

# Animal Control Program Components

Animal Control Management

## Animal Control Issues and Problems

The animals in our communities are responsibly kept companion animals like dogs on leashes and cats snoozing on the family sofa, but they are also free-roaming dogs harassing citizens, damaging property, and causing accidents. They are scrawny, semi-wild cats scraping out a living in alleys, disturbing the peace, and spreading disease. And they all divide a community between citizens who have animals and those who do not.

For the sake of public health and safety and the quality of life in a community, it is imperative that local governments provide animal control services. It is up to city and county governments to provide mechanisms to resolve conflicts that will protect both people and animals.

The animal control program should perform specifically designated functions: it should enforce laws, rescue mistreated animals, humanely destroy the hundreds of animals received by shelters daily that are not reclaimed by their owners or adopted, promote licensing of both cats and dogs, and provide a low-cost spay/neuter program that enables all residents to sterilize their pets. Finally, an effective animal control program must deter future problems through public education.

An organized animal control program is within the reach of any community, large or small. To be successful, however, it must be a formal program with sufficient budgetary allocations, managed by a competent, professional staff.

Pet overpopulation is the most serious challenge faced by local animal sheltering and control operations today. Why does this problem exist? The root cause is pet owners failing to take responsibility for their animals.

The most successful programs integrate three basic components: legislation, education, and sterilization (LES). Animal shelters, both public and private, that follow this formula have reported significant decreases in the numbers of animals they handle after a few years of program operation. Among the common elements employed by these agencies: an ordinance that includes differential licensing; a low-cost spay/neuter clinic (or some other effective low-cost spay/neuter program); mandatory sterilization for all animals adopted from sheltering facilities; and a public education program.

## Elements of an Effective Animal Care and Control Program

Solutions range from basic animal control programs to progressive, integrated animal service programs built on comprehensive ordinances that reward responsible pet ownership and penalize irresponsible pet ownership. Regardless of the size of the community, successful programs tend to have the following characteristics:

- Local government support - both political and financial
- A comprehensive animal control ordinance and the ability to enforce it
- Adjunct laws and programs to ensure that all pet owners have access to affordable sterilization services
- Adequate facilities and equipment
- A staff of animal caretakers professionally trained to quickly and humanely handle animals at minimum risk to themselves
- A working relationship with one or more veterinarians
- An effective public education program.

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## **SEVEN BASIC POLICIES FOR EVERY ANIMAL SHELTER**

Is your animal care facility meeting the basic needs of animals and the public? Find out by comparing the following seven of the most essential shelter policies with those of your facility.

Policy #1 - Accept every animal brought in.

Policy #2 - Do not charge a fee for surrendered animals.

Policy #3 - Maintain a clean, comfortable, safe, and healthy environment for each animal.

Policy #4 - Hold stray animals for a minimum of five operating days, including a Saturday.

Policy #5 - Screen prospective adopters using adoption standards.

Policy #6 - For euthanasia, use sodium pentobarbital administered by well-trained, compassionate individuals.

Policy #7 - Spay or neuter all animals at time of adoption, or guarantee that all adopted animals are later sterilized.

*From Animal Sheltering Magazine/January-February 1996*

## **PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

### **Shelter Experience**

What is it?

- How people feel when visiting or contacting the agency
- Physical facilities

- Service

Why is it important?

- People will want to come to the shelter.
- People will tell other people about their positive experience.
- More animals will get adopted.
- More lost animals will be returned to their owners.
- Positive influence on how people care for their own animals.

How to do it:

- Shelters must have the disease prevention component of a hospital, the functional capabilities of a police station and the user friendly appeal of a hotel.
- The shelter must be physically attractive, clean and well maintained.
- The shelter must be operated with the comfort of the animals, public and staff in mind.
- The hours of operation are convenient for the public. Emergency services are available 24 hours a day.
- Staff (and volunteers) are knowledgeable, compassionate, courteous, and professional toward animals, the public and each other at all times.

## **Community Relations**

What is it?

- Building and maintaining relationships

Who is important in the community?

- Staff and co-workers
- People who call you to pick up dogs
- People who have lost their pets
- People who can influence the future of your organization
- People who can influence others

Why is it important?

- Helps make changes and improvements easier to accomplish
- People will call for help with stray dogs
- Pet owners will call when looking for their lost dog
- Provides the opportunity and support to make important changes

How to do it:

- Communicate important information to all those who are important in the community.
- Bring the information to their attention rather than waiting for them to find out by some other means - to make sure what is being said is accurate and puts emphasis on what is really important.

## **Education**

What is it?

- Teaching compassion and respect for all living things
- Encouraging responsible pet ownership
- Creating a community that embraces humane values

Why is it important?

- Animals will receive better care.
- People will help an animal in need.
- People will support your efforts to help animals.
- There will be less abuse and neglect of animals.

Who should it be directed to?

- Young children
- Teachers who work with children
- Pet owners
- Lawmakers
- Everyone in the community

How to do it:

- Visits to classrooms
- Workshops for teachers
- Special classes for pet owners
- Articles in newspapers and magazines
- Presentations to community groups

## **Legislation**

What is it?

- Laws that encourage proper care and treatment of animals, protect them from harm and encourage responsible pet ownership

Why is it important?

- Establishes the community's guidelines for treatment of animals
- Formally establishes ownership and owners responsibilities
- Provides responsible agencies and organizations with the authority to protect and control animals

Who is important?

- Working with lawmakers, veterinarians and any other people that are concerned about animal care or who may be affected by a new law

## **Sterilization**

What is it?

- A combination of programs that teaches people about the importance and benefits of pet sterilization, encourages the spay/neuter of pets and makes sterilization easily available

Why is it important?

- People are unaware of pet overpopulation (e.g. money spent on shelters, suffering of animals, dangers to the community).
- Many people do not have the financial means to pay the full cost.
- Many people do not know of the health benefits to the pet of being sterilized.

How to do it:

- Set up a free or low-cost clinic.
- Establish a low-cost program with veterinary clinics providing the surgeries.
- Offer cost savings on animal licenses for sterilized animals.
- Establish laws encouraging sterilization.

*This document was prepared for the Animal Care and Control Workshop sponsored by HSUS/HSI and Hawaiian Humane Society for representatives from Taiwan, October 1998.*