

## HUMANE SOCIETY TO CUT FULTON TIES

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The Atlanta Humane Society, under fire for its management of the Fulton County animal shelter, will end its nearly three-decades long relationship with the county on March 20.

The society will no longer operate Fulton County Animal Control, as it has done since 1974, following disagreements about money and shelter conditions and a worsening relationship with government officials in the face of criticism from private animal rescue groups.

"We cannot continue to operate with a substandard facility," said Glenn Summerlin, the president and chairman of the board of the society. He said communication with the county has been "absolutely abysmal" over the past year or so. He said county officials had ignored requests for meetings.

Relations started deteriorating after private animal rescue groups complained to commissioners about the number of animals being killed at the shelter. The euthanization came under scrutiny again last month after pound workers killed two pure-bred hunting puppies that slipped from a house in north Atlanta.

The shelter holds lost animals three days before killing them, fewer than the five-day minimum at the Cobb, Gwinnett and DeKalb shelters. Animal advocates say the shelter should keep them longer and should scan for microchip implants that identify animals, something the other three counties also do. Many of the animal rescuers have complained that they feel unwelcome at the shelter.

Fulton County declined to negotiate with the society after Bill Garrett, the executive director of the society and Summerlin sent a letter Dec. 4 requesting a \$500,000 increase to their \$2,050,000 base budget. Combined with income from licensure and impoundment fees, that would have boosted the animal control budget to nearly \$3 million a year, the letter said.

Fulton County responded Dec. 17 that it planned to look for new management.

Garrett faxed a memo to County Commissioner Mike Kenn Monday demanding a meeting to discuss what happens next. The society says it owns the trucks, computers, cages and other equipment at the shelter.

"There's a dispute whether we own the equipment, since we've been paying for it all these years," said Susan Laccetti Meyers, a spokesperson for Kenn.

Summerlin said he presumed the society bought the equipment from the money it was paid to run the shelter. He said the county and the society will meet this afternoon to talk about that. "If they don't elect to purchase it, we'll be selling it to someone else," he said.

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