

Animal Services Advisory Board Periodic Report FY 2018 and FY 2019



**REGIONAL
ANIMAL SERVICES**

February 16, 2021

Regional Animal Services Advisory Board

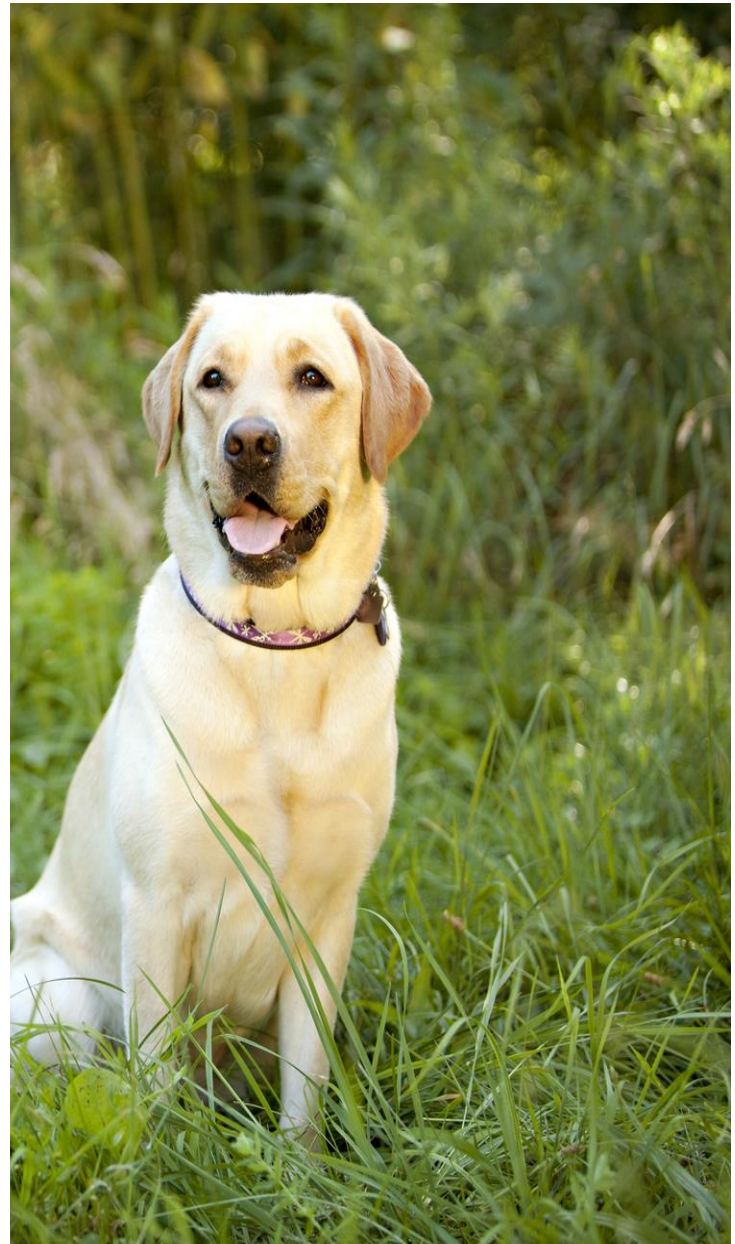


Table of Contents

Introduction and Purpose of the Animal Services Advisory Board.....	4-5
Animal Intake Statistics.....	6
Animal Outcome Statistics.....	6-7
Field Service Call Statistics.....	10
Animal Cruelty Cases.....	10-11
Animal Enrichment.....	11
Happy Tails.....	12
WCRAS Budget	12-14
WCRAS Strategic Objectives.....	14-16
Trap-Neuter-Return Cat Program.....	16-17
Washoe County Code Updates.....	17
2021 Legislative Priorities.....	17
Special Interest Research Project, <i>The Dog Parker</i>	19-20
Recommendations and Long Term Goals	20-21

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Introduction and Purpose of the Animal Services Advisory Board

This report provides a summary of the activities of both the Washoe County Regional Animal Services Department (WCRAS) and the Animal Services Advisory Board (ASAB) for the two-year period FY 17-18 and FY18-19.

The ASAB was formed by the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners in 2016. The seven-member ASAB is comprised of elected officials of Washoe County, the City of Reno and the City of Sparks, and members of the public. The ASAB is committed to enhancing information and sharing ideas between WCRAS and the community through open dialogue and discussion, and where appropriate, recommendations. The ASAB also works collaboratively with WCRAS and the community to explore and develop recommendations on essential departmental goals.

Washoe County provides support to the ASAB, including a Recording Secretary, Legal Counsel, and other supportive staff as necessary. The WCRAS Director provides updates on departmental programs and services, emerging developments, financial and budgetary updates, events and accomplishments as well as goals and objectives. The Director also prepares this periodic report to be provided to the Board of County Commissioners, including an overview of the ASAB recommendations and actions during a specified time period.

The ASAB met in November, February and May of FY 2018 and August and January of FY 2019. Two additional meetings were scheduled between 2018 and 2019. However, a quorum was not obtained, and the meetings were cancelled.

During the meetings in 2018 and 2019, the ASAB learned about WCRAS through quarterly presentations by the WCRAS Director and departmental staff. The ASAB heard updates on statistics and programs operated by the department and provided feedback. As it is important to the constructive role of the ASAB, to have a comprehensive understanding of WCRAS and as such, this was the focus of the meetings during the first two years.

The WCRAS Director provides a Director's Report at every ASAB meeting. This report includes a quarterly update on incoming/outgoing animals, return to owner percentages for stray animals, animal welfare and cruelty statistics, and other time sensitive information. The report generally includes notable stories that reflect the behind-the-scenes work by field, kennel and administrative staff that highlight WCRAS's efforts.

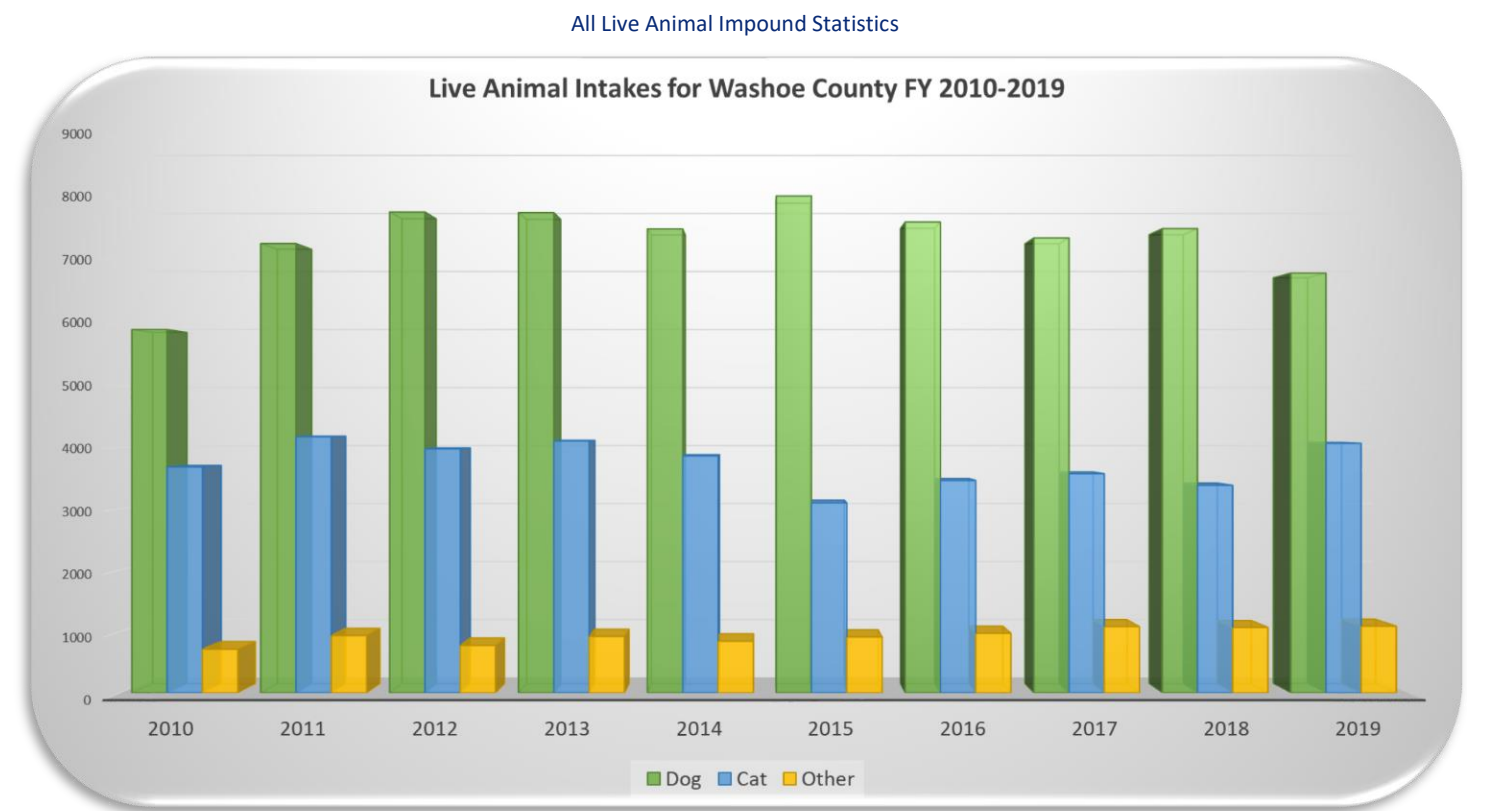
Specific program area updates such as field, shelter, budgetary or outreach services are frequently provided and presented by various staff members from the department so that the ASAB and the community have an opportunity to meet valued members of the WCRAS team and provide feedback on WCRAS’s programs.

The ASAB members also request agenda items in order to discuss emerging issues that affect the community and its animals.



Animal Intake Statistics

WCRAS’s average animal intakes are approximately 13,000 per year. This chart provides data on the live intake of domestic animals, as well as livestock and exotic animals. It also includes intake of stray, surrender and cruelty case animals.

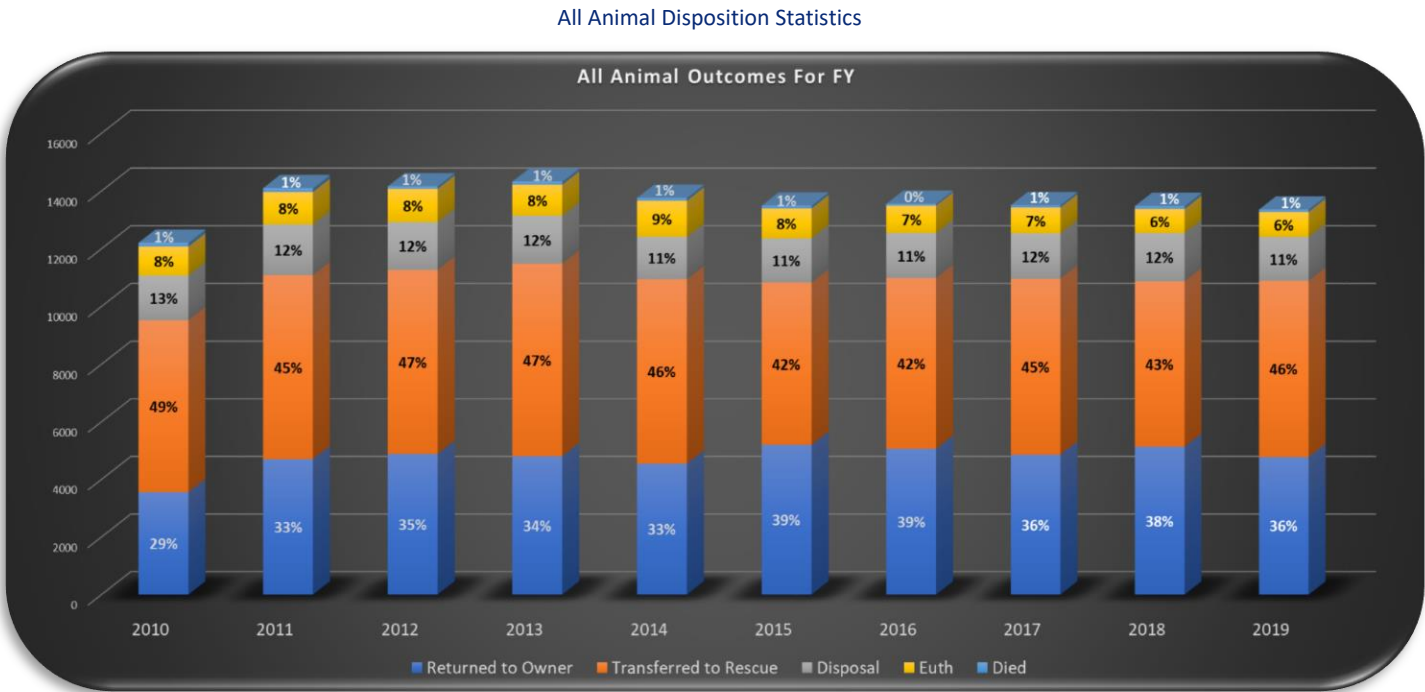


As part of the statistical component of the Director’s Report, the staff and the Board discuss trends and possible correlations as they relate to the data. For example, the number of dogs impounded spiked following the economic downturn in 2008-2009. The noticeable spike in intake for the subsequent few years (2010-2013), could have been attributed to the economic impacts experienced by our community. The growth of our region commonly correlates to the increase in the population of animals in our shelter as well.

Animal Outcome Statistics

WCRAS boasts a 95% live outcome percentage for all live animals that cross our path. What this means is very few animals that pass through our shelter are euthanized or die during care.

The *Transferred to Rescue* and *Returned to Owner* data in the outcomes chart below highlight the live release efforts. Animals that were deceased upon intake comprise 12% and 11% of animal intake in FY 17-18 and FY 18-19 respectively and are not calculated in the live percentage rate.



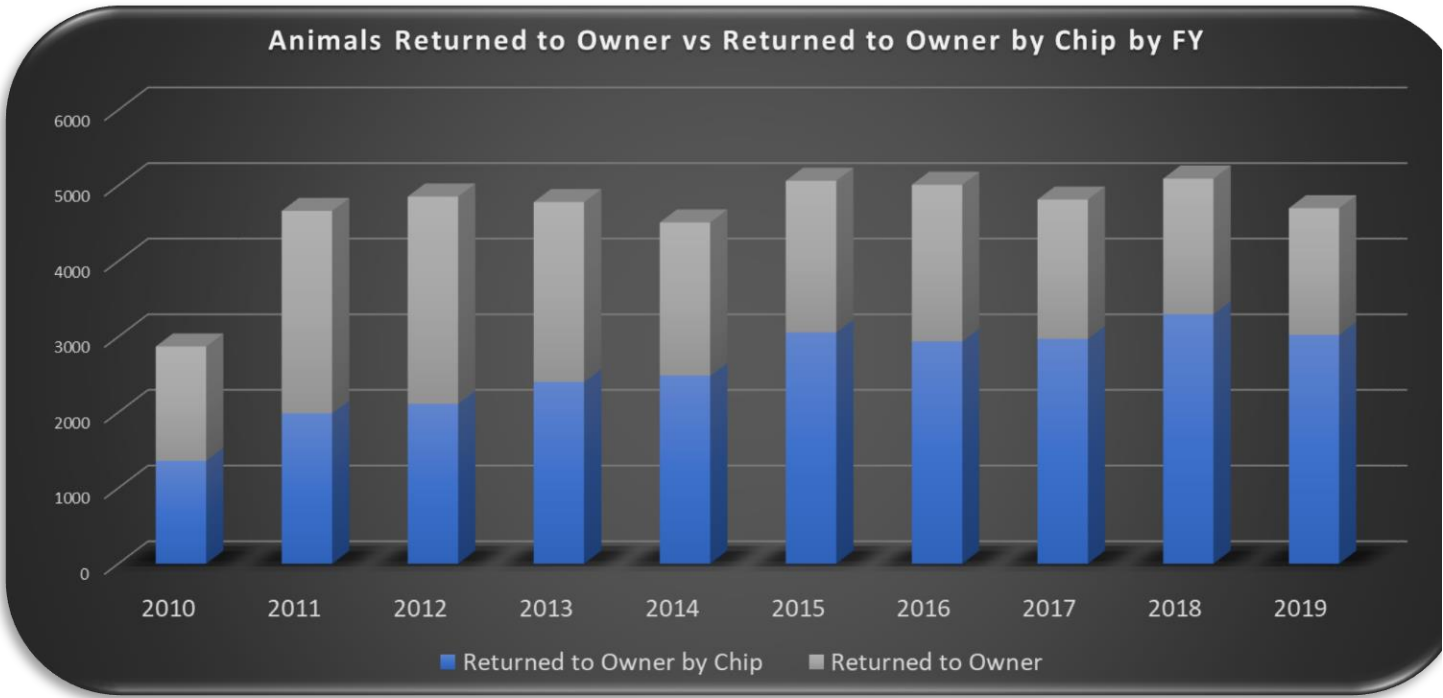
Transferring animals to a rescue partner allows for over 40% of all animals that WCRAS receives to be adopted. Through an Interlocal Agreement, WCRAS and Nevada Humane Society (NHS) partner together on a variety of programs, especially adoption of unclaimed WCRAS animals. NHS provides the adoption services for animals that successfully perform in a behavioral assessment and get transferred out of WCRAS, after they have been processed through a stray hold period and remain unclaimed.

WCRAS also works with SPCA of Northern Nevada, Pet Network and 50 to 60 other rescue group partners to assist in placement of animals that do not transfer to NHS, in order to exhaust every option for a live release for every adoptable animal. In many cases, one rescue or shelter may be more equipped to deal with a behavioral or health issue than another and can meet the animal’s specific needs.

Returning animals to their owner is an important and notable initiative to reunite lost pets with their families. Animals that get returned to their owner expeditiously, saves tax dollars, minimizes stress on the animal and reserves resources for those animals that truly need services. WCRAS successfully returned to their owners 38% and 36% of animals in FY 17-18 and FY 18-19, respectively.

WCRAS staff routinely discuss and implement strategies to support their efforts to return animals back to their owners, such as the free microchip program that launched in late 2012. Since 2012, WCRAS has microchipped just under 30,000 animals. Any dog or cat residing in Washoe County may receive a free microchip from WCRAS which stays with the animal for life. The unique microchip number that is assigned to that animal and owner get uploaded into WCRAS’s database, and the national microchip registry, to help with reunification efforts, if those efforts become necessary. In both FY 17-18 and FY 18-19, 64% of animals were returned to their owners were primarily due to the animal having a microchip prior to coming to WCRAS.

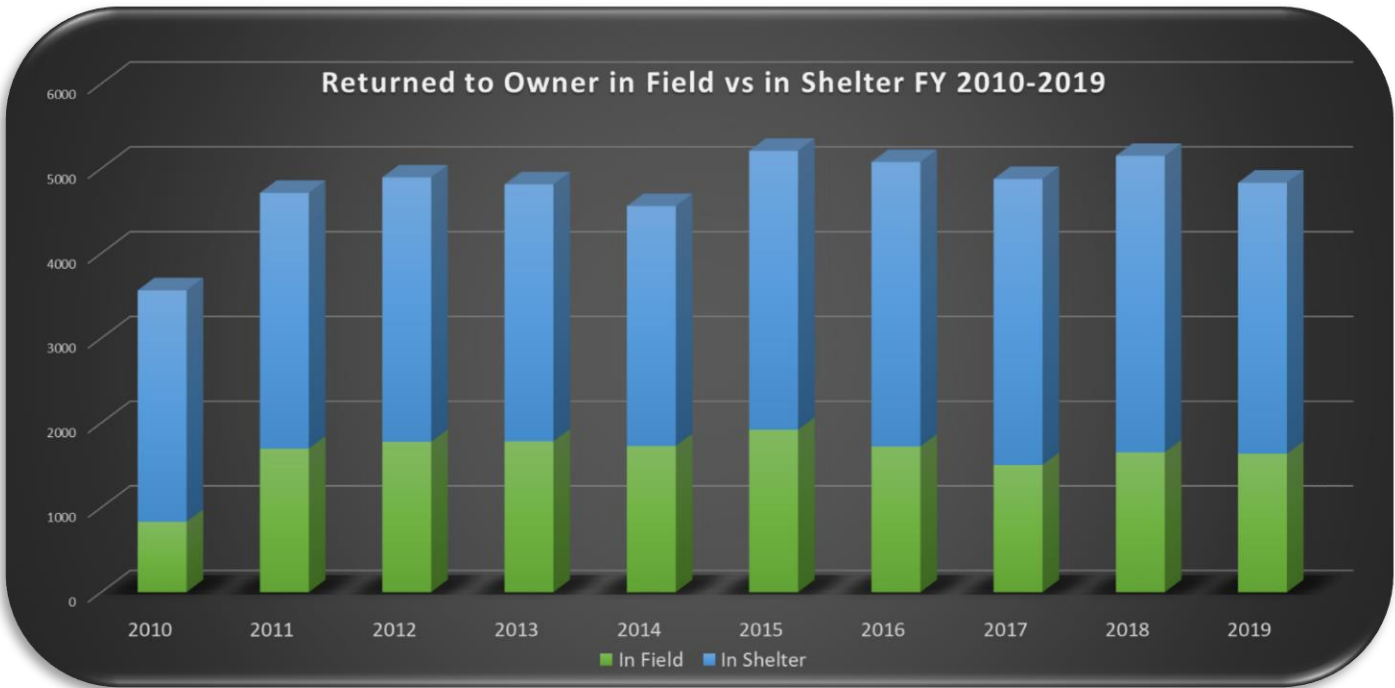
Animals Returned With and Without a Microchip



Staff efforts support WCRAS’s highly successful return-to-owner numbers. Such efforts include immediately scanning each animal picked up for a microchip, uploading a photograph of each animal into WCRAS’ database immediately, and ensuring staff follow up on contacting the owners of those animals with identification (tags, microchip, collar with contact info) all help to

support WCRAS’ successful return- to- owner numbers. Field staff also routinely research social media platforms and the WCRAS internal database for lost animal reports. These activities frequently result in a prompt reunification without requiring the animal to be brought to the shelter, resulting in cost savings to WCRAS but more importantly, returning animals safely to their families. It takes effort, attention to detail and a lot of follow through to ensure that staff are doing everything possible to return animals to their homes.

Collective Data Reflecting Animals Being Returned in Field (prior to impound) and from Shelter (post impound)



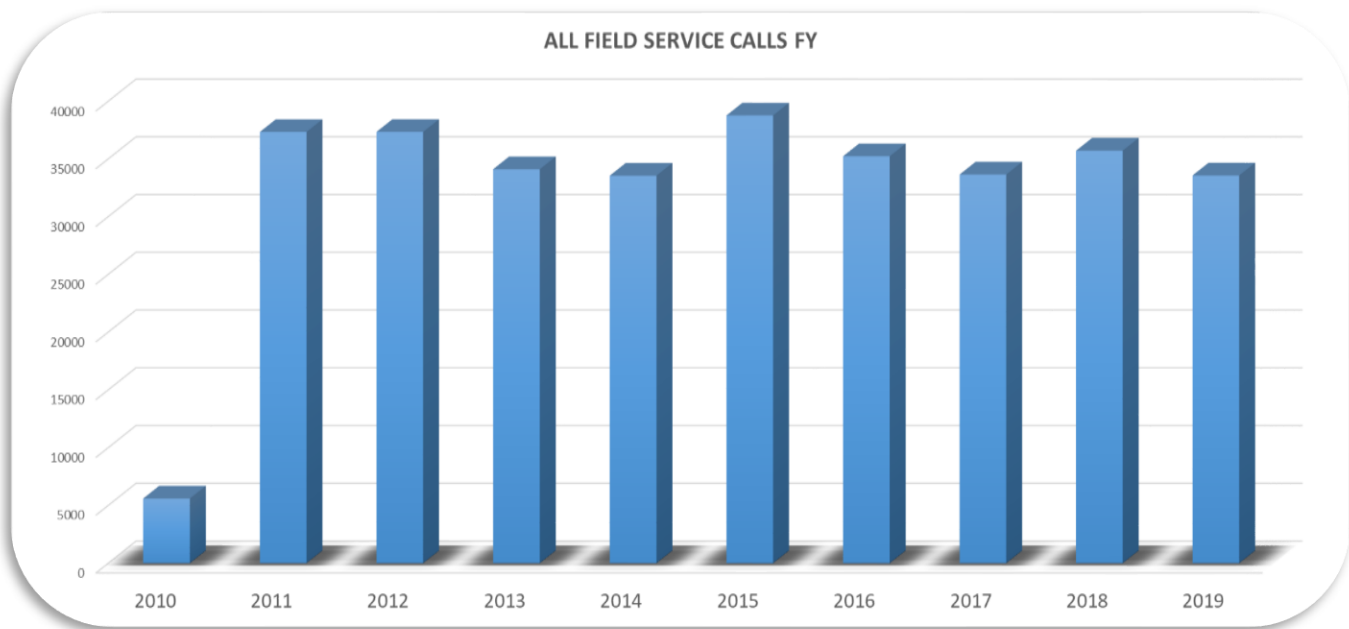
The data about the return of animals helps to drive programs such as the free microchip program and the free ride home program, both of which help to promote identification by way of a microchip and or a license. The premise of the free ride home program is that WCRAS will make reasonable attempts to contact and bring home a lost pet that is has identification, preventing the animal from being impounded at the shelter.

The data in green represents in-field return of animals without the need for sheltering. The in-field return effort provides an opportunity for an officer to facilitate valuable connections with pet owners while engaging in face-to -face contact. Many times, the valuable feedback and discussions that take place during the face to face dialogue resolve the root issue. When a redemption occurs after the animal has already been impounded, the opportunity may be lost for that dialogue to occur.

Field Service Call Statistics

WCRAS receives well over 30,000 calls for field services on average per year. These range from routine calls to which field staff respond, to stray animals at large, to animal welfare/cruelty and animal bites. Staff and the ASAB discuss possible correlations related to a change in call volume from quarter- to- quarter. For example, WCRAS experiences a much higher call volume for animals that are left in unattended vehicles from May through October when the weather is hot. WCRAS also experiences higher call volume during milder weather when people and animals are more likely to cross paths in parks and other public places.

Collective calls for Field Services FY Year over Year

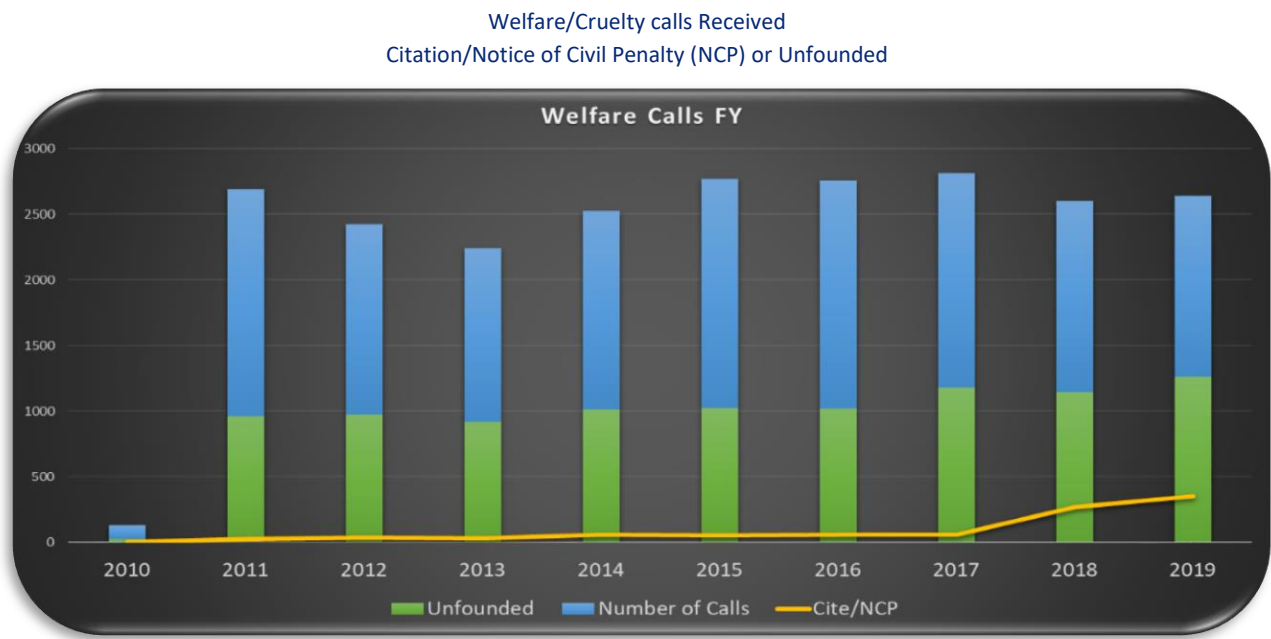


Animal Cruelty Cases

WCRAS updates the ASAB on completed animal cruelty cases, along with photos and outcomes, which are often presented by field staff. Staff shared their internal focus in FY 17-18 to improve case report preparation, evidence collection and overall investigation strategies. As a result of these efforts, WCRAS has improved the working relationship with the Washoe County District Attorney's Office, veterinarians and other law enforcement partners, as well as increased the successful prosecution of animal cruelty/welfare cases.

In 2015, WCRAS had only 50 citations and /or Notice of Civil Penalties (NCPs) issued for animal cruelty/welfare type violations. WCRAS realized a steady increase in the number of penalties from 57 citations/NCPs in 2017 to 353 citations/NCPs in 2019, a greater than 600% increase.

The increase in penalties can largely be attributed to WCRAS’s improvements in overall case preparation, evidence collection and consistent report writing.



Animal Enrichment

Animal enrichment for shelter animals is critical to their future adoptability. The ASAB heard from kennel staff about behavioral assessments and efforts to help find homes for difficult- to -adopt animals. Kennel Supervisor, Yvonne Shanto provided updates to the ASAB about a new animal enrichment program that has been working well. It helps to engage animals with constructive, behavioral and sensory stimuli.



Supervisor Shanto shared the essential oil “scent of the day” enrichment idea and how it is being implemented in the animal rooms to elicit a variety of positive responses from calming to curiosity. She also explained the use of edible enrichment, such as pupsicles and treats, which help to engage animals that may need mental or physical stimulus. She shared how this program has successfully reversed animal behavior from withdrawn or overreactive to a more “adoptable-ready” animal.

Happy Tails

WCRAS staff have shared “Happy Tails” updates at each ASAB meeting, highlighting an animal or two that “beat the odds.” One such story highlighted a joint effort between Truckee Meadows Water Authority, the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, Nevada Energy and WCRAS to



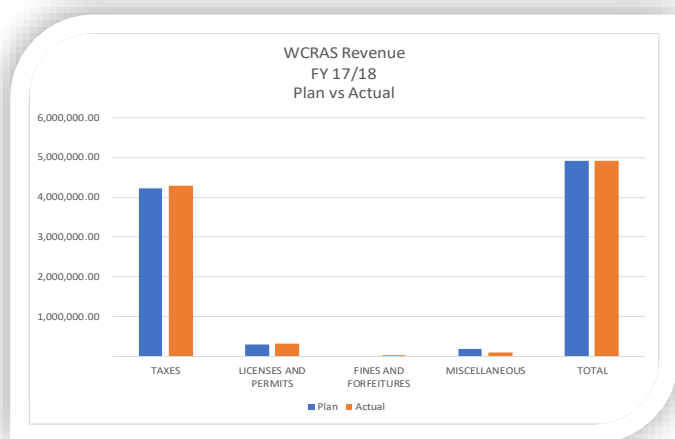
assist in rescuing several deer that had fallen into a canal with a steep embankment.

Another shared story told of an elusive dog that had roamed the streets of Reno for two years. An Animal Control Officer (ACO) spent a year working with the neighborhood and establishing a successful plan to trap the dog.

WCRAS Budget

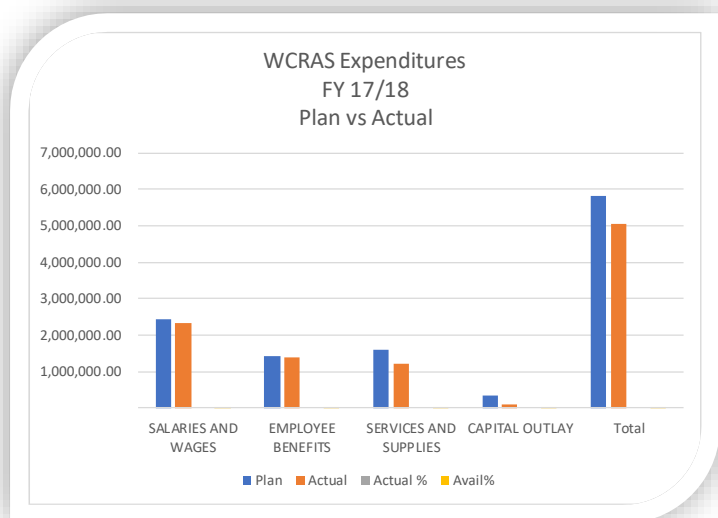
The Animal Services Fund, one of Washoe County’s special revenue funds, includes various revenue sources, but is primarily funded by a property tax of .03 cents for every \$100.00 of assessed property value and is appropriated to cover WCRAS shelter and regional field enforcement operations. WCRAS and NHS cooperatively share space at the Longley facility. NHS leases their portion of the facility from WCRAS and reimburses WCRAS for operational expenses and a pro-rata share of common area expenses.

FY 2018 revenue increased by \$216,231, or 5%, from FY 2017. This increase in revenue was primarily due to an additional \$173,478 in higher property tax collections. The program also received an increase of \$22,090 in revenue due to an increase in dog license compliance, and \$4,721 more in service fee charges that were successfully collected when compared to FY 2017.



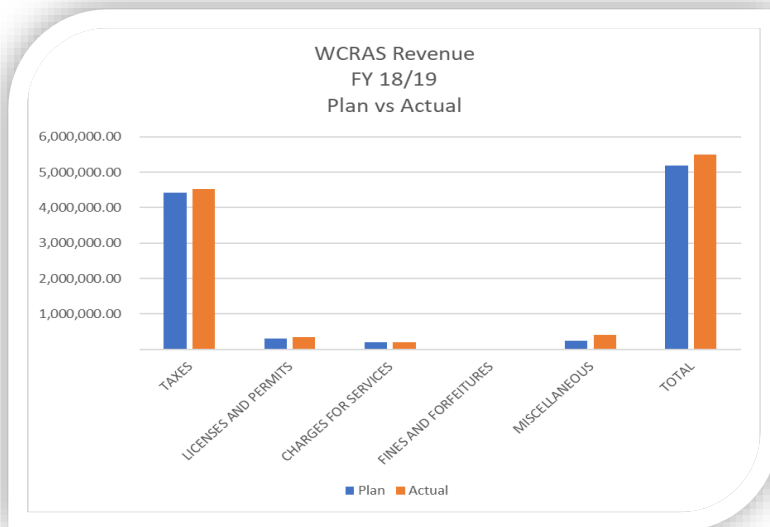
Accounts	Plan	Actual	Actual %
TAXES	4,214,714.00	4,290,018.55	102%
LICENSES AND PERMITS	307,000.00	329,272.00	107%
FINES AND FORFEITURES		450.00	
MISCELLANEOUS	192,385.17	87,343.37	45%
TOTAL	4,917,099.17	4,913,594.01	100%

FY 2018 expenditures increased by \$394,672, or 8%, when compared to FY 2017. However, FY2018 expenditures were still under budget in the amount of \$772,263.



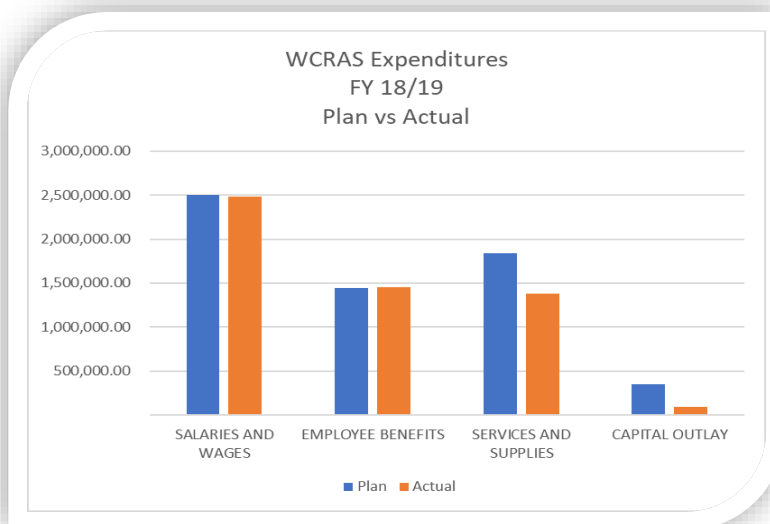
Accounts	Plan	Actual	Actual %	Avail%
SALARIES AND WAGES	2,444,841.97	2,341,312.31	96%	4%
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	1,440,529.08	1,380,623.90	96%	4%
SERVICES AND SUPPLIES	1,591,688.07	1,226,365.18	77%	23%
CAPITAL OUTLAY	350,000.00	106,495.00	30%	70%
Total	5,827,059.12	5,054,796.39	87%	13%

FY 2019 revenue increased by \$574,916, or 12%, when compared to FY 2018. The increase was driven due to an additional \$244,481 from higher property tax collections. There was also an \$11,221 increase in animal licenses and permits as a result of increased compliance. In addition, the net change in the fair value of investments increased by \$222,778 from the prior year.



Accounts	Plan	Actual	Actual %
TAXES	4,427,921.00	4,534,500.01	102%
LICENSES AND PERMITS	307,000.00	340,493.00	111%
CHARGES FOR SERVICES	203,000.00	202,054.69	100%
FINES AND FORFEITURES		100.00	
MISCELLANEOUS	244,247.32	411,362.55	168%
TOTAL	5,182,168.32	5,488,510.25	106%

FY 2019 expenditures increased by \$351,375, or 7%, when compared to FY 2018. However, FY 2019 expenditures were still under budget in the amount of \$736,766.



Accounts	Plan	Actual	Actual %	Available %
SALARIES AND WAGES	2,504,206.24	2,483,381.96	99%	1%
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	1,445,802.73	1,452,980.41	100%	0%
SERVICES AND SUPPLIES	1,842,928.55	1,376,809.27	75%	25%
CAPITAL OUTLAY	350,000.00	93,000.00	27%	73%
TOTAL	6,142,937.52	5,406,171.64	88%	12%

WCRAS Strategic Objectives

WCRAS's strategic objectives are the core of its strategic plan, including:

- Greater Community Presence and Collaboration; Raise awareness and support for the organization among those served.** In an effort to create and expand WCRAS's profile, WCRAS revamped its website to be more informative, focused and captivating, and began tracking the algorithms. It became apparent that WCRAS had one of the most frequently visited webpages in the County at 312,635 hits in 2018 and 338,500 hits in 2019. WCRAS began using Twitter, through collaboration with the Communications Team at the

Manager's Office, and typically issues over 80 tweets annually about notable events and activities.

- 2. Proactive Outreach Programs & Education; Establish programs that address the root causes of animal welfare issues.** WCRAS has devoted a heavy focus toward outreach and proactivity, recognizing that progressive animal services overlap with social services and overall community wellness. Many of the programs that WCRAS participates in aim to support the preservation, protection and promotion of lifesaving efforts, rather than simply controlling the animal population.

WCRAS participated in over 100 events in FY 18-19, such as vaccine clinics, career fairs, festivals, etc. In FY 18 -19, WCRAS assisted 5,293 pets with free pet food as part of their resources for seniors. WCRAS assisted 426 pets with medical care for homebound seniors during the same time period. WCRAS vaccinated over 7,700 animals through vaccine clinics and outreach events.

- 3. Effective Regulation Compliance; Make compliance with rules and regulations easy for citizens.** WCRAS aims to be a resource center for our community, rather than simply an animal shelter. This means that the community needs to trust that WCRAS staff will serve as a conduit for valuable resources and that staff will employ a resolution-based approach to problems, to help promote responsible pet ownership and to attempt to resolve problems with a proactive philosophy.

Officer Brooks Securing a Broken Fence to Keep a Dog Contained on Property Rather Than Impound the Dog



One of the strategies that WCRAS instituted in support of this objective is a fix-it ticket program for dog licensing. The goal of this program is to gain owner compliance by providing a voidable Notice of Civil Penalty (NCP) which can be vacated within a two-week period if the owner to licenses their dog, rather than be given an automatic fine. This program has been relatively successful with a two-year average of 57% compliance.

4. **Engaged and Professional Team: Unleash the knowledge, compassion, and energy of staff and volunteers by empowering them to make a positive impact on the community and its animals.** WCRAS maintains the goal of professionalism as one of high importance through training, consistency and linear communication. WCRAS field staff attend standardized academy training that is structured in three successive, week-long modules. Additionally, field staff have multiple FEMA and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) training certificates to help ensure their safety during emergency evacuations. Kennel staff have been offered animal behavioral training, stress recognition and reduction, and online classes in sheltering and animal care. Administrative staff have attended animal behavioral training as well as de-escalation training as well. WCRAS has integrated internal training, to improve consistency and gain skill sets for commonly needed proficiencies such as safe trailer towing.

In addition, WCRAS has made concerted efforts to improve communication within their team through routine staff meetings, daily shift change briefings, newsletters and participation in a consistent staff recognition program. Statistics are shared during each division meeting, highlighting specific metrics for each division area.

Trap-Neuter-Return Cat Program

The ASAB specifically requested to learn more about the Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) program that WCRAS and NHS collaboratively facilitate. The ASAB heard a presentation from former NHS Chief Operations Officer, Arthur Westbrook about the inner workings of the program, statistics and future goals.



Mr. Westbrook provided an overview of the process for a cat coming through the TNR program and explained that the feral cats are examined, vaccinated, spayed/neutered, microchipped and released into a colony that is monitored by a

colony caretaker. He further explained that NHS provides resources to help monitor the cat colonies, and the process to address feral cat nuisance abatements.

Washoe County Code Updates

WCRAS has continued to include the ASAB in collaborative discussions to address proposed amendments to Washoe County Code (WCC) Chapter 55.760, Dangerous Dogs. Staff shared the current code section as well as highlighted areas that the staff have prioritized as needing refinement. Productive discussions have taken place and feedback provided by both the ASAB and community members.

2021 Legislative Priorities

WCRAS's legislative priorities have been discussed with the ASAB for the upcoming 2021 Session. The ASAB heard the overview of each priority and provided their thoughts and ideas and expressed a desire to continue supporting the department with the proposed changes. A collective list of the priorities and language is below.

NRS 171.17751 (5)(b) Designation of certain state, county and city officers to prepare, sign and serve citations

Existing law provides that an animal control officer who is employed by a city or county in accordance with NRS 171.17751(1) and NRS 280.125 may prepare, sign and serve a citation only to enforce an ordinance of the city or county by which the animal control officer is employed. (NRS 171.17751(5)(b)). Proposed amendment language clarifies that an animal control officer may also prepare, sign and serve a citation to enforce laws prohibiting cruelty to animals set forth in chapter 574 of NRS and NRS 202.487.

NRS 574.050 Definitions

Existing law provides that abandoning an animal constitutes animal cruelty in violation of NRS 574.100(1)(f). Suggested amendment language adds a definition for "abandon" and "abandonment." Proposed amendment language also adds a definition for "shelter" as that term applies to enclosures for dogs.

NRS 574.080 Peace officer or animal control officer may take possession of animals and implements used in fights among animals

Existing law provides that a peace officer or animal control officer who is authorized by law to make arrests may impound animals and implements used in animal fighting, and in doing so, must provide their name and “residence.” However, in Nevada, an animal control officer is not authorized by law to make arrests. Further, neither a peace officer nor animal control officer can be compelled to disclose their “residence.” Accordingly, the proposed amendment language removes the qualifier “authorized by law to make arrests” and amends the requirement that the officer disclose their “residence” to their “place of work.”

NRS 574.090 Disposition of animals or implements used in fights among animals

Legislative amendments during the 2019 session implemented a court hearing process for persons lawfully arrested for animal fighting. The hearing process provides that if the arrested person wishes to contest the forfeiture of impounded animals, they may request a hearing within 5 days of the impoundment to determine whether they may continue to own or possess the impounded animal(s) or whether the animal(s) should be transferred to an animal rescue organization, animal shelter or another person. Existing law at the time of the 2019 amendments required the impounded animal(s) to be held in impound pending the disposition of the criminal case. Those provisions were not amended during the 2019 session. Accordingly, these provisions are currently inconsistent. The proposed amendment language remedies this inconsistency by clarifying that upon the person’s conviction for animal fighting, the animals will be forfeited, only if they have not previously been forfeited as a result of the aforementioned hearing process.

574.100. Torturing, overdriving, injuring or abandoning animals; failure to provide proper sustenance; requirements for restraining dogs and using outdoor enclosures; horse tripping; penalties; exceptions

The proposed language revises provisions prohibiting cruelty to animals. Existing law prohibits torturing or unjustifiably maiming, mutilating or killing an animal kept for companionship or pleasure and all cats and dogs. (NRS 574.100(1)(a)). The proposed language expands the categories of animals protected under NRS 574.100(1)(a) to include animals kept for working purposes and unowned domesticated animals. Existing law also prohibits certain acts constituting animal cruelty, which include: (a) causing/procuring/allowing an animal to be overdriven, overloaded, tortured, cruelly beaten or unjustifiably injured, maimed, mutilated or killed (NRS 574.100(1)(b)); (b) depriving an animal of necessary sustenance or drink (NRS 574.100(1)(c)); and (c) abandoning an animal (NRS 574.100(1)(f)). Proposed language

modernizes these provisions and additionally prohibits: (a) depriving an animal of proper ventilation and/or wholesome air, if such animal is confined indoors; (b) depriving an ill or injured animal of veterinary care, causing the animal to suffer unnecessary pain or suffering; (c) depriving an animal of grooming or shearing, to the extent such grooming or shearing is necessary to prevent adverse health effects or suffering; and (d) causing, procuring or allowing an animal to ingest alcohol or narcotics.

Existing law also prohibits certain acts in restraining a dog. The proposed language supplements these protections by specifying that a person shall not restrain a dog using a device that: (a) fails to allow the dog access to food, water or shelter, (b) fails to allow the dog to avoid its own excrement or urine, (c) is too heavy for the particular dog, failing to allow the dog to move around freely. The proposed language specifies that a dog may only be restrained using a properly fitted collar or body harness which provides enough room between the collar or harness and the dog's throat to allow normal breathing and swallowing. The proposed language revises the maximum time a dog may be restrained from 14 hours in a 24-hour period to 10 hours in a 24-hour period. Additionally, the proposed language prohibits leaving an unspayed, female dog outside without a fence or other barrier to prevent other animals from accessing the dog. Finally, proposed language prohibits restraining sick or injured dogs.

NRS 574.110 Abandonment of disabled animal unlawful

This provision was last amended in 1919 is proposed to be repealed in its entirety.

Special Interest Research Project, *The Dog Parker*

The Department researched a product called The Dog Parker, based on a request of the ASAB for possible use in our community. The Dog Parker is a secure, temperature- controlled enclosure that can be placed outside of participating businesses that allows for the safe-keeping of a dog while the owner visits a business. The Dog Parker is equipped with monitored ventilation and heating units to maintain interior temperatures and is also monitored by the Dog Parker corporate offices. Staff employed by Dog Parker are dispatched to the location if necessary and do have the ability to



remove animals if the need arises. The customer pays for the service by the amount of time necessary.

WCRAS staff spoke with the Dog Parker vendor as well as researched the product reviews and provided a complete summary of the program to the ASAB. Additionally, a memo was prepared and delivered by staff to each respective elected body including a summary of the research that had been collected for their consideration and possible implementation within their jurisdictions. To date, no action has been taken to implement this system in Washoe County.

Recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners

The ASAB requested an overview of the County's social media protocols and how WCRAS utilizes social media within the course of WCRAS's work. The ASAB heard an update from staff about the County's social media protocol, which require appointed departments to utilize social media through the Communications Team within the Manager's Office for both Facebook and Twitter.



The ASAB recommends, for consideration by the Board of County Commissioners and the County Manager, that WCRAS be given authorization to create and utilize the power of social media within the scope of their work to empower and support their day - to - day efforts with their own dedicated avenues. The ASAB believes that opportunities to engage with the community, share timely and important information, and gain community support are being missed. Shelters across the country routinely utilize social media as a free platform to help increase and support overarching goals such as animal reunification, organizational transparency and awareness, and community engagement.

Long Term ASAB and WCRAS Objectives

The ASAB looks forward to sharing its collective knowledge and expertise as well as that of its contacts and constituents by providing WCRAS and our community with their recommended tools and resources to strengthen and support WCRAS’s role and impact within our community.

WCRAS and the ASAB will continue to work with all of our partners and stakeholders to support WCRAS’s mission to promote responsible care of animals through education, proactive outreach and regulation, making Washoe County a safe community.

