Grand Jury Report

RESPONSE FORM

Grand Jury Report Title: County Delivery of Animal Control Services

Report Dated: 6/9/14

Response Form Submitted By:

Douglas L. Losak

Response MUST be submitted, per Penal Code §933.05, no later than:

9/7/14

We have reviewed the report and submit our responses to the FINDINGS portion of the report as follows:

X I (we) agree with the Findings numbered:

4, 8, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18

X I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the Findings numbered below, and have ***attached, as required***, a statement specifying any portion of the Finding that are disputed with an explanation of the reasons therefore.
1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 19, 24

We have reviewed the report and submit our responses to the RECOMMENDATIONS portion of the report as follows:

☐ The following Recommendation(s) have been implemented and ***attached, as required***, is a summary describing the implemented actions:

☐ The following Recommendation(s) have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, ***attached, as required*** is a time frame for implementation:

X The following Recommendation(s) require further analysis, and ***attached as required,*** is an explanation and the scope and parameters of the planned analysis, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared, discussed and approved by the officer and/or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed: (This time frame shall not exceed six (6) months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury Report)
1, 2

X The following Recommendations will NOT be implemented because they are not warranted and/or are not deemed reasonable, ***attached, as required*** is an explanation therefore:
5, 6, 7, 10

We have completed the above responses, and have attached, as required the following number of pages to this response form:

Number of Pages attached: 4

We understand that responses to Grand Jury Reports are public records. They will be posted on the Grand Jury website: www.co.mendocino.ca.us/grandjury. The clerk of the responding agency is required to maintain a copy of the response.

We understand that we must submit this signed response form and any attachments as follows:

First Step: E-mail (word documents or scanned pdf file format) to:

- The Grand Jury Foreperson at: grandjury@co.mendocino.ca.us
- The Presiding Judge: grandjury@mendocino.courts.ca.gov

Second Step: Mail all originals to:

Mendocino County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 939
Ukiah, CA 95482

Printed Name: Douglas L. Losak
Title: Acting County Counsel

Signed:_____ Date: _____

MENDOCINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT TITLED:

COUNTY DELIVERY OF ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICES

FINDINGS:
(F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F8, F9, F10, F11, F12, F13, F14, F15, F16, F17, F18, F19, F24)

F1 - Manual re-entry of data is costly, inefficient, and introduces the possibility of transcription errors.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with this Finding. The Board of Supervisors agrees with and adopts the response of the Mendocino County Sheriff to this Finding.

F2 - Animal Control Officers often have difficulty making contact with Animal Care while in the field.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees in part with this Finding. The Board of Supervisors agrees with and adopts the response of the Mendocino County Sheriff to this Finding.

F3 - Information access limitations restrict efficient handling of loose and stray animals, because no background information is available to officers in the field.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees in part with this Finding. The officers do not have computers in their vehicles, but they are able to contact Animal Control by cell phone in many areas of the County. If the animal in question has a license on it, or if the owner's name is known, it is possible to access information in the field.

F5 – Not all data about an individual case is necessary to proceed on most licensing (small animal) cases. Large animal abuse or neglect cases require more extensive information from both Aegis and Chameleon to proceed.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees in part with this Finding. It is unclear what the Grand Jury means by this "finding." An officer can start a licensing case on partial information about the owner, etc. They can also start an animal abuse or neglect case without having the owner's full name and other information.

F9 - The absence of an Animal Control Officer stationed on the coast represents a serious risk to public health and safety.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with this Finding. Law enforcement, both County and City, respond to Animal Control calls when there is a risk of harm to citizens.

F10 - Coastal calls require at least two extra hours of officer time.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees in part with this Finding. See response to Finding 9 above. Additionally, response times will be shorter if Animal Control is already on patrol in the coastal area.

F11 - There is an egregious degradation of coverage on the coast.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with this Finding. Although there is no Animal Control Officer stationed on the coast, the Animal Control Officers are out in the field while on duty and respond to calls from the coast. In addition, law enforcement officers, both County and City, respond to Animal Control calls when there is a risk of harm to citizens.

F15 - The impact of budget decreases has degraded services for the entire County.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees in part with this Finding. The Board of Supervisors implemented budget cuts in all departments in response to decreased revenue and increased costs while attempting to preserve critical services and deliver additional services in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible based on the resources available.

F17 - Animal Control Officers are more than dog catchers. They are underpaid for the level of training they are required to have and the responsibilities they perform.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees in part with this Finding. The Board of Supervisors agrees that Animal Control Officers are more than dog catchers. The Board of Supervisors disagrees that they are underpaid when compared to other County employees.

F19 - A comparison of job descriptions reveals a higher level of responsibility of the Animal Control Officer than that of the Deputy Probation Officer I. (Appendices A and B)

The Board of Supervisors wholly disagrees with this Finding. This is like comparing apples to oranges. The duties and responsibilities of an Animal Control Officer are necessarily different from those of a Probation Officer I.

F24 - Lack of prosecution leads to Animal Control putting more emphasis on working with abusive owners longer in an attempt to alter owner behavior before proceeding with removal of the animals.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with this Finding. The Board of Supervisors agrees with and adopts the response of the Mendocino County Sheriff to this Finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
R1, R2, R5, R6, R7, R10

R1 - Animal Control Officers be given the technology and equipment to access the animal care database from the field. (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5)

This Recommendation requires further analysis. The County will ask staff to determine if this proposal is technologically feasible, and if so, the cost of implementation. It is hoped that such this analysis will be complete within six months.

R2 - Animal Control and Animal Care be re-integrated into one operational unit under the Sheriff's Office. (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5)

This Recommendation requires further analysis. The Board of Supervisors will request that Sheriff Allman and H&HSA Director Cryer analyze the pros and cons of this proposal and make a recommendation to the Board within six months.

R5 - The County Administration restore the level of staffing of the Sheriff's Office Animal Control unit to at least four Animal Control Officers and restore appropriate funding. (F8, F9, F10, F11, F12, F13, F14, F15)

This Recommendation will not be implemented as it is not reasonable as the County cannot afford to implement this recommendation at this time. If in the future, there are sufficient funds to hire more Animal Control Officers, this recommendation will be given serious consideration.

R6 - The Animal Control Officers' salaries should be made at least commensurate with that of a Deputy Probation Officer I. (F16, F17, F18, F19)

This Recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted. The duties of a Probation Officer and an Animal Control Officer are different in significant aspects and one should not be compared to the other.

R7 - Animal Control Officers be given the opportunity to join MCERA Safety Officers classification. (F18, F19)

This Recommendation will not be implemented as it is not reasonable as the County lacks the funding to implement this recommendation.

R10 - Board of Supervisors pass a County ordinance which forbids individuals found guilty of animal abuse from owning animals for a set period of time. (F24)

This Recommendation will not be implemented, because it is not warranted. The District Attorney has the ability to make this recommendation in each case that he/she feels it is appropriate. The Court could also impose this condition on its own if it believes such a term of probation is required.