



Mr. Howell, euthanized by
Long Beach Animal Care Services, October 27, 2016

Inaccuracies in the Reporting of Euthanasia Decreases at Long Beach Animal Care Services (LBACS)

ABSTRACT

This report explains the inaccurate methods the City of Long Beach and Mayor Garcia use to report progress in lifesaving at the Long Beach animal shelter. First, the accurate method used as the standard in the sheltering industry is reviewed. Then, the inaccurate method used by the City of Long Beach is detailed. The City's inaccurate method does not take into account the shelter's yearly intake and therefore does not place the number of animals euthanized in the proper context. The City's unorthodox calculations result in inaccurate progress numbers, which misleads the public as to the true progress the shelter is making.

Prepared by: Stayin' Alive Long Beach
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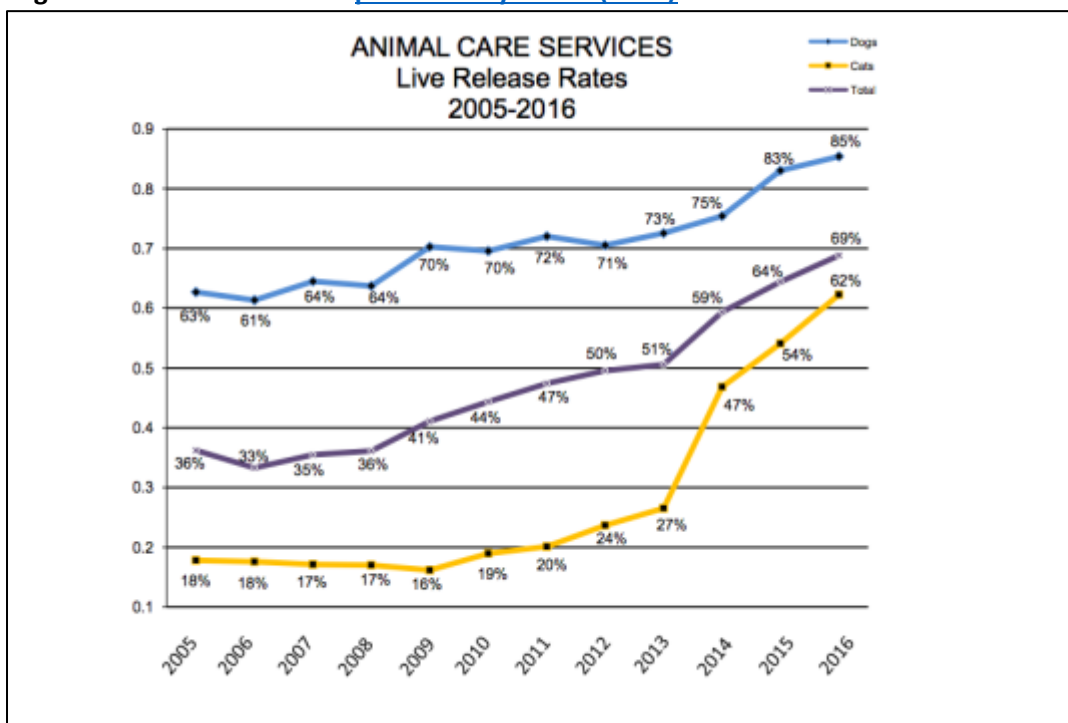
Inaccuracies in the Reporting of Euthanasia Decreases at Long Beach Animal Care Services (LBACS)

In January 2017, the City of Long Beach issued [a press release](#) claiming that LBACS had decreased euthanasias by 27% for dogs over the last year [1]. This claim was echoed by Mayor Garcia on his Facebook page and was picked up by a number of [news outlets](#). This number is highly misleading to the public and differs from how LBACS has reported progress in the past. A look at the data reveals that the decrease in euthanasia rate from 2015 to 2016 is 2 percentage points. The following paragraphs demonstrate how the report of a 27% decrease in euthanasias misleads the public and differs from the sheltering industry standard for reporting a shelter's progress. In fact, it contradicts the way that LBACS itself reports its progress (see Figure 1 below).

The Sheltering Industry Reports Progress in Rates, Not Raw Numbers

Like thousands of animal shelters across the country, LBACS reports its Live Release Rate [2,3] every year. As we see in Figure 1 below, LBACS reports its Live Release Rate for dogs in 2015 at 83% and in 2016 at 85%. These rates are correctly calculated by dividing the number of animals leaving the shelter alive by the number of animals the shelter received (intake) in a given year. Note that the increase in Live Release Rate for dogs from 2015 to 2016 is 2 percentage points (this is the same as a decrease of 2 percentage points in the euthanasia rate). Notably, there is no change of 27% in any category from 2015 to 2016 as cited by the Mayor and city management.

Figure 1. Live Release Rates [published by LBACS \(2017\)](#)



Source: [City of Long Beach](#) (2017).

[1] A similarly misleading 31% decrease in euthanasia for cats was also cited.

[2] The Live Release Rate was established as an industry standard at the Asilomar Accords, a conference comprised of national animal welfare organizations in 2004.

[3] The Live Release Rate and the Euthanasia Rate added together equal 100 percent.

How is the Euthanasia Rate Calculated?

As we can see from Figure 1, to accurately gauge a shelter's progress in lifesaving, the *rate* from year to year must be compared. The *rate* for a given year is found by dividing the euthanasias by the *intake*, and then the *rates* from year to year are compared. The *intake* is key, as it represents the community's need, which changes from year to year. Table 1 shows exactly how the *rate* is calculated.

Table 1. Euthanasia Rate Method utilized by the sheltering industry

2015		
Add number of puppies and dogs LBACS euthanized in 2015	539 dogs + 61 puppies	= 600 dogs and puppies euthanized in 2015
Add the number of dogs and puppies taken in in 2015 (intake)	3089 dogs + 463 puppies	= 3552 dogs and puppies taken in in 2015
Divide the number of puppies and dogs euthanized by the number of puppies and dogs taken in in 2015 (intake)	600/3552	= 17% of dogs and puppies euthanized in 2015. (This means that 83% is the live release rate.)
2016		
Add number of puppies and dogs LBACS euthanized in 2016	407 dogs + 30 puppies	= 437 dogs and puppies euthanized in 2016
Add the number of dogs and puppies taken in in 2016 (intake)	2699 dogs + 307 puppies	= 3006 dogs and puppies taken in in 2016
Divide the number of puppies and dogs euthanized by the number of puppies and dogs taken in in 2016 (intake)	437/3006	15% of dogs and puppies euthanized in 2016. (This means that 85% is the live release rate.)
The euthanasia rate in 2015 (17%) minus the euthanasia rate in 2016 (15%) gives us the true decrease in the euthanasia rate the shelter has made.	Euthanasia rate in 2015 – Euthanasia rate in 2016	17% - 15% = 2 percentage points decrease in the euthanasia rate

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Where do City Management and Mayor Garcia get the inaccurate number of 27%? [4]

The 27% decline in euthanasias cited by the City and Mayor Garcia is very different. It is a decline in the raw *number* of euthanasias, not in the *rate* of euthanasias. To reach this inflated number, the City reports the decrease in euthanasias as a percentage of the prior year's euthanasias and nothing more. This method does not take into account the animals taken in (*the intake*) each year. However, *intake* is crucial to understanding the community's need in a given year, and it cannot be ignored if one wants an accurate picture of the shelter's progress. Table 2 shows how the City does this calculation, which gives an inaccurate picture of the shelter's progress.

Table 2. Misleading "Number Method" utilized by Mayor Garcia and the City

Add number of puppies and dogs LBACS euthanized in 2015	539 dogs + 61 puppies	= 600 dogs and puppies euthanized in 2015
Add number of puppies and dogs LBACS euthanized in 2016	407 dogs + 30 puppies	= 437 dogs and puppies euthanized in 2016
Subtract euthanasias in 2016 from euthanasias in 2015	600-437	163 fewer dogs and puppies euthanized in 2016 than 2015
Divide the decrease in euthanasias by the total number of dog/puppy euthanasias from the prior year (2015).	163/600	= 27%. 163 is 27% of 600. Here, we see the method is not taking into account the differences in intake for each year. Intake is never mentioned.

To recap: As mentioned above, the "Number Method" does not incorporate each year's intake. It is the *rate*, which does incorporate each year's intake, that provides the context. Without context, a change in the raw *number*, like 27%, is meaningless. Only a change in the *rate* tells the story.

Because Mayor Garcia's 27% scenario leaves out the *intake* (which defines the need of our community) it does not tell an accurate story. **It misleads the public with an irrelevant bit of meaningless data, creating a statistical smokescreen to hide the shelter's lack of significant progress.**

Why Does This Matter?

The people of Long Beach listen to the Mayor, and they pay attention to sound bites from the media. The inflated 27% statistic has been widely reported and repeated by the Mayor in both mainstream and social media. They use these inflated numbers to excuse the ongoing unnecessary killing of helpless animals at our shelter. If the public knew that from 2015 to 2016 the decrease in the euthanasia rate for dogs was only 2 percentage points, more voices would demand change; however, Mayor Garcia and the City's method is designed to prevent this. The City cites transparency as one of its values; however, we see here a case where an elected official and city management are actively working to obscure the facts to maintain the status quo. This is harmful to Long Beach's shelter animals, to the citizens of Long Beach and to democracy.

[4] In addition to misleading the public by citing decreases in the euthanasia number, city management and the Mayor also mislead the public by not reporting other outcomes besides euthanasia, including adoptions, fosters, transfers, transports and returns-to-owner. This additional issue is discussed [on our website](#).

Links appearing in the report (please copy and paste into your browser):

- Page 2 City of Long Beach Press Release.
<http://www.longbeach.gov/press-releases/press-releases/city-of-long-beach-animal-care-services-continues-improving-with-another-record-year-in-2016/>
- Page 2 Long Beach Press Telegram article.
<http://www.presstelegram.com/social-affairs/20170107/fewer-animals-euthanized-at-long-beach-shelter-last-year>
- Page 2
Fig. 1
Top City of Long Beach Euthanasia Statistics.
<http://www.longbeach.gov/press-releases/media-library/documents/dog-and-cat-impound-euthanization-numbers-2005-2016/>
- Page 2
Fig. 1
Bottom City of Long Beach Press Release.
<http://www.longbeach.gov/press-releases/press-releases/city-of-long-beach-animal-care-services-continues-improving-with-another-record-year-in-2016/>
- Page 4 City of Long Beach Public Records Request page.
<http://www.longbeach.gov/citymanager/public-records-request/>
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Footnote Stayin' Alive Long Beach website.
<http://www.stayinalivelongbeach.org/lbacss-numbers.html>