



CITY OF LOS ANGELES
L A ANIMAL SERVICES



Date: June 30, 2008
To: Board of Animal Services Commissioners
From: Edward A. Boks, General Manager
Subject: SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION – NEW HOPE PROGRAM REVISIONS

At the meeting of June 9, 2008, in connection with the report recommending changes to the New Hope Program policy, agreement, information form, and monthly report, along with re-instatement of spay/neuter charges and deposits, the Board requested that staff meet again with an ad-hoc committee assembled by Commission Vice-President Riordan to represent New Hope partners. Members of the committee are:

Marie Atake
Lisa Edmondson
Laura Beth Heisen
Ben Lehrer
Scott Sorrentino

The meeting occurred on June 16, 2008, and focused on several issues of greatest concern to this committee with ideas for compromise changes. As at past meetings, the discussion was valuable and yielded information about the proposed New Hope revisions as well as larger issues that enhance our joint understanding of Department and rescue perspectives. The topics are as follows.

Fees and Fee Increases:

The re-institution of the spay/neuter fee and deposit has been reluctantly accepted as inevitable due to the City's financial situation. However, the committee was concerned about other changes that extended the waiting period, through one full weekend, before any discount was offered for available animals. Among reasons the committee objected to the time frame was that it might be confusing and therefore inconsistently applied, and that animals would be held longer at the animal care center which has a cost to the City and elevates the risk of illness in the animals.

State law mandates that stray dogs and cats be held by the Department for a certain minimum number of days before becoming available for adoption. Owner-surrendered animals are available immediately, although State law prohibits euthanasia for time-space until the same legal holding period has elapsed. The committee suggested any animal be discounted to New Hope partners on available date plus one day. This would offer visibility to the general public of typically five or six days for strays, but only one day for owner-surrenders. After reviewing statistics of New Hope adoption patterns of

owner-surrendered animals, it appears that the New Hope partners focus early adoption efforts on highly adoptable dogs, puppies, and kittens. Out of 3575 dogs adopted by New Hope in calendar 2007, 1,149 of them had come into Los Angeles Animal Services as owner-surrenders. Of the 1,149, 481 of them were adopted at discount, or released at no charge, to New Hope partners, prior to the review date. Uniformly the dogs were designer breeds, pure breeds, puppies, and highly adoptable animals, often adopted within 24 hours.

Staff will verbally recommend that the proposed New Hope Program revision read that any available dog or cat will be subject to New Hope discount after “Review Date” in Chameleon plus one day. “Review Date” is a required field for every kennel record and is assigned according to a consistent formula based on State law. Any owner-surrendered cat over one-year of age, or any owner-surrendered pit pull or pit bull mix dog of any age, will be Green-Listed after one day for New Hope partners to adopt at the maximum discount.

Unweaned and Fostering:

After further elaboration on the proposal that animals under eight weeks of age can be adopted at the standard low price by New Hope, or fostered under the existing foster program by New Hope, this element appears to be satisfactory.

No modification to the proposal is recommended.

Providing Addresses for Licensing Purposes:

The committee formulated a pilot program that would expand and enhance the New Hope partners' responsibility to explain licensing requirements to dog adopters living in the City of Los Angeles and to assist them in timely completion of the licensing process, by providing rabies and spay/neuter certificates, for example. The pilot would operate for six months, and a comparison made of licensed versus unlicensed dogs among people in City zip codes who adopted a dog; if 70% of those in City zip codes showed a license, the pilot could be considered for permanent implementation.

In a recent audit of the Department, the City Controller stated, regarding the need to improve the Licensing Program, that: “The estimated percentage of unlicensed dogs in the City ranges from 70% to 85%. The Department is not taking advantage of several methods at its disposal to increase the percentage of licensed dogs.” The audit recommended some immediate steps, but the expectation of officials who will monitor the Department's audit action plan will be that the Department will identify all avenues to increase licensing compliance. For example, we are notifying all veterinarians in the City that they are required to send rabies certificates, with owner name and address, to the Department. Veterinarians do not claim that confidentiality prevents them from forwarding the certificates as required. Animals adopted through New Hope are the most efficient set of animals to input into the Chameleon Tag system because animal records already exist.

Staff will verbally clarify at the meeting that collection of addresses for adopters in the City of Los Angeles applies only to persons adopting dogs, not cats or rabbits, but does not recommend a pilot information program in lieu of providing addresses of dog adopters by New Hope partners.

Adding New Adopter Name and Contact Information to Microchip Registration:

The committee suggested that New Hope Partners would not be required to add a new adopter's name to the microchip registration, at any time; the current proposal gives them 30 days after an the adoption to add the new guardian/owner. The committee felt this was not an enforceable provision and should be a recommendation, not a requirement. From staff's perspective, every cross-check available that helps a pet get back to his or her home must be utilized.

No modification to the proposal is recommended.

Six Months Waiting Period Before a New Hope Member Can have Active Status:

Staff had suggested this as a cooling-off period for members who sometimes transition from group to group, but respects that the decision should be under the control of the New Hope designated lead contact.

Staff will verbally recommend that the proposed New Hope Program revision remove the six-month as member requirement.

Monthly Report Form and Frequency:

Since the Department generates most of the information on the monthly report form, the monthly e-mailing should not be onerous, but does allow timely recordkeeping. In discussion about the form contents, a minor change is recommended but the need for zip codes on adopters (or address, but only when a dog is adopted to a person in the City) and spay/neuter date (if not done by the Department) must remain. Statistics from 2007 show 729 animals still pending for spay/neuter from among the 6,146 dogs and cats adopted by New Hope Partners. Including the date on the monthly report will help us cross check and follow-up where necessary.

Staff will verbally recommend that the proposed New Hope Program monthly form revise columns to drop "Foster" and "Kennel" and in place show "With Rescue" and "Deceased."

Northeast Valley Animal Shelter New Hope Access Hours:

The committee requested regular 24/7 access and services to New Hope at the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter. Staff explained that we are working on staffing and access, as well as protocols for which animals are transferred, and would continue to communicate to New Hope as the situation evolves. We share the committee's goal.

No modification to the proposal is recommended.

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Using "Guardian" and "him" and "her" Terminology in the Documents:

Staff will verbally acknowledge that the proposed New Hope Program revision will be modified to use "guardian," "guardian/owner," and "him," "her," "he," and "she" to refer to animals rather than "it."