

February 1, 2013

Elizabeth A. Egan
Fresno County District Attorney
2220 Tulare St #1000
Fresno, CA 93721

Dear Ms. Egan,

We have learned of the shooting that happened at the Selma Animal Shelter last week, during which an unnamed officer allegedly shot five dogs still inside their closed kennels. In at least one television news interview, Selma's police chief Myron Dyck not only admitted that the incident occurred, but stated that such action was justified because the dogs were allegedly aggressive and already slated for euthanasia.¹ In another news story, Selma's City Manager D-B Heusser is quoted as saying about these dogs and the shooting: "They were very aggressive... It had to be done."²

We cannot express strongly enough that both the actions of the officer in question and the defense of such actions are unacceptable, and we request that you investigate the incident and pursue every appropriate legal recourse to hold this officer accountable.

The officer in question shot five dogs while they were still inside in their kennels, allegedly because he feared for his life. We in the animal care and control industry cannot fathom a scenario where a dog safely behind closed kennel bars would be able to inflict bodily injury on a human standing on the outside of the kennel. If the dogs were too aggressive to be removed from their kennels with a leash, the officer should have been properly trained and equipped to use basic safety tools like a catch pole, a simple device employed thousands of times over each and every day in humane shelter operations across the country to manage aggressive dogs. Alternatively, he could have enlisted help to anesthetize the dogs while still in their kennels so they could then be safely handled and humanely euthanized. The officer's decision not to use basic humane safety equipment is not only individually unacceptable, it indicates a grave failure of humane leadership and training across the organization as a whole.

The implication that the incident should be minimized because the dogs were slated for euthanasia anyway is equally troubling. Make no mistake—shooting a dog inside a kennel is *not* euthanasia. Euthanasia is defined by humane organizations as a death free from stress and pain. Along with the technical skills required, there must be compassion and a sense of solemnity, reverence, and respect for the animals when euthanasia is performed. Clearly, this was not even a consideration at the Selma Animal Shelter that day.

Animal shelters are intended to be safe havens for pets that are homeless, abandoned, abused, neglected, or otherwise in need of care. The people entrusted with this important responsibility should exemplify the highest standards of compassion, regardless of the animals' physical appearance or behavioral status. We understand more than anyone else the challenges and demands that animal control professionals face every day, and we are proud to stand behind the men and women who perform this lifesaving work humanely and professionally (including, we trust, others who care for animals at the Selma Animal Shelter). However, as the facts have been reported in this case, we find no excuse or justification for the callous disregard for animals this officer exhibited. Moreover, we cannot stand behind an agency or its leadership that would permit such a horrific abuse of the public's trust to take place and do anything other than condemn it.

¹ <http://www.kmph.com/story/20757982/cop-shoots-kills-5-dog-at-animal-shelter>

² <http://www.fresnobee.com/2013/01/29/3152753/selma-city-manager-defends-decision.html>

We are jointly requesting from your office a formal response revealing how and why the incident occurred, an accounting of what review of agency procedures is under way, and a description of any recourse you decide to pursue against the officer who committed this heinous act.

And we are copying Selma city officials on this letter, to whom we offer ourselves as advisors in animal handling/behavior and humane euthanasia – to help Selma Animal Services better understand what our profession and our communities expect from a humanely operated animal services program.

Sincerely,

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cc: Mayor Kenneth Grey and City Council Members George Rodriguez (Mayor Pro Tem), Jim Avalos, Mike Derr, and Scott Robinson (Mailed to: Selma City Council, 1710 Tucker Street, Selma, CA 93662); City Manager D-B Heusser (Mailed to: City of Selma, 1710 Tucker Street, Selma, CA 93962); Myron Dyck, Chief of Police (Mailed to: Selma Police Department, 1935 E. Front Street, Selma, CA 93662)