



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
December 7, 2017

DACC RESPONSE TO HORSE DEATHS IN SYLMAR

LONG BEACH, Calif. — The tragedy of the deaths of 29 horses burned by the Creek Fire at a ranch in Sylmar has caused extensive public concern. The Department shares in the grief over the loss of these beautiful horses, and all other animals affected by the Creek and Rye fires. We also wish to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts made by officers in response to this event and provide information regarding their response to this devastating situation.

The Department received a request for assistance at this location at 8:45 am on the morning of Tuesday, December 5. Los Angeles County Animal Control Officers responded immediately and arrived at the location to find a barn burning, with some areas of the roof collapsing. The officers could see and hear horses in distress and quickly retrieved two horses and a puppy. After securing these animals in their trailer and vehicle, the officers returned to the burning barn to rescue an additional four horses before the flames blocked their entry. The officers placed these four horses in an arena on the property that was away from the fire. Before they left for their own safety and that of the animals they had secured, the officers flagged down a fire truck to douse the barn with water and trailered the horses to Incident Command to relocate them and obtain additional assistance.

Additional officer teams returned to the property to find the barn still burning and entered the barn to rescue the horses. The stalls were padlocked, and the officers were forced to break the padlocks of ten stalls to rescue the horses. The barn became inaccessible due to the fire and the collapsing roof. The officers transported these horses to Incident command, returned some of the horses to their concerned owners, and the remaining horses were transported to the Department's emergency sheltering location at Pierce College.

A team of four officers returned to the ranch to rescue the horses in the arena. The officers were joined by owners with trailers. The horses in the arena were all retrieved by the owner and by the officers. Sadly, many horses locked in their stalls at the barn did not survive the fire.

Three of the horses transported to Pierce College were injured by the fire. The Department immediately obtained emergency veterinary treatment for them, which is ongoing. One horse has been medically released. Sadly, despite all efforts one was euthanized due to the extent of its injuries. A third horse will recover after several months of treatment. The Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation is paying for the medical treatment of this horse.

DACC officers are committed to saving the lives of animals and heroically struggled in this difficult situation to save as many horses as possible. The Department extends its deepest condolences to the horse owners who lost their beloved equine friends.

This event serves as a tragic reminder for those who keep horses to develop actionable evacuation plans to reduce loss and injury. Horse stalls should never be padlocked or otherwise made inaccessible. Early evacuations are key to ensuring these tragedies do not occur. The Department also encourages horse owners to microchip their horses for identification during emergencies, and to have alternative housing sites established in advance in case of evacuations. The Department and Foundation also thank the many generous donors who have contributed money to assist animals affected by the fires. Donations may be made at www.lacountyanimals.org.

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