

ANIMAL SERVICES

Shelter Review Report



January 2016



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Acknowledgements

The Shelter Task Force would like to thank the following groups, people, and organizations who helped with their time, hospitality and guidance on this project. Your invaluable input has helped set a course for the saving of thousands of lives. Your insights and experiences are incorporated into our recommendations. We could not have done it without you!

Alley Cat Allies
Animal Rescue League
Animal Shelter Advisory Committee
Austin Pets Alive!
Ben's Pet Food Pantry
City of Austin Animal Center
City of Fort Worth Code Compliance
City of Irving Animal Care Campus
City of Waco
County of San Diego
Dames for Dogs
DFW Humane Society
Dr. Michiel Noe, *Mayor pro tem*
El Paso Animal Services Employees
El Paso Citizens for Shelter Reform
El Paso County Sheriff

El Paso Pug Rescue
El Paso Veterinary Medical Association
Enchanted Pass Animal Rescue, Inc.
From the Heart Rescue
Golden Retriever Rescue of El Paso
Great Dane Rescue of El Paso
Huckleberry Hound Rescue
Humane Society of El Paso
Maricopa County Animal Care & Control
No Kill Advocacy Center
Pet Guardian Angel Welfare Association
Pets Alive El Paso
Sun City Cats
Target Zero
Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager
Yavapai Humane Society

And all other animal lovers who have helped contribute to this report.

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Executive Summary

The City of El Paso leaders should be commended for their understanding that the situation at the Animal Shelter (AS) cannot continue as it exists today. Simply put, the shelter is euthanizing an inordinate number of animals. Current practices must change for the welfare of the animals. This will not be an easy fix but rather will require the cooperation of the current shelter staff, the leaders of the City of El Paso, other communities serviced by the shelter, the El Paso Veterinary Medical Association, local rescue groups, passionate volunteers, and the public. All must play a role in increasing the number of animals that are spayed or neutered within the community, reducing the number of animals coming into the shelter and increasing the number of animals reunited with their owners or adopted into new homes.

For those animals that do end up at the El Paso Animal Shelter, we should strive to meet the guidelines established by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians for the care of the animals while at the shelter. It is understood that these are only guidelines and that we may not be able to meet all of them, but they should be adopted as Best-Practices guidelines for the El Paso Animal Shelter.

Our stated goal for the El Paso Animal Shelter is to reach a no-kill status equivalent to 90% live release rate in the next five years. In short, the no-kill equation is outlined in these 11 steps:

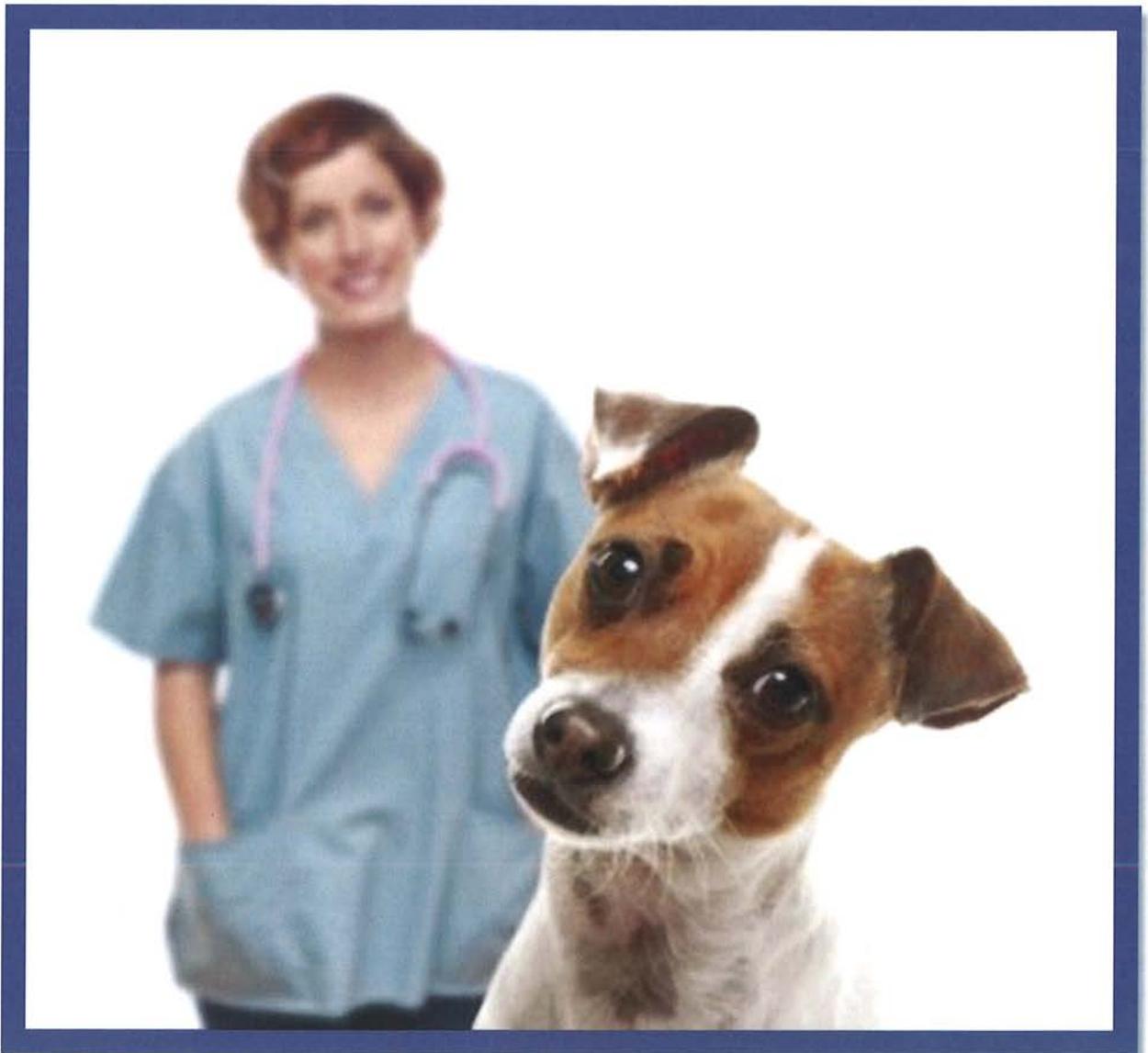
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|---|---|
| 1. Community Cat/Feral Cat TNR Program | 7. Medical and behavior programs |
| 2. High-volume, low-cost spay/neuter | 8. Public/community relations |
| 3. Rescue groups | 9. Volunteers |
| 4. Foster care | 10. Proactive redemptions |
| 5. Comprehensive adoption programs | 11. Dynamic Leadership |
| 6. Pet retention | |

To reach this goal, improvements are needed in the form of additional personnel who will provide outreach, education, adoptions and general enhancements to current operations. Facility improvements, policy changes, and renewed and energetic relationships with our partners, volunteers and donors are also paramount in making the needed culture change at the shelter, and in our community, a reality.

In summary, we are recommending:

- Elevate the Animal Services Division to department level status known as the El Paso Animal Services Department (EPAS).
- Additional budget for personnel of approximately \$1,300,000 phased in over the next three years, to fund 27 new positions which will focus solely on life-saving and outreach measures.

- The additional daily O&M budget will also need to be addressed at an estimated annual budget of \$550,000 – prorated for the first two years.
- Capital Improvement investment of \$1,000,000 phased over three years is needed to cover the facility improvements. A complete listing of these requested improvements are included later in this report.
- Employing Best-Practices methodologies so that EPAS will be able to leverage new grant funding opportunities to offset some of the funding needs.



Task Force Charge

In the spring and early summer of 2015, the City Council experienced a regular flow of individuals and groups routinely complaining about Animal Services' actions and operations, particularly in regard to animal treatment and related "kill rates." In July of 2015, the City Manager approached Steve Marshall, Zoo Director and Robert Resendes, Public Health Director, to prepare an assessment of the current operations of the City of El Paso's Animal Shelter. The two were tasked to make recommendations for improvement. As part of the charge, Marshall and Resendes were to discreetly examine current El Paso Animal Shelter practices. Also, they began searching out other successful regional shelters and investigating their implementation of industry standard "Best-Practices" that aided in achieving successful shelters.



In early September, the Animal Shelter assessment team was expanded to include Mr. Kurt Fenstermacher of the City Manager's office and Ms. Ellen Smyth, Environmental Services Director. With the help of Human Resources, a job description was created for an Animal Services Division Director. As with all successful animal shelters, indeed – with any successful organization, the imbedded leadership of a dynamic director drives and sustains meaningful changes, vision, and culture changes. Mr. Fenstermacher was appointed to be the interim Animal Services Division Director during the 4-month evaluation review by the task force of four.

Best-Practices

In whole, or in part, the task force visited several "success story" shelters, *i.e.*, shelters which have changed their operations from low- live release to high-live release entities. These visits included Austin, Fort Worth, and Irving in Texas, and Maricopa and Yavapai Counties in Arizona. It quickly became obvious that these "no kill" shelters shared common characteristics and practices which were lacking in El Paso.



The following is a list of key components that have resulted in Best-Practices communities achieving a live outcome rate above 90%. While each formula for success was slightly different, all had similar high-level strategies. Specifically, they focused on structural changes (organizational and operational) to enhance lifesaving, increasing live outcomes and reducing shelter intake. A halfhearted attempt at the programs listed below will **NOT** be effective. They must **ALL** be aggressively implemented in order to reap the lifesaving rewards.

1. Community Cat/Feral Cat TNR Program

A Community Cat Program which is also known as the Trap Neuter Return (TNR) program is the only humane, compassionate and proven effective method of reducing a feral cat population, and Best-Practices communities across the country have embraced this system as a method of drastically reducing shelter intake and thus saving lives.

2. High Volume, Low-Cost, or No-Cost Spay/Neuter

Low-cost or no-cost, high volume spay/neuter programs are a key component to reducing shelter intake. The outcomes of such programs become especially effective over time. Additionally, reducing intake allows for additional resources to be allocated to other shelter necessities.

3. Rescue Groups

Rescue groups are an invaluable element of any Best-Practices shelter. Any transfer of an animal to a rescue group reduces taxpayer cost for veterinarian care and boarding (or euthanasia), in addition to freeing up a kennel for another animal. A transfer to a legitimate rescue should never be refused by a shelter.

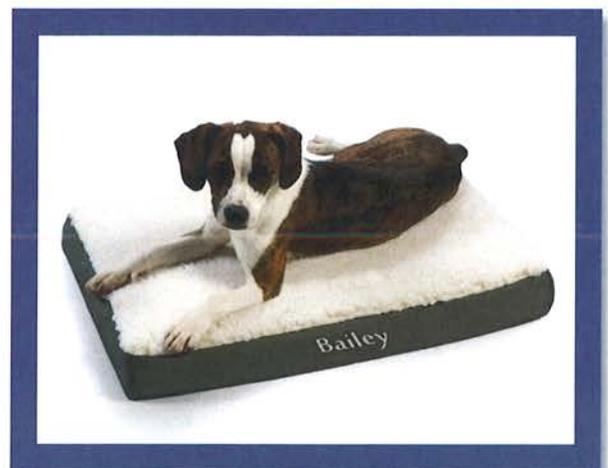
Interviews with most of the area's rescue groups demonstrated both a disgust and distrust for the EPAS and its traditional practices of high volume euthanasia with limited live release practices.

It is imperative that the EPAS change its practices and culture so as to eventually change its unfortunate reputation and win back the trust of external partners, shelters, rescues and relocation services – all of which are essential towards the goal of a true no-kill shelter.

Recent changes in leadership and City Manager's commitment to modifications and improvements have been noted and appreciated by previously doubtful community partners. We need to capitalize on the current positive momentum in order to move the entire animal care community forward with a single vision of Best-Practices animal and pet care in El Paso.

4. Foster Care

Foster care is an exceptional way of drastically expanding shelter capacity. Volunteer foster homes provide boarding, food and care for animals, and serve as key advocates for the shelter's mission. These programs may also save the lives of neonatal kittens and other animals that cannot survive in a shelter environment.



5. Comprehensive Pet Adoptions

A community CAN adopt its way out of euthanizing for space with coordinated efforts. There are more than enough homes for El Paso's homeless pets. An effective adoption program must offer promotions, adoption specials and implement effective marketing programs and even interstate transfers to get pets into their forever homes. To be successful, the EPAS must put as much or more effort into adoptions and other outplacements as it does with animal intakes.

6. Pet Retention

Many of the reasons people surrender their animals are preventable, but the EPAS shelter must work with the public to help them retain their animals whenever possible. Through offering advice and assistance to those in need, we can reduce intake and keep families together. For example, some individuals need short term assistance to purchase pet food and may not be aware of area pet food pantries.

7. Medical and Behavior Rehabilitation

A key part the EPAS' responsibility is to ensure the health and well-being of its animals. Animals must be treated for medical conditions and rehabilitated for behavioral issues, if needed. This step should include the implementation of evaluation, vaccination, cleaning/grooming and other protocols.



8. Public Relations/Community Involvement

Community support is key to shelter success. By increasing the public's awareness of the good and important work provided by the EPAS, the community will get involved, which means more donations, more volunteers, more adoptions and more lifesaving success. In turn a more positive reputation and image for the EPAS will be nurtured.

A Best-Practices shelter embraces the people in its community. They volunteer, foster, socialize animals, staff offsite adoption venues and open their hearts, homes and wallets to the animals in need. The public is at the center of every successful shelter in the nation. By working with people, implementing lifesaving programs and treating each life as precious, a shelter can transform itself.

9. Volunteers

New, life-saving efforts cannot succeed without volunteers. They expand the EPAS operational efforts with minimal additional expense. They are invaluable, and the backbone of any successful shelter.

10. Proactive Redemptions

In other successful Best-Practices operations, up to 65% of roaming animals are returned to their owners in the field without ever being taken to any shelter. Successful Return-To-Owner (RTO) efforts drastically reduce shelter intake and euthanasia rates.



11. A Compassionate Director

Consistently, the most important factor in reaching a 90% live release rate is effective leadership. Unless a shelter's leader is progressive, compassionate and hard-working, other efforts are likely to fail. The leader sets the tone, creates compassionate policies and implements effective procedures for the organization.

History of the El Paso Shelter:

The City of El Paso (COEP) Animal Services Division, formerly part of the City-County Health and Environmental District, has been housed within the Environmental Services Department since FY2012. The four years prior to that (FY08-FY11) it was housed in the City Health Department. The District was dissolved on December 31, 2007. Prior to its demise, a 2006 report on the State of the Shelter was prepared by Mr. John Neal.



In that report, Mr. Neal stated that *“The primary problem affecting many of these [Animal Shelter] issues is a total lack of modern information systems. Everything done by Animal Control is done and supported by manual records. Much time is wasted compiling, issuing, retrieving, and organizing manual records. This includes animal records, work orders, dispatch reports, work logs and so forth. This creates extraordinary operating inefficiencies, communication problems, opportunity for errors, and impairs customer service. Partly as a result, the organization has no operating standards or performance indicators tracking service to its customers.”*

Since this 2006 report, the information management software situation has not improved with the failed implementation of Accela at the shelter. Although the annual operating budget at the Shelter has increased from \$2.7 million in 2006 to \$4.4 million dollars in 2016, the AS is still relatively underfunded in comparison to other cities of similar size. Staffing positions have also increased 30% from 31 to 42 full-time employees mostly in the area of spay/neuter clinical personnel.

Today, the AS receives more than 30,000 dogs and cats at its open-admission shelter each year. The shelter actively seeks to reunite lost pets with their owners and find homes for the remaining animals with new families or other rescues groups and shelters. However, approximately 13,000 animals are still euthanized each year. The Task Force has come up with 40 initiatives to increase the number of animals leaving the shelter alive as well as several recommendations to improve the welfare of the animals at the shelter during their stay.

Background of Animal Shelters:

Historically, animal services departments were formed solely to protect humans from illness and injury caused by domestic animals. Most began simply as divisions of health or sanitation departments. Animal shelters existed to give citizens a very limited time to redeem an impounded pet. All other animals were euthanized. In the latter half of the 20th century, the number of pets increased significantly, and they began to move indoors as companion animals.

This new association prompted groups to begin rescuing animals from euthanasia at municipal shelters, and citizens began to expect animals to have an opportunity to be adopted directly by the public. Recognizing that most impounded animals were adoptable, the 21st century witnessed an increased desire for the majority of animals in shelters to be reunited with their owners or find new homes.

El Pasoans have reached this state of desire. They have expressed in great numbers and with great passion that they no longer have an appetite for killing our animals. Over many years the reputation of the AS being a kill-shelter has ostracized several key potential community partners whose help would be invaluable in saving the lives of otherwise healthy and adoptable pets. Thus, the assessment began with the public community input meetings.

Assessment:

There are many issues that the Environmental Services Department Animal Services Division is facing. The observations and stated recommendations in this report point toward the ultimate goal of increasing live release numbers, reducing the intake of animals into the shelter and reducing euthanasia numbers of shelter animals. The findings focus primarily on the shelter operations. However, we acknowledge that the Animal Control Officers (ACO) in the field provide essential functions in support of city-wide animal welfare activities. The assessment began with a review of Best-Practices used by successful shelters around the nation. This was followed by a review of the operations and processes of the COEP Animal Shelter.



The current mission/purpose statement of the Animal Services Division is two-fold:

- ❖ ***To provide temporary animal care and quarantine services; and to provide pet adoption services to responsible caring individuals and families.***

The proposed mission statement for the new department will include a component dealing with customer service, animal welfare, and responsible pet ownership such as:

To compassionately provide for the health, safety and welfare of El Paso companion animals in our care and to advocate for animals in the community through education, community partnerships, and responsible pet ownership.

In addition to a revised mission, the shelter should also be given a new name that is reflective of the new reality of a 90% live release, no-kill philosophy. A new Vision Statement is also recommended in order to enhance the image and promote the services at the shelter. Some examples of those might be:

Animal Adoption Shelter of El Paso	EP Animal Care and Rescue
Animal Shelter of El Pawso	Friends for Life Shelter/Adoption Center
El Paso's Animal Haven	Sun City Animal Haven
El Paso's Animal Protector	Sun City Pets
El Paso's Animal Shelter & Adoption Center	Sun City Sanctuary
El Paso's Homebound Animal Shelter	Sun City's Pet Shelter
El Paso's Shelter for Lost Pets	Trails of Hope Shelter/Adoption Center
El Pawso Animal Shelter	

Methodology:

The Task Force concluded that a thorough understanding of the ESD Animal Shelter Division activities as well as the distribution of responsibilities throughout the department is a crucial factor in conducting an accurate analysis of the reported issues.

During the months of September through December 2015, the members of the Task Force conducted a review of the operations and processes at the Shelter and also visited out of town shelters. An initial on-site meeting was held on September 9, 2015 with all available shelter staff to explain the purpose of the Task Force study.

The Task Force continued to conduct interviews with staff to identify the critical functions of the division. Interviews were also conducted with other stakeholder groups including the Animal Shelter Advisory Committee (ASAC), the El Paso Veterinary Medicine Association (EPVMA), the Humane Society of El Paso (HSEP), as well as various rescue partners. Actual observations were conducted in the shelter environment when possible. Consultants came to the shelter and assessed operations.

What follows is a report of actions to date, Best-Practices review, implementation of needed changes and large scale recommendations which are policy in nature and will affect Title 7 of the City of El Paso's municipal code.



Task Force Actions:

In preparing for this report and while having Mr. Fenstermacher on the “inside” of the Animal Shelter, personally observing day-to-day practices, the task force implemented several changes. These changes were made under Mr. Fenstermacher’s leadership and the results immediately addressed several Best-Practices that improved the welfare and quality of care for the animals in the Shelter.

The following changes and improvements have been completed or are now in progress toward a more animal-care-centric operation with an emphasis on the quality of care and on reaching an improved live release rate.

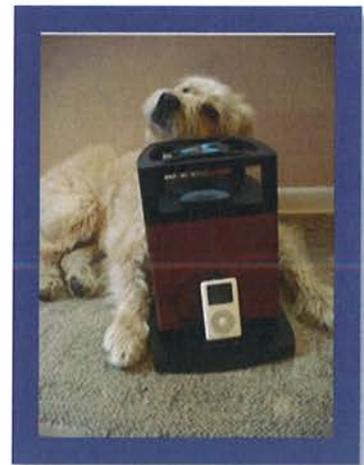
Professional Affiliations: Best-Practices shelters do not happen or materialize in a vacuum. Rather they are developed over time with the help and assistance of other successful entities “paying it forward” and helping others. The AS has long existed as an island unto itself in terms of Animal Shelter practices. As the 19th largest city in the United States, El Paso has one of the highest animal intake censuses in the entire nation. It is imperative that El Paso take its place with other large cities and counties in the areas of policy process, practice peer review, software user groups, operational Best-Practices forums, etc. in order to bring down these numbers. To date, under the Acting Director’s leadership, AS has established memberships/partnerships with:

- Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA)
- National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA)
- Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)
- Million Cat Challenge
- Association of Shelter Veterinarians
- Maddie’s Fund
- Best Friends

Active and current participation in these and other associations will ensure that EPAS remains current in the science of animal shelter management and animal care.

Beds and Towels: Under the direction of Acting Animal Services Director, Mr. Fenstermacher, the majority of animals now have beds, blankets and towels to rest/sleep upon rather than cold and uncomfortable concrete or stainless steel. Community contributions of said items have greatly improved the quality of life for sheltered animals at zero or minimal cost.

Soothing Kennel Music: As has been demonstrated in numerous kennels around the country, the playing of relaxing music can indeed have a positive calming effect. Animal tensions and anxieties have been drastically reduced with the playing of soft music throughout the AS kennels and holding areas. Thanks to a mini-grant, acquired by Mr. Fenstermacher from the Rescue Animal MP3 Project, AS pets are now able to relax on their new beds and enjoy the sounds of soothing music. Since the AS was already wired for a paging system, adapting the existing system for music was inexpensive and simple.



Direct Phone Access for Area Veterinarians:

At the request of the EPVMA a new phone line was installed at the shelter that goes directly to our medical staff. This allows direct communication between area veterinarians when emergency situations arise in the community that requires input for our data base.

Nutrition: As part of the nutrition enhancement program, animals are now feed two smaller meals rather than one large meal per day. We are also evaluating the nutrition program in order to maximize the health and well-being of the animals.

Owner Surrender Policy: This necessity to revise the Owner Surrender Policy was so painfully obvious that it was changed immediately and needs to stay in force moving forward. Formerly, the practice was to allow pet owners to present their animals for destruction by the AS. Many of these pets were in good health and friendly – very viable for adoption or other outplacement. The new policy requires owners to surrender their animals to the shelter without having a say in the animal’s final disposition. A veterinarian assessment is now required to determine if indeed the animal is a viable candidate for euthanasia due to disease, injury or pain. “Convenience” euthanasia is no longer a practice of the AS. Owners who insist on their animal’s destruction will be counseled to seek out a private practice veterinarian. Convenience destruction is no longer provided at the shelter for adoptable animals.

Streamline Adoptions: There is seldom a good reason to delay or deny a willing adopting individual or family from leaving an adoption facility without the animal of their choice. Previous practice included 5 pages of paperwork, after-the-decision spay, neutering and vaccination. Paperwork has been reduced to one page. Now, all adoptable animals are ready to go home with their forever families within minutes of a “match.” Nevertheless, the AS relies on adopters past practices and records to ensure that pets are not being released to an individual or family with a known history of animal neglect, cruelty, hoarding, fighting, *etc.* Volunteers check on adopter families after a few days of placement to ensure that the new pet is adjusting to their new home.



Task Force Recommendations:

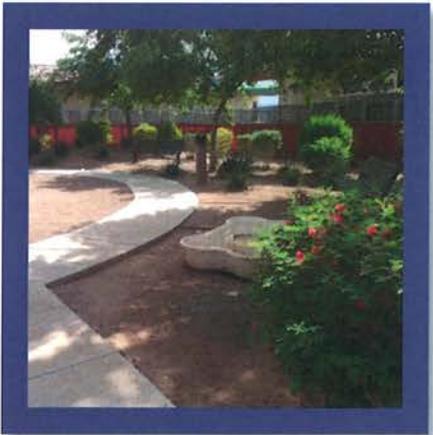
In addition to the aforementioned accomplishments, the task force has identified a number of other significant tasks that will need to be complete in order to progress toward a more animal-care-centric operation with an emphasis on the quality of care and on reaching an improved live release rate.

- **Appoint Permanent Animal Shelter Division Director.** The Task Force highly recommends that Mr. Fenstermacher be made the permanent Shelter Director so that the momentum and goodwill that he has been able to attain with staff, partners, and veterinarians to date is not in vain.
- **Create Stand Alone Department.** The successful Animal Shelters visited by the Task Force all had autonomous leadership and good standing in their various communities. Some, though autonomous in function, received administrative support, e.g., payroll, purchasing, accounting, personnel, etc., from larger departments. The Task Force recommends our shelter be similarly structured so that it is its own department. For a short time, at least early-on in the transition phase towards a fully autonomous department, any needed support in administrative functions should be provided by Environmental Services.
- **Hire sufficient veterinarians.** Not long ago, the El Paso Animal Shelter (AS) was dependent on contract veterinarians to meet its day-to-day obligations. This process often delayed necessary surgeries for animals as well as delays in rabies vaccination and in turn, adoptions and other out-placements. Successful, large-scale shelters have full time veterinarians on staff to ensure the humane, fast and efficient processing of animals. In comparing animal volumes with those of other shelters, the Task Force recommends four (4) full-time employee veterinarians. This will attain the economy of scales needed to reach Best Practices efficiencies and a no-kill status. It also ensures an ongoing medical presence at the shelter across all days and shifts of operation. Currently, AS employs two (2) full-time veterinarians.
- **Low-Cost/No-Cost Spay and Neuter.** We will need to continue to strengthen our low-cost/no-cost spay and neuter programs in order to reduce the number of unwanted pets. Our Socorro Road Clinic has been constructed as a low-cost spay and neuter clinic. As an already-built and turnkey facility, the Socorro Road clinic will easily allow for increased spay/neuter surgeries.



- Additionally AS has a mobile spay and neuter van that acts as a “satellite” site that supplements spay/neuter clinics. Without exception, every large-scale shelter operation visited by the Task Force and similarly researched had multiple fixed and mobile operations to better serve our customers.
- **Facility Improvements.** High functioning Animal Shelters ensure that animals-in-care have sufficient and proper facilities. A comprehensive list of recommended facility improvements includes:
 - Outdoor meet and greet area and play yard for dogs —drainage, artificial turf, fencing, dog park amenities *e.g.* agility games, water feature, and shade structure.
 - Surrender Area– new entrance for owner surrender, with surrender prevention/intervention team counseling prior to surrender and separate entrance for adoptions.
 - Adoption Areas – Adoptions will occupy the space in current VIP office located in southeast corner of the building. A new door, counter space and waiting area will be installed.
 - Sallyport renovation – a new partition wall will be added in the sallyport, separating animal holding and drive-through garage area (sanitation, heat regulation, welfare). A new, above ground kenneling system for large dogs, including drainage, will be installed. The current parasite dip tank will be filled in to achieve this renovation. Sound baffles will also be installed.
 - Appliances – due to the volume of laundry at the shelter and concerns about the transmission of disease, we will need to add an additional industrial clothes washer/dryer or expand current capacity with an outside Laundromat contractor. Additionally, an industrial dishwasher is needed that is sized appropriately to meet the demand and sanitation requirements.
 - Ventilation – The ventilation in the various rooms in the shelter is inadequate for the assigned purpose. We will add negative pressure ventilation to quarantine room A and the Feline room. Currently, only quarantine room B has negative pressure ventilation.
 - Roof drainage – The roof of the kennels currently drain onto the concrete walk area. We will add extensions to the roof drains on A, B and C kennel buildings so that water runs away from the building and does not drain to sidewalk adjacent to kennels.



- Offices –The current space at the shelter does not meet the needs. Approximately 8000 square foot addition to the west of the existing training room to provide additional administration offices including surrender prevention counseling and support.
 - Cattery Room – Approximately 1000 square foot addition to the east of the existing cattery room (into the porch area) for better opportunities for community cat play, typically called a “catio”.
 - Outdoor patio area – The outdoor patio area can easily be capped for use as administrative offices.
- 
- **“Friends of EPAS” – 501(c) 3.** Without exception, all high-functioning, no-kill shelters are dependent on outside, non-fee, non-governmental resources to fund necessary operations such as supplemental food, blankets, bowls, toys, and other expendable items. Although the establishment of a non-profit corporation and associated support is beyond the purview of this report and the City’s efforts, the Task Force nonetheless recognizes and encourages the efforts of private citizens who have begun the processes of incorporation as a means of support and funding for the EPAS.
 - Additionally, there are many funding sources and grantors nationwide who limit their funding to non-profit corporations which would naturally exclude the City of El Paso from eligibility. A benevolent association with a charitable organization with a shared vision of best care and best outcomes for EPAS animals would be a tremendous benefit for all parties and pets.
 - **Amend Title 7 in its entirety.** In early 2015, independent of the establishment of the Task Force, the AS in conjunction with the El Paso Animal Shelter Advisory Committee, rescue groups and concerned citizens worked diligently to address several necessary changes in the City’s animal ordinance. The goal was to enable the policy changes necessary to implement a new culture of animal live release practices, which have proven successful in other large communities across the nation. Movements toward Title 7 changes were delayed to allow for Task Force work to proceed unencumbered. As the Task Force’s assignment comes to an end, it is imperative that recommended Title 7 changes be adopted in order for the City of El Paso to reap the same benefits and positive outcomes accomplished by similar sized cities across Texas and the United States. Specifically, the Community Cats concepts of the proposed ordinance change are essential toward the establishment of the EPAS as a true no-kill shelter. No other change in operations and practice will result in a greater, immediate improvement of the EPAS live release rate than this concept and its associated practices.

- **Organizational Structure.** In its critical examinations of successful, no-kill shelters across the country, the Task Force found that a three-pronged approach to animal throughput and no-kill status is incumbent on:
 - Animal Control functions (intake)
 - Animal Care functions (shelter) and
 - Animal out-placement services (live-release)

Currently our staffing distribution is inordinately high on the intake and shelter components of the operation. We will restructure the distribution in order to better balance the focus on the live-release outcomes. EPAS has concentrated its resources on animal intake and care/processing of animals with little or no resources dedicated to outplacement activities. Based on observations of successful models visited and researched, the Task Force strongly recommends the funding of the following new positions which are critical to the success of achieving a 90% live-release rate:

Positions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total FTE requested
Marketing Division Manager	1			1
Community Cats Coordinator	1			1
Surrender Prevention Manager	1			1
Veterinarian	1			1
Adoption Coordinator	1			1
Surrender Prevention Clerk	1	1		2
Animal Services Attendant	1	1		2
Licensing/Registration Clerk	1			1
Adoption Counselors	1	1		2
Veterinary Technician	2	2		4
Rescue/Transfer Coordinator		1		1
Assistant Director			1	1
Web/Social Media Coordinator		1		1
Training and Enrichment Coordinator			1	1
Educator		1	1	2
Volunteer Coordinator			1	1
Off Site Adoption Supervisor			1	1
Off Site Adoption Counselors			3	3
Total	11	8	8	27

- **Marketing.** Communication of the EPAS message and keeping it current and positive in the mind of the community is paramount. To do this, a full time marketing effort will be required. Twitter, Facebook, and Insta-gram can all be used to help create a strong brand. Regular print and electronic communications are needed as are opportunities for speaking engagements before community groups, service organizations, schools and other interested bodies. Easy access to web sites is imperative.

Until recently, the only access to the website involved clicking through the ESD website or typing out the URL:

www.elpasotexas.gov/environmental-services/animal-shelter

The Task Force worked with IT to purchase and activate the following URLs (web site names). The following web site names are now fully functional and point directly to the EPAS website with minimum typing or clicking:

- www.EPAnimalServices.com
 - www.EPDogs.com
 - www.EPCats.com
 - www.FindMyLostPetEP.com
- **Community Cats.** Our current approach of managing the stray cat population in El Paso is a failure. Our approach has historically been to round up stray cats and take them to shelter where nearly 90% of them are euthanized due to space restrictions. We have dedicated many hours of shelter and field time and countless tax dollars on this endless cycle. This approach has not had an impact on the stray cat population.

A new approach for our community is a philosophy that has been tested and successful in many communities throughout the nation. We began our efforts with targeted Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) several years ago with the support of Petsmart Charities. Through this program, we have targeted high intake locations (targeting zip codes), looking at areas with a high volume of cat complaints. Through a trap program organized by the shelter and assisted by Animal Control Officers (ACOs) in the field, cats trapped in these targeted areas are brought to the shelter, sterilized, vaccinated and returned to where they were picked up. The post-sterilization behavior of cats should lead to a reduction in nuisance complaints. In areas where we have continued complaints, we partner with Sun City Cats who help to alleviate the problem through other deterrent techniques.

Moving from targeted TNR, a more comprehensive Community Cat program is essential. In general, a comprehensive Community Cat program is similar to TNR but at a larger scale. Cats enter the shelter through residents or ACOs. Eligible cats are fixed, vaccinated, ear-tipped, and returned to their outdoor home.

- **TV Pet Adoption Spot.** With the assistance of the City's Public Affairs Office, arrangements could be made for a weekly spot on a major, local news station to highlight shelter animals which are available for adoption. Additionally, Channel 15 is recommended as an additional venue by which shelter animals' pictures and descriptions can be broadcast as well as instructions on how to reserve and adopt the featured pets.



- **Adoption Program.** Adoptions are vital to the EPAS lifesaving mission. The quantity and quality of shelter adoptions is a direct function of shelter policies and practices. Live release rates increase when shelters better promote adoptions with effective marketing and easy public access hours.
 - Onsite - these adoptions take place at the Shelter. On January 1, 2016 AS for the first time began providing adoption services independent of outside contractors.
 - Offsite - these adoptions will take place in high traffic and high visibility locations i.e. retail establishments and/or recreational events.
 - Mobile - these adoptions take place from the newly acquired Mobile Pet Adoption Van that was generously funded by the Stanton Foundation.

- **Implementation of Feral Cat Boxes.** A Best-Practices feature by all shelters visited by the Task Force was the use of Feral Cat Boxes for those cats that are unaccustomed to human interaction. These boxes can be used in the field, in transport, in the shelter and in kennels to provide feral cats with a safe experience free from the anxiety producing practices of being handled, transferred and exposed to view. These boxes are also easy to clean. Additionally, the boxes provide added safety to animal handlers and volunteers. Several of these boxes have been purchased and their use implemented with instant success. The Task Force recommends additional purchases of these sturdy and reusable items.

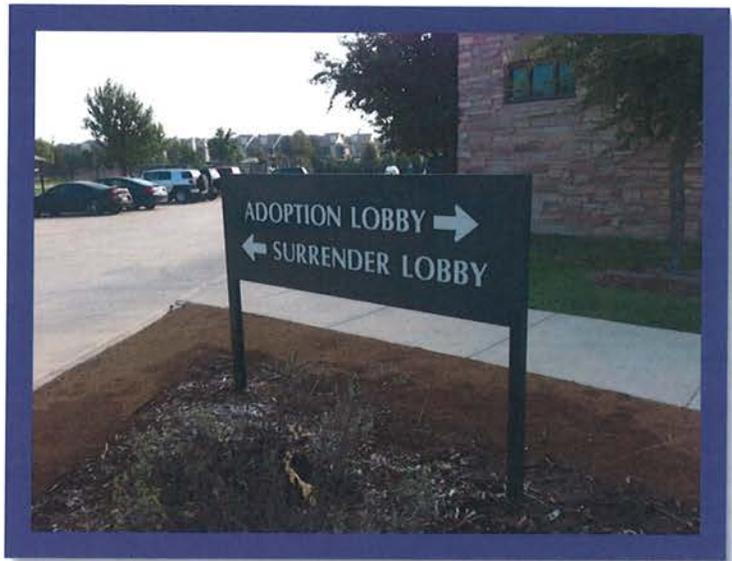
- **Animal Shelter Management Software Selection.** After considerable research, demonstrations, reference checks, *etc.*, the Task Force, as well as most of the Animal Shelter staff, has agreed on the selection of PetPoint software. This software is one of the top-selling and popular shelter management software packages on the market. The system will streamline data entry, improve animal inventory and census control, interface with popular online pet search software, and allow for a public portal for individuals and families searching for lost or adoptable pets. These features were regularly requested by participants at all public meetings, as ways of improving animal care and shelter services in El Paso. The Purchase Order for the software has been signed and implementation will begin in early 2016.

- Improved Signage/Image.** Repeatedly, at several public meetings, attendees expressed frustrations and shared experiences regarding difficulty in finding AS and subsequently being confused upon arrival as to where to go and how to navigate the layout of the current campus.

It was profoundly clear that signage was a sore spot for the public as was the image/reputation of the shelter. As such, this Task Force strongly recommends a

rebranding of the operation including improved, user-friendly signage.

Acting Director Fenstermacher has already begun to implement the on-campus changes and is working with the Texas Department of Transportation on more and improved directional signs to guide the public safely and directly to the EPAS.



- Create Surrender Support Team.** The Task Force was privy to many sad and gut-wrenching stories of pets being surrendered at several shelters visited. Unfortunately, many owner(s) asked to have the animal euthanized – for less than acceptable reasons.

Successful shelters employ Surrender Counselors who work closely with individuals and families surrendering their pets. Due to various reasons such as deployment, unemployment, divorce, lease prohibitions, cash flow challenges, many pet owners see no alternative but to put their pet “to sleep.” In well established, Best-Practices shelters, trained and compassionate surrender counselors assist those who are distraught and anxious about their pet and their current or looming challenges.

Solutions to deter surrenders included providing pet food for the animal, referring the family to a pet food pantry, intervening with landlords, arranging for temporary foster care, all to help both the animal and its owner not have to part ways in a manner which includes shelter admission. As do all successful animal shelters, minimizing admissions to the shelter is one of the most effective ways to save animal lives.

The Task Force recommends sufficient staff and associated training in place to deter and minimize shelter surrenders – particularly for reasons which can be reasonably addressed at the community level.

- **Streamline Volunteer Process.** In its travels to other animal shelters, it became quickly apparent to the Task Force that a large and active volunteer program is essential.

The Task Force learned that the volunteering process for AS volunteers is difficult, lengthy and archaic. Currently, the AS requires an extensive background check, fingerprinting, and a lengthy application process and rabies vaccination for all volunteers. No other animal shelter that was visited required so much for its volunteers to be placed into service. Indeed, upon asking, the Task Force learned that a potential volunteer could be substantially screened, vetted and trained in about one hour – as compared to up to six months with AS.



The volunteer base for the AS is minimal at best. In other shelters, volunteers constituted a significant portion of the shelters' workforce. El Paso doesn't lack for interested volunteers. Rather, it has made the process too time consuming and burdensome so as to deter volunteers from participating.

A vibrant, best-practice animal shelter thrives on its volunteer staff and their inherent ability, compassion and love for animals to not only assist in day-to-day shelter operations and animal care but as ambassadors to the community of the work, mission and goals of the shelter.

Soon, the more burdensome aspects and requirements for volunteer service with the AS will be rescinded or reduced to streamline the process and hasten the time between application and service.

- **Implementation Team.** The Task Force appointed to this project recommends an additional few months of part-time participation in order to carry our mission beyond the research and study phase. Indeed, with the numerous recommendations and need to change the focus and culture of current operations to a viable no-kill shelter and with considerable knowledge of current needs and City processes, the Task Force members would be well suited to assist shelter and animal control staff in the expedited implementation of many of the listed recommendations and changes.

The Task Force appreciates the opportunity to work collaboratively on this project. We sincerely hope that the recommendations contained herein are fully adopted and efforts are taken to move into implementation.

Appendix A

Task Force Recommendations

	Task Force Recommendations	Timeline	Notes
1	Revise Mission of Animal Services	FY16	Draft of Mission statement is in progress. New name, motto and vision statement are also needed.
2	Adopt Live Release goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FY16 = 50% • FY17 = 60% • FY18 = 70% • FY19 = 80% • FY20 = 90% 	FY16	Target Zero recommends a multi-year phased approach to reach the 90% live release target.
3	Appoint Animal Services Division Director A permanent Director is needed ASAP to ensure consistency and stability.	FY16	Mr. Kurt Fenstermacher would be an excellent choice for continued progress.
4	Add Veterinary Capacity Fund 1 additional veterinarian and support staff	FY16	Currently we have three veterinarian positions approved but need a 4 th for 24/7 coverage.
5	Low Cost Spay and Neuter We will continue to strengthen our Socorro Road Clinic	FY16	Additional staff will allow for the Socorro Road Clinic to become fully operational.
6	Facility Improvements Turf is needed in the play areas as well as a number of other facility improvements	FY16	A full listing of facility improvements is in the report appendices.
7	501 (c)(3) Interested parties will create a 501 (c)(3) for fundraising.	FY16	In progress. Funds raised will be dedicated to support the COEP Animal Shelter activities.
8	Amend Title 7 Amend Title 7 in its entirety in order to address the best practices used in other municipalities.	FY16	A comprehensive rewrite inclusive of the Task Force Recommendations will be presented to City Council for adoption.
9	Owner Surrender Program Implement an owner surrender program.	FY16	A team of individuals will work to decrease the number of animals being surrendered by owners.
10	Canvass Neighborhoods Door to door neighborhood intervention program that targets animals lacking Vaccinate/Microchip/License.	Continuous	Existing Animal Control Officers (ACO) will be trained to provide this service.
11	Vaccinate/Microchip/License Clinics Continue to fund vaccinated, microchipped and license clinics.	Continuous	About 300 animals can receive the Vaccinate/Microchip/License at each clinic.
12	Community Cat Program Provide funding for vaccinations and sterilization of cats, returning them to their point of origin.	FY16	Currently staff is able to S/N about 50 animals per day. Additional personnel will increase this number.
14	Behaviorist Positions Fund a training and enrichment coordinator to assist with behavior assessments.	FY18	Currently one position exists. This additional position will be added in year 3.

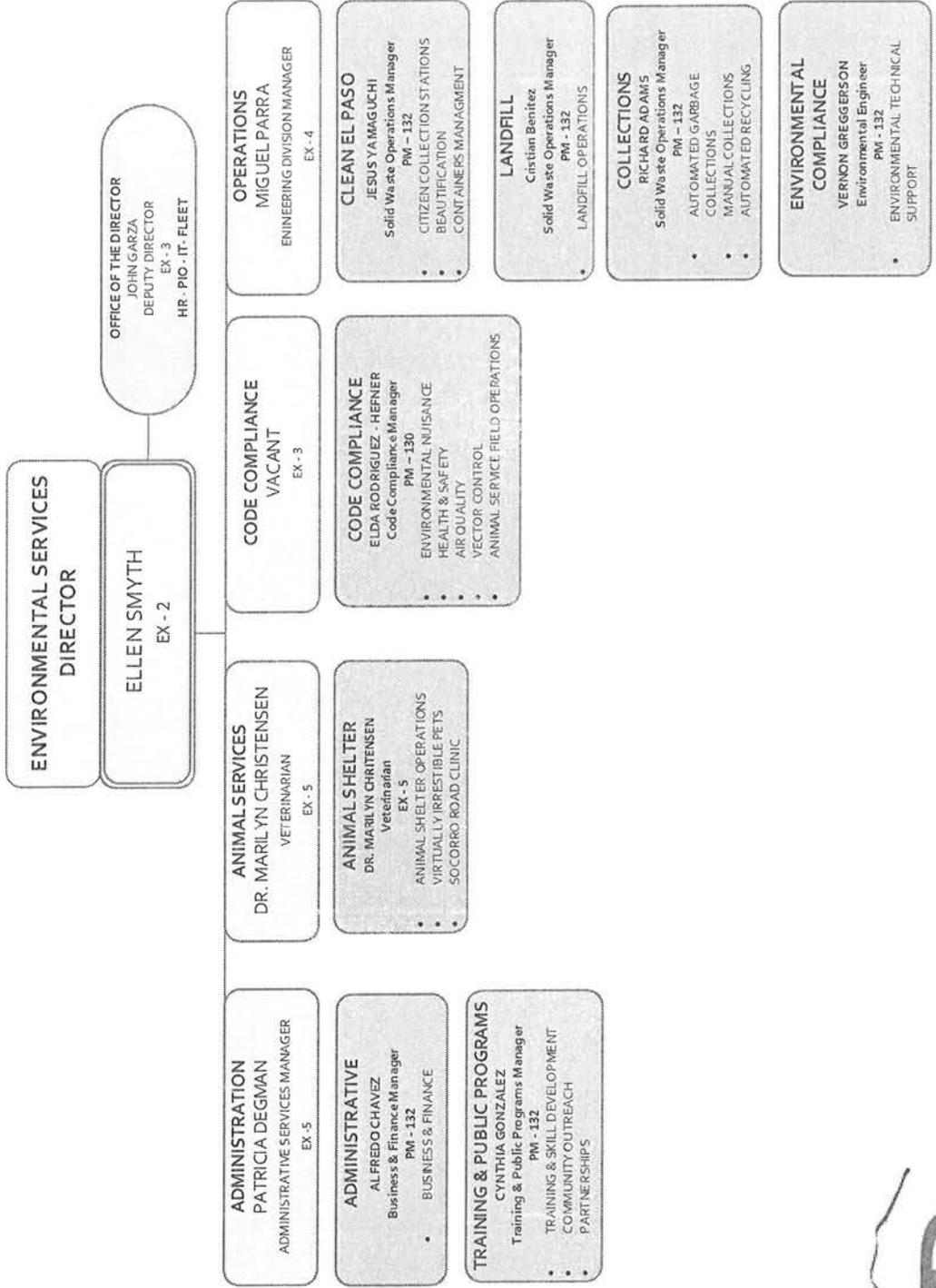
	Task Force Recommendations	Timeline	Notes
15	Public Awareness Campaign Organize a public relations task force that focuses on promoting shelter needs.	FY16	One marketing division manager will be hired to coordinate the efforts of staff and volunteers.
16	Low Income Spay/Neuter Vouchers Continue the voucher program for those who meet the financial requirements.	Continuous	Grant funding for the voucher program is received from the State on annual basis.
17	Provide Euthanasia List (E-List) to Partners Expand opportunities for rescue groups to review the daily euthanasia list.	Continuous	Animals that are candidates for transfer to rescue programs will be saved thus increasing live-release rates.
18	Last Resort Adoptions Provide a program where any person can take an animal off of the E- list.	FY16	The E-list is the list of animals scheduled to be euthanized the next day.
19	Revamp the Animal Services Website The AS website needs to be constantly "refreshed" with links to new programs and social media resources.	FY16	A Marketing Division Manager will be hired to oversee these activities. Contract-staff and volunteers will be utilized.
20	Utilize 211 and 311 to Provide Pet Tips Staff will develop scripts for 211 and 311 operators.	FY16	Scripts and data bases will include the answers to common concerns and questions related to companion animals.
21	Animal Acclimation Program Create a task force that will work to acclimate the animals in the shelter.	FY16	A program to reduce animal stress would enhance animal welfare and adoptability.
22	Software/Database Implement PetPoint as the new shelter software and data base.	FY16	This software has been ordered and training of staff will begin January 2016.
23	Sharing Statistics With the new database, statistics will be readily available and will be posted to the website each month for transparency.	FY16	
24	Food Bank The City needs to partner with agencies such as Ben's Pet Pantry to make food available to those who need it.	FY16	In progress.
25	Enhance Foster Care Program Work to enhance the foster capabilities with our partners.	FY16	
26	Marketing Create a new name, logo, brand <i>etc.</i> in order to enhance the image of the Shelter.	FY16	
27	Advertising Invest money in billboards, TV and radio spots to raise public awareness.	FY17	Ads are very expensive so effort will be made to get as much in-kind as possible such as Channel 15.
28	Volunteers Create robust volunteer opportunities with streamlined application process.	FY16	A volunteer coordinator will be needed to manage this effort.

	Task Force Recommendations	Timeline	Notes
29	Nuisance Animals Develop educational materials on dealing with nuisance animals.	FY16	These materials can be used by 211, 311, field staff and shelter intake staff.
30	Return to Owner (RTO) Engage citizens and field staff in efforts to return found animals to their homes so that they never get to the shelter.	FY16	If the owner cannot be found we will accept the pet and continue to look for unification.
31	EP Veterinarian Medical Association (EPVMA) Continue to work with EPVMA on outreach and education about responsible pet ownership.	FY16	EPVMA has offered to pass out literature provided by the COEP.
32	Offsite Adoptions Offsite adoptions offer opportunities for partner organizations to enhance our community efforts.	Continuous	Currently we have one adoption van. Establish off-site, fixed locations which will be finalized in FY17.
33	Adoption Program Adoptions will be increased with the development of in-house adoption programs and by strengthening partner adoptions.	FY16	In-house adoptions began January 1, 2016.
34	TV Pet Adoption Spot Arrangements have been made for weekly spots on a local news station to spotlight shelter animals available for adoption.	FY16	Shelter animals' pictures and descriptions can be broadcast with information on how to adopt the featured pets on Channel 15 and other media outlets.
35	Implementation of Feral Cat Boxes A Best Practice feature is the use of Feral Cat Boxes.	FY16	The boxes provide added safety to animal handlers and volunteers as well as reducing stress.
36	Review and Amend Current Fee Structure	FY16	
37	Enforce Differential Licensing Provision	FY16	
38	Develop and Implement Standard Operating Procedures	FY16	
39	Waive Fees for Owners who agree to Spay or Neuter their pet.	FY17	To increase the number of altered pets, some assessed shelter fees would be waived if the owner agrees to have their pet altered.
40	Task Force → Implementation Team The Task Force respectfully requests additional involvement in order to carry out our mission of Shelter improvements beyond the research and planning phase.	FY16	The Task Force is well suited to assist shelter and animal control staff in the expedited implementation of the listed recommendations and changes.

Appendix B

Current Animal Services Division Organizational Chart

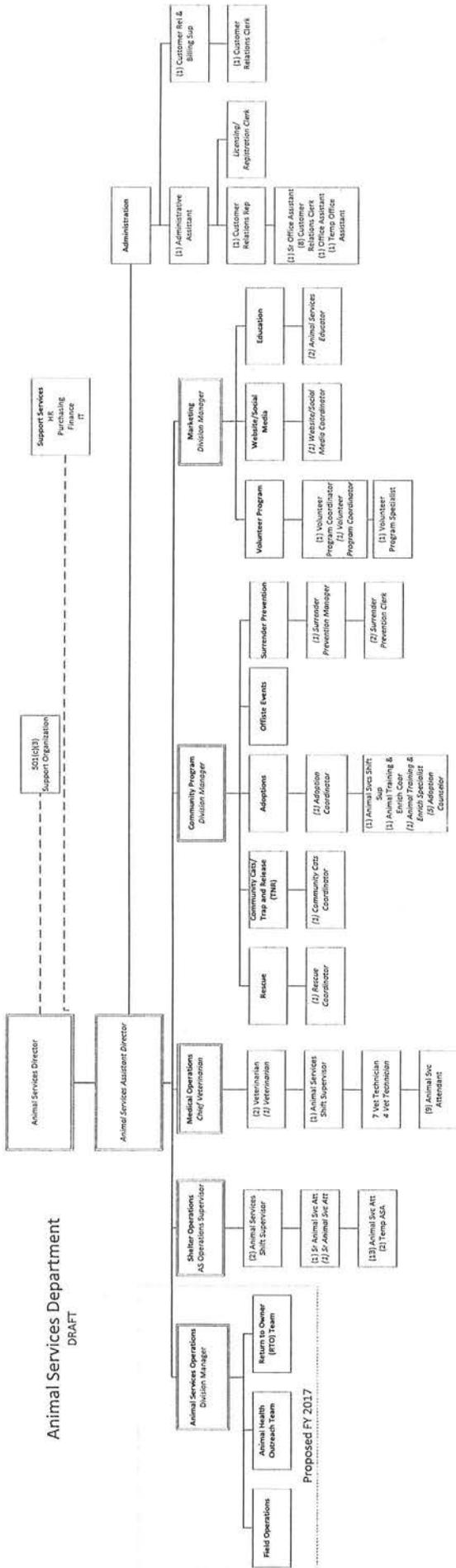
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
 ORGANIZATION CHART
 Current Structure
 As of 1/13/15



Appendix C

**Proposed El Paso Animal Services Department
Organizational Chart**

Animal Services Department DRAFT



PROPOSED FY 2017

Appendix D

Target Zero Report



Animal Services of El Paso, Texas Shelter Assessment

**Sara Pizano, MA, DVM, Program Director
Cameron Moore, Program Manager
October 2015**

INTRODUCTION

The Target Zero team was invited to the Animal Services (AS) of El Paso shelter between October 6 and 9, 2015 to complete an assessment. This report is a result of the on-site visit, observations at the shelter and interviews with staff, volunteers, non-profit organizations, one city council member and shelter leadership. Presentations were given to the City Manager's Task Force and a Town Hall meeting was attended by over (50) people on Tuesday, October 6, 2015. Target Zero welcomes the opportunity to teach proven strategies and the consultants appreciated the time and attention of meeting participants. AS is poised for dramatic lifesaving results once the strategies in this report are embraced and adopted.

TARGET ZERO ASSESSMENT REPORT

This report should be viewed not as an all-inclusive document but rather a framework for improvement. Recommendations are based on best practices by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), Alley Cat Allies, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), Best Friends Animal Society, the Million Cat Challenge and successful programs nationwide. References are available at the end of this document.

All recommendations are focused on the simultaneous goals of (1) decreasing shelter intake, (2) keeping shelter pets healthy, (3) decreasing length of stay to live outcome and (4) maintaining a 90%+ save rate. Strategic programs are based on the Target Zero pyramid approach and more information can be found at target-zero.org.

Figure 1: Target Zero Strategy Pyramid



ANIMAL SERVICES OF EL PASO

This report will focus on specific practices that must change in order to decrease intake and increase live release but there are many positive attributes that must be noted first:

- City Manager appointed Animal Services Task Force dedicated to make positive changes
- Motivated interim shelter director and enforcement director interested in implementing best practices
- Offsite spay/neuter clinic for the public (pending a veterinarian)
- Cat condos in adoption area with one cat (or multiple kittens) per two units
- Natural light in cat adoption room
- Ample storage space
- Many dog runs with guillotine doors
- Facility less than (15) years old with potential to retrofit
- Humane Society of El Paso on same campus willing to build on partnership
- Outdoor play yards for dogs
- Surgery suite with (4) surgery tables
- 311 city call takers for AS
- Licensing requirement for dogs and cats with potential to increase fee, establish differential for intact and sterilized pets and use revenue for income targeted spay/neuter program

LEADERSHIP~BUDGET

STATUS

There are no established Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in use but management meetings held on a regular basis. There appears to be a major disconnect with management, and staff does not appear to be held accountable when not performing. The annual budget for the shelter operation is \$4 million and additional \$3.4 million is allocated for animal control or \$7.4 million combined.

As part of the City Manager's Task Force, an interim director has been recently appointed to oversee the shelter and address complaints from the public. The Table of Organization includes many supervisory layers and the director position has (4) direct reports, (3) of whom are veterinarians along with (1) animal services manager. Staff in the same classification may have a different supervisor depending on their schedule.

During the consultation, the interim director was meeting with each staff person individually, a practice applauded by the consultants. The interim director asked each staff person their opinion regarding the challenges and potential solutions with the shelter operation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The development, implementation and updating of SOPs is crucial to the success of any organization. Staff must be well-trained in all best practice protocols and receipt of protocols and any training kept in each employee's file. Staff must be held accountable when not performing and the receipt with proof of training used as documentation that the management team communicated goals appropriately. **When staff is not held accountable in a consistent and fair way, it is not possible to build a strong, high performance team.** Leadership reports that new and promising employees have resigned because of this serious management issue. A review of accountability should be done by the human resource department so the management team is clear regarding SOPs, training and proper disciplinary documentation.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) recommends a combined annual animal control/shelter budget of \$7 per capita. For El Paso County, with 834,000 residents, that would amount to \$5.8 million or \$1.6 million under the combined current allocation.

Also, in comparison, animal services in Miami-Dade County Florida, with 2.4 million people, employed (24) Animal Control Officers (ACOs) in 2011, while El Paso employs (41) ACOs (including supervisors) with a population of 834,000. The City of El Paso offers (24) hour/(7) day a week non-emergency services to the public. A more fiscally responsible allocation of resources would include:

- Reserving evening and overnight hours for true emergencies such as police calls, confiscations, injured animals or bite cases
- Discontinuing the pickup of trapped cats unless injured or rabies suspects (see **Community Cat Diversion**, page 32) that would decrease calls by over 9,000 the first year
- Discontinuing the pickup service when an owner wishes to surrender their pet (see **Surrender Prevention**, page 26)
- Using several ACO positions to operate the Community Cat Diversion program
- Re-classifying or eliminating ACO positions when workload decreases with Community Cat Diversion
- Appealing to the City Council to utilize the cost savings from eliminated enforcement positions for life saving positions at animal services such as a Surrender Prevention coordinator that will decrease intake and therefore operational costs

One public shelter saving over 90% of incoming animals, Jacksonville Animal Care and Protective Services, operates under the recommended \$7 per capita because they have such strong partnerships with many non-profit organizations. Leadership is encouraged to build stronger partnerships in the non-profit sector with the goals of decreasing shelter intake and increasing live outcome to 90%+, as this will be fiscally beneficial as well.

The director of the shelter should:

- Have no more than (3) direct reports overseeing different sections of the operation. Having (3) veterinarians answer to the director is redundant.

- Streamline the Table of Organization so all shelter staff within the same location (shelter or spay/neuter clinic) in the same classification has one supervisor. Having multiple supervisors oversee staff in the same classification by definition leads to inconsistent management.
- Establish lead workers in each classification so there is a point person during each shift
- Be committed to the care, treatment and live release of all shelter animals with the goal of saving 90%+
- Create and implement effective SOPs with input from the staff
- Ensure the management team is holding staff accountable with regards to the established SOPs
- Host regular management meetings (weekly) and all staff meetings (monthly)
- Develop partnerships to decrease intake/euthanasia and increase live outcome
- Engage and encourage the community involvement by welcoming volunteers, reporting statistics on the website and alerting those surrendering in receiving to the risk of euthanasia
- Attend national conferences with as many key staff as possible such as the Humane Society of the United State EXPO and Best Friends Animal Society annual conference
- Maintain membership in the Association of Shelter Veterinarians and join the listserve for the Million Cat Challenge to learn about best practices around the country
- Apply to become a Best Friends Animal Society Network Partner

DATA ANALYSIS

STATUS

Staff reports that Chameleon shelter software was used in the past and that they found it user friendly. Currently the shelter uses software that was developed internally that does not have the capability to generate useful reports. Shelter statistics are often analyzed by hand, entered in an excel table, for a daily inventory, for example, then deleted from the computer the same day. The enforcement team does not enter information into the shelter software but leaves handwritten forms with the intake staff. These forms are often left in a pile on a desk in intake while the pet is left in a cage with no identification.

Surgery staff reports that updating information in the database after a pet is sterilized may take up to (4) hours a day. **There are no accurate reliable statistics available.**

At the time of the assessment, leadership was researching shelter software such as PetPoint and Chameleon.

Consultants were provided with the following statistics; however, they cannot be verified for accuracy.

Live Release of Dogs and Cats Versus Euthanasia Animal Services of El Paso

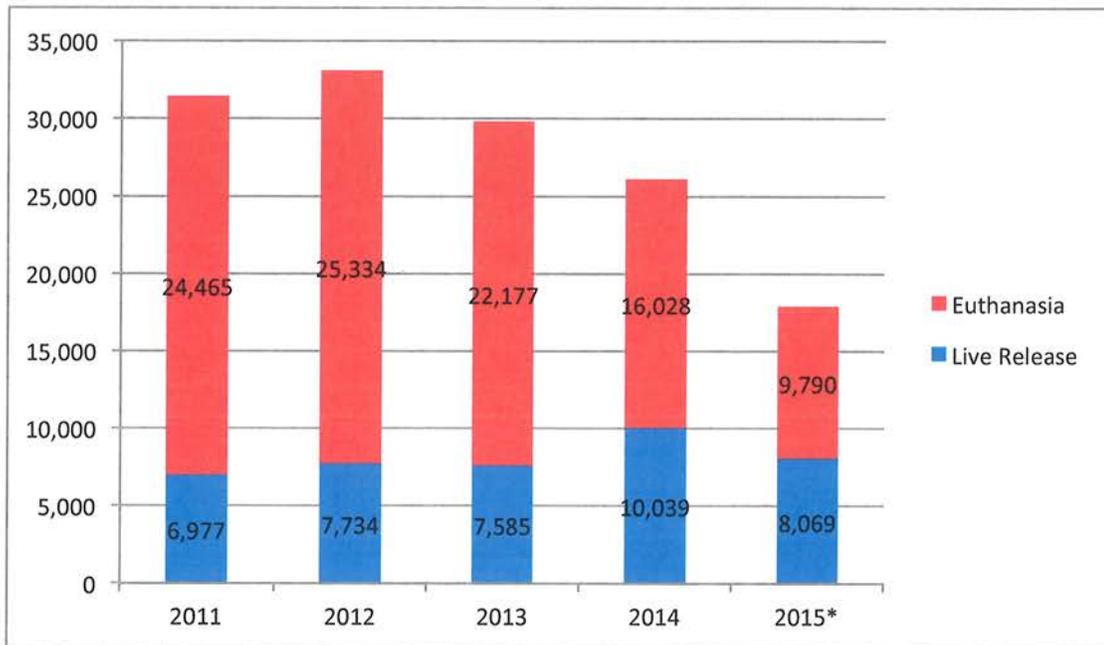


Figure 2: 2015 year to date statistics are through October 6, 2015.

Live Release of Cats Versus Euthanasia Animal Services of El Paso

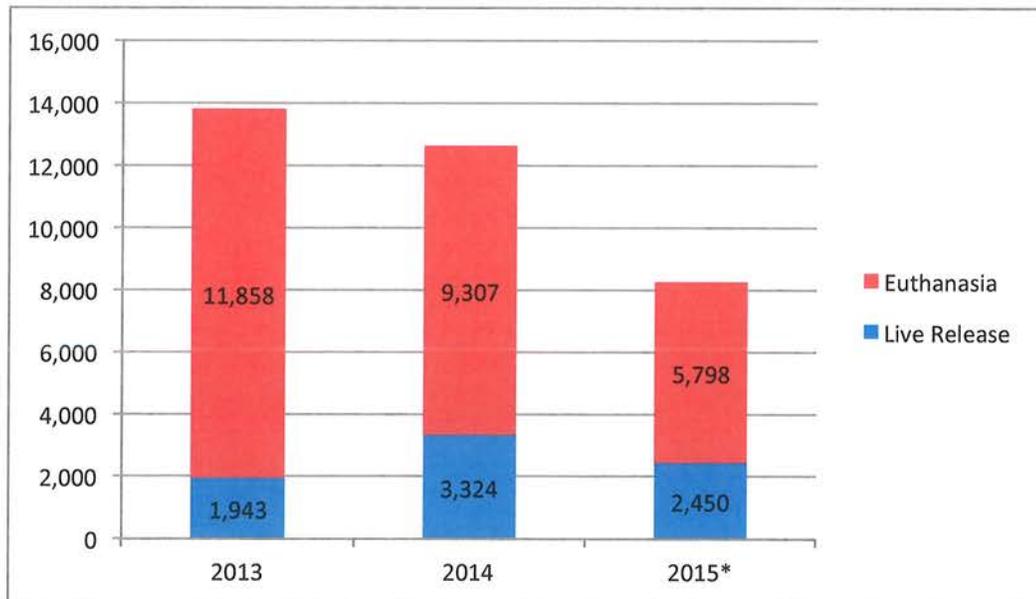


Figure 3: 2015 year to date statistics are through October 6, 2015.

Live Release of Dogs Versus Euthanasia Animal Services of El Paso

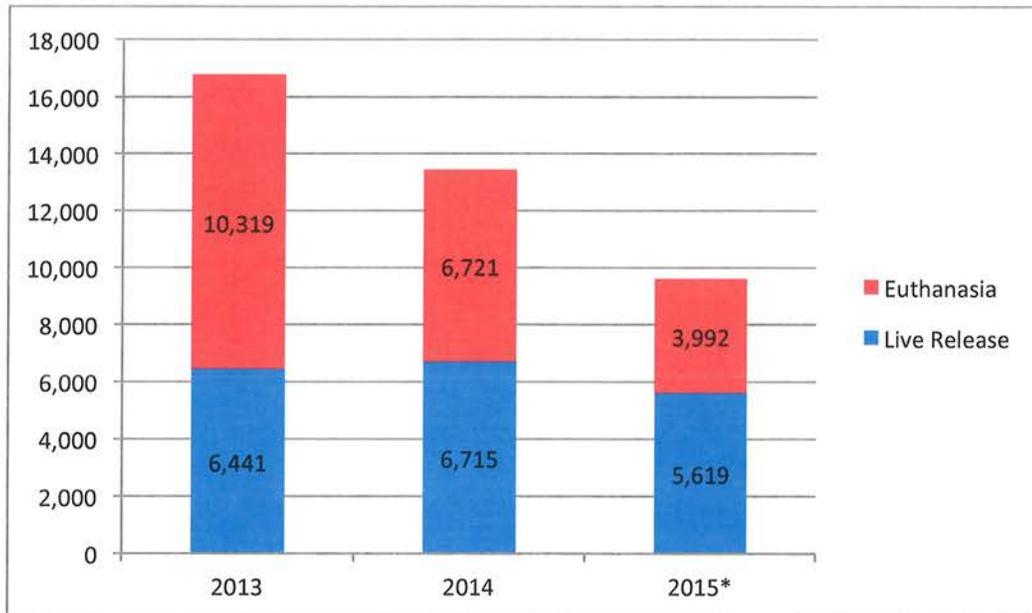


Figure 4: 2015 year to date statistics are through October 6, 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Data collection and analysis are essential management tools. Without accurate information regarding the intake specifics about a pet or their outcome, leadership cannot make fiscally or morally responsible decisions. Understanding how program decisions impact trends is integral in the quest to decrease shelter intake and increase live outcome. The lack of shelter software has created an insurmountable challenge/barrier to effective population management.

The same standard professional software should be attained for both the shelter and enforcement staff and all staff properly trained. Chameleon software, for example, allows for detailed management of information, useful reports and is highly user friendly. A scanner system is included that allows for information to be uploaded automatically using a bar code system on the cage and cage card. **Shelter software must be viewed as the language the shelter and enforcement staff uses to communicate and all information must be entered in real time.**

Crucial and basic data entry for each pet must include but is not limited to:

- Specific cage/run where the animal is placed that is updated if pet is moved during their stay
- Sterilization status ('F' for intact female, 'S' for sterilized female, 'M' for intact male and 'N' for

sterilized male)

- Intake status (stray/public, stray/field, owner surrender, court case, etc.)
- Any history from owner or Good Samaritan
- Any medical issues and/or treatment

For effective population management, it would be helpful for the rounds team to have a cart with a lap top computer (**Population Management**, page 21). This will provide a convenient way for those teams to check and update records during rounds. When not in use, the cart should be stowed in a secure location such as a locked office.

PUBLIC POLICY~ANIMAL CONTROL

STATUS~ORDINANCES

A \$10 license is required for each dog and cat and there is no differential if sterilized or intact. In the last fiscal year a reported 80,000 licenses were sold.

The City of El Paso Council has the power to update the local code but the County of El Paso must abide by Texas state law.

RECOMMENDATIONS~ORDINANCES

City leadership should consider increasing the license fee for dogs and cats but exempt ear tipped free roaming cats. A differential between intact and sterilized pets should be allocated to a fund for income-targeted spay/neuter (see **Targeted Spay/ Neuter**, page 27).

A thorough review of the El Paso city code should be done to ensure there are no barriers to live outcome and that the enforcement team can concentrate on true public safety issues.

STATUS~ANIMAL CONTROL

The Environmental Services Department oversees the enforcement director as well as the shelter director. The enforcement budget is \$3.4 m budget. There are (41) city ACOs including a supervisor who work (3) shifts, (24) hours a day, (7) days a week. Enforcement does not enter information into the shelter software and when an ACO leaves a pet at the shelter, they fill out a paper form for the intake staff. These forms are often left on the desk in intake with no identification on the pet or cage, with incomplete information and illegible handwriting. ACOs are equipped with lap tops, iPhones, and microchip scanners but they are not consistently utilized for reuniting pets in the field.

The City of El Paso ACOs serves a total of (6) municipalities admitting approximately 83% of the

overall enforcement intake. El Paso County ACOs, Ft. Bliss and (6) municipalities admit the balance (17%) of the pets. ACOs are not vaccinating pets on intake and pick up owner-surrendered pets for a fee of \$55. If the owner requests euthanasia they are charged an additional \$25. ACOs may give an owner the option of a (10) day quarantine at the shelter even if the pet in question is up to date with their rabies vaccination.

Between September 1, 2014 and August 31, 2015, ACOs admitted 9,248 cats, the vast majority of whom were healthy. (6) stray pets and (1) owner-surrender were admitted during the overnight shift on one night during the assessment.

Several ACOs were observed dragging dogs with catchpoles in the sally port and netted friendly cats with no signs of aggression. Many pets, both dogs and cats, were labeled 'aggressive' but were easily handled by the consultants.

RECOMMENDATIONS~ANIMAL CONTROL

When enforcement and shelter staff is under different leadership, it is **imperative** that the directors of each section work closely together towards the common goals of decreasing intake and achieving a 90% live outcome (return to owner, adoption, rescue, foster or transfer). The protocols for the ACOs **directly** affect the shelter operations and can create or remove barriers to life saving.

Sharing the same software is the basic foundation for creating the most efficient team and how both teams should communicate in real time. Once leadership implements the new software system, ACOs should be entering information in the field about the lost pet and taking their picture. Information is then uploaded within an hour so that owners can search for their lost pet online right away. At the shelter, ACOs should be vaccinating dogs/puppies on intake with Bordetella and booster vaccinations, placing an identification band on their neck, printing a cage card and updating their location in the software.

Leadership must pay attention to the hours dedicated to intake vs outcome of shelter pets. The number of hours committed to bringing animals into the shelter by the ACOs and public currently exceeds the number of live outcome hours for return to owner, adoption, rescue, transfer or foster. Live outcome hours should exceed intake hours with consideration for the ACO. ACOs are in service (24) hours a day and answering non-emergency calls overnight. A more practical schedule would include day time hours and emergency calls only after 7pm. Examples of emergencies would be police calls, injured animals or confiscations. In comparison, Miami-Dade Animal Services in Florida, with a population of 2.4 million people employed (24) ACOs in 2011. The City of El Paso alone with 833,000 people has (41) ACOs and those positions/budget allocations should be used in much more productive ways.

ACOs should make every effort to reunite dogs/puppies in the field by checking for any identification. If a microchip is found, ACOs should search for the owner via

petmicrochiplookup.org and talk to residents in the area where the dog was found in an effort to prevent admission to the shelter. ACOs should be focused on public safety and should discontinue the pickup of owner-surrendered pets. Pet owners must be responsible for placing their own pets and use the shelter as a last resort. Providing assistance for owners to place their pets outside the shelter system is crucial (see **Surrender Prevention**, page 26).

ACOs should discontinue the practice of picking up cats, unless they are injured or rabies suspects, for many reasons (see **Community Cat Diversion**, page 32). This will decrease the current workload by at least 40%. There would then be opportunities to use ACO positions for life saving programs such as community outreach/surrender prevention or as Community Cat Liaisons.

All shelter and enforcement staff are in need of humane animal handling of dogs and cats with the following in mind:

- Friendly cats should be transported in carriers and never placed in a net
- Until the Community Cat Diversion program is implemented, any feral cats held at the shelter should be provided with a feral cat den and only transported in the den.



Figure 5: Photo of a Feral Cat Den

- It is **never** appropriate to attempt to handle a feral cat unless the cat is anesthetized
- The vast majority of the pets in the shelter labeled 'aggressive' are acting out of fear because of the way they are being mishandled

SHELTER POLICY/ENVIRONMENT

STATUS - CATS

All cats in the shelter are transported in nets, regardless of their temperament and housed with dogs in multiple areas of the shelter for prolonged periods of time. Most cats are housed in stainless steel cages below the required standard square footage of (11) square feet per cat and multiple cats from varying sources may be placed in one cage. Litter and food/water bowls are placed immediately next to one another and one nursing mother in the stray hold room had defecated in her food bowl due to the proximity. On the first afternoon of the assessment, one cat room housed (54) cats and more than a dozen had no food, water and/or litter box. When questioned, leadership was unaware whom was responsible for that area.

The adoption room is the only area for cats with appropriate housing and this room is the only cat

holding area with natural light, a highly recommended feature. One cat or sibling kittens are housed between (2) condos leaving ample space for normal behavior. There was no other evidence throughout the shelter of cat enrichment such as blankets, toys, items to scratch, etc.

Cats are not vaccinated on intake and fed dry food once daily. Several staff observed was unable to differentiate between a good-tempered cat and a feral cat and appeared afraid of getting bit or scratched. One ACO commented, 'You can't trust cats' while netting a friendly cat. Staff reported that 'temperament' tests were done on cats but it was unclear who was qualified to make behavior determinations. This staff person said if a cat came to the front of the cage and rubbed his head on the cage door to be pet, he was deemed 'friendly'. If not, he was deemed 'feral'. Volunteers or staff indicate 'Friendly' on a cat's cage card to alert other staff.

Animal Services received a grant from PetSmart Charities for the sterilization of cats from several zip codes. Cats enter the shelter from those zip codes for spay/neuter and release even though in excess of 76% of all cats entering the shelter are euthanized. If there is room in the surgery schedule, cats from those zip codes are sterilized and then may be placed in small carriers or cages until they can be released, which may be several days later. While cats may receive food and water while in the carrier, they do not have room for a litter box or space to lay down in a clean area. Cats scheduled for release are kept in a small 10 x10 room where dogs are also groomed and dried with blow dryers. If there is no room in the surgery schedule then the cats from those zip codes are euthanized.

Staff reported that all cats are netted so their cages can be cleaned but cats were also found in cages filthy from the previous resident, which may have been a dog.

There is a very friendly shelter cat that roams through the shelter. During the assessment, this cat became curious about another cat in a net being carried into a noisy dog kennel where it was to be housed. The cat in the net became highly defensive and almost escaped from the net in the hallway.

RECOMMENDATIONS~CATS

All aspects of cat housing and handling at El Paso Animal Services is considered highly inhumane, unacceptable and causes excessive, unnecessary stress to all shelter cats. In addition, these practices are putting the staff at high risk of injury. The following practices are egregious and must be discontinued immediately:

1. ***Cohousing cats with dogs:*** The shelter setting, even in a state of the art shelter, is stressful for cats. However, shelter leadership is obligated to provide the best possible environment that minimizes noise. Housing dogs (considered a predator) and cats (considered prey by dogs) is unacceptable practice that is terrifying for cats. Even a well natured cat will become so fearful that they act out with aggression.

Cats should **not** be housed in:

- The sally port

- The (2) dog quarantine areas
- The same room where dogs are groomed

Cats should only be housed in:

- What is now labeled 'exotics' and should be renamed 'stray hold 1'
 - Placed in the newly created community cat room away from dogs (currently used for storage) near the outside exit door so cats can be transported for surgery and release easily
 - The feline stray room that should be renamed 'stray hold 2'
 - Adoptions
 - Surgery – cats being prepped and/or recovering from surgery should be kept in a bank of cages in the hallway away from the dogs waiting for surgery
2. **Netting feral cats:** For the safety of the staff, feral cats should never be handled unless under anesthesia. When the Community Cat Diversion program is implemented, feral cats in traps should stay in their traps or humanely transferred to a shelter trap by placing the traps end to end. Consultants recommend using the current storage room to place community cats the night before and after surgery. Traps should be mounted on PVC pipes/plastic trays so urine and feces falls through the trap and cats can be fed and given water in the trap.



Figure 6: Photo of a community cat being housed in a humane trap, elevated on PVC risers, food/water provided in trap.

Until the Community Cat Diversion program is implemented, feral dens should be used in each cage with (1) cat per cage. Consultants assisted the interim director with the purchase of feral dens during the assessment. This practice is the safest and least stressful for staff and the cats.

3. **Netting all friendly cats**: It is extremely stressful for a cat to be caught in a net and several staff was observed transporting cats with their tails caught between the metal frame. Friendly cats should be picked up and placed in carriers when transporting them around the shelter as this is the safest for the staff and cats.
4. **Housing one adult cat in a 2'x2' stainless steel cage**: Stainless steel cages are under the minimum required square footage for humane housing for one cat. There is no space to separate food/water bowls from the litter box and the best the staff could do is place those items diagonal from each other but instead, food bowls in all cages were immediately next to the litter boxes. Poor cat housing and husbandry has a substantial negative impact on health and quality of life. Cats stressed in a shelter due to inappropriate housing have higher rates of upper respiratory infections and lower adoption rates. **A minimum of (11) square feet per cat is recommended for shelter housing, with a separation of litter and food/water bowls.**
5. **Housing more than one adult cat who are strangers to each other in a 2'x2' cage**: Housing one cat in a cage less than (11) square feet per cat is considered inhumane therefore adding another unknown cat to the already insufficient space is egregious. This practice provides 'the worst case scenario' for a shelter cat that automatically puts the cat on the defensive in an exceptionally tiny space with no place to escape. This practice is not only dangerous to the cats mentally and physically but highly dangerous for the staff. It is impossible for one person to remove a fractious cat from a small space while ensuring the second cat does not escape.

Best practice recommendations include keeping cats in their cages and spot cleaning. This process is the safest and produces the least amount of stress for staff and cats when cats are housed in (2) compartment condos with portholes that can be open/closed. The cat can be sequestered on one side of the condo while the other side is spot cleaned. The cat should have a new (disposable) litter box and clean water/food bowls kept on opposite sides of the porthole. Any items not soiled, such as towels, should be kept with the same cat. There is no reason to do a deep cleaning while the cat is residing in the enclosure during their stay in the shelter and introducing new daily smells, or removing cats from their cages is highly stressful. The enclosure should be completely disinfected when the cat leaves permanently.

Proper housing and enrichment helps reduce stress and the spread of infectious disease and improves the overall welfare of the cats in shelter care. In addition, cats are comforted by hiding or perching so shelving is another way to provide an option for them and increase square footage.

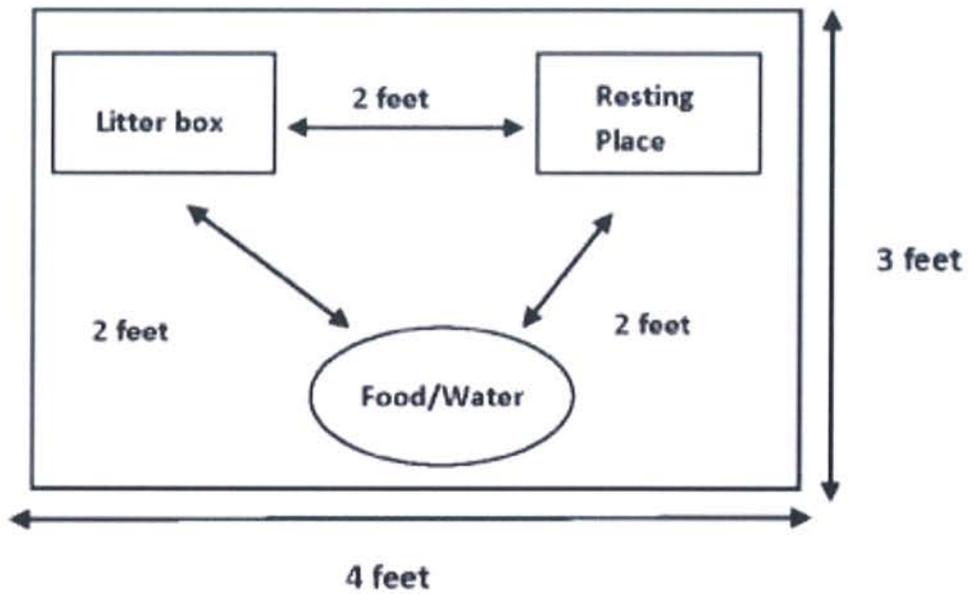


Figure 7: Minimum requirement for shelter cat housing



Figure 8: If cat cages do not meet the minimum standards, a porthole could be cut between two cages and a shelf placed on one side to increase square footage. The litter box should be placed on one side and food/water on the other.



Figure 9: Pre-fabricated cat portal with attached closure.

All cats and kittens over (6) weeks should receive an FVRCP vaccine on intake and information recorded in the computer software. Due to the high number of shelter cats, excessive length of stay and inhumane housing, there is a high incidence of upper respiratory infections (URIs). URIs are a constant challenge for all shelters, however, with proper management, the deleterious effects can be mitigated. The implementation of the **Community Cat Diversion** program, (page 32), will drastically and immediately decrease the overall number of cats entering the shelter population by over 84%. Retrofitting the current cages with portholes to provide the appropriate space for each cat will also help. However, the most essential focus is to decrease exposure with the shortest length of stay to live outcome whether it be adoption, rescue, foster or transfer.

Proper nutrition is essential to keep shelter cats healthy. All cats should have age appropriate dry food in their cages at all times, as cats prefer to graze, and fed age appropriate canned food twice daily.

Leadership should revisit the terms of the current PetSmart Charities grant. Over 76% of the incoming cats entering the shelter are euthanized, yet cats are actively being trapped and brought to the shelter from the zip codes stipulated in the grant. Less cats would be euthanized if the grant funding could be used for cats already being admitted from those zip codes as opposed to bringing more cats intentionally into the shelter from those areas, and for those eligible to be released back to their outside home. **Releasing cats after sterilization to the location where they were found and have a known food source should be considered a 'return to outside home'.**

There should be no long-term dog or cat residents living at the shelter. El Paso Animal Services is a very large shelter with over 25,000 animals a year entering the facility. All staff must be focused on decreasing intake and increasing live outcome and the shelter is a highly stressful place for cats without inflaming an already stressful situation.

SHELTER POLICY/ENVIRONMENT

STATUS - DOGS

Dogs are housed in the sally port often in inappropriately sized cages with larger dogs in cages too small for them to stand or lie down. The staff reports overcrowding in the shelter as the reason even highly adoptable dogs may stay in the sally port for the duration of their stray hold and subsequently be euthanized for space. Several staff and ACOs were observed dragging dogs with leashes or catch poles and dogs considered medium to large were sometimes housed in top cages. Several catch poles throughout the shelter were not working properly.

There is a tank in the sally port where dogs are dipped presumably for fleas and ticks but leadership could not report how often the water was changed or what products were used in the water.



Dogs are fed dry food once daily in the morning and the food bowl removed within an hour whether or not the dog ate. Small dogs are kept in cages while larger dogs are kept in runs with guillotine doors, however, due to the high volume of dogs in the shelter, the doors are kept closed. Dogs, like cats, may be housed in small cages or single runs with other dogs they do not know due to lack of space.

During observation of the cleaning process, a kennel staff person appeared apprehensive about handling a 40# dog that ultimately jumped from the top cage onto the floor wet with disinfectant and soap. The staff person then scruffed the dog and lifted him by the neck to return him to his top cage.

Kennel staff wear jump suits to protect their clothing that are removed and laundered at the shelter when the morning cleaning is done. This is an excellent way to decrease transmission of infectious disease.

The cleaning process was very noisy with the slamming of cage doors, grates thrown to the floor and top cages were hosed with water and scrubbed with disinfectant while dogs were housed on the bottom cages. Water and disinfectant then dripped into their enclosure and the cage card holder was often soiled and wet. After rinsing disinfectant with water, staff did not always squeegee and did not dry the cage, run or grate and the dog returned to a wet enclosure. Most runs had slightly elevated boards that served as beds for dogs.

A different disinfectant is used each day and there is no standard for the dilution of concentrated products or attention paid to mandatory contact time. Staff observed during the assessment added random amounts disinfectant to a bucket of water. In one quarantine room, a staff person moved each dog into the adjacent run via a guillotine door then cleaned the empty run. Dogs would then be moved back through a run that was just cleaned but that had just housed another dog, thus defeating the purpose of attempting to disinfect runs.

In other areas, with no empty runs, staff had no other options but to tether dogs in groups or in front of other dogs, again, only increasing the chance for cross contamination of pathogens.



During morning cleaning. The black dog (tethered) was very frightened and the St. Bernard barked directly at him during the entire cleaning process, which made the black dog even more panicked.

In buildings A through C dogs are housed in single runs with doors covered with a solid partition. The public is only allowed to walk around the outside of the buildings and view each dog through a window.



Figure 12: Dog looking out from C run

Dogs are provided with no enrichment such as towels, soft beds or toys. Outside play yards were not being used at the time of the assessment since they were partially flooded and staff report there are too many dogs to take outside.

The drainage in quarantine A and B is poor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All issues related to shelter dogs are a result of the absence of a **Surrender Prevention** program, (page 26), **Income Targeted Spay/Neuter** (page 27), increased length of stay due to the lack of **Population Management**, (page 21), and self-imposed barriers to **Live Outcome** (page 36). Proper design for dog

kennels includes a guillotine door so that staff is able to close the dog on one side while they clean the other and vice versa but this feature is not currently utilized because of the high number of shelter dogs. Staff is set up for failure and has no good option during the cleaning process. When the Target Zero strategies are implemented, intake decreased and live outcome increased, staff should have room to house one dog per (2) runs with the guillotine door kept open at all times except during the cleaning process.

Consideration should be made to wall off a part of the sally port and install prefabricated and slightly elevated dog runs with guillotine doors. Even though the sally port should only be used for short term housing (less than 1 day), dogs require a space where they can stand and posture normally.

Many dogs enter the shelter dirty and/or with fleas and ticks. Volunteers should be enlisted to bathe each dog soon after intake. There are a plethora of topical flea and tick products on the market today that should be part of the preventive care provided on intake by staff. Dip tanks are unsanitary, transmit more disease than they prevent and are not recommended.

All shelter and enforcement staff must be trained in humane animal techniques as it is unacceptable to drag dogs by their necks. Staff, however, do need appropriate safety tools so all equipment including catch poles should be either fixed or replaced if not working properly. Leadership should consider purchasing several large cages on wheels to transport large aggressive/fearful dogs that will not walk on leashes.

Daily Rounds should be implemented as soon as possible (see **Population Management**, page 21). Fast track highly adoptable animals from the sally port should be placed in the adoption area or sent to rescue to avoid euthanasia. Proper nutrition in the shelter setting is crucial. Dogs should be fed age appropriate food twice daily with a mixture of dry and canned. Those who are malnourished should be fed a third meal of canned food as well.

Leadership should implement strict cleaning protocols as per the Association of Shelter Veterinarians *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters*. It is not necessary to change disinfectants daily as this will make it more challenging for staff to use products correctly. Using a different disinfectant once a week is sufficient to address a broad spectrum of pathogens. An example would be to use Accel (accelerated hydrogen peroxide) (6) days a week and 10% bleach (1) day a week. Sanitation highlights include:

- Cleaning healthy animals first and animals with signs of infectious diseases last
- Be sensitive to the noise created by the cleaning process and minimize when able
- Automating dilution of disinfectants, training staff regarding proper order and contact time:
 - Remove all physical items from the kennel such as feces
 - Remove dog from kennel
 - Clean all surfaces with soap then rinse with water
 - Apply disinfectant and allow for proper contact time
 - Rinse with water
 - Squeegee excess water

- Use towel to dry all surfaces if needed
- Do not allow dogs to wait or walk in soap/disinfectant or be placed back in a wet run

The drainage throughout the shelter should be checked and in quarantine A and B in particular.

Staying in a shelter is very stressful for dogs. The more positive interactions the dogs have with staff, volunteers and the public, the more likely their chance of live outcome. Shelter staff, intentionally or unintentionally pose the greatest risk for pathogen transmission when compared to the public. Signs with positive sentiments such as *'Please pet our pets but use this hand sanitizer between each one!'* will ensure pets are interacting with the public and the disease transmission risk is kept to a minimum. Enrichment in a shelter setting includes:

- Comfortable beds such as Kuranda beds as opposed to laying on a raised, hard surface
- A towel or blanket on the Kuranda bed
- Physical interaction with the staff, volunteers and public
- Time to run and play in the outside areas
- Interactive toys (when there is one dog per run to avoid fighting) such as Kongs filled with peanut butter and frozen for each dog at night

AstroTurf and drainage should be installed in the outside play areas that can be disinfected. Keeping these areas with or without grass decreases their usability when it rains and will harbor intestinal parasites and deadly viruses.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

STATUS

While AS does host a Shelter Volunteer orientation, staff reports that it can take up to (6) months for those interested in helping to get approved. Staff perceive this as a barrier as there are many people who would like to help but who are waiting an excessive amount of time and become volunteers elsewhere.

RECOMMENDATIONS

AS is fortunate to have many interested supporters wanting to help at the shelter. **Every effort should be made to create a streamlined approval process, training program and make volunteers feel like an appreciated, welcomed, informed part of the shelter team.** Grant funding for volunteer programs is available but tracking of hours is mandatory. This is also important to analyze trends for growing the volunteer program. Volunteers should be asked to clock in and out so hours are calculated automatically.

A structured volunteer program will make the greatest and most positive impact for the shelter pets and leadership is encouraged to designate a full time staff person to oversee this program. Job descriptions should be created and the following categories considered, although volunteers should be encouraged to be cross-trained in any other areas they may be interested in such as:

- Dog adoptions
- Cat adoptions
- Offsite adoptions
- Community Cat Diversion program
- Behavior training (dogs)
- Bathing (dogs)
- Clinic/surgery

A volunteer coordinator would:

- Keep track of all volunteer activities
- Utilize a scheduling software so volunteers could easily see when/where they are needed most
- Ensure volunteers are kept informed of all changes, updates, successes and challenges
- Serve as the volunteer supervisor and point person for volunteers
- Research/consider volunteer software such as Volgistics, to manage the program and track hours

POPULATION MANAGEMENT

STATUS

All shelter activity to include surrender from the public and any live outcome is done in the same lobby space. There is no Daily Rounds or population management done. Cats are housed with dogs throughout the shelter but during the assessment, the interim director addressed this inhumane practice.

In two rooms labeled 'Quarantine', dogs with signs of infectious diseases were housed with those who had injuries, non-contagious medical problems or were physically healthy but part of a confiscation case.

Leadership reported that all dogs and puppies are vaccinated on intake by shelter staff with a Distemper/Parvo virus vaccine, however, a spot check showed that a dog with a non-infectious medical condition housed in the sick quarantine room (AAAA15-22639) had not received any vaccines since his arrival on 10/5/15). Deworming is not done on intake, but is performed during the dog's stray hold period. The kennel cough vaccine is not given on intake. Cats are not vaccinated on intake and only if they are moved to the adoption area after the stray hold. ACOs did not vaccinate any animals on intake.

The shelter accepts species other than dogs and cats even if they are not part of a confiscation, such as ferrets, ducks and other wildlife. Two ducks were housed in a quarantine room with dogs but with no

food or water. When questioning leadership regarding the food, it was unclear whether or not the ducks would be fed. A ferret was housed in a cage in the cat adoption area.

A kennel supervisor does inventory each morning to ensure all animals are accounted for, an excellent and recommended practice. The kennel supervisor then manually enters the number of animals in each area into a chart. The chart is then deleted from computer and the paper copy kept in a file. The same kennel supervisor makes the euthanasia list each day depending on the length of stay, physical condition of the pet and space.

Cage cards were missing from many cages throughout the shelter during the assessment and some pets had orange neckbands signifying they were 'adopted', white if they were considered 'adoptable' and yellow if they were 'on hold'. On one day of the assessment in Building B, (9) dogs had collars and (23) did not.

There are (3) buildings separate from the main shelter building for dog housing in runs or cages. One building is designated for males only, one for males and females that have microchips, and the last for a mixture of female dogs of all sizes in runs and small dogs and puppies in cages. The public can view all dogs in those (3) buildings that may include dogs labeled 'aggressive'. In one building there was a sign about the pet's personality was found on the inside cage door, however, the public was not allowed inside the buildings so would not have an opportunity to see the sign.

Employees may bring their pets to work and during the assessment there were (3) altercations with a free roaming dog and cat. On (2) occasions the free roaming dog attempted to bite a shelter dog in the hallway in transit to a medical exam and on (1) occasion, the free roaming cat was too close to a cat in a net being transported into a quarantine room with barking dogs. The cat in the net nearly escaped and would have put the staff and shelter cat in physical danger.

Due to the high adoption fees, there is an increased length of stay in the adoption areas and high euthanasia rates of adoptable pets from holding areas.

RECOMMENDATION

An open admission shelter serves a variety of conflicting purposes. Historically, the public has been trained to bring stray animals or animals they can no longer keep to a shelter. For many people, this is a devastating decision and for others one that is handled with great apathy. **With either scenario, the area of intake is a highly emotional one and warrants a separate entrance and space for staff/volunteers to have a Surrender Prevention discussion (page 26) or learn as much as possible about the incoming pet in order to make the best possible placement.** Leadership should consider retrofitting the front office volunteer space next to the lobby so these programs are kept separate.

In general, shelter software should be viewed as the vehicle for staff to communicate in real time. For appropriate Population Management, all information regarding a pet should be entered **in real time** including but not limited to:

- Intake categories that automatically generated 'available' date:
 - Stray from Good Samaritan with specific location found
 - Stray from the field with specific location found
 - Owner surrender with owner information
 - Confiscation/court case
- Basic information
 - Species/breed
 - Estimated age
 - 'F' for intact female, 'S' for spayed female
 - 'M' for intact male, 'N' for neutered male
- Location in shelter
- Medical record
 - Vaccinations on intake (Distemper/Parvo and Kennel Cough for canines FVRCP for felines)
 - Dewormer
 - Any medical issues, exam notes, treatment
 - Once organized, can discontinue using paper and scanning into Chameleon
- Outcome
 - New owner information/adoption
 - Foster volunteer information if foster
 - Rescue group information if rescue
 - Shelter name if transfer
 - Euthanasia including reason and type/amount of drugs administered

As discussed in **Shelter Policy/Environment~Cats**, page 10, cats must not be housed with dogs. For the same reasons, wildlife such as ducks/birds/ferrets, etc., is considered prey and dogs/cats considered predators. Leadership should consider not accepting any species other than canines or felines unless part of a confiscation case. In the event that another species must be held until there is resolution of such case, an organization specializing in the care and treatment of the species in question should be engaged.

Pets showing signs of infectious, contagious diseases must be kept separated from pets with no such signs. Housing these pets with those that are part of a confiscation hold is irresponsible and exposes them to contagious diseases. Likewise, injured or pets suffering from non-contagious medical conditions are already under a great deal of physical stress, so housing them with pets already showing signs of infectious disease only increases their likelihood of contracting that disease.

Vaccinating every pet (canine and feline) on intake over (6) weeks old, administering dewormer and flea/tick control is considered basic and best practice. Leadership must develop a 'needs preventive care' report so each day supervisors have the tool to follow up on any pets still in need of treatment.

AS is responsible for public safety and the care/tracking of rabies suspects, court cases, bite and dangerous dog cases in addition to the ethical responsibility of caring for stray and owner surrendered

pets. All shelter pets should have a cage card and an identification collar. Leadership should make every effort to streamline the entire operation. Blue neckbands should be used for males and red for females (tabband.com). The status of each pet can change throughout their stay so keeping the collar of neckbands current is simply an unnecessary task that only adds to the workload and is unlikely to remain accurate. **The status of each pet must be kept current in real time in the shelter software to achieve the quickest live outcome.**

Also, in an effort to improve the flow of pets through the shelter to live outcome, separating male and female dogs in different buildings not only limits valuable space in which they may be viewed by the public but serves no purpose. Intact adult male and female dogs should be kept in separate runs but it is not necessary to separate them in different buildings. The exception would be sterilized dogs from the same family that are already bonded.

Barriers on the cage doors on the inside hallway of the dog runs in Buildings A through C (and throughout the shelter) should be replaced with chain link and the public should be allowed to interact with dogs from the inside hallway. Aggressive dogs, court cases or those with zoonotic diseases should not be kept in areas where the public has access.



Figure 13: Barrier on cage door in dog run

The length of stay in adoptions will be drastically decreased if the open adoption philosophy is embraced (see **Adoptions**, page 37). Staff would then have an opportunity to move animals through to live outcome from the sally port.

Daily Rounds is absolutely essential for every animal shelter. Initially, this task seems overwhelming, time consuming and unattainable but as the AS staff makes progress with surrender prevention, community cat diversion and thus decreasing intake along with more effective live outcome programs, rounds will take no longer than 45 minutes. A cart with a laptop will help this team work more efficiently as information/notes can be updated in shelter software in real time.

The Daily Rounds team should include representation from:

- A veterinarian
- Kennel Supervisor
- Clinic Supervisor
- Foster/Rescue

This team should do cage checks and ask the following questions for each pet in the shelter:

- Are you where you are supposed to be?
- Do you need anything today such as medications, a bed or identification collar?
- Do you need something scheduled such as a spay/neuter surgery?
- Do we need to follow up with anyone on your behalf such as a rescue or foster volunteer that was scheduled to transfer you already?
- Have you been here longer than a week? Do we need to highlight you as Pet of the Week or on social media?
- Do you need any special attention from any of us?
- Are you a foster candidate? Have we alerted our foster volunteers that you are here?
- Is your information in Chameleon accurate? Does your status need to be changed in your Chameleon record?
- Are you highly adoptable or most likely to be transferred by a rescue group? Have we already alerted the rescue groups that you are here? (If so, this pet should be 'Fast Tracked' and sterilized so they are ready for live outcome as soon as they have a commitment)

One team member should be responsible for taking notes on an excel sheet during rounds and ensuring tasks are completed by the end of the day. This document should list the animal identification/name/location, task assigned to a specific staff person and box for follow up. The process of rounds should be strictly to identify issues that need to be resolved, it is not the time to solve each issue. For example, if a pet is not in their assigned enclosure, the task of determining the outcome of that pet should be assigned to a staff person for follow up after rounds. Anything simple and quick that can be resolved during rounds should be done in real time and if need be, staff held accountable at a later time.

The main goal of Daily Rounds is to ensure that each pet has the shortest length of stay to live outcome such as return to owner, adoption, rescue, foster or transfer. If a pet, however, is in need of humane euthanasia for severe aggression and/or advanced medical issues, the rounds team can discuss that

decision together. The euthanasia protocol must include that the technician read all notes in the shelter software before injecting the euthanasia solution to avoid any irreversible errors. The process by which controlled drugs enter the shelter and are tracked must be reviewed as consultants did not have time during the assessment period.

Staff and volunteers should not be permitted to bring their pets to the shelter for any reason and no pets should live at the shelter long term.

SURRENDER PREVENTION

STATUS

There is currently no surrender prevention program at AS but the HS does field some calls and attempts to intervene. No statistics are tracked regarding intervention success but the HS reported that some local animal welfare groups did not want to be listed on a resource page since they are already overwhelmed with work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We now know that there are many simple (and free) strategies that can decrease intake. This proactive measure to decrease intake is not only a cost savings with regards to animal care days but has a far greater impact on lifesaving measures than any reactive program. **A recent Maddie's Fund survey revealed that public shelters need the most help but are the least likely to ask. This same survey showed that Good Samaritans are most likely to help foster pets they found when they are provided with free supplies such as formula, food, litter, preventive care and spay/neuter services.**

Taking the time to assist pet owners who truly desire to keep their pets, who need help placing their pets or Good Samaritans who can potentially foster, pays dividends for the entire shelter operation. Leadership is strongly encouraged to partner with the HS to develop a joint Surrender Prevention program. Part of this program should include immediate admission to the HS for fast track, highly adoptable pets. **This process will be most impactful if the HS embraces an open adoption philosophy and lowers their adoption fees permanently below \$35. This will decrease the length of stay for both organizations (see Adoptions, page 37).**

Historically, open admission shelters have not placed any boundaries on owners surrendering their pets or Good Samaritans who found stray pets. Attention must be paid to creating hours of operation that support live outcome. **Live outcome hours for owners to reclaim their pets, adoption, rescue or foster volunteers should exceed intake hours for the public and animal control.** ACOs must discontinue the practice of picking up owner-surrendered pets in the field and trapped cats (unless injured or rabies suspects). Hours for owner surrenders should be limited to, for example, (2) days a week in (4) hour blocks and must be by appointment only. Staff making appointments should take that opportunity to

intervene, assist and potentially keep the pet out of the shelter system at that time. When the shelter puts limits on surrendering pets, owners often find alternative life saving solutions.

The Surrender Prevention team should attempt to:

- Develop and advertise helpful websites
- Host a community hotline operated by volunteers as a call back service to assist pet owners
- Educate pet owners regarding the risk of infectious disease and euthanasia when pets are admitted to AS to discourage surrender
- Ensure the pet owners are aware of the low cost medical/spay/neuter opportunities in the community
- Attempt to connect pet owners with needed services such as behavior trainers and low cost veterinary care, crisis foster care and/or food bank through in-kind donations or services through a non-profit partner
- Assist pet owners who cannot keep their pets, place them within community networks to avoid surrender to the shelter
- Ask Good Samaritans to foster litters of puppies or kittens they found and provide free care kits that include instructions on care and follow up for spay/neuter and placement outside the shelter system
- Ask Good Samaritans to foster stray dogs that are still posted on the shelter website and whose pictures are prominently displayed in the lobby in hopes of a reunification

The team should understand that any diversion percentage is a positive and not to expect 100% success with each pet owner or Good Samaritan. The Target Zero team considers a 30% diversion successful. It is crucial that statistics be tracked regarding number of hotline calls, website visits, number of pets diverted and what help was recommended along with dates of any new services provided. These numbers should be analyzed along with the overall shelter intake to assess the impact of programming.

TARGETED SPAY/NEUTER

STATUS: SHELTER

The surgery room is spacious with (4) surgery tables and includes the prepping area. Consultants did not observe surgery but interviewed (2) veterinarians. Surgery is done Monday through Friday. Dogs and cats are housed together in the surgery holding area and pets may be held in the shelter waiting days for surgery even if they have an adoption commitment. Leadership indicated that spay/neuter releases were not an option. Cats from the PetSmart Charities zip codes may be euthanized if there is no room in surgery.

All pets are fasted for (24) hours prior to surgery and up to (20) surgeries are scheduled per day depending on the speed of the surgeon. One newly hired veterinarian is in training and may do less than (20) surgeries per day. However, consultants arranged for this veterinarian to train at First Coast

No More Homeless Pets in Jacksonville, Florida, the largest spay/neuter clinic in the country. This newly hired veterinarian will also attend training at the Humane Alliance in Asheville, North Carolina, when space available in early 2016.

RECOMMENDATIONS: SHELTER

Best practice in shelters today includes high volume/high quality spay/neuter (see *Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs* by The Association of Shelter Veterinarians at shelternvet.org). For many decades, sterilization in shelters has been done at (2) months of age or (2) pounds with negligible complications, mortality or morbidity when appropriate protocols are in place. High volume spay/neuter surgeons are considered specialists.

Part of the best practice recommendations includes fasting adults the night before the surgery but not fasting puppies or kittens prior to the surgery. Surgery patients, in particular puppies and kittens, are at risk of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) that will increase the risk of anesthetic complications. Puppies and kittens should not be fasted before surgery. It is acceptable for pets to have access to water before surgery regardless of age.

Ideally, dogs and cats should be housed in separate holding areas, as discussed at length in the **Shelter Policy/Environment~Cats** (page 10). The area used to shave and prep animals for surgery should be in an area separate from the surgical tables in order to maintain sterility. Leadership should investigate retrofitting this area to address these issues.

The goal of AS should consistently be to break the cycle of homelessness in dogs and cats. Part of that process is sterilizing as many pets before they leave the shelter if healthy enough and at the minimum weight/age requirement. **All efforts should be made to sterilize pets before they leave the building without increasing their length of stay.**

When a shelter pet has a live outcome opportunity but are too ill, injured or young for sterilization or there is no room in the surgery schedule, there are two options. The first option is to categorize those animals as 'Foster to Adopt'. In that way, the pet remains the legal property of AS and the adopter/rescue understands there will be enforcement consequences if they do not return for or provide proof of sterilization within the specified time frame. The second is to legally adopt the pet to the new owner but require a spay/neuter deposit of at least \$50 that would be refunded at the time of sterilization. **Either way, staff must follow up with each pet that left unsterilized to ensure compliance.**

Spay/neuter surgery must be scheduled at the shelter (7) days a week so there is no delay in live outcome, especially for those cats eligible for the PetSmart Charities grant and upcoming Community Cat Diversion program. Shelter software chosen should generate reports including one identifying the unsterilized pets in the shelter. This process must be a joint undertaking with communication between the kennel and clinic supervisor to ensure adult pets are not fed the morning of surgery when added to the surgery schedule at the last minute.

STATUS: COMMUNITY

The City of El Paso has completed the offsite spay/neuter clinic for the public and is currently looking for high volume surgeons. There is currently no income-targeted spay/neuter done in the community, but consultants were able to meet with City Council member Dr. Michiel R. Noe. Dr. Noe is interested in starting a voucher program with local veterinarians.

The local veterinarian association reportedly has \$1 million from the sale of pet licenses but the allocation of this money is currently unknown.

Potential surgery capacity if funding and staff was available in El Paso includes:

- AS surgery suite (operating Monday through Friday)
- AS Public Spay/Neuter clinic (operating only when veterinarian available)
- HS surgery suite (operating (4) days a week)
- (3) mobile surgery units privately owned

RECOMMENDATIONS: COMMUNITY

Studies prove that by providing low-income pet owners subsidized spay/neuter services, shelter intake at the public shelter decreases (*Getting to Zero*, Peter Marsh). In general, the tipping point is (7) subsidized surgeries per one thousand (1,000) residents. **In El Paso County the need is at least 6,000 low-income subsidized surgeries a year with the owner co-pay under \$20.**

El Paso County has ample spay/neuter infrastructure but is in need of high volume/high quality (HVHQ) surgeons. Having a city council member interested in providing subsidized surgeries is essential, however, it is imperative that efforts be focused on high volume spay/neuter programs. Programs dependent on private veterinarians and voucher systems have not proven successful.

Many HVHQ programs, such as the ones below, are proving the inverse relationship between subsidized surgeries and decreased shelter intake/euthanasia.

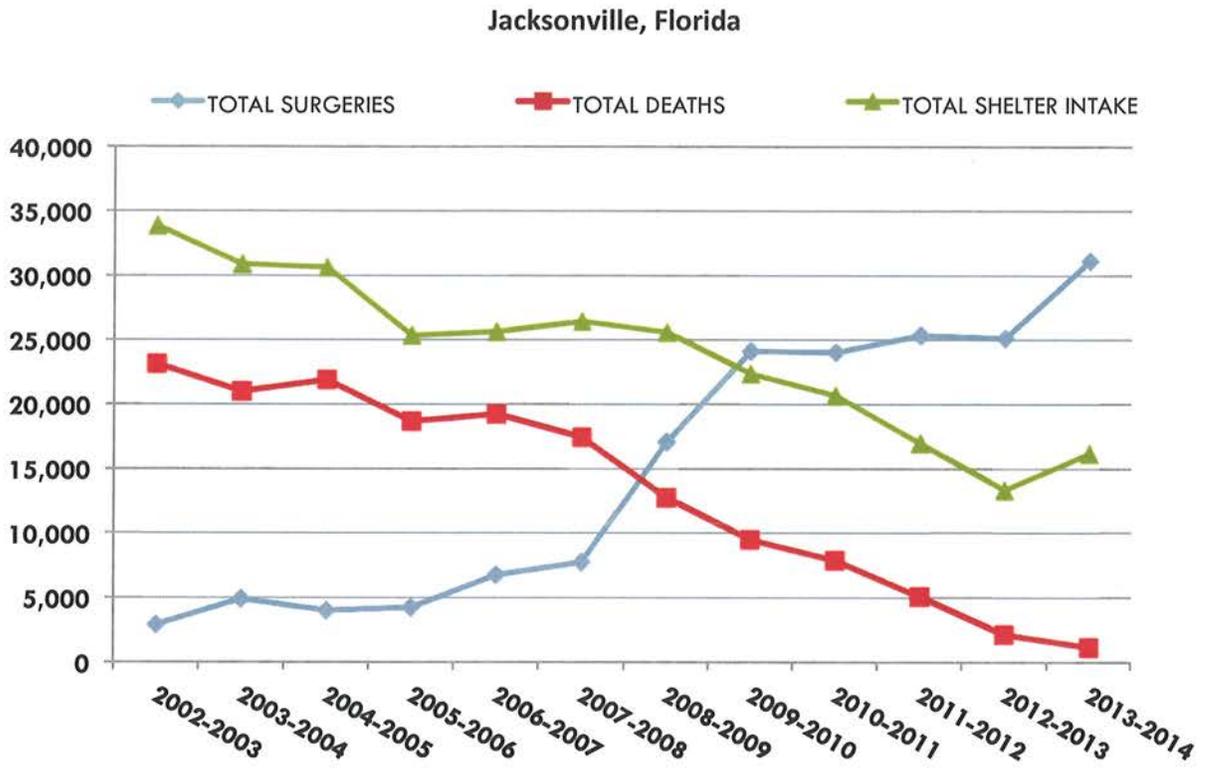


Figure 14: Inverse Relationship between targeted spay/neuter and shelter intake/euthanasia in Jacksonville, Florida.

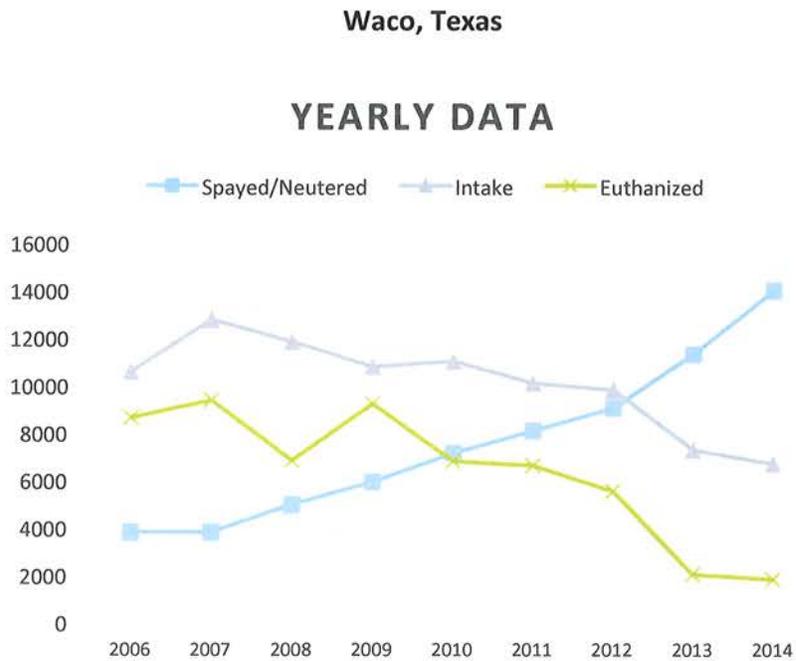


Figure 15: Inverse Relationship between targeted spay/neuter and shelter intake/euthanasia in Waco, Texas.

Huntsville, Alabama

YEARLY DATA

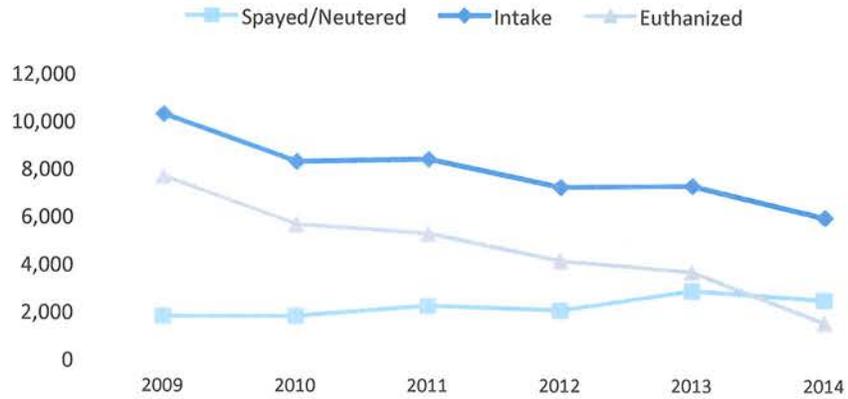


Figure 16: Inverse Relationship between targeted spay/neuter and shelter intake/euthanasia in Huntsville, Alabama.

Indianapolis, Indiana

YEARLY DATA

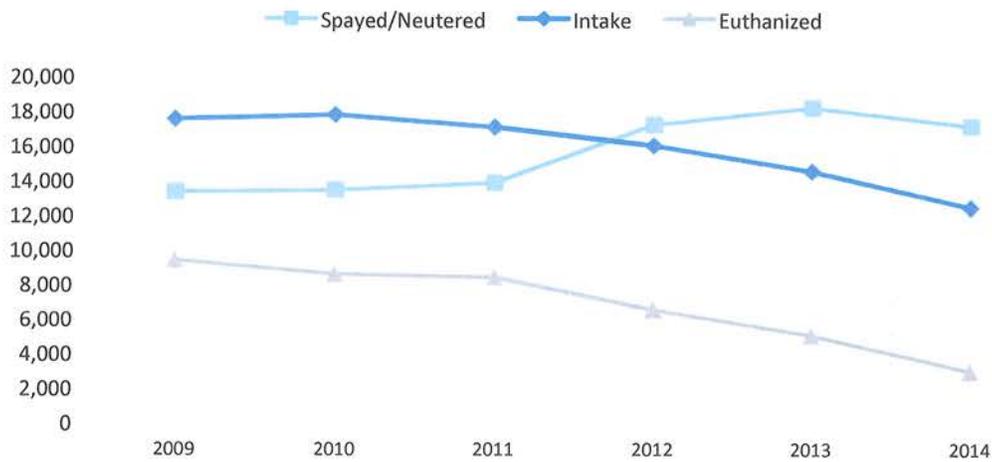


Figure 17: Inverse Relationship between targeted spay/neuter and shelter intake/euthanasia in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Another important target group in addition to fixed income pet owners and **Community Cats** (page 32), is to target large dogs. Large breed dogs are less likely to be sterilized since it is more expensive to do so, have larger litters than small breed dogs and are exponentially harder to place once they enter the shelter system.

There is ample infrastructure in El Paso for a robust targeted spay/neuter program. The local veterinary association should be approached and offered an opportunity to donate part of the proceeds from pet licensing to help subsidize targeted spay/neuter. Other sources of funding include private donations, grants and revenue earmarked from the differential licensing price between intact and sterilized pets.

COMMUNITY CAT DIVERSION

STATUS

Currently, stray cats are held at the shelter for (3) days if no identification and (6) days with identification. Consultants estimate that approximately 13,407 cats entered AS in the CY 2014 and 76% were ultimately euthanized. **ACOs admitted a total of 9,248 cats between Sept 1 2014 and August 31 2015. (167) of the 9,021 total cats (.01%) were returned to their owner calendar year to date in 2015.**

PetSmart Charities has provided a grant to sterilize community cats from specific zip codes. Free roaming cats from those zip codes may be randomly brought in by the public or ACOs and Sun City Cats actively traps cats in the designated zip codes and brings them to the shelter. Cats from these zip codes may be sterilized and released if there is room in the surgery schedule. If there is not room in surgery or cats are brought in on a Friday or Saturday, they are euthanized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Community Cat Diversion programs make sense for shelters, the public and is a crucial lifesaving strategy. The basis of the program is to use common sense and assess an incoming cat found outside by their healthy body weight. Though the shelter employee or Good Samaritan does not know the cat's food source, the cat clearly does. **Sterilizing, ear tipping and vaccinating the cat against rabies and returning him to the area where he came from should be considered 'return to outside home'. AS has already received a \$50,000+ grant from PetSmart Charities and implemented this program in several zip codes.**

This program has only benefits including:

- Targeting the solution and stopping the reproduction cycle, thus decreasing the overall number of outside cats and their unwanted mating behaviors
- Returns cats to their outdoor home
- Increases community immunity against rabies

- Decreases the number of cats entering the open admission shelter and ultimately losing their lives
- Increases the adoption chance of those cats that do enter the adoption program (indoor only, declawed cats)
- Uses limited shelter resources (time, staff, money, supplies, cage space, etc.) for other lifesaving programs
- No need to test for Feline Immunodeficiency or Leukemia Viruses (FIV and FeLV, respectively) (cost savings) since sterilized cats are unlikely to spread these diseases even if positive

There are several key reasons why Community Cat Diversion makes sense operationally, financially and morally:

- Studies prove that cats are seven (**7-10**) times more likely to find their way home from the street than a shelter.
- Year to date in 2015, AS returned only **0.01%** of the cats admitted to their owners
- **76%** of the cats admitted to the shelter last year were euthanized
- ACOs admitted over **11,406** cats in 2014 simply because they were free roaming. Without having to transport healthy cats to the shelter, ACOs can concentrate on true public safety issues.
- Every community that implements Community Cat Diversion programs virtually eliminates complaint calls regarding cats.
- This program offers a solution by ending the reproduction of cats returning to their outside home instead of managing a symptom by trapping and euthanizing cats
- Community Cat Diversion is successful in many communities across the country and in Texas including Waco, San Antonio and Austin.

It is crucial that all shelter staff understand the very basic and simple components of this program before it is started. In a national survey sponsored by Alley Cat Allies, a Harris poll showed that 81% of respondents did not want community cats euthanized. When this program is rolled out with informed staff and volunteers, the culture in the community will eventually change.

This program is supported philosophically and financially by all reputable national organizations to include the Best Friends Animal Society, the ASPCA, HSUS, Alley Cat Allies, the Association of Shelter Veterinarians and the Million Cat Challenge. New leadership should join the Million Cat Challenge (millioncatchallenge.org) and be part of this national movement to stop the unnecessary euthanasia of shelter cats.

Many communities across the country have adopted this program and virtually eliminated complaints about cats as well as preserved valuable and limited enforcement time to focus on true public safety issues.

Jacksonville Animal Care and Protective Services -Cat Intake and Outcome

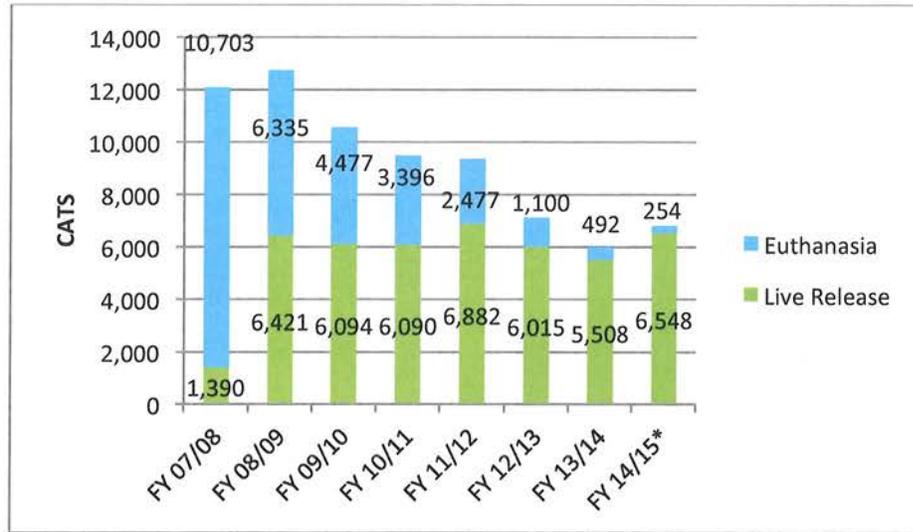


Figure 18: Shows decreasing intake/euthanasia of cats after Community Cat Diversion program (called Feral Freedom) in Jacksonville, Florida in August 2008. These figures are through August 31, 2015.

City of Waco Animal Shelter-Cat Intake and Outcome

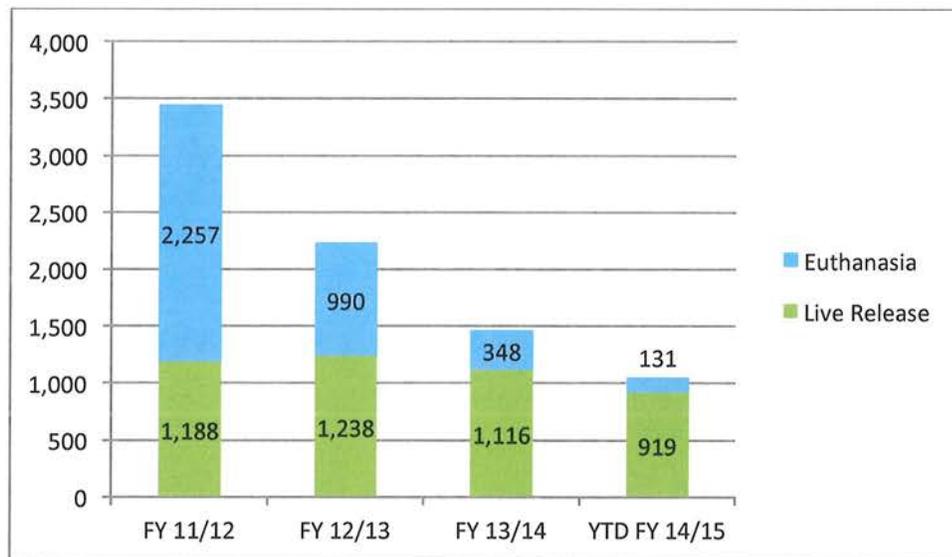


Figure 19: Shows the decrease in shelter intake and euthanasia after the Community Cat program began in October of 2013 in Waco, Texas. *FY 14/15 data is through August 31, 2015.

Huntsville Animal Services-Cat Intake and Outcome

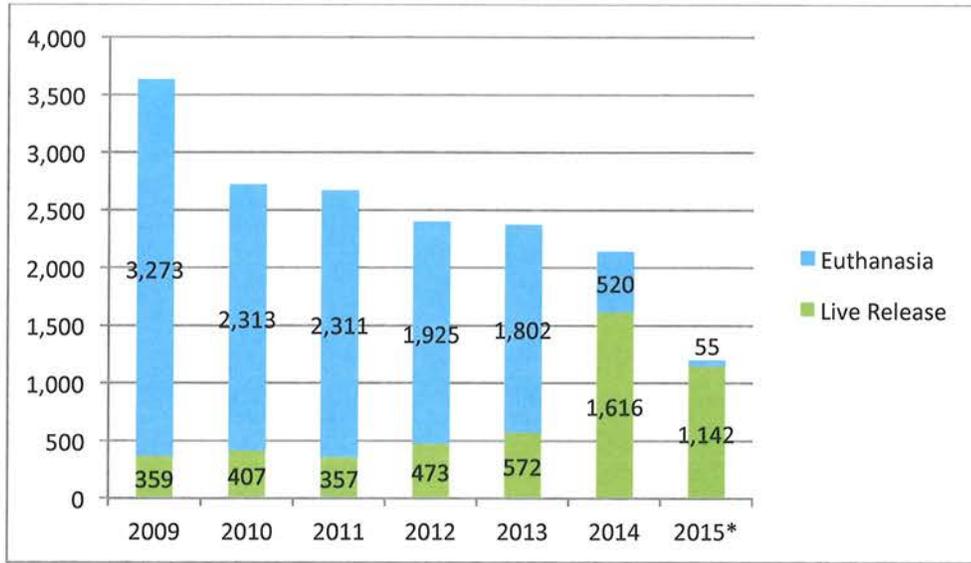


Figure 20: Shows decrease shelter intake of cats after income targeted spay/neuter began in 2009 and increased live release of cats after the Community Cat Diversion program began in April 2014 at Huntsville Animal Services. *2015 figures are through August 31, 2015.

Indianapolis Animal Care and Control -Cat Intake and Outcome

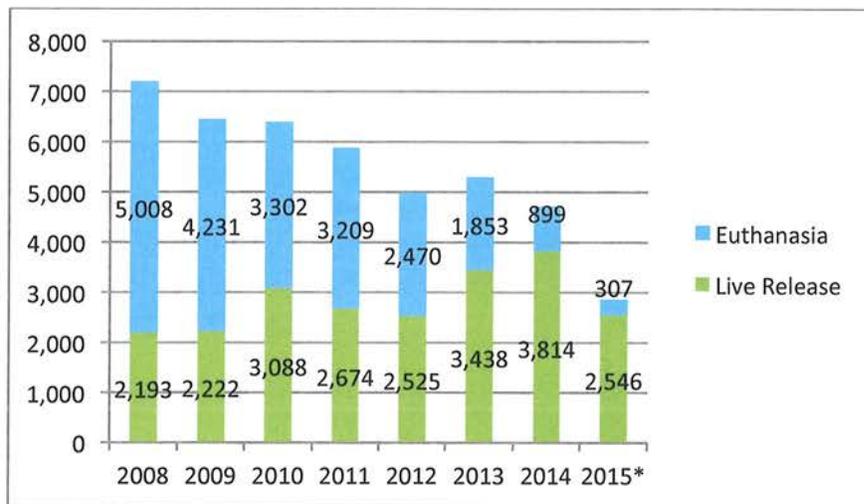


Figure 21: Shows the dramatic decrease of cat euthanasia numbers after the Community Cat Diversion Program was implemented in August 2013. Figures are through August 31, 2015.

LIVE OUTCOME PROGRAMS

RETURN TO OWNERS

STATUS

Overall, the percentage of return to owners for cats is very low.

	Dog	Percentage	Cat	Percentage
2013	2,585	20.6%	254	.02%
2014	2,676	16.1%	244	.01%
2015 YTD*	2,166	17.8%	167	.01%

Note: current shelter statistics do not differentiate between dogs and cats picked up in the field versus surrendered at the shelter over the counter. 2015 YTD stats are through October 6, 2015.

Although the local code requires that each dog and cat be licensed, there is a backlog with regards to data entry. In addition, even though the shelter implants microchips, staff is (5) years behind entering owner information, rendering the microchip useless. ACOs reportedly have the tools to reunite pets in the field such as microchip scanners and laptops, but rarely do so.

When a person comes to the shelter to look for their lost pet, they face many barriers such as the wait time to be escorted throughout the shelter, impound and boarding fees with no option for adoption services that include sterilization and if a veterinarian is not on site to administer a rabies vaccination, the pet is held in the shelter and the owner instructed to return another day.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned above, the **Community Cat Diversion** program (page 32) would resolve the low return to owner rate for cats, as they are (7-10) times more likely to find their way home from the street than a shelter. This program should be considered 'return to outside home'.

Leadership must establish protocols and procedures to ensure that AS is not part of the overpopulation crisis but instead part of the solution that reunifies pets as quickly as possible with their owners. Leadership must address the backlog of license and microchip data as quickly as possible as this is a serious barrier to reunification. Consideration should be given to the Found Animal Foundation microchips, as this non-profit has removed the fee for updating owner information and provides chips to shelters at a low cost. ACOs should be scanning for microchips in the field and intake staff at the shelter and utilize the petmicrochiplookup.org website when a chip found.

A handout should be available in the lobby and clearly visible, outlining the steps to take when searching for a lost pet in the shelter, community and online. Any pets transferred to foster care or rescue during the stray hold period should have a color full-body picture placed on the bulletin board in

the lobby and labeled 'in foster care' or 'with rescue'. The handout should direct those pet owners to check the bulletin board first.

In an effort to achieve the ultimate goal of sterilizing as many animals as possible, owners should be given a financial incentive when reclaiming their pet. Instead of paying impound and boarding fees, owners should be offered spay/neuter, etc. for a lower fee.

ADOPTIONS				
STATUS				
Year	Dog Adoptions	% of Intake	Cat Adoptions	% of Intake
2013	2033	16.2%	271	.02%
2014	2560	15.4%	598	.04%
2015 (YTD)*	2671	21.9%	685	.07%

**2015 YTD numbers are through October 6, 2015*

There is currently a month-to-month contract between the HS and AS. Five HS staff are stationed at AS who are responsible for all adoptions. Adoption fees range in price but never drop below \$60 according to staff and all proceeds go to the HS. The HS management team is highly anxious about any reduction in adoption fees at either organization and fear they will 'go out of business' if they do not have that particular revenue stream. The HS Board of Directors reportedly is not active in fundraising efforts.

At AS, there is an attractive cat adoption room off the main lobby with condos and natural light, both recommended features. Staff reported high euthanasia rates of cats in other parts of the shelter due to the length of stay in cat adoptions. In addition, staff reported that no pets were permitted to be adopted from a quarantine room regardless of the reason they were housed there. A sign in the lobby indicated that an adoption from AS would include the risk of having to return the pet if the owner was found.

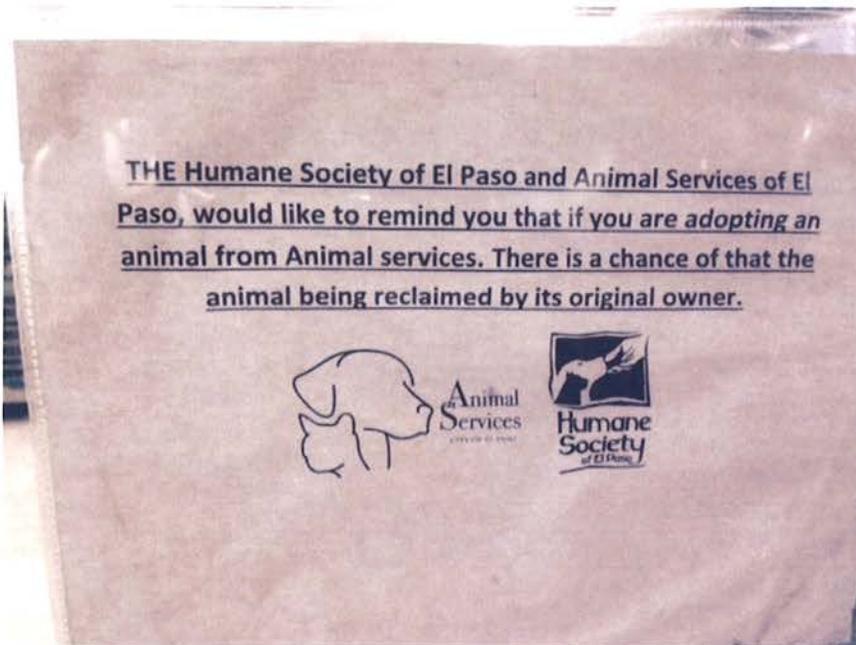


Figure 22: Sign posted in lobby

A group of dogs chosen by staff and volunteers are labeled 'VIP', sterilized and ready to be adopted. On 10/9/15 (18) VIP dogs went to an offsite adoption event. Staff reported that (6) of the (18) dogs were on the euthanasia list and if they were not adopted at the event, they would be euthanized since they were at the shelter for (3) weeks. In an exit meeting with the HS, management indicated to consultants that HS would be willing to transfer VIP dogs if not adopted since they were already sterilized. The HS, however, is understandably apprehensive about transferring pets from the AS due to their high infectious disease rates. There appear to be communication issues with regards to transfers between the two organizations.

AS hosted a reduced fee adoption event recently and adopted (127) pets in (2) days. In discussion with the HS management team, there was a sentiment of criticism for the perceived high rate of return but with further discussion, the actual percentage of returns was unknown and likely less than (10) animals. When consultants suggested looking at the number of lives saved over the baseline as opposed to the perceived return of adopted pets, the HS staff person appeared more supportive of such efforts.

The process by which the public adopts shelter pets is not user friendly. Dogs available for adoption are in separate buildings from where the lobby is located. Many people were observed by consultants viewing dogs but there were no adoption counselors present to assist them. Interested adopters then had to return to the lobby to find a staff person to help them.

As discussed in the **Shelter Policy/Environment~Dogs**, (page 16), the public is only allowed to view dogs through windows and not permitted to interact with them from the inside hallways. Small dogs and puppies are kept in small cages, also behind glass, and difficult to see. From the outside of the buildings,

there was no information or cage cards visible for potential adopters to read regarding the age, sex, etc., of the dog.

There are few visitation rooms for dogs or cats and during the consultation the outside play area was not in use because of the flooding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research done by the ASPCA showed no direct correlation between high adoption fees and the bond with a pet owner (aspcapro.org). In the recently published *'Adopters Welcome'* guidelines by the Humane Society of the United States, they also confirm that lower fees are associated with lower lengths of stays and higher adoption rates. **Adoption fees should be \$35 (all inclusive) or lower and during this time of crisis, all adoption fees waived.** Animal welfare organizations should not depend on adoption fees as a prime revenue source as this is in direct conflict with lifesaving goals. AS should partner closely with the HS so both share the same low adoption fee and avoid any competition for adopters. Shelter pets at both organizations will be the beneficiaries of such a strong partnership.

All animal welfare agencies must embrace an open philosophy adoption program with the goal of making the right match and creating a responsible pet owner if their **community** goal is to reach/maintain a 90%+ live release rate. This includes the open admission shelter, limited admission shelters, rescue groups and foster volunteers who should be seeking permanent placement for pets as soon as possible and remove barriers to life saving. The shelter should be a welcoming and positive environment and staff eager to assist potential adopters.

As many animals as possible must be sterilized prior to release without increasing their length of stay. All animals should be considered for adoption on a case-by-case basis including those from a quarantine room. Surgery must be done (7) days a week so a live outcome opportunity is not delayed or missed. When a veterinarian is scheduled (7) days a week, no pet would have to be held for a rabies vaccination before release.

The public should be encouraged to interact with all pets and disinfect their hands between pets. An excessive number of signs warn people in a negative way to not touch puppies but in fact, an informal study done by the University of California, Koret Shelter Medicine program showed that staff was far more responsible for the transmission of infectious disease when compared to the public. The shelter environment, customer service provided by all staff and consistent positive messaging will contribute to a higher adoption rate. A cheerful sign saying, *'Please disinfect your hands between pets to help us keep them healthy!'* is more welcoming than *'STOP! Don't touch, pet or walk our pets!'*. Visiting areas where potential adopters can spend time with shelter pets should be created and protected from the weather.

Barriers on run doors throughout the shelter should be replaced with chain link and potential adopters allowed to walk on the inside hallway of Buildings A through C. Dogs who are aggressive, involved in court cases or potentially zoonotic should not be available for public viewing unless they are looking for their pet and escorted by an employee.

AS should be commended for hosting a reduced fee adoption event, however, marketing and continued fee reduced/waived adoptions will result in a far greater number of lives saved.

On a regular basis, the shelter volunteer force should schedule follow up calls for all adopters (2-3) days after the adoption to ensure that pets and people are adjusting. Supporting adopters immediately following the placement will help prevent returns and position AS as a resource center.

Any party taking a pet for adoption, rescue, transfer or foster with a medical or behavior issue should sign a release including the condition to ensure full disclosure.

FOSTER CARE

STATUS

There is currently no formal foster care program at AS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although AS does not have a formal foster volunteer program, the HS does. Consultants found the HS leadership to be very interested in a joint program. This would eliminate any sense of competition between AS and the HS for volunteer foster homes and again, the pets will be the beneficiaries of such a partnership.

Ensuring volunteers are educated and trained is crucial. Good Samaritans and those interested in fostering will be more likely to help when given supplies and supported. If the HS is responsible for the foster program, AS could partner by providing supplies. If a pet is placed in foster care during the stray hold, it must be mandatory that a full body color picture with the pet's information be placed on the bulletin board in the lobby and those searching for their lost pets directed to check there first.

New leadership must set priorities and boundaries for the foster care program. Foster homes should be used for highly adoptable pets in need of temporary care, such as puppies or kittens that need to reach (2) months or (2) pounds before sterilization or pets in need of short-term medical care. Foster volunteers should be empowered and encouraged to place pets in their permanent homes.

Foster volunteers must embrace an open adoption philosophy as well and the HSUS guidelines, '*Adopters Welcome*' as part of the mandatory training. The guidelines are available to read or download at animalsheltering.org.

RESCUE

STATUS

Leadership reports (2) rescue partners that may transfer pets for \$5 each.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For a shelter the size of AS, (2) full time coordinators covering (7) days a week are needed. Those coordinators should overlap on the busiest days of the week and network with rescue partners to increase involvement.

If a pet is transferred to a rescue group during their stray hold, a full body color photo must be placed on the bulletin board in the lobby labeled 'with rescue'. If an owner comes to the shelter, they would be instructed to check the bulletin board before proceeding through the kennels.

Animals going to rescue should be sterilized if medically fit (without increasing their length of stay), provided preventive care, medications, microchipped, etc., at no cost to the rescue. Rescue groups are significant live outcome partners and an integral part of the goal to save 90%+ shelter animals. All barriers to transfer must be removed and funds are the most common one.

Communication and transferring of pets must be as streamlined as possible for rescue groups. Once the shelter population is lowered through surrender prevention programs and the live outcome increased, the population will be healthier making them more likely to be transferred by rescue groups. Many groups utilize foster homes with more than (1) pet, so the fear of contagious disease is a rate limiting step with grave consequences for shelter pets.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While El Paso Animal Services is currently in crisis, the interim director is highly motivated and committed to implementing best practices. By the end of the assessment, staff was given the directive to no longer house cats with dogs and feral dens were purchased. Consultants were encouraged by the immediate action taken. Prior to the assessment, the interim director was in the process of meeting with each staff person individually.

Shelter intake would decrease by over 50% if the Community Cat Diversion program is implemented and even further if the other strategies are adopted.

A 90%+ live release rate for El Paso Animal Services is very much within reach when the strategies in this report are implemented. Target Zero is encouraged by the commitment of leadership and welcomes the City of El Paso as the newest Target Zero Fellow. As the shelter improves, the community perception will improve as well. AS should be viewed as a service organization and consideration should be given to changing the name to the *El Paso Pet Resource Center*.

REFERENCES

Helpful Websites

target-zero.org (Target Zero)

shelternvet.org (The Association of Shelter Veterinarians)

aspcapro.org (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)

animalsheltering.org (Humane Society of the United States)

bestfriends.org (Best Friends Animal Society)

alleycatallies.org (Alley Cat Allies)

millioncatchallenge.org (Million Cat Challenge)

Helpful Books

Infectious Disease Management in Animal Shelters, Lila Miller, DVM & Kate Hurley, DVM

Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff, Lila Miller, DVM & Steven Zawistowski, PhD, CAAB

Getting to Zero, Peter Marsh

Replacing Myth with Math, Peter Marsh

Helpful Guidelines

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-neuter Programs (shelternvet.org)

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters (shelternvet.org)

Adopters Welcome, Humane Society of the United States (animalsheltering.org)

The Five Freedoms: <http://www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-animal-care/five-freedoms>

Enrichment for Cats

Cat Cage Modifications: Making Double Compartment Cat Cages using a PVC Portal: <http://www.sheltermedicine.com/shelter-health-portal/information-sheets/cat-cage-modifications-making-double-compartment-cat-cages->

Raised beds:

<http://www.sheltermedicine.com/shelter-health-portal/information-sheets/building-an-elevated-bed-for-use-in-shelter-cat-housing>

Kuranda beds:

<http://kuranda.com/humane/pet-supplies/cat-bed>

Simple Shelter Enrichment for Cats: <http://ufsheltermedicine.com/files/2011/11/simple-shelter-enrichment-for-cats.pdf>

Scratch N Bits Shelter Donation Program

<http://www.imperialcat.com/adoptacat.php>

Enrichment for Dogs

Simple Shelter Enrichment for Dogs: <http://ufsheltermedicine.com/files/2011/11/simple-shelter-enrichment-for-dogs.pdf>

Organized Play Groups for Dogs, see centerforshelterdogs.org

Animal Farm Foundation – Everyday Enrichment Ideas:
<http://www.animalfarmfoundation.org/pages/Everyday-Ideas>

Cleaning and Disinfection

DiGangi, B. Maddie’s Shelter Medicine Program. University of Florida. Guidelines for the Use of Bleach. Available online at: <http://ufsheltermedicine.com/files/2011/12/guidelines-for-usingbleach-update.pdf>

DiGangi, B. Maddie’s Shelter Medicine Program. University of Florida. Cleaning and Disinfection 101. Available online at:

http://ufsheltermedicine.com/files/2011/11/Cleaning_and_Disinfection_101.pdf

Community Outreach

Information about the Pets for Life program:

<http://www.humanesociety.org/about/departments/pets-for-life/>

The Pets for Life toolkit:

<http://www.animalsheltering.org/how-we-help/work-for-change/pets-for-life/pets-for-lifetoolkit.html>

“Taking it to the Streets,” Animal Sheltering article about Pets for Life successes:

http://www.animalsheltering.org/resources/magazine/mar_apr_2013/taking-it-to-thestreets.pdf

Appendix E

County of San Diego: El Paso Animal Shelter Evaluation

EL PASO ANIMAL SHELTER EVALUATION

By

Daniel E. DeSousa, Deputy Director

County of San Diego Department of Animal Services

BACKGROUND

On 27 August 2015, the County of San Diego Department of Animal Services received a telephone call from Rosemary of the City of El Paso. Per Rosemary, the City Manager, Tommy Gonzales requested that a supervisor from the County of San Diego Department of Animal Services visit and conduct a review of the El Paso Animal Services shelter. A subsequent telephone call was received from Steve Marshall on 2 September 2015.

On Wednesday 7 October 2015 and the first half of Thursday 8 October, Deputy Director Daniel DeSousa of the County of San Diego Department of Animal Services visited the El Paso Animal Shelter to conduct an assessment.

DeSousa was allowed to move freely throughout the facility and was permitted to speak to any employees as he saw fit. The following document notes the observations from the visit and recommendations to improve the conditions and the shelter for the employees, public and, most importantly, the animals in the care of the shelter.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel DeSousa has worked for the County of San Diego Department of Animal Services since March of 1989. He started out as an animal control officer and was promoted within two years to the position of Sergeant in the Department's Dangerous Dog Task Force. In the Dangerous Dog Task Force, DeSousa served initially as the Department Representative in administrative hearings to declare dogs to be either a dangerous dog or a public nuisance. He eventually was promoted to the position of Supervising Animal Control Officer and was assigned as the Department's Hearing Officer to oversee the Department's hearings and to render decisions. During this time, he also served as the coordinator of the Department's Animal Law Enforcement Academy.

After being promoted to the position of Administrative Analyst, DeSousa took over the responsibilities of compiling the Department's statistics, conducting legislative analysis, and revising the Department's policy and procedure manual. He also started to serve as the Department's Public Information Officer.

As a Deputy Director for the Department of Animal Services, DeSousa is responsible for the management of one of the Department's three animal care facilities. The shelter which he manages in the southern portion of San Diego County bears a great deal of similarities to the El Paso Animal Shelter due to its proximity to the U.S./Mexico border.

DeSousa has also served on the Board of Directors for the National Animal Care and Control Association for two years and currently holds the position of Vice President of the Association.

OVERVIEW

Situated at the border of the United States and Mexico, the City of El Paso is estimated, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, to have a human population of 679,036 as of 2014. Roughly twenty percent (20%) of those people live below the poverty level.

The El Paso Animal Shelter serves the City of El Paso and also provides sheltering services for the communities of Anthony, Clint, Ft. Bliss, Horizon City, San Elizario, Socorro, Vinton, and the County of El Paso. If the total population of those cities (those that were available on the U.S. Census Bureau website) is added to the City of El Paso, the estimated human population is 754,700. By utilizing the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) ownership calculator, the estimated dog population for the area is 169,517 and 185,192 cats.

For the years where records were provided, the El Paso Animal Shelter takes in an average of over 32,000 animals per year.

Built in 2004-2005, the shelter is too small for the number of animals being impounded and lacks any area for the adoption process. Adoptions are currently conducted by the adjacent El Paso Humane Society staff out of a small room in the El Paso Animal Shelter.

The animal shelter was moved to the auspices of the Health Department in approximately 2007 however the shelter languished due to limited resources and what was described as a “culture of fear”. In 2012, the animal shelter was then moved under the oversight of the Environmental Services Department, where it exists to this date.

While the shelter is general funded and the budget (FY 15 Adopted budget of \$4,300,488) has been described as “robust”, it was admitted that the budget is not used effectively.

The City of El Paso has created a team to review the operations of the animal shelter and members of that team include the Director of the El Paso Zoo, the Directors of the Health Department and the Environmental Services Department, and Kurt Fenstermacher, the Assistant to the City Manager. As described by Fenstermacher, they know that the shelter needs to change but they are unclear as to what to change or how to do so.

In addition, there are numerous outside organizations trying to effect changes within the shelter including Target Zero, Alley Cat Allies and El Pasoans for Shelter Reform. Nathan Winograd was also scheduled to be in El Paso on 4 November 2015.

Recommendation: Create a Mission Statement which clearly defines the goals of the animal shelter. While this may seem trivial, it provides something for the shelter to aspire to as well as gives the public an idea of the direction the shelter is headed.

SHELTER BUILDING

While the shelter used to be easily accessed by the public from Fred Wilson Road, the construction of a freeway immediately in front of the shelter has reduced the visibility of the shelter to the public. There is also no signage visible from the freeway that indicates the presence of the shelter. However, once a person exits the freeway, there are signs directing the public to the shelter.

Upon entering the driveway to the shelter, the public encounters a sign that clearly directs people to the Humane Society of El Paso. The El Paso Animal Services portion of the sign however is obscured by the tree next to the sign. In addition, the Humane Society's building is clearly identified by their signage on their building.



Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the El Paso Animal Services building. The first visible building of the animal shelter is the classroom but there is no signage on the side of the classroom indicating the structure is the animal shelter. Rather, there is a sign above the Dog Buildings that identifies the shelter yet the sign is difficult or almost impossible to read from the entrance to the shelter.



Lastly, the welcome sign at the front of the shelter is not indicative of a professional, government-run facility.



As noted in the Overview, the El Paso Animal Shelter was designed with the specific intent that adoptions would be handled by the Humane Society of El Paso. As such there are no rooms or areas set aside for a potential adopter to interact with a pet. By only serving as a receiver of animals and conducting very few adoptions, the shelter is likely viewed by the public as only a place where animals are euthanized if they are not claimed by their owner and this mindset must be changed. The El Paso Animal Shelter must be viewed by the public as a place for people to come and adopt a pet. And, with the numbers of animals being impounded, the shelter must be able to set their own adoption rates to help manage their shelter population. Currently, the Humane Society tries to discourage special adoption rates as that impacts their revenue.

In order to increase adoptions, changes would have to be made to the existing shelter to accommodate interact yards or rooms.

Recommendation: Improve signage at the entrance to the parking lot that clearly identifies both the Humane Society of El Paso and the El Paso Animal Shelter.

Recommendation: Install signage on the façade of the building to identify the structure as being the El Paso Animal Shelter.

Recommendation: Design and construct a professional entrance sign at the front of the building. This sign can provide directions to the public as to where to look for their lost dog.

Recommendation: The El Paso Animal Shelter must conduct their own adoptions and, while the shelter should have set adoption fees, the shelter must have the ability to set special adoption fees when necessary.

Recommendation: Add additional space to the shelter to the left of the classroom (when facing the building) and dedicate that space to adoptions. The area is currently a water catchment basin with an inflow flume and an outflow pipe which could possibly be connected and the basin then filled in.



FRONT LOBBY

Immediately upon walking into the building at the shelter, the public is greeted by a large glass wall that reads “Welcome to Animal Services”. Unfortunately, this glass wall blocks the office staff’s view of the incoming public.

Due to a lack of adequate signage, people looking for their lost pet enter and line up in the front lobby to speak with a clerk, only to be told to exit the lobby and check the kennels in Dog Buildings A, B, and C. If the person cannot find their dog, they then return to the front lobby and have to sign in to be escorted into the non-public portions of the shelter. This is an inefficient system that can easily be streamlined so as to make the process as smooth as possible for the public and to also reduce the numbers of customers in line at the counter.



While there are two computers accessible to the public in the front lobby, neither computer could access the website for the El Paso Animal Services or the Department of Environmental Services’ website. According to the staff, the computers have been unable to access the websites for an extended period of time. This is especially troublesome as both computers could access the websites of the El Paso Humane Society and Pets Alive – El Paso. The shelter needs to present itself as a professionally run operation and the fact that the shelters own computers cannot access their own website is unacceptable.



In the lobby are three (3) television monitors mounted to the wall. Intended to be used for promotional photos/videos and information, these monitors, like the computer monitors, have not been functional for an extended period of time.

At the front counter are three (3) customer service stations. Each station has two computer monitors that effectively block the view of the clerical staff and the public. With all of the other items on the front counter, there is little to no room left on the counter.

Currently, all public interaction takes place at this front counter including the surrender of stray or owner relinquished animals, animal claims or adoptions and licensing. This results in the mixing of stray animals with unknown temperaments and diseases with animals being reclaimed or adopted from the shelter.

Recommendation: Remove or raise the “Welcome to Animal Services” glass partition and utilize the counter as a “greeter station” where an employee could direct the public to the appropriate location. This would eliminate the public from having to stand in line to ask where to look for their missing animal. In

ANIMAL HOUSING AND SEGREGATION

CAT ADOPTION

The main cattery is located just off of the front lobby. The room has great lighting however the airflow was insufficient, leaving the room stuffy.

As cats tend to prefer higher resting areas, a shelf should be provided in each cat cage. This will allow the cat to lie down away from its litter box.

Since the public is allowed into this room, it does increase the risks of disease spread amongst the cats. In addition, in speaking with the staff member that was cleaning in the cattery, it was learned that a member of the public has attempted to steal a cat from the cattery as the cages are not locked.

Recommendation: In order to provide stimulation for the cats, the hanging of cardboard scratching posts on the exterior of the cage door could easily be accomplished.

Recommendation: Install hand sanitizing stations if not already available.

Recommendation: Install locks on all cats cages to prevent theft of animals.



DOG BUILDINGS

The El Paso Animal Shelter has three dog buildings (Dog Building A, B, and C) which are accessible to the public twenty-four (24) hours a day. The dogs are maintained in indoor kennels with each kennel having a window to the outside. Such a technique is good in that it reduces the spread of disease from the public touching one dog and then touching other dogs down the row. Each building has its own cleaning supplies which also helps to reduce disease transmission.

Based upon the damage to the floors, it appears that the drains do not remove all of the water.

Water buckets are secured by chains which pose the risk of entanglement.

As not all of the dogs are able to be housed in these three buildings, staff must escort the public into the non-public areas to search for their dog if it is not located in Building A, B, or C. This appears to be a tremendous drain on the staffing levels as the escorts take place on a very regular basis.

DOG BUILDING A

Unfortunately the glass makes it difficult to see into some of the kennels, especially those that do not have shade from the sun, due to the glare. One person was observed with his face up to the glass and his hands cupped around his eyes in order to look into one kennel. In addition, while the interior of the building was overall well-ventilated and cool, one kennel in particular, A19, was in direct sun and very warm. The dog in that kennel, a Pit Bull was observed panting heavily.

DOG BUILDING B

Dog Building B is similar in design to Dog Building A however one end of the building consists of one large room that contained twenty-seven (27) Shor-line cages with dogs. The airflow and temperature in the building were good. Cage DB29 contained three (3) Labrador Retriever pups even though there were other open cages in the room (DB27 and DB30). In addition cage DB29 was only half the size of DB27.

DOG BUILDING C

The interior of this building was warmer and more humid than either Building A or B, perhaps due to the southern exposure of the building.

Kennel C10 contained an adult German Shepherd and an adult Golden Retriever in an area approximately four foot by seven foot.

SALLY PORT

The purpose of a sally port is to allow animal control officers to pull into the building and safely unload animals from their patrol vehicle in a secure environment. If an animal were to escape while being unloaded, the animal would still be within the solid confines of the building and its chances of escape are minimized.



The El Paso Animal Shelter currently has a total of one hundred and seven (107) stainless steel Shor-line cages in their sally port (identified by cage numbers SP1 to SP40 and H1 to H67). Those cages housed a variety of animals including large and small dogs and even cats. Several cages contained multiple small dogs. Mothers with nursing pups were found in two cages in the sally port (cages SP35 and H41). Two adult dogs in particular could not lie down in their cages due to their size (a Saint Bernard in H43 and another dog in SP24). This housing is in direct conflict with the shelter's own policies. The cage for the Saint Bernard measured approximately twenty-eight inches wide by twenty-eight inches deep and thirty inches in height (28x28x30). It should be noted that on 8 October 2015, the cage for the Saint Bernard had been doubled in size by removing a divider panel.





In addition, the cages are so small that the animals have no means to move away from any feces in their cage, as was evidenced by an adult Shar-Pei that was housed in cage SP4.

In order to clean the Shor-line cages, the animal must be removed and secured (tied) in a safe location. This is a very labor intensive process and increases the likelihood of an animal escaping.

The sound within the sally port was very loud, primarily due to the large numbers of barking dogs. While staff has the luxury of wearing ear plugs, the animals in the sally port are subjected to the noise constantly, thus raising the animals' stress levels.

A chemical dip is located in the floor of the sally port.

DOG QUARANTINE A

During the inspection of Dog Quarantine A, a young dog was found non-responsive in its kennel. The dog would not open its eyes or lift its head even with the observer pounding on the kennel door. Dried blood in the kennel and the non-responsive nature of the dog was indicative of parvo. Kurt Fenstermacher left the room to notify the staff of the condition of the dog and the dog was subsequently euthanized.

In addition to the dogs in the room, two Shor-line cages held two cats and one duck. According to staff, the duck was placed in the room as staff believed the bird to be ill, even though the barn was available to house the bird.

DOG QUARANTINE B

In speaking with staff, it was learned that dogs have gotten entangled in the cables which are used to raise the door that would allow a dog to access the adjacent kennel. In addition, there are no drains outside of the dog kennels so any water in the staff walkways must be pushed back into the dog kennels and the drains located in the kennel.

Documentation pertaining to each animal is kept in plastic pouches on the front of the kennel/cage. In the case of the Shor-line cages, the cleaning of a top cage resulted in the paperwork in the bottom cage (DQB25) getting wet and becoming illegible

While the animal shelter is fairly new, there is visible water damage in the ceiling of Dog Quarantine B.

Recommendation: Eliminate the use of Shor-Line cages as primary housing for dogs. At a minimum, housing must allow the animal to turn freely, stand, and lie down in a comfortable position and to be able to be away from areas where the animal has urinated or defecated.

Recommendation: Remove cats from the sally port environment

Recommendation: Install awnings above dog building windows to reduce or eliminate direct sun on the glass thus reducing the temperature within the individual dog kennel. The awnings will also reduce or eliminate the glare on the glass, thus allowing people to see easily into the kennels.

Recommendation: Separate mothers and their pups from the general population of dogs. Newborn pups are extremely susceptible to disease and should be isolated from the general population of dogs.

Recommendation: Eliminate housing of animals within the sally port altogether. If space is an issue, consider constructing a wall to divide the sally port in to two separate rooms (a sally port and an animal holding room).

Recommendation: With the availability of relatively inexpensive external parasite medications, initiate the treatment of animals entering the shelter with external parasite medication.

Recommendation: Remove the chemical dip from the sally port.

Recommendation: Install permanent water bowls in the dog buildings or, at a minimum, brackets to hold a stainless steel water bowl to eliminate the risk of a dog getting entangled in the existing chain.

Recommendation: Install Shor-line T-Kennels with protected cables for guillotine doors to eliminate the risk of dogs being entangled, as depicted below.



BARN

While the shelter has a six stall barn, only three are available for use to house livestock. Two of the stalls are currently being used for storage and a third has freezers. The floors are concrete and, of the three available stalls, two stalls had two rubber mats and the remaining stall had one mat. There are no exterior pens attached to the barn, thus no immediate access to the outdoors for any animals housed within the barn. When the facility does have livestock, the animals are walked to a fenced area immediately behind the barn and allowed to graze.



Walking through the barn, you encounter a disassembled cadaver freezer and a shed for storage. The animal shelter has no need for the disassembled freezer and the storage shed has clutter.

Recommendation: As one side of the barn is immediately adjacent to the actual shelter building, it precludes the addition of panels to the exterior of that side of the barn to allow for animals to have exposure to the outdoors. The opposite side of the barn, however, could be opened and outfitted with panels to allow livestock to move from the protection of the barn stalls to the outside. The chain link fencing surrounding the field area would need to be moved to accommodate the exterior pens with the option of still keeping a large fenced-in area for livestock to have additional room to graze. Allowing the animals into the fenced-in area would also assist with vegetation control in the enclosure.

Recommendation: For those stalls that can house livestock, the shelter should have rubber mats that cover the entire floor of the stall and adequate wood shavings to provide for the comfort of the animal and to insure sound footing. The material should also be absorptive to capture any feces or urine that can easily be removed as necessary¹.

Recommendation: An animal shelter should be as neat and orderly as possible. The disassembled cadaver freezer needs to be removed and the storage shed cleaned of any clutter and trash.

¹ http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ceh/local_resources/pdfs/pubs-Sanctuary-bkm-sec.pdf

ANIMAL HANDLING

While dogs were observed being walked on leash throughout the shelter, cats on the other hand were only observed being carried in cat nets commonly referred to as squeeze nets or “EZ Nabbers” in the shelters policy (depicted to the right). While this tool can be used for the vaccination of cats, the recommended method to move a cat from one cage to another should be a wire carrier or cat cage. A cage provides a greater degree of control over a cat and causes less stress to the animal. Staff should be trained in how to properly restrain a cat by grasping the cat at the scruff and holding the back legs while loading the cat into a cage.



Recommendation: All animal care staff must have training in canine and feline behavior and humane animal handling techniques.

ANIMAL IMPOUNDS

In order to reduce the euthanasia numbers at the El Paso Animal Shelter, the sheer numbers of animals coming in to the shelter must be brought under control. While the shelter does have an obligation to take in stray animals, owners seeking to relinquish their pets should be directed to first contact local rescue groups or the Humane Society of El Paso. In addition, if a behavioral issue is the reason for the relinquishment, the owner should be directed to local trainers in the community to see if the problem can be easily solved, thus precluding the animal from ever having to enter the shelter. If the reason is a medical one, are there outside organizations that can help cover the cost of the treatment? If so, an owner should be directed to those organizations first.

RELINQUISHMENTS

Currently, the shelter has no system or protocol in place to overrule a request by an owner who wishes to have a perfectly healthy and friendly animal euthanized.

In addition, due to the presence of Fort Bliss, the El Paso Animal Shelter deals with a great deal of adoptions by military personnel and their families. Unfortunately, many of those animals are subsequently surrendered by those same families when the military member is deployed or transferred.

Recommendation: The relinquishment or surrender form that an owner signs when bringing their pet in to be euthanized must be amended to include language that the shelter has the final authority as to whether the animal is euthanized or not.

Recommendation: The El Paso Animal Shelter should work with organizations such as Dogs on Deployment (<http://dogsondeployment.org/>) that can foster animals while a military member is on deployment.

SPAYING AND NEUTERING

There are a total of seventy-two (72) veterinarians in the community of El Paso and these veterinarians must play a vital role in the reduction of the pet overpopulation problem in El Paso. Their assistance in educating the public regarding the benefits of altering the animal cannot be emphasized enough.

The El Paso Animal Shelter does go in to the community on a regular basis in a leased van with a contracted veterinarian to provide spay/neuter surgeries. Eighty dollar (\$80) spay/neuter vouchers are also available for distribution to the public. While the voucher may not cover the complete cost of the surgery, it should reduce the owner's portion of the payment significantly. In addition, the shelter does have grant money available from the Humane Alliance but the shelter has been unable to hire a veterinarian to fill the position.

Recommendation: Differential licensing costs should be established wherein the cost for a license for an altered animal is less than the cost for an unaltered animal.

Recommendation: Encourage the local veterinary community to provide low cost spay/neuter surgeries to the public if the member of the public has been referred by the shelter. While a reduced surgery cost may be unpalatable to the veterinary hospital, the opportunity to obtain a new client should outweigh those concerns. Ideally, the cost of the surgery would be covered by the voucher.

Recommendation: On any unaltered dog or cat that is impounded at the shelter, the pet owner should be charged a spay/neuter deposit (in addition to the current \$10 unaltered fee) and provided thirty (30) days to have the animal spayed or neutered in order to have the deposit returned. Any deposit that is not returned should be maintained in a fund to maintain the existing spay/neuter vouchers.

Recommendation: On any subsequent impounds of the unaltered animal, the owner should again be charged the same spay/neuter deposit. In addition, the City of El Paso should create an additional fee that is non-refundable. The County of San Diego Department of Animal Services "Pet Impact Fee" is one hundred and twenty dollars (\$120).

OFF-SITE ADOPTIONS

In many communities, the national pet store chains such as Petco and PetSmart provide complimentary space for local animal welfare organizations to display animals for adoption. If this has not been done in the area, the El Paso Animal Shelter should contact those businesses and partner with them in increasing pet adoptions.

RESCUE GROUPS

A one page document was provided by the staff that lists a total of eight (8) rescue partners, however it was reported that only three (3) of those partners are registered with the El Paso Animal Shelter.

That being said, in the front lobby of the shelter is a document that lists ninety-eight (98) all breed and breed-specific rescue groups. This begs the question, why haven't these rescue groups partnered with the El Paso Animal Shelter? With the euthanasia rates as high as they are, the collaboration with these rescue groups to exit animals is crucial. As such, efforts must be made to encourage the rescue groups to become active partners with the shelter.

The County of San Diego Department of Animal Services currently has 219 rescue groups that can exit an animal at no charge to the rescue group. A copy of the Department's Rescue Partner Agreement is attached. These rescue groups cannot place an adoption hold on an animal, unless they are willing to pay the regular adoption fee for the animal. While one may question the decision to release an animal at no charge, with the euthanasia rates as high as they are, the alternative to not being exited by a rescue is likely euthanasia for most of the animals. In addition, it is expected that the rescue groups will, on occasion, exit an animal that needs veterinary care which the group would arrange and pay for. The question as to who would be responsible for the spaying and neutering of the animal should be decided on a case-by-case basis. If, however, it will encourage the rescue group to exit the animal and the shelter has the time and staffing to do so, it would be beneficial to have the animal altered before it leaves the shelter.

ANIMAL EUTHANASIA

It should be noted that no animal euthanasia was observed during the review of the El Paso Animal Shelter.

Nonetheless, with the statistics showing the number of animals euthanized on an annual basis, it is obvious that far too many animals are being euthanized. The community, the shelter and the leaders of the City of El Paso must take a proactive stance to reduce the number of animals being euthanized.

In an effort to get an understanding of the euthanasia of animals at the shelter, it is imperative that the shelter record the reason for the euthanasia. Only then will the shelter determine the necessary steps to address the euthanasia of the animals. How many of the animals that were euthanized had medical conditions and what was the severity of the condition or how many animals had behavioral issues, and lastly, how many were healthy and friendly animals that exceeded their hold date? While it is preferred that the shelter have a baseline number of animals euthanized for a specific reason, it is in the interest of the shelter, and especially the animals impacted by the euthanasia, that a baseline number is extrapolated from a short time period, rather than wait for an entire year's worth of data. At the conclusion of one year, the numbers can be finalized and a definite baseline set.

Once these numbers are compiled, the City of El Paso should make a commitment to their community and the animals within the community that no healthy and friendly animals are euthanized. Only once that goal has been met can the shelter then strive to reduce the number of animals that are euthanized for a medical or behavioral issue.

Recommendation: In order to track the number of animals euthanized for a specific reason, the El Paso Animal Shelter should use the Asilomar Accord definitions. Those definitions can be found at (<http://www.asilomaraccords.org/definitions.html>). This will allow everyone to "speak the same language" when it comes to defining. It should be noted that just because an animal is defined as having a "treatable" or "manageable" condition does not automatically mean the animal should be euthanized. Rather, that animal could still be adopted by a person that is aware of the condition and has agreed to continue to treat or manage that condition.

DISPOSAL OF ANIMALS

The majority of people that work at an animal shelter do so because they have a compassion for animals and they truly care for the animals that come through their doors. Those same staff understand that euthanasia can and does take place and it is fully expected that the animal is euthanized in a humane manner not only for the animal's well-being but also that of the employee(s). Unfortunately, the staff at the El Paso Animal Shelter are then tasked with loading the animals, some in large trash bags but many not, onto a conveyer belt which then drops the animal's body into a dump truck. An animal services attendant then must drive the dump truck to the landfill to dispose of the animals' bodies. This procedure is (or should be) a direct affront on very compassion which the field of animal care requires.



Euthanized animals are also sold to an outside contractor but the purpose of the sales was not discussed.

Recommendation: As the El Paso Animal Shelter is part of Environmental Services, have the Environmental Services personnel that handle trash removal be responsible for the transportation and disposal of the animal carcasses.

Recommendation: As an alternative, contract out for that service to be handled by a third party.

PERSONNEL

A document was provided that listed a total of forty-seven (47) positions as being assigned to the animal shelter with twenty-five (25) of those positions being animal services attendants. The list of positions with employee names does not correlate exactly with the work schedules provided. For example, for the clerical/customer service positions, the following names were not found on the list of employees: Kim Sanchez, Priscilla Hernandez, Barbara Settle, Beatriz Moreno, Christopher Tapia, Antyn Vejil, Sally Singleton, and Paloma Martinez.

Perhaps the biggest issue with the personnel employed at the El Paso Animal Shelter is the lack of any animal experience requirement when applying for a position as an animal services attendant. Rather the minimum qualifications are a high school diploma or GED. This has resulted in a revolving door of animal care staff and a high turnover rate of staff. This turnover of staff creates additional work for the remaining employees and can be mitigated by amending the minimum qualifications. The County of San Diego Department of Animal Service's job description and minimum qualifications for the position of animal care attendant are attached.

On a positive note, the El Paso Animal Services has just hired a foster coordinator. While this is a step forward, community involvement and participation are crucial for this position to be beneficial.

It should also be noted that all of the staff that were interviewed were very pleasant and had a very positive attitude.

Recommendation: Amend the minimum qualifications for the animal services attendant position to require, at a minimum, six (6) months of experience working in a veterinary hospital, humane society or other similar organization. The caring of personal pets should not be considered as meeting the minimum qualification.

Recommendation: Ensure that all staff are trained by an accredited organization in the humane handling of animals.

FORMS

Several forms and documents were obtained during the visit and need to be revised.

The Quarantine Order currently reads "An animal owned, kept, harbored, or under your care, custody or control, has been reported as having been involved in a bite incident or as possibly rabid." The document continues to then reference "said animal". Without a description of the animal on the document, a criminal complaint could not be issued as the officer would be unable to testify that the owner knew which animal was required to be quarantined.

The first selection on the Department's Warning Notice advises an owner that their animal has been impounded and to redeem the animal at the shelter during normal business hours. The form lists the "normal working hours" as "(11:00 am. to 6:00 pm., Monday through Saturday)". Those hours are not consistent with the El Paso Animal Shelter's current operating hours of Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday (10:00 am to 6:00 pm), Wednesday (3:00 pm to 6:00 pm), Saturday (10:00 am to 5:00 pm) and

Sunday (12:00 pm to 5:00 pm). In an effort to provide excellent customer service, the hours need to be amended on the form so as to preclude a person from coming to the shelter when it is actually closed to the public.

Recommendation: Amend the Quarantine Order form to have an area on the document where the description of the animal can be noted. This will remove any ambiguity as to the specific animal to be quarantined.

Recommendation: Amend the Warning Notice to include the proper hours of operation.

MEDIA RELATIONS

In discussions with Dr. Christensen, the media does not cover the animal shelter in a positive light. The vast majority of the public creates an opinion of an agency, be it good or bad, based upon what they hear or read in the media. As such, it is inherent upon the management staff of the shelter to work to create a positive relationship with the media. The shelter staff should be reaching out to the media and asking for their assistance in promoting upcoming adoption events, to highlight successful reunifications of animals or the rescue of an animal from a cruelty or neglect case. This requires that someone on the staff be available at a moment's notice to respond to inquiries from the media and to make themselves available for an interview at any given time.

Recommendation: Whoever is designated as the shelter's Public Information Officer (PIO), should receive training from the City of El Paso's professional communications staff and be trusted to provide the correct information to the media.

Recommendation: As soon as a news-worthy story comes to the attention of the shelter's management staff, the PIO should be contacting the local news, both print and electronic. All stations should be notified at the same time so as to prevent the appearance of preferential treatment being provided to any one media outlet.

Recommendation: If it is not being done so yet, the local television stations should be approached to gauge their interest in having an "adoptable pet" segment on their local news. If this is already being done by the Humane Society of El Paso, a sharing of that opportunity should be explored between the two organizations.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

A key to any successful organization is that the staff knows what they are required to do and, just as importantly, how they can successfully accomplish their duties. While the El Paso Animal Shelter has a policy and procedure manual, the vast majority of staff either does not know of its existence or what the manual contains. The manual should clearly set the expectations of the shelter as well as the repercussions for failure to adhere to the established policies and procedures.

A reflection of any organization is the documentation that it produces. Unfortunately, one portion of the policy manual that was reviewed as part of this report (Section 3 Kennel Operations), is fraught with typographical errors, poor grammar, and poor formatting. For example, Section 3.2 pertaining to Kennels Intake starts with section "A" and then has subsections beginning with "A". One typographical error, as an example, on page two of the document is the word "bitter" when the correct word is "biter".

Section 2 of the manual (Safety Statement) lists the Personal Protective Equipment which is utilized at the shelter (Section 2.1 B). Item "f" of the list is a restraint pole and it reads that the pole "will be used when handling wildlife, stray, quarantined animals or fractious dogs and cats. The restraint pole must be used with gentleness and utilized in the manner taught in the animal control officer training manual." The National Animal Care and Control Association opposes the use of catch poles / restraint poles on cats as they all too often cause injury to the animal.

Recommendation: A complete review and rewrite of the shelters policies and procedures must be undertaken to ensure that the document is well written.

Recommendation: All staff should be issued a copy of the manual and should sign that they have received a copy of the manual. That acknowledgment must be kept in the employee's personnel file to support any subsequent disciplinary action.

Recommendation: Remove the authorized use of restraint poles on cats. Cats should only be captured utilizing such tools as Freeman nets or other similar devices.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play a crucial role in any animal shelter whether it is directly assisting the employees of the shelter or, more importantly, providing a crucial role in the socialization of animals within the shelter.

The El Paso Animal Shelter does have a "V.I.P. Volunteer" program and has a roster of sixty (60) volunteers however, of those, only thirty-five (35) are actively involved at the shelter. According to the list of employees, the shelter currently has one Volunteer Program Coordinator and a vacancy for a second position.

It should be noted that on page two (2) of the actual volunteer application, the document twice asks the question "Have you previously worked for the City of El Paso? If yes, give dates, City Department and reasons for your separation in REMARKS below." This is both the first and last question on page two.

Recommendation: Hire a second Volunteer Program Coordinator.

Recommendation: Remove the duplicative language in the volunteer application.

STATISTICS / COMPUTER RECORDS

As a government agency, any records created by the El Paso Animal Shelter could be subject to release and the public has an expectation to see the statistics from the shelter to evaluate the shelter's efforts to improve the live release rate of animals.

On the El Paso Animal Services' website the only statistics available are for calendar years 2011 and 2012. For calendar year 2011, the shelter took in a total of 31,852 animals. Of those, 24,465 animals were euthanized and 6,977 were released (either adopted, returned to owner, or transferred). By adding those two sets of numbers, you get a total of 31,442 or a difference of 410 animals from the total number of impounds. By comparing the total number of animals released to the total number of animals impounded, the shelter's live release or "save rate" was 21.9% for 2011.

For calendar year 2012, the shelter took in 33,327 animals. A total of 25,334 animals were euthanized and the statistics show a total of 7,734 animals released. The statistics are further broken down to show 3,016 animals were returned to their owners and 4,731 were transferred. Assuming that these two numbers are what comprise the "animals released" statistic, the numbers do not add up. Rather those two numbers add up to 7,747. The live release or "save rate" for calendar year calculates to 23.2%.

No statistics are available on-line for calendar year 2013.

For calendar year 2014, a Summary Report was provided that breaks down the impounds and dispositions by jurisdiction and animal type. The report shows a total of 31,344 animals impounded for calendar year 2014 with the vast majority of the animals, 26,248, coming from the City of El Paso. The remaining sixteen (16) percent came from the other jurisdictions. While minor in number, a total of seventeen (17) animals were impounded with no jurisdiction identified. In addition, a total of one hundred (100) animals were entered into the computer system with no animal type. The capture of these two simple pieces of information should be automatic and the failure to capture the information calls into question the efficacy of the database currently being used. The Summary Report details a total of 10,389 animal releases and 16,311 animals being euthanized. Despite assistance provided by the El Paso Animal Shelter, clarity could still not be obtained regarding the discrepancy between the numbers of animals impounded and those either released or euthanized (a total of 4,644 animals).

The El Paso Animal Shelter previously utilized the Chameleon database which was designed specifically for animal shelter management. The shelter has since utilized a database system which was created for the issuance of permits in the Environmental Services Department. According to staff, as the new program is web-based, the system does slow down considerably when multiple people are accessing the site. In addition, according to the clerical staff at the front counter, the only way to research an animal is with the kennel number. If a person inquired as to whether or not their animal came in from a specific zip code or community, the existing database is unable to search for such information.

Recommendation: The shelter must move back to a database system that is specifically designed for animal shelter management purposes. The shelter should investigate going back to Chameleon or utilize Shelter Buddy or other animal database.

Recommendation: Whatever database the shelter moves to, it must require that the jurisdiction and animal type (as well as any other important fields) be required to be completed for a record to be stored in the system. This will eliminate the “unknown” types of animals and “unknown” jurisdictions and allow for better tracking of records.

Recommendation: The shelter needs to utilize a different form to report the statistics, either by utilizing the Asilomar form² or a different intake and disposition form for each jurisdiction and animal type.

² http://www.asilomaraccords.org/statistics_and_formulas/annual_animal_statistics_table_template_2-07.pdf

FINAL COMMENTS

The El Paso Animal Shelter should be commended for their understanding that the situation cannot continue as exists today. Simply put, the shelter is euthanizing an inordinate number of animals and things must change for the welfare of the animals within the community. This will not be an easy fix but rather will require the cooperation of the shelter, the City of El Paso, the other communities serviced by the shelter, the Texas Veterinary Medical Association, the local veterinary hospitals, local rescue groups, and the public. All must have a role in increasing the number of animals that are spayed or neutered within the community, the reduction of the number of animals coming in to the shelter and the increase in the number of animals reunited with their owners or adopted into new homes.

For those animals that do end up at the El Paso Animal Shelter, the shelter should strive to meet the guidelines established by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians for the care of the animals while at the shelter (<http://www.sheltervet.org/assets/docs/shelter-standards-oct2011-wforward.pdf>). It is understood that these are only guidelines and not every animal shelter can meet those guidelines, but they should be looked upon as goals for the El Paso Animal Shelter.

The County of San Diego Department of Animal Services is willing to provide any additional assistance, forms, policies, guidance, etc. that the El Paso Animal Shelter needs to help it accomplish its goal of reducing euthanasia at their shelter.

Appendix F

Animal Services Recommended Facility Improvements

Animal Services Facility Improvements

Budgeted Year	Project Location	Description	Est. Cost
1	Play Area	artificial grass - 6000 sq ft with 800 sq ft cobbles, & amenities	\$49,000
1	Adoption Area		\$44,600
1	Sally Port		\$43,800
1	Main Entrance		\$95,300
1	Appliances	dishwasher and washer/dryer	\$18,800
1	Quarantine Room (s)	Room A - Needs - Negative Pressure Ventilation	\$4,000
			\$255,500
2	Roof drains on Kennel "C"	exterior work	\$1,400
2	Adoption Van	van	\$220,000
2	Atrium	skylight	\$82,000
			\$303,400
3	Add'l Off Space	2300 square feet	\$345,000
		Total Year 1	\$255,500
		Total Year 2	\$303,400
		Total Year 3	\$345,000
	PROJECT TOTAL		\$903,900
		Contingence Plus 20 %	\$180,780
	GRAND TOTAL		\$1,084,680