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EDWARD A. BOKS
General Manager

Report to the Board of Animal Services Commissioners

Edward A. Boks, General Manager

COMMISSION MEETING DATE: March 24, 2008

PREPARED BY: Ed Boks

REPORT DATE: March 21, 2008

TITLE: General Manager

SUBJECT: Use of Deceased Animal Bodies for Veterinary Medical Education by
Western University of Health Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine

BOARD ACTION RECOMMENDED:

That the Board approves conveyance of deceased animals to Western University of Health Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, for veterinary education purposes, not to exceed 200 deceased animals per calendar year.

SUMMARY:

Western University of Health Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, in Pomona has requested participation of the Department in their program to train new veterinarians. Specifically, Western University will request at least 50, but no more than 200 per calendar year, of selected deceased animals to use for veterinary education purposes.

These specimens will be used exclusively for learning purposes at Western University's College of Veterinary Medicine. Respect for the inherent value of the animals will require special care in handling the remains. All animal remains will ultimately be cremated and a memorial service provided. This program is designed to help provide a greater quality of education to future generations of veterinarians committed to helping animals.

The medical staff of LA Animal Services will retain all decision-making authority over the animals in the Department's care. Staff of the Western University College of Veterinary Medicine will be provided with an opportunity to choose cadavers from amongst those that otherwise would be disposed of via the Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation's contract

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Subject: Use of Deceased Animals for Veterinary Medical Education by Western University of Health Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine

with an outside vendor and will have an opportunity to consult with LAAS medical staff only regarding cause of death and other factors that could serve to inform their effective use in veterinary training. This program will never result in any action or decision that would incentivize the selection of specific animals or hasten the end of an animal's life so that its body could be used for any Western University programs.

BACKGROUND;

This program is intended to further the goal of providing improved training to veterinary students that will help address the notable shortage of veterinarians nationwide. The long-term goal is to improve medical care for all animals without placing the lives of any shelter animals at risk through vivisection or unwarranted decisions to euthanize.

Western University currently has a Willed Body program modeled after the human cadaver program in its College of Osteopathy. Pet guardians have the option, after their loved pets have passed on, of donating the cadavers to the college. There are strict rules and procedures guiding Western University and these donors through discussions to insure that even on an individual basis there is no chance that the donation to its program plays any role in decisions made while the pet is alive.

The proposed program between LAAS and Western if modeled on the Willed Body program. The Department and the University will employ comparably stringent guidelines. Selected cadavers will be treated respectfully and will make a significant contribution to the future well-being of the incalculable number of animals the future veterinarians training at Western will save.

Western University of Health Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine was founded in 1998 on a reverence for life philosophy which does not support the killing of animals for teaching and research. Western University is committed to developing a new generation of veterinarians sensitive to the intrinsic value and sanctity of every animal life.

Currently, responsibility for the remains of animals that die or are euthanized in City shelters is assumed by the City's Bureau of Sanitation. Those remains are sent to a rendering firm that boils some, if not all, of them down into material that becomes part of livestock feed per the Bureau's contract with an outside vendor.

There is a controversy in our society concerning the possibility of the euthanasia agent becoming part of the feed and finding its way into both the human and animal food chains. At the urging of members of the humane community, the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is currently investigating this issue. As a result of this investigation, the City's rendering firm may be trying to reduce the extent to which its by-products might find their way into livestock feed, so more carcasses may instead be

Subject: Use of Deceased Animals for Veterinary Medical Education by Western University of Health Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine

finding their way to local landfills, either at the hands of the rendering firm or the Bureau of Sanitation with which the rendering firm has its contract.

The Department believes that allowing no more than 200 cadavers be used to further veterinary medicine without any animals being killed specifically for that purpose is more respectful to both the dead animal and those that are still living than disposing of them the usual way.

Currently, an average of more than 1,000 animals die in City shelters of natural causes every year and over another 1,000 are dead before being taken in (DOA). Animals selected for the Western University program could be taken from these two populations, thus mitigating even any remote connection between euthanasia decisions and cadaver selection. Selecting up to 200 bodies a year for this program will have no negative impact whatsoever on the Department's ongoing effort to end the killing of animals for time or space considerations, nor will it impact decisions regarding euthanasia to end suffering.

Western University will not be involved in any decision selecting animals for euthanasia – and no animal will ever be harmed or killed for its teaching programs. Western University takes great pride in their commitment to graduating veterinarians with excellent anatomical and surgical skills without ever harming a living animal. Because Western University has taken this principled stance other veterinary colleges are being pressured to end their terminal surgery programs, and we anticipate that soon that practice will be history.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to Animal Services. Western University of Health Sciences College of Veterinary Medicine will provide all transportation and specimen preparation costs.

Approved:

Edward A. Boks, General Manager

Subject: Use of Deceased Animals for Veterinary Medical Education by Western University of Health Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine

BOARD ACTION:

_____ Passed

Disapproved _____

_____ Passed with noted modifications

Continued _____

_____ Tabled

New Date _____