

county of ventura

ANIMAL REGULATION DEPARTMENT

August 12, 1998

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Chief Administrative Officer
County of Ventura
800 So. Victoria Ave.
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RESPONSE TO 1997-1998 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT ON ANIMAL REGULATION

Recommendation: The Department of Animal Regulation "should institute a volunteer program".

Response: There has been an Animal Regulation Volunteer Auxiliary in constant operation since 1977. The number of active volunteers has fluctuated dramatically over the years as Department staffing levels, programs and operations have changed. Active groups of 50+ large animal advocates remain available and ready to assist in livestock related emergencies due to disasters. There are volunteers actively participating in the public education program, wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, marine mammal rescue and transport, and shelter animal exercise.

The staff position of Volunteer Coordinator was eliminated in 1989-90 due to budget reductions and has not been reinstated. Without a staff person to recruit, select, train and monitor volunteers, we have not encouraged or accepted any new volunteers to perform hands on functions at the shelter. History has shown that volunteers need continual monitoring when working directly with the animals or the public and there has been no staff available for such time consuming duties. Two former Grand Jurors have been meeting with Department personnel in the hopes of becoming the core of a new volunteer recruitment, training and monitoring program. We look forward to working with these enthusiastic organizers.

Recommendation: The Animal Regulation Department "should set up a door to door canvassing program for collecting dog license fees.

Response: The Department had a full time 8 member canvassing crew prior to budget reductions in 1989-90. Since 1996-97 we have had a canvassing crew of 4 extra help employees going door-to-door on weekends in the unincorporated areas. Beginning in 1997-98 several of our contract cities have requested canvassing services and the crew have been expanded in FY 1998-99 to include 8 extra help people. Canvassing is only done on weekends, as it has been our experience that few people are at home during daylight hours on weekdays. Revenue generated in cities through license sales is returned to those cities and may be used by them to offset their Animal Regulation contract costs. Revenue generated in unincorporated areas goes towards offsetting County costs for Animal Regulation services.

Recommendation: The Department of Animal Regulation "should utilize the Simi Valley Shelter for more than a holding facility".

Response: The Simi Valley Holding Facility was designed to hold up to 24 dogs and cats for a very limited time. The dog cages are entirely indoors and of such a small size that dogs cannot be safely or humanely kept for more than 48 hours without causing potential harm. There are no facilities for isolation of sick or contagious animals and no facilities for quarantines, livestock, or wildlife. The facility has been kept open only as a courtesy to the cities of Moorpark and Simi Valley and has been done so at some considered added expense to the other contract cities and the County. If either Moorpark or Simi Valley wish, they can fully fund remodeling, upgrading, and staffing to expand the use of the facility. There are no animals from the unincorporated areas or any other city taken to the Simi holding facility and expanding the usage would in no way benefit those entities.

Recommendation: "Ventura County should institute lower animal licensing fees for senior citizens".


Response: Each city that the Department of Animal Regulation contracts with for the provision of services is free to set the fees at whatever rate they desire. The Animal Regulation Commission, comprised of an elected official from each contract city and a County Supervisor, has discussed this idea on a number of occasions and has always rejected it unanimously as they concurred that the revenue loss would be substantial to an already struggling program. License fees of \$10 and \$30 per year are not high by statewide standards and the time and cost of implementing variant fees would be prohibitive.

Recommendation: "Ventura County should set up a low cost spaying/neutering clinic".

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Response: Ventura County has a very successful, and cost effective spay-neuter voucher program that is available to unincorporated area residents as well as the residents of Ojai, Ventura, Port Hueneme, Camarillo, Moorpark and Simi Valley. To actually build a building and provide all of the overhead costs, staffing and support that a "low-cost clinic would require would be a financial burden that the County and contracting cities are not prepared or willing to undertake. There are, in addition to the County voucher program, a number of private low cost options including the Humane Society clinic and voucher programs, private veterinary practitioners low-cost days, Mercy Crusade, Pet Assistance Foundation, Concerned People for Animals (C.P.A.) Humane Animal Rescue Team (H.A.R.T.) and others. The cities of Oxnard and Santa Paula have voucher programs of their own and Thousand Oaks residents may use the Los Angeles County clinic at Agoura. Fillmore has opted not to participate in any type of spay/neuter program at this time due to financial constraints.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kathy Jenks
Director