



Audit of the Animal Care and Adoption Division

Office of the County Auditor

Audit Report

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Report No. 21-05
December 16, 2020



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY AUDITOR

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Honorable Mayor and Board of County Commissioners

At the request of the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, we have conducted an audit of the Animal Care and Adoption Division.

The objectives of our audit were to determine whether kennel operations adhere to best practices and laws; programs and processes are operating effectively; personnel are adequately trained; assets are handled correctly; and revenues and expenses are accounted for appropriately.

We conclude that kennel operations do not consistently adhere to best practices and laws. We conclude that programs and processes are not operating effectively. We conclude that personnel are adequately trained. Except as noted within this report, we conclude that assets, revenue, and expenses are handled and accounted for appropriately. Opportunities for Improvement are included in the report. Management's Response is included in Appendix D.

The audit also includes assessing the substantiation of the allegations reported by complainants. We have included a comprehensive list of allegations received and assessed, along with the disposition of each in Appendix A.

We conducted this audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient and appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by the Animal Care and Adoption Division throughout our audit process.

Broward County Board of County Commissioners

Mark D. Bogen • Lamar P. Fisher • Beam Furr • Steve Geller • Dale V.C. Holness • Nan H. Rich • Tim Ryan • Barbara Sharief • Michael Udine
www.broward.org

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Melton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bob" and last name "Melton" clearly distinguishable.

Bob Melton
County Auditor

cc: Bertha Henry, County Administrator
Andrew Meyers, County Attorney
Monica Cepero, Deputy County Administrator
Leonard Vialpando, Director, Environmental Protection and Growth Management
Jeff Halsey, Director, Animal Care and Adoption Division

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, we conducted an audit of the Animal Care and Adoption Division. We conclude that kennel operations do not consistently adhere to best practices and laws. We conclude that programs and processes are not operating effectively. We conclude that personnel are adequately trained. Except as noted within this report, we conclude that assets, revenue, and expenses are handled and accounted for appropriately.

The Animal Care and Adoption Division (ACAD) is not adequately staffed to support current operations and provide minimum standards of care without over reliance on volunteers. We estimate that ACAD is at 65% the staffing level needed to adequately provide full services to the public for the specific operations reviewed. Our analysis shows that additional staff are needed in Kennel Operations, Clinic Services, Customer Service, and key program positions such as foster, rescue, adoption, return-to-field, volunteer, outreach, and information technology. In addition, we noted that ACAD has no certified animal behaviorists to assist in identifying and treating animals with behavioral issues and additional veterinarians are needed to provide adequate medical care. In total, we recommend ACAD staffing be increased by 29.5 to 36 FTE, depending on the number of volunteers used to assist in providing enrichment and whether programs such as pet licensing are outsourced as recommended.

Lighting in kennel areas is not used in compliance with industry guidelines to maintain animal health and well-being. Animals at the facility located in the interior kennel areas are without light daily between 14 to 18 hours. Leaving animals in darkness for an excessive amount of time may impact animal medical and behavioral health.

Current work schedules are inadequate to maintain animal health and well-being or support Shelter operations. Animals are left unattended for 16 to 18 hours without interaction with either other animals or humans. Cleaning begins within one hour of opening to the public at 11 a.m. which is insufficient time to address the quantity of animal waste which builds up within the kennel contributing to offensive odors within the kennels upon opening to the public. When combined with inadequate ventilation, it creates an unpleasant experience. In addition, cleaning is still in process upon opening, resulting in hoses within walkways and wet floors which increase the risk of injury to volunteers and members of the public. Also, animals are fed shortly before opening hours increasing the likelihood that animals will produce waste during the hours the shelter is open to the public.

Kennels and cages at the shelter are not secured during the hours the shelter is open. Anyone within the shelter, including volunteers, and members of the public can open kennels and cages and remove animals without employee supervision. Uncontrolled access to kennels and cages increases risks to animals, volunteers, the public, and employees, who may have to deal with incidents that occur. Dogs shaking the kennel door are at times able to open kennel doors increasing the risk of injury to the animal, public, volunteers and employees.

Kennel areas are not adequately monitored by employees during hours the shelter is open to the public to ensure the safety of members of the public, volunteers, and animals, and reduce legal liability. We have observed kennel operations staff, cleaning, and walking dogs throughout the day while volunteers and shelter visitors are generally unsupervised in Kennel areas. Volunteers have indicated during focus groups that it is difficult to find shelter staff when assistance is required. We have observed hazards to employees, volunteers, and the public, such as spills from water bowls and the occasional urine in the walkway while volunteers and members of the public are present. During interviews with volunteers, we noted that volunteers have been bitten while attempting to handle a suddenly aggressive animal without employees being present in Kennel areas to assist.

During our review of the sanitation procedures, we noted concerns that require immediate attention. The built-in Spray Master Technology (SMT) system, a pressure cleaning system used in the shelter to clean and sanitize animal enclosures while conserving water is not working as designed and requires immediate attention. Procedures to prevent contamination and the spread of disease (Fomite control) within kennel operations need to be enhanced and immediately implemented to reduce contamination with pathogens that contribute to transmission of disease. During our daily observations, we noted that staff do not consistently adhere to appropriate anti-contamination procedures.

Standard Operating Procedures regarding behavioral health do not align with national standards. Dogs do not consistently receive behavior evaluations either during the intake process or periodically throughout shelter stays. Eleven of 50 (22%) dogs we reviewed did not receive a behavior evaluation within seven days of intake as required by the shelter's intake policies. Six of 50 (34%) dogs in the shelter between 8-30 days did not receive a behavior evaluation. In addition, animal behavior classifications are not adequately recorded within the Chameleon system or consistently supported by behavior notes. Lack of appropriate supporting documentation for behavior classifications and inadequate recording of behavior classifications within Chameleon may increase risk of injury to the animal, employees, volunteers and members of the public and may not allow an adequate historical record to justify euthanasia based on animal behavior. According to industry guidelines, assessment of an animal's behavior must begin at the time of intake. Just as care is taken to note any physical problems that may require attention, behavioral

problems (stress, fear, anxiety, aggression) that require intervention or affect how that animal can be safely handled should also be noted at the time of intake and entered into an animal's record. Actions should be taken to respond promptly to behavioral needs.

Enrichment activities at the shelter are inadequate to maintain the health and well-being of animals. There is no formal schedule, criteria, and documentation of enrichment activities for animals within the shelter. In addition, while enrichment experiences are provided, such as walks and playtime, management is unable to demonstrate if all animals participate in these experiences or the frequency of participation, because the experiences are not scheduled or documented. For example, management uses a whiteboard to document daily walks; however, the whiteboard is managed by volunteers and inconsistently updated by staff. The whiteboard is erased each day and no permanent record is retained. The lack of adequate enrichment activities may cause animals to suffer mentally, be stressed, and cause behavior to deteriorate significantly reducing the likelihood of adoption and increasing the risk of euthanasia.

During our review of the administration of the Volunteer Program, we noted that improvements are needed. There is an inadequate number of volunteers daily to meet the needs of the shelter and make up for the lack of shelter staffing noted in our report. Volunteer surveys are not performed at various stages of the program as required by the approved Volunteer Standard Operating Procedure.

The pet licensing program is ineffective and potentially results in approximately \$13 Million annually in lost revenue, based on statistics indicating the approximate number of pets in Broward County. The County issues licenses for only 17% of all pets in the County, based on statistical data. The number of licenses issued monthly appear to be decreasing year over year. For example: The number of licenses issued in December 2019 was approximately 13% lower than December of the previous year. Pet registration renewal averaged 51.4% during the five-year period reviewed. Pet registration tags are required to be issued/renewed annually, with few exceptions. In addition, we estimate cost savings of approximately \$1.1 million over a three-year period when outsourcing is combined with the change to "Forever Tags" (not required to be renewed annually). In addition, professional outsourcing could lead to better compliance, which could significantly increase revenues.

Animal enclosures do not consistently meet industry guidelines. Smaller cages/enclosures used for housing cats are too small to allow a minimum of two feet between food, urination and defecation, and resting areas. Dog kennels/enclosures do not consistently contain a soft resting place to provide comfort and prevent pressure sores from developing, as required by ASV Guidelines, without adequate documentation. During our shelter observations from February 24 – 26, 2020, we noted six kennels without a bed or bedding. Upon follow-up with management

and review of the Chameleon system, in four of six (67%) instances there was no documentation supporting the absence of a bed or bedding.

Employees and volunteers are not adequately trained on animal handling procedures. Animal handling training is currently informal and typically handled through on-the-job training, volunteers train other volunteers and employees train other employees. As a result, animal handling procedures are inconsistently applied, and standards are unclear. Industry standards indicate that adequate training is key to limiting the use of unnecessary force during handling and must be provided to anyone who will be handling animals. ACAD has incurred liability claims of \$22,000 for animal bites during the audit period for volunteers and the public and \$27,000 in workers compensation claims for animal bites for employees.

Animal inventory counts or animal census to ensure all animals are accounted for are not performed daily as required by ACAD's Daily Census procedure. For example, during the period October 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020, animal inventory counts were performed on average every five days with a range of one to 13 days.

The current process for identifying and listing animals that require Foster is informal and is not tracked within the Chameleon system to maintain an adequate history. Staff utilizes a whiteboard to record animals needing foster which is periodically erased and not used to update Chameleon, the system of record. This method does not ensure completeness, facilitate the establishment of animals' history, is not measurable, facilitate the generation of system reports, or ensure transparency and accountability.

Daily assessments of at-risk animals are not performed by the Rescue Coordinator to proactively make them available to rescue groups. Upon inquiry, we were informed by staff that there is just not enough time or staff resources to conduct daily assessments and still meet other deadlines. Rescue application files are not adequately maintained and do not consistently contain required documentation. Twenty-nine of 49 (59%) sampled rescue partners did not have complete application documentation.

Medical procedures require enhancement. Periodic medical examinations are not performed for animals in the shelter greater than 30 days. Five of 29 (17%) animals sampled, did not have documentation of a medical examination during intake within the Chameleon system. Twelve (12) out of thirty (30) (40%) animals tested were missing evidence that their initial weight was recorded at intake, and two (2) out of thirty (30) (6%) animals tested were missing evidence that the animal's weight was recorded while at the facility.

During our review of field service response activities, we noted concerns. Nineteen of 60 (32%) field service calls sampled had response times that exceeded expected response times

established in ACAD's policies and procedures. The dispatch function is performed by a designated field service officer each shift while working in the field increasing response times. Dispatch and call response activities should be segregated. While the designated field officer is responding to a call, dispatch activities cannot be efficiently performed. There are currently no formal Field Service Officer monitoring procedures. During our review of Field Service Officer activities using global position system (GPS) data, we identified several concerns. We noted longer than usual routes between call locations. Field Service Officers sometimes spent most of the shift driving on highways, instead of driving through communities to patrol. Stops were made unrelated to a specific call that appear longer than what would be considered normal or related to field officers' daily duties.

Public records requests are not responded to in a timely manner. ACAD received 599 public records requests during the period October 1, 2018 to May 22, 2020, with an average response of 43 days. As of May 22, 2020, 62 public record requests were open with an average of 314 days since the receipt date.

Customer service calls are not handled adequately. The ACAD Customer Service number received 54,548 calls during the audit period. Of those calls, 42,661 (78%) were not answered by Customer Service personnel. We found that 75% of the unanswered calls were forwarded to voicemail.

During our review, we noted ACAD does not perform periodic emergency evacuation drills of the shelter. There are many reasons the shelter may have to be evacuated including bomb threats, fire, active shooter, etc. During these situations, the lives of employees, volunteers, visitors, and animals should be considered.

The Spay and Neuter Programs are not adequately monitored for effectiveness. The spay and neuter program is driven by the budget not on data monitoring demand or increases and decreases in animal populations. Management has no method to monitor whether the program is achieving its objective.

Trust fund accounts are not managed adequately to ensure that monies are accounted for appropriately and used for the appropriate purpose. All four trust fund balances are comingled and not accounted for separately making it difficult or impossible to validate fund balances and ensure that funds are transferred and disbursed for the purposes intended by County ordinance. For example, ACAD was unable to provide the fiscal 2019 year-end fund balance for each of the four trust funds. After review of the Adoption Trust Fund, we were unable to verify that \$40,513.70 in interest income for fiscal year 2019 was allocated to the Adoption trust account. Adoption donations of \$29,131 were incorrectly recorded to the General Trust Account for fiscal year 2019.

The Pet Supermarket agreement is expired and has not been renewed or updated since September 2012. We further noted that provisions within the old agreement are still in effect today, and that monitoring and progress reports of animals at Pet Supermarket is not occurring per the terms of the agreement. The Pet Supermarket contract is required to be renewed every four years per the initial agreement.

During our review of Purchasing Card (P-Card) transactions, we noted that transactions are potentially split to circumvent the \$3,500 P-Card limit. Cardholder transactions totaling \$352,947, considered potential splits, were processed within one to seven days or there were an excessive number of monthly transactions with the same vendor. Master agreements are not consistently used to reduce costs.

The Animal Shelter has design flaws that require remediation and was not designed to support the County's goal of "No Kill". The Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system is not adequately designed to support animal shelter operations. The current system does not adequately separate air between animal housing areas and administrative areas used by staff and members of the public. In addition, the air exhaust taking air out of the system is too close to the air intake resulting in the recirculation of bad air. Both these issues affect air quality within the building and contribute to unpleasant odors. The shelter is not designed to provide alternate housing based on length of stay, which has been identified as a risk factor for animal physical and psychological well-being. As the length of stay increases, it becomes progressively more important to provide space that is both mentally and physically stimulating. During inquiries with the Construction Management Division, they indicated there was no record or knowledge of a request to modify the construction program or adjust the design to suit the goal of "No Kill."

Exterior areas in the rear of the animal shelter used for animal enrichment (walks, playgroups) were not originally designed for that purpose and do not have adequate drainage to maintain animal health and well-being or support operations. While there are canopies installed in outdoor areas that provide some shade to reduce direct sunlight to employees, volunteers and animals on sunny days, these areas are not equally protected from inclement weather to facilitate their use for enrichment activities on rainy days. The grassy area between the building and the two fenced play areas is steeply sloped, slippery, and present a fall hazard to volunteers and employees taking dogs out for walks or enrichment. Several volunteers commented that they have slipped or have observed others slip due to the sudden slope. This is further exacerbated when walking strong dogs. Most of the area in the rear of the shelter building floods after heavy rainfall and may remain under water for extended periods affecting shelter operations.

Additional opportunities for improvement are included in our report. Our report contains a total of 135 recommendations for improvement. In addition, we assessed 87 allegations made to us by various individuals during the course of the audit, which are included in Appendix A. Management's response is included as Appendix D. We appreciate management's cooperation during the course of the audit.