



MEMORANDUM

Date: May 26, 2023

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner *Jan Leshner*
County Administrator

Re: **PACC Outcomes and Decompression Program**

Pima Animal Care Center (PACC) individually evaluates each pet that comes into the shelter to determine placement options and outcomes.

Consistent with its commitment to transparent public communications, beginning December 2022, PACC implemented a Euthanasia list due to the on-going overcrowding and related disease control issues in the shelter. While the dogs on this list are not necessarily a public safety risk, they do require more resources than can be provided in our setting.

In response to the Call to the Audience at the Board of Supervisors' May 16, 2023 meeting, the attached memorandum from PACC Director Monica Dangler includes the details that lead to the euthanasia of each of the four dogs mentioned. In addition we included a short summary of the Decompression program and how PACC volunteers and staff continue to work with unsocialized dogs.

JKL/dym

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Monica Dangler, Director, Pima Animal Care Center

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MEMORANDUM

Date: May 23, 2023

To: Jan Leshner
County Administrator

From: Monica Dangler
Director Animal Services

Via: Francisco Garcia
Deputy County Administrator

Re: PACC Euthanasia and Decompression Program

Background

PACC evaluates each animal that comes into the shelter as an individual to determine placement options. As part of this, PACC may determine animals are a public safety risk and euthanize or decide that pets need specialized placement outside of PACC's ability and give them an exit date, typically 5 days, to leave the shelter through rescue, otherwise be euthanized.

In December 2022, PACC introduced a Euthanasia List for the first time in about 6 six years due to the on-going overcrowding the shelter had been experiencing since June 2021. This list is a tool to notify the community, volunteers, and staff of dogs that needed extra attention to get out of the shelter alive prior to euthanizing for space. The dogs are ranked based on documented behaviors in and out of the shelter and volunteer and staff feedback regarding to handling. While these dogs typically would not be considered a public safety risk, they do require more resources and we must place them into a home when shelter capacity is significantly higher than normal. This list is consistent with PACC's commitment to transparency in communication to the public.

Dogs Recently Euthanized

At the May 16th Board of Supervisors meeting Tina Glidden showed four pictures of dogs that had been euthanized by PACC. Below is each dog and the documented behaviors that led to them each receiving a deadline either at intake or after being on the Euthanasia List.

Smuckers and Checkers

These two dogs were brought to PACC on February 9, 2023, as stray dogs that had been walking in street. At admissions it was noted that they were nervous, unsocialized, would not walk on a leash, and had the potential to bite out of fear. On February 14th and 18th, a behavior staff member attempted to evaluate the dogs by taking them out of the kennel. Each time the attempt was unsuccessful due the dogs flailing and biting once leashed. On February 23rd, it was decided to give these dogs an exit date

due to them not being able to be evaluated but knowing that a community member had been able to successfully get them in a car. Unfortunately, no rescue came forward to transfer the dogs into their care, resulting in euthanasia on March 3, 2023.

Butterball

Butterball came to PACC on August 22, 2022, for rabies observation after a provoked bite. He was then added to the Euthanasia List due to the bite and documented notes regarding becoming overstimulated and difficult to handle in the shelter environment. On March 2, 2023, we assigned an exit date to several dogs due to having 508 dogs in-shelter. Butterball had a couple interested parties that ultimately were not the right fit. He was scheduled to be euthanized the morning of March 6, 2023. The evening before a volunteer advocate reached out asking if an interested party could meet Butterball. We agreed to allow the potential adopter to come in before operating hours between 8 AM - 9 AM to meet him. Unfortunately, the interested party did not show and was unresponsive to calls. Butterball was euthanized at 11:38 AM on March 6th.

Saul

Saul came to PACC On November 6, 2022, as a stray. Saul was a very nice dog that took a minute to warm up to new people. While at the shelter Saul had two incidents with minor bites which seemed to be in response to being territorial on-leash, which is not an unusual behavior seen in dogs while at the shelter. Because of these he was put on the Euthanasia List, but not dead lined. An adopter came forward to adopt. We described the behaviors we saw and gave recommendations for managing him. While in the home and on leash he bit a guest in similar circumstances as at the shelter. After being returned to the shelter Saul was given a deadline to be rescued. No rescue came forward to transfer him into their care. Saul was euthanized May 8, 2023.

Decompression Program

At the May 16th Board of Supervisors meeting Ms. Glidden also spoke about the ending of the Decompression Program. PACC's Decompression Program was a volunteer run program that worked with dogs that are unsocialized and needed additional help to become handleable by staff and other volunteers. The volunteer run program required that dogs who were "enrolled" be made unavailable for adoption or rescue transfers for a minimum of 2 weeks.

In early April, the Decompression team notified PACC along with the public that they no longer were able to continue the program due to PACC's inability to keep pet unavailable. This after PACC received large impound of fractious, defensive dogs and did not allow them to be part of the Decompression Program due to space limitations. They were given an exit date due to their documented behavior both in and out of the shelter.

PACC has had to reassess operations continually since COVID due to the ever-changing landscape and increasing census. We have been in contact with the Decompression Lead since the announcement and

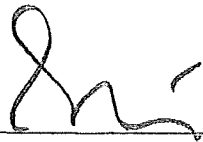
are looking at how we can move forward. Regardless of the team existing or not, PACC will continue to assess each pet that enters the shelter as an individual and give them a best chance at a live outcome when public health or safety is not at risk. Since the discontinuation of the Decompression Program, PACC has begun implementing new ways for all volunteers to contribute to the socialization of fearful dogs and are positive that we can continue to help these dogs while not putting other dogs' lives at risk due to space limitations.

While we have had to implement a euthanasia list and deadline dogs from that list on occasion, PACC continues to operate a lifesaving shelter with a live release rate (% of pets leaving the shelter alive) of more than 91%. 90% is considered "no-kill".

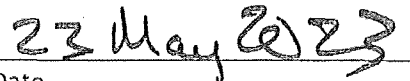
Summary

PACC is the only open intake shelter in Pima County and our resources are finite. As of today, there are 46 more dogs in the shelter than typical for this time of year. The issues facing PACC are not unique to Pima County but are being experienced throughout the nation. PACC has been lucky to have the support of the Board of Supervisors and county leadership, that began implementing big ideas many years ago, committing to transparency and lifesaving at PACC. These changes include but are not limited to; creating a Pet support Center to help people keep their pets, expanding the foster program to be one of the most robust programs for municipal sheltering, and investing half a million dollars in public spay/neuter annually. Unfortunately, here is no silver bullet or quick fix to the challenges PACC is facing today. Lack of access to veterinary care and lack of housing options that allow pets are two of the big issues impacting people across the country. All these things have made it possible for PACC to remain a lifesaving shelter, even today when many shelters have reverted to killing on intake.

Concur:



Francisco Garcia, Deputy County Administrator



Date