III. SHELTER OPERATIONS

This section reviews the Shelter Operations of the Animal Control Services Division.

A. THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ANIMAL CONTROL SHELTERS

Today’s public perception of domestic Animal Shelters generally remains a negative one, characterized by old, dilapidated, noisy and odor-prone facilities located in industrial and/or out-of-the-way areas – in short, the “pound”. This image not only belies the rigorous health requirements and functional, multi-purpose needs of a shelter, but it also is in stark contrast to the changing State-mandated regulations and public expectations regarding the manner in which domestic animals should be held and treated. These concerns have led not only to recent changes in California law embodied in the Hayden and Vincent Bills (described herein), but also to significant re-evaluation of existing facilities exemplified by the recent completion of new facilities in San Francisco, Oakland, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Houston, San Diego County, Contra Costa County, San Jose, Santa Barbara and Monterey. These facilities, while all different, encompass state-of-the-art mechanical and plumbing systems designed to maximize disease control as well as durable finish materials intended to withstand the rigors of daily cleaning with chemicals and hot water. These systems and materials are comparable to those required in research facilities and, hence, are significantly more complicated and costly than those found in a modern office building. At the same time, these new animal shelters also are being designed with extensive public-oriented components including spay-neuter clinics, education programs (classrooms and children-oriented learning areas) as well as more traditional adoption and redemption services. In addition, greater concern for staff safety and morale is being incorporated - acknowledgement of not only the difficult job requirements but also the economic reality of retaining qualified staff in an ever-expanding job market.

Ultimately an animal shelter needs to provide a healthy and appropriate environment for animals and staff, which facilitates the goals of the organization. While these goals will vary from one community to another, the following should serve as a baseline common to all:

◆ Creation of a safe, healthy environment to house lost animals until claimed by their owners.

◆ An environment with adequate capacity for holding animals in a humane manner that promotes good health and prevents the transmission of contagious diseases. There is an important and direct relationship between the nature of a shelter’s holding capacity and the well-being and health of the shelter’s animal population. While sizing the required holding capacity for dogs, cats, and other small and “exotic” animals is an important first step in programming a facility, designating appropriate areas for protective custody, vicious animals, sick animals as well as young and pregnant animals, must also be provided.

◆ A positive environment that minimizes stress levels for animals, employees, and visitors alike.

---

1 Excerpted from San Joaquin County Regional Animal Control Shelter Study, George Myers and Michael G. Ross, November, 2000

III-1
◆ Adequate Animal Support areas to insure proper care. These include Food Preparation, Laundry, Grooming, Exam and Medical Procedure Rooms, behavior evaluation areas, food and laundry and equipment storage areas, Euthanasia Rooms, vehicle maintenance and cleaning areas.

◆ Adequate Staff Support areas. Animal Shelter staff support needs in an animal shelter such as proper break room areas, lockers and restrooms, are of equal if not greater importance than in many other work environments. Caring for incarcerated animals, many of which are ill and/or frightened, can be an extremely stressful experience - particularly when confronted on a daily basis. Furthermore, many employees initially seek out employment in animal shelters due to an inherent love for animals, only to be confronted with the stark reality of animal abuse cases and ongoing euthanasia – oftentimes involving high percentages of a shelter’s population. In addition, the maintenance of shelters involves the unforgiving tasks of constant cleaning of urine and feces and the sterilization of kennels and cages to prevent disease transfer. While in the field, Animal Control officers are constantly exposed to both domestic and wild animals with unknown health conditions and, at times, a hostile public unsympathetic to their job responsibilities. All of these activities argue for well-designed locker/shower/restroom areas as well as the need for hygienic staff lounges located in acoustically isolated areas.

◆ A Public Responsive Environment Which Supports the following:

- Adoption of companion animals
- Education of Animal Care issues including responsible pet ownership and other animal care issues
- Redemption of lost animals
- Surrender of unwanted animals
- Licensing.

With respect to animal health and disease control issues, it is helpful to understand the inherent health problems confronting domestic animal shelters. The following is a brief description of these issues:

**Disease Control In Animal Shelter Environments**

The primary diseases that are of concern in an animal shelter environment are those that are easily transmitted among members of a species i.e. contagious disease. These may be caused by viruses or by bacteria. Full descriptions of these contagious diseases and how they are spread, particularly in a shelter environment, are presented in Appendix I, which is contained in Volume 2 of this report.

The time interval from when an organism is first exposed to an infectious agent to when the first sign of disease appears is considered the incubation period. One of the problems presented in a shelter environment is not knowing whether any animal is incubating a disease when that animal enters the facility. Many diseases are contagious during the incubation period and generally one
cannot tell if an animal that is not presenting any symptoms is healthy or if it is carrying an infectious agent and will soon come down with a disease.

Disease Prevention

The primary methods for preventing the spread of transmissible disease include eliminating the disease (i.e. vaccinate and test) and/or eliminating the routes of transmission by quarantine and disinfection. However, when quarantining an animal, ideally it needs to be housed only with other animals that have the same disease (i.e. you do not place a dog with kennel cough in the same room as one with parvo, even if the room is labeled “isolation”). This can be a problem with upper respiratory diseases as there are many different causative agents and it is extremely difficult to identify exactly which virus or bacteria is responsible. This may be one reason why cats in isolation take such a long time to improve, for just as they are getting over their original disease, they catch a different one from the cat in the next cage. In addition, isolation is not of much help if food and litter pans are not sterilized (or disposable ones used), if boxes and leashes are shared, or if people fail to wash their hands between handling each animal.

Disinfection helps control the spread of disease. However, the right disinfectant must be used. None of them kill all bacteria or all viruses. Additionally, for many disinfectants to work, all organic matter (i.e. fecal matter, dried food, blood, etc.) must be removed first. Disinfectants do not work instantly. They must be left on for the recommended time if they are to be effective. The concentration and water temperature must also be proper for them to be maximally effective. (See Appendix V for a thorough look at proper shelter cleaning protocols)

All surfaces of a cage or kennel must be cleaned - the ceiling, doors and walls as well as the floor. The outside of cages/runs should also be washed down.

Vaccination helps prevent the development of disease. However, vaccines do not work instantly and they do not cure a disease once the disease is incubating. The animal is susceptible to a disease until it has time to develop preventative antibodies, typically at least a week. Vaccines only protect against the organisms for which they were developed.

Overcrowding contributes to the spread of disease by increasing the concentration of infectious organisms in a given environment. Overcrowding also causes stress in an animal, making them more likely to contract a disease.

Facility Design Prevents Disease Transfer

There are several key programming and design components which must be utilized together in order to minimize disease transfer and animal stress while maintaining a healthy environment. These components include those listed below and are valid for both all indoor facilities as well as those featuring indoor/outdoor kennels.

1. **Sizing the animal holding habitats correctly so as to avoid overcrowding.** Sizing cat and dog holding populations involves many factors beyond the simple calculation of the number of animals multiplied times the agreed-upon holding period divided by the number of days in a year. While this is the first step, other factors such as redemption and adoption rates, population increases, seasonal variations of incoming animals (particularly in the Spring) and determinations made by shelter staff of “adoptability”, all must be taken into account.
addition, separate facilities must be designated for sick animals, protective custody cases (which can often result in animals being held from 6 months to a year), and vicious animals.

2. **Minimizing the number of animals per space or compartment.** This holds true for cats, dogs, and other animals. While there are no set rules as to number of animals per room, modern shelters usually limit 6 to 12 healthy dogs per ward, while 8 to 20 healthy cats (in a well-ventilated space - see Item # 3 below) seems to minimize disease transfer among cats. Sick animals need to be isolated or quarantined (as do vicious dogs and protective custody animals, but for different reasons). Ideally, any sick (or suspected to be sick) animal would be quarantined to its own space or room, with its own separate air-handling unit, in an isolated part of the facility. Since this is generally not economically practical, modern shelters limit dog quarantine wards to 3 to 4 kennels and cats to 8 to 10. Relative to indoor facilities, each of these rooms must have its own 100 percent exhaust system with complete fresh air changes of 12 to 18 per hour depending on various environmental factors. Indoor/outdoor facilities have different requirements depending on seasonal ambient temperatures.

However, as noted in the discussion of disease transfer above, proper compartmentalization for disease control should also provide a variety of quarantine wards or rooms so that animals suffering from, or exposed to, different diseases are not placed in the same room – thus exposing them to a new disease as they try to recover from the first. Thus, it is generally recommended that smaller wards/rooms be provided and that they be designated separately (in the case of dogs) for parvo, skin allergies or kennel cough, or (for cats) a variety of smaller rooms for upper respiratory ailments. Similarly, there is a need to isolate Protective Custody animals from both the sick and the general “holding” population, partially for better disease control and partially for security control.

3. **Room and Cage/Kennel Configuration.** While compartmentalization and reduction of animals per ward are key components of disease control, so too is the design of the room and kennels/cages. In regards to dog wards, individual kennels should be designed so that a dog in one kennel cannot come into direct contact with another, resulting in the direct transfer of diseases such as parvo and kennel cough. Given the ability of large and small dogs to jump and climb, separating walls between kennels or habitats should be solid up to at least 6'-0” high and constructed of a highly durable and washable material which can withstand daily cleanings. Since some dogs have been known to jump out of 6'-0” high enclosures, consideration should be given to enclosing the tops with mesh for at least a percentage of the kennels.

Extreme care must also be given to the use of drains in these kennels. Typically, some form of linear trench drain is used for cleaning of kennels. In most older facilities, (Kern County included) these drains are open from kennel to kennel and drain in one direction or another. Aside from the aesthetic considerations within the animal holding environment, such trench designs allow urine and feces residue and, hence, disease to pass from kennel to kennel, thus exposing animals to each other. Kennels should also be organized such that dogs do not face each other. Part of this concern is due to transfer of airborne disease such as kennel cough. However, of equal concern is that dogs, being highly territorial, will set each other to barking much more frequently which tends to create a significantly more stressful environment for all concerned. While the relationship of health to stress levels for “captive” shelter and zoo animals has only recently been taken seriously as a major contributing factor to the animals’ well being, domestic shelters which feature smaller, single loaded kennels demonstrate lower disease transfer problems and generally higher adoption rates.
Cat Rooms do not have the same drainage issues as dog kennels (although each room does need a central drain and hose bib). The room should ideally be designed in a manner that keeps stacked cages on one side only. Again, part of this concern is due to the presence of airborne viruses caused by coughing and sneezing cats (the most common disease problem amongst cats). However, also of concern is the added stress that occurs between aggressive and non-aggressive cats exposed to one another.

4. **Specialized mechanical systems featuring 100 percent fresh air/exhaust and 12 to 18 air changes per hour.** Fresh air is essential to the control of disease in animal shelters and to present an atmosphere that is conducive to the public’s positive perception of the shelter. Shelters that smell of feces and urine present an immediate poor first impression for the visitor. Indoor-outdoor shelters are not immune from the requirement for fresh air exchange. Often indoor-outdoor shelters are constructed with poor or non-existent air exchange capability because it is thought that having the kennels open to the outdoors is sufficient for the introduction of fresh air and the elimination of stale air. The result, particularly in the winter is a shelter that is closed with no way of bringing in fresh air or exhausting stale air.

**B. OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS IN KERN COUNTY SHELTER OPERATIONS**

The Animal Control Services Division houses animals in four shelters as shown below.
1. **Bakersfield Metro Area:**

The main shelter and Animal Control Offices are located at 201 South Mount Vernon Avenue in Bakersfield on land leased from the City of Bakersfield. The County entered into a contract during 2003 to provide shelter services for City animals. The City has recently completed construction of an additional dog kennel to house City dogs. When this kennel is complete, the Bakersfield Shelter will consist of 174 dog kennels, 29 puppy cages, and 126 cat cages. Most of these enclosures hold multiple animals. In addition, the facility has corral areas and two stables to house livestock.

![Bakersfield Shelter](image1)

**Hours of Operation:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Wednesday 12:00 Noon to 7:00 P.M.
2. **Mojave:**

The Mojave Animal Shelter is located at 923 Poole Street in Mojave adjacent to the Mojave airport. The shelter has 23 dog runs and 26 cat cages.

Hours of Operation: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Wednesday 2:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. (Closed 12-1 for lunch)

Mojave Shelter
3. **Lake Isabella**

The Lake Isabella Animal Shelter is located at 14891 Highway 178. The shelter has 27 dog runs and 25 cat cages.

![Lake Isabella Shelter](image)

**Hours of Operation:** Tuesday to Saturday 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

4. **Ridgecrest**

The Ridgecrest Animal Shelter is located at 411 County Line Road, in Ridgecrest. The shelter has 35 dog runs and caging for 25 cats.

**Hours of Operation:** Monday to Friday 11:00 a.m. to 5:00; Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Hours of Operation

These hours of operation conform to legislative requirements but are not necessarily convenient for the public relative to retrieving a lost animal, adopting an animal or conducting other business with the Division.

C. FACILITIES HISTORY

September 1978 - Kern County took over shelter services from the SPCA to provide care to impounded city and county animals.

1980 - Constructed office and Kennel A at current location
1984 - Constructed Kennel B
1987 - Constructed Kennel C
1987 - Constructed Mojave Shelter
2001 – Constructed Kennel D/E - (Senate Bill 1785)
2002 – Suspended expansion of Mojave Shelter
July 1, 2003 – Temporary contract with the City of Bakersfield to provide shelter services with the utilization of Kennel D.
July 1, 2004 – County of Kern and City of Bakersfield entered into a five-year contract with a five-year option to renew.
July 1, 2005 - City of Bakersfield construction of City Kennel due to be completed.

D. BAKERSFIELD ANIMAL HOUSING

Kennel A – Dog/puppy Adoption Kennel. Altered dogs and unaltered puppies are available for public adoption. Adoptable animals receiving medical treatment are in runs located on the south end of the kennel to minimize the potential for cross-contamination to healthy dogs.

Cat Room – Adoptable cats/kittens are located on the west side of the room. The north side, middle and east side of the room house domesticated hold/stray cats.

Kennel B – Outside/west runs. Dog introduction/exercise runs. Potential families are able to introduce themselves to adoptable dogs.

Kennel B – Inside/west run. Designated for injured/sick/medicated dogs.

Kennel B - B01 – B15 runs. Quarantined, dog aggressive, special hold cases (PC 597, wildlife), special need (aged, medicated, nursing, etc.).

Kennel B – Inside PR 1 – 13 – Puppies, delicate, small and aged dogs.

Kennel B - PS 1 – 16. Puppies, delicate, small and aged dogs receiving medication.


Kennel C – C01 – C40. County of Kern Hold/Stray dogs.

Kennel E – Euthanasia Room-2 Euthanasia runs.

E. CURRENT FACILITIES EVALUATION

While it was not the intent of this study to provide an extensive evaluation of the County’s animal sheltering facilities relative to either functional or physical needs, it is necessary to describe them and contrast them with modern construction.

Kern County is presently served by 4 facilities. The Mojave, Lake Isabella and Ridgecrest shelters are limited in size and capacity with a small number of kennels and limited support functions. Therefore, the comments noted below apply primarily to the Bakersfield facility.

Generally, the design of this shelter is indicative of Animal Shelters built prior to 1990 with their primary focus on the holding of stray and surrendered dogs with little emphasis on accommodations for cats or other small animals. Staff support areas are minimal and public amenities are generally limited to a public counter. The facility is constructed of wood frame and concrete block with a concrete slab on grade. Neither concrete block walls nor concrete slabs, both of which are inherently porous, have been adequately sealed in most areas, which have further exacerbated cleaning and odor problems. The lack of adequate ventilation and humidity control along with the absence of proper waterproofing seals at perimeter areas (block to wood), have allowed the wood structure to also absorb unwanted odors and moisture. Mechanical systems, when they exist, do not provide adequate ventilation (12 to 15 air changes per hour are generally recommended) and noise and odor are ever present within the facility. In addition, the holding capabilities of the facility do not satisfy SB 1785 (Hayden) unless multiple dogs are held in each kennel.

Of equal importance to the facility’s animal holding capacity and physical condition, is the nature of the animal holding habitats and the functional flow or layout of the overall design. In regards to the habitats, the current design of the facilities’ dog kennels feature chain link enclosures with open trench drains at the entry into each kennel. These open drains pose a disease transfer problem and require animals and humans to walk over or view the animals across them.
In addition, the side walls of each kennel are generally partial height concrete block, but not high enough to prevent large dogs from confronting each other nose to nose - hence, again allowing easy disease transfer. Kennel D uses stainless steel separations in lieu of concrete block. Most kennels also are double-stacked around a central corridor such that dogs face one another. This arrangement is discouraged today both because it enhances the opportunity for disease transfer through airborne viruses, and because it induces confrontations and, hence, additional stress and barking. The facility has too many dogs per compartment and isolation areas are ineffective due to overcrowding, poor mechanical/plumbing systems or a combination thereof.

The new City of Bakersfield kennel differs from the others in that it is constructed of foam EPS sandwiched between plastic FRP panels. This construction eliminates many moisture retention issues but still requires that the concrete flooring be sealed for disease control. Some agencies have experienced trouble with dogs chewing through the FRP.
In summary, if the long-term goal is to operate a healthy facility consistent with today’s standards, then none of these facilities are good candidates for extensive renovation.

However, immediate action needs to be taken relative to thorough disinfection and the painting/sealing of porous surfaces. Even if significant renovation funds are expended to install appropriate air handling systems, plumbing lines and ceiling, floor and wall finishes, the result would only produce an upgraded version of an out-of-date plan with inappropriate animal holding accommodations.
Staffing

1 Shelter Supervisor
2 Senior Animal Care Workers
1 Office Services Specialist
1 Offices Services Technician
13 Animal Care Workers (Bakersfield Shelter, 2-License Survey Team)
2 Animal Care Workers (Mojave Shelter).

Kennel Staff Duties

An effective animal sheltering program must accomplish the following:

◆ Take in dogs, cats, livestock and other animal types.
◆ Keep track of these animals i.e., inventory control.
◆ Provide a sanitary condition in which the animals are to be kept.
◆ Identify those animals in need of veterinary attention.
◆ Provide required veterinary care.
◆ Notify owners of their animal’s impoundment in a timely manner.
◆ Return animals to their owners and collect appropriate fines and fees.
◆ Hold animals the legally required amount of time.
◆ Identify those animals that are suitable for adoption i.e., healthy, and non-aggressive.
◆ Humanely euthanize those animals that are not suitable for adoption or cannot be adopted.
◆ Dispose of animal carcasses.

The Shelter Manager reported that the duties of the kennel staff include the following activities and responsibilities:

◆ Transportation of animals to and from vet for altering.
◆ Transportation of animals to and from vet to receive emergency medical care and complete required tracking forms and paper work.
◆ Provide prescribed medical treatment/medication to animals under vet care.
◆ Take pictures of animals to be posted on PetHarbor.com and the County of Kern website and monitor reports to insure all pictures are taken and on line.
◆ Coordinate rescue of animals with 501c 3, non-profit rescues.
◆ Prepare Pet of the Week profile.
◆ Help visitors to the shelter find lost pets and adoptable animals.
◆ Provide coverage during Dispatcher’s absence.
◆ Cover all rabies clinics in the County of Kern.
◆ Vaccination of all adoptable animals.
◆ Application of SAFER Test, document in Chameleon Program if animal fails.
◆ Taking the temperature of animals prior to SAFER Testing and prior to transportation to vet for altering and documenting in Chameleon the results.
◆ Receiving stray and owner surrender animals before and after normal shelter operational hours.
◆ Coverage from Bakersfield of the Mojave Animal Shelter during the absence of Mojave shelter personnel.
◆ Transportation of adoptable animals from Bakersfield to Mojave for altering due to the contracted vet’s (NOR) inability to alter animals in Bakersfield.
◆ Process returned sick animals adopted from the shelter.
◆ Process Claim for Refunds.
◆ Answering questions and returning calls generated from animals seen on Pet-Harbor and/or the website.
◆ Billing to customers for abandoning animals at the shelter.
◆ Coordinate vehicle maintenance of three dog trucks, licensing sedan and shelter pick up.
◆ Request building maintenance on the Bakersfield facility, administration building and Mojave Shelter.
◆ Launder bedding.
◆ Assist Office/shelter staff processing City of Bakersfield license/tags.
◆ Monitoring/issuing license tags sold within the community from various community outreach programs and veterinarian hospitals.
◆ Transport livestock to auction.
◆ General cleaning of parking lot, runs and cat cages and rooms.
◆ Inventory and stocking of feed and supplies.
◆ Visit and keep open lines of communication with Lake Isabella Shelter and Ridgecrest Shelter.
◆ Scanning for microchips during intake procedures.

The tasks performed by kennel staff mirror those noted for an effective sheltering program. However, the frequency and effectiveness of kennel cleaning and the effectiveness of veterinary care is lacking.
Stray Impounds

An Animal Release and Intake History form is filled out and signed by the property owner and/or deliverer with assistance from the Office Services Specialist, Office Services Technician, and/or Animal Care Worker at the shelter or Animal Control Officer in the field. The form requires name, address, phone number, location animal was found or trapped, and length of time the customer had possession of the animal. If the animal has been involved in a bite or scratch, relevant information necessary to initiate the quarantining of the animal for rabies is obtained. A full description of the animal is to be entered on the form including the species, breed, sex, age, name, vaccination information (if known), license/tag collar information, reason for release and any other information relative to the animal. Animal Control personnel receiving the animal shall sign and date the Release.

Upon impoundment the animal is scanned for micro-chip by an Animal Care Worker/Animal Control Officer, a digital picture is taken of the animal and posted on the County of Kern website and PetHarbor.com. An evaluation of the animal’s appearance, health and age is made.

The animal will be placed in a kennel/run/cage designated for Hold/Strays. City dogs are housed in Kennel D. County dogs are housed in Kennel C. Dogs requiring isolation due to quarantine for rabies or special needs, such as injured, sick or aggressive dogs are housed in Kennel B. Hold/stray cats are held in the Cat Room and Cat Suite in Kennel B. Feral, quarantine and sick/injured cat receiving medication are housed in the Cat Evaluation/Quarantine Room.

Animal information and location are entered into Chameleon immediately after placing the animal in the assigned run/cage. A kennel sheet is then generated by Chameleon and is posted on the run/cage.

Infirm/Injured Animals Requiring Medical Attention

Animals found to be injured and/or sick upon impoundment or in the kennels receive medical care. Shelter personnel contact an available veterinarian by phone detailing clinical signs being observed and obtain the veterinarian’s recommendation to immediately euthanize or receive medical treatment. Bakersfield animals are normally treated at North of the River Animal Hospital. Mojave Animal Shelter personnel telephone Tehachapi Veterinary Hospital and arrange to transport the animal to Tehachapi for medical care. Southern Kern Veterinary Hospital in Rosamond will only receive county infirm/injured animals by appointment. It may take several days before animals can be scheduled and seen by the veterinarian.

An “Animal Control Veterinary Care and Tracking Report” is filled out prior to transporting to the veterinary hospital. A veterinarian invoice identifying services rendered and the amount owed accompanies the animal upon return to the shelter. The medical outcome, prognosis, if any, and medication prescribed is entered into Chameleon.

Owner Surrendered Animals

The Division, in response to the Court Order requiring the Division to hold all animals for the legally required time period, stopped accepting owner-surrendered animals.
Returned Animals

Animals adopted from the Bakersfield/Mojave Shelter may be returned if deemed sick within a 30 +/- day period from the date of adoption. The customer is encouraged to utilize the “Free Pet Examination” at a veterinary hospital of their choice for a health examination and consultation within three days after adoption. If the animal is deemed sick and not treatable by the veterinarian, shelter personnel request the veterinarian to recommend euthanasia in writing. If a verbal recommendation for euthanasia is obtained over the phone, shelter personnel document the recommendations in Chameleon. In the event the veterinarian does not recommend euthanasia, shelter staff will transport the animal to an available veterinarian for treatment.

If the animal is treatable and/or has not been seen by a veterinarian, shelter personnel will call local veterinarians detailing their observation and requesting the veterinarian’s recommendation. Typically, the veterinarian will require shelter personnel to transport for exam and recommendation. If medications are prescribed, larger dogs are housed in Kennel B, smaller dogs/puppies are confined in Kennel B infirmary cages (PS Cages) and cats are held in the Cat Quarantine/Evaluation Room. Unless a veterinarian recommends euthanasia, the animals are held the same amount of time applicable to stray animals, but are available for adoption/redemption for the entire holding period. The policy to refuse adoption of sick animals in this category has been rescinded.

If an animal is returned because of illness, the customer is entitled to a reimbursement of the adoption fee. However, they are responsible for any medical services they authorize from the veterinarian. Exchanges are not permitted.

Animal Impounded With Identification

Animals impounded with identification are to be placed in Kennel C (County) or Kennel D (City) runs and a “red” kennel sheet is placed on the animal enclosure to indicate that there is owner information on the animal. Owner information is documented in Chameleon. In addition, certified return receipt letters of impoundment are sent by Office Services Specialist, Office Service Technician or Animal Care Worker.

Known owners are billed for all impoundment fees of animals abandoned at the shelters.

Feral Cats

A feral cat is defined as a cat without owner identification whose usual and consistent temperament is extreme fear and resistance to contact with people. A feral is totally unsocialized to people. If a feral cat has not been reclaimed by its owner or caretaker within the first three days of the required holding period, excluding the day of impoundment and continues to exhibit characteristics of a feral, it may be euthanized.

Feral cats are placed in the designated “cat evaluation” cages located in the Quarantine/Evaluation Cat Room. If during the holding period the cat demonstrates it is domesticated, the cat is moved to the Cat Room and an updated Kennel Sheet is created and placed on the cage.
Livestock Impounds

Livestock impounded by Animal Control personnel are placed in the livestock paddock. Stallions, boars and bulls are placed in separate areas preventing contact with other animals. A Notice of Livestock Confinement is completed on horses and cattle. A copy of the statement is filed with the Shelter Supervisor, the State Brand Inspector and California Department of Food and Agriculture.

If after 14 days from the date of the first posting of the notice, no satisfactory proof of ownership has been made, or if the owner refuses or fails to pay all expenses the animal may be sold at public auction.

Quarantined Animals

Any animal which bites or scratches exposing a person to rabies or the potential of rabies is isolated for a minimum of at least 10 days, not including the day of the bite. Dogs are confined in Kennel B-Quarantine/Security Kennel. Cats are quarantined in the Quarantine/Evaluation Cat Room. In the event the animal dies while quarantined, a lab sample is prepared and Public Health Services is contacted to ascertain if the specimen will be tested for rabies.

Release/Availability of Animals

A list of animals held the required amount of time is reviewed daily by the Animal Care Worker in charge of the specific kennel where the animal is housed. The animal’s status is evaluated by searching the animal’s identification number in Chameleon to determine any rescue interest, special holds, additional communication made with an owner, establish the date letters were sent or certified return receipts received. Dogs deemed in good health, not showing signs of animal, food or people aggression will have their temperature taken and SAFER Tested. If the dog fails for any of the aforementioned reasons, it is taken to Kennel E for euthanasia. Cats deemed not adoptable are euthanized in their cages after reviewing the cat’s status in the Chameleon program. The final disposition is entered into the Chameleon program and documented on the Euthanasia logs.

Adoptable dogs are processed for altering by changing their status in Chameleon to “Available” to be “altered” and placed in Kennel A. Cats are processed the same and placed in a Cat Adoption cage. If a cat is adopted prior to altering, the cat is placed in the Cat Evaluation Room and transported the next available day to North of the River Animal Hospital for altering. Upon return, the animal owner is contacted to pick their cat up at the shelter.

Adoption

Bakersfield Shelter: Dogs considered healthy after taking their temperature, passing the SAFER Test and receiving vaccinations will be scheduled for transportation to contracted North of the River Vet Hospital (NOR) for altering. Dogs over four months of age will receive their rabies vaccination. The veterinarian is able to accommodate the altering of six dogs on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Fridays and a larger number of male cats on the aforementioned days. Animals must be picked up on the following day. Occasionally, arrangements are made to transport animals to the Mojave Animal Shelter and then to contracted Southern Kern Veterinary Hospital for altering and rabies vaccination.
Mojave Shelter: Adoptable dogs/puppies/cats/kittens are processed same as above, except animals are transported to Southern Kern Vet Hospital in Rosamond for altering.

Dogs failing the SAFER Test and unaltered may be rescued by legitimate 501c 3, non-profit rescue groups registered with the Division for $10.00. If a rescue group identifies an available animal as a potential rescue, they are given an additional three days to arrange for the pick up.

The number of animals placed for adoption at the Bakersfield shelter is limited by the number of animals NOR can alter in a day.

Current Adoption Fees are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal Type</th>
<th>Adoption Fee</th>
<th>Spay/Neuter</th>
<th>Vaccinations</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Cat</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Cat</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$60.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Euthanasia Policies and Procedures

Each Animal Care Worker is assigned a locked Euthanasia Kit, equipped with a tracking numbered bottle of sodium pentobarbital, syringes and assorted 19 gauge, 18 gauge, 20 gauge, 21 gauge x 1 in. and 1 ½ in. needles and Telazol. Euthanasia log-in sheets are required to document the administration of euthanasia and/or Telazol.

Animal Control personnel required to euthanize must complete the eight-hour Euthanasia Training course.

Animal Care And Feeding

Animals are fed in the evening of each day. Animals that are thin, requiring soft food receive it according to their needs. Puppies, kittens, cats and nursing dogs also are provided food on an ongoing basis.

Food is withheld after 6:00 p.m. for animals scheduled for next day altering.

Dogs in Kennel A (adoption kennel) are provided food on a continuous basis.

Water is provided to all impounded animals as required.

Livestock are fed twice a day, morning and evening, unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian.

Animals are assessed daily to determine if the animal should be considered for SAFER Testing.

Dogs are not tested if they show dog-to-dog aggression while housed together or food aggression.

Animals under quarantine for a bite or scratch will not be SAFER Tested, by virtue of the nature of the impoundment, which constitutes a fail.

Facility Sanitation

The runs are cleaned three times per day if staffing permits, once in the morning, afternoon and evening. If kennel space permits, dogs are locked on the opposite side during the cleanings. Debris is hosed into the gutter and down the drain. Non-organic debris is physically removed (collars, s-hooks, disposable latex gloves etc.).
Morning cleaning: The run is cleaned of all debris with a high-pressure water hose. Disinfectant is applied with a foamer attachment; Pine-o-line is alternated every other day with Lem-quat. Cleaner/ disinfectant

Afternoon cleaning: The runs are cleaned of all debris with a high-pressure water hose.

Evening cleaning: A high-pressure water hose is used to remove debris prior to feeding.

As necessary any time of day: When a run has been occupied with a contagious animal:

To achieve functional disinfection when bloody, pungent feces and odors are present in the dog runs, the area is washed down with water and chlorine diluted 1:32 and administered with a ”Hudson” sprayer. A “Sanitary” or “Unsanitary” sign is posted to alert staff if a run is acceptable or unacceptable to receive animals.

Sunday: The runs are cleaned of all debris with a high-pressure water hose. They are then hosed down with disinfectant. A thorough cleaning using chlorine diluted 1:32 is the 3rd step. All resting beds are removed, disinfected and bleached.

Cat cages are broken down and removed for cleaning using the same methods as described above.

Cleaning and sterilization best practices: A clear understanding of the definition and function of different cleaning products is important to design an effective cleaning protocol. Three types of product are generally used for environmental cleaning:

◆ Soap/detergent: Cleaning agent that works by suspending dirt and grease. Does not kill harmful microorganisms.

◆ Disinfectant: Chemical agent which kills harmful microorganisms. Does not necessarily remove dirt or grease.

◆ Degreaser: More powerful soap/detergent specially formulated to penetrate layers of dried on body oils and other greasy debris.

Effective sanitation requires applying a germicidal agent to a basically clean surface. This requires use of both detergent and disinfectant products. Detergents in themselves do nothing to kill germs. Although some disinfectants can also act as detergents, many (such as bleach) do not. Virtually all disinfectants used in shelters are inactivated by organic material (such as feces, kitty litter, saliva, sneeze marks and plain old dirt) to some extent, so if they are not applied to a clean surface, they simply will not work. Periodically, a stronger degreaser should be used to deal with body oils and other grunge that builds up in kennels over time and can render disinfectants ineffective.

◆ Disinfectants MUST be used at the correct concentration. Going by smell or color or “eyeballing” it leads to extra expense and potential toxicity if too much is used, and ineffectiveness if too little is used. Cleaning protocols need to include clear instructions on how to correctly dilute the disinfectant to be used.

◆ Adequate contact time is required. Virtually all disinfectants require a contact time of at least ten minutes. Spraying on, wiping off and immediately putting an animal in the freshly “cleaned” cage will not prevent disease spread.
Disinfectants must be applied to a basically clean, non-porous surface, free of organic matter. Porous surfaces such as wood, carpeting, unsealed concrete and turf cannot be completely disinfected.

Disinfectants and detergents can cancel each other’s actions, and should not be mixed unless specifically directed by the manufacture.

There is no single perfect disinfectant for use in all circumstances. It is important to consider the surface to be cleaned and the harmful microorganisms most likely to be present. Most disinfectants are effective against most bacteria, enveloped viruses and fungi. Unenveloped viruses are more resistant, and are only killed by a few disinfectants safe enough for routine use. Unenveloped viruses of importance in shelters include parvo, feline panleukopenia, and calicivirus (a significant component of feline URI). Other agents not reliably inactivated by most disinfectants include ringworm, some protozoal and coccidial cysts, parasite eggs such as roundworm and whipworm, and external parasites such as fleas, ticks and mites. Special protocols are required when these agents are an ongoing problem in a shelter. Other considerations in choice of cleaning/disinfection agents include cost, ease of storage and application, and animal and staff tolerance. In some cases, it may make sense to have one basic daily or more frequent protocol, with a more thorough cleaning protocol used at less frequent intervals (e.g. once a week.)

Despite the conscientious efforts of staff, the current cleaning practices utilized in the Animal Control Services Division do not conform to the best practices noted above. We asked Dr. Richard Bachman D.V.M., who is an expert in shelter veterinary medicine (see Vita in appendix VI) to review the current practices of the Division with regard to current industry standards. His observations are that the Division is not conforming to best practices for the following reasons:

- Overcrowding hampers staff’s ability to move animals to provide the most effective cleaning.
- Traffic flow throughout the shelter does not allow for the adequate isolation of contagious animals.
- The porous nature of the shelter’s interior hampers the effective cleaning disinfection of kennel and cat holding areas.
- Disinfectant is not applied to animal holding areas frequently enough.
- Vacancies and lack of adequate staff training make it difficult to assure that existing cleaning protocols are adhered to.
- The rotation of Pin-o-line and Lem-quat is ineffective in that they are essentially the same Quaternary Ammonia products differing only in non-disinfecting qualities such as fragrance and the presence of a detergent.
- Animal holding areas need to be thoroughly cleaned and then disinfected.
- Cat holding cages need to be taken outside thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and allowed sufficient contact time for the disinfectants to work.
- The division needs to re-evaluate its product choices and frequency of application to more closely adhere to current industry practice.

See Appendix V for a thorough examination of this topic.
Staffing Adequacy

We are not aware of any widely accepted standard for determining correct staffing for public animal shelters. However, an examination of various variables can provide guidance relative to an appropriate staffing level.

The number of personnel needed to staff an animal shelter is dependent on the following variables:

◆ The physical size of the facility
◆ The number of kennels
◆ The number of cat cages
◆ The number of animal intakes
◆ The number of owner returns
◆ The number of adoptions
◆ The number of animals euthanized
◆ The hours the shelter is open to the public
◆ The cleaning protocols adopted
◆ The frequency of standard and extraordinary cleaning
◆ The number of sick animals held
◆ The length of stray holding
◆ The length of adoption holding
◆ The availability of veterinary care i.e. onsite or offsite
◆ The availability of spay/neuter services (i.e. onsite or offsite)
◆ Are other duties not specific to typical kennel duties assigned i.e. adoption counseling, lost and found assistance, clerical duties, etc?
◆ The availability of a dedicated computer system.

Based on information provided by Animal Control Services Division staff:

◆ 95 percent of all animal intakes occur at the Bakersfield Shelter
◆ 70 percent of all animals intakes are at the shelter and 30% from the field
◆ Staffing at Ridgecrest and Lake Isabella and Mojave is adequate.

Based on the Citygate analysis of animal intake volume and distribution the following number of animal intakes and outcomes are of significance:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division Animal Dispositions</th>
<th>Total Division</th>
<th>Bakersfield Shelter</th>
<th>Shelter Surrenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impounded</td>
<td>28,549</td>
<td>27,122</td>
<td>18,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redeemed</td>
<td>1,247</td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted</td>
<td>2,830</td>
<td>2,689</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euthanized</td>
<td>24,139</td>
<td>22,932</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the above information these observations and recommendations relate to the Bakersfield shelter.

The most time consuming activity for kennel workers is cleaning. As noted previously best practice cleaning protocols, are in general, not being followed. All areas and objects are not being cleaned thoroughly enough or often enough to prevent the spread of disease.

**What needs to be cleaned?**

When we think of cleaning protocols, often the focus is on cleaning cat cages and dog runs. However, germs are tracked by human and animal traffic *throughout* any shelter. Additionally, germs are spread by hands, on doorknobs, clothing, carriers, exam tables, instruments, animal transport vehicles, and so on. Different protocols and products may be needed for different areas; following is a list of some areas and items to consider:

- Office areas (lower priority if shelter animals are not allowed in offices, but employees will still track germs in and out from animal areas).
- Main lobbies and hallways.
- Dog runs, including central walkways, walls, doors, gates, etc.
- Cat rooms, including floors, walls, doorknobs, etc. as well as cages (if applicable).
- Quarantine areas.
- Isolation areas.
- Medical/surgical areas, including instruments and equipment.
- Other indoor animal areas, such as grooming, treatment rooms, intake rooms, visiting rooms, training areas, etc.
- Exercise yards or other outside animal areas.
- Vehicles.
- Carriers and transport cages.
- Hand washing.
- Employee clothing (separate clothing should be worn while doing heavy cleaning or handling infectious animals).

---

3 University of California at Davis Shelter Medicine WEB page: http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/msmp/protocols.htm
- Bedding.
- Dishes.
- Toys.
- Tools, such as poop scoopers and mops.
- Ventilation and heating ducts.
- Storage areas (especially food storage).
- Entire building, especially door knobs, phones, keyboards, and other frequently handled items.

The time it takes to complete some of the above tasks is dependent on the number of animals. Others are dependent on the size of the facility and the distance between work areas. Still others are dependent on the frequency of the occurrence.

Animal Shelters are 365 day a year operations. Not all tasks are performed every day. The analysis below averages the tasks over the entire year taking into account that some of them are only performed when the shelter is open to the public or during normal business hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Enclosures</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Times Per Day</th>
<th>Total Minutes</th>
<th>Minutes Per Week</th>
<th>Minutes Per Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean Dog Enclosures</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,060</td>
<td>28,420</td>
<td>1,477,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean Cat Cages</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>8,820</td>
<td>458,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean Laundry Area</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean Euthanasia Room</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean Hallways etc.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>10,920</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFER Test Dogs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>62,400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait on Public</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Animals to Veterinarian</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euthanize Animals*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>4,410</td>
<td>229,320</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed Livestock</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>5,460</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Intake **</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>4,560</td>
<td>237,120</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>21,840</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Minutes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>7,577</strong></td>
<td><strong>50,035</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,601,820</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hours Per Year**

- Employees Needed @ 1,832 Hours Per Employee Per Year 24
- Employees Needed @ 2,080 Hours Per Employee Per Year 21

III-23
* Includes: Taking animal from kennel or cage, verifying animal is to be euthanized, filling syringe, euthanizing the animal, making entry in Chameleon, placing animal in cooler

** Includes: Receiving animal from the public, taking animal to the vet room for shots, scanning for microchips, taking the animal’s picture, downloading the picture to Chameleon and making the computer entry, printing a kennel card, placing the animal in a kennel or cage and hanging the kennel card

There are currently 13 employees assigned to the Bakersfield shelter. Therefore, the Division would have to fill three vacant Animal Care Workers and hire six more if the Division can run short staffed when employees are on vacation or using sick leave. Alternatively, nine more employees would need to be hired if all activities must be covered every day. It should be noted that with current staffing there are not enough personnel to thoroughly clean and disinfect the animal holding areas. This is one of the primary reasons that the Division has had difficulty dealing with disease control.

Public Access

The debate as to which areas are open to the public and which areas are restricted to staff only is one common to many public shelters. Shelter administrators need to balance:

- Public safety/liability concerns
- Staff needs relative to getting their work done without public interruption
- Animal health issues regarding the transmission of disease via person/animal contact
- The desire to have lost animals re-united with their owners
- The desire to adopt the greatest number of animals
- Good public relations.

Currently the public has unrestricted access to the adoption kennel/cat adoption areas. The rest of the facility, which includes rabies quarantine kennels, aggressive animal holding areas isolation areas and the kennels and cat holding areas for stray animals is a restricted area separated from the public access areas by a “green gate.” This barrier has caused a great deal of controversy in the community and was recently reviewed by the Kern County Grand Jury. The Grand Jury found justifiable reasons for the Division’s restrictions noting the need to keep the public away from quarantined and dangerous animals. They also noted that persons wishing to look for a lost animal can do so if escorted by a Division employee. They recommended that at a minimum the slats be removed from the gate so that people could view what is behind the gate. In our community focus group meetings, we were confronted with a very suspicious feeling on the part of the participants. Many believe that animals are being mistreated and that the reason for the green gate was in large part to make it impossible for the public to view these “nefarious” activities. In fact, removal of the “green gate” was the number one priority of those attending the focus group meetings with 22 percent making it their primary “need to change” issue.

Public safety concerns, staff efficiency, animal health issues and the desire for public access need to be balanced. We note that a great deal of staff time is currently being used to escort the public into the stray hold kennel/cat areas. The Division should adhere to the Grand Jury’s recommendation and remove the slats from the gate immediately. The opening of the new “Bakersfield Kennel” will provide the opportunity for the Division to review its public access
policy. Fencing can be moved to allow the public access to the stray kennel/cat holding areas while still restricting access to other parts of the facility. Division staff should consult with appropriate county personnel regarding the exact placement of fences and gates. For example, if a person having hand to face contact with animals is of concern, low level slats or screening can be used to reduce these contacts.

Behavior Evaluation

Shelters in the past utilized subjective evaluations relative to what dogs were placed for adoption. Age, size, breed, and observed behavior were some of the criteria used by shelter workers to determine which animals to place for adoption and which ones to euthanize. Public liability concern, the return of animals after displaying aggression in the new adopter’s home, and the resulting holding periods and limited shelter space led shelter administrators to seek a more objective and valid criteria on which to base adoptability decisions. Kern County has adopted the SAFER protocol to evaluate adoptability. This was done without community involvement, and as a result, many animal activists have serious concerns regarding the program. These concerns were expressed during our Community Focus Group meetings and in the Customer Survey. The following are excerpts from an article outlining issues involving behavior evaluation and the contrasts between SAFER and other evaluation methods. The full text of the article appears in Appendix VII. The reader should keep in mind that Kern County last year impounded 15,087 dogs and that any method employed must take into account this reality and the limited staff available to evaluate animals. Thus, tests that take a very long time to complete are of limited utility in a large public shelter.

Excerpts From The Bark Unleashed

“In a gathering storm centered on the policies of animal shelters, temperament testing has become a lightning rod. Some resource- and space-starved shelters—which might have once chosen dogs for adoption based on such specious criteria as color, size, age, breed or length of time in the shelter—now use a series of tests that purport to evaluate a dog’s behavior and predict whether the dog will be a good companion for an adopter. Shelters using such tests make several claims for doing so: The dogs they put up for adoption are safer; dogs are selected based on whether they would be good family pets without regard to age or appearance; data gleaned from the tests help shelters find better adoption matches and provide useful information to adopters; and as a result, more people in the community are adopting shelter dogs.

“So what’s prompting the firestorm? Several issues. No one advocates putting vicious dogs up for adoption, but many people think good dogs are being declared unadoptable because the tests are unfair and the people administering the tests are not qualified. A common refrain is, “My dog wouldn’t have passed the test.” Further, opponents of temperament testing claim shelters use these tests to hide the truth—that they show low euthanasia rates and high adoption rates by counting only “adoptable” dogs (those that passed the test). This, they believe, deludes a community into believing that there is no pet over-population problem, and encourages people to drop off an inconvenient dog at a shelter. Detractors also claim that testing tempts shelters to focus on quick resolution rather than spending in-house resources on prevention and utilizing outside resources such as rescue groups.

4 http://www.thebark.com/ezine/features_specialFeatures/specialFeatures_04.html
“Central to all these important and intense issues, though, is the fundamental question: Are temperament tests valid? That is, can testing a dog in a stressful shelter environment predict later behavior of the dog?

“Most people advocating tests agree that “temperament” tests, in fact, are not valid because a dog’s “temperament” is subjective. Instead, they prefer calling the tests “behavior evaluations,” because behavior can be seen and described objectively. Two such behavior evaluations, Sue Sternberg’s Assess-a-Pet and Dr. Emily Weiss’ SAFER/Meet Your Match, are the ones most likely to be used by shelters because information about these tests is readily available through workshops, seminars, books, and videos as well as from such organizations as the American Humane Association and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

Assess-a-Pet

“Assess-a-Pet, a step-by-step behavior evaluation that takes about 15 minutes, was developed by Sue Sternberg. Sternberg based the test on her 23 years of dog behavior experience, and has refined it over the past 11 years at the nonprofit shelter she founded in upstate New York, Rondout Valley Animals for Adoption.

“Assess-a-Pet is not a simple pass/fail test; in most parts of the evaluation, the tester selects among a range of responses and also adds observations. For example, the four responses to a test during which the tester strokes the back of the dog are: moves toward tester in at least two out of three strokes, stays in same spot, moves away from tester, or freezes and becomes more aroused. Although some dogs have extreme responses, most responses land in a gray area.

SAFER/Meet Your Match

“Emily Weiss, PhD, divides behavior evaluation into two parts, the SAFER (Safety Assessment for Evaluating Rehoming) test, and the Meet Your Match program, both developed at the request of the Kansas Humane Society. SAFER, a six-part test designed to evaluate aggression quickly (in about six minutes), also uses Sternberg’s Assess-a-Hand for food guarding. In this evaluation, a dog is given an A, B, C, D or F in each part. For example, during the sensitivity test, in which the handler kneads and squeezes large handfuls of skin from the dog’s ears to its tail, if the dog accepts the touch, it gets an A; if it quickly turns toward the handler’s hand and mouths with little to moderate pressure, a C; if it growls or tries to bite, an F. Weiss recommends that all the tests be conducted by two people and videotaped. As with Sternberg’s test, each shelter determines, based on its resources, what combination of grades determines adopt-ability. After a dog is SAFER tested, the shelter might then use Weiss’s Meet Your Match program to evaluate the needs of individual dogs and gather information from potential adopters to find compatible homes.”

Testing the Tests

Weiss, for example, followed two groups of dogs at the Kansas Humane Society through adoption or euthanasia. One group was given the SAFER test; the other given health checks but not a behavior evaluation. Of the 141 dogs, 12 were euthanized for behavior reasons and of those, only four were in the SAFER tested group. A follow-up phone survey three weeks after the dogs were adopted determined that 36 dogs from the untested group showed aggression
compared to eight from the SAFER-tested group. “We repeated the test about six months later and got similar results,” says Weiss. “After that, they were not comfortable putting dogs up for adoption that hadn’t been tested.”

For her first study, Smith tracked 839 behaviorally assessed dogs adopted over a two-year period. The results, which she’s planning to present at the HSUS/Animal Care Expo in March, show that dogs put into a level-one category (no restrictions) after the behavior assessment stayed in the shelter an average of six days, level-two dogs (restrictions such as homes with older children) stayed an average of nine days, and level-three dogs (more difficult issues) stayed 14 days. Some of the level-one dogs were returned and adopted out again, but none were euthanized. On the other hand, 3 percent of the level-two dogs and 7 percent of the level-three dogs were returned and euthanized (or euthanized elsewhere) for behavior problems. “Our return rate has decreased since implementing an assessment process,” she says. “We are making better matches and our euthanasia rate has not increased.” Smith believes that because of temperament testing, the shelter is putting safer dogs up for adoption.

Adds Donaldson, “The anti-testing people are so incredibly well-meaning. I know where they’re coming from. You run a test, adopt the dog anyway, and the dog is fine. Clearly there are problems with the tests, but it could be that some tests are valid, that some parts of the tests may have good predictive value. The preliminary results from tests by Emily [Weiss] and Amy [Marder] have value and are a tantalizing reinforcement for some things, but we have to get funding for more research. Before we can save all the dogs, we have to triage; we have to save the maximum number of dogs in a way that makes sense. If testing is not the way, if it turns out that there is no way to test that’s adequately valid, then we’ll need to stop banging our heads on the testing wall. But then what will we go on?...”

Veterinary Medical Care Costs

The veterinary cost to provide spay/neuter surgery for adopted animals is projected to cost $82,000 for fiscal year 2004-2005.

The veterinary cost to provide medical care for impounded animals is projected to cost $64,000 for fiscal year 2004-2005. Medical supplies are projected to cost $34,000 for fiscal year 2004-2005.

Combined, the total budgeted cost for spay/neuter and medical care is projected to be $180,000 for fiscal year 2004-2005. Some of these costs are charges for after-hours emergency treatments.

The following distribution of veterinary costs has been reported by the Resource Management Agency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Veterinary Care Provider</th>
<th>Percentage of Charges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North of the River Veterinary Hospital</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Emergency and Urgent Care</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakersfield Veterinarian Hospital</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kern Veterinarian Medical Association</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Others</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Veterinary Care Program Observations

Dr. Richard Bachman D.V.M., who is an expert in shelter veterinary medicine (see Vita in Appendix VI) visited the Bakersfield shelter at Citygate’s request, reviewed the current medical program and provided Citygate with his observations and evaluation. Dr. Bachman’s observations include the following:

◆ There is no coordinated medical program in place other than the identification of a perceived problem and then sending the animal to the “vet.”
◆ There are no standardized protocols to triage medical problems.
◆ The current policy of “outsourcing” veterinary care is inefficient and insufficient relative to follow-up care resulting in inadequate medical care for the Divisions animals.
◆ There is inappropriate animal flow resulting in inadequate infectious disease control and poor utilization of current animal holding capacity.
◆ The facility is poorly designed with respect to flooring and wall surfaces resulting in non-sealed surfaces harboring potential infectious disease agents.
◆ There are inadequate infectious disinfection protocols to deal with serious disease outbreaks e.g., Parvo, Panleukopenia, and Calici.
◆ There is a lack of staff training relative to recognition and response to disease outbreaks.
◆ There is no diagnostic capability to recognize infectious disease outbreaks.
◆ The disease control procedures at the Bakersfield shelter are inadequate to prevent the ongoing outbreak of various animal diseases i.e., parvo, distemper, kennel cough, upper respiratory infection, etc.

Spay/Neuter Programs

There are no “Low Cost Spay/Neuter Clinics” operating in Kern County. Animals adopted from the County’s shelters are spayed/neutered in accordance with State Law. We are assuming that the same holds true for any non-profit adopting animals in Kern County. A citizen wishing to have an animal spayed/neutered would need to take it to a private veterinarian.

Operation Fix It Program was suspended in 2003. It provided a $10 voucher given to alter cats, and a $20.00 voucher given to alter dogs.

The County subsidizes the spay/neuter fee charged at adoption. The County’s primary contractor, North of the River Veterinary Hospital, charges the County the following fees to spay/neuter County shelter animals:
### Routine Canine Sterilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Spay</th>
<th>County Subsidy</th>
<th>Neuter</th>
<th>County Subsidy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20 lbs.</td>
<td>$75.60</td>
<td>$35.60</td>
<td>$70.60</td>
<td>$30.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 39 lbs.</td>
<td>$90.72</td>
<td>$50.72</td>
<td>$77.72</td>
<td>$37.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 59 lbs.</td>
<td>$105.84</td>
<td>$65.84</td>
<td>$84.78</td>
<td>$44.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 79 lbs</td>
<td>$120.96</td>
<td>$80.96</td>
<td>$91.84</td>
<td>$51.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 to 99 lbs</td>
<td>$136.08</td>
<td>$96.08</td>
<td>$98.91</td>
<td>$58.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 to 119 lbs</td>
<td>$151.02</td>
<td>$111.20</td>
<td>$105.50</td>
<td>$65.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Routine Feline Sterilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Spay</th>
<th>County Subsidy</th>
<th>Neuter</th>
<th>County Subsidy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flat Rate.</td>
<td>$63.45</td>
<td>$10.60</td>
<td>$18.50</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- All sterilization fees include the following procedures, services and supplies:
  - Pre-anesthesia wellness physical examination
  - Pre-anesthetic sedation
  - Intravenous induction anesthesia
  - Tracheal entubation
  - Surgical scrub and patient preparation
  - General anesthesia (Isofluorane inhalant)
  - Inter-operative electronic cardiac, respiratory, and oxygen tension monitoring
  - Separate sterile surgical instrument pack for each patient
  - Sterile surgical suite
  - Surgeon wears sterile surgical cap, gown and gloves for each procedures
  - All necessary surgical supplies
  - Post-anesthesia monitoring until recovery
  - 1 day hospitalization
  - Physical examination on the day of release
  - Post-operative antibiotic injection, if required
  - Certificate of sterilization
  - Post operative antibiotic injection, as required.

Any non-routine complication procedures are an extra charge based on the contract between North of the River Veterinary Hospital and the County.

The County subsidy to provide spay/neuter surgery for adopted animals is projected to cost **$82,000** for fiscal year 2004-2005.

The **Partnership for Animals Committee** surveyed local veterinarians in the Spring of 2004 and found the following range of charges:
Routine Canine Sterilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Spay Range</th>
<th>Spay Median</th>
<th>Neuter Range</th>
<th>Neuter Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20 lbs.</td>
<td>$59 to $175</td>
<td>$92</td>
<td>$56 to $155</td>
<td>$80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 40 lbs.</td>
<td>$69 to $175</td>
<td>$99</td>
<td>$65 to $155</td>
<td>$88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 80 lbs</td>
<td>$95 to $175</td>
<td>$125</td>
<td>$80 to $155</td>
<td>$104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 81 lbs</td>
<td>$95 to $200+</td>
<td>$146</td>
<td>$95 to $170+</td>
<td>$118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Routine Feline Sterilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pay Range</th>
<th>Spay Median</th>
<th>Neuter Range</th>
<th>Neuter Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$50 to $175</td>
<td>$76</td>
<td>$30 to $105</td>
<td>$45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Low cost” spay/neuter rates in other communities are less than those currently being charged in Kern County. For example:

San Francisco S.P.C.A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cats All</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>*65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs Up to 65 pounds</td>
<td>85.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs 65 pounds and over</td>
<td>110.00</td>
<td>125.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Pregnant Cat $95.00

Auburn California

Animal Spay/Neuter Clinic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cats Adult</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kittens Under 4 pounds at time of surgery</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs Under 80 pounds</td>
<td>30-35.00</td>
<td>*40-45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puppies 8 wks-4 mo and under 30 pounds</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Additional $10 if in heat or pregnant
San Bernardino S.P.C.A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cats</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>31.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>Up to 30 pounds</td>
<td>36.00</td>
<td>46.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>31 to 75 pounds</td>
<td>51.00</td>
<td>61.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>76 pounds and over</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>96.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Southeast Area Animal Control Authority (SEAACA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cats</td>
<td>Adult (8 wks and up)</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>Under 25 pounds</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>25-40 pounds</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>41-55 pounds</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>70.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>Greater than 56 pounds</td>
<td>Determined by vet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contra Costa County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spay/Neuter Fees</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spay:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs over 50 lbs.</td>
<td>$ 125.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs 20 to 50 lbs.</td>
<td>$ 85.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs under 20 lbs.</td>
<td>$ 50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cats</td>
<td>$ 45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs over 50 lbs.</td>
<td>$ 65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs 20 to 50 lbs.</td>
<td>$ 50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs under 20 lbs.</td>
<td>$ 30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cats</td>
<td>$ 25.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F. **Spay/Neuter – Education Program Case Study**

Contra Costa County’s animal control program is selected for study in that Citygate is very familiar with its history and operational components, and that certain parallels can be identified between Contra Costa County’s history and Kern County’s present circumstances.

Contra Costa County has experienced the growth that Kern will experience over the next 20 years. The total County population increased from 651,600 in 1980 to 930,025 in the year 2000, a 42 percent increase.

Contra Costa County has integrated its animal control programs. The County has service contracts with all but one of the County’s 19 cities. The Contra Costa County Animal Services
Department has operated a low cost spay/neuter clinic since 1977 and a public education program since 1981.

From 1974 to 2004, the number of animals impounded decreased from 41,749 to 13,758 and the number of animals euthanized decreased from 31,904 to 5,330 while the human population increased from 545,750 to 907,850. The human population increased 66 percent but the number of animals impounded decreased by 67 percent and animals euthanized decreased by 83 percent. These changes are depicted below.
Comparable animal data for the years 1974 and 1979 were not available for Kern County. Therefore, a comparison between Contra Costa County and Kern County for the years 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004 are shown below. Kern County began housing animals from the city of Bakersfield in 2004. Animal impounded and animals euthanized for 2004 were adjusted to exclude Bakersfield animals in order to present a meaningful comparison with prior years.
KERN COUNTY POPULATION VS ANIMALS IMPOUNDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Animals Impounded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>453,400</td>
<td>25,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>518,300</td>
<td>29,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>604,183</td>
<td>23,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>645,881</td>
<td>24,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>732,401</td>
<td>15,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY POPULATION VS ANIMALS IMPOUNDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Animals Impounded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>647,750</td>
<td>24,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>715,800</td>
<td>22,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>787,700</td>
<td>17,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>842,000</td>
<td>18,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>907,850</td>
<td>13,758</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 1975, concerned citizens approached the Board of Supervisors relative to building and staffing a spay/neuter clinic. These initial efforts were not successful. These citizens formed a non-profit organization named S.P.A.Y. (Stop Pets Annual Yield) to raise money for a spay/neuter clinic. By 1977, they had raised enough money to purchase and equip a “doublewide” mobile home as a clinic. They proposed giving the clinic and equipment to the County if the County would administer the program. The Board of Supervisors accepted this offer and the Clinic began operations in 1977.

The Contra Costa County Spay/Neuter Program is focused on providing low-cost spay/neuter and vaccination services to all of the citizens of Contra Costa County. There are no income requirements. The Clinic provides spay/neuter surgery service Monday through Friday. Vaccinations are provided Monday through Saturday. All revenue generated at the clinic is credited to the Clinic. Rabies vaccination and a current dog license are required. Non-profit groups are accommodated relative to scheduling but no discounts are provided.

Contra Costa County’s spay/neuter program has been instrumental in helping reduce the number of unwanted animals in the community. Non-profits have collaborated with the County on various spay/neuter promotional efforts. The Contra Costa County Humane Society, which was an outgrowth of the original S.P.A.Y. organization, has offered discount coupons at various times and has assisted with paying for clinic renovations and equipment upgrades. Tony LaRussa’s Animal Rescue Foundation has collaborated with the County to utilize other community resources relative to kitten spay/neuter.

Initially a controversial program, the spay/neuter clinic is now accepted as an essential factor in reducing the number of companion animals euthanized in the County. The clinic is also recognized as an essential preventive program that reduces the amount of space required to house unwanted animals.

While we have used Contra Costa County in the above Case Study, other agencies have achieved similar results.

“Hundreds of jurisdictions offer subsidized spay/neuter programs, which work by creating a financial incentive for pet owners to have their pets sterilized.

“Two states, New Hampshire and New Jersey, have accumulated data on spay/neuter programs over a period of years.


“In the [first] six years after the programs inception the state’s eight largest shelters admitted 30,985 fewer animals. (New Hampshire’s eight largest shelters account for 95% of the animals admitted statewide.)

“Cities and counties that have run their own subsidized sterilization programs for years also consistently report that the number of animals handled by local shelters have stabilized or declined, even in the face of growing citizen populations”

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has chronicled the successes of agencies throughout the nation in adopting successful spay/neuter programs.

---

5 Animal Control Management, International City/County Management Association, 2001, P35-39
6 http://hsus.org/pets/
Maddie’s Fund is also a resource relative to successful spay/neuter programs. The crucial point is that successful spay/neuter programs have been started and sustained throughout the United States. Kern County can do it too.

G. CHEMICAL STERILIZATION

A chemical method of sterilization has recently been approved that has the potential of assisting public shelters in their quest to spay/neuter the maximum number of animals. The drug Neutersol was recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration. (FDA)

The positives of using Neutersol are:

1. Possible eliminates the need for time consuming invasive surgery.
2. Does not involve the removal of the testicles thus leaving the animal still looking like an intact male. (A desirable outcome for some owners.)
3. Low level of complications if properly administered.
4. Has proven to be 99.6% effective in clinical trials.

The negatives of using Neutersol are:

1. It is now only approved for a narrow age range, i.e. 3 to 10 months.
2. Only available for dogs.
3. The dogs’ neutering cannot be confirmed by visual observation.
4. The actual effectiveness of the injection is not verifiable, i.e. you will not know, without laboratory analysis if the dog is in fact sterile.
5. The reduction in testosterone may not be enough to eliminate male aggressive behavior.
6. Current expense is no less than surgery.
7. Takes 60 days to work.
8. Does not kill sperm already in the body at the time of injection.

If the FDA approves Neutersol for a wider range of ages and the manufacturer is able to come up with a visual means of determining if the procedure has been performed e.g. dye injection, its use in a public shelter environment should be seriously considered.

H. EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Contra Costa County Animal Services Department has operated a public education program since 1981. The program was initially run by an Animal Control Supervisor as part of his regular assignment. Primary emphasis was on school presentations and talks given to service clubs and public agencies relative to safety around animals. The program was expanded to include humane education and spay/neuter information. This expansion was made possible by using volunteer staff from the Contra Costa County Humane Society. The Education Program

---

7 http://www.maddiesfund.org/
was later expanded and a part-time Humane Educator was hired to manage the program. The program manager was responsible for curriculum development and the training of Animal Services staff and volunteers to give school and other presentations. This position has recently been expanded to full-time and a 20/40 part-time position has been added.

If an agency builds a spay/neuter clinic, it does not follow that the public will rush to use its services. The spay/neuter program needs to be treated as a business where a successful outcome is not annual profit but is instead measured by the number of spay/neuter surgeries performed annually. Viewed in this way, it is apparent that a business plan needs to be developed and an advertising strategy implemented that will maximize the utilization of available spay/neuter resources.

Part of this strategy needs to include educational programs conducted in the County’s schools. When school children are provided with information relative to the value of animals and an early knowledge of spay/neuter, the spay/neuter of animals will become more accepted and more prevalent. The result is fewer homeless animals and fewer public resources needed for their care.

I. SPAY/NEUTER SUMMARY

This is the most important component of a successful animal control program. The education program teaches responsible pet ownership including the concept of not letting animals roam freely and the necessity of spay/neuter. The former will have an immediate effect while the introduction of spay/neuter in the schools will pay dividends now but also into the future. For it is a certainty that if the birth rate of dogs and cats is not controlled the problems associated with the Animal Control Services Division in Kern County will continue to worsen.

The only spay/neuter “program” currently working in Kern County is the spay/neuter of animals adopted from the government shelters and non-profits. **This will not solve the problem.** Kern County impounded over 28,000 dogs and cats, returned slightly more than 1,200, adopted around 2,800 and killed over 24,000. **The number of dogs and cats obtained from other sources e.g. newspaper advertisements, breeders, gifts, etc., make it apparent that if the only effort relative to spay/neuter in a community is limited to shelter animals the desired effect relative to reducing the unwanted animal population will not be achieved.**

The rates currently being charged in the community by the area’s veterinarians, as chronicled by the Partnership for Animals Committee, make the spay/neuter of dogs and cats a luxury for many in the community.

Currently Kern County is meeting its obligations under Vincent by contracting with local veterinarians. There are no low cost spay/neuter clinics operating in the County. Unknown are the number of spay/neuter surgeries performed in the County by private veterinarians on an annual basis. A comprehensive study of Kern County spay/neuter resources and practices should be undertaken to determine the following:

- Number and location of all veterinary hospitals in Kern County.
- Number and type of surgeries performed at these clinics.
- Fees charged.
Current resources, practices and commitment of local non-profits relative to participation in spay/neuter efforts.

Some of this work has already been accomplished by Partnership For Animals Committee. After this survey is completed, Kern County will be better able to develop a Countywide spay/neuter strategy.

We have not been able to develop comparative data for spay/neuter programs that rely on arrangements with private veterinarians to provide a community’s entire spay/neuter program. Many jurisdictions are using private veterinarians to spay/neuter shelter animals and many non-profits operate spay/neuter clinics.

We are suggesting that the County open a low cost to free spay/neuter clinic. There are other models that can and have worked in other communities; thus, our recommendation that a comprehensive study be undertaken to determine the number of sterilization surgeries being performed each year in Kern County.

J. Recommendations To Improve Shelter Operations

Facilities

Recommendation III-1: Effective January 1, 2006, establish a Capital Facility Fee to cover costs for new animal control facilities.

The County’s Capital Facility Fee program for new construction does not include a fee for expansion of the current animal control facilities. It is our understanding that County staff will be including such a fee in the countywide fee study that is currently underway and due to come to the Board in the near future.

Recommendation III-2: In the short term, modify the current facility. Paint all masonry block walls with epoxy based paint and seal concrete flooring.

The porous nature of the walls and flooring in the facility hamper effective disease control. To address this problem, the following steps are recommended:

- Systematically close down each kennel and cat holding area.
- Thoroughly clean, disinfect and scrub with bleach.
- Paint all masonry block walls with epoxy based paint to prevent the recurrence of bacteria and virus accumulation in porous masonry walls and concrete floors.
- In the long-term Contract with an architect familiar with the construction of animal shelters to develop a long term plan for the replacement of the current facilities

Recommendation III-3: In the long-term, build a new shelter and administrative facility.
The current shelter facilities are inadequate to house the current, much less the future, volumes of impounded animals. The current facilities have inadequate animal holding capacity, are not conducive to disease control, animal adoption, staff morale, or public access. Lacking are adequate support areas relative to laundry, medical space, food preparation, equipment storage, staff break rooms, lockers, restrooms, and office space. Public spaces are too small for the volume of visitors and the efficient transfer of animals. The Division should consult with an architect familiar with public animal shelter design. Develop a strategic, multi-year plan to ensure that adequate shelter facilities are in place ahead of demand.

Medical Program

**Recommendation III-4:** Bring the medical program “in-house” and phase in the building and staffing of a veterinary clinic.

**Recommendation III-5:** Consider bringing in a mobile/modular building to the Bakersfield shelter site.

**Recommendation III-6:** Contract with either a veterinarian conversant with public animal shelter issues and/or the University of California at Davis.

The Division should contract either with a veterinarian conversant with public animal shelter issues and/or the University of California at Davis to establish policies, procedures and protocols sufficient to protect the animals entrusted to the care of the Division. The disease control procedures at the Bakersfield shelter are inadequate to prevent the ongoing outbreak of various animal diseases. The current policy of “outsourcing” veterinary care is costly, inefficient and is not providing the care necessary for the animals entrusted to the County’s care. Shelter medicine is far different than a normal veterinary practice. The volume of animals in need of care and the lack of any medical history for impounded animals make the establishment of policies and protocols that are shelter specific an imperative.

**Recommendation III-7:** Establish policies relative to the provision of veterinary care for the most common procedures.

The Division should establish policies relative to the provision of veterinary care for the most common procedures. Require prior managerial authorization before more significant treatment is undertaken. There are no controls relative to the extent or cost of veterinarian procedures. Establish policies relative to the provision of veterinary care inclusive of what constitutes comfort and stabilization as opposed to extensive medical procedures for stray animals taken to veterinarians for emergency treatment. Develop a standardized fee schedule with veterinary service providers for the most common procedures. Require prior managerial authorization before more significant treatment is undertaken.
Spay Neuter Program

**Recommendation III-8:** Create an efficient and aggressive Countywide spay/neuter program.

The most effective way to lower the euthanasia rate of companion animals in Kern County is synonymous with the most effective way of reducing long-term public expenditures on Animal Control – namely implement an aggressive, affordable spay/neuter program and, thus, reduce the number of unwanted pets. While enhanced adoption programs and improved facilities will help increase the adoption rate, there will always be an imbalance, relative to the number of animals needing homes, to the number of humans desiring companion animals, if the current reproduction rate is not reduced. Other communities such as Contra Costa, Alameda, and San Francisco counties have made extensive progress in this area and offer varying models from which to learn. **The bottom line is that this is the single most important program that will have the greatest economic and reduced euthanasia rate impact.**

**Recommendation III-9:** Establish extensive relationships with local non-profit groups and the City of Bakersfield to partner with the County’s spay/neuter efforts.

The reduction of companion animal euthanasia is not a problem government can solve without the ongoing participation/partnership of the non-profit animal community and concerned citizens of Kern County. The non-profit community can be an invaluable asset and can help the County attain the goal of lowering the euthanasia rate. The City of Bakersfield contains approximately half of the county’s population. No long-term solution to the County’s pet over-population problem can hope to succeed without their participation.

**Recommendation III-10:** Contact Maddie’s Fund to explore the possibility of establishing a partially funded joint public-private spay/neuter effort. (For more information, see [http://www.maddiesfund.org](http://www.maddiesfund.org))

Maddie’s Fund has helped communities across the country in their efforts to reduce the euthanasia of companion animals. Grants are available as well as valuable consultation and advice relative to ways to reduce a community’s euthanasia rate. Participation of the non-profit community is usually a prerequisite. Therefore, the collaboration with community non-profits as noted above is essential.

**Recommendation III-11:** Study the practicality of including a mobile clinic as part of the County’s long-term strategy to spay/neuter the maximum number of dogs and cats.

Mobile clinics have met with mixed success in other communities. They are relatively expensive to operate and staffing becomes a concern when the supply of available veterinarians and registered veterinary technicians must be considered. When the mobile clinic is deployed, it usually means that the regular clinic is closed. However, given the very large geographic size of Kern County, a mobile clinic should be considered as part of an overall spay/neuter strategy.
Policies: The Green Gate Issue

**Recommendation III-12:** Reconfigure the fencing and green gate to provide public access to the stray/hold areas of the facility.

The need to control public access to certain areas of the facility needs to be balanced against other needs relative to increased animal returns and adoptions and the public’s perception of the Division’s work. Other fencing and control methods should be explored with the addition of the City of Bakersfield’s new kennel.

**Recommendation III-13** Immediately fill the three vacant Animal Care Worker positions and hire up to six more Animal Care Workers over the next three years

There are currently 13 employees assigned to the Bakersfield shelter. The Division needs to fill its three vacant Animal Care Worker positions and hire six more. Even with this additional staffing the Division is likely to run short staffed when employees are on vacation, sick leave, etc. The preferred alternative, in an ideal world, would be for the Division to hire nine more workers so that all cleaning activities could be covered every day. It is clear that current staffing levels do not provide enough personnel to thoroughly clean and disinfect the animal holding areas. This is one of the primary reasons that the Division has had difficulty dealing with disease control.