



Contra Costa County Animal Services Department



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Contra Costa Animal Services Investigation Report Summary *July 15, 2016*

On June 18th, 2016, Contra Costa Animal Services (CCAS) shelter staff performed end of life services on five dogs, including animals Barbie (animal 844111) and Tommy (animal 845097). Shortly after the end of life procedures had been carried out, shelter staff was alerted to a potential mistake in the euthanasia of Barbie. Upon review, it was verified that a 501(c)(3) organization had confirmed that they would adopt Barbie, which under CCAS policy would have prevented the euthanasia of that animal. CCAS staff was also alerted at that time about a potential mistake regarding the euthanasia of Tommy. CCAS staff and volunteers place a tremendous priority on saving the lives of animals and were heartbroken to learn about the unfortunate error that resulted in the euthanasia of Barbie. As such, CCAS endeavors to fully understand and address the gaps that led to this unfortunate mistake.

The Department conducted an investigation to: a) identify the circumstances that led to the erroneous euthanasia of Barbie on June 18th, 2016, b) to identify if Tommy was erroneously euthanized and c) to eliminate potential gaps in Contra Costa Animal Services' (CCAS) euthanasia processes and procedures.

KEY FINDINGS

Our investigation of the incidents concerning Barbie, Tommy and CCAS' euthanasia protocols revealed the following:

- CCAS erroneously euthanized Barbie as a result of communication errors. If CCAS staff and volunteers had followed the established protocols for recording animal status updates and performing end of life procedures, Barbie would not have been euthanized.
- CCAS staff and volunteers did not properly follow the common practices for communicating updates about Barbie's status.
- CCAS staff did not follow established protocols for performing the end of life procedure on Barbie.
- The investigation found no wrongdoing with regards to the euthanasia of Tommy. In the case of Tommy, there was no confirmed adopter or transfer partner recorded in the animal's Chameleon profile. While there was a rescue group interested in adopting Tommy, they had not notified CCAS to record a confirmed placement of Tommy.

IMPROVEMENTS UNDERWAY

- CCAS is revising its processes and protocols for performing end of life procedures to include additional safety nets that will serve to minimize the chance of similar errors.
- CCAS will hire a paid staff position to oversee the Department's Transfer Partner program.
- CCAS is in the process of creating the position of Animal Center Operations Manager to support CCAS' Director and staff in managing CCAS shelter operations.
- CCAS is scheduling new trainings with an independent trainer on euthanasia and will provide additional ongoing trainings for any CCAS staff member who performs end of life procedures as part of their required job duties to ensure that all processes and protocols are strictly followed.
- CCAS will create a single point of contact between Transfer Partners and CCAS through an email account dedicated solely to Transfer Partner communications.

CCAS LIVE RELEASE RATE

CCAS' live release rate has increased significantly in recent years, from 46% in 2011 to 75% in 2015 and 79.4% through May of 2016. This trend is indicative of CCAS' emphasis on saving lives, and is a direct result of improvements the Department has made that have helped foster stronger relationships with CCAS' transfer partners and the public.