

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

September 26, 2023

Expanding Animal Care Services in the Antelope Valley

The Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) has provided animal control and sheltering services in the Antelope Valley since 1958 when the Lancaster Animal Care Center was opened. Since that time, the population in the Antelope Valley has grown exponentially.

Due to the increased population and number of animals that needed to be served by the Department, the County opened an additional animal care center in 2016 in Palmdale. Opening this care center provided additional animal housing capacity, reduced driving time for residents and allowed animal control officers to respond more quickly - improving customer service and care for vulnerable animals in the Antelope Valley. However, with continued growth in the Antelope Valley, the current size of the Palmdale shelter is not able to adequately serve the region and has limited housing capacity and dog kennels to serve the number of dogs needing care and shelter.

The Palmdale Animal Care Center provides care for approximately the same number of dogs as the Department’s Lancaster, Downey, and Baldwin Park Care Centers, but has less than half the amount of dog kennels available.

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Animal Care Center	Dogs Admitted 2022	Number of kennels
Baldwin Park	3,083	198
Downey	3,538	180
Lancaster	3,717	158
Palmdale	3,422	68

To address this shortage, the Palmdale shelter regularly transports dogs from its overburdened facility to other County shelters where there is more room for adoptable animals with the goal of providing longer stays and visibility for a greater chance of adoption. Nevertheless, the transport programs are not enough to alleviate the pressure and more effectively increase live outcomes for our dogs in Palmdale. Transports are also time-intensive given the significant travel distance and that it removes staff from performing other necessary duties at the Palmdale Animal Care Center, creating inefficiencies and work backlogs.

Additionally, with the continued growth in the Antelope Valley, DACC has also seen an increase in unlicensed and backyard breeders as well as an increased need for spay and neutering services to better manage the growing canine and cat population. For these reasons, the Palmdale Animal Care Center has struggled to find adoptive homes for some dogs because the housing limitations restrict their ability to keep the dogs long enough for adequate adoption outreach efforts.

The property for the development of the Palmdale shelter was sold by the City of Palmdale to the County in 2013 for the purpose of constructing an animal care center. The completed shelter, now located at Sierra Highway and Avenue Q-6 was opened in 2016 and sits on approximately two acres of a 5.94-acre parcel. The vacant parcel provides an opportunity for expansion of the shelter which will better serve our constituents, allow the Department to care for more animals, and increase adoptions and improve outcomes in the Antelope Valley, as well as eliminate current inefficiencies from deploying staff away from their duties to transport animals to other care centers across the County.

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I THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office, in collaboration with the Departments of Animal Care and Control and Public Works to report back in writing in 120 days with an assessment of opportunities for expansion of the Palmdale Animal Care Center, including projected costs as well as an identification and analysis of potential funding sources.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Animal Care and Control to take the following actions:

1. Report back in writing in 60 days with a plan to provide regular no-cost or low-cost spay and neuter clinics, in coordination with non-profit spay and neuter organizations, including engaging with the Center for Strategic Public Partnerships to help identify philanthropic funding to support clinics and volunteer programs to better manage the number of animals entering the shelters in the Antelope Valley.
2. Report back in writing in 45 days with a detailed plan to develop robust community education and outreach programs, with an emphasis on the Antelope Valley, to include, but not be limited to, regular and ongoing messaging to residents about spay and neuter opportunities; managed intake assistance for families in need of pet-support; and active use of communication channels and social media outlets for adoption and fostering opportunities in the Antelope Valley.
3. In conjunction with law enforcement, code enforcement, and any other relevant County Departments and outside regulatory agencies, report back in writing in 120 days with a plan to increase focused enforcement to mitigate and prevent illegal and back-yard breeders, mistreatment of dogs and puppies, the release of unwanted dogs into the streets and shelters, and the illegal sale of dogs in both public and private locations.

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