

READ AND CONSIDERED
DATE 1/20/26 BY Ch

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: *Animal Services in Sonoma County: Separate and Not Equal*

Report Date: June 13, 2025

Response by: Damien O'Bid Title: City Manager

Agency/Department Name: City of Cotati

FINDINGS:

[List numbers: F1, F3- F10]

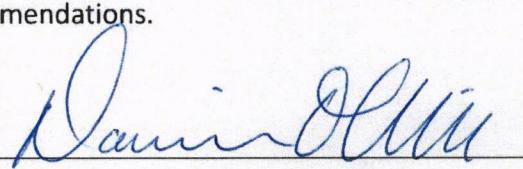
- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F1, F4, F5, F7-F10.
 - While we don't share all of the challenges noted in these findings, the City is supportive of greater cooperation and coordination among the cities and the County of Sonoma.
 - See the attached letter fully responding to findings.
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F3, F6.
 - F3. The City has no knowledge of coordination between SCAS and NBAS.
 - F6. The City of Cotati and Rohnert Park have aligned license fees.
 - See the attached letter fully responding to findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

[List numbers: R1-R2, R4-R5]

- Recommendations numbered: R1-R2, R4 have been implemented to the extent possible, pending further action by the County of Sonoma. R5 is not applicable.
- See the attached letter responding to recommendations.

Date: 10/20/2025

Signed: 

Number of pages attached: 3

(See attached PC Civil Grand Jury Response Requirements)

City of Cotati

Sonoma County, California



September 15, 2025

Honorable Judge Christopher Honigsberg, Presiding Judge
County of Sonoma
600 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Sent via email: gjury@sonoma-county.org

Subject: Response to the 2024-2025 Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury Report, Animal Services in Sonoma County

Dear Judge Honigsberg,

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, attached is the City of Cotati's response to the Grand Jury Final Report on *"Animal Services in Sonoma County, Separate and Not Equal The Costs and Consequences of Decentralization."*

R1. By November 1, 2025, the Board of Supervisors will direct DHS to establish an Animal Services Task Force comprising county, city, and shelter representatives to revisit the 2012 DHS Animal Services Report and recommend a governance structure for animal services that will: 1) provide county-wide oversight to ensure compliance with State Law; 2) standardize fees and engage a common licensing vendor to enhance public health and safety, licensing rates and revenue, and; 3) achieve economic efficiencies through shared resources. (F1, F3, F4-F6 and F9-F10)

Response: The City shares animal shelter services with the City of Rohnert Park. The City is also open to discussions with the County of Sonoma (County) regarding standardization and greater cooperation to improve the systems for animal services in Sonoma County.

R2. By January 1, 2026, each of Sonoma County's 9 cities will delegate one or more representatives to participate in the county-wide Animal Services Task Force convened by DHS. (F1)

Response: If the County convenes a county-wide Animal Services Task Force, the City will participate directly or through our shelter partners in Rohnert Park.

R4. By May 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors will direct DHS to launch a county-wide public information campaign in cooperation with the cities to explain the legal imperative and benefits of licensing pets. The campaign will commence no later than July 1, 2026. (F7-F9)

Response: Noted. The City regularly uses public information to raise awareness regarding the need for animal licensing.

R5. By November 1, 2025, each city contracting with North Bay Animal Services will inspect and evaluate the shelter condition, and evaluate the shelter operation and animal control services, to determine whether NBAS is complying with legal mandates and other terms of its contract. (F2, F1 1-F12)

Response: Noted. The City does not contract with North Bay Animal Services.

F1. Failure by the county and its nine cities to adopt recommendations in the 2012 DHS Animal Services Report has left Sonoma County animal service agencies operating without shared standards, communication channels, data sharing or oversight.

Response: The City is open to discussions with the County regarding standardization and greater cooperation to improve the systems for animal services in Sonoma County.

F3. A lack of coordination between SCAS and NBAS is an obstacle to a fully coordinated implementation of the county-wide disaster response plan for animal evacuations.

Response: The City, through DocuPet, shares licensing information with SCAS to facilitate county-wide disaster response preparedness.

F4. Insufficient funding and staffing make it difficult for some agencies to provide effective training for staff and volunteers.

Response: The City shares animal services with the City of Rohnert Park, which is augmented with City General Fund contributions to maintain effective shelter operations.

F5. Insufficient funding and staffing make it difficult for agencies to maintain websites and social media content required for effective public relations.

Response: Animal licensing is done through DocuPet, which directly performs public engagement, supplemented by direct public engagement by the City on the need to license animals.

F6. Having multiple different fee structures for animal licenses and services is confusing to the public and complicates billing and collection of license fees and fines.

Response: Noted. The fee schedules between the City and the City of Rohnert Park were largely aligned upon the implementation of DocuPet.

F7. Failure to achieve high levels of licensing in all government jurisdictions and provide access to shared information undermines mandated rabies control, makes it more difficult to return lost pets, and results in a loss of revenue.

Response: The City encourages all owners to license their dogs, with voluntary licensing of cats. Licensing data is shared with the County through DocuPet.

F8. Based on SCAS data, uniform adoption of online licensing management through DocuPet (or a comparable vendor) would increase county-wide licensing rates and enhance compliance with state law.

Response: Noted. The City uses DocuPet in a joint agreement with the City of Rohnert Park.

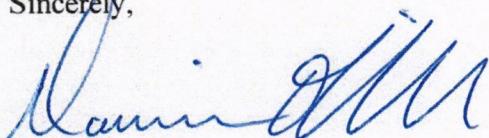
F9. Failure to promote the benefits and legal requirement to license dogs, and failing consistently to send license renewal reminders, contribute to low license compliance and loss of revenue.

Response: The City moved to DocuPet, in part, to ensure more consistent messaging to owners and greater overall compliance.

F10. Making centralized training resources available could enhance performance of animal services employees and volunteers.

Response: The City uses a shared services model with the City of Rohnert Park to promote consistency between our abutting jurisdictions. The City also supplements shelter operations with General Fund contributions to ensure a high level of operations.

Sincerely,



Damien O'Bid
City Manager
City of Cotati