Audit Highlights
August 2022

Animal Services Program Follow-Up



Objective

The objective of this special report was to follow up on the City's actions to implement recommendations from the 2015 Animal Services Program audit.

Background

In April 2015, we issued an audit of the Animal Services Program. The objective of that audit was to evaluate Animal Services operations as compared to best practices and to determine whether they comply with applicable laws, regulations, and policies. We had three findings and issued three recommendations (see back page).

In March 2017, we followed up the status of those recommendations and determined the first was still underway and the other two had been implemented by Animal Services management:

- Ensure information collected on department operations is complete and accurate
- Safeguard shelter drug inventories

This report focuses on Animal Services' efforts to implement the remaining recommendation.

What We Found

We verified the Animal Services Office has not fully implemented a key recommendation from our 2015 Animal Services Program audit.

We recommended Animal Services evaluate kennel shelter operations and implement strategies to comply with state requirements and recommended best practices for animal housing and care. Animal Services has made some efforts to address the recommendation. However, it appears the City's animal shelter is still overcrowded and response times to citizen emergency calls may be untimely. We looked at each of the three parts of the recommendation:

a. Determine the optimum level of staff needed for kennel operations to meet best practices for animal care

We did not see documented evidence that management performed this evaluation since the 2015 audit. Management indicated staffing decisions are currently done annually, based on observed needs by managers.

b. Develop and implement strategies to meet state requirements for animal housing and ensure alignment with best practices related to capacity and animal care

To address state requirements for animal housing, the City moved out of the Town Lake Animal Center facility in 2017. However, the City has 14 fewer kennels to house medium to large dogs since the 2015 audit.

Also, the City implemented several strategies to keep animals out of the shelter including providing support to pet owners, encouraging pet adoptions, and simplifying the adoption process. The City has also transfered 760 animals to out-of-state rescue partners since 2021. However, we saw several documentation issues with that program.

c. Develop and implement strategies to ensure Animal Services timely responds to citizen emergency service calls

We were unable to do a one-to-one comparison of current response times to those from the 2015 audit, largely due to how the information is maintained in the tracking tool. Animal Services allocated additional staff in this area, but continues to report challenges responding to calls. We also noted the customer service call information is not always complete.

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Animal Services Program Follow-Up

2015 Audit Findings and Recommendations

Animal Services Program Audit Findings, April 2015	
Finding 1	Animal Services does not have sufficient facilities and resources allocated to meet the City's live outcome goal and remain in line with State requirements and industry best practices. As a result, the City's animal shelters are overcrowded, animals in the shelters are not consistently receiving the level of care recommended by best practices, and response times for many citizen calls are untimely.
Finding 2	Animal Services does not have sufficient processes to record and prioritize calls, which results in unreliable data and reduces their ability to manage field operations effectively.
Finding 3	Inadequate monitoring and safeguarding of medications increases the risk that Animal Services may not comply with federal requirements or detect instances of possible misuse or waste.

Animal Services Program Audit Recommendations, April 2015		
Recommendation 1	The Chief Animal Services Officer should evaluate kennel shelter operations and implement strategies to ensure Animal Services complies with applicable state requirements and meets recommended best practices for the housing and care of animals. Areas of review should include: a) determining the optimum level of staff needed for kennel operations to meet best practices for animal care, b) developing and implementing strategies to meet state requirements for animal housing and to ensure alignment with best practices related to capacity and animal care, and c) developing and implementing strategies to ensure Animal Services timely responds to citizen emergency service calls.	Underway
Recommendation 2	The Chief Animal Services Officer should establish policies and procedures to ensure information collected on department operations, such as records of call responses, is complete and accurate, including: a) providing documented guidance to dispatch staff on the criteria for categorizing customer service calls, and b) ensuring that field staff track, collect, and report all necessary information regarding each service call including reasons for not responding.	Implemented
Recommendation 3	The Chief Animal Services Officer should establish policies and procedures to safeguard shelter drug inventories, including policies and procedures for: a) drug purchases, receiving, storing, and use; b) separation of duties; and c) disposal of expired or defective drugs, including the documentation, storage, and segregation of expired drugs from unexpired drugs.	Implemented

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