



April 26, 2016

Hello Everyone,

I have something extremely difficult to share with you. As volunteers, I know you all care deeply about our organization and the work we do, so I want you to hear this directly from me. Please understand I know of no correct etiquette for what I'm going to say.

I've worked in animal welfare for more than 30 years. I've held hands and cried with my clients as they've said goodbye and euthanized their cherished family members. I've walked through puppy mills and witnessed the pain of cruelty up close, helped heal animals who are suffering and learned, first hand, the pain of losing an animal that no one could save. But nothing prepared me for the news we all recently learned: a 3-day-old infant died after a tragic incident involving a dog adopted from our shelter. None of us could learn this and not feel pain, defeat and abject sadness that such a thing happened.

By now, I'm sure you've heard about the tragedy that befell the young couple in Mira Mesa whose newborn died as a result of an incident with their family dog, Polo. A dog they adopted from us six months ago. The first question we asked was whether we had seen any signs of aggression in this dog before adopting him out. That answer is no. His records tell of a happy, social dog who enjoyed going on walks and playing with other dogs. He was adopted quickly and greatly loved by his new family.

We do everything humanly possible to ensure that every animal we take in is cared for, evaluated and loved before they go home with their new family. And that was the case with Polo, who passed every interaction without concern. We know we can't absolutely guarantee any dog will be safe in every circumstance, much as we try. What happened was tragic and I can't even begin to fathom the pain this family is suffering.

This horrible accident was one that all of us in animal sheltering dread and not a single one of us could have foreseen. There was not a fragment of aggression seen in this dog before tragedy struck. But tragedy did strike and there was nothing any of us could have done to prevent it. Our hearts go out to this family.

I'm grateful everyday for each of you and all that you do to help us help animals and people in our community. At times this work is extremely challenging and this is one of those times. But always remember your commitment to inspire compassion makes a positive impact every day on thousands of lives – both animal and human. Thank you for all that you do to make that commitment possible for us.

My door is always open to you in case you have questions about this situation or anything related to San Diego Humane Society. Please stop by or email me at Gary@sdhumane.org

Sadly,

Gary Weitzman, DVM, MPH, CAWA
President and CEO