Women in animal control—
Interview with Betty Denny
Smith
by Charlene Drennon

DRENNON: Los Angeles Co. covers 5000 square miles, 25 cities, as well as unincorporated areas, and Animal Control has over 200 employees. Isn’t it unusual for a woman to be the director of such a large animal control department?

SMITH: Yes, there are very few women animal control directors. Five years ago, there weren’t any women animal control officers to speak of, but today, there are women officers in many of the departments.

DRENNON: What are your suggestions to a woman who would like to train to be an animal control director?

SMITH: She should get the most complete education she can. It’s important that she learn about all animals and animal behavior, not just dogs and cats. She should take business courses, and learn about budgets, laws and labor issues. She must know how to deal effectively with people. It would also be to her advantage to work in a shelter.

DRENNON: What was your background?

SMITH: I have had a varied background, and I think it’s important that women training for such a position do so. I majored in business administration in college. I served on the board of the Pet Assistance Foundation for several years, and was one of the founders and president of VSA, a volunteer group chartered to work in the Los Angeles city shelters. I lobbied in Sacramento for animal welfare legislation for several years, and served on numerous county and state committees on upgrading animal control.

DRENNON: What accomplishments are you most proud of in your two years?

SMITH: Many new programs have been started, including humane education, and we have added four spay clinics. I am most proud of our disease prevention program, our euthanasia program using sodium pentobarbital and the addition of eight animal health technicians to our shelters.

DRENNON: I understand your shelter at Agoura (Calif.) is considered a model shelter.

SMITH: Yes, it is. It was opened in November, 1976, and we’ve involved local citizens extensively there. We are fortunate that the group Actors and Others for Animals, financed pilot programs at Agoura for distemper inoculations and euthanasia by sodium pentobarbital injection. These programs have been extended throughout the county.

DRENNON: What is the potential employment picture for women in animal control work?

SMITH: Almost unlimited. Government, through affirmative action programs, is actively seeking qualified women for permanent jobs. Also, most of the money goes to actual salaries and not to administrative costs — so the grant recipient must be prepared to handle such needs as tools and supplies.

CETA benefits those who prepare

If you’re planning to apply for a grant through CETA — the Federal Comprehensive Employment Training Act — be prepared to show that you know what to do with it.

CETA grants pay the salaries of long-term unemployed persons while they receive on-the-job training with local groups, up to one year. The salary maximum is $10,000. The local organization is able to carry out a project that wouldn’t be possible otherwise, and in some cases, hires the trainees for permanent jobs. CETA grants are available to municipal agencies as well as private organizations.

Claude Bowen of the CETA office in Harford Co., Md., advises grant applicants to show “hard-nosed administrative ability” to supervise the employees. The grant application must be for a specific project with results that will be measurable. Also, most of the money goes to actual salaries and not to administrative costs — so the grant recipient must be prepared to handle such needs as tools and supplies.

DRENNON: What about handling large animals?

SMITH: Not generally. Usually, the public is kinder to women.

DRENNON: How are women at enforcement?

SMITH: Very effective. Often people will accept citations more readily for women. All officers are trained to use citations as an education process for the offender.

DRENNON: Here’s the jackpot question, Betty. Would you want your daughter to go into animal control work?

SMITH: Absolutely. It is frustrating and demanding work, sometimes heartbreaking. But it is very rewarding to know that you are doing a difficult job in a humane manner.

JOB OPPORTUNITY - Division Chief, Los Angeles County Animal Control. Direct supervision of animal care centers and enforcement of state and local laws governing animals.

Applicants should have management experience with an animal control agency or humane society or animal control work, must have demonstrated administrative ability, and must be able to coordinate training programs. Salary approximately $23,000. Send resumes immediately to Clarence Shaw, Dept. of Personnel, 222 N. Grand, Los Angeles, Calif. 90012.
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Lu Anne Womack and Allen Carter received veterinarian technician training at Knox Co. (Tenn.) Humane Society under a CETA grant last year. They plan to continue animal careers.

The Harford Co. Humane Society has nine employees under a CETA grant - seven are working on outdoor projects and two are introducing humane education programs for the county.

Shelter Manager Warren Brodrick advises those interested in a CETA grant to make an appointment with the local CETA office and discuss the project. He cautions against "hand-wrining for poor little animals." Instead, the group should show how the program will benefit the trainees and the community.

An HSUS Animal Control Workshop will be held April 28-29, 1978, at the Holiday Inn in Waterloo, Iowa. Topics covered will include animal sterilization, education, animal control operations and humane society organization. For more information, contact Ann Gonsoinman, HSUS Midwest Regional Director, Argyle Bldg., 506 E. 12th St., Kansas City, Mo. 64106, (816) 474-2070.

Animal control workshop

The funds are earmarked for jurisdictions with populations of more than 100,000. The CETA offices distribute grant money according to local needs and match up qualified unemployed persons with the created jobs. Jurisdictions under 100,000 population are served by the "balance of state" CETA office in each state.

New shelter going up?

by William R. Meade, III

Meade is executive director of the Animal Welfare League of Arlington, Va., Inc., and a shelter design consultant.

Meade offers design consultation to groups building or remodeling animal shelters. Contact him at 2650 S. Arlington Mill Dr., Arlington, Va. 22206, (703) 931-0236.

His booklet titled "Recommendations for Prototype Animal Shelters" is available for $2 from SHELTERSENSE, HSUS, 2100 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

Many older animal shelter buildings have reached the end of their usefulness, and must now be replaced. In addition, many humane societies are beginning animal shelter operations.

With these new facilities being built, we have the opportunity to improve the quality of animal shelters - or to repeat the mistakes of the past. If we allow the same mistakes to be repeated, it will mean twenty or more years of working in shelters that are often inhumane for the animals and unpleasant for the personnel.

The first mistake often made is the approach that a shelter should be the cheapest building possible. I do not advocate that a shelter be "gold-plated," but I do believe it is false economy to leave out ceilings, good lighting, floor finishes and proper temperature control in the name of economy. If an organization makes up its mind to build a quality shelter rather than another barren dog pound, they CAN do it.

The second major mistake is building design that does not allow for proper cleaning and disinfecting of animal areas. Again and again, shelters are built with no places to put the animals while the runs or cages are being disinfected with a high pressure sprayer.

Sound control is an important factor that is often overlooked in shelter design. The adult dog kennels should be sound proofed to stop noise from going to the front office and the cat and puppy areas. A concrete block perimeter wall around the kennel, rising to the underside of the roof deck, can accomplish this. Doors with self closers must close off kennel areas.

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