

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

April 8, 2025

Proclaiming April 11th National Pet Day and Therapy Dog Appreciation Day in Los Angeles County: Recognizing the Positive Impact of Pets on Mental Health

The National Institute of Health states pets may decrease stress, improve heart health, and even help children with emotional and social skills development. According to a poll held by the American Psychiatric Association, 88% of pet owners consider their pets to be part of their family and 63% stated their pet is a true friend, while 69% shared their pets offer companionship and provide unconditional love and support.

Although pets are integral members of families, animals also serve as integral members of society. Dogs, in particular, serve critical roles as working members of various sectors including police, military, search and rescue, farming, and service/guides. Therapy is another critical service that dogs provide. Due to the mental health benefit experienced by engaging with pets, trained therapy dogs visit people in various settings such as hospitals, nursing homes, and schools. Therapy dogs help provide psychological and physiological therapy by providing comfort and joy. From working with a child learning to read to serving as a source of comfort to patients recovering from cancer to visiting a senior in assisted living, therapy dogs and their handlers work together as a team to improve the lives of the people they visit.

Despite the roles animals play in society, every year thousands enter shelters in

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Los Angeles County for various reasons ranging from death, illness or incarceration of a pet's owners to housing or financial changes to physical separation and lack of reunification. It is pertinent that as Los Angeles County celebrates the joy pets and therapy dogs bring to our lives, that we also uplift the many animals in our County's Animal Care Centers waiting for a family and further shine a light on the services available to help pets and families remain united.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Proclaim April 11th as National Pet Day in Los Angeles County.
2. Proclaim April 11th as Therapy Dog Appreciation Day in Los Angeles County.
3. Direct the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) to commemorate both National Pet Day and National Therapy Dog Appreciation Day and the positive impacts of pets on mental health by:
 - a. Promoting the benefits of pets on mental health via social media, newsletter, and any other mediums available to DMH, including prescheduled in-person events as applicable in the days leading up to and following April 11th.
 - b. Including Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) in at least one May is Mental Health Month event in each Supervisorial District where they would provide on-site adoptions and promote this adoption opportunity broadly.

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4. Direct the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) to commemorate both National Pet Day and National Therapy Dog Appreciation Day by:
 - a. Uplifting the positive impact of pets on mental health via sharing content created by DMH that recognizes the benefits of pets on mental health via all avenues of external communication available to the department, including animal care center specific social media.
 - b. Providing a discounted adoption promotion for pets 35 pounds and over in the weeks leading up to April 11th and the weeks following, as found feasible by DACC. Additionally, provide a promotion for pets adopted at May is Mental Health Month events.
 - c. Elevate awareness about Backyard Breeding Policies, Pets Are Family Program, Pet Pantry service at Animal Care Centers, spay/neuter programs, and other pet ownership retainment programs across communication platforms and pre-scheduled in-person events for the April 11th commemoration and at DMH Mental Health Month events.
5. Direct the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office (CEO) to uplift National Pet Day and National Therapy Dog Appreciation Day by promoting the adoption discount offered by DACC, and DMH messaging to County staff and to Los Angeles County communities by posting on social media and all other

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applicable communication outlets.

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