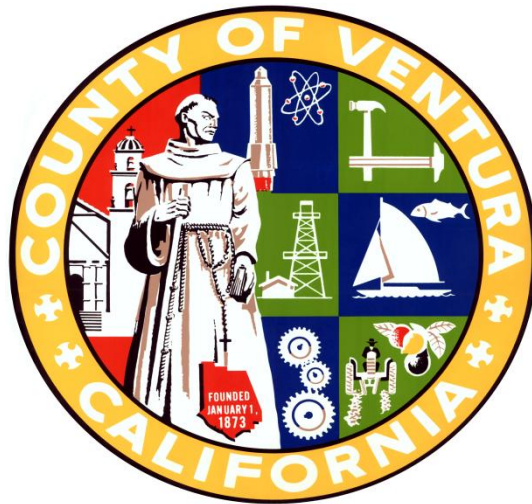


# **Ventura County Grand Jury 2011 - 2012**



## **Final Report**

### **Ventura County Animal Services Department**

**June 12, 2012**

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## **Ventura County Animal Services Department**

### **Summary**

The 2011–2012 Ventura County Grand Jury (Jury or Grand Jury) opened an inquiry into the policies, procedures, operations, and practices of the Ventura County Animal Services Department (Department). This inquiry was conducted on the basis of newspaper articles discussing activities of the Department and various citizen complaints directed at perceived practice and policy deficiencies of the Department.

The Grand Jury interviewed numerous persons with respect to the various subjects of the inquiry. The Grand Jury examined the practices and written policies of the Department as well as Department records and records of its suppliers and contractors. The Grand Jury visited Department facilities to observe and inspect the premises to ascertain the coherence of written policy to practice.

The Jury found that the Department has had, since 2010, excellent and well-thought-out “Strategic Plans-Mission Statements.” The Department has made substantial improvement under its post-May 2008 management by pursuing those plans. [Ref-08, 12] Moreover, the Department’s Strategic Goals reviews have pinpointed many of the critical problems underlying its operational difficulties. It is apparent to the Grand Jury that the Department has moved to address these problems and that continuing efforts are underway to further alleviate them. However, the Grand Jury also concluded that some of the noted difficulties appear to persist in some form and, as a practical matter, seem intractable. In addition, the Grand Jury found new difficulties which are in need of continuing management attention.

The Grand Jury discovered that a central factor in many of the Department’s perceived difficulties is the fact that the Department operates a service—whose principal mandated mission is the control of rabies and the health and safety of the public *vis a vis* the animal population of Ventura County (County). [Ref-01–03] This mandated service and the Department’s collateral services require continuous interaction with a public that is active in advocacy for the preservation of animal life as well as for the humane treatment of the animals. [Ref-04–07, 12] This situation has created tension and a degree of separation between elements of the public and the Department. [Ref-04–06] To an indeterminable degree, this tension has interfered with the Department’s ability to efficiently perform its mission.

From its inquiries and observations the Jury concluded that, despite difficulties observed in the Department’s performance of their mission, personnel are dedicated, compassionate, and caring toward their charges. Objective evidence of this compassion and care is displayed in observed “empathy fatigue” on the part of Department employees in the euthanizing chain and in the efforts of management to expand its adoption outreach programs.

The principal issue leading to tension between public advocates and the Department is the continuing effort of a segment of the “animal rescue” public to require the County to declare its shelter (Shelter) a “No Kill” Shelter. [Ref-04–07] The Department has publically expressed sympathy with a “No Kill” philosophy and appears to be working toward that status. [Ref-08] However, after careful consideration and inquiry, the Grand Jury has concluded that as a practical matter—considering the physical plant and budgetary outlays required to effect a “No Kill” County Shelter—the accomplishment of a “No Kill” Shelter goal is problematic.

Public “No Kill” advocacy pressure and the practical requirement to euthanize animals in Department care has resulted in observed low Department morale and “empathy fatigue.” [Ref-05] Moreover, Department management has apparently succumbed to a “siege mentality” in its communication with the public and in its intra-governmental relationships. This mentality has been detrimental to the Department’s mission, image and effectiveness. [Ref-20]

With respect to Department euthanasia practice, the Grand Jury found that despite a current increasing intake of dogs, the rate of dogs euthanized by the Department has decreased since 2008. [Ref-09–11] This reflects other findings concerning Department activities; foremost, the Department’s enlistment of rescue groups to partner adoption offerings to the public and its own Shelter emphasis on adoption. [Ref-07, 08, 12]

The Jury considered several factors that impact the rates of euthanasia for dogs, cats, and other animals. Among these are “holding times”—mandated by the State (seventy-two hours), versus Department established holding periods (five business days) and, of course, the Shelter’s limited holding capacity. [Ref-14] (Att-05) Moreover, there are added time restrictions on adoptions of some dog classifications due to the Department’s “unique” County Shelter’s home inspections policy, e.g., “pit bulls.” (Att-05)

Although the Grand Jury understands the present necessity to outsource the spaying and neutering functions and the emergency off-hours medical trauma function—given the limited availability of the single County Veterinarian—the Grand Jury found that the cost to the Department for these outsourced functions is significant. Accordingly, the Grand Jury recommends that the County Executive Office (CEO) conduct a study to determine the economic feasibility of returning outsourced Shelter work to the Department and hiring a second County Veterinarian. To provide better service to the public, the Grand Jury is of the opinion that bringing these functions in-house with adequate medical personnel, would improve medical services, and result in more efficient use of medical personnel and existing medical facilities.

In addition, the following are a few of the other Grand Jury recommendations for the Department:

- make inoculation of all incoming dogs with the Bordetella vaccine a permanent policy

- expedite construction of the planned and budgeted intake facility
- exercise more direct control and require more accountability of the medical section with respect to hours of work, overtime, vehicle usage and other non-medical policies and practices
- institute biannual *mandatory* Employee Assistance Program (EAP) *counter stress technique training* for all personnel involved in the euthanizing process, including administrative “list makers”

Prior to the Jury undertaking its inquiry, some Jury-listed recommendations were in process at the Department’s initiative. The Grand Jury recommends that these Department actions be expedited.

## **Background**

The Grand Jury opened an inquiry into the policies, procedures, operations, and practices of the Department. This inquiry was conducted on the basis of newspaper articles discussing activities of the Department and various citizen complaints directed at perceived practice and policy deficiencies of the Department.

## **Methodology**

The Grand Jury interviewed numerous persons with respect to the various subjects of the inquiry.\* Those interviewed included interested citizens, experts in the relevant fields of inquiry, county employees, and various service suppliers having relevant connections to the subject inquiry. The Grand Jury examined the practices and written policies of the Department as well as records of the Department and its suppliers and contractors. The Grand Jury visited Department facilities to observe and inspect the premises to ascertain the coherence of written policy to practice. In addition, the Jury visited and inspected animal shelter facilities in other counties. The Grand Jury also considered current and historical newspaper articles and comments. The Grand Jury sought and received best practices information from impartial experts in shelter care and governance and used reliable Internet sources for public records.

\*With respect to public release of information by the Civil Grand Jury, the California Penal Code provides that: “. . . the name of any person, or facts that lead to the identity of any person who provided information to the grand jury, *shall not be released. . . .*” (Pen. Code § 929) (italics added)

## **Facts**

**FA-01.** The Department has issued two “Strategic Plans-Mission Statements” since 2008. (Att-01)

**FA-02.** The mandated mission of the Department is the control of rabies and the health and safety of the public *vis a vis* the animal population of Ventura County. [Ref-01-03]

- FA-03.** The Department has made substantial improvement in its operations since May 2008. [Ref-11, 12] (Att-01, 03)
- FA-04.** The Department outsources all spaying and neutering services for animals taken into the shelter where such services are required by policy or requested by owners.
- FA-05.** The Department outsources most animal injury emergencies for severe injuries and all nighttime injuries.
- FA-06.** A single Department veterinarian, on a continuing basis, cannot physically perform all daytime required Shelter veterinarian services when spaying and neutering surgeries are required.
- FA-07.** A single Department veterinarian cannot, on a continuing basis, physically attend all nighttime-required Department veterinarian services.
- FA-08.** The Shelter operating theater is not used for spaying and neutering surgeries.
- FA-09.** The Department's ancillary adoption service function requires continual Department interaction with the "animal rescue" and adoption public. [Ref-04-07]
- FA-10.** There is a segment of the animal rescue community who advocate the Department's immediate adoption of a "No Kill" policy and the designation and operation of the Shelter as a "No Kill" Shelter. [Ref-04-07]
- FA-11.** The Department has publicly stated its sympathy with the principles of the "No Kill" concept and has voiced its intention to work toward accomplishment of that goal. [Ref-08] (Att-03)
- FA-12.** At the present, mandatory animal intake levels, kennel space limitations, and citizen adoption rate, prevent the Department from achieving "No Kill" status.
- FA-13.** In year 2010 the Department's euthanasia rate for dogs entering the shelter was 30%. The Department's euthanasia rate for felines entering the shelter was 65%. The Department's overall euthanasia rate for dogs and cats was 40%. The estimated (human) population of Ventura County in 2011 was 830,215 (12<sup>th</sup> by size in California). [Ref-09-11]
- FA-14.** In year 2010 only two county shelters of California's 58 counties—which, like the Department, are required to accept all animals presented or caught—reported being true "No Kill" shelters. These counties, Sierra and Alpine, had a 2011 population (human) of 3,179 and 1,109, respectively. [Ref-09, 11]
- FA-15.** Despite an increase in mandatory animal intake figures, the Department euthanasia rate of dogs has decreased. [Ref-11, 12]

- FA-16.** California law sets time standards for “holding time” prior to the euthanizing or release of an animal. [Ref-14]
- FA-17.** Department “holding time” in many cases exceeds minimum State required “holding times.”
- FA-18.** The Department has instituted many animal adoption efforts on its own initiative and has coordinated others in conjunction with local private animal rescue groups. [Ref-12] (Att-01, 03)
- FA-19.** Bordetella inoculation of dogs in shelters is recommended by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV). [Ref-13] (Att-02)
- FA-20.** Bordetella inoculation of dogs entering the Shelter is not a matter of permanent policy of the Department. (Att-04)
- FA-21.** The necessity for Bordetella vaccine in shelters is agreed upon by visited shelter personnel, interviewed technical personnel, medical personnel (save one), the ASV, and various rescue groups. [Ref-06, 07, 13] (Att-02)
- FA-22.** Cost of the Bordetella vaccine is low (approximately \$2.00–\$5.00 per dose) for county shelters. This cost may be further reduced with grants from private groups.
- FA-23.** Beginning in December 2011, a grant-funded Bordetella vaccine was administered by the Department on a temporary basis to dogs not considered “too aggressive.” (Att-04)
- FA-24.** Inoculation of dogs with the Bordetella vaccine facilitates placement and care after adoption. [Ref-06]
- FA-25.** Inoculation of dogs with the Bordetella vaccine facilitates kennel sharing. [Ref-13] (Att-02)
- FA-26.** Inoculation of dogs with the Bordetella vaccine reduces risk of kennel infection (“kennel cough”) from this particular virus. [Ref-13] (Att-02)
- FA-27.** The Department’s “unique” Home Inspection Procedure for some breeds requires the absence of trained personnel from other important Shelter duties. (Att-05)
- FA-28.** From November 1, 2010, to November 17, 2011, there were 309 home inspections performed for dog adoptions. Of these, approximately 192 were approved for adoption and 40 were disapproved. Those remaining were either cancelled or pending as of November 17, 2011.
- FA-29.** Of the 309 home inspections for dogs, 190 (61.5%) of the dogs were identified as “pit bull” and 37 (12%) were identified by other classifications which included the word “bull.”
- FA-30.** No other California county-owned shelter, visited or interviewed, has a home inspection program.
- FA-31.** Some private breeders of recognized breeds conduct home inspections.

- FA-32.** The Department utilizes and trains volunteers to assist in the Shelter's activities.
- FA-33.** Volunteers are disappointed and frustrated with the Shelter's lengthy "no-hands-on" training, regardless of animal handling experience. In addition, they are unhappy about not being assigned "inside-trust" work, in contrast to other public and private shelters observed by the Jury.
- FA-34.** The public has voiced its perception that Department delay in Internet posting—sparse information, absence of important information, poor quality or no photos—has resulted in lower rates of adoption and increased euthanasia rates. [Ref-06, 07]
- FA-35.** Personnel at all shelters visited and members of the public share the view that prompt, complete, and accurate posting of animal data, along with a fetching photograph of an animal, is critical to prompt adoption of a pet regardless of its "adoptability."
- FA-36.** In comparison to other professionally-maintained animal adoption Internet sites that were viewed, the Jury judged the Department's site—which has no dedicated professional site Webmaster—to be average.
- FA-37.** A planned and budgeted one-stop in-take process facility has been designed to expedite input of Internet descriptive breed data, medical data, and photo entry in the registration process with a goal to facilitate adoption of animals and to reduce errors and delay in the intake process.
- FA-38.** Delay in the availability and presentation of an animal for adoption, for any reason, decreases the animal's chance for adoption and increases the likelihood of its being euthanized because of mandatory animal intake acceptance requirements, rates of adoption, holding times, and holding space.
- FA-39.** Shelter personnel have low morale with indications of apparent "empathy fatigue" by those associated with the euthanasia process.
- FA-40.** Upon management application, the Ventura County Employee Assistance Program can present relevant group training to County personnel on matters that may affect the health and well-being of employees. [Ref-15]
- FA-41.** Housing more than one animal in a single unit poses medical and social risks. [Ref-13] (Att-02)
- FA-42.** There are ASV guidelines for selection of animals for group housing. [Ref-13] (Att-02)
- FA-43.** The Grand Jury visited and contacted public shelters which house multiple compatible animals in single units to increase holding capacity.
- FA-44.** The public has complained of inadequate group housing; poor selection of animals for group housing; and animal stress produced by kennel co-location of incompatible breed groupings. [Ref-05-07]



- FA-45.** There are risks and benefits of group housing. [Ref-13] (Att-02)
- FA-46.** Selective mixing of compatible and socialized animals of same or similar size and breed has proved successful in other shelters and has increased the capacity of shelters to reduce euthanasia pressure.
- FA-47.** Holding animals in large population shelters results in animal stress. [Ref-13] (Att-02)
- FA-48.** Placing large dog(s) in kennels adjoining kennels holding small dog(s) results in added stress for both groups.
- FA-49.** Dogs are more likely to be judged aggressive or hyperactive on intake when stressed by the presence of other dogs, or when they are evaluated for “temperament” in the presence or vicinity of other dogs.
- FA-50.** Dogs classified as aggressive or hyperactive are less likely to be adopted than those not so classified.
- FA-51.** Dogs classified as aggressive or hyperactive are more likely to be euthanized than those not so classified.
- FA-52.** In the processing of animal intake, adoption administration is dependent on the “Medical Release” as well as accurate and complete intake medical data, which has been found—in some anonymous case entries—to be sparse, incomplete, inaccurate, or wrong for a given dog.
- FA-53.** The Shelter Medical section functions independently with little or no administrative management control of work schedule and attendance, performance accountability and resource usage, including vehicle usage and storage. Public comment asserts that intra-Department scheduling conflicts have unnecessarily delayed and interfered with some adoption activities.
- FA-54.** Shelter adoption process requires excessive “line-time” and frequent multiple line visits for a single day adoption
- FA-55.** When a phone call is placed to the Department, the Shelter’s opening recorded message takes more than two and a half minutes.
- FA-56.** “Pit bull,” is not a breed. [Ref-16]
- FA-57.** A dog’s Shelter breed description is assigned the dog during its intake process by “experience-trained” intake personnel exercising their subjective judgment. The “breed description” assigned is based on the dog’s configuration—in the case of a “pit bull” label, size, facial characteristics (jaw and head size) and body configuration characteristics akin to those of the Staffordshire Terrier and American Staffordshire Terrier breeds.
- FA-58.** Several dog adoption facilities classifying dogs bearing “pit bull mix” physical features, make a judgment based on the prevailing breed of the dog and classify the dog primarily as that breed, e.g., “Boxer pit bull,”

“Brindle pit bull,” “American Staffordshire Terrier,” “pit bull terrier mix,” rather than merely labeled “pit bull mix.”

- FA-59.** There are known dog classification experts in the County who are willing to volunteer to assist in the formal training of classifiers and to assist in classification.
- FA-60.** The Department has recommended that the County and each city pass an ordinance mandating the neutering and spaying of “pit bull mix” dogs as determined by the Department to be “pit bull mixes.” [Ref-18] (Att-07)
- FA-61.** Mandatory spaying and neutering ordinances are controversial, despite the fact that as many as eleven California counties have passed such ordinances. [Ref-17, Ref-18] (Att-06)
- FA-62.** The proposed ordinance would apply to all “pit bulls”—as defined in the proposed ordinance—in the jurisdiction of the adopting legislative body, with the exception of five restricted categories. [Ref-18] (Att-07)
- FA-63.** Pit bull type dogs excepted by the proposed ordinance from mandatory spaying and neutering are:
- dogs under sixteen weeks of age
  - pure-bred Staffordshire Bull Terrier, American Pit Bull Terrier, or American Staffordshire Terrier, recognized by and registered with one of several listed national registry organizations
  - dogs used by law enforcement or for law enforcement purposes
  - dogs with such infirmities, or of such an age, that there is a high likelihood it would suffer death or serious bodily injury by the surgery, if confirmed in writing by a licensed veterinarian
  - dogs under appeal as set forth in the proposed ordinance
- [Ref-18] (Att-07)
- FA-64.** The ordinance proposed by the Department is based on the Los Angeles model and provides for non-compliance fines of up to \$100.00, plus administrative fees, and up to \$500.00 for continued violations. [Ref-18] (Att-07)
- FA-65.** Under the proposed ordinance, appeals from the “pit bull” classification determination by the Department may be appealed within five days to the Department’s Director, or his or her designee, whose decision would be final. [Ref-18] (Att-07)
- FA-66.** Information concerning the meetings, composition, activities, policies and procedures of the Ventura County Animal Services Commission (VCASC) is obscure and difficult to obtain.

- FA-67.** Information relative to the VCASC is buried in the Department's Internet site under a reference to "About Us," and is referred to as the Ventura Animal Regulation Commission, an out-of-date reference.
- FA-68.** Presently, the VCASC has only posted the current agenda, some minutes, no information about the VCASC's mission or membership, and gives no contact information.
- FA-69.** Public and city personnel—having a reason or duty to interface with Department management—believe there is a "siege mentality" at the Department which results in poor communication on the part of the Department administration. [Ref-20]

## **Findings**

- FI-01.** Since 2010, the Department has had, and presently has, excellent and well thought-out "Strategic Plans-Mission Statements." (FA-01)
- FI-02.** The Department has made substantial improvement under its post-May 2008 management. (FA-03)
- FI-03.** The Department operates a service whose principal mandated mission is the control of rabies and the health and safety of the public. (FA-02)
- FI-04.** The Department's mandated mission and collateral services put the Department in close and personal contact with the public. (FA-09)
- FI-05.** The humane treatment of animals and the euthanizing of animals is a focus point of many County citizens and is the subject of extensive newspaper coverage. (FA-09, 10)
- FI-06.** The Department's mandated mission and collateral services bring the Department into conflict with elements of "animal-rescue" public. (FA-10)
- FI-07.** The Department outsources all shelter spaying and neutering services required or requested. (FA-04)
- FI-08.** The Department outsources emergency services for animal injuries and nighttime animal incidents. (FA-05)
- FI-09.** The Department is understaffed for medical and technical personnel considering its volume of required animal intake and services. (FA-06, 07)
- FI-10.** One veterinarian cannot, over time, physically perform all day and night veterinarian medical services of the Shelter. (FA-04-07)
- FI-11.** The Department's "unique" County Shelter Home Inspection Procedure requires the absence of trained personnel from other Shelter duties. (FA-27, 30)
- FI-12.** Internet posting of information of animal adoption candidates—their photo, medical information, breed, size, configuration, and

temperament—is critical to the time-line of an animal’s adoption and survival. (FA-34, 35)

- FI-13.** The Department has difficulty in the timely and thorough servicing of its animal adoption Internet service. (Ref-34, 36)
- FI-14.** The Department lacks professionally-trained personnel to maintain its Internet site. (FA-36)
- FI-15.** Department personnel involved in the euthanasia process evidence low morale and “empathy fatigue.” (FA-39)
- FI-16.** Stress reduction training is available to County organizations and individual employees through the EAP. (FA-40)
- FI-17.** The use of the Bordetella vaccine for dogs has become standardized in animal care facilities in the United States. (FA-19, 21)
- FI-18.** The Bordetella inoculation of intake dogs is not a matter of permanent policy of the Department. (FA-20)
- FI-19.** The Department has not budgeted for the purchase of the Bordetella vaccine, though it has accepted a temporary grant to inoculate certain dogs. (FA-23)
- FI-20.** A planned and budgeted “one-stop process” animal intake facility is scheduled. (FA-37)
- FI-21.** The Department utilizes and trains volunteers to assist in the Shelter’s activities. Department volunteer training is lengthy, with “no-hands-on” —regardless of animal handling experience—and volunteers rarely are used for “inside-trust” work. (FA-33)
- FI-22.** Other shelters train volunteers with progressive hands-on animal involvement and utilize some volunteers for inside administrative tasks facilitating non-animal-contact duties and increasing shelter efficiency. (FA-33)
- FI-23.** Restrictive dog group housing procedures have resulted in less than optimal use of kennel space and unnecessary animal stress. (FA-42–FA-44)
- FI-24.** The Department relies on experience-training for Shelter personnel, who often identify “pit bull mix” characteristics without identifying what kind of “mix” is suggested, when classifying Shelter and Internet breed descriptions. (FA-57–59)
- FI-25.** The Medical Section of the Department operates autonomously with minimal supervision from the administration with respect to scheduling, work hour accountability, and resource usage, including vehicle usage and storage. (FA-52)
- FI-26.** Scheduling of medical functions affects the continuity and efficiency of Shelter adoption processes. (FA-52, 53)

- FI-27.** At times, entry of medical information and other action data into Shelter software is not entered contemporaneously with the service performed and is often entered by other than the actors. (FA-52)
- FI-28.** Data entered into Shelter software by other than the actor responsible for the entry avoids accountability and may be incomplete. (FA-52)
- FI-29.** The Department's proposed mandatory "Spaying and Neutering of Pitt Bulls" legislation affects all owners of dogs in legislated city and County areas who own dogs with "pit bull" physical features. (FA-60-65)
- FI-30.** Under the proposed ordinances, classification of mixed breeds labeled as "pit bulls" is to be subjectively and finally judged by the Department. (FA-60-65)
- FI-31.** Persons owning dogs judged to be "pit bull mixes" are subject to fines for not having had spay or neuter surgery performed on their dogs. (FA-60-65)
- FI-32.** Adoption of the proposed legislation will increase the work load of Shelter officers. (FA-60-65)
- FI-33.** The proposed legislation provides for an appeal process whereby, on appeal, the Department's appellate decision of its own field classification decision is final. (FA-60-65)
- FI-34.** Under the legislation, the prior social history of the animal under consideration is irrelevant. (FA-60-65)
- FI-35.** Unnecessary, time-consuming adoption processing delays, repeated and prolonged line visits, and an indifferent "Shelter attitude" are often encountered by the public at the Shelter service counter. (FA-54)
- FI-36.** The Shelter's telephone answering service takes an inordinate amount of time to provide contact options and does not allow for personal contact. (FA-55)
- FI-37.** The VCASC discloses almost no Internet information and what little information is posted, is difficult to find. (FA-66-68)
- FI-38.** Department management has seriously detracted from its effectiveness and mission by poor communication evidencing a "siege mentality." (FA-69)

## **Recommendations**

- R-01.** That the County Executive Office conduct a study to determine the economic feasibility of returning outsourced Shelter work to the Department and hiring a second County veterinarian. (FI-07-10)
- R-02.** That the Department bring outsourced services in-house and hire a second County veterinarian. (FI-09, 10)
- R-03.** That the Department institute inoculation of all incoming dogs with the Bordetella vaccine as a permanent policy. (FI-17-19)

- R-04.** That the Department expedite the completion of the planned and budgeted "one-stop" intake facility. (FI-20)
- R-05.** That the Department employ an expert Internet website maintenance employee, or utilize an expert site maintenance volunteer, to improve and maintain its website. (FI-12-14)
- R-06.** That the Department administration exercise more direct control and require more accountability of the medical section with respect to hours of work, overtime, vehicle usage, on-call, and other non-medical policies and practices. (FI-25-28)
- R-07.** That the Department institute biannual mandatory Employee Assistance Program *counter stress technique training* for all personnel involved with the euthanizing process, including administrative "list makers." (FI-15, 16)
- R-08.** That the Department eliminate its "unique" Shelter home inspections policy and better utilize trained personnel for core Shelter duties. (FI-09, 11, 32)
- R-09.** That the Department reach out to volunteer breed experts and breed classifiers to better train Shelter personnel to more accurately judge breed mixes and act, at times, for the Shelter in classifying dogs on intake and for Internet descriptions. (FI-12, 24, 29-32)
- R-10.** That the Department include with every "pit bull mix" classification, the suspected "mix" breed in the Shelter and Internet description. (FI-12, 24)
- R-11.** That the Department work to improve the selection of compatible breeds in order to increase common kenneling. (FI-23)
- R-12.** That the Department take better care to avoid collocating breeds in kennels likely to bring stress upon one another. (FI-23)
- R-13.** That the Department redesign its telephone answering service to reduce the categories of options presented. (FI-36)
- R-14.** That the Department afford clients in a same-day single adoption transaction a "head of the line" pass when a second or third line wait is required as part of the transaction. (FI-35)
- R-15.** That the Department revise the training program for volunteers to progressively introduce hands-on animal contact during the training. (FI-21, 22)
- R-16.** That the Department train and utilize competent volunteers to undertake substantive internal administrative duties as well as animal contact duties. (FI-21, 22)

- R-17.** That the Department revise its proposed mandatory “pit bull” spay and neuter ordinance program to cover only dogs brought, or caught and brought, to the Shelter. (FI-29–31)
- R-18.** That the Department revise its proposed mandatory “pit bull” spay and neuter ordinance program appeal process to include an “outside” review by a three-person hearing panel of volunteer breed experts not in the employ of the County—including at least one volunteer veterinarian—in lieu of Department review of its own earlier decision. (FI-33)
- R-19.** That the Ventura County Animal Services Commission raise its public visibility by having a clear Internet reference; and by posting its membership, mission, direct contact points, agenda, minutes, meeting schedules and locations. (FI-37)
- R-20.** That the Board of Supervisors take cognizance of the public’s extensive interest in the humane treatment of animals and raise the level of support for the Department in order to meet the public’s expectations of that treatment. (FI-04–06, 29)
- R-21.** That the Board of Supervisors provide sufficient additional funds to permit the hiring of a second veterinarian and an Internet maintenance specialist, and to pay for necessary Bordetella vaccine. (FI-09, 10, 17–19)
- R-22.** That management leadership review their communication and leadership skills by utilizing custom-designed EAP training to enhance those skills, avoid a “siege mentality,” and consequently, to increase the effectiveness of the Department and its public and intra-governmental image. (FI-38)

## **Responses**

### Responses Required From:

Board of Supervisors (R-20, R-21)

### Responses Requested From:

Animal Services Department (FI-03–21, 23–27, 29–36, 38) (R-02–18, 22)

County Executive Office (FI-07, 08) (R-01, 04, 05)

Ventura County Animal Services Commission (FI-37) (R-19)

### For Information Only:

Ventura County Public Health Department

## **Commendations**

1. The Ventura County Animal Services Department is to be praised and encouraged to continue in its efforts to become a model shelter despite a tightened budget, restricted personnel hiring, and the burgeoning dependent Ventura County animal population.

2. The public advocates reflected in this report are also to be encouraged to continue their efforts to seek compassionate and humane treatment for those unfortunate animals who live amongst us and who are without advocates, and to continue to demonstrate that Ventura County is a caring and civilized society.

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## **Attachments**

- Att-01.** Ventura County Animal Services 2010-2013 Strategic Plan and "SWOT Analysis" January 2012 Update
- Att-02.** Extract from "Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters," 3 pp, *The Association of Shelter Veterinarians 2010*
- Att-03.** Ventura County Animal Services "Working Toward Zero and the No Kill Equation"
- Att-04.** COUNTY OF VENTURA ANIMAL SERVICES, MEMORANDUM, December 5, 2011
- Att-05.** Department of Animal Services Policies and Procedures Manual Number 9-1, Animal Adoptions
- Att-06.** Public letter to Ventura County Animal Services Commission
- Att-07.** Proposed Addition to Chapter 4 (Animals) of Division 4 of the Ventura County Ordinance Code

## **Disclaimer**

This report is issued by the 2011-2012 Ventura County Grand Jury. Due to a potential conflict of interest, a member of this Grand Jury was excused from participating in any aspect of the production of this report.

## **Glossary**

<b><u>TERM</u></b>	<b><u>DEFINITION</u></b>
"Animal rescue public"	Members of the public active in efforts to prevent euthanasia of animals through adoption efforts
ASV	Association of Shelter Veterinarians
Bordetella vaccine	A vaccine given to dogs to prevent a certain highly contagious upper respiratory infection
Breed description	A classification given an animal during the intake process based on similarity to physical characteristics of breeds commonly recognized by leading animal certifying societies
Breed selection	Classification assigned to a dog when entering the shelter and used in adoption processing
CEO	County Executive Office
County	Ventura County
Department	Ventura County Animal Services Department.
EAP	Ventura County Employee Assistance Program
Empathy fatigue	Emotional detachment brought about by prolonged emotional exposure
Experience trained	Trained as part of on-the-job experience rather than through formal training
Grand Jury	2011–2012 Ventura County Grand Jury
Head of the line	Next in line for service
Holding time[s]	Time limitations stated or required before an animal may be released or euthanized
Inside-trust	Substantive administrative tasks bearing responsible duties
Kennel cough	A highly contagious canine illness characterized by inflammation of the upper respiratory system
Line-time	Time spent in the counter service line at the Shelter

<b><u>TERM</u></b>	<b><u>DEFINITION</u></b>
List drawers	Personnel composing the list of animals to be euthanized
List makers	Persons involved in compiling lists of animals for euthanasia
Medical release	Clearance of a Shelter animal for release by the County Veterinarian
Mix	The different breed characteristics of a mongrel dog
No Kill	A policy where no animal, other than severely injured, old and severely ill or intractably vicious animals, are put to death
One-Stop process	A process where all of a series of required intake steps are performed serially at one time
Pen. Code	Penal Code
Pit Bull	A dog classification based on physical characteristics; not a breed
Rescue group	A citizen civil advocacy organization whose goal is to prevent the euthanasia of animals through pet adoption
Shelter	Ventura County Animal Services Department Camarillo animal shelter facility
Siege mentality	A state of mind whereby one believes that one is being constantly attacked, oppressed, or isolated; or the belief among a group of people that everyone else is in opposition to them and they must protect themselves
Single unit kennel	A subdivision kennel of limited space often designed to hold one animal
Strategic Plan	Department, 1 January 2012, Strategic Plan
SWOT	Department "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats" analysis
True "No Kill" shelters	County shelters that have reported to the State that no animals had been euthanized for a year

**TERM**

**DEFINITION**

Unique home visit  
program

A VCASD program for home visitation of prospective adopters of certain dogs said by VCASD to be unique in California county shelters

VCASC

Ventura County Animal Services Commission having cognizance over the VCASD

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## **Attachment 01**

### **Ventura County Animal Services 2010 – 2013 Strategic Plan and “SWOT Analysis” January 2012 Update**

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**Ventura County Animal Services  
2010 - 2013  
Strategic Plan**

**January 2012 Update**

**Our Mission:** Our Mission is to improve the lives of the animals under our care, to be timely and compassionate in our response to customer issues, to educate through community outreach and public awareness, and to provide for the health and safety of the citizens and animals of Ventura County.

**Our Vision:** Ventura County Animal Services will be a catalyst in working toward a future where everyone is a responsible pet owner, there are no unwanted pets, and the rabies virus is no longer a menace to animals and humans.

**Our Values**

Ventura County Animal Services supports its Mission by being:

- **Ethical**  
We serve the citizens and animals of Ventura County in a professional manner, with honesty and respect.
- **Efficient**  
We use both organizational and environmental resources wisely in the provision and delivery of our services.
- **Creative**  
We seek innovative solutions to bring about effective, quality resolution to issues and problems.
- **Honest**  
We are open and honor our commitments to the community and each other. Our actions are consistent with what we say.
- **Compassionate**  
We have concern for the animals in our care, and empathy with the public on issues dealing with lost animals, relinquishment and nuisance complaints.
- **Dedicated**  
We are dedicated toward enforcement of animal laws, education, animal sheltering and re-homing.

**Strategic Goal 1.0**  
**Reduce Overcrowding in the Kennels**

Overcrowding continues to be the number one reason for euthanasia of animals at our shelter. Large numbers also lead to the spread of infectious disease to all of the kennel population. This in turn taxes the veterinary resources we have to maintain the health of the animals.

**Objectives:**

- 1.1 Implement changes in policies and programs that will move animals through our system more quickly - from the time they arrive at the shelter to adoption.

- 1.1.1 Initiate a change in the Return-to-Owner (RTO) policy, reducing the hold days from 14 to 10. With microchips and emails, owners are notified within the first 24 hours. Experience has shown that only a small percentage of owners reclaim their animals after it has been held for ten days.

**UPDATE:** Change implemented in January 2010.

- 1.1.2 Increase the number of days the spay/neuter veterinarians are on site in proportion to the number of animals needing to be sterilized, thereby reducing the wait time between when an animal is adopted and when it goes home.

**UPDATE:** Spay/neuter days have increased to an average of three to four times/week to meet the volume of animals. Animals are held over night due to the late hour of surgeries and the need to recover from anesthesia.

- 1.1.3 Initiate promotional adoption fees to attract potential adopters to those animals that are less likely to get adopted.

**UPDATE:** Three ongoing promotional programs have been implemented: Seniors (65+) Senior Dogs/Cats (5 yrs.+) and Bully Promo. In addition, seasonal promotions are done at least quarterly. Plus, in 2011 the shelter participated in the 3 month ASPCA \$100k Challenge which was a national promotional event. It met its goal of 1780 adoptions during this period.

- 1.1.4 Initiate offsite adoptions to outreach the animals to the public and make adoptions more accessible.

**UPDATE:** Offsite adoptions started in October 2009. Dogs are taken to offsite locations three weekends out of the month. Cats are housed offsite at three retail stores.

- 1.1.5 Explore new ways to advertise the animals including the use of multi media and social networking.

**UPDATE:** Videos on some of the animals have started to be added to the web site. A Facebook page was recently developed. Twitter and other social networking outlets have not yet happened.

- 1.1.6 Initiate behavior assessments on the animals and post the information on the kennels and web site. This will provide more information to a potential adopter on whether the animal is the right fit for their family and lifestyle and lead to less returns.

**UPDATE:** Behaviorists such as Bound Angles work with the shelter on difficult cases. Volunteers and staff use a modified assessment model to aid in identifying key behaviors that help rescues and the public determine the adoptability of animals.

- 1.1.7 Initiate a foster program that will help to wayside animals that are either too young for adoptions, need extended medical care, or a temporary home for a family in transition.

**UPDATE:** A program was initiated in 2010 that involved using County employees to foster underage/underweight kittens. It has proven very successful and the pool of fosters has now grown to include the shelter's own volunteers.

- 1.1.8 Initiate and develop a volunteer program that can assist staff in implementing new programs and enhancing the shelter environment for the animals while they are in our care.

**UPDATE:** A volunteer program was begun in August 2009. The shelter does a monthly orientation for new volunteers and maintains an active crew of about 50. A volunteer coordinator was hired in July 2010 to better organize, recruit, track and retain this group of individuals. In 2011 over 10,000 volunteer hours were given to the shelter. In addition, a division of the volunteers – our Bunny Brigade, won a national award, for their innovation and dedication to shelters' forgotten animals.

- 1.2 Facilitate and enhance Rescue Group adoptions. The Shelter works with over 150 rescue groups on finding homes for its animals. In 2009, a third of the animals that left the shelter did so through the help of these groups. Through improving our processes and communication, we can better work together to increase this number.

- 1.2.1 Initiate a Rescue Transfer Agreement that will allow Rescues to use their own veterinary services for spay/neutering of animals.

**UPDATE:** The Transfer Agreement was developed and implemented in February 2010. In addition, the shelter asked for

and received funding from the Heigl Foundation to cover the spay/neuter of rescues.

- 1.2.2 Initiate a Rescue email address to facilitate one central source for receiving and sending information.

**UPDATE:** A Rescue email address was set up in March 2010. In July 2010, a rescue coordinator was hired to work exclusively with the rescue community

- 1.2.3 Initiate a pre-euthanasia list that will provide Rescues with a list of those animals that are in the most need of adoption.

**UPDATE:** An Adoption Alert email was established in early 2011 that is sent daily to Adoption Partners. It lets them know what animals have exceeded their legal hold periods.

In addition to the above identified rescue objectives, other improvements made with this group in mind include:

- Redesigned the website to include an AID search feature, making it easier for rescues to lookup animals on line.
- Increased animal information on website (age, weight) to assist rescues in picking animals without seeing them in person.
- Started accepting credit cards over the phone, allowing deposits to be made to hold an animal without the rescue being there in person – expediting the transfer process.
- Established protocol for allowing rescues to pickup animals during nonpublic hours with an appointment.
- Established protocol for rescues who want to pick out animals, spay/neuter, get health certificates and fly them across country.
- Established protocol for rescues that wanted to hold animals with us at the Simi Facility until they were able to line up long distance transports.
- Established protocol for rescues that wanted to take out shelter animals for offsite events.
- Held a 4 meeting roundtable to discuss, identify and work through issues.

- 1.3 Look at physical changes to the shelter that can assist in quicker adoptions.

- 1.3.1 Create an unloading intake area. This will allow for more efficient intake of the animals including immediate picture taking and inoculation.

**UPDATE:** Work has begun on an unloading area including the taking down of a wall and installation of computer lines. Anticipated completion date is summer 2012.

- 1.3.2 Create a "real" room. This is an area where potential adopters can interact with an animal in home setting.

**UPDATE:** Investigations were made into buying and converting storage containers or construction offices. The costs of acquiring one of these and installing it have put this on the back burner for now.

- 1.3.3 Construct a "cat room" where potential adopters can see and interact with the cats.

**UPDATE:** The Miller's Kitty Kottage was constructed and opened in August 2011. To date the facility has adopted out over 50 healthy and happy cats.

- 1.3.4 Explore the feasibility of opening up the Simi shelter as a "secondary" shelter with limited adoptions.

**UPDATE:** Current staff limitations make opening the Simi shelter difficult. However, since 2011 the facility has been used as a transfer facility by the rescues that are pulling large numbers of animals and waiting for cross county transportation.

- 1.3.5 Identify funding sources that can be used to pay for needed capital improvements.

**UPDATE:** A private donor stepped forward to pay for the community cat room and county capital improvement funded was found for improvements at the shelter which included to new heaters in the kennels, new sidewalks, filtered air conditioning in the hospital and the upcoming intake area. In addition, volunteer labor and donations also built a new exercise pen and planted trees around the shelter facility.

- 1.4 Inform the public about TNR (Trap, Neuter, Release). TNR is a humane alternative to euthanasia for managing and reducing feral cat populations that is proving to be more effective than traditional eradication methods. Educating the public about alternative choices for feral felines and referring them to nonprofit groups that work with ferals will greatly reduce the need to euthanize feral cats brought into the shelter.

**UPDATE:** Information was put on the website regarding TNR. The public, calling in with questions on trapping ferals, is given the option of contacting a nonprofit. Any further effort in this area has been challenged by Wild Urban League who believes ferals are harmful to bird and native animal populations.

- 1.5 Strengthen the capacity of veterinary staff to deal with increased patient loads through modernization and enhancement of its medical diagnostic equipment and treatment facilities.

**UPDATE:** Equipment replacement will depend on grants and donations. To help with patient load, a Registered Veterinary Technician was hired on a part time basis. In addition, a partnership was begun with Pet Emergency Clinic where licensed veterinarians in their final stages of residency got one month rotations in shelter medicine at Camarillo. This has given us the opportunity of having two vets on staff several times a year.

- 1.6 Investigate programs that can be implemented to prevent animals from reaching the shelter in the first place.

- 1.6.1 Initiate and maintain a pet food bank for those that can't afford to feed their pets.

**UPDATE:** A Pet Pantry was initiated at the Camarillo shelter in November 2009. Food is given out every Sunday, from 10am to noon. In 2011 a second Pet Pantry was opened at the Simi Facility. In one year the Pantry served 3,380 clients served and fed over 10,000 pets.

- 1.6.2 Engage other animal service agencies, animal nonprofits and the veterinarian community in a strategic planning process to address animal overpopulation issues.

**UPDATE:** To date, the Department has been improving itself before looking outward. However, toward this goal, it is now keeping statistics that meet the Asilomar Accords. This is the first step needed to qualify for Maddie's Funds which can be used to develop a community wide strategic plan.

**Strategic Goal 2.0**

**Provide efficient and effective processing of animal licenses.**

Ventura County is a Rabies Declared Area. The State of California mandates dog licensing to ensure that dogs have been vaccinated against this disease. Based on a 2008 projection of 210,000 dogs in this County, only 36% were licensed by the County. More outreach is needed to increase this percentage.

**Objectives:**

2.1 Implement changes in licensing policies and procedure that will streamline the process and make it more customer friendly.

2.1.1 Initiate online license registration to provide an easier way for animal owners to pay for their licenses.

**UPDATE:** An online licensing program is currently being tested by staff. The link to access the Department's licensing program with the County's online credit card system is in development with a goal to go live on or before summer 2012.

2.1.2 Initiate the transition from annual to permanent dog licenses which will decrease staff time and cost.

**UPDATE:** This was completed in March 2010.

2.1.3 Encourage voluntary renewal of licenses through an education campaign that shows the benefits to the dog owner, the dog and to the shelter program.

**UPDATE:** The "It's Their Ticket Home" campaign was launched in April 2010. Focus is on the benefits to the dog owner and dog, including a free return to owner if the dog is found wandering (instead of a trip to the shelter).

2.2 Reduce the risk of the spread of rabies to domestic animals through additional compliance measures.

2.2.1 Revise the County Ordinance to require veterinarians to turn in rabies certificates to the County.

**UPDATE:** At the request of the Santa Barbara Ventura Veterinarians Association, a mandatory reporting program was put on hold while the voluntary education program was promoted by the vets. This is to include a new brochure with the "It's Their Ticket Home" campaign. The brochure is printed but not yet distributed to vet offices and clinics.

- 2.2.2 Investigate the feasibility of county wide cat licensing. Dogs are not the only pets susceptible to rabies. The State Veterinarian recommends that both dogs and cats get vaccinated.

**UPDATE:** Staff have brought this topic forward for discussion to the Animal Regulation Commission and had individual discussions with council members of the cities of Simi Valley and Camarillo. At this time, neither of those two cities are willing to go forward on this idea. The other cities (Ventura, Fillmore, Santa Paula and Port Hueneme) have yet to comment.

2.3 Revise and streamline the Kennel and Wild Animal Permit Inspection Programs.

- 2.3.1 Update inspection standards and maintain a database of kennel and wild animal owners.

**UPDATE:** Inspection standards and new licensing forms have been developed and are in use. A database of kennels is being developed as inspections and licensing are being done.

- 2.3.2 Develop a benefits package for kennel owners who are licensed, such as listing on the VCAS web site.

**UPDATE:** Due to other staffing priorities, this project has not been started.

- 2.3.3 Offer the Kennel Inspection Permit program to Cities.

**UPDATE:** Due to other staffing priorities, these projects have not yet been started.



**Strategic Goal 3.0**

**Improve the image of the Department through education, community outreach and customer satisfaction.**

As a service organization, customer image is very important. More so with animal service agencies because of the emotions involved dealing with animals. An improved image leads to more support of our efforts, more donations, and ultimately more re-homing of animals from our shelter.

**Objectives:**

**3.1 Improve customer service.**

- 3.1.1 Standardize and streamline business processes that occur at the shelter front counter for better customer service delivery and reduced time at the counter.**

**UPDATE:** In January staff identified seven processes that occur at the front counter – adoptions, viewing, licensing (by ACOs and by licensing staff), relinquishments, owner returns, and drawings. Steps and paperwork within these processes were eliminated with the end goal being quicker turn around for customers at the counter.

- 3.1.2 Provide training to staff in customer relations.**

**UPDATE:** In March 2010 all kennel, licensing and phone staff participated in a customer relations seminar specifically designed for this department.

- 3.1.3 Update the VCAS website to allow for more customer interactions and transactions to occur.**

**UPDATE:** Beginning in March 2010, our website has an interactive "Lost and Found" program that allows the public to make postings of animals that they have either lost or found. This is operated by Pet Harbor, a national website. Owners/finders can register their found animals or search shelters or postings by private persons to see if their lost animal has been picked up.

**3.2 Disseminate more information into the community about the Department, its services and animals for adoption.**

- 3.2.1 Provide the media with articles about shelter animals for adoption and animal education.**

**UPDATE:** Due to staff work load, the department is still generally operating on a reactive basis to media opportunities instead of proactively feeding articles to the press on a regular basis.

- 3.2.2 Use the Department web site: [www.vcas.us](http://www.vcas.us) as an education and resource site for animal owners.

**UPDATE:** Improvements have been done to the department web site including the addition of a Bunny page, a calendar and better descriptions and video clips on the animals. However, more work and regular updating can to be done.

- 3.2.3 Recruit the assistance of volunteers, nonprofits and others to produce public service information in multi media, social networking and other technological formats.

**UPDATE:** A VCAS facebook page has also been developed and is very active. The department is still seeking volunteers to work on a twitter page and other marketing efforts.

- 3.2.4 Provide for and maintain a reliable data system through Chameleon that can be used to measure the effectiveness of the Department's programs in reducing its euthanasia rate.

**UPDATE:** In working on securing a reliable data base, staff has developed several new reports that can be used to monitor animal intake and outcome, by type and optional date range.

- 3.2.5 Outreach into the community by attending and participating in community events.

**UPDATE:** Staff has participated in a number of annual community events including the Ventura Harbor Easter Event, Ventura St. Patrick Day's Parade, Day of the Horse, Camarillo Street Fair, the Pooch Parade, Fair Parade, the Fair itself, as well as numerous pet store openings, and community education days.

**Strategic Goal 4.0**

**Improve employee jobs skills and reduce injuries in the workplace.**

Implement written, standardized procedures and regular training programs for continual skill development to ensure that all employees have the expertise they need to do their jobs efficiently, effectively and in a safe environment.

**Objectives:**

4.1 Ensure that all employees have appropriate skills and training for their position.

4.1.1 Implement an in-house training and skill review program that incorporates the various expertise of being an Animal Control Officer.

**UPDATE:** Several in house training courses have been given to refresh skills. These include workshops in customer service, workplace discrimination, animal behavior assessment, animal hoarding, identifying sovereign citizens, and workplace security.

4.1.2 Implement additional training needed to optimize employee performance.

**UPDATE:** One of the major concerns working in this profession is employee stress due to dealing with large numbers of animals that you want to save, having to make hard choices regarding those animals and then being hammered for those choices by a hostile public. A Compassion Fatigue Workshop lead by ASPCA counselors took place in September 2010. As a courtesy, humane officers from Ojai HS were invited.

4.2 Ensure that all shelter and field employees are current on certification and training needed for the workplace, as an Animal Control Officer, and to meet the challenges of each position within the Department.

4.2.1 Update and maintain the Department Safety Manual and ensure all employees are currently educated on safety procedures.

**UPDATE:** The Safety Manual is being updated as time permits. A Safety Evaluation was conducted and a Kennel Safety Officer assigned.

4.3 Update and maintain Shelter and Field Training Manuals and written Standard Operating Procedures to ensure a common knowledge base across the Department.

**UPDATE:** In process

**4.4 Maximize the use of Chameleon to assist in accomplishing our Department Mission.**

**4.4.1 Identify additional programs and prioritize their usefulness by need, ease of implementation and cost.**

**UPDATE:** Due to budgetary constraints, our IT position was eliminated. Computer services were transitioned over to County ISD but specific Chameleon data analysis was not. These three objectives are therefore on temporary hold.

**4.4.2 Reconcile past records and establish a baseline for new statistical data.**

**UPDATE:** TBD

**4.4.3 Train additional staff on multiple uses of Chameleon.**

**UPDATE:** TBD

**Strategic Goal 5.0**

**Provide efficient and rapid response to calls for service and emergencies.**

Responding to citizen requests, field officers pick up stray, aggressive, abandoned, injured and dead animals in the contract cities and unincorporated areas of the County. In addition, they perform leash law enforcement, nuisance animal investigations and are first responders in animal emergency situations involving wildlife and natural disasters.

**Objectives:**

**5.1 Improve Service Call response time.**

**5.1.1 Evaluate a new routing system for officers.**

**UPDATE:** A new routing system was analyzed and implemented in May, 2010. Implement changes in policies and programs that will lead to more efficient and effective use of officer time.

**5.1.2 Re-evaluate bite policy and procedure.**

**UPDATE:** TBD

**5.1.3 Consider disincentives for serial trappers.**

**UPDATE:** After researching what other jurisdictions do, a Trapping Relocation Fee was established to discourage serial trappers.

**5.1.1 Re-evaluate the need to answer certain wildlife calls such as raccoons.**

**UPDATE:** TBD

**5.2 Implement changes in administrative procedures to reduce officer time away from the field.**

**5.2.1 Evaluate existing forms and redo as necessary to better reflect officer functions and activities.**

**UPDATE:** The existing forms were found to be okay, but a pilot program using a laptop in the truck to enter data directly into Chameleon showed that better efficiencies were achieved this way. This item was put in the 2012 CIP budget.

**5.2.2 Create an intake receiving area for animals and train field officers on Chameleon inputting.**

**UPDATE:** Officers are being trained in the inputting of data into Chameleon in preparation for completion of the Intake Area.

**5.2.3 Develop a more efficient system for rotating trucks out for maintenance that minimizes officer time out of the field.**

**UPDATE:** The County is working on this objective from GSA Fleet Central.

### **Ventura County Animal Services Strategic Plan SWOT Analysis**

The Strategic Planning process included a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis of the department as a whole. The VCAS Strategic Plan goals were developed taking into account the department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

#### **Strengths**

1. Compassionate, caring staff
2. Onsite vet facility
3. Good cooperative working relationships with Cities, State, Federal agencies and other County departments
4. Extensive connections with the animal nonprofit rescue community
5. Central location of shelter facility
6. Expertise and experience of staff
7. Public opinion

#### **Weaknesses**

1. Understaffed – can't carry workload (animals)
2. Staff compassion fatigue and stress leads to poor customer service
3. Numerous worker's compensation claims
4. Inconsistent training among staff
5. Undersized facility for demand that also needs modernization
6. Areas of the County that are underserved

#### **Opportunities**

1. Changes in animal sheltering philosophy
2. Technology improvements (e.g. web-licensing, social networking)
3. Community outreach (to provide information and improve public image) via media and physical outreach at different venues
4. Partnerships w/ nonprofits, businesses
5. Volunteer Program
6. Expand role of nonprofit arm (ARVA) that can assist department
7. Expand education role (e.g. Spay/neuter)
8. Expand services (e.g. Park District contracts, Thousand Oaks)
9. Reopen Simi Facility as an operating shelter

#### **Threats**

1. County/City Revenue Shortfall
2. Continued repeal of Hayden Law (and State SB-90 reimbursements)
3. Increased county population and subsequent increase in pet population
4. Natural and man made disasters, including rabies
5. Continuation of economy downturn/recession
6. Public opinion

## **Attachment 02**

**Extract from**

**"Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters," 3 pp.**

***The Association of Shelter Veterinarians 2010***

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# **Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters**

*The Association of Shelter Veterinarians • 2010*

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immunizations while in the care of the shelter. All medical information should be provided in written form with the animal at the time of transfer or adoption.

## 2. Considerations on Intake

Each animal's individual health status should be evaluated and monitored beginning at intake and regularly thereafter (AAEP 2004; UC Davis 2009). This allows any problems or changes that develop during an animal's shelter stay to be recognized, distinguished from pre-existing conditions, and addressed.

A medical history, if available, should be obtained from the owner at the time of surrender. Any available information should be solicited when stray animals are impounded as well. Ideally, this information should be obtained by interview, although written questionnaires are acceptable. Each animal should receive a health evaluation at intake to check for signs of infectious disease and/or problems that require immediate attention (UC Davis 2009). Intake evaluations should be documented in the medical record. Every attempt should be made to locate an animal's owner, including careful screening for identification and microchips at the time of intake. Intake health evaluation should therefore include scanning multiple times for a microchip using a universal scanner. Research has shown that the likelihood of detecting microchips increases with repeating the scan procedure multiple times (Lord 2008). (See subsections below for information on vaccination and other intake treatments.)

Separation of animals entering shelters is essential for proper maintenance of health and welfare. Beginning at intake, animals should be separated by species and age as well as by their physical and behavioral health status. Young animals (puppies and kittens under 20 weeks [5 months] of age) are more susceptible to disease and so should be provided with greater protection from possible exposure, which can be more easily accomplished when they are separated from the general

population. Starting from the time of intake and continuing throughout their stay, healthy animals should not be housed or handled with animals who have signs of illness. (See section on Behavioral Health and Wellbeing for more information on intake procedures.)

## 3. Vaccinations

Vaccines are vital lifesaving tools that must be used as part of a preventive shelter healthcare program. Vaccination protocols used for individual pets in homes are not adequate in most population settings. Strategies must be specifically tailored for shelters because of the higher likelihood of exposure to infectious disease, the likelihood that many animals entering the shelter are not immune (Fischer 2007) and the potentially life-threatening consequences of infection. Some vaccines prevent infection whereas others lessen the severity of clinical signs (Peterson 2008). Panels of experts (AAFP 2006; AAHA 2006) agree that protocols must be customized for each facility, recognizing that no universal protocol will apply to every shelter situation.

Guiding principles for core vaccination in shelters, that are generally applicable to most shelters, are available (AAFP 2009; AAHA 2006). Within this framework, specific vaccination protocols should be tailored for each program with the supervision of a veterinarian, taking into consideration risks and benefits of the vaccines, diseases endemic to the area, potential for exposure, and available resources (Miller & Hurley 2004; Miller & Zawistowski 2004).

Because risk of disease exposure is often high in shelters, animals must be vaccinated at or prior to intake with core vaccines. Pregnancy and mild illness are not contraindications to administering core vaccines in most shelter settings because the risk from virulent pathogens in an unvaccinated animal would be far greater than the relatively low risk of problems posed by vaccination (AAFP 2009; AAHA 2006; Larson 2009). Core vaccines for shelters currently include feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, panleukopenia (FVRCP) for cats (AAFP

*Animals must be vaccinated at, or prior to, intake with core vaccines.*

*An emergency medical plan must be in place to provide appropriate and timely veterinary medical care for any animal who is injured, in distress, or showing signs of significant illness.*

2009) and distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza, and canine parvovirus (DHPP)/distemper, adenovirus 2, parvovirus, and parainfluenza virus (DA2PP) and *Bordetella bronchiseptica* for dogs (AAHA 2006). The use of modified live virus vaccines (MLV) is strongly recommended over killed products for core shelter vaccines in cats and dogs, including those that are pregnant, because they provide a faster immune response.

Rabies vaccination on intake is not considered a priority in most shelters, as the risk of exposure to this disease is not high within most shelter environments. However, animals should be vaccinated against rabies when a long-term stay is anticipated; when risk of exposure is elevated; or when mandated by law. At minimum, animals should be vaccinated for rabies at or shortly following release.

Shelters that house animals for extended periods of time have an obligation to ensure that vaccinations are repeated in accordance with shelter medicine recommendations (AAFP 2006; AAHA 2006). Re-vaccination is recommended for puppies and kittens until maternal antibody wanes. Puppies and kittens must be re-vaccinated (DHPP and FVRCP, respectively) at 2–3-week intervals for the duration of their shelter stay or until they are over 18–20 weeks old.

Shelters that do not vaccinate with core vaccines immediately on entry, or do not vaccinate all animals, are much more likely to experience deadly outbreaks of vaccine preventable disease (Larson 2009). Protocols for managing adverse reactions must be provided by a veterinarian and required treatments must be accessible. Training on proper vaccine storage and administration, and treating reactions, should be supervised by a veterinarian. The location for injection of a specific vaccine (i.e., rabies in the right rear leg) should follow administration site guidelines (AAFP 2006; AAHA 2006). Records of any immunizations provided while in the care of the shelter should be kept.

#### 4. Emergency Medical Care

An emergency medical plan must be in place to provide appropriate and timely veterinary medical care for any animal who is injured, in distress, or showing signs of significant illness (AAEP 2004; CFA 2009; CVMA 2009; FASS 1999). Staff should be trained to recognize conditions that require emergency care. The emergency care plan must ensure that animals can receive proper veterinary medical care and pain management promptly (either on site or through transfer to another facility) or be humanely euthanized by qualified personnel as permitted by law.

#### 5. Pain Management

Shelters often care for animals with acute or chronically painful medical conditions. The American College of Veterinary Anesthesiologists (ACVA) defines pain as a complex phenomenon involving pathophysiological and psychological components that are frequently difficult to recognize and interpret in animals (ACVA 2006). Pain must be recognized and treated to alleviate suffering. Unrelieved pain can result in chronic physical manifestations such as weight loss, muscle breakdown, increased blood pressure and a prolonged recovery from illness or injury (Robertson 2002). Early pain management is essential. Failure to provide treatment for pain is unacceptable.

Recognizing and alleviating pain in a wide variety of species can be complex and difficult (Paul-Murphy 2004). Individual animals have varying reactions to stimuli and may manifest a variety of clinical and behavioral signs (ACVA 2006). Although there are multiple scales and scoring systems published for gauging animal pain, few have been validated and there is no accepted gold standard system for assessing pain in animals (IVAPM 2005). However, it is generally assumed that if a procedure is painful in human beings then it must also be painful in animals (ACVA 2006; APHIS 1997b). It is the shelter's responsibility to combine findings from physical examination, familiarity with species and breed, individual behavior, and knowledge of the

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## **Attachment 03**

### **Ventura County Animal Services**

#### **“Working Toward (sic) Zero and the No Kill Equation”**

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### Working Toward Zero and the No Kill Equation

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The following are programs and policies of Ventura County Animal Services' "Working Toward Zero" Strategy that coincide with the No Kill Advocacy Center's "No Kill Equation"

1. **TNR** – Since the 2009 controversial court ruling by a Los Angeles Superior Court, no municipal shelter can engage in funding TNR (trap-neuter-release) programs. Nevertheless, VCAS posts educational material about TNR on its web site, thereby providing the public with alternative choices. In addition, the public, when calling with questions or requests to trap ferals, is given the option of contacting nonprofit groups that work with this population. In February 2011 the shelter also convened a Cat Rescue Roundtable to discuss ferals and other issues of concern.
2. **Spay/Neuter** - No adopted dog or cat leaves our shelter without being spayed/neutered. Ventura County does not have a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance, so owned animals can be reclaimed without this requirement. However, to discourage overpopulation of pitbulls, the shelter offers these owners a free spay/neuter before leaving the shelter. VCAS also offers Spay/Neuter Vouchers which can be used to discount the cost of spay/neuter surgery and it works with Valley Vet Nonprofit in advertising their low income \$10 spay/neuter program.
3. **Rescue Groups** – VCAS works with over 150 Adoption Partners, i.e. rescue groups that are nonprofit 501c3 organizations and have a proven track record for caring for animals pulled from shelters. Our shelter is also Adoption Partners with Petco and Petsmart, where animals can be housed overnight and adopted directly from the store. Adoption Partners are given greatly reduced adoption rates, a special email for better communication to the shelter and a dedicated staff person to assist them. A grant from the Jason Debus Heigl Foundation also pays for the spay/neuter of all the animals they pull.
4. **Foster Care** - Our greatest need for foster parents is the care of underage/underweight kittens. Following the County of San Diego's lead, we began our program using a controlled group – our own county employees. This gave us a pool of volunteers that we could trust and easily train. As our foster program has grown so have our volunteer pools. We have since expanded our foster parents to include individuals working for local vet hospitals and volunteers within our own shelter program.
5. **Comprehensive Adoption Programs** – Our shelter hours are designed to provide as much access as possible to the working public – we're open at lunch time, evenings and all weekend. To encourage adoptions, we have a number of ongoing promotions – senior citizens can adopt for half

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### Working Toward Zero and the No Kill Equation

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price, all senior animals (5 years and older) and all pitbulls are half price, as well as numerous half price promotions for all our animals. We take dogs and bunnies offsite for adoption events at local stores three weekends out of the month. Our cats are permanently housed in three retail stores in two cities. And we have a weekend pop up "pet shop" in an upscale retail mall.

6. **Pet Retention** - While some reasons for returning animals are inevitable, most can be avoided by an honest assessment during the adoption process and learning how to communicate with your new pet once you get them home. Before adoption can take place, VCAS requires all potential dog adopters to spend time with an animal in an open exercise area where person and dog can assess each other and determine if their personalities and lifestyles fit. An Animal Control Officer stays with the potential adopter and works with him/her to gain the dog's confidence. The session is terminated if either the person or animal shows signs of discomfort or fear. If the adopter already has an animal, the shelter animal is introduced to him in a controlled, neutral environment and observations are made to see if the animals will get along. Upon adoption, new adopters are encouraged to enroll their dogs in a free six week "Introduction to Obedience" class where they can work on building better communication skills. This class can be repeated as many times as necessary. For those adopters that have additional issues, VCAS provides referrals to outside dog trainers and canine behaviorists. Also under this heading, owners that are turning in animals are first counseled by officers on alternative options for dealing with their surrender situation. And the shelter provides a weekly Pet Pantry for those owners that need assistance in feeding their pets.
7. **Medical and Behavior Prevention** - Upon intake, all dogs are vaccinated with DAPPL2 and cats are given HCPCH. Behavioral evaluations are done by volunteers and staff as time permits or upon specific request from an Adoption Partner. The safety of the animals and the cleanliness of the kennels are of top priority to shelter staff. Our shelter follows the "Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters" established by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians. As stated in the Guidelines, "Every shelter needs to operate within its own capacity of care, taking into account the number of housing units they have, the number of animals coming into their facility, and the animal care staff they have to handle their population. Shelters should maintain their populations below maximum housing capacity to allow for daily intake. Maximum housing capacity must not be exceeded." With regard to Group Housing, the Standards state, "Inappropriately used group housing creates physical risks of infectious disease exposure and injury or death from fighting. It also creates stress, fear, and anxiety. Group housing makes monitoring of



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### Working Toward Zero and the No Kill Equation

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individual animals more difficult, resulting in failure to detect problems or inadequate access to necessities like food and water. Staff safety may also be compromised." It goes on to state that if group housing is to be done, several considerations must be taken into account, such as not grouping them until they have had several days or weeks to acclimate to the surroundings, have been temperament tested, and had a thorough physical exam. Our shelter has a community cat room that meets these standards. We also bond dogs (i.e. more than one dog per kennel) who meet the above criteria.

8. **PR/Community Involvement** – Despite not having a marketing budget or dedicated public information officer, VCAS has been able to continually expand its exposure in the community through media stories, social networking and event participation. It has both a website ([www.vcas.us](http://www.vcas.us)) and very active facebook (VCAnimals). The department participates in several community events each year including street fairs, parades and the annual county fair. Officers are also available to talk to neighborhood groups on wildlife and animal safety. Finally, our shelter volunteers have recently started a grade school humane education program.
9. **Volunteers** – Barely three years old, our growing volunteer program has developed its own uniqueness. The Bunny Brigade achieved national recognition for their total commitment to caring for this forgotten shelter animal. The Dog Squad is in charge of our offsite adoptions and assists shelter staff in keeping our web pictures up and our dog kennel environments warm and enriched. The Cat Group is finding its paws as we transition into a new era with the Community Cat Room and new methods for keeping our Main Cat Room cats happy. In addition, we have volunteers showing animals on television, assisting at the Shelter Hope Pet Shop, fundraising, caring for our horses and other odd jobs around the shelter. In 2011, 600 volunteers contributed over 10,000 hours of service helping our animals. New volunteer orientations are held monthly.
10. **Proactive Redemptions** – The shelter keeps a listing of lost and found dogs and cats at its front counter. The books are maintained and cross referenced several times a week with our kennel inventory by our volunteers who also go through other lost & found resources such as Craig's List. In addition, our website gives information on what to do if you have lost or found an animal and it has an interactive "Lost and Found" program that allows the public to make postings of animals that they have either lost or found. This is operated by Pet Harbor, a national website. Owners/finders can register their found animals or search shelters or postings by private persons to see if their lost animal has been picked up.

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**Attachment 04**

**COUNTY OF VENTURA ANIMAL SERVICES, MEMORANDUM,  
December 05, 2011**

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COUNTY OF VENTURA ANIMAL SERVICES  
MEMORANDUM

December 05, 2011

To: All Staff

From: 

In response to multiple cases of Kennel Cough and Upper Respiratory Infections amongst the dogs Monica has chosen to inoculate all dogs for Bordetella upon intake. This program will run through the month of December. The Bordetella vaccine we use is intranasal. If you have questions please see an ACO II for instruction on how to use these. As always, if the dog is too aggressive to receive this vaccine don't do it and indicate in comments.

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## **Attachment 05**

**Department of Animal Services  
Policies and Procedures Manual  
Policy Number 9-1, Animal Adoptions**

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**DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

<b>POLICY NUMBER:</b> 9-1  <b>DATE ISSUED:</b> 06-16-10  <b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> 06-16-10  <b>SUPERSEDES:</b> 9-1 5/1/93 & 9-1 12/27/95, 5/23/77, 10/1/02	<b>SUBJECT:</b>  ANIMAL ADOPTIONS
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**POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Animal Services Department that animals will be adopted only to appropriate, suitable homes or to legitimate, verified animal rescue organizations. No animal will ever be knowingly sold for experimentation, research, "guard duty" or as a human food source.

1. All animals (except bovines) impounded as strays or relinquished by their owners will have a State mandated adoption period unless, due to health, temperament, age, or other criteria, they are deemed unadoptable.
2. Certain animals, as selected by the Kennel Supervisor, Veterinarian, Veterinary Technicians, or Department managers, may require potential adopters to submit to home checks, background checks or may have stringent adoption criteria placed upon them prior to being approved for adoption. See Procedure for Home Inspection to follow.
3. Any regular member of the Department staff may refuse to adopt any animal to a home, person or situation that they deem unsuitable.
4. Specific animals may be transferred to the Humane Society of Ventura County, at no cost to the Humane Society, for adoption purposes.
5. In certain instances and at the discretion of Department supervisory, management or veterinary staff, animals will be transferred directly to 501(c)3 non-profit animal rescue or welfare organizations without ever being made available for public adoption.
6. Department personnel may not adopt any animal until it has been made available for adoption to the public at large for at least one business day as outlined in Policy 1-13.
7. All paperwork must be completed and filed prior to any animal leaving the Camarillo or Simi Valley shelter.

Policy #9-1  
Animal Adoptions  
Page 2

8. Only animals that are the property of the County of Ventura will be made available for adoption. An animal becomes County property upon completion of its mandatory owner holding period or upon completion and acceptance of an Animal Relinquishment Form.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. All dogs and cats adopted from the Department of Animal Services must be spayed or neutered prior to leaving the facility.
  - a. Animals deemed to be too young, infirm, or medically unsuitable for surgery at the time of adoption may be released to the public or rescue organization upon collection of the appropriate spay/neuter deposit and the setting of a surgery appointment at the shelter – usually thirty (30) days from the date of adoption.
  - b. Animals being adopted to pre-approved 501(c)3 Adoption Partner prior to sterilization may go out upon completion of a Spay/Neuter Contract.
  - c. The Supervising ACO in charge of Kennel Operations will, from time to time, post lists of pre-approved volunteers for wayside purposes.
2. Dogs and cats being adopted by out of County residents, as verified by their valid identification, do not require licenses.
3. All dogs and cats being adopted or waysided must be implanted with a Trovan microchip prior to leaving the shelter.
4. No person under the age of 18 years may adopt any animal.
5. No wild (feral) cats or kitten are to be adopted without permission of the Department manager, Veterinarian or Supervising ACO.
6. No injured or sick animal or any animal housed in or under the care of the Veterinary facility (pens 200-299) may be sold, adopted or transferred unless and until the Veterinarian or his designated representative has personally spoken with the prospective purchaser.
  - a. If a citizen or rescue wishes to adopt an animal as described above and the Veterinarian or RVT is unavailable, the Counter Officer is to take a spay/neuter deposit to hold the animal specifically in the person's name. It is then the Counter Officer's responsibility to make sure the animal is written on the veterinary board for case review and advisement.

Policy #9-1  
Animal Adoptions  
Page 3

7. No animals which are known to have bitten or scratched any person, attacked any other animal or displayed aggressive, vicious or unstable behavior are to be sold, adopted, transferred or waysided without the permission of the Director unless a previous temperament/behavior evaluation has been conducted and approved by the Kennel Supervisor. In addition to all regular adoption paperwork, a "Known Biting Animal" form must be completed by the Counter Officer at the time of adoption.
8. All non livestock, non poultry animals, including but not limited to dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, and rodents are to be sold as pets (companion animals) only.
9. No animal is to be sold to a known breeder, wholesaler, dealer, kennel, pet shop, guard dog service, research laboratory or any commercial enterprise.
  - a. Any employee or volunteer having good reason to believe that a prospective purchaser will not provide a good, safe, humane home for a pet must express their concerns immediately to a Supervisor or the Counter Officer in order to prevent the sale of the animal.
10. The Department Director or his/her authorized representative may refuse to make any animal available for adoption to any person or organization that, in their opinion, may not provide adequate care, treatment, housing or environment for the specific animal.
11. Every attempt must be made to insure that an adopted animal will be properly cared and provided for. Prospective buyers should be questioned as the situation allows as to their abilities, needs, desires and capabilities and counseled appropriately.
12. No animal may be sold or transferred to anyone who cannot provide a valid government issued identification document.
13. No animal may be sold to anyone not able to provide a street address which must be verifiable in the Cross Reference directory. Be sure to obtain both street and mailing address. No animal may be adopted to a P.O. Box except to an approved 501(c)3 rescue.
14. An appropriate license fee must be collected for all dogs and cats over the age of 16 weeks (4 months) unless the purchaser is a an approved 501(c)3 rescue, or can prove residence out of County or within the city limits of Thousand Oaks. When in doubt, collect a license fee subject to refund upon proof of a valid license in another jurisdiction.

Policy #9-1  
Animal Adoptions  
Page 4

15. Finders first right of refusal. Any person, recorded to be the source of the animal's impound, that turns over a stray animal to this Department has the first option to adopt the animal when it becomes available for adoption. Finder must be present when the animal first becomes available for adoption, and if one or more persons wish to adopt the animal at that time, the finder has the right of first refusal.
16. If the Finder, on record, does not show for the privilege of first refusal and if two or more persons wish to adopt the same animal a drawing (lottery) must be conducted to determine the order in which the animal will be made available.
  - a. All adults present at the time of the drawing are eligible to participate.
  - b. The person whose name is drawn must be the purchaser or record.
  - a. If the person whose name is drawn first declines to adopt, the next name drawn shall be allowed to adopt the animal. If all original potential adopters decline the animal, another drawing shall be held to re-establish the adoption order.

**Home Inspection Procedure**

1. Potential adopters must visit with the requested dog inside the exercise yard. Animal Control Officer discusses dog's breed and personality characteristics during this time to determine if customer understands the breed and is equipped to handle the needs of both the breed and dog's temperament. If comfortable with placement at this time requests customer complete application by returning to front desk. If not comfortable with placement explain to customer why placement is not possible for this dog. ACO returns to front counter and marks passed or failed on front counter list.
2. Customer returns to front counter and fills out "Home Inspection Form"
3. Front Counter Officer verifies licenses on all animals listed as currently owned (if any are listed) and checks in computer for any information regarding animals owned by customer making requests. All animals requiring licensing must be current or application will not be accepted. You may sell a license at this time.
4. Mark in the "comment section" of Chameleon. The customer's name and contact info. Number the request in the order in which it was received.
5. If other customer's have requested this dog, hand customer the instruction sheet. If they are the first customer to request the dog, continue to next step.
6. If the customer has a current dog, advise them that the dogs must meet and schedule a time for this. The dog to dog meeting must be completed within 48 hours.
7. Access the adoption interview screen in Chameleon. (Windows to Person to Adoption Interview). Be careful to clear and search using the animal ID only. This will bring up all persons interested in this dog.
8. Verify Person ID number. If none exists one must be created for the person you are working with.
9. Under comment section in the adoption interview screen, type in all steps taken.
10. Being sure to note all steps taken and information under the "Adoption Interview Comment" screen. If no other dogs are in the home and no meeting is required, schedule a yard check by generating an activity and marking the "Adoption Interview Comment Screen" to show a yard inspection was scheduled. If meeting between dogs is needed, the Officer handling the dog during the "Meet and Greet" will update interview with pass or fail and comments to support decision. If greeting passed the "Meet and Greet" ACO will then schedule the yard inspection and generate an activity.
11. Daytime ACO doing yard inspection will contact Dispatch to update record. Dispatch will note findings in interview screen. If home fails, Dispatch will notify front counter ACO by leaving a message in home inspection file located in Phone room above night phones. Front counter ACOs will follow up on all home inspections on a daily basis.

## **Attachment 06**

### **Public letter to Ventura County Animal Services Commission**

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April 3, 2012

Dear Members of the Ventura County Animal Services Commission:

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide some background and insight concerning the topic of the proposed ordinance **MANDATING THE SPAY-NEUTER OF BULLY BREED DOGS**.

This is an emotional issue for those of us in the rescue industry, in shelters and amongst breeders. Some people are willing to grasp at straws and cling to ANY idea that has even the remotest chance of helping reduce the need to kill adoptable dogs. Others oppose government intervention in their private lives and will fight mandatory ANYTHING. In this case we believe the VCAS director is trying to appear proactive by suggesting this program without concern for how or when or if it can ever be implemented or used to achieve its stated goals. We believe it poses a diversion from other programs that WOULD impact the rate at which adoptable animals are being killed in Camarillo.

We oppose this for the following reasons:

**1. There has been insufficient and imbalanced information presented to the commission.**

Santa Barbara recently spent 14 months with a task force trying to develop a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance. Both Los Angeles City and Los Angeles County Animal Services have mandatory spay neuter ordinances of some form or another. Has this Commission heard a report from those three counties, our closest neighbors, concerning how they decided what ordinance to pass and how it has worked for them in the 3-5 years since it was enacted? Isn't that important information you should have before deciding what ordinance might be best for Ventura County?

**2. The proposed ordinance does not address the reason we kill so many bully breed dogs at our shelter.**

There are more Chihuahua and chi-mixes impounded at our shelter than bully breeds. Bully breeds are the most commonly euthanized breed not because they are impounded at the highest rate, but because they have the LOWEST adoption rate. One of the reasons they have the lowest adoption rate is because ours is the only local county that requires a home check be conducted for all bully breed adoptions. People who might otherwise be willing to adopt a bully will go to Los Angeles or Santa Barbara so they do not have to undergo the home check or wait the many weeks it can take to secure one from our county. Those people will get their pit bulls from neighboring counties...reducing adoptions of the bully breeds from our own shelter. The home check requirement is causing more pit bulls to be IMPORTED from other counties, increasing the problem locally.

**3. Our shelter, by the director's admission, lacks the time and the staff to implement the programs it already has.**

Adding another time or processing requirement to their work load will further reduce the quality of service to ALL the animals and to residents of the county. Shelter staff does not have the time to keep the website updated with pictures, ages and weights of animals in the shelter. We routinely find clerical errors in a least 50% of the paperwork maintained and generated by shelter staff. Maintaining accurate records is NOT something at which they are particularly competent. We rescue dogs whose records say they are neutered when they are not. Females that are intact when the record says spayed. Wrong genders, wrong weights, wrong breeds and wrong ages. Until they can adequately service their current programs, adding any new program with a record keeping requirement would be ill-advised

**4. The shelter vet does not perform spay and neuter surgeries.**

The surgeries are sub contracted to another vet, who then sub-sub contracts outside labor who come in 2-3 days a week to perform the procedures in a trailer behind the shelter buildings. Any mandatory spay/neuter ordinance needs to account for the vet protocol already in place, or the LACK of a vet protocol. Who pays for the extra surgeries and "middle-men"?

**5. What percentage of pit bull heritage triggers the title "bully breed"??**

Under the proposed ordinance any animal control officer can decide whether a dog is a bully breed. The decision can be appealed to Ms. Nolan whose decision is final. What special training do any of those people have in breed identification? Who keeps the dog during the appeal process? Who pays the boarding if the resident wins the appeal? Who pays for any DNA testing? If the dog is 1/2 pit bull and 1/2 lab, why is it not a lab? Rottweilers, Akitas and Boxers also require home checks...why not mandate altering them too?

**6. The ordinance invites arbitrary, selective and capricious enforcement activity.**

Our VCAS director says the ordinance will only be enforced when dogs are impounded and they will not send out canvassing teams. You should either adopt an ordinance that you have the time, resources and intention of enforcing, or don't waste everyone's time. Selective and arbitrary enforcement INVITES law suits.

**7. The animal services director is Los Angeles characterizes breed-specific spay-neuter legislation as "foolish".**

In a recent interview, the head of Los Angeles Animal Services was asked to comment on their mandatory spay and neuter laws. Passed in 2008, the Los Angeles ordinance requires ALL dogs be altered. Director Brenda Barnette said when asked about singling out the bully breeds, "I can't imagine the foolish breed-discriminatory legislation being proposed in Los Angeles..."

We understand how important it is to reduce shelter overcrowding and how attractive it sounds to be able to reduce the number of ANY breed of dog being killed. And we support realistic and effective spay/neuter education and legislation. BUT, selective enforcement may cause more problems than it solves. Especially at a shelter that lacks the staff or expertise to get pictures, ages and weights of adoptable animals loaded onto their own web site with any regularity.

We are suggesting that the shelter fully implement and use all the tools at its disposal now and THEN see what their statistics look like before adding more tools to the box. Maybe THIS particular tool is not the one they need if all the other tools were being used correctly and efficiently. It's like building a house. Maybe you WILL need a tile cutter before you are done. But spending money to buy one now when you have not finished pouring the foundation because you cannot afford to do so seems inappropriate.

We implore you NOT to jump at the wrong answer just because it is convenient and reacts to popular prejudices. There is no emergency requiring the commission to make a decision before it has heard from other animal control agencies in our neighboring counties who have already walked this path. It makes one wonder, what's the rush??

Respectfully,

Diane Rowley Van Sickle  
P.A.P.A. - Promote and Protect Animals  
S.P.A.R.C. - Santa Paula Animal Rescue Center, Inc.



## **Attachment 07**

### **Proposed Addition to Chapter 4 (Animals) of Division 4 of the Ventura County Ordinance Code**

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**County of Ventura****Proposed Addition to Chapter 4 (Animals) of Division 4 of the Ventura County Ordinance Code****Article 9 Spaying and Neutering of Pit Bulls****4700 Purpose and Applicability**

Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 122331, no person shall own or keep a Pit Bull over the age of four months which has not been spayed or neutered, except as provided in Sec. 4720.

**4710 Definition**

1. For purposes of this section, "Pit Bull" is defined as any Staffordshire Bull Terrier, American Pit Bull Terrier or American Staffordshire Terrier breed of dog, or any mixed breed of dog which contains, as an element of its breeding, physical traits and distinguishing characteristics that conform to the standards of the above breeds as established by the American Kennel Club ("AKC") or United Kennel Club ("UKC") that identify it as partially of the breed of Staffordshire Bull Terrier or American Pit Bull Terrier or American Staffordshire Terrier. The AKC and UKC standards for the above breeds are listed on their websites as well as online through the Animal Service Department ("Department") website.
2. Determination of Breed. If an owner is unsure as to whether or not his unspayed and/or unneutered dog is a Pit Bull, he may make an appointment with the Department at which a Department staff member shall make a determination as to whether or not the dog is a Pit Bull. If the dog owner wishes to appeal the determination that the dog is a Pit Bull, within five business days of the staff member's determination he may request a hearing before the Department's Director or his designee. The informal hearing shall be held no more than 30 days after the Director receives the request. The decision of the Director or his designee is final.

**4720 Mandatory Spaying and Neutering of PitBulls: Exceptions**

No person may own, keep, or harbor any dog within the unincorporated area of the County of Ventura that the person in possession knew, or should have known, was a Pit Bull that has not been spayed or neutered unless:

1. The dog is under sixteen weeks of age;
2. It is a purebred Staffordshire Bull Terrier, American Pit Bull Terrier or American Staffordshire Terrier, recognized by and registered with the American Kennel Club (AKC), United Kennel Club (UKC), or other national registry;
3. It is a dog used by a law enforcement agency for law enforcement purposes;
4. It is a dog which is unable to be spayed or neutered without a high likelihood of suffering serious bodily harm or death due to age or infirmity and the owner of such dog provides to the Department written confirmation of the condition from a licensed veterinarian;

5. Determination of breed is under appeal pursuant to Section 4710.2.

**4730 Penalties for Failure to Spay or Neuter Pit Bull**

Violation of Section 43.1 may result in the following penalties:

A first violation shall be an infraction punishable by a fine not to exceed \$100 plus administrative fees in the amount approved by the Board of Supervisors. Continued violation may result in additional fines up to \$500 and/or impoundment of the animal. In order for the owner to reclaim the Pit Bull from the Department, in addition to paying the fines and fees set out in this Section, one of the following must occur:

1. The Department shall have a veterinarian spay or neuter the dog. The dog owner shall pay a deposit of \$65 prior to the procedure and will be charged the fee for such services consisting of the actual expense incurred as established by the Department. There may be additional fees for any extraordinary care provided.
2. In the alternative, the owner shall arrange for another veterinarian within the County to spay or neuter and shall pay the Department's costs of delivering the dog to a vet of the owner's choosing. The Department shall deliver the dog to the vet, and the vet shall release the dog to the owner only after the spaying or neutering is complete.
3. At the discretion of the Director, or his designee, the Director may release the dog to the owner provided that the owner signs an affidavit that he will have the dog spayed or neutered within two weeks and will provide documentation verifying that the spaying or neutering occurred upon completion. If the owner fails to have his dog spayed or neutered as agreed in the affidavit, the Department shall have the authority to impound the dog, and the owner may be charged with a second violation.
4. In the event that the Director or his designee determines that payment of any fees by the owner of a dog which is impounded or otherwise taken into custody would cause extreme financial difficulty to the owner, the Director or his designee may, at his discretion, waive all or part of the fees necessary for compliance with this section.
5. The owner shall contact the Department within the first four business days of the dog's holding period and pay all fees and fines toward its reclaim, or pursuant to Food & Agricultural Code Section 31254, the dog will be deemed to be abandoned.

**4740 Allocation of Fees and Fines Collected**

All fees and fines collected under Section 4730 shall be used only by the Department to fund the implementation and enforcement of the Department spaying/neutering program.