

# Becky Monroe - Lost Dogs 12

I think that the issues with Animal Control can best be expressed by reading a piece by the Chicago Tribune Editorial Board published Sept 8 entitled, "Why lost pets stay lost in Cook County." The piece started by talking about what to do if you're trying to find your lost pet.

Reading from the article:

*"Don't expect much help from Cook County's Department of Animal and Rabies Control. It doesn't operate a shelter and doesn't consider reuniting lost pets with their families a big part of its mission. In a report last month, the county's inspector general made a good case that it ought to, and we agree. Especially since the IG's six-month review left us shaking our heads at what the department actually does.*

*Animal Control is about rabies, mostly. It gets most of its funding from the sale of rabies tags — and spends much of that money to pay employees to type the rabies tag data into a very old computer system.*

*There are 22 full-time employees, and 13 of them spend most of their time processing tags, often earning comp time for working during their lunch hours, according to the IG's report.*

*Most of the data is submitted by clinics, shelters, veterinarians and rescue groups that perform the actual rabies vaccinations, but Animal Control's system is so dated that the information can't be uploaded easily, if at all. So staffers do it by hand. If this reminds you of the Cook County clerk of the circuit court office, join the club.*

*The IG recommends a web-based system so veterinarians and others can input the data themselves, freeing up resources for more meaningful services (like helping you find your dog.)*

*The office is closed nights, weekends and holidays, and the IG's report notes that law enforcement agencies throughout the county complain that they can't access rabies data or find an animal control officer except during banking hours.*

*There are six employees who patrol the unincorporated area for strays. Their workday includes time spent commuting to and from work in their take-home government vehicles. For one*

*employee, that's three hours a day. If heavy traffic means their door-to-door workday lasts longer than eight hours, they get comp time.*

*What do they do in between? The report doesn't say, exactly, but it sounds rather aimless."*

The Tribune Editorial mirrors another article that the Tribune ran on August 4 about Animal Control failing to pick up a dog after they were notified by the Sheriff's Office on July 13.

Reading from the article:

*"The dog was in the locked garage when officers arrived July 13 to evict two young men from a foreclosed house in the 11200 block of Worth Avenue. Finding that the men had moved out, officers posted an eviction notice and called the animal control department to remove the dog, according to the sheriff's department.*

*But last week, Frank Shuftan, a spokesman for County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, denied that such a call was placed, saying in an email to the Daily Southtown that animal control double checked its call log for that day after the Southtown story appeared and found no record of such a call from sheriff's police.*

*But the sheriff's department released a tape of a July 13 call in which a woman is clearly heard saying, "Cook County Animal Control, may I help you?" A sheriff's officer then says, "Cook County Sheriff's Police calling" and that there's "a dog to picked up from an eviction" and giving the address in Worth.*

*"It's a German shepherd in the garage," the officer says, giving the name and phone number of the receiver, the person representing the bank, who would be waiting for animal control at the garage.*

*Animal control apparently never sent anyone to the house."*

How many bad news stories will it take to get this Board to make meaningful changes at Cook County Animal Control? It seems obvious to everyone who has had interaction with Cook County Animal Control that this department is a disaster. We are calling upon the County Board to stop ignoring this issue.

"There are major metropolitan areas across the United States making headway to improve municipal and county animal shelters and their services to the community. Just to name a few that have made giant strides in animal sheltering: Austin, TX, Washington DC, Miami-Dade County, FL, and Kansas City, KS. These areas have proven it can be done with the right leadership and oversight. It is our belief that it is time for Cook County to take the same initiative. The animals and the taxpayers deserve better."