



Washington County
Auditor's Office

Audit of Bonnie L Hays Animal Shelter: First Follow Up Report

Final Report
August 11, 2020



John Hutzler, CIA, CGAP, CCSA, County Auditor

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Follow Up Report: Audit of Bonnie L Hays Animal Shelter

Background and Summary

Animal Services is a division of Washington County's Health and Human Services Department (HHS). Animal Service operates the Bonnie L. Hays Animal Shelter, constructed in the mid-1990s. In 2018 Animal Service sheltered about 2,100 dogs and cats. The shelter also returned about 950 lost pets to their owners.

In July 2019, the Washington County Auditor released report "Audit of the Bonnie L Hays Animal Shelter," together with the response of the County Administrator and the Director of HHS. The Auditor made nine recommendations for action to improve compliance with industry standards for animal care.

Management generally agreed with the audit findings and agreed to implement most of the audit recommendations by March 2020. We scheduled this follow-up review to determine the extent to which management had implemented those nine audit recommendations.

We found that management adopted policies, procedures, protocols and a strategic plan to address seven recommendations. However, we were unable to confirm that they had been implemented. We consider implementation of those seven recommendations, and the recommendation to maintain adequate staffing as audit recommendations are implemented, to be In Process. The County did not implement one of the nine recommendations. We will conduct further follow-up after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Overview of the 2019 Audit

Audit Objectives

The Auditor's Office initiated the Animal Shelter Audit to provide management a detailed analysis of the shelter's capacity to provide the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) minimum level of acceptable care for dogs and cats in shelter.

Findings

Over the past decade, management and staff of the Bonnie L. Hays Animal Shelter have significantly improved the quality of care for animals in shelter. The demand for housing at

the animal shelter has been on the decline since 2012. The shelter has adequate space to shelter 26 cats and 48 dogs. Staff capacity for daily care and staff capacity for flow-through are more than adequate.

However, limitations of the facility and certain shelter practices prevent the shelter from providing what the ASV considers the minimum level of acceptable care. To achieve what the ASV considers a minimum level of acceptable care, additional improvements are necessary. While management action can address many of the issues identified, addressing other deficiencies may require remodel or replacement of the facility.

Recommendations

To achieve that minimum level of acceptable care, we recommended:

1. The shelter should adopt written policies and protocols that define maximum housing capacity based on the number of animals who can be adequately housed within available primary enclosures and ensure the number of animals housed does not exceed that capacity.
2. The shelter should install transfer doors in kennels used to house dogs restricted to kennel, so that staff can confine the dog to one side of the kennel while cleaning the other side.
3. The shelter should securely enclose its outdoor exercise yard and provide dogs held longer than two weeks with daily opportunities for aerobic exercise.
4. The shelter should provide dogs housed longer than two weeks with places to hide within their kennels and opportunities to play in the secured outdoor space.
5. The shelter should provide all cats with places to hide.
6. The shelter should develop a robust foster care program to better balance admissions and outcomes and control cat populations within housing capacity.
7. Animal Services should put processes in place to transfer any cat admitted to shelter more than two weeks earlier to foster care or to a facility equipped to provide appropriate long-term care. If it needs to hold animals long-term, the County should either remodel or replace the shelter to provide alternatives to traditional cage housing.

8. The County should include the animal shelter in its facilities master planning process to address deficiencies that may require capital investment to remodel or replace the existing shelter. To achieve ASV minimum level of acceptable care, remodel or replacement should provide appropriate housing for each animal, before and after surgery.
9. Animal Services management should ensure that shelter staffing remains adequate to provide higher levels of care as it implements the audit recommendations.

Status of Audit Recommendations

The County did not implement one of the nine recommendations, and eight remain in process.

1. The shelter should adopt written policies and protocols that define maximum housing capacity based on the number of animals who can be adequately housed within available primary enclosures and ensure the number of animals housed does not exceed that capacity.
Current Status - In Process. In March 2020, Animal Services adopted Policy & Procedure (P&P) #131 Maximum Housing Capacity, defining the maximum housing capacity of the shelter to be 26 cats and 48 dogs and establishing a procedure for maintaining populations within those capacities using transfers to other facilities, intake limitations, cat fostering and other options. Since the shelter was closed to the public due to the Covid-19 epidemic shortly after the policy was adopted, we will follow-up after the pandemic to verify that the number of animals housed does not exceed the defined capacity.
2. The shelter should install transfer doors in kennels used to house dogs restricted to kennel, so that staff can confine the dog to one side of the kennel while cleaning the other side.
Final Status - Not Implemented. Animal Services asserts that retrofitting existing kennels to accommodate transfer doors is not feasible, and either a new facility or redesign and reconstruction of the existing facility will be required to implement this recommendation. There is currently no specific plan or target date for replacement or redesign of the animal shelter.
3. The shelter should securely enclose its outdoor exercise yard and provide dogs held longer than two weeks with daily opportunities for aerobic exercise.
Current Status - In Process. –According to the manager, the outdoor exercise areas are secure. During the course of our follow-up, Animal Services adopted P&P #133

Aerobic Exercise for Dogs, providing that, subject to eligibility determined by behavior and medical evaluation, dogs held over 2 weeks be provided with off-leash outdoor exercise daily. We were unable to verify that the policy has been implemented because the shelter did not document that opportunities for daily aerobic exercise were actually provided once a dog was held longer than 2 weeks. We will conduct further follow-up to verify that the new policy is followed.

4. The shelter should provide dogs housed longer than two weeks with places to hide within their kennels and opportunities to play in the secured outdoor space.
Current Status - In Process. During the course of our follow-up work, Animal Services adopted P&P #133 and #134 Providing Hiding Space for Dogs, providing that dogs held longer than two weeks will be provided with a hiding space within their kennel and with daily outdoor play time. We were unable to verify that Policy 134 has been followed because the shelter did not document that opportunities to play outdoors were provided to dogs held longer than two weeks. We will conduct further follow-up to verify that the new policies are followed.
5. The shelter should provide all cats with places to hide.
Current Status - In Process. Shortly after the release of the original audit report, the shelter revised its protocol for cat cage setup to provide a place for the animal to hide. We were unable to verify that the protocol is being followed because there were no cats in shelter due to the Covid-19 shutdown. We will conduct further follow-up to verify that the new policy is followed.
6. The shelter should develop a robust foster care program to better balance admissions and outcomes and control cat populations within housing capacity.
Current Status - In Process. We found that over the past year, cat populations exceeded housing capacity 20% of the time, and only 4% of cats were placed with foster volunteers. Animal Services is considering whether it needs to strengthen its foster care program. In March 2020 Animal Services adopted P&P #131 defining the cat capacity of the shelter as 26 adult cats, and during the Covid-19 pandemic, the shelter stopped accepting health stray cats. At the time of our May 28 visit, the cattery was empty. We will conduct further follow-up to verify that cat populations remain within capacity limits after the shelter resumes normal cat intake that includes healthy stray cats.
7. Animal Services should put processes in place to transfer any cat admitted to shelter more than two weeks earlier to foster care or to a facility equipped to provide appropriate long-term care. If it needs to hold animals long-term, the County should

either remodel or replace the shelter to provide alternatives to traditional cage housing.

Current Status - In Process. Before we completed our work on this follow-up, Animal Services adopted P&P #132 Transfer of Cats, which provides that under normal operating conditions cats will not be in the shelter longer than 2 weeks. When a cat reaches 10 days in the shelter, staff will issue an Urgent Transfer Request to members of the Animal Shelter Alliance and Foster Requests to approved foster volunteers. We will conduct further follow-up to verify that the new policy is followed.

8. The County should include the animal shelter in its facilities master planning process to address deficiencies that may require capital investment to remodel or replace the existing shelter. To achieve ASV minimum level of acceptable care, remodel or replacement should provide appropriate housing for each animal, before and after surgery.

Current Status - In Process. In September 2019 the Facilities Manager and the Real Property Manager presented to the Board a Strategic Facilities Master Planning project that would result in adoption by the Board of a Facilities Master Plan in March of 2021. However, the Facilities Manager acknowledged that the strategic plan has not yet been implemented. Due to uncertainties arising from the Covid-19 epidemic, he was unable to provide a revised date for the development of a Facilities Master Plan. We will conduct further follow-up after the pandemic.

9. Animal Services management should ensure that shelter staffing remains adequate to provide higher levels of care as it implements the audit recommendations.

Current Status - In Process. As a result of declines in shelter populations due to the Covid-19 shutdown, additional staff has not been needed. We will conduct further follow-up to ensure that management adds staff, as needed, when it implements other recommendations.

Other Matters

During the course of our review, we learned that the shelter was not retaining certain records in accordance with the retention schedule specified in Oregon Administrative Rules. We brought the matter to the attention of the Animal Services Manager, and he promptly adopted a policy to address record retention.

About this Review

In April 2020 we initiated a follow-up review to determine whether management had implemented the nine recommendations from our July 2019 Audit of the Bonnie L Hays Animal Shelter. We asked the Animal Services Manager to describe any actions taken to implement the Auditor's recommendations, and to provide documentation that would support the actions taken. We reviewed the response to our request, reviewed the documentation submitted, and collected additional information as necessary to provide sufficient, appropriate evidence to conclude whether each recommendation was fully implemented.

We concluded that a recommendation was Not Implemented if we found that management had taken no action to implement the recommendation and had no specific plan to implement the recommendation. We concluded that a recommendation was In Process when management had not completed planned implementation or when we were unable to verify that policies and protocols adopted by management during our review had actually been implemented. We will conclude that a recommendation has been Fully Implemented when we find management has completed the recommended actions or has adequately addressed the issues identified by alternative means.



DATE: August 10, 2020

TO: John Hutzler, County Auditor

FROM: Stephen Rhodes, Interim County Administrator
Sia Lindstrom, Interim Assistant County Administrator

**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO FIRST FOLLOW UP REPORT: Audit of Bonnie L. Hays
Animal Shelter**

We have reviewed the report dated August 4, 2020, regarding your first follow-up to the Bonnie L. Hays Animal Shelter Audit which was initiated in April of 2018 and completed in June of 2019.

Your follow up report is a positive and accurate assessment of the steps taken at Animal Services to address your recommendations. We appreciate the collaboration of the Auditor's Office with the staff at Animal Services and believe that the combined efforts have resulted in improvements to our programs and services. We understand that significant temporary changes in operations at the animal shelter, due to the Corona Virus Pandemic event, have made it difficult for your office to confirm that your recommendations have been fully implemented. We are confident that as the Pandemic is resolved and you have a chance to conduct a second follow up to your original report, you will be able to include findings of "fully implemented" in your final report.

We appreciate the work the Auditor's Office undertook to assess the important animal care and sheltering services provided at the Bonnie L. Hays Animal Shelter. HHS values continuous quality improvement, and the recommendations in your original report support our intention to ensure we provide quality services throughout HHS which includes the Animal Services Division.

Cc: Ruth Osuna, Deputy County Administrator
Marni Kuyl, Health & Human Services Director
Mjere Simantel, HHS Assistant Director
Randy Covey, Animal Services Manager