

Appendix 7

Comments by American Humane Association
on Humane Society Response to Appendix 1

January 2, 2002



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To: Pierce County Performance Audit Committee

From: Connie Howard, American Humane Association
Dave Carbaugh, Nebraska Humane Society

Re: Comments on Humane Society Response to Appendix 1,
Detailed Analysis of Field Services Issues

After considering the Humane Society's response, we made two minor changes to Appendix 1.

- On pages 2-3 of the response, the Humane Society says it classified picking up confined strays as a service request in 2000 and as a complaint in 2001. This presents a dilemma when reporting 2000 data (mislabeled in the response as 2001). On page 32 of the appendix, we have modified the table of 2000 data to show both kinds of classification and changed related references in the text.
- The Humane Society is critical of our use of the word "contiguous" about the dispatch areas. In the appendix, page 28, we have added a sentence to say what we meant: the dispatch areas overlap jurisdictions.

The material in Appendix 1 is important if Pierce County wishes to continue contracting with the Humane Society. The analysis of the truck logs, for example, raises questions about what is counted as field time under the contract. To make any progress on this issue, we believe it is essential to have a more specific contract.

- 1. The current contract is too general. In effect, the Humane Society can provide whatever services it wishes, respond to complaints by its own timelines, and demand that Pierce County should pay for all services that are provided. Pierce County should re-draft the contract, define the services, specify priorities, add reporting standards, and add performance measures if possible.**

2. Pierce County should consider whether Humane Society field time to respond to service requests, as opposed to animal control complaints, should be supported under the contract. In many cases, we believe that taxpayers should not support certain activities now classified as service requests.

The Humane Society objects to our calculating the field time in FTE terms (pages 1-2 of the response, referring to pages 28-31 in the appendix). The objection was unnecessary. The appendix clearly states that the FTE estimates refer only to time in the field, not at the shelter. As to documenting the field time for each driver, the information is available in the audit work papers for discussion by Pierce County and the Humane Society.

Another major part of Appendix 1 is documentation and analysis of the pending complaints on a particular date (pages 33-37 in the appendix). Most significantly, the Humane Society response says nothing about the complaint data, because the information is accurate. What can be done in the future to prevent large backlogs of complaints?

We believe increased funding to hire more drivers would be wasteful at this time. Many contract and management issues need to be addressed first.

A good first step would be to specify response priorities in the contract, keep track of the response times in the Chameleon system, and report the information on a regular basis in an agreed format. Another possibility is to adopt different response strategies to certain types of complaints, rather than expecting an animal control officer to "investigate" each and every complaint by a field visit. For first-time barking complaints, for example, it may be better to send a letter to the owner. If the barking continues, then a field visit would be appropriate.

We stand by the analysis and recommendations in the audit report. We hope they can become the basis for a revised contract with the Humane Society and improved animal control services in Pierce County.