

## **WILD CATS TO BE REMOVED FROM RANCHO LOS AMIGOS AFTER INCREASED PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS**

**LOS ANGELES, October 23, 2008** - Los Angeles County leaders announced today that in response to public health concerns at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, wild (feral) cats will be removed from the campus.

Due to the large number of feral cats on the campus, estimated at 150 - 200, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) has determined that the current conditions pose a public health risk. Evidence of fleas, flies, and feces associated with the cats has been observed throughout the campus, including adjacent to a child day care center, a County Crime Laboratory, and a County Public Health Laboratory. Unmanaged colonies of feral cats could potentially pass on organisms related to human disease such as rabies, plague, endemic typhus, toxoplasmosis, and cat-scratch disease. These pathogens can be transmitted via bite, scratch, fleas, and exposure to fecal matter.

Representatives from the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) have worked with a local feral cat group for over nine months to find a solution to this growing problem. Despite this effort, the cat population remains significant, and a recent inspection on the campus found five litters. DACC has offered the group numerous resources to assist in this effort; however the number of cats has continued to grow.

DACC will be in charge of removing the feral cats from the campus. DACC will begin trapping the cats, and moving them to the Downey Animal Shelter. While at the shelter, the cats will be assessed, and all adoptable cats will be made available for adoption. DACC will also once again run its Sarn Cat promotion to seek out even more homes for these feral cats. The goal of DACC is to find homes for all of these cats, and euthanasia will only be used as a last resort.

"What this comes down to is protecting the health and well being of the children at the day care center and our employees at the crime and public health labs, as well as the public who routinely visit the campus," said Supervisor Knabe. "The goal is to control fleas and other problems that could pose a public health hazard, especially for children or those with weakened immune systems. This is kids over cats, plain and simple."

For media questions regarding the public health aspects of this issue please contact Sarah Kissell from the Department of Public Health at (213) 240-8144. For press inquiries regarding the trapping and removal of the cats please contact Michelle Roache from the Department of Animal Care and Control at (562) 728-4644.

In an effort to find homes for as many of these feral cats as possible, DACC is asking the public for help. If you are interested in helping one of these needy cats, please email DACC at <mailto:animalinfo@animalcare.lacounty.gov> to let them know you are interested in adopting one or more of these cats. Include your contact information and how many cats you are interested in adopting in your email, and they will contact you when they have Rancho cats available.

Additional documents and resources are available on Knabe.com, including a copy of the notice from the Department of Public Health regarding the public health concerns associated with the feral cats, and a letter from the Department of Animal Care and Control outlining the various resources it offered to remove the cats from the campus.