

# Our Readers Write

## Five Things You Need to Know About the Montcalm County Animal Shelter

By Gwen Stromp

In March, when I first learned what was happening at the Montcalm County Animal Shelter, I was shocked. I didn't know what to do. And frankly, I was reluctant to get involved. After all, I was just an individual concerned about the outdated methods used at the shelter. Why put myself through the heartache of knowing too much?

But since then, I have learned too much. There is no turning back. I find myself making the drive to Montcalm to attend commissioner meetings. I find myself passing out fliers to area businesses. I am telling everyone I know about the injustices animals in Montcalm County have to endure.

But through all this, I have also learned it's okay to be horrified. And to get angry . . . as long as you do something about it.

Below are the facts. I am listing them not to horrify or shock you, but to arm you with the information needed to help fight for change. Contact the Montcalm County Controller today and tell him how you feel. Visit [www.ccmontcalm.org](http://www.ccmontcalm.org) to learn how you can get involved. Learn to use your voice for those who do not have one.

### Five Things You Need to Know

1. Montcalm County has a contract with USDA Class-B animal dealer, R&R Research, owned by Jim Woudenberg. Under the contract, the shelter gives pets to Woudenberg. He, in turn, keeps 100 percent of the profits on the sale of the animals to various research facilities. This contract is up for renewal on January 31, 2009. The time to fight for the end of this contract is now.
2. Taxpayers assume the county is using the most current and humane form of euthanasia (sodium pentothal injections). But this is not happening. Michigan county animal shelters are supposed to follow AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) guidelines for humane euthanasia. Yet in Montcalm County, animals are still being gassed in a 55-gallon drum. In many cases, animals suffer in the barrel with their lungs burning for several minutes as they struggle to get above the deadly gas.
3. While there is a contract for Woudenberg to sell shelter animals to research facilities, no such contract is in place for him to euthanize animals not sold to research. Yet he is. Because it is illegal to gas animals that are over 30 pounds in a barrel, the county has opted to turn those animals over to Woudenberg for lethal injection. This is unprecedented because the euthanasia is performed with no oversight from shelter professionals. What's more, when Woudenberg operated out of Newaygo County, a shelter employee wrote a letter to the Michigan Department of Agriculture complaining about his ability to perform the injections correctly and humanely.
4. Patricia Lentz, the new director of the shelter, promised to apply for a license so humane lethal injections could be performed in-house. However, a close look at the proposed 2009 budget reveals funds for this are not included. The budget does include a raise for Lentz, who was fired doing the same work from Isabella County for unsatisfactory work performance.
5. The Montcalm County Commissioners are solely responsible for the policies and procedures used at the county animal shelter—not Lentz, not Woudenberg. Until the commissioners hear from numerous concerned citizens, they seem unwilling to change their outdated policies and inhumane procedures.

Send commissioner correspondence to Chris Hyzer, Montcalm County Controller.

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