

# LOS ANGELES POLICE COMMISSION

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January 22, 2014

BPC #14-0006

The Honorable Public Safety Committee  
City of Los Angeles  
c/o City Clerk's Office  
City Hall, Room 395  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attention John White:

RE: CITY COUNCIL MOTION REGARDING THE STATUS OF THE ANIMAL CRUELTY  
TASK FORCE (COUNCIL FILE NO. 13-1514)

At the regular meeting of the Board of Police Commissioners held Tuesday, January 21, 2014, the Board APPROVED the Department's report relative to the above matter.

This matter is being forwarded to you for approval.

Respectfully,

BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maria Silva".

MARIA SILVA  
Commission Executive Assistant

Attachment

c: Chief of Police

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

BPC H14-0006  
RECEIVED SF

JAN 15 2014

POLICE COMMISSIONER

January 10, 2014  
8.2

REVIEWED

TO: The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Chief of Police

*MEM Sepan*  
DATE 1/16/14

SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL MOTION REGARDING THE STATUS OF THE ANIMAL  
CRUELTY TASK FORCE (COUNCIL FILE NO. 13-1514)

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. That the Board of Police Commissioners review and approve this report.
2. That the Board transmit the attached Fact Sheet containing findings and conclusions to the Public Safety Committee.

DISCUSSION

On July 1, 2005, the Animal Cruelty Task Force (ACTF) was established and composed of two Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) detectives and six Animal Control Officers from the Department of Animal Services (DAS).<sup>1</sup> The Commanding Officer, Planning and Research Division, and Office of Support Services, were assigned to directly oversee and coordinate the operation of the ACTF.

On January 3, 2010, ACTF was reassigned to Detective Support and Vice Division (DSVD), which also manages the Mental Evaluation Unit. The ACTF is currently composed of four LAPD detectives, one Police Officer, and one Animal Control Officer. Currently, ACTF has one vacant detective position. Since its creation, the ACTF has evolved due to the violent criminal nature associated with animal abuse. As a result, ACTF has increased the number of detectives over animal control officers compared to 2005.

The focus of ACTF has been to prioritize animal abuse cases pertaining to public safety concerns. Many of the cases investigated by ACTF involve violent individuals with mental illness. These cases often lead to other forms of violent criminality such as domestic violence, child abuse, or aggression directed at members of the public. The ACTF works in partnership with the Department's Mental Evaluation Unit to help identify and prevent at-risk behavior, as well as the Department of Children and Family Services when a minor is involved.

The DAS continues to provide a vital role in ACTF. They provide forensic/medical examinations and compile medical reports, which are required by prosecuting attorneys for filing criminal charges. Also, DAS facilitates animal abuse investigations through their animal control and humane law expertise.

<sup>1</sup> On February 15, 2005, the Board of Police Commissioners approved the Department and DAS to combine enforcement efforts. On May 4, 2005, full Council approved the motion to establish the ACTF (Council File No. 04-1141).

Animal abuse or humane cases that do not fall within ACTF criteria are referred to DAS for appropriate action.<sup>2</sup> The ACTF continues to be a needed resource in the City, as reflected in the statistics below:

| TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES | DATES                                |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 125                   | January 1, 2013 to November 26, 2013 |
| 191                   | January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012 |
| 241                   | January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011 |

The following is a breakdown of the cases submitted for filing consideration as a result of crime reports, resulting in a 53percent clearance rate for crime reports investigated:

- 195 Cases Cleared by Arrest
- 76 Cases Rejected due to Lack of Sufficient Evidence
- 26 Cases Unfounded

Although the numbers would appear to reflect a 48 percent decrease in total investigations being handled, the ACTF emphasis has shifted over the last three years to investigate the most violent cases of animal abuse.

| TOTAL NUMBER OF ARRESTS | DATES                                |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 49                      | January 1, 2013 to November 26, 2013 |
| 19                      | January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012 |
| 39                      | January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011 |

The following is a breakdown of the total 107 arrests during the three-year period investigated and submitted to the respective prosecutorial agency for filing consideration:

- 49 Felony arrest (8 cases rejected for a filing rate of 84%).
- 58 Misdemeanors (1 case was referred to a City Attorney Hearing for a filing rate of 98%)

Public interest in combating animal abuse has remained constant. In 2013, ACTF directly received 1,394 public calls for services.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that LAPD patrol officers contacted the ACTF after-hours on 58 occasions. In 2012, LAPD patrol officers contacted ACTF on 44 occasions for advice on complex animal abuse investigations.

Should you have any questions, please contact Captain Kelly P. Mulldorfer, Detective Support and Vice Division at (213) 486-0910.

Very truly yours,



CHARLIE BECK  
Chief of Police

BOARD OF  
POLICE COMMISSIONERS  
Approved *January 21, 2013*  
Secretary *Maria Silva*

<sup>2</sup> The criteria for ACTF cases consist of aggravated animal abuse, blood sports, bestiality, and animal sacrifice.

<sup>3</sup> In 2013, the ACTF began tracking public calls regarding animal abuse.

## FACT SHEET

### CITY COUNCIL MOTION REGARDING STATUS OF THE STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ANIMAL CRUELTY TASK FORCE (COUNCIL FILE NO. 13-1514)

December 3, 2013

#### BACKGROUND

On November 19, 2013, Councilmembers Paul Koretz and Mitch O'Farrell were granted a motion to obtain information relative to the status of the structure and operational activities of the Animal Cruelty Task Force (ACTF).

On February 15, 2005, the Board of Police Commissioners approved an expansion of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Los Angeles Department of Animal Services (DAS) role in the investigation of animal abuse, which was at the request of a City Council motion (Council File No. 04-1141). The Police Commission forwarded its approval to the Public Safety Committee, which approved the establishment of the Animal Cruelty Task Force (ACTF).

On March 29, 2005, the Board of Animal Services Commissioners approved the partnership between DAS and the LAPD that formed the ACTF. The LAPD established an Animal Cruelty Unit within the Department and a Memorandum of Agreement between LAPD and DAS has been renewed every two years since 2005.

#### INFORMATION

On January 3, 2010, the ACTF was reassigned from Planning and Research Division to Detective Support and Vice Division (DSVD). The ACTF is currently comprised of four LAPD detectives, one police officer, and one Animal Control Officer. Currently, ACTF has a vacant detective position.

The focus of the ACTF has shifted over the years due to the violent criminal acts associated with animal abuse. The focus of ACTF is to prioritize animal abuse cases that significantly threaten public safety. Some of the cases investigated by ACTF involve violent individuals, and animal abuse investigations often lead to other forms of violent crimes such as domestic violence, child abuse, or aggravated assaults. Many individuals who commit animal abuse also suffer from mental illness. The ACTF works in partnership with the Department's Mental Evaluation Unit, DSVD, to identify at-risk individuals and prevent violent behavior. The ACTF also collaborates with the Department of Children and Family Services when a minor is involved as a witness, victim or perpetrator. As a result, ACTF has increased the number of sworn investigators, as compared to animal control officers, since 2005.

The DAS continues to perform a vital role in the ACTF. Their veterinarians provide Forensic/medical examinations and complete medical reports that are needed to obtain a criminal filing. Also, the DAS facilitates animal abuse investigations through their animal control and humane law expertise. Animal abuse or humane cases that do not meet the criteria for an ACTF investigation are referred to the DAS for appropriate action.

## FACT SHEET

### CITY COUNCIL MOTION REGARDING STATUS OF THE STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ANIMAL CRUELTY TASK FORCE (COUNCIL FILE NO. 13-1514)

December 3, 2013

Since the establishment of the ACTF, strong collaborative efforts with the District Attorney's Office have resulted in a variety of best practices and provided ACTF personnel with direct access to Deputy City and District Attorneys for case consultation and case filing. This collaboration and direct access to specific filing deputies has greatly increased the task force filing rates.

The LAPD and DAS have taken numerous steps within their respective agencies to provide training to first responders and ensure that notifications are made to ACTF on egregious animal abuse cases. The ACTF regularly provides training to LAPD personnel and other law enforcement agencies as part of the Department Vice School curriculum. In 2013, training was provided to first responders at roll calls on six occasions, and recently the ACTF provided training to personnel assigned to Communications Division.

In the last two years there were over 100 after-hour calls to ACTF from LAPD patrol officers seeking advice on animal abuse cases generated from calls for service from the community.<sup>1</sup> The advice provided to first responders from subject matter experts has increased the quality of the preliminary investigations, which has facilitated the assignment of appropriate resources to the most serious animal abuse cases.

Public interest in combating animal abuse has remained constant and the ACTF received 1,394 public calls for service in 2013.<sup>2</sup>

The latest Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between LAPD and DAS was ratified on August 1, 2013. The purpose of this MOA was to establish guidelines based on best practices for operations and supervision of ACTF. It also established areas of responsibility for ACTF, which allowed the investigative focus to remain on serious animal abuse cases. As previously stated, cases that are not within the scope of the ACTF are referred to the DAS for appropriate action. Cases that involve animal hoarding are referred to the Los Angeles Police Department Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU), the Los Angeles Housing Department, and DAS for appropriate action. The ACTF is responsible for conducting investigations of suspected animal cruelty as listed below:

- Aggravated Animal Abuse Resulting in Serious Injury or Death;
- Severe Animal Neglect (Felony Cases);
- Dog Fighting;
- Cockfighting;
- Bestiality;
- Animal Poisoning; and,
- Animal Sacrifice and Mutilation.

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<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles patrol officers contacted the ACTF after-hours on 58 occasions in 2013 and on 44 occasions in 2012.

<sup>2</sup> In 2013, the ACTF began tracking public calls regarding animal abuse.

**FACT SHEET**

CITY COUNCIL MOTION REGARDING STATUS OF THE STRUCTURE AND  
OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ANIMAL CRUELTY TASK FORCE  
(COUNCIL FILE NO. 13-1514)  
December 3, 2013

**SIGNIFICANT STATISTICS**

The ACTF continues to be a significant resource for the City, as reflected in the statistics below:

**CASES HANDLED BY ACTF**

| TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES | DATES                                |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 125                   | January 1, 2013 to November 26, 2013 |
| 191                   | January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012 |
| 241                   | January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011 |

Although the numbers reflect a 48 percent decrease in total investigations handled, the ACTF redefined its mission over the past three years to investigate only the most egregious cases of animal abuse. Below is a breakdown of the crime reports submitted to the respective prosecutorial agency for filing consideration, which resulted in a 53 percent clearance rate.

- (195) Cases Cleared by Arrest
- (76) Cases Rejected due to Lack of Sufficient Evidence
- (26) Cases Unfounded

**ARRESTS MADE BY ACTF**

| TOTAL NUMBER OF ARRESTS | DATES                                |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 49                      | January 1, 2013 to November 26, 2013 |
| 19                      | January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012 |
| 39                      | January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011 |
| <b>107</b>              |                                      |

Below is a breakdown of the total 107 arrests during the three-year period submitted for filing consideration:

- Felony Arrests (*Filing rate = 84%*)
- Misdemeanor Arrests (*Filing rate = 100%*)

Of the above listed arrests, eight felony cases were rejected due to the lack of sufficient evidence, and one misdemeanor case was referred to a City Attorney Hearing. The majority of misdemeanor arrests resulted from cockfighting events.

**SIGNIFICANT CASES**

**Domestic Violence-Related**

October 20, 2013

A 40 year-old female victim and her live-in boyfriend, were involved in a domestic dispute. The victim's four young minor children shared the small apartment with them.

## FACT SHEET

### CITY COUNCIL MOTION REGARDING STATUS OF THE STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ANIMAL CRUELTY TASK FORCE (COUNCIL FILE NO. 13-1514) December 3, 2013

The suspect, while intoxicated, went into the bedroom and physically and verbally abused the victim. He destroyed bedroom furniture and brutally killed the family dog. The eldest child witnessed the suspect kill the dog, while the other three children heard the violence from their bedroom. The eldest child called the police and the suspect was arrested. The victim and her daughter sustained minor injuries. The District Attorney's Office filed felony animal abuse against the suspect. Multiple misdemeanor charges for domestic violence and child abuse were also filed. The DCFS was notified of this incident.

#### February 10, 2012

The suspect was involved in a domestic dispute with his live-in girlfriend because she had become pregnant. He went to his neighbor's property and brutally beat a small dog to death by repeatedly kicking, stomping and hitting it with a broom handle. The suspect also stabbed and beat a second dog on the property. The second dog survived the attack that was witnessed by four neighbors. The District Attorney's Office filed multiple counts of felony animal cruelty.

#### **Family Violence-Related**

#### October 10, 2013

An elderly female and her cat moved in with her sister and son, (40 year-old suspect). The suspect became intoxicated and battered the elderly female, which caused her to leave the residence. When she returned home, her cat had been brutally killed. Bloodstains and pools of blood covered the bedroom walls, floor, and furniture. The female fled the house and the police were summoned. Prior to the arrival of police, the suspect put the dead cat on elderly female's bed, next to his cellular phone, and hid on the roof of the house. The District Attorney's Office filed felony animal cruelty and misdemeanor battery charges.

#### February 6, 2012

The suspect violated a restraining order by going to his mother's home. He (suspect) was refused entry because of his violent behavior, at which time he threatened his mother and killed the family dog by impaling it on a sharp metal rod outside of the apartment. The District Attorney's Office filed multiple felony charges.

#### **Mental Illness-Related**

#### May 19, 2013

The suspect's family left their residence, with the exception of the 22 year-old suspect, who stayed home. When the family returned, the suspect was nude and was mumbling about hearing voices. The suspect's sister discovered a pool of blood in the bathroom and the family dog's eyeball on the floor of his bedroom. The dog was found buried in the backyard near a bloody shovel. The suspect was transported by ambulance to Pacific Hospital, where he was treated and placed on a mental evaluation hold. The suspect admitted to killing and mutilating the dog because "voices told him to do it."

## FACT SHEET

### CITY COUNCIL MOTION REGARDING STATUS OF THE STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ANIMAL CRUELTY TASK FORCE (COUNCIL FILE NO. 13-1514) December 3, 2013

This case was brought to the attention of MEU, and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), as several young children live in the household.

#### May 2, 2012

The suspect beat a stray St. Bernard dog to death during a street carnival. According to witnesses, the suspect attacked the dog for no apparent reason. The dog fled from the suspect and attempted to hide in a nearby school, but he followed the dog and continued the beating. Numerous witnesses, including young children from the school, witnessed the incident. The District Attorney's Office filed felony animal cruelty, and included a weapons enhancement. Information about this incident and the suspect was forwarded to the Mental Evaluation Unit.

#### **Juvenile Animal Abusers**

#### May 22, 2013

The ACTF was notified by a concerned teacher after students at an elementary school were caught sharing a video from their phones. The video depicted a minor subject torturing a small defenseless dog. The 13-years-old subject was seen picking up a small dog by its collar and holding it off the ground in a choking manner. The dog was clearly suffering and attempted to wiggle back and forth to break free. The subject then held the dog over his head and forcefully slammed the dog onto the sidewalk. The subject then stomped on the injured small dog. The School Administration and DCFS were notified of the incident regarding the at-risk behavior. The District Attorney's Office filed felony animal cruelty charges.

#### **Sexual Deviant Behavior**

#### November 10, 2013

Harbor Area Patrol Officers responded to an animal cruelty radio call and contacted the ACTF. During the investigation, ACTF investigators recovered a home surveillance video that captured images of a man entering the backyard of a residence at 0400 hours and engaging in acts of bestiality with a family dog

The investigation further revealed earlier that same day that the suspect entered another residence and committed a hot prowl burglary. Based on evidence and a confession, the suspect was arrested and booked for residential burglary. The suspect admitted engaging in similar sexual acts with the same dog on at least five to nine occasions. The District Attorney's Office filed charges related to the residential burglary on one count bestiality.



## FACT SHEET

### CITY COUNCIL MOTION REGARDING STATUS OF THE STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ANIMAL CRUELTY TASK FORCE (COUNCIL FILE NO. 13-1514)

December 3, 2013

#### July 28, 2013

Witnesses observed their 84 year-old neighbor, naked in his back yard, having sexual intercourse with a female Pit Bull. This was not the first time that the neighbors witnessed the bestiality involving the same suspect. The act of bestiality was captured on video and provided to ACTF. The victim dog was impounded as evidence and a forensic examination was conducted by DAS. The DCFS was notified, as there were a number of children, including a 2-year-old, who also live at the residence and purportedly share the same bed as the suspect. The City Attorney's Office filed multiple charges of bestiality, animal abuse, and lewd conduct.

#### **Other Animal Abuse-Related Crimes**

#### August 17, 2013

The suspect stole a van that was left unattended with the motor running and a dog in the back seat. This case generated significant media attention because the owner enlisted the public's help for the safe return of their family dog. Two days later, the van was found parked with the dead dog inside. The suspect, a local transient, was identified from video surveillance and arrested. The District Attorney's Office filed one count a felony animal cruelty and misdemeanor auto theft.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Since the establishment of ACTF, the combined efforts of the LAPD and DAS have proven a much needed resource for the City, as reflected by the public's interest and high case clearance rates. The prosecution efforts of the Los Angeles City Attorney and the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office have enhanced the City's efforts in prosecuting criminal activity involving animals. Animal abuse cases have a direct correlation to violence against people and/or other serious crimes. It is essential that the focus of ACTF investigations continue on those cases that cause public safety concerns.

The vision of the ACTF is to break the connection between animal abuse and human violence. The key concept of preventing animal abuse is educating the community and the stakeholders involved in combating this form of violence.

Prepared by:  
Detective Support and Vice Division

PERSONNEL AND ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2013

ROOM 1050, CITY HALL - 3 PM  
200 NORTH SPRING STREET, LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

MEMBERS: COUNCILMEMBER PAUL KORETZ, CHAIR  
COUNCILMEMBER MITCH O'FARRELL  
COUNCILMEMBER FELIPE FUENTES

(Adam Lid - Legislative Assistant - 213-978-1076; e-mail [adam.lid@lacity.org](mailto:adam.lid@lacity.org))  
Click [here](#) for agenda packet

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Note: For information regarding the Committee and its operations, please contact the Committee Legislative Assistant at the phone number and/or email address listed above. The Legislative Assistant may answer questions and provide materials and notice of matters scheduled before the City Council. Sign Language Interpreters, Communication Access Real-Time Transcription (CART), Assistive Listening Devices, or other auxiliary aids and/or services may be provided upon request. To ensure availability, you are advised to make your request at least 72 hours prior to the meeting/event you wish to attend. Due to difficulties in securing Sign Language Interpreters, five or more business days notice is strongly recommended. For additional information, please contact the Legislative Assistant listed above.

FILE NO.

SUBJECT

(1)

13-1500

Communication from the Mayor relative to the appointment of Dr. Rosalinda Lugo to the Employee Relations Board for the term ending September 23, 2018.

Ethics Commission Review: Pending

Background Review: Pending

Community Impact Statement: None submitted

**TIME LIMIT FILE - DECEMBER 22, 2013**

**(LAST DAY FOR COUNCIL ACTION - DECEMBER 18, 2013)**

(2)

12-0186

City Attorney report and Ordinance relative to adding Section 53.74 to the Los Angeles Municipal Code to ban the use of bullhooks or other tools designed to inflict pain to control or train elephants.

Fiscal Impact Statement Submitted: No

Community Impact Statement: None submitted.

Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee  
Tuesday, November 19, 2013

(3)

13-1460  
CD 6, 7

City Administrative Officer (CAO) report relative to proposed modification to the Apollo Project to expand mobile spay and neuter services for Pit Bull and Pit Bull mixed-breed dogs in Pacoima and Sylmar (Formerly Council File No. 10-2451).

Fiscal Impact Statement Submitted: Yes

Community Impact Statement: None submitted.

(4)

13-1513

Motion (Koretz - O'Farrell) relative to implementing changes to the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) to increase the number of cats that a City resident may own from three to five.

Community Impact Statement: None submitted.

(5)

11-0754-S1

**CONTINUED FROM 2-5-13**

City Attorney and Department of Animal Services reports and Ordinance relative to modifying the definitions of dog kennel, cat kennel, and pet shop in LAMC Section 53.00 and amending the guidelines for issuing a pet shop permit in LAMC Section 53.50(e).

**(Also referred to the Planning and Land Use Management Committee)**

Fiscal Impact Statement Submitted: Yes

Community Impact Statement: None submitted.

(6)

13-1514

Motion (O'Farrell - Koretz) relative to the status of the structure and operational activities of the Animal Cruelty Task Force.

Community Impact Statement: None submitted.

(7)

13-1284

Motion (O'Farrell - Koretz - LaBonge) relative to the feasibility of outlawing the use of animal traps or snares that maim, kill, or cause inhumane suffering.

Community Impact Statement: None submitted.

(8)

13-1206

City Planning Department report and CAO to report relative to request for substitute authority for one Deputy Director of Planning pursuant to the Department of City Planning Department Personnel Ordinance (Ordinance No. 1822414).

Fiscal Impact Statement Submitted: No

Community Impact Statement: None submitted.

(9)

11-0510

Personnel Department report relative to proposed extension of Contract No. C-113556 with NeoGov, Inc. for automation of the civil service selection process.

Fiscal Impact Statement Submitted: Yes

Community Impact Statement: None submitted.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS OF PUBLIC INTEREST WITHIN THIS  
COMMITTEE'S SUBJECT MATTER JURISDICTION

**Materials related to an item on this agenda submitted to the Committee after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection in the City Clerk's Office at 200 North Spring Street, Room 395, City Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90012 during normal business hours.**

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