

Board Briefing on Animal Services Audit

Recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners

To better protect the health and safety of people, the Board of County Commissioners should

1. Establish a policy that provides parameters for when it is safe to re-home animals.
2. Support Animal Services in getting access to criminal background information.
3. Provide Animal Services with the funding to increase staffing as needed to meet minimum national standards for providing care to shelter animals.

Recommendations to Multnomah County Animal Services Management

To improve record keeping and data quality,

1. Conduct manual checks to ensure that there is not conflicting information in the animal records.
2. Ensure that all euthanized animals are recorded in both the drug logs and the animal records database.
3. The new animal database should
 - o Include mandatory fields that must be completed for every animal.
 - o Produce reports that are accessible online by the public.

To better protect the health and safety of animals in the shelter,

4. Comprehensively study total staffing needs, and advocate to the Board of County Commissioners for increased staffing as necessary to help protect the health of the animals in shelter care, including
 - o Increasing staffing for cleaning and feeding to meet National Animal Care & Control Association guidelines.
 - o Ensuring adequate staffing to provide the shelter's animals with daily enrichment and consistently prompt behavioral health care.
5. Evaluate existing operating procedures and ensure that employees know how to access and use them.
6. Develop and implement standard operating procedures for areas that lack them.
7. Implement a formal training program for new staff as well as ongoing training.
8. Maintain documentation of all training.
9. Remediate the health and safety issues that Risk Management identified in its Safety Site Visit report as soon as possible.

10. Remediate the cooling issues in all dog kennels as soon as possible.
11. Continue to improve housing for individual cats by compartmentalizing housing and increasing each housing unit's space.
12. Provide for separation of animal species throughout each animal's shelter stay.
13. Establish contingency housing to ensure that the shelter can accept all animals brought to it by County residents and Field Services' Animal Control Officers.
14. Provide a comprehensive enrichment program to all cats and dogs in every section of the shelter to ensure each animal receives daily social contact, mental stimulation, and physical activity.
15. Provide cats and dogs at the shelter for longer than 1 week with enrichment that increases as their length of stay increases.
16. Maintain documentation of all enrichment provided, and track this information to ensure all animals receive enrichment consistently.
17. Institute a daily rounds program that includes, at a minimum,
 - A rounds team involving people from different shelter units,
 - Daily decision-making that is clear and specific, and
 - Documentation of rounds' observations, decisions, and actions.

To better protect the health and safety of people,

18. Provide ongoing training to employees and volunteers on workplace safety issues, ranging from managing difficult conversations to workplace violence scenarios.
19. Provide shelter employees, particularly management employees, with training on County personnel rules, which require that the workplace be respectful, professional, safe, accepting of cultural differences, and free from inappropriate or abusive workplace behavior.
20. Document all behavioral concerns and discuss them with potential owners before adoption.
21. Clearly document what information is disclosed about an animal at the animal's adoption or transfer.

To improve planning and measurement,

22. Planning documents should include:

- Clear and specific project mission that fits into the larger strategic goals
- Sufficient and appropriate staffing
- Staff training
- Realistic and measurable goals
- Cost/benefit analysis

Scope and Methodology

The scope for this audit comprised all Multnomah County Animal Services (MCAS) operations and functions. We primarily focused on fiscal years 2014 and 2015 (7/1/2013 through 6/30/2015), with data review including calendar years 2010 through 2014.

Our audit objectives were to:

1. Describe the county's animal welfare ecosystem.
2. Verify live release rate reports and assess their compliance with the Asilomar Accords.
3. Determine whether MCAS shelter practices protect the health, safety and welfare of shelter animals, staff, volunteers, and members of the public.
4. Assess MCAS Field Services operations for compliance with codes, policies, and national standards.

To accomplish these objectives we:

- Conducted over 100 interviews with management, staff, volunteers, animal welfare organizations, and the public
- Visited the Animal Shelter over 20 times and carefully monitored the status of animals
- Visited the Lombard Adoption Center several times
- Went on ride-alongs with Animal Control Officers
- Emailed surveys to staff and volunteers
- Studied County Code, state laws, and national standards
- Analyzed thousands of animal records

To assess the reliability of the data elements needed to answer the engagement objectives, we performed electronic testing of required data elements and interviewed agency officials knowledgeable about the data. The results of our electronic testing showed that data elements contained some incorrect and missing data. Therefore, we determined that the data were partially reliable for the purposes of this report. Thus, references to this data include a warning about its potential errors.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings, and conclusions based on our audit objective.

We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions.