

**Improving the Animal Service Model:  
Recommendations from the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee  
April 2014**

Members of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) commend and thank the City Council of London for the resolution to work toward a 'No-Kill' model, as decided in December of 2013. AWAC also welcomes the creation of the enhanced programs approved by Council; the hiring of a City Veterinarian and the creation of an external adoption centre.

In light of these new and progressive developments, the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is pleased to provide the City's Community and Protective Services Committee (CPSC) and Council with our updated recommendations regarding London's Animal Services Model. Our intention is that these recommendations will serve as a Master Plan to guide us toward the best possible model specifically adapted to the London community.

AWAC recognizes that we are at present working through an initial round of new programs. It will take time for us to work together as a community to bring new initiatives to fruition. We hope that the road map that our recommendations provide will help to guide future initiatives. We believe the following recommendations will help to move our community toward the 'No Kill' model that was approved by Council.

**Executive Summary**

AWAC members agree with the resolution to move toward the 'No Kill' model, one where no healthy or treatable animals are killed for lack of space, or because more time is required to find caring, permanent homes. The recommendations within this document support this model, divided into six priorities that we would like to see implemented.

**A – Improve Accountability and Transparency**

The description of this set of recommendations was submitted to the Community and Protective Services Committee on December 9, 2013, and can be viewed in the *1st Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee Report*, contained in the agenda for that meeting.

<http://sire.london.ca/cache/2/zyn01viucjesbnzewgzlsgmi/12153505012014124242356.PDF>

Those recommendations, along with the ones below combine to provide a high quality and achievable level of animal services.

**B – Improve Shelter Facility**

**C – Exceed Industry Standards for Animal Care**

**D – Set the Goal of Establishing An Animal Sanctuary.**

**E – Expand City Initiatives**

**F – Improve Ease of Licensing, Pet Identification; and Protect the Privacy of Foster Homes**

**Priority Level B: Improve Shelter Facility**

**(B1) Recommendation – Make an Expanded Shelter Building City-Owned**

AWAC appreciates the suggestion that the City explore acquiring a building that could become a new animal shelter facility. This shelter facility could be used by sub-contractors, joint partners or city staff to provide animal services. AWAC prefers a building that would be owned and directed by the City and be free of ties to any other entity. We believe that having the building as a City-owned facility would provide the City with maximum flexibility in the coming years. We believe such a facility owned solely by the City would help achieve the transparency, accountability and oversight needed to ensure the highest possible standard of care for all animals needing the care of the City.

**- Establish a Task Force to obtain funding:** We suggest that the begin a public process to obtain funding through donations and grants to purchase or construct such a building as soon as possible. Additionally, the decision to purchase or construct a building must be made openly and with community input.

The broader community can be invited to share in this goal by establishing a separate Task Force to solicit funding for such a building. The kinds of skills needed for such a Task Force will likely be found in the business community, rather than among AWAC or Rescue group

members. Community leaders with business acumen as well as leaders in charitable fundraising could be tasked with seeking donations and grants in order to fund the acquisition of such a building.

## **B2) Recommendation – Full time Veterinary Service, and Allocation for More Space to Sheltering**

AWAC agrees that an on-site surgical suite and full-time veterinary services are needed in any shelter supported by the City. Further, beyond the surgical facility needed for veterinary services animals also need care, space, and time to successfully recover from injury and illness before being adopted.

Sheltered dogs and cats with minor and major medical conditions must be given veterinary care to ensure increased survival rates. Animals with conditions such as fleas, allergy dermatitis and heartworm should be treated routinely. Animals with more serious conditions, such as painful injuries or illnesses, must receive emergency medical treatment immediately regardless of time of day.

We recommend that such practices be adopted by the City-hired Veterinarian who will work within the shelter. We further urge that this increased level of Veterinary care be adopted immediately at the shelter using the Veterinary services that the Pound keeper already relies on. There is no need for this increased level of care to be delayed until the hiring of a Full-time Veterinarian.

By treating a greater range of conditions as opposed to destroying such animals, there will be a need for increased space for animal housing to allow animals to have more time to recover.

## **Priority Level C: Exceed Industry Standards for Animal Care**

### **(C1) Recommendation – Go Beyond Minimum Industry Standards**

Staff's previous recommendation states that the current shelter facility operates using industry standard procedures and protocols for shelter facilities. Their report states that the current shelter has been inspected by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAFRA), and is operated in accordance with the provisions of the Public Pound By-law, the *Pounds Act*, *Animals for Research Act*, *Municipal Act*, and all other applicable legislation.

We wish to point out that these legislated standards are minimum standards only. For example, OMAFRA (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs) is chiefly meant to govern the use of animals for food, rather than provide protection for companion animals. Current legislation covers the more basic aspects of facilities such as checking that drains are clear, walls are clean, food and water is sufficient, and the appropriate storage of drugs and chemicals. Advanced care provisions, such as the existence of outdoor runs and play areas, and provision of exercise and stress reduction activities are not included in most current legislation.

AWAC therefore recommends establishing care-standard procedures within the city shelter that meet or exceed the standards of leading animal care systems, of which Calgary's Animal Services is one example. All animals entering the shelter system must be assessed for injury and/or illness and given appropriate medical attention immediately, regardless of the hour of intake, as well as clean living space, bedding, food and water. Exercise and socialization with human care-givers and/or appropriate animal companions should also be accommodated whenever possible.

Upper Respiratory Infections (URI) are common in felines housed in crowded, stressful conditions at pounds and shelters, and such illnesses sometimes are used as justification for mass culling. Animal rescue groups tell us that Upper Respiratory Infections do seem to originate within the current shelter. Care protocols coupled with proper heating and cooling systems, larger cages, and even use of cage-free design can go a long way to minimize this problem. Similarly, dogs require more kennel space than they currently have, including appropriate outdoor areas for relieving themselves. This provision should include court-ordered dogs under the Dog Owners' Liability Act (DOLA), who are awaiting a decision on their fate as they, as much as any other dogs, require proper care, exercise and socialization. Dogs known to be friendly and showing no signs of infectious disease should have access to other dogs through group play and socialization areas. A large outdoor space for exercise, toileting, socialization, training and behaviour modification (if necessary) should be a requirement of any facility operated by the City's chosen contractor, joint partner or city staff. Many community shelters and humane agencies make regular use of volunteers to deliver many of these

services. It saves money and frees up staff time for other duties. We recommend that these enhanced opportunities for socialization and exercise be provided to sheltered companion animals by making use of volunteers.

AWAC recommends encouraging the City Pound keeper to continuously initiate innovative programs and protocols that ensure the highest standards of care, and to incorporate volunteers into their animal care activities.

The City's recent approval of funds to establish a City veterinarian in a city-owned building is a step towards improving matters as is the City's approval of a Cat Adoption Centre in 2014. Since the City has not requested input on Animal Services Recommendations since 2011, and since the City has put forward RFPs for these services, Council (through CPSC) can expect our recommendations once the RFP bids are closed and we are able to comment.

#### **Priority Level D: Future Goal - Establish An Animal Sanctuary**

##### **D1 Recommendation – Set and Publicize the Goal of Establishing a Sanctuary**

AWAC suggests that the City set a goal of establishing a sanctuary facility for companion animals, a location which will allow such animals a full opportunity to live comfortably in cases where an adoptive or foster home cannot be provided. This building can be used to house animals needing longer care than can be given at the shelter, adoption centre or a foster home.

We recognize that this goal does not fit into the current budget. Nevertheless, we suggest that by publicizing the future goal of establishing such a sanctuary that an appropriate building may be donated. Such a building need not be of the same scale and cost as the proposed City-owned shelter, and could be a retrofitted house with adequate yard to allow for outdoor activities. Partnerships with non-profit organizations to manage this facility would be the ideal model.

The goal of acquiring a building for an animal sanctuary could be included in the work of the Task Force suggested in '(B1) Recommendation – Make Future Expanded Shelter City-Owned'

#### **Priority Level E: Expand City Initiatives**

##### **(E1) Recommendation – Continue and Expand City Initiatives**

It is important to have initiatives that help prevent animals from entering shelters in the first place. The City has already initiated a number of community programs that AWAC would like to see continued and expanded.

These include:

- 1) Amend existing pet limit by-laws (for AWAC's position on these, please read our submission to the City's upcoming Public Participation Meeting regarding pet limit by-laws).
- 2) Feral Cat programs –Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR)
- 3) Year-round, City-funded high volume, low-cost spay/neuter program
- 4) Increased public education on responsible pet ownership
- 5) Increased adoptions through effective high-profile city-funded marketing, as well as improved programs and opportunities for potential adopters to choose companion animals in a cage-free setting
- 6) Work with and increase support to rescue groups, who have played a key role in reducing kill rates within London's pound system and have maximized the chances of stray dogs and cats finding permanent homes.

#### **Priority Level F: Improve Ease of Licensing, Pet Identification; and Protect Privacy of Foster Homes.**

##### **(F1) Recommendation – Increase Locations to Purchase Dog and Cat Licenses, and Encourage Micro-chipping**

AWAC agrees with the staff recommendation to encourage the use of micro-chipping of dogs

and cats as a means of returning lost pets to their homes. A reduced license fee can be offered as a means of encouraging pet guardians to micro-chip their pet.

At present, a first time license must be purchased at the City shelter only. The location of the shelter is not easily accessible for those without access to a vehicle. We suggest that this service can be provided at a variety of locations and does not require the over-sight of specialized animal service workers. Just as an administration fee is paid to the city contractor for the issuing and renewal of licenses, the same fee could be offered to dog groomers, pet stores and Veterinary offices that may be willing to offer this same service. Government services such as Canada Post have made their services more readily available to customers by commissioning businesses such as drug stores and convenience stores to provide some postal services. If Londoners do not have to travel as far to purchase their license the chance of voluntary compliance will be increased.

AWAC also recommends that the licensing process be made as simple as possible. Certificates that prove spay/neuter surgery, as well as vaccination records are easily lost, and Veterinarians sometimes charge for replacement records. We believe that more Londoners would license their pets if the process did not also require certificates that may have been misplaced. The honour system where such certificates are not required, though imperfect, may well increase the level of voluntary compliance with licensing. If a dog or cat is not up to date on vaccinations, which then causes the guardian to avoid licensing, nothing has been achieved for either the animal or the city. If the animal is at least licensed, then the chance that the animal will be re-united with his home is increased and London will obtain the funds needed for animal programs.

We do not believe that there is a need for anyone other than the Rescue group directors to know the location of rescue group foster homes.

Rescue groups rely on foster homes to provide the cost effective and compassionate services that benefit both animals and the city. In return, most foster homes have requested respect and anonymity. Most rescue groups have signed confidentiality agreements with their foster home providers that cannot be violated. AWAC recommends that the City instead continue to establish and maintain relationships with Directors of Rescue groups, and leave the regulation of Foster homes in the hands of those directors. This has worked well for decades and rescue groups have not been a source of problems, but rather provide solutions to the city in very cost effective ways.

## **(F2) Recommendation – Foster Homes and Trap/Neuter/Return Programs – Maintain as City Run Initiatives**

Sections A3 and A4 of Staff's September 9, 2013 Recommendation discuss proposed registries for foster homes and trap/neuter/release colonies in London that would be maintained by the contractor. We recommend these two initiatives and any potential files remain with the City only. The City has had an Animal Coordinator position for the past 5 years, whose incumbent has already established relationships with key members of the animal rescue and veterinary community, and coordinated numerous spay/neuter events and adoption days. We recognize that it is necessary for the Animal Welfare Coordinator to know the location of managed feral colonies as he administers the funding of the spay/neuter surgeries for these cats, and this information should be managed within that office.

AWAC is also advised by animal rescue groups that it is a hardship for them to be required to provide names and addresses of persons adopting cats and dogs for the purpose of licensing. We recognize that any agent of the city, such as the shelter contractor or adoption centre partner must adhere to all city requirements such as licensing of adopted animals. However, these entities are/will be contracted by the City and act as its agents. Rescue groups are not in this situation, and are in competition with online pet sales and private breeders who do not demand the sharing of private adopter/purchaser information. We suggest instead that the City ask Rescue groups to support the licensing program through education at the time of adoption and to promote the benefits of licensing. Rescue groups understand that much of the funding for progressive animal programs will come from license fees, so they are highly motivated to promote and encourage adopters to license their newly adopted pets.

## **Conclusion**

AWAC believes that restructuring animal services delivery in the manner we have suggested would not cause a great discrepancy in total expenditure per animal. We recognize that there is already increased funding budgeted for enhanced services, and that acquiring new facilities will require further funding from various sources. We believe that over time, these costs will be offset by increased revenues from voluntary compliance with licensing and greatly increased

donations. Most citizens are unaware that they can make targeted donations to their city for specific animal-related programs. The Task Force that we have suggested, and other forms of marketing can be used to encourage Londoners to contribute to programs and facilities that they can be proud of. Pet over-population will also be systematically decreased, which will ease the cost of shelter and enforcement services.

We also believe that the preceding recommendations will increase the trust and goodwill among all parties involved; the City, the contractor, the rescue community, and pet guardian/owners. As well these recommendations will ensure greater transparency, better outcomes for the animals, and a cost-effective and caring model of animal services.