

**BOARD REPORT**  
**June 30, 2008 Commission Meeting**

**COMPROMISE PROPOSAL:**  
**Changes to New Hope Program**

**BY THE NEW HOPE COMMITTEE:**

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**New Hope Program Achievements:**

New Hope Partners ("NHPs") provide life saving services to LAAS. New Hope Partner groups in the twelve months preceding April 2008 rescued 3,591 dogs and 2,455 cats from LAAS shelters. Thus, **New Hope Partner groups rescued over 25% of all animals adopted from LAAS shelters, and 13% of all live animal impounds at LAAS shelters.** The benefit to LAAS of NHPs is even more significant due to the substantial increase in LAAS euthanasia recently reported (31% LAAS euthanasia increase reported by CNN on June 12, 2008).

The New Hope Program helps increase New Hope Partner rescue of more needy LAAS shelter animals, i.e., the newborn, the sick and the injured, and often those who will need special efforts and the longest care prior to adoption. The overall expenses associated with these animals are not nearly offset by adoption savings through the New Hope Program even when New Hope adoptions have been free.

Beyond saving lives, **NHPs enable LAAS to save significant employee labor and animal care expenses, as well as euthanasia and carcass disposal costs.** This is because NHPs take on all costs for each of the over 6,000 animals per year they rescue, including daily care, veterinary care, and adoption

**New Hope Partner Program Revision Goals:**

- A. Facilitate and maintain a cooperative working relationship between the NHPs and LAAS.
- B. Ensure an appropriate balance of providing incentives for NHPs to rescue from LAAS shelters and recognizing the financial, life-saving and public relations benefits NHPs provide for LAAS, while taking into account the current budget and financial crisis facing LAAS and the City of Los Angeles. (The economic downturn also affects NHPs.)
- C. Provide clear and simple New Hope Program rules.
- D. Prevent reduction in life-saving efforts by NHPs and withdrawal of NHPs' participation, whether due to burdensome or costly requirements, or by interfering with NHPs' ability to generate adoptions from their respective groups.

**Status:**

The New Hope Committee has operated since February 2006, when it helped LAAS launch the New Hope Program. The Committee includes at least one representative focusing on dog, cat and rabbit rescue, the three species to which the New Hope Program applies. After discussion and agreement on many issues, the remaining key issues are summarized in this report.

**Rabbits:**

The New Hope Committee accepts the currently proposed New Hope Program for rabbits, including the requirement for pre-release spay/neuter of every rabbit.

**The New Hope Committee Program Revision Proposal and Explanations:**

1.

**Requirement that NHPs pay full price for all animals not on a New Hope Alert until the animal's "review date" plus one day.**

Although the New Hope discount would not be available during the hold period of review date plus one, NHPs may adopt any available animal not irremediably suffering at any time by paying full price.

The review date is generally the date of impound plus four business days. By the review date plus one more day, all animals will be placed on a green or red New Hope Alert; at that time, NHPs can adopt the animal at the New Hope discount price. (Example: Animal is impounded on Friday June 27, 2008; animal costs NHPs full price until Thursday July 3, 2008.) Under the LAAS proposal, NHPs will pay full price to adopt animals not yet on a New Hope Alert. This would be the first time in over a decade that LAAS' rescue partners are asked to pay full price for any animal with more than a one day hold period giving the public a chance to adopt.

Stray animals, by law, are in the shelter but cannot be adopted by anyone until the review date. The LAAS proposal gives the public one day to adopt stray animals before NHPs can adopt with the New Hope discount. The New Hope Committee agrees with this.

Owner surrender animals, by law, are immediately available for adoption upon impound; thus, for owner surrender animals, there are at least five days when the public can adopt the animal but the NHPs are not allowed the New Hope discount. Because only owner surrender animals would be available to the public and held at the shelter for this long period of time without offering a New Hope discount to NHPs, only owner surrender animals are subject to disagreement about the holding period before the New Hope discount applies.

**ISSUE A. For owner surrender animals, the proposed required hold period before NHPs may adopt at the New Hope discount is excessively long, increasing animals' risk of disease, costing LAAS excessive animal care expenses and overutilizing cage space.** By encouraging NHPs to wait five or more days before rescuing owner surrender animals, LAAS is unnecessarily creating the following negative consequences:

- **Animals will be unnecessarily exposed to disease** due to longer stays in the shelter than had the New Hope discount not been withheld. .
- Animals left in cages for longer periods of time can become mentally unpredictable, **worsening the animals' chances of adoption.**
- **LAAS will incur significant additional and unnecessary animal care costs** for animals who would have been rescued much earlier if the New Hope discount were not withheld.
- **LAAS will over-utilize scarce cage space**, for animals who would have been rescued earlier if the New Hope discount had not been withheld.
- **Lowered morale and diminished incentive** for NHPs to rescue animals from LAAS shelters, with benefits reduced below the levels of other local shelter systems and prior LAAS programs.
- These problems are **exacerbated by LAAS' proposed increases in adoption fees for the public and proposed reductions in shelter operating hours**, both of which hamper adoptions to the public and make New Hope Partner adoptions more important to save lives and avoid LAAS animal care, euthanasia and carcass disposal costs.

LAAS justifies these serious negative consequences by saying the long owner surrender hold period before the New Hope discount applies will give the public adequate first chance to adopt animals. LAAS analyzed the most recent one-year statistics and, while LAAS concluded that there is a significant need to prevent "cherry-picking" by NHPs, a **careful analysis shows that cherry-picking is not significant compared to the negative consequences of the proposed rule.** LAAS found that, of 3,575 dogs adopted by NHPs, 1,149 were owner surrender dogs, with 481 of those adopted before their review date. That is, **the greatest number of dogs who could be of concern is 481 dogs or 13% of the New Hope adopted dogs.** For cats, only 181 of 2,571 New Hope cat adoptions were adopted "quickly" (LAAS does not define this word). **The greatest number of cats who could be of concern is 181 cats or 7% of all New Hope cat adoptions.** It is important to note that a large number of those cats would be unweaned kittens who the shelters regularly call to beg NHPs to take quickly and who therefore do not belong in the count of allegedly "cherry-picked" animals.

The New Hope Committee does not believe these relatively small numbers justify the serious negative consequences of the proposed rule.

The following reasons explain the problems with LAAS' statistical analysis:

- **87% of dogs are not adopted by NHPs until after their review date.** Of the 3,575 dogs adopted by NHPs, only 481 were adopted before their review date. This number must be reduced by the sick, injured, mix-breed and by the 26 unweaned puppies rescued by NHPs. Thus, the maximum number of dogs who could be "cherry-picked" by NHPs is 455, or only 12.7% of all 3,575. It is also only 3.2% of all dog adoptions.
- **93% of cats are not adopted by NHPs until after their review date.** Of the 7% who are adopted before their review date, a large number are unweaned and the shelter staff begs NHPs to rescue them without any delay.

- The data includes "released" animals in addition to adopted animals; "released" animals are unweaned. LAAS staff very often call to beg NHPs to take these animals as quickly as possible. These **unweaned animals are incorrectly included in the count of alleged "cherry-picking"**.
- If NHPs were truly cherry-picking the animals, they would adopt as soon as available. That is not what is happening with owner surrender animals. The following shows when the 455 owner surrender animals adopted by NHPs before their review date were actually adopted:

<b>Day of impound</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>1 day after impound</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>2 days after impound</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>18%</b>
3 days after impound	66	15%
4 days after impound	37	8%
5+ days after impound	26	6%

Of the 455 owner surrender dogs adopted by NHPs before the review date, **129 were adopted after more than two full days after being available for adoption. The 324 dogs adopted during the first two available dates for owner surrender animals represent only 9% of New Hope adoptions, and 2% of all dog adoptions to New Hope and the public.** The New Hope Committee agrees that the New Hope discount should not apply during the first two days of an owner surrendered animal's availability if the animal is not already on a New Hope Alert. However, **for owner surrender animals not already on a New Hope Alert, withholding the New Hope discount beyond two business days only serves to hurt LAAS and the animals but increasing LAAS animal care and veterinary costs, over-utilizing cage space, increasing the animals' risk of disease, and increasing the animals' risk of euthanasia.**

- **LAAS' analysis does not identify which of the allegedly cherry-picked animals include the sick, the injured, those requiring behavioral assistance, those who are unweaned, or those of ages not generally considered "young enough."** (The statistics pulled do not show age or secondary breed.) **These would not be "cherry-picked" animals. Also, the dogs may not be purebreds of the breeds shown,** since the statistics are pulled by primary breed but provide no information about secondary breed (thus, at least some are mix reeds). Thus, the numbers of allegedly cherry-picked animals are likely overstated to some extent. Any of these factors would leave the animal not highly adoptable. Thus, the 13% of dogs and 7% of cats should be reduced by those who were sick, injured, unweaned, behaviorally challenged (the animals most NHPs focus upon).

**ISSUE B. Certain animals should be placed on the New Hope Alert and made available for adoption by NHPs as soon as the animal is available for adoption.** While LAAS proposes to do this for cats over one year of age and pit bulls, there are many other animals who are at high risk of over-utilizing LAAS employee resources and LAAS cage space and being euthanized. These animals should be on the New Hope Alert immediately. For example, it does not make sense to delay placing "rescue only" animals from being on a New Hope Alert, or sick and injured animals housed in the hospital who the public will not see and who will cost LAAS disproportionately high animal care and veterinary costs.

With respect to cats, immediately placing cats on the New Hope Alert should be at less than one year of age until currently high cat euthanasia is substantially reduced.

### **NEW HOPE COMMITTEE PROPOSALS:**

**1. The following dogs and cats will be available for adoption to NHPs at the New Hope discount price (adoption fees and immediately upon the expiration of the animal's legally required hold period before adoption, without regard to the animal's intake category as owner surrender, stray or otherwise.**

- (1) Pit bull and pit bull mix dogs.
- (2) All cats except healthy, friendly kittens between 8 weeks and four months of age at the time of impound.
- (3) Every dog and cat housed in any LAAS shelter hospital or other non-public area of a shelter.
- (4) Every dog and cat housed at the Northeast Valley animal shelter.
- (5) "Rescue-only" dogs and cats.
- (6) Red-listed and green-listed dogs and cats.

None of the above-listed animals is highly adoptable and most are at high risk of costing LAAS high animal care and veterinary costs and being euthanized. There is no justification for withholding encouragement for NHPs to rescue the above animals.

**2. For owner surrender animals only, begin the New Hope discount at the close of business after the second business day after impound.** Thus, owner surrender animals would be full price to NHPs for the first two business days after impound. With animals available to the public two full days, it can be assumed that if the public did not get to the shelter to adopt, then this is not an animal to be "cherry-picked."

### **2.**

#### **Requiring NHPs to Disclose Their Private Adopter Names and Addresses to LAAS.**

LAAS proposes to require all NHPs to submit to LAAS the names and addresses of all adopters of dogs rescued by NHPs from LAAS shelters. For unknown reason, LAAS also proposes to require NHPs to submit names and zip codes of adopters outside the Los Angeles city jurisdiction.

Number of dogs at issue: Of the approximately 3,500 dogs rescued from LAAS shelters per year by NHPs, it is reasonable to assume that at least 25% are adopted into homes outside the city of Los Angeles. This leaves approximately no more than 2,625 dogs as the total number of dog adoptions at issue per year. NHPs adopt to rigorously screened homes which can generally be expected to be responsible and license their dogs. Thus, no more than some fraction of 2,625 dogs are at issue. (Compare this to the auditor's May 27, 2008 finding that 70% to 80% of the 400,000 to 800,000 dogs in the city are unlicensed.)

The New Hope Committee believes that the proposed requirement is an unfortunate and ill-conceived reaction to the Controller's audit. The New Hope Committee believes **the requirement will reduce not increase LAAS dog licensing, and will also cause the loss of NHP adoptions, increased LAAS costs, and higher euthanasia, without increasing licensing.**

- **NHPs now facilitate licensing by their dog adopters.** They provide licensing information, licensing application forms, and copies of rabies and spay/neuter certificates, to make the adopter's licensing easy. Imposing the requirement can be expected to curtail these efforts to educate about licensing and to provide the needed forms. This will produce less licensing, not more.
- The LAAS proposal **requires LAAS follow-up which is more labor-intensive** for LAAS and yields fewer benefits than the current situation with NHPs facilitating their adopter licensing.
- Some NHPs have stated that because they feel a strong moral obligation to protect their adopters' privacy, they will either not adopt dogs from LAAS shelters, or drop out of the New Hope Program. **Some polled NHP groups have said they will leave the NH Program over this issue alone.** NHPs have **legitimate liability concerns** if private adopter information they submit is lost in transmission, or disclosed once submitted to LAAS. This very concern was confirmed by the February 2008 newspaper accounts of LAAS leaving private citizen personal information in open boxes sitting in an alleyway behind the East Valley animal shelter for a long period of time.
- The rule **forces NHPs into a moral "Sophie's Choice"** of remaining in the New Hope Program to save LAAS animals vs. feeling a moral obligation to protect their adopters' private information and not have the proposed rule jeopardize adopters' willingness to adopt from NHPs. NHPs placed in this difficult moral dilemma by the proposed rule could provide false information to LAAS. This will not increase licensing, and could result in wasted enforcement resources.
- **The requirement may inhibit adoptions** for security/privacy reasons. Some members of the public are justifiably concerned about sharing their personal information (in this case indirectly) with a third party (i.e., they are not in control of the transmission of the information, do not know if the transmission is secure, and do not know who or how many individuals will have access to the information).
- There are many sources of animals for adopters wanting to adopt, including many rescue groups who have chosen not to become NHPs or who will drop out of the New Hope Program due to this requirement. **This requirement produces an uneven playing field which places NHPs at a disadvantage** for adoptions vis-à-vis those many groups not required to submit adopter information to LAAS. That is, the requirement hurts the very groups which are doing the most to help LAAS.
- NHPs have **legitimate liability concerns** if private adopter information they submit is lost in transmission, or disclosed once submitted to LAAS. This very concern was confirmed by the February 2008 newspaper accounts of LAAS leaving private citizen personal information in open boxes sitting in an alleyway behind the East Valley animal shelter for a long period of time.
- Adopters who do not license their animals after NHP urging and assistance are not likely to license when presented with a notice from LAAS. The New Hope Committee believes **the increased LAAS staff needs of the proposed requirement is unlikely to produce gain, and certainly is will not overcome the licensing losses the requirement will create.**

**There is no evidence that NHP adopter dogs are not being licensed.** Thus, the above serious problems would be created without even identifying or quantifying any problem with NHP adopter licensing. Most NHPs adopt to responsible members of the public following rigorous screening, increasing the probability these adopters will license their animals voluntarily.

### **NEW HOPE COMMITTEE PROPOSALS:**

1. Do not require NHPs to submit any adopter private information including names and addresses.
2. If there is question that NHP adopters are not licensing their dogs, then implement the following six-month pilot program to determine if a problem exists and quantify whether the problem justifies the harms created by the proposed requirement:

#### Pilot Program

Term: 6 months

Requirements for NHPs:

- Provide all adopters residing in the City of LA with special New Hope Dog License Application forms (easily identifiable from standard applications).
- Provide all adopters residing in the City of LA with a copy of the adopted animal's s/n certificate and rabies certificate.
- Provide all adopters residing in the City of LA with a stamped envelope addressed to LAAS (LAAS to provide).
- Explain to all adopters residing in the City of LA the importance of dog licensing.
- Offer to assist all adopters residing in the City of LA with completing the License Application form.
- The NHP Monthly Report will include a check box for Adoption with one check box for Within City of LA and one check box for Outside of City of LA; NHPs will check the appropriate box.

During the Pilot Program, the Department will compare the number of Dog Adoptions within the City of LA with the number of NHP specially designated Dog License Applications received. If the average percentage of compliance over the Pilot Program period is 70% or better, the Pilot Program will be implemented in place of requiring adopter names/addresses. Otherwise, LAAS and the New Hope Committee will reconvene to seek a way to increase LA City licensing without harming New Hope Partner adoptions. Neither the names/address for cat/rabbit adopters nor the names/zip codes for dog adopters residing outside the City of LA will be required regardless of the outcome of the Pilot Program.

3. Transfer License: The New Hope Committee would also like to see the Department explore the possibility of the Transfer License with the City Attorney. We offer our assistance in creating this service improvement and license compliance enhancement.

3.

**Adding New Adopter Name and Contact Information to Microchip Registration:**

Under the LAAS revisions, NHPs would be required to add a new adopter's name to the microchip registration within 30 days of the adoption. There are pros and cons to adding new adopter names and contact information to a microchip already registered to a NHP. The decision should be the prerogative of the NHP that rescued and then found a home for the animal. This provision also adds financial burdens to NHPs or their adopters to pay for the microchip change. A number of polled NHP organizations (especially cat rescue groups) said they do not add the adopter to the microchip, and will not, citing numerous examples where they received calls that their animals were at the shelter. These animals may have died if the NHP was not the primary contact or if the adopter had been secondary and responded negatively to the call from the shelter. If the NHP advises the adopter that this is the group's policy, and the adopter agrees to the adoption, there is no reason for the Department to interfere with an agreement between a NHP and a member of the public.

**NEW HOPE COMMITTEE PROPOSAL:**

Do not add any additional requirement regarding identification microchips and instead leave this to the judgment of the NHP groups.

4.

**Northeast Valley Animal Shelter New Hope Access Hours.**

The 24/7 access touted as a benefit of the New Hope Program should apply to the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter. **Animals housed at the Northeast Valley shelter are the most labor-intensive LAAS animals**, since they are the aggressive, the sick, the injured and the unweaned. **They are also the LAAS animals at greatest risk of euthanasia**, given their inaccessibility to the public, their reasons for being housed at that shelter, the inconvenient working hours of the Northeast Valley New Hope Coordinator works, and the remote location of that shelter relative to many NHPs.

**NEW HOPE COMMITTEE PROPOSALS:**

1. Provide 24/7 access to and adoptions from the Northeast Valley shelter.
2. Train the Northeast Valley shelter staff to complete New Hope Adoption forms. The New Hope Committee does not believe this is a difficult task. Alternatively, enable New Hope Coordinators at the shelter of the animal's origin to complete the New Hope Adoption forms; NHPs can do the adoption over the phone at the shelter of origin, and pick up the animal from the Northeast Valley shelter.

The above proposal will do much to help save Northeast Valley shelter animals without undue burden on LAAS staff. In fact, **completing the adoption paperwork involves less staff effort than continuing to house the labor-intensive and high-risk animals.**