



**“Fixing Broward County’s Animal Control Program”
by Broward County Commissioner Ken Keechl**

When you elected me to be your County Commissioner, I made several important promises to you. First, I promised never to raise your property tax rate. Second, I promised to be an environmentally sensitive, business-friendly Broward County Commissioner. As my voting record indicates, I have kept those promises.

But I made another important promise to you as well. I promised to be your eyes and ears while serving as your County Commissioner. I promised to be responsive to your concerns. If something was wrong at the County level, I promised to investigate it and, if possible, remedy it.

With that last promise in mind, I would like to utilize this month’s article to update you with regard to an appalling situation that several of you brought to my attention: alleged animal abuse and incompetency at Broward County’s animal shelters.

Last year, I received a number of emails and phone calls from residents of Lighthouse Point, Fort Lauderdale, Wilton Manors, and Oakland Park regarding a local news program’s “exposé” of alleged animal abuse practices at our shelters. Two employees, acting as “whistleblowers”, alleged that Broward County was allowing unacceptable practices to occur at our shelters.

As an animal lover and owner, I was skeptical. Animal abuse at our own taxpayer funded shelters? Unthinkable. Nevertheless, I reviewed the transcript of the television program and demanded an immediate in-house investigation. The in-house investigation revealed numerous appalling practices including: euthanizing cats in front of other cats; mistreating animals by a few employees who inflicted unnecessary pain and utilized unnecessary force; improperly estimating the amount of euthanizing drugs because of the lack of scales; improperly utilizing expired drugs; failing to use sufficient diligence when examining impounded animals for traceable identification; and the improper handling of deceased animals.

To say that I was (and still am) appalled was an understatement. While I believed the in-house investigation to be thorough, I nevertheless demanded an **outside** review of Broward County’s entire Animal Care & Regulation Division by a nationally recognized program: the National Animal Control Association (NACA). My colleagues on the County Commission unanimously agreed. I am pleased to report that the outside review is now completed, and the Commission convened a special two hour workshop in late October to deal exclusively with the recommendations of NACA.

NACA’s report is extensive and eye-opening. It can be viewed at www.broward.org/animal. Space limitations preclude me from discussing the report’s findings and recommendation in detail. But suffice it to say that many of the problems outlined above were confirmed, and others were uncovered.

Because of your concerns, these appalling practices have been stopped, people have been fired, and, in one case, the State Attorney’s office was notified. Because of your concerns, Broward County’s

Animal Control Program is on its way to becoming the type of program Broward's residents (and their pets) deserve.

Much progress has been made, and I believe this unfortunate episode is behind us. Again, as your County Commissioner, I am your eyes and ears at the Broward County Commission level. If something needs fixing, let me know. Remember, I work for you.

My best to you and your families,

Broward County Commissioner Ken Keechl, District 4.
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