

# Out of Control, Into Compassion

**Progressive agencies are changing the way animal control does business, reconciling the need to protect the public with the goal of saving animals' lives**

BY CARRIE ALLAN

When Mark Kumpf was an animal control officer in Virginia back in the early 1990s, he held what he now regards as a rather dubious record: He'd issued more misdemeanor summonses than any other officer in the history of the department.

"I wrote more dog tickets than I knew what to do with," says Kumpf, now president of the National Animal Control Association and director of the Montgomery County Animal Resource Center in Dayton, Ohio. "It really was very much an enforcement attitude. .... The goal was how many animals can you pick up, how fast can we get them off the street, and how many summonses can you write."

He did it for years, patrolling the streets of a busy port city, a dedicated civil servant with a clear, specific job: Protect the public from dangerous animals and cite people for violations of animal control laws. He spent his days capturing strays, investigating cruelty complaints, and checking out pets for licenses and rabies vaccination compliance. His citations averaged between 100 and 150 a month, and his monthly court dates were a full docket of what Kumpf calls the citation "trifecta"—running at large, no city dog license, and failure to vaccinate against rabies.

"I thought that the way to correct animal problems was to cite everyone, impound everything, and be a good little animal cop," Kumpf says. "But, I don't know, I just had one of those moments after I'd been on the

job for a while and I thought, this really isn't doing anything. It was like bailing the ocean with a thimble."

Intake and euthanasia numbers weren't dropping. The same animal problems kept happening. And the department kept doing the same things in response.

Kumpf wanted to do more, but he found himself in a kind of limbo. Like many officers and municipal agencies, he was working within the confines of a box—and under a shadow that's held sway over municipal agencies since animal control was in its infancy.

## Rabies and the Dawn of Dogcatching

Enforcing laws has been the primary focus of animal control agencies since the early days.

The job of the municipal dogcatcher evolved out of fear. In the latter days of the 19th century, a disease called hydrophobia—what we now know as rabies—regularly caused human fatalities, especially in cities where stray dogs roamed the streets and came into contact with people.

Dying from rabies was (and still is) a hideous way to go. Symptoms begin with fatigue and loss of appetite and progress into headache, fever, hallucinations, and from there into paralysis, seizures, frenzied aggression, and death from cardiac or respiratory failure.

Before the work of Louis Pasteur, many understood that deaths from hydrophobia were related to contact with animals, but those who grasped the connection grasped it only partially.



**Whether they work for municipal agencies or private organizations, friendly field officers like Jennifer Kulina, a humane agent with the Capital Area Humane Society in Hilliard, Ohio, are helping erase the old image of the "dogcatcher" from the public imagination.**

That limited understanding of disease transmission led to a terror of stray dogs that can seem—to a pet-loving inhabitant of the 21st century—absurdly paranoid. The newspaper stories of the time capture the fear, and many emphasize the dangers of pity.

"The sympathy that Archibald W. Dickson ... felt for a homeless cur which had been run over by an automobile ... resulted yesterday in his death by rabies," a reporter for *The New York Times* wrote in 1909. "Compassion for a homeless dog shivering with cold outside his police booth in Brooklyn cost Policeman John McDermott ... his life," read a 1927 piece.

Through the mid-20th century, the paper carried regular rabid dog stories, often highlighting the deaths of children and noble public servants. These deaths were accompanied by fevered public debate over how the problem should be handled. Should municipal agents be allowed to enter private property without a warrant in pursuit of an unknown stray? Should all dogs be muzzled? Should all strays be exterminated?

That extreme approach was advocated more than once. "It is estimated that there are 150,000 stray dogs now in New York City, and 50,000 in Brooklyn alone," the *Times* noted in 1908. "These dogs are the real menace to the community, and in the opinion of the Health Department should be got rid of before the danger from hydrophobia can be eliminated."

# Animal Control Gets Modern

## Dark Days for Dogs

A fearful citizenry can drive terrible public policy, allowing approaches that might not be considered in calmer times. It was in this climate of rabies terror that 19th century "dogcatchers" operated. Often employed by local health departments, the men were hired to clear the streets of strays. Their mandate to protect citizens made kindness toward the dogs a low priority.

The methods for catching and disposing of animals were all violent operations, according to Bernard Unti, Ph. D., senior policy adviser for The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and an authority on the history of the humane movement. Dogcatchers lassoed the animals with ropes that choked them, dragged them to their wagons, and threw them into the trucks in ways that often resulted in broken legs and necks. Pound-masters assumed that unhealthy or ungroomed strays were unowned, and usually did not bother to feed these dogs while they waited for death. Most impounded animals were killed brutally by clubbing, shooting, hanging, or drowning.

**The public  
terror of rabies  
at the turn of  
the last century  
can be seen in  
this newspaper  
illustration of an  
officer "shooting  
a mad dog" ...  
who appears to  
weigh about 10  
pounds ... and  
was apparently  
thought to be  
more dangerous  
than firing a gun  
in a crowd.**

Further stories from the era—of citizens shot by dogcatchers, dogcatchers arrested for crimes or making off with the beloved pets of children—illustrate the public's disdain for the work. Dogcatchers were seen as a necessary evil; citizens were grateful for the protection they provided but disgusted at the roughness of their methods. The old saw, "I wouldn't vote him in as dogcatcher" conveys the contempt with which the job has long been regarded. Some of the oldest humane societies and SPCAs in the country were formed by citizens concerned about the brutality of the dogcatchers.

The tension between those employed by the municipal pound, which existed to protect people from rabid, vicious, and nuisance animals, and private humane groups, which formed to protect animals, persists to

this day. And the enforcement-driven approach to animal control work has dogged the field—and the image of animal control officers—for decades.

Isn't it time to close the divide?

## The Pet Paradox

The vast majority of animal control officers bear no resemblance to the terrifying dogcatchers of history—or to the clichés that replaced them: the bumbling, net-toting incompetents who pursued mischievous pooches through the black-and-white terrain of many a 1950s TV show. Most ACOs consider a love of animals fundamental to their work; programs like *Animal Cops* have helped put a new, compassionate face on animal control officers.

"I've seen so much progress in the animal control field," says Don Jordan, director of the Seattle Animal Shelter in Washington. "Many of the good ol' boys have retired or passed away, and the societal trend over the past few decades has really been evolving us into a more compassionate society generally."

While dangerous animals will always exist and require cautious and professional handling, we live in a different world. The rabies terror, which still exists in other countries and often results in animal control methods comparable to those practiced here at the turn of the last century, is a thing of the past in the U.S. According to the Centers for Disease Control, since 1960, the majority of rabies cases in this country have been caused by wild, not domestic, animals.

The U.S. has become a nation of pet lovers, in part because of that shift. Even owned pets were once kept outdoors, but modern veterinary medicine has made it possible to bring animal companions indoors to share our homes and furniture with them (to our mutual benefit, if not that of the homes or the furniture). Americans spend tens of billions on pets every year. A 2008 survey indicated that, if dropped on a deserted island, two-thirds of pet owners would pick their pets over their spouses for company. These days, a *New York Times* article referring to a "homeless cur" would likely draw angry letters from dog lovers across the country.

Yet, paradoxically, the struggle to protect animals continues.

In 2008, 50,000 animals were admitted to the shelters that make up the municipal shelter system in Los Angeles. Across the country, 40,000 came in to New York City's Animal Care and Control Department. In Florida, Miami-Dade Animal Services took in more than 30,000.

These numbers represent a vast improvement over those reported just a few decades ago. For example, in 1971, Los Angeles Animal Control euthanized more than 110,000 animals—that's an average of 300 a day. That number had dropped to 20,000 by 2008—still a tragic number, but a fraction of the one-time death toll.

HARPER'S WEEKLY, 1879





MIAMI DADE ANIMAL SERVICES

**Every day, ACOs perform lifesaving work for people and animals in their community. Here, senior animal control supervisor Kris Miller, of Miami Dade Animal Services, holds a puppy she and local firefighters rescued from a drainpipe.**

Similar decreases in euthanasia numbers across the country reflect the hard work of people in the field, and the growing public concern for animals.

### A Change is Gonna Come

Those who've been in the field a while have seen the shift up close.

"Back in the late-'70s, early-'80s—and I think this was pretty common across the country—there was a large population of dogs roaming the streets," says Mike Oswald, director of Multnomah County Animal Services in Troutdale, Ore. "The work being done in the field was just trying to manage an incredible population of dogs. We didn't have sophisticated programs on adoptions or health care or outreach. It was just trying to handle the results of real overpopulation."

Oswald's worked for the county in different roles since 1977. He's watched the work of his department and other animal welfare groups in Portland pay off. In 1981, his agency took in 10,000 dogs; last year, it took in 3,400.

Other cities have seen similar developments. More people recognize the value of licensing and of spaying and neutering. More people keep their animals inside. National euthanasia estimates in the 1970s were between 12 and 20 million; current annual estimates range from 3 to 4 million. It's a tremendous achievement, and the trend downward continues.

While some states require shelters to report their annual intake figures, no national reporting requirements exist. It's still difficult to estimate what portion of euthanized animals are either too dangerous to place or too sick to treat; that pie chart would look different from one agency and one region to the next.

But it's safe to say this: Nationwide, the cats and dogs euthanized simply because the facilities holding them have run out of space still represent too large a piece of that pie. As long as they represent even a sliver, the work of animal welfare groups remains undone.

Where does animal control fit into this work? The majority of the animals entering shelters every year are still being taken in by public, municipal shelters—animal control facilities. The euthanasia crisis cannot be solved without the help of animal control. And as intake and euthanasia numbers have dropped precipitously, as the public clamors to see those numbers drop further and faster, the leaders of progressive animal control agencies have responded to the challenge.

### Protection, Enforcement, Compassion

One big shift has been the trend toward losing control—the word, that is. More and more agencies have dropped it from their names, opting for the more friendly "Animal Services," "Humane Investigations" and the like, or simply supplementing their names with "care," becoming "Animal Care and Control."

## Animal Control Gets Modern



**While many ACOs still wear badges, "dogcatchers" have come and gone. Even "Animal Control" is beginning to seem out-of-date—many departments have changed their names to "Animal Services" or "Humane Law Enforcement."** "We didn't 'control' anything," jokes John Snyder, vice president for the Companion Animals section of The HSUS, recalling his days as the head of an animal control agency in Alachua County, Fla. The department shifted away from the off-putting title early, changing to "Animal Services" in the early-'90s. Snyder thinks all agencies should be on that bus. "'Control' no longer describes what the organizations do, or should be doing," he says. "And if the term 'dogcatcher' hasn't died everywhere, it should."

But a name change alone won't solve the problems. Without progressive, people-friendly policies that justify the name change, animal control departments operating under kinder, gentler titles will still labor under negative public perceptions.

For many of the best agencies in the country, citation and enforcement—while still necessary tools—are far, far down the list of daily priorities. The aggressive, heavy-handed approach of the dogcatchers of yore, those wannabe SWAT types who treated animals and local citizens as enemies? They're fossils.

And let them petrify—Kumpf says the attitude wasn't helping people or animals. "Before, many officers didn't talk to people; they talked *at* people," recalls Kumpf. "It was, 'You're going to do this because I said so, and I'm the officer, and look at my bright, shiny badge.'"

For Kumpf, the educational tactic took root while he was still an officer in Virginia. The department took a new approach to fieldwork, issuing fewer summonses and focusing citations on the more serious cases. "I still issued citations and handled cases, but the ones that went to the judge were the ones that deserved to be heard, and the outcomes were consistently applied," he says.

He's carried the approach to his subsequent jobs. When he began instituting his friendlier touch in Dayton, he says, at first his bosses were concerned about a drop in citation-generated revenue—but they quickly saw the advantages.

"They were looking at me and saying, 'Your citations are dropping,'" Kumpf remembers. "And I'm like, 'Yeah, and do you notice I've taken in 2,000 fewer animals in the past two years, and our revenue's up, and our licensing's up, and our adoptions are up, and do you know why that is? It's because I'm not everyone's worst enemy anymore.' ... In 20 years, we really have changed the model for animal control."

### Public Servants, Public Trust

Animal control officers, after all, are public servants, Kumpf points out, and when the public's priorities shift, local government's approaches must shift with them. Once upon a time, what the public wanted from animal control departments was to be kept safe from dangerous dogs and the deadly diseases they might carry (and to make sure that they didn't step in dog poop on their walk to the grocery store).

Now, however, the public also wants to know that their local agencies are humane-minded, compassionate places working alongside other community animal welfare groups to stop animal cruelty and reduce euthanasia. Enforcement is a part of that, but education is often just as important.

"The public is no longer willing to accept the old catch-and-kill mentality," Kumpf says. "Most animal control agencies are governmental or quasi-governmental organizations, and first and foremost, our duty is to the citizens we're there to serve, and if the services don't match what citizens are looking for, then we have to figure out ways to provide services citizens accept."

Many animal control directors have progressive ideals and want to move forward with more people-friendly policies, only to find themselves stymied by bureaucratic systems and old-school thinking on the part of local government.

Remember Einstein's definition of insanity? It's doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results. Yet many municipalities—in spite of public pressure to change, in spite of a clear mandate—continue to underfund their animal services agencies,

yet are surprised when problems occur, euthanasia rates don't drop, and critics are vocal.

Any municipality that's getting criticized by the public for the state of its animal control department should start with a little self-examination. Local governments have long treated animal control departments like stepchildren, Snyder says, remembering the contemptuous attitude of various elected officials he worked for in Florida, some of whom would actually bark and meow at him when he came to them with requests. "Animal complaints, traditionally, are one of the most frequent calls to government from citizens, but animal control departments are not funded to reflect that," says Snyder.

"As a segment of local government, animal control directors aren't always in control of their own destinies. What they need to do is educate the next layer—the assistant county manager, the director of public works, the public safety director—that this is a lot more than dogs and cats," Snyder says. "It's a people issue, and it's an emotional topic with the public, and if it's not handled correctly, your phone is going to be lit up all the time. ... You can either put in the investment beforehand, or spend countless hours responding to negative media and all sorts of problems."

### From the Top Down

Citizens who want to see adoption rates rise and death rates drop at their municipal shelter should be at city council meetings delivering a clear message to their government representatives: Fund and support the animal control department.

Look into programs and approaches that are working, that are saving animals' lives in other communities. Stop treating animal welfare issues as an afterthought.

Animal control directors need to make sure their bosses get that message—and understand that it's a directive coming from the public.

You won't persuade government budgeters with a fuzzy-wuzzy approach, says Oswald. "Saying 'We all love animals and this is the right thing to do' doesn't always cut it in a public environment driven by finite dollars and who gets them, and you're fighting for those dollars." Presenting progressive animal control programs as an important element of community livability will get you further, he says.

Getting beyond the status quo takes an investment—and not purely a financial one. Many of the sources interviewed for this article emphasized how support from bosses and managers within the local government had helped them move their departments forward.

At Miami-Dade Animal Services, director Sara Pizano, D.V.M., says that it was the commitment of county managers that convinced her to pursue her current job.

Pizano has implemented huge changes at the agency, primarily to health management processes for sheltered animals; before she arrived, the Florida agency was suffering from regular outbreaks of infectious disease. The shelter had been the subject of extensive criticism from the public and volunteers, and the county hired a team from The HSUS Animal Services Consultation program to come in and perform a top-to-bottom evaluation.

To Pizano, then the director of veterinary services at the Humane Society of Broward County, the managers' choice to invest in the evaluation was a sign that, if she got the job, she'd have support and a mandate to make changes.

"I'd never wanted a county job. I never sought a county job," Pizano says. "The only reason I pursued the job was because I read that the county manager had asked HSUS to come in. And I thought, well, that's a person who wants to see change. And I was totally right. ... It's all the difference in the world."

### Learning the Ropes—and the Nets, and the Control Poles

Support from above can be a major catalyst for change in a department, especially when supporters work to ensure that department staff are properly equipped and well-trained. Good animal control officers aren't born, they're made—through experience, education, and strong mentorship.

Back in the bad ol' days, animal control officers rarely got the latter two items. They were simply sent into the field to obtain the former. "There were no

**A sheltered  
pooch gets  
some love from  
animal care and  
control officer  
Kandi Broadus  
and animal care  
provider Torbin  
Peterson at the  
Montgomery  
County Animal  
Resource Center  
in Dayton, Ohio.**



## Animal Control Gets Modern

rules, no training," says Snyder. "It was, 'Here's a truck, here's the keys, here's a rope, you're going to this part of the county to pick up strays, here's the ordinance, talk to people about what they're not allowed to do.'"

Snyder was often frustrated by the "Bubba mentality" of overbearing or ignorant officers who didn't understand the need for polite, friendly interactions with the public. Often he witnessed officers taking the very tacks that have helped perpetuate the dogcatcher stereotype. But he points out that no one should expect an officer to evolve if he's not given the opportunity.

Aside from animal control, "there's really no other segment of local government that puts people in the field to interact with citizens and enforce laws with no training," Snyder says. Many more departments require and provide training now, but back in the '70s, he says, "the parking meter technicians had more training than my staff. And they were putting a piece of paper behind a windshield wiper. ... Meanwhile, we're out there in the field, dealing with animals that have the potential to injure you, animals who are injured themselves and have to be handled humanely, and some unbelievably high-tension interactions with the public. We need people who can handle that, not just say 'It's the law,' from behind their dark sunglasses."

That Schwarzenegger-esque approach to animal control work is understandable; every day, field officers confront the worst face of humanity. Even in these more enlightened times, animal control can be dangerous,

depressing work, and the dark-sunglasses approach can feel like a zone of safety, emotionally and physically.

But it's not the best way to make progress. Dark glasses and a cold tone can throw up a wall, and many people will erect their own walls in response. And once those walls go up, many ACOs will find themselves forced back into an enforcement approach, because it's the only option left.

Progressive departments provide training that gives their officers better options. In Canada, officers with the city of Calgary's Department of Animal and Bylaw Services get animal handling training, but also receive education on handling the most unpredictable of critters—humans.

"All of my officers go through a 30-day course on conflict resolution, so they're certified as mediators and negotiators," says Bill Bruce, the department's director. The city pays the training costs. "What it does is increases my compliance, reduces the complaints I get, and has virtually eliminated things like assaults on officers ... But it has also helped us learn how to work with people better."

### Stepping Outside the Box

There are scores of excellent training options available to officers now, Snyder says, and trained ACOs have helped the field become more professional over the past decades. But if local managers fail to understand the need for ongoing training and fail to budget to pro-

An ad on the side of a public bus in Oregon lets citizens know that Multnomah County Animal Services is there for homeless pets—and that the public can get involved with the work.



vide that training, those cartoon dogcatchers may start creeping back into those agencies, dragging their nets and their knuckles.

An animal control department with a progressive director and supportive municipal leadership is bound to move forward. But while any elected official worth her salt can provide the animal control department with moral support, there are financial realities to contend with, and those realities can't always be fixed from within the confines of the government box.

Municipal animal control will always have to compete for dollars with other infrastructure needs and government-financed programs such as public schools, clean water, public transit, libraries, and roads. The public cares about animals, but many citizens also care that their car axles aren't damaged by driving over giant potholes.

In this era of shrinking budgets and collapsing markets, even the most supportive city or county managers may not be able to fill the money and manpower gap. A breach will likely remain between the animal control services that local governments are willing and able to pay for and the services the public wants.

The most progressive agencies are figuring out how to fill that gap, looking beyond the government coffers and beyond their own four walls to supplement both funding and staff.

There are ways for municipal agencies to fundraise, and besides, "just because you're underfunded doesn't mean you can't be progressive in terms of your attitude and your creativity and your openness to working with others," says Richard Avanzino, president of Maddie's Fund, the foundation that, since 1999, has invested more than \$70 million in community collaborations working to reduce euthanasia.

Many of the policies and approaches that can save animals' lives can also save money, Avanzino says. "I think a lot of the solutions have cost-benefit," he says. "If you can transfer animals out quickly to rescue groups and foster care, then you're going to avoid overcrowding, and you're going to avoid spending the money it would cost you to provide care and service to those animals until an eventual disposition."

### Two Secret Weapons

Lifesaving programs such as rescue, fostering, and animal transfer save money, and agencies can also take on animal problems in their communities by embracing two fundamental concepts that government departments often shy away from: engaging in external fundraising, and welcoming volunteers into the work of the department.

Many government departments don't realize they can raise money beyond what their municipalities provide them; others are aware of the option but don't



want to deal with the headaches it entails. And the idea of bringing in volunteers—who, in some locales, may be the same people who've been slingin arrows at the animal control department for years—makes some directors shake in their boots, fearing staff/volunteer tensions, an increased workload, or howls of protest from local unions.

But agencies that have learned to fundraise and embrace volunteers find themselves able to provide services that their government budgets would never have allowed. Many local governments will never provide the resources it takes to ensure that animals coming into municipal shelters are treated and housed humanely, and provided necessary veterinary care and extras like blankets, toys, and daily exercise.

These provisions—veterinary care beyond the most basic treatment, environmental and behavioral enrichment programs, prerelease spaying and neutering, aggressive promotion of adoptable animals—are fundamental parts of a community strategy to save animal lives. Other programs, like fostering, transfers, and trap-neuter-return programs for feral cats can play a crucial role.

Yet many of these are still viewed as "optional extras" by government funders. And while animal advocates should work to change that perception, they must also cope with its existence by finding ways to take their programs forward without relying solely on municipal funds.

At Fort Wayne Animal Care and Control in Indiana, director Belinda Lewis has learned to live with budget limitations without allowing those limits to curtail her agency's work. The agency took in more than 16,000 animals last year. The numbers are intimidating, but an enormous volunteer program—200 active volunteers contribute around 1,000 hours every month, helping with everything from welcoming adopters as they enter the shelter to cleaning kennels and providing exercise—

**Many municipal agencies formed to control dangerous dogs, and cats are still often neglected by municipal budgeters. Progressive agencies have found ways to generate revenue to ensure cats aren't left out of their work.**

# Animal Control Gets Modern

and savvy external fundraising practices have helped Lewis keep her agency moving forward.

"We run a constant balance between what is a government responsibility and what are the special things we want to achieve that a lot of government agencies aren't able to do," Lewis says.

## Parity for Cats

One task that some local governments continue to treat as an optional extra is the care and shelter of cats. Pounds—as some continue to call them—were formed as holding facilities for dogs, and the original role of animal control is summed up in the title "dogcatcher." Historically, dogs have been more of a threat to public health, and animal control was assigned to manage those dangers.

Some municipalities have never caught on to the fact that other species require management. Their buildings are designed to hold dogs. Their officers aren't assigned (and in some cases, aren't allowed) to pick up cats. And in some locales, municipal money provided to animal control is designated strictly for canines.

"Under Ohio law, dog licensing money can only go to programs for canines, so you have to find a whole other revenue stream if you're going to support cats," says Kumpf. "Many shelters in Ohio, at least government ones, don't handle cats at all. Cats are like ghost animals. ... There may be twice as many in people's homes and in the community, but from the perspective of government funds, they don't exist."

The continuing disparity between the funding for dog management and the funding for cats gives government agencies a clear mandate to look into external fundraising and building strong volunteer programs. A snapshot of euthanasia numbers around the country would reveal that many shelters that rarely have to euthanize a healthy, adoptable dog these days still run out of space for cats.

Municipal agencies should be seeking ways to help, says Snyder. "The fact that there are still animal control agencies that totally ignore cats is beyond my comprehension," he says. "Do they have the resources to deal with cats? Maybe not. Should they be helping with cats? Yes. Do they need to find a way to move that into their agenda and services? Yes. They need to work with other community groups—the cat fanciers, the SPCA, whoever—that are engaged on the cat issue and bring them together to figure out an approach."

Several of Fort Wayne's adoption and sterilization programs for cats have been made possible by the department's proactive fundraising.

And to glance over the line items in Fort Wayne's municipal budget is to get a perfect glimpse of a wider truth: Government money will not solve the euthanasia crisis.

It's not simply that cities and counties aren't paying for behavior enrichment or adoption promotions. When it comes to animal medical care, Fort Wayne pays for some basic vaccines, and for euthanasia drugs and equipment—and that's it. From a government funding perspective, euthanasia will always be the cheaper option.

## Deepening the Pockets of Animal Control

If Lewis depended solely on government funds, animals who arrived at her shelter with even minor medical conditions would likely be euthanized.

Instead, two funds that the department has marketed to supporters and built up over the years allow Lewis and her staff to create happier endings for the animals in their care. A directed donations fund, which allows donors to fund particular projects of their choosing, and another pool of funds that can be released only by majority vote of the city's animal care and control commission, add more than \$500,000 to the department's budget. Along with providing medical care to animals who need it, the funds have allowed the agency to market adoptions, hire a volunteer coordinator, and fund training for staff.

"We're doing, from a fundraising perspective, pretty much everything that a private nonprofit does," Lewis says. "[The money] just doesn't apply to our government responsibilities."

The irony is that one reason Lewis originally sought the government job was because she really didn't like fundraising. Having spent three years as the director of a small nonprofit, Lewis decided to go into animal control because she wanted to bring the humane ethic to government work—and because she figured there would be no fundraising responsibilities in a government job.

She could have run with that idea, but instead, she refused to let her dislike of fundraising hold her agency back. "When I got over to the government side, I thought, 'Gosh, there are so many things we could be doing. We've got to find a way to make money!'" she says. "We've been fundraising actively for about 22 years now."

Citizens will donate to animal control agencies if they're asked in the right way, but agencies must set up designated funds in a way that makes it impossible for local government to reallocate the money donated for animal care toward other programs.

Agencies must then market the program, and make sure the public knows that the money can only be used for the animals. "The biggest problem with people donating to government is that they think it goes into a general fund, which means it can be used to raze the left field dugout at the local ball field," says Kumpf. Make it clear that donations are going directly to ani-

mal care, and you'll see your funds—and with them, your ability to save lives—multiply.

Designated funds aren't the only option for government agencies, either. Many have found great success when local citizens have established "Friends of" groups. These incorporated 501(c)(3)s can serve as fundraising and support branches for the municipal agency, raising money and giving it directly to the department, or using the funds to pay for staff training or equipment that the city won't pay for.

### **Getting By with a Little Help from Your Friends**

Money-raising "Friends of" groups aren't the only folks animal control agencies should pal around with. Reach out to the private humane societies. Reach out to rescue groups and feral cat colony caretakers.

People working in municipal animal control are accustomed to criticism from the public, and often from other animal welfare groups. Developing a more open, welcoming approach to outsiders can be difficult, but to make real progress, municipal agencies don't just have to think outside their box. They have to welcome others into it.

When Diane Sauve took her current position as the director of animal control in Palm Beach County, Fla., one of the first things she did was start meeting with other directors of animal welfare organizations. She jokingly called the meetings the Mideast Peace Accords.

In the past, she says, "there was little or no cooperation or communication between our organization and the private groups ... generally there was mistrust. ... I got the directors of the shelters in the same room, and we all sat down for a day, and we talked." Mutual respect, she says, helped the relationships move forward; since then, the local shelters—all of which are no-kill organizations—have been helping her agency save lives by accepting animal transfers.

The meetings, Sauve says, helped the groups identify shared goals. "I think we have one of the best relationships historically with the private shelters in Palm Beach County; I can pick up the phone and call any of them and say, 'I have a problem and I need your help,' and they are there. And they know if they call me they'll get the same."

In Calgary, Bruce has taken a similar tack by establishing good rapport with a collection of diverse groups. His Responsible Pet Ownership group includes local rescue groups, a foundation that helps feral cats, veterinarians, the local humane society, and the kennel club.

Bruce doesn't propose any new ordinance without first reaching consensus with these stakeholders. Two years ago, their support helped the agency pass a cat-licensing ordinance to match the one it had long had for



MONTGOMERY COUNTY ANIMAL RESOURCE CENTER

dogs. Pet licenses are heavily marketed as a ticket home for pets, and since the program started, the agency's return-to-owner rate has increased significantly, its cat euthanasia rate has dropped to 18 percent, and the local humane society's has dropped to around 30 percent.

"We tap every resource in the community ... so when I go to the council with an ordinance change, what they're hearing is the combined wisdom of all the animal people in the community," Bruce says.

### **Finding Helpers**

Animals need every bit of wisdom and every bit of help available, and many animal control agencies have benefited from bringing in volunteers. Animal control will always be understaffed, and implementing a structured volunteer program can be the make-or-break element for an agency that aims to save more lives.

Many animal control agencies are unionized, and unions are often fearful that if employers allow volunteers, staff will be cut, says Jordan. And unions aren't the only barrier: Staff can be understandably resistant to change. "People are very protective of their turf, and it's difficult to accept strangers ... who may be well-educated, very enthusiastic, and may do great things, but are going to create more work for everyone."

**At the Montgomery County Animal Resource Center, director Mark Kumpf's citizen-friendly approach has helped his agency increase revenue, build community support, and drop euthanasia numbers.**

# Animal Control Gets Modern



**Volunteers at Miami Dade Animal Services have helped the agency provide more enrichment for their animals.**

**Here (shown left to right), volunteers Jessika Garcel, Izabella Bartoszuk, Marielos Baltodano, and Melissa Pimentel help out at a mobile adoption event.**

Jordan's agency in Seattle has gotten over the hurdles. Volunteers at his shelter help out with 18 different programs, assisting with everything from photographing animals for their online adoption profiles to organizing special events.

In Miami back in the early 2000s, the ongoing problems at the municipal shelter created a firestorm of criticism, largely from the volunteers who'd been working there. In the midst of the maelstrom, the old management decided to kick out the volunteers.

When Pizano came on board in 2005 and implemented a series of improvements, she felt safe bringing them back. Much of their criticism, she says, was justified.

"Now they get an hour orientation, a PowerPoint, handouts. They get a tour so they understand how we work and why we have to make the decisions we make," says Pizano. "[We explain that] we're trying to save as many as possible, and you need to help us do that. ... We're trying to stop euthanasia, but you need to respect the decisions we make here or you can't volunteer here."

By becoming more transparent and getting past fears of outside influence, municipal agencies can generate help and support from the community.

"The old, nonprogressive animal shelter is a sad and depressing place ... and easily loses volunteers," says Megan Webb, the director of Oakland Animal Services in California. "Animal services agencies that make an effort toward being progressive—even if they aren't there yet, but are working toward it—will attract and

keep more volunteers, who will help them become more progressive, which will bring in more volunteers, and it becomes a positive feedback loop."

## It Takes a Village

The people who come in the door may start out as critics, says Hilary Anne Hager, shelter activities coordinator for Everett Animal Services in Washington. But if you structure your volunteer program properly and resolve initial tensions between staff and volunteers, those volunteers will no longer feel like outsiders. "They're not the public anymore; they're part of the team," she says.

Hager and Webb have both noticed a fear among staffers that if the volunteers do more work, their own jobs might be threatened. That's not the way it has to be, they say. In fact, good volunteer programs often have the opposite effect: When volunteers do more, staff have more time to do more. Customer service improves. Animal care improves.

"What I always remind people is that when our volunteer program started ... there were eight staff people," Hager says. "And now there are 16, about to be 19, in the department, and there are about 130 volunteers. So clearly having a volunteer program has not hurt staffing levels or cost jobs."

To save more lives, public agencies need to recruit everyone they can, creating a stronger discourse between the department and the community it serves.

The history of animal control is a history of catch-22s, of reconciling the public safety function and the animal protection function. That tension may never be entirely resolved. But if you envision the work of humane societies and the work of animal control agencies as two separate circles, you must place those two circles on top of each other. They share more goals than ever before; more and more of their work overlaps.

Neither humane societies nor animal control agencies formed with the goal of ending euthanasia, and yet both are at the center of the current public debate about it. As society has changed, needs have changed. The new goals—to protect the public, save animals from suffering, and end euthanasia—require new approaches.

Kumpf is loving the new model. "Even though I can't say I'm doing miracles, I can still drop those numbers, and every animal control agency can do that if they commit themselves to making the changes in their way of thinking," he says. "You don't have to change your budget. My budget went down 9 percent, and my adoptions went up, so no one can give me the 'I don't have the money to do this' speech—because it's not the money, it's the motivation. If you have the desire and the commitment to make a change, any agency can change." **AS**