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AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

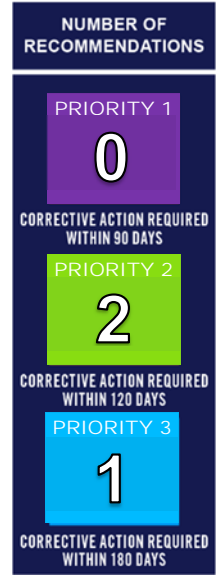
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May 1, 2020

TO: Marcia Mayeda, Director
Department of Animal Care and Control

FROM: Robert G. Campbell, Chief
Office of County Investigations

SUBJECT: **IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES NOTED DURING LIMITED REVIEW
#2016-12438**



During a limited review at Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC), we noted areas where DACC can strengthen its strategic management and internal controls for handling animal welfare complaints and field responses. Please see Attachment I, Table of Findings and Recommendations for Corrective Action, for details of our observations and recommendations.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with DACC management. The Department’s response (Attachment II) indicates general agreement with our findings and recommendations.

We thank DACC management and staff for their cooperation and assistance during our review. If you have any questions please call me at (213) 893-0058, or your staff may contact Chief Investigator, Greg Hellmold at (213) 893-0243.

RGC:GH:TT:gl

Attachments

c: Arlene Barrera, Auditor-Controller
Audit Committee
Audit Division

REPORT #OR-2016-12438

LOS ANGELES COUNTY AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

Peter Hughes
ASSISTANT AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

Robert G. Campbell
DIVISION CHIEF

Office of County Investigations

Report #IOR-2016-12438

**DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL
IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES NOTED DURING LIMITED REVIEW #2016-12438**

BACKGROUND

The Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) is responsible for intaking, assessing, responding to, and addressing reported animal welfare complaints (e.g., cruelty, abuse, neglect, or public safety) within the County and contract cities. Such reports generate calls for service known as “activities” that Animal Control Officers (ACOs) must complete. DACC reported receiving 158,544 such calls in calendar year 2018. We reviewed DACC field response activities in response to animal welfare complaints during calendar years 2017-2019 and noted areas where DACC can strengthen its internal controls and processes.

TABLE OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTIVE ACTION

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
1	<p>Strategic Management of Animal Welfare Complaints and Field Responses – We noted opportunities for DACC to enhance oversight of animal welfare complaints and field responses.</p> <p>DACC provided a “Pending Call Log” (Log) that identified 2,018 complaints pending a field response as of October 29, 2019. Although the Log did not identify the “Priority Level” of each complaint, 1,868 (93%) of the complaints were outstanding more than seven days, which exceeds the established field response timeframe for Priority 4 complaints (the least sensitive priority level except for Priority 5 complaints that have no established field response timeframe per DACC Policy OPF140), and 134 of the complaints were outstanding between one and five years. We also noted ACOs “closed-out” 1,026 complaints during calendar years 2017 through 2019 without conducting any field response.</p> <p>This indicates that the Department’s response timeframes may not be aligned with existing staffing levels and complaint volume. DACC management established the timeframes in Policy OPF140 on July 1, 2003, and has never revised them.</p> <p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaps between staff performance and policy requirements/ expectations 	<p>Priority 2 – DACC management strengthen the management of animal welfare complaints and field responses by:</p> <p>a) Re-evaluating Policy OPF140 to ensure priority levels and corresponding response timeframes are realistic and attainable given current staffing levels and caseloads.</p> <p>b) Establishing a formal process to periodically evaluate performance trend data and adjustments to priorities and/or staff deployments.</p> <p>Department Response: Agree Implementation Date: August 1, 2020</p>

¹ ACC Policy OPF140 (effective July 1, 2003) defines the different types of field responses and establishes Priority Levels (1-5) base on the threat to public or animal welfare. It also provides the following response timeframes: Priority 1 within one hour or less, Priority 2 within four hours, Priority 3 within 24 hours, Priority 4 within seven days, and Priority 5 no time limit.

Priority Ranking: This audit team assigned Priority Rankings to Recommendations from 1 to 3 based on the potential seriousness and likelihood of negative impact on the Agency’s operations if corrective action is not taken.

TABLE OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTIVE ACTION	
ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to optimize deployment of resources and staff • Increased risk of animal welfare issues going unaddressed when cases are closed without a field response 	
<p>2 Compliance Monitoring of Field Responses to Animal Welfare Complaints – DACC management can improve the accountability and effectiveness of field operations by establishing controls to ensure staff comply with DACC Policy OPF140, which sets field response timeframes for animal welfare complaints. We noted that ACOs routinely postponed field responses beyond the timeframes specified in the policy and/or “closed-out” complaints without any field response during calendar years 2017-2019 and there was no indication that supervisors routinely followed-up on such deviations.</p> <p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased risk of animal welfare issues • Inadequate measurement of staff performance 	<p>Priority 2 – DACC management establish internal controls to monitor compliance with DACC Policy OPF140 and create a more accountable process for responding to and closing animal welfare complaints, including in cases where no field response is conducted.</p> <p>Department Response: Agree Implementation Date: September 1, 2020</p>
<p>3 Scheduling and Dispatching Process for Field Responses to Animal Welfare Complaints – DACC’s process for scheduling and dispatching resources can be strengthened to more efficiently deploy personnel. Specifically, ACOs receive a list of assigned complaints/field responses each workday, which is not compiled or sorted for routing efficiency.</p> <p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential lost productivity due to increased travel time and less optimal routing • Difficulty comparing performance between staff and setting/enforcing performance targets. 	<p>Priority 3 – DACC management explore the feasibility of technology solutions to improve efficiency in scheduling and dispatching ACOs, and to the extent possible optimize the assignment of animal welfare complaints based on the geographic location of the ACO and the required field response.</p> <p>Department Response: Agree Implementation Date: November 1, 2020</p>

For more information on our auditing process, including recommendation priority rankings, the follow-up process, and management’s responsibility for internal controls, visit auditor.lacounty.gov/audit-process-information.

Priority Ranking: This audit team assigned Priority Rankings to Recommendations from 1 to 3 based on the potential seriousness and likelihood of negative impact on the Agency’s operations if corrective action is not taken.



Marcia Mayeda, Director

April 29, 2020

TO: Robert G. Campbell, Chief
Office of County Investigations

FROM: Marcia Mayeda
Director

RESPONSE TO AUDITOR-CONTROLLER FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDED CORRECTIVE ACTIONS – REPORT #2016-12438

The Department has reviewed the Auditor-Controller's report and agrees with the findings and recommendations. Attached is the Department's plan of corrective action.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (562) 728-4610, or your staff may contact Ms. Betsey Webster, Chief Deputy Director, at (562) 728-4620.

Attachment

MM:BW:in
Sec:BW/mAC.IOR 4.29.20

Attachment

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Agoura Hills, CA 91301
(818) 991-0071

Baldwin Park ACC
4275 N. Elton Street
Baldwin Park, CA 91706
(626) 962-3577

Carson/Gardena ACC
216 W. Victoria Street
Gardena, CA 90248
(310) 523-9566

Castaic ACC
31044 N. Charlie Canyon Rd.
Castaic, CA 91384
(661) 257-3191

Downey ACC
11258 S. Garfield Ave.
Downey, CA 90242
(562) 940-6898

Lancaster ACC
5210 W. Avenue I
Lancaster, CA 93536
(661) 940-4191

Palmdale ACC
38550 Sierra Highway
Palmdale, CA 93550
(661) 575-2888

Administrative Office
5898 Cherry Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90805
(800) 253-3555

**DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL
IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES NOTED DURING LIMITED REVIEW #2016-12438
DEPARTMENT ACTION PLAN/RESPONSE**

ISSUE 1: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF ANIMAL WELFARE COMPLAINTS AND FIELD RESPONSES	
A/C Recommendation	DACC management strengthen the management of animal welfare complaints and field responses by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Re-evaluating Policy OPF140 to ensure priority levels and corresponding response timeframes are realistic and attainable given current staffing levels and caseloads. b) Establishing a formal process to periodically evaluate performance trend data and adjustments to priorities and/or staff deployments.
Priority	PRIORITY 2
Agree/Disagree	Agree
Department Action Plan	We will... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Update Policy OPF 140, as well as other related policies, to determine the appropriate target response times for the various types of calls the department receives. b) Establish a formal process to periodically evaluate performance trend data.
Planned Implementation Date	August 1, 2020

ISSUE 2: COMPLIANCE MONITORING OF FIELD RESPONSES TO ANIMAL WELFARE COMPLAINTS	
A/C Recommendation	DACC management establish internal controls to monitor compliance with DACC Policy OPF140 and create a more accountable process for responding to and closing animal welfare complaints, including in cases where no field response is conducted.
Priority	PRIORITY 2
Agree/Disagree	Agree
Department Action Plan	We will incorporate into Department policy a standardized process for evaluating call prioritization and the closure of calls. We will develop a process for field services supervision to review officer response to calls and make determinations about closing calls in accordance with policy.
Planned Implementation Date	September 1, 2020

ISSUE 3: SCHEDULING AND DISPATCHING PROCESS FOR FIELD RESPONSES TO ANIMAL WELFARE COMPLAINTS	
A/C Recommendation	DACC management explore the feasibility of technology solutions to improve efficiency in scheduling and dispatching ACOs, and to the extent possible optimize the assignment of animal welfare complaints based on the geographic location of the ACO and the required field response.
Priority	PRIORITY 3
Agree/Disagree	Agree
Department Action Plan	We will work with the CIO to explore the feasibility of additional technological solutions. Currently, officers work is assigned by two methods. First each officer has a list in their <i>Toughbooks</i> (and often they will print a copy of this list) that includes assigned calls for the day. The officers then proceed to these calls based on priority and geography. Secondly, as priority calls come in during the day, dispatch can route those additional calls to the officer that is in the geographic location of the new call. The Department has already incorporated GPS tracking in its patrol vehicles so that dispatch can monitor, in real time, the location of officers.
Planned Implementation Date	November 1, 2020