

10/28/2024

Dear Board Members,

I am writing to inform you of critical animal welfare issues I observed during my brief tenure at Animal Resources and Care. Despite efforts to advocate for improved care, I encountered significant resistance, which hindered my ability to ensure appropriate treatment for the animals, particularly the cats in the facility.

Upon beginning my employment, I was alarmed by the conditions in which the cats were kept. Several kennels housed 2-3 adult cats, and it was evident that daily cleaning was not a routine practice. Staff members informed me that they were instructed to merely shake out blankets and reuse them each day without changing soiled bedding or disinfecting the kennels. Many litter boxes were unsanitary, and I found food bowls containing mold, as documented in photographs I took during my first week. When I raised these concerns, I encountered indifference from leadership, who, at one point, suggested that my concerns reflected an "excessive empathy" for the cats.

A recurring issue involved the refusal of necessary medical treatments. Numerous cats suffered from severe eye infections that rendered them unable to see. When I requested treatment for these animals, the attending veterinarian, Dr. Stephenson, dismissed the need for intervention, stating that the conditions would resolve naturally and that her staff would not be administering eye medications to the affected animals. My offer to apply these treatments was also declined.

We had a six-month-old cat brought into the facility with an exposed back leg, where both the bone and muscle were visible. Dr. Stephenson performed a neuter procedure on the cat, applied a vet wrap to the leg, and then left the animal in a kennel for over a week while she went on vacation. The cat was only given a single dose of meloxicam post-neuter, with no ongoing pain management prescribed. Over the following days, the odor of the decaying tissue was apparent in the hallway. I expressed concern to Director Julie Johnson, emphasizing that leaving the cat in a kennel with an exposed, untreated leg and without adequate pain relief was inhumane. In response, Julie questioned how I knew the cat was in pain. I explained that the nature of the injury itself indicated suffering, to which she replied dismissively, suggesting that my generation tends to believe that everything requires pain medication when it does not. I proposed seeking assistance from a rescue organization or having one of our rotating veterinarians perform an amputation to alleviate the cat's suffering, rather than waiting for Dr. Stephenson's return. This suggestion was also denied.

In another concerning incident, Dr. Stephenson determined that a puppy was "brain dead" after performing CPR during surgery. The puppy was placed in a kennel from that morning until the following day, without any monitoring or supervision overnight. Throughout the day, both staff and customers

could hear the puppy crying from the cat ward in the medical area. Uncomfortable with the puppy's distress, I reported the situation to Director Julie Johnson. However, Dr. Stephenson insisted that the puppy was fine and instructed us to disregard the cries. It was only the next morning that the puppy was euthanized, after suffering unattended in the kennel throughout the night.

The treatment of bottle-fed neonatal kittens at the facility was also deeply concerning. There is no structured program in place for these vulnerable animals. During my time there, many neonatal kittens arrived, and when I inquired about the established protocol, I was informed that they were simply placed in kennels with the hope that staff would remember to feed them. Staff had previously been told that if they did not want to care for these kittens, they could take them to the "blue room" for euthanasia.

I immediately sought to improve this situation but encountered significant resistance. Sarah Gilley opposed any efforts for assistance with foster placements or for recruiting fosters, making it challenging to secure care for these kittens. As a result, I personally took home over 10 bottle-fed kittens to care for them during my brief employment, as no one else was available or willing to help, and there was no foster system in place.

I proposed creating a bottle-baby foster group that could allow fosters to take turns caring for these kittens, understanding the demanding nature of their needs, including nighttime feedings. This would have greatly supported the welfare of these kittens, but Sarah Gilley immediately dismissed the idea, and despite my concerns raised with Director Julie Johnson, the proposal was not considered further.

Perhaps the most concerning practice was the "Return to Field" (RTF) designation for surrendered adult cats and kittens under six months old, many of which were never outdoor animals. When I raised concerns about releasing these animals into the facility's parking lot, leadership did not provide a viable justification for this practice. On one occasion, three "jungle cats," identified through DNA testing as distinct due to a hoarding case, were released in the same manner. This approach appeared focused on maintaining favorable live release metrics, which I found ethically questionable.

In addition, I was instructed to direct citizens who could not foster stray animals to return the animals to where they were found, suggesting that they should not have intervened if they could not assume responsibility. I believe this stance is counterproductive to community engagement and undermines public confidence in our organization.

These concerns reflect only a portion of the troubling practices I observed during my four months at Animal Resources. I am deeply concerned that, under the current management, the facility may continue

to provide inadequate care for both animals and the community. I hope this letter encourages the Board to take immediate action to address these issues and prioritize the welfare of the animals in their care.

Sincerely,

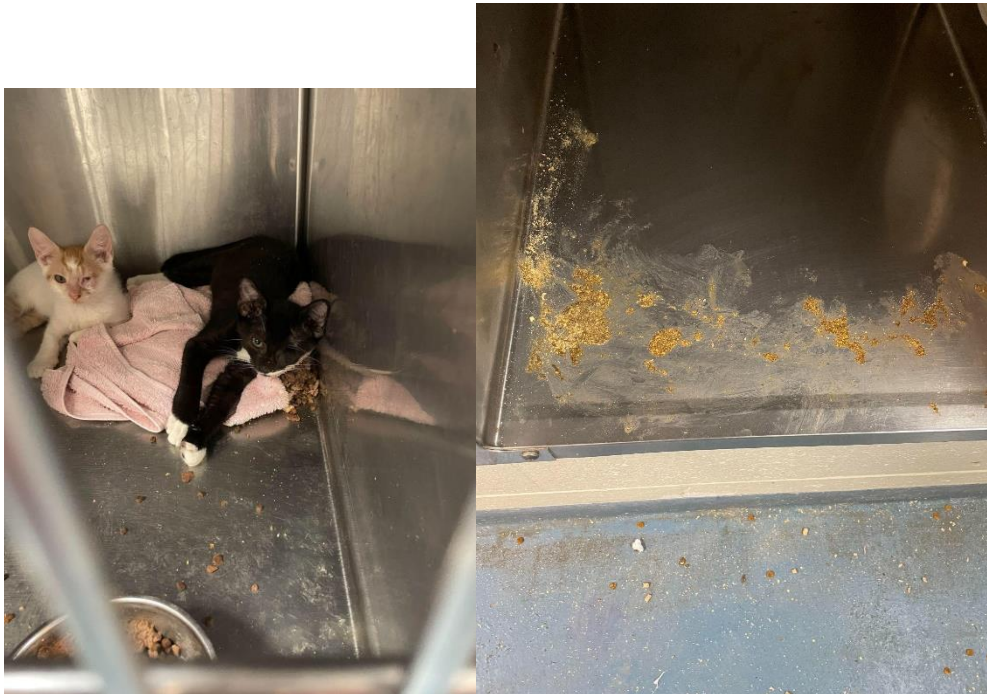
Skye Graves



6 month old kitten with broken leg



Moldy food found after cleaning



"Cleaned" kennels after removing blanket



Mop used to clean isolation