



King County

Metropolitan King County Council
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 13, 2011

TO: Dow Constantine, King County Executive
Lorraine Patterson, Director, Records and Licensing Services Division

FROM: Cheryle A. Broom, King County Auditor ^{CB}

SUBJECT: Audit Follow-up on 2009 Performance Audits of
King County Animal Care and Control

The King County Auditor's Office 2011 Work Program, as approved by Council Motion 13440, includes a follow-up to two 2009 performance audits. One reviewed King County Animal Care and Control (KCACC), and the other was an assessment and analysis of KCACC's euthanasia practices.

Thank you for coordinating with our staff and providing us with an updated executive response and status of activities (attached). The updated response indicates that the new model of Regional Animal Services of King County (RASKC) implemented in July 2010, and the ongoing efforts of RASKC staff, are making significant progress in implementing the 25 recommendations made in the performance audit and euthanasia review. Given the comprehensive nature of progress to date in addressing the recommendations, this concludes our follow-up activities on these two performance audits.

If you have any questions, please contact Brian Estes or me at 296-1655. Thank you.

Attachment

cc: Metropolitan King County Councilmembers
Fred Jarrett, Deputy County Executive, King County Executive Office (KCEO)
Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget
Caroline Whalen, King County Administrative Officer and Director,
Department of Executive Services (DES)
Caroline McShane, Deputy Director, Finance and Business Operations
Division, DES
Carrie Cihak, Policy and Strategic Initiatives Director, KCEO
Jenny Giambattista, Policy Staff, King County Council (KCC)
Marilyn Cope, Policy Staff, KCC



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KING COUNTY AUDITOR

JAN 25 2011

RECEIVED

January 24, 2011

Cheryle A. Broom, County Auditor
Metropolitan King County Council
King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue, Room 1033
Seattle, WA 98104-3272

RE: Updated Response to Final Reports – Performance Audit Animal Care and Control and Review of King County Animal Care and Control Euthanasia Practices

Dear Ms. Broom:

In 2009, Executive Triplett submitted two letters with comments regarding the County Auditor's proposed final reports on the Performance Audit of Animal Care and Control and the Review of King County Animal Care and Control Euthanasia Practices, dated November 17, 2009. Executive Triplett's responses and comments sent in 2009 were based on an assumption that the King County Animal Care and Control Shelter program would phase out in February 2010.

Since that time, the Executive proposed and the Council adopted a new model for delivery of animal services. The model was developed in close coordination with cities in King County and on July 1, 2010, we began implementation of this model under the name Regional Animal Services of King County (RASKC). Based on the County's commitment to continue animal services through RASKC for unincorporated King County and 26 contract cities, we have revisited the 2009 audit recommendations and are submitting this letter along with updated comments to both reports, at your request. Some highlights include:

- Ken Nakatsu was hired in March 2010 to develop and implement the new model.
- Shelter sergeants were relocated close to the front customer counter. Coupled with the ability to accept credit cards, this has greatly improved customer service.
- "Grand rounds" by veterinarians and shelter managers have improved animal care.
- Created a veterinary clinic medical director and hiring process is underway; hired two new veterinary technicians.

Cheryle Broom
January 24, 2011
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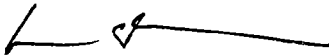
- Chameleon system was upgraded in 2010 providing greater security, efficiency, and the ability to post photographs of animals to the adoption website. User training was provided to all animal services employees.
- Time is set aside at the end of each day for behavior assessments.
- A volunteer-run feral cat barn home program was established.
- Veterinarians review all potential euthanasia cases against medical criteria.
- As of Sept 2010 the average length of stay for dogs was reduced from 9.49 days (2009) to 6.20 days (2010); and for cats from 14.52 days (2009) to 12.00 days (2010).
- The euthanasia rate has fallen to 16.5% from 40% 4 years ago. We are continually seeking ways to further reduce the number of animals euthanized.

As you can see, we are implementing many of the audit recommendations as part of RASKC and, while we have made substantial progress, we are working to continually improve the program.

Our attached responses to the audit recommendation detail work on outstanding items that management and staff will complete in 2011. We are committed to creating and managing a successful, model regional animal services program.

If you have any questions regarding the response, please do not hesitate to contact me at 206-296-3185.

Sincerely,



Lorraine Patterson
Director, Records and Licensing Services

Attachment

cc: Valerie Whitener, Senior Principal Management Auditor, King County Council
Fred Jarrett, Deputy County Executive, Office of the Executive
Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget
Caroline Whalen, Director, Department of Executive Services (DES)
Caroline McShane, Deputy Director, Finance and Business Operations Division
Carrie Cihak, Strategic Initiatives Director, Office of the Executive

Attachment A-RASKC Response-Review of Animal Care and Control – January 24, 2011

Recommendations	Agency Position	Schedule for Implementation	Comments
<p>1. ACC needs to implement a staffing model or tool that accurately simulates the flow of work over time so that ACC can accurately plan staffing and associated resource needs. Such a model should also align staffing with population dynamics, housing, and program capacity.</p>	<p>Concur, Partially concur, or Do not concur.</p>	<p>July, 2010 and ongoing</p>	<p>Briefly summarize your reasons for partial or non-concurrence. Concurrence does not require comment.</p> <p>Regional Animal Services of King County (RASKC) has taken several actions to significantly improve staffing relative to the operational needs of the shelter. First, work schedules for regular staff are set relative to workload which can be predicted for different days of the week. Second, short term temporary labor is used for known absences (e.g. medical leaves) and, in particular, for seasonal peaks as projected through observations of daily shelter population trends. Third, overtime is used, as needed and when cost effective. Operations have been improved in ways that have reduced the length of stay for animals in the shelter which, in addition to improving animal care, enables staff to be much more efficient and productive. Having fewer animals in the Kent Shelter and closing the Crossroads Shelter and redeploying those staff to the Kent Shelter also has enabled better care and more efficient operations. Nonetheless, frequent, unpredictable events like staff injuries/medical leave, an influx of animals from hoarders, etc. will always present challenges. RASKC has relocated the shelter sergeants next to the public intake area, so they may assist and support staff at the public counter and in the stray hold, quarantine and dog adoption areas of the shelter. RASKC also will install more computers and other equipment to improve operation by year end.</p>
<p>2. ACC should adjust the physical location and operational approaches of shelter supervisors so they are more accessible to staff and modify their supervision to support timely monitoring and decision-making.</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>4th Qtr 2010 and ongoing</p>	<p>This has been initiated and will be expanded as key staff is hired in the veterinary clinic. RASKC is continuing its efforts to hire a qualified Vet. Medical Director.</p>
<p>3. ACC should continue its efforts to implement Grand Rounds and develop approaches to ensure information from the rounds receives appropriate follow-up and is used to monitor and improve animal care practices.</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>Started 4th Qtr 2010 and in progress</p>	<p></p>

Attachment A-RASKC Response-Review of Animal Care and Control – January 24, 2011

<p>4. Continue to improve and implement intake procedures that ensure accurate evaluation and recording of information about incoming animals, and that identify planned outcomes for animals.</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>Completed and continuing.</p>	<p>Two new veterinary technicians, one of which is supported by the Animal Bequest Fund, have been hired to specifically improve the assessment of animals during intake. Initial intake procedures for the veterinary technician have been developed and will be revised as the new process is assessed. Information from the intake assessments will help identify planned outcomes for many animals and ensure accurate and complete recording of information.</p>
<p>5. ACC should develop and implement IT controls that include: sufficient management of system security and oversight. Improved training and supervision of users, alignment between user access and user needs, regular reconciliations of all data records for animals in the county's care, and increased monitoring of user activities that impact data reliability and integrity.</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>July 1, 2010, 1st Qtr 2011</p>	<p>The October 2009 performance audit noted that the shelter management system software, Chameleon, had not been updated since it was first installed in 2006. Updating the system and taking other actions were strongly recommended. On July 1, 2010, the most up-to-date version of Chameleon was installed at RASKC. All staff received training and instruction in its use. The new version of Chameleon resolves many of the security and data integrity concerns. A systems administrator was assigned, and varying levels of access are granted to staff and supervisors.</p> <p>Animal records are reconciled monthly prior to producing monthly animal reports. Scripts within Chameleon will be created to alert supervisors when data entry errors occur.</p> <p>Please see response to #6 below for additional information.</p>

Attachment A-RASKC Response-Review of Animal Care and Control – January 24, 2011

<p>6. ACC needs to continue to engage technical support for the shelters to ensure Chameleon software is updated, is working properly and has been sufficiently customized to meet the shelter's needs. Additionally, ACC needs to improve its use of IT resources, including Chameleon, to facilitate shelter activities and improve the flow of animals through the shelter.</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>July, 2010 for the shelter management module. December, 2010 for dispatch and licensing modules.</p>	<p>Technical support has been dedicated to Chameleon since the beginning of the year (2010) and was an integral part of the project team that installed the current version of Chameleon. As recommended in the performance audit, that technical resource is used routinely to resolve issues and customize reports to assist supervisors in managing the animal flow and other shelter functions. The new version of Chameleon incorporates an "address checker" and other means of identifying other incorrect or duplicate entries of information. The new version of Chameleon also is much easier to use, particularly relative to taking and using photographs of animals which helps with the return of animals to their owners and with adoptions. Additional computers have been installed to enable greater access and use of Chameleon.</p> <p>New modules for field dispatching and licensing will be installed before the end of the year. In addition to improving field operations and licensing, these new modules, coupled with the installation of laptop computers in the animal control officers' trucks in December 2010 will improve shelter operations as well by enabling more expedient entry and access to information about animals, their licenses, and information about their owners.</p> <p>As reflected above, training on the new version of the Chameleon shelter management system was provided to all staff, and additional training or re-training will be provided as needed.</p>
<p>7. ACC needs to improve Chameleon training for shelter staff to ensure all staff members are comfortable using the system and use it appropriately.</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>July, 2010 and ongoing</p>	<p>When installed, training will be provided to all appropriate staff for the dispatch and licensing modules as well. This will be the same approach for all new future versions installed.</p>
<p>8. ACC supervisors and management should increase supervision and monitoring of data entry to ensure Chameleon data is accurate, consistent, and complete. Increased supervision and monitoring could include regular samples of records, direct supervision of data entry, development of reports that identify common errors, and/or installation of additional applications to track</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>July, 2010</p>	<p>As recommended in the performance audit, the new version of Chameleon identifies and resolves many of the duplicate data entry and other data reliability issues. New reports and applications have the ability to provide immediate alerts to supervisors when data entry errors occur, enabling better tracking and individual performance improvement programs and/or training as needed.</p> <p>The addition of a management staff member in October 2010 provides additional oversight, supervision, and analysis for data monitoring and reporting.</p>

Attachment A-RASKC Response-Review of Animal Care and Control – January 24, 2011

common errors or misuse of the system.				
9. ACC should develop and implement a process to inventory animals in foster care and regularly reconcile information about these animals with data in Chameleon.	Concur	1st Qtr 2011		Tracking in Chameleon of neonatal kittens that die in foster care has improved. "Due back" dates will be added to Chameleon records. Calls will be made to foster parents when these dates are exceeded to ensure timely follow-up and reconciliation.
10. ACC should clarify with members of the King County Council which formula should be used to calculate the annual euthanasia rate in compliance with Title 11.	Concur	2011		RASKC agrees that the calculation of the euthanasia rate as specified in KCC Title 11 should be revised to reflect both the inventory of animals at the beginning and end of each year. In addition, RASKC believes that reporting information consistent with the Asolimar Accords (live release rate) will allow useful comparisons with other agencies. RALS will work with Council staff to modify the KCC.
11. ACC should hire a permanent Animal Services Manager.	Concur	Done		Ken Nakatsu was hired in March 2010 to facilitate development and implementation of the new Regional Animal Services Model.
12. ACC should at least annually conduct performance evaluations of all shelter staff.	Concur	Done		Performance evaluations of all RASKC staff were conducted in September, 2010. The only exception is for staff on leave. Those evaluations are written and will be reviewed and delivered to the staff when they return from leave.
13. ACC should gather additional data and track shelter operations more closely by adopting the performance metrics identified by UC Davis as soon as practicable.	Concur	1st Qtr 2011		RASKC has been tracking population dynamics, capacity and length of stay metrics. Tracking of specific euthanasia reasons has been implemented. Tracking of animal health status changes and disease incidence needs to be integrated into Chameleon, and the planning for this is in progress. This will be implemented in 1 st Quarter 2011 following the dispatch and field services transition to Chameleon.

Attachment B-RASKC Response-Review of Animal Care and Control Euthanasia Practices – January 24, 2011

Recommendations	Agency Position	Schedule for Implementation	Comments
1. KCACC needs an appropriate room and location to perform animal evaluations.	Concur	2011 and ongoing	A separate room or facility to perform animal evaluations and behavior assessments would be valuable and, along with additional space for dog and cat isolation, was included in the Executive's Proposed 2011 Budget. In the 2011 Adopted Budget, the Council adopted funding for two (2) isolation facilities (modular buildings), but did not include the assessment facility (modular building) proposed by the Executive.
2. ACC supervisors need to assign a dedicated protected time to perform behavioral assessments.	Concur	Implemented	This is a required daily assignment for shelter staff before leaving for the day.
3. Both Assess-a-pet and SAFER are two behavioral evaluation assessments tools that are being used throughout the county. The shelter should consider the use of one of these methods, or obtain a full protocol from a veterinary behaviorist. Following adoption of a specific evaluation protocol, staff should be trained in reading animal behavior.	Concur	Spring 2011	RASKC is planning to provide SAFER training and implementation in 2 nd Quarter 2011.
4. It is generally best to say that any dog needs to be carefully introduced to cats, while the dog is on a leash; this procedure should be continued until the dog's behavior in the home can be fully evaluated.	Concur	Implemented	Adopters are given advice about introducing adopted dogs to cats in the adopters' homes.

Attachment B-RASKC Response-Review of Animal Care and Control Euthanasia Practices – January 24, 2011

<p>5. Animals should have behavioral evaluations on intake. For owner surrendered animals, if they pass their evaluation, they can immediately be moved to adoption as long as they are medically healthy. (This limits care days, saves cage space, and saves staff time and money). For other animals, this initial behavioral assessment can serve as a baseline, against which further animal evaluations can be compared.</p>	<p>Partially concur</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p>On the ASPCA's SAFER website page, it says: "Research has found that cortisol (stress hormone) levels significantly decrease at approximately 72 hours after intake, which may change the behavior of the dog and may allow for a more predictive assessment. "If possible based on your resources, wait 72 hours after intake before assessing. Otherwise, strive to assess all dogs of assessment age within 24-72 hours after in your facility, or at intake (if resources do not permit waiting at all)." Owner surrendered animals are assessed the day of or day following intake. Stray animals are assessed at 72 hours following intake, or sooner if the animals' temperament allows. Two new veterinary technicians were hired in 4th Qtr 2010. Medical assessments are being performed on animals upon intake on a pilot project basis using Animal Services Bequest Funds.</p>
<p>6. KCACC should review potential cost savings of outsourcing spay and neuter services to a local veterinary hospital. This step may be necessary to give the veterinary staff adequate time to diagnose and treat sick or injured animals within the shelter population.</p>	<p>Partially concur</p>	<p>Additional veterinary technician positions were hired in 4th Qtr 2010. Outsourcing of spay and neuter services is not currently being considered.</p>	<p>From a cost savings perspective, it is unlikely that it would be beneficial to outsource spay and neuter services. While RALS has not conducted a cost-benefit analysis, this opinion is based on the fact that public shelter veterinary clinics do very high volume spay and neuter services and, in comparison, private veterinarians do this type of service on a less frequent basis. Given the expertise our veterinarians developed through high volume their time per operation is low, which we assumed results in a lower per operation cost than outsourcing. Hiring a veterinary clinic medical director to oversee clinic operations (replacing temporary resources) and hiring additional veterinary technicians will enable more time and resources to be dedicated to diagnosing and treating sick or injured animals. Access to Animal Services Bequest Funds, which was granted as part of establishing Regional Animal Services of King County, will also provide more resources for the diagnosis and treatment of ill or injured animals.</p>

Attachment B-RASKC Response-Review of Animal Care and Control Euthanasia Practices – January 24, 2011

<p>7. Veterinary technicians should provide intake examinations on every animal. Positive findings are immediately reported to the veterinarian for further care.</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p>Two new veterinary technicians, one specifically funded by the Animal Services Bequest Fund, began these examinations in December 2010.</p>
<p>8. Shelter managers and veterinarians should jointly conduct daily rounds, and jointly discuss euthanasia decisions.</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>Partially implemented</p>	<p>Staffing constraints prevent consistently conducting daily rounds, which can take several hours when the shelter is full. RASKC has implemented weekly grand rounds and regular meetings involving veterinarians, supervisors and managers to discuss specific cases, which could involve euthanasia, and animal flow issues. Medical euthanasia decisions are made by veterinarians based on each animal's condition, often with input from shelter managers, and behavioral euthanasia decisions by shelter managers after their review of staff assessments and, if appropriate, their own assessments.</p>
<p>9. Veterinary staff should review all treatment decisions and euthanasia recommendations.</p>	<p>Partially concur</p>	<p>Partially implemented</p>	<p>Veterinarians currently approve all euthanasia decisions for medical reasons. Shelter sergeant supervisors approve euthanasia decisions for behavioral reasons. We continue to seek ways in which to further reduce the number of animals euthanized.</p>
<p>10. KCACC managers and veterinarians should review and update standard shelter protocols, to insure that they reflect current best shelter medicine practices. For example, the current protocol of euthanizing all kittens that test positive for FelV should be reconsidered. Since many kittens convert, and become FelV negative, all positive kittens should go into foster care and be retested monthly. Another example would be to revisit the choice of first line antibiotic therapy for feline upper respiratory infections.</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>The protocol for antibiotic therapy for feline URI was revised in fall of 2009. Cats showing signs of URI are moved to new isolation areas.</p> <p>RASKC changed FelV protocols to include additional lab confirmation of diagnosis and is reviewing the impact of holding or fostering FelV positive (IFA negative) kittens for several months.</p> <p>The Regional Animal Services model included a new Medical Director position to oversee clinic operations and animal health in the shelter. Although this position is anticipated to function as a "working" Medical Director (i.e., performing medical procedures and providing medical care), this additional resource will help with respect to keeping current with shelter best practices.</p>
<p>11. KCACC should revisit its current policy of accepting feral cats, and enhance plans and procedures that allow for feral cats to be trapped, anesthetized, vaccinated, sterilized, ear tipped and returned to their colony without having to</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>RASKC has revised in practices relative to feral cats and is continuing to consider additional potential strategies. RASKC is relying principally on volunteers and partners who are placing altered feral cats in barn homes and similar situations. Future research will be made into the feasibility of RASKC</p>

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<p>enter the shelter.</p>			<p>performing non-sheltered, feral spay/neuter surgeries and possible code revisions impacting feral cats.</p>
<p>12. KCACC staff needs to receive training and supervision on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculating and administering the correct dosage of euthanasia medication consistent with product guidelines. • Recording accurate and consistent information in the data system regarding euthanasia decision-making and administration of Fatal-Plus. • Recording appropriate information in medical records. 	<p>Concur</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p>RASKC officers are now weighing animals prior to euthanasia and calculating Fatal Plus dosage at 1 cc/10 lbs for IV and 3 cc/10 lbs for IP administration. The 'euthanasia reasons' category in Chameleon has been expanded to record multiple medical and behavioral conditions. A separate 'euthanasia memo' has been created to record a summary of why the euthanasia decision was made. This is in addition to detailed veterinary examination findings and/or behavior assessment notes.</p>