



Volunteers want dog-walking changes at Austin Animal Center

By Jade Mingus, KVUE | February 18, 2015

AUSTIN -- Volunteers at the Austin Animal Center say dogs are kept in their kennels for 24-48 hours without someone taking them for a walk, and they are calling on the city to make a change.

"Some of the dogs do go kennel crazy, and I've seen it," said volunteer Will McKinney. "The biggest no-kill city in the United States, and it's not right that our animals are sitting in kennels for 24 to 48 hours at a time."

Volunteers say when dogs don't get a chance to exercise it leads to restless or aggressive behavior. They use orange tags to track the dogs that have been walked.

"We've been concerned for quite a while," said volunteer Harrell Hoffman.

Hoffman counted orange tags for 10 months and found an average of 39 dogs a day go without a walk. The shelter argues the number is not accurate when you various other factors are taken into consideration.

"They are not taking into account that the animal may have been on a lock or a stray animal and it doesn't belong to us and that animal does not come out of the kennel," said Chris Noble, interim chief of Austin Animal Services.

Noble says he simply doesn't have enough staff to oversee how many dogs get exercise. On Wednesday, 13 workers were cleaning and caring for the center's 385 dogs and more than 100 cats.

After KVUE started asking questions, the Austin Animal Center began generating a morning report listing the number of animals available to walk, their kennels, breed, and age. Staff also use time tags to show when they've interacted with the dogs.

"Their primary function is sanitation cleaning the kennels and feeding the animals anything beyond that we rely on the volunteers," said Noble.

Volunteers say it's up to them to keep track if a dog falls through the cracks and don't get walked. The Animal Center says even more volunteers are needed, they have 600 right now.

"I don't think the burden should be put on volunteers. I believe volunteers are there to supplement," said McKinney.

<http://www.kvue.com/story/news/investigations/defenders/2015/02/18/animal-volunteers-shelter-austin/23645403/>