

The Suffolk News-Herald

Society called to perform important task

Editorial Board

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If there were ever any question about the need for an active and effective chapter of the Humane Society in Suffolk, recent news about an outbreak of parvovirus at the Suffolk Animal Shelter should provide the answers.

More than a dozen dogs have been diagnosed with the deadly virus since it first was discovered in a puppy that had been adopted at the shelter. At least two of those dogs — including the one that had been adopted — have died from the infection. At least 12 others had to be euthanized after it was determined that they were suffering from the effects of the disease.

Suffolk Animal Control and the Suffolk Humane Society have had a good working relationship since the society was formed in 2006 by a group of area residents who were concerned with the high rates of euthanasia at the animal shelter. The society works to reduce the number of dogs ultimately meeting that fate by increasing the rate of spaying and neutering and by helping the city find adoptive homes for stray and surrendered animals.

By all accounts, it has been a successful relationship, with the Humane Society's 300 members holding regular adoption events, sponsoring visits by the Virginia Beach SPCA's Neuter Scooter and lobbying throughout the city for the owners of companion animals to take better care of their four-legged friends.

The parvovirus outbreak, however, brought a new challenge: The shelter has sought help from the Humane Society in finding people to provide foster care for uninfected dogs. Without such care, the dogs would be in danger of contracting the highly contagious virus through exposure at the shelter, despite city employees' efforts to eradicate it from the premises through aggressive cleanings with bleach.

Foster care is never an ideal situation. Companion animals and children both need permanent, loving homes where they can get the love and attention that helps them thrive.

But in an imperfect world, imperfect solutions can help solve short-term problems. So it is with the Humane Society's work providing temporary homes for those animals displaced while the animal shelter is scrubbed clean.

Suffolk is fortunate to have a group of people who truly care for animals working in the animal shelter and volunteering with the Humane Society. Their work on behalf of this helpless segment of the city's population is commendable and worthy of the citizens' support.