

Exhibit J

Harris County

HCPHES

Public Health & Environmental Services

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VPH Responses to Allegations in the Media

Freezer incident

(taken from an Incident Report submitted by Cathy Schuermann, former Animal Control Officer, on 1/11/10)

- On Sunday, 1/10/10, during the course of his duties, an Animal Control Officer (ACO) noticed a dog in the freezer was not completely contained in a body bag.
- He investigated and determined that the dog was still alive.
- Animal Control Officer Schuermann returned to the shelter, noticed the other ACO was upset and asked what was wrong.
- The other ACO explained that he had found the dog in the freezer.
- After their discussion, the ACO reported the incident to his supervisor and the weekend Kennel Supervisor properly euthanized the dog soon afterwards.
- Dr. Blackmar was notified about the situation the next day, Monday 1/11, by an Incident Report completed by Animal Control Officer Schuermann.
- Dr. Blackmar immediately launched an investigation.
- Based on the investigation, appropriate and immediate personnel actions were taken concerning those involved.
- Animal Control Officer Schuermann did not indicate that she had asked anyone to adopt the dog in her Incident Report and she did not contact Dr. Blackmar to ask to adopt the dog before it was euthanized.

Basset Hound (Original concern)

- Basset Hound (Hope) arrived at the shelter with an infected wound on her back leg that she'd had for a long time.
- She was placed on the "Rescueme" list that is sent to approved rescue groups daily.
- While in the shelter her wound was cleaned and she was given daily antibiotics and pain medication.

- We did receive a call from Basset Buddies informing us that they would pick her up after the 3 day hold, they did not ask permission to remove Hope before the 3 day hold expired.
- When the 3 day hold expired on a Saturday at 4:00pm (closing time), VPH staff stayed an extra 20 minutes to transfer ownership to Basset Buddies.

3 Day Hold (developed to address rescue groups concerns)

- State law requires that counties hold animals for a period of time.
- Harris County's regulation provides pet owners 3 working days to reclaim their lost pets.
- On June 7th Commissioners Court approved the use of a Temporary Custody (medical release) Agreement allowing approved rescue groups to pick up animals from VPH that require urgent veterinary treatment during the 3 day hold.
- As of August 10th only 10 of approximately 100 rescue groups have applied to use the Temporary Custody (medical release) Agreement by Commissioners Court.
- As of August 10th only one of the eligible animals has been picked up by a rescue group placed during the 3 day "medical" hold period as allowed the Temporary Custody Agreement.

Euthanasia

Context and History

The shelter design makes it difficult to comply with current shelter medicine best practices and laws related to euthanasia. Repeated requests have been made to expand and upgrade the VPH shelter. Commissioners Court ordered two feasibility studies (most recent in 1/2008) to determine shelter facility needs. Harris County purchased land behind the shelter for the purpose of future expansion.

Euthanasia in view of waiting animals –

- Supplemented the door with an additional visual barrier to prevent those outside the room from being able to see animals being euthanized.
- Staff have been:
 - retrained on the Texas Administrative Code related to euthanasia,
 - reminded of the importance of adhering to the code, and
 - admonished about the importance of keeping animals from witnessing the euthanasia of other animals.

Carcasses not in view of live animals –

- A tarp has been hung to divide the euthanasia room into 2 sections – one for administering the euthanasia drug and one as a holding area for unconscious animals until death can be verified.
- Staff have been:
 - retrained on the Texas Administrative Code related to euthanasia,
 - reminded of the importance of adhering to the code, and
 - admonished about the importance of preventing animals from seeing animal carcasses.

Quiet isolated place while dying –

- VPH has designated the area at the back of the euthanasia room – as far away from the hustle and bustle of the dock as possible.

Monitor animal for vital signs –

- The Texas Administrative Code does not require the use of a stethoscope to verify death of an animal. VPH uses other approved means of verifying death.

Intracardiac injections -

- Intracardiac injections are legally allowed on unconscious animals. On the rare occasion that VPH uses the intracardiac injection, the animal is already unconscious.

IRS Allegations

- Neither Dr. Blackmar nor any VPH staff are compensated by the board to attend board meetings or conduct Friends of County Pets activities.
- Commissioners Court appointed Dr. Blackmar to serve on the board of Friends of County Pets.
- Dr. Blackmar and VPH staff attend the board meetings and conduct Friends of County Pets activities as a part of their assigned work duties.

Miscellaneous Allegations

- Use of needles - New needles are used on each animal.
- Correct dosages by weight - Animals are correctly dosed by weight.
- Employees alleged to have been ordered to violate law since 2003 – VPH has not found evidence supporting this statement.

Corrective Actions:

- The appropriate staff have been retrained on the Texas Administrative Code related to euthanasia.
- Until a facility expansion occurs, temporary visual barriers have been installed to further ensure compliance with the Texas Administrative Code.
- Current quality assurance processes are being reviewed and will be modified as appropriate to:
 - implement any necessary process improvements and
 - ensure staff are trained and are complying with the Texas Administrative Code.