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# MEMORANDUM

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Date: March 15, 2017

To: The Honorable Chair and Members  
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry  
County Administrator 

Re: **Pima Animal Care Center Report on a Recent Incident in the Town of Sahuarita**

The *Green Valley News* reported on a recent situation in the Town of Sahuarita involving an aggressive dog and two separate attacks on other dogs. The attached memorandum summarizes the facts of the incident and the response provided by the Pima Animal Care Center (PACC).

The memorandum also explains the general protocol used by PACC when responding to complaints and delineates, more specifically, the requirements governing the response included in the Sahuarita Municipal Code.

Following the incident, PACC reviewed its operating procedures and protocols to identify areas in which processes could and should be improved. The memorandum discusses the actions PACC has taken to prevent incidents of this nature in the future.

- Field Officers will now issue a notice at the victim's residence if the victim is not available at the time of response;
- PACC staff will work with local law enforcement agencies to clarify the need for victims to contact PACC directly after an incident;
- A meeting will be held at the start of each shift to ensure communication between staff about needed investigators and follow up.
- In addition, PACC is reviewing current staffing patterns of enforcement personnel to improve response times and increase responsiveness.

PACC deeply regrets the unfortunate incident and will continue to work with staff and local law enforcement to improve response to incidents involving reported dog bites and attacks.

CHH/mjk

Attachment

c: Jan Leshar, Chief Deputy County Administrator  
Dr. Francisco Garcia, Assistant County Administrator

Date: 14 March 2017

To: Chuck Huckelberry  
County Administrator

From: Francisco Garcia   
Assistant County Administrator

Via: Jan Leshner   
Chief Deputy County Administrator

Re: Pima Animal Care Center Response to Aggressive Dog Attacks

This memorandum summarizes the recent aggressive dog incident in the Town of Sahuarita as well as the response by the Pima Animal Care Center (PACC) to that event.

***Facts of the incident and response from PACC:***

On February 17, 2017 at approximately 1111 hours, PACC Dispatch received a report from Sahuarita Police Department (SPD) that a loose dog was attacking multiple other dogs. SPD reported that it had an officer responding to the area. SPD did not advise of any other victims or advise of seeing the incident that occurred.

At approximately 1140 hours, SPD called again to advise the dog had been contained at the residence of the owner.

At approximately 1142 hours PACC Field Services Officer Daniel Robledo arrived on scene. While on scene, he impounded the alleged attacking dog. Officer Robledo left a notice at the residence where the dog was confined advising that the dog had been (impounded) removed from the premises and transported to our facility. SPD provided contact information for KM, the owner of the dog that was attacked. SPD advised that KM had taken her dog to a veterinary office to have its injuries treated.

At approximately 1437 hours PACC Field Services Supervisor Kelli Baugus attempted contact with KM using the telephone number provided by SPD but was advised that the telephone number utilized did not belong to KM. No further efforts were made to contact the victim.

The impounded dog was released February 17, 2017 to the owner YG since PACC did not have the victim statement needed to continue to maintain the impound of the dog. Sahuarita Municipal Code 6.35.020 permits an animal to be impounded when "a peace officer or a Pima County animal care officer or other designated enforcement agent *has issued a citation* for a violation of this chapter or of the Arizona Revised Statutes, and reasonably believes that the violation will continue. . ." (Emphasis added). PACC did not make any further attempts to contact KM because the complaint was closed, erroneously.

On February 21, 2017 at approximately 1705 hours PACC Dispatch received another report of a loose dog attacking a dog subsequently determined to be the same address as the previous complaint.

At approximately 1723 hours PACC Field Services Investigator Tiffany Foster and Field Services Officer Trainee Tony Allen were dispatched.

At approximately 1753 hours Investigator Foster and Trainee Allen arrived on scene and determined the following:

At 1620 hours a female juvenile was going door to door with her dog fundraising for a charity. When the door was opened, the dog from the complaint on February 17 escaped the house and attacked the dog accompanying the girl. Investigator Foster conducted further investigation that included speaking with KM the owner of the attacking dog. Investigator Foster issued citations for both the February 17 and 21 incidents and the dog was deemed to be dangerous per ordinance.

The attacking dog was surrendered by her owners and was subsequently euthanized by PACC staff.

***PACC protocol for response to dog/dog attacks:***

The Pima Animal Care Center responds to complaints based on a priority assignment. Priority determination is based principally on the information provided to dispatch at the time of the call. When a PACC enforcement officer responds to a complaint of an aggressive dog, the protocol is to conduct an investigation. In some cases, law enforcement has arrived prior to PACC and has conducted a portion of the investigation. Officers obtain needed information from the law enforcement agency to continue the investigation. If the victim/complainant is available, the officer will meet with that individual to obtain further information. This information is critical to determine whether a citation is issued, whether impoundment is appropriate, and whether a dangerous dog assessment should be completed. Without the assistance and cooperation from the victim/complainant PACC cannot responsibly move forward with the complaint.

Per Sahuarita Municipal Code 6.25.020, "whenever a person is charged with a violation of this chapter, or whenever the town enforcement agent has reason to believe an animal may be dangerous, an evaluation of the animal shall be conducted". A dangerous animal includes animals declared to be vicious which is defined as "any animal that has a disposition or tendency to bite, attempt to bite, endanger or otherwise injure human beings or other animals". If a dog is deemed dangerous after an assessment and hearing, the owner of the animal has to comply with the following restrictions: 1) confine the animal to include multiple restrictions to the base, height, gates needing to be locked; 2) muzzle the animal when outside the confinement; 3) post signs at every gate of the confinement; 4) obtain liability insurance of no less than \$250,000; 5) have their animal tattooed; and 6) the animal is required to be spayed or neutered.

PACC enforcement officers rely on statements from victims and witnesses to determine our legal authority to issue citations, impound a dog, issue a bond to seize a dog, and/or to establish cause for a dangerous dog assessment. Victims have up to one year from the date of the incident for citations to be issued. As a matter of internal policy, PACC is not the complainant unless an officer personally witnesses the incident and observes the violation. This is considered a best practice in law-enforcement.

***Identified areas of process breakdown:***

The officer who responded to the incident on February 17 received incorrect contact information for the victim of the attack. This error prevented his supervisor from contacting the victim at the time of follow up and when the attacking dog's owner presented at PACC to redeem the pet.

When the attacking dog was returned to its owner, the supervisor did not update the activity notes to indicate

that further follow up by an officer or investigator was necessary. This prevented situational awareness on the part of team and in turn resulted in no further follow-up with the owner of the dog that had been attacked.

The communication failure was compounded by the fact that on a day-to-day basis officers may serve entirely different geographic areas depending on staffing and scheduling needs. Finally, given Sahuarita's low call volume, there are days that PACC officers are not in that jurisdiction simply because there are not complaints, priority calls, follow-ups, or other events to be attended.

The Sahuarita Sun article reports that the victim of the original attack was not aware of the need to speak with an officer from PACC since the incident was reported to Sahuarita Police Department. This misunderstanding or miscommunication may have resulted in this victim not contacting PACC for follow-up.

***How PACC is utilizing existing resources to prevent further incidents of this nature:***

Field Officers will now be directed to issue a notice at the residence of the victim if the victim is not available at the time of the response.

In the next few weeks, Field Services Manager, Adam J. Ricci, will contact all local law enforcement agencies to clarify the need for victims to contact PACC directly after an incident. Ricci will create victim cards to be provided to local law enforcement advising the victim as to the process of incidents with dog bites and attacks.

PACC leadership is reviewing current patterns of staffing and patrol and considering the assignment of an officer to specific geographic areas in order to improve response times and to increase responsiveness to the needs of the area and/or jurisdiction.

Field Services will be implementing a Roll Call period at the start of each shift. This Roll Call will allow communication between the supervisor and their staff about needed investigations, follow up, and directed patrols. This will also present an opportunity for officers to ask questions of their supervisors in regard to their in-field experiences and will allow for clarification of policies, processes and department direction. Adam will communicate to jurisdiction representatives on potentially high profile incidents.

We are reassessing our enforcement officer coverage needs to meet the needs of all our jurisdictional partners. Additional officers and supervisory staff may be helpful to improve response times for critical events.

***Conclusion***

PACC is continuously reviewing its process by using available data to inform the way we deliver services. We will continue to review Field Services (enforcement) data to identify performance and quality metrics that can be reported to the jurisdictions, PACCAC and other stakeholders.

We deeply regret the unfortunate incident that occurred in Sahuarita. We are using this sad occurrence to refine and improve our processes for working with law enforcement and becoming more victim centered in our response to incidents involving reported dog bites and attacks.

Cc: Teri Bankhead, Assistant to the Town Manager, Town of Sahuarita  
Jose Ocano, PACC Operations Director  
Adam Ricci, Field Enforcement Manager  
Barry Gillaspie, Chairman, PACCAC