

Here is the Roanoke meeting (10/10/04) report.

Things are moving, and they need to move more.

Please let us know what you can do to help – or offer yourself, and we will suggest something that you can do.

Please also let us know if you want to come to the meeting on Saturday in McLean.

Lillian Clancy and Don Marro

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A meeting regarding the pet overpopulation study started at 11:00 am at the Hampton Inn in Roanoke on Sunday, 10/10/04.

Attendees:

Victoria Brownell/League for Animal Protection

Lillian Clancy

Kelly Farrell, DVM/Angels of Assisi

Kathleen Herrin/at-large

Tammy Javier/Planned Pethood Clinic

Donald Marro

Michael Quesenberry/Roanoke City Animal Control

Don Thorne/Roanoke Valley SPCA

unable to attend:

Sena Crutchley/North Carolina Voters for Animal Welfare

Leslie Davis/North Carolina Voters for Animal Welfare

BB Knowles/North Carolina Voters for Animal Welfare

Karen Phillips

Karen Walker/Pound Pals of Radford

Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves and spoke briefly of the group with which they are affiliated or otherwise described their reasons for attending.

## Agenda

1. The proposed name of our organization, Virginia Voters for Animal Welfare was discussed. There appearing to be no opposition, we record this group to be in favor.
2. A discussion of the potential presentation by Dr. Michael McDonald dealing with lowered cost/high volume s/n at a profit was discussed. The goal is to provide a variety of options regarding s/n, McDonald's "for profit" model included. Virginia Voters for Animal Welfare is tentatively hosting a presentation by Dr. McDonald on 12/1/04.

Discussion touched on how to attract veterinarians to attend the presentation and how to attract veterinarians to do such work.

Kelly Farrell, a veterinarian involved daily with such a practice at Angels of Assisi, and Tammy Javier who works with Planned Pethood, noted some advantages: limited inaction with clients, never on call, can work part time, and those who are "burned out" or not good at/or prefer not to deal with clients can be attracted. Strong surgical skills are a requirement, or a desire to develop those. Fair wages are also a requirement to keep these professionals.

3. Lillian Clancy and Don Marro indicated that there would be outreach to various groups to see if common ground could be reached on one or more issues. Groups include veterinarians, VACA, the office of the State Veterinarian, Spay Virginia, VFHS, breeders, and AKC.
4. Tammy Javier and Kelly Farrell discussed the program Angels of Assisi offers. It was found that when more than low cost s/n was offered, there was less accomplished in terms of sterilization. Establishing a shelter, while worthwhile, was found to eat up time and money. Providing other vet services than s/n even at a cost of only 45% of typical fees "sucks life" from the s/n program. As a result, the focus is on only s/n.
5. Don Marro and Don Thorne discussed the numbers of owner give ups and talked about the education program being started in Thorne's regional center. Thorne noted there is some local business sponsoring.
6. Kelley Farrell mentioned going to a potential corporate sponsor, Advanced Auto, with a van of adoptable animals, and being able to adopt 25 in that visit. Adoption events at large companies can be successful.
7. Don Thorne mentioned the liability he and his group face. Even otherwise docile animals can become "cage crazed".
8. Kelly Farrell brought up "making the case" that shelter pets are great pets, not failures, and the shelters/rescues need to make these pets compete with pet stores and breeders. She suggested there be more PR on how great shelter animals can be.

9. Victoria Brownell discussed Petland sales, pointed out that AKC registration is not a guarantee of quality, that AKC has never seen the animal so registered. AKC requires that an owner who wants to show their pet must keep it intact.

10. Kelly Farrell suggested categorizing breeders:

- . responsible breeders/breed enthusiasts
- . accidental breeders
- . breeders who breed for profit

She added that she feels taxing breeders will drive them underground, and so suggests considering the opposite: give a gold star award to good breeders.

11. Don Marro wondered how it would be possible to get AKC to police itself.

12. Lillian Clancy asked that any “good breeders” be identified and sent to her.

13. Mike Quesenberry said his city has tried to follow up on business licenses (tho not in regard to dogs) but it isn’t consistent. With dogs as a business, he feels officials “look the other way”.

He will follow up and get figures about licenses. He believes that about 20-25% of dogs are licensed. He added that they plan to move to licensing cats.

Quesenberry said there is a criminal summons for having unlicensed dogs heard in the General District Court which can be prepaid at \$50.00.

He wants the ceiling (\$10) for dog licenses made higher.

He noted that he is on the Board of VACA.

14. Kathleen Herrin believes that any revenues and income from pet sales should be subject to tax and licenses.

15. Tammy Javier suggested generating revenues by encouraging all vets to sell dog licenses, giving them \$0.50 for each license sold. She added that she would not make the vet an enforcer of the licensing requirement, however.

16. Mike Quesenberry said there have been increased sales of licenses when a neighborhood is alerted to the possibility of door-to-door checks on licenses. Advertising where the checks are going to be ahead of time has made sales go up, but the program suffers from manpower shortages.

17. Don Marro said he would prepare financials if Quesenberry thought they would be useful as illustration of revenue from a license fee of \$25 with an 80% compliance rate. Such information might be used to push local officials into enforcement of licensing, with revenues generated to benefit local animals generally, including s/n programs.
18. Don Thorne added that companion animals are the least important category for the State Vet; he does not see that the office gives them any priority.
19. Don Thorne asked if the office of the State Vet would create generic forms to be used for transfer of animals from one facility to another. He also asked that the state identify a software program which would make reporting easier and more uniform.
20. Kelly Farrell said that if state reports regarding animal disposition, if done correctly, will show that a strong s/n program is the only answer to the overpopulation problem.

She added that dogs and cats are very different problems, stating that half the cats in Virginia are not owned. This may require different approaches to resolve overpopulation, such as giving heavy emphasis to stray/feral cat s/n programs, especially in low income areas. Dogs would benefit from a focus on training and behavior and the s/n of “bully” dogs such as pit bulls and rotties.

21. Costs of s/n were discussed.

Tammy Javier says that many people in her area cannot afford even cheap s/n.

Kathleen Herrin feels that with 25% unemployment in her area that families are struggling to feed their families first before worrying about s/n.

22. Kelly Farrell believes that unplanned births of dogs and cats come from the 10-20% of the least affluent of the population, so license increases and heavy enforcement won't work. She feels that penalties are a disincentive for those barely able to support their family.

She suggests selling more licenses, not necessarily more expensive licenses.

She suggested a method of compliance would be getting vets to identify those with dogs and cats, known to the vets because they have been given rabies shots. There are possible privacy issues, but it is being done in New Hampshire.

23. Mike Quesenberry feels that revenues from pet licenses should go to animal control, but instead such revenues go into the general fund in his area.
24. Victoria Brownell suggests using a sliding scale of ability to pay as a way to get to free s/n for those who cannot afford. Having worked on such a program in North Carolina, it

took work to do it, often having to make calls at night, but she was able to make a difference by working this way.

25. Attendees were asked to discuss what they would consider doing as a result of the meeting.

Kelly Farrell wants to push especially on s/n and unwanted litters. If controlled, this frees up people and money. Money is needed to do this, either by being raised privately, or by getting it from the government, showing that animal control costs (mainly sheltering costs), go down significantly with increased s/n. She counsels avoiding any issues that would be divisive and instead looking at opportunities to be successful first. She would like “marquee” projects – projects that would excite large groups interested in animal welfare. She particularly suggested avoiding any thoughts that vet techs could do s/n surgery, which could be offensive to vets.

Kathleen Herrin wants to push on s/n and education. She would be in favor of a gold standard for breeders and rescuers, regulating breeders by having both breeder’s licenses and by paying tax. She suggests not raising fees generally. She would like to be part of an “animal advocate” program in the court system, using trained volunteers, much as is done for children.

Don Thorne wants to develop a strong s/n program and get it to the people who need it most. He would start with the State Vet and get that office to push s/n themselves. He would then work to get the vets on board. He also listed all the various ways an animal control function is set up and where that function reports; there appears to be numerous variations.

Don Marro said there will likely be a meeting with VVMA and he asked Kelly Farrell and Don Thorne to consider being part of that meeting.

Mike Quesenberry said he agreed with the focus of Don Thorne. State and local government support and education about the problem are needed. Because he is with a government agency, he is prevented from doing lobbying, but he would like to push Richmond for help in enforcing what’s written, and allowing licenses fees to be higher.

Victoria Brownell would work to increase fees and funnel collected fees back to an organization dealing with the pound or shelters. She wants to get “an ear and a heart” in Richmond.

Tammy Javier would work to raise fees, directing that money to s/n programs. She wants to focus on s/n at this time. She expressed concern about the Humane Alliance model, saying in its quest to be self-sustaining, it is too expensive. She says her own group does not use means testing.

Don Marro asked what form encouraging s/n can take:

- . do as McDonald/Mackie – s/n for profit
- . do as Angels of Assisi/Kelly Farrell with a benefactor subsidizing surgery costs
- . do as Spay Virginia is doing with the Humane Alliance self-sustaining model

Kelly Farrell suggests that the s/n model which works best depends on the population. What works in New Hampshire with a state-funded voucher program may not work in Virginia if vets won't participate. High volume s/n clinics, mobile or stationary, are the cheapest and fastest because they are fine-tuned, and replicating that type of program is what she believes Spay Virginia is trying to do. She believes Spay Virginia could be a successful program but it needs money for those who cannot afford it, perhaps from special grant funds, and she wonders if it may not need to be self-sustaining as constant fund-raising is difficult.

When asked if s/n issues, then, should be left to Spay Virginia, Kelly Farrell indicated that perhaps the best approach would be to partner with them so that duplication does not waste money and energy.

Kathleen Herrin feels culture change is necessary and education is necessary, as people don't think there's a problem. She gave the example of her neighbor not realizing that purchasing a dog license would directly help her local facility.

When asked about those involved in programs similar to Angels of Assisi, Kelly Farrell thinks there are about 12-20 full time s/n veterinarians doing high volume work for the public. There are additional programs run in conjunction with a pound/shelter that may not be full time or for the public. She believes that, using a voucher program, that 30-40% of Virginia's vets would participate. When asked about the number of vets being graduated in Virginia, she said the number is going up, the demand is going up, and more women are becoming vets which has a positive impact on animal welfare issues.

Kathleen Herrin suggested a tax incentive for vets who participate.

It was suggested that a "Spay Virginia" sign on the outside could suggest a gold standard for s/n.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm.