

# Capitola leaders dogged in plan to handle city's strays



Lauren Sagar/Sentinel photos

Nurse Paula Dias gives Tucker a bath at Chanticleer Veterinary Hospital last week. The city of Capitola, instead of contracting with the county Animal Services Authority, is paying the veterinary hospital for medical and boarding services.

## Council: City can provide services cheaper than county

*Animal Shelter*  
By **SORAYA GUTIERREZ**  
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A decision by the city of Capitola to end its contract with the Santa Cruz County Animal Services Authority and handle its own sheltering — a move that city leaders estimate will save \$40,000 a year — is being called a mistake by animal control professionals.

Starting July 1, the Capitola Police Department will be responsible for catching stray dogs and cats and taking them to designated animal clinics, where the animals will be inspected, medically cleared, photographed and posted on [petfinders.com](http://petfinders.com) for adoption.

"I'm sure after they realize what's entailed



*625-07*  
Doshe looks out of her kennel at the Chanticleer Veterinary Hospital. The hospital will likely see more animals when it begins boarding animals for the city of Capitola next month.



# Animal

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in animal control they'll have no desire to do it anymore," said Animal Services field manager Todd Stosuy.

With everything that animal control officers deal with on a daily basis, he said, there's likely to be an uproar from police officers.

Members of the police force recently took a crash course in "Animal Control 101," Stosuy said, and they weren't so excited with the material he presented.

"None of the officers were interested in it at all," he said of the five-hour training session.

But Police Chief Richard Ehle is confident his department can handle the task, and called it "absurd" for Animal Services to think otherwise.

"We have a very small number of animals that we deal with," Ehle said.

County figures show that in 2006, 128 animals from Capitola were sheltered by Animal Services. The city's share for animal services for the fiscal year from July 2006 to June 2007 was \$56,348.

With costs expected to increase to \$70,000, the decision to drop out of the county Animal Services contract on June 30 "came down to financial reasons only," said Ehle.

The city estimates it can run a similar program for about \$30,000 a year.

So instead of dropping strays at county shelters in Scotts Valley or Watsonville, the city is contracting with Chanticleer and Adobe veterinary hospitals in Santa Cruz for medical and boarding services, as well as Bed and Biscuits animal boarding facility for housing domestic animals.

"I'm hoping that between the 25 and 30 officers, we can handle 100 animals a year," said Ehle.

It won't be the first time the city's animal services will be in-house. During the 1960s and '70s, the city had an animal control officer and trucks equipped with cages. Councilman Ron Graves, who also was on the City Council during those years, said dogs ran loose on the streets and beach more often back then.

"It was a major problem in those days," Graves said.



Lauren Sagar/Sentinel

O.B. is one of the dogs currently boarded at Chanticleer Veterinary Hospital. Beginning next month, the hospital will contract with the city for boarding services.

Nowadays, he said, people have better control of their pets.

The city of Watsonville struggled with shelter management for years before contracting with Animal Services in November 2004.

Tricia Geisreiter, Animal Services coordinator, said police no longer wanted to deal with animal control duties.

"The Watsonville Police Department tried to run an animal shelter, and they ended up begging us to take it over because it's just a lot of work that's unexpected," she said.

The agency will try to not let the loss of Capitola's financial contribution affect services to the rest of the county, Geisreiter said.

Altogether, the county, Watsonville, Santa Cruz and Scotts Val-

ley contribute about \$2.5 million toward the agency's \$3 million budget. The county pays the largest share, about \$1.3 million in the coming year.

"It's still a financial hit," she said. "I mean \$56,000 is small compared to what other agencies contribute, but it's still \$56,000, and we need every penny."

The agency will move its Scotts Valley operation to a new larger and more modern building in Live Oak in summer 2008.

The city of Capitola is negotiating with the county to continue the licensing of dogs within the city boundaries.

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