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## **Shelter Refuses To Release Dog To Owners On Sunday, Dog Later Dies In Shelter**

Posted on Thursday, September 13th, 2007 at 6:00 am in [Animal Shelters & Charity](#), [News for Cats, Dogs & Owners](#), [National Dog, Cat & Pet Info](#), [Dogs](#).

By [Emily Huh](#)

A California family is mourning the death of their dog, Sasha, who died in a county animal shelter.

The 14-year-old retriever mix was found by animal control and was placed in the San Luis Obispo County Animal Shelter. She escaped during a thunderstorm, and her owners looked for two days and finally found her at the shelter.

Sasha's owners came to claim their dog on a Sunday. But shelter employees refused to let Sasha go home with her owners because under county policy it was a non-business day.

When Sasha's owners, Murial and Danny Sprouse, came back to the shelter on Tuesday morning (Monday was Labor Day), they paid the shelter fee and went to get their dog. To their horror, Sasha was dead in her kennel.

"We looked down the hallway, and there she was, obviously dead," Sprouse said. "All the dogs were barking like crazy."

She added that on Sunday when they saw Sasha, she was fine and they had desperately wanted to take her home then.

Shelter employees and volunteers said they checked on Sasha on Monday and she appeared to be fine.

The Sprouses are still uncertain why Sasha died. They are not alleging a connection between the death of their dog and the two extra days that Sasha spent in the shelter.

They simply want the shelter to change its rules, so that owners can take their pet home during non-business hours.

The animal services manager has since told his employees that they should call him if there are “special” circumstances and he will allow the animal to leave with the owner.

He said in Sasha’s case, she was a geriatric dog and was feeling stressed from being in the kennel and in the heat. Looking back on the situation, he should have released her, he said.

The manager also added that the employees working that day had not released Sasha because they were not trained in handling cash and they did not know the procedures for releasing an animal. He stated that releasing animals on non-business days takes away employees from their other responsibilities.

But now, employees are aware that animals can be released in certain situations.

Sasha’s situation has resulted in an outpouring of emails from the shelter’s volunteers who are complaining about the shelter and the safety of the animals.

They have asked supervisors to investigate the facility.

One five-year volunteer said the shelter coordinator is being asked to do too many things and this is causing some problems at the shelter.

Other volunteers said they use their own money for medical attention at times, foster sick animals in their homes for months, and drive miles to get animals to rescue groups.

The county administration will most likely hire the Humane Society of the United States to conduct a \$25,000 peer review of the shelter.

Source: [San Luis Obispo](#)

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## 25 Responses to “Shelter Refuses To Release Dog To Owners On Sunday, Dog Later Dies In Shelter”

**Sharon says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 6:52 am](#)

Proof again that you should never leave your animal alone at a shelter once he or she has been found. Make shelter employees call the police if they want you to leave. Better to get arrested than to have your dog die. Who is working in these shelters anyway? obviously people who are too stupid to find work anywhere else. There appear to be no job requirements for working with animals, not even common sense.

**nora says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 7:13 am](#)

I totally agree with you Sharon, and poor Sasha died of a broken heart (heart failure) thinking that she had been abandoned never to see her loving humans again.

**[Robert Davis](#) says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 8:02 am](#)

They should sue for animal neglect and have the county fire the person who would not release their dog. It is amazing that the parents are there to pick up the dog and they are told to come back tomorrow...screw that - I would not have left. I would have told them I want to play with her a few minutes and then run like hell out

of the facility. Let them call the police - especially when you have vet records that show this is your dog. This just makes me furious to hear how people are treated in such a manner and then people just allow it to happen to them as well as if they had no choice. BS - PEOPLE - STAND UP FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR PET!!!! You wouldn't allow this to happen to your child and these are our children.

**Sharon says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 8:11 am](#)

They wouldn't release a sick and old dog to her owners because they didn't know how to handle cash? This whole thing makes me sick.

**Lorie says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 8:55 am](#)

I agree with Nora that poor dog died of a broken heart and gave up the will to live because it thought it owners didn't want him anymore. How sad, what right do these people have to keep you from your pet they do not want them there or take care of them anyway.

**Jenny Bark says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 8:59 am](#)

I agree with all of you. They said they most likely hire the Humane Society to conduct peer review at \$25,000. What a great way to help the babies & spend the tax payers \$. Why don't they ask the tax payers who live around each & every shelter what they know & think of each shelter. That is where they get the animals & workers & ex-workers from. They don't want to hear what people have to say about them & the care they receive. No \$ of mine goes to kill shelters, except tax \$ & I can't stop that.

**Lynne says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 9:27 am](#)

I suspect most shelters are not adequately funded and rely on volunteers. Until citizens demand change, local governments will continue to ignore such problems. Heck, in my county even police, fire, and emergency medical staff are underfunded. This is the unfortunate result of a complacent population.

**sylvia says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 9:31 am](#)

From what I know the Humane Society is worse than the workers at the shelter. All these groups including PETA make tons of \$\$\$ off a naive public and never really help animals. The SPCA by me is bad but the Humane Society shelter here makes the SPCA look like the Four Seasons.

**Denise says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 11:01 am](#)

The primary objective and responsibility of a shelter is to RELEASE animals when their owners come to pick them up....what other 'responsibilities' can there be that is MORE IMPORTANT?

quote:

"He stated that releasing animals on non-business days takes away employees from their other responsibilities."

**pat says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 12:06 pm](#)

idiots idiots idiots idiots idiots.

we are surrounded by idiots.

i didn't know you had to be "trained to handle cash". six-year-olds do it all the time.

**KarlaSanDiego says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 1:23 pm](#)

I agree with all of you. Why do we continue to read these same stories of shelters euthanizing or have accidental deaths of a pet that's already been claimed??? Why?

**catmom5 says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 1:29 pm](#)

I cannot imagine the devastation this has caused the dog's owners, not to mention the poor dog. Words escape me . . .

**straysRus says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 1:51 pm](#)

Unfortunately, reclaiming animals is not the common scenerio around open door/kill shelters, that probably accounts for less than 3% of the responsibilities. So no, that ain't the main responsibility...sadly.

No excuse for this, lack of training is never a reason, nor is lack of contact. I agree that I would not have left without my pet, however, I regularly visit kill shelters off hours and see customers turned away. One reason? Some people are not there for reclaim as stated, but some have robbed or stolen (shelters often have high demand drugs). So for employee safety, they cannot let people in after hours.

The shelter system is underfunded, undermanned and overwhelmed. I bet no one in this thread every considered donating their time to help. It is YOUR system, folks, YOU need to get involved in any aspect possible.

Most open admission shelters have paid employees here, NONE get any of my tax dollars, therefore they have lousy hours and abilities.

**NH says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 1:55 pm](#)

Someone should pay for this horrible incident. I think the Executive Director of this shelter should be fired!

**Lynn says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 2:07 pm](#)

Whoever approved this deplorable and excruciatingly stupid policy needs to be fired.

Can you imagine....that poor dog had to have been scared out of her mind for some time before the family found her. Then FINALLY her humans came.....and left. The dog didn't understand that they were coming back. One wonders if she felt so emotionally abandoned and literally died of a broken heart.

Regardless of what it cost, sue the hell out of them. Get that axe to chop heads. Set an example loud and clear so that other shelters pay attention.

To everyone: You must: Collar and ID always kept on pet; microchip your pet; and get off your fanny and search all the shelters in your county every day. I mean it. Do NOT be content to make phone calls. What looks like a Dashund to you may be described as a Poodle to someone else. No kidding.

Last but not least, as pointed out by others, should you find your pet in the shelter, camp out, even if you

have to hide....just keep your pet in sight.

**Sharon says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 3:08 pm](#)

Shelters need to be taken away from County government and run locally. What I have found is the County officials put their relatives, girlfriends, etc in positions that they have no business in so that they can get their buddies on a government payroll. Volunteers usually end up heartbroken after weeks, months, and years of seeing animals treated like crap. The system is broken and needs to be fixed. I hope they sue somebody. Unless money is at stake, people don't care. This animal died because they wanted money to return her and couldn't even figure out what to do with it when the owners were willing to pay. NEVER LET YOUR ANIMAL OUT OF YOUR SIGHT IF FOUND AT A SHELTER! It will either die or be euthanized before you will ever be able to get it back. We are reading about this kind of thing every day!

**Anonymous says:**

[September 13th, 2007 at 8:07 pm](#)

“One five-year volunteer said the shelter coordinator is being asked to do too many things and this is causing some problems at the shelter.

Other volunteers said they use their own money for medical attention at times, foster sick animals in their homes for months, and drive miles to get animals to rescue groups.

The county administration will most likely hire the Humane Society of the United States to conduct a \$25,000 peer review of the shelter.”

WAIT! Something is OBVIOUSLY wrong here. There is a \$25,000 available for a peer review but no budget for a part-time or another full-time co-ordinator? And to pay for medical care of sick animals? Who hired and pay the knuckle headed who run the SLO shelter and the HSUS?!! Why didn't those volunteers go to the press about the shelter's incompetency? As always it takes a death to make a change. Sad.

**Carol says:**

[September 14th, 2007 at 3:04 am](#)

Oh GAD!!! This is horrible - and just because it didn't fit into their schedule or policies! I thought the shelters were supposed to CARE about the animals! Apparently NOT!!!

NOW - they're gonna have H\$U\$ do a review - AND pay them money? An organization that doesn't even RUN a SHELTER??? Am I the only one thinking this is absolutely CRAZY??? What a FARCE!!!

**Cynthia says:**

[September 14th, 2007 at 4:17 am](#)

Carol & Anonymous — exactly! How does one have a “peer” review with a political activist organization that doesn't run even ONE shelter!!! I'm sorry, what does “peer” mean again??

And \$25,000 is easily available to fund the political machine of H\$U\$, but not to pay workers or buy medicines? Really, the director of this farce needs to receive the hook. I hope the people of his district are up in arms over this, and don't settle until he's run out of town. That poor dog and family. How absolutely devastating for them, and I can imagine they must be thinking of everything they should have done instead, even though it was hardly their fault. They placed their faith in the wrong system. And many shelters are under the control of the wrong people, with the wrong objectives.

Let's support our good local shelters and show them how it should be done!

**Sylvia says:**

[September 14th, 2007 at 6:19 am](#)

Oh my God, how can those people sleep at night keeping a dog away from its owner for two days because nobody knew how to handle cash? How about not giving a damn about cash and caring about the animal - Humane Society - isn't that part of their name? How is this humane? Sometimes rules are just stupid and need to be ignored - common sense is in short supply.....as is compassion - my heart goes out to Sasha's owners

**Sharon says:**

[September 14th, 2007 at 7:31 am](#)

Humane Society is an oxymoron. They are another group who cares about nothing but money and self-perpetuation.

**pork chop says:**

[September 14th, 2007 at 12:17 pm](#)

Well one thing is for sure.. The HSUS KNOWS how to handle cash and lots of it.. even though they run NO shelters.. what a waste of \$\$\$ Taxpayers .. rise up and tell your county NO.. no HSUS.. what good will that do? try Nathan Winograd No Kill Solutions instead. under his ideas that dog would have been home with the owners THAT DAY.. This is disgusting.. "how to handle cash"?? hmm you take the \$\$ .. you out it in a drawer and you go home.. how much could it have been?/ or better yet.. get the name and address.. let the dog go without paying and collect later.. WHO CARES.. money vs dog reunited.. you choose.. as was said in Forest Gump.. Stupid is as Stupid Does.. and throwing money at the H\$U\$ will NOT help.. but hiring some sensible people would.... ever wonder why she wasn't released.. Sunday.. Hoiliday.. mo' money.. mo' money.. and a lousy way to earn it..

I don;t believe in lawsuits BUT this would surely be an exception.

**Rose says:**

[September 14th, 2007 at 12:33 pm](#)

If the Humane Society really gave a rats a\$\$ they would charge such an outrageous amount of money. They have over 200 MILLION in assets.

The shelter needs to hire competent people not get an animal rights extremist group to do a review.

The ones who wouldn't release the dog were cruel.

**Margarette says:**

[September 14th, 2007 at 1:41 pm](#)

Having the fox inspect the henhouse has never proven to be the best idea.

The SLO Shelter knows that they will get a list of improvements from HSUS [who by the way, sell their products & services to all shelters, never donate ] & SLO Shelter will make a big "to-do" about accomplishing all those improvements~! But it will be business as usual.

Nothing will change until you change the management for better educated personnel.

It takes a COLLABORATION of Community Services to make your & my shelter the best that they can be. Those communities that have worked to implement the programs that have been developed to change their Shelters to the new ways are willing to share their programs with other communities:

<http://www.maddiesfund.org/sitemap.html>

NATHAN WINOGRAD FROM MADDIES FUND:

<http://www.maddiesfund.org/org.....ograd.html>

Here are a few suggested readings:

<http://naiatrust.org/References.htm>

<http://www.purebredcatbreedres....vocacy.htm>

ASILOMAR ACCORDS FROM MADDIES FUND:

<http://72.14.253.104/search?q=....izations/a\>

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Read the truth about the many AR groups like HSUS & PETA & how the public is scammed into thinking that they are donating to a group that helps those sad looking animals in their ads, when in fact less than 1% of their donations ever go directly to any animal care.....it goes to their stated agenda of supporting political candidates that are creating legislation that restricts animal ownership...they want to eliminate animal ownership....that means you .....totally. And of course to their very nice salaries & perks....look up charities.<http://www.consumerfreedom.com/> When you see the name Humane Society of XXXtown on your local shelter you might think that they are associated with HSUS [which is the HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES], but HSUS are NOT associated in any way....in fact when you donate to the fine glossy ads of HSUS thinking that it is going to help the animals in your community, WRONG, your local Humane Society of XXXtown never sees any of that donation....and those local Shelters have been cheated out of their own community resources.~!!!!!!!

Let me hear from you when you have done some reading~!

mema

**Jade says:**

[September 15th, 2007 at 11:37 pm](#)

I suggest a round of phone calls and emailsto let them know why they shouldn't give that \$ to H\$U\$...

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1055 Monterey Street  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Telephone: (805) 781-5000

Toll free: (800) 834-4636

[http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Contact\\_Us.htm](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Contact_Us.htm)

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