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Lake County, Florida

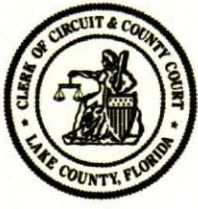
Audit of
Animal Services
Licensure Function

Internal Audit Division
Audit Report

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November 16, 2012



Internal Audit Division

Clerk of the Circuit Court • County Court • Board of County Commissioners

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November 16, 2012

Board of County Commissioners

We have conducted an audit of the Licensure function of the Animal Services Division of the Conservation and Compliance Department of the Lake County Board of County Commissioners as scheduled per our Annual Audit Plan.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by the Animal Services Division during the course of our audit.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Melton, CIA, CFE
Director of Internal Audit

BM/cm

cc: Honorable Neil Kelly, Clerk of Circuit & County Court
David Heath, County Manager
Gregg Welstead, Conservation and Compliance Department Director
Marjorie Boyd, Animal Services Division Manager

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We have conducted an audit of the Licensure Function of the Animal Services Division, as scheduled per our Annual Audit Plan. The Lake County Animal Services Division provides for public safety and animal welfare; and enforces state statutes and local ordinances regarding animals. The Division promotes responsible pet ownership, reunites lost pets with their families, and helps people select a new pet through the Adopt-a-Pet program. Animal Services is the Countywide receiving facility responsible for housing strays and quarantined animals, animals that are “live evidence” in court cases, and unwanted domestic animals. Shelter services are provided to all 14 municipalities in Lake County.

The County could receive \$455,864 in additional revenue annually if licensure laws are reasonably complied with and if rates are comparable to other counties. Currently, Lake County has a 6.5% licensure rate based on licensable pet estimates, which means 93.5% of the dogs and cats in Lake County are not licensed, even though all are required to have a license under the County ordinance. Lake County Licensure fees are significantly lower than the average of fees in other counties. The licensing fee structure should be evaluated. In addition, County licensing requirements should be promoted. Animal Services does not have a promotion plan to educate County residents about the requirement to license the dogs and cats.

Animal Services does not provide license renewal notices and, therefore, is not in compliance with Florida Statutes. We estimate that compliance with the statutes would result in increased revenue of \$41,542 annually related to increased renewal of one-year licenses. Animal Services does not contact current licensees prior to or after expiration of the license. No follow-up is performed when current license holders do not renew. As a result, license holders may forget their license is expired or otherwise choose not to renew. Florida Statutes require that renewal notices be sent at least 45 days prior to the due date of the license to remind dog owners to purchase a tag. We recommend that management consider outsourcing the licensure and renewal process.

County license tag sales by veterinarians could be maximized and controls over tags could be enhanced. A one-month sample of the available monthly rabies vaccination reports from veterinarians was taken to compare the number of vaccinations given to the number of licenses issued. The percentage of licenses issued was determined to be 14.7% of the eligible vaccinated animals. If these reporting veterinarians are representative of the population, then this is a possible indication that the total net amount of annual and recurring additional revenue could be \$103,104, net of the \$1.00 handling fee per license to the veterinarians.

Some veterinarians are not reporting rabies vaccinations to Animal Services as required by law. A review of the rabies vaccination reports received by Animal Services during this calendar year revealed

that 26 veterinarians out of 30 veterinarian establishments in Lake County, or 86 percent, have not provided any reports. Some veterinarians located outside of Lake County that provide services to Lake County pets have been more responsive. Section 828.30(3), Florida Statutes, states: "Upon vaccination against rabies, the licensed veterinarian shall provide the animal's owner and the animal control authority with a rabies vaccination certificate."

Animal Control Officers routinely issue written and/or verbal warnings to animal owners in instances in which their animals are not current on rabies vaccinations and license requirements. Under current practice, if an Animal Control Officer finds an unlicensed animal, the officer merely warns the owner to obtain the license within the next 10 days or the owner will be issued a citation. Note that this is not giving the owner 10 days to prove the license exists — it is giving the owner 10 days to obtain the license after getting caught. The current practice of only issuing warnings provides little or no incentive for owners to obtain licenses.

Some information is not being regularly entered into the division's software system on a timely basis. As a result, specific animal information is not readily available. This could become critical in the event of a bite involving a potentially dangerous dog, when the information may be needed immediately. During the course of the audit, a review of county licenses not yet entered in the system showed that the forms dated back to June 4, 2010. The estimated number of forms that have not been entered from this date through 2012 to date is 7,257. This situation needs to be corrected immediately.

We also noted other areas that could be improved relating to the acceptance of cash by animal control officers, accounting for licenses, control over license tags, and use of licensure software. Our report contains a total of 19 recommendations for improvement, of which management concurs with eighteen.

INTRODUCTION

Scope and Methodology

We have conducted an audit of the Licensure Function of the Animal Services Division, as scheduled per our Annual Audit Plan. Our audit objectives were to:

1. Determine whether licensure fee revenue and compliance is being maximized.
2. Determine whether the licensure system provides accurate and current information.
3. Determine the effectiveness of the veterinarians' involvement in the licensure process.
4. Determine whether all licensure revenue has been accounted for properly.

To determine whether the licensure fee revenue and compliance is being maximized, we interviewed Animal Services management, documented processes, visited dog parks, researched demographics, contacted other counties' Animal Services functions, and reviewed ordinances and rules. Using this information, we then reviewed case files and liens issued, selected samples of the warnings and violations issued, and projected the amount of licensable pets, licenses, and revenues using our samples.

To determine whether the licensure system provides accurate and current information, we reviewed the software system functions and database, discussed the system with Animal Services management, staff, and other county staff, and documented the processes. We then reviewed the animal license cards, selected samples of the license cards, traced the samples into the database, and stratified the samples based on the results.

To determine the effectiveness of the veterinarians' involvement in the licensure process, we interviewed Animal Services management, researched and reviewed statutes, ordinances, and the Department of Business and Professional Regulation website, reviewed the animal license logs and rabies vaccination reports, and performed site visits.

To determine whether all licensure revenue has been accounted for properly, we interviewed Animal Services management, documented processes, and traced a sample of deposits into the specific accounts.

This report includes only the portion of our audit that pertains to licensure. An additional report will be subsequently issued which will include our audit procedures conducted in other areas within Animal Services.

Our audit included such tests of records and other auditing procedures, as we considered necessary in the circumstances. The audit period was from October 1, 2011 through May, 2012. However, transactions, processes, and situations reviewed were not limited by the audit period.

Overall Conclusion

We conclude that licensure fee revenue is not being maximized and that opportunities exist for increased licensure fee revenue. We also determined that the licensure system does not provide fully accurate and current information that is needed to readily provide necessary information to the Animal Services staff. The veterinarians' involvement in and cooperation with the licensure process is not fully effective. We conclude that licensure revenue received has been accounted for properly.

Background

The Lake County Animal Services Division provides for public safety and animal welfare; and enforces state statutes and local ordinances regarding animals. The Division promotes responsible pet ownership, reunites lost pets with their families, and helps people select a new furry friend through the Adopt-a-Pet program. Animal Services is the Countywide receiving facility responsible for housing strays and quarantined animals, animals that are "live evidence" in court cases, and unwanted domestic animals. Shelter services are provided to all 14 municipalities in Lake County (including Mount Dora and Lady Lake). The Animal Services Division provides full service to the unincorporated area and twelve municipalities within Lake County.

Lake County Municipalities Receiving Full Service from Animal Services

Astatula	Leesburg
Clermont	Mascotte
Eustis	Minneola
Fruitland Park	Montverde
Groveland	Tavares
Howey-in-the-Hills	Umatilla

In FY 2012, the Animal Services Division was staffed with 26 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees and a budget of \$1,618,409 for providing these services. The division is funded through both the General Fund and the Animal Shelter Sterilization Fund. The Animal Shelter Sterilization Fund is generated

through various fees and donations and is specifically designated for animal sterilization, medication, and testing supplies related to the prevention of animal over-population.

FY 2012 Budget	General Fund	Animal Shelter Sterilization Fund
Revenues:		
Animal Shelter Penalties	\$25,000	
Animal Shelter Board	16,000	
Animal Shelter Rabies Vaccination	15,000	
Animal Shelter Vet Transport	500	
Animal Shelter Dog Tags	42,000	
Animal Shelter Neutering	40,000	
Animal Shelter Disposals	2,000	
Animal Control charges [FS 828.27(4)(b)]	16,000	
Transfer from General Fund	1,137,824	
Donations		\$45,000
Livestock Sales		35,000
Interest		1,400
Transfer from Fund Balance		242,685
Total Revenues	\$1,294,324	\$324,085
Expenditures:		
Personal Services	\$1,026,375	
Operating Supplies	77,600	40,000
Fuel	60,000	
Utilities	36,750	
Repair & Maintenance	35,700	
Communications	18,600	
Office Supplies	8,000	
Reprographic Charges	5,800	
Insurance	4,249	
Contractual Services	4,000	
Printing & Binding	3,500	
Other Charges and Obligations, Rentals	3,400	
Professional Services (Vet services)	2,500	40,000
Neutering Charges (Vet services)	2,000	
Travel & Per Diem	1,400	
Training	1,450	
Freight & Postage	1,000	
Promotional Activities	1,000	
Books, Publications, Dues	1,000	
Reserve for Contingency		244,085
Total Expenditures	\$1,294,324	\$324,085
Total Combined Funds – Revenues/Expenditures		\$1,618,409

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Our audit disclosed certain policies, procedures and practices that could be improved. Our audit was neither designed nor intended to be a detailed study of every relevant system, procedure or transaction. Accordingly, the Opportunities for Improvement presented in this report may not be all-inclusive of areas where improvement may be needed.

1. Licensure Compliance Rates Should Be Improved, and Licensing Fees Should Be Evaluated.

The County could receive \$455,864 in additional revenue annually if licensure laws are reasonably complied with and if rates are comparable to other counties. We noted the following specific concerns:

- A. The percentage rate of licensed animals in Lake County could be increased. Currently, Lake County has a 6.5% licensure rate based on licensable pet estimates, which means 93.5% of the dogs and cats in Lake County are not licensed, even though all are required to have a license under the County ordinance. Based on the results of a 2009 survey performed by the Florida Animal Control Association (FACA), the State averages a 23.2% licensure rate of licensable animals. However, it is important that Animal Services aggressively pursue licensure of all applicable animals in Lake County. Public health and safety is compromised by applicable animals not being licensed as required.

Because of the lack of compliance with the County ordinance, the County is missing out on potential revenues estimated at \$170,003 for FY 2011 of which \$127,162 is annual recurring revenue, and the remaining \$42,841 would recur once every three years. These funds, if available, could be used to fund basic operations of Animal Services.

In order to protect the public health and safety, all dogs and cats should be licensed to ensure they are appropriately vaccinated and to readily identify them should the need arise. In addition, section 4-36(d) of the Lake County Code of Ordinances requires that all dogs and cats be licensed.

We have included specific recommendations to increase the rate of licensure in this report in Opportunities for Improvement Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7.

- B. The licensing fee structure should be evaluated. The licensing fees for Lake County Animal Services are not adequate to recover all costs. Currently, only \$66,609 in revenue is received from license fees. However, operating costs for Animal Services were \$1,280,397 in FY 2011. The General Fund is subsidizing the operations of Animal Services to an unnecessary extent. In addition, Animal Services operations may be suffering due to a lack of adequate funding.

If the licensure rate were to be raised as recommended in Opportunity for Improvement No. 1A above, total annualized fees would be \$141,442. Animal Services is missing out on potential revenues estimated at \$70,216 in annual recurring revenue, plus an additional \$60,441 in revenues recurring once every three years (annualized revenue of \$90,363).

In addition, Lake County Licensure fees are significantly lower than the average of fees in other counties. If fees were raised to meet the averages of surrounding counties and the percentage rate of licensed animals was increased, Animal Services could see a potential increase in annual recurring revenues by \$371,470 plus an additional \$253,181 in revenues recurring once every 3 years (annualized revenue of \$455,864).

We noted the following fees:

Animal License Fees by County and Type

County	Sterilized		Intact	
	1-year	3-year	1-year	3-year
Hillsborough	\$20	N/A	\$40	N/A
Marion	\$5	\$15	\$35	\$105
Pinellas	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20
Polk	\$10	\$15	\$25	\$60
Seminole	\$6	N/A	\$11	N/A
Average Fee	\$12.20	\$16.67	\$26.20	\$61.67
Rounded to Nearest Dollar	\$12	\$17	\$26	\$62
Lake	\$5	\$5	\$11	\$11

We Recommend Management:

- A. Consider and implement programs to help ensure all appropriate animals are licensed.
- B. Evaluate the licensing fee structure and determine the most appropriate fees.

Management Response:

- A. Management concurs with this recommendation and will suggest implementing a program to ensure all dogs/cats are licensed. Proposal for PetData to be considered by the Lake County Board of County Commissioners.

- B. Management concurs with this recommendation and will suggest the current fee schedule for licensing be revised to reflect an appropriate fee.

2. County Licensing Requirement Should Be Promoted.

Animal Services does not have a promotion plan to educate County residents about the requirements to license dogs and cats. Currently, residents learn about the requirement of a county license tag through their veterinarian or when they are warned by an Animal Control Officer for failing to have a current county tag. These methods are not effective. Some of the veterinarians do not offer or promote county license tags. (See Opportunity for Improvement No. 4.)

Methods of promotion available to Animal Services include:

- a. Newspapers
- b. County website
- c. Dog parks
- d. Utility bill inserts
- e. Mailings
- f. Lake County television
- g. County Fair and other events

Because of the lack of awareness of licensure laws, Lake County has a compliance rate of only 6.5% (as noted in Opportunity for Improvement No. 1). It is essential that a promotion plan be adopted to significantly increase awareness and compliance with licensure laws. The County has an Office of Information Outreach that has expertise in providing citizen education regarding Lake County. This office could work with Animal Services to develop a Promotion Plan.

We Recommend Management develop a plan for the promotion of licensing requirements by working with the Office of Information Outreach to determine the best available options.

Management Response: Management concurs with the recommendation and has already made contact with Lake Front TV for promotion of licensing, adoptions and other topics on October 30, 2012. Animal Services will also work on a promotional plan with Information Outreach for educating the citizens on pet licensing.

3. Renewal Notices Should Be Provided.

Animal Services does not provide license renewal notices, and, therefore, is not in compliance with Florida Statutes. We estimate that compliance with the statutes would result in increased revenue of \$41,542 annually related to increased renewal of one-year licenses. We noted the following specific concerns:

- A. Currently, Animal Services does not contact current licensees prior to or after expiration of the license. No follow-up is performed when current license holders do not renew. As a result, license holders may forget their license is expired or otherwise choose not to renew. Section 828.28(1), Florida Statutes, requires that renewal notices be sent at least 45 days prior to the due date of the license to remind dog owners to purchase a tag. Animal Services was unaware of this statute. In addition, providing renewal notices will increase compliance with licensure requirements as discussed in Opportunity for Improvement No. 1.
- B. The software that Animal Services uses to track licenses and animals does not have the capability to send out renewal notices. Other counties that we contacted for comparison were either using a different software that possessed the capability to send out renewal notices or were contracting with a third party vendor to process and send the notices. One or more third party providers are available to handle the licensure process. Our review indicated that some other counties use a third party service, and have found it to be effective.

We Recommend Management:

- A. Provide renewal notices to dog and cat owners.
- B. Determine whether it would be beneficial to outsource the licensure process or to acquire software that can provide licensure renewal notices, along with any necessary staffing.

Management Response:

- A. Management concurs with the recommendation to provide renewal notices to dog/cat owners. Florida State Statute 828.28(1) does require notices to be sent 45 days prior to expiration date. Management will recommend to outsource the licensure program.
- B. Management concurs with the recommendation. To outsource the licensure program would be more beneficial and cost effective versus new software and necessary staffing. Management will recommend to outsource the licensing program to PetData.

4. County License Tag Sales By Veterinarians Could Be Maximized And Controls Over Tags Could Be Enhanced.

Lake County could potentially see additional annual and recurring revenue of \$103,104 by increasing participation in county license tag sales by veterinarians. Lake County provides licenses to veterinarians to sell, usually at the time rabies vaccinations are provided by the veterinarians.

A. Monthly rabies vaccination reports are provided by some, but not all, veterinarians to Animal Services. Under Lake County Code Sec. 4-36(d), “the owner of a rabies-susceptible animal which is vaccinated against rabies shall obtain a tag for the animal upon each vaccination.” A one-month sample of these reports was taken to compare the number of vaccinations given to the number of licenses issued. The percentage of licenses issued was determined to be 14.7% of the eligible vaccinated animals. If these reporting veterinarians are representative of the population, then this is a possible indication that the total net amount of annual and recurring additional revenue could be \$103,104, net of the \$1.00 handling fee per license to the veterinarians. By using the average licensure fee of the other counties as recommended in Opportunity for Improvement No. 1B, the amount of this additional revenue can then be projected to be \$373,680, of which \$265,536 is an annual and recurring amount. Following is a chart identifying the various components of the potential additional license revenue:

	Total	Sterilized: 1-year	Sterilized: 3-year	Intact: 1-year	Intact: 3-year
Estimated Annual Unlicensed Animals Based on Sample	20,520	7,776	5,112	7,200	432
Current Licensure Fee		\$5	\$5	\$11	\$11
Revenue using Current Licensure Fee	\$148,392	\$38,880	\$25,560	\$79,200	\$4,752
Net Revenue after handling fee of \$1.00 per license	\$127,872	\$31,104	\$20,448	\$72,000	\$4,320
Average Licensure Fee		\$12	\$17	\$26	\$62
Revenue using Average Licensure Fees	\$394,200	\$93,312	\$86,904	\$187,200	\$26,784
Net Revenue after handling fee of \$1.00 per license	\$373,680	\$85,536	\$81,792	\$180,000	\$26,352

During our visits to veterinary establishments, we noted that some veterinarians view the sale of the county license tag as part of the package of services provided to the pet owners. These veterinarians simply give the county license tag to the pet owner along with the rabies vaccination tag and include it with the total bill for services. They consider it their responsibility to help protect the pet owners from receiving a citation and a fine. Other veterinary establishments simply post a copy of the county ordinance and expect the pet owner to ask for a tag.

For additional issues related to licensure reports and the rabies vaccination reports that are required to be filed by veterinarians, see Opportunity for Improvement No. 7.

B. Internal controls over license tags issued to veterinarians need improvement. Each year, participating veterinarians are provided Lake County license tags to sell to pet owners upon vaccination of the pet for rabies. As rabies tags are issued to veterinarians and receipts are returned proving sale of the license, an Animal Services employee logs the tag numbers issued

or returned. During our review of these logs, we noted two instances in which licenses were returned to Animal Services by veterinarians that were not recorded as having been issued to the veterinarians. These were detected only when the veterinarians returned the licenses.

We noted an additional three instances in which licenses returned to Animal Services by veterinarians were not recorded by Animal Services staff as having been returned. Although a log of issuances is maintained, there is no requirement that the persons making entries into the log initial the entry.

There is no accountability regarding who is making entries into the log, nor is there accountability when licenses are issued to veterinarians. Without accountability of persons distributing licenses or persons making entries in the log as licenses are returned, the ability to track erroneous or incorrect entries is limited. Therefore, theft or misappropriation of funds could occur without detection.

- C. The actual fee collected should be indicated on each license form. In many cases, when a customer adopts or reclaims an animal, the animal license is paid as part of the adoption/reclaim receipt. If the animal is already vaccinated, a license will be issued simultaneously. If the animal is not vaccinated, Animal Services will issue the license upon proof of vaccination. In either case, when the license fee is collected through an adoption or reclaim, "no charge" is written on the license form. Although there is a field on the license form to indicate the receipt number through which the fee was collected, this field is not always filled out, and there is no place to indicate the receipt date. As a result, it is difficult to determine if a license form indicating "no charge" is truly a license with fees waived or simply a license charged through a separate receipt. We noted one instance in which we could not determine if a fee was waived, charged through a different receipt, or inadvertently not collected. Lack of clear documentation of fees could result in theft or misappropriation of funds. Additionally, it could open employees to the threat of accusation of theft of funds.

We Recommend Management:

- A. Consider options to increase tag sales, including enacting an ordinance that makes it mandatory for the veterinarians to sell a county license tag at the time a rabies vaccination is given to a dog or cat.
- B. Require that the Animal Services employee issuing the licenses ensure the licenses are in sequential order of those issued in the log. In addition, the employee should record issuance in the log immediately upon issuance of the licenses to the vet. Employees making entries in the log should be required to take responsibility for the entry. Management should also consider developing an electronic logging system to use instead of the paper logging system currently in use.

- C. Require that the actual fee collected be indicated on each license. If the fee was collected through an adoption or reclaim, the receipt number and date should also be identified on the license.

Management Response:

- A. Management concurs with the recommendation. Management will consider different options to increase compliance with the county licensing program with the veterinarians. Management will continue working on the Electronic Log-In program for veterinarians to input the mandatory rabies and license information.
- B. Management concurs with the recommendation. Management will provide a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for all employees for the issuance of licenses to veterinarians and animal owners. Animal Services will also provide an electronic logging system for issuing licenses to participating vets.
- C. Management concurs with the recommendation. A new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is being drafted to address the issue of completing all fields on the license form.

5. Controls Over And Processes Related To Citations Should Be Tightened.

During our review of citations and related processes, we estimate that the opportunity to collect up to \$531,000 of revenue during fiscal year 2011 and through fiscal year 2012 was lost due to the current practice. We noted the following specific concerns:

- A. Animal Control Officers routinely issue written and/or verbal warnings to animal owners in instances in which their animals are not current on rabies vaccinations and license requirements. Under current practice, if an Animal Control Officer finds an unlicensed animal, the officer merely warns the owner to obtain the license within the next 10 days or the owner will be issued a citation. Note that this is not giving the owner 10 days to prove the license exists — it is giving the owner 10 days to obtain the license after getting caught.

Lake County Code of Ordinances section 4-36 states: “it is a violation...for any owner of any rabies-susceptible animal to fail to have and/or display in an appropriate manner the animal’s rabies certificate and county tag.” The ordinance recommends a \$150 penalty for the first violation and a \$500 penalty for any repeat violation within five years of a previous offense.

The current practice of only issuing warnings provides little or no incentive for owners to obtain licenses. Under the current system, an owner can wait and see if he gets caught and if so, obtain the license at that point. Animal Services could have received up to \$531,000 in citation revenues over FY 2011 and 2012 through July, assuming the current licensure rate would have remained constant over this period. While we recognize the purpose of citations is

not to generate more revenue, the current practice does not provide a deterrent to violating licensure requirements. This practice is contributing to the situation noted in Opportunity for Improvement No. 1.

- B. When a fine remains unpaid beyond the due date, Florida statutes allow a lien to be placed in the public record against the respondent. Currently, liens are not recorded as soon as possible. We noted current time lags of up to six months to record the liens. We found 22 fines with due dates ranging from February 11 to June 9, 2012 which have not yet been recorded in the public record. This reduces opportunities for the County to collect monies due since the respondent may effect transactions before the lien is recorded that would have otherwise required satisfaction of the lien. While reviewing liens, we also noted that lien recording fees are not included. Recording fees should be allowed to be recovered if ordered by the Special Master at the time of assessment.
- C. Animal Control Officers often issue citations while out in the field. For various reasons, an officer can void a citation. If a citation is voided, the officer is instructed to place it in the corresponding case file. Though citations are pre-numbered, there is no process for accounting for all citation numbers. The lack of accountability over citations could allow theft or misappropriation of funds to go undetected.
- D. While out in the field, Animal Control Officers often collect payment for various fees. It is the policy of the Division not to accept checks as payments, so customers often pay with cash. Though officers are instructed to issue a receipt with each transaction, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether officers are in compliance. The policy of allowing officers to accept cash payments in the field increases the risk of theft or misappropriation of funds going undetected, and puts the officer at risk of false accusations. Therefore, the acceptance of cash payments by officers should be prohibited.

We Recommend Management:

- A. Consider issuing citations in all instances in which an animal is not current on rabies vaccination and licensing requirements.
- B. Record liens immediately after the due date. In addition, management should work with the Special Master to require that any recording fees be paid by the respondent in addition to the fine amount.
- C. Develop a process for regularly accounting for all citation numbers issued to each Animal Control Officer, including verification of voided and blank citations on hand.
- D. Prohibit Animal Control Officers from accepting payments.

Management Response:

- A. Management has not considered issuing citations prior to a warning due to Section 8-4(B) (Enforcement Procedures) for Special Master Code Cases. Owners will be given Notice of Code Violation and given a time frame to be in compliance with the code section.
- B. Management concurs with the recommendation. A new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) will be drafted for the recording of all liens immediately after the case due date. Management will also suggest a review with the County Attorney and Special Master to discuss recording fees to be paid in addition to the fine amount.
- C. Management concurs with the recommendation. A new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) will be drafted for all Notice of Hearing citations to be assigned by management in a series of numbers to each Animal Control Officer and tracked by electronic logging system. All void/cancelled citations must also be turned in to management.
- D. Management does not approve the acceptance of checks for adopting or reclaiming animals from the shelter due to the large amount of dishonored checks received; however, Animal Services does accept personal checks via the mail for County licenses and other services provided to the public. Management will draft a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Animal Control Officers or staff not to accept cash payments in the field, but it is acceptable to accept checks or money orders, cashier's checks and on-line payment for County licenses.

6. Automation Could Be More Effective.

Software used by Animal Services does not provide adequate licensure information, fee information, or reports necessary for effective management. In addition we observed significant backlogs and omissions relating to entering and capturing information into the system. We noted the following specific concerns:

- A. Animal Services uses commercially-available computer software to track animal information, including licensure, animal complaints, animals picked up, and animals in the shelter. During our review, we noted several inadequacies in the software as follows:
 - a. The software does not facilitate exportable reports. Instead, all information must be retrieved on an individual animal basis or by a separate retrieval program written by IT personnel. For example, the software does not have the capability of generating reports with the number of licenses issued, nor whether the licenses are issued by Animal Services or veterinarians. There is a risk of inappropriate management decisions or appropriate action not being taken because management information is not generated from the system.

- b. The system does not have the capability of storing or sending emails. Therefore, the required notifications of license renewals cannot be readily done by email.
- c. The software does not allow for limited, read-only access. Volunteers have been allowed to enter license information into the system, with access to other functions of the software, including the ability to delete information. Because there are no restrictions on access, volunteers or other employees could inadvertently or purposefully delete or alter data in the system.
- d. The system lacks the ability to track changes within the application. Without audit trails, management cannot determine who, when, or how changes were made in the system, including addition or deletion of data and changes to system settings or controls.
- e. The software does not have the ability to track financial transactions.

An effective system should be able to automate functions that would otherwise require staff time and should be able to generate overall data to aid in management decision-making.

- B. Some information is not being regularly entered into the system on a timely basis. As a result, specific animal information is not readily available. This could become critical in the event of a bite involving a potentially dangerous dog, when the information may be needed immediately. On the weekends, no one is in the office to search through the license cards manually to try to find the specific animal involved. In addition, information is not readily available for management analysis that may be needed in decision-making. Failure to enter the cards on a timely basis increases the possibility that the cards could contain errors that would remain undetected for extended periods of time. We noted the following specific concerns:
 - a. Information for licenses issued by veterinarians is not being entered into the system on a timely basis. During the course of the audit, a review of county licenses not yet entered in the system showed that the forms dated back to June 4, 2010. The estimated number of forms that have not been entered from this date through 2012 to date is 7,257. This situation needs to be corrected immediately.
 - b. Licensure fee amounts and expiration dates are not always entered into the system. License fees vary from \$5 for a sterilized animal, \$11 for an intact animal, and \$1 for a license replacement. Additionally, the fee is totally waived in some instances.
 - c. Information relating to whether the animal is sterilized or intact is sometimes not entered into the system.
 - d. Notes pertaining to the animal, including such items as why fees are being waived or reasons for actions taken, are written only on the physical cards without being entered into the system.

- C. Although the county license form asks for the mailing address of the dog or cat owner, a physical address is not required. A review of issued license forms showed that some of the mailing addresses are not physical addresses. Based on the sample reviewed, three to four percent of the forms showed the address as a post office box. We could not reasonably determine whether other addresses are the actual physical residence of the animal. Use of a mailing address other than the location of the pet does not assist in locating the pet's home. In the event of an immediate need to locate a pet or a pet owner, for example, in a bite incident, the mailing address is of little value. As a result, public health or safety could be endangered.

We Recommend Management:

- A. 1) Request the vendor to add report capability to the system. Until this is done, management should work with IT to develop appropriate management reports from data extracted from the system. Alternatively, management should consider other animal shelter software that provides more of these features.

2) Request that email capability be added to the system.

3) Restrict access to the system to Animal Services employees only until such time as the system can provide appropriate levels of access. Once this is done, access should be limited to those needing only the specific features that they are responsible for using.
- B. Require all information to be entered into the system on a timely basis. Immediate action should be taken to enter the backlog of licenses into the system.
- C. Modify the county license form to include both the mailing address and the physical address.

Management Response:

- A. Management concurs with the recommendation of working with Information Technology to develop report options from the system. Management has considered other shelter software over the past few years that provides the suggestions listed in numbers 2) and 3). However, funding has been the issue for replacing the existing software. Management will propose to review all available software, such as Chameleon Software program, if funding is available with Lake County Board of County Commissioners' approval.
- B. Management concurs with the recommendation that all information be entered into the system on a timely basis. However, the current staffing level is not sufficient in order to keep the data entry up to date. Management would recommend all backlog licenses and current licenses be compiled and provided to the licensure company PetData for entry.
- C. Management concurs with the recommendation and will revise the current license form to reflect mailing address and physical address, with the Division's next form supply order.

7. Animal Services Should Work With Veterinarians to Report Rabies Vaccinations.

Some veterinarians are not reporting rabies vaccinations to Animal Services as required by law. A search of the Department of Board of Professional Regulation licenses showed that Lake County currently has 30 veterinary establishments. A review of the rabies vaccination reports received by Animal Services during this calendar year revealed that 26 veterinarians, or 86%, have not provided any reports. Some veterinarians located outside of Lake County that provide services to Lake County pets have been more responsive.

As a result, Animal Services is not able to obtain rabies vaccination information quickly in the event of a bite, which could result in painful treatments and unnecessary expense to the victim. Animal Services is not receiving the information required by statute and is thereby precluded from ensuring that animals are appropriately vaccinated and licensed.

Section 828.30(3), Florida Statutes, states: "Upon vaccination against rabies, the licensed veterinarian shall provide the animal's owner and the animal control authority with a rabies vaccination certificate."

In addition, the reports provided by the veterinarians typically include information about whether or not the owner purchased a county license tag. This information is essential to Animal Services in order to fulfill their function of encouraging compliance with County licensing laws. By contacting pet owners obtaining rabies vaccinations for their pet, Animal Services can increase compliance with licensing laws. This situation is discussed further in Opportunity for Improvement No. 4.

We Recommend Management:

- A. Work with the veterinary community to devise a plan that facilitates compliance with rabies vaccination reporting requirements. If compliance is not achieved, management should use enforcement mechanisms allowed by law.
- B. Establish procedures to contact pet owners who did not purchase a county license tag when obtaining a rabies vaccination.

Management Response:

- A. Management concurs with the recommendation. Animal Services management will continue to work with the local veterinarians on compliance. Management will continue to work on the new Electronic Log-In program for veterinarians and will implement the new program upon completion.
- B. Management concurs with the recommendation; however, the appropriate staffing level would need to be provided in order to accomplish this goal. Management would again

recommend the licensure company PetData to ensure County Licenses are purchased with obtaining a Rabies vaccination.