

Sadistic Practices at Local Government Animal Control Agency Continue  
December 3, 2004

Over nearly ten years we have documented concerns about the treatment of homeless animals and increasingly abusive practices that characterize Multnomah County Animal Services.

Always insular and never friendly, during Michael Oswald's reign, the agency has been transformed into a maximum security prison for frightened lost animals. Surveillance cameras scan all parts of the building. The Intake area, once always open to the public has been locked down and the windows blocked out. Those seeking their lost dogs, must sign in, and wait to be escorted to the area. They are advised that only one person at a time may enter. I saw a staff person inform a couple that they could not go in together. Visitors to Intake are advised not to speak to, or in any way interact with the dogs in their cages where they are held until "processed."

Michael Oswald states this form of absolute isolation of abandoned animals decrease their "stress" readying them for their "test" conducted three days after entry into the agency. During that time these scared animals are held in complete isolation, allowed no contact whatsoever. I was once disciplined by a staff member for giving a homeless animal a treat during a time Intake was not "off limits" reprimanded and reminded that there was to be no contact with any of the animals, all so clearly frightened and alone.

I know of no literature suggesting that pack animals thrive when made invisible, allowed no comfort, treated like commodities caged for grading. Homeless animals at this "shelter" are held like insurgent prisoners of war, during which time every move is studied for "signs" of unadoptability and duly recorded.

While afraid and cowering after the three day stay meant to "settle them down," they are dragged to the cheerless, windowless, stinking tiny temperament testing room and literally forced across the threshold if they show the slightest resistance.

Last week I saw a beautiful timid about two year old male pitbull mix, Ned, fall on his belly in terror some 20 feet away from the testing room. He was being "retested" because although he passed this arbitrary test with "flying colors" (Tier 1) by separate and unequal standards set for any pitbull dog or suspected mix, he was afraid of this room, or the linoleum floor that lead to this room. I watched for twenty minutes, in my own increasing upset, as Linda Powers, the agency's chief assessor, and Stephanie Collingsworth, an agency staff person and one of Ms. Powers proteges, half coaxed with biscuits and dragged this young dog across the floor. Finally they found a rug and lifted him onto it and dragged him bodily the rest of the distance. I commented that he was scared and they couldn't get a good "read" this way. Stephanie Collingsworth flouncing on the way back to her desk after forcing this dog into the room responded : "We don't care what you think, Gail. We have to sort them out."

It doesn't matter that their temperament testing "style" is cruel and perverse. It doesn't matter that every dog senses the staff's impatience, that their only "treat" is when these are hurled at them to make them more "cooperative." It doesn't matter that this "test" is no more than a rough behavior protocol, never statistically standardized, rarely predictive in hostile shelter environments. It is however useful to kill by: "the rules made me do it." Now I can go have another hot fudge sundae.

The staff have their "orders" from Michael Oswald, and like dysfunctional prison guards, they carry these orders out. His philosophy about animals is that these are commodities, potential liabilities, nuisances, disposable. He took the Multnomah County 2000 Task Force agenda and threw it out, replacing this with his own will. And to assist in this process, he has been forgiven

all accountability by our local government.

He has refused to produce any raw statistics on adoptions, deaths, and transfers since June 2003 with the Multnomah County Commissioners full tolerance.

When these were first sought through public records, he insisted in his own version of Homeland Security. Only redacted versions, unacceptable to us because of the history of dishonesty that tracks this agency were permitted at enormous cost. Anyone who asked for these and persisted was a "journal terrorist, a "security risk" ( there is a dossier on me with such comments as she told the Portland Tribune that we were intentionally misclassifying adoptable animals). Six months later, when a judge threw out the "security concerns" forbidding direct access to the Pharmacy Book of Records, Michael Oswald proclaimed these "too cumbersome" to produce. In June 2003, based on the agencies own figures, deaths were up, adoptions down, transfers up. That's when the curtains went down.

The progressive animal welfare community has for the most part been driven away from and most certainly excluded from this agency. They ask questions, report concerns. No suggestions, no offers are welcome. Most volunteers are teenagers or the disabled. Most tasks menial such as cage cleaning.

Ned, the about two year old beautiful brindle pitbull mix, referred to above, who actually scored at the coveted Tier 1 outside the "temperament testing room," who got along with other dogs and loved people was put to death on November 20 despite protests. On retest with Linda Powers his score was changed to Tier 3. He was too afraid to take the test after she dragged him down the hall on a blanket/rug into the "testing room. "

These are her comments. " November 19 Tier 3 when tested in BA room, took 20 minutes with help of other staff members to get him to cross linoleum into BA room."

She ordered him killed because and her compatriots concurred because he couldn't; score high in the testing room. That test is unavailable, at least I haven't been able to find it anywhere. I only have the Tier 1 record. He died because was afraid of crossing the linoleum floor and all "tests" must be conducted in that tiny awful room. I told staff that I would find resources for him. They killed him anyway.

All other dogs I inquired about were also killed. One never questions authority. As simple a statement that an animal is scared provokes disdain and rejection.

Roger, an 8-10 month old young lab mix, was another "kill" because of a "suspicion" of ethnic tainting. He scored at Tier 2 with the note "very shy had to go into kennel/stiff handling." So a staff member wrote on second glance: " appears to be a pit mix- Confirmed my suspicion w'th another coworker-Due to mix, T2, and handling issues [shyness, no aggression whatsoever noted in any record) ER 11/8/04. He is dead now too.

And you might be interested in reading Buddy's protocol, the BA for the young dog who received so much press after he was found wounded, and left wrapped up in a sheet in a Portland Park. He is/was depressed and still quite injured when Linda Powers "tested" him and labeled him "unadoptable": Tier 3. He is housebroken so he was somebody's inside dog. On his "test" he was noted to be "easy to leash from kennel door, sits or stands at kennel door.tail neutral." "Remains in place/neutral" when collar put on. On sociability items, he stayed close but not interactive. When the bright pink blown up rubber glove attached to a stick that the agency uses as an assess-a-hand was employed to press his ears and cheeks, remove his bowl and pressure his body, he accelerated eating. A note was made "afraid of assess-a-hand." Other intrusions , "stroking" his tail, picking up his paws, reaching over his back, "scrunching"/ pinching skin over

his shoulders caused him to avoid further contact or become stiff. He permitted having his mouth pried open without a struggle. He "allowed" a "Safe Hug." And he was failed based on these items, allowed a place only in a sanctuary or killed as soon as the public forgets about him, whichever comes first.

As you go through record after record, what emerges are signs of terrified dogs dutifully recorded as death sentences by "staff1: whale eyed, cowering, ears flattened, "this one's really scared!!!", submissive urination. The staff sea res them and then kills them for the fear they elicit. If they start out fine, they are retested at the first signs of stress, and killed.

Good dog, but "Poor Kennel Presentation": Dead dog. If a dog cowers in back of the cage, that is scored as "poor kennel presentation." The dog has to "sell" himself. He has to come up front, lipstick or cap on and seduce an adopter for whom ironically/paradoxically the standards are quite low.

The only standards Michael Oswald cares about relate to his ego, how he presents to the public, does he look good. As an aside, he should correct the number of annual dog bites he publicizes that keep him quite busy. An actual count reveals these to be closer to about 450 annually, not 900.

Fascism operates this way. Go behind the fog of carefully controlled propaganda. This is not a "cute" dispute/debate about the "temperament testing controversy." This is about planned overt deception, needless slaughter, and a county and its citizens who permit this.

How can you be proud of this? Do their lives, already so short, and their plights matter so little to you?

Sincerely,

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