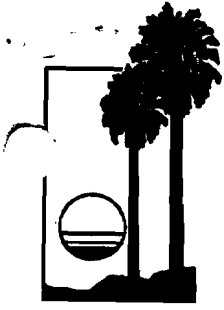


FILE

City of Desert Hot Springs



April 16, 2002

Mary Ellen Johnson, Foreperson
2001-02 Riverside County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 829
Riverside, California 92502

Dear Ms. Johnson,

Thank you for the time that the Grand Jury Committee has taken to review our animal shelter and for the opportunity to respond to your observations. I will provide an overall response, and then a response to each finding and recommendation of the Grand Jury.

Overall Desert Hot Springs Response

As mentioned on the Grand Jury visit, the City of Desert Hot Springs has been renovating the physical facilities and overhauling the policies and procedures at the shelter over the past year. Many of these improvements were in progress during the visit. Over the past year we have made great strides. There are two new areas for exercise with fresh air and drains, clean cement, landscaping, trees and flowers planted for color. The cattery has been renovated largely to the efforts of volunteers. The cages have been installed into banks with shelves and drawers to store supplies. The west wall has been covered with a complete wall-sized mural of a water mill and stream in the forest. The other walls have been painted in a soft green and bright fall motif. New curtains and new rugs along with the soft sounds of a small water fountain and music of nature sounds complete the new look. The completed cushioned bench for sitting and visiting with the healthy, happy cats will then encourage adoptive owners will come and spend time with the cats, enabling them to find new loving homes.

These changes, along with training and monitoring of employees and the willingness of our shelter to work with Palm Springs Animal Shelter, Save A Pet, Animal Samaritans and several rescue groups, have reduced the euthanasia rate to approximately 30 percent in the

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last three months. We believe this to be the lowest rate of any public shelter in the Valley, if not the Inland Empire. We work very closely with all the groups in the area.

We have also just begun a new program of injecting a microchip into each new animal adopted or for which a license is issued. Desert Hot Springs is the only public shelter in the Coachella Valley, if not the County, to provide this, at no extra cost, for every adopted animal. The microchips identify the animal if it is lost and recovered by the shelter.

A new adoption center opened at a local shopping center in February and continues two Sundays a month (2nd and 4th) from the hours of 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Adoptions include vaccinations and licensing. The new education program for schools started in February, along with all the other new changes

Grand Jury Finding #1

Animals are often abandoned by Desert Hot Springs' seasonal population. This results in a considerable fluctuation in the number of animals kept in the shelter.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Partner with other area animal shelters to handle the seasonal overflow of animals.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

There is a fluctuation in the number of animals brought to the shelter. However, the largest number of animals coming into the shelter is believed to be from the surrounding unincorporated County of Riverside and not from the seasonal population. The City is working with the County of Riverside Animal Control staff to coordinate city efforts with county license canvassing and animal patrol in the county unincorporated areas around Desert Hot Springs. In addition, we partner with Save-a-Pet, Animal Samaritans, and other pet rescue organizations to reduce the number of animals in the shelter. These efforts have resulted in what we believe to be the lowest euthanasia rate of any public shelter in the Coachella Valley if not the entire County of Riverside.

Grand Jury Finding #2

Training programs and the monitoring of work performance, including written policy and procedures, are nonexistent.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Provide a training program for the shelter staff and volunteers.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

The City has always maintained some level of training programs as required to have certified animal control officers and to certify individuals to administer euthanasia, most recently on November 8, 2001. We are now on the list for Cock Fighting class, Chemical Capture, State Humane Academy, Animal Control Officer Academy, Recognizing the Child/Animal Abuse Connection for the Field Officer, Livestock Handling for the Field

Officer. These classes started in the spring of 2002. Operational policies have been difficult to find because other shelters of our size do not have them. However, we have acquired policies from larger shelters and are revising them to suit our size and needs.

Grand Jury Finding #3

There are no volunteer programs in place.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Seek out volunteers with compute skills to assist in daily operations.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

During the time that the Grand Jury visited the shelter Sharon Levy was the City's volunteer coordinator, preceded by Stephanie Copeland, although there were only a few volunteers at that time. In addition, the City has benefited from a volunteer advisory board consisting of animal care organizations in the Coachella Valley, which has assisted the City in implementing new policies and procedures. More recently Ms. Levy is assisting with fund-raising and Shelter Supervisor Parker is organizing volunteers.

There is now a volunteer program in place and some volunteers are certified in Peace Officer Standardized Training (POST) 831 and State of California Certified Euthanasia. Some have many years working not only in shelters but also in the animal control field operations, with training in office procedures and data entry. There are young volunteers who come and play, brush and spend time with every animal in the shelter at least two times each week. They have helped enormously, and the list of volunteers is growing.

Grand Jury Finding #4

No one is scheduled to care for or feed the animals on weekends or holidays.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Use volunteers, or current employees to staff the shelter and to feed and care for the animals on the weekends and holidays.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

Someone has always provided for feeding and watering animals on weekends and holidays, although, due to the small number of staff, (one supervisor, one animal control officer, and one kennel technician) there was no written schedule. We currently have one full time shelter technician and he along with the shelter supervisor works on weekends along with at least three work-release persons. Weekends also see the largest number of volunteers. This has been the case for at least the past year. A written schedule, enclosed, is now posted.

Grand Jury Finding #5

The shelter's computer system is inoperative. This requires all activities to be logged manually.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Repair or replace the computer system.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

The City has purchased a new computer for the shelter and appropriate software has been ordered to track licensing and microchip information.

Grand Jury Finding #6

Personnel records of past and present employees, maintained in the shelter's office, are incomplete.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Update and maintain personnel records.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

Personnel records of present and recent employees are maintained in the office of the personnel director at city hall and are complete. Personnel records of former employees are kept off-premise in storage. Those are appropriate locations to maintain this information. At the time of the Grand Jury review, the Grand Jury requested records of past employees that were in off-premise storage. These were difficult to retrieve without substantial cost because the records are filed alphabetically and the city had no list of all of the employees who have worked at the shelter over the course of time.

Grand Jury Finding #7

No water is carried in the animal control vehicle for the animals.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Provide fresh water in the animal control vehicle for animals.

Desert Hot Springs Response

Five gallons of water along with towels and bowls are carried on the truck at all times in order to cool down overheated animals (such as happens when they have been running for some time.) However, Desert Hot Springs enjoys the fact that their animals are never more than 15 minutes from a vet or the shelter at any point in the city's jurisdiction. The animals do not have to be driven around all day in the truck as with the County animal control operations. Our animals are brought in as soon as they are picked up. Also, animals that are hot when picked up often throw up water if they drink on a moving truck, thus causing the humidity to rise inside the trucks and putting the dogs in more danger.

Grand Jury Finding #8

The original outdoor enclosure contains up to 14 dogs. It is covered with a torn tarpaulin, exposing the animals to the elements year round.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Repair or replace the tarpaulin covering the original outdoor pen.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

While the original outdoor enclosure has the capacity to hold up to 14 dogs, there are no more than 7-8 dogs housed there at a given time. The torn tarpaulin has been removed and a new drain and fence have been installed. "Igloo" doghouses are provided to protect from the winter weather. A new patio cover has been ordered for receipt by early May, to provide shade during the summer season.

Grand Jury Finding #9

The outdoor enclosure's misting system, used to cool the animals, is inadequate.

Grand Jury Recommendation

No Grand Jury recommendation.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

The misting system used in the outdoor enclosure is also used in combination with two large wading pools. The water is tested at least 3-5 times a day with a thermometer and filled with fresh water 2-3 times a day when temperature rises in the summer time. This will keep the animals sufficiently cool in conjunction with the new shade structures.

Grand Jury Finding #10

There is a strong odor coming from the animal enclosures.

Grand Jury Recommendation

No Grand Jury recommendation.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

This did not occur on the first Grand Jury visit, but may have on the second visit. We attribute that to either the time of day (if it was early before kennels were cleaned) or the performance of the kennel technician who was employed here at the time. Kennels are cleaned and disinfected several times per day and are reasonably odor-free. Some of the dogs, especially on medications, those with renal problems, older animals, etc. have strong urine, bowel odors. We believe that the procedures established several months ago by our new shelter supervisor have improved the cleanliness and reduced odors substantially. Were someone to visit the shelter unannounced at this time, we believe the shelter would be relatively odor-free.

Grand Jury Finding #11

The interior ceiling heater has exposed wiring.

Grand Jury Recommendation

No Grand Jury recommendation.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

The heater was inspected by the fire department and was not found to be a hazard. Nonetheless, a metal plate has been installed on the heater.

Grand Jury Finding #12

There is no street number or identifying sign on the outside of the animal shelter

Grand Jury Recommendation

Install identifying signs at the entrance of the shelter.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

There is a sign in the driveway that we believe to be visible from the street. In order to assure that it is, the sign will be moved closer to the street.

Grand Jury Finding #13

There is notification system to inform owners of impounded animals.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Develop policies for notifying owners of captured licensed animals.

Desert Hot Springs Response

Owners of impounded animals are always notified either by phone or personal visit. When an animal is found with identification from another jurisdiction, that jurisdiction or individual is always contacted. In addition, *all* animals adopted from the shelter have a microchip installed. We are the first public shelter in the Valley, if not the County, to do so. We are always looking for better ways to notify owners of impounded animals which may include use of a website to show photographs of impounded animals.

Grand Jury Finding #14

The animal shelter has not taken advantage of funds by applying for available grants.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Apply for available grants to be used for ongoing education of the public in animal care.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

We have been notified that the city will receive \$80,000 from a trust to improve conditions for the animals at the shelter, and for spay and neuter programs. Other than this, we have found no grants specifically available to public shelters. The City does not have a grants writer and we rely on grant information provided generally through professional sources.

Grand Jury Finding #15

Animal food is not properly stored or organized.

Grand Jury Recommendation

No Grand Jury recommendation.

City of Desert Hot Springs Response

All animal food is kept in the storage room and is rotated regularly before each new shipment. Shipments are kept small purposely to ensure optimal freshness. Dog food is kept in one area of the storage room and cat food is kept in another area and also a can with a freshness lid is kept in the cattery.

Grand Jury Finding #16

The proposed Coachella Valley area-wide animal shelter project is not presently available.

Grand Jury Recommendation

Investigate the feasibility of utilizing the proposed Coachella Valley area-wide animal shelter project, if it becomes available.

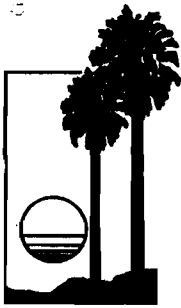
Desert Hot Springs Response

The City of Desert Hot Springs has been a leader and major proponent for the Coachella Valley Animal Campus



Matt Weyuker
Mayor

cc: City Council
City Manager



City of Desert Hot Springs

September 3, 2002

2001-02 Riverside County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 829
Riverside, California 92502

Thank you for the time that the Grand Jury Committee has taken to review our animal shelter and for the opportunity to respond to your observations.

We will respond in accordance with the numbered paragraphs of the findings in your letter.

1. There is a fluctuation in the number of animals brought to the shelter. However, the largest number of animals coming into the shelter is believed to be from the surrounding unincorporated County of Riverside and not from the seasonal population.
2. Training programs have begun, first with state certified euthanasia last November 8, 2001. We are now on the list for Cock Fighting class, Chemical Capture, State Humane Academy, Animal Control Officer Academy, Recognizing the Child/Animal Abuse Connection for the Field Officer, Livestock Handling for the Field Officer. These classes started in the spring of 2002. Operational policies have been difficult to find because other shelters our size do not have them. However, we have acquired policies from larger shelters and are revising them to suit our size and needs.
3. While the City has not been able to establish a strong formal volunteer program, we rely heavily on volunteers as well as work-release individuals through the Sheriff's Department.
4. We currently have one full time shelter technician and he along with the shelter supervisor work all day weekends along with at least three work-release persons. Weekends also see the largest number of volunteers. This has been the case for at least the past year.

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5. The City has purchased a new computer for the shelter and appropriate software has been ordered to track licensing and microchip information.
6. Personnel records of present and recent employees are maintained in the office of the personal director at city hall and are complete. Personnel records of former employees are kept off-premise in storage. Those are appropriate locations to maintain this information.
7. Five gallons of water along with towels and bowls are carried on the truck at all times in order to cool down overheated animals (such as happens when they have been running for some time.) However, Desert Hot Springs enjoys the fact that their animals are never more than 15 minutes from a vet or the shelter at any point in the city's jurisdiction. The animals do not have to be driven around all day in the truck as with the County animal control operations. Our animals are brought in as soon as they are picked up. Also, animals that are hot when picked up often throw up water if they drink on a moving truck, thus causing the humidity to rise inside the trucks and putting the dogs in more danger.
8. While the outdoor enclosure has the capacity to hold up to 14 dogs, there are no more than 7-8 dogs housed there at a given time. The torn tarpaulin has been removed, a new drain and fence have been installed. "Igloo" doghouses are provided in both outside enclosure areas. A new patio cover is has been ordered for receipt by early May, prior to the summer season.
9. The misting system used in the outdoor enclosure is also used in combination with two large wading pools. The water is tested at least 3-5 times a day with a thermometer and filled with fresh water 2-3 times a day when temperature rises in the summer time.
10. Kennels are cleaned and disinfected several times per day and are reasonably odor-free. Some of the dogs, especially on medications, those with renal problems, older animals, etc. have strong urine, bowel odors. We believe that the procedure established several months ago by our new shelter supervisor has improved the cleanliness and reduced odors substantially. It should also be noted that the kennel technician on duty the day that the Grand Jury made its second visit, is no longer employed at the shelter.
11. A metal plate was installed on the heater.
13. Owners of impounded animals are always notified either by phone or personal visit. When an animal is found with identification from another jurisdiction, that jurisdiction or individual is always contacted. In addition, all animals adopted from the shelter have a microchip installed. We are the first public shelter in the Valley, if not the County, to use this technology. We are always looking for better ways to notify owners of impounded animals which may include use of a website to show photographs of impounded animals.
14. We have found no grants specifically available to public shelters. The City does not have a grants writer and we rely on grant information provided generally through professional sources.

15. All animal food is kept in the storage room and is rotated regularly before each new shipment. Shipments are kept small purposely to ensure optimal freshness. Dog food is kept in one area of the storage room and cat food is kept in another area and also a can with a freshness lid is kept in the cattery.

16. The City of Desert Hot Springs has been a leader and major proponent for the Coachella Valley Animal Campus. The cities of Palm Springs, Indio, Coachella, and La Quinta have withdrawn, bringing into question the economic viability of the Campus.

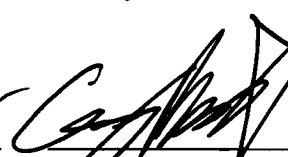
We have made great strides in the shelter of Desert Hot Springs. We have two new areas for exercise and fresh air with drains, clean cement, landscaping, trees planted, flowers planted for color, the cattery has been changed largely to the efforts of volunteers. The cages have been installed into banks with shelves and drawers to store supplies. The west wall has been covered with a complete wall sized mural of a water mill and stream in the forest. The other walls have been painted in a soft green and bright fall motif. New curtains and new rugs along with the soft sounds of a small water fountain and music of nature sounds complete the new look. We hope the completed cushioned bench for sitting and visiting with the healthy, happy cats will ensure adoptive owners will come and spend time with the cats at our facility, enabling most cats to find a new loving home as quickly as possible.

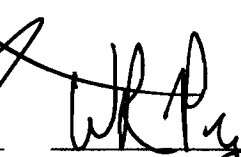
These changes, along with training and monitoring of employees and the willingness of our shelter to work with Palm Springs Animal Shelter, Save A Pet, Animal Samaritans and several rescue groups, have reduced the euthanasia rate to approximately 30 percent in the last three months. We believe this to be the lowest rate of any public shelter in the Valley, if not the Inland Empire. We work very closely with all the groups in the area.

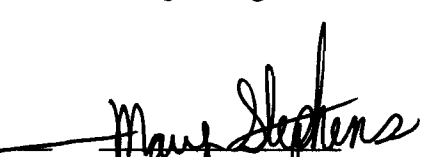
We have also just begun a new program with microchips being included with each new adoption, and a new canvassing program to include microchipping with the license. A new adoption center has opened the second Sunday in Feb. and continues two Sundays a month (2nd and 4th) from the hours of 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Adoptions include vaccinations and licensing, all combined in a close site downtown. The new education program for schools started in February, along with all the other new changes. There is now a volunteer program in place and volunteers who are on the schedule are certified in P.O.S.T. 831 and State of California Certified Euthanasia, have many years working not only in shelters but also in the field operations of animal control office procedures and data entry. There are young volunteers who come and play, brush and spend time with every animal in the shelter at least two times each week.

They have helped enormously in their efforts and the list of volunteers is growing.


Greg Ruppert
Councilmember


Gary Bosworth
Councilmember


Will Pieper
Councilmember


Mary Stephens
Councilmember