

NSJVMA newsletter

Dear Colleagues,

I wanted to begin providing a quarterly update about our new animal shelter in Stanislaus County, now called Stanislaus Animal Services Agency or SASA. We are now a Joint Powers Agency (JPA) and the Agency is governed by a Board. The members are the City Managers from each of our partners—Modesto, Ceres, Patterson, Waterford, Hughson and the CEO of Stanislaus County.

Onto medicine and PARVO: We opened our doors about 11 months ago and have experienced some interesting developments since. With our animal holding space more than tripling, the dogs and cats can be housed with more room and comfort. However, it has created some challenges. While the shelter is larger, our budget and staff are not. It has stretched our staff thin when it comes to cleaning. And though every kennel gets sterilized every day, we must rely on the Alternative Work Program (minor offenders working off time) to complete the tasks.

Our parvo rates have improved in the new facility surprisingly by half, but we still have some ground to cover. I think our struggle to effectively sanitize day in and day out remains a contributor. Anecdotally, I am hearing our vet community is experiencing a higher parvo incidence in this early season as well. There are days we have 4-5 litters of parvo positive puppies come to our doorstep. Even worse than the overtly symptomatic dogs, we get many asymptomatic, recently infected puppies that break 2-3 days later and have subsequently blazed a path of infection throughout the shelter. We do our best to contain it, keep others isolated and still meet the demands of the public for healthy puppy adoptions.

It has proven to be the most difficult and frustrating part of my job. I want to thank you for your continued patience. Please do your best to sympathetically educate any clients that deal with this unfortunate situation. I'm also always available should you have any questions, suggestions or concerns. A couple other things worth mentioning:

- 1- We allow for a money-back return should the new owner discover a serious illness is present with their newly adopted pet.
- 2- We do not intentionally adopt out dogs with that are sick. We will adopt dogs with mild kennel cough and prescribe appropriate medication when needed.
- 3- We hold three onsite vaccination clinics a month. The first and third Wednesday and one on Saturday.
- 4- In December will be participating in the "12 strays of Christmas" on KCAT country radio.
- 5- Our SCATE program is still in effect. A large banner is now on display at the shelter to encourage sales.

Lastly, I like to throw out something for consideration. We would like to encourage Rabies-Reporting to Animal Services. Obviously, for this to have any success we need your participation. If your first reaction is thumbs down, consider a couple things: Merced has been in this system for a few years and found it to be quite successful. The vets anecdotally report it is low hassle and adds a slight increase to vaccine business. Also our licensing rate is currently 35%, while Merced's is above 60%. A big part of our revenue is from licensing.

Quite simply with more operating revenue and more animals in our database we would be able to enforce more of our regulations effectively. Our canvassing efforts would increase throughout the County, which has shown a direct correlation to increases in vet visits—as owners are cited for lack of vaccines or proper animal care. We have a serious pet overpopulation problem and high noncompliance in this area and this could be a big step in the right direction. Please give it some thought.

Thank You,

Kwane Stewart, DVM
Stanislaus County Veterinarian