

Search is on for animal shelter director ✓

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SANTA CRUZ — The search is on for a new director of the beleaguered animal shelter.

Outgoing director Gail Willis put in his last day of work Wednesday, clearing the way for new management of the Santa Cruz County Animal Welfare Association.

Willis, 64, said he will continue to be active in the state Animal Welfare Association. He currently holds the post of secretary.

"I've been in it (animal welfare work) all my life and will remain active," said Willis earlier this week.

At least four qualified candidates have applied for the director's post, said Board of Directors member Lisa Leask.

They will be interviewed next week and a decision made "ASAP (as soon as possible)," said Leask.

Until the position is filled, Frank Amsden will act as interim director.

The Seventh Avenue facility has been widely criticized for poor management

and purported abuses of animals.

Last year, the Sheriff's office investigated 11 cases of purported abuse. Those investigations were prompted by ousted Board member Dorothy Welch.

Only one incident warranted criminal action, a detective concluded. But even that was eventually dropped upon further investigation by the District Attorney's Office.

Welch was also a key mover behind an investigation conducted by the Grand Jury in 1982, which concluded that lack of

money and poor management caused many of the shelter's problems.

The county Board of Supervisors recently extended its contract with the Animal Welfare Association, which runs the Seventh Avenue facility, until June 1984.

But board members have made clear their dissatisfaction with the facility and are in the process of reviewing applications from three groups to take over operations.

The animal welfare association is among the groups vying for the contract.