

Stayin' Alive Long Beach

Status of Long Beach Shelter Animals

Research and Policy Report

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent blue and grey geometric shapes that resemble a stylized wave or a series of connected blocks. The year "2014" is printed in a large, black, sans-serif font on the right side of this graphic.

2014

STAYIN' ALIVE LONG BEACH
STATUS OF LONG BEACH SHELTER ANIMALS
ANNUAL REPORT CARD FOR LONG BEACH ANIMAL CARE SERVICES

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Long Beach Animal Care Services (ACS), the city agency charged with the care of lost and homeless animals in Long Beach, euthanizes 50% of the animals the agency takes in. Although overall euthanasia rates decreased slightly in 2013, euthanasia continues to be by far the most common outcome for animals that enter the ACS animal shelter. This report presents the euthanasia and adoption rates at ACS for 2013, documents the impact that the agency's lack of an adoption and foster program has had on euthanasia rates in the past year, explicates the effects of ACS's current relationship with spcaLA on animals at ACS, and reveals problems with transparency that continue to render ACS unaccountable to the public. Relevant comparisons to the City of Sacramento's Animal Care Services, an open-admission municipal shelter in a city of roughly the same size and with the same median income as Long Beach, are made throughout the report. Sacramento ACS has cut its shelter euthanasia rate in half as a result of implementing progressive animal sheltering programs. The City of Long Beach could achieve similar results in lifesaving by doing the same.

The findings in this report are based on documents received from the City of Long Beach through the California Public Records Act. These documents reveal that Long Beach Animal Care Services continues to experience challenges in the following areas:

High Euthanasia Rates. In 2013, ACS euthanized nearly 4400 companion animals, or 50% of the animals that the agency impounded. Euthanasia rates were 72% for cats, 29% for dogs, 74% for kittens and 15% for puppies. Cats and kittens continue to constitute the largest group of animals that ACS euthanizes. Comparisons with other municipal shelters, such as Sacramento Animal Care Services, which implement progressive animal sheltering programs, reveal that ACS continued to euthanize dismayingly large numbers of animals in 2013 as a result of not instituting the programs that would measurably improve the save rate of shelter animals in Long Beach.

Lack of programs. While ACS continues to euthanize large numbers of animals, it also fails to fully implement a comprehensive adoption program and foster program, two programs that have been shown to dramatically increase save rates in cities where they are competently and comprehensively implemented. The relationship between positive, well-managed programs and increases in shelter animal save rates has been well documented in cities such as Sacramento, Austin, Reno and others. Cities that adopt a full suite of lifesaving programs, including a comprehensive adoption program, foster programs, Trap-Neuter-Release programs for community cats, high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs, vibrant volunteer programs, proactive public relations,

community outreach and others, greatly increase their capacity to save shelter animals' lives. The absence of any full participation in these key programs, particularly a comprehensive adoption program, foster program and volunteer program, continued to be the main cause of ACS's high kill rate in 2013.

ACS and spcaLA. The neighboring spcaLA is considered by city administration to be the adoption arm of ACS. Accordingly, ACS cites its partnership with spcaLA as a justification for not implementing a comprehensive adoption program of its own. However, in 2013, spcaLA took in only 26% of the animals ACS received, reducing by just 2 percentage points the number of animals it accepted from ACS in 2012. Given that ACS kills nearly 70% of the companion animals that spcaLA does not take in, this decrease is troubling. In communities that strive to decrease their kill rates, both public and private shelters must work hand in hand to meet the needs of the public concerning lost and homeless animals. This report recommends that the City establish a full adoption program at ACS to provide placement of those animals that are not taken in by spcaLA. It further recommends that the City re-examine the terms of the agreements between spcaLA and ACS to implement greater cooperation between them, including an element that holds spcaLA accountable for the number of animals it takes in.

Lack of transparency. Finally, ACS's lack of transparency concerning the number of animals it euthanizes, and more importantly, the documented progress the agency makes or does not make, continues to be problematic. The agency reports decreases in euthanasia *numbers*, not in the euthanasia *rate*. This accounting practice yields reports that overstate the agency's supposed progress. This is misleading to the public and exacerbates the euthanasia problem at the Long Beach Animal Care Services shelter by keeping the public uninformed about the euthanasia rate and about the need for foster and permanent placements for the animals. In this way, the City of Long Beach fails to take advantage of the greatest resource ACS has to place animals: the animal-loving residents of Long Beach.

INTRODUCTION

The mission of Stayin' Alive Long Beach is to decrease the euthanasia rate at the Long Beach Animal Care Services (ACS) animal shelter by raising public awareness of the need for ACS to put in place progressive sheltering programs. In pursuit of this goal, Stayin' Alive Long Beach has compiled the 2013 statistics regarding companion animal euthanasia and save rates at Long Beach Animal Care Services. Data were obtained from Long Beach Animal Care Services via public records requests made under the California Public Records Act. Statistical data originate from Kennel Statistics Reports maintained by ACS which track intake and outcomes of animals at the Long Beach municipal animal shelter.

In October 2013, Stayin' Alive Long Beach released a study which documented euthanasia rates and analyzed programs at Long Beach Animal Care Services for 2012.

The report also made recommendations for improving the agency's ability to increase its save rate. The purpose of the current report is to provide the public with an update on the status of Long Beach's shelter animals housed at the Long Beach Animal Care Services shelter for 2013 and to once again offer key recommendations for increasing the save rate of animals at the Long Beach Animal Care Services shelter.

The organization of the report is as follows. First, the statistical data for animal euthanasia and save rates at Long Beach ACS are presented. The second section discusses ACS's performance with regard to adoption and foster programs, two key lifesaving shelter programs. Third, the troubled relationship between ACS and spcaLA and its impact on Long Beach's lost and homeless animals are discussed. Finally, ACS's reporting practices with respect to euthanasia numbers are analyzed, with special attention given to the unorthodox and misleading reporting method ACS uses.

LONG BEACH ANIMAL CARE SERVICES PERFORMANCE: EUTHANASIA RATES

ALL COMPANION ANIMALS

The numbers provided in this section are presented to counter the inflated progress reports that ACS presented in its Open House for 2013. At that event, ACS claimed to have achieved double-digit decreases in the killing of dogs and cats, when in fact, their decreases amounted to less than 3-4 percentage points for these companion animals. The misleading use of statistics to unduly influence public opinion will be discussed in greater detail in the section of the report on transparency.

In 2013, ACS continued to euthanize large numbers of companion animals. According to ACS records, the agency received 8785 companion animals last year and euthanized 4382 of them, resulting in a 50% euthanasia rate. This represents a 3 percentage point decrease over 2012, when 5074 dogs and cats out of 9602 were euthanized. This number is part of a stable trend in ACS's unimpressive performance with regard to decreasing euthanasias. ACS's decrease in its companion animal euthanasia rate over the past four years has been in the 1-3% range: ACS euthanized 56% of companion animals in 2010, 54% in 2011, 53% in 2012 and 50% in 2013. A side-by-side comparison of ACS's euthanasia rates for companion animals in 2012 and 2013, the years of interest for this report, can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Change in euthanasia rate for companion animals at Long Beach ACS 2012-2013

	2012	2013
Total companion animals euthanized	5074	4382
Total companion animals impounded	9602	8785
Euthanasia rate	53%	50%
Change 2012-2013		-3

The Case of Sacramento Animal Care Services. In 2010, the City of Sacramento’s Front Street animal shelter was a high-kill shelter, euthanizing 74% of the dogs and cats entering the facility (Sacramento Animal Care Services, 2014). In July 2011, new management was put in place at Sacramento Animal Care Services. Under the new administration, Sacramento ACS implemented the programs of the No Kill Equation (see Appendix A), a suite of programs designed specifically to increase save rates at the nation’s animal shelters. Within two years, Sacramento ACS decreased the agency’s kill rate by half. Its euthanasia rate decreased from 70% in 2011 to 35% in 2013 as a result of competent implementation of proactive programs designed to save lives (News10/KXTV, 2012). Observed side-by-side with Sacramento’s achievements, Long Beach Animal Care Services’ decrease in euthanasia rate over the past three years is strikingly low and points to a clear lack of programs designed to save animals.

Table 2. Euthanasia rates at Long Beach ACS and Sacramento ACS 2011-2013

	Long Beach ACS	Sacramento ACS
2011	54%	70%
2012	53%	47%
2013	50%	35%
Change 2011-2013	-4	-35

CATS

ACS euthanizes cats and kittens in larger numbers than other animals at the shelter. In 2013, ACS took in 1782 adult cats and euthanized 1276 of them, realizing a kill rate of 72%. In 2012, they took in 1922 cats and euthanized 1433 of them, for a euthanasia rate of 75%. This yielded a decrease in cat euthanasia rate of only 3 percentage points from 2012 to 2013, which can be seen in Table 3. This decrease is much smaller than the 13% decrease in killing that ACS claims to have achieved for cats in 2013.

Table 3. Change in euthanasia rate for cats at Long Beach ACS 2012-2013

	2012	2013
Total cats euthanized	1433	1276
Total live cats impounded	1922	1782
Euthanasia rate	75%	72%
Change 2012-2013		-3

The proportion of cats and kittens killed at ACS reveals a clear need for programs designed to increase positive outcomes for this population.¹ This would include an adoption program and cat and kitten fostering programs.

DOGS

Dogs have higher rates of survival at the Long Beach animal shelter. In 2012, more than 1200 dogs were euthanized at the shelter, yielding a euthanasia rate of 31%. In 2013, ACS euthanized only 170 fewer dogs than the prior year. This change produced a 2 percentage point decrease in dog euthanasia rate, with 29% of the dogs impounded by ACS being killed in 2013, which can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Change in euthanasia rate for dogs at Long Beach ACS 2012-2013

	2012	2013
Total dogs euthanized	1281	1111
Total live dogs impounded	4087	3822
Euthanasia rate	31%	29%
Change 2012-2013		-2

Again, we see a significant disparity between actual progress in the decrease in killing dogs and the inflated 14% decrease claimed by ACS during its Open House.

KITTENS

Kittens are the most frequently euthanized animal in the Long Beach animal shelter. In 2012, 2240 kittens were euthanized from an intake of 2902 kittens. In 2013, ACS euthanized 1909 kittens out of 2592 taken in. This represents a decrease of 3 percentage points, which is consistent with decreases for other animals discussed above. This can be seen in Table 5.

ACS data indicate that approximately 35% of the kittens that are taken in at ACS are weaned; that is, they can eat without assistance. In 2013, spcaLA took in only 18% (460

¹ We anticipate that this number will increase in 2014, as LBACS has begun a shelter-neuter-return (SNR) program for community cats. However, a large proportion of the cats killed by ACS are not community cats; they are cats and kittens that could be placed in homes through local adoption if ACS had a full adoption program.

in raw numbers) of the kittens that came into the ACS shelter. Assuming that they took in only weaned kittens, this left an estimated 17% of weaned kittens with no attempts at adoption. As mentioned in Stayin’ Alive Long Beach’s policy report (October, 2013), ACS could dramatically increase the save rate of kittens at the Long Beach shelter if it instituted a foster program that placed weaned kittens, which can eat on their own and are highly adoptable, in volunteer foster homes in the community. A significant number of unweaned kittens could also potentially avoid euthanasia if ACS instituted a neonatal foster/training program.

Table 5: Change in euthanasia rate for kittens at Long Beach ACS 2012-2013

	2012	2013
Total kittens euthanized	2240	1909
Total live kittens impounded	2902	2592
Euthanasia rate	77%	74%
Change 2012-2013		-3

ACS has come out publicly against a foster program in general and for cats and neonatal kittens specifically (Gazette Newspapers, October 9, 2013), saying that such programs are “unrealistic,” even as other public shelters in California, among them Sacramento Animal Care Services and Los Angeles Animal Services, have put into place not only foster programs for adult dogs and cats but also foster programs for neonatal kittens.

Among the objections raised by ACS to a foster program for kittens is the eventual cost of spaying or neutering the kittens once they are adoptable (Gazette Newspapers, Oct. 9, 2013). We suggest that sources of funds be found among additional donations, grants, and the formation of partnerships with Long Beach veterinarians willing to donate the required number of neuter services each year. In addition, a small portion of the revenue from licensing, which has reached in excess of \$1 million, and which has nearly doubled since 2009, would be more than adequate to offset any additional neutering costs.

PUPPIES

Puppies are the least frequently euthanized animal at the Long Beach animal shelter. In 2012, ACS euthanized 17% of puppies received. This number decreased by 2 percentage points in 2013 (see Table 6). Puppies, like kittens, are among the most highly-adoptable shelter animals. ACS data indicate that approximately half of the puppies euthanized at the shelter are euthanized due to severe illness, such as parvovirus. However, those remaining 50% of healthy and treatable puppies could be placed in foster homes until they are ready to be adopted. Nonetheless, as will be discussed in greater detail below, ACS does not currently operate a foster program.

Table 6: Change in euthanasia rate for puppies at Long Beach ACS 2012-2013

	2012	2013
Total puppies euthanized	120	86
Total live puppies impounded	691	589
Euthanasia rate	17%	15%
Change 2012-2013		-2

LONG BEACH ANIMAL CARE SERVICES ADOPTION AND FOSTER PROGRAMS

Two of the most basic and powerful programs a shelter can implement are an adoption program and a foster program. Yet, ACS does not officially have an adoption program. On its website and in its current operations manual, ACS states:

The City of Long Beach Animal Care Services does not adopt animals directly to the public. We work with registered animal rescues and our partner the spcaLA to find homes for our adoptable guests when they are not redeemed (sic) by their owners.²

The lack of a comprehensive adoption program and foster program is by far one of the biggest obstacles to increasing the save rate of animals at the Long Beach Animal Care Services shelter. In the following section, the state of adoption and fostering programs at ACS is discussed.

ACS ADOPTIONS

As mentioned above, ACS does not officially adopt to the public and views spcaLA as the agency responsible for doing adoptions; however, in spite of this stated policy, ACS does manage to adopt out a small number of animals each year. In 2012, ACS adopted out 324 animals. In 2013, this number incrementally increased to 434, yielding a 2 percentage point increase in adoptions.

Table 7: Number and percentage of animals adopted out by Long Beach ACS 2012-2013

	2012	2013
Total ACS adoptions	324	434
Total intake	9602	8785
Percentage of adoptions	3%	5%
Change 2012-2013		+2

² Source: (www.longbeach.gov/acs/rfp_animal_care_services_rfp_faq.asp).

The purpose of looking at ACS’s adoption numbers versus transfers to spcaLA or rescue organizations is twofold: 1) to clarify and understand whether ACS is currently working at its full adoption capacity and 2) to identify the degree to which spcaLA functions as an adequate adoption partner for ACS.

In 2013, ACS continued to implement a very limited adoption program, adopting out only 434 dogs and cats in 2013. Although this represents an increase in the raw number of animals adopted out (110 more animals were adopted out by ACS in 2013 than in 2012), these 434 animals represent only 5% of the animals taken in by ACS.

Additionally, 301 of those adopted were dogs or puppies and only 133 were cats and kittens, underscoring the urgent need for relief for cats and kittens at the Long Beach animal shelter.

City of Sacramento Animal Care Services, in contrast, had a 33% shelter adoption rate in 2013. Indeed, the progress Sacramento ACS has made over the past two years, since implementing innovative programs and shifting its attention to pursuing adoptions as one of several lifesaving strategies, has proved formidable. As mentioned above, Sacramento ACS management implemented the No Kill Equation in July 2011. As a result, adoptions increased from 15% in 2011 to 25% in 2012, with adoptions reaching 33% in 2013; this more than doubled the number of adoptions reached only two years prior. Long Beach ACS’s 5% adoption rate stands in stark contrast to that of Sacramento, revealing a program and operations problem that is clearly costing thousands of animals their lives every year. The comparison of adoption rates at Long Beach and Sacramento can be seen in Table 8, below.

Table 8. Comparison of adoption rates at Long Beach ACS and Sacramento ACS 2011-2013

Year	Long Beach ACS	Sacramento ACS
2011	3%	15%
2012	3%	25%
2013	5%	33%

The raw numbers underlying these percentages demonstrate the differing volumes of animals that are being adopted out by the two agencies. Indeed, **Sacramento ACS adopted out more than seven times as many animals as Long Beach ACS did in 2013.** These numbers are seen in Table 9, below:

Table 9. Comparison of raw numbers of dogs and cats adopted out by Long Beach ACS and Sacramento ACS 2011-2013

Year	Long Beach ACS	Sacramento ACS
2011	264	1,550
2012	324	2,427
2013	434	3,105

These figures clearly indicate that the lack of an adoption program continues to impede ACS's ability to significantly decrease its euthanasia rate. This lack appears to be attributable to the continued perception that spcaLA should act as the primary adoption provider for ACS; however, spcaLA takes in only 26% of ACS animals, leaving 74% of animals at serious risk of euthanasia at the Long Beach animal shelter.

It is unclear why the City and ACS continue to run only the most limited of adoption programs, given the high number of animals that ACS euthanizes. Clearly, a competently-managed adoption program would have a quantifiably positive impact on the save rate at ACS. As mentioned in the Stayin' Alive Long Beach policy report (October, 2013), a comprehensive adoption program includes:

- Off-site adoptions (several times per week at multiple locations)
- Public-friendly adoption hours
- Frequent, ongoing and creative marketing promotions
- Policies designed to maximize the chance an animal will be adopted
- Mobile adoptions and
- Excellent customer service, including a clear adoption procedure

Offsite adoption events. In April 2013, Stayin' Alive Long Beach asked ACS in a public records request whether ACS transports animals to offsite adoption events, and if so, to provide the number of animals taken to these events. Offsite adoption events are crucial to the lifesaving efforts of any animal shelter because they bring the animals to an interested public, rather than requiring the public to go to the shelter, which is not always feasible, even for genuinely interested parties. ACS's response to our query is as follows:

LBACS staff and volunteers have taken some animals to off site adoption or special events. There is no report.

The vague nature of this response clearly indicates that offsite adoption events, which need to take place on multiple days of the week at multiple locations to be effective, have not been utilized with any degree of commitment by ACS in the past. In March 2014, Stayin' Alive Long Beach repeated this question to ACS, who this time replied that they have taken animals to seven offsite adoption events; however, they were still unable to provide any information on the number of animals taken to the events or whether any of these animals were or were not adopted. Furthermore, ACS observes no official protocol for conducting offsite adoption events. This lack of specificity with regard to offsite adoptions indicates a lack of interest on the part of ACS administration in the lifesaving potential of offsite adoptions. This is especially true when one recognizes the potential that offsite adoptions have for increasing the save rate, as well as increasing revenue and decreasing costs.

Indeed, the fact that ACS does not engage seriously in offsite adoptions is made clear from observations of ACS at these events. Reports from citizen attendees have indicated that ACS brings only a limited number (3 or 4 at most) dogs to the events and does not bring cats, which is the population most at-risk at the Long Beach animal shelter. Furthermore, these events have been staffed by Animal Control Officers wearing law enforcement uniforms, which constitutes a troubling staffing choice; law enforcement's presence, by its very nature, clearly distracts interested parties from visiting the adoption area and considering the animals for adoption.

Photography and Networking. Even more troubling is the regressive policy forbidding staff and volunteers to photograph and network stray animals until after 5 days after admission. Stray animals are required to be held for 3 days by law. Inexplicably, ACS waits an *additional 2 days*, bringing the total to 5 days before allowing the animals to be photographed and networked to the public. This means that animals languish in kennels for 5 days before volunteers or staff can photograph them or try to find a home for them. On Day 6, the animal is evaluated by spcaLA (which only takes in 26% of ACS animals) and if not taken in, is eligible for euthanasia on Day 7. The result is that animals at LBACS have only one to two days to be photographed and publicized before they can be killed.

This limitation on the amount of time volunteers and staff have to find a home for an animal has a devastating effect on the animals' chances of being adopted and is no doubt a major reason why ACS euthanized more than 4000 animals in 2013. Sacramento ACS, on the other hand, begins networking animals from the day they are admitted, telling potential adopters that the animal will be available after the 3 days required by law. This policy, called "Open Stray," gives people who have lost their animals time to find him or her at ACS, while ensuring that the animals' chances to be adopted are maximized.

ACS's regressive programs and policies provide cause to question the commitment of ACS shelter management to saving lives. ACS would benefit greatly from consultations with shelter management experts or the many experienced rescue organizations in Long Beach to learn how to promote adoptions at offsite events, so that offsite adoptions become the powerful tool they are designed to be. Although the mere fact that ACS has begun to attend offsite adoption events with animals is encouraging, their participation in these events must be greatly expanded to maximize their effectiveness as part of a lifesaving program. ACS management should also be required to engage in in-service continuing education on lifesaving program management so that they become informed of the latest techniques in animal sheltering.

ACS FOSTER PROGRAMS

Establishing a strong and extended foster network is an essential component of 21st century animal shelter management. Placing animals in foster homes frees up cage space and transfers the daily costs of caring for animals such as food, care and non-medical supplies to willing members of the community.

Despite the inarguable boost to lifesaving that foster home networks provide to shelter animals in locales where they are implemented, ACS does not currently operate a foster program, though it apparently can and does utilize foster homes on an extremely limited basis. ACS records indicate that 38 animals—all of them puppies or kittens—went to foster homes in 2013. This represents an increase from the 13 animals that went to foster homes in 2012 (see Table 10). In spite of this nearly threefold increase, it is important to realize that these numbers are nonetheless extremely low in total. Even at its highest point in 2013, less than half of 1% of animals that came into the shelter were sent to foster homes. Long Beach’s prominent community of animal lovers could provide a powerful foster network, a proven, low-cost option for lifesaving that the City and ACS are not putting into place. Instead, ACS funnels available foster volunteers to spcaLA, a multi-million dollar agency with national name-brand recognition that is capable of operating its own foster volunteer recruitment efforts.

Sacramento ACS, in contrast, has approximately 200 animals in foster homes at any given time, a clear indication that it is possible to implement a strong foster program that saves lives.

Table 10. Number of LBACS animals going to foster homes in 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013
Number of animals going to foster homes	13	38
Total live intake	9602	8785
Percentage of total intake	< .2 percent	< .5 percent

LONG BEACH ANIMAL CARE SERVICES AND SPCLLA: A TROUBLED PARTNERSHIP

As mentioned above, the City of Long Beach views spcaLA as the adoption arm of the Long Beach animal shelter. According to records obtained from ACS, spcaLA takes in an average of 2500 animals each year from ACS, with this number steadily decreasing over the past 3 years. Exact numbers and percentages of transfers from ACS to spcaLA can be seen in Table 11.

TRANSFERS TO SPCALA

Table 11, below, documents the percentage of animals spcaLA has taken in from ACS over the past 3 years.

Table 11: Number and percentage of animals transferred to spcaLA 2011-2013

	2011	2012	2013
Total transfers to spcaLA	2817	2657	2266
Total ACS intake	10167	9602	8785
Percentage of animals transferred to spcaLA	28%	28%	26%
Change 2011-2013		0	-2

ACS's role in this relationship has been to devote taxpayer-funded time and effort to supporting adoptions of spcaLA animals by referring potential adopters to spcaLA, recruiting foster homes for spcaLA and by giving spcaLA first choice of the animals at ACS. All of this would seem to be part and parcel of a viable partnership between the two agencies, were it not for three crucial facts:

1. Historically, spcaLA has taken in only about 28% of the animals at the ACS shelter, leaving 72% of animals at ACS without any safety net because ACS does not operate its own adoption program to complement spcaLA's efforts. Indeed, nearly 70% of all animals at ACS in 2013 that were not taken in by spcaLA were killed. This has constituted a massive failure in the City's efforts to protect Long Beach's lost and homeless animals.
2. Exacerbating this situation is the fact that ACS can produce no written agreement that requires spcaLA to take in any specific number or particular kind of animal from ACS. In the absence of such an agreement, spcaLA is free to take in as many or as few animals as this private agency desires. Therefore, it is highly problematic that ACS does not have an adoption program of its own, and expends tax-payer funded efforts to improve adoption outcomes at spcaLA, rather than devoting its resources to developing and utilizing its own adoption programs. In addition, spcaLA's lack of accountability, coupled with the City's lack of decisive actions in compensating for spcaLA low intake levels, has resulted in tens of thousands of animals being killed unnecessarily at the ACS shelter since the spcaLA-ACS partnership began.
3. From 2012 to 2013, spcaLA reduced the number of animals it took from ACS from 28% to 26% (see Table 11, below). This is a *significant* reduction given the fact that ACS refers potential adopters to spcaLA, recruits foster homes for spcaLA rather than ACS animals, and gives spcaLA first choice of ACS's most adoptable animals – in short, the small effort that ACS invests in adoptions of any kind is expended on helping an agency with an \$8 million revenue stream and national name recognition (spcaLA, 2013). This

has resulted in over 38,000 companion animals dying at the ACS side of the shelter, which constitutes a violation of the public trust.

Stayin' Alive Long Beach strongly recommends that City Council empower ACS to begin its own comprehensive adoption program to supplement that of spcaLA. Stayin' Alive also recommends that the City re-evaluate whatever agreement exists between ACS and spcaLA so that greater cooperation might be effected between the two agencies; however, this greater cooperation should certainly not impede ACS from recognizing that it needs its own adoption program. Without this crucial step, ACS will undoubtedly continue to kill nearly 70% of the animals that spcaLA does not take in every year.

LONG BEACH ANIMAL CARE SERVICES: THE NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY

Any public, taxpayer-funded program should be evaluated using performance goals and metrics used to assess whether or not those goals are being met. One of the most disturbing aspects of the public, taxpayer-funded animal sheltering program in the City of Long Beach is the lack of transparency that exists concerning the sheer number of animals the City euthanizes on a yearly basis, as well as the progress the ACS makes in decreasing that number.

At their 2013 year in review Open House, held in February 2014, ACS released euthanasia statistics that were misleading to the public: In calculating its progress, ACS resorts to a statistical sleight of hand that makes the agency's progress seem much greater than it is in reality. The shrewd reporting of euthanasia numbers to obscure its underperformance reveals not only a lack of transparency, but a clear attempt to manipulate public perception by Long Beach City management. This lack of meaningful disclosure should be addressed by the City Council immediately so that Long Beach residents have transparency with regard to the performance of Long Beach ACS.

At their Open House, ACS reported having decreased euthanasias by 13% for cats and 14% for dogs. As discussed in the first section of this report, the actual decrease that ACS realized in the euthanasia *rate*, the most accurate measure of a shelter's progress, is 3 percentage points for cats, 3 percentage points for kittens, 2 percentage points for dogs and 2 percentage points for puppies. This constitutes a significant disparity between actual progress in decreasing the amount of killing at the shelter and that claimed by ACS and Long Beach City management.

Examination of ACS's calculations reveals that ACS arrives at these overstated numbers by using unstandardized values – that is, by comparing raw numbers of animals killed from year to year rather than by comparing the rate – that is, the numbers of animals killed *as a percentage of the shelter's total intake*. Comparing the number of animals killed from one year to another does not take into account the total number of animals

received in any given year. To arrive at an accurate accounting of ACS's effectiveness, it is necessary to compare the euthanasia **rate** from each year—**where the rate is calculated as a percentage of intake**—not the euthanasia numbers. The use of the euthanasia rate rather than simple numbers yields an accurate assessment of ACS's actual performance. Reporting decreases in "euthanasias" rather than decreases in the euthanasia *rate* misleads the public. This is precisely the kind of misunderstanding that ACS relies upon by reporting "decreases in euthanasias" rather than decreases in the euthanasia rate.

Appendix B explicates in greater detail the difference between the raw numbers-based method ACS uses, which results in inflated progress claims, and the rate-based method, which is the statistically sound method for reporting progress in decreasing killing.

The value of transparency is adhered to at many other levels of Long Beach city government. Since ACS is a taxpayer funded agency, it should be held to the same standard as every other agency.

We therefore urge City Council to order an audit of ACS's reporting methods and to require the agency to report changes in euthanasia rate on a percentage of intake basis. Furthermore, we urge the City to make public the exact methods by which ACS arrives at its performance metrics. In addition, we request that City Council direct ACS to publish its raw intake and outcome numbers on the agency's website monthly, as does Sacramento Animal Care Services, so that Long Beach citizens and animal advocates may readily monitor ACS's performance of animal adoptions, transfers, fosters, euthanasias and other outcomes. Finally, and most importantly, we recommend that the City require ACS to set performance goals for lifesaving at the ACS shelter and to make available to the public an assessment of the agency's performance of those goals at least every six months.

CONCLUSION

Over the past decade, if not longer, the City of Long Beach appears to have viewed the killing of animals in its shelter as a kind of necessary evil. This attitude has stimulated the culture of helplessness that has overwhelmed Long Beach Animal Care Services, miring it in both complacency and inefficiency, much to the detriment of the more than 38,000 companion animals that have been killed there over the past seven years.

Recognition of a problem is the first step in solving it. However, not only does city administration consistently deny that such problems exist, but it has engaged in a PR cover-up of these issues. In a July 2013 article in the *Grunion Gazette*, the director of ACS was credited with effectively stating that killing "isn't the emphasis" at ACS anymore. With a 50% kill rate and the killing of more than 70% of all cats at the shelter, the director's claim is patently false.

Furthermore, at a city council meeting in spring of 2014, City Manager Patrick West stated that ACS is doing “wonderful things.” While it is true that ACS has instituted minor improvements during the past year—the most significant among them a pilot Shelter-Neuter-Return program for community cats and a public commitment to partner with Friends of Long Beach Animals on an onsite spay/neuter clinic, the fact that City management continues to ignore ACS’s lack of an in-house adoption program, or in fact, a number of additional lifesaving programs, while it continues to tout minor improvements, shows a clear disregard for the trust the Long Beach public has placed in the City. It also provides evidence of a “circle the wagons” mentality that has clearly been encouraged to protect and maintain the dismal status quo at ACS. This is the same city administration under whose watch an ACS employee was found guilty last year of embezzling more than \$600,000 from the shelter over a period of several years (Long Beach Press Telegram, September 12, 2012).

The negative evidence against ACS continues to grow, as the shelter’s 50% kill rate continues to diminish the City of Long Beach’s reputation as a progressive city. Stayin’ Alive Long Beach therefore calls upon the City Council of Long Beach to do the following:

- Pass a council resolution mandating that ACS establish and operate an adoption program and other lifesaving programs;
- Establish performance goals and acceptable metrics for ACS that communicate to the public the degree to which ACS is performing or not performing the duties the public has entrusted to it;
- Require ACS to post its Chameleon kennel statistic reports on its website on a monthly basis;
- Request that the City Auditor audit and report on ACS’s euthanasia and save rates for at least the past 3 years using percentage of intake as the basis for yearly comparisons;
- Conduct an audit of ACS’s current programs to assess their capacity to effect lifesaving;
- Consult nationally-known experts on shelter management to inform the City of best practices in animal sheltering.

Until City Council takes measures necessary to create a new culture at ACS, one that values and exhibits transparency and takes a proactive approach to saving lives, thousands more animals will die yearly at the Long Beach Animal Care Services animal shelter. Long Beach has the power to be a truly animal-friendly city, but until these

shelter reforms are set in motion, Long Beach's claim to be the "safest large city for people and animals" will be nothing but an empty platitude, indeed, "a tale....full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

References

- Gazette Newspapers (October 9, 2013). No-Kill Policy Report Stirs Animal Shelter Passion. http://www.gazettes.com/news/government/no-kill-policy-report-stirs-animal-shelter-passion/article_ce6a333e-30ea-11e3-be58-0019bb2963f4.html.
- Gazette Newspapers (July 19, 2013). Animal Care Department Focuses on Providing Services. http://www.gazettes.com/lifestyle/pets/animal-care-department-focuses-on-providing-service/article_dcc9b0cc-ef49-11e2-bfd2-001a4bcf887a.html.
- Long Beach Animal Care Services 2012-2014. Kennel Statistics Reports. Obtained by Stayin' Alive Long Beach through the California Public Records Act.
- Long Beach Press Telegram (May 14, 2012). Ex-Long Beach Animal Care Worker Charged with Embezzlement Pleads Not Guilty. <http://www.presstelegram.com/technology/20120514/ex-long-beach-animal-care-worker-charged-with-embezzlement-pleads-not-guilty>.
- Long Beach Press Telegram (September 12, 2012). Former Long Beach employee who embezzled money sentenced to prison, restitution. <http://www.presstelegram.com/technology/20120912/former-long-beach-employee-who-embezzled-money-sentenced-to-prison-restitution>
- News10/KXTV (2012). Sacramento City Animal Shelter Launches Campaign to Save Lives. <http://www.news10.net/news/article/185562/0/Sacramento-City-Animal-Shelter-launches-campaign-to-save-lives>.
- Sacramento Animal Care Services (2014). Shelter Statistics – City of Sacramento. <http://portal.cityofsacramento.org/General-Services/Animal-Care/About-Us/Shelter-Statistics>.
- socala (2013). Internal Revenue Service Form 8879-EO. <http://socala.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/FYE2013-Form-990-01202015155345.pdf>.
- Stayin' Alive Long Beach (2013). What's Happening to Long Beach's Shelter Animals? A report on the effectiveness of Long Beach Animal Care Services and recommendations for change. http://www.stayinalivelongbeach.org/uploads/1/2/1/3/12139294/stayinalivelongbeachreport_2013.pdf

APPENDIX A

PROGRAMS OF THE NO KILL EQUATION

I. Feral Cat TNR Program

Many communities throughout the United States are embracing Trap-Neuter-Release programs (TNR) to improve animal welfare, reduce death rates, and meet obligations to public welfare.

II. High-Volume, Low-Cost Spay/Neuter

Low-cost, high-volume spay/neuter will quickly lead to fewer animals entering the shelter system, allowing more resources to be allocated toward saving lives.

III. Rescue Groups

An adoption or transfer to a rescue group frees up scarce cage and kennel space, reduces expenses for feeding, cleaning, killing, and improves a community's rate of lifesaving. In an environment of millions of dogs and cats killed in shelters annually, rare is the circumstance in which a rescue group should be denied an animal.

IV. Foster Care

Volunteer foster care is crucial to No Kill. Without it, saving lives is compromised. It is a low cost, and often no cost, way of increasing a shelter's capacity, improving public relations, increasing a shelter's public image, rehabilitating sick and injured or behaviorally challenged animals, and saving lives.

V. Comprehensive Adoption Programs

Adoptions are vital to an agency's lifesaving mission. The quantity and quality of shelter adoptions is in shelter management's hands, making lifesaving a direct function of shelter policies and practice. If shelters better promoted their animals and had adoption programs responsive to the needs of the community, including public access hours for working people, offsite adoptions, adoption incentives, and effective marketing, they could increase the number of homes available and replace killing with adoptions. Contrary to conventional wisdom, shelters can adopt their way out of killing.

VI. Pet Retention

While some of the reasons animals are surrendered to shelters are unavoidable, others can be prevented—but only if shelters are willing to work with people to help them solve their problems. Saving animals requires communities to develop innovative strategies for keeping people and their companion animals together. And the more a community sees its shelters as a place to turn for advice and assistance, the easier this job will be.

VII. Medical and Behavior Programs

In order to meet its commitment to a lifesaving guarantee for all savable animals, shelters need to keep animals happy and healthy and keep animals moving through the system. To do this, shelters must put in place comprehensive vaccination, handling, cleaning, socialization, and care policies before animals get sick and rehabilitative efforts for those who come in sick, injured, unweaned, or traumatized.

VIII. Public Relations/Community Involvement

Increasing adoptions, maximizing donations, recruiting volunteers and partnering with community agencies comes down to one thing: increasing the shelter's public exposure. And that means consistent marketing and public relations. Public relations and marketing are the foundation of all a shelter's activities and their success. To do all these things well, the shelter must be in the public eye.

IX. Volunteers

Volunteers are a dedicated "army of compassion" and the backbone of a successful No Kill effort. There is never enough staff, never enough dollars to hire more staff, and always more needs than paid human resources. That is where volunteers make the difference between success and failure and, for the animals, life and death.

X. Proactive Redemptions

One of the most overlooked areas for reducing killing in animal control shelters are lost animal reclaims. Primarily shifting from passive to a more proactive approach—has proven to have a significant impact on lifesaving and allow shelters to return a large percentage of lost animals to their families.

XI. A Compassionate Director

The final element of the No Kill Equation is the most important of all, without which all other elements are thwarted—a hard working, compassionate animal control or shelter director not content to continue killing.

Source: Winograd, N. (2009). Revisiting the No Kill Equation. <http://www.nathanwinograd.com/?p=1832>

APPENDIX B

TWO METHODS FOR REPORTING PROGRESS IN DECREASING KILLING (FELINE EXAMPLE)

1. Method One: Percentage of intake
2. Method Two: Raw unstandardized numbers only (Method used by Long Beach ACS).

METHOD ONE: Percentage of Intake

This method is preferred because it takes into account the community's need and therefore more accurately measures agency performance.

Percentage change in euthanasia rate for cats and kittens at Long Beach ACS 2012-2013
Using raw numbers converted to a percentage of intake

	2012	2013
Total cats & kittens euthanized	3673	3185
Total live cats & kittens impounded	4824	4374
Euthanasia rate	76%	73%
Percent difference 2012-2013		-3

Using percentage of intake yields a 3 percentage point decrease in cat euthanasia rate from 2012 – 2013.

METHOD TWO: Raw Unstandardized Numbers Only (Method utilized by LBACS)

ACS's method using raw numbers only. In response to a public records request, ACS provided the following equation to show how the agency calculates its progress in decreasing killing. This method yields a decrease in numbers only -- not a decrease in the rate, which is the only meaningful way to view a shelter's progress. ACS's reporting of a 13% decrease in "cat euthanasias" at the ACS 2014 ACS Open House is a statistical manipulation that seems designed to manipulate public perception of the agency's progress.

1. $3673 - 3185 = 488$ (2012 euthanasias minus 2013 euthanasias)
2. Taking the difference (488) and dividing it by 2012 euthanasias (3673) yields a 13.3% decrease:

$488/3673 = 13.3\%$ decrease. This number is comparing apples to oranges and does not give an accurate read of ACS's actual performance with respect to reducing killing.



www.stayinalivelongbeach.org