

Commissioners hear animal control report

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Forsyth County commissioners heard a staff report on ways to improve animal control during a Thursday, Oct. 13, briefing.

Forsyth County Animal Control is responsible for calls on animal cruelty, rabies and vicious animals. It also runs an animal shelter that receives about 8,000 animals a year on average.

The department has about 29 employees and receives more than 1,000 service calls a year.

The report, which was requested by the commissioners, focused on response time. Urgent calls for things like rescuing an animal in danger or an attack in progress are responded to in less than an hour on average. Calls about cruelty, animal bites and rabies exposure are responded to in four hours on average. Less urgent calls can take days to respond to. Calls about stray and nuisance animals and neglect take an average of eight days to respond to.

The report also included stats on the animal shelter. It showed nearly a quarter of animals at the shelter were adopted and nearly 10 percent were reclaimed by their owners last year. About 61 percent of the animals were euthanized in 2015, which is the lowest percentage of euthanasia at the shelter in eight years.

Deputy County Manager Damon Sanders-Pratt, who presented the report, gave numerous options to improve service beyond increasing staffing. They included contracting with animal welfare groups to provide adoption services, renaming the depart-

ment to "Rabies Control & Cruelty Investigations" to emphasize its core mission, narrowing the focus to rabies and vicious dogs, putting animal control in the Sheriff's Office's or health department's hands,

said they could add to the ordinance that animal control officers would give out such information with any warnings they issue about tethering.

Commissioner Don

Martin reiterated his opposition to the ordinance. He gave the example of a man who contacted him saying that he currently has his dog on a 20-foot leash and believed he would have to

put it in a small kennel box under the ordinance.

"This is not like some no-brainer," said Martin.

Kaplan, who's been working on the ordinance for a year and half, dis-

agreed.

"This is not rocket science," he said. "This is not the most critical thing we've handled, I don't know how it became that way."



Martin



Kaplan

and implementing more aggressive civil penalties for violations. He also said that the shelter could reduce euthanasia by not excepting all voluntary surrenders, but doing so might cause more people to abandon their animals.

Sanders-Pratt also gave a presentation on a new tethering ordinance that commissioners are scheduled to vote on in their Oct. 24 meeting. The ordinance bans unsupervised tethering with a one-year education period before it goes into effect.

The discussion by county commissioners once again focused on tethering. County Commissioner Walter Marshall wanted the ordinance's education campaign to include contact information for nonprofits that build fences for those who can't afford them. Commissioner Ted Kaplan

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