



## Doña Ana County Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners Executive Summary

**Meeting Date:** March 23, 2021

**Agenda Item Title:** Approval for Sole Source Contract with Barkhouse

### **Overview:**

County Animal Control and Environmental Codes had established an ambitious priority action item, i.e., to reduce the number of animals impounded at the Animal Services Center. This is clearly a goal that requires a multivariate approach to problem solving. In contracting services with Barkhouse, the County will be supporting these individual components that can lead to the stated goal.

First, Barkhouse will provide a no cost spay/ neuter/microchip program to the citizens of Doña Ana County, and charge the County at a greatly reduced price than what the County is currently funding through other programs. Barkhouse will have their own surgical staff performing the surgeries, and will utilize existing County resources (the Court Hold Building and/or the mobile surgical unit) to perform this function. In addition to serving private owners within the County, Barkhouse will also spay/neuter/microchip stray and abandoned animals impounded within the county's jurisdiction. Barkhouse's efficacy is demonstrated in their independent vaccination and microchipping clinics, e.g., in one day, February 27, 2021 Barkhouse's clinic administered 225 vaccinations and implanted 250 microchips. This one day total far exceeds any results reported by current contractual programs. The County agrees that these measures will reduce the animal population, with a significant impact being realized over time.

Second, Barkhouse programs will take adoptable abandoned and stray animals and "rescue" through relocation. Barkhouse has been nationally recognized for its relocation program and has receivers throughout the United States. Since December 1, 2020 to date, through its current cooperative partnership with the County, Barkhouse has relocated 211 dogs to various receiver locations throughout the western United States. These are animals that, if not relocated, would continue to be strays, relinquished/abandoned, injured/killed/euthanized, or simply long-term impoundments. It should be noted that animals are *not* relocated to shelters nor do they end up there at any juncture. Rather, they are essentially "pre-adopted" and vetted by receivers and transferred to receivers who place the animals. If a special regimen is needed, e.g., medical assessment that is provided by the receivers. Within two weeks of transfer, the vast majority of the 211 dogs were permanently adopted. Astoundingly, pursuant to the December 2020 relocation flight, 73/74 dogs were adopted within three working days. The remaining dog was fostered/adopted within two weeks.

Barkhouse has contributed to a large proportion of relocations within southern New Mexico. In

fact, Barkhouse is one of the few organizations that has successfully relocated traditionally “unadoptable” animals (e.g., chronic medical needs, chicken killers). Again, these efforts are another critical factor in reducing and diverting the unwanted animal population from the Animal Services Center and the County.

Third, Barkhouse programs assist with pregnant domestic animals, in that they care for mothers and litters, arrange for spaying after delivery and relocation of the entire litter (mother included) to receivers for adoption. This has traditionally been an under-addressed/silent issue in Doña Ana County. If there was not such an available program, puppies would be abandoned, left at the shelter, and subject to disease and injury. Many would be impounded. The mothers would be left unspayed and subjected to repeat pregnancies. Again, a proactive program such as Barkhouse offers another variable in solving the animal population dilemma.

In sum, the mid-year adjustment allotment was proposed to provide for these services, and the funding remains available. Financial Services has confirmed Barkhouse as a sole source in accordance with state law, and there were no objections or oppositions filed within the thirty-day mandatory announcement.