



MEMORANDUM

Date: June 19, 2015

To: The Honorable Chair 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: **Pima Animal Care Center Overcrowding**

The recent significant overcrowding at Pima Animal Care Center (PACC) caused staff to take the necessary step of waiving adoption fees to manage the pet shelter population. Questions occasionally are raised regarding this practice of waiving fees; and earlier this week, Marana Town Manager Gilbert Davidson expressed concern about the potential loss of revenue. It is important to remember that the waiving of fees is done to maintain a healthy, humane and cost effective operation.

This fiscal year to date, the cost to care for each pet is averaging just over \$177 based on an average length of stay of just under 12 days, at an average per day cost of \$15. The average adoption fee is \$30. The result is a savings of \$147 per animal. Obviously, the expense to shelter a pet is great; and any efforts to limit the number of days a pet is at PACC – even if it means adoption fees are waived – is a financial and operational benefit to PACC and to all the jurisdictions that support its operation.

It is important to note that, unlike other shelters and organizations that restrict intake to manage their pet population, PACC must continue to take in pets; often to prevent abandonment, neglect and abuse. This means the pet population at PACC will periodically reach numbers that are simply too high for its current physical and operational capacity.

Not mitigating crowded conditions comes with additional challenges and expenses that include:

- Multiple dogs to a kennel makes feeding and cleaning more difficult and takes more time;
- Multiple dogs to a kennel increases fight risk, which can lead to medical costs; and
- Spread of disease is harder to contain, which can lead to increased medical costs.

In order to offset these challenges, PACC must, at times, take aggressive steps to find homes for the pets in its care.

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One of the tools used successfully across the nation is the waiver of adoption fees. The application of this best practice is humane and cost effective, in light of the costs of either housing or euthanizing an animal.

As intake numbers begin to increase, or as known seasonal periods with historically higher intake periods – such as summer and certain holidays – approach, PACC shelter management staff evaluates all possible strategies to manage the animal population, which may include the reduction or waiver of fees.

CHH/mjk

c: Jan Leshar, Deputy County Administrator for Medical and Health Services
Dr. Francisco Garcia, Director, Health Department