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## Levy County Animal Services offers low cost spay-neuter service to needy people;
### *Quarterly report lists numbers of dogs and cats adopted and euthanized;*
### *Gilchrist & Dixie counties euthanize animals too*



**Story and Photos**
**By Jeff M. Hardison © June 7, 2017 at 1:17 p.m.**

   **BRONSON --** Levy County Director of Animal Services David Weatherford on Tuesday morning (June 6) delivered a quarterly report to the County Commission in which he and Dr. Darlene Essler, the county's veterinarian, answered questions too.

   One important change that was mentioned in regard to the low cost spay and neuter service -- from when it first started -- is that it is no longer available to people who are 62 years or older, unless they are on some sort of government assistance other than just Social Security. Age alone is no longer a qualifying factor.

   Dr. Essler explained that area veterinarians were commenting to the county that the county's low spay-neuter fee was cutting into their business. She mentioned that not every person who is 62 years old, or older, actually needs the reduced fee offered by the county.

   However, Levy County residents of any age (older than 18 years) who accept government aid due to low income are qualified for a reduced adoption fee in Levy County, as noted in a previous story published in *HardisonInk.com* from an April 18 press release from Levy County Animal Services Administrative Assistant Bridgett Domenico, and according to what was said at the June 6 meeting.

   Levy County Animal Services is offering low cost spay/neuter services through the "For Our Friends the Animals Lost Cost Spay/Neuter Initiative Program," Domenico said.

   These low cost services will be made available to residents of Levy County who are of low income status (determined by eligibility for other types of government aid). Proof of eligibility must be submitted with the application, along with a $10 nonrefundable

application fee.

   Proof must consist of a photocopy of a Florida Driver's License showing residence in Levy County, and proof of government aid unless over 62 years of age.

   Prices are listed below in this program:

   Dog spays (up to 75 pounds) - $55.  Pregnant dogs add $10. Dogs over 75 pounds are not eligible.

   Dog neuters (up to 75 pounds) - $40.  Cryptorchid dogs add $15.  Dogs over 75 pounds are not eligible.

   Cat spays - $40.  – Pregnant cats add $10.

   Cat neuters - $25.  Cryptorchid cats add $15.

   Flea control (Capstar) less than 25 pounds add $3.

   Flea control (Capstar) over 25 pounds add $6.

   To read all about Levy County Animal Services' normal fees and to gather other information, click HERE.

   To see the Pet Finder listings to see the animals at Levy County Animal Services now, click HERE.

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**Goldy and Inky (the cats) Hardison are among the more fortunate cats who live indoors at all times. Both of these female cats are spayed, and they are both current on their vaccinations and physical examinations. Both of these cats are working cats, serving as mascots for *HardisonInk.com*, where Goldy is the senior mascot. They also perform tricks. Those videos are in the advertising area on the right side of the Police Page.**

OTHER ANIMAL SERVICES NEWS

Director Weatherford gave a report about activity in Levy County Animal Services from Jan. 1 through March 31.

In that three-month period, Levy County had an intake of 237 dogs and 123 cats.

Of those 237, there were 42 dogs adopted. There were six dogs euthanized in that three-month span.

Fifty-eight cats were rescued. There were 57 cats euthanized in that three-month span.

Obviously, the odds of a cat dying after it reaches Levy County Animal Services is much higher than for a dog in the same scenario.

However, Levy County Animal Services does everything it can to relocate lost cats with their owners; to have groups rescue cats; and to have cats adopted to new owners.

Levy County Animal Services even has a new Cat Room, which provides better conditions in comparison with the previous holding area as the felines wait for the next destination in their lives.

As of Tuesday morning, there were 42 cats available for adoption in Levy County.

After some people commented about counties with bigger budgets not having to euthanize feral and stray animals, Weatherford conceded that this is the method Levy

County has used and must continue to utilize now.

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Director Weatherford said he needs to conduct repairs and improvements on some of the facilities at the animal holding area. In seeking bids, Weatherford found it is going to be less expensive for the county to conduct the work itself.

The Levy County Commission unanimously gave him approval to spend up to $10,000 for constructive work by the county itself on the facilities.

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## GILCHRIST COUNTY

Although some counties have "no kill" shelters, Gilchrist County is like Levy County.

In Gilchrist County, dogs and cats that are not adopted or rescued within a certain time frame are euthanized using drugs that are considered to be a humane method for ending their lives.

Gilchrist County Animal Control Officer/Supervisor Ericka Hudson said there is no adoption activity in Gilchrist County.

Her department has two people her and Brandon Bulter. She has been in her post for seven years.

Hudson uses rescue services from other counties. One place she speaks highly of is Lotsa Love Pet Rescue, Rehabilitation and Adoption from the Orlando area.

There are also rescue groups from Gainesville that help Hudson work with the animal control issues in Gilchrist County.

She said there is an average of about 2,000 animals a year that she and her colleague deal with. The animal control dilemmas in Gilchrist County include horses, pigs, goats and wildlife; although she is thinking about just rejecting wildlife calls altogether.

From Jan. 1 through March 31, the Gilchrist County intake numbers showed a total of 291 animals -- 149 dogs; 132 cats; eight pigs; and two horses being listed as intakes in Gilchrist County, Hudson said.

During that three-month period, there were 110 animals altogether that had to be euthanized in Gilchrist County.

And while Alachua County might claim to be "no kill," she said, there are occasions where that county must do this. And that county has closed its doors and rejected the acceptance of animals too.

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## DIXIE COUNTY

While the departments under the county commissions in Levy and Gilchrist counties are responsible for animal control, in Dixie County the sheriff somehow inherited the job.

Dixie County Sheriff Dewey Hatcher Sr. said there is no adoption program in Dixie County. He advises any new Florida sheriffs to not accept the job of animal control.

When the Dixie County Sheriff's Office receives complaints about animals, dogs, cats, cows out and other issues, they take care of it as best as possible.

When a neighbor's dog knocks over a garbage can, or chickens are clucking too loudly, there is not something the DCSO can do. The best solution to the problems is for the animals' owners to take responsibility for their pets and livestock.

Usually, with wandering livestock, the animals are retrieved within 10 days, Sheriff Hatcher said. As for adopting cats and dogs, the nearest place to Dixie County to adopt a pet is in Gainesville.

The sheriff explained that he is not about to get into the animal adoption business. There is an area in Dixie County where problem animals are kept, but that is not open to the public, Sheriff Hatcher said.

Like Levy and Gilchrist counties, many of the feral and stray cats and dogs in Dixie County wind up having to be killed.

As was mentioned in the Levy County Commission meeting on Tuesday, if Alachua and Marion counties have "no kill" animal shelters, then that reflects two things.

There are more people in Alachua and Marion counties (than in Levy, Gilchrist and Dixie counties) who are available to adopt a pet, and there is a bigger base of taxable property in those two counties (than in Levy, Gilchrist and Dixie counties) to provide the revenue needed to operate that form of animal control.