

AUDIT REPORT



CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
BUREAU OF MANAGEMENT AUDIT
WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR., COMPTROLLER

Audit Report on Shelter Conditions And Adoption Efforts of Animal Care And Control of New York City

MH06-082A

June 19, 2006



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
1 CENTRE STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007-2341

WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR.
COMPTROLLER

To the Citizens of the City of New York

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In accordance with the responsibilities of the Comptroller contained in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter, my office has audited the conditions under which animals are sheltered by Animal Care and Control of New York City (AC&C) and the level and success of AC&C's efforts to promote the adoptions of animals from its shelters.

AC&C is a not-for-profit corporation under contract with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to provide animal care and control services for the City's homeless and unwanted animal population. We audit entities such as this to ensure that they comply with their City contracts and applicable laws and regulations concerning their operations and care of those they serve.

The results of our audit, which are presented in this report, have been discussed with DOHMH and AC&C officials, and their comments have been considered in preparing this report. Their complete written responses are attached to this report.

I trust that this report contains information that is of interest to you. If you have any questions concerning this report, please e-mail my audit bureau at audit@comptroller.nyc.gov or telephone my office at 212-669-3747.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'William C. Thompson, Jr.'.

William C. Thompson, Jr.
WCT/ec

Report: MH06-082A
Filed: June 19, 2006

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*The City of New York
Office of the Comptroller
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**Audit Report on the
Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of
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AUDIT REPORT IN BRIEF

Animal Care and Control (AC&C) of New York City is a not-for-profit corporation that provides animal care and control services. Under contract with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), it is the sole organization responsible for the care of the City's entire homeless and unwanted animal population. The contract requires that AC&C provide humane sheltering as well as adoption efforts to reduce the number of homeless and abandoned animals. In this audit, we evaluated the conditions under which animals are sheltered by AC&C and the level and success of AC&C's efforts to promote the adoptions of animals from its shelters.

Audit Findings and Conclusions

Overall, AC&C shelter conditions are adequate, and staff is generally responsive to the needs of both the animals and the public they serve. However, cleaning could be improved with more timely cleaning of adoption wards, spot cleaning of cages, and properly drying floors. In addition, other improvements can be made in the following areas: shelter security, investigations of animals missing from shelters, the isolating of sick animals from healthy animals, and walking the dogs.

We found AC&C's level of adoption efforts to be adequate, except for not providing adoption services at its receiving centers in Queens and the Bronx. These efforts included a Web site at www.nycacc.org promoting adoption, daily adoption hours at all of its full-service shelters, off-site adoption events, and New Hope placements with pet rescue organizations. However, we could not determine the success of these efforts with regards to the number of animals adopted due to the absence of original adoption agreements and supporting documents.

Although we did not evaluate the veterinary care of animals at the shelters, pet rescue organizations and customers surveyed had concerns about the health of the animals. Moreover, AC&C does not have a required customer service quality-assurance program.

Audit Recommendations

Based on our findings, we make 13 recommendations, including the following:

AC&C should ensure that:

- Cleaning procedures are followed, including the timely cleaning of adoption wards, the periodic spot cleaning of cages, and the proper drying of floors after being cleaned.
- Sick animals are separated from healthy animals.
- Efforts are increased to get volunteers for dog-walking activities or find alternative solutions to address this issue.
- Doors to restricted areas and cabinets containing pharmaceuticals are locked at all times.
- Complete adoption documentation is maintained, including signed adoption agreements, for seven years, as required by its own policy.
- There is adequate medical staff to address the medical needs of the animals.
- All animals are examined shortly after they arrive and that contagious animals are immediately isolated.
- A formal customer service quality-assurance program is developed and instituted to identify areas that may need improvement.

Agency Response

In their response, DOHMH and AC&C officials generally agreed with the audit's findings and recommendations.

*The City of New York
Office of the Comptroller
Bureau of Management Audit*

**Audit Report on the
Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of
Animal Care and Control of New York City**

MH06-082A

INTRODUCTION

Background

Animal Care and Control (AC&C) of New York City (formerly known as The Center for Animal Care and Control) is a not-for-profit corporation that was created in 1994 to provide animal care and control services for the City after the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) announced that it was terminating its contract with the City for these services. The mission of AC&C is “to promote and protect the health, safety and welfare of pets and people in New York City.”

On January 1, 1995, AC&C entered into its first contract with DOHMH (then named the Department of Health) to be the sole organization responsible for the care of the City’s entire homeless and unwanted animal population. The contract was subsequently renewed through June 30, 2006, with an option to renew for an additional three-year period.

The contract requires AC&C to provide humane sheltering as well as adoption efforts to reduce the number of homeless and abandoned animals. AC&C must accept at its facilities all animals that are lost, stray, homeless, and unwanted or abandoned. It must operate animal shelters in City-owned buildings in the boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island seven days a week, 12 hours a day. The contract originally required that AC&C operate animal receiving facilities leased by the City in the Bronx and Queens five days a week, 8 hours a day, when funding was reduced this was later amended to two days a week, 8 hours a day. In addition, the contract requires AC&C to coordinate all intake, management, and disposition of animals by means of the Chameleon computer tracking system.

AC&C’s shelters in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island are open to the public from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and have adoption hours of 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. seven days a week. Each shelter has five or more wards (rooms) of cages, each separating animals by type (e.g., dogs, cats) as well as by stage in the shelter process (unexamined, holding, adoptable, and contagious).

In Queens and the Bronx, AC&C has receiving centers, each open to the public two days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Queens center is open on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and the Bronx center is open on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Neither receiving center holds animals overnight or provides adoption services. AC&C transfers animals by van from the Queens center to the shelter in Brooklyn and from the Bronx center to the shelter in Manhattan.

In Calendar Year 2005, AC&C took in a total of 44,547 animals including 41,406 (93%) cats and dogs. At the same time, AC&C processed out of the system a total of 39,588 cats and dogs, including 10,743 (27%) that were adopted, 6,840 (17%) that were taken by rescue organizations, 1,409 (4%) that were returned to owners, and the remaining 20,596 (52%) that were euthanized.

In Fiscal Year 2005, the AC&C budget showed \$7.2 million in City contract revenue and \$1.7 million from other sources, including \$1.2 million from shelter and adoption revenues and \$500,000 from donations, grants, and events. In Fiscal Year 2006, its budget showed \$7.2 million in City contract revenue and \$2.6 million from other sources, including \$1.1 million from shelter and adoption revenues and \$1.5 million from donations, grants, and events. As of February 2006, AC&C reported 154 employees, four of them veterinarians.

AC&C has a board of directors that is appointed by the Mayor. The seven board members include representatives of DOHMH, the Police Department, and the Department of Parks and Recreation, and four private citizens.

Objectives

The objectives of this audit were to evaluate:

- The conditions under which animals are sheltered by AC&C, and
- The level and success of AC&C's efforts to promote the adoptions of animals from its shelters.

Scope and Methodology

The scope period of this audit was July 1, 2004, through March 31, 2006. The audit focused on cats and dogs, which made up 93% of the animals taken in by AC&C. Our review included the contract between DOHMH and AC&C as well as AC&C's policies and procedures, *Shelter Operations Procedure Manual*, employee handbook, volunteer handbook, minutes of the board meetings, monthly animal activity statistics, certified financial statements, and Web site.

Two prior audits conducted by the Comptroller's Office, *Audit Report on the Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of the Center for Animal Care and Control* issued in June 2002 and *Audit Report on the Financial Practices of the Center for Animal Care and Control* issued in June 1998, were also reviewed to assess whether there were any recurring issues. In addition, *Guidelines for the Operation of an Animal Shelter* of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and *Animal Control Management: A Guide for Local Governments* were used as criteria.

To obtain an understanding of AC&C's shelter system, we interviewed AC&C's Executive Directors, Information Technology Manager, Controller, Director of Human Resources, Director of Operations, Operations Support Coordinator, Volunteer/Special Events Manager, Director of Shelter Medicine, and Call Center Manager. AC&C shelter managers and staff members were also interviewed, and a walkthrough of the Brooklyn shelter was conducted to develop an understanding of the facility's layout and adoption operations. In addition, we attended an AC&C supervisors meeting and a meeting of the Board of Directors. We also met with DOHMH officials, including the AC&C contract manager, and reviewed DOHMH reports on AC&C activities.

For background information on local animal care and control, we met with the President of the Mayor's Alliance,¹ and with ASPCA officials. In addition, for nationwide comparisons, 13 large municipalities were contacted: Berkeley, California; Boulder, Colorado; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Detroit, Michigan; Houston, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Maricopa County (Phoenix), Arizona; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Richmond, Virginia; San Francisco, California; and Washington, DC.

In addition, two surveys were conducted to obtain opinions from the public concerning their experiences with AC&C. The first survey was sent to 300 randomly selected customers from the 2,862 who had adopted a cat or dog from AC&C between July 2005 and September 2005. The second was sent to all 100 pet rescue organizations who had rescued 10 or more cats and dogs from AC&C between July 2004 and September 2005. The surveys and results for each question are included in Appendix I for customers and Appendix II for pet rescue organizations.

Reliability of Data Generated by Chameleon

AC&C is required by its contract to coordinate all intake, management and disposition of animals by means of the Chameleon computer tracking system. To evaluate the reliability of data generated by Chameleon, animal inventory reports and adoption statistics were tested against shelter conditions and adoption documents. To determine whether the AC&C animal inventory was accurate, Chameleon animal inventory reports dated February 2, 2006 from both the Brooklyn and Manhattan shelters were obtained and 10 percent of the 666 animals listed on these reports were judgmentally selected to determine whether the reports were accurate. We tested accuracy by confirming that the animals were physically present in the cages listed on the reports.

For adoption statistics, two samples totaling 145 adoptions were tested. A sample of 100 adoptions was randomly selected from a Chameleon generated list of 22,191 cats and dogs adopted between July 1, 2004 and September 30, 2005, to compare to adoption agreements and supporting documentation, such as photo identification, proof of address, phone number, and adoption questionnaire. In addition, one adoption for each month was judgmentally selected from shelter hard copy files at each of the three full-service facilities for a total of 45 adoptions and compared to the Chameleon generated list.

¹ The Mayor's Alliance is an umbrella organization for private groups interested in animal welfare and rescue created in December 2002 that today has as many as 200 pet rescue groups participating in its programs.

Shelter Conditions

To assess AC&C shelter conditions, a total of 24 unannounced visits, between October 2005 and March 2006, were made to its five facilities, including 9 visits to Brooklyn, 11 visits to Manhattan, 2 visits to Staten Island, and 1 visit each to the Queens and Bronx receiving centers. Shelter conditions were quantified from a total of 20 visits to the Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Staten Island shelters, excluding 2 preliminary survey visits as well as the visits to Queens and the Bronx, since the receiving centers do not house animals overnight.

AC&C staff advised us that shelter cleaning begins each day at 8:00 a.m. and that it takes up to two hours to clean each animal ward. During the overnight shifts (midnight–8:00 a.m.), only spot cleaning takes place. Therefore, the unannounced visits were scheduled for the afternoon on different days of the week, including one visit in the evening and one visit on the weekend, to make sure the shelters are cleaned at least once a day and that adoption wards are cleaned before the start of adoption hours. Shelter conditions for cats and dogs were evaluated for the following conditions: ward and cage cleanliness, presence of cage (identification) cards, access to water, and the separation of sick from healthy animals.

To evaluate AC&C's procedures and documentation for investigations of animals missing from shelters, we obtained the total list of 265 animals that were noted in Chameleon as "missing" between July 1, 2004, and February 6, 2006. We then randomly selected and tested Chameleon's records of investigations for 10 of these animals.

To determine whether dogs are being exercised according to HSUS guidelines, we interviewed AC&C officials and noted if dogs were being exercised during our visits. Then we calculated the average length of stay for adoptable dogs in all shelters. The analysis was based upon the 1,681 dogs that had come into the AC&C shelters during the last quarter of 2005 and had been adopted out by February 8, 2006.

To identify possible incidents of animal abuse or mistreatment, we reviewed AC&C incident and workers' compensation report files as well as personnel files in which disciplinary write-ups, grievance reports, and notes-to-file are kept. A listing of 255 past and present employees who worked for AC&C between July 1, 2004, and February 6, 2006, was obtained and the personnel files of 25 employees were judgmentally selected and reviewed.

Adoption Efforts

To assess the level of adoption efforts, we reviewed adoption-related areas on AC&C's Web site at www.nycacc.org, including locations and hours, calendar of off-site events, programs, and statistics; attended two AC&C off-site events, one in Queens and one in Brooklyn; and compared adoption events data for September 2005 from North Shore Animal League (North Shore) reports as well as from AC&C's report to DOHMH against adoption data in Chameleon.

We attempted to determine the success of adoption efforts using AC&C's adoption statistics for the most recent period available in Chameleon—July 1, 2004, through September 30, 2005. We could obtain and review documentation for only 101 of the 145 sampled adoptions because of

the absence of original adoption agreements and supporting documents. Adoption agreements were checked to see whether agreements were signed by both the adopter and AC&C; that dates, animal identification numbers, and owner identification numbers on agreements matched data in Chameleon; and that supporting documentation was present.

The results of the above tests, while not projected to the populations from which they were drawn, provided a reasonable basis for us to assess shelter conditions and adoption efforts.

This audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS) and included tests of records and other auditing procedures considered necessary. This audit was performed in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter.

Discussion of Audit Results

The matters covered in this report were discussed with AC&C and DOHMH officials during and at the conclusion of this audit. A preliminary draft report was sent to AC&C and DOHMH officials and discussed at an exit conference held on May 1, 2006. On May 9, 2006, we submitted a draft report to AC&C and DOHMH officials with a request for comments. We received a written response from DOHMH and AC&C officials on May 24, 2006. In their response, DOHMH and AC&C officials generally agreed with the audit's findings and recommendations. DOHMH stated:

“We are pleased that this audit provides a favorable account of shelter conditions and adoption efforts. AC&C has recently made procedural changes to further improve controls over security and cleanliness. We agree that more attention needs to be paid to health and medical treatment of animals, and the contract and budget currently being negotiated with AC&C reflect this priority. We will continue to review the performance of AC&C to assure that the concerns raised in this audit are properly addressed.”

The full texts of the responses from DOHMH and AC&C are included as addenda to this report.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, AC&C shelter conditions are adequate, and staff is generally responsive to the needs of both the animals and the public they serve based upon our observations, interviews, and questionnaires. However, cleaning could be improved with more timely cleaning of adoption wards, spot cleaning of cages, and properly drying floors. In addition, other improvements can be made in the following areas: shelter security, investigations of animals missing from shelters, the isolating of sick animals from healthy animals, and walking the dogs.

We found AC&C's level of adoption efforts to be adequate, except for not providing adoption services at its receiving centers in Queens and the Bronx. These efforts included a Web site at www.nycacc.org promoting adoption, daily adoption hours at all of its full-service shelters, off-site adoption events, and New Hope placements with pet rescue organizations. However, we could not determine the success of these efforts with regards to the number of animals adopted due to the absence of original adoption agreements and supporting documents.

Although we did not evaluate the veterinary care of animals at the shelters, pet rescue organizations and customers surveyed had concerns about the health of the animals. Moreover, AC&C does not have a required customer service quality-assurance program. These findings are discussed in detail in the following sections of this report.

Shelter Conditions

The AC&C contract requires that animals "shall be cared for in a humane manner." HSUS recommends that all animal shelters should "maintain a clean, comfortable, safe, and healthy environment for each animal." It states that this is important because:

"Animals, like humans are sentient beings who deserve to live in a humane, disease-free environment. A shelter should examine animals soon after they arrive and place them in appropriate housing areas of the facility. Animals should be separated by species, sex, age, and health status. They should be housed in a way that minimizes stress and disease transmission and should be provided with proper food and water, human attention, protection from the elements, adequate ventilation, and heat, and veterinary care when needed."

Overall, AC&C shelter conditions are adequate, and AC&C shelter staff is generally responsive to the needs of both the animals and the public they serve, based upon our observations, interviews, and questionnaires. In addition, there was no evidence of animal abuse or mistreatment, and animal inventory reports generated by Chameleon are accurate. This section of the report on shelter conditions discusses in detail our findings on cleanliness and the physical care of animals as well as areas where improvements can be made. We did not evaluate the medical care of animals at AC&C shelters, as discussed in "Other Matters" later in this report.

Almost all cat and dog cages at AC&C shelters had cage cards attached and the animals had access to water, as required by HSUS guidelines, which state that "a cage card should accompany each animal" and "animals should have access to fresh water at all times." Of the 3,749 animals observed on 20 visits, 3,711 (99%) had identification cards and 3,457 (92%) had water.

Cleaning Procedures Are Not Always Followed

The AC&C *Shelter Operations Procedure Manual* states, “All animal rooms are to be cleaned a minimum of once per day,” which is in line with HSUS guidelines. AC&C staff advised us that shelter cleaning begins each day at 8:00 a.m. and that it takes up to two hours to clean each animal ward. During the overnight shifts (midnight–8:00 a.m.), only spot cleaning takes place.

Cat and dog wards were generally clean or in the process of being cleaned during our visits. Of the 320 wards observed on 20 unannounced visits to the three full-service shelters, 264 (82%) were clean, 18 (6%) were not clean, and 38 (12%) were being cleaned, as shown in Table I below:

Table I

Summary of Cat and Dog Ward Conditions
(October 2005 - March 2006)

AC&C Full-Service Shelter	Shelter Visits	Wards			
		Total # Observed	Clean	Not Clean	Being Cleaned
Brooklyn	8	120	100	2	18
Manhattan	10	190	156	15	19
Staten Island	2	10	8	1	1
Total (% of total)	20	320 (100%)	264 (82%)	18 (6%)	38 (12%)

When we surveyed pet adopters and rescue organizations on shelter cleanliness, they concurred with our observations. Of the 87 customers who responded to the question of whether or not they found the shelter clean, only one responded negatively. In addition, the 27 pet rescue organizations that responded to the shelter cleanliness question rated cleanliness as above average (4.1 on a scale of 1 to 6).

The overall cleanliness of the shelters appears to be adequate. However, we did find three areas where improvements can be made: more timely cleaning of adoption wards, spot cleaning, and properly drying floors.

The Director of Operations informed us that the adoption wards should be cleaned by noon. On four separate visits, three to Brooklyn and one to Manhattan, we noted that some adoption wards had not been cleaned by the start of adoption hours, after the public was invited into the wards, and on one of these visits the adoption ward was still not cleaned more than two and a half hours later. Therefore, it is possible that potential adopters may be discouraged by the unclean conditions.

In addition, the *AC&C Shelter Operations Procedure Manual* also requires that “after the initial cleaning, cages should be cleaned as often as necessary to ensure that the animals are properly cared for.” HSUS guidelines advise that “a clean cage will minimize the spread of disease and will reflect the level of care that your shelter provides each animal.”

Although the overall cleanliness of the shelters appears to be adequate, we did not observe spot cleaning taking place. A prior audit by the Comptroller’s Office had a similar finding that the animal cages were not consistently spot cleaned. As shown in Table II below, of the 3,749 cages we observed, 3,402 (91%) were clean, while the remaining 347 (9%) cages could have benefited from spot cleaning.

Table II

Summary of Cat and Dog Cage Conditions
(October 2005 - March 2006)

AC&C Full-Service Shelter	Shelter Visits	Cages		
		Total # Observed	Clean	Not Clean
Brooklyn	8	1,839	1,697	142
Manhattan	10	1,843	1,651	192
Staten Island	2	67	54	13
Total (% of total)	20	3,749 (100%)	3,402 (91%)	347 (9%)

For example, in March 2006 we observed eight cages in one dog ward in Manhattan that had not been cleaned or even spot cleaned probably since the previous evening. Nearly every cage had multiple feces at 10:00 a.m. and were still not cleaned at 11:30 a.m. and at 1:00 p.m. when we returned to the ward. Without periodic spot cleaning, the animals are being exposed to unhealthy conditions for longer than necessary.

In addition, AC&C’s *Shelter Operations Procedure Manual* states, “After all cages are cleaned, floors are to be washed, rinsed, and ‘squeegeed’ or dry mopped if necessary.” Of the 282 wards observed, 54 (19%) had wet floors. We noticed that employees did not always squeegee the floors after cleaning. When floors are squeegeed, there are no puddles or standing water left on the floor. If floors are wet, it is possible for staff and visitors to track germs from room to room, and it creates a potential liability since the public or workers may slip and injure themselves.

Recommendation

1. AC&C should ensure that cleaning procedures are followed, including the timely cleaning of adoption wards, the periodic spot cleaning of cages, and the proper drying of floors after being cleaned.

AC&C Response: AC&C agreed that while AC&C has policies in place, these “policies are not effective without enforcement.” AC&C stated that “during the audit period, Spot Cleaning Logs were developed and implemented to document the process and increase staff accountability. . . . Care Center [Shelter] Supervisors, Assistant Supervisors and Lead Animal Care Officers are responsible for this enforcement. . . . In addition, senior management inspects each Care Center and reviews logs a minimum of once weekly to evaluate supervisor efficacy.”

Sick Animals Should be Separated from Healthy Animals

AC&C does not adequately isolate sick animals from healthy animals as required by its contract with DOHMH. A prior audit by the Comptroller’s Office had a similar finding that contagious animals were kept in the same wards as healthy animals.

HSUS guidelines also state that sick or injured animals should be separated from healthy animals. On 5 (25%) of our 20 visits, we observed animals identified by AC&C as “sick” housed with healthy animals in one or more wards, including five adoption wards. For example, on two visits in December 2005, we found sick dogs with healthy animals in one of the Manhattan shelter’s adoption wards with notes attached to their cages saying “contagious move ASAP.”

If contagious animals are housed with healthy animals, it is likely that the healthy animals, especially adoptable animals, will become sick. In fact, when we surveyed the public, this was the one area in which the customers responded most negatively, with 28 (27%) of the 103 customers who responded to the question regarding the health of the pets they adopted from AC&C telling us that their adopted pets were not healthy. One customer commented that the cat he adopted suffered from ring-worm and an ear infection, which he would have liked to have known before adopting the animal.

Recommendation

2. AC&C should ensure that sick animals are separated from healthy animals.

AC&C Response: AC&C agreed, stating that “AC&C recognizes the extreme importance of isolating animals who have contagious disease and has a clear policy outlining the steps that must be taken in the event animals having infectious disease are identified. . . . The auditors observed an operational problem.” AC&C has since changed its protocols to solve this problem. AC&C continued: “In addition, The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will replace the entire HVAC [Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning] system and duct work at the Manhattan Care Center which is expected to help reduce the spread of disease. This renovation project is projected to begin in the fall of 2006.”

Dogs Should be Exercised

While dogs in the AC&C Staten Island shelter are exercised, the dogs in the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters are not exercised regularly, if at all. A prior audit by the Comptroller's Office also reported that the dogs in the shelters were not being exercised regularly.

The HSUS guidelines state that dogs confined in cages should be exercised in runs at least 4 feet by 10 feet twice daily or walked on a leash for at least 20 minutes twice daily. Although the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters do have outside runs, they are not being used.

AC&C told us that it cannot leave dogs outside in the dog runs at the Manhattan shelter; officials stated that the shelter has been fined by the Department of Environmental Protection and has received citations resulting from neighbors' complaints about the barking. AC&C officials did not explain why the runs in Brooklyn are not being used. However, according to officials, dogs are walked in Manhattan (and Brooklyn) only when volunteers are available. We contacted other large municipalities throughout the country and found that many, like AC&C, rely on volunteers to walk the dogs.

An ASPCA official advised that if a dog is going to be in a shelter for longer than two days, it would be a problem if they are not being walked. AC&C reports the average stay in the shelter for cats and dogs is 6.95 days.² Our own analysis showed that during the three-month period (October 2005–December 2005), dogs that were adopted stayed in the AC&C shelters an average of 8.8 days each, including 493 dogs (29%) that appear to have stayed more than 10 days each.

Because many of the dogs at the shelters are housed in cages that do not give them much room to move around, it is crucial that AC&C exercises them. This is especially true for those dogs that are confined for longer periods of time.

Recommendations

AC&C should:

3. Ensure that efforts are increased to get volunteers for dog-walking activities or find alternative solutions to address this issue.
4. Focus its limited resources on animals that have been confined for longer periods of time.

AC&C Response: AC&C agreed with both recommendations, stating that “as many dogs as possible should be walked. . . . As noted in the report, like most other large municipalities throughout the country AC&C relies on its volunteers to exercise the dogs. We have implemented several volunteer programs designed to get every adoptable dog out for a walk every day: The Family Dog Program . . . [and] The Dog Walking Program, . . . [which] is growing quickly due to the involvement of New York Cares, a non-profit group designed to organize volunteer efforts around New York City.”

² AC&C Monthly Activity Report for January 2006.

Shelter Security Needs To Be Improved

Animal Control Management: A Guide for Local Governments states, “Because many shelters have had animals stolen . . . other security systems and procedures should be implemented as necessary to ensure that animals and staff are protected.” On one Brooklyn visit, we observed a customer removing and replacing a dog from an upper kennel in an adoption ward and taking it outside without the assistance of AC&C staff. Likewise, when we surveyed the public, 34 (40%) of the 86 customers who responded to the question confirmed that they too had been allowed to handle the animals outside their cages without an attendant present. Also, on all of our visits to the AC&C shelters, it was possible for anyone to walk into restricted areas of the shelters, where sick and dangerous animals are also kept, since doors leading to these areas were always unlocked, although some had signs reading “employees only” and “buzz to enter.”

In addition, §2.13 of the City contract requires that “refrigerators and other cabinets containing pharmaceuticals shall be locked.” However, on a visit in March 2006 to the Manhattan shelter with a DOHMH veterinarian, the pharmaceutical cabinets in the medical office were not locked.

By allowing visitors to handle animals on their own and to walk unaccompanied throughout the shelter, there is a potential that members of the public can injure themselves, staff members, or the animals. In addition, animals and pharmaceuticals can be stolen.

Recommendations

AC&C should ensure that:

5. Customers are assisted in handling all animals.

AC&C Response: AC&C generally agreed, stating, “AC&C’s policy clearly states that no member of the public should handle animals without a volunteer or employee present. Because of successful adoption efforts, our customers outnumber our volunteers and staff so there are times that we are not able to comply with the policy.” AC&C claimed that inadequate staffing levels are due to insufficient resources.

Auditor Response: During the times AC&C cannot comply with this policy because of the large number of customers, AC&C should make it a priority to assist in removing and replacing animals in the kennels, especially upper kennels, to ensure the safety of both customers and animals. In addition, signs should be posted in the adoption wards to inform customers not to remove animals from their kennels without assistance. Once the animals are outside their kennels, AC&C may choose to allow customers to socialize with the adoptable animals without volunteers or staff present if staffing levels are inadequate.

6. Doors to restricted areas and cabinets containing pharmaceuticals are locked at all times.

AC&C Response: AC&C generally agreed, stating, “AC&C agrees that security is important. For this reason the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and DOHMH Police are upgrading our security system to include security cameras with closed circuit television and access control. AC&C does not believe however, that access to restricted areas is a significant problem and we believe that for employee safety reasons the doors must remain unlocked.

“With respect to cabinets containing pharmaceuticals, AC&C and DOHMH agree that general medical supplies and pharmaceuticals do not need to be kept locked at all times. . . . It is mandatory however, that cabinets containing Controlled Drug substances are kept locked at all times and AC&C strictly adheres to this policy. The new contract, currently under negotiation, will clarify these important differences.”

Auditor Response: We agree that upgrading the security system and access controls may be sufficient to improve security so that doors to restricted areas do not have to be locked.

No Evidence That Investigations of Animals Missing From Shelters Took Place

AC&C had no documentation that it investigated animals that were identified as missing from its shelters. As a result, we were unable to verify that investigations did in fact occur. Between July 1, 2004, and February 6, 2006, 265 animals were listed in Chameleon as “missing.” According to AC&C’s Director of Operations, shelter managers and supervisors are responsible for checking animal inventory daily, investigating animals identified as missing, and maintaining memos documenting these investigations on Chameleon.

Based on our review of 10 randomly selected cases, we found no evidence that investigations took place. AC&C did not have adequate records on Chameleon or elsewhere to show that efforts were made to find or report these animals. We received no explanations of what happened to these animals and, in some cases, it took more than a month for the animals to be listed as missing in the computer system.

Of the 10 missing animals, 8 were cats and kittens from the Brooklyn shelter. In one case, a stray Bombay cat came into the Brooklyn shelter on October 23, 2005. The cat was given medication on November 12, 2005, and six days later a note was entered in Chameleon stating that medical staff could not find the cat. On January 25, 2006, more than two months later, the Shelter Manager closed out the animal record in Chameleon as “missing.”

If inventories of animals are performed daily and an animal is noted as missing, an investigation should begin immediately to determine the whereabouts of this animal. The sooner the investigation is begun, the more likely AC&C will be able to find out what happened to the animal and determine whether there are any patterns associated with the problem. For example, do most occurrences of missing animals pertain to a specific breed, a specific shelter, or a specific shift.

Subsequent to our bringing this matter to their attention, we received AC&C's newly written procedures for investigating absent animals on March 31, 2006. Based on our limited review, these procedures appear to be adequate.

Recommendation

7. AC&C should ensure that all animals missing from the shelters be investigated using the new procedure, including documenting on Chameleon when and by whom each step is done.

AC&C Response: AC&C agreed, stating, "AC&C codified the existing *Missing Animal Tracking Policy* during the audit period. Supervisors are [now] following this step by step procedure and official police reports are filed when theft is suspected."

Adoption Efforts

Level of Adoption Efforts

AC&C's contract requires that it "shall promote adoption as a means of placing animal" and "shall provide adoption services at the shelters and receiving facilities." Overall, AC&C has many adoption efforts, including a Web site at www.nycacc.org promoting adoption, daily adoption hours at all of its full-service shelters, off-site adoption events, and New Hope placements with pet rescue organizations.

However, AC&C does not provide adoption services at its two receiving centers. A prior audit by the Comptroller's Office had a similar finding, noting that adoptions were not consistently offered at the receiving centers.

AC&C's Web site is updated regularly and includes information about adopting pets; hours, addresses, and directions to each of its shelters; a monthly adoption event calendar; and photos of animals available for adoption. The Web site also links to the monthly adoption statistics generated by Chameleon.

AC&C has both on-site and off-site adoptions to individuals. The contract specifies that AC&C "shall operate an adoption program at each shelter, five (5) days per week, to include weekends plus three (3) additional days during the week, for a minimum of six (6) hours each day the program operates." We confirmed that AC&C exceeds these requirements at each of its three full-service shelters (Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Staten Island), which have adoption hours from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. seven days each week.

While the contract does not specifically require AC&C to place animals through off-site adoption events, AC&C participates in 17-25 adoption events each month, alone and in conjunction with organizations like North Shore. We confirmed that these adoption events and efforts are occurring through our observations, a review of North Shore records, and our public survey, in which nine (8%) of the customers responded that they had adopted their pet at an AC&C adoption event.

AC&C also works directly with pet rescue organizations and the Mayor’s Alliance to place older and sick animals through its New Hope program. The umbrella organization’s President told us that the Mayor’s Alliance has a good working relationship with AC&C and has provided funding for two New Hope coordinators at the AC&C shelters.

Since AC&C does not provide adoption services at the Bronx and Queens receiving facilities, customers must travel to other boroughs in order to adopt at a shelter. Local Law 12 of the City of New York, which was enacted in July 2002 by the City Council, requires that the City acquire and complete construction of full-service animal shelters in the Bronx and Queens by July 1, 2006. An AC&C official told us that the City may have identified sites in the Bronx and Long Island City, Queens, for these full-service shelters, but it appears unlikely that the deadline will be met.

Recommendation

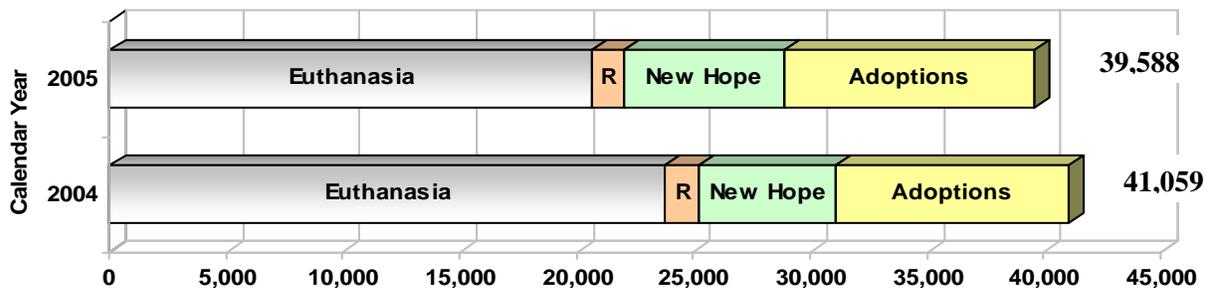
- 8. AC&C should provide adoption services at its Bronx and Queens receiving centers until its full-service facilities are up and running.

AC&C Response: AC&C agreed, stating, “Although AC&C would like to provide daily adoption opportunities in the Bronx and Queens Receiving Centers, our lease does not permit animals to remain in the centers overnight. . . . we will evaluate the viability of using the Receiving Centers as Off-Site Adoption locations as funds and volunteers become available.”

Success of Adoption Efforts

In 2005, AC&C reported results for 39,588 cats and dogs, as shown in Figure 1, below, which included 27 percent that were adopted (Adoptions), 17 percent that went to rescue groups through its New Hope program (New Hope), four percent that were returned to their owners (R), and the remaining 52 percent that were euthanized (Euthanasia). Compared to 2004, AC&C adoptions were up 7 percent, and New Hope placements were up 17 percent, while euthanasia was down 13 percent.

Figure 1
AC&C Results for Cats and Dogs
(2004-2005)



Although the adoption numbers reported appear to have increased, we were unable to verify that these adoption statistics from Chameleon, which AC&C reports to DOHMH and the public, are reliable or complete because of the absence of original adoption agreements and supporting documentation. Original documents for only 101 of 145 sampled adoptions (70%) were available for review.

Shelter managers were unable to find original documents for the remaining 44 adoptions. AC&C's "Record Retention and Destruction Policy" states that adoption agreements are to be kept for seven years. An AC&C official told us that they had accidentally discarded all adoption files for a five-month period in 2004 from both the Brooklyn and Manhattan shelters, including documents for 30 adoptions from our sample and could not account for the remaining 14 adoptions.

In addition, of the documents for 101 adoptions that were found, 15 agreements (15%) were not signed by the adopter. AC&C, by not adequately maintaining its adoption files and by not requiring signed adoption agreements, contrary to its own policies, increases the risk that data is incorrectly or erroneously entered in Chameleon, that errors may not be identified, and that AC&C could report inaccurate statistics.

Although we could not verify the results of AC&C's adoption efforts, the customers surveyed who had adopted cats and dogs from AC&C seemed to be satisfied with the adoption process. Of the 106 customers who responded to our survey, almost all said AC&C staff was helpful, that they were satisfied with their adoption experience and would recommend AC&C to others considering adopting pets. One customer who adopted several animals from the Brooklyn shelter commented that the AC&C staff:

"are wonderful. They know the animals, can answer questions, and are all very upbeat. . . . [They] do an amazing job . . . do their best to match the animals with new families. I recommend the shelter to anyone I meet who wants to adopt an animal."

In addition, the 30 pet rescue organizations that responded to these questions on our survey rated AC&C's overall performance as above average (4.1 on a scale of 1 to 6), saying that AC&C was particularly responsive to their rescue group's needs (4.8) and that they were very satisfied with the New Hope e-mails that AC&C sends to alert the groups about available animals (4.8).

Recommendation

9. AC&C should ensure that it maintains complete adoption documentation, including signed adoption agreements, for seven years, as required by its own policy.

AC&C Response: AC&C agreed, stating, "AC&C's current policy as the audit reports is that adoption paperwork must be maintained for seven years. Many of our records were damaged or accidentally discarded during a recent renovation. . . . In the future AC&C will ensure that: Contracts are stored with a reputable record storage company to safeguard these documents [and] Computer based options are investigated that will allow us to move to paperless storage."

Other Matters

Concerns about Health of Animals at the Shelters

Though we did not evaluate the veterinary care of animals at the AC&C shelters, on three separate visits we observed customers complaining about sick animals they had recently adopted from AC&C. In addition, an official from the ASPCA told us that most animals taken from AC&C break out with some kind of illness when they arrive at ASPCA. The health of animals also seems to be the biggest concern of customers, as noted earlier, as well as of pet rescue organizations.

Medical care of animals was the only area in which pet rescue organizations rated AC&C's services as slightly below average (3.3 on a scale of 1 to 6); seven (24%) of the 29 organizations that rated AC&C medical care gave it the lowest possible rating (1). For example, one pet rescue organization expressed frustration with sick animals being shipped out accompanied by no medication or record of prior medications. Another organization complained that recently, all of the animals it has taken have been or become sick so that its veterinarian bills are staggering and disproportionate, it believes, to what veterinarian costs should be.

The HSUS *Guidelines for the Operation of an Animal Shelter* state that in order to minimize disease, all animals should be evaluated shortly after they come in to the shelter. AC&C's Medical Director informed us that animals that appear healthy may not be examined for one to two days after arrival.

AC&C has four veterinarians and 21 veterinary technicians who cover the three AC&C shelters. AC&C's Medical Director stated that AC&C needs more veterinarians and was having a hard time replacing experienced veterinary technicians who had left. Officials from both the Mayor's Alliance and the ASPCA concurred that AC&C needs more medical staff. A prior audit by the Comptroller's Office also raised concerns about medical staffing levels.

In addition, an ASPCA official told us that 50 percent of the cats have an upper respiratory infection when adopted from AC&C, and as many as 80 percent will develop one after arriving at ASPCA. AC&C's Medical Director stated that the shelters have no true isolation wards, so that if an animal has an airborne infectious disease, the disease will travel through the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning ducts to other wards.

Further, on our visits to the AC&C shelters, we did not observe many kennel cleaners wearing gloves or other protective garments, even when cleaning the contagious animal wards. An ASPCA official suggested that to reduce the spread of illness, AC&C employees should be wearing disposable gowns, caps, and disposable shoe covers when handling cats with ringworm and upper respiratory infections.

Recommendations

AC&C should:

10. Ensure that there is adequate medical staff to address the medical needs of the animals.

AC&C Response: AC&C agreed, stating that it “has actively been addressing disease control in the Care Centers. For example, AC&C has increased its medical staff from four veterinarians to five and 21 veterinary technicians to 25 in April 2006. In addition, DOHMH has re-directed funding to the Medical Department allowing us to hire part-time staff in addition to the staff increases already mentioned.”

11. Examine all animals shortly after they arrive and immediately isolate contagious animals.

AC&C Response: AC&C agreed, stating, “Animals that come to AC&C requiring immediate medical care due to illness or injury are seen by a veterinarian or veterinary technician immediately. . . . All animals receive a nose to tail veterinary exam within two days of arriving at the Care Centers. The recent staffing changes should reduce wait time to less than 24 hours by July 2006 in most cases.”

12. Require protective garments be worn by staff, especially when cleaning contagious and unexamined animal wards.

AC&C Response: AC&C agreed, stating that “AC&C policy requires the following: Gowns and gloves must be worn while cleaning wards containing contagious animals. Disinfecting shoe baths are in place outside all contagious wards. Equipment used to clean wards containing contagious animals must remain in that ward. AC&C supervisors are now rigorously enforcing this policy.”

AC&C Lacks Required Customer Service Quality-Assurance Program

AC&C does not have a customer service quality-assurance program, which is required by its contract with DOHMH. §1.5 of the contract states that AC&C “shall develop . . . a customer service quality assurance program which monitors customer satisfaction with services provided . . . and the quality of these services.” A prior audit by the Comptroller’s Office had a similar finding that a customer service quality-assurance program required by the contract was not developed.

In the DOHMH quarterly report letter to AC&C dated May 4, 2005, the contract manager stated, “One area of concern is the absence of a written customer service quality assurance program,” and he requested a draft customer service quality-assurance plan by June 30, 2005. He suggested that “a written customer service quality assurance plan will help the organization [AC&C] measure each component of service offered to the public and would help identify customer service areas that may need improvement.”

We surveyed the public and pet rescue organizations for their opinions of services provided by AC&C. Of the 106 customers who responded to our survey, almost all said AC&C staff was helpful and that they were satisfied with their adoption experience and would recommend AC&C to others considering adopting pets. In addition, the 30 pet rescue organizations that responded rated AC&C's overall performance as above average (4.1 on a scale of 1 to 6), saying that AC&C was particularly responsive to their rescue groups' needs (4.8). Medical care of animals by AC&C was rated slightly below average (3.3) by the 29 organizations that responded to this question. Samples of each survey along with the results are included as follows: Appendix I, survey of customers, and Appendix II, survey of pet rescue organizations.

Recommendation

13. AC&C should develop and institute a formal customer service quality-assurance program to identify areas that may need improvement.

AC&C Response: AC&C agreed, stating, "Although AC&C Care Centers are monitored by DOHMH, we are in need of a tool that will allow customers to let us know how we are doing from their perspective. A customer questionnaire is currently under development and will be implemented no later than July 1, 2006.

CUSTOMER SURVEY AND RESULTS

(106 of the 300 surveys mailed to AC&C customers in January 2006 were returned by March 31, 2006)

- | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|
| 1. Where did you adopt your pet? | No answer | <u>2</u> |
| AC&C Shelter - Manhattan | | 37 |
| AC&C Shelter – Brooklyn | | 38 |
| AC&C Shelter – Staten Island | | 20 |
| Adoption Event | | 9 |
| 2. Who did you adopt your pet from? | No answer | <u>5</u> |
| AC&C | 96 | OTHER |
| | | 5 |
| 3. Were you aware that the pet you adopted was from AC&C? | No answer | <u>4</u> |
| YES | 95 | NO |
| | | 7 |
| 4. Were you interviewed before you adopted your pet? | No answer | <u>1</u> |
| YES | 73 | NO |
| | | 32 |
| 5. Did you find the AC&C Staff Helpful? | No answer | <u>5</u> |
| YES | 95 | NO |
| | | 6 |
| 6. Was your pet healthy when you brought it home? | No answer | <u>3</u> |
| YES | 75 | NO |
| | | 28 |

If you have not been to an AC&C shelter, please go on to question 9.

94 Customers answered questions #7 and/or #8

- | | | |
|---|-----------|----------|
| 7. Did you find the shelter clean? | No answer | <u>7</u> |
| YES | 86 | NO |
| | | 1 |
| 8. At the shelter, were you allowed to be with animals outside their cages without an attendant present? | No answer | <u>8</u> |
| YES | 34 | NO |
| | | 52 |

- | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|
| 9. Overall, were you satisfied with your pet adoption process? | No answer | <u>1</u> |
| YES | 98 | NO |
| | | 7 |
| 10. Would you recommend AC&C to others considering adopting pets? | No answer | <u>2</u> |
| YES | 100 | NO |
| | | 4 |

PET RESCUE ORGANIZATION SURVEY AND RESULTS

(30 of the 100 surveys sent to pet rescue organizations on February 1, 2006 were returned by March 31, 2006)

- | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|
| 1. How long have you been working with AC&C | No answer | 0 |
| <1 yr <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="3"/> 1-5 yrs <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="12"/> 5 yrs + <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="15"/> | | |
| 2. In 2005, How many DOGS did you rescue from AC&C? | No answer | 2 |
| <10 <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="8"/> 10-100 <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="14"/> 100 + <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="6"/> | | |
| 3. In 2005, How many CATS did you rescue from AC&C? | No answer | 3 |
| <10 <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="7"/> 10-100 <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="17"/> 100 + <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="3"/> | | |
| 4. In 2005, which AC&C Shelters have you visited? | No answer | 0 |
| Brooklyn <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="20"/> Manhattan <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="25"/> Staten Island <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="8"/> | | |
| None <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="3"/> | | |
| 5. How often do you go into the AC&C Shelters? | No answer | 0 |
| Weekly <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="7"/> Monthly <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="11"/> Rarely <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="9"/> | | |
| Never <input style="width: 40px;" type="text" value="3"/> | | |

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH ...*	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	Avg Rating
6. AC&C staff responsiveness to animal needs?	1	1	3	7	5	4	9	4.2
7. AC&C staff responsiveness to your needs?	0	0	0	6	4	10	10	4.8
8. Shelter's cleanliness?	3	0	5	6	4	5	7	4.1
9. Physical care and feeding of animals?	1	7	2	5	6	2	7	3.5
10. Medical care of animals?	1	7	4	3	7	4	4	3.3
11. AC&C Adoption Events?	16	1	0	2	4	5	2	4.3
12. "New Hope" e-mails?	2	0	0	3	8	8	9	4.8
13. Your experience with AC&C, overall?	0	0	1	6	10	4	9	4.5
14. AC&C's performance, overall?	0	0	6	3	9	5	7	4.1

*N/A = Not Applicable, 1 = Unacceptable to 6 = Superior (Average = 3.5)

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER



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THOMAS R. FRIEDEN, M.D., M.P.H.
COMMISSIONER
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May 24, 2006

John Graham, Deputy Comptroller
Audits, Accountancy & Contracts
Office of the Comptroller
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007-2341

Re: Draft Audit Report on Shelter
Conditions and Adoption Efforts of
Animal Care and Control of New
York City, MH06-082A

Dear Mr. Graham:

We have discussed the draft audit report with senior management of Animal Care and Control of New York City (AC&C). Their detailed response is attached.

We are pleased that this audit provides a favorable account of shelter conditions and adoption efforts. AC&C has recently made procedural changes to further improve controls over security and cleanliness. We agree that more attention needs to be paid to health and medical treatment of the animals, and the contract and budget currently being negotiated with AC&C reflect this priority. We will continue to review the performance of AC&C to assure that the concerns raised in this audit are properly addressed.

We appreciate the courtesy and professionalism of your staff in the performance of this audit. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Thomas Hardiman, Director, Internal and External Audits, at (212) 219-5285.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas R. Frieden".

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

TRF/mc



Animal Care & Control of New York City

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York, NY 10007
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: (212) 442-2066
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May 23, 2006

John Graham, Deputy Comptroller
Office of the Comptroller
One Center Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Deputy Comptroller Graham:

Attached please find the response of Animal Care & Control (AC&C) to the Audit Report: Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of Animal Care & Control/MH06-082A. AC&C appreciates the Auditors hard work and professionalism exemplified in this audit.

Respectfully,

Mary Martin
Executive Director

Response to the Audit Report: Care Center Conditions and Adoption Efforts of Animal Care and Control of New York City
Audit Number: MH06-082A

Introduction

Animal Care & Control thanks the Office of the Comptroller for its time and attention in the completion of this audit.

We are pleased that in general, the Auditors found our services to be acceptable and that the majority of people who adopted animals from us were pleased with the outcome. We are working to improve the services that we provide to the community and to the dogs, cats, rabbits and other assorted creatures that find their way to our Care Centers. The audit findings and recommendation will be helpful to us.

Responses to Audit Findings and Recommendations

1. AC&C should ensure that cleaning procedures are followed, including the timely cleaning of adoption wards, the periodic spot cleaning of cages, and the proper drying of floors after being cleaned.

Response: AC&C's policy explains step by step, how to clean and disinfect wards, cages and all other surfaces. This policy includes spot-cleaning of kennels and cages as needed. During the audit period, Spot Cleaning Logs were developed and implemented to document the process and increase staff accountability. With regard to the Auditor's recommendation to dry the floors after cleaning, AC&C's policy calls for using a squeegee to remove the majority of standing water from kennels and floors. This procedure is widely used and accepted in animal shelters across the country.

AC&C acknowledges that policies are not effective without enforcement. Care Center Supervisors, Assistant Supervisors and Lead Animal Care Officers are responsible for this enforcement. They:

- Walk through the wards at minimum, before, during and after each shift.
- Instruct and counsel staff on the importance of utilizing proper cleaning and disinfection techniques.
- Monitor staff performance by reviewing Spot Cleaning Logs and Veterinary Check Logs, and the general condition of the Care Center throughout the day.

In addition, senior management inspects each Care Center and reviews logs a minimum of once weekly to evaluate supervisor efficacy.

2. AC&C should ensure that sick animals are separated from healthy animals.

Response: AC&C recognizes the extreme importance of isolating animals who have contagious disease and has a clear policy outlining the steps that must be taken in the event animals having infectious disease are identified. All staff members are trained to spot signs of what could be symptoms of illness but they are not qualified to diagnose disease. The auditors observed an operational problem: non-medically trained staff members labeling animals "contagious" as a method of communicating to the medical staff that further evaluation was needed. AC&C has made the following changes to protocol to solve this problem:

- AC&C no longer uses a paper labeling system. Instead, the staff member creates a request for veterinary exam using our shelter software system. This list is checked twice daily by trained veterinary staff and the decision to move animals to isolated areas is made by the veterinary team and the move is made immediately.
- Veterinarians, veterinary technicians and Care Center Supervisors complete a visual examination of each and every animal a minimum of once daily. Any animal suspected of having infectious disease or requiring additional veterinary care is moved to the appropriate ward immediately.

In addition, The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will replace the entire HVAC system and duct work at the Manhattan Care Center which is expected to help reduce the spread of disease. This renovation is projected to begin in the fall of 2006.

3. AC&C should ensure that efforts are increased to get volunteers for dog-walking activities or find alternative solutions to address this issue.
4. AC&C should ensure that its resources are focused on animals that have been confined for longer periods of time.

Response to #3 and #4: AC&C agrees fully that as many dogs as possible should be walked. The reality of our job is that we must house a significant percentage of dogs that cannot be walked because:

- They have bitten or scratched someone and are in quarantine.
- They are ill or injured and walking them poses a threat to their health or to the health of other animals.

To meet the basic needs of dogs that are with us long-term or who cannot be walked, AC&C utilizes large kennels (4'x 5') that allow for unrestricted movement and play. The dogs in these kennels are provided treats, Kong Toys and other diversions that will help relieve boredom. At this time there are not enough large kennels for all the dogs. In July 2006 we will be replacing our smaller kennels in the Manhattan Care Center. The viability of doing the same thing in the Brooklyn shelter is currently being evaluated based on funds and space available.

As noted in the report, like most other large municipalities throughout the country AC&C relies on its volunteers to exercise the dogs. We have implemented several volunteer programs designed to get every adoptable dog out for a walk every day:

- The Family Dog Program, designed to save the lives of adoptable shelter dogs, trains volunteers to provide socialization and basic obedience to temperament tested shelter dogs making them more desirable and therefore more likely to get adopted.
- The Dog Walking Program, under development during the audit period and formally codified in April 2006, allows trained volunteer teams to walk adoptable dogs in the vicinity of the Care Centers. These dogs wear brightly colored "Adopt Me" vests to identify them as needing a home and encouraging the public to adopt a shelter dog. On the first day of the newly designed program two dogs were adopted by people who saw them on the street. This program is growing quickly due to the involvement of New York Cares, a non-profit group designed to organize volunteer efforts around New York City. These seasoned dog handlers come to the Manhattan Care Center weekly and we expect this program to expand to the Brooklyn Care Center in the very near future.

Due to the success of these programs all adoptable dogs are walked on week-ends in the Manhattan Care Center and in the Staten Island Care Centers and 50% are walked during the week in those locations. We anticipate the same success in our Brooklyn Care Center with the expansion of the New York Cares project and other targeted volunteer recruitment efforts.

5. AC&C should ensure that customers are assisted in handling all animals.

Response: AC&C's policy clearly states that no member of the public should handle animals without a volunteer or employee present. Because of successful adoption outreach efforts, our customers outnumber our volunteers and staff so there are times that we are not able to comply with the policy. Until resources permit us to increase staffing levels AC&C utilizes the following:

- During adoption hours, AC&C locks kennels holding animals that could be easily stolen and are highly desirable.
- Only animals evaluated as adoptable are placed in areas where the public is given access.
- In the Brooklyn Center, potential adopters are asked to leave their drivers license or other identification at the desk before being permitted to spend time with an animal without staff supervision.

6. AC&C should ensure that doors to restricted areas and cabinets containing pharmaceuticals are locked at all times.

Response: AC&C agrees that security is important. For this reason the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and DOHMH Police are upgrading our security system to include security cameras with closed circuit television and access control.

AC&C does not believe however, that access to restricted areas is a significant problem and we believe that for employee safety reasons the doors must remain unlocked. All doors to restricted areas are clearly marked "Employees Only".

With respect to cabinets containing pharmaceuticals, AC&C and DOHMH agree that general medical supplies and pharmaceuticals do not need to be kept locked at all times. Animals requiring medical care are continually entering and leaving the shelter therefore the veterinary team utilizes these supplies constantly. It is mandatory however, that cabinets containing Controlled Drug substances are kept locked at all times and AC&C strictly adheres to this policy. The new contract, currently under negotiation, will clarify these important differences.

7. AC&C should ensure that all animals missing from the shelters be investigated using the new procedure, including documenting in Chameleon when and by whom each step is done.

Response: As the audit states, AC&C codified the existing *Missing Animal Tracking Policy* during the audit period. Supervisors are following this step by step procedure and official police reports are filed when theft is suspected.

8. AC&C should provide adoption services at its Bronx and Queens Receiving Centers.

Response: Although AC&C would like to provide daily adoption opportunities in the Bronx and Queens Receiving Centers, our lease does not permit animals to remain in the centers overnight. Transporting the animals to and from the other Centers to the Bronx and Queens Centers is not possible with our current resources. We do, however, bring our Mobile Adoption Program to all the boroughs and we will evaluate the viability of using the Receiving Centers as Off-Site Adoption locations as funds and volunteers become available.

9. AC&C should ensure that complete adoption paperwork is maintained, including signed adoption agreements, for seven years, as required by its own policy.

Response: AC&C's current policy as the audit reports is that adoption paperwork must be maintained for seven years. Many of our records were damaged or accidentally discarded during a recent renovation. To prevent this mishap in the future AC&C will ensure that:

- Contracts are stored with a reputable record storage company to safeguard these documents.
- Computer based options are investigated that will allow us to move to paperless storage.

10. AC&C should ensure that there is adequate medical staff to address the medical needs of the animals.

11. AC&C should ensure that all animals are examined shortly after they arrive and that contagious animals are immediately isolated.

Response to 10 and 11: AC&C is in full agreement with this recommendation and has actively been addressing disease control in the Care Centers. For example, AC&C has increased its medical staff from four veterinarians to five and 21 veterinary technicians to 25 in April 2006. In addition, DOHMH has re-directed funding to the Medical Department allowing us to hire part-time staff in addition to the staff increases already mentioned. Although veterinarians and veterinary technicians are vital to Care Center operations, controlling disease transmission in our Care Centers and every other animal shelter across the country will remain a significant challenge. Some of the reasons for this are:

- The variety of ways diseases are spread.
- The constant introduction of new animals from many sources.
- The difficulty in killing various pathogens and preventing reintroduction.
- Incubation periods of disease making early identification difficult if not impossible.
- Aging or inadequate ventilation systems.

The difficulty of controlling disease notwithstanding, AC&C is pro-active in implementing accepted means of controlling the spread of disease in the Care Centers. Examples of some approaches utilized and possible enhancements are:

- Animals that come to AC&C requiring immediate medical care due to illness or injury are seen by a veterinarian or veterinary technician immediately. There is a veterinarian on call 24 hours a day seven days per week.
- Currently all animals are vaccinated within two days of arrival. We are evaluating our ability to change this policy so that animals are vaccinated immediately upon arrival.
- All animals are treated for external and internal parasites.
- All animals receive a nose to tail veterinary exam within two days of arriving at the Care Centers. The recent staffing changes should reduce wait time to less than 24 hours by July 2006 in most cases

12. AC&C should ensure that protective garments are worn by staff, especially when cleaning contagious and unexamined wards.

Response: AC&C policy requires the following:

- Gowns and gloves must be worn while cleaning wards containing contagious animals.
- Disinfecting shoe baths are in place outside all contagious wards.
- Equipment used to clean wards containing contagious animals must remain in that ward.

AC&C supervisors are now rigorously enforcing this policy.

13. AC&C should implement a formal customer service quality-assurance program to identify areas that may need improvement.

Response: Although AC&C Care Centers are monitored by DOHMH, we are in need of a tool that will allow customers to let us know how we are doing from their perspective. A customer questionnaire is currently under development and will be implemented no later than July 1, 2006.