

## **Community Letter: 4/4/23**

There is a misinformation campaign spreading on Facebook that we would like to clear up.

It is being perpetrated by Petaluma's former contractor for animal services. That contractor lost the contract to NBAS for many reasons. If the City had been satisfied with their service, NBAS would not even exist.

We'd like to address 2 areas: euthanasia records, and animal care in our Petaluma shelter and our Clearlake shelter.

If data recording and analysis of animal shelter animals and calls for service were simple, we'd all simply use a spreadsheet. But it's complex, so NBAS uses the industry standard, the software used by most of the animal shelters in the U.S. – PetPoint. This software allows us to record and track many complex aspects of animals sheltering.

But some folks have questioned our reported euthanasia numbers. They are comparing apples to oranges and spreading untruths. But that's ok, we're here to help.

Simple question: why are the euthanasias reported in the Asilomar report, different from the records obtained from the vets that NBAS uses?

Euthanasias are a hot-button topic. Let us assure you, NBAS does not euthanize a healthy and treatable pet. We have many examples of pets for which we have provided long term medical care in order to clear that pet for adoption.

So, why the discrepancy in the numbers?

1. Our veterinary clinics treat all of our animals. NBAS helps animals in jurisdictions other than Petaluma. So, some of the vet records for euthanasias, are for pets outside of the Petaluma jurisdiction. But the Asilomar report for Petaluma's jurisdiction, only includes pets in the Petaluma jurisdiction.
2. With thousands of medical records to enter (exams, vaccines, treatments, tests, surgeries, follow-ups, emergencies) in 2020, across all of our vets, mistakes are bound to happen. In one example, the vet reported a euthanasia of a guinea pig, as a euthanasia of a cat. (Those questioning our numbers are focused on cats, that's why this record came under scrutiny.)
3. Our vet clinics have been gracious enough to do their own data entry into our PetPoint software. This saves us hundreds of hours of work, and correctly records the person providing the service (for public transparency). There are occasions in which they exclude one step: assigning an Asilomar status. If the Asilomar status is not included in a euthanasia record, that animal will not be included in the Asilomar report – another reason for the vet/NBAS records mismatch. While the PetPoint software does allow

users to alter a euthanasia record so that Asilomar status could be included after the fact NBAS staff were reluctant to a) expend the extra resources, and b) alter the record with staff fingerprints potentially causing more questions to be asked. This is one of the reasons we report the raw data to the City of Petaluma and the public. This allows for individual analysis of the raw data.

Every discrepancy has a simple explanation. But the goal of those spreading misinformation is to discredit NBAS, not to get to the truth.

There is a 30 minute training video that PetPoint created that explains the Asilomar report: from setting up the data elements, to 'cleaning up the data', to running the final report. Please reach out if you'd like a copy of that training video, and we will inquire with PetPoint about the feasibility of providing it to you.

Next, let's discuss animal care at our Petaluma shelter and our Clearlake shelter.

**Allegation:** The Petaluma shelter has never been this full.

**Truth:** That is correct.

- In the last 5 years since winning the contract, the population of Petaluma has increased. The pet population has increased too. We have expanded animal housing by adding 3 portable buildings (heated and cooled). We have added 2 play yards for the dogs. We have converted unused indoor space for cat housing. We have added storage for pet food and supplies. All was accomplished because of generous donations from the public.
- During the Covid shelter-in-place, many shelters emptied of pets: people were home and wanted animal companionship. In Petaluma, we experienced similar low numbers in our shelter. But since the summer of 2021, adoptions have stalled across the country. As of November 2021, the national average length of stay in shelters for dogs has increased by 18 days compared to pre-pandemic numbers (these are national statistics, gleaned from: <https://lms.petpoint.com/blog/zblog.php> 'Days in Care' & 'Real Data to address a real issue'.) All of this leads to fuller shelters.

At the Petaluma shelter, the added space helps. But we have also increased our volunteer hours and re-assigned staff to better accommodate the increased workload so that the animals get the care they need.

**Allegation:** the animals at the Clearlake shelter are not getting vet care.

**Truth:** When the City of Clearlake was struggling to find trained staff, especially animal control officers, and were suffering from packs of stray dogs running in the streets, they reached out for help. NBAS answered by sending officers to the shelter to train and patrol. Almost immediately, that shelter's capacity increased. Temporary housing was constructed so that the dogs could get off the streets and public safety could be restored. The city leadership was more than satisfied with NBAS's performance, so offered the contract.

When we assumed the contract, we discovered that many of the dogs were not getting medical attention. We immediately brought dogs to our Petaluma vets for care and started to develop relationships with Lake County vets to provide services.

In the 8 months that we have held the contract, we have completed 827 medical procedures for 399 animals, well over the 170 animals that were cared for the previous year.

Fact: Clearlake shelter animals are getting the vet care that they need.

Something else to consider when comparing animal services in Petaluma with animal services in Clearlake. There are different kinds of situations that arise in both places. For example, in Petaluma, the barking complaints are greater than in Clearlake. Perhaps it's because of the denser, urban orientation of the population.

In Clearlake, we see many more officer assist calls for service that result in a large number of dog impounds. In a one month period, we took in 31 dogs from 3 different incidents.

In Clearlake, we see more dogs get hit by cars that require emergency vet care, than we see in Petaluma.

But what about all of the horrific photos and stories from volunteers?

Through a behind-the-scenes smear campaign, volunteers and members of the public are being offered future employment at the shelter, in hopes that the lies will cause the City leadership to cancel the NBAS contract. Those very people had every opportunity to bid on the contract, but chose not to.

The photos do not lie. It is not uncommon for shelter dogs to become kennel stressed, and smear their own feces on the walls of their kennel. There is not enough funding provided by the City (or any City), to provide 24/7 observation and care for shelter pets. This is the sad reality that we all live in, in this country.

What can you do?

Do not feed into the drama. If you have a question about what you are seeing, ask the people who can provide an answer: shelter staff.

Do not spread false accusations that you do not have first-hand knowledge of.

Come visit either shelter at any time. We are open to all. You can easily walk in and view the animals for yourself. No appointment necessary.

Come volunteer at the shelter! We have plenty of tasks that need to be done, from laundry to dog walking to cuddling cats. Everyone is welcome!