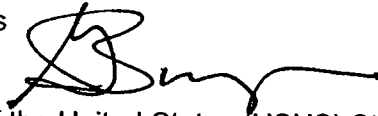


# Memorandum



**DATE:** September 27, 2004

**TO:** Honorable Alex Penelas, Mayor  
Honorable Chairperson Barbara Carey-Shuler, Ed.D.  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** George M. Burgess  
County Manager 

**SUBJECT:** Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) Study on Miami-Dade Animal Shelter

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The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the County Manager's Office (CMO) together commissioned the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) to conduct a peer review and assessment of the Miami-Dade Animal Shelter. Since we only received the complete package from the HSUS late last week, staff has not had sufficient time to review all the recommendations. However, there has been so much interest in its findings that I want to make sure each of you receives a package. We also have received several requests for copies from local animal organizations and activists, therefore these reports will be made available at [www.miamidade.gov](http://www.miamidade.gov) so that interested parties can have access to them. Attached for your review is the completed HSUS study.

The County's Performance Improvement Division in the Office of Strategic Business Management performed its own review (also attached) which focused on best practices and organizational placement within the County organization. Based on that internal review, as you know, the 2004-05 Adopted Budget takes the animal services function out of the Miami-Dade Police Department, creating a new Animal Services Department and increasing its budget by 21 percent. With the Board's approval of this recommendation at the second Budget Hearing last Thursday, I will begin a nationwide recruitment for a director for the department.

The HSUS review focused primarily on the conditions of the shelter, the procedures and practices in caring for the animals and our management practices. The report is technical and detailed and meant as a tool for the shelter staff to move forward and make necessary improvements. This report is meant to be the blueprint for short-term and long-term goals and accomplishments for the department and its new director.

I want to thank the Inspector General Chris Mazzella for partnering with the County in an effort to make Miami-Dade County Animal Services a better organization. And I thank the HSUS for such a thorough and professional review.

#### Attachments

cc: Chris Mazzella, Inspector General  
Robert Parker, Director, Miami-Dade Police Department  
Krista Hughes, Humane Society of the United States

**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES™**

*2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037  
202-452-1100 ■ [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org)*

**THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES  
ANIMAL SERVICES  
CONSULTATION PROGRAM**

**MIAMI-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT  
ANIMAL SERVICES UNIT**

**Miami, FL**

**The Humane Society of the United States  
2100 L Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037**

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**September 2004**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 2.0 TASK FORCE

## 3.0 SHELTER MAINTENANCE

3.1 SHELTER EXTERIOR/ GROUNDS/ LANDSCAPING

3.2 EXTERNAL AND DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

3.3 PARKING AREAS/ WALKWAYS

3.4 WASTE DISPOSAL/ STORAGE

3.5 BUILDING SECURITY

3.6 GENERAL SAFETY ISSUES/ OSHA

3.7 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES/ DISASTER  
PREPAREDNESS

3.8 FACILITY MAINTENANCE

## 4.0 SHELTER INTERIOR DESIGN AND LAYOUT

4.1 HUMAN SERVICE AREAS

4.11 GENERAL OVERVIEW

4.12 RECEPTION/ LOBBY

4.13 OFFICE/ DISPATCH AREAS

4.14 HANDICAPPED ACCESS

4.15 INTERNAL SIGNAGE

4.2 ANIMAL SERVICE AREAS

4.21 GENERAL OVERVIEW

4.22 VENTILATION/ TEMPERATURE (HVAC)

4.23 DOG HOUSING

4.24 CAT HOUSING

4.25 SMALL ANIMAL HOUSING

4.26 WILDLIFE/ EXOTIC HOUSING

4.27 FARM ANIMAL/ EQUINE HOUSING

4.28 ANIMAL EXAM/ MEDICAL ROOM

## 5.0 SHELTER OPERATIONS

5.1 GENERAL OPERATIONS

5.11 GENERAL OVERVIEW

- 5.12 HOURS OF OPERATION
- 5.13 TELEPHONE SYSTEM
- 5.14 COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT
- 5.15 GENERAL RECORD KEEPING/ SHELTER STATISTICS
- 5.16 INCOMING ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION AND PROCEDURES
- 5.17 LOST AND FOUND PROCEDURE
- 5.18 JOB DESCRIPTIONS
- 5.19 STAFF UNIFORMS
- 5.2 ANIMAL CARE AND HANDLING
  - 5.21 DOG/ CAT CARE
  - 5.22 OTHER ANIMAL CARE
  - 5.23 ANIMAL HANDLING

## **6.0 VETERINARY/ HEALTH ISSUES**

- 6.1 GENERAL SHELTER MEDICINE/ HEALTH CARE
- 6.2 DISEASE CONTROL AND SANITATION
- 6.3 ISOLATION AND SEPARATION
- 6.4 FEEDING PROTOCOLS
- 6.5 INCOMING ANIMAL EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS
- 6.6 VACCINATION PROTOCOLS
- 6.7 STERILIZATION SERVICES
- 6.8 VETERINARY SERVICES/ CONTRACTS/ RELATIONS
- 6.9 ZOOZOSES

## **7.0 EUTHANASIA**

- 7.1 SELECTION CRITERIA
- 7.2 EUTHANASIA PAPERWORK
- 7.3 METHODS
- 7.4 CARCASS DISPOSAL
- 7.5 EUTHANASIA ROOM/ ENVIRONMENT
- 7.6 EUTHANASIA TECHNICIANS/ TRAINING



## **8.0 ADOPTIONS**

- 8.1 SELECTION CRITERIA/ BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENTS**
- 8.2 ADOPTION PROCESS AND POLICIES**
- 8.3 ADOPTION FOLLOW-UP/ COMPLIANCE**
- 8.4 COMMUNITY PLACEMENT PARTNERS**
- 8.5 FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT**

## **9.0 COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

- 9.1 PROMOTION/ SOCIAL MARKETING**
- 9.2 VOLUNTEERS**
- 9.3 HUMANE EDUCATION**
- 9.4 RELATIONS AND COLLABORATION WITH AREA ANIMAL SHELTERS/ ORGANIZATIONS**
- 9.5 CUSTOMER/ CLIENT SERVICE**
- 9.6 WEB SITE**
- 9.7 FERAL CAT ISSUES**

## **10.0 FIELD SERVICES/ ANIMAL CONTROL**

- 10.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW**
- 10.2 OFFICER SAFETY**
  - 10.21 OPERATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND FIELD OFFICER TRAINING**
  - 10.22 COMMUNICATIONS/ DISPATCH**
  - 10.23 EQUIPMENT/ VEHICLES/ UNIFORMS**
  - 10.24 LAW ENFORCEMENT BACKUP AND RELATIONS**
- 10.3 EMERGENCIES/ AFTER HOURS**
- 10.4 FORMS/ RECORD KEEPING**
- 10.5 OFFICER ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES**
- 10.6 ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCE REVIEW**
- 10.7 LICENSING/ MANDATORY REGISTRATION**
- 10.8 DOGFIGHTING**
- 10.9 INVESTIGATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT**
- 10.10 FIELD SERVICES/ ANIMAL CONTROL CONTRACTS**
- 10.11 WILDLIFE ISSUES**

## **11.0 GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

**11.1 ARTICULATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL VISION, MISSION, AND PLANNING**

**11.2 INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

**11.21 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**11.22 OPERATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND TRAINING**

**11.23 COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS SYSTEM**

**11.3 ANIMAL CONTROL ADVISORY BOARD/ COMMITTEE**

**11.4 DEFINITION AND RECOGNITION OF AGENCY'S ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY**

## **12.0 HUMAN RESOURCES**

**12.1 PERSONNEL/ POLICIES**

**12.11 STAFFING LEVELS**

**12.2 STAFF TURNOVER**

## **13.0 FINANCIAL ISSUES**

**13.1 GENERAL FINANCIAL ISSUES**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) believes that the objective examination of shelter procedures and operations is best accomplished through independent consultations. The HSUS is the nation's largest animal protection organization, and is uniquely positioned to evaluate the effectiveness of local animal care and control services, offer recommendations, and provide assistance with implementation.

Recognizing the need within the animal sheltering community for professional, standardized analysis, The HSUS has developed the professional Animal Services Consultation (ASC) program, a service created to effectively assist local animal care and control agencies (both municipal and nonprofit) in managing their way to success.

In December 2003, The HSUS was asked by the Miami-Dade County Manager's Office and Office of the Inspector General to provide a proposal for a review of the Miami-Dade Police Department Animal Services Unit. The HSUS submitted a proposal for a comprehensive review and evaluation of its current operations, services, and programs with an eye to the future. A site visit was conducted June 15-18, 2004.

Each HSUS ASC is tailored to meet the client's needs by utilizing a team of experts to conduct an assessment of services and suggest feasible solutions, as may be necessary, to a wide breadth of problems. To assist Miami-Dade County, The HSUS utilized a team with specific expertise within the field of animal care and control. The team for this consultation included the following HSUS representatives:

**Kim Staton, HSUS Consultant**  
*Shelter Facilities and Operations*

**Karen Terpstra, HSUS Consultant**  
*Shelter Facilities and Operations*

**John Snyder, HSUS Senior Director, Companion Animals and Equine Protection**  
*Management and Administration*

**Jim Boller, HSUS Consultant**  
*Field Services and Animal Control*

**Krista Hughes, HSUS Assistant Manager, Animal Services Consultation Program**  
*Site Coordinator/ Report Development*

Along with this final report, we have compiled a reference materials binder, which contains sample forms, relevant articles, studies, and other information to help further support our recommendations. Footnotes marked by an asterisk (\*) are resources that have been provided separately along with additional books, CD ROMs and catalogs.

**Notes:**

The HSUS team would like to applaud Miami-Dade County for taking this initial step towards improving services for the people and animals in Miami-Dade County. We are optimistic that positive change will result from the collaboration of those overseeing, working for, and working with Miami-Dade Police Department Animal Services Unit.

Included in this report are many recommendations, some requiring substantial change, and we understand that it can be overwhelming. To start, we suggest reviewing the report several times and forming a task force in order to prioritize the recommendations (See section 2, Task Force). Some of the recommendations can be implemented immediately with just a change in process, while others may take months or even years. It will be an ongoing process.

By nature our reports focus on areas that need improvement, but the observations throughout this report are not meant to be critical; rather they should be viewed as a snapshot of where the agency is and used as a departure point to where management wants it to go. In addition, we do our best to highlight areas that are commendable. Unfortunately, some agencies that have received evaluations have been unfairly besieged due to individuals and groups taking observations and recommendations out of context and using them to target individual shelter staff. Some of the issues discussed in this report are not uncommon in sheltering agencies around the country, and The HSUS urges those reading the report to use it as a tool for positive change, not a weapon.

We would like to add that the observations and recommendations made in this report should in no way be used to lay blame at the feet of Miami-Dade Police Department Animal Services Unit staff members. Although every shelter has its mix of marginal, satisfactory and exceptional employees, they are most often working with little or no oversight, training and equipment, and yet are still getting the job done. It is the responsibility of the county, in conjunction with shelter management to make the suggested changes.

Please note that hereafter the Miami-Dade Police Department Animal Services Unit will be referred to as "MDPASU." The HSUS would like to thank the people involved with Miami-Dade County and MDPASU for their assistance and cooperation with The HSUS ASC team. We have been extremely pleased to assist in their efforts to improve programs and services for both the animals and humans within their community, and remain available as a continued resource in the coming months. With that in mind, The HSUS respectfully presents the following report.

## 2.0 TASK FORCE

The development of a task force to review this document and create a working plan of action is a very important step to take. After reading this report, the task force should recommend priorities and action items with due dates. The document the task force develops then becomes MDPASU's working document to implement the recommendations in this report. The structure of people selected for this task force is critical.

This process will help MDPASU prioritize and plan for the future, with not only this report, but with other changes and plans for MDPASU down the road. This process has been used successfully with other agencies that have received evaluations.

The recommendations included in this report are based on what we believe are best practices in the field of sheltering. Miami-Dade County officials and MDPASU management, in concert with the task force, should prioritize and weigh each recommendation against available resources and decide whether or not that recommendation is to be implemented as-is or used as a departure point for what is more realistic for them.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Put together a committee of no more than seven members that are willing to commit up to four months and who work well in group settings. It is important to appoint unbiased individuals to the task force. The task force should include the following:
  - A shelter staff representative
  - A veterinarian with a strong shelter medicine background
  
- Other members may include:
  - An individual with legal strength
  - Public health officials
  - City budget officials
  - Community members with expertise in short-term and strategic planning
  - Those interested in animal welfare, but without personal agendas
  
- ✓ If the agenda is not moving forward due to disagreement, strongly consider hiring a professional facilitator.
  
- ✓ Convey the responsibilities of the task force, which include:
  - Reviewing the report
  - Using a form, divide up and prioritize each recommendation <sup>1</sup>

This process allows the agency, through the task force, to evaluate the recommendations

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1 Task force matrix example

as they relate to each other.

- ✓ Develop a reporting mechanism so the recommendations of the task force can be presented and MDPASU can begin to implement the changes.
- ✓ Create written guidelines outlining expected behavior and conduct for task force members. These guidelines should include stipulations if meetings are missed.
- ✓ A memorandum of understanding (MOU) should be created that outlines the above sections and the role and outcome of the taskforce. All task force members should be required to sign the MOU so it is understood that the task force is to be a professional undertaking.

## **3.0 SHELTER MAINTENANCE**

### **3.1 SHELTER EXTERIOR/ GROUNDS/ LANDSCAPING**

#### **Observations:**

The original building was built in 1973 and the West Wing was added in 1985. The shelter exterior and grounds were not in bad condition but there was a lack of cleaning, litter removal, and landscaping.

There was an abundance of litter, especially cigarette butts, throughout the grounds including the front public parking lot and under the trailer located at the end of public parking area. Overflowing ashtrays and trash cans may have contributed to this problem.

The front entrance area was in need of cleaning. Although this area had to accommodate a lot of traffic every day, it was evident that keeping this area clean was not a priority. The sidewalk was dirty and discolored and The HSUS team noticed a dirty diaper that sat in the driveway in front of the entrance for the better part of a day before someone picked it up.

The front glass doors were in need of cleaning due to smudges and handprints. Understandably, it is very difficult to keep these doors clean in light of the traffic that passes through them; however, the condition of the doors indicated that they may not have been cleaned for some time. The dirty doors contributed to the overall unsanitary appearance of the main entrance area.

Landscaping outside the building was limited. There were some planted trees at the entrance of the building and some dispersed throughout the parking area.

The exterior of the shelter was in reasonably good repair for its age but needed some minor repairs and preventative maintenance. There were some areas where paint had chipped and needed to be repaired and repainted. And a significant number of the overhead lamps in the front entrance area were not working. These light fixtures were also dirty which restricted the amount of light provided.

The HSUS team was told that ground maintenance, including landscaping, was contracted through an outside source.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Assign a staff person to closely monitor the grounds and remove litter and cigarette butts on a daily basis. Although litter removal may be included by the landscaping company, it is not practical or cost effective to have an outside party come every day.
- ✓ Clean the light fixtures and replace burnt out bulbs or repair as necessary to ensure that all lights are fully operational.
- ✓ Trash cans and ashtrays should be emptied at least once daily to ensure the public has an appropriate place to discard trash items and cigarette butts. Consider purchasing

“smoker’s outpost” type cigarette butt receptacles to replace the current cans. They hide and hold hundreds of butts and won’t necessarily need emptying daily.

- ✓ Clean the front entrance glass doors at least once daily, inside and out.
- ✓ Pressure wash the sidewalk and driveway as needed to minimize the accumulation of dirt and staining. This may be as often as monthly.
- ✓ Make it a priority to keep the grounds neat and aesthetically pleasing by keeping the grounds mowed in the areas that need it, especially the parking lot area and around the mobile trailer. Adding some more shrubbery and flowers will enhance the grounds.
- ✓ Thoroughly inspect the outside of the building and repaint or repair areas in need (Also see section 3.8, Facility Maintenance).
- ✓ If MDPASU continues to contract for landscaping services, it is recommended that some of the above recommendations be outlined in the contract so these duties can be carried out appropriately.

**Discussion:**

First impressions are lasting and as visitors approach the shelter, the impression they receive should be warm, friendly and inviting. A community’s animal shelter is the heart of an animal care and protection program and facilities and grounds should be maintained so that they are attractive and welcoming to the public. The external maintenance levels of the physical building itself can be – or can appear to be – reflective of how strong and caring the internal programs are. Currently, the building’s exterior requires only minor improvements.

## **3.2 EXTERNAL AND DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE**

**Observations:**

External directional signage to MDPASU was inadequate. The HSUS team was unable to locate directional signage on any of the main roads near the shelter. However, a professionally constructed sign located by the roadway on shelter grounds could be seen from a distance. There was also a large sign above the main entrance, which was also professional and attractive.

There were several hand made signs posted on the glass front entrance doors which listed adoption hours, vaccination hours, and information about citations and civil violations. Professionally made signage at the front entrance included the shelter’s hours of operation.

Approximately 30 feet down the sidewalk to the left of the front entrance were two “receiving pets” signs directing the public to the animal receiving area. Animals were not able to be relinquished in the main lobby. The “receiving pets” signs were not easily seen from the front entrance and The HSUS team observed several members of the public standing in line at the main lobby counter to relinquish pets only to then be directed back outside after waiting in line for several minutes or more.



A Miami-Dade Police logo (a badge) was on several of the signs including at the entrance, on a large banner inside the lobby area, and on the animal control vehicles, etc. Although it appeared that the logos were similar, some said Miami-Dade Police and others said Animal Services Miami-Dade Police.

The public entrance to the parking lot was gated and during hours of operation the gates were left open. Outside of the gate were two signs both which had the agency's name, address, and hours of operation. No phone numbers were provided for after-hour emergencies, and hours for adoption and reclaim were not listed. The HSUS team saw several people come into the lobby in the morning only to be told that they would have to come back at 11 a.m. Having this information on the perimeter signs would prevent them from having to make an unnecessary trip into the building.

There was a large adopt-a-pet banner affixed to the fence as you enter the parking lot. This was a nice touch. The fence surrounding the building had several faded "bad dog" signs attached to it.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Provide directional signs (similar in quality and style to other professional municipal signage) at all major intersections off the main road.
- ✓ A logo designed specifically for the agency should be included on all signs. This will aid in brand recognition among MDPASU visitors, supporters and the general public.
- ✓ Remove the hand made signs from the front doors. Affix a small permanent sign on or near the front door including MDPASU's logo, name of the organization, various hours of operation (including adoption and reclaim), phone number and any number to call for after-hours emergencies.
- ✓ The signs outside the perimeter gate should have information directing people to alternate resources (i.e. wildlife rehabilitation, emergency veterinarians, etc.) when the shelter is closed. This sign should also have an animal control phone number for after-hour emergencies and the hours for adoption and reclaim.
- ✓ Provide signage at the front entrance area to direct those relinquishing animals to receiving. These signs should be professionally constructed and located in conspicuous areas so as not to be overlooked.
- ✓ Remove the "bad dog" signs around the perimeter fence. They give a negative connotation instead of fostering the idea that MDPASU is a place to adopt a loving family pet.

**Discussion:**

An animal control facility is often the first place people seek when they need advice about any animal related situation. Not only is it important that people be able to easily locate the facility, but there should be instructions on what to do when the facility is closed, so that people do not abandon their animals out of frustration. Exterior signage should be designed and installed with

the intention of directing and welcoming shelter visitors, and highlighting the main entrance area.

### 3.3 PARKING AREAS/ WALKWAYS

#### **Observations:**

The main parking area provided three handicapped parking spaces and close to fifty regular spaces. A staff parking area located on the East side of the building provided another seven regular spaces and two additional handicapped spaces. There was access to the sidewalk via a ramp adjacent to the handicapped spaces in the main parking lot.

The number of parking spaces designated for staff was inadequate given the number of staff at work at any given time. Consequently, many staff parked in the main parking lot. During the site visit many cars were parked next to the curbs or on grassy areas since the parking lot was often full. The HSUS team did notice some animal control vehicles parked in the main parking lot.

Most animal control vehicles were parked on the West side of the building, which was the back side of the facility and closed to the public. The number of spaces was adequate given the number of vehicles in the fleet. The mobile animal clinic (MAC) unit was also parked in this area.

During the site visit, law enforcement vehicles were often parked directly in front of the main entrance to an extent that the covered driveway was blocked (See Fig. 1). This prevented the public from being able to use the driveway as a “drop off” for people and animals.

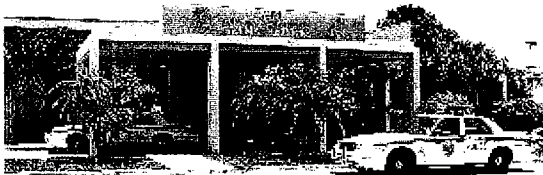


Figure 1

Although a few cracks existed in the pavement, the condition of the parking lots was relatively good. The parking lot did need re-striping; however, The HSUS team was told that re-striping had already been scheduled.

The parking lot had adequate lighting with six light poles plus one directional light pole at the West end of the parking lot.

There were no clearly marked fire zones. Customers and staff appeared to park any place they could find room.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ If/when space allows, increase the number of parking spaces, both handicapped and standard. This applies to both public and staff parking areas. Refer to [www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm#4](http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm#4) for information regarding the ratio of standard parking spaces to handicapped spaces that is required.
- ✓ If parking in the main parking lot, require that staff and volunteers park in the spots furthest away from the building entrance. The parking spots closest to the building should be left open for the public who are often dropping off or picking up animals.
- ✓ Law enforcement vehicles should be parked in a designated location other than directly in front of the main entrance. The covered drop off area should be left open for visitors.
- ✓ The parking lot should be striped to indicate restricted parking areas such as fire zones. Local ordinances should be referenced to ensure compliance with fire lanes and other parking related restrictions. Restricted parking areas should be enforced.

### **3.4 WASTE DISPOSAL/ STORAGE**

**Observations:**

MDPASU did not have standard operating procedures (SOP) regarding the use of the dumpster or when trash cans inside the facility were to be emptied. According to a staff member, the dumpster is emptied once daily. Trash cans in the shelter were emptied as needed, usually three to four times per day, which appeared adequate. The person who fills the trash can is responsible for taking it to the dumpster.

The dumpster was located on the West side of the shelter near the animal control vehicle parking area out of public view. During the site visit upon initial inspection, there was no strong odor emanating from the dumpster but there was trash on the ground surrounding it. Upon later inspection of this area, there was a rather strong, offensive odor that could be smelled about ten feet away from the dumpster.

Although there did seem to be adequate storage space in the facility, several areas were being used to store unused equipment. At the far end of the West Wing, the hallway was partly filled with stainless steel cages, an old dishwasher, and file cabinets (See Fig. 2). Outside the West Wing in the grass were several truck toppers that appeared to be damaged and unusable. Also, many items that did not appear to be used were stored outside by the crematorium.



Figure 2

MDPASU did have extensive, detailed SOPs regarding the storage and disposal of biohazardous waste including spent sharps. The veterinary clinic, euthanasia room, and vaccination clinic had small biohazardous containers which were used for spent sharps until they are moved into larger trashcan-style containers that were kept locked and secured on the West side of the building. There was a list of staff that was trained on the proper storage and disposal of biohazardous materials; and staff that was not trained was not authorized to handle the designated containers, which is appropriate and commendable.

Most of the food used by MDPASU was donated by various sources. It was stored separately in a room across from M Ward and also in a storage room across from the dip tank area to help prevent rodents or water from causing damage. Rodent and insects did not appear to be causing problems in the food storage areas; however, The HSUS team was told that rats are a problem in the facility.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Although storage space did not appear to be a problem, it is important to continually evaluate the need for items stored throughout the facility, such as those mentioned, and discard the items not being used on a regular basis.
- ✓ Trash surrounding the dumpster should be picked up daily by a designated person.
- ✓ Close the lid of the dumpster to minimize odors that are inevitable in an animal shelter.
- ✓ In order to minimize food spoilage, food should be rotated regularly and be used on a "first in, first out" basis.
- ✓ To reduce rodent and insect damage, store all food in Rubbermaid-type bins or rubber garbage cans with sealed lids. The lids should be used consistently to reduce infestation. If rodents continue to be an issue, contact The HSUS for the most humane way of ridding the building of rodents.
- ✓ A periodic inventory of all food stores should be performed and broken bags, cracked cans and spoiled food removed.

### 3.5 BUILDING SECURITY

#### **Observations:**

MDPASU did not have SOPs regarding building security. The shelter did not have an alarm system or a functional camera system. Both cameras, one which was located in the lobby, were operational at one time but were not repaired when they malfunctioned.

The front gates were shut at closing time but The HSUS team was told that there is generally someone on the premises at all times. The HSUS team is unsure how much night lighting was provided around the outside of the building especially the West Wing and N Ward.

The South Dade facility had an alarm system in addition to a front gate that was locked upon closing to help prevent burglaries.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop and implement SOPs for building security including opening and closing procedures and eventually alarm procedures. This will help provide consistency and avoid critical oversights such as doors being left unlocked or the front gate being left open.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Consider having alarm and camera systems installed to ensure a higher level of security. Possible security concerns include someone trying to steal an animal instead of paying the charges, someone trying to steal a pit bull or someone trying to steal controlled drugs.
- ✓ Advise staff on how to respond to dangerous situations such as a security breach. This should also be included in the SOPs.
- ✓ Ensure that the outside of the building is well-lit. Install additional lighting if needed.

#### **Discussion:**

Animal shelters are an easy target since many of them store controlled drugs and have animals that may be targets of theft as well. Vandalism is also a problem for many shelters. Having adequate outside lighting and good security will deter most people.

### 3.6 GENERAL SAFETY ISSUES/ OSHA

#### **Observations:**

Safety issues were not observed to be a top priority during the site visit. Although the HSUS team did not see staff being blatantly unsafe, more could be done to ensure staff and public safety.

The HSUS team contacted the Miami-Dade County Office of Safety and was told that safety guidelines were based on Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines even when not required to be, which is commendable. Each county department is assigned its

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2 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "13 Steps to a More Secure Shelter," July/August 2001\*

own safety officer or representative and they all follow the same guidelines set by the county. The police department had a safety/risk management officer; however, The HSUS team was told by shelter staff that this officer does not have much communication or involvement with the shelter.

“The Miami-Dade County Safety Manual” was authored by the Office of Safety Loss Prevention Unit of Miami-Dade County in June 2001. Although the manual was quite extensive and good, it did not speak well to the specific dangers/risks associated with shelter work such as animal bites, scratches, etc. The manual included information on various reports to use depending on the nature and severity of an injury or accident.

During the site visit, decibel readings were taken in several of the animal housing areas to measure noise levels. The highest readings in the areas monitored were 111 decibels in F Ward, 105 decibels in N Ward, 83 decibels in A Ward, and 102 decibels in the West Wing. Some of these levels are in the harmful to dangerous range, which is normal for a shelter setting; however, the lack of personal protection equipment (PPE), such as earplugs was the concern.

Other PPE concerns were the lack of eye protection and with exception of the veterinary staff, the lack of use of gloves to prevent or minimize contact with potential zoonotic pathogens. The HSUS team did see kennel staff wearing rubber boots during cleaning.

MDPASU did have a material safety data sheets (MSDS) notebook available to staff; however, it was incomplete and missing MSDS for chemicals in use at the shelter. The HSUS team was told that the book was kept in the captain’s secretary’s office and The HSUS team also saw some MSDS posted on the walls in various areas of the building.

There was no official safety training program for staff but ideally they do receive on-the-job training under veteran staff and the shelter manager before being able to perform the functions of their job position. However, The HSUS team was told by key staff that some newer employees had received no direct training. In addition, The HSUS team was told that safety videos are available, which cover animal handling, chemicals, and lifting; however, they are not consistently shown to new employees.

During the site visit secondary containers were not always labeled and in some cases mislabeled. For example, a phenol disinfectant was in a container marked “bleach” and another container of A-33 was not marked at all. A container that was marked “flea and tick dip” actually contained Virkon S disinfectant. It was unclear how long ago many of the disinfectants had been mixed, which is important because some disinfectants lose their effectiveness if exposed to light or after a certain amount of time. Chemicals were being stored in the electrical supply room, which could be a safety hazard.

During the site visit possible tripping hazards included wet floor signs not being used consistently when they should have been; exits/entrances from one animal housing area to another with steps that were not marked; hoses left stretched out on the floor, and drains not being properly covered.

The HSUS team counted four eyewash stations throughout the shelter, which was excellent, and two first aid kits. The first aid kit in the dispatcher's office had only limited supplies such as alcohol swabs, band aids, etc.

The South Dade facility was well equipped with appropriate safety equipment including three fire extinguishers, a first aid kit, and an eye wash station.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ MDPASU leadership should call upon the department's safety officer or representative to conduct a thorough safety audit of the shelter. This will help to identify areas that may be problematic and can provide guidance on measures needed to bring the agency's safety program into full compliance with any local and federal guidelines.
- ✓ Establish an internal safety committee to identify potential safety risks at the facility and make recommendations to appropriate officials on how to resolve or minimize these risks. The safety committee should review job related accidents on a monthly basis and make a determination about whether or not the accident could/should have been avoided and if any violation of existing policy may have caused or contributed to the accident. This process will also help the committee identify needs for additional training and/or equipment.
- ✓ MDPASU management should do a monthly safety insurance walkthrough and note any safety concerns. A checklist developed by MDPASU could be useful.<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ "Wet Floor" signs should be used consistently where wet floors exist to help avoid potential falls and injuries by the public and staff. This may require the purchase of additional signs so that any area where water or urine may be on the floor, a sign is in place.
- ✓ Apply brightly colored OSHA warning tape on the steps leading in to or out of animal housing areas with unmarked steps. In addition, signs stating "Step Up," "Step Down," or "Watch Your Step" should be affixed on the wall next to these doors.
- ✓ Increase the number and availability of first aid kits. At minimum, there should be a fully equipped kit in the West Wing, the wards area, the euthanasia room, the veterinary clinic, behind the front counter, and the receiving area. Each first aid kit should contain a minimum of band aids of various sizes and shapes, alcohol swabs, topical antibiotic ointment, tweezers, sterile gauze pads, and betadine or iodine antibacterial swabs.
- ✓ MDPASU management must determine which hazards present in the shelter require PPE and then require staff to use it.<sup>4</sup> This should be noted in the SOPs. According to OSHA you must also train employees required to wear the equipment to do the following:

- Use PPE properly

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3 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Safety Insurance Checklist," January/February 1999\*

4 OSHA Fact Sheet, Personal Protective Equipment

- Be aware of when PPE is necessary
  - Know what kind of PPE is necessary
  - Understand the limitations of PPE in protecting employees from injury
  - Don (put on), adjust, wear and doff (take off) PPE
  - Maintain PPE properly
- ✓ Continually evaluate the sound levels in the animal housing areas, and require earplugs for staff during cleaning and feeding to stay in compliance with OSHA regulations. The importance of policies regarding ear protection should be stressed to all staff on a regular basis.
- ✓ Secondary containers need to be properly labeled with the full name of the materials in the container, the concentration if a solution or mixture, and the date. Proper labeling of containers containing chemicals is essential to health and safety.
- ✓ Review placement of the eyewash stations throughout the facility and ensure that they are placed where appropriate. According to OSHA, “where the eyes or body of any person may be exposed to injurious corrosive materials, suitable facilities for quick drenching or flushing of the eyes and body shall be provided within the work area for immediate emergency use.”

MDPASU should maintain an “Employee Right to Know” station, which should be accessible to all staff at all times. This should include:

- MSDS
  - Accident report forms
  - Where to seek emergency medical treatment
  - Safety hazard reporting and maintenance request forms
- ✓ A safety training plan must be developed, and followed up, with ongoing instruction and supervisory commitment to maintain safety as a priority. Existing staff as well as new employees should go through this training. Proper documentation of all training should be maintained in the employee’s personnel file.
- ✓ Types of safety training to be provided at the time of hire should include topics such as:
- Animal handling
  - Proper lifting
  - How to complete an accident report
  - How to report a maintenance problem
  - Where to go for emergency medical treatment
  - How to safely perform an animal decapitation
  - Zoonoses prevention



- ✓ Safety and training information provided to new employees could be incorporated into a “Safety Training Manual.” This manual may include:
  - How to read an MSDS
  - Location of the “Right to Know” station
  - How to use the security system
  - Locations of emergency exits<sup>5</sup>
  - Locations and use of safety equipment such as eye wash stations and fire extinguishers
  - Proper secondary labeling of hazardous materials
  - Emergency evacuation procedures
  - Use of PPE
  - Zoonoses transmission and prevention
  
- ✓ Consider purchasing the Animal Care Training program.<sup>6</sup> This comprehensive training program includes a number of training videos as well as teaching guides and tests. This would prevent the need for having to develop your own program from the ground up.
  
- ✓ There are additional safety resources available through the Internet. Examples include:
  - MSDS Online: <http://www.msds-online.com>
  - Cornell University: <http://msds.pdc.cornell.edu/msdssrch.asp>
  - OSHA: <http://www.osha.gov>

**Discussion:**

According to OSHA, state and local government workers are excluded from Federal coverage under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. Some states have developed and operate their own complete job safety and health programs which are approved and monitored by OSHA; however, according to OSHA’s Web site, Florida has not done so. States without OSHA-approved state job safety and health plans, such as Florida, may voluntarily provide safety and health protection to their governmental workers. Many states without approved safety and health programs do provide coverage to public employees, to varying degrees, through programs that do not receive Federal funding and are not subject to Federal OSHA oversight.

Employee and public safety must be taken seriously in any work environment, and it is the employer’s responsibility – and legal and ethical obligation – to ensure the safety and welfare of employees and the visiting public. This is achieved by providing a safe environment, proper training, necessary equipment, and appropriate accountability protocols.

MSDS are important (easily obtained from the product supplier) documents that address a variety of work-related hazards. They detail proper procedures for working with chemicals and substances and describe: a) physical properties; b) toxicology; c) health effects; d) first aid; e) storage requirements; f) protective equipment needed; and g) spill/leak protocols.

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5 OSHA Fact Sheet, Emergency Exit Routes

6 Animal Care and Equipment Services, Inc, [www.animal-care.com](http://www.animal-care.com), 1-800-338-ACES

To some degree, noise is inevitable in all animal shelters regardless of size. However, noise not only presents a danger to staff, it also plays a significant role in forming the public’s opinion of an animal shelter. Additionally, the short- and long-term effects of noise on the animals — many of which are stress-related — must also be strongly considered.

The barking of dogs is generally the greatest source of noise, but many other factors also contribute. Advancements in the design of shelters, and the materials incorporated in them, have served to help reduce the noise in many animal care and control agencies.

OSHA has strict regulations regarding acceptable decibel levels (particularly on an extended or continual basis) for the protection of employees. Their guidelines state that when employees are exposed to 85 decibels or higher on an eight hour, time-weight average, ear protection must be available and a general hearing conservation program instituted. To deter long-term hearing loss, Consumer Reports has developed a set of recommendations, based on the findings of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders, the summary of which is shown in the following table:

Category	Decibel Level	Examples	Recommendations
Dangerous	About 110 and up	Firearms; fireworks and jet engines at close range; loud concerts or music clubs	Always use ear protection
Harmful	About 100-110	Chainsaw; snowmobile; loud aerobics class	Protect ears when exposure exceeds 15 minutes
Potentially Harmful	About 85-100	Circular saw; loud string trimmer or power blower; motorcycle at high speed; loud wedding reception; loud mower; loud vacuum cleaner	Ear protection recommended, especially for regular, lengthy exposure
Relatively Safe	About 85 or less	City traffic noise; hair dryer; electric string trimmer or mower; quiet vacuum cleaner; noisy dishwasher; noisy air conditioner	Ear protection not needed

### 3.7 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES/ DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

**Observations:**

Although MDPASU had extensive written materials, forms, OSHA requirements and listed resources pertaining to emergency procedures, there were no written guidelines instructing staff what to do in the event of an emergency.

MDPASU had a very detailed, comprehensive hurricane plan in place, which is commendable. The plan included a list of local resources to access in the event of a hurricane including

veterinarians, other shelters, rescue organizations, etc. The plan also had good tips for pet owners on what to do before, during, and after the storm, which included a list of local hotels that would take pets. The list was well researched; however, The HSUS team is unsure if the list is maintained and kept up to date.

The hurricane plan recommended euthanizing and disposing of all “surplus” animals which have legally become the county’s property and which have not been selected for foster care. The hurricane plan had provisions for staff to stay at the shelter during a hurricane. The plan made no distinction between a category I hurricane and a category V.

MDPASU did not have SOPs regarding other disaster situations that may arise in spite of the fact the shelter had been severely flooded in the past; The HSUS team was told that disaster exercise drills are not conducted.

MDPASU had at least eight fire extinguishers located throughout the shelter and most were adequately charged; however, at least two were out of the appropriate range. The fire department inspects the fire extinguishers annually, the last inspection being in August of 2003. The HSUS team did not see smoke detectors in the building during the site visit.

MDPASU did not have a plan specifically to deal with potentially violent individuals; however, given the fact that police department personnel is ever-present at the shelter, the few situations that had occurred were handled and diffused quickly. This is truly an advantage to keeping order and safety at the shelter.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ MDPASU should prepare staff for disasters at the shelter in addition to hurricanes (i.e. fire, chemical spill, flooding, tornado, nuclear disaster) including an animal evacuation plan should the need arise.<sup>7</sup> This section of the plan should include specific methods. For example, slip leashes with a snap closure should be on hand (one for at least the average number of dogs) to be used to lead dogs out to a fence (be specific) and then used as a tie-out.
- ✓ The disaster plan could be developed so that specific staff members are responsible for specific species (example: [name of staff members] responsible for cats in isolation ward, [name of staff members] responsible for dogs in N Ward, etc). This should only be a part of the plan if the animals can be safely evacuated without jeopardizing human safety.
- ✓ Change the existing hurricane plan from euthanizing “surplus” animals to making provisions for evacuation of animals to safety if necessary. Consider multiple options that may include reducing the population of animals that are not adoptable through euthanasia, identifying shelters in other parts of the state that may be willing to accept animals during an emergency, and transferring animals to foster homes.
- ✓ Update the hurricane plan to distinguish how the plan should change depending on the category of the hurricane.

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7 HSUS *Disaster Planning Manual*, “Animal Facilities”\*

- ✓ In addition to planning for a disaster at the shelter, MDPASU should prepare staff for a disaster in the community.<sup>8</sup> This plan would include other shelters, rescue groups, veterinarians, zoos, breeding facilities, boarding facilities and individual pet owners.
- ✓ Make sure the disaster plan/manual developed is dated to ensure that the forms and contact information is kept up-to-date.
- ✓ Contact the HSUS Southeast Regional Office for possible assistance in developing and implementing a disaster plan as well as for information on outside training opportunities.<sup>9</sup>
- ✓ MDPASU staff should actively participate in any drills performed by the Office of Safety and should conduct their own in-house disaster preparedness drills at least once a year to include a partial evacuation of the public, staff and animals to an area of safety. When an emergency arises, staff must be at the ready – armed with the proper knowledge, training and equipment necessary to put the plan into action. If these things have not been planned, practiced, and reviewed prior to an incident, they will be useless and the plan will not work.
- ✓ If it has not already been done, ask fire department personnel to make recommendations on number and location of fire extinguishers for the shelter.
- ✓ Train staff in the proper use of fire extinguishers.
- ✓ In addition to scheduled annual inspections, a member of the internal safety committee should be responsible for inspecting every fire extinguisher at least once monthly and have any that are not appropriately charged recharged or replaced. A log should be maintained indicating inspection dates, findings, and action taken.
- ✓ Install smoke detectors, ideally which sound an alarm at a central station so that there is fire protection during the hours that the shelter is closed. Even more ideal would be to install a sprinkler system in addition to smoke detectors.
- ✓ Take advantage of any fire drills offered by the county's fire department.
- ✓ Purchase an emergency generator in the event of a power outage.
- ✓ Even though police are present at the facility, it is important to develop an SOP on how to deal with threatening individuals. All staff and volunteers who have contact with the public should receive training on conflict resolution, how to deal with difficult customers, and diffusing volatile situations. This will minimize the number of situations that might get out of control.
- ✓ Train select staff in human first aid and CPR.
- ✓ Even though staff are on the premises at all times, install an outside lock box for the

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8 HSUS *Disaster Planning Manual*, "Community Planning"\*  
9 *Shelter Pages* 2004, Regional Offices, page 17\*

purpose of allowing fire department or other emergency officials quick, easy access to the shelter in the event that staff are not available. This box should contain keys that will allow access to the shelter and to any locked cages/kennels in which animals are housed.

**Discussion:**

Emergency situations may not fall into the category of a full scale disaster such as a hurricane. An emergency may consist of a broken water line, a gas leak, or someone falling and sustaining an injury. It is critical that staff know and understand the importance of reacting properly and professionally to these situations. One of the primary functions of having an emergency plan is to teach staff how to mitigate injuries, damage, and losses.

### 3.8 FACILITY MAINTENANCE

**Observations:**

MDPASU did not have SOPs regarding building maintenance. The MDPASU maintenance staff did perform some preventive maintenance such as changing the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) filters every two weeks. In general, it appeared that most maintenance issues had been addressed; however, some repairs were only temporary. For example, holes in some chain link kennels had been repaired by plugging them with a metal sign and wrapping wire around it. Requests for repairs were handled via an internal written requisition process. The maintenance staff was limited to minor repairs and larger jobs had to be requisitioned to the police department.

Some maintenance issues that appeared to have been overlooked included proper repair of damaged chain link fencing in some of the kennels, which could injure visitors, staff, or animals (See Fig. 3), repairing damaged epoxy where it had chipped and peeled exposing the concrete, stained ceilings from leaks, and cleaning of fans and the HVAC vents.



Figure 3

According to staff, the roof was replaced six or seven years ago and the building was repainted approximately three years ago. Berms had been built around the shelter after it flooded several years ago. Staff also indicated that the HVAC system had been replaced within the past 10 years.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop a comprehensive facility maintenance plan to include regularly scheduled inspection of all kennels, cages, floors, walls, doors, equipment, lights, and HVAC system including the vents, etc. Regular preventative maintenance will help to anticipate and address problems before they arise.
- ✓ Develop a written SOP for maintenance requests based on the process already used. This should include a protocol for staff to communicate maintenance issues to shelter management.
- ✓ If it is not already done, maintain a written log of all requested and completed repairs.
- ✓ Shelter management should walk through the facility on a regularly scheduled basis and record areas of need.
- ✓ Weekly to monthly monitoring should be conducted by shelter management to assure that the unit supervisors at the facility are attempting to correct deficiencies. This can be accomplished by comparing “work orders” with dates requested, reasons for not being completed, and observing the overall facility to see if improvements are being made.

**Discussion:**

Routine inspections will decrease the number of costly repairs that have to be initiated because something was overlooked. It is much more cost effective to have a solid preventative maintenance program in place rather than waiting until something breaks or gets worse. Prevention is a good way to save money in the long run.

## **4.0 SHELTER INTERIOR DESIGN AND LAYOUT**

### **4.1 HUMAN SERVICE AREAS**

#### **4.11 GENERAL OVERVIEW**

The shelter is poorly designed as most aging animal shelters are. The current building has outlived its usefulness as an animal shelter and is not large enough to accommodate the ever-growing needs of the human and animal population.

#### **4.12 RECEPTION/ LOBBY**

##### **Observations:**

A common entrance was used by clients who wanted to get their pets rabies vaccinated, purchase pet licenses, and those wanting to adopt. A separate entrance was used for clients who needed to relinquish stray and owned animals, which is preferable to having all services in the same area.

To the left of the front entrance inside the lobby were several snack and soda machines. To the right of the front entrance were a small shelving unit and a rotating literature display. The literature display included limited information in both English and Spanish to better accommodate the community. During the site visit the shelves held displays for tag order forms; however, five of the six displays were out of forms. The rest of the shelves were empty. The floor in the lobby was terrazzo, which was in need of cleaning.

Seating was not provided in the lobby for clients waiting for assistance. Rather there were poles with ropes guiding clients to form lines much like you would find in a movie theatre. The absence of seating in the lobby meant that customers had to stand in line, sometimes for extended periods of time, in order to get assistance. During the site visit, people who accompanied their friends/family to the shelter were seen sitting outside on a bench near the entrance to avoid having to stand in line.

The rabies vaccination clinic was located at the West end of the lobby. There were three chairs located immediately outside the clinic for patrons who were waiting to get their animals vaccinated. Several small offices were set up along the perimeter of the lobby including the lost/found office and offices for police department personnel. Public restrooms were clearly marked and located on the East end of the lobby near one of the entrances to the animal wards. Also on the East end of the lobby was a large cage for displaying animals for adoption and a lost/found board. A television was set up and during the site visit was playing scenes from Miami Animal Police and other programs on Animal Planet (See Fig. 4).



Figure 4

Signage in the lobby included a sign stating fees; however, some of the directional signage was confusing. A sign in Spanish and English directed people to form lines at the counter. Above the counter were signs stating one line for “information” and the other for “vaccinations.” A large sign posted near the ceiling stated “Welcome to the Miami-Dade Police Department Animal Services.”

During the site visit, the flow of human and animal traffic through the lobby was relatively easy with the exception of delays at the reception counter. The HSUS team did not observe overcrowding of the lobby area. The reception counter was U-shaped to accommodate customers at the rabies clinic on one side and those wanting to adopt or purchase a license on the other. The area behind the reception counter was large enough to accommodate several people and appeared reasonably organized.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Benches or chairs should be furnished inside the lobby so people can sit down while they wait for service or fill out forms.
- ✓ Although the current system of having people wait in line is acceptable, consider other systems that may improve customer service. Some shelters use a system where people take a number and wait to be called. Downsides to this system include people not knowing to take a number to get assistance or not hearing their number called. Other shelters are using a restaurant-style pager system where the client is paged when they can be helped. If either the number or pager system is used, responsible pet care displays in the lobby could be used to educate clients while they are waiting.
- ✓ Thoroughly strip and buff the floor to remove all old wax, oil, and dirt build up. It then needs to be waxed and maintained in accordance with proper care for terrazzo floors.
- ✓ See section 4.15, Internal Signage for recommendations on signage in lobby.
- ✓ Increase the educational materials in the lobby and use the shelves to neatly display them. Make sure to include information in Spanish and English regarding rabies vaccination, spay/neuter, local and state laws pertaining to animals, responsible pet ownership,



behavior and training, list of local veterinarians, and upcoming events. Neatly providing written materials to the public is an easy way to educate. Continually develop educational and informational materials for public use or take advantage of materials made available by several national organizations, including The HSUS. Be sure that they are all stamped with the name and address of MDPASU.

- ✓ Make a staff member responsible for making sure the educational literature displays and identification tag order forms are full at all times.

#### **4.13 OFFICES/ DISPATCH AREAS**

##### **Observations:**

The dispatch area was sufficient in size for two people to work at the same time and the room seemed equipped to serve its purpose. The dispatch office was located just off a central hallway in the vicinity of other staff offices. In general, the building seemed to have sufficient office space; however, the offices in the lobby afforded little privacy as they were separated by partitions approximately 7-8 feet tall. The ceilings were open to noise and distractions coming from the lobby and other nearby offices.

##### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ With current staffing levels MDPASU is utilizing the space well; however, if possible, research ways to enclose the offices in the lobby to provide these staff with work environments more conducive to productivity.

#### **4.14 HANDICAPPED ACCESS**

##### **Observations:**

Both of the kennel entrance doors accessible from the lobby were wide enough to allow wheelchair access; however, there were no automatic door openers which would make it difficult for someone in a wheelchair without assistance. During the site visit The HSUS team observed a woman in a wheelchair struggling to access one of the public animal housing areas.

The public restrooms in the front lobby were not wheelchair accessible. Overall, the shelter was very difficult to navigate in a wheelchair with some areas being inaccessible altogether. Some areas had steps rather than ramps and existing ramps did not have handrails.

##### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Ensure that the facility complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)<sup>10</sup>, which cover the construction and alteration of facilities in the private sector (places of public accommodation and commercial facilities) and the public sector (state and local government facilities).

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10 <http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm#4.1>

- ✓ Install an automatic door opener via push button to make entering the building and main kennel area easier for those with disabilities.
- ✓ Public restrooms, adoption areas, and areas where stray animals are housed should be retrofitted to allow for easy passage and navigation by someone in a wheelchair. This will require removal of steps, the installation of ramps and handrails, and the enlargement of certain areas.

**Discussion:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications.

A public entity must ensure that individuals with disabilities are not excluded from services, programs, and activities because existing buildings are inaccessible. A State or local government's programs, when viewed in their entirety, must be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. This standard, known as "program accessibility," applies to facilities of a public entity that existed on January 26, 1992. Public entities do not necessarily have to make each of their existing facilities accessible. They may provide program accessibility by a number of methods including alteration of existing facilities, acquisition or construction of additional facilities, relocation of a service or program to an accessible facility, or provision of services at alternate accessible sites.<sup>11</sup>

## 4.15 INTERNAL SIGNAGE

**Observations:**

There was limited internal signage in all areas of the building with exception of the administrative offices and front lobby.

Areas off limits to the public were mostly indicated by handmade laminated signs in poor condition (See Fig. 5). Animal housing areas were not marked to indicate what animals were housed in them but were only marked with letters A-M to indicate wards (See Fig. 6). There were professionally made signs directing people to the West Wing and wards, but most of the signs did not indicate if those areas held adoptable animals or even what type of animals they would find there.

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11 Americans With Disabilities Act, [www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/q%26aeng02.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/q%26aeng02.htm)

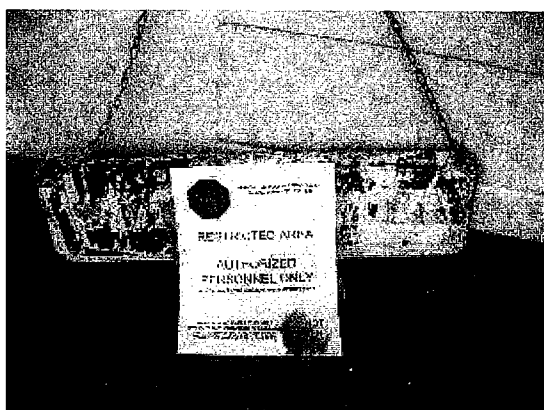


Figure 5



Figure 6

The lack of internal signage made it both difficult and confusing for the public to find animals they wished to see. During the site visit The HSUS team overheard the public constantly inquiring about where certain animals were being housed.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Provide clear signs that identify each animal housing area such as “Dog Adoption,” “Cat Adoption,” “Quarantine,” or “Sick Isolation.”
- ✓ Signs stating “Cat Adoption” and “Dog Adoption” should not only be at the entrances to these areas, but also throughout other parts of the shelter, especially in the lobby, with arrows directing the public which way to go.
- ✓ Internal directional signage should be in both English and Spanish.
- ✓ Remove the handmade signs. Those signs MDPASU wishes to keep should be replaced with professionally made signs. This will project a more professional appearance.
- ✓ Interior signage must be clear, noticeable and preferably, standardized with a common color, shape and size.
- ✓ Internal signage should be ADAAG compliant, which has requirements for character proportion and height.
- ✓ As with exterior signage, interior signs should contain the MDPASU logo to increase brand recognition.
- ✓ Consider purchasing information “stations” for things such as the “Right to Know” information, SOPs, security information, and emergency information. These “stations” are professional looking and highly visible.<sup>12</sup>

12 Sharpe Safety Supply, (SOP Station, Right to Know Center, Emergency Information Center, Security Information Center), <http://www.sharpesafety.com/catalog/product-display.php3?ID=723>

## 4.2 ANIMAL SERVICE AREAS

### 4.21 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The layout of the shelter was not conducive to minimizing stress on animals, or smooth flow of public traffic and it was poorly suited for the prevention and management of disease. This can be improved with retrofitting the existing facility; however, it will take extensive and costly changes. Some of the retrofitting recommendations may not be feasible due to building constraints that The HSUS team is unaware of.

### 4.22 VENTILATION/ TEMPERATURE (HVAC)

#### Observations:

MDPASU did not have SOPs regarding ventilation or temperature in the animal housing areas. According to information provided, there were six HVAC units mounted on the roof each with anti-spore and triple layer filters located at the returns. The lobby, staff offices, paper room, staff break room, and veterinary areas had central air conditioning and heating, with an air exchange rate of five percent per hour. A-M Wards (animal housing) had no central air conditioning or heating, but did have exhaust vents, which drew air from the rooms and out through the roof. The HSUS team is unsure if the exhaust vents are used.

The dog housing area in the main building, N Ward, consisted of kennels that were screened in and covered by a metal roof. Large floor fans kept the air circulating and were situated to blow air through the kennels and outside through the screens. One of the fans was blowing air through the kennels housing sick dogs to the kennels housing healthy dogs, which is a sure way to spread disease.

N Ward did not have any type of central heating or cooling, consequently this area remained hot and humid making it difficult for the floors to completely dry. The temperature was above the recommended temperature for comfortably housing animals; however, The HSUS team recognizes that it is difficult if not impossible to adhere to recommended temperatures in outdoor housing.

Adjacent to the N Ward were eleven small rooms (A-M Wards) that housed adult dogs and cats as well as kittens and puppies. M Ward, the only air conditioned animal housing ward, was 69 degrees with an air conditioning window unit; however, it was blowing directly on young puppies. The wall thermometer in F Ward read 86 degrees at 11:30 a.m. and 90 degrees at 3:30 p.m., which were unacceptable temperatures for animal housing. Several of the wards had thermometers attached to the walls; however, most of them were not working. The HSUS team is unsure if the temperatures are monitored and what steps are taken if the rooms become too hot.

A-M Wards had doors on either end of the rooms. The doors to A (euthanasia room) and M Wards were kept shut because these two rooms had window air conditioning units. The doors to all the other wards were kept open to allow for ventilation. Large wall fans blew air from one side of the rooms out the doors into N Ward. An area of concern was air blowing from rooms

housing sick animals out to the N Ward which housed adoptable dogs.

The West Wing was built as an addition to the main building to house dogs. These kennels were indoor/outdoor and were adequately ventilated when the guillotine doors were raised. However, when the guillotine doors were down, ventilation was restricted. The West Wing guillotine doors were left open during the site visit except during the cleaning process so this was not a significant problem; however, this could be a problem during colder months if/when the doors needed to be kept closed to help keep the building warm.

During the site visit The HSUS team only noticed one floor fan in the center walkway for one side of the West Wing. The opposite side of the building did not have a fan. The building did have large built-in fans near the ceiling, which pull air out of the building; however, they were dirty and rusted and staff advised that they are not often used (See Fig. 7).



Figure 7

The fans and vents that were observed needed to be cleaned. Dirty vents can contribute directly to the spread of disease throughout the shelter.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ At minimum, for the time being, continue to use fans in animal housing areas that are not air conditioned; however, it is imperative that fans are not blowing from areas housing sick animals to areas housing healthy animals (See section 6.3, Isolation and Separation).
- ✓ Fans and air vents should be regularly cleaned. Vents, air ducts and filters should be cleaned and/or replaced monthly at minimum.
- ✓ The air from fans and from air conditioning units should not blow directly on any animals. Adjust them accordingly.
- ✓ If in need, repair the wall fans (near the ceiling) in the West Wing and use them continuously to help keep air circulating. The exhaust vents in A-M Wards should also be run continuously. To be effective, air ventilation systems must be run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.

- ✓ Except for during cleaning and inclement weather, leave the guillotine doors in the West Wing open to allow for ventilation.
- ✓ If a new facility is going to be built within the next five years, contact The HSUS for recommendations for the HVAC system in the new building.
- ✓ If a new facility is not going to be built within the next five years, retrofit the animal housing areas (with the exception of the West Wing and N Ward) with a forced-air HVAC system if possible as this is the best system for an animal shelter.

Although MDPASU must consider the financial aspect of air conditioning the animal housing areas, The HSUS team recommends that the air be cooled both for the comfort of the animals, the staff and the visiting public. While a lack of air conditioning is not fatal to most canine and feline animals, cooling and drying inside air during hot weather conditions can minimize animals' discomfort and stress and thereby the incidence of disease.

- ✓ If air conditioning is installed, maintain an ambient air temperature between 68 and 72 degrees in animal housing areas. Install lockable thermostat covers to minimize the changing of temperatures in animal housing areas. Only a few people should have keys and must understand the importance of keeping the animal housing areas at a comfortable temperature for the animals.
- ✓ It is critical to disease control to provide the following air changes per hour:
  - Public areas: a minimum of six to eight changes per hour
  - Animal holding areas: twelve to fifteen times per hour (if HVAC is installed)
  - Veterinary areas: a minimum of six to eight changes per hour
- ✓ Once temperature can be controlled, inexpensive temperature/humidity monitors are available in many electronic stores, and should be purchased and rotated to monitor animal housing, food storage, and euthanasia areas. Temperature and humidity readings should be recorded in a log twice daily, and fluctuations or inconsistencies should be brought to the attention of management.

**Discussion:**

A perfectly designed building is only as effective as the air circulation and ventilation employed. The majority of diseases in a shelter setting are airborne, and when these diseases linger or are spread to other populations in the facility – the shelter will become “sick.” There is no amount of cleaning that will prevent this problem.

The inability to control temperature in the shelter may also very well be a contributor to serious disease problems. Although there are advantages to having outdoor or open-air kennels, there are also disadvantages such as not being able to eliminate moisture. Moisture can contribute to the development and spread of certain diseases such as coccidiosis, an intestinal parasite than can cause diarrhea and lethargy.

Heating, cooling, and humidity control systems should be serviced regularly as part of a facility's

preventive maintenance program. These are crucial, not only to provide for the animals' health and comfort, but also for that of the staff and visiting public. A means of circulating the air must always be in operation in all animal housing areas.

## **4.23 DOG HOUSING**

### **Observations:**

There were 29 large narrow side by side kennels in N Ward measuring approximately 20 feet by 4 feet. They did not have guillotine doors dividing them into two sides like the West Wing kennels (See Fig. 8).

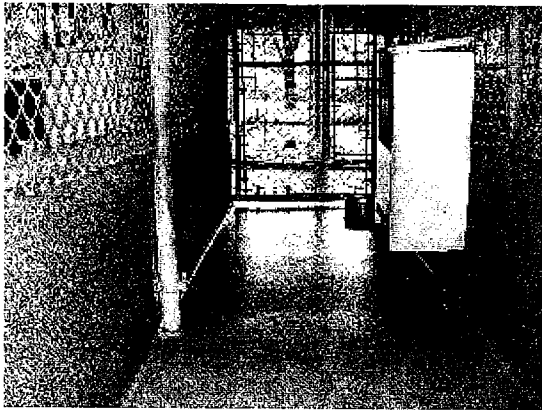


Figure 8

The tops of the kennels were not covered, except for a few to prevent escape by animals that may climb. In N Ward, the kennels were separated by a solid wall approximately two to three feet in height and chain link extending up towards the ceiling. This allowed the dogs to have nose to nose contact, which increased the potential of disease being spread. This also allowed the dogs to see each other, which increases stress.

The floors in N Ward were made of a textured epoxy, which is preferred flooring if well maintained; however, it had started to chip and peel significantly in several places. The bare concrete was visible in some areas.

The drainage system in N Ward consisted of a trench drain set outside one side of the kennels that ran the entire length of the kennels. This required staff to wash debris out of kennels and then down the trench drain past the other kennels into the final drain where the waste was discharged into the main sewage line (See Fig. 9).



Figure 9

The West Wing had two main rows of kennels separated by an eight to ten foot walkway, which did allow the dogs to see each other from across the walkway. Each individual kennel was separated from the one next to it by a solid wall that was high enough to prevent nose to nose contact and visual contact between animals, which is preferred (See Fig. 10).

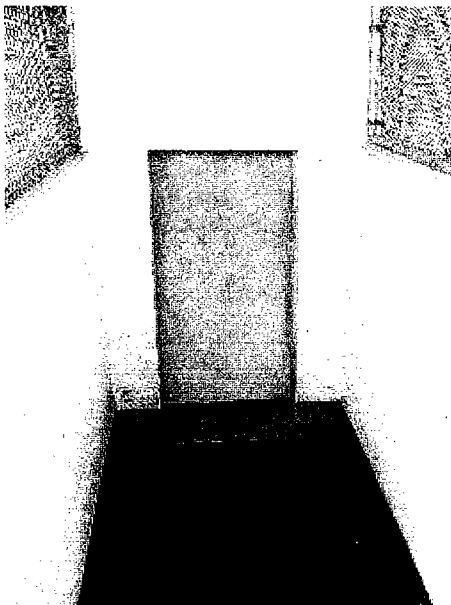


Figure 10

Each individual kennel in the West Wing had two sides separated by a guillotine door, which makes the cleaning process much more effective and efficient. Both sides of each kennel measured approximately 4 by 6 feet.



There was a common drain running down the middle of each row of kennels underneath the guillotine doors. In each kennel this drain was covered by a metal plate that was set about a half an inch to an inch off the floor (See Fig. 11). In theory this allows debris to wash underneath the metal plate and into the drain but prevents the dog from stepping in the drain or having access to it (See section 6.2, Disease Control and Sanitation).

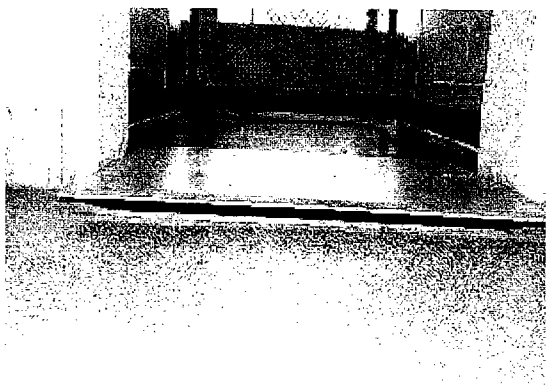


Figure 11

The flooring in the West Wing was in better condition as this part of the building was built more recently. It was also textured epoxy flooring.

The lighting in both N Ward and the West Wing was dim making it difficult to view animals, creating safety risks for staff and the public, and creating an atmosphere that was depressing and uninviting. Several of the overhead lights were not working in the West Wing.

Small dogs and puppies were being housed in D/E and J/K Wards. There were six kennels separated by a chain link gate in each of the rooms. The chain link gates were being kept closed and dogs were being housed on each side in effect turning the six kennels into twelve separate small kennels (See Fig. 12). The individual kennels were separated from the adjacent kennels with a solid wall approximately four feet high, which prevented the small dogs and puppies from having nose to nose contact. However, the dogs only separated by the chain link gates were able to have nose to nose contact.



Figure 12

The kennel floors in D/E and J/K Wards were sloped slightly towards the walkways and did not have drains in them. The drains were located in the walkway outside of the kennels. Therefore during the site visit urine flowed from the kennels into the walkway where staff, animals, and visitors walked (See Fig. 13).



Figure 13

Several of the dog kennel areas had damaged chain link including sharp points protruding out, which could easily injure the animals, staff, or public. This was particularly noticeable in D/E and J/K Wards.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Repair the floor in all areas where the epoxy has cracked or chipped.
  
- ✓ Repair or replace lights that do not work and monitoring them closely to ensure they are

kept working at all times. Consider installing lighting that better illuminates the animals for adoption in order to make them more appealing.

- ✓ Install a drain cover in N Ward to help minimize the potential of cross contamination when flushing the drain. Drain covers should be removed at a minimum of once a week to ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting.
- ✓ Raise the height of the solid partition between the kennels in N Ward to a height sufficient to prevent nose to nose and visual contact between the dogs in adjacent kennels.
- ✓ To make cleaning more efficient, consider installing a second trench drain in N Ward (opposite the kennels where the existing trench drain is) and then installing a guillotine door in each kennel dividing it into two sides. If this cannot be done see section 6.2, Disease Control and Sanitation for cleaning recommendations for the current setup.
- ✓ Replace or permanently repair damaged chain link fencing in all areas.
- ✓ Build trench drains in the walkways on either side of the kennels in D/E and J/K Wards to keep the urine from flowing onto them. Although trench drains are not ideal, in this circumstance it is better than the current alternative.
- ✓ Remove the chain link separating the kennels in D/E and J/K Wards and install solid partition walls in order to prevent contact between those animals.
- ✓ Based on experience, ensure that enough kennels have covered tops in order to properly house dogs that may attempt to climb.

#### **4.24 CAT HOUSING**

**Observations:**

The sizes of the cat cages at MDPASU varied but most were a standard three by three foot size. All cat housing was stainless steel cages, which is suitable housing. None of the cages had resting shelves (See Fig. 14).

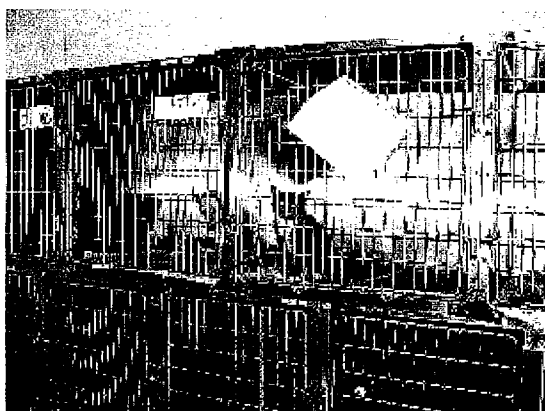


Figure 14

Cages were stacked two high, which is appropriate; however, in several rooms there were a row of cages on each side of the room facing each other, which adds to the stress of already frightened animals. Cats were being housed in rooms with dogs, which is unacceptable and should be stopped immediately.

The flooring in the wards housing cats appeared to be old, textured epoxy. Some floors were cracked through to the concrete making it impossible to properly disinfect.

MDPASU does not use colony housing for cats, which is perfectly acceptable.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Immediately discontinue housing any cats in rooms with dogs (See sections 5.21, Dog/ Cat Care and 6.3, Isolation and Separation for more information).
- ✓ Consider purchasing resting shelves for the cat cages. It is more important to provide cats with extra vertical space with shelves than horizontal space.
- ✓ Arrange the cage units in the cat housing rooms so that they are not facing each other. In small rooms, rearrangement may be limited to placing cage units in a “back to back” configuration. Cat cages can be placed back to back in a variety of configurations within the room. If this is not feasible, put some kind of barrier, possibly a plastic curtain connected to a ceiling track in between the sets of cages so the cats do not have to see each other. This will decrease their stress.
- ✓ Repair the cracked or chipped areas in the flooring.

- ✓ Although considering colony or group housing for cats was not discussed as a possibility, MDPASU management should address the following if it becomes a topic of interest in the future:<sup>13</sup>
  - Does your agency have the time and staff commitment to research, plan, and implement communal housing?
  - Does your agency have a proven disease control program?
  - Is spaying or neutering each cat prior to admittance to a colony a viable option for your agency?
  - Can your agency provide the necessary and extensive variety of tests and vaccines for all cat-colony candidates?
  - Does your agency have well-developed, written protocols (for initial exams, quarantine procedures, cleaning, etc.)? Can these be readily adapted for colony housing?
  - Does your agency have access to a veterinarian, either on staff or in private practice, who will help develop new procedures and oversee their implementation?
  - Does your agency have space and resources for buying large caging or renovating a room suitable for housing a colony of cats?
  - Are your shelter staff and volunteers trained to evaluate cats for signs of behavior problems and illness?
  - Does your agency have the ability to hold cats beyond a specific period of time?

## 4.25 SMALL ANIMAL HOUSING

### **Observations:**

MDPASU did not have SOPs regarding small animal housing. Although MDPASU, on rare occasion, receives small animals such as rabbits, ferrets, gerbils, and guinea pigs there were no designated housing areas or special housing units to accommodate these animals.

Most small animals were referred to other organizations, individuals, or schools. The HSUS team has concerns about pet owners being referred to someone only to find out they can't accept any animals at that time. The animal could be abandoned or suffer a worse fate if the owner does not have any other options.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop SOPs in regards to all aspects of accepting, housing, transfer of, and euthanasia of small domestic animals.
- ✓ Discontinue referring people who are relinquishing small animals to local schools.
- ✓ The HSUS team recommends one of two options:
  1. Continue to refer small animals to appropriate organizations or individuals

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13 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "All Together Now, Group Housing for Cats," March/April 2003\*

without accepting them into the shelter. However, this should only be done if MDPASU can ensure that animals are not being turned away from these organizations and individuals. Similar to placement partners, any referral should be made only to those organizations and individuals that have been approved by MDPASU and determined to be appropriate for housing and caring for referred animals (See section 8.4, Community Placement Partners).

2. Designate a separate small, indoor area (with adequate temperature control and ventilation) for both the holding and adoption (as appropriate) of small animals received by MDPASU. This could even be a space as small as a retrofitted restroom.

If this option is chosen, continue to work with approved organizations and individuals, which could take small animals directly from MDPASU.

- ✓ Do not house any small animals in cat or dog housing rooms. It is better not to accept them than to put them into such stressful conditions.
- ✓ If accepted, small animals must be cared for appropriately according to the needs of each species.<sup>14</sup> Ideally, an agency should identify the small animal needs based on the average numbers and types of species received. Caging specifications vary with each species, and statistical information, such as average length, weight and growth rate of an animal, or environmental requirements such as temperature, light and humidity should be gathered and carefully reviewed.
- ✓ The caging must be carefully arranged and monitored to minimize stress. The HSUS suggests the small animal room be designed to hold three small animals at any given time based on staffing limits and the potential for responsible re-homing of these species.

### **Discussion:**

Although small domestic animals such as rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, and hamsters are not rabies vector species and don't pose a threat to the public, MDPASU has a responsibility as a full service animal shelter to do their best to assist the owners who can no longer care for their small animals.

Keeping animals in elementary school classrooms has been a subject of debate within the education and animal-protection communities for many years. Although classroom pets can help teach responsibility and empathy, problems can arise when teachers and students aren't prepared for the challenges a classroom pet presents. By encouraging people to take unwanted pets to schools MDPASU may be unknowingly placing those animals in danger.

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14 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, *The Complete "How To" Series*, Section G- "Small Mammal Care"\*

## 4.26 WILDLIFE/ EXOTIC HOUSING

### **Observations:**

MDPASU did not have SOPs regarding wild or exotic animals. During the site visit there were no wild or exotic animals in the shelter. There was no area in the shelter to accommodate wildlife, such as raccoons and opossums, or exotic animals such as sugar gliders and iguanas. On very rare occasion, they receive these animals but make arrangements with another organization for pick up. These animals were most often referred to other organizations and individuals in the area to avoid having them come into the shelter. The referral list provided by MDPASU included resources for dealing with a wide variety of animals such as raccoons, foxes, monkeys, reptiles, etc. (See section 10.12, Wildlife Issues).

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop SOPs in regards to all aspects of accepting, housing, transfer of, and euthanasia of wildlife and exotic animals.
- ✓ Continue to work with the State Fish and Wildlife Service and private wildlife contractors when appropriate.
- ✓ In the event that an exotic animal does get relinquished to the shelter, work with approved placement groups which may responsibly place exotic animals in appropriate homes. If an approved placement group is not available, the most responsible course is euthanasia. Appropriate euthanasia methods will vary for different species of exotic animals.
- ✓ Do not attempt to house wildlife or exotics except very *temporarily* (less than 24 hours) if necessary in an area separate from cats, dogs, and small domestic animals. There may be times when a rehabilitator (for wildlife) or placement group (for exotics) cannot accept them immediately, which may call for temporary housing at the MDPASU facility. *If* MDPASU decides to house these animals temporarily, each species must be housed and cared for appropriately according to its needs (i.e. humidity, lighting, temperature, food, etc.).
- ✓ If necessary, contact The HSUS for assistance in locating placement groups for exotic animals.
- ✓ Research information on reptiles and parrots through The Avian Welfare Coalition<sup>15</sup> and Melissa Kaplan's Herp Care Collection,<sup>16</sup> which are two excellent resources.

### **Discussion:**

There is no single correct or best approach to temporarily housing exotics or wildlife; however, there are commercial cages that will work well, and shelter-built enclosures that are as serviceable. Whatever space is available or dedicated to this use should have a fair degree of flexibility so that the shelter can accommodate the needs of whatever animal they find in their

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15 [www.avianwelfare.org](http://www.avianwelfare.org)

16 [www.anapsid.org](http://www.anapsid.org)

care.<sup>17</sup> Because of the nature of these animals and the fact that they are easily stressed, any holding space or spaces should be located out of high traffic and noisy areas in the shelter, with no public access. In addition, staff access is best restricted to those persons responsible for the care of exotics and wildlife. To a degree, these spaces should also function somewhat as quarantine and/or isolation areas, allowing some control of potential medical problems.

Examples of traditional and non-traditional caging and the species of animals that may be temporarily housed in them follows:

- Aquariums: various sizes; useable for both aquatic and terrestrial amphibians and reptiles, as well as small exotics such as hedgehogs and prairie dogs. With any aquarium, make sure there is a tight-fitting screen or other suitable top, with a device or system for locking the top down.
- Household Storage Containers: various sizes; clear and opaque plastic; usually with snap-on lids that can be perforated for ventilation; suitable for amphibians, reptiles and small exotics.
- Livestock Equipment: watering troughs for cattle and other livestock, either in plastic or metal; can also be used for larger aquatic or terrestrial reptiles and non-climbing mammals.
- Commercial Wire Cages for Mammals: various sizes and configurations; manufactured for use with rabbits, guinea pigs, ferrets; they provide suitable housing for small to medium-sized exotics for whom glass may not be the best choice, like sugar gliders and flying squirrels.
- Commercial Cages for Birds: various sizes; cages that allow horizontal movement as opposed to tall narrow shapes are preferable; be aware of gauge of bars when housing large parrots. Gauge is used to determine the thickness and strength of the bars. Large parrots can easily bend or crush small gauge bars.
- Miscellaneous/Other: In the event that an animal too large for caging discussed above has to be housed, freestanding sectional dog pens and large dog crates can be used.

## 4.27 FARM ANIMAL/ EQUINE HOUSING

### Observations:

MDPASU did not have SOPs in regards to farm animal/equine housing. MDPASU does not generally get involved in farm animal or equine issues; however, they do refer citizens to other organizations that can assist. At one time they did house a pot bellied pig in an outdoor enclosure behind the shelter.

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17 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, *The Complete "How To" Series*, "How to Temporarily House Wild Mammals"\*



**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop SOPs in regards to all aspects of accepting, housing, transfer of, and euthanasia of farm animals and horses.
- ✓ Have a plan to set up minimal appropriate temporary housing for farm-type animals if it is needed in a pinch.
- ✓ The existing outdoor pen should be covered and partially enclosed to provide adequate protection from the elements should another animal have to be housed there.
- ✓ Continue working cooperatively with local organizations for farm animal and equine issues.

## 4.28 ANIMAL EXAM/ MEDICAL ROOM

**Observations:**

The shelter had a veterinary examination room immediately adjacent to the surgical suite and across the hallway from A, B, and C Wards in an area off-limits to the public. The small, well-organized room had two examination tables and plenty of storage cabinets (See Fig. 15).



Figure 15

The room did not have any permanent cages for holding animals. During the site visit dogs were tethered to the examination table and on one occasion a dog was tethered and left unattended. Had the dog jumped from the table, he could have been choked. A playpen type cage on wheels was used to hold puppies on several occasions, which was appropriate.

There were a number of controlled drugs kept in this room, which were appropriately stored in a double locked drug supply cabinet. Non-controlled drugs were also stored in this room.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Consider installing a few stainless steel cages to hold animals in the event that they must be left unattended in the room. Animals that are tethered with slip leashes should never be left unattended.

## **5.0 SHELTER OPERATIONS**

### **5.1 GENERAL OPERATIONS**

#### **5.11 GENERAL OVERVIEW**

In general, animal shelter staff are often overworked and underappreciated by the very communities that are responsible for pet overpopulation and the euthanasia that results. MDPASU is in the very difficult position to accept and house approximately 32,000 homeless animals every year; and even though dealing with this stress, The HSUS team found many of the staff to be caring, compassionate and trying their best with the resources and training provided to them. This said The HSUS team found that overall; shelter operations were disorganized and unstructured.

#### **5.12 HOURS OF OPERATION**

**Observations:**

The North shelter's hours of operation for licensing and rabies vaccination were Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday 7:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Adoption and redemption hours were Monday through Friday 11:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. It is appropriate that adoption hours do not begin until staff has had a chance to clean the areas which the public visits.

The shelter is closed on major holidays. MDPASU should be commended for providing ample opportunity for the public to visit the shelter in the evenings and on weekends when a majority of the working public are able.

The HSUS team found different information regarding the shelter's hours. For example, information on the front doors and "helpful information" flyer stated the shelter's adoption hours are until 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and until 4:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday; the Web site and phone recording stated 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

The HSUS team was told that the front gates are closed in the evening after the shelter closes. The HSUS team was also told that animals are accepted 24 hours a day, but when asked about citizens with emergencies or stray animals showing up at the shelter after hours, The HSUS team was told that the citizen must call the police non-emergency number and that the police will contact the shelter. However, neither the police non-emergency number nor instructions on what to do were provided on signs outside the gate.

The South Dade facility maintained operational hours of 7:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, and was closed on Sunday and Monday.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Close the North shelter at least one day each week, preferably Wednesday, to allow for more thorough cleaning and “catch-up” time for staff. This should not prevent people from relinquishing animals.
- ✓ Continue to receive and assist animals 24 hours a day and offer an emergency pick-up service, if possible (See section 3.2, External and Directional Signage).
- ✓ Ensure that all MDPASU information regarding hours of operation are consistent. This should include brochures and flyers, signage, the phone recording, and the Web site.

### **5.13 TELEPHONE SYSTEM**

**Observations:**

The existing telephone system consisted of 15-18 incoming lines. There were additional lines recently added to help accommodate the huge number of calls coming into the shelter. All lines came to the front desk where they were routed to the appropriate person or department. According to staff, if the person the call is transferred to does not answer, that call is bounced back to the front desk. However, front desk staff is not aware that the call has been bounced back and callers often have to hold for long periods of time resulting in frustration.

During the site visit, the dispatcher checked voice mail every few minutes to ensure a timely response to all incoming calls for service. According to one staff member, the dispatch area receives an average of 600 calls per week. Many of these calls did not require response from the field unit but rather were people calling for services that were not provided by MDPASU.

MDPASU was in the process of installing a 311 system that would help “weed out” these kinds of calls and which would also minimize the amount of time spent by dispatchers on calls that are not related to MDPASU. The 311 system will be maintained by the Miami-Dade Police Department.

Night time personnel answered incoming calls on the police emergency line after normal hours of operation. Staff calls a supervisor if an emergency exists. There was a recorded message that is delivered to the public during closed hours for non-emergency situations (See section 9.5, Customer/ Client Service).

There was a public announcement (PA) system set up through the phone system; however, it only worked in the office areas, not the animal housing areas. There was a bell that rang in the back of the shelter if assistance was needed up front or if someone in the back needed to handle a phone call. There were no telephones located in the West Wing.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Key staff should be provided with hand held radios to increase the ability to communicate internally.

- ✓ Install a telephone line in the West Wing. Staff who work in this rather isolated part of the shelter should also be equipped with hand held radios.
- ✓ Research ways to address the issue of calls being bounced back up to the front office staff without their knowledge. This may mean investing in a phone system that notifies front office staff when a call has been bounced back to them allowing them to give that caller priority service.

## 5.14 COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT

### Observations:

The computer system was networked internally but not with other county departments. There was no internal IT person; however, several staff had some computer expertise and could help troubleshoot minor problems. For more complicated issues, MDPASU had to consult with an IT person via the Miami-Dade help desk. The HSUS team could not confirm if or how often backup was conducted.

### Recommendations:

- ✓ As reliance on computers grows, hire an IT person for the shelter so that computer issues/problems can be addressed quickly and appropriately.
- ✓ Backup should be conducted on a daily basis.

## 5.15 GENERAL RECORD KEEPING/ SHELTER STATISTICS

### Observations:

MDPASU did not have SOPs for record keeping or the use of the Chameleon software program. The HSUS team found record keeping inaccurate and ineffective.

MDPASU used the Chameleon animal shelter management software package, which is excellent; however, only a fragment of Chameleon's capabilities were being utilized. Staff told The HSUS team that a few officers went to Chameleon training off-site but other staff had to learn by trial and error. The HSUS team was told that training is essentially non-existent and that citizens are getting citations in error because there is no consistency in how things are done and mistakes are being made.

Basic monthly and annual reports are generated and were provided to The HSUS team; however, there is a question about the accuracy of these reports due to the major discrepancies in the kennel inventory reports. During the site visit, The HSUS team asked to have a daily kennel inventory of animals printed out. The HSUS team then compared the animals on the list to the animals actually in the shelter and found that a large number of animals were not in the cages or kennels that were listed on the kennel inventory. And in many instances a different animal was in the cage instead, for example, cage B18 was listed on the kennel inventory as housing a black "domestic shorthair" cat when in actuality, there was a tan and white dog in the cage with no

cage card. This is only one example of many.

During the site visit, The HSUS team reviewed several reports. A review of a daily intake report indicated that for the first three hours of the shelter being open; it had only received 11 animals, which could not be accurate according to the staff person who generated the report. However, nothing was done to research or correct this discrepancy. This report was generated in June when intakes are typically very high.

The April report indicated that 44 animals died at the shelter and 69 were missing. The May report indicated that 59 died at the shelter and 39 were missing. Reasons for death were not listed. The HSUS team was not provided with any clear explanation of where missing animals could be but were told that a few of the animals may have died in transit to the shelter (See section 10.23, Equipment/ Vehicles/ Uniforms).

The input of relevant information into individual animal's records was lacking. During the site visit an American bulldog mix was moved to the West Wing because he had attacked and injured his kennelmate in N Ward. The HSUS team made note that after being moved the dog was not given a cage card; nothing was noted on his kennel that he was dog aggressive; and no notes were input into Chameleon as to his behavior or the injection of antibiotic he received. Another dog could have been put in the West Wing kennel with him or he could have been adopted to someone with another dog. This type of oversight appeared to be common.

See section 6.1, General Shelter Medicine/ Health Care for information on medical record keeping.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop and implement clear SOPs regarding all aspects of record keeping including the use of Chameleon to include data entry pertaining to vaccinations, veterinary examinations, medical treatments, behavioral observations, drug and supply inventories, field operations, animal dispositions, and generating various related reports such as monthly and yearly statistics.
- ✓ Consider contacting other sheltering organizations that use Chameleon to find out how they utilize the program and what works or doesn't work for them. Utilizing Chameleon will help to make MDPASU's work more well-organized and accurate.
- ✓ All staff that uses Chameleon should be fully trained in its use.
- ✓ Immediately begin using a kennel inventory report to conduct a daily morning census. This should be done by physically matching the animal I.D with the number on the animal's collar and making sure the animal is in the correct cage or kennel. Any discrepancies should be immediately reported to a supervisor and appropriately resolved. Once record keeping is more accurate, this can be done less frequently.
- ✓ If not already done, submit monthly and annual reports to the assistant county manager charged with overseeing MDPASU. This information can be used to educate the county

manager's office about the problems faced by MDPASU and also enlighten them on the tremendous workload associated with running an animal care and control program.

- ✓ Begin tracking more comprehensive intermediate level shelter statistics<sup>18</sup> which include the following (This can be done with Chameleon):

**Number of animals received/entered the shelter:**

- A. Species
  - 1. Dogs
    - a. Adults
    - b. Puppies (<6 months)
  - 2. Cats
    - a. Adults
    - b. Kittens (<6 months)
  - 3. Other
    - a. Domestic and exotic
      - Rodents
      - Rabbits
      - Avian
        - Caged birds
        - Uncaged birds
        - Poultry
      - Reptiles
      - Amphibians
      - Ferrets
      - Livestock (e.g. cattle, pigs, sheep, horses)
    - b. Exotic/Wildlife
      - Primates
      - Non-native wild animals
      - Exotic cats
    - c. Native Wildlife
    - d. Other
- B. Method of Entry (Where did they come from?)
  - 1. Owner surrendered
    - a. Method
      - Turned in at shelter
      - Turned over to and picked up by staff
    - b. Euthanasia requested due to
      - Age
      - Illness/injury
      - Behavior
      - Other

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18 "Intermediate Shelter Statistics" provided by the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy

2. Adoption returned within 30 days to shelter
3. Running-at-large/stray
  - a. Found and turned in at shelter by general public
  - b. Picked up in field by staff
    - Captured at large by staff
    - Trapped
    - Found and turned over to staff by general public
4. Transfers (e.g. other shelters, organizations, institutions)
5. DOA
6. Seizures/confiscations
7. In-house births
8. Other

**Number of animals leaving:**

A. Species

1. Dogs
  - a. Adults
  - b. Puppies (<6 months)
2. Cats
  - a. Adults
  - b. Kittens (<6 months)
3. Other
  - a. Domestic and exotic
    - Rodents
    - Rabbits
    - Avian
      - Caged birds
      - Uncaged birds
      - Poultry
    - Reptiles
    - Amphibians
    - Ferrets
    - Livestock (e.g. cattle, pigs, sheep, horses)
  - b. Exotic/Wildlife
    - Primates
    - Non-native wild animals
    - Exotic cats
  - c. Native Wildlife
  - d. Other

B. Method of disposition (What happened to them?)

1. Returned to owner
  - a. Dogs
  - b. Cats
  - c. Other

2. Placed/adopted
  - a. New home
    - Dogs
    - Cats
    - Other
  - b. Foster home
    - Dogs
    - Cats
    - Other
3. Euthanized
  - a. At request of owner
    - Dogs
    - Cats
    - Other
  - b. Healthy Euthanized
    - Dogs
    - Cats
    - Others
  - c. Euthanized for Medical, Age or Physical condition
    - Dogs
    - Cats
    - Others
4. Transferred
5. DOA disposal
6. Other (e.g. died at shelter, missing, escaped)

- ✓ When reporting statistics to the community, emphasize that the burden of responsibility for pet overpopulation must be shared by all members of the community. For example, rather than stating that “Miami-Dade Police Animal Services Unit handled XX stray and homeless animals in 2004,” management should instead accentuate the public’s role in shelter numbers through language such as “Miami-Dade County generated XX stray and homeless animals in 2004.”

**Discussion:**

Like most businesses, animal sheltering agencies are expected to maintain accurate records regarding their activities. This includes, but is not limited to the accurate accounting of all animals received and their corresponding dispositions. An accurate and easy-to-use data collection and analysis system is essential for reporting such information to donors, local government and other funding sources. In addition, such reporting is essential for assessing the organization’s performance, formulating strategic plans and setting goals.

Some of the statistical information provided by MDPASU was nothing short of alarming. The high incidence of animals dying at the shelter is of great concern. Given the noted inconsistencies in record keeping practices, it is impossible to determine whether these numbers are accurate. However, given the extent of disease in the shelter, lack of effort to identify or treat illnesses, failure to isolate sick animals and the overall inattention to the animals it is feasible these numbers could be on target.



"What" you do is important and need not be overshadowed by "how much" you do. It is often stated that quality is more important than quantity; therefore you can and should put numbers to work for you in ways to improve the quality of what you do.

All sizes of shelters benefit from keeping accurate statistics on every aspect of their work. Numbers tell people who you are and what you are up against. Presented here are reasons to keep an accurate count of the animals you handle.

#### Accountability

Numbers will justify your existence to a Board of Directors, government entities, and the general public. You know you are productive, but they must know that as well.

#### Liability

Proper recording of numbers will show you kept each animal the legally required time.

#### Public Image

Numbers will increase public awareness of the magnitude of your mission. Numbers help you convey the results of your efforts.

#### Budgets/Fundraising

A good budgeting process requires statistics to identify needs. Numbers assist in planning for the future. Numbers paint pictures that open pocketbooks for donations.

#### Program Evaluation/Planning

Strengths and weaknesses are exposed through statistics. Analysis of your numbers will identify successful as well as ineffective programs. Statistical analysis can assist in the design of future programs. Comparison of statistics may expose animal population trends (local, regional, and national).

## **5.16 INCOMING ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION AND PROCEDURES**

### **Observations:**

MDPASU had limited SOPs regarding animal intake procedures. Animals brought in by the public were processed through a separate entrance to the left of the main lobby (See Fig. 16). Very basic information including an animal description and date of intake was recorded in Chameleon, but no personality or behavioral information for the animal was recorded. Some of the recorded information was misleading, for example staff often listed themselves as the source of the animal and used the shelter address instead of recording the information of the person who brought the animal to the shelter and the location at which the animal was found.

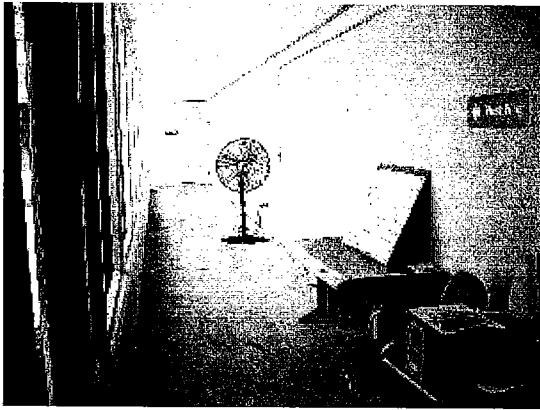


Figure 16

The fee to surrender an owned animal was \$15. Once the animal was handed over, the owner was required to go to the main counter in the lobby and pay the \$15 and have their animal's record removed from the system so they don't get license updates, etc. in the future.

Animals were not routinely scanned for microchips at intake, which was observed throughout the entire site visit. A stray Labrador retriever was brought in to the shelter on 6/11/04. Six days after the dog arrived at the shelter he was scanned and a microchip was found. The dog's owner was contacted and was to pick the dog up the next day. If this dog had gotten sick during his stay he could have been euthanized after his five day hold period. In addition, this dog spent six days taking up valuable kennel space that could have been used to house a truly homeless dog.

After an animal's information was recorded, a blue or red collar was stapled on the animal and the animal was either placed in one of the receiving cages or tethered to the fence (See Fig. 17). Some staff said red collars meant the animal was a biter or dangerous and blue collars meant adoptable, but others said the colors didn't matter. The SOPs stated that blue is indicative of a non-aggressive animal and red is indicative of an aggressive animal. The collars had the animals impound number and the date written on them. Although the system needs improvement, MDPASU should be commended for using collars to identify animals in the facility.

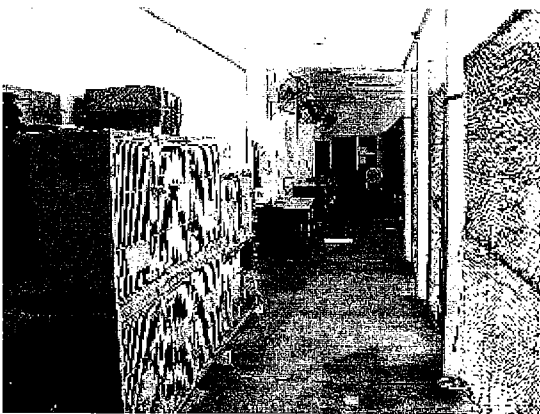


Figure 17

The process of tethering animals to the fence needs to be re-evaluated. On one occasion a dog which had been relinquished and tied to the chain link fence by staff, chewed through the nylon leash and escaped. This escape occurred after one staff member warned another that he was trying to chew through his leash. Had this dog been aggressive it could have been a serious situation with a high potential for injury to other animals and people (See section 6.3, Isolation and Separation).

Once the staff had a moment, the animal was moved from the receiving kennels or was un-tethered from the fence and placed basically where ever there was room. If the staff person working receiving thought the animal looked sick he would go in B Ward or the kennels designated for sick animals in N Ward. There was no consistent system for housing the animals after intake.

Animal information sheets printed out from Chameleon were being used for cage cards; however, they were not consistently attached to the cages and kennels and often the paperwork was with the wrong animal. Some of them were placed in plastic sheaths and some were just placed between the bars of the cage. The cage cards listed basic information such as the animal's ID, age/sex, breed, color, intake date, stray or owner surrender, due out date, and if the animal was on hold or adopted. Although the cage cards listed the kennel number that the animal was supposed to be in, the cages in the wards were not marked well. Some had numbered stickers and others had engraved tags. The kennels in the West wing were marked well. There were many occasions during the site visit when cage cards for animals could not be located and it was not uncommon for them to be found lying on the floor.

A majority of the animals did not have their pictures taken for their records at intake even though Chameleon offers a Cham-cam that can be used to take pictures of animals at the time of intake.

One example of the intake procedure was a dog named Daisy who was being surrendered by her owner's son because she unintentionally knocked down the elderly owner by jumping up on him. The man stated that Daisy is very friendly, play bites, and is spayed and up to date on vaccinations. Staff entered the man's name and address into Chameleon; however, no information about the dog's condition or behavior was entered. After the man left, staff entered that Daisy was not spayed, so an HSUS team member told staff that the man said she is spayed in order to prevent Daisy from having to go under anesthesia and have unnecessary surgery to find out she is spayed. Daisy was given a blue collar with the date and her impound number and she was taken directly to N Ward and put in a kennel with two similar sized female dogs. Daisy was not given an intake examination because staff explained that the veterinarian only looks at the animals if receiving staff "sees something" (See section 6.5, Incoming Animal Examinations and Assessments).

On the last day of the site visit a staff member stopped someone outside of the building and "adopted" the puppy he was bringing in to relinquish. Apparently, not an isolated incident, some staff take animals directly from people outside the building instead of adopting them from the shelter. A different staff member approached The HSUS team after this happened for our opinion because he was discussing with another staff member whether or not this was appropriate.

There did not seem to be any consistency regarding whether litters were given separate animal identification numbers or were given one number for the entire litter. At one point during the site visit a litter of stray Labrador/shepherd puppies was brought in. The veterinarian determined that they had parasites by looking at their stool. Two staff members argued how they should be listed in the system. One said that if they have parasites or are less than eight weeks old the litter should get one identification number; however, the other staff member said that they should each get an identification number. The puppies were all input under one identification number at that time; however, later that day they all had separate identification numbers. They were put in isolation; however, no indication of why they were in isolation was listed on their Chameleon records.

Also on the last day of the site visit, three different people brought in kittens. One newborn, three sick kittens, and another sick kitten brought in separately. They were all put in the same receiving cage and given one identification number instead of separate numbers because staff said they are sick and will be euthanized anyway.

The MDPASU did disclose all information related to the disposition of sheltered animals to the public upon request, which is commendable.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Create and implement written SOPs regarding the intake process for stray and owner released animals. This includes where animals should be housed after intake (See section 6.3, Isolation and Separation). This will provide for consistency in gathering information and in the overall process.
- ✓ It should be a priority to take a picture of every animal at the time of intake.
- ✓ Contact Chameleon to inquire about using the program to print out comprehensive, professional cage cards for the animals and discontinue using the current printed animal information sheets. The cage cards should contain accurate information and be descriptive and informative about each animal available for adoption.
- ✓ Secure the paperwork to the cages and kennels in a manner that will prevent it from coming off. In cases where paperwork comes into contact with feces or urine, discard and replace it.
- ✓ Ask owners to fill out a brief personality profile for pets they are relinquishing. This information will help staff determine the adoptability of an animal; any special needs the animal may have, and will assist staff in making the best match possible between adopter and pet. This information can be recorded directly into Chameleon or filed at the front desk and provided to potential adopters upon request.<sup>19, 20, 21</sup>
- ✓ Instead of recording staff names and the shelter's address for those who bring in strays,

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19 Personality profile examples

20 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Feline Background Information," May/June 1996\*

21 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Canine Background Information," March/April 1996\*

staff should start taking the name of the person who brings in an animal and the location where the animal was found. This information needs to be reflected in the “source” and “location found” boxes in Chameleon.

- ✓ Use the colored identification collars to differentiate male from female animals. Red can be used for female and blue for male.
- ✓ All incoming animals should be checked for the presence of a microchip implant at the time of admittance. For animals possessing an implant, ownership should be verified through the corresponding national microchip registry. The animal’s record should indicate if a microchip is found or not.
- ✓ Find a way to have people relinquish their pets without having to wait in two lines, one to leave their pet and one to be taken out of the system.
- ✓ Remove the numbered tags and stickers from the cages in the wards and re-number them so they are clearly marked and easy to identify. Many shelters use numbered plastic tags that can be affixed to each cage by a metal chain or clip. The tags come in many colors to make them highly visible.
- ✓ Staff should not be “adopting” animals outside of the shelter from people who are relinquishing them. If staff wishes to adopt an animal, the animal should be relinquished to the shelter and the staff member should go through the same process as the public including paying the adoption fee and having the animal sterilized. This should be a policy that is strictly enforced.
- ✓ All animals, including those in litters, should be given separate identification numbers. This will help record and shelter statistic accuracy.
- ✓ Discontinue charging people a fee to surrender their animals. Requiring owners to pay a surrender fee to turn in their animal may result in people abandoning their animals instead of opting to pay the fee.

## 5.17 LOST AND FOUND PROCEDURE

### Observations:

MDPASU did have SOPs regarding its lost and found services and provided the general public with the ability to report lost or found animals, which is excellent; however, this process needed improvement.

Stray hold periods give the public a chance to look for their lost pets. According to the SOPs and Code of Miami-Dade County, stray dogs are required to be held for five days. Dogs with evidence of a microchip, license tag or other collar type identification are held 10 days. During the site visit a stray dog with an unreadable tag was in N Ward. The HSUS team checked his record and found that the dog was being held for 10 days as required.

The HSUS team was told by staff that normally stray dogs are not held the required five days but they were during the period that The HSUS team was on site. If accurate, this could create serious legal issues for MDPASU.

There was not a legal required stray hold period for cats. The SOPs stated that surrendered feral cats could be immediately euthanized, but stray cats were to be held five days or 10 days with identification. However, if the stray animal had a medical condition he could be euthanized before the five day hold was up.

If an animal is brought in as a stray and is wearing tags or other identification, a memo is entered into Chameleon to "flag" that animal, and then staff attempts to contact the owner by phone. If a call cannot be completed a card is sent to the owner's last known address indicating the animal is at the shelter and it's the owner's responsibility to reclaim the pet by a certain date.

MDPASU utilized a *Lost / Found Pet Form*, which was used for recording basic information including whether the animal was a dog or cat, the date lost or found, the owner's name and contact information, and animal information such as markings, color, breed, size, and if the animal was identified by a tag or microchip. There was no place to record the date the form was filled out, the location the animal had been lost or found, the pet's age, or whether the animal had been spayed or neutered.

Persons searching for a lost pet were not required to complete a *Lost / Found Pet Form* prior to looking through the shelter. Staff advised that citizens who had lost or found a pet that they could meet directly with the lost and found coordinator. In his absence, they could complete a *Lost / Found Pet Form* and leave it in the appropriate box on the coordinator's door. The SOPs stated that lost and found services were available seven days a week. It was the understanding of The HSUS team that someone was supposed to assume the lost and found responsibilities during the lost and found coordinator's absence; however, we were told that this rarely happens. A binder of the *Lost / Found Pet Forms* was kept and organized by date. The information was also entered into the computer but the binder was still used for reference.

MDPASU's Web site stated you must come to the shelter to see if your lost pet is there; however, during the site visit *Lost / Found Pet Forms* were being filled out over the phone and owners were being advised whether or not their animal was at the shelter.

There was a lost and found bulletin board located in the lobby. Although staff indicated this board was checked daily for possible matches of animals in the shelter, The HSUS team saw a few possible matches that had not been followed up on until The HSUS team brought them to the attention of staff. A sign on the board stated that lost and found postings would be removed after 10 days; however, most of the lost and found postings were not dated and those with dates were not removed after 10 days. Staff indicated that some people that post reports on the bulletin board, do not complete a *Lost / Found Pet Form*.

A driver's license or picture identification was required to reclaim a lost pet, which is appropriate. MDPASU did not require veterinary records but would ask for a picture of the animal. The HSUS team was told that they also compare the address noted on the lost report to

where the animal was found. The only way this information could be cross-referenced is if a finder had filed a found report. The information on the report would be compared to the information provided at the time of reclamation by a potential owner.

There was a \$40.00 redemption fee required in addition to a \$7.00 rabies vaccination fee and a \$5.00 per day boarding fee. License fees were \$35.00 for intact animals and \$25.00 for neutered animals.

The Web site's lost and found section stated that to see animals impounded by MDPASU visit [www.PetHarbor.com](http://www.PetHarbor.com). Some of the information listed on Pet Harbor was incorrect or extremely out of date:

- A kitten's picture was listed under dogs as a five-year-old brown/sable mixed breed.
- A dog was listed as being at the shelter since March 11, 2002.
- Most of the records said the animal was 5 years old even when the photograph showed a puppy or kitten.
- One dog's Chameleon record stated an intake date of 6/15/04 and an age of 3 months but the Web site listed her intake date as 6/14/04 and an age of one year.
- Only very few of the hundreds of listings included a picture of the animal.

The Web site instructed people to visit the shelter at least every 3 days to look for their lost pets.

The after-hours phone recording directed people to contact the Pet Owner's Alliance and provided a phone number but this information was not listed on MDPASU's Web site. The Pet Owner's Alliance Web site stated that it operates the largest computerized lost and found and tattoo tracing service in the State of Florida.

Statistics were kept on the number of animals that were reunited with their owners. According to reports provided, during the month of April, 2,261 animals were received into MDPASU. During this same time period, 107 animals, less than 5%, were reclaimed by their owners. During the month of May, intakes were 3,037 with only 99 returns to owner. This is an approximate 3% return rate.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ People should be required to fill out a written *Lost / Found Pet Form* before being allowed to look at the animals. Then if a person claims he found his pet at the shelter, the information on the lost report can be used to determine if in fact the animal may be his. Allowing someone to first look through the facility for his animal prior to completing a report allows a dishonest citizen to walk through the facility, choose an animal that he wants to say is his and attempt to falsely claim it.
- ✓ Continue to require that owners provide proof of ownership - not just personal identification. The proof could be photos of the animal, veterinary records, licenses, bills of sale, breed registries, etc.
- ✓ Continue using a single *Lost / Found Pet Form* for each animal which makes it easier to file, track, and remove from the binder once the animal is found.

- ✓ Review and update the current *Lost / Found Pet Form* requesting more specific information including:<sup>22</sup>
  - Location where the animal was lost or found
  - The age of the animal
  - Whether or not the animal was sterilized
  - The date the form was filled out
- ✓ The updated forms should require staff to choose from standardized descriptions instead of staff filling in blanks. The form should have choices that staff must choose from. For example, staff must choose between several choices in each category to help keep answers consistent. Examples include:

**Collar:** nylon (buckle or snap), leather, choke chain, harness, no collar, or other \_\_\_\_\_.

**Tail (Dogs):** Bob tail, brush tail, curled tail, docked tail, flagpole tail, flat tail, otter tail, plumed tail, rat tail, stumpy tail, whip tail, or other \_\_\_\_\_.

**Markings (Dogs):** solid, merle, sable, ticking, brindle, mask, pips, stockings, socks, splashed, or other: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Markings (Cats):** tabby, tortoiseshell, solid, calico, shaded, or other \_\_\_\_\_.

**Primary color:** red, chocolate, blue, cream, black, white, or other \_\_\_\_\_.

Breed book encyclopedias should help MDPASU staff determine which descriptions to use based on frequency seen at the shelter. Staff should be trained to identify the descriptions chosen.

- ✓ Continue to keep the *Lost / Found Pet Forms* in binders; however, they should be kept in four separate three-ring binders; two binders (one lost and one found) for dogs and two binders (one lost and one found) for cats. Each binder would be sub-divided by sex. For example, the lost dog binder would be divided by lost male and lost female dogs. This is a simple and easy-to-follow system that may increase return-to-owner rates.
- ✓ Allow *Lost / Found Pet Forms* to remain in the binders for 30 days. Once 30 days has passed, remove the form (unless the owner has called and requested an extension) and require new lost or found reports be submitted if necessary. This will prevent outdated forms from clogging up the binders. Make sure to let people know that they will need to re-submit a lost or found report once 30 days has passed.
- ✓ There should be one or more persons responsible for the daily checking of lost reports against the animals in the facility and against the flyers posted on the bulletin board. Also, lost reports should be checked against found reports for any possible matches.
- ✓ Because the general public has poor capabilities when it comes to the proper identification of a found dog or cat by breed, reliance on such information to accurately match lost reports with found reports usually results in a low percentage of successful reclamations. An initial cross check system should rely on only a few physical factors

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22 Lost and found report examples



such as coat color, hair length (in cats), gender and weight (in dogs). If the initial cross check produces a possible match, other factors such as age, location lost/found, breed, etc. should be used.

- ✓ There should be one or more persons responsible for the daily checking of local newspaper classifieds for lost/found pets.
- ✓ Consider posting found ads in the classified section of the local newspaper(s). Many papers offer found listings for no charge. Listing stray animals at the shelter may help increase MDPASU's return to owner rate.
- ✓ Enforce the rule that notices placed on the lost and found bulletin board must be dated. Discard notices after 10 days so the board does not become outdated and ineffective.
- ✓ Train staff to encourage citizens who have lost pets to place ads in newspapers, check at local veterinary clinics, and post flyers, etc.
- ✓ Continue to take lost and found reports over the telephone but do not advise citizens whether a pet is at the shelter or not. Instead, instruct the pet owner to come to the shelter and look for his lost pet. This puts the responsibility back on the pet owner to positively identify his pet.
- ✓ Encourage citizens looking for lost pets to visit the shelter often, daily if possible, to avoid the potential for euthanasia or adoption to another person.
- ✓ Utilize Chameleon for lost and found services. The lost and found information entered into Chameleon can be generated into a report which lists the animal's information and ID number. This can be posted daily at the shelter and put on MDPASU's Web site.
- ✓ In addition to the daily boarding fee, instead of charging the same redemption fee every time an animal is impounded, an escalating redemption fee should be charged. For example, the first time an animal is impounded the redemption fee should be a set fee (MDPASU must determine amount) plus \$5.00 per day for boarding, \$7.00 for a rabies voucher (if applicable), and the cost of registering the animal (See section 10.8, Licensing/ Mandatory Registration) if he is not already registered. The redemption fee should increase for each time the animal is impounded. This type of program requires an excellent record keeping system.
- ✓ To encourage sterilization, redemption fees for unsterilized animals should be markedly more than for sterilized animals with the difference returned to the owner upon presentation of proof of the surgery. For example, for a first redemption, the fee for a sterilized animal could be \$25.00 and the fee for an unsterilized animal could be \$50.00. After proof that the animal has been spayed or neutered, the owner would get the difference of \$25.00 returned. The aforementioned numbers are an example; MDPASU would need to determine an appropriate fee for unsterilized animals. Similar programs

have been implemented around the country.<sup>23, 24</sup> In addition, to refunding the difference in the redemption fee, MDPASU could also refund the difference in the licensing fee for sterilized vs. unsterilized animals. This program may increase sterilization in the community.

- ✓ Consider making microchipping mandatory before reclaim for a first ordinance violation, and *requiring* spay or neuter on a third ordinance violation.
- ✓ Consider development of a long-term program for working closely with persons who have lost a companion animal. Many animal care and control agencies have had overwhelming success doing so, with the outcome being better customer service and increased return to owner rates. Well-trained volunteers could be used to assist office staff with:
  - Greeting people
  - Assisting visitors in completing lost reports
  - Escorting pet owners through the shelter
  - Ensuring that visitors review the “dead on arrival” and found pet reports
  - Providing advice and counseling on how best to look for their pets
  - Maintaining and updating both the lost and found files
  - Performing daily lost and found checks on stray animals in the facility
  - Performing daily cross checking on stray animals in the facility with the “lost and found” listings in the local newspaper
- ✓ The HSUS team understands the magnitude of work it takes to enter the picture and correct information for every animal to be listed in Pet Harbor; however, if this service is going to be offered the information posted must be accurate and up to date.
- ✓ Ensure that all dogs are held for the minimum stray hold period required by law unless the conditions are met in Sec. 5-11.1 (5) (b). With the exception of cats with medical conditions, ensure that stray cats are held for the five day minimum as stated in Section 3 of the SOPs.
- ✓ Train staff to identify the behavior of truly feral cats. Frightened cats may be mistakenly labeled as feral and euthanized before the stray hold if staff is not adequately trained.
- ✓ Ensure that staff is following the Code of Miami Dade County Sec. 5-11.2. It states that prior to the destruction of any animal, missing animal reports that have been filed during the 14 day period preceding the animal’s proposed date of destruction must be checked.

**Discussion:**

An example of escalating redemption fees, not including the boarding fee, rabies vaccination, or registration fee, is as follows:

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23 *Naca News*, “Animal Friendly Licensing in Midland,” September/October 2003  
24 *HSUS Animal Sheltering* magazine, “Pay Up or Spay Up,” March/April 2001\*

	Sterilized	Un-sterilized	Other requirements
<b>First Offense</b>	\$50	\$100	microchip
<b>Second Offense</b>	\$100	\$200	microchip
<b>Third Offense</b>	\$200	\$400	microchip and animal must be spayed or neutered and a secure enclosure must be provided for the animal
<b>Fourth Offense</b>	\$300	\$600	microchip and animal must be spayed or neutered and a secure enclosure must be provided for the animal
<b>Fifth/Successive</b>	\$400	\$800	Seizure
<b>Failure to comply with a written order</b>	\$100	\$200	

## 5.18 JOB DESCRIPTIONS

### Observations:

MDPASU provided job descriptions relating specifically to animals for animal care specialist, animal care specialist supervisor, animal services clerk, veterinarian, and veterinary technician. For field services, The HSUS team was provided with job descriptions for animal control specialist, animal services investigator, and animal control supervisory. MDPASU should be commended for having job descriptions; however, there were some issues noted by The HSUS team.

The job description for the animal care specialist supervisor only listed the job's minimal requirements; there were no job specifications listed. Also, it stated that they must complete incinerator operator training; however, MDPASU no longer uses its crematorium.

The job title for the person in charge of lost and found was animal services clerk. The job description included assisting the public in search of lost pets; however, most of this person's time was handling lost and found.

There was only one animal care specialist level. There were no provisions for advancement within the specialist position. The minimum job requirements for the animal care specialist were an eighth grade education and six months of experience in the care and feeding of animals. After one year in this position animal care specialists were eligible to become veterinary technicians.

According to the organizational chart provided, MDPASU was under the direction of a captain and most sections, including north and south shelter operations, the investigative section, and the code enforcement section, were headed up by a lieutenant or sergeant. However, these job

descriptions did not mention anything about animal care, nor did they reflect the jobs that were actually being performed.

The job description for veterinarian only mentioned that the person will work with dogs. There was no mention of working with cats or other animals, which does not reflect the actual job.

The job description for animal control supervisor stated that he or she is responsible for planning, assigning and reviewing the work of subordinate communications operators; however, The HSUS could not find such a position on the organizational chart.

Some of the illustrative tasks outlined in the job descriptions were not being completed by the staff. For example, illustrative tasks for the veterinarian included examining all dogs impounded and implementing a program for the control of veterinary communicable diseases. During the site visit few of the animals impounded were examined by a veterinarian and the disease control practices observed in animal housing areas were extremely ineffective. The illustrative tasks for animal care specialist included maintaining strict accountability by keeping animals with their respective records. This did not appear to be a priority as The HSUS team found many animals without records during the site visit.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ All job descriptions should be updated to reflect the actual job tasks being performed. As responsibilities change, job descriptions should also change.
- ✓ All staff job descriptions should be reviewed on a regular basis to make sure that they are still accurate and relevant. "On a regular basis" means at least as often as the strategic plan is updated; every three to five years. Regular evaluations of each person should be conducted routinely using those job descriptions (and SOPs) as the baseline.
- ✓ Increase the minimal educational requirement of any job to be a high school diploma or GED. In addition, consider increasing the animal care and feeding requirements to more than six months and specify if that experience must be in a veterinary office, animal shelter, kennel, etc.
- ✓ Develop a job description for each position within MDPASU.
- ✓ Create a separate job description for the lost and found coordinator. This job was specialized in comparison to other clerks.
- ✓ Make some provisions for advancement within the specialist classification such as Specialist I, Specialist II, etc.

**Discussion:**

Due to high stress levels and varying philosophical points of view in this field, some agencies are starting to administer personality profile tests to better qualify individuals with compatibility to the specific organizational needs.

## 5.19 STAFF UNIFORMS

### **Observations:**

MDPASU did have a basic dress code but it did not specify that staff would wear a designated uniform. It required staff to wear clothing that would not prevent any safety issue such as dangling jewelry, loose clothing that could get caught, or glasses other than prescription.

The majority of staff wore an identifiable uniform although there did not always seem to be consistency as to what uniform was worn. For the most part, animal care specialist wore dark green shirts with brown slacks and supervisors wore white shirts with brown slacks. Some staff was wearing name tags and others were not.

Given the nature of the work that has to be done in an animal shelter, staff was generally clean and neat in appearance.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Professional name tags should be provided and all staff *and* volunteers must be mandated to wear them at all times when on duty.
- ✓ Management should routinely inspect and perform on-going replacement of worn or damaged uniforms.
- ✓ Consider providing plastic aprons for employees and volunteers who work with bleach. This will help protect their clothing from stains.

### **Discussion:**

Shelter management should hold staff to the highest standard of appearance. Adequate resources must be made available so employees can present themselves to the public in the most professional manner possible. A neatly presented, practical uniform specifically designed for direct animal care work enhances the professionalism and helps to improve public respect. This includes appropriate outerwear, such as jackets or sweatshirts to be worn in cool or rainy weather.

The importance of customer service and supervision in an animal shelter environment cannot be understated. Consumers expect and demand professional, knowledgeable sales people. Shelters require that visitors to the shelter be supervised in order to minimize injuries to both animals and people. Therefore, it is important that the visiting public be easily able to recognize a member of the agency's staff.

## 5.2 ANIMAL CARE AND HANDLING

### 5.21 DOG/ CAT CARE

#### **Observations:**

Animal care was mediocre and improvements could be made in terms of keeping the animals as

comfortable as possible in a shelter environment. This is not necessarily a reflection of staff's shortcomings but rather a lack of direction from management.

None of the animals were provided with any comfort items such as toys, soft bedding, or hiding spaces. The cats in B and C Wards were not provided with litter boxes and were forced to urinate and defecate on the newspaper in their small cage adding to their stress.

One kitten was observed with no water, no litter box, and no food. This kitten was very sick and had been scheduled for euthanasia; however, euthanasia did not occur until several hours after this kitten had been without basic provisions for care. In addition, some of the dogs knocked their water dishes over frequently leaving them without water in very hot weather.

Many of the animal housing areas were overcrowded; especially B Ward. Some cages were constantly filled with feces and urine because they were overcrowded and staff could not keep up with cleaning them, especially when a mother dog and her litter were being housed in small cages. Segregation was inconsistent as some dog kennels only housed one animal where others had five or more in one kennel. At one point, one of the kennels in N Ward designated for sick dogs had 13 animals in it. In addition, animals were not always separated by size and small dogs were observed to be housed with very large dogs. The HSUS team observed a rather serious fight break out in B Ward. The cage had too many dogs in it at the time. There was no staff in the area so an HSUS team member broke up the fight by spraying water on the dogs. As long as overcrowding continues, fights and serious disease issues will be inevitable.

Cats and dogs were housed in several wards together, which is extremely stressful for already frightened cats. Some cats in the wards with dogs were showing signs of fear such as cowering in the backs of their cages but nothing was done to alleviate their fear. At one point The HSUS team asked a staff member to put a towel over the bottom half of a cage housing a cat and her newborns because she was ignoring them and was obviously stressed.

Animals that were about to whelp were not given whelping boxes, or any substitute. Water bowls were set on the floor of the cages with mothers and young, which could be a drowning hazard.

Dogs were often tethered during cleaning and at intake. The disposable type leashes used were short and often did not allow the dogs to lie down or move freely, which seemed to contribute to them pulling tight around their necks and choking them.

Music was played relatively loudly in some areas including N and A Wards, which appeared to be for the staff and not to comfort the animals. In general the stress level for the animals was high and could be lessened with some minor adjustments.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Every cat or kitten should be provided with a litter box regardless of whether the animal is scheduled for euthanasia.
  
- ✓ Animals should have access to clean, fresh water at all times. The only exception is if a veterinarian has advised against it due to surgery being scheduled, etc. Assign a staff

- person or volunteer to walk through the shelter every hour to monitor water availability and fill any bowls that are low or empty.
- ✓ Immediately discontinue housing cats in rooms with dogs. See section 6.3, Isolation and Separation for room recommendations.
  - ✓ Provide proper training for all staff and volunteers on recognizing, reducing and/or preventing stress in all animals.<sup>25, 26, 27</sup>
  - ✓ The HSUS recommends that a shared 5-foot by 10-foot kennel should house no more than two large, two medium, or three small dogs. MDPASU's facility is inadequate and these guidelines may be difficult to adhere to; however, under no circumstances should 13 dogs be housed in a kennel together even if they are awaiting euthanasia.
  - ✓ At minimum puppies, kittens, nursing mothers, and elderly animals should be provided with something soft to lie on to keep them as comfortable as possible. Blankets, sheets, or towels work well for dogs and toilet seat covers, towels, or pillowcases work well for cats. These items can be donated. This will create an additional workload, and provisions for doing laundry on a daily basis would need to be made. This would be an appropriate job for a volunteer.
  - ✓ Provide some type of whelping box for animals about to deliver. The box should have a blanket or towel to provide some cushion for the animals. In addition, if in a cage, a sheet or pillowcase should be draped on the bottom half of the cage door to afford some privacy and to minimize stress for the mother.
  - ✓ At minimum, mount water bowls on cage doors for animals that are about to or have recently given birth; however, this is a good idea for all cages. This will prevent the drowning of any offspring that could otherwise accidentally fall or crawl into a water bowl placed on the cage floor.
  - ✓ Frightened and stressed cats should be provided with a thin cloth (like a sheet or pillowcase) on their cage door so people or other animals cannot look inside, or be provided with shoeboxes or something similar for privacy. Sheets, pillowcases, and shoeboxes can be obtained by simply asking the public to donate them. Remove the sheets and boxes during cleaning. Only the bottom half of a cat's cage door should be covered to allow for ventilation.
  - ✓ Once MDPASU has implemented the basics of animal care, consider providing species appropriate toys to all animals to decrease stress and increase mental stimulation. Toys do not have to be elaborate or expensive. Cats can be provided with shower curtain rings attached to their cage doors or rice filled film containers. Dogs can be provided with ropes tied in knots or tennis balls as long as the drains have covers to prevent blockage.

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25 Denver Dumb Friends League, "Recognizing and Reducing Stress for Shelter Animals"  
26 Rondout Valley Kennels, Inc., "When Something Must be Done"  
27 Rondout Valley Kennels, Inc., "Stress Signals Checklist"

Ask the public to donate appropriate toys. Do not transfer toys from animal to animal without properly disinfecting them (See section 6.2, Disease Control and Sanitation).

- ✓ House animals appropriately based on their needs and personalities:
  - All kennels and cages in each area should be identified and marked as high, medium or low stress and a stress level chart should be made accordingly.<sup>28</sup>
  - After identifying the high stress kennels/cages, alter them if possible, to make them lower stress. This may be accomplished by moving cages so animals aren't looking at each other, determining sources of loud noise and muffling them,<sup>29, 30, 31</sup> blocking visual stimulations, etc. An example would be the placement of a dividing wall down the center isle of the West Wing dog kennels. This will prevent the dogs on either side of the walkway from seeing each other and will reduce stress tremendously.
  - In the high stress kennels/cages that can't be altered, only house the animals who may be able to tolerate higher stress.<sup>32, 33</sup>
  - Staff and/or trained volunteers should walk through the animal housing areas daily using a standardized form (one for dogs and one for cats) to note the behaviors of animals showing signs of stress.<sup>34</sup> Animals that are exhibiting stress should be moved to a lower stress kennel/cage.
- ✓ Consider using volunteers to give "people time" and "quiet time" to the animals.<sup>35</sup>
- ✓ If music is played in the animal housing areas ensure that only classical music is played as studies show it may create a less stressful environment for the animals.<sup>36</sup> Consistently monitor the volume to make sure it isn't too loud.
- ✓ Consider ideas from other organizations to make the animals more comfortable and to increase the level of their care.
- ✓ Discontinue tethering dogs with the leashes currently being used. Consider providing each animal care specialist with a six foot British-style slip lead that they are responsible for keeping track of. These will be more safe and comfortable for the dogs and staff.

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28 Stress reduction program chart example

29 *Shelter Pages 2004*, "Noise Reduction Products," page 104\*

30 *Pet Services Journal*, "Controlling Noise in the Kennel," May 2003

31 *HSUS Animal Sheltering* magazine, "The Right Stuff," September/October 2004\*

32 *HSUS Animal Sheltering* magazine, "How to Set Up a Comfy Cat Cage," November/December 2001\*

33 *HSUS Animal Sheltering* magazine, "How to Set Up a Comfy Dog Kennel," January/February 2002\*

34 *101 More Great Shelter Ideas*, "Kennel Walk Through Form"

35 *101 More Great Shelter Ideas*, "Quiet Time"

36 *HSUS Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Roll Over for Beethoven," November/December 2002\*



**Discussion:**

Sick animals should be provided with a heightened level of care, not less. These animals have greater need for the basics and deserve proper care even if they are scheduled for euthanasia.

When determining the stress level of each kennel or cage, keep in mind that sights, sounds, and smells all play a part. The whir of a fan, the sound of a door closing, a radio playing rock music, dishes being clanged together during washing, or a paging system can all be noises that we don't consider scary, but may very well be terrifying to a confused and frightened animal. A kennel in a high traffic area may send one dog into a spinning frenzy every time someone walks by or it may be just the right place for an older, calmer dog. The same goes for cats; you may have one cat that likes to act as the "greeter" for the room, while another cat may want a calmer setting.

The quality of animal housing is one of the most important aspects of preventative health care and disease control. Any animal in a shelter environment will experience some level of stress due to the change of environment, separation from family, and the daily handling by strangers. Cats and kittens are particularly susceptible to stress when removed from familiar surroundings. When subjected to the sounds of barking and whining of puppies and dogs, cats can experience extreme distress.

Shelter animals must be housed in a way that minimizes stress, provides for their special needs, affords protection from the elements, provides adequate ventilation, and minimizes the spread of disease and parasites. In addition to separating animals by species, ideally, depending on facility restrictions, efforts should be made to house them in "life-stage groups" keeping animals with different stages of immunity, such as young animals, nursing mothers, sick or injured animals, and fully vaccinated adults, well separated within the shelter. Animals that are stressed or recuperating from injuries or illness must have a quiet place to rest during their recovery period. New shelter designs should reflect these animal management concepts.

## **5.22 OTHER ANIMAL CARE**

**Observations:**

Other animals include everything other than dogs and cats such as small animals, wildlife, exotics, and farm animals; however, no such animals were being housed at MDPASU during the site visit.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓. Use The HSUS as a resource for information on caring for animals other than dogs and cats.

**Discussion:**

In the event that MDPASU is responsible for the care of an animal other than a dog or a cat, proper precaution must be taken to ensure that the animal is being cared for appropriately for its species. Animals not receiving the proper nutrition and care can quickly become ill and die.

## 5.23 ANIMAL HANDLING

### **Observations:**

Other than limited information in the euthanasia procedures, MDPASU did not have SOPs addressing animal handling.

The HSUS team did not witness any intentional abusive techniques used during the site visit; however, the inappropriate manner in which some animals were handled was of great concern.

Many staff members handled the animals gently and with care; however, overall staff appeared poorly trained. The HSUS team observed a staff member cleaning one of the puppy rooms picking up puppies by the arms and under the armpits and tossing them back into their cages. The staff member did not seem malicious, just untrained and unsupervised. The HSUS team observed two other staff members carrying animals similarly by their arms and armpits. One of those staff members carrying a puppy by one front leg immediately supported the puppy in both hands when she noticed The HSUS team in the room. The fact that she adjusted her handling technique once she realized she was being observed was cause for heightened concern. This lead The HSUS team to conclude that this person knew better yet chose to mishandle the animal regardless. Personnel with this attitude should not be working in an animal shelter.

The HSUS team found feral cat handling to be appalling and it was brought up during the site visit wrap up meeting as an issue that needed to be addressed immediately. Using control poles, feral cats in traps and in carriers were poled around the neck and pulled out of the trap or carrier. The cats observed thrashed around so violently that they could have easily been injured. The cats were then lifted by the control poles around their necks without any body support and put into the upper level cages. This was all done in B Ward with loudly barking dogs in adjacent cages. The cats were given no comfort items or places to hide and appeared terrified as they huddled in the backs of the cages.

Adult dogs were typically leashed and walked, which is appropriate. Other than carriers, The HSUS team did not see any other animal handling equipment being used.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Written guidelines of animal handling must be expanded in the SOPs to clarify expectations and training.
- ✓ Staff should be trained in removing feral cats from traps and carriers in a quiet room using a feral cat handling system. The current method of feral cat handling should be stopped immediately.
- ✓ Animals should never be carried by one leg, by the neck, or dragged on a leash. Proper safe handling and restraint of animals (including fractious animals) should be immediately taught by an independent source to protect staff members and the animals in their care. Staff safety should be the primary concern when transporting and handling animals. Staff should be trained to read animal body language and to recognize signs of stress in animals.

The HSUS, National Animal Control Association (NACA), American Humane Association (AHA), and other national and local groups offer animal handling and restraint seminars, textbooks, and videotapes. The training may include information such as:

- Animals are never to be free-lifted from the ground or hung using a control pole and that every animal's body weight must be well supported prior to lifting.<sup>37</sup>
  - Do not use control poles on cats. Use nets or feral cat handling systems for difficult cats.
  - Lift dogs by supporting body underneath.
  - Use carriers to transport cats, wildlife and exotics.
  - Develop and supervise a system to ascertain that animal handling and restraint policies, procedures and training programs are continually reviewed and updated, in practice as well as in writing.
  - Inspect all control poles to ensure that cables are smooth, release appropriately, and have intact bite sleeves. All bent poles should be discarded to ensure staff and animal safety.
  - Ensure that a high-quality cable cutter is available and easily accessible to allow for the quick removal of any defective control pole cable release mechanisms.
  - Place all handling equipment on a weekly maintenance program that includes the immediate repair or removal of any faulty equipment.
- ✓ To facilitate responsible animal care and control while assuring staff safety, we recommend that MDPASU staff have ready access to the following animal handling equipment at minimum and receive instruction on its proper use:
- Capture gloves - These can be critical in preventing injuries to both humans and animals, and in ensuring that animals are handled humanely. Gloves are a wise investment; they should be sized to fit snugly, made of a penetration-resistant material, and lined with a puncture-resistant material. Welder's gloves, while similar in appearance, do not offer the needed protection, and lend a false sense of security. Do not use garden gloves as bite protection.
  - Crates, cages and cardboard carriers - Many sizes and types of cages and crates should always be available for a variety of situations. Cardboard carriers can be used for many purposes, including the transportation of diseased or dead animals, and to provide a quiet environment for animals undergoing the euthanasia process.

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37 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, *The Complete "How To" Series*, "How to Use a Control Pole" \*

- Caging and transfer systems for unsocialized cats - Trap transfer cages and squeeze cages are essential equipment for animal care and control. These caging systems provide for the anesthesia, euthanasia, or transfer of feral and unsocialized cats without need for any human handling or intervention whatsoever.
  - Feral cat handling systems - Designed to provide an alluring “safe place” for feral and unsocialized cats to hide, these versatile cages allow for field pick-up, daily care, cage cleaning, monitoring, treatment, transfer, anesthesia, or euthanasia of feral or unsocialized cats without handling.<sup>38</sup>
  - Nets - Nets are essential pieces of equipment which can enable any staff to handle a variety of animals with minimal need for restraint. Nets should be sturdy, at least twice as deep as their diameter, and flat on the end instead of round. Many nets allow for the capture and removal of unsocialized cats with little difficulty.
  - Leashes - Leashes serve many purposes, and should be readily available for all staff. A number of manufacturers offer sturdy rope-type slip leashes at a nominal price.
  - Muzzles - Commercially manufactured muzzles are available from many animal equipment companies in a range of sizes to fit dogs and cats.
  - Pole syringes and blow guns - These devices allow for humane chemical immobilization of fractious, feral, unsocialized or aggressive animals without physical handling.
  - Stretchers - Most animal stretchers have plastic or vinyl covers designed to help transport injured, anesthetized, or sedated animals safely and comfortably. Many come with a cover that fits over the prone animal, attaching to the stretcher with a material such as Velcro.
  - Towels and blankets - These items can be used for a multitude of purposes, including capturing small animals, covering cages and traps, and providing comfort to animals housed within transport compartments.
- ✓ Staff should be held accountable by their supervisors and supervisors should appropriately handle animals to set a good example. There should be disciplinary action against any staff person who inappropriately handles any animal.

**Discussion:**

It is evident that, through SOPs, management must clarify specific animal handling procedures and use these SOPs to hold staff accountable to the expectations of the agency. This will allow staff to: a) better assess the temperament of the animals in their care; b) identify key variables within the physical surroundings; and then c) apply the most appropriate type of restraint (if

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38 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “Feral Cat Handling System” product review, May/June 1999\*

necessary) for each given situation.

Some training areas in animal handling and restraint may seem elementary - especially for "seasoned" staff - but if the staff has not been provided adequate information relating to basic concepts, they will not recognize the underlying reasons for correct animal handling techniques and procedures. As a result of staff's lack of awareness of basic principles, inappropriate techniques will be passed on from each employee generation to the next. The same might be said for many, if not all, aspects of a modern animal care and control program. The staff needs to know not only the right techniques, but also the rationale behind them.

Control poles, which have become a standard piece of equipment for most animal control departments, are designed as a defensive or protective safety tool for guiding fractious animals, and not for offensive maneuvers against animals, or as a matter of routine, convenience, or speed.

The repeated use of control poles cannot be substituted for professional animal capture and handling skills. Although staff safety is an important priority, the humane handling of animals must also be ensured, and stress for both the animal and handler should be eliminated whenever possible. Training and guidance by qualified animal care and control experts would greatly reduce the incidence of use of the control pole.

It is important to note that an animal handler's most important tool cannot be found in any catalog. By far, the greatest asset to animal handling staff is knowledge. Personnel trained in animal behavior and humane handling can ensure that they are handling animals - and employing equipment - in the safest, most humane manner possible. To make quick assessments, staff must be able to accurately interpret the situation (including an animal's behavior) and choose an appropriate response within minutes - often seconds. The more humane a staff member's restraint or capture technique is the more efficient and effective that staff member will be.

The HSUS team recognizes that standard professional animal handling equipment (such as high quality gloves, nets and caging) can be relatively expensive. However, the proper equipment is well worth the investment for the staff as well as the animals needing care. We strongly recommend that MDPASU invest in its staff by regularly allocating resources and funding for organization-wide training opportunities and appropriate animal handling equipment.

## **6.0 VETERINARY/ HEALTH ISSUES**

### **6.1 GENERAL SHELTER MEDICINE/ HEALTH CARE**

#### **Observations:**

During the site visit MDPASU failed to follow its own SOPs and lacked a well-defined system for processing incoming animals and for properly managing their health.

Many of the dogs housed in the shelter exhibited a variety of symptoms of illness, including runny eyes and noses, coughing, diarrhea, vomiting, skin conditions, lethargy and loss of appetite. The group housing arrangement, particularly in the N Ward made disease transmission quite inevitable. Even though animals that appeared to be sick were removed and euthanized, chances were excellent that a dog in the same kennel or on either side would become ill as well. Cleaning methods and the movement of staff from sick to healthy areas further enabled disease transmission (See sections 6.2, Disease Control and Sanitation and 6.3, Isolation and Separation).

Generally, the cats housed in the two cat adoption wards appeared to be healthy during the site visit.

If an animal care specialist noticed that an animal in general housing was sick, he or she would notify a veterinary technician and the animal would be moved to a sick ward. If an animal had been selected for adoption and was found to be sick, the adopter was notified to choose another animal. Sick animals were not treated and according to one higher level staff person, once animals are placed into B Ward, they don't receive any veterinary care at all.

Whether already chosen for adoption, in stray hold, or past stray hold, sick animals were euthanized. Section 4-III of the SOPs and Code of Miami-Dade County stated that sick animals could be destroyed before the end of the stray period if the following three conditions were met: 1) there was no way to determine the owner of the animal; 2) a Florida veterinarian certified in writing that the animal was suffering from a specific communicable disease or extreme disease, injury, or neglect; and 3) the shelter manager or unit head approved the euthanasia in writing.

Sick animals were not euthanized for two exceptions noted by The HSUS team. If an approved placement partner was contacted or saw a sick animal that they wanted, they could take him. During the site visit, only sick animals were released to placement partners. The other exception was observed during the site visit on one occasion. An adopter came into the shelter after receiving notification that the dog he wished to adopt was sick. He complained to the rescue coordinator who consequently arranged for him to foster the dog through a placement partner (See sections 8.4, Community Placement Partners and 8.5, Foster Care Placement).

The veterinary staff at MDPASU focused on three areas: performing spay/neuter surgeries, performing pre-surgery exams, and euthanasia. Veterinary care for the shelter animals appeared to be a low priority. Other than the one day that a veterinarian prepared the sick animal log, veterinarians were not observed examining or providing care for the shelter animals (See section 6.7, Sterilization Services).

The HSUS team made note of several examples of a lack of veterinary care during the site visit. A mother cat with three newborn kittens was being housed in C Ward, which was also housing dogs. The kittens were lying in different areas of the cage away from their mother. She did not have a litter box or food. She appeared to be very hot and stressed and displayed no interest in her kittens. The HSUS team asked staff to move the cat and her kittens to more appropriate housing but staff declined stating that there was nowhere to put her, except with adoptable animals. The HSUS team then asked staff to partially cover the cage door with a towel to give her more privacy, which staff did. Later that day, there were only two kittens in the cage. The following day, there were two dead kittens in the cage right after cleaning in the room was completed. The kittens had been dead for a few hours. A veterinarian examined the cat and determined she was not producing milk; however, this was not discovered until at least three days after she gave birth and the kittens had already been deprived of food and had died. This type of oversight is unacceptable.

A dog in N Ward sick kennels awaiting euthanasia was in dire need of medical attention. This attention was only rendered upon the request of The HSUS team although the animal's problems had been brought to the attention of key staff the day before. The dog had not been euthanized immediately because staff was waiting a few days to see if a placement partner could take her. The animal in question was a red, female Doberman that had thick, purulent nasal and ocular discharge, was lethargic, weak, dehydrated, emaciated, tick ridden, and was having difficulty breathing. It is appalling that an animal could be allowed to exist in an animal shelter over a period of days in this condition with no acknowledgement of her condition or effort to alleviate her suffering. It is important to understand that animal shelters are not exempt from the provisions of F.S.S. 828.12, Cruelty to Animals, and that failure to provide necessary sustenance, shelter, or care, may be construed as a violation of said statute.

Another example was a litter of seven puppies that had been divided into two cages, three in one and four in the other. The first day they had diarrhea, which was mentioned to staff that were present at the time. The following day, they had explosive bloody diarrhea; however, nothing had been done to determine what was causing the diarrhea nor were these animals treated as if they may have had a contagious disease. The symptoms of these puppies were ignored until The HSUS team mentioned it to a supervisor.

During the site visit, medical and treatment information was not being recorded even when animals were provided medical treatment during their stay at the shelter. The medical treatment field of Chameleon was not being used. If an adopted animal was observed to be sick, a memo was placed in Chameleon stating that the adopter had been notified. Memos did not include symptoms of illness.

MDPASU had three forms to record all medical information on the animals in the shelter and those that came in for sterilization surgery. The *Daily Animal Sick Log* was used to list animals slated for euthanasia. The *Adoption List* was used for the pre-surgery exam for animals that had been adopted. Of the forms used the *Adoption List* was the best, because it listed specific tests given and results. However, this information was not input into Chameleon. There were two forms both called *Surgery Log*. It appeared that one was used to list shelter animals scheduled for surgery and the other was used for public animals scheduled for surgery.

There was no method for looking up the health status of a particular animal unless it had been chosen for adoption. One could then look up the identification number in Chameleon, look up the memo stating that the animal was sick, and then go back to the *Adoption List* for that date to determine the reason. The veterinary technicians would also attach a *Sick/Missing log* to the *Adoption List* indicating which animals could not be adopted because they were either sick or could not be found in the shelter. On 6/14/04, out of 15 animals scheduled for pre-surgery examinations, four were sick, one had been euthanized, one was already neutered and two were missing. On 6/17/04, out of 17 animals scheduled, three were missing, one had been returned to his owner, one had not completed the stray hold and two were sick.

MDPASU lacked medication and treatment log forms for sick and injured animals within the facility. The HSUS team observed a veterinarian give a dog an injection of penicillin because he had gotten into a fight with a dog in his kennel and his mouth was bleeding. This treatment was not recorded anywhere, and the dog was moved to a new kennel. The current condition of animal symptoms and treatment progress, or lack thereof, was not recorded. Failure to properly record medical information may be a violation of the Florida Veterinary Medical Practice Act, FSS Ch. 470.

It was difficult to communicate with many members of the veterinary staff, both veterinarians and technicians. Many of them told The HSUS team that they don't speak English well and this was evident in our discussions and attempts to ask questions. Staff often did not understand common English veterinary terms. Much of the staff at the shelter and the public served by the shelter does not speak Spanish. This could lead to misunderstandings and mistakes regarding animal care and treatment.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Re-examine MDPASU's philosophy regarding the sheltering of animals and establish overall objectives and goals. The goals and objectives should mandate that MDPASU concentrate its efforts towards creating a well-structured system for creating a healthy environment and providing humane care for the animals in its shelter facility.
- ✓ Review and update the SOPs to assess, provide, and monitor the needs of animals for veterinary care such as:<sup>39</sup>
  - How are sick animals to be processed?
  - What diseases, if any, will be treated?
  - What are the options for animals that cannot be treated?
  - How will diseases be diagnosed and treated and who is responsible for diagnosis and treatment? What role do the veterinarians play?
  - How will treatments be documented and presented to potential adopters?
  - How will MDPASU handle follow-up care and post-adoption ramifications?
- ✓ Place a greater emphasis on caring for the animals in the shelter. To accomplish this, at least one veterinarian and/or one registered veterinary technician should be assigned each day to evaluate the health status of all animals residing in the shelter. This does not mean

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39 Kate F. Hurley, "Developing Infectious Disease Policies and Protocols in an Animal Shelter"



a full physical exam but rather eyeballing each animal to make sure their health has not deteriorated. Recording the information on a simple form will help track changes in behavior, eating, elimination, etc.<sup>40</sup> This should be included in the SOPs.

- ✓ At least one veterinarian per shift should be overseeing care for the animals in the shelter, rather than having all veterinarians performing surgery each day. If less surgery can be done, perform less public surgeries per day (See section 6.7 Sterilization Services).
- ✓ When making their rounds, veterinarians or veterinary technicians should start with the animals in adoption, and then move to healthy hold, quarantine, and lastly isolation. This will help prevent the spread of disease.
- ✓ Sick and injured animals must be given basic veterinary treatment to minimize their pain and suffering until their outcome, whether it is euthanasia, adoption, breed placement group, return to owner, etc.
- ✓ If animals are to be euthanized for medical reasons, particularly before the end of the stray hold, the animal's condition must be determined by qualified personnel and documented in accordance with the Code of Miami-Dade County Sec. 5-11.1 (5)(b).
- ✓ Train staff and veterinarians how to use Chameleon and record all medical information in the appropriate fields in this program.
- ✓ Utilize one chart on which all sick/injured animals are recorded according to SOPs developed. All information can be kept in Chameleon and a daily report/chart can be printed. This chart should be available to all staff so that animals are not overlooked. A veterinarian or other person with knowledge of appropriate veterinary care for sheltered animals should check this chart several times throughout the day to ensure that animals are appropriately assessed, treated, released to a placement partner or euthanized as soon as possible. This is important to prevent unnecessary animal suffering. This chart should have each animal's number, location, diagnosis/symptoms, treatment schedule, and the initial of the staff member administering the treatment.
- ✓ Use a medication/treatment form for each sick/injured animal according to the SOPs<sup>41</sup>, in concert with the sick/injured animal chart. This form should be maintained daily indicating medications/treatments given to animals and by whom. This form should contain the animal's name, number, and a brief description. It should have the name of the medication being given, the amount being given and how many times per day it is given. It should also have a place to record information such as temperature, and observations such as eating, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargic or alert and responsive, etc. Medications/treatments should be given in accordance with veterinary recommendations. This information should ultimately be filed with the animal's record and/or record this information in the medical treatment field of Chameleon. If the animal is reclaimed or adopted, this information should be provided to the owner or adopter.

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40 Health and behavior tracking form example

41 Medication/treatment form examples

- ✓ Enter all health examination, diagnosis, testing, vaccination, treatment and surgery information in Chameleon when it is done, or use a log form for each day and transfer the information to Chameleon later.
- ✓ Address and resolve the communication challenges due to language differences and English proficiency.
- ✓ Provide encouragement and financial support for the shelter veterinarians to network with other shelter veterinarians and continually gain access to new and cutting-edge information relating to shelter medicine in order to maintain and improve the level of veterinary care available to the animals within MDPASU. There are several nearby shelters with veterinary staff that have offered assistance to MDPASU. There are also several local veterinarians who have expressed concern about the condition of the animals in the shelter and have offered assistance.
- ✓ Create and implement an SOP for handling major disease outbreaks within the shelter, although major disease outbreaks will be greatly minimized if the ventilation, cleaning and animal processing recommendations made by The HSUS are implemented.
- ✓ Disciplinary action should be taken against any staff member who fails to quickly report any injury or illness of an animal to the veterinary staff.

**Discussion:**

While it is impossible to totally prevent the spread of disease within the shelter setting, it is possible to reduce it. It is essential that the care of all animals be monitored and treatments provided when necessary in order to: a) control the occurrence of diseases and parasites in the shelter; b) best protect the health and comfort of the animals; c) protect the public's health; d) provide overall humane care and treatment of sheltered animals; and e) engender public trust in the level of care provided for their homeless animals.

Due to the number of animals MDPASU handles and the lack of financial resources, it is understandable that they do not have the luxury to house animals long-term or treat animals past their stray hold period; however, no animal should go without basic veterinary care during its mandatory stray hold.

The responsibility of caring for Miami's stray and homeless animals is a serious one. It brings with it a responsibility to individually assess the health status and special needs of every animal admitted to the shelter soon after admission, and to provide care for those needs throughout the animal's stay at the shelter.<sup>42</sup>

As progress is made to place more animals through adoption and reclaim, people will have more questions about what tests and vaccinations an animal has received. Information will be more accessible on the permanent health record. For example, if someone questions why an animal was euthanized, the health record should show if the animal tested positive for leukemia or

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42 *Health Care for Sheltered Animals*, by Leslie Sinclair, DVM, Director of Companion Animal Care, HSUS Animal Care EXPO, 1997

heartworm. Entering this information into the medical treatment field on the computer will make it easy to access and print out.

A network of veterinarians interested in and familiar with animal shelter practice has been developed and a specialized training conference for shelter veterinarians is presented annually.<sup>43</sup> Animal shelter practice is a new and unique field of veterinary medicine, and is one which brings with it topics, procedures, and dilemmas that do not arise in other veterinary practice situations. Staying in touch with new innovations will help ensure that staff stays up-to-date, well trained, and able to make necessary modifications to protocols as needed. Additionally, other animal welfare organizations in the area have offered to assist MDPASU with training and animal care issues.

## 6.2 DISEASE CONTROL AND SANITATION

### **Observations:**

The lack of isolation and separation made disease control and sanitation extremely difficult to manage. MDPASU staff also did little to minimize disease cross contamination amongst animals. Staff was observed handling multiple animals without washing or disinfecting their hands in between, including after touching animals that were obviously sick. Only veterinary staff was observed wearing gloves for animal handling.

As mentioned in section 6.1, General Shelter Medicine/ Health Care, a litter of puppies had bloody diarrhea. In the morning their cage was soaked with diarrhea to the point that it had run out of the cage, down the wall, and onto the floor. During the cleaning process in this ward, two dogs were tethered very close to the bloody diarrhea. The animal care specialist did not exercise any precautions to prevent the spread of disease in this situation. The cage with the sick puppies was one of the last to be cleaned. Consequently, during the cleaning process, the caretaker walked through the contaminated area a number of times potentially spreading disease wherever he stepped.

There were no hand sanitizers or footbaths in any of the animal housing areas, and there were limited convenient areas for staff to wash their hands with soap and water. Airflow was provided by fans, each of which blew air from one ward into at least one other which essentially pushed "sick" air around the building. Cleaning and sanitation practices were below industry standards and inconsistent from one staff member to the next. These factors further exacerbated the incidence of disease within the shelter environment.

MDPASU did have SOPs for cleaning procedures, which is commendable; however, they were inadequate and loosely followed, which appeared to be due to a lack of training and/or supervision. Staff appeared to be doing their best with the resources and training offered to them. The SOPs for cattery cleaning was much more detailed than the kennel cleaning procedure; however, all the SOPs needed to be reviewed and updated.

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43 *Animal Shelter Veterinarian*, A Publication of the Association of Animal Shelter Veterinarians, [www.shelternvet.com](http://www.shelternvet.com)

Before cleaning started each day, the animal care specialist supervisor mixed up a batch of A33, a disinfectant/detergent, from a hose proportion regulator into a large open barrel. Each animal care specialist would get a bucket of the A33 mixture from the large barrel. They would then go to the storage room and get a scraper, a squeegee, a long handled brush and a trash can. The specialists assigned to clean the cat wards would also get a trashcan filled with cat litter. Staff members were scheduled to clean different wards daily. The long handled brushes, scrapers and squeegees were all kept in the storage room and used throughout the building on any given day. The brush used in a sick ward one day could be used in the puppy ward the next.

All food and water dishes were stainless steel, which is preferred, with the exception of the feeders in the dog kennels. Litter boxes were plastic but staff stated that they used to use disposable litter boxes. An industrial type dishwasher located in G Ward was broken and dishes were washed by being placed in the bucket of cleaning solution for several minutes and then rinsed.

In addition to the A33, there was also a large plastic 55-gallon drum full of clear liquid lying on its side on top of bricks. Written on the drum was "bleach"; however, staff stated that there had been no bleach at the shelter for over a month. When they do have bleach, they mix 1-gallon of bleach with 55 gallons of water and use it until it is gone. This mixture is not effective for pathogen removal and mixing such a large quantity (staff stated that it lasted about a month) means that the bleach has become useless long before a fresh batch has been mixed. Staff stated that the drum currently contained L-phse, a disinfectant containing phenyl-phenol, which animal control officers (ACOs) used to clean their trucks. The cleaning process observed was as follows:

After being removed from their dirty cages, animals in B and C Wards were either placed in a clean empty cage, tethered to the front of the cage or put into an open-topped kennel on wheels while their cages were cleaned one or two at a time. The transfer cages were not cleaned in between uses. In L and M Wards, the puppies/dogs were let out of their cages to roam in the room while the cages were being cleaned one at a time, which allowed them to have physical contact with other dogs exacerbating the spread of disease.

Specifically in M Ward, once a puppy was removed from his cage, the bowls and newspaper were removed and the cage was rinsed with water from a hose. The cage was then scrubbed with a long handled brush dipped in a bucket of A33 solution. Appropriately, all sides and door of the cages were scrubbed. During scrubbing, the brush banged very loudly against the cage sides and back, frightening the other animals still in the adjacent cages. Stuck on feces were scraped off with a long handled metal scraper, which was not disinfected between cages. The cage was rinsed with water in less than 3 minutes, dried with a squeegee, new newspaper placed in it and the puppy was returned to the cage. During the process of cleaning a top level cage, the cage below it (which had already been cleaned) got wet along with the newspaper and the puppies. Bowls were put in a trashcan full of A33 and bleach according to the staff member. The HSUS team is unsure if the staff member thought he was using bleach but was actually using L-phse, which was currently in the barrel labeled bleach.

When the H and I Wards were cleaned, kittens were removed from their cages and put in a

trashcan full of cat litter while cages were cleaned one at a time. The litter can was full so some of them easily jumped out to the floor. The litter boxes, bowls and newspaper were removed. The litter box contents were dumped in the trashcan, and then was rinsed and scrubbed with the long handled brush and A33 solution used to clean the cages. The litter box was held on the floor with the employee's foot and scrubbed with the brush, then rinsed with the hose. The food bowls were stacked on the floor. The cage was then scrubbed with the long handled brush dipped in the A33 solution bucket. The sides were scrubbed but the door was not. The cage was immediately rinsed with water. It was then dried with a squeegee and new newspaper was put in. Fresh litter was put into the wet litter box and returned to the same cage. The water dish was put back in the same cage. If cats were moved into new cages their cage cards were appropriately moved with them. While the top cages were being cleaned, there were cats in the cages below. The cleaning solution and the rinse water splashed into the cages below containing cats. The top of the bank of cages was very dirty during the site visit and it was apparent it had not been cleaned on a regular basis.

In D/E and J/K Wards, dogs were removed from their kennels and tethered to the chain link gate. The animal care specialist stated she was using an N22 solution. Bowls full of the solution were poured on the kennel floor and then the large pieces of feces were scraped up. The kennel was not rinsed prior to the solution application. The kennel was scrubbed with a long handled brush; however, it was filthy with smeared feces and urine, which were then being pushed around with the brush. Walls were sporadically scrubbed. The kennel was immediately rinsed with water from a hose and dried with the squeegee. Fresh food was put in the automatic feeder. The water bowl was upside down in the kennel for the entire process and it was then rinsed and refilled.

Kennels in the N Ward generally contained three to six dogs each. Staff removed dogs from two kennels at a time and tethered them to the chain link fence along the kennels. Staff then hosed the kennels with water, scraped feces, poured a bowl of A33 solution onto the floor, scrubbed the floor with a long handled brush, rinsed it with a hose without letting the disinfectant sit for ten minutes, and then dried the kennel with a squeegee. Water bowls were rinsed with the hose and refilled, and then the dogs were put back into their original kennel. During spot cleaning throughout the day, dogs were not removed and staff was observed yelling at some dogs and spraying them with a hose to make them move.

MDPASU is fortunate to have guillotine doors in the kennels in the West Wing; however, while some of the guillotine doors were appropriately lowered to separate animals from the area being cleaned, others were not. Some animals were sitting in the disinfectant that had been applied to the outside portion of the kennels and many of the dogs were wet. Kennels in the West Wing were cleaned just as the kennels in the N Ward were cleaned. Organic material, such as feces, urine, and hair was not removed from some kennels before the disinfectant was applied. Staff then hosed the kennel with water, scraped feces with the long handled scraper, poured a bowl of A33 solution onto the floor, scrubbed it with a long handled brush, rinsed with water without letting the disinfectant sit for 10 minutes, and dried with a squeegee. Water bowls were rinsed with the hose and refilled.

During the site visit, The HSUS team noticed an ever-present odor of feces and urine even when the kennels appeared to be fairly clean. The odor seemed to be coming from the drains in the

West Wing (See section 4.23, Dog Housing) as the system does not allow for ease of cleaning under portions of the metal drain covers. At The HSUS team's request, the metal plate was removed in one of the West Wing kennels and an abundance of feces, urine and hair was discovered both under the metal plate and in the drain. According to staff, the drain flushes had not worked for a while, consequently there was an accumulation of waste in the gutters. This was the source of the offensive odor and most assuredly contributed to the spread of disease. The HSUS team also noticed that the metal plates would shift back and forth, rotating slightly, when animals stepped on them. This happened more dramatically as the screws holding the plates to the floor became loose.

Automatic feeders were washed once a week according to staff; however, many of them were extremely rusted (See Fig. 18). Staff stated that they use a degreaser (HD) the first Wednesday of every month or on major holidays for all cages and kennels. The hallway floors were scrubbed daily after the wards were cleaned. Staff used the long handled brushes used in the cages and kennels and the A33 solution. The drains in the hallway were not cleaned. The HSUS team noticed that one of the hallway drains was partly blocked with what appeared to be the same hair for three days.

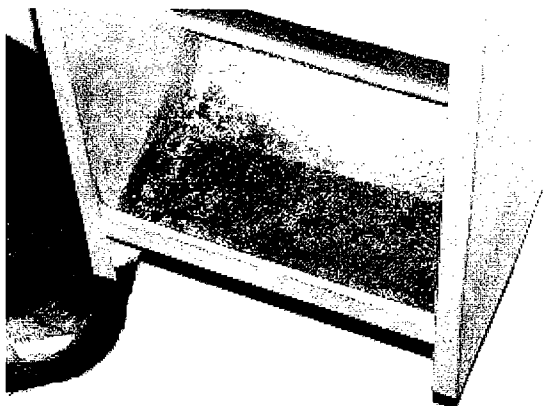


Figure 18

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ It is recommended that MDPASU staff adopt the following cleaning protocol for the dog kennels (N Ward, West Wing, and D/E and J/K Wards) on a daily basis:
  1. Before cleaning, each dog must be moved through the guillotine door to the other side of his kennel in the West Wing. It is important to note that the dog kennels in the West Wing should not be cleaned one by one, but rather all the dogs in a section should be moved to one side of their kennels so the empty side can be cleaned as a whole in order to expedite cleaning of that section.

For dogs in N, D/E, and J/K Wards tethering may be the best option under the current circumstances. However, the current method of tethering the animals to the chain link leaves animals in areas where they have contact with other animals and/or they are sitting in the cleaning area being exposed to the cleaning solution and stressed by the cleaning procedure. Small hooks should be installed outside of the cleaning area and the dogs

should be attached to the hook with leashes while their kennels are cleaned. Tethering must be done in a way where the animal cannot hurt or choke itself or have contact with other dogs. Staff may have to clean N Ward in sections of four or five kennels at a time due to having to tether the dogs. Similarly to West Wing, the kennels should not be cleaned one at a time, but rather several dogs should be moved from their kennels at once and their kennels should be cleaned as a section to speed up the cleaning process.

If the retrofitting described in section 4.23, Dog Housing can be accomplished for N Ward, removing the dogs and tethering them would not be necessary.

2. Remove any animal bedding and all food and water dishes from the kennel. Gather the dirty dishes, wash and disinfect them, and then return them to the kennels/cages; or purchase enough dishes to pick up the dirty ones, replace them with clean dishes, and wash the dirty dishes before use the next day. Note that dishes should be washed and disinfected every day even if they will be used by the same dog.
3. Remove all solid organic waste (such as feces and hair) by scooping it out. Spraying feces with water to wash it down the gutters scatters germs. Removing organic waste is important because disinfectants are much less effective in the presence of organic material. The scoop used must be disinfected between each kennel. This can be accomplished by rotating two scoops in a bucket of disinfecting solution; use one scoop, place it in the bucket, use the other scoop and then place it in the bucket, and so on. This bucket of disinfectant solution should be changed at minimum daily.
4. Rinse away urine with water.
5. The kennel must be scrubbed with either a detergent/disinfectant combination or first with a detergent and *then* with a disinfectant. Use one of the two following options:
  - A. **If using a detergent/disinfectant combination** (such as a quaternary ammonium product), use a bristled scrub brush with medium stiffness to scrub all surfaces within the kennel including the floor, sides, resting board, and top. Gates on the kennels should be cleaned and scrubbed on a daily basis. Use a disinfectant proven specifically effective against various bacteria and viruses common in a shelter environment.

Allow the solution to remain on the surface for the time specified by the manufacturer's instructions. This is extremely important.
  - B. **If using two separate products (a detergent and a disinfectant)** you must first scrub the kennel with the detergent (such as dish soap). Using a bristled scrub brush with medium stiffness, scrub all surfaces within the kennel with the detergent including the floor, sides, resting board, and top. Gates on the kennels should be cleaned and scrubbed on a daily basis.

Rinse the kennel well and *then* apply the disinfectant (such as diluted bleach). Allow the disinfectant to remain on the surface for the time specified by the

- manufacturer's instructions or a minimum of ten minutes for diluted bleach.
6. Thoroughly rinse all surfaces with a steady stream of hot water, if available.
  7. Dry the kennel completely using a squeegee and good ventilation prior to returning the dogs to N, D/E, and J/K Wards. For West Wing, move the dogs to the clean side of the kennels and repeat this process for the dirty side of the kennels.
  8. Regularly clean and disinfect other areas including the aisle ways, walls and ceilings, as they can accumulate bacteria, disease, and odor.
- ✓ Many of the sanitation and disease control considerations mentioned above also apply to animals being housed in stainless steel cages. We recommend the following protocol for the wards; however, cat cages do not necessarily have to be completely cleaned every day like the dog kennels do. If a cat's cage is relatively clean, it is acceptable to spot clean his cage by scooping the litter box and cleaning the food and water dishes. However, if a cat's cage is noticeably soiled it should be completely cleaned. All stainless steel cages for dogs should be cleaned daily.
1. Remove animals from their stainless steel cages during the cleaning process. Animals should never be let out of cages to run loose during cleaning procedures as this spreads viruses. There are three options:
    - Keep at least one clean cage empty in each housing area. Move an animal from his dirty cage to the clean cage. Clean the dirty cage. Move the next animal to this newly cleaned cage and clean his dirty cage. Move another animal to this newly cleaned cage, and so on until all cages are cleaned. This system, however, is extremely time-consuming and not recommended as a first choice.
    - Use portable carriers. The most effective way to use portable carriers is to have one for each animal in each room. Temporarily label each portable carrier with the animal's name/number. Each day the animal would be transferred to his carrier in order for his cage to be cleaned. It is important to note that the cages should not be cleaned one by one, but rather all the animals in a section should be moved to their portable carriers at once in order to expedite cleaning of that section as well as to keep animals out of the way of organic material, water and disinfectant. Once the animal leaves the shelter, his portable carrier needs to be appropriately disinfected before it is used for another animal. MDPASU could also purchase disposable cardboard carriers for cats and kittens. If a cat or kitten is adopted, he can be sent home with his cardboard carrier. If the cat or kitten is euthanized, his cardboard carrier should be disposed of.
    - Have an equal number of empty cages to occupied cages in each room. Some agencies use this method very successfully by designing rooms that have a wall of cages on one side of the room (side A) and another wall of cages on the opposite wall (side B). To clean, they move the animals from the dirty cages on side A to the clean cages on side B and then clean side A all at once. The



next day they move the animals back from side B to side A, and clean side B, and so on. This system takes a lot of discipline because one wall of cages must stay empty in order for this system to work. If a shelter becomes full and starts filling the cages on both sides, the system will be useless.

2. Remove all bedding. If newspaper is used, dispose of it. If blankets, rugs or towels are used, they must be washed, disinfected and replaced if noticeably soiled or dirty.
3. Remove food/water dishes, and litter boxes in cat cages. Empty used litter outside of the cat room area because emptying the litter box in the room where cats are housed increases the possibility of disease transmission when dust from the used litter circulates in the air. Wash, disinfect, and dry all prior to reusing.

Scooping solid waste (replacing litter when necessary) can be acceptable if the box is relatively clean and is going to be kept with the same cat. This can only be done if the litter scoop is unfailingly disinfected in between each litter box. This can be accomplished by rotating two litter scoops in a bucket of disinfecting solution; use one litter scoop, place it in the bucket, use the other litter scoop and then place it in the bucket, and so on. The bucket of disinfecting solution must be changed daily at minimum.

4. Remove all solid, organic waste (feces, hair, etc.) left in the cage. This is important because disinfectants are much less effective in the presence of organic material.
5. The cage must be scrubbed with either a detergent/disinfectant combination or first with a detergent and *then* with a disinfectant. Use one of the two following options:
  - A. **If using a detergent/disinfectant combination** (such as a quaternary ammonium product), use a bristled scrub brush with medium stiffness to scrub all surfaces within the cage including the sides, top, and doors. Use a disinfectant proven specifically effective against various bacteria and viruses common in a shelter environment.

Allow the solution to remain on the surface for the time specified by the manufacturer's instructions. This is extremely important.

- B. **If using two separate products (a detergent and a disinfectant)** you must first scrub the cage with the detergent (such as dish soap). Using a bristled scrub brush with medium stiffness scrub all surfaces within the cage with the detergent including the sides, top, and door.

Rinse the cage well and *then* apply the disinfectant (such as diluted bleach). Allow the disinfectant to remain on the surface for the time specified by the manufacturer's instructions or a minimum of ten minutes for diluted bleach.

6. Wipe cage dry; replace newspaper and bedding; replace clean litter box; replace food and fresh water; place animal(s) back into dry cage.
7. Clean walls, floors, between and tops of cages, window sills and all other surfaces within the room.

NOTE: Kirk's Current Veterinary Therapy, Volume XIII has a brief and concise review of the different disinfectants available, their properties, antimicrobial spectrum, advantages and disadvantages.<sup>44</sup>

- ✓ Develop new cleaning SOPs based on MDPASU's implementation of the above procedures and establish emergency procedures for effectively handling disease agents introduced to the shelter environment.
- ✓ In general, staff on all levels should receive extensive and ongoing training in proper sanitation and disinfection methods, and should be closely supervised to ensure proper sanitation. Everyone should be cleaning the same way according to MDPASU protocol.
- ✓ Educate all shelter staff regarding common shelter disease agents. This should include parvovirus, panleukopenia, canine distemper, intestinal and external parasites, salmonella and ringworm.<sup>45, 46, 47</sup> Staff should also review basic facts about how viral, bacterial and fungal agents are transmitted (vector transmission), basic disease prevention methods, basic sanitation and disinfection techniques and proper identification of disease symptoms.
- ✓ Kennels should be cleaned from ceiling to floor, and all cage doors, etc., should be manually scrubbed. It is false economy — and a potential source of infection — to clean the walls of a kennel only to the height of the dog inhabiting the kennel. If any one section of the shelter is left unsanitized, disease can be easily transmitted.
- ✓ Continue to use a degreaser, but use it once a week before the detergent as part of the daily cleaning process in both the dog and cat housing areas. All degreasing agents should be used in conjunction with some type of mechanical action, either scrubbing or pressure washing.
- ✓ Consider purchasing an electric, hot water pressure washing system. They are relatively inexpensive, with reliable units ranging from \$500 to \$800 in price. Northern Tools and Equipment, Inc.<sup>48</sup> carries an electric unit for \$500 that works well in a shelter setting. Pressure washing units can hasten the time needed to thoroughly clean animal housing

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44 Kirk's Current Veterinary Therapy, Volume XIII, "Disinfection and Antiseptic Use in Small Animal Practice" pp 258-262

45 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine "Controlling Upper Respiratory Infections in Your Shelter," January/February 1997\*

46 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine "Parvovirus, Stopping a Deadly Disease From Overwhelming Your Shelter," July/August 1996\*

47 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine "Keeping Your Cats Healthy, Guarding Against Panleukopenia" May/June 2001\*

48 [www.northerntool.com](http://www.northerntool.com)

areas and can also reduce filmy build-up on cage surfaces. However, pressure washers do not eliminate the need for the weekly degreasing of cage surfaces.

- ✓ Ensure that during cleaning, animals in bottom cages do not get wet when staff are cleaning the top cages. This could be accomplished by removing all animals in a section and cleaning the cages as a whole, not individually.
- ✓ As scheduling permits, assign staff to clean the same animal housing areas each day. This will allow them to get to know the animals better in order to observe their health, behavior and eating habits.
- ✓ Ensure all staff follows the manufacturer's instructions for all products used. For example, the SOPs should state, and staff should be aware, that quaternary ammonium should not be mixed with bleach.
- ✓ MDPASU must minimize all possible disease vectors such as pooper-scoopers and scrapers used to clean dog kennels or litter scoops used to clean out cat litter boxes. Ideally, properly disinfecting cages and kennels after using scoops, etc. in them negates the need to disinfect those items (scoops, etc.) between uses. However, by disinfecting these items (scoops, etc.) after each use you ensure that germs are not being spread from cage to cage.
- ✓ Ensure that employees know the correct dilution ratio for all products used and that for their safety and the safety of the animals, they are followed. The following formula should be used whenever mixing bleach:

Take the number 21 and divide it by the percentage of sodium hypochlorite in the bleach you're using. This will give you the number of ounces of bleach per gallon of water you should use.

For example if you are using bleach with 5.25 percent hypochlorite, 21 divided by 5.25 equals 4. This means you should use 4 ounces of bleach for every gallon of water.

- ✓ The metal drain cover plates in the West Wing kennels should be removed at least once weekly to allow for thorough disinfecting of the drains and flooring underneath the plates. The flushing system must be fixed immediately and used often. Ideally, organic materials should be scooped out; however, any unintentionally washed into the drain system should be flushed out to the main waste pipe provided by the city. Fecal matter left in shelter drain pipes will dry, harden and over time will reduce the inside diameter of the drain.
- ✓ Ensure that employees know which products are appropriate for use with which species of animal. Make sure to never use phenols (Lysol, L-phse, etc.) around cats or reptiles, as they are very toxic to these species.
- ✓ Conduct regular inventory of cleaning supplies and order as necessary to ensure staff are

not without essential products such as bleach.

- ✓ Staff must disinfect their hands or use clean disposable gloves prior to handling animals and in between handling animals. If possible, install sinks and soap dispensers in areas that are more convenient for staff handling animals. This is very important so that staff can wash their hands often. In addition, install instant hand sanitizer dispensers in all animal housing areas. Require the staff to use them and encourage the visiting public to use them in between visiting with different animals to help prevent the spread of disease.
- ✓ Do not allow the public to remove animals from their kennels/cages without staff assistance. Not only does this spread disease, but it is also a safety issue for the public and the animals. If necessary, use small padlocks on all cages and kennels where the public has access. Give relevant staff the key to the locks so they can assist potential adopters.
- ✓ All diluted bleach mixtures must be mixed fresh daily as bleach decomposes easily when exposed to light and other factors.
- ✓ Specific instructions to staff about dilution, contact time and shelf life (once mixed) should be posted in all areas where disinfectants are mixed and used. Instructions for proper dilution and time requirements are listed on the product containers. Containers must be clearly marked with the name of the chemical that is actually in it.
- ✓ Schedule quarterly clean up days where all staff and volunteers work together to not only complete the daily routines, but also clean vents, light fixtures, heaters, walls, doors, hallways, window sills, etc.
- ✓ Before introducing any item (blankets, pooper scooper, toys, dishes, litter boxes, etc.) to a new animal, make sure it has been properly disinfected.<sup>49</sup>
- ✓ Discontinue mixing one large batch of disinfectant every morning that staff fills their buckets with. Purchase a hose proportion regulator for each animal housing area in order to dispense disinfectant when cleaning.<sup>50</sup> This accurately dilutes chemicals to a desired dosage and also puts air into the chemical as it sprays out, allowing it to foam as it runs down the walls. It will cling better to the surfaces such as chain link fence, wall and floors thus helping to leave the disinfectant in place for a suggested minimum of 10 minutes before rinsing. However, until that change is made, have staff fill their own bucket immediately before cleaning the kennels/cages.
- ✓ The HSUS recommends rotating disinfectants. Chlorine bleach or quaternary ammonium products are the two disinfectant choices most common in shelters. For example, use a disinfectant/detergent (such as a quaternary ammonium product) Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, and use a detergent and then bleach Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The reality is no one product will kill every virus that exists in a shelter

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49 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "How to Clean Kennel Items," May/June 2002\*  
50 [www.petedge.com](http://www.petedge.com)

setting, therefore the need to rotate becomes even more important. Some believe that rotating disinfectants keeps viruses from becoming immune.

- ✓ All plastic litter boxes and any food/water bowls should be replaced with stainless steel or disposable paper products that can be discarded daily. Stainless steel is easy to disinfect and durable, making it ideal for shelter use. To be adequately disinfected, cat carriers must be non-porous plastic. Disposable litter boxes can be purchased in bulk through a paper supply warehouse. Steam table pans, which can be used as litter boxes can be purchased through commercial kitchen supply stores. Animal Care Equipment and Services, Inc.<sup>51</sup> also sells stainless steel litter boxes. Plastic items (such as food bowls, water dishes, and litter pans) cannot be properly disinfected. Once scratched, plastic becomes porous and can harbor disease-spreading bacteria.
- ✓ Install footbaths at the entrances to the sick isolation areas. There are mats available from vendors such as Animal Care Equipment and Services, Inc.<sup>52</sup> into which you can place a bleach solution. This solution must be prepared and changed daily. These mats are effective and are less likely to result in tripping or spilling than a pan filled bleach solution.
- ✓ Cleaning equipment such as brooms, brushes, squeegees, pooper-scoopers and other items needed in each room should be assigned to that room and not travel throughout the shelter. An easy way to do this is to color-code the handles to coordinate with specific rooms.
- ✓ Eliminate the use of the automatic dog feeders. They cannot be effectively cleaned or easily removed for cleaning.
- ✓ Repair or replace the dishwasher.
- ✓ Any area of the shelter in which animals pass must be cleaned and disinfected daily. This includes, but is not limited to, the animal housing areas, the euthanasia room, the medical room, the front lobby, and hallways.

**Discussion:**

MDPASU should be commended for generally using the kennels in the West Wing appropriately by keeping the guillotine doors open except for during cleaning. Guillotine doors were designed to facilitate cleaning, not to be permanently shut. Housing a dog on either side of the guillotine door (effectively doubling the number of kennels) makes it impossible to properly clean the facility resulting in disease outbreaks, too many animals for the staff to adequately care for, and an environment that is not conducive to encouraging the public to adopt.

Cleaning and disinfecting are not the same things. Disinfecting is accomplished with a disinfectant, which is a chemical solution that destroys microorganisms. Cleaning is accomplished with a detergent, which are cleansing agents that help remove dirt and debris so

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51 Animal Care and Equipment Services, Inc, [www.animal-care.com](http://www.animal-care.com), 1-800-338-ACES

52 Animal Care and Equipment Services, Inc, [www.animal-care.com](http://www.animal-care.com), 1-800-338-ACES

they do not interfere with the disinfecting process. A degreaser is a strong detergent designed to cut through filmy layers, such as body oils, that regular detergents can't penetrate. It is very important to completely remove detergents before applying disinfectants.

Quaternary ammonium compounds and bleach are the two most common disinfectants used in shelters. Quaternary ammonium compounds are good disinfectants and they also have some detergent action. However, some quaternary ammonium compounds are inactivated in the presence of some soap or soap residues, so careful product selection is important. Their antibacterial activity is reduced in the presence of organic material such as feces and hair and that is why it is so important to remove it before applying the disinfectant.<sup>53</sup>

Some agencies feel that scrubbing a kennel first with a detergent and then using diluted bleach on that same kennel is not a cost-effective or efficient way to clean and disinfect the kennel areas. However, bleach is a disinfectant and not a detergent. If bleach is used as the primary disinfectant, areas must be scrubbed with a detergent prior to applying bleach.<sup>54</sup>

Adequate and thorough cleaning protocols must be established and practiced in order to maintain a healthy population of animals within an animal shelter environment. Thorough cleaning standards coupled with proper air ventilation of animal housing areas are both key elements to maintaining a healthy shelter environment for animals.

While it is impossible to totally prevent the spread of disease, it is possible to dramatically reduce it. Circumstances and finances may affect the choice of cleaning materials and methods, but a daily cleaning schedule must be maintained without fail.

### 6.3 ISOLATION AND SEPARATION

#### **Observations:**

There were some attempts to isolate and separate animals with the space available; however, these attempts were fruitless due to the building design and ventilation issues. The MDPASU building is ill-suited for properly isolating and separating animals to control disease, to decrease stress levels for the animals in its care, and to protect the safety of the animals and staff.

MDPASU did not have SOPs that specified how animals were to be housed within the shelter. The decision of where animals would be housed seemed to lie with the staff members but it was not coordinated based on an intake examination, any understanding of disease management or other animal husbandry concepts, such as segregating species, or of placing the sick isolation area away from the apparently healthy animals.

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53 "Sanitation-Disinfection Basics," Joan S. Jeffrey, Extension Poultry Veterinarian, University of California-Davis

54 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Disinfection Connection," July/August 2003\*

During the site visit the building was being used in the following way:

WARD	USE	PUBLIC ACCESS
A	Euthanasia room	No
B	Sick isolation and injured animals (cats and dogs)	No
C	Bite quarantine, protective custody, nursing mothers (cats and dogs)	No
D/E	General housing medium size dogs	Yes
F	General housing small dogs	Yes
G	Storage/ Dishwasher	No
H	General housing cats/ kittens	Yes
I	General housing cats/ kittens	Yes
J/K	General housing medium size dogs	Yes
L	General housing puppies/ small dogs	Yes
M	General housing puppies	Yes
N (1 <sup>st</sup> three kennels)	Sick and injured dogs	No
N (remaining kennels)	General housing dogs	Yes
West Wing	General housing dogs	Some

Upon intake, which was performed by field staff or animal care specialists, animals that did not appear to be seriously ill or injured were typically placed into general housing without any examination, vaccination or treatment by veterinary staff. Placement of dogs appeared to be based on finding a kennel that had the fewest dogs of a similar size to the new impound. Adult cats did not appear to be housed with other unfamiliar cats, but kittens were combined.

Animals were not properly segregated based on health, species, or adoptability. Healthy but injured animals were placed in wards housing sick animals, often in the same kennels with animals that were ill basically assuring that those injured animals would also become sick.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ The HSUS team would like MDPASU to consider the concept of isolation and separation. This means that the facility would have four separate areas for dogs and four separate areas for cats. These areas should include:
  - Adoptions
  - Healthy hold
  - Isolation (sick)
  - Quarantine (bite cases and aggressive)

The following are The HSUS team's suggestions; however, MDPASU management may decide to alter these based on policy decisions and what they find works best for them.

**The adoption areas should be as follows:**

WARD	USE	PUBLIC ACCESS
D/E	Puppy and small/ medium dog adoption	Yes
I	Puppy and small dog adoption	Yes
N	Dog adoption	Yes
Current Paper Room	Cat and kitten adoption*	Yes

- ✓ Retrofit the current paper room (See Fig. 19) to house cats by installing stainless steel cages and removing the current paper operation. This would allow MDPASU to house cats away from dogs, decreasing their stress, and hopefully increasing their chances of adoption. The current paper operation would need to be relocated to F Ward.

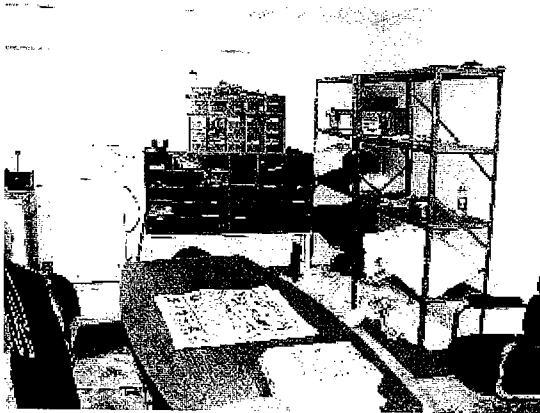


Figure 19

- ✓ These adoption areas should be the only animal housing areas the public could walk through without staff escort. There should be approximately half the number of adoption kennels/cages as there are healthy hold kennels/cages.

**The healthy hold areas should be as follows:**

WARD	USE	PUBLIC ACCESS
Current Break Room	Cat and kitten healthy hold	No
West Wing (kennels 1-44 and 62-88)	Dog healthy hold	No
L	Cat and kitten healthy hold*	No

- ✓ The current break room (See Fig. 20) could be moved somewhere else in the facility or a trailer could be provided. Retrofit the break room by installing stainless steel cages. During the site visit, several members of staff indicated that they do not like eating “in the animal area.”





Figure 20

- ✓ Install lockable screen doors on both sides of L Ward. This will allow ventilation but will prevent the public from entering.
- \* If the current break and paper rooms are on the same HVAC system and air flows between the two rooms it may be necessary to use both these rooms for healthy hold and instead use L Ward for cat/kitten adoptions. Although not the first choice, this will help ensure that possible “sick” air is not entering the adoption area where healthy animals are housed.
- ✓ In the West Wing, male/female designations should be flexible and determined by actual inventory of animals and not by kennel number.
- ✓ Only healthy dogs and cats that arrive at the shelter would be placed in healthy hold areas, with the exception of bite case and aggressive animals. There should be approximately twice the number of kennels/cages for healthy hold than for adoptions.

**The isolation (sick) areas should be as follows:**

WARD	USE	PUBLIC ACCESS
M	Puppy/ small dog isolation	No
Current Feed Room	Cat and kitten isolation	No
West Wing (kennels 45-61)	Dog isolation	No

- ✓ In order to limit the “sick” air in M Ward from entering N Ward, the door between the two wards must be kept closed at all times. Install a lock and only give keys to key supervisory staff. This door should not be used for passage.
- ✓ Retrofit the current feed room across from M Ward to house cats by installing stainless steel cages and removing the food that is being stored there. This would allow MDPASU to house cats away from the dogs. If possible, install a window air conditioning unit similar to M Ward. If not possible, install a lockable screen door so there is adequate ventilation but restricts the public’s access. Move food storage to H Ward. If this room is

not large enough to house the cats requiring isolation, MDPASU management should determine another alternative for cat isolation such as a separate trailer.

- ✓ It is less than ideal to house sick dogs in the same general area as potentially healthy animals as we have recommended for the West Wing; however, the facility leaves little room for properly isolating the animals. It is important not to blow air from the isolation area in the West Wing to the healthy hold areas. If fans are to be used, ensure that they do not direct the “sick” air towards kennels housing potentially healthy animals.
- ✓ Building a new sick isolation wing on the shelter would be ideal because the current design makes it extremely difficult to keep the animals properly isolated. Isolation areas should have separate ventilation from the rest of the animal housing areas.
- ✓ Only animals that arrive sick or become sick while at the shelter should be housed in these areas. The public should not have access to these areas without staff escort. The number of kennels/cages will depend on the number of sick stray animals being held, the agency’s resources, and desire to treat sick animals.

**The quarantine areas should be as follows:**

WARD	USE	PUBLIC ACCESS
West Wing (kennels 28-44 as needed starting with 44)	Quarantine and protective custody canines	No
Cages as needed in the current break room (healthy hold)	Feline quarantine and protective custody	No

- ✓ Only healthy bite case or aggressive animals should be housed in quarantine kennels/cages. Sick bite case or sick aggressive animals should be housed in isolation. The number of kennels/cages designated should be based on the typical number of animals needing to be quarantined at MDPASU.
- ✓ Only use dog kennels with guillotine doors such as those in the West Wing for quarantine in order to limit staff handling of potentially dangerous dogs. Quarantined cats should be housed in cages that limit staff from having to handle them such as double size cages with dividers. With these cages, staff can move the cats to one side in order to clean the other side, similar to the guillotine doors for the dog kennels.
- ✓ No matter what room bite case or aggressive animals are housed in, their kennels/cages should be locked at all times and the animals should remain in the same kennel or cage for the duration of their stay. These kennels/cages should be clearly marked “QUARANTINE” or “AGGRESSIVE.” The public should not be allowed in these areas unescorted. This would reduce liability.

**Other areas should be as follows:**

WARD	USE	PUBLIC ACCESS
A	Euthanasia Room	No
B	Euthanasia holding for only healthy or injured animals, not sick animals	No
C	Pregnant/nursing and healthy/injured felines	No
Storage room across from dip tank area	Animal Receiving	Possible
Storage room across from dip tank area	Incoming Examination Room	No
Dip tank area	Intake temporary holding	No
F	Paper Room	No
G	Storage	No
H	Feed Room	No
J/K	Pregnant/nursing and healthy/injured canines	No

- ✓ B Ward can be used for euthanasia holding instead of having animals awaiting euthanasia left in the hallway. This room should be empty at the end of each day and should not hold any sick animals due to the proximity to N Ward and the ventilation issues.
- ✓ Install lockable screen doors as necessary on these rooms to allow ventilation but to restrict the public's access.
- ✓ Retrofit one of the storage rooms across from the dip tank area into an animal receiving area.
- ✓ Retrofit the other storage room across from the dip tank area into an incoming animal examination room. This would allow animals to be given an incoming examination before being moved to another housing area (See section 6.5, Incoming Animal Examinations and Assessments). Intake cages could be set up in the dip tank area so that animals would not be moved out of holding until they had been examined (See Fig. 21).



Figure 21

### **Discussion:**

These changes will allow MDPASU to improve animal management and health but they do not replace the need for a new facility. This setup is not ideal, nor does it meet all of the standards for isolation and separation; however, based on the current layout and air flow in the facility, this seems to be the best possible use of current space and will likely decrease the spread of disease.

The isolation and separation concept of managing the population will provide the staff with the space flexibility they need, protect the public from potential bites, insure a healthier environment for the animals, and protect the agency from unnecessary liability issues. It would also allow staff to make better euthanasia decisions, and allow the agency to present adoptable animals to the public instead of every animal without regard of its adoptability.

In order for the isolation and separation concept to work, it must be strictly adhered to. Some organizations make the mistake of bending the rules by not using space as it is designated, which defeats the purpose of keeping healthy animals away from sick ones and only allowing the public access to the adoptable animals chosen by MDPASU.

The isolation and separation concept works as follows (Also see the flow charts on pages 92 and 93):

### **Evaluation at intake**

There needs to be a place where all incoming animals are triaged, which would be one of the retrofitted storage rooms across from the dip tank area. It should be a priority to do health examinations the day the animal comes in (See section 6.5, Incoming Animal Examinations and Assessments). After the staff examines an animal, he would be housed in healthy hold, quarantine, isolation or euthanized depending on the outcome of his exam and stray hold status.

### **Healthy hold**

If healthy and possibly adoptable, the animal should be held in healthy hold for at least two days. The healthy hold area would allow the animal time to acclimate to the shelter and time for the staff to observe and evaluate the animal. The only exception may be for cats that are surrendered by their owners and are adoptable, healthy, current on vaccinations, and preferably altered. These cats may immediately be moved to adoptions. Although this exception can be made for dogs as

well, it is preferable for cats because they do not generally need the waiting period for a full temperament evaluation like dogs do.

Once an animal had been held in healthy hold for two days, evaluated and determined healthy and adoptable, he would be moved from the healthy hold area to the adoption area. If there is no room in adoptions, the decision to euthanize that animal or an animal in adoptions to make room must be made (See section 8.1, Selection Criteria/ Behavioral Assessments).

If stray, healthy, and determined unadoptable, the animal would be held in healthy hold for the stray hold period and then euthanized. If owner surrendered, healthy, and determined unadoptable, the animal would be euthanized immediately after intake.

### **Adoptions**

Excluding the cat exception noted above, animals should not be housed in adoptions until they have spent a minimum of two days in healthy hold.

### **Quarantine**

If a healthy, stray animal coming in through the triage process is being held for biting/rabies observation, the animal would be housed in quarantine for the rabies hold period. This animal could then be euthanized or evaluated for adoption, depending on the circumstance of the bite.

If the animal is owner surrendered and determined to be aggressive or unpredictable, but has not bitten, he would be euthanized. If he is a stray and determined to be aggressive or unpredictable, but has not bitten, he would be held in quarantine (to limit staff contact) for the stray hold period.

### **Isolation**

In order to keep the general population healthy, the following animals would be housed in the isolation area thereby minimizing the spread of disease and sickness:

- A stray, sick animal that is brought in and needs to be held for the mandatory stray hold period
- A dog or cat that got sick during his stay at the shelter
- A sick animal that is surrendered by his owner

Animals in the last two categories should be kept only if MDPASU feels they have the staff and budget to attempt treatment. MDPASU needs to determine if its infrastructure can support the treatment of animals for illnesses such as URI or kennel cough. There will be many animals that come in sick and will have to be treated for their stray period, but the agency needs to decide if it has the luxury of treating animals beyond their stray period. It is the opinion of the HSUS team that with current resources and number of incoming animals, MDPASU does not have the luxury of treating animals past their stray periods or adoptable animals that become sick during their stay.

\*Please note that these recommendations in this section are made based on the assumption that there is no foster program or behavioral modification program in place.





## 6.4 FEEDING PROTOCOLS

### **Observations:**

MDPASU did have SOPs for feeding that was not being followed based on discussions with staff. The HSUS team did not witness feeding or see animals eating because it was done at 5 a.m. and 7 p.m. The exception was dogs with automatic feeders, which gave them access to dry food at all times.

According to staff the animals are fed the following:

- Kittens are fed wet food only
- Cats get wet and dry food, but they are not free fed
- Dogs and puppies get canned and dry food
- Any animal that isn't eating is given canned food

The feed room contained both donated and purchased canned and dry food including Iams, Whiskas, Pedigree, Buccaneer, and Eukanuba.

The daily feeding record addressed in the SOPs was not observed being used during the site visit. If an animal was observed not to be eating staff were to tell a supervisor. The use of the automatic feeders in kennels with multiple dogs would make it very difficult to monitor food intake or ensure that submissive dogs were being adequately fed.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Review and update the SOPs for the feeding of dog and cats. The updated SOPs should be strictly adhered to.
- ✓ Train animal care specialists to observe and document the appetite and food intake of sheltered animals and to adjust diets accordingly. Animals who consistently consume the entire amount of food offered to them in a short period of time should be offered a greater volume of food per feeding; and animals without an appetite should be examined by the veterinarian. The body condition and weight of animals should also be documented and monitored, in order to detect nutritional problems.
- ✓ Closely monitor the eating habits of animals that are in groups or litters. Malnutrition or dehydration can occur quickly in young or weak animals.
- ✓ Food and water bowls must be positioned for easy and safe access by all animals. Observe during feeding time to make sure that dogs are not guarding the food of the others that may share their kennel. Remove food possessive dogs and house them separately or reevaluate their adoptability.
- ✓ Discontinue free feeding the dogs. Feed them enough food to meet their nutritional needs based on the animal's individual habits, age, size and weight.
- ✓ Begin free feeding the adult cats. They should have dry food (formulated for their ages) available to them at all times as cats tend to eat approximately 14 small meals a day.



They may be given canned food in addition if needed.

- ✓ Feed nursing mothers a high protein diet that includes canned kitten or puppy food.
- ✓ Feed geriatric animals, and those with dental problems, soft food.
- ✓ Feed puppies and kittens food formulated for their age. They should never be fed adult food.
- ✓ Puppies and kittens that are having trouble eating dry food should be given canned food.
- ✓ Feed puppies and kittens that are six to twelve weeks of age three times a day. Feed puppies and kittens who are twelve weeks to twelve months of age twice a day, and continue feeding adults twice a day.
- ✓ Use only products that are made by major national pet food companies and are 100 percent nutritionally complete. Generic pet foods are not recommended. Often, the nutrients in generic pet foods are not readily available for digestion and absorption by an animal. Tests have shown that puppies and kittens that were fed generic pet foods had a greater incidence of illness, improper growth, and other physical abnormalities and required one-and-one-third times as much food per pound of weight gained.
- ✓ If MDPASU continues to use donated food, establish a system to manage the donated food sources in order to feed the animals a consistent diet during their stay at the shelter. In other words, if an animal is fed one type of food one day and another type the next day, there is a potential for gastrointestinal upset. Attempt to keep food changes to a minimum, but document when they occur to give some insight as to why diarrhea occurs at certain times.
- ✓ Consider taking advantage of the Hill's Science Diet Shelter Nutrition Partnership offered through The HSUS's Shelter Partners program. Through this program, MDPASU could feed all of its animals a consistent premium-quality diet.<sup>55</sup>

**Discussion:**

Establishing a system to oversee dietary habits is of the utmost importance, and staff should be trained to monitor and adjust an animal's diet accordingly. Procedures should include a system that allows staff to monitor food intake, special needs, feeding behaviors, and eliminations of animals.

The stress of a kennel environment, combined with his/her health and age at entry, can dramatically impact an animal's appetite and nutritional needs. Observations relating to appetite can provide important feedback that relates to each animal's general health and continued adjustment to the shelter environment. If necessary, nutritional protocols may need modification to allow for extra (or less) food and special diets.

When housing multiple dogs in a kennel, consideration must be given to “food aggression.” Some dogs that show no signs of aggression will display dominance when food is presented. If not monitored closely, some dogs and puppies will overeat while others are denied access. In addition, serious fights over food can occur at a time when shelter staff are not in the area and cannot intervene.

## **6.5 INCOMING ANIMAL EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS**

### **Observations:**

MDPASU did have SOPs for veterinary procedures but failed to follow them. Section 4-II stated that a veterinary technician or veterinarian will immediately give all incoming animals a preliminary screening and that all animals brought into the facility will have their medical and physical condition assessed by the veterinary staff. In Section 4-IV, the SOPs stated that all animals housed for adoption or for return to owner shall be vaccinated within 24 hours of impoundment and that all animals will be checked and treated for fleas and ticks before housing.

There was a walk-through flea bath area that was not in use because staff stated that it was too difficult to maneuver dogs around the corners. There were pressure sprayers located in the intake area that were labeled “Vircon” and “Flea Spray”. Staff stated that the sprayers were filled with flea spray once a week and used only on dogs. There was no other method of flea or tick control for dogs or cats in use. The HSUS team observed several dogs in kennels with visible ticks.

Upon intake, which was performed by field staff or animal care specialists, animals were moved from the temporary intake area and placed immediately into general housing without an examination unless an injury or illness was visible. In those cases, the employee performing intake went to get a veterinarian, who then appeared to quickly look over the animal, rather than conducting a thorough exam. The HSUS team was told that full exams are done on adopted animals prior to surgery. Potentially sick animals were then placed into B Ward, the N Ward sick kennels, or the carrier was placed outside of A Ward where euthanasia is performed. If the latter was done, a request for euthanasia was placed in the mail slot outside the door to A Ward.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ The SOPs must be reviewed and updated to assess, provide for, and monitor the needs of all animals. The SOPs should take into consideration the individual needs of each animal, as well as the overall need to maintain an optimum level of health and well being for all animals in the shelter, and to protect the staff and visiting public. SOPs must be followed consistently.
- ✓ All incoming animals, once admitted, should be placed in temporary intake holding (retrofitted dip tank area) or taken directly to the medical examination room (retrofitted storage room across from dip tank area). The assessment of incoming animals should include:
  - Scanning for a microchip
  - Routine vaccination protocols (See section 6.6, Vaccination Protocols)

- General temperament assessment (not a full temperament evaluation. See section 8.1 Selection Criteria/ Behavioral Assessments)
- A picture taken for Chameleon
- Identification (collar)
- Temperature and vital signs
- General physical examinations
- External parasites and treatments
- Internal parasites, fecal examinations, and de-worming medications
- Routine diagnostic testing (See section 8.1, Selection Criteria/ Behavioral Assessments)
- Basic grooming needs/concerns

This should take place the day the animal arrives. Animals would not leave this area until all medical work had been completed and all health data properly documented.

Depending on the health and temperament of the animal, some of these would not take place. For example, a sick cat that is going to be immediately euthanized does not need diagnostic testing, grooming, parasite treatments, etc.

- ✓ Two well-trained staff persons working together should evaluate each animal. This helps to eliminate subjectivity and stress on the part of examiners, and makes the process faster, easier and safer.
- ✓ Once this process is complete, animals should be moved to the appropriate housing area based on their overall condition and classification (See section 6.3, Isolation and Separation).
- ✓ Consider staggering staff schedules so incoming examinations can continue to take place after the shelter closes its doors to the public.
- ✓ Develop and implement a form to record initial health exam information.<sup>56</sup> The *Adoption List* form currently used by MDPASU would work, but must be modified to include space to document both normal and abnormal findings, and to indicate that all body systems have been examined, as well as space for behavior comments and microchip scan and/or tag information. “Check off” forms make this process easy and time-efficient. All health information must then be entered into the treatment field of the Chameleon program. Copies of such documentation should be provided to adopters or owners if the animal is reclaimed.
- ✓ Animals must be treated for fleas and ticks at intake. Ensure that the products used are safe for dogs and cats.
- ✓ Dogs six months of age and older should be tested for heartworm disease during intake.

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56 Initial health exam form examples

Given the prevalence of this disease in Southern states, this is a logical test to include in any health screening process. Cats and kittens should be tested for feline leukemia virus (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). A combination test will screen for both diseases using one blood sample.

**Discussion:**

Internal parasites (such as roundworms and hookworms) and external parasites (such as ringworm, fleas, and ticks) have profound implications for the health of individual animals in a shelter, as well as for the overall health of the shelter population. Parasites, if untreated, can result in serious consequences that will inevitably become more severe: a strain on an animal's well being, an inability to ward off other illnesses, and the further spread of disease. In addition many common parasites of dogs and cats present a health risk to staff members and to the general public who visit or adopt from an animal shelter. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has published guidelines for prevention of transmission of roundworms from pets to people. These guidelines should be considered when developing SOPs for examination and assessment of the health status of animals selected for adoption.<sup>57</sup>

For flea and tick products, the ingredients to be wary of are organophosphate insecticides (OPs) and carbamates. A product contains an OP if the ingredient list contains chlorpyrifos, dichlorvos, phosmet, naled, tetrachlorvinphos, diazinon, or malathion. If the ingredient list includes carbaryl or propoxur, the product contains a carbamate. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the potential dangers posed by these products are greatest for children and pets. There is reason to be concerned about long-term, cumulative exposures as well as combined exposures from the use of other products containing OPs and carbamates.

The NRDC's report lists flea- and tick-control products marketed under the following major brand names that have been found to contain OPs: Alco, Americare, Beaphar, Double Duty, Ford's Freedom Five, Happy Jack, Hartz, Hopkins, Kill-Ko, Protection, Rabon, Riverdale, Sergeant's, Unicorn, Vet-Kem, Victory, and Zema.

## 6.6 VACCINATION PROTOCOLS

**Observations:**

Although the SOPs required vaccination within 24 hours of impoundment, animals at MDPASU were not vaccinated until they had been selected for adoption and had passed the pre-surgery health examination.

When asked why animals were not vaccinated upon impound, management told The HSUS team that it was because of a paper presented a few years ago at The North American Veterinary Medicine Conference stating that vaccinating animals in a shelter increases the incidence and spread of disease. One of the shelter veterinarians had attended this conference. When asked for a copy of the article, no one was able to locate it. Management was asked when the SOPs were

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57 The Centers for Disease Control's "Recommendations for Veterinarians: How to Prevent Transmission of Intestinal Roundworms from Pets to People"

developed and The HSUS team was told that it had been less than a year ago. Adopted animals were vaccinated with DHLPP (listed as DA2PL/Parvo) and Bordatella. Cats were vaccinated with FVRC (listed as FELC) and leukemia. Animals with worms were treated with Ivermectin or Strongid. All animals over 4 months of age were given a rabies vaccine.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ All healthy, potentially adoptable animals should be vaccinated the day of intake. An animal's state of general health would be determined during the incoming examination. If the animal is obviously sick, injured, a pregnant stray, less than six-weeks of age, or otherwise unadoptable, the animal should not be vaccinated and these animals should be kept in an appropriate area for the stray period if relevant (See section 6.3, Isolation and Separation).
- ✓ The vaccination protocol should be developed with a veterinarian and should include:
  - DHLPP (or similar variation) vaccinations for dogs and puppies
  - FVRCP (or similar variation) vaccinations for cats and kittens
- ✓ Explore the use of Heska 7 FVRCP for vaccinating cats.
- ✓ All vaccination procedures for each animal should be recorded. Records should include the date and time of administration, the specific agents contained in the vaccine, the form of such agents (i.e., modified live virus, killed virus, bacteria, etc.), the manufacturer of the vaccine, the serial number and expiration date of the vaccine, the site of vaccination (i.e., "right shoulder"), and the route of vaccination (i.e., subcutaneous, intramuscular, or intranasal injection).

### **Discussion:**

It is very important to realize that vaccinating is only one strategy in preventing infectious diseases and it is just one tool in a disease prevention program. Many animals, in the stress of a shelter environment, will not mount effective immunity despite being vaccinated with the best vaccines. Many vaccines do not actually prevent initial infection; they just prevent significant symptoms from developing. Some animals may spread infectious viruses despite showing no symptoms themselves. Some vaccine immunities can be overwhelmed by a high enough "challenge dose" of the infectious organism. It is too convenient to blame the vaccine when there is a disease problem. It is critical to also consider animal husbandry practices, disinfecting procedures, quarantine and isolation protocols, and animal handling practices.

Upper respiratory infections will always exist where cats are concentrated together under stressful conditions. Still, many shelter veterinarians have found that incidence rates, as well as the severity of clinical signs, can be minimized by the use of intranasal/ intraocular vaccines that provide local antibody protection within 2-3 days (such as Heska7 FVRCP). The injectable vaccines require 7-10 days for an antibody response, which is why intranasal vaccines are increasingly used for all cats entering a shelter.<sup>58</sup>

Some canine vaccine manufacturers have gone to the effort and expense to improve the

effectiveness of their parvovirus vaccines (the most difficult disease to vaccinate against and also the most lethal). Specifically, Fort Dodge and Intervet companies have done extensive research to make sure that their vaccines are effective against the worst strains of the disease and that their vaccines are effective in very young puppies.

The Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program through UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine discusses the issues of shelter vaccines, core vaccines and recommends immediate vaccination.<sup>59</sup>

*When Should the Vaccine Be Given? Immediately upon intake, if not sooner! In almost all cases, shelter animals should be vaccinated immediately upon intake. A delay of even a day or two will significantly compromise the vaccine's ability to provide protection. In a cost saving effort, some shelters delay vaccination until the animal is made available for adoption, or even until it is adopted. While this does provide a service to adopters, the protective effect of the vaccine within the shelter is greatly reduced or eliminated. (In some cases, the chance of the vaccine preventing disease may be 90% or better if given the day before exposure, but will drop to less than 1% if given the day after exposure.) When possible, vaccination prior to intake is ideal (e.g. for owner surrendered animals or those returning from foster care).*

## 6.7 STERILIZATION SERVICES

### Observations:

Although The HSUS team has recommendations for MDPASU's sterilization programs, MDPASU should be highly praised for taking a proactive approach to reducing the animal population in Miami-Dade County. According to records provided MDPASU sterilized 9,342 animals through its spay/neuter program in 2003.

MDPASU did not have an SOP for sterilization services. Two sterilization programs offered were sterilization of animals adopted from the shelter and free sterilization for Miami-Dade County residents regardless of their financial situation. The free surgery included cats and dogs less than 50 pounds and 5 years of age; however, the Web site did not mention these limitations.

The free surgeries required three full time veterinarians (seven days at North shelter clinic, five days at South Dade facility clinic and two days per week on MAC). Since the organization only employed four staff veterinarians and one contract veterinarian, the two remaining veterinarians performed the adoption surgeries, approximately 12-15 per day. The veterinarians also gave rabies shots to privately owned animals throughout the day.

An *Adoption Contract* was printed out at the time of adoption. If the animal was not sterilized at adoption the contract stated the adopter must sterilize the animal within 30 days; however, no deposit must be left in these cases. MDPASU did not have a system to follow-up and make sure sterilization was completed (See section 8.3, Adoption Follow-up/ Compliance).

According to the contract all animals will be sterilized prior to adoption unless they have a

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59 <http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/CCAH/Prog-ShelterMed/vaccination.htm>

medical condition that won't allow it; however, animals that were less than four months of age or those that were sick and fostered through a placement partner were not sterilized before they left. In these cases the foster person had to sign a contract to stating they would bring the animal back for sterilization and adoption when healthy.

The HSUS team got different answers from different people about pre-pubescent sterilization. The HSUS team was told by one staff member that it is up to the veterinarian performing the surgery and another said that animals under four months of age aren't sterilized because they get sick. Staff also told The HSUS team that they do not spay pregnant animals; however, on 6/16/04, three of the cats spayed for the public were pregnant.

Shelter animals were examined by veterinary technicians before surgery and the public's animals were not examined. Spay and neuter surgeries for adopted animals were done in the surgery room of the North shelter clinic. Public animals were sterilized in the North shelter clinic, on the MAC unit, and at the South Dade facility clinic. Staff advised that public animals were sterilized before shelter animals at the North shelter clinic.

One veterinary technician worked in the North shelter surgery clinic. This person administered pre-anesthetic drugs, which were appropriate and then placed the animal on a rusty sink rack for surgery preparation. At this time some adopted animals (see section 8.2, Adoption Process and Policies) and some public animals received a microchip if it was requested, and all animals received an injection of penicillin, which was appropriate in the less-than-sterile conditions. The animal's abdomen was shaved, washed with betadine, sprayed with alcohol, wiped with gauze and then sprayed with betadine, which was appropriate to prevent infection. The animal was then placed on a cart to go into the surgery room.

The surgery room was small and had two operating tables and two surgeons operating each day. The HSUS team did not find the conditions adequately sterile for surgery. The cart, surgery tables, and anesthesia masks were not cleaned or disinfected between animals and the surgical drape and gloves were not changed between animals. The HSUS team observed one veterinarian preparing for surgery. He washed his hands at the sink in the surgery room using a disposable surgical scrub sponge; however, this sponge was already sitting open on the side of the sink and looked as if it had been used before. He left it on the edge of the sink when he finished.

Instruments were soaked in a solution for 30 seconds, and then surgery packs were prepared and sterilized in an autoclave, which was an appropriate instrument cleaning procedure.

The HSUS team visited the South Dade facility clinic, but arrived after the veterinarian had already finished surgeries for the day. The clinic was located in a large trailer and was very clean with new fixtures and equipment. The surgery room was at least twice as large as the one in the North shelter clinic with only one veterinarian working five days a week. On the date The HSUS team visited, there were four cats and three dogs sterilized although more were scheduled for surgery but did not show up because appointments were not confirmed.

Staff schedules 20 to 25 public surgeries per day at the North shelter clinic; however, on 6/14 there were seven public surgeries, eight on 6/15 and 16 on 6/16. Ten to 15 surgeries are

scheduled at the South Dade facility clinic per day; however, the staff veterinarian told The HSUS team that up to 25 per day could be done.

The HSUS team did not get an opportunity to see the MAC unit in operation, but MDPASU should be commended for offering such a service.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Create and implement detailed sterilization program SOPs for both shelter animals and the animals belonging to the public.
- ✓ Until the animals in the shelter can be provided adequate veterinary care The HSUS team recommends that MDPASU choose one of the following (Also see section 6.1, General Shelter Medicine/ Health Care):
  - 1) Discontinue offering free sterilization to any citizen of Miami-Dade County without regard to their financial ability to pay. Free surgeries should be offered to those who can prove need and subsidized sterilization should be offered to those not qualifying for free sterilization. This will still appeal to the public and will help to offset the costs. The income raised from the subsidized program could help pay for an additional veterinarian to provide care for the animals in the shelter.
  - 2) Continue to offer the free sterilization program for animals in the county, but perform less free sterilization surgery on a daily basis so the veterinarians on staff can spend more time caring for the animals in the shelter. The veterinarians should care for the animals in the shelter, sterilize the animals being adopted, and then as time allows perform free spay/neuter for the public.
- ✓ Sterilization programs should include animals over 50 pounds and five years of age. If a subsidized program is utilized, there should be a higher fee to sterilize larger animals, pregnant animals, and animals in heat. These procedures are appropriate for population control.
- ✓ MDPASU should begin pre-pubescent sterilization. This will ensure that all animals, including those less than four months of age, will be spayed or neutered before going to their new homes. This will ensure no animals adopted from MDPASU will contribute to overpopulation. If necessary, hire a veterinarian proficient in pre-pubescent sterilization.
- ✓ Public surgeries should be increased at the South Dade facility clinic and decreased at the North shelter clinic in order to give needed attention to the shelter animals in MDPASU's care. The South Dade facility clinic is under-utilized and in much better condition than the clinic at the shelter.
- ✓ All animals, including public animals, should receive a brief examination by a veterinarian before surgery.



- ✓ Greater care should be taken to prevent disease transmission including:
  - Reducing contact between animals
  - Cleaning surfaces/ changing papers between animals
  - Changing gloves between handling animals
  - Washing initially with a sterile sponge. If the room is left, gloves are torn, or blood gets on hands, they should be scrubbed again
  
- ✓ Although probably not feasible now, in the future consider sterilizing some animals prior to offering them for adoption. Incoming animals deemed healthy and highly adoptable, could be scheduled for surgery and surgically altered. By being selective and only choosing animals that are highly adoptable for this will lessen the need to euthanize animals that MDPASU has already sterilized. However, this does not mean these sterilized animals shouldn't be evaluated against incoming animals for euthanasia decisions.
  
- ✓ Animals that are highly adoptable but not healthy enough for sterilization may be sent to foster care (as space allows) until they are ready for surgery and adoption (See section 8.5, Foster Care Placement).
  
- ✓ If an animal is being adopted without being sterilized (due to medical conditions), require a deposit large enough to encourage compliance, refundable after the animal is brought back to the shelter for sterilization.
  
- ✓ Replace the rusty sink rack in the surgery prep area with stainless steel and ensure it is disinfected between each animal.

**Discussion:**

MDPASU's desire to solve the problem of pet over-population through accessible public spay/neuter programs is extremely admirable. However, the organization focuses a majority of its resources on this effort while the animals in the shelter do not receive adequate care.

## **6.8 VETERINARY SERVICES/ CONTRACTS/ RELATIONS**

**Observations:**

MDPASU offered adopters free medical follow-up for adopted animals for 30 days. A free exam at an independent veterinarian was not included in the adoption; however, adopters were encouraged to take their pet to a private veterinarian promptly after adoption. If an adopted animal was brought in to the shelter because of a health issue, it was the veterinarian's discretion whether or not to treat the illness; however, The HSUS could not find any documentation as to what illnesses would be treated.

The Dade County Veterinary Foundation was involved in the development of the 2003 Animal Services Task Force report provided to The HSUS team. There is obvious concern from the veterinary community and interest in assisting MDPASU in improving its operation.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Seek on-going training from local veterinarians as a way of building cooperative relationships.
- ✓ Keep veterinarians in the community informed of changes in vaccination and other health care policies at the shelter.
- ✓ Ask for feedback about the health of animals adopted from MDPASU. Let local veterinarians know that MDPASU wants to know about health problems so that steps can be taken to prevent them. Invite local veterinarians to visit the shelter to see how it operates.
- ✓ Build coalitions with local veterinarians to assist in providing subsidized spay/neuter services to the public and spreading the word about the importance of sterilization.
- ✓ Document which illnesses will be treated for animals within 30 days of adoption so the service is consistent for all adopters.

**Discussion:**

If local veterinarians are informed about vaccination and testing policies, they will see that MDPASU is taking reasonable steps to insure the health of animals at the shelter. If they see adopted animals with health problems, but know that MDPASU is trying its best, they are more likely to frame things in a positive way to the adopter. This is why it is important not to be defensive in discussing reported health problems. Veterinarians are in a position to improve MDPASU's image in the community or to damage it, so as much as possible they should be made to feel like partners in a joint effort.

## **6.9 ZOONOSES**

**Observations:**

The HSUS team was not aware that any zoonotic disease information, other than rabies, had been provided to staff. MDPASU did not have SOPs regarding zoonotic diseases or for handling rabies specimens. Staff performing euthanasia stated that they prepared rabies specimens several times a week from cats, dogs and wildlife, particularly raccoons.

According to the Miami-Dade Health Department's Monthly Report on Selected Reportable Diseases/Conditions, there have been no cases of animal rabies since 2000. According to the Florida Department of Health, nearby Collier and Broward Counties have had reported cases of animal rabies as recently as 2003.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Offer rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis and titers to staff that are exposed to animals as recommended by the Florida Rabies Advisory Committee.

- ✓ Develop formal training for all staff regarding zoonoses.<sup>60</sup> Staff should be made aware of the most common zoonotic threats encountered in an animal shelter. The Rabies Prevention and Control in Florida, 2004, from the Florida Department of Health is a good resource for rabies information.
- ✓ Develop and implement SOPs regarding zoonoses and precautions staff should take to minimize exposure. The SOPs should include information on what to do if an employee thinks he or she has been exposed.
- ✓ Provide staff with a laminated card listing possible zoonotic diseases staff could be exposed to. In the event that an employee becomes ill, they should give this card to their physician. Zoonotic diseases are often late to be diagnosed because shelter employees fail to inform their physicians of the type of work they do.

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60 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Protect Your Staff, Protect Yourself," March/April 1996\*

## 7.0 EUTHANASIA

For further information on euthanasia, please refer to the HSUS *Euthanasia Training Manual* accompanying this report.

### 7.1 SELECTION CRITERIA

Because euthanasia and adoption selection hinge upon one another, please see section 8.1, Selection Criteria/ Behavioral Assessments for information on selection criteria.

### 7.2 EUTHANASIA PAPERWORK

#### Observations:

MDPASU used the *Daily Animal Sick Log* to list animals scheduled for euthanasia. After a euthanasia/veterinary technician prepared the euthanasia list, each animal was then looked up in Chameleon for holds due to a possible owner, adoption, or placement partner coming for the animal. The shelter manager was responsible for initialing that each of the animals on the list was verified in Chameleon and a veterinarian initialed each line of the log. The log also had a space at the bottom for a supervisor/sergeant's signature; however, in reviewing the *Daily Animal Sick Logs* for June 14, 15 and 16, only the log for the 16<sup>th</sup> had been signed by a supervisor.

Based on the animals listed on the *Daily Animal Sick Log*, the technician then printed out a *Pre-Euthanasia Report* from Chameleon listing all of the animals scheduled for euthanasia as well as any holds on them. The *Pre-Euthanasia Report* was attached to the *Daily Animal Sick Log*, as were copies of cage cards for most of the animals euthanized, forms for owner requested euthanasia, and any lost and found check lists. The HSUS team was told this paperwork is then filed by the North shelter operations supervisor and kept for one year.

The technicians seemed to follow different procedures for the paperwork when performing euthanasia. On 6-14-04 and 6-15-04, the euthanasia technician recorded the weights of most of the dogs on the *Pre-Euthanasia Report* as they were performing euthanasia. On 6-16-04, the euthanasia technician recorded the weights of most of the dogs plus how many cc's of Fatal Plus were used (for the dogs only).

Drug record keeping was inadequate, which was discussed during wrap up meeting during the site visit. A veterinarian would sign out Schedule II, III and IV drugs from the MDPASU pharmacy, in which a clerk worked part time. The North shelter operations manager kept the key to this room. These drugs were then placed in a double-locked cabinet in the veterinary clinic.

Any euthanasia technician who started using a new bottle of Fatal Plus would sign it out on a log sheet attached to the door of the drug cabinet. The log sheet reflected the total number of bottles in inventory, a reduction in the number of bottles when someone took something from the inventory, and where the drug was taken (i.e. euthanasia room, South Dade facility, etc.) This log

did not contain much of the information that is mandated by Federal and State laws. There was no record kept showing who used each bottle, which animals it was used on, and in what quantity.

The technicians would record the dosage given to each animal in Chameleon, but that amount was often not written on the *Pre-Euthanasia Report*. The only SOP related to euthanasia paperwork required the technician to record the amount of drug used for each animal on the *Drug Ledger*. The HSUS team did not observe this being done, did not see a form called the *Drug Ledger* and was not given a copy of one. MDPASU did not use a bound book to record sodium pentobarbital use.

In Florida, there are two permits that must be obtained before any order for sodium pentobarbital will be filled. They are a DEA Controlled Substance Permit and a Board of Pharmacy Modified Class II Institutional Permit. Without these two permits, shelters in Florida cannot obtain the necessary drug for euthanasia.

Although nobody on staff could produce current copies of either of these two permits, they did have the necessary DEA 222 Form which is used to order the sodium pentobarbital. The mere fact that they are ordering the sodium pentobarbital when they need to is an indication they are currently permitted but just don't know where the permits are located.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop SOPs for euthanasia paperwork including forms, logs, and ledgers to be used, and how, when and by whom they should be filled out. This should include entering information into Chameleon.
- ✓ Continue recording when a new bottle of Fatal Plus is removed from the pharmacy; however, the information recorded must be more comprehensive (See *HSUS Euthanasia Training Manual*, page 14).
- ✓ An extensive and complete euthanasia log book system for the sodium pentobarbital and other controlled substances needs to be put into place immediately. A proper euthanasia ledger should contain the following information:
  - The name and concentration of the drug being used;
  - The bottle number of the drug;
  - The date the drug was administered;
  - A description of the animal; (This can be an identification number as assigned by Chameleon; however, it is recommended to include a physical description of the animal as well)
  - The estimated or actual weight of the animal;
  - The amount of drug used;
  - The signature of the person administering the drug;
  - The drug balance;
  - Signature of an assigned on-site manager no less than once monthly to ensure proper inventory and reconciliation;

- Entries into the ledger should be made when new inventory is received accompanied by the signature of the person making the entry;
  - Reason for the euthanasia should be indicated
- 
- ✓ There should be a daily supervisor review of the drug inventory compared with the drug ledger to ensure the balance reflected on the drug ledger coincides with what is on hand. This helps identify discrepancies early so they can be tracked down and addressed quickly.
  - ✓ A record of the drugs used for euthanasia, reasons for euthanasia, and the date euthanized should be maintained in each animal's record in Chameleon in addition to the drug ledger. This way, the information can be accessed if the computers go down and it also provides another means of checks and balances. Information in the computer can be compared with what is in the written ledger.
  - ✓ Reason for euthanasia should be specified in Chameleon. Animals that are euthanized due to illness should have a diagnosis specified on the *Daily Animal Sick Log* and in Chameleon.
  - ✓ Install a computer in A Ward so that dosage, outcome, reason for euthanasia, and date/time can be recorded immediately into Chameleon.
  - ✓ Ensure that MDPASU is following the record keeping requirements of the DEA. Each location that orders, stores, and administers scheduled drugs needs to have a copy of the current permits on site at the location the drugs are kept. This includes a DEA Controlled Substance Permit and a Florida Board of Pharmacy Modified Class II Institutional Permit.
  - ✓ Keep euthanasia records for a minimum of two years.

## 7.3 METHODS

### Observations:

There were extensive SOPs on euthanasia methods dated January 5, 2004, which is excellent. The HSUS team was provided with two different copies of this memo, one signed by the previous captain and one signed by the current captain during the site visit. It specified materials that must be in the euthanasia room, preparation, responsibilities of staff, procedures according to Governing Florida Statutes and Safety Information for Fatal Plus, as well as illustrations of methods. The SOPs did not specify needle size or use of pre-euthanasia anesthetics.

Florida state law requires an injection of sodium pentobarbital as its sole method of euthanasia for cats and dogs in shelters, which is the method used at MDPASU and the method recommended by The HSUS. The SOPs listed intravenous (IV) injection (in the vein) as the location of injection with cephalic vein injection as the preferred method, saphenous vein as optional and the jugular vein as the absolute last resort. There was an illustration of

intraperitoneal (IP) injection (in the abdominal area) for cats and a method to determine heart standstill via intracardiac (IC) insertion (in the heart), but the procedure did not discuss or recommend IC or IP injection.

The HSUS team observed the euthanasia process on two separate occasions. Both involved the same restrainer but two different euthanasia technicians. The euthanasia technician obtained the Fatal Plus, Telazol and supplies from the veterinary clinic because drugs are not kept in A Ward. The restrainer brought dogs into the room one at a time and read the identification number off of the dog's collar. He then weighed the dog and told the weight to the euthanasia technician. The euthanasia technician drew up the Fatal Plus based on the weight of the dog. He gave 1 cc per ten pounds of weight, plus one cc, which was appropriate. The restrainer appropriately lifted the dog onto the table and held him from the side, extending the front leg for injection.

The first euthanasia observed was of a puppy that was an adoption return and appeared to be very ill; suspected to have parvovirus. The puppy weighed 22 pounds. The technician used a spray bottle with water to wet the front leg in order to see the vein more clearly and injected 3 cc's of Fatal Plus into the cephalic vein using a 20 x 1 needle. Although the puppy was unconscious, he continued to breathe. The technician injected another 3 cc's and the puppy appeared to stop breathing. Immediately after the dog stopped breathing, death was verified by checking for a corneal reflex and also for a heartbeat with a stethoscope. The puppy was then immediately put in a black bag and loaded into the truck outside the door. The restrainer cleaned off the table using Chlorhexadine spray and a paper towel and went to get the next dog.

This basic procedure was followed with the next seven dogs, except that none of them required a second injection.

The restraint methods utilized were gentle, caring and humane and animals were comforted before, during and after the injections were given. On this day, The HSUS team did not observe a muzzle of any kind used during euthanasia.

On the second day of observation, the procedure for dogs was similar except corneal reflex was not used to verify death. Leash muzzle wraps were appropriately used on the dogs to protect the staff but handling was gentle and caring.

The HSUS team observed euthanasia of one adult cat. The technician gave the cat 2 cc's of Telazol while the cat was in its cage in another room. He brought the cat into the room once he was anesthetized and euthanized him via IC injection using a 25 x 5/8 needle. The technician stated that all cats are anesthetized using Telazol prior to euthanasia. Cats were not weighed on the scale but rather the euthanasia technician estimated their weights.

The HSUS team also observed a kitten being euthanized. She was first given an injection of Ketaset. After the kitten had appeared to lose consciousness the euthanasia technician conducted a blink reflex before an IC injection was given. The kitten was immediately checked with a stethoscope and bagged.

All of the animals observed were placed in plastic bags within one minute after the last injection.

The technician held the bag open at one end of the table and the restrainer slid the animal off the table into the bag. No other animals were in the room when euthanasia took place and the dead animals were removed before another was brought in. Staff was caring and respectful during the euthanasia observed.

Some areas of concern include:

- None of the animals were scanned for microchips before euthanasia although there was a scanner on the table in the room
- Death was confirmed immediately only via stethoscope and sometimes corneal reflex
- Staff safety

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Because it is used for cats and kittens, update the SOPs to include instructions for IC euthanasia including pre-euthanasia anesthetic drugs used.
- ✓ Ensure that the pre-euthanasia drugs have taken effect before performing IC injections. This can be done by checking for a blink reflex and withdraw reflex (See page 99 of the *HSUS Euthanasia Training Manual*).
- ✓ Staff must scan all animals for microchips before beginning euthanasia process. Scanning was performed very infrequently upon intake, so it is very likely that animals with microchips are euthanized without the owner knowing that the animal was at the shelter.
- ✓ Ensure that appropriate needle sizes are used for the different methods of injection. (See page 28 of the *HSUS Euthanasia Training Manual*).
- ✓ Management should closely monitor euthanasia procedures on an ongoing basis, and develop a comprehensive plan to continually provide euthanasia training on a regular basis.
- ✓ Animals should be checked more carefully for verification of death. There are four signs that can be checked to verify death:
  - Lack of respiration (the most obvious sign)
  - Lack of eye reflexes (corneal reflex test)
  - Lack of heartbeat (cardiac standstill technique)
  - Presence of rigor mortis

Due to the number of animals being euthanized, it is probably not feasible to wait until rigor mortis sets in to bag the animals and remove them from the room. However, The HSUS team recommends that animal not be bagged until their euthanasia information is recorded and then the cardiac standstill technique is performed.

- ✓ Proper safety, such as the use of muzzles, should be incorporated when euthanizing animals, as necessary.



**Discussion:**

One of the most critical responsibilities for those in the animal care and sheltering field - and the function that is often most demonstrative of an organization's level of compassion and concern - is an agency's commitment and ability to provide the most humane death possible when euthanasia is necessary.

The word euthanasia is of Greek origin and means "good death." In order to provide a humane death, the euthanasia process must result in painless, rapid unconsciousness followed by respiratory arrest, cardiac arrest, and ultimately death. For euthanasia to be truly euthanasia, the animal should be as free from stress and anxiety as possible.

The use of sodium pentobarbital and proper administration of that drug by an injectable method do not in and of themselves ensure a humane death. The manner and route by which the drug is injected as well as the circumstances surrounding the administration of sodium pentobarbital, have a great impact on the humaneness of the procedure. Simply requiring euthanasia by injection is no guarantee that the manner in which the drug is being applied is humane or compassionate. It is a binding obligation of shelter administrators to evaluate current euthanasia procedures frequently, ensure that animals are being properly handled, and verify that employees are competent, compassionate, and properly trained.

The 2000 American Veterinary Medical Association's Panel on Euthanasia states that any technique used should "minimize distress and anxiety experienced by the animal prior to loss of consciousness."<sup>61</sup> Technical proficiency and humane handling of the animals to be euthanized can minimize this stress and anxiety. Such humane handling is accomplished by staff that is knowledgeable about animal behavior; demonstrates respect, compassion, and sensitivity for the animals; and is committed to providing animals with a dignified death. It also requires consideration of the animal's behavioral, physical, and physiological responses to the process, as well as to the drugs used.

There are many factors involved in providing a humane death for an animal. Technical skill and knowledge regarding drugs and equipment is a necessity; however, an understanding of the emotional investment on the part of staff members is equally important. Teamwork, support, patience, attitude and an understanding of one's convictions and personal commitments to the job are all involved in giving an animal a dignified death.

Please see the enclosed *HSUS Euthanasia Training Manual* for more detailed information about euthanasia methods.

## **7.4 CARCASS DISPOSAL**

**Observations:**

Animals were individually placed in plastic bags that were tied closed and put into the bed of a pickup truck located outside the euthanasia room. MDPASU pays to dispose of the carcasses at a landfill and according to staff, they make trips to the landfill twice a day. The HSUS team was

told that the drive to the landfill takes 1 ½ to 2 hours round trip therefore animals euthanized in the early evening were left in the back of the truck overnight. When The HSUS team arrived at the shelter in the morning, the carcasses had been sitting outside overnight and had a very bad odor, which could be smelled from the front of the building.

There was a crematorium at the facility that was not being used. MDPASU stopped using it when the police department took over due to community complaints about the smell.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Continue using the landfill to dispose of carcasses.
  
- ✓ Purchase a large walk-in freezer to store the carcasses until they can be taken to the landfill. Not only will this reduce or eliminate the odor of decomposing bodies, it may also allow staff to make less trips to the landfill saving valuable staff time, which can be used to care for the live animals in the shelter.

## **7.5 EUTHANASIA ROOM/ ENVIRONMENT**

**Observations:**

MDPASU should be commended for having a room that is solely used for euthanasia (See Fig. 22). The room was of adequate size and the walls were painted white with no decoration of any kind. Lighting was provided by a long florescent light fixture that ran down the center of the ceiling above the work area. There was a euthanasia table in the middle of the room which was stationary (not vertically adjustable) and had a stainless steel top. In one corner of the room was a sink. The other side of the room had a table, a large scale, a restraint gate, and a large air purification system. The table was unorganized and contained various items including paper towels, Chlorhexadine spray, a bottle labeled "Rompun," a sharps container, rubber gloves, stethoscope, microchip scanner, a saw, eyewash, and a razor. The room did not contain all the equipment listed in the euthanasia SOPs and was missing useful equipment such as a control pole, nets, trap isolators, and pole syringe.



Figure 22

There was a sign on the door that said “Caution Do Not Enter;” however, staff knocked on the door several times during our observation of euthanasia. The noise level in the euthanasia room was higher than preferred during observation due to a radio playing, the air purification system, and barking dogs in adjacent areas. The room is air conditioned and the temperature at the time of observation was 83 degrees Fahrenheit and 80% humidity.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Provide some wall decorations and paint to brighten the room up. Perhaps allow the staff to paint a mural in memory of the animals that had to be euthanized there.<sup>62</sup>
- ✓ Consider keeping a euthanasia diary in the room to allow staff to write down their feelings and thoughts.
- ✓ Ensure that all the equipment listed in the SOPs is readily accessible in the euthanasia room.
- ✓ Install wall holders that allow equipment to be stored off the floor.
- ✓ Keep the table that holds supplies and equipment organized. Another table may be necessary if a computer is installed in the euthanasia room.
- ✓ Place a rubber mat atop the euthanasia table to prevent animals from slipping and moving around during the injection process.
- ✓ Display an external sign indicating when euthanasia is taking place so that the room’s

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62 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “What a Difference a Little Color Makes,” September/October 2001\*

occupants will not be disturbed. Stress the importance of respecting this notice to staff. The sign may be as simple as red on one side and green on the other, which can be flipped to indicate “okay to enter” or “do not enter.”

- ✓ If the radio is kept in the room, only soft classical music should be played. The radio should be turned off completely during death verification if the stethoscope is being used.
- ✓ If staff has trouble seeing the animals’ veins due to shadows, install additional lighting that is not directly over the work area.
- ✓ Monitor the temperature in the room and try to keep it between 72 and 82 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Discussion:**

It is important to give the animals a calm and quiet area in order to reduce their stress as well as providing the staff with a safe working area. The euthanasia room should be the quietest, most respected, least interrupted and most relaxed room in an animal shelter. Cats and dogs immediately pick up on the ambience of the room and the people in it. While animals do not “know” they are about to be euthanized, they do recognize that they are in an unfamiliar environment and efforts should be made to reduce stress prior to euthanasia. Animals generally will relax and feel more trusting if the environment is pleasant and they are comforted and reassured.

For the benefit of both the animals and the staff, a euthanasia room should be made to look and feel warm, comfortable, clean, and peaceful. It should be a medium sized room that is not cramped or so large that an animal feels like it is exposed and vulnerable. The room should be well lit. It should be warm, dry and clean and have a professional atmosphere - not formal or sterile, just professional. The floors and tables should be easy to clean and they should always be cleaned between animals. If anesthetized dogs must lie on the floor, they ought to be covered and cats should be in covered cages or carriers. Consider pictures or posters to help lend a more cheerful atmosphere.

Even the staff’s movements will go a long way toward allaying animals’ fears. Calm, gentle, slow movements are preferred and do much to relax the animals and reduce stress. If a euthanasia room is noisy to the point of distraction, the animals will likely respond in kind. They will be difficult for staff to handle, and the quality of the euthanasia process will diminish accordingly.

## **7.6 EUTHANASIA TECHNICIANS/ TRAINING**

**Observations:**

The State of Florida requires that euthanasia be performed by an employee or agent of the shelter who has successfully completed a 16-hour euthanasia technician certification course. In Florida, the Board of Veterinary Medicine has deferred the responsibility of providing a proper curriculum, training, testing, and certification of euthanasia technicians to the Florida Animal

Control Association (FACA). As required, MDPASU used the certification training materials and test developed by FACA. One of the veterinarians at the shelter conducted the training. Each employee that was certified had proof in his/her employee file of having completed the 16-hour training and passed the exam.

The technicians observed were competent and performed euthanasia in a professional manner.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Continued education in strengthening skills for euthanasia should be continually explored.

## 8.0 ADOPTIONS

### 8.1 SELECTION CRITERIA/ BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENTS

#### Observations:

As euthanasia and adoption selection hinge on each other, both will be discussed in this section.

The only adoption selection criteria in the SOPs indicated that “it is the policy of the Animal Services Unit to make available for adoption, any dog or cat that has been medically screened for health and temperament...” However, most of the animals did not receive any veterinary exam until they had been selected by an adopter, and The HSUS team is unaware of any behavior evaluation whatsoever. Most animals in the shelter were available for adoption. Basically after sick animals, noticeably aggressive animals, and pit bulls were weeded out for euthanasia, everything else was available to be adopted.

There was one veterinary technician and one animal care specialist assigned to euthanasia each day. On the day observed, the veterinary technician walked through the shelter with one of the veterinarians making up the *Daily Animal Sick Log*. They began in B Ward and then proceeded to general housing. Any animal that appeared to be sick was put on the list with no description of symptoms specified. The veterinarian generally observed from a distance, occasionally asking the veterinary technician to bring an animal closer for him to look at but animals were not tested to confirm a particular illness. Staff told The HSUS team that this was not normal procedure, that usually veterinary technician conducted this procedure without a veterinarian.

Staff told HSUS team that over 300 animals were euthanized the weekend before the site visit to “clean out the shelter” and that normally animals were not kept the five day stray holding period as required by section 5-11 of Code of Miami-Dade County, which could be a serious liability for Miami-Dade County.

#### Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop and implement SOPs for adoption and euthanasia selection. This process needs to be formalized and criteria well documented.
- ✓ Management, in concert with a veterinarian, should develop a chart that clearly communicates which animals with what injuries/illnesses observed should be euthanized immediately.
- ✓ A determination regarding a potential adoptable animal’s disposition should be made during their stay in healthy hold. If a dog or cat is not a candidate for adoption, euthanasia should take place immediately (or after his mandatory stray hold) to make room for new arrivals that may be adoptable (See section 6.3, Isolation and Separation).
- ✓ Diagnostic testing results should be used to help screen dogs and cats for adoptability. This will ensure that someone does not choose an animal to adopt only to find out he or she has heartworm or feline leukemia.

- ✓ To evaluate an animal for adoption, MDPASU should consider not only variables such as age, health, temperament, physical condition, behavior and available space, but it must also address many other questions such as:
  - What are the prospects for providing this animal with a quality life?
  - Is the animal in pain or distress and is there hope of alleviating this pain to allow for a quality of life?
  - Does keeping this animal in his or her present condition present health or safety risks to other animals or people?
  - Given the fiscal and practical limitations faced by this organization, does keeping this animal alive reduce that ability to care humanely for other animals?
  
- ✓ Daily assessments should be done for the animals in healthy hold in order to choose which healthy, adoptable animals to move into the adoption area. Space is always limited, and if a new arrival (in healthy hold) is perhaps a better candidate for adoption than an animal already up for adoption that has not generated any interest from potential adopters, the new arrival should be given the opportunity for adoption.
  
- ✓ Daily assessments should be done for the animals already in the adoption area, and those that are no longer considered good candidates for adoption should be euthanized. In order to avoid “warehousing” animals, this evaluation process needs to be performed daily (sometimes multiple times a day) and consistently.
  
- ✓ For now, implement a basic “eyeball” assessment to determine temperament. This should be done during the animal’s initial incoming examination.<sup>63</sup>
  
- ✓ Only after other changes are made should a *formal* behavior evaluation program be implemented.<sup>64, 65</sup> First, MDPASU should implement the isolation and separation changes in section 6.3, Dog/ Cat Care in section 5.21, and General Shelter Medicine/ Health Care in section 6.1. Formal behavior evaluations should take place during a dog’s stay in healthy hold.
  
- ✓ The behavior evaluation program’s influence on euthanasia and adoption decisions should be documented in the SOPs, implemented and well understood.
  
- ✓ The behavior evaluations should be performed by a skilled and experienced animal care professional in a position of authority, preferably in consultation with other key staff members. When making euthanasia decisions for incoming animals, an emphasis must be placed on maintaining full adoption areas and on minimizing disease within the shelter environment.

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63 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “Pet Temperament Status,” September/October 1996\*

64 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “Putting Your Behavior Evaluation Program To the Test,” September/October 2003\*

65 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “Assess With Success Part Two, Evaluating Animals for Adoption,” November/December 2003\*

- ✓ The behavior evaluation results should always be attached to the dog's paperwork and recorded in Chameleon.
- ✓ Carefully evaluate the reason for surrender when considering making owned animals available for adoption. When the formal behavior evaluation program is put in place it should be done on owned animals as well as strays.
- ✓ If animals are euthanized due to illness, the illness needs to be specified and documented. Records need to be kept for each animal.
- ✓ Provide euthanasia as soon as possible once an animal has been selected. These animals should not have to wait until a convenient time for staff.
- ✓ Develop criteria that will clearly document the reasons for and numbers of animals being euthanized. Differentiate between those who had potential to be placed if additional resources were available and those who did not.
- ✓ Consider establishing categories similar to the following when developing protocols to determine an animal's potential:

CATEGORY	STATUS	EUTHANASIA
Adoption Potential	Animals who, given the space, time, staff, money or availability of an appropriate home could live well in a new home.	...is most often due to a lack of resources and / or appropriate homes.
Medical -- Treatable	Animals in good physical condition with treatable, non-contagious medical conditions such as skin problems, bad flea or mite infestations, a broken limb, abscess, or problems that could be fixed with treatment and / or time.	...is most often a result of lack of resources, space or time to treat the animal.
Medical -- Contagious	Animals in good physical condition with a medical condition such as an upper respiratory infection, kennel cough, ringworm or a less severe case of mange that may be very treatable but highly contagious in a shelter environment.	...is most often not only because of the symptoms of the illness, but also to prevent contamination of others.



Physical Condition	Animals in general poor overall condition and/or health (for example, old, thin, weak).	...is often the eventual result as these animals are often poor candidates for adoption placement due to the extensive medical rehabilitation necessary.
Unweaned -- Too Young	Animals that are too young to survive on their own or in a shelter setting, needing extensive care and socialization.	...is often the result due to the labor-intensive nature of care and lack of foster homes.
Breed	Animals of breeds that are banned or at an increased risk in a community (such as areas where dog fighting occurs).	...may be performed if no other options are available.
Behavior Problems	Animals with behavior problems such as chewing, inappropriate urination, separation anxiety, timidity, destructiveness, or lack of socialization.	...is generally due to a lack of an appropriate placement that will provide a commitment to adequate training, socialization, and the proper environment.
Kennel-Stress	Animals with a marked change in behavior due to stress as a result of an extended stay in the shelter.	...is generally performed for humane reasons to prevent further suffering.
Space	Animals who would continue to make good adoption candidates but whose cage space is needed for others.	...is generally necessary when space in the shelter is unavailable and room must be made for other animals needing housing and care.
Inappropriate for Adoption	Certain species of animals, or animals with a serious condition that is not suitable for rehabilitation.	...is appropriate even if the resources (space, time, money, staff, and isolation) and a potential home is available.

Medical -- Untreatable	Animals with a terminal illness or injury, severe chronic illness, or other serious medical condition.	...is appropriate to eliminate ongoing suffering for the animal.
Temperament Issues	Animals that are extremely shy, timid, high-strung, stressed, or distressed.	...is generally necessary due to an unlikely chance for successful adjustment into a new home.
Aggressiveness	Animals that are showing signs of aggression, have attacked another animal or person, or have a history of aggression.	...is generally appropriate for humane, safety, ethical, and liability reasons.
Feral or Unsocialized	Animals that have not and cannot be handled and do not adjust to the shelter setting.	...is generally appropriate for animals with no hope of socialization.
Court Order	Animals that have been ordered for euthanasia at the direction of a judge, hearing officer or other public official with that authority.	...is performed to comply with this ruling.

- ✓ Although The HSUS team acknowledges that it is the law in Miami-Dade County, The HSUS recommends against any breed specific policy or ordinance. Instead, it is recommended that each animal and potential adopter be properly screened to ensure, as much as possible, the animal is appropriate for adoption and will be properly placed. If the law does change, MDPASU should implement an aggressive screening procedure when considering the placement of specific breeds to ensure that only the best representatives of the breed are made available for adoption.<sup>66</sup>

**Discussion:**

It is necessary to rethink the selection process for adoption and euthanasia. Decisions regarding the adoptability or the euthanasia of animals within the animal shelter are the most difficult for staff to handle. Progressive and well-run animal shelters recommend a standard adhering to the organization's mission statement.

It is understandable that with the number of animals entering the facility and the lack of

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66 *JAVMA*, "A Community Approach to Dog Bite Prevention," Volume 218, No. 11, June 1, 2001

resources, MDPASU must euthanize sick and injured animals. However, as MDPASU makes improvements to disease control and sanitation, isolation and separation and incoming animal examinations and vaccinations, the health of the animals in the shelter should improve. These improvements will allow MDPASU to choose the animals that are the best candidates for adoption instead of allowing the public to choose from every animal regardless of their stray hold status, behavior, or health. Hopefully, this will increase the number of animals adopted; however, it may also require staff to select healthy animals for euthanasia to create adequate space in the shelter. This is why it is important to have clearly documented criteria for choosing animals for euthanasia.

The behavioral health of an animal in the custody of an animal care and control agency is as important as his or her physical health. A behavioral examination and assessment of animals is also extremely crucial to the adoption process and its success.

A shelter's responsibility is to protect the public and provide a safe haven for unwanted and lost animals. Animals are individuals, and each should be evaluated on an individual basis prior to euthanasia. While this is often difficult, the volume of surplus animals and lack of appropriate homes necessitates that this be done as fairly and compassionately as possible.

A behavior assessment program cannot be created on the fly. When developing a program, clear and well-thought-out written policies, procedures, forms, communication techniques, and accountability measures should be implemented. Behavior assessment programs must be unique to each shelter's situation, staff time and expertise. There are several programs available upon which to base a program that is appropriate for MDPASU.

The accurate assessment of the behavioral status of an animal allows a shelter to provide adequate care for that animal, to improve that animal's likelihood of adoption, and to potentially place that animal in an appropriate adoptive home. Additionally, behavior assessment also plays a key role in enhancing the safety of staff members and the general public, and greatly reduces adoption liability.

## **8.2 ADOPTION PROCESS AND POLICIES**

### **Observations:**

MDPASU had very limited SOPs regarding the adoption process and policies. An informational sheet entitled, *Want to Adopt a Pet?*, explained the adoption process to potential adopters. They were instructed to look at the animals, select those they are interested in and find a staff member in the kennel area. The staff member then looks up the animal in Chameleon, records some pertinent information on the sheet, and initials it. The potential adopter takes this sheet to the front desk and pays a \$5 fee to hold the animal. Stray animals still in their mandatory hold could be put on adoption hold by potential adopters but they could not be officially adopted until their stray hold was up.

Adoptions were done on a first-come, first-served basis. MDPASU did not utilize an adoption questionnaire (a.k.a. adoption application) or any other means to screen or counsel potential

adopters. There was no effort to "match" people with a pet that would be best suited for their lifestyle or preferences. There was no procedure for allowing adopters to socialize with the animals they wanted to adopt or for adopters to bring in their own animals to meet an animal they wanted to adopt.

The adoption paperwork was completed in a timely manner but people sometimes had to wait several days before their pet was sterilized and they could take him or her home. Animals that were already spayed or neutered could go home the same day as adopted if they received an exam, vaccinations and a microchip; otherwise surgery was scheduled as soon as possible usually within two days. This delay may be due to the fact that most of the staff veterinarians were focusing their time on sterilizing the public's animals, not the animals adopted from the shelter.

MDPASU used an adoption contract that served to limit liability against MDPASU and required adopters to comply with animal regulations. This form appeared to be sufficient.

The adoption fee was \$28.25 for dogs and cats. Dog adopters who reside in Miami-Dade County pay an additional \$7 for the rabies shot and an additional \$25 for dogs for the license fee. The adoption fee included vaccinations, sterilization surgery, and a microchip, which is excellent.

Young animals were not necessarily microchipped at adoption. During the site visit, an adopter brought back her four month old puppy to have her spayed. The puppy was scheduled to also get her microchip and when asked, the staff member stated that the microchip is just like a regular vaccination and so they don't give them when animals are eight weeks old.

MDPASU was not tracking the number of animals returned and why, but has the ability to do so through the Chameleon program.

According to the Web site, MDPASU did have a Match-a-Pet program. People were instructed to call a number and specify what kind of animal they are interested in. If an animal matching that description comes in the person would be contacted by the lost and found office. The HSUS team was unable to determine if this program is successful; however, MDPASU should be commended for offering it.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Update MDPASU's SOPs to include the adoption procedure, policies, and written adoption guidelines to ensure consistency in the adoption process. Guidelines may include things such as:
  - Animals will be placed first and foremost as companion animals or, with exception, as service animals with supervisor approval.
  - Adopters must be 18 years old or older.
  - Potential adopters must provide landlord information if they live in a rental property and it must be verified that they are allowed to have pets on the premises before an adoption proceeds. The animal may be placed on a 24-hour hold to verify this information.

- Animals determined to have serious or dangerous behavioral problems will not be made available for adoption.
- ✓ Allow the public to view animals (in the adoption areas only) unescorted by staff; however, train staff (and select volunteers) to assist adopters in the animal selection process while they look at the adoptable animals by answering questions, highlighting certain animals, discussing breed traits, and assisting adopters in selecting the right animal. Detailed cage cards will also help adopters choose the right animal for them.
- ✓ Develop a form where staff and select volunteers can write their observations about the animals' traits and behaviors on one side. The other side can have information for the public. This will assist all staff in making good matches.<sup>67</sup>
- ✓ Ensure that all staff involved in the adoption program be as familiar as possible with the animals available for adoption, as well as with companion animals in general. They are crucial to helping make a quality, life-long match between pet and adopter.
- ✓ At this time, implement a basic adoption questionnaire and screening process. If the same criteria are used to screen all adopters consistently, they are not typically considered to be discriminatory. The screening process should include the following at minimum:
  - Require that all other applicable animals in the household are licensed
  - Check potential adopters against a list of people who have histories of animal problems and cruelty convictions to ensure that staff is not adopting to pet owners known to be irresponsible or abusive
  - For renters, require written or verbal proof that pets are allowed as well as any other requirements such as deposits and sizes of pets allowed
  - If there are animals in the home that are not sterilized, then MDPASU should only place animals that can be spayed or neutered prior to adoption.
- ✓ Allow the public to submit questionnaires for adoptable strays within their mandatory hold period. This may help to move animals through the facility quicker. Once strays have been held in healthy hold and have been deemed adoptable, they can be moved to adoptions where the public can submit questionnaires for them. However it must be made clear that if the animal is claimed by his or her owner within the hold period, the questionnaire will become void or can be applied to another animal.<sup>68</sup>
- ✓ Make it a goal to implement a comprehensive adoption counseling process with a full-time staff person in charge as case manager in the future as the program grows. In addition, if necessary, select staff can assist the full-time adoption case manager as adoption counselor(s). Make sure the adoption counselor(s) have a desire to help people and that they are the friendliest, most outgoing members of the staff.

The case manager and adoption counselor(s) would be responsible for working with potential adopters to help them select the right pet for their lifestyle and would work with

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67 Behavior observation form examples

68 Adoption status form example

the adopters through the entire process, including approving the adoption paperwork. The adoption case manager can then provide the subsequent follow-up after adoption to ensure a smooth transition into the new home.

- ✓ Hold a short adoption counseling session with each potential adopter when their questionnaire is turned in to help the adoption counselors determine if the potential adopter should be approved to adopt. This will give the adoption counselors the opportunity to discuss pet care responsibilities and get clarification on answers if necessary. The adoption questionnaire should be friendly and contain open-ended questions to encourage discussion and to help the staff make a better match. The process should be a counseling session, not a test.<sup>69, 70</sup>
- ✓ Designate an area away from the front counter that can be used to sit down with potential adopters during the counseling session. This can be as simple as a couple chairs and small table or desk. The corner of the lobby that was holding the large cage unit may be a practical spot for a few of these stations separated by cubicle panels.
- ✓ Continue to offer the Match-a-Pet program. A staff member—preferably the staff member who serves as the liaison with placement partners—should be responsible for this program. Citizens participating in the Match-a-Pet program should be contacted before placement partners are called. Research ways to utilize Chameleon for this program.
- ✓ For people who find and relinquish strays, create a special information card or sheet to be given to them that clearly explains MDPASU's stray hold period, health and behavior evaluation (once implemented), and a process for them to follow if the animal becomes a candidate for adoption and they wish to adopt. For instance, if they are interested in adopting the animal, have them fill out an adoption questionnaire and then give them a handout that instructs the finder to call the shelter by a certain time and day to check on the adoption status of the animal. If the animal is made available for adoption and the finder calls, the adoption questionnaire will be applied to the animal and an adoption can take place. These processes provide finders first right of refusal on adoptions, and frees up staff time.
- ✓ Establish a process where multiple questionnaires can be accepted for one animal on a first come, first serve basis. If the first applicant is approved after their counseling session but lacks certain criteria (i.e. landlord/homeowners association approval, animals at home licensed, etc), allow a 24-hour hold to be placed on the animal while the applicant gathers the necessary information. If the applicant fails to provide the additional information necessary within 24 hours, the next approved applicant should be contacted. It may be worthwhile to explore what procedures other shelters use for this process and institute the best practices.<sup>71</sup>

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69 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "In Pursuit of Lifelong Homes," November/December 2002\*

70 Counseling checklist

71 Adoption tracking form example

- ✓ MDPASU should consider a basic appeals process for those who were denied adoption. If someone is denied, the shelter manager or director should review the case and make a final decision. However, it is important that denials are based on written policy and not personality conflicts. If implemented, the appeals process should be written into the SOPs.
- ✓ Continue to charge the same base adoption fee for cats and dogs. Although spay/neuter fees may differ for different sized animals, dogs are not more valuable than cats and the adoption fee should continue to signify this.
- ✓ Adoption returns should be carefully tracked. The reasons for return should help drive improvements to the adoption process.<sup>72</sup> For example if an agency has many animals returned because of behavior issues, the agency may want to spend more time during the adoption process counseling on animal behavior and solutions to problems.
- ✓ Implement a way for adopters to meet with the animal they are interested in adopting outside of his kennel or cage. And if desired by the adopter, there should be a process for them to bring in their pets to meet the shelter animal they are interested in. This could be done by establishing a meet and greet area specifically for this purpose.
- ✓ All dogs and cats should be microchipped at adoption regardless of their age.
- ✓ Establish in writing the goals and objectives for the adoption program, and identify processes for continual evaluation.

**Discussion:**

Citizens choosing to adopt from MDPASU have done so in light of other available options such as pet stores and breeders. In addition, the adoption decision was most likely based on a strong desire to do something charitable for MDPASU.

A good adoption program incorporates policies and guidelines designed to assist with responsible matchmaking. A good decision is one that is based upon:

- Information presented by the potential adopter
- The appropriateness of that animal to that environment
- An adoption counselor's good judgment, common sense, and willingness to look at each situation individually

Part of a progressive adoption program is to teach adoption counselors not to think in terms of catching potential adopters in a wrong answer. While it is important to have guidelines that are in place to protect the animals and ensure that each adopted animal is placed in a responsible home and sterilized, it is also important to make the right match. Staff must be trained to evaluate potential adopters and teach adopters to be responsible pet owners. This can be tricky and selection of the right staff members to be adoption counselors is crucial. We encourage the

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72      Return form example

organization to look for people who are excellent communicators, who are genuinely able to enjoy the process of talking with people and helping them make decisions regarding the correct type of pet for their family.

A comprehensive, interactive adoption program will better serve the needs and interests of both the animals in the care of MDPASU and the people who come to adopt suitable companions. The staffing and resources dedicated to implementing a comprehensive adoption program clearly need expansion in order to meet this goal. However, by identifying what the organization hopes to achieve, it can easily identify the resources needed to accomplish it, work those needs into the organization's list of priorities, and then phase in the various aspects of the program as resources are made available.

The purpose of an adoption program, whether conducted by a private animal-protection agency or a municipal animal control agency, should be to find responsible, lifelong homes for animals suitable as companions. Such matchmaking requires knowledge of both the animals to be placed and their prospective adopters. The goal of any adoption program is not to place as many animals as possible but to place animals in appropriate homes that provide the animal a safe, caring home for life.

The HSUS believes strongly that it is not a kindness to animals for an agency to place them in homes where they will fail to receive adequate care and companionship, food, water, shelter, or veterinary care when necessary. Nor is it a benefit to the community for an agency to place animals where they will be allowed to roam the streets, violate animal control laws, or add their offspring to the surplus of unwanted animals who already burden the community.

When seeking to place homeless animals into new homes, shelters face stiff competition from pet stores, breeders, and sources of free animals. According to a survey by the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPMA), 20 percent of cat and dog owners obtained their animals at shelters. The rest took in strays, bred their own animals, or acquired pets through friends, relatives, breeders, newspapers, and pet stores. Taking a cue from these statistics, shelters are examining ways to break down historical barriers that stand in the way of relationships with veterinarians, dog trainers, groomers, social service workers, breed placement partners, breeders, and neighborhood feral cat caretakers. Not only can these people amplify and complement existing shelter services, they can also boost a shelter's image in the community as a reliable source of new animal companions.

Studies have shown that prospective pet owners generally stay away from an animal shelter for a variety of reasons:

- Ignorance of the surplus animal problem
- Impulse buying and impulse accepting
- Perceived quality of shelter animals
- Unfamiliarity with the animal shelter
- Misconceptions about the animal shelter
- Inconvenience of hours and/or location of the shelter

Shelters cannot hope to overcome these obstacles easily because many preconceived notions



about shelters and shelter animals are so deeply rooted in the American psyche that they are taking decades to change. But other problems may have more achievable solutions, perhaps something as basic as noting any improvements made and helping to correct a shelter's lack of visibility (or negative image) in the community. However, increasing adoptions demands careful regard for the adoption process in an effort to ensure that healthy animals are placed in responsible homes.

Although certain adoption criteria (such as whether or not a landlord will allow pets) are absolute, most are meant to serve as guidelines, enabling counselors to work within each set of circumstances individually. One of the keys to program success is to have consistent approaches, policies, and procedures in order to avoid any false allegations that the agency is either arbitrary or discriminatory. Evaluation of potential adopters can be based on three basic criteria: 1) commitment to the life and needs of the animal; 2) compassion and a desire for mutual companionship; and 3) capability of providing the essentials of a healthy, happy life for the animal.

The adoption process should be a positive, friendly, and educational one and never an opportunity to either "get an animal out of the shelter" or for the "adoption police" to find fault with a person's lifestyle. But there are certain circumstances under which a requested adoption should not occur. Because potential adopters often initially view a refusal as a rejection or accusation, counselors must be honest and direct, as well as courteous and understanding. If done appropriately, explaining the rationale for adoption denial can serve as an educational experience, and not a demeaning one. When staff fails to do this correctly, the potential adopter leaves without a true understanding of the message and will simply acquire an animal elsewhere. Some agencies find that instead of denying adoptions, it benefits them to work with those people who simply need education on responsible pet care or some assistance in complying with the agency's guidelines. Instead of denying an adoption, letting potential adopters know of your concerns with the adoption and asking if they will work with the agency to address the issues is non-threatening. Those that will work with the agency will be educated and an animal will have found a home. Those that won't work with the agency have not been outright denied, but have made the decision themselves.

Animal shelters should be aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities regarding the adoption of any animal. Good adoption policies will help your agency make the best decisions for the animals being adopted and will assure the community that all potential adopters are treated fairly and equally. Exceptions to enacted policies should not be made without consultation with a supervisor and/or a home visit.

### **8.3 ADOPTION FOLLOW-UP/ COMPLIANCE**

#### **Observations:**

MDPASU did not follow-up with adopters, including ensuring sterilization of animals that were sent home unsterilized.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ There should be follow-up on all animals leaving the shelter unsterilized. Create a callback list for animals adopted or fostered without being sterilized. Assign a staff person or volunteer to make follow-up calls when the sterilization is due and schedule an appointment with them or require proof of sterilization if they had the sterilization done by a local veterinarian. A list may be able to be automatically generated in Chameleon for this purpose. Those not in compliance should be held accountable according to their contract.
- ✓ Make it an eventual goal to follow up on all animals that are adopted from the shelter (not just those that went home unsterilized). In addition to verifying sterilization (if animals are sent home unsterilized), phone calls are also a friendly way to follow up on health and behavior concerns and catch problems before they result in an animal being returned. If possible, assign a staff person or utilize a volunteer who will be responsible for handling follow up calls. MDPASU must decide how long to wait to call the owners of animals that were sterilized before going home.
- ✓ Maintain a list of area dog trainers and behaviorists, which can be given as a reference if an adopter is having a behavior issue with a newly adopted pet.<sup>73</sup> This list, along with behavior information sheets, can also be used for those who call the shelter perhaps thinking about relinquishing a pet due to behavior issues.<sup>74</sup>
- ✓ During follow up calls, suggest that adopters send a photo and keep MDPASU informed on how the animal is doing. Post photos on an adoption bulletin board in the lobby and rotate them on a regular basis.

**Discussion:**

It is essential to follow up on all adoptions to find out if health and temperament screening methods are adequate and to see if changes need to be made to counseling offered. Follow up also shows concern and that MDPASU is working with the adopter to make the adoption a success. People will feel grateful to the agency that has cared for an animal and made it possible for them to adopt a companion. Asking for a photo and showing a genuine interest in hearing about future progress cements the relationship. Successfully adopted animals are like alumni and their adopters can become part of a strong support and donor base.

An adoption program is just a revolving door or worse if animals from MDPASU become part of the breeding pool adding to the ongoing problem of overpopulation, which the shelter is dealing with. The numbers seem overwhelming, but each animal spayed or neutered represents generations of litters prevented and slowly the numbers will begin to come down. Even if other animals in the community are still breeding it is unacceptable for MDPASU, which is setting the example for the community, to allow animals in its adoption program to become part of the problem.

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73 [www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com), (Association of Pet Dog Trainers)  
74 HSUS "Pet Behavior Tip Sheets" on CD Rom\*

## 8.4 COMMUNITY PLACEMENT PARTNERS

### **Observations:**

MDPASU did not have an SOP regarding placement partners (a.k.a. rescue groups, adoption partners, breed placement groups) but had a full-time employee assigned to handle lost and found reports and to work with placement partners. Placement partners were required to provide the 501c3 determination letter from the IRS, which was the only criterion necessary to allow them to take animals from the shelter. Placement partners were not required to pay a fee or sign a contract to remove animals. Animals were not diagnostic tested, vaccinated or sterilized before they were taken by a placement partner. The rescue coordinator seemed to have good working relationships with these organizations and would call the appropriate group when a particular type of animal came in.

Placement partners could identify animals that they wanted to take; however, during the site visit, these groups were used to rescue animals slated for euthanasia. The animals taken out of the shelter were in poor condition. A representative of one of these groups stated that his organization had to have a separate holding area for the animals taken from MDPASU because they were so sick that they infected the other animals at his shelter.

Representatives of several of these organizations have approached MDPASU expressing concern about the health of the animals. MDPASU management has reacted by increasingly limiting the access of these organizations to the animals. One memo implied that missing animals were due to the presence of the placement partners and required that a supervisor escort certain representatives of these groups in the shelter, which gave them even less access than the general public.

Immediately after the site visit, management demoted the rescue coordinator and put another employee in the position that did not have the same knowledge of the placement partners or relationship with them.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ MDPASU should immediately begin working with community placement partners to improve their working relationship and eliminate the mutual mistrust. A responsible placement partner works with shelters to increase the number of animals placed and decrease the euthanasia of adoptable animals.
- ✓ In order to reanalyze its need for a placement partner program, MDPASU should review the following:
  - The number of animals that are considered adoptable but that are euthanized for space or time issues. *The larger this number, the more basis for establishing a program.*
  - The number of animals that are euthanized because their condition deteriorates in the shelter setting or that cannot be housed comfortably in the shelter. *The larger this number, the more basis for a program.*

- The number of purebred animals received by the shelter annually, expressed as a percentage of the total domestic animal intake. *The more purebred pets received, especially purebred dogs, the more assistance is likely to be available, given the very well-developed network of national purebred dog placement groups in the United States.*
- The number of animals who need additional health care beyond which the shelter is able to provide, but who, with such care, could be made available for adoption. *The higher the level of health care a shelter provides the less need for assistance from other groups.*
- The number of animals who need behavior modification beyond which the shelter is able to provide, but who, with such treatment, could be made available for adoption. *The more behavior modification available to animals in the shelter, and the more successful those treatments are in improving animals' placement, the lower the need for outside assistance.*
- The relative success of the shelter's adoption program, as expressed by the percentage of adopted animals returned to the shelter plus those animals that were relinquished by their adopters to other sources. *High return rates of adopted animals and high rates of adopted animals being given away within the first year of adoption point to possible deficiencies in adopter screening/preparation for ownership on the part of the shelter. Such statistics are not always tracked by shelters, but can be very helpful for program evaluation. Animals that go through relatively unsuccessful shelter adoption programs may benefit from placement by groups with better track records in this regard.*
- The financial condition of the animal shelter. *The more under-funded the agency, the more need it has for outside assistance from placement partners and others.*
- The location/accessibility of the shelter with regard to the public. *Shelters located far from population centers in the service area, or which have very limited public hours stand to benefit most from placement partner programs.*
- The number of annual visitors to the shelter who are seeking to adopt a pet. *Accessibility aside, low actual adoption foot traffic at a given shelter is another reason to consider a program.*
- Staff attitude towards the establishment of a placement partner program. *Unsupportive staff can undermine well-designed programs. Placement partner programs are best set up when staff opinions about their benefit are at least neutral, if not outright supportive. The opinions of staff leaders, both formal and informal, are most important.*
- Board and community attitude towards the establishment of a placement partner program. *If establishing a program is a board priority, there is more impetus to*

*establish one. If the community served by the shelter supports the concept of shelter-placement partner networking, the same holds true.*

- The availability of staff and other resources to manage a placement partner program. *The many examples nationwide of bad outcomes for animals and shelters with poorly managed programs demands that shelters honestly determine their willingness and ability to fund, staff, and evaluate any program before establishing one.*
  - Availability of a well-run foster care program associated with the shelter. *Shelters with effective foster care programs have less need of partnering with placement partner groups providing the same type of care. However, poorly managed or inadequate shelter-based foster care programs, along with absence of any foster program, are factors that would support placement partner networking.*
  - Existence of a placement partner program that needs to be improved. *Some shelters have problematic programs, or ones that have inadequate oversight. A poor program is risky for animals and shelters, and should either be consciously evaluated and improved, or shelved, based on the other factors listed here.*
  - Existence of potential placement partners within reasonable proximity to the shelter. *The more choices of placement partner groups within what the shelter considers to be a reasonable distance, the easier it will be to find enough responsible groups to establish a program. A survey of nearby placement partner groups to determine whether they offer services to the types of animals regularly received by a given shelter may need to be undertaken.*
- ✓ If MDPASU decides that they would like to continue/expand their placement partner program, a committee should be established. The small committee may include staff (line and management), select volunteers, and trusted representatives of placement partner groups. The committee should be responsible for:
1. Program Design. Using examples from other shelters or national organizations as a starting point, the committee should be responsible for designing a workable program specific to MDPASU including:
    - a. Setting goals for the program. MDPASU should prioritize potential placement groups for the screening process by evaluating data such as:
      - What number and types of animals most need assistance at the shelter?
      - Which animals tend to be euthanized for space or time reasons?
      - Which ones deteriorate rapidly in the shelter environment or are difficult to house?
      - Do certain animals make up a large percentage of returns or failed adoptions?
    - b. Philosophy alignment guidelines. The committee should identify those of the

shelter's philosophies on which alignment with placement partners are most critical. For example, mandatory neutering is a common area of critical philosophy alignment between shelters and placement groups. Euthanasia of animals that bite humans is another important area, on which there appears to be more philosophical variation. However, limit philosophy alignment priorities to those considered to be most important to avoid complicating the screening process with minor issues.

- c. Developing a screening procedure. Having in place a standard screening protocol for ALL placement partners will help ensure fairness. The basic elements include:
  - An application<sup>75</sup>
  - Required attachments (i.e. non-profit registration status, standard forms used by the group, etc.)
  - References
  - An interview
  - A site visit
- d. The selection process. Selecting groups with which to partner involves reviewing their applications and attachments, calling references, and conducting interviews and site visits. A checklist may be helpful to the shelter to summarize the results.<sup>76</sup> Placement partners should be divided into "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory" categories, and a notification protocol established. For those not chosen by the shelter as partners, the reasons for that choice should be clearly explained and a time period established, after which a group may reapply.
- e. Record keeping. All original application materials should be maintained for a designated period of time in a centralized location at the shelter, organized by placement partner.
- f. Developing written guidelines/policies and eligibility requirements for working with placement partners.<sup>77</sup> These guidelines may be determined by answering the following questions:
  - Is MDPASU willing to transfer animals to anyone – group or individual?
  - Do placement partners need to be non-profits or can they be for-profit dealers, pet store owners, breeders, etc.?
  - How does MDPASU's placement program guard against contributing to a hoarder's collection?
  - What is the mission statement/overall goal of the placement partner and does it match the goals set forth by MDPASU?

2. Program approval. Once the committee drafts the program, it should go to shelter management for approval, and be modified if necessary.

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75 Placement partner application examples

76 Placement partner screening results form example

77 Placement partner guidelines examples

**Other Considerations:**

- ✓ Continue with the current program until a new program is designed.
- ✓ Once program design is complete, MDPASU should send letters to placement partners with which it is currently working or has worked with in the past explaining the development process, and especially, that they must re-apply to become partners under the new guidelines. If a placement partner representative is included on the planning committee, then the shelter may wish to share that person's name and contact information so that other placement partners can forward suggestions and concerns appropriately. Some shelters have held "open house" type events for placement partner representatives just prior to and/or during the revamping or design of a new placement partner program. These provide an avenue for two-way communication and can also offer a chance for shelter staff to meet the representatives face-to-face and offer tours of the shelter, etc.
- ✓ Do not wait until you have an animal in need before you contact a placement partner. MDPASU should start contacting and screening placement partners immediately. Placement partners may contact MDPASU and ask to become partners, although this frequently only happens when an animal they wish to assist is in the shelter, which puts undue pressure on the shelter's screening process. Immediate release is not a reasonable request from an unscreened placement partner. Proactive placement partner contact and screening is preferred and benefits both parties.
- ✓ Staff and volunteer training should be a priority as they need to know how the placement partner program works. How do animals get recommended for the program? Which groups are approved placement partners, and which are not? What are the criteria used by the shelter to choose its partners? Who is coordinating the shelter's program? These things can probably be communicated through an in-service type training session for staff and volunteers. New staff members and volunteers should be instructed about the program as part of their standardized training. Breed identification training may also be obtained by asking representatives of placement partner groups.
- ✓ MDPASU should maintain a written record of each placement partner/person with whom they work. Because most placement partners are comprised of several individuals, make sure MDPASU knows the group's main contact person.
- ✓ MDPASU should require animal housing and care standards from placement partners. These standards should be reviewed carefully in order to ensure adequate animal care will be given.
- ✓ Ideally MDPASU should site inspect every placement facility (or foster home) prior to the transfer of animals. If the placement partner has numerous members, each facility should be inspected. However, depending on staffing levels and resources this may not be feasible. Another option is to inspect only the main facilities or those which house the most animals, but require facility inspection reports from the group's "command" for every member in the placement partner group. Inspections should be done initially and yearly to ensure compliance. This is important because unfortunately some sheltering

agencies have unknowingly sent animals to hoarders, which they believed were legitimate placement partners.

- ✓ Create an adoption contract specifically for placement partners and ensure that it releases MDPASU from any and all liability created by the actions of the animal.
- ✓ As with all dogs and cats adopted from the shelter, spay/neuter confirmation must be consistently acquired for each animal. If the animal is healthy, he or she should be sterilized and microchipped prior to removal from MDPASU. This ensures that the animals will not contribute to the overpopulation problem and that the animals are permanently identified in case of loss or theft.

**Discussion:**

In many communities animal shelters have forged formal working relationships with placement partners. In these relationships, animals are transferred between a shelter and a placement partner. Placement partners are nonprofit groups, whether incorporated or more informally organized, which do not generally operate “brick-and-mortar” animal shelters, but whose primary mission is to accept needy animals, provide some level of care and services to those animals, and seek adoptive homes for them. Placement partners usually house animals in one or more foster homes, and differ from non-sheltered agencies by having a narrower mission, in most cases limited to animal placement.

Placement partners may be divided into three categories:

- *Breed-specific* (provide services for specific breeds of dogs or cats; examples include groups that specialize in Basset Hounds, Siamese cats, etc.),
- *Type-specific* (provides services for a type of animal other than dogs or cats, including ferret placement groups, rabbit placement groups, etc.), and
- *Non-specific* (provides assistance for a wider variety of animals, including groups that handle all small dogs, groups that assist multiple breeds and breed mixes, groups that help different kinds of senior animals, and groups that work with both dogs and cats).

In order for these relationships to work properly, there must be clearly stated expectations and a written, formal agreement executed between all parties. Prior to the release of an animal to a placement partner, a shelter must be assured that the transfer is in the best interest of the animal and the community.

It is always preferable for various groups involved in animal care, sheltering and control efforts within a community to work well together.<sup>78</sup> However, differences of opinion, philosophical disagreements, mission-based differences and high emotions often stand in the way of complete harmony. Clearly, community opinion is significant to the overall perception of an organization, and ultimately, the success of its animal care programs and services.

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78 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “A New Breed of Adoption Partner,” January/February 2001\*



## 8.5 FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT

### **Observations:**

MDPASU did not have SOPs for foster care or a formal foster care program. "Foster care" was used to refer to animals that were not eligible for adoption due to illness that were released to the adopter through sponsorship by an placement partner, which was observed during the site visit. The HSUS team does not believe this happens often, but only when an adopter complains about having to choose another animal to adopt. In this case the adopter is responsible bringing the animal back for sterilization at which time the status would be changed from foster to adoption.

During the site visit, a purebred longhaired Chihuahua puppy was brought in as a stray. Immediately after intake the puppy's cage card had "hold for xxxx" (a staff member's name) written on it. The puppy was given a bath that same day and was also seen in the veterinary clinic although there were no outward signs of illness. The next day The HSUS team looked up the puppy's number in Chameleon. The record was found and indicated what cage the puppy was in; however, the puppy was not in the cage indicated. Apparently, the staff member that had put her name on his cage card had taken the puppy home with her overnight but had brought the dog back the next day. The HSUS team asked a staff member how the owner of the dog would find him if he came to the shelter to look and the staff member said he won't find him. There was no picture of the dog in his record or on MDPASU's Web site. The dog entered the facility on 6/17 and his due out date was 6/23. The Web site was checked on 6/23 and there was no listing for any Chihuahuas.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ If MDPASU decides to formalize a foster program, wait until the operational issues outlined in this report [animal identification, animal health protocols, adoption/euthanasia selection (the basics)] are addressed. A foster program will only fail if simply added to the other programs before they are running smoothly.
- ✓ Any fostering by staff should be approved by a supervisor and indicated in the animal's record. Staff should not foster animals just because they feel like it, but should follow written criteria for choosing foster animals. Animals fostered during their stray period should be listed with the lost and found coordinator so that someone looking for a lost pet can locate him or her.
- ✓ Discontinue "fostering" through placement partners. If adopters choose to continue the adoption process for an animal that has become sick, the adopter should pay a spay/neuter deposit (not spayed/neutered), be given medications (depending on the illness), and a medical history for their own veterinarian. The adoption contract should specify that the adopter is aware of the medical issues and will have the animal treated by his or her own veterinarian. The animal should be required to be sterilized after treatment.
- ✓ Once a formalized program is established, make a staff person in charge of the foster program.
- ✓ A fostering program must have a goal. Before establishing a formal program MDPASU

management should ask themselves the following questions:

- Are you fostering animals primarily to open up cage or kennel space in your shelter? This should not be the primary reason for a foster program.
- Can the organization meet the operational expenses of a foster program?
- Do you have the time, staff, and resources needed to maintain the foster program?
- How long a period is considered foster care? At what point does it become an adoption?
- Will there be space for the animal when it is time to return to the shelter? If not, how will the space situation be addressed?
- How many animals and what types can be in foster care at one time?
- Which animals will be placed into foster care?
- How will animals that have special needs and that require special care be handled and monitored?
- How will animals that require behavior modification be handled and monitored?
- If you are fostering pregnant animals can you assure 100% sterilization of the offspring? If not evaluate this practice.
- How will animals with an injury or illness be handled?
- Can your organization provide food, litter boxes, and everything else that's involved in caring for an animal in foster care?
- Do you need to set up some sort of revenue source that can provide for the care of fostered animals?

These are difficult questions, but ones that must be addressed in order to develop realistic expectations for how the program will function successfully. An effective program is more than just getting an animal "out of the shelter." To operate a constructive and positive foster care program, time and resources need to be devoted to the program and MDPASU must be prepared to provide the oversight necessary to keep its program running effectively.

- ✓ MDPASU management must consider the level of management that will be required to maintain a foster program. To manage the foster care program successfully, MDPASU should:
  - Keep track of animals and foster homes through a record keeping system
  - Develop a volunteer base from which to pull foster parents
  - Develop criteria regarding which animals should or should not be fostered
  - Determine the qualifications required of potential foster parents
  - Solicit help from community veterinarians
  - Offer foster parent training orientations
  - Develop an application and agreement form specifically for foster parents
  - Find sources of funding for supplies, vaccines and medical treatment
  - Provide guidance, instruction sheets and advice for foster parents
  - Set up schedules for preventative medical care, vaccinations, etc. for animals in foster care
  - Monitor the health and well being of foster animals by visiting homes and calling the foster parents periodically

- Determine the foster family's role (if any) in assisting with the adoption of the animal
  - Ensure that MDPASU has the appropriate liability insurance and develop a disclaimer to protect your organization in case a fostered animal injures a foster family member
- ✓ Records for any animal in foster care should be consistently completed with the pertinent information. Files must be organized to ensure that animals in foster homes can be monitored easily. Each animal's record should contain the following information:
- Reason for fostering
  - Foster home contact information, name, address, telephone number, date animal went to home
  - Expected date to return
  - Medical information, vaccination schedule, veterinary history
  - Any treatment given by foster family
  - All communications with foster family
  - Ongoing progress and status of animal

### **Discussion**

Generally speaking, fostering is the placement of special-case animals into temporary homes until they are suitable for adoption. A foster care program can increase an animal shelter's responsible adoptions, decrease the numbers of animals euthanized, boost employee morale, and enhance public relations within the community. Or, unfortunately, a foster program can drain a shelter's limited resources, cause the organization to lose sight of its mission, and even jeopardize the lives of shelter animals. In order to maintain control, management must set realistic goals, develop strong policies and procedures, and adhere to them. Always remember that fostering is not a solution to pet overpopulation or irresponsible pet ownership.

It is extremely important to understand that a foster care program can't save all the animals, replace a cramped facility, or mend holes in organizational policies. However, when a foster care program is managed correctly, it can greatly assist your organization, the animals in its care, and even your community. It can give certain animals an improved chance of adoption, provide a caring home environment for animals, and lift the spirits of staff and volunteers who confront the tragedies of pet overpopulation every day.

To be successful, a foster care program requires a high level of supervision and maintenance. A foster care program must be expertly supervised or it will quickly spiral out of control.<sup>79</sup>

## 9.0 COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS

### 9.1 PROMOTION/ SOCIAL MARKETING

#### **Observations:**

Based on interviews with the management staff, The HSUS team was told MDPASU did not have SOPs for media inquiries. All media inquiries are referred to the county public information officer for comment. According to the Miami-Dade Communications Department, each county department is represented by a public information officer whom they meet with on a monthly basis.

Based on information received by The HSUS team during the public comment period, MDPASU was getting a lot of negative press primarily on the level of animal care, and animal record keeping issues. Apparently the negative publicity and complaints regarding animal care have been an issue with MDPASU for a number of years. The only positive publicity seemed to be the animal control field operations coverage on Animal Planet's show Animal Cops.

MDPASU provided The HSUS team with a list of public service event requests through October 2004 that they are scheduled to respond to. These events range from open houses at other venues to health fairs at which MDPASU will have representatives present. It appears that a number of outreach efforts like this are regularly attended by staff from MDPASU. The information provided to The HSUS team also included several events hosted by MDPASU including an adoption and literacy event, shelter open house, and a bike ride event. The HSUS team commends MDPASU for making an effort to reach out to the community.

#### **Recommendation:**

- ✓ MDPASU should listen to the needs and desires of the community to guide the development of services and programs that will impact positively on community trends. Surveys, focus groups, comment cards, and other types of input can be used to determine how programs might be designed to motivate for change, and monitoring the outcomes of all efforts should be integral to the overall planning process.
- ✓ All of the programs, promotional materials, and services MDPASU develops should be tested with its target audience to estimate their potential success.
- ✓ To learn more about promotion, social marketing, and media relations, MDPASU management should consider enrolling in on-line courses offered by Humane Society University<sup>80</sup> and read relevant articles in *Animal Sheltering* magazine.<sup>81, 82</sup>
- ✓ Continue to have a presence at community events and continue hosting outreach events.

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80 [www.humanesocietyu.org](http://www.humanesocietyu.org)

81 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Selling Your Organization's Messages," January/ February 1999\*

82 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Public Relations: Getting Started," May/June 1998\*

- ✓ To increase visibility, look into inserting flyers in water bills or other county mailers to citizens that would educate on proper animal care, spay and neuter programs, and information on pet identification.
- ✓ If possible, discontinue forwarding all media inquiries to the public information officer. MDPASU should identify one or more in-house staff to serve as the primary media contacts. Media interviews can be coordinated through the public information officer but only staff at MDPASU can speak expertly to the issues regarding service delivery for their program. These select staff should attend media training.
- ✓ Create and implement an SOP for media relations in conjunction with the public information officer.
- ✓ Representatives from the Communications Department and MDPASU should meet with various media representatives in Miami-Dade County to discuss the issues, role, goals, and the changes being implemented at MDPASU in an effort to build trust and a relationship with the media.
- ✓ MDPASU must recognize the importance of good public relations and ensure that community interests are heard on a timely basis, and that all media inquiries are handled both pro-actively and responsibly.<sup>83</sup>
- ✓ Take advantage of resources provided by national animal protection groups to inform the media of the issues faced by MDPASU. Shelter management should do more promotion through letters to the editor, public speaking, etc.

**Discussion:**

One of the shortcomings in traditional education efforts is when we believe that if we simply tell people the “right” thing to do (i.e. spaying and neutering, putting identification on their pets, etc.) they will change. Although some do, most don’t.

Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole.<sup>84</sup> Social marketing borrows the techniques that companies use to influence people to buy goods and services. Although there may be some adaptation in a nonprofit setting, social marketing is based on proven approaches.

Business definitions of marketing focus on the principle of exchange. People and organizations freely give something to get something, usually money for a product or service. Social marketing is built on exchange too, because we are asking people to adopt new behaviors and they will expect something in return. They may get physical, emotional, convenience, monetary or other benefits or they may avoid consequences by adopting the new behavior.

Behavior change is the bottom-line for social marketing and for animal protection advocates.

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83 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “Making the Media Work for You,” July/August 2002\*

84 Philip Kotler, Ned Roberto, and Nancy Lee, *Social Marketing: Improving the Quality of Life*

Henry Spira said, "Bring about meaningful change one step at a time; raising awareness is not enough." If people are aware of the need to spay or neuter their animals, but have not found the time to do so, we have not succeeded.

A survey of more than 200 animal care and control agencies, conducted jointly by two graduate students, one at Stanford University Graduate School of Business and the other at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, points to "community engagement" as one of the distinguishing factors in those organizations that have been successful in capping or reducing the surplus pet problem in their communities.<sup>85</sup>

This finding is not surprising, given that in recent years some public and private non-profit agencies that are interested in both serving and changing behaviors within their communities have broadened their traditional education or public information programs to employ strategies that focus more on an understanding of the needs and interests of potential consumers of their message or programs.

In an effort to accomplish as much as they can with limited resources, most agencies try to approach all issues and all people with the same tools, with the result being that the effort is so broad or generic that it impacts almost no one. Or, they implement "good ideas" from other agencies that, while potentially effective with certain audiences and certain issues, aren't really getting at the most important target audiences and issues for their own communities.

Public buy-in is crucial for long-term improvements. The agency's mission, combined with input from the community (in order to understand its needs), should guide the development of programs that will impact positively on community trends. Local animal care and control agencies must pay close attention to: a) the importance of listening to and collecting information about the community; b) the need to view community outreach and public engagement as integral to the agency's overall purpose and programs rather than simply as an add-on accomplished via a few public service announcements and/or a presentation for children; c) the importance of having a coordinated plan for influencing the community; and d) a common understanding of agency goals, and the different roles people play in achieving these.

Increasingly, local governments are recognizing that today's animal control problems and their potential solutions are highly complex. With more people living in less space, and the growing perception of pets as family members or even surrogate children, public expectations concerning animals are changing. Neighborhood disputes, personal responsibility conflicts, maintenance of property values, and various quality-of-life concerns are as much a part of today's animal control issues as vicious dogs and rabies.

Consequently, animal care and control programs are shifting increasingly to a service orientation, designed not only to enforce laws and remove homeless animals from the streets, but also to promote standards for responsible pet ownership, assist in dispute resolution, and work to

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85 Salman, M.D.; New, J.; Scarlett, J.; Kass, P.; Ruch-Gallie, R.; Hetts, S.; "Human and Animal Factors Related to the Relinquishment of Dogs and Cats in 12 Selected Animal Shelters in the United States," *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 1(3), 207-226, 1998

identify and reduce or eliminate the sources of animal problems in the community.

As MDPASU works to redefine itself in a manner that meets current and future needs of the people and animals in Miami-Dade County, the guidance and support of the county regarding community outreach will be critical. The following trends are contributing to the evolution of the traditional animal shelter into more of a “community resource center” and a temporary haven for animals on their way back to lifelong homes:

- Returning animals to their original owners. Some shelters are increasing return to owner rates by heightening the visibility of their services, giving "free rides home" to tagged animals, streamlining lost-and-found reports and sharing them with other shelters, microchipping animals to complement registration-tag identification, and working with retailers such as PetsMart to list lost and found animals at computer kiosks in stores and shelters. In the future, better inter-agency communication and Web site listings will continue to increase the number of reunions between people and their pets, and to decrease the number of animals filling shelter kennels and cages.
- Focusing on population controls. Even in communities where accidental breeding and pet overpopulation are not as severe as they once were, aggressive sterilization programs are still critical to continue the decrease in population numbers. MDPASU should be commended for its commitment to make a real dent in long-term numbers. The MAC unit should also help in reaching more pet owners in low-income neighborhoods.
- Enacting animal care and control legislation. Clear and consistent animal care and control laws, and effective enforcement of those laws, are obviously critical to maintaining public safety and protecting animals from abuse and neglect. But they are also important ingredients in educating the public about responsible pet caretaking. Even the more routine efforts of ACOs and other field personnel add up to a huge difference in the way communities perceive and respond to animals. Local leash and waste-disposal laws can go a long way toward keeping non pet owners happy and making communities more pet friendly.
- Targeting rental housing. Because "landlord doesn't accept pets" has become a common reason for relinquishment, many shelters are seeking to tear down the metaphorical fences that stand between pets and people in rental units. By providing information and advice to property managers and helping pet owners find appropriate rental housing, shelters can help more people hold onto their companion animals.<sup>86</sup> In terms of adoptions, the numbers speak for themselves: Researchers say that if all rental housing units permitted pets, about 6.5 million more animals could be placed in new homes.

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86 HSUS brochures, “Profiting from Pets” and “13 Steps to Finding Rental Housing That Accepts Pets”\*

- Collaborations. Both municipal agencies and private organizations will be more successful if they involve citizens and other animal groups in their programs. Many shelters have already initiated such partnerships, working with placement partners to find more homes for animals, partnering with free-roaming cat caretakers to identify and reduce cat colony numbers through TTVARM programs (trap-test vaccinate-alter-release-monitor), and involving volunteers in socializing and training shelter animals.<sup>87</sup> Veterinarians and other animal professionals are working with shelters to identify behavior problems or lifestyle issues while also promoting shelter animals and services.
- Making the case for funding and resources. Effective animal care and control services must begin with sufficient funding from local governments.<sup>88</sup> Staff training, proper equipment, and a sanitary shelter are the basic essentials. But local leaders who truly want to increase the number of animals available for adoption, while decreasing the numbers euthanized, are now recognizing the importance of devoting resources to providing adequate staff and development of innovative programs that increase return-to-owner rates and strengthen people's relationships with their pets.
- Preserving the bond. In seeking to keep pets and people together, some organizations have launched programs that provide temporary assistance to pet owners who are ill or elderly, or to those who have been displaced from their homes. In some areas, victims of domestic violence can turn to shelters for temporary boarding of their pets. In others, pet owners who have lost their jobs or are experiencing other financial setbacks can turn to pet food-banks at local shelters for help. Community organizations have been established specifically to help people living with HIV/AIDS to obtain veterinary services, in-home pet care, and re-homing services for pets.
- Providing behavioral assistance. Shelters around the country are beginning to stave off relinquishments by providing free or subsidized behavior training and advice. The new push to address such issues as house-soiling and other destructive behaviors includes pet-parenting classes, pre-adoption counseling, and behavior training. Shelter studies reveal a clear need for such programs, indicating that many people who surrender animals are unaware of effective methods for dealing with routine behavior issues.<sup>89, 90</sup>
- Working with sheltered animals. By making animals comfortable during their stay and keeping their minds occupied through light training and stimulating toys, shelters around the country are seeing noticeable differences in the mental health of their furry residents. Dogs that otherwise might languish in their kennels are

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87 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Teaching Manners for Life," January/February 2000\*

88 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Show Me the Money," May/June 2002\*

89 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Minding Their Manners, Teaching People and Their Pets," March/April 2000\*

90 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Help! My New Cat is Peeing Outside His Litter Box," November/December 2001\*



learning basic commands during walks and feeding times - and showing off their newfound education to potential adopters. Because the dogs take what they learn with them to their new homes, stress-reduction and behavior programs are not only increasing adoptions but also reducing return rates.

- Ensuring the best environment possible. As shelters develop programs and services to extend their outreach to the general public, they are also redesigning their physical structures to make facilities more comfortable for the animals in their care. New designs now include more elements intended to reduce noise, increase sunlight, and add a touch of home to dog kennels and cat rooms. By making use of windows, mirrors, plants, high-quality ventilation systems, and sound absorption materials, shelters can create a more relaxing and stimulating environment for animals, employees, volunteers, and visitors.
- Becoming a true community resource. In the same way that shelters have rallied around the spay/neuter message, they are now beginning to market a broader message about the important roles companion animals play in human lives. Pets have become an integral part of the family in an increasing number of households, but many pet owners still have more casual relationships with their companion animals. Through media campaigns and creative marketing strategies, shelters can raise public awareness of their services and of the value of animal companionship.

### **Public Relations**

MDPASU must be ready whenever a crisis strikes that may bring negative publicity to their door. Animal shelters must be seen as a safe haven within their community. Conflicts relating to animal care and services (legitimate or otherwise) depicted primarily in the local media tend to lead only to further divisiveness among those involved, rather than resolution. And, by providing the public with only a rough sketch rather than the full clear picture, ongoing negative publicity has the potential to lead to increased animal abandonment by an untrusting public.

The best way to address an image problem is to show the public, through actions in everyday service, that the department cares about animals and is committed to their protection. To do so also means not only producing good press but also demonstrating consistency, kindness, and timeliness in dealing with the public's concerns. When animal care and control professionals take pride in their work, the public clearly notices. The best "PR" for the agency is ensuring that the community receives the highest level of service when dealing with MDPASU and the animals receive consistent, high-quality care.

This being said, the fact remains that the very nature of animal control work is such that it creates conflict. The department must have the time and staff to be able to turn around reporters' requests almost immediately. With the advent of on-line media, reporters are often working under the constant pressure of imminent deadlines. Broadcast reporters generally need to conduct on-camera interviews by early afternoon, in order to be able to: a) transport the videotape back to the station; b) allow for editing; and then, c) air the story that evening.

It is extremely beneficial to have an appointed spokesperson available that has been well-trained

to respond to media inquiries. Reporters, readers and viewers are likely to remember a face or a name they've seen before and will, over time, come to respect that person as an authority on that subject matter. Responding to media inquiries on a timely basis, asking about deadlines, and making every effort to accommodate the deadlines will also likely lead to a stronger relationship with reporters and will give them a sense that they are dealing with professionals who understand and respect their needs.

It is important for animal care and control officials to understand the role of the media. The media provides entertainment, disseminates public information, and acts as a watchdog for the community. A publicly funded animal control agency is likely to be scrutinized by reporters, and the combination of the public's interest in animals and society's fascination with political scandal contributes to a news organization's desire to publish or air any stories related to animal care and control. Any activity or situation appears more sinister when reporters are blocked or stories are recorded by undercover camera. On the other hand, a camera crew that is welcomed to the shelter, given a thorough tour by a shelter director or manager, and encouraged to ask questions is more likely to portray an objective or even positive portrait of the shelter and the shelter staff.

## 9.2 VOLUNTEERS

### **Observations:**

Although MDPASU did have an unstructured volunteer program, there were no written SOPs. Several weeks before the site visit, the volunteer program was suspended due to liability reasons according to shelter management; however, those performing community service were still allowed to work at the facility.

The HSUS team was provided with a *Volunteer Information Sheet*, which was used to gain some basic information and interests from potential volunteers. Volunteers were also required to sign a *Volunteer Agreement and Release* holding MDPASU harmless in the event that a volunteer is injured.

MDPASU did not actively recruit volunteers, hold a volunteer orientation, provide formal training, use job descriptions, or use scheduling for volunteers. There were no exit interviews with volunteers who left the shelter nor was there any formal recognition for volunteers.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Immediately begin addressing the liability issues and then consider reinstating the volunteer program at MDPASU. If reinstated, once the following recommendations are implemented with the current level of volunteers, proceed to expanding the program. If these recommendations are not addressed, the program is doomed to failure and continued controversy.
  
- ✓ For volunteer section recommendations, please refer to *Volunteer Management, A Guide for Animal Care Organizations* accompanying this report. This manual contains more detailed information on how to implement a volunteer program.

- ✓ Develop written SOPs for the volunteer program.
- ✓ A paid MDPASU staff member should formally be put in charge of the volunteer program and should act as volunteer coordinator. Depending on the size of the program, this can be a full-time job. The key to a good program is a competent volunteer coordinator with a comprehensive, structured training plan complete with rules and regulations for volunteers.
- ✓ To be successful, MDPASU's volunteer program will need funding resources - an earmarked budget.
- ✓ Staff needs to "buy-in" to a volunteer program. They must be involved with planning the program and need to see how volunteers will help them in their job, rather than create more work for them.
- ✓ Staff will value volunteer positions they see to be of direct assistance to them. To uncover possible volunteer jobs, conduct interviews with staff to determine their needs and interests. Based on that survey, volunteer job descriptions and a complete training program should be developed. Before volunteers start working, a manual should be developed and should contain information about the following:
  - Positions assigned to volunteers
  - Job descriptions
  - Duties volunteers may and may not perform
  - Minimum age for volunteers
  - Uniforms, color-coded clothing, name tags
  - Volunteer contact with the public
  - Volunteer contact with the animals
  - Areas of the agency where volunteers are permitted to work
  - How, when, and where orientations will be conducted
  - Required training specific to each position
  - Recording time donated
  - Minimum time commitment per week and for how many months
  - Resolution procedures for staff-volunteer conflicts
  - Protocol for reviewing and dismissing volunteers
  - Actions taken if a volunteer is injured "on the job"
  - Insurance coverage for volunteers or separate under the shelter's general policy
- ✓ Meet with staff to determine their comfort level with volunteers. Address any concerns they may have by creating policies that put staff at ease.
- ✓ Although MDPASU seemed to have a group of volunteers knowledgeable in companion animal issues, remember that many of the people who volunteer know only that they want to help animals. They may have little or no understanding of the actual work your shelter does or the philosophical issues surrounding animal sheltering. Volunteers are your ambassadors and they need all the information they can get to assist visitors at the

shelter. The volunteer manual serves as an invaluable resource that volunteers can refer to time and again during their service with your organization. So, in addition to the previous basic rules and policies, make sure that the pages of that manual contain:

- Goals of MDPASU and the goals of the volunteer program
  - Services MDPASU provides
  - MDPASU's philosophy on complicated issues such as intakes, adoption and euthanasia
  - General information about MDPASU, including operating hours and important phone numbers
  - MDPASU policies such as adoption procedures and holding periods
  - A brief history of MDPASU and its achievements
- ✓ Create volunteer jobs that are meaningful! If volunteers aren't made to feel like an important part of the agency, they will leave.

### **Recruitment**

- ✓ Discontinue allowing volunteers to show up to do whatever it is they feel like doing. Volunteer recruitment should be conducted based on the needs of MDPASU. The staff needs to determine what positions volunteers can fill and how many they need at one time. Recruitment should be done to fill those positions rather than trying to accommodate the requests of every individual that contacts MDPASU with an idea. Volunteers are brought into the agency to do a service. It is important that MDPASU recruit volunteers based on need to prevent a dilution of efforts or an unruly volunteer program. Remember: You don't need a job for every person that wants to volunteer. You just need a volunteer for every job you need to fill.
- ✓ Consider requiring a minimum length of service for all volunteers. For example, volunteers can be required to commit for a six-month period, working a minimum of 10 hours a month or whatever hours and commitment MDPASU needs. It is a big investment for any agency to recruit, properly train, and supervise volunteers. The purpose of a minimum time commitment is to help weed out volunteers who are not serious about the volunteer job.
- ✓ Advertise for volunteers. Include information about the positions available and their requirements, time commitment, shelter contact information, and orientation information. This will provide prospective volunteers with enough basic information about the program that they can decide whether or not they wish to attend the orientation and make the commitment. Advertising can be done several ways including on your Web site, through a press release, during events, in a newsletter, etc.

### **Training**

- ✓ Schedule group orientations to educate potential volunteers about MDPASU so they can decide if MDPASU is the right place for them to volunteer. Alternate days and times for orientations to accommodate as many potential volunteers as possible.<sup>91</sup>

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91 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "How to Host a Volunteer Orientation," November/December 2002\*

- ✓ In addition to a formal volunteer orientation as part of the recruitment process, all volunteers need a formal training class that will give them the basics they need to work in the shelter. Some shelters choose to have a mandatory animal handling class during which all new volunteers learn the basics of the shelter operation and how to handle the animals. Once that training is complete, the volunteers are then trained on their specific job assignment. For example, a dog walker will have different training requirements than a volunteer adoption assistant. It's important to tailor the training to the job that needs to be done.
- ✓ As much as possible, try to schedule training sessions during quiet times. This can be challenging, but balancing between when the volunteers are most often available (evenings and weekends) and when the staff is available is important.
- ✓ Create and keep a separate area as a formal equipment station for volunteers. All supplies volunteers will need to do their jobs, such as leashes and poop bags for dog walkers, should be located here and be kept stocked at all times. This helps volunteers feel autonomous (which is important for volunteer motivation) and efficient, while ensuring that staff isn't interrupted for basic supplies.
- ✓ If special training events are offered to the staff, consider offering it to special volunteers as well (but, be sure to spread the wealth and not always offer it to the *same* volunteers—give everyone a chance to participate at one time or another).
- ✓ Post instructions as much as possible. Be detailed. It's worth the time because it will keep volunteers from making mistakes. It will also make the volunteers feel more autonomous because they won't have to bother staff every time they forget how to complete a task such as mixing the cleaning solution or completing licensing paperwork. Even though volunteers are trained, they are not generally there full-time like the staff so it will take them longer to get the hang of things. They will often need reminders. The "How To" sheets published in *Animal Sheltering* magazine are great for this purpose.<sup>92</sup>
- ✓ Keep in mind the more you increase a volunteer's responsibilities, the more time staff members will have to spend training the volunteer. Once the program has stabilized, consider using well-trained volunteers to teach new volunteers the ropes. This will not only alleviate staff pressure, but will provide a growth opportunity for your seasoned volunteers.

### **Scheduling**

- ✓ Volunteers should be required to set a schedule. Each volunteer position can have a different schedule depending on the shelter's needs and the volunteer's availability.

### **Supervision**

- ✓ Provide a clear chain of command for your volunteers. Volunteers need to know whom to report to within the organization, and that person needs to be available to the volunteer.

- ✓ Set high expectations for your volunteers. Don't be afraid to challenge them. Volunteers usually leave their assignments because they are underused, not because they are overworked.
- ✓ Deal with volunteer problems right away. Your volunteers and paid staff will respect you for it. Document volunteer performance and keep a record in the volunteer's file.
- ✓ From time to time, problems with volunteers are bound to occur. However, if you take the time to create a solid program, you will have fewer problems and the problems you do have will be easier to solve. Remember that it is perfectly acceptable to fire a volunteer when necessary.
- ✓ Keep in mind that volunteers will need to know much of what the staff needs to know when issues arise or there is a change in shelter policy. Be sure to keep the volunteers informed about current events related to MDPASU's operations.

### **Recognition**

- ✓ Highlight a volunteer of the month on the MDPASU Web site. This not only serves to recognize the good work of your volunteers, but also helps recruit new volunteers that visit the site.
- ✓ Consider holding periodic volunteer meetings or send out a volunteer newsletter via e-mail to help build camaraderie and to keep volunteers informed.
- ✓ As volunteers leave the program, MDPASU should consider conducting exit interviews. This information will assist the volunteer coordinator in improving the program and help to address problems, which may have lead to the volunteer's departure.

### **Discussion:**

Volunteer programs can be extremely effective in supplementing staff efforts. They can build goodwill and trust for the agency in the community. Volunteers are ambassadors for the agency in promoting its mission to the community. Citizens willing to give their time are a resource that is vital and important to many government agencies.

But for a volunteer program to be successful, you must lay a strong foundation for the program. Adding volunteers to a disorganized sheltering operation will only serve to make things worse. You risk doing damage to your programs and your organization's reputation if you bring in volunteers before you are ready.

Due to the emotional nature of this business and the fact animals must be euthanized, the MDPASU volunteer program must have different guidelines than for other volunteer opportunities such as at the public library. Volunteers must be completely oriented to all aspects of the operation and must understand that they are there to assist, not direct the activities of the agency. Achieving this understanding is the difference between success and failure.

While the long list of benefits offered by a volunteer program is immediately compelling, the

pitfalls of a poorly conceived and/or poorly managed program can be crippling. Difficulties involving volunteers are rarely brought about solely by the volunteers themselves; they nearly always occur because a shelter lacks sufficient structure for the program or the resolve to manage volunteers effectively.

More often than not, poorly organized programs leave shelters with dozens of ineffective, uncommitted volunteers who stop by only on rare occasions to walk a dog or two; or worse, a handful of well-meaning but often ill-informed volunteers who seek to change the shelter's philosophy and eventually undermine its mission. What's more, a few unhappy volunteers who quit in frustration may tell others of the shelter's failing program, ruining the shelter's reputation in the process.

Volunteers who are not properly trained may make mistakes and alienate staff members. Some volunteers may become disillusioned and leave if the program isn't well structured and their role within the organization is not clear. If this happens, they may spread the word in the community about their bad experience with your organization. In addition, to keep staff and volunteers from feeling alienated, staff must be on-board with the volunteer program and roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined.

For some shelters, a volunteer program is not worth the investment. Certain animal care and control facilities, for example, do without volunteer programs because liability concerns or labor issues make it impractical or impossible to place volunteers in positions of responsibility. Other humane organizations lack the resources necessary to oversee such a program. Simply put, a shelter can be successful without volunteers.

But if a shelter is interested in investing in the many benefits that volunteers can bring to the shelter and the animals, remember that volunteers will give their time and talents free. Just keep in mind that it will still require considerable time and energy to make the program successful. It takes a great deal of work to recruit, screen, train, and retain volunteers in an animal shelter.

To ensure that staff and volunteers understand their respective roles in the organization, managers must sit down with their staff and review policy considerations before bringing the next volunteer on board.

The volunteer coordinator should act as the human resources department of a volunteer program. The volunteer coordinator works with the staff to identify which job functions can be fulfilled by volunteers. The coordinator creates volunteer job descriptions, sets goals, implements training programs, and provides ongoing program evaluation. It's important to remember that the day-to-day management and training of individual volunteers falls primarily on the shoulders of the managers and staff members working side-by-side with them. While the volunteer coordinator can lay the foundation for a successful program, he or she cannot be expected to individually manage, train, and evaluate every volunteer in the program. That's why frontline managers and staff must be committed to managing and working with volunteers, and why your organization needs to ensure that staff support the program.

It is crucial that staff and volunteers have a mutual respect for one another, and see themselves as

part of a team—working together for the benefit of the animals and the community. Just as crucial is that volunteers understand the hierarchy of leadership, who is in charge, and who has the final say in all shelter matters. A well-run volunteer program can be an organization's best publicity in the community, and happy workers its best ambassadors.

Remember: the purpose of your volunteer program is to help you help the animals. Determine when you want volunteers and how many you need at one time and recruit accordingly. Having volunteers come in whenever they want may work when there are only a handful of volunteers; however, this can become problematic as a program grows. If you have too many volunteers at one time, you'll overwhelm the staff, volunteers will get in the way, and they won't feel needed. Or, you will have big gaps where you don't have any volunteer help at all.

Volunteer recognition is a daily on-going task. The more integrated the volunteers are and the more meaningful work they are assigned, the more motivated they will be. A well-run volunteer program is your best volunteer motivator and recognition. But never underestimate the importance of saying "thank you." Showing sincere appreciation for a task completed by a volunteer may be more valuable than receiving something material.

While MDPASU exists to serve the community, a volunteer program exists to serve MDPASU. It's important not to lose sight of the goal of the program and to maintain control so it works to help the operation, not hinder it.

### 9.3 HUMANE EDUCATION

#### **Observations:**

MDPASU management advised The HSUS team that there was no formal humane education component for the agency or budget for this function. Three employees were identified as responding to requests as available, such as visiting classrooms and other venues to discuss the role and services of MDPASU; however, this resulted in their tasks at the shelter being delayed or transferred to someone else.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ MDPASU should make an effort to solicit local teachers who are interested in receiving *KIND NEWS*. This publication produced for elementary, middle, and high school students could go a long way in helping to educate the children regarding responsible pet ownership and other issues. This periodical is produced by the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education (NAHEE), The HSUS's youth education division, and is a one of a kind program nationally.<sup>93</sup> This is an excellent way to provide humane education without having MDPASU staff present.

Adopting a classroom for a year is an inexpensive thing to do and MDPASU might find many people interested in financially supporting this simple effort that would reap considerable rewards.

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93 National Association for Humane and Environmental Education "Program and Materials Catalog 2004"\*



- ✓ Designate one or more staff members whose sole function is to provide humane education for the community. This may require hiring additional staff or if current staff is designated to serve in this capacity they must be trained how to make effective humane education presentations and possess public speaking skills.
- ✓ A designated humane educator will allow MDPASU to conduct more classroom presentations for Miami-Dade elementary schools. Use *An Animal Care and Control Professional's Guide to Classroom Presentations* as a tool in developing them. While animal care and control staff know their jobs and understand the importance of animal control, they are not generally teachers and this booklet provides an outline on how to do classroom presentations effectively.<sup>94, 95</sup>
- ✓ Focus MDPASU outreach in schools in the zip codes that generate the most calls for service. It is also effective to evaluate areas in the community that generate the most animal relinquishment.

### **Discussion:**

Humane education is a form of character education that is much more than teaching the proper care of companion animals. It also stresses the importance of respect, compassion, and responsibility in our treatment of all animals and people—and the preservation of natural habitats. Humane education methodologies vary—they include animal shelter tours<sup>96</sup>, classroom visits by shelter personnel, after-school activities, summer camps, junior volunteer programs, and the distribution of lesson plans and other materials for the classroom.

Day to day activities such as impounding animals and answering complaints are reactive ways to deal with overpopulation. With the cultural diversity of Miami-Dade County the need for humane education is paramount. Many residents of Miami-Dade County simply do not know about or understand the role of MDPASU. Humane education is a proactive way to positively affect the workload on MDPASU by making the community aware of the depth and breadth of the problem of animal overpopulation and their role in helping to address it. Most animal care and control agencies fall far short of providing a progressive humane education program because of service related responsibilities which they provide. Changing the attitudes about animals, their care, and explaining why it is important to spay and neuter is critical to changing the animal population reality in any community.

## **9.4 RELATIONS AND COLLABORATION WITH AREA ANIMAL SHELTERS/ ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Observations:**

There were a number of animal protection groups, placement partners, and not-for-profit animal shelters in and around Miami-Dade County. The HSUS team is not aware of MDPASU's relationship with most of them or extent of collaboration with the exception of some of them

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94 *An Animal Care and Control Professional's Guide to Classroom Presentations\**

95 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "The Character Connection," September/October 2001\*

96 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "How to Lead a Shelter Tour," September/October 2000\*

removing animals from MDPASU.

Humane Society of Greater Miami (HSGM), in both written and public testimony at the public hearing in Miami-Dade County regarding MDPASU on June 14<sup>th</sup>, pledged to work with and offer support to MDPASU in improving its programs and services. In a document provided to The HSUS team, key action steps were outlined as needed for MDPASU and HSGM to work together effectively. These included:

- Define and communicate roles
- Consistent, committed leadership at MDPASU
- Disease control
- Open communication

In addition, HSGM believes it can be of assistance with humane care for the animals at MDPASU and education of the public. The Humane Society of Broward County has also expressed its interest in assisting MDPASU with anything needed including training in animal handling, customer service, euthanasia training, etc.

In 2003 a situation analysis and recommendations report was completed by an animal services task force made up of local veterinarians, volunteers, MDPASU staff, and animal-related groups and organizations. This purpose of this report was to help MDPASU management in identifying, reviewing, and addressing the issues faced by the organization. Apparently, there was little to no response from MDPASU regarding this report, which is unfortunate giving that it may have damaged relationships with local groups even more.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ In order to build upon the relationships with local organizations, MDPASU first needs to work on implementing the recommendations in this report. Internal problems need to be addressed in order to regain the trust of the community.
- ✓ Partner/collaborate in areas where there is a logical partner and potential for a positive working relationship. This may include inviting the board presidents of all the local groups to convene and see how you might work more closely together to meet the common mission to protect animals. You may find there are many duplications of service and some areas that are not being addressed at all. Consider using a facilitator to lead this meeting. The groups that attend should establish basic guidelines for conducting business with each other including written SOPs that all organizations must adhere to. The Metro Denver Shelter Alliance is a good model to follow.
- ✓ Consider combining efforts for staff or volunteer training opportunities at the local level. Other animal organizations in the community may have excellent training programs that MDPASU can take part in. This will further build bonds of trust between local groups.

**Discussion:**

Partnerships and collaborations are likely to be by-products of strategic planning. For example, should the agency determine that one of its goal areas is feral cats; it makes sense to take an inventory of the individuals and organizations in the community who are best equipped to work

with feral cats. Rather than duplicating services, perhaps it would make more sense to outsource feral cat services to another agency through a formal strategic alliance.

Collaborations are obviously dependent upon the ability of all parties to work well together. Organizations involved must have the ability to disagree on issues and not have those disagreements result in personal or media attacks, or punitive action. There will be disagreements and they need to be handled professionally by all parties or the animals and community will suffer. There is tremendous potential to re-build damaged and strained relationships. The affected agencies and groups should try in every way possible to work together to address animal overpopulation and the impact it has on the community. If progress is to be made, all groups involved must allow incidences that have occurred in the past to remain in the past.

## **9.5 CUSTOMER/ CLIENT SERVICE**

### **Observations:**

MDPASU did not have SOPs regarding customer service. In general, overall customer service could use improvement. The HSUS team noticed deficiencies in areas such as customer service etiquette, ability to help clients, long periods of waiting on both the phone and in line, and ease of navigating the facility.

Some of the clerks were very helpful to the public but others stayed at the back of the reception area and let people wait in line while they conducted personal conversations or talked on a cell phone.

The HSUS team spent about thirty minutes with one of the MDPASU clerks and was very impressed with her pleasant demeanor as well as her ability to handle many incoming calls in rapid succession without getting flustered or frustrated. She was truly very professional in the performance of her job responsibilities. However, The HSUS team was told that it is difficult to answer the phones and deal with clients at the front counter at the same time. According to staff, the phone operators used to be in a different area away from the front counter and it worked better.

The HSUS team was told that clerks were instructed to ask for assistance from select Spanish speaking senior staff if they were unable to understand and assist Spanish speaking callers. However, The HSUS team observed Spanish speaking callers being advised to call back hours later.

If someone called the shelter after normal hours of operation they got a recorded message. This message gave options to choose the following:

- For emergencies dial 911
- Hours and directions
- Stray dogs/ Dead animal on public right of way/ Hurt dog
- Adoptions
- Lost and found

- Spay/neuter appointment or MAC schedule
- Citations section
- Licensing section
- Option for the operator

The HSUS team called the shelter three times after hours. The option to speak to an operator was chosen two times but rang several times and then a recording stated “operator not available” and we were disconnected. The third time, the stray dog/ dead animal/ hurt dog option was chosen. We received a recording stating that we had reached the dispatch office and to leave a message.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Non-English speaking citizens should be helped at the time of their initial contact with MDPASU and not informed to call back later. MDPASU must make arrangements to have a Spanish speaking staff member available at all times during hours of operation.
- ✓ Develop an SOP for customer service including phone etiquette. This will be extremely helpful to new employees and will also assist existing staff in understanding the important role they play when dealing with the public.<sup>97</sup>
- ✓ Clearly articulate to all staff the importance of good customer communications, and provide organization-wide training in telephone etiquette and customer service.
- ✓ Hold meetings with the clerks to find out what hurdles they face in providing the best customer service possible, then address the issues.
- ✓ Provide regular meetings and training to address and reduce the stresses associated with sheltering work. Because the stresses of working in a shelter environment can strain even the most optimistic of attitudes, support programs that help staff deal with the emotional strain of their jobs, and maintain a focus on the institution’s vision (and their role in achieving it) can contribute to consistent, positive customer service.<sup>98</sup>
- ✓ Staff should not be having personal phone conversations when behind the reception counter while customers are waiting. If they are on a break they should not take it behind the counter as this confuses clients.
- ✓ In addition to the staff suggestion box in the hallway, consider purchasing a suggestion box and placing it in the lobby in order to receive feedback from the citizens of Miami-Dade County. Use the information to improve customer service.
- ✓ If not already done, provide recorded messages when citizens are on hold. Topics can be, hours of operation, address, location, licensing information, etc., and any data that people regularly call to request. While on hold they may get what they need and end the call with the information they requested or at the least it makes the hold time more interesting and

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107 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, “Customer Service: How Can It Help You?” November/December 1996\*

98 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, “When Stress Turns Into Distress,” March/April 1999\*

informative.

- ✓ Although the problems The HSUS team experienced with calling after hours may have been coincidental, ensure that such problems are not typical. If the examples are representative of the service provided address and rectify them.
- ✓ MDPASU should provide information on their phone messages to direct people to alternate resources (i.e. wildlife rehabilitation, emergency veterinarians, etc.) when the shelter is closed.

**Discussion:**

Due to the large volume of calls MDPASU receives there will probably always be callers on hold, which is common for most governmental animal control agencies. But those staff that do not make client service a priority damage MDPASU's reputation. A telephone call is often the first contact a member of the public will have with an agency, and this experience should not leave an impression that the agency is unorganized, unsympathetic or uncaring. Great public relations and customer service begins with the public's initial contact with the agency, and this should be an easy and helpful experience. This is an opportunity to create a new adopter, a new volunteer, a new donor, and a new friend to the organization.

Working behind the front counter and answering the phones is one of the most stressful positions in a municipal animal care and control agency. Without formal training in customer service some staff will try not to engage the public as a way to minimize this stress.

Maintaining customer service in animal shelters is difficult when most shelters are understaffed and often customers are anxious, excited, and sometimes demanding. Regular staff training in the areas of telephone etiquette and customer service is worth the investment of time and money because it helps staff members retain their ability to handle difficult situations.

## **9.6 WEB SITE**

**Observations:**

MDPASU should be commended for having a Web presence. Overall the Web site was attractive with a similar look to other county department Web sites. The link was easy to find on the main Miami-Dade County Web site and the site was relatively easy to navigate. The site had important information such as directions, phone numbers, hours of operation, and services offered. The HSUS team was informed a sworn police officer was responsible for updating the MDPASU Web site.

The hurricane information on the Web site was quite extensive and impressive. This section had clearly taken a lot of work and time to provide; however, several of the links were not active.

MDPASU had a pet finder service powered by Pet Harbor. This could be used by people looking to adopt a specific pet or by those who are looking for their lost pet; however, many of the records were incomplete and/or incorrect (See section 5.17, Lost and Found Procedure). There

were some inconsistencies between the MDPASU Web site and the Pet Harbor Web site. On 8/12/04 The HSUS team visited the Pet Harbor Web site at [www.petharbor.com](http://www.petharbor.com). It stated that MDPASU had 408 records and 57 images loaded. The HSUS team then visited MDPASU's Web site. There was a link to Pet Harbor through the lost and found section, which had 267 dog, 58 cat, and 1 "other" records listed. There was also a link to Pet Harbor through the Match-a-Pet section of the MDPASU Web site but only 30 dog and 25 cat records were listed.

Overall, the Web site was good; however, The HSUS team noted the following areas as needing improvement:

- A lack of information about rabies or how to avoid dog bites.
- Incorrect information. The Web site says that the agency receives no general fund tax support; however, in the last budget year MDPASU did receive nine hundred thousand dollars.
- Links or contact information to other relevant groups such wildlife rehabilitation and emergency vet clinics in case the public has an after hours emergency and can't contact MDPASU directly.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Ensure the following basic information is listed on MDPASU's Web page:
  - A link to Miami-Dade County's animal ordinances
  - Alternative resources in the community for wildlife issues and pet veterinary care emergencies
  - Information on rabies and how to avoid dog bites
- ✓ In addition, the following programs and services should be highlighted on MDPASU's Web site when/if MDPASU implements them:
  - Volunteer program
  - Foster care
  - Dog training/pet parenting classes
  - Humane education
- ✓ Although already on Pet Harbor, MDPASU should begin using the free services of Petfinder ([www.petfinder.org](http://www.petfinder.org)), Pets911.com, and other "virtual shelter" online services. These online Web sites are dedicated to helping homeless companion animals find new homes by hosting hundreds of networked animal shelters and rescue organizations nationwide. Each offers MDPASU the opportunity to promote its animals and services to those around the country. In addition, most of these agencies have incentives or services available to shelters that use their sites.
- ✓ All facts need to be checked and corrected and all links need to be valid and up to date.
- ✓ Contact Pet Harbor to inquire about the inconsistency in the number of records listed between the two links (Lost and Found, and Match-a-Pet Program). Fix this as soon as possible.
- ✓ The Web site, at some point, needs to be turned over to a civilian employee for cost

savings and to free up the officer to perform other duties.

## 9.7 FERAL CAT ISSUES

### **Observations:**

MDPASU did not have SOPs regarding feral cats, other than mentioning that they are not available for adoption and may be euthanized immediately. MDPASU loaned humane traps to citizens who wanted to trap nuisance/stray/feral cats. The traps were loaned upon presentation of a current driver's license or state issued ID and a \$75.00 deposit was required. The trap agreement did not specify how long people could keep the traps. MDPASU did not participate in any kind of trap/neuter/release (TNR) program. Feral cat handling is discussed in section 5.23, Animal Handling.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Refer to *Community Approaches to Feral Cats* accompanying this report for more detailed information on dealing with feral cat issues.
- ✓ Create and implement a detailed SOP for the handling, care, housing, and euthanasia of feral cats while in MDPASU custody.
- ✓ Keep accurate records of feral cats and kittens handled by MDPASU and their disposition. Over time this data will help MDPASU determine where resources are currently going and where they might be more useful.
- ✓ MDPASU should meet with individuals/organizations in the community currently working on feral cat issues and discuss the ways they can compliment each other. Perhaps MDPASU can arrange feral cat spay days several times a year through staff veterinarians or local veterinarians they have relationships with.
- ✓ Continue loaning traps to the public but monitor trap usage as closely as possible to ensure traps are returned to MDPASU. Ensure that deposits are collected for each trap loaned out and consider establishing a number of days in which the trap must be returned.
- ✓ Provide each person borrowing a trap with information on safe and humane trapping procedures and instructions on what to do after an animal is trapped or in an emergency such as an injured animal.

### **Discussion:**

MDPASU is not alone in dealing with feral cats, as it is an issue across the United States. Though neither euthanasia nor TNR is the prescription for every community, each has its time and place. In some communities, both approaches are used to address different circumstances. Humane advocates will no doubt continue the debate over feral cat management, but for now many shelters are finding that working with TNR programs are an effective way to build bridges between the animals, the animal care and control agency, and the public.<sup>99, 100, 101</sup>

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99 JAVMA, Vol 222, No 1, January 1, 2003, "Evaluation of the Effect of a Long-Term Trap-

## 10.0 FIELD SERVICES/ ANIMAL CONTROL

### 10.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

After riding along with and observing MDPASU field staff, The HSUS team feels that considering the resources provided there was an overall sense of dedication and caring by field personnel for their jobs. However, The HSUS team noted a general lack of personnel training as well as clarification and consistency in regards to procedures.

Field services for MDPASU were comprised of an enforcement operations section, which was divided into two units; the investigative section and the code enforcement section.

### 10.2 OFFICER SAFETY

#### 10.21 OPERATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND FIELD OFFICER TRAINING

##### Observations:

The written policies and procedures for the field services unit were very general. They were not detailed and did not cover all aspects of the day to day duties executed by the ACOs. The SOPs included a larger and more detailed section covering the mounted patrol division; however, The HSUS did not observe the mounted patrol division as part of the evaluation.

It was apparent after talking with field services staff, that there was no consistency among the employees in regards to the understanding of policy or proper procedure. Many aspects of their jobs were left to the discretion of the individual ACO, such as transport of animals in vehicles during hot weather.

There were noted addendums to the SOPs but they only referred to the supervision by the police department over the animal services unit. These additions did not have dates but appeared to have been added with out any review or update of the existing written SOPs pertaining to the shelter or its operation.

Field services was divided into enforcement and investigation; however, there was no clarity of duties. The general SOPs stated that both units were responsible for regulatory and enforcement activities.

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- 100 Neuter-Release and Adoption Program on a Free-Roaming Cat Population”  
*Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 5(4), 285-298, “The Effects of Implementing a Feral  
Cat Spay/Neuter Program in a Florida County Animal Control Service”
- 101 *JAVMA*, Vol 212, No. 2, January 15, 1998, “Free Roaming and Feral Cats  
—Their Impact on Wildlife and Human Beings”



In the SOPs, the only two investigation areas that had any detail were the dangerous dog investigation section and the field impoundment section. The HSUS team noted the following deficiencies:

The SOPs mentioned permitting breeders and kennels but did cover what a breeder or kennel is or the process required for compliance. MDPASU did have a form to be used when inspecting kennels; however, kennel inspections were not included in the SOPs.

The SOPs stated that MDPASU would investigate complaints regarding chapter 5 of the county code but did not mention anything about dealing with violations of the state animal cruelty law. The SOPs did not include an explanation of the process required to pursue violations.

The SOPs did not include any copies of the forms used in the field or examples of how they should be filled out. Other forms, such as the number body condition score of dogs, had no explanation as to what the numbers mean.

There were no formal training programs in place for field personnel even though the State of Florida requires that ACOs be state certified. Only two of the field officers were certified under state requirements and recently 17 officers sat for the state test, which 16 of them, including a supervisor, failed. There was a reference to training found in the special purpose vehicles section of the SOPs. This training referred to on-the-job training but did not indicate what this training should entail. The lack of training was seen in the different ways the two units handled similar situations. There was a lack of self-confidence in handling certain situations which is also related to inadequate training.

The HSUS team found personnel files to be incomplete and missing information for those staff members that had passed training and state certification. Field staff consistently relayed that training issues is one of the areas in greatest need of improvement.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Immediately review and update written SOPs for all aspects of field services. An electronic record should be kept for easier updating and review. This should include, but not be limited to the following:
  - Handling and transport of animals
  - Scheduling, including normal hours, after hours, and on-call response
  - Dress code
  - List of call response and prioritizing calls
  - Reporting of personnel injury or accident
  - Response and duties during disaster
  - Vehicle and equipment use and maintenance
  - Case documentation and filing of reports
  - Radio and phone response
  - Use of chemical immobilization equipment
  - Employee training
  - Dispatch
  - Investigation procedures

- ✓ See section 11.22, Operating Policies, Procedures and Training for more information on SOP development.
- ✓ Field officers should be trained and certified in compliance with Florida State law for ACOs.
- ✓ Consider sending select field officers to National Animal Cruelty Training through the Law Enforcement Training Institute dealing with specific areas of animal related investigations.
- ✓ Consider sending select staff to animal rescue and disaster training. Contact Humane Society University via [www.humanesocietyu.org](http://www.humanesocietyu.org) for training opportunities and schedules.
- ✓ All field personnel should be certified in euthanasia and remote chemical immobilization in accordance with Florida State requirements before being allowed to perform such procedures. There should be an annual review of skill level for certified staff.
- ✓ Contact the local police academy to see if ACOs can attend relevant training offered such as interview techniques and conflict resolution.
- ✓ All new hires should go through Animal Care Training (ACT), which is specifically designed for shelter personnel. All current personnel including supervisors should also participate in this training to ensure consistency in knowledge and understanding.
- ✓ Copies of all training completed by ACOs should be kept in their personnel files.
- ✓ Funds specific to training should be budgeted.

**Discussion:**

Not having set written procedures leaves the performance of duties up to the discretion of the individual. This makes it harder to justify officer's actions with public scrutiny as well as justifying employee disciplinary action. ACOs that are not properly trained or certified open the agency up to liability. In the event that new employees are hired, having clearly written SOPs makes it easier for them to understand their duties and integrate into the organization.

## **10.22 COMMUNICATIONS/ DISPATCH**

**Observations:**

The HSUS team was not able to find written SOPs for the dispatching of calls to the field officers. Calls coming into the shelter through the main phone system were transferred to the dispatch center. The dispatcher took the information and relayed the call to the appropriate field officer. The dispatcher determined which officer to give the call to based on a hand written list of officer assigned areas provided to them in the morning. It is left up to each individual officer to prioritize the calls they receive.

Depending on the shift there were one or two dispatchers on duty. Callers were routinely told to call back later if the dispatcher working was not bilingual and unable to communicate with the caller.

ACOs were only provided with hand held radios to communicate with the dispatchers. There was no emergency signal button to alert dispatch in case of an emergency or an off-band that the ACOs could use to communicate with each other in the field without tying up the dispatch band. During The HSUS team member's ride-along with field staff there did not appear to be any dead areas in radio transmission. Several of the ACOs did utilize personal cell phones for work purposes though this was not required. A set of standard response codes was used by ACOs when communicating on the radio; however, the codes were not documented in the SOPs.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop and implement complete written SOPs for dispatch duties.
- ✓ ACOs should have set response areas of coverage or extended rotation periods before they are switched to a different area. This lessens the risk that calls will not be transferred properly, it allows for easier follow up, and encourages the ACOs to get a better sense of the public concerns in their assigned area.
- ✓ Money should be budgeted for a secondary form of communication for ACOs. This may include permanent radios installed in all animal services vehicles or at minimum cellular phones. Staff should not have to use their personal cellular phones for work related calls without being reimbursed.
- ✓ Establish a call priority system which places greater emphasis on emergencies such as dog bites, animals hit by cars, etc. and have routine calls such as a dog running at large, barking dog, etc., at a lower priority level. Instruct ACOs to answer calls based on priority.

## **10.23 EQUIPMENT/ VEHICLES/ UNIFORMS**

**Observations:**

In addition to staff training, the lack of equipment was another area of major concern for field staff. The only equipment list for ACO vehicles in the SOPs included:

- Fiberglass impoundment carrier
- Fire extinguisher
- First aid kit
- Body bags
- Road flares

This list did not provide an ACO with the equipment to adequately perform animal control duties and ACO vehicles were lacking in essential equipment to carry out the duties of the job.

MDPASU possessed a remote chemical capture gun; however, The HSUS team was informed that it is not used. Only two of the field staff could be identified as having been certified in its use.

Most of the animal control vehicles used by MDPASU were pick-up trucks with the standard type cage insert. Four new vehicles had stainless steel cage inserts while the rest had older fiberglass cage inserts (See Figs. 23-24). Several of the fiberglass cage inserts were dirty, had holes chewed through them, and were in need of repair (See Fig. 25). One of the vehicles was a cargo van with no permanent caging installed. The temperature was not monitored inside any of the vehicle animal transport boxes and airflow was minimal, especially in the older units, which was an issue brought up at the site visit wrap-up meeting as needing immediate attention. The HSUS team witnessed animals, which appeared to be near heat exhaustion, being taken off the trucks by ACOs on more than one occasion.



Figure 23



Figure 24

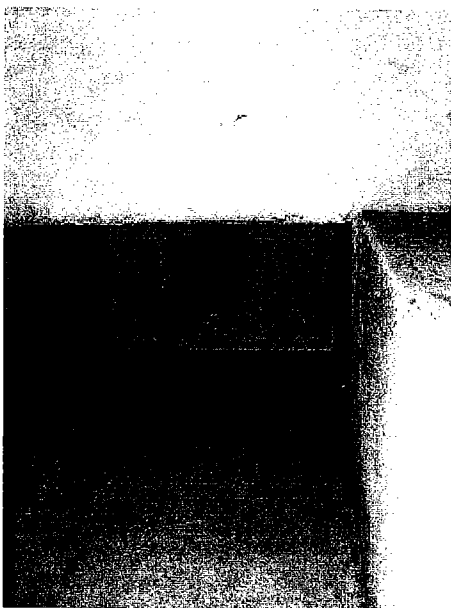


Figure 25

All of the vehicles were well identified with Miami Dade Police Department Animal Services on the sides and back. Phone numbers for 911 and the non-emergency police line were displayed on the sides but not the backs of the vehicles. The shelter's number was not displayed on the animal control vehicles. None of the animal control vehicles had emergency indicator or warning lights on the roof. The county fleet shop handled maintenance of vehicles. The HSUS team was informed that it is the responsibility of field staff to notify their supervisor when vehicles need maintenance including preventative work such as oil changes.

The cleaning process for animal control vehicle cages was inconsistent and inadequate to prevent transmission of disease. Some staff members used disinfectant and others did not, some used a brush to scrub the cage and others did not. The disinfectant was not allowed to sit a recommended 10 minutes before hosing out. Staff was consistent in drying the cages with a squeegee after cleaning.

The field uniforms were appropriate for the job; however, some of the shirts were well worn and needed to be replaced. There were two different styles of shirts worn by the field staff; button down and pullover. Some field staff indicated that they only possessed one or the other of the shirt styles. All the ACOs wore cargo style pants and appropriate lace up boots. ACOs did wear name tags. ACO uniforms were provided by MDPASU; however, staff was responsible for replacing their footwear.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ MDPASU management should use the following list to compare with their equipment supply for each vehicle and then determine what the needs of the ACOs are.

*Animal Handling Equipment*

- Restraint/catch pole(s);
- cable leashes;
- sturdy rope-type slip leads;
- long-handled net;
- capture gloves;
- disposable gloves;
- heavy rubber gloves;
- plastic carriers;
- raccoon/cat trap;
- dog trap on wheels;
- trap transfer cage(s);
- animal stretcher with wheels;
- blankets (for scared, trapped, and injured animals);
- lead shank—large animal;
- animal grasper;
- fowl leg grasper;
- horse halter;
- rope halter (cow/horse);

- rope (cotton);
- snake tongs and snake bag;
- plastic bat container

*Health and Safety Items*

- waterless disinfectant;
- biohazard protective kit;
- first-aid kit for animals;
- first-aid kit for people;
- thermometers;
- eye wash;
- hand wipes;
- hand warmers;
- safety glasses and hard hat;
- life jacket;
- fire extinguisher;
- flares/triangles

*Food and Comfort Items for Animals*

- towels (cloth and paper);
- squeak toy/ball;
- bottled drinking water;
- dog food;
- dog treats;
- cat food;
- cat treats;
- sweet feed in coffee can, to make noise to alert equine and farm animals;
- food and water bowls

*Tools*

- bolt cutters;
- shovel;
- pocket knife;
- ice scraper and snowbrush;
- regular screwdriver and Phillips screwdriver;
- hatchet;
- snow shovel;
- duct tape;
- masking tape;
- tool box;
- garbage bags;
- crowbar

*Record Keeping Forms and Educational Materials*

- complete animal control laws, including abbreviated versions for the public;
- citations;
- summons;
- mileage log sheet;
- metal citation/warning and metal ticket books;
- license reminder postcards;
- license applications;
- trap agreements;
- dog tag ID;
- deer tags for deer hit by cars;
- door hanger notices;
- business cards;
- incident reports;
- bite reports;
- microchip scanner;
- map to shelter;
- sample lost/found fliers;
- general responsible pet owner information handouts;
- stapler/staples

*Investigation Devices*

- 35-millimeter camera;
- Polaroid camera;
- video camera;
- tape recorder;
- note paper;
- Tufts Animal Care and Condition scales for dogs;
- horse conformation chart;
- Henneke body scoring chart;
- horse weight tape;
- cattle weight tape;
- large envelopes for evidence;
- small and large plastic zipper-lock bags for evidence;
- stickers/labels (for labeling evidence);
- indelible markers;
- pens

*Weather and Vision Aids*

- binoculars;
- flashlight & batteries;
- magnetic flood light;

- raincoat;
- heavy gloves;
- boots;
- waterproof tarp;
- sunglasses

*Communications Equipment*

- handheld radio that connects to dispatchers;
- cellular telephone;
- pager

*Miscellaneous*

- deodorizing spray (for skunk and other odors);
- air freshener;
- high-quality, up-to-date maps of areas covered, kept in a ring binder;
- disinfectant for cleaning cages and equipment;
- a clean uniform

- ✓ Field staff should be trained in the proper and safe use of equipment provided to them including alternatives to using a catch pole for restraining animals.
- ✓ Though chemical capture equipment is not routinely used, written SOPs need to be immediately established for its use.
- ✓ Consider training and equipping field staff with retractable bite sticks.
- ✓ Follow the procedures for cleaning animal housing areas in section 6.2, Disease Control and Sanitation and use similar procedures for cleaning the animal control vehicles.
- ✓ Create and implement a monthly vehicle inspection form, which lists required equipment, and utilize it monthly to ensure that each truck is equipped accordingly.
- ✓ Create and document a procedure for replacement of worn uniforms. Uniform replacement can be at the agency's expense, employee's expense, or a joint expense.
- ✓ The animal shelter's direct phone number should be prominently displayed on both sides and the back of each vehicle.
- ✓ As the older cage inserts need to be replaced, purchase cage inserts that meet the safety needs of the ACOs and welfare needs of the animals, such as temperature control and ease of disinfecting.
- ✓ Immediately install or otherwise place a thermometer in each of the transport boxes and have ACOs check them frequently to ensure the animals' safety. Until the older cage inserts can be replaced, animals should not be left in the transport boxes for longer than



necessary in hot or cold weather. This policy should be strictly enforced. Ask the staff veterinarians for acceptable temperatures.

## **10.24 LAW ENFORCEMENT BACKUP AND RELATIONS**

### **Observations:**

During the time The HSUS team rode with MDPASU field officers there were several encounters with other law enforcement officers. The interaction between the agencies was well received but it was apparent that the other agencies were not educated to the procedures of MDPASU or animal-related enforcement issues. Even though MDPASU was being run by Miami Dade Police Department it was apparent that there was no cross department training or training with other local enforcement agencies as to the role and responsibilities of MDPASU.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Provide an on-call schedule and contact information to county dispatchers as well information about the types of calls ACOs can respond to.
- ✓ Continue to build relationships with other agencies such as police and fire departments, and the county prosecutor's office through good communication and cross training.

### **Discussion:**

Some communities have a representative of animal control address police officers somewhere in the cycle of training once every year or two. The purpose is to explain animal control's role, abilities, answer questions and thank the police for their continued support. The benefits of establishing training with other agencies, especially prosecutors, gives all participants a better knowledge of what the other needs and helps minimize the lack of prosecution in animal cases.

## **10.3 EMERGENCIES/ AFTER HOURS**

### **Observations:**

The HSUS team did not ride with ACOs after hours. No written SOPs were provided for after hours operations or response, including what constitutes an emergency call and how staff is contacted. All information gathered was from conversations with the staff.

The HSUS team was informed that after hours duties rotate between the field staffs that are called out from their residences. Each ACO works on-call one month at a time.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Written SOPs must be created for all aspects of emergency/after hours procedures.
- ✓ The SOPs should include an emergency call-out list which specifically details which calls are considered an emergency. This list should be provided to police dispatch so they will know which calls are considered emergencies when answering animal related calls at night. For instance a stray dog wandering around a neighborhood is not an emergency;

however, a stray dog hit by car is. An animal threatening a human is also an emergency. If police officers are provided with this list, they can make some decisions without contacting animal control for every call that involves an animal. If the emergency is dealing with an animal situation not handled by MDPASU a list with the appropriate agency to contact should also be provided to dispatchers.

- ✓ Written SOPs need to be created for after hours vet service so that severely injured animals can be stabilized or humanely euthanized in a timely manner. Keep vet records for these animals in the event that an owner looking for his or her animal wants an explanation.
- ✓ Establish a written schedule for on-call rotations at least a year in advance to allow staff to make personal arrangements and allow for other changes.

## 10.4 FORMS/ RECORD KEEPING

### Observations:

The HSUS team was provided with a variety of forms used by MDPASU such as those to track officer field activity, warning notices, citations, and dog licensing forms, and cruelty complaint forms. All the forms reviewed seemed adequate and useful; however, many of the forms used for similar purposes were of varying size and shape.

Chameleon was available but it did not appear that the full potential of the system was being utilized. All reports were paper copies and were filed by case number. This contributed to redundancy in work due to duplicate hard copies filed in different locations. Paper copies of citations were required to be forwarded to the county clerk's office for filing, which added to the workload.

There were a limited number of computers for use by field staff to enter and look up information, which required staff to wait for an available computer in order to complete their work. During the site visit several ACOs tried to locate misfiled paperwork that would have been easily saved and found if Chameleon had been properly utilized.

Copies of statistics for the field services section broken down month by month for 2004 were provided. The statistics were confusing and it was unclear exactly how many calls had been responded to. It appeared that certain types of responses were counted in several different areas, which increased the appearance of the number of calls responded to.

### Recommendations:

- ✓ Bring in a trainer that is familiar with all applications of the Chameleon system and train staff on how to utilize its potential. There is a section of Chameleon specifically for tracking field reports and this system is programmed to tabulate statistics for each application area.
- ✓ Purchase more computers so that at least every two-field personnel share a computer for

entering their daily field reports.

- ✓ A complete review of each form and its purpose needs to be conducted and forms should be consolidated for multiple uses where appropriate. The HSUS team believes some of the current forms could be generated from the Chameleon. Chameleon can generate complaint forms, license or tax records, animal and owner history, etc. Some specific record customization to specifically track the information MDPASU wants can usually be achieved by working with programmers.
- ✓ For neatness and professional appearance, forms should be of same size and lettering type.
- ✓ See section 5.15 General Record Keeping/ Shelter Statistics.

## 10.5 OFFICER ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES

### **Observations:**

ACOs called dispatch when they arrived at a call and again when they finished the call. ACOs filled out a call log sheet called an *Activity Report* of the calls they ran, which made note of the call, address, time and disposition. MDPASU did not have SOPs for the documentation of *Activity Reports* or for review of the daily activity by a supervisor.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Develop and implement SOPs for the tracking of daily *Activity Reports* and the filing of these forms for review by supervisory staff.
- ✓ Supervisory staff should review *Activity Reports* every day for completeness and accuracy and then sign off on them.
- ✓ The *Activity Reports* should be modified to provide a space for the ending time of each call responded to, fuel or oil added to the vehicle, and a vehicle equipment checklist.

### **Discussion:**

Activity reports can be one of the most important tools in evaluating productivity and ensuring officer accountability. Miles driven, travel time between calls, time spent on each call, etc. are clear indicators that can be used to measure an officer's productivity.

Complete activity reports are very important for after hours, on-call staff in order to compare what is on the ACO's activity report verses a print out of calls coming in to the night dispatch center. This verifies that calls are being handled and that there is no discrepancy in on-call reimbursement to the employee.

## 10.6 ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCE REVIEW

### **Observations:**

Miami-Dade animal control ordinances as provided to the HSUS team appeared to be routinely updated. References to last sections updated were found to be in 2001. The ordinances addressed a variety of issues that overall seemed to be adequate for public safety and humane issues in Miami-Dade County.

Areas of concern were ordinances dealing with free-roaming cats and the licensing of cats. Not addressing free-roaming cats increases the risk of rabies transmission from wild vector animals to domestic animals and humans.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Include cats in the stray ordinance section 5-6, running at large.
- ✓ As Miami-Dade County updates its ordinances, consider contacting The HSUS for examples of progressive animal related ordinances that have been implemented in other areas.<sup>102</sup>
- ✓ See section 10.8, Licensing/ Mandatory Registration.

### **Discussion:**

The purpose of animal control is to ensure public safety and an unchecked free-roaming cat is a high risk factor for the spread of rabies. Free-roaming cats have a shorter life expectancy than cats that are confined to their homes and yards from higher risk of infectious disease and urban calamity.

According to *Animal Control Management, A Guide for Local Governments*, the following animal control laws should be strived for over time:

- Mandatory registration
- Citation and impoundment fees
- Dangerous-dog laws
- Rabies control
- Restraint laws
- Nuisance laws
- Pooper scooper laws
- Animal limitation
- Security bond provisions
- Other provisions such as:
  - Regulation of pet shops
  - Reporting by animal dealers
  - Animal cruelty and neglect
  - Keeping of wild, exotic, and novelty animals
  - Animal events

- Guard dogs
- Pet giveaway prohibition
- Pound seizure prohibition
- Breeding restrictions

We believe that one of the best barometers regarding an animal control ordinance is if animal related problems continue to go un-addressed. Are the problems affecting the quality of life of citizens and animals in the community? Would ordinance changes reduce the number of animals coming into the shelter or reduce the number of citizens bitten each year? If so, they should be addressed. However, adding ordinances usually have costs associated with them, which should be kept in mind.

## **10.7 LICENSING/ MANDATORY REGISTRATION**

### **Observations:**

MDPASU did have SOPs regarding the licensing of dogs and cats. Dogs over four months of age in Miami-Dade County were required to be licensed (also known as mandatory registration); however, for cats licensing was voluntary. The HSUS team was told that there had been tremendous public opposition to attempts to include cats in the licensing ordinance.

It was the responsibility of the Finance/Licensing section of MDPASU to disperse, track, and handle all revenues for the sale of animal licenses. License tags were distributed directly from the shelter and from veterinarian clinics. Veterinarians sell dog licenses at the time of administering rabies vaccines to their clients. The HSUS team was told by MDPASU licensing personnel that getting information back from the veterinarians in a timely manner is one of the major areas that cause citizens to be sent a citation for non-compliance.

The cost of annual licensing was \$25 for altered dogs and \$35 for unaltered dogs; however, the SOPs stated different costs. The voluntary license fee for cats was \$2. MDPASU used needs testing for license sales and would give a discount to residents with proof of need based on one of seven types of public assistance.

During the site visit while riding with ACOs, records were checked to verify that dogs had a current license and vaccination. If they did not, the ACO issued a warning to comply within 30 days. This information was entered into the licensing database and a citation was automatically issued if non-compliance occurred.

The HSUS team was informed that periodic neighborhood canvases are done for the purpose of identifying unlicensed dogs and pit bulls residing within county limits.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ MDPASU should promote an effort to require that animals be vaccinated for rabies every three years instead of every year. Renewal of license tags should be set in accordance with the rabies vaccination requirement.

- ✓ Increase the license fee for an unaltered animal to be three to five times the fee for an altered animal. This helps serve as encouragement to get intact animals sterilized, and rewards owners of altered animals with a significantly lower license fee for being responsible. The ultimate goal is the number of animals born that pass through the shelter will drop as a result of an effective differential registration program.
- ✓ Continue to work towards mandatory licensing of cats. If this is accomplished the fees should be the same for dogs and cats.
- ✓ Develop incentive and penalties for veterinarians encouraging them to return licensing information to MDPASU promptly.
- ✓ When/if ACOs do not have calls to respond to they should be proactively canvassing neighborhoods for violations as well as taking the opportunity to educate citizens about responsible pet care.

**Discussion:**

Animal mandatory registration programs are commonly one of the most mismanaged programs of local governments across the United States. They are inherently set up to fail from the beginning because their purpose is often misunderstood.

Mandatory registration serves eight functions:<sup>103</sup>

- As a lost pet recovery service
- As a statistical tool
- Ensures rabies vaccinations
- As a revenue source
- As cat control<sup>104</sup>
- Promotes spaying and neutering
- Helps ensure compliance with city ordinances
- Lowers the burden for non cat/dog owning tax payers

There are many local governments that believe animal registration programs should be expected to generate a significant portion of the animal control agency's budget. However, that would be the equivalent of saying that revenue from police citations should underwrite the cost of the police department; a totally erroneous assumption. Actually the biggest benefits of a well run registration program are that animals are identified and hopefully, with the right fee structure, the majority are sterilized. This can save an animal control agency and taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars in reduced response to citizen complaints, reduced numbers of animals impounded, and reduced housing costs. It also expedites the process of getting a lost animal with an identification tag on back to his owner, with a citation when necessary, instead of costly impoundment, transport and sheltering.

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103 International City/County Management Association, *Animal Control Management, A Guide for Local Governments\**

104 HSUS "Cat Licensing Fact Sheet"

An effective registration program encourages the public to comply because they get preferential service if their animal is found by animal control. Mandatory registration is often more successful when promoted as a pet protection service rather than a licensing tax. Several communities will return a registered animal running at large to his home, free of charge for the first violation as a benefit of complying with pet registration laws. However, a registration program must be actively enforced or compliance will be low.<sup>105, 106</sup>

Animal registration programs should be managed by the agencies that benefit from them. Programs operated by government tax collector offices, water departments, and police departments are not usually successful. Another alternative is hiring a private contractor to handle the entire function for local government. Some of the communities who have privatized their entire registration function are Dallas, TX; Raleigh, NC; Maricopa County, AZ; and others.<sup>107</sup>

Mandatory cat licensing gives cats many of the same protections dogs have benefited from for years. Some citizens oppose cat licensing because they say they are nothing more than “round up and kill” programs. However, governments do not (and should not) use cat licensing as a justification for humanely trapping and euthanizing every cat prowling around the neighborhood without a collar and tag. Nor do governments have the resources for such programs. Instead, cat licensing empowers ACOs to quickly resolve problems by enabling them to identify those persons responsible for cats who may be suffering, who may be living outdoors unprotected, who may be breeding indiscriminately, who may be lost, or who may be bothering people by straying onto their property.

In addition, some citizens will oppose mandatory cat licensing because they will have to pay a fee they didn’t have to pay before. This is understandable; however, government officials must strive to educate these individuals about the benefits of licensing to all cats, not just those lucky enough to have responsible caretakers. Governments may appease responsible pet owners by offering differential licensing, and discounts for multiple cat households, senior citizens, and low-income cat owners.

Feral cat caretakers may also criticize mandatory cat licensing. In some jurisdictions, officials have agreed on a compromise in which feral cat caregivers are required to register as caretakers of feral cat colonies if they meet certain criteria, but are exempted from having to license the individual cats. One example is Brevard County, Florida.

According to the Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, vaccines used in state and local rabies-control programs should have 3-year duration of immunity. This constitutes the most effective method of increasing the proportion of immunized dogs and cats in any population. No laboratory or epidemiologic data support the annual or biennial administration of 3-year vaccines following the initial series. In addition, Rabies Prevention and Control in

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105 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “Taking License With an Ad Campaign,”  
September/October 1999\*

106 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “You’ve Got a (Pet Friendly) Friend in Pennsylvania,”  
September/October 2000\*

107 Pet Data, [www.petdata.com](http://www.petdata.com)

Florida, 2004, from the Florida Department of Health states that the Rabies Advisory Committee adopts the recommendation of the National Association of Public Health Veterinarians' Compendium of Animal Rabies Control, 2001 in regard to 3-year rabies vaccines for dogs and cats.

## **10.8 DOGFIGHTING**

### **Observations:**

MDPASU had a fairly detailed SOP for dangerous dogs and dog bite investigation, which mentioned the fighting of dogs; however, no SOPs existed specifically pertaining to dogfighting. In Florida it is a felony to fight a dog, have possession of a fighting dog and to be a spectator at a dogfight. Miami-Dade County does have a breed ban specifically on pit bulls.

During the site visit, field personnel responded to a request for assistance from the police concerning a pit bull that was jumping a fence and threatening citizens. The dog was signed over to the ACO by the dog's owner without a citation. This dog had bite patterns consistent with those found on fighting dogs. These bite patterns were not recognized by the field officer until it was pointed out by The HSUS team member. This indicated a lack of training of MDPASU field personnel.

MDPASU had one officer assigned to handle all pit bull incidents. The HSUS team did not have an opportunity to ride with this officer. The HSUS team got the impression that few cases are filed and most incidents dealing with pit bulls are dealt with by citation and mandate of removal of the animal from the county.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Every ACO should be sent to dogfighting investigation workshops when available. This will train them in basic indicators and what to look for in dogs that have potentially been fought. These workshops move around the country and can be brought within driving distance of Miami-Dade so no overnight travel or airfare would be required. The HSUS can provide contact information for future dogfighting training courses.
- ✓ Animal fighting in Miami-Dade County may best be handled by MDPASU working in conjunction with state police departments. The investigation of illegal animal fighting activities by local law enforcement, animal control, and humane agencies is frequently difficult, frustrating, and unsuccessful. The lack of success is most often due to circumstances beyond the control of the investigating agency. Because of the specialized nature of the criminal activity, participants are often scattered over a wide area involving multiple jurisdictions. The broad distribution of participants may present certain difficulties unless the investigation effort is tightly coordinated among a number of law enforcement agencies.
- ✓ Join the HSUS National Illegal Animal Fighting Task Force (NIAFTF). The task force has been an effective tool in uniting law enforcement, ACOs, prosecutors, judges,



government investigators, and government officials from across the United States via the Internet.<sup>108</sup>

**Discussion:**

The HSUS has created extensive materials to help local agencies educate both the public and local law enforcement about the crime and animal suffering involved in illegal animal fighting. These educational materials will assist MDPASU — whether now or in the future — in starting a campaign to educate the community about illegal animal fighting in your community.<sup>109, 110</sup>

In recent years, The HSUS has seen an unprecedented increase in both illegal cockfighting and dogfighting activities in this country. This tortuous “blood sport” results in anguish and acute suffering and pain for those animals that are forced to fight. In addition, dogfighting is a dehumanizing and degrading activity – a serious offense to the sensibilities of a civilized society – and certainly an offense warranting a felony penalty. Dogfighting is a sadistic “contest” in which two dogs, specifically bred and trained to fight, are placed together for the purpose of attacking and mauling each other. The momentum for this activity stems largely from a desire to “be the toughest,” to earn money for their owners, and to entertain spectators. Fights average nearly an hour in length and often last more than two hours. Dogfights end when one of the dogs is no longer able or willing to continue.

The injuries inflicted and sustained by dogs participating in dogfights are frequently severe, even fatal. The pit bull terriers used in these fights have been specifically bred and trained for fighting and are unrelenting in their attempts to overcome their opponents. These dogs have extremely powerful jaw muscles. This crushing produces severe bruising, deep puncture wounds, and often, broken bones. Dogs who survive a fight often die of blood loss, shock, dehydration, exhaustion or infection hours – or even days – after the fight.

Other animals are often sacrificed as well. Owners often train their dogs for fights using smaller animals such as cats, rabbits, or small dogs. These “bait” animals are often unwanted litters, stolen pets or animals obtained through “free to good home” advertisements. The numerous raids across the country have unearthed many disturbing facets of this illegal “sport”:

- Young children are often allowed or forced to watch, which promotes an insensitivity to animal cruelty, an enthusiasm for violence, and a lack of respect for the law;
- Illegal gambling is often the norm at dogfights. While enjoying watching dogs injure and maim one another, owners and spectators spend thousands of dollars wagering on their favorites;
- Firearms and other weapons are quite common at dogfights because of the large amounts of cash present; and
- Illegal drugs are often sold and used at dogfights.

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108 National Illegal Animal Fighting Task Force application

109 *Illegal Animal Fighting, A Law Enforcement Primer for the Investigation or Cockfighting and Dogfighting\**

110 *Animal Fighting: The Final Round* video\*

Dogfighting is illegal in all 50 states, and the federal Animal Welfare Act prohibits the interstate transportation of dogs for fighting purposes. Dogfighting is a felony offense in 47 states, being a spectator to a dogfighting event is illegal in 48 states, and the possession of dogs for fighting purposes is illegal in 45 states. Dogfighting is often considered a felony for the following reasons:

- The cruelty involved in dogfighting should be punished by more than a slap on the hand. This is not a spur-of-the-moment act; it is a premeditated, cruel, and abhorrent practice that has no place in a civilized society.
- Dogfighting yields large gambling profits for participants.
- Those involved with dogfighting conspire to keep dogfights secret, so investigations and other law enforcement actions may be difficult and extremely expensive. Law enforcement officials are more inclined to investigate dogfighting if it is a felony.
- As more states make dogfighting a felony offense, those remaining states with low penalties will become a haven for dog fighters. All states must classify dogfighting as a felony if they are to eradicate this cruel practice.

## **10.9 INVESTIGATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT**

### **Observations:**

It appeared that communication between the enforcement and investigations units were limited, detracting from its effectiveness.

Examples of enforcement are described throughout the Field Services/ Animal Control section of this report. Because operational funding comes from monies collected from citations, The HSUS team believes that more emphasis is put on enforcement rather than education.

During the site visit an owned pit bull was encountered by field personnel and the owner was automatically issued a \$500 citation and given 48 hours to remove the animal from the county. The HSUS team was advised that the citation has to be issued even if the owner decides to surrender the animal to the ACO. If the dog's owner does not provide verification that the dog has been removed from the county he is cited \$500 a day until compliance is met.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Consider combining the investigations and enforcement departments to improve communication and effectiveness or otherwise address this issue.
- ✓ ACOs should be empowered to use their discretion when giving warnings over citations; however, the deciding factor should not exclusively be raising money for operations. The goal should be to educate the owner and improve the conditions for the animal (in non-crisis situations such as improper shelter in fair weather) and if this is not done in a timely manner, enforcement action should be taken.

- ✓ Those receiving a warning should be given one written warning before further action is taken (does not apply to animals in crisis or other situations such as a dangerous dog). Have carbon duplicate written warning forms printed to issue in order to educate pet owners about responsible pet care. The written warning forms should have a place for the owner to sign and date to prove that they received a copy. One copy of the form should be given to the violator and one should be kept for MDPASU records. By making sure that all warnings are documented properly, MDPASU can disprove violators who say they were not warned. It will also demonstrate that staff is not being unfair by giving less warnings to one person than to another before taking further action, such as issuing a citation.
- ✓ When a violator cannot be located to be personally issued a written warning, use a door hanger or other means to notify them.
- ✓ Provide ACOs with professional looking educational materials covering issues ranging from responsible pet care and rabies to Miami-Dade ordinances and spaying/neutering. MDPASU is missing an opportunity to adequately educate the citizens of Miami-Dade County.

**Discussion:**

Successful animal control is a combination of education and enforcement. The key to success is the balance of each of this. Many animal control agencies apply too much enforcement and too little education. Others don't enforce and are therefore ineffective.

## **10.10 FIELD SERVICES/ ANIMAL CONTROL CONTRACTS**

**Observations:**

No formal or written contracts existed with other agencies; however, The HSUS team was told that other animal control agencies as well as private agencies bring animals to MDPASU for holding and final disposition. Local private agencies would bring their non-adoptable dogs and cats to MDPASU so they would not have to euthanize them. In addition, other small animal control agencies would bring overflow animals to MDPASU to free up space at their facilities.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Formal, written memorandums of understandings (MOU) need to be established to ensure that animals dropped off at MDPASU are done so in accordance with state regulations, as well as MDPASU policies and procedures.
- ✓ A per-animal fee should be charged for agencies inside Miami-Dade County that drop off animals at MDPASU. MDPASU should have a contract with agencies outside the county that drop off animals, but not a-per animal fee. This will help cover holding and disposition expenses accrued by MDPASU.

## 10.11 WILDLIFE ISSUES

### Observations:

As a general rule, MDPASU does not handle calls related to wildlife issues. Calls pertaining to wildlife are referred to the State Fish and Wildlife Service or to a private wildlife contractor.

MDPASU did not have SOPs pertaining to wildlife issues. There was no designated or segregated holding area in the shelter to hold wildlife temporarily until the animal could be euthanized or transferred to a wildlife rehabilitator if the need should arise. No formal training was required of field staff for the handling of wildlife issues. Many of the ACOs were apprehensive about dealing with wildlife due to their lack of training and experience with wildlife issues.

### Recommendations:

- ✓ Ensure that staff has the proper equipment to handle wildlife in the event that an animal is brought to the shelter or an ACO must handle wildlife in the field.
- ✓ See section 4.26, Wildlife/ Exotic Housing.
- ✓ Continue to refer citizens with wildlife complaints to Fish and Wildlife and/or private contractors when appropriate. However, if MDPASU is referring to specific contractors it is their obligation to ensure that they use humane techniques. Contact The HSUS for more information on solving wildlife conflicts and humane removal.
- ✓ MDPASU should include information on rabies and solutions to wildlife conflicts on its Web site to encourage people to try and resolve issues before calling MDPASU. For those without Internet access, MDPASU should have hard copies of the information available. Many organizations, including The HSUS, have Web information that MDPASU could link to or use the copy of *Wild Neighbors* accompanying this report and make copies straight from the book. Field staff and those staff members that deal with the public on the phone should have the basic knowledge to speak intelligently about wildlife issues.
- ✓ Consider providing training for staff that handles wildlife including:
  - Wildlife biology, life cycles, habits, and diseases
  - Wildlife damage identification and site evaluation
  - Integrated wildlife damage management
  - Methods of approved lethal and non-lethal resolution of common wildlife problems, including frightening devices, repellents, one-way door exclusion and other exclusion methods, habitat modification, and live-trap and release
  - Handling of infant and immature wildlife and techniques to limit the possibility of orphaning
  - Humane capture, handling, and transport of wildlife
  - Techniques to prevent reoccurrence of problems
  - Disposition of sick or injured wildlife
  - Euthanasia and disposal of carcasses

➤ Applicable wildlife laws, rules, and policies

The HSUS, companies such as AAA Wildlife Control,<sup>111</sup> and perhaps Florida Fish and Wildlife may assist in staff training.

**Discussion:**

The rapidly growing number of human-wildlife conflicts in urban and suburban areas directly affects the operation of animal shelters and the work of animal control professionals. People generally do not understand the normal behavior of urbanized wildlife, are frightened of the animal or of contracting rabies or feel, without any real basis, that the animal is a nuisance. Public education is the first and perhaps most crucial role that animal control professionals can play in meeting the needs of the community.

It is normal to see raccoons, opossums and other urbanized wildlife during the day, even though these animals were once nocturnal. Wild animals have become accustomed to being around people, and the loss of habitat to development has led to wildlife adapting to human environments. Although wild animals sought shelter and food in the woods, they are now forced to find shelter in attics, basements, or garages and eat food left out for pets and our trash.

Callers should be educated about rabies. It is extremely rare to find a rabbit, squirrel, or opossum with rabies; they are low-risk animals, and typically viewed as “dead-end” hosts. Callers also assume an animal is rabid because it does not show fear of people, but the animal could have easily been conditioned by being fed by “animal lovers,” thereby lessening its fear of humans.

People are also frequently under the impression that it is better to trap and relocate the animal, but this procedure is highly problematic and recommended by The HSUS only as a next to last resort, killing being the last. Problems with adverse climatic conditions (heat and cold), competition from others of the same species, or predation by different species, locating shelter and food, and the abandonment of young all make relocation a less than desirable option. Emerging strategies and techniques that allow wild animals to stay within their known home ranges while addressing the immediate conflicts they cause are far superior to any other approaches.

Trap and removal does not solve the problem. If an area in or near the home is attractive to wildlife, trapping a few of the species will only make room for others to inhabit the area. For these reasons, it is best to deter wild animals rather than trap them.

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111 AAA Wildlife Control Urban Wildlife Control Training Program

## 11.0 GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP

### 11.1 ARTICULATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL VISION, MISSION, AND PLANNING

#### **Observations:**

MDPASU does not have a mission or vision statement. The only mission statement The HSUS team received was one for the police department. MDPASU's SOPs did state that the primary responsibility of the Animal Services Unit is to protect the public from rabies and problems associated with stray dogs. According to the documents provided, MDPASU has not done any strategic or long term planning.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ MDPASU needs to make a commitment to formulating a carefully constructed strategic plan and taking a serious, introspective look at the organization's priorities and governing principles.<sup>112</sup>
- ✓ MDPASU should select a facilitator with a thorough working knowledge of the strategic planning process as well as a working knowledge of the animal care and control field. MDPASU can explore finding local citizens sympathetic to animal welfare that are skilled in facilitating the strategic planning process as this is a process that is best led by someone outside the agency. Other options include finding a college professor that is interested in animal welfare or if needed, The HSUS can provide a list of facilitators experienced in the planning process with animal protection organizations. Also, [www.mapnp.org/library/plan\\_dec/str\\_plan/str\\_plan.htm](http://www.mapnp.org/library/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm) has excellent resources.
- ✓ The strategic planning process should begin with the development of a mission statement specific to MDPASU. The team should also take the time to establish a written vision statement for the organization.
- ✓ An internal planning team consisting of senior management, select staff, and volunteers should be appointed to work with the facilitator to come up with sound goals and objectives for MDPASU. Staff and volunteers should participate in the "good idea" phase of planning. This is an opportunity for the entire animal caring community to shape the future of MDPASU.

All goals and objectives in the strategic plan should flow from the agreed upon vision and mission statements. This plan should identify specific long-term goals (five years maximum) and more immediate objectives.

- ✓ Develop action plans. An important component of strategic planning is the development

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112 HSUS *Shelter Sense*, "Strategic Planning In The Animal Care and Control Shelter," February 1993

of action plans which provide the detail to the strategic goals and that typically incorporate the following components:

- The specific steps or actions required for each priority.
  - Who will be held accountable for seeing that each step or action is completed?
  - When these steps or actions are to be carried out?
  - What resources need to be allocated in order to carry them out?
  - What feedback mechanisms are needed to monitor progress within each step?
- ✓ Commit the resulting plan to writing. It is a reminder of priorities when the week is blurred by day-to-day activities. It serves as a basis for board self-evaluation, board evaluation of the executive director, management evaluation of staff, allocating limited resources, and making difficult life-affirming decisions. Most of all, it serves as a roadmap to keep everyone working in the same direction about where the organization is going and how it is going to get there.
  - ✓ Articulate the vision and the concrete goals to everyone in MDPASU. Visit the plan regularly at staff meetings and volunteer orientations. Publicize the plan. Give regular progress reports to the community.
  - ✓ Due to limits of budget and staff, MDPASU may have to put some services and programs in the “parking lot.” This means that they are on the wish list but just cannot be attained right now. This is a very hard thing to do – in essence MDPASU may not be everything it wants to be. However, by acknowledging the wish list in the strategic plan the agency illustrates to staff, volunteers and supporters that, as MDPASU strengthens and progresses, those programs are part of the plan.
  - ✓ Shelter management must regularly and systematically monitor and evaluate progress. Ensure that MDPASU can maintain and carry out its strategic goals and action plans. The missing ingredient for success is often the organizational capacity to do what they say they want to do. Lasting social benefits come from the capacity for strong performance – the ability to develop, sustain, and improve the delivery of a mission.
  - ✓ Strategic planning should probably not be started until an experienced animal control director can be hired and begin the process. The HSUS team is confident Miami-Dade County government has the expertise and resources to help MDPASU achieve this when it is ready.

**Discussion:**

A mission statement should articulate vision. Remember that a mission statement comes from the head, but vision comes from the heart. A mission statement is a general statement of the agency’s purposes. It states what the agency actually does, not what they hope they will do. It states why the agency exists, what their most important services are, and what they believe in. The mission is a statement of basic services and priorities designed to reach the visionary place. This place is where the organization's highest ideals and core values are shared by all. The vision illuminates rather than limits.

As a tool, the mission and vision statements will help keep MDPASU on track. When reviewing projects for the organization, go back to the mission and vision and determine if the project fits with the mission. If a project does not fit, don't do it. The organization cannot just adopt the newest idea of the day recommended by whoever thinks it would be a good idea.

Strategic planning is an effective management **tool** that helps an organization to do the best job that it can. This tool allows an organization to do the following:

- Focus its limited resources, both human and financial, on its real priorities
- Evaluate the organization's ability to meet those priorities
- Adjust the organization's activities or programs in light of continually changing circumstances

*In short, strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future.* -- [www.allianceonline.org](http://www.allianceonline.org), "What is Strategic Planning?"

Without a detailed plan to work towards its goals, MDPASU will be able to focus on basic issues as it has in the past, but will not move progressively forward to achieve all that it wants to accomplish. Creating the steps can be difficult. Everyone involved with MDPASU has his or her own best guess as to what the correct programs and methods are.

Participation in the planning process should be as broad as possible. The document is important, but just as important is inclusiveness. The plan should be reviewed each year for progress and modification. Some ideas won't work and some new ideas will be developed. A plan does not lock an organization onto a path. There are always new routes and shortcuts that the organization may want to explore.

Remember that organizational changes do not implement themselves – people make them happen. For effective day-to-day management to occur one does not simply make staff and volunteers adhere to the board's organizational plan and priorities but must insure that workplace goals are completed together, one step at a time. The commitment to make improvements throughout the agency must be tempered with a caution that progress will not necessarily occur quickly.

## **11.2 INFRASTRUCTURE & SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

### **Observations:**

The HSUS team was provided with a copy of the organizational chart for MDPASU. It was not dated but represented the most current one based on discussion with shelter management. The chain of command was somewhat confusing. It was clear that those in charge of the North Shelter Operations, Financial Operations, Enforcement Operations, and South Operations reported to the captain in charge; however, it was unclear who reported to whom in the many units (i.e. Code Enforcement Section, Finance/Licensing Section, Veterinary Section, Animal Care Section). For example, in the Animal Care Section did all the staff report directly to the



Sergeant in charge of Shelter Operations or did the animal care specialist supervisor directly oversee all the staff listed under that position including the maintenance repairer and maintenance mechanics?

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ The organizational chart should be dated and revised as necessary as positions and staff change.
- ✓ Revise the chart to clearly show the chain of command.

## **11.21 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Observations:**

Employees are evaluated based on Miami-Dade County employment policies. The HSUS team does not feel this is an area we should comment on as it is a countywide policy not one just affecting MDPASU.

In the past, MDPASU was under public works; however, for the past several years MDPASU has been under the direction of the police department. The HSUS team was told that this was a temporary solution until a long term solution could be found. While the police department has solved some of the problems that have plagued the agency, running a shelter is an area in which they have no expertise, and as a result operational complaints continue.

The police department had a policy of rotating officers in and out, including the captain in charge of MDPASU. This created a lack of continuity and no historical perspective for the organization. At the time of the site visit the police captain in charge was in an acting capacity, and the police lieutenant in charge of enforcement had been there only five weeks. Based on information received there have been three captains in charge of the agency in less than four years. The lack of familiarity made it difficult for The HSUS team to get answers to questions because some officers did not know much about the agency's history or actions. During the writing of this report, The HSUS team was told that county officials are considering searching for and hiring an experienced animal control director for MDPASU.

There was a limited number of staff scheduled to work a night shift at the North shelter to monitor the animals, receive animals, empty trash, and spot clean and feed; however, there was no supervisor on duty at night.

The time clock used to record staff time was broken and had been for some time. Staff enters the hours they work manually.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Move the shelter out from under the police department and hire an experienced animal control director whom will give the agency stability. This position could be a direct report to the county manager or an assistant county manager, or assigned to another

department other than the police.

- ✓ Repair or replace the time clock. The potential for abuse and any possible disagreements about hours worked will be instantly resolved. This is a 7 day a week operation and supervisors may not always be aware of who came to work when.
- ✓ Each shift, including the night shift, should have a supervisor on duty to ensure that staff is productive and any safety or security issues that arise can be effectively addressed.

If it is not financially feasible to have a supervisor on duty during the night shift, provide a list of assigned duties to be carried out by the night shift staff to ensure that important tasks are being completed. These tasks should include spot cleaning animal housing areas, organizing storage and other areas of the shelter, making sure animals have water, filing, cleaning etc. This checklist should be reviewed by a supervisor each morning to ensure that work is being properly completed.

- ✓ Staff must be held accountable for their work performance, and management should follow the county's procedure for discipline and corrective action when staff members make repeated mistakes.

**Discussion:**

Simply transferring MDPASU from one supervisory agency to another is not the solution. In many communities having the animal care and control agency transferred to another supervisory agency is viewed as some form of punishment and is usually not welcomed by the receiving agency. MDPASU needs to be viewed as an important, viable public health and safety service that deserves adequate funding and support to achieve its mission. Hopefully this report will provide Miami-Dade County with the tools necessary to put MDPASU back on track. The citizens and animals of Miami-Dade County deserve no less.

## **11.22 OPERATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND TRAINING**

**Observations:**

MDPASU should be commended for having SOPs. The SOPs are a good beginning; however, they lack the detail and organization to be very effective. Throughout this report, the HSUS team has indicated that the SOPs need improvement.

Most of the SOPs were not dated and during discussions with staff, many did not know MDPASU policies on some issues and gave answers that were contrary to policy.

According to supervisory staff, MDPASU did not have a budget for staff training. Staff has not attended animal related conferences or received outside training for important issues such as animal handling, which isolates staff. The HSUS team is unsure if staff is cross trained with different positions at the shelter.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Use the “HSUS SOP template” accompanying this report to help update MDPASU’s current SOPs. Every aspect of the operation needs a written procedure.
- ✓ The SOPs need to be put in their own manual if they aren’t already (three ring binders are fine). If the SOPs are currently not maintained electronically, this needs to be done in order to make updates, changes, and additions easily. The SOPs should have the revision date on every page.
- ✓ Management needs to be open to input from employees regarding feasibility of the SOPs and policies.
- ✓ The procedures should be reviewed annually by management to ensure they continue to be realistic, effective, efficient, and are still up-to-date with current practice. Suggestions from staff should be considered for change of process.
- ✓ If there are necessary changes during the year, SOPs can be issued in the form of memos followed up by specific training and entered into the copies of the manual.
- ✓ Staff should be introduced to this manual and each be provided a copy. In addition, a centrally located, easy to access copy should be available at all times.
- ✓ When receiving a current copy of the SOPs, each employee should be required to sign their name, indicating they received it.
- ✓ If/when a volunteer program is revived, the volunteers should each receive portions of the manuals that pertain to the services they provide and they should be asked to sign that they understand and will abide by them.
- ✓ Management needs to ensure that all staff are knowledgeable of and held accountable for SOPs. Each supervisor should be provided a copy of the SOP manual and should be instructed to develop his or her staff training from it. As each training topic in the procedures manual is completed, each party should be required to initial and date that it was completed and the trainee understood the task. This provides assurances that the training is completely covered and it provides management a tool to hold staff accountable for their actions.
- ✓ MDPASU should ensure that training funds are available for all staff to receive training opportunities relevant to their job positions.
- ✓ Encourage staff to attend conferences, meetings and educational opportunities as they will increase the level of knowledge and professionalism by the department and the staff and also offer networking opportunities with colleagues from around the state, region and nation. Employees who attend training usually come back pumped up, enthusiastic, and with new ideas and solutions to problems. These opportunities may include HSUS Animal Care Expo (Atlanta 2005), National Animal Control Association Annual Training

Conference, and Online educational opportunities provided by Humane Society University ([www.humanesocietyu.org](http://www.humanesocietyu.org)).

- ✓ Consider ordering a subscription of *Animal Sheltering* magazine for each staff member or at minimum for each department, to read and learn from. Cost is \$11.00 per year per subscription. *Animal Sheltering* can also be viewed free online at [www.animalsheltering.org](http://www.animalsheltering.org).
- ✓ In order to make the most of the information provided in *Animal Sheltering* magazine, consider requiring staff to read the main article and provide feedback in a brief staff meeting. For example, "Room to Roam" (March/April 2002) is an issue dedicated to colony housing for cats. Staff should provide input such as:
  - Is colony housing right for our shelter? Why or why not?
  - If yes, what do we need to do to make colony housing a reality for our shelter?
  - Do we have the resources to do this?
  - What is our next step in the planning process?
- ✓ Look locally for some free training and friendship building by requesting local veterinarians to do training workshops on first aid and recognizing the symptoms of diseases common in shelters, local breed fancier or placement partner groups to do workshops on breed identification, or ask to take part in training opportunities provided to county employees that would have a positive impact on MDPASU.
- ✓ Consider taking advantage of the assistance and training offered by other local animal shelters such as HSGM and Humane Society of Broward County.
- ✓ Consider including in-service training opportunities in the MDPASU budget. Some organizations have found this to be among the most cost-effective methods for training large numbers of people. Very qualified speakers, even some of national renown, can be brought to the facility to cover topics of particular concern to MDPASU. Topics might include cat handling, animal behavior, dealing with exotics in the shelter, customer service/team building, etc. The options are limitless and should be selected based upon the needs of the staff and the priorities established within the strategic plan. By bringing the speaker to the shelter (preferably on a day when the facility is closed to the public) MDPASU need only pay for travel expenses for one person versus several staff members.
- ✓ Vary staff training, based on individual strengths that are identified and nurtured whenever possible. Allow staff to then provide expertise and guidance to others.
- ✓ Training should be addressed in the organization's strategic plan with a built-in process of tracking and accountability. The organization could commit within the strategic plan to provide a set number of hours of in-service training each year along with a specific plan for other types of training.
- ✓ Provide cross training for staff through a formalized cross training program so that they

appreciate each others' job, become more valuable to the organization and begin to work as a team with some common goals to place and care for animals.<sup>113</sup>

**Discussion:**

A *policy* should be considered a guide to decision-making under a given set of circumstances, and therefore flow from – and be consistent with – the organization's overall mission. And a *procedure* can be considered as a particular way of accomplishing something, such as a series of steps followed in a definite regular order. Lastly, *SOPs* establish an overall routine that serves to ensure a consistent and repetitive approach to actions.

Many animal control agencies have difficulty keeping SOPs current; however, it is a task that must be performed with all due diligence. Written SOPs are important because they convey management's philosophies, communicate policies and appropriate procedures, translate the agency's philosophies and desires into action, and they are invaluable communication tools for efficiently running operations within departments and interrelated departments. In addition, they serve as guides for training new and existing employees, they help prevent difficulties in performing duties due to lack of understanding or inconsistent approaches from personnel changes, and they serve to ensure compliance with regulatory agencies such as OSHA and DEA. It is an ever changing document.

SOPs provide staff with clear direction and clear expectations so they can succeed or fail. It is unfair to fire or discipline staff for not doing something they had no idea they were supposed to do. In addition, the staff needs to know not only the right way to do things, but also why it is important to do them.

Animal control can be one of the most problematic components of local government. In many instances it is because there is no training, no minimum standards for ACOs and limited support from local government. Animal control agencies nationally hire individuals without adequate background checks, and send them into the community to enforce laws with no training. This has been and continues to be one of the biggest problems associated with animal control programs in the U.S.

The HSUS team recognizes the benefit of "on the job" training, which should be one part of a comprehensive training program. Training for staff in all aspects of animal care and control is an investment well worth the cost.

## **11.23 COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS SYSTEM**

**Observations:**

The HSUS team received copies of all of non-sworn positions, employee benefits, and salary grades at MDPASU. Salaries and benefits were competitive with other governmental animal control agencies in the area. Fringe benefits were excellent, including the non-contributory Florida State Retirement program.

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113 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Cross-Training in Your Animal Shelter," July/August 1996\*

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ None

### **11.3 ANIMAL CONTROL ADVISORY BOARD/ COMMITTEE**

**Observations:**

There is no animal control advisory board or committee for MDPASU.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ The Board of County Commissioners should give serious consideration to the creation of such an advisory board or committee via resolution, paying specific attention regarding the specific purpose for and membership make up of this board.
- ✓ Review *Animal Control Management, A Guide for Local Governments* (pages 20-21), accompanying this report for guidelines for appointing members with specific backgrounds and common duties assigned to advisory boards. The HSUS will provide additional resources to help Miami-Dade County create such a board if so inclined.

**Discussion:**

There are some very successful advisory boards and some very problematic ones. The difference can be the makeup of the board and its responsibility. Advisory boards can help the agency with a work plan, provide a hearing panel for dangerous dog cases, and a variety of other functions; however, they should have no authority over the day to day operations, or any budget authority. The board should be purely advisory.

### **11.4 DEFINITION AND RECOGNITION OF AGENCY'S ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY**

**Observations:**

According to the public comment The HSUS team received prior to the site visit, MDPASU's reputation has been damaged due to the negative publicity it has received and the negative experiences people have directly had with MDPASU.

The very fact that MDPASU is part of the police department may result in citizens not utilizing the agency's services out of fear. Police cars parked at the front entrance may intimidate citizens and keep them away. Many of the residents of Miami-Dade County emigrated from South American countries, where there are no animal control agencies, so this concept is new to them.

All governmental animal care and control units have the same role. It is first and foremost to protect public health and safety and promote humane disposition for all animals received. As in most communities, the public does not understand the roles of the various animal agencies in the community. Miami-Dade County is no different.

Management at MDPASU told The HSUS team that the shelter was a "no-kill" facility because

euthanasia was only performed on sick, injured or aggressive animals. The term “no kill” is misleading due to the fact that statistics provided to The HSUS team stated MDPASU euthanized over 21,000 animals in 2003. MDPASU is an open-admission shelter that accepts all animals, regardless of their adoptability, which is admirable and necessary.

**Recommendations:**

- ✓ Begin a campaign to let the citizens of Miami-Dade County know what MDPASU is and what it does. This campaign must reach out to all the different cultures in the Miami-Dade County community. MDPASU needs its own identity, not that of a part of the police department.
- ✓ Many recommendations throughout this report will assist MDPASU in developing its definition and its recognition in the community. In particular, a long range plan that covers media relations, fund development, outreach programs, staff development, how to meet and achieve the ‘basics,’ and a variety of other issues will begin the process.
- ✓ Discontinue referring to MDPASU as a “no-kill” shelter. The term is confusing to the public and media, and can be divisive between animal welfare agencies trying to work together to end overpopulation.
- ✓ Examine the Metro Denver Shelter Alliance and how their collaborative process allows the agencies to present an accurate position to the public about pet overpopulation and the relationship between resources and save rate. By establishing common definitions and benchmarks, member agencies are equipped with neutral and consistent language to use when educating the public about pet overpopulation and the resulting need for euthanasia.

**Discussion:**

Historically MDPASU, like many other municipal animal control agencies, has unfortunately been viewed as the “stepchild of local government.” Just as some citizens do not understand the role of MDPASU, neither do many elected officials and county administrative staff. MDPASU’s role in the community is misunderstood, is under funded, and is problematic but it does not have to be this way.

In recent years governmental animal control agencies provide more services related to the adoption of animals, sterilization of adopted animals, and other services that in the past were provided almost exclusively by private non-profit groups. And the public in many communities now demand these services from municipal agencies. Progressive animal care and control agencies are no longer just there to round up strays and destroy them; however, MDPASU must provide quality basic services before it tries to be all things to all people.

The term “no-kill” is such a confusing concept for many and different agencies have different definitions for it; however, The HSUS offers the following statement:

Limited-admission shelters, commonly called “no-kill” shelters, can play a helpful role within a community in helping homeless companion animals find responsible, lifelong homes; however, becoming a limited-admission shelter is not as easy as deciding not to euthanize animals.

Limited-admission shelters are distinguishable from open-admission animal shelters primarily by the fact that they choose not to euthanize animals in response to the tragic problem of companion animal overpopulation. Limited-admission animal shelters do not have to euthanize because they may accept only animals they deem adoptable and also limit the numbers of animals they will accept. Therefore, when they are full, they do not accept more animals. Limited-admission shelters keep or foster all animals they choose to admit until the animals can be placed in adoptive homes or die of natural causes (many do euthanize suffering or aggressive animals). An open-admission shelter, such as MDPASU, accepts every animal, adoptable or not, that comes to its door regardless of whether the shelter is full; however, generally these agencies must euthanize animals when they run out of space to make room for incoming animals.

The HSUS believes that every community should have an open-admission shelter whose doors are open to *all* homeless and unwanted animals. If a limited-admission shelter turns away animals in a community where no open-admission shelter exists, that animal is at risk for abandonment or some other cruel fate.

In short, an organization that chooses not to accept every animal can *supplement* an open-admission animal shelter, but it cannot *substitute* for one.

Because limited-admission shelters generally do not euthanize the animals in their care, they may spend extended amounts of time in a shelter setting. The HSUS believes that human companionship, like food, water, and shelter, is an essential need of dogs, cats, and other companion animals and that they suffer when deprived of it. Therefore, The HSUS is strongly opposed to long-term housing of companion animals in institutional settings because such conditions may deprive animals of adequate human attention. Limited-admission shelters that keep animals for long periods of time should take steps to meet this fundamental need through special enrichment programs, well regulated and monitored fostering arrangements, or other means. The HSUS believes that every dog, cat, and other domesticated companion animal deserves—and ultimately belongs in—a lifelong home with attentive, responsible caregivers.

In addition, the HSUS believes that euthanasia is the only acceptable option for certain animals and that limited-admission shelters, like all shelters, should institute policies to ensure that the suffering of these animals is ended through euthanasia when appropriate. The HSUS believes that animals who clearly present a potential hazard to animals and/or humans because of disease or severe aggression should be euthanized. Those animals that develop aggressive tendencies or suffer from severe psychological distress during prolonged confinement in a sheltering facility should also be euthanized. The HSUS further believes that animals suffering from serious injuries or painful terminal illnesses should be euthanized.

Organizations that choose not to euthanize animals, like all organizations, should strive to be forthright with the public. The HSUS strongly believes that it is unethical for a limited-admission shelter to advertise that it "does not kill animals" without also acknowledging publicly that the shelter does not accept every animal brought to it. Moreover, a limited-admission organization's fund-raising solicitations should acknowledge that the shelter's ability to choose *not* to euthanize homeless animals depends in part upon the existence of animal shelters that *do* so. To fail to be forthright about the realities of pet overpopulation is to create in the public's mind the false and



harmful perception that every animal shelter could choose to end companion animal euthanasia without disastrous animal suffering resulting from that decision.

## 12.0 HUMAN RESOURCES

### 12.1 PERSONNEL/ POLICIES

#### 12.11 STAFFING LEVELS

##### **Observations:**

The HSUS team was advised that MDPASU did not have enough staff throughout the site visit. According to the organizational chart provided to the HSUS team MDPASU had 54 full-time staff, 35 part-time staff, and seven sworn staff. Thirteen of the positions were vacant. Seven of these vacancies were for kennel staff, which amounts to one third of the necessary staff in animal care. The HSUS team was advised that these positions were frozen.

It was explained that part-time staff is not allowed to work more than 39 hours per week. The HSUS team was unable to ascertain why this many employees fall under part-time status; however, we believe it is because part-time staff do not receive the benefits that full-time staff do.

##### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ Explore making the majority of part-time employees full-time.
- ✓ Immediately fill vacant positions; especially kennel staff, since a large number of complaints are being received about animal care issues.
- ✓ Until such time as an experienced animal control director is hired, and the police leave MDPASU, no major changes in staffing should be undertaken. Any changes in staffing should be the decision of the new animal control director.

##### **Recommendations:**

It is very hard to determine what the correct staffing level is for animal care and control agencies, because no two provide identical levels of service. It is like comparing apples to oranges.

There are virtually no national guidelines for staffing except the National Animal Control Association (NACA) recommendation which states one ACO for every 16,000-18,000 of human population. Using that estimate, MDPASU would need 100+ ACOs, which is probably not realistic or affordable.

If all part-time animal care positions were made full-time and all positions were filled, The HSUS team believes this would be an adequate number to provide humane and effective animal care. In addition, making these positions full-time provides more incentive for employees to stay with the organization.

## **12.2 STAFF TURNOVER**

### **Observations:**

Based on interviews with MDPASU staff, turnover is very low, which is very uncommon in animal care and control.

### **Recommendations:**

✓ None

### **Discussion:**

There could be a number of factors for low turnover including employees recognizing the benefit of working for MDPASU and enjoying their work. Salary and fringe benefits may make the staff feel stable in an otherwise lower salaried community for similar service in the private sector. In any case this should be considered positive. Making the part-time staff full-time giving them full benefits may decrease turnover even more.

According to the Society of Animal Welfare Administrator's (SAWA) last salary and resource study, of the agencies who responded to their survey they report an average of 48% annual turnover in kennel staff, and an overall 34% turnover rate for all positions agency wide from the responding agencies.

## 13.0 FINANCIAL ISSUES

### 13.1 GENERAL FINANCIAL ISSUES

#### **Observations:**

The SOPs state that MDPASU is a self-proprietary unit which operates from fees and fines collected countywide. This revenue is partly raised by charging relinquishment and other fees, impoundments, rabies vaccinations, citations, adoption fees, and licensing fees.

The biggest issue for MDPASU related to budget is the unrealistic expectation that it should be self sufficient. It is agreed that animal care and control units should try and generate revenue from people who create the need for the services to the extent possible. However, during the last budget cycle MDPASU received approximately \$900,000.00 general fund support for the program with a 5.575 million dollar budget, plus an additional 1.5 million in unbudgeted police personnel costs. As in most animal control programs between two thirds and seventy five percent of the budget is related to salary and fringe benefit costs for employees. Miami-Dade County is close enough to these ranges that this is not an issue worth addressing.

With an estimated service population of 2,312,478 citizens, the county expenditure per capita for animal care and control is \$2.47 per person. These numbers were provided by the Miami-Dade County Office of Strategic Business Management Performance Improvement Division, which also completed a review of MDPASU.

The Animal Control Trust Fund was one million plus dollars in 2001 and is now less than \$70,000. These funds, primarily donated by citizens after Hurricane Andrew, should have been restricted and not used to subsidize operational costs. The Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General is conducting an internal audit, which should address this issue more in-depth.

#### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ When and if the police leave, part of the 1.5 million dollars they provide in unbudgeted support will have to be supplemented by general fund dollars.
- ✓ The International City County Management Association (ICMA), in a special report on animal control programs for local government, recommends that local government budget four to seven dollars annually per human inhabitant for the operation of an effective animal control program.<sup>114</sup> Using this formula Miami-Dade County is running a minimally funded operation and should strive to meet the minimum of \$4.00 per person, which equals a budget of \$9,249,912.00. The difference between current revenue generated and this figure should be achieved with general fund dollars. It should not be expected that the cost of animal control will be fully recovered by mandatory registration fees, impoundment fees, and other user fees.
- ✓ The budget for adequate service delivery for MDPASU should be prepared by an

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114 International City/County Management Association (ICMA), "Animal Control Management, A Guide for Local Governments," page 3\*

experienced animal care and control director, projecting realistic anticipated revenues that can be generated and the necessary funding difference provided from general fund dollars.

- ✓ Any additional funds donated to MDPASU need to be earmarked for projects above and beyond what the normal budgeted operating costs are. They need to go into a trust fund specifically restricted for this purpose.

**Discussion:**

The expectation that MDPASU should be self sufficient is unrealistic and currently not achieved by any governmental animal control agency in the U.S. to the knowledge of The HSUS. Animal care and control is a public health and safety service. The HSUS, while not having revenue estimates for other Miami-Dade County public health and safety departments, is confident MDPASU raises more of its cost of operation than any other county department.

Citizens will not donate to municipal animal care and control agencies unless they know their donations will not go into the general fund or be used to pay salaries of existing employees.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is the nation's largest animal-protection organization, with more than seven million constituents. The HSUS was founded in 1954 to promote the humane treatment of animals and to foster respect, understanding, and compassion for all creatures. Today our message of care and protection embraces not only the animal kingdom but also the Earth and its environment. To achieve our goals, The HSUS works through legal, educational, legislative, and investigative means. The HSUS's efforts in the United States are facilitated by our regional offices; we are not, however, affiliated with any local animal shelters or humane organizations. Our programs include those in humane education, wildlife and habitat protection, farm animals and bioethics, companion animals, and animal research issues. The HSUS's worldwide outreach is supported by our global family of affiliated organizations.

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**A REVIEW OF THE ANIMAL SERVICES UNIT  
OF THE MIAMI-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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MIAMI-DADE COUNTY  
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC BUSINESS MANAGEMENT  
PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT DIVISION

JUNE 30, 2004

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	ii
<b>SCOPE</b> .....	1
<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	1
<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	2
<b>FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	2
Organizational Placement and Funding .....	3
Service Priorities .....	6
Facilities .....	8
Community Relations and Partnerships .....	10

### ATTACHMENTS

- A. Research Contacts
- B. References
- C. Summary of Best Practices
- D. Best Practice Jurisdictions – Organizational Placement
- E. Best Practice Jurisdictions – Financial Summary
- F. Animal Care and Control – Roots and Transformation
- G. “Friends of the Shelter” Comparison
- H. Best Practice Jurisdictions – Operational Summary
- I. Advisory Board Comparison



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At the request of the County Manager, the Office of Strategic Business Management, Performance Improvement Division (OSBM/PI) conducted a review of the Animal Services Unit of the Miami-Dade Police Department. This review identified best practices and offers recommendations across four broad categories related to animal care and control: organizational placement, management, and funding; service priorities; facilities; and community relations and partnerships. Below is a summary of key findings and recommendations for each category.

### **Organizational Placement, Management, and Funding**

In Florida and around the country, animal control agencies in large cities and counties typically are independent and autonomous. Exceptions tend to be placed in departments having complimentary functions, such as neighborhood services, public health, or public safety departments. Although outsourcing may provide public relations benefits to a jurisdiction by deflecting negative public sentiment, this practice is increasingly rare and not recommended by animal care experts. OSBM/PI recommends that the Animal Services Unit be transitioned out of the Miami-Dade Police Department and established either as a standalone department or combined with complimentary neighborhood-oriented services in a new department.

All best practice jurisdictions studied are managed by a veterinarian or other seasoned animal care specialist. These professionals bring with them specialized knowledge and experience in animal care and control, including an understanding of the health and behavioral issues that are central to the animal services function. Miami-Dade County should conduct a national recruitment to identify an animal care and control professional to lead the Animal Services Unit; the Humane Society of the United States can provide assistance in this effort.

Budgeted funding for all but one of the best practice jurisdictions studied is above the minimum of \$4 per capita recommended by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). While all jurisdictions studied are supported by both ad valorem and service-related funding, the ratios of these sources vary widely from agency to agency. Relative to these jurisdictions, Miami-Dade County lies near the bottom both in terms of per capita spending and general fund support. Over the course of several years, the Animal Services Unit's budget should be brought more into line with those of its high-performing peers and with HSUS/ICMA-recommended funding levels.

### **Service Priorities**

Animal care and control agencies regarded as successful were found to have reconciled their often-competing "care" and "control" functions, balancing traditional public health and safety roles (focusing on rabies vaccination and stray animal pick-up) with a new emphasis on fostering humane population control and facilitating animal adoption. Increasingly, best practice jurisdictions work cooperatively with private sector animal welfare organizations, establishing complimentary programs and planning strategically for the future. The Animal Services Unit has made progress toward such an orientation since its transition to the Miami-Dade Police Department. A newly selected director should be tasked with continue strategically in this direction.

## **Facilities**

State of the art animal shelters, according to the International City/County Management Association, “must have the disease prevention components of a hospital, the functional capabilities of a police station, and the user-friendly appeal of a library.” Despite these requisites, many jurisdictions’ shelters, including that of Miami-Dade, are aged and ill-designed for their purpose. A dilapidated facility can harm not only public perception but the health and well-being of potentially adoptable animals. With this in mind, OSBM/PI recommends that the County develop a multi-year capital funding strategy for the Animal Services Unit to secure substantial shelter improvements.

Furthermore, most jurisdictions with state-of-the-art shelter facilities (whether newly constructed or renovated) reported strong cooperative partnerships providing considerable benefits to the capital improvement process. These partnerships vary in nature and scope, from “friends-of” organizations helping to raise funds and secure corporate sponsorships, to public/private joint ventures in pursuit of shared new sheltering and adoption center facilities. OSBM/PI will work with the Animal Services Unit in investigating and pursuing such cooperative opportunities.

## **Community Relations and Partnerships**

Well-regarded animal care and control agencies are notable for their solid community relations and strong partnerships. This study revealed no single formula among best practice jurisdictions for successful community relations; however, each jurisdiction demonstrates strength in at least one of the following areas: community engagement through advisory boards, volunteer programs, and not-for-profit “friends of” organizations; community education; and community collaboration through regional coalitions and alliances. The first of these, community engagement, is an essential starting point for the Animal Services Unit. Provided appropriate channels for contributing their time and talents, members of the public can then assist the Animal Services Unit not only with animal care but with long-range planning, fundraising, community education, and development of broader alliances and strategic partnerships throughout the animal welfare community. OSBM/PI will work with a newly appointed director to help establish a productive model for leveraging community support through volunteer programs, advisory and planning assistance, and fund raising.

## SCOPE

In January of this year, the County Manager requested that the Office of Strategic Business Management, Performance Improvement Division conduct a best practices review of the Animal Services Unit (ASU) of the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) in response to concerns raised by County Commissioners, members of the public, and the media. In addition to this internal review, the County Manager's Office and the Office of the Inspector General jointly contracted with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) in March to perform a peer review and assessment of the ASU through that organization's Animal Services Consultation Program. An HSUS final report is slated for release in mid-September.

The scope of this review is limited and intended not to overlap with that of the HSUS review, which will provide more specific procedural and policy recommendations related to the day-to-day operation and management of the ASU. This review focuses on *best practices* and provides high-level recommendations related to organizational placement, management, and funding; service priorities; facilities; and community relations and partnerships. OSBM/PI has coordinated with HSUS to minimize duplication of effort.

## BACKGROUND

The ASU is responsible for the enforcement of State law and County code related to the control and care of animals, principally Chapter 828 of the Florida Statutes and Chapter 5 of the Miami-Dade County Code. Key responsibilities under these rules are licensing of dogs; enforcing vaccination requirements for dogs and cats; protecting the public from stray and dangerous dogs; and investigating animal cruelty cases.

In addition to these enforcement functions, the ASU operates an animal shelter and clinic seven days a week, providing vaccination and spay/neuter services. This shelter is the only public animal shelter in the county; importantly, it is also the only *open-admittance* animal shelter. A satellite office and clinic located in South Dade offers licensing, vaccination, and spay/neuter services. ASU operates a Mobile Animal Care vehicle (MAC) that provides off-site spay/neuter and adoption services several days each week.

The ASU took in approximately 32,000 animals in calendar year 2003. Of those, 66% were euthanized, 14% were adopted, and 3% were redeemed by their owners. Of those animals euthanized, 86% were considered potentially adoptable. Also in calendar year 2003, the ASU responded to nearly 30,000 calls for service, performed 9,342 spay/neuter operations, removed 5,338 dead animals from public rights-of-way, and investigated 1,458 animal cruelty cases resulting in 560 warnings and issuance of 457 civil citations.

The ASU budget for fiscal year 2003-04 is \$5.575 million. The majority of this budget comes from proprietary operations, with only \$900,000 coming from the Countywide General Fund. In addition to these budgeted amounts, MDPD provides approximately \$1.5 million in unbudgeted personnel. This additional personnel consists of one civilian and 10 sworn officers, several of whom are on light duty or are relieved of duty, and supplements a staff of 81 full-time equivalents. Although the ASU is ostensibly fully proprietary, it requires consistent general fund

support. The unit's principal revenue sources are license tag sales, shelter fees, and code violation fines; additional revenue is generated through a variety of means, including lien research fees, breeders permit fees, and sales associated with the MAC. Special purpose trust funds that had combined balances of more than \$1.5 million in 2001 have been substantially depleted; these funds now total less than \$70,000.

The ASU was transferred to the Miami-Dade Police Department in October 2001 from the Miami-Dade County Public Works Department, where, under the name Animal Care and Control, it had been housed since 1982. Customer service deficiencies were cited as the reason for the transfer. MDPD appeared well-placed to assume the responsibility, with its investigative capacity (including frequent participation with Animal Care and Control in animal-related cases), established community education role, and animal care experience. Furthermore, the unit's animal control officers already were members of the Police Benevolent Association.

Following this transition, two key policy modifications were implemented, significantly reorienting the mission of the ASU. First, healthy animals at the shelter would no longer be euthanized immediately following the state-mandated holding period, but instead would remain available for adoption as long as they remained in good health. In support of this policy, all animals received health assessments and vaccinations immediately upon arrival at the shelter. The ASU sought to build partnerships with rescue groups to increase the likelihood of adoption and began advertising adoptable animals on the ASU website. Second, with the intent of tackling the county's serious animal overpopulation situation, the ASU instituted a free spay and neuter program for cats and dogs below the weight of 50 pounds; it is perhaps the nation's only fully subsidized spay/neuter program. Partnerships with local veterinarians and purchase of the Mobile Animal Care vehicle supported this ambitious program. While the revamped unit was initially hailed as a success, in recent months public support has waned while complaints against the ASU have mounted.

## **METHODOLOGY**

OSBM/PI sought first to understand the legal and cultural context of animal care and control in the United States and Florida, including traditions, trends, and emergent issues of consensus and contention. Subject matter experts assisted in identifying leading jurisdictions in the animal care and control field; ten jurisdictions (including six best practice and four peer jurisdictions) were surveyed on a broad array of topics. Nine more jurisdictions provided information concerning specific topics of interest, such as regional partnerships and advisory board structure. OSBM also conducted a site visit to the ASU shelter, interviewed current and former ASU staff, and consulted with additional County personnel on a variety of subjects. Attachments A-C provide a listing of research contacts and jurisdictions, references, and best practices by category.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This review identifies best practices and offers recommendations in four broad categories related to animal care and control: organizational placement, management, and funding; service priorities; facilities; and community relations and partnerships. In summary, OSBM/PI recommends that the ASU should be separated from the Miami-Dade Police Department,

managed by a nationally recruited animal care professional, and funded at an enhanced level. Current service priorities appear to align with best practices, but need to be implemented in a more effective and sustainable manner. The unit's facilities are in need of improvement; OSBM/PI recommends a multi-year capital funding plan that takes into account potential shelter-related partnerships. All of the above should be pursued in the context of improved community relations and partnerships, built on the foundation of community input in the form of an advisory board and community involvement in the form of a well-ordered volunteer program.

Each of the following sections and subsections presents key findings and recommendations in brief, followed by supporting information, case studies, and/or relevant historical data.

### **Organizational Placement, Management, and Funding**

OSBM/PI identified a number of factors contributing to the success of a public animal care and control agency; primary among these are organizational autonomy and flexibility, managerial expertise and experience in the animal welfare field, and budgetary strength and diversification. The ASU comes up short on each of these counts, limited operationally by MDPD policy and procedure, lacking in experienced professional leadership, and reliant on program-related revenue to perform an intensive task serving all county residents. To provide the ASU the flexibility and resources it requires, OSBM/PI recommends that the ASU be transitioned out of MDPD, that an animal care professional be recruited to lead the unit, and that the unit's budget gradually be restructured and enhanced to meet certain nationally recognized funding formulas.

#### *Organizational Placement*

In Florida and around the country, animal control agencies in large cities and counties typically are independent and autonomous. Exceptions tend to be placed in departments having complimentary functions, such as neighborhood services, public health, or broad, multidisciplinary public safety departments. Although outsourcing may provide public relations benefits to a jurisdiction by deflecting negative public sentiment, this practice is increasingly rare and not recommended by animal care experts. OSBM/PI recommends that the unit be transitioned out of the MDPD and established either as a standalone department or combined with complimentary neighborhood-oriented services in a new department. (See Attachment D: Best Practice Jurisdictions – Organizational Placement.)

Typically, according to subject matter experts, animal care and control agencies are located within police departments only in small to mid-size cities; few successful models of such arrangements are available. While certain benefits may presently accrue to the ASU as a result of its placement within MDPD – such as direct access to police officers for arrest purposes, additional staff rotations, and the support of a large, well-resourced department – these appear to be outweighed by a number of drawbacks.

In accordance with MDPD policy, managerial positions in the ASU must be staffed by sworn police officers. This contributes to elevated staffing costs, removes officers from direct police work, and restricts opportunities for positioning civilian animal care professionals at high levels within the organization. MDPD policy regarding training has further negatively impacted the

unit. Pursuant to Chapter 828 of the Florida Statutes, Animal Control Officers must complete 40 hours of Florida Animal Control Association-approved training prior to issuing citations; MDPD's unwillingness for its personnel to receive civilian training has resulted in a deficiency of certified Animal Control Officers at the ASU. Above all, experts in the field underscore the need for clear distinction between the missions of law enforcement and animal care and control (and the potential of law enforcement agencies to blur the two), as well as the critical importance of professional knowledge of animal care and shelter management, which often is lacking in law enforcement agencies.

OSBM/PI's recommendation to transition the unit out of MDPD would require significant adjustments to compensate for the loss of centralized services now provided to the ASU through various support bureaus. However, potential benefits of such a transition include greater flexibility in asserting the unique identity of the ASU, a more-equal footing with private animal welfare organizations, and a position of appropriate weight and significance from which to provide community leadership and to recruit key personnel.

In approaching a transition, special consideration must be given to staffing, not only to meet needs associated with realigning support functions, but to compensate for the loss of light-duty and relieved-of-duty officers now supplementing the ASU staff. Furthermore, particular attention would have to be given to ensuring that adjustments would not negatively impact the unit's already strained record-keeping systems, which have been a persistent source of public complaint. A staged, carefully planned transition would also be required to avoid potential supervisory issues relating to uniformed and civilian reporting.

OSBM/PI does not recommend outsourcing the animal services function at this time. Although outsourcing may provide public relations benefits to a jurisdiction by deflecting negative public sentiment, this practice is increasingly rare and not recommended by animal care experts. The public/private partnership it establishes shifts the burden of animal care and control without necessarily contributing to a sustainable improvement in services. At worst, such an arrangement could impede opportunities for building a broad network of partnerships toward a comprehensive countywide animal welfare strategy. Experts point out that jurisdictions often fail to reap the savings benefits anticipated from outsourcing while experiencing a decline in service levels and continued, and even increased, public complaint. In view of an unfortunate tradition of antagonism between private animal welfare organizations and public animal care and control agencies, successful partnerships have been particularly difficult to effect. Successful relationships are built primarily at the point of overlapping interests: humane population control and animal adoption.

Furthermore, no candidate organization with sufficient capacity or inclination has been identified at this time. The most likely candidate, Miami-Dade's largest private animal welfare organization, the Humane Society of Greater Miami (HSGM), revised its policies in 2002 to cease accepting stray animals and to become a limited-admittance shelter focused on adoptable animals. This policy is in conflict with the statutory animal care and control responsibilities assigned to ASU.

While complete privatization is not recommended, certain aspects of animal care and control do lend themselves somewhat toward outsourcing. The sheltering of potentially adoptable animals is one such aspect, provided that a willing partner with sufficient resources is available. As will be addressed under *Facilities*, development of shared facilities within the context of a strategic public-private partnership may be a superior alternative to a simple contractual service relationship.

### *Management*

All best practice jurisdictions studied are managed by a veterinarian or other seasoned animal care specialist. These professionals bring with them specialized knowledge and experience in animal care and control, including an understanding of the health and temperament issues central to the animal services function. OSBM/PI recommends that the County conduct a national recruitment to identify an animal care professional to manage the Animal Services Unit. Assistance in identifying effective recruitment mechanisms can be provided by the Humane Society of the United States.

Though a number of enhancements have been implemented at the ASU with a fair degree of success since its transition to MDPD, the unit has been managed by sworn police officers during this period, none notable for extensive knowledge or expertise in the field of animal care and control. The ASU would strongly benefit from the direction of a professional with expertise and experience in animal care. Such expertise and experience could help to allay the type of concerns presently being expressed by the general public and the animal welfare community; most importantly, they should considerably enhance the quality of care to animals provided by the ASU.

### *Funding*

Budgeted funding for all but one of the best practice jurisdictions studied, and for half of the peer jurisdictions studied, is above the minimum of \$4 per capita recommended by the HSUS. While all jurisdictions are supported by both ad valorem and service-related funding, the ratios of these sources vary widely from agency to agency. Relative to these jurisdictions, Miami-Dade County lies near the bottom both in terms of per capita spending and general fund support. Over the course of several years, the Animal Services Unit's budget should be brought into line with those of its high-performing peers and with HSUS recommendations; this can be accomplished by garnering additional general fund support, establishing a more productive relationship with community advocates, and developing new funding mechanisms, including, if feasible, corporate sponsorship. (See Attachment E: Best Practice Jurisdictions – Financial Summary.)

The principal revenue sources of the ASU are license tag sales, shelter fees, and code violation fines; additional revenue is generated through lien research fees, breeders permit fees, and sales associated with the Mobile Animal Care vehicle. Although the ASU is ostensibly fully proprietary, for the past several years it has failed to generate sufficient revenue to cover its costs. The unit's current year budget of \$5.575 million includes a subsidy from the Countywide General Fund of \$900,000. Further, the unit is supported by an additional \$1.5 million in unbudgeted MDPD personnel assigned to the unit. Special purpose trust funds that had combined

balances of more than \$1.5 million in 2001 have been substantially depleted; these funds now total less than \$70,000.

Animal care and control experts note that attempts to rely on fines and user fees alone for funding can become self-defeating. Such reliance can pit the various functions of an animal care and control agency against one another – for instance, increases in licensing and adoption fees mitigates against licensing compliance and adoption rates. According to ICMA, general fund support for animal control services appropriately compliments the broad public purpose of animal control agencies, whereby not only pet owners but the general public benefits.

The ASU could benefit from a diversification of its financial base as well. While the ASU does presently have access to private donations through its trust funds, the promotion and use of these funds should be reviewed and updated. In addition to direct contributions, a number of jurisdictions receive public support through affiliated not-for-profit “friends of the shelter” organizations; some of these, such as Friends of San Francisco Animal Care and Control, also assist with securing corporate sponsorships. The potential for such opportunities should be investigated by the ASU. (See Attachment F: “Friends of the Shelter” Comparison.)

### **Service Priorities**

While each of the best practice jurisdictions studied continues to place importance on addressing traditional public health and safety concerns through rabies vaccination and pick-up of strays, they also have demonstrated an increasingly collaborative and proactive approach that also focuses on fostering humane population control and facilitating animal adoption. The current orientation and service priorities of the ASU are reasonably well aligned with progressive practices, but more can be done in this area.

### *Reconciling Animal “Care” and “Control”*

Animal care and control agencies regarded as successful were found to have reconciled their often-competing “care” and “control” functions, balancing traditional public health and safety roles (focusing on rabies vaccination and stray animal pick-up) with a new emphasis on fostering humane population control and facilitating animal adoption. Under MDPD, the ASU has largely succeeded in effecting this reconciliation. The unit should continue in its efforts to decrease euthanasia, increase adoption, and reduce overpopulation of companion animals countywide as it seeks to rebuild public confidence. (See Attachment G: Best Practice Jurisdictions – Operational Summary.)

The cultural context of public sector animal control has changed over the past several decades, paralleling changes in societal views toward and relationships with animals – particularly domestic or “companion” animals. In jurisdictions recognized as progressive, public and private sector animal agencies work closely with one another to develop a common language (forging consensus regarding such polarizing terms as “adoptable” and “no kill”), establish complimentary policies and programs, and plan strategically. Attachment H provides a brief discussion of the roots and transformation of the animal care and control field in the United States.



Research shows that investment in programs balancing animal “care” and “control” can provide not only immediate public health and public relations benefits but also long-term financial savings to a jurisdiction. According to ICMA, “An effective animal control program not only saves cities and counties on present costs – by protecting citizens from dangerous dogs, for example – but also helps reduce the costs of animal control in the future. A city that impounds and euthanizes 4,000 animals in 2001...but does not promote spaying and neutering will probably still euthanize at least 4,000 animals a year in 2010. A city that...institutes differential licensing, funds a subsidized spay/neuter program, and has an educational program for both adults and children will likely euthanize significantly fewer animals in 2010 and save on a host of other animal-related costs as well.”

Following its placement within the Miami-Dade Police Department, the Animal Services Unit implemented several strategies that can be categorized as best practices, the most striking of these being an effort to dramatically reduce euthanasia at the Miami-Dade shelter and the establishment of a program to provide free spay/neuter services to all County residents. These ambitious programs were met with strong positive response, both locally and nationally. However, they only have met with partial success; euthanasia rates for adoptable animals remain high, and the spay/neuter program is limited to animals weighing less than 50 pounds.

#### *Eliminating Euthanasia through Public/Private Cooperation*

Best practice jurisdictions work cooperatively with private sector animal welfare organizations toward shared goals related to eliminating the need for euthanasia of adoptable animals by fostering humane population control and promoting adoption. With this in mind, the Animal Services Unit should focus on building common ground and cooperative relationships with other animal welfare organizations throughout the county and region.

Adversarial relationships between *open*-admittance public animal shelters with high euthanization rates and *limited*-admittance private shelters with high adoption rates create an atmosphere antithetical to cooperation, despite the fact that both organizations might share similar values and goals. Public and private-sector animal care professionals agree that humane population control focusing on sterilization rather than euthanasia is critical to the success of any animal care and control effort. Animal advocates, humane societies, veterinary associations, and professional associations such as the Florida Animal Control Association (FACA) all support controls and limitations on the breeding of animals, citing wide-ranging benefits to both the public and to animals, including fewer impoundments, reduced sheltering expenses, and less unnecessary euthanasia. Two statewide programs provide supporting evidence: A New Hampshire program generated a 38% decrease in euthanasia within three years of establishment, while in New Jersey, a statewide spay/neuter program is attributed for a 29% drop in impoundments and a 10% drop in animal euthanasia between 1984 and 1999.

A number of communities have created excellent models of public/private cooperation toward reducing euthanasia. In Colorado, the Metro Denver Shelter Alliance has crafted mutually agreeable criteria, standards, and goals related to the placement of adoptable animals. In California, the Long Beach Bureau of Animal Control and the Los Angeles Society for the

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals jointly raised funds for and constructed a pet adoption facility. Maricopa County, Arizona's New Hope program matches difficult-to-place animals that otherwise would be euthanized with partner agencies that work to place the animals in permanent homes. And Hillsborough County's No More Homeless Pets Coalition approaches the issue from multiple angles, with task forces promoting spay/neuter programming, innovative adoption outreach efforts, and community education simultaneously.

## **Facilities**

Poorly functioning animal shelter facilities harm both resident animals and public perception of the operating agency. Similarly, a lack of coordination between public and private animal welfare agencies or conflicting policies and strategies between agencies, particularly related to animal sheltering, contributes to public skepticism and detracts from animal welfare. Miami-Dade County should develop a multi-year capital funding strategy to secure substantial improvements for the ASU's facilities that align with modern facility design principles. These improvements should be done in combination with joint planning and an investigation of potential community and corporate partnerships, including the possibility of developing shared adoption facilities, so as to maximize the benefit of this investment.

### *Shelter Design*

State of the art animal shelters, according to the International City/County Management Association, "must have the disease prevention components of a hospital, the functional capabilities of a police station, and the user-friendly appeal of a library." Despite these requisites, many jurisdictions' shelters, including that of Miami-Dade, are aged and ill-designed for their purpose, and are far from meeting current standards and expectations. A dilapidated facility can harm not only public perception but the health and well-being of potentially adoptable animals. With this in mind, OSBM/PI recommends that the County develop a multi-year capital funding strategy for the Animal Services Unit to secure substantial shelter improvements.

The ASU shelter, now more than 40 years old, is insufficiently equipped to handle the approximately 32,000 animals entering the facility each year. As many as 400 animals per day reside at the shelter, and with far more animals arriving at the shelter than being redeemed, rescued, or adopted out, overcrowding persistently threatens. As Miami-Dade County's only open-admittance animal shelter, surrendered animals cannot be turned away. When space at the shelter runs out, euthanasia of healthy animals becomes necessary.

Not only is the shelter too small for the number of animals it typically houses, but it suffers from a number of deficiencies related to its design and condition. The facility lacks sufficient quarantine areas to prevent the spread of disease among resident animals. Also promoting the spread of disease are substandard ventilation and drainage systems; few areas of the shelter are well-insulated or air-conditioned, while trench drains cutting across kennels facilitate cross-contamination. Further negatively impacting the ventilation system, as well as computer and phone systems, is an over-taxed electrical system.

Efforts to improve the shelter's functionality as it relates to visitors – particularly potential adopters – are ongoing, but continued improvement is needed. Current standards of animal shelter design call for dedicated adoption-related spaces (if not separate facilities altogether), both for the housing of adoptable animals and for the welcoming and serving of potential adopters. For an agency seeking to increase adoption and eliminate unnecessary euthanasia, as is the case with the ASU, quality adoption-related facilities are particularly necessary.

“A new or renovated facility,” according to *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “offers plenty of opportunities, enabling a shelter to present a better image to the public, implement new programs and policies, improve animal health with better isolation and separation procedures, reduce animal stress, and raise adoption rates.” And ICMA notes that “Many citizens visit shelters to adopt new pets or search for lost pets, and their experiences at safe, efficient, well-designed animal control facilities contribute to their impressions of their government.” Improved shelter facilities would provide multiple benefits to the Animal Services Unit and the animals in its care.

### *Sheltering Partnerships*

Given sufficient funding, several alternatives are available for addressing the ASU's shelter-related needs, ranging from moderate to major rehabilitation of the present facility, to construction of a second (or replacement) shelter or adoption center. In addition, a South Dade satellite facility presently provides licensing, vaccinations, and spay/neuter services, and a mobile clinic and adoption vehicle is in service four days per week; these resources could be expanded, relocated, or reassigned as appropriate. But to focus solely on physical shelter improvements without also considering potentially complimentary community partnerships may diminish the value of a major capital investment.

Nathan Winograd, executive director of the Tompkins County (Ithaca, New York) SPCA warns against prioritizing facilities over relationships: “What confuses a lot of people in this movement, what stops them before they start is the completely false idea that to end the killing of healthy and sick homeless pets, you need to start with big bucks and big shelters. That helps, it helps a lot, but it is putting the cart before the horse. And that's not so great when our cart and our horse have a long way to go. To reach our goals, we much first focus our energies, *not* on building a shelter, but on rebuilding our relationship with the community.”

Many jurisdictions that have been successful in securing state-of-the-art shelter facilities (whether newly constructed or renovated) have done so largely with the support of cooperative partnerships. These partnerships vary in nature and scope, from “friends-of” organizations helping to raise funds and secure corporate sponsorships, to public/private joint ventures in pursuit of shared new sheltering and adoption center facilities.

In Dallas, for instance, the Metroplex Animal Coalition recently led a successful campaign to secure \$11.5 million in bond funds for a new animal shelter for the City of Dallas. Long Beach, California recently partnered with SPCA-LA to construct a new animal shelter and adoption center; this “companion animal village” features “an interactive display of adoptable animals, cat colonies with screened porches allowing indoor/outdoor access, state-of-the-art indoor/outdoor dog kennels and a multipurpose education center.”

Also pursuing shared facilities are Reno, Nevada and San Diego, California. The Reno partnership brings together the Nevada Humane Society, the Cities of Reno and Sparks, and Washoe County to provide consolidated countywide services and to construct a new shelter with approved bond funding of \$10.75 million and an additional \$2.5 million from the Nevada Humane Society. The San Diego partnership brings together the San Diego Humane Society, the City of San Diego, and the San Diego County Department of Animal Control to construct a new “animal welfare complex” to be jointly operated by San Diego County and the San Diego Humane Society; the facility “will serve as a model of efficiency and ethical animal care as it allows each agency to meet its primary goals of operating facilities that keep animals healthy, helping pets develop behavior that is desirable, and creating an environment that people want to visit and from which they look forward to adopting.”

Partnerships with the community clearly have the potential to bring both financial and operational benefits. Joint strategic planning, sharing and coordination of limited physical and human resources, and collaborative and creative fundraising partnerships can result not only in more efficient provision of services but a more effective approach to animal care and control – with fewer surrenders and impoundments, less unnecessary euthanasia, and an increase in adoptions. Genuine, mutually beneficial partnerships focused on goals such as these should be a part of the ASU’s facilities planning efforts; OSBM/PI will work with a newly-appointed Animal Services Unit director in investigating and pursuing such cooperative opportunities.

### **Community Relations and Partnerships**

Well-regarded animal care and control agencies are notable for their solid community relations and strong partnerships. This study revealed no single formula among best practice jurisdictions for successful community relations; however, each jurisdiction demonstrates strength in at least one of the following areas: *community engagement* through advisory boards, volunteer programs, and not-for-profit “friends of” organizations; *community education*; and *community collaboration* through local and regional coalitions and alliances. It is strongly recommended that the Animal Services Unit seek to deepen its community relations by developing and facilitating meaningful avenues of involvement for members of the public.

OSBM/PI recommends that a new ASU manager explore establishing a community advisory board. The board could contribute to the effectiveness of the ASU in one of several ways, including educating the community, developing partnerships, and fundraising. In view of the ASU’s two trust funds into which public contributions are collected, a financial oversight role (focusing on the use of trust fund dollars) may also be appropriate. The new manager should also work to develop a structured volunteer program once sufficient stability and the capacity to appropriately orient and engage volunteers has been established.

### *Community Engagement*

OSBM/PI studied several jurisdictions that are supported by advisory boards, sometimes referred to as *animal control commissions*. These boards assist with functions such as policy and program formulation, long-range planning, and research and drafting of legislative items. Most

are comprised of members appointed by local elected officials, while some combine elected official appointees with representatives appointed by local community organizations such as humane societies or veterinary associations. The rules guiding many of those boards studied direct that members meet specific qualifications, such as legal, veterinary, or financial expertise; ICMA suggests inclusion of a health department representative, the chief of police, a veterinarian, humane organization representatives, and citizen members, including at least one individual with legal expertise. (See Attachment I: Advisory Board Comparison.)

While some animal control commissions are granted binding authority over their respective agencies, ICMA recommends that oversight boards be limited to an advisory capacity, lending unique insight and expertise to staff, and providing meaningful and constructive input into the work process.

Community engagement is essential for the Animal Services Unit. Beyond simply educating the public, *engaging* the public in the work of animal care and control has shown to bring substantial benefits to communities and to animals. One means of community engagement is the employment of volunteers. All best practices organizations surveyed are well supported by volunteers in the day-to-day management of their programs and shelter operations. According to HSUS, such programs should include a broad range of components, including recruitment, screening, orientation, training, and recognition of volunteers; creation of job descriptions and a volunteer manual; and even creation of a volunteer contract to ensure clarity regarding the roles and obligations of both volunteer and agency. Among the many functions with which volunteers can assist are animal care (grooming, training, socialization, foster care, veterinary assistance), clerical and customer service (filing, reception/counter/retail assistance, adoption counseling), and special events (educational speaking engagements, community adoption outreaches, fundraisers).

Many jurisdictions' animal care and control organizations are supported by not-for-profit, volunteer "friends of" organizations that provide fundraising and community education assistance, advocacy, and other services. Those agencies supported by "friends of the shelter" organizations benefit from a dedicated, organized body of advocates channeling volunteers, funding, and in-kind contributions of materials and supplies.

### *Community Education*

Interviews with best practices organizations highlighted the value of a strong community education program; many organizations contacted reported dedicated community education staff. ICMA affirms that "[n]o animal control program is complete without a well-planned outreach program. The success of every other aspect of animal control – from pet registration to leash laws to sterilization programs – depends on the cooperation of an informed public." Particularly in light of Miami-Dade's demographics, cultural diversity, educational attainment, and language barriers, the Animal Services Unit should strengthen its focus on community education to the greatest extent possible.

The focus of community education programs varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but common themes include the importance and benefits of spaying and neutering pets, promoting

adoption, and providing a variety of assistance to pet owners including training services, behavioral tips, and advice directed at minimizing the surrender of pets. The community education programs of many jurisdictions are well supported by a cadre of volunteers and are given direction and guidance by advisory boards; some jurisdictions pursue educational efforts jointly with partner organizations to bring issues of significance and mutual interest to the broadest possible audience.

Examples of successful community education programs include that of Fort Wayne, Indiana, where since 1985 a staff educator has worked with local schools, both in classroom presentations and in developing teaching materials for broad dissemination. A ten-member Humane Education Advisory Council provides public input and guidance into the program. The San Francisco Animal Care and Control department also provides educational programming for schoolchildren, with emphasis on animal care and safety, while Palm Beach County's educational programs focus on responsible pet ownership. Maricopa County, Arizona offers a free animal behavior helpline, where pet owners can share questions with animal care experts, as well as an on-line library of fact sheets on a variety of animal behavior and animal care-related issues.

### *Community Collaboration*

As discussed in *Service Priorities*, best practice jurisdictions provide excellent models of local and regional cooperation and collaboration between public and private-sector shelters, animal control agencies, and animal welfare organizations. Compound benefits arise from successful partnerships of this type, from immediate improvements in public confidence to long-term financial benefits associated with the elimination of duplication of services, stabilization of the area's animal population, and increased responsibility on the part of pet owners and the public at large. Here in South Florida, there already exists an animal welfare coalition, the Quad-County Animal Welfare Director's Association, that, although dormant of late, offers an opportunity for renewed regional cooperation and collaboration. A new ASU manager should take every opportunity to engage in this and any other such collaborative opportunities that may arise.

One of the most notable collaborative efforts nationwide is that of the Metro Denver Shelter Alliance. This alliance brings together a number of animal welfare organizations, including the Dumb Friends League (a Denver-area humane society), the Denver Municipal Animal Shelter/Animal Control Division of the Department of Environmental Health, the Denver Area Veterinary Medical Society, and the Humane Society of Boulder Valley. Following Denver's lead, animal welfare organizations in Albuquerque, New Mexico are moving forward to create a similar coalition, and representatives of the Denver coalition have been invited to visit Phoenix, Arizona to share their expertise.

In Dallas, the Metroplex Animal Coalition brings together nearly two-dozen animal welfare organizations from throughout the Texas counties of Dallas, Tarrant, Collin, and Denton "to reduce the killing of dogs and cats in municipal animal shelters and humane societies." The coalition pursues this objective through sponsorship of such activities and services as a public education campaign promoting adoption and free spay/neuter services for low-income pet owners. The coalition recently led a successful campaign to secure bond funds for a new animal shelter for the City of Dallas.

The bottom-line goal of all animal welfare coalitions, like that of Dallas's Metroplex, is to eliminate unnecessary euthanasia of animals. According to *Animal Sheltering* magazine, roadblocks lie in the path of even the most well-meaning organizations as they strive together toward this goal. Cooperation can turn to "bickering among organizations and agencies about where and how to seek funding; which programs and services are most likely to net results; and how to measure the progress toward the ultimate goal. Use of language – including terms like 'no kill' and 'adoptable' – has often been a major point of dispute, causing rifts between organizations and within communities that can last for years." The success of Denver's alliance lies in the persistence of its members in pressing beyond such roadblocks, in forging a common language, and in remaining focused on the big picture.

Such community-wide commitments to eliminate unnecessary euthanasia generally find their roots in an agreement between two key players – for instance, between a community's primary humane society or SPCA and its public animal care and control agency – and then develop into an increasingly broad coalition. Public agencies rarely step up to the plate first. The 1994 "adoption pact" between the San Francisco SPCA and the San Francisco Department of Animal Care & Control that guaranteed against euthanizing any of the city's adoptable dogs or cats followed several years of pressure from the SPCA. Similarly, the Denver alliance owes its existence to the leadership of the Denver Dumb Friends League. Nothing precludes, however, the public sector from taking a leadership role; in 2002 the Mayor's Alliance for New York City's Animals was formed with the aim of eliminating euthanasia in the city's animal shelters, and in 1999 Maricopa County Animal Care and Control opened "the first municipal no-kill shelter [a limited-admittance adoption facility complimenting its two traditional open-admittance shelters] in the United States".

In recent years, Miami-Dade County likewise showed initiative and sought to provide leadership in a local "no kill" movement. However, absent a number of supporting factors, the ASU lost credibility as this effort faltered. Working collaboratively through such vehicles as the Quad-County Animal Welfare Director's Association, the ASU should seek to identify common ground and build strong partnerships toward realistic, achievable goals to improve the quality of care for animals throughout the community.

## ATTACHMENT A. RESEARCH CONTACTS

### Subject Matter Experts

- Ms. Connie Howard, former Director of Shelter Services, American Humane Association
- Ms. Krista Hughes, Assistant Manager, HSUS Animal Services Consultation
- Ms. Lois Kostroski, Executive Director, Florida Animal Control Association
- Mr. John Mays, Executive Director, National Animal Control Association
- Ms. Bert Troughton, Director, ASPCA Imagine Humane Unit
- Mr. Steven Zawistowski, Senior Vice President, ASPCA

### Best Practices Survey

#### *Best Practices Jurisdiction and Organizations*

- Humane Society of Boulder Valley (Colorado)
- Maricopa County (Arizona) Animal Care and Control
- Nebraska Humane Society
- Pinellas County (Florida) Animal Services Department
- San Diego County (California) Animal Services Department
- San Francisco (California) Animal Care and Control Department

#### *Florida Jurisdictions and Organizations*

- Broward County Animal Care and Regulation Division
- Hillsborough County Department of Animal Services
- Humane Society of Greater Miami
- Palm Beach County Animal Care and Control Division

### Additional Research and Interviews

#### *Advisory Boards*

- Fort Wayne (Indiana) Animal Control Commission
- Fort Wayne Humane Education Advisory Council
- Hillsborough County Animal Advisory Committee
- Orange County (California) Animal Control Advisory Board
- Palm Beach County Animal Care & Control Advisory Board
- San Francisco Commission of Animal Control & Welfare



## **Additional Research and Interviews, *continued***

### *Collaborative Partnerships*

- Dallas (Texas) Metroplex Animal Coalition
- Long Beach (California)/SPCA “Companion Animal Village” partnership
- Mayor’s Alliance for New York City’s Animals
- Metro Denver (Colorado) Shelter Alliance
- Quad County Animal Welfare Director’s Association (South Florida)
- Reno (Nevada)/Humane Society shelter partnership

### *“Friends of the Shelter” Organizations*

- Friends of San Francisco Animal Care and Control
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## **ATTACHMENT C. SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICES**

### **Spay/Neuter Services**

- SPOT Program – Low cost vouchers for pet owners to receive shots, spay and neuter services (Broward County)
- Free spay and neutering services for low income citizens (Pinellas County)
- Spay and neuter rebate coupons to service-area residents and through veterinarians participating in subsidized spay/neuter program (San Diego Department of Animal Services)
- 200 free spays/neuters are performed one day every 3 months; in addition 5 spays/neuters are performed at a subsidized rate everyday (Maricopa County)

### **Placement Partners**

- Works with Broward Humane Society on adoption efforts (Broward County)
- Agreements with local pet stores to adopt cats (Pinellas County)
- Over 80 placement partners (i.e. private animal shelters and rescue groups); accounted for approximately 35% of all adoptions in FY 2002-2003 (San Diego Department of Animal Services)
- New Hope Program – Rescue groups adopt animals that have been at the shelter for a long time and keep them in no-kill facilities until they are adopted (Maricopa County)
- Offsite adoption centers at Petsmart and Pet Supermarket (Palm Beach County)

### **Advisory Committees**

- Board-appointed Animal Advisory Committee to assist in formulating policies, procedures, fee and fine structures and ordinance improvements (Hillsborough County)
- Member of the Animal Care and Control Advisory Board for the County (Palm Beach County)
- Board-appointed Commission of Animal Control and Welfare; addresses issues of animal abuse and cruelty and reports to the Board of Supervisors for the County (San Francisco Animal Care and Control)

### **Mobile Units**

- Mobile Spay/Neuter Unit (Palm Beach County)
- Mobile Surgical Unit (Pinellas County)
- Mobile Adoption Unit (Maricopa County)

## **Education**

- Employees cross-train between the organizations and spend time at each facility (Broward County Animal Care & Regulation and Broward County Humane Society)
- Provides education program for kids in schools and teaches animal safety and care (San Francisco Animal Care and Control)
- Attends monthly meeting with other animal services organizations (Humane Society of Boulder Valley)
- Staff visits other shelters (Boulder Valley)
- Minimum of 12 hours of training for staff (Boulder Valley)
- Invites smaller shelters to attend guest speakers/continuing education events (Nebraska Humane Society)
- Animal Control Officers are NACA trained (Nebraska Humane Society)
- Provided humane education to 11,000 students in 2003/2004 school year (Humane Society of Greater Miami)
- Creating improved educational programs to promote responsible pet ownership (Palm Beach County)

## **Fundraising**

- Second Chance Fund – Special fund to cover the veterinary costs for treatment beyond what typically can be provided (Humane Society of Greater Miami)
- Special fundraising events – Walk for the Animals, Saks Bal Harbour event, Pawsitively Humane auxiliary club (Humane Society of Greater Miami)
- Mandatory fees for bite complaints and citations (Palm Beach County)
- Partner 501(c)(3) conducts fundraising events (San Francisco Animal Care and Control and Maricopa County)
- Humane Society-operated thrift/retail store (Boulder Valley)

## **Adoption and Pet Ownership Services**

- Conducts home visits for “at risk” animals (Palm Beach County)
- 30 day return and care for any adopted animal (Palm Beach County)
- Volunteer-staffed mentoring program to help people and animals adjust after adoptions (Palm Beach County)
- Free obedience training for all adopted animals (Palm Beach County)
- Information kiosks planned for high traffic areas (Palm Beach County)
- All animals put on internet and updated every 15 minutes as impounded (Palm Beach County)
- Dog training classes (Boulder Valley)
- Careful screening of potential adopters to create “perfect matches” (Humane Society of Greater Miami)
- Rabies clinics targeting in low-income areas (Broward County)
- Free animal food for low-income pet owners (Maricopa County)
- Maintains directory of animal-friendly housing and assists pet owners in finding housing where pets are allowed (Maricopa County)

**ATTACHMENT D. BEST PRACTICE JURISDICTIONS –  
ORGANIZATIONAL PLACEMENT**

**Best Practice Jurisdictions**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Organizational Placement</b>
Pinellas County Animal Services	Standalone department
San Diego County Animal Services	Standalone department
San Francisco Animal Care and Control	Standalone department
Omaha/Sarpy County, Nebraska	Outsourced (Nebraska Humane Society)
Boulder, Colorado	Outsourced (Humane Society of Boulder Valley)
Maricopa County Animal Care and Control	Standalone department

**Peer Jurisdictions**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Organizational Placement</b>
Miami-Dade County Animal Services Unit	Division of Police Department
Broward County Animal Care & Regulation	Division of Community Services Department
Hillsborough County Animal Services	Standalone department
Palm Beach County Animal Care & Control	Division of Public Safety Department

**ATTACHMENT E. BEST PRACTICE JURISDICTIONS – FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

**Best Practice Jurisdictions**

Jurisdiction	Budget	Percent General Fund	Population	Per Capita
Maricopa County Animal Care and Control	\$8,750,000	1%	3,259,093	\$2.68
San Diego County Animal Services	\$11,394,423	16%	2,813,833	\$4.05
Pinellas County Animal Services	\$3,900,000	64%	921,000	\$4.23
San Francisco Animal Care and Control	\$3,400,000	85%	776,733	\$4.38

**Peer Jurisdictions**

Jurisdiction	Budget	Percent General Fund	Population	Per Capita
Broward County Animal Care & Regulation	\$3,313,556	17%	1,623,018	\$2.04
Miami-Dade County Animal Services Unit	\$5,575,000	16%	2,253,362	\$2.47
Palm Beach County Animal Care & Control	\$7,200,000	70%	1,131,184	\$6.37
Hillsborough County Animal Services	\$6,041,796	63%	998,948	\$6.05

Note: The International City/County Management Association recommends that animal care and control be funded at a level of \$4 per capita, based on service area population.

## ATTACHMENT F. "FRIENDS OF THE SHELTER" COMPARISON

### **Friends of San Francisco Animal Care and Control**

*Established:* 2000 by volunteers within the department

*Classification:* 501(c)(3) corporation

*Board Members:* 5 regular members; up to 8 members permitted

*Function:* Provides support to San Francisco Animal Care and Control in animal care, adoption placement, and public education; raises funds and recruits corporate sponsors to supplement limited budgeted funding

*Notes:*

- Board members are current and former shelter volunteers
- Department offers suggestions as to how organization can spend money raised; but organization makes final call on use of funds
- Has close contact with department director and deputy director on projects
- Department reviews publications, issues and other matters the organization supports because the Department's name is part of the organization's name (publications may include a disclaimer noting the organization is distinct from the department)

### **Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation**

*Established:* 1984 by volunteers within the department

*Classification:* 501(c)(3) corporation

*Board Members:* Currently between 7 and 9; up to 20 permitted

*Function:* Raises funds to enhance care and increase adoption of unwanted animals

*Notes:*

- Board includes two active volunteers and three veterinarians
- Board meets 3 to 4 times per year
- Foundation created based on idea of a former Animal Care and Control Director
- Donors are more generous toward foundation than County; County refers most donors to the foundation
- Foundation raises \$300,000 – 350,000 per year
- Foundation would like more input in the running of the shelter

## **Friends of Long Beach Animals**

*Established:* 1990 by shelter volunteers

*Classification:* 501(c)(3) corporation

*Board Members:* 9 board members

*Function:* Promotion of the humane treatment and care of animals through the education of the public as to pet owner responsibilities as well as increasing awareness and supporting laws and legislation that make abuse of animals a serious crime.

*Notes:*

- About 800 paying members/volunteers
- No employees – run entirely by volunteers
- Provides additional funds and assistance to Long Beach Animal Control
- County does not consult them on matters concerning animal services
- Developed an outreach program in 1999 called SNIP (Spay/Neuter Incentive Program) targeting low-income, high-volume, pet over-populated areas
- Developed humane education classes and ran them in local parks
- Pays certain veterinarian bills for stray animals in the care of Long Beach Animal Control on a case-by-case basis
- Over the past 5 ½ years paid \$199,695 for the spaying/neutering of 4,000 cats, 2,549 dogs, 50 rabbits, and one hamster (6,600 animals in total since July 1, 1998)

**ATTACHMENT G. BEST PRACTICE JURISDICTIONS –  
 OPERATIONAL SUMMARY**

**ADOPTION**

**Best Practice Jurisdictions**

Jurisdiction	Intakes	Adoptions	Adoption %
Boulder, Colorado	8,163	6,185	76%
San Francisco Animal Care and Control	9,877	6,356	64%
Omaha/Sarpy County, Nebraska	29,998	13,938	46%
Maricopa County Animal Care and Control	57,699	25,996	45%
Pinellas County Animal Services	17,481	5,716	33%
San Diego County Animal Services	29,644	8,923	30%

**Peer Jurisdictions**

Jurisdiction	Intakes	Adoptions	Adoption %
Palm Beach County Animal Care & Control	23,084	5,021	22%
Broward County Animal Care & Regulation	18,945	4,014	21%
Miami-Dade County Animal Services Unit	32,136	4,422	14%
Hillsborough County Animal Services	31,638	2,618	8%

## EUTHANIZATION

### Best Practice Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Intakes	Euthanizations	Euthanization %
Pinellas County Animal Services	17,481	12,808	73%
Maricopa County Animal Care and Control	57,699	29,691	51%
Omaha/Sarpy County, Nebraska	29,998	14,300	48%
San Diego County Animal Services	29,644	10,006	34%
San Francisco Animal Care and Control	9,877	2,943	30%
Boulder, Colorado	8,163	1,103	14%

### Peer Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Intakes	Euthanizations	Euthanization %
Hillsborough County Animal Services	31,638	26,206	83%
Miami-Dade County Animal Services Unit	32,136	21,205	66%
Broward County Animal Care & Regulation	18,945	12,448	66%
Palm Beach County Animal Care & Control	23,084	15,043	65%



## **ATTACHMENT H. ANIMAL CARE & CONTROL – ROOTS AND TRANSFORMATION**

The role of the public animal control agency in the United States was established in the 1940s, legislated into existence at the state level primarily in response to a serious and persistent threat of rabies, with dogs as the principal carriers. In 1938 rabies became a nationally reportable disease; the decline in cases documented nationally throughout the 1940s is attributed to the success of the new animal control (pick-up of stray and dangerous dogs) and vaccination programs of that decade. According to data compiled in 2001 by the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of human deaths attributable to rabies declined from more than 100 to fewer than three per year over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

During these early decades of animal control in Miami-Dade County, stray dog pick-up and management of the “dog pound” was the purview of municipalities. In 1955, the City of Miami and several other area municipalities entered into a contract for these services with the Humane Society of Greater Miami (HSGM), a private animal welfare organization established in 1936. Soon after, in 1958, Miami-Dade County adopted an ordinance requiring rabies vaccination and licensing of all dogs and prohibiting dogs from wandering unleashed on public streets. The County began providing animal services in unincorporated areas in 1960, while HSGM continued to provide contractual animal control services to cities such as Miami until 1972. Today, the ASU is the sole agency, public or private, responsible for animal control in Miami-Dade County.

Meanwhile, long before public health concerns spurred the rise of public animal control functions, private animal welfare organizations were actively working on behalf of animals, with particular focus on preventing animal cruelty. The oldest humane organization in United States, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), was established in 1866 in New York City. Seven years later, the first federal law protecting animals against cruelty, the Twenty-Eight Hour Law, was enacted. Cruelty prevention societies soon were established in cities across the county, such as the San Francisco SPCA in 1868. In these early years, much of the focus was on work animals such as horses. These organizations advocated for anti-cruelty legislation, operated ambulance services for injured horses and other animals, developed education programs, and built shelters for stray and injured animals.

While the primary mission of these organizations remained centered on animal welfare, many humane and cruelty-prevention societies, like the Humane Society of Greater Miami, got into the animal control business in partnership with local government. Many of those organizations involved in public partnership animal sheltering prior to the enactment of animal control laws sooner or later found themselves at cross purposes. According to HSGM, the adoption of Miami-Dade’s animal control ordinance in 1958 “resulted in a staggering 20 percent increase in the number of dogs surrendered for adoption to HSGM by owners who claimed they could not afford the inoculations and license fees.” Organizations established to protect animals found it necessary to euthanize animals in growing numbers due to shelter overcrowding, which in turn caused discontent among members and donors. Consequently, in recent decades relations between public and private animal agencies became increasingly strained.

The 1970s brought into focus a national companion animal overpopulation crisis. Considerably more dogs and cats were being born each day than were wanted by responsible owners, shelters were filling up, and euthanasia rates continued their rise. In 1973 the ASPCA introduced a requirement that all animals adopted out of its New York City shelters be spayed or neutered; many states now have enacted laws replicating this policy. The Humane Society of the United States promoted a programmatic formula based on legislation, education, and sterilization (LES) intended to stem the population explosion. By offering training to shelter employees around the country and through new publications such as *Animal Sheltering* magazine, the HSUS was successful in establishing the LES formula in communities nationwide. In an attempt to quantify the situation, a newly-formed National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy began conducting nationwide surveys of shelter animals in 1993. The following year saw the development of the nation's first statewide subsidized spay/neuter program in New Jersey.

Communities were slow, however, to recognize that while local and state law addressed canine-related issues in some depth, cats were on their way to becoming the country's most popular pet (overtaking dogs in the 1980s), yet with very little legislation either for their control or their protection. The "dog pounds" of yesteryear are now populated with large numbers of cats as well. While new low-cost spay/neuter programs have proven popular and successful, there appear to be many points on which to disagree. Many towns and cities around the country now are torn by disputes between supporters and opponents cat registration, of leash laws for cats, of the maintenance of feral cat communities, and of limitations on the number of cats (and other animals) per household.

Changing trends, challenges, and conflicts such as these all point toward the need for fresh, flexible approaches to animal care and control. While each of the best practice jurisdictions studied as part of this review continues to place importance on addressing public health concerns through rabies vaccination and pick-up of strays, all have demonstrated a more global, collaborative, and proactive approach to animal care and control that also focuses on fostering humane population control and facilitating animal adoption.

## **ATTACHMENT I. ADVISORY BOARD COMPARISON**

### **Hillsborough County – Animal Advisory Committee**

*Number of Members:* 10

*Members appointed by:* 7 by Board of County Commissioners, 2 by Hillsborough County Veterinary Medical Society, 1 by Humane Society of Tampa Bay

*Term of appointment:* 4 years (maximum two consecutive terms)

*Qualifications:* N.A.

*Reports to:* Animal Services Department, County Administrator, BOCC

*Offices:* Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary

*Meetings:* Monthly

*Financial oversight:* None

### **Orange County (CA) – Animal Control Advisory Board**

*Number of Members:* 7

*Members appointed by:* Board of Supervisors

*Term of appointment:* 2 years (may be reappointed to one second term)

*Qualifications:* Animal interest, veterinarian, general public (3 district reps, 2 at large)

*Reports to:* Director of Animal Control

*Offices:* Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary

*Meetings:* Monthly

*Financial oversight:* None

### **City of Fort Wayne – Fort Wayne Animal Control Commission**

*Number of Members:* 5

*Members appointed by:* 3 by Mayor, 2 by Common Council

*Term of appointment:* 3 years (no term limits)

*Qualifications:* “Interest and knowledge of animal care”

*Reports to:* Director of Public Safety

*Offices:* Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary

*Meetings:* Monthly

*Financial oversight:* Administers Animal Care Fund

### **Palm Beach County – Animal Care and Control Advisory Board**

*Number of Members:* 9

*Members appointed by:* Each County Commissioner appoints one member

*Term of appointment:* Indefinite

*Qualifications:* N.A.

*Reports to:* Director of Animal Care and Control Division

*Offices:*

*Meetings:* Monthly

*Financial oversight:* None

### **San Francisco – Commission of Animal Control and Welfare**

*Number of Members:* 10

*Members appointed by:* 7 appointed by Board of Supervisors' Rules Committee; non-voting members represent Animal Control, Police, Health, and Park & Recreation Departments

*Term of appointment:* 2 years

*Qualifications:* "Interest and experience in animal matters"; one licensed veterinarian

*Reports to:* San Francisco Board of Supervisors

*Offices:* Chair, Vice-Chair

*Meetings:* Monthly

*Financial oversight:* None