



COUNTY of YOLO

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

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September 10, 2024

To: Honorable Judge Timothy Fall
Superior Court of California, County of Yolo
1000 Main Street
Woodland, CA 95695

To: Yolo County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 2142
Woodland, CA 95776

RE: 2023-2024 Yolo County Grand Jury Report: The Yolo County Animal Services – MOVING FORWARD

Honorable Judge Fall and Grand Jury Foreperson:

The following is the response to the findings and recommendations in the 2023-2024 Yolo County Grand Jury Report titled “The Yolo County Animal Services – MOVING FORWARD” from the Department of Community Services. For purposes of readability, we have included the Grand Jury’s findings and recommendations in **bold**.

F-1: Funding for Animal Services has not kept pace with Yolo County population growth and the attending increase in requests for services.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the finding. During the last two years, the budget for Animal Services has increased \$1.35 million; a nearly 37% increase in the overall budget. This has funded needed building improvements to the shelter, secured a contract for a veterinarian clinic, replaced older patrol trucks, and are also funding newly added veterinarian and vet tech staffing.

F-2: The decision to build additional veterinary space in the southeastern portion of the Probation Ancillary building near the existing shelter is acknowledged as a positive step in the piecemeal approach to incremental improvement of services.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F-3: The Grand Jury's email and in-person requests for documents addressed to leadership at the Yolo County Animal Services received no reply or greatly delayed responses for the requested material. The Grand Jury finds there are shortcomings of the leadership and management skills at the shelter.

Response: The respondent agrees with the first sentence of this finding. There were delays due to employee vacations schedules, and internal routing of responses through leadership. Additionally transition from the Sheriff's Office to the Department of Community Services occurred part way through the investigation. The change in leadership, differing chains of command, and onboarding, resulted in delays of information being available to the Grand Jury. The respondent disagrees with the second sentence in this finding. More information is needed to respond fully.

F-4: Relations with both internal and external partners at the shelter became contentious resulting in ineffective and diminished delivery of services.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the finding. It is unclear which relationships the comments are referring to. While some relationships have evolved through the Covid pandemic and post-pandemic, YCAS works to build strong partnerships that work in the best interest of shelter animals, as well as the County and JPA members. YCAS continues to partner with Yolo SPCA to increase spay/neuter efforts. While Koret Shelter Medicine Program (KSMP) held the contract to provide veterinary services onsite from 2012 to the end of contract 7/2023, County leadership evaluated and pursued an alternative model to provide County-employed veterinary staffing once the contract ended. This new model allows for greater efficiency and will allow future opportunities for community spay-neuter clinics. During this transition to building a YCAS Vet team YCAS partnered with UCD Vet Med Teaching Hospital (VMTH) emergency department to assist with providing routine and critical treatment to the shelter animals. This partnership was vital during this transition and now has remained strong as YCAS has reduced the routine need and now only utilizes the services for afterhours emergency care. Furthermore, YCAS continues to maintain strong relationships and collaborate with community partners, such as Solano SPCA, Sac SPCA, Yolo Vet, Animal Wellness, Midtown Vet, Yolo Spay Neuter Group, Sacramento-Community Spay Neuter, additionally with KSMP for training in industry standards and shelter best practices.

F-5: Each department within Yolo County Animal Services (kennel/field/medical services) has a supervisor, except for the front office. This may lead to fragmentation of services and inefficiencies throughout Yolo County Animal Services.

Response: The respondent disagrees with this finding. The front office staff members have an assigned supervisor (Supervising Animal Services Officer – Shelter), which is supplemented by the presence of the Director of Animal Services. Following the transition from Sheriff's Office to Community Services, internal examination of organizational flow, and supervisorial presence was evaluated. Additionally, training and clarification of work responsibilities was provided to front office staff, which continues to improve workflow.

F-6: With the change in oversight from the Yolo County Sheriff to the Department of Community Services, the Grand Jury could not determine how weapons are stored when not in use by the Field Officers.

Response: The respondent disagrees with this finding. Information provided to the Grand Jury on April 16th, 2024 included the following:

Each Officer has been assigned a shotgun after completion of the required PC 832 course and successfully completed their qualifications at the Range. It is secured when not on duty, and while on duty secured in racks in each patrol truck. Our weapons have always been maintained on site at YCAS. Extra Tasers and cartridges are secured as well in a designated location.

F-7: The Grand Jury could not determine how firearm certification, or any other specialized certification needed to qualify as a Field Officer is achieved in light of the transition from the Yolo County Sheriff's Department.

Response: The respondent disagrees with this finding. Information provided to the Grand Jury on April 16th, 2024 included the following:

Our Officers do a 6 month in house training, typically 3 months in the Shelter and 3 months out in the field based on prior experience and skills, which includes attending Humane Euthanasia training, POST PC 832 Firearms Familiarization Course, POST PC 832 Arrest, Search and Seizure, Taser Training and participate in Cal Animals Trainings as available along with chemical capture. We have attended humane academies in the past pre-COVID, now we are able to enroll in virtual classes provided by Cal Animals to become Certified ASO's which the Director, the 2 Supervising ASO's and 2 ASO's have completed. Additional trainings include specializations such as Cruelty Investigations, Wildland Fire Trainings, Wildlife Chemical Immobilization, Large Animal Technical Rescue.

Range training has been completed through the Sheriff's Office every 6 months and arrangements will be made to ensure these are scheduled accordingly.

F-8: The Grand Jury could not identify any formal facility inspection process.

Response: The respondent agrees with this finding. There is no mandated inspection processes for animal shelters.

R-1: The Yolo County Board of Supervisors should increase funding for Yolo County Animal Services to keep pace with Yolo County population growth and the attending increase in requests for services.

Response. The respondent partially agrees, however, any increase in service levels would be commensurate with an increase in the contracted amount as decided and agreed upon by the contracting jurisdiction.

R-2: The Yolo County Animal Services should continue development of additional veterinary space in the former Probation Ancillary building.

Response: The respondent is already implementing this recommendation. The project is under contract as of July 1st, 2024.

R-3: The Department of Community Services should provide for a management/leadership consultant to improve leadership skills at the Yolo County Animal Services.

Response: The respondent is already implementing this recommendation. Under DCS leadership and guidance, progress is being made in implementation of improved organizational workflow processes, completion of routine employee evaluations and coaching, addressing employee performance gaps, and implementing training plans to increase productivity and improve the quality of services provided to the community.

R-4: The Department of Community Services should consider reviewing and modifying the Yolo County Animal Services leadership job descriptions to address the shortfall in communications.

Response: The respondent disagrees with this recommendation. It is unclear how modifying the job description would improve communication. However, communication has been improved and continues to improve under DCS guidance, with frequent regular check-ins and clearly communicated expectations and consistent follow up.

R-5: The Department of Community Services should request that the Yolo County Board of Supervisors authorize a change in the Animal Services organization structure to appoint a director of operations who would supervise the front office staff or appoint a front office staff supervisor. This position would report directly to the Director of Animal Services.

Response: The respondent disagrees with this recommendation. The front office staff members have an assigned supervisor (Supervising Animal Services Officer – Shelter), which is supplemented by the presence of the Director of Animal Services. Following the transition from Sheriff's Office to Community Services, internal examination of organizational flow and supervisory presence was evaluated. Additionally, training and clarification of work responsibilities was provided to front office staff, which continues to improve workflow.

R-6: The Department of Community Services should establish a policy by September 1, 2024, for how weapons are secured after hours.

Response: This policy required updating following the transition from the Sheriff's Department to Community Services. The policy has been updated and implemented.

R-7: The Department of Community Services should establish by September 1, 2024, a policy defining how Field Officers will achieve firearm and any other certification to qualify as a Field Officer.

Response: The policy required updating following the transition from the Sheriff's Department to Community Services. This policy has been updated and implemented.

R-8: The Yolo County Board of Supervisors should hire a consultant for an evaluation of the facility and workflow optimization and how it can be improved.

Response: The respondent agrees that an outside consultant may provide insights on workflow optimization. However, there is a budgetary consideration for this, therefore this recommendation has not been implemented. However, current services and practices align with organizational best practices recommended by Cal Animals, which provides and trains on the best practices for Animal Welfare organizations and also certifies Animal Service Officers. Shelter medical and shelter protocols follow best practices guidelines under KSMP, UC Davis, University of Wisconsin, HSUS and ASPCA.

Sincerely,



Leslie Lindbo

Director

Department of Community Services