Watsonville animal shelter changes hands

Animal Shelter   RP 11-16-04

New Animal Services Authority takes reins from police department

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OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Moving boxes filled the animal shelter on Airport Boulevard on Monday, bringing new direction and leadership to the 135 cats, rabbits and dogs who call the shelter home, and bringing hope to perhaps thousands of other pets who may become lost this year.

The Animal Services Authority, which moved into the shelter on Monday, has taken over for the Watsonville Police Department, which has been responsible for finding agencies to run the shelter for the past five years.

"The police department is not geared for taking care of animals," Animal Services General Manager Michael McFarland said.

Animal Services operates a shelter in Scotts Valley, as well. McFarland said it made sense for Animal Services to take charge of services throughout Santa Cruz County, as it would cut down on bureaucracy and help pet owners find their lost pets more easily.

Animal Services is a joint

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Hendrix the rabbit keeps a wary eye on visitors at the Watsonville animal shelter Monday.

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powers authority, like the fire board, and serves Santa Cruz County, the city of Santa Cruz, the city of Scotts Valley, the city of Capitola and the city of Watsonville.

The Watsonville shelter will continue to be a shelter and adoption point for south county animals, though all phone calls will go through one local animal control phone number serving both north and south county.

This process will better serve both animals and people, McFarland said.

"It provides a better service to the county," he said. "Consolidation makes sense. We'll be able to better locate animals and be more consistent."

New hours for the shelter are Tuesday through Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for phone calls and animal drop-offs, and 12 to 5 p.m. for kennels and adoptions.

The animal control phone number is 454-7303.