

## **Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley loses veterinarian**

**By Steve Ramirez Sun-News reporter**

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To visit the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley Web site, click [here](#).

LAS CRUCES -- A little more than eight months after becoming the veterinarian at the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley, Dr. Laura Henkel has resigned and left the facility.

Dr. Beth Vesco-Mock, ASCMV executive director, said Wednesday that Henkel's resignation became effective Sept. 24. Vesco-Mock said she could not comment about why Henkel left, citing personnel issues. But Vesco-Mock did say she was disappointed Henkel decided to leave.

"We'll definitely miss having Dr. Henkel," Vesco-Mock said.

Do-a Ana County Commissioner Scott Krahling, chairman of the board of directors of the ASCMV, said that Henkel would likely have an exit interview with the city's Human Resources Department. The city provides administrative oversight for the animal center, but the facility is jointly owned by the city and county.

"We're working to ensure that all of the services provided by a veterinarian will be met," Krahling said. "We've contracted with off-site veterinarians to provide those needed services. We've directed Dr. Beth to move as quickly as possible to resolve this situation."

Vesco-Mock said a request has already been submitted to the human resources department to begin advertising the vacancy.

"As is the case in all veterinarian postings, we will be conducting a national search for a replacement," Vesco-Mock said. "The human resources department will be able to make a better determination of what the timeline will be for filling the position. But the plan is to definitely hire a replacement as quickly as possible."

Human Resources Director Andre Moquin said the annual salary for the position will be about \$85,000 a year.

"We will post the position starting this weekend," Moquin said. "Generally, to fill a position of this nature, we're looking at a six- to eight-week process."

Meanwhile, Vesco-Mock said two private veterinarians have been contracted to provide their services, including low-cost spay and neutering for pet owners.

"Actually, I'm shocked just how smoothly everything is going," Vesco-Mock said. "The two veterinarians available to us are working very well. They have graciously worked their already busy schedules around ours. Nothing has slowed down at all."

Before Henkel began her duties at the animal center, veterinarians in private practice in Las Cruces were utilized at the shelter. Vesco-Mock said the transition period to hire a new full-time center veterinarian will be much like the old practice.

But with medical facilities now available at the animal center -- which weren't there before Henkel arrived -- and the use of contracted veterinarians, Vesco-Mock believes any possibilities of serious medical problems at the shelter should be greatly reduced.

According to data Vesco-Mock presented in September to the animal center board of directors, the shelter has taken in 8,975 animals through July and was on a pace for an estimated 15,385 animals this year. Through the first seven months of the year, 5,421 animals had been euthanized at the shelter.

Henckel, of Amado, Ariz., has more than 21 years of general practice and animal shelter veterinarian experience. Before coming to Las Cruces, she was a part-time veterinarian at an animal hospital in Sierra Vista, Ariz. Henkel also worked a spay-and-neuter van in Arizona.

After learning of Henkel's departure, some animal advocates said they were concerned that problems at the animal center that happened before prior to Henkel's hiring could possibly return again. There is consensus among city and county administrators, center board members and management that having a full-time veterinarian is critical to animal center operations.

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Without a vet

- Dr. Laura J. Henkel has resigned as veterinarian at the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley.
- Henkel has been the veterinarian at the animal shelter since Jan. 5.
- The shelter will contract with private veterinarians to provide services until a new veterinarian can be hired.
- The center is jointly owned by the city of Las Cruces and Do-a Ana County.