

PROGRAMS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

GWINNETT ANIMAL TASK FORCE APRIL 20, 2012

I. IMMEDIATE GOALS

1. Euthanasia Criteria
2. Euthanasia Methods
3. Feral Cats
4. Website

II. DESIRED OUTCOMES

1. Full-time Staff Veterinarian
2. Adoption/Rescue Coordinator
3. Temperament Testing/Training
4. Volunteer Program
5. Marketing

III. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Animal Advisory Committee
2. Shelter Director
3. Outsourcing
4. Miscellaneous Policy Recommendations

Overview

The Programs Committee was tasked with analyzing processes 'inside' the shelter, as opposed to county codes/ordinances or policies followed by officers on the road, and recommending improvements and enhancements to current procedures. We focused on specific items that we considered to be of the most urgent nature, while also recommending other, more broad programs that we believe will enhance shelter operations and improve the conditions and outcomes for animals housed there.

We considered four areas to be in need of immediate change, and will make our concerns in these areas known directly to Major Dan Bruno and Assistant Chief Brett West. The items that we consider to be urgent are:

1. Euthanasia criteria: Ending an animal's life should be a last resort, a decision never to be reached until all other possible outcomes have been exhausted. To ensure that this is the case, we believe that every euthanasia request must be signed off by (a) the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator, who will certify that every effort to send the animal to rescue has been made; (b) a veterinarian, who will verify that an animal's illness or injury is not treatable in the shelter, and (c) the shelter director, who will indicate his/her agreement that all other alternative outcomes have been exhausted and that physical space in the shelter is not available to prolong the decision.
2. Euthanasia method: Ending an animal's life must be performed with extreme concern for the levels of stress and discomfort experienced by the animal. Current methods of restraint and injection used with cats do not meet this criterion. Specifically, we recommend that cats be sedated with IM injection prior to a lethal dose being given, either IP or IV. They should be gently restrained pre- and post-injection to avoid injury. Employees should be re-trained in humane restraint techniques.
3. The feral cat population is underserved in Gwinnett County. A local non-profit organization is forming a team of volunteers and obtaining grant funding to assist with humane alternatives for these wild creatures at no cost to the county. Calls regarding feral cats can be referred to a team coordinated by Planned PETHood that will advise citizens on alternatives to delivering cats to the shelter. Feral cats delivered to the shelter will be diverted to this team for TNR or relocation.
4. The shelter website must be kept up-to-date to facilitate adoption and rescue. We recommend cross-training so that more than one ACO can maintain this data. Pictures should be taken and posted within 24 hours of intake, and removed promptly when animals leave the building. Adequate human resources must be made available for this; volunteers can be used.

In addition to these four immediately implementable items, we present the following five desired outcomes:

1. Cost justification offered for full-time staff veterinarian
2. Proposed job description for full-time Adoption/Rescue Coordinator
3. Improved temperament testing of animals, along with training of employees in animal behavior and temperament testing: Employees who are knowledgeable about animals' body language are less likely to have negative encounters with the animals, which puts both the animals and the employees at risk.
4. Enhanced Volunteer program to assist with smooth shelter operations
5. Marketing of shelter facility, services, and animals – to improve the public's perception of the value and effectiveness of this county agency, and to increase the amount of public interaction and the number of animals adopted from the shelter.

While not specifically in the purview of our committee, we found other items to be of such importance that we did not want to risk them being overlooked:

1. Recommendation for changes to the Animal Advisory Council
2. Qualifications for new Shelter Director
3. Potential outsourcing of shelter services, and/or re-assignment to an agency other than Police Services

I. 1. EUTHANASIA CRITERIA

Ending an animal's life should be a last resort, a decision never to be reached until all other possible outcomes have been exhausted. To ensure that this is the case, we believe that every euthanasia request must be signed off by three individuals:

1. The Adoption/Rescue Coordinator, who will certify that every effort to send the animal to rescue has been made.

It is clear to this Task Force that every effort is not currently being made, as the members of rescue organizations on the Task Force have recounted many instances of not being notified at all or of being given less than 24 hours to pull an animal. Our recommendation for a full-time Adoption/Rescue Coordinator includes examples of this.

2. A veterinarian, preferably a full-time staff veterinarian will certify that the animal has an illness or injury that is not treatable in the shelter.

In particular, the decision to end a life is frequently made because the animal is sneezing or has "a runny eye." While we are aware of the need to prevent the spread of disease in a shelter environment, most Upper Respiratory Infections are easily treatable with very inexpensive antibiotics. Many rescues will accept animals with URI's if given a chance to pull them.

3. The shelter director, who will indicate his/her agreement that all other alternative outcomes have been exhausted and that physical space in the shelter is not available to prolong the decision.

A visitor to the shelter has documented empty dog cages on 17 days during Feb-March-April, and found an average of 68 cages open daily (attached). Our inquiries about why dogs are put to death when space is available have met with two replies, neither of which is acceptable: (1) empty cages are used during the cleaning process to prevent the spread of disease, per shelter medicine protocols. In fact, these protocols are not universally agreed upon, and the size of Gwinnett's shelter allows for other alternatives. (2) some cages have to be left open for incoming dogs. Yet the number of empty cages on any given day exceeds the number of dogs received on an average day.

The ultimate goal should be to always ensure that shelter employees view the selection process not as: "We can end this animal's life because ...," but rather "We **cannot** end this animal's life until"

Volunteer Observation of Empty Dog Kennels at GCAC
February 1 - April 17, 2012

Date	Pod A 100-127	Pod B 128-155	Pod C 156-183	Pod D 184-211	Pod E 212-239	Total Kennels empty*	% empty*
Feb. ?	7	5	11	17	23	63	45%
Feb. ?	9	11	22	15	did not check	57	41%
Feb. 12	10	6	14	18	18	66	47%
Feb. 15	13	6	6	17	22	64	46%
Feb. 21	4	8	13	20	22	67	48%
29-Feb	10	7	10	17	20	64	46%
7-Mar	8	9	13	16	19	65	47%
9-Mar	6	6	4	17	18	51	37%
13-Mar	3	4	13	17	21	58	42%
14-Mar	2	7	16	15	24	64	46%
17-Mar	9	8	18	19	23	77	55%
21-Mar	7	6	8	20	21	62	45%
22-Mar	5	14	17	21	25	82	59%
1-Apr	12	8	17	16	19	72	52%
7-Apr	12	8	17	21	19	77	55%
13-Apr	19	13	16	21	25	94	68%
15-Apr	17	12	15	19	25	88	63%

* total # available in all pods: 139

I. 2. EUTHANASIA METHODS

An immediate, thorough review of training protocols for ACO's is in order. We have learned that, after initial training in euthanasia techniques, which is not always done by a veterinarian, ongoing review and training are non-existent. According to a National Animal Control Association guideline statement, "Euthanasia should be performed by a minimum of two persons and only by persons who are trained in humane euthanasia procedures and can demonstrate their ability in accordance with methods put forth in training approved by NACA, HSUS, ASPCA, AVMA or an accredited educational institution."¹ Shockingly, when a Task Force member witnessed euthanasia of animals during a visit to the shelter this month, a new ACO was allowed to perform her first-ever euthanasia with no training other than the verbal instruction given to her by another ACO.

The most urgent items that result in outright inhumane treatment involve cats.

1. Catch poles are not approved for use on cats. Per the Association of Shelter Veterinarians: "The use of catch poles for routine restraint of cats, including carrying or lifting, is inhumane and poses significant risk of injury to the animal; therefore they must not be used for such purposes."² While we were told unequivocally that catch poles are not used on cats at the shelter, our Task Force member did witness them being used in a manner that is nothing short of inhumane. Immediate training is needed in gentle, humane restraint techniques. It IS possible to humanely and safely restrain even a feral cat.
2. Intra-peritoneal (IP) injections are used to euthanize cats at the shelter. While this is an approved method, most experts recommend first sedating the cat with an intra-muscular (IM) injection of a sedative such as a mixture of ketamine and xylazine. This causes the cat to lose consciousness more quickly, after which a smaller dose of euthanasia solution (sodium pentobarbital) can be administered intra-venously (IV). The IM injection has the added benefit of being easier to administer, requiring less restraint. From a cost perspective, ketamine and xylazine are very inexpensive, and the lower dose of sodium pentobarbital will justify the cost of the additional drugs.

For both cats and dogs, the room in which their life ends is very important. Above all, "Animals should not be permitted to observe or hear the euthanasia of another animal, nor permitted to view the bodies of dead animals."³

¹ Disposition of Animals – Euthanasia, approved 8/24/10, revised 10/02/10 by John W. Mays, Executive Director, National Animal Control Association

², ³ Guidelines for Standard of Care in Animal Shelters; The Association of Shelter Veterinarians, 2010

Gwinnett County Animal Task Force

Recommendation for TNR Coalition

There are an estimated 46,650 free-roaming cats in Gwinnett County, Georgia. The ongoing debate over the most effective way to decrease colony populations calls for new politics. Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR) is a method used to humanely curb community cat populations with proven results.¹ TNR is the only proven cost effective solution in dealing with free roaming cats; eradication will never be successful, as it is costly to taxpayers and does nothing to lower the number of free roaming cats within our community.

With an average litter of four kittens born every six months, Gwinnett County could witness as many as 11,633 free roaming kittens born and survive each year.² Removing community cats through trap and kill tactics only creates a vacant niche to be filled by other stray and community cats, most of whom would still be intact and therefore capable of producing yet more kittens.³

Strategies for saving feral cats are different from those for saving healthy and treatable pets. Ferals need community-based programs that humanely reduce their numbers while allowing them to live out their lives side-by-side with the rest of us. Trap, Neuter, and Return (TNR) is not only humane; it is the most cost effective way to reduce the number of homeless cats. Programs built around TNR reduce births, save lives, and support community efforts to compassionately care for cats.⁴

A feral cat program can have a dramatic impact on the number of cats entering a community's shelters, and on the number of cats euthanized. In San Diego, for example, cat impounds and euthanasias at county shelters decreased by over 40% after the Feral Cat Coalition began offering free spay/neuter clinics for ferals. And, in San Francisco, cat impounds at the city shelter have declined 28% and cat euthanasias 73% thanks in large part to the SF/SPCA's feral cat assistance program.⁴

Organizations on even the smallest budget can start a feral cat program. It's as simple as a feral cat caregiver support group, volunteers, and humane traps. As your program grows, you can expand.⁴

The Task Force recommends partnering with a local non-profit advocacy group to promote TNR. Monies saved by not housing and euthanizing feral cats can be used for marketing materials to educate the public about the policy. Actual trapping, supplies, and spay/neuter will be paid for by our TNR Coalition Partners through grants and other private sources.

Short-term Goals:

1. Keep Feral Cats Out of the Shelter

- Stop accepting trapped feral cats and stop trapping feral cats: Feral cats are not socialized to people, and are therefore unadoptable. Since animals that are not candidates for adoption are killed in animal control shelters, do not even take in feral cats. Feral cats simply do not belong there. Avoid being the custodian of a cat you cannot service.⁵ (Gwinnett County has a head start here: our officers stopped picking up cats in January 2011.)
- Recognize eartipping: An eartip means the cat has been spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and is part of a feral cat colony. The Task Force recommends that all eartipped cats be returned immediately to their original location.⁵
- Facility protocol for unearrtipped feral cats should focus on Trap, Neuter, and Return. Take those cats to be spayed or neutered, and then return them to their outdoor home- their colony's habitat. Maintaining excellent records, detailing the location the cats originally came from, will make it easier to return the cats.⁵

Recommendation:

The Task Force recommends a Staff Liaison trained in issues pertaining to feral cats. Planned PETHood is willing to extensively train and cross train selected staff, free of charge, in the areas of feral cats, TNR, temperament and public relations. The Staff Liaison will have a proactive role in educating the public about alternatives to kill tactics for those who bring in feral cats they have trapped.

Recommended Alternatives to costly eradication at GCAC:

- 1) Educating the public about removing cats from their property; this will only attract new cats, especially if there is a feeding source. Instead of paying the \$25.00 owner surrender fee; the cat may be spayed/neutered at low cost spay/neuter clinic, such as Planned PETHood, for the same price. Volunteers should be available to transport cats to and from the spay/neuter clinic for clients who may not be able to do so.
- 2) For public who are insistent on cats not returning the location where they were trapped, a low cost spay/neuter fee should be suggested, instead of the \$25.00 owner surrender fee; and TNR coalition members should be contacted for placement of cats into a barn program.

2. Build People Power

Having a staff member/volunteer responsible for feral cat protocols and information within the organization is a great way to jump-start a TNR program. This person would be responsible for educating the rest of the organization on protocols, including how to respond to the public regarding feral cats.⁶

Recommendation:

While GCAC Staff are busy with variable tasks and duties; The Task Force recommends the creation of a Volunteer Feral Cat Liaison Position to be selected by the on-site Volunteer Coordinator to assist with educating the public and working with GCAC volunteers in the following areas:

- Educate and train volunteers and public on TNR protocol and trapping techniques
- Develop and maintain relationships with community cat volunteers and members within feral cat coalition
- Determine target areas for TNR based on phone calls from the public
- Keep critical data current with:
 - Name/address/ZIP CODE
 - Number of cats in colony
 - Call time/date
- Educate and train volunteers and public on how to manage a colony
- Educate volunteers in the GCAC volunteer program how to:
 - Answer phone questions regarding TNR
 - Answer questions when people come into shelter with/without trapped cat
- Management of materials-handouts
- Knowledge of ways to work with management on private property/authorization form for TNR
- Research potential barn program clients
- Assist with monthly TNR training classes at GCAC provided by TNR Coalition Partners
- Present TNR portion at new volunteer orientation once a month
- Evaluate the success of the TNR program through statistical analysis

All TNR volunteers will be given liability waivers by on-site GCAC Volunteer Coordinator during training or at Volunteer Orientation. Waivers will cover TNR and transport of cats to and from GCAC. Liability waiver is being created by Gwinnett County Legal Department.

3. Educate the Public about Outdoor Cats

The majority of callers reporting outdoor cats to animal control are looking for help, not exterminators. Callers can't ask for services that they don't know exist. Share educational materials and information in your shelter and online about feral cats and their inability to be adopted as well as Trap, Neuter, Return.⁵

Educate the public about your programs and other local resources for stray and feral cats such as low-cost or subsidized spay and neuter clinics and Tran, Neuter, Return programs. Let them know about humane deterrents to keep cats away from places where they are not welcome.

Recommendation:

- Let trained volunteers assist with calls and answer question when people come into the shelter with or without a trapped cat (See Help Desk Section in Volunteer Recommendation)

- Allow trained volunteers to promote TNR; during day to day operations, at special events, at monthly TNR training classes at GCAC and within the community.
- Link the GCAC website to Feral Cat Coalition Partners; giving public access to resources readily available
- (See Marketing Strategies Recommendation for a full list of outlets to Market TNR in Gwinnett County)

Long-Term Goal in Gwinnett County: Feral Freedom

When Best Friends approached Rebecca Guinn, director of LifeLine Animal Project, and Kathy Mooneyham, director of DeKalb County Animal Services and Enforcement, about starting a Feral Freedom program in DeKalb County, both women jumped at the chance to save the lives of community cats.

Community cats who are picked up by DeKalb County Animal Services officers are taken directly to the LifeLine facility in Avondale Estates which is only two miles from the shelter. Individuals who bring stray or feral cats to the shelter are given directions to LifeLine and asked to take the cats to that facility.

Why DeKalb County, Georgia

The need for community cat assistance in metro Atlanta is significant. According to the LifeLine website, “an estimated 30,000 feral cats each year end up in Atlanta’s shelters, where the only option is euthanasia. The taxpayer cost in the Atlanta area to trap and euthanize these cats is more than \$4 million annually.” LifeLine has an existing program dedicated to humanely controlling feral cat colonies. Utilizing the LifeLine Spay/ Neuter Clinics, Atlanta has sterilized more than 13,000 feral cats through TNR.

Feral Freedom is all about saving lives of community cats by reducing the number of cats euthanized in shelters. And saving lives is exactly what Kathy and Rebecca are doing. In the first two months of the program over 300 community cats have been fixed. This translates to a reduction in the feline kill rate from 78 to 26 percent at DeKalb County Animal Services.



The key to the success of Feral Freedom is to get the community’s support of



the program.

Rebecca says thus far the local community has been accepting of Feral Freedom and there have been few complaints about the program. She hopes that the community support will increase in the future as residents realize the amount of taxpayer dollars that is being saved because the county is no longer responsible for trapping and euthanizing feral cats.

Recommendation:

With the tremendous proven results that DeKalb has had with the Feral Freedom Project, we are excited about the possibility that Gwinnett County could be selected in 2013 to receive Feral Freedom grant funding from Best Friends Animal Society. Our 46,650 free roaming cats and the citizens they live among deserve it. Currently, we have an even higher kill rate (80%) than Dekalb did when they began the program, so we have a greater opportunity for success. We want to show Best Friends Animal Society that, with their funding and expertise, and the commitment of Gwinnett County’s BOC, the GCAC staff, volunteers and the community, we can implement Feral Freedom in Gwinnett County.

¹Best Friends Animal Society: Trap, Neuter and Return Cost Savings Calculator, at: <http://network.bestfriends.org>

²Levine, Jay, F Felicia B Nutter, Michael K. Stoskopf, Reproductive Capacity of Free-Roaming Domestic Cats and Kitten Survival Rate, Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, Vol 225, No. 9, November 1, 2004.

³Best Friends Animal Society estimate for Animal Control, at: <http://network.bestfriends.org>

⁴How to start a feral cat program by Leslie Wilson, 2001

⁵Feline Friendly Practices for Shelters/Alley Cat Allies, at: <http://alleycat.org>

⁶How to Build an Organizational Trap-Neuter-Release Program, at: <http://alleycat.org>

DRAFT

Best Friends Animal Society Trap, Neuter and Return Cost Savings Calculator

Supporting TNR Programs For Community Cats
Could Save Taxpayers in Gwinnett, Georgia Millions of Dollars

Estimated Cat Population of Gwinnett, Georgia

Estimated Number of Cats	84,820
Estimated Number of Free-Roaming Cats	46,650

Estimated Costs Associated With Discount Packaged Alteration and Return Per Cat

Additional Care for Sick/Injured	\$20
Packaged TNR Procedure	\$25
Estimated Cost of Discount Packaged TNR in Gwinnett, Georgia	\$45

Estimated Costs Associated With Feline Eradication Per Cat

Sheltering	\$40
Food/Supplies	\$30
Eradication/Euthanization	\$30
Estimated Cost of Eradication in Gwinnett, Georgia Per Cat	\$100

	5,750* (Free-Roaming Cats)
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John Dunham and Associates: New York

**NOTE FROM TASK FORCE: Savings are actually greater per our suggestion, because the "Discount Packaged TNR" would be performed by the public or by the county's TNR Coalition Partners at no cost to the county. If the county chose to participate in funding the TNR effort, savings are as shown.*

Gwinnett Animal Task Force / Programs Committee

Savings Analysis for Full-Time Staff Veterinarian

SAVINGS

Non-emergency vet care	\$ 51,379
Emergency vet care	\$ 1,167
Retainer for DEA license/training	\$ 3,000
Upcharge for euthanasia drugs	\$ 7,185
Spay/neuter fees to adopters	\$ 100,224
Spay/neuter fees to rescues	\$ 15,120
TOTAL SAVINGS	\$ 178,075

Comments

2011: 68,749 actual less 3,000 retainer & 14,370 drug cost
 2011: 2,334 actual; 50% may not be saved even with FT vet

14,370 - 50%

¹ 2011: 1,856 adoptions @\$60/ea (x90% to account for senior adoptions, promotions, etc)
 2011: 1,008 ave \$60 x 25% of rescues (rescue can opt for s/n)

EXPENDITURES

Veterinarian salary	\$ 76,422
Benefits	\$ 25,219
Training	\$ 2,500
Licensing (Ga vet, DEA)	\$ 800
TOTAL NEW EXPENSE	\$ 104,941

²

33% of salary
 includes CE credits and training for technician
 not every year; can break down to ave. yearly amount

NET SAVINGS \$ 73,134

NOTES:

¹ Currently \$60 for each adoption is collected in cash and passed directly to SHF. Eliminating the pass-through to a contractor would result in 100% of fees collected remaining with the county.

Since all expenses related to spay/neuter surgeries, with the exception of salaries, are paid by the county, no additional non-salary expense would be incurred for an equal number of surgeries.

Retention of 100% of spay/neuter fee will result in added convenience for the adopter, as one fee can be charged instead of the current adoption fee plus additional spay/neuter fee paid in cash. The net savings resulting from employment of a full-time vet could allow a reduction in total adoption fees, presumably leading to increased number of adoptions.

² We did not include a veterinary technician in our analysis. The shelter currently employs an Animal Care Specialist whose duties are very similar to the job we would describe; this position can be reassigned to work directly with the veterinarian.

Gwinnett Animal Task Force / Programs Committee
Savings Analysis for Full-Time Staff Veterinarian

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Gwinnett County Animal Welfare and Enforcement

Staff Veterinarian Position (full-time)

Objective

- To provide the best animal care possible through onsite daily care of shelter animals, reduced euthanasia rates, and reduced shelter disease while reducing bottom line costs

Requirements

- Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree
- Current DEA license
- Knowledge of shelter medicine principles and protocols
- Familiarity with “working dog” medicine to care for county canine officers

Duties

- Manage daily operations of the shelter veterinary services
- Spay/neuter animals prior to adoption and perform vaccinations and microchipping
- Educating staff on humane euthanasia in compliance with shelter euthanasia policy
- Responsible for final decision on euthanasia in cases for injury or illness
- Ensure adequate inventory and proper tracking of medical supplies, medications and all drugs, including DEA regulated substance
- Supervise proper medical record keeping for sheltered animals
- Provide training to officers to include administering medications, providing information on animal disease detection and disease control protocols and procedures
- Perform daily rounds, initiate and follow up on treatment plans.
- Examine and develop treatment protocols for sick/injured sheltered animals as well as impounded animals
- Assist staff in animal cruelty and neglect investigations including testifying in court
- Provide leadership by example for veterinary support staff
- Provide on-call assistance to shelter/road personnel in the case of sick or injured animals

Gwinnett Animal Welfare Task Force Adoption/Rescue Coordinator Recommendation

In an effort to revitalize the critical role of the Rescue Coordinator, the Task Force recommends redefining this vital position as the “Adoption/Rescue Coordinator.” While the current position only focuses on locating suitable rescues, it is critical for the staff in this role to also facilitate adoptions at GCAC as well. The Adoption/Rescue Coordinator must be a full-time position 100% focused on increasing rescue and adoption rates at our shelter. While GCAC rescue adoption rates have remained stagnant over the past three years, counties such as Dekalb, have shown a significant increase.

	Total Animals Impounded/Brought to Shelter		Animals Adopted		Animals to Rescue	
2005	All Animals	10432	2326	22%	1335	12.8%
2006	All Animals	9580	1850	19.3%	1492	16%
2007	All Animals	9662	1982	21%	1770	18%
2008	All Animals	10976	1906	19.3%	1201	12.2%
2009	All Animals	11383	2093	18.4%	1071	9.4%
2010	All Animals	9171	1583	17.3%	1016	11.1%
2011	All Animals	8224	1856	23%	1008	12%

The Task Force believes that these stagnant adoption/rescue rates clearly indicate the need for the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator to dedicate his or her time exclusively to adoption and rescue. With a highly dedicated individual, open and willing to implement new ideas while improving working relationships with established rescues and building new relationships in and out of state, the possibility for increasing adoption/rescue rates will increase dramatically.

While GCAC Adoption/Rescue Rates Remain Stationary, Others are Dramatically Improving:

While GCAC rescue and adoption rates have shown no appreciable improvement in the past seven years, counties such as Dekalb have shown a significant increase. Thanks to the efforts of its dedicated Adoption/Rescue Coordinator, DASE has seen a 325% increase in the number of animals transferred to no-kill rescue groups, from 506 animals in 2008 to 1,648 animals in 2010. Social networking plays an increasingly vital role in attracting rescue groups to the Dekalb facility, as does out-of-state transport; Friends of Dekalb Animals, a group formed exclusively to transport animals from DASE to no-kill groups located primarily in the northeastern United States, has helped DASE significantly increase the number of animals transferred to rescue groups for adoptive placement.¹

Find the Best Qualified Candidate for the Position:

Shelters in surrounding areas have hired civilians to fill their current Adoption/Rescue Coordinator positions, which have proven highly effective. The person filling this critical position at GCAC should have previous animal rescue experience, a high level of enthusiasm, effective customer skills, public relations and marketing expertise, excellent organizational skills, and computer literacy, including familiarity with social media. He or she must be motivated by a sense of compassion and a desire to find life-saving options for animals coming through the shelter, and persistent in seeking the best possible

outcome for each one. The Task Force would like to see a visionary fill this position and raise the bar for our sluggish Adoption and Rescue rates.

In an effort to aid the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator with his or her duties, we are recommending a volunteer leadership position be established to directly assist with all related duties as outlined in the Volunteer Recommendation Section. It is also highly recommended that a dedicated staff person be cross trained to continue the work of the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator on his or her two days off per week. When animals' lives are on the line, the Task Force believes the role of the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator is exceedingly critical seven days a week.

The Task Force recommends the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator's redefined role include mandatory training by a certified behavioral specialist if he or she is to conduct temperament testing. We have also been told that the Rescue Coordinator is currently in charge of deciding which animals are to be euthanized on a daily basis. The Task Force does not agree with this protocol and recommends the euthanasia selection process be made by (3) staff members, including the full-time veterinarian, the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator and a staff supervisor, as outlined in the Section I.1., Euthanasia Criteria.

Effective Marketing:

The Task Force believes that stagnant adoption/rescue rates clearly indicate the need for the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator to dedicate his or her time exclusively to adoption and rescue. This individual must have a firm grasp on effective marketing strategies. With a highly dedicated individual, open and willing to implement new ideas, while improving working relationships with established rescues, building new relationships in and out of state, the potential for increasing adoption/rescue rates will increase dramatically. The Task Force recommends general guideline(s) for adoption and rescue goals to be set forth with the implementation of the new shelter director:

Responsibilities:

- Ensure that animals move from Intake to the adoption floor in a timely, efficient manner.
- Assist with documentation of temperament, plan, progress, and reassessments.
- Assist in temperament testing with a certified behavioral specialist, unless otherwise trained by a certified behavioral specialist.
- Answer all correspondence relating to the adoption or rescue of all animals daily.
- Reach out to rescue organizations to notify them about animals at the shelter in a timely manner.
 - Animal Rescues do not spend their time calling animal shelters looking for animals. The A/R Coordinator must be diligent in contacting rescues within 48 hours of an animal's arrival. This would include, calling breed specific rescues and sending out email blasts to approved rescues, and delegating these tasks to the volunteer Assistant Adoption/Rescue Coordinator. After speaking with local rescue groups in the surrounding areas, it has been established that rescues have a greater chance of finding placement for shelter animals when given at least a (3) day notification period.
- Cultivate relationships with local & out of state rescues.
- Assist rescue groups when they come into the facility.
- Ensure appropriate interviews and approval or declination of adoption applicants.
 - There is currently no application/screening process in place for potential adopters. The Task Force strongly recommends the implementation of a basic application for potential

adopters to fill out on-site, similar to that of Dekalb County Animal Control, for the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator to review.

- Supervise intake photo process; if a photograph is not taken of an animal during intake or by road officers, it is the responsibility of the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator to ensure a photograph of the animal is taken and placed on the county website within a 24 hour period. Following this recommendation is critical for potential owner reclaims and locating potential rescues and adopters. The Task Force has learned of instances where animals' photos never made it to the website before scheduled euthanasia. This is unacceptable.
- Interview, select and train volunteer to fill role as Assistant Adoption/Rescue Coordinator.
- Cross-train appointed staff to fulfill Adoption/Rescue Coordinator duties during off days and vacation.
- Create written descriptions of the dogs to promote them for adoption on websites and cage cards, if volunteers have not already done so.
- Supervise internet websites such as Petfinder.com as well as the GCAC website to reflect current and accurate availability of animals.
- Provide Data Entry officer with information on new animals and animals to be delisted daily. It is the responsibility of the A/R Coordinator to ensure listings of animals have been removed once the pet has left the shelter. On the A/R Coordinator's days off, it is the responsibility of the Data Entry Officer to make sure all listings stay current.
- Keep "official" GCAC Facebook page current and manage content during business hours.
 - Although it is stated in the employee handbook that employees are not to visit personal websites during business hours, and Facebook is currently blocked on all GCAWE computers, the Task Force finds it necessary for the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator to be granted exception to this policy to allow for content management of the "official" Facebook page.
- Coordinate vet work that needs to be done for all pre- adopted animals, animals new to the adoption sections, animals going to rescue groups and on transports. Have paperwork ready in a timely manner for rescues/transports.
- Participate in radio and TV interviews focusing on adoptions.
- Assist ASAll (on-site volunteer coordinator) in supervising the planning, organizing and coordinating of special events to promote adoptions. ASAll will work directly with volunteers to delegate tasks.
- Develop and provide informational and educational materials to be offered to adopters.
- Provide follow up assistance to adopters to resolve problems to help lower return rates.
- Facilitate effective communication with kennel staff to ensure staff is aware of any and all pending adoptions, rescues, or holds.
- Attend meetings delegated by shelter director, including functions to promote adoptions; bring animals when appropriate.
- Maintain current data base of rescue organizations with contact info, breed preferences, and Georgia Dept. of Agriculture and 501(c).
- Maintain records in compliance with Georgia Dept. of Agriculture requirements.

The Task Force recommends that a recognized process of Temperament Testing be put into place at the shelter, and that employees receive formal training in animal behavior and temperament testing.

When done by a trained behaviorist, temperament testing has been shown to reduce the number of animals being euthanized in shelters. Currently at GCAC, no formalized animal behavior training is in place for the ACO's, and no actual temperament testing is being performed. Animals are euthanized based on subjective observations of ACO's who have never been trained on animal behavior.

One of the Animal Task Force members observed a dog being euthanized because it had been deemed aggressive by an ACO; however, when it was brought into the Euthanasia Room, he was wagging his tail and letting those present pet him. No effort was made to perform an actual temperament test on him, and this obviously friendly dog was unnecessarily euthanized. (ID # 22953, euthanized April 2nd, 2012)

It was also observed that a cat was incorrectly deemed wild and selected for euthanasia. Fortunately, a Animal Task Force member observed the cat in her holding cage and informed the ACO's that the cat did not appear wild. In this case, the ACO's took the advice of the Task Force member and did not euthanize the cat. (ID # 23069, April 2nd, 2012) There are other documented instances at GCAC where cats have come in that, during the initial temperament test were thought to be "wild," but after further review and improvement in temperament, were moved from the "wild" cat room to the adoption side. It's critical to the well-being of these cats that their evaluation be accurate.

The Task Force would like to recommend that unless a dog has presented a very obvious case of human aggression (lunging, actually snapping at a person), it must be temperament tested before being labeled as aggressive. It is also recommended that at least two people be present for the temperament testing, both for safety reasons and validity of the test.

We would also like to note that human aggression and dog aggression are not the same thing. Dog aggression is not a valid reason to label a dog unavailable for adoption. A dog aggressive dog should be offered to authorized rescues or an experienced adopter.

Following are some examples of recognized temperament testing principals by reputable animal behavior experts. This type of training is already available to ACO's; our proposal is to make this training mandatory and to utilize the volunteer resources that have been offered to supplement it.

Assessing Shelter Dogs and Temperament Testing

Compiled by: Partnership for Animal Welfare, Inc.
P.O. Box 1074, Greenbelt, MD 20768

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Introduction

Temperament is the general attitude a dog displays towards people and other animals; it is the combined inherited and acquired physical and mental traits that influence the dog's behavior. Temperament testing evaluates an individual dog's temperament through a series of tests that measure traits including stability, confidence, shyness, friendliness, aggressiveness, protectiveness, prey instincts, play drive, and self-defense instincts, and ability to distinguish between threatening and nonthreatening situations.

Some trainers, behaviorists, owners, breeders and shelters use temperament testing as a way to assess the temperament of an individual dog as a candidate for adoption, therapy or assistance animal work, search and rescue, or other purposes. Many adopters and rescue volunteers benefit from engaging a canine behavior specialist or trainer who has substantial, direct experience with assessing shelter dogs. Temperament tests can gauge attitudes and serve as a predictive tool for getting an idea of how the dog might act and react in various situations and in response to various stimuli.

While much of temperament is hereditary, it is also influenced and modified by the individual dog's environment -- which includes the actions of the owner in shaping the dog's behavior. This is why a puppy with dominant tendencies can mature into either a friendly, confident adult dog ... or a bossy dog who dominates other animals ... or a dog who uses aggression to get his way with humans and other dogs.

So while temperament testing can be extremely valuable, it is important to remember that while we may not be able to change an individual dog's genetic history, we can still help shape his attitude towards people, animals, things and places that he will encounter in life, in addition to managing the dog's behavior.

Assessing Dogs at Shelters and Rescues

Many dogs that are given up to animal shelters have never received training or guidance. Some never had the opportunity of a caring owner. Or the owner cared, but was ignorant about proper training and care of dogs, or had received misguided information. In any case, a multitude of given-up dogs are dismissed as 'problem animals' ... when in reality, the problems can be corrected and avoided by applying current knowledge about canine care and management.

In addition, the stressful environment of a shelter can aggravate and magnify behavior problems,

adding to the possibility that a pup or dog might be returned after being adopted.

Many shelter workers and rescue volunteers are now using temperament assessment to learn more about individual dogs. This effort can result in:

- * Identifying problems.
- * Addressing problems through behavior modification and training sessions. This doesn't happen at all facilities, but it is becoming more prevalent.
- * Information that helps shelter and rescue folks make better matches between dogs and potential adopters.
- * Knowledge that can be shared with adopters so they can plan to address and avoid problems, increasing the chance of a successful adoption.

Remember, however, that the stress of being in a kennel, losing his former family, and/or possibly enduring recent cruelty, trauma or neglect can negatively influence the outcome of a dog's temperament test. It helps to delay conducting tests until the dog has acclimated to the shelter, which takes at least three days. Depending on the environment of the shelter/kennel, it can take much longer ... and some dogs who could recover normalcy in a calm home just do not adapt to shelter life.

Another caveat: dogs of some breeds and backgrounds are reserved by nature. Temperament tests put substantial emphasis on dogs more willing and able to positively respond sooner to unknown people. So a downside is that a temperament test could weed out dogs who would make fine pets but who are currently a little shy or shelter-stressed at the time of the test.

Also, a temperament characteristic that may be undesirable for many adopters might be fully acceptable to others. For example, a dog who shows exceptional tolerance to people grabbing at him or making sudden movements would be ideal for homes with youngsters or for visiting hospitals as a therapy animal. But that does not mean that a less tolerant dog is abnormal or less adoptable, since his other qualities may be appealing to other prospective adopters.

There is controversy about how much weight temperament evaluation should be given in determining adoptability: while some canine authorities contend it is unfair to deny a dog the chance for adoption due to a breed-biased trait or trauma-influenced behavior that may be remedied with basic care, others argue that with the lack of decent homes for dogs, we might as well identify the best candidates for adoption based on their behavior in less-than-optimal conditions, for they are more likely to get and stay adopted.

Indeed, many rescue volunteers do not rely solely on temperament tests, and prefer instead to take the dog home for a few days (even weeks) to enable more of a real-world assessment. An individual dog may display more outgoing, friendly traits in a home environment; by the same token, a seemingly docile dog in a shelter may show more defensive or aggressive traits when in another environment.

FYI, many experienced rescue volunteers caution not to take any dog with a bite history (particularly human bites) or repeated aggression towards humans ... or who frequently displays erratic behavior even in nonthreatening situations, without a medical basis to the behavior (ie, in pain from being beaten or shot) ... or who tries to attack the temperament evaluator and other people.

Keep in mind the sayings that one size does not fit all and nobody's perfect. All living beings have some of what can be construed as behavior problems. All prospective dog owners should be advised that education and patience will be required on their part, no matter which pup or dog they choose. At the same time, shelters and rescues should attempt to gather as much information as possible on each dog, and provide it with potential adopters. Temperament assessment is a valuable tool, but adoption decisions should be based on other factors as well.

How to Assess Shelter Dogs

In the article 'He's Cute But Is He the Right Dog for You?' in the February 2004 issue of Dog Fancy, Jean M. Fogle explains how use of temperament testing enabled the Massachusetts SPCA to reduce the return rates of dogs adopted out.

Fogle has composed an excellent guide to assessing the temperament of individual canines. You'll find 'Assessing a Shelter Dog' in PDF form at http://www.shelterdogs.org/pdf/assessing_a_shelter_dog.pdf

What Testing Involves

Some guidelines for temperament testing follow, but be sure to see the links listed below for complete, essential information.

- * Information should be gathered prior to testing, such as age, breed/breed mix, sex, sexual status (puppy or sexually mature), reproductive status (intact or neuter/spay), and behavioral traits such as how friendly the dog acts to people, how the dog reacts to other dogs, whether the dog previously had any obedience training, how the dog reportedly behaved towards kids and adults in his prior home, is the dog on any medications, is the dog ill in any way, etc.
- * Know whether the dog has exhibited aggression, and what kinds of aggression, so you can plan accordingly.
- * The dog should wear a sturdy collar/leash during the testing so that the testers have a means of control.
- * You'll be taking some items for testing in addition to collar and leash; for example, toys, ball, food bowl. Disinfect the test items between use, since there could be illness somewhere in the kennel.
- * Have two people present at the test for safety's sake as well as for objective observation.
- * Ideally, the tester should be a canine behavior specialist trained in temperament testing. And he or she should not be someone familiar to the dog. Strive to act confident (but not overbearing) and neutral. Be aware that getting a totally objective evaluation is extremely difficult, since a dog's reactions will vary to some degree depending on the physical and personality traits of the evaluator. For example, a dog typically senses quickly whether a person is take-charge leader or a more submissive, deferential type. Dogs usually can also assess whether a person seems friendly and approachable, as opposed to threatening or aloof. This affects the responsiveness of the dog.
- * Find a controlled, calm environment for the exercises. This is not something to do in the middle of a crowd. Make sure you can use the room without interruption, disruption or distractions (ie, no loudspeaker announcements, cell phone ringing).

* If the dog shows signs of having not yet adjusted to shelter life, delay testing.

* Record observations about responses immediately after each test exercise.

* A wide variety of testing exercises are conducted. Exercises can include: how long it takes for the dog to pay attention to the evaluator (one test of sociability) ... reaction to being called by the evaluator ... reaction to being approached by the evaluator (friendly? tentative? fearful? neutral?) ... reaction to eye contact, and then being stared at by the evaluator ... responses to being petted in various places of the body (does the dog move closer, pull away, stand still, wag, relax, stiffen) ... reaction to sudden movements (curious? submissive? defensive? aggressive?) ... reaction to certain objects (such as an umbrella or cane ... does the dog panic, does he eventually recover, does he tentatively investigate) ... reaction to a sudden noise ... reaction to unusual tactile stimulation (such as walking on wire) ... reaction to having mouth touched and eventually examined ... reaction to an attempted hug ... reaction to having paws touched (per previous cautions, remember that a shelter dog might have endured injury, and a dog in pain may react defensively -- this is natural and needs to be taken into account) ... reaction to being led on leash ... reaction to being presented a toy and the degree to which the dog attempts to guard the toy ... response to food and any signs of food-guarding ... reaction to being coaxed into a lying-down position (accepting? willing? fearful? struggling?) ... reaction to the evaluator turning away and/or leaving.

Personality traits are also observed and recorded, such as whether the dog is confident or shy ... active, hyperactive or calm ... dependent or independent ... interested in people, things or the environment (some dogs are more interested in things than in people, which is a trait to note) ... tolerant or reactive. Is the dog accepting of physical restraint ... interested in playing (and what kinds of playing; does the dog try to catch, pounce, grab ... his willingness to release objects and interact with the person playing with him) ... given to chase moving targets (object, jogging person ... to gauge prey instinct). This is just an overview; see the links below for details.

* Note: it is good to test a dog's level of arousal to cats, since a dog prone to chasing a cat in play or due to prey drive should not be placed in a home with cats or other small animals. However, do not subject a cat to possible injury or even fear. Some people test the dog by gauging his reaction to a cat in a carrier some distance away.

* Problem reactions would include unprovoked and unwarranted aggression, extreme resource-guarding behavior, difficulty to recover after panicking, and strong avoidance, fear or aggressive tendencies towards things that would be common to everyday environments.

* Realize that time must be allowed for each exercise. For example, even a friendly dog may not approach the evaluator immediately. It may well take 5 or 10 minutes for a friendly dog to feel comfortable in the testing environment before approaching a person.

Questionable Temperaments - Adapting to New Homes

How much can a dog's attitude and sociability change after getting adopted into a caring home?

Canine expert Sarah Wilson (www.greatpets.com) provides insight from the canine's point of view. The disadvantaged dog, not understanding the concept of being 'given up', may be waiting for the old owner to return to pick him up. He might regard the prospective adopter as just one of dozens of humans coming by his shelter cage.

If the dog's underlying temperament is good, he will start attaching to his new family within two or three weeks. The new owner can speed things up by making a concerted effort new day to

bond with the dog, giving lots of quality time, playing ball, going on walks, and teaching basic behaviors such as 'look at me', 'sit' etc.

Some factors that can lead to delays: long or traumatic confinement in a shelter/rescue kennel. The overwhelming noise and activities, and being so close to other dogs (particularly those who are not neutered/spayed) can lead to anxiety and depression.

Also, a dog who was taken away from his or her littermates and mother at too early an age, before 8 to 12 weeks, may have trouble bonding and/or getting socialized.

Wilson suggests how you can help the dog while he is still in the shelter. Visit him several times. Bring healthy, some food rewards (make sure the shelter folks OK giving treats to dogs). Bring a safe toy. See if he starts warming up to you. Ask the shelter staff if the dog has begun bonding with anyone there.

Young Puppy Temperament Assessment

Much more important than puppy temperament testing is the socialization, education and environment that the owner should provide. However, some folks recommend assessing a puppy's sensitivity to various stimuli, using techniques such as those that follow, to get a general idea of a puppy's temperament.

* Clap your hands: does the puppy look at you? Does he approach readily, in a friendly manner? These are good signs of sociability.

* Make eye contact: does the puppy engage in eye contact? This is a good indicator of a confidence pup. In contrast, be concerned about a pup who will not look at you. This could reflect a temperament problem or a vision disability.

* Call to the puppy: a puppy who ignores attempts to get his attention may have a hearing or temperament problem. Disinterest in interacting with people can indicate a disease as well.

* Praise the dog: it's good if the puppy responds to verbal praise with some welcoming behavior, such as wagging his tail.

* Follow me: after playing with the pup for awhile, walk or jog away. If he tries to follow, that's a positive sign. Not following indicates the pup has an independent personality.

* Pet the pup: does he respond in a friendly or accepting manner? Or does he try to dominate you by nipping, growling or jumping at you? Does he reflect independence by trying to escape?

* Play with a toy: roll a safe dog toy, such as a ball, or a crumpled paper ball near the pup. But don't toss the toy at the pup. See if the dog will follow it. Encourage the pup to fetch the toy and to bring it back to you. A dominant-natured pup will fetch the ball, take it away, and resist letting you take it. An independent pup may show no interest in the toy; however, this could also indicate an ill puppy. A submissive pup may be a little fearful of the toy. A highly social pup will bring the toy back to you on his own. Normal behavior would involve the pup getting the toy, chewing on it, but allowing you to take it away. Willingness to retrieve can be an indicator of a dog's interest in training exercises.

* Rollover test: gently take the puppy and roll him onto his back. Gently hold him in place with one hand on his chest for 15 seconds. A dominant or independent pup will tend to resist the whole time. He might yip or try to nip you. A submissive pup does not struggle at all, and may

try to lick you in deference. Most puppies will resist for a few seconds and then contentedly accept your handling.

Note: this rollover test is not an alpha roll. Never perform an alpha roll on any dog of any age. It's an old technique told to prove dominion, but eventually found to hamper the human/canine bond in addition to leading to many bite cases.

* Picking up the puppy: lift gently by interlacing your fingers palms up beneath his tummy. Hold him in this elevated position for 30 seconds. Does he struggle actively for release, for a prolonged period, signaling dominance or independence? Or does he quickly acquiesce? How quickly he accepts and relaxes can indicate whether he's relatively submissive or closer to a typical pup. A submissive pup will attempt to lick in deference to your control.

* Touch a paw, then press between the pads gently. The responses you get and how quickly you get them can reflect a pup's tendency towards submission, dominance, independence, or a more normal temperament.

* Noise test: make a sudden noise. See if the pup responds with curious interest, fear, barking, aggression, or ignores it.

* For a detailed puppy evaluation program see the Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test link below. This approach assesses social attraction and social dominance, retrieving, following, restraint, elevation (being lifted), touch sensitivity, sound sensitivity and stability, and ranks pups in degrees as socially attracted, adaptive, submissive, dominant and independent.

Notes about puppy handling and evaluation:

* Make sure nothing fearful or negative happens during any puppy evaluation or handling sessions.

* Responsiveness indicates that the puppy is probably pretty adaptive and has great ability to bond. A pup who seems very nervous or fearful may not be a good choice for a home with children or with a lot of activity. However, he may respond very well to gentle and consistent training suited to his personality. A dog who tends to be aloof even when faced with stimuli may be of an independent temperament, and might be stubborn when it comes time for training, but that's not always the case. Again, keep in mind that these are generalizations, and puppy adopter will be in the key position to shape the pup's behavior.

* Many behavior experts do not place great emphasis on testing of young puppies; however, some agree that highly aggressive pups often turn out to be dominant and aggressive adults. If you're checking out dogs in a litter, you may want to engage the help of a canine behaviorist.

* It is important to handle puppies frequently and every day. Always handle them gently and speak in a calm, happy manner. Your goals are to teach them to accept being handled, that no harm will come from handling, that it's OK to be examined (this paves the way for acceptance of everything from grooming to vet visits), and to trust you as a benevolent leader. Puppy kindergarten classes are also highly recommended to help provide essential socialization opportunities.

Resources

Assessing a Shelter Dog
by Jean M. Fogle

<http://ebook-download.cba.pl/ebook/assessing-a-shelter-dog-by-jean-m-fogle.html>

Evaluating Temperament in a Potential Rescue Dog

by M. Shirley Chong

<http://www.shibaweb.com/rtemp.htm>

Assess-A-Pet Program

by Sue Sternberg

<http://www.suesternberg.com/programs/03assessapet.html>

Puppy Aptitude Test

by Wendy and Joachim Volhard

http://www.workingdogs.com/testing_volhard.htm

Temperament Testing Program at C.A.R.E. Shelter

<http://www.care-evanston.org/temperament.htm>

Matching Dogs and People: Temperament Testing Shelter Dogs

<http://www.canismajor.com/dog/sheval.html#Test>

American Temperament Test Society

<http://www.atts.org>

Tough Temperaments: Dominance, Aggression, Viciousness and definitions of other terms such as Submission, Temperament, Socialization

<http://www.canismajor.com/dog/behvterm.html>

Fostering a Rescue Dog

<http://www.shibaweb.com/rfst.htm>

Canine Drives

<http://www.canismajor.com/dog/drives.html>

Choosing and Getting a Dog

http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_ChoosingAndGettingAPet.php

Adding a Dog to Your Family: How to Prepare for Success

Mixed Breeds

http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_MixedBreeds.php

Book List - includes excellent books about evaluating puppies and secondhand dogs

http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_Books.php

For more Dog Tips and other information about pet care, adoption and the work PAW does, visit our website at: www.paw-rescue.org

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Excerpts from “Scaredy Cat or Feral Cat? Accurate evaluations help shelter staff provide optimum care” by Brenda Griffin, DVM

Intake of Cats to the Shelter

Intake of cats to the shelter Animal shelters are inherently stressful environments, filled with new stimuli, including noises and odors and other stressors that may only be apparent to the animals. Because of their unique biology, cats are particularly prone to experiencing acute stress and fear in novel environments, which readily trigger adrenaline release, preparing the cat for escape or defense. Fearful cats experience racing hearts and dilated pupils; some may be overtly aggressive or “teetering on the edge” of defensive aggression. Such responses compromise cat welfare and staff, and make it difficult to determine the cat’s true temperament.

Handling and restraint of cats of varying ages, personality types, social experiences, and stress levels requires skill, knowledge of normal feline behavior and signaling, finesse, and proper equipment. Most cats respond best to gentle restraint and detest being “overhandled.” Animal shelters should have protocols in place to minimize feline stress, beginning in the field and continuing throughout their stay at the shelter. Cats should be transported in individual carriers or traps that are covered so that the cat is not exposed, allowing her to feel hidden and more secure. Cats instinctively feel more secure when they can perch at a high point, and studies indicate that feline stress responses are significantly reduced when cats are housed in elevated cages compared to floor-level cages; with this in mind, transport carriers containing cats should never be placed on the floor, and cats should be preferentially transferred to the highest available holding cage. From the time of intake, care should also be taken to minimize noise, particularly that of barking dogs.

Special Considerations for Intake of Feral-Behaving Cats

Both feral and highly stressed tame cats may have dilated pupils and be stiff, tense, or completely frozen. They may tuck their feet under them and try to hide in the farthest corner of their enclosure. Some may appear nearly catatonic, while others may strike out defensively if approached, particularly feral tomcats. Once stressed, cats often remain reactive for a prolonged time and may become more reactive if they are stimulated again before they have been allowed a cool-down period. When cats enter the shelter exhibiting signs of marked stress and fear, they should be given strict “chill-out time” to acclimate to the shelter for at least 24 hours.

During this time, cats must have a place to hide and a place to perch; they will feel instinctively safer. Soft bedding should be available for comfort and to help them establish a familiar scent that aids in their acclimation. Their enclosures should be elevated and must be kept covered. After the strict “chill-out” time is over, evaluation should occur daily over the following three to four days. Care should be taken during cleaning procedures to minimize stress, and cats should be allowed to hide while their cages are quietly tidied and replenished as needed. Feral cat dens (available from Animal Care and Equipment Services/ACES) are ideal for this purpose; they can be secured from a distance so the cat is safe inside during cleaning procedures. Cats should be returned to the same cage, and in order to preserve their own comforting scent, only spot cleaning should be performed. If it becomes necessary to house the cat in another location, the den and towel should accompany the cat to ease the transition.

Evaluation Process

The overarching goal of the evaluation process is to allow cats the opportunity to acclimate to the shelter and “show their true colors.” Cats who are identified as “tame” can be moved through normal procedures for holding and adoption. Some timid or shy cats may receive special behavioral assistance—such as

assignment to foster care—to help them adapt to the shelter and prepare them for adoption.

Physical Features that can Help Distinguish Feral Cats

- **Ear tip:** Removal of the tip of one ear (usually the left) is the universal symbol for a sterilized free-roaming/feral cat. However, some cats with tipped ears may be tame rather than truly feral. Thus the presence of an ear tip alone should not be used as a designation: The ear tip only truly means that the cat has been spayed/neutered. It may, however, mean that the cat has a caregiver, and efforts should focus on retuning the cat to the colony. Take caution not to mistake frostbite of the ear for a tipped ear.
- **General body condition and other physical features:** Feral cats may be any age, size, or color; however, they are usually young (frequently less than 3 years) and are rarely overweight unless they have already been neutered. Prior to TNR, feral cats are most often lean and wiry. Unless they are ear tipped, tipped, feral cats should be assumed to be reproductively intact. Females may be pregnant or lactating, especially between April and October. A large abdomen on a female may indicate pregnancy. If mature, males will have tomcat urine odor, a wide neck, and big jowls. They often have scars on their face and ears, or torn earflaps. In contrast, “freaked out” tame cats may be overweight. Also, they may be older; geriatric cats are sometimes the most stressed cats in the shelter environment. They may be recognized by their lack of facial fat, which gives their faces a more angular appearance and mottled irises (the colored part of the eye) or a bluish color to the lens of the eye. These are subtle changes that may be recognized with experience.

Behavioral Features that Can Help Distinguish Feral Cats

- **Behavioral evaluation:** After the cat has been allowed time to acclimate, evaluation should begin. Whenever possible, caregivers should be assigned to care for the same cats on a regular basis.

Task Force note: Since ACO's are on a rotating basis, all cats under the 24-hour observation period should be checked by day/evening staff at least once per shift. Notes referencing the behavior of each cat should be read, taken into consideration and a detailed account of each cat's temperament under the "24-hour observation period" should be documented by the end of each shift ACO's shift.

- **Obvious feral or fractious behavior:** The cat may signal right away that he is teetering on the edge or is highly fearful. Further evaluation is unsafe and will serve to make the cat even more highly reactive. In fact, it could even delay the acclimation process if the cat is not truly feral. There is no need to evaluate further at that time. Return the next day to assess the cat's progress.

Task Force note: If fractious behavior is observed, ACO's should make a detailed notation and leave the cat alone, so that the ACO rotating onto the next shift is fully aware of this witnessed behavior. The ACO on the next shift should reassess the cat himself or herself for improved temperament. It is not to be assumed by any ACO at GCAC that if (1) ACO identifies fractious behavior; the cat is indeed "wild" and does not need further temperament testing if under the "24-hour observation period."

- **Obvious tame behavior:** Alternatively, the cat may come right up to the front of the cage and solicit attention by rubbing with his body, reaching with his paws or mewing. In this case, you may deem that it is safe to open the cage door and attempt to pet and even pick up the cat. If the cat is indeed easy to handle and tame, he can be transferred to general cat holding.

Mixed Responses

Many cats will respond somewhere in between “feral behaving” and “tame.” If the cat's pupils relax and do

not remain dilated, or if he looks away or his body becomes less tense, these may be signs that he is relaxing. Offer verbal encouragement and be patient. If the cat neither comes to you nor tries to escape or defend himself, you may consider slowly reaching your hand into the cage. Be prepared to retreat should the cat react in an aggressive fashion. You may be able to reach into the cage above the cat's head and slowly pet the head. If you are unsure if it is safe to reach into the cage, use an Assess-a-Hand. If the cat exhibits any aggressive behavior, discontinue the evaluation for the day and return the next day to evaluate his progress.

If the cat is relaxing, further evaluation can take place in a secure location where the cat can interact with you outside of the cage. If the cat relaxes when you gently touch and pet his head—and you deem it to be safe—you may slowly reach behind his ears, gently grasp the scruff of his neck, and pull him toward you on his side. Then, hold/hug him close to your body, supporting and covering him under your arm, and gently release him in the designated evaluation area. Ideally, you could sit with him on your lap, allowing him to hide in a towel or the nook of your arm. In this case, the cat may be fearful and stiff, but should be nonaggressive. Alternatively, a cat den can be used to transfer the cat calmly to the evaluation area.

As the evaluation continues, you will be able to assess his behavior: Does the cat sit on your lap? Does he respond to gentle massage? Massaging the top of the head in a slow, circular fashion may be calming (this is a known acupressure point). Does the cat warm up to petting, or does the cat remain stiff, frozen, or retreat from your lap? If the cat becomes aggressive, the evaluation should stop for the day. If he becomes highly reactive, he can be given some “chill-out” time in the pen before being transferred back to his holding cage.

If the cat jumps down from your lap, take note of his behavior in the evaluation area. As long as he is nonaggressive, continue to evaluate him. Is he interested in exploring the environment, or does he hide and retreat? Does he solicit attention from you? Make eye contact with you? Purr or meow? How does he respond to your reach and touch? Will he allow you to pet him? Only on the head, or can you stroke his back, too? Will he allow you to pick him up again? Is he fearful and stiff, or does he continue to relax? Try interacting with him with a cat dancer toy. Does he show any interest in play?

Be Proactive and Think Prevention

Understanding the importance of minimizing stress in cats and recognizing and responding to it are keys to maintaining proper behavioral welfare and maximizing the shelter's life-saving potential. Staff should be trained to evaluate cats beginning at intake and to educate relinquishers about TNR and community cat care and control. For cats determined to be feral, staff should make every effort to offer TNR services or referral to other programs. Staff should be trained to recognize indicators of stress in the cats who are admitted to the shelter.

Cats should be routinely classified at intake according to their behavioral characteristics. Suggested designations include:

- Friendly/bold (tame, outgoing, and solicits attention)
- Friendly/shy (fearful, but tame and accepts attention without becoming aggressive)
- Fearful/shy (shy or fearful, teetering on aggressive; can handle with caution)
- Feral behaving (frozen or overtly aggressive; unsafe to handle)

Staff should monitor cats daily to determine their “true colors” as best as possible and to watch for signs of stress or adjustment to the shelter. They should record their findings daily, noting trends and making adjustments in the care of individual cats and the population as indicated.

Shelters must always strive to provide the best possible care for all animals who enter their doors. This is true whether animals remain in the shelter for hours, days, or months, and regardless of their ultimate disposition. When it comes to scaredy cats and feral cats, best practices call for proactive stress reduction and careful evaluation for all cats, and neuter return for cats determined to be feral. All of these animals deserve the best care possible during their shelter stay.

Scaredy Cat or Feral Cat? Accurate evaluations help shelter staff provide optimum care By Brenda D.V.M.
**Recommendations made by Programs Subcommittee: Gwinnett County Animal Welfare Task Force*

DRAFT

Gwinnett County Animal Welfare Task Force
Programs Committee
Volunteer Program Recommendations

We are quickly becoming a Service Nation, with more people volunteering than ever before. Yet, GCAC is not tapping into this valuable resource. Also, by making the process exceedingly difficult, we are potentially losing many great volunteers.

Volunteers can provide huge benefits for animal shelters, offering critical assistance to expand the effectiveness of meeting the shelter's mission. It is extremely important to have an efficient Volunteer Program while matching the volunteer's talents and abilities to the job; placing volunteers where they feel needed and can make a contribution.

When your volunteer doesn't feel needed or appreciated, they will go somewhere else to donate their time. For instance, while observing other volunteer programs, one of our Task Force Members met an avid volunteer at Dekalb County Animal Control who is doing a wonderful job helping with the photography. This person lives in Gwinnett County and drives right by our shelter to volunteer her time at Dekalb, where she says that she feels appreciated and like one of the staff.

Many prospective volunteers have been turned off by the arduous application process. The application process can take anywhere from 1-3 months, during which time, volunteers may find other more accessible avenues to volunteer their time. This is topped off by the invasive fingerprinting process that many find extremely unnecessary and cumbersome. The Task Force agrees that potential volunteer candidates should have to pass the background check that is already in place, but having to be fingerprinted to walk a dog is excessive and sends the wrong message. The Task Force recommends the removal of the fingerprinting requirement for future volunteer applicants.

Setting Achievable Goals and Lessening Restrictions:

The Animal Task Force would like to set a progressive active volunteer outreach goal: which would include 50 trained, active volunteers within the first six months and an additional 25 volunteers by the end of 2012. Overall, we would like to see 75-100 active volunteers by the end of the year.

There will always be volunteers eager to help out, but are restricted because their hours are not conducive with those at the shelter. Keep volunteer hours flexible for those willing to volunteer on weekends and evening hours. There are volunteer tasks which can be completed in the evenings at home. For instance, one may work on educational material for outreach projects or promotional materials on their own time and forward to the ASAH upon completion. During our research into surrounding Animal Control facilities, we were able to verify that other agencies are utilizing their volunteers when the volunteers are available. This must be the standard at GCAC.

Networking shelter animals on Facebook saves lives and doesn't cost a cent:

With today's fast paced social media there is an entire network we would like to utilize in order to give the animals in our shelter the best possible chance to be reclaimed, adopted or rescued. A Facebook page will exist with or without the consent of the Board of Commissioners; in fact, one is currently being maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers and was created in October of 2011 for the Gwinnett Shelter after people noticed that no progress had been made in getting the webpage updated daily. In a short amount of time, the page has over 2400 supporters within the Facebook community and grows daily. There were 1,200 interactions with the page and over 97,546 people that it reached in the first week of April 2012 alone. The Communications Division might have a higher comfort level with the page being operated "in house" with content management. This is why the Task Force is recommending the immediate approval of an "Official" Gwinnett County

Animal Control Facebook Page. Maintenance of a Facebook page is an ongoing project that can easily be managed by volunteers with minimal supervision. Until an "Official" page can be approved, Gwinnett Animal Shelter should work with the current Facebook volunteers to maintain updated information on the status of all animals at the shelter.

There are currently thirty-two counties in GA posting their animals on Facebook, including: Athens-Clarke, Cobb, Cherokee, DeKalb, Hall, Floyd, Forsyth, Fulton, Cherokee and many more. There is no reason for a progressive county like Gwinnett to not do the same for the sake of our animals. Networking shelter animals on social media sites, such as Facebook saves lives and it does not cost our taxpayers a cent. It is inconceivable that GCAC has not been granted access to initiate this life saving measure.

Expanding the Volunteer Program:

1. The Immediate Assignment of an On-Site Volunteer Program Coordinator.

Currently, there is no on-site staff member at GCAC to monitor the volunteers and take an active role in coordinating the program. The current Gwinnett Police Volunteer Coordinator is in charge of 17 units and does not have time to focus adequate attention on the Volunteer Program at GCAC as needed. Nor is this staff member even in the same vicinity to offer support. Without a staff member on-site to manage the volunteer program, there is very little potential for development and growth. Thus, the Task Force is recommending that an ASAH take on the role of the official "On-Site Volunteer Program Coordinator."

While these duties currently fall under the job description of the ASC, we collectively agree these duties are more in alignment with the ASAH job description and recommend moving this item from ASC to ASAH job description: *"Coordinate volunteer activities and volunteer orientation to train volunteers on what their duties are at the shelter."*

The implementation of the "On-Site Volunteer Program Coordinator" is vital, as we have had several current volunteers comment at Task Force subcommittee meetings regarding their frustrations concerning volunteering at the shelter. They have stated that a great deal of time is spent standing around not knowing what it is they are supposed to be doing. The ASAH would be able to help tremendously with the fundamental process of keeping volunteers coordinated while providing valuable on-site management of our essential volunteers.

2. Implementation of two key volunteer leadership positions: Assistant Volunteer Coordinator and Assistant Rescue Coordinator.

- a. Assistant Volunteer Coordinator Position:** Candidate will be selected by the On-Site Volunteer Coordinator after an interview process. AVC is a volunteer leadership position which should be filled by a volunteer willing/able to commit 15-20 hours per week at the Shelter. AVC will report directly to the ASAH and will be responsible for, but not limited to; working on monthly e-newsletter, volunteer recruitment, assisting with on-site phone training, tracking volunteer hours and on-site management of volunteers, and other duties as requested by shelter personnel and approved by management.

Volunteers may be assigned to a "Team" in order to increase group effectiveness, for example:

- **Social Media Team:** taking digital photos and writing stories to update Facebook page.
- **Education Team:** volunteering to work on criteria/educational materials for outreach programs.

- **TNR Team:** Answering phones at help desk and questions at intake regarding TNR, assisting with trapping, transporting cats to spay/neuter clinic, researching barns for adoption/release, handing out TNR literature, recruiting potential TNR volunteers, educating public on benefits of TNR and managed colonies.
- **Special Events/Marketing Team:** to effectively market animals available for adoption, such as:
 - (1) *“What’s in a Name”* Marketing Campaign will include assigning names to all animals during intake process. The public relates more effectively to animals with names as opposed to those who are only identified by their numbers. This program should be supervised by the Adoptions/Rescue Coordinator in order to maintain efficiency.
 - (2) *“More than a Mug Shot”* Marketing campaign will focus on publicizing more adoption friendly photographs of the animals in order to entice potential adopters. Appealing photos can make the difference between life and death. For that reason, we recommend additional photographs be taken by volunteers with the dogs outside, in more natural lighting, with the addition of props. GCAC staff has instructed volunteers they are not allowed to take the animals outside for photos, though there is nothing in the SOP that states such.

Other duties that can be delegated to volunteers on a daily basis are:

- **Dog Walkers:** as stated in the SOP, each animal is to be exercised twice a day. Volunteers are encouraged to write the times each animal is walked on the pen card to show visitors animals are receiving adequate exercise.
- **Kennel Cleaning and Cat Socialization:** essential for the health and wellbeing of the animals. Volunteers should be encouraged to handle the cats as much as possible, as long as they are properly sanitizing.
- **Client Services:** Establish an “Animal Help Desk” to be managed by trained volunteers. While the ASA’s are very busy on the phones assisting a myriad of callers, there is another type of caller who is also in need of assistance that can monopolize the time of the staff. *“We’re all familiar with reasons people bring animals to the shelter or abandon them, what many people don’t realize is that many of these situations can be resolved in such a way that will keep animals out of the shelter.”*¹ If an ASA determines the caller needs this type of detailed assistance, staff can forward the call over to the Help Desk (if volunteers are available) to assist with these calls. Volunteers can give callers resources which have been approved by the shelter, to help reduce animals being dropped off for reasons such as lack of food, low cost spay/neutering, etc. Sometimes, all the caller needs is a bit of information and moral support. Nevada Humane Society’s Animal Help Desk Handbook is available free of charge.

- b. **Assistant Rescue Coordinator Position:** Candidate will be selected by Adoption/Rescue Coordinator after an interview process. ARC is a volunteer leadership position which should be filled by volunteer willing/able to commit 15-20 hours per week at Shelter. ARC will be responsible for assisting the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator with tasks, including, but not limited to; contacting Rescue Groups, returning phone calls, email correspondence, sending email blasts and assisting the Adoption/Rescue Coordinator with all related tasks.

Additional Volunteer Program Short-Term Goals/Initiatives:

The Task Force is recommending a series of goals that can be implemented in a very short period of time (1-3 months) to effectively manage the fragmented Volunteer Program which is currently in place.

- 1.) Mandatory Volunteer Orientation and Handling Training Session to be held each month for all new volunteers. Include a Volunteer Manual for each volunteer to clearly explain rules, guidelines and description(s) of each volunteer position, with mandatory training expectations for specified areas. Have new volunteers sign volunteer contract after reading materials. Volunteers who will have direct contact with the animals will be given an on-site mandatory training regarding animal handling by an experienced ACO or handler.
*Since March of 2011, there has not been (1) official Volunteer Orientation.
- 2.) Update GCAC webpage to include Volunteer Program Overview, with a list of all volunteer opportunities, along with ASAH and AVC's contact information. Include instructions on application process for new volunteers, dates and times of upcoming volunteer orientations.
- 3.) Schedule a "shadow shift" for all new volunteers to be done with an experienced officer or volunteer on their first volunteer shift. This will give volunteers a chance to get acclimated with shelter, staff and most of all, the animals.
- 4.) Make it easy to identify volunteers by getting t-shirts, aprons or name tags. The public are more inclined to approach individuals who are clearly identified. We do not want to lose potential adopters because they are unable locate someone to direct them and/or answer questions.
- 5.) It is important to stay connected with your volunteers or they may very easily fall off the radar. Send a monthly E-Newsletter via email to current volunteers, using easy and free programs such as mailchimp, including upcoming special events and specific volunteer needs. Staying in touch with volunteers on a regular basis keeps them active.
*Since March of 2011, there has only been (1) email sent out to current volunteers regarding specific volunteer needs.
- 6.) Schedule volunteer shifts and track volunteer hours using free online tools such as signupgenius.com. Approved volunteers will have the opportunity to sign up for shifts online and staff can easily track who is coming in each day. When you allow volunteers to show up whenever they want, you can easily have days where several volunteers are not utilized efficiently and other days when there are no volunteers at the shelter at all.
- 7.) Make the shelter a welcoming place. The Task Force would like to encourage the community to visit, even if they are not looking to adopt. The extra attention is good for the animals; the visitors are more likely to tell friends and family, which will create community support. We would like visitors to feel more than a sterile, stark environment while visiting GCAC. An easy way to change the atmosphere is by allowing volunteers to assist with maintaining bulletin boards. At Dekalb County Animal Control, there is a bulletin board in the intake area with photos of recently adopted animals with their owners, including a bulletin board with photos of their valued volunteers.
- 8.) Be sure to let staff and volunteers know to greet visitors with a smile, make eye contact and offer help with questions. How would you like potential adopters to be greeted when they are searching for their next family member? Provide places for people to sit and interact with the animals. The public should never feel like it is too much trouble for staff or volunteers to get an animal out to look at. Encourage the public to connect with the

animals, i.e., toys near the cat area can be used by volunteers or the public to engage the cats and a designated dog exercise area gives people an easy way to interact with the animals.

¹Available at: nevadahumanesociety.org/pdf/HowWeDidIt11-08.pdf

DRAFT

III. 1. ANIMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Programs Committee of the Gwinnett Animal Task Force endorses the bylaw revisions submitted by the current Animal Advisory Committee and offers the some minor enhancements, highlighted on the attached document.

It is our belief that causing this committee to report directly to the Board of Commissioners will greatly improve its effectiveness. The GAAC will forward only those recommendations that have been approved by majority vote. The Board of Commissioners will retain the responsibility to make final decisions on all recommendations submitted.

We suggest minor changes to the proposed members of the committee itself, agreeing with the AAC that an 11-member committee is optimal and leaving in representatives of the rescue community. We are hopeful that the resulting committee will give serious consideration to appointing advisors (Article VIII, Section 8) with knowledge of currently apropos issues such as specific dog breeds, i.e. "pit bulls," and feral cats.

It is also critical that this committee provide an oversight function to ensure compliance with the recommendations submitted by this Task Force and approved by the Board of Commissioners.

DRAFT

ANIMAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

CODE OF ETHICS

As a member of the Gwinnett Animal Advisory Council (GAAC) representing all the citizens in the county, I shall constantly strive:

To devote time, thought, and study to the duties and responsibilities of the GAAC, so that I may render effective and credible service;

To work with my fellow GAAC members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion that arises during vigorous debates of points at issue;

To base my personal decision upon all available facts in each situation; to vote my honest conviction in every case, unswayed by partisan bias of any kind; thereafter, to abide by and uphold the final majority decision of the council;

To remember at all times that, as a member of the AAC, GAACI have no legal authority other than that given in the bylaws; and to conduct my relationships with the county staff, local citizenry, and all others on the basis of this fact; and to refrain from communicating any confidential information to any outside source;

To resist every temptation and outside pressure to use my position as an GAAC member to benefit either myself or any other individual or agency apart from the total interest of the county;

To bear in mind under all circumstances that the primary function of the GAAC is to act as an advisory group to the Board of Commissioners; and that the administration of animal control and the conduct of the county business shall be left to Gwinnett County Animal Control, the Gwinnett County Police Department, the Board of Commissioners, as well as employed management and professional and support staff;

To welcome and encourage cooperation by citizens and organizations in the county; and

To provide, in a spirit of teamwork and a commitment to animal welfare, the most effective GAAC service possible to Gwinnett County.

BYLAWS

Article I. Name

The name of this council shall be the Gwinnett Animal Advisory Council, (GAAC) as created by the Board of Commissioners by resolution on _____20

Article II. Purpose

The GAAC shall be an advisory council for the purpose of studying, making recommendations, ensuring compliance with directives issued by the Board of Commissioners, and offering professional advice to Gwinnett County Animal Control and the Board of Commissioners on animal welfare and other animal-related issues in Gwinnett County.

Article III. Objectives

The objectives of the GAAC shall be:

- To provide a channel for dialogue between citizens and the Board of Commissioners;
- To bring about cooperation and coordination of resources to maximize animal welfare.

Article IV. Limitations

Section 1.

The GAAC shall have no power to enter into contracts of any nature nor to spend public funds.

Section 2.

In the absence of written consent, no council member shall be required to provide any sum of money, property, or service other than services described herein to the GAAC.

Section 3.

The GAAC shall have no power to bind any member or any citizen to any debt, liability, or obligation in the absence of any express written authorization from the party to be bound.

Section 4.

The exclusive authority of the GAAC is to gather information and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. The ~~AAC~~ GAAC has no independent authority to act on any of its recommendations. Decisions on whether or how to act on any recommendations submitted by the GAAC belong exclusively to the Board of Commissioners, Chief of Police, Animal Control Manager, and/or County staff

Section 5.

GAAC members are not County employees and have no authority to hold themselves out as such.

Section 6.

The GAAC shall have no power beyond those expressly set forth in these bylaws.

Article V. Membership

Section 1.

The GAAC shall be composed of eleven (11) members, as follows:

- One member representing the ~~Lawrenceville Kennel Club~~ licensed dog or cat breeding community;
- One member representing the feline rescue community in Gwinnett County ~~domestic feline interests~~;
- One member representing livestock animals;
- One member representing the canine rescue community in Gwinnett ~~Rescue community~~ County;
- One member representing the Gwinnett Municipal Association;
- One member representing the Gwinnett County Veterinary Medical Association;
- One member representing each of the four commission districts;
- And. One member representing the Commission Chairman.

Initially, each designated organization/interest shall submit their recommendation for appointment in writing to the Board of Commissioners for approval

All persons recommended must be residents of Gwinnett County. Only Gwinnett County residents are eligible for appointment to the GAAC.

The Board of Commissioners may reject any recommendation submitted and request the organization/interest concerned to recommend another member for appointment.

Following the initial appointments, by November 1 of any year preceding the expiration of a member's term, the Commissioner, or organization/interest represented by that member shall submit in writing to the Board of Commissioners the name of a new recommendation for appointment or a written request to renew the current member's term

Section 2. Term of Office.

Initially, all members will be new to the council. Therefore, to stagger membership terms, the odd numbered district representatives, the Gwinnett County Veterinary Medical Association member, the ~~Lawrenceville Kennel Club~~ breeding community member and the Livestock member will serve one year terms and the other members will serve two year terms. Thereafter, members shall each serve staggered two year terms so that the council will always have both experienced and new members.

The term of those serving in office when these by-laws are enacted will be terminated upon the new appointments.

Section 3.

Members selected will serve in non-paying volunteer positions.

Section 4. Voting Rights

Each member shall be entitled to one vote and may cast that vote on each matter submitted to a vote of the GAAC. Proxy voting and absentee ballots shall not be permitted and advisory members do not vote.

Section 5. Termination of Membership

If a member ceases to be a resident of Gwinnett County, that person shall no longer hold membership in the GAAC. The GAAC, by affirmative vote of two-thirds of all members, may also recommend (with reason or cause) the suspension or expulsion of a member to the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners.

Section 6. Transfer of Membership

Membership in the GAAC is neither transferable nor assignable.

Section 7. Resignation/Vacancy

Any member may resign by filing a written resignation with the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners. Any vacancy created on the council may be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term through the same selection procedure as specified in Sections 1 through 2.

Section 8. Absences

It is the responsibility of each member to inform the chairman when and for what reason a member will be absent from a meeting. In the event that a member is absent from more than 50% of meetings held in a calendar year, then that individual shall be replaced. It shall be the responsibility of the Chairman to inform the Commission of such need for replacement.

Article VI. Officers

Section 1.

The GAAC shall have the following officers:

- A. Chairperson;
- B. Secretary (to set agenda and keep group records); and
- C. Parliamentarian.
- D. Vice-Chairman

Gwinnett County government may provide a staff assistant to keep records for the county and to assist in setting the agenda.

Section 2. Election and Term of Office.

The officers of the GAAC shall be elected annually and may serve no more than two consecutive terms on the same office. Election shall be by a majority vote of

all members of the GAAC. The term of office for each officer shall begin immediately upon election. An officer shall serve until relieved of his or her duties as provided by Section I-5029 of the Code of Ordinances, Gwinnett County, Georgia or until he or she voluntarily steps down. In the event of an extended absence of either office, the GAAC may appoint a temporary Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Secretary to fill the office until the return of the absent officer or until the expiration of his or her term of office, whichever comes first.

Article VII. Duties of Officers

Section 1. Chairperson

- A. Preside at all meetings of the. GAAC
- B. Sign all letters, reports, and other GAAC communications.
- C. Perform all duties incidental to the office of Chairperson and other duties as may be prescribed by the GAAC.

Section 2. Secretary

- A. Act as custodian of any council records not maintained by the staff assistant provided by the county.
- B. Coordinate agenda items, records management, and recommendation submissions with the staff assistant provided by the county.
- C. Keep a register of the addresses and telephone numbers of council members.
- D. Compile an agenda at least 48 hours prior to the regular meeting and submit for additions, deletions, and/or approval by the Chairperson or by the GAAC
- E. Coordinate correspondence for Chairperson's signature on behalf of the council Members.
- F. In general, perform all duties incidental to the office of Secretary and other duties as may be assigned by the Chairperson or by the GAAC

Section 3. Parliamentarian

Ensure meetings are conducted in an orderly manner per Roberts Rules of Order and the Georgia Open Meetings Act.

Section 4 Vice-Chairman

The Vice-Chairman shall act as the Chairman in his or her absence. When acting as Chairman, the Vice-Chairman shall have the same powers, duties and privileges as the Chairman. The Vice-Chairman shall ensure meetings are conducted in an orderly manner per Roberts Rules of Order and the Georgia Open Meetings Acts.

Article VIII. Meetings

Section 1.

The GAAC shall meet regularly ~~once~~ at least twice per quarter-year.
Meeting cancellations should be made up within 30 days of cancellation.

Section 2.

Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson or by a majority vote of the GAAC.

Section 3.

A quorum shall consist of GAAC members and a majority vote of those present constituting a quorum shall be sufficient to decide all matters which come before the GAAC.

Section 4. Conduct of Meetings.

All regular and special meetings of the GAAC shall be conducted in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order or in accordance with an appropriate adaptation thereof

Section 5. Agenda

The Chairman shall determine the meeting agenda. Members of the Gwinnett Animal Advisory Council may request the addition of agenda items by contacting either the Chairman or the Director at least three (3) calendar days prior to a meeting. All matters to be considered and/or acted upon by the Gwinnett Animal Advisory Board shall appear on the agenda.

Section 6. Meetings Open to the Public

Regular and special meetings of the GAAC shall be open to the public as required by the Georgia Open Meetings Act. Notification of meetings and cancellations is to be posted on the Gwinnett County website seven (7) calendar days preceding the meeting date. The agenda shall be given to the Director of Animal Control who will have it posted on the Gwinnett County website.

Section 7. Recommendations

The AAC shall only submit recommendations which have been approved by a majority vote of the GAAC. All recommendations for action must be submitted in writing to the Board of Commissioners.

Section 8. Advisors

The GAAC, with majority vote, may appoint advisors to provide expertise in specific areas being addressed by the GAAC. The purpose of these advisors shall be to provide information about issues in their fields of

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expertise and to facilitate information-gathering and recommendations by the GAAC.

Article IX. Amendments to the Bylaws

Pursuant to the Resolution creating the GAAC, these bylaws may only be amended by resolution of the Board of Commissioners. Any requests to amend the bylaws must be submitted in writing, signed by the Chairperson, and addressed to the County Administrator.

DRAFT

Restructuring: A Critical Life Saving Initiative

The Animal Task Force has identified numerous areas for improvement and made recommendations for implementing much needed best practices to increase efficiencies, quality of care for animals and dramatically increase life saving.

During the course of the Task Force evaluation, however, it became evident that any future progress at animal control and services is complicated by Gwinnett Police Department procedures that impact the shelter's ability to effectively respond to the demands of caring for live animals and enforcing county animal control ordinances.

Current management under the Gwinnett Police Department has failed to put saving lives at the top of its mission. Staff accountability, effective life-saving programs, and good relations with the community currently are lacking. The management team, directly led by a Police Department representative until very recently, has shown so little interest in shelter operations that standard operating procedures have been allowed to become woefully out of date.

Running a successful animal services operation requires both governmental oversight in providing animal services that protect the community and a professionally staffed shelter to provide housing and treatment for the animals in its care while promoting animal welfare policies that promote responsible pet ownership.

Therefore, the Task Force believes it to be in the best interest of County operations overall for shelter management to be removed from the jurisdiction of the Police Department. While this is a transition that will obviously require study in order to be properly performed, and we are aware that many budgetary and structural issues will need to be addressed, this division has been performed successfully in many jurisdictions, including locally in both Fulton and Walton counties.

Stated briefly, the proposed structure is as follows:

- The Police Department would retain oversight of Animal Control operations, including road patrols, code enforcement, and overseeing animal cruelty, neglect and court cases.
- Animals admitted to the shelter would become the responsibility of Sheltering Operations, including strays waiting for owner reclaims and all other animals made available for adoption or rescue.
- While Animal Control operations will continue to report to the Police Department, we see two options for Sheltering Operations: (1) reporting directly to the County Administrator or (2) total privatization to an independent organization. Either way, Shelter Operations will be better equipped to enlist a professional team of animal care specialists and to prioritize animal care, while leaving enforcement to the experts in the Police Department.

One area in particular that has caused much recent discussion and would be made easier by removing Sheltering Operations from the Police Department is the approval and management of volunteers. Not having volunteers in an official Police capacity will eliminate the cumbersome requirements of background checks, fingerprinting, and the requirement that they conform to department policies.

In summary, Gwinnett needs a shelter management model that not only meets the expectations of the community but also puts into place programs that will reduce the cost of animal control and services while putting an end to the killing of healthy dogs and cats that the shelter is supposed to protect.

With the creation of the Animal Task Force, our County leaders have demonstrated a commitment to making Gwinnett a model for progressive animal services. This will only happen when the appropriate management is in place, and that management must include civilian-led experts in community animal care.

DRAFT

Miscellaneous Policies Needing Review at GCAC

Exercise and Care

In the seven hours our Task Force member spent at GCAC on Monday 4/2/12, she did not witness even one dog being walked, nor were any staff members interacting with the animals. While 4-6 inmates were observed cleaning pens that are in open view to the public in the morning, when escorted to the back (not open to the public) at the end of the day, almost all of the dogs were sitting in pens with urine and feces. Walks should be recorded on a kennel card kept on the dogs kennel to keep track to ensure dogs are getting enough exercise to make their stay more comfortable.

“Studies determined that shelter animals given blankets and comforters relax, feel happy, safe, secure and warm. Being comfortable in a more home-like setting increases their chances of being adopted.”
Operation Blankets of Love-

Animals should be given blankets and toys that can be sanitized or thrown away when that animal leaves to make them more comfortable. Many blankets, towels, dog beds, etc., have been donated by the public, but they are not used. Cost should not be as issue as the inmates do the laundry and the shelter already has industrial washing machines. The reason given by management for not offering blankets to dogs is the possibility that they may be ingested, but we believe the comforting element of having something to snuggle far outweighs the risk of an occasional ingestion; particularly since employees are always around to observe the dogs' behavior and can remove items when they see this behavior.

Adoption Procedures

Dogs that are chosen by a rescue group have Not Available orange cards put on them (same cards as for aggressive dogs!) and their info is pulled from the window. They often sit there for days or even a week or more waiting for the rescue, during which time adopters may end up being interested in them but can't consider adopting them because they are NA. Adoption should be the ultimate goal; adopters should receive priority over rescue. Alternatively, these dogs could be moved to the back to allow space for other dogs that may be killed due to lack of space in the adoption area.

People are only permitted to interact with 2 dogs that they are interested in adopting in order to limit disease. While there should be a reasonable limit, more than two should certainly be allowed during the selection process. There are lots of sanitizers around the kennel for them to use in between each dog to help with the spread of disease from their hands.

People may not interact with a dog unless the entire family residing in the household is there and they are serious about adopting. We recommend some flexibility to this policy.

Not everyone who reclaims a dog is offered the option to spay/neuter and microchip for \$60 (or \$30 for senior or Gwinnett County employee) instead of paying the impound/boarding fees. This should be offered every time, as altering and microchipping can prevent future problems for the shelter.

Equipment

The data management officer mentioned he has observed more and more microchipped animals coming into GCAC by officers in the field. He stated he believes there are two reasons for this: (1) improper use of the scanner by moving it too quickly over the animal's body and (2) not all scanners are functioning properly. The Task Force Recommends scanners be checked on a daily basis at GCAC and in the field; with random equipment checks performed by Supervisors.

Field Operations

One of our Animal Task Force Member did a ride along with a Field Officer and learned that there is a great distance for them to cover and not all calls can be answered, especially if a Field Officer is needed at a crime scene or an eviction where animals are involved. They often have to sit and wait for the property to be cleared before they can remove the animal prohibiting them from going on any other calls.

Gwinnett County is very large, covering approximately 437 square miles with anywhere from a minimum of two and maximum of 5 Officers to cover this great distance on any given day. In contrast, DeKalb County Animal Services has only 267 square miles and has a maximum of 5 Officers to cover their County and the DeKalb Animal Task Force determined there were not enough field officers to adequately cover the number of calls coming in. DeKalb had approximately 23,327 calls in 2010 while Gwinnett had 26,255 calls in 2011 and yet they have the same number of officers but Gwinnett is nearly double the amount of square mileage.

It is not realistic for Gwinnett Officers to be able to cover the vast amount of square miles with the same number of Officers that was deemed inadequate for DeKalb which has much less square mileage. The Task Force recommends taking officers from the Kennel and putting them on the road. GCAC should have 4-5 officers on the road at all times to properly respond to critical calls and have more time to ascertain animals in the field; animals which may be returned to their owners and may never have to come to GCAC in the first place.

To offset the loss of man power in the kennel, Sheriff Butch Conway and Major Dan Bruno have conversed and the Sheriff has offered inmate manpower to work at GCAC in the kennels and handling the same duties that the current inmates from the Department of Corrections do. Sheriff Conway committed to providing GCAWE with the same inmates as long as they were housed at his jail, meaning GCAWE would not have the issue with different inmates each day. This helps maintain the integrity of the disease prevention measures currently in place.

Petco Adoption Partners

The Petco Program marks the first time shelter animals have been routinely sent off-site to increase exposure to the public. The adoption fee for fully vetted cats is \$30. This is a wonderful, innovative program put in place by GCAWE.

For now, the Petco Program sends adoptable cats to a single store on Pleasant Hill Road in Duluth, where they are showcased in the front of the store where customers make their purchases. There are

four cat cages, fully carpeted, with a perch for the cats to lie on. GCAC sends an ACO to the Petco daily to clean the cages and check the status of the cats.

Since January 24, 2012, seventeen cats have been adopted from this Petco location. One of our Task Force Members went to this store and personally checked the placement of the cats, the cages, and spoke with Management about the program. The manager said cats that are sent over from GCAC are adopted very quickly and also stated she would like to see more cats sent to the store for adoption.

The Petco Program is a wonderful initiative, although the program is extremely underutilized. Our Task Force Member went to Petco on a busy Saturday, where three out of the four cages sat empty, while over 30 cats were sitting at GCAC waiting for adoption. If the four cages at Petco stayed at capacity, there is the potential for adopting over 100 cats per month through the Petco Program.

While the Petco Program has saved the lives of seventeen cats in the past three months, 241 cats at GCAC lost their lives; 53 in January, 84 in February and 104 in March. GCAC must be more proactive in utilizing the Petco Program, which has the potential of saving many more lives. It also gives GCAC the opportunity to showcase a highly innovate program that is one of the first of its kind in the country.

Fees Retained at GCAC

Public Funding in Model Communities

Community	Human Pop.	Animal Control Budget	Animals Handled Annually	Euthanasia Rate	Budget Per Capita
Tompkins County, NY	101,564	\$1,250,000	2,177	6%	\$12.31
Washoe County, NV	421,407	\$4,800,000	14,802	6%	\$11.39
Albemarle County, VA	99,150	\$900,000	3,727	8%	\$9.08
Travis County, TX	1,024,266	\$6,531,436	22,475	26%	\$6.38
Gwinnett County, GA	805,321	\$2,307,123	9600	59%	\$2.86

Gwinnett County has a much lower budget per capita than our neighboring county of DeKalb as well as many model communities throughout the United States who have drastically lowered their rate of euthanasia. Times are tight and budgets are tighter, but the Task Force feels that revenue can be increased at GCAWE, specifically by causing revenue collected to remain with this department. Currently, monies collected for adoptions, reclaims, and other fees are diverted into the county's General Fund; we propose that this income be used to directly benefit the animals in the shelter. Additionally, we have provided data showing a net savings of \$73,134 by hiring a full-time veterinarian, as opposed to the county's current practice of utilizing contractors and private services to provide spay/neuter and veterinary services. This savings could be used for Marketing campaigns to increase exposure, public awareness, and adoptions, and other innovative programs designed to improve the lives of animals in our care.

Data Management Issues

Gwinnett County Animal Welfare and Enforcement has recently gained media attention from outlets reporting serious failures in timely posting of animals in the shelter to the county's website. Shelter management has not responded to the issues, resulting in animals having no chance of adoption, rescue or reclaim. Many animals are not able to be viewed by the public, their photos never appearing on the GCAWE webpage before euthanasia is scheduled. The Task Force is recommending that photos of all animals be taken and posted within 24 hours of intake, and removed promptly when animals leave the building. This would include animals not deemed available for adoption, as they may be someone's pet and have an owner looking to reclaim them.

Management claims to be addressing the problem of incorrect data - a supervisor was even quoted on video on a local news channel stating that the problem is being addressed - and yet days go by without updated information appearing on the GCAWE website. The head of Gwinnett County's Communications Department, consulted on maintenance of the webpage, confirmed that it is the responsibility of GCAWE to keep their webpage information current. In order to ascertain what data management problems currently exist, one of our Task Force Members spent an entire shift with the acting ACOII in charge of data management. During this observation period, there were several other troublesome instances which were witnessed, not relating to data management. *See Appendix A for a full description of events observed by our Animal Task Force Member.*

The officer in charge of keeping this information current - the "data management" officer - also is responsible for many duties that in no way relate to data management. These other tasks actually take up the majority of his time in lieu of updating the GCAWE webpage. These tasks include: cleaning neglect pens, euthanizing wild cats, taking almost all photos of animals in the shelter (which can be up to 50-70 photos after returning from his two days off), editing photos and resizing images, responding to all emails/inquiries about lost and found cats/dogs, creating lost and found forms, training officers to use the database system, creating training manuals for the staff, updating all rabies postings, addressing all IT issues at the shelter, designing the updated GCAWE page, euthanizing other animals as assigned, and additional duties as described in the ACOII job description and as assigned.

Because of the number of unrelated tasks assigned, the officer stated to our Task Force Member that he was two weeks behind on replying to lost and found inquiries online. Since most animals that come through GCAWE barely get the minimum five day holding period, and most certainly never get weeks, this delay is clearly unacceptable; the shelter could potentially be euthanizing animals citizens have lost and are in the process of looking for. This officer explained he has made suggestions to supervisors which would help him perform his duties more efficiently and stated that supervisors (past and present) have failed to listen. *(A list of these suggestions is included in Attachment A).*

These critical items must be remedied immediately:

- **Cross Training:** The officer in charge of data management used to have help managing the website by an officer that has recently reassigned to field operations. There should be 1-2 officers who are cross trained in keeping the shelter buddy database updated and knowledgeable in downloading photos/removing photos from the website in order to keep the website current during times when the primary officer is unavailable, i.e., days off, sick days, and vacation.
- **Photographing the Animals:** It takes an ample amount of time to take photos of shelter animals that will aid in getting them adopted or rescued. The officer in charge of data management is also required to take all of the photos of the animals. This officer stated that when he returns to work after his two days off, there can be anywhere from 50-70 animals to photograph. He has recommended that all officers be given cameras to assist with the task of photographing the animals in the field. In the shelter, while other officers have been reprimanded for not taking photos at intake, these officers still refuse to help with this critical life-saving measure. In addition to requiring photos at intake, additional "adoption friendly" photos can and should be taken by trained volunteers; this is included in our Marketing and Volunteer Program Recommendations.
- **Correcting Inaccurate Data:** The officer in charge of data management has stated he is routinely having to go back behind officers who do not keep their notes current, i.e., there are several listed at the vet who are not there. Officers will move animals within the facility (from pen to pen) without putting it in the notes and subsequently, the data management officer has to comb the facility looking for them. Also, officers will put animals in the Shelter Buddy system without checking to see if that animal is already entered, which causes confusion and is very problematic in keeping the system accurate/current. The Task Force recommends better oversight of officers to ensure that their assigned duties are completed in a reliable, efficient manner.

- Petfinder Problem: Petfinder.com is a valuable resource for placing pets into homes, and normally is automatically synchronized with the Shelter Buddy system; however, many of the photos the data management officer is uploading are failing to synch with Petfinder. This problem has been ongoing for over a year and has yet to be resolved. This officer believes the problem is with Petfinder and not the Shelter Buddy system, but no one has looked into the problem. Many other shelters use Petfinder, so there must be a workaround. It's important for this technical issue to be resolved in order to widen the scope of visibility for shelter animals.

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