

Police chief takes over city's animal control

Investigation into incident at shelter over weekend turned over to deputy prosecutor

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An incident over the weekend at the Forrest City Humane Shelter has resulted in a shakeup of the city's animal control department.

There are now two animal control employees rather than three, and they report directly to the police chief. The person who served as head of animal control has been transferred to a position in another city

department.

On Sunday, an animal control employee let dogs out and left the shelter. The dogs were discovered still outside at almost 10 p.m. A fight broke out among the dogs. One dog later died from injuries it suffered.

"As a result of the investigation into the latest incident at the animal shelter, Police Chief Dwight Duch has assumed control of the Forrest City Animal Control Division as of June 4, 2010," Mayor Gordon

McCoy said in a press release. "I am currently evaluating the department, as I have been for some time, and the facility. I believe that there is a solution to the situation, and I am going to work with the Forrest City Area Humane Society to get this situation resolved and ensure that it doesn't happen again."

Contacted this morning, McCoy said, "I'm making changes. We're not going to drag our feet. We made some mistakes, and the mistakes have

to fall on the shoulders of the people responsible."

He continued, "With that being said, I no longer have an animal control director. The two other employees will report to the chief."

He said former animal control director Roy Hamilton has been transferred to the Public Works Department.

Also contacted this morning, Duch confirmed that the dog catchers would be reporting to him.

"There will be no change in the day-to-day operation of animal control," Duch said. "We're going to work to make it all as smooth as possible. The daily operations will be in place."

As for the investigation, Duch said information gathered by the police has been turned over to Deputy Prosecutor Chris Morledge.

"I'm waiting for a formal letter from him with a decision," said Duch. "We do the investigation, **See ANIMALS on Page 2**

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turn it over to the prosecutor and he makes the decision on the way it goes."

In the press release, McCoy also held out an olive branch to the FCAHS.

"This is not an issue with the Forrest city Area Humane Society...It is our responsibility," he said in the release. Later in the release he

said, "This is the first step in the direction that we need to move in. Hopefully, with the cooperation of the FCAHS, the next steps will be coming quickly."

The city administration and the local Humane Society have sometimes been at odds over the care of animals at the shelter. There is also a lawsuit over ownership of the shelter.