



**Signature Report**

**May 29, 2007**

**Motion 12520**

**Proposed No.** 2007-0105.1

**Sponsors** Phillips, Patterson and Ferguson

1                   A MOTION approving the report submitted by the county  
2                   executive in response to Motion 12297 and making  
3                   recommendations to improve enforcement of animal  
4                   cruelty laws in King County.

5  
6                   WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of a just and civilized society to establish laws  
7                   and take necessary actions to protect the safety and well-being of animals, and

8                   WHEREAS, animals are vulnerable to abuse and neglect and must be protected,  
9                   and

10                  WHEREAS, the state of Washington granted law enforcement and animal control  
11                  agencies the power to enforce animal cruelty laws with RCW 16.52.015, and

12                  WHEREAS, King County authorized the manager of the animal control authority  
13                  and his or her authorized animal control officers to enforce animal cruelty laws with  
14                  K.C.C. 11.04.170, and

15                  WHEREAS, it is unlawful to be cruel to animals in King County, under K.C.C.  
16                  11.04.250, and

17           WHEREAS, in 2006 there have been several serious animal cruelty cases reported  
18 that resulted in the deaths of family pets in King County, and

19           WHEREAS, the council of King County passed Motion 12297, requesting the  
20 county executive to file a report making recommendations on how to improve: the  
21 county's efforts to reduce and eliminate animal cruelty; the investigations of animal  
22 cruelty allegations; and the coordination of resources among animal control and law  
23 enforcement, and

24           WHEREAS, Motion 12297 requested the county executive to evaluate alternative  
25 organization models for the enforcement of animal cruelty laws and make  
26 recommendations on how King County animal control should be organized for animal  
27 cruelty, and

28           WHEREAS, Motion 12297 also requested the county executive to improve  
29 animal control section policies and procedures for: coordination of animal cruelty  
30 enforcement between animal control officers and law enforcement officers; tracking and  
31 following up on animal cruelty cases, particularly repeat offenders; and accepting reports  
32 of alleged animal cruelty cases from private humane societies, and

33           WHEREAS, Ordinance 15652, Section 28, contained a proviso P1 for the records,  
34 elections and licensing services division, restricting the records, elections and licensing  
35 services division from spending two hundred fifty thousand dollars pending the council's  
36 review and approval by a motion, a report that describes opportunities to improve  
37 enforcement of animal cruelty laws in King County and containing information the  
38 council requested in Motion 12297;

39           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

**Motion 12520**

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40           The county executive's report to the council in response to Motion 12297 and  
41 proviso P1 of Ordinance 15652, Section 28, has been reviewed and is hereby approved.

42

Motion 12520 was introduced on 2/12/2007 and passed by the Metropolitan King County Council on 5/29/2007, by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Mr. Gossett, Ms. Patterson, Ms. Lambert, Mr. von Reichbauer, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Phillips and Mr. Constantine

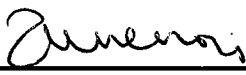
No: 0

Excused: 2 - Mr. Dunn and Ms. Hague

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

  
Larry Gossett, Chair

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

**Attachments**      A. Executive Response to Metropolitan King County Council Motion 12297



King County

Department of Executive Services  
Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division

Attachment A  
2007-0105

**Executive Response to Metropolitan King County Council Motion 12297**

Motion 12297:

- A. Make recommendations on how to improve the County's efforts to reduce and eliminate animal cruelty, the investigations of animal cruelty allegations, and coordination of resources among animal control and law enforcement.
- B. Evaluate alternative organizational models for the enforcement of animal cruelty laws and make a recommendation on how King County animal control should be organized for animal cruelty. The evaluation shall include an analysis on the feasibility of designating responsibilities to one or two animal control officers for enforcement of King County animal cruelty laws enforcement. The evaluation shall also include an analysis of how other jurisdictions, including the cities of Houston, San Diego and Detroit, are organized for the enforcement of animal cruelty laws and whether King County should be organized in a similar manner.
- C. Improve animal control section policies and procedures for:
  - 1. Coordination of animal cruelty enforcement between animal control officers and law enforcement officers;
  - 2. Tracking and following-up on animal cruelty cases, particularly repeat offenders; and
  - 3. Accepting reports of alleged animal cruelty cases from private humane societies.



**King County**

Department of Executive Services

**Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division**

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## **Introduction**

Council Motion 12297 has provided King County Animal Services and Programs with an opportunity to review its animal cruelty investigation procedures and organizational structure as it relates to animal cruelty investigations.

Animal cruelty is a serious crime deserving of immediate and forthright attention. As public education and outreach publicize the humane treatment of animals and as other media carry that message as well, the public is becoming more knowledgeable about animal cruelty and its effects on our society. The demand for animal control authorities to do more to investigate and prosecute animal cruelty cases has created a higher level of awareness nationwide. In King County the goal of achieving a safe and humane environment for animals of all types is paramount.

While the procedures and organizational structure currently in use at King County Animal Services and Programs for investigation of animal cruelty have proven to be effective and efficient for handling thousands of cases, any process can be improved. This review of King County animal cruelty operations and models in place in other jurisdictions is beneficial in finding such improvements.

# **Evaluation of Alternative Models for Enforcing Animal Cruelty Laws**

## **Local Organizational Models**

- **King County**

King County Animal Services and Programs provides a wide range of animal care and animal control services, including animal cruelty investigations, in unincorporated areas of King County and most cities in King County under an inter-local service agreement program. The cities of Seattle, Renton, Des Moines, Normandy Park, Milton, and Medina do not contract for full services; all other cities do. The service area covers more than 2,200 square miles, to include a population of more than 1.2 million residents (approximately two-thirds of King County). King County Animal Services and Programs operate two animal shelters – one in the city of Kent, the other in the city of Bellevue (at Crossroads). Two Sergeants are tasked with oversight of all animal cruelty cases, while 14 Animal Control Officers are responsible for investigating animal cruelty charges in geographic service districts.

- **Seattle**

The City of Seattle uses the same model as King County Animal Services and Programs. Seattle Animal Control investigates all animal control cases within its jurisdiction, including animal cruelty cases. Their trained animal control officers respond to approximately 600 animal cruelty investigations a year. Seattle Animal Control is staffed with 13 officers dedicated to field enforcement including animal cruelty investigation. Two of the 13 officers are assigned to park patrols.

- **Pierce County**

Prior to January 1, 2006, the Humane Society for Tacoma/Pierce County provided Pierce County and its contract cities with animal control services and animal cruelty investigations. The Humane Society made the decision to cease animal control enforcement services, such as cruelty investigations, and transitioned to focus on the sheltering, education and adoption elements of their mission. As a result, Pierce County formed its own animal control agency with four officers to investigate animal control cases within its jurisdiction, including animal cruelty investigations.

- **Snohomish County**

The model in Snohomish County is very similar to King County. Snohomish County Animal Control provides animal control services and animal cruelty investigations to the unincorporated areas, while the largest city in Snohomish County, Everett, has its own animal control authority that investigates animal control cases and animal cruelty. Animal control officers are trained and respond to approximately 700 calls each year alleging animal cruelty.

## **Organizational Models Nationwide**

- **Detroit**

The handling of animal control services in Detroit is a particularly unique case. Currently, Detroit Animal Control and the Michigan Humane Society both respond to animal control calls. All animal cruelty investigations are conducted by the Michigan Humane Society, one of the oldest and largest humane societies in the nation. This arrangement began approximately twenty years ago when budget shortfalls in Detroit limited the city's ability to handle animal control. The Michigan Humane Society stepped up and filled the void. Animal control is still under funded by the city in Detroit, therefore the Michigan Humane Society continues to pick up stray animals, rescue animals, shelter animals, and conduct animal cruelty investigations. The Michigan Humane Society does not receive payment from Detroit for these services; rather the organization raises funds through private donations. Cal Morgan, Executive Director for the Michigan Humane Society, was interviewed by King County and stated he would prefer the city handle cruelty investigations and other animal control services to allow his organization to focus more on shelter operations and adoptions.

Detroit Animal Control has 17 animal control officers, three animal control investigators, four supervising animal control officers, and one dog pound assistant, who also dispatches full time, while the remaining dispatch duties are rotated among the other officers. At Detroit Animal Control, none of the officers handle animal cruelty, calls are referred to the Humane Society.

Michigan Humane Society has four full time cruelty investigators and one field agent and an office coordinator. Last year they received 4,700 complaints regarding cruelty, mostly involving allegations of no food, shelter, or water during warm weather. The Michigan Humane Society gathered evidence in these cases and forwarded their findings on to police and prosecutors for processing. They have prosecuted as many as 80 cases in a year; last year 40 warrants were issued for animal cruelty charges.

- **Houston**

In Houston, the governmental animal control authority handles all animal control cases with the exception of animal cruelty. The Houston Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) handles all animal cruelty investigations. They do not receive funding through the city, but raise private donations based on appeals to citizens to help fund animal cruelty investigations.

Last year the Houston SPCA responded to over 8,500 calls about animal abuse, cruelty and neglect. Houston SPCA's investigations department is staffed by six full-time cruelty investigators who work closely with other humane organizations, and with law enforcement officials for coordinated animal cruelty investigation efforts.



- **San Diego**

In San Diego, the local government animal control authority handles animal control services, including animal cruelty. The city of San Diego contracts with San Diego County for animal control services. However, the local San Diego Humane Society and SPCA also investigate animal cruelty cases in San Diego under a joint operating agreement. The animal cruelty calls are distributed between the two (government agency and the SPCA non-profit) depending on who the reporting party calls. In other words, the agency that is contacted first by the reporting party, whether it is San Diego County or the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA, would handle the investigation. The exception would be where the agency contacted first was overwhelmed with other calls and could not respond. Under this scenario, the receiving agency would refer the call to the other agency (if overwhelmed). The San Diego Humane Society and SPCA receive no funding from the city or county for animal cruelty investigations. Funding is achieved through private donations.

San Diego County Animal Control is composed of 31 field staff providing animal control services, including animal cruelty investigation. The San Diego Humane Society and SPCA Cruelty Investigations Department has a Chief of Investigations, a lieutenant and three officers, and also works with the volunteer Animal Rescue Reserve. San Diego County Animal Control responds to approximately 4,500 cases of abuse and neglect each year. As a private, nonprofit organization that receives no tax dollars or government funding, the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA relies on financial support from donations and some fees for service.

## Organizational Model Discussion

There are generally three organizational models used around the country for animal cruelty investigations: 1) local government; 2) private non-profit; and, 3) mix of local government and private non-profit.

1. The local model (currently in use in King County) is the most common. The local government animal control authority investigates all animal control related cases, including animal cruelty. The trend shows more jurisdictions moving toward this model, which is the most widely used in Washington state. The City of Seattle and other western Washington jurisdictions use this model.
2. The non-profit model exists where a county or municipality contracts with a humane society or an SPCA for animal control services, including animal cruelty investigations. This model typically has the humane society or SPCA handling all elements of the required animal control services, including animal cruelty investigations and sheltering.
3. The third model exists where the duties are split between a jurisdiction and a private non-profit. Usually the non-profit handles the animal cruelty investigations and/or sheltering services and the county or municipality handles all other animal control services. In other instances, such as in San Diego, the municipality shares animal control services, including animal cruelty investigations with the local humane society or SPCA. Another type of mixed approach is where a jurisdiction (e.g., Renton and Des Moines) enforce animal control, including cruelty investigations through its police department and contract for sheltering services through a sheltering contract.

A recent national and local trend is impacting models #2 and #3. Local humane societies are canceling and/or not entering into contracts with local jurisdictions for animal control services due to the rising cost of providing those services. The most noteworthy example of this occurred in 1994 when the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) announced it would not bid on a new contract to provide the city of New York with animal control services. The ASPCA had provided New York with animal control services for roughly a century. New York subsequently formed its own animal control authority.

Here in Washington state, the Humane Society of Tacoma/Pierce County and SpokAnimal C.A.R.E. (Your Inland Northwest Humane Society) announced in 2005 that they would no longer provide animal control services to the respective local jurisdictions in their areas. In response, the cities of Lakewood and Tacoma ultimately were forced to form their own animal control programs. The city of Spokane is currently working toward forming its own animal control program.

## **Feasibility of Designating Cruelty Law Enforcement Responsibilities to 1-2 Officers**

### **Animal Cruelty Statistics**

In recent years, King County Animal Services and Programs averaged nearly 900 calls per year alleging animal cruelty. The volume of calls received exhibited an upward trend in 2002 when the number was 703 (in 2000 and 2001 the number was 566 and 575, respectively). In 2003 the number of calls rose to 804. It remained approximately at the same level in 2004 at 815. It then rose in 2005 to 1,002. The average over the three years was approximately 873 calls per year.

Ninety percent of those calls were unfounded. For example, many of the calls involved a healthy pet being kept on a chain in a backyard, or a dog whining and/or barking out of boredom. Under local laws, this does not constitute cruelty as long as the animal is not suffering and has adequate food, water and shelter.

In the remaining 10 percent of calls, the appropriate level of response in most cases was to educate the animal owner about responsible animal care, not cruelty. For example, the responding Animal Control Officer is encouraged to point out typical dog behavior from boredom and the need for frequent exercise along with other tips for controlling behavioral problems, such as digging and/or excessive barking.

Some cases, however, require enforcement action. Those actions include written notices of violation, and orders to correct pet care deficiencies that require appropriate follow-up. There have been approximately 10 cases per year that result in enforcement for animal cruelty.

The number of calls that result in charges for Animal Cruelty in the first or second degree filed by the King County Prosecutor varies annually, most recently from a high of seven in 1996, to a low of one in 2000. Between 1994 and 2005, following the passage of new state cruelty laws, a total of 47 cases resulted in criminal filings, an average of fewer than four cases per year.

### **King County Animal Control Officer Performance Averages**

During the three years from 2003 through 2005, each King County Animal Control Officer responded to an average of 1,250 calls overall. This average includes all animal cruelty calls.

### **King County Animal Services Current Staffing and Cruelty Case Procedures**

Currently, two Animal Control Field Sergeants are assigned to oversee and track animal cruelty investigations, in addition to their supervisory roles for all animal control field services. While the Field Sergeants are responsible for all animal control activity on their respective shifts, the highest priority is clearly placed on animal cruelty cases. The Field Sergeants provide oversight 365 days per year.

The Field Sergeants monitor animal cruelty calls as they are received. When the call appears to have the potential for being a first or second degree case of animal cruelty, the Sergeants are dispatched to the scene to provide maximum oversight. For other calls, the Animal Control Officer assigned to the specific geographic service area in which the call originated is dispatched to the scene. If the call appears to be a potential animal cruelty call, the Officer notifies the Duty Sergeant.

Under this model, King County Animal Services and Programs has two highly trained, highly skilled Sergeants tasked with oversight of all animal cruelty cases. While oversight of animal cruelty cases is not their only responsibility, it is considered top priority.

In addition, King County Animal Services and Programs have 14 Animal Control Officers responsible for investigating animal cruelty charges in their geographic service area. Most of these officers have many years of experience handling animal cruelty investigations, and each has attended animal cruelty training taught at the official Animal Control Academy, and many have also completed the national animal cruelty training offered through the University of Missouri.

Under the current model, King County Animal Services has a total of 16 staff (2 Sergeants and 14 Officers) responsible for animal cruelty investigations.

### **King County Animal Services Dispatch System**

King County Animal Services and Programs have divided its countywide service area into geographic service areas to which individual Animal Control Officers are assigned. The calls for service received via the Animal Control Call Center or 911 emergency response are dispatched in accordance with the geographic service area organization. The service area boundaries are drawn to distribute the calls as equally as possible based on average number of calls per year, together with geographic area and density of population. Some service areas are more urban and therefore smaller in geographic size, while some are rural and larger in size. Animal cruelty calls are received from all areas of the county. Because of this wide geographic distribution, the animal cruelty calls are currently dispatched to the geographic service area to achieve the best efficiency for initial response.

### **Recommendation that Field Sergeants and Officers handle cruelty cases**

While animal cruelty cases present a very tragic and horrific crime, designating one or two of the existing animal control officers to work solely on animal cruelty investigations would not provide a more effective response. This analysis and conclusion is predicated on King County Animal Cruelty Statistics and dispatch system realities for the large geographic area and number calls received alleging cruelty in King County. The report and fact sheet submitted to the County Council on May 22, 2006, by the Department of Records, Elections and Licensing Services of the total number of animal control calls during 2005 (15,307) presented a clear record of the number of reported animal cruelty calls (1,002), the number of unfounded animal cruelty calls (899), and the number of animal cruelty cases prosecuted (two).

Statistically there are not enough incidences of animal cruelty in King County to warrant the commitment of limited resources to address the caseload.

In light of the distribution of animal cruelty calls being so widespread in as large a geographic area as King County, it would not be efficient for one or two designated officers to make first contact on all animal cruelty calls. These Officers would encounter extensive travel time driving from one cruelty call to another. With the number of unfounded calls, time lost would be problematic at best in that it would foster slower responses to each additional animal cruelty call and would compound the dilemma. Such a structure would be counterproductive to the goals and objectives of the organization and the County's overall goal of improved service delivery.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Organization Model**

Our analysis leads us to the conclusion, that the current organizational model used by King County Animal Services and Programs to investigate animal cruelty cases is the most efficient, effective model for the local circumstances. Thousands of animal cruelty complaints are quickly and thoroughly investigated and brought to conclusion through a partnership between King County Animal Services, local police agencies, the King County Prosecutor, and information received from local humane societies and the public.

The models used in the cities of Detroit, Houston, and San Diego do not appear to be effective options for King County. Although these models seem highly effective for those cities, King County does not currently contract with a humane society or SPCA, and, in fact, King County formed its Animal Services and Programs agency in 1972 in response to the cessation of a contractual relationship with a local humane society. This occurred more than thirty years ago, significantly ahead of the national trend (city of New York example) that exists today.

We believe our current model, where cruelty investigations are handled by trained Animal Control Officers, makes the most sense for our local community. The University of Missouri Law Enforcement Training Institute offers Level I, Level II, Level III, and Level IV animal cruelty investigation training classes. The King County Animal Services and Program's two Field Sergeants have completed training through Level II. They will be sent to attend upper level courses III and IV by year-end 2007.

The decision to maintain the animal cruelty investigation function/responsibility in King County Animal Services and Programs is supported by the public investment in the agency, the risk and liability considerations and impacts involved in contracting law enforcement responsibilities, and the corresponding effects on potential contractors.

We recommend that the overall current organizational model continue, with improvements in coordination as outlined below.

## **Actions to Improve Efforts to Reduce/Eliminate Animal Cruelty**

### **Public Awareness/Education**

King County Animal Services and Programs proposes to partner with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) on a series of educational and training programs aimed at preventing animal cruelty and to pilot an Animal Cruelty Prevention program.

HSUS is the nation's largest animal protection organization, with more than ten million members with exceptional knowledge and resources at its disposal. HSUS works with animal shelters and animal control agencies throughout the country on educational campaigns focused on numerous topics that relate to animals and animal care, including animal cruelty.

These programs would include:

- The First Strike™ Campaign -- an educational initiative launched in 1997 by HSUS to increase public and professional awareness of the connection between animal cruelty and human violence and to encourage professionals involved in anti-violence to work together towards solutions. HSUS would make First Strike information materials available to King County Animal Services and Programs to distribute through shelters, schools, and community groups. HSUS has agreed to provide King County Animal Control Officers with First Strike training at no cost.
- National Association for Humane and Environmental Education (NAHEE) – an anti-cruelty program specifically aimed at youth in our community. HSUS agrees to make NAHEE materials available to King County Animals Services and Program for distribution through King County Schools.
- Animal Cruelty Rewards – a protocol is in place between HSUS and King County Animal Services and Programs wherein HSUS offers a standing monetary reward for information leading to arrests and convictions in animal cruelty cases. The reward program includes a protocol for dissemination of reward information via the media. This type of program would be coordinated with local animal support and protection groups as well.

### **Increased Coordination /Improving Animal Control Policies and Procedures**

Improvements to service delivery can be achieved by increased coordination and public awareness. This improvement was realized by transitioning our current Licensing Enforcement Coordinator to take on responsibility for coordinating all animal cruelty cases.

Immediate actions have been taken to improve the Animal Control Section polices and procedures for Coordination of animal cruelty enforcement between animal Control

officers and Law Enforcement. The Enforcement Coordinator of Licensing has been assigned to focus on coordinating all animal cruelty cases and will be responsible for ensuring appropriate communication between Animal Services and Programs, and local Law Enforcement agencies. The Enforcement coordinator will follow-up with the Field Sergeant handling the investigation, to ensure timely reports, responses to the public, and coordination with local police. The Enforcement Coordinator will develop consistent approaches and practices for ensuring effective communication and coordination and delivery of high quality services through timely and professional responses.

We are pleased to report we have already seen positive results, with the additional coordination efforts. Recently, animal control responded to a horrific case in Auburn, where two men savagely attacked a defenseless black lab with a baseball bat. Responding quickly King County Animal Control Officers, Auburn Police Department, a Field Sergeant, and the Enforcement Coordinator began a coordinated effort with the police department to help locate the suspects, by issuing joint press releases, and working with local animal advocate groups.

Special care was provided for the lab, which animal control officers named "Buddy". The enforcement coordinator sought out a non-profit group to assist in the collection of donations to cover rising medical costs to care for "Buddy" and worked with the police department to release pictures of the suspects and offer a reward for information leading to an arrest. The reward was provided through the Humane Society of the United States.

Because of the concerted effort the suspects were brought into custody within a week. Animal Control will continue efforts to assist the police departments and work with humane organizations and other groups.

**Conclusion:**

The proposals presented to improve King County Animal Services Animal Cruelty operations offer greater coordination for animal cruelty investigations in all of King County. More importantly, the proposal to partner with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) on a series of educational and training programs aimed at preventing animal cruelty are giant steps toward eliminating animal cruelty in King County. Assigning only two officers to animal cruelty on a countywide basis would not be an efficient or effective use of resources given the geographic dimensions of the County and number of complaints received. Advanced training should further increase efforts to improve overall animal cruelty investigations.

This opportunity to review our Animal Control policies and procedures has proved beneficial in the effort to reduce/eliminate animal cruelty.