

# Research program uses local 'strays'

By SUSAN WEBB  
Battalion Reporter

In the past, the fate of a stray animal in College Station was not pleasant. Even if the stray managed to escape death from exposure to the elements, car injury, or starvation, it still faced being captured by an officer with the humane society.

The city of College Station's animal control policy used to be that a stray animal which was picked up was taken to a holding pen at the city dump. If the animal was not claimed within 72 hours it was shot. The policy has been changed. After being used in helpful experiments for research, the strays are killed in a more humane manner by personnel at the Texas A&M University Laboratory Animal Resources and Research (LARR) facility.

President of the Humane Society, Jean Duffy, cited an example of the past policy's inadequacy, which prompted citizens of College Station to do something about the problem.

"About two years ago, a neighbor's dog got loose and bit a jogger. The jogger was only nipped on the ankle but he called the police to have the dog picked up since it hadn't had its shots," she said.

Duffy recalled that the matter had not been handled in a correct manner. "The dog should have been impounded for ten days for observation, but they took him out to the city dump to the pen where the animal apparently got loose," she said.

"The animal started running and the (humane officer) shot him," Duffy added. Duffy said that the citizens of College Station needed to be educated on what the problems of the animal control policies were.

Duffy said the city of College Station needs an adequate facility that would include a pet adoption program and spay and neutering services for the stray animals if enough funds could ever be allocated.

The College Station animal control policy now provides for the stray animal to be boarded at a local veterinary hospital. If the stray is boarded for 72 hours without being claimed, it is brought to the LARR facility by humane officer, Marc Hodges.

Hodges, who became humane officer last summer, says that all dogs and cats are to be licensed with the city.

"Anyone can come up to the

clerk's office and register their animal with the city," he said. "If the animal has one of our tags, I can come up to the police station and identify where it belongs right away," he added.

But if the owner is not found or the stray animal is not claimed, it is then donated to the LARR facility for research.

The LARR facility receives all of its research animals from pound facilities of some type. "We only go

through state or city operated pick up people, and primarily police departments with their own humane officers, such as College Station," said Jeff Sanford, manager of the LARR facility.

"By going through these places we know that the animals they have been picked up and have been held at some central location as a stray for a set period of time, normally from three to five days," Sanford said, "to give the owners a chance to claim."

The stray animals that are brought to the LARR facility are used in research for the betterment of society.

Before the animal is used in a chronic experiment, it is held for at least 30 days at the LARR facility.

Sanford said the animals are checked to make sure they are in good physical condition, free of heart-worms, and appropriately vaccinated.

"This is to make sure that they are good solid animals before they are placed under study," he added.

One experiment that is being worked on is called a flea bite sensitivity test. This is done by working with different antigens (any substance that when introduced in the body, stimulates the production of an antibody) on dogs.

"A lot of dogs will get a large number of fleas on the body that causes a skin rash and severe itch-

ing," Sanford said, "and right now work is being done on an antigen to try to find something that could be injected into the dog to alleviate this type of problem."

Sanford said that the animals used in experiments are only subjected to a minimum amount of stress. "We, as a research unit, are governed by the USDA which puts out stringent guidelines concerning animal health and welfare," Sanford said. Examples of those guidelines would be space requirements for each individual animal, the amount of food given, and the type of food that can be used.

"We adhere to those rules strictly," Sanford assured, "and on a day to day basis the animals are treated in a most humane way."

Once an animal has completed an

experiment, it is not turned back into the public domain. "Some of these animals may have had minimal surgery, and it is just not a good practice to return any experimental animal back into a household situation," Sanford said.

"The USDA requires that at the end of procedure those animals be terminated humanely, and they are," he added.

The procedure that is used by the LARR facility to terminate the animals' life is painless.

"Depending on the animal and species, or if a dog is small enough it is put into a small carbon dioxide cylinder. The effect results in the animal going into a deep sleep."

"The centers of the brain involved in conscious activity are depressed quickly to the point where the ani-

mal drifts off to sleep before death occurs, so there is no pain at all," Sanford said.

"Some groups of people make us (researchers) out to be monsters with knives that do nothing but slice animals," Sanford said. "But, that is not the case at all," he added.

"We are here to provide the utmost that we possibly can in humane treatment for the animals," he said.

College Station is fortunate in having a facility such as the LARR. "In some of the smaller outlying towns the police department usually does not have facilities for carbon dioxide euthanasia. . . we try to correct that problem by providing the service to the local animal control units in a humane manner," Sanford said.

## Animals put to sleep by 'untrained' staffs

More than a third of the 44 animal shelters visited this year by a Humane Society specialist had poorly trained personnel in charge of putting thousands of unwanted animals to sleep, said Phyllis Wright, society spokeswoman of Washington, D.C. Wright, shelter director for 13 years, said at the Texas A&M University animal control conference that the people responsible for this less-than-entirely task must be prepared psychologically and technically.

Only then, she said, will euthanasia truly be a peaceful death for dogs and cats — free from stress, fear, pain and apprehension.

Irresponsible pet owners must bear their part of the blame for "littering" the streets with strays that endanger public health, Wright indicated. These same people are appalled when they find out their local shelter kills perfectly healthy animals, sometimes as many as 90 percent of them.

"The public still thinks all animals are kept," she told animal control officers at the College of Veterinary Medicine-hosted meeting.

"Once the decision is made to euthanize, she explained, careful consideration must be given to making it as humane as possible for both the animal and the persons hired to do it.

"It is morally wrong for a person who does the euthanizing not to know the current discussion on methods of death," said Wright.

Four states have recently outlawed the pressure chamber as the prime instrument of death, and questions are being raised about carbon monoxide methods because of the safety hazards to shelter workers.

Carbon dioxide and nitrogen methods, as well as drug injection, are among other methods tested and used, but so are such crude techniques as gunshot.

The people surrounding the act of death often appear profoundly affected as the dying, so careful consideration must be made in selecting workers who will put animal to sleep so they will do it as humanely as possible for both of them.

## A Thanksgiving ministry: dinner for 150 strangers

United Press International  
SAN ANTONIO — Dorothy Perry, described by a friend as a person "who does good by faith alone," has invited 150 strangers to her house for Thanksgiving dinner this year.

As she has for the past 34 years, the widow will cook and serve Thanksgiving dinner for 50 basic trainees at Lackland Air Force Base, and 50 foreign students and 50 students from San Antonio College who otherwise would be having cafeteria dinners.

"It's amazing how the groups fit together," Perry said. "When they're getting ready to come, I'm sure they're thinking it couldn't be any fun. But, once here, we have a pretty unique Thanksgiving dinner."

In keeping with her work as a Christian missionary, Perry conducts a non-denominational Thanksgiving service before dinner and later the guests present skits representative of their country or state.

Although she insists on occasionally preaching Christianity to those of other faiths, the government of Iran has been so impressed with her

work with Iranian students in the area that it has invited her to visit the country.

"Last year a young man told me that he was in a hurry to get back to his barracks," Perry recalls. "He thought the day was going to be boring. By the time he left, he hugged me and said it was one of the happiest days of his life."

Perry said her life is enriched by serving Thanksgiving dinner to persons who are away from their homes and their families during the holiday.

"My late husband was a missionary and I helped him minister to the needs of servicemen and prisoners of war 34 years ago," she said. "Every since that time, I've been trying to help our young servicemen."

"The cooking is good at the base, but these young people, away from their families for the first time, need the love and friendship of a homestyle Thanksgiving."

Perry is one of several San Antonians taking part in an eight-year program to invite many of Lackland's 10,000 trainees to private homes for Thanksgiving dinner.

Chaplain Capt. Brian Talcott said the program, co-sponsored by the

San Antonio Council of Churches, placed 2,500 trainees in homes for the traditional family feast last year and estimates the number will rise to 5,000 this Thanksgiving.

"Many civic organizations and church groups pool their efforts and invite 30 or 40 trainees to dinner," Talcott said. "But most of the trainees go in pairs to homes."

Perry said she has little money, but somehow she manages to prepare an adequate feast for her guests.

"I'm a missionary and many churches support my efforts and help with my projects, but I don't know who bought all the food I cooked last year for Thanksgiving," she said.

"Every home should have one of these young people for Thanksgiving dinner, especially those who don't have children. They just don't know the joy it brings until they've tried it."

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