel card and drug euthanasia log books. The lead officer then arrived with no urgency to prepare animals for euthanasia
- < The ill dogs were recumbent and unresponsive. They were dragged out of the cage with a pole and muzzled. Dogs were lifted by the scruff and grabbing skin on rump and were placed roughly on the table
- < An HSUS team members asked staff members how death was verified. Two lead officers and an animal keeper stated that animal is dead if the eyes don’t blink and/or if you feel the chest with your hand and no heartbeat is felt.

### **Recommendations:**

U The HSUS strongly recommends that the City of Dallas Animal Control management immediately secure outside assistance with daily euthanasia. The HSUS also recommends that staff involved in performing euthanasia attend this training.

U All supervisors should be required to attend the euthanasia training in order to oversee the implementation of our recommendations and to educate new staff in the: a) proper techniques for dosing sodium pentobarbital; b) routes of administration; c) pharmacology of the drugs used; and d) accurate determination of death prior to disposal.

## 6.8 EUTHANASIA ROOM/ENVIRONMENT

### **Observations:**

Two doors access the euthanasia room. One opens toward the vehicle port and freezer. The other door opens toward the incoming area and the vehicle port. The only sign on the door reads 'Employees Only.'

There was no first aid kit in the room, no emergency eye wash equipment, or standard handling equipment. There was only a make shift control pole and syringe pole. No gloves, net, transfer cages or towels were observed.

This area was noisy and had a high traffic volume. The room was cluttered with boxes, cleaning equipment and hazardous material containers. The room was dirty, dusty and drab in appearance. Officers and staff would come in while animals were being euthanized to bring animals inside the room, to ask questions, or just to look. Some staff were observed playing loud music, laughing and talking inside the room while the euthanasia process was being carried out.

Cages surround the euthanasia table to the right and the left. This situation is stressful and not comforting. Animals are euthanized in front of each other. Dogs are tied to cages as others are euthanized and dumped into carts. These carts are kept in the room in plain view of all animals to be euthanized. Animals are dragged into the room and shoved into cages with poles. Animals euthanized by intraperitoneal injection are put back into cages that were not covered to reduce outside stimuli. Some animals euthanized by intraperitoneal injection were immediately thrown into the cart with dead animals.

### **Recommendations:**

The HSUS team recommends that the euthanasia room:

- U Be used only for the purpose of euthanasia and made accessible only to euthanasia staff.
- U Be located convenient to where the majority of animals are housed; near another room in which euthanized animals can be taken for a short period of time to observe for signs of rigor mortis; and near a walk-in freezer where bodies may be held until disposal.

- U Include a means of notification when euthanasia is taking place that states that the room's occupants should not be disturbed with this to be respected by all staff.
- U Use the space immediately outside the walk-in freezer as the location for death verification through rigor mortis. This will help to ensure that live and dead animals are not in proximity.
- U Provide privacy so that other animals can't see animals being readied for euthanasia.
- U Provide a first aid kit and eye wash station.
- U Disconnect the ringer function on the phone. Install a light system to serve as an alternate form of notification.
- U Be soundproofed so that other activities occurring in the shelter - such as the barking of dogs - cannot be heard.
- U Be well lit, with an illumination source that is neither dim nor glaring.
- U The euthanasia room should be composed of materials which are easily cleaned and disinfected.
- U Have a counter-level work surface on which to place animals (such as an examination table) and an additional surface of similar height on which the euthanasia technician can perform record keeping duties.
- U Contain one or more (coverable) cages or carriers in which an animal may be placed while supplies are readied and paperwork is checked, or in which animals who have been given pre-euthanasia sedatives/tranquilizers/anesthetics or intraperitoneal injections of euthanasia solution can be placed until those drugs take effect
- U Have adequate storage areas for supplies such as paperwork, microchip scanners, syringes and needles, and other necessary supplies.
- U Have an exhaust fan for odors, but one quiet enough to prevent distraction of the euthanasia technicians or fear in the animal.

**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.

Even the staff's movements will go a long way toward allaying animals' fears. Calm, gentle, slow movements are preferred and serve to relax the animals and reduce stress. If a euthanasia room is noisy to the point of distraction, the animals will likely respond in kind. They will become difficult for staff to handle, and the quality of the euthanasia process will go down accordingly.

## **7.0 ADOPTIONS**

### **7.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW**

#### **Observations:**

The adoption process at DAC is woefully behind the times and in need of a complete overhaul. All over the adoption paperwork is the phrase “The City of Dallas Animal Control reserves the right to refuse any adoption.” The reality is that no review is conducted at all. In fact, staff stated that they were unable to deny anyone an animal, no matter how unsuitable the home, because “we are the City.” The bulk of the comments the HSUS team received described the adoption program and the small numbers of animals adopted. While adoption is certainly an important part of DAC's programs, it is not enough to simply say “more adoptions must take place” or, “we need more adoption runs/cages and we will adopt more animals.”

The adoption program at any shelter hinges on the basics: animal assessment, animal cleaning, animal care, animal housing, proper staff, health protocols and education. In order for the adoption program to grow, develop and ultimately over time increase the number of animals adopted, the above mentioned basics must be firmly entrenched before any change in the adoption program can take place. The largest part of the solution is in getting the basics right, and then the citizens of Dallas will grow to trust the agency and will want to come to the facilities to adopt. But gaining the public's trust cannot happen in a vacuum, and much more money, staff, accountability, strong operational procedures and oversight will be needed.

Until the public knows they are going to get a clean, healthy, behaviorally sound pet from DAC, simply putting more animals up for adoption will not solve the problem.

The selection of animals as candidates for adoption and how long an animal is held for adoption are major issues and will be discussed at length.

### **7.2 ADOPTION PROCESS**

#### **Observations:**

The process for adoption is as follows:

- < Sign-in at the front counter.
- < Proceed to adoption area unescorted - dogs can be taken out to the exercise area without any assistance from staff..
- < Patrons are instructed to bring the animal's cage card to the front desk if they are interested in adopting
- < After showing identification and completing the adoption application, the patron is instructed to sign the back of the impound card and if the animal is under 4 months a sterilization letter is completed.
- < If the patron rents, sometimes the staff person behind the desk will call the landlord to ok the adoption, but this is usually (according to staff) not done and is not a mandatory policy.
- < IF the animal is over 4 months old and not sterilized, the surgery will be complete prior to release to the new owner.
- < Each adopter is given a dog or cat adoption kit, rabies certificate and registration papers.
- < The staff records the adoption in the daily worksheet and sterilization book.

During the HSUS team visit there was only one person behind the dog adoption counter and one person behind the main counter at both facilities. There was lots of literature and pictures on the wall and on the counter in both the Forney Rd. main office and the dog adoption center. The amount of material on the wall was distracting and appeared cluttered and unkempt..

### **Recommendations:**

To accomplish its goals, we recommend that DAC immediately develop an adoption program that incorporates policies and guidelines designed to assist adoption counselors in reaching appropriate decisions. A good decision is one that is based upon: a) information presented by the applicant; b) the appropriateness of that animal to that environment; and c) a counselor's good judgement, common sense and a willingness to look at each situation individually. DAC should take all steps necessary to educate adopters to be good pet owners and to find animals that best suit their needs. A more interactive adoption process will be beneficial for both the animal and the adopting family<sup>32</sup>.

DAC should develop a comprehensive, interactive adoption program to better serve the needs and interests of the animals in its care as well as the people who come to adopt suitable companions<sup>33</sup>. The staffing and resources dedicated to implementing a comprehensive adoption program clearly require expansion in order to meet this goal. By identifying what the City hopes to achieve, the agency can easily: a) identify the resources needed to accomplish it; b) work those needs into the agency's list of priorities; and then c) phase in the various aspects of the program as resources become available.

Although funding such a position may be an obstacle, management should consider the addition of a full-time staff person devoted to overseeing the entire adoption program. With the large number of humans and animals requiring attention at the animal shelter, it is simply too much to ask the front

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<sup>32</sup> HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine "In Practice--Our Adoption Process, And Why We Do It This Way" January/February, 1996.

<sup>33</sup>HSUS "Guidelines for Responsible Adoption Programs". 1998.

office and kennel staff to devote significant time to promoting and assisting with adoptions. With that in mind, The HSUS recommends that DAC:

- U Establish in writing the goals and objectives for the adoption program, and identify processes for continual evaluation.
- U Expand the hours in which the shelter is open to the public for adoption. Convenient evening and weekend hours will enable individuals and families with busy work schedules to visit the shelter for both adoptions and redemptions of animals.
- U Identify the written policies and guidelines necessary to assist the staff in determining methods of counseling potential adopters and the criteria for determining the appropriateness of an adoption.
- U Collect and review adoption applications, contracts, release agreements, and animal profile sheets from as many shelters as possible. Incorporate the best ideas into new forms.
- U Ask potential adopters to complete a short adoption application to: a) enable animals to be placed in an environment that is compatible with their individual needs; b) ensure that adopters are matched with animals who are compatible with their interests and lifestyles; and c) increase the likelihood that the animal suits their expectations, lifestyle, and home environment.
- U Determine the animal care related criteria that will be used to make adoption decisions. Examples include acquiring permission from landlords to bring an animal onto their property; ensuring that the animal will be adequately confined and therefore not roam free to violate local ordinances; and assurances that the animal will be kept as a companion and not as a guarding or working animal.
- U Consider taking applications and providing 24 hours for potential adopters to obtain landlord approval. If one applicant fails to return with landlord approval, go on to the next in line.
- U Approve adoption applications and conduct an interactive consultation process prior to adopters choosing (and falling in love with) a particular dog or cat.
- U Evaluate and reduce the clutter in the office.
- U Hire additional staff to work with potential adopters - to counsel them, direct them to appropriate animals and them with their decisions.
- U Institute a procedure for checking potential adopters against a list of people who have histories of animal problems, cruelty convictions, etc. - exclusive of the current computer system to ensure that staff are not adopting to pet owners known to be irresponsible or abusive.
- U Ensure that all staff members involved in the adoption program, whether employee or

volunteer, be intimately familiar with the animals available for adoption as well as with companion animals in general.

- U Continue to require the sterilization of all adopted animals and promote juvenile spay or neuter.
- U Develop and implement an adoption follow-up program to assist new adopters with transitional or adjustment problems, and to monitor the success of the placements.
- U Consider establishing a “wish list” file system for specific breeds or types of animals. Maintain applications on file for those who came to the shelter, were approved, but did not find their “dream animal,” and contact those people when the specified animal becomes available.
- U Develop a shelter-wide program to encourage development of strong customer service and marketing skills. It is best for an adoption program to be known for being friendly, helpful, supportive, and fair.<sup>34</sup>
- U Discontinue the practice of allowing people to take an animal out of the cages or kennels before staff or volunteers speak with them about their home situations.
- U Require that staff more closely monitor and supervise the animal/human interactions in the outside exercise areas.
- U Follow the pediatric spay and neuter policy as written by DAC.
- U If an applicant indicates the animals they have at home are not spayed or neutered, or they have the same species at home that they want to adopt and that animal is not spayed or neutered decline adopting to them any animals that are not already spayed or neutered or can be prior to adoption. This, of itself, will increase compliance with policies for sterilization of adopted pets.
- U Refuse to adopt opposite sex of the same species if they cannot be spayed or neutered prior to adoption.
- U Develop a “Homecoming Packet” for new adopters. Include information such as:
  - < the initial introduction to the new home
  - < the animal’s diet and health concerns
  - < information on basic care and answers to FAQs
  - < training issues and classes
  - < local ordinances and laws governing animals in the community

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<sup>34</sup> HSUS *Animal Sheltering Magazine*, “Customer Service--Helping Animals by Helping People.” November/December, 1996.

- < where to go for help
- < recommended reading on behavior and training
- < a list of supplies and necessities
- < the animal's medical records
- < information on the free veterinary exam
- < a list of participating veterinarians
- < what to do if they have lost an animal
- < a "missing pet" form
- < information on DAC
- < a note encouraging feedback

U Lastly, adoption paperwork should include a warning (reviewed by the City's legal counsel) that the health and behavior of animals is, by their nature, unpredictable. That warning should be coupled with a provision disclaiming, on behalf of the City, any warranty regarding the health or behavior of the adopted animal and any liability resulting from events occurring after the adopter has taken possession of the animal.

### 7.3 ADOPTION SELECTION

#### **Observations:**

According to the veterinarian and the person in charge of adoption, the decision whether to consider an animal a candidate for adoption is made by these two persons with input from the veterinarian technicians and various other interested staff persons. Animals are evaluated based on health and temperament, however, there is no formal temperament evaluation conducted. At the time of the HSUS team visit, there were 30 dogs and 23 cats available for adoption at the Forney Rd. location, and 20 dogs and 12 cats available for adoption at the Oak Cliff location. There were also holdover adoption animals being held in the "off view" stray areas at both facilities. There were animals (mostly dogs) that had been up for adoption for many months. This surprised the HSUS team members and we were told by staff members that once a dog made it to the adoption ward, they were "there to stay."

The dates on the cage cards told the story - 7/22/01, 6/21/01, 6/22/01, 6/8/01, 5/26/01, 5/4/01, etc. were dates of impound. Some of these animals had been at the facility for 3-4 months - with one dog there since February. There did not appear to be any oversight as to how long animals were kept. It is a luxury for most large well-run animal care and control agencies to hold animals longer than one month. The HSUS team could not understand the rationale for holding animals so long when there were perfectly adoptable animals in the stray hold areas. Some staff indicated that it was not abnormal to have dogs at the facilities so long that they suffer from "kennel depression."

There were also several examples of animals in the adoption section with this note on their cage card: "Not for Sale, under treatment for coughing sneezing". At the Oak Cliff facility there were 7 dogs with this sign on their cage. There were a multitude of dogs up for adoption but since there was no room in the adoption ward they were being housed in the stray ward, exposed to parvo, kennel cough etc.

### **Recommendations:**

U The HSUS team strongly recommends DAC create a position of “case manager”. This person would be in charge of adoptions. The case manager would be a specialist in animal behavior and animal identification and would work in concert with the veterinarian who would determine the health of the animals. Together the veterinarian and the case manager would maintain the adoption animal selection. They would determine when an animal has been up for adoption too long, taking into consideration animals held off-view that would also be candidates for adoption. This person would be responsible for signing off on euthanasia if necessary and be able to make difficult decisions for animals that have been up for adoption for extended periods of time. The selection of this person would need to be careful and precise. The Marin Humane Society in California has used this model successfully.

U If animals come down with any virus (URI, kennel cough, coccidia, etc) they should be moved from the adoption ward and housed in a isolation room until they are successfully treated and then returned to the adoption area or euthanized if they have not responded to treatment.

U If an appropriate location is not available to isolate and treat common viruses, a strict policy should be in place stating that animals with URI, kennel cough, or other virus should be euthanized to protect the health of the general population.

U Treatment in the general population must immediately stop if there is to be any change in the health of the population.

### **Discussion:**

It is apparent that DAC is attempting to conduct business without the infrastructure, staff, money or system to do it effectively. The decision to keep sick animals and treat them actually keeps the environment unhealthy and prevents the animals from the stray holding areas from having a chance for adoption. The decision to keep dogs up for adoption for several months is not acceptable in the current environment offered by DAC. The process is actually causing overcrowding of animals and creating an environment that prevents healthy, behaviorally sound animals from being placed for adoption.

## **7.4 POST ADOPTION HEALTH CHECKS/ SPAY-NEUTER COMPLIANCE**

### **Observations:**

DAC does not perform post adoption health checks. The spay and neuter follow-up for animals sent home on a contract consists of a letter sent to the adopter one month prior to due date. As the certificates are mailed back to DAC by the veterinarian who performed the surgery, a notation is made

in the master spay and neuter book. The adopters who do not send back the neuter certificate are noted and sent another letter informing them that they can be held responsible and that the surgery is required by state law. But there is no follow-up if no response is received and the adopter does not comply.

A review of the surgeries due book from Nov 2000 to May 2001 (with the understanding that most of the surgeries at the maximum are due two months after adoption, 8 week old animals can be sterilized at 4 months old, two months away) we found 145 animals not yet denoted as spayed and neutered. We also saw evidence of multiple adoptions of opposite sex animals of the same species that were too young to be spayed or neutered prior to adoption. This practice is senseless in light of the huge overpopulation of companion animals in Dallas.

### **Recommendations:**

U Immediately stop adopting animals too young for surgery to people who have a history of not spaying or neutering pets.

U Immediately stop adopting animals of the same species but opposite sex to the same family unless one or both of the animals can be spayed or neutered pre-adoption.

U Institute a policy of conducting follow up phone calls at the end of the due month to the adopters to arrange the spay or neuter.

U Provide transportation to the surgery via animal control officers.

U Put in place a policy and procedure to reclaim animals that the owners refuse to spay or neuter.

U Establish an in-house spay and neuter clinic and fully embrace pediatric spay and neuter to ensure 100 percent sterilization of all adopted animals prior to leaving the facility.

## **7.5 COMMUNITY ADOPTION PARTNERS**

### **Observations:**

There are currently many independent programs at both facilities determined by how aggressively individual staff members apply the program.

Some of the comments from staff include concerns that the breed placement groups take the most adoptable animals leaving less desirable animals behind. Among other issues mentioned is that the groups pay a small adoption fee, DAC vaccinates, tests and spays or neuters the animals for this small fee, and the placement groups then adopt the animals for \$100-150. There are also concerns that DAC may be releasing animals to groups that are incapable of caring for them, as there is no oversight of, nor inspections conducted at, these alternative facilities.

Breed placement partners often remove an animal before staff have had a chance to evaluate the animal to see if it is a candidate for breed placement or adoption.

**Recommendations:**

U If DAC is going to utilize community adoption partners, then the entire program for both facilities should be placed in the hand of the person or “caseworker” in charge of adoptions and just as animals are selected for adoption animals, in the same manner they would be selected for breed placement partner release. DAC must be in charge and control the release of animals from its facilities.

U DAC must develop clear policies to guide any adoptions partner programs and ensure that all parties involved are aware of the policies and adhere to them<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup>HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, “A New Breed of Adoption Partner,” January/February, 2001.

## **8.0 FIELD SERVICES/ANIMAL CONTROL**

### **8.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW**

#### **Observations:**

The HSUS team interviewed the majority of Field Services supervisory personnel as well as numerous field officers. The team also conducted field observations by riding with Animal Control Officers while they performed routine duties. Based upon these interviews and field observations, the HSUS team has serious concerns related to the field services. These concerns run the gamut from the critical to the minor; from officer safety to humane animal treatment. In our evaluation of this aspect of the program, it is important to note that the HSUS team was often provided several different answers to the same inquiry. In other situations, responses appeared deliberately evasive and unclear. This seemed pervasive throughout the staff, including supervisors and field staff.

Throughout the area of Field Services, there was an apparent adherence to maintaining the status quo. This loyalty to “the way it has always been done”, discounts the great strides that have been made in the animal care and control field over the past decades. Supervisory personnel must subscribe to progressive ideas and techniques. They then must diligently instruct their subordinates and insist that those instructions be followed and maintained. The current culture at DAC embraces a mindset of the past.

### **8.2 COMMUNICATIONS/DISPATCH**

#### **Observations:**

Animal Control Dispatch/Call-taking operations are located in the lower level of City Hall. They are incorporated into the city’s “911/311” Dispatch Center. Calls from citizens concerning all aspects of city services are answered by a large group of operators. Each operator is equipped with a computer panel and software which allows the calls to be separated by agency. Service requests involving animals allow a series of scripted screens to appear before the operator, who then asks appropriate questions and enters the callers’ responses. When completed, the request will be entered. Priority runs will be transferred to the assigned dispatcher. All runs will be printed at the Forney Rd. facility which has a printer directly connected to the 911/311 Central Dispatch Center. There was little, if any, oversight of the received runs. Several runs involving animal neglect were seen in a stack of runs that had not been given out to any officers. One had been overlooked for three days.

The HSUS team observed the operations at the Dispatch/Call-taking center. Supervisory personnel were also interviewed. It would appear that the “911/311” operation incorporates much of the latest technology in communication. The “311” section handles all animal control service requests, as well as other non-emergency (police, fire, medical) city services. This is accomplished through approximately forty operators/call-takers. We were also advised that additional equipment, including wireless

communication/laptop computers, will be provided to each animal control vehicle within approximately one year. This will allow all runs to appear directly on the screen of each vehicle. It will also provide mapping, location and directory capabilities.

### **Recommendations:**

The overall dispatch operation seems to function effectively. Because, however the dispatcher does not have direct contact with the complainant, some officers felt it would be useful to have more information concerning specific runs. This type of concern could arise in almost any dispatch operation, particularly in those where operators may not be extensively schooled in animal control operations.

U All operators should be assigned to do a “ride along” with field personnel in order to develop an appropriate understanding and knowledge of the common situations encountered, as well as department procedures and capabilities. The HSUS team was advised that some of the operators have participated in a “ride along.” We were further informed that amended scripts were currently being developed in anticipation of the wireless/laptop installations

U The team recommends that the “ride along” be further developed and provided as a structured part of the training received by the operators.

U We would also recommend that all scripts be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, with input from all field personnel.

## **8.3 OFFICER COMMUNICATIONS/SAFETY PROCEDURES**

### **Observations:**

The HSUS team observed radio communications and selected safety procedures while riding with field personnel. Animal Control Officers would routinely make a stop to investigate a complaint without calling in to the dispatcher to notify them that they were “out of service.” Team members observed officers leaving vehicles running and doors unlocked while they investigated complaints, sometimes being out of both sight and hearing distance of the vehicle. Animal Control Officers were observed, on at least one occasion, entering a private residence on a non-emergency run. Although no runs involving snakes were observed, the HSUS team was advised by both officers and supervisors concerning the procedures followed when responding to such runs. The HSUS team also noted that officers routinely leave their vehicle carrying their capture poles. These poles are fabricated by the department and are not considered to meet standards for efficacy and safety for the animal or the officer.

### **Recommendations:**

The HSUS team recommends that:

U A more structured radio procedure be adopted with strict adherence required. All actions should be reported and logged by the dispatcher as well as on the Officer’s Daily Worksheet. This would include a 10-7, or out of service time and location or run reference number, reported to the

dispatcher upon arrival. This procedure is very important from an officer safety standpoint. Should an accident or mishap occur and the officer is unable to communicate or return to the vehicle, the dispatcher would be aware of how long the officer had been off the air, the nature of the run, and the location to respond with assistance

U A “10 Code” could be developed which encompasses virtually all categories of runs and the corresponding routine results. This type of system, coupled with corroborating information from the dispatcher, can also be helpful in determining officer accountability

U Officers should not leave vehicles running while unattended. This type of oversight was observed at various times of the day and whether or not there was an animal on board. If there are no animals in the vehicle there is no logical explanation for this practice. Certainly in morning hours, prior to air temperature becoming a factor, there would not be any necessity for this practice. If air temperature is the reason this practice has evolved, then a better procedure should be developed. Such a procedure could dictate that once the air temperature reaches a certain level, such as 80 degrees, the animal(s) must be brought in for unloading

U Vehicles should be kept locked at all times. Each time an officer loads an animal into a vehicle, the door or cage should be locked. This practice will prevent tampering and the possible loss of equipment and/or an animal.

U Animal Control Officers should not enter private residences except for emergency situations, or if accompanied by another officer. The largest part of an officer’s business can be conducted effectively while in the public view. Entering a dwelling can expose the officer to a myriad of bad situations, including assault and accusations of misconduct. Animals to be turned in can be brought by the resident to a doorway. If weather conditions warrant, paperwork can be filled out in the officers’ vehicle and returned to the resident upon completion.

U DAC’s policy concerning snakes should be reviewed. Currently, non-venomous snakes are relocated “if possible.” Venomous snakes may be euthanized in the field using available implements, or may be brought in to the shelter for euthanasia. Officers are equipped with “snake tongs,” but no other equipment for handling or transport. Their training concerning identification and handling is suspect. The HSUS team would first recommend that snake runs not be handled except under emergency conditions. Without proper equipment and training the officers and the public are, in most cases, being exposed to unnecessary risk of injury. A program of education in coexistence should be adopted instead. If a policy of responding to “nuisance” snakes is to continue, there are a number of factors to address. A strict emergency procedure, in the event a bite occurs, must be adopted. It must include access information and locations of appropriate anti-venin; comprehensive, structured training in identification and handling; proper equipment including puncture resistant gloves and leggings, and secure transportation containers. In situations where euthanasia is required because of serious injury, it should be performed only by a licensed veterinarian or certified euthanasia technician, who have training and experience in the euthanasia of reptiles. This should be accomplished by intra-muscular injection of anesthesia followed by intra-cardiac injection of euthanasia solution. Once again, the availability of anti-venin is essential

U Officers should not leave their vehicles with their capture pole unless they have reason to believe it may be needed (a bite suspect, aggressive animal, etc.) The perception of the public concerning capture poles is often some misconception. And the majority of contacts do not require their use. Additional training in animal behavior and officer safety are far better options than maintaining the image created by appearing constantly with a capture pole. Other objects, such as a clipboard or citation holder, can be used to ward off an aggressive animal that may surprise an officer. We would also recommend that the department invest in manufactured capture poles and appropriate training in their use.

## 8.4 PROCEDURES

### **Observations:**

The HSUS team observed an officer make a run concerning “pitbulls running loose.” On arrival no dogs were seen at-large, but the officer checked an address nearby where two “pitbulls” were known to live. Upon investigation of the residence, two “pitbulls” were observed in the fenced backyard; one loose, the other chained. The chained dog was obviously suffering from a severe skin disease. A man appeared stating that he was the brother visiting the owner. The officer advised him of the running loose complaint and a “notice” was left with the brother. The diseased dog was not mentioned or investigated in any way.

The HSUS team observed officers removing animals from private property either without a property owners permission (an injured cat,) or relying on a note purportedly left by the property owner giving permission (opossums & raccoons.) In these cases, no notice was left advising the property owner of the officers visit or the action taken.

The HSUS team observed officers removing animals from traps, or injured animals, with capture poles. The animals were carried or dragged to the vehicle and loaded.

### **Recommendations:**

The HSUS team recommends:

U Officers investigate all routine violations and obvious incidents of neglect or cruelty, regardless of the nature of the complaint. In the case cited above, it is obvious that this situation should have been addressed and the animal supplied with treatment and relief from its condition.

U DAC requires that property owners be present and sign an authorization/release form prior to an officer removing an animal from private property. Should an officer need to remove an animal that is suffering injury, disease or neglect from property where no one is at home, a notice of the action should be left. If neglect or cruelty is the reason for removal, then the officer should be prepared to prosecute the property owner.

U All officers should be supplied with “air carriers” or small transport cages, and stretchers. The

carriers should be used to move small animals from traps to vehicles in lieu of using a capture pole. They can also be used when moving injured small animals. The stretcher should be used to move larger injured animals to the vehicles. Both of these procedures would be considered appropriate and more humane. In the case of injuries, it will reduce the possibility of complicating the injury.

## 8.5 FINANCIAL ISSUES

### **Observations:**

There are field service activities that could increase revenue and thus enhance the current allocations. The proposed budget for FY 2001-02 is just over 3.5 million. Expenditures for training and for “minor apparatuses” (equipment) are proposed at approximately \$9,000 and \$30,000, respectively. Based upon the observations of the HSUS team concerning these two areas, additional efforts and expenditures need to be applied to these areas.

### **Recommendations:**

In order to fund the purchase of much needed equipment and professional overall training, the HSUS team would recommend that the City of Dallas consider some, or all, of the following revenue enhancements:

- U Misdemeanor Notice<sup>36</sup> : This document is used as a “fix-it” ticket and is issued in lieu of a citation requiring a court appearance or a fine paid to the court system. This document can be used for license/rabies vaccination violations and restraint violations. In lieu of the aforementioned fine or court appearance, the violator would be able to pay a “fee” directly to the department within a specified period of time (10 days, 2 weeks, etc.). Should the violator prefer a court appearance or does not comply with the fee payment timetable, the department would issue a citation to court where the charge can be adjudicated. Under this program, all fees generated by the Notice would go directly to the department.
  
- U License Late Fee: Under this plan, any license not renewed within a prescribed period following expiration (2 weeks, 30 days, etc.) would be subject to a late fee. This will encourage owners to be timely in their renewals and demonstrate the seriousness with which the department views the licensing requirement

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<sup>36</sup>Jefferson County (KY) Animal Control Notice/Warning Citation. November/December, 1998.

## 8.6 WILDLIFE

### **Observations:**

DAC handles a tremendous number of nuisance wildlife runs. The predominant species handled were raccoons and opossums. The HSUS team observed these runs being handled virtually every time they were riding with an officer. Of the situations observed, all cases were of the nuisance category and did not involve, other than in a very general way, a threat to public health or safety. Raccoons and opossums were removed from traps using capture sticks for adults and gloves for young animals. In all cases, there were no transport cages. It is apparently unclear how long the department has been responding to nuisance wildlife calls or how the practice evolved.

### **Recommendations:**

U Certainly one of the primary functions of animal control concerns domestic dogs and cats. And these functions are of interest to government because of public health and safety issues. It may be argued that due to the threat of rabies, nuisance raccoons should be included as a duty of animal control. However, the most likely vector for the virus to humans will be through contact with dogs and cats. In addition, an inordinate amount of time is spent on species other than potential rabies carriers. It is the recommendation of the HSUS team that DAC emphasize domestic dog and cat services and greatly reduce or eliminate the nuisance wildlife runs.

## 8.7 SECURITY

### **Observations:**

The HSUS team observed the unloading of vehicles at both shelters. At the Forney Rd. facility officers were observed unloading animals while the garage door was open.

### **Recommendations:**

U The HSUS team recommends that a strict protocol for unloading vehicles be established and enforced. Such procedures would include the overhead garage doors being closed and secured each time an animal is being unloaded. There is a high degree of risk that an animal will escape if such a procedure is not adopted and strictly enforced. This risk becomes even more dramatic when considering the escape of a quarantine observation animal and the potential consequences.

## 8.8 CAPTURE EQUIPMENT

### **Observations:**

During the HSUS site visit, team members asked the field supervisor what type of chemical immobilization equipment was used by the field staff. The supervisor advised that not all field staff members are certified and that only supervisors and a few senior officers have the ability to discharge chemical capture equipment and advised that the equipment available for those select officers are two Disinject Chemical Capture rifles and two Palmer Chemical Capture rifles. The Palmer Chemical Capture rifles are primarily designed for use on thick skinned animals at long range, such as with cattle in a field. Rifles shoot a large metal dart by either CO<sub>2</sub> or a small explosive charge. The dart itself also contains a small explosive charge (behind the drug chamber) that explodes upon impact and forces the drug into the animal. These darts come with barbs on them to hold them in the animal's flesh to ensure the drug dose is injected. All of the Officers interviewed on this topic advised the HSUS that they had filed off the barbs to both minimize dart loss and to prevent painful tissue trauma to the animal darted. While well intentioned, the manner in which the current equipment darts are being used (filing off the barbs) compromises the effectiveness of the equipment. The Disinject Chemical Capture rifles are a much more cutting-edge immobilization equipment in comparison to the Palmer rifles. DAC has two different versions of the Disinject rifle: one is CO<sub>2</sub> powered, the other a pressurized air pump. If used correctly, these rifles are less likely to cause serious injuries to animals because they are equipped with a gauge to control the air pressure needed for the shot distance. This type of Chemical Capture equipment also uses disposable darts that discharge without the use of an explosive charge, and without the explosive charge officers have a much better chance of a successful first shot since the dart discharge from the rifle is much quieter.

### **Recommendations:**

U The agency's field staff should have access to and be held accountable for the newest technology in chemical capture equipment for use under controlled conditions, such as the two current models of the Disinject rifles. It is recommended that DAC discontinue use of the Palmer Chemical Capture rifles and either purchases two more Disinject models as replacements or research the latest trends in chemical capture techniques and provide all officers using this equipment with the latest training and certification as well as a re-certification.

If there are no procedures currently in place, the following recommendations should be considered when creating these procedures:

U The equipment should only be used in a controlled environment, i.e., one that ensures safety, meets humane standards for animal capture, and complies with applicable state and federal guidelines.

U The operator must be a well-trained professional who is proficient in the use of such equipment and who possesses accurate firing skills.

U The operator must have access to appropriate drugs and be thoroughly trained in their application under the supervision of a qualified veterinarian.

## 8.9 LAW ENFORCEMENT BACK-UP AND RELATIONS

### **Observations:**

The relationship between the City of Dallas Police Department and DAC seems to be on an as-needed, supportive resource basis for both departments. When one of DAC Field Officers has safety concerns while in the field, the option to request assistance and get an immediate response from the City of Dallas Police and Fire Departments is readily available. The reverse of this is also true when a Police Officer or Fireman needs assistance with an animal-related issue.

### **Recommendations:**

- U To further enhance this relationship, an appropriate representative from DAC should seek an opportunity to meet with someone from the police department on a regular basis to maintain and reinforce a good relationship.
- U Utilize the knowledge and skills of the City of Dallas Police Department in areas such as crisis intervention, personal protection and self defense. Exposure to this expertise can prove invaluable for animal control field staff. Conversely, Field Officers can in turn provide expertise in areas such as defensive animal handling and dangerous dog behavior, the link between dogfighting and drug-related crimes, and the connection between animal abuse and human violence
- U Consider efforts to increase the City of Dallas Police Department's level of understanding of DAC, such as through a one hour rotation at the police academy for all new cadets. Curriculum content should include an explanation of mutual assistance situations, and provide information to aid new officers with their personal safety with dangerous animals
- U Consider the training opportunity mentioned above to discuss issues such as the connection between animal cruelty and human violence and the role of DAC officers in conducting successful investigations.

## 8.10 OFFICER UNIFORMS

### **Observations:**

DAC's field staff uniform consists of dark blue slacks along with a light blue shirt that has agency patches on the left sleeve. Many officers had several different types and styles of agency patches. It also became very difficult to distinguish Kennel staff from Field staff because they all wore uniforms that stated "Animal Control Officer." All Field Officers are issued a Badge and City Identification Card but it is left to the Officers' discretion whether those items are worn. According to supervisors, each officer is issued five uniform shirts, five pairs of pants and one all weather jacket, and these articles are replaced on an as needed basis or at least every six months, but officers are not supplied with any belts, shoes or accessories. Officers may not carry firearms, ASP (Bite Stick), pepper spray or handcuffs.

### **Recommendations:**

- U DAC should provide kennel staff with a uniform shirt that displays “Kennel Technician” or “Animal Care Technician.” This would help members of the general public to distinguish between actual Animal Control Officers and Kennel Staff. Staff who work in the front office should wear polo shirts in a dark color with agency logo and that displays either “Staff” or “Animal Care Team.”
- U Supervisors should continue to wear business attire with a name badge showing full name and title
- U The only uniformed staff members should be animal control officers working in the field.
- U Field Officers should be required to display their city issued ID cards and badges at all times they are on duty rather than at their discretion. The animal control agency patches need to be uniform in size and of consistent design for the entire department.
- U Field staff should undergo daily uniform inspection by a supervisor at the beginning of each shift to verify compliance with the dress code.
- U DAC must continue to replace Field officers uniforms as they become worn and faded.
- U The overall feeling regarding the field staff uniform is that the current uniform is adequate but it should be stressed to the field staff that their appearance is vital to community perceptions of their skills, confidence and abilities. A proper and complete uniform, kept clean and well pressed, is the first step to a professional department image in public.

## **8.11 FIELD SERVICES EQUIPMENT**

### **Observations:**

During the HSUS site visit, team members observed that DAC’s vehicles failed to maintain most of the basic animal capture equipment that is needed to perform safe and humane animal capture in the field. The only equipment observed in vehicles were a pair of lightweight leather garden gloves, one snake tong, a leash, and a rope that ran through a five foot long metal pipe that functioned as a capture pole. An HSUS team member observed the use of this type of control pole to remove young puppies and feral cats and kittens from live-traps. The team member was advised by field staff that they do not want to touch stray animals for fear of fleas, mange and ticks, and that removing feral cats with the current equipment has proven to be a very difficult task without the use of a capture pole. Every

officer had their own duffle bag (purchased by the officer) that was used to house any necessary paperwork needed in the field. The inventory of humane traps available for field staff at the shelter for cats or raccoons reflected only one trap available and no effective system in place to assure that traps rented to citizens are returned. At the time of the HSUS site visit, staff had no idea of the actual number of traps the department owned or had rented out.

### **Recommendations:**

U This is an area in field service that should not under any means be taken lightly as the safety of the staff and the animals they assist is greatly jeopardized without the proper equipment to effect responsible, safe, and humane animal handling and rescue. We strongly recommend that all DAC vehicles be immediately furnished the following equipment in good working order as a minimum equipment standard:

#### Equipment List

- ' restraint/capture pole(s)
- ' cable leashes
- ' regular leashes
- ' long-handled net
- ' capture gloves
- ' disposable gloves
- ' plastic carriers
- ' raccoon/cat traps
- ' dog trap
- ' trap transfer cage(s)
- ' animal stretcher with wheels
- ' blankets (for scared, trapped, and injured animals)
- ' animal grasper
- ' fowl leg grasper
- ' rope (cotton)
- ' snake tongs and snake bag
- ' plastic bat container
- ' waterless hand sanitizer
- ' first aid kit for animals
- ' first aid kit for people
- ' thermometers
- ' hand wipes
- ' safety glasses/goggles
- ' high visibility safety vest
- ' fire extinguisher
- ' flares/triangles
- ' towels (cloth and paper)
- ' squeak toy/ball

- ' bottled drinking water
- ' dog food
- ' dog treats
- ' cat food
- ' cat treats
- ' food and water bowls

#### Miscellaneous

- ' bolt cutters
- ' shovel
- ' multi-purpose tool
- ' crowbar
- ' 35 millimeter camera
- ' Polaroid camera
- ' disinfectant for cleaning cages and equipment
- ' binoculars
- ' flashlight & batteries
- ' magnetic flood light

U It is strongly recommended that some type of humane trap deposit log be created so that DAC supervisors can keep an accurate count of the number of traps actually owned by the department, the number available at the shelter at any given time and the condition of those traps, the number of traps assigned to field officers' vehicles (field officers should be held accountable for those traps) and the number of traps rented to the general public. Traps that are rented to the general public should be numbered and only rented for 5-day intervals. The department should also receive a rental deposit for each trap rented at the time of rental and when the trap is returned the renter would receive a full refund of their deposit

## **8.12 ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER TRAINING**

### **Observations:**

One of the most obvious problems observed by The HSUS team involved an apparent lack of formal, organized training for field staff of DAC. For example, during the site visit team members were advised by staff that training for new employees is minimal, and that the training program for a new hire was to spend one to two weeks in the kennel to get them familiar with animal handling and then that new hire would be assigned to a senior officer for a two week ride along. The animal control supervisor and staff seem to have a different idea of what the actual new hire training protocol is, but

one of the animal control supervisors was able to provide the team with a training record that was very detailed and concise but according to those records, many of the active officers' training activities had not been completed.

An HSUS team member had the opportunity to meet with the city's code compliance trainer and he advised that DAC had their own separate training program and that his department acted only as a coordinator for speakers that were to be scheduled to speak at the animal control training program. An outline of this particular type of training program was provided and the instructors of this program listed by name. All were current animal control supervisors and senior officers. This particular training program was last held in October of 2000. Many of the field officers felt that a more formal training program would be helpful. New hires are often put into the field prior to any formal training, but, according to supervisors, all officers are required to complete a two day state health department certification program for animal control officers. While on ride along with several field officers, HSUS team member were told that many officers currently actively working in the field, and with several years of service in the job, have not yet received this certification. One supervisor also stated that many that did receive this basic certification no longer have valid certification because the state requires continuing education credit hours for all Animal Control Officers and none of the inter-departmental training offered to the staff is accredited by the state. All of this was also evidenced by the common culture among the field staff allowing each individual to perform duties differently. The HSUS team member was told that the majority of training consists of a unspecified amount of cross-training time in the kennel, shadowing of another senior officer and a copy of the Department's General Operations Procedure Manual.

### **Recommendations:**

- U DAC should give immediate attention to the development and design of a structured on-the-job training program (based on policies and procedures as a guide) that will provide new members of the staff with the information and skills necessary to effectively and competently perform their jobs.
- U All staff actively working in the field should be required to attend some formal basic animal control training program. This should also be accompanied by some specified training program that thoroughly explains the City of Dallas Code and its enforcement.
- U Develop a system to ensure that policies, procedures and training programs are continually reviewed and updated, in practice as well as in writing. In addition, the implementation of a system for verifying that all staff are knowledgeable of current regulations, agency policies and standards, and established procedures and protocols for operations - and held accountable for compliance - is essential.
- U Provide classroom instruction, books, and video tapes for educational purposes. Training tapes and textbooks are available from various national and state groups. The Texas Animal Control Association (TACA), The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the National Animal Control Association (NACA), American Humane Association (AHA), as well as other national and local groups, have training materials and seminars available.
- U Further explore and take advantage of the training opportunities offered by national animal

control association and the Texas Animal Control Association for all field staff. It is important to expose staff to knowledgeable and experienced instructors in the animal care and control field, and to provide them with an opportunity to meet and network with their peers in the profession

- U Consider hosting a presentation or seminar with a qualified facilitator addressing the spread of disease and the importance of cleaning and disinfecting.
- U Provide workshops on rabies and other zoonotic diseases. These workshops could potentially be offered by staff from the state health department.
- U Ask local veterinarians to present workshops in animal first aid and recognition of symptoms of diseases common in shelters.
- U Provide regular meetings and training to address and reduce the stresses associated with animal care and control work.
- U We strongly recommend that DAC invest in its staff by allocating resources and funding for department-wide training opportunities. Field Staff are an invaluable resource, and investments should be made to assist them in their growth and development as animal care and control professionals.

## 8.13 AGENCY VEHICLES

### **Observations:**

During the HSUS site visit, team members observed that the primary vehicles used by DAC field staff are full size vans. The City is responsible for vehicle upkeep, and at the time of the HSUS site visit, there were nine agency vehicles in the compound. All vehicles are white and are in good to excellent condition. The vehicles have the City identification decal which displays “The City of Dallas Animal Control” as well as the 311 dispatch phone number.

The interior of the vehicles, which house the animal holding compartments made at the city shop are metal stack modules that offer a total of six separate compartments mounted to the vehicle. The animal holding compartment uses the total amount of space available in the cargo area of the vehicle. The vehicles also have a plexiglass and metal divider between the cabin area and the animal holding area. Animal holding compartments include a forced-air system for climate control, and vehicles are all equipped with amber lights on the roof.

### **Recommendations:**

- U The HSUS team recommends that the current animal holding compartments immediately be replaced or upgraded in such way as to offer some form of protection from the spread of disease. If

the current systems are upgraded or replaced a procedure needs to be put in place and officers held accountable for proper cleaning and disinfecting after any animal is transported to the shelter. The current compartments are made from open, fence-like material that allows easy spread of airborne disease. They also utilize space poorly and make it impossible to transport other necessary equipment and injured animals without increasing that animal's suffering. The current holding compartment also makes it impossible to properly and safely transport multiple animals of different species. There are several companies nationwide that make stainless steel animal transport/holding compartments fitted to your needs and for specific vehicle makes and models.

## **9.0 GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP**

### **9.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW**

#### **Observations:**

The field of animal care and control has become a highly specialized one in the last two decades. This has occurred primarily as a result of public opinion and interest in animal welfare issues. Elected and administrative officials can and do receive significant numbers of calls from citizens in their communities when these issues are not handled well. Nationally, professionalism in the field has improved dramatically in the last few years. Improvements in the level and quality of service provided to animals and to citizens in many communities have been, and continue to be, dramatic. The old image of workers in animal care and control agencies as “dog catchers” is an outdated relic, as is the notion that animal shelters are nothing more than dog pounds where mangy and sick stray animals are impounded and ultimately die.

Unfortunately, in many ways DAC has failed to keep up with the significant progress made in Texas and the rest of the country. While the planned construction of a new shelter at Oak Cliff is a move in the right direction, without modernization and improvement of services delivery of DAC, there will be a new building but the same problems DAC is experiencing now.

The DAC has been a ship adrift for years. There is no one individual to blame for this lack of direction, leadership or achievement. However, under the brief direction of the Department of Code Compliance, definite improvement has been noted, which is very encouraging although significant improvement is still required.

Throughout this report there are numerous recommendations to help DAC achieve the vision and mission it has created. To achieve these goals and provide the service it can and should to the people and animals of Dallas, the commitment from the Dallas City Council must be ongoing. The problems inherent in DAC will not be corrected overnight. This will be a multi-year process requiring a constant level of funding and support from the city. Otherwise the DAC will continue to be the ugly stepchild of Dallas city government.

### **9.2 IDENTIFICATION AND ARTICULATION OF AN ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL VISION**

**Observations:**

A written vision statement for DAC was provided to the HSUS team members. It reads as follows:

“Our primary goal is to provide outstanding customer service for the citizens of Dallas. We strive to be a highly responsive organization that is respected by our customers, who include the citizens of Dallas, the city management of Dallas, and the Dallas City Council. We desire that our program be the premier animal control program in the state of Texas and that it be recognized as a model program for other communities.

We expect a high level of professional conduct from our personnel. We believe in our people, we encourage them to achieve excellence, and we do release them to do it. We recognize that techniques, programs and equipment do not produce quality service and do not meet citizen needs in a timely manner, only people do, people who care, people who are treated as creative contributing adults.”

While interviewing the staff it was clear there is a commitment on most levels to making improvements in the current operations so the agency can achieve their vision. In this regard, officials within the DAC, Code Compliance, and the Advisory Committee mentioned a number of areas in which improvements could and should be made to achieve the ideals of the vision statement:

- < Addressing deficiencies in the physical plants
- < Ensuring and promoting humane animal care
- < Maintaining proper vaccination protocol for all incoming animals
- < Disease prevention instead of disease control
- < Minimizing the unrealistic expectations of the agency
- < Improving staff morale and customer service
- < Increasing staffing levels
- < Decreasing pet overpopulation, through surgical sterilization and education
- < Increasing adoptions
- < Computerizing records

**Recommendations:**

There is a serious need within DAC for planning - both short and long term. While the agency has developed a vision and mission statement, it is a long way from achieving either. If necessary, a professional facilitator should be secured to help the agency achieve this goal.

### **9.3 RISK MANAGEMENT**

**Observations:**

DAC management reported to HSUS team members that they had several employees out on leave due to injuries, etc. Specifics were not provided as to the actual number of employees or what the specific injuries were. We did not receive information about injuries to the public that posed a risk management issue. Animal care and control programs can be very problematic, with a higher number of injuries to staff and the public visiting the facility than in other non-emergency departments. With the Oak Cliff shelter destined for destruction, no time was spent assessing potential problems in facility design and/or operation. The Forney Rd. shelter did not seem to have any serious risk management issues visible, but several staff out on workman's compensation is definite cause for concern. Injuries to animal control staff are usually a result of two issues in combination: poor training and poor equipment.

**Recommendations:**

U It is recommended that the city's risk management office perform a thorough assessment of potential risks to staff, volunteers and visitors at the Forney Rd. Shelter. Of particular note, the lack of modern capture equipment for handling and transporting animals (e.g., spring loaded capture poles, safety gloves, cat carriers, etc.) definitely contributes to staff injury incidents.

U Employees should be trained in the proper use of all equipment, including defensive driving, and if through carelessness they or someone else is injured by their actions, progressive disciplinary action should be used to correct the behavior or separate the employee from DAC.

U The final recommendation on this topic is that the project architect provide preliminary plans for review by the city's risk management office before final plans are approved.

## **9.4 STABILITY AND LEADERSHIP**

**Observations:**

According to the City of Dallas, Department of Code Compliance, Animal Control Organization Chart, revised as of May 1, 2001, The Director of Code Compliance, and that position's Assistant Director, supervise the Animal Control Division Manager. Directly reporting to the Division Manager are one Field Operations Manager and one Shelter Operations Manager. Each Manager is responsible for either the field operations or shelter operations at both the Forney Rd. and Oak Cliff shelters. Additionally, the Division Manager directly supervises two veterinarians and two clerical positions.

There has been little stability and a lack of leadership in the manager's position within DAC, and there has been considerable turnover in this position as well. HSUS team members were advised that there

had been seven Division Managers since 1993. During the HSUS site visit, the majority of city and Animal Control staff expressed the opinion that DAC has improved since the current manager began in early 2000, but that there are still many areas that are in need of substantial work.

DAC is considered little more than a kennel or “dog pound” by many in the city government and in the community. Efforts of the most recent Division Manager have been aimed at elevating DAC to a higher status within the city's government. Also, the transfer of the DAC to the Department of Code Compliance has provided a tremendous boost for DAC's image, accountability, and morale. The HSUS team definitely felt that the Director of Code Compliance was working very hard to provide the guidance, accountability, efficiency, budgeting and planning to DAC that has been lacking for years. This transition will not happen overnight, but the HSUS team was impressed with the efforts of the Department of Code Compliance to assist this long neglected division of city government. The results of this neglect are very evident in the practices and procedures which are not on a par with progressive municipal animal control programs nationally.

Prior to being under the Department of Code Compliance, DAC was under Streets and Sanitation, and prior to that, the Health Department.

Although some community members have targeted the current Manager as one source of perceived problems, others stated to members of the HSUS team that problems predate this Manager and that he has made improvements in many areas. Still others felt that many agency problems were historical in origin and steps had been taken to address several deficiencies, that management has done little to expedite the agency's progress beyond a minimal point. The current Division Manager is a long term (29+years) employee of DAC, and has worked his way up to his current position.

### **Recommendations:**

If DAC is to resolve current difficulties and realize its potential via the leadership of the Department of Code Compliance, it needs to fully commit to active management and accountability at all levels, including:

- U Reassessing the current management structure to ensure that responsibilities are divided equitably and logically among the existing positions.
- U Creating additional management or supervisory positions if this assessment deems them necessary. The current situation has one Shelter Operations Manager supervising two shelters, and one Field Operations Manager supervising all ongoing field operations for both locations. The HSUS team believes there should be an onsite manager, for both the field and shelter operations, located at each shelter
- U Identifying and communicating specific roles, realistic expectations and benchmarks for programs as well as for individual performance of duties.

- U Providing staff with all the training necessary to meet expectations.
- U Monitoring staff performance on an ongoing basis.
- U Maintaining structured avenues for both formal and informal communication in order to provide direction, respond to needs for clarification and support, and deliver constructive feedback.
- U Holding employees accountable (through progressive disciplinary action) for failure to meet expectations, produce desired outcomes, or behave in a responsible and professional manner.
- U Providing funds for the professional development of the Division Manager and his management team so that they may be exposed to the latest trends for humane, effective service delivery.

### **Discussion:**

The key indicators of how well any business or organization is being managed are the agency's end products. Consequently, much of the HSUS team's efforts focus on these "outcomes," which in the case of an animal control program include: a) the level and quality of service to the community; and b) the level and quality of care for the animals entrusted to the agency.

In addition, in order to better understand the outcomes to which management practices may be contributing and for which they are responsible, members of the HSUS team met with managers, reviewed common practices, and identified the systems or infrastructures that are in place to support the agency's overall activities.

Due to frequent transfers of DAC to other city departments and the frequent turnover of managers of DAC, it was clear to members of the HSUS team that problems with management systems and practices are, and have been, present for significant duration throughout the agency. The serious operational issues outlined elsewhere in this report and the fact that many of these problems appear to be chronic point to deficiencies in several areas of management's responsibility.

## **9.5 ANIMAL CONTROL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **Observations:**

Texas statutes 823.005 mandates the appointment of an advisory committee by a governing body of a county or municipality where an animal shelter is located. Additional requirements for this advisory committee are: the committee must be composed of at least one licensed veterinarian, one county or municipal official, one person whose duties include the operation of an animal shelter and one representative from an animal welfare organization. Finally, the advisory committee shall meet a minimum of three times per year.

It was explained to HSUS team members that each elected council person appoints one person from their ward to serve on this committee, which is far more than the four called for as a minimum in the state statute. This committee has been in existence for several years and, from HSUS team members observations, has been very active and in some cases instrumental in getting elected officials to pay attention to the plight of DAC. Additional funding and approval for a new shelter to replace the Oak Cliff facility are just some of the accomplishments of this committee. For this and other significant accomplishments, the advisory committee is to be commended.

**Recommendations:**

While the advisory committee is active, the HSUS team has some recommendations to assist the committee in their charge:

- U If it does not already exist, create a policy and procedure manual for advisory board members and insure they are oriented to the board and its charge as soon as possible after being appointed.
- U Strict adherence to the minimum mandatory membership criteria as defined by state law must be followed.
- U Terms limits, after which the member rotates off the advisory committee may be in place, but not made clear in the materials received by the HSUS team. If not, they should be established. Staggered two year terms with a possibility for two terms before rotating off should be considered.
- U The Director of Code Compliance and the Manager of DAC should approach individuals in the community who have an interest in animal welfare issues to ask them to consider serving on the advisory board as openings occur. These individuals should bring a variety of expertise to the committee, such as business, law, marketing, public relations, etc. Obviously, they need to have an interest in animal welfare, but the criteria for their appointment should not be exclusively an interest in animals. An extra effort should be made to encourage participation by members of the Hispanic and African-American community as well.

## 10.0 HUMAN RESOURCES

### 10.1 STAFFING LEVELS

#### **Observations:**

According to DAC staff interviewed during the site visit, there has been a staffing struggle at DAC for a long time. The staffing pattern as of the site visit, according to information provided by DAC, showed a total staff compliment of 69. However, during the onsite visit there were relatively low numbers of officers in the field and a small number of staff in the kennels and offices. That DAC is a 24/7 operation explains this to some extent. But at the Forney Rd. Shelter, there was never more than one staff person behind the counter to assist the public. This resulted in long waits for visitors attempting to conduct business.

The DAC provided an organizational chart dated 5/1/2001 to the HSUS team. This chart shows staff in three major categories. Under Field Operations is (1) Manager, (3) Animal Control Supervisors and (40) Animal Control Officers.

#### Field Operations

When you consider the human population of the Dallas service area, the fact that these officers represent the total number for both shelters and include staff for the canvassing program, and that field services provides response 24/7 with continual position vacancies, vacation and sick leave absences, this number is woefully inadequate. The National Animal Control Association recommends one animal control officer position for each 16-18 thousand human population served. Checking rosters for field officers revealed that it was not uncommon for DAC to have as few as five officers on duty during the busiest morning and afternoon shifts. With the receipt of approximately 70,000 requests for service from Dallas residents annually, they are constantly behind, and on occasion with up to a 500 call backlog. One important component to an effective animal control program is response time. Like fire or police, an animal control officer needs to be able to respond in a timely fashion to resolve the problem on the first call.

#### **Recommendations:**

U Increase the number of officers to allow timely response to all requests for service. The number recommended by the National Animal Control Association should be a goal for DAC. By adding more field staff each year for the next few budget years, response times and numbers of backlogged calls will decrease. The ultimate goal is for all requests for service to be answered the same day received.

#### Shelter Operation

According to the organizational chart, the shelters have (1) Shelter Operation Manager, (1) Animal Control Supervisor, (1) Clerk, (6) Animal Control Officers and (9) Animal keepers. Based on the site visit observations, DAC is using the Animal Control Officers in the shelter to assist at the front desk

and help in the kennels. If all these staff were combined to clean, feed, and otherwise operate the shelter, this still would be an inadequate number. Maintaining animals and assisting customers in two shelters, 7 days a week, is a workload that requires more staff. Additionally, using higher salaried Animal Control Officers instead of clerical staff and animal keepers is very uncommon in the animal control industry for an agency the size of DAC.

### **Recommendations:**

U Reassign Animal Control Officers to the field. It would be adequate to have one in the shelter behind the counter when open to issue citations or provide assistance with enforcement information. This would free up the other officers to create the significant increase in the field staff that was previously recommended.

U Hire additional animal keepers and clerical staff to cover the day to day operation of both shelters. These positions historically have lower salary ranges than officers. The approximate number of animal keepers needed for both shelters, not taking into consideration the construction of a new, much larger, facility at Oak Cliff, which is under consideration by City government, will require doubling the number of kennel staff at a minimum. The animals and citizens who enter DAC facilities are receiving an absolute minimum of care and assistance.

### **Veterinary Services**

The final category on the organizational chart is (2) Veterinarians and (2) Veterinary Technicians. These positions provide veterinary care to the animals and the Technicians assist with euthanasia.

### **Recommendations:**

U From a staffing/efficiency standpoint, the staffing and job duties of these individuals will be more completely addressed in another segment of this report, under veterinary care. The need for a full time veterinarian at each facility is crucial.

## **10.2 POLICY/PROCEDURES MANUAL**

### **Observations:**

The HSUS team was provided with a copy of the DAC Policy and Procedures Manual. The manual addresses many of the responsibilities of the staff of DAC germane to the effective performance of their duties. Many of the staff, however, do not know about the content of this document - the same policy question posed to several employees and supervisors resulted in numerous different responses. This leads the team to believe that the manual is not distributed or updated, nor are employees held

accountable for adherence to its content. The manual covers many situations relating to the operation of the facility and duties of an officer. The HSUS team was not able to ascertain whether every situation commonly encountered by staff at DAC is indeed covered in this manual. With this in mind, we cannot comment on whether the document covers every aspect of the operation.

### **Recommendations:**

U A policy and procedures manual is of necessity a constantly changing document. This document should be assigned to one staff member for updating, distribution and responding to questions from staff concerning policy changes. This employee should be under the direction of the Manager in updating this document when changes occur. Each new employee should receive a copy of the latest manual, and be required to sign an acknowledgment that they have read and are familiar with the contents and will adhere to policies described in the manual at all times. The manual should be maintained electronically, and all pages numbered. As changes occur, new pages should be provided to each employee with instructions on what is changing, and instructions on what should be removed or replaced in the manual when the new information is distributed. Each officer should have a copy in their vehicle at all times as a reference if questions arise in the field. In the shelter, copies should be available for staff to refer to as needed.

## **10.3 STAFF TRAINING**

### **Observations:**

Staff training seems to be primarily in house, on-the-job. Officers do attend the two week training program created by Code Compliance for animal control. This seems to be an excellent training model, but, according to information provided, has only been offered once in the last year. (October 2000) This leaves all officers hired since then with on-the-job training only. There is a training officer who tries to provide training on an as needed basis, with an in house training checklist. This checklist seems to be a good program. The employee is rotated through various stages of DAC operations and is instructed in and acknowledges by signing off on each area that he/she understands the task. With staff turnover, however, and vacancies, the training officer expressed difficulty in getting this training to all the staff that needed it.

### **Recommendations:**

U Ideally, all new officers should go through formal training as soon as possible after hire. In the absence of this, all new hires should be assigned to the training officer for orientation before going into the field. Sending new hires out with existing officers can help as long as the officers they ride and train with are exemplary examples of the quality of officers DAC wants to train new staff. Officers trained incorrectly will have to be retrained later, which results in errors, and potential liability for the City of Dallas

U Management of DAC, has had little or no access to regional or national training in animal control best practices. There are numerous opportunities from which management of DAC would benefit. Examples include the National Animal Control Association annual training conference, The Humane Society of the United States Animal Care EXPO, and the American Humane Association annual training conference. These conferences provide numerous classes on management, ordinance

development, shelter design and construction, dangerous dog legislation, etc. This lack of professional development for management of DAC should be addressed and funds budgeted for this purpose. Networking and exchange of ideas for management will improve the services provided to both the citizens and animals of Dallas.

## 10.4 STAFF TURNOVER

### **Observations:**

Staff turnover is a serious problem nationwide for animal control agencies. The Society of Animal Welfare Administrators, in a recent salary and benefit survey, reported an average 34% annual turnover rate from the animal welfare agencies who responded to the survey. This is a result of a combination of factors such as the nature of the job, low salaries, working conditions, equipment, work hours, euthanasia, etc.

### **Recommendations:**

U DAC seems to have problems with turnovers for many of the same reasons. Poor morale within the agency also appears to be a factor. The fact that there is a feeling among field and kennel staff interviewed that rules are not enforced, that some staff are abusive and are not held accountable, needs to be addressed.

U DAC management needs to communicate its expectations clearly to all employees. Failure on the employees part to perform as requested should result in progressive disciplinary action. Attention to specific jobs that have a higher turnover rate should help to determine what additional causes can be addressed. Changing work schedules, rotating euthanasia responsibilities, weekend work, etc., can all be explored as options to improve conditions for employees.

## 10.5 HIRING/FIRING/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

### **Observations:**

Hiring and firing and grievance procedures are outlined in the City of Dallas Personnel Rules, Chapter 34 of the Dallas City Code. This covers all animal control employees as well. The document is well written and explicit. Some supervisors at DAC expressed frustration over the difficulty of terminating problem employees. While there are detailed procedures to follow and a formal grievance procedure for employees to grieve suspensions, terminations etc., these procedures are not uncommon for a government agency. There are many well run, efficient animal control agencies nationally who are able to overcome these perceived obstacles and maintain discipline as well as excellent morale. It was the feeling of the HSUS team that enforcement of disciplinary procedures was lax. In fact, HSUS team members were informed through public comment that at least two employees of DAC had been placed on administrative leave, but not terminated, for mistreatment of animals. If this is true, such behavior cannot and should not be tolerated. With a tremendous workload and continual staff vacancies, it may be that any employee who reports for work is needed and their shortcomings are overlooked as long as they do not create major disruptions.

**Recommendations:**

- U In hiring new staff, it is critical to recognize the specialized nature of the work to be performed. DAC should not be the destination for problem employees transferred out of other city agencies.
  
- U Only those individuals who have an expressed commitment to the health and well-being of animals should be employed to provide animal care.
  
- U Thorough background checks should be conducted on all employees. Increasing the educational requirements for applicants may be beneficial.
  
- U Excellent documentation is the key to termination of substandard employees. Although the system for progressive discipline is cumbersome and sometimes frustrating, it is still incumbent upon agency supervisors, through good documentation, to use the system to the agency's advantage. Employees who have been provided with the information and tools to effectively do their jobs but who still fail to comply with the city's rules and regulations must be dealt with swiftly and firmly. The agency's ability to control its work force can only be maintained by following its own rules as well as the city's in hiring, disciplinary and firing policies.
  
- U DAC policy should clearly state that any employee found guilty of abusing animals should be terminated on their first offense.

## **10.6 BUDGETARY CONCERNS**

**Observations:**

The HSUS team received a copy of the approved line item budget for DAC for FY 2000-01. As in most animal control agencies, salaries and personnel costs represent the largest share of the budget, or almost 2.5 million out of a 3.1 million budget. It is impossible for this assessment team to determine which line items are adequate or are insufficient to provide needed levels of service. The budget process for DAC should be based on the determined level of service desired for the citizens and needed by the animals of the community. The addition or subtraction of existing line item accounts based on past year expenditures is common with many animal control agencies but does not address the real needs.

**Recommendations:**

- U The International City County Management Association (ICMA), in recently released special report on animal control programs for local government, recommends that local government budget four to seven dollars annually per human inhabitant for the operation of an effective animal control program. Using this formula, with an estimated Dallas human population at 1.1 million, would place the minimum operating budget for DAC at 4.4 million for basic services, or 1.3 million more than is currently budgeted. These additional funds would be utilized to improve animal care within the facility and increase field staff to dramatically decrease response times to requests for services from citizens.
  
- U Out of a 3.1 million dollar operating budget, six thousand dollars for training for a staff of sixty

nine is less than one hundred dollars per year per employee. This should be substantially increased. Training objectives should be identified and developed and funding allocated annually.

## 10.7 COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS SYSTEM

### **Observations:**

The employees of DAC are employees of the City of Dallas. The city has specific personnel policies and procedures in place for all city employees, as outlined in the City of Dallas Personnel Rules, Chapter 34 of the Dallas City Code. These are not the agency's policies and procedures as were discussed in another section. Salaries and benefits for all city employees are determined by the city. Salary, benefits and working conditions are important issues in any agency attempting to recruit and retain career employees. It appears that the current hourly starting wage for an animal control officer is competitive. The benefits package is excellent.

### **Recommendations:**

U The salaries and benefits should continue to be reassessed on a regular basis to determine that the city is providing competitive salaries and benefits for the employees of the DAC. Most cities, and we are sure Dallas is not an exception, review these items on a regular basis. Nationally, however, many government agencies do not fully comprehend the role and responsibilities of animal control staff when it comes to salaries. In too many communities, salaries for animal care and control personnel are very low. We believe that the responsibilities of various animal control positions are not always fully articulated to the human resources division by the animal control agency, nor are they completely understood by the city's administration. Effective animal control employees have extensive public relations, law enforcement, and public health and safety responsibilities that are frequently overlooked during evaluations for salary grade assignment. Animal control programs nationally rank among the most utilized public services, but often are associated with the highest level of citizen dissatisfaction because of poorly trained staff with low pay.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is the nation's largest animal-protection organization, with more than seven million constituents. The HSUS was founded in 1954 to promote the humane treatment of animals and to foster respect, understanding, and compassion for all creatures. Today our message of care and protection embraces not only the animal kingdom but also the Earth and its environment. To achieve our goals, The HSUS works through legal, educational, legislative, and investigative means. The HSUS's efforts in the United States are facilitated by our regional offices; we are not, however, affiliated with any local animal shelters or humane organizations. Our programs include those in humane education, wildlife and habitat protection, farm animals and bioethics, companion animals, and animal research issues. The HSUS's worldwide outreach is supported by our global family of affiliated organizations.