



## Pet Assistance Foundation

*A compassionate presence in the community since 1955*

March 2, 2021

Dear Long Beach City Council Members:

We are concerned that the direction Long Beach Animal Care Services has taken is leading to a reduction in services to the animals of Long Beach and your constituents, as well as a possible legal risk for the city. While the Strategic Plan you are being asked to accept contains many positive elements and admirable aspirations, it also includes controversial and inhumane practices and lays the groundwork for a system that would no longer serve the needs of our community.

In short, LBACS seems to be accepting the “capacity for care” (C4C) model, which identifies the ideal number of animals a shelter can optimally care for, based on available resources, and suggests that only a certain number of animals should be housed. While we all certainly want the best possible care for the animals in our shelter, if we subscribe to C4C and available resources are not equal to the actual needs of the community, what will happen? Unfortunately, LBACS is following the trend among shelters to deal with a surfeit of homeless animals by adopting policies and programs designed to limit the number of animals they will serve.

One approach is to restrict admissions. Euphemistically called “managed admissions,” this policy requires those seeking to turn in a found or unwanted animal to make an appointment to do so, and fill out forms online beforehand. For many, these obstacles are too challenging, and they seek other solutions. The shelter achieves the desired effect of fewer animals reaching their door, but animals are left in precarious circumstances, private animal welfare organizations are asked to do the city’s job, citizens are stressed and less likely to help the next animal in need, and vulnerable animals are put at risk of improper handling and abandonment. Pet Assistance Foundation receives frequent calls from distressed animal lovers who have kittens, cats or dogs, called the shelter, and been discouraged from bringing them in.

Another extremely troubling program is Return to Field (RTF), also called Shelter Neuter Return (SNR). Not to be confused with proper Trap Neuter Return (TNR), which involves proactively spaying and neutering all of the cats in a feral colony to stop population growth, notifying the surrounding community of this plan, and

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releasing them back where they were found with caregivers in place to provide food, water and oversight, with the goal of gradual attrition, so fewer and fewer cats have to suffer the hardscrabble life of the unowned cat, RTF simply means fixing individual cats at random and putting them back wherever they came from. The shelter need not identify caregivers, nor notify the community (even if the cat was brought in as a nuisance), and no effort to trap and fix other free roaming cats in the area is specified, as would be required to successfully curtail breeding. Most troubling of all is the fact that the shelter is also releasing friendly, affectionate cats through RTF, a practice that has resulted in legal action claiming animal abandonment in Orange and San Diego Counties.

Still other policies seek to move animals quickly through the system by reducing or eliminating adoption criteria, or by means such as LBACS' stated goal of transporting 10% of adoptable dogs and cats to distant shelters each month. It is unclear how these pets' welfare will be protected or verified once they leave Long Beach, and since pet overpopulation is a widespread problem, one has to wonder who will welcome 10% of our homeless pets, and why.

So under the boutique shelter model of ideal capacity, while the animals accepted may receive superior care, many, many others are left out in the cold, or heat; citizens seeking to help them are left with more responsibility and fewer options, and we are all left with the question: will this approach fulfill the needs of our communities and its displaced pets?

We propose that our priority needs to be addressing the problem of pet overpopulation at its source through community outreach, humane education, spay/neuter support, and enforcement of Long Beach's excellent spay/neuter laws. That's how we can achieve and maintain the highest standards of shelter care without turning citizens away, leaving animals on our streets, or marginalizing cats. That's how Long Beach can become the national leader in animal welfare that we have the capacity to be.

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