



COUNTY of VENTURA

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE
SEVET JOHNSON, PsyD
County Executive Officer

Mike Pettit
Assistant County Executive Officer

Scott Powers
County Chief Financial Officer

Danielle Keys
County Human Resources Director
Labor Relations

September 30, 2025

Sent Via E-mail

Honorable Matthew P. Guasco
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Superior Court of California, Ventura County
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Rec'd
OCT 02 2025

Subject: Approval of Response to the 2024-2025 Ventura County Grand Jury Report
Entitled "Ventura County Animal Services Commission" for Submittal to the
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court

Honorable Judge Guasco:

In accordance with State requirements, the response from the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to the 2024-2025 Ventura County Grand Jury Report referenced above is hereby submitted along with a copy of the respective Board Letter and Minute Order.

By way of this email, copies of the response to the subject report (Exhibit 1), the Grand Jury Report (Exhibit 2), Minute Order, and September 16, 2025 Board Letter were provided to the Ventura County Clerk; to Superior Court Jury Services; and to the Foreperson of the 2025-2026 Ventura County Grand Jury. As has been the usual practice in past years, Jury Services will provide copies of the response to the State Archives.

Should you have any questions, please call me at 654-2864.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Pettit
Assistant County Executive Officer

Attachments:

- Exhibit 1 – BOS' Response to GJ Report on "Ventura County Animal Services Commission"
- Exhibit 2 - Grand Jury Report on "Ventura County Animal Services Commission"
- Minutes
- Board Letter dated September 16, 2025

Copies:

- County Executive Officer, Sevet Johnson, PsyD
- County Clerk, Michelle Ascencion
- Animal Services Director, Esteban Rodriguez
- Jury Services Manager, Tania Magdaleno
- 2025-2026 Ventura County Grand Jury Foreperson, Kathleen Garcia



COUNTY of VENTURA

Civil Grand Jury

Exhibit 1

800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009
Tel(805)477-1600
Fax (805)658-4523
grandjury.venturacounty.gov

Response to 2024-2025 Ventura County Grand Jury Report Form (Please See California Penal Code Section 933.05)

Report Title: Ventura County Animal Services Commission

Responding Entity: Ventura County Board of Supervisors

FINDINGS

- The County of Ventura (County) agrees with the Findings numbered: F-01, F-02, F-05, F-10, F-11, F-12
- The County disagrees wholly or partially with the Findings numbered: F-03, F-06, F-08, F-09

(See attached explanation.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered NOT APPLICABLE have been implemented
- Recommendations numbered R-01, R-02, R-05, R-06 have not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future.
(See attached explanation.)
- Recommendation numbered R-07 requires further analysis.
(See attached explanation.)
- Recommendations numbered NOT APPLICABLE will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

Date: 9/16/2025

Signed: *McDell*

Title: Assistant County Executive Officer

Number of pages attached: 2

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: Ventura County Animal Services Commission

Report Date: June 17, 2025

Response Prepared By: Mike Pettit Title: Assistant County Executive Officer

FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS

F-01, F-02, F-05, F-10, F-11, F-12. The County agrees with these findings.

F-03. The County partially concurs with this finding. While we agree that the transition to a lifesaving model—defined by a 90% or higher live release rate—has increased financial pressures on both the County and Contract Cities, we respectfully clarify that Ventura County Animal Services (VCAS) has always operated as an open admission shelter. The shift in 2014 was toward a No Kill model, not a change in admission policy. We also respectfully disagree with the assertion that budgetary considerations were prioritized over Best Practices. VCAS has consistently strived to uphold best practices within the scope of available resources.

F-06. The County partially concurs. As noted above, VCAS has always been an open admission shelter. The transition referenced in the Report pertains to the adoption of a No Kill model, not a change in admission policy.

F-08. The County partially concurs with this finding. While mandatory spay/neuter ordinances may have merit, their effectiveness is limited without accessible community-based veterinary resources. VCAS supports best practice approaches that emphasize access to care, including the deployment of a public Mobile Medical Unit to expand availability of low-cost spay/neuter services.

F-09. The County partially concurs. We acknowledge that limited staffing resources can contribute to fatigue and burnout among staff and volunteers. VCAS is actively working to create pathways for staff and volunteers to raise concerns and access support. However, we note that many compassion fatigue training programs are time-intensive and not always tailored to the unique challenges of animal welfare work, which can inadvertently increase workload stress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R-01 This recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be addressed in the near future. Ventura County Animal Services Commission (VCASC) is responsible for reviewing and updating its bylaws so long as VCASC's bylaws remain consistent with its overall authority granted by the Board of Supervisors as an advisory body to the County. Ventura County Animal Services (VCAS) intends to place this item on the agenda for one of VCASC's final meetings in 2025, with the goal of adopting revised bylaws effective January 2026.

R-02. The County concurs with this recommendation. VCAS staff will support VCASC in developing and implementing a transparent and structured process to fulfill its advisory responsibilities with a goal of completing this effort in 2026.

R-05. The County concurs that the current cost allocation and billing methodology for Contract Cities is outdated. The existing model—based on hourly billing and impound counts—does not adequately support proactive services such as education, outreach, and preventive care. VCAS is committed to working collaboratively with Contract Cities during the upcoming contract review process for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (FY26-27) to modernize the contracts and better reflect the full scope of services provided.

R-06. VCAS acknowledges that compassion fatigue and burnout are complex issues influenced by workload, staffing limitations, and organizational culture. Current contract structures limit flexibility in staffing, which can hinder the ability to provide relief for affected personnel. VCAS will collaborate with County Human Resources and Labor Relations to streamline personnel processes, address performance concerns, and explore proactive strategies to support staff wellness as part of the contract renewal process for FY26-27.

R-07. Further analysis is warranted to assess the potential impacts—both fiscal and operational—of extending services to the cities of Thousand Oaks and Santa Paula. VCAS will evaluate service level needs, facility capacity, and staffing implications to determine whether such partnerships would result in cost savings or place additional strain on existing resources.



**BOARD MINUTES
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF VENTURA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**SUPERVISORS MATT LAVERE, JEFF GORELL,
KELLY LONG, JANICE S. PARVIN AND VIANEY LOPEZ
September 16, 2025 at 8:30 a.m.**

**COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE - Approval of the Response to the 2024-20
Ventura County Grand Jury Report Entitled "Ventura County Animal Service
Commission" for Submittal to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.**

- (X) All Board members are present.
- (X) The following person is heard: Mike Pettit.
- (X) Upon motion of Supervisor LaVere, seconded by Supervisor Long, and duly carried, the Board hereby approves recommendation(s) as stated in the Board letter.

By: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Mia Martinez", written over a horizontal line.

Mia Martinez
Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board



**BOARD MINUTES
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF VENTURA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**SUPERVISORS MATT LAVERE, JEFF GORELL,
KELLY LONG, JANICE S. PARVIN AND VIANEY LOPEZ
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- (X) The following person is heard: Mike Pettit.
- (X) Upon motion of Supervisor LaVere, seconded by Supervisor Long, and duly carried, the Board hereby approves recommendation(s) as stated in the Board letter.

By: _____

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Mia Martinez
Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board



COUNTY of VENTURA

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE
SEVET JOHNSON, PsyD
County Executive Officer

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September 16, 2025

County of Ventura Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: Approval of Response to the 2024-2025 Ventura County Grand Jury Report Entitled "Ventura County Animal Services Commission" for Submittal to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that your Board consider and approve, with or without modification, the response provided on behalf of your Board and the County to the 2024-2025 Ventura County Grand Jury Report entitled "Ventura County Animal Services Commission" for submittal to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in accordance with Penal Code section 933(c).

DISCUSSION:

Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05 require that your Board comment on Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury pertaining to County government under your authority.

The 2024-25 Grand Jury issued a report dated June 17, 2025, entitled "Ventura County Animal Services Commission" (Report). The Grand Jury required a response from your Board regarding Report Findings numbered F-01, F-02, F-03, F-05, F-06, F-08, F-09, F-10, F-11 and F-12; and Report Recommendations numbered R-01, R-02, R-05, R-06 and R-07.

The Grand Jury also invited a response from the Ventura County Animal Services Commission (VCASC) and the Animal Services Director. The proposed response from your Board and the County was prepared in coordination by the Animal Services Director, County Executive Office, and the Board Appointee to the VCASC and is attached as Exhibit 1. A copy of the Grand Jury Report is attached as Exhibit 2 for reference.

Given that your Board's proposed response was prepared in coordination with the Animal Services Director (and other County staff and officials), and will also be submitted on behalf

of the County as a whole, a separate response from the Animal Services Director is not needed. When a response is invited by the Civil Grand Jury, a response is not required by the Penal Code provisions governing civil grand juries. For this report, only the County is a required respondent.

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) investigated the VCASC to assess its effectiveness, governance, and alignment with its original mission. The Grand Jury focused on how well the VCASC is fulfilling its advisory role in supporting Ventura County Animal Services (VCAS), particularly in its collaboration with your Board and the eight Contract Cities (Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Simi Valley, and Ventura).

The Findings contained in the Report are stated verbatim as follows:

F-01. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that the Ventura County Animal Services Commission's core mission to advise, guide, support, and collaborate with Ventura County Animal Services has been undermined due to issues such as non-adherence to its bylaws, inconsistent meeting schedules, and ineffective communication.

F-02. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that between 2015 and 2024, the Ventura County Animal Services Commission's advisory role, communication purpose, and collaboration process diminished replaced by a narrow focus on limiting or reducing contract costs.

F-03. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that the transition to an Open Admission shelter in 2014 increased financial pressure on both the county and Contract Cities, forcing Ventura County Animal Services to place budget considerations ahead of Best Practices for animal control, shelter care and field services.

F-04. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that the cooperative partnership between the eight Contract Cities and Ventura County Animal Services evolved from a collaborative partnership into a client-vendor relationship, leading to splintered purposes, conflicting priorities, and a decline in unified commitment.

F-05. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that the current Animal Services Agreements do not adequately address rising costs of shelter and field services, requiring Ventura County Animal Services to use funding, staffing, supply, and facility workarounds to compensate for budget shortfalls.

F-06. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that the Ventura County Animal Services Camarillo shelter, which opened in 1985, is aging, outdated, and consistently over-crowded with animals, as Ventura County Animal Services maintains its mission to be an Open Admission, 90% live-release model.

F-07. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that there has been a significant decrease in the number of animals being taken out of the shelter by local rescue groups and foster options, adding another stress factor to the consistent over-capacity of the Camarillo shelter population.

F-08. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that academic research deems spay/neuter ordinances insufficient without effective enforcement. In contrast, no-cost or low-cost spay/neuter programs have proven far more effective and successful as a long-term solution.

F-09. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that compassion fatigue negatively impacts human animal welfare workers, and the consequences of compassion fatigue on the mental health and wellness of Ventura County Animal Services staff and volunteers are not being adequately identified nor sufficiently addressed.

F-10. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that Thousand Oaks and Santa Paula are the only incorporated cities in Ventura County that do not contract with Ventura County Animal Services, leading to confusion and frustration for the public trying to determine which agency is responsible for their animal services.

F-11. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that the English-only Ventura County Animal Services website, written materials, and other communication with the public do not foster, and can be a deterrent to, engagement with the non-English-speaking population of Ventura County.

F-12. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury finds that an antiquated sanitation system, lack of necessary air-filtration systems, and the inability to quarantine contribute to viral medical issues. These conditions interfere with the safety and welfare of the population at the outdated shelter.

Your Board and the County's proposed response to the Grand Jury Report agrees with Report Findings numbered F-01, F-02, F-05, F-10, F-11 and F-12; partially agrees with Findings numbered F-03, F-06, F-08, and F-09. With respect to Finding F-08, while mandatory spay/neuter ordinances may have merit, their effectiveness is limited without accessible community-based veterinary resources. VCAS supports best practice approaches that

emphasize access to care and, in partnership with the Animal Services Foundation, is deploying a public Mobile Medical Unit to expand availability of low-cost spay/neuter services.

The Grand Jury's recommendations contained in its Report are stated verbatim as follows:

R-01. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Ventura County Animal Services Commission review, reevaluate, and revise Commission by-laws to facilitate better communication and nurture stronger collaboration between the Commission, Ventura County Board of Supervisors, and Ventura County Animal Services. This needs to be completed by December 31, 2025. (F-01, F-02, F-04)

R-02. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Ventura County Animal Services Commission enhance accountability by establishing a transparent process and structured procedure to fulfill its core advisory role with the Ventura County Board of Supervisors. This needs to be completed by December 31, 2025. (F-01, F-02, F-03, F-04)

R-03. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Ventura County Animal Services Commission support Ventura County Animals Services in developing proactive strategies and implementing community-targeted spay/neuter, licensing, and micro-chipping programs. This needs to be completed by December 31, 2025. (F-06, F-07, F-08)

R-04. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Ventura County Animal Services Commission support Ventura County Animal Services' re-engagement with local rescue and foster groups and other effective and proven methods that lead to long-term decreases in shelter population. This needs to be completed by December 31, 2025. (F-06, F-07, F-08)

R-05. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, Ventura County Animal Services Commission, and Ventura County Animal Services review, re-evaluate, and revise the Contract City Animal Services Agreements to better conform to 2025 Best Practices for animal welfare, control, shelter, and field services. This needs to be completed by December 31, 2025. (F-03, F-04, F-05)

R-06. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors and Ventura County Animal Services implement mental health programs specifically targeted to address the effects of compassion fatigue on the staff and volunteers working at Ventura County Animal Services. This needs to be completed by December 31, 2025. (F-09)

R-07. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors and Ventura County Animal Services open a dialogue with the cities of Santa Paula and Thousand Oaks regarding contracting with Ventura County Animal Services for potential cost saving and uniformity of service for residents of Ventura County. This needs to be completed by December 31, 2025. (F-10)

R-08. The Ventura County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Ventura County Animal Services Commission assist Ventura County Animal Services in securing grants for special care, education, and training programs not covered in the Ventura County Animal Services annual budget. This needs to be completed by December 31, 2025. (F-03, F-05)

Your Board and the County's proposed response to the Grand Jury Report states that Recommendations numbered R-01, R-02, R-05, and R-06 will be implemented with anticipated completion in 2026, provided that VCASC concurs with and supports recommendations R-01, R-02, and R-05 when presented to the VCASC by VCAS for its consideration. Recommendation numbered R-07 requires further analysis. Further details regarding the proposed responses can be found in the detailed response form attached as Exhibit 1 to this letter. Lastly, it is important to note that under the new leadership at VCAS, active engagement and collaboration with both our city partners and local rescue/foster partners has been increased and relationships and progress have improved as a result.

The County sincerely appreciates the Grand Jury's efforts in reviewing the effectiveness of the VCASC and concurs with their recognition of the many Ventura County volunteers who give of their time, effort and talents to support the Animal Shelters and provide emergency evacuation and rescue response.

Strategic Plan:

This item contributes to the Board of Supervisors 2024-2027 strategic priorities of Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities.

This letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, Animal Services, and County Counsel. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Pettit, Assistant County Executive Officer, at (805) 654-2864.

County of Ventura
Board of Supervisors
September 16, 2025
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sevet Johnson", written in a cursive style.

Sevet Johnson, PsyD
County Executive Officer

Exhibit 1: Response to Grand Jury Report "Ventura County Animal Services Commission"
Exhibit 2: Grand Jury Report "Ventura County Animal Services Commission"