Letters, Correspondence, and Comments that were sent to Washoe County Regional Animal Services Advisory Board

Table of Contents

Letter from Karen	3
Letter from Jill Dobbs	4
Podcast from Jill Dobbs	8
Letter from Jerleen Bryant	9
Letter from Jenni Beaty	12
Letter from Joshua Green	15
Letter from Abbi Ludico	16
Letter #2 from Abbi Ludico	18
Letter from Jerleen Bryant	20

From: Karen < <u>karbear1123@aim.com</u>>
Sent: Tuesday, September 5, 2023 9:29 PM

To: Animal - Advisory Board < Advisory Board@washoecounty.gov >

Subject: NHS feeding concerns.

[NOTICE: This message originated outside of Washoe County -- DO NOT CLICK on links or open attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

It is my understanding that the small animals (rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs) need fresh food every day as part of a healthy diet. Under the previous administration, staff could purchase fresh food and turn in receipts for reimbursement. The current administration is not allowing this. They also have not made any arrangement to get fresh food.

This is disgraceful and not in keeping with their mission. Can someone please look into this?

I am not an employee, just a concerned citizen.

Thank you

Sent from the all new AOL app for Android

From: Jill Vacchina Dobbs < Jill@spcanevada.org > Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2023 9:29 AM

To: Animal - Advisory Board < <u>AdvisoryBoard@washoecounty.gov</u>> **Subject:** State of Animal Sheltering and SPCA-NN operations updates

[NOTICE: This message originated outside of Washoe County -- DO NOT CLICK on links or open attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Dear WCRAS Advisory Board,

I think it's important that you all know the current state of animal welfare in Washoe County. Please read my email below that I sent out to my Team last week.

Truly, Jill

From: Jill Vacchina Dobbs < Jill@spcanevada.org>
Date: Tuesday, September 26, 2023 at 7:33 PM

Subject: FW: State of Animal Sheltering and SPCA-NN operations updates

SPCA-NN Team,

This email is to clarify some misconceptions, briefly explain what's happening in regional animal sheltering, and to share some important updates for SPCA of Northern Nevada (SPCA-NN) operations.

Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS)

WCRAS is the municipal lost & found pet and animal law enforcement agency. That means they handle stray intakes, house and care for strays, return pets to owners, enforce municipal, county, and state laws. Their operations pertain to all types animals (e.g., dog licenses, permits, citations, welfare checks, cruelty investigations, etc.). Their job is intense, important, and they care for far more pets than SPCA-NN does.

The mandatory Nevada stray hold is 5 days and after that WCRAS pets are made available for transfer to adoption partners (both shelters and rescue groups). WCRAS also provides some community programs: CARES fund, senior pet food and veterinarian support (when available), vaccine clinics, humane education, and community outreach projects.

WCRAS does <u>not</u> do adoptions. Since they are a Washoe County department, they cannot quickly pivot to address changing pet populations or other factors. They have a slow approval process and must get approval through county red tape to hire more staff, increase their budget in any way, etc. Their partnerships with adoption agencies are critically important.

Learn more about WCRAS

here: https://www.washoecounty.gov/animal/who we are/index.php.

Shelter Overpopulation Crisis in northern Nevada (and beyond)

The shelter overpopulation crisis is currently overwhelming for our region, which mirrors national trends. Homeless dog and cat intakes are up significantly, adoption rates are down, average length of stay stats are up, etc. Economic constraints, inflation, affordable housing crisis, reduced donations for all nonprofit sectors including shelters, shrinking access to affordable vet care, etc. are all contributing factors. And each of those factors is complex and multi-faceted on their own.

Additionally, COVID negatively impacted the number of spay/neuter surgeries nationwide and in 2022 the U.S. was 3 million s/n surgeries behind, which will continue in 2023 (the data for 2023 isn't available yet). This results in millions and millions of additional unwanted pets entering the sheltering system nationwide without the capacity or resources to handle such a significant increase.

Additionally, the largest shelter in our region, Nevada Humane Society, has dramatically reduced their intakes from WCRAS. They are WCRAS's contractual and primary adoption partner, so their reduction significantly impacts WCRAS, SPCA-NN, foster-based rescues, and all rural partners as well. I've included a data graph showing the decrease in transfers (see below).

Getting out-of-state shelter partners and networks to help is difficult because every area is experiencing similar challenges, but I will continue these important efforts. Also, our regional coalition will continue making pleas to our community to adopt and support our efforts.

SPCA-NN Capacity and Intake Changes

SPCA-NN has increased our WCRAS intakes <u>over 700%</u> while continuing to serve our rural partners the best we can. We should all be incredibly proud of everything we've accomplished in 2023 despite these intense challenges!!

Thanks in large part to SPCA-NN's transfers, WCRAS has only had to euthanize 2 adoptable dogs for space this year despite running at or over capacity for 90% of this summer. That's an incredible impact that I hope we are all very proud about because it's a really big deal!!

Based on initial data from Kelley Bollen's shelter assessment, recent staffing changes, team survey results and feedback, SPCA-NN will be reducing our dog intakes immediately. All scheduled dog transports will be cancelled for this week and next (approx. 6 dogs/week), then we'll continue to reassess our capacity of care weekly and adjust accordingly. I will keep y'all updated.

Part of why we pushed so hard this summer was in belief that NHS would start increasing their intakes by September/October and we'd be able to decrease ours by now, plus homeless pet populations start to organically decline in fall and winter. Unfortunately, it's going to take longer for NHS to stabilize and increase their intakes, and large dog populations are not yet slowing.

Yes, this means WCRAS is going to have to humanely euthanize for space (dogs) because our regional sheltering system cannot handle this volume of dog intakes. I'm working closely with WCRAS to support their team in this difficult reality and SPCA-NN will continue to support

WCRAS to the best of our ability. There are many factors outside of our control and our first responsibility is to all the pets we can care for at our high standard of care.

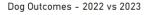
I'm incredibly proud and thankful for all the lives we've saved and improved during this difficult year, and you should be too—thank you all!! Do not be discouraged because we are still fulfilling our mission and operating at a high level—we just need to slow down dog intakes to ensure a high standard of care, safety, and positive working environment.

Please continue to advocate for vulnerable pets and talk to everyone you know about the importance of adopting and donating to shelter pets during this crisis!

<u>Please note</u>: We will be holding an All-Paws mandatory meeting on Monday, October 16th at 10:00a (it's a non-surgery day for clinic). We'll send out calendar invites with an agenda to everyone soon.

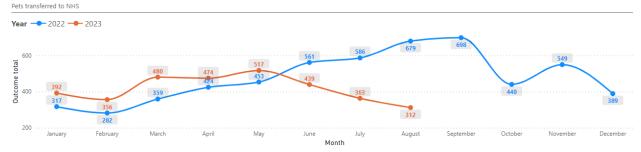
Thanks for all you do!!

Jill





Cat Outcomes - 2022 VS 2023





Jill Vacchina Dobbs, J.D. (she/her)

Executive Director SPCA of Northern Nevada

530.386.6679

www.spcanevada.org

4950 Spectrum Blvd, Reno, NV 89512





SPCA of Northern Nevada connects people and homeless pets to bring joy, love, and compassion to our community and beyond. We offer quality adoptions, affordable spay/neuter, vaccinations/microchipping, medical financial assistance, and more! Please visit https://spcanevada.org/careers/ for job opportunities.

In 2022 we:

- Placed 1,695 pets into safe, loving homes.
- Provided 3,805 high-quality spay and neuter surgeries.
- Provided 10,660 community vaccinations.
- Helped 445 pets stay with their families through Todd's Medical Assistance Fund.
- Visit our <u>2022 Community Impact Summary</u> for more information.

From: Jill Vacchina Dobbs < Jill@spcanevada.org>

Sent: Friday, October 13, 2023 12:15 PM

To: Animal - Advisory Board < Advisory Board @washoecounty.gov > **Subject:** State of Animal Welfare in Washoe County Podcast

[NOTICE: This message originated outside of Washoe County -- DO NOT CLICK on links or open attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Dear WCRAS Advisory Board members,

Here is a recent Renoites podcast episode interviewing Jill Vacchina Dobbs, Executive Director for SPCA of Northern Nevada on animal welfare in Washoe County and nationally.

I thought you all might enjoy listening and sharing this episode to help educate our community on what is happening and why the shelter overpopulation crisis is getting worse regionally.

https://www.renoites.com/e/jill-vacchina-dobbs-on-pet-adoptions-and-animal-welfare/

Truly, Jill



Jill Vacchina Dobbs, J.D. (she/her)

Executive Director SPCA of Northern Nevada

530.386.6679

www.spcanevada.org 4950 Spectrum Blvd, Reno, NV 89512







From: Jerleen Bryant < jbryant@nevadahumanesociety.org>

Sent: Sunday, October 22, 2023 8:47 PM

To: Animal - Advisory Board <AdvisoryBoard@washoecounty.gov>

Subject: In response to info shared at Advisory Board meeting on 10.20.23

[NOTICE: This message originated outside of Washoe County -- DO NOT CLICK on links or open attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Dear WCRAS Advisory Board,

I want to take a moment and share my thoughts on the Advisory Board meeting that was conducted on Friday. I have been with NHS for five months, and It has been an incredibly busy time. I took over an organization that had been lacking capable and proficient leadership for quite a while. We were without proper policies, procedures, and SOP's in most all areas of our operation, and while we had some very caring and capable staff, they had not been provided proper training in their respective fields. Additionally, our organization had not been adhering to known and accepted best practices in the animal welfare industry. This is not a situation that can be turned around overnight but I'm happy to say we have made notable progress and continue to do so.

The information that Shyanne shared during the meeting regarding transfers to NHS from WCRAS is not incorrect, however, it does not provide the whole story and I'm afraid that this board is left without a full understanding of the current situation with both of our organizations. Shyanne shared that transfers to NHS were down 42% - 44% during the last quarter. I do not dispute that. However, I believe it is important to understand that public surrenders to NHS are up 42% for cats and 55% for dogs year to date, and 124% for cats and 143% for dogs last month alone. Our community is suffering from an overpopulation of animals, and we are not unique in this country. It is not any one organization's fault, it is a community problem and needs to be addressed as such.

Our PSA states that NHS is required to accept public surrenders as the official surrender facility for Washoe County. There is no language in the PSA that requires NHS to transfer in animals from WCRAS. However, even if it did contain that language, I can assure you we would not be any more motivated than we currently are to transfer in the greatest number of animals possible. Our ability to do this is directly related to the number of animals adopted from NHS which then creates available space to transfer in more. Each and every day the need to transfer in animals from WCRAS to relieve the pressure in their facility is a driving focus and priority for myself and my staff. Numerous times we have had to pivot and think outside the box to address an urgent situation. Sometimes bringing in staff from our Carson City shelter to care for additional animals or compromising the standards of care in our current housing areas to accommodate more animals. Transferring animals to our Carson City shelter to create space here in Reno so we can transfer in more animals from WCRAS has happened numerous times as well. We routinely accept animals from

WCRAS with serious medical needs that require intense treatment which carries a hefty price tag. We do all of this because we are here for the animals, and we value our relationship as animal welfare partners with WCRAS and want to do all that we can to help.

I'm very sad and disappointed to see the plethora of misinformation regarding what NHS is required to do, and not required to do circulating in our community. Knowing the incredible amount of resources, both financial and otherwise that we put forth to be good partners with WCRAS and yet to receive nothing more than an onslaught of criticism is disheartening.

We are 22 days into this month and we have already transferred in 192 cats and 79 dogs from WCRAS. We have been operating at or above capacity for the last several months which is a daily challenge for our staff, no different than it is for Shyanne and her team. I can't help but feel frustration at the numerous and ongoing conversations surrounding the capacity at WCRAS, however, I have never heard anyone ask about capacity limitations at NHS. It is as if we somehow have infinite space, and sadly, that is just not the case.

I look forward to sharing information with this board regarding NHS operations and the significant impact we are making in our community at the January meeting. In the meantime, if there is additional information that I can share, that would help to mitigate the misinformation circulating, please let me know and I will happily provide it. I understand that previous NHS leadership was reticent with sharing NHS stats and reluctant to communicate with this advisory board. I am happy to say that I don't feel the same and I look forward to a new chapter with clear expectations and communication.

In closing here are a few fun facts:

- NHS is in good standing with our lease and pay our 58% share of expenses each month.
- Contrary to the rumor mill we do not occupy this building for free.
- The PSA does not require NHS to transfer in animals from WCRAS.
- The PSA does require NHS to accept public surrenders.
- NHS receives absolutely no financial compensation from the city of Reno or Washoe County for surrenders or transfers.
- NHS took 79% of ALL cats transferred from WCRAS in Qtr 1.
- NHS took 82% of ALL dogs transferred from WCRAS in Qtr 1 (including a parvo positive dog today)
- In the last month of QTR 1 transfers to NHS from WCRAS trended up and exceeded the previous year in the same month.

Thank you for reading this information and for everything you do to help the animals in our community.

Kindly,

Jerleen

Jerleen Bryant

Chief Executive Officer

(775) 856-2000 ext. 319

2825 Longley Lane, Suite B, Reno, NV 89502













From: jenni beaty <<u>gynblossom@yahoo.com</u>> **Date:** November 14, 2023 at 7:45:22 AM PST **To:** Hillary Schieve <<u>schieveh@reno.gov</u>>

Subject: Nevada Humane Society

Hello,

My name is Jennifer Beaty. I was a clinic staff member for Nevada Human Society for almost six years. I was let go 10-31-23.

I want to be upfront about my involuntary departure from NHS so as not to be labeled an angry past employee. I write this letter out of serious concern for the lack of care and direction NHS is headed.

I am saddened that NHS is taking little to no sick and injured animals - these animals needed us the most. I know of many cats and dogs who are being left at WCRAS due to their ages or medical status. I understand these animals are harder to move quickly, cost extra money and need more time to recover. However that is why I previously took such pride in working there. We took the old, the sick, the ones who needed major medical treatment. My heart was full of joy watching these animals heal and be adopted.

The medical cases they did have pending, some took months to resolve. Many of these were animals pending major surgical repairs and their condition were only worsening over their wait. Many developed other major issues that could have been avoided if they had not been made to wait for so long. My heart broke as I watched them languish. I only stayed on at NHS as long as I did to care for the animals. I felt they needed me. However my opinions, regardless of how respectfully I voiced them were not welcomed.

I have been through three CEO's and I think five COO's; I have never seen this kind of disregard for animal welfare until Jerleen Bryant and her new Director of Operations Trent Bingham came on board.

I have personally seen countless numbers of dogs being euthanized for behavioral reasons. As I am a Euthanasia Tech myself, I believe in humane euthanasia for medical and true behavioral issues. However, countless dogs have been sentenced to many months of languishing in the back kennels with no walks or yard time. Finally only to be deemed a "threat to society" then euthanized.

Many of these dogs have killed chickens or attacked live stock. However the purpose of NHS is to help re home or find appropriate rescues or homes for these dogs. They are instead treated as numbers. Some of these dogs have languished for up to six months,

slowly going crazy. Several of these dogs remained in the back without vaccines which is against NHS's own SOP. Unvaccinated animals can cause a whole slew of other medical issues. These dogs were able to be handled and still remained alone, unvaccinated and without basic freedoms.

Once they have sat for long length of time they are now "kennel aggressive." Which now leads to rabies testing. One of the dogs they euthanized was said to possibly have rabies. Unfortunately this dog was older and had been in and out of the NHS repeatedly. His "behavior" stemmed from repeat stays at the shelter, abandonment issues, and simply being older and possibly arthritic. At the time of my dismissal I know of two dogs, who had been tested for rabies.

This brings me to the lack of communication between staff and volunteers. NHS is now using martingales to walk the dogs. These martingales are to be put on by the AM volunteers for walks, then to be taken off at night by staff. These collars are being left on all night and will eventually lead to a dogs death. I have personally seen in other organizations dogs hung to death due to these types of collars being left on without supervision. There are many ways the dogs can die with these collars on. I did bring it to the attention of management only to be told its not my business. I pray this does not lead to any unnecessary and preventable death.

The lack of standards has left filthy laundry and moldy food bowls in the ISO's. Instead of washing the donated blankets and towels, NHS solution is to just throw them away regardless of whether the dogs and cats have enough blankets for warmth.

The guillotines are often left open at night now, even when its too cold. I often went around making sure the dogs had blankets and sweaters, and were not getting soaking wet in the rain.

I have had to take care of animals on the weekend who have had serious surgeries or are very ill, animals that needed to have emergency care. However at times they were not sent to emergency centers and died as a result. I have seen pregnancy spays on animals that resulted in death. One in particular was named Clove and she did go to emergency care and later died on complications from her pregnancy spay. Friday's are days they do major surgeries and then leave the animals all weekend without veterinarian supervision or care. Now on Sundays they have veterinarians working. However this is brand new and does not help all the animals who died previously.

NHS's standards are extremely low as well. Many of the dog and cats in the ISO's, most of which already are compromised by parvovirus and pan leukemia, are not getting

cleaned and fed. I had started taking photos of the severe lack of cleaning before I was let go. This is appalling to me and broke my heart.

I used to have immense pride working for NHS. But, I have watched most of the long term staff members either be "laid off" or just left due to lack of care for the animals.

The huge increase in prices is also shameful. It leaves the public feeling like they should just go to breeds.

I understand having to raise money, but it feels like it is costing other animals at Washoe County their lives.

NHS used to be an open admission, no kill shelter. No longer is it either. I heard Trent say at a meeting we are going to make Washoe understand we are not their dumping ground.

I only want what is best for all these animals, I am truly sad and sickened to see the direction NHS is headed. I fear and worry for all the animals in the "care".

Thank you for your time,

Jennifer Beaty (707) 391-8245 Gynblossom@yahoo.com Title: Concerns for the care of animals in the Nevada Humane Society's care

Contact Information: Joshua Green, Dogs.barkside@gmail.com, 7758959406

Concerns:

I am an ex employee as well as an ex-volunteer for NHS. I also own and run my own business of canine behavior using positive reinforcement.

The things going on at NHS are not okay and the animals need help. Staff are not properly trained and do not feel comfortable doing their jobs due to lack of training. The staff that is there has little knowledge regarding animal welfare and behavior.

Jerleen Bryant has completely turned the shelter for the worse and the animals are suffering under her care. I have experience training past employees and volunteers that was successful. I have volunteered my services for free to help dogs that are locked in their kennels for days without proper enrichment and have now been completely turned away.

NHS doesn't want help even though it's needed for the sake of the animals and staff.

-- Joshua Green, Dogs.barkside@gmail.com, 775-895-9406

Washoe County Animal Advisory Board:

My name is Abby Lucido and I worked for the Nevada Humane Society from July 27, 2022 until June of 2023.

I started on Cat Staff but later moved to Med Staff in March of 2023 where I worked very closely with clinic. This meant I was the one who brought the euthanasia paperwork from clinic to the admin office where they would file it as well as providing treatment for the animals in the shelter.

I was advised by Options Veterinary to submit a letter here regarding my concerns at the Nevada Humane Society after a comment I left on their Facebook. Jerleen Bryant and the increase in euthanasia is my main concern for why I am writing this letter.

Jerleen Bryant has turned the place upside down and it is no longer what I would consider safe for the dogs. During the short time I overlapped with Jerleen I saw many more dogs being euthanized for minor behavioral issues than while Greg Hall was CEO. By minor behavioral issues I mean mild resource guarding, not coming around in the kennel (fearful), kennel aggression, and fence fighting. This is all stuff the dogs would have been worked with to solve before being made available for adoption before Jerleen, but now they are not given the chance and immediately deemed unadoptable.

An example of this would be Oswald NHS-A-115830 who is now deceased. He was originally being questioned by a vet for FAS (Fear, Anxiety, Stress) while in his kennel and if it was going to become detrimental to his QOL (Quality of Life). He was then evaluated by Josh Green who owns BarkSide Dog Training and helps out some of the shelter dogs. Josh evaluated him alongside the Dog Staff supervisor and manager where all three deemed he was fine and he just needed to run in the yard a little longer because he had already been there for a few months at this point. I witnessed this conversation first hand.

However, Oswald was deemed unsafe by Jerleen and her "behavior board" where he was later euthanized on 5/30/23. Pictures of Oswald are still up on their Instagram promoting adoptions using his pictures and a video of staff hugging him.

Oswald was the first of many and I watched the euthanasia papers become more everyday I was there. I eventually left because I couldn't stand watching my favorite dogs be euthanized for things that would have been fixed in the past.

Jerleen has since told Dog Staff not to pull as many seniors, medical cases, and pit bulls because they are "undesirable". She has instructed them not to pull any dogs that seem

to be unruly and if they can't walk on a leash to walk them back to County where they will pick a different dog. This is also putting more strain on WCRAS and their capacity when they pick a dog then bring them back.

They have also removed their behavioral evaluation system and dogs are now being adopted out without being evaluated. Jerleen has also raised adoption fees for any dogs they think are pure bred to \$450 without any DNA testing before adoption.

I hope this brings awareness to the situation going on at the Nevada Humane Society and something can be done before more dogs are euthanized for minor issues that should not be held against them.

This used to be a safe house for employees as well as the animals, but now no one is sure where they stand or what animal is next. The vets are not stepping in to stop the amount of euthanasias happening in their facility.

-- Abbi Lucido

Washoe County Animal Advisory Board,

I have some other concerns regarding Jerleen Bryant as CEO of the Nevada Humane Society and some of the changes she has made to the place.

One of my biggest concerns would be finances, how Jerleen talks to employees about them, and how she is spending money. She now holds quarterly all staff meetings where the whole shelter closes for 2 hours and they have a meeting. Most of the time these meetings consist of talking about finances for the "company" and what the plan is moving forward.

Early on Jerleen announced they are signing a contract with Hill's Science Diet, a very expensive food company, and all the animals will be strictly fed Hill's. All public food donations were taken out of the facility into a metal container in the back. Public donations are now only used for the community program where people with low income or who feed the feral colonies can come get free food. This has not been disclosed to those donating and think it is going to feed the animals in the shelter.

During these meetings she is always telling staff how low on funding they are and how they need help which is not true. She has spent a lot of money in what I call "decorations" and nothing useful.

She took everything out of the break room and bought all new furniture from RC Willey as well as painted it. She later got an industrial coffee maker that stands about six feet tall and makes lattes, cappuccinos, espresso, and more.

Jerleen has bought new decorative benches for around the building and has started renovating the cove next to the adoption desk to become a store. This money could have been used to renovate the dog play yards that are falling apart and need some TLC.

Some other more minor concerns I have would be that she has reduced the space they have for cats which means they cannot house as many as they used to. Every cat is now required to have two cages including kittens which is unnecessary for the kittens and any smaller cats.

She has also cleared a room that used to be for the Barn Cats and now wants to use it as a public euthanasia area in the future. This means the cats that used to be in that room got moved into a Ringworm Isolation Unit and took away an entire room to house Ringworm cats. This has also increased the strain WCRAS feels when it comes to their cat capacity.

Thank you for taking the time to read these two letters and I hope this brings awareness to what is going on at the Nevada Humane Society.

-- Abbi Lucido

From: Jerleen Bryant

Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2023 12:58 PM

To: Naomi Duerr < <u>duerrn@reno.gov</u>>; Hillary Schieve < <u>SchieveH@reno.gov</u>>

Subject: Acknowledgement of recent letters, request to provide updated NHS strategy to

City

Hello Chairwoman Duerr and Mayor Schieve,

Our collaborators at Washoe County Regional Animal Services notified us that additional letters have recently been sent to the Mayor and Advisory Council for WCRAS.

As is always the case, I want to assure you that we take all concerns seriously and have been investigating to see if the allegations within hold merit. Initially, what we are able to confirm is that we are confident we are employing the highest standards of best practices. We are a little confused about a few of the allegations, as we have been working diligently these last several months to install improved procedures that adhere to even higher standards of animal welfare, for both the animals and the employees and volunteers attending to their care.

Regardless, the animal welfare world as you know, and its best practices, are complex and what these letters say to us is that there is still confusion. As we have worked on many internal policies recently, we are now at the juncture for NHS where we are ready to channel more energy into more consistently communicating with our many publics.

We would very much like the opportunity to sit down with you and discuss what our plans for increased, outbound communications looks like and how we endeavor to impart on the public what NHS is doing to better care for animals and our team. Additionally, we also want to unpack how we are going to begin incorporating some communications initiatives to alert northern Nevadans to the problem that is rising animal surrender rates – here and across the country.

I welcome any and all questions you may have and hope we can sit down to discuss the above at a time that is convenient for you both.

With respect, Jerleen

Jerleen Bryant

Chief Executive Officer



2825 Longley Lane Suite B Reno, Nevada 89502 775-856-2000 ext. 319

www.nevadahumanesociety.org











This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you received this email in error please forward to the correct person, or contact the sender.