

PLACER COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

Background/Summary

The 2000-01 Grand Jury toured the Placer County Animal Shelter at DeWitt Center in response to a complaint and found the shelter, which was built in the early 1970s, is outdated and does not meet the needs of rapidly growing Placer County, particularly with regard to the area reserved for cats.

The County, aware of the problems, is pursuing plans to build a new shelter. A new program manager was hired in March 2001. In addition, the Placer County Supervisors recently directed \$300,000 to Animal Control for immediately correction of some of the worst conditions noted by the 2000-01 Grand Jury.

Discussion

As a follow-up, members of the 2001-2002 Grand Jury inspected the animal shelters located at DeWitt Center in Auburn and Tahoe Vista in North Lake Tahoe and interviewed management and staff at both locations. Both shelters are well staffed, relatively clean, and full of animals. The DeWitt kitchen area is inadequate for the uses required. The DeWitt staff noted the cats developed medical problems caused by their proximity to the dogs. Their cages were stationary and not moved easily. The problem has since been solved by the addition of stainless steel cages that are moved easily.

The recently acquired contingency funds are being used to address the most pressing problems cited by the 2000-2001 Grand Jury to allow for better working conditions and provide a more humane environment for the animals in their care.

Finding 1

Though no definite timeline has been established at this time, plans are underway to improve the existing shelter at DeWitt Center by relocating the cat area to another part of the shelter. The cats are now housed in stainless steel cages that can be moved easily.

Recommendation 1

Move ahead as quickly as possible to relocate the housing for cats to a less stressful area and provide a quarantine area.

Finding 2

The DeWitt kitchen area is not large enough for the preparation of the necessary quantity of animal food. There is also limited storage space for the food and supplies throughout the facility.

Recommendation 2

Continue with plans to enlarge the kitchen workspace/storage area for more efficient use.

Finding 3

There are water drainage problems at the rear of the DeWitt Center creating unsafe conditions in the large animal corral. This is partly due to water runoff from cleaning the inside cages area, but there is also runoff from a privately owned project located to the northeast which drains onto the shelter property.

Recommendation 3

Continue with plans to divert the indoor water runoff away from the large animal corral and other outdoor areas. In addition, the county should work with the neighboring parties on a solution to the outdoor water runoff problem as quickly as possible in order to avoid disease and injury to animals confined in the corral area.

Finding 4

The facility at DeWitt is outdated, overcrowded and does not provide adequate workspace for staff or proper housing for the animals.

Recommendation 4

Continue to improve the existing facility while moving ahead with plans for a new shelter as quickly as possible in order to provide improved working conditions and a humane environment for animals. All of the ongoing improvements will correct some of the more immediate problems, but they should be viewed as only temporary measures until a totally new facility is constructed.

Commendations

The Tahoe Vista facility has implemented a successful “Adopt a Pet” program and is to be commended for the large community based volunteer group it has recruited as well as its responsible euthanasia policy. The DeWitt facility is to be commended for its extended public access hours for adoptions and its ongoing work with private agency and animal advocacy groups.

Respondents

Placer County Board of Supervisors
Placer County Executive Officer
Placer County Health and Human Services Director
Placer County Facilities Department

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS TO:

The Honorable James D. Garbolino
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Placer
Historic Court House
101 Maple Street
Auburn, CA 95603