



## **Public Notification: Rutherford County Animal Control Receives Notice of Violation**

**Rutherford County, NC — 9/8/2023** — The County received a Notice of Violation and Assessment of Civil Penalty from Dr. Patricia Norris, Director of the Animal Welfare Section of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture on September 5<sup>th</sup>. We engaged in a conference with Dr. Norris the next morning and are working with her and the Animal Welfare Section to address the deficiencies they found leading to the Notice and Assessment. We are underway with a Corrective Action Plan and will continue to engage Dr. Norris and the Animal Welfare Section for their oversight, instruction and advice, as well as to mitigate the civil penalties imposed.

To be clear, first and foremost, the conditions cited are unacceptable and will and must be corrected. We have faced a near total turnover in our staff that left animal control very short-staffed for much of this year and required hiring new staff with a broad level of training and supervision to assist them in performing their jobs in caring for the animals under their care. Turnover coupled with staff operating in an aging facility and at a time the County has seen a rise in the number of animals being surrendered or abandoned to our facility and to animal rescue groups exacerbated issues at our center. Unfortunately, we have fallen unacceptably short in record keeping in an effort to maintain the everyday operations of the facility, answering incident calls, veterinarian care, road calls and keeping the facility open and offering services to our citizens. We believe we have hired good people to assist us and who are committed to the care of animals in our charge. It is our duty and our charge to ensure we equip them with the training, the knowledge and the ability to perform their jobs.

Some of the most serious charges related to a dog and her puppies surrendered to our facility with an extremely dangerous and communicable Parvo virus. In the efforts to keep them quarantined in a full facility, and with not enough staff to handle our normal responsibilities, the animals were not transported for veterinarian care in a timely manner. This is not acceptable and our corrective action plan, along with the hiring of new staff and training to deal with crises of this nature, will assist our efforts to correct the identified deficiencies.

The Board of Commissioners are deeply concerned by this Notice, which runs contrary to their commitment to animal welfare and animal control in Rutherford County. Plans for a new animal control facility to replace the current, aging structure have already been drawn and a contractor retained for its construction by the end of next year using grant funds in the amount of \$4,167,144. Some of the deficiencies cited are the direct result

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of an aging structure that is no longer sufficient to meet the growing needs for animal control, which the new building is designed to correct.

We are facing a crisis, not only in Rutherford County but, from our understanding, nationwide, with a massive increase in dogs and cats being abandoned and neglected by their owners. Our animal control facility and most rescue groups with whom we partner for the adoption of these dogs and cats into good homes are currently overwhelmed and at or beyond capacity to house them. There are simply more dogs and more cats who need good homes than there are folks willing to adopt them.

It is our charge to work through this and provide the care for these animals no matter how many we receive, and it is our commitment to make this happen.

*For more information, press only:*

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