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**October 27, 2015**

**Supplemental Response to Report by “All About the Animals”**

On September 3, 2015 a report was provided to the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors by a local animal welfare group, “All About the Animals.” (AATA). The Department responded to this report on October 3, 2015 (Appendix A). The Department’s October 3, 2015 response addressed allegations regarding Conditions at the Shelter and Standards of Animal Care; Retaliation Against and Obstruction to Rescue Groups; Euthanasia Rates; Euthanasia of Animals Within the Holding Period; Animal Health; Customer Service and Staff Apathy; and Processes and Procedures. Further, this response addressed six “case studies” presented by AATA.

Subsequently, AATA submitted a spreadsheet of allegations on October 5, 2015. As many of these are general in nature, DACC addresses these allegations below. Responses to specific allegations are provided on the attached table (Appendix B).

**Cleaning and Sanitation of Animal Housing Areas**

(Responds to allegations 9, 13, 14, 17, 22, 23, 24, 27, 31, 33, 39, 44, and 51)

DACC cleans all animal housing areas each day. All areas are cleaned using accelerated hydrogen peroxide (AHP). AHP is a synergistic blend of commonly used, safe ingredients that when combined with low levels of hydrogen peroxide produce exceptional potency as germicide and performance as a cleaner. AHP is EPA approved for killing the most difficult pathogens including both enveloped and non-enveloped viruses as well as bacteria (including mycobacteria such as Tuberculosis). Accel concentrate is not only approved to kill Parvo but also to kill the Polio Sabin 1 virus, which is considered in science as being the most difficult virus to kill on earth. It is a green certified, extremely safe product that can be used around animals without harm. It has become the disinfectant of choice for animal care centers and veterinary hospitals around the country.

Dogs are housed in indoor/outdoor kennel runs that have a dividing door between the two sections. It is DACC policy that the dogs be secured on the opposite side of the run that is being cleaned so that they are not exposed to the water or HPA. If this is ever not the case, it is hoped that the person witnessing this would report it immediately to a supervisor so the misconduct can be addressed.

Cats are placed in temporary holding dens while their cages are cleaned. All cage surfaces are cleaned; food and water bowls are removed for cleaning and replaced with

new bowls; and bedding is removed for laundering. Disposable litter pans are discarded and replaced with new ones.

The main cleaning activities occur in the morning before the care centers are open to the public. This is to ensure the walkways are dry for visitors and that the animal housing areas are neat and accessible for potential adopters to view animals.

Throughout the day, animals urinate and defecate and spill their water or food. Cats often like to burrow under the newspapers that line their cages, thereby spilling their food, water, and litter. Staff and volunteers regularly spot check and tidy the areas that have been dirtied, but there will be times when a visitor sees disarray or animal waste in a holding area before it is cleaned. Maintaining animal housing areas is an ongoing, regular part of animal care center operations.

### **Feeding and Watering**

(Responds to allegations 12, 13, 14, 26, 27, 31, and 33)

Animals are fed nutritious and wholesome food suitable for their species, age, and medical conditions. DACC feeds Canidae products, a high-quality pet food. Both dry kibble and canned food are provided pursuant to the animals' needs. Additional nutritional supplements such as Nutrical are used as needed. Most dogs are fed in the evenings after the care centers are closed so they may eat without disruption. Thin dogs, young puppies, or dogs with other needs are prescribed additional feedings throughout the day as necessary. Cats are fed in the morning and have their food available throughout the day. All animals receive fresh water and the water is constantly monitored and refilled as needed.

The dog kennel watering systems require manual operation and many water bowls can be filled at the same time. Some bowls may be fuller than others, causing water to overflow the dishes in those runs. DACC will be installing automatic dog waterers in new kennels at the Downey Animal Care Center this year in a pilot project to evaluate the suitability and sustainability of their use.

### **Euthanasia of Animals Wanted by Rescue Groups**

(Responds to allegations 11, 12, 20, 21, 28, 40, 42, and 43)

Several allegations were made regarding the euthanasia of animals for which a rescue group had made a Commitment to Adopt (CTA) or placed a networking hold. CTAs mean that the rescue group has committed to adopt the animal by a specified date. Networking holds mean the rescue is trying to find a home for the animal and has asked DACC to delay euthanasia while they try to secure placement.

Sometimes rescues do not honor their CTAs or are unable to find a placement for animals under networking holds and the time for the hold has expired. In these cases, DACC may have to euthanize the animal for medical, behavioral, or space reasons. The rescues have been given their opportunity to adopt the animals but did not do so. Examples of this are in responses to allegations 20, 21, and 28.

### **Animal Handling**

(Responds to allegations 25, 35, and 45)

DACC staff are given classroom and hands-on training regarding safe and humane animal handling. Staff members are observed by subject matter experts regarding animal handling and must demonstrate satisfactory skills to perform their assigned duties. DACC also has surveillance cameras in several animal care centers and is adding more, further strengthening its ability to monitor staff animal handling practices. Visitors are encouraged to speak to the supervisor on duty should they have concern about animal handling practices they have witnessed. Staff is trained to be compassionate towards the animals in their care and are held accountable to this expectation. DACC does not condone harsh handling of animals and will take any corrective action, including discharge from County service, if such behavior occurs.

### **Dog Behavior Evaluations**

(Responds to allegations 22 and 47)

DACC's mission of finding homes for as many animals as possible must be balanced with its responsibility for protecting the public from dangerous or aggressive animals. For this reason, DACC carefully monitors the behavior and temperaments of dogs in its care to ensure an aggressive animal is not placed where it can cause harm to people or other animals.

DACC uses a standardized temperament assessment protocol to evaluate a dog's temperament. These assessments are not meant to provide a comprehensive, definite and never-changing portrayal of a dog's complete temperament. Rather, this assessment is designed to provide a general evaluation of the temperament the animal is displaying while in the care center. It is a snapshot in time. DACC realizes that some animals that express fearful or dominant behavior in the care center may behave more calmly in a home environment. Conversely, an animal can display suitable behavior while in the care center but display aggression at a later time after it has settled into a new home.

Nevertheless, DACC can only consider the behavior that is exhibited in the care center – not what "might" happen after placement. As a result, dogs receive different letter grades based on the results of their behavior as observed using the standardized behavior assessment form. These grades are used to place the dog with the most suitable type of home. In cases where the dog demonstrates it needs further behavior modification prior to adoption, it will be categorized as "rescue only" and only made available to an approved Adoption Partner.

## **Conclusion**

DACC appreciates the opportunity to respond to these allegations. It is hoped the information provided in this response provides greater understanding of its practices and commitment to protecting the people and animals in Los Angeles County.

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## **Enclosures**

c: Animal Care Board Deputies  
Chief Executive Office  
Executive Office



## Department of Animal Care and Control

### Responses to Allegations made by “All About the Animals”



	Date	Complainant Name	Animal ID	Care Center	Allegation	Department Response
1	Apr 2014	Anonymity Requested	Not provided	Agoura	We pulled a poodle in April of last year. She went into the spay clinic before we picked her up. She was spayed that day. Upon picking her up we noticed that she was holding her leg up. We took her to our vet, and her leg had been broken.	DACC has searched its surgery records for the Agoura Animal Care Center during the month of April, 2014. There were no poodle dogs spayed or neutered in the Agoura Animal Care Center clinic during the month of April, 2014. It is possible this dog is a poodle mix, and DACC has it listed as a different breed. Without an animal identification number we are unable to research this allegation.
2	July 2013	Dianne Prado	Not provided	Agoura	Amazing dog, passed temperament test, rescue expressed intent to rescue. Dog was killed on a Saturday morning- reason given: space.	DACC has searched its records for dogs that were euthanized at the Agoura Animal Care Center for the month of July, 2013. Only five dogs were euthanized that month. None of these dogs were euthanized for space (in fact, the Agoura animal care center never euthanizes for space), and none were euthanized on a Saturday.  A4601477: Euthanized on Wednesday, 7/17/13 due to a severe heart murmur. Was available for adoption for 14 days. A4598663: Euthanized on Monday, 7/22/13 for behavior – aggression. Bit volunteer. Contacted rescue group and they didn’t want the dog. A4576768: Euthanized on Tuesday, 7/23/13 for severe aggression to other animals. A4603917: Euthanized on Thursday, 7/25/13 for severe aggression to other animals. A4604924: Euthanized on Thursday, 7/25/13 for severe aggression to other animals.
3	2013	Joanna Kaestle	Not provided	Lancaster	I assisted in rescuing a shepherd puppy mix in 2013 from Lancaster animal shelter. He was scared so we carried him from the kennel to our car. When we got him home and set him down on the ground, we immediately noticed that his back legs didn't work properly! They flopped around from side to side when he was walking or trying to run. We took him to a specialist who determined he likely had some sort of spine damage and the signals weren't making it to his legs. In any case, we were given some physical therapy to do with him which seemed to help, and he was eventually adopted by a great family that was willing to work with him on his disability. My complaint is the fact that there was not ONE medical note on this dog, and he was neutered at the shelter! It’s completely unacceptable that a 5 month old puppy who can barely walk in his hind end goes through intake and a neuter with a veterinarian, and there is not one medical note on his disability! The dog in question was rescued through Karma Dog Rescue and I was his foster & financial sponsor. I adopted him privately from the shelter in my name.	There are no records of adoption in 2013. Records show a dog (animal ID # A4727815) that was adopted in July, 2014, to Nathan Kaestle. The Department’s Medical Chief of Staff will follow up with Mr. Kaestle to determine if this is the same dog and to research the dog’s subsequent medical diagnosis.
4	July 2014	Eva Munoz	4729210	Baldwin Park	On or about July 1 2014 a stray dog was seized by the BP animal Control Staff the dog was chased on the street of Azusa for a long time maybe an hour the dog was eventually caught by the 2 officers and was dragged back to the truck During this dragging the suffered injuries to all four	The Department had received multiple calls about this dog, which was a stray dog living near the river bed. It was extremely fearful of humans and difficult to capture. On 10/22/13 we received a call reporting the dog was injured and having difficulty walking.

					<p>paws bleeding and missing skin She could not walk The dog was seized and taken to the BP shelter when she was kept in the hospital for 3 days I wanted to adopt this dog rescue this dog I was told by staff that this dog was aggressive per AC officers which caught her She was not however it is my belief that the AC officers were pissed off at the dog for having had to work so hard to catch her then injured her accidental or not and used the excuse of aggressive to kill her or hide the evidence of what they had done to her I went into the shelter and spoke to the supervisor then and told him i would be adopting her he told he me first she'd had to stay there until her paws healed and then she was mostly likely put on the rescue only because of her aggression I denied she was in any way aggressive and should be assessed once she healed I visited her every day and she was a terrified dog that had been on the streets too long at least a year but didn't have an aggressive bone in her body She was scared of people I lined up a rescue to help me rescue her and finally on or about July 7 2014 i asked to talk to Pat Claerhout and asked she release the dog to a partner rescue She agreed and allowed the dog to be released on 7/8/1.</p>	<p>The officer was unable to locate the dog when she arrived. On 2/14/14 we received another call to capture it, and that it was limping, but it was also gone upon the officer's arrival. On 6/14/14 we received another call that it was injured but were unable to capture it. On 7/2/14 we were able to capture the dog. It was taken to the Baldwin Park ACC to be given immediate treatment. It was bleeding from its paw, and was given a sedative, wound treatment, and antibiotics. It was placed with an Adoption Partner after its stray holding time had expired.</p> <p>This dog was extremely difficult to capture, and made many attempts to evade capture by the officers. Sometimes, dogs that run this much will injure their paws in the process due to ongoing rough contact with cement. This dog was provided the necessary medical treatment and released to an animal rescue organization.</p>
5	Jan 2014	Betsy Bueno		Baldwin Park	<p>I attempted to rescue 3 horses. At first I was refused since I live in Santa Rosa. Then One of the horses was mishandled, injury was caused which led to him having to be put down and costing the County at least \$5,000 to \$10,000 at the hospital due to my complaint and threats.</p>	<p>This horse was not mishandled. He was surrendered by his owners for chronic, severe lameness issues resulting from severe navicular syndrome and degenerative joint disease. He was examined by two equine veterinarians and had diagnostics and treatment at an equine hospital. His condition could not be repaired, he was in unremitting pain, and was euthanized at the recommendation of the veterinarians. The cost of his hospitalization was \$2,639.</p>
6	TBD	Josh Liddy	Not provided	Carson	<p>Throughout the last few years I've witnessed and been in contact with owners of dogs who have been impounded into Carson under dubious claims, only to be held for numerous months in quarantine without due process for their owners. Each day they are held they are compiling impound fees which are then demanded upon the dog's release. The court is avoided, the rule of law avoided. It is quite literally a racketeering operation. Many dogs have been left and were eventually euthanized under this exact scenario..</p>	<p>The Department disputes this allegation. The Department has a comprehensive potentially dangerous/vicious dog investigation and resolution program that provides due process for dog owners while protecting public safety by keeping dangerous dogs confined pending the outcome of the owner's hearing. Hearings may be conducted by an administrative hearing officer or judicial officer, and the rule of law is consistently applied. The Department takes its responsibility of protecting public safety very seriously, and takes the steps necessary to ensure the public and its pets are protected from dangerous dogs.</p>
7	Sept 2014	Krista Place	A4779267	Carson	<p>Rescuer Krista Place discovered Baca, a two-year-old Australian Shepherd, who was extremely sick at Carson Animal Care Center. She found Baca panting heavily and throwing herself against the kennel walls. Despite Krista reporting that Baca needed urgent medical attention to two separate Animal Control Officers within the space of one hour and a half, Baca died without being seen by the vet. "Hearing the news of Baca's death broke me. He didn't have to die," said Place, who found out from Lisa Eldridge, Animal Care Center Manager for Carson.</p>	<p>Baca entered the Carson ACC on Friday, 9/18/2015. This neutered male dog was fearful and medical staff were unable to perform a complete examination. He was observed to be bright, alert and responsive but also had a distended abdomen and placed on the list for a veterinary examination on Monday, 9/21/15. On Saturday, the veterinary team monitored Baca and noted him to be lying in his cage and stable. On Sunday, 9/20/15 he was found deceased in his kennel. A necropsy was performed, and it determined that Baca died from abdominal ascites (when fluid fills the space between the lining of the abdomen and the organs) with fluid in the pericardium, possibly due to cardiomegaly (enlarged heart) and right sided heart failure due to possible cardiomyopathy (abnormal heart muscle).</p> <p>The Department has reviewed its security camera footage for the time frame the complainant said she contacted animal control officers. There were no officers on the</p>

						<p>footage viewed for that time period, so the Department is unable to determine who the complainant may have spoken to. The Department has contacted the complainant and requested to have the officers (whether Department officers, or officers from contract cities that house animals at our care center) identified. However, the complainant has not responded to our requests for more information.</p> <p>The Department deeply regrets this incident and hopes it will be provided with the information requested so a thorough investigation can be conducted.</p>
8	Aug 2015	Jen Scrivner	4857041	Carson	<p>I adopted for a rescue a dog from the Carson Shelter. The dog was a pit bull that scored an A on temp test so had been there longer than most. Horrible URI when picked up, never treated with proper course of antibiotic. Dog subsequently ended up with moderate pneumonia. Have Photos and all medical papers.</p>	<p>This dog was surrendered by his owner to the Carson animal care center on 7/18/15. He was vaccinated and treated for fleas. On 7/29/15 he developed upper respiratory infection and was placed on a course of antibiotics (minocycline) and placed on observation for response to treatment and appetite. On 8/10/15 he had responded well to the antibiotics and was healthy. However, on 8/12/15 he became ill again with another upper respiratory infection and was placed on two more antibiotics (doxycycline and ciprofloxacin). This medication was continued until he was adopted on 8/20/15. The adopter was advised of his medical condition at the time of adoption.</p> <p>Because DACC accepts all animals regardless of their medical condition, some new arrivals may be ill or incubating communicable diseases that can spread to other animals in the care center. Although DACC routinely vaccinates each incoming dog and cat with preventative vaccines, no vaccinations provide immediate and complete immunity against infectious disease. Additionally, animals with poor care prior to their arrival may not have fully functioning immune systems and may be more susceptible to illness.</p>
9	Sept 2014	Anonymity Requested	Not applicable	Carson	<p>I was at the Carson Shelter to adopt a severely neglected dog in order to foster and rehabilitate (using my own money). I came to pick up the dog a few hours before closing. While waiting for the dog to be brought up I see a worker clean the kennels by spraying the floors with a water hose. It was freezing that night and I doubt that water would have evaporated quickly. The dog's feet and belly's got all wet and they were just left that way. I'm sure they were cold and wet most of the night! I said nothing because I know of the retaliation that goes on if you say anything against them.</p>	<p>Please see the Department's October 28, 2015 response.</p>
10	Nov 2011	Anonymity Requested	Not provided	Carson	<p>14 years old poodle was dying when i went to save her. Shelter was confuse they have no idea how to find her. They did not recognize her because she look 10 pound thiner. She was laying on the floor like a rag. Dirty fool of pee maggots was coming from her vagina. Horrible conditions. I took her immediately to the vet. She was humanly euthanize. Vet find the maggots and Tammy was in beyond horrible condition. Also that was another little blind Pomeranian with dirty water to drink. Water was fool of pee and poop. I complain and find pout after I left they did euthanize little guy at a private clinic. Never ends. Shelter did not give her wet food to eat, she has no teeth, she was starving to death. Nobody at a shelter know she was there. She was dying and shelter did not see that. They do not pay attention.</p>	<p>A response to this allegation was provided in the Department's October 3, 2015 response to the report by "All About the Animals".</p>

11	TBD	Allison Claire Genis	Not provided	Downey	Killing cats after we placed a CTA (computer problems).	Please see the Department's October 28, 2015 response.
12	Sept 2012 Aug 2015	Jonquil Ben	Not applicable	Downey	There are many issues at Downey shelter. Animals are routinely euthanized prior to the duration on the holding period. Animals have been euthanized after being CTA'd by a rescue. We often see animals without proper food/water. The multiple rescues I work with have detailed documentation of multiple incidents that can be provided.	Please see the Department's October 28, 2015 response.
13	Aug 2015	Kathy Darnell Warner	Not provided	Downey	I visited the Downey shelter Direct on Sunday afternoon the conditions in building three cat cages were disgusting filthy cages cancer no food water litter in their food litter were throughout the cages	Please see the Department's October 28, 2015 response.
14	Aug 2015	Hali Burton	A4868306	Downey	She was spayed Monday, 8/24/15, after spending the weekend in her own filth with no food and water for who knows how long. I have photos of filthy cage, and empty food and water bowls.	Please see the Department's October 28, 2015 response.
15	Aug 2015	Kellie Haarman  Gwenn Vallone	A4862083	Downey	Was described as a 7 year old male pug that was put in the medical building. Pug's medical notes state dental calculi, eye and nasal discharge, extreme tic infestation and dehydration, weight was 24lbs. Pugs intake date was 8/1/2015. Pugs stray hold was up on 8/5/2015. Pug Nation called the Downey shelter first thing Monday, August 3, 2015 and asked for early release on medical waiver. Downey shelter refused told Pug Nation he's just a little dehydrated, he will be okay until his stray hold is up. Pug died sometime between Monday, August 3rd and Wednesday, August 5th. It is my belief that if the Downey Shelter had released this pug on Monday the 3rd he would be alive today. It is my belief that this pug needed medical care that the shelter did not provide. If a breed specific rescue is willing to foot the bill for expert medical care why refuse the dog that right, making them suffer a day longer in a shelter where they will eventually perish????.	A response to this allegation was provided in the Department's October 3, 2015 response to the report by "All About the Animals".
16	Aug 2015	Gwenn Vallone	A4862083	Downey	We called and said we would rescue a 7 year old Pug, but had to wait a few more days for the 'hold' to be over. We requested to pull him on medical waiver and were denied; said we needed to wait until hold period done. The day he was to be released we called and a rep said he 'died' in the shelter. If we were allowed to get him, he would have survived. He was only 7 years old. SEE PHOTOGRAPH C	A response to this allegation was provided in the Department's October 3, 2015 response to the report by "All About the Animals".
17	Aug 2015	Laura Ragan	4861768	Downey	Went to pull a kitten and found kitten almost dead in cage. The kitten was in building 3 (adoptable building) kitten was obviously sick (lying in vomit) nobody noticed. Kitten tested positive for FeLV. The other cages were dirty, litter boxes completely flat so the cats did not have a place to go to the bathroom. Every cat we have pulled from this shelter has been very sick. They are not adequately vetting them, feeding them, cleaning their cages; and as a result URIs spread like wildfire.	This kitten came in to the Downey ACC on 7/31/15. The animal had an intake examination and was vaccinated, treated for fleas and dewormed. On 8/5/15 the kitten developed an upper respiratory infection and was placed on antibiotics for ten days. On 8/6/15 the veterinarian directed staff to monitor the kitten for appetite, behavior and worsening condition and contact the veterinarian if this occurs. The veterinarian also directed staff to feed canned food to entice appetite, if necessary. The kitten was adopted on 8/13/15  The complainant states that the kitten tested positive for FeLV (feline leukemia). FeLV is shed in very high quantities in saliva and nasal secretions, but also in urine, feces, and milk from infected cats. Cat-to-cat transfer of virus may occur from a bite wound, during mutual grooming, and (though rarely) through the shared use of litter boxes and feeding dishes. Transmission can also take place from an infected mother cat to her



						<p>kittens, either before they are born or while they are nursing. FeLV doesn't survive long outside a cat's body—probably less than a few hours under normal household conditions. FeLV has an incubation period of eight weeks. It is likely this kitten was infected with the virus prior to being admitted to the animal care center.</p> <p>Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and October 28, 2015.</p>
18	Jul 2015	Richard Galvan	A4857092	Downey	<p>Richard Galvan reported that his dog K-NO, a senior pit bull, escaped his home when the side gate was left open. On July 18, 2015 K-NO entered Downey Animal Care Center. Richard and his wife learnt of K-NO's presence at the shelter via the shelter website, and called the shelter to alert them that the dog belonged to them. Richard's wife went to the shelter on July 25 with the belief that K-NO could be collected in return for an \$84 fee as informed by the shelter over the phone. Richard called the shelter on July 28 to inform them that he would be returning to the shelter with the increased release fee the following day, and begged them not to kill K-NO in the meantime. Despite Downey shelter staff promising Richard that they would keep K-NO alive, he was killed at 7pm on July 28, reportedly a short time after Richard's phone conversation with them.</p>	<p>A response to this allegation was provided in the Department's October 3, 2015 response to the report by "All About the Animals".</p>
19	May 2015	Rochelle Mendia	A4831697	Downey	<p>Cat from Downey. He was inadequately cared for while in the care of Downey and ultimately died. His condition worsened once he ended up in Downey. I can tell you more given more space to type.</p>	<p>This geriatric cat arrived at the Downey ACC on 5/18/15 in very poor condition and was provided with all necessary medical care during his stay. Despite this care his condition continued to decline, most likely due to his already poor state of health. Upon intake the cat was dehydrated, had missing and worn teeth, hazy eyes, and diarrhea. Ms. Mendia expressed interest in adopting the cat, and was advised that he arrived in poor condition and must be examined by a veterinarian. He was treated for fleas (which can cause anemia), given antibiotics and extra food. He was monitored by the medical staff daily. On 5/19/15 he developed an upper respiratory infection. His medical treatment and monitoring continued and he was prescribed additional nutritional supplements. On 5/20/15 his condition deteriorated despite all treatment and he became emaciated. He was tested for feline leukemia and feline infectious viremia and the tests were negative. As he was not responding to treatment, the veterinarian recommended that he be sent home with the adopter ASAP for further care. On 5/20/15 a cat rescue group contacted the ACC veterinarian several times and were made aware of his condition, and requested to adopt the cat. Ms. Mendia was also contacted on 5/21/15 and advised of his poor condition and the need to adopt him immediately. She advised staff that she was not able to adopt him until 5/22/15. The cat rescue adopted him on 5/22/15. The cat was released as a medical foster prior to the expiration of the mandated stray hold period, due to its failing health.</p>
20	Dec 2014	Hali Burton	A4785599	Downey	<p>12/31/2014 10 year old cat Rescue plan found and CTA (commitment to adopt) placed at 10:18 AM. Puller called again at 12:30 to confirm. When transporter arrived, this sweet, friendly, healthy girl was already dead</p>	<p>The rescue group failed to meet its commitment to adopt this cat. This cat came in to the Downey ACC on 12/19/14. On 12/24/15 a rescue group notified the management at Downey that they wanted to network the cat for adoption. There was a deadline given of 12/27/14, which was communicated to the rescue via email. A reminder was</p>

						sent to the rescue on 12/27/14 of the end of their networking period. Rescue never picked up the cat as they had requested. On 12/29/14 the cat developed upper respiratory disease and was euthanized on 12/30/14. This rescue never came to adopt the cat during their networking period as instructed. The cat subsequently became ill and was euthanized to prevent the spread of disease to other cats.
21	Dec 2014	Hali Burton	A4784356	Downey	Volunteers were networking her and found a rescue to take her today (it was her final day - day 4). Puller sent email to ALL 6 managers at 10:09 AM to put a CTA (commitment to adopt) on her to keep her safe. They killed her anyway, before the end of her 4th day.	<p>This cat was in the care center for 15 days, not the four days stated in the allegation. This cat came in to the Downey ACC on 12/15/14. On 12/20/15 a rescue group requested a "network extension hold" to give them time to find a home for the cat. They were given until 12/23/15. The rescue did not come for the cat, and a reminder was emailed to them on 12/23/15. On 12/29/15 the cat was diagnosed with severe upper respiratory illness, bilateral mucopurulent discharge, and open mouth breathing. It was euthanized for illness on 12/30/15.</p> <p>This cat was approved for euthanasia at 8:43 am on 12/30/15. The rescue's email, sent seven days after their holding period expired, was sent at 10: 09 am, after the cat had already been euthanized.</p> <p>Further, this rescue has been repeatedly advised that emails between the hours of 7-12 am are not a guarantee that they would be addressed immediately, since this is the time that animals are being evaluated for placement and the staff authorized to receive and address these emails were busy with these duties.</p>
22	Sep 2014	Rosie	Not applicable	Downey	So many complaints. Place is dirty and smells. Workers lack empathy in dealing with people & animals. Sad and sick animals sitting in waste. Wait time on telephone is eternal-never ending. Mishandling of animals. Mislabeling of animals as having behavior problems only leads to further euthanization of healthy pets. There has to be an understanding by staff workers of animals and behavior of them when they are scared and not be so quick to euthanize them. There needs to be a better working relationship between shelters and rescue groups. There has to be better screening for adopters AND workers! I see dogs in the street every time I visit. Why does animal control not show up when called?	<p>The holding time on the telephone has greatly reduced since DACC opened a new, additional communications center in August, 2014. Since this time, call holding times longer than 30 seconds have been reduced by 84%.</p> <p>Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.</p>
23	Aug 2014	Lili Geyelin	A4743904 A4743903	Downey	I rescued a 2 y/o female A4743903 and her 4 m/o kitten A4743904 on 8/20/14. While at Downey shelter, they were in deplorable conditions in a trashed cage, with no access to food or water during a heat wave. I complained to then shelter manager, Juan Danny Ubario, via email about the shocking photo a volunteer took and he responded that they had cleaned the cage 4 times that day. I had requested a combo test be done on the adult female to determine if FeLV or FIV + for which I paid \$25. I was told she was FeLV + which was incorrect. 2 subsequent tests were run by my vet confirming she is FIV +. Apparently, someone misread the test which could've resulted in the cat not being rescued and demonstrates a certain level of incompetence on the part of the medical staff. Both mom and kitten were spayed at the shelter and arrived sneezing and underweight. I question whether either one should've been subjected to a surgery given the poor	<p>A response regarding cage cleaning is provided in the Department's response of October 28, 2015.</p> <p>Both cats were examined prior to surgery and were found to be healthy for the procedure. The medical division has reviewed its protocols for reading FeLV and FIV testing to ensure the tests are being read accurately.</p>

					condition they were both in. Over the following 3 days, mom became critically ill with a life-threatening bacterial infection and was hospitalized overnight at the ER.	
24	Jun 2014	Lili Geyelin	Not provided	Downey	2 m/o kitten sick and in filthy conditions (have photo documentation taken Sat. 6/21, showing kitten at from of cage sitting up, meowing and reaching out to volunteer), per shelter vet, Dr. Carissa Jones, on Monday morning found face down in litter box, unresponsive and subsequently euthanized. Recv'd no vet care - neglected entire wknd. This is not the first case of kittens/cats found dying and/or dead on Monday morning due to lack of adequate veterinary care over the weekend due to no vet on staff. Little to no attention is paid to animals' needs by kennel attendants or RVTs over the weekend and cats suffer and die as a result.	Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.
25	Oct 2013	Melinda Smith	Not provided	Downey	I saw dogs who were being presented for euth being handled extremely inhumanly. Held in the air by leash around neck for over a minute at a time. When they noticed I was watching they ceased the action to their current victims and began to question me as to my purpose there. These people should not be employed working with animals as they lack compassion.	Please see the Department's response of October 28, 2015.
26	May 2013	Lauren Rudy	Not provided	Downey	Mother cat and her litter of 4 were in building 9 for over 24 hours without any food or water. I immediately brought this to the attention of of the Lt in 9 who acted as if it was no big deal and a small oversight.	Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.
27	Mar 2013	Alice Chow	Not provided	Downey	Dogs were neglected. Kennels were dirty and some water bowls were not filled.	Please see the Department's response of October 28, 2015.
28	Nov 2012	Hali Burton	A4504109 A4504110 A4504111 A4504112 A4504113 A4504114	Downey	6 kittens arrived at Downey on 10/25/2012. They were all killed 11/2/2012 at 2:09 PM. Their last moments on Earth, and no compassion whatsoever... Sick kittens and no room to even move; thrown in this tiny cage, where they could not move, eat, drink or use litter box. We were networking them and had a rescue lined up and \$350 in pledges. Rescuer called and spoke to Ron at 1PM and was told there is a possibility the cats will not be here later today. She asked if they were healthy. He said they are in Bldg 3,Cage D331 (the adoptables bldg).	These kittens were surrendered by their owner and available for adoption for eight days. At time, they became ill with an upper respiratory infection and were euthanized to prevent transmission of the disease to other cats. The Department was not notified by anyone that the kittens were being networked for adoption. Animals with upper respiratory infection can serve as reservoirs of disease to quickly infect many other animals. This can lead to serious disease outbreaks that require increased euthanasia to bring under control. Removing contagious animals from the population prevents disease outbreaks and saves countless more animals' lives.
29	Sep 2012	Rhae Ann Theriault	None	Downey	I visited Downey Co. Shelter around noon on September 15 2012 with the intention of videotaping and photographing the available cats/kittens for adoption/rescue. The temperature was in the triple digits and immediately upon entering building 3 I noticed how hot and stuffy it was. I then realized that none of the cages had water and the plastic curtains that are usually down to keep the animals warm were still in the same position. In other words they were not rolled up for hot days such as this and there was no ventilation for the poor cats, kittens. An AC officer by the last name of Torres entered the room, closely watching my actions. When I told him none of the animals had water and the plastic curtains were all in the down position he seemed to ignore my concerns.	The Department is aware that the cat room building needs air conditioning. In fact, this request was made to the CEO and Board of Supervisors as a critical issue and it was funded in FY 2014-15. The County is currently in the process of installing air conditioning in this building.  Please see the Department's response of October 3, 2015.
30	Jul 2012	Anonymity Requested	A4454630 A4454633 A4454634	Downey	Cat and her 4 3-4 month old babies were locked within their transfer box for what seemed to be a very long time considering they were covered in urine and all open mouth breathing when I found them. Condensation had grown on the Plexiglas slide door from the heat. SEE PHOTOGRAPH A.	This allegation was addressed in the Department's October 3, 2015 response to the report by "All About the Animals".

			A4454635 A4454636		This is a ongoing issue in building 9 on the weekends. I visit most weekends, mid-day, and often find MANY cats still locked into their transfer boxes, even after their cages are done being cleaned. No one ever seems to think it's an issue that the cats are locked away from food, water and litter.	
31	Jun 2012	Kate Croley	Not provided	Downey	Many animals were without water. Cages were filthy. Staff was not helpful when we tried to adopt our cat 15 minutes prior to closing...they refused because paperwork would take too long & asked us to return the next business day which happened to be after a holiday weekend, so our poor cat had to wait two more full days in the hot sun in a tiny uncleaned cage. She was on the kill list and it was lucky we got there before they put her down as they refused to hold her for my fiance and myself.	Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.
32	Jun 2011-2014	Elissa Braitman	Not provided	Downey	I pulled a mother and 2 month old kitten and found they had not been examined by a vet in the 5 days they had been at the shelter. The kitten had an advanced URI and a large wound with an abscess on his neck. Euthanasia was recommended. I took him to an outside veterinarian where he received 24 hour care and ultimately expired a week later.	Please see the Department's response of October 3, 2015.
33	Sept 2012 – Apr 2015	Ashly Perez de Tejada	Unknown	Lancaster	The conditions of the Lancaster shelter were deplorable. Too often the animals did not have adequate bedding, the cages were often dirty and looked to have been that way for long periods of time (which was demonstrated by dryness of the poop in the kennels and filth of the animals themselves). Often the water spouts were broken leaving perpetually running water in the kennels creating a damp and uncomfortable environment for the animals.	Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015. DACC provides bedding, such as blankets or towels, as necessary for animals depending on their medical condition and the environmental needs (for example, in warmer months the dogs prefer lying on the cool concrete floor). Most kennel run floors are heated during the colder months with hot water pipes beneath the concrete. Other areas are heated with radiant or forced air heating. DACC provides beds of varying shapes and sizes suitable to the size and needs of the dogs.
34	Aug 2015	Anonymity Requested	Not provided	Not provided	2. Too many animals per cage. 3. Lack of vet care. Pulled a dog with Parvo no vetting provided. 4. Staff makes it impossible for rescues to pull dogs. They recruiter that a registered partner himself is present to do the pull and they are not allowed to pull fir anyone but their own rescue. However LA Coubty Debbie Cross IGNORES rescues applications completely n does not allow to register. It only kills more animals bcz rescues have NO WAY of pulling dogs from Lancaster located 120 miles away from the city. 5. Staff constantly drops registered partners taking their pulling rights away for no particular reasons making it even harder fir rescues to help they also make it very difficult to hold dogs having CTA program that makes no sense. The dogs are being held for CTA who do not show up a lot of tines and animals are being killed while there were other interested parties and rescues who were not allowed to pull or adopt due to CTA that didn't show up n the dog ran out of time. It's an absurd program! 7. Cages are NOT sanitized n many dogs get parvo or kennel cough, etc due to not cleaning empty cages!!	Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.
35	Jun 2015	Danielle	Unknown	Lancaster	I witnessed Officer Williams (don't know his first name -African american man) drag a dog by the catch pole and kick him 2 times -I screamed for him to stop and he said the dog is aggressive I said you don't have to kick him- I also witnessed another young officer female grab really aggressively	DACC does not have an African-American male officer with the last name of Williams. Please see DACC responses of October 3, 2015 regarding customer service, and October 28, 2015 regarding animal handling.

					and hit a small dog she was pulling out of the truck to bring in-I told her not to be so ruff with them she told me to shut up and mind my own business. I have other witness's that seen it happen	
36	Apr 2014	Anonymity Requested	Not provided	Not provided	I saw a young pit bull and asked about her availability. I was told she would be available on Tuesday when the shelter opens at 12pm I was there at 12:30 on Tuesday to pull her. I was told she was pts that morning. I will never file a complaint in fear of our pull rights being jeopardized.	Please see the Department's response of Oct 3, 2015. DACC cannot respond further without the animal's identification number so its records can be researched.
37	Jan 2014	Anonymity Requested	Not provided	Not provided	I noticed a tiny Chihuahua in the general population. She was hovering in a corner, sivering and in obvious pain. It was obvious also that she had recently given birth to puppies. her mammary glands were very large. I expressed my concern for her. She stayed out there suffering for three days. By the time she moved into isolation, upon the vet examining her, her mammary glands burst open with infection. I asked to speak to the vet on duty when her hold was up and I was pulling her. The vet told my she had cancer. I did not believe this. I took her to our vet. She had an infection. This suffering could have been prevented if she had received proper medical care when I saw her the first time. we have vet records.	Please see the Department's response of Oct 3, 2015. DACC cannot respond further without the animal's identification number so its records can be researched.
38	Sep 2013	Anonymity Requested	Not provided	Not provided	I pulled an Eskie from Lancaster who had distemper, and was being treated for a mild kennel cough! We spent almost \$6000 on this 2 year old; he made it!	Please see the Department's response of Oct 3, 2015. DACC cannot respond further without the animal's identification number so its records can be researched.
39	Jan 2008	Anonymity Requested	Not provided	Not provided	I have seen unsanitary conditions, feces laying on the ground all over the place. Dogs being sprayed with water in freezing conditions. Dogs not receiving proper vet care. I witnessed animal control workers scanning dogs and finding no chips, then realizing the batteries were dead and only joked about it, did not go rescan dogs.	Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015. DACC scans all animals for microchips three times – upon impound, prior to surgery, and prior to adoption or euthanasia. This complaint from 2007 cannot be further researched.
40	TBD	Anonymity Requested	Not provided	Not provided	Failure to adequately vet animals, killing within 72 hours, killing despite 501c3 rescue expressing intent to rescue	Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.
41	Feb 2011 – Dec 2014	Anonymity Requested	Not provided	Lancaster, Baldwin Park, Carson, Downey	I cannot just select ONE of the above, as ALL of the above apply to Lancaster, Baldwin Park, Carson and Downey	Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.
42	Jan 2014	Julia Mildenberger	Not provided	"Multiple"	Animals are not kept proper time-not shown for adoption-euthanized with adopter/rescue waiting. I am afraid to stand up to animal control because of retaliation	Please see the Department's response of October 28, 2015.
43	Feb 2012	Jennicka Anderson	TBD	"Multiple"	It has happened at multiple occasions both to us and other rescues that we have been advised not to rescue and animal as well as we called to say we are on our way to rescue and the shelter still euthanize Also at times there are 10-20 empty cages and they still euthanize that day healthy adoptable dogs/cats	Please see responses of October 3 and 28, 2015 regarding rescue group adoptions.  There is a need to have some vacant kennels each day. Care center staff must anticipate how many new arrivals are expected, and plan for their safe and humane housing accordingly. There must be empty animal housing kennels or cages where the new arrivals can be placed. While some animals may be able to be housed together, animals that are aggressive to other animals must be housed singly to prevent attacks

						on other animals. DACC manages its animal population consistent with recommendations from leaders in animal shelter veterinary medicine, including veterinary medicine universities and the Association of Shelter Veterinarians. Further, the kennels may be empty because DACC just sent a group of dogs on a transport or to an offsite adoption event.
44	Jul 2014	Jan McClowry	TBD	Baldwin Park	Dirty kennels. Also when calling the shelter received different info on several occasions. Ill/hurt animals needing care. <NEED MORE SPECIFIC INFO INCLUDING DATES AND IDS>	Please see DACC's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.
45	TBD	Aminah Yaquin Carroll	TBD	Carson	I have a friend in La who witnessed physical abuse on more than one occasion, and another in la who still has in her care a dog that was severely injured ion the shelter as a frail elder GSD. <NEED MORE SPECIFIC INFO>	This second hand report cannot be investigated or substantiated. Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.
46	TBD	Josh Liddy	TBD	Carson	The Carson shelter routinely kills groups of Pit Bull puppies, and when they do they always excuse it with saying the dogs had parvo. This is 1 example: <a href="http://www.swaylove.org/when-puppies-are-killed-the-carson-shelter-always-cries-parvo">http://www.swaylove.org/when-puppies-are-killed-the-carson-shelter-always-cries-parvo</a> <NEED MORE SPECIFIC INFO>	This litter of barely weaned puppies (Animal ID's A4632093 – 98) were surrendered by their owner on 9/13/13. They were vaccinated against common canine illnesses, including parvovirus. Parvovirus is an extremely contagious and highly fatal disease that is most devastating to young puppies, often resulting in death. Although these puppies were vaccinated upon intake, vaccines do not stimulate immunity immediately after they are administered. Once a vaccine is administered, the antigens must be recognized, responded to and remembered by the immune system. Full protection from a vaccine usually takes up to fourteen days. Since these very young, unthrifty puppies were exposed to parvovirus, it was determined that euthanasia was necessary since it was likely they would succumb to the disease as well as infect other animals in the facility. The decision to euthanize in cases like this is not made lightly, and is done with the consideration of the overall dog population at the care center and our goal to provide a disease-free environment.
47	Aug 2015	Hilary Rosen	Not provided	Carson	the lack of professionalism and care from the Head Vet at Carson was horrifying. Zero care. I have video and photos of a dog they deemed unadoptable to the public and as being aggressive which couldn't be farther from the truth. This same dog was diagnosed with cancer and I have come to believe the shelter vet never even got close enough to her to give her a solid evaluation. <NEED MORE SPECIFIC INFO>	The only Hillary Rosen we have on file is a person who adopted a dog (A4659213) in January, 2014. This dog did not have any medical problems except being thin and requiring extra feedings. This dog was seen and evaluated by the medical staff. The Department cannot research this further without an animal identification number.  Please see DACC's response of October 3, 2015 regarding medical care.
48	Jun 2015	Francella Youdbulis	TBD	Carson	I adopted a chihuahua from there and the shelter did not provide any pain medication or antibiotics even though they had performed two major surgeries on her two days prior to me adopting her <NEED MORE SPECIFIC INFO RE SURGERIES>	No record of any person with that name that adopted from the DACC system. It is a matter of practice to release all surgery patients with pain medication. DACC cannot research this further without the animal identification number.
49	Apr 2015	Jennifer Ingman	A4808835	Carson	Memphiz ,a 3 year old dog,was killed,due to illness,they said.She needed a little care,she was not sick enough to warrant her death. <WAS THE DOG KILLED DURING 72 HOUR LEGAL HOLD PERIOD?>	Memphiz was surrendered by her owner to the care center on 3/16/15. On intake, the medical exam noted she was very thin. She was vaccinated, treated for fleas, and placed on extra feedings and observation. On 3/26/15 she developed an upper respiratory infection and was prescribed a course of antibiotics. On 3/31/15 a rescue

						<p>group asked for a temperament assessment and extra time to network her for adoption. On 4/5/15 the rescue group was given until 4/10/15 to find a placement. She received a temperament assessment on 4/9/15 and passed with a B grade. The network hold was extended by DACC to 4/17/15 to give the rescue group additional time. On 4/12/15 she had recovered from her illness. The care center continued to hold her for adoption until on 4/29/15 when it was noticed that her temperament had turned and she had become aggressive.</p> <p>It is not uncommon for dogs' temperaments to change after extended confinement, due to frustration, stress or other factors. In these circumstances dogs are euthanized as they are no longer adoptable for public safety reasons. She was euthanized on 4/30/15 for behavior. It should be noted that the Department made her available for adoption for six and a half (6 ½) weeks, treated her for illness, and worked with a rescue group in the hope she would be adopted.</p> <p>Making the decision to euthanize an animal is always the last resort, and several factors have to be taken into account before coming to this decision. Among some of the factors are the health of the animal, length of stay, how many animals are being held at the time, and the overall adoptability of the animal. At times it is considered inhumane to hold an animal when the ongoing kenneling has caused it too much stress and anxiety. Further, holding an aggressive animal that is not being considered by adopters takes valuable cage space away from highly adoptable animals that deserve an opportunity to find a new home.</p>
50	Feb 2011 – Apr 2015	Anonymity Requested	Unknown	Downey	The conditions and care of the animals was an ongoing problem. I was at the shelter several times a week pulling animals and saw the neglect myself <NEED MORE SPECIFIC INFO RE ALLEGED NEGLECT>	Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.
51	TBD	Anonymity Requested	Not applicable	Lancaster	I visited Lancaster shelter to meet and pull a dog. Not only was I treated horribly by the front desk staff but after seeing rows of filthy kennels and injured dogs laying there, not being treated for obvious injuries and wounds <NEED MORE SPECIFIC INFO INCLUDING DATES AND IDS>	Please see the Department's responses of October 3 and 28, 2015.



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**October 3, 2015**

**Response to Report by “All About the Animals”**

**Background**

On September 3, 2015, a report was provided to the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors by a local animal welfare group, “All About the Animals” (AATA) (Appendix A). AATA describes itself as a team of like-minded animal loving individuals that have worked together for the past two and a half years. This report summarized the results of a survey of Adoption Partners conducted by AATA regarding the County of Los Angeles Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC).

The survey was prompted by a visit to the Downey Animal Care Center (ACC) on August 5, 2015, by Ms. Laura Jones of AATA. Ms. Jones took photographs of dog kennels with feces in them and launched a petition for the Board of Supervisors to investigate conditions in County ACCs. The photographs Ms. Jones produced do show some dog kennel runs with an amount of feces that fall short of DACC’s standards of cleanliness. The conditions shown are unacceptable, and DACC has taken corrective action to address this (Appendix B).

While this report contains inflammatory and alarmist language regarding DACC such as, “nothing short of shocking”, “horrific”, “jaw dropping”, “deep-rooted problems” that are “systemic, cultural and sustained” and calling for a “radical upheaval”, a careful reading of the results does not support these allegations or call for action.

DACC’s response to these allegations will provide a better understanding of the issues raised in AATA’s report and the important work it does in protecting people and animals in Los Angeles County. DACC’s responses are to the allegations *as they are presented*, and notes that most, if not all, of these allegations are unsupported.

**What is an “Adoption Partner”?**

Adoption Partners are animal rescue groups that adopt animals from DACC animal care centers. DACC currently works with 237 Adoption Partners. While any group of private individuals that perform this work can be called a “rescue group”, DACC Adoption Partners are rescue groups that participate in DACC’s Adoption Partner program. To qualify for Adoption Partner status, Adoption Partners must be nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations and agree to comply with program guidelines and practices. In return, they receive discounted pricing on animals and certain accommodations not available to the general public.



### **Survey Response Rate**

The response rate and number of complaints in AATA's report are not statistically significant and must be assessed with this in mind.

According to AATA's report, the survey was issued to approximately 500 local nonprofit animal rescue groups between the dates of August 24, 2015 to September 1, 2015. Of these 500 solicitations, they received 82 (16 percent) unique responses with 36 (0.7 percent) of them self-identifying as approved Adoption Partners with DACC.

The survey generated 111 separate complaints (some respondents provided multiple complaints). Although AATA requested information limited to the prior three years, some respondents provided information dating back to 2007. Removing the four outlying responses prior to June 2012 adjusts this response total to 107 complaints. During this same time, DACC placed 45,115 dogs and cats with Adoption Partners (Appendix C)

Further, AATA's chart of the categories of complaints (page 8 of their report) shows quite clearly that many of the categories only generated a handful of complaints. These are addressed below.

### **GENERAL ALLEGATIONS**

Unfortunately, AATA's report lists general "categories of complaints" (pages 3 and 8 of the AATA report) but provides no confirmed examples to support these allegations (the six "case studies" are discussed separately below). Additionally, while AATA acknowledges it invited "positive feedback" from respondents, none of this positive feedback was included in its final report to provide a balanced response to its survey.

Since DACC does not have confirmed examples to investigate and respond to regarding these general allegations, its responses provide information regarding DACC's policies and practices in these areas.

### **Conditions at the Shelter and Standards of Animal Care**

It should be noted that the Downey ACC was built in 1946. This care center, along with the other five animal care centers operated by DACC are very old and have exceeded their useful lives. Existing animal care facilities are dated and difficult to maintain. DACC animal care centers, which were built 30-70 years ago, were intended for a very different population, in sheer numbers of animals and the expectations of the communities served.

A Facilities Improvement and Expansion Plan was submitted by DACC to your Board on January 6, 2015. This plan identified the need for short-term extraordinary maintenance as well as large-scale projects to remodel and replace existing animal care centers. Your Board directed the Chief Executive Office (CEO), in consultation with DACC and the Department of Public Works (DPW) to address these needs.

DACC is currently working with the CEO and DPW to establish a Capital Plan for the replacement or renovation of existing animal care centers. Additionally, your Board allocated \$4M in FY 2015-16 to address some of the most critical maintenance and repair issues at the animal care centers.

Further, it has been noted that DACC is only staffed at 34 percent of the recommended animal care staffing level recommended by the Humane Society of the United States and the National Animal Care and Control Association. DACC, in collaboration with the Chief Executive Office, is in the process of developing a multi-year staffing plan to identify funding to increase staffing levels to appropriate levels.

In the meantime, DACC is grateful for the generous volunteer support by caring individuals who wish to assist DACC in enhancing animal well-being in the ACCs. These volunteers provide supplemental care for animals, assist DACC in animal placement efforts, help visitors to the care centers, and myriad other important services. *DACC encourages and welcomes individuals interested in enhancing care for animals in its care centers to join the volunteer program and partner with DACC in mutually cooperative and productive efforts.*

DACC is also pursuing other supplemental staffing strategies, such as the use of GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence) workers to provide staffing in support of animal care needs.

### **Retaliation Against and Obstruction to Rescue Groups**

Although the report by AATA repeatedly stated that Adoption Partners have not complained about DACC because they are afraid of retaliation and losing their Adoption Partner privileges, only three responses were categorized in the chart.

DACC has indeed suspended or terminated Adoption Partners but at no time were these actions taken in regards to whistle blowing activities or complaints. Since 2006, DACC has suspended or terminated Adoption Partner privileges for 21 Adoption Partners for the following reasons:

1. Ten cases of animal abuse or neglect of DACC animals in the care of the Adoption Partner. Criminal convictions were associated with a number of these cases.
2. Five cases of failing to comply with Adoption Partner policies, including fraudulent submission of their IRS tax status, falsifying spay/neuter certificates, and failure to pay for adopted animals.
3. Two cases of Adoption Partners failing to comply with DACC stipulations regarding the placement of dangerous dogs, putting the public at risk.
4. Two cases of failing to comply with local animal facility regulations.

5. One case of IRS revocation of the organization's tax exempt status.
6. One case where two dogs adopted from DACC by the Adoption Partner fought and died as a result of their injuries.

Further, AATA incorrectly states the facts and circumstances regarding the suspension of an animal rescuer named Cathy Nguyen in 2007, erroneously claiming that Ms. Nguyen was "banned" from adopting animals after filing a lawsuit against the County of Los Angeles.

In fact, Ms. Nguyen was *temporarily suspended* from adopting dogs on December 13, 2007, pending the outcome of a confidential investigation conducted by the County of Los Angeles Auditor-Controller regarding certain adoptions. Ms. Nguyen's adoption privileges were suspended pending the outcome of the investigation. Ms. Nguyen later filed a lawsuit on December 20, 2007. Her suspension *preceded* the filing of her lawsuit and therefore the lawsuit could not have created retaliation as alleged.

As stated previously, DACC works with 237 Adoption Partners. DACC values the important partnerships they bring to increasing the live release rates of animals. To support Adoption Partner efforts, DACC has created a structured program and has provided many processes to expedite their adoption and rehoming of animals.

For example, Adoption Partners:

1. Pay \$10 per animal, versus the \$50 fee for the general public.
2. Have the spay/neuter deposit waived, as long as they submit their spay/neuter certificates each month to confirm the procedure has been performed.
3. Are allowed to put "Commitments to Adopt" on animals over the telephone and by email, which private residents may not do.
4. Are able to adopt animals one hour earlier prior to opening, to avoid long wait times.
5. Are able to have their primary contact person pay for animals by credit card over the telephone.

### **Euthanasia Rates**

DACC has made great strides in reducing animal euthanasia. Through many collaborative efforts such as working with Adoption Partners, participating in transport programs that take unwanted but adoptable dogs to other areas where there is a demand for these animals, participating in off-site and special adoption events, using facial recognition software to help reunite lost pets with their owners, and more. In

2013, DACC won a prestigious Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Top Ten Award for “Reducing Canine Euthanasia Through Partnerships.”

DACC is currently partnering with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in a Safety Net program at the Downey and Baldwin Park animal care centers. The Safety Net provides intervention services for pet owners to enable them to avoid surrendering their pets to DACC. In little more than one year, the Safety Net has diverted more than 3,400 animals from entering these two care centers. A similar program has been initiated at the Lancaster animal care center by The Lange Foundation. Fewer incoming animals means the existing limited resources can be redirected to helping other animals in DACC’s care and reduces the euthanasia of unwanted animals.

In 2001, DACC’s euthanasia rate for dogs was 69.7 percent. By 2015, it has dropped to 19 percent. As DACC is an open admission care center system that accepts all animals regardless of their medical or behavioral status, it does accept dogs that are too dangerous for placement, too sick or injured to save, or are just never adopted by the public despite efforts to find them new homes.

Cat euthanasia has also declined. In 2001, the euthanasia rate for cats was 97 percent. This has dropped to 65 percent in 2015. The most common reason a cat is euthanized is because it is feral, or an unweaned kitten that is unable to eat without assistance. Although the live release rate for cats has shown strong improvement, DACC agrees that more work needs to be done to continue to reduce the euthanasia of cats. DACC is implementing the following initiatives to address this issue.

Requiring the spay or neuter and microchipping of cats: Since adoption outcomes for feral cats or unweaned kittens are extremely remote, the best way to reduce cat euthanasia is to prevent cats from entering the care center system through spaying and neutering to prevent the births of more unwanted cats. On October 20, 2015, DACC will be presenting a draft ordinance requiring the spaying or neutering, and microchipping, of all cats in Los Angeles County. This ordinance is modeled on the successful ordinance requiring the spay or neuter and microchipping of dogs, which has been in effect since 2006.

Low cost spay/neuter services: Further, thanks to the \$103,000 allocated by your Board in Fiscal Year 2015-16, DACC has implemented a low-cost spay/neuter program for cats called the “Purrfect Fix.” Low-cost spay/neuter services will be offered throughout DACC’s service area to provide resources for cat owners or caretakers to obtain these important services.

Free cat adoptions: Finally, through a generous grant from the ASPCA, DACC is able to offer cat adoptions for free. It is hoped this program will encourage cat adoptions and further reduce the euthanasia rate of cats.

DACC continues to explore all opportunities for reducing euthanasia of companion animals and will continue to work toward the day where every animal is wanted, adopted, and loved.

### **Alleged Euthanasia of Animals Within the Holding Period**

DACC holds all stray dogs and cats for four days, not including the day of impoundment, so their families can find them. All owner surrendered dogs and cats are held for the same period of time. The only circumstances these animals may be euthanized during the holding times are if they are irremediably suffering or are unweaned puppies or kittens without a mother and cannot eat without assistance.

DACC has many policies in place to prevent the unauthorized euthanasia of animals within this holding period, including a zero tolerance policy for wrongful euthanasia. DACC takes the strongest disciplinary action called for if these policies are ever violated, which is extremely rare. As AATA has provided no examples of improper euthanasia within the holding period as they allege, DACC cannot respond to this claim.

It should be noted that DACC does not set a maximum holding time for animals in its care. As long as an animal is healthy and temperamentally sound, it will be held for adoption as long as there is sufficient space.

### **Animal Health**

DACC employs 10 full time veterinarians and 20 Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVT) to monitor animal health, treat and prevent illness or injury, provide surgical repairs to injured animals, spay and neuter pets, and perform other medical duties. DACC medical staff follows animal health protocols established by the University of California - Davis's School of Veterinary Medicine and the Association of Shelter Veterinarians. DACC has set a national standard for animal transportation medical protocols and continues to incorporate best practices as they are brought forward.

All incoming animals receive a medical examination, routine vaccinations, treatment for fleas and worms, and treatment for other medical maladies. When care center medical staff are unavailable, seriously ill or injured animals are taken to private emergency hospitals for treatment. Care center medical staff conduct rounds every day to monitor the health of the animals in their care and implement treatments for sick animals. Adopted animals receive an exit health exam prior to leaving the care center.

Individual animal health directly influences the health of the general population of animals at the care centers. Because DACC accepts all animals regardless of their medical condition, some new arrivals may be ill or incubating communicable diseases that can spread to other animals in the care center. Although DACC routinely vaccinates each incoming dog and cat with preventative vaccines, no vaccinations provide immediate and complete immunity against infectious disease. Additionally, animals with poor care prior to their arrival may not have fully functioning immune systems and may be more susceptible to illness.

Therefore, DACC medical staff closely monitors both the individual health of each animal while also managing the overall health of the care center population to ensure against outbreaks of disease among many animals. Individual animal health and the health of the general population are closely influenced by each other. Animals with serious illnesses such as canine parvovirus, feline panleukopenia, or advanced cases of upper respiratory infection can serve as reservoirs of disease to quickly infect many other animals. This can lead to serious disease outbreaks that require increased euthanasia to bring under control. Removing contagious animals from the population prevents disease outbreaks and saves countless more animals' lives.

DACC veterinarians save many injured animals through their medical treatments and surgeries. Animals injured beyond DACC resources are referred to emergency hospitals. Adoptable animals with good prognoses for recovery may be treated under the Dreams Come True program. This program, funded by the Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation, pays up to \$1,500 per case to private veterinarians to treat and/or surgically repair injured animals.

### **Customer Service and Staff Apathy**

Professionalism and community partnership are two key components within the DACC's mission. DACC recognizes the importance of providing exceptional customer services and believes that positive experiences within the care centers can result in more animals finding their new forever homes. Specifically our expectation is that customers are greeted, treated with professionalism and compassion, and that those present with urgent needs will be provided an alternative to waiting in long lines.

DACC has implemented an online customer service survey that allows all customers to provide feedback regarding their experience at all animal care centers. The data from these surveys will be compiled and analyzed to assess customer satisfaction, perception of cleanliness and other observations of our customers. This data will be used to make adjustments and improve the care center activity of staff and volunteers.

Signs have been posted in the lobbies that provide the telephone number, e-mail address, and mailing address for customers to report their experiences and/or seek further assistance. DACC will continue to monitor the feedback it receives regarding customer service matters and take any corrective action necessary.

### **Processes and Procedures**

AATA received 14 complaints regarding "shelter processes/procedures" but has provided no examples of which processes or procedures these are. Therefore, DACC is unable to respond to this allegation. DACC has many policies and procedures in place that are based on best practices, conformance with State law and County policy, and other guiding factors and is happy to provide further explanation if provided with direct questions or examples.

## **“CASE STUDIES”**

AATA cites six “case studies” as examples of complaints about DACC operations. Regrettably, AATA has not provided detailed information for most of these cases to allow DACC the opportunity to properly research, analyze, and respond to the allegations.

Case Study 1: AATA described a poodle in November 2011 that was matted, had a maggot infestation, and was in need of veterinary care. Because no animal ID was provided, DACC cannot research this case and review the medical records, condition of the animal when it arrived at the animal care center, or the condition which the animal was in at the time of rescue.

Fly larva come from fly eggs, which are deposited on dirty tissue, dead tissue, or feces. Sadly, it is not unusual for a pet to enter our care centers with fly larva that do not present until later in their stay. When this occurs, the veterinary team will clip and clean the area (shave, scrub with Chlorhexidine scrub) and remove any visible fly larva. Treatment with the medication Ivermectin is given to prevent further larva from growing. The animal is monitored for any larval growth, which is removed as it appears.

Sometimes when an animal enters our care centers it presents with visible fly eggs. These appear as small white/yellow dots and are difficult to remove. It is accepted practice to treat these animals with Ivermectin, wait for the eggs to grow into larva, and then remove the larvae as they appear. Ivermectin is meant to kill the larva, prevent them from feeding on the tissue, and keep further eggs from becoming larva. Fly larva only feed on dead tissue or rotten/dirty substances - they do not eat live healthy tissue. The alleged presence on the vulva of the animal suggests there was infection present, in which case the DACC practice is to treat the infection.

It is also common for a dog to come into our care centers with missing teeth or otherwise having the inability to eat hard kibble. In these situations the dog is provided a soft diet.

A presentation of the animal ID number for this dog would allow DACC to research the history, care, and outcome of this dog to be able to respond further.

Case Study 2: This case refers to a blind Pomeranian in November 2011 that had defecated and urinated in its water bowl and was euthanized later that day. AATA suggests the dog was euthanized by staff in retribution for an animal rescuer reporting the dirty water bowl to staff. No identifying information was provided for this dog to give DACC the opportunity research the dog’s records to determine the reason for euthanasia. Nevertheless, DACC adamantly refutes the allegation that staff would euthanize an animal in an act of retribution for a complaint.

Case Study 3: Two survey respondents claim to have witnessed animal care staff inhumanely handling animals, in October 2013 and June 2015. No other information has been provided to substantiate these allegations.

The behavior described, if true, is completely unacceptable. DACC responds to complaints regarding inhumane animal handling swiftly and imposes the strongest discipline called for, up to and including discharge from County service. Had this complaint been made by the observers, DACC would have immediately investigated these allegations and taken all appropriate action. DACC requests details about the alleged observations so they can be investigated.

Shortly after hire, DACC staff is given classroom and hands-on training regarding safe and humane animal handling. Staff members are observed by subject matter experts regarding animal handling and must demonstrate satisfactory skills to perform their assigned duties. DACC also has surveillance cameras in several animal care centers and are adding more, further strengthening its ability to monitor staff animal handling practices.

Visitors are encouraged to speak to the supervisor on duty should they have concern about animal handling practices they have witnessed. Staff is trained to be compassionate towards the animals in their care and are held accountable to this expectation. A sign posted in the lobby of all animal care centers provides several options for concerned parties to report complaints to management, including a telephone number that is answered 24/7.

Case Study 4: This complaint from July 2012 is regarding a mother cat and her four kittens that were confined in a cat den. Cat dens are 15" x 11" x 10" plexiglass dens that are placed in each cat cage to provide a private area in which scared cats can hide. Each den has a porthole that allows the cat to enter and exit, and the portholes can be closed to confine the cat inside the den. This is done when the cages are being cleaned or when transporting cats to prevent their escape. The dens are not air tight, and have air holes drilled in regular intervals for air circulation.

When cat cages are being cleaned, the cats are usually in the dens no longer than 15 minutes. After the cage is cleaned, the porthole is opened and the cat can decide whether to remain in the den or emerge into the rest of its cage.

Frightened cats may press their bodies towards the front of the den in an attempt to avoid contact with the person cleaning the cage or transporting them. Sometimes a mother cat and kittens may be confined in a den together for a brief period of time. This can give the impression of an overcrowded den. It is difficult to determine the exact circumstances regarding this photograph as it is of poorer quality and blurred.

Nevertheless, staff do know that cats are not to be confined to dens beyond the time required and to use multiple dens if necessary. Excess confinement for these purposes would be considered a violation of policy, and DACC would take all appropriate corrective action with staff involved.

Case Study 5: This complaint from August 1, 2015, is regarding a stray pug dog that presented with discharge from its eyes and ears, poor teeth, a severe tick infestation,



and was dehydrated. He was monitored by the veterinary team every day and was immediately treated with doxycycline, eye ointment, and provided with extra feedings. On August 3, the pug was panting heavily and almost fainted when being walked. He was placed in the medical observation building for additional care.

Pugs are brachycephalic dogs. The skull bones of brachycephalic dogs are shortened in length, giving the face and nose a "pushed in" appearance (other breeds with this characteristic include English Bulldogs, Boxers, and Shih Tzus). Due to the shorter bones of the face and nose, the anatomy and relationship with the other soft tissue structures are altered; some of these changes can cause breathing problems for the affected dog. Severely affected animals have more pronounced airway noise, appear to tire easily with exercise, and may collapse or faint after exercise. This was the medical condition of this pug.

This dog was a stray, and was not available for adoption until August 6, 2015. DACC kept the pug at the care center and under medical observation in case his owner was searching for him. It is our mission to return lost pets to their families, and releasing him early could have meant his family would never find him and would be a violation of the state law regarding holding times for impounded animals. He was under medical observation and treatment the entire time he was in DACC's care. Unfortunately, despite this care he succumbed to the effects of brachycephalic airway syndrome on August 5.

Case Study 6: This complaint from July 2015 is in regard to a geriatric stray dog without identification or a microchip that became very ill and was euthanized for humane reasons 10 days after his arrival. This dog, named "KNO", was owned by the Galvan family and he had been missing from their home for six months.

On July 18, 2015, KNO arrived at the animal care center and was vaccinated and treated for fleas.

On July 21, at 9:22 a.m. Mr. Galvan contacted the care center and identified KNO as his missing dog, based on KNO's photograph on DACC's website. Mr. Galvan advised DACC that he would be in later that day to identify and claim KNO.

On July 22, Mr. Galvan advised DACC that he would not be able to come in, but his wife would come to the care center three days later on July 25 to identify and reclaim KNO. Mr. Galvan was advised that KNO was now available for adoption since no one in the Galvan family had been to the care center yet to positively identify him and that it was imperative that he or Mrs. Galvan come to the care center as soon as possible to positively identify and claim KNO.

On July 25, Mrs. Galvan came to the care center but did not reclaim KNO. Instead, she requested to adopt him (note the adoption fee would have been \$100 including the neutering, and far less than the fee for reclaiming a lost, unlicensed pet). DACC has no

record of refusing to release KNO to Mrs. Galvan on that date, and he could have gone home that day upon payment of the required fees.

On July 27, KNO became ill with an upper respiratory infection and diarrhea. He was examined by the veterinarian and prescribed two antibiotics and an antidiarrheal medication. He was tested for parvovirus and giardia, two common causes of diarrhea in stray dogs (both tests were negative) and placed on canned food and under watch to monitor his appetite, with instructions to notify the veterinarian if his condition worsened.

On July 28, KNO's condition had seriously deteriorated. He was unable to stand, unresponsive, had abdominal pain, and black diarrhea. The medical staff gave him intravenous fluids and dextrose. Medical concerns at this point were possibilities of a gastrointestinal tumor, renal failure, liver failure, or infection. The veterinarian determined that KNO was irremediably suffering and care center management attempted to contact the Galvans to advise them they needed to pick up KNO immediately or he would be euthanized.

Staff made contact with Mrs. Galvan and left a message for Mr. Galvan. Mr. Galvan called back at 6:35 p.m. and advised DACC that they were still not able to reclaim KNO. At 7:06 p.m. KNO was euthanized to end his suffering.

It is certainly regrettable that KNO was not reclaimed by his family earlier. DACC provided excellent medical care to KNO during his ten days with us and for the seven days we held him after the Galvans were aware he was at the care center. It is always DACC's desire to return lost pets to their owners.

### **Conclusion**

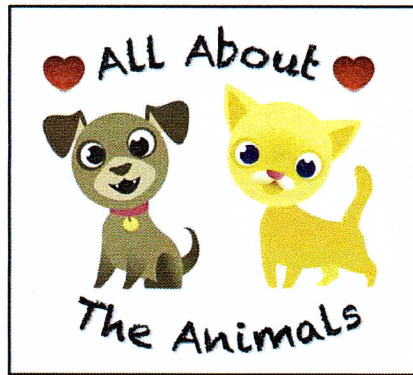
It is DACC's hope that this response and the corrections it contains provides a better understanding of the issues raised in the AATA report. DACC is a transparent organization and is always willing to answer questions regarding its operations.

The plight of unwanted or lost companion animals is a compelling and emotional issue that generates strong feelings among caring people. DACC, too, feels strongly about improving the outcomes for animals. It has been our experience that these efforts are most successful when all parties are able to work together collaboratively for this common goal.

DACC appreciates AATA's compassion for animals and encourages an open dialogue with them and other interested parties to create an atmosphere of mutual cooperation towards improving the well-being of animals in County animal care centers and our communities.

MM:in

Sec:/All About the animals DACC Response



All About the Animals  
LA County Shelter Reform Survey  
August / September 2015

Report to the Office of Supervisor Knabe  
September 3, 2015



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# Executive summary

Following the passing of Supervisor Knabe's motion to investigate the complaints made relating to the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control ("DACC"), subsequent to inhumane conditions at Downey shelter being exposed in the media, All About the Animals, a grassroots animal welfare and rescue network, have undertaken a survey issued to around 500 local 501c3 rescue groups.

The results of the survey are nothing short of shocking. Whilst we knew that the feces filled kennels of Downey shelter were just the tip of the iceberg, the extent of the inhumane treatment of animals reported in the survey is jaw dropping. And whilst the animal rescue community are fearful of complaining against DACC due to fear of retaliation, as discussed in this report, we understand there is even more to this than we know.

In our report we hope to illustrate to the Board that, despite claims to the contrary from Marcia Mayeda (Director of DACC; "the DACC Director"), the inhumane conditions witnessed on August 5 are an indicator of deep-rooted problems at the LA County shelters. We believe that we can demonstrate that these issues are indeed systemic, cultural and sustained, and not one-time issues due to staffing / scheduling / seasonality as expressed by the DACC Director.

We received 111 separate complaints via the survey, from 82 unique respondents. 36 of the complaints were submitted by rescuers with reported official LA County DACC approved pull rights. The survey reported complaints under the following categories:

- Animals getting sick in the shelter / spread of disease
- Conditions at the shelter (ie the environment)
- Customer Service below expectations
- Failure to adequately vet animals whilst in the shelter
- Issues with shelter processes / procedures
- Killing despite 501c3 rescue expressing intent to rescue
- Killing within 72 hour legal hold period when NOT irremediably suffering
- Not giving the animals the best chance of adoption
- Obstructions to rescue (eg unfair removal of pull rights)
- Retaliatory action when whistleblowing against Department
- Staff apathy
- Standards of animal care (ie treatment of the animals)
- Other

The majority of complaints raised (53%) related to Downey shelter, however, spanned across the entire LA County shelter network.

We provide 6 case studies of some of the most prominent complaints (in our view) in this report.

We hope that the Board will take the time to read this eye opening report to glean a true picture of the undeniably horrific conditions and practices that have occurred in recent years within LA County shelters.

There appear to be inherent issues with the operation of the LA County shelter network. There have been reports of failings with the provision of basic sanitary and humane care, animals receiving inadequate vetting, policies and procedures in place that do not give the animals the best chance of adoption, killing animals despite rescue holds, and even killing an owned animal where it was made very clear that the animal was to be reclaimed. Staff apathy and lack of compassion is also a key theme from the survey.

It seems apparent to us that there needs to be an overhaul in the management of LA County shelters, with radical change needed starting from the top. The Board also needs to give assurances to the rescue community that speaking up about the conditions of the shelters will not result in the removal of their pull rights. A management that proactively works with, instead of against, rescue groups could make the world of difference to the lives of the defenseless, voiceless animals at the mercy of the LA County shelters.

**Enquiries to: [allabouttheanimalsnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:allabouttheanimalsnetwork@gmail.com)**

**Media enquiries to: [llewispr@aol.com](mailto:llewispr@aol.com)**

# Introduction and background

After witnessing 22 out of the 42 kennels in Building 5 at Downey Animal Care Center with floors covered in excrement on August 5, 2015 (whereby in numerous cases the feces were dried and encrusted to the floor and had seemingly been there for days), Laura Jones, Co-Founder of All About the Animals, launched a petition imploring the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (“the Board”) to independently investigate conditions across their animal shelter network (which garnered around 5,000 signatures of which over 1,400 respondents were Los Angeles residents).

We were thrilled when Supervisor Knabe filed a motion to the Board to investigate the complaints made, which was passed on August 18. We eagerly await the outcome of the investigation, carried out by the Board CEO in conjunction with the Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC).

In the meantime, All About the Animals decided to launch an investigation of our own; seeking feedback from the animal rescue community on the operations within the LA County shelters.

## ***Who is All About the Animals?***

*All About the Animals is a team of like-minded animal loving individuals that volunteer our time and skills to support numerous rescue groups, primarily with marketing communications via online media to help with fundraising to save lives from Southern California kill shelters, and also to help after they have left the shelter (such as to fund vetting, training etc.). We have built up an email database of approximately 2,500 Animal Advocates in the approximately 2.5 years since the inception of our group. We are now forming a non profit organization in order to fundraise in our own right, with the aim of continuing to support other rescue groups but also expanding and to be able to operate with a marketing budget.*

*One might expect a more established rescue organization to undertake such research as per this survey, however, our understanding is the larger organizations such as the ASPCA, Humane Society and PETA on the whole focus on their own shelters and are not as aware of the operations of the Government-run shelters as the smaller independent rescue groups whose views and experiences we are representing via this survey.*

Our report presents the results of our Shelter Reform Survey (“the survey”), which was issued to around 500 501c3 rescue groups in LA County and adjoining counties by email. The survey was open August 24 to September 1, 2015. It was specifically targeted at rescue groups because a) the rescue community frequent the LA County shelters repeatedly; b) feedback suggested that prior complaints made to DACC (and the Board, which we understand are typically referred back to DACC to address), had not been adequately resolved;

and c) rescue groups are often afraid to speak out about their complaints for fear of losing their pull rights (approval to adopt animals from LA County shelters in the name of their rescue group). We therefore gave rescuers the opportunity to report their complaints anonymously via the survey. Where we have been given permission to do so, we will provide the personal details of the survey respondents to the Board in a secure password protected file separate to this report, should the Board wish to explore the complaints further.

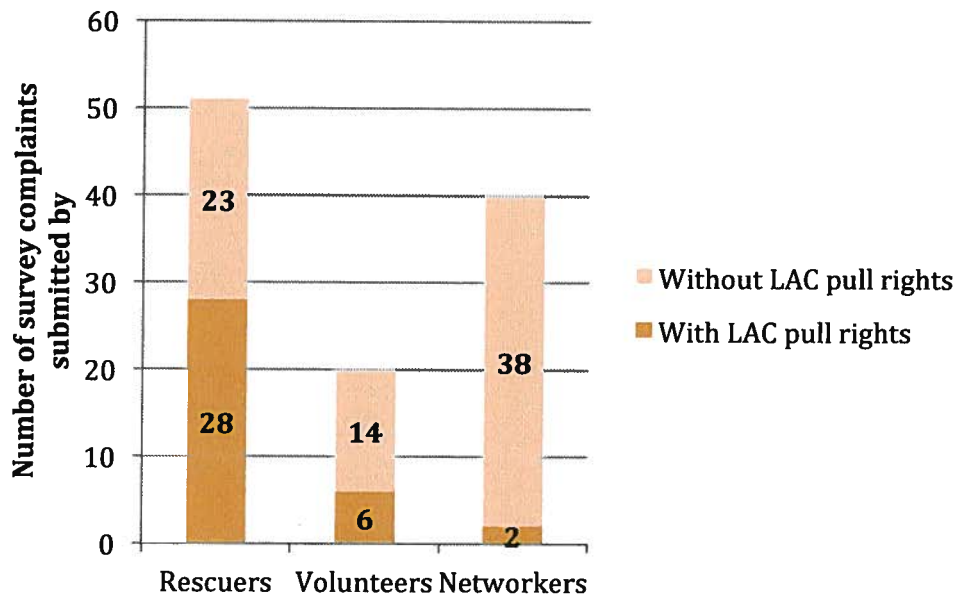
We appreciate that the Board has allocated budget to address “critical unmet needs” as recommended in a report by DACC dated January 2015, however, this report addresses infrastructure (i.e. buildings and equipment) only, and does not address shelter operations more widely; for example, policies, practices, management, staffing, shelter conditions and humane treatment of animals are not explicitly addressed. In our report we hope to illustrate to the Board that, despite claims to the contrary from Marcia Mayeda (Director of DACC; “the DACC Director”), the inhumane conditions witnessed on August 5 are an indicator of deep-rooted problems at the LA County shelters. We believe that we can demonstrate that these issues are indeed systemic, cultural and sustained, and not one-time issues due to staffing / scheduling / seasonality as expressed by the DACC Director. We believe that radical upheaval is needed in order for the LA County animal shelters to provide basic humane care, let alone anywhere close to exemplary care.

We hope that the Board will take the time to read this eye opening report to glean a true picture of the undeniably horrific conditions and practices that have occurred in recent years within LA County shelters.

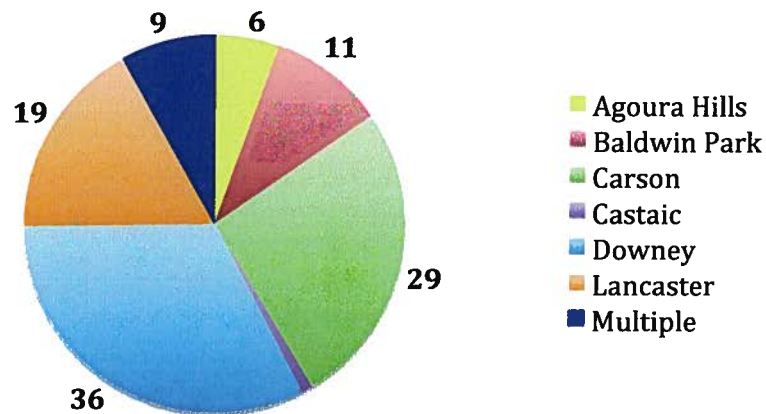


# Summary of survey results

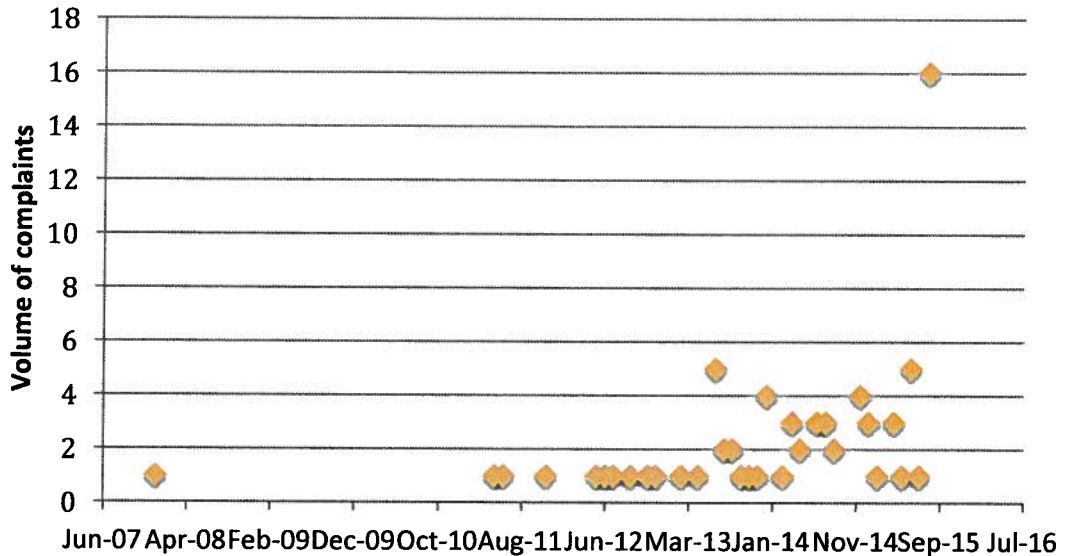
Whilst our survey invited positive feedback, all but one submission contained complaints (albeit there were some positive comments interspersed). We received 111 separate complaints from 82 unique respondents. 36 of the complaints were submitted by rescuers who claim to have official LA County DACC approved pull rights (note that we say “claim” because we cannot verify this ourselves to be fact).



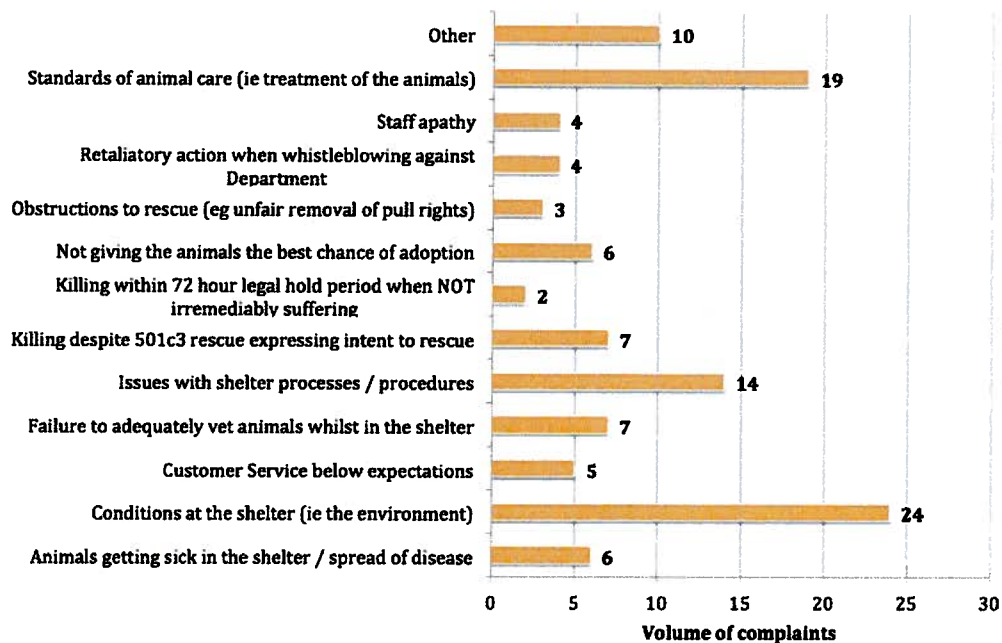
The complaints were heavily weighted towards Downey shelter (53% of complaints), however this focus could be influenced by the fact that the petition we published focused on Downey in particular. Complaints were registered across all of the shelters, albeit Castaic was not individually named.



We asked for recent feedback, spanning the last 3 years ideally, however as the chart below plots; a few of the complaints exceeded this period.

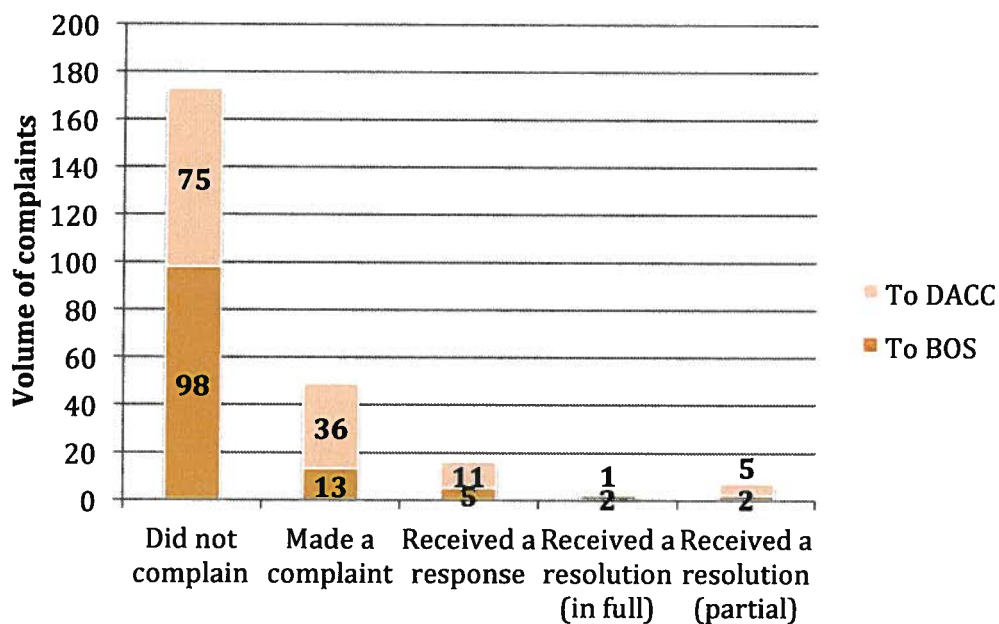


The chart below illustrates the categories of complaints submitted via the survey. Note that some complaints submitted overlap multiple categories. The environment for and treatment of the animals appear to be the most prevalent concerns, followed by issues with shelter processes and procedures (constituting 22%, 17% and 13% of complaints submitted, respectively).



As the chart below illustrates, in the majority of cases, complaints have not been submitted in writing to the Board or the DACC to date. There were numerous statements made in the survey which suggested that the reason for this was that rescuers did not believe that their complaints would be acted upon, and in addition they were fearful of losing their pull rights by speaking out against the DACC. One survey respondent, an official LA County pulling partner who wishes to remain anonymous, stated in the survey “We are afraid to lose our pull rights and would be afraid to submit any complaints. We have never filed a complaint and never will. This is strictly due to fear.”

Where complaints have been submitted however, the instances of perceived resolution of the complaints are arguably low, for example, 31% of complaints made to DACC received a response and 17% received a partial or full resolution.



An example of retaliation against a rescuer speaking out is from a 2007 civil lawsuit filed by Cathy Nguyen against the DACC and Mayeda for alleged illegal killings. In this case, Marcia Mayeda banned rescuer Cathy Nguyen from adopting from LAC shelters after she filed the suit. This was overturned when the case was settled.

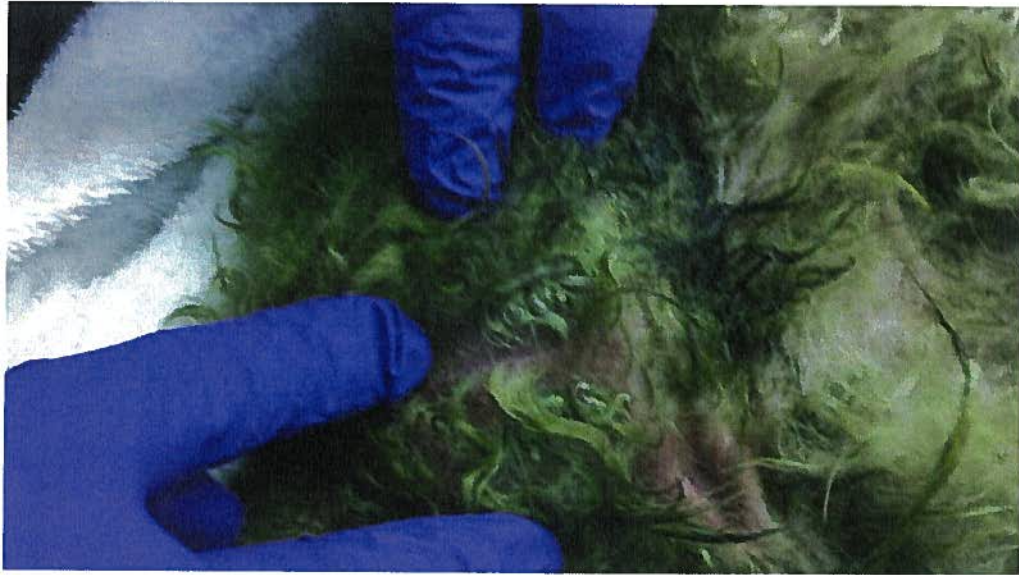
## Case studies

We have picked out some of (in our view) the most prominent complaints of inhumane treatment of animals submitted via the survey. The remaining survey responses can be viewed in full (with the exception of the removal of personal identifying contact details) in the Appendix. Supporting documentation / additional detailed information has not been submitted via the survey; however we do have this for some of the case studies where we have requested this separately.

### Case studies 1 and 2: Poodle in dire need of vetting, and blind dog with feces in bowl

One of our survey respondents, the founder of a rescue organization who has had LAC pull rights historically, and who wishes to remain anonymous (for fear of this affecting her rescue's ability to pull animals from LA County shelters), broke down in tears as she recalled her experience of pulling a 14 year old poodle from Carson shelter in November 2011 who was "infested in her own feces and urine. Maggots were all over her vaginal area...eating inside of her from the filth". The rescuer stated; "Nobody was cleaning or taking care of her. I TRIED TO SAVE HER. The vet said she had to be euthanized as the infection was horrible and had taken over her." The rescuer reported that the Poodle, Tammy, had no teeth and was not eating and was essentially starving in the shelter.





Tammy the Poodle was clearly in dire need of vetting which does not seem to have been addressed by the shelter. As the picture above shows, the maggots feeding on her infection were clearly visible yet are not thought to have been noticed by the shelter staff. She ended up irremediably suffering, thus had to be immediately euthanized upon exiting the shelter, by the rescuer's vet. Pictured below is Tammy in the shelter around November 18, 2011. She was euthanized around November 28. Her condition had clearly deteriorated whilst in the care of Downey shelter.



The same rescue reported another complaint to us from Carson shelter, which also occurred in November 2011. A blind Pomeranian had urine and feces in her drinking water which did not seem to have been noticed by shelter staff. After the rescuer raised this complaint with shelter staff, she reports they euthanized the animal later that day.



We have the ID numbers of these 2 animals however these would identify the rescue who wishes to remain anonymous at this stage. If the Board can provide assurances that this report will not affect the rescuer's ability to pull from LA County shelters, then the rescuer may reconsider this position.

### Case study 3: Allegations of abuse

A (reportedly) approved LA County DACC pull partner rescuer stated that in October 2013 at Downey shelter she "...saw dogs who were being presented for euth being handled extremely inhumanly. Held in the air by leash around neck for over a minute at a time. When they noticed I was watching they ceased the action to their current victims and began to question me as to my purpose there."

A second survey respondent, a rescue volunteer, alleged that in June 2015 she witnessed a Lancaster shelter employee: "drag a dog by the catch pole and kick him 2 times." She continues; "I screamed for him to stop and he said the dog is aggressive. I said you don't have to kick him. I also witnessed another young officer female grab really aggressively and hit a small dog she was pulling out of the truck to bring in. I told her not to be so rough with them she told me to shut up and mind my own business".

## Case study 4: Multiple cats stuffed into small spaces

A mother cat and her 4 3-4 month old babies were stuffed into a small plastic "transfer box", as pictured below, at Downey shelter in July 2012. Their IDs were: A4454630, A4454633, A4454634, A4454635 and A4454636. The rescuer, who is reportedly an official LA County DACC pulling partner (and wishes to remain anonymous), stated that the cats were covered in urine, and appeared to have been in the box far too long in the heat; condensation was forming on the Plexiglas container and the animals were panting upon exiting the box.



## Case study 5: Deceased pug was denied vetting

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[Tips About Lost & Found Pets](#)

[Bringing Animals to Us](#)

Animal ID: **A4862083**



I don't have a name yet and I'm an approximately 7 year old male pug. I am not yet neutered. I have been at the Downey Animal Care Center since August 1, 2015. I will be available on August 5, 2015. You can visit me at my temporary home at [DRECEIVING](#).

The staff/volunteers here haven't had a chance to really get to know me yet. Please visit me at the animal care center and ask about spending some one-on-one time with me.

A4862083 was a 7 year old pug put in the medical building of Downey shelter; intake date was August 1, 2015 and the stray hold ended on August 5. The rescuer reported that the pug's medical notes stated "dental calculi, eye and

nasal discharge, extreme tic infestation and dehydration". As reported by a rescue volunteer, approved LA County rescue partner Pug Nation LA called the Downey shelter first thing Monday, August 3, 2015 and asked for early release on medical waver. Downey shelter refused and told Pug Nation LA "he's just a little dehydrated, he will be okay until his stray hold is up". The dog sadly died sometime between Monday, August 3 and Wednesday, August 5. The rescuer stated; "It is my belief that this pug needed medical care that the shelter did not provide. If a breed specific rescue is willing to foot the bill for expert medical care why refuse the dog that right, making them suffer a day longer in a shelter where they will eventually perish?"

### Case study 6: Owned dog mistakenly euthanized

The most heart wrenching report was submitted to us outside of the survey, and was not involving a rescuer but a private individual. However, we feel that this animal, and his devoted family's story, should be told.

Richard Galvan reported that his dog K-NO, a senior pit bull, escaped his home when the side gate was left open. On July 18, 2015 K-NO entered Downey Animal Care Center. Richard and his wife learnt of K-NO's presence at the shelter via the shelter website, and called the shelter to alert them that the dog belonged to them. Richard's wife went to the shelter on July 25 with the belief that K-NO could be collected in return for an \$84 fee as informed by the shelter over the phone.

Below is a healthy happy looking K-NO pictured upon intake at the shelter.

**PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THIS CARD**

**My ID # A4857092**  
July 28, 2015 Tem



**My Name is: OLD PAINT**  
**I'll be available on : NOW!**

I'm a male, white, Pit Bull Mix. My friends at the shelter think I'm about 8 YEARS old. I came to the shelter as a stray on July 18, 2015.

My friends here haven't had a chance to get to know me yet. I will be able to spend some one-on-one time with you as soon as I am available. Please ask a staff member or volunteer for more information.

**My temporary home is: D126**

VACCINATIONS	
BORDETELLA	July 18, 2015
DHLPP	July 18, 2015



However, when Richard's wife arrived at the shelter on Saturday July 25, she was reportedly told that K-NO's release fee had increased to \$360, and in addition K-NO could not be released until Monday or Tuesday because he "does not look good" and the shelter vet needed to see him. Richard states that his wife did explain to the shelter that they would take K-NO to their own vet, but still his release was denied.

Pictured below, K-NO looking emaciated and unwell having spent time in the care of Downey shelter (the shelter named him "Old Paint"). As can be seen in the photo, Richard's wife witnessed feces inside the dog's bowl and no water. She alerted a shelter employee who did not take immediate action but instead responded "oh, they will clean it".



Richard called the shelter on July 28 to inform them that he would be returning to the shelter with the increased release fee the following day, and begged them not to kill K-NO in the mean time. Despite Downey shelter staff promising Richard that they would keep K-NO alive, he was killed at 7pm on July 28, reportedly a short time after Richard's phone conversation with them.

This was a tragic and avoidable mistake, which has destroyed not only a dog's life, but a human's too. Richard and his family are wracked with guilt that K-NO

ended up at Downey "death camp", as he calls it. Richard stated: "I pray and ask K-NO to forgive me, I told my wife he was scared and he was looking for me ... I would never do anything to hurt my babies.... he was such a good dog. I'm so very hurt how they treated my KNO I will not forget or forgive.... I'm still feeling the pain I'm sure he felt being in that nasty so called shelter....As I'm writing you I'm crying...I will never be able to hold and hug him again."

Richard's contact details are available upon request.

# Recommendations

There appear to be inherent issues with the operation of the LA County shelter network. There have been reports of failings with the provision of basic sanitary and humane care, animals receiving inadequate vetting, policies and procedures in place that do not give the animals the best chance of adoption, killing animals despite rescue holds, and even killing an owned animal where it was made very clear that the animal was to be reclaimed. Rescue groups are fearful of speaking out against DACC because of fear of losing their pull rights; it is this balance of power which has kept the reality of the abhorrent conditions and treatment of animals prevalent within the LA County shelters essentially a secret from the public for a number of years. A Grand Jury investigation may be appropriate given these circumstances.

Staff apathy and lack of compassion for the animals seems to be a key theme of the survey. In the words of one LA County approved pulling partner:

*"THERE ARE A LOT OF LAZY EMPLOYEES AT THE SHELTERS. THERE IS LACK OF SUPERVISION BY THE SUPERVISORS AT THE SHELTER, (THEY ARE ALWAYS IN MEETINGS) SO THERE IS LOTS OF STANDING AROUND, LONG BREAKS, AND WRONG USE OF VOLUNTEERS."*

We believe the issues stem from management level, and are cultural. We acknowledge that working in a kill shelter is an incredibly tough job, and it would seem that the staff are not given the support, training and supervision they need in order to take utmost care of the animals. We have received feedback which derived from sources within DACC that the staff that do have genuine compassion for animals and that strive to do a good job that make complaints are punished by management. Further details are available upon request.

With around 100 animals per day euthanized within the LA County shelter network, there is a lot of work to be done in order to reach the elusive "no kill" status (which means a 10% or less kill rate). Whilst there have been vast improvements in the euthanization rates for dogs, the cats seem to be ignored and a 70-80% kill rate is not acceptable. We acknowledge that the euthanization rates are the responsibility of the public as well as DACC, who cannot control the intake (albeit spay/neuter programs would assist with this and we understand this is being explored by the Board). However, surely more can be done by DACC to give the cats increased chances of survival, such as proactively reaching out to cat rescues. In addition, whilst much of the killing may be necessary currently, the inhumane treatment whilst in the care of the shelters most certainly isn't. Numerous animals are dying in fear, discomfort, and suffering.

Feedback we have had from rescue groups suggests that there is a non-collaborative relationship between DACC and rescue groups. There should be a common goal to save lives, and there is a desire from the rescue community to

progress this relationship, as explained below by a reported LA County approved pulling partner in the survey (note CTA = Commitment to Adopt):

*“There are many issues at Downey shelter. Animals are routinely euthanized prior to the duration on the holding period. Animals have been euthanized after being CTA'd by a rescue. We often see animals without proper food/water. Adoptable animals are routinely labeled feral/aggressive and become rescue only or are euthanized without being given a chance. Medical seems to have improved and Dr Jones is very helpful. Also the policy change that forces rescues to CTA in person and no longer allows rescues to CTA by email or phone is a big deterrent. Rescues like mine are very far away and it is not cost effective or productive to have to go to the shelter twice. We want to work WITH the shelters to help save the animals, it shouldn't be a battle. It should be teamwork! We know we can make Los Angeles a No Kill county if we all work together! LA should be an example for the other large cities and set the bar! “*

Gwenn Vallone, Board Director from rescue group Pug Nation LA (a DACC approved rescue partner who reported case study 5 above) stated; "The LA County shelters seem obstructive to working together with rescues to save lives, other local shelters are much easier to work with".

A collaborative approach between Government-run shelters and rescue groups is indeed possible, and is happening under our noses at the San Clemente / Dana Point animal shelter, which achieves amongst the highest live release rates in the country. The Pet Project Foundation is Rescue Partner to the City-run shelter, and assists with the following:

- *“Medical care for all shelter animals, including spaying and neutering all animals*
- *Food, including special diets and treats*
- *All bedding and toys*
- *Significant portion of kennel attendant and dog trainer salaries*
- *Capital improvements to the shelter facility*
- *Subsidizing the cost of spay/neuter programs in our communities.”*

This is in stark contrast to the LA County shelter system, which has been known to refuse the help of animal rescue groups to vet the animals, where many of the dogs do not have the simple comfort of a bed, where temperament tests frequently result in inaccurate assessments of the animals thus minimizing chances of adoption, in particular for bully breed dogs.

All About the Animals would like to assist the Board and the DACC with facilitating improved working relationships with local independent rescue groups. We would like to draw upon local expertise such as the Pet Project Foundation, and other no kill shelters, in order to assist the Board and DACC in reforming the LA County shelter network. The Pet Project Foundation have indicated that, subject to approval from their board, they would potentially allow a tour of the San Clemente / Dana Point shelter. LA City shelters are also thought

to be more progressive than LA County (and have much more favorable euthanization rates for cats than County also); there is help available on the doorstep!

It seems apparent to us that there needs to be an overhaul in the management of LA County shelters, with radical change needed starting from the top. The Board also needs to give assurances to the rescue community that speaking up about the conditions of the shelters will not result in the removal of their pull rights. A management that proactively works with, instead of against, rescue groups could make the world of difference to the lives of the defenseless, voiceless animals at the mercy of the LA County shelters.

# Appendix: Survey results in full

Please see separate attachment.



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Director

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Appendix B

September 30, 2015

**Animal Care Center  
(ACC) Locations**

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

Baldwin Park ACC  
4275 N. Elton St.  
Baldwin Park, CA 91706  
(626) 962-3577

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

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

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

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

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich  
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl  
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: Marcia Mayeda  
Director

**DOWNEY ANIMAL CARE CENTER - CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN**

**Background**

In August 2015, a number of concerns were raised regarding operations at the Department of Animal Care and Control's (Department) Downey Animal Care Center (ACC). On August 11, 2015, your Board directed an investigation of these complaints. On September 2, 2015, the Interim Chief Executive Officer and I reported back to your Board regarding the outcome of this investigation.

In addition, the Department has developed a Corrective Action Plan to address specific issues at the Downey ACC. This information is provided below.

**Office Customer Service Improvement Plan**

Professionalism and community partnership are two key components within the Department's mission. The Department recognizes the importance of providing exceptional customer service and believes that positive experiences within the care centers can result in more animals finding their new forever homes.

The Downey ACC has received a number of customer service complaints in the past several months. As a result, the Department has implemented the following action items:

### Confirmation of Customer Service Expectations

The Department's expectation of staff for quality customer service has been reviewed with all staff. It is the mission of the Department and the County to provide high-quality customer service to visitors to our facilities and this will be an ongoing expectation for all customer service staff.

Specifically our expectation is that customers are greeted, treated with professionalism and compassion, and that those with urgent needs will be provided an alternative to waiting in long lines.

Animal care attendants have been reminded of their responsibility to assist visitors in the animal care areas and to be available and helpful to answer questions or provide other assistance.

Corrective action with personnel who have not met this standard has been implemented.

### Customer Service Supervisor

The Department has assigned a highly-trained employee with strong customer service skills to function as a customer service supervisor. This supervisor will closely monitor customer service in the office at the Downey Animal Care Center throughout the day. Their job is to evaluate customer service staff regarding customer interactions, identify and implement efficiencies to reduce wait times, intercede when sensitive or potentially volatile interactions occur, receive and investigate customer complaints, and implement other improvements as needed.

The supervisor will lead weekly staff meetings with office staff to ensure expectations are clearly stated and understood, any new information is disseminated, questions and/or concerns of customer service staff have been addressed, and input from staff related to improvements is received.

### Customer Service Surveys

The Department has implemented an online customer service survey that allows customers to provide feedback regarding their experience at all animal care centers. The data from these surveys will be compiled and analyzed to assess customer satisfaction, perception of cleanliness, and other observations by our customers. This



data will be used to make adjustments and improve the care center activity of staff and volunteers.

Signs have been posted in the lobbies that provide the telephone number, e-mail address, and mailing address for customers to report their experiences and/or seek further assistance.

### **Kennel Cleanliness Improvement Plan**

The Department recognizes the importance of providing exceptional animal care within our animal care centers. Cleaning policies have been long established to ensure the health and well-being of the animals in our care and to prevent the spread of disease. These policies are reviewed regularly by Department veterinary staff to ensure the Department is using the most current best practices in preventing animal disease.

To ensure the Downey ACC is aligning its staffing and procedures with the purpose and mission of the Department, the kennel sergeant will perform facility rounds every hour to ensure the animal housing areas are clean and well maintained in accordance with Department expectations. Additionally, the kennel sergeant has reviewed Department policies and procedures related to cleaning and disinfecting animal enclosures with each animal care attendant. Corrective action with personnel who have not met this standard has been implemented. The Downey ACC management has also adjusted the kennel staffing schedule to ensure the animal caretaking and cleaning procedures are completed in a timely manner.

### **Quarterly Care Center Facility Inspections**

The Department will begin quarterly inspections of all animal care centers to evaluate their overall condition, cleaning practices, animal husbandry practices and other factors. The evaluations will be conducted by a team of Department employees not assigned to that work site and will include a veterinarian, kennel supervisor, and animal facility license inspector. These inspections will be used to ensure animals in ACC facilities are being properly housed, cared for, and maintained in a clean and healthy environment.

### **Staffing Shortfalls**

As has been reported to your Board, the Department is only budgeted for animal care attendant positions at 34 percent of the recommended standard set by The Humane Society of the United States and the National Animal Care and Control Association.

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Until this staffing shortfall is corrected, the Department will continue to be challenged in providing the necessary level of staffing. The Department is currently working with the CEO to develop a multi-year plan to increase staffing levels to the appropriate levels.

In the meantime, the Department is working with other County departments to bring GAIN (Greater Avenues to Independence) workers into the animal care centers to provide additional workforce resources. Additionally, the Department continues to recruit volunteers to provide their generous donated labor to care for animals, assist the public, enhance adoption efforts, and many other necessary functions. A full-time staff position of Volunteer Coordinator was approved by your Board in the Supplemental Budget on September 29, 2015, and this position will greatly enhance the ability to recruit and retain volunteers.

### **Conclusion**

The Department is closely monitoring the initiatives discussed above and will continue to review the operations at all County animal care centers to ensure the highest levels of customer service and animal care.

MM:in

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c: Animal Care Board Deputies  
Chief Executive Office  
Executive Office