

STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTIES OF POTTER AND RANDALL

CITY OF AMARILLO

On the 3rd day of April, 2012 the Amarillo Bi-City-County Public Health district Board met for a quarterly board meeting in the City of Amarillo, Department of Public Health conference room located at 1000 Martin Rd., Amarillo, Texas, with the following members present:

VOTING MEMBERS	PRESENT	NO. MEETINGS HELD	NO. MEETINGS ATTENDED
Kenneth Crossland, DDS Chair, City of Canyon	Y	189	165
J. Taylor Carlisle, MD Potter County	N	85	27
Delores Thompson Potter County	Y	13	09
Judy Smith Randall County	Y	63	50
Lanita Tidmore Randall County	Y	24	23
Belinda Gonzales Taylor City of Amarillo	N	27	19
Kevin Hawkins Vice Chair City of Amarillo	Y	39	36

Administrative Officers Present:

Dr. Matt Richardson	Director, Public Health, City of Amarillo
Dr. Roger Smalligan	Health Authority, Public Health, City of Amarillo
David Chamberlain	Nutritionist III, WIC, City of Amarillo
Deree Duke	Director, Environmental Health, City of Amarillo
Shannon Barlow	Asst. Director, Animal Control, City of Amarillo
Mike McGee	Director, Animal Control, City of Amarillo

Others Present:

Hector Mendoza	Assistant Director, Public Health, City of Amarillo
Rhonda Ramirez	Recording Secretary, Public Health, City of Amarillo

Guests Present:

Robin Cupell	Texas Panhandle Pet Savers (TPPS)
Dawn Hallgren	Texas Panhandle Pet Savers (TPPS)
Sunny Hodge- Campbell	Board Member, Animal Control Board & Humane Society Board
Jena McFall	Executive Director Humane Society
Tracy Dougherty	President, Animal Control Board
Kyndel Lee-Bates	Reporter, Pro News Channel 7
Russell Anglin	Reporter, Amarillo Globe News

Item 1: Chairman Dr. Crossland opened the meeting at 7:00pm, established a quorum, and conducted the consideration of the following items in the order presented.

Item 2: Dr. Crossland-Introduction of Members and Guests.

Item 3: Approval of the January 10th, 2012 minutes

Dr. Crossland made a motion to approve the January 10th, 2012 minutes. There were no objections and the minutes were approved as written.

Item 4: Consider Reappointment of Roger Smalligan, MD, MPH as Health Authority for the Amarillo Bi-City-County Health District

Delores Thompson made a motion to reappoint Dr. Smalligan for a two year term as the Public Health Authority for a term effective February 24th, 2012 to February 24th, 2014 and further, that we now ratify and approve all official decisions and actions taken by Dr. Smalligan between February 24th, 2012 and this date.

Judi Smith seconded the motion.

Dr. Crossland then asked the board, "All in Favor?" All were in favor with no oppositions. Motion carried with a unanimous decision.

Due to interviews being conducted with the media, Dr. Crossland suggested the items in the agenda be rearranged. The board in agreement with the chairperson moved to Item 11: Administrative Reports to accommodate guests and board members.

Item 5: Administrative Reports

Environmental Health

Deree Duke acknowledged the rain Amarillo received. She reported that Environmental Health has nothing new in their reports. She said they are now fully staffed including seasonal positions. They have been checking all the restaurants in Canyon.

Health Authority

Dr. Roger Smalligan gave an update on what the flu season has looked like this year. He said there was a big push to get everyone six months and older vaccinated. Dr. Smalligan said that Texas has not been hit that heavily as of yet. Dr. Smalligan compared 2010-11 with this year and showed the reduction in hospitalizations nationally due to flu. Dr. Smalligan said he does not believe we can relate it entirely with vaccinating people and awareness of prevention, but is more complex. Dr. Smalligan discussed data for Amarillo from previous years, more specifically H1N1, which showed an earlier peak in October rather than in February or March and never had a second peak. He then stated that last year the flu season moved back into the more typical pattern with reports of 400-500 people in our area having type A and B flu. He said this year reports from the same locations, local hospitals and clinics, show almost no Flu Type B and Flu A is peaking at a lower number, 150, and is now dropping off.

Animal Control

Shannon Barlow reported they have had a case of cat rabies in Potter County about a week ago. She said they have done some extensive trapping in the location where the cat was picked up from and that around 15 cats were taken out of that colony. Of those, 11 were tested with one positive case. She also added they had one report in Lamb County of a horse with rabies. Ms. Barlow said they are extensively trying to make people aware of the importance of vaccinating small animals as well as livestock and show animals. Any animals that will come in contact with other animals or people should be vaccinated.

Ms. Barlow also introduced the new Executive Director of the Humane Society, Jena McFall. Animal control has been working with Ms. McFall, showing her the "world" of Animal Control and they are very glad to have her.

Public Health

Dr. Matt Richardson told the board that he testified at the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services regarding funding. He said they have struggled with immunization and TB funding. He is hoping changes will be made. Mr. Richardson reported they are working on a Medicaid reimbursement structure with the Amarillo Hospital District trying to find some dollars that have been opened up for Texas to fund some core Public Health Services.

Dr. Richardson reported that on February 14, 2012 laws changed and the Adult Safety Net was eliminated. He said the Health Department is not giving as many adult shots due to the changes. He says it is going to be a problem for the public. The problem that will be the most burdening is the Meningitis (MCV4) vaccine which is necessary for all freshman entering college or non-traditional students to attend courses on campus. MCV4 used to be covered for "underinsured" or "uninsured" adults, but now is no longer covered. Dr. Richardson reported that Amarillo College and West Texas A&M University had much fewer Freshmen attending in the fall and spring semesters. He said he included that in his testimony in Austin in effort to get those dollars back from the State Health Department for MCV4.

Dr. Crossland asked about the limited arrivals of refugees and if Public Health was expecting less. Dr. Richardson stated it has been an oddity. He said there were some Homeland Security requirements that were enacted around Thanksgiving which slows the process for refugees and immigrants. The refugee populations typically get to skip several steps of the immigration requirements, essentially refugees get to "cut in line." When it comes to Homeland Security checks, everyone is the same and that has really slowed the flux of primary arrivals. The Health Department thought it would pick back up in the spring but hasn't. He said that one of the concerns they have is that there is a "bottleneck" in Washington D.C. and when they open the "flood gates" the Health Department will get hammered, similar to what happened in 2006. He is concerned that they will go from clinics of 3-6 people to clinics of 26-30 which will put a strain on the healthcare and school systems.

Dr. Crossland asked about the Tuberculosis (TB) dollars at risk. Dr. Richardson stated that the TB grant was restored to level funding. Funds had been cut and after some "shaking of the bushes" and heated phone calls they received level funding. This is not an increase but is the same amount as the previous year. Dr. Crossland asked if it was adequate funding. Dr. Richardson expressed another TB nurse and support staff is needed so more funding is needed.

WIC

David Chamberlain stated WIC is still seeing a drop in numbers. January they had 8077, February 8005, and another drop in March to 7932. Mr. Chamberlain said the Margaret Payton, WIC Director, spoke to some people nationally and at state levels and they are all experiencing the same dropping trend. Many theories as to why are going around. One theory is, there were some changes to the SNAP program and they believe many are opting to use SNAP and are seeing funds increase on that program.

Item 6: Presentation and Discussion by Texas Panhandle Pet Savers on Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) Program- Robin Cupell

Ms. Cupell handed out a packet titled "Trap-Neuter-Release, Addressing Feral Cat Concerns." Most of Ms. Cupell's presentation was read verbatim from the packet. The packet has been added to these minutes as *Attachment A (Pages 1-14)*.

After the presentation, Dr. Crossland asked if there were any questions for Ms. Cupell. There were none.

Item 7: Presentation and Discussion of a report from Environmental Health on the proposed TNR Program-Deree Duke, Director of Environmental Health, City of Amarillo

Deree Duke stated that "Feral" is wild or untamed and is the way diseases are spread from lots of different animals. She believes this is the primary focus of Environmental Health. She said that a lot of misinformation and emotions is leading to cat versus dogs versus birds. Public health decisions are too important and the decision needs to be based on scientific principles. Ms. Duke stated that Environmental Health opposes TNR and the decision is based on human health and enforcement issues. She stated they did extensive research and believes that TNR would not work. She believes it comes down to the safety of children and TNR goes against everything veterinarians, wildlife biologists and public health practitioners have learned about preventing disease. There were no questions of Ms. Duke.

Item 8: Presentation and Discussion of a report from Public Health on the proposed TNR Program-Dr. Matt Richardson, Director of the Department of Public Health, City of Amarillo

Dr. Matt Richardson stated they conducted some research and explained how they did the research. He said they did a literature review using the National Library of Medicine called "PubMed." PubMed is what physicians and public health professionals use when they do a literature review. It is a compendium of all the peer review research that is published since inception. There are millions and millions of documents. Dr. Richardson explained that he did an online research through PubMed using the search terms of Trap-Neuter-Release, TNR, feral cat control, rabies and cats as potential subjects to return results. Dr. Richardson says they were specifically looking for public health effects of a TNR program. He has not included any ethical discussions of euthanasia or wildlife or any other solutions or pieces of the TPPS program presented. He said he took a very surgical, clinical approach to the peer review research to find out specifically if there is a public health concern of TNR programs.

Dr. Richardson said the first and biggest topic, when talking about public health and animal control, is rabies. The reason for that is, rabies used to be 100% fatal. If a human contracted clinical rabies infection it was a death sentence and is a terrible way to die. However, recently there has been a new protocol that has saved two peoples lives and possibly a third. He said what is interesting is, on February 3rd, 2012 the weekly edition of the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported recovery of a patient with clinical rabies. (*Attachment B, Pgs 15-16*) Dr. Richardson said he brings this up not just because it is a miracle that this eight year old little girl survived but that the public health investigation in fact confirmed that the patient did have contact with free-roaming, unvaccinated cats at her school on several occasions and that is a concern. Dr. Richardson stated rabies is the biggest concern of public health when dealing with exposure to feral cats and potential effects on people. Dr. Richardson reported that in Columbia in 2008, there were two human deaths attributable to feral cat exposure. This was found in their epidemiological investigation. Dr. Richardson said that rabies is rare in humans but there is literature to support that feral cat exposure is a potential public health threat.

Dr. Richardson states that there are many ways to get Toxoplasmosis but there is new research in the late 2000's talking about the environmental burden of Oocysts and *Toxoplasma gondii* which is concentrated in cat colonies where any large concentration of cats exists in the outdoors. The concern with Oocysts and *Toxoplasma gondii* is that the oocysts persist in the environment for up to two years and that's a problem. Dr. Richardson states because of this, there is an on-going environmental impact in a concentrated area, specifically in colonies, where cats get together. He said oocysts do happen in nature for sure, but a colony, where there is expected human interaction, suggests that an environmental public health threat is there.

The third point Dr. Richardson made is the literature in which Ms. Cupell and TPPS proponents reference about TNR population control. He said it's from the 1990's and early 2000's. Dr. Richardson stated that literature from 2003 on has started to refute some of the earlier research. He said that even some of the original authors who investigated cat populations and feral cat colonies are reporting concerns regarding TNR. One article from the *Journal of American Veterinarian Medical Association (Attachment C, Pg 17)* written in 2004 by two authors that have PhD's in Wildlife Biology and a veterinarian refutes a 2003 article stating, "Free-roaming cat populations have

a high intrinsic growth rate, and euthanasia is estimated to be more effective at reducing cat populations than trap-neuter-return programs.” Dr. Richardson also referenced another article written in the *Journal of American Veterinarian Medical Association 2011 (Attachment D Pg 18)* which states “Targeting TNR methods at feeding groups in urban residential neighborhoods may result in increased group size. Dr. Richardson stated that the “vacuum effect” which Ms. Cupell referenced, noted in the late 1990’s and 2000’s, states that it provided a biological niche. However, that is now being refuted in 2011 and shows 2 major group changes in dynamics: sexually intact cats immigrate into the neutered groups more readily and neutered cats reduce their emigration rates, it is biologically inviting new members because when cats are neutered or de-clawed they lose ability to defend themselves and the sexually intact cats migrate into the colonies.

Dr. Richardson stated he also reviewed the recommendation from the *Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control from the National Association of Public Health Veterinarians, Inc. published November 4, 2011 (Attachment E, Pgs 19-20)* which vehemently advocates removing stray animals. They support whole-heartily, animal control ordinances to remove stray animals as a potential public health threat.

Dr. Richardson stated that based on the assessment of the current research of potential risks associated with feral cats and the documented presence of rabies in both Potter and Randall counties as recent as 10 days ago, it is the Department of Public Health’s official recommendation to the Board of Health that the existing ordinances and control of feral cat populations continue and that the TNR program be rejected.

*All references in which Dr. Richardson used in his discussion are attached to the end of these minutes as notated in parentheses.

A question was asked regarding the location of the colonies in Amarillo. Mike McGee, Director of Animal Control answered, “They are everywhere, including residential areas, commercial and industrial areas, throughout the city.”

Item 9: Presentation and discussion of a report from Animal Control on the proposed TNR Program-Mike McGee, Director of Animal Control, City of Amarillo

Mike McGee stated that when TPPS initially brought the program to the city commission last year in September, the city commission charged the Animal Control Board and the Animal Control Board charged the Animal Control Department to gather research and information pertaining to Trap-Neuter-Release programs throughout the state and nation. Mr. McGee said because they have had little thought or process about TNR over the years, they began to look into what other cities and states were doing throughout the nation. They found that there are a lot of people trying TNR and there are a lot of people that are not. The presentation by TPPS is ultimately for one solution and that is to reduce the number of animals that are euthanized in public shelters, period. They want to do as they did in Austin and get to a no-kill environment. That is their objective, plain and simple. No dressing it up, that’s all they want to get to with this whole thing. Mr. McGee stated that the more him and Shannon Barlow, Assistant Director, Animal Control, got to looking into it, they decided that TNR may not be that bad of a deal. It will cut cost for service by 50% overnight, cut the euthanasia rate by 55% overnight, putting us half way to meeting the objectives and the goals they want to obtain in trying to reach a no-kill position. Mr. McGee then stated that he did have a few concerns and most of them revolved around public health issues and environmental health issues. He then invited the directors of these two departments to help him research TNR. Mr. McGee stated that two initial concerns came up when they spoke with Robin Cupell (TPPS) and members of her group. One concern is the public perception of Animal Control not responding to calls for service. They have a lot of people in the neighborhoods that don’t want the cats because they tear up their property, flower beds, and they kill birds in the back yards, along with a number of things. The second concern is rabies. The two primary vectors of rabies in our area are the skunk and raccoon which share the same habitat, environment, and feeding stations as the cats. The skunks and raccoons are being trapped all over Amarillo. Mr. McGee said this is evident because they trapped a cat that tested positive with the skunk strain of rabies. Mr. McGee reported that tonight Randall County Sheriff’s Department, South Amarillo, shot a cat that was displaying clinical signs of rabies. The cat will be tested in the morning and they will have results by the end of the week. Mr. McGee stated another concern they have is how

the cats will be vaccinated and re-vaccinated. While they are excited about being able to cut calls for service and the Animal Control can actually provide a range of different services to the community, the more they dig into the environmental impact and the public health impact of TNR in all areas of the community they also find that the colonies will be in residential areas around schools, playgrounds, and parks. Mr. McGee said the animals will defecate in the sand boxes and playground where children will be. He said the Oocysts exist for up to two years in those playgrounds and sand boxes. Mr. McGee stated that while he loves animals, and it has been portrayed over the last several months that he is not much of an animal lover, he also loves his daughter more than anything. She is 21 years old and I can't tell you how much time they spent at these parks, playing in these sand boxes. He said, "all the cats in the world I would euthanize every dad-gum one of them as long as I intend to be working for the city to save one child, one child." He said, "It's not worth 15,000 or 100,000 cat's lives for one child to die or get rabies." "Or one mother to be infected with Toxoplasmosis and lose a child." "It's just not worth it." Mr. McGee stated that the TNR program, while it is great and the concept is wonderful, is about the animals. He said there is a lot of contradiction in some of the notes that Ms. Cupell passed out. He said it talks about the cats go into these organized colonies and because they are fed and managed properly they don't have the same need and the same desire to hunt. Then at the very end of her handout she said that the cats do "rat abatement" and kill 6 or 7 rats a day. Mr. McGee stated, then they are not being fed properly and that is inhumane treatment of a cat and you can't have it both ways. Mr. McGee stated that his concern, his job, what he is tasked with as the Director of Animal Control, is to provide a safe environment for our children and our people to play, exercise and go out. If that means he has to trap 20,000 cats a year and put them down, then that's what he thinks we should do. Mr. McGee recommends to the Board of Health that we stay consistent with Matt and Duree's recommendations to the City Commission and continue on with the process of what they are doing. The Animal Control Board will make their decision in May.

Dr. Crossland asked if there were any questions of Mr. McGee. Robin Cupell asked if he agreed that the cats do currently exist in the community. Mr. McGee answered yes. Ms. Cupell then asked if he felt that vaccinating the cats would make it safer. Mr. McGee answered that the cats do exist in our neighborhoods, they are everywhere. He said there are 4 or 5 particular areas where they trap cats. He stated that Animal Control has not had the resources or time, nor have they made the commitment to be aggressive towards trapping and removing these cats from those areas. He said, "Bottom line, they have been almost lazy about it because they are so busy doing everything else that they rely on citizens." He stated that Animal Control also has a plan, if everything works out in the current budget, to address the issue. In the future, if they get the additional bodies that they need, they have a designed plan to aggressively attack the cat issue. He also stated that he disagrees with the information Ms. Cupell had in her presentation related to removing the cats. In 2006, there was an outbreak of Tularemia which was pretty significant. The federal wildlife biologist and agencies that were tasked with performing and removing those animals from the airport east of Amarillo were not able to do what they needed to do to get the numbers down. Within a year, properly equipped and funded and staffed, Animal Control was able to virtually eliminate that threat. They do minor maintenance at the airport and surrounding areas every spring, summer and fall. He said they have yet to come back with a huge, enormous problem with the vectors that carry Tularemia, also known as rabbit fever. Mr. McGee stated that with proper funding, support from city officials, and a very aggressive program the threats with feral cats can be eliminated.

Item 10: Presentation and discussion of a report from the Health Authority on the proposed TNR Program- Roger Smalligan, MD, MPH-Health Authority

Dr. Roger Smalligan started by saying he was very interested in Robin Cupell's first presentation of TNR. He said he also went to PubMed and pulled a bunch of articles with similar search criteria as Dr. Richardson. He said he did find some articles that said TNR works, but his general sense of these were that they were in fairly well-defined areas. One report Ms. Cupell referred to in Florida was a small college campus that had a feral cat problem. They did a very good project there and it showed that the cat problem went to almost zero. The reports showed the program was fairly effective where there are a smaller number of cats. On the other hand there were a number of articles that have shown it has not been effective. It could be to how well it's implemented and funded. Dr. Smalligan referenced Ms. Cupell's article from Rome stating that the conclusion was they were able to reduce to 30% but then all of a sudden people are releasing their domestic cats into the wild, not neutering/spaying them,

coming into the colonies and repopulating them and it was basically a complete waste of time. Dr. Smalligan stated if the population is not educated and they are not required to take care of their pets then it will not work because it will over power the success with TNR. He said he tried to read a broad series of articles. Dr. Smalligan stated that his personal opinion, after reading all the articles, the weight in the public health arena was more in the against, largely due to the fact, that depending on how well the program is run, there is going to be cat feces that kids can be exposed to from TNR or from cats that are not controlled at all. Dr. Smalligan said that as a Public Health Board, to say we want to promote a program that, in the bigger projects didn't show a lot of success and he doesn't think we will have reduced numbers, and from taking care of patients in the hospital and seeing all of these diseases that cats can spread, is a risk. Dr. Smalligan stated he feels we need to carry on with our best efforts to reduce the feral cat population in the most humane way possible, to put healthy ones up for adoption and further education for the public with regards to neutering/spaying their pet cats.

A question was asked from the board as to where the staff that would operate the TNR program comes from and who are the people who take care of them. Ms. Cupell responded by saying that as an example of a person they received this last week, was a caller saying there is a colony living behind her house and asked if they could assist her in taking care of them. Ms. Cupell said she told the lady that at this time it was not something they could do, but that they would have trained her to be the care taker of that colony. She would trap those animals with the help of an animal welfare group such as TPPS. A question from the board was then asked regarding the funding for the TNR program. Mrs. Cupell said it comes from grants and donations.

Item 11: Consider a recommendation regarding the proposed TNR Program

Dr. Crossland announced it was time to consider a recommendation for the TNR Program. He said our function as a board is to evaluate the scientific facts and form an opinion that is in the best interest of the community.

Lanita Tidmore made a motion that the Amarillo Bi-City-County Board of Health issues the following statement to the Animal Control Board, the Mayor, and the Amarillo City Commission: This board opposes the Trap-Neuter-Release program as a management strategy for feral cats with the reason being, the increased risk to public health and to enforce all laws that protect the public against rabies or zoonotic diseases. The Board of Health also supports the efforts of the Animal Control Department for Randall and Potter counties.

Delores Thompson seconded the motion.

A vote was taken for the motion. Five (5) were in favor with no (0) oppositions to oppose the TNR Program.

Item 12: Public Comments

There were none.

Item 13: Adjournment

Dr. Crossland set the next meeting for July 10th, 2012 at 7p.m. at the Public Health Department Conference Room. Dr. Crossland adjourned the meeting at 8:43 p.m.

Dr. Kenneth Crossland, Chair

Rhonda Ramirez, Recording Secretary