



MANAGEMENT LETTER of AUDIT OBSERVATIONS

August 20, 2021

Marylou Ward, Animal Control Officer Supervisor

An audit of the Animal Control Department was completed on August 13, 2021. The issuance of an official Audit Report is pending Management Responses. Internal audits can be carried out in all areas of County operations, with an audit focus upon improving operations by providing management with a reasonable assurance of whether or not internal controls exist and are effective in their area of operations. When internal control deficiencies are identified they are brought to management's attention along with recommendations for improvement, within the Audit Report. As a result of this audit, the Internal Audit Function will schedule a 90-120 Day follow-up with the Animal Control Department concerning progress made on addressing the High- & Moderate-level risks/findings indicated in the official Audit Report.

The internal audit process consists of a thorough review and understanding of applicable SOPs and policies governing operations and staff actions. Interviews are conducted with knowledgeable staff, direct observations are made of department activities, as well as the testing/reviewing of documentation that support purported activities. The audit focused upon the period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

The following comments, which have been or will be discussed with you, are intended to improve the Animal Control Department's internal control structure. Comments are presented here and not within the official Audit Report, as these items are viewed as beyond the immediate scope of the audit. As with all Management Letters, an official response in writing is not required, however verbal feedback to the internal auditor is encouraged. A few auxiliary items that were revealed, of which Animal Control Department leadership may want to stay abreast and address, are below (*Management Input is italicized*).

- **Pending Projects for Calendar Year 2021 -**

The Commissioner Report Priority Action Items January 20, 2021 mentioned “preparations/consultations to update/recalibrate/refit the existing mobile surgical unit/equipment as a viable working module for the spaying/neutering of county animals.” When the internal auditor inquired of progress for this item, the Animal Control Officer Supervisor did not yet have a timeframe in place for the completion of this project.

The Commissioner Report also confirmed receipt of “Solar Animal Repellers that the officers will place in high cat traffic areas, i.e., feral, unwanted, and/or nuisance cats.” According to the Animal Control Officer Supervisor these items have yet to be utilized.

The internal auditor received a copy of the Priority Action Items from the former Assistant County Attorney & Animal Control/Codes Enforcement Manager. If this report was submitted to the County Manager by the Animal Control Department as expected deliverables for 2021, the Animal Control Officer Supervisor will want to develop a timeframe for completing the spaying/neutering project, as well as a date to begin train-up and usage of the Solar Animal Repellers.

Management’s Response: *The Animal Control Officer Supervisor is actively working on the spaying/neutering project above. The project is pending a Veterinarian and the securing of a facility license for the mobile unit. She currently has no plans for the Solar Animal Repellers.*

- **Inefficient Recordkeeping –**

Animal Control Officers made the internal auditor aware of having to type the same data into the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley’s Shelterluv software, as well as into the Court Hold facility’s Shelterluv software system. An inquiry revealed that the officers simply need a second work email address to prevent having to retype the entries into both systems.

A conversation with Information Technology (IT) personnel revealed that a ticket needs to be submitted indicating which users need a second email address. It is recommended that the Animal Control Officer Supervisor submit a ticket to IT with the necessary information, to acquire the needed email addresses. Efforts made that will allow for a copy and pasting of the data from one system to the next could ease officer frustration while simultaneously improving efficiency.

Management’s Response: *The Animal Control Officer Supervisor will submit a ticket to IT by the end of September 2021, to secure alternate email addresses for staff.*

- **County Webpage -**

While reviewing the Doña Ana County Animal Control/Codes Enforcement web page, the internal auditor noted that the types of emergency incidents were the same as types of non-emergency incidents, without distinction. In addition, an external website link to the Animal

Services Center of the Mesilla Valley does not access the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley.

The Audit recommends making a distinction in verbiage such as *life threatening* or *exigent*, to distinguish between emergency versus non-emergency incidents. Also, the inoperable link to the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley should be corrected.

Management's Response: *The Animal Control Officer Supervisor stated that the website should be updated in the month of September 2021.*

- **Court Hold Policy and Procedures Updates -**

The Court Hold Policy and Procedures manual uses the language 'Animal Caretaker,' but the Animal Control Department currently employees a 'Live Evidence Technician,' while the county website recognizes the titles of 'Animal Caregiver' and 'Live Evidence Technician.' Also, the internal auditor noted a Rabies Submission Log and a Live Evidence Log within Court Hold records, but these documents were not noted within the Court Hold Policy and Procedures manual.

It is recommended that the Court Hold Policy and Procedures manual's language be updated as applicable to include the applicable terminology above. A copy of this manual should also be readily available to staff within the Court Hold facility.

Management's Response: *The Animal Control Officer Supervisor will update the policy's language by the end of September 2021.*

- **Desired Training -**

Interviews with Animal Control Officers revealed their interest in receiving such annual or one-time instruction as livestock handling, snake handling, de-escalation, chemical immobilization, and animal behavioral assessment training. If continuing education is required to attain or maintain certifications, Animal Control leadership should weigh the costs vs benefits of administering (or acquiring) such training to staff. Although SOP-required education should be a priority, this does not demean the benefits of providing discretionary training that could add value to the department as a whole.

Management's Response: *A new staff member will begin acquiring the necessary training on 7 September 2021; the required dead animal (large carcass) training was administered on 1 September 2021; criminal complaint training was completed on 2 September 2021; and there are plans to take advantage of future training opportunities to keep staff current on required trainings.*

Thank you for the attention given to the items cited above.


Ernest Harvin, CIA

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