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DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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December 9, 2021

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

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

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL – IMPROVEMENT
OPPORTUNITIES NOTED DURING LIMITED REVIEW (REPORT #IOR-2016-
12438) - FIRST FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

We completed a follow-up review of the Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC or
Department) Improvement Opportunities Noted During Limited Review dated May 1, 2020 (Report
#IOR-2016-12438). As summarized in Table 1, DACC fully implemented one of the
recommendations and partially implemented two recommendations. The Department should fully
implement the outstanding recommendations.

Table 1 - Results of First Follow-up Review

Table with 5 columns: PRIORITY RANKINGS, TOTAL RECOS, FULLY IMPLEMENTED, PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED, NOT IMPLEMENTED. Includes a sub-total for OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS with a value of 2.

Attachment I details our review and the Department’s corrective actions. We will follow-up and
report back on the outstanding Priority 2 recommendations in a subsequent review.

We thank DACC management and staff for their cooperation and assistance during our review. If
you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 893-0058 or e-mail at
rcampbell@auditor.lacounty.gov, or your staff may contact Supervising Investigator Tim Takara at
(213) 893-0918 or e-mail at ttakara@auditor.lacounty.gov.

RGC:GH:TT:gls
Attachment

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

REPORT #F1-2016-12438

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Report #F1-2016-12438

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

RECOMMENDATION	A-C COMMENTS
<p>1 Priority 2 – Strategic Management of Animal Welfare Complaints and Field Responses – Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC or Department) management strengthen the management of animal welfare complaints and field responses by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Re-evaluating Policy Operations Field (OPF) 140 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. <p>Original Issue/Impact: We noted opportunities for DACC to enhance oversight of animal welfare complaints and field responses. 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 exceeded 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 OPF 140), and 134 of the complaints were outstanding between one and five years. We also noted Animal Control Officers (ACOs) “closed-out” 1,026 complaints during calendar years 2017 through 2019 without conducting any field response.</p> <p>This indicated the Department’s response timeframes may not be aligned with existing staffing levels and complaint volume. DACC management established the timeframes in Policy OPF 140 on July 1, 2003, and never revised them. As a result, this may cause gaps between staff performance and policy requirements/expectations, increased risk of animal welfare issues going unaddressed when cases are closed without a field response, and misdirected opportunities to optimize deployment of resources and staff.</p>	<p>Recommendation Status: Partially Implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) DACC management informed us that they re-evaluated their response timeframes, determined that they meet the industry standards, and no change was needed. They stated that they surveyed other agencies, found that the response times required of their staff were consistent with other agencies, and they will maintain what they consider to be best practice standards even though they are experiencing inadequate staffing levels to achieve those standards. We reviewed response time policies and guidelines that DACC received from other animal care agencies and confirmed that they are consistent with DACC’s established response timeframes. DACC acknowledged that established priority timeframes will not always be met. b) DACC management provided a report showing each care center’s compliance with established complaint response timeframes and indicated that care center managers use the report to adjust staffing resources within their care center to maximize compliance. However, DACC was unable to provide documentation showing any shifts in staffing resources within a care center or countywide, and/or how it has improved their overall level of compliance.

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

RECOMMENDATION		A-C COMMENTS		
2	<p>Priority 2 – Compliance Monitoring of Field Responses to Animal Welfare Complaints – DACC management establish internal controls to monitor compliance with DACC Policy OPF 140 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>Original Issue/Impact: 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. This increased risk of animal welfare issues and does not provide adequate measurement of staff performance. DACC management can improve the accountability and effectiveness of field operations by establishing controls to ensure staff comply with DACC Policy OPF 140, which sets field response timeframes for animal welfare complaints.</p>	Recommendation	Status:	Partially Implemented
		<p>DACC management indicated that they continue to use their Chameleon application to maintain and track the status of responses to calls. DACC revised its Policy OPF 140 (effective August 7, 2020) to require that a manager, rather than a supervisor, apply their discretion whether to forego a response and close the call by marking it “MCLSD” (which stands for manager closed) and providing their initials and date in Chameleon if it is unlikely a response at that time will resolve the issue.</p> <p>OPF 140 also requires supervisors to review response timeframes weekly and managers to review response timeframes monthly, for their assigned care centers, to identify and address gaps between performance and established response timeframes. However, the supervisors and managers do not document their weekly and monthly reviews.</p> <p>DACC management indicated they will further enhance internal controls by revising Policy OPF 140 by December 2021 to establish guidelines describing when it is acceptable for a manager to close out a complaint as well as a formal process for the respective Deputy Directors to perform and document a monthly review of overall call response times, in addition to reviewing close-outs.</p>		

RECOMMENDATION	A-C COMMENTS
<p>3 Priority 3 – Scheduling and Dispatching Process for Field Responses to Animal Welfare Complaints – 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>Original Issue/Impact: We noted ACOs received a list of assigned complaints/field responses each workday, which was not compiled or sorted for routing efficiency and could potentially cause lost productivity due to increased travel time and less optimal routing. This may cause difficulty in comparing performance between staff and setting/enforcing performance targets. We noted, DACC’s process to schedule and dispatch resources could be strengthened to deploy personnel more efficiently.</p>	<p>Recommendation Status: Implemented</p> <p>We confirmed DACC explored the feasibility of technology upgrades and consulted with the Chief Information Officer. DACC reported receiving the requested Toughbooks (laptops) and they are working with Internal Services Department (ISD) to begin installing the Toughbooks into DACC vehicles beginning November 29, 2021.</p> <p>Further, DACC management told us their internal Information Technology team is collaborating with ISD to upgrade DACC’s Geographic Information System (GIS) portal. GIS will allow DACC’s dispatch staff to know in real time the location of every field-assigned ACO. Therefore, dispatch staff will be able to assign calls for service based on the location of the call and an ACO’s proximity based on the GIS information. Management will also use GIS data to identify clusters of areas that have a higher call volume in real time and adjust scheduling the number of ACOs to that specific location.</p>

We conducted our review in conformance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. 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.