



# **ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL KENNEL OPERATIONS**

Report #08-05

April 22, 2008

The Mayor of the City of Jacksonville and his Administration are committed to identifying operational areas that can be reviewed and improved for operational efficiency. At the request of the Environmental and Compliance Department and the Animal Care and Control Division, the Mayor's Office of Performance Auditing and Management Accountability (MOPAMA) under the direction of the Inspector General has completed a review of the animal intake process at the Animal Care and Control facility and present this report.

### **Project Goal**

The project goal is to address recent concerns by the Animal Advisory Group regarding the Animal Intake and Disposition Process of the Animal Care and Control Division (ACC). The specific project objectives are as follows:

1. Review existing ACC procedures to ensure they are adequate and complete.
2. Review the process for handling animals within the Animal Care and Control facility and make recommendations to improve and streamline the process.

### **Background**

The ACC Division ensures that animals are properly treated and controlled. For many residents, its most important function is to serve as a source for healthy, adoptable pets. The division implements and enforces laws, regulations, codes and procedures concerning the treatment of domesticated animals. It also enforces laws dealing with control of wild animals. Two facilities are maintained by ACC, the main facility is located at 2580 West First Street and the Mandarin Adoption Center is located at 10501-2 San Jose Boulevard. The Mandarin Adoption Center only handles animals that are ready for adoption. All other processing of animals is conducted at the main ACC facility which is the focus of this report.

Including the temporary kennels, the ACC facility was designed to house only 450 animals. However the average daily occupancy was 667 animals for FY 2007. During that period, 26,639 animals were processed through the facility. All but 1,288 were cats or dogs. Only 2,095 animals were adopted with an additional 926 placed with the Jacksonville Humane Society or other rescue groups. For those animals not adopted or placed, 19,662 were euthanized. Reasons for euthanizing animals include behavioral issues, medical conditions, and feral disposition.

Animals enter the ACC system in one of two ways (attachment 1). The first is through the front desk where animals are surrendered by the owner or dropped off by citizens who found or captured the stray or feral animal. The second is from animals collected by the Animal Control Officers (ACO) in the field which deliver them to the Intake Room of the ACC facility. In most cases, animals from other agencies come through the front desk but are sometimes brought directly to the Intake Room. Information regarding the

animal will be entered to the Chameleon database either in the field by way of wireless laptop or at the front desk.

Chameleon is an all inclusive kennel management software which maintains animal records and allows ACC to track animals as they move through the system or process. Pertinent information is entered into the database regarding each animal such as its condition, breed and description. A color photograph of the animal is taken and attached to the file. Information regarding the owner or person delivering the animal is also entered. Other pertinent information regarding the animal such as medical treatment received at ACC is entered into Chameleon. Chameleon is also the same system which houses data for the Pet Licensing Program.

Chameleon automatically generates an identification number for each animal. A plastic collar containing the hand-written number is affixed to the animal unless there is the possibility of injury to staff in doing so. Collars are not affixed to puppies because of the possibility of it being chewed off by a litter or kennel mate. In cases where the collar was not attached to the animal, the collar is attached to the kennel door. The identification number and collar is the means used to identify each animal in the system to ensure any action being taken is for the correct animal. If there is any question as to the animal's correct identification, the color photograph of the animal is used.

All animals are processed through the Intake Room by the ACO, Kennel Officer (KO) or Veterinary Technician (VT). Animals are checked for signs of ownership which includes microchips, tags and obvious signs of care such as grooming. An assessment of the animal is conducted to determine if medical attention is required and the animal's potential for adoption. The animal is vaccinated against contagious diseases and dewormed. The animal is then taken to the appropriate kennel and the kennel number is entered into Chameleon. If the animal is in need of medical treatment, a VT will make an assessment if immediate treatment is required or not and appropriate steps will be taken. In cases where the animal is beyond assistance, the animal will be humanely euthanized.

According to *Sec. 462.601 Impounding of animals* of the Municipal Code, ACC shelters dogs and cats, whether tagged or stray, for seven days excluding official holidays recognized by the City. Feral dogs and cats are sheltered for 24 hours. ACC provides shelter and care for animals, other than dogs and cats, for 48 hours, with the exception of a wild animal that is endangered or threatened or otherwise protected from destruction by regulations. Under *Sec. 462.604 Voluntary surrender by owner*, animals voluntarily surrendered by their owner only need to be provided shelter and care for 48 hours. ACC places a hold on the animal based on the above criteria. Chameleon is annotated with a review or due date based on the hold. Final disposition is determined when the hold expires. Disposition is based on the adoptability of the animal.

Animals are housed and cared for in the kennel section of the ACC facility. Kennels are cleaned each morning approximately two hours after feeding. Additional cleaning is conducted as required throughout the day. VTs walk the kennels at a minimum of twice

daily to treat, observe and otherwise evaluate the animals' conditions (attachment 1). If at anytime an animal is observed as needing medical treatment, appropriate action is taken. Within the confines of the ACC facility, contagious animals are separated from others; however, overcrowded conditions prevent complete isolation. As part of the daily routine, an inventory of animals is conducted and compared to the Chameleon database.

With few medical exceptions, all animals placed in adoption by ACC are spayed or neutered. Animals that are ready for adoption are moved to the adoption area of the ACC facility with many going to the Mandarin Adoption Center (attachment 1). These animals are housed only one animal to a kennel where in other parts of the facility there will be several animals in one kennel unless an animal is considered to be aggressive or dangerous to others.

### **Methodology**

The approach to this project was to engage the staff of the ACC in improving their own process. The MOPAMA team interviewed employees, reviewed current operational policies and procedures, reviewed the steps necessary to process animals and developed a process map (attachment 1) in order to obtain a thorough understanding of the process. In addition, the MOPAMA Staff facilitated the development of an action plan (attachment 2) to assist ACC in addressing concerns identified during the process review. An exercise was conducted to prioritize action plan items according to feasibility, impact and overall effectiveness. The action plan was divided into three categories.

- Medical
- Kennel Operations
- General

The following are our findings and recommendations.

### **Objective 1**

- Review existing operational policies and procedures to ensure they are adequate and complete.

### **Finding 1-1**

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and associated forms cover the majority of actions within the process; however, only those produced as memorandums were dated. There was no means to identify if SOPs provided were the most recently issued and accurately reflected current procedures. For example, the SOP for intake did not reflect the latest change for vaccinating animals. Additionally, all SOPs were not in a central location.

### **Recommendation 1-1**

Standard Operating Procedures should be the basis by which ACC staff perform their duties. SOPs should be dated, revised as needed, and periodically reviewed to ensure they reflect proper procedures. SOPs should also include all aspects of the process. There should be a central location where all SOPs are maintained as a master file. All members of the ACC staff should be familiar with all procedures so as to understand the relationship between their task and tasks of others.

### **Department Response**

*The Department has been updating the SOPs since the fall of 2007. The recently hired Community Relations Specialist has been tasked with compiling the latest SOPs and preparing the Master File. The Department is also convening training classes for newly hired staff to familiarize them with the SOPs.*

### **Finding 1-2**

ACC has no formal training program for ACC staff. Often times training is compromised because of the workload resulting from low staffing levels and over-population in the shelter. Many responsibilities and tasks performed by the ACC staff are learned once they are hired. This is especially true in entry-level positions. In addition, there is a high level of emotion and stress with tasks performed routinely. New staff members receive on-the-job training (OJT) by shadowing other employees.

### **Recommendation 1-2**

We recommend that the City's Training and Organizational Development office be enlisted to develop a curriculum for the training of new ACC staff. ACC Supervisors should be used as a resource for developing the curriculum. All current staff should also participate in the training to ensure there are no gaps in knowledge or skills. ACC should document all training given to employees.

### **Department Response**

*The Department had received an offer from the Organizational Development office on April 10, 2008 and has requested assistance in meeting the training needs of ACC staff. The Department is working to identify and provide the needed training.*

### **Objective 2**

- Review the process for handling animals within the Animal Care and Control facility and make recommendations to improve and streamline the process.

### **Finding 2-1**

Based on the Florida Animal Control Association (FACA) and the National Animal Control Association (NACA), ACC is understaffed. ACC is authorized 16 Kennel Officers (KOs) or Animal Care Assistant Senior. As of March 28, 2008, only 12 of those positions are filled with 3 KOs assigned to the Mandarin Adoption Center. The remaining 9 KOs along with two supervisors are responsible for the daily care and feeding of the animals at the ACC facility 7-days a week.

There are 6 authorized Veterinary Technician (VT) positions with only 3 currently filled. There is one VT supervisor position which is filled. VTs dispense medications, screen all incoming animals and ensure the overall health of animals on a daily bases. They also assist in all surgeries and in euthanizing animals.

### **Recommendation 2-1**

Efforts should be made to expedite the filling of the vacant positions in order to bring ACC up to fully staffed levels for KOs and VTs. In addition to providing better care for the animals sheltered at the ACC facility, it would help to reduce the stress of the job, and reduce the errors observed in locating animals in the shelter as documented in Finding 2-3.

The Florida Animal Control Association (FACA) recommends shelters have at least one KO per 1,000 animals handled per year. ACC has averaged 24,338 animals for FY 2005 to FY 2007 with a high of 26,639 for FY 2007. This equates to having 24 to 26 KOs using FACA's recommendation. The National Animal Control Association (NACA) uses a more complicated formula which takes into consideration the average hold period for animals. Using the FY 2007 data, NACA recommends 28 KOs to meet the basic daily needs of the animals sheltered. Reducing the hold period from the current 7 days to 5 days for animals would reduce the recommended KOs to 20. Neither formula takes into account the number of facilities within an animal control system. Once all positions are filled, conditions at ACC should be reviewed to see if the current authorized number of KOs and VTs is sufficient.

No specific information was found regarding recommendations for the number of VTs a kennel should employ.

### **Department Response**

*The Department has completed the process of converting kennel officer positions to veterinary technicians and is actively working to fill these positions. As such, the current positions, even all full staff, will not meet suggested staffing levels. Additionally, the*

*Department has already begun the process of reducing the hold time from 7 days to 5 days.*

### **Finding 2-2**

Numerous kennels house 3-4 animals in a space designed to hold only one. Overcrowding causes many negative effects on the animals; illness for example is spread much more quickly when many animals are kept in the same kennel. ACC is required to hold stray dogs and cats, whether tagged or not for 7 days by the municipal code. This directly contributes to the overcrowding in the ACC facility.

### **Recommendation 2-2**

The FACA recommends a minimum holding period of 5 working days for owned animals and 3 working days for strays. MOPAMA and ACC agree that the holding period should be reduced to 5 working days for all animals. This would reduce overcrowding and recommended staffing levels as noted in Recommendation 2-1.

### **Department Response**

*As mentioned above, the Department has already begun the process of reducing the hold time from 7 days to 5 days.*

### **Finding 2-3**

During an observed daily inventory of animals, it was noted that several animals were not in the location assigned in Chameleon. The KO Supervisor conducting the inventory had to locate the animal and update Chameleon on the correct location. Because the supervisor was using a printed list, he had to go to a computer terminal inside the Intake Room to print out a description of the animal in question. Once the animal was properly identified, Chameleon was then updated. The daily inventory is essential in ensuring the proper location and identification of each animal. The inventory can take up to 4 hours to complete because of the number of errors.

The movement of animals at the ACC facility is conducted by ACOs, KOs and VTs. Beyond the initial assignment to a specific kennel, animals are moved for various reasons such as medical treatment, euthanasia and behavioral issues. The Chameleon database is supposed to be updated for each movement but it is not always done, especially when VTs are moving animals for medical treatment or procedures and will be returning the animal the same day. Because Chameleon does not remember the previous location of an animal, the VT could not rely on it to know which kennel to return the animal after the treatment or procedure. Currently, VTs are not required to update Chameleon if the animal will be returned to its original kennel the same day.

### **Recommendation 2-3**

If the VTs are not going to be required to update Chameleon if the animal will be returned the same day, a placard or similar type indicator should be placed on the kennel door to indicate an animal has been removed for medical treatment. Once the animal is returned, the placard should be removed.

To ensure the animal inventory is correct, ACC is working to implement the following:

- ACC will dedicate a KO to each run or area within the facility for a period of at least one week. This will allow an officer to become more familiar with their assigned animals and more likely to notice if an animal is out of place or missing. Additionally, by becoming more familiar with their assigned animals, KOs are more likely to notice if there is a change in behavior or medical condition with any of the animals.
- With only a few exceptions, ACC will allow only KOs to move animals within the shelter. This will help the KOs to know what animals are coming to their assigned runs or areas and to ensure they know where they have been moved. This will also allow VTs to concentrate on treating or preparing animals for surgery instead of collecting and moving animals. Animal Control Officers will have a faster turnaround time enabling them to return to the field sooner.
- ACC is acquiring a laptop computer with wireless capability to conduct animal inventories. The computer will be securely attached to a cart that could be located closer to the runs so KOs can quickly update Chameleon as needed. At night the cart will be locked up.

MOPAMA agrees that the above actions should be taken to reduce the number of lost or misplaced animals within the ACC facility. However, current staffing levels may prevent dedicating a KO to each run or area. The current vacant positions will have to be filled in order to accomplish the objective.

### **Department Response**

*The Department has completed the process of converting kennel officer positions to veterinary technicians and is actively working to fill these positions. Once the transition is complete, the Department will look to move in the recommended direction.*

*However, the Department has already hired an experienced veterinary technician to conduct daily inventory and work with the Veterinarian and other kennel staff to streamline movement of animals within the shelter.*

*Chameleon training is in the works for all shelter employees once hiring is completed. Additionally, a laptop computer is being obtained to assist in the inventory process.*

#### **Finding 2-4**

Euthanasia is a difficult, yet necessary part of the duties carried out at the ACC facility. It is performed for various reasons including to ease the suffering of animals that have serious or chronic medical issues that prevent them from being adopted. Animals that have behavioral problems such as being overly aggressive to humans and other animals along with feral animals that will not make good pets are euthanized. Regular euthanasia keeps the shelter healthier by preventing overcrowding and eliminates animals which are not considered adoptable. However, it is labor intensive procedure that requires 2-3 staff to carry out. It has been ACC's intention to conduct euthanasia daily, but because of staffing issues and workload, this is not always accomplished. Euthanasia is conducted for the most part, Mondays through Fridays, with a fewer number performed on weekends. On Sundays there are few, if any, animals euthanized.

#### **Recommendation 2-4**

Regular euthanasia should be conducted on a daily basis to prevent overcrowding and maintain a healthier environment within the shelter. While the intention is not to euthanize more animals or euthanize animals prematurely, it is intended to allow ACC to concentrate on saving those animals that are adoptable.

#### **Department Response**

*The Department has instituted a policy requiring euthanasia on a daily basis and is currently being performed. Additionally, in the interest of increasing live releases, the Department has instituted a policy of informing the Jacksonville Humane Society (JHS) of all available animals at least 24 hours prior to euthanasia to enable live releases of potentially adoptable animals.*

#### **Finding 2-5**

Numerous animals were not wearing collars. The reason given for this was that the animal was too fractious or aggressive to receive a collar. For safety reasons the collar was tied to the kennel door. Puppies also do not wear a collar because other puppies they are kept with tend to chew on the collar and it becomes a choking hazard. Collars are the primary means of identifying animals throughout the process. The collars have the hand-written identification number that identifies the animal in Chameleon. Whenever an animal is moved or a procedure is performed, the collar is checked and the identification number verified. Without the collar, the staff is left with identifying the animal using the vague breed, color labels given and photograph in Chameleon. No non-collared animals were observed being moved, but there were several collars attached to kennel doors that did not belong to the occupants. The collars were discarded because the animal had apparently been euthanized.

### **Recommendation 2-5**

The safety of the staff handling animals is paramount. However, the current procedure of identifying a non-collared animal is time consuming and subject to errors. There is no obvious solution that maintains an acceptable level of safety when handling aggressive animals. ACC staff is researching the use of bar-coding for identifying all animals within the shelter. Bar-coding could also be used to record different standardized procedures thus eliminating time consuming manual entries into the animals file. ACC should continue its research into finding a safe, accurate and easy means to identify animals not currently collared.

### **Department Response**

*The Department will explore other options such as tagging etc to enable identification of all animals within the shelter.*

### **Finding 2-6**

New staff is not given immediate access to Chameleon by ACC. Delays as long as a month have been noted. This exacerbates the problem of animals being misplaced because the newer staff that moves the animals cannot update the system and must rely on others to do this, after the animal has been placed.

### **Recommendation 2-6**

All Animal Care and Control staff should be trained before they are allowed to move animals and should have access to Chameleon by the time they are finished with their training. SOPs should include a training guide for Chameleon.

### **Department Response**

*The Department will train all employees on Chameleon and include the training guide in the SOP manual.*

### **Finding 2-7**

The dog kennels were found to have feces on the floor while animals were being fed. The primary feeding apparatus is a hanging bowl on the kennel door. However, because of overcrowding and the possibility of food aggressive dogs being kept together, a separate bowl was placed on the floor among the feces. Food was observed to have spilled onto the floor among the feces. Because of the staffing levels, kennels are only cleaned once a day. Cleaning is conducted in the morning approximately two hours after feeding which begins at 7:00 AM. This policy has

resulted in a cleaner and fresher smelling facility during the day. However, having food and feces next to each other could lead to the spreading of contagious diseases such as parvovirus, a deadly disease caused by an unclean environment.

### **Recommendation 2-7**

Kennel cleaning should be conducted more frequently. Food bowls should not be placed on un-cleaned kennel floors. Animals that are food aggressive should be separated from other animals if space is available.

### **Department Response**

*The Department will continue to monitor the situation and increase cleaning activities as needed. The Department always strives to separate animals whenever possible.*

### **Opportunity for Improvement**

Efforts should be made to address the true root cause of overcrowding. The public needs to be educated in regards to being responsible pet owners and not contributing to the number of abandoned, stray or feral animals. Efforts should be made to reduce the feral animal population in the community so there would be fewer animals to shelter and ultimately euthanize.

The true root cause of the overcrowded conditions does not rest with the staff or facilities of Animal Care and Control. Nor does it rest with the policies, procedures and ordinances that regulate the care and sheltering of abandon, stray or feral animals. It rests with the pet owners who allow their dogs and cats to breed unchecked then abandon them or expect someone else to resolve the problem. Abandoned animals continue to breed thus increasing the unwanted animal population. In FY 2007, 19,662 unwanted animals were euthanized in Duval County.

The following should be implemented to continue a culture of continuous improvement within ACC:

- The ACC should continue to follow the Plan-Do-Check-Act improvement cycle.
- Policies, procedures and standards should be in writing and reviewed periodically to ensure they are current. Dissemination should be to all staff. Staff members should follow all policies, procedures and standards in the sheltering and care of the animals.

### **Department Response**

*The Department has commenced an educational campaign to encourage responsible pet ownership and proper licensure of animals.*

## **Conclusion**

The dedication and concern by the staff at the ACC facility is commendable. However, the overcrowded conditions and the low staffing levels of KOs and VTs contribute to errors and the failure to update the database regarding the location of animals. Overcrowding also contributes to the spread of disease resulting in a higher euthanasia rate. Plans are underway to upgrade the KOs' positions to help in the recruitment and retention of kennel staff.

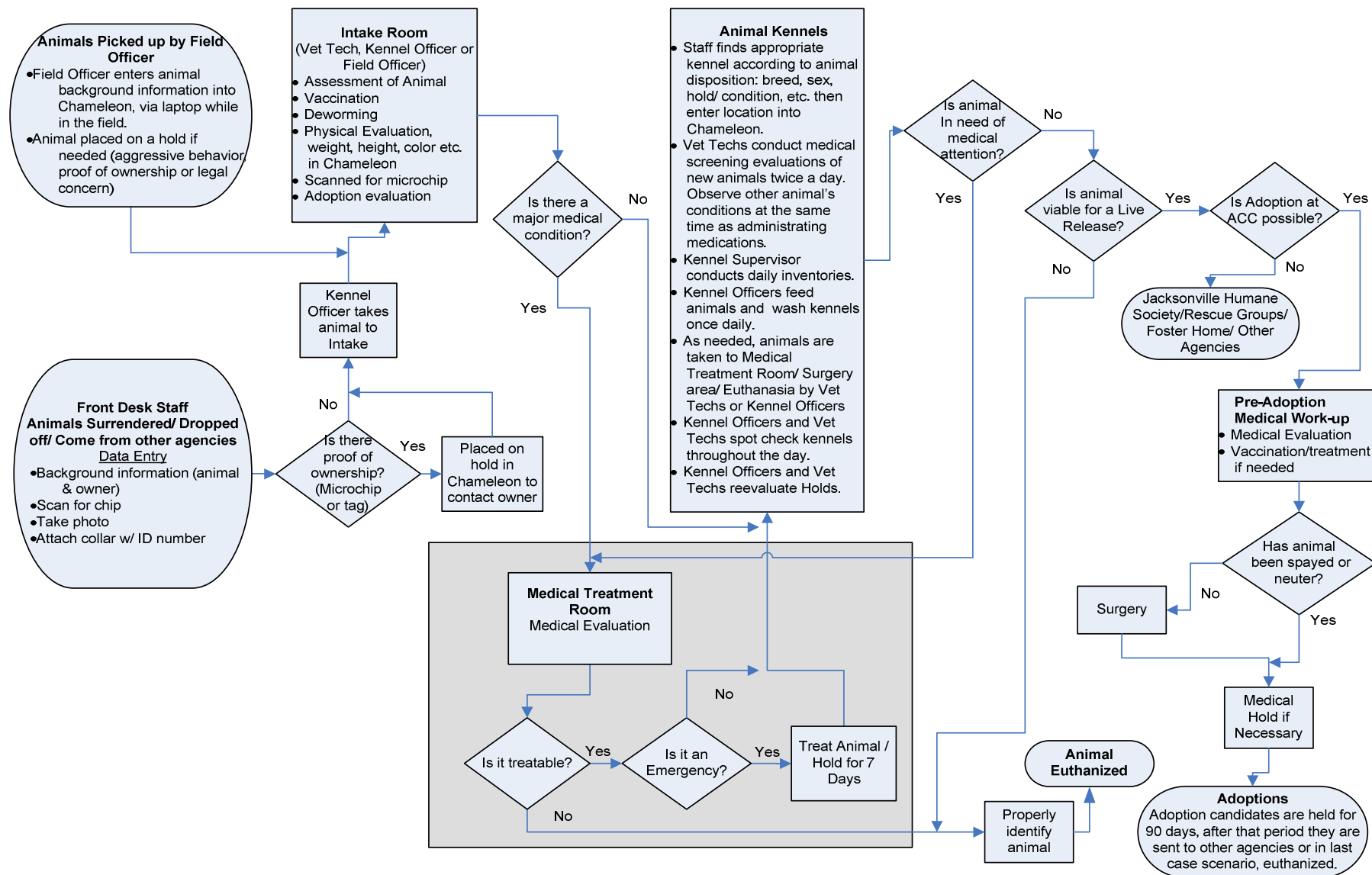
It is believed that the recommendations in this report and the actions being taken by the ACC staff outlined in the Action Plan (attachment 2) will address the concerns of the Animal Advisory Group regarding animal intake and disposition. A major concern identified by the group is animals not being identified in a timely manner regarding adoption, illness or euthanasia. A combination of reducing the holding periods, filling current vacancies and adopting the above recommendations will improve the likelihood an animal will be placed for adoption.

Groundbreaking for a new facility is planned for the summer of 2008. The current facility will then be renovated and used as an overflow facility. The size of the Mandarin Adoption Center will also be increased. Though not a part of this review, the new facility is expected to relieve the overcrowded conditions.

We appreciate the cooperation of Animal Care and Control's staff in conducting this review.

# Animal Care and Control: Animal Intake and Processing

(current state 3/25/08)



**ACC Kennel Operations  
Action Plan**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>*FEASIBILITY</b>	<b>*IMPACT</b>	<b>*EFFECTIVENESS</b>	<b>PRIORITY SCORE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
<b>Medical</b>	1. Animals arriving sick	Educate the public - school programs	Yes	5	3	4	60	Fred Forbes
	2. Animals getting sick @ ACC	Strict adherence to intake protocol	Little	5	5	5	125	Wendy Kennel
		Vaccinate animals sooner (as picked up)	Yes	5	5	5	125	Wendy Kennel
		Strict adherence to cleaning protocol	Little	5	5	5	125	Dave Freeman and Terri Terrell
		Quarantine incoming animals to reduce exposure risks	very high	1	4	3	12	n/a
<b>Kennel Operations</b>	3. Daily feeding	Purchase non-spill Bowls	Yes	5	3	3	45	Dave Freeman and Terri Terrell
	4. Daily Cleaning	Update/follow cleaning protocol	Little	5	5	5	125	Dave Freeman and Terri Terrell
							0	
	5. Daily inventory	Purchase a laptop computer to use during inventory	Yes	5	5	5	125	Fred Forbes, Ed Obrero
		Conduct everyday	Yes	4	5	5	100	Ed Obrero, Kennel Supervisors
	6. Customer contact/escort	Recruit volunteers as customer escorts	No	5	5	5	125	Cathy Wood

**ACC Kennel Operations  
Action Plan**

		Use floater Kennel Officer	Yes	3	4	4	48	Dave Freeman and Terri Terrell
	7. Animals not where database indicates	Only Kennel Officers move animals	Yes	4	5	5	100	Fred Forbes, Ed Obrero
							0	
	8. Mandatory holds	Reduce holding time (Requires legislative action)	Little	3	5	5	75	Ebenezer Gujjarlapudi, Fred Forbes
							0	
<b>General</b>	9. Data entry into Chameleon database	Apply new technology by using a barcode scanner for identifying animals and services received	Yes	4	5	5	100	Jason Oliveres
		Hire a CSA II to do data entry	Yes	3	3	3	27	Fred Forbes, Ed Obrero
							0	
	10. Lack of training and training program	Establish formal training program	Time	5	5	5	125	David Freeman, Terri Terrell, Wendy Kennel and Jason Oliveres
		Update training	Time	5	5	5	125	David Freeman, Terri Terrell, Wendy Kennel and Jason Oliveres
							0	
	11. Not following SOP	Training Documentation	Time	5	5	5	125	David Freeman, Terri Terrell, Wendy Kennel and Jason Oliveres
		Update SOPs	Time	5	5	5	125	David Freeman, Terri Terrell, Wendy Kennel and Jason Oliveres

**ACC Kennel Operations  
Action Plan**

		Increase staffing	Yes	4	5	5	100	Ebenezer Gujjarlapudi, Fred Forbes
	12. No centralized SOP	Establish centralized SOP	Time	5	5	5	125	David Freeman, Terri Terrell, Wendy Kennel and Jason Oliveres
	13. Reactive not proactive to work	Develop new means to educate public	Yes	5	5	5	125	Everyone
	14. Need for more volunteers	Recruit additional volunteers	Time	5	5	5	125	Cathy Wood
							0	
							0	
	15. Need for more rescue groups and foster parents	Research and recruit	Time	5	5	5	125	Michele Ryninger
							0	
	16. Staffing levels	Increase to FACA levels	Yes	3	5	5	75	Ebenezer Gujjarlapudi, Fred Forbes
							0	
	17. Over Crowding	Educate Public	Yes	5	3	4	60	Fred Forbes
		Reduce Holding Time	Yes	3	5	5	75	Ebenezer Gujjarlapudi, Fred Forbes
	18. Map the Kennel and Medical Treatment processes in more detail		Time	4	4	5	80	Ed Obrero

\* 5 high to 1 low