




## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**From:** Lee Ann Shenefiel, Interim Chief Animal Services Officer  
Animal Services Office (ASO) 

**Date:** November 13, 2018

**Subject:** Update on Disease Management Protocols

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Please use this memo as an update to the ASO's disease management efforts. As you know, the Austin Animal Center (AAC) and its rescue partners have seen multiple cases of distemper within the canine population.

Canine distemper is a virus that affects dogs. It has been a growing problem in Texas since Hurricane Harvey. The virus can impact all systems in the body, but typically starts with upper respiratory signs and can sometimes progress to neurological symptoms. Distemper is contagious to other dogs and is spread much the same way a cold is with humans: through saliva and mucous. Dogs can contract the disease when an infected dog sneezes or coughs near or on them, through nose-to-nose contact, and sometimes through shared surfaces like water bowls or toys.

To resolve this situation, the ASO implemented new processes and procedures for intake and flow of new dogs into the system to better protect incoming dogs, most of whom have unknown or limited vaccination histories. ASO staff began implementing these new processes and procedures on October 27th. As soon as a dog is brought into the system, it is vaccinated immediately. The vaccination needs at least three days to incubate before the dog has developed sufficient immunity to distemper. Any dogs that are brought in on the same day are kept together for the three day hold period before they are introduced into the public kennel population. These dogs are kept in a new dog isolation area where they stay in our kennel until they clear the three day period. To limit exposure during this vulnerable period, we have limited access to this kennel building to minimize the risk of any disease spreading. We have communicated these new processes to our staff and volunteers who are interested in providing out of kennel enrichment to these dogs.

When we have days with high dog intake, which can be up to two dozen in a single day, our kennel resources are strained to maintain this isolation space, but staff and volunteers have been able to ensure the isolation period is maintained. We do have a higher than ideal shelter population and are working with our partners on increasing rescue pulls, as well as pushing for adoptions and fosters to help us during this time of influx.

We also are working with Austin Pets Alive! (APA!) to administer Vitamin C Intravenous (IV) therapy to all dogs within our population to boost their immunity so that if they were to get sick, the severity of the symptoms would be tempered. Also, APA! has been identifying animals within our system to transfer into their foster home network.

ASO leadership has held three town hall style meetings for our staff and volunteers to communicate our processes and provide updates as well as answer questions. We have also implemented daily morning meetings where all teams are invited to hear updates, provide feedback, and ask questions about any concerns they have. We will continue to have the daily meetings as appropriate.

We would also like to extend an invitation to all Council offices to tour the AAC and personally see the operations and protocols that have been put in place. Seeing these processes firsthand can provide a better insight into the daily challenges the ASO manages. If interested, please have your office contact Belinda Hare at 512-978-0565 to schedule a date and time.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 512-978-0521.

Cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
Sara Hensley, Interim Assistant City Manager