

Highlights

Why We Did This Audit

Resolution 160680 directed the city auditor to conduct an audit of the city's Animal Health and Public Safety Division.

Our audit focused on whether Animal Health and Public Safety has implemented processes and provided training consistent with recommended practices.

Background

Animal Health and Public Safety is a division of the Neighborhoods and Housing Services Department and is responsible for performing animal care and control services for the city.

The division enforces the city's animal control ordinances and manages the city's contract with Kansas City Pet Project which operates the city animal shelter.

The Animal Health and Public Safety Division responds to approximately 16,000 calls for service annually. Animal control officers respond to the following calls for service:

- Owned animals running at large
- Stray animals
- Neglect and cruelty of animals
- Injured animals
- Wildlife in homes
- Animal bites of humans

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PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Animal Health and Public Safety: Community Vision and Improved Management Oversight Needed

What We Found

The Animal Health and Public Safety Division's (AHPS) focus on enforcement of animal-related code violations rather than education or field resolution is not always successful in achieving the desired outcome of improved animal welfare and public safety. More than two-thirds of animals impounded for cruelty-neglect violations in Kansas City were not reclaimed by their owners. These owners are not educated on responsible pet ownership, which may allow a cycle of neglect to continue if they obtain another animal. Some cities are focusing animal care and control practices on responsible pet ownership and connecting owners with resources to resolve problems in the field.

AHPS and Kansas City Pet Project, which provides shelter services for the city, have a strained working relationship, which interferes with the ability of this public-private partnership to collaborate effectively in the delivery of the city's animal care and control services. A shared community vision of how the city will protect the public and animals is needed to direct the activities of both organizations towards common goals and provide benchmarks for success.

AHPS's enforcement efforts are not consistent. The city's dangerous dog and bite quarantine ordinances are not consistently enforced. Follow-up inspections for cruelty-neglect complaints and violations are not always conducted and investigations are not adequately documented.



Division management does not fully use or analyze the data it collects, which could be used to evaluate the timeliness of response to calls for service, assess staff scheduling in relation to call volumes, and identify enforcement patterns. Training received by animal control officers and supervisors covers most recommended topics, but management should ensure staff receives annual training.

What We Recommend

We make recommendations to improve the Animal Health and Public Safety Division's delivery of animal care and control services by:

- Improving the working relationship between Animal Health and Public Safety and KC Pet Project.
- Establishing a process for stakeholders to develop the city's vision for animal care and control.
- Remediating animal code violations and documenting investigations consistently.
- Analyzing performance data to provide accountability and assist in managing resources.
- Providing consistent and ongoing training.

Management agreed with the recommendations.