

2003-2004 GRAND JURY REPORT

Riverside County Animal Control Services Department

Indio Animal Control Shelter

Background

The Riverside County Department of Animal Services (DAS) provides animal services in three communities (Riverside, Indio and Blythe) and unincorporated areas of Riverside County. The mission of DAS is to “serve the people and animals of Riverside County through programs that provide for public education, humane sheltering, responsible pet ownership and progressive law enforcement. DAS promises to provide these services with respect, concern and compassion for all”.

The Director of DAS is responsible for the overall operation of the Riverside, Indio and Blythe Animal Shelters and reports to the Director, Riverside County Community Health Agency.

The Indio Animal Shelter is the focus of this report. The Supervising Animal Control Officer supervises the day-to-day operations of the Indio and Blythe Animal Shelters and reports to the Director, Riverside County Department of Animal Services. The Indio Animal Shelter observe the following business hours open to the public:

Shelter Services

10:00 am – 4:00 pm	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday
10:00 am – 7:00 pm	Wednesday

Field Services

8:00 am – 4:00 pm	Monday through Friday
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A compendium of animal services provided at the Indio Animal Shelter is below:

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Dog License Fees, Leash Law Violations
- Hearings

SHELTER SERVICES

- Vaccinations and Microchip Service
- Animal Turn-In
- Quarantine of Animals
- Upkeep of Impounded Animals

FIELD SERVICES

- Stray, Injured & Dead Animal Complaints
- Kennel License Requests
- Cruelty Cases
- Emergency Response & Investigations
- Dog License Fees, Leash Law Violations
- Potentially Dangerous, Dangerous & Vicious Dog Hearings
- Animal Relinquishment
- Emergency Response After Hours

The Indio Animal Shelter has the following number of kennels and animal capacity:

	Kennels/Cages	# of Animals
Dogs	30	80
Cats	40	40
Horses	02	02

Findings

1. During the period January through May 2004, Riverside County officials received approximately 100 citizens' complaints regarding the Indio Shelter concerning the treatment of animals and the negative attitude of employees toward the public and rescue organization representatives.
2. Only 22 of the 2,720 animals impounded in FY 2002-2003 at the Indio Animal Control Shelter were transported to a veterinarian for treatment of their injuries or illness.

3. The disposition of impounded animals from the Indio Animal Control Shelter representing seven (7) months in the FY 2003-2004 are reflected below:

DISPOSITION OF IMPOUNDED ANIMALS				
Held over And <u>Impounded</u> FY 2001-2002	FY 2002-2003 2,720		FY 2003-2004 (7/1/03 – 2/29/04) 1,731	
Euthanasia	1,879	69.1%	1,152	66.5%
Adopted	477	17.5%	244	14.1%
Return to Owner	364	13.4%	335	19.4%

**Note: Fiscal Year starts July 1st through June 30th.*

4. According to current policy dogs are held (5) days post-impound before the public or rescue organizations can adopt.
5. Currently, the Indio Animal Control Shelter has working relationships with only the following three (3) rescue organizations and a private citizen:
 - Save-a-Pet
 - Yucaipa Animal Placement Service
 - Orphan Pet Oasis
 - Private Citizen
6. Evidence shows that the Director of Riverside County Animal Control Services Department rarely visited the Indio Animal Control Shelter and was not well informed regarding the operations of the Indio Animal Shelter.
7. The management for the Animal Control Shelter in Indio failed to utilize an independent and unbiased citizen complaint process to address the public's issues and concerns.
8. During a visit at the Indio Animal Control Shelter, the Grand Jury observed the following conditions:
 - a. Most of the 30 dog kennels were dirty with strong unpleasant odor of feces and/or vomit on the floor. (Photographs 1 and 2).

- b. Soft canned food for very young, elderly or sick animals was unavailable.
- c. Towels, blanket or paper to create a more comfortable environment for puppies, kittens, and older or sick animals was unavailable.
- d. Upper fencing on some kennels that would prevent larger dogs from jumping into another kennel was missing. (Photograph 3)
- e. Drain holes (6-8" in diameter) in the kennel floors were uncovered. (Photographs 4 and 5)
- f. Freezer containing euthanized animals was unlocked and accessible to anyone on the property.
- g. An outdoor run for overflow had no protective covering to reduce exposure from the sun.
- h. The condition of the building showed a need for repairs and has not been repainted since 1974.
- i. Cooling misters that surround the outside animal quarantine area were inoperative.
- j. Administrative and animal records were observed to be scattered on the floor and spilling out of file boxes in a metal shed that also contained bags of dog and cat food. (Photograph 6)
- k. Two (2) of the animal control vehicles do not have the circulating roof swamp coolers on them.
- l. Upon reviewing the Riverside County Policy and Procedure Manual there are no procedures for implementation of spay/neuter programs.

9. Prior to the euthanasia of animals, the Indio Kennel Attendants do not obtain the name and phone number of private citizens and rescue organizations who have placed a "Hold" on an animal for adoption and therefore, are not in compliance with the Indio Animal Shelter's Policy Number 326. This policy states, "If there are any **holds** on an animal (**even if they are expired**), an attempt will be made, via phone to the person or persons to confirm they are not interested in the animal."
10. Many animals impounded at the Indio Animal Shelter are not receiving needed veterinary care. This practice is in violation of California Civil Code Section 1834.4(a) and (b) which states, "impounded animals must receive appropriate veterinary care" and also violates Section 559d (a) and (b) of the California Penal Code, which require that "no adoptable or treatable animal be killed".
11. In accordance with Riverside County Animal Service Policy Number 335, all animals deemed suitable for adoption are administered Bordatella vaccination as well as the 5 in 1 injection. Although this information is recorded on the Animal Cage Card, the rescue organization's representatives and private citizens are not notified of the vaccinations when adopting the animals.
12. The Supervising Animal Control Officer at the Indio Animal Shelter was unable to provide documentation or clearly articulate the qualifications, behavioral standards, problem solving skills and human relations skills for the Animal Control Officers Position.
13. In April 2003, a person present at the Indio Animal Shelter, documented the following acts of cruelty to animals:
 - a. "Kennel attendants kicking and punching dogs like they were punching bags that were in the process of being euthanized.
 - b. Newborn kittens (a week old) were not fed and were allowed to starve to death.
 - c. Kennel attendants using their animal control sticks to drag cats to the edge of the cage for the purpose of euthanasia.

- d. Kennel attendants hitting cats with their animal control stick to calm them prior to moving to another cage or euthanasia.”

Recommendations

Riverside County Board of Supervisors
Riverside County Animal Services Department
Riverside County Community Health Agency

1. Riverside County Animal Control Department develop and revise kennel operating policies and procedures that specifically apply to the Indio Shelter addressing the following areas:
 - a. Field Service responsibilities and practices.
 - b. Administrative and Office Record System.
 - c. Vehicle maintenance and operation.
 - d. Care of injured and/or sick animals.
 - e. Euthanasia.
2. The Indio Animal Control Management install shelves in the metal shed to store administrative records that are currently on the floor in the metal storage shed and in a bathroom.
3. Management at the Indio Animal Shelter provide soft foods for young, elderly and/or sick animals and store all animal food properly in the food storage locker.
4. Indio Animal Control Services Supervisor establish an effective work schedule that focuses on managing the operations at the Indio facility.
5. Replace all missing drain covers to prevent injury to small dogs.
6. Formal disciplinary action be taken against employees who fail to take injured, sick or suffering animals to the veterinarian or abuse or neglect impounded animals.
7. Indio Animal Control Service Supervisor and staff attend appropriate training classes that emphasize public relations and effective communications with rescue organizations.

8. Create a schedule of operating hours (staying within budget) at the Indio Animal Shelter to accommodate the working public for increased access to reclaim lost pets and promote adoptions.
9. Develop an effective program to increase pet adoptions, returning lost pets back to their owners, reduce euthanasia by:
 - Implementation of an aggressive spay/neuter program.
 - Distribute educational materials to the public regarding pet adoption and the need for spay/neuter.
 - Aggressive networking with rescues organizations that could incorporate offsite adoptions.
 - Maintain and update "website" to promote adoptions.
10. Indio Animal Control Shelter establish contracts and expand working relationships with rescue organizations to increase the number of pet adoptions.
11. The Director of Animal Control provide a staff member, with experience in public relations, to serve as the Indio Animal Service Liaison to establish coordination with rescue organizations and pet adoptions.
12. In FY 2004-2005 the Indio Animal Shelter establish and promote a pet adoption program with the goal to reduce by at least twenty-five percent (25%) the number of animals euthanized.
13. Revise the current complaint process through implementing a three-part (3) Citizen's Animal Service Complaint Form with a tracking number and copies furnished to:
 1. Complainant.
 2. Director of Animal Control Services.
 3. Director of Community Health Agency.
14. The Director of Community Health Agency submit a quarterly report to the Board of Supervisors, which includes a copy of the complaint and corrective action taken.