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ANIMAL CONTROL IN FULTON COUNTY

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Our animal control personnel in Fulton County are running a successful program. We serve a stable population of approximately 600,000 people based on the 1980 census and updated projections. Our area encompasses some 225,000 households. Of those, approximately 143,000 are single family dwellings, 75,000 are of the multiple family variety and some 7,000 fall into other categories. Geographically, the area consists of 50% urban, 40% suburban and about 10% rural. Which is relatively little "true" rural land consisting of agriculture or open woodlands. The county is approximately 75 miles in length and varies from 2 to 35 miles in width and has become almost completely urban.

Fulton County is located in the piedmont region of north central Georgia and has a temperate climate averaging about 64° year round. Such agreeable weather conditions have little or no effect on the domestic dog and cat population which has stabilized at around 110,000 animals. This estimate uses the State of Georgia estimate of 1 pet per 5 people.

Income levels in our area are generally lower than the national average. This is offset somewhat by a lower cost of living and an employment level which is above the national average.

Our program operates from two shelters, one of which is the Atlanta Humane Society Shelter. It was chartered in 1873 and the present facilities were built in 1930. The second shelter was built in 1981 and was designed specifically to handle all animal control functions. It contains the usual runs, special quarantine section and has adequate administrative office space. Through these facilities, we handled 17,000 dogs and 8,500 cats in 1983. This is considerable reduction from 1974 when we handled over 50,000 animals. Of the 1983 figures, some 27% of the animals were adopted and 10% were reclaimed by their owners.

We use another method of measurement that seems gruesome but also illustrates positive results, In 1974, the City of Atlanta was removing 23 tons of dead animals monthly from the city streets. Using 25 pounds as an average weight per animal, this represents about 1,840 animals per month or 22,000 animals per year. In 1983 this figure has dropped to 2.7 tons per month or 2,496 animals per year.

Success has been the result of implementing other people's ideas, theories and programs and the development of a co-operative program involving the City, County, Health Department and Humane Society. The two main topics to be resolved were funding and legislation. Funding has always been a problem. The cities and the county were paying the Society less money in 1979 for animal control services than they were spending themselves in 1974. Also, during the worst 5 years of inflation, there was zero growth in the animal control budget. In 1984, the budget is \$994,000, all of which goes to animal control programs.

We have attempted to develop a workable, enforceable and standard ordinance. The county and cities have now passed standard ordinances encompassing 90% of all items requested and are specific in several categories. For example, "Restraint" and "Under Control" are used in our animal control ordinances which read "A dog must be confined to the owners property by leash, fence or chain" and when off the property must be on a leash not more than 6 feet long and accompanied by a person not less than 15 years of age. All animals not under these conditions are in violation whether on public or private property. This gives us a "Hot Pursuit" law that does not stop us from going onto private property.

All violations of our ordinance, except cruelty and quarantine violations, can be handled via citations. Power to cite to court is essential to a successful program as is cooperation from the judicial system. The latter proved to be our most difficult task.

When we first began issuing citations in 1974, we brought offenders to court but the judges threw our cases out and ridiculed our officers. In response, offenders were brought back repeatedly with the addition of witnesses and the complainants themselves. Judges and prosecutors were spoken to privately and shown magazine articles, studies and papers describing animal related problems and their solutions.

Ten years later we now have specific days and specific courts to hear our cases. There is a city judge who routinely fines first offenders \$200.00 but will suspend it upon proof of fence and dog run construction expenditures. The courts have now recognized that people are tired of free roaming dogs and cats. Court support, however proved essential in dealing with the problem.

In summary, I would like to repeat that all the ingredients for a successful program have been established. Many learned men and women have devised theories, practices and procedures and they are readily available, and they will work. The greatest obstacles to overcome are the elected and appointed officials. If they are the serious and willing to fund an animal control operation, they can have a successful one.

ACTIVITY REPORT

ANNUAL 1983

Shelter Operations - Animal Control Services

| | <u>Dog</u> | <u>Cat</u> | <u>Other</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|-------------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Animals impounded | 11,875 | 1,541 | 415 | 13,831 |
| Reclaimed/adopted | 1,826 | 44 | 43 | 1,913 |
| Released to AHS | 1,062 | 216 | 25 | 1,303 |
| Released to wild | -0- | -0- | 116 | 116 |
| Euthanized | 8,784 | 1,209 | 176 | 10,169 |
| Other | 377 | 104 | 57 | 538 |