

January 2016

The ACO Voice

A Monthly Magazine from Animal Control Training Services
The Only National Monthly Magazine Dedicated to Animal Control

*“Forever Homes” for
Animal Control Directors*



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“Forever Homes” for A/C Directors

By Jeffrey Clemens, ACTS

Directors of Animal Control agencies have been having difficulty finding their “forever homes.” Recently I searched “Animal Control Director Fired” in the Google search engine and was surprised how many title headings there were for this topic. At first glance, one would think they were watching an episode of the Apprentice with Donald Trumps' infamous proclamation, “YOU'RE FIRED!” Unfortunately, that exclamation is commonly associated with an employer informing the employee of his or her dismissal, an involuntary termination of employment for a reason and or reasons often perceived to be the fault of the employee. But is that always the case?

Within the first search results, I found 10 separate listings. The next logical question to ask was, “why?” Why are so many Animal Control Directors being fired from their positions? As I read through the articles, it was interesting to learn the different causes of their dismissal.

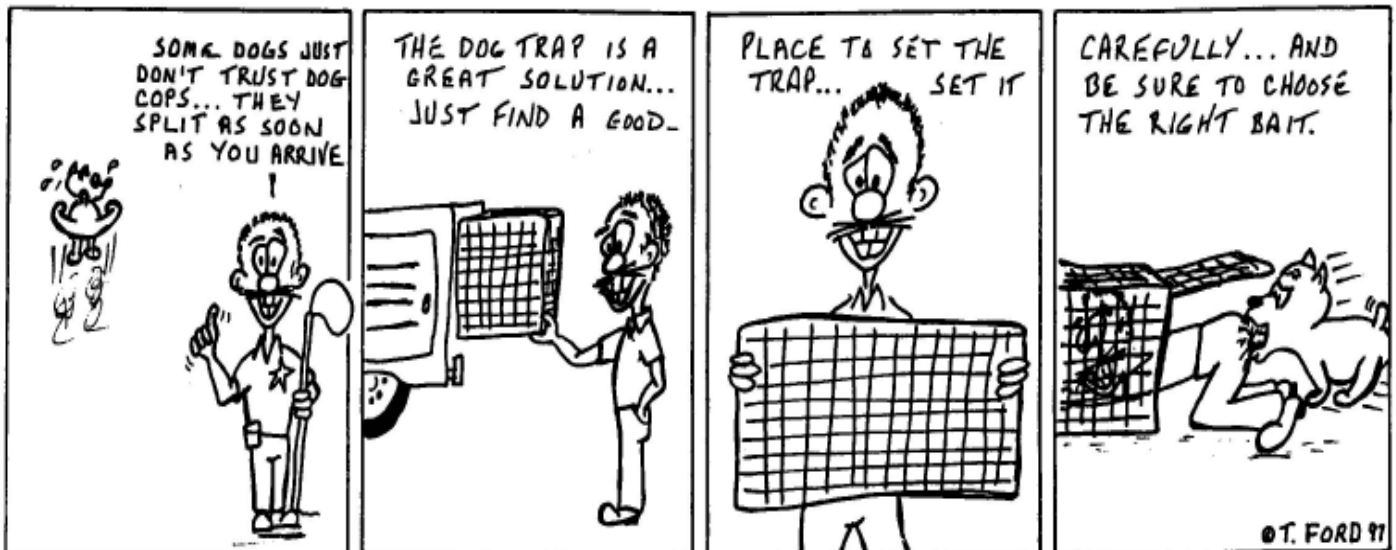
Here are a few of the reasons that were given: Excessive absenteeism (one director had 25 sick days in the last 10 months), lack of support from employees, poor judgment in hiring of other employees, deceitful tactics in a promotion attempt, putting “bite” dogs in general population, failing “to properly store under lock and key the controlled substances used in euthanasia of animals” and failing to “properly document and account for the use of controlled substances expended in the euthanasia of animals, improper euthanasia techniques, unacceptable or unusually high numbers of animals being euthanized,” and last but not least, the embezzlement of

funds! Now the questions that need to be answered are: What are the qualifications of a good director? Who is involved in the interviewing and vetting process? Several departments had hired and fired as many as three directors in less than one year.

Many of the directors were let go from their positions prior to their probationary period of one year. This allows for an employee to be let go without providing any reason. Once the employee is off of probation, it becomes more difficult to terminate the employee. Most government positions have civil service protections and are not subject to the “Employee at will” clause. This can be come tricky; often an employee will put on their best Sunday dress until they are off of probation and then show their true colors and intentions. Unless they violate the law or rules of employee conduct, it is nearly impossible to get rid of them.

Most of the reasons provided were objective and warranted the dismissal of the employee. However, I found some commentary on a few that were subject to question. In one article it mentioned that the director was simply used as a scapegoat. The higher levels of administration fired the director only to make it appear that they were addressing departmental issues and community concerns, thus relieving any pressure that they might be receiving from animal activist groups that in the last decade have become vocal, influential and yield tremendous political power. Whatever the case, one thing is for certain: Animal control directors are having difficulty finding their “Forever Homes.”

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Remembering Kelly Annette Cotney

By Mitch Sneed

Family, friends and the entire community said goodbye to a beloved public servant with a big heart.

Memorial services for Alexander City (Alabama) Animal Control Officer Kelly Annette Cotney, 35, were held on December 18, 2015 at the chapel of Radney Funeral Home.

According to investigators, Cotney and her passenger, 7-year-old Gracie Deason, were seriously injured when Cotney's car hydroplaned on rain-soaked streets and was struck broadside by an approaching truck just before 8 a.m. on December 14.

Both Cotney and Deason were transported to Birmingham for treatment of what officials described as "very serious injuries." Cotney was taken to the University of Alabama-Birmingham Trauma Center, while the child was taken to Children's Hospital of Alabama.

Cotney succumbed to those injuries late that evening, while Deason remained in ICU at Children's.

Cotney's death has rocked a community where she was known for her dedication to her job and her family.

The family held a visitation and hundreds of those who Cotney touched were on hand to pay their respects. That follows an incredible outpouring of support on several social media outlets.

One of the most touching tributes came from her partner in Animal Control, Ken Vernon. "Kelly was like my little sister. I was her sergeant but she meant more to me than just an employee for she was like family. She was the best animal cruelty investigator I had ever worked with. She did not have a whole lot of training other than what I taught her but she had the natural talent, passion and the will to do the best she could

for the animals. I loved working with her and she loved her job. It was not always peaches and cream but she made the best of everything. She was a very special person and she touched a lot of lives. She was also the Secretary for the Alabama Animal Control Association. She was also so proud of that position."

"Then she was taken away from me in a moment's notice. We are never promised another day, another hour, another minute or even a second. I am so heartbroken to have

lost someone who I considered my little sister. I miss you and I love you, Kelly Cotney. The Lord above must have had a case he needed investigated. Your work on earth is done, I will take it from here."

The service was officiated by Randy Anderson and Rev. Wayne Cowhick. Burial was followed in the Hillview Memorial Park.

Cotney leaves behind two sons, Benjamin James Wagoner and Samuel Layne Wagoner of Alexander City; mother, Beckie Dodgen Cotney Hidbrader (Larry) of Newburgh, Indiana; father, Thomas Alvin Cotney (Nira) of Alexander City; sisters, Renea Cotney Rose (Jason) of Vestavia

and Blake Cotney of Evansville, Indiana; fiancée, Cheldon Deason of Buttston; step-sister, Jennifer Harris of Alexander City; step-brothers, Robin Harris of Birmingham, Rob Hidbrader (Lauren) of Valdosta, Georgia, Asa Hidbrader (Shelley) of Houston, Texas; grandmother, Carolyn Cotney of Ashland; and a host of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her grandfather, Ben Dodgen; grandmother, Bea Dodgen; grandfather, Luke Cotney.



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**Remembering Kelly Annette Cotney
by Stacey Smith McMullen**

I stand here now, all alone,
You're no longer by my side,
The tears I shed I can't hold back,
These feelings I cannot hide.

My love for you was oh so strong,
I wish you only knew,
That I would have done anything,
If there was anything I could do.

You were always there for me,
Whenever I needed a friend,
Now I can't believe you're gone,
I need my friend again.

When I was down you picked me up,
You always did know how,
A caring hug, an understanding talk,
Or just your beautiful smile.

I sit and think of the life you lived,
As I shared with you so many years,
And now as I look at these photographs,
I can't hold back the tears.

What we had was more than a friendship,
It was a much deeper bond,
And nothing could ever break that,
Not even the fact that your gone.

The time has come to say goodbye,
The angels are calling your name,
But I won't lie, I can't help but cry,
My life just isn't the same.

I miss everything about you,
You were such an incredible friend,
Although your life on earth is over,
Our friendship will never end.

My love for you is eternal,
You have a permanent place in my heart,
And I know that someday, eventually,
We'll no longer be apart.

So go now, Kelly Cotney, you have a new home,
With the angels up in the sky,
Just don't be upset, if from time to time,
You look down and see me cry.



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Serving her Country and Community

By Jeffrey Clemens, ACTS

Born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona, Lacy O'Loughlin graduated from Shadow Mountain High School before enlisting in the United States Navy. It was there that she served in the capacity of a Hospital Corpsman for 5 years. During her time of service, she gained education and experience becoming an Emergency Medical Technician, a CPR Instructor and a Combat Medicine Technician. Lacy was deployed and



spent most time at the Naval Hospital in Okinawa, Japan, and the other half at Camp Pendleton, California with the marines. After her military service, she made good use of her well-deserved G.I. Bill benefit. She attended Carrington College where she earned her diploma in Veterinary Assisting. She applied that education and now has 7 years of

experience in shelter medicine and was hired in November of 2014 as an Animal Control Officer with the Maricopa County Animal Care and Control in Phoenix, Arizona.

When asked a few questions about her experience in the military and as an ACO, Lacy replied, "My military experience helped me prepare for the position of an ACO. Being a medic and vet tech helps on injured animal calls, the discipline in basic training and service helped adjust to rank structure in the department, the use of the phonetic alphabet, pride in wearing a uniform, staying fit as our job is physical at times, working in stressful situations, and most importantly, standing together as a team in our department to accomplish our goals."

"What I find most rewarding as an ACO is reuniting animals with their owners, providing a service to the public by protecting the health and safety of humans and animals, being cross-trained as an ACO and a dispatcher. In addition, I enjoy educating the public on animal control laws which are not known and working with other ACO's in different cities within the county. With all of the rewards, there are a few challenges as an ACO: Visibility at night working the second

shift, working in the extreme heat during the summer months, overcoming public misconceptions of animal control, language barriers with some customers as we are a border state, and last, providing services as Maricopa County is comprised of 9,224 square miles and a population estimated at around 4 million!"

"My future plans as an ACO is to grow with skills and knowledge as I'm the newest member. My 5-year plan is to stay in Arizona and remain in animal control services. I want to be part of the next generation of ACO's to raise the platform of our profession."

"I once was told to do a ride-along with an ACO. I'm glad I did. It opened my eyes and my heart grew bigger respecting such a rewarding job. I am blessed to be part of such an experienced and professional team at Maricopa County Animal Care and Control and a nation of ACO's with a passionate drive to showcase what we really do. In my spare time, I stay busy with my hobbies: riding motorcycles, physical fitness to stay in shape and being involved in charity work by donating supplies to homeless people with pets. Most of all, I have my hands full with raising my four-year-old son."



TEN COMMANDMENTS OF OWNING A DOG

I am fortunate to have an Animal Rescue Organization in the community in which I serve as an Animal Control Officer. I only have to hold an animal I find for 5 days before I can turn the animal over to the rescue where it will hopefully find a forever home. I just wish the rescue would hand out what in my opinion are the “Ten Commandments of Owning a Dog.” I hope you enjoy them.

- 1. ALL DOGS CAN BITE!** – Don’t assume that because your dog does not bite you that it will not bite someone else.
- 2. NOT EVERYONE LIKES DOGS!** – Your neighbors and friends may not appreciate you bringing your dog to their home or party. Only OFFICIAL service dogs are allowed into restaurants and stores.
- 3. BE PREPARED TO SPEND MONEY!** – Fees to purchase or adopt a dog, vet bills for vaccinations and checkups. (Average \$227 per year.) Food, shelter, grooming and homeowner’s insurance. (The average dog bite claim is \$30,000.00.)
- 4. SPAY OR NEUTER YOUR DOG!** – They will be less aggressive and stay closer to home. Plus, 1.2 million dogs are euthanized every year in the US. (That’s the population of Dallas, TX)
- 5. LICENSE OR CHIP YOUR DOG!** – Consider it a way to protect your investment, and in some communities it’s the law to license your dog.
- 6. TRAIN YOUR DOG WITH POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT!** – Remember you are seeking compliance not punishment.
- 7. PET OWNERS, LIKE PARENTS DON’T GET A DAY OFF!** – Dogs are living creatures that require food, water and exercise every day.
- 8. DON’T OVER FEED YOUR DOG!** – We spend 60 million dollars a year feeding our pets dog food. Remember, if your dog is overweight, feed for the weight you want your dog to be not the weight he currently is. Junk food is not good for humans so don’t give it to your dog.
- 9. DOGS ARE ANIMALS!** – Don’t assign dogs human traits. If they could reason like humans they wouldn’t run in traffic, roll in poop or not be able to find their way home.
- 10. WHEN DOGS ARE OLD OR ILL, HAVE YOUR PETS GENTLY PUT TO SLEEP!** – People say their dog doesn’t seem to be in pain. Do you cry all the time you have a headache or arthritis! It’s hard to put an animal to sleep but it’s the right thing to do.

Cindy Bulling, Animal Control Officer – Priest River, ID

Recognizing Randall Brown

By Jeffrey Clemens, ACTS

Chief Field Officer Randall Brown of Multnomah County Animal Services in Portland, Oregon displays integrity in his leadership style and all of his interactions with others. He is fair in his assessments and determinations, and considers all parties in his decisions.



Randall is straightforward in his communications with others, displaying both compassion and consideration, even in adversarial situations. He is ethical in his dealings with employees, other managers, staff from other agencies, and the public - Randall can be counted on to provide honest feedback and opinions. He does not back down from challenges, and he is firm in upholding the law. Randall's high ethical standards set the bar for his team, and he has earned their respect. Members of Randall's team said "he is literally the best manager anyone could ask for."

An example of his professional ethics is his honesty in providing accurate information to the local authorities, courts, and others about cases. He is thoughtful in his comments while providing the specific details required for resolution. He works toward reaching impartial and just outcomes.

Randall Brown's personal and professional strength of character along with his sincerity and honesty have helped the MCAS Field Services Team function effectively during a time of transition. He is a great example of the DCS Value of Integrity.

The Animal Services Field Services Team, under the direction of Randall Brown, demonstrates integrity in their work through their honest and sincere approach in interacting with the community. The team is regularly in the public eye with duties that involve upholding the county and state laws, where they show high ethical standards.

Randall Brown's modeling integrity has given the team a new sense of strength, fairness, and the ability to work as a cohesive unit to accomplish their work safely, effectively and professionally. During a time of transition at Animal Services, Randall's honest straightforward style helped the team "gel." He did a fabulous job holding everything together!

Often the team is in state courts addressing felonies and misdemeanors, and testifying at administrative hearings to protect the welfare of the county's animals and citizens.

The team demonstrates honesty, a sense of fairness, and sincerity in their dealings, displaying integrity with the citizens they serve, and their pets. This team, with Randall Brown at the helm, is a great example of the DCS Value of Integrity.

ACTS would like to congratulate Randall Brown for his departmental recognition and also welcome him aboard as part of the 2016 instructor cadre for ACTS. Randall has all of the qualifications that will make him an outstanding instructor in the areas of officer safety, animal-related law enforcement, specialty training and much more.

Congratulations and welcome aboard!

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ACTS Training Schedule

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Investigative Techniques for A/C Professionals - Hosted by Ventura County Animal Services

January 13-14, 2016 - Camarillo, California

Schedule of Training: Investigative Techniques for Cruelty and Neglect Complaints; Evidence Law/Collection; Animals as Evidence

Training Program for Animal Control Professionals - Hosted by Queen Anne's County Animal Control

January 18-22, 2016 - Crumpton, Maryland

Schedule of Training: Field Training Officer Certification; Chemical Immobilization (certification); Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Pepper Spray (certification)

Training Program for Animal Control Professionals - Hosted by Cullman County Animal Control

February 1-5, 2016 - Cullman, Alabama

Schedule of Training: Field Training Officer Certification; Multiculturalism in Animal Control; Understanding the "Link" in Animal Abuse; Chemical Immobilization (certification)

Training Program for Animal Control Professionals - Hosted by Kitsap Humane Society and Animal Control

February 8-12, 2016 - Silverdale, Washington

Schedule of Training: State Laws, County Ordinances and City Codes; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Evidence Law and Collection; Investigative Techniques for Cruelty and Neglect Complaints; Courtroom Preparation and Testimony; Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment

Training Program for Animal Control Professionals - Hosted by McCracken County Government

February 22-23, 2016 - Paducah, Kentucky

Schedule of Training: Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture Restraint Equipment; Officer Safety and Self-Defense

Animal Control Officer Specialized Training Course - Hosted by the Wisconsin Animal Control Association

March 10-11, 2016 - Green Bay, Wisconsin

Schedule of Training: Illegal Animal Fighting; Understanding the "Link" in Animal Abuse

Field Training Officer Certification for A/C Professionals - Hosted by the Bentonville Police Department

March 15-16, 2016 - Bentonville, Arkansas

Schedule of Training: Field Training Officer Certification

Animal Control Officer Specialized Training Course - Hosted by the North Kansas City Police Department

March 28-30, 2016 - North Kansas City, Missouri

Schedule of Training: Illegal Animal Fighting; Understanding the "Link" in Animal Abuse; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Performing Animal Exhibitor Inspections; Understanding the ADA/Service Animals for ACO's/LEO's

Animal Control Officer Specialized Training Course - Hosted by the Montgomery County ARC

April 4-6, 2016 - Dayton, Ohio

Schedule of Training: Illegal Animal Fighting; Understanding the "Link" in Animal Abuse; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Performing Animal Exhibitor Inspections; Understanding the ADA/Service Animals for ACO's/LEO's

ACTS Training Schedule

For a registration form, visit www.aco-acts.com or call 913-515-0080

**Animal Control Protective Equipment Certification - Hosted by the North Kansas City Police Dept.
May 9-12, 2016 - North Kansas City, Missouri**

Schedule of Training: Baton/Bitestick Certification; Pepper Spray Certification; Handcuffs - Arrest and Control Certification; Taser Certification; Chemical Immobilization Certification

**Training Program for Animal Control Professionals - Hosted by Cobb County Animal Control
June 13-16, 2016 - Marietta, Georgia**

Schedule of Training: Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Evidence Law and Collection; Dog Fighting Investigation; Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Officer Safety and Self-Defense

**Field Training Officer Certification - Hosted by the North Kansas City Police Department
July 14-15, 2016 - North Kansas City, Missouri**

Schedule of Training: Field Training Officer Certification

**Field Training Officer Certifications - Hosted by the Montgomery County Animal Resource Center
July 28-29, 2016 - Dayton, Ohio**

Schedule of Training: Field Training Officer Certification

**Field Training Officer Certification - Hosted by the Wisconsin Animal Control Association
September 8-9, 2016 - Green Bay, Wisconsin**

Schedule of Training: Field Training Officer Certification

**Animal Control Officer Safety Training Course - Hosted by the North Kansas City Police Department
September 12-15, 2016 - North Kansas City, Missouri**

Schedule of Training: Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Officer Safety and Self Defense; Pepper Spray Certification; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Baton/Bitestick Certification

**Training Program for Animal Control Professionals - Hosted by Cobb County Animal Control
October 3-5, 2016 - Marietta, Georgia**

Schedule of Training: Multiculturalism in Animal Control; Investigative Techniques for Cruelty and Neglect Complaints; Illegal Animal Fighting

**Animal Control Protective Equipment Certification - Hosted by the Montgomery County ARC
October 17-20, 2016 - Dayton, Ohio**

Schedule of Training: Baton/Bitestick Certification; Pepper Spray Certification; Handcuffs - Arrest and Control Certification; Taser Certification; Chemical Immobilization Certification

**Animal Control Officer Specialized Training Course - Hosted by the North Kansas City Police Dept.
November 7-9, 2016 - North Kansas City, Missouri**

Schedule of Training: Multiculturalism in Animal Control; Citations, Dangerous and Vicious Declarations; Interview and Investigation Techniques; Investigative Techniques for Cruelty and Neglect Complaints

Animal Control Training Services Professional Review of Operations

WHY A REVIEW?

Animal Control/Care agencies are no different than other enforcement organizations as far as their susceptibility to crisis management. They often become so busy with their daily problems that they do not have the time to plan ahead. Or, if they have a plan, they don't have the time to see if they are staying on track.

A thorough review can point out what is working and what needs to be improved. New ideas can be presented for the agency's consideration. A proper review results in a win-win situation for the agency, government, and taxpayer.

WHAT WILL ACTS REVIEW?

The team's report will include, but is not limited to, the following: Service Delivery Area, Administration, Communications, Shelter Operations, Field Operations, Occupational Safety Procedures, Licensing, Employee Attitude Survey, Community/Interagency Relations and the Proposed Implementation Plan.

ACTS BACKGROUND AND CAPABILITIES

Animal Control Training Services is a limited liability company of the State of Kansas. The company was founded to provide for the development of Animal Control Officers and Field Services through training, certification and consultation, with an increased focus on officer safety and professional service.

Team members utilized in the evaluation process are currently engaged in the animal control profession. They have well-earned reputations for managing effective programs and understand government responsibilities and limitations. In view of the staff's practical experience in animal control, as lecturers on a nationwide level and as consultants, ACTS provides a full spectrum of services for nonprofit and government agencies. All ACTS evaluations are confidential with a written report given only to the contracting agency. Media contact, or the release of the report to additional individuals or agencies, is at the discretion of the contracting agency.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

All program evaluations are assessed a minimum charge based upon the size of the agency, plus expenses. Once ACTS appraises the depth of the study, ACTS will submit a detailed, written proposal outlining all commitments required by both the contracting agency and ACTS.

REFERENCES

ACTS lead evaluator has participated in reviews for city and county governments, nonprofit humane organizations, and other entities. For a full list of these references, please visit www.aco-acts.com.

**For a no-obligation information consultation, call 913-515-0080 or
email info@aco-acts.com**