



NETWORK NEWS

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Allies In Animal Control

Proactive Animal Control: Tools To Reduce Overpopulation

By Billy Grace
North Little Rock Animal Control

One of the major problems that we face in Animal Control is the abundance of unwanted animals. North Little Rock Animal Control seems to have found ways to combat this overwhelming problem and in fact, may have turned the corner toward an actual reduction in the number of stray animals within the city. It took almost four years to arrive at this point and it was not easy by any means.

It started with research. This is after all, the information age, and anyone who does not take advantage of the success and failure of his neighbors is doomed from the start. Research was made difficult, however, by the fact that all of our close neighbors were operating the same way we were. They were bringing in animals by the truckload and adopting out all they could without sterilizing them first. This resulted in more unwanted puppies and kittens because the majority of these new pet owners did not sterilize their animals as promised.

We then began researching and studying other programs out of state, and that's what really opened our eyes to what we were doing. By releasing these animals unsterilized we learned that we were not part of the solution, but a major part of the problem.

Based on a national average, over half of the people who adopt unsterilized animals from shelters



Billy Grace, Director of North Little Rock Animal Control

do not sterilize the animal as promised. Sterilization prior to adoption is absolutely essential to a successful animal control program and we began our pre-sterilization policy in late 1996. It should be noted that our support group, North Little Rock Friends of Animals played a crucial role in helping to achieve this goal.

With the problem of pre-sterilization behind us we turned our attention to the owned animal population within the city. Again, research from cities like San Francisco, Dallas and many others which have enjoyed great success told us that we needed basically three programs in place to attack this problem. They are:

(1) Running-at-large fines that differ significantly for sterilized animals and animals that are not sterilized;

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Working With Animal Services

By Linda Haller
Orange County Animal Services,
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I recently reached a milestone in my career: fifteen years of service with a county animal service organization. During my fifteen-year career in this very demanding and rewarding profession, I have heard and seen just about every story and situation involving people and animals. Throughout all the encounters and issues, one central theme kept reappearing: the need for everyone concerned with the welfare of animals to work together for the benefit of the community and the animals within it.

The original purpose of animal control was the control of the rabies virus specifically in domestic dogs. As vaccines became more abundant and laws requiring dogs and cats be inoculated for rabies were passed, the role of animal control changed. An expanding and urbanizing human population dictated the role change from that of strictly enforcement to that of promoting responsible pet ownership through education.

I can hear the snickering and comments as you read this, because for most of you, you have very preconceived notions of what your animal control does and how they act. Some of your notions are well deserved. There are, however, those that are not. Remember, like everything else, not everyone moves or changes at

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(2) A low cost spay/neuter program that makes sterilization possible for low income citizens;

(3) A dog license with a significant price differential for sterilized versus unsterilized animals, the cost of which should be enough to motivate low income citizens to take advantage of the low cost spay/neuter program. (Most impounded animals in cities across the nation come from low income areas.)

With the help of Mayor Patrick Hays and a very progressive city administration we were able to implement these programs over the next two years. The final stage, the differential dog license, went into effect on May 1, 1999. The results have been encouraging at the very least and have proven to be very inexpensive to the taxpayers of our city.

It seems that even though we are spending more and more on spay/neuter programs with each

passing day, the revenue produced by these ordinances has kept pace with these increased expenditures. In essence, we are allowing these programs to be funded by those who cause the problem. Strict enforcement is the key.

In 1996 we had a 12% adoption rate, and were euthanizing 74% of the animals that we handled. The rest were reclaimed by their owners. Our animal intake increased by 36% over the previous year because it was necessary to launch our programs with a massive cleanup campaign. Since that time our numbers have steadily improved, and on August 23, 1999 we were proud to announce a 31% adoption rate, and a 48% euthanasia rate. While we are pleased with these numbers, we are most proud of the fact that for the first time since records have been kept, our animal intake is actually down slightly from the previous year.

Judging from these statistics it would appear that North Little Rock Animal Control is at least headed in the right direction. This problem, however, is not exclusive to North Little Rock. It encompasses the entire state of Arkansas and it will take a unified, statewide effort involving all animal control agencies working together to solve it.

An often overlooked and very valuable resource is the public. As mentioned earlier, the accomplishments at North Little Rock Animal Control would not have been possible without the support of our "Friends Of Animals" volunteers. It is my belief that virtually every city in the state has an ample supply of concerned citizens that are more than willing to donate their time and money to help the spay/neuter effort.

Law enforcement learned thirty years ago that the public is a valuable resource for solving problems and the time has come for animal control agencies to do the same.

Working With Animal Services

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the same speed. Things do take time. So, how can you help with the change and work with your animal control or humane groups?

There is no one answer to the above question, yet two things that I know will help are being able to compromise and leave our egos at the door. Each and every one of us and the group or organization we support has a different agenda when it comes to the animals, and yet if you talk about those goals without the emotion and preconceived notions, you will find your goals overlap. The challenge I have for you is to determine what one goal your community would like to accomplish, then work toward that goal using all available resources. You will be surprised what you will learn and accomplish. That is what we have had to do in my particular organization.

We have built three spay/neuter clinics in our county to cut the supply of unwanted cat and dog litters. Our city of 870,000 is growing by over 30,000 people a year. These new people bring companion animals with them, adding to the numbers with which we must deal.

In 1997-98 we had to euthanize 4,028 dogs. In 1998-99, the number fell to 3,142 — a drop of 22%. The number of cats dropped from 4,959 in 1997-98 to 4,192 — a drop of 15% in 1998-99. As a result, the community is seeing results with fewer tax dollars being spent on the killing of healthy dogs and cats. The other result is that we at animal control can change and work with citizens and groups and the groups can work with us. We still don't all agree on the outcome of everything, but there is a better appreciation of who we are and what we all believe in. Try it! You may be pleasantly surprised!