

# 2018 – 2019 Civil Grand Jury

## Riverside County Department of Animal Services Improved Efficiency for County Animal Control Officers

### Department of Animal Services Mission Statement:

*To promote an environment of responsible pet ownership through progressive animal welfare initiatives, community outreach, and humane education in a culture of compassion, creativity and integrity.*

### Background

The Riverside County Department of Animal Services (RCDAS) operates four animal shelters. These shelters are located in Jurupa Valley, San Jacinto, Thousand Palms, and Blythe. Non-profit organizations operate animal shelters in Palm Springs, Riverside, San Jacinto and Wildomar. The facilities in Corona, Moreno Valley, Norco and Beaumont are city owned and operated. Beaumont does not provide shelter services because their animals are transported to the Ramona Humane Society facility in San Jacinto. The regulations governing the treatment of all animals in shelters can be found in the §§1813 – 1834.7 of the California Civil Code.

The Riverside County Department of Animal Services Intake Statistics Report for 2018 indicated over 46,000 animals were handled by county-operated shelters and over 27,000 by the city-owned and non-profit shelters. Intake numbers consist primarily of strays, owner surrenders and confiscations. The overall adoption and live release rate for all shelters in the county, whether they were county-operated, city-operated or run by a non-profit was approximately 90% of intakes.

In 2018-2019, the Riverside County Civil Grand Jury (RCCGJ) toured county, city-owned and non-profit shelters. RCCGJ members conducted several visits, some unannounced, to observe the treatment and care of the animals at these facilities. Although there are no state or county statutes regarding the operation of Animal Shelters or mandating the periodic inspection of shelters by any governmental agency, all of the facilities were found to be well-run, organized, in good repair and clean. RCCGJ members reviewed policy and procedure manuals and interviewed shelter employees, management personnel, veterinary staff and animal control officers. One area of concern, voiced by the Commander of Field Operations for the RCDAS,

was for the safety of Animal Control Officers (ACOs) when handling and transporting cash in the field. We discussed the matter in telephone interviews with Animal Control Directors in other counties and several expressed a similar concern.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Tours/Visits**

- City of Moreno Valley Animal Shelter
- Animal Friends of the Valley – Wildomar non-profit
- Ramona Humane Society Animal Shelter – San Jacinto non-profit
- Riverside, San Jacinto and Blythe-County Animal Shelters

### **Interviews**

- Riverside County Department of Animal Services (RCDAS) – Director
- Riverside County Department of Animal Services (RCDAS) – Deputy Director
- Riverside County Department of Animal Services (RCDAS) – Chief Veterinarian
- Animal Friends of the Valley – Executive Director Animal Shelter
- Animal Friends of the Valley – Shelter Board of Directors Vice President and Bookkeeper
- Animal Friends of the Valley – Animal Control Chief (ACC)
- Moreno Valley – Animal Services Division Manager
- Ramona Humane Society – President Chief Executive of Operations
- Ramona Humane Society – Vice President of Operations

### **Telephone Interviews and Payment Policy Comparisons**

- Animal Control Superintendent Norco
- Animal Services and Enforcement Supervisor Corona
- Animal Control Officers and Animal Control Director Palms Springs
- Kern County Animal Control Director
- Los Angeles County Animal Control Director
- Orange County Animal Control Director
- San Diego County Animal Control Director
- San Mateo County Animal Control Director

### **Documents Reviewed**

1. Animal Friends of the Valley, *Manual of Standard Operating Procedures*, Revised January 2015
2. Animal Friends of the Valley, Inc. Audit Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2018
3. Animal Friends of the Valley By-Laws, August 27, 1998

4. California Animal Laws Handbook Published by State Humane Association of California, 2018
5. City of Moreno Valley Animal Services Division Operation Manual; Policy 1.4 Rev. Aug 2018
6. Riverside County Department of Animal Services Policy and Operations Manual, December 13, 2018
7. Riverside County Department of Animal Services Standard Operating Procedures; December 13, 2018 and February 5, 2019
8. Riverside County Department of Animal Services Intake Statistics January 2018 to December 2018
9. Ramona Humane Society Training and Reference Manual, November 5, 2018

### **Internet Resources**

1. (March 1, 2019). Riverside County Department of Animal Services: <https://www.rcdas.org/home>
2. (March 20, 2019). Riverside County Department of Animal Services Mission Statement : [www.rcdas.org/Supervisors](http://www.rcdas.org/Supervisors)
3. (March 26, 2019). Riverside County Code Ordinance No. 630 §11 Impounded, Dogs and Cats and Service Fees <https://countyofriverside.us/AboutTheCounty/BoardofSupervisors.aspx>

## **FINDINGS**

### Lack of Policy for Handling Payment of Fees in the Field

1. The County's 37 Animal Control Officers (ACOs) are dispatched daily to handle a variety of animal related activities. Section 11 of Riverside County Ordinance No. 630, indicates an ACO *may or shall* collect fees for the following services: pet surrender (cats \$145, dogs \$153), return to owner (\$40), and in the field euthanasia (\$60). The RCDAS currently does not have a written policy regarding how ACOs should handle payments for these services, as the previous policy regarding payment was rescinded in October, 2017.

### Cumbersome and Unsafe Procedures for Processing Fee Payments

2. According to the RCDAS Standard Operating Procedure Manual, animal control officers must complete a cumbersome, multiple step process involving both supervisory personnel and a fiscal deposit designee in order to have their daily receipts posted.

The RCCGJ concluded from testimony and evidence that officers and management were uncomfortable and apprehensive handling cash in the field due to safety concerns. In addition, Standard Operating Procedure for inputting of Official County Receipts (OCR) into their data base, is time consuming and inefficient.

## **Recommendations**

### **Riverside County Board of Supervisors Riverside County Department of Animal Services**

#### Lack of Policy for Handling Payment of Fees in the Field

1. The Riverside County Department of Animal Services should have a policy and procedure regarding the acceptance of payments in the field for services by animal control officers.

#### Cumbersome and Unsafe Procedures for Processing Fee Payments

2. County animal control officers should be issued a tablet with a credit card reader to process payments made in the field. Supplying this tool would reduce the County's legal and safety liability exposure of its field staff. This will be an inexpensive solution that eliminates cash handling and improves the efficiency, convenience and safety of ACO's.

Report Issued: 06/11/2019  
Report Public: 06/14/2019  
Response Due: 09/16/2019