

Follow-Up: Stella Case & Additional Animal Welfare Concerns

Gwinnett Animal Advocacy Alliance <gwinnettanimalshelteradvocates@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 23, 2026 at 3:48 PM

To: "Jorstad, Lindsey" <Lindsey.Jorstad@gwinnettcounty.com>

Cc: "Stephens, Glenn" <Glenn.Stephens@gwinnettcounty.com>, "Carden, Kirkland" <Kirkland.Carden@gwinnettcounty.com>, Matthew Holtkamp <Matthew.Holtkamp@gwinnettcounty.com>, Jasper Watkins <Jasper.Watkins@gwinnettcounty.com>, "Hendrickson, Nicole" <Nicole.Hendrickson@gwinnettcounty.com>, "Ku, Ben" <Ben.Ku@gwinnettcounty.com>

Hi Lindsey,

Thank you for your follow-up.

Regarding your request for a direct contact: the source for much of this information is [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is choosing to share this documentation through our advocacy group because she no longer trusts the County's internal reporting channels. After she attempted to use the proper HR process to report misconduct by [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED], she was met with what she—and I—view as a retaliatory reprimand and a hostile work environment. Since the internal system failed to protect her, she has authorized me to identify her so these issues can no longer be dismissed as 'unverified.'

I am providing the specific details you requested regarding the reports of animal mistreatment and policy violations.

1. Improper Use of Water as Behavior Control

- Date: December 20, 2025
- Location: Pod 2, Pen 143
- Animal ID: 114415 (Sunny)
- Staff Involved: [REDACTED]
- Details: It was reported that during handling, Sunny was fixating on a leash. To force a release, [REDACTED] allegedly sprayed the dog directly in the face with a hose.

2. Violation of GDA Regulations (Spraying Occupied Kennels)

- Date: Multiple occasions in October 2025
- Staff Involved: [REDACTED]
- Details: [REDACTED] observed [REDACTED] spray water into kennels while dogs were still inside on multiple occasions. She is unsure whether the behavior continued but confirmed it occurred more than once.

3. Improper Cleaning & Environmental Safety (Wet Kennels)

- Date: Pictures I provided in my previous email were taken in late February 2026
- Staff Involved: [REDACTED]
- Details: Reports and photographs indicate kennels are frequently left wet after cleaning. Despite the availability of squeegees, dogs are returned to runs before surfaces are dry.

4. Development of Skin Condition/Open Wounds

- Itzae (ID 114682): Despite being in the shelter's care since December 2025, she developed open wounds in early February 2026.
- A second dog from the same cruelty case as Itzae has also developed similar open wounds (picture attached in previous email)
- Bodie (ID 114602) also developed a skin allergy/condition (he is still at the shelter)

The issue of animals developing pressure sores/skin conditions is not new. It was raised last year during meetings with Commissioners Carden and Ku as an ongoing concern. Volunteers have reported that some dogs either are not provided a bed or are given plastic beds that are too small for their size. Both situations can contribute to discomfort and potential pressure sores, especially for dogs spending extended time in kennels. We understand the concern that Kuranda-style beds may be damaged by some dogs. However, many other shelters successfully use elevated beds as part of their standard care. This raises the question of whether there are solutions or best practices that could be implemented here to improve animal comfort and welfare.

I am speaking now in my personal capacity and I am going to be direct.

I have reviewed the details of the reprimand issued to [REDACTED] after she filed her complaint against [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. From my perspective, the way that situation was handled raises serious concerns about retaliation. Although the reprimand was later reduced to a verbal reprimand, the overall experience led to her resignation. That context matters, because it explains why people are not willing to come forward.

While other couples at the shelter demonstrate public displays of affection without consequence, [REDACTED] was targeted only after her husband began asking questions about operations during a volunteer orientation and after she filed a complaint to HR. When leadership like [REDACTED] uses a mandatory staff meeting to publicly disparage volunteers—specifically [REDACTED]'s husband and [REDACTED] — labeling them as "problematic" for simply being inquisitive or speaking out, **it sets a standard that mistreating the community is acceptable**. This culture of hostility toward the public and volunteers is exactly why Gwinnett continues to lose its most dedicated supporters.

Based on the documentation I have seen and the accounts I have heard, the environment at this shelter has become toxic. I am deeply concerned by the following reports of misconduct that appear to be tolerated by shelter leadership and the County.

- **Sexual Harassment:** I am aware of reports involving a staff member named [REDACTED] who allegedly made sexually harassing comments regarding two female staff members, specifically referencing seeing [REDACTED]'s nipples and making inappropriate comments about [REDACTED]'s private parts following a surgery.
- **Harassment of Volunteers:** I have also received reports of [REDACTED] following a volunteer in a manner that made her feel unsafe and later mocking her when she was in tears over an adoption issue. Per her statement:

"As a volunteer, I found one cat that I bonded with and waited hours to adopt - I clearly remember a man named [REDACTED] who followed me around as a volunteer and creeped me out. Despite him knowing that I do a lot for the animals as a volunteer, when it came time to adopt, he saw a woman cut in front of me in line and he allowed her to adopt my chosen cat during adoption. Not only was it embarrassing and a waste of time— I continued to volunteer with my head held high despite tears, while he followed me around mockingly saying, "you're just ignoring me because you didn't adopt the cat." and lied to me right after saying that the cat was still up for adoption and got my hopes up — only to see the new owner walking away with the kitten."

In addition, [REDACTED] was also in a situation last year where [REDACTED] followed her around the shelter causing her distress, even after [REDACTED] asked to be left alone.

- **Inconsistency in Discipline:** I cannot understand how the County terminates individuals like [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for inappropriate behavior in a parking lot, yet gives a slap on the wrist to individuals like [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for the mistreatment of animals. "Merit Rule #11" regarding conduct that reflects unfavorably upon the County must be applied consistently. The "bad apples" are staying, while compassionate, ethical officers and staff are being forced out.
- **Operational Negligence:** We continue to receive reports of staff standing around and not assisting the public, a behavior that seems to have no consequences under current management.

The shelter's mission is to save lives, but that mission cannot be achieved under a leadership team that prioritizes "falling in line" over animal welfare and staff safety. I believe a complete overhaul of management and an independent audit are the only ways to restore public trust.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Gwinnett Animal Advocacy Alliance

On Sat, Mar 21, 2026 at 12:25 PM Jorstad, Lindsey <Lindsey.Jorstad@gwinnettcountry.com> wrote:

Ms. [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email. To ensure a thorough and accurate review, I ask that you share my contact information directly with any individuals who have firsthand knowledge of the alleged incidents described. It is important that I hear directly from those who personally observed these situations so we can fully understand the circumstances and take any appropriate action.

For each reported incident, individuals should be prepared to provide specific details, including:

- Dates and approximate times
- Facility locations (including POD numbers)
- Canine identification numbers
- Staff involved or present
- Any additional context that would support a comprehensive review

Direct, firsthand accounts are essential for us to properly investigate and address any concerns. Please have those individuals contact me directly at Lindsey.Jorstad@GwinnettCounty.com.

Sincerely,



Lindsey Jorstad | Community Services Director | Gwinnett County Government

770.822.8869 | 446 W Crogan Street, Lawrenceville, GA 30046 | GwinnettCounty.com
Find us on social media @GwinnettGov and sign up for email newsletters!

From: Gwinnett Animal Advocacy Alliance <gwinnettanimalshelteradvocates@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, March 21, 2026 11:18 AM

To: Stephens, Glenn <Glenn.Stephens@gwinnettcounty.com>; Jorstad, Lindsey <Lindsey.Jorstad@gwinnettcounty.com>

Cc: Hendrickson, Nicole <Nicole.Hendrickson@gwinnettcounty.com>; Ku, Ben <Ben.Ku@gwinnettcounty.com>; Carden, Kirkland <Kirkland.Carden@gwinnettcounty.com>; Watkins, Jasper <Jasper.Watkins@gwinnettcounty.com>; Holtkamp, Matthew <Matthew.Holtkamp@gwinnettcounty.com>

Subject: Follow-Up: Stella Case & Additional Animal Welfare Concerns

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Dear Ms. Jorstad and Mr. Stephens,

Since my last email, our group has received additional information that raises further concern.

We have been provided with a firsthand account describing current practices inside the shelter that appear consistent with issues previously identified in past complaints and investigations. These reports include allegations of dogs being sprayed while inside their kennels, including the use of warm or hot water, and spraying being used as a method to control behavior.

As you are aware, similar concerns were documented in a 2021 complaint and investigation, which concluded that spraying kennels while dogs are still occupied is a violation of Georgia Department of Agriculture regulations.

While we recognize these are allegations, the fact that they closely mirror previously documented findings raises serious questions about whether corrective actions were implemented and consistently followed. If accurate, these reports would represent not only a continuation of prior issues, but a significant failure in oversight and accountability.

Additionally, we have received reports that dogs are, at times, left in wet kennels after cleaning, and that cleaning agents (including Rescue disinfectant) may not always be fully rinsed before animals are returned to their runs. Best practices in animal welfare require that kennels be properly cleaned, that disinfectants are correctly diluted, and that surfaces are adequately rinsed and dried before animals are returned. Failure to do so can increase the risk of respiratory illness and skin irritation, particularly when animals are exposed to prolonged moisture or residual chemicals.

We have been provided with photographs showing dogs in visibly wet kennel conditions, along with information regarding several dogs that developed skin issues and/or open wounds while in the shelter's care. Two of these dogs were cruelty case animals, including one named Itzae (ID 114682). Photos are attached for your reference.

Cruelty case dogs have already endured significant hardship prior to arriving at the shelter and should receive the highest standard of care during their recovery. While we are not asserting direct causation, the conditions being reported raise legitimate concerns regarding adherence to proper cleaning protocols, environmental conditions, and overall animal care practices.

Given these concerns, we want to reiterate and further emphasize the importance of implementing camera systems in all animal housing, medical and surgical areas, as well as in the euthanasia room. This is a reasonable and widely adopted measure to promote transparency, ensure accountability, and protect both animals and staff by providing clear documentation of interactions, care, and procedures.

If the County does not wish to pursue the formation of an Animal Welfare Task Force at this time, we strongly encourage

consideration of an independent operational audit. For reference, we have attached a recent audit conducted in DeKalb County, which may serve as a useful model for evaluating shelter operations, identifying gaps, and restoring public trust.

The level of concern within the community continues to grow, and transparency will be critical in restoring trust.

We would appreciate a response at your earliest convenience and remain available to discuss these concerns further.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

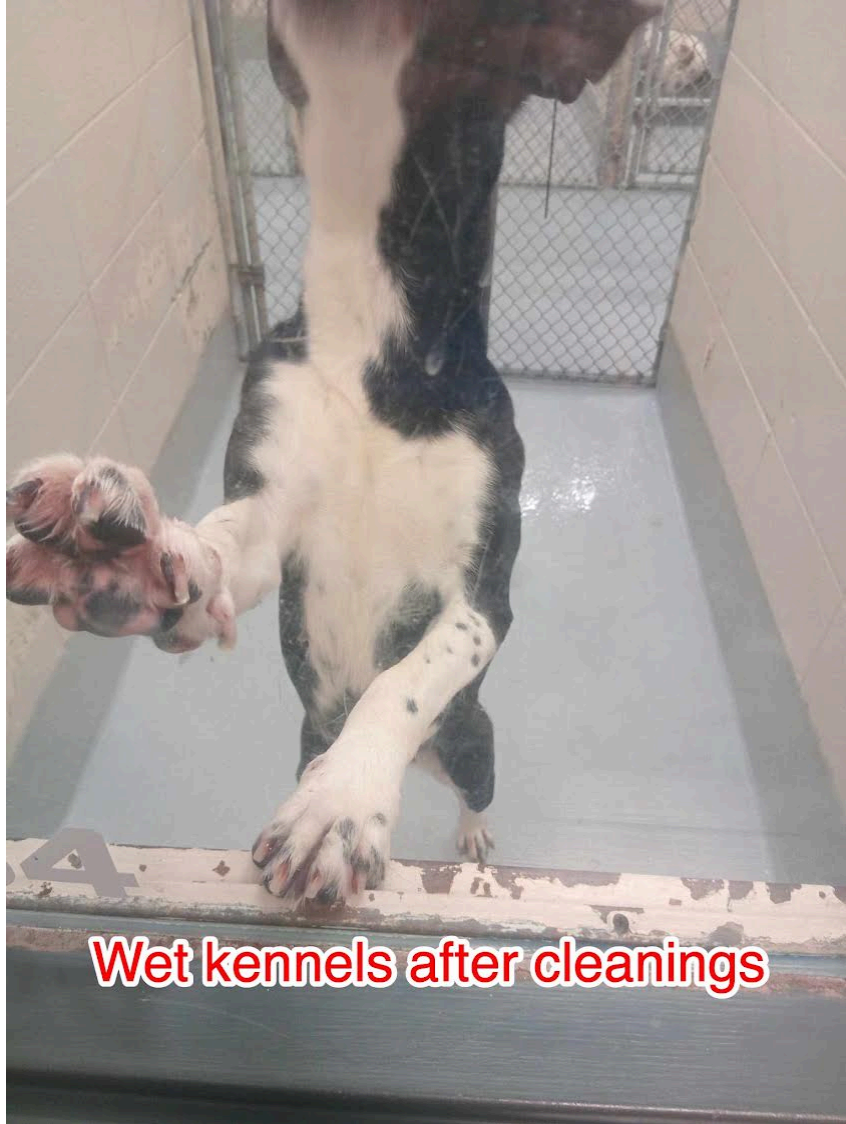




Wet kennels after cleanings



Wet kennels after cleanings



On Tue, Mar 17, 2026 at 3:46 PM Gwinnett Animal Advocacy Alliance <gwinnettanimalshelteradvocates@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Ms. Jorstad and Mr. Stephens,

Over the past week, our group received a significant number of messages from concerned residents and advocates following the euthanasia of a dog named Stella. Given the level of concern, we intentionally waited to review the open records in full before speaking publicly so we could ensure an accurate understanding of the events.

After receiving the records, I compiled a detailed timeline of events, including documentation, notes, and questions. I have attached this timeline, along with the rabies SOP, for your review.

Based on the information provided, it appears that a series of process breakdowns occurred that resulted in Stella being euthanized without all relevant information being fully considered.

For example:

- There appears to be no documentation of the owner's calls on Saturday morning, despite reports that she contacted the shelter and was actively working to obtain medical records
- Stella was initially identified by the attending veterinarian as a rescue candidate; however, that determination was later reversed following internal discussions with Dr. Odum and shelter leadership.
- The decision to proceed with euthanasia was made without completing the required stray hold period or allowing reasonable time to confirm ownership and obtain medical records, despite the owner having contacted the shelter
- Rabies protocol was cited; however, the required 10-day quarantine/observation period was not followed, despite no documented bite and neurological symptoms already noted at intake

- Stella (ID 115727) does not appear on intake or in-care reports and is only documented on the euthanasia report, raising concerns regarding intake processing, recordkeeping, and case tracking

Individually, each of these issues is concerning. Collectively, they point to systemic gaps in communication, documentation, and protocol adherence that contributed to this outcome.

This situation has raised broader concerns within the community regarding consistency in procedures, medical decision-making, and overall transparency.

In response, our group has created a petition requesting that the County establish a new independent Animal Welfare Task Force, similar to the one convened in 2012. That task force evaluated shelter operations and provided recommendations; however, many community members believe those recommendations were not fully implemented or sustained.

The purpose of a new task force would be to:

- Review current shelter policies and procedures
- Evaluate medical and euthanasia decision-making processes
- Assess transparency and documentation practices
- Review managed intake policies and their impact on access and outcomes
- Strengthen relationships with volunteers and rescue partners
- Ensure alignment with recognized best practices in animal welfare

In addition, we are requesting that the County incorporate camera systems in areas where animals are housed, as well as in the euthanasia room, as part of the current construction project. At present, there are no cameras in these areas, which raises concerns regarding transparency and accountability. Implementing this measure would provide oversight, improve trust, and protect both animals and staff.

Finally, we respectfully request that the County consider reimbursing the owner for the cremation expenses incurred. Given the circumstances surrounding this case and the concerns identified in the records, we believe this would be an appropriate and compassionate step. The receipt is attached for your reference.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these concerns further and understand what steps the County plans to take in response.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Gwinnett Animal Advocacy Alliance



Sweet Stella

Please note any tips accepted go towards helping pet parents and families that cannot afford our services.

Customer		Invoice Details	Payment	
		PDF created March 10, 2026	Due March 9, 2026	
		\$239.00	\$239.00	
Items	Quantity	Price	Amount	
Individual Cremation	1	\$239.00	\$239.00	
Subtotal			\$239.00	
Total Paid			\$239.00	
			\$239.00	

