

Approved: [Signature]  
Superior Court Judge

Date: 8/28/14

**RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FORM**

Report Title: It's 10 p.m. Do You Know Where Your Dog and Cat Are?

Report Date: June 25, 2014

Response by: August 21, 2014 Title: Rita Scardaci, Director.

Agency/Department Name: Sonoma County Health Services Department

**FINDINGS:**

I (we) agree with the findings numbered: 1 and 2

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: \_\_\_\_\_

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed;  
include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ have been implemented.

(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)

Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ have not yet been  
implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)

Recommendations numbered 2 \_\_\_\_\_ require further analysis.

(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a  
timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the  
agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of  
the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the  
date of publication of the Grand Jury report.)

Recommendations numbered 1 \_\_\_\_\_ will not be implemented because they are  
not warranted or are not reasonable.

(Attach an explanation.)

Date: August 21, 2014 \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: Rita Scardaci

Number of pages attached 2



August 21, 2014

Honorable Kenneth J. Gnos  
Presiding Superior Court Judge  
Hall of Justice  
600 Administration Drive  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

**FILED**  
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF SONOMA

SEP - 5 2014

BY [Signature]  
Deputy Clerk

**Response to Grand Jury Report: It's 10 p.m. Do You Know Where Your Dog And Cat Are?**  
**Report Date: June 25, 2014**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**R1. *Sonoma County Animal Services enforce a firm deadline for owners to retrieve their animals or relinquish them for adoption.***

**Response: Recommendation will not be implemented.**

Sonoma County Animal Services' (SCAS) primary goal is to return stray (or impounded) animals to their owners as soon as possible. The current SCAS return-to-owner (RTO) rate is 55% for dogs and 20% for cats. These rates are significantly higher than the national averages of 20% for dogs and 2% for cats. Most pets that are impounded in shelters have owners, but the reclaim process can be challenging due to several factors: Owners may not know to look in the shelter system for their lost pets, tools to identify and connect with owners may be inaccurate (tags have old phone numbers, microchips are not registered), owners may be unavailable (out of town), and owners may not have funds to pay reclaim fees. For these reasons, enforcing a firm deadline for reclaim or relinquishment would not be an effective strategy to reduce the amount of time animals are in the stray holding area. As an alternative, SCAS has taken the following steps to expedite the return of pets to their owners:

- 1) Developed a proactive redemption program called "Love Me, Find Me," which includes engagement of the community in social media and other sources to share information on lost and found pets, provision of an ID tag and microchip to all animals upon reclaim, creation of an online lost pet reporting tool for the public, and customer service training for all staff who take lost and found pet reports on the phone or in person. Increased marketing and communication efforts will help residents of the unincorporated County, the City of Santa Rosa, and the Town of Windsor know to contact us first when they lose or find a pet in our jurisdiction.
- 2) Networking with the other animal services agencies in Sonoma County to share lost and found pet information and to educate pet owners on how to navigate the shelter/jurisdiction system currently in place.
- 3) Provided training for the staff and volunteers of all local animal services agencies, rescuers, and others involved in handling lost and found pets. The July 23, 2014 training was taught by the national nonprofit Missing Pet Partnership and sponsored by SCAS.

- 4) Recently developed a procedure for determining financial hardship. Under the new procedure, low-income owners will be able to reclaim their pets quickly even if they have inadequate funds to pay reclaim fees.

SCAS will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these measures in improving the RTO rate, reducing the length of stay, and improving the outcomes for animals in our care.

***R2. Sonoma County Animal Services continue and expand its spay and neuter services.***

**Response: Recommendation requires further analysis.**

Animal Services' highly successful "Love Me, Fix Me" program performed 2,409 low-cost or no-cost spay/neuter procedures for Sonoma County dogs and cats in 2013 and 940 in the six months between January 1 and June 30, 2014. Rabies vaccinations and microchips are included at no additional charge. Demand for these services is high, and there is often a long wait list. The current backlog is over 400 pets.

At its current service level, the annual cost of the program is \$367,000. We typically hold three low-cost clinics per week at targeted sites around Sonoma County. Funding to continue the "Love Me, Fix Me" mobile spay/neuter program has been included in the FY14/15 budget. The program is funded partially with a grant from the Community Foundation and from private donations. In FY13/14, community support for "Love Me, Fix Me" generated approximately \$10,000 in individual donations and a \$40,000 donation specifically for cat spay/neuter surgeries.

Sustaining or expanding the program beyond FY14/15 will require the identification of ongoing funds. SCAS will conduct further analysis to identify options and opportunities to meet the high demand for low-cost spay/neuter surgeries. We will work with our community and veterinary partners to assess the cost effectiveness of our current model, identify potential funding sources for this much-needed service, and consider other methods of increasing access to low-cost spay/neuter surgeries. The Department will return to the Board within six months with an update on the recommended model for low-cost spay/neuter services and funding proposals needed to sustain and expand these services.

Signed:



\_\_\_\_\_  
Rita Scardaci, PHN, MPH, Director  
Sonoma County Department of Health Services

Date:

August 21, 2014