ANIMAL SERVICES CONSULTATION PROGRAM

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES

San Luis Obispo, CA

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

Site Visit – March 2008

Report Delivery – June 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1.0 TASK FORCE..... 1

2.0 SHELTER MAINTENANCE..... 3

2.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW
2.2 BUILDING/GROUNDS/LANDSCAPING
2.3 EXTERNAL AND DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE
2.4 PARKING AREAS/WALKWAYS
2.5 WASTE DISPOSAL/STORAGE
2.6 BUILDING SECURITY
2.7 GENERAL SAFETY ISSUES/OSHA
2.8 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES/DISASTER PREPAREDNESS
2.9 FACILITY MAINTENANCE/ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

3.0 SHELTER INTERIOR DESIGN AND LAYOUT .. 18

3.1 HUMAN SERVICE AREAS
3.11 RECEPTION/LOBBY
3.12 OFFICES/DISPATCH AREAS
3.13 HANDICAPPED ACCESS
3.14 INTERNAL SIGNAGE
3.2 ANIMAL SERVICE AREAS
3.21 VENTILATION/TEMPERATURE (HVAC)
3.22 NIGHT SURRENDER
3.23 DOG HOUSING
3.24 CAT HOUSING
3.25 SMALL ANIMAL/EXOTIC HOUSING
3.26 WILDLIFE HOUSING
3.27 FARM ANIMAL/EQUINE HOUSING
3.28 ANIMAL EXAMINATON AND MEDICAL ROOM

4.0 SHELTER OPERATIONS 31
- **4.1 GENERAL OPERATIONS**
  - **4.11 HOURS OF OPERATION**
  - **4.12 TELEPHONE SYSTEM**
  - **4.13 COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT**
  - **4.14 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**
  - **4.15 GENERAL RECORD-KEEPING/SHELTER STATISTICS**
  - **4.16 INCOMING ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION AND PROCEDURES**
  - **4.17 LOST AND FOUND PROCEDURE**
- **4.2 ANIMAL HANDLING**
- **4.3 ANIMAL CARE**
  - **4.31 DOG CARE**
  - **4.32 CAT CARE**
  - **4.33 SMALL ANIMAL/EXOTIC CARE**
  - **4.34 WILDLIFE CARE**
  - **4.35 FARM ANIMAL/EQUINE CARE**

5.0 VETERINARY/HEALTH ISSUES..... 54
- **5.1 VETERINARY SERVICES/CONTRACTS/RELATIONS**
- **5.2 GENERAL SHELTER MEDICINE**
- **5.3 INCOMING ANIMAL EXAMINATIONS**
- **5.4 VACCINATION PROTOCOLS**
- **5.5 STERILIZATION SERVICES**
- **5.6 DISEASE CONTROL AND SANITATION**
- **5.7 ISOLATION AND SEPARATION**
- **5.8 FEEDING PROTOCOLS**
- **5.9 ZOONOSES**
  - **5.91 HEALTH DEPARTMENT RELATIONS/BITE CASE PROCESSING**

6.0 EUTHANASIA..... 84
- **6.1 SELECTION CRITERIA**
- **6.2 EUTHANASIA PAPERWORK**
- **6.3 EUTHANASIA METHODS**
- **6.4 CARCASS DISPOSAL**
- **6.5 EUTHANASIA ROOM/ENVIRONMENT**
- **6.6 EUTHANASIA TECHNICIANS/TRAINING**

7.0 ADOPTIONS..... 100
- **7.1 SELECTION CRITERIA/BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENTS**
- **7.2 ADOPTION PROCESS AND POLICIES**
- **7.3 ADOPTION FOLLOW-UP/COMPLIANCE**
- **7.4 COMMUNITY ADOPTION PARTNERS**
- **7.5 FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT**

8.0 COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS..... 114
- **8.1 PROMOTION/SOCIAL MARKETING**
- **8.2 VOLUNTEERS**
- **8.3 HUMANE EDUCATION/OTHER PROGRAMS**
- **8.4 RELATIONS WITH AREA ANIMAL SHELTERS/ ORGANIZATIONS/COMMUNITY INTEREST GROUPS**
- **8.5 CLIENT SERVICE**
- **8.6 WEB SITE**
- **8.7 FERAL CATS**

9.0 FIELD SERVICES/ANIMAL CONTROL 135
- **9.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW**
- **9.2 OFFICER SAFETY**
  - **9.21 OPERATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND FIELD OFFICER TRAINING**
  - **9.22 COMMUNICATIONS/DISPATCH**
  - **9.23 EQUIPMENT/VEHICLES/UNIFORMS**

9.24 LAW ENFORCEMENT BACKUP AND RELATIONS
9.3 EMERGENCIES/AFTER HOURS
9.4 JOB DESCRIPTIONS (ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS/FIELD STAFF)
9.5 FORMS/RECORDKEEPING
9.6 OFFICER ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES
9.7 ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCE REVIEW
9.8 LICENSING
9.9 DOGFIGHTING
9.10 INVESTIGATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT
9.11 FIELD SERVICES/ANIMAL CONTROL CONTRACTS
9.12 WILDLIFE ISSUES

10.0 GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP..... 166
10.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW
10.2 ARTICULATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL VISION, MISSION, AND PLANNING
10.3 STABILITY AND LEADERSHIP
10.4 INFRASTRUCTURE & SUPPORT SYSTEMS
10.5 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
10.6 OPERATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND TRAINING
10.7 COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS SYSTEM
10.8 ANIMAL CONTROL ADVISORY BOARD/COMMITTEE
10.9 DEFINITION AND RECOGNITION OF AGENCY'S ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

11.0 HUMAN RESOURCES..... 180

11.1 PERSONNEL/POLICIES

11.11 STAFFING LEVELS

11.12 JOB DESCRIPTIONS (NOT INCLUDING ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS/FIELD STAFF)

11.13 STAFF UNIFORMS (NOT INCLUDING ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS/FIELD STAFF)

11.14 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

11.15 STAFF GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

11.2 STAFF TURNOVER

11.3 HIRING/FIRING/DISIPLINARY PROCEDURES

12.0 GENERAL FINANCIAL ISSUES 187

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 June 2007, The HSUS provided a proposal for a comprehensive review and evaluation of San Luis Obispo County Animal Services current operations, services, and programs with an eye to the future. A site visit was conducted March 18–20, 2008.

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, for a wide range of issues. To assist San Luis Obispo County, The HSUS utilized a team with specific expertise within the field of animal care and control. The team for this evaluation included the following HSUS representatives:

Dr. Janet Chipperfield, HSUS Consultant
Shelter Operations

Katherine McGowan, HSUS Consultant
Shelter Facilities and Operations

Keane Menefee, HSUS Consultant
Field Services and Animal Control

Mike Oswald, HSUS Consultant
Management and Administration

Beau Archer, HSUS Shelter Services Coordinator, Animal Services Consultation Program
Site Visit Coordinator/Report Development

Carolyn Machowski, **HSUS Manager, Animal Services Consultation Program**
Assistant Site Visit Coordinator/Report Development

Dawn Lauer, HSUS Outreach Assistant, Companion Animals
Animal Services Consultation Intern

Along with this 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 a plus sign (+) have been included and consist of

books, CD-ROMs, brochures, and catalogs. Footnotes marked “CR” are simply credit references and are not included. Footnotes with neither a (+) or “CR” are found in the reference materials binder. All photographs are at the end of the report.

Notes:

The HSUS team would like to applaud San Luis Obispo County for taking the step toward improving services for both the people and animals in San Luis Obispo and the surrounding communities. We are optimistic that positive change will result from the collaboration of those overseeing, working for, and working with San Luis Obispo County Animal Services.

Included in this report are many recommendations, some requiring substantial change, which we understand can be overwhelming. Initially, we suggest that you review the report several times and then form a task force in order to prioritize the recommendations. (See section 1.0, Task Force) Some of the recommendations can be implemented immediately with just a change in procedure, while others may take months or even years. Indeed, it will be an ongoing process.

The recommendations are derived from the expertise of The HSUS team as well as HSUS guidelines, and they are based on what we believe are best practices in the sheltering field. The recommendations in this report have been carefully chosen for San Luis Obispo based on the current facilities. While this report has been written specifically for San Luis Obispo County, some of the recommendations are those we would make for any agency. For example, every animal shelter should ensure 100 percent spay/neuter compliance for adopted animals.

The HSUS team has attempted to make recommendations that are feasible; however, unbeknownst to The HSUS team, San Luis Obispo County may have already tried some of them in the past, and some may not be feasible with available resources. In short, The HSUS team does not imply that every recommendation must be implemented to be successful.

The observations included in this report are based on information gathered by The HSUS team. The team:

- observed the staff and the facility during the site visit,
- held discussions with staff, volunteers, government officials, and other area animal organization representatives,
- reviewed information provided to The HSUS team such as standard operating procedures (SOPs), forms, statistics, etc., and
- solicited and reviewed public comment via press releases to local media.

The HSUS has tried to ensure the integrity of the observations and the information used to derive them, but recognizes that some of the statements made to The HSUS team may not have been completely accurate.

By their 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 was at the time of the site visit, and they should be used as a departure point to where management wants the agency 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 to support positive organizational change, *not* a basis to criticize past performance. Indeed, weighing the costs and benefits of the recommendations can provide a positive motivational influence towards change.

Please note that hereafter the San Luis Obispo County Animal Services will be referred to as "SLOCAS." The HSUS would like to thank the people involved with the SLOCAS and San Luis Obispo County for their assistance and cooperation with The HSUS 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 we remain available as a continued resource. With that in mind, The HSUS respectfully presents the following report.

1.0 TASK FORCE

Once a task force[1] is developed to review this document and create a working plan of action, the task force should recommend priorities and action items and specify due dates. The document the task force develops then becomes the SLOCAS' working document to implement the recommendations in this report. The structure of the task force and the people selected for it are critical.

This process will help the SLOCAS prioritize and plan for the future both in response to this report and with respect to other potential changes and plans for the SLOCAS. This process has been used successfully with other agencies that have received evaluations.

The San Luis Obispo County officials and SLOCAS management, in concert with the task force, should prioritize and weigh each recommendation against available resources and decide whether that recommendation is to be implemented as-is or used as a departure point for what is most realistic for them.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Put together a committee of no more than seven members who 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:
  - ➢ Shelter staff representatives
  - ➢ Members of the advisory board
  - ➢ A veterinarian with a strong shelter medicine background

  Other members may include:

  - ➢ An individual with legal strength
  - ➢ Public health officials
  - ➢ County budget officials
  - ➢ Community members with expertise in short-term and strategic planning
  - ➢ Those interested in animal protection, but without personal agendas
- ✓ If the agenda does not move forward due to disagreement, strongly consider hiring a professional facilitator.
- ✓ Create written guidelines outlining expected behavior and conduct for task force members. These guidelines should include stipulations for missed meetings.
- ✓ Convey the task force's responsibilities, which include:
  - ➢ reviewing the report

---

[1] Task force matrix example

- ➢ prioritizing each recommendation using a standardized form to rate each recommendation by expected financial/labor cost, time, potential benefits, etc. The recommendations can be divided up among the task force members, which will allow the agency, through the task force, to evaluate the recommendations as they relate to each other.

- ✓ Develop a reporting mechanism so the recommendations of the task force can be presented and SLOCAS can begin to implement the changes.

- ✓ A memorandum of understanding (MOU) should be created that outlines the above sections and the role and outcome of the task force. 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.

2.0 SHELTER MAINTENANCE

2.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

SLOCAS is located on County land at 885 Oklahoma Avenue in San Luis Obispo off of Cabrillo Highway. The shelter neighbors the Honor Farm, the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Department (SLOCSD), and Woods Humane Society (WHS). The animal shelter was constructed in 1971.

2.2 BUILDING/GROUNDS/LANDSCAPING

Observations:
Landscaping services were provided by San Luis Obispo County (SLOC) through their Honor Farm inmate work program. The grounds were clean and inviting and the landscape appeared well-maintained and provided a professional image for SLOCAS. The building was also neat in appearance and the front of the building was free from debris or trash. The area around the back of the building was not well kept; there were several items lined up against the back fence, against the building, and in the fenced crematorium area. For more on this topic, see section 2.5, Waste Disposal/Storage.

Recommendations:

- ✓ SLOCAS is commended for providing welcoming, well-landscaped, and maintained grounds which offer a positive and professional first impression to visitors.

- ✓ Remove all unnecessary items being stored alongside the back fence line, against the building, and in the crematorium area.

2.3 EXTERNAL AND DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Observations:
There were clearly-marked, municipal street signs about one half mile in either direction off the main highway. The signs were well-maintained and professional in appearance. The entry of the SLOCAS parking lot displayed a sign that read "San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office Animal Services Div. 885 Oklahoma Ave." A concrete block half-wall in front of the shelter, to the left of the Lobby entry read "San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Department Animal Services Division." The "Animal Services Division" text was larger than the other text.

The signage was somewhat confusing as it appeared to primarily identify the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Department (SLOCSD) rather than "animal services." The left Lobby entrance glass door displayed the SLOCSD logo and the right glass door displayed slightly smaller text that read "Animal Services Division." A large plaque to the right of the Lobby entrance read "Impounded animals and customers with animals see kennelman at information window." There was a lack of signage such as "Adoptions," "Lost and Found,"

or "Admitting;" therefore, visitors first entered the building and inquired with the administrative staff rather than the Kennel Office window. The hours of operation signage consisted of laminated text on the glass to the right of the double door entry to the Lobby. The signage for the night surrender area was located to the far left of the building on a brown sign that was propped up against a tree. *(See photo 1)* There was no signage addressing after hours' emergency care of companion animals or wildlife.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create a logo for SLOCAS. For improved branding purposes, a logo should be used in all signage to help distinguish SLOCAS from the SLOCSD.
- ✓ Prominently place the term "Animal Services" on the entrance doors so that visitors can easily discern that they have arrived at the right location, rather than mistaking the facility for a substation of the SLOCSD.
- ✓ Implement clear, directional signage for "Adoptions," "Lost and Found," and "Admitting" in order to direct visitors to the appropriate location rather than relying upon staff to redirect clients who have entered the wrong part of the building.
- ✓ Replace the large plaque to the right of the Lobby entry using a more professional design and a clearer message.
- ✓ Create and install a more prominent sign (ideally illuminated) for the night surrender area during closed hours. The night surrender area should also be noted at the front door so that visitors know to take the animal to the left side of the building.[2]
- ✓ Post signage on the front door directing clients to the nearest emergency clinic, including phone number and address, since companion animal emergencies often occur during closed hours.
- ✓ Post signage regarding the nearest wildlife rehabilitation center and/or emergency contact information for farm animals because wildlife and farm animal issues may arise during the night.

Discussion:

Animal shelters are often the first place people seek when they need advice about any animal-related situation. Exterior signage should be designed and installed with the intention of welcoming and accommodating shelter visitors. Visitors should be able to find the shelter and access the service they desire simply by following signage. Visitors to animal shelters are oftentimes in distress due to an animal-related emergency or concern. Providing clear, prominent signage that immediately directs the visitor to the appropriate location will greatly enhance the level of client service. Relying upon staff and/or volunteers as a main method of directing visitors is not efficient.

---

[2] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Night-Drop Kennels for Animals: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," March–April 2007+

2.4 PARKING AREAS/WALKWAYS

Observations:
The parking lots were paved and in good condition. There was a public parking area along the front of the shelter and a separate parking area to the right of the building designated for employees. The public parking consisted of 14 parking spaces and one handicapped space, and the employee parking consisted of 12 parking spaces. There were two parking lot lights poles for the public parking. The employee lot was approximately two thirds full during the site visit and also had two parking lot lights poles. The rear of the building had a paved lot with nine parking spaces for animal control vehicles and vans. There was one light in the rear parking area. A ramp was available at the front of the building for persons with disabilities to access the facility, but no fire zones were marked.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Mark the fire zones so that visitors, employees, or volunteers do not block the area designated for fire and rescue vehicles.
- ✓ Consider installation of a secured fence to keep animal control vehicles and employee cars separate from public access for heightened security and safety.
- ✓ Consider installing additional lights for the animal control vehicle parking lot.
- ✓ Check with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines which require that two accessible parking spaces are available in parking lots with 25–50 spaces. Since the employee parking lot is separated, two spaces may not be required.

2.5 WASTE DISPOSAL/STORAGE

Observations:
At the time of the HSUS site visit, the SLOCAS Personnel Policy and Protocol Manual had not been distributed or implemented; therefore, employees, inmates, and volunteers could not be held accountable for procedural accuracy or expectations. The team was given a copy of this draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) manual for review. The draft SOP did not outline how to manage waste or comply with storage protocols.

A sharps container was observed in the Kennel Office and another was mounted to the wall in the Medical/Euthanasia room. According to staff, kennelworkers were responsible for emptying both containers and transporting contents to the Honor Farm for final disposal in larger containers.

Open containers of food were observed in the food storage room several times during the site visit. Staff mentioned during the site visit that there had been a rodent infestation that was mostly under control. There were several signs around the shelter posted on 8 ½ x 11" sheets of paper which stated, “Please help control rodent influx into the kennel! By following these guidelines you can do your part to help keep the mouse population down.” The guidelines outlined several ways in which staff, volunteers, or inmates should handle animal and human

food in the Kennel and Cat Rooms. Many of these guidelines were not being followed, such as not picking up spilled animal food and not leaving food in empty animal cages.

Storage consisted of two sheds in the rear of the building as well as a few closets throughout the building. The bulk of food was kept in one of the storage sheds and litter was usually kept in the shed and in an old refrigerator no longer in traditional use. During the site visit the litter was stored outdoors between the freezer and the old refrigerator. Staff explained that the old refrigerator was storing cages and crates that belonged to a citizen charged with animal hoarding in 2006. The floor of the shed that stored the food was littered with an abundance of dry food pellets. *(See photos 2–4)*

There were four washing machines, two dryers, two desks, a hospital gurney, and other miscellaneous equipment strewn around the crematorium area. *(See photos 5–9)* Along the fence behind the shelter sat several items such as cage banks, humane traps, barrels, old cabinets, and buckets. *(See photos 10–13)*

The dumpster was located in the rear of the building and no odor emanated at the time of site visit; however, the lid was open exposing contents and allowing access for rodents and vermin. According to staff, the dumpster was emptied twice weekly (Tuesdays and Fridays).

Recommendations:

- ✓ Implement SOPs[3] for waste disposal and storage in compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations and best practices for employee, volunteer, and visitor safety.

- ✓ Immediately implement precautions for food storage that requires secure covering of all food containers to help minimize rodent infestation.

- ✓ Put in place a rotation system in the food storage areas to reduce the risk of spoilage and infestation.[4]

- ✓ Remove the cage banks, hospital gurney, crates, and other items from the crematorium area. By removing these items rodents will have fewer hiding places.

- ✓ Store the washing machines, crates, carriers, desks, chairs, buckets, equipment, and cages in one of the storage sheds since storage is minimal within the shelter.

- ✓ Create inventories of items in storage. An inventory is especially critical to emergency preparedness and an evacuation plan. Inventories are also required when any kind of audit and/or review are completed. Having inventories of equipment and items in storage would be beneficial during the budgeting process as well as understanding if there was loss of resources.

---

[3] HSUS SOP template CD-ROM+

[4] "The Humaneness of Rodent Pest Control," G. Mason and K.E. Littin

- ✓ Review the items that need to be stored in the shelter and storage sheds. Designate space for needed items and do not accumulate obsolete items.

Discussion:
Good storage habits will save time and expense in searching for what is needed. Staff will benefit from having what they need on hand in an environment that is clean and orderly. Do not be afraid to throw out what you may never use and to create open, available space that does not have to be occupied simply because it is there. Items usually accumulate because there is no plan; once a plan has been implemented, adequate storage capacity and storage areas will not be cluttered or overfilled.

Most animal shelters across the country encounter rodent issues from time to time. Through proactive, careful practices, an infestation can easily be remedied. A consistent and standard procedure for food and supply storage will assist in eradicating this problem.

2.6 BUILDING SECURITY

Observations:
Article II, Section A, Building Security and Access, in the draft SOP covered the following: 1) Exterior Doors and Gates, 2) Close Down, 3) Public Access Areas, 4) Restricted access areas, 5) Loitering, and 6) Parking.

The Kennel Office had a window through which staff and clients communicated. Staff allowed clients entry through a door buzzer system. Clients were not always assisted or accompanied by staff after being buzzed in, which left the shelter open to compromise.

According to staff interviews, each employee had the entrance code to the building alarm and a key. The security system was HSN; staff said reports were not generated due to cost.

Several animal rooms and offices inside the facility were protected with a keyless system. The system required the use of a numeric code which was issued to staff members and inmates. The team was also told that inmates had taken liberties during their work release time to steal syringes, needles, and other supplies. Some inmates had taken advantage of the public accessibility of the shelter to meet up with family members, friends, and spouses/partners.

Gamecocks that were confiscated from an investigation were housed in the back of the facility in an area that could have been easily compromised. There was an open gate between the public access area and the area where the gamecocks were kept, allowing the public easy access. An individual could also easily slip through the back fence. *(See photo 14)* Opposite the housing for the gamecocks was the outdoor portion of the Quarantine Kennel, also leaving this area exposed.

Recommendations:
- ✓ Assign unique codes for the security alarm to each employee so that an accurate record of who has entered/exited the building is kept. Although the keyless system is

effective in preventing unauthorized entry into the many rooms of the shelter—with inmates transitioning over a period of weeks or months—the integrity of the system can easily be compromised.

- ✓ Securely lock the area which houses the gamecocks at all times. Make this area inaccessible to the public, as these animals are part of an evidentiary chain in a criminal case. The security and housing of the impounded gamecocks must be immediately improved.

- ✓ Place keyed-alike padlocks on the gates that are accessible to the public (example: dog exercise yards). With a small staff, it is important to limit access to the facility or unattended animals until a staff member can assist.

- ✓ Consider putting audible alarms on exit doors so that management/staff would know if they are used. Place appropriate signs on the doors asking visitors to use them only in an emergency.

- ✓ Install a video camera to monitor various areas of the facility to help deter theft, misconduct, and other safety issues. When housing live evidence, it is imperative that members of the public do not have access to the areas where animals are kept so the chain of custody is not compromised.

Discussion:
Because day-to-day operational concerns often receive the most immediate attention in shelters, building security and precautions to ensure general staff, public, and animal safety are often overlooked, but these issues must remain a priority. Any problems must be regularly pinpointed, addressed, and resolved before a crisis occurs. Animal shelters are often theft targets because many of them store controlled drugs and have desirable animals. Good security systems and procedures will deter most people.

2.7 GENERAL SAFETY ISSUES/OSHA

Observations:
Article II, Section G, Securable Items, in the draft SOP covered the handling, management, and storage of field services equipment, controlled substances, and medical supplies. The SOP did not contain an Article specific to safety issues or OSHA compliance.

The HSUS team met with the County Safety Officer who was charged with implementing the Volunteer Policy and Procedure Manual that was in draft form during the site visit. The plan aimed to introduce the manual to all staff and volunteers, provide a re-orientation period, obtain feedback from staff and volunteers, and terminate volunteers who do not choose to participate in the new policies. Volunteer and staff safety issues were his priority.

While on-site, the team learned of an altercation between two dogs involving two volunteers. According to SLOCAS staff, the dog that was being walked by a new volunteer started to “fence fight” with a dog in a run. The more seasoned volunteer attempted to break up the dog

fight in the best way she knew how, but sustained an injury to her leg which required immediate medical attention resulting in reconstructive surgery. The dog who was being walked was later euthanized according to records obtained by the team.

An example of inappropriate animal handling was observed by a member of the team. A cat was prodded with a chemical bottle in an effort to move the cat to the other side of the cage. During this incident the bottle was punctured by the cat. This action was excessive, potentially hazardous to the animal, and could have also resulted in an injury to the person. For more on this incident, see sections 4.2 and 5.6.

The team was informed that the inmates did not select their assignments and the shelter was not allowed to screen them for prior knowledge of animal abuse or allergies to animals. Interviews with staff revealed that some inmates had severe allergic reactions to the animals. Additionally, according to interviews, inmates had been removed due to threatening behavior toward staff and volunteers (example: engaging in threatening verbal abuse). The kennelworkers did not carry weapons and relied on pepper spray to fend off any significant threats posed by inmates.

The team asked staff about Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and were provided with a binder of papers that were somewhat disorganized. A canister of Vet-kem® Siphotrol® Plus Area Treatment was observed in the cabinet in the Medical/Euthanasia Room. *(See photo 15)* There was no MSDS for this product which is intended for carpets, bedding, and furniture and must not contact skin. MSDS did not appear to be available for all of the bottles and canisters of chemicals that were observed throughout the facility. Upon inspecting chemical containers, the team found several unmarked secondary containers throughout the facility. *(See photos 16–19)* An on-site test confirmed one of the secondary containers contained a bleach mixture, but no label or writing was on the bottle. Eyewash stations were not observed in the facility.

Posters of federal labor laws were posted in the employee break room. SLOCAS had an Accident Report form, a Worker's Compensation form, and an Animal Bite form. A first aid kit was kept inside a Kennel Office cabinet.

Although the process was not observed during the site visits, employees expressed concern about lack of proper training for decapitation of animals being tested for rabies. For more on this subject see section 5.9, Zoonoses.

According to interviews, the staff had received training on: workplace violence, rabies awareness, Chameleon© software, and first aid. The animal control officers (ACOs) participated in a defensive driving course.

An unstable, black two step stool was observed in the facility. This was the only step stool observed, which led the team to wonder how staff, inmates, and volunteers reached high places such as ledges, shelves, and cages.

The Kennel hallway was wide enough and easily accessible to visitors and staff. "Wet Floor" signs were observed in the Kennel.

Noise levels in the administrative area were minimal. Even though all of the runs in the Kennel were not occupied, the Kennel was fairly loud. If the Kennel was at capacity, noise would become a serious factor for the health and wellbeing of the animals, staff, and visitors.

The Cat Rooms were well within a safe decibel range, and in fact the sound meter was not able to take readings because the rooms were very quiet. In the Kennel, sound baffles were hanging from the ceiling over some, but not all of the aisles—between every two runs. The team did not see evidence of ear protection made available to or used by staff and/or inmates. According to staff interviews, some of the inmates used ear plugs on occasion.

The HSUS team recorded sound levels on March 19 as follows:

Time	Room/Area	Sound Level
8:20 am	Kennel A	71–89 decibels
8:20 am	Kennel B	84–94 decibels
8:20 am	Kennel C	73–87 decibels
8:30 am	Kennel D	67–79 decibels
8:30 am	Kennel E	75–78 decibels
8:35 am	Cat Room C1	64 decibels
8:40 am	Cat Room C2	N/A
8:45 am	Cat Room C3	N/A

Time	Room/Area	Sound Level
11:50 am	Kennel A	80–93 decibels
11:50 am	Kennel B	81–94 decibels
11:50 am	Kennel C	74–87 decibels
11:55 am	Kennel D	64–72 decibels
11:55 am	Kennel E	64–80 decibels
12:00 pm	Cat Room C1	N/A
12:00 pm	Cat Room C2	N/A
12:00 pm	Cat Room C3	N/A

Time	Room/Area	Sound Level
4:00 pm	Kennel A	77–87 decibels
4:00 pm	Kennel B	70–82 decibels
4:00 pm	Kennel C	70–82 decibels
4:00 pm	Kennel D	70–86 decibels
4:00 pm	Kennel E	66–77 decibels
4:10 pm	Cat Room C1	N/A
4:10 pm	Cat Room C2	N/A
4:10 pm	Cat Room C3	N/A

Recommendations:

- ✓ Discontinue the use of Honor Farm inmate labor.
- ✓ Offer the same training to volunteers and staff and hold volunteers accountable to the same standards to ensure their health and safety and that of the animals. The dog "fence fighting" incident speaks to the importance of appropriate training for all volunteers and implementation of basic safety protocols.
- ✓ Install more of the baffle sound proofing panels in the Kennel to reduce the noise pollution.
- ✓ Each employee should attend safety training specific to SLOCAS at the start of her/his employment; volunteers should also be required to attend this training.

Attendees should be given a written test at the conclusion of the safety training to demonstrate that they have learned and comprehended the material. A record of this safety training and the test should also become a part of each employee personnel file. The safety training should include the following topics:[5]

- How to read a Material Safety and Data Sheet (MSDS)
- Location of emergency exits
- Emergency evacuation procedures
- Locations and use of fire extinguishers, eye wash stations, and first aid kits
- Proper lifting technique
- How to complete an accident report
- How to report a maintenance problem
- How to handle a chemical spill
- Where to go for emergency medical treatment
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)[6]
- Proper secondary labeling of hazardous materials
- Animal handling
- Fire safety
- Transmission and prevention of zoonotic diseases

✓ The SLOCAS safety committee should hold regularly scheduled monthly meetings to discuss issues, review accident reports, ensure that all MSDS are current, and make adjustments to training and policies as needed. At least one staff member from each shelter department should attend these meetings.

✓ Determine which hazards are present in the shelter and which require personal protective equipment (PPE), and must require employees to use the PPE. According to OSHA, shelter management must train employees required to wear the equipment to do the following:

- Use PPE properly
- Be aware of when 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

✓ Evaluate the sound levels at the shelter during periods of high animal intake, and require earplugs for staff during cleaning and feeding in order to stay in compliance with OSHA regulations, particularly if fans are in operation adding additional noise to the area. The importance of policies regarding ear protection should be stressed to all staff on a regular basis.

---

[5] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Safety Insurance Checklist," January–February 1999+

[6] OSHA Fact Sheet, "Personal Protective Equipment"

- ✓ Conduct a thorough safety audit of operations three months after the SOP manual has been implemented. This will help to identify areas that may continue to be problematic as well as evaluate employee, volunteer, and inmate compliance.

- ✓ Management should conduct a monthly safety assurance walk-through and note any safety concerns. A checklist developed by the County Safety Officer could be useful.

- ✓ Properly label secondary containers with the full name of the materials in the container, the concentration if a solution or mixture, and the date. Proper labeling of secondary containers is mandatory to ensure the health and safety of employees, volunteers, inmates, and animals.

- ✓ Change the bleach solution in the spray bottles daily to ensure potency and effectiveness.

- ✓ Provide secure, functioning step stools in all rooms where they may be needed.

- ✓ Install eyewash stations at the shelter 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."

- ✓ Properly maintain and update the MSDS consistently.

- ✓ Develop a safety training plan and follow up by prioritizing ongoing instruction and supervisory commitment to maintain safety working conditions.

- ✓ Maintain and update an "Employee Right to Know" station. This should include:
  - ➢ MSDS
  - ➢ Accident Report forms
  - ➢ Where to seek emergency medical treatment
  - ➢ Safety hazard reporting and Maintenance Request forms

- ✓ There are additional safety resources available on the Internet. Examples include:
  - ➢ MSDS Online: www.msdsonline.com
  - ➢ Cornell University: http://msds.pdc.cornell.edu/msdssrch.asp
  - ➢ OSHA:[7] www.osha.gov

Discussion:

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.

---

[7] OSHA Fact Sheet, "OSHA Compliance Assistance"

The use of inmate labor presents significant threat to the well-being of the animals as well as to the visiting public, volunteers, and staff. Untrained laborers are also more likely to unwittingly place themselves in danger. By employing a professional, well-trained staff, SLOCAS will reap the rewards of having consistent, competent care of the animals.

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.

To some degree, noise is inevitable in all animal shelters regardless of size. Noise, however, 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—many of which are stress-related—of noise on the animals must also be strongly considered.[8, 9, 1011]

The barking of dogs is generally the greatest source of noise, but many other factors also contribute. Advancements in shelter design and the materials incorporated in them have served to help reduce the noise in many animal care and control agencies.[12]

OSHA has strict regulations regarding acceptable decibel levels (particularly on a continual or routine basis) to protect 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® developed a set of recommendations based on the findings of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders, which states the following relating to sound levels:

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	Chain saw; 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

---

8 *Science Daily*, "Constant Din Of Barking Causes Stress, Behavior Changes In Dogs In Shelters" July 26, 2006
9 *The Daily Illini*, "Colorado Study Finds Shelter Designs, Noise Levels Affect Animals' Well-being," August 2006
10 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Going Barking Mad," pages 29–31, January–February 2004+
11 "Controlling Noise," C. Scott Learned, MS, PE, 2005
12 HSUS *Shelter Pages 2008*, "Noise Reduction Products," pages 112–113+

2.8 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES/DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Observations:
The draft SOP did not include a section on emergency preparedness. The animal services manager told the team that he would be attending The HSUS National Conference on Animals in Disaster in June 2008.

All fire extinguishers were compliant with safety inspections. The team observed one in the Kennel hallway, one in Cat Room C1, and one in Cat Room C3; no fire extinguisher was found in the Kennel.

Shelter keys were not kept on-site in a lockbox for emergency personnel to access the facility because the SLOCSD had keys. According to staff, employees were to call 911 in the event of a serious incident involving a threatening altercation.

A red binder with an emergency plan was prominently visible in the main administrative office on the wall; however, staff was not aware of its contents and had not participated in any formal emergency training associated with the plan. According to staff, the organization had recently undergone National Incident Management System (NIMS) training and participated in a short-term evacuation a few years ago. The organization had recently received a $25,000 grant to purchase mobile shelter units ($20,000 for collapsible cages and $5,000 for a trailer).

Recommendations:

- ✓ Implement employee training drills that cover a variety of natural disasters including, earthquake, fire, toxic exposure, flooding, and tornado.
- ✓ Procure adequate equipment for emergency response such as temporary caging, portable wire crates, vaccines/de-wormer, triage medical kits, towels, blankets, bedding, bowls, potable water, etc.
- ✓ Undergo training for self-evacuation to properly respond to an emergency that would require animal population removal and relocation in temporary housing.
- ✓ Identify a means of transport for relocating the animals.
- ✓ Develop a procedure for handling paperwork in the event that the computer system is inoperable.
- ✓ Establish procedures for handling displaced animals during community emergencies.
- ✓ Develop an off-site, temporary animal intake procedure.
- ✓ Create a protocol to properly maintain and log controlled substances in a temporary facility.

Discussion:
As the only municipally-operated animal sheltering facility in the County, SLOCAS has an

ethical and legal obligation to prepare for community emergencies. It is imperative that all staff is aware of the protocols and undergoes quarterly emergency trainings—ideally, two of those four trainings should be a surprise drill to evaluate competency of staff.

Emergency situations do not always fall into the category of a full-scale disaster. 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 in these situations. One of the primary functions of having an emergency plan is to teach staff how to mitigate injuries, damage, and losses.[13]

2.9 FACILITY MAINTENANCE/ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Observations:
The draft SOP did not include facility maintenance or environmental management. Facility maintenance was performed by County General Services on an as-needed basis. Staff told the team that maintenance issues were quickly resolved and General Services was consistently responsive to work orders. Management mentioned that the Kennel drains often clogged with animal hair, which is fairly common in animal shelters.

The team did not determine who was responsible for changing HVAC filters or light bulbs on a regular basis. Lighting in the Kennel was not necessary during daylight hours due to the design which included rooftop skylights and several wide, sliding doors that remained open during operating hours. The Cat Rooms required lighting. Insulation was not observed on internal water pipes or around the water heater. Recycling containers were not observed at the facility, other than paper recycling in the administrative office. The HSUS team observed inmates utilizing Health Technology® Kennel Kare for cleaning dog runs and Health Technology® Triple Two or a bleach and water mixture for cleaning cat cages.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Coordinate with General Services to develop a written SOP for routine maintenance and repairs. Emphasize which systems, like the HVAC, plumbing, and drains, are top priority and must be repaired immediately.

- ✓ Establish a preventive maintenance schedule for the facility. Regular preventative maintenance should be scheduled to anticipate and address problems before they arise.

- ✓ Management should walk through the facility on a regularly scheduled basis and record areas in need of repair or attention.

- ✓ Treat Kennel drains with a bio-enzyme to promote safe drainage and prevent clogging. Bio-enzyme treatment of drains will also help prevent disease spread and

---

[13] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Weathering the Storms," May–June 2005+

odor emanation and curtail expenses by proactively addressing drainage issues and lessening repairs.

- ✓ Implement a recycling program that includes cans, glass, and plastic.
- ✓ Conserve energy by insulating the water pipes throughout the Kennel, Cat Rooms, and hallways.
- ✓ Utilize Energy Star compact fluorescent light bulbs which use 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to ten times longer. Energy Star compact fluorescent light bulbs must be recycled when expired because they contain mercury.[14]
- ✓ Ensure that the HVAC filters are being changed every month on a regular schedule.
- ✓ SLOCAS is commended for utilizing high quality cleaning products (Triple Two and Kennel Kare) that are people, animal, and environmentally friendly and are also California EPA and OSHA compliant. Because disease control is of utmost importance in animal shelters, The HSUS does not recommend the sole use of "green" cleaners. Veterinarian Kate Hurley reminds us that we need to be able to use bleach or potassium peroxymonosulfate to make animal housing safe.
- ✓ Ensure the correct dilution ratio for all products is used and that for staff 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 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 and Fridays, and use a detergent and then bleach Tuesdays and Thursdays. The reality is no one product will kill every virus that exists in a shelter setting, therefore the need to rotate becomes even more important.
- ✓ The HSUS commends SLOCAS for its Kennel design which utilizes the natural environment to provide lighting. The County should consider learning more about these types of designs by speaking with local experts and neighbors such as the Congregation Beth David Synagogue in San Luis Obispo which utilizes a passive solar building.

---

[14] epa.gov/bulbrecycling, www.earth911.org

Discussion:

An animal shelter is no different from other municipal buildings, requiring constant attention and funds to adequately maintain the property. Routine problems, such as drains clogging, guillotine doors not functioning properly, hoses breaking, and light bulbs burning out, commonly occur and must be addressed. The County has a responsibility to ensure that the facility is kept in a manner that is functional, safe, and attractive, and that crucial equipment, such as HVAC systems, is maintained and in good operating condition.

Animal shelters are difficult to maintain due to the heavy volume of animals and use of harsh chemicals. A higher price will be paid to make up for months or years of neglect. 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 wait until something breaks or gets worse.

Many animal shelters across the U.S. are considering environmental management standards, systems, or protocols in order to reduce their environmental impact. Some shelters have opted for moving into new, green buildings while others have chosen to make efforts that are feasible in their current facilities. The tenets of sustainable/green shelters are rooted in energy efficiency and conservation. The design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings aims to reduce operating costs, improve public and occupant health, and reduce effects on the environment. Most shelters are not able to abandon their current facilities and afford new green buildings, but they can make small changes to improve energy efficiency by utilizing inexpensive, low-tech measures to decrease their footprint on the environment and reduce operating expenses. When the time is right for a new shelter, San Luis Obispo County is poised to tap into environmental innovations and design due to its local expertise and having the sun on its side.

3.0 SHELTER INTERIOR DESIGN AND LAYOUT

3.1 HUMAN SERVICE AREAS

3.11 RECEPTION/LOBBY

Observations:
Clients entered the Lobby through glass double doors which provided a good view of the Lobby area. The Lobby is an open space that was attractive, neat, and ample for the level of activity observed while the team was on-site. Well-displayed literature was available for visitors to read and a television with a DVD player allowed waiting visitors to view programs about pet care. Two chairs and a bench were available to accommodate visitors. A large, attractive fish aquarium and a public restroom were also in the Lobby. The Kennel Office window and entrance for adoptions and animal relinquishments was immediately to the left of the Lobby entrance doors.

Recommendations:

- ✓ SLOCAS is commended for its inviting, attractive service Lobby.
- ✓ Staff the Kennel Office window with an administrative staff person at all times to interface with clients rather than having kennelworkers interrupted to assist clients. This assignment could rotate among the administrative staff.
- ✓ Unlock the Kennel entrance door during open hours to make access to the Kennel more inviting. With a staff person at the window at all times, this would not create a security issue. If staff must leave the window unattended for a short period, the door may then be temporarily locked.
- ✓ Consider creative animal shelter design if renovations or additions are planned.[15]

Discussion:
An animal shelter's reception area provides the first impression for incoming visitors and can create a lasting positive effect. A cheerful, helpful staff member or volunteer will also have a favorable impact on the visiting public, and the community will consider the organization user friendly and professional.

3.12 OFFICES/DISPATCH AREAS

Observations:
The main administrative office consisted of on open area with several workstations with

---

[15] HSUS Animal Care Expo 2007, "Bark-itecture on A Budget, Creative Animal Shelter Design," Martha T. Seng, AIA

ample space for the employees, including large, fairly new modular workspace units for each staff member, and current computer technology on every desk. The office had been recently expanded and remodeled.

A small office with two small desks/workspaces adjacent to the main administrative area was used for dispatch and by ACOs. All employees had access to the room. At times, ACOs had to take turns using the small space, making it difficult for the officers to conduct follow up phone calls and other business efficiently. Also, when officers were in the room making phone calls or talking, it was difficult for the dispatcher to hear calls.

Clerical employee functions were organized by desk designation. A desk was designated to each of the following functions: taking bite reports and tracking quarantine follow-ups, processing animal facility permits, providing service to clients at the front desk, dispatching field officers, and accounting.

The staff lunch/employee break room was situated next to the dispatch office, separated by a partition. The team was told that conversations were easily overheard and noise levels were disturbing to staff. Staff did not gain much privacy during breaks due to the break room design and arrangement.

The animal services manager's office and conference room were situated off of the main administrative area toward the front of the building. The administrative services officer's office was opposite a staff restroom to the left of the dispatch office. Each of these offices had doors and could therefore provide privacy.

A closet along the Kennel hallway was converted into a volunteer office.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Provide adequate work stations for the ACOs on duty so that they can work efficiently.
- ✓ Rearrange and reconfigure the main office to accommodate ACO work stations. Consider moving the automation specialist workstation to the dispatch room.
- ✓ Consider adding partitions to the workstations in the main office to provide more privacy and sound proofing.

3.13 HANDICAPPED ACCESS

Observations:

SLOCAS was in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). Doorways throughout the facility appeared wide enough, thresholds did not present obstacles, and the floor surface was level. The handicapped parking sign and space met measurement and visibility guidelines. There was no automatic door opener on the entrance door. The shelter had satisfactory wheelchair access. The facilities were on one level; there were no obstacles in the walk area that would restrict handicapped access.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Consider adding an automatic door opener.

3.14 INTERNAL SIGNAGE

Observations:

Overall, internal signage was lacking in professionalism and quantity. Some signs were professionally produced while others were hand-lettered. Some of the signs appeared new but other signs appeared old and tattered.

The Cat Rooms were difficult to find. Signage directing the public to the cat areas was inadequate, consisting of 8½ x 11" hand-lettered paper and cardboard signs with arrows. Cat Rooms C2 and C3 were separated from Cat Room C1 by a small hallway, and the only sign directing visitors to these rooms was hand-lettered and taped to an open door. *(See photo 20)*

The restricted area designated only for employees was identified by unprofessionally hand-lettered text directly on the wall and door frame. *(See photo 21)* Whether a reflection of the signage, or lack of complying with SLOCAS policy, volunteers reportedly often entered restricted access areas.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Replace all hand-lettered signage in the shelter with large, professionally-produced, highly visible signs that allow the public to easily find the Cat Rooms as well as other areas. Discontinue using taped-up signs, which never look professional and quickly become faded and tattered. Improved signage will help the public locate adoptable animals, especially cats.

- ✓ Designate areas of the shelter which are off-limits to the public, and then enforce those restrictions. The public, volunteers, and inmates should not be allowed unrestricted access to rabies quarantine animals, evidentiary animals, or those who are in isolation.

- ✓ Interior signage should be clear, noticeable, and standardized with a common color, shape, and size. Signage should assist clients using positive images and language that also supports the marketing and branding plan.

- ✓ Evaluate the messages and strategic placements for important messages. Seek outside assistance from someone who is not familiar with the shelter to analyze the signage in order to determine if the perceptions match the intentions of the signs.

- ✓ Seek assistance from County personnel and outside marketing and communication professionals in crafting language that can better meet SLOCAS' needs.

- ✓ Ensure that internal signs comply with the ADAAG, which has requirements for character proportion and height.[16]

3.2 ANIMAL SERVICE AREAS

3.21 VENTILATION/TEMPERATURE (HVAC)

Observations:
The administrative office area and Lobby was a controlled environment—heated and air conditioned. The temperature and humidity was comfortable during the site visit. The open-aired Kennel created a pleasant environment for the dogs.

The Kennel was open-aired on two sides during operating hours. The Cat Rooms had heating panels and an HVAC system on the ceiling. The animal services manager explained that he requested HVAC systems for the rooms that would allow for a fresh air exchange at 20 air changes per hour. However, he wasn't able to confirm if that was indeed the case or if the HVAC systems were in good working order. The Cat Rooms appeared to have minimal air flow.

The HSUS team recorded temperature and humidity readings on March 19 as follows:

Time	Room/Area	Temperature	Humidity
8:20 am	Kennel A	54°	74%
8:20 am	Kennel B	54°	74%
8:20 am	Kennel C	54°	76%
8:30 am	Kennel D	55°	76%
8:30 am	Kennel E	57°	72%
8:35 am	Cat Room C1	59°	74%
8:40 am	Cat Room C2	63°	71%
8:45 am	Cat Room C3	64°	69%

Time	Room/Area	Temperature	Humidity
11:50 am	Kennel A	66°	61%
11:50 am	Kennel B	66°	62%
11:50 am	Kennel C	64°	64%
11:55 am	Kennel D	64°	64%
11:55 am	Kennel E	64°	64%
12:00 pm	Cat Room C1	64°	64%
12:00 pm	Cat Room C2	65°	64%
12:00 pm	Cat Room C3	65°	64%

[16] www.access-board.gov

Time	Room/Area	Temperature	Humidity
4:00 pm	Kennel A	72°	51%
4:00 pm	Kennel B	73°	51%
4:00 pm	Kennel C	73°	51%
4:00 pm	Kennel D	75°	48%
4:00 pm	Kennel E	75°	49%
4:10 pm	Cat Room C1	75°	48%
4:10 pm	Cat Room C2	75°	48%
4:10 pm	Cat Room C3	77°	48%

Recommendations:

- ✓ Review the air system with an HVAC specialist. Technical data about all of the air handling systems should be reviewed and understood. It is essential to understand how the air moves within the shelter environment because it plays a major role in managing disease and providing animal and human comfort. If there are disease outbreaks in any animal population, knowledge of the air system will help to correct the problem.

- ✓ It is critical for disease control to provide the following air changes per hour:
  - ➢ Public areas: minimum of 6–8 changes per hour
  - ➢ Animal housing areas: minimum of 12–14 changes per hour
  - ➢ The best environment would be created using 100% fresh air. Where fresh air is prohibitive, filters and other purification systems should be utilized to purify returned air.

- ✓ Maintain an ambient air temperature between 68 and 72 degrees in the administrative area and Cat Rooms. Install lockable thermostat covers to minimize the changing of temperatures in animal housing areas and prevent anyone from turning vents on and off.

- ✓ Put into place a preventative maintenance program for all air handlers.

- ✓ Review recommended air exchange rates for animal housing facilities. Compare existing design specifications and make adjustments where possible.

- ✓ Ensure that proper methods are taken during extreme changes in temperature and/or humidity to maintain a comfortable temperature in the Kennel and Cat Rooms.

- ✓ The HSUS defers HVAC recommendations to the expertise and experience of Design Learned, Inc.[17, 18]

---

[17] www.designlearned.com

[18] "Fresh Air & Filtration-Mechanical Design for Animal Care Facilities," C. Scott Learned, MS, PE, 2005

Discussion:
San Luis Obispo County is fortunate to have a mild climate and therefore maintains a comfortable temperature year-round. The lowest temperature averages 42 degrees during winter months while the highest summer temperature averages 82 degrees.[19] Many residents and businesses function without the use of air conditioning as a result of the temperate climate.

Air quality is a very important aspect of maintaining animal health within the shelter. Facilities without the ability to move large volumes of air can pose a greater risk of disease because re-circulated, filtered, and exhaust air can harbor infectious agents. Air quality is directly related to animal disease, and poor air quality translates into high disease rates. Providing good quality air is essential and well worth the investment both in design and upkeep.

Even a well-designed kennel or cattery is only as effective as the air circulation and ventilation it employs. Many diseases in a shelter setting are airborne, and when these diseases are spread to other populations in the facility, the entire shelter is put at risk. No amount of cleaning will prevent the spread of disease in the face of an inadequate ventilation system.

The inability to control temperature in the shelter may also contribute to serious disease problems. Although there are advantages to having indoor/outdoor kennels and moving fresh air through animal spaces, there are also disadvantages, such as not being able to eliminate moisture and the introduction of dirt, dust, and pollutants.

Heating, cooling, and humidity control systems should be serviced regularly as part of a facility's preventive maintenance program. These systems 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.

3.22 NIGHT SURRENDER

Observations:
An after hours animal surrender area—also known as night deposit boxes—provided people with the option to relinquish an animal after the shelter was closed. SLOCAS had a night surrender area to the left of the shelter facade. Signage was not prominent; therefore, it may be difficult for someone to find it, especially at night. The most visible sign was propped up against a tree adjacent to the night surrender area. The night deposit boxes consisted of six dog runs and six cat cages. The runs had concrete floors and chain link fencing. The cages were numbered on the ground in front of the cages. The numbering system was confusing and at first not easily noticed during daylight, which would only make it more difficult in the dark. Padlocks were on the cages to encourage people to lock the cage door once the animal was secured inside the cage. Since the night surrender area was outside, it was not

---

[19] www.weather.com

temperature controlled. There was an Owner Surrender form pad available, but no Stray Intake form. This Statement of Surrender form requested a signature and disclosure stating the animal is personal property of the person relinquishing and had not bitten anyone during the past 15 days. One morning during the site visit, the team observed a dog in a night surrender run and the Statement of Surrender was rolled up and placed in one of the squares of the chain link.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Use outside doors that lock automatically and are made of solid, sturdy material—not, for example, a chain link cage door which allows people to access the animal once placed in a cage or run.
- ✓ Provide Stray Animal Intake forms at the night deposit box area.
- ✓ Provide at least one enclosure that will accommodate a large farm animal and label it accordingly.
- ✓ Provide phone numbers on the night kennels in case of an emergency and make sure someone is available to respond to emergency calls.
- ✓ Keep the outside area well lit, and use a security camera.
- ✓ Provide more prominent, but basic instructional signs for the public. Keep them simple.
- ✓ Create an easy, straightforward Stray Intake form and place it in the night surrender area.
- ✓ Ensure that the night surrender area is well-illuminated. Provide a pen (with a tie to prevent theft) and a place to leave the form where it will be preserved.
- ✓ Number the enclosures clearly, and ask depositors to record the number on the form.
- ✓ To encourage honesty, explain on the form (and perhaps on a sign as well) that the information requested is for the animal's benefit.
- ✓ If possible, assign someone to check the night surrender area each night at a certain time.

Discussion:

After hours' relinquishment boxes must be designed and managed with the best interests of animals and people in mind. Enabling citizens to relinquish animals after hours is controversial in the field of animal care and control, primarily because there is no clear right or wrong position on the subject. One argument is that agencies that cannot provide 24-hour staff at the facility, after hours' relinquishment can create a safety net for vulnerable animals that may be dropped off at the facility after hours.

Those who oppose after hours' relinquishment argue that animals should not be treated like

mere bank deposits. They also say that people often don't leave sufficient background information with the animals, and therefore a higher proportion of the animals must then be considered stray, which means the shelter must keep them for the stray holding period. Proponents of after hours' relinquishment also stress that without the option; some people will simply abandon their animals or tie them to the shelter's gate.

3.23 DOG HOUSING

Observations:
Article V, Section D, Animal Housing, in the draft SOP covered how and where animals were to be housed based on species and age.

The Kennel was painted a cream color and was bright and airy. Florescent lighting was installed, but was not in use during the site visit. The Kennel lighting that was provided by skylights appeared sufficient.

The dog run walls consisted of painted cinder block walls and a combination of barred and chain link fence doors. The Kennel floors were composed of unpainted concrete which appeared to be in good condition. Shallow trench drains ran the length of each aisle in front of the dog runs and there were drains in the center of each trench. The aisle floors sloped toward the trench drains and the run floors sloped to the center of the runs and toward the trenches. The dog runs had side guillotine doors; none of the runs in the main Kennel were connected to the outdoors. Runs in the Quarantine Kennel were connected to the outdoors and had guillotine doors. The Quarantine Kennel had facing runs, and Kennels B through D had facing runs, which at times caused excessive noise from barking. Each of the 48 dog runs was similar in construction and size at 96 x 48 x 80 inches (L W H). The doors were 42 x 75 inches. The lower third of each dog run appeared greasy from body oils. Hoses on reels hung from the ceiling in each aisle. The nozzle of the spray gun in Kennel D had a significant leak. The outdoor exercise yards were constructed of chain link fence, with artificial turf surfaces and shade cloth.

The shelter was divided into a public access area and a restricted area. The Quarantine Kennel, which housed dogs being held under observation for biting and dogs with severe behavior issues, was separated from the Kennel by two locked doors. Several times during the site visit, the second door was tied open with a dog leash. *(See photo 22)* The door between the public access area and restricted sally port area was consistently open. The public had essentially free access to that area of the facility and the impounded gamecocks, as previously mentioned.

The Dog/Cat Isolation Room housed two dog runs. Both consisted of chain link front sliding doors. The chain link at the bottom of both of the doors was damaged and appeared to have been chewed on and through by dogs. *(See photo 23)* Run A2 in the Kennel had a frayed guillotine door cable with sharp edges.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Repair and/or replace any chain link that has broken. Broken wires can cause harm to a dog's mouth. Consider replacing any large grid chain link with smaller sized chain link so that dogs will not be able to chew the wire.

- ✓ Degrease all the dog runs and implement a cleaning routine that incorporates degreasing as preventative health maintenance. The greasy film residue is due to long-term exposure to dog fur oil which can transmit disease to animals. Whenever a new dog enters that run, he/she is exposed to the bacteria from the dog that previously occupied the run.

- ✓ Repair any leaks to hoses, spigots, or spray guns.

3.24 CAT HOUSING

Observations:

Cats were housed in five areas of the shelter: Cat Rooms C1, C2, C3, a Cat Isolation Room (C4), and a Dog/Cat Isolation Room. The Cat Rooms were generally clean, but drab with only a few posters for decoration in rooms C1 and C3. Cat cage banks were face to face with approximately four feet of space between them. The cage tops were dusty, but not cluttered or used for storage. A stuffed toy and an old stuffed Kong® were observed on top of the cages in the Dog/Cat Isolation Room and were present throughout the site visit. *(See photo 24)* There was no special housing exclusively for feral cats, but Cat Room C3 was used to house "aggressive" cats.

The natural lighting in Cat Room C1 created good lighting, while rooms C2 and C3 were darker and less inviting. The Cat Room floors were made of concrete and sloped to a center drain. The cat cages were either double-compartment composite units with portals between the units, or single-compartment stainless steel units. The double-compartment cages were 26 x 22 x 18 inches with perches measuring 8 x 25 inches. Most of the cat cage banks were elevated more than 17 inches from the floor, but a few banks were on wheels, close to the floor. Food and litter accumulated in the rim of the base of many of the double-compartment cat cages. *(See photos 25–26)* SLOCAS was in the process of phasing out stainless steel cage banks.

There were 18 double-compartment cages in C1, 21 in C2, 15 double-compartment cages and 16 stainless steel cages in C3, 12 in C4, and 12 in the Dog/Cat Isolation Room. The total number of cat cages in the facility during the site visit was 94.

Cat cages in the Dog/Cat Isolation Room were clean and set up including food and water, ready for cats to occupy. There were no cats present in the room during the site visit; however, the food and water remained in the cages.

There was no colony housing of cats. There was a small "get acquainted" room off of the Kennel hallway. The light in the "get acquainted" room was not functional during the site visit.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Improve lighting by installing windows on the far walls of each room to allow in natural light, specifically Cat Rooms C2 and C3.
- ✓ Complete the elevation of all banks of cat cages and continue the transition from the stainless steel cat cages to the composite double cages.
- ✓ Do not set up empty cat cages with filled food and water bowls. While this may be convenient for staff, the bowls should be stored in a clean, dry area away from other animals until they are needed. Food, including stuffed Kongs®, should not be left sitting out where it can absorb moisture from the air, become stale, attract vermin, or become moldy.
- ✓ Repaint the Cat Rooms and other areas needing uplift. Utilize vivid colors, designs, and murals to brighten the otherwise plain walls.
- ✓ Remove the litter and food that accumulates at the rim of the double-compartment cages daily.
- ✓ Clean the tops of all of the cages regularly. Keep the cage tops free of dirt, dust, and supplies.
- ✓ Repair or replace the light and/or bulb in the "get acquainted" room.

3.25 SMALL ANIMAL/EXOTIC HOUSING

Observations:

Two small animal/exotic housing units were present inside the main entrance of the Kennel. The units were professionally constructed with self-contained ventilation and heating systems. Both units appeared to be fairly new and in good condition. The units had appropriate climbing and perching options for the animals.

There was one wooden wire rabbit hutch in the Kennel hallway. The floor of the hutch was wire. There were three out-of-use rabbit hutches located outdoors between the Kennel building and the building housing Cat Rooms C2 and C3.

Recommendations:

- ✓ SLOCAS is commended for providing modern, appropriate housing for rodents, and other small animals. For small and exotic animals who are timid (such as chinchillas, hedgehogs, or guinea pigs) consider housing them in a less public area of the shelter.
- ✓ Replace the wire-bottom of the rabbit hutches with flat, easily-to-clean bottoms.
- ✓ Consider replacing the wooden-framed rabbit hutches in favor of a non-porous material. Wood is porous and cannot be properly sanitized. Replace with stainless steel or another material that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.

Discussion:
Animal shelters today must house and care for exotic, unusual, and "fad" animals including birds, snakes, reptiles, fowl, fish, rabbits, gerbils, hamsters, guinea pigs, and other small mammals. Many agencies struggle with the same "ever-changing" housing issues for these animals; however, these animals have special housing and care needs that must be addressed.

There is no single correct or best approach to housing small domestic or exotic animals; however, there are commercial cages that work well and shelter enclosures that could be retrofitted. Whatever space is available or dedicated for this use should have a fair degree of flexibility so that the shelter can accommodate the needs of the various animals they find in their care. The inherent nature of some small and exotic animals causes them to be easily stressed, so for these animals their housing should be located out of high traffic and noisy areas in the shelter, especially those with public access. In addition, staff access is best restricted to those trained in the care of small animals and exotics. This space should also function somewhat as a quarantine and/or isolation area, allowing some control of potential medical problems.

The following are examples of traditional and nontraditional caging and the species of animal that can be accommodated in each:

- Aquariums: Various sizes; appropriate for both aquatic and terrestrial amphibians and reptiles, as well as for small exotics such as hedgehogs and prairie dogs. As 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 punctured for ventilation; suitable for amphibians, reptiles, small exotics, and bats.
- Livestock Equipment: Watering troughs for cattle and other livestock, in either 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-size exotics like sugar gliders and flying squirrels, for whom glass may not be the best choice.
- Commercial Cages for Birds: Various sizes; cages that allow horizontal movement are preferable to tall, narrow ones; be aware of the gauge of bars when housing large parrots—gauge is used to determine the thickness and strength of the bars, and large parrots can easily bend or crush small-gauge bars.
- Miscellaneous/Other: In the event that an animal is too large for the caging discussed above, freestanding sectional dog pens and large dog crates can be utilized.

3.26 WILDLIFE HOUSING

Observations:
At the time of The HSUS site visit, there was no wildlife housed at SLOCAS. There was no housing designated specifically for wildlife on the premises.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create a separate area to temporarily house wildlife. There may be times when a rehabilitator or veterinarian cannot accept wildlife immediately, and such animals would require temporary housing at the facility.[20]

3.27 FARM ANIMAL/EQUINE HOUSING

Observations:
At the time of the HSUS visit, there were no farm animals being housed with the exception of the gamecocks which were located in the rear of the building.

The impounded gamecocks were housed in three banks of large, double-unit stainless steel cages as well as in a wooden-framed, six-cage hutch. The stainless steel cages measured 36 x 48 x 35 inches. The wooden unit cages were slightly narrower than the stainless steel units.

SLOCAS had a large, fenced-in area to the right of the building designated for large animal housing. The grounds and grass were in good condition and there was adequate space for several horses or other large species. A roofed shelter was provided within a smaller fenced area inside the paddock. Food and water tubs were available, but not in use.

Agility equipment was propped up against the outside of the fenced grounds. A bucket of hay and a pail of old water were also observed in the fenced area. *(See photos 27–29)*

Recommendations:

- ✓ Store the agility equipment elsewhere.

- ✓ Do not allow standing water to remain when there are no animals on the grounds. Although mosquitoes are not as prevalent in the region, they are still present in summer months and standing water attracts and allows them to breed.

- ✓ SLOCAS is commended for providing an adequate, natural paddock setup for horses and other livestock.

---

[20] Wildlife Care Basics for Veterinary Hospitals: Before the Rehabilitator Arrives+

3.28 ANIMAL EXAMINATON AND MEDICAL ROOM

Observations:
The Medical/Euthanasia Room in the restricted access area was utilized for euthanasia, some medical treatments, and rabies specimen preparation. This room was used for functions that should occur in different rooms. There was no room specifically designated as an examination room for incoming animals.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create an animal examination room and utilize the room exclusively for animal examinations. Examinations must always be conducted away from the general population of animals and away from treatment/euthanasia areas. See section 5.3, Incoming Animal Examinations for more recommendations.
  - ➢ An examination room should be conducive to performing a complete physical examination on incoming animals. The room should contain a stainless steel examination table, a stethoscope, a microscope, a digital thermometer, a large dog scale, and a baby scale for weighing puppies, kittens, and small mammals.
  - ➢ An examination room should contain at least one working microchip scanner at all times. Consider anchoring a scanner via a chain to one of the counter tops to prevent it from being removed from the room.
- ✓ Utilize one room for euthanasia and rabies specimen preparation, but not in the same space as treatments or incoming examinations. To euthanize in the same space that involves disease prevention and treatment is to potentially transmit disease to the central animal care area and then to other parts of the shelter.

Discussion:
Performing a thorough examination on all incoming animals is essential. The findings of a physical examination will ultimately affect an animal's adoptability and well-being as well as the overall health of the entire shelter population. Keeping the examination room clean, well stocked, and adequately equipped should be a top priority for any shelter.

4.0 SHELTER OPERATIONS

4.1 GENERAL OPERATIONS

The draft SOP was divided into five articles: General Provisions, General Operations, Administrative Services, Field Operations, and Kennel Operations.

4.11 HOURS OF OPERATION

Observations:
The shelter was open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm for all services; on Wednesdays, the shelter remained open until 7 pm. On Saturdays and Sundays the hours of operation were 9:00 am to 4:00 pm; however, the shelter was closed to the public on Sundays.

Kennelworkers and inmates arrived at 7:30 am, the dispatcher arrived at 8:30 am, and the administrative staff arrived at 9 am. The shelter was open to the public during cleaning.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Review the operating hours and the benefits of being open on Sundays. If SLOCAS is not able to be there seven days per week, close on a weekday. Weekends provide the very best opportunity for most families to come to the shelter to adopt an animal or search for their missing pet.

- ✓ Consider adjusting business hours so that all cleaning of public areas is completed before the shelter is opened to the public. Citizens looking for lost pets can be escorted through the Kennels while cleaning is in progress, if needed.

Discussion:
By remaining open to the public until 7 pm on Wednesday nights, SLOCAS offers the public a chance to come adopt after traditional working hours. The hours of operation of many animal shelters includes weekday evening hours and weekends, usually the busiest visiting and adoption times.[21] Despite the difficult nature of the work, employees who work at an animal shelter need to embrace the "retail" culture of adopting animals to the public.

Convenience is a major factor in choosing a source for a new pet, which is why shopping mall pet shops, neighbors, and relatives are often more popular sources than animal shelters. An agency's hours should allow it to compete for a segment of the adoption market by being accessible during those hours most convenient for the general public.

---

[21] HSUS Guidelines for Animal Shelter Policies

4.12 TELEPHONE SYSTEM

Observations:
The telephone system at SLOCAS was an automated attendant system. Calls were first answered by an automated message system. The system, which accommodated three open lines, routed calls to the designated desk phone and placed the call in a queue to be answered. The desk phones did not have separate extensions. The phone system had the capability for employees to log out of the system.

There was no public address system in the facility, therefore two-way radio transceivers were used to communicate throughout the building and with the Honor Farm. There were four separate channels used: Honor Farm, animal control officers, Kennel 1, and Kennel 2. For the size of the facility, this seemed to work well. Each night at approximately 6 pm one of the ACOs updated the phone line with a listing of found animals. Various checks of the lost and found phone line indicated that this procedure is consistently updated on a daily basis and served as an excellent community resource.

Recommendations:
None.

4.13 COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT

Observations:
SLOCAS' computer system included thirteen networked PC stations and four laptop computers used by field services staff. The system was part of the County's information technology (IT) network and the hardware and software met current technology standards.

All County-wide finance, budget, and human resources database functions ran on the SAP enterprise system. Both hardware and software for the SLOCAS local network was supported by the County's IT department. SLOCAS received local network support from the sheriff's office. Data backup was set by County IT protocols.

SLOCAS had one dedicated department automation specialist supporting the system. The automation specialist's time was included in the SLOCAS budget as one full-time position. However, The HSUS team observed that the specialist also supported other functions of the sheriff's office. During the site visit, the automation specialist was able to provide the team with a wide range of requested reports.

Recommendations:
None.

4.14 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Observations:
The draft SOP did not include information management; however, Article III, Section E

covered Computer Use. SLOCAS used Chameleon© as their animal shelter software database system. Chameleon© is one of the recognized industry standards as an integrated animal shelter database system. SLOCAS received all updates as part of their Chameleon© licensing agreement. Chameleon© was installed on all desktop PCs with integrated modules for the following files: animal inventory, client, address, licensing, and calls for service. All work stations and desks had a desktop PC on the network, access to Windows XP programs, and the Internet. In addition to the standard programs, the animal services manager, administrative services officer, and the senior account clerk had access to the SAP system. The desk in the volunteer office also had a PC; however, it was not on the network. This PC had access to Windows XP programs and the Internet.

The County IT department provided the initial staff training for Chameleon©. Ongoing training and cross-training was performed by SLOCAS staff. The management staff and senior account clerk received SAP training from the County IT department.

The staff observed by The HSUS team appeared proficient in the use of Chameleon©. The automation specialist reported that the system was reliable and they had experienced few system failures.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create an SOP manual for using the Chameleon© software system.
- ✓ Establish a formal training program for new employees and advanced power users.

Discussion:
SLOCAS had an effective suite of software programs. Chameleon© offers industry standard software modules for an integrated database system to manage animal records, people records, licensing, and complaints. SAP is also an industry standard enterprise database system for managing finances, budget, and personnel. The combination of these two systems provided an excellent information management system providing SLOCAS management with timely, accurate data and reports.

4.15 GENERAL RECORD-KEEPING/SHELTER STATISTICS

Observations:
There were no written procedures for record-keeping. The HSUS team observed the administrative assistants and the senior accounts clerk using standard forms and filing completed paperwork in the office file cabinets. Some data was entered into Chameleon© which captured and stored electronic files. The hard copy original records and documents were kept on-site or sent to County archives consistent with the County records retention requirements.

Standard reports were available in SAP and Chameleon© and client reports were created by the automation specialist using Crystal Reports® software. The HSUS team requested and received monthly and annual reports from SAP and Chameleon© for animal intake and

disposition, licensing, calls for service, financial reports, current budget expenditure and revenue reports, and employee activity reports. SLOCAS also provided The HSUS team with comprehensive reports on annual animal intake and disposition, calls for service and licensing, and revenue and expenditures reports for the past ten years. There was no monthly or annual reporting to the sheriff or to the County administrator.

SLOCAS kept statistics for animal intakes, outcomes, adoptions, euthanasias, redemptions, and calls for service. Cats and dogs were tracked separately and all other animals were labeled as "Misc." The team was provided statistics from 2002–2007. There was not line item for the following: (1) incoming and outgoing animal transfers from/to other organizations, (2) status of animals whose disposition was euthanasia, and (3) animals that died or were lost in the shelter.

SLOCAS did not place animal statistics on its Web site even though members of the community had expressed interest in their performance.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create an SOP for record-keeping and shelter statistics.
- ✓ Place critical SLOCAS data and statistical reports on the Web site.
- ✓ Develop filing and retention procedures for records and include them in the SOP.
- ✓ Plot annual euthanasia statistics on the same chart as annual human population numbers.[22]
- ✓ Utilize the format and guidelines of the Asilomar Accords.[23] Make monthly and annual comparisons which can assist in judging the overall effectiveness of spaying and neutering within the community's animal populations and help forecast future intake and euthanasia numbers during certain times of the year.
  - ➢ The statistics would include the following:

Number of animals received/entered the shelter:

A. Species
  1. Dogs
     a. Adults
     b. Puppies (<six months)
  2. Cats
     a. Adults
     b. Kittens (<six months)
  3. Other
     a. Domestic and exotic

---

[22] http://preview.tinyurl.com/4vkq7k
[23] www.asilomaraccords.org, The Asilomar Accords+

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
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., from 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 (<six months)

2. Cats
    a. Adults
    b. Kittens (<six 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. Disposition (See the detailed list in The Asilomar Accords)

- ✓ Emphasize that the burden of responsibility for pet overpopulation must be shared by all members of the community. For example, rather than stating that "San Luis Obispo County Animal Services handled XX stray and homeless animals in 2007," management should instead accentuate the public's role in shelter numbers through language such as "San Luis Obispo County generated XX stray and homeless animals in 2007," or "XX% of the animals generated by San Luis Obispo County were euthanized."

Discussion:
The database systems used by SLOCAS are capable of producing the statistical reports recommended above. These systems can be utilized to create the reports for sharing vital information with the public, interest groups, the media, and elected officials. Posting data on the SLOCAS Web site would be a good first step in communicating SLOCAS' performance. Interestingly, staff, volunteers, and even some management personnel were unaware of basic organizational performance.

Record-keeping accuracy greatly improves when animal inventory information is part of a software program designed to track animals. 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 local government, donors, and other funding sources. In

addition, such reporting is essential for assessing the organization's performance, formulating strategic plans, and setting goals.

What an agency does is important and need not be overshadowed by how much it does. It is often stated that quality is more important than quantity; therefore, SLOCAS can and should put the numbers it has to work for it in ways that will improve the quality of its work.

Shelters of all sizes benefit from keeping accurate statistics on every aspect of their work. Numbers tell people who an organization is and what challenges it faces. Presented below are reasons to keep an accurate count of the animals an agency handles.

Accountability: Numbers justify a shelter's existence to government entities and the general public. An agency knows it is productive, but others must know this as well.

Liability: Proper recording of numbers will show that each animal was kept the legally required amount of time.

Public Image: Numbers increase public awareness about the magnitude of a shelter's mission. Numbers help convey the results of an agency's efforts and also help convey the public's role in generating stray and homeless animals.

Budgets/Fund-raising: A good budgeting process requires statistics in order to identify needs. Numbers assist in planning for the future. Numbers paint pictures that may generate donations.

Program Evaluation/Planning: Strengths and weaknesses are exposed through statistics. Analysis of a shelter's numbers identifies 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).

4.16 INCOMING ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION AND PROCEDURES

Observations:
The animal receiving area was located at the Kennel entrance which was to the left of the main entrance. The form used for intake was called a Statement of Surrender and posed a variety of questions about the animal ranging from food preferences, to compatibility with children, to personality descriptions. The form also required the confirmation of ownership and guarantee that the animal had not bitten in the past 15 days. There was a $20 fee to surrender an animal although the form did not reference the fee.

According to staff interviews, a client surrendering an animal was asked to leave the animal with the kennelworker in the Kennel and return to the main office to complete paperwork. The staff would then interview the client to learn if there was an aggression problem with the animal and, if so, a fee for euthanasia was suggested. Once the paperwork was completed, it was stapled to a Chameleon© generated cage card which had the animal identification

number, sex, age, collar color, collar type, jurisdiction found (if stray), found @ (if stray), intake type, color, breed, and markings. The cage cards did not provide information about the animal beyond the above physical characteristics.

One relinquishment was witnessed during the site visit. A client entered the Kennel to surrender a six year old, male, Cattle Dog/Border Collie mix (A119734)—listed in Chameleon© as a Queensland Heeler. The client told staff immediately that she did not want him euthanized. She asked the staff member if they could call her if he was to be euthanized and the staff member stated that they could not call her, but that she can keep an eye on the Web site and call to check on him periodically. The staff member stated that within one to two weeks the dog would be on the Web site, that they did not have a time limit, and that dogs have been there as long as three to four months. Staff explained that if a client calls they will let them know if the animal has been adopted. The client revealed that the dog's leg either had a birth defect or a break that healed badly. Her veterinarian told her that if it got worse they would have to remove the leg. The client and staff then discussed his medical and behavioral history.

Cage cards were meant to stay with the animal; however, staff reported that people often removed cage cards to ask questions about a particular animal and the cards got lost. During the site visit, the team observed many dog runs and cat cages that did not have cage cards. The team also observed dog runs and cat cages that had cage cards and no animals inside. The team observed dog run B5 had a cage card but no dog. A volunteer had taken the dog to one of the outdoor exercise yards, but had not left any signage on the run to indicate that the dog was out for exercise.

Dogs were not fitted with identification (ID) collars, even though ID collars were observed on-site. According to staff, identification collars were not placed on animals until they were altered; however, another staff member told the team that the bands were only used during "kitten season."

Since the animals had no identification collar, the potential for error was high. There was no system of daily inventory, and no way to match cage cards with animals. The team asked a staff member how they are certain of an animal's identity if two or more animals look very much alike, and the staff member replied "we just know." The integrity of animal tracking was highly compromised by the process the team observed.

Cat cages were labeled with the same cage cards provided on the dog runs. As with the dogs, the cats were not fitted with ID collars.

All information about animals was stored in the computer system and in a file box in the administrative offices. The computer system was only accessible to staff members, and information stored in the office was not accessible to the public. If a client wanted information about an animal beyond the minimal description on the cage card, that client was required to find a staff member or volunteer and have them procure the information. Staff members were not always readily available, and volunteers were not allowed to access Chameleon© or office files. The net effect was a roadblock for a client wishing to adopt an animal.

There were no cage cards or other identifying materials on the cages which housed the gamecocks.

There was an unwritten practice that was passed on from previous management referred to as "BPTS" (Before Put To Sleep). According to staff interviews, any person from the public could enter the shelter and write BPTS on the cage card, which would then require the shelter to contact this person before the animal was euthanized. There were no regulations of this practice and no criteria for its use. Staff stated that even animals with severe behavior problems can have BPTS written on their cage cards. The staff shared their disdain for this practice because they felt it created a sense of hysteria that was not needed.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Place ID bands on all animals upon intake and conduct daily inventories to match ID bands with computer records which will facilitate a more effective animal tracking system. There are several types of collars available and SLOCAS should decide which will work best for them. SLOCAS may utilize the bands that are currently being used on animals upon alteration. Other options include:
  - ➢ Hollister hospital-type insert bracelets, which are water resistant and are secured by a clip.[24]
  - ➢ Paper collars with sticky tape on one end that can be purchased inexpensively from a veterinary medical supplier or through Animal Care Equipment and Services, Inc. (ACES).[25]
  - ➢ Martingale collars (for dogs only) prevent dogs from backing out of them. The benefits are that dogs will not tear off the collars and that volunteers will not have to put a collar on a dog (risking a poor fit and a dog escaping) each time they take him or her out. Once a dog has left the shelter the collar should be washed, and a new identification number put in the temporary tag.

- ✓ Redesign the computer-generated cage cards with more thorough information about the animals. Adopters would like to see details about the animals' behavior, personality, medical issues (if any), likes, dislikes, etc. Cage cards should be easy to read and interpret.[26]

- ✓ Create a Pet Personality Profile to collect behavioral information on animals relinquished by their guardians. Place this information in the computer record. This will help staff determine the adoptability of an animal and assist in making the best possible match between adopter and pet. This information should be provided to potential adopters upon request.[27]

---

[24] www.hollister.com
[25] Animal Care and Equipment Services, Inc, www.animal-care.com, 1-800-338-ACES
[26] Sample Cage Card and Animal Profile
[27] Dog and Cat Personality Profile samples

- ✓ Establish a written SOP on how disclosure of disposition will be handled by the agency. All staff should be provided with training and support regarding this process. If the current form is to be used, then it should be presented to every person that turns an animal into the shelter.

- ✓ Attach medical treatment cards for animals receiving daily medication to the animal's run or cage to ensure that medications are administered as directed. See section 5.2, General Shelter Medicine for more on this subject.

- ✓ Cease the practice of BPTS. Decisions regarding the final disposition of animals are the responsibility of SLOCAS based on applicable policies and Codes.

- ✓ Leave notes on the run or cage if an animal has been removed. Laminated 3 x 5 inch cards reading "On A Walk," "In The Get Acquainted Room," or "In The Exercise Yard" may be effective.

- ✓ Track the reasons guardians give for surrendering or returning animals in order to help reduce relinquishment. Knowing why people are relinquishing their pets can help SLOCAS determine what type of community outreach is needed. For example, if a large number of owners are relinquishing pets due to behavior issues, SLOCAS may consider developing an educational training program to help guardians resolve basic behavior problems that can interfere with the human/animal bond. Such information can be highly publicized within the community and can provide pet guardians the information they need before they become frustrated and turn over their pets to the shelter. Understanding the reasons for pet relinquishments can help SLOCAS create intervention programs to help keep people and their pets together for life.[28]

Discussion:
Cage cards that are supposed to "move with the animal" are not reliable methods of identification in a shelter environment. Paperwork can easily be lost, switched, or become damaged or faded and animals of the same breed and color, such as black cats or black labs, can look alike. It is imperative that animals be properly identified in the shelter. Identification is invaluable if an animal were to escape from the shelter, and it also prevents errors such as accidental euthanasia.

4.17 LOST AND FOUND PROCEDURE

Observations:
The draft SOP did not contain a section on lost and found procedures. Holding periods were stated as follows in Article V, Section E, Holding Period, of the draft SOP:

1) Stray animals: All animals received as strays, regardless of species, shall be held for

---

[28] HSUS "Pets for Life Behavior Tip Sheets" on CD-ROM+ www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/index.html

> *a minimum of four days, not including the date of impound. 2) Owner relinquished animals: All animals received as owner surrenders, regardless of species, shall be available for adoption immediately. a) Owner surrendered animals shall be held a minimum of four days, not including the date of impound, prior to euthanasia or being made available for rescue.*

Article III, Section L, Animal Redemptions, of the draft SOP further stated:

> *1) Stray Holding: Animals impounded as strays shall be held for redemption by their owners as mandated by applicable State Law.*

During the site visit staff told the team that stray animals, including feral cats, have a stray holding period of five days. Staff further stated that an animal with a tag or microchip had a holding period of seven days.

Kennelworkers processed lost and found reports utilizing the Chameleon© database. There was a lost and found bulletin board and a binder including reports from the past 30 days. Members of the public brought in photos of their animals or called SLOCAS to report an animal lost or found. People seeking their lost pet did not complete a lost report prior to looking through the Kennel or Cat Rooms for their pet. Proof of ownership was required, but it was unclear what was acceptable as proof.

If the incoming animal was a stray, the staff member receiving the animal checked computerized lost reports for potential matches. Volunteers also regularly reviewed lost reports and attempted to match them with shelter animals.

SLOCAS had an extremely proactive lost and found program. The SLOCAS Web site provides "guidelines to help you find your lost pet" and features found animals that are within the shelter, found animals that are being cared for by private citizens, and a listing of missing animals. Every evening an SLOCAS telephone hotline for found animals was updated with dates, times, locations, and descriptions.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Require clients to fill out a lost report before being allowed to look at the animals. Then if a person claims he found his pet at SLOCAS, the information on the lost report can be used to determine if, in fact, the animal is his.

- ✓ Require all individuals surrendering an animal, whether their own or a stray, to show photo identification in order to verify name and address. The complete contact information for every person brining in an animal should be recorded and tracked in the computer.

- ✓ Require clients to provide proof of ownership, not just personal identification. The proof could include photos, veterinary records, licenses, bills of sale, breed registries, etc.

- ✓ Revise Article V, Section E, Holding Period 1) Stray animals, in the draft SOP to include that SLOCAS will comply with the California Food and Agriculture Code

Section 17006 which states that animals "irremediably suffering from a serious illness or severe injury shall not be held for owner redemption or adoption."

- ✓ Task a staff member to be responsible for daily checks of the lost reports against animals in the facility.
- ✓ Revise the draft SOP to explicitly describe the holding periods for stray animals, owner surrendered animals, and feral cats. Given the discrepancy between what The HSUS team was told on-site, the draft SOP, and the state Codes, staff needs to review this key information.
- ✓ SLOCAS is commended for their proactive, comprehensive lost and found program.

Discussion:
Since most municipal shelters have high rates of stray animals (sometimes close to 80 percent of their animals are stray), having a proactive lost and found program is essential to increase return-to-owner rates and decrease the shelter population.

Allowing clients to look through the shelter for their lost animal prior to completing a lost report provides the opportunity for dishonest people to attempt to claim an animal that is not theirs, especially if they are not required to provide proof of ownership.

Increasing the reclaim rate improves staff moral, helps to reduce the pressures on holding requirements and other animal care workload, and greatly reduces the impulse of clients to immediately adopt another animal, especially when those stray animals might be returned home. The improvement of redemption numbers will help to relieve the pressures on space in the shelter and on the need to do more adoptions.

The following excerpts in the California Food and Agriculture Code regarding holding periods can be used when revising the draft SOP. Section 31108 states:

> *(a) The required holding period for a stray dog impounded pursuant to this division shall be six business days, not including the day of impoundment, except as follows: (1) If the public or private shelter has made the dog available for owner redemption on one weekday evening until at least 7:00 p.m. or one weekend day, the holding period shall be four business days, not including the day of impoundment. (2) If the public or private shelter has fewer than three full-time employees or is not open during all regular weekday business hours, and if it has established a procedure to enable owners to reclaim their dogs by appointment at a mutually agreeable time when the public or private shelter would otherwise be closed, the holding period shall be four business days, not including the day of impoundment. Except as provided in Section 17006, stray dogs shall be held for owner redemption during the first three days of the holding period, not including the day of impoundment, and shall be available for owner redemption or adoption for the remainder of the holding period.*

Section 31752 of the Code concerns stray cats and reads the same as above with the exception of the addition of Code 31752.5, which states that if the cat has been determined

feral through temperament assessment performed by a qualified individual the cat may be euthanized or transferred to a 501(c)3 rescue.

Section 31108.5 of the Code related to owner relinquishment of a dog and states:

> *(b) Upon relinquishment, the dog may be made available for immediate euthanasia if it has a history of vicious or dangerous behavior documented by the agency charged with enforcing state and local animal laws.*

Finally, Section 31754 of the Code states:

> *(a) Except as provided in Section 17006, any animal relinquished by the purported owner that is of a species impounded by public or private shelters shall be held for the same holding periods, with the same requirements of care, applicable to stray dogs and cats in Sections 31108 and 31752, and shall be available for owner redemption or adoption for the entire holding period. (b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), kittens or puppies relinquished by the purported owner, or brought in by any other person with authority to relinquish them, to public or private shelters, may be available immediately for adoption.*

Revising SLOCAS' SOPs to include specific language from the Code will ensure that all staff are aware of the mandated holding periods and will also hold them accountable for both understanding and upholding them.

4.2 ANIMAL HANDLING

Observations:
Animal handling was not included in the draft SOP and SLOCAS did not have a training guide that outlined handling practices.

Inmates handled animals during routine cleaning of Kennels and Cat Rooms. During the site visit, four inmates worked at the facility, and their tenures ranged from two days to two months. None of the inmates interviewed had received any formal training on animal handling, animal care, cleaning, disinfecting, shelter procedures, or client service. One inmate spoke very little English, and none of the shelter staff interviewed spoke Spanish. Members of the public who entered the Kennel were greeted and assisted by volunteers or inmates.

On March 19, an inmate was observed in the main Kennel hallway picking up a rabbit by his ears. When the inmate saw the team member he placed his other hand under the rabbit and put him back in the hutch.

During the cleaning process an inmate placed a large, in-heat female Pit Bull mix into an exercise yard which was already occupied by another dog; the dogs were separated without incident. The team was told that volunteers have placed dogs together in the outdoor yards and at times fights have broken out, yet the volunteers were not trained to halt dog fights.

One of the inmates cleaning cat cages used a plastic spray bottle of germicide to prod a cat from one side of a double cage to another, poking the cat with the bottom of the bottle repeatedly until the cat escaped through the portal to the other side. In the process, the cat bit or clawed a hole in the plastic bottle, allowing germicide to spray out. Plastic portal covers were available for use to move cats from side to side or confine a cat to one side of a double cage for cleaning, but these were never observed in use.

A control pole was observed in Cat Room C2. One staff member stated that she had been taught to use a control pole on a cat during her first week at SLOCAS. A net was also observed in the Cat Rooms and an inmate said that he was told to use the net to catch cats who escaped their cages.

The altercation between the two dogs involving two volunteers discussed previously in section 2.7, General Safety Issues/OSHA, is an example of a serious animal handling issue.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Discontinue the use of control poles for handling cats. Use of control poles on cats is not recommended as a primary restraint or capture tool. A control pole should be used *only* when other alternatives for restraint have been exhausted and restraint of the animal is necessary so that the cat can be transported from one location to another. The HSUS "How to Use a Control Pole" would be a useful training tool for staff as it provides guidelines on looping the cable under the foreleg.[29]

- ✓ Humane and safe handling of cats can be achieved using the following products:
  - ➢ The Campbell Pet Company "EZ Nabber"[30]
  - ➢ The ACES "Cat Bagger"
  - ➢ The ACES "Feral Cat Den" (is usually left open in the cat cage at all times)

- ✓ Do not allow inmates or other untrained staff to capture or restrain cats, or handle other small or exotic animals.

- ✓ Establish and implement training procedures for duties which the inmates are required to perform until staff is hired to replace those duties (see section, 10.4 Infrastructure & Support Systems). These duties should *not* include animal handling in any form. All inmates should be directly supervised by paid staff while performing their duties.

- ✓ Instruct the kennelworkers to spend their time working directly with the animals in their care, supervising inmate and volunteer labor, and assisting clients. Other tasks such as clerical work should be reassigned to the administrative staff.

---

[29] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, The Complete 'How To' Series, Section A, Animal Handling+

[30] www.campbellpet.com

- ✓ Utilize caution when introducing dogs who have not been previously introduced. Only staff or volunteers who have been trained in reading dog behavior should be tasked with pairing dogs or forming dog play groups.

- ✓ Require the same training for volunteers as staff and hold them accountable to the same standards.

- ✓ Ensure that all animal handling equipment is placed on (at a minimum) a weekly maintenance program that includes the immediate repair or removal of any faulty equipment.

- ✓ Always place cats in an appropriate carrier when being moved to a different area of the shelter, especially when taken outside. No matter how adept the handler, a cat could easily become frightened and escape. Using cat carriers or the recommendations above will make the cat feel more secure and also protect the staff from being accidentally scratched or bitten. Cats should never be scruffed and held unsupported.

- ✓ Inhumane handling should never be tolerated. Management must be accountable for any acts of cruelty that are taking place at SLOCAS.

- ✓ Ensure staff safety and humane care of animals by providing access to the following animal handling equipment and ensure that staff receives instruction on the proper use of the equipment:
  - ➢ Capture gloves: These can be critical to preventing injuries to both humans and animals, and to 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 or oven mitts (which are similar in appearance) do not offer the needed protection, and offer a false sense of security. Capture gloves are available from several companies. Do not use oven 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 a variety of purposes, including the transportation of diseased or dead animals or providing a quiet environment for animals undergoing the euthanasia process.
  - ➢ Caging and Transfer Systems for Unsocialized Cats: Trap transfer cages, squeeze cages, and feral cat handling systems are crucial equipment for animal care and control. These caging systems provide for the anesthesia, euthanasia, or transfer of feral and unsocialized cats without the need for 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 the field pick-up, daily care, cage cleaning, monitoring, treatment, transfer, anesthesia, or

euthanasia of feral or unsocialized cats with no handling necessary.[31]

- Nets: Nets are an essential piece of equipment that can enable all staff to handle a variety of animals with minimal restraint. Nets should be sturdy, at least twice as deep as the diameter, and flat on the end instead of round. Many nets allow for the capture and removal of unsocialized cats with minimal difficulty.
- Leashes: Leashes can serve many purposes, and should be more readily available for all staff. A number of manufacturers offer nylon 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.
- Syringe Poles: These devices allow for the 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 carry injured, anesthetized, or sedated animals safely and comfortably during transport. Many come with a cover that fits over the prone animal, attaching to the stretcher with a securing material, such as Velcro.
- Towels and Blankets: These items can be used for a multitude of purposes, including for capturing smaller animals, covering cages and traps, and providing comfort to animals housed within transport compartments.

4.3 ANIMAL CARE

4.31 DOG CARE

Observations:
There was no written SOP in place for animal care specific to comfort items or general treatment.

While staff expressed concern for the animals in their care, they were seldom observed interacting with the animals or directly monitoring their care.

Dogs and cats were not housed in the same area, with the exception of the Dog/Cat Isolation Room which contained dog runs and cat cages facing one another. One employee stated that during “kitten season,” cats were housed in a portable bank of cages which was placed in the Kennel hallway.

During the site visit, slightly more than half of the runs in the Kennel were occupied. All runs had blankets or towels for bedding. An ample supply of towels and blankets was observed throughout the facility. Each run was also equipped with an elevated resting bench and stainless steel water bowl.

Dogs were removed from their runs by inmates and taken to one of four outdoor exercise

---

[31] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, “Feral Cat Handling System,” May–June 1999+

yards while their runs were cleaned. There was no stated deviation from moving animals to the yards during cleaning in the event of cold or inclement weather. There was minimal odor and adequate air circulation. Open double-width sliding doors leading to the outdoor exercise yards allowed fresh air to circulate through the Kennel. The Kennel was cool, but not uncomfortably cold; however, a dog (A148464) named "Oscar" at 8:20 am on March 19 located in run D12 was shaking, presumably from the temperature. Run D12 is located near one of the double-wide openings leading to the outdoor yards.

Paper trays were used for dry dog food in the dog runs and were shallow and in some cases slid under the bottom of the run door into the trench drain which maintained a three inch gap. It was not clear if the dogs were sliding the paper trays under the door and into the trench drains before or after they had eaten some of the food. Water was available for all dogs and was changed daily by the inmates. SLOCAS had an ample supply of stainless steel bowls which were stored in the Medical/Euthanasia Room.

The care of dogs in the outdoor yards during the cleaning process was inadequate, as described in the following several examples.

- A small dog escaped from an outdoor yard. Staff told the team that small dogs were placed in one of the outdoor night surrender runs during cleaning; however, many small dogs were observed in the outdoor yards during the site visit. A Chihuahua mix (A148299) was found running loose in the Kennel by one of the team members as he opened the front door of the Kennel. If a member of the public had been buzzed in the door at that time the dog may have escaped. The team member was able to maneuver so that the dog did not escape. The team was informed that small and even medium sized dogs are known to escape from the outdoor yards due to the gap between the fence and the gate door. *(See photos 30–31)* Staff explained that the dog had just been returned by a client and he was placed in the yard by a volunteer temporarily while his run was set up, even though all of the empty runs were pre set.
- The team observed an inmate place a large black and white Pit Bull in an outdoor yard next to a white, toy Poodle. The Pit Bull barked and pawed at the chain link fence and the Poodle appeared afraid and attempted avoiding contact by moving to the opposite side of the yard. A Miniature Schnauzer in the other adjoining run then proceeded to urinate on the Poodle several times.
- An inmate was observed removing stainless steel water bowls, dropping them from waist-level onto floor creating loud noise as dogs remained in the runs on the opposite side of the aisle. The dogs appeared fearful, moving to the back of their runs.
- On March 19, batting from bedding and toys was observed in one of the dog runs. On March 20, the same dog in that run was given another blanket with batting.

<u>Recommendations:</u>

- ✓ Create dog care SOPs to include incoming animal examinations, vaccination protocols, sterilization, isolation and separation, and feeding protocols.

- ✓ Separate dogs from cats in the Dog/Cat Isolation Room. Do not house dogs and cats in close proximity to one another.

- ✓ Provide training for all staff and volunteers on recognizing, reducing, and preventing stress in dogs.[32, 33, 34] Utilize a form to document animals who are exhibiting signs of stress.[35]

- ✓ Repair the gap between the fence and the gate door in the outdoor exercise yards. Do not place small dogs in the outdoor yards unless the gap is sufficiently narrowed.

- ✓ Cease feeding the dogs in the shallow paper trays in favor of stainless steel bowls.

- ✓ Relocate the storage of stainless steel bowls. Move the bowls from the Medical/Euthanasia Room in order to alleviate the possibility of contamination given that sick animals are euthanized in that room.

- ✓ To ensure consistency, a supervisor should be responsible for making "spot checks," at minimum in the early morning and late afternoon to confirm that all aspects of the dog care SOPs are being carried out.

- ✓ Monitor animals for any signs of discomfort, such as shaking. As "spot checks" are implemented, also consider run location and the animal's health, behavior, and condition, and move animals who may be better suited to another location.

- ✓ The HSUS commends SLOCAS for having platform dog beds and bedding in each dog run.

Discussion:

The quality of animal care 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.

Stress is a major factor in the development and spread of disease in a shelter environment. In order for the animals to maintain their sociability in the shelter environment, amenities such as platform beds, bedding, and toys are recommended. These enhancements also signal to the community that the animal caretakers will take extra time to ensure that the animals' needs are being met. Shelter animals must be housed in a way that minimizes stress, provides for their specific needs, affords protection from the elements, provides adequate ventilation, and minimizes the spread of diseases.

---

[32] "When Something Must Be Done," Rondout Valley Kennels, Inc.
[33] "Stress Signals Checklist," Rondout Valley Kennels, Inc.
[34] "How Can Learning About Dog Behavior and Training Benefit Your Shelter?", Rondout Valley Kennels, Inc.
[35] Kennel Walk Through Form

4.32 CAT CARE

Observations:
Cat Rooms did not house dogs with the exception of the Dog/Cat Isolation Room.

As previously described, cat cages were either double-compartment composite units with portals between the units, or single-compartment stainless steel units. All of the cages in use, including the double units, housed one cat; there were approximately 50 cats on-site during the site visit.

The cat cages contained disposable cardboard litter boxes, disposable paper food trays, and stainless steel water bowls. Most cages contained towels or small blankets. Food, water, and litter were available in all cages. All of the Cat Rooms were a comfortable temperature and there was minimal odor; however, there was minimal airflow and the team noted that during warmer temperatures airflow was likely to be an issue in these rooms.

As previously mentioned, the majority of cage banks were elevated more than 17 inches from the floor, but a few banks were not elevated. During the site visit the team noted that the bottom rows of the banks that were not elevated contained newspaper that had been recently wet. Cats contained in these bottom cages were not visible to a person standing or sitting in the room. A volunteer working with one of these cats lay on the floor on her stomach to interact with a cat.

The team observed two inmates clean the cat cages. One inmate was very thorough and methodical in his cleaning procedures and took great care to handle the cats gently. The other inmate, by contrast, was careless in his cleaning technique and seemed hostile toward the cats. For more on the cleaning process, see section 5.6, Disease Control and Sanitation.

There was an overall sense that cat care was a lower priority than dog care at this facility. Staff and volunteer efforts seemed focused on dogs, and several volunteers stated that the staff “did not care” about the cats. The shelter coordinator admittedly had considerably less experience working with cats than dogs.

Many of the dog runs had “volunteer observations” sheets attached with notes about individual dogs, presumably to encourage adoption. There were no such notes on any of the cat cages. A random audit of computerized medical records produced several records for cats in which medications were not administered because the cat “could not be handled.” Many of the cards in C2 were labeled “Caution–Fearful” and the cats in this room were described by staff as either feral, or recent additions who were too fearful to be handled. Most of the cats in this room hid in the backs of their cages, but did not react aggressively when approached.

On March 19, the team observed a cat (A148058) wearing a flea collar who had an intake date of February 29. On March 20, “Lizzi” a black and white cat (A148380) located in Cat Room C3 was observed in the last stages of gestation. There was no note on her cage card regarding her pregnancy, but there was a note that she was scheduled for spay on March 21. The cage card also noted “adopted” and when the team inquired about it they were told that she was adopted by the shelter so that they could have another office cat. Lizzi did not have

food and water in her cage, which would have been appropriate given that she was scheduled for surgery the following day, but it was the afternoon and it appeared that someone meant to feed her because fresh food and water was in an empty cat cage on her left.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create cat care SOPs to include incoming animal examinations, vaccination protocols, sterilization, isolation and separation, and feeding protocols.

- ✓ Hire a paid staff member with verified experience in handling cats. Charge this person with training and supervising staff in the care and proper handling of cats. Immediately ensure that cat care becomes an equal priority to dog care in the shelter. In the interim, directly supervise all inmate labor while cat areas are being cleaned, and instruct all staff in correct restraint techniques.

- ✓ Utilize the double-cage system that is in place to secure cats during cleaning. Humanely direct cats from one side to the other.

- ✓ Enlist an experienced staff member or volunteer to conduct temperament evaluations of "fearful" cats, to help distinguish the fearful from the truly feral.

- ✓ Provide training for all staff and volunteers on recognizing, reducing, and preventing stress in cats.[36, 37, 38]

- ✓ During "kitten season" or any other high intake period be sure not to crowd animals in cages or runs.[39] Staff should be provided with written guidelines that specify the maximum number of dogs, puppies, cats, or kittens that can be housed in a cage, run, or room. With regard to kittens, the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program suggests the following:
  - ➢ There must be enough space so that every kitten can stretch out, move around, eat and be able to get to the litter box without problems. Ideally, house no more than 2–3 unrelated kittens per cage.
  - ➢ Refrain from switching kittens around between different groups, but rather keep kittens as a constant group once they have been introduced to each other.
  - ➢ If you have very young kittens not yet suitable for adoption, get them into a foster program.

- ✓ Remove flea collars from animals upon intake.

---

36 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Kitty Comforts," January–February 2005+

37 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Keeping shelter cats healthy through stress reduction," January–February 2007+

38 Impacts of Shelter & Housing Design on Shelter Animal Health, 'Housing that minimize stress and maximizes welfare,' UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program

39 Impacts of Shelter & Housing Design on Shelter Animal Health, 'Avoid Crowding,' UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program

- ✓ To ensure consistency, a supervisor should be responsible for making "spot checks," at minimum in the early morning and late afternoon to confirm that all aspects of the cat care SOPs are being carried out.

Discussion:
In many shelters across the country cats are granted inferior status to dogs and are treated as such. SLOCAS appears to be no exception. Enlisting the help of a person with bonafide cat handling experience to manage the cat areas would greatly improve the level of cat care in this facility. It was stated on many occasions during The HSUS site visit that there is a significant cat overpopulation problem in San Luis Obispo County. Elevating the level of cat care at SLOCAS will help to increase the cat adoption rate at this facility.

4.33 SMALL ANIMAL/EXOTIC CARE

Observations:
During the site visit one of the small animal/exotic housing units was occupied by a degu. Species-appropriate food was present, as was water, newspaper bedding, a towel, and a hollow log for the animal to hide in.

A cage in the other multi-section unit had recently been occupied by domestic rats. These animals had been removed prior to the team's arrival, but the cage had not been cleaned.

The wooden-framed wire rabbit hutch in the Kennel hallway was housing one domestic rabbit. There was clean hay for bedding, food, water, and a hutch box. There was not litter box for the rabbit. The water bottle had a slow leak and it was replaced when brought to the attention of a kennelworker.

Kennelworkers were responsible for caring for and cleaning the small animal/exotic cages. The team was told that this task was not delegated to inmates; however, one of the team members witnessed an inmate cleaning the rabbit hutch. Cages were reportedly cleaned daily.

A peahen roamed loose on the shelter grounds. *(See photo 32)* One staff member stated that she had been living freely on the shelter grounds for four or five months.

Recommendations:

- ✓ The HSUS team strongly recommends that SLOCAS develop a written SOP addressing the care and housing for every species that may come into its shelter.

- ✓ Remove the peahen from the property if SLOCAS has not yet done this. Locate a rescue group or adoptive home for the peahen. Do not allow animals to freely roam the shelter grounds, as it poses potential danger to the animal and to the visiting public who may not expect to encounter a loose animal on the property. Additionally, peafowl have been known to be aggressive and have the potential to harm visitors.

- ✓ Place litter boxes in the hutches when housing rabbits. Utilize shredded newspaper to be used as litter; *do not* use cat litter for rabbits.

- ✓ Make "spot checks" in the early morning and late afternoon to confirm that all aspects of the SOPs are being carried out.

4.34 WILDLIFE CARE

Observations:
At the time of the site visit there was no wildlife on the premises. Impounded wildlife was routinely transported to one of several local wildlife rehabilitation centers. Severely injured or diseased wildlife was euthanized. For more on wildlife, see section 9.12, Wildlife Issues.

Procedures for the care of wildlife at SLOCAS appeared to be more than adequate.

Recommendations:
None.

4.35 FARM ANIMAL/EQUINE CARE

Observations:
The draft SOP did not include a section specifically related to farm animal or equine care. Aside from the gamecocks, there were no other livestock or horses on the premises.

Each gamecock was housed in an individual, locked cage of large double-unit stainless steel bank of cages. The cage size was adequate, but there was no bedding on the floor of the cages. Water, feed, and cracked corn were present, but food and water bowls were knocked over and were not readily replaced. Some of the water bowls were soiled. *(See photos 33–34)* There was no shade in this area, and the stainless steel cages were warm to the touch from the direct sun. The rear wheels of one cage bank had sunk halfway into the mud underneath them, and the cage tilted back at a ten to fifteen-degree angle. This caused the birds contained within to slide to the rear of the cages. The cage banks were positioned opposite each other allowing the birds to see one another.

The team was told that the gamecocks were fed and watered by the inmates. Staff was not observed in the area at any time during the site visit. It was unclear how often the cages were cleaned or who actually cleaned them. As of 4:00 pm on March 19 the birds had not been cleaned, fed, or watered; regardless, feces and odor were minimal. A staff member told the team that there had been other gamecocks from the same seizure, but they had died at the shelter.

Recommendations:
- ✓ Improve the gamecock housing as the current housing is inadequate. Bedding should be provided, and cages should either be mounted on a secure surface where they cannot sink into mud, or replaced with other caging which allows them access to dirt or another substrate in which to scratch. The area should be re-graveled or otherwise resurfaced to mitigate the mud and direct sun. The water and food containers in the cages should be secured to prevent dumping.

- ✓ Assign only paid staff to attend to evidentiary impounded animals.
- ✓ Perform "spot checks" in the early morning and late afternoon to confirm that all aspects of the SOPs are being carried out.

Discussion:
Animals held as evidence in a criminal case are a special circumstance and require special care. Not only must their husbandry needs be met, but the chain of custody of evidence must be maintained at all times to preserve the integrity of the case.

A detailed description of an appropriate housing arrangement for gamecocks can be found in the book *Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff*.[40] This book was present in the animal services manager's office.

[40] *Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff*, Lila Miller, D.V.M., Stephen Zawistowski, Ph. D., pages 520–521 CR

5.0 VETERINARY/HEALTH ISSUES

5.1 VETERINARY SERVICES/CONTRACTS/RELATIONS

Observations:
The animal services manager is a licensed veterinarian. He maintained an office in the shelter and was present during the entire site visit. A current veterinary library, veterinary medications, and controlled drugs were stored in the animal services manager's office. Although the animal services manager is a veterinarian, he stated that his primary role in the shelter is one of management and administration, rather than veterinary oversight of the shelter animals. This was also supported by interviews with staff and volunteers, as well as by the team's observation. The animal services manager stated that he conducts veterinary rounds twice per week to examine shelter animals; however, these rounds were not observed by The HSUS team during the site visit. He further stated that shelter staff brought animals suspected of being sick or injured to his office for examination.

During interviews with the animal services manager he gave a detailed description of his job duties at SLOCAS. These duties were predominately administrative and clerical in nature and included: budget oversight, personnel issues, operations oversight, dealing with volunteer and citizen complaints, oversight of field services, conducting administrative hearings regarding nuisance abatement cases and animal seizures, maintaining communication with local veterinarians, remote chemical capture, acting as SLOCAS liaison for various City and County committees and departments, upgrading and increasing efficiency of the office and information technology department, data management and statistical reports, and triage and treatment of shelter animals. It was evident during the site visit that the animal services manager's role at SLOCAS was one of administrator rather than veterinarian. The perceived and actual roles of the animal services manager served as a constant source of confusion and frustration for the staff, volunteers, and general public.

The animal services manager explained that area veterinarians offered adopters a free initial health exam of any adopted pet. There was no observed contractual agreement with local veterinarians with the exception of two MOUs with local emergency clinics. The animal services manager spoke to the relationship between SLOCAS and area veterinarians and described this relationship as generally positive and cooperative, which was also supported by staff. Sick and injured animals were frequently transported to area veterinarians for evaluation and treatment. Area veterinarians were compensated for their services with SLOCAS funds, up to $100.00 per animal treated. Since the animal services manager did not perform daily examinations, treatment, or euthanasia of shelter animals, veterinarians were not hired to come to the shelter during his absence.

The animal services manager stated that he frequently had animals evaluated by area veterinarians rather than perform examinations himself. He stated that in some cases he did this to avoid conflicts with volunteers and foster groups, because there was frequent public backlash from these groups if he made an unpopular veterinary decision on behalf of a shelter animal. For this reason he avoided the backlash by referring sick or injured animals to

outside veterinarians for examination and treatment, and paid these veterinarians for their services. He stated that this process "wastes a lot of taxpayer money," but that the pressure from his superiors to appease the volunteers and foster groups made the financial outlay worth it.

The animal services manager stated that the California State Veterinarian did not inspect SLOCAS.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Immediately clarify the animal services manager's role at SLOCAS and communicate this clearly to staff, volunteers, and the general public. If the animal services manager is to function as an administrator then that should be clearly stated, and a veterinarian should be hired or retained on a contract basis to examine and treat shelter animals on a daily basis. If the animal services manager is to function as the shelter's veterinarian then that should be clearly stated and his job description should be rewritten to reflect shelter medicine as a higher priority than administrative duties.

- ✓ Reassign all administrative or clerical tasks currently being handled by the animal services manager which may reasonably be delegated to other staff members.

- ✓ Immediately begin the practice of daily rounds through the Kennel and Cat Rooms to check animals, direct treatment, and monitor the correct administration of treatment. This should be done by the animal services manager, a designated contract veterinarian, or a veterinary technician. Animals can be treated in their run or cage.

- ✓ Do not treat sick animals in the animal services manager's office. Walking animals through the administrative office has the potential of spreading disease throughout the facility. This practice is further problematic because the shelter mascots "Joe" and "Roy" are present in the office.

- ✓ The SLOCSD and board of supervisors must make an immediate, public, and sustained commitment to support the management and the staff at SLOCAS.

- ✓ Refrain from granting immediate credence to volunteer complaints. Veterinary medical decisions must not be overturned by volunteers or non-medical personnel.

Discussion:

A common thread among the frustrations cited by staff, volunteers, and the animal services manager himself is the apparent confusion over his role at SLOCAS. The mere fact that the animal services manager is a licensed veterinarian allows one to draw the conclusion that he provides medical oversight and treatment of shelter animals, however this is not the case. The administrative duties which the animal services manager has been assigned, as well as those which he has voluntarily assumed, clearly take priority over his responsibilities as a veterinarian. Clarifying the animal services manager's role at SLOCAS and taking positive steps to provide for daily veterinary care of all shelter animals will go a long way towards quelling volunteer complaints. More importantly, daily rounds through the shelter will allow for better animal health and disease prevention and will also allow the animal services

manager to directly supervise the activities of the staff. “Managing by walking around” is one of the oldest and most effective forms of management; see section 10.5, Performance Management and Accountability for more on this subject.

Volunteers provide a valuable service to organizations with limited budgets and can be indispensable in an animal shelter. However, volunteers, like paid staff, must have boundaries. Volunteers will not agree with all decisions made for shelter animals, but it is imperative that they respect the authority of those making the decisions. For more on this topic, see section 8.2, Volunteers. It is equally imperative that the people charged with making the tough decisions in an animal shelter have the full backing of their superiors.

5.2 GENERAL SHELTER MEDICINE

Observations:
The draft SOP contained Article V, Section F, Pregnant, Nursing, and Unweaned Animals, and Section G, Injured and Ill Animals. Each section defined the terms of its focus and described the terms under which animals would be medically treated or euthanized.

Kennelworkers communicated with one another about sick animals via email, notes on a bulletin board in the Kennel Office, and on a clipboard on the shelter coordinator’s office door. Kennelworkers had not received formal training in disease recognition, handling sick or injured animals, or preventing the spread of disease. If kennelworkers or ACOs observed an animal with a possible illness or injury, that person either brought the animal to the animal services manager’s attention, or made a note on a clipboard affixed to the shelter coordinator’s door. The animal services manager then diagnosed and gave treatment recommendations for that animal. Those treatment orders were then to be recorded in the animal’s computer file. In the animal services manager’s absence, animals were transported to an area veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment.

During the site visit, several animals were observed to be in need of veterinary care. A dog in the Dog/Cat Isolation Room named “Jeanine” who had been spayed the morning of March 18 was showing signs of pain. A team member brought the dog’s condition to the attention of the shelter coordinator who was not aware of the dog’s immediate history. There was no cage card and no identification on the animal. The shelter coordinator asked the animal services manager to examine the dog and he prescribed appropriate analgesia. The shelter coordinator stated that animals were not routinely given post-operative analgesic medication after they returned to SLOCAS post surgery. She believed that analgesic medication might be given at the time of surgery by the attending surgeon; however, there was no record of this.

Another animal in obvious need of veterinary care was a cat named “Ivan” (A148225), who had an open, draining sore over one eye. There were no notations on this animal’s cage card or on the treatment clipboard in the Kennel hallway to indicate that veterinary care had been administered. There was also no indication of a medical problem in his computer record.

“Roscoe,” (A141128) a Pit Bull displayed a widespread lesion on his front left leg. The team asked a staff member where medical information should be noted and he stated that “if

someone notices, they write it on the Animal Requiring Medical Attention sheet on the shelter coordinator's office door." A team member then viewed the sheet and it did not have any entries.

The dog (A119734) mentioned in section 4.16 was observed by a team member to be limping and noticed that there were no notations in the computer record, or anywhere on his cage card indicating a condition. Upon further investigation the team member discovered that the injury was described on the written intake profile. This profile was stored in a file box in the main office which was inaccessible to all but a few staff members.

Staff explained that when an animal received treatment for a medical condition, a yellow sticker bearing the veterinary caduceus emblem was affixed to that animal's cage card. The team noted that three animals in the Kennel had such stickers, and had corresponding treatment records in their computer files. A staff member stated that the yellow caduceus stickers had not been used "in months," and that the three stickers were placed up Monday, March 17, 2008 for the benefit of The HSUS site visit.

The team was told that a list of animals requiring veterinary care was printed from Chameleon© records twice a day, and that the staff administered medications according to that list. After the treatments on the list were completed, the list was thrown away. During the site visit this process was not observed. The team was told that if an animal received medical treatment and was then adopted, the adopting party was given a copy of that animal's computerized treatment record.

No one person was assigned to monitor the status of sick or injured animals, and there was no on-cage system to alert staff to an animal's condition or verify that medications had been given. As previously stated, there was no area specifically designated for the examination or treatment of sick animals.

A random audit of Chameleon© records showed that examinations and treatments were entered for some animals. Some of the records, such as A147883, were thorough and easy to understand. Others, such as A146341, were cryptic and contained only abbreviations of diagnoses and medications ordered without specifics as to medication strength, route, or frequency of dose. Many records contained only a computer-assigned treatment number with no details as to diagnosis or specific treatment orders. The records that concerned the team most were those for which the disposition was listed as "euthanized–medical untreatable" without treatment records or diagnoses.

Appropriate medications were present and available in the animal services manager's office, as well as in the Kennel Office. A check of the Kennel refrigerator revealed current antibiotics as well as one bottle of expired reconstituted antibiotic.

Records of administered treatments were inconsistent and difficult to trace and verify. The overall system of diagnosis, treatment, and monitoring of sick animals had no consistency or accountability.

Recommendations:

- ✓ A veterinarian should develop a written, detailed SOP for animal health care and the SOP should be implemented and followed consistently.[41]

- ✓ Immediately institute veterinary rounds to evaluate every sick or injured animal on a daily basis.

- ✓ Designate one person, preferably a veterinary technician, to oversee treatments and ensure that treatments are performed and documented on a daily basis. This person should (1) be thoroughly trained in disease recognition and handling of sick and injured animals, (2) observe every single animal in the shelter every day to watch for early signs of illness before spreading to other animals, and (3) administer medications consistently and at the same time every day. This observation can be performed at the same time as the daily animal inventory recommended in section 4.16.

- ✓ Consider hiring a trained veterinary technician.

- ✓ Isolate sick animals from healthy animals as soon as possible to minimize the spread of disease.

- ✓ Immediately institute a system of on-cage medical cards to alert staff members that an animal is under medical care and to track whether medications are given as scheduled.

- ✓ Track medications on the medical cage cards as well as in the computer chart. These cards can take the place of the yellow caduceus stickers which provide no real information. These cards, or a written summary of the information contained therein, can be sent with an adopted animal as part of that animal's medical history.

- ✓ Print a daily Chameleon© report of animals requiring treatment, and check that report against the on-cage medical cards. This provides a check-and-balance system so that no treatments are overlooked. These daily medical reports should be stored as part of shelter medical records for a minimum of one year.

- ✓ Enter all diagnoses and treatments in the Chameleon© records in standardized form—diagnosis, treatments ordered and administered with specifics as to medication type, dose, route, and frequency.

- ✓ Record the diagnoses in the computer file if an animal is euthanized due to an untreatable medical condition. California Food and Agriculture Code 32003 and CCR-2032.3 contained within the Veterinary Medical Practice Act detail the requirements for accurate medical records.

---

[41] "Developing Infectious Disease Policies and Protocols in an Animal Shelter," Kate F. Hurley, DVM

- ✓ Implement, as part of the animal health SOP, a specific procedure for staff to follow to notify the medical staff in writing of a sick or injured animal. This procedure should be failsafe in ensuring that these animals receive medical care in a timely fashion. This could be accomplished by creating a Vet Check Needed form, which would include the date and time of the report; reporting staff member's name; the animal's identification, description, and location; and a brief description of the signs or problem. These forms should be easily accessible for all staff and completed forms would be placed in an in-box in the room that becomes designated for examinations. The in-box should be clearly labeled and used exclusively for this purpose. The staff member tasked with the oversight of treatments, preferably a veterinary technician, should be responsible for checking this box frequently throughout the day and examining the animals in a timely manner.

- ✓ Examine the healthiest animals first and the sickest last to prevent the spread of disease. For example, start with the animals in Adoption, then move to healthy hold, quarantine, and lastly, isolation. For more specific recommendations see section 5.7, Isolation and Separation.

- ✓ Animals who are on medication should each have a Treatment Observation form that is filled out each time the medication is administered. The HSUS recommends the following forms; however, SLOCAS should decide if and how it wants to combine the information in these forms based on the needs of the agency:
  - ➢ Treatment Log.[42] One for dogs, one for cats, and one for "other," if necessary. The treatment logs should consist of a list of each sick/injured animal under treatment, its identification number, location, and name of medication given, the dosage and times per day. This form should be hung in the examination room and utilized by the staff member responsible for administering medications to make sure that no animal is unintentionally overlooked. The staff member should initial and check off the boxes when each animal on the list has received her or his daily medication. Most shelter software programs are capable of generating a daily treatment log.
  - ➢ Treatment Observation Form.[43] Every sick/injured animal receiving medication should have a treatment observation form attached to his enclosure. Medical treatments should be meticulously documented in chronological order; this information should ultimately be filed with the animal's medical record. The form should record the following information:
    - Animal's identification number
    - Animal's description
    - Diagnosis/symptoms
    - The name and amount of the medication given
    - Times per day and number of days the medication should be given

---

[42] Treatment Log Form
[43] Treatment Observation Form

- Observations (i.e. temperature, appetite, urine, stool, nasal/eye discharge, activity level, etc.)

Advise adopters of the medical condition of any potential pet in order to determine whether they can provide the care required for that particular animal. A hard copy of an animal's medical record must be provided to the adopter, who in turn can present it to her or his veterinarian for ongoing care and treatment.[44, 45]

➢ Medical Record.[46] Each animal in the shelter should have a medical record created at the time of the initial examination. The record should include the following:

- Animal's identification number
- Animal's description
- Vaccination and diagnostic test history
- Initial physical examination findings and information, such as condition at arrival, flea treatments, microchip scan, etc. See section 5.3, Incoming Animal Examinations.

The Medical Record form should include space to document both normal and abnormal findings and indicate that all body systems have been examined. "Check-off" forms make this process easy, time-efficient, and consistent from animal to animal. All information recorded on the medical records should be initialed by the individual performing the task. Ideally, medical records should be maintained in a shelter software program in addition to hard copy. Computerized medical records would allow any staff member to access an animal's medical record from any computer terminal and would also eliminate the risk of losing or misplacing paper records.

✓ Dispense medications in individual vials and clearly label and store them in a designated secure location. Labeling should include the date dispensed, animal's name and identification, name of the medication, and complete dosage information. Medications should never be fastened to an animal's cage or stored in an area accessible to the public where they could be lost, stolen, or damaged.

✓ Develop a written SOP to designate which diseases and medical conditions will be treated in the shelter environment. Careful consideration should be given to the treatment policy for contagious, chronic, and zoonotic diseases. Once developed and implemented, this policy should be followed consistently.

Discussion:
Disease control is a constant problem in most animal shelters. Contagious disease is to be

---

[44] Initial Health Exam Form
[45] Health Evaluation Chart
[46] Shelter Medical Record example

expected as a natural result of commingling large numbers of animals with unknown health histories and immunization status. Stress exacerbates the challenge to animals' immune systems. Although a certain amount of contagious disease is to be expected, steps can be taken to minimize its spread. SLOCAS is fortunate to have a veterinarian on staff to diagnose and prescribe treatment for shelter animals. SLOCAS also enjoys a building structure which allows for at least some level of isolation of sick animals. All that is apparently lacking is a commitment on the part of the management and staff to make daily health evaluations and treatment a priority. This will require additional staffing, rearrangement of priorities of current staff, or both.

The California Food and Agriculture Code Section 17005 (b) prohibits the euthanasia of animals with treatable medical conditions. If SLOCAS designates an animal as having an untreatable medical condition and then euthanizes that animal because of that condition, then that condition should be clearly described as part of the permanent medical record along with any efforts made to treat the condition. Euthanizing animals due to "untreatable medical conditions" without this evidence is disingenuous at best and potentially unlawful at worst.

5.3 INCOMING ANIMAL EXAMINATIONS

Observations:
There were no directives in the draft SOP regarding incoming animal examinations.

Animals entered SLOCAS through the Kennel, night surrender, and field services. Owner surrendered animals were accepted at the Kennel Office window by a kennelworker. The kennelworker performed a cursory exam, scanned for a microchip, administered vaccinations, and entered the vaccination information in the animal's Chameleon© record. Health problems noted during the exam were written on the animal's profile but not entered in the computer record. The kennelworker then printed a cage card and placed the animal in a run or cage. As previously mentioned, animals were not given ID bands, tags, or any other form of direct identification.

The HSUS team observed one examination of an incoming animal. The kennelworker who performed the exam had no formal training in disease recognition, but appeared to be competent and comfortable performing the exam. The team was told that all incoming animals were scanned for microchips; however, this did not always happen. For example, prior to placement with a rescue group, a cat (A148205) was scanned and a microchip was found. There was no record of the cat being previously scanned, and no record of a microchip, tracing, or owner contact. The cat had been in the shelter for approximately one week.

Animals left in the night surrender area were removed by a kennelworker and processed in the same manner as described above. At 7:30 am on March 19 the team arrived at the shelter and there was a Labrador Retriever (A118649) in one of the night surrender runs who was moved into the Kennel at 8:10 am. The dog was scanned and had a microchip which was traced to an owner who was promptly contacted. The dog was returned to the owner the following day.

There was no standard process for the intake and processing of animals brought to the shelter by ACOs. The animal services manager expressed his concern over the lack of standardization and his desire to improve that process. Animals brought in by ACOs were placed in cages, but it is unclear when they were examined and vaccinated.

Although a large quantity of feline leukemia/immunodeficiency virus (FeLV/FIV) tests and heartworm tests were available, they were seldom used. The animal services manager explained that he only used the FeLV/FIV tests if a cat was sick and was to be released to an adopting party, or if he suspected FeLV/FIV. He also explained that canine heartworm disease is not endemic in that part of California and that most people, including him, do not use heartworm preventative for owned animals. He further explained that performing the tests on a larger scale would require more time and training of staff.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create and implement an incoming animal examination SOP.
- ✓ Provide training in physical examination and disease recognition for all staff who are assigned the task of examining incoming animals.
- ✓ Record physical examination findings, problems, and vaccinations both in the computer record and on the animal's medical card, as previously recommended.
- ✓ Establish a standard procedure for accepting animals from the field division. Assign one person per day to assist ACOs with unloading animals from trucks, scanning, examining, vaccinating, and housing those animals.
- ✓ Place an ID band or other identification directly on every animal. See section 4.16, Incoming Animal Identification and Procedures for more detailed recommendations.
- ✓ Scan every incoming animal for a microchip and record microchips and owner contact information both in the computer record and on the cage card.
- ✓ Reduce the quantities of FeLV/FIV and heartworm tests ordered and make better use of that part of the budget. If FeLV/ FIV and heartworm tests are not regularly used, do not order them in large quantities. Alternatively, make use of the tests. This will require training staff to draw blood and interpret the tests. Most kennelworkers already know how to perform venipuncture on dogs, as the same techniques are used during euthanasia. Staff should be trained to draw blood on cats; venipuncture of the medial saphenous vein of cats is not technically difficult and requires only a moderate level of restraint. Although canine heartworm disease is uncommon in this part of California, cases do occur, as reported by the American Heartworm Society.[47] SLOCAS should use its available tests, at least on dogs who are symptomatic for heartworm disease.

---

[47] www.heartwormsociety.org

- ✓ Consider rearranging the Kennel Office, or selecting another location to accommodate incoming animal examinations. This could be accomplished by transferring the file cabinets to another location and replacing the large desk with a smaller one. A stainless steel table could then be added to the room where incoming examinations, treatments, and routine preventative care such as vaccinations, lab tests, and treatments of non-contagious animals can be performed. This would be a good space to perform animal care procedures on healthy animals. Animals that are showing signs of disease must not go to the treatment facility. Treatment of those animals needs to happen in the isolation area where they are housed, if at all possible.

- ✓ Utilize the stainless steel table in the Medical/Euthanasia Room for examinations and drawing blood until another examination/treatment area can be established. Cleaning protocols must be followed carefully to prevent spread of contagious disease.

5.4 VACCINATION PROTOCOLS

Observations:
As previously mentioned, kennelworkers vaccinated animals who entered SLOCAS via the Kennel during the intake examination; however, there was not a standard procedure governing when animals were examined or vaccinated, particularly if animals were brought in by ACOs. ACOs told the team that all cats that could be handled were given a vaccination upon intake and dogs waited until the next day. The draft SOP, Article IV, Section H, Vaccination, stated that all impounded animals greater than four weeks of age should be vaccinated within 24 hours of impound.

All animals were vaccinated unless they were too fractious to handle, i.e. feral cats. Dogs received a distemper/adenovirus2/parainfluenza/parvovirus vaccine by injection and a nasal Bordetella vaccine. Cats received a viral rhinotracheitis/calici/panleukopenia/chlamydia vaccine by injection. Vaccines were boosted at one-month intervals for the animals who were still at the shelter after one month. There was no stated limit as to how many vaccines an animal might receive.

Rabies vaccinations were given by kennelworkers at the time of adoption, placement with a rescue group, or placement in a foster home. The team observed one rabies vaccination, which was given to a cat in the scruff.

There was an abundant supply of appropriate vaccine stored in the Kennel refrigerator. There were also several trays of long-expired vaccine intermingled with new vaccine.

All vaccinations were recorded in the computerized treatment records. This was verified by random audit of treatment records.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop a written, detailed vaccination protocol for both dogs and cats. A shelter veterinarian should be responsible for developing these protocols and the protocols should be implemented and followed consistently. The HSUS recommends that

SLOCAS review the vaccination protocol created by the UC Davis Koret School of Shelter Medicine Program when developing its protocol.[48, 49]

- ✓ Dispose of all expired vaccine, and rotate stock so that vaccine is less likely to expire before use. Create a stock management plan for items that have expiration dates. It is important to rotate stock in order to maintain quality.

- ✓ Establish standard procedures for the timely vaccination of animals brought in by ACOs. Animals should be vaccinated within 24 hours of arrival at the shelter, and ideally as soon as the animal is unloaded and processed.[50] Vaccinations should be documented so that all staff is aware that they have been completed.

- ✓ The animal services manager, or another licensed veterinarian, should administer all rabies vaccinations. Under California statute HSC 121690-121700, rabies vaccinations may be administered only by a California-licensed veterinarian or by a licensed veterinary technician under the direct supervision of a veterinarian.

- ✓ Administer rabies vaccinations to cats in the right rear leg, as recommended by the American Association of Feline Practitioners and the American Animal Hospital Association. Vaccine-associated sarcomas can develop in cats secondary to rabies vaccination. Giving vaccinations in standardized locations can help practitioners to more accurately diagnose and treat skin tumors that arise after vaccination.

Discussion:
It is very important to realize that vaccination is only one strategy in preventing infectious diseases and that it is just one tool in a disease-prevention program. It is also critical to consider animal husbandry practices, disinfection procedures, isolation and separation protocols, and animal-handling practices.[51]

Vaccination protocols should be designed based on the available resources of the shelter, the number of animals handled, the turnover rate of animals within the shelter, applicable state laws (e.g., those concerning rabies), the relative incidence and severity of particular diseases in the area, and the manner in which animals are housed (as well as the resulting risk of disease being spread within the shelter). Vaccination protocols for companion animals have changed in recent years, and various associations (American Veterinary Medical Association, American Animal Hospital Association, Association of Feline Practitioners, and most veterinary colleges) have introduced new vaccination recommendations. However, vaccination continues to be a controversial subject in veterinary medicine, and there is no universal consensus among veterinary practitioners regarding routine vaccination. Typical vaccination regimens are intended for companion animals in normal household situations, not

---

48 2006 AAHA Canine Vaccine Guidelines Revised

49 The 2006 American Association of Feline Practitioners, Feline Vaccine Advisory Panel Report

50 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Vaccination Station: the finer Points of Shelter Protocols," July–August 2006+

51 "Establishing a Shelter Preventive Medicine Program," Brenda Griffin, DVM, MS, Kate Hurley, DVM, MPVM

shelters. Shelter recommendations are available online and in print, but not all sources agree. Over vaccination and/or inappropriate vaccination are both economically wasteful and potentially harmful to the health of shelter animals. Vaccinations are not without side effects; for example, they can cause short-term immunosuppression (making the animal more susceptible to disease) or cause transient symptoms that mimic disease (nasal discharge, runny eyes, etc.), which can be confused with real illness.

The UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program discusses the issues of shelter vaccines and core vaccines, and it recommends, with agreement from The HSUS, immediate vaccination:[52]

> *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).*

5.5 STERILIZATION SERVICES

Sterilization of dogs and cats adopted from SLOCAS were performed at private veterinary hospitals or WHS.

While the adoption paperwork was being completed, the administrative staff provided adopters with a list of veterinarians and their respective fees; after the adopter made their selection, staff made an appointment. The pet remained at the shelter until the day of surgery and was then transported to the veterinary hospital by an ACO. The new owner was responsible for all of the incurred fees. Following the surgery, the pet was released from the hospital to the new owner.

According to SLOCAS, most local veterinarians did not participate in juvenile spay/neuter. If the kitten or puppy was under the age of 16 weeks, the animal was released to the new owner who was required to leave a deposit, which would be returned upon proof of sterilization. Approximately 45% of the deposits from the first six months of FY 07–08 were not refunded; some adopters requested that their funds be applied as donations. Non-compliance would not only result in the forfeiture of the deposit, but would also result in civil fines up to $100.00/day for failing to fulfill the terms of the adoption agreement.

---

[52] www.sheltermedicine.com

The SLOCAS Adoption Contract stated:

> *County ordinance requires all dogs and cats adopted from the shelter to be spayed/neutered prior to release to new ownership. The County has agreements with some local veterinarians to perform this service. An appointment must be made with one of these veterinarians at the time of adoption. Your signature indicates your agreement to claim this animal following transport to the veterinarian by the County and payment to the veterinarian for alteration of the animal. Under special circumstances an animal may be released directly from the shelter with a spay/neuter deposit, in such situations you must provide proof of alteration to the Animal Services Division within 30 days or face citation for violation of California Food and Agriculture Code 30523. Citation under this code will result in a fine of up to $100 per day.*

However, according to management, the spay/neuter non-compliance penalty was unenforceable due to ambiguity in the California Food and Agriculture Code, which made it applicable only to counties of less than 250,000 residents, and the population of San Luis Obispo County exceeded that number. California Food and Agriculture Code Section 30503 (a) (1) states:

> *Except as otherwise provided in subdivision (b), no public animal control agency or shelter, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelter, humane society shelter, or rescue group shall sell or give away to a new owner any dog that has not been spayed or neutered.*

Subdivisions (a) (2)–(d) define rescue groups and explain exceptions and deposits. Further, section 30503, subdivision (e) states: “This section only applies to a county that has a population exceeding 100,000 persons as of January 1, 2000, and to cities within that county.” Sections 30520–30523 further details spay/neuter provisions.

SLOCAS had an agreement with WHS, which was funded by a state reimbursement program for mandated services to sterilize SLOCAS-adopted animals. SLOCAS utilized this $40,000 allocation to compensate WHS for the spays/neuters that they performed. The adopters were not charged for the sterilizations performed through this agreement. These reimbursement monies were expected to be depleted at the end of the year, but management had a tentative plan to redirect monies allotted to a public voucher program and to increase adoption fees to subsidize the sterilizations done at WHS. The HSUS team was concerned with the lack of criteria for which some adopters were responsible for paying for the sterilization required by the adoption agreement while others were not.

According to WHS, several surgical slots were reserved weekly for SLOCAS’ animals, but rarely were they all filled. Year to date, 82 cat spays, 96 cat neuters, 47 dog spays, and 63 dog neuters had been performed at WHS. SLOCAS had a checklist for cats scheduled for surgery at WHS; if there was an identical checklist for dogs, it was not provided to the team.

Although management alluded to a voucher program to assist the public with the cost of sterilization, there did not appear to be a formalized or advertised procedure.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Continue efforts to spay and neuter all adopted animals prior to placement into new homes.
- ✓ Closely monitor adopters' compliance to spay/neuter all juvenile puppies and kittens. In conjunction with the County's legal department, revise the existing Adoption Contract to make it an enforceable. Animals adopted to homes where there are intact animals, or to persons who disagree with SLOCAS' sterilization policy, should be sterilized before release.
- ✓ Review California Food and Agriculture Code Sections 30503 and 30520–30523.
- ✓ Enlist the cooperation of local veterinarians to perform juvenile sterilizations.
- ✓ Prioritize educating the public about the benefits of sterilization by providing basic information to dispel myths.
- ✓ Develop a mutually acceptable sterilization fee structure with WHS and increase adoption fees accordingly. This will ensure that all adopters share in the cost of the surgery, that the requirement is not dependent on any state reimbursement monies, and that allotted surgical time is used.

Discussion:
Sterilizing animals prior to release is a practice that animal shelters provide to ensure that they are not contributing to the unwanted pet problem in their community. Some shelters perform this surgery prior to offering the animals for adoption, while others wait until the animals are contractually claimed. Either procedure is effective as long as animals are sterilized by a mutually agreed upon time limit. Adoption programs that allow unaltered animals to leave the shelter and that do not have a rigorous compliance follow-up program, lose the assurance that those animals will not contribute to the overpopulation problem.

5.6 DISEASE CONTROL AND SANITATION

Observations:
The team examined a brief SOP for sanitation that was provided with the background information prior to the site visit. The one-page document appeared to be missing the second page, which would have presumably covered the remainder of the cat cleaning protocols. The document was numbered 1–4: Sanitation Station, Routine Cleaning Agents, Dog Kennels Protocol, and Cat Kennels Protocol. Another one-page document entitled "Trustee Duties," included abbreviated cleaning instructions. Article V, Section B, Cleaning, of the draft SOP consisted of short definitions of 1) Frequency, 2) Animals to be Removed, and 3) Conformity.

Cleaning products were observed both in the open storage area in the Kennel hallway and in 55 gallon barrels in the Medical/Euthanasia Room. The barrels of Health Technology® Kennel Kare and Health Technology® Triple Two were attached to a two-product, wall-

mounted rinse dispenser that was attached to the hot water pipe. *(See photo 35)*

Inside the entry way to Kennel B the team observed a small plastic container without a lid that contained small plastic packets of green powder. The packets were labeled "A33 Dry," which is a dry disinfectant that becomes active when mixed with one gallon of water. This disinfectant is a mixture of four quaternary ammonium compounds and "kills a broad spectrum of microorganisms [and is] effective against: Canine parvovirus, Feline pneumonitis, Feline rhinotracheitis, Canine distemper, Staphylococci, Streptococci, Proteus Spp., Vibrio, Microsporum Canis, [and] Candida albicans."[53] The team did not observe A33 Dry being utilized.

On March 19 at 7:40 am the team observed the cleaning process. Inmates opened the double-wide sliding Kennel doors. At the same time, the staff checked the night surrender area and walked through the Cat Rooms, looking into each cat cage.

The dog runs were cleaned by two inmates in the following manner: the dog was removed and taken by leash to an outdoor exercise yard. The nylon resting bench was hung on the wall of the run, blankets removed, disposable food trays thrown away, and stainless steel water bowls removed. Feces were removed using metal scoops, which were not rinsed or exchanged between runs. The entire run was sprayed with a high-pressure hose equipped with a hose-end dispenser with pre-diluted Triple Two disinfectant/cleaner/deodorizer. The inmate sprayed all of the runs in a row, and then scrubbed the walls and floor in turn with a scrub-brush affixed to a broom handle. Run doors were not scrubbed. The inmate then rinsed the germicide from all surfaces and squeegeed the floor of each run into the trench drain before returning the dog to the run. Contact time of the germicide was adequate, exceeding ten minutes; however, a team member observed a different inmate cleaning dog runs who rinsed the germicide immediately after application. After all of the runs were cleaned and the dogs were replaced, the inmate applied germicide to the aisle between the runs, rinsed the floor, and sprayed down the trench drains.

Dogs urinated and defecated freely in the outdoor yards that were used to house the dogs during cleaning. Cleaning of these yards was not observed by the team during the site visit, but a staff member identified an unlabeled spray bottle containing an unknown "disinfectant" that was used for spraying the outdoor artificial turf runs.

Dogs in the Quarantine Kennel were moved outside through guillotine doors, and their runs were cleaned in the same manner as described above.

On March 20 at 2:45 pm, a soiled blanket was in the empty run 1 of the Dog/Cat Isolation Room. The blanket was observed on March 18 in the run with a dog who had been spayed that day. The dog was sent to a foster home on March 19.

Although cleaning began at 7:30 am, on March 19, at 11:10 am the team observed a Pit Bull (A141128) whose run C05 had not been cleaned and contained loose, bloody stool. The team

---

[53] http://www.renspets.com

returned at 11:55 am and the run was clean; however, there were no notes on the cage card regarding the bloody stool. See sections 5.2, General Shelter Medicine and 5.7, Isolation and Separation, for more on the topic of medical care.

During the site visit, most of the runs were clean and free of superficial dirt and waste material; however, the lower one third of the walls and doors of all of the runs were heavily stained with dog body oils.

On March 19, a pile of feces was found in one of the outdoor yards before the shelter opened for cleaning, indicating that the feces was there from the day before. At the far right of the outdoor yards near Kennel E, the team observed a large bucket of dirty water filled with shovels and scraping equipment for cleaning the runs. There wasn't a drain nearby in which to empty the barrel of stagnant water, which had the color and odor of fecal material. *(See photo 36)* When asked, a kennelworker could not remember the last time the barrel had been emptied or cleaned. The area immediately adjacent to this bucket was muddy and a pattern had formed on the ground indicating repeated emptying of the bucket's contents onto the ground next to the yards. This practice is highly unacceptable because the water in the bucket was filled with feces remnants, bacteria, and other elements that readily enter the ground and can spread disease to the yards which were only a foot away.

A scoop, which was piled with semi-dried feces, was left near the gamecock cages from the morning of March 18 to the early afternoon of March 19. *(See photo 37)* The top of a bush located next to the gamecock cages and in front of the outdoor portion of the Quarantine Kennel had a pile of semi-dried feces. *(See photo 38)*

Cat cages were cleaned by two inmates who had very different approaches and levels of thoroughness. A cart was utilized during the cleaning process which carried open containers of litter and dry cat food, as well as cleaning supplies. An inmate working in Cat Room C1, cleaned in the following manner: paper, litter box, food, water bowls, and blankets were removed from the cage. The disposable paperboard litter box and food trays were thrown away and the water was dumped. The inmate sprayed pre-diluted Health Technology® Kennel Kare detergent/disinfectant onto the interior surfaces of the cat cage, taking care not to spray the cat inside and trying to gently usher the cat from one side of the cage to another. He wiped the surfaces of the cage after spraying germicide, not allowing any contact time. He then wiped the cage doors and resting perches with a cloth rag that had been sprayed with germicide. Cage bars or other surfaces were not rinsed. The same rag was used in several cages and not rinsed or changed. After wiping the cages, he replaced the newspaper, food, water, and litter box with fresh ones before moving on to the next cage. This inmate was very thorough and spoke gently to the cats while handling them and cleaning. The other inmate that the team observed cleaning and handling cats performed less thoroughly and less gently (also see section 4. 2, Animal Handling). This inmate was observed cleaning Cat Room C2. He opened one side of the double-sided cage and removed the contents. He then sprayed germicide and wiped it out immediately. He then closed one side of the cage, prodded the cat through the portal with the germicide bottle, and cleaned the second side as he did the first. His cleaning technique was very cursory with no attention to detail. Neither inmate was observed using the plastic slide panel to close the portal between sides of a cage, which were available in all of the Cat Rooms. Both inmates who cleaned the Cat Rooms wore latex

gloves. All three cat rooms had trash cans with no lids which contained soiled litter, food, and newspaper. Other trash cans were observed without lids throughout the shelter.

The team did not observe dog runs being spot cleaned, but did observe a volunteer spot cleaning cat cages. She also utilized the same rag from cage to cage. She placed the rag in a bucket of water mixed with an undetermined amount of bleach. When the team asked staff why the volunteers were cleaning the cat cages they replied "because we can't make them stop."

Footbaths were not used. Purell® waterless hand sanitizer dispensers were present throughout the facility.

Staff members were not observed cleaning dog runs or cat cages, and did not supervise inmates.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Implement written SOPs for cleaning procedures. Combine the step-by-step cleaning and disinfecting instructions that were sent to the team prior to the site visit with Article V, Section B in the draft SOP.

- ✓ Properly dispose of the dirty water in the bucket containing cleaning shovels, etc. so that disease is not transmitted to the dogs in the outdoor exercise yards.

- ✓ Ensure that inmates are directly supervised until they are phased out and that kennelworkers participate in cleaning animal areas.

- ✓ Cease allowing volunteers and inmates to clean cages unless they have been thoroughly and properly trained and authorized to do so. Utilizing the same cleaning implement without cleaning between uses can spread infectious disease from one cat to the next. Volunteers must be properly trained to carry out this important task, otherwise animals' lives are at risk. Volunteers must adhere to the same cleaning and health protocols as staff to maintain a healthy animal population.

- ✓ Immediately remove the plastic barrel of cleaning equipment and soiled water. Replace this barrel with smaller cleaning stations that would consist of buckets of germicide in which to rinse equipment between cages. Dispose of the dirty water and replenish with fresh germicide and water daily. Thoroughly rinse scoops between uses in runs to prevent spread of contagions.

- ✓ Make sure all items have been properly disinfected before introducing them to a new animal, including blankets, toys, dishes, litter boxes, etc.

- ✓ Spot clean all dog runs and cat cages throughout the day. Both dogs and cats instinctively prefer to urinate and defecate away from their den and feeding area. Confinement is particularly stressful for these animals when they are forced to sleep and eat near a build up of their own waste. The odor and dirty appearance of the shelter will also discourage potential adopters.

- ✓ If a cat's cage is noticeably soiled, it should be completely cleaned and disinfected. If a cat's cage is relatively clean, it is acceptable and preferable to spot-clean the cage. This is commonly referred to as the CCC method: Cleaning Cat in the Cage. Use the following steps to spot-clean:[54]
  - ➢ If the cat is shy or scared, create a makeshift refuge from a cardboard box or paper bag, allowing the cat to hide while the cage is being cleaned. The less the cat is handled, the better for disease control.
  - ➢ If canned food is offered, the food bowl should be cleaned or replaced every day; however, if dry food is offered and the bowl is not visibly crusted or grimy, it is acceptable to dump any day-old food and refill. Water dishes should be emptied, rinsed, and refilled.
  - ➢ Ideally, litter should be dumped and replaced daily; however, resources may not allow this. If clumping litter is being utilized, use disposable food service gloves to pick up the feces and urine clumps; change them between each cage, ensuring that disease is not being spread from box to box. If litter scoops must be used, use stainless steel ones, which can be disinfected. Have at least two on hand and label them by number so that they can be used in consecutive order, making sure to let each sit in the disinfection bucket at least ten minutes before it is reused. Be sure to change the water several times during cleaning so that the level of contaminants does not overwhelm the solution's disinfecting capability; remove any scoops that become too soiled with caked-on debris. In some cases the use of disposable litter boxes is recommended to expedite the cleaning process. If non-disposable cat boxes are used, then they must be sized appropriately for cats. It is vital for cats to have vertical space and a place to hide.
  - ➢ Shake out clean towels and place them back in the cage, but remove and replace any wet or visibly dirty towels and newspapers with fresh. Leave clean cat toys, replacing only those that are dirty. Leaving items with a cat's scent on them will decrease her stress level.

- ✓ Remove cleaning products from the Kennel and all other public access areas.

- ✓ Purchase sanitizing footbath mats, such as those made by Wearwell™, and utilize them in case of a disease outbreak.[55] These mats hold up to a gallon of disinfectant solution (bleach or quaternary ammonia). When foot pressure is applied, the rubber tips bend, immersing shoe soles in sanitizing solution. These mats are effective and are less likely to result in tripping or spilling than are pans filled with diluted bleach. Assign a staff member to prepare and change the disinfectant daily.

- ✓ Feed and water the cats after the area being cleaned has been completed. Open food and water containers should not be present during cleaning, as they may become contaminated with chemicals, bacteria, and viruses.

---

[54] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Spot-Cleaning a Cat Cage," May–June 2005+
[55] www.wearwell.com

- ✓ Institute a regular schedule of deep-cleaning and degreasing runs and cages. This can be set up on a rotating basis so that all cages are scrubbed regularly.

- ✓ Make use of the plastic panels intended to restrict cats in the double-sided cages.

- ✓ Allow cleaning products to contact the surface being cleaned for a minimum of 10 minutes.

- ✓ Cover all trash cans with lids.

- ✓ Put in place a multi-faceted approach to the control and prevention of disease. Some viruses, such as panleukopenia and parvovirus, are very stable in the environment and will be able to spread disease for many months if the animal housing areas, bedding, litter boxes, and food and water bowls are not properly disinfected.[56, 57, 58]

- ✓ Pay careful attention to staff and inmate movement within the Kennel and Cat Rooms. An employee who has handled a sick animal, potentially contagious animal, or who has entered a room housing sick or contagious animals, should not be permitted to enter the healthy animal or intake areas. This person should be regarded as "contaminated" until he or she has fully showered and changed clothing unless he or she was wearing a gown. The HSUS team recommends that staff be specifically assigned to work in only one of the healthy, sick, or potentially exposed animal housing areas. No movement between these areas or the dog and cat areas during the course of the day is permissible unless the staff member starts in the healthy area and finishes in the sick/isolation area. It is imperative that the staff understand that the most common vector of disease transmission in an animal shelter is human contact and transference on skin and clothing.

- ✓ Establish and practice adequate and thorough cleaning protocols in order to maintain a healthy population of animals. Thorough cleaning standards coupled with proper air ventilation of animal housing areas are both key elements to maintaining a healthy shelter environment for animals.

- ✓ Educate all shelter staff about common shelter disease agents, including parvovirus, panleukopenia, canine distemper, intestinal and external parasites, upper respiratory infections, and ringworm. All staff should know how these diseases are transmitted, basic disease prevention methods, basic sanitation and disinfection techniques, and proper identification of disease symptoms.[59, 60, 61]

---

[56] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Keeping Your Cats Healthy, Guarding Against Panleukopenia" May–June 2001+

[57] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Parvovirus, Stopping a Deadly Disease From Overwhelming Your Shelter," July–August 1996+

[58] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "The Virus that Never Dies?", November–December 2006+

[59] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Controlling Upper Respiratory Infections in Your Shelter," January–February 1997+

- ✓ Determine the number of kennelworkers needed by using the General Staffing Recommendations for Kennel Caretaking. The HSUS estimated minimum staffing formula (for kennel caretaking only):

_____ (Human Population)	Multiplied by 7% =	_____ (Incoming Animal Population Per Year)
_____ (Incoming Animals Per Year)	Divided by 365 (days per year) =	_____ (Incoming Animals Per Day)
_____ (Incoming Animals Per Day)	Times Four* Day Holding Period =	_____ (Animals in Shelter Per Day)
_____ (Animals in Shelter Per Day)	Times fifteen minutes** per animal =	_____ (Number of Minutes Needed)
_____ (Minutes Needed)	Divided by 60 (minutes) =	_____ (Number of Hours Needed)
_____ (Number of Hours Needed)	Divided by 3*** (hours for cleaning/feeding) =	_____ (Staff Needed Per Day)

* The HSUS is using the average holding period of four days as a basis for this study. Some animals may be held for a much shorter period; however, many animals may be held for a period exceeding the four day requirement.

**This formula is based on a per-animal time of nine minutes for cleaning and six minutes for feeding.

***These three hours are solely for the performance of these two tasks, but allowing for further time in the day to perform routine maintenance tasks such as laundry, dishes, lost and found checks, etc.

Discussion:

The cleaning procedures at SLOCAS were insufficient. The primary issue was inconsistency which was a direct result of paid staff not being involved in the daily cleaning responsibilities and relying on untrained inmates and volunteers to carry out this immensely important task. The goal of all cleaning programs/protocols for animal shelters is to keep the facility clean, the healthy animals healthy, and prevent the spread of disease. All too often the practices of the staff and the agency actually create problems by spreading disease.

It is important to remember that cleaning and disinfecting are not the same things.[62] Disinfecting is accomplished with a disinfectant, which is a chemical solution that destroys microorganisms and must be applied after detergent. Cleaning is accomplished with a detergent which is a cleansing agent that helps remove dirt and debris which interferes with the disinfecting process. A degreaser is a strong detergent designed to cut through filmy layers, such as body oils, that regular detergents cannot penetrate. It is very important to completely remove detergents before applying disinfectants.

Quaternary ammonium compounds are good disinfectants and they also have some detergent action. However, some quaternary ammonium compounds are inactivated in the presence of 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.

---

60 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "The Most Persistent Fungus Among Us," September–October 2007+

61 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Outbreak of Drug-Resistant Salmonella at an Animal Shelter," November–December 2004+

62 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Disinfection Connection," July–August 2003+

Bleach is a disinfectant, not a detergent. If bleach is used as the primary disinfectant, areas must be scrubbed with a detergent prior to applying bleach. Make sure to never use Phenols (Lysol, etc.) around cats or reptiles as they are very toxic to these species.

When it comes to cleaning, it is critical that fomites (particles of dirt, hair, feces) that attach to the walls, floors, chain link, etc. are physically removed to allow for disinfection of the surface. Proper cleaning protocols that are effective involve physical (muscle power) scrubbing of the surface after the fomites have been removed and the disinfectant applied.

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. Any area of a shelter in which animals are housed (or through which animals pass) must be cleaned and disinfected daily. This includes, but is not limited to animal housing areas, euthanasia rooms, medical rooms, hallways, and service lobbies.

Even the best shelter, by definition, is an inherently unhealthy place. Animals enter from different locations with unknown medical histories and often little or no past vaccinations against disease. Animals who have been recently exposed to (and therefore able to spread) disease may show no initial symptoms upon examination during the incubation period. The need for good health care protocols is crucial, and the rationale is two-fold—to uphold the shelter's responsibility to care humanely for animals and to maintain the reputation of the organization as a well-run community resource.

5.7 ISOLATION AND SEPARATION

Observations:
Article V, Section D, Animal Housing, of the draft SOP included specific instruction on the separation and designation of animals given their age, breed, and behavior. The protocols in the draft SOP were not being followed during the site visit.

Adoptable animals and stray animals were intermingled throughout the Kennel and Cat Rooms. In general, The HSUS team found that SLOCAS' system of isolation and separation was inadequate since there were stray, adoptable, and sick animals intermingled throughout the Kennel and Cat Rooms.

The Medical/Euthanasia Room, Dog/Cat Isolation Room, Quarantine Kennel, and Cat Isolation Room C4 were behind a locked door. Dogs held under bite observation and those with demonstrated aggressive behavior or histories were housed in Quarantine.

Although staff said that animals who showed signs of illness were moved to one of the Isolation Rooms, several cats in the general population were observed sneezing. These cats were not moved to Isolation during the site visit, and there were no treatment records in these animals' computer records.

The gamecocks were separated from the shelter buildings, but not completely secured due to

the accessibility via the open gate. *(See photo 39)*

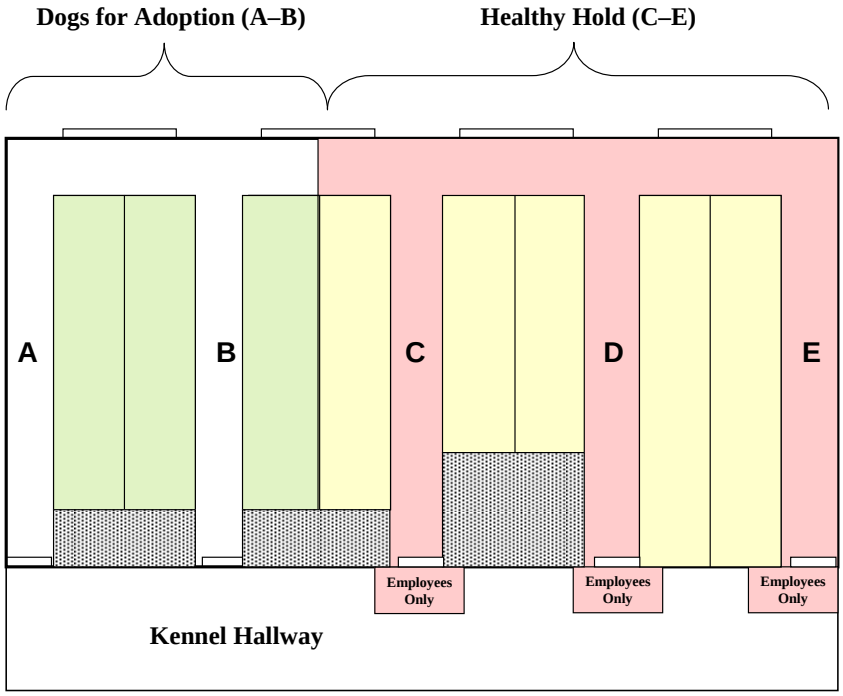
Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop written SOPs for isolation and separation of animals. Assign four separate areas for both dogs and cats: adoption, healthy hold, isolation, and quarantine.[63]

- ✓ A written SOP for housing should require that all animals be separated in the following manner:
  - ➢ Dogs must always be separated from cats.
  - ➢ Sick or injured animals must always be separated from healthy ones.
  - ➢ Puppies and kittens must be separated from adults (unless nursing).
  - ➢ Dangerous animals must be separated from all other animals, and the public.
  - ➢ Nursing animals must be separated from all others and must be located in a quiet area of the shelter.
  - ➢ Animals with special needs should be isolated from all others.
  - ➢ Animals available for adoption should be separated from animals who are not for adoption.

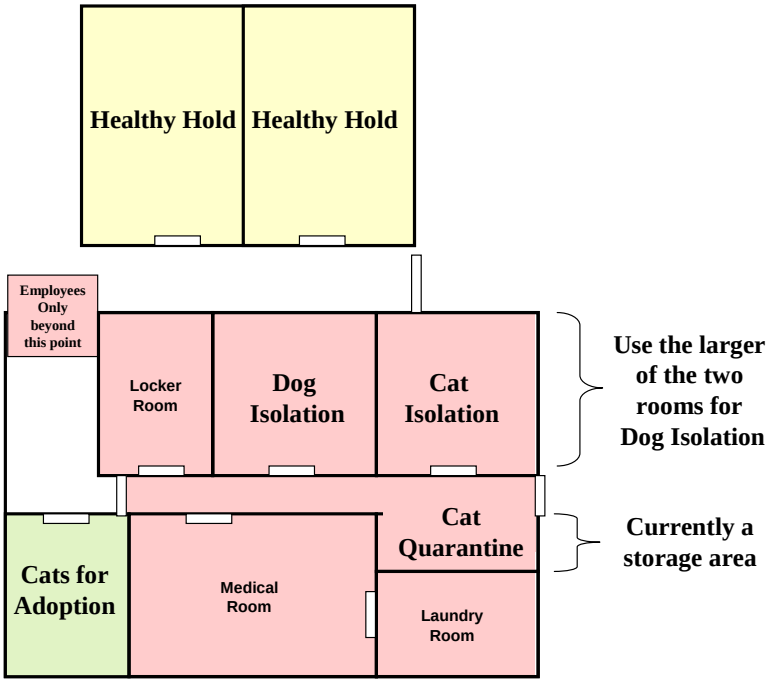
- ✓ Separate adoption animals from healthy hold animals in Kennels A–E by designating aisles of the Kennel as "healthy hold" and "adoptions."

- ✓ Consider the following recommendations on isolation and separation of dogs:



[63] Isolation/Separation Flow Charts

- ✓ Consider the following recommendations on isolation and separation of cats:



- ✓ Transform the larger of the Isolation Rooms into a Dog Isolation Room. Transform the smaller Isolation Room into a Cat Isolation Room.

- ✓ Rope off the healthy hold area with appropriate signage indicating that the public may not enter.

- ✓ Examine all animals in the facility on a daily basis to check for signs of illness, and promptly isolate those animals. Assign one person to monitor the condition of isolated sick animals on a daily basis, and report changes in condition to the animal services manager.

- ✓ Keep Quarantine Kennel and evidence holding areas locked at all times.

- ✓ Place newly arrived healthy dogs and cats in the healthy hold areas. A healthy hold period would allow time for the vaccines to take effect and time for the staff to evaluate the behavior and temperament of each animal. After cats and dogs have been evaluated and approved for adoption they can be moved from the healthy hold areas to the adoption areas.

- ✓ House animals in "life-stage groups," keeping animals who have different stages of immunity (such as young animals, nursing mothers, sick or injured animals, and fully vaccinated adults) well separated within the shelter. Animals who are stressed, elderly, nursing litters, or recuperating from injuries must be housed in a quiet place. Most often, these areas are identified as a "special needs rooms" where these animals can receive the specialized care necessary for their mental and physical well-being.

- ✓ Clearly mark all animal housing areas (i.e. adoption, feral, quarantine, etc.)
- ✓ Make it a priority to achieve the separation of animals in order to protect the health and well-being of the animals. A shelter should provide appropriate housing areas, and animals must be housed in a way and in a location that will minimize stress and disease transmission.

Discussion/Recommendations:
SLOCAS is fortunate to have a separate isolation area in which to house sick animals. Steps should be taken to improve disease recognition and treatment, as well as to ensure that animals placed in isolation are not forgotten. The concept of isolation and separation in an animal shelter allows one to manage the animal population more effectively, and in the process protects the public and ensures a healthier environment for the animals. The isolation and separation concept is as follows:

- Evaluate and vaccinate the animal at intake.
- If sick, house the animal in isolation for the stray period.
- If a bite case or an aggressive animal, hold in quarantine.
- If the animal appears healthy and potentially adoptable, hold the animal in healthy hold for at least two days.

The isolation and separation concept of managing the population will provide the staff with space flexibility, protect the public from potential bites, and protect SLOCAS from liability. Isolation and separation will also help the staff make better euthanasia decisions and help SLOCAS present only those animals who have been fully evaluated and chosen for adoption to the public.

In order for the isolation and separation concept to work, it must be strictly followed. Some organizations make the mistake of bending the rules by not using space as it is designated. There may be times when the healthy hold area is full and some agencies make the mistake of placing a healthy animal in the isolation room. Exposing healthy animals to sick ones negates the logic and benefits that result from the isolation and separation concept.

5.8 FEEDING PROTOCOLS

Observations:
Article V, Section C, Feeding, of the draft SOP contained directives on 1) Frequency, 2) Provision of Food and Other Consumables, and 3) Responsibility. Animals were to be fed a minimum of once daily and water was to be available at all times. SLOCAS was not to accept donated food and only SLOCAS staff was allowed to feed animals unless they asked volunteers to assist.

All dogs were fed Purina® “Hi-Pro” food; small amounts of other types of donated food were observed in the facility. Food was in a storage room off of the Kennel hallway and was kept in bags on elevated shelves and in plastic containers with lids. Cats were fed dry

Purina® cat food and a variety of canned foods. Animals were fed and given water in the morning by inmates. The team observed dry and canned puppy and kitten food of the same brands in one of the sheds.

Dog and cat food was not measured or given to animals based on their size or age; for example, a Chihuahua (A148442) received the same amount of food that a Pit Bull (A148385) received and the amount of food that the Pit Bull received appeared excessive. *(See photos 40–41)* Cats received a full paper tray of dry food and sometimes received canned food. Food intake was not monitored by staff.

Treats were freely distributed by volunteers, without restriction. One dog's cage card was clearly labeled with the words "No treats, on a special diet." A volunteer was observed giving this dog the same treats as she gave the other dogs in the Kennel.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create and implement an animal feeding SOP. Develop specific written feeding protocols for kittens, puppies, cats, and dogs and these protocols should be followed consistently. If SLOCAS is going to accept and use donated food, revise the feeding protocols SOP to reflect that.

- ✓ SLOCAS is commended for feeding a consistent, name-brand diet.

- ✓ Develop a written schedule of feeding times for those animals who require multiple feedings according to their age and nutritional needs. Establish protocols to ensure geriatric animals and those with dental problems are fed soft food accordingly. Ensure that the staff strictly follows the schedule and protocols.

- ✓ Train staff to monitor and document the appetites, body condition, age, weight, and food intake of shelter animals and to adjust an animal's diet 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. Many animals, particularly cats, have difficulty adjusting to life in a shelter and become inappetent. Loss of appetite can lead to serious health concerns, including failure of major organs and death.[64]

- ✓ Give special care and closely monitor animals who are malnourished or have special health requirements. Unweaned kittens with no mother or surrogate mother should be considered for a foster home, and if one cannot be secured, euthanasia may be the most humane solution.

- ✓ Administer twice-daily feedings of measured quantities of food based on the requirements of each animal.

---

[64] Tufts Animal Care and Condition Scales for Assessing Body Condition

- ✓ Feed puppies less than 12 weeks of age four times daily or every six hours. Puppies 12 weeks to six months of age should be fed three times a day or every eight hours. Puppies six months to 12 months of age should be fed twice daily.

- ✓ Feed kittens less than 12 weeks of age canned food four times daily or every six hours. Kittens 12 weeks to six months of age should be fed canned food three times a day or every eight hours, with access to dry food at all times. Cats six months or older should have dry food available at all times and should be fed canned food as needed. Since cats, on an average, like to eat many small meals a day, it is advisable to leave dry food available all day long. Take into account that cats with access to "free food" must be monitored to make sure they are eating.

- ✓ Establish feeding protocols for nursing mothers to ensure that they are fed a high calorie, high protein diet three times a day. Kitten or puppy food is usually the appropriate choice for nursing mothers.

- ✓ Ensure that volunteers respect SLOCAS instructions and adhere to any written notes on cage cards. Volunteers who do not follow these instructions should not be permitted to volunteer at SLOCAS.

Discussion:
Establishing a system to oversee dietary habits is of the utmost importance. The stress of a kennel environment combined with an animal's 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.

Because shelter animals are in a stressful situation, they are more susceptible to digestive upsets from poor quality foods and changes in brands. Feeding one brand exclusively, especially a premium brand greatly reduces the number of animals who experience gastrointestinal problems while at the shelter.

5.9 ZOONOSES

Observations:
Article V, Section N, Rabies Testing, in the draft SOP included the procedures for specimen preparation. The only observed SOP that was observed on-site for rabies specimen preparation was a sheet of paper posted above the stainless steel table in the euthanasia room. This paper contained a line drawing of an animal with arrows and a line across the base of the skull depicting where the head was to be severed from the body. *(See photo 42)* Staff members used a sharp knife for decapitation, which appeared adequate. Rabies specimen preparation was not observed during the site visit.

None of the staff interviewed had received any training in zoonosis, including rabies, but the staff was aware of zoonotic diseases. The only measures taken to prevent zoonotic disease

transmission were basic hygiene and the use of latex gloves.

Kennelworkers and ACOs received pre-exposure rabies vaccinations and titers. Employees were tested for tuberculosis at the time of hire.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop detailed written SOPs on zoonoses to include relevant zoonotic diseases 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.

- ✓ Develop formal training for all staff regarding zoonoses.[65, 66, 67] Staff should understand the most common zoonotic threats encountered in an animal shelter, including but not limited to rabies, external and internal parasites, ringworm and other potentially harmful diseases. Information on zoonotic disease should be readily available in easily understood printed form for all staff, volunteers, and public.

- ✓ Provide staff with a laminated card listing possible zoonotic diseases to which an employee could be exposed. In the event that an employee becomes ill, he or she should give this card to the attending physician. Zoonotic diseases are often late to be diagnosed because shelter employees fail to inform their physicians of the type of work they do.
  - ➢ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has detailed information, by species, detailing zoonotic diseases. Their Web site also contains information regarding people who may be autoimmune compromised and at higher risk.[68]

- ✓ Define, in writing, which animals require rabies testing.

- ✓ Develop a written, detailed SOP for rabies specimen preparation. This SOP should include step-by-step instructions on the decapitation process, required PPE, cleaning and storage of equipment, and specimen storage. Replace the line drawing depicting decapitation with clear written instructions for the preparation of rabies specimens. Laminate these instructions and post them where specimens are prepared. Purchase and require the use of "meat-cutters gloves" to prevent accidental knife injury during decapitation.

- ✓ Review annual updates of the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, "Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control."[69]

---

65 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Protect Your Staff, Protect Yourself," March–April 1996+

66 www.sheltermedicine.com/portal/is_zoonotic_diseases.shtml#top3

67 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Zoonotic Disease: The Enemy In Our Midst," July–August 2004+

68 www.cdc.gov/healthypets/browse_by_animal.htm

69 National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, "Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, 2007"

Discussion:
The prevention of zoonotic disease is a critical part of any shelter operation as well as any public education program. SLOCAS' employees are its most valuable resource and every precaution should be taken to protect their health.

A zoonotic disease is any disease that may be transmitted from an animal to a human under natural conditions. Zoonotic diseases pose a risk to shelter personnel who work with or around animals. Animals infected with zoonotic diseases may not show any significant signs of illness. In humans, however, the infections may be debilitating. Anyone working with animals should be aware of the potential for zoonotic disease and take commonsense precautions to minimize their risk.

Zoonotic diseases can be prevented through a variety of means, including use of protective clothing, prevention of bites and scratches, proper sharps-handling procedures, medical surveillance and vaccination programs, post-injury treatment, and good personal hygiene.

All animals, their tissues, and fluids should be treated as if they were infected with pathogens (microorganisms that cause disease). Avoid working with animals if you are ill, especially if you have respiratory problems. A large number of zoonotic diseases are considered potential threats to shelter employees; some are common, and others are very rare. The following are the more common and/or important zoonotic threats:

Bordetella (Kennel Cough)—Bordetella bronchiseptica is a bacterium that is a common cause of respiratory disease in dogs. It is the most prevalent infection of dogs at a shelter and has been reported to cause mild respiratory infections in people. Disease transmission can be prevented by avoiding contact with the mucous membranes of infected dogs, hand washing, and wearing a respirator when spraying down kennels.

Cryptosporidia—Cryptosporidium parvum is a protozoan, similar to toxoplasma. There is no effective treatment for the disease. Preventive measures include good hygiene such as hand washing and using gloves when handling feces.

Bartonellosis (Cat Scratch Disease)—Cat scratch disease is an infectious illness caused by the bacteria Bartonella. It is believed to be transmitted by cat scratches, bites, or exposure to cat saliva. This leads to swelling of the lymph nodes (lymphadenopathy) near the site of the scratch or bite.

Tapeworms—Many species of tapeworms that infect animals can be passed to humans, if tapeworm eggs voided in feces enter the mouth and are swallowed. Preventing infection involves recognition and treatment of infected dogs and cats and flea prevention.

Salmonellosis—Salmonella poisoning is one of the most common forms of zoonoses, with the infection being transmitted directly from animals to humans or indirectly, from infected food products (meat, eggs, dairy products) to humans. Salmonellosis affects all animal species. The transmission of salmonellosis can be prevented through good hygiene, especially hand washing. Individuals should be especially cautious when handling feces from animals afflicted with diarrhea.

Ringworm—Dermatophytosis, better known as ringworm, is a common fungal infection of the skin, hair, or nails of mammals. It is important to note that this infection is caused by a fungus similar to that which causes athlete's foot in humans, not a worm. The infection can be spread by direct contact with the lesions or spores on the animal or in the environment and by indirect contact, through grooming implements (combs, brushes) or shared equipment such as collars.

Rabies—This virus is transmitted by infected saliva, usually by a bite wound, but virus-laden saliva may also enter preexisting wounds or abrasions. All mammals are susceptible to the virus. According to the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program, infected dogs, cats, and ferrets will show clinical signs of rabies within 10 days of the time the virus is present in the saliva, which forms the basis of the quarantine period.

Toxoplasmosis—All pregnant or potentially pregnant women should take precautions if working with cats. Disposing of cat litter daily and either using disposable litter boxes (which are discarded daily) or disinfecting litter boxes daily will substantially reduce the risk of toxoplasmosis transmission to humans as toxoplasmosis requires at least 48 hours in cat feces to reach an infective stage.

Cheyletiellosis (Walking Dandruff)—A skin rash affecting cats, rabbits, and dogs. Symptoms range from mild scaling and crusting without itching to intensely itchy dermatitis with rash and hair loss. Cats may present without obvious rash but with excessive grooming. Clinical symptoms in humans include an itchy, red, raised rash, most often on arms, legs, or the trunk.

5.91 HEALTH DEPARTMENT RELATIONS/BITE CASE PROCESSING

Observations:
Article III, Section Q of the draft SOP concerned Bite Reports and Quarantine. This section was well written and very thorough. The sections included Duty to Receive, Bites to a Person, Bites to a Domestic Animal, Conditions of Quarantine, Home Quarantine, Veterinary or Shelter Quarantine, Removal of Animals from Quarantine, Notification of Abnormalities, Quarantine Lifting, and Fees.

Bite reports were taken by a member of the administrative staff who entered them into the computer and then dispatched an ACO to place the animal in quarantine. Local physicians and hospitals complied with mandatory reporting of animal bites within 24 hours of treatment of the victim. The clerk kept track of the ten-day quarantine period, and in the case of home quarantine, called the animal owner at the end of the quarantine period for release. The clerk would ask the animal owner a series of questions prepared by the animal services manager to verify that the animal did not show signs of rabies. If the clerk was not confident that the owner could assess the animal appropriately, she would dispatch an ACO to examine and release the animal from quarantine.

The team did not observe Rabies Observation Cards on-site.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Release animals from quarantine only if they have received a complete exam by a trained ACO or veterinarian. Relying on owners to accurately assess their pet's condition leaves SLOCAS open to liability. Animals should receive a thorough examination on day one and day eleven of quarantine.

- ✓ Grant home quarantine of animals only under the supervision of an adult. Animals should not have contact with other mammals during the rabies quarantine period. Clients should contact the local health department if they become suspicious of their animal's condition.

- ✓ Instruct ACOs to perform a spontaneous inspection of home quarantine cases during the holding period.

- ✓ Create Rabies Observation Cards and use red paper so that staff will proceed with caution with the animals who have that color card on their cage. Many shelters choose to use a red card for this purpose, since the color red typically signifies caution or danger.

6.0 EUTHANASIA

For further information about euthanasia, please refer to the enclosed *HSUS Euthanasia Training Manual.*[70]

6.1 SELECTION CRITERIA

Observations:
Article V, Section K of the draft SOP covered euthanasia. The SOP did not cover the selection of animals to be euthanized other than stating "for reason of physical debilitation, infirmity, or temperament."

Kennelworkers who noted health or behavior problems brought those animals to the attention of the shelter coordinator, who made the euthanasia determination. Final approval was given by the animal services manager, but he did not routinely examine the animals prior to euthanasia unless they were specifically brought to his attention.

Feral cats were euthanized after their stray holding period if placement in a suitable rescue group could not be found.

As previously discussed, the animal services manager stated that SLOCAS sometimes used FeLV/FIV tests to help determine an animal's disposition, and this was verified by a random audit of computerized medical records.

The team was told that animals with zoonotic disease or other medically treatable conditions such as "hot spots" were, at times, selected for euthanasia.

Because euthanasia and adoption selection affect one another, please see section 7.1, Selection Criteria/Behavioral Assessments for further observations/discussion.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Formulate and implement structured euthanasia selection criteria, and adhere to those criteria. Develop criteria that will clearly document the reasons for and numbers of animals being euthanized. Include this in the SOP.

- ✓ Rotate the task of selecting animals for euthanasia so that one person is not always responsible for these decisions.[71]

- ✓ Follow the definition of the term "unhealthy and untreatable" as defined by the Asilomar Accords. Euthanize only dogs and cats who at or subsequent to the time they are taken into possession:

---

[70] *HSUS Euthanasia Training Manual*, Rhoades, Rebecca H., DVM, 2002+
[71] *JAVMA*, Vol 228, No 7, April 1, 2006, "Euthanasia and Quality of Life," Bernard E. Rollin, Ph. D.

- have a behavioral or temperamental characteristic that poses a health or safety risk or otherwise makes the animal unsuitable for placement as a pet, and are not likely to become "healthy" or "treatable" even if provided the care typically provided to pets by reasonable and caring pet owners/guardians in the community; or
- are suffering from a disease, injury, or congenital or hereditary condition that adversely affects the animal's health or is likely to adversely affect the animal's health in the future, and are not likely to become "healthy" or "treatable" even if provided the care typically provided to pets by reasonable and caring pet owners/guardians in the community; or
- are under the age of eight weeks and are not likely to become "healthy" or "treatable," even if provided the care typically provided to pets by reasonable and caring pet owners/guardians in the community.

✓ SLOCAS is commended for placing animals with rescue groups thereby reducing the need for euthanasia.

✓ Continue to use the FeLV/FIV tests if they are to remain in stock.

Discussion:
SLOCAS has greatly reduced its euthanasia rates over the last several years. The animal services manager and SLOCAS staff are encouraged to continue these efforts by continually building and maintaining relationships with rescue and foster groups, improving the spay/neuter program, and making other improvements in the facility to increase adoption rates.

Animals are individuals, and each should be evaluated on an individual basis prior to euthanasia. This evaluation should be performed by a well-trained and experienced animal care professional in a position of authority, preferably in consultation with other key trained and knowledgeable staff members of the organization. Decisions regarding the euthanasia of animals within the animal shelter are the most difficult for staff to deal with. Progressive and well-run animal shelters follow a standard adhering to the organization's mission statement.

Selecting animals for euthanasia is one of the most stressful tasks that animal shelter employees face. Those employees entrusted with this responsibility are often uneasy about choosing which animals to euthanize, but with clear definitions this task would be much more manageable. There will never be a time when shelters do not euthanize any animals at all—there will always be animals in need of our assistance such as those who are sick, injured, or behaviorally unsafe for human companionship. Ultimately, it is essential to have clearly documented criteria for choosing animals for euthanasia.

SLOCAS must put immediate attention into improving its overall animal management program. Animals who are sick must either receive appropriate medical attention, or the decision to euthanize must be made in a very timely manner. Treatment for contagious disease must be done in a proper isolation area or out-of-shelter fostering; healthy animals must be protected from contracting a manageable disease.

An animal should not be euthanized simply because the required hold time is up, or simply due to space limitations. Other factors, such as age, health, behavior, and physical condition come into play when determining whether an animal should be euthanized. If one (or more) of those factors is an issue and the animal is deemed unhealthy and untreatable, then that is the reason for euthanasia. Unfortunately, in many shelters across the country the competition for space in the adoption areas is a determining factor.

Accurately documenting the number of animals euthanized and the reasons for euthanasia is an important management tool. The ability to communicate shelter triumphs (decreased need for euthanasia) or shelter difficulties (increased need for euthanasia or euthanasia of a particular type/species of animal) is extremely important both to elicit public support (fund raising, spay/neuter education, etc.) and to ensure that the shelter remains accountable.

Many shelters utilize the following table to establish and develop protocols to determine and animal's potential.

CATEGORY	STATUS	EUTHANASIA
Adoption Potential	Animals that, 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, noncontagious medical conditions such as skin problems, bad flea or mite infestations, broken limbs, abscesses, or problems that could be fixed with treatment and/or time.	...is most often a result of a lack of the resources, space, or time to treat the animals.
Medical, Contagious	Animals in good physical condition with medical conditions such as upper respiratory infections, kennel cough, ringworm, or less severe cases of mange that may be very treatable but are highly contagious in a shelter environment.	...is often not only because of the symptoms of the illness but also to prevent the contamination of others.
Physical Condition	Animals in poor general overall condition and/or health (for example, old, emaciated, weak).	...is often the result as these animals can be poor candidates for adoption placement due to the extensive medical rehabilitation necessary.
Unweaned, Too Young	Animals who are too young to survive on their own or in a shelter setting and need extensive care and socialization.	...is often due to the labor-intensive nature of care and the lack of foster homes.
Breed	Animals of breeds that are banned or at an increased risk in a community (such as areas where dogfighting 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.

CATEGORY	STATUS	EUTHANASIA
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 limited and room must be made for other animals needing housing and care.
Inappropriate for Adoption	Certain species of animals.	...is appropriate even if the resources (space, time, money, staff, and isolation) and a potential home is available.
Medical, Untreatable	Animals with terminal illnesses or injuries, severe chronic illnesses, or other serious medical conditions.	...is appropriate to eliminate the ongoing suffering of the animal.
Temperament Issues	Animals who 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 show 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 to be euthanized by a judge, a hearing officer, or another public official with that authority.	...is performed to comply with this ruling.

6.2 EUTHANASIA PAPERWORK

Observations:
There were no SOPs for euthanasia paperwork on-site; however, Article V, Section K, Euthanasia, 10 Records, briefly covered the record-keeping and storage of controlled substances. There was no euthanasia checklist or system of verifying an animal's identity other than the printed Chameleon© record.

Drug usage was logged on 8 ½ x 11" half-sheets of paper, which was kept in a plastic tackle box with the "in-use" euthanasia drugs. The tackle box was kept in a locked closet in the Kennel hallway. Once a bottle of premix (ketamine-xylazine) or Fatal Plus® (sodium pentobarbital) was emptied, it was returned to the animal services manager with its log sheet. The animal services manager kept completed log sheets in a safe in his office.

Paperwork and tracking at SLOCAS was unsystematic, which left open the possibility of careless mistakes being made. As previously mentioned, a cat (A148205) was scanned prior to placement and found to have a microchip. If this cat had been designated for euthanasia instead of placement, it may have been euthanized without being scanned first, which may have had disastrous consequences.

Controlled drugs were stored in a locked safe in the animal services manager's office. This safe contained schedule II and III controlled drugs including Fatal Plus®, ketamine, fentanyl, butorphanol, diazepam, and hydrocodone. The safe also contained purchase records for these drugs and log sheets detailing their use. The log sheets were simple half-sheets of paper with the drug name, bottle number, and a table showing the date, amount used, initials of the staff member using the drug, animal number, and amount remaining in the container. Conspicuously missing from these sheets were the dosage and strength of a given drug, quantity contained within the stock bottle, lot number, and expiration date. There were no carbon copies of any records. It was difficult, using these sheets, to track drug usage and reconcile usage with on-hand stock. Also present in the safe was a large quantity of expired drug as well as numerous empty bottles. Due to the importance of managing controlled substances and their paperwork, The HSUS team recommended at the concluding meeting with County officials on March 20, that SLOCAS acquire the appropriate forms and logs and dispose of the expired drugs and empty containers.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create a more detailed SOP for euthanasia paperwork including step-by-step instructions.

- ✓ Immediately develop an SOP for verifying which animals are to be euthanized and create euthanasia checklist forms to be completed by the technician for each animal that is euthanized.
  - ➢ The euthanasia checklist should include verification of the animal's description (breed, sex, color, identification number), confirmation of the authorization for euthanasia, confirmation that the stray hold time has expired, and rescanning for a microchip. If any of these criteria cannot be verified, the euthanasia of that animal should be postponed until verification is made unless the animal is suffering.
  - ➢ Each euthanasia checklist should be attached to the animal's permanent record and filed accordingly.

- ✓ Devise and utilize a separate log sheet for tracking euthanasia. Information on this log sheet should include euthanasia dates, times, animal ID numbers, drugs used and the initials of the person who performed the euthanasia. This log sheet can be used as another part of a check and balance system for controlled drug tracking, animal disposition tracking, and statistical analysis.

- ✓ Immediately contact the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and California controlled drug regulating authority and acquire the forms for tracking controlled substances, if this has not yet been accomplished. Immediately implement these forms, and provide an inventory of all drugs used and on-hand.

- ✓ Dispose of expired drugs as per DEA regulations. Adhere to all federal and state regulations pertaining to the handling and tracking of controlled substances.

- ✓ Provide a more secure storage for the "in-use" euthanasia drugs. Use a secure safe instead of a tackle box, which can be easily stolen if the storage closet is inadvertently left open.

- ✓ Comply with the DEA regulations surrounding the storage, record-keeping, inventory, use, and disposal of all controlled substances. Record-keeping requirements include records of the drugs purchased, received, distributed, and dispensed. This closed system allows a controlled substance to be traced from the time it is ordered to the time it is dispensed to the ultimate user (the animal) and log forms returned.

- ✓ Controlled Substance Inventory Log forms[72] must include the name of the controlled substance along with its form, strength, and size. The log sheet would then individually list the bottles of the drug with the following information:
  - ➢ The date distributed
  - ➢ The identification number assigned to that individual bottle by the shelter upon receipt from the supplier; numbers must be consecutive
  - ➢ The lot number located on the bottle
  - ➢ The expiration date located on the bottle
  - ➢ The signature of the person removing the bottle from storage
  - ➢ Which department will be using the drug
  - ➢ The date the empty bottle was returned
  - ➢ To whom it was returned

- ✓ The individual daily use Controlled Substance Daily Log form[73] must include the name of the drug, bottle number, the form, strength, size, lot number, and expiration date. Additionally it must include the:
  - ➢ Date the drug was used
  - ➢ Animal identification number
  - ➢ Animal description (species and breed)
  - ➢ Signature, not initials, of person administering
  - ➢ Injection route administered
  - ➢ Number of ml used
  - ➢ Reason for euthanasia
  - ➢ Supervisor reconciliation of amount of drug used with drug remaining on-hand

- ✓ These records must be kept together in one location and maintained for two years. Periodic inventories must take place and a biennial inventory must be done.[74] A biennial inventory must be signed by the person performing, witnessed, and include:
  - ➢ Registrant and DEA number
  - ➢ "C" number (also called schedule number), which indicates level of control placed on each drug

---

[72] Sample Controlled Substance Inventory Log Form
[73] Sample Controlled Substance Daily Log Form
[74] Sample DEA Biennial Inventory Form

- Controlled drug name
- Type/size
- Lot or batch number
- Quantity

Discussion:
Maintaining a verification system for euthanasia is essential for any animal shelter in order to prevent errors that may result in the wrong animal being euthanized. An irreversible mistake, such as euthanizing a stray animal before the hold time has expired, can result in tragedy for a pet, heartbreak for a pet owner, and damage to a shelter's reputation. The burden of guilt caused by a mistake such as this will also greatly increase the stress level for staff performing euthanasia.

The accurate record-keeping of controlled drugs is a serious legal issue for animal care and control. Sodium pentobarbital (Fatal Plus®) is a schedule II barbiturate, which means it is a federally controlled substance. It can only be purchased using a DEA registration and order form, and is subject to and controlled by federal and state security and record-keeping requirements. It is imperative that every animal shelter ensure the safe management and accurate records of controlled drugs.

6.3 EUTHANASIA METHODS

Observations:
The draft SOP, Article V, Section K, Euthanasia, 7 Protocol, covered euthanasia methods for a) Amphibians, fish, reptiles, b) Birds, c) Cats, d) Dogs, e) Horses and Livestock, f) Rabbits, g) Rodents, bats, other small mammals, and h) Swine.

The team observed only one of the three euthanasias performed during the site visit although prior to the site visit, The HSUS team requested that any animals scheduled for euthanasia that were not sick or injured be held aside in order for the team to observe. When the team arrived they again specifically requested that any euthanasia being performed during the site visit be observed by at least one member of the team; however, this request was not honored. On March 20, a Dachshund (A011387) was euthanized as "medical-untreatable" as an owner request while the team was at lunch; and a cat (A146905) that had been returned March 10 was euthanized as "medical-untreatable" the same day.

Kennelworkers performed euthanasia under the animal services manager's indirect supervision. The one euthanasia that the team observed was a Pit Bull mix (A148090) with an extensive bite history. Two euthanasia technicians participated in the process. One euthanasia technician retrieved the dog from his run in the Quarantine Kennel and brought him by leash to the Medical/Euthanasia Room and locked both doors that led to the room. The other euthanasia technician had already retrieved the euthanasia drugs from the storage space in the Kennel hallway closet and the animal services manager had already approved the euthanasia. The dog was muzzled and given an intramuscular injection of 2.0 mls of ketamine-xylazine at a 5:1 ratio. The dog was not weighed prior to determining the

medication dose; rather, his weight was estimated by the euthanasia technician. Both of the euthanasia technicians spoke to the dog and handled him gently and safely. The euthanasia technician who restrained the dog supported the dog's weight as he succumbed to the drug. The muzzle was removed and the euthanasia technicians waited for three minutes until the dog was lightly sedated. They lifted the dog to the stainless steel table which was covered with a clean towel. The dog was appropriately and gently restrained. The technician shaved the dog's left foreleg and administered an intravenous (IV) injection of 6.0 mls of Fatal Plus® sodium pentobarbital solution into the cephalic vein. The euthanasia technician missed the vein on the first attempt, but was successful on the second attempt. The euthanasia technician then verified death with a stethoscope and by checking for a corneal reflex. The dog's body was placed in a plastic bag and carried to an outdoor refrigerator unit to await cremation.

The euthanasia technician recorded the amount of premixed ketamine-xylazine and Fatal Plus® that had been used on sheets which were kept in the drug box. The drug box was returned to its storage place in the Kennel hallway closet.

The euthanasia technicians were not observed scanning the dog for a microchip prior to euthanasia, and there was no procedure for verifying the dog's identity other than the printed Chameleon© record. For more on this subject, see section 4.16, Incoming Animal Identification and Procedures.

Euthanasia of cats was not observed. The animal services manager stated that all cats were given intraperitoneal (IP) injections of Fatal Plus®. The team was told that fractious or feral cats were netted or restrained with a control pole and injected into the abdomen, and were "sometimes" sedated with ketamine prior to euthanasia. No feral cat dens were observed. Although the team was not able to observe euthanasia of feral cats, they noted that the practice of netting feral cats (who were intermingled throughout the Cat Rooms) would cause undue stress for the feral cats and the other cats caged in the rooms.

All kennelworkers stated that intracardiac (IC) administration of drugs was never performed, under any circumstances. The draft SOP stated that "Intracardiac injections are prohibited without the express authorization of the Animal Services Manager."

Section K of the draft SOP stated the following with regard to the euthanasia of a) Horses and Livestock:

> *Euthanasia of horses shall be conducted by the administration of injected sodium pentobarbital solution or by gunshot. Administration of sodium pentobarbital shall be made through intravenous injection at the jugular vein only. Gunshot shall be administered to the head and must be preauthorized by the Animal Services Manager or his designee.*

The same section stated the following with regard to the euthanasia of h) Swine:

> *Swine greater than twenty pounds body weight shall be euthanized by gunshot. Pre-sedation shall be administered to all swine prior to euthanasia by gunshot.*

Recommendations:

- ✓ Implement written euthanasia method SOPs as soon as possible. Utilize the *HSUS Euthanasia Training Manual* to develop the SOPs as well as other recommendations in this section.

- ✓ SLOCAS staff is commended for their overall approach to euthanasia and the level of competence displayed during the one observed procedure. It is regrettable that the team was not permitted to observe the other euthanasias on March 20, which would have aided the team in forming a more thorough impression of SLOCAS' euthanasia practices.

- ✓ As previously mentioned, cease using control poles on cats. See section 4.2, Animal Handling, and recommendations in this section for recommendations on handling feral or fractious cats.

- ✓ Limit the use of IP injections to friendly cats who can be easily handled. One staff member should hold the cat while the euthanasia technician administers the injection.

- ✓ Cease performing IP injections on feral cats unless a skilled euthanasia technician and handler are able to net the cat humanely—with as little stress as possible—and correctly perform the injection.

- ✓ Train SLOCAS euthanasia technicians on how to perform intracardiac injections.

- ✓ Consider the preferred method of euthanasia for fractious or feral cats below:
  - ➢ Administer intramuscularly (IM) the appropriate dose of premix (ketamine-xylazine) to the fractious or feral cat in his or her cage using a syringe pole, a plexiglass cat shield (ACES), or after removing the cat using one of the devices discussed in section 4.2.
  - ➢ Allow the cat to become unconscious in a dark, quiet enclosure.
  - ➢ Verify that the cat is completely anesthetized by performing a toe pinch.
  - ➢ Administer an IC injection of sodium pentobarbital (never IC a pregnant animal).
  - ➢ Verify death; see the recommendations below for more details.

- ✓ Verify death properly by the following methods and verification sequence: (1) lack of respiration, (2) lack of eye reflexes, (3) lack of heartbeat, (4) presence of rigor mortis. Each of these signs should be checked in order of their listing here. Only the fourth sign, rigor mortis, is a certain sign of death.[75]
  - ➢ Cardiac puncture is another method of positively verifying death. Once the euthanasia technician checks for lack of respiration, lack of eye reflexes, and lack of heartbeat, and receives a negative response, insert a needle into the animal's heart, aspirate the syringe, and watch for movement. When there is no movement death has taken place.

---

[75] HSUS Euthanasia Training Manual, page 111

- ✓ Add the use of the premix (ketamine-xylazine) to the euthanasia section of the draft SOP. Designate for which animals and for which routes of injection administration it is to be used, for example, for fractious cats and dogs and IC injections.

- ✓ Immediately implement a written checklist of steps to be taken prior to euthanizing any animal, once ID bands are placed on animals upon intake, as recommended in section 4.16. These steps should include:
  - ➢ Cross reference the ID band with the animal's computer record making sure that the ID numbers and breed identification match.
  - ➢ Check the animal's ID band against the computer record, paying particular attention to intake and disposition dates and any computerized or written notes concerning owner contacts, potential adoption, or foster placement.
  - ➢ Scan all animals for microchips prior to euthanasia, even if they have been scanned previously.
  - ➢ Procure a scale and weigh animals prior to euthanasia to ensure accurate dosing of drugs. It is acceptable for an experienced euthanasia technician to estimate weight as long as death has been properly verified.

- ✓ Cease euthanizing horses, livestock, and pigs by gunshot unless it involves an emergency euthanasia of a gravely injured animal who is severely suffering. With regard to pigs, after the animal is given premix, administer an IC injection of sodium pentobarbital at a dose of 1.0 ml/10 lbs. Horses and livestock should continue to receive IV injections into the jugular vein.

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 cardiac and/or respiratory arrest and ultimately death. The American Veterinary Medical Association's Guidelines on Euthanasia states that any technique used should "minimize distress and anxiety experienced by the animal prior to loss of consciousness."[76]

Intraperitoneal injection is a humane, approved method of euthanasia for cats, when performed correctly. However, this technique requires adequate restraint so that the injection is given in a specific location and not just "into the abdomen." For feral cats, the best restraint is chemical, therefore SLOCAS is strongly encouraged to anesthetize all fractious or feral cats and then provide an IC injection.

Intracardiac injection is also a humane, approved method of euthanasia. Its advantage is that it is the quickest of all euthanasia methods; its disadvantages are that it can only be used on

---

[76] AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia, June 2007

unconscious animals—with loss of sensation or feeling—because of the pain of injection and the difficultly in administering correctly.

In rare instances, an animal may appear to lack respiration, eye reflexes, or a heartbeat, but still be alive. Instead of succumbing to the effects of sodium pentobarbital, the animal may instead have entered a coma-like state in which most of his or her body functions are greatly suppressed or slowed. The animal may survive in this state until the effects of the drug wear off, sometimes many hours later and then revive. Because incidents such as this are possible, it is essential to develop a system for the verification of death and ensure than it is followed without exception.

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.

The HSUS believes strongly that there should be two people involved in the euthanasia process: one to hold and calm the animal and another to inject. IV injection (within the vein) is considered to be the most rapid and reliable method of performing euthanasia by injection when it can be administered without causing fear or distress in the animal. IP injection (within the peritoneal cavity) are acceptable for friendly cats, kittens, and puppies if IV injections are difficult or impractical. IC injections (within the heart) are acceptable only for animals who are unconscious or deeply anesthetized. Because intrahepatic (IH) injections (within the liver) have not yet been sufficiently studied, The HSUS does not recommend IH as an acceptable route. Questions remain regarding the accuracy of injection, organ sensitivity to pain, suitability for multiple species, and smooth induction into unconsciousness.

Stress and anxiety can be minimized by technical proficiency and humane handling of the animals to be euthanized. 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 animals' behavioral, physical, and physiological responses to the process, as well as to the drugs used.

In most animal shelters, there are generally two types of animals received: well socialized animals who are tame and friendly; and unsocialized animals who are fractious and frightened. Friendly animals yearn for human contact, and proper euthanasia is performed by holding and comforting the animals while a painless injection is given in the vein and the animal loses consciousness. **Fractious animals fear human contact, and proper euthanasia minimizes handling by proficiently administering anesthetics and releasing the animal to become unconscious in a dark, quiet, and safe enclosure.**

Access to pre-euthanasia drugs is crucial during euthanasia procedures in the animal care and control setting. Training in their appropriate use is also fundamental. For example, it is not

uncommon to hear people (wrongly) interchange the terms sedation, tranquilization, and anesthesia. In order to humanely administer pre-euthanasia drugs, it is imperative to understand the differences between these words and to know which pre-euthanasia drugs offer what effects:

> *Sedation* refers to the state resulting from the administration of a drug which calms an animal but does not affect his ability to feel pain and which causes some drowsiness or sleepiness. The most common sedative used for pre-euthanasia in combination with other drugs is xylazine, often referred to by the brand name, Rompun® (although there are other xylazine products available). Xylazine alone does not anesthetize animals and therefore should not be used alone prior to an IC injection.
>
> *Tranquilization* refers to the state resulting from the administration of a drug which depresses the sensation an animal feels but does not render him unconscious; tranquilization does not generally cause drowsiness or sleepiness, although it may allow an animal to relax to the point of sleepiness. An example of a commonly used tranquilizer in the shelter environment is acepromazine.
>
> *Anesthesia* refers to the state resulting from the administration of a drug that produces a loss of sensation or feeling. Examples of anesthetic agents are: tiletamine-zolezepam (Telazol®) or a mixture of ketamine-xylazine. Both of these combinations offer anesthesia and allow for an IC injection when properly administered.

All three of these levels can be appropriate for use prior to euthanasia, depending on the circumstances. However, the level of sedation, tranquilization, or anesthesia provided by any drug or drug combination is dependent on many factors, including animal body weight, animal health condition, dose used, route by which the drug is administered, and other factors. New pre-euthanasia drug combinations and techniques are continually being explored. Management establishing protocols to include the use of pre-euthanasia drugs and evaluating these procedures routinely to keep pace with emerging research, opinions, and options is essential.

Choosing the right needle diameter and length is as important as selecting the right drug for euthanasia. A needle that is too wide or too long can cause the animal unnecessary pain during injection. Needle selection should be based on such factors as species, size, and breed of the animal; type of injection; volume of injection; and viscosity (thickness) of the fluid being injected.

The following table lists the common ranges for the various sizes and species of animals:

Common Needle Sizes for Various Methods of Injection				
Species/Size	**Subcutaneous (SQ)**	**Intramuscular (IM)**	**Intravenous (IV)**	**Intracardiac (IC)**
Dog/Large (over 60 lbs)	20-22G x 1"	20-22G x 1"	20-22G x 1"	18-20G x 1½"
Dog/Medium (30-60 lbs)	20-22G x ¾" or 1"	22G x ¾"	20-22G x ¾" or 1"	18-20G x 1" or 1½"
Dog/Small (15-30 lbs)	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾"	20G x 1" or 1½"

Common Needle Sizes for Various Methods of Injection				
Species/Size	**Subcutaneous (SQ)**	**Intramuscular (IM)**	**Intravenous (IV)**	**Intracardiac (IC)**
Puppy (under 15 lbs)	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	20-22G x ¾" or 1"
Cat	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 1"
Kitten	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	25G x ¾"	25G x ¾"	22G x ¾"or 1"
Rabbit	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾" or 25G x ¾"	22G x ¾"

Again, it is imperative that the death of each animal be verified absolutely prior to disposal. All eye reflexes are absent by the early part of stage four of anesthesia, and even a strong beating heart can be relatively difficult to palpate in some animals. Therefore, cardiac puncture (placing a needle into the heart and assuring the cessation of movement) and, preferably, rigor mortis (rigidity) are the only two sure methods of verifying death.

Gunshot is only acceptable in an emergency field situation where an animal cannot be confined and transferred to the shelter, sodium pentobarbital is unavailable, and the personnel are well trained in the use of gunshot. This method is highly dangerous to personnel. Gunshot is absolutely not acceptable for routine shelter euthanasia.

6.4 CARCASS DISPOSAL

Observations:
Article V, Section O, Incinerator, in the draft SOP included information on which animal remains are suitable for incineration, which employees are permitted to utilize the crematorium, and a statement regarding smoke emissions. The SOP did not include step-by-step instructions on its use.

Deceased animals were bagged and placed in a large walk-in cooler in the same outdoor area as the crematorium. According to one staff member, carcasses were incinerated twice a week. During the site visit, however, the cooler was filled to a level of approximately two feet with bagged carcasses. There was no odor emanating from the cooler when the door was closed, but moderate odor was present when the door was opened.

The crematorium was not in operation during the site visit; therefore, observations of the cremation process did not take place. A staff member stated that a new crematorium had been installed four months prior to the site visit and had since been out of service twice. Reportedly, carcasses had only been burned four times since the unit's installation, which explained the large number of carcasses in the cooler. Staff told the team that when the crematorium functioned properly, they loaded and turned on the unit in the morning and shut it off before closing.

Recommendations:
- ✓ Create and implement carcass disposal SOPs, including step-by-step instructions and safety and health precautions.

- ✓ Require the crematorium manufacturer to service the unit as provided for under warranty. If the unit cannot be repaired in order for it to be used reliably, it should be replaced.

- ✓ Require all staff loading or unloading the crematorium to wear approved goggles, masks, and gloves if this is not already being done.

- ✓ Ensure that the crematorium is being powered for the appropriate amount of time based on the requirements for its operation (volume or weight/rate). Follow the guidelines in the manufacturer's operation manual.

6.5 EUTHANASIA ROOM/ENVIRONMENT

Observations:
As mentioned in section 3.28, the Medical/Euthanasia Room was located in a restricted access area and was utilized for euthanasia, some medical treatments, and rabies specimen preparation.

There were no medications kept in this room. The room had one stainless steel exam table, a tool compartment, a counter/sink, cabinets, two 55 gallon barrels of cleaning products, and other miscellaneous items. The room itself was fairly organized, but held some clutter. While somewhat drab, it was not unpleasant.

The room was functional with adequate lighting and two doors. One of the doors was the entry from the hallway and the other door led to the laundry room, which led to the crematorium area. During the site visit the laundry room door and door to the crematorium area were left open except during the euthanasia that had been observed by the team.

There was no signage designating the room as a euthanasia area, and "do not enter" signs were not utilized during euthanasia, but the doors were locked.

The team observed the following animal handling equipment in the room: a control pole, clippers, net, towels, and muzzles. There was no restraint gate for fractious dogs who are unable to be handled.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Hang external signs on the Medical/Euthanasia Room entrance doors that can be flipped over indicating either "Euthanasia is in progress, please do not disturb" or "Room is not in use, okay to enter." The importance of respecting this notice should be understood and respected by all employees.

- ✓ Reduce clutter in the room and securely store all equipment that is not in use.

- ✓ Install a restraint gate for restraint of large, fractious dogs. Purchase a standard gate and bolt it to the wall. Lead the dog between the gate and the wall and slowly and gently move the gate toward the wall. When the dog is secured, administer premix via an IM injection.

Discussion:
The euthanasia room should be the quietest, most relaxed, respected, and least interrupted room in an animal shelter. Cats and dogs can immediately pick up on the energy in a room. 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 the animals and the staff, the euthanasia room should look and feel warm, comfortable, clean, and peaceful. It should be a medium-sized room that is not cramped, or be so large that an animal feels like it is exposed and vulnerable. The room should be well-lit, and it should 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 remain on the floor, they ought to be covered. Cats should be in covered cages or carriers.

The staff's movements will go a long way toward allaying animals' fears; calm, gentle, slow movements will 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 become difficult for staff to handle, and the quality of the euthanasia process will deteriorate accordingly.

6.6 EUTHANASIA TECHNICIANS/TRAINING

Observations:
The shelter coordinator, two kennelworkers, and the ACOs had completed an eight hour euthanasia training course conducted on-premises by the animal services manager, using materials provided by the American Humane Association (AHA). The training consisted of videos, practice using a model for venipuncture, and supervised practice on live animals. All training courses had been given during the last 12–18 months. Staff members euthanized animals prior to being trained, but the animal services manager had recently instituted a policy prohibiting anyone from euthanizing unless they had completed the recent training. Refresher courses were not offered.

One staff member seemed to be reluctant to express his/her feelings about euthanasia other than to comment that he/she did not like to do it, but it had to be done.

California requires certification of euthanasia technicians, and allows the training program to be conducted by a licensed veterinarian. California statute allows trained and certified animal shelter workers to perform euthanasia.

Staff did not receive compassion stress or compassion fatigue training, and no programs were available to help them cope with euthanasia stress other than the County-sponsored employee assistance program (EAP). The animal services manager told the team that he was interested in pursuing for the SLOCAS shelter employees HSUS euthanasia training through Humane Society University.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Periodically observe staff members to ensure that their euthanasia skills are satisfactory and institute refresher courses, as needed.

- ✓ Make compassion stress training available to all staff on a regular basis.

Discussion:

The performance of skilled, humane euthanasia is a critical component of an open-admission animal shelter. It is a binding obligation of shelter administrators to evaluate euthanasia practices and procedures frequently, ensure that animals are being properly handled, and verify that employees are competent, compassionate, and properly trained.

Euthanasia should be entrusted to the most conscientious and qualified personnel only; never to a person who is careless, indifferent to animal suffering, or untrained in animal behavior and euthanasia techniques. Employees must be able to cope emotionally with euthanizing animals while maintaining a concern for the well-being of each individual animal.[77]

There are many factors involved in providing a good death for an animal. Technical skill and knowledge of the drugs and equipment are a necessity; however, an understanding of the emotional investment each staff member has in the process is equally important. Team work, support, patience, attitude and an understanding of one's convictions and personal commitments to their job are all involved in giving an animal a dignified death.

Compassion stress is a common phenomenon among animal welfare professionals, who have the often thankless job of dealing with the pet overpopulation problem. Compassion stress can manifest in many ways including depression, substance abuse, and time lost from work. SLOCAS is encouraged to provide formal training and support for all staff members.

---

[77] Compassion Fatigue in the Animal-Care Community, Charles Figley, Ph.D., and Robert Roop, Ph.D.+

7.0 ADOPTIONS

7.1 SELECTION CRITERIA/BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENTS

Observations:
SLOCAS did not have an SOP for adoption selection other than the draft SOP, Article V, Section J, Temperament Assessment and Evaluation of Adoptability. The shelter coordinator was responsible for deciding which animals were adoptable.

The SAFER™ test was used to evaluate dogs' temperaments prior to being approved for adoption. Staff stated that they followed the test systematically, but that they were not completely satisfied with the test. They reportedly replaced the Asses-a-Pet™ test with the SAFER™ test because the volunteers pressured them to use a behavior evaluation that has a proven record.

Behavior assessments were performed on a dog's fourth day at the shelter; however, the team was told that all dogs were not assessed because SLOCAS allowed clients to place holds on animals. This meant that when the animal's holding period expired the animal was immediately released to the new adoptive home.

The evaluations were conducted by the shelter coordinator and one other staff member, both of whom had attended the SAFER™ training course and been certified in its proper use. SAFER™ grades (A–F) were used to help determine adoptability and decide if special adoption circumstances were required, such as placement in a home with no small children.

The HSUS team observed one dog temperament evaluation on March 18. The dog "Claire" had been transferred to Woods Humane Society several days prior; she was returned to SLOCAS because she did not pass their temperament assessment. The dog had reportedly been food aggressive.

The evaluation was conducted in a small office adjacent to the main administrative office. Staff stated that they usually utilized the conference room, but it was in use at the time. The team observed staff evaluate the dog on the following items: look, sensitivity, tag, squeeze, food/rawhide, toys, dog-to-dog, and dog-to-cat. The team noted that the evaluation steps of the SAFER™ test were performed hastily, especially with regard to food and the dog-to-dog introduction—from start to finish the evaluation was approximately five minutes. In the last step of the evaluation, the staff introduced the dog to "Joe," the shelter cat, during which two team members and several employees were present. The handler held the dog while another staff member located the cat and then placed him on the floor several feet from the dog. The cat was reportedly dog-friendly, but appeared reluctant to participate; the dog did not react to the cat's presence. The dog "passed" the test and was sent to a foster home with a SAFER™ behavior medication protocol sheet entitled "food guarding program." Staff said that dogs who "fail" the food portion of the test are considered a risk and are then housed in Quarantine prior to euthanasia.

The team concluded that the results of this particular test were suspect because of the pace,

the room size, and the distracting environment. The food portion of the evaluation was limited to approximately one minute and the environment was not ideal.

There was no behavior evaluation program for cats.

Animals were not selected for adoption or euthanasia based on age or breed. SLOCAS appeared progressive in its attitude toward placing Pit Bulls in homes.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Follow the guidelines for separating animals in section 5.7, Isolation and Separation.
- ✓ Better control the environment when carrying out temperament evaluations in order to obtain the most accurate results possible. For example, do not administer portions of the test in a crowd of people in an open office, and if a dog is known to be food aggressive, dedicate more time to that portion of the evaluation. Dedicate more than five minutes to each evaluation; the standard is 15 minutes.
- ✓ Utilize a cat carrier when first introducing a cat to a dog in the dog-to-cat portion of the temperament assessment. If the dog reacts positively after the initial introduction in the carrier, the cat may be removed for further review. The safety of the cat involved in a dog temperament assessment is crucial.
- ✓ Consider combining or adding aspects of the Asses-a-Pet™ test to the evaluation tool currently in use. For staff skilled in dog behavior it is within reason and perfectly acceptable to combine or mix and match steps from various resources in order to achieve comprehensive information about animals.[78]
- ✓ Recruit and train a person with verified experience in handling cats, and charge that person with assessing the temperament and behavior of cats in the shelter. In the interim, utilize one of the cat rescue groups to provide regular behavior assessments of shelter cats. Create a form to evaluate the temperament of cats.[79]
- ✓ Designate a room to conduct temperament evaluations. The preference would be a generous sized room—minimum ten by ten feet with no obstructions or distractions—that is quiet and clean.
- ✓ Perform temperament evaluations prior to allowing the public to place a hold and pay the adoption fee for a dog. SLOCAS should place client's names on a waiting list and contact the client after the animal has been evaluated and is adoptable.
- ✓ Implement temperament evaluations on *all* dogs regardless of hold adoptions. It is the responsibility of SLOCAS to administer behavioral assessments of all animals not only to insure public safety, but also to match animals into appropriate homes.

---

[78] "How To Implement Behavior Evaluations By Letting The Dogs Tell Us Who They Are," Dee Ganley, CPDT/CABC/CDBC

[79] Feline Evaluation sample

- ✓ Carefully evaluate the reasons for surrender, such as biting, when considering owner surrendered animals for adoption. Perform the SAFER™ test on surrendered animals as well as strays. SLOCAS should euthanize animals who have bitten out of aggression. Adopting these animals out is unfair to both the adopter and the animal, and it can be a liability for the shelter if a human or another animal gets hurt or killed.

Discussion:
A temperament evaluation program should be a carefully considered component of a professional animal management plan. Clear and well-thought-out written policies, procedures, forms, communication techniques, and accountability measures should be implemented. Behavioral programs must be unique to each shelter's situation, staff time, and expertise.[80, 81]

The behavioral health of an animal in the custody of an animal care and control agency is as important as her or his physical health. A temperament/behavioral assessment of each animal is also extremely crucial to the adoption process and its success. It assists a shelter with the determination of the type of home that will best meet the needs of the individual animal and also provides potential adopters with information to assist them in determining the appropriateness of a particular animal for their lifestyle. The accurate assessment of the behavioral status of an animal helps a shelter provide adequate care for that animal, improve that animal's likelihood of adoption, and place that animal in an appropriate adoptive home. Accurate behavior assessments also play a key role in enhancing the safety of staff members and the general public.

7.2 ADOPTION PROCESS AND POLICIES

Observations:
The adoption process in its entirety was not observed during the site visit; therefore, responses in this section are derived from interviews with the shelter coordinator and other staff members. The team did, however, observe several clients who were interested in adopting looking at dogs in the Kennel.

All animals except for those held in Quarantine and Isolation were open for public observation and potential adoption. As previously stated, there were no designated adoption areas, therefore stray animals and animals for adoption were intermingled.

Clients wishing to view animals rang the Kennel doorbell and waited to be let in by whichever staff member, volunteer, or inmate was nearest the door. Once the door was open, the SLOCAS representative instructed the client to enter and look through the Kennel or Cat Rooms. The HSUS team observed several volunteers offer assistance or point to particular animals. Volunteers kept a "wish list" for those clients seeking a particular breed.

---

[80] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Putting Your Behavioral Evaluation to the Test," September–October 2003+
[81] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Assess with Success," November–December 2003+

If a client wished to adopt an animal whose stray time had not elapsed, the client completed an Adoption Hold form for that animal and paid the adoption fee. If the animal was claimed by its owner, the fee was refunded. If the animal was unclaimed, the adoption was completed at the end of the hold time.

If a client chose an animal that was immediately available for adoption, a volunteer or staff member removed the animal from his or her cage so that the animal and client could interact. These interactions took place either in one of the outdoor exercise yards or the cat "get acquainted" room. If the client chose to adopt the pet, she completed adoption paperwork including the Animal Adoption Acknowledgement, Release, Waiver and Disclosure form in the main office, paid the adoption fees, and took the animal home. The aforementioned adoption contract was fairly lengthy, somewhat difficult to read, and discussed the adopter's responsibilities to the animal in sufficient detail. The entire process took approximately 30 minutes. There was no adoption application, waiting period, or apparent pre-adoption counseling. This contradicted the draft SOP, Article III, Section N, Animal Adoption, 4 Adoption Applications, which stated, "All adopters shall fill out and sign an adoption application." There was no observed attempt to match qualified adopters with the most suitable adoptees. In rare circumstances such as when the adopter was a college student, office staff verified residence and landlord approval. One staff member stated that volunteers tried to steer potential adopters to animals that the volunteers felt were in imminent danger of euthanasia.

The adoption fee was $30.00, plus $15.00 for the rabies license. Fees included all vaccinations given in the shelter and the microchip implant. Most animals were transported to an area veterinarian for spay/neuter prior to adoption.

Adopters received a packet of information containing information on common shelter-borne disease, contact information for area veterinarians, as well as coupons and special offers from local pet supply stores.

Few adoptions were denied. A list of five people who were prohibited from adopting was kept in the main office. The animal services manager had the ultimate authority to deny adoptions.

Off-site Adoptions
SLOCAS held off-site adoptions every Saturday at Lemos Feed and Pet Supply. Volunteers were responsible for selecting cats and managing the events. Off-site adoptions were also held at special community events such as the "Strawberry Festival." There was a ten cat limit for the weekly events; sometimes dogs attended the events.

Volunteers were responsible for providing the administrative staff with a list of cats that would go on the Wednesday prior to the event. Some of the cats that went to the event were transported from foster homes.

After the administrative office received the list of cats/dogs, they compiled adoption packets and made sure that the animals were up to date on vaccinations and were microchipped.

Animals were transported to the off-site adoption events in volunteers' vehicles or County vehicles by authorized volunteers.

At the event, cats were held in their carriers and dogs were handled on leash.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop and implement written policies and procedures for the adoption process.[82] Identify the written policies and guidelines that are necessary to assist the staff in determining the methods for counseling potential adopters, and the means to determine the appropriateness of an adoption. The goal should be placement into permanent homes for as many animals as possible.

- ✓ Establish structured adoption guidelines. Train staff in pre-adoption counseling in order to assist clients in selecting the pets which are suitable for their lifestyles. Utilize the following tools developed by the ASPCA®: Canine-ality™, Puppy-ality™, and Feline-ality™ Assessment™.

- ✓ SLOCAS staff should assist clients with adoptions. Volunteers should not be permitted to perform adoption counseling unless they have been specifically trained in adoption counseling.

- ✓ Require a paid staff member to attend all off-site adoption events. The volunteer coordinator would be most suited for this responsibility.

- ✓ Review adoption applications of other animal care and control agencies and institute adoption counseling.[83] An adoption counseling session should be a relaxed, friendly meeting that results in the best possible match for both the animal and the adopter. Adoption counselors should ask open-ended questions that elicit honest answers from potential adopters. The process should be a counseling session, not a test. The following are some topics and questions that one should cover in an adoption counseling session:
  - General questions, such as asking why they want a pet, what type of pet they are looking for and why?
  - Experience level of the potential adopter
  - Household activity level
  - Number of people in the household, ages of any children
  - Specific to dogs, how often will the adopter be able to provide walks/exercise, how long will the dog be left alone during the day?
  - What type of behavior/training problems did the adopter experience with previous pets and how did he/she resolve them?
  - Specific to cats, how will the adopter handle scratching behavior? Discuss alternatives to declawing.

---

[82] www.animalsheltering.org/resource_library/search_results.html?librarytopic=adoptions

[83] Sample Adoption Applications

- ✓ Make sure that all staff involved in the adoption program is intimately familiar with the animals available for adoption as well as with companion animals in general. It is crucial that these staff members have the knowledge necessary to make quality life-long matches between pet and adopter.

- ✓ Consider promoting the animals who generally get overlooked. See how other shelters around the country have highlighted these animals in the article, "Highlighting the Wallflowers" in *Animal Sheltering* magazine.[84]

- ✓ Institute a procedure for checking potential adopters for any history of animal cruelty or neglect to ensure that animals are not placed with known irresponsible or abusive pet owners.

- ✓ Develop a more comprehensive adoption packet for new adopters. Include the following:
  - ➢ The animal's medical records
  - ➢ Feeding recommendations
  - ➢ Potential health concerns
  - ➢ How to introduce the new pet into the home and to other animals
  - ➢ Information on training classes and any information from trainers in the community who work with the shelter
  - ➢ Local animal control ordinances
  - ➢ Recommended books on behavior and training
  - ➢ A list of supplies and necessities
  - ➢ What to do if they lose an animal

- ✓ Explore public discussions on shelter policies regarding issues such as declawing and pets living outdoors.[85, 86]

Discussion:
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 applicant, the appropriateness of that animal to that home, and an adoption counselor's good judgment 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, it is also important to "make the right match." Staff must be trained to evaluate potential adopters and to teach adopters to be responsible pet owners. Selecting the

---

[84] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Highlighting the Wallflowers," March–April 2007+
[85] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "The Declaw Dilemma," pages 14–25, May–June 2004+
[86] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Inside-Out," page 8, September–October 2003+

right staff members to be adoption counselors is crucial. We encourage the organization to look for people who are excellent communicators, who genuinely enjoy talking with people, and who can best help people make decisions regarding the correct type of pet for their family.

A comprehensive and interactive adoption program will better serve the needs and interests of both the animals in the care of SLOCAS and the potential adopters. The staffing and resources dedicated to implementing a comprehensive adoption program need expansion in order to meet this goal. However, by identifying what SLOCAS hopes to achieve, it can easily identify the resources needed, work those needs into the agency's list of priorities, and then phase in the various aspects of the program as resources become available.

The purpose of an adoption program, whether conducted by a municipal animal control agency or a private animal protection agency, should be to find responsible, lifelong homes for the animals in its care. 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 and 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, companionship, food, water, shelter, or veterinary care. 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 the 2007–2008 survey by the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPMA), 10% of dog owners and 18% of cat owners obtained their animals from 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 groups, breeders, and neighborhood free-roaming 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 including:

- Ignorance of the surplus animal problem
- Impulse buying and impulse accepting
- Perceived quality of 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 are so deeply rooted in the American psyche that they may take decades to change. Some 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. Increasing adoptions, however, 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. Exceptions to enacted policies can be made by consulting with a supervisor. 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 process 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.[87] However, there are definitely certain circumstances under which a requested adoption should not occur. Potential adopters often initially view a refusal as a rejection or accusation. Counselors must be not only honest and direct, but also courteous and understanding in order to diffuse a potentially volatile situation. 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.

Animal shelters should be aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities regarding the adoption of any animal. Good adoption policies will help SLOCAS make the best decisions for the animals being adopted and will ensure the community that all potential adopters are treated fairly and equally.

7.3 ADOPTION FOLLOW-UP/COMPLIANCE

Observations:
The team was told that adoption follow-up was minimal; adoption follow-up calls were not observed during the site visit. The draft SOP did not mention adoption follow-up calls, or

---

[87] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Judgment Calls," p. 29–35, September–October 2007+

spay/neuter compliance tracking. Article III, Section N, Animal Adoption, 2 Alteration of Adopted Animals, a) stated, "Every effort shall me made to ensure that animals which are not spayed or neutered at the time of adoption are transported to a veterinarian for alteration before being released. If an appointment for alteration cannot be made, the animal services manager may authorize the release of the animal contingent upon the payment of a spay/neuter deposit."

Many animals were spayed or neutered prior to adoption. One staff member stated that in many cases, area veterinarians refused to spay or neuter animals adopted from SLOCAS until two weeks had elapsed from the time of adoption, because they feared that the animals would be sick. Rabies vaccinations were enforced by ACOs acting under County ordinance. It was unclear whether the ACOs also enforced spay/neuter statutes. Spay/neuter compliance rates were not available.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Institute tracking of spay/neuter and rabies compliance. This can be generated as a weekly or monthly report from Chameleon© and assigned to ACOs for follow-up.

- ✓ Place follow-up calls on all adopted animals.[88] When possible, assign a staff person or volunteer who will be responsible for making the calls. One way to do this is to have 31 folders in a file cabinet numbered 1–31, which correspond to the days of the month. If SLOCAS decides that two weeks, for example, is a good period of time to wait to follow-up, the adopters' paperwork can be put in the numbered folder that corresponds with the date he/she should be called. Every day, the paperwork should be pulled out of that corresponding folder and calls should be made to the adopters. In addition, 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.

- ✓ Take advantage of The HSUS's free pet behavior tip sheets,[89] which can be used to help counsel adopters on particular behavior issues they may be having with their new pet. SLOCAS can put their own contact information on the back of these sheets, which can be e-mailed or mailed to adopters.

- ✓ Maintain a list of area dog trainers and behaviorists that can be given as a reference if an adopter is having a behavior issue with a newly adopted pet. This list can also be used for those who call the shelter and are thinking about relinquishing a pet due to behavior issues. The Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) Web site allows one to search for members by zip code.[90]

---

88 Sample Adoption Follow-Up Form
89 www.petsforlife.org
90 www.apdt.com

7.4 COMMUNITY ADOPTION PARTNERS

Observations:
SLOCAS worked with many rescue groups in the San Luis Obispo area. Groups had verified 501(c)3 status and were kept on file in the animal services manager's office. Home visits were performed before placement of animals with a group. Adoption fees were collected and paperwork was completed, as for the general public. SLOCAS required that groups to fill out an Animal Rescue Partner Registration form in order to receive animals, and an Animal Rescue Request if interested in receiving a particular animal.

SLOCAS engaged in a positive relationship with the neighboring Woods Humane Society. SLOCAS regularly transferred dogs and cats to WHS. Communication between SLOCAS and WHS was described as positive and cooperative by both groups.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop written policies and procedures along with contractual requirements for the qualified placement partners with whom SLOCAS works (See HSUS *Animal Sheltering* Magazine, "Placement Partner Application Form," March–April 2004).[91, 92, 93, 94]

- ✓ Once compiled and written, all policies and forms should be presented to all placement partners and consistently followed.

- ✓ Develop and document animal housing and care standards for placement partners in order to ensure adequate animal care will be provided.

- ✓ Inspect every placement partner facility prior to the transfer of animals. If the group has numerous locations, each one should be inspected. Follow-up visits should be performed yearly to ensure compliance.

- ✓ Implement statistical tracking and follow-up of animals that are transferred to placement partners.

- ✓ SLOCAS is commended for its efforts in working with placement partners and the neighboring humane society.

Discussion:
In many communities, animal shelters have forged formal working relationships with placement partners.[95] In these relationships, animals of a particular breed, type, or special

---

[91] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Placement Partner Application Form," March–April 2004+
[92] Placement Partner Agreement example
[93] Placement Group Survey example
[94] Procedures for Rescue Groups
[95] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "A New Breed of Adoption Partner," January–February 2001+

need are transferred between a shelter and a placement group. 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 community.

Community opinion is significant to the overall perception of an organization and ultimately to the success of its animal care programs and services. Differences of opinion, philosophical disagreements, mission-based differences, and high emotions may stand in the way of complete harmony, but it is always preferable for placement partners and shelters to work well together.

7.5 FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT

Observations:
Article IV, Section L, Foster, in the draft SOP included information on foster care placement.

SLOCAS frequently utilized the services of foster parents. Foster parents were required to have a volunteer application on file, and to have completed six hours of volunteer time at the shelter before they were allowed to take animals home. The team was told that there were no other criteria for acceptance into the foster program, and no training was provided for foster parents prior to placement of animals. The team was also told that background checks and home visits were not performed; however, the draft SOP stated that an "Animal Foster Application" and home inspection were requirements. The SLOCAS Foster Policy stated, "Animal Services may schedule an inspection of the foster's home or location where animals are to be fostered."

The foster program was administered by the shelter coordinator who kept all forms and related paperwork. Foster parents were responsible for medical care for the animals in their charge, and were not reimbursed by SLOCAS for these expenses.

Staff members were allowed to foster animals, and were required to follow the same procedures as other foster parents.

Animals were designated for foster care by the shelter coordinator or the animal services manager. There was no set limit on the amount of time an animal might be in foster care, and this was decided on a case-by-case basis. Animals were required to be returned to the shelter for adoption after foster care.

The team was informed by some foster parents that they had been given insufficient time (less than one day) to pick up animals from the shelter after they were called for assistance. These individuals contended that it was unfair to call them for assistance during regular work hours and then be told that if they were unable to comply with the time frame they could not foster that particular animal.

Recommendations:
- ✓ SLOCAS is commended for maintaining an active foster care program.

- ✓ Screen foster parents carefully to avoid placement of animals into undesirable circumstances. Home visits should always be conducted as well as ongoing training for foster parents in disease recognition, animal handling and behavior, zoonosis, and other related topics.

- ✓ Allow foster parents a time limit (i.e. 48 hours) to retrieve animals from the shelter unless emergency circumstances require immediate removal.

- ✓ Create a foster agreement and reconsider the policy of requiring foster parents to join the volunteer program and complete volunteer time prior to approval of their application.

- ✓ Create a Foster Handbook which would include basic animal care information and the current Foster Policy.

- ✓ Provide basic treatment and dispense medications at no expense to the foster parent when appropriate. If the foster parent chooses to take the animal to a veterinarian and incurs additional charges, the foster parent would be responsible for those charges.

- ✓ SLOCAS management should develop a detailed, written SOP for the foster program. This SOP should address all of the following:
  - ➢ A record-keeping system to keep track of animals and foster homes
  - ➢ Criteria regarding which animals are eligible for foster care
  - ➢ Determining the qualifications required of potential foster care providers
  - ➢ Soliciting help from community veterinarians
  - ➢ Orientation and training for new foster care providers
  - ➢ Determining the source of funding for supplies, vaccines, and medical treatment for animals in foster care
  - ➢ Providing guidance, instruction sheets, and telephone support for foster care providers
  - ➢ Monitoring the health and well-being of foster animals by visiting foster homes and calling foster care providers on a regular basis
  - ➢ Determining the foster care provider's role in assisting with the adoption of the animal
  - ➢ Determining if there is a need to set a limit on the length of time an animal can remain in foster care and defining this limit if indicated

- ✓ Ensure that SLOCAS has the appropriate liability insurance and develops a disclaimer to protect SLOCAS in the event that a foster animal injures a person.

- ✓ Place the records for the animals who are in foster care in a designated area within the shelter and fully update them on a regular basis with all pertinent information. Files

must be organized to ensure that animals in foster homes can be accurately monitored. Each animal's record should contain the following information:[96]

- Reason the animal was placed into foster care
- Foster home contact information, name, address, telephone number
- Date the animal went to the foster home
- Expected date of return to the shelter
- Medical information, vaccination schedule, veterinary history
- Any treatment given by the foster care provider
- Documentation of all communication with the foster care provider
- Ongoing progress and status of the animal
- Final disposition

✓ Set limits in the foster program as a whole and in each foster home. For example, "SLOCAS will place in the foster program a maximum of XX animals at one time. Each foster home may foster no more than X kittens, X cats, and one dog." It is important to set reasonable limits on the number of animals that can be fostered in the program overall *and* in any one home. The number limit for each foster home needs to take into account the time, standard of care, and resources needed for each animal.

Discussion:
Foster parents can be an invaluable resource to ease overcrowding and provide emergency care in a shelter. SLOCAS enjoys an active foster program, which is only lacking in structure.

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. All foster programs must have criteria for carefully choosing foster animals and caregivers. Always remember that fostering is not a solution to pet overpopulation or irresponsible pet ownership.

It is important to understand that a foster care program cannot 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 your 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. However, no organized foster program should be based on emotional impulses. Everyone needs to be on board and

---

[96] Foster Care Sample Forms and Information

everyone involved must agree on the concept as well as the practice. There must be realistic expectations so that 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 SLOCAS must be prepared to provide the oversight necessary to keep the program running efficiently.

8.0 COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS

8.1 PROMOTION/SOCIAL MARKETING

Observations:
SLOCAS had no plan or SOP for media inquires or community outreach. There was no designated spokesperson; therefore, media inquires were handled by different people depending on the nature of the question or topic. The animal services manager generally responded to most media inquiries; however, he deferred some inquiries to the sheriff's public information officer, or other County departments. The animal services manager told The HSUS team that he had a good working relationship with the sheriff's public information officer. The animal services manager prepared general information press releases and forwarded them to the SLOCSD, who was responsible for sending out all press releases through their automated media distribution list. SLOCAS did not have a written policy, goal, strategy, or organized plan for promoting their programs or conducting community outreach activities.

The HSUS team was provided with copies of media articles from January 2006, up to The HSUS team visit in March 2008. A review of the articles revealed that a broad variety of animal issues were reported in the media. These included articles about animal neglect cases investigated by SLOCAS, responsible pet ownership stories, and announcements of events and changes in service. Four issues dominated the media coverage over the past year:

- Criticism of SLOCAS over the care and disposition of 100 animals seized in a 2006 animal hoarding case.[97, 98]
- Outspoken opinions, personal attacks on SLOCAS management, and accusations about the number of animals euthanized at the shelter.
- Criticism of SLOCAS over a 2007 Labor Day holiday incident where an owned dog died while in the shelter under their care.
- Public debate by County-elected officials about the sheriff's department seeking to relinquish management responsibility for animal services, and the uncertain future of SLOCAS.

During the site visit, SLOCAS was at the center of controversy. The print media had run articles that were critical of SLOCAS' policies and operations, and had highlighted cases and incidents that reflected the community's dissatisfaction. The climate of negativity was fueled by concerns from volunteers who have complained to the County board of supervisors, the sheriff, and the media. On many occasions the media had made inquiries simultaneously to the sheriff's public information officer, the animal services manager, and the County administrator's office. These multiple inquiries to obtain information can be time consuming

---

[97] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Opening the Closed Door," July–August 2004+
[98] HSUS "An Animal Hoarding Task Force Solution" CD-ROM+

and result in mixed messages from SLOCAS and the County.

The HSUS team saw examples of proactive efforts by SLOCAS to provide meaningful public education to the community using the local print media. In the last year, there were articles in the newspaper that featured how to be a responsible pet owner, announcements of SLOCAS sponsored low-cost rabies vaccination and microchip clinics, and a story highlighting shelter volunteers titled "Shelter Volunteers go the extra mile." SLOCAS also partnered with a local radio station for a weekly "Pet of the Week" program that featured adoptable shelter animals. The humane education program at SLOCAS provided the primary outreach presence in the community (see section 8.3, Humane Education/Other programs).

Recommendations:

- ✓ Designate one spokesperson for SLOCAS that will coordinate responses to media inquires.
- ✓ Develop a media plan with clear expectations and protocols with the sheriff's public information officer and the animal services manager.
- ✓ Create a community outreach plan.[99]
- ✓ Continue reaching out to the community with the various means already utilized and continually explore new options, which may include bite prevention programs, additional community events, targeting and marketing existing radio and TV spots, etc.
- ✓ 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.

Discussion:

One of the shortcomings in traditional education efforts is when we believe that if we simply tell people the "right" thing to do they will change. Although some do, most do not. 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.[100, 101]

Education or promotion includes public relations (publicity, media relations and community relations), direct marketing (Web site, direct mail), and personal outreach (presentations,

---

[99] "Community Relations: Reaching out to the Public and to other Professionals;" and, "Beyond the basic program: Five Recent Trends in Innovative Outreach." *Animal Control Management, A Guide for Local Governments*, International City/County Management Association, 2001+

[100] Strategic Social Marketing for Nonprofits, Nedra Kline Weinreich, March, 2006 www.social-marketing.com

[101] Philip Kotler, Ned Roberto, and Nancy Lee, Social Marketing: Improving the Quality of Life CR

one-on-one).[102] Promotion is part of marketing, but marketing includes much more. Social marketing encompasses analysis, planning, testing, execution, and evaluation of integrated programs designed to influence people to trade their old ideas, beliefs, and behaviors for new ones. Social marketing compliments, but does not replace legislative or legal efforts.

Social marketing borrows the techniques that companies use to influence people to buy goods and services. Although there may be some adaptation in an animal shelter 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**.** 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.

Although compelling education and communications can be highly motivating, promotion is more powerful when combined with appropriate product, price, and place elements. For example, an animal shelter wants to increase adoptions. The organization launches some top-notch publicity, advertising and direct mail (promotion). However, the shelter has many sick animals (product), the shelter is hard to get to and uninviting (place) and the adoption fee is prohibitive for some community residents who might otherwise provide good care (price). Unfortunately, the animal shelter will likely fail in its effort to significantly increase adoptions not because of poor promotion, but because of other marketing factors.

Note that marketing is not just about the targets for your programs. You can use your marketing mindset to think about achieving behavior change from donors, volunteers, alliance partners, the media, your co-workers and more. Any time you are trying to change someone's behavior; you can use social marketing thinking and actions to get better results.

Why Do We Need to Understand Promotion and Social Marketing?
Animal shelters should be serving and changing behaviors within their communities. This is achievable by broadening the traditional education and public information programs and employing strategies that focus more on an understanding of the needs and interests of potential clients and the message of the programs.

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

---

[102] Social Marketing Flow Chart

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.

When it comes to the broad issue of promotion, there is no shortage of ideas for new materials and programs that could assist SLOCAS in delivering its messages. Extensive sample materials, ranging from individual brochures to PSAs to comprehensive campaigns, have been prepared by animal control agencies across the country. Also, *Animal Sheltering* magazine often reports on educational efforts of animal care and control agencies. Model programs and ideas are also featured at both The HSUS Animal Care Expo and the American Humane's annual conference.

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

Using Promotion and Social Marketing

As SLOCAS grows and works to redefine itself in a manner that meets the current and future needs of the people and animals in San Luis Obispo 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 licensed animals, streamlining lost-and-found reports and sharing them with other shelters, microchipping animals to complement license-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 dog runs 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. To make a

real dent in long-term numbers, a few shelters subsidize spay/neuter surgeries for all pet owners, not just adopters, who would normally be unwilling or unable to pay for the procedure. Mobile spay/neuter clinics are also 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.[103] 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.
- 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 breed placement groups 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.[104] 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.[105] 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,

---

[103] HSUS brochures, "Profiting from Pets" and "13 Steps to Finding Rental Housing That Accepts Pets"+
[104] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Teaching Manners for Life," January–February 2000+
[105] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Show Me the Money," May–June 2002+

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.[106, 107]
- Working with shelter 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 runs are learning basic commands during walks and feeding times, and are 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 that 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

Most shelters focus their public relations efforts in three areas; publicity, media relations, and community relations. Publicity primarily refers to newspaper, radio, and television coverage

---

[106] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Minding Their Manners, Teaching People and Their Pets," March–April 2000+

[107] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Help! My New Cat is Peeing Outside His Litter Box," November–December 2001

prompted by an event, but the shelter itself can also generate it. Media relations connote a relationship with the media that encourages news organizations to promote the shelter's objectives. And community relations is the most direct form of public relations because every time your staff interacts with the public, any time your agency hosts an event, and every time you mail a newsletter to a member, you're engaging in community relations.

SLOCAS 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 SLOCAS 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 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 be inclined to portray an objective or even positive portrait of the shelter and the shelter staff.

SLOCAS must always show that it is making every possible effort to improve its operations and image and that it truly cares for the animals and the community.

8.2 VOLUNTEERS

Observations:
In addition to other duties, the shelter coordinator position was responsible for the volunteer program, which consisted of approximately 50 active volunteers. SLOCAS permitted volunteers to walk dogs, conduct some obedience and socialization, conduct adoption interviews, approve adoptions, answer questions from the public, feed cats, clean dog runs and cat cages, and add comments to cage cards about health conditions of individual dogs and cats.

There was a standard volunteer application process. Anyone who is 18 years of age or older and who had a permanent address could be a volunteer. Volunteers did not have a uniform, but they wore name tags and were expected to dress appropriately. There was no specific identified budget for the volunteer program.

SLOCAS had three primary methods of recruiting volunteers: 1) a volunteer page on their Web site; 2) a brochure available at the shelter which was passed out at community events; and, 3) word of mouth. The SLOCAS Web site offered a description of the volunteer opportunities, such as the Animals Requesting Friends (ARF) program. Volunteer applications were available at the front counter in the Lobby. There was also a brochure called "Volunteer Opportunities," which was handed out at humane education and community events.

SLOCAS staff did not provide orientation for new volunteers; rather the volunteers themselves performed the orientations. The orientation was a short one-on-one meeting held by one volunteer with the new volunteer. There were no procedures or policies available for the volunteers. The duties, activities, and shifts were communicated by word of mouth. The shelter coordinator provided The HSUS team with a document titled: Animal Services Division Volunteer Guidelines. There was no date on the document and it was not used for orientations. The shelter coordinator was not involved in the orientation process.

The HSUS team was provided a copy of a draft Volunteer Policy and Procedure Manual dated March 3, 2008. The draft was under review by the newly created volunteer advisory committee. The committee was comprised of the animal services manager, shelter coordinator, and six volunteers. The committee was working on a plan to implement the new manual in April 2008.

There was a sign-in sheet for volunteers in the small volunteer office. Volunteers signed in and listed the hours they were at the shelter. There were no volunteer job descriptions; SLOCAS permitted volunteers to choose the jobs they wanted to perform. The shelter coordinator had developed a document that listed volunteer opportunities and assignments; however, the document had not been distributed to volunteers.

Information bulletins from the animal services manager were posted on a clip board in the volunteer office. A review of the bulletins issued during the month of January 2008 included information about re-establishing the volunteer advisory committee, The HSUS site visit, and a transfer agreement with Santa Barbara County for them to take SLOCAS' animals.

There was no formal recognition program and no exit interview procedure for volunteers. In response to volunteer complaints, the animal services manager had recently instituted office hours during which he made himself available to volunteers in order to address their concerns. These office hours were conducted twice a week for a total of three hours; one session was held in his office and one session in the Kennel Office. During the site visit no volunteers had availed themselves of an opportunity to speak directly with the animal services manager. The animal services manager stated that he takes his laptop with him for the weekly sessions in the Kennel Office to "get work done" during the time.

The HSUS team solicited written comments from the public in preparation for the visit and many of the volunteers submitted comments. Communication between SLOCAS' employees and volunteers had deteriorated to the point that open criticism from both parties was customary. The County Employee's Association filed a written complaint from the staff addressed to the sheriff, animal services manager, and the County safety officer. The complaint cited the negative impact on the office and employees caused by the disruptive actions of some of the volunteers. The complaint stated that volunteers were not supervised, they were allowed into areas not open to the public, and management did not take action on reports of misconduct by volunteers. Volunteers reported complaints to the sheriff, County supervisors, and the media about incompetent employees, mistreatment of animals by employees and inmates, and lack of health care for shelter animals. The volunteers maintained their own Yahoo group to communicate with each other, to voice frustrations, as well as to criticize the shelter management and staff.

The HSUS team held a special meeting for volunteers on the evening of March 19. Approximately 25 volunteers attended to share their concerns and comments. The team observed that there was no one voice for the SLOCAS volunteers. Many of the concerns and praises that were shared were observed by the team during the site visit. The team noted that the lack of volunteer oversight, policies, structure, and training contributed to the ongoing contention. Some volunteers were disappointed that they did not receive much acknowledgement for their contributions, while others were more concerned with daily operations. Some volunteers wanted access to items such as animal computer records, medical sheets/records, and medications.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create a full-time volunteer coordinator position responsible for recruiting, screening, hiring, orienting, training, and supervising volunteers. The position should report to the animal services manager.

- ✓ Finalize and implement the draft Volunteer Policy and Procedure Manual (dated March 3, 2008) if not accomplished by the time of The HSUS report delivery. Understand that the transition will be challenging, but ultimately rewarding.

- ✓ Implement a plan to distribute the manual, orient, and train volunteers.
- ✓ Contract with an impartial, professional facilitator for team building training for the employees and volunteers.
- ✓ Establish detailed job descriptions for volunteer duties and assignments.
- ✓ Track volunteer hours as full-time-equivalent hours.
- ✓ Re-establish the Volunteer Advisory Committee to create a forum to discuss policies, procedures, improvement opportunities, and problem solve.
- ✓ Create a uniform standard for all volunteers, i.e. shirt, smock, or apron, with a logo, and a name tag.
- ✓ Establish clear expectations and standards of conduct for volunteers.
- ✓ Establish a formal volunteer recognition program.
- ✓ Understand that SLOCAS is not obligated to provide volunteers access to SLOC computers, administrative offices, or animal medications. Because the volunteers accomplish a wide range of operational duties, one can understand why they would like or need access to some of these items. However, many of the duties that volunteers perform should be assumed by SLOCAS staff, which would alleviate this particular tension.
- ✓ Document volunteer performance, and keep a record in the volunteers' files. If a volunteer violates the written volunteer policies, SLOCAS must determine, as it would with staff, what disciplinary action will be taken. Although it is important to recognize that volunteers are donating their time, it undermines the program if staff and volunteers do not function as a team. Volunteers should be treated as unpaid staff, and it is perfectly acceptable to terminate a volunteer when necessary.
- ✓ Develop a written grievance procedure for volunteers that includes a clear chain of command. A volunteer should take his complaint to the volunteer coordinator, and if the situation is irresolvable at that level, to the animal services manager, who would then pass it to the sheriff, if necessary. Volunteers should not be permitted to overstep the authority of their immediate superiors and communicate directly with the sheriff. This procedure should be included in the Volunteer Manual, and violations should incur consequences. It is imperative that issues are addressed impartially and promptly and that a record be kept of verbal and written correspondence.
- ✓ Create volunteer jobs that are meaningful! If volunteers aren't made to feel like an important part of the agency, they will leave. Consider utilizing volunteers in a "Head Start" program for adoptable dogs. Shelters across the country use Head Start

programs to provide basic training for dogs and help relieve the stress of the kennel environment.[108]

- ✓ Explain to volunteers how certain policies and decisions are made. For example, if volunteers are provided with the information that euthanasia and foster care decisions are not random, but are based on certain written criteria, the volunteers should be less likely to question them.

- ✓ Perform volunteer orientations, as they are essential if volunteers are being utilized at the shelter. One day a month should be set aside for volunteer training, preferably on a Saturday or one evening, to ensure that training is convenient for volunteers and conducive to learning without the interruptions of normal job duties. In order to build stronger relationships between themselves and the volunteers, all levels of staff should be involved in the training process.

- ✓ In addition to making a formal volunteer orientation part of the recruitment process, all volunteers need to attend a formal training class covering 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's operations and how to handle animals. Once that training is complete, the volunteers are trained in their specific job assignments. For example, a dog walker will have different training requirements than a volunteer adoption assistant will. It's important to tailor the training to the job that needs to be done.

Discussion:
A volunteer program needs structure and leadership. The relationship between volunteers, staff, and management has been deeply damaged from a breakdown in procedures, expectations, supervision, and communication to the point that there was tension, animosity, and distrust between the volunteers and the staff. SLOCAS is fortunate to have active volunteers because not all public animal service agencies have volunteers or formal volunteer programs. Volunteers can be valuable partners providing enhanced care for shelter animals, assisting the public, and serving as ambassadors to the community. Untrained, unaccountable, and undirected volunteers can result in confusion and frustration. There are many valuable resources available to assist in developing and sustaining an effective volunteer program. The HSUS handbook Volunteer Management for Animal Care Organizations is a comprehensive guide and SLOCAS can benefit from its use. Due to the current state of distrust, an effective intervention effort is needed to salvage the disheartened volunteers and reassure concerned staff. An independent, outside facilitator skilled in restoring trust, rebuilding relationships, and implementing change is needed. The work and process already developed by the County's safety officer is a good start. There will be a need to invest ongoing time to implement the changes. Successful volunteer programs in the animal services/animal welfare field require a commitment of resources, a dedicated and trained volunteer coordinator, established written policies and procedures, clear expectations, ongoing training, recognition, and accountability.

---

[108] Examples of Head Start programs

8.3 HUMANE EDUCATION/OTHER PROGRAMS

Observations:
SLOCAS had a formal humane education program and a part-time humane educator position that reported to the animal services manager. The humane education program had a budget of $53,640 in the FY 07–08 adopted budget. The program had a long, recognized history in San Luis Obispo County, especially among school-aged students. The program was cut in the 1990's, but was re-established in 2000.

SLOCAS had three primary humane education programs: an in-school program titled: "Be an Animal Services' Pet Pal;" "Camp Paws;" and, "Healing Touch." The in-school program had an established goal to reach every elementary school classroom in San Luis Obispo County, once each year. The curriculum was material called a "Pet Pal's Promise." The program taught basic pet care responsibilities to students, including a pet license message. The instructional materials were a multiple-page coloring book. The humane education program incorporated the services of "Roy," the SLOCAS dog ambassador. "Roy" was a shelter dog adopted by the humane educator, who accompanied her on all of her classroom visits and community events and was considered the shelter mascot.

"Camp Paws" was a week-long summer camp for elementary school students, eight to twelve years old. The stated goal of "Camp Paws" was to help educate children on the care and training of pets and animals, to teach responsible pet ownership, and to show the campers the role of animal services in the community. The camp was run by the humane educator with the help of a staff of teen counselors, who were former "Camp Paws" students. The camp was held three times each summer and served approximately 12 students each session. Each camp session ended in a graduation celebration for students, the teen counselors, and the student's parents.

"Healing Touch" was a program in partnership with the County's juvenile hall. Juvenile hall students were paired with shelter animals for obedience training for the dogs and skill building for the youth.

In addition, there were humane education programs targeting high school students that introduced them to career possibilities in animal services and animal welfare.

SLOCAS also held an annual "Adoptathon and Kids Pet Fair." The fair targeted students and included a poster and essay contest. SLOCAS utilized flyers in the schools and community to publicize the event.

The budget primarily consisted of the humane educator's salary and benefits. The program was partially supported by fees for some of the activities, i.e., "Camp Paws." The miscellaneous supplies for the various humane education programs were supplemented by either donations or paid for out of the humane educator's personal expenses. SLOCAS staff expressed concerns about unstable funding, liability for children handling shelter animals, and the potential for program cuts in the face of looming SLOCAS budget reductions.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop a plan to sustain the funding, develop sponsorships, and continue support for the humane education program at SLOCAS. Explore grant funding opportunities from private foundations and national humane education organizations.
- ✓ Create a detailed budget for the humane education program. Include goals and performance measures to better assess the effectiveness of the programs.
- ✓ Explore ways to combine elements of the volunteer program with the humane education program.
- ✓ Utilize the Web site to post humane education events and activities.
- ✓ SLOCAS is commended for its recognized humane education programs and commitment to staffing a humane educator position.

Discussion:
Humane education is required in many states, including California. Few public animal services organizations in the country have successfully sustained a formal humane education program. The materials, data on the number of students served, and written testimonials from students and parents was good evidence that the program was well received in the community. The message of humane treatment of animals and owner responsibilities is a critical component of effective prevention programs. It can be difficult to measure the direct impact of humane education programs. One method to gauge success can be tracking the number of students reached and the number of people attending events. Partnerships with the schools, the County's juvenile hall, and community groups are effective ways to build public awareness about animals and cultivate support for animal services. The HSUS has extensive materials and resources to support humane education programs.[109] SLOCAS has an opportunity to create a community outreach program by connecting the staff, volunteers, and resources of the humane education program with the volunteer program. A well-thought out plan, with specific goals can focus volunteers and staff to work together on a common outreach mission.

8.4 RELATIONS WITH AREA ANIMAL SHELTERS/ ORGANIZATIONS/COMMUNITY INTEREST GROUPS

Observations:
Aside from SLOCAS, there were four primary animal organizations in San Luis Obispo County: The Woods Humane Society, North County Humane Society, Feline Network, and Second Chance at Love Humane Society. In 2003, the SLOCAS animal services manager pulled together a coalition of these shelters to address ways to reduce euthanasia. The group was called the San Luis Obispo County Animal Welfare Alliance. The alliance applied for a community grant from Maddie's Fund®. The HSUS team was told that the Maddie's Fund®

---

[109] www.humanesociety.org/youth

grant was declined because the combined community euthanasia number for all the shelters in the alliance was lower than the level Maddie's Fund® has established for awarding grants. The coalition disbanded after the grant application was declined.

Based on conversations with other organizations and management on-site, there were three main issues that concerned the other animal organizations in the County: the number of animals euthanized at the SLOCAS shelter, the conditions for animals at the shelter, and the use of inmate labor for cleaning. Euthanasia numbers at the SLOCAS shelter was the impetus that rallied the alliance. The HSUS team noted that the euthanasia per 1,000 human population in San Luis Obispo County was 2.[110] In 2006, the U.S. average for the number of shelter animals euthanized per 1,000 human population was 14.8.[111]

There was a good working relationship and a cooperative agreement between SLOCAS and the Woods Humane Society. WHS agreed to accept the transfer of a minimum of 120 healthy/treatable dogs and a minimum of 180 healthy/treatable cats from SLOCAS and pay one dollar as part of the annual lease agreement with the County. At the time of the site visit SLOCAS was not transferring cats to WHS. This may have been in preparation for "kitten season," which would be a time when SLOCAS would be in greater need of transferring cats to other organizations or foster homes.

SLOCAS also had an agreement with the Tails retail store to transfer adoptable shelter cats to them for placement into new homes.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Re-establish the San Luis Obispo County Animal Welfare Alliance in order to develop a common community goal, spread the spay/neuter message, increase adoptions, and reduce euthanasia of shelter animals in all shelters in the County. The Metro Denver Shelter Alliance[112] is a good model to follow.

- ✓ Collaborate with other animal care/welfare groups in areas where there is a logical potential for a positive working relationship. This may include inviting the presidents of all these groups to convene and discuss how all might work more closely together to meet the common mission to protect animals. For example, there may be 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 terms of reference that all organizations must respect.

- ✓ Take the lead in repairing, building, and maintaining healthy co-operative relationships with the other members of the animal welfare community because SLOCAS is the agency with primary responsibility for animal care in San Luis Obispo County.

---

110 SLOC 2007 population 262,436 / 1000 = 262, SLOCAS 2007 euthanasias 538 / 262 = 2.

111 *Animal People*, July–August 2006, Merritt Clifton CR

112 www.saverate.org/

- ✓ As previously recommended, adopt the Asilomar Accords[113] statistical reporting model for SLOCAS. Advocate for all shelters in the County to adopt Asilomar reporting methodology.

- ✓ Track and report the euthanasias per 1,000 human population statistic for the County.

Discussion:
The euthanasia of animals at SLOCAS was the lightening rod in the community, creating divisiveness, accusation, and dissatisfaction with the agency. In reality, the euthanasia number for the San Luis Obispo County area was far lower than the national average. That does not mean that SLOCAS should not take every opportunity to continue to lower that number by working with other shelters and groups in the County. Coalition building in communities helps set a framework for agencies to work together in collaboration. Coalitions can establish expectations and agreements to transfer animals, pool scarce resources, and present joint press releases and public outreach. Formal coalitions can also make commitments to agree to respect each other, and work together for a common goal. The HSUS has resources and materials to help communities build effective coalitions.[114]

Many communities have adopted the practice of tracking euthanasia per 1,000 human population as a performance measurement. The statistic can be used to compare community performance against other communities. The euthanasia number used is the total of all public and private shelters serving a community. A successful coalition can redirect its focus away from pitting shelters against each other, and embrace collaboration as the path to improving the performance of the entire community.

The Asilomar Accords statistical reporting model has also been gaining acceptance as a national standard for collecting and reporting animal intake and disposition data for shelters. There are granting organizations that can assist shelters and coalitions in implementing this reporting tool.[115]

8.5 CLIENT SERVICE

Observations:
Article III, Section B, Customer Service of the draft SOP consisted of 1) Demeanor, 2) Attentiveness, 3) Assistance, and 4) Phone Service.

As discussed in section 3.11, Reception/Lobby, client service interactions took place at both the clerical office counter in the Lobby and at the Kennel Office window.

The HSUS team observed a remarkably low phone call volume and low client traffic levels at the front counter. During two separate three-hour periods when the shelter was open to the

---

113 www.asilomaraccords.org
114 HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Building Bridges," September–October 2004+
115 www.maddiesfund.org

public, very few clients came to the front desk. Client service staff was observed conversing and visiting much of the time. During one observation, the supervisor asked the client service staff if the phone system was working or not, because no phones were ringing, but the phones were functional. Most client service operations in animal shelters are hectic, overwhelming, and demanding, but this was not observed at any time during the team's three day visit. The HSUS team noted that the client service function appeared to be overstaffed for the work load.

On one day of the site visit, the account clerk was off work. No one was trained to cover the functions at the desk—only the supervisor was trained as a back-up to fulfill the important accounting responsibilities for the division.

In January 2007, SLOCAS' dog licensing program was contracted to PetData®. For this reason, the majority of processing of new licenses and renewals was administered off-site by the vendor. The HSUS team was told that one administrative assistant position was eliminated from the budget after the PetData® contract was awarded. Client service staff reported that PetData® took 2–4 weeks to process new licenses, which created a problem of not having up-to-date license records and vital pet owner information.

When clients came to the counter in the Lobby, a staff member had to get up from her desk to assist them. The team observed instances when clients stood at the front counter without any staff member seeing them or providing service. The team observed client interactions with the conclusion that clerical staff treated clients courteously. On March 20 at 2:15 pm a client came to SLOCAS in search of his lost cat. Office staff directed the client to the Kennel so that he could look through the Cat Rooms and the found reports. Staff also gave the client a phone number to call so that he could check the daily pick ups after 6:00 pm.

On the same day, a client came to SLOCAS to purchase a license for his new Chihuahua puppy. He told the staff that he missed his neuter appointment, but staff did not take that opportunity to initiate dialogue about neutering or offer him phone numbers or contacts to get his dog neutered. The client also asked the staff what he could use to bathe his puppy who had fleas. The staff member did not offer advice or ask another staff member for information. The client picked up the hand sanitizer that was on the Lobby counter and asked if that would work and the staff member replied that it probably would. During this conversation an instructional video on topical flea products was playing on the television mounted on the ceiling.

As noted in section 7.2, Adoption Process and Policies, clients wishing to view animals rang the Kennel doorbell and waited to be let in by a staff member, volunteer, or inmate. The SLOCAS representative would then instruct the client to enter and look through the Kennel or Cat Rooms. On March 18, the team witnessed a client at the Kennel Office window ask a kennelworker if he could enter to look at the dogs. The staff member asked if the client had been there before and when he replied yes he was buzzed in. The staff member instructed the client to look around at will, did not offer assistance, or ask anyone else to escort him through the Kennel.

On March 19, a client interested in adopting a dog entered the Kennel. The client described

to staff the type of dog that he was interested in and explained that he had never had a dog before. Staff appeared disinterested and stated that a volunteer would assist him. A volunteer who happened to be hearing impaired attempted to help the client, however they were having problems communicating. The client went back to the Kennel Office, but when staff saw him returning, they closed the door and turned their backs.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop client service SOPs and ensure that all staff possesses the telephone etiquette SOPs.[116, 117]
- ✓ Establish a training manual for all clerical functions based on the SOPs. Train staff on how to recognize unusual situations, how to deal with difficult clients, how to diffuse situations, and when to contact management to intervene. Staff needs to know that management will support them in their relations with the public. Training will assist staff in appreciating the important role they play in working with the public.
- ✓ Audit the office operations in order to assist with determining appropriate staffing levels. There may be opportunities to restructure positions between animal care and client services within the existing staffing numbers.
- ✓ Document all activities, functions, paperwork, and processes at each clerical desk.
- ✓ Staff the front counter during all hours the shelter is open in order to provide timely client service to the public. This will ensure friendly and effective client service for the public.
- ✓ Always engage and educate the public on spay/neuter, licensing, flea products, etc. when given the face-to-face opportunity.
- ✓ Ensure that all staff participate in the adoption process.

Discussion:

The term "client service" is more appropriate than "customer service" for the animal sheltering industry. A customer is someone who pays for goods or services, while a client is someone with whom you build a relationship.

Dealing with the public, whether in person or on the phone, is one of the most stressful tasks in a shelter. Without formal training in client service, some staff will try not to engage the public as a way to reduce this stress, or they will handle interactions inappropriately, damaging the agency's reputation in the process.

A citizen's experience with the staff should not leave the impression that the agency is unorganized, unsympathetic, or uncaring. Great public relations and client service begin with the public's initial contact with an agency, and this should be an easy and helpful experience.

---

[116] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Phone Finesse," pages 14–16, March–April 2005+

[117] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "The Art of Diffusing Conflict," pages 10–12, March–April 2004+

This is an opportunity to create a new adopter, a new volunteer, a new donor, or a new friend for the organization.

Maintaining client service in animal shelters is difficult because most shelters are understaffed, and visitors are often anxious, excited, or demanding. Because there was more than sufficient client service staffing, SLOCAS should be able to provide excellent service to its clients. Regular staff training in the areas of telephone etiquette and client service is worth the investment of time and money because it helps staff members retain their ability to handle difficult situations. It is important to realize that regardless of how many years an agency has spent on goodwill with its clients, one bad incident can ruin that investment.

8.6 WEB SITE

Observations:
SLOCAS maintained a Web site on the SLOCSD Web site. The animal services Web site was easy to navigate, informative, and incorporated photos of animals, staff, and volunteers. Web site features included a full list of services, fee schedule, volunteer opportunities, information about humane education programs, lost pet information, animals in the shelter, and County ordinances. Animals available for adoption were posted on the Petfinder™ Web site which was linked from the animal services Web site. Each animal available for adoption had pertinent information and most included a photograph. There was a computer scheduling protocol in the Chameleon© software to automatically update the Petfinder™ data files multiple times each day to provide current, up-to-date information for the public on adoptable animals. There were no links for licensing or donations and SLOCAS statistics were not posted on the site.

The community and volunteers were interested in knowing more about the performance of SLOCAS, and many volunteers expressed suspicion of the published shelter data. There was confusion and a sense of mistrust in the community about the shelter operations, especially among the volunteers.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Add information on the Web site about SLOCAS activities and events, e.g. create an events calendar.
- ✓ Include a digital photograph of every adoptable animal posted on the Web site.
- ✓ Explore opportunities to create online services on the Web site. These can include reporting lost and found animals and a method for accepting payment of fees and services using bankcards.
- ✓ Create a link to the PetData® contractor's Web site to improve client access to licensing information.
- ✓ Create a link for the public to make private monetary donations to assist in funding the humane education program, volunteer program, and animal care needs.

- ✓ Post the SLOCAS animal statistics on the Web site. Include calls for service by call category and historical trend data. For an example of an agency that posts statistical information, see the Web site of Animal Care and Control of New York City.[118]

Discussion:
An effective Web site can be a powerful tool for providing information to the public and improving accessibility to SLOCAS' services. Posting shelter data on the Web site communicates to the public that the agency is open and honest about its responsibilities. Keeping the information current and fresh can be a challenge, but the site can function as an important public information source. Many public animal services agencies are incorporating online services for the public to improve accessibility. Simple things like creating links to the PetData® online license function or an online monetary donation page, gives the public—and your supporters—an easy way to access services, stay informed about SLOCAS events and activities, and build support for the organization's mission.

8.7 FERAL CATS

Refer to *Community Approaches to Feral Cats* accompanying this report for more detailed information on feral cat issues.[119]

Observations:
SLOCAS did not have a program, SOP, or policy addressing feral cats. Some cat cages had tags that stated "aggressive." However, there were no stated criteria to determine if cats were feral or frightened pets.

Many feral cat rescue groups were active at SLOCAS, and the animal services manager actively sought the assistance of these groups to take feral cats. This was verified by discussion with volunteers and representatives of these groups.

SLOCAS had a program to loan humane cat traps to the public. They collected cat trap deposits of $25, and charged $2 per day for the use of the traps.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create and implement a detailed SOP for the handling, care, housing, and euthanasia of feral cats in SLOCAS custody.

- ✓ Train kennelworkers in the identification and temperament assessment of feral cats, in accordance with state law.

- ✓ Establish a separate area in the shelter to house feral cats. House all stray feral cats in segregated cages and attempt to keep their environment quiet, with minimal traffic and handling. (See section 5.7, Isolation and Separation)

---

[118] www.nycacc.org
[119] Margaret R. Slater, *Community Approaches to Feral Cats*, Humane Society Press, 2002+

- ✓ Consider utilizing feral cat dens for safe and humane handling.[120] (See section 4.2, Animal Handling)

- ✓ Work with partner shelters in the County to expand trap, neuter, release (TNR) services. Provide community education concerning the problem of feral cats and solutions.[121]

- ✓ Take advantage of The HSUS's double compact disk "Effectively Managing Feral Cats," included in the resource materials with this report.[122] These disks may be ordered and distributed to interested parties in the community.

- ✓ Keep accurate records of feral cats and kittens handled by SLOCAS, including their disposition. Over time, this data will help determine where resources are currently going and where they might be more useful. For example, has trapping feral cats reduced the number entering the shelter?

Discussion:
Cats make up nearly half of the animals received at SLOCAS each year. Many shelters across the country have been experiencing a steady increase of cats entering shelters. The California Food and Agriculture Code established mandates for assessing cat behavior and specific holding requirements for feral cats in shelters. SLOCAS must take the steps to ensure compliance with state law. In a shelter environment it can be quite difficult to determine whether a cat is truly feral or simply a terrified house pet. All efforts must be made to provide a quiet environment with minimum stimuli during the "cool down" period.

SLOCAS is not alone in dealing with feral cats, as it is an issue across the United States. Though neither euthanasia nor TNR alone 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 is an effective way to build bridges between the animals, the animal care and control agency, and the public.[123]

Most people don't want to trap and euthanize cats and kittens; they just want to prevent more from being born. Where there are concerned citizens that will take responsibility, monitor the colony and provide daily care for the cats, which might be an acceptable alternative. It is imperative that all of the surrounding neighbors be consulted and given an explanation of TNR and the possible benefits. If after consulting with everyone, the neighborhood is in agreement, only then might TNR be a reasonable solution.

---

[120] www.animal-care.com/product_list.cfm?sub2a=53&prod=1
[121] Bryan Kortis, Implementing a Community Trap Neuter Return Program, HSUS, 2007+
[122] www.humanesociety.org/feralcats
[123] *JAVMA*, Vol 222, No 1, January 1, 2003, "Evaluation of the Effect of a Long-Term Trap-Neuter-Release and Adoption Program on a Free-Roaming Cat Population"

TNR programs and colony management can enhance public safety. Feral cats are naturally inclined to keep away from humans. In addition, when cats are fed away from populated areas, contact is further minimized. Conflicts occur when compassionate individuals begin feeding the cats close to work or home, thus increasing the cats' proximity to people. TNR programs and colony management, including a feeding program away from populated areas, reduces the chance of contact by keeping cats away from human population areas.

9.0 FIELD SERVICES/ANIMAL CONTROL

For more information on Field Services and Animal Control, please refer to the enclosed International City/County Management Association (ICMA) *Animal Control Management*: *A Guide for Local Governments*.[124]

9.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

SLOCAS provided full-service animal control for all of the municipalities and unincorporated areas of San Luis Obispo County. The undersheriff of the SLOCSD oversaw SLOCAS and the animal services manager reported directly to the undersheriff on all animal services issues. The HSUS team interviewed the following regarding field services: the sheriff, undersheriff, SLOC administrative analyst, animal services manager, two lead ACOs, and six ACOs. The SLOCAS field staff consisted of two lead ACO and six ACO positions. At the time of The HSUS team visit, there was one ACO vacancy.

SLOCAS had contracts with seven municipalities and the County to provide animal control services, which covered an area of approximately 3,616 square miles. The areas consisted of the Cities of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, San Luis Obispo, and the unincorporated areas of San Luis Obispo County.

The field personnel worked four 10-hour shifts per week, which covered Monday–Saturday 8:00 am–6:00 pm, and emergency on-call services on Sunday. On-call began at 6:00 pm and ended at 8:00 am Monday–Saturday and the on-call shift on the weekend began at 6:00 pm on Saturday and ended at 8:00 am on Monday.

The HSUS team conducted field observations by riding with two ACOs during routine field duties. During the ride alongs, the ACOs responded to seven calls, which will be discussed in more detail in section 9.10, Investigations and Enforcement. The HSUS team commends SLOCAS for its officers' humane handling of animals during impoundments, record-keeping, follow-up investigations and client service.

The SLOCAS field program was observed as an effective part of the organization. The officers were professional in demeanor while being friendly and helpful to the public. Based upon the interviews and field observations, The HSUS team had concerns with the lack of consistent field rules and operating procedures, staff morale, staff accountability, field training, and the overall direction and placement of the organization.

---

[124] *Animal Control Management, A Guide for Local Governments*, International City/County Management Association, 2001+

9.2 OFFICER SAFETY

9.21 OPERATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND FIELD OFFICER TRAINING

Observations:
Article IV of the draft SOP covered Field Operations. The two lead ACOs stated that they had heard there was a manual being written, but they were not asked for their input or advice in the creation of the document. The non-lead ACOs were not aware of the manual and also were not asked for their input.

The draft SOP was well written and covered the majority of field operations, but was of little value to the field staff since the document had not been distributed. For that reason, training and accountability could not be effectively achieved. Despite this lacking, all of the ACOs appeared to have a good idea of what was expected of them, given that they learned how to accomplish those tasks through on-the-job training. The manual contained sectional protocols on the following: Governing Authority, Uniforms and Procedures, Shift Rotation and Duty Assignments, Officer Safety, Radio Communications, On Call, Animal Handling and Impound, Alternative Capture Methods, Field Responses, Enforcement Actions, License Verification, Reports, Nuisance Abatement, Animal Seizure, Permit Inspections, Court Appearances, Child and Elder Abuse Reporting, Monetary Transactions, and Wildlife. Protocols lacking from the manual included Job Descriptions, Training, Accountability and Benchmarks, and Dog and Cock Fighting.

In the absence of written policies and procedures, ACO training was accomplished by learning from other officers. New hire training consisted of the following”

- 6–12 weeks of ride-along training with the lead ACOs or other assigned ACOs. The length of time depended on the amount of prior experience of the new hire or the immediate need of the organization to fill vacant positions.
- 1 week in the Shelter
- 1 week in Dispatch
- 2 week State Mandated Basic Animal Academy
- 1 week optional State Advanced Animal Academy
- 2 week PC-832 Arrest and Firearms Course
- 1 day Euthanasia training
- 1 day Rabies training
- 1 day Asp training
- 1 day Pepper Spray training
- 1 day First Aid/CPR training

Staff told The HSUS team that there was a training need for local gang recognition orientation, diversity training, exotic wildlife handling and impoundment training, animal health and zoonotic diseases, recognition of child and elder abuse, and emergency preparedness training.

ACO personnel files were kept with the Human Resources section of the SLOCSD.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Provide ACOs with a hard copy of the SOPs so that they can have access to new and updated policies and procedures. ACOs should use the hard copy in the field during the course of their duties.

- ✓ Review the current policies relevant to field services to ensure that each is addressed and has a corresponding procedure. Be sure to include the date of development or revision on all new procedures. Expand the SOPs to include such details as Job Descriptions, Training, Accountability, Benchmarks, and Dog and Cock Fighting.

- ✓ Provide staff with the ability to have input in procedural development. Assign staff to review current procedures and have them provide feedback in the form of revisions and additions.

- ✓ Set up training programs based on protocols and have all existing staff and new hires complete the program to ensure consistency of implementation of protocols among the ranks.

- ✓ Provide ACOs with training on local gang recognition orientation, diversity, wildlife handling and impoundment, recognition of child and elder abuse, and emergency preparedness. Some of this training could be provided by the sheriff's department.

- ✓ Provide workshops on rabies and other zoonotic diseases. These workshops could be presented by the state health department.

- ✓ Set up a schedule to review protocols and current service demands on an annual or semi-annual basis so that new and revised protocols can be developed and outdated protocols can be eliminated. Involve all levels of field staff to assist in this program.

- ✓ Send each ACO to a minimum of 10 continuing education credit hours of training every year in order to maintain a current level of training on industry standards and professional development. State conferences and regional trainings are also a great way to network with other regional agencies and to observe what type of services they provide to their citizens and how those services can be tailored to SLOCAS.[125]

Discussion:

SOPs are important to the management of any facility and make training new employees more efficient. SOPs do not have to be elaborate, but they should be practical and clearly

---

[125] http://leti.missouri.edu

written so they may be used as a ready reference for employees and management alike.

Maintaining a detailed, step-by-step SOP enables staff to be aware of how management expects them to conduct themselves while handling the calls they encounter. Although an SOP cannot cover every possible scenario or situation, a good SOP helps to give base guidelines to assist the ACO in the decision making process of how to proceed. When the staff has a hand in the development of the SOPs, it makes them a shareholder in the success of the department. Employees are more likely to read and use the SOPs if they are involved in their creation and revisions.

Written procedures should be considered works in progress that should be reviewed and updated at regular intervals or when deficiencies are identified. Written procedures ensure fairness, provide for consistency of service, and may help resolve disputes.

Staff training is vital in maintaining a productive work environment. With the many changes in technology, laws, capture and restraint methods, client service, and equipment it is vital that SLOCAS keeps up with these changes so that they provide their citizens with the best possible product. Citizens expect trained professionals serving their community; therefore, it is vital that the ACOs attend animal-related training from outside sources in order to stay abreast of changed or new industry practices.

9.22 COMMUNICATIONS/DISPATCH

Observations:
There were written procedures for communications and dispatch in the draft SOP. The team observed that incoming calls were handled in a very polite and professional manner.

The administrative assistants handled call taking and dispatching duties Tuesday through Friday and ACOs were assigned this task on a rotating basis on Mondays and Saturdays. Call taking began at 8:00 am and ended at 5:00 pm. Emergency calls after hours and on Sundays were taken by SLOCSD emergency operators.

Dispatch was provided by four rotating positions among the administrative staff on a monthly basis. This was viewed as somewhat cumbersome as each month a new dispatcher worked with the ACOs. There was no consistency in codes used by the four rotating positions, so the officers had to acclimate to a different dispatch language each month. Calls made directly to the shelter were handled by the staff and were relayed to the ACOs who were at the shelter or on the road. There was no bulletin board of the schedules of on-duty ACOs.

During the site visit the administrative staff and ACOs were overheard answering citizen service request phone calls. Calls were answered by stating the name of the organization, the name of the call-taker, and asking how they can help them.

Several of the administrative assistants and ACOs stated that they wished there could be one permanent dispatcher instead of the current rotation of administrative assistants. A staff

member also told The HSUS team that another staff member had volunteered to be the permanent dispatcher, but the request had been denied.

SLOCAS utilized the Chameleon© software system for call taking and dispatch. There was not an SOP for its use. The HSUS team witnessed the call taker enter the calls into Chameleon© and dispatch the calls to the officers distributed by priority and area. SLOCAS sectioned the County into three areas: South, SLO/Coast, and North. One to two officers covered South and North depending on available staffing and the lead ACOs covered SLO/Coast.

Vehicles were equipped with permanent radios; the officers communicated using 800-megahertz two-way radios and their personal cell phones during work hours. ACOs were provided a pager and cell phone for after hours on-call shifts. During The HSUS team's field ride along, the ACOs were seen with the hand-held radios on their person and on at all times making themselves available to dispatch and other ACOs.

The HSUS team was informed that there were times when dispatchers were unaware of an officer's location or status and on occasion an ACO would call for a dispatcher and not receive a response.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Generate and maintain statistics on incoming calls based upon geographic area and type of complaint. Management should review these statistics to determine what kind of educational or enforcement programs may benefit these areas, and then designate work teams to spend time in the areas focusing on resolutions.

- ✓ Create written SOPs addressing the process of taking and dispatching calls so that there will be uniformity in information taken, the way calls are handled, and how the information is entered into the Chameleon© database.

- ✓ Hire and train permanent dispatchers to cover all shifts. With four administrative staff members, a schedule could be designed to cover dispatching duties Monday–Saturday making ACOs available to do field work. Also, consistency in language and codes is crucial to efficient dispatching.

- ✓ Ensure that the radio is covered at all times while officers are still in the field to guarantee their safety and provide information when needed.

- ✓ Provide dispatchers with supplementary training in local animal control ordinances so that callers can be better advised of the level of service and/or results that they may expect.

- ✓ Implement a hot board so that off-duty officers can follow up appropriately on cases in process or left over from the previous day.

- ✓ Post a schedule of on-duty staff so that dispatchers know the officers on duty.

- ✓ The HSUS team was delighted to see that the ACOs have pagers and cell phones for after hours and safety. These capabilities are a great benefit that many agencies do not provide.

Discussion:
Communications is of the utmost importance. Every division, department, or organization should know the whereabouts of its employees and be able to ascertain if and when an employee has been dispatched to a specific address in the past and exactly what took place when that call was handled. Not only should a dispatcher always be available to an ACO in the field, but also the public should be offered patience when calling for assistance or advice. Many of the calls into an animal control facility are complex and multifaceted in nature, requiring a sizeable time commitment on the part of staff. The prompt handling of calls and field response times are critical when dealing with animal control issues. The public does not call for animal services unless there is a problem, usually one that has escalated into what is then perceived to be an emergency. How a dispatcher or an operator responds to a request for service reflects on the credibility and reliability of the agency. Animal issues are often emotional and callers are expecting advice, affirmation, understanding, and above all, polite service for their tax dollars.

9.23 EQUIPMENT/VEHICLES/UNIFORMS

Observations:
The HSUS team would like to commend SLOCAS for the variety and condition of the equipment that is provided to the ACOs. The ACOs appeared to be well-equipped to perform their duties safely and effectively. The vehicles in which the team rode contained capture poles, leashes, traps, animal handling gloves, nets, digital cameras, microchip scanners, transfer cages, boots, road hazard signs, lariat ropes, dog food, livestock leads, body bags, snake and cat tongs, shovels, stretchers, fire extinguishers, muzzles, binoculars, tool kits, and syringe poles.

The officers told the team that finding new streets and locations was difficult, especially for the newer officers so they purchased their own navigational units to expedite response times. Officers also noted that trying to read maps at night posed driving risks and the navigational units mitigated this concern.

Section H, Alternative Capture Methods, in the draft SOP covered chemical capture equipment and chemical capture discharge reporting; however, only the animal services manager was authorized to use the chemical capture equipment. Several officers expressed a desire to be able to carry a tranquilizer gun on their vehicle, but SLOCAS management stated that they were comfortable with the current procedures and feared that ACOs would overuse the tranquilizer guns.

The ACOs carried pepper spray and ASPs on their person and were issued a .38 revolver, but there were no SOPs for the approved use or reporting requirements of the weapons. The HSUS team was concerned about the issuance of pepper spray, batons, and firearms, and their intended use and lack of written procedures to clarify use. ACOs attended a one-day

training course on the proper handling and use of the pepper spray and ASP and they attended a two-week training course concerning the .38 revolver. Staff told The HSUS team that the pepper spray and ASP were for personal protection against potential human threats and not for use on animals and the .38 revolver was only used for euthanizing large injured animals, such as deer.

SLOCAS had eight Ford F-350 animal control vehicles, with modular animal transport boxes in place of the pickup bed and one small-sized extended cab Ford Ranger truck for supply pick-up and miscellaneous administrative duties. The transport boxes provided sufficient ventilation for animals, with ventilation slats in each of the animal transport cage doors and an electric air conditioning system on the roof that circulated air throughout the animal compartments. Staff told The HSUS team that seven of the eight trucks had air conditioning for the transport boxes. Each vehicle had the SLOCSD seal on the doors and the back displayed "Sheriff Animal Services Division," but there was no contact information such as phone number, physical address, or Web site. Staff told The HSUS team that the vehicles were nice, but they wished the cab was extended due to the amount of equipment they had to carry and the limited space available.

The ACOs were professional and neat in appearance and were easily identifiable to the public. Throughout the site visit, the ACOs were in uniform and presented a good public image. The uniforms were cared for and cleaned by the individual employee. Each officer was provided with four sets of class C uniforms and one set of class A uniforms, one jacket, one sheriff's badge, one hat, and one duty belt. ACOs were given a monthly allowance of $30.00 for uniform cleaning and replacements. The ACOs were not provided any footwear and many were upset that the kennelworkers were provided boots but they were not.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Compare current ACO equipment with the following suggested list:

Animal Handling Equipment	Health and Safety Items
Restraint pole(s) Cable leashes Regular leashes Long-handled net Capture gloves Leather shelled, Kevlar lined 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 for large animals Animal grasper Fowl leg grasper Horse halter Rope halter (cows/horses)	Waterless disinfectant Biohazard protection kit Breathing apparatus and protective clothing for hoarding cases First aid kit for animals First aid kit for people Thermometers for animal's temperature Digital Infrared Thermometers for temperature of surroundings during cruelty cases Eyewash Hand wipes Hand warmers Safety glasses and hard hat Life jacket Fire extinguisher Flares/triangles Gate Openers so ACOs do not have to stop and open window to open gate creating an unsafe environment after hours in the dark

Animal Handling Equipment	
Rope (cotton) Snake tongs and snake bag Plastic bat container	
Record-keeping Forms and Educational Materials	**Investigation Devices**
Citations Summons Complete Animal Control Laws, including abbreviated versions for distribution Mileage Log Sheet Citation and Warning and Ticket Books License reminder postcards License Applications Trap Agreements Deer tags (for deer who have been hit by cars) Door notices Business cards Incident Reports Bite Reports Microchip scanner Maps Directions to shelter Sample Lost/Found Flyers Responsible Pet Owner Information Handouts Stapler and staples	35mm or digital camera Polaroid camera Video camera Tape recorder Notepaper Tufts Animal Care and Condition Scales (dogs) Horse conformation chart Henneke Body Scoring Chart[126] Horse weight tape Cattle weight tape Large evidence envelopes Small and large plastic zipper-lock evidence bags Stickers/labels (for labeling evidence) Indelible markers Pens
Weather and Vision Aids	**Communications Equipment**
Binoculars Flashlight and batteries Magnetic floodlight Raincoat Heavy gloves Boots Waterproof tarp Sunglasses Vehicle safety light bars with amber covers on top of cab of trucks, including alley and take down lights to increase visibility at night Spot mirrors on side-view mirrors on all trucks	Handheld radio that connects to dispatchers In-vehicle mounted radios In-vehicle mounted computers for updating call information into AS400 and improve response time to calls Cellular telephone Pager
Miscellaneous	
Deodorizing spray (for skunk and other odors) Air freshener High-quality, up-to-date, laminated maps of areas, kept in a ring binder Navigational units for officers vehicles to locate addresses Disinfectant for cleaning cages and equipment Spare uniform	

[126] Henneke Body Scoring Chart

- ✓ Develop an equipment check list for each vehicle and each ACO. Each ACO should be responsible for all of their equipment and its working condition. Each truck and animal transport cage should be equipped accordingly and be properly cleaned and disinfected after each use.

- ✓ Provide each ACO with five sets of shirts and pants and one pair of leather boots for outdoor use. Replace damaged uniforms immediately and provide ACOs with a fresh set of uniforms on a yearly basis.

- ✓ Ensure that all animal control vehicle air conditioning units are working properly in order to reduce heat-related stress on animals.

- ✓ Incorporate a program to ensure routine inspection and maintenance of field service vehicles. Create a comprehensive checklist and a Maintenance Request form for items that require attention.

- ✓ Display the SLOCAS phone number, physical address, and Web site prominently on both sides and the rear of each vehicle. Printed messages such as "Spay or Neuter Your Pet" or "Report Cruelty" can improve the department's public image and the delivery of its philosophy.

- ✓ Provide additional training in conflict resolution, "verbal judo," and mediation techniques, as well as enhanced self-defense techniques.

- ✓ Create procedures for weapons if they are going to be issued. If ACOs are to be armed similarly to police officers, The HSUS team believes that the same recruitment standards, mental and physical testing, and complete training should also apply.

- ✓ Provide ACOs with educational information for distribution to the public. The HSUS can provide pamphlets describing how to live humanely with wildlife neighbors and alternatives to trapping; brochures about barking dogs, understanding why they are barking, and solving barking issues in a humane manner; information on low cost spaying and neutering, proper shelter, and humane restraining techniques. The ACOs should hand out a synopsis of local animal control laws as well as pertinent state cruelty laws.

Discussion:
Most, if not all of the upgrades, changes and additions recommended by The HSUS team regarding equipment and vehicles could be accomplished within six months. These changes will improve safety and professionalism and lower the incidence of disease for animals transported into the facility.

A remote delivery system of tranquilizing agents is a valuable tool under certain circumstances. Chemical immobilization is not necessary or recommended in most situations; however, under certain conditions, such as the capture of a dangerous animal, tranquilization can be invaluable.

The HSUS team has serious concerns about the use of chemical sprays, collapsible batons,

and guns, particularly in the absence of standard operating procedures. There is no question that most of the officers felt more secure carrying this equipment; however, their actual safety is more of a product of training than of the presence of these deterrents. The manner and attitude in which potentially volatile situations are approached is critical.

9.24 LAW ENFORCEMENT BACKUP AND RELATIONS

Observations:
ACOs stated that they felt their relationship with law enforcement was satisfactory and when they needed assistance the law enforcement agencies in the County were always quick to respond. The team asked the ACOs if they believed assistance from law enforcement agencies would decrease if they were taken out of the SLOCSD. ACOs responded that they would likely receive the same cooperation, regardless of what department they were under, but they felt safer with the SLOCSD patch on their building, uniforms, and trucks. The HSUS team asked the sheriff about removing SLOCAS from the SLOCSD and he stated that he may allow them to "rent" and display the SLOCSD logo and patch on the building, vehicles, and uniforms if it assisted in diffusing potentially volatile situations.

Although the ACOs did not normally interact with the fire departments, they were confident that their working relationship would be the same as their experience with the SLOCSD.

ACOs stated that they tried to assist and respond to police requests as quickly as possible to maintain working relationships, but due to large distances of coverage they were not always able to respond as fast as they would like. No police assistance was requested while The HSUS team rode with ACOs during the site visit.

SLOCAS staff had concerns with the lack of training that the SLOCSD and other municipal police departments in the County received regarding animal control issues. ACOs told The HSUS team that law enforcement officers responded to animal calls and that the officers were not always familiar with the animal control laws. Staff stated that standardized training would benefit police officers and would educate them on how to better handle animal control issues.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Continue to build the relationship between SLOCAS and SLOCSD through good communication and cross training. Some communities have a representative of animal control address the police officers somewhere in the cycle of training once every year or two. The purpose is to explain animal control's roles, abilities, answer questions and thank the police for their continued support.

- ✓ Consider providing training to law enforcement officers on reading dog behavior and how to handle emergency situations and general information about rabies, the signs of a sick or injured animal, and what to do when confronted with situations involving an animal. The ACOs have a large distance to cover and when an emergency situation arises law enforcement officers have to know what to do before help can arrive.

- ✓ Allow SLOCAS to display the SLOCSD seal, even if the department is relocated within the County. This measure would continue to give the impression of an enforcement agency, with the protection of the SLOCSD. The HSUS team has concerns on what level of service SLOCAS will receive if they are removed from the SLOCSD. With many law enforcement agencies to work with and a public that has grown accustomed to SLOCAS under the SLOCSD, it may give the impression that their enforcement ability has decreased or been eliminated.

Discussion:
It is imperative that the police and animal services have a good working relationship. Due to the dangers that ACOs face, they need to have confidence that, if needed, their police department can respond in a timely manner and provide assistance.

9.3 EMERGENCIES/AFTER HOURS

Observations:
The draft SOP did not include emergencies, but after hours was covered in Article IV, Section F, On Call. Article F covered 1) Assignment of Duty, 2) Prioritization, 3) Citizens finding a dog after hours with an Animal Services tag, 4) Deferred Call Types, 5) Shift Log In, 6) Pager and Cell Phone Use, 7) Availability to Respond, 8) Duty to Respond, and 9) Animal Impound.

The team did not observe emergency or after hours calls. Staff appeared knowledgeable on the policies for handling emergency calls. When a call for an animal emergency was made to the SLOCSD emergency line, they called the on-call ACO on her or his pager and cell phone. Injured animals picked up after hours were taken to emergency veterinary clinics for stabilization and treatment.

Article IV, Section I, Field Responses, of the draft SOP listed calls into priorities as follows:

(a) Aggressive animal at large
(b) Injured domestic animal
(c) Domestic animal in distress
(d) Law enforcement assistance
(e) Loose animal causing traffic hazard
(f) Loose livestock
(g) Stray animal on school yard
(h) Domestic animal in custody
(i) Confined domestic animal
(j) Owned animal for surrender
(k) Cruelty or neglect

(l) Animal at large

(m) Dead animal

(n) Unsanitary conditions

(o) Noise complaint

During the ride alongs, the ACOs responded to calls on a priority basis, but the highest level of priority responded to was at a level (h) Domestic animal in custody.

The lead ACOs and ACOs rotated on-call status every night and utilized their shelter keys and alarm code for building access. The animals were scanned and placed in an open run or cage. As stated in section 5.4, Vaccination Protocols, ACOs told the team that all cats that could be handled were given a vaccination upon intake and dogs waited until the next day. The animal impound was then entered into Chameleon© and a cage card was printed. Staff told The HSUS team that normally cages were pre-set, but there were occasions when they had to set up the cage upon arrival.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create written SOPs 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. The prioritization list in the draft SOP is a good start. This list should be distributed to police and fire dispatch so they will know which after hours' calls are considered emergencies. For instance, a stray dog wandering around a neighborhood, a barking dog, or a stray dog under a house, is not an emergency; however, a stray dog hit by car or an animal threatening a human, is an emergency. If police officers are provided with this list, they can make decisions without contacting animal control.

- ✓ Ask local veterinarians to present workshops on recognizing life-threatening injuries and providing animal first aid. Officers could then be trained to provide basic triage and administer pain medications as directed by the consulting veterinarian if medical attention is delayed.

Discussion:

Traditionally, animal control problems are more likely in the evening hours when: a) more people are "out and about" noticing strays and unconfined animals; b) commuter traffic results in an increase of accidents involving animals; c) people returning home find their own animal missing; and d) persons returning home find notices of animal control violations and then contact the agency to discuss the complaint. Adjusting the hours and the current shifts for the majority of staff would allow for greater flexibility and better response time for the public.

9.4 JOB DESCRIPTIONS (ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS/ FIELD STAFF)

Observations:
The San Luis Obispo County human resources department had job descriptions for the positions of lead ACO and ACO. The job descriptions accurately documented the duties, responsibilities, and standards for each position. The lead ACOs and ACOs performed the essential duties of their job descriptions with the exception of the ACO job description which did not mention dispatcher duties as part of the job requirements. As mentioned previously, the ACOs were required to rotate dispatch on Mondays and Saturdays.

The definition portion of the lead ACO job description stated:

> *Under general supervision, assists in the licensing, impounding, caring for, and disposing of animals in accordance with State, County and local laws, ordinances and regulations*

The team was told that the lead ACOs did not have supervisory/management authority. Despite this, the lead ACO job description stated "assists in supervision of subordinate staff at night and on weekends," and "supervises subordinate staff when required." The non-lead ACO job description stated "assists in training and supervising subordinate personnel." It appeared that the lead ACOs held "lead" roles based on education/experience, seniority, and a slight difference in typical tasks, rather than for reasons of supervising/management field services. It was unclear which position was the "subordinate personnel" to the non-lead ACO position.

The lead ACO and ACO job descriptions both listed "destroys animals using proper methods" in the typical tasks section.

SLOCAS had eight ACOs on staff serving a population of 262,436 (2007),[127] indicating that there was one ACO for every 32,805 citizens.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Consider increasing the number of ACO positions. The National Animal Control Association (NACA) recommends one ACO for every 18,000 citizens. This standard would suggest 14.6 ACOs; The HSUS recognizes that this is an inflated estimate.

- ✓ Review the ACO job duties and determine if dispatching needs to be added to the job descriptions. Alternatively, schedule an administrative assistant to cover dispatch. Duties that deviate from job descriptions may prevent employees from fulfilling their assigned responsibilities.

- ✓ Reclassify one of the lead ACO positions to a field supervisor position.

---

[127] www.census.gov

- ✓ Replace the word "destroys" with "euthanizes" in the lead ACO and ACO job descriptions.

Discussion:
Having a clear and concise job description is the key to finding and hiring staff. Listing the skills and attributes you want in applicants will help make the hiring process more objective. At a minimum, a job description should include the basic skills required, duties and responsibilities, and reporting structure. Job descriptions also offer standards against which to measure whether or not applicants are qualified and which applicants are most qualified. Job descriptions later become a tool for both employees and the employer to use to assist with performance appraisals, promotions, and salary increases. Job descriptions should be reviewed once a year, as well as in the event of a significant shift in responsibilities. Current employees can help write the descriptions and should review them every year because they know best what work they perform on a daily basis.

9.5 FORMS/RECORDKEEPING

Observations:
Article IV, Section L, Reports, in the draft SOP covered 1) duty to generate reports, 2) attachments, 3) timeliness of submission, and 4) format.

Chameleon© stored and was able to retrieve records, statistics, and trends for field services. ACOs were not able to access Chameleon© remotely. SLOCAS provided The HSUS team with a variety of forms such as those used to track ACO warning notices, citations, quarantine of rabies suspects, nuisance complaints, dangerous animals and seizure of animals. All forms reviewed seemed adequate and useful.

In reviewing activities in the Chameleon© database, one could easily identify past results and follow up on calls. Field activities such as calls, warnings, follow-ups, and investigations (such as barking dogs, cruelty and bites) had been entered. The only hard copy filing of paperwork consisted of bites and potentially dangerous dog investigations.

While reviewing forms and copies of standardized documents, The HSUS team noted that there were no dates of production or revision on the forms, brochures, and other printed materials. None of the written materials were available in Spanish.

ACOs daily activity worksheets were not reviewed by management on a consistent basis, unless there was a question or problem that needed to be investigated.

SLOCAS saved monthly and annual reports. Reports were able to track: calls answered/received, animals impounded and dispositions, citations, and licenses sold. These statistics were not used to provide assistance for trends of animal-related problems, benchmarking, or employee evaluations.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Provide ACOs access into the Chameleon© program through on-board computers in the vehicles so that they are able to update service calls that have already been initiated by the dispatcher. ACOs could also enter service calls that they receive in the field into the system to have a more thorough and condensed reporting system.

- ✓ Review ACO activity reports at least weekly to ensure they are responding to calls and providing the level of service expected by management.

- ✓ Include production and revision dates on all printed forms and materials.

- ✓ Make information available in Spanish so that no one is excluded from using SLOCAS' services because of a language barrier. In 2006 the U.S. Census estimated that SLOC had a Hispanic/Latino population of over 18% and a population of 14.7% of residents that speak a language other than English. Not having a form of communication with non-English speaking residents can cut off support of a significant portion of your population. People are more likely to seek assistance and provide support to organizations that they can communicate with.

Discussion:

Consistent, clear messages are very important in educating and encouraging the public to do what is right. In most cases, people have not educated themselves about animal laws in their communities. Correct information provided in a neat and concise manner can be very effective in assisting the public and encouraging them to do what is required to correct a situation.

Excellent report writing is crucial to any animal control investigation. Proper enforcement of local animal control ordinances and state cruelty laws depends on detailed records that make the history of animal-related calls to a particular address readily accessible.

9.6 OFFICER ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES

Observations:

There was no measure in place to document ACO accountability. ACOs were given performance evaluations yearly, but no statistics, benchmarks, or trends were used in the formal evaluation process. Some staff stated that if they received a complaint shortly before their evaluation that the entire focus of the years' work would be placed on that one complaint. They further stated that since there were no benchmarks in place, they received poor evaluations based on one recent situation.

ACOs indicated that management was not always aware of the day-to-day struggles and workload that was required of them. Some of the staff suggested that if they reported problems to management their complaints would not be acted upon.

Management did not review the daily activities of the officers on a consistent basis. Staff told The HSUS team that there were concerns regarding some of the ACO's productivity. Several

ACOs stated that there is a distrust of management because of their selective enforcement of rules and disciplinary actions. When The HSUS team asked management about disciplinary actions they stated that they are not allowed to do anything above a counseling session and feel as though their hands are tied on making staff accountable.

The team was told that while ACOs are on the road, they regularly request information from dispatchers or advise them of the status of a call. This allows for faster data input on the less involved calls, but also allows for dispatchers to keep better track of ACOs. In addition, if ACOs are not assigned to their normal zone, dispatch is able to provide updated information regarding the call being handled.

As previously mentioned, the County was divided into three sections, the North, SLO/Coast, and South. During the site visit there were two officers on the South side, two on the North side, and one lead ACO on the SLO/Coast. The peak staffing level during the site visit was six officers for a total of 3,616 square miles or one officer for 603 square miles.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop an SOP and business plan with staff outlining accountability measures and benchmarks.
- ✓ Require lead ACOs to ride with officers on a periodic basis to evaluate quality of work and provide the animal services manager a report of their findings so that this information can be used during reviews and evaluations.
- ✓ Change the assignments of zones or areas covered periodically so that each officer stays familiar with various areas of the County.
- ✓ Senior management needs to look at ways to improve communications with all staff. Staff must also feel that they can communicate issues with management and expect the problems to be resolved without fear of retaliation or being ignored.
- ✓ Management needs mechanisms in place to acknowledge staff when things go right, not just when things go wrong. Incentives such as Pat-on-the-Back notes, a bulletin board recognizing staff for various positive incidents, or acknowledgements for positive results during staff meetings can help improve staff morale and ensure staff that management notices the good in their staff, not just the negative.

Discussion:

Accountability SOPs protect the ACO and the agency governing them. Daily log forms 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 indicators that can be used to measure an officer's productivity.

Alternating zones gives new perspective to the ACOs and lends itself to better patrolling as each person has his or her own routine and notices different things in the surroundings. The ACOs need to be very familiar with the County when they are on call and rotations of territory helps to keep everyone *au fait* with community changes.

9.7 ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCE REVIEW

Observations:
SLOCAS is required to enforce ordinances in seven municipalities and the unincorporated County. The jurisdictions and ordinances they enforce are:

City of Arroyo Grande, Title 6, Chapters 6.04–6.24
- 6.04-Definitions
- 6.08-Administration and Enforcement
- 6.12-Animal Control Regulations Generally
- 6.16-Dogs and Cats
- 6.20-Pet Shops and Other Animal Use Operations
- 6.24-Apiaries

City of Atascadero, Title 4, Articles 1.101–1.403
- Article 1-General Provisions
- Article 2-Dogs
- Article 3-Cats

City of Grover Beach, Chapter 5, Section 3500–3581
- Part 1-General Provisions
- Part 2-Dogs
- Part 3-Cats
- Part 4-Animals, Poultry and Household Pets
- Part 5-Apiaries

City of Morro Bay, Title 7, Chapters 7.04–7.16
- 7.04-General Provisions
- 7.08-Dogs
- 7.12-Cats
- 7.16-Other Animals, Poultry and Birds

City of Paso Robles, Title 8, Chapters 8.04–8.20
- 8.04-General
- 8.08-Dogs
- 8.12-Cats
- 8.16-Animals, Poultry and Household Pets
- 8.20-Penalties

City of Pismo Beach, Title 6, Chapters 6.04–6.20
- 6.04- Definitions
- 6.08-Animal Control Officer and Public Pound
- 6.12-Dogs
- 6.16-Dog Kennels and Pet Shops
- 6.20-Miscellaneous Animal Control Regulations

City of San Luis Obispo, Title 6, Chapters 6.04–6.28

6.04-Definitions
6.08-Public Pound
6.12-Impoundment Procedures
6.20-Animal Control Regulations
6.24-Dog Kennels, Pet Shops, Catteries and Aviaries
6.28-Domestic Animals and Poultry

Unincorporated San Luis Obispo County

Upon review of the ordinances and interviews with staff, The HSUS team contended that the ordinances in all of the enforcing jurisdictions were similar to each other. This permits ACOs to move easily from area to area without having to contend with an entirely different set of ordinances. This also makes hiring and training new staff more efficient.

The majority of the ordinances were comprehensive and functional. Through interviews with staff, the following ordinances were recommended to be included in all areas of enforcement jurisdictions:

- Mandatory cat licensing/registration
- Definition of feral cat colonies
- Definition of prohibited animals
- Mandatory microchipping
- Restraint ordinance that requires animals to be behind a secure enclosure
- Spay/neuter requirement unless the owner has a breeders license

Recommendations:

- ✓ Task a review board with examining the ordinances and consider joining them so that there is one uniform animal ordinance for all contract jurisdictions.
- ✓ Work closely with the County administrators and attorneys to address the needed ordinance changes from the suggestions listed above and any other ordinances deemed necessary for revision or inclusion. SLOCAS must be involved in the creation of ordinances that they will be charged with enforcing.
- ✓ Review ordinances yearly to gauge effectiveness of the animal control program and to ensure that the mission of creating safe neighborhoods for both people and pets are being met.
- ✓ Design and distribute a flyer or brochure in Spanish that outlines basic animal laws for the cities and the County.
- ✓ Advertise the agency's Web site as a source of information about animal control ordinances.

- ✓ Contact The HSUS for examples of progressive animal-related ordinances that have been implemented in other areas as SLOC and other contract municipalities update their ordinances.

- ✓ Provide training and continue to foster the relationship with the SLOCSD and other law enforcement agencies to better educate police officers on the crime of animal cruelty. Since most forms of animal cruelty are felony offenses, law enforcement's involvement is not only beneficial, it is required to prosecute a felony crime. Law enforcement jurisdictions should assign a detective that SLOCAS can go to regarding criminal cruelty cases for advice, direction, investigation, and prosecution. SLOCSD and other police agencies also need to give SLOCAS the ability to instruct police officers on animal cruelty and the role that the police departments play in such offenses.

Discussion:
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

Animal control laws are really quality of life laws. Communities with good animal control ordinances are generally better places to live because they provide good enforcement policies and procedures and empower enforcement personnel by giving them the tools they need to address the issues. In these places, barking dogs do not disturb the citizens' quality of life,

citizens and mail carriers can walk down the streets without fear of being attacked, and public places and parks are not soiled with dog feces. Would ordinance changes reduce the number of animals coming into the shelter or improve citizens' quality of life? If so, they should be addressed. However, it is important to keep in mind that additional ordinances usually have costs associated with them. Lawmakers need to understand that animal control laws are a very important part of the makeup of a good community.

9.8 LICENSING

Observations:
Article IV, Section K, License Verification, in the draft SOP briefly described the ACOs duty to ensure compliance.

SLOCAS contracts with PetData® to handle the registration paperwork, mail out notices, and tags. Licenses can be purchased through the mail or at the shelter. PetData® sends out reminders and follow-up letters to persons who have not complied with an initial reminder.

Dogs:
All of the Codes under SLOCAS jurisdiction stated that all dogs older than four months of age and residing in the County for more than 30 days must be licensed. Rabies vaccinations were required in order to get a dog licensed within SLOC. The license was issued based on the rabies inoculation status of the animal and could not be issued in a time that exceeds the duration of the animal's rabies vaccination period.

The license fees were designed to encourage persons to sterilize their dogs. Licenses could be purchased for one to three years and there was a substantial cost savings for sterilized dogs.

The license fees were as follows:

Altered one year:	$15.00
Altered three years:	$30.00
Unaltered one year:	$36.00
Late penalty:	$12.50
Senior Citizen, 3 year:	$23.00
Replacement tag:	$10.50
Transfer ownership:	$12.50

SLOCAS sold 6,221 dog licenses in 2007 and there were 17,677 licensed dogs in SLOC.

SLOCAS administered microchips ($20.00) and rabies vaccinations ($10.00) for the public from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. One of the kennelworkers performed these services in front of the Kennel Office.

Cats:
Under both City and County Codes, cats were required to have rabies vaccinations, but licensing was not required.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Pursue the possibility of allowing license sales revenue to be put into a fund account for SLOCAS for use only to go toward low cost spay/neuter programs and other programs beneficial to the goals and objectives of the animals in the care of SLOCAS.

- ✓ Establish a mandatory identification and registration program for cats.[128, 129]

- ✓ Work with other animal organizations to assist with neighborhood canvassing and promotional events to increase licenses.

- ✓ Consider providing additional staff that would perform only license registration through canvassing and enforcement. Agencies such as Los Angeles County Animal Control have revenue officers that target neighborhoods to check for current registration and issue citations for non-compliance.

- ✓ Develop and distribute educational materials promoting the benefits of microchipping to pet owners. SLOCAS and veterinarians should be encouraged to provide affordable microchipping to their clients.

- ✓ Develop written SOPs that address the "who, what, why, and how" of using microchip technology. Written SOPs should address training, scanning techniques, scanner maintenance, and tracing ownership.

- ✓ Present an off-site, quarterly low-cost rabies vaccination, license, and microchip clinic for residents of SLOC.

Discussion:

Cat ownership has surpassed dog ownership in the United States.[130] Mandatory cat registration helps communities solve numerous problems. Most importantly, it can help lost cats from being unnecessarily euthanized. In communities that register cats, every lost cat that is registered by a responsible owner can be returned home. Cat registration and identification are essential before communities can enforce laws that require cats outdoors to be supervised or to be spayed or neutered.

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.

---

[128] HSUS "Guide to Cat Law, A Guide for Legislators and Humane Advocates"+
[129] Cat Licensing Fact Sheet
[130] www.petdata.com

Mandatory registration serves eight functions:[131]

- As a lost pet recovery service
- As a statistical tool
- Ensures rabies vaccinations
- As a revenue source
- As cat control
- Promotes spaying and neutering
- Helps ensure compliance with local 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, numbers of animals impounded, and housing costs. A well-run registration program also expedites the process of returning a lost animal with an identification tag to his or her owner—with a citation when necessary—instead of costly impoundment, transport, and sheltering.

According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association's (APPMA) 2007–2008 National Pet Owners Survey, 39.4% of U.S. households own at least one dog and 34% of U.S. households own at least one cat. The average number of dogs owned per dog-owning household is 1.67 and the average number of cats owned per cat-owned household is 2.3. According to the 2006 and 2007 U.S. Census and the pet estimate formula, San Luis Obispo County has a population of 262,436, with 102,007 households. Using the formula provided in *Animal Control Management, A Guide for Local Governments*, there are approximately 67,119 dogs and approximately 79,769 cats living in San Luis Obispo County. Without some sort of registration via microchip or licensing, the jurisdictions have no way to track pet ownership.

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. Animal

---

[131] *Animal Control Management, A Guide for Local Governments*, International City/County Management Association, 2001, p. 16+

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.[132, 133, 134]

9.9 DOGFIGHTING

Observations:
The draft SOP did not include the handling of dogfighting cases.

SLOC, like all areas, had illegal dogfighting within its boundaries. The team was told that prosecution for the actual offense of dogfighting was rare. More often, SLOCAS contended with the aftermath of dogfighting by addressing the injuries and neglected treatment of the participating dogs.

Dogfighting and the possession of dogs for fighting are felonies in California, and being a spectator at a dogfight is a misdemeanor.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop a written SOP covering dogfighting in conjunction with the sheriff's department. Such a policy should outline what signs to look for that might indicate fighting activity. This SOP should explain how to safely make inquiries and gather information from the public. The SOP should also specify how that information is to be presented to the appropriate investigators.

- ✓ Encourage ACOs to utilize The HSUS Animal Fighting and Cruelty campaign Web site and to read related articles in *Animal Sheltering* magazine.[135, 136, 137]

- ✓ Provide all ACOs and law enforcement officers in the County with training on the recognition of wounds, training equipment, and other signs indicative of dogfighting.

- ✓ Coordinate communications and training exercises with the gang unit of the SLOCSD. If either agency has knowledge of dogfighting, they need to ensure that both sides are aware of the incident and develop an investigation protocol between SLOCAS and the SLOCSD.

- ✓ Provide the opportunity for every ACO to attend dogfighting investigation workshops when available. These workshops move around the country and can be brought within

---

[132] *Naca News*, "Mo' Licenses Mo' Fees Mo Money!?," September–October 2003 CR
[133] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Taking License With an Ad Campaign," September–October 1999+
[134] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "You've Got a (Pet Friendly) Friend in Pennsylvania," September–October 2000+
[135] www.hsus.org/acf/fighting/dogfight/
[136] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "Dogfighting Investigations," July–August 2006+
[137] HSUS *Animal Sheltering* magazine, "The Costs of Dogfighting," November–December 2007+

driving distance of SLOC so no overnight travel or airfare would be required. The HSUS can provide contact information for future dogfighting training courses.[138]

- ✓ Work in conjunction with state police departments if SLOCAS has issues with illegal animal fighting in the future. 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.

- ✓ The HSUS recommends that no dogs seized from dogfighting operations, even puppies, be placed for adoption or transferred to placement partners. Although some of the dogs and puppies seized may appear perfectly friendly, it is important that SLOCAS err on the side of caution. Puppies that come from fighting lines may be unpredictable and dangerous as they mature. SLOCAS does not need that liability, and the community does not need a potentially dangerous dog.

Discussion:
The HSUS has created 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 SLOCAS—whether now or in the future—in starting a campaign to educate the community about illegal animal fighting in the community.

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 who 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 and the crushing of their jaws 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.

---

[138] www.humanesocietyu.org/workshops_and_classes

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 owners and spectators enjoy watching dogs injure and maim one another, they 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.

Dogfighting is illegal and the federal Animal Welfare Act prohibits the interstate transportation of dogs for fighting purposes. Dogfighting is a felony offense in all 50 states and is 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.

9.10 INVESTIGATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT

Observations:
The following were provided in Article IV of the draft SOP: Section M, Nuisance Abatement, Section N, Animal Seizure, and Section P, Court Appearances. The draft SOP did not cover animal cruelty investigations or other levels of enforcement that outlined the steps one should take depending on the severity of the cruelty or neglect. The ACOs told The HSUS team that the majority of investigations involved neglect and basic failure to provide care.

In California, animal cruelty is defined in section 597 of the penal code.

Penal code 597 section (a) states:

> *"…every person who maliciously and intentionally maims, mutilates, tortures, or wounds a living animal, or maliciously and intentionally kills an animal, is guilty of an offense punishable by imprisonment in the state prison, or by a fine of not more than*

> *$20,000, or by both the fine and imprisonment, or, alternatively, by imprisonment in a County jail for not more than one year, or by a fine of not more than $ 20,000, or by both the fine and imprisonment."*

Penal code 597 section (b) states:

> *"Except as provided otherwise in subdivision (a) or (c), every person who overdrives, overloads, drives when overloaded, overworks, tortures, torments, deprives of necessary sustenance, drink or shelter, cruelly beats, mutilates, or cruelly kills an animal…and whoever, having charge or custody of an animal, either as owner or otherwise, subjects any animal to needless suffering, or inflicts unnecessary cruelty upon the animal, or fails to provide proper food, drink, or shelter or protection from the weather, or who drives rides or otherwise uses the animal when it is unfit for labor, is, for every such offense, guilty of a crime punishable as a misdemeanor or as a felony…"*

The HSUS team did not observe any cruelty investigations calls, but was advised that SLOCAS took an educational approach to violators and were inclined to give verbal or written warnings rather than written citations. ACOs stated that the process normally began with a written or verbal warning depending on the severity of the violation. They would then reference Chameleon© to determine if there were past violations at the address. The ACOs provided information to various individuals regarding their responsibility as a pet owner and also offered solutions to help them solve problems.

The ACOs stated that normally the process of cruelty investigations started when they were assigned to investigate the case. During a cruelty investigation the ACO would take pictures, conduct interviews, and gather witness statements.

During the ride alongs, the ACOs responded to the following seven calls for service and three animal impounds: one dog tethering compliance follow-up, one cruelty follow-up involving a dog with an injured foot, a caught dog, a stray dog and the animal was not on scene, a follow-up concerning five dogs living inside a pick-up camper, an opossum on a fence and the animal was impounded, and a loose dog complaint and the animal was impounded. All animals were handled humanely, and the opossum was placed in a transfer cage and taken to a wildlife rehabilitation center. On all of the calls that the team observed, the ACOs used the least amount of restraint when handling animals, and were careful not to injure or further stress the animals.

During discussions with officers, there was no consensus on when it would be appropriate to issue a citation.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Update the draft SOP to include all aspects of enforcement and investigation.
- ✓ Determine levels of criteria for issuing citations.
- ✓ Provide the ACOs with training on case preparation and presentation: how to organize a case, what documentation is needed, how to write a good report, and how

to present it. Include training in testifying, interviewing, search and seizure, chain of custody, photography, evidence gathering, field notes, the plain view doctrine, etc.

- ✓ Encourage key City/County officials to participate in a First Strike workshop.[139]
- ✓ If complainants cannot be located personally, use a door hanger or postcard to let them know how the agency has responded to their complaint.
- ✓ Send select ACOs to the National Cruelty Investigations School.[140]
- ✓ Provide ACOs with professional-looking educational materials covering issues such as responsible pet care, rabies, ordinances, and spaying/neutering.
- ✓ SLOCAS ACOs should be applauded for their humane handling of animals. The goal in animal handling is to use the least amount of restraint possible to safely handle the animals and the ACOs demonstrated this well.

Discussion:
Successful animal control is a combination of education and enforcement. Enforcement is an extremely important part of an effective animal care and control program. It must be consistent in its application and comport with the philosophy of the department. The key to success is the careful balance of each of these aspects. Many animal control agencies apply too much enforcement and too little education. Others do not enforce and are therefore ineffective. The goal should be to educate owners and help them improve the conditions in which their animals live. If the improvements are not made in a timely manner, enforcement action should be taken. Although The HSUS team's site visit was only a small slice of time in the activities of SLOCAS, it appeared the ACOs did a good job of interacting with the public and enforcing the ordinances.

9.11 FIELD SERVICES/ANIMAL CONTROL CONTRACTS

Observations:
SLOCAS provided full service animal control for all of the municipalities in SLOC. The costs for services for these services for FY 07–08 were reported as follows:

City of Arroyo Grande	$100,201.39
City of Atascadero	$149,381.15
City of Grover Beach	$70,070.47
City of Morro Bay	$52,943.61
City of Pismo Beach	$50,541.05
City of Paso Robles	$145,246.91
City of San Luis Obispo	$149,992.55

139 www.hsus.org/firststrike
140 www.code3associates.org/NCIS.php

Staff told The HSUS team that they received support from the law enforcement agencies in these areas and have radio communications with each of the individual departments when back-up is needed.

Recommendations:
None.

9.12 WILDLIFE ISSUES

Observations:
Article IV, Section S of the draft SOP contained information on wildlife. Section S stated that SLOCAS did not exercise jurisdiction over wildlife related issues and that officers did not routinely respond to wildlife calls. The exceptions related to public safety and animal welfare and consisted of the following: where there are reports of animals demonstrating signs suggestive of rabies infection, where the Department of Fish and Game or Wildlife Services are unable or unwilling to respond in the interest of providing humane care, where citizens inadvertently catch wildlife while attempting to trap a domestic animal, where assistance is needed by the Department of Fish and Game, and where venomous snakes are present.

The ACOs and the division had the best interests of wild animals in mind. Wildlife was not needlessly euthanized or relocated to eliminate what many in the public consider "nuisance" animals.

Sick, injured, or orphaned native wildlife were transported to Pacific Wildlife Center for care and relocation. SLOCAS did not trap or house wildlife; these services were referred to Wildlife Services (also known as "The County Trapper"). When healthy wildlife was captured, the ACO released the animal on-site, or if the location was not safe, they transported the animal within one half mile so that the animal could return to its established home, food, and water sources.

Traps were available to the public for rent at $2.00/day, but specifically for use on stray cat complaints.

SLOCAS statistics recorded the "miscellaneous incoming" total at 525 for 2007. The miscellaneous incoming total consisted of wildlife, livestock, domestic birds, and rabbits.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Expand the SOP to include all aspects of accepting, temporarily housing, transferring, and euthanasia of wildlife and exotic animals.

- ✓ Place additional emphasis upon the wildlife portion of the officers' training. This would consist of departmental policies, ordinance requirements, common species, and behaviors.

- ✓ The HSUS team commends SLOCAS' handling of wildlife issues.

- ✓ Refer complainants to a wildlife control operator if they insist on removal of an animal that is not causing damage to property, is not sick or injured, is not confined to an area which it cannot escape, and is not posing an immediate health or safety threat. If a wild animal must be trapped and relocated, a trained professional should determine if the site and conditions are appropriate for release because relocating wild animals can be a death sentence for them. The determination should include such factors as the time of year, food and water sources, saturation of the species in the area, predators, etc.

- ✓ Provide complainants with information on available wildlife control methods to alleviate their problem. Also provide them with methods and practices which the citizen may employ in the future to avoid a recurrence of the wildlife problem. If the caller claims to have tried these methods with no success, an ACO should be dispatched to evaluate the situation. In cases where the caller is threatening to harm an animal, the ACO should be made aware of the threat and be dispatched to resolve the problem.

- ✓ Include information on rabies and solutions to wildlife conflicts on the Web site in order to encourage people to resolve issues before calling. For those without Internet access, hard copies of the information should be provided. Many organizations, including The HSUS, have information on the Internet that SLOCAS can link to its Web site.[141]

- ✓ 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 situation such as trapping an injured animal.

- ✓ Advise citizens to watch orphaned wildlife from a distance to determine if the adult returns. If an adult does not return, the citizen should be advised to keep the animal safe and warm until it can be brought to the shelter or picked up by an ACO. A rehabilitator would be a valuable contact in this situation.[142]

- ✓ Begin keeping detailed records for wildlife cases that SLOCAS handles. The following data should be kept for each case:
  - ➢ Complainant's name, address, and phone number
  - ➢ Date(s) of service
  - ➢ Nature of complaint
  - ➢ Methods employed to alleviate the problem
  - ➢ Disposition of animal including method of euthanasia, location of release site, or name, address, and phone number of wildlife rehabilitator

---

[141] www.hsus.org/wildlife/urban_wildlife_our_wild_neighbors/the_humane_approach_to_humanwildlife_conflicts.html

[142] HSUS *Wild Neighbors, The Humane Approach to Living with Wildlife*, Page 6

- ✓ In addition, a yearly summary should include the following:
  - ➢ Total number of complaints received
  - ➢ Total number of complaints serviced
  - ➢ Number and kinds of animals released at the site of capture or relocated
  - ➢ Number and kinds of animals transferred to a wildlife rehabilitator
  - ➢ Number and kinds of animals euthanized and method of euthanasia employed

- ✓ For more information about dealing humanely with wildlife issues, contact The HSUS,[143] or visit the AAA Wildlife Control Web site.[144]

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 misunderstand the normal behavior of urbanized wildlife; fear the animal or the possibility 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 once sought shelter and food in the woods, they are now forced to find shelter in attics, basements, or garages and to eat food left out for pets or thrown out in 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, 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. There are several alternative methods of dealing with "nuisance" wildlife. It would be more cost effective and a better use of time to have informational material[145, 146] available to mail out or refer citizens to, rather than send an ACO on "nuisance" wildlife calls.

People are frequently under the impression that it is best to trap and relocate the animal; however, this procedure is highly problematic. The HSUS recommends relocation only as a last resort. In many cases euthanasia may be the most humane option. Problems with adverse climatic conditions (heat and cold), competition from others of the same species, predation by different species, locating shelter and food, and the abandonment of the young that are often overlooked in "nuisance" animal control all make relocation a less-than-desirable

---

143 www.hsus.org/wildlife
144 www.aaawildlife.com
145 HSUS *Raccoon: Living in Harmony with Your Wild Neighbors* brochure+
146 HSUS *Beavers: Living in Harmony with Your Wild Neighbors* brochure+

option. Strategies and exclusion 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 members of the species will only make room for others to inhabit the area. For these reasons, it is best to humanely deter wild animals, or live in harmony with them.[147]

[147] HSUS *Wildlife Rehabilitation: Living in Harmony with Your Wild Neighbors* brochure+

10.0 GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP

10.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The HSUS team received a warm welcome from staff and management of SLOCAS, as well as from the sheriff and the County board of supervisors.

Elected officials informed the team that over the past year they received an increasing number of complaints from constituents and volunteers expressing concerns about animal services. As previously discussed, the concerns were regarding inadequate management of the shelter, unsatisfactory medical care for shelter animals, worries about inmates cleaning the Kennel and Cat Rooms and mistreating animals, and disagreements with SLOCAS management over euthanasia policy.

A sequence of three significant events occurred in late 2007 and early 2008 prior to The HSUS visit in March 2008. First, in October 2007, the County board of supervisors hosted a series of facilitated meetings to listen to concerns of the public and volunteers and to develop strategies to address the priority issues. Second, near the end of calendar 2007, the sheriff sent a memorandum to the County board of supervisors announcing that he was relinquishing management oversight of animal services. And, third, on February 1, 2008, SLOCAS staff filed a formal complaint with the County human resources director through their employee's association expressing their concern about the negative impact of volunteers at the shelter and potential health/safety issues.

The sheriff gained management responsibility for animal service in 1998 when it was moved from the County health department. County officials were forthright with The HSUS team about their interest in restructuring animal services and realigning its reporting relationship within County government. In response to the sheriff's memorandum in late 2007, the County administrator and County board of supervisors ordered a management study to develop options to address the future organizational placement of animal services in the County.

The animal services staff, management, and volunteers openly voiced their concerns about the environment of uncertainty surrounding the future of animal services, and how it had contributed to an atmosphere of confusion and mistrust. The public discussion about animal services by the elected officials and the media had further exacerbated the fear about the fate of animal services in San Luis Obispo County.

10.2 ARTICULATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL VISION, MISSION, AND PLANNING

Observations:
SLOCAS had a mission statement published in the County's budget document. SLOCAS'

mission statement was: "The animal service division of the sheriff's department is dedicated to providing protection, education, and the humane treatment of animals in order to ensure a safe and healthy community and to promote the benefits of responsible pet ownership." The mission statement was posted on their Web site and referred to as a "statement of purpose."

In interviews with The HSUS team, the animal services manager and the sheriff were consistent in their explanation of the primary purpose of animal services as an "animal control" agency—with a priority to protect public safety and health. The animal services manager frequently referred to SLOCAS as an "animal control agency" emphasizing that it is not a "humane society." The animal services manager stated that he felt that there was a definite separation between the responsibilities of an animal control agency and a humane society. He felt that SLOCAS was properly an animal control agency, charged with protecting the health and well-being of the public. As such, he felt that resources should be dedicated to those tasks, and that the housing, medical care, and re-homing of stray or unwanted pets were responsibilities that properly belonged to humane societies and allied animal welfare groups.

There was no written strategic plan or long term plan for animal services. The sheriff stated that SLOCAS had been functioning well over the past couple of years, and it was his assessment that animal services was ready to become a stand-alone agency within County government. The sheriff stated that he had also raised the issue of ending management oversight with the County administrator in 2006. The HSUS team was provided numerous print media articles about the sheriff's desire to relinquish management responsibility and the County board of supervisors' interest in studying options.

During the site visit the team was informed that the elected officials were considering three policy options for animal services, which included:

- Creating animal services as a stand-alone agency in County government.
- Separating animal services into two functions: (1) field enforcement services would remain under the sheriff's responsibility, and (2) shelter operations would be placed under a different County department.
- Separating animal services into two functions: (1) field enforcement services would remain under the sheriff's responsibility, and (2) shelter operations would be contracted out to a nonprofit humane organization.

The options discussed by elected officials were not the result of a strategic planning or long-range planning effort, but in reaction to the sheriff's notice to the County board of supervisors that he aimed to relinquish animal services management oversight back to the County administrator.

The County administrative officer requested that Woods Humane Society submit a proposal to assume the management of animal care and adoptions. WHS submitted a written proposal dated March 5, 2008 to the County administrative officer. The WHS proposal included two options. In option one, WHS would take responsibility of all SLOCAS animals at the conclusion of the animal's legal holding time. In option two, WHS would take responsibility

for sheltering all animals. Both options would require a capital investment.

Many of the public's comments received prior to the site visit were from volunteers voicing concerns about the management of the shelter. Some written comments offered with a request for anonymity for fear of reprisal. Some comments advocated for a reduction of shelter euthanasia and better veterinary care for the animals in the shelter. Other comments called for SLOCAS to become a "No-Kill" shelter, or merely made derogatory rants about SLOCAS management and staff. Vocal volunteers were frustrated with what they described as a low priority given to the care of animals in the shelter.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Determine the organization structure and reporting relationship for animal services. This decision is the responsibility of the County administrator and the County board of supervisors.

- ✓ Assign a high level administrative staff person in the County administrator's office to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the current situation, assess alternatives, and recommend selection of the best solution.

- ✓ Create and implement a transition plan for animal services to the new organizational structure.

- ✓ Create a long-range plan for SLOCAS with measurable goals and deliverables.

- ✓ Review and update the vision, mission, and values for SLOCAS.

- ✓ Conduct a full financial analysis of each of the policy options.

- ✓ Establish a citizen task force comprised of key animal welfare leaders, representatives from the cities in the County, the veterinary medical association, SLOCAS volunteers, and citizens. The task force can advise the County board of supervisors on animal services programs and policies.

Discussion:

Members of the community were voicing a growing concern over the need for San Luis Obispo County elected officials and animal services management to place a higher priority on animal care. The community outcry to end euthanasia and provide higher standards of humane care for shelter animals is an issue local governments are facing across the country. Communities are calling for elected officials to operate public shelters humanely, and embrace progressive policies and practices to end euthanasia. The stated priority of SLOCAS has been to protect human safety and health. This was evident in the clerical area which was well-staffed, with a modern, nicely furnished and recently remodeled and expanded office. The field services program was well-equipped and provided an excellent level of service. The shelter, on the other hand, was older, understaffed, and relied on Honor Farm inmate labor and volunteers to perform the fundamental animal care and client service functions.

The emerging, industry best practice in public animal service agencies is a dual mission of protecting the health, safety, and welfare of people *and* animals in the community. This

translates into funding full service field operations, full service shelter operations, and maintaining the highest level of humane care for the animals. SLOCAS is a public animal services organization responsible by law to protect public safety as well as animal welfare in the community. This is an opportune time for the County board of supervisors to empanel a broad-based community task force to advise elected officials on policy issues and community goals for animal services.

Animal welfare exists on a long continuum between animal control and animal rights. Historically, animal control has been charged with preserving public health through rabies control programs, stray animal apprehension, and enforcement of applicable laws. Animal welfare has been charged with caring for and rehoming unwanted animals and educating the public. There has been a generally accepted, clear delineation between the two camps. As societies evolve and change their attitudes and their laws regarding pets, animal control and welfare agencies must evolve as well. The line between animal control and animal welfare is no longer clear, and many of the responsibilities are shared. The animal services manager and his superiors are encouraged to embrace this evolution in attitudes, rather than fight to stay in the old animal control mold of "catch and warehouse." SLOCAS is poised to join the leading edge of animal control and animal welfare reform. The first step toward becoming more progressive is a change in attitude.

It should be noted that The HSUS believes that every community should have an open-admission shelter where all homeless and unwanted animals are accepted. Limited-admission shelters, sometimes called "No-Kill" shelters, are distinguished from open-admission animal shelters primarily in that they accept only animals for whom they have space and choose not to euthanize animals in response to the tragic problem of companion animal overpopulation, thereby limiting the number of animals they can accommodate. 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.

"No-Kill" has come to mean operating limited admission animal shelters in which healthy and treatable dogs and cats are not euthanized for time and space considerations. Most open admission shelters in the U.S. are not able to achieve this goal. "No-Kill" as a philosophy is noble, and as an objective or aspiration it is essential, but it cannot be accomplished with the flip of a switch. The true cost of communities attempting to achieve "No-Kill" with the flip of a switch is often unforeseen. Distressed animals and financial burdens are often the result of the misfortune of thinking that this goal is achievable over night. It will take all of us to get this job done and it will take much time and effort.

We must stretch ourselves and find new ways to save the lives of dogs and cats. There are no shortcuts. At this point, "No-Kill" sheltering is an aspiration, but currently a difficult goal to achieve in more than a handful of communities throughout the nation. But that should not deter us from working diligently toward the goal of ending euthanasia, except for sick and very aggressive animals. Achieving this goal takes more than a declaration—it's an operational state, and few communities today are able to devote enough resources to the task.

10.3 STABILITY AND LEADERSHIP

Observations:
As mentioned in section 9.1, General Overview, SLOCAS was a division of the SLOCSD and the undersheriff oversaw SLOCAS. The sheriff had managed animal services since 1998 and the animal services manager had been the incumbent for eight years.

SLOCAS had two exempt management positions: the animal services manager and the administrative services officer. All other positions were represented by the San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association (SLOCEA). In this environment, only management positions have the authority to hire and evaluate employees. The lead ACOs and the shelter coordinator were not managers or supervisors, and as such did not have management or supervisory authority. This was supported in the job descriptions of the leads and the shelter coordinator. Their duties were to organize, assign, coordinate, and lead the work.

The animal services manager was presumed by the community to function in a dual role—as the division administrator and the shelter veterinarian. The animal services manager job description stated the following with regard to veterinary/medical oversight:

> *Direct the inspection and assessment of sick and injured animals; oversee and participate in related treatment functions; coordinate and direct activities related to the removal of deceased animals from roads, private property and other County locations; assure proper quarantining and euthanizing of animals in accordance with established regulations; oversee the administration of vaccines.*

The job description does not specifically dictate that the animal services manager must fill the role of shelter veterinarian. Regardless, the dual responsibilities as defined by the job description and as perceived by the public, created confusion and frustration for citizens who expected the animal services manager to provide a higher level of veterinary care for the shelter's animal population.

The sheriff stated that when he first took over animal services from the health department there were many problems, including high euthanasia numbers. He stated that more recently animal services had been functioning well and in his opinion could successfully operate as a stand-alone agency, even though animal advocates and volunteers brought him a growing number of complaints regarding operations, staff, and management. The sheriff's policy was to assign a command staff member to fully investigate every complaint. He told the team that most complaints from the public or volunteers had not been substantiated. He also stated that complaints about the same past incidents trickled in over time even though they had been previously resolved (sometimes months or years ago) which drained the department's resources.

Staff told The HSUS team that SLOCAS management had little authority in actually managing some of the important aspects of the division. The authority to fire or discipline employees and effectively manage volunteers rested with the sheriff or undersheriff. Staff also reported that when they took their concerns and issues to management, often management took no corrective action.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Establish a clear delegation of management and supervisory authority to the supervisors and animal services manager.

- ✓ Clarify the animal services manager's role at SLOCAS and communicate his role to staff, volunteers, and the public. Eliminate the veterinary responsibilities from the animal services manager classification and hire a contract veterinarian to examine and treat the shelter animals, or redefine the classification to include direct veterinary care and oversight of the animals.

- ✓ Rewrite the "veterinarian option animal services manager" job description to reflect the balance of management/administration and veterinary care. If one area has a higher priority, the job description should clearly indicate that balance.

- ✓ Hold the animal services manager accountable for leading SLOCAS.

Discussion:
The County board of supervisors, charged with handling the transition of SLOCAS, aims to effectively resolve this issue in a timely manner. Upon completion of SLOCAS' transition, animal services' management authority, responsibility, accountability, and support will facilitate stronger stability and leadership.

It is important for staff to have the confidence and support of upper management. It is equally important for the SLOCAS staff to understand that the field of animal services is easily criticized and generates many complaints. Clear and concise communication will help show the public, volunteers, staff, and management a united front.

Although it might be difficult to foresee and control the actions of individual employees, the overall conduct of the staff and the quality of animal care and client services are ultimately the responsibility of the animal services manager who has been in his position for nearly a decade. When management gets involved with all aspects of shelter work, it usually boosts the morale of staff members. If management is willing to pitch in wherever needed, it shows staff that they will not ask someone to perform a task that they themselves are not willing to perform, which is also a way to gain respect.

The job of managing an animal services division requires a full-time, competent administrator/manager. The veterinary medical responsibilities would best be fulfilled by hiring a veterinarian specifically for shelter oversight, contracting for the service, or shifting the responsibilities of the animal services manager. The community has been demanding an improved quality of care for the animals in the shelter and taking these steps will drive SLOCAS toward that goal.

10.4 INFRASTRUCTURE & SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Observations:
SLOCAS was organized in a standard structure for a public animal services agency. They

had an organizational chart depicting reporting relationships; however, the reporting structure was not effective. The division was managed by the animal services manager, and they had a field operations unit, a shelter operations unit, and clerical/client services unit. As such, SLOCAS was organized into three functional areas: field, clerical, and kennels.

On the organization chart the ACOs reported to two lead ACOs who had no supervisory or management authority, as previously stated. The lead ACOs reported to the animal services manager. The five clerical employees were supervised by the administrative services officer who reported to the animal services manager. The Kennel operations had a staff of 2.5 full-time employees (FTE) that "reported to" the animal shelter coordinator who reported to the animal services manager. The animal shelter coordinator who had no supervisory/ management authority also sought direction from the administrative services officer. Kennelworkers relied heavily on inmate labor and volunteers to provide cleaning and animal care. The animal shelter coordinator was tasked with being responsible for the kennelworkers, the Honor Farm inmate labor, and volunteers. It appeared to the team that each of the 2.5 kennelworkers had equal decision-making power and no one was really "in charge." Although the organization chart listed three positions as supervisory roles, those employees did not actually have supervisory authority.

There were not enough supervisors to ensure proper management control at SLOCAS. There were twenty-one FTE and two supervisor/managers.

The animal services manager submitted a request in the FY 07–08 budget to create five additional kennelworker positions, and eliminate the use of Honor Farm inmate labor. The request was not recommended in the adopted budget.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Reclassify one of the lead ACO positions to a field supervisor position reporting to the animal services manager.
- ✓ Reclassify the animal shelter coordinator position to a supervisor, reporting to the animal services manager.
- ✓ As previously recommended, eliminate the use of inmate labor for Kennel and Cat Rooms cleaning and replace with additional kennelworkers.
- ✓ Hire a full-time volunteer coordinator.

Discussion:

One manager to eleven staff creates an inefficient supervision environment. It is the opinion of The HSUS team that the animal services manager's responsibilities are too diverse. The day-to-day supervisory responsibilities for operations fell on the shoulders of the animal service manager, who was also expected to function to some extent as a veterinarian. This is especially problematic in an operation that runs seven days-a-week, with the complexity of a field enforcement program and animal care operations. Improved supervision can be accomplished within existing positions by reclassifying one lead ACO position and the animal shelter coordinator position to supervisory/management positions. That would create

four supervisor/manager positions to 19 employees. If SLOCAS wants to sustain its volunteer program, they should hire a full-time volunteer coordinator. The team believes that kennel management and volunteer coordination cannot successfully be carried out by the same position.

SLOCAS should eliminate its reliance on Honor Farm inmate labor for its animal care responsibilities. The proposal submitted by Woods Humane Society revealed what it would cost the County to provide a higher level of animal care services. The proposal clearly demonstrated the requirement to significantly increase staffing levels and provide a capital investment in a new or remodeled facility.

10.5 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Observations:
SLOCAS used a standard Employee Evaluation form developed by the County's human resources department. The form was based on established criteria that included: quality of work, job knowledge, alertness, creativity, interpersonal skills, attendance, safety consciousness, and personal appearance. Employees received formal evaluations which were carried out by direct supervisors once a year. The final evaluation was routed for review and signatures by the supervisor, and department head—the sheriff. The completed forms were maintained in employee personnel files by County human resources. The HSUS team did not review the personnel files to determine if all employees had a current evaluation in their file.

There was no time clock. All employees had a formal work schedule with starting and ending time, scheduled work days, and days off. The Chameleon© software system provided detailed reports on the activities and work produced by employees. The HSUS team was provided performance reports for the clerical staff and the field officers. The reports captured workload indicators by employee on a daily, monthly, and annual basis.

All management and employee positions had a written, comprehensive job description. Each job description included: a definition of the position, duties and tasks performed, employment standards for knowledge and abilities, required licenses and certifications, and other conditions of employment pertaining to "character." The documents were developed by the County's human resources department.

The work of clerical staff and field officers was well tracked. The HSUS team did not see any reports pertaining to workload and activities of the kennelworkers. No supervisory control and unclear delegation of authority contributed to ineffective oversight of work.

San Luis Obispo County had a strong system of comprehensive, public sector human resource policies, procedures, personnel rules, regulations, job descriptions, and performance evaluations. Work schedules were subject to negotiation under the collective bargaining agreement between the County and the employee's association.

The Chameleon© software reporting capability provided SLOCAS management with an

excellent tool to monitor employee performance.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Ensure that all employees receive a formal, written performance evaluation each year, in accordance with the County human resources policy.

- ✓ Managers and staff should discuss goals for the following year and jointly create a plan for achieving those goals. The plan should contribute to organizational goals and the professional growth of the employee.

- ✓ Conduct regular staff reviews to evaluate accomplishments and productivity and set future goals. These reviews can be somewhat informal and should be encouraging to staff, but should also form the basis of departmental accountability. Staff should know what they need to do, how to do it, and if their job descriptions need to be changed. Staff needs to know that the animal services manager is aware of their work, is open to their suggestions, and values their efforts.

- ✓ Management needs to practice "Management by Walking Around" to become aware of what individual employees do, how they do it, what challenges they face, etc. Efforts can then be directed to provide the appropriate training and resources to help them become professional animal care workers. This also leads to credibility when managers review an employee's performance.

Discussion:

Performance management includes activities that will ensure that goals are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner. Performance management can focus on performance of the organization, a department, and employees. One of the downfalls that managers have is that they are too quick to point out negative behaviors and do not communicate positive feedback. An evaluation system must be maintained through commitment in policy and practice to integrity, accountability, consistency of use, and periodic review. The following are some points to consider when providing feedback to employees during reviews:

- Clarity—Be clear about what you want to say.
- Emphasize the positive—Every potentially negative situation has another side.
- Be specific—Avoid general comments and clarify pronouns such as "it," "that," etc.
- Focus on behavior rather than the person.
- Refer to behavior that can be changed.
- Be descriptive rather than evaluative.
- Own the feedback—Use 'I' statements.

10.6 OPERATING POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND TRAINING

Observations:
As mentioned previously, the animal services manager presented The HSUS team with a document titled: Personnel Policy and Protocol Manual. This manual was a draft document written by the animal services manager, and had not been distributed to staff. Employees told The HSUS team that they had heard that the animal services manager was composing a manual, but they had not been directly involved in its development.

The draft manual was a one-hundred and eight page comprehensive, uniform document. It was well written, well organized and contained thorough, detailed procedures. The manual was organized into five "articles," a table of contents, and an appendix and was organized as follows:

Article I — General Procedures (i.e., hours of operation, rules of conduct);

Article II — General Operations (i.e., use of telephones, computers, vehicles);

Article III — Administrative Services (i.e., customer service, cash handling, animal relinquishments, adoptions, bite quarantines, licensing);

Article IV — Field Operations (i.e., governing authority, radio communications, enforcement actions, animal seizure);

Article V — Kennel Operations (i.e., cleaning, feeding, vaccinations, behavior assessment, euthanasia, foster, rescue, volunteers).

Appendix — Organizational Chart

The animal services manager kept an electronic file depicting the trainings that each employee received. Some of the most recent trainings included SAFER™ temperament assessments, CPR, and euthanasia. The Honor Farm inmates received on-the-job training by performing the duties and following a one-page instruction sheet.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Immediately create a staff review process for the draft SOP to gather employee input. Solicit suggestions from staff that perform those relevant tasks.
- ✓ Develop a media release about establishing an SOP to address community and volunteer concerns about SLOCAS operations.
- ✓ Establish an annual review process to update the SOP manual. Ensure that they remain up-to-date with current practices.
- ✓ Partner with the County human resources department to develop a plan to introduce the manual.
- ✓ Engage a facilitator to assist the review and implementation of the manual.

- ✓ Create a plan to ensure all employees are properly trained in the manual's procedures.

- ✓ Prepare a plan for introducing the manual to the volunteers. Provide relevant SOPs to volunteers and train them in those areas. They should be required to sign their names confirming that they are in receipt of the SOPs.

- ✓ Make the SOP manual available to all SLOCAS staff either online or in printed form when it is finalized. Keep a master copy in the shelter and ensure that staff is aware of its location. Obtain staff signatures identifying that they are in receipt of hard copy manuals. If done electronically, send an e-mail to staff and print a copy of the e-mail properties indicating when staff opened the e-mail.

- ✓ Communicate with each employee about any changes, additions, deletions, or amendments to the SOPs. Instruct staff to replace outdated copies in their manual.

- ✓ Create a manual section on staff training requirements. Training should be tailored to the specific tasks of the job responsibilities. Record training in personnel files to ensure that staff has completed the necessary training components.

- ✓ Implement a system to ensure that all staff members and volunteers are aware of and are held accountable for following the operational procedures.

- ✓ Utilize resources such as *Animal Sheltering* magazine. Post articles on staff boards or at staff meetings. Seek feedback from staff on articles such as "Pit Bulls: Dilemma and Debate" (March 2007). Staff could be involved in discussions on breed specific legislation, public safety, and other solutions about Pit Bull dogs.

- ✓ Allow management and other staff to attend off-site training held by The HSUS, AHA, NACA, and the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA).

- ✓ Include in-house training opportunities in the SLOCAS budget. This can be more cost-effective than sending staff to off-site training. Invite qualified speakers to train staff in a variety of topics related to their duties. Depending upon the subject matter, open the session to other local agencies, charging a seminar fee, to help defray costs. Topics may include animal handling techniques, animal behavior, investigation techniques, and client service.

- ✓ Utilize local resources for training. Local veterinarians can provide information about animal first aid and triage, kennel clubs and cat fanciers can offer breed identification. Utilize the expertise that is available in your community.

Discussion:
A *policy* is a guide to decision-making under a given set of circumstances, and it should therefore flow from and be consistent with the organization's overall mission. A *procedure* is a particular way of accomplishing something, such as a series of steps followed in a definite regular order. *SOPs* establish an overall routine that serves to ensure a consistent and repetitive approach to actions.

It was the opinion of The HSUS team that the absence of SOPs and training was a core deficiency facing SLOCAS. The foundation for successful organizations is established SOPs, clear policy, written expectations, ongoing training, and accountability for employees, volunteers, and management.

The animal services manager created a good first draft of an SOP. However, given the atmosphere of uncertainty, mistrust, suspicion, and deficient accountability, a successful implementation will require a well-thought out plan and strategy. The sheriff's office and County administrator's office need to provide the leadership, resources, and support to the animal services manager to bring about a successful outcome. The interest of volunteers, the community, and the media requires SLOCAS to prepare a clear plan for communicating the policy changes and providing an opportunity for comments, questions, and clarification.

SOPs should be thoughtfully and carefully prepared and regularly updated. 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 and among departments. In addition, they should 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 the DEA.

Staff needs clear expectations and directions so they can succeed. 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. The HSUS team recognizes the benefit of "on the job" training, which should be one part of a comprehensive training program. Any training for staff in all aspects of animal care and control, formal or otherwise, is an investment well worth the cost.

10.7 COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS SYSTEM

Observations:
The nonexempt employees at SLOCAS were represented by the San Luis Obispo County employee's association. There were three units in the employee's association: the clerical unit (administrative assistants), the public safety unit (animal control officer and lead animal control officer), and the trades and crafts unit (kennelworkers). Salaries and benefits were negotiated for the employees by the employee's association representative through collective bargaining with the County. The salaries and benefits were established in the current MOU covering five years (2004 through 2008) for the clerical and public safety units, and covering six years (2006 through 2011) for the trades and crafts unit. Annual cost of living adjustments were included but there was no provision for merit pay in the MOU.

SLOCAS had a competitive salary and benefits package, which included health, reciprocal retirement benefits, vacation leave, and sick leave accrual. The salary ranges for each classification provided approximately a 20% range in pay from the first step in the salary range to the top step. Employees moved through the salary range based on years of service.

The wages and salaries at SLOCAS were competitive in comparison to other comparable California counties. The pay ranges for animal control officers and kennelworkers were comparable to the surrounding counties of Monterey and Santa Barbara.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Reward staff for exceptional work. Consider giving movie passes, restaurant coupons, or a few hours of paid time off as acknowledgements that exceptional efforts are recognized and appreciated by management.

Discussion:

Wages and salaries are traditionally the largest percentage of an organization's budget, with over 60% allocated to human resources. This is appropriate since the animal care and control profession is a service industry. The general economy and regional differences, unemployment trends and their impact on hiring, and the resources of the organization all impact what staff is paid. For these reasons, The HSUS team refrains from making specific recommendations about the levels at which staff should be paid and offers only general observations and suggestions.

Compensation is one of the most difficult and sensitive areas to assess during any HSUS evaluation. Employees expect fair remuneration for the services they perform. What is often lacking is the understanding that compensation is affected by many factors: the expectation of fairness by employees, competitive labor market wages, value of the other benefits provided to employees, the organization's ability to pay, federal and local laws, etc.

Problems arise when responsibility and accountability for work are poorly defined and individual employees feel unfairly treated as they measure themselves against other employees. Employees need to understand that they are not entitled to compensation simply for showing up to work, but that remuneration is also based on their performance, level of responsibility, and contribution to the organization.

10.8 ANIMAL CONTROL ADVISORY BOARD/COMMITTEE

Observations:

Aside from the volunteer advisory committee mentioned in section 8.2, Volunteers, there was no formal advisory board/committee for SLOCAS. The team was told that there had been a formal advisory board in the past. The former advisory committee was made up of representatives from the seven cities that receive animal services from SLOCAS.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Re-establish an advisory board.

- ✓ Expand the advisory board membership to include citizens, representatives of contract cities, representatives from local humane societies, and the local veterinary medical association.

Discussion:
Given the level of frustration, complaints, and mistrust by the community, an advisory board/committee would serve the County well. An effective advisory board can provide a mechanism for meaningful community involvement. An advisory board should bring people in on a short term basis to assist the County board of supervisors and the animal services manager in establishing priorities, setting goals, reviewing and commenting on policy, and providing input on important issues.

10.9 DEFINITION AND RECOGNITION OF AGENCY'S ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

Observations:
SLOCAS used their Web site, humane education program, volunteer program, and direct service delivery as the primary methods for establishing their role in the community. Feedback from SLOCAS' annual client survey demonstrated that 80% of the citizens that had contact with SLOCAS rated their interaction as satisfactory or excellent. The growing interest in SLOCAS was sparked, in part, by volunteers calling for change in shelter practices. The County board of supervisors and sheriff's open discussion about animal services had drawn public attention to the animal issues facing the community, as well as the needs for improved animal care at the shelter. The elected officials responsible for providing animal services have heard from the community about the need for more progressive animal care and shelter policies and had raised community awareness.

There was an element of confusion by the public concerning SLOCAS' identity. The management representative from the Woods Humane Society told The HSUS team that the public often confused the two organizations, especially since the shelters are located directly next to each other and both are on County property.

Recommendations:
- ✓ Create a public information plan to promote the services and programs of SLOCAS.
- ✓ Task the advisory board with creating a 3–5 year strategic plan for SLOCAS.

Discussion:
Citizen involvement and input is critical for formulating a plan for the future of animal services in San Luis Obispo County. The discussion has been at the appropriate level of County government—the County board of supervisors, the County administrator, and the sheriff. Once the future vision, strategic direction, and goals have been set for SLOCAS, it will afford an excellent opportunity for the County leadership to develop a three to five year strategic plan to achieve the goals.

Over time, SLOCAS will be able to reverse some of the damage done by past issues and controversies by implementing many of the recommendations in this report. As client service improves, SLOCAS' image in the community is likely to improve as well.

11.0 HUMAN RESOURCES

11.1 PERSONNEL/POLICIES

11.11 STAFFING LEVELS

Observations:
SLOCAS had twenty-one budgeted positions. Field services had seven ACOs and two lead ACOs. Client services were comprised of one administrative services officer, one senior accounts clerk, four administrative assistants, and one department automation specialist. The administrative assistants answered phones, served the public at the front counter, provided radio dispatch for the field operations, and provided clerical support. A senior account clerk was responsible for accounts receivable and payable, cash handling, and financial reporting. All clerical personnel were responsible for answering phones. Management assigned the clerical personnel to each of the desks on a three-month rotation plan, except for the accounting function. The functions, responsibilities, activities, procedures, and policies were transmitted by one clerical employee to the next as they rotated among the assignments.

The Kennel and Cat Rooms were staffed with one animal shelter coordinator and two and one-half kennelworkers. There was one half-time humane educator. Honor Farm inmate labor and volunteers provided Kennel and Cat Room cleaning, animal care, and some client services.

Management expressed concerns about having to use Honor Farm inmate labor to clean dog runs and cat cages at the shelter. As mentioned in section 10.4, Infrastructure and Support Systems, the animal services manager submitted a formal request for five new kennelworker positions in order to eliminate the Honor Farm inmate labor. The $198,120 request was not recommended for funding by the County administrator.

The number of kennelworkers observed on-site was critically inadequate for the animal population at SLOCAS. Relying on volunteers and untrained, transient Honor Farm inmate labor was a problem due to lack of training, lack of supervision, and unreliability.

The workload in the clerical service area appeared low compared to the clerical staffing levels.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Conduct a workload study to determine the necessary staffing level to perform all kennel work with fully trained staff.

- ✓ Increase staffing levels to adequately staff the animal care functions. Make sure that all cleaning and caretaking tasks are completed before the shelter opens to the public and that there is enough staff to adequately cover the public areas and care for the animals during public hours.

- ✓ Analyze the current staffing levels in the client service operations to determine appropriate staffing.
- ✓ Distribute workloads equitably.
- ✓ Consider creating landscaping, grounds keeping, or janitorial tasks for Honor Farm inmates, if there is a continued goal to utilize inmate labor.

Discussion:
The community and volunteers have clearly voiced their concern about an inadequate quality of care for the animals at SLOCAS. It is the fundamental responsibility of SLOCAS to provide a consistent, humane standard of care. An adequately staffed, trained, and supervised shelter operation will significantly improve animal care.

Animal care must be the central focus of SLOCAS; an animal shelter must have enough staff to provide adequate care of the animals. The shelter also has a responsibility to provide services that ensure public safety and programs that promote adoption and sterilization. Each shelter is different, based on the human population served, the estimated number of animals owned in the community, the size of the area covered, etc. Ultimately, every shelter has an obligation to maintain high standards of service and quality animal care.

In order for an organization to achieve its goals, it requires not only a committed staff team, but one that is sufficient in numbers and specifically hired and trained for the required tasks. Although having staff that can 'pitch in' when needed is desirable, a certain amount of staff specialization is essential.

Establishing 40-hour workweeks to cover all areas of a shelter is difficult in itself; scheduling kennel and office staff to cover the work in a facility that provides seven-day-a-week care and accessibility is even more challenging. Creativity in rotating days off or offering a schedule of 10-hour days with four days on and three days off might entice employees to accept scheduling changes.

11.12 JOB DESCRIPTIONS (NOT INCLUDING ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS/FIELD STAFF)

Observations:
The HSUS team reviewed the job descriptions for each classification at SLOCAS, including the management positions. The job descriptions were comprehensive and in most cases accurately reflected the job duties observed by the team. Each description identified specific details for typical tasks, employment standards, education/experience, licenses/certifications, and conditions of employment. The job descriptions were created and maintained by the San Luis Obispo County human resources department.

The shelter coordinator job description paralleled an issue with the animal services manager position, discussed in section 10.3, in that it documented responsibilities of a dual role. The position entailed acting as a lead kennelworker as well as assisting with supervision of staff

and coordinating volunteers. During the site visit many employees also referred to the shelter coordinator as the "volunteer coordinator." The shelter coordinator position job description was defined as the following:

> *Under general supervision, acts as a lead worker in shelter operations including the intake, care, adoption and euthanasia of shelter animals; coordinates volunteers; administers medications, vaccinations, and microchips; conducts animal temperament assessments, facilitates the adoption of shelter animals; assists in the supervision of staff and volunteers assigned to the shelter; and does other work as required.*

The job descriptions documented the duties, responsibilities, and standards for all of the positions accurately with the exception of the leadership roles of the lead ACOs, shelter coordinator, and animal services manager.

Kennelworkers were seldom observed cleaning or performing maintenance duties in the Kennel and Cat Rooms. They also did not appear to directly supervise the activities of the inmates or volunteers. Kennelworkers spent much of their collective time on activities other than animal handling and care, such as data entry of incoming animals, tracing microchips, updating computer records, and other shelter-related paperwork. One staff member spent the majority of one day attempting to repair the crematorium.

The typical tasks section of the kennelworker job description stated "destroys and disposes of animals in accordance with prescribed procedures."

See section 9.4 for field services job descriptions. Also review sections 10.3, Stability and Leadership and 10.4, Infrastructure & Support Systems, for other recommendations pertinent to job descriptions.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Reclassify the animal shelter coordinator position to a supervisor, reporting to the animal services manager, in order to accurately reflect the tasked Kennel and Cat Room responsibilities.

- ✓ Do not allow unqualified kennelworkers to repair the large-scale, industrial crematorium, which may lead to significant injury or loss of life. Require the manufacturer of the new crematorium to make repairs as dictated by warranty. See section 6.4, Carcass Disposal for more in this subject.

- ✓ Edit the kennelworker job description to "euthanizes animals and disposes of carcasses in accordance with prescribed procedures." Refrain from utilizing language such as "destroy" with respect to animals.

11.13 STAFF UNIFORMS (NOT INCLUDING ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS/FIELD STAFF)

Observations:
Generally, the appearance of employees was professional. During the site visit the kennelworkers and humane educator wore uniforms with name tags and patches identifying them as San Luis Obispo County sheriff's department animal services employees. The clerical staff and management were appropriately dressed for a County business office environment.

Office staff did not wear name tags; however, there were small signs with their names on their desks. The animal services manger wore a sheriff's department animal services badge on his belt.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Require all non-uniformed staff to wear a name tag that also indicates their title.
- ✓ Develop a policy that specifically states the footwear, clothing and/or uniform staff must wear in each position. The policy should set personal appearance guidelines. The policy should include a section on uniform replacement and that worn out uniforms are to be returned to management for replacements. Management must strictly enforce the policy. The policy should be developed with the following in mind:
  - Health and safety of the employee and animals.
  - Professional appearance.
  - Consistency with SLOCAS' "look and feel."

Discussion:
A client's first impression of an organization is based upon their first contact with employees. A uniform clearly communicates to the public that someone is an employee of the organization. The employees who do not wear a uniform need to wear name tags, especially those employees working the client counter or front desk. Good client service, including appearance, needs to be a priority.

Adequate resources must be available so that employees can present themselves to the public in the most professional manner possible. A neat, practical uniform for kennelworkers, specifically designed for direct animal care work, enhances professionalism and helps improve public respect.

11.14 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Observations:
There was no employee handbook. The rules and expectations for employees were established in the negotiated memorandum of understanding between the County and the SLOCEA. The memorandum of understanding outlined detailed, specific expectations for

conduct and performance, including: work schedules, sick leave usage, uniforms, employee safety, and use of facilities.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create an employee handbook specifically outlining the rules and conduct expected at SLOCAS. This could be included in the draft Personnel Policy and Protocol Manual, coupled with the existing Memorandum of Understanding and would establish the rules, expectations, procedures, protocols, and policies for SLOCAS employees.

Discussion:
The absence of written policies, procedures, protocols, and expectations was the critical deficiency at SLOCAS. The draft Personnel Policy and Protocol Manual is the first step in establishing expectations and performance standards. The memorandum of understanding serves as a general guideline for employees. However, an employee handbook can provide specific rules, expectations, and policies for SLOCAS employees.

11.15 STAFF GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Observations:
The employment agreement between the County and the employee's association contained a grievance resolution procedure for each of the work units: clerical, public safety, trades and crafts, and supervisor. Section 49 B of the MOU with the SLOCEA covered the five steps to the grievance process:

> "1. Within 5 calendar days following the incident which caused or led to a problem, SLOCEA will apply to the Director of Personnel for relief.
>
> 2. The Director shall meet with SLOCEA and such other persons as deemed necessary in an attempt to resolve the problem.
>
> 3. Should SLOCEA be unable to obtain satisfactory relief, it may further appeal to the Board of Supervisors.
>
> 4. Within 10 calendar days after receipt of the decision of the Personnel Director, SLOCEA's written appeal shall be submitted to the County Administrative Officer for submission to the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors may hear the appeal or by resolution, board order, or ordinance, refer all grievances submitted to them to such other person or body as they deem necessary for hearing. The Board of Supervisors shall further determine whether or not the decision reached by such other person or body shall be final and binding or advisory in nature. The Board of Supervisors' decision shall be final and binding in all cases.
>
> 5. SLOCEA agrees that this Article gives it no rights under Civil Service Ordinance or Rules."

Employees and management were aware of the grievance process. Just prior to The HSUS

site visit, the employee association had filed a formal complaint with the personnel director on behalf of the employees of SLOCAS.

Recommendations:
None.

Discussion:
The grievance process is a subject of bargaining. The memorandum of understanding for the three bargaining units of San Luis Obispo County is the appropriate vehicle for establishing the process that is agreed to by the SLOCEA and the County.

11.2 STAFF TURNOVER

Observations:
At the time of The HSUS visit, all of the positions were filled except for one ACO position. There was a healthy mix of experienced employees and recently hired employees. The staffing history did not reveal any unusual trends in turnover. The main turnover that the SLOCAS experienced was in the Honor Farm inmate labor.

A number of employees had been with SLOCAS for ten or more years while others were just coming off of probation. One clerical position was eliminated from the budget in FY 06–07 when the division contracted out the licensing function.

The animal services manager told The HSUS team that he was directed to prepare a budget submission for the FY 08–09 budget that represented a 2.5% reduction that could include employee reductions.

Recommendations:
- ✓ The HSUS commends SLOCAS for retaining employees. SLOCAS is fortunate to have a stable workforce with low turnover.

Discussion:
It is common to have a high turnover rate among direct animal care staff and part-time employees of an animal shelter. Job satisfaction and employee stability increases when employees take pride in what they do and are included in some level of decision-making. Supervisors need to find as many ways as possible to let their employees know when they have done a good job and that their opinions matter. Having too few managers, too many responsibilities, and no priorities can cause confusion and affect staffing levels and stress.

Managers need to understand that among the most valuable assets that any animal sheltering organization has is a competent and committed workforce. While studies show that wages are not the primary motivator for an employee, failure to provide a competitive wage is a factor in turnover in even the most committed of staff teams. The cost of turnover goes well beyond the “hard” costs of training and retraining. It also often results in low morale, loss of “organizational memory,” frequent mistakes and general instability.

Dissatisfaction and stress create direct costs for organizations in terms of health care. If animal control or kennelworkers are overworked, they are likely to make more mistakes and be injured. Dissatisfaction also leads to absenteeism, which increases overtime for those staff that must take on an extra load. There are also productivity costs to turnover—if the people who leave are better performers than those who stay, productivity will be reduced.

11.3 HIRING/FIRING/DISIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Observations:
The sheriff was ultimately responsible for transfers, reassignments, termination, and disciplinary actions. The animal services manager was responsible for interviewing and selecting employees. The undersheriff and animal services manager interviewed the top three candidates and provided recommendations for each vacancy and then the final decision was made based on an interview with the sheriff.

As mentioned briefly in section 10.3, Stability and Leadership, The HSUS team was told that management did not have sufficient authority to correct employee performance problems. The team was told that there had been occasions when corrective actions taken by SLOCAS management were not supported by the sheriff or undersheriff.

The animal services manager had authority to issue a memorandum to employees in matters of performance and conduct. Formal personnel actions in excess of a memorandum required the approval of the sheriff or undersheriff. The steps for correcting performance or conduct were established in the memorandum of understanding between the County and the employee association.

The HSUS team was informed by several employees and volunteers about the lack of authority invested in the animal services manager.

Recommendations:
- ✓ Clarify the authority of the animal services manager position in personnel actions, including terminating and disciplinary decisions.

12.0 GENERAL FINANCIAL ISSUES

Observations:
As stated in section 9.1, General Overview, SLOCAS was a full service animal services organization that served all of the municipalities and unincorporated areas of San Luis Obispo County. The FY 07–08 adopted operating budget was $2,285,524. The budget was funded with a combination of program revenues from City contracts, dog license fees, shelter fees, adoption fees, and supplemented with County general fund support. Program revenue in the FY 07–08 adopted budget was $1,447,218 and General Fund support was $838,306.

FY 07–08 Funding	Amount	Percent
Program Revenues	$1,447,218	63.3%
General Fund Support	$838,306	36.6%
Total Budget	$2,285,524	100.0%

As discussed in section 9.0, Field Services/Animal Control, SLOCAS had service contracts with the seven cities of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and the unincorporated areas of San Luis Obispo County. Revenue from these seven contracts totaled $701,465 in the FY 07–08 budget. There was a financial goal to recover the total cost of providing service in the cities through their contracts. All of the contracts with the cities included an annual cost of living adjustment.

The majority of SLOCAS' operating budget was personnel costs. Employee salaries and benefits were $1,653,114, representing 72.3% of the total budget.

The SLOCAS operating budget was broken into six service programs, summarized below:

Service Program	Budget	FTE
Administration	$ 279,843	2.0
Animal Placement	$ 318,308	4.0
Enforcement	$ 930,407	9.0
Humane Education	$ 53,640	0.5
Licensing	$ 309,806	1.5
Sheltering/Euthanasia	$ 343,520	4.0
Total	$2,285,524	21.0

SLOCAS was a well-funded program that enjoyed a stable financial history. Over the past ten years SLOCAS' funding kept pace with annual inflation. Staffing levels had remained essentially flat for ten years. Each year they experienced a cost of living adjustment to the budget to maintain service levels. The 2.5% budget reduction plan for FY 08–09 signified that this was the first time in ten years that SLOCAS was faced with a constraint budget.

The cost for the County to provide animal services was $8.05 per capita. As a general rule, adequate funding of an animal care and control program costs approximately $4–$7 per citizen annually.

Financial policy was established by the County administrator and the County board of supervisors. The SLOCAS budget request was prepared by the animal services manager then submitted to the sheriff. The County administrator prepared the final budget request for SLOCAS and the County board of supervisors adopted the final budget.

Budget policy for SLOCAS was directed by the County administrator and County board of supervisors. The SAP enterprise database software aided in the management of this process because it provided detailed financial expenditure and revenue reports, as well as budget to actual reports.

SLOCAS did not actively solicit private, monetary donations. They had a volunteer trust account, which functioned as a separate, financial fund to receive private monetary donations. The account had been established to receive private donations in a restricted account that paid for veterinary medical services for animals.

All procurement, accounts receivable, and accounts payable for SLOCAS were the responsibility of the senior accounts clerk and the administrative services officer.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create a plan to solicit private donations and pursue private grants to help supplement SLOCAS programs.

- ✓ Develop a wish list of select items that can be utilized for direct animal care. Solicit volunteers and community groups to spearhead campaigns to collect food, bedding, or other essential items.

Discussion:

San Luis Obispo County appeared to have a relatively stable financial environment over the past ten years, and SLOCAS had been funded at a level to sustain a consistent service level. The financial policy challenge facing San Luis Obispo County government will be making a commitment to increase funding for enhanced animal care services at the shelter.

Photo 1

Photo 2

Photo 3

Photo 4

Photo 5

Photo 6

Photo 7

Photo 8

Photo 9

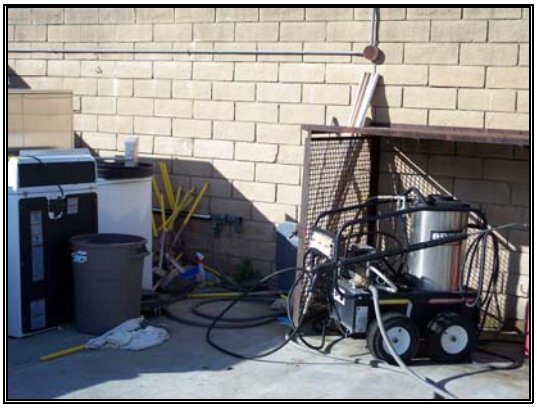


Photo 10

Photo 11

Photo 12

Photo 13

Photo 14

Photo 15

Photo 16

Photo 17

Photo 18

Photo 19

Photo 20

Photo 21

Photo 22

Photo 23

Photo 24

Photo 25

Photo 26

Photo 27

Photo 28

Photo 29

Photo 30

Photo 31

Photo 32

Photo 33

Photo 34

Photo 35

Photo 36

Photo 37

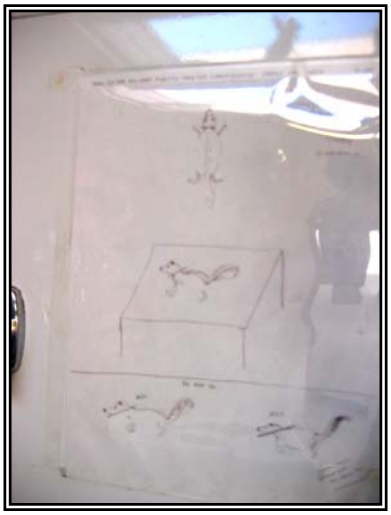
Photo 38

Photo 39

Photo 40

Photo 41

Photo 42



The HSUS is the nation’s largest animal protection organization with more than ten million members and constituents. The HSUS is a mainstream voice for animals, with active programs in companion animals, wildlife and habitat protection, animals in research, and farm animals. Our mission is to celebrate animals and confront cruelty. The HSUS protects all animals through legislation, litigation, investigation, education, advocacy and field work. A non-profit organization, The HSUS celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2004, is based in Washington, D.C. and has regional representatives across the country.