



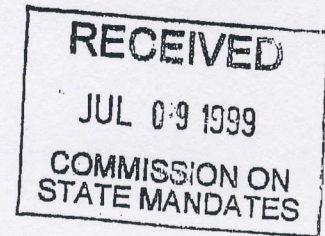
A non-profit corporation
since 1868

The San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Response to the County of Los Angeles Test Claim
Chapter 752/98

Test Claim No. 98-TC-11
"Animal Adoption"

July 7, 1999



OFFICERS

RICHARD E. DIRICKSON
Chairman of the Board

JACQUELINE L. YOUNG
Vice Chair

FILMORE C. MARKS
Treasurer

EDWIN J. SAYRES
President

DIRECTORS

CATHERINE H. BLACK
CATHERINE B. BROWN
DONALD M. BROWN, M.D.
JAN BUCKLEY
RANSOM S. COOK
AUSTIN E. HILLS
WILLIAM R. KALES
BERNARD M. KRAMER, M.D.
JAMES J. LUDWIG
STEPHANIE C. MacCOLL
WILLIAM LEE OLDS, JR.
ANNE BOVET ROBERTS

Test claimants and others opposed to Chapter 752/98 rely on misplaced assumptions and predictions by shelter service providers that they will need larger, more costly facilities and massive funding for longer holding periods, longer hours of operations, and hiring and training of new staff. But Chapter 752/98 puts a premium on adoption and getting lost pets back home, not on building new shelters or hiring/training new staff. Common-sense responses by shelters to the common-sense standards in Chapter 752/98 can accomplish this life-saving work through cost-effective strategies that, on average, reduce a pet's stay in the shelter. Indeed, the actual experience of The San Francisco SPCA and San Francisco's Department of Animal Care and Control (SFACC) in using those strategies belies the speculative claims of the opponents of Chapter 752/98 and reinforces the cost-effective, humane basis of Chapter 752/98.

In April 1994, The San Francisco SPCA and the SFACC collaborated in a life-saving partnership, which we call the Adoption Pact (See Adoption Pact, enclosed as Exhibit A.) Several of the key provisions of the Adoption Pact were written into Chapter 752/98 and are now state law. In addition, many of the practices in place in San Francisco are also written into the incentive structure of Chapter 752/98. These include, for example, making owner-surrendered pets available for adoption, the right of access to shelter dogs

1500 Sixteenth Street
San Francisco, CA 94103-4213
(415) 554-3000
www.sfspca.org
e-mail: publicinfo@sfspca.org



and cats by rescue organizations, and flexible public access shelter hours.

All of the arguments advanced in opposition to Chapter 752/98 were also made in San Francisco five years ago. The claims about runaway costs, increased euthanasias, and the unworkability of the efforts have not borne out in San Francisco and there is no reason to believe they will occur in other parts of the State. In fact, San Francisco has the lowest euthanasia rate of any City and County in the United States accomplished with taxpayer savings of approximately \$486,480.00. Not only was this accomplished on a revenue-positive basis for City taxpayers, it was accomplished without new shelter facilities or increased space.

With five years of actual experience, we feel strongly that public/private partnerships can work to save both lives and taxpayer dollars not only in San Francisco, but also throughout the State. And it is why we feel the same incentive structures in Chapter 752/98 are so vital to the future of animals in shelters throughout California.

Traditional Shelter Strategies Are Inefficient and Costly

Impounding and killing animals is costly. In Santa Clara County, for example, the costs of impoundment and euthanasia of a cat in a public animal control facility are estimated at \$74 per animal of taxpayer's money--\$46 for impoundment and \$28 for euthanasia. (Office of Council Member James Beall and Coalition for Humane Legislation, 1994.)

Every pet adopted or reunited with his/her owner instead of being killed saves taxpayer money in two ways: (1) saving costs of killing and disposal; and, (2) bringing in revenue from adoption fees and owner reclaim fees. Animal shelters can be fiscally responsible, and save more lives, by redirecting their efforts toward increasing owner reclamation, adoption, and utilizing the resources of private rescue organizations. Without Chapter 752/98, many shelters fail to do this.

Chapter 752/98 is Cost-Effective

By contrast, since 1994, any dog or cat in the San Francisco City shelter who is not adopted and is subsequently scheduled for euthanasia is made available to our organization, so that we may care for him/her until a suitable home can be found. By allowing The San Francisco SPCA--a private rescue and adoption organization--access to City shelter dogs and cats, together both organizations have guaranteed that no adoptable dog or cat will be killed in the City and County, and none has been killed since 1993. (See Adoption Pact Fifth Year Report, enclosed as Exhibit B.)

With innovative adoption programs,¹ backed by successful voluntary spay-neuter efforts, the City and County of San Francisco has a life-saving ratio nearly three times better than that of other major urban centers and almost double the ratio of shelters surveyed nationwide.² And San Francisco once again achieved the lowest euthanasia rate of any city and county in the entire country last year--all at significant savings to City taxpayers.

In the last five years, 12,162 dogs and cats were transferred to The SF/SPCA from the City facility, rather than being euthanized. This collaborative effort has saved

¹ In the last five years, for example, 5,532 dogs and cats were placed through a program called "adoption outreach" which takes shelter animals off-site to locations around the City. This program reaches individuals where they live, work, and socialize, rather than requiring them to visit the City shelter or our own facility. By increasing the exposure and contact of shelter animals with individuals in the community, more adoptions occur. The adoption fees, public exposure, private donations, and savings associated with not holding and euthanizing these animals provides a recoup of expenses associated with this effort.

² The achievements in the City and County of San Francisco are citywide results; they are not limited to our own shelter. The total number of dog and cat euthanasias in San Francisco is readily ascertainable from the enclosed annual report as well as from fiscal year reports published annually by the San Francisco Department of Animal Care and Control.

City taxpayers a total estimated cost of \$486,480.00 so far.³ And this doesn't include the cost in animal lives or the human costs--stress, burn out, depression, and anger--to the City workers who perform the euthanasias.

City taxpayers save in other ways, too. Because San Franciscans are willing to surrender animals directly to our shelters when they know the animals will be saved, fewer animals are abandoned on our streets to "give them a chance." And fewer animals on our streets mean fewer strays to be collected by City Animal Control Officers. The number of dogs and cats picked up dead from our City streets and neighborhoods has dropped a full 23 percent, while field collections by City Animal Control Officers dropped by 592 animals from the year before our cooperative life-saving efforts began--saving hundreds, if not thousands, of hours in staff time, as well as hundreds of miles of wear and tear on City vehicles and equipment.

Chapter 752/98 can be Implemented Without New Facilities

In addition, the gains in San Francisco's adoption numbers and decreased euthanasia rate were accomplished without any additional space allocation, without new shelter facilities, and without any additional taxpayer outlays. Aggressive and cost-effective adoption programs such as "adoption outreach" increased shelter turnover, freed up kennel space, reduced length of stay which in turn saved costs of care, and generated revenues from adoption fees. At the same time, collaborative arrangements with community groups and humane organizations to rescue animals scheduled

³ For every animal transferred to our shelter from the City facility, San Francisco taxpayers save approximately \$40.00 in sheltering, euthanasia, and disposal costs. Multiplied 12,165 times, this amounts to taxpayer savings of approximately \$486,480.00. In that same time period, 10,093 unwanted San Francisco dogs and cats who would otherwise have gone to the City shelter were surrendered directly to The San Francisco SPCA, where they were also provided with necessary care and placed in responsible new homes. Had we not taken these animals, the City would have been forced to take them and either hold them for adoption or euthanize them for a total savings to City taxpayers in excess of \$1.2 million dollars.

for euthanasia from the City shelter shifted cost of care from taxpayers to private individuals. These efforts eliminated the killing of adoptable animals, reduced the killing of treatable pets by approximately 60%, increased adoptions, and reduced average shelter length of stay--all at substantial savings for municipalities.

If City and County shelters put effort into aggressive adoption programs and building relationships with rescue groups and humane organizations which exist throughout the State of California, all of the benefits of Chapter 752/98 can be accomplished without increased space allocations; and all can be accomplished on a revenue-neutral or revenue-positive basis for taxpayers.

Conclusion

San Francisco's ability to implement humane, cost-effective responses is not unique to San Francisco or to its relationship with The San Francisco SPCA. The common-sense strategies enacted in Chapter 752/98 are specific enough to provide incentives and give direction, yet general enough to allow each community and shelter to move forward in saving lives and taxpayer dollars.