

Washoe County Regional Animal Services

Evaluation Report

March 31, 2022

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ABOUT US



LEAD CONSULTANTS

Jyothi V. Robertson

DVM, DABVP Shelter Medicine

Dr. Robertson is an internationally recognized specialist in shelter medicine who has spent the past fifteen years focused on creating efficient processes, improving organizational structure, utilizing statistics to influence policy choices, and enriching facility design to minimize animal stress while improving overall animal health and well-being.

Dr. Robertson possesses extensive board and management experience at both the state and national level. Jyothi is on the Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) committee for the Human Animal Support Services (HASS) and on the Executive Committee of HASS which is reframing animal sheltering within a One-Health and DEI context. As Chair to the national Animal Welfare Committee for the American Veterinary Medical Association she has the opportunity to guide animal welfare policy nationally and also co-chaired the subcommittee on Access to Care. She served on the Executive Board of the Association of Shelter Veterinarians for six years and is currently on their DEI task force. Her passion for statistics earned her a position with the Advisory Board of Shelter Animals Count in its early stages. Jyothi was a Delegate to the House of Delegates for the California Veterinary Medical Association for two terms and continues to be on their Animal Welfare Committee. These volunteer appointments, along with her other contributions in national endeavors, have guided her in her collaborations with diverse populations to impact change.

Dr. Robertson was the Medical Director for Oakland Animal Services for multiple years during the pursuit of a Residency in Shelter Medicine through the Koret Shelter Medicine Program and while starting her consulting business as JVR Shelter Strategies. She completed her veterinary degree and residency from UC-Davis and her undergraduate degree from Princeton University. Jyothi conducted research for 20 years on topics ranging from Lyme disease to obesity. She is boarded with the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners in Shelter Medicine.

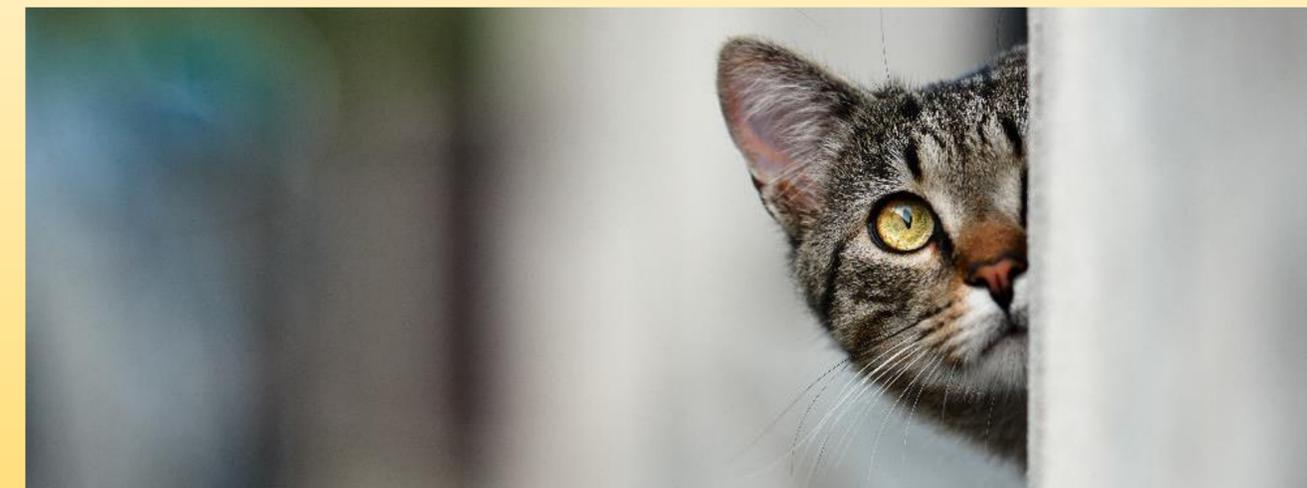
Heather J. Cammisa

M.A., Certified Animal Welfare Administrator

Heather has two decades of leadership experience, including more than a dozen years as chief executive officer of two animal care and control organizations. She is recognized for excellence in strategy, program development, fundraising, fiscal management, communications, relationship building, legislative affairs, board relations and broad cause advocacy. She joined Adisa as a consultant in 2018.

Heather has worked with national, regional and local entities and serves on boards and advisory committees for animal organizations. She is a Certified Animal Welfare Administrator (CAWA), trained disaster responder, Animal Control Officer (ACO), Animal Cruelty investigator (ACI) and has a graduate certificate in Wildlife Forensics and Conservation from the University of Florida. She has taught and developed animal care and control curricula for more than a decade with Career Development Institute and taught mathematics and economics as an adjunct at Rutgers University.

Heather holds a Master's Degree in Economics from Rutgers University and worked in both financial and social economics before devoting her career to not for profit management and community animal welfare advancement.

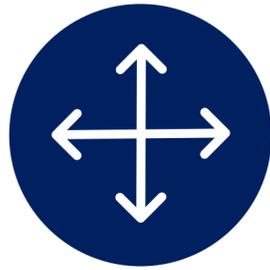


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SCOPE



SCOPE

Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS) and Nevada Humane Society have entered into a professional services agreement to cooperatively serve the community. In that agreement, under Article 5, the parties have agreed to “exercise the degree of care, skill and diligence ordinarily provided by professional animal service organizations,” and to have their individual operations conducted at the Regional Center “evaluated by a qualified organization at a minimum of every five years.”

ADISA

Washoe County Regional Animal Services retained Adisa to evaluate its operations in fulfillment of this contractual obligation and to gain feedback and recommendations. The organizations worked together to revise the scope to meet budget constraints.



METHODS



METHODS

Materials Review, including but not limited to:

- Animal Handling Data and Statistics
- Standard Operating Procedures
- Reports, including Advisory Committee Reports
- Case Data
- Policies and Procedures
- Volunteer Engagement Materials
- Budgets
- Web Presence and Social Media Accounts

Interviews

Site Visits

- *December 15-16, 2021, Dr. Jyothi Robertson and Jasmine Johnson*
- *February 8, 2022, Heather Cammisa*



SUMMARY



SUMMARY

Washoe County Regional Animal Services serves a population of 421,407 residents plus visitors to Washoe County with field animal care and control functions, cruelty cases, impound and reclaim services, and code enforcement, such as dangerous dogs, quarantines and permits. The majority of codes enforced by the agency are under County Code Chapter 55 Animals and Fowl and NRS 574.100. They also provide community education, community outreach services and manage disaster response and emergency shelter establishment and operations, when needed. The staff of 42 handle roughly 10,000 animals per year, the majority of which are stray animals. Owner surrender services, outside of emergency situations, are handled by Nevada Humane Society. The stray hold is 5 days. The facility is co-located with Nevada Humane Society with an original payment agreement in 2003 and a 15 year amended and restated lease agreement in 2009 (with two 10 year optional renewals). A Professional Consulting agreement with NHS is in effect for veterinary services for sheltered animals, vaccine clinics and outreach events. There is a seven member Animal Services Advisory Board (ASAB) that meets quarterly and receives an update report from the director of WCRAS. The organization's budget is roughly \$5 million with 72.8% of expenses comprised of staffing costs. This staffing cost is just beneath the median of 76.5% for the 19 governmental animal control agencies that serve human populations between 100k to 1 million residents that reported in data to the 2020 Association of Animal Welfare Advancement Salary Survey. WCRAS is, higher than its peers in employee count and employee expenses in dollar terms. The median number of active volunteers at these comparable agencies is 150 with 5,000 median hours of volunteer and foster services hours. WCRAS' current volunteer program is on hiatus. The organization is a leader in return to owner services.





SUMMARY

Recommendations written here are dynamic in nature and are dependent upon the specific processes occurring at the time of this review. Hyperlinks and associated documents are provided as examples to offer more context. Specific recommendations were also presented verbally to the shelter director and assistant director at the time of the site visits.

Each section below contains a general description of the area examined and a list of recommendations. Detail will be provided verbally to specific managers as deemed necessary to offer more context to the recommendations, if desired.



FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Animal Flow & Pathway Planning

Animal Intake Selection & Flow Thru

This organization serves as the animal control agency for the County and as such, has a primary responsibility to hold and maintain strays and field animals (bite confiscates/quarantine, etc.). As such, the intake process does not involve selection from transfer partners or public.

The flow thru process reflects the organization's primary role as an animal control agency. Cats are immediately transferred to Nevada Humane Society (NHS) pending the five-day stray hold. Dogs are transferred to NHS based on their intake status, including five day stray hold, and temperament. Other relationships exist with transfer and rescue partners to serve as options for outcomes.



Entry way

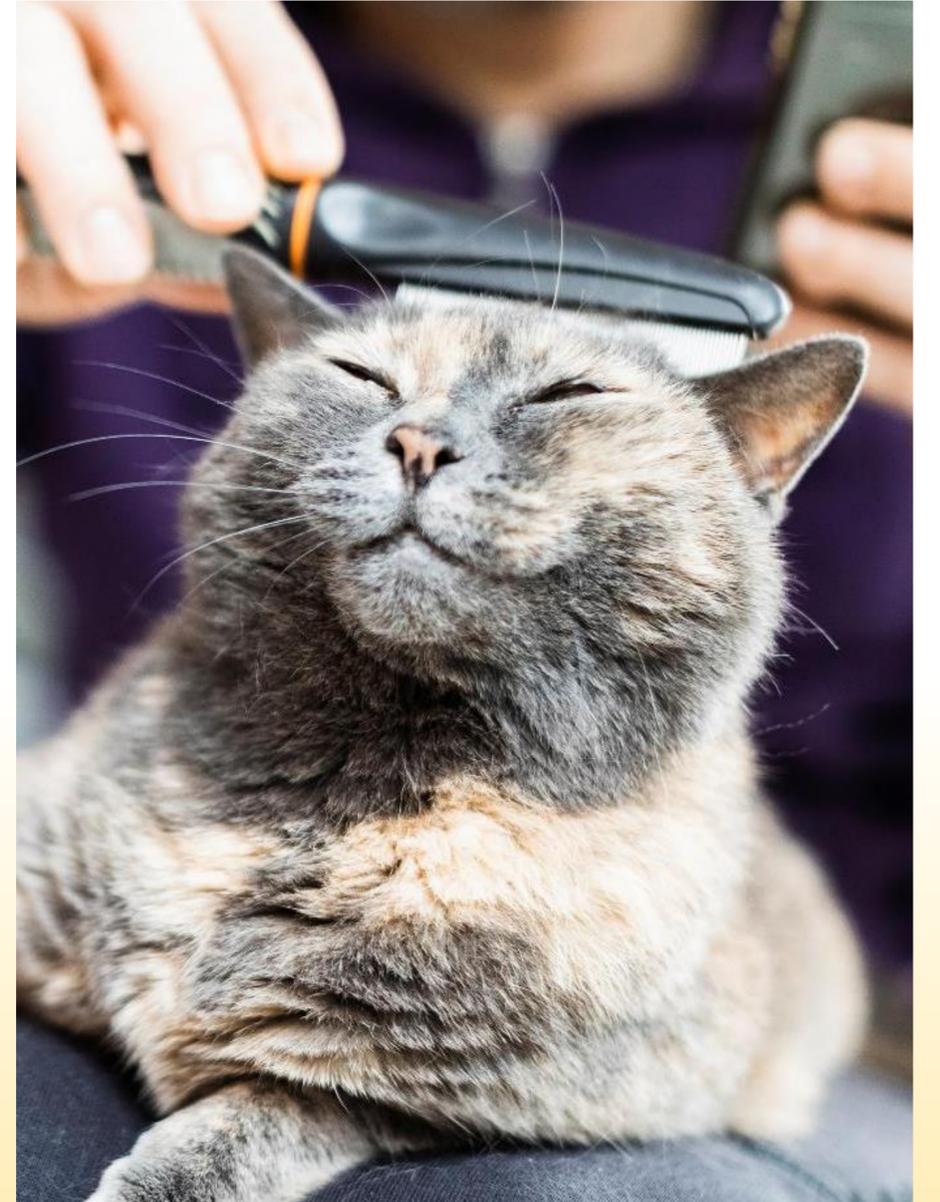
Animal Flow & Pathway Planning

Decision Making Process in Moving Animals through to Outcome

The decision to move animals to a particular location in the facility or to a transfer partner occurs through multiple people at the organization - the kennel supervisors, lead caretaker, and veterinary technician - all move animals physically within the facility and contact rescue/transfer partners, depending on their particular relationship with a specific organization.

Length-of-Stay and Barriers to Expeditious Movement of Animals to Outcome

Cats are typically held for short periods of time prior to being transferred to NHS. Dogs may remain longer in the facility depending on the assessment of NHS behavior staff, medical team, and their intake status. Examples of barriers to expeditious movement include lags in behavior exams, medical exams, intake exams, and the need for repeat behavior exams during which animals were held without a specified time period.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Animal Flow & Pathway Planning

1 Institute pathway planning.
Create a daily walk-thru
process that puts eyes on
every animal

- a. Consider having the assistant director begin this process for two weeks to determine the best course of walkthrough
- b. Initially, utilize a basic template to note items (see Resources) and modify as the process becomes more solidified
- c. Create a formal position of a pathway planner to reduce animals staying in limbo and not having actions taken to expedite their movement out of the facility
 - i. This person should have medical background and be provided training so that they can also improve disease recognition and determine next steps for animals they deem to be ill

2 Determine target
lengths-of-stay for different
populations – adult/juvenile
dogs and cats

- a. Share targets with NHS so that both partners understand the best time allotments
- b. Base target LOS on population goals and capacity planning
 - i. Consider targets that are close to the hold periods since the majority of animals will be transferred to NHS within a short time frame
 - ii. Set flags or reminders to notify pathway coordinators within Chameleon

3 Consider new pathway
options for dogs that do not
pass the NHS behavior exam
on the first time.

- a. If the dog is going to stay in the kennel for a second exam, consider what enrichment activities and behavior opportunities might be available to improve likelihood of passing the exam on the second pass

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Animal Flow & Pathway Planning

- 4 Purposefully select holding housing areas
 - a. Consider housing based on likelihood of going to NHS and due out date
 - b. Develop a written SOP delineating areas and when animals should be moved so that all can follow this procedure
 - c. Minimize animal movement unless necessary
- 5 Implement a foster program for animals awaiting behavioral re-evaluations
- 6 Develop MOUs with rescue partners and probe a transport program working independently or with agencies that relocate animals to areas of the country that have more demand and less intake.
 - a. Webinar, MOUs, templates and protocols available here: [St. Hubert's Transport Program ToolKit](#)
 - b. [Wings of Rescue](#), [ASPCA Relocation Program](#) (WCRAS may be the launch of services in Nevada), [Greater Good Goodflights](#).
 - c. [Maddie's Fund Apprenticeship \(online\)](#)

Intake Procedures

Animal Intake Locations

Cats and dogs were being processed in the same intake area. This room is adjacent to the night holding areas for dogs. Cats are moved to this room for processing from multiple locations. Room designations were to be changed or modified soon after the site visit to better accommodate felines. Intake exams occur in the primary intake room based on the availability of the staff to conduct the exam, not immediately when they are admitted. Cats and dogs are processed at the same time. Cats are placed in feral dens on a cart to have their intake exams completed and brought into the intake room.

Standard Intake Treatments

Standard processes are not performed as written in SOP. A cursory physical exam was conducted as well as a weight, temperature, pulse, respiration rate, and sexing. Animals were given a rough age estimate. Diagnostics, such as ear cytologies, were performed if warranted, and depending on the person conducting intake. FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus and Panleukopenia) and DHPP (Distemper, Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, Parvo) vaccines were administered to cats and dogs respectively. Dewormer was administered to animals under 2 years of age.



**Animal control dog intake, above.
Treatment room, below.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Intake Procedures

- 1 Create a standardized intake process utilizing fear free methods to minimize stress in handling and reduce the likelihood of animals becoming ill
 - a. Fear Free Intake and Admissions Course
 - b. Utilize a standardized intake process that is followed by every staff member conducting intake.
- 2 Designate separate dog and cat intake areas
- 3 Prioritize intake of animals in the morning so animals are not left in overnight holding areas or feral dens
- 4 Vaccinate animals immediately upon intake. Intake physical exams can be performed later but animals should not be waiting overnight or all day to have vaccines administered

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Intake Procedures

5 Conduct the feline intake process with one cat at a time as opposed to bringing multiple cats in feral dens for long periods of time. This will minimize the stress on the cats and decrease their likelihood of becoming ill due to feline URI.

6 Provide training on performing physical exams thoroughly and picking up signs of disease. (See diagnosis of disease section for resources)

7 Create a standardized process for maintaining intake area inventory and supplies

8 Improve communication to improve the intake process

- a. Create a system of communication that is not reliant on the use of stickies and hand-written notes on small papers. Utilize Chameleon or a white board more effectively.
- b. Discontinue the use of stickies with animal ID numbers and print cage cards with all necessary information
- c. Increase communication between front desk and intake so that animals are not remaining in holding areas that are owned

Facilities

[Kennel Count and Description \(Google Spreadsheet\)](#)

The facility had 281 enclosures where the majority of the dog kennels are double-sided housing systems with transfer doors and the majority of the cat housing units are double-sided with portals. The above hyperlink gives the listing of cages at the time of the site visit. Dog and cat housing is constructed and maintained to support repeated cleaning and disinfection.

Overall/General Areas (e.g. play yards, get-acquainted areas)

Play yards are not located on the premises outside of one small fenced area near the barn. This pen was not seen in use at the time of either site visit. Public are allowed in the front lobby. General public areas were well-lit and spacious. The site visit occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and appropriate barriers were in place to minimize transmission.

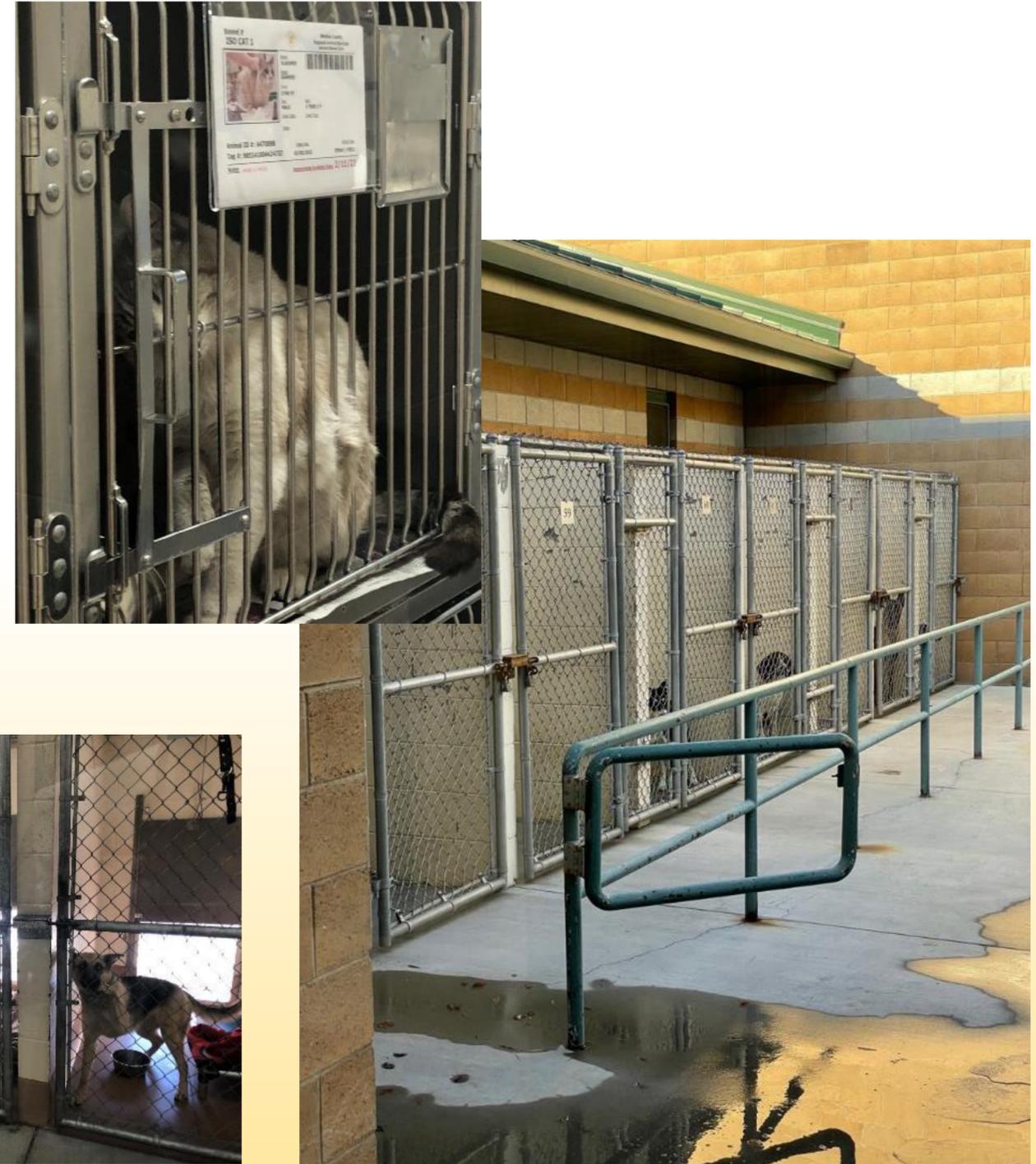


Cat enclosure with portal, left. Cat housing along hallway, above.

Facilities

Cat Housing

Cat enclosures range from small 21”x21” enclosures to larger enclosures that can be opened to give cats access to three enclosures. Public facing cat enclosures had portals installed to allow for separation of food, bedding, and litter. Cage banks are on rollers that allow for easy movement of the entire cage bank for deep cleaning.



Dog Housing

All dog runs are the same size and similar structure with large drainage holes within them. Runs consist of chain link fencing and painted cinder blocks. Drainage holes in kennels create potential areas for injuries due to them not having an appropriate cover and this was reported by different staff to have different impacts on whether enrichment items could be provided to the animals out of fear of clogging the drains.



Animal Housing

Facilities

Quarantine and Isolation Areas

Quarantine and isolation areas have similar caging systems to the general housing areas. Feline isolation areas were not double-compartment (portalized) and as such, were small in dimension. These areas also contained the smaller 21”x21” enclosures.

Small Mammals/Exotics Housing

Small mammals are housed in an area separated from other animals. Rabbits and other small mammals are housed in wire cages with wire flooring. Cardboard boxes are placed in the wire kennels to give a flat surface in a portion of the cage. Ferrets are housed with rabbits and rats. Bird housing is placed on the top but no birds were present at the time of the site visit. A large turtle enclosure and aquariums were set up with fresh running water for exotics but no animals were present at the time of the site visit in this separated room.



Cat isolation enclosure, top. Rabbit in enclosure, bottom

Facilities

Large Animal/Poultry Housing Areas

A barn with multiple stalls, with both indoor and outdoor areas, was behind the rear of the building. Only one entrance/exit was present and could be accessed from the inside of the barn. A coop area was located directly behind the barn and had separate enclosures to house multiple birds.



Large Animal and Poultry Housing

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Housing

1 Consider more suitable rabbit housing
House Rabbit Society

- a. House Rabbit Society Housing
 - i. San Diego House Rabbit Society

2 Consider adding portals to all cat enclosures

3 Prioritize obtaining drain covers



- a. Check with UC-Davis and others for solutions

4 Create separate areas for feline intake and canine intake



General Animal Care

Sanitation Procedures for Canine Areas

At the first site visit, dog areas were cleaned daily in the morning utilizing Trifectant. Cleaning occurs either individually or in pairs. Deep cleaning occurs regularly according to staff but was not observed for canine areas. Staff rotate through different areas based on the preference of the manager who is on duty on any particular day.

Sanitation Procedures for Feline Areas

Cat areas are spot cleaned daily if a cat is remaining in the housing unit and are deep cleaned in between cats. The entire cage bank is taken to a large cage washing system biweekly to be deep cleaned. Cages are sanitized with bleach on a rotating schedule. Cats are moved to allow for an empty cage bank to be deep cleaned, if the population numbers allow for this.



Cage washer, above. Dog run and open drain cover, left.

General Animal Care

Sanitation Procedures for Other Areas (e.g. vehicles, getting acquainted areas, outdoor areas, intake rooms, walkways)

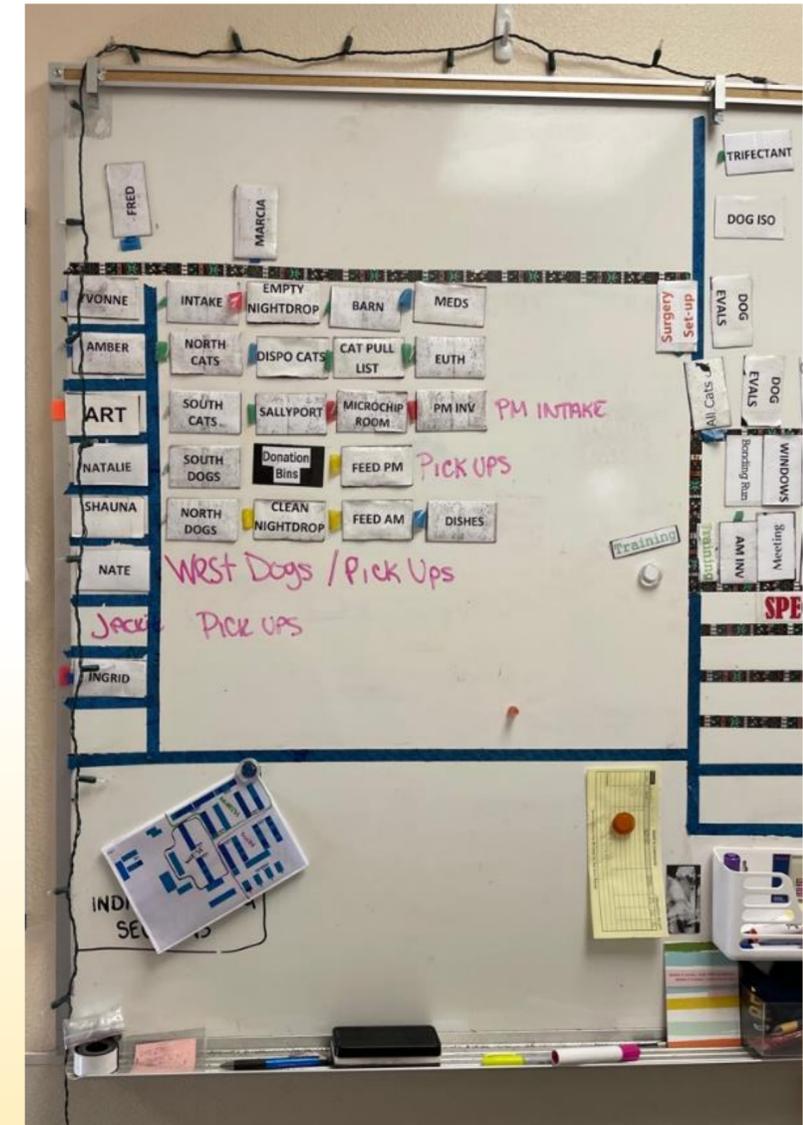
Cleaning and disinfecting of animal control vehicles, cages, traps and equipment has not kept up with the changes underway in chemicals and processes in transition in the shelter. The transition to accelerated hydrogen peroxide (“Rescue”) was underway at the time of the Adisa team’s second site visit but had not yet been introduced to animal control and other areas.

Nutrition and Feeding of Animals

All dogs are fed once a day except puppies, long-term dogs and underweight dogs who are fed twice a day. All cats and kittens are fed once a day with kittens, long term, and underweight cats also fed canned food once daily. Food brands are rotated depending on what is available.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all Standard Processes

SOPs were not available at the time of the site visit for all standard processes. Those that were available were not currently being utilized by all staff consistently. A new kennel manager was beginning to review and implement updated SOPs.



Assignment board



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR General Animal Care

1

Improve nutrition and daily maintenance of animals

- a. Ensure kittens and puppies are fed at least twice daily with sign off sheets for consistency and accountability among staff
- b. Prioritize feeding and watering of animals in morning and afternoon tasks
- c. Consider optimizing nutrition plans with NHS veterinarians for those animals that are being monitored for food intake

2

Improve cleaning protocols (UC Davis Sanitation in animal shelters) (Best Friends Sanitation Playbook)

- a. Recognize that quaternary ammonium compounds are not effective against parvo or panleukopenia (UC Davis Disinfectant table)
- b. Have two people cleaning dog runs together to expedite cleaning
- c. Prioritize feeding and basic cleaning of animals over deep cleaning
- d. Spot clean when feasible for cats with dish soap and water (ASPCA cat spot cleaning)
- e. Utilize Rescue (accelerated hydrogen peroxide) as feasible for animals

3

Update SOPs for all components of general animal care and sheltering processes

- a. Ensure that everyone is trained in the SOPs that are developed and that adherence to policies occurs
- b. Consider having staff sign off on updated SOPs to increase accountability and adherence to policies

4

Implement scheduling of staff assignments in advance to allow staff to arrive and get started with their assigned tasks

Veterinary Services

Washoe County utilizes veterinarians and veterinary services from partner organizations, such as Nevada Humane Society, to provide veterinary care for their animals. They have one full time veterinary technician on staff to oversee the animal health needs for the animals and a veterinarian comes on-site for a limited time during the week to see medical cases.

Medical Record Keeping

Limited medical records are kept in the Chameleon database. Vaccines are immediately placed into the computer database.

Treatment for Common Diseases

Treatment choices are made by the veterinarian and the veterinary technician. Standing orders and treatment regiments specifying end dates are not utilized. The veterinarian making treatment choices is not employed by Washoe County Animal Services and as such, treatment options were not discussed in depth with veterinarians.



Kitten at WCRAS

Veterinary Services

Disease Recognition and Data Tracking

There is one registered veterinary technician who is responsible for the medical services at Washoe County. Further training is necessary to improve the medical services provided and increase data tracking.

Isolation and Separation of Animals as Necessary

Isolation occurs for some cases. Animals are held in isolation during their treatment course, regardless of clinical signs. Since cats are quickly moved to NHS, most diagnosis and separation of disease in cats appears to occur after transfer.



Cat isolation wards

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Veterinary Services

1 Improve disease recognition among staff

- a. Provide CE and training to all staff that interact with animals
 - i. [Cornell Shelter Medicine Symposium](#)
 - ii. Maddie's – [Flash Classes](#) or [Courses](#)
 - iii. ASPCA Pro - [Trainings](#)
- b. Institute daily rounds, where staff go into each room to observe each animal, in order to catch illness and other issues more quickly
 - i. [UC-davis Daily rounds sheet/UC Davis Shelter rounds page](#)
- c. Create standing medical orders
 - i. Creation of [standing medical orders](#) from NHS DVMs will help with continuity of care and will allow shelter pets to be started on medications before transfer
- d. Follow basic PPE recommendations for zoonotic disease and infectious disease
 - i. Example: Ringworm
 1. [UW Dane county ringworm videos/protocols, UC-Davis ringworm site,](#)
 2. [SFSPCA Spore Program Webinar](#)
 - a. [SFSPCA SPORE protocol](#)
 3. [UW Ringworm Roundup 1](#)
 4. [UW Ringworm Roundup 2](#)
 5. [UFL Shelter Med Protocol](#)

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Veterinary Services

1 Improve disease recognition among staff

(continued from previous page)

- e. Ensure that disease is being recognized by trained medical staff and daily care staff. Improve the method of communicating disease concerns by creating a formalized system to note concerns.
- f. Consider stopping medical treatments on cats for URI if clinical signs have resolved. Movement of felines to isolation areas can exacerbate illness (feline herpesvirus activation). Consider modifying protocols to reflect latest thinking on treatment of illness in shelter settings.
- g. Create separation between contagious animals in isolation so that cross-contamination is controlled

2 Train all staff on fear-free handling to improve the administration of medications (fear free)



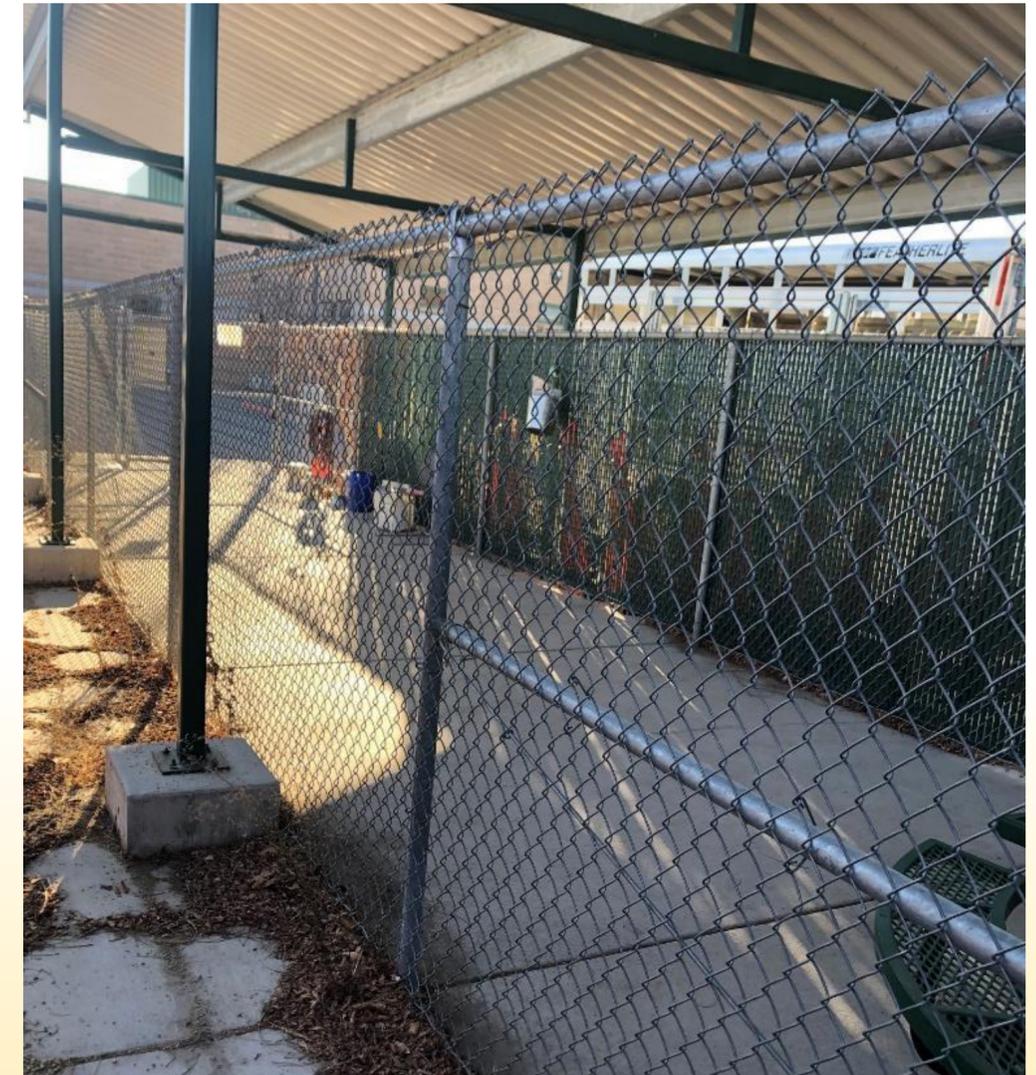
Recommend separating illness, consider a dedicated URI room over mixing illness in a single room

Stress Reduction, Behavior & Enrichment

Stress reduction, behavior, and enrichment programs were not in place at the time of the site visit. One person was designated to begin these programs. Behavior assessments are conducted by NHS staff. A single area for out of kennel time for dogs was not in use at the time of the visit and is reportedly used infrequently.

Case			Animal		Enrichment	
Animal	Location	Initials/Date	Animal	Location	Initials/Date	
MUÑECA	39	Bandaging run/ time outside of kennel				Bark/Brush/Combs
LEROY	42	Bandaging run/ time outside of kennel				Walk/leash training
PEANUT						Proprietary
						Bone/Trauma Feeder
						Bandaging run/ time outside of kennel

Enrichment board



Single outdoor kennel for potential out of kennel time for canines

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

Stress Reduction Behavior & Enrichment

1 It is integral to a shelter program to have enrichment opportunities for animals. In-kennel and daily out-of-kennel exercise is important for all animals, especially those staying in the shelter beyond their stray hold

2 Custody and quarantine animals remaining extended periods of time should have some form of enrichment rotated on a consistent basis

a. Best Friends - Dog Enrichment

b. If case management does not improve, WCRAS should remodel a portion of its kennels to provide better housing for long-term court case holds. Current kennels are inadequate and WCRAS does not have play yards for the animals to get adequate exercise away from the kennel. In addition, seeking permission for animals to be kept at other facilities – properly contracted to preserve chain of custody and care - with better long-term housing and exercise programs should be pursued. We recommend contacting Heather Lewis at Animal Arts for an evaluation of space redesign to better support long term holds.

3 Institute a dog walking program for dogs that remain longer than the 5 day hold period and utilizing in-kennel training techniques – example from Karen Pryor Academy

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Stress Reduction Behavior & Enrichment

- 4 Utilize other means of in-cage enrichment for animals to minimize stress
- a. [UC Davis dog and cat enrichment](#)

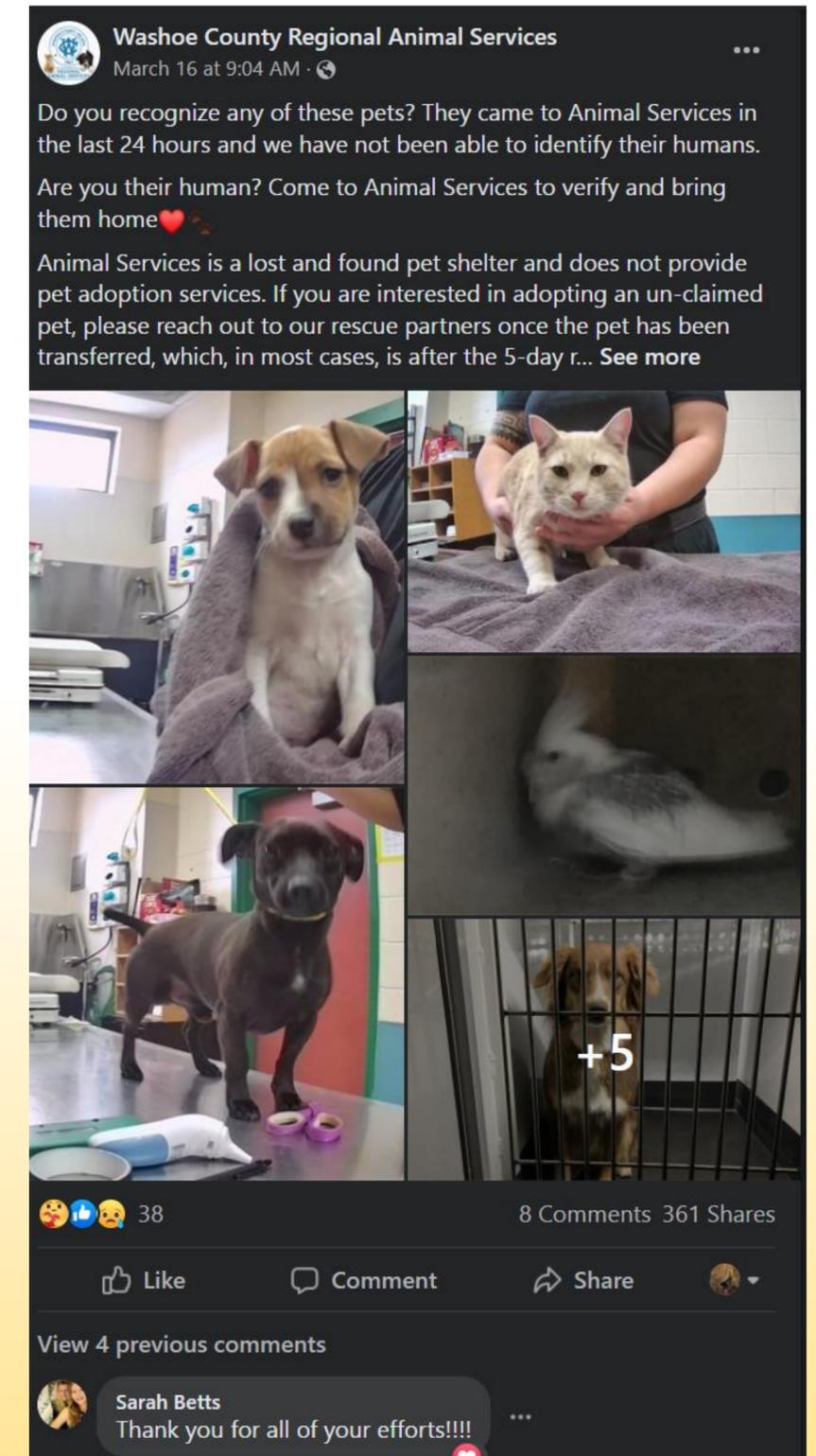
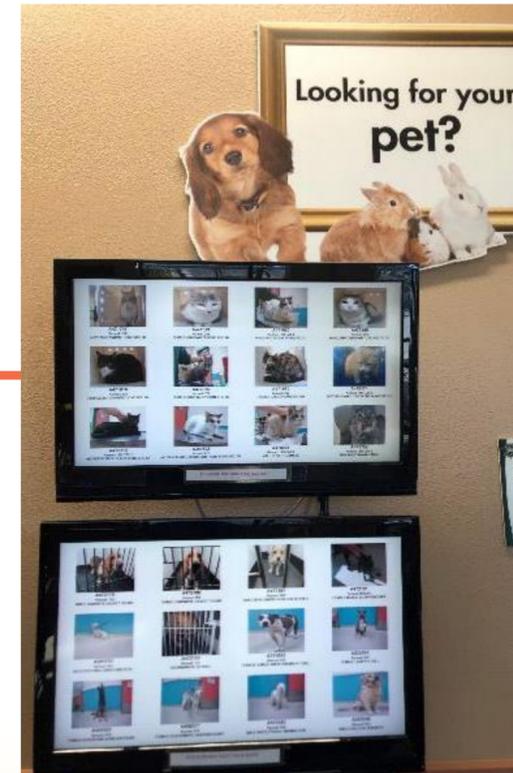
- 5 Decrease movement of cats to minimize stress and use of feral cat dens to move cats
- a. [Fear Free Cat enrichment course and Housing and environment course](#)
 - b. [Best Friends - Shelter Cat Enrichment](#)



Community & Customer Service

Lost/Found Communications

The organization maintains a dispatch service area and a front desk customer service area. The front desk customer service area is broken into two service areas to handle intakes and reclaims and general inquiries. A scrolling monitor in the lobby provides the ability for visitors to see all impounded stray animals at the facility. The customer service area is responsible for contacting pet owners when a microchip is found in an impounded animal. This is accomplished by twice a day queries of the Chameleon database and making calls to owners. The website prominently features information on finding or losing a pet and provides information on animals at the shelter as well as search tips and a portal to report a found or lost dog. The organization did not have a social media presence to communicate found animals or other matters with the community when this evaluation consult began. Over the time of the engagement, the organization launched a Facebook page. The first post was on December 3, 2021. As of March 19, 2022, the page has more than a thousand followers and its posts regarding found animals are widely shared on community message boards, notably those community social media pages related to pets and lost/found pets. The organization is currently posting daily collage posts of impounded animals on Facebook, Monday through Friday.



Facebook post of stray animals picked up in prior 24 hours

Community & Customer Service

Reclaim Process

The reclaim process observed during the site visit was efficient and conducted with professional service. WCRAS' free microchipping program begun in 2012 is a source of pride within the organization and yields a higher-than-industry return rate for stray animals. Of the 6,569 stray animals impounded at WRCAS in FY21, 70.3% were reclaimed, an impressive percentage reflecting a responsive reclaim process and the microchipping program. WCRAS reports that more than half of reclaims were found with a microchip. A query of 2021 Shelter Animals Count data for Governmental Agencies across Arizona, Utah and Nevada, of which WCRAS is one, finds a 33.5% return to owner rate among stray animals at large.



Lobby & reclaim service area

Community & Customer Service

Community Education

The organization has a URL that redirects to dedicated web pages on the county's website with information for the community on WCRAS' services, lost/found pet information and advice, other services, such as vaccine clinics at other organizations, and pet tips including a recently launched newsletter that highlights pet care. The Spring 2022 newsletter offers education on dental disease in pets. As mentioned earlier, at the outset of the consultation, the organization did not have an online social media presence. This changed during the consultation with the launch of WCRAS' Facebook page. This is a positive development for communications with the public, promotion of prevention and education programs as well as posting impounded animals to the public to support pet retention. Outside of this effort, the officers and staff make presentations in the community and through partnerships with social service agencies, the organization works to educate and support pet families.

In 2021, WCRAS partnered with Nevada Humane Society and SPCA of Northern Nevada on a social marketing campaign regarding dogs in hot cars that included press releases, web promotion, video content and educational flyers.



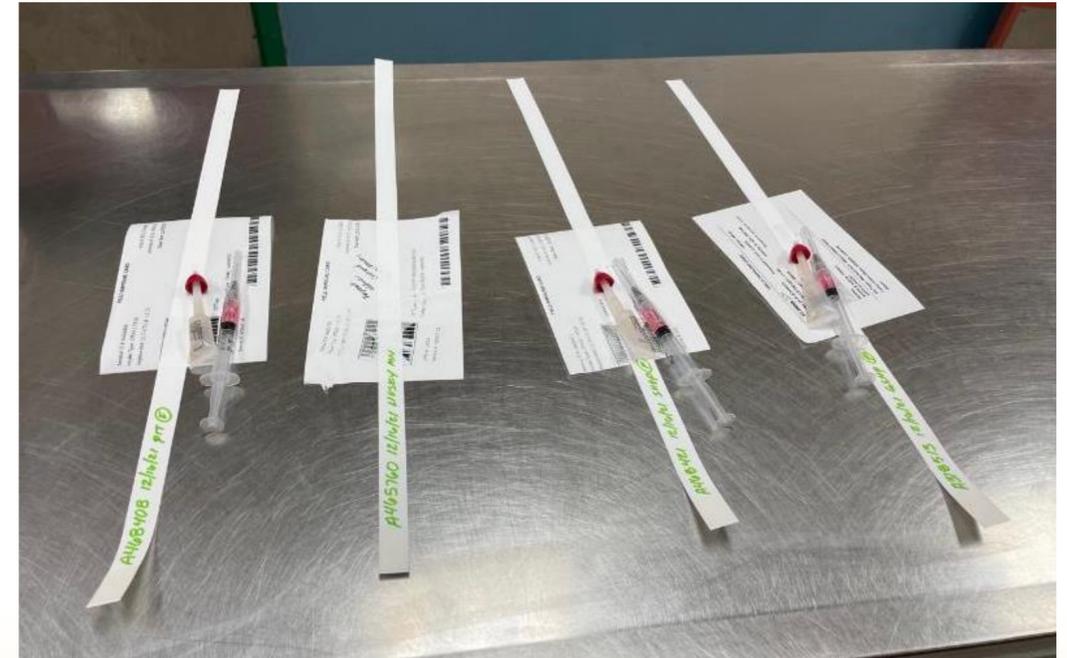
Community room

Community & Customer Service

Community Outreach Services

At the outset of the consultation, WCRAS was holding public spay/neuter events in their facility in partnership with the SPCA of Northern Nevada. It has placed these events on hold. These events were embraced by staff and a source of pride. They were, however, very time consuming and required animals to be dropped off the night before. Given competing needs of space and manpower, we support the organization's cessation of this program pending a reanalysis of partnerships and methods to more efficiently support the community with spay/neuter services.

WCRAS endeavors to support seniors with pets and pet families fleeing domestic violence. The organization inspires and collects in-kind and financial community support for these programs. WCRAS provides pet food, pet supplies and vaccinations. The organization is expanding these community support efforts in recognition of the human-animal bond and is tracking with national trends in animal welfare. The director of WCRAS is familiar and engaged with the national human-animal support initiatives and conversations among leaders in animal care and control.¹ Importantly, the organization is engaging in partnerships to run these programmatic efforts, with social service agencies and with other regional welfare organizations.



¹ Human Animal Support Services <https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/>

Community & Customer Service

Volunteer Engagement

Prior to the pandemic, it appears volunteers were more engaged at WCRAS. However, for a shelter of this size, the volunteer corps even then appears to have been quite small and there is significant opportunity for growth. With some intentional focus and support, volunteers can provide tremendous support to WCRAS and the animals and people it serves. Volunteers can be an incredible source of renewable energy to help organizations meet their missions. Organizations that strategically engage their community members as volunteers are going to reap the most benefits, including:

- Being significantly more adaptable, sustainable, and capable of going to scale.
- Accomplishing their mission as their peers without volunteers, but at almost half the median budget.
- Reap up to a \$6 return on every dollar invested when considering the financial value of volunteer involvement.

As ambassadors, volunteers have an extensive reach in the community—through family, friends, co-workers, and others. However, volunteers require an investment of valuable staff time. The success of any volunteer engagement relies on a strong foundation.

The most successful shelters are those with large, well support volunteer teams, where volunteers are integrated throughout the organization and empowered to take on significant roles. There are really no limits to what volunteers can do with the proper infrastructure and support.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Community & Customer Service

1 Conduct a website audit by a volunteer or community member to receive feedback. Potential areas for relocation of information or changes, as examples:

- a. Disaster preparation tips for the public are important and WCRAS provides this information. The information is located under “Field Services,” an unlikely place for the public to look for resources and tips.
- b. “Support WCRAS” has drop downs when one hovers over the tab. The hover does not list all the areas covered therein. The Amazon wishlist for the Community CARES program is on the main page; it is referenced but not available on the CARES page itself, only the link to make an online donation.
- c. As the SNYPS program is on hiatus, moving up the information on other providers of low-cost spay/neuter, currently at the bottom of the page and one would need to read through after first reading that the program is not running

2 Reno has a Hispanic or Latino population of 24.0% with 25.5% of households found to have a language other than English spoken in the home.² Recommendation: Increase availability of materials in Spanish, including forms used in the field and those available in times of disaster

² U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/renocitynevada>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Community & Customer Service

3 Provide wildlife information and increase staff competency in providing advice to the public. WCRAS is aligned to the [National Animal Care and Control Association's recommendation](#) to not bring in healthy wild animals. Instead, NACA encourages community education to promote coexistence and reduce conflicts.

- a. [English – HSUS Wildlife Conflict Resolution Guide](#)
- b. [Spanish – HSUS Wildlife Conflict Resolution Guide](#)
- c. [HASS Wildlife Toolkit \(coming April 2022\)](#)

4 Build upon momentum of positive social media presence with updating job descriptions for staff, or training volunteers, to patrol and engage with lost pet and other social media accounts to support those who have lost or found pets in the community, offering reduced need for field response and impoundment.

- a. [Reno/Sparks Lost and Found Pets](#)
- b. [Lost/Found Pets in the Carson City/Gardnerville/Dayton/VC/Reno Areas](#)
- c. [Lost and Found Pets of Northern Nevada](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Community & Customer Service

5 Keep the internal spay/neuter events on pause while a more efficient system is developed, with partnerships and perhaps volunteer support to reduce the time demands on staff which takes time for other community-based prevention and education efforts.

6 Restructure and relaunch the volunteer program to meet today's needs

- a. Adisa has a volunteer engagement arm, Energize. A free one-year subscription to the Energize Online Training Center is being offered to support WCRAS as part of this evaluation.
- b. Please see the 6-page supplement with specific volunteer program recommendations for WCRAS
- c. Identify dedicated staffing and provide training to support volunteer engagement

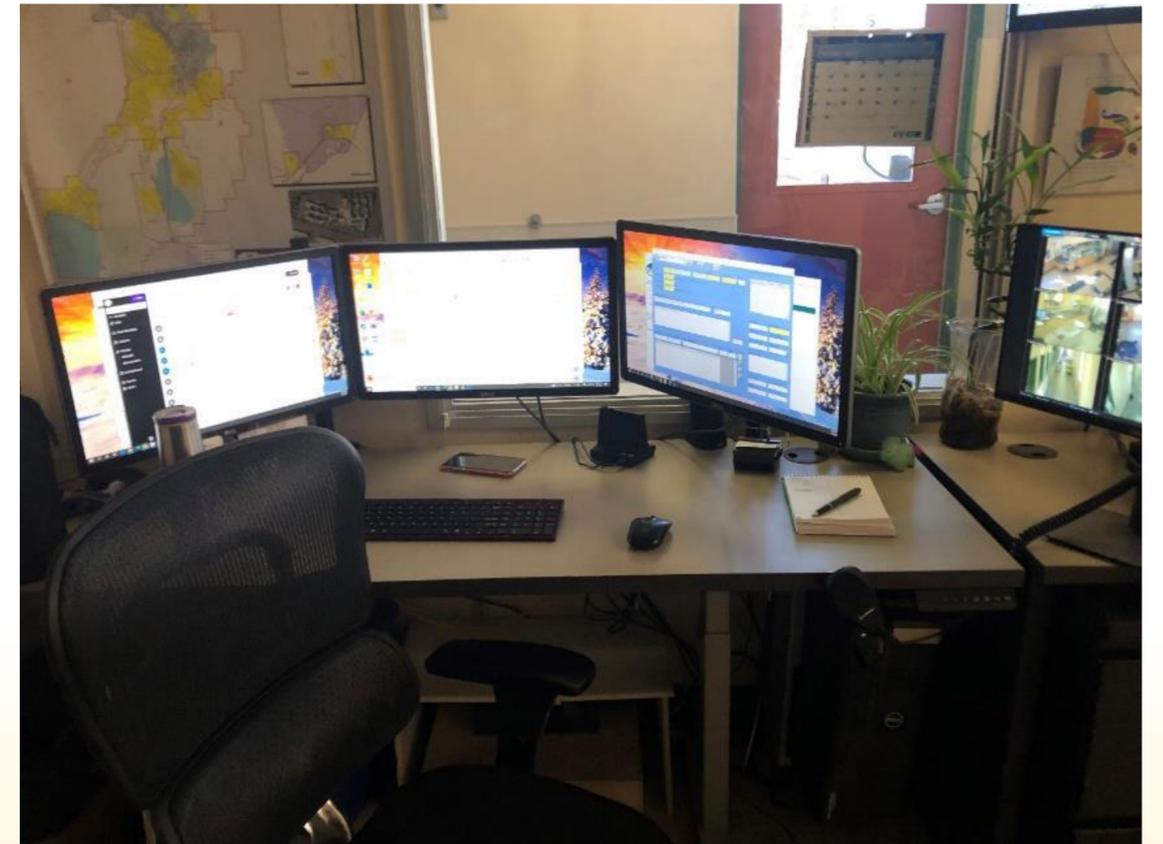
7 Continue developing community outreach programming and engage current community outreach lead on programs such as Pets for Life and in networking with peers at other organizations for networking.

Field Services

Dispatch Center Operations

Dispatch operations are housed in a separate area of the building with dedicated staffing. Field services are open 8am to 10pm, 365 days per year. After hours, an emergency call list is identified where field services will respond to with “on call” officers, e.g. active animal cruelty, domestic animal on the highway, severely injured domestic animal. The facility has a dropbox location for animals housed inside the building with a dedicated entrance. The dispatch center is well equipped and maintains detailed information on officer location and vehicles. The organization handles 30,000 calls for field services per year. The software in use, Chameleon, is a robust animal control and animal handling software package and has been structured for functionality at WCRAS. Dispatch is able to reach officers on the road via radio communications and upload information to Chameleon that officers are able to access from the vehicles.

Dispatch is challenged with non-dispatch community contact when the public cannot reach Nevada Humane Society and/or there is a lack of understanding between the roles of the two agencies. It is estimated that 30% of calls to dispatch are intended for Nevada Humane Society.



Dispatch center

Field Services

Policies & Procedures

The organization has an SOP manual. The manual undergoes ongoing updates. Currently, there are updates occurring in the cleaning and disinfection process in the kennel that have not yet migrated to the cleaning and disinfecting of trucks, cages and equipment.

The policy that requires bite cases to be held in the building if the rabies vaccine is not current is using space that is needed for other intake at the building. This policy follows County Code 55.610(2)(a) and a meeting with the county Health District (rabies control authority, where not assigned to WCRAS) should be considered to expand home based quarantine unless the animal control officer deems the home environment not conducive, e.g. in-home daycare and animal cannot be separately housed.

The officers are not considered peace officers. They do not carry firearms on their persons for personal protection. Rather, they carry batons and pepper spray and therefore rely on law enforcement backup in threatening or volatile situations. A shotgun is in the animal control vehicles to dispatch injured large animals such as deer struck by cars. A range master is identified on the team. Another team member is the designated safety officer.

The organization collaborates with Nevada Humane Society on a Trap-Neuter-Return program for the management of community cats. The partnership and approach to engage community members in solving the cat population is an example of progressive animal control efforts of the agency.



Kittens at WCRAS

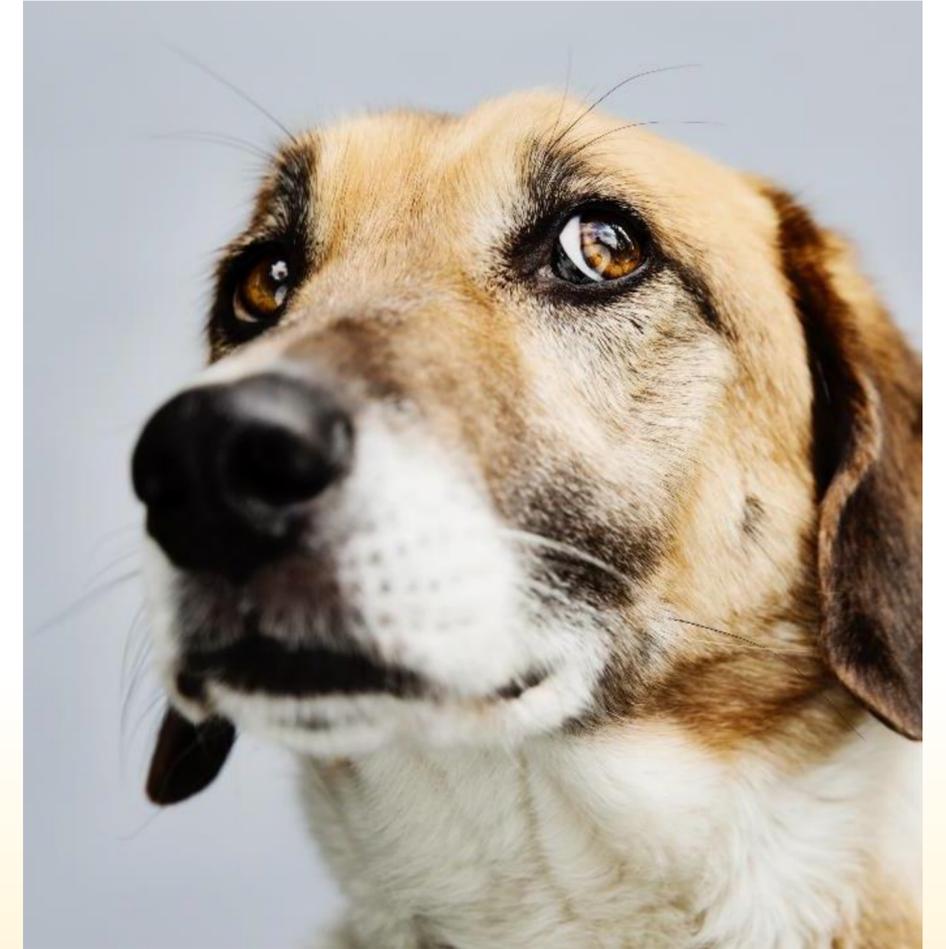
Field Services

Officer Coverage, Training

Officers meet in the morning for a group up meeting to review active cases and discuss workload. Washoe county is a very tall county with rural areas. The population of more than 420,000 people is heavily centered in population areas that qualify as “Congested Areas” and thereby have more animal control regulations for enforcement, e.g. running at large.

Officer training, certifications and vaccination records are managed within the animal control department and by the Administrative Assistant II. A skilled and respected animal control, animal rescue and animal cruelty investigation training firm, Code3 Associates, is brought in to provide training with upcoming events in April on Livestock Handling and Rescue (April 22-23) and Essential Animal Services Training, Module C (April 25-29). In addition to training their own team, WCRAS acts as a host with these Code3 Associates training events, thereby building networks and advancing skills of other agencies, law enforcement professionals and veterinary professionals in the region.

Officer time is at a premium and coverage duties are wide, including handling a burdensome permitting process for exotics, kennels and catteries.



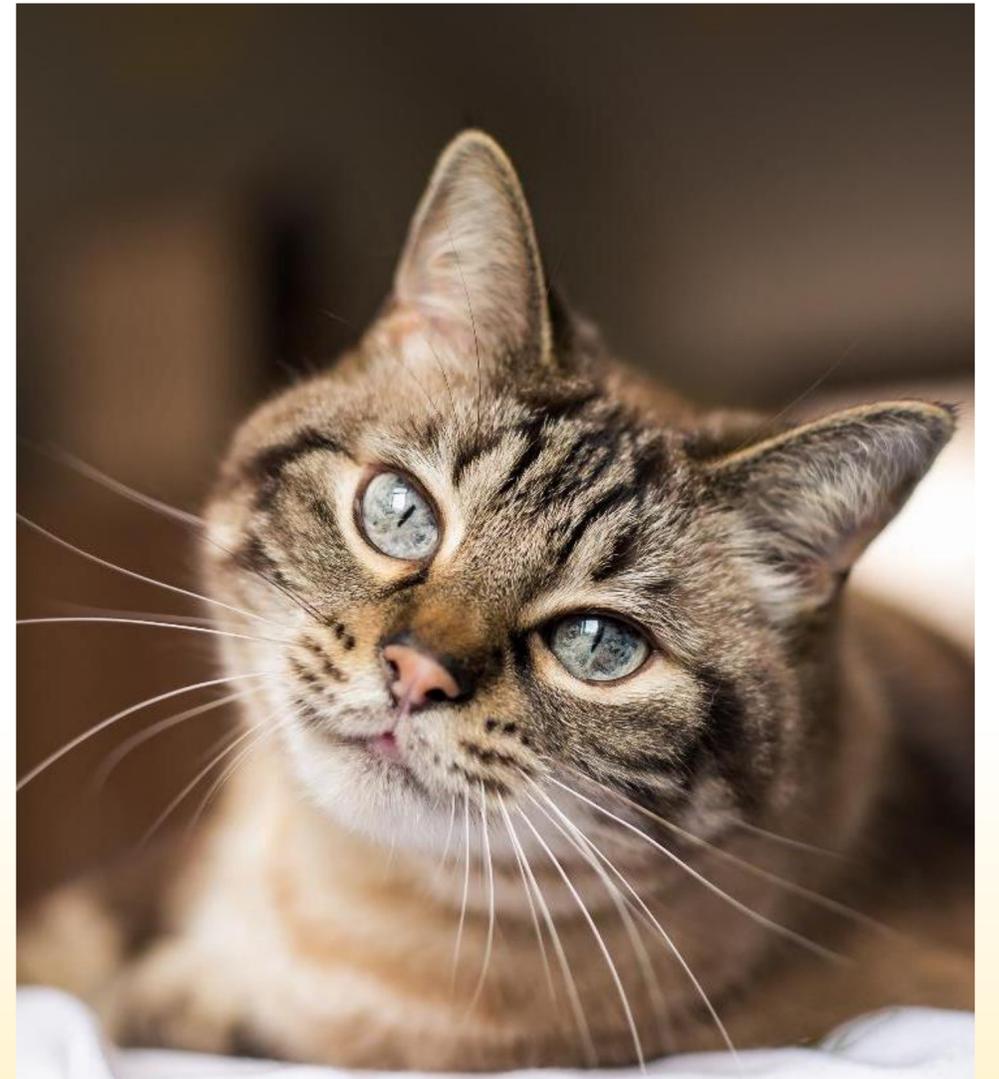
Field Services

Officers

The officers can only enforce misdemeanors, not gross misdemeanors or felonies. They do not have arrest powers.

Officers work to establish positive relationships with the District Attorneys and others in law enforcement for effective and expeditious case handling.

Field work observed in the evaluation found that WCRAS officers handle cases with a high level of professionalism and support the community. A fence was repaired by an officer to prevent escape of an animal while the owners were not home and equipment to perform the repair was on the truck. The officers support TNR in the field and expressed appreciation for the partnership with Nevada Humane Society on the initiative. The “Fix It Ticket” was witnessed in the evaluation, where the resident is given time to remedy a failure to license and if remedied, no fine will occur. If someone has a license, animals are provided a “free ride home” which aligns to progressive animal care and control policies.



Field Services

Case Management

Officers will accept animals in the field from owners and caretakers for “Safe Hold” when the owner is evicted (5 day hold offered), goes to jail (10 day hold) and when the owner is hospitalized (5 day hold). The officers will often have to fax forms to the place the owner is housed to get permissions and handle communications. The officers and agency will extend timelines on a case-by-case basis.

Hoarding cases are reported by the agency as increasing and increasing in officer time demands.

Permits are another area consuming officer time.

Dangerous dog and cruelty case timelines to adjudication are creating long-term holds of animals where the facility and operation is not designed to provide for animals on long bases.

Cruelty cases are managed with systematic information collection and case preparation beginning at the crime scene. Cases are challenged by the officers not having the ability to write cruelty citations at levels beyond misdemeanors. As with Dangerous Dog cases, cruelty cases are facing long wait times in the judicial process thus costing taxpayers with the housing of the animals and the facility is not designed for long-term housing of animals, thus creating welfare challenges for the animals and space challenges for the responsiveness to the community.



Long term hold cat resident, top.
Dog hold cases below.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Field Services

- 1 Work with Nevada Humane Society to establish a back-line for communications between the entities. Officers who scan some chips need to contact NHS and must use a standard phone number when trying to research the chip inserted by NHS during a time period where uploaded records are not available. Dispatch also does not have a “back line” to reach a live person to resolve community issues together. The on-location staff will walk over to try to help an officer in the field. This support should run both ways with designated staff available to respond to urgent matters of either agency via telephone.
- 2 Continue efforts to increase licensing ability via partners and new technology tools. Continue the efforts underway to collect information about an animal in the field. The new “Animal Information Surrender Form” was first put into place in the field in December 2021. It is not yet available in Spanish. It is an important tool, especially as WCRAS offers “safe holds” for people who are going to the hospital or to jail if no one else is able to take an animal urgently.
- 3 Work with the county sheriff and city police departments to establish designated liaisons for facilitation of services to the community and case handling

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Field Services

- 4 Contact [Red Rover](#) about training disaster response volunteers and/or deploying to assist WCRAS with daily animal care at the emergency shelter. This frees up staff time for community response and caring for animals at the main location and sustaining other services during disaster events.
- 5 Engage in discussions with the county and policy makers to update Code 55 to increase the number of dogs that may be owned. Moving the figure to six will cut the number of variance permits by 80% (116 to 23) and save 8 hours of officer time per initial permit plus ongoing renewal and inspection time. This time can be better used in service to the county's residents. Concerns around noise, sanitation and home-based businesses are better addressed by zoning, health and nuisance codes. Hoarding requires a multi-agency approach due to mental health factors in hoarding behavior and the mental and physical health services needed to support the resident. Limit laws will not prevent hoarding. Ongoing inspections can reduce recidivism, which is very high among animal hoarders.
- 6 Explore noise monitoring devices to reduce officer time handling nuisance complaints. See [NoiseNet](#) as an example.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Field Services

- 7 Educate the community on hoarding to encourage earlier reporting. See [Animal Humane Society's hoarding page](#) as an example.
- 8 The field team and the facility are not equipped to handle and provide care for exotic animals such as primates yet they are tasked with intake and care of these animals. Policy makers should ban the possession of these animals. Currently, a permit process creates burden on the animal care and control team and facilities, training and equipment make response to situations very challenging.
- 9 Prepare a facility disaster plan and conduct drills. The building is constructed of fire-resistant materials and has a sprinkler system. Flooding is somewhat of a concern. While the risk has been mitigated, disease outbreaks, nearby chemical spills and other potential situations could necessitate evacuation of some or all parts of the facility.
- 10 Consider reviewing the [disaster response materials](#) provided in the supplemental materials to support utilization of other agencies and volunteers in the set up, stocking and daily management of disasters. Sample schedules, inventory lists, procurement links and other information included.

It has been a pleasure to work with the Washoe County Regional Animal Services team. We appreciate your willingness to look within and seek recommendations beyond the contractual evaluation. The organization has already begun many of the recommendations as of March 28, 2022.

We hope that this report and supplemental materials are helpful to you in service to the team and community, human and animal as well as to “Road Map” action planning currently underway.

We remain available to the WCRAS team for questions and discussion.



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