



# Memorandum

**TO:** BUILDING STRONG  
NEIGHBORHOODS COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Sara L. Hensley

**SUBJECT:** ANIMAL CARE & SERVICES  
(ACS) CENTER STATUS AND  
POLICY BARRIERS

**DATE:** 12-05-05

---

Approved	Date
----------	------

---

**PURPOSE**

The following memorandum provides an update on the activities of the Animal Care and Services (ACS) Program in the last year. ACS is responsible for all domestic animal field and sheltering programs for the City of San José and the contract cities of Cupertino, Los Gatos, Milpitas, and Saratoga. These field services include responding to aggressive, injured, sick, or stray animals, dead animal pick up, barking dog complaints, vicious or dangerous animal permits, pet shop inspections, and injured or sick wildlife. The Animal Care Center provides shelter for stray and homeless domestic animals, reunites lost pets with their families, euthanasia for suffering animals as well as those that are neither reclaimed nor adopted, and placement of animals in responsible new homes.

The Animal Care Center opened to the public on October 1, 2004. This report details the activities of the first year (12 consecutive months) of operations at the new shelter and field operations for fiscal year 2004-05. The statistical information also includes the new service contracts with the cities of Cupertino, Los Gatos, and Saratoga. Currently, the Division provides animal care and services to approximately 1,100,000 residents in Santa Clara County.

**FIELD OPERATIONS**

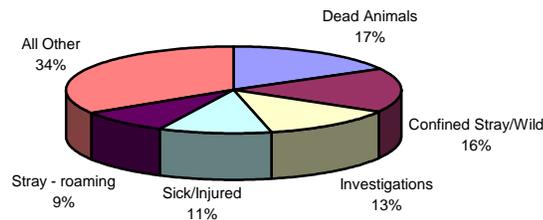
In FY 2004-05, ACS responded to 29,164 calls for service. These calls are categorized into three priority levels with Priority 1 (P1) calls being the most urgent (aggressive dogs, injured animals, police assists). Priority 1 calls typically represent 10-15% of the total service calls.

The performance measure for field services is based on the ability of the Division to respond to Priority 1 service calls within one hour or less. The target is to respond within that timeframe at least 85% of the time. The response time for the period of July 2004 through June 2005 was 89%.

<b>FY 2004-2005</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Total</b>
Calls for Service	8352	6434	6381	8259	29,426
Response (P1 – target 85%)	88%	90%	92%	85%	89%

The field services unit responds to approximately 50 different call types. The following chart, *Top Five Calls for Service (ACS) 04-05*, illustrates the five most common service requests. These top five call categories comprised 66% (19,422) of all calls for service on FY 2004-05.

**Top Five Calls for Service (ACS) 04-05**



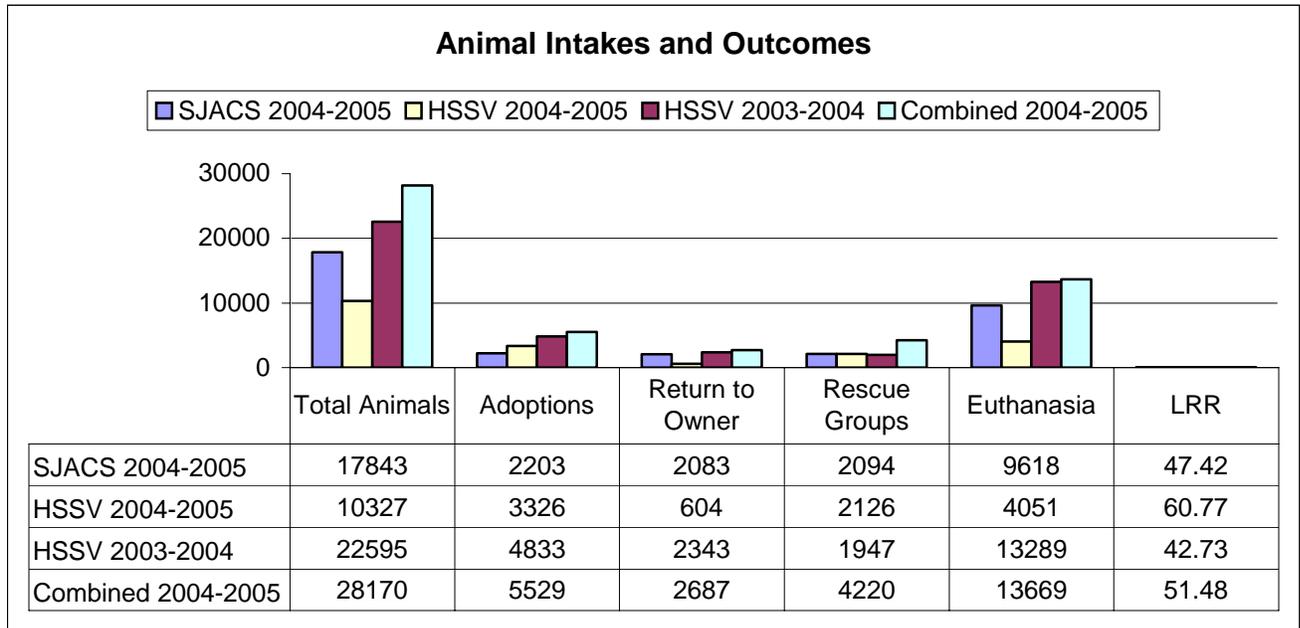
## **SHELTER OPERATIONS**

The Animal Care Center (ACC) has been in operation for twelve months, Oct. 2004 through Sept. 2005. The months of November through February are generally the lowest volume months in any animal shelter. March and October are transitional months and April through September is very high volume due to seasonal litters of cats.

*Total animals:* ACS received 17,843 animals in the first year of operations, which is 21% less than the previous year when San José animals were housed at the Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV). The reduction is primarily due to two factors: 1) In general, the ACC did not accept owned animals. Owned animals are animals that are surrendered by the owner to a shelter for a variety of reasons (moving, allergies, behavior, etc.). Historically, this can represent 20% of an incoming animal population. In the first twelve months of operation, the ACC accepted only 7% (1,289) owned animals; in 2003-04, 18% (3,650) of San José animals housed were owned. This was done to try to reduce the number of incoming animals and allow the limited shelter space to be used for stray animals. The remaining owned animals that the City did not accept were given to the HSSV and animal rescue groups. 2) The HSSV has more available space and resources to house owned animals because 80% of the animal volume is now housed by San José. However, in what appears to be a market shift or expansion, the two facilities combined to take in 25% more animals than in the previous year.

The following graph, *Animal Intakes and Outcomes – comparison*, details the number of incoming animals at the ACC in the first twelve months of operation. It also details the same twelve months for the previous year at the Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV) when the City of San José was contracting with HSSV to provide animal sheltering services, and finally, it shows the combined totals for both facilities during the first twelve months of ACC operation.

The City received and cared for 5,271 dogs and puppies, 10,936 cats and kittens, and 1,636 other animals (rabbits, chickens, reptiles, birds, small mammals).



SJACS 2004-2005, and HSSV 2004-2005 – 12-month period 10/1/04-9/30/05

HSSV 2003-2004 – All CSJ service areas

Combined 2004-2005 – combined activity for SJACS and HSSV, 12 month period 10/1/04-9/30/05

*Adoptions:* The Animal Care Center is performing well after a slow start. Although the adoptions at the ACC are only 46% of the total adoptions performed at HSSV in the previous year, the City program is continuously improving and expanding. Currently, the City is adopting the same number (sometimes more) of animals as HSSV, with evidence of increasing trends for the City. Public awareness, positive media and promotional events have helped this process. The combined adoptions for both organizations show an increase of 15% over the previous year. This is good news for the region because increased adoption rates produce direct downward pressure on euthanasia rates.

*Rescue Groups:* Area animal rescue groups have been more active in the last year compared to previous years. The combined number of animals rescued has increased 117% over the previous year. This can be attributed to the City’s policy of pursuing formalized relationships with 501c3 non-profit groups who have an interest in helping save animals. ACS has developed these relationships with more than 100 individuals representing 33 organizations in the Bay Area. Rescue groups focus on animals that need “above standard” care that the City does not have the time or resources to provide. These services range from minor/major medical care and behavior modification to care for the very young or the very old. Rescue groups find new homes for these animals through their own adoption programs.

*Euthanasia:* Although the number of animals euthanized at the ACC decreased (-28%) compared to the previous year, so did the volume of animals (-20%), which results in a net decrease in euthanasia of 8%. When ACS and HSSV are combined, the total number of animals

euthanized increased 3% compared to the previous year. However, it is important to recognize that this small increase occurred during a period of time when the live animal intake increased 25% (combined). As a result, the actual euthanasia rate for the area has declined. This is expressed as a Live Release Rate (LRR).

*LRR:* The Live Release Rate is an industry term that measures the number of animals that leave an animal shelter alive. This is determined by dividing the number of animals that were released alive (to their owner, adoptions, rescue) by the total number that were admitted alive. Based on national statistics for an open door public animal shelter, a very successful LRR for dogs is 70% to 80%. A successful LRR for cats is 60% or better. Total combined (dog + cat) LRR for the first twelve months of operation at the Animal Care Center improved 11% over the same period last year when the Humane Society provided contract services. For reference, the national average is 36%. Combined, the two agencies produced a LRR that was a 20% improvement over the previous year (51.5%).

It should be noted that the large volume of cats received by the City significantly impacts this measurement of euthanasia. A more detailed evaluation of the numbers reveal that the LRR for all dogs was 74% at the ACC and the LRR for all cats was 29%.

**REVENUES**

In FY 2004-2005 the Division collected \$2,180,000 in revenue. These revenue sources include animal licensing, fees and charges for services, board and impound charges, adoptions, and contracts for service with other cities. This fiscal year also included a reimbursement from the State of \$551,000. Cities/counties are entitled to reimbursement for some of the increased costs incurred under SB 1785 (1998), including veterinary care and increased holding periods for stray animals. These revenues represent 42% of the FY 2004-05 operating budget (\$5,188,000) for the Division.

The Division has also been helping local animal advocates form a 501c3 non-profit organization that will directly benefit the Animal Care Center and its programs. The primary purposes will be to develop additional funding for medical needs, the spay neuter clinic, and public education about responsible pet ownership. The non-profit group can also help to attract grants and donations to these critical services. As the agency gains more notice in the public and continues to work with the large network of animal rescuers, there will be opportunities for outside funding, partnerships, and sponsorships.

In FY 2005-06 revenues should increase in most categories; however, the State reimbursement is not expected to be as large. Depending on the amount received from the State the cost-recovery amount for the division could slip to the mid 30% range.

<b>Primary Revenue Sources</b>	<b>2004-2005</b>
Contracts	668,000
Fees and Licenses	961,000

State Claim	551,000
-------------	---------

## **POLICY ISSUES**

*Recent Legislation* –The State enacted a law, effective January 1, 2006, that enables cities and counties to adopt dog breed-specific ordinances to regulate spay/neuter programs and breeding requirements, provided that no specific dog breed, or mixed dog breed, is declared potentially dangerous or vicious just based on breed. ACS is currently working with the Animal Advisory Committee to review Title 7 of the San José Municipal Code for recommendations regarding amendments and/or additional regulations relating to pit bull breeding requirements, feral cats, outdoor adoptions, and standards of care. In 2004, staff proposed revisions to Title 7 regulating dangerous dogs, pet limits, and animal rescuers.

*Future development in Coyote Valley, North SJ, and Evergreen:* The Animal Care Center is currently large enough to handle the capacity of the communities it serves. The addition of contract cities in 2004 enabled San José to build 50% more cat holding space and a low cost public spay and neuter clinic. The clinic will help to humanely reduce the incoming animal population over the next 5-10 years as the City continues to grow, however, the increases in human population will affect the operations during the next 5-15 years and beyond. Potential opportunities for partnerships may exist in the future with the south county cities, or the County, for a satellite facility that could serve the Coyote Valley population along with the rest of the area.

*Feral cats:* ACS expends significant resources responding to feral cat issues. This past year, the Animal Care Center received almost 11,000 cats. Eighteen percent or 2,022 of these cats were classified as feral. Another 23% or 2,486 of the incoming cats were too young for the City to care for effectively, and the majority of those kittens were the offspring of feral cats. A feral cat is fearful of people and acts like a wild animal. Feral cats live near humans because food, water, and shelter are available. No one claims these cats and they are euthanized at the Animal Care Center.

The City Council has recognized that there are more humane solutions to the feral cat population issue and approved the construction and staffing of a low cost spay and neuter clinic for the public. The next step in this process is the development of policy that recognizes humane trap, neuter, and release programs for feral cats. These programs seek to reduce the feral cat population by limiting breeding and decreasing the use of euthanasia as the primary method for control of the population.

*Barking Dogs:* Barking dogs are the most common nuisance complaint received by ACS, with more than 1,500 individual complaints each year. Resolving a noise complaint involving a barking dog is often a difficult and time consuming process. A determination of a noise violation can be subjective. ACS attempts to balance the interests of the dog owners with the interests of the complainant(s) by asking the complainant(s) to track the frequency and duration of the barking. In addition to these noise logs, ACS interviews the residents in the neighborhood to determine if other residents have similar concerns and/or to eliminate the possibility that the barking may come from another residence. In addition to administrative citations, ACS can seek

administrative penalties through the administrative remedies process if the barking is continuous and persistent. If these actions do not resolve the barking issue, ACS may seek to have the noise abated by securing a warrant to remove the dog.

*Wild Animals:* Wild animals such as coyotes, pigs, and pigeons continue to concern residents, particularly residents living near the south and east foothills. ACS does respond to calls regarding sick, injured, or attacking wild animals. The mitigation of nuisance species such as feral pigs, coyotes, and pigeons remains largely unresolved in the City. These nuisance animals take advantage of the wealth of food, water, and shelter resources that are near homes and parkland. In some cases, the nuisance animal activity is destructive to private and/or public property

The expense to effectively control these animals can be high and often controversial. ACS is mandated (both State and City laws) to provide domestic animal control, quarantine, and enforcement activities. The City also provides limited wild animal services as a convenience for residents. The City maintains contract services with the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley (WCSV). WCSV provides rehabilitation of wild animals, education classes to the community, education and advice to individuals, and consultation on major wildlife nuisance issues. The City, however, does not provide mitigation, control, or extermination of healthy and nuisance wildlife. The County Vector Control Department, private pest companies, and the State Department of Fish and Game all provide various forms of resources to assist residents with nuisance wildlife.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The Division will continue to gradually increase programming and capabilities as it matures. In 2006, major programming will include the low cost spay/neuter clinic, license canvassing, dog-training classes, improved adoptions, targeted feral cat control, Municipal Code changes, and a foster program.

SARA L. HENSLEY  
Director of Parks, Recreation  
and Neighborhood Services