

2018 RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: Dogs on the Run

Report Date: 06/26/2018

Response by: W. Honsal, Sheriff, County of Humboldt

FINDINGS

1. The Sheriff agrees with the findings numbered: F1
2. The Sheriff disagrees wholly or partly with the finding: F6, F7, F9

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations numbered R1 and R3 has been implemented.
2. R3, R6, R8 has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future (Beginning of 2019).
3. R5 requires further analysis.
4. R9 will not be implemented at this time because it is not reasonable due to the expense

Date: 9/27/2018

Signed: 

Number of pages attached: 3

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE SUMMARY STATEMENT

Findings:

F1. There is little communication across animal control jurisdictions regarding bite histories for dogs, which puts the public at increased risk for dog attacks upon people and pets.

Response:

We agree and improvements in our records management system are in the process of being implemented that should resolve this issue. Our new records management system (RIMS) will be able to interface with the records management systems for the City of Eureka, the City of Arcata, and the City of Fortuna who also use the RIMS record management system.

F6. Due to inconsistent follow-through by Humboldt County Animal Control, the City of Eureka Animal Control, and the City of Fortuna Animal Control to ensure proper quarantine of dogs which have bitten people and pets, and verification of rabies for them, Humboldt County residents are at risk of contracting rabies.

Response:

Humboldt County Animal Control covers a large area. With the resources we have it is often difficult to conduct follow up when new in progress calls take priority. It is also common for dog owners to move or relocate their dogs making it harder for Animal Control to complete follow up in a timely manner. This is an issue we are aware of and we are conducting further analysis to find ways to improve in this area.

F7. Lack of cross-reporting dog bites to the Humboldt County Public Health Department Local Health Officer by county and city animal control agencies places the county citizens at risk of a rabies outbreak.

Response:

We agree that the lack of cross-reporting is an issue but disagree that it places citizens at risk of a rabies outbreak. Whenever there is a question regarding the health status or location of a potentially rabid animal this information is reported to Environmental or Public Health.

F9. Residents of Humboldt County are unaware if a potentially dangerous dog or vicious dog resides within their neighborhood, placing them or their pets at risk of being attacked or bitten.

Response:

Unless an animal has been declared as potentially dangerous or vicious through a court hearing, we are limited in the information we can provide to the public. If the animal has been declared dangerous with court ordered restrictions we can and do make efforts to notify the complainant. Our new records management system, when fully implemented, will allow the public to search specific locations for potential hazards.

Recommendations

R3. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office establish a database accessible by all Humboldt County Law Enforcement Agencies which shall contain identification, location, and type of incident for all dog attacks within Humboldt County. This database should be established and operational by March 31, 2019. (F1)

Response:

We agree and are in the process of implementing our new records management system. Our new records management system (RIMS) should be up and fully operational by the end of 2018. RIMS has a "collaborate" feature that gives allied agencies the ability to search our system and vis versa. Once fully operational, other law enforcement agencies, as well as the public, will be able to search our database for information relating to past law enforcement/animal control calls at specific locations within Humboldt County.

R5. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office, the City of Eureka Police Department, and the City of Fortuna Police Department establish a checklist, similar to the one found in Appendix A, to be embedded within the Animal Control Report forms, The checklist should function as a reminder to Animal Control Officers of all the follow-up information needed for a complete report, and ensure no report is closed until all follow-up has been documented within the report. This checklist should be in use by December 31, 2018. (F7)

Response:

This recommendation requires further analysis. With the implementation of our new records management system, it may not be possible to embed the checklist within the overall Animal Control report. It can be attached as a separate document and included in the case file. We agree this can be a helpful tool when conducting an investigation and will take steps to implement some variation of the recommendation. The supervisor reviewing the reports will also ensure that the report is complete and follow-up is documented.

R6. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Humboldt county Animal Control, the City of Eureka Animal Control, and the City of Fortuna Animal Control comply with the state of California Animal Control Code and provide monthly reports to the Public Health Department of all animal bites that occurred within their jurisdiction for said month. This revision should be complete by December 31, 2018. (F8)

Response:

We accept this recommendation and are taking steps to have it implemented. When our new records management system is fully implemented it will make compiling statistics and gathering information much easier. It should be no problem to comply with this request within the specified time period.

R8. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Humboldt County Animal Shelter establish an information page on its website notifying the public of the location, description of the dog, and name of the owner of all dogs in the county identified as Potentially Dangerous or Vicious. This page should be accessible to the public by December 31, 2018. (F9)

Response:

We accept the recommendation and will conduct further analysis as to how to implement such a program. This information will have to be legally appropriate to ensure that proper due process has been provided. The sheriff's office staff will work with County Webmaster, as well as county council and the shelter manager to ensure that public information such as "potentially dangerous and vicious animals" is lawfully posted to our website.

R9. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends that Humboldt County Animal Shelter, the City of Eureka Animal Control, and the City of Fortuna Animal Control microchip at (the) owner's expense for identification purposes all un-microchipped animals that pass through the Humboldt County Animal Shelter or have engaged in an unprovoked attack upon a person or pet. The microchip information shall be maintained within a database accessible to all local law enforcement. This program should be in effect by December 31, 2018. (F1)

Response:

We do not accept the recommendation as it is not feasible at this time. This would require a mandatory microchipping ordinance in order to require that all pets that pass through the shelter are microchipped. Microchipping some animals would require sedation which would require veterinary involvement. The county could potentially add to our potentially dangerous and vicious dog ordinance that the owner must have the animal microchipped by their veterinarian.