

Franklin County Animal Advisory Board Minutes November 19, 2008

The Animal Advisory Board of Franklin County, North Carolina met at 7:00 p.m. at the Animal Shelter on T Kemp Rd. The following Board Members were present: ex-officio members: Franklin County Animal Control Director Graham Stallings, Commissioner Bob Winters, Franklin County Humane Society President Ida Estep and Kimberley Barth, DVM; voting Board Members: Dianne Barrett, Chip Broughton, Elyse Goldman, DVM, Bess Nicholson, John Ryan and Paulette Woods. Absent: voting member Brenda Simmons. There were no members of the general public present.

- 1) Board members reviewed and approved minutes of the October 22, 2008 meeting.
- 2) Plan of action to present to Commissioners

Broughton restated the AAB's mission to support the spay/neuter initiative in the County. He posed the question: "What is our best course of action to recommend to the County so that County residents have their pets spayed/neutered? Is licensing the best plan, charging more for animals not sterilized?"

Barth stated that Raleigh vet's register animals for a license when owners bring them in for their rabies shot. The owner pays the vet for the license and they forward the money and the paperwork to the appropriate municipality. Licensing in Franklin County will also help to enforce rabies vaccinations. Barth will check on how Raleigh handles the details.

Stallings recommended the AAB do a comprehensive study of other counties in NC, which are comparable in population and size to Franklin, on how they handle licensing of dogs/cats. The AAB needs to put together a plan to take to the Commissioners. New Hanover has an excellent county wide program that has been evolving over the years. The AAB could pick another county's plan or pick ideas from each county and implement its own plan. During the task force it was estimated there were 28,000 households in Franklin County with approximately 1.8 pets per household; a license fee multiplied by that many pets would create income for spay/neuter education.

Stallings continued that in the past registration was done on tax records, listed on property taxes. Stallings quoted the March 5, 2006 News & Observer focusing on spay/neuter, suggesting using it as a model. "The solution has three components: public awareness about the need to spay and neuter; accessible and affordable sterilization options for low-income pet owners; and municipal revenue from a county license fee for unaltered animals". The AAB will need to be prepared for opponents to licensing.

Broughton questioned the suggestion that hunting dogs and show dogs should pay a lesser rate for licensing. Alton Parrish, the Task Force Hunter representative, will be invited to an AAB meeting to discuss controlling the dog/cat population in Franklin County. Broughton suggested a very low, minimal license fee for altered dogs/cats with a much higher rate for unaltered as an incentive to get animals spay/neutered.

Estep stated show dogs cannot be altered and still show in conformation. Show dogs are too valuable for their owners to allow them to breed indiscriminately. Some states require proof that a dog has been entered in a certain number of shows to receive a reduced license fee. Estep suggested there should be a lesser rate for show and hunting dogs—maybe a multi-dog license fee as is done in other states. Barth suggested an exemption for service dogs.

Ryan and Broughton will check the license fees for surrounding counties to Franklin. Stallings suggested contacting Joe Blumquist, animal shelter inspector with NCDCA, to supply a list of websites with license information.

3) Updates on previous topics or new issues

Disaster Companion Animal Shelter Plan

Estep provided an update from the Disaster Companion Animal Shelter Plan meeting Dr. Tickle presented on pet disaster planning. Estep stated the state has mobile trailers, CAMET (Companion Animal Mobile Equipment Trailer), set up with cages, plastic to cover floors and internal supplies. The CAMET contains the supplies but volunteers and a building are still needed. So far it appears that County schools are opposed to having animals sheltered in the hallways or gyms with owners caring for them. The Red Cross wants owners to provide proof of all shots, including Bordetella, before entering a shelter which is unlikely during a disaster. It was recommended that proof be required for rabies shots but owners could sign a release regarding the possibility of unvaccinated animals contracting other diseases while in the shelter. According to Randy Liken shelters are set up and opened by the County; the Red Cross does not have decision making power; they are there to assist. All funding and grants are done through the EMS coordinator, Liken. It was stressed that external groups such as HSUS and EARS not be allowed to come in independently they must come in under the state/county. Estep added that another issue with the Pet Disaster plan is that it includes only dogs, cats, and small pets like hamsters, not horses.

Broughton stated there have been problems in the past with people being turned away at shelters with their pets. Winters said the Red Cross had threatened to shut the Lake Royale shelter down if pets were allowed.

Feral Cats at Landfill

Broughton stated Lawanna Johnson was disappointed in the letter issued about the feral cats at the landfill. She has concerns with the cats not being monitored once they are trapped and the treatment of trapped cats. Johnson has offered T/N/R and monitoring of the colony but because of liability issues her offer was declined by the County. According to all the studies T/N/R is the way to solve the feral cat problem and Johnson will continue to pursue the problem of the feral cats at the landfill.

Stallings stated AC is not currently trapping at the landfill but if they receive a complaint and have to trap. Johnson will be notified. Barrett stated this is a golden opportunity for the County having someone that is willing to spay/neuter, test, and give shots, feed and monitor the colony at no charge. Estep stated the issue with Johnson's proposal is how to structure it so it will not create liability for the county.

Shelter adoption spay/neuter follow-up

Broughton voiced concerns that the \$50 spay/neuter deposit included in the adoption fee was not enough to make it worth having animals not spayed or neutered. If adopters failed to spay/neuter animals, the shelter first needs to call the adopter to see if they need assistance in finding a vet. If they do not spay/neuter, the shelter needs to follow the Ordinance and have an ACO pick the animal up.

Stallings stated at this time there has not been a problem, spay/neuter has been getting done but if there is a problem AC can call the adopter and if they are unwilling to follow the agreement, AC will follow the Ordinance and pick the animal up.

Goldman offered to do spay/neuter on animals adopted from AC at the same rate she offers to the FCHS. The adoption fee would include the vet service and an ACO would take the animal to a participating vet. After recovery the adopter would pick the animal up at the vet. Under this plan, AC would know the animal had been taken to the vet. Goldman will check with area vets and work up a proposal of costs for the next meeting.

Stallings stated that Gaston County uses this system, but it would require amending the Ordinance. Estep asked about people who qualified for lower cost spay/neuter through SNIF, PALS or Safe Haven or those who wished to use their private vets. Other issues raised included the issue of monopoly, using County assets for personal transport, and the complications of again amending the Ordinance.

Miscellaneous

Broughton stated that ACO Kathy Johnson did an excellent job at the volunteer recruitment meeting; she is great employee going the extra mile. At the meeting Johnson explained what was expected of the volunteers. Estep suggested having Johnson go with her to the schools to talk about animal care and the facility

- 4) The next meeting is scheduled for December 17, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Shelter.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by Paulette Woods, Secretary to the Board