

2007-2008 Grand Jury Report
“Is Orange County Going to the Dogs?”
Response to the Findings and Recommendations

Response to the Findings

F-1 **Limited Access Shelters:** Some cities using limited-access shelters are sending animals deemed unadoptable to the County Animal Shelter, thereby shifting the cost and responsibility for care and euthanasia to the County if the animals are not adopted.

Response: *Agrees with the finding.*

OC Animal Care provides contract animal sheltering services to 22 Orange County cities. The remaining 12 cities have built their own city animal shelter or contract with another city for animal shelter services. Each year, OC Animal Care receives animals from each of the 12 non-contract cities, the vast majority of which are surrendered by their owners. In FY 2007-08, the cost to board and care for a dog or cat was \$33.00 per day and the cost to euthanize a dog or cat was \$34.00. Owners that surrender their animal for immediate euthanasia due to a medical condition that results in the animal being deemed irremediably suffering or for observed aggression are charged \$34.00, covering the cost of the euthanasia and disposal. Owners surrendering their animals for other reasons are charged \$79.00, which includes the owner surrender processing fee of \$29.00 and two days of board and care at \$25.00 per day.

State law requires that an owner-surrendered animal must be held for a minimum of two days if placed up for adoption and four days if euthanized. If an owner-surrendered animal is euthanized, the minimum cost by the County is \$82.00, which is two days of board and care at \$33.00 per day and the daily \$8.00 board and care charge for the first two days. If the animal is deemed adoptable, the County and contract cities bear the cost of board and care at \$33.00 for each day, after the first two days paid for by the owner, the animal remains at the shelter and all additional costs for medical care and adoption efforts.

F-2 **County Shelter Animal Population:** The Orange County Animal County Shelter is faced with a growing animal population problem that exceeds the capacity of the County Shelter and its ability to place those animals in homes.

Response: *Agrees with the finding.*

Over the past four years, OC Animal Care has experienced year-to-year increases and decreases in dog and cat impounds. In 2004, OC Animal Care impounded 25,340 dogs and cats. In 2005, a total of 27,449 dogs and cats were

impounded resulting in an 8% increase. However, in 2006, impounds totaled 26,729 dogs and cats, representing a decrease of 7.6%. Impounds increased by 4% to 27,874 dogs and cats in 2007. Over this same four-year period, OC Animal Care increased adoptions by 30% from 8,806 in 2004 to 11,501 in 2007.

- F-3** **AB 1634—Health Pets Act:** The County Board of Supervisors has not taken a position on AB 1634; legislation which if passed could alleviate many future animal overpopulation problems.

Response: Agrees with the finding.

In June 2007, OC Animal Care staff briefed Board of Supervisors' staff regarding AB 1634 – Healthy Pets Act, which requires the mandatory spaying and neutering of all dogs and cats, other than for animals that have received an exemption. At the time of briefing, the bill was still undergoing numerous amendments and in September 2007, was made a two-year bill. Although recently reintroduced, the bill continues to undergo significant amendments.

Response to the Recommendations

- R-1** **Limited Access Shelters:** The cities utilizing limited-access shelters adopt an open-shelter policy for all dogs and cats within their city limits or reimburse the County Shelter for the expense of boarding and euthanizing animals from their cities.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis.

OC Animal Care does not receive any reimbursement for services provided to the residents of the 12 non-contract cities. OC Animal Care will work with the City Managers Financial and Operational Advisory Board to conduct an analysis on this recommendation and the results will be forthcoming. The Advisory Board is scheduled to meet on September 25, 2008. At this meeting, all responses from the 12 non-contract cities will be reviewed and discussed. Based on their decisions regarding admission policies, the Advisory Board will evaluate options related to non-contract cities reimbursing the County for boarding and euthanizing animals from their cities. By December 1, 2008, the Advisory Board will have completed the evaluation and will have a response for this recommendation.

- R-2** **County Shelter Animal Population:** The OC Animal Care Department prepare and present to the Board of Supervisors a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance to reduce animal overpopulation and to ease the strain on the capacity of the County Shelter.

Response: *This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The Board of Supervisors has approved a pilot Spay/Neuter Voucher and Feral Cat Trap-Neuter-Release programs as part of the Fiscal Year 2008-09 Budget with an initial County investment of \$50,000 for each program. OC Animal Care continues to enhance its responsible pet owner education, which includes classroom presentations, shelter tours, government access channel advertisements, and a spay/neuter educational brochure on the homepage of OC Animal Care website.

The Board of Supervisors has for many years approved a non-sterilized dog license fee that is substantially higher than the sterilized dog license fee to further encourage dog owners to spay and neuter their dogs. Currently, an unsterilized dog license fee is \$100.00 for a twelve-month period. A sterilized dog license fee is \$24.00 for a twelve-month period. Cat licensing in the County of Orange is optional and available through OC Animal Care.

In response to the Grand Jury Report, the City Managers Financial and Operational Advisory Board has expressed interest in examining methods to achieve full cost recovery for the unsterilized dog license fee.

R-3 **AB 1634--Health Pets Act:** The County Board of Supervisors examine and consider supporting State Assembly Bill AB 1634 to assist in alleviating many of Orange County's animal overpopulation problems.

Response: *This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The County of Orange has reviewed AB 1634 (Levine). The bill has been amended eight times and is subject to additional changes. Over three hundred organizations and individuals support AB 1634, and over three hundred organizations and individuals oppose AB 1634. The intended and unintended consequences of this bill require further study; thus, the County of Orange declines to take a position on the proposal.