

Site Visit to Reno Nevada Humane Society and Washoe County Animal Services January 17 – 19, 2010

Quick Facts:

- Saving Animals and Customer Service is the # 1 Priority. Resonated throughout our visit.
- 65,000 s.f. building, shared function with Washoe County Animal Control
- Budget: \$3.5 M, Shelter is privatized; \$7.5 M, Animal Control (highly unionized)
- Building was completed in 2005; \$16 M came from taxpayers, \$4 M paid by Humane Society
- Staff: 80 people, NHS kennel staff make \$7.75/hr.
- Shelter Intake: 11,000 animals per year (mostly cats), Animal Control: 5,000 animals per year.
- The construction was built to minimize disease, and minimize contamination. Each pod had at most 10 animals, only one animal to a kennel.
- Classical music played throughout the facility, in every pod, in surgery, in the lobby.
- Shelter has more cats than dogs; about 700 animals under roof, nearly 500 are cats, and 200-250 dogs
- Breeds: Saw very few pure breeds; one older lab, a Pointer, bassett, a few Shep mixes and small dogs (Chihuahua) but nearly all are Pits.
- 5-6% kill rate
- Average length of stay 15-22 days
- All animals are fed *twice* a day...cats are fed a tablespoon of wet food in the morning, just to test if they are eating, then dry food in the afternoon
- Most, if not all adoptions are onsite.

Lobby:

Upon entering the building, there is an open, semi-circular desk for “adoption counselors” – there are 5-7 counselors helping customers. Each counselor has a computer, and customers sit face to face with counselors while adopting. Each adopter is given an adoption packet.

Every adoption is **celebrated** with the ringing of a BELL. There is a measure on the wall to indicate adoption goals and where they are for the month. January’s goal was 800 adoptions.

- Cheerful atmosphere, no glass partitions or dividers
- We heard “can I help you” 100 times
- Customer Service is the #1 priority. “No” is not an option.
- Hallway, lobby and atrium space filled with large wire cat cages. Spotless.
- Windows off hallway show several cat colonies with furniture (sofas, etc.)



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Adoption Center is open daily. There is a separate entrance for Adoption, and Owner Surrender (called Admissions). This is to prevent contamination.

Admissions:



Admissions are open **ONLY** Monday – Friday, 11am-5pm. Drop off fee is \$25. Director says that they are considering having appointments for drop-offs (with counseling); currently animals are brought in a separate entrance nearby, examined by a tech, and placed in quarantine cages until approved to enter the shelter by the vets.

All animals are:

- Weighed on intake, vaccinated and de-wormed.
- All animals are behavior evaluated, tested for Parvo or Pan-Luek
- Data is entered into Chameleon and the status is marked: needs microchip and surgery, needs behavior test, adoption pending etc. The process is reported and updated daily, which makes the flow of animals effortless.

Behavior Evaluation

NHS uses “Safer Assessment Tests” to evaluate an animal’s disposition. This includes the following tests:

- Includes Sit, Stare (no stare is best),
- Sensitivity (rubbing back, pulling the coat and ears),
- Tag (walking on leash and tagging dog’s butt)
- Squeeze (feeling chest and moving down leg to paw, squeeze paw),
- Food Bowl Test, Toys (playful),
- “Dog Meet Dog” test,
- Cat Test (walking dog through cat alley in shelter)

Each kennel is marketing with Dog Walking Dots: **GREEN DOT**: Easy to Walk, **YELLOW DOT**: Experienced volunteer walkers only, **PURPLE DOT**: Staff Walk Only
Also, cats have DECLAWED stickers on their cages.

If an animal has behavior issues, the animal goes to training.

Kennels:

Open to outside with guillotine; staff cited that open kennels work sometimes, but not in colder weather that Reno sometimes has (it was very cold when we were there).

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Drains are circular and in the inside kennel in the corner; dogs have eaten or chewed most of the drain covers, so there is usually just a 4-5 inch hole in the corner.

In the morning, the dogs are put outside, and the feces is removed and thrown into the trash. The kennel is sprayed with **hot** water. Then a foamy solution (Nutraquat) is applied and remains standing for 10 minutes. Then this is rinsed and a disinfectant solution is applied. Then the kennel is rinsed and dried. The same process is repeated for the outdoor runs. All grates are cleaned daily, and all bowls and washed daily. The kennel care staff makes \$7.75 and takes great pride in keeping their pods clean, and



maintaining inventory of their animals. The kennel care taker knew all of his dogs, which were mostly pit bulls. Any behavior issue or other issue is noted in the computer. If the animal becomes ill, he/she is immediately removed and taken to ISO. ISO had ONLY 10 animals. They are extremely cognizant of contamination, so different gloves must be worn from kennel to kennel.

Kennels are identified with a Number (1) and a barcode which matches the animal ID to the number. Inventories are performed in the morning and evening using a scanner. Kennel Card and Kennel Barcode is scanned to ensure a match.

Post Adoptive Care:

Cats and dogs can be sent home on meds. Adopters have two weeks to get them treated at the clinic before the onus goes to the new vet.

Fostering Animals

NHS does not have a Foster-to-Adopt program. Fosters must be at least 18 and have a current ID. They must fill out an Application & Contract.

- Computer System can “flag” animals as “needing a foster”
 - Priority Lists: Bottle Feeders, Sick Babies
 - Hardest to Place: Moms/Babies & Ferals
- Incoming calls from Fosters needing medical help are transferred to the Clinic and must have an Appointment (Appts. are after 1 PM)
- Foster Care Emergency Phone for After-Hours Foster Emergencies
- Foster Coordinator does follow-up calls
- NHS has 150 active families in the foster program.

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- Contact information is tracked on a spreadsheet, and fosters name is put into the computer. Foster families are marked with yellow, red or other indicating the family is or is not a good foster candidate.
- They recognize the foster families with Gold and Platinum Fosters
- NHS provides a “Starter Kit” for new fosters (food, bag of litter, baby bottle & formula, Friskies turkey pate for gruel, syringes, etc.)
- Tell fosters if they have parvo in their house, there is a 1 year wait period before they can foster again. Clean with bleach.
- FOSTERS MUST CHECK IN EVERY 2 WEEKS!

Operations

The Ops manager pulls for Surgery, directs flow of animals, conducts inspections and walk-thrus, alerts vets to animals needing med help; and monitors staff to ensure they are performing inventory. The Ops manager produces reports each day for status of the animals (i.e. where they are in the process). In addition, a daily treatment plan is produced for the sick animals, and after meds are administered, the system is updated.

- All cats go in Cardboard Carriers for Adopters purchased from Butler Vet Supply.
- Dog Food: ALL donated lots of Pedigree and they get broken bags from Wal-Mart.
- Cat cages are cleaned with paper towels and detergent. Gloves are changed after each cage is cleaned.
- Food dishes for cats: French Fry cardboard dishes from a restaurant supply, thrown out after
- Litter: Only 1 cup placed in box; boxes are cardboard boxes from a vendor (100,000 boxes at 12 cents each)
- Litter is donated from local “kitty litter mines” (oil dry)
- Cats are not removed during daily cleaning; paper towel is sprayed, then used to wipe inside of cage; dishes and litter pan are thrown out, water changed
- Gloves changed between kennels
- Any cats needing to be removed from kennels are placed in “feral boxes”—gray boxes with Lucite fronts that they bleach out afterwards—used for transporting cats around the shelter or removing them from kennels...also for use inside the kennel for a feral cat to hide in...

The Animal Control Officers have computers in their truck, and drivers can put in animal into system and get the A-number while still on truck. In addition, the ACO scans the animal to see if there is a microchip. ACO's job is to return the animal to their rightful owner. Goal is to increase the number of animals returned home BEFORE they head for the shelter.

Animal Help Desk

One full time staffer is in charge of call backs from the hotline. She has a script she follows and offers solutions to pet issues. “NO” is not an option. She counsels people

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on issues they have, answers questions and logs each question and resolution into a spreadsheet. This is not automated. She forwards issues as appropriate. Her goal is to keep people from surrendering their pets by offering solutions and advice. 80-100 calls/day...some go directly to her, but most go to VOICEMAIL, and these are checked every 1-2 hours; urgent situations and animal surrenders have priority. All closed cases are followed up with an email.

The most remarkable thing about our visit is that every person from kennel cleaner, to marketing, to adoptions, to adoption counselors had the same goal – to save lives, to keep the place disease free, to match pets up with people, and ensure that every customer walked away with a positive experience.

-Marci Glennon

