

Gratiot County Herald-2

<http://gcherald.com/news/county-commissioners-renew-contract-with-r-r-resea.shtml>

County Commissioners renew contract with R & R Research

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By Phyllis McCrossin

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Jim Woudenberg of R & R Research explained that the animals obtained by the facility are secured from a variety of sources.

"These are unclaimed, unwanted animals that are about to be euthanized," Woudenberg said.

He added that the facility holds the animals obtained from Gratiot County an additional seven days to be certain the owners don't eventually claim them.

"We have had some instances where the owner did show up and we made arrangements to return the animal to them," he said.

Dawn Little, Gratiot County Animal Control officer, told the Gratiot County Finance Committee members last week that although the rescue groups are assisting with the adoption of dogs and cats, both the county facility and the rescue groups are full. And the numbers of animals being surrendered to animal control is increasing.

Little explained that animals taken by Animal Control facility that can't be placed go to R & R Research. In exchange R & R Research disposes animals that have been euthanized.

"If I have a dog that I think I can place then Jim (R & R Research) will have to wait," Little said. "Jim gets the animals as a last resort. It's our first concern to adopt the animals out. But you can't hold on to every dog and you can't adopt every dog out."

A 21-page packet presented to Commissioners by Gratiot County resident Maria Lott outlined suggestions for Commissioners to consider prior to their voting on the contract with R & R. Among her suggestions were:

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Using Waste Management for disposal of euthanized animals.

- Working out a collaborative agreement with surrounding counties for cremation of animals.

- Extend the hours of operation at Animal Control so more animals could be adopted.

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"Often people who surrender their pets to Animal Control are unaware that their pet may be sold to a research facility," Lott said.

Lott suggested Commissioners look into implementing a volunteer program in Gratiot County with the Humane Animal Treatment Society (H.A.T.S.) – an organization that works with the Isabella County Animal Shelter.

Members of H.A.T.S. volunteer at the Isabella shelter and clean cages, walk dogs and help find homes for animals at the shelter.

District Two Commissioner Tim Lambrecht said Gratiot County had used volunteers in the past, but liability insurance had become an issue.

"I am familiar with H.A.T.S.," Lambrecht said. "It's a great organization. But our liability insurance doesn't cover volunteers. Right now we just don't have the money for such a program. "

Lott noted that H.A.T.S. purchases its own liability insurance.

Board chair Mark Knowles asked for a motion to receive Lott's suggestions and suggested they remain in communication with animal right groups to work out some sort of arrangement with volunteers.

Commissioners also renewed the five year contract with R & R Research. Make public more aware of the fact that some animals from Animal Control go to research.