

Summary of

Assessment Report and Recommendations for a Successful and Sustainable Future



On-site assessment conducted
November 18 – 20, 2014

Report submitted to the Board of
Directors February 26, 2015



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About Humane Network and the Consulting Team

Humane Network's Mission

We are committed to dramatically and responsibly increasing animal lifesaving by helping you create sustainable results. We offer personalized consulting, practical information, model programs, and networking opportunities to humane organizations, animal services agencies, rescue groups, and concerned citizens.

We help you or your organization:

- Achieve your lifesaving goals through responsible, sustainable strategies.
- Provide services to your communities with dependability and quality customer service.
- Involve your communities in helping create and sustain positive change.
- Employ sound business practices and technologies to increase efficiencies and effectiveness.

An Experienced Team

- Humane Network is the only consulting team in the U.S. who has created and sustained a community-wide live release rate of over 92% for dogs and cats for five years.
- Our lead consultants are experts in the fields of non-profit management, facilitation, animal shelter operations and field services, and animal behavior.
- Our two principal consultants have over 35 combined years of experience in the animal welfare field.
- Our expert consultants bring years of experience in the areas of animal services, field services, animal behavior, and shelter medicine.

Consulting Team

Bonney Brown, President and Principal Consultant

Diane Blankenburg, CEO and Principal Consultant

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About this Assessment

Humane Network conducted an assessment of ACCT Philly operational functions and programs for both animal sheltering and field services (including an onsite visit on November 18 – 20, 2015). The assessment focused on the current reality, as well as recommendations that foster a culture of continuous improvement, maximize lifesaving results, and help guide strategies for the future.

Our goal was to assist ACCT Philly in their efforts to increase their live-release rate while also building a strong, efficient, and sustainable organization. Toward that end, we looked at many aspects of the organization's work and operations.

Major areas reviewed by the consulting team include:

- Intake
- Animal flow
- Outcomes/live release
- Veterinary services
- Field services
- Programs including adoptions, foster care, etc.
- Marketing, development, and community outreach
- Customer services
- Volunteer and Rescue Group program
- Resources—staffing levels, finances, etc.



- Facility and animal housing

The consultants' activities included:

- Research of agency and community and general preparation for assessment and interviews.
- Review and analysis of over 90 ACCT Philly documents, policies, protocols, and records.
- Multiple in-depth interviews in person and by phone with executive leadership, managers, key staff, volunteers, and board members.
- Surveys of volunteers, rescue group partners and board members.
- Onsite visit by three consultants including extensive observation of staff at work.
- Analysis of financial and animal data provided.

An assessment of a dynamic organization, like ACCT Philly, provides a snap shot in time. In the verbal debrief to management following the site visit, several of the recommendations were already under consideration and some already in progress. Still others have been implemented since the site visit.

About the Community

Facts about the City of Philadelphia

- Population: 1.55 million people
- Land mass: 134 square miles
- Ethnically diverse community
- Median household income: \$30,746,
- Median family income: \$37,036
- Poverty level: 26.5% of the population is living below the poverty level
- 36% of households do not have an automobile; higher than most other American cities



About ACCT Philly

Quick facts about Animal Care and Control Team (ACCT Philly)

- ACCT Philly assumed operations from the Pennsylvania SPCA in April 2012.
- Mission is to provide shelter, care, and lifesaving efforts for homeless, abandoned, and abused animals and protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Philadelphia, providing a benefit to all of the citizens of the City regardless of race or economic status.
- Operates out of a 19,000 sq. foot section of a city-owned facility in North Philadelphia, which it shares with Vector Control.
- Handles between 28,000 and 30,000 animals annually.
- Animal admissions are 19 animals per 1,000 residents. This is higher than the national average of 14 animals per 1,000 residents.
- Historically, 20,000 of these have been cats; cats are nearly 60% of intake.
- 40% of canines arriving at the shelter are pit-bull type dogs.
- Provides field services/stray rescue, code enforcement, animal sheltering, owner surrender and adoption services, and basic veterinary care for the animals in their care.
- Very limited budget—\$3.9 million which comes from a combination of city contract fees and donations from the public.
- Has embraced the public push to save more lives. This focus in Philadelphia dates back to 2004 when media coverage and public pressure launched a push for Philadelphia to become a “no-kill city.” A “no-kill” community is commonly understood to mean that a community’s animal shelters are saving all the healthy and treatable animals. A 90% live-release rate is generally accepted as a bench mark. This recognizes that some animals will be too sick or injured to be saved and that some dogs will be too aggressive to be safely rehomed.
- Open each and every day of the year for pet adoptions.
- Live-release rate has steadily increased under the current leadership.

2014 Results

- Live-release rate: Hit a record high of 72%, up from 65% in 2013.
- Euthanasia: 7,383 (26% of incoming animals of all types) down from 10,355 in 2013, a 29% decrease.
- Adoptions: 8,201 placements, a 24% increase over 2013.
- Animal admissions: 27,990, down from a high of 32,264 in 2012.
- Foster care: 3,887 animals went through the foster care program—14% of total annual animal shelter population.
- Shelter admissions: Dropped by 9% from 2013 for a six-year low.
- Return-to-owner (RTO—animals reunited with their families): Hit an all-time high of 1,040 animals.
- Adoption returns: 9% (3% return rate within 30 days. 5% return rate for over 30 days); 724 animals out of 8,201 adoptions. There is no precise industry standard for the time frame used in calculating returns, but many organizations use the 30-day mark. The current adoption return percentage of 9% is below the 12% to 14% that is sometimes cited as the national average.



Other 2014 Accomplishments

- Opening of Everyday Adoption Center (EAC) in PetSmart Plymouth Meeting
- Creation of kitten nursery
- Pets for Life program
- Shelter-Neuter-Return for feral cats
- Online dog licensing
- Lost and Found Pets Philadelphia on Facebook
- Safe at Home program



Assessment

Facility

Main Shelter

Dog capacity: 180 large dog kennels, 21 small dog kennels

Cat capacity: 5 rooms, total about 200

The facility has several serious drawbacks that make the work considerably more challenging and they include:

- Lack of space in general to perform critical functions
- Single large room for dogs—problematic for disease control and noise level
- Negative public perception with presence of Vector Control sign
- Lack of office space
- Lack of isolation space for treatable but contagious animals
- Entry reception area: potential adopters and people surrendering pets in same space poses infection control challenges
- Limited number of sinks for hand washing and sanitation
- Lack of space for a volunteer office
- Lack of separate space for safe transfers of incoming animals



Every Day Adoption Center

Dog capacity: 17

Cat capacity: 12 – 24

Adoption Center Addition/Renovation

Petco Foundation has funded an adoption center re-design, an addition to the front of the shelter.

- 2,000 sq. ft, \$750,000 to build
- Features will include:
 - Separate entrance for intake and adoption
 - Redesign of all animal areas, including:
 - Double-sided dog kennels
 - Cat meet and greet area
 - New intake area
- Paved lot
- Vector Control relocation

These are excellent improvements to the facility and they encompass most of the recommendations we have made.



Staffing

There are 80 staff members, including 12 humane officers.

Staff comments on staffing issues included the following recurring themes:

- Frequent challenges in keeping up with the volume of work—cleaning, caring for animals, keeping up with data entry/paperwork and supporting existing programs
- Insufficient staff to cover being open 16 hours a day
- Extreme difficulties in the event of any absence
- Lack of time for staff training
- Additional veterinary care needed
- Sometimes tense atmosphere due to work load



RECOMMENDATIONS: Staffing levels are low across the board. Areas where more staff may make a substantial difference are:

- A third full-time veterinarian
- Nursing/vet assistant staff
- Customer service staff to help customers in the lobby
- Field service staff

The role of the Operations Director is very diverse. Recommend restructuring and rearranging responsibilities as follows:

Executive Director

Operations Director (transfer some responsibilities to others)

Community Programs Director (would need to promote someone or recruit and hire)

Field Services Director (exists as a manager level staffer)

There is some additional analysis on staffing and funding levels in the Appendix.

Staff was utilizing the slower winter months to review all processes and procedures and bring them up-to-date. Additionally, plans for moving toward surrender by appointment were underway.

RECOMMENDATIONS: We recommend moving forward with the plan to implement Surrender by Appointment, which is also sometimes called Managed Admissions. It has many advantages and is rapidly becoming a best-practice in the animal welfare field. The benefits include:

- Improved customer service.
- Improved animal care, as staff can be scheduled to handle the critical intake process on a timely basis. Vaccinating animals within minutes of arrival at the shelter has been shown to reduce illness.
- It also allows time for people to pursue alternatives to surrendering their pets.

(Additional information provided in the Appendix.)

Communication

Communication is a common challenge. Common themes in staff comments include:

- The free app called Trello has helped to improve communication.
- Desire for:
 - More time for management and all-staff meetings
 - Additional communication and follow up regarding animals in need of care
 - Need more integrated cross department goals/projects
 - More time for training
 - Greater clarity on strategies

RECOMMENDATIONS: Targeted routine meetings both for staff and volunteers with a clear agenda and skilled communications-oriented chairperson for the meeting. Currently, staff is so busy keeping up with basics that time for these kinds of meetings and non-urgent communication seems like a distant luxury. This could fall under the role of a new Community Programs Director.

Customer Service

Several managers stated: “Customer service is a priority.” From everything we heard, we believe that this is a top priority for leadership and management, but that it suffers from lack of staff/resources.

Recurring themes in observations in the front lobby

- Long wait periods and as many as 16 clients waiting at one time without explanation or greeting.
- Lack of basic customer service awareness/practices by frontline staff.
- Lack of complete and clear communications with clients.
- Explanations, additional information or encouragement rarely offered.
- Appearance of the area could be improved; this will be remedied with planned renovations.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Critically need increased staffing in the lobby/reception area when there is a line.
- Provide customer service training and/or ensure that people working the front desk are compulsively friendly and helpful people who cannot help but go the extra distance.
- Some greeting or instruction/information is needed when people enter.
- Reinforce good client decisions with genuine gratitude.
- Engage people in positive interaction and encourage solutions that will save lives.



Managing Calls

At the time of our visit, management was re-designing the phone tree. The redesign was to be guided by the following:

- Tallying current call types
 - Status of animals (50 to 100 a day)
 - Pick up animals (50 to 100 a day)
 - Cruelty (up to 50 a day)
 - Misdirected calls (50 a day)
- Prioritizing calls and establishing new guidelines for response.

Programs

Project Kitten: The kitten nursery is a significant contributing factor to the increased lifesaving. This creative use of space to keep vulnerable kittens apart from other animals in the shelter and the pleasing look and atmosphere are well done.

Return to Field (RTF) also called Shelter-Neuter-Return (SNR):

- The *Cat Programs, Policy and Procedures* document is very well done.
- Cats are nearly 60% of intake.
- Historically, adult cats, especially those that are under socialized, shy or feral, have a low adoption rate at this shelter.
- More than 70 cats arrive at the shelter each day in the summer months.
- RTO rates are also historically low at 1% or less.
- Studies show that the cat's best chance at returning to their home is through being returned to the field, rather than held in a shelter.
- Logic tells us that if the cat is out there and doing well (in good physical condition) that they are getting what they need (food, etc.) from somewhere.
- Dr. Kate Hurley of UC Davis and Dr. Julie Levy of the University of Florida are spearheading a national effort that has the endorsement of nearly all large, national animal welfare organizations (HSUS, ASPCA, Maddie's Fund, Best Friends and many others). More information on the program can be found at www.millioncatchallenge.org. This site contains helpful information on managed admissions, surrender prevention, and removing barriers to adoption, as well as RTF/SNR.
- There are some volunteer and staff questioning and concerns about how cats are selected for this program. This can be addressed with a meeting that airs concerns and gets everyone on the same page about the goals of the program. The creation of a matrix or checklist for decision-making is recommended. Discussion and understanding that the outcome for cats held in the shelter may not be optimal can help people consider alternatives in a new light.



Safe at Home: The Safe at Home program helps approximately 10% of the cats. This wonderful program encourages people to take cats they have found back home with them—rather than surrendering them at the shelter. They can pick the cats up next day after they are neutered at no cost. This is an excellent example of a surrender prevention program. This program could benefit from the surrender by appointment plan, as ideally people will be told about the program when they call for an appointment and generally, it is easier to work with people to keep pets out of the shelter before they arrive at the shelter.



Foster Care: This program has seen very substantial growth over the past year and should be a source of great pride for ACCT Philly. We also feel that this is an area into which ongoing effort will continue to increase results. Several staff members and volunteers made similar remarks and provided the following ideas to help increase the number of willing foster homes:

- More resources for foster caregivers (crates, supplies, medications, etc.)
- Behavior resources to help with any problems

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Continue to grow this effort with a brigade of volunteers to foster senior animals and cats with upper respiratory infections (essentially a feline cold) to enable more of these animals to be saved.
- Seek additional grant funding and in-kind donations to support the foster care program.
- Ongoing recruitment and advertising for new foster care volunteers.
- Recruit and train key volunteers be available to assist with foster caregiver concerns.
- Review all current programs in terms of lifesaving return. Focus on the most productive programs. There are many creative and appealing programs in place, a few, including a couple that are volunteer favorites, appear to have limited return. The goal would be to redirect volunteers engaged in these into more effective programs.

Adoptions

Staff includes:

- 4 managers, 6 counselors
- 4 counselors and 1 kennel attendant at the Everyday Adoption Center

Adoption Process:

1. Potential adopters enter lobby and are sent to adoption office by front desk staff.
2. Adoption counselors send people to adoptable viewing rooms.
3. Once they select a pet, they go back to adoption office.
4. They complete a brief verbal questionnaire.
5. They may meet with the animals again.
6. Front desk processes paperwork, fees, and provides guidance.
7. Adopter must return to shelter and pick up the pet after it is spayed or neutered. This may take up to three days but usually next day. In the winter, some pets are fixed ahead of time.



The latest best practices in terms of favoring information and support over intensive grilling as part of the adoption process have been embraced by ACCT Philly. There is some volunteer concern that appears to be based upon a lack of understanding of the shortcomings of past adoption screening practices and the power of building the adopter/pet connection and sharing animal behavior information in creating more successful bonds that result in more lasting adoptions. Additional information will be provided in the Appendix.

One staff member comment about adoptions: “Good not being judgmental; open, but not reckless” accurately reflects our impression of the adoption process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

While not possible with current staffing, it would be ideal to get pets fixed in advance so that they can go home immediately. More veterinary staff or veterinary volunteers may be needed, but as intake declines, this may become more manageable.

Shelter Operations

This is a high-volume shelter. This alone is challenging, but given the space, limited resources, and low staffing levels, the challenge is significantly compounded.

Given these challenges, the work of the management and staff and most specifically, the results they achieve, are nothing short of remarkable. Our recommendations should be considered within this light.

Animal Care

The many checklists and protocols are well done. It is clear to us that the intention of management is to maintain a very high standard of animal care.



While management descriptions of cleaning protocols are 100% on target, staff practice sometimes seems to miss the mark. Managers do not have time to monitor performance and training is spotty—all due to limited staffing levels.

The shelter suffers from understaffing (relative to the number of animals handled) to the degree that managers are often juggling multiple tasks and doing hands-on work hence they do not have sufficient time to monitor and coach staff.

Intake

This area was currently under review by the shelter staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Complete the update of the intake process (addressing challenges listed below) well in advance of the coming spring increase in animal intake. Processing incoming animals must be done on a timely basis, for this reason, the updated process should include time-frame benchmarks/goals for various aspects of the process. (Note: This is underway by the Operations Director and a staff committee.)

Intake challenges to be addressed include:

- Cleaning of common areas, including walls.
- Supply restocking.
- Marking clean cages and those still in need of cleaning.
- Select a few volunteers to work with cats in the intake room who are stressed and need time to adjust (TTA).
- Review checklists with and get feedback from new frontline staff to be sure that the intent of each point is very clear and easy to understand.



Cleaning and Sanitation

RECOMMENDATIONS: More training and ongoing monitoring is needed. This will require more appropriate staffing levels so that managers have time to monitor performance.

Other protocols to be included in staff retraining:

- Final cleaning of cages when cats or dogs are adopted, euthanized or otherwise will not be returning to the same cage is often called “terminal cleaning.” Very thorough cleaning is essential.
- Strict “one use” policy on cat dens—use once, then clean.
- Gain acceptance by staff of “cleaning in place” or spot cleaning for cats, as recommended by UC Davis (a copy of this protocol will be included in the Appendix). Monitor staff for compliance.
- Top-down cleaning of kennels and the removing all debris.
- Implement a “15-minute poop rule” to ensure that all cages and kennels are free of feces and urine.

Admission Hours

At the time of our visit the lobby closed at 10:00 pm and adoptions ended at 8:00 pm. Staff was on hand for 24-hour intake. (This has changed since our site visit.)



RECOMMENDATIONS: Reduced hours for admissions and some other night services in order to re-allocate staffing to help ensure that critical tasks can be completed during the busiest times of the day. (Hours have been reduced since our site visit.)

Best practices in shelters is currently moving toward managed admissions and efforts to keep animals in homes and out of shelters whenever possible. While ideally our nation’s animal shelters are safe havens, in reality, they are stressful places for animals—stress alone can cause illness—and all too often outcomes are not what we all hope (this is true of most shelters). The extended hours for admissions that were being maintained at ACCT are very rare.

The reason to shorten admission hours at ACCT is even more compelling because of the very limited resources with which they operate. The precious staff time at night ends up serving relatively few animals. In short, it makes no sense to staff the shelter into the night when the shelter is so very understaffed during the day. Staff time is urgently needed to seek lifesaving alternatives for the animals, including adoption and rescue, as well as provide animal care.

The benefits to the animals will include more staff time during the day to engage in work that will reduce length of stay, reduce needless admissions, and increase lifesaving. Ideally, as animals are placed more quickly, their need for attention will be met in their new homes.

See the Appendix for an analysis of hours at other open-admission animal services shelters. Current hours are still longer than many shelters we work with and several noted in the document provided.

Return to Owner

This is an area that has seen substantial growth in the past year. There potential for continued improvement in this area. Approaches to consider include: promoting billing options for redemption fees, giving management staff lee-way to reduce or waive fees, and leaving posters in the field when an animal is picked up by officers.

Euthanasia

The euthanasia process, as it is outlined and described by management, is sensible and appropriate. However, in practice, there seems to be some confusion for both staff and volunteers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Euthanasia decision-making. Convene separate meetings where staff and key volunteers can share concerns, perceived disconnects, and hopes for the future in this area. Create a management-approved clear matrix or selection process with specific guidelines to help guide daily decisions.
- Lifesaving program eligibility. A related matter is the issue of which animals are eligible for lifesaving programs (such as foster care, rescue group placement, and veterinary care which may include medication to be provided to a foster caregiver or rescue group). The limited veterinary staff may make this challenging—especially in the busier months. However, a discussion could be helpful to explore possibilities of what would be needed to make the desired changes so that more animals could fall into the “treatable” category and be a part of the various lifesaving programs. It is worth noting that there may be grant funding and significant individual donor support available to fund such efforts at expanding lifesaving



capacity. Once staff is clear on these policies and how they will be put into practice, it may be beneficial to share this information with volunteers.

Canine Evaluations

- A modified SAFER test is used for dogs over 30 lbs. or if needed by rescue groups. This has been well established and seems to be done well by the evaluator, who is knowledgeable. However, the staff is not able to keep up with the volume of dogs in need of evaluations. One component of the evaluation that may bear reconsideration is the dog-to-dog assessment, which has not been performed routinely. Rescue groups frequently cite the need for this information before selecting a dog.
- The volunteer program to help with evaluations seems to be a good concept.
- Ideally, a full evaluation would be conducted. We recommend the Modified Assess-a-Pet evaluation as a study has shown that it is most effective at accurately identifying canine aggression. However, at the present time, staffing levels do not permit anything more than what is currently being done.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Dog Play Groups. The dog evaluator is also trying to run play groups. This time may be better spent staying focused on keeping up with evaluations and getting dogs out of the shelter to rescue groups or adoptive homes. A shorter length of stay reduces the need for a play group program.
- Cat Test: The “cat test” for dogs should be revisited. As it is described in the training documents, it may be able to be done humanely by skilled staff, but staff and volunteers reported that it is not always done in this way and there is legitimate concern for the well-being of the cats used for this test.
 - If continued, the cage used must be cleaned thoroughly between cats for infection control.
 - Purchase a “FurReal Lulu Kitty animated plush interactive cat, white by Hasbro” on Ebay. An older upright/seated model is best and it is important to select one that works. These work well and create a humane alternative.
 - Any “cat test” in the shelter is not going to be 100% reliable, therefore, it is very important not to give adopters a false sense of security. Anyone adopting a dog or a cat when they already have a dog needs counseling on how to safely introduce a new dog and cat. The information should include advice on not leaving cats (or small dogs) alone with another new (or existing) dog until they are sure that they get along very well. The dog should be kept leashed during the adjustment period to ensure safety of smaller animals.



Vet Services

Staff includes:

- Manager who oversees protocols, controlled substances, staff, processes/procedures, scheduling, and disciplinary actions
- Two full-time vets
- 12 nurses (vet techs that cover 4 shifts), 5 of them are full surgical nurses

Clinic provides:

- Wellness for foster animals
- Vet checks
- Spay/Neuter, which they see as their primary focus; they are very efficient—in past two months, over 1,000 s/n surgeries (no public s/n services other than the Safe at Home program services)
- Training for students from University of Pennsylvania

There is limited time and resources to help animals with illness or injury, but resources include:

- Stella Fund—donor allocated funds for special medical needs
- Philadoptables (private non-profit)—targeted help
- Negotiating with PAWS for funding some surgeries

There is a lack of buy-in on some specific agency policies from some influential clinical staff. For example, there is some reluctance among some clinical staff to see senior pets as adoptable. While this is understandable historically, the hope is that in time this can be proven to be untrue in this community, as it has been in others that achieve 90% live-release rates. There are people who want to adopt senior cats and dogs, though they may require a bit more time in the shelter and more targeted marketing. There is staff, volunteer, and rescue group interest in seeing this reluctance addressed and increasing the number of senior animals that are helped. These animals can also generate considerable donations for their care.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Achieve clarity on standard of care for senior pets. (Everyone in the clinic is not on the same page with management regarding saving/helping these animals.) Consider discussing differences between clinical staff, leadership and animal care management and seeking some kind of common ground or at least an agreement on what services are offered and why. Additionally, work together to develop a path for increased lifesaving in this area.

Lifesaving Efforts

Lifesaving staff focuses on:

- Write-ups/photos for urgent animals
- Rescue contact—call rescues directly to sell individual animals
- Re-launched Project Pet: volunteers work on positive clicker training with dogs
- Foster homes in need of behavior resources



Opportunities and challenges:

- UTI cats are very hard for them to place with rescues.
- Senior cats—more could be saved if ACCT Philly provided some limited medication and diagnostics for these cats.
- Need additional veterinary staffing to get more of the animals out alive.
- Staffing levels make it difficult to keep up with volume of animals in need of placement.
- The canine evaluation doesn't include dog-meet-dog which makes it harder for rescue to commit to taking the dogs, as most provide care in foster homes that already have dogs.

Field Services

Dispatch & Field Observations

Dispatch is currently handled in-house, as opposed to police dispatch or centralized city complaint center. This is preferable for two reasons:

- Provides a higher level of customer service as citizens reach a topic expert upon initial contact.
- Can ensure that responding officers have complete information, thereby further enhancing customer service and field services efficiency.

PetPoint is the software program that is currently being utilized and while it has some limitations, it is a cost-effective program that is adequate for the task with respect to dispatching officers to citizen complaints and requests for assistance. Unfortunately, officers do not have internet-capable devices in their vehicles and as such are not able to take full advantage of the efficiencies that the dispatch program offers. Officers currently receive their calls-for-service (CFS) via cell phones.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

Field Operations

Equipment Enhancement:

- Install internet-capable tablets in officer vehicles, utilizing the cellular carrier with the best coverage for the geographic area for increased efficiency and effectiveness.
- Install GPS in officer vehicles and provide dispatch with a designated monitor solely for viewing officer locations to aide in assigning calls for service (CFS), especially high priority CFS.
- Provide dog snares for officer use in the field, it is an invaluable tool for officers and a much more efficient device for capturing shy dogs, dogs on the run and even when dealing with mildly fractious dogs (use of protective bite sleeve recommended).



Review Call Priority:

- Review the prioritizing of CFS to effectively respond to CFS in order of true importance. Generally speaking, dog-at-large CFS should receive a high priority response:
 - Dogs running at large pose a threat to public safety due to both the potential to bite someone, or attack another animal, as well as the potential to enter traffic and cause an accident.
 - They are a notable animal welfare concern since "hit-by-car" is the number one cause of accidental death in dogs.
 - Responding in a timely manner also increases the odds of locating the owner, which can reduce animal intake.
 - A timely response can also help to reduce the likelihood of repeat complaints for the same problem.
- Ensure officers call and inform the complainants of their efforts on CFS as it improves customer satisfaction and can increase the potential to gather additional information regarding pet owner identity, when needed, which may help reduce animal intake.

Officer Safety:

- Officer safety is important and while officers were wearing protective vests, they appeared lax about using cell phones while driving (without using a hands-free device) and did not wear their seatbelts: both pose a much greater threat to their safety, statistically.
- A protective bite sleeve is an important piece of safety equipment for officers when dealing with an aggressive dog or lifting a dog (especially one that's injured) to load it in a vehicle. It can also reduce back injuries as it allows the officer to lift properly when loading a dog into the vehicle. A PowerPoint presentation showing its use and benefits will be provided as part of the Appendix.
- Field vehicles should have adequate warning lights for officer safety and the safety of other motorists. A full light bar is preferred but can be cost prohibitive. A less costly alternative would be to install LED strobes on the headlights and taillights; average cost is less than \$500.

Staffing and Time-Saving Efficiencies:

- Staggering officer shift starting times consistent with hourly CFS statistics to create the heaviest staffing for the busiest times of the day, typically 11:00 am-7:00pm for most agencies and until 10:00 pm during peak summer months.
- Consider creating a Field Assistant position. This is similar to what many law enforcement agencies have done for many years. Police departments commonly have a non-sworn position to handle the tasks that require less skill and training, commonly called a Community Service Officer, or something similar. In animal services work, this person could be trained to handle dead animal pickups, contained animals, traps, assisting officers and other minor duties. Departments find they can generally staff five assistants for the same cost as three officers, a noticeable savings in challenging economic times. On average, most departments discover that

about half of the CFS can be handled by assistants. Additionally, this position can be cross-trained to help in the shelter and the office when needed.

- Consider limiting night time officer and dispatch staffing and replace with an on-call officer.
- Provide transfer cages for officers to use to avoid the officer time and vehicle costs associated with having to return traps to their owners.
- Officer vehicles should be equipped with supplies for minor fence repair (hammer, nails, wire, wire cutter, etc.) as this can reduce impounds and increase officer efficiency.

General Enforcement Tone Recommendations

While issuing citations is an important element of enforcement, if used excessively it reduces public support and increases animal surrenders/abandonment. It is widely accepted in law enforcement that increasing the odds of being caught for committing a violation has more impact on altering behavior than harsh penalties do. Therefore, to reduce violations, an agency must maximize efficiency in responding to violations, such as dogs-at-large, in a timely manner and not simply increase penalties for violations. In the enforcement of animal regulations, it should also be understood that, unlike with vehicle violations, a dog has a mind of its own and can outrun most owners. As such, the enforcement approach in animal control should be applied differently and should be more educational based, with a high percentage of written warnings, as opposed to frequently issuing citations. Issuing multiple citations to a pet owner during a violation contact should be reserved for the most serious offenders as it otherwise reduces officer efficiency and increases the likelihood of animal abandonment/surrender, raising shelter operation costs.

Field Equipment Implementation Recommendations

Review and discuss the above recommended equipment and any other equipment needs with the officers; proper officer equipment will enhance officer efficiency and safety. Increased efficiency may allow the officer to take sufficient time to attempt to locate pet owners, in the case of a dog-at-large, in an effort to resolve the problem without impounding the animal; thereby reducing the negative impact on shelter housing capacity and reducing the potential for animal abandonment through non-redemption of pets.



Shelter and Support Services Recommendations

- Provide 42" monitor at shelter facility that provides citizen during business and after hour viewing of impounded animals.
- Cross-train shelter staff to provide non-business hours redemption of animals—especially great for customer service on holidays and can reduce the likelihood of shelter over-population on longer holiday weekends.
- Offer billing for impound fees.
- Waive impound fees for quick redemption of pets impounded during windstorms, 4th of July, or other similar events. It's creates good media attention and public relations, as well as avoids overcrowding during unique situations.
- Promote micro-chipping as you would spay/neuter; consider the possibility of offering three-year or even lifetime licenses to micro-chipped dogs. This would likely require some adjustment in local code or even possibly in state statute; however, it would be worth pursuing since it is the best way to make a long-term impact on reducing animal intake.
- Ensure website has up-to-date posting of all impounded pets. Consider eventually having officers photograph/upload impounds in the field—this can increase chances of reuniting pet and owner faster and occasionally eliminates the need to impound.
- Consider scheduling officers on four, 10-hour shifts, as opposed to five, 8-hour shifts—2 days on duty, 1 day off duty, 2 days on duty, 2 days off duty tends to keep officers fresh, as opposed to 4 consecutive tens, with 3 days off.

- Process licenses, permits, etc. Monday- Friday, 10am-5pm only; owner surrenders by appointment only.

Development/Outreach

For a relatively young organization, a considerable amount of progress has been made in developing the capacity for raising funds. Accomplishments include:

- Petco Lifesaving Grant for adoption center
- Duck Race event
- Donor thank-you party in December
- Holiday Heroes campaign
- Excellent appeal letter



Staff: There is one Communications/Development manager who works in partnership with the Executive Director on development-related tasks. She manages a wide range of outreach and promotional activities, including:

- Photos
- Writing
- Creating flyers of all types
- News releases
- Data entry
- Appeal letters
- Thank you notes (hand-signed by the ED)
- Events, including the Duck Race (\$11,000)
- Oversees social media
- Calendar photo contest (\$6,000) through Café Press
- Pulls donor contacts from PetPoint, cleans up the data and uploads weekly
- Direct mail
- Dog license renewals



Media Relations:

- Very busy media market, making story coverage challenging
- Sending 1 to 2 news releases per month
- Paying to promote Facebook page
- Use of Instagram
- Uploading photos to Flickr for lifesaving
- Adoption promotion—producing many clever and interesting adoption promotions with great graphics and fun, engaging concepts.



This very small team is doing an excellent job in a competitive media market.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Future opportunities may be found in the sentiments of several staff members: “Promote Senior pets and special needs pets with special promotions, especially senior cats.” Programs such as “Seniors-for-Seniors” offered in some communities can help get older cats and dogs adopted. Perhaps a pilot program can be considered for Fall 2015 when admissions begins to slow down again.

Volunteers

- Volunteers exceed 1,000.
- Volgistics used to track volunteer time and activity.

- It is important to note that many, if not most, volunteers voiced admiration for current leadership's experience and successes. Many voiced a great desire to get to know senior staff better and communicate with senior management. This is an understandable sentiment. At the same time, senior staff (all staff) is so busy just trying to keep up with the volume of work that finding time to allocate to volunteer discussions and friendly dialogue can prove challenging and may feel unrealistic to staff. Relationships almost always tend to suffer when there is insufficient time and staff support to accomplish the tasks at hand.

- Hot issues of concern from volunteers include:

- Volunteer access to PetPoint

- It is appropriate to limit or even eliminate volunteer access to this program as there is a need to protect the integrity of the information in the database, as well as the privacy of the people who are in the database.
- The removal of access is seen as punitive by volunteers who feel that they were trying to help.



- Volunteer hour changes

- The hour changes were not intended to limit volunteer access, but rather to limit the hours that the surrender room is open and to reallocate staff to times when their presence can have the greatest benefit on quality of care and lives saved.
- The new hours are still longer than many shelters. See the comparison document provided in the Appendix.
- The impact perceived by volunteers may be able to be mitigated to a significant degree by addressing specific individual concerns.

- Communication between staff and volunteers (especially related to changes)

- As an organization grows and adopts new best practices it is not unusual for there to be a period of adjustment for long-term volunteers and staff. It is human nature to experience change as potentially threatening and alarming. In the absence of information, humans also tend to make assumptions about motivation and results.
- The major challenge has been staff time and energy to manage the volunteer communications to minimize negative responses.

- Adoption process

- Some volunteers are upset by lack of landlord checks and other changes perceived as reduced scrutiny for adopters.
- The perception of this change is that it will result in lower quality homes, though this is not necessarily the case at all. There is a lot of information behind this industry-wide movement toward more open adoptions. The information sheet included in the Appendix provides many links to helpful resources.

- Adoption returns and poor quality homes are resulting from open adoption policies. Since adoptions have increased in volume, this likely results in greater numbers of returns, however, the percentage of animals returned has not increased.

- A sense of being unappreciated. Perception is that they are viewed and treated as dispensable and an annoyance.

- "Everyone is too busy to listen"
- "Management does not care what they feel and think"
- "It's about numbers, not about care"

- Perceptions that the focus on "numbers" (lifesaving statistics) is not really caring about and saving animals underlies some concerns. There is a natural tendency to rely on familiar concepts, such as the thinking behind older adoption screening practices, rather than seeking out new information on latest best practices in sheltering and the reasons

behind them. This information needs to be disseminated appropriately to gain buy in and manage emotions—which often run high in animal welfare.

- Desire for professional skills of volunteer base to be tapped more effectively. (This can help re-direct energy and engage people in mission-directed efforts.)
- SNR (RTF) creates a sense that cats are “dumped” back out when should be adopted. Sharing information on the decision-making process (how cats are selected for this program and why) as well as discussing the likely outcomes and options for placing cats in an adoption program, as well as the research behind SNR programs (which is substantial), can be helpful.

Several staff members reported lack of respectful communications from volunteers and lack of support for organizational policies. Some of this has manifested in in-person communications as well as on the private volunteer Facebook group. Lack of trust has grown to the point that even innocuous comments may be interpreted by volunteers as insincerity or even as evidence of lack of caring and compassion for the animals.

ACCT Philly Summary of Survey Results – January 2015

Volunteers (72 respondents)

Recurring themes observed:

- Communication, as it has existed, is resulting in frustration on the part of many volunteers.
- There is a feeling by some of not being appreciated.
- Trust has not been established between staff and volunteers (works both ways).
- There is appreciation for staff and management, for their hard, stressful work.
- There is awareness that the facility is understaffed and lacks resources.
- There is a typical level of emotion among volunteers who work with animals in shelters.
- There is a general lack of understanding of the reasons behind policies and policy changes and in the void, some make negative assumptions about motivations and results.

Volunteer



Hug love snuggle cuddle walk
Pet brush play love kiss Hug

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Some volunteers, including some who are “opinion leaders” are not fully bought into the vision of saving more lives. It is important going forward that someone in a key staff leadership role manage the communications with volunteers, gain buy-in to the vision, and support and understanding through periods of change. This may include a mix of one-on-one, small group, and inclusive volunteer meetings. This is a time-consuming activity that involves relationship building and facilitation skills.

At the same time, a continuation of the current strong leadership drive and will to get the job of saving lives accomplished will be critically important.

It is important to note that, at present, there is insufficient staff to successfully manage the volunteers beyond basics. Clear and ongoing two-way communication with volunteers is important through and after this next transition period.

Recurring themes observed:

- Additional information about animals and a bit more assistance (medications for example) could help some of the groups take more animals.
- More targeted communications could help some of the groups take more animals.
- Ability to reach staff via phone on a timely basis would be helpful.

Recently, a new Rescue Partner Process has been put into place, including online sign up and new rescue policies and procedures complete with a manual. This includes a new VIP Partner Program modeled after

the successful program at Los Angeles Animal Services. There is conflict over dogs being sent to the adoption center that rescue groups find desirable. Staff hopes that these newly outlined procedures should help to alleviate stress and confusion over this process by establishing clear expectations.

Several rescue groups mentioned the difficulty of getting through to talk to an individual to get information. Hopefully, this can be addressed as part of the call assessment process and updated rescue process.

Conclusion

ACCT Philly has made great strides in animal lifesaving in spite of many facility and resource challenges. This certainly says a great deal about the determination, commitment, and resourcefulness of the leadership, staff, volunteers, and board members. We are honored to play a small part in helping ACCT Philly continue to grow, increase their lifesaving successes, and realize their overall mission to help the homeless pets of Philadelphia and the many people who care about them.

Appendix

- *Benchmarks for Staffing and Funding for Animal Services*, Humane Network
- *Comparison: Hours of Operation and Admissions for Animal Services Agencies*, Humane Network
- *Recommended Resources for ACCT Philly*, Humane Network (includes links to recommended resources on a variety of topics including intake processes, cleaning protocols, surrender by appointment, and surrender prevention)
- *Animal Sheltering, Surrender Prevention*, Bonney Brown
- *Animal Help Desk Manual*, Bonney Brown, Diane Blankenburg
- *Rethinking Pet Adoptions*, Humane Network
- *Customer Service and Phone Manual* (sample from Nevada Humane Society)
- *How to Make Your Shelter More Appealing Checklist*, Humane Network
- *Management Walk-Through Checklist*, Humane Network
- *Use and Benefit of the Bite Sleeve for Humane Officers*, Mitch Schneider (PowerPoint)
- *Win-Win Animal Services*, Mitch Schneider (PowerPoint)

These documents are available from Humane Network, upon request. E-mail info@humanenetwork.org