

# **2001-2002 GRAND JURY REPORT**

## **Desert Hot Springs Animal Shelter**

### **Background**

The City of Desert Hot Springs constructed a 1,266 sq. ft. animal shelter in 1988 at a cost of \$30,000. The facility included 10 kennels and a feline room. In mid 2001, a new fiberglass fabric covered shelter was constructed adjacent to the main entrance at a cost of approximately \$6,300. It has a misting system for cooling purposes, drainage facilities, four prefabricated dog houses, and a plastic wading pool for the dogs.

Responsibility for this facility was first assigned to the City's Community Safety Division. In July 1999, the city's financial status resulted in extensive city-wide layoffs. The animal shelter was then placed under the control of the chief of police. In January 2001, control of the animal shelter was transferred to the city manager.

The annual operating budget in 1988 was \$36,000. By 1999, the shelter's annual budget had grown to \$141,317. In January 2001, it was increased to \$165,000. The 2001-2002 budget is \$194,850 with \$150,239 devoted to salaries and benefits of the shelter's staff.

The staffing has remained at 2 full-time employees since the facility opened. Salaries and benefits of these employees compare favorably with similar facilities.

### **Findings**

1. Animals are often abandoned by Desert Hot Springs' seasonal population. This results in a considerable fluctuation in the number of animals kept in the shelter.
2. Training programs and the monitoring of work performance, including written policy and procedures, are nonexistent.
3. There are no volunteer programs in place.
4. No one is scheduled to care for or feed the animals on weekends or holidays.
5. The shelter's computer system is inoperative. This requires all activities to be logged manually.

6. Personnel records of past and present employees, maintained in the shelter's office, are incomplete.
7. No water is carried in the animal control vehicle for the animals.
8. The original outdoor enclosure contains up to 14 dogs. It is covered with a torn tarpaulin, exposing the animals to the elements year round.
9. The outdoor enclosure's misting system, used to cool the animals, is inadequate.
10. There is a strong odor coming from the animal enclosures.
11. The interior ceiling heater has exposed wiring.
12. There is no street number or identifying sign on the outside of the animal shelter.
13. There is no notification system to inform owners of impounded animals.
14. The animal shelter has not taken advantage of funds by applying for available grants.
15. Animal food is not properly stored or organized.
16. The proposed Coachella Valley area-wide animal shelter project is not presently available.

## **Recommendations**

**Desert Hot Springs City Council  
Desert Hot Springs City Manager  
Mayor of Desert Hot Springs**

1. Provide a training program for the shelter staff and volunteers.
2. Repair or replace the computer system.
3. Seek out volunteers with computer skills to assist in daily operations.
4. Provide fresh water in the animal control vehicle for animals.
5. Repair or replace the tarpaulin covering the original outdoor pen.
6. Update and maintain personnel records.

7. Develop policies for notifying owners of captured licensed animals.
8. Apply for available grants to be used for ongoing education of the public in animal care.
9. Use volunteers, or current employees to staff the shelter and to feed and care for the animals on the weekends and holidays.
10. Install identifying signs at the entrance of the shelter.
11. Partner with other area animal shelters to handle the seasonal overflow of animals.
12. Investigate the feasibility of utilizing the proposed Coachella Valley area-wide animal shelter project, if it becomes available.