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William M. Davis  
Interim Bureau Director

Dear PCAS Partners and Interested Citizens,

As of 1/17/12 Pinellas County Animal Services will be closing our after-hours drop off to the general public. After this date, **the after-hours drop off will remain accessible only to law enforcement.**

For 16 years Animal Services has maintained unattended, after hours drop off. Over time we have faced many problems with this service. Our first and foremost concern is the welfare of the animals left in the drop off unattended. It is not appropriate to have sick, injured, extremely young, or otherwise compromised animals left unattended in a cage overnight. These animals need to be evaluated immediately and have their needs addressed promptly, and this cannot happen with our current system. In addition, a sick animal placed in the drop off can spread infection to the surrounding healthy animals and result in disease outbreak that can impact the entire shelter population.

The original intention of creating the after-hours drop off was for the convenience of citizens who found stray animals after hours. We have found that stray animals left in our drop off often are accompanied by an incomplete history, which can impair our success at reuniting these animals with their rightful owners. By taking in strays in person, we will be able to ask the appropriate questions to give each animal the best chance of returning home.

We are finding an increasing number of citizens abusing the after-hours drop off by using it to dump unwanted pets. One of our organization's primary goals is to increase responsible pet ownership. Making it easy for citizens to discard unwanted pets is a direct contradiction to this goal. We are excited to move to taking in all owner surrendered pets in person. This change will allow us to discuss the owner's reasons for surrender and give us the opportunity to counsel the citizen, provide education and resources, and encourage the citizen to reconsider the decision to discard their pet. In those cases where the owner still elects to surrender the pet, we will be able to gather a more complete medical and behavioral history which will allow us to perform a better evaluation and decision on placement of the animal.

Concerned citizens will be referred to 24 hour emergency clinics for evaluation and care of sick or injured animals, which will facilitate humane treatment. Citizens who have found stray animals after hours will be encouraged to shelter the animal until the shelter is open for business. Citizens who have concerns about a dangerous or aggressive animal will be advised to contact the police who will be able to assist and resolve the issue. Those citizens who are interested in surrendering their pets will need to do so during normal business hours.

The drop-off center will remain available to law enforcement agencies who often must address animal issues in carrying out their duties to protect our citizens.

We firmly believe this decision to close the after-drop off is in the best interest of the general public and animals we serve and it reinforces responsible pet ownership. I am confident that the citizens who rescue strays and bring them to the shelter will continue to do so during our normal business hours. Thank you for understanding and supporting Animal Services in our ongoing mission to improve the welfare of the dogs and cats of Pinellas County.

William Davis,  
Interim Director, Pinellas County Animal Services

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