

November 9, 2011

The Wake County Animal Center's goal is to adopt healthy animals and encourage responsible pet ownership through spay/neuter and vaccinations. We value our partnership with WRAL and the adoption opportunities they provide throughout their broadcast. The situation with Sassy is unfortunate and it was a mistake for her to appear as an adoptable dog.

Sassy was selected to appear on TV based on criteria we have established for featuring animals on the station, including age, time at the Center, appearance of positive health and type of dog. Sassy appeared to be healthy when she left the Center. That evening, a kennel technician reported Sassy was demonstrating a "honking cough and green nasal discharge." At that time, Sassy was identified as a dog that needed to be euthanized, based on her demonstrated symptoms. Our policy restricts infectious dogs from being placed on the adoption floor or placed in foster due to the risk of spreading infection to other animals both in the Center and in an adopter's home.

Our protocols regarding how to respond to animals with symptoms of respiratory disease have been supported by the North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine. Those protocols include daily evaluation by veterinary and Center staff for indications of infectious disease. However, we recognize the need to evaluate our current policies and procedures at the Center. The County enlisted a third-party evaluator last month that has already begun its assessments of Center operations. In addition, The County Manager's Office is involved in the review of these policies and procedures. Cases like Sassy's will be a part of that review.

We are proud to announce the addition of our new shelter director, Dennis McMichael, who is well-versed in the challenges we face at the Wake County Animal Center. We are looking forward to working with Dennis, who comes to us with a fresh set of eyes and experiences to help to shape the Center's future. We are committed to preserving positive relationships with our rescue partners in order to promote adoptions, foster and rescue of the County's animal population.

Joe Durham
Wake County Deputy Manager