Public Low Cost Anti-Rabies Clinics

The Anti-Rabies Clinic program is a prime protector of public health and safety. Conducted by the License Division of the Department of Animal Regulation, in conjunction with the Southern California Veterinary Medical Association, the quarterly clinics are held in February, May, August and November. In the 45 clinics conducted in the 1973-74 fiscal year, 23,796 dogs were vaccinated against the infectious disease at local parks and recreation centers. The inoculation cost is $2 per dog. A total of 7,182 dog licenses was issued at the clinic sites.

The impact of the expanded clinic program is reflected in the fact that a rabid dog has not been recorded in the City since 1962. A State law (in addition to the City ordinance) requires that all dogs, four months and older, must be vaccinated against rabies every 30 months in areas declared rabies endemic by the State Department of Public Health.

Animal Airlift

The City of Los Angeles, under the supervision of the Department of Animal Regulation, has given more than 2,209 wild animals a second chance for survival.

The "second chance" animals are those which have been humanely trapped in the City of Los Angeles, loaded aboard a helicopter and flown to Angeles National Forest for relocation. In the 1973-74 fiscal year, 406 small wild creatures were relocated from an unnatural urban environment to a natural habitat. The unique conservation program, called "Animal Airlift", was initiated September 11, 1969. The first wild animal cargo was flown out of Van Nuys Municipal Airport. The point of flight origin now is the West Valley Animal Shelter in Chatsworth.

Since the inception of the program, originated by Robert I. Rush, General Manager of the City Department of Animal Regulation, small wild creatures displaced by expanding urban projects have been transported to the national forest in flights scheduled virtually each week.

The animals, including raccoons, opossums, foxes, squirrels, rabbits, owls, hawks and nonpoisonous snakes, are generally trapped in outlying areas of the City at the request of harried home owners, who, for some reason or another, find the animals a nuisance. Humane box traps are set by Animal Regulation Department wildlife officers. The trapped animals are placed in safe comfortable cages at a neighboring animal shelter and held a few days, at most, before departing on the Airlift for new homes in the wilderness.

For the 35-mile flight to the forest, the animals are placed in ventilated boxes and secured to the frame of the helicopter. Flying the Airlift are George W. Mason, District Supervisor of the West Valley Animal Shelter, the current base of flight origination, and Ray Schutte, City helicopter pilot.

Game management personnel of Angeles Forest assist Mr. Mason and Mr. Schutte in selecting release sites for the animals. Availability of food, water and shelter are priority factors in selecting the sites.

Only animals native to California are released back to the wilds. Other wild animals found in the City are given sanctuary in zoos or similar facilities. Deer, frequently found in Los Angeles urban areas, are corralled and returned to a native habitat by vehicle.

Volunteer Services to Animals (VSA)

A volunteer organization of responsible citizens, interested in the care, control and welfare of animals, was activated as a public service adjunct to the Department, March 31, 1972. Known as the Volunteer Services to Animals (VSA), this dedicated group of humane workers has contributed substantially to the improvement of service and environment in the City's animal shelters.

VSA recommendations adopted included an increased feeding schedule for puppies and kittens; an extension of time for the adoption of impounded stray cats; the posting of shelter signs designed to assist visitors in locating lost pets; the installation of stainless steel feeding bowls on the doors of cat cages, thus preventing overturned food receptables; and the installation of telephones for VSA use, thus facilitating inquiries regarding lost pets. VSA workers in the shelters continue to play a prominent role in reuniting lost pets with owners and in the placement of available shelter animals in homes where humane care is assured. President of VSA is Mrs. Betty Denny Smith.

St. Francis of Assisi Award

A Los Angeles couple, dedicated to child and animal welfare, received the second annual St. Francis of Assisi Humane Award. Mr. and Mrs. Felipe Chavex, 1010 West 21st Street, Los Angeles, were selected from a field of 51 nominees for high achievement in humane work.

The distinguished award was conceived by Mayor Tom Bradley during his councilmanic tenure in the spirit of promoting humane treatment to all animals throughout the City.

Mr. and Mrs. Chavez filled a great need in their neighborhood for humane animal care, according to the Animal Regulation Board of Commissioners, the judging panel in the annual competition.