

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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New calves on the Sperry Ranch in Moraga enter a chute before branding.

Photo Andy Scheck

Springtime on the Suburban Ranch

By Diane Claytor

On a warm Saturday morning, while many Lamorindans were out enjoying the sunshine, four recently-born calves on the Sperry Ranch were perhaps not as happy. They were being branded, which is done for both identification and as a theft deterrent. According to Susan Sperry, who has lived on the Moraga ranch for more than 60 years, branding doesn't really hurt the animals. "It's like placing your hand on a hot stove," she explained. "It only hurts for a minute or two."

In 1944, Sperry's father, Gordon Frazell, bought the 80-acre ranch located on the eastern border

of Moraga. A house painter by trade, Sperry's father spent weekends building his family house on the property – the house now occupied by Susan Sperry's younger daughter.

Sperry and her late husband built a house just up the hill from her father's (where she currently lives) and her older daughter recently built one up the hill from that. Sperry's sister also built a house on the property. Other than her years away at college, Sperry has lived most of her life on the ranch.

...continued on page A8

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

News	A2 - A12
Life in Lamorinda	B1 - B12
Food	B7
Not to be Missed	B8-B9
HOW TO CONTACT US	B9
Shop Orinda	B10
Sports	C1 - C4
Service Directory	C1
Classified	C2
Our Homes	D1 - D16

This Week Read About:

Moraga Road Housing Discussed	A4
Wight House Litigation Looms	A3
Regulating Wineries	A4
Moraga Party House Ordinance	A5
Orinda Farmers' Market Opens	A6
Warhol Exhibit at SMC	B3
International Film Showcase	B4
Baseball Preview	C1

Summer Camps B5-B8



Half-day camps listing – page B5-B8.

Fire Districts A8

Assessing your home's defensible space – page A8.

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County Animal Services in Transition

With a change in leadership at hand, many spoke about the future of the department

By Nick Marnell



Deputy director Rick Golphin comforts Chewy, impounded due to abuse and neglect. Photo Andy Scheck

One by one the women walked to the dais. Each woman, an animal rights advocate or a volunteer at the Martinez animal shelter, lashed out at the Board of Supervisors over the perform-

ance and the direction of the Contra Costa County Animal Services Department. They demanded that the county hire a proactive director, and that the director employ No Kill methods and

put greater efforts into marketing and public education.

"The next time you walk through our shelter, look into the animals' eyes," volunteer Debbie Rodriguez told the supervisors at that December meeting. "They're counting on us humans to use our brains and creativity to get them out alive."

"Things sometimes don't move quickly enough for them," said Cindy Smith, volunteer program manager, though she acknowledged some of the volunteers' complaints, including the lack of marketing, the difficulty navigating the department website and the need for more public service announcements.

"We've come a long way since 2005, when we moved into this new building," said Smith. "We do have a Facebook presence, Instagram is coming, and we'll be getting a new adoption truck." She stressed the need to do a better job of telling people about adoption. "Because as long as people bring us animals, and pass up animals for adoption, our euthanasia rate will be difficult to drop."

... continued on page A12

Life in Lamorinda B1-B12

Vinyl LP record resurgence – page B2.



Sports C1-C3

DFAL Honors Winter Sport Athletes – page C2.



Our Homes D1-D16

Design tips to spruce up for spring – page D8.

