Metropolitan Dade County (FL) Animal Control Division has a well-organized operations manual available for other groups or agencies to use as a model. The manual may be requested from the division at 7401 NW 74th St., Miami, FL 33166 -- please enclose $1.50 to cover costs.

Division Director Ronald F. Petty considers an operations manual "essential in any sizable undertaking that employs people at various levels of responsibility or that operates on a shift basis."

In a letter to SHELTER SENSE, Petty commented, "The positive benefits of having such a manual include standardization of procedure and enhancement of employee morale and confidence since all employees know exactly what the rules are, and what the purpose of the organization is. "The manual should be as lean and hard as possible, somewhat like the Constitution, laying down basic principles and policies, leaving details and 'how-to' procedures to memoranda or other forms of directives that can be posted on bulletin boards. A good place to find a model manual is at local law enforcement agencies."

Petty said that for both shelter managers and employees, the manual is "the basic document...that lays down the rules and regulations in clear terms at the actual working level."

City efforts prove successful

Hot Springs (AR) Animal Control Director John Seales (400 Kimery Lane, Hot Springs, AR 71901) reports good results from three efforts to improve animal control:

- Public image -- The Animal Control Department is a separate unit within the city government, and the officers have uniforms. Seales says the well-groomed, uniformed officers are "respected as Animal Control Officers, not dog catchers."
- Law enforcement -- When animal control officers spot a free-roaming dog, they follow it to locate the owner, since they are generally run home. The owner is given a courtesy warning for the first violation of the leash law. If the owner cannot be located, the dog is impounded and the owner must pay a fine to reclaim it.

The courtesy warning states in part: "It is unlawful to let your dog run at large within the City of Hot Springs. Dog must be kept confined on a leash, or within an enclosure on the premises of the owner...This warning has been recorded at the Animal Control Office. Any other violation will result in a summons to appear in court...We ask for your cooperation in this matter with the hope that Hot Springs can be made a more pleasant place to live for both the people and their pets."

On the second violation, the owner receives a summons to appear in court. The department has a solid case at this point because of the courtesy warning, and stiff fines are generally imposed.

- Education -- Animal control officers present educational programs in area schools and at civic clubs and other groups on proper care for pets and the importance of obeying the leash law. The department also has a section in the Sunday edition of the local newspaper, reporting violations of the leash law and providing animal care tips and other information.

Radio PSA's (public service announcements)

Free gifts make good public relations

Tompkins County SPCA, Ithaca, NY, reports that giving free items to the public brings returns in goodwill and money donations, too.

The SPCA makes free ID tags for pets, with tags that cost a few cents each and an engraving pencil that cost about $10 at the local hardware store. Executive Director William Brothers says the tags are made for adopted and owner-claide dogs and cats at the shelter, and are also given out at county rabies clinics, shopping centers, fairs and in neighborhoods.

Brothers notes that few people walk away without leaving a donation of 50¢ to $3 for their "Free" tag. Also, giving out a tag "can start a one-to-one dialog with the pet owner which we can turn into an educational session. The comments are: "Thousands of pets are now identified in our county helping us to maintain our 60% rate of returning stray dogs to their owners."

Brothers purchases quantities of the aluminum tags from National Band and Tag Co., 721 York St., Newport, KY 41072.

The SPCA officers also carry a supply of inexpensive nylon leashes to hand out at no charge. Brothers obtains these leads from KISS Mfg., Route 1, Box 302A3, Franklin, NC 28734. He says they are lighter, less bulky and easier to slip over a dog's head than chain collars. Leash law violators can be given leads which bring the dogs under control and also make for good public relations.

Radio public service announcements can help you get your message to the community. Radio (and television) stations must give a certain amount of air time to PSAs.

Remember, however, that radio stations are commercial enterprises. While they may be sympathetic to your cause, they are not obliged to air your announcements. Also, there are many good causes in your area, competing for the public service air time.

To increase your chances of having your messages read on the air, make sure they are of importance to the entire community and are presented in the best possible form. Adapt your message to your audience -- if many people in your area speak Spanish, have your messages translated.

Also, different stations prefer different lengths for PSAs, so you should check this in advance. An announcement with 25 average-length words takes about 10 seconds, 50 words take about 20 seconds and 150 words take about 60 seconds.

The copy should be typed, double or triple spaced, on one side of 8½" x 11" paper. Your organization's letterhead stationery is acceptable. If you use plain paper, type at the top your organization's name and the name and telephone number of the person to contact for more information.

Start the copy one-third of the way down the first page, and leave ample margins. Remember to use a clean typewriter ribbon.

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