



The State of KCACC

Can KCACC Be a Model Shelter?

- I believe that the No Kill goal as defined in Council Ordinance and Motions is an achievable goal in King County
- But let's put that aside for now
- Before we can talk about that, let's look at what we can all agree on
- Let's look at basic animal care
- What is it that a modern shelter should be expected to do every day?

Basics

- Feed the animals
- Provide fresh water
- Disease control
- Adoptions
- Enforce cruelty laws
- If it wants to reduce killing, medical care, volunteer and other programs

Basics

- If a shelter does not even do that,
- How can it ever be successful at the most important job a shelter has—saving lives?

Basics

- If the answer to that question is “it can’t” because it does not even do the basics...
- That doesn’t mean you should abandon the goal
- Because the goal of 85% lifesaving, of a truly modern humane shelter, is very doable

Analysis

- I was hired to help the Council make that determination
- That analysis was conducted during the months of February and March of this year
- It included five days of onsite review, including an unannounced visit to see the shelters on a "typical" day

Analysis

- It included a series of community, public, organizational, volunteer, and staff surveys
- A series of telephonic and face-to-face interviews, including members of Code Enforcement, Law Enforcement, representatives from rescue groups, Advisory Committee members, County Executive staff, Guild leadership, KCACC management
- Visits to area shelters

Analysis

- It also included review of thousands of pages of documentation, submitted in response to Information Requests to various County agencies, including KCACC.
- Because I am limited on time, I can't possibly give all the examples and analysis that led me to the conclusions I am going to make in the presentation. But it is in the draft report.
- This is what I found...

The Infirmary

- Neediest of animals
- Monday morning: no food, water, cleaning.
- Monday afternoon: no food, water, cleaning.
- Tuesday first thing in morning: no food, water, cleaning.
- Tuesday later that morning: no food, water, cleaning.



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34









The Infirmary

- Bowls were dry on Monday morning and cages were filthy, meaning possibly no care on Sunday when shelter was closed and minimal oversight
- It is quite possible these cats did not get care since Saturday
- Even a mother cat with newborn kittens in the infirmary had not been fed
- Sergeant supposed to review rooms and “sign off” on them

The Infirmary

- Supposed to be audited
- Animals went at least over 24 hours, quite possible two full days, into the third
- Staff member noted some animals “eating and drinking”
- Where is the supervision and oversight?

SPOT CLEANING:

Dog Cat
Adoption Stray West Wall
Isolation Nursery Quarantine

ACO INITIALS: MM DATE: 2/19/08

1000: MM
1100: MM
1200: MM
1300: MM
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Sergeant Initial:

SPOT CLEANING:

Dog Cat
Adoption Stray West Wall
Isolation Nursery Quarantine

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Sergeant Initial:

- Sitting on walls unsigned for days
- Or signed without being truly reviewed as in the case of the Infirmary
- Or signed and reviewed, but don't know what to look for as staff admitted supervisors spend very little time in the shelter and KCACC management rarely does
- On February 21, I saw an unsigned audit checklist dated Feb. 17 sitting on wall unsigned from the nursery. I found a mother cat with newborns in a "clean" cage, with spot checks, who had NO food well into the afternoon on Feb. 18

SPOT CLEANING:

Dog Cat
Adoption Stray West Wall
Isolation Nursery Quarantine

ACO INITIALS: MM DATE: 2/20/08

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1800: MM

Sergeant Initial:

Let's Take a Step Back

- KCACC is 30 years old
- It is not a new duty, it has nothing to do with being a “model” agency
- Yet, it is not done with regularity
- And, systems of accountability which should have been in place for decades are not enforced

Let's Take a Step Back

- ACO: "I've seen it before"
- Veterinary Team: "Ongoing problem"
- U.C. Davis: "Heartbreaking" and reported to management during wrap up meeting
- KCACC knew I was coming to review
- Studies show that processes improve by as much as 50% when auditor is present
- So I showed up unannounced two weeks before the scheduled review to see the shelter on a "typical" day



Adoption
Center



King County
Animal Control
821 - 164th Ave. NE
(206)296-3940

Hours: Tuesday to Friday 2pm - 6pm
Saturday 12 Noon - 6pm

821



ENTRANCE





Crossroads parking lot during unannounced January inspection



Improved Processes: Crossroads parking lot during pre-scheduled review

Let's Take a Step Back

- Remember: processes improve by as much as 50% when auditor is present
- Should have been at personal, professional best
- Yet did not even feed all the animals

Adoptions

- I counted 15 empty cat cages in the adoption room
- They were empty for most of the four days.
- Staff was signing “checklists” daily
- Staff was signing hourly reviews daily
- Sergeants had their checklists daily
- Lead Supervisor had her audit duties daily
- KCACC management is supposed to oversee daily

Adoptions

- Meanwhile, lots of cats outside of public view who had been cleared for adoption in the back waiting for a chance that isn't being given to them—with no oversight to ensure that animals are moved
- While staff complain of not enough space at the shelter
- Empty cages in adoption are lost opportunities for lifesaving
- [Video](#)

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TABELLA PLASTICA
KLEBBREITEN
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Such Cats Your Affection Spreads Infection

CA34

CA31

CA40

CA41

Tuesday
Cuddles!

Tuesday
Cuddles!

Basic Management Issues

- Guild's primary role is to protect and advance the interests of its members (that is not a "bad" thing, that is just the reality of unions)
- Supervisors belong to same Guild as line workers
- The same person who is supposed to discipline a worker is potentially the same person who would defend that worker at an arbitration or grievance
- Self-policing is not effective in any industry
- And violates core principles of management within an organization

Basic Management Issues

- One civilian manager who defers to Sergeants
- This is inherently problematic
- No real independent leadership at KCACC
- No real systems of accountability
- Checklists are left unsigned
- Training is not consistently provided
- Standards and accountability measures are inadequate
- Everyone appears to have their own style of doing things



A “clean cage” at
Kent



Food being contaminated by “waste water”



A “clean cage” at Crossroads



A “clean floor” at Crossroads



KCACCC's "new" cleaning policy in effect

Be Advised

There has been a confirmed case of parvo virus in our dog adoptions area. This is a contagious disease that can be spread to your own dog(s) at home. Please take this into consideration before entering our adoptions area. As you leave, make sure to step on the mats with bleach solution to help sanitize your shoes.

The sign was there on 1/30, but no parvo since “summer” according to KCACC, told it would be taken down, still there 2/21



Dogs fed in feces filled cages so dogs do not always eat

In addition dogs are not compatibility-tested because staff does not have the training or skill set to do so, you get resource guarding by dogs and dog fights

Disease Control

- I watched a staff member give medication to a sick cat and then without washing her hands or changing her gloves proceeded to handle healthy cats
- Animals are not getting vaccinated despite official “policy” since 1997
- KCACC has high rates of disease
- Animals dying in kennel is increasing
- Animals are not always being provided food, water, and minimal care

These are not “new” problems

- 1998 Complaint by KCACC Veterinarian
- “The basics of animal health care are not being provided for the animals at the Kent shelter. On any given day, one third to one half the animals available for adoption have not been vaccinated.”
- “I have often discovered animals in filthy conditions, without proper food, or forgotten for days in a back room or out of the way cage.”
- “The tracking and identification of animals is haphazard and inadequate.”

These are not “new” problems

- “When I encounter these problems, I bring them to the attention of management, often with recommendations for their solution. Despite my repeated efforts to communicate the importance of providing these basics of health care, these errors and inadequacies remain largely unchanged after 3 years.”
- The letter is dated 1998.
- The issues and problems are the same.

KCACC

- Ineffective effort to modernize/capitalize the facility except for very recently in response to public scrutiny, and then mostly simple fixes, not comprehensive
- Problems which faced agency in 1991, 1992, and 1998, faced agency to this day.

KCACC

- KCACC has had 5 managers in 7 years
- Most from other departments without sheltering experience
- Last Manager pulled into elections issues
- “Interim” Manager has served two years as Interim

KCACC

- Inadequate training of staff
- Inadequate systems of accountability/oversight

KCACC

- 1992 Advisory Committee Goals:
 - *Redeem the largest number of animals possible.* Little effort is made to cross-reference “Lost” with “Found” reports beyond the initial call and many times, not even then. Photos are not uploaded into Chameleon and then third-party websites like Pet Harbor so people looking for lost pets can access online at home. As a result, total redemptions have either remained flat or actually declined in number.

KCACC

- 1992 Advisory Committee Goals:
 - *Encourage spay/neutering of the largest possible number of dogs and cats.* A \$25 voucher program has never been effectively evaluated for competency or effect. The last five years of data show a decline in the number of vouchers redeemed to 160, or a paltry 3% of vouchers issued for the last twelve months.

KCACC

- 1992 Advisory Committee Goals:
 - *Establish standards and provide greater professional training for King County Animal Control staff in order to improve their skills as public service officers and protectors of animal welfare.* Most staff, with one or two exceptions, have complained that training is not encouraged and efforts to obtain training have been denied.

KCACC

- 1992 Advisory Committee Goals:
 - *Establish an animal health care and veterinary services program for King County Animal Control.* Animals in the infirmary were not provided food, water or care for the better part of two of the four days I was there. Despite a commitment spanning ten years to vaccinate all animals on intake, this still does not occur.

KCACC

- 1992 Advisory Committee Goals:
 - *Develop a volunteer program to support and supplement the programs of King County Animal Control.* Volunteers report “looking the other way” at neglect of animals to avoid having the program eliminated, and a recent fully revocable MOU is similar to agreements in the past which have also been revoked.

KCACC

- 1992 Advisory Committee Goals:
 - *Aggressively and effectively enforce Animal Control laws in a timely manner.*
 - Let's look at how this plays out

A Case Study

- High profile case of dog being abused brings to light KCACC inaction on animal cruelty (the "Mooie" case)
- Council asks for report on state of processes and how to improve

Animal Cruelty

- According to KCACC
 - KCACC developing partnerships with law enforcement
 - Recommendation was that the “current organizational model continue” because process is “effective and efficient”

Animal Cruelty

- According to KCSO:
 - Problems include a poor attitude on the part of KCACC staff and management involved in handling animal cruelty cases, poor equipment, lack of investigations protocols, poor storage of evidence, poor understanding of law, poor training, and poor handling of cases. It also includes failure to follow up, poor response times (as much as three days in some cases), and lack of initiative

Animal Cruelty

- KCACC's program is said to be led by "two highly trained, highly skilled Sergeants tasked with oversight of all animal cruelty cases."
- In fact, the Sergeants have only received Level I and Level II National Animal Control Association training, well below the equivalent training for "Sergeants" nationally.
- Promises to the Council that the Sergeants would receive further training by the end of 2007 have not been fulfilled.
- Some field officers have not received training, and others have only received basic training.

Animal Cruelty

- “thousands of animal cruelty complaints are quickly and thoroughly investigated and brought to conclusion through a partnership between King County Animal Services, local police agencies, the King County Prosecutor, and information received from local humane societies and the public.”
- Despite roughly 1,000 calls for service involving animal cruelty annually (1,002 in 2005 and 1,060 reported in 2006), KCACC only files two to four criminal cases per year.
- The report says that better than 99% of calls are unfounded and that all but two to four can be handled by owner education.
- As a result, it concludes that “there are not enough incidences of animal cruelty in King County to warrant the commitment of [additional] resources to address” this issue.
- There is good evidence of cases involving serious harm.

Animal Cruelty

- In 2005, while KCACC filed 0.2%, KCSO 27%.
- According to the KCSO Deputy, the fact that KCACC has not filed more cases does not mean that additional crimes of animal cruelty did not occur. It simply means that KCACC did not file the cases.

Animal Cruelty

- Code Enforcement officer assigned to help oversee coordination of animal cruelty cases at KCACC
- Not because of problems but rather because “any process can be improved.”
- Result?

Animal Cruelty

- Code Enforcement Personnel

- Identified dozens of bona fide cases of animal cruelty but notes that KCACC does not follow up.
- Can't force because "outsider" and KCACC management unresponsive
- Among the complaints:
 - The identification of "about 15 cases of actual cruelty sitting for months with no action, no next steps, and no follow up by KCACC officers."
 - "Animals are sitting in the shelter with no plan to address." (e.g., Green dogs)
 - "Cases simply closed out with no comments."
 - "Cases which are six months old but not filed because they need follow-up work which is not getting done."
 - KCSO reports that they have been asked by Code Enforcement personnel to take over cruelty enforcement.

KCACC

- The other items include full-time adoption counselors, a zero tolerance for animal cruelty, and modernizing the Kent facility.
- No effective results in these areas have been forthcoming either.
- Current changes to shelter, while important (e.g., cats not in dog rooms) are not comprehensive, and disjointed
- KCACC management could not provide a reason why 1992 goals/problems had not been achieved/corrected.
- KCACC management opined that the lack of implementation of many of the 1992 Advisory Committee goals was "Possibly a budget issue."

KCACC

- KCACC has been holding between \$500,000 and \$600,000 dollars of unspent donor funds going back years
- In addition, a 1997 review by the King County Auditor found that "If the County had been reimbursed appropriately by incorporated cities for animal control services provided in 1996, incorporated cities would have contributed about \$700,000 more to the Current Expense Fund." (Report Number 97-04.)
- As a result, "The audit recommended that the County should consider reviewing its funding policies with the incorporated cities to ensure full recovery of costs in providing animal control services to residents of incorporated cities."
- Cost recovery has not been addressed in contracts for animal control.

KCACC

- From at least 2003, the Council has not denied a single funding request for KCACC until the Citizens Advisory Committee asked them to provide only provisional funding for this year and look into the possibility of going out of the sheltering business.





Infirmmary

- No HVAC
- No sink or water
- Heated by a “space heater” even at night
- Staff have to carry two buckets into room (one with water, one with disinfectant)
- I did not see them do this during cleaning

Infirmary

- KCACC promised in 2004 and then again in 2005: the infirmary was being enlarged and modernized, including new Heating, Ventilation and Air Condition ("HVAC") systems, because "the plan has been approved and we do have the money in our budget to do it. We are on the Facilities project list. The remodeling project will include extending the HVAC system to the isolation room. The room also will be enlarged."
- Did not occur

Improvement

- The claims of improvement, in recent press releases and statements:
 - Are not enforced or quantifiable (checklists, partnerships with law enforcements)
 - Are contradicted by my observations (“caught up” on spay/neuter)
 - Are not verifiable (statistics)

Statistics

- Do not have rigor, reliability, or integrity
- Do not count animals who die in kennel
- Do not count "owner requested euthanasia"
- Have counted animals arriving dead on intakes, but not as dispositions so animals "saved" increases as a function of impounds
- Animals sent into foster are also sometimes counted as "saved" but only "passively" follow up to determine if saved, died, etc.
- Duplicate entries
- I found animals not where the system said they were, I found dogs and cats having no vaccinations, dogs listed as having cat vaccinations and vice-versa
- System is not designed for audit trail

In 2008, same problems as...

- The 1991 HSUS report
- The 1992 Advisory Committee
- The 1998 Veterinarian's Complaint
- 2005-6 Concerns Over Animal Cruelty
- The 2007 Advisory Committee

FY08 Operational Plan

- In 2008, FY08 plan said “unlikely” to meet Council goals
- The Council faces three choices: 1. abandon the goals
- 2. Continue to micromanage the agency, something a policy body is not well suited to
- Or 3. find someone else who will meet them.

Alternative

- Process could have involved short, medium, and long-term plans for a truly model facility, training, accountability measures, benchmarks, and an action plan grounded in the No Kill philosophy and goal, with clearly marked budgetary numbers that reflect the importance of the agency to citizens and the Council

Would More Resources Make a Difference?

- Not likely
- Funds, as discussed earlier, where available (Animal Benefit Fund, Cost Recovery, Council approval of budget requests)
- Accountability and basic shelter issues not impacted
- But more than that, we have experience and history as to how KCACC has not leveraged other available resources offered to it that augment its budgetary allocations

Would More Resources Make a Difference?

- Friends of KCACC offered to pay for an infirmary. KCACC said No.
- Local PetSmart at Tukwila offered to adopt out KCACC animals, KCACC lost the store (116 adoptions last year belonged to an out of county rescue group, not the shelter 2 miles down the road)

Would More Resources Make a Difference?

- Microsoft employee offered to bring agency to table, KCACC did not respond
- Volunteers offered draft plans and manuals, with no reply by KCACC
- KCSO relationship not adequately managed
- Code Enforcement frustrated by KCACC “push-back”
- Organizations who pull animals are being given unvaccinated animals who break with disease, stop taking animals

Would More Resources Make a Difference?

- March 2008
- A group complained that “animals are getting sicker the longer they are in there... I would like to help the animals but if we are to work together a process must be established and adhered to.”
- Different people, but same complaints as e-mails dating back to 1999

Would More Resources Make a Difference?

- KCACC is still soliciting donations of items from the public it is not using in the shelter
- Money always helps, but may not be leveraged
- Because systems, accountability not adequate to do so
- Long term prognosis is questionable
- It would delay needed and crucial reforms

Needed

- Mandate the programs and services and procedures any animal control provider must follow, giving the Council's vision the force of law

Achievable

- There are communities in the United States which have achieved an 85% rate of lifesaving as demanded by the King County Council, and it is a reasonable and achievable expectation.
- These communities are very diverse
- But what they all share in common is animal control leadership committed to providing the best service possible to the citizens and animals of their community, combined with an unwavering commitment to lifesaving.
- All the tools—including volunteers, resources, philanthropy, and other community support—needed to achieve similar success in King County already exist in the community

