

**Performance Audit  
Animal Control**

October 2003

**City Auditor's Office**

**City of Kansas City, Missouri**

October 7, 2003

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

This performance audit of Animal Control services was initiated by the City Auditor pursuant to Article II, Section 13 of the city charter. This audit focuses on the efficiency and effectiveness of Animal Control Division efforts to protect public health.

We estimate that about 119,000 dogs and 145,000 cats currently live in Kansas City. Very few of the owners of these animals comply with the city's laws requiring animals to be licensed. The number of dog licenses sold dropped from approximately 28,000 (29% of all dogs) in fiscal year 1982 to about 10,000 (8%) in fiscal year 2002, while the number of cat licenses sold dropped from about 4,400 (5% of all cats) to 1,700 (1%) in the same period. Pet licensing serves an important function to pet owners and other city residents. City staff can use licenses on strays to quickly trace lost pets back to their owners, while lost animals without licenses or other identification must wait for their owners to contact the animal shelter in hopes of finding their lost pet. Of the more than 10,000 animals brought to the animal shelter in fiscal year 2002, only 14 percent were reclaimed by their owners and about 68 percent were euthanized. Licensing also provides a user fee, whereby those who use the service help pay its costs. While low licensing rates are a common problem in municipalities, a more proactive approach could increase licensing and in turn, place a higher portion of the funding burden on pet owners. We recommend that the Director of Neighborhood and Community Services appoint a task force to examine ways of increasing licensing compliance. Solutions that require modifications to state statutes should be communicated to the City Council.

Under state law, animal control is a county responsibility. Kansas City residents, however, may feel strongly that animal control is a city public safety priority. In fiscal year 2002, Animal Control staff handled 20,000 cases, usually involving threats to public health such as animal bites and strays. The 2004 adopted budget includes less per capita spending on animal control activities than industry standards recommend, and staffing is lower than recommended levels. Less than half of Kansas City residents surveyed are satisfied with the quality of animal control services. For all local cities surveyed, satisfaction averaged about 60 percent. The general fund covers more than 80 percent of animal control costs. Based on the city's 2003 expenditures, licensing compliance would have to exceed 66 percent for the program to be self-supporting. The International City/County Management Association suggests jurisdictions should not expect the entire costs of animal control to be fully recovered from licenses, impoundments, and other user fees. Devoting some public funds to animal control, however, rather than expecting all costs to be borne by animal owners, may be necessary. However, those whose activity

requires regulation to protect the public interest should pay a significant portion of the cost of that regulation. We recommend the Director of Neighborhood and Community Services submit information on Animal Control costs and revenues to the City Council for their consideration in setting cost recovery goals.

A draft of this report was sent to the City Manager and the Director of Neighborhood and Community Services on September 3, 2003. A written response is appended. We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation extended to us by the staff of the Animal Control Division throughout the audit. The audit team for this project was Martin Tennant and Gary White.

Mark Funkhouser  
City Auditor

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# Animal Control

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## Introduction

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### Objectives

This audit of Animal Control services was conducted pursuant to Article II, Section 13 of the Charter of Kansas City, Missouri, which establishes the Office of the City Auditor and outlines the City Auditor's primary duties.

A performance audit is an objective, systematic examination of evidence to independently assess the performance of a government organization, program, activity, or function in order to provide information to improve public accountability and facilitate decision-making.<sup>1</sup> This audit was designed to answer the following question:

- Is the Animal Control Division efficiently and effectively protecting human health and safety?

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### Scope and Methodology

Our review of the Animal Control Division focused on the city's responsibilities for animal control, the costs and revenues generated from animal control efforts, and the effectiveness of animal licensing efforts.

The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Methods included:

- Interviewing Animal Control and Health Department staff and surveying local jurisdictions.
- Reviewing state and city regulations regarding animal control services.
- Reviewing professional literature on animal control efforts, animal-related threats to human health, and animal licensing.
- Calculating licensing compliance rates.

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<sup>1</sup> Comptroller General of the United States, *Government Auditing Standards* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994), p. 14.

- Reviewing city records on division operations.

No information was omitted from this report because it was deemed privileged or confidential.

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## **Background**

The mission of the Neighborhood and Community Services Department's Animal Control Division is "to provide animal control, kennel, and pet licensing services to Kansas City so that human health and safety is protected as well as the welfare of animals."

Rabies is the most deadly disease that animals can transmit to humans. In the United States, rabies is primarily a disease that affects and is maintained by wildlife populations. Vaccination of pet animals and livestock that have regular contact with human beings provide a barrier to protect human beings from infection with rabies.<sup>2</sup>

### **Legislative Authority**

Missouri law empowers counties to establish their own animal control operations, including fee setting and operation of dog pounds.<sup>3</sup> In counties without animal control operations, responsibility falls to county health departments. However, counties also have the option of contracting for these services with area cities.

The charter gives the city the power to regulate or prohibit the running at large of any animal within city limits.<sup>4</sup> It also allows the city to license, tax, and regulate the keeping of dogs, cats, and other animals and fowl.<sup>5</sup> Chapter 14 of the Code of Ordinances requires dogs, cats, and ferrets to be licensed. Obtaining a license requires proof of rabies vaccinations.

### **Animal Control Activities**

Animal control officers respond to calls involving wild animals in confined areas, animal cruelty, strays, animal bites, and requests for assistance from the Police Department. Calls from the police or those relating to animal bites, animal cruelty, or animal injuries receive the

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Krebs, MS, et al., "Rabies surveillance in the United States during 2000," *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, (December 15, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Mo. Rev. Stat. § 322.090.

<sup>4</sup> Charter of Kansas City, Missouri, Art. I, Sec. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Charter of Kansas City, Missouri, Art. I, Sec. 59.

highest priority. The Department of Environmental Management assumed responsibility for dead animal pick-up during fiscal year 2003.

Animal control officers are commissioned, which authorizes them to issue general ordinance summons. In fiscal year 2002, the division issued over 2,500 citations, 48 percent of which resulted in convictions. Officers are authorized to impound animals that violate the code. Captured animals are taken to the city's animal shelter, where they can be claimed by their owners or adopted. Animals that are not claimed or adopted within a few days are euthanized.<sup>6</sup>

**Estimated animal population.** We estimate that about 119,000 dogs and 145,000 cats currently live in Kansas City.<sup>7</sup> Since 1982, the estimated dog population has increased by 21 percent. The estimated cat population has increased by more than half. (See Exhibit 1.)

Exhibit 1. Estimated KCMO Dog and Cat Populations, 1982 to 2002

Year	Dogs	Cats
1982	97,978	93,312
1988	94,370	107,123
2002	118,868	144,598

Sources: Pet Incidence Trend Report; Adopted Budget 2003; *Animal Control Division*, Office of the City Auditor, City of Kansas City, Missouri, May 1989.

**Licensing.** In October 2000, the city executed a contract with Pet Data, Inc. for animal license services. The contract calls for Pet Data to provide registration tags to citizens, and to maintain an animal license database and a website providing animal registration information. Under the contract, Pet Data receives \$3.68 for each license sold, up to a maximum of \$75,000 for fiscal year 2003. Since September 2001, the city has paid Pet Data about \$155,000.

The code allows other persons, corporations, and veterinarians to sell licenses. The code allows the licensing agent to collect the city's license fee and a handling fee of \$2.00, which the agent keeps. Pet Data is responsible for providing the license tags and other materials, and confirming that revenues from licenses sold are collected. According to the Animal Control manager, 23 area veterinarians sell animal licenses.

<sup>6</sup> The Code of Ordinances requires dogs be kept for no less than five days and cats no less than two, however animals brought in by their owners must only be kept for one day before disposition. These time periods do not apply to sick or injured animals.

<sup>7</sup> Throughout the report, we estimate the number of dog and cats living in Kansas City based on pet ownership rates from the National Pet Food Institute website and Kansas City, Missouri household figures from the city's 2003 adopted budget.

### Division Staffing and Funding

The 2004 adopted budget included 28 authorized positions for Animal Control, following three anticipated retirements and the elimination of two vacant positions. The 2003 adopted budget included 31 positions.

Animal Control spending has increased since fiscal year 1999. (See Exhibit 2.) Seventy percent of the division's budget is spent on Animal Control staff.

Exhibit 2. Animal Control Expenditures, Fiscal Years 1999 to 2004

Fiscal Year	Total Expenditures
1999	\$1,427,592
2000	1,368,272
2001	1,506,012
2002	1,686,014
2003	1,799,289
2004 <sup>8</sup>	1,612,039

Source: Office of Management and Budget staff.

**Fees and penalties.** Revenue sources for Animal Control include animal licenses, vaccinations, spaying, animal shelter fees, contracts with other municipalities, and private donations. In addition, the code assesses penalties for violations such as not purchasing a license or animal cruelty convictions. Exhibit 3 identifies selected fees and penalties.

Exhibit 3. Selected Animal Control Fees and Penalties

Fees/Penalties	Amount
Unaltered pet license	\$30.00
Altered pet license	7.00
Shelter impound fee	25.00
Shelter daily charge – small animals	10.00
Shelter daily charge – large animal/livestock	25.00
Rabies vaccination	10.00
Adoption fees – dogs	80.00
Adoption fees – cats	65.00
Penalty for unlicensed pets <sup>9</sup>	75.00

Source: Code of Ordinances, Kansas City, Missouri, Sec. 14.51 and 14.52.

<sup>8</sup> Estimated.

<sup>9</sup> Penalties increase along with the number of violations in a three-year period. The penalty for the fourth and subsequent violation is \$500.

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## Findings and Recommendations

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### Summary

Of the more than 10,000 animals brought to the Kansas City animal shelter in fiscal year 2002, only 14 percent were reclaimed by their owners. Over 68 percent of the animals were euthanized. The high number of animals that had to be euthanized may be related to the low rate of compliance with Kansas City's animal licensing requirements. We estimate that about 119,000 dogs and 145,000 cats currently live in Kansas City. While city code requires licenses for all dogs and cats, only about 10,000 dog licenses and 1,700 cat licenses were purchased in 2002. Pet licensing allows city staff to trace stray pets back to their owners, preventing them from being adopted by others or more likely euthanized. Licensing also provides a user fee, whereby those who use the service help pay its costs.

While low licensing rates are a common problem in municipalities, a more proactive approach could increase licensing and in turn, place a higher portion of the funding burden on pet owners. Under state law, animal control is a county responsibility. Kansas City residents, however, may feel strongly that animal control is a city public safety priority. In fiscal year 2002, Animal Control staff handled 20,000 cases, usually involving threats to public health such as animal bites and strays. Budgeted spending for fiscal year 2004 is less per capita on animal control activities than industry standards recommend, and staffing is lower than recommended levels. Citizen satisfaction with animal control efforts are lower, on average, than other local cities surveyed. The general fund covered more than 80 percent of animal control costs during fiscal years 1999 to 2003. Devoting public funds to animal control, rather than expecting all costs to be borne by animal owners, may be necessary.

We recommend the Director of Neighborhood and Community Services appoint a task force of pet owners, veterinarians, animal rights activists and Animal Control staff to examine ways of increasing licensing compliance. We also recommend the Director provide information on Animal Control costs and revenues to the City Council for their consideration in determining cost recovery goals.

## **Licensing Compliance Is Low**

Pet licensing serves an important function to pet owners and other city residents. City staff can use licenses on strays to quickly trace lost pets back to their owners, while lost animals without licenses or other identification must wait for their owners to contact the animal shelter in hopes of finding their lost pets. Animals not reclaimed by their owners end up adopted or euthanized. Of the more than 10,000 animals brought to the animal shelter in fiscal year 2002, only 14 percent were reclaimed by their owners, while over 68 percent were euthanized. Licensing also provides a user fee, whereby those who use the service help pay its costs.

Few Kansas Citians purchase licenses for their pets, and the number who comply with the city's licensing laws is decreasing. The number of dog licenses sold dropped from approximately 28,000 in fiscal year 1982 to about 10,000 in fiscal year 2002, while the number of cat licenses sold dropped from about 4,400 to 1,700 in the same period. The number of licenses sold represents a small percentage of the estimated number of dogs and cats living with city residents.

Low compliance appears to be common but other local cities have had greater licensing success. A 1993 pet enumeration project increased licensing in Kansas City in 1994. The city's ability to increase compliance is hindered by a state law that inhibits efforts to identify animals that require licenses.

### **Licensing Benefits Pets, Their Owners, and Other Citizens**

Conscientious pet owners recognize that obtaining a license for their pet is a way of protecting the animal. Prior to obtaining a license, owners must prove that the animal has been vaccinated against rabies and other diseases. The license serves as a form of identification that can be used to trace lost animals back to their owners. The license fee is also a means of requiring some of those who use the service to pay a portion of its cost.

**Licensing can return lost animals to their owners more quickly.** In fiscal year 2002, over 10,000 animals were brought to the city's animal shelter. Of these, more than 6,000 animals were "strays." (See Exhibit 4.) Animal Control staff define "stray" as an animal that is not effectively physically restrained. The animal can still be a stray if it is owned or wearing a license.

**Exhibit 4. Animals Brought to City Shelter, Calendar Year 2002**

Reasons	Number of Animals
Strays	6,601
Animal bites, cruelty cases, etc.	1,320
Brought in by citizens	2,159
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,080</b>

Source: NCSD staff.

About 68 percent of the animals brought into the shelter were euthanized, about 14 percent were adopted, and 14 percent of the animals were returned to their owners. A 1997 survey of local government animal control organizations, private non-profit shelters, and others by the National Council on Pet Population (NCP) included results on the disposition of animals taken to shelters. Kansas City's 2002 euthanization rate is slightly higher than the national average, while its adoption rate is lower. (See Exhibit 5.)

**Exhibit 5. Comparison of Animal Dispositions, Fiscal Year 2002**

Disposition	NCP Survey	KCMO AC
Euthanized	63.6%	68.1%
Adopted	23.9%	14.0%
Released (returned to owner)	9.8%	14.0%
Transferred (other/unknown)	2.8%	3.9%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100.1%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Sources: Shelter Statistics Survey; NCSD staff.

**Licensing serves as a user fee.** License fees are the primary method of allowing dog and cat owners to shoulder some of the burden of animal control costs. In addition, the higher fees paid by owners of unaltered pets is designed to make irresponsible owners pay more of the costs of controlling the city's animal population.

**Few Pet Owners Purchase Licenses**

The high percentage of animals euthanized in Kansas City could be related to the low compliance with licensing laws. Over the past 20 years, Kansas City's licensing rate for dogs and cats combined has dropped from 17 percent to about 4 percent. Low compliance appears to be common but other local cities have had greater licensing success.

**Licensing rate has decreased.** The Code of Ordinances requires licenses for all dogs, cats, and ferrets. In fiscal year 1982, about 28,000 dogs were licensed in Kansas City. By 2002, the number of dog licenses sold had dropped to about 10,000. The decrease in the number of dog licenses sold means that licensing compliance for dogs has dropped from 28.9 percent of the estimated dog population in 1982 down to 8.4 percent in 2002. Cat owner compliance is even lower; in 2002, only 1.2 percent

of the estimated number of cats were licensed, down from 4.7 percent in 1982. (See Exhibit 6.)

Exhibit 6. Dog and Cat Licensing Rates, 1982 to 2002

Year	Dogs			Cats		
	Licenses	Population	Compliance	Licenses	Population	Compliance
1982	28,286	97,978	28.9%	4,353	93,312	4.7%
1988	20,368	94,370	21.6%	2,757	107,123	2.6%
1991 <sup>10</sup>			16.4%			2.0%
2002	9,965	118,868	8.4%	1,693	144,598	1.2%

Sources: Pet Data, Inc. staff; *Animal Control Division*; memorandum from City Auditor Mark Funkhouser to Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council, March 30, 1992.

**Low licensing compliance appears to be common.** Licensing compliance rates for other area municipalities range from about 22 percent to just under 6 percent of the animals requiring licenses. Kansas City’s compliance rate for dogs and cats combined is less than 5 percent. (See Exhibit 7.)

Exhibit 7. Pet Licensing Compliance in Area Cities, 2002

City	License Compliance Rate
Kansas City, MO	4.4%
Lee’s Summit, MO	5.7%
Liberty, MO (dogs only)	11.9%
Overland Park, KS	21.9%

Sources: Lee’s Summit, Liberty, Overland Park, and Pet Data, Inc. staff; Adopted Budget 2003; and Pet Incidence Trend Report.

**Increased Compliance Is Difficult to Attain Under Current Circumstances**

Kansas City’s ability to increase compliance with licensing laws is hampered by shortcomings in the current system and by state law. Compliance is voluntary, and is based on owners’ self-reporting their pets. Efforts to identify unlicensed pets are limited. In addition, state law prohibits veterinarians from releasing information on animals they treat.

**Pet licensing relies on the pet owner.** Pet Data, Inc., the company with which the city contracts to handle licensing, maintains a database of animal licenses and sends renewal notices to pet owners as their licenses expire. If the owner does not respond, the city does not have a mechanism in place to determine whether the pet is no longer owned or to identify new pets needing licenses.

<sup>10</sup> Information on licenses sold and estimated animal populations is unavailable.

Animal control officers verify whether licenses are current when responding to calls and issue citations for violators. As a result, pet owners who do not comply with the licensing laws do not incur any negative consequences unless their pet is the subject of a call to Animal Control.

#### **Increasing Animal Licensing**

In 1996, the Minneapolis Animal Control Department made licensing services more user friendly by making applications more widely available, conducting neighborhood clinics, and commissioning veterinarians to register animals. As a result, pet registrations rose 12 percent in the first year. In 1998, the Allegheny County, Pennsylvania County Treasurer included a flier about dog registration with the tax bills. The number of registered dogs grew from 44,000 in 1998 to nearly 100,000 in 1999.

Source: *Animal Control Management: A Guide For Local Governments*, pp. 22-23.

**Pet enumeration may increase compliance.** Overland Park, which had the highest area licensing compliance of the cities we contacted, performs door-to-door canvassing in one of its six wards each year as part of its licensing efforts. In fiscal year 1993, Kansas City Animal Control completed its own pet enumeration. Animal license revenues in fiscal year 1994 increased by \$200,000 over 1993 levels. (See Exhibit 8.)

**Exhibit 8. Pet License Revenues, Fiscal Years 1993 to 2003**

Fiscal Year	Pet License Revenues
1993	\$125,878
1994	327,685
1995	234,542
1996	186,790
1997	162,652
1998	149,750
1999	139,680
2000	136,806
2001 <sup>11</sup>	88,026
2002	115,537
2003	195,996

Source: AFN.

**State law prohibits veterinarians from releasing data on pet owners.** Efforts to identify animals needing licenses are hampered by state law

<sup>11</sup> Information on current license holders was lost on January 1, 2000, preventing the division from sending reminder notices for license renewals.

that prevents veterinarians from providing information. State regulations require veterinarians to maintain records on all patients, including the name and address of the animal owner.<sup>12</sup> The rules of professional conduct state that licensed veterinarians:

Shall not reveal confidential, proprietary or privileged facts or data or any other sensitive information contained in a patient's medical records or as otherwise obtained in a professional capacity without the prior consent of the client.<sup>13</sup>

According to state statute, no veterinarian:

Shall be required to disclose any information concerning the veterinarian's care of an animal, except on written authorization or other waiver by the veterinarian's client or on appropriate court order or subpoena or as may be required to ensure compliance with any other federal or state law.<sup>14</sup>

While few pets are licensed, it appears that a majority receive veterinary care. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, 85 percent of dog owners and about 67 percent of cat owners obtained veterinary care for their pets during 2001.<sup>15</sup>

Although each of these animals potentially requires a license, state law prevents veterinarians from sharing information on pets and their owners with Animal Control or its contractor. Information from veterinarians on animals treated would allow the city to identify animals needing license renewals and new pets that need licenses.

### **Task Force Needed to Develop Ways of Increasing Licensing Compliance**

The benefits to both pet owners and the general public that accrue from pet licensing merit a proactive effort to increase compliance. Increased compliance with city code could increase the number of lost pets reunited with their owners, reduce shelter overcrowding, lower euthanasia rates, and potentially increase revenue. The Director of Neighborhood and Community Services should appoint a task force to

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<sup>12</sup> Code of State Regulations. § 270-4.041A.

<sup>13</sup> CSR § 270-6.011.

<sup>14</sup> RSMo., § 340.286.

<sup>15</sup> American Veterinary Medical Association, *U.S. Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook*, (Schaumburg, IL., 2002), and U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 2002, p. 753.

work with the Animal Control Division to identify cost effective ways of increasing licensing compliance.

The task force should include pet owners, veterinarians, animal rights activists, as well as Animal Control staff. Activities to be considered include, at a minimum, increased publicizing of city licensing requirements; consideration of animal enumeration efforts; making citizen compliance easier; and changes in state law to allow veterinarians to release data on the names and addresses of animal owners.

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## **Funding and Staffing Levels Are Below Industry Standards**

The Animal Control Division receives over 80,000 calls annually.<sup>16</sup> Of these, more than 20,000 calls result in case files, many of which involve threats to public health such as stray animals and bites. State law requires the county, rather than the city, to provide animal control services. Citizens generally regard this service as a necessary means of protecting health and welfare, and Kansas City has made a commitment to provide the service.

Currently, the animal control program is largely funded by the general fund. Spending and staffing levels for animal control are less than industry standards recommend. Based on the city's current level of expenditures, licensing compliance would have to exceed 66 percent for the program to be self-supporting. While it appears doubtful that licensing and other fees could ever reach a level that would cover the full cost of an effective animal control program, these revenue sources should be expected to recover an identified portion of the division's operating costs.

### **Citizens Expect Protection Against Safety Threats**

Animal Control received about 80,000 calls during fiscal year 2002. While 75 percent of these calls were requests for information, 20,000 were complaints of problems affecting public health, such as bites and strays. According to an animal control guide by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), animal control is a function that is essential to public health and safety. For humane reasons or because they do not want to be harassed by animals, citizens demand some sort of animal control in their community.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The figure does not include calls directed to the city's tow lot dispatcher when the Animal Control dispatch is shut down between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. and on weekends.

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey L. Handy, International City/County Management Association, *Animal Control Management: A Guide For Local Governments*, (Washington D.C.: 2001), p. 2.

**Animal control is a county responsibility.** Under Missouri law, animal control is the responsibility of counties, not cities. Whenever rabies becomes prevalent, mayors or county commissions are required to issue quarantine orders; dog owners are required to immunize, impound, or kill their pets; and police officers are required to kill any dogs running loose that are not immunized.

Platte County's animal control efforts are complaint driven, and focus primarily on dogs. Clay County has no animal control service of its own; instead, they have a mutual aid agreement with Liberty, Missouri. Many area municipalities, including Kansas City, also provide animal control services. Jackson County recently contracted with Kansas City to assume responsibility for its animal control efforts.

**Citizens view animal control as a city public safety priority.** In our 2002 citizen survey, 20 percent of respondents ranked animal control as either their first or second choice in a list of public safety items that should receive the most emphasis from city leaders over the next two years. Animal control services ranked fourth behind police activities but ahead of municipal court, the ambulance service, and fire protection.<sup>18</sup>

### **Budgeted City Funding Is Below Industry Standards**

Kansas City's budgeted spending for animal control is slightly less per capita than recommended by the ICMA. Staffing levels for the animal shelter and field staff are also low. Citizen satisfaction with the quality of animal control services provided in Kansas City is less than the average of local jurisdictions surveyed.

#### **Budgeted expenditures are less than industry standards.**

Expenditures for animal control services have increased by 26 percent since fiscal year 1999, from \$1.4 million to about \$1.8 million in 2003. The 2004 adopted budget reduces expenditures by about \$190,000, resulting in planned per capita spending of \$3.64. According to the ICMA, an effective animal control program costs at least \$4 per person and in some jurisdictions, the budget is as high as \$7 per person.

**Staffing levels are also low.** The Humane Society developed a formula for estimating kennel caretaking requirements, based on the number of animals brought to the shelter annually. According to the formula, the city's kennel needed 10 employees to handle the animals brought to the

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<sup>18</sup> *City Services Performance Report for Fiscal Year 2002*, Office of the City Auditor, City of Kansas City, Missouri, March 2003, p. 23.

shelter in 2002. Only five employees are currently assigned to the city's animal shelter.

As reported by the ICMA, a 1994 study by the National Animal Control Association (NACA) found that the average ratio of field officers to citizens was one officer for every 16,000 to 18,000 persons. However, the NACA recommends optimum field staff calculations factor in city area and enforcement responsibilities. In addition, the NACA recommends local governments base staffing levels on a call for service model, analyzing service calls, and measuring the demand for animal control services.<sup>19</sup> Based on the city's population, between 25 and 28 field staff may be needed. The division has 9 animal control officers<sup>20</sup> and 3 special investigators assigned to field operations.

**Citizen satisfaction with animal control remains low.** Less than half of Kansas City residents were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the quality of animal control services, according to surveys completed in 2000, 2001, and 2002. In contrast, satisfaction for residents of other local cities ranged from 42 to 81 percent. On average, satisfaction levels for all cities surveyed were about 60 percent for the last three years.

### **Controlling Animals May Require Subsidy**

The bulk of Animal Control expenditures are covered by the general fund. The ICMA states that jurisdictions should not expect the costs of animal control to be fully recovered from license fees, impoundment fees, and other user fees.<sup>21</sup> Devoting public funds to Animal Control, rather than expecting all costs to be borne by animal owners, may be necessary.

**Fees cover a small fraction of costs.** In fiscal year 2003, Animal Control fees (including animal licenses) covered less than 20 percent of Animal Control costs. (See Exhibit 9.) We estimate that licensing compliance would have to exceed 66 percent in order for the program to become self-supporting, assuming current licensing fees and no change in the percentage of spayed/neutered and unaltered licenses purchased.

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<sup>19</sup> *Animal Control Management: A Guide For Local Governments*, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> According to the Animal Control manager, two officers primarily provide animal control services for sections of Jackson County that are outside the city limits.

<sup>21</sup> *Animal Control Management: A Guide For Local Governments*, p. 3.

Exhibit 9. Animal Control Cost Recovery, Fiscal Years 1999 to 2003

Fiscal Year	Expenditures	Revenues <sup>22</sup>	Cost Recovery
1999	\$1,427,592	\$250,430	17.5%
2000	1,368,272	262,479	19.2%
2001	1,506,012	207,445	13.8%
2002	1,686,014	224,680	13.3%
2003	1,799,289	304,799	16.9%

Source: Office of Management and Budget staff.

We estimate that a 30 percent compliance rate for dogs alone, (a compliance rate nearly achieved in 1982) would provide almost \$250,000 in additional revenues.

### Cost Recovery Goals Should Be Developed

The City Council needs to decide the level of costs that should be recovered from pet owners. Once established, achievement of the cost recovery goals should be monitored and reported to the Council at least annually when modifications of Animal Control fees are considered.

**Cost recovery goals should be established.** Our Fees and Service Charges follow-up report recommended the City Council establish cost recovery goals for departments collecting fees for service.<sup>23</sup> While the ICMA suggests Animal Control operations cannot expect to be self-supporting, direction from the City Council would help Animal Control identify the portion of operating costs they should seek to recover from animal licensing and other division fees. Factors to be considered should include assessing a larger burden of the costs on irresponsible owners (those who do not spay or neuter their pets) through differential licensing, and the deterrent effect of graduated penalties on repeat behavior.

The Director of Neighborhood and Community Services should develop information comparing Animal Control Division costs and revenues, and submit it to the Office of Management and Budget as part of the city's annual user fee review process. This information would assist the City Council as they consider the portion of costs the Animal Control Division should recover.

<sup>22</sup> Excludes revenues from citations issued for violations of the animal control section of the Code of Ordinances, dead animal pick-up charges, and private donations.

<sup>23</sup> *Fees and Service Charges Follow-up*, Office of the City Auditor, City of Kansas City, Missouri, September 2000, p. 20.

**Success in meeting cost recovery goals should be monitored.** Our Fees and Service Charges follow-up report also recommended departments calculate cost recovery rates using current information on revenues and costs. In addition to reporting progress in achieving the City Council's cost recovery goals, the Director of Neighborhood and Community Services could use this information when determining whether to revise Animal Control fees, once compliance goals are achieved.

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## Recommendations

1. The Director of Neighborhood and Community Services should appoint a task force to identify ways of increasing compliance with pet licensing laws. Solutions that require modifications to state statutes should be communicated to the City Council.
2. The Director of Neighborhood and Community Services should develop information on Animal Control costs and revenues and submit this information to the Office of Management and Budget, for communication to the City Council for their consideration of cost recovery goals.



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**Appendix A**

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**Director of Neighborhood and Community Service Department's Response**





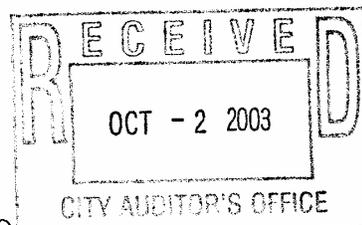
## Inter-Departmental Communication

**Date:** October 2, 2003

**To:** Mark Funkhouser, City Auditor

**From:** Les Washington, Director, Neighborhood and Community Services  
*David P. King for*

**Subject:** Response to Audit Report of Animal Control Program



Following is the department response to the performance audit of Animal Control services. In general, the department concurs with the audit report and the two recommendations. As stated, this audit focused on the efficiency and effectiveness of the division's efforts to protect public health. This response includes commentary regarding some of the statements contained in the report as the audit brings to light some key points regarding effective animal care and control programs.

### Overview

Most agree that pet licensing/identification programs are an integral part of an effective animal control and care program. Increased compliance with the pet licensing ordinance would benefit the human and the pet population as the division would be in a much better position to deliver quality animal management programs. As pointed out in the audit, one of the benefits of licensing animals is identification. It would seem that all pet owners would be motivated to purchase this inexpensive identification (an "insurance policy") for their pets, however, the audit points out that increasing compliance is not a simple task.

Pet licensing also ensures that rabies vaccinations are current, provides information that is valuable in assisting officers with bite and other animal control investigations, provides revenue to help offset the costs of administering the animal control program, and can be a source of reliable demographic data. Animal management is a comprehensive issue, however, one thing is certain, a well-resourced animal control agency is vital for public health and safety within any community, and inadequate funding is the main obstacle to establishing effective animal control programs.

The audit report points out that the animal control division is funded at \$3.64 per capita, and this is below the minimum recommended level for a "basic" animal control operation. According to experts, animal control programs should be budgeted at least at the \$4.00 per capita level, and some programs are budgeted in the \$7.00 per capita range. In management's review of other animal care and control agencies, the programs containing outreach and education components are budgeted in the \$6.00 to \$7.00 range.

As stated in the audit, "the high number of animals that had to be euthanized may be related to the low rate of compliance with Kansas City's animal licensing requirements". While it is true that impounded animals wearing a pet license can easily and quickly be traced back to an owner, unfortunately, many of the animals that end up in the shelter are

homeless and/or abandoned. Thus, the euthanasia problem goes well beyond compliance with pet licensing.

The large homeless and abandoned pet population is the result of pet overpopulation as well as the weakening of the human-animal bond, and increased licensing compliance is not directly related to these two issues. HOWEVER, a high euthanasia rate may be indirectly related to low licensing compliance rates in that when licensing compliance is low, the revenue stream is also low. Increased revenues provide the funds necessary to deliver the animal management programs necessary to address the pet overpopulation and pet retention problems.

It is important to note that animal control programs are considered to be an investment in reduced costs down the road. These programs expend the majority of resources on problems that result from the behaviors of irresponsible pet owners, e.g. failure to spay/neuter pets, allowing pets to roam, inadequate vet care, etc. Spay/neuter programs as well as outreach and education are a big part of solving a community's pet overpopulation and animal problems. Programs such as these heavily depend upon revenues from pet licensing.

Effective programs must give priority to preventing and dealing with the more serious health and safety problems such as rabies and dog attacks. While it is true that the aggressive control of stray dogs is a critical function that will go far to ensure rabies does not converge upon the community, "dog bites" are already considered to be a serious public health problem. Each year, nearly 4.7 million Americans are bitten by dogs. The "dog bite" problem inflicts considerable damage on victims while incurring enormous hidden costs to communities.

#### Summary

The department recognizes the animal control division is under-funded and that increased revenue through increased compliance with pet licensing laws will help remedy the problem. The department is also keenly aware of the negative short-term and long-term effects of an under-funded animal control program on the community.

Staff has focused on ways to increase revenues and enhance programming. The following steps have already been taken to address this issue.

1. Last fiscal year, cost recovery was analyzed and ordinances increasing fees for service and minimum fines were introduced and passed by council. (Effective September 1, 2002) An amnesty period was offered and additional vet clinics were solicited to sell pet licenses. As a result of these staff and council actions, there was an increase in sales in the months of August, September, and October. (Pet licensing revenues increased 58% from FY '02 to FY '03) In addition, council passed Resolution No.020847 requiring any additional revenue generated by the fee increases to be put back into the operation to enhance services.
2. Ongoing marketing and outreach is an important component of successful licensing programs. As mentioned, the animal control program is not funded for outreach activities so efforts in this area have been intermittent. Despite the barriers, staff has

worked with the licensing contractor, PetData, to develop printed materials, including water bill inserts, brochures and posters. Our public presentations always include information on pet licensing. Additional marketing and outreach would be possible with increased revenue.

3. Another key component to a successful pet-licensing program is enforcement of the pet licensing law. The current field staffing level at animal control is very low and prohibits strategic efforts to enforce the licensing ordinance.

Staff analyzed the costs and benefits of adding ten animal control officers to the field operation. The plan is for five of these officers to focus their efforts exclusively on enforcement of the licensing ordinance. Based on the analysis, it is projected that the revenue from the fines will cover the costs of adding the staff. The goal is to increase pet licensing compliance, enhance revenues, and subsequently improve services.

4. The City Council approved hiring 4 new youth worker positions to assist with animal control activities. The division is currently recruiting youth for these positions.
5. Finally, the department recognizes no animal control program is complete without a strategic outreach program. Cooperation from an informed public as well as collaborative working relationships with other professionals in the field is critical to program success. As mentioned, the division is not currently funded for this type of activity, however, these activities have been included as focus items in the department's strategic plan.

#### Recommendations

1. The department agrees there is no easy solution to increasing compliance. Therefore, a task force may help identify new strategies to increase compliance. Management is continually seeking partners and reaching out to the public in an effort to continue the movement of the animal control division in a positive direction. Developing a task force is in line with current management philosophies.
2. As discussed, the department agrees animal control is under-funded and that increased pet licensing compliance will provide desperately needed revenue to reduce the reliance on tax-supported general funds. Information regarding costs and revenues will be submitted to OMB as recommended. Resolution No. 020847 has provided cost recovery guidance to be considered while establishing appropriation levels.

cc: Wayne A. Cauthen, City Manager