



Janelle Dixon, CEO
Animal Humane Society
845 Meadow Lane North
Golden Valley, MN 55422

Dear Ms. Dixon:

On the evening of September 15, 2008, the Animal Humane Society lost sight of their purpose: "to create a more humane world for animals by promoting the responsible treatment of animals" and destroyed a healthy kitten that should not have been destroyed.

Background: On September 15, my husband I and brought in a four month old kitten that we live-trapped in our backyard to the Golden Valley location. We trapped this little fellow because we feared for his safety living outdoors as well as we wished to do our part to help reduce pet overpopulation.

Once trapped inside the cage, this little animal sat calmly and allowed us to get very close to the cage while we looked him over and chatted with him. This kitten did not exhibit any sign of aggression, either immediately after trapping or during the car trip to the AHS. His ears were up, his eyes were not dilated and not once did he hiss, crouch low or demonstrate any other body language that would indicate he was feral.

During the check-in process, we were told by Kathryn at the front desk that he would be evaluated to determine if he was feral, but this would not happen right away. Kathryn indicated the kitten would be given time to "chill out" (Kathryn's words) and any decision about his adoptability would be made *after* he was allowed a chance to settle down from the stress of being trapped and transported. In addition, we were told that he would not be put down right away without a proper evaluation. Based on this information, never in our wildest dreams did we believe that this small kitten would be destroyed within five minutes of being removed from the waiting room.

In addition, while the kitten sat in the trap in the waiting area, two female AHS staff members came by to remark on the beauty and calm demeanor of this animal. Both staff members remarked that he was "not feral." However, it is disconcerting to note that the kitten was transported to the back room by a male staff member who blew into the kitten's face and immediately proclaimed him to be feral - before even being removed from the waiting room. The kitten did not react when the staff member blew into his face; however, given what transpired in the next five minutes, it appears that blowing in the kitten's face was the criteria used to evaluate the potential adoptability of this unfortunate animal.

Upon witnessing the lack of empathy the male staff member exhibited to this kitten, as well as his obvious predisposition that the kitten was feral, I asked who would be evaluating the kitten. I was told that a vet tech would evaluate the kitten.

Once the kitten was taken to the back room, the situation escalated from concerning to disturbing.

My husband and I could see several people (at least three) in the back room where the kitten had been taken. In addition, we could clearly hear the pitiful mewing of a kitten, although it was not clear whether this was from the kitten we brought in or another kitten in the room. Nevertheless, the situation seemed chaotic and frightening even to me. Kathryn went into the room to check on the status and returned within 2-3 minutes and said, "He's definitely feral. When we let him out he ran up the wall and they needed a net to catch him."

Kathryn then went back into the room to retrieve our trap, and when she returned I asked when it would be determined for sure if he was feral. Kathryn replied that he had already been put down. My husband and I were absolutely stunned at how quickly this determination had been made. ***Why wasn't he given***

the time to "chill out" as Kathryn indicated your process would allow? How can a kitten who must have been terrified at being trapped, then transported in a cage and plunked down in a noisy roomful of people not react in a fearful manner?

We asked why he had been put down already - within five minutes of being removed from the waiting room, and Kathryn replied that "they couldn't get him out of the cage." When I questioned the conflicting information about first being told the kitten ran up a wall and they needed a net to get him down, versus, they could not get him out of the cage, Kathryn stated, "after he ran up the wall, he ran back into the cage."

Inconsistencies in data presented:

- We were told the kitten had run up a wall after they let him out of the trap, and staff had to use a net to catch him. If he had indeed run up the wall, why were we also told that staff could not get him out of the cage? It's just not clear what happened - was he in or out of the cage??
- The cage in reference is a live-trap which does not stay open by itself. How did the kitten "run back into the cage"? Was someone holding it open for him? *If this young, frightened cat was indeed feral, he would not have approached that closely to a staff member who would have had to be holding open the trap.*
- We were clearly told that the kitten would be allowed time to "chill out" from the ordeal of being trapped before he would be evaluated for adoptability. This animal was **NOT** given a chance to chill out. Instead, **within five minutes of being taken into the back room**, it appears he was chased around a room by several people, caught in a net and then (hopefully humanely) put down. At this point, I just can't be sure about the "humane" part of this chaotic situation.

This was a four month old kitten. In addition to the blatant inconsistencies of what happened in that back room, it appears that excessive force was used on this small, fragile animal who had not exhibited any aggression from the moment he was trapped. I don't doubt he was frightened, but I do doubt that excessive force and immediate death was needed in this case.

As caring citizens, my husband and I entrusted this kitten to your organization's care, believing that due process would allow for a proper, professional evaluation by staff other than a callous male intake coordinator. We believed (and were told) that the kitten would be given time to get over the stress of being trapped and transported to what must have been a very scary place for him. **Instead, circumstances lead us to believe that this animal's final minutes were terrifying and, we suspect, involved cruelty.**

We have four cats, one of whom under similar circumstances would have performed *at least* as poorly as the kitten we entrusted to your care. Our cat "Diesel" (adopted from the Steele County Humane Society) had been found outdoors at a young age and was about as nervous and fearful as a cat can be. However, Diesel had been in the care of a caring foster home prior to our adopting her and is the sweetest, most loving cat. Steele County Humane Society gave her time and a chance to find a forever home.

The kitten we brought to you was not even granted five minutes to settle down before he was deemed feral. It appears the criterion used was to blow in his face while he was being carried in the trap. The people involved in making this determination lacked skill, empathy and any knowledge of cat behavior. The staff involved was incompetent at best and demonstrated premeditated cruelty at worst.

We did not deliver an obviously aggressive, adult cat to your organization. This was a small, fragile four month old kitten. We believed we were doing the right thing in bringing this kitten to your organization and that he would have at least been given a ghost of a chance. However, the lack of consideration given this kitten completely belies the word "humane" in your organization's name. It goes without saying that we will not consider ever entrusting another stray animal to your care. **In addition, my husband and I will communicate this experience to other humane organizations so they may also spread the word about the Animal Humane Society's lack of compassion for companion animals.**

Sincerely,

