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County Auditor



St Louis County Pet Adoption Center
10521 Baur Blvd 63132

Internal Audit Report

Audit of Facility Operations and Services

March 2018

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Auditor's Office

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I. Introduction:

Auditor toured the Saint Louis County Pet Adoption Center and comparative facility. Auditor suggests consideration as to:

1. Employment of a full time veterinarian licensed by the State of Missouri or equivalent contracted services;
2. Employment of veterinary technician(s);
3. Increased staffing and enhanced training for employees and volunteers;
4. Review and update of safety and security policies and procedures to be implemented as relative to animal and human interaction.

The Saint Louis County Auditor (“Auditor”) and staff inspected the Saint Louis County Pet Adoption Center (“Center”) on Monday, March 5, 2018 to investigate citizen complaints concerning operation of the Center. Auditor made observations during the tour of the facility with the Operations Manager and exchanged contact information at the end of the visit. On March 6, 2018 the Auditor left a voice message by telephone for the Operations Manager to schedule an audit entrance meeting. The phone call was not returned.

II. Observations of System Program:

The Director of the Center was present during part of the tour, but was occupied and attending to animals. Auditor noted approximately 75 dogs and 25 cats which were housed at the Center. A large number of dogs were pit bulls and mixed breed. The animals were housed in various rooms throughout the Center based on evaluation factors such as bite history, need for quarantine due to recent bite reports, illness, and recent intake. Auditor spoke to personnel including the Director, Operations Manager, Director’s Assistant, Animal Maintenance worker, Animal Control Officers and Supervisor, Clerical staff, Supervisory personnel and Volunteers.

The dog cage conditions appeared inadequate and an obnoxious, unusual, unidentifiable, clothing permeating odor was present in one of the large-sized dog housing rooms. The dog kennels had no outside egress which meant dogs must be individually removed and walked when needed. There was not adequate staff to do this. A stack of newsprint was observed in one dog kennel room and staff said it was used in kennels to collect animal waste since the dogs were not taken out often enough. Most of the dog kennel common areas had been hosed down presumably for sanitation. The cat kennels appeared orderly for the most part, but were small and dim. It seemed the animals had adequate food and water. A pet “adoption display” window was observed in the building lobby. It was clean and occupied.

Auditor was told employees performed blood draws and administered medicine. A manager expressed concern about the possible spread of parvovirus and contraction of rabies. On March 15, 2018, a local news outlet reported two dogs had recently died at the Center from canine parvovirus and a third was being treated. The report indicated no previous outbreak of parvovirus at the Center. Auditor learned no veterinarian was on site full-time, however, a veterinarian visited the Center several times per week to check animals. The County contracted with the veterinarian for “up to three days a week” starting December 26,

2017 and ending March 31, 2018. Auditor learned the Director of the Center apparently had a veterinary degree, but was not currently licensed in the State of Missouri according to the Missouri Division of Professional Registration.

Auditor learned volunteers were given minimal or no training when they began their assignments. Volunteers are accepted starting at age 12. Ages 12-16 must work with a parent. Auditor was told many employed staff received inadequate training.

After Auditor's March 5 field review of Center, another animal shelter in the area was visited for testing and control comparison. Auditor noted the second shelter housed substantially fewer, but noticeably happier and calmer animals, the environment and housing for the animals was cleaner and more sanitary than the Center and the shelter employed a staff of fifteen veterinarians who rotated through the shelter from time to time to provide full-time care for the animals. Auditor performed additional testing subsequent to March 5, 2018 by verbal and in-person contact with private veterinarians located in Saint Louis County.

III. Audit Findings:

Auditor finds there is no full time veterinarian working at the Center. Auditor is unable to determine how often the contract veterinarian visits the Center and for how long each time or what specific duties and responsibilities are assigned. Additionally, there is no finding as to regulatory compliance with respect to drug prescription, ordering, inventory control, dispensation and record keeping. Auditor compared veterinary services from two other Missouri based county pet control centers and found that both contracted veterinary services. One contracted with the Humane Society to provide on-demand, as-needed service. Animals were taken to the Humane Society upon initial intake and at other times for treatment of illness or disease and for spaying and neutering. The second comparison contracted with a private veterinarian for 24/7 emergency service and the same veterinarian would visit the animals at the facility on a regular basis for routine matters. Additionally, this comparison employed two full-time veterinary technicians.

Auditor finds Center staffing is inadequate relative to workload and animal population. A volunteer reported staff is "desperate and frustrated". It was noted the County advertised Center positions on its government job site recently. In some instances training of staff and volunteers is either minimal or non-existent. Some dogs were found to be vicious and one dog escaped from its cage during Auditor's inspection. Another dog repeatedly jumped 4 to 5 feet inside its cage. The dogs are unable to leave their cages without human assistance and staffing shortages hampered the ability of dogs to exercise and relieve themselves.

Auditor finds the physical conditions in the animal housing areas (for both animals and workers) are less than ideal based on Auditor's tests and comparison with another local facility and Auditor's interviews with regional veterinarians. The two facilities were opposite one another relative to population, housing, odor, cleanliness, staffing, and veterinary care. There is both animal and human risk related to parvovirus and possibly rabies at the Center.

IV. Risks and Opinion:

- A. Hiring adequate, qualified staff that will perform consistently should reduce risk on various levels to the County. Specifically, the risk for animals to contract disease and subsequently cause injury to employees and volunteers will be reduced. Risk exists regarding the prescription, ordering, inventory, control, storage, indexing, and administration of drugs – particularly controlled substances – without a full-time veterinarian on staff. The adherence to DEA or other governmental regulations should be reviewed. AUDITOR RECOMMENDS CONSIDERATION AS TO HIRING A FULL-TIME VETERINARIAN OR ALTERNATIVELY CONTRACTING FOR APPROPRIATE ROUTINE AND EMERGENCY VETERINARY SERVICES. CONSIDERATION REGARDING EMPLOYMENT OF VETERINARY TECHNICIAN(S) IS ALSO RECOMMENDED.

- B. There is risk of injury to employees and volunteers (who may be young and/or inexperienced) as a result of inadequate training. Many of the animals exhibited as mean. Monetary risk exists relative to liability claims and/or workers' compensation requests. Risk as to animal comfort and welfare, sanitation and the spread of animal disease exists due to inadequate staffing.

- C. AUDITOR RECOMMENDS COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING FOR ALL EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY, ADEQUATE SUPERVISION BE PROVIDED, PARTICULARLY FOR VOLUNTEERS, THAT VOLUNTEERS NOT BE REQUIRED TO PERFORM DANGEROUS FUNCTIONS AND THAT ALL EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS BE ADEQUATELY ASSESSED PRIOR TO PLACEMENT IN THE CENTER. IT IS RECOMMENDED CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO INCREASING STAFFING LEVELS. IN ADDITION, IT IS RECOMMENDED SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES BE REVIEWED AND UPDATED, AS NEEDED, REGARDING ANIMAL AND HUMAN INTERACTION.

Auditee's Response:

Auditor sent detailed written questions and request for documents to Center management twice. No response was received on either occasion.

Auditor's Comments:

Without Auditee's response, Auditor's ability to assist Auditee was restricted and accordingly, it would be difficult to set forth a plan moving forward and make recommendations.

V. RATING:

The overall performance in the areas audited was FAIR*.

**The ratings cover only audited areas and do not reflect an opinion on the overall operation of the entity.
Within that context, the rating scale indicates the following:*

Excellent: The audit results indicate this entity is well managed. The report contains no findings. In addition, if applicable, prior recommendations have been implemented.

Good: The audit results indicate this entity is well managed. The report contains few findings, and the entity has indicated most or all recommendations have already been, or will be, implemented. In addition, if applicable, many of the prior recommendations have been implemented.

Fair: The audit results indicate this entity needs to improve operations in several areas. The report contains several findings, or one or more findings that require management's immediate attention, and/or the entity has indicated several recommendations will not be implemented. In addition, if applicable, several prior recommendations have not been implemented.

Poor: The audit results indicate this entity needs to significantly improve operations. The report contains numerous findings that require management's immediate attention, and/or the entity has indicated most recommendations will not be implemented. In addition, if applicable, most prior recommendations have not been implemented.