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May 22, 2023

TO: Marcia Mayeda, Director
Department of Animal Care and Control
FROM: Greg Hellmold, Chief [Signature]
Office of County Investigations

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

We completed a second and final 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). We reviewed the status of two Priority 2 recommendations that had not been fully implemented as of our first follow-up report issued December 9, 2021. As summarized in Table 1, DACC partially implemented the two outstanding recommendations to strengthen controls over the strategic management and monitoring of field responses to animal welfare complaints.

Table 1 - Results of Second and Final Follow-up Review

Table with 5 columns: PRIORITY RANKINGS, TOTAL RECOS OUTSTANDING, FULLY IMPLEMENTED, PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED, NOT IMPLEMENTED. Rows include PRIORITY 1, PRIORITY 2, PRIORITY 3, and TOTAL. A summary row shows 2 partially implemented recommendations.

For details of our review and the Department’s corrective actions, see Attachment.

We thank DACC management and staff for their cooperation and assistance during our review. If you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 893-0243 or ghellmold@auditor.lacounty.gov, or your staff may contact Supervising Investigator Tim Takara at (213) 893-0918 or ttakara@auditor.lacounty.gov.

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Attachment

c: Oscar Valdez, Interim Auditor-Controller
Audit Committee
Audit Division

Report #IOR-2016-12438

LOS ANGELES COUNTY AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

Robert G. Campbell
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Greg Hellmold
DIVISION CHIEF

OFFICE OF COUNTY INVESTIGATIONS

Report #F2-2016-12438

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES NOTED DURING LIMITED REVIEW #2016-12438 – SECOND AND FINAL 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> <p>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.</p> <p>b) Establishing a formal process to periodically evaluate performance trend data and adjustments to priorities and/or staff deployments.</p> <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</p>	<p>Recommendation Status: Partially Implemented</p> <p>a) Implemented. 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.</p> <p>b) Partially Implemented. DACC is currently piloting a new program using Microsoft Power Business Intelligence (Power BI) to gather work performance data (e.g., response times, number of calls handled). We reviewed the Power BI dashboard provided by DACC and noted it includes each call’s activity type, priority level, status, as well as the activity date and time. It also includes the number of dispatched calls and completed calls for a specified activity period per DACC location.</p> <p>DACC management indicated they review the data from the Power BI reports and provide feedback every two weeks to ensure performance trends are captured so that proper adjustments can be made in field operations. Additionally, DACC Deputy Directors will be required to submit to the DACC Chief Deputy Director a summary of operational adjustments discussed and made effective July 2023.</p>

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
	<p>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>DACC's process utilizing Power BI appears to address our recommendation by providing a mechanism to gather, evaluate, and make adjustments based on performance trend data. Accordingly, once DACC adopts the pilot program on a permanent basis this recommendation will be fully implemented.</p>
<p>2</p>	<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 increases 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>	<p>Recommendation Status: Partially Implemented</p> <p>We noted DACC has made some progress towards creating a more accountable process for responding to and closing animal welfare complaints. DACC management provided a copy of their revised DACC Policy OPF 140, with an effective date of December 22, 2021, which authorizes only DACC employees holding the position of Animal Control Manager or above to apply their discretion in foregoing a response to an animal welfare call.</p> <p>Management provided two examples of entries in Chameleon (on April 25, 2023) with closed responses (“MCLSD” or manager closed because it is unlikely a response at that time will resolve the issue) and we noted the entries contained the initials of an appropriate level employee and the date the call was closed. However, management could not generate a report through Chameleon of all entries identified as “MCLSD” for us to review, or readily quantify the population of cases closed by management without a field response.</p> <p>DACC management told us they are developing a monthly “MCLSD” report in the new Power BI reporting dashboard, which is in progress with an expected completion date of July 2023. DACC indicated the “MCLSD” report will be generated monthly and will be reviewed with the manager’s Deputy Director to ensure managers apply dispositions appropriately.</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.