

COUNCIL REPORT
LOS ALAMOS POLICE DEPARTMENT
ANIMAL SHELTER



Chief D. Sgambellone

A Comprehensive Report Submitted to the County Council

9/26/2023

LOS ALAMOS POLICE DEPARTMENT'S
ANIMAL SHELTER

Los Alamos County Animal Shelter was established to meet the needs for local animal welfare seven days a week. The Los Alamos Police Department (LAPD) currently manages the Animal Shelter. There are five authorized full-time staff at the Animal Shelter who are employed by the County and managed by the Los Alamos Police Department. The Shelter is 4,000 square feet with 18 indoor/outdoor kennels, housing for 18 to 20 dogs and up to 25 cats, with quarantine or isolation areas, animal bathing, treatment areas, meet and greet rooms, and on-site office staff space. The Shelter allows residents to surrender, turn in stray animals, or adopt potential pets. The goal of the Animal Shelter is to provide a safe and secure environment for all animals under their care while ensuring they are treated humanely, allowing for a fast transition to a permanent home.

The Shelter provides all medical needs and testing along with conducting behavior tests on animals prior to adoption. To prevent adoption for breeding purposes and to reduce the animal population, the Animal Shelter only adopts spayed and neutered animals. The Shelter arranges the fostering animals for both short and long-term needs, socializing animals, advertising, and adopting animals from the Shelter as well as several off-site adoption events. Creative adoption efforts and programs provide support for animals to place homeless animals into loving homes.

Staff

The Los Alamos Animal Shelter has five authorized full-time staff positions which provide for the animals 7 days a week; the Shelter is open to the public Mon-Tue and Thu-Sun from 1100 to 1700 hours. Wednesdays, the Shelter closes to the public for a deep cleaning of all areas. The Animal Shelter Manager Position was established approximately four years ago and is currently filled by Paul Sena. Mr. Sena started in March of 2019 and was selected out of twenty-two applicants. Mr. Sena has extensive experience in supervision, veterinary care, and experience as assistant manager in surrounding Animal Shelters. Mr. Sena supervises four Animal Control Officers (ACO's) and utilizes daily checklists to ensure requirements are met.

The ACO's, who enforce the Animal Control laws within the County, also have duties within the Animal Shelter. These duties include cleaning the Shelter areas, transporting animals to medical appointments, ensuring animals are fed, enriched, and they manage surrendered, reclaimed, or adopted animals. ACO's respond to calls for service throughout the County to calls such as barking dogs, dog bites, roaming animals, or to investigate animal cruelty cases. ACO's work to solve problems through educational material, public outreach, mediation between parties, loaning of equipment such as bark collars, and enforcement of animal related ordinances. Currently, all of the four positions are filled.

All ACO's are required to have successful completion and maintenance of the National Animal Control Association Level I certification course within eighteen months of employment. Additional training obtained by current staff includes:

Paul Sena:

- NACA Level 1
- NACA Level 2

- Shelter Dog Training Mentorship

Jacob Hill:

- FEMA - IS-0010.a Animal in Disaster Awareness and Preparedness
- FEMA - IS-00011.a Animals in Disasters Community Planning
- FEMA - IS-00100.c Introduction to Incident Command System
- FEMA - IS-00111.a Livestock In Disasters
- FEMA - IS-00200.b ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incident
- FEMA - IS-00700.b An introduction to the National Incident management System
- FEMA - IS-00800.c National Response Framework, An Introduction
- Calibre Press- Implicit Bias
- NACA Level 1
- NACA Level 2
- National Animal Cruelty Investigation School – Animal Cruelty Level 1
- Diversity and Cultural Competency for Law Enforcement
- Blue to Gold University- Real World De-escalation
- Blue to Gold University- Warrantless Home Entries, Curtilage, and Open Fields
- Shelter Dog Training Mentorship

Theresa Phelan:

- FEMA - IS-00019.19 FEMA EEO Supervisor Course
- FEMA - IS -00011.a Animals in Disasters: Community Planning
- FEMA - IS-00010.a Animals in Disasters: Awareness and Preparedness
- FEMA -IS-00037.19 Managerial Safety and Health
- Santa Fe Animal Shelter – Humane Euthanasia Training Course
- State of New Mexico Animal Sheltering Board – Euthanasia Technician License*
* (currently renewing due to expiration during COVID)*
- NACA Level 1
- NACA Level 2
- NACHO – Module A
- NACHO – Module B
- NACHO – Module C
- The Humane Society of the United States – Animal Cruelty and Fighting
- Blue to Gold – Real World De-escalation
- Calibre Press – Implicit Bias
- NACA – Bite Stick Certification
- NACA – Training Conference Completion Certificate
- Code 3 and Colorado State University – Certified Animal Cruelty Investigator (National)
- TTCS – Interactions with Person having Mental Impairments
- TTCS – Instructor Development
- TTCS – First Line Supervision and Management
- ASPCA Webinar – Animal Enrichment Best Practices
- ACTS (Animal Control Training Services) – Field Training Officer Certification
- TASER International X/26 and M26 Certificate

Miki Moreno:

- NACA Level 1
- NACA Level 2
- NACHO – Module A
- NACHO – Module B
- NACHO – Module C
- Code 3 and Colorado State University – Certified Animal Cruelty Investigator (National)
- ACTS – Officer Safety for ACO
- ACTS – Training for Animal Control Professionals
- ASP Tactical Baton Certification
- AXON Academy Taser Certified

Animals as Evidence

It has been brought up by the Animal Shelter Advisory Committee that animals from custody battles, or animals taken in as evidence are not treated humanely. As Chief, I have not heard of a single animal that has been taken in as evidence, unless it is already deceased. When speaking to employees who have worked in the animal Shelter, they remember very few incidents over the last 19 years. Regardless of who manages the Shelter, taking in an animal for evidentiary purposes will always remain a possibility. These animals, if taken into evidence are still treated humanely. They are given food and water each day and will continue receiving enrichment from the Shelter Employees. These animals do not have encounters with the public or other animals ready for adoption. The liability if the animal was injured by another animal is very high. This is the same as animals who are quarantined for bite cases. They are separated but still have human contact, food, and water.

Community Involvement

The Animal Shelter works directly with community organizations such as LA Cares for a pet food distribution program, Smiths Market place for off-site adoption events, Paulina Gwaltney Photography to assist in showcasing our adoptable animals, and Pet Pangaea for dietary recommendations. A new 501(c)3 organization, entitled *For the Animals*, was established by Jib Bennett. *For the Animals* solicits and collects donations for the Los Alamos County Animal Shelter. This money is used to assist the Animal Shelter to fund medical care for animals in special situations or to purchase larger items to improve the welfare within the Shelter. Another community organization is the boy scouts, who built an outdoor Shelter for animals such as chickens or reptiles.

The Shelter volunteer program has expanded, and now younger children can participate in animal enrichment such as reading to the animals, giving treats, providing walks or other playful events. There are around 130 volunteers who participate at the Animal Shelter. However, there are between 25-30 volunteers that come in on a consistent basis. The volunteers are given training/ orientation to the Animal Shelter before they are allowed to work with any animal. They are given a handbook, trained on proper techniques, and sign training waivers to abide by County Policy. Volunteers are only asked to complete tasks they feel comfortable with. Some volunteers only desire to work with specific animals, want to complete enrichment, or prefer to clean or do laundry. The Animal Shelter attempts to ensure volunteers are utilized to the best of their ability, feel

comfortable, and are around only safe animals. Volunteers and public citizens are not authorized to handle aggressive animals or ones that are being quarantined.

The Animal Shelter also uses individuals who need to complete community service. The Animal Shelter works with the Judicial system to allow a place to help the community as well as complete community service.

Statistics

The Los Alamos Animal Shelter has statistics that demonstrate the Animal welfare is very good. The following includes data from January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2022. If you compare this data to the data previously submitted to Council, you will notice it has remained very consistent.

Length of stay is especially important for overall animal welfare. The following statistics are based on Animal Shelter outcomes from January 1st, 2020, through December 31st, 2022. A total of 583 animals came into the Shelter during this time period. Of these, 54.03% or 315 animals stayed in the Shelter care for less than seven days. A total of 156 animals (27%) stayed between 8 and 31 days, 64 (11%) stayed between 32 to 60 days, and 48 (8%) stayed more than 60 days. Many of the long-term stay animals were placed into foster care homes due to an illness or being too young to adopt. Puppies and kittens can come into the Shelter at such a young age it is not safe to adopt them out. The foster care homes house these animals until it is safe for them to meet the public or once medical treatment has been completed.

Annual statistics show the Animal Shelter surpassed the national average in every category. In 2022, the Los Alamos Animal Shelter took in 137 dogs and 73 cats for a total of 210 animals. A total of 98.5% of dogs and 93.1% of cats were live releases or an average of 96.2% for all animals. This number includes return to owner, transfer to another agency, or adoptions. Returning stray animals back to owners is a priority of the Los Alamos Animal Shelter. The national average, according to the American Humane Society, is 15.8% for Dogs and 2% for cats. Los Alamos Animal Shelter surpassed this number by returning stray dogs 86% of the time and stray cats 27.5% of the time. Adoption is a very important component of any animal Shelter. Nationally, 25% of dogs, and 24% of cats are adopted once placed into a Shelter. Los Alamos Animal Shelter adopted 84% of dogs and 79% of cats which were brought into the Shelter.

Euthanasia of animals is a common topic when discussing Animal Shelters. Los Alamos Animal Shelter has never claimed to be a no-kill Shelter; however, it meets the statistical requirements to be considered one. To become a no-kill Shelter, less than 5% of the animal population can be euthanized. In 2022, the Los Alamos Animal Shelter had a total of 7 non-live releases of 210 animals, or 3%. The national average is 56% for dogs and 71% for cats according to the American Humane Society. Contrary to what the Ad hoc Committee presented to Council; we do have a policy on euthanasia. Our Policy is always to try and find the best home for an animal. Most euthanized animals are due to medical conditions. We have a policy on euthanasia and all animals under this consideration must get approval from the Chief of Police prior to the act. The Chief is briefed on the quality of life, background history of the animal, and veterinary recommendations prior to any decision. The only exception is if the animal is suffering, and time is of the essence.

From 2019 through April 18th, 2023, there have been a total of 21 citations issued by animal control officers; 10 of those were written warnings rather than citations forwarded to court. Of the remaining 11, 10 of those citations issued were for roaming dogs and 1 was for excessive barking. The Animal Control Officers continue to be more focused on education and providing resources rather than citing. Working with the County Utilities Department, Shelter staff have provided inserts to utility bills educating the public about animal welfare and safety.

Animal Behavior

The Los Alamos Police department has recently gone to the Santa Fe Humane Society as well as the Albuquerque Animal Shelter to learn how they conduct behavioral assessments. It has been the practice of the Los Alamos Animal Shelter to conduct SAFER behavior assessments. We recently learned that American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) is no longer standing behind SAFER testing as it is not a good predictor of animal behavior after adoption. ASPCA is no longer training or certifying personnel in SAFER. The Santa Fe Humane Society has made a new in-house system to adapt to these changes. Now, all current Shelter staff have been trained and conduct behavioral testing in-house prior to adoption.

Enrichment

Enrichment provides outlets for normal animal behaviors and is crucial to the animal's welfare. Enrichment is an item that provides mental and physical stimulation to animals. Animals within the Shelter are enriched through the use of puzzle toys, flirt poles, fetch games, play groups, and walks. We offset the boredom that leads to behavior problems and issues once adopted. Enrichment is an integral part of any adoption program since Shelter animals can spend much of their time in kennels. Enrichment gives them the mental and physical stimulation they need to stay occupied, happy, and healthy. All of these things translate to faster adoptions.

The next revision of department policy is anticipated to be completed by October of this year and will include an enrichment policy. Although the policy has not been published yet, Shelter staff have been adhering to the following:

- The animals will have species specific enrichment.
- Enrichment will include rotation of senses including but not limited to:
 - Olfactory Stimulation: Novel scents or extractions mixed with water may be used with animals but must be checked prior to use to ensure it is safe for the species. Scents will be sprayed only in the air and never directly onto bedding. Essential oils will not be used with cats. Cat pheromone or cat nip may be used.
 - Auditory Stimulation: Books, music and biological significant sounds can be played for animals. Music and sounds will be turned off prior to staff leaving the facility for the night as to not have the sound disrupt the animals sleeping.
 - Visual Stimulation: Bubbles, lava lamps, mobiles and aquariums may be used to visually stimulate the animals.
 - Cognitive Stimulation: Feeding bowls, puzzle plates and lick mats may be used. This will provide animals with investigatory opportunities. Yard time for dogs will be provided. Dogs will be placed in a play group and staff will mark and document which animal can socialize with another based on their behavior and temperament. Cats will be provided opportunity to access the catio.

-Taste Stimulation: Kongs with peanut butter and other various dog treats will be provided, ice blocks with food and treats will be made and provided to dogs. Lick mats with various types of treats will be provided to cats.

Community Input

The Animal Shelter Ad hoc Committee conducted a survey using an online platform in 2019. The survey was open from 23 January 2019 until 21 February 2019 and had a total of 324 visitors and 259 responses. The entire document report is 196 pages long and breaks down the statistics on each of the 13 questions. Question 13, on the survey, was a fill in response which 109 completed responses. The following is a statistical analysis of the responses:

- Within the survey, 32 out of the 259 had never visited the Animal Shelter, meaning 87.6% of the respondents had time within the Shelter. 33.6% of the respondents had been in the Shelter over 5 times within the last 5 years.
- Within the survey, 86 or 33.2 % of the respondents have never adopted an animal from the Los Alamos Animal Shelter. 58.3% or 151 of the respondents had adopted in the past 10 years, and 8.9% or 23 had adopted in the past but it was over 10 years ago.
- Within the survey, 205 or 79.2% of the respondents had a positive response to if the Animal Shelter was a good place to adopt pets; Agreed (92 total) or strongly agreed (113 total). 11 respondents or 4.2% disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed.
- Within the survey, 210 or 81.1% of the respondents had a positive response to if they believed the animal were being taken care of in a humane manner. 98 strongly agreed, 112 agreed. 14 or 5.4% of the respondents had a negative response with 12 disagreeing and 2 strongly disagreeing.
- Within the survey, 72.6% or 188 of the respondents had a positive response regarding the Shelter staff being courteous; 83 strongly agreed, 105 agreed. A total of 32 or 12.4% of the respondents had a negative response with 28 disagreeing, and 4 strongly disagreeing.
- Within the survey, 196 or 75.7% of the respondents had a positive response in regard to the facility being clean and well organized; 87 strongly agreed, 109 agreed. A total of 23 or 8.9% of the respondents had a negative response to having a clean facility.
- Within the survey, 154 or 59.5% of the respondents had a positive response in regard to the hours of operations. 41 strongly agreed, 113 agreed. 58 or 22.8% of the respondents had a negative response to the hours of operation; 51 disagreed, 8 strongly disagreed.
- Within the survey, 97 or 37.5% of the respondents had a positive response regarding the Shelter has a great volunteer program. A total of 35 strongly agreed, 62 agreed and a total of 9 or 15.1% of the respondents had a negative response to the volunteer program; 24 disagreed, 15 strongly disagreed. A total of 123 or 47.5% had no opinion.

- Within the survey, 188 or 72.6% of the respondents had a positive response in regard if the Shelter was meeting the community needs. 61 strongly agreed, 127 agreed. A total of 27 or 10.4% of the respondents had a negative response to the Shelter meeting the community needs; 23 disagreed, 4 strongly disagreed.
- Within the survey, 226 or 87.3% of the respondents had a positive response in regard if the Shelter was a place they would recommend to adopt a pet. A total of 148 strongly agreed, 78 agreed. A total of 17 or 6.6% of the respondents had a negative response to recommending the Shelter as a place to adopt a pet; 13 disagreed, 4 strongly disagreed.
- Within the survey, 188 or 72.6% of the respondents had a positive response in regard if the Shelter was meeting the community needs. A total of 61 strongly agreed, 127 agreed. A total of 17 or 6.6% of the respondents had a negative response to the Shelter meeting the community needs; 13 disagreed, 4 strongly disagreed.

The overall response was positive from the community; positive leaning responses outnumbered negative ones 10 to 1. There are some areas which the community brought to light, which may need more attention. The Shelter staff are always trying to improve, and community comments are always welcomed.

Additionally, the National Community survey commissioned by Los Alamos County in 2022 indicated a rating of 81% for the overall quality of Animal Control service. A historical review of the survey shows a positive rating above 80% for Animal Control in each survey conducted since 2004. In 2022, there were no external complaints on Shelter staff and four external compliments.

Self-Evaluation

All facets of Police Department operations are continuously examined and improved upon as staffing and resources permit. Most notably within the Animal Shelter, the following areas have been identified as needing improvement or implemented. First, a draft re-write of Chapter 6 has been completed. Staff anticipates holding a public meeting to gather input on this draft in October, with an introduction of an updated draft ordinance planned for November. Second, we continue to evaluate potential options for a dog socialization area. While funding exists, there has been delay with respect to the location and size of the run. Additional changes that have been implemented include:

- Cat patio- outdoor play enrichment for cats, allows fresh air to animals
- Dog kennel- improved cages by placing opaque plexiglass to allow animals to be out of sight from other dogs, in case they are aggressive or want to hide. Lowers overall anxiety of animals
- Dog kennel- placed rubber flooring to reduce sound bounce off of cement floor. Lowered overall noise disturbance to animals.
- Sounds boards- to reduce sound bounce off cement walls. Will lower overall noise disturbance to animals

Oversight Board

The State of New Mexico already has an oversight committee that looks over all Shelters, provides advice, and ensures Animal Shelters are keeping up with the proper standards or protocols. The New Mexico Animal Sheltering Committee has been reformed and may be able to conduct an evaluation of the Los Alamos Animal Shelter in the future; the Police Department has reached out to representatives for guidance and have spoken to them about an inspection in the future. The New Mexico Animal Sheltering Committee does publish minimum standards for Animal Shelters. Los Alamos Animal Shelter meets and exceeds all these standards. It should be noted that the previous Animal Shelter Manager assisted in writing the standards for all New Mexico Shelters.

Conclusion

Additional oversight is not warranted. The Los Alamos Animal Shelter consistently exceeds national animal welfare standards and has received positive community feedback and support since at least 2004 as evidenced by a statistically valid community survey instrument.

There is always room for improvement, and the goal of the Los Alamos Animal Shelter is to provide the best care for the Animals and the best service to the community. As outlined above, the Los Alamos Animal Shelter has adopted recommendations from others including the Ad-Hoc Committee and has improved its service. The Los Alamos Animal Shelter strives to improve with each and every experience and looks forward to serving the citizens of Los Alamos to the best of our ability.