

Valley

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On the Issue

INFORMED OPINIONS
ON TODAY'S TOPICS

Stemming the Tide of Animal Euthanasia

By ROB O'NEIL
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

The Los Angeles Animal Regulation Department impounded 74,000 animals during fiscal year 1994-95. Almost 50,000, or more than two-thirds of them, were eventually euthanized.

In San Francisco, the city's Department of Animal Care and Control and the private Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals signed an "Adoption Pact" in 1994 designed to ensure an interagency cooperation that would give a home to every adoptable animal.

In 1995, San Francisco impounded 13,663 animals and euthanized 4,568, or just over one-third. The eventual goal is to eliminate euthanasia of treatable animals.

Is it possible to maintain and operate animal shelters in a city the size of Los Angeles without euthanizing most of the impounded animals?

Gini Barrett, Sylmar, former president, Los Angeles Animal Regulation Commission:

"At the volume we're bringing animals into the system today, no, I don't think it's possible. . . . You have to decrease the rivers, and I do mean rivers, of animals coming into the system. I stepped down [as commission president] so I could initiate a task force on spay and neutering . . . which can eliminate unnecessary and unwanted animals. . . . We must decide as a society . . . to quit treating animals like litter."



Gini Barrett

Edson C. "Russ" Cook, Tarzana, member, Los Angeles Animal Regulation Commission:



Edson C. Cook

"The archaic system of 'animal control by killing' . . . can be eliminated in approximately two years at no cost to the taxpayers . . . by creating a private/government alliance to handle what we call the 'treatables' . . . these are cats or dogs traditionally considered not adoptable because they are old, ugly, unweaned, maimed, un-socialized. . . . But a lot of these could be treated over a period of time and . . . brought back to be trusting of human beings. . . . Then you need to stem the tide of animals coming into the shelters with an aggressive free spay and neuter program."

Peter Persic, spokesman, L.A. Animal Regulation Department:

"What we are really facing are too many unwanted animals and not enough homes, and we are at the end of the pipeline. It's unfair to the animals, unfair to the city and unfair to the taxpayers to have this horrible cycle of unwanted pets. . . . Our statistics say 36.5% of all animals impounded fall into one or more of the following categories: the owner has turned them in and requested we euthanize them; they have bitten; they are dead; they are seriously injured or sick."

Elyse Mayberry, Winnetka, founder, CATS Inc., an organization that rescues, neuters and places feral cats:

"The problem is we need low-cost spay and neuter, and early spay and neuter. . . . There's research showing no ramifications to spaying cats as early as eight weeks [old]. We [CATS] like to do it at four months, but a lot of vets won't do it until six months. By that time, you have cats that have gone into heat. . . . It's a matter of educating people . . . and getting enough participating veterinarians who charge reasonable fees."

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