

2007-2008 GRAND JURY REPORT

Animal Friends of the Valley Animal Shelter

Background

Animal Friends of the Valley Animal Shelter (AFVAS) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation located at 29001 Bastron Avenue, off Strickland Road, in a rural area near Lake Elsinore. The AFVAS contracts with the cities of Temecula, Murrieta, Canyon Lake, and Lake Elsinore to pick-up unwanted and stray animals in the southwest region of Riverside County.

AFVAS opened a shelter in 1988 formerly known as Lake Elsinore Animal Friends. In the 1990s the AFVAS began searching for a permanent home. In 2005, the four contracted cities agreed to enter into a joint financing authority that would issue bonds for a new shelter to be built at the corner of Mission Trail and Corydon Street in the City of Wildomar. In 2007, all four cities and the Riverside County Board of Supervisors agreed to finance a 39-year bond plus a 5% contingency, allowing the County to cover any missed payments by the cities. The total Bond is \$17 million. Issues concerning parking, environment, approvals from the consulting architect, and the Riverside County Board of Supervisors have delayed the start of the building.

AFVAS currently utilizes trailers to house administration, security, and personnel. The night security guard uses his own trailer and has placed it outside adjacent to the chain link fence that encircles the facility.

Large dogs are kept outdoors in chain link kennels, while small dogs are kept in a separate area in smaller kennels. Another building houses cats. There is a brick building for euthanizing animals, as required. Prior to February 28, 2008, a separate trailer was used to house puppies and kittens.

On the above date, at approximately 5:00 a.m., a fire started in the trailer that housed twenty-four puppies and fifteen kittens. Firefighters were able to extinguish the fire before it could spread to an adjoining trailer. However, all 39 puppies and kittens perished. The Riverside County Fire Department Report, Incident #001-8924, indicated the origin of the fire was an "Unspecified short-circuit arc," in the trailer wall.

Findings

1. In March 2008, two dogs died from Parvovirus (Parvo) at the shelter. A common disease fatal to dogs is Parvo, “a genus of viruses that replicates autonomously in suitable cells.” Parvo manifests itself in canines in the form of vomiting and diarrhea that dehydrates the animal. Death almost always follows. Humans, walking throughout the shelter, can have this virus adhere to their footwear and unknowingly spread the virus. The Parvo virus can exist on floors, cages, and clothing for months and can be carried outside the shelter unless disinfected. The AFVAS does not warn visitors of this potential hazard to animals. The state appointed Executive Director, a Humane Officer, stated that a “disinfectant box” should be used. However, it is not being used.
2. The metal roof above the kennels supports a misting system that provides water mist to keep the larger dogs cool during warm weather. This misting system is attached to the electrical flex conduit that provides electricity to the fluorescent tube fixtures. The fixtures are not designed for outdoor use, and many fluorescent tubes were missing. The misting system has corroded the light fixtures and can possibly cause an electrical short and fire.
3. During a tour of AFVAS, it was observed that large dogs were restricted from normal movement such as being able to lie down, turn around, and sit normally. The cause of the restriction is a large sleeping box inside the kennel. One dog was sitting on top of his sleeping box because of the lack of room to move.
4. It has been reported that when it rains the AFVAS becomes flooded. Because of poor drainage, it is necessary to sand bag areas and use pumps to drain the water accumulations. The AFVAS grounds become muddy and are dangerous to work in and difficult to safely park a vehicle.
 - Riverside County Department of Building and Safety, Environmental Compliance Division, recently has been issued a state storm water permit. This permit requires storm water pollution compliance inspections to be conducted at all commercial facilities, including kennels. These inspections began in 2007, and will continue in 2008. No inspection of the AFVAS has been performed as of the date of this report.
5. AFVAS does not have smoke detectors and/or fire alarm systems installed and operating in their trailers.

6. The entrance to the AFVAS does not have address numbers visible from the street or the parking lot. The address does not register in computer programs, such as Mapquest.

Recommendations

**Riverside County Board of Supervisors
Animals Friends of the Valley
Riverside County Fire Department
Riverside County Transportation and Land Management Agency
Riverside County Building and Safety,
Environmental Compliance Division**

1. Inform personnel and visitors of the hazard of the Parvo virus by posting signs. Provide a box or platform to disinfect shoes as employees and the public enter and exit the facility. This box must contain disinfectants and germicides such as RX-75 or RX-44 PLUS, both of which have been shown to be effective against Parvo.
2. Provide a well-lighted and safe facility using approved outdoor waterproof light fixtures.
3. Provide room for larger dogs by removing the sleeping box and putting down a pad and blanket as weather permits.
4. Riverside County Department of Building and Safety, Environmental Compliance Division, must, without delay, perform an initial inspection of AFVAS to determine if they are in compliance with all state and local storm water quality requirements. AFVAS management must identify potential and actual sources of pollutants at the AFVAS and insure they do not contaminate nearby waterways that might receive drainage. Correct and redirect drainage to eliminate flooding during the rainy period.
5. Install smoke detectors and a fire alarm system in all structures at AFVAS.
6. AFVAS must post an identifying and clearly visible address sign at the street entrance.

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