

COUNTY OF VENTURA DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL REGULATION

INTRODUCTION

The City of Thousand Oaks changed their animal regulation services from Ventura County to Los Angeles County in 1990. Simi Valley considered doing this also but decided against it. Thousand Oaks reports their service is better and the cost is less since the change. This prompted the Grand Jury to compare the services and cost of animal regulation for both Los Angeles and Ventura counties.

INQUIRY

We interviewed the Management Analyst and Resource Division Manager from Thousand Oaks who oversee animal control for the city. The director and deputy director of community services for the City of Simi Valley were interviewed. Both individuals were on the committee that negotiated with Los Angeles County for animal control services. The Regional Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control was interviewed. The director of the Ventura County Animal Regulation Department was interviewed. The Agoura animal shelter and the Ventura County animal shelter were toured.

FINDINGS

In 1995/96 the Ventura County animal shelter impounded 14,772 dogs and cats. Of these, 5,716 (38.7%) were reclaimed and/or adopted and 8,899 (60.2%) were destroyed. These figures have fallen 12% in the last 10 years.

During the same period, Los Angeles County impounded 87,823 dogs and cats. Of these, 20,041 (22.8%) were reclaimed and/or adopted and 66,419 (75.6%) were destroyed.

Los Angeles County uses volunteers to help exercise, feed and groom the animals. Volunteers also work in the office, assist in lost and found, pet placement and fund raising. A Ventura County spokesperson said they do not have space for office volunteers nor the personnel to supervise volunteers working with the animals. Ventura County cannot use volunteers to replace a paid employee. Ventura does use volunteers in the Public Education Program.

Any volunteer must sign a liability insurance waiver in order to start work at the shelter. Ventura County does not believe this is a binding agreement and would be concerned about law suits should a volunteer be injured on the job.

Los Angeles County provides low cost microchips and tattooing for animal identification. Ventura County implants each animal adopted from their shelter. Referrals are offered to the public.

Ventura County offers free animal services for homeless people. Los Angeles County does not provide this service to the homeless.

The City of Thousand Oaks has a response time of thirty minutes to one hour from the Agoura shelter. Ventura County has a ten to thirty minute response time to all but the far reaches of the county and during after hours calls. The response time in these instances could be ninety minutes.

Los Angeles County has a spaying/neutering clinic open to the public. The cost for spaying/neutering cats at Agoura Shelter is \$20-\$25. Dogs are \$1.00 per pound. The profit from the clinic helps offset the shelter's expenses. Ventura County does not have a spaying/neutering clinic. They provide a \$40.00 voucher good toward payment of spaying/neutering at a veterinarian or the Humane Society. This is provided when an animal is adopted and/or at the request of a citizen who has an animal registered with the county.

The Ventura County budget has been reduced every year since Fiscal Year (FY) 1990/91. Since FY 1990/91, full time employees have been reduced by 16 due to budget cuts.

Licensing fees in Los Angeles County and Ventura County are comparable except that Los Angeles County offers senior citizen discounted rates.

Adoption fees in both counties are comparable except that Los Angeles County offers senior citizen discounted rates.

Reclamation, room and board fees are comparable in both counties.

Both counties provide community education programs. They go into the schools with the animals for educational purposes.

There is a shelter in Simi Valley which is under utilized. At the present time it is used as a holding area only for animals picked up in the East County. There is insufficient personnel to staff the shelter 8 hours a day. The Director of Community Services for Simi Valley indicated there are a number of citizens interested in volunteering to help at the shelter.

The Cities of Oxnard and Santa Paula have their own Animal Safety Response Unit under the police department. They have their own animal rescue vehicles. When animals are picked up they are immediately transported to the Camarillo shelter.

CONCLUSIONS

Los Angeles County (Agoura Shelter) seems to work well for Thousand Oaks. The proximity of the City of Thousand Oaks to the Agoura Shelter is probably the main reason that Los Angeles County works so well there.

No additional structures or changes were needed at the Agoura Shelter, which meant no initial financial outlay.

Door to door canvassing for collection of animal license fees by Los Angeles County in Thousand Oaks has increased revenue, thereby lowering the total cost of animal control expenses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ventura County Animal Regulation Department should institute a volunteer program.
- Ventura County Animal Regulation Department should set up a door to door canvassing program for collecting license fees.
- Ventura County Animal Regulation Department should utilize the Simi Valley shelter for more than just a holding area.
- Ventura County should institute lower animal licensing fees for senior citizens.
- Ventura County should set up a low cost public spaying/neutering clinic.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

Chief Administrative Officer

Ventura County Animal Regulation Department