



Municipality of Anchorage
Animal Care and Control Services
Strategic Plan
January 27, 2006



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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mike Walsh
Animal Control Advisory Board Member, Committee Chair

Don Daniels
Animal Control Advisory Board Member

Katie Nolan
Animal Control Advisory Board Member

Peg Banks, President
Friends of Pets

Myra Wilson, DVM
Animal Care and Control Center Manager

Heather Wheeler, Deputy Director
Municipality of Anchorage
Department of Health and Human Services

DeeAnn Fetko, Contract Administrator
Municipality of Anchorage
Department of Health and Human Services

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The mission of the Anchorage Animal Care and Control Program is to protect people and pets in our community through enforcement of animal laws, encouraging responsible pet ownership, and promoting animal welfare.



Animal Care and Control Services are contracted by the Municipality of Anchorage through a request for proposals. The Department of Health and Human Services writes and administers the contract that results from this purchasing process. Generally, the contract is written for a one year period with four option years to renew. Animal Licensing and Placement Services was the successful proposer for year 2006 services. The organization is a subsidiary of Doyon Universal Services, LLC and has managed the program since April of 1999.

The Animal Care and Control Program provides for enforcement of domestic animal laws throughout the municipality. Services are provided from Eklutna to Girdwood and in accordance with Title 17 (Animals) of the Anchorage Municipal Code. In addition to enforcement, the program oversees the health and well being of animals brought to the Animal Care and Control Center by enforcement staff and the general public. Animals are provided general health checks, vaccinations, and kind handling while at the shelter. Customer services support animal adoptions, returning lost animals to their owners, fee collection, pet licensing, and general assistance to the public. The contractor is also responsible for keeping the kennel areas of the center in clean and sanitary condition. Volunteers are recruited and managed by the contractor to assist with adoptions, exercising pets, grooming animals, uploading pictures on the municipal website, and other supportive tasks.

The Municipality contracts separately with VCA Animal Hospitals for spay/neuter surgeries and microchip implants for adopted dogs and cats. Adopters pay for these services in full at the time they adopt a pet. VCA picks up adopted pets from the Animal Care and Control Center, completes the surgeries, and releases the animals to their new owners. VCA has provided these services since January of 2003 when the spay/neuter and microchip prior to adoption program began.

Municipal Property and Facility Management, in coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services, provides for maintenance, capital improvements, janitorial services, snow removal, and utilities at the Animal Care and Control Facility. Street maintenance performs grounds keeping and horticultural services as needed.

Established by municipal code, the Animal Control Advisory Board is charged with advising the Mayor and Assembly on all matters pertaining to animal control within the Municipality of Anchorage. The nine member board holds monthly meetings to take public comment, discuss matters, and make recommendations to the city on animal care and control issues. The Chief Animal Control Officer and the Animal Control Contractor serve as technical advisors to the board. Most recently, the board has been working on issues related to the keeping of large domestic animals, public education, off-leash dog areas, and strategic planning.

In addition to working with the Animal Control Advisory Board, the Animal Care and Control Program partners with various groups to foster its mission. Non-profit organizations such as Friends of Pets, the Alaska Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), Canine and Kitty Connection, and other groups provide essential rescue services for animals with special medical and/or behavioral needs and those that may otherwise be euthanized. These organizations work to find permanent homes for rescued animals and some provide low cost coupons or services to pet owners to encourage spaying and neutering, vaccinating, and identifying pets to their owners.

Relevant Statistics

Population

	1996	2000	2004
Human Population in Anchorage	254,269	260,283	277,498 ³
Dog Population in Anchorage	52,700 ¹	62,866 ²	65,878 ⁴
Cat Population in Anchorage	36,300 ¹	67,701 ²	70,945 ⁴

Note: There are also many horses, birds, reptiles, pocket pets, and other domestic animals in the Municipality of Anchorage that are handled by animal care and control services.

Animal Care and Control Center

	1990	1995	2000	2005
Requests for Enforcement Services	11,684	12,953	10,180	9,563
Enforcement Miles Driven	99,965	110,943	109,840	89,921
Animal Bites Received	644	598	621	612
Dogs Licensed	4,536	11,451	7,050	15,995
Live Animals Received	10,754	7,925	9,047	8,848
Animals Adopted	2,505	2,960	3,494	3,722
Animals Claimed by Owners	2,038	1,604	1,691	1,501
Animals Euthanized	6,039	2,709	2,717	3,046
Enforcement Staffing Level	7	8	10.5	10.5
Center Staffing Level	10	11	14.5	14.0
Volunteer Hours	*	*	8,507	13,614

* Information not recorded

^{1, 2, 3, 4} See references on page 14

Strategic Plan Background

The Animal Care and Control Services strategic planning process employed by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Animal Control Advisory Board was prompted due to societal changes regarding animal welfare, increasing human and animal populations, and varying requests for change from groups and individuals. It is important to evaluate these changing environmental factors and provide clear direction for Animal Care and Control Services to meet associated service demands. A strategic planning process was implemented to assess environmental impacts, determine the importance of various care and control programs, establish where resources are most appropriately utilized, and set goals for the next three to five years.



The Animal Control Advisory Board established a strategic planning committee to embark on the planning project. At the onset of the project, the committee sent an open ended questionnaire to all Animal Care and Control Services partners and stakeholders. These included over 130 organizations ranging from law enforcement agencies to animal welfare groups to community councils. Questions focused on four main service areas including enforcement, animal care, public education, and the Animal Care and Control Facility. Thoughtful and detailed responses to the questionnaire provided the committee with valuable insight. This information guided the development of a community-wide survey. Once a public survey was drafted, the survey was piloted and then revised for clarification and condensing. A media release was then issued to inform the public about the survey and request their input which was well received. Over 600 interested individuals responded to the on-line survey posted on the municipal website.



Information received from the public, partners, and stakeholders was paramount in the development of this report. The plan was reviewed and unanimously recommended for adoption by the Animal Control Advisory Board on January 26, 2006.

The committee resolved to conduct the planning project at a very low cost and accomplished this goal by utilizing the city contract already in place for performing on-line surveys. The only other cost included minimal postage for partner surveys.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The strategic planning committee recognizes the on-line public survey was not a scientific study. However, the information gained through the survey is relevant due to the overwhelming number of responses received. Results of the survey were utilized in the findings below.

General

Overall, the public finds the Animal Care and Control Program to be well managed.

Enforcement

The public believes more animal control enforcement is needed. 58% responded positively to increasing enforcement of animal control laws. When asked if they



support adding to the number of Animal Control Officers on patrol, 77% responded affirmatively. In 1999, the National Animal Control Association (NACA) conducted a comprehensive review of the Anchorage Animal Care and Control Center. The review demonstrated a need for additional officers. Based on service area (Eklutna to Girdwood) and the number of calls for service, the NACA report called for approximately seventeen Animal

Control Officers. This is more than double the current amount of seven officers. Hiring one new enforcement officer every year over the next five years is recommended.

Animal cruelty received attention as the most important animal control enforcement issue in the municipality. 89% responded to animal cruelty as being very significant or somewhat significant in the municipality. Other animal issues highly rated in terms of significance included dog bites and animal attacks at 86%, and loose dogs at 84%. Based on this information, the committee recommends continuing to train at least two animal control officers through the National Animal Cruelty Investigation School as well as training at least two Anchorage Police Department officers in animal cruelty investigation techniques. Additionally, development of animal cruelty case tracking methods, memorandums of understanding between Animal Care and Control and law enforcement agencies, and educational materials for the Municipal Prosecutor's Office are advised. Bites, attacks, and loose animal issues should be addressed through enhanced enforcement and public education campaigns.

There is great support for microchipping animals as a means of identification (94% responded affirmatively). However, mandatory microchipping of domestic animals was not advised (just over 50% supported a mandatory program). The committee recommends continuance of the microchip prior to adoption program as well as enhancing public education efforts on the benefits of microchipping pets.

A majority support cat licensing (57%). While the committee would like to see cat licensing required, it would necessitate a revision to the current animal control code. The Animal Control Advisory Board recommended cat licensing in 2002, however, the issue was controversial and did not pass at the Assembly level. Although a code revision is not recommended at this time, public opinion should be monitored for potential implementation in the future.



The public overwhelmingly supports the concept of dog parks (83%) even though the majority of respondents didn't utilize the current designated areas (60%). The committee recommends municipal support to install signage at the 5 current off-leash dog areas, address parking issues at select sites, and complete and implement the operations plan for all the off-leash areas.

Animal Services

A majority supported some form of fee discounts to rescue groups (81%). Based on this finding, it is recommended that adoption fee discounts be provided to approved animal rescue organizations when the shelter requests their assistance.



An on-site spay/neuter clinic is favored (supported by 69%) as well as an increase in minor veterinary services (supported by 85%) at the Animal Care and Control Center. However, the committee found these services would require a major restructuring of the building and the substantial capital outlay required is not economically feasible. Additionally, these services are already adequately provided in the community by private businesses and non-profit agencies. The committee would like to see a community donation fund established to pay for medical services at veterinary clinics for injured and/or homeless pets.

Public Education

Most respondents (54%) found public outreach should be enhanced. At the same time, 60% of respondents reported they were in contact with Animal Care and Control Services at least annually through community event participation. The data shows the public education program is an effective way of contacting the general public, yet requires expansion. The committee encourages an increase in public education. Since the majority of enforcement requests for service involve loose animals and barking dogs, the public education program should concentrate on addressing these issues. Additional focus should be on the following topics: responsible pet ownership, spaying and neutering animals, humane care of animals, and available Animal Care and Control Services.

The public found the current hours of operation at the Animal Care and Control Center to be adequate (74%) and supported closing a few days per year for staff training (85%). The committee endorses closing the shelter a few days per year for training when necessary. Advance notice to the public should be well publicized.

Animal Care and Control Building

Citizens backed building additions to the Animal Care and Control Center to increase the housing space for cats (64%) and dogs (67%). The survey suggested citizens are willing to support such increases through a combination of public



funding and user fees. The committee understands the public desire to make housing available for more animals especially since the number of animals in the Municipality of Anchorage is expected to increase with population growth. Additional impacts from the Mat-Su Valley and military bases are anticipated. Historical data shows

approximately 180 animals per year are euthanized due to limited space at Animal Care and Control. When reviewing this information, the committee considered whether a bigger shelter should be built to house more animals or efforts should be focused on preventing animals from ending up at the shelter. The committee concluded greater emphasis and associated funding should be placed on minimizing the number of animals coming into the shelter, increasing the number of animals leaving the shelter, and decreasing the time animals remain at the shelter. This should be accomplished by increasing adoption counseling, working with rescue groups (decreased fees and increased communication), increasing public education, and increasing the volunteer program.

GOALS

Based on findings and historical information, goals were developed for the Animal Care and Control Program to attain the next three to five years. Each goal includes associated objectives, strategies, and a date for implementation.

<u>Goals, Objectives, and Strategies</u>	<u>Timeline for Implementation</u>
<u>Goal 1: Increase Animal Control Enforcement Capabilities</u>	
Objective 1.1: Respond to calls for service the day they are received	
Strategy: Increase funding for enforcement officers and support services (fund one new officer per year for 5 years)	2007-2011
Objective 1.2: Provide ongoing proactive patrols for loose animals	
Strategy: Increase funding for enforcement officers and support services (fund one new officer per year for 5 years)	2007-2011
Objective 1.3: Reinstate 24 hour emergency response service level	
Strategy: Provide funding to reinstate on-call emergency response	2008
Objective 1.4: Increase percentage of animal cruelty cases investigated and brought to trial	
Strategy: Provide training for two APD officers in animal cruelty investigations	2007
Strategy: Institute a method of tracking cases, investigations, and outcomes	2008
Strategy: Incorporate requirement to have two animal control officers trained in animal cruelty investigations into contract	2008
Strategy: Develop a memorandum of understanding with the Anchorage Police Department and the Alaska State Troopers regarding agency roles in animal cruelty investigations	2008
Strategy: Provide educational materials for the Municipal Prosecutor's Office	2009

Objective 1.5: Enhance use of technology to better serve and inform the public	
Strategy: Implement e-animal control, on-line request for service capability (Animal Control Advisory Board to develop work group to establish timeline and feasibility)	2006
Strategy: Provide access to enforcement information in the field via laptops (Animal Control Advisory Board to develop work group to establish timeline and feasibility)	2006
Strategy: Review and update web page information quarterly	2007
Strategy: Advertise the animal care and control web page (add to printed materials immediately)	2008
Objective 1.6: Increase number of animal licenses and special purpose licenses	
Strategy: Employ a licensing compliance specialist through funding request	2007
Strategy: Coordinate with veterinary clinics to obtain current rabies certificates	2007

Goal 2: Reduce the Number of Animals Housed and Animals Euthanized	
Objective 2.1: Increase number of animals claimed	
Strategy: Increase public education on the importance of pet identification	2007-2008*
Strategy: Increase public knowledge of enforcement services, shelter services, shelter location, and hours of operation	2007-2008*
Objective 2.2: Increase number of animals adopted	
Strategy: Address issue of animals coming from military bases (Animal Control Advisory Board to develop a work group to address these issues)	2006
Strategy: Address issue of animals coming from the Mat-Su Valley (Animal Control Advisory Board to develop a work group to address these issues)	2006
Strategy: Increase public knowledge of shelter services, shelter location, and hours of operation	2007-2008*

*Funding licensing compliance specialist in 2007 will free Public Relations staff time spent on these activities. Funding additional Public Relations staff in 2008 will support these objectives.

Strategy: Add adoption counselors to staff	2007-2008*
Strategy: Increase volunteer hours dedicated to direct contact with pets such as dog walking, cat purring, training, grooming, etc.	2007-2008*
Objective 2.3: Reduce the number of incoming animals	
Strategy: Increase public education on spaying and neutering, animal restraint, and pet identification	2007-2008*
Objective 2.4: Increase the number of animals rescued by approved animal rescue organizations	
Strategy: Enhance relationships with approved rescue groups	2006
Strategy: Provide adoption discounts to rescue groups when rescue is requested by Animal Care and Control	2007
Objective 2.5: Reduce animal stress at the shelter	
Strategy: Enhance shelter environment within the kennel areas	Ongoing
Strategy: Minimize length of stay for pets through increasing animal adoptions and returns	Ongoing
Strategy: Request rescue of adoptable pets that have been at the shelter for some time and their ability to cope is declining	Ongoing

*Funding licensing compliance specialist in 2007 will free Public Relations staff time spent on these activities. Funding additional Public Relations staff in 2008 will support these objectives.

Goal 3: Enhance the Program's Public Education Outreach and Media Relations

Objective 3.1: Increase public education and outreach staffing levels

Strategy: Increase funding for public relations program through a funding request	2008
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Goal 4: Project and Prioritize Capital Needs

Objective 4.1: Review capital needs annually

Strategy: Animal Control Advisory Board to establish a committee including the Department of Health and the Animal Control	2006
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Contractor to project and plan for future needs	
Objective 4.2: Improve facility to better respond to emergency needs	
Strategy: Build a fenced in area on the acreage next to Animal Care and Control to house animals in the event of a disaster	2008
Objective 4.3: Improve off-leash dog area access and information	
Strategy: Provide signage and boundary maps at each off-leash area	2006
Strategy: Provide parking improvements at University Lake and Connor's Bog off-leash areas	2006
Strategy: Identify additional off-leash areas for future needs	2006

NEXT STEPS

The next step in the strategic planning process involves implementing the objectives set out in the plan. Implementation includes the following:

The Animal Control Advisory Board will ensure tools to measure progress of the plan objectives are in place.

The Department Health and Human Services in coordination with the Animal Control Advisory Board will make resource requests to support implementation of the plan as required.

The Animal Care and Control Contractor in coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services will implement the strategies laid out in the plan as resources are provided.

The Animal Control Advisory Board will develop work groups as recommended in the plan.

The Animal Control Advisory Board will review the status of the effects of the plan on an annual basis.



REFERENCES

¹Source: Estimates made using number of households in 1996 MOA Community Planning and Development Department population and housing and applying the percentage of cat and dog owners based on a 1993 survey by Hellenthal & Associates for the MOA DHHS. Does not include military bases.

²Source: Estimates made using the number of MOA households in the 2000 U.S. Census and calculating the percentage of dog/cat owning households and the average number of pets per household based on the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association 2002/2001 National Pet Owners Survey.

³Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and analysis Section's Annual Components of Population Change for Alaska, 1990-2004.

⁴Source: Estimates made using the number of MOA households in the U.S. Census Bureau 2004 American Community Survey and calculating the percentage of dog/cat owning households and the average number of pets per household based on the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association 2002/2001 National Pet Owners Survey.