



# City of Mission Viejo

Office of the Mayor and City Council

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Council Member  
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August 28, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Wieben Stock  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

RE: Response to Grand Jury report - "Is Orange County Going to the Dogs"

Dear Judge Wieben Stock:

This letter is submitted in response to the recent Grand Jury report "*Is Orange County Going to the Dogs.*" We appreciate the opportunity to provide the following responses to the finding and recommendation listed in this report.

## **Finding:**

***F-1 – Some cities using limited-access shelters are sending animals deemed unadoptable to the County Animal Shelter, thereby shifting the cost and responsibility for care and euthanasia to the County if the animals are not adopted.***

Response 1. Disagree. The Mission Viejo Animal Services Center (MVAS) by definition of the Grand Jury is a limited access shelter in that: 1) we do not provide euthanasia service; and 2) owner relinquished animals are only accepted if considered adoptable. However, when residents request euthanasia, they receive information on local veterinarians that can perform this service. If an animal is not accepted by MVAS as an owner relinquishment with the intention of finding a new home, they are referred to rescue groups. MVAS does not refer residents to Orange County Animal Services (OCAS) for euthanasia services or owner relinquishment.

## **Recommendations:**

***R-1 – The cities utilizing limited-access shelters adopt an open-shelter policy for all dogs and cats within their city limits or reimburse the County Shelter for the expense of boarding and euthanizing animals from their cities.***

Response 1. Disagree. Mission Viejo Animal Services (MVAS) Center opened in 1992 servicing Mission Viejo residents only. In 1995, Laguna Niguel began contracting with MVAS. The MVAS was established as a small animal shelter to house stray animals and owner surrenders with no veterinary clinic or veterinary staff. The MVAS program was designed to give extraordinary care, including medical care, by using area veterinarians who discount or donate services for adoptable pets. With the assistance of a non-profit group (DAWG) the MVAS Center provides medical care and spay/neuter surgeries for all the animals impounded.



MVAS currently accepts all strays from within our service areas. When space permits, we also accept adoptable owner surrender animals from within our service area and surrounding communities including the service areas of OCAS. However, it should be noted that it is highly likely that a number of our stray animals are coming in from surrounding communities (including OCAS service areas).

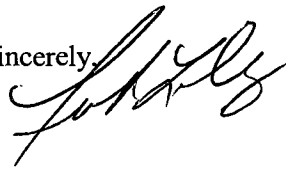
MVAS does not euthanize animals due to overcrowding and does not provide a euthanasia service to residents for their pets. The MVAS acts as a pro-humane shelter, euthanizing only animals that are extremely ill or aggressive.

We feel that we are currently meeting the needs of pet owners and pets in our service areas and ultimately have no control over what an animal owner does with their animal. We also believe that accurate data will reflect that very few animals from our service area are accepted by OCAS for euthanasia or owner relinquishment.

We disagree with the recommendation of the Grand Jury report and would ask that the Orange County Animal Shelter stop accepting animals from the MVAS service area or refer all requests for euthanasia to a veterinarian and owner relinquished requests to rescue groups. Another option would be to charge higher fees for animals they accept from MVAS service area to offset the cost.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,

 Mayor Pro Tem  
For Trish Kelley - Mayor

Trish Kelley  
Mayor

- c: Ann Avery Andres, Foreman, Orange County Grand Jury  
City Council  
City Manager  
City Clerk  
Director of Public Services