



MEMORANDUM

Date: July 30, 2013

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

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.H. Huckelberry", is written over the typed name and title.

Re: **Collaborative Efforts to Reduce Animal Overpopulation in Pima County**

In the past year, Pima Animal Care Center (PACC) has been making steady strides in keeping our community safe and protecting pets from abuse and cruelty, while saving more of the community's cats and dogs that come to the shelter for placement.

Despite persistent improvement, the staff at PACC recognizes they cannot do it alone. A community effort is necessary to stop the flood of unwanted animals needing shelter and placement. To that end, Pima County is a partner in a unique coalition designed to use a collaborative approach to positively impact the welfare of animals within our community. This memorandum outlines the progress being made by PACC, as well as introduces to the Board of Supervisors the County's participation in the newly-formed Pima Alliance for Animal Welfare (PAAW).

PACC has been working diligently to make the improvements it can, independent of its work with the coalition. The facility's live release rate, which is a measure of animals adopted or rescued by community partners, as well as lost pets returned to owners, rose to 64 percent in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012/13. This compares to 55 percent in the previous fiscal year.

Numerically, PACC surpassed 12,000 saved animals in the fiscal year ending June 30, which topped the previous record of 11,000. Conversely, when owner-requested euthanasia is subtracted, the numbers of animals euthanized decreased from more than 9,400 in FY 2011/12 to approximately 7,000 last year. Although PACC has set a higher goal for the current fiscal year, immediate challenges arose within days. Two weeks into the new fiscal year, PACC cared for nearly 1,040 animals that had been turned in for sheltering.

By law, as an open admissions shelter, PACC accepts all homeless, unwanted, abandoned and lost pets free of charge. The facility also accepts every pet that comes to the door, regardless of medical condition or temperament. Last fiscal year, PACC took in more than 24,500 live animals. By comparison, the other large sheltering entity in Pima County, the Humane Society of Southern Arizona, handled more than 9,000.

Some staffing changes have helped PACC respond to this ongoing challenge. A new volunteer coordinator has increased the volunteer base from approximately 65 to more than 300. Given the center's relatively remote location, a new adoptions coordinator has placed a heavy focus on getting more animals to offsite adoption locations. Thus, people who may never otherwise visit a shelter can still encounter pets where they live and shop. The shelter's rescue coordinator also ensures rescue groups are given notice when there is a dire need to intervene on behalf of an animal with medical or behavioral needs.

Ultimately, making our region a safer place for companion animals will require effort from the community in its entirety. Recognizing the need for improvement, animal advocates and shelter leaders agreed to discuss ways to work cooperatively to reduce the number of animals coming into the shelters, to help those already in the shelter find a second chance at having a loving home, and to provide support to current pet owners.

Last fall, Pima County invited other entities to come together to discuss ways to make this happen. The Humane Society of Southern Arizona responded, as did representatives of numerous rescue groups. Also participating were representatives from the veterinary community, as well as from other stakeholders, including Tucson Electric Power/UNS Energy Corporation, the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona and others passionate about animals.

At the close of the initial PAAW meeting in November 2012, a steering committee was appointed and charged with defining, implementing and monitoring strategies that will improve animal welfare in Pima County. Steering committee members include:

- Barbara Brown, Chairperson, Community Foundation for Southern Arizona
- Melissa Dulaney, Vice-chairperson, UNS Energy Corporation
- Ann-Eve Cunningham, National Institute for Civil Discourse
- Dr. Scott Ruth, Veterinarian
- Tammi Barrick, Animal Welfare Alliance of Southern Arizona
- Maureen O'Neil, Humane Society of Southern Arizona
- Kim Janes, Manager, Pima Animal Care Center

The steering committee, which met monthly through the winter and spring, adopted a mission to engage all Pima County residents, agencies, and organizations in aggressive adoption and spay/neuter efforts, responsible breeding, and conscientious pet ownership to ensure all companion animals have a loving home and humane care. It also adopted three primary goals:

1. Eliminate the need for animal sheltering;
2. Provide hope for animals while in the shelter; and
3. Ensure to the degree possible, that animals, once rehomed, remain there by helping owners with resources; whether through pet food banks, reduced-cost medical care, or simply providing a list of pet-friendly landlords when owners must move.

Already, the group has met with some success.

The coalition conducted a competitive process to secure a team of students from The University of Arizona Eller College of Management to assist with analyzing shelter data to help identify strategic solutions to save more lives. Group members distributed a survey to the veterinarian community, seeking feedback about whether there is more capacity for increased spay/neuter surgeries if additional funding could be identified. Through the work of this committee, Pima County is one of only 10 communities in the country approved for consulting assistance from Humane Network in a project funded by Best Friends Animal Society to expand lifesaving efforts.

The larger group reconvened July 11, 2013 and broke into subcommittees to work on several specific, key issues:

- identifying additional resources to help owners keep their pets when challenges arise post-adoption;
- increasing spay/neuter efforts;
- providing additional assistance for medically vulnerable animals; and
- promoting pet adoptions.

Although this model is unique nationally, Pima County has a history of working collaboratively with other community partners to improve services; from the behavioral health system to the work being done at The University of Arizona Medical Center – South Campus to our work with private entities running many of our premiere tourist draws. While Pima County has provided staffing to support the PAAW effort, there are also other ways the County can support this group, including our ongoing efforts to secure more resources for low to no-cost spay/neuter services.

When the County increased the animal licensing fee several years ago from \$12 to \$15, the County dedicated the \$3 increase to the spay/neuter program. Combined with other donations we have collected from the community, we have been able to invest \$220,000 in spay/neuter programs in recent years. This investment means that nearly 173,000 potentially unwanted and homeless animals will not be born.

The Honorable Chairman and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
Re: **Collaborative Efforts to Reduce Animal Overpopulation in Pima County**
July 30, 2013
Page 4

We are encouraging other jurisdictions to dedicate their licensing increase revenue to spay/neuter surgeries as well; since spay/neuter, along with education, are the only proven ways to reduce animal overpopulation.

Ultimately, addressing the problems associated with unwanted and stray animals will require a different, more proactive path forward; and the formation of PAAW is a very positive step toward improving animal welfare. I will share more information with the Board as the work of PAAW progresses.

CHH/dph

c: Jan Leshar, Deputy County Administrator for Medical and Health Services
Dr. Francisco Garcia, Director, Health Department
Kim Janes, Manager, Pima County Animal Care Center