

May 25, 2005



The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
Room 383, Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

**Marcia Mayeda**  
Director

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Administrative Office  
5898 Cherry Ave.  
Long Beach, CA 90805  
(562) 728-4882  
Fax (562) 422-3408  
<http://animalcontrol.co.la.ca.us>



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**Shelter locations**

11258 S. Garfield Ave.  
Downey, CA 90242  
(562) 940-6898

216 W. Victoria St.  
Gardena, CA 90248  
(310) 523-9566

4275 No. Elton  
Baldwin Park, CA 91706  
(626) 962-3577

5210 W. Avenue I  
Lancaster, CA 93536  
(661) 940-4191

31044 N. Charlie Cyn. Rd.  
Castaic, CA 91384  
(661) 257-3191

29525 Agoura Rd.  
Agoura, CA 91301  
(818) 991-0071

Dear Supervisors:

I am writing to inform you of a critical staffing shortage in my agency that threatens the County's compliance with California law and disrupts animal healthcare services provided to pet owners in Los Angeles County.

Over the last six months, my department has lost two staff veterinarians to other employment or retirement and, at the end of this month, will lose another veterinarian. Three of the six shelter-based veterinary medical positions allocated to my agency are now vacant or will be vacant in less than a week.

This vacancy rate of 50% not only dramatically increases the workload on the remaining veterinarians, but also jeopardizes our agency's compliance with California law governing pet population control efforts and the level of care required for animals housed in public animal shelters.

Specifically, Food and Agriculture Section 30502 mandates that all dogs and cats adopted from public animal shelters in California be spayed and neutered before leaving the shelter in order to help control pet overpopulation problems in the state. And California Civil Code Section 1846 sets standards for health care provided to animals housed at public shelters.

In order to minimize the legal risk of non-compliance with those laws, our remaining staff is concentrating on spay and neuter surgeries. But, because we have one of the most successful placement rates for adoptable animals in Southern California, our vets cannot keep pace with the demand for their services, and this is now impacting on our placements. The public has to wait longer than usual to take new pets home and that creates customer dissatisfaction and overcrowded shelter conditions.

It also means that healthcare clinics that normally provide low-cost health maintenance shots for residents of your districts have been drastically cut back so our veterinarians can focus on performing sterilization surgeries.

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

Honorable Board of Supervisors  
Veterinary Medical Staff Shortage  
May 25, 2005  
Page Two

The problem we – and the Department of Health Services, which also uses veterinarians as part of its public healthcare mission – have is that the Los Angeles County salary rates for veterinarians are not only well below private sector standards but are even near the bottom for city and county agencies in Southern California.

Last November, we conducted a salary survey and discovered that the salary range for veterinarians employed by Los Angeles County -- \$56,992.32 to \$70,803.24 – is among the lowest for any urban county in California. Only San Bernardino County, which remains predominantly rural, pays its staff veterinarians less than we do.

Ventura County pays its veterinarians between \$54,161.90 and \$79,127.88 a year. Orange County pays between \$59,384 and \$75,712. Even Riverside County pays its veterinarians between \$72,676.16 and \$100,019.52 a year.

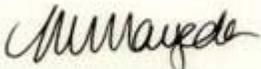
The Los Angeles City Department of Animal Services, our main local competition for doctors interested in performing shelter veterinary medical work, pays its staff veterinarians between \$64,101.60 and \$79,636.32 per year.

I want to assure the Board that our agency has not been standing idly by while the situation has grown steadily worse. We have been attempting to hire qualified veterinarians since late last year. And, in virtually every case, prospective candidates lose interest as soon as they learn what our salary range is. Any veterinarian, even one just out of medical school, can earn well over \$70,000, our top step, working in the private sector.

Our agency, in conjunction with the Department of Health Services, is asking the Chief Administrative Office to declare a manpower shortage in this critical area and address this compensation issue to make our salary levels competitive and attractive.

Unless and until that happens, the current situation of an overworked veterinary medical staff and reduced animal healthcare services keeps the County at risk and erodes the reputation your Board is working hard to establish that Los Angeles County agencies can be counted on to provide a level of service excellence that makes this county a model for others to emulate. We will continue to work aggressively towards a resolution and will keep your Board advised.

Sincerely,



Marcia Mayeda  
Director

c: David Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer  
Viola Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer