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ANIMAL CARE PRACTICES AT
LOS ANGELES COUNTY ANIMAL CARE CENTERS

The County of Los Angeles Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) operates seven animal care centers (ACCs). These ACCs are in Agoura Hills, Baldwin Park, Carson/Gardena, Castaic, Downey, Lancaster, and Palmdale. DACC provides services to all unincorporated County areas, as well as 45 cities that contract for services. In FY 21-22 DACC cared for approximately 27,000 animals.

DACC is a national leader in animal shelter management. DACC was recognized in June 2022 by Best Friends Animal Society as ranking 10th out of 100 shelters nationally for improving its lifesaving of animals. Recent awards for its performance include: a 2021 Legacy Award from the Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Commission for showing a commitment to program quality and productivity excellence; a 2021 National Association of Counties Achievement Award for the implementation of progressive community-based services; and a 2020 California State Association of Counties Merit Award for response to COVID-19. Some highlights of how DACC provides care to animals include:

Population Management

- DACC closely manages its animal population to avoid overcrowding and animals remaining in its care for excessive periods of time. DACC’s population management program was developed in consultation with the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program.
- DACC operates under the guidelines of Socially Conscious Animal Sheltering, a compassionate, transparent and thoughtful model for how animal shelters can best support vulnerable animals in their care and in their communities. Learn more at: http://scsheltering.org/.
- DACC does not subscribe to the “no-kill” method of operating animal shelters because of the common resulting problems of overpopulation and disease outbreak in shelters, release of dangerous dogs to the public, and other unsafe
management practices that jeopardize animal welfare and human safety. For more information on DACC’s position see: https://animalcare.lacounty.gov/dacc-is-redefining-care/.

- DACC offers alternatives to impoundment consisting of referrals to resources, free food and pet supplies, financial assistance for urgent veterinary care, and other necessary help to reduce the surrender of pets into DACC’s care and help keep pets and their families together. These services are funded by the Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation (LACACF); see: www.lacountyanimals.org.
- DACC provides pet re-homing assistance through its partnership with Home to Home™, a free pet re-homing program that allows pet owners to find new homes for pets they can no longer keep. This reduces the number of owner-surrendered animals relinquished into DACC’s care. Find out more at: https://home-home.org/rehome/.
- In collaboration with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), DACC operates a foster program for underage, vulnerable animals (mostly kittens) so they are not admitted into the care centers but are instead promptly placed with trained foster volunteers who provide the necessary around the clock care until the kittens are old enough for adoption. This prevents the euthanasia of underage kittens who cannot thrive in an animal care center due to their undeveloped immune systems and need for constant care. People interested in becoming foster volunteers can find information at: https://animalcare.lacounty.gov/got-kittens/.
- DACC’s Love at First Sight adoption program proactively identifies adoptable animals and makes them ready to go home the same day they available for adoption by promptly providing spay/neuter surgeries and microchip implantations. With Love at First Sight, DACC also eliminated the unpopular wait list system (which created delays in adopting animals) and now offers adoption to the first eligible party that appears in person and is ready to adopt immediately.
- Animal photos are uploaded in real time to DACC’s website so owners can better find a lost pet and interested adopters can find their new family member. Animals ready to be adopted are clearly labelled “Ready to Go Home.” See: https://animalcare.lacounty.gov/view-our-animals/.
- DACC animal care center managers, behavior and enrichment staff, and medical staff meet weekly to review the status of every animal and develop exit plans to help them get adopted or placed with rescue groups.
- DACC promotes its longer stay animals for adoption on social media and at offsite adoption events. Request are sent to animal rescue groups to assume care of these animals.
• Management and executive staff receive weekly reports of dogs who have been in DACC’s care longer than 20, 30, and 60 days. Monitoring these animals helps ensure that exit plans are developed and adoptable animals may be placed into new homes. They also receive weekly reports of animals in special hold custody that cannot be immediately released, such as animals held pursuant to court orders or in custody pending the outcome of potentially dangerous/vicious dog hearings, to ensure these cases are brought to the quickest resolutions possible.

• DACC works closely with more than 300 nonprofit adoption partners (rescue groups) who collaborate with DACC to assume care of hard-to-place animals and place them into new homes. This includes all species, not just dogs and cats.

• DACC regularly transfers adoptable animals from its animal care centers with higher animal populations to animal care centers with more available space so they may have added visibility and opportunities for adoption.

Animal Behavior and Enrichment

• DACC has a behavior and enrichment team that conducts dog play groups for dogs to safely socialize and exercise in play yards with other dogs. Dog play groups are excellent ways to discover each dog’s unique personality for successful placement and gives dogs much-needed opportunities for exercise, socialization, and de-stressing.

• DACC’s dog kennels are indoor/outdoor runs so dogs can eat and drink in the indoor kennel and eliminate in the outdoor kennel. DACC animal care attendants clean and disinfect each run daily and spot clean throughout the day. Cats can stretch and exercise using portals that connect two or more cages, giving them greater opportunity for movement and providing a separate litter box area from their cage where food and water are provided.

• Volunteers can exercise and socialize with all species of behaviorally sound animals in DACC’s care. This may include walking, grooming, or just sitting quietly with a shy animal who wants companionship. DACC welcomes anyone older than 16 years of age interested in volunteering, and more information can be found here: https://animalcare.lacounty.gov/become-a-volunteer/.

• Dogs exhibiting behavior that make them unsuitable for adoption to the general public are closely evaluated. Whenever possible, they are placed with trusted adoption partners who will provide behavior modification training, with the ultimate goal of placement with a permanent adopter. Dangerous dogs are not offered for rescue or adoption and are humanely euthanized to protect the safety of the public and other animals, allowing more space for adoptable and treatable animals to be cared for.
Medical Care

- DACC employs 13 veterinarians and 25 registered veterinary technicians to provide medical care for animals seven days a week.
- Each animal receives a medical exam, core vaccines, and flea/tick treatment upon arrival. Veterinarians conduct daily rounds and provide treatments as needed. Dogs and cats are spayed or neutered prior to adoption unless underlying medical conditions preclude the surgery.
- DACC works with private veterinary hospitals to provide emergency and after-hours emergency medical treatments for animals in its care.
- The Dreams Come True program finances treatment at private veterinary hospitals for severely injured animals with conditions beyond the resources of DACC. This program is funded by donations to the LACACF. For more information see: https://lacountyanimals.org/services/dreams-come-true-fennec/.
- The Grooming Gives Hope program provides grooming services by private groomers to groom excessively matted dogs. Often this grooming is medically necessary and reveals underlying wounds. It also greatly improves the dogs’ chances for adoption, turning dull and depressed dogs into exuberant adoption candidates. This program is also funded by the LACACF. For more information see: https://lacountyanimals.org/services/grooming-gives-hope/.

DACC welcomes visitors to its animal care centers. Private adoption appointments are available to provide personalized adoption services. Information on our adoption process and hours can be found here: https://animalcare.lacounty.gov/adoption-hours/.

Want to help animals cared for by DACC? Please donate to the Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation at https://lacountyanimals.org/give/.

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