



## **Implementation Plan to Reduce Animal Intake and Increase Live Animal Outcomes**

### **Vision:**

**Austin is a humane community, where animals are valued and suffering and unnecessary euthanasia have been eliminated.**

### **1) Revise Mission of Animal Services**

Consistent with the AAC recommendation, we will include as a key indicator in the HHSD FY11 Business Plan, a live outcome goal of 90%.

Animal Services has a broad responsibility as a municipal animal services program, including the responsibilities associated with animal control, rabies control, quarantine services, public safety, animal sheltering, animals placement, and the humane treatment of animals. Therefore, the mission of Animal Services should reflect these responsibilities. The inclusion of the above goal in the Business Plan will reinforce our continued commitment to achieving live outcomes for sheltered animals.

### **2) Davenport Adoption Center**

Implement an adoption center in the Davenport building after the shelter moves to the new facility. Outsourcing this program to an organization with core competencies in off-site adoptions would bring the advantage of focusing Animal Services staff on the increased customer traffic that we expect at the new shelter, as well as, bringing experience with off-site adoptions to the table. This program would be the largest off-site adoption site in the community.

Issue RFP for a private sector operator to provide adoption services to implement the above programs for dogs, cats, and rabbits.

#### Timeline:

Prepare RFP program scope.	March-May 2010
Issue RFP	June 2010
Evaluate proposals received.	July-August 2010
Award/negotiate contract.	September-December 2010

Davenport launch upon move to new shelter.

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The following unmet needs in the community related to adoption programs have been identified and can be met utilizing this adoption center:

- Regular adoption venue opportunities for placement partners that have been screened and approved by the City. Some rescue groups have established adoption venues in the community, however some groups do not have those opportunities available to them. This facility could be used to provide regularly scheduled adoption fairs where groups in need of an adoption venue could promote their animals. This would also provide the advantage of a good mixture of types of animals being available. Increased placements by rescue groups, the Austin Humane Society (AHS), and other shelter partners, will result in more slots available for shelter animals in need of assistance
- Offsite adoption program for sheltered animals. Animals in the adoption program at the new shelter will be brought to the Adoption Fairs. Two strategies will be used for selecting animals. 1) Highly desirable animals will be included so that adopters see the potential for great pets at the shelter. This will help drive traffic to the new shelter. 2) Animals that are not getting interest from adopters at the shelter. This will allow these animals to be seen in a different venue that may attract an appropriate adopter. All animals will be sterilized so they are ready for adoption from the fair.
- Offsite adoptions for owner surrender animals. Provide an adoption program and venue for pet owners to rehome their owned animals. This program could be modeled after the Citizens for Animal Protection program in Houston. The aim of the program is to reduce shelter intake by assisting pet owners with rehoming their pet outside of the shelter. Animals that are appropriate for rehoming would remain in their homes rather than entering the shelter. Adoption opportunities are provided at an off-site adoption venue for these animals. The Davenport adoption center would offer an opportunity for the creation of this program.
- Provide a program to foster and tame kittens from feral colonies. The feral cat volunteers participating in the current trap-neuter-release program have identified the need for this type of program. Currently, many of volunteers must stop their trapping/sterilization activities when kitten season starts because they begin trapping kittens to young to release. These kittens are fostered until old enough for adoption and then adopted out. The volunteers do not have enough time for both fostering and trapping thus slowing down the sterilization activities. This program would provide kennel space for housing kittens until foster homes are secured and/or taming and socialization on-site. Once ready for adoption, the kittens would transition into the adoption program at the center.
- Provide a foster center for bottle babies (kittens and puppies.) Even with the significant reduction in kitten intake we are experiencing, there remains an unmet need for assisting baby animals that are unable to eat on their own. Traditional foster programs that rely on individuals or families do not meet the needs of these animals because of their frailty. Many fosters homes are uncomfortable working with these very young animals. An alternative model is to establish a location outside of the shelter where these baby animals can be housed and cared for by shifts of volunteers supported by appropriate veterinary staffing. This would allow more experienced

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fosters to care for a larger number of animals, efficiency in veterinary visits, etc. The Davenport building would offer an opportunity for this type of program on a seasonal basis. Once old enough for adoption, these animals would transition to the adoption program at the center.

- Provide a program for recovery space for feral cats that have been sterilized. The feral cat volunteers participating in the current trap-neuter-release program have identified the need for this type of program. Currently, recovery space for sterilized cats is a limiting factor for the volunteer trappers. This is particularly important when working on a site with very large numbers of free roaming cats where mass trapping is warranted. The Davenport building would offer an opportunity for this type of program on a seasonal basis. Friendly cats would be transitioned into the adoption program at the center.

**Cost Analysis:**

Davenport estimated facility utilities and building maintenance, \$26,617

Operations costs, \$50,000

Total \$76,617

Note: Actual costs would depend on proposals received.

**Impact:**

3,000 adoptions per year from the center

**3) Increased Make-Ready Capacity**

Increase in-house sterilizations by providing staffing for surgeries to be performed on Saturdays and Sundays, fully utilizing the surgery suite capacity. This would provide approximately 2,000 additional surgery slots and would increase total capacity from 3,600 to about 5,600 surgeries. Goals for this enhancement would be to reduce the wait time for surgery to an average of two days and maintain the inventory of adoption animals at 90% sterilized. Having the animals already sterilized allows for an expedited exit from the shelter once a placement has been made. Minimizing wait times for surgery also expedites the animals' departure from the shelter. A pilot program has been in place since October 2010 and has shown good results in reducing wait times for surgery.

**Cost Analysis:**

- 2 part-time vet tech leads @ 20 hours each - \$33,700  
16 hours of vet time - \$26,890  
Total Cost - \$60,590

**Impact:**

- Increase in shelter ability to process live outcomes while staying committed to sterilization of sheltered animals leaving the shelter.
- Reduced intake due to prevention of unwanted litters.

- 2,000 sterilization surgeries per year.

#### **4) Additional Veterinary Capacity for Injured/Ill Shelter Animals**

Fund a 0.5 veterinarian and one additional veterinary technicians to provide additional capacity for treating injured/ill animals that are candidates for rehoming or returning to their original homes.

##### **Synopsis:**

- In FY09, 962 animals were euthanized that had medical issues/injuries. Some of these animals could have been saved if funding were available to resolve the medical issues.
- In FY09, 224 dogs in the adoption program were heartworm positive. This disease is somewhat expensive to treat in the private sector so this disease poses a significant barrier to adoption or placement with a partner agency. Currently, the shelter does treat some of the dogs that are heartworm positive and these dogs are readily adopted once treatment is completed. However, the shelter does not have enough veterinary capacity to treat all of the dogs on a timely basis.
- In FY09 1,505 animals were euthanized for humane reasons to eliminate suffering.
- In FY09, veterinary technicians performed 90,038 treatments/exams.
- In FY09, the veterinarians performed 5,855 treatments/exams in addition to the 3,698 sterilization surgeries performed.

##### **Cost Analysis:**

Costs \$95,000 (.5 fte veterinarian and 1 veterinary technician)

##### **Impact:**

- Increase in shelter ability to achieve live outcomes for medically compromised animals.
- 2,000 additional veterinary exams per year

#### **5) Behaviorist Position**

Consistent with AAC recommendations, fund a behaviorist position to create programs that assist sheltered animals that have behavior issues and to create programs that reduce shelter intake. Programs will include:

- A SAFER Plus certification for pit-bull type dogs. (The ASPCA is using this program to assess pit-bull type dogs on military installations.) This program would provide a more in-depth behavior evaluation of the pit-bull type dogs. This would provide more information to potential adopters and rescue groups and help to remove some of the stereotypes regarding this breed that negatively affect individual dogs. Additionally, the program would gather information that would be used to develop behavior management programs for individual dogs. Create a volunteer based shelter

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acclimation program to help animals that are exhibiting behavior problems associated with shelter induced stresses.

- A program to evaluate and develop remediation plans animals with behavior issues that are barriers to a live outcome.
- A program to provide individualized behavior interventions options for animals that are deteriorating behaviorally. Additionally, all aspects for the shelter environment (housing options, procedures, protocols, human interactions, etc.) need to be regularly monitored for unintended reactions from the animals that may lead to behavior problems.
- A program to acclimate animals to the shelter environment.
- An owner surrender evaluation program. This program would require pet owners considering relinquishment of a pet to schedule an appointment. An evaluation of the pet would be conducted during the appointment. This would provide the pet owner with definitive feedback regarding options available for their pet, if relinquished.
- Reinstatement of puppy classes that were offered by the shelter before elimination of the Behaviorist position. Classes would be targeted to pet owners in high-intake, low-income neighborhoods where cost and accessibility are barriers to accessing dog training programs. The program would be volunteer supported and would offer partnership opportunities for other agencies
- A basic obedience classes that would be targeted to pet owners in high-intake, low-income neighborhoods, where cost and accessibility are barriers to accessing dog training programs. The program would be volunteer supported and would offer partnership opportunities for other agencies.
- Interventions for Pit-bull type dogs. There are several successful models in other communities that are positively impacting shelter intake, neighborhood safety, and humane treatment of the dogs.

### **Synopsis:**

- In FY09, 1,897 animals euthanized had behavior issues.
- In FY09, 1,488 animals euthanized had aggression issues.
- In FY09, 1,513 of the dogs euthanized were pit-bull type dogs. The majority (972) of these dogs had behavior or aggression issues that were impediments to rehoming or returning to their original home.
- The above described population of animals makes up 70% of the total euthanasia for FY09. To substantially reduce the euthanasia rate, programs to assist these animals need to be developed.
- Once an animal is selected for the adoption program, the City keeps that animal until it is adopted. For some animals, that can mean an extended stay in the kennel environment. Long term caging of dogs and cats can and does lead to behavior problems that further impede rehoming.

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- Dog owner relinquishment intake is driven by lack of commitment to keeping the dog in the family for its entire life. To reduce intake from this cause, communities need programs that increase the bond with the dog. Puppy Kindergarten classes enhance the bond between the family and the dog by providing the family with positive tools for raising their new puppy. The classes also help provide adequate socialization so that the puppy will grow up to be friendly and well adjusted. Additionally, families that attend Puppy Kindergarten are more likely to continue on with obedience training for their dog. Affordability of the class is a barrier to low-income families.
- We are learning about some very creative programs in other communities that work through partnerships with the juvenile justice system, police departments, and recreation departments, and other youth programs to change the culture of pit-bull ownership. These programs encourage sterilization of pit-bulls, but also seek to create a culture of kindness, humaneness, and responsibility. The programs focus heavily on reducing the chance that the dogs will be fought. Programs offer obedience training, vaccinations, microchips, toys, collars/leashes, education about proper care of dogs, etc.
- As noted above, life-time commitment is the biggest factor putting dogs at risk of euthanasia. Improving the controllability and manageability of the dog will reduce the likelihood that the dog will be re-homed or relinquished to a shelter. Affordability of basic obedience or manners training is a barrier to low-income families.

### **Staff Cost Analysis**

Behaviorist position \$74,266

#### **Impact:**

- Increase in shelter ability to achieve live outcomes for behaviorally compromised animals
- Increase in shelter ability to respond to, and prevent, behavior deterioration due to long term kenneling.
- Reduce intake of animals at high risk of euthanasia.

### **6) Owner Relinquishment Policy:**

Implement an owner surrender evaluation program. This program would require pet owners considering relinquishment of a pet to schedule an appointment. On the spot dropoff of owned pets would no longer be accepted. An evaluation of the pet would be conducted during the appointment. This would provide the pet owner with definitive feedback regarding options available for their pet, if relinquished.

#### **Synopsis:**

- In FY09, 27% of intake was from owner relinquishment.
- The open intake shelter is a safety net for unwanted animals and should continue to serve that purpose for the safety of the animals.

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- In some cases, there is legitimate need for the animal to be sheltered (death of a human companion, etc.) and, in other cases, owners may not have worked to resolve issues with the pet due to the convenience of the open intake shelter. Open intake shelters are beginning to implement policies that continue to protect and shelter pets when necessary but also require pet owners to behave more responsibly in upholding the lifetime commitment to their pets.

**Staff Cost Analysis**

- Fund one additional customer service position \$39,891
- Fund Behaviorist position (See recommendation number 4 above) \$74,266

**Impact:**

Reduce owner relinquishments by providing pet owners with realistic information regarding options available for their pet.

**7) Enhance Foster Care Program**

Enhance the foster care programs by funding the following programs:

- Continue the current foster program an increase animals served by 373.
- Consistent with the AAC recommendations, permanently fund make-ready costs for animals adopted directly from the foster home.
- Consistent with the AAC recommendations, permanently fund make-ready costs for animals rehomed by the finder.
- Fund additional make-ready capacity to provide medical services for foster animals adopted from the shelter. (see recommendation number 2)
- Fund a pilot project with a partner organization, to enhance the foster capability through leveraging the City investment.

**Synopsis:**

- In FY09, 662 underage kittens were euthanized and 29 underage puppies. This is 10% of the total euthanasia. Additionally, some number of the animals with behavior and medical problems could benefit from foster care.
- In past years, the foster program for Animal Services did not have a full time coordinator. However, the program has been growing each year as seen below:

	<b>Cats</b>	<b>Dogs</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>FY06</b>	60	36	96
<b>FY07</b>	240	88	328
<b>FY08</b>	402	23	425
<b>FY09</b>	575	152	727

- Additionally, the Austin Humane Society (AHS) houses a foster program that serves approximately 1200 animals per year. Animals served include animals from the City

shelter, as well as, those dropped off at the AHS. Animals dropped off at the AHS are animals that would otherwise enter the open intake shelter if the AHS program was not in place. Therefore, this foster program is an intake prevention program for Animal Services, as well as, a foster placement program. The AHS is committed to growing this program to serve more animals at-risk of euthanasia.

- Beginning FY10, Animal Services has dedicated one FTE to coordinating the foster program so that the program can expand in capacity to serve underage animals as well as animals with medical issues that need resolved prior to adoption.
- Currently, the shelter allows foster home participants to be actively engaged in the adoption process. As part of this process, sterilization and medical make-ready services have been arranged at Emancipet so that foster animals with adopters do not need to return to the sheltering system.

**Cost Analysis:**

\$45,000 to permanently fund the surgery and make ready services for animals adopted directly from the foster home, animals rehomed by the finder, and the leveraging project.

**Impact:**

- Increase live outcomes by 373
- Increase sterilized pets in the community by 200

**8) Enhance Spay Street Program**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, enhance this neighborhood intervention program, which targets at-risk breeds, by adding the following components:

- Provide funding for 300 sterilizations beginning FY11.
- Provide funding for additional staff outreach position.
- Emancipet will grow a volunteer program to support the outreach component of the program.
- Emancipet will continue to seek funding to support the remaining sterilizations to achieve the program goals:

2010	900
2011	1,080
2012	1,296
2013	1,555

**Cost Analysis:**

- \$25,500 for sterilizations surgeries
- \$65,000 for outreach position

**Impact:**

- 300 sterilizations
- 200 animal welfare interventions
- Reduced shelter intake from at-risk neighborhoods

**9) Provide Sterilization Services at Rabies Clinics**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, provide funding for sterilization at the five rabies clinics conducted each year in high-intake, low-income neighborhoods. Services will be provided by Emancipet.

**Synopsis:**

- We are currently providing sterilization services at rabies clinics. Rabies clinic are targeted to low income/high intake neighborhoods. At the clinics, we target animals at high-risk of euthanasia (if they were to enter the shelter) for a free sterilization surgery and free microchip.
- In FY09, \$30,000 Funding was provided from the donation fund for this program.
- For FY10, \$30,000 is budgeted in the donation fund for this program

**Cost Analysis:**

\$40,000 (\$30,000 from donation funds, \$10,000 from the General Fund)

**Impact:**

- 600 sterilizations per year
- Reduced intake of animals at high risk of euthanasia.

**10) Provide Sterilization Services for Owned Cats**

Provide funding for free sterilization of owned. Services will be provided by Emancipet. Goals for this program are as follows:

- FY11 1,000 surgeries
- FY12 1,200 surgeries
- FY13 1,440 surgeries
- FY14 1,728 surgeries

Emancipet would seek funding to supplement the program and decrease City funding over time. (See Cost Analysis below)

**Synopsis:**

- In FY09, 48% of cat intake was animals 6 months of age and younger. Continued focus on reduction of unwanted litters is critical to further reduction of the euthanasia rate for cats.
- In FY09, \$50,000 from the donation fund was used to provide free sterilization services for owned cats.
- In FY10, we received a one year grant for provision of free sterilization services for owned cats. The grant amount is \$20,000 and is matched by \$20,000 from the donation fund.

**Cost Analysis:**

- FY11 \$60,000 (\$20,000 from donations funds, \$40,000 from the General Fund)
- FY12 \$45,000 (\$20,000 from donations funds, \$25,000 from the General Fund)
- FY13 \$30,000 (\$20,000 from donations funds, \$10,000 from the General Fund)
- FY14 \$15,000 (\$15,000 from donations funds)

**Impact:**

- 1,000 sterilization surgeries in year one (see above)
- Reduced cat intake

**11) Emergency Care Fund**

Maintain the emergency care fund to assist animals that are brought into the shelter because of lack of money for needed medical care (usually trauma related.) With these animals, we often find a high level of commitment to the animal and can help keep the animal in its home if we have funding available to assist with the medical issue. In FY09, 252 animals were surrendered due to medical reasons.

**Synopsis:**

- In FY09, \$50,000 was available from the donation fund to assist ill/injured animals. In FY09, we focused on puppies that were ill with PARVO which, in most cases, will be fatal unless treated very quickly after onset of symptoms. Treatment of this highly contagious disease is expensive. This funding saved 100 puppies by preventing their intake into the shelter and/or paying for treatment for some that did enter the shelter.
- In, FY10, \$31,890 is available from donation funds to assist ill/injured animals so that they can stay in their home.
- Animal Trustees of Austin fundraises in order to provide some level of assistance (usually \$50,000 per year) to injured/ill animals at-risk of euthanasia.
- Funds available from both organizations do not meet the need in the community. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty estimates that there are 80,000 pets in Travis County living in poverty. Any trauma or serious illness for the animals that requires veterinary treatment will not be affordable for the family.

**Cost Analysis:**

\$50,000 (\$30,000 donation funds, \$20,000 from the General Fund)

**Impact:**

Prevent intake of 100 animals

**12) Feral Kitten Foster Program**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, develop a program to provide foster, socialization, spay/neuter and adoption of underage kittens trapped in colonies. Recommend funding the operations costs for the program and provide space for the program in the Davenport Adoption Center when operational.

**Synopsis:**

The feral cat volunteers participating in the current trap-neuter-release program have identified the need for this type of program. Currently, many of volunteers must stop their trapping/sterilization activities when kitten season starts because they begin trapping kittens to young to release. These kittens are fostered until old enough for adoption and then adopted out. The volunteers do not have enough time for both fostering and trapping thus slowing down the sterilization activities. This program would require kennel space for housing kittens until foster homes are secured, personnel to feed the animals and clean the kennel space, veterinary medical costs to support those who may be ill or injured, medical make-ready costs, sterilizations costs, and kitten adoption program support.

Note these are not cats that are currently entering the sheltering system and therefore the program would not directly impact sheltered animals. However, the trap-neuter-release program has had a significant impact on reduction in intake.

**Cost Analysis:**

**Veterinary Costs:**

Medical make-ready	\$54.14
Sterilization	\$50.00
Medical support	\$50.00
Per kitten veterinary cost	\$154.14
200 kitten veterinary cost	\$30,282
Part-time (0.5) coordinator	\$21,402
<b>Total for 200 kittens</b>	<b>\$52,230</b>

**Impact:**

200 kitten adoptions

Continued reduction of cat intake through enhanced sterilization efforts by volunteer trappers working to sterilize free roaming cats.

### **13) Public Awareness Campaign**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, we will organize a volunteer public relations task force to assist with the campaign.

The City of Austin will create, plan and implement an exciting seasonal public awareness campaign that focuses on key Animal Services programs.

The overall goal of the Campaign is to increase awareness and knowledge about actions and behaviors that collectively contribute to a humane community with respect to animal welfare. The public awareness campaign will work towards increasing live outcomes, and reducing shelter intake.

One of the many approaches the City of Austin will take as part of the public awareness campaign will be a re-design of the Animal Services Web site. In Spring 2010, the Animal Services Web site will be “refreshed” with a new look and feel, user-friendly architecture and links to new social media resources maintained by Animal Services staff.

The site will enable first time visitors and longtime friends of the Animal Center to connect immediately with the resources they seek, including adoption/fostering resources, lost/found help and options to volunteer/donate. Easily marketable and memorable URLs will be available including getapetnow.com and more.

Animal Services will also benefit from the complete City Web site redesign, sometime in 2011, when the preliminary user-based architecture will be rolled into the overall architecture of the entire City Web site. This will enable users to easily find Animal Services resources from any other resource on the City Web site.

#### **Cost Analysis:**

Advertising: \$45,000

Printing: \$8,000

#### **Impact:**

Increased awareness and participation in animal welfare programs.

### **14) Free Animal Sterilization Programs**

Fund one additional day of free sterilization services beginning in FY11, bringing the City program to 3 free days per week/50 weeks per year. Fund one additional day of free sterilization services beginning in FY13, bringing the City program to 4 free days per week/50 weeks per year.

#### **Synopsis:**

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- The City of Austin is currently investing \$214,500 from the General Fund budget to provide free sterilization services in neighborhoods where animal intake is high and access to sterilizations services is severely limited. This funding provides two free days per week/50 weeks per year. This program is fully utilized and pet owners are regularly turned away due to filled capacity.
- The City of Austin is investing \$133,500 from donated funds to provide targeted free sterilization services. These programs target animals at the highest risk of euthanasia if they were to enter the shelter and focus on providing services in service resistant neighborhoods.
- Travis County is currently investing \$50,000 to provide free sterilization services neighborhoods where animal intake is high and access to sterilizations services is severely limited.
- Animal Trustees of Austin provides free sterilization services to pets owned by homeless individuals.

**Cost Analysis:**

- FY11 \$120,000 (based on current contract rates)
- FY13 \$120,000 (based on current contract rates)

**Impact:**

- FY11 sterilize an additional 1,500 animals per year
- FY13 sterilize an additional 1,500 animals per year

**15) Feral Cat Sterilization**

Continue funding the feral cat sterilization voucher program at the current level of \$30,000.

**Synopsis:**

- The Austin Humane Society provides a feral cat sterilization program. The program provides 5,000 free sterilizations per year.
- The City provides \$30,000, per year, to provide feral cat sterilizations for cats that are injured and require sterilization at a full service veterinary clinic. This funding provides the sterilization surgery as well as treatment for the injury.

**Cost Analysis:**

\$30,000 (currently funded)

**Impact:**

- Provide 300 sterilizations and medical care
- Reduced cat intake

**16) Affordable Veterinary Care**

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Limited access to affordable veterinary care in the community is negatively impacting animal welfare and intake into the shelter. Animal Trustees of Austin (ATA) provides some level of affordable veterinary care to the low income community. During 2009, ATA served 33,597 animals. ATA provides affordable sterilizations, dental treatments, heart worm treatments, wellness services, and specialty surgeries. ATA is going to launch a capital campaign for a new facility that will begin to address some of this need in the community.

### **17) PARVO Prevention Program**

Create a PARVO Prevention Program that will reduce the death of puppies. The program will include:

- Provide free PARVO vaccinations at all rabies clinics.
- Provide free PARVO vaccinations at Emancipet and Animal Trustees of Austin during puppy season (February through May).
- Conduct a PARVO awareness campaign throughout puppy season.

#### **Synopsis:**

- Parvo is responsible for a large number of puppy deaths in the community. The disease is preventable through a vaccination protocol for puppies. Affordability of veterinary care and accessibility to veterinary care are barriers to this life saving vaccination.
- PARVO will be fatal to the puppy unless treated very quickly after onset of symptoms. Treatment of this highly contagious disease is expensive and, therefore, not affordable to many families in high-intake, low-income neighborhoods.
- Because this disease is highly contagious, euthanasia is likely if the infected animal enters a shelter.

#### **Cost Analysis:**

- \$5,500 for Rabies clinics program (100 puppies per clinic, 5 clinics, \$11 per shot)
- \$16,500 for vaccinations at Emancipet and ATA (300 per month for 5 months, \$11 per shot)

#### **Impact:**

- Reduced intake of sick animals that then create a risk for shelter populations
- Reduced euthanasia
- Reduced death of puppies in the community.

### **18) Pet Identification Ordinance**

Implement an ordinance requiring pet owners to keep visible identification on pets at all times.

#### **Synopsis:**

- The majority of stray dogs and cats that become homeless and enter the shelter do not have any form of identification.
- Animal Services proactively promotes the wearing of collars and identification through outreach/awareness activities. Additionally, Animal Services provides free collars in high-intake neighborhoods using donation funds.

Implement an ordinance requiring pet owners to keep visible identification on pets at all times.

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

#### **Impact:**

- Reduced intake due to field return-to-owners
- Increased return-to-owners from the shelter

### **19) Provide the Euthanasia List**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, expand opportunities for rescue groups to review the euthanasia list to identify animals that may be candidates for their program, similar to the current successful process utilized with Austin Pets Alive!. Staff will continue the current practice of making the euthanasia list available. Staff is working with partner groups who would like to pull animals from the euthanasia list to establish time extensions that suit their individual programs.

#### **Synopsis:**

The euthanasia list is available to all approved rescue group and shelter partners. However, many rescue group partners are focused on a specific breed or species of animal and utilize the website as a tool for identifying potential animals for their programs. Our shelter partners do review the euthanasia list when in the shelter making selections and/or walk the disposition list with Animal Services staff. Animal Services conducted a survey of approved partner rescue groups to determine which groups would be interested in reviewing the euthanasia list. Animal Services is currently working with those interested rescue groups to facilitate those groups' ability to review the euthanasia list and make expedient decisions regarding animals that might be suitable for their programs.

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

#### **Impact:**

Live outcomes

## 20) Last Resort Adoptions

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, provide a program where an owner or person in the community who surrenders an animal and wants to be the last resort to prevent the animal from being euthanized may put a hold on the animal.

### **Synopsis:**

Currently anyone who brings an animal into the shelter can indicate their interest in helping to save the animal by completing the adoption application and becoming an approved adopter. We then note their interest on the animal record and contact the potential adopter if the animal is not reclaimed. Additionally, if an individual wants to help save an animal but cannot adopt the animal, the person is referred to our approved rescue group list as a potential foster home.

**Staff Cost Analysis:** \$0

### **Impact:**

Live outcomes

## 21) Pit-Bull Task Force

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, continue to work closely with the Pit-Bull task Force, Love-A-Bull and other organizations interested in helping solve challenges associated with pit-bull type dogs

### **Synopsis:**

The pit-bull task force was created in FY08. It was modeled after the Hoarding Task Force which has been an effective tool for bringing together key stakeholders to coordinate both intervention and prevention activities. Out of the initial meetings came several ideas which have been implemented and are functioning successfully:

- Provision of animal sterilization services at rabies clinics targeted to pit-bull type dogs
- Spay Street neighborhood intervention program targeting services to pit-bull type dogs
- Partnership with Love-A-Bull to provide their program information to adopters of pit-bull type dogs

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

### **Impact:**

- Reduce intake
- Humane treatment of pit-bull type dogs
- Live outcomes

## 22) Microchip Animals Not Relinquished

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, continue the current program that provides free microchips to animals when the owner does decide not to relinquish in order to track success of program.

This is an activity the City currently does. When an owner decides not to relinquish an intact animal, the owner is provided a voucher for animal sterilization and a microchip. The vouchers are funded from the donation fund.

Additionally, the City is currently funding \$50,000 for free microchips for community animals. This program provides 8,300 free microchips per year. For altered animals that are not relinquished, the owner is offered a microchip for the animal utilizing microchips available from this program.

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

**Impact:**

Live outcomes if those pets become lost and enter the shelter at some point in the future.

## 23) Revamp the Animal Services Website

In Spring 2010, the Animal Services Web site will be “refreshed” with a new look and feel, user-friendly architecture and links to new social media resources maintained by Animal Services staff.

The site will enable first time visitors and longtime friends of the Animal Center to connect immediately with the resources they seek, including adoption/fostering resources, lost/found help and options to volunteer/donate. Easily marketable and memorable URLs will be available including getapetnow.com and more.

Animal Services will also benefit from the complete City Web site redesign sometime in 2011, when the preliminary user-based architecture will be rolled into the overall architecture of the entire City Web site. This will enable users to easily find Animal Services resources from any other resource on the City Web site.

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

**Impact:**

- Increased awareness and participation in animal welfare programs
- Increased awareness of how to find a lost pet
- Increased awareness of pets available for rehoming

## 24) Utilize 311 to Provide Pet Rehoming Options

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, Staff will develop a new section of the website dedicated to alternatives, tips, and options (including the APA! PASS Hotline) for rehoming a pet. 311 will be able to utilize this information, as well as, refer callers to the website.

311 will continue refer pet owners to the Animal Services website which provides access to a virtual behaviorist through the ASPCA, lists of approved rescue partners (including APA), and other pet retention tips.

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

**Impact:**

Reduced shelter intake and increased pet retention

## **25) Owner Surrender Acknowledgement**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, individuals that surrender their animal are currently required to sign an owner surrender form. The form includes an acknowledgement that the animal may be euthanized. Additionally, there is a very large bilingual sign in the receiving area describing the options available for surrendered pets (including euthanasia) and a scrolling reader board that provides statistics.

Additionally, we are recommending alternative strategies for accomplishing reducing owner relinquishments. These include a new owner surrender program, and a pet retention program that will provide early interventions. (See recommendations number 5 and 6 )

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

**Impact:**

Reduced shelter intake and increased pet retention

## **26) Animal Acclimation Program**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, create a task force made up of staff, rescue and volunteer groups to work with stray cats and dogs to acclimate them to the shelter environment. Fund a Behaviorist position to develop and coordinate this program. (See recommendation number 5.)

**Synopsis:**

The animal shelter environment is very stressful for cats. Cats may show aggression or highly fearful behaviors when first entering life in the shelter. Every effort has been made to reduce stress levels for the cats in how we house them, cleaning protocols, feeding protocols, etc. Additionally, we find that some cats can adjust to the shelter environment if given some additional time. One of the disposition protocols is to provide cats, that appear interested in human interaction but are exhibiting fear behaviors, with additional time to adjust to the environment. Additionally, we refer cats to our volunteer team for socialization and interaction to assist them in adjusting. This is especially helpful with kittens.

Dogs can be more reserved when entering the shelter and become more confident as they adjust to shelter life. This will often allow us to see a more accurate picture of the dog's temperament after a few days in the shelter. One of the disposition protocols available is to provide dogs that appear to be potential adoption candidates with additional time to adjust to the environment. Currently, we do not allow volunteers to interact with these animals

because we do not have the resources to thoroughly evaluate the dogs and coordinate a behavior intervention that will ensure the safety of the volunteer.

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

**Impact:**

Reduced stress for the animals leading to live outcomes

**27) Rescue Group Task Force**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, host a task force to examine any new opportunities for additional placement partners.

Currently, Animal Services has a full-time position that coordinates the placement of animals with partner agencies and rescue groups. This position also researches opportunities for new placement opportunities and recruits new groups.

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

**Impact:**

Increased rescue group participation leading to additional live outcomes

**28) Contact Reno, NV**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, City staff spoke with Mitch Schneider, Shelter Director for the Washoe County open intake shelter in order to identify additional opportunities to return animals to their homes. Based on that discussion, we will continue the field return-to-owner program already in place and the elimination of the night drop boxes in the new shelter. Additionally, we have recommended an ordinance mandating pet identification. (See recommendation number 18.)

**Synopsis:**

For FY09, the return-to-owner rate (as a percentage of stray animals) for Animal Services was 8% for cats and 36% for dogs.

Washoe County (Reno) indicates a return-to-owner rate of 37% for healthy and treatable animals. Feral cats are not counted in euthanasia rates or return-to-owner rates. They are considered wildlife.

Mitch Schneider indicated that their major focus in their return-to-owner efforts was on dogs. The following programs were discussed:

- Mandatory microchip requirement for pet owners.
- Pet owners who choose not to reclaim their pet from the shelter are issued a citation.
- No night drop box for owner surrenders. Only stray animals are accepted after hours.
- Field return-to-owner program.

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

**Impact:**

- Reduced intake due to field return-to-owners.
- Increased return-to-owners from the shelter.

**29) Software/Database Review**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, conduct a software/database review process in collaboration with the AAC and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

**Synopsis:**

The current shelter management software package was installed in 1999. The system is still supported by the vendor, so it is not considered a legacy system. There are other products available, although most other options are more suitable for smaller shelter operations. Like any software tool, this database has limitations that we must work around to accomplish business needs. Given the age of the system, a formal software review process should be conducted.

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

**30) New Measures**

The additional measures recommended by the AAC that are readily available will be added to the measures posted to the Animal Services website each month. Measures for any new policies or programs implemented will be developed as a part of the implementation process. These new measures would be posted to the website as well.

**Synopsis:**

The City currently tracks 26 measures in the performance database related to animal services provided in the community. In accordance with the City budgeting and business planning methodology, the measures are focused on outcomes and delivery of services to the community. The majority of the proposed measures are measuring procedures rather the outcomes achieved by the procedures or programs.

Approximately half of the proposed measures can be readily provided from data gathering that is currently in place. This additional data could be posted monthly to the Animal Services website along with the performance reports and donation reports now being posted monthly.

The other half of the recommended metrics are associated with procedures or policies recommended by the AAC but not yet been implemented. For new program or polices, the development of appropriate performance measures would be a part of the program design process or policy implementation policy.

**Cost analysis:** \$0

**31) Fee for Wildlife Relocation**

Implement a \$50 relocation fee for pest control companies that bring wildlife to the shelter for disposal.

**Synopsis:**

- Pest companies are bringing to the shelter healthy wildlife that they have trapped for their customers. The City takes these animals back to their territory so that they will not be euthanized. This fee would be an incentive for the pest companies to be more proactive in assisting their customers with resolving the wildlife issue they are experiencing rather than unnecessarily disrupting healthy wildlife.
- Individuals also trap wildlife and bring them to the shelter. These animals are also returned to their home territory.

**Cost Analysis:**

Costs: \$0

Revenues \$6,500

**Impact:**

Reduce wildlife intake by 130

**32) Intake Fee**

Implement a \$160 intake fee for other jurisdictional agencies (outside of Travis County) that bring animals to the shelter for sheltering and disposition.

**Cost Analysis:**

Costs: \$0

Revenues \$16,000

**Impact:**

Reduce intake by 100 animals

**33) Feral Cat Food Bank Location**

Consistent with the AAC recommendations, a partner organization (or private sector) should provide a location to house a food bank for feral-cat colony managers to access cat food on a regular basis.

**Synopsis:**

The feral cat volunteers participating in the current trap-neuter-release program have identified the need for this type of program. Currently, many of volunteers feed their colonies on a daily basis. While regular feeding is not a requirement of an effective trap-neuter-release program, many of the feral cat volunteers continue feeding after the trapping activities have been completed. The program would require a facility for food storage and distribution, source for food (funding or regular donations), and program coordination

(eligibility certification, donor solicitation, inventory management, verifying property owner permission, etc.).

This type of program, if operated by the City, would raise concerns with citizens that are opposed to free roaming cats.

**Cost Analysis:** \$0

## **AAC Recommendations Not Included**

### **1) Release stray cats that are not adopted in the community after they have been sterilized.**

#### **Staff Analysis:**

City staff does not impound stray cats. All stray cats are brought into the sheltering system by good Samaritans. In general, the following concerns drive citizens to bring cats into the shelter:

- Fear for the animals' safety (predation, might be hit by car, dog attack, etc.)
- The animal is friendly and may have an owner looking for it
- The animal is a nuisance in the neighborhood (property damage, breeding uncontrolled, etc.)
- Fear of disease being spread in the neighborhood that might affect pets or humans
- Concerns about cat predation on indigenous wildlife species

A policy decision to release sheltered cats into neighborhoods should consider the above noted issues and concerns.

**Staff Recommendation:** Due to the concerns noted above, staff does not recommend the release of sheltered stray cats into neighborhoods. Strategies throughout the implementation plan will contribute to the reduction of euthanasia for stray cats.

### **2) Impose an immediate and permanent moratorium on the killing of any animal (except for humane reasons or aggression validated by a behaviorist) when there are empty cages and kennels.**

#### **Staff Analysis:**

The open intake shelter must maintain empty cages at all times to accommodate incoming animals.

Euthanasia at an open intake shelter is not just a factor of cage space. In FY09, 7,003 animals (all species) were euthanized. Of those, 52% of the euthanasia was necessary due to aggression, to eliminate the suffering of the animal, or for rabies testing. The remaining 3,380 animals euthanized were categorized as unnecessary euthanasia. Of these 3,380 animals, 2,902 had behavior problems or medical problems that were impediments to placement. Extending the length of stay for these animals without any intervention to

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resolve their medical and/or behavior needs will not result in improved placement opportunities and may lead to inhumane conditions for the population as a whole.

Veterinary considerations regarding humane housing and care for animals in any shelter environment are as follows:

- Effective population management requires a plan for intentionally managing each animal's shelter stay that takes into consideration the capacity and ability to provide humane, standardized care. Active population management requires an appreciation that capacity for care has limits for every organization.
- Length of stay has a dramatic effect on the experience and needs of animals in shelter care. The intensity of care and enrichment provided to sheltered animals must be appropriate to the length of stay.
- Population dynamics and flow through must be controlled to ensure a balance between intake, live release and other outcomes that will maintain daily population within the carrying capacity of the shelter. Increasing average or median lengths of stay contributes to increasing daily population and capacity requirements.
- Adequate ventilation is essential for comfort and for limiting spread of infectious diseases. Increasing population density within a given space will require a higher ventilation rate.
- Stress has a profound effect on an animal's immune system. Stress causes increases in the circulating cortisol levels of an animal. Cortisol acts to depress the immune system. Chronic stress lowers the animal's immune system making them more susceptible to disease. Research shows that each day an animal spends in a shelter environment increase their risk of disease by 5%. Increased population density increases the sound levels and human traffic within an area, both of which are significant stresses to the animals housed in the area.
- Primary enclosures should exceed minimum dimensions and allow expression of a full range of an animal's normal postural and behavioral repertoire. An animal should be able to turn freely, stand easily, sit, stretch, move head, be able to eliminate with normal posture. Animals should have a choice of locations for resting vs. interaction and the ability to retreat when tired or fearful. An animal should be able to eliminate in a separate area from where they eat and sleep. They should have ample sunlight and frequent air exchange with fresh outside air.
- Problem behaviors are likely to be seen in animals that are housed for prolonged periods of time or in poorly enriched environments, but the stress of even short-term confinement can compromise both physical and behavioral health, negatively impacting animal welfare.

Stressors affecting animal health in a shelter environment:

- Sounds – increases with increased capacity
- Air quality – decreases with increased capacity
- Lack of exercise/movement – inappropriate housing for period of confinement

- Constant visual stimulation- strange people, new animals coming in, high human traffic flow by public and staff
- Lack of social interaction with familiar people and animals, animals are most relaxed with people/animals they know
- Changes in temperature
- Lack of enrichment activity
- Poor control of light/dark cycles

**Staff Recommendation:**

The new facility will greatly improve environmental conditions for the animals.

Staff is committed to the goal of limiting euthanasia to the euthanasia that is required for medical, behavioral, or aggression reasons. Current practices flex cage space requirements and animal hold times, as seasonal demand fluctuates, in order to maximize live outcomes. However, a blanket moratorium could be counter productive and not in the best interests of the entire shelter population.

**3) Outsource to Austin Pets Alive the animal adoption program, including medical work-up services for adopted animals.**

**Staff Analysis:**

Outsourcing options should be considered using standard city procurement processes.

**Staff Cost Analysis**

Cost analysis of outsourcing options should be conducted using standard city procurement processes.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends outsourcing options be considered using standard city procurement processes.

We recommend beginning with a solicitation of proposals for operation of Davenport Building adoption center when it becomes available in 2011. (See recommendation number 2.)

**4) Allow Austin Pets Alive to have volunteers present at TLAC intake area to freely converse, after approved City of Austin volunteer training, with owners regarding alternatives to shelter surrender. City should provide \$40,000 to APA for a coordinator.**

**Staff Analysis:**

This proposal recommends that shelter visitors first be greeted and interact with APA volunteers before speaking with City staff regarding the relinquishment of their pet.

Staff agrees that discussion with owners who are considering relinquishment of their pets is important. That is why they are currently counseled about alternative solutions by City staff. Pet owners that indicate an interest in APA services are referred to the APA PASS program

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hotline. However, experience shows that once an animal has actually arrived at the shelter it is unlikely that the pet owner will leave the shelter with the animal.

The exceptions to this are animals that are brought in because of lack of money for needed medical care (usually trauma related). With these animals, we often find a high level of commitment to the animal and can help keep the animal in its home if we have funding available to assist with the medical issue.

In FY09, \$50,000 was available from the donation fund to assist these animals. In FY10, \$31,890 is available from donation funds to assist ill/injured animals so that they can stay in their home. Additionally, Animal Trustees of Austin fund raises in order to provide approximately \$50,000 of assistance to injured/ill animals at-risk of euthanasia.

Funds available from both organizations do not meet the need in the community. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty estimates that there are 80,000 pets in Travis County living in poverty. Any trauma or serious illness for the animals that requires veterinary treatment will not be affordable for the family.

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff agrees with the concept of reducing owner relinquishment of animals. However, based on our experience, we are recommending alternative strategies for accomplishing this goal. Staff recommendations include emergency veterinary care funding to families in need. This recommendation provides veterinary assistance to allow owners to keep their pet rather than relinquishing the animal when they cannot afford trauma care. A new owner surrender program will provide immediate and direct feedback to each pet owner regarding the probability of rehoming if they choose to owner surrender the animal. A pet retention program that will provide early interventions will be developed. Elements will include interventions to keep pit-bull type dogs in their homes, affordable dog obedience classes, puppy classes, etc. (See recommendations number 5, 6, and 11)