

ANIMAL

CARE & CONTROL TODAY

A Publication of the National Animal Care and Control Association



A Day in the Life of Animal Control

- page 6

CSIM For ACOs

- page 29

Examining Our Biases

- page 20

Five Inexpensive, Effective Ways to Get More Pets Home

- page 24

UPCOMING TRAINING
OPPORTUNITIES
pg. 9

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

- 6 A Day in the Life of Animal Control
- 10 Being a Better Administrator
- 14 Dog Bite Investigations for the ACO
- 18 The Benefits of Chemical Immobilization Training
- 20 Examining Our Biases
- 22 What's Cooking, ACOs?
- 24 Five Inexpensive, Effective Ways to Get More Pets Home
- 27 Fostering Connections
- 29 CSIM for ACOs

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From Our Executive Director



Dear Animal Care & Control Colleagues,

Fall is in the air, and for many in animal welfare, that usually means things start to slow down a little. The calls for service and the endless litters of kittens may not be as overwhelming as they were in mid-summer. I hope you can slow down, breathe and get to enjoy a pumpkin-spiced something!

Here at NACA, we spent our summer refocusing on ensuring our members have access to training, and we are happy to report that with the support of our partners at the ASPCA, we were able to award 88 fully funded scholarships to NACA ACO Certification. In addition, NACA offered training by way of conference presentations in 12 states across the country on a variety of topics. We were so happy to be back out in the world and connecting with those on the ground doing the work. Without the officers and the agencies, we would not be NACA!

This year alone, NACA has connected with officers in North Carolina, Florida, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arizona, New Mexico, Louisiana, Georgia, California, Washington State, Oregon, and we are only getting started! In addition to scholarships over the summer, we also launched a series of virtual live conversations with ACOs from across the country. We have reached more than 300 officers in the first three months! I hope you will join us; check out the NACA calendar for the next LEADing Conversations! At NACA, we are looking forward to continuing our upward trend of connecting with members, the public, and helping to deliver on our mission of supporting officers and agencies around the country! Wishing everyone a safe and healthy Fall season! Stay safe!

Jerrica Owen
NACA Executive Director



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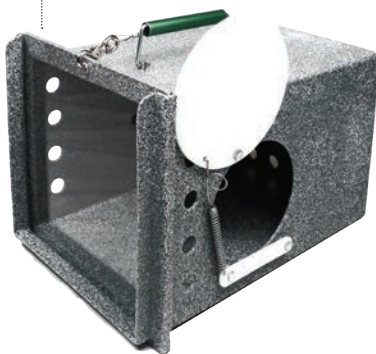
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A Day in the Life of Animal Control

By Matthew Freudenberg

When people think of an animal control officer, their immediate response is, “Dog catchers!” But we are much more than that. People have a misconstrued interpretation of an animal control officer; they picture us with the big dog net running after strays. And yes, on some days you may see us with a net running after an animal, which is just the beginning of the type of calls we manage, things we see, and the day-to-day struggle of working in a shelter. Never did I think that I would be part of a country-wide “culture” that believed in the proper treatment of animals. I grew up watching *Animal Cops Houston*

and always thought to myself what an impressive job that would be, not realizing the mental and physical strain and the feeling of helplessness you may sometimes feel. On many occasions I have had people say, “I could never do your job.” I ask myself why? Is it the thought of dealing with sick, injured, or abused animals? Is it the thought of knocking on strangers’ doors and telling them what they are doing is wrong? Is it the possibility of someone not taking you seriously? What is it? In my short career as an ACO, I have realized everyone in the field does their job out of the kindness of their heart and out of their love for animals.

When a call for service comes in, we have the obligation of dealing with that situation. It could be something as serious as an extreme dog bite or something simple like a stray walking down the road. Each time we respond, we need to take in all aspects of the call and make sure it is addressed in the safest way possible. When you knock on someone's door, you never know what type of person may answer. You always must think that the dog you are responding to is not going to be friendly. You must take a stance of precaution when dealing with the unknowns. The stresses of the job could be very overwhelming and learning ways to cope or express your feelings could really help.

I learned very quickly that all animals cannot be saved. From wildlife to domesticated animals, there are always going to be situations you may not agree with when it comes to saving animals. This part of the job plays a crucial role for me mentally. Asking questions, trying to find solutions, realizing that the shelter may not be equipped with advanced medical care, or that the staffing or time needed to rehabilitate an animal may not be there. At the end of the day, I focus on the lives I saved, the people in the community who thanked me, and the people who praised me for doing an excellent job. Focusing on the
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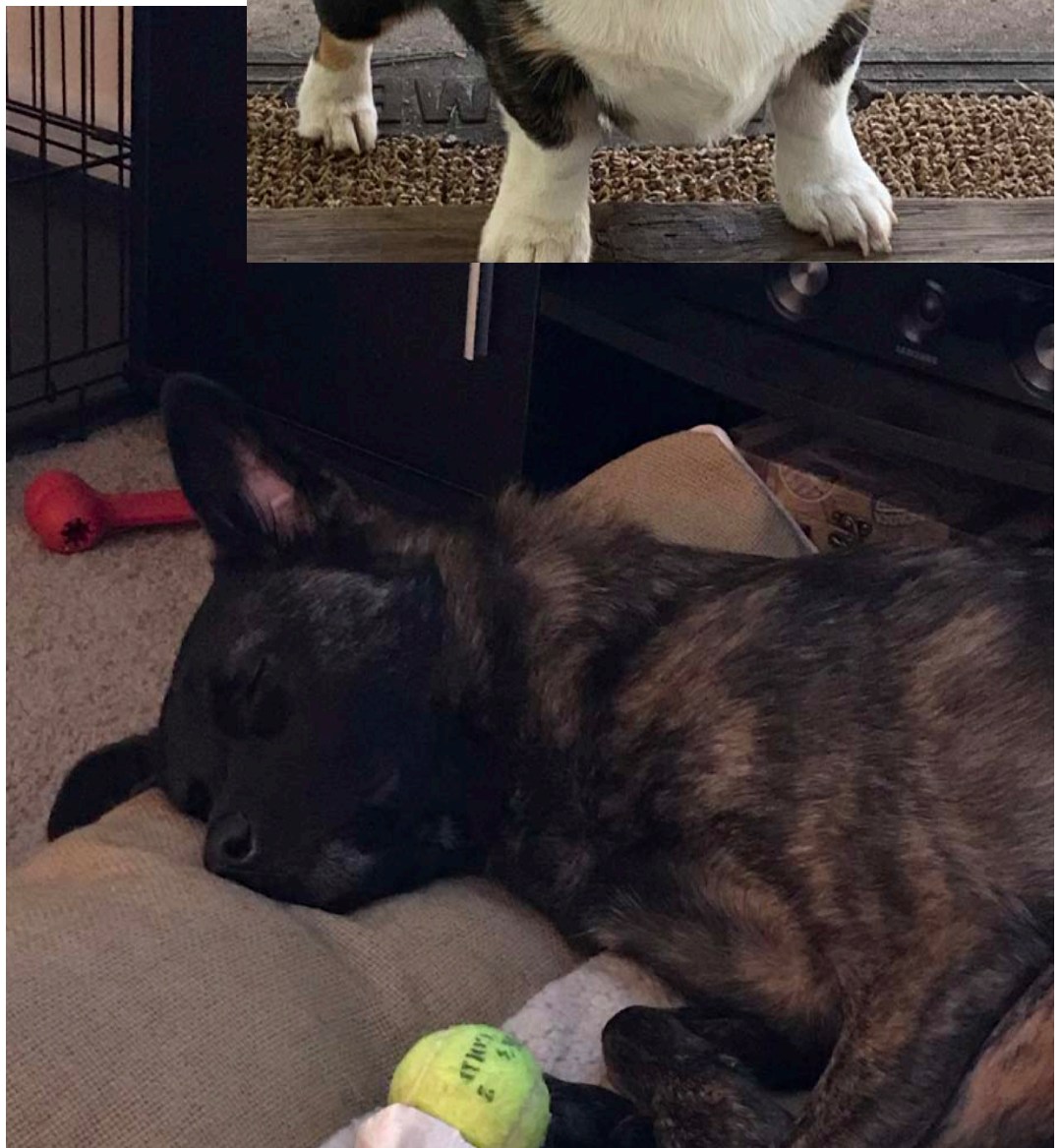
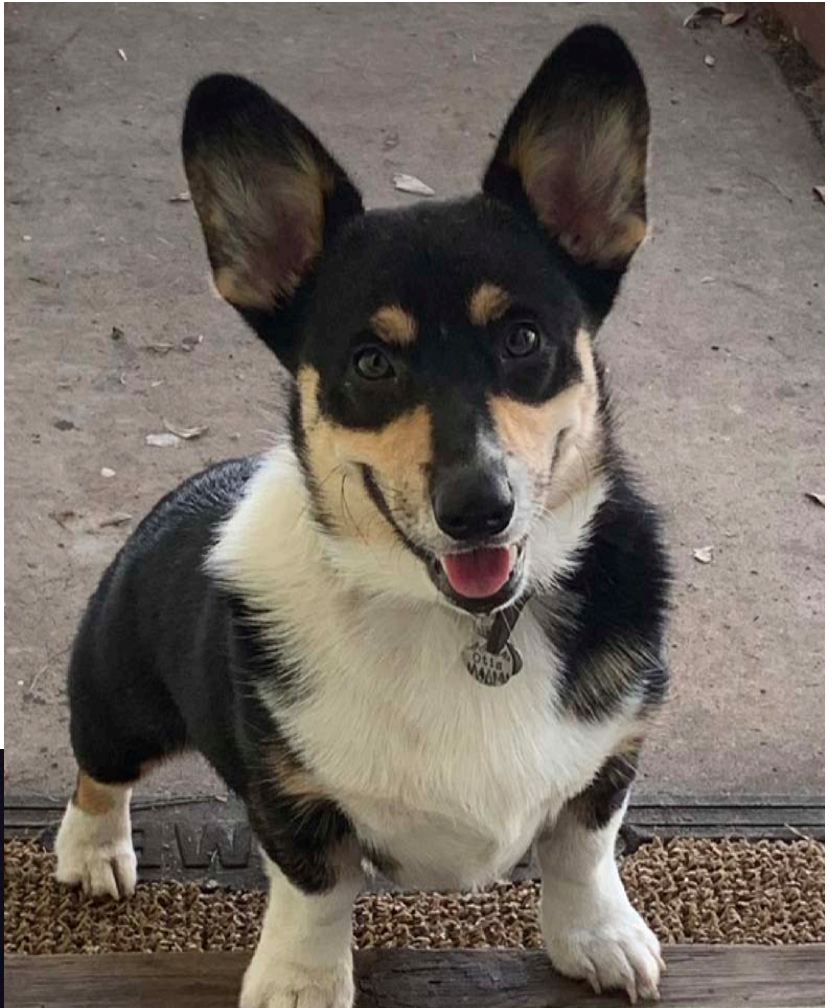
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positives will always outweigh the negatives, especially when the negatives are out of your control.

The stresses that you may have in the field can also contribute to the stresses at the shelter. I personally, at all costs try to avoid bringing animals into the shelter. If you can use all your resources and try to find the owner of the lost pet and return it, that could ease some of the stress for you and your coworkers. Bringing an animal to the shelter stresses out the animal and the staff. When shelters fill up you must think outside the box of housing animals or make the tough decision of euthanizing animals. Not to mention, when a shelter is full it could be a breeding ground for disease and could potentially run rampant within the shelter. Taking the time and utilizing all your tools to return an animal back home is the best outcome.

I have had the opportunity to work with the FBI, DEA, ATF, local state agencies, and city police on certain calls. Never in a million years did I think this career would allow me to work with such elite agencies. Again, at the start of my career I had a misconception of what this job was truly about. Unlike police, when we respond to a call, our victim cannot tell us what is going on. We must decipher the scene, piece together actual signs of neglect, look at owner history, push for an admission of guilt, and make sure we are doing everything legally. When dealing with a suspect, it could go as simple as writing a warning or as extreme as executing a warrant. Most people look at ACOs as just chasing stray dogs, when it is much more complicated than that.

Matthew Freudenberg is an ACO at Charlotte Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control. ❖



Upcoming Training Opportunities



November

- 1 Online Reputation Management for Animal Shelters, Justice Clearinghouse Webinar
- 9 NACA Leading Conversations: Animal Control Officer Safety
- 13 – 16 Texas Animal Control Association Conference, San Marcos TX
- 17 The Top Ten Techniques for Dealing with Conflict, Justice Clearinghouse Webinar
- 28 - December 9 Humane Law Enforcement Academy Training – In Person/CA

December

- 1 Community Engagement: The Lifesaving Philosophy – Webinar
- 6-8 Safe Capture: Chemical Immobilization – Livestreamed
- 10 Rehabilitation of Rabies Reservoir Species – Virtual
- 14 NACA Leading Conversations: Compassion Stress
- 17 Infectious and Zoonotic Disease – Virtual
- 15 NACA Board Meeting (Members Welcome) – Virtual
- 21 NACA LEADing Conversations – Virtual



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Being a Better Administrator

By Julie Banks

I remember when I started my first job in animal welfare. I was young, eager, and beyond excited to start my career knowing that I was focusing on making the world a better place for animals. I was going to rescue them, find them new homes, and spend my entire day doing nothing but being with them. I thought that loving animals was all that I needed to know to be successful in my role.

My administration expectations began when I was

asked to make the weekly schedule and assignments for the team. And then came the ordering of supplies and doing weekly inventories. I had to create a budget and read monthly financial statements. I had to create and enforce policies and procedures, and when I became a supervisor, I had to manage people. I suddenly realized that my job was as much about business operations as it was about animals.

I felt unprepared for the administrative functions that I was given. I knew that these tasks required organization and analytical skills in a way that I had not experienced. I had to turn on a different side of my brain that I had not used since twelfth-grade math class. I remembered how much I hated math class and began to second guess my new career choice. I turned to my dad, who was an accountant, for some support. It was that day when I realized that I needed to embrace my inner administrator and learn whatever I could to become successful. That was the day that administration became my superpower to save animal lives. Below are some tips that I learned from my father and others along the way.

Time Management

I hear from animal welfare workers that animal care and crises prevent them from doing administrative duties. While this may be true, I suspect that it is about doing a better job with time management. I have learned I need to plan my day prioritizing my work in my color-coded calendar to ensure administrative duties are just as important as other functions. Some days, I would plan to work off-site so that I could focus as needed on batches of like work, sharing the calendar with my team so that they knew that there were times that were off-limits, delegating functions, and exhibiting trust. Finally, I would use technology and free apps to organize myself and keep myself accountable.

Budgets and Financial Statements

Being vulnerable was key for me in this area as I knew it was my weak spot and I needed to admit it. I was working in governmental animal control, and I built a relationship with someone from the budget office who became my financial mentor. He often confused me with “financial talk,” but he helped me understand how to read reports and use them to understand what was going on at the organization. He taught me about the benefits of having a line-item budget so that you can see each area and what exactly is being spent. The statements told me the true story. Even though our government developed our budget in larger buckets, wherever I worked, I would break it down in line and analyze it the same way I did our monthly shelter statistics. The budget was thoughtfully incorporated into our strategic planning processes.

Needing more help, I attended a

local community college class to further help me understand how to create a budget that made sense. I learned about having a team approach to the budget development process and that it was more important than it just being created by your leadership or financial staff. Not only does this ensure financial/budget literacy among your team, it keeps you on the same page when it comes to programming and costs. The financials would be distributed to the team monthly, and we would have working sessions to identify areas that needed improvement.

Purchasing

One day, an incredibly wise person asked me when was the last time I reviewed our purchasing habits. I realized that it had been years. I had gotten so comfortable with ordering from the same company, utilizing the same order sheets, I did not realize that I was spending too much on products and leaving money on the table that could be used for life-saving programming instead. I also realized that we had a decentralized process and were not taking advantage of bulk discounts within our organization as everyone was making their own orders. I quickly moved to a coordinated internal process and calendarized a twice-a-year review of our spending habits. Finally, I carefully reviewed, updated, and inserted myself with all purchasing specs and governmental processes that were needed when

(continued on page 12)


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(continued from page 11)

the RFP processes came around. This way, I was not just relying on external voices and could ensure that the chosen organization would provide us with the product at the best prices. And if you want to try something innovative, I discovered a new organization called Shelters United, which I also currently work with. They are the only group-buying organization for animal welfare organizations. They negotiate better discounts on behalf of organizations so administrators and purchasers save money and time. Plus, joining is free and every group who joins gets a dedicated member consultant to help them with questions, finding the best deals and discounts, etc.

Inventory

I remember going with my dad to a client who sold shirts. He was doing an audit and had to count the shirts in the factory to see if they matched the financial statements. The statements were off from what was there. They ended up realizing that they had bought too many of the same type of item and that the inventory was just sitting and taking up space. Doing a monthly inventory of all products and supplies became the key to saving money. They calendarized this event and incorporated all staff and volunteers into the time allocated. This helped them stay organized and ensured everyone knew where all the items were located. They kept a computerized inventory that made it easy for reordering and keeping track of usage. The next year they

had extra money within their budget allowing them to hire another staff member.

Communication Skills

Communication is key to all administrative functions. We spend so much time talking about animal functions, we do not spend enough on administrative functions, making them less important. Having regular meetings where you get input, ask questions, and educate on topics can help solve problems and manage future challenges.

Throughout my career, I spent a large amount of time utilizing administrative functions to help problem solve and successfully find solutions for complex situations. I got in touch with my analytical, detail, and critical thinking brain, and used it to be a better leader and to meet our organizational mission and goal. I am still prioritizing this and learning new tips and tools. I encourage you to do the same.

Julie Bank is a shelter consultant who works with private, public, and corporate animal organizations to meet their missions and goals. She worked previously in animal welfare leadership positions in New York, California, Oklahoma, and Arizona. One of the organizations she works with is Shelters United, a group purchasing organization. The Shelters United team is made up of passionate animal welfare supporters, and as their shelter consultant, Julie is proud to be on this team helping groups save money and save more lives. To learn more about Shelters United, visit www.sheltersunited.com. ❖



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Dog Bite Investigations for the ACO

By James W. Crosby and Adam W. Stern

Every crime show on television mentions forensics. On these shows they usually talk about fingerprints, footprints, and DNA. But what is forensics, really? Is it playing with expensive toys and peering into microscopes in a dark room while cool looking machines hum in the background? How can forensics apply to your job as animal control officers? Depending on the type of forensic work you do, you might have access to high-tech equipment; however, “forensics” according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary is “the application of scientific knowledge to legal problems.” Whether your case is civil or criminal, the legal process is the center of what forensic science is. Veterinary forensics, simply put, is the use of any field of science to animal-related legal proceedings through the observation and interpretation of physical evidence including the animal.

Why does this involve us in animal control? We are involved in both civil and criminal actions, and we face legal professionals who are responsible for defending those we accuse. As defenses get more technical, we must meet the challenge. Animal cruelty cases and animal fighting offenses require evidence and proof. The state must prove their accusations; whereas, defense attorneys will attack a case on multiple fronts in order to defend their clients. The same holds true when we investigate dog bites for civil and criminal cases which require evidence and proof, especially due to the sheer number of bite cases we face annually.

Evidence is important in animal cruelty and neglect cases, but let’s talk about dog bites and dangerous dog proceedings. In the case of injuries, and even fatalities, too often in the past we have missed the boat. Unfortunately, “In-depth investigation of dog bite incidents has, in the past, been relatively rare.” Especially in the United States, law enforcement officials have often adopted the attitude “The dog did it – we are done.” Looking in

from the outside, it is understandable that when law enforcement is confronted with an apparently mauled victim, a scene with a large amount of blood (Figure 1), and a dog covered in blood, the most common (and probably logical) reaction is to assume the dog mauled the person. The easiest thing to do is impound the dog, have it humanely euthanized, and not invest any additional resources into the case.

Animal bite cases need to be fully investigated similarly to any other case regardless of whether it is an accident or not. The individual pieces of evidence particular to a case where a sentient being injures a person should not be overlooked even in these specialized cases. Our professional duties require a detailed and specialized investigation. An incomplete investigation fails to address concerns and needs of owners, the public, and the legal system. Most importantly, it does not help us understand why the event happened in the first place. Without understanding why the event happened, we cannot prevent similar events from occurring in the future.



Figure 1

Animal Care & Control Today — Fall 2022

Dog Bites

Dogs bite for a reason. That reason may not be immediately apparent to us as humans, and must be sought using a dog's frame of reference. It is part of the duty of the investigator to identify the reason for the bite. There is no "typical" bite, as they can be penetrating or non-penetrating, one tooth or multiple teeth, and cause minor to major injury. For the purposes of this article, we will label a bite as a skin penetrating wound caused by a dog's teeth (Figure 2). Criminal and civil liability may be attached to even a simple dog bite. As the severity of the bite increases, so do the potential consequences.

Here we will focus on dog bites and dangerous dog cases. While these are related, they are behaviorally distinct. The distinction can be fuzzy to some as they feel that any dog that bites is also dangerous. Research has shown, however, that not all biters are necessarily dangerous, but they are public nuisances that we have to try to abate. Dangerous dogs are a definite step up as they present a valid safety concern to the public and to their owners and families. In many cases, the victim of a fatal dog attack has in fact been part of the dog's immediate social group.

Investigating Dog Bite Cases

Response to an emergency involving an apparent dog attack must start with safety and security. The needs of

the human victim are primary as aid must be rendered and done safely. Many times, you will respond after the emergency is over, but you still have to be ready to take the lead in case you are the first on scene.

In a serious incident, positive identification of the dog(s) involved is critical. Even relatively minor bites need accountability. For instance, a bite victim with a minor wound may develop life-threatening complications directly tied to the bite, such as *Capnophagia canimorsus* infection. At the scene, the dog should be photographed and labelled clearly. Many dogs look similar, so in the interest of immediate identification and for the future a microchip can provide a positive, unalterable, unique ID.

Once on scene, you will have to document and/or collect four different types of evidence (circumstantial, testimonial, physical, and behavioral). These four sets of data work together to help you determine the true events and to assess responsibility.

Circumstantial evidence is evidence that relies on an inference to connect it to a conclusion of fact. Who was there, what were they doing, and how did they and the dog interact? Ask probing questions. Get the details. Don't accept "the dog just bit 'em." Find out what happened one second, five seconds, ten, one minute, five minutes before the bite occurred. What happened earlier that day? Who did what historically?

Testimonial evidence is the statement(s) made by people who claim to know something about what happened. Remember that the word claim can be important. Were the "witnesses" really there? Could they have seen what they claim? What agenda may they have? What do they have to gain or lose?

Physical evidence is tangible evidence that can be touched and picked up that is relevant to the case. This can include bite marks, blood stains, and footprints. You will have to work with law enforcement, the medical team (medical examiner, treating physician), and the veterinary team to collect physical evidence from the scene, the human victim, and the accused dog(s).

All physical evidence collection begins with photography. Take pictures of everything you can, including the dog, the scene, and injuries before and after treatment when possible. Include a scale if possible; an ABFO #2 forensic scale is easy to

(continued on page 16)



Figure 2



Figure 3

(continued from page 15)

carry and inexpensive (Figure 3). If you seize the accused dog, remember that there is no hurry to destroy the dog, even if that will be the ultimate outcome. The dog is evidence and remember that warrants to take evidence, even from the dog, may be required. It is important to talk with your local prosecutor regarding legal advice so you can be sure you have checked all of the correct boxes.

If you have a deceased victim, physical evidence collection is relatively simple. The police and medical examiner or coroner are lead on these cases. However, they should include you and your agency in the overall animal-centric portion of the investigation. Bite mark details, debris, clothing items and DNA recovered from the victim's wounds and skin can all be collected.

Similarly, evidence should be collected from the dog, including a reference sample for DNA analysis. Collection is harder with a live dog than for a deceased dog. It is imperative you work with a clinical veterinarian when working with live dogs and have a veterinary pathologist perform a forensic postmortem examination including examination of the gastrointestinal tract when dealing with a deceased dog (Figure 4). Emergency medical services and other

medical resources are more interested in saving or treating the human victim. Your evidence may, therefore, not be immediately available to you; however, you should go over the scene and look anyway as you never know what you might find at the scene.

Behavioral evidence is a matter of observing and recording the behaviors you and/or staff observe. This begins at the scene when you first arrive. What is the dog doing? With whom? What are the specific actions the dog is showing? Don't use qualitative interpretations – note the actual behaviors. Does the dog show teeth, raise hackles, and emit a low growl when male staff approaches but is calm and affiliative when females approach? Spell it out. Record these interactions on scene and in your kennel if the dog is seized.

Application

If your agency has clear policies and practices, your agency can be more prepared to conduct due diligence on all bite cases and be able to handle the high-profile cases as easily as the minor ones. If you conduct superior dog bite investigations, you will be able to provide competent owner and community educa-

tion. Your advice can assist individuals at the nuisance level to avoid progression to more serious incidents. General community education on dog bite prevention and responsible pet ownership can help reduce your case load and improve public safety.

You can also be the resource for local and area legislation and a source that legislators can depend on. Legislative bodies want to know what and how violent behavior from dogs happens. Animal control officers are an information resource better than most others when it comes to local problems. Remember that historically many bite investigations were not in-depth investigations, and due to this fact some historical data might not be reliable. It is important to consider a number of factors when using historical data. These include 1) age of past data, 2) biases in reporting, 3) chain citations in publications, and 4) reliability of the sources.

Conclusions

It is imperative that in-depth dog bite investigations are performed to allow us to understand what has happened. You should use all evidence available to you, including physical, testimony, behavioral, and circumstantial evidence to determine what happened, why it happened,



Figure 4

and determine if anyone was responsible for why the events transpired. “Dogs, although undoubtedly capable of independent action, do not usually depart far from prior behaviors. As owners and caretakers of domestic dogs, humans are ultimately responsible for their care and su-

pervision.” Ultimately it is the responsibility of the investigator to determine what happened so that legal action can take place as necessary and so we can prevent needless dog bite incidents from occurring in the future.

James W. Crosby is a PhD candidate at the University of Florida in the Veterinary Forensics program. He is a certified behavior consultant canine, a certified dog behavior consultant, and a retired police lieutenant and former animal control division chief. Mr. Crosby has personally investigated nearly 40 dog bite related fatalities and performed hands-on behavioral evaluations on about 60 dogs that have killed humans. Mr. Crosby works as a consultant to owners, animal control agencies, and police agencies,

Adam W. Stern, DVM, DACVP, is a professor of Forensic Pathology at the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine. He is a board-certificated veterinary pathologist and specializes in the forensic death investigation of animals. Dr. Stern performs forensic autopsies on animals across the county and routinely participates in continuing education trainings in veterinary forensics. He is a past president of the International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association. ❖

Study on Officer Perspective on Community Engagement

Monday • November 7
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The National Animal Care & Control Association partnered with the University of Denver Institute of Human Animal Connection. NACA & IHAC conducted a series of research studies that address the critical gap in the literature and the animal welfare industry in understanding the perspectives on how to effectively engage with historically and systemically excluded communities through animal control and field services.



This Webinar will discuss the results of this study will provide a nuanced picture of approaches to community engagement on animal control/field services issues from the perspectives of the professionals tasked with enforcing current laws and policies.



The Benefits of Chemical Immobilization Training

By Mark L. Drew

Animal control officers receive many distinct types of training. Requirements vary by state and local jurisdiction, but can include general police duties, animal behavior, trapping and handling techniques, and knowledge of local or state ordinances and rules for dogs, cats, and livestock.

Chemical immobilization is a tool that is used by many animal control officers for both domestic animals and wildlife. Because the drugs used in chemical immobilization produce some level of anesthesia, it is essential that officers using this tool receive proper training in both the process of chemical immobilization and the equipment used to ensure the safety of all animals and humans involved.

The training required for the use of chemical immobilization agents, often incorrectly termed tranquilizers, varies by state and is usually controlled by the State

Board of Pharmacy or its equivalent. Most times, access to the drugs used for chemical immobilization is regulated by the State Board of Pharmacy and requires the participation of a licensed veterinarian.

Because many animal control officers operate by themselves or in small teams, it is imperative that all members of the team have a general understating of chemical immobilization and how to use this tool effectively and safely. The biggest mistakes are often made because of inattention to detail or to hurrying the process.

Safe Capture, now housed within the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Academy, has been providing chemical immobilization training for animal control officers as well as other participants including wildlife biologists, zoo personnel, students of all kinds, and veterinarians, for more than 30 years. The training is thorough and

designed to cover all aspects of chemical immobilization to allow participants to develop a capture plan, select the proper equipment, drugs, and procedures, perform minimal anesthesia monitoring, and be prepared for anesthetic emergencies and accidental human exposures. While the amount of information is intense, it is important to educate participants about the wide variety of equipment, situations, and applications associated with using this tool proficiently and effectively.

The course completion certificate is recognized by many state, federal and local agencies, jurisdictions, and associations due to the high quality and consistency of current information for animal control officers. However, like all training, if the skills learned are not used often, your knowledge becomes rusty, so attending a training class every two to three years is highly recommended.

We get a lot of great questions and comments from Safe Capture participants. One ACO needed to get trained to have his supervisor approve his using chemical immobilization on dogs and cats. However, his supervisor had never received training on chemical immobilization and was asking why various equipment and drugs were needed for the



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use of chemical immobilization. Several zoom calls later with both the ACO and his supervisor, a reasonable equipment choice was made, and after another zoom call to the local veterinarian, access to reasonable anesthetic drugs was arranged. The ACO reported back after about six months that for the first time, he felt confident in using chemical immobilization and that the training he had received was effectively used in the field.

Safe Capture Chemical Immobilization Training is available in three formats: in-person, livestream, and self-guided eLearning modules. The courses are all similar in content, but vary in accessibility to instructors and hands-on training. For more information, visit <https://sdzwaacademy.org/safecapture/>. ❖



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Examining Our Biases

By Jace Huggins

Every day, every call, and every interaction we have leaves a small imprint on our unconscious mind. These small imprints help our brains make decisions without us even needing to really think about it. Imagine how clogged your mind would be if you were consciously thinking through everything.... It would be EXHAUSTING! And our brain knows that, so it handles most of those processes unconsciously, reaching back to past imprints and making decisions for us. Sometimes those imprints focus more on presumption than fact. (That woman is on drugs vs. that flame will burn me.)

This can show up in a few different ways when we are out in the field. Me personally, I have had to acknowledge and overcome a very racially intolerant upbringing. My family, while loving and supportive, carried deep racist beliefs from their own upbringing. As a child I never knew any different, but as an adult I realize my unconscious brain made a lot of presumptions about people based solely on their looks, skin color, and financial status. For others,

it may show up as stereotypes based on a traumatic or stressful incident. But often, lots of small incidents, seemingly similar, will become lumped into an unconscious bias.

This can show up for us as:

- After a few incidences of owners claiming their sick or injured animal is a "stray" and turning them over, our unconscious brain tells us to question and mistrust every person who "finds" a stray sick or injured animal.
- After working multiple bite calls where a certain breed of dog is the biting animal, our unconscious brain assumes that every bad bite is the result of that breed of animal.
- After working multiple difficult or traumatic welfare or cruelty calls in a specific neighborhood our unconscious brain tells us that every welfare call there is probably warranted, and the animals should be removed.

Some of these situations may feel extreme, but try to tap into your first thoughts, generally unspoken when you are assigned a certain type of call or beat area. They

may be more telling than you realize. But here is the most important part – having these unconscious decisions being made is not a bad thing – in many ways those thoughts keep us alive. (Ever driven home without remembering how you got there?) The most important thing is to recognize them.

I now recognize that a few beliefs from my upbringing created a negative association for me on the job. Specifically, general conversations my parents had about how certain races interact with and treat animals. Being aware of that bias allows me to be fully present in those moments and ensure that I am interacting and treating our citizens in a consciously equitable and fair manner. Without being mindful of and acknowledging those biases, (There are tests you can take to assess unconscious bias.) I could have, and did at times, allow my actions to be clouded and drawn to more punitive resolutions than were necessary.

We all have our own journeys that have gotten us where we are today. Some of them have been bumpy, some have been an all-out roller coaster on a broken track, and those journeys have left their imprint on us. And while I have mentioned how unconscious bias can lead us to act in a more punitive manner, the opposite can happen too! Maybe you are interacting with someone who shares part

of their life story with you, and it closely resonates with you or mirrors yours. Something like being in foster care or adopted, escaping a violent relationship – it can be anything. That moment of connection can unconsciously lead you down the path of “going easy” on this person. Maybe the last three people got big press hard, three copies, tickets from you, and this person gets a warning. Your unconscious bias might lead you to trust or believe someone more than another person too.

And it may feel like there is nothing you can do about bias popping up and swaying your actions, but there is. The first is doing some self-reflection and taking some implicit bias tests to help you better understand what those imprints are. Another thing is looking to handle every call from a place of equity. We sometimes focus more on equality or fairness, a “what’s good for the goose is good for the gander” type approach, when in reality we will be far more effective by addressing what is good and right for each individual and animal we interact with. When we approach situations from this lens while also being mindful of that self-reflection we did previously, we can act from a place of true neutrality, which in turn will build trust and respect within our communities.

Jace Huggins is chief of field services at Front Street Shelter in the City of Sacramento, California. ❖

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What's Cooking, ACOs?

Animal control is a tough job. Sometimes finding the time to cook is even tougher. "ACO Michele" created a Facebook group in 2017 called "ACO Bites" that quickly grew to over 200 members with an average of 51 posts a month! The group is designed for ACOs and animal care professionals to share their favorite foods with other like-minded professionals! The emphasis is mostly on quick meals that can go from idea to table in under an hour because we all know coming home after a long, hard day and being able to prepare a good meal is important to staying healthy – and keeping one's sanity!

We know the weather will start to turn cold again soon and this recipe should warm you right back up! Enjoy this ACO Bite from Kelly Thyssen. Kelly is owner/instructor of the Humane Educators of South Texas! So cozy up with your Shepherd (or other fur babies!) and get ready to make the most amazing (low carb!) meal!

Low Carb Taco Meat Shepherd's Pie

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 2 bell peppers (I like red and orange, but you can use whichever is your favorite.)
- 1 ½ cup diced sweet onion
- 2 cloves chopped garlic
- 3-4 tbsp. of your favorite taco season mix (or a pre-made taco season packet)
- 2 tbsp. butter
- ¼ cup water
- 2 bags of frozen riced cauliflower
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 3 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Preheat oven to 375° F

Meat:

Add 1 tbsp. butter, diced onions, and bell peppers to a large skillet over medium heat. Cook until softened, then add garlic. Cook for 1 minute, then add ground beef to the vegetable mixture. Once beef is cooked, add the taco seasoning and water. Cover and let simmer while making the cauliflower mash.

Cauliflower mash:

Cook the riced cauliflower according to directions on package. Once cooked, put into a food processor along with 1 tbsp. butter and the heavy cream. Process till smooth and fluffy. Fold in ½ cup of cheese, and salt and pepper to taste.

Add meat to a 2.5-3 quart casserole dish with a lid and spread evenly. Top with cauliflower mash and spread evenly over the meat, making sure mash is completely covering the meat and touching the sides of the dish. Then top with the cheddar cheese.

Cover with lid and bake for 30 minutes. Remove lid and continue baking for 10-15 minutes or until the cheese topping is golden brown. Remove from oven, serve, and enjoy!

Grab a beverage of choice, relax after your hard day, and enjoy this amazing meal! Keep up the good work!

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Five Inexpensive, Effective Ways to Get More Lost Pets Back Home

Submitted by The Humane Animal Support Services Project

This story might sound familiar. Five years ago, Mike Wheeler, director of Cabot Animal Support Services in Arkansas, wrote a citation for a man whose dog got out. The dog got out again. Mike wrote another citation.

"I took the dog, impounded the dog," Mike told us. "He got a citation for not being current on his vaccinations. He got a citation for no city license."

The owner wanted to bring his dog home, but he couldn't afford the citations. With each between \$125 and \$175, they were adding up.

"So he got a citation for failure to reclaim," Mike said.

The man then didn't show up for court. His driver's license got suspended. He was a truck driver, and lost his job, too.

"And I don't know what happened after that. They moved out of the house," Mike said. The dog was adopted into another family.

Mike says that this is how things were done then. There was nothing unusual, inappropriate, or illegal about how Mike handled this loose dog and his owner.

But Mike couldn't get this dog and this man out of his head. He couldn't shake the conviction that a different approach from the start would have led to a better outcome for everyone.

"I could have wired his fence together for probably less than three dollars, and put the dog back in there, and I didn't do it," Mike says.

Ninety-eight percent of pet owners view their pets as important members of their family. The Human Animal Support Services project is working toward a model of community-focused animal services that recognizes and honors that bond by preventing pets from being unnecessarily separated from their families, and instead supporting them to be at home.

Pet pantries expanded access to veterinary care and emergency fostering programs for pets whose owners are temporarily unable to care for them are among the ways that community-focused animal organizations are keeping people and pets together.

Field services are key in preserving families and keeping pets from entering the shelter system when they don't have to, through distributing pet food and supplies. One of the areas where animal welfare officers play a most critical role is in helping lost pets get back home.

This is a mission with extra urgency while animal shelters across the country are full, especially when considering that

about half of pets who enter shelters come in as "strays," but many aren't stray at all; they are simply loose or lost pets who've wandered away from home (and not that far from home, either, in most cases). Below are five inexpensive, effective ways to be part of this project:

Free Rides Home

Free Ride Home: sometimes known as "return to owner," is a program through which pets picked up in the field are brought back to their homes, usually without the owners paying any fees. The programs reunite pets with their families and save shelters money too. We spoke with three organizations about the nitty gritty of starting and operating a Free Ride Home program in this blog. It helps if officers have microchip scanners on their vehicles.

Lost and Found Texting Programs

About a year and a half ago, Greenville County Animal Care in South Carolina set up a lost and found pets texting program. People who've lost a pet text the word LOST to 864-467-3950 and receive an instant reply with information about how to file a lost pet report and other steps to help locate the missing pet. Those who've found a pet text the word FOUND to the same number. "We'll text you all of the information and tips you need to help you reunite the cat or dog you found with its lost owner!" GCAC wrote in a Facebook post.

Before instituting this program, GCAC's return to owner rate was about 15 percent for dogs. Since putting the texting program in place, that rate has essentially doubled.

This blog gets into the details of Greenville's lost and found texting program, and how other organizations can start programs of their own. For more info on this subject, go to: <https://www.facebook.com/GVAnimalcare/photos/a.10150714816581202/10160014471116202>.

Spread the Word

This one may require some coordination with the person handling communications and social media for your department or organization: Put out info, and a lot of it, about what someone should do if they've lost or found a pet to help the pet get home quickly.

Lifeline Animal Project created these great graphics to let people know that the first step, when finding a lost pet,

is to check in with their neighbors. They've translated the info into Spanish, too, to reach more of their community.

Some organizations put outdoor hangers with this info on them and put up billboards. This Lost Pet Reunification communications toolkit, created by HASS and HeARTs Speak, has lots more infographics, talking points, sample social media posts, and other tools and resources you can use to talk to your community about what you and they can do to get more lost pets back home.

Courtesy Posts for Found Pets

This is another one that will take coordination with the person who runs your social media pages. Ask them to put up courtesy posts for found pets who aren't in the shelter.

For more info on this subject, go to: <https://www.facebook.com/CincyAnimalCARE/posts/pfbid02WGTsm-PEKtkaTCNzYZVurFKAsVrzc9KwfwWANGM81mirDokkGh-caTJBbHDy2zdQF4I>.

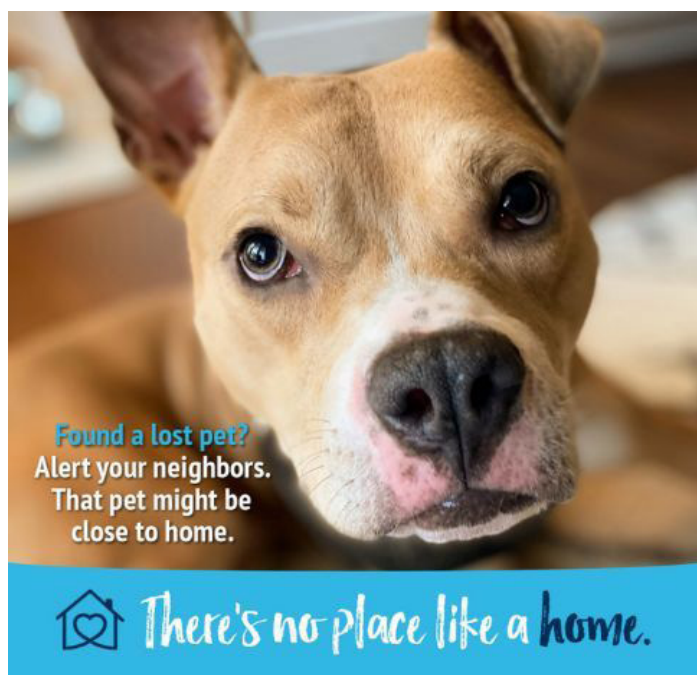
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Found a pet? Follow these simple steps!

- 1 POST** Snap photos and post on social, Nextdoor and lost.petcolove.org
- 2 WALK** Take the pet around the area you found them to see if someone is looking
- 3 CHIP** Check the microchip at a vet's office or pet supply store
- 4 REPORT** File a found pet report with the local shelter



This type of materials can be shared far and wide. One graphic was even turned into a pamphlet that went out with water bills!



Share this infographic to help get word out to your community about what to do if someone finds a lost pet.

(continued from page 25)

These posts help in a number of ways: The top one is that more people will see, and hopefully recognize, the pet in question, which increases the chances of the owner learning where their missing pet is and being able to reclaim them. Courtesy posts also help people learn that the first thing to do, if they find a lost pet, is to snap a picture and share it on community social media pages. Most people want to help lost pets get home, and often the only thing standing in the way is them knowing what to do!

Fixing Fences

Inspired and haunted by the dog whose owner lost his job, his home, and his dog, Mike Wheeler created the Fences for Fido program at Cabot Animal Support Services, as one of the organization's now very expansive pet support services. Cabot's officers carry fence-mending gear on their trucks; the gear is donated by local hardware stores. When a dog gets out or an officer notices that a dog has the potential to get out, the officers simply mend the fence, and then leave a note on the front door to let the owner know.

"People are always thankful, but don't look for the praise," Mike says. "All we want to tell them is, 'Look, your dog was getting out. We did temporary repairs just to make sure your dog didn't get out anymore. If there's anything you need from us, please let us know.' That's all. We're not there for

accolades and everything. We just want to make sure the families stay together."

We interviewed Mike for this blog, where he describes how Fences for Fido works and how others can implement fence-fixing programs like this of their own. We hope you'll give it a read and then please reach out to let us know about how you're supporting people and pets in your community! We'd love to hear the stories that inspired innovation and change, and about the programs, pets, and families that stand out to you. Email marketing@americanpetsalive.org or reach out to www.humananimalsupportservices.org. ❖



Check out this before and after. Using the tools in every animal service officer's truck, CASS officers were able to fix some holes in this fence. They aren't making the fences pretty, Mike Wheeler says, but these repairs do stop the resident dogs from getting out.

Fostering Connections

By Bridget Mire

The art of conversation has been referred to as a rhythmic dance, and that's how Stella Ickes sees it. When she goes out to a case and talks with someone, she's paying attention not only to what they say, but also to their tone and body language.

"How can I connect to this person to be able to speak on their level?" she says. "How are they going to interpret me, and what's going to be the most positive outcome for this? It's a gift. I appreciate it now, and I love being able to use it to win people over."

Stella, an animal control officer for Pasco County Animal Services in Florida, has won over many people. She serves as community engagement officer, building partnerships throughout the county and working tirelessly to help those most in need.

The approach of caring for both people and pets has permeated the animal control team at PCAS, a Tier 1 shel-

ter under the Human Animal Support Services coalition.

Officer Stephanie Martin says it helps to make friends with someone instead of immediately jumping into the complaint.

"I just kind of start talking," she says. "'How's it going? How's your day? How was your weekend? Tell me about your dog.' You've got to ease into it. If you start talking to them about their animal, how they got it, stuff like that, they tend to be a little more patient. Or, you just let them vent and you're their best friend."

Stephanie doesn't want officers to be seen as "dog catchers" or for anyone to be afraid of them. She reminds those she talks to about PCAS' goal of saving at least 90 percent of the animals entering its shelter.

The stories that stand out to her range from hoarding cases involving over 40 cats to reuniting a microchipped

(continued on page 28)



(continued from page 27)

husky with her owner after the dog had been missing for a year.

In cases involving repeat offenders or severe cruelty, enforcement is the only option. But Stephanie says it's rewarding when she gets to educate people on responsible ownership and give them a chance to provide better care for their pets.

"We understand what you're going through, and we get emotionally involved with things sometimes," she says. "It affects us in every different way, shape, and form. We're human."

In an industry that once focused on picking up and euthanizing animals, officers at PCAS now provide education and resources to help people keep their pets and improve their situations. They carry pet food on their vans, refer pet owners to low-cost veterinary clinics, and coordinate with other county departments to assist with needs such as housing or employment.

"You're a lawyer, you're a therapist, you're all kinds of things," Stella says. "You wear many hats, but it's what fits the need. Between the homeless community, or somebody

who had a house fire and needs assistance, or CPS is involved and they're calling us, you're involved in a variety of ways. You play a lot of roles, and it's an honor when people trust you."

Solving problems is Stella's favorite part of the job, but it can be frustrating when she realizes there are restrictions to what she can offer. Sometimes it's a matter of limited resources, and other times it's because the pet owner isn't willing to work with her. She says she must strike a balance between helping and enabling people, and her gut tells her the right thing to do.

"My happiest moments are when people are really receptive to your help and they use it in the proper way," she says. "My brain's always working on solving their problems because I want a positive outcome. Their stories stay with me for a long time, and I absorb them."

Bridget Mire has been involved with animal welfare for 17 years, starting as a volunteer for rescue groups and shelters in various states. She was a print journalist for six years and now serves as education and outreach coordinator for Pasco County Animal Services in Florida. She can be reached at bmire@mypasco.net. ❖



Critical Incident Stress Management (CSIM) for ACOs

Q & A with Adam Leath, Adapted from a Justice Clearinghouse Webinar

Question: Is there any kind of (CISM) training for family members? So family members of animal welfare professionals who may not understand why sometimes we'd rather seek support from our peers or other people within the profession? Sometimes friends and even family – they mean well, but they just don't understand.

Adam Leath: It's such a serious problem because it's very alienating. How are you going to explain some of these situations to someone who has never experienced that before? It's almost impossible. So, in terms of training for family, what we'd like to do in our CISM team, we oftentimes, depending upon the level of involvement, might even involve certain individuals from the family. Not necessarily in the debriefing or the defusing, but they will be involved in the resources. So the individual who was involved in the debriefing or the defusing is that first responder, that person who's had direct interaction with the incident. And we provide them with resources for their family. And then, certainly, one-on-ones, when they seek mental health intervention or any type of treatment or therapy, would be really where the family becomes one-on-one block step with that individual, should they need that type of support.

As it relates to what sort of general exposure type of training might exist for our family members, I can say that to my knowledge this exposure-type training for family members does not exist. It would be really challenging to try to encompass all that animal welfare professionals and ACOs do out there every single day. The work of first responders is what makes our communities thrive.

Question: Do animal welfare and control agencies typically have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or peer support program as we hear about on the law enforcement side?

(continued on page 30)



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(continued from page 29)

Adam Leath: EAP is one of the most recommended resources from our CISM team. So, for those who are not familiar, the EAP is the Employee Assistance Program, and they provide a lot of resources on the mental health side. Oftentimes it is to the degree that's necessary that EAP provides the appropriate resources. EAP is generally available to many city and county agencies, so if you are a municipal animal control, you likely could connect with this resource through your Human Resources department. If you are part of a non-profit organization, oftentimes they also have EAP resources available through human resources departments.

Question: Point of clarification, in terms of terms or definitions, how is CISM different from compassion fatigue, are these terms interchangeable, or what's the difference?

Adam Leath: So, for CISM, we're talking about the intervention or the mitigation of serious stress based upon an extraordinary situation that took place. When we're talking about compassion fatigue, we're talking about repeated exposure to the same type of trauma. Oftentimes euthanasia is most commonly associated event with compassion fatigue. Performing or witnessing euthanasia, especially the first few times is extremely challenging for anyone to cope with and manage and work their way through. Over a period that can fatigue their ability to feel compassion. So

that's why we'll refer to compassion fatigue. We're talking about how much an employee in animal welfare has of themselves to continue to give before it's hard for them to be as compassionate as they once were. For CISM, we're talking about a specific incident, that a lot of individuals have responded to, that was outside of the norm that was a cause of significant stress or has the potential to create significant stress in the lives of those that responded.

Question: Post Event Debriefing vs Defusing - What is it about those 12 hours that's been set for defusing? It seems like that might be awfully difficult to be able to respond to everyone so quickly, so can you tell us about that 12-hour mark?

Adam Leath: I would highly encourage everyone to research the Mitchell Model. It will probably make a little more sense, and I think in practice, it makes even more sense. But the reason why we limit those 12 hours in that initial defusing is that, in the defusing, we're doing something a little different than what we're doing in the debriefing. In defusing, we're literally looking for stabilizing a situation. We're looking to immediately get in front of those that saw what they saw, did what they did, and provide them, with at least some level of stabilization. Here are some resources, here are some of the things you're likely to experience. Here's what you should probably make sure that you are aware. Make sure your family's looking out

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for those types of things, and that's typically in the first 12 hours. If we can't do that in the first 12 hours, then we're looking at a debriefing. Debriefing is the more in-depth providing of resources, the full exploration of what took place, those best practices, what we learn, the types of questions that we ask, and the framework in which we asked those questions are geared toward the recovery phase and geared toward integration back into the workplace with an effective coping strategy.

Question: If an institution is resistant to providing resources or funding such a team, how can we advocate to change their minds? How do we get the boss to get on board?

Adam Leath: I think a lot of times, leadership may not see the ripple effect. When we're talking about CISM, we're talking about addressing a core issue that affects the entire organization. We don't always like to think about how things affect upstream. They typically are forced to respond to the biggest fire, whatever is right in front of them. I would encourage you to look at things like your turnover rate or exit interviews with employees who leave.

I would look at the use of personnel time or time off work. If there are any significant changes in those things, it's already affecting the organization, the individual who's at the top just may not be aware of it. So, while it may seem like you're infusing resources, it has such a huge ripple effect downstream. If we can mitigate the effects that some of these serious stressful events take place on our employees, we do notice a palpable difference in the use of sick time, we notice a palpable difference in those that turn to controlled substances or alcohol or negative coping strategies that have ripple effects on themselves, even their family or their job. If they continue to use a negative coping strategy for long enough, it can have detrimental effects. By looking at various types of statistics, you can see whether it's already having an effect and use that to take to leadership. Data have an impact on making the case to leadership for having the resources available to all staff.

Adam Leath, NACA Board member, serves as director, Volusia County Animal Services, Daytona Beach, Florida. ❖

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