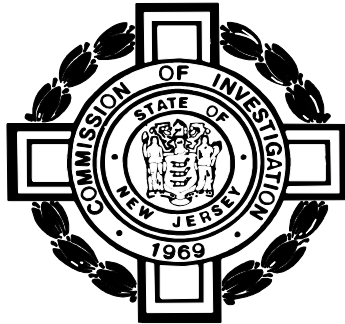


*State of New Jersey
Commission of Investigation*



**ADDENDUM TO REPORT
ON
ASSOCIATED HUMANE SOCIETIES**

April 2003

IRREGULARITIES IN THE CREMATION OF THE PUBLIC'S PETS

The Commission issues this addendum to document further evidence of AHS's dereliction in fulfilling its representations to the public and its mission to promote the welfare of animals. AHS has failed to maintain strict standards in providing cremation services to the public by failing to return the correct remains at all times.

Cremation of pets is one of the services that AHS has offered to the public. Both the Newark and Lacey facilities have crematories. Pets brought to the Tinton Falls shelter for cremation are delivered by AHS employees to the Lacey facility and the remains are then returned to Tinton Falls for pickup. Former employees at the Lacey facility alleged that, on occasion, pet owners did not receive the ashes of their own pets, but rather the remains of cremated shelter animals or other people's pets. They provided several reasons for this result. First, because cremations were not performed frequently, some of the residue from the cremations of shelter animals was retained in order to provide ashes to pet owners. At other times, when a pet owner brought an animal to the facility for euthanasia and cremation, the animal was euthanized, but not cremated, and the owner was provided the residue from the cremations of other animals. In addition, there were occasions when pets and shelter animals were cremated together for purposes of expedience. If a member of the public paid AHS to cremate his or her pet, but the ashes of shelter animals or other pets were mixed with or substituted for the ashes of the person's pet, a violation of *N.J.S.A. 2C:20-4a*, theft by deception, may have occurred.

Based upon the allegations, the Commission conducted an undercover operation whereby staff members, representing themselves as members of the public, delivered to the Lacey and Tinton Falls facilities the bodies of animals for cremation. Three animals were taken to the Lacey facility between November 2001 and January 2002 and three animals were delivered to the Tinton Falls shelter during a two-day period in July 2002. A cooperating veterinarian provided the euthanized animals and inserted in all but one of them tiny metal objects, which could later be searched for in the cremated ashes that were returned. He closed the incisions with glue, not staples. Following each cremation, the remains were delivered to the New Jersey State Police Forensic Laboratory for examination to determine whether the inserted objects were present.

Each of the three animals taken by Commission staff to the Lacey facility contained 10 metal rods. The State Police analyses determined that rods were present in the remains of two of the animals. However, the ashes of the third animal contained none of the objects placed in it, but only numerous staples. Of the animals delivered to the Tinton Falls shelter, the first had 10 metal rods, the second had 10 metal balls and the third contained no objects. The two animals with metal objects were taken to the shelter one day apart. The State Police analysis of the remains of the first animal identified no metal rods, but did find staples. Analysis of the remains of the second animal revealed that they contained one metal rod and two metal balls, indicating that the ashes were commingled with the remains of the first animal and possibly others. The analysis of the ashes of the third animal established that they contained no objects. However, it cannot be known with any certitude whether these remains were in fact the correct ones or simply the ashes of other animals.

Clearly, the Commission's undercover operation established that, in at least three of the six instances, the integrity of the cremation process was corrupted. If AHS has accepted money from the public to cremate their pets, but has not returned the ashes of an individual's pet to that owner, then it has accepted money under false pretenses and has committed a serious breach of trust in robbing pet owners of the remains of their beloved animals. It is imperative that AHS institute measures to ensure that the cremation process is not compromised and that the full and complete remains of an individual's pet are returned.