

CITY OF DELANO – ANIMAL CONTROL SHELTER

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

On October 16, 2007, members of the Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2007-2008 Kern County Grand Jury visited the City of Delano Animal Control Shelter (Shelter) to inquire into the operations of the Shelter, pursuant to Penal Code Section 925a.

PROCESS:

Members of the Committee met with the Police Chief, the Police Commander responsible for overseeing the operations of the Shelter, and two of the three Shelter employees. In addition, two citizen volunteers were interviewed. In preparation for the meeting, the Committee reviewed the past five years of Kern County Grand Jury final reports, internet information, and newspaper articles relating to the City. In reviewing the previous final reports, it was determined that no Grand Jury report had been made on the Shelter in at least the past five years.

BACKGROUND:

The Shelter, located at 1300 West Cecil Avenue, Delano, CA 93215, is under the control of the Police Department. The City has had its own animal control services since at least 1975. The present building and kennels were constructed at least ten to 15 years ago. The area covered by animal control is approximately 11 square miles, the area within the boundaries of the City. The normal business hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. During non-business hours, the Police Department responds to emergency calls for animal control services, using the animal control impound vehicle if necessary.

FINDINGS:

1. The staff of the Shelter consists of two Animal Control Officers and one Pound Master. In addition, on Thursday of each week, trustee inmates from the Delano Community Correctional Facility, which is managed by the Police Department, assist in heavy cleaning at the Shelter.
2. A policy and procedures manual for cleaning and feeding is in place, however, there are no other policies or procedures currently addressed. The provisions of the Hayden Bill (SB 1785) address issues of veterinary care, nutrition, shelter, exercise, water, and humane treatment of impounded animals, as well as

- minimum length of impoundment, among other things. These are items which could be included in the policy and procedures manual.
3. Veterinary services, as necessary, are provided on a fee-for-service basis by two local veterinarians.
 4. The Animal Control Officers carry no firearms while patrolling or responding to calls in the animal control impound vehicles, although tranquilizer guns are available. Calls for service are dispatched through the police dispatcher. Assistance is available through the Police Department, if necessary. The most prevalent citations issued are for leash law and licensing violations, as well as lack of proof of rabies vaccination.
 5. Kennels are of adequate size for multiple animals. The inside kennels are covered and have fans for cooling. Misters are planned to be installed before it becomes hot in 2008. The concrete floors have multiple cracks, making it difficult to assure cleanliness. Kennels are cleaned twice daily. A power washer is used for cleaning, with bleach and Parvosol utilized to minimize the risk of infections. Food is left in the kennels at all times, except during cleaning.
 6. There is a storage building at the Shelter with a washer and dryer for cleaning animal bedding. The grounds surrounding the Shelter are basically barren, with no grass and only minimal trees. The soil was described as being alkaline, making it difficult to grow grass.
 7. Approximately 60 animals are impounded per month. The shelter has 23 inside dog kennels, nine outside dog kennels, and two portable dog kennels. There are also five cat enclosures. There are separate kennels for sick or injured dogs and cats, separated from the other kennels. Impounded animals are vaccinated for common diseases.
 8. Upon being impounded, animals are checked for licenses or other identifying information, and they are scanned for microchips with a universal scanner. If an impounded animal's owner can be identified, contact is attempted by telephone or through a registered letter. Notices are also published on the following two web sites: "www.petfinder.com" and "www.dogsindanger.com."
 9. Impound logs are maintained on paper files, with records for all but the current year filed at the Police Department. Impounded animals are kept for four to seven business days, with "adoptable" animals kept as long as space permits. Staff works with 25 to 30 rescue organizations, basically "Anybody we can," per the Animal Control Officer.
 10. Prior to adoption, all dogs are recommended to be spayed or neutered, with decreased licensing fees for those that are spayed or neutered. Dogs are given "hands on" temperament safety testing prior to being made available for adoption.

11. Animals which are not considered adoptable, or which are not adopted or accepted by a rescue organization, are euthanized onsite at the Shelter by the Animal Control Officers, who have been certified to do so, or by a private veterinarian. Euthanasia drugs are kept in a safe at the Police Department, with a drug log also maintained there. The euthanization rate of impounded animals is approximately 40%, lower than some other shelters in the county.
12. No other cities utilize the services of the Shelter.
13. The Police Chief provided an informational pamphlet on the Shelter, prepared in advance of the Committee's visit, including multiple photographs depicting improvements made to the Shelter in 2007 and listing future goals for improvement.
14. It is noted that prior to the visit to the Shelter by the Committee members, it was a lengthy process to locate the Shelter's web site, through the City's web site (www.CityofDelano.org). When this was mentioned to the Police Chief, he spoke to an information technology staff member at City Hall, while the Committee members were there. By the next day, a Quick Link for Animal Control had been added to the City's web site.

COMMENTS:

The Police Chief stated that the shortage of funding for improvements at the Shelter is a challenge. He noted that they are seeking approval for a new shelter in the next budget year. In the interim, he stated that they depend on all of the volunteer assistance they can get, adding that additional volunteers are needed and welcome. The Chief is to be commended for the results of his efforts during 2007.

In speaking with the two citizen volunteers, they basically praised the improvements that the Police Chief had been able to make to the Shelter during the past year. They reiterated that additional volunteer assistance is needed to help supplement the shortfall of funding for Shelter projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Delano Police Department should take immediate steps to complete the policy and procedures manual to encompass the appropriate provisions of the Hayden Bill. (Refer to Finding 2.)
2. The concrete floors within the kennels of the Shelter should be sealed to help to ensure cleanliness, if the construction of a new Shelter is not approved in the new City budget. (Refer to Finding 5.)
3. Every effort should be made to obtain sufficient funds from the City to provide some landscaping on the barren grounds around the Shelter, to assist in cooling

the area, if the construction of a new Shelter is not approved in the new City budget. (Refer to Finding 6.)

The City of Delano Police Department should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

Note: Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed through the Kern County Library system and on the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS TO:

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, 2ND FLOOR
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**cc: FOREMAN
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**