

Fresno County's new county animal control service faces big challenge, 'but we'll fix it'

By Rory Appleton
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[Fresno Humane Animal Services](#) officially took the reins as Fresno County's latest animal control provider Thursday, and its southeast Fresno headquarters was a whirlwind of activity on day one.

"Walking into this was unbelievable – overwhelming," said Susie Martino, a volunteer. "But we'll fix it."

Martino, also a board member with Fresno Humane Animal Services' parent organization, the Animal Compassion Team, said the group inherited a lot of sick dogs. Two veterinarians spent all of Thursday giving shots and administering antibiotics, she added.

"The biggest issue right now is that we have a lot of sick animals that are currently in inhumane conditions," Martino said.

The conditions included kennels with two or three large dogs in them and cages containing as many as four or five smaller breeds. When Fresno Humane Animal Services arrived at the facilities Sept. 30, the dogs had no bedding and Styrofoam water bowls, Martino said.

No dogs were adopted during Fresno Humane Animal Services' first day as county animal control provider.

However, California Animal Control – which held the county contract for four months before losing services to Fresno Humane Animal Services in September – maintains that the facilities were up to code.

"We did a full walk-through with the county health department and a veterinarian yesterday," Daniel Bailey, president of California Animal Control, said Thursday.

Bailey said the Styrofoam bowls help with disease control. He added that the county checked off all inventory before his organization left the building.

California Animal Control held the county contract, which covers 6,000 square miles of unincorporated areas, took over for Liberty Animal Control, which filed for bankruptcy at the end of May.

Fresno Humane Animal Services president Brenda Mitchell said about 210 dogs are now housed at the shelter. Her team of volunteers is working to build more kennels.

A Chihuahua named Lily was the group's first to be returned to her owner.

Martino said Lily had been at the shelter since July 7. Her owners reported her missing July 4. Lily had a microchip, which apparently was not detected by California Animal Control. Volunteers reunited her with her owners the night of Sept. 30.

Bailey said some of the microchips implanted in dogs aren't picked up by the universal chip readers used at the shelter.

They (the dog's owners) thought it was a prank when I called and asked if they had a dog named Lily. They said they used to.

Susie Martino, volunteer at Fresno Humane Animal Services

Mitchell's team will work to reduce the amount of dogs killed at the county shelter.

"Today, we've got dogs going out for parvo treatment," Mitchell said. "It would be easy just to euthanize them, but we've got big hearts out here."

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Fresno Humane Animal Services

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Open to the public from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday

Animal control officers work from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday