

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

A. STUDY SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The scope of Citygate's engagement covered all major program areas of the Animal Control Services Division including Administration, Shelter Operations, Field Operations, and Community/Public Relations.

The objective of the study was to analyze the policies, procedures, management and operations of the Kern County Animal Control Services Division. The specific focus of the Operational Review addresses issues related to:

- ◆ Philosophy of the Division
- ◆ Mission and policies of the Division
- ◆ Organizational structure and management systems
- ◆ Organizational relationships
- ◆ Allocation of employees and other resources
- ◆ Data management
- ◆ Personnel management and training
- ◆ Records management
- ◆ Communications
- ◆ Information systems
- ◆ Facility and equipment
- ◆ Fiscal management
- ◆ Relationships with citizens.

Within this study scope, we defined several objectives that, once accomplished, would help determine if the Division is successfully providing its services in an efficient, effective, timely and responsive manner. These study objectives include:

- ◆ Determining if the Division's mission, goals and objectives are clearly specified and adopted as guidelines for the allocation of organizational resources.
- ◆ Evaluating if the Animal Control Services Division provides a clearly defined, comprehensive set of services that are well planned and executed.
- ◆ Assessing the aspects within the Animal Control Services Division that are most critical to successful organizational performance.
- ◆ Evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization to ensure that service levels are as high as possible given existing resource constraints, and to determine if the reallocation of resources would result in improved services or cost savings.

- ◆ Providing realistic and implementable recommendations to help the Animal Control Services Division improve its overall effectiveness and meet the needs of the residents of Kern County.

The study scope performed by Citygate Associates included neither compliance nor financial audits as a part of its work.

B. STUDY APPROACH

In conducting this study and to address the study objectives described above, we outlined an approach that would facilitate the effective gathering of the necessary information. This process included:

- ◆ Meeting with the County's assigned project staff to initiate the study.
- ◆ Interviewing members of the Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Office staff, Resource Management Agency Director, Environmental Health Department Director, and the current and immediate-past Animal Control Services Manager to obtain their perceptions.
- ◆ Performing walkthroughs of headquarters and remote offices and facilities, interviewing selected County officials and employees of the Division to gain their perspective on the functions and operations of the Division, and identifying preliminary issues.
- ◆ Seeking citizen input from the Partnership for Animals and at a well-advertised public Animal Control Services Community Workshop.
- ◆ Administering Customer and Employee Surveys, based on the issues identified.
- ◆ Observing operations and reviewing available documents and records.
- ◆ Reviewing the Animal Control Services Division's activities in the context of other departmental functions to determine if opportunities exist to enhance organizational performance through the reorganization of functions, the consolidation of service providers, contracting out, and other alternative service delivery approaches.
- ◆ Analyzing the results of the Customer and Employee surveys and presenting the results in the report.
- ◆ Performing benchmark comparisons with surrounding counties, and best practices nationally.
- ◆ Presenting findings to the County Staff to confirm the issues and direction of the study.



Throughout this process, it was our policy to review findings of the study with multiple sources in order to increase the accuracy of findings and data used in the report.

C. COMMUNITY INPUT

There is an active and vocal segment of the community that is highly critical of the County's current animal control program. This sentiment was expressed at both the Animal Control Committee meeting held on May 4 and at the community workshop held on May 24. Many issues and concerns were identified at these forums. The most important issues, in order of priority, were expressed as follows:

<u>Topic or Issue</u>	<u>Percentage of May 24th Participants Indicating This Priority</u>
1. Provide public access to all kennels ("Green gate")	22%
2. Make Animal Control Services a separate department	20%
3. Provide affordable spay & neuter clinics ("Less In")	10%
4. Aggressively investigate and prosecute animal abuse cases	10%
5. Increase public awareness education	7%
6. Hire a professional animal control services director	7%
7. Improve scanning	7%
8. Build new facilities	7%
9. Increase Animal Control Services Division's budget	5%
10. Provide better veterinary care	5%

In addition to the Community Workshop, a Customer Survey was launched on May 26th. The survey close date was June 23rd. The website had 528 visits, 95 partially completed surveys (not counted) and 272 completed surveys. Although some respondents provided positive comments regarding the animal control program, most of the response was negative in nature. Interestingly, the survey indicates a very high level of willingness to pay higher taxes in order to improve animal control services, as indicated below:

		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
14.	Would you be willing to pay additional taxes or fees for improved animal services? <i>You must answer this question.</i>		
	Yes 	205	75%
	No 	67	25%
Total		272	100%

The survey is described and analyzed in more depth in section VII of this report.

D. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF ANIMAL CONTROL

The animal control goals and procedures of local governments have changed significantly over the last twenty years. Originally, animal control activities centered on the impoundment of dogs to protect livestock and the prevention of rabies through impoundment, vaccination, and quarantine of biting animals. The control of animals centered on the enforcement of leash laws and the killing of impounded animals that were not redeemed by their owners, as efficiently as possible. At that time, little was done to expedite the return of impounded animals to their owners and few resources were expended in adopting impounded animals. Animal control activities were generally placed under agriculture departments at the county level and under police departments in most cities.

The organizational placement of the animal control function has also changed over the years. At the county level animal control is still found in agriculture departments in rural counties but may also be found in: Sheriff's departments, health departments or divisions, or as stand alone departments. At the city level, placement in police departments still predominates, but the function can also be found in public works departments or park and recreation departments.

Some jurisdictions contract with local non-profit humane societies for animal control. These relationships vary in their effectiveness because of the conflict some humane society supporters see between the "humane mission" and some aspects of the "law enforcement mission" of animal control. The Hayden law, adopted in 1998, has further strained this relationship, leading some humane societies to either significantly increase their contract rate or cancel their animal control contracts. These actions were in part taken because of the overcrowding and dilution of resources that adherence to the requirements of Hayden requires.

The organizational placement of animal control in Kern County is currently in the Environmental Health Department of the Resource Management Agency. The organizational placement of animal control in Kern County has been the subject of much discussion and will be addressed in this report.

In the middle 1970's concerned citizens and non-profit animal welfare organizations throughout California began to exert influence through the legislative process to change what they perceived to be indifferent or in some instances inhumane treatment of animals at local government-operated shelters. The legislature passed several bills that had a significant impact on the operations of local animal control programs. Among these were:

- ◆ The banning of altitude chambers for euthanasia.
- ◆ Requiring only one animal at a time be killed in carbon monoxide chambers.
- ◆ Requiring that cats be held for 72 hours before they could be euthanized.
- ◆ Requiring that animals be spayed/neutered before adoption or a certificate purchased to cover the cost of the sterilization.
- ◆ Requiring that Animal Control Officers obtain an 832 P.C. module a. certificate.
- ◆ Requiring that Animal Control Officers report instances of child abuse to Child Protective Services.

Concerned citizens and local and national non-profit animal groups such as The Humane Society of the United States (H.S.U.S.) and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to

Animals (A.S.P.C.A) continued to press for the reduction if not elimination of companion animal euthanasia at the country's animal shelters. This advocacy has resulted in several national news stories that brought this issue to the attention of local concerned citizens who began lobbying for improvements in policies, procedures, facilities, and quality of personnel engaged in animal control activities. In many instances, their concerns were not addressed at the local level and this in turn led to legislation at the State level. This has most recently led to enactment in California of the Hayden and Vincent bills that will be discussed in detail later in this report.

E. THE EUTHANASIA DEBATE

The fate of unwanted animals needs to be addressed when a community considers examination of its animal control program. The desirability of ending the euthanasia of companion animals is a goal that is worthy of pursuit. However, the magnitude of the effort and resources that must be committed to reaching this goal is extensive and must be examined.

F. ANIMAL REPRODUCTIVE CAPACITY

The reproductive capacity of dogs and cats far exceeds that of humans. The Humane Society of the United States has calculated that one female dog and her progeny can produce more than 67,000 offspring in seven years. One female cat can produce more than 430,000¹ offspring. These numbers represent a maximum that is not attainable because it is based on the assumption that all animals in a population can and do breed to their maximum biological capacity and live long enough to reach their reproductive potential. However, the breeding potential gives some idea of the magnitude of the problem facing animal control agencies.

G. FULL ACCESS PUBLIC SHELTERS

Private non-profit humane societies can be selective relative to the number and type of animals that they take in and care for. A public shelter cannot adopt this operational model and fulfill its responsibility under the law relative to the impoundment of stray animals and rabies control. (Division 14 of the State Food and Agriculture Code, Sections 121575-121710 of the State Health and Safety Code and Sections, 2606, 2606.2 and 2606.4 of the California Code of Regulations). (See **Appendix IV** for the text of these regulations.) Many of the animals impounded will not be suitable for adoption because of illness, injury, or aggressive behavior. Other adoptable animals will be euthanized because the number of animals will exceed the number of potential adopters.

H. ALTERNATIVES TO KILLING SO MANY ANIMALS

If Kern County wishes to reduce the number of companion animals that are killed in its public shelters, a two-part strategy must be implemented.

¹ http://www.hsus.org/pets/issues_affecting_our_pets/pet_overpopulation_and_ownership_statistics/hsus_pet_overpopulation_estimates.html

1. Reduce the Breeding Capacity of the Animal Population

An effective spay/neuter program should be a central component of any community's effort to reduce the killing of its companion animals. A concerted effort needs to be made to educate the public on the need to spay/neuter dogs and cats. Community resources must be devoted to this endeavor either by the construction and staffing of low cost spay/neuter clinics and/or the local veterinary community needs to become involved in offering affordable spay/neuter services for the community. Issues regarding these two alternatives will be addressed later in this study.

2. Increase the Adoption and Redemption Rate

For calendar year 2004, Kern County impounded and processed the following number of animals:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Impounded</u>	<u>Redeemed</u>	<u>Adopted</u>	<u>Euthanized</u>
Dogs	15,087	1,055	1,886	10,540
Cats	<u>13,462</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>664</u>	<u>11,207</u>
Total	28,549	1,123	2,550	21,747

Clearly, the number of dogs and cats returned to their owners and the number adopted can be increased. The construction of new or remodeled "user friendly" shelters, outreach adoption, use of non-profit community resources, media contacts and use of the internet need to be integrated into a community-wide system if the euthanasia rate is to be reduced.

I. SHELTER SIZE AND EUTHANASIA RATE

A shelter must be of a size consistent with the inflow of animals, taking into consideration the redemption, adoption and immediate euthanasia of severely sick and injured animals.

Approximately 45 to 50 percent of the square footage of a modern shelter is devoted to the housing of dogs. If, in a hypothetical case, a shelter has 100 dog kennels, impounds 25 dogs a day, returns 5 to owners each day and adopts 5 each day, the shelter will fill all of its kennels in seven days. If the shelter is doubled in capacity, it will be full in 14 days.

Extending the holding periods for animals gives some animals a longer time to be redeemed or adopted. However, many animals are abandoned by their owners and there are more animals than available homes. Extended holding periods also place animals at risk relative to the contraction of contagious diseases that are always present in shelters despite the best efforts of shelter personnel to control diseases.

The current legal holding period for shelter animals in California is six days plus the day of impoundment. This can be reduced to four days if the shelter is open one weekend day or one weekday evening until 7:00 p.m. Extending the holding period beyond the legal minimum can have a positive effect on the euthanasia rate if there is a concerted effort to increase adoption and redemption rates and increase the number of animals that are spayed/neutered.

If in the above example adoption and redemption rates are increased by 20 percent (i.e. one more animal per day is adopted and redeemed), it will take eight days to fill the shelter if it had 100 kennels and 16 days if it had 200 kennels. If on the other hand the same 20 percent reduction is

applied to animal impoundment it would take 10 days to fill if it had 100 kennels and 20 days if it had 200 kennels. If all of these strategies were combined it would take 13 days to fill if it had 100 kennels and 25 days if it had 200 kennels. This example can be repeated using any size shelter and the result will always be that you reach a point where some animals have to be killed to make room for those animals coming into the shelter. There is going to be a finite shelter capacity and an almost infinite inflow of animals. Until the number of animals being redeemed and adopted equals the number impounded, there will always be animals euthanized at public shelters.

J. HAYDEN AND VINCENT BILLS

SB 1785 (Hayden) and AB 1856 (Vincent) modified various California Code sections relating to the holding periods for impounded and surrendered animals, the care they are to receive and spay/neuter requirements by:

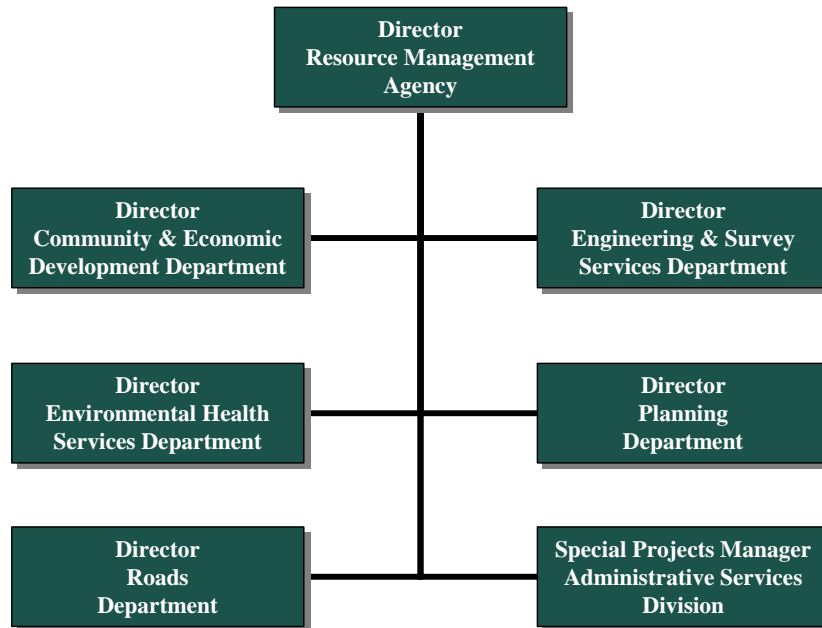
- ◆ Stating that it is the policy of the State that “no adoptable animal should be euthanized if it can be adopted into a suitable home.”
- ◆ Requiring that stray animals be held six business days, not counting the day of impoundment.
- ◆ Reducing the holding requirement to four business days, not counting the day of impoundment, if the shelter is open until 7:00 PM one weekday or the shelter is open one weekend day.
- ◆ Requiring that surrendered animals be held for two business days, not counting the day of impoundment. This holding period increased to the same as for stray animals noted above, effective July 1, 2001. The effective date of this provision was modified by AB 2754 (House) to become operative July 1, 2002. AB 2754 also modifies the Hayden Bill to allow surrendered puppies and kittens to be made immediately available for adoption. AB 2754 also requires that all animals be scanned for microchips. The full text of AB 2754 is also included in this study in Appendix III.
- ◆ Requiring that efforts be made to provide veterinary treatment for ill or injured animals so as to make them suitable for adoption.
- ◆ Requiring specific records be kept on all animals impounded, surrendered and/or medically treated.
- ◆ Requiring that animals be turned over to non-profit rescue groups prior to the animal being euthanized.
- ◆ Requiring that reasonable efforts be made to reunite lost pets with their owners and specifies that owners and the finders of pets be provided with specific information.
- ◆ Requiring that all animals adopted from public and non-profit shelters be spayed/neutered
- ◆ Providing an exception to this requirement for agencies in counties having populations of less than 100,000.

- ◆ Requiring the imposition of fines on redeemed pets that are not spayed/ neutered.

K. THE KERN COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL ORGANIZATION

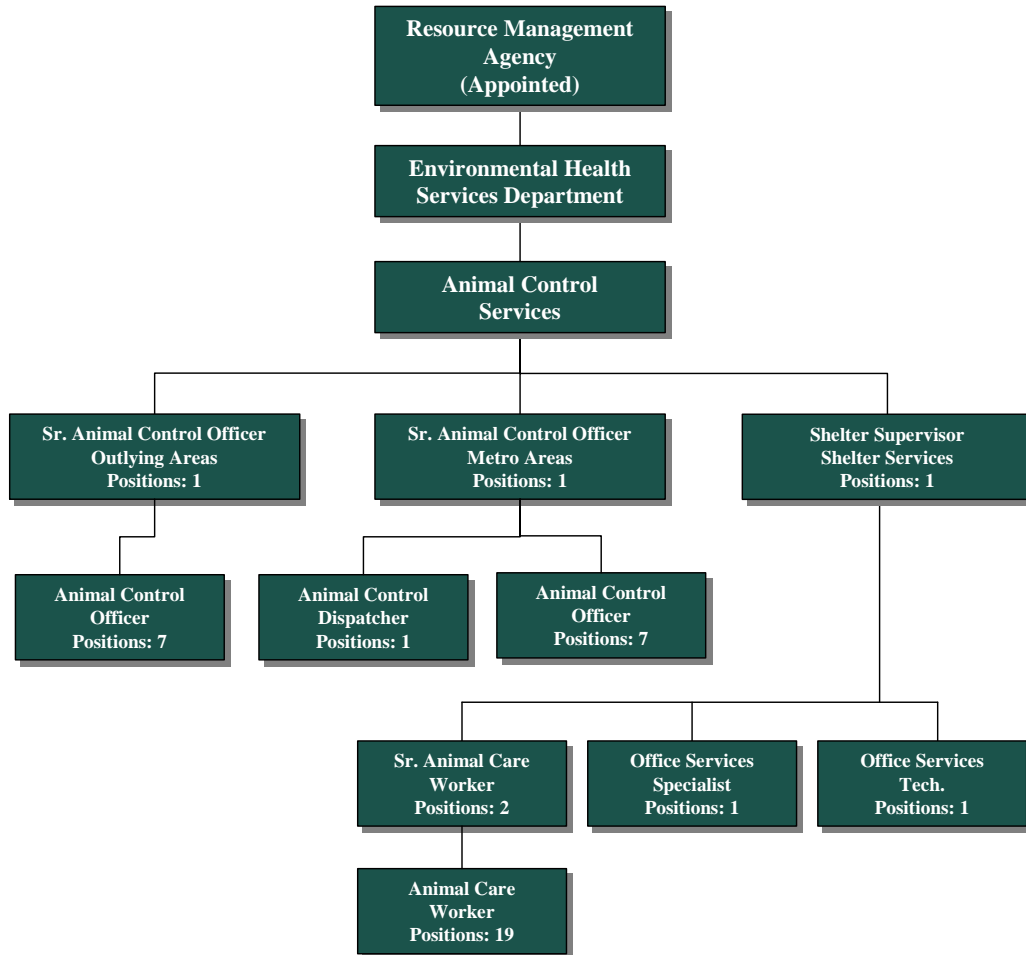
The Kern County Animal Control Services Division is a unit of the Environmental Health Department which is part of the County's Resource Management Agency as illustrated in **Exhibit I-1**.

Exhibit I-1
Resource Management Agency Organization Chart



The Animal Control Services Division is organized into three functional areas: Administration; Field Operations; and Shelter Operations as illustrated in **Exhibit I-2**.

Exhibit I-2
Animal Control Services Organization Chart



The Kern County Animal Control Services Division serves the unincorporated areas of Kern County, which includes the unincorporated municipalities of Frazier Park, Lamont, Mojave, Oildale, and Rosamond. The Division also provides all or partial animal control services and shelter services to the cities of Arvin, Bakersfield, Delano, Maricopa, and Tehachapi through contractual agreements.

The Division is responsible for the efficient and effective administration of numerous important countywide programs, including:

- ◆ Animal abuse and cruelty investigations
- ◆ Spay/Neuter program
- ◆ Animal adoption
- ◆ Licensing and rabies vaccination
- ◆ Animal bite investigations
- ◆ Stray and abandoned animal impoundment
- ◆ Shelter system management

- ◆ Dead animal pickup and disposal
- ◆ Barking dog ordinance enforcement.

L. THE PERSONNEL

The Division is supervised by an Animal Services Division Chief. The Administration unit consists of the Animal Services Division Chief, an Office Services Specialist, an Office Services Technician, and an Animal Control Dispatcher. The unit is responsible for, with assistance from Environmental Health Department staff, general administration, finance, record keeping, animal licensing and dispatching. Purchasing, information technology support, accounts receivable, accounts payable, risk management, and contract management are handled by Environmental Health Services. The Resource Management Agency provides payroll, telephone, and information technology services to the Animal Control Division.

The Field Operations unit consists of 2 full-time Senior Animal Control Officers, one of which is unfilled currently, and 12 full-time Animal Control Officers. The unit is responsible for enforcing the animal control laws. Officers investigate nuisance and cruelty complaints, patrol for stray animals and impound, quarantine and euthanize animals.

Shelter Services consists of 1 Shelter Supervisor, 2 Senior Animal Care Workers, 14 Animal Care Workers, 2 of which are unfilled currently, and 1 part-time Animal Care Worker. The unit is responsible for providing for the humane care, shelter and disposition of animals at the shelter and for evaluating animals for adoption suitability.

The Department has contracts with two of the County's cities to provide field service: Maricopa and Tehachapi. The County operates two animal shelters in Bakersfield and Mojave and contracts with the City of Ridgecrest and a private service provider in Lake Isabella for shelter service in these areas. The cities of Arvin and Bakersfield contract with the County for shelter service. The cities of Delano, Shafter, Taft and Wasco operate their own animal control programs. There are no plans at this time to provide contract shelter services to other agencies.

Exhibit I-3 Salaries For Funded Positions in the Animal Control Services Division

Position	Staffing	Monthly Salary Range
Animal Services Division Chief	1 Filled	\$4,984-\$6,084
Senior Animal Control Officer	1 Filled, 1 vacant	\$2,370-\$2,894
Shelter Supervisor	1 Filled	\$2,370-\$2,894
Senior Animal Care Worker	2 Filled	\$1,991-\$2,430
Animal Control Officer	12 Filled	\$1,991-\$2,430
Animal Care Worker	15 Filled, 3 vacant	\$1,875-\$2,289
Office Services Specialist	1 Filled	\$2,370-\$2,894
Office Services Technician	1 Filled	\$2,092-\$2,555
Animal Control Dispatcher	1 Filled	\$1,991-\$2,430
TOTAL POSITIONS	35 FILLED, 4 VACANT	

M. STATISTICS*

Over the past 10 years in Kern County the population has grown from 604,000 to 732,000, which represents a 21 percent increase. During this same period of time, the level of annual total animal impounds has increased from 22,635 to 15,600 or approximately 31.1 percent. The euthanasia rate over this same ten-year timeframe has dropped from 92.87 percent to 87.79 percent. The overall euthanasia volume has dropped from 21,020 animals to 13,696 animals, which represents a 34.8 percent decrease, which is commendable.

Exhibit I-4 10-Year Animal Volume and Disposition

	<u>1994</u>		<u>1999</u>		<u>2004</u>	
Impounded	22,635	<u>% of Total</u>	21,492	<u>% of Total</u>	15,600	<u>% of Total</u>
Redeemed	706	3.12%	581	2.70%	511	3.28%
Adopted	909	4.02%	1,645	7.65%	1,394	8.94%
Euthanized	21,020	92.87%	19,266	89.64%	13,696	87.79%
Discrepancy	545		2,649		3,129	

To put Kern County's euthanasia activities in perspective it is important to look at the euthanasia activities in other California animal control agencies during this same period of time. For example, as illustrated below in **Exhibit I-5**, the counties of Contra Costa, Santa Barbara and Ventura have **also decreased** their euthanasia volume by 36 to 44 percent. Kern County's euthanasia volume has **decreased by** 34.8 percent. Numerous other agencies in California have achieved significantly reduced euthanasia volume rates.

- * Kern County began housing animals from the city of Bakersfield in 2004. Animal totals for 2004 were adjusted to exclude Bakersfield animals in order to present a meaningful comparison with 1994 and 1999 data.

Exhibit I-5
Euthanized Animals Trend Comparison

<u>AGENCY</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2004</u>	10-YEAR CHANGE
Contra Costa	10,420	9,743	5,802	44.3 % reduction
Santa Barbara	2,814	1,707	---	36.3 % reduction
Ventura	8546	9163	4797	43.9 % reduction
KERN	21,020	19,129	13,696	34.8 % reduction

N. THE BUDGET

The following **Exhibit I-6** shows the Animal Control Services Division approved budgets and Net County Cost for a five-year period:

Exhibit I-6
5-Year Budget Trend

Animal Control Services	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Expenditure	\$ 1,978,464	\$2,003,311	\$ 2,072,605	\$ 2,385,092	\$ 2,997,464
Revenues	\$ 1,665,983	\$ 1,161,433	\$ 1,622,069	\$ 1,662,612	\$ 2,073,254
Net County Cost	\$ 312,481	\$ 392,878	\$ 450,536	\$ 722,480	\$ 924,210

In the past five years, expenditures have increased by 51.5 percent, while revenues have only increased by 24.4 percent. As a result, the Net County Cost which must be made up from the County's General Fund has increased by 195.8 percent.

O. COST ANALYSIS

In 2001, revenues from fees, charges and contract services to other agencies amounted to \$1,665,983 or approximately 84.2 percent of total revenues, with general revenues and realignment fund making up the balance. This is an admirable Cost Recovery Ratio. By the year 2005, the Cost Recovery Ratio dropped to 69.1 percent.

Exhibit I-7 below illustrates that the Cost Per Animal during the past 5-year period has ranged from a low of \$70.07 to a high of \$96.48, as indicated below:

Exhibit I-7
5-Year Cost Per Animal In Kern County

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
Total Expenditures	\$ 1,776,871	\$ 1,978,464	\$ 2,003,311	\$ 2,072,605	\$ 2,385,092
Total Impounds	25,360	22,381	20,763	27,615	28,549
COST PER ANIMAL	\$ 70.07	\$ 88.40	\$ 96.48	\$ 75.05	\$ 83.54

Exhibit I-8 below illustrates that the Subsidy Per Animal during the past 5-year period has ranged from a low of \$ 13.96 to a high of \$ 25.31, as indicated below:

Exhibit I-8
5-Year Subsidy Per Animal In Kern County

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
Total Subsidy	\$ 390,407	\$ 312,481	\$ 392,878	\$ 450,536	\$ 722,480
Total Impounds	25,360	22,381	20,763	27,615	28,549
SUBSIDY PER ANIMAL	\$ 15.39	\$ 13.96	\$ 18.92	\$ 16.31	\$ 25.31