

**CITY OF SAN BERNARDINO RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN REPORT TITLED “WHO LET THE DOGS OUT? A TAIL IN TWO CITIES”**

Note: the original Grand Jury findings are repeated below in italics. The City’s responses are in bold, with additional explanation and commentary in regular typeface. References to the “City” or the “respondent” refer to the City of San Bernardino.

**Responses to Findings**

*F-1 The Animal Services Department is underfunded and understaffed.*

**The respondent disagrees partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.**

The Animal Services Department has not had a full staff of fully trained animal control officers for several years. In 2021, the Department had only six allocated Animal Control Officers with no supervisor or lead position assigned to the Unit. Over time, the Department has expanded the Field Services Unit to include a supervisor and lead animal control officer. At the end of 2023, Animal Services had filled all but two vacant animal control officer positions. The Unit consists of one Animal Services Supervisor for Field Officers, one Lead Animal Control Officer and four filled and fully trained Animal Control Officers for the City. There are currently two vacant positions, which the Department is working on filling. Because the Unit is not fully staffed, additional time is needed to fill the two vacant positions and then evaluate the need for increased Animal Control Officers once they are fully trained and assigned to the field.

*F-2 San Bernardino Animal Services needs a veterinarian on site to take care of pets’ medical needs.*

**The respondent agrees with the finding.**

*F-3 San Bernardino Animal Services does not currently have a checklist that all ACOs may use to inspect the yard of an offending owner of a stray or biting dog. This is needed for consistency of documenting the encounter and putting the owner on notice to remediate the problem area.*

**The respondent agrees with the finding.**

*F-4 The SBCAS Policy and Procedure Manual is not complete, nor updated every year, thus the procedures for ACOs are not completely clear and laid out in written form.*

**The respondent agrees with the finding.**

*F-5 Currently, ACOs do not have assigned areas (beats) of responsibility within the City of San Bernardino. If SBCAS assigned different beats to each ACO, it would save time and fuel, provide a quicker response, and increase time for educating the pet owners and public who reside in the ACO’s area.*

**The respondent agrees with the finding.**

*F-6 The public perception of Animal Control Officers is that they are a threat to their pet.*

**The respondent agrees with the finding.**

*F-7 One of the biggest reasons for the continued spike in dog attacks/bites in the City of San Bernardino is due to the number of non-spayed/neutered animals in the city.*

**The respondent disagrees partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.**

There are several reasons for the higher number of dog bites in the City of San Bernardino as compared to the City of Rancho Cucamonga. A recently released report noted that dog bites were increasing throughout the State. Additionally, the Department feels that the bite statistics should be compared to a population with similar demographics to our residents. According to Census.gov, in 2022, the City of Rancho Cucamonga had a poverty rate of 7.5% with a median household income of \$105,534 versus the City of San Bernardino where the poverty rate was significantly higher at 20.2% with a lower median household income of \$61,323. Residents in the City of San Bernardino have limited access to spay/neuter services and experience economic barriers to obtaining veterinary care for their animals. While low cost and/or free spay/neuter services are crucial to reduce the number of loose dogs in the City, the Department believes that supportive services are necessary to help the community. The services needed to reduce the number of stray dogs includes expanded access to care, education on responsible pet ownership, including keeping your pet on a leash, free microchipping as well as bite prevention training for all community members regardless of pet ownership. Expanded programming and community support would have a greater impact on reducing the total number of dog bites annually.

## **Responses to Recommendations**

*R-1a Increase funding for Animal Services.*

**The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.**

The Department has requested additional funding for crucial positions, including a Public Education officer as well as a Manager overseeing the Community Outreach Unit. These positions will be included with the expansion of the Department to cover shelter services for Fontana, Rialto and Colton in addition to Grand Terrace and Loma Linda. The Department believes these additional positions serving in a Community Outreach capacity will help increase public education to our community and larger region, ultimately reducing dog bites.

*R-1b The Grand Jury recommends increased funding is necessary to allow Animal Services to hire additional ACOs.*

**The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed,**

**including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.**

The Animal Control Unit has not been fully staffed with trained Animal Control Officers for the past five years. This is the first time in several years that the Department has had four trained field officers to respond to calls in the City and is working to fill two vacant positions. The City therefore requests additional time to fill the vacant positions and then evaluate the need for additional staffing once there are six fully trained officers assigned to field operations in the City.

*R-2a Hire an on-site veterinarian which would save time and money.*

**The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.**

The Department has an open recruitment for two on-site veterinarians as well as per diem positions designated for high quality high volume spay neuter. The recruitment for the position of veterinarian has been open for over a year, and the City has increased the compensation package and salary twice during that time. Despite the increase in salary as well as offering a stipend, the position has not been filled as a result of a nationwide shortage of veterinarians. The Department is currently working with the City's Human Resources Department to identify additional opportunities to recruit staff veterinarians, including recruiting foreign candidates through a Federal Visa program. Due to the challenges in recruiting for these positions, the Department does not have a timeline for onboarding staff veterinarians.

*R-2b The Grand Jury recommends a Partnership with San Bernardino City Unified School District to create an Animal Services Pathway program for high school students to learn about animal care, becoming groomers, veterinary technicians and veterinarians.*

**The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.**

The Department is open to a partnership with the San Bernardino City Unified School District, but additional time is needed to develop and implement the program and propose it to our elected officials. The Department will be attending Career Day at two schools (elementary and junior high) in the district over the next couple of months. Our vet staff, animal control officers and administrative staff will be at the event to discuss opportunities for careers in animal welfare. We will utilize this pilot program to fully develop a proposal for the partnership with the school district.

*R-2c Create an outreach program for prospective veterinary hires.*

**The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.**

The Department is conducting research on outreach for prospective veterinarians. We will work with the City's Human Resources Department to develop a program based on industry best

practices. Due to the Nationwide shortage of Veterinarians, the Department will need additional time to conduct the study and implement the program.

- R-3 The Grand Jury recommends that the Animal Services Department develop a uniform written checklist for ACOs to check and ensure that the yard is secure. A copy of the checklist is to be given to the owner.*

**The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.**

The Department is working to create a checklist for the Animal Control Officers to utilize on home inspections. We estimate the checklist will be completed and implemented by September 2024.

- R-4a The Grand Jury recommends that the SBCAS complete writing the Policy and Procedure Manual and eliminate the names of employees and use the staff positions instead. Review the Manual annually and present current changes in laws to staff monthly.*

**The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.**

Department leadership is currently working on revising the Policy and Procedure Manual to be completed and distributed to staff by January 2025.

- R-4b Hold monthly or bimonthly staff meetings at the Shelter with management and ACOs to bring everyone up to date on the latest laws and/or developments in the field of Animal Care.*

**The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.**

The department currently holds monthly all-staff meetings with ACO's in attendance and holds bimonthly staff meetings for the Field Operations department. In both meetings staff discuss current cases, challenges and solutions in-line with industry best practices. Staff also attend webinars related to the field of animal welfare from National Industry Leaders, including the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), Best Friends Animal Society, Maddie's Fund and CalAnimals Animal Welfare Association.

- R-5a The Grand Jury recommends that SBCAS divide the city into separate beats of the city and require ACOs to cover just that portion of the city each day.*

**The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.**

The Department is working to divide the city into at least 4 quadrants so that officers can be assigned to a specific area and rotated quarterly. We expect this to be completed and implemented by January 2025.

- R-5b The Grand Jury recommends the City of San Bernardino provide animal care training to the public twice annually. Each ACO is to provide training for pet owners in his/her beat via online or in-person.*

**The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.**

Once the City determines the areas ACO's will be assigned to and the Policy and Procedure Manual has been finalized and distributed, the Department will offer regular training to the community. We estimate this to be implemented by Spring 2025. Currently, the administration team is scheduling and attending Neighborhood Association Meetings in an attempt to educate community members on responsible pet ownership and programs available to the residents and their pets.

*R-6 The Grand Jury recommends that the SBAS reach out and educate the public about Animal Services via in-person and other forms of media.*

**The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.**

The Department is currently active on social media, informing the public about our programs and services. The City is in the process of redesigning the website and the Department plans on updating the Animal Services pages to be more informative and accessible to the community. Additionally, the Department holds quarterly in-person Animal Control Commission meetings open to community members. In addition, the administration team is working with the Neighborhood Association to schedule presentations at their regular meetings in the community. The Department expects a communication policy, including public education to be completed by Summer 2025.

*R-7 The Grand Jury recommends the SBAS reach out and educate the public in the City of San Bernardino about the benefits of spaying/neutering dogs. Education to be delivered in-person and other forms of media.*

**The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.**

The City is in the process of redesigning the website and the Department plans on updating the Animal Services pages to include additional information on the benefits of spaying and neutering pets. Additionally, the Department holds quarterly in-person Animal Control Commission meetings open to community members. In addition, the administration team is working with the Neighborhood Association to schedule presentations at their regular meetings in the community, including the topic of the importance of spaying and neutering. Once the Department has a team of veterinarians to perform community spay/neuter, we hope the combination of education and opportunities for low-cost spay/neuter will help reduce the number of unwanted pets in the City. We expect the public education piece of the communication policy to be completed and implemented by Summer 2025.