

<https://www.citywatchla.com/animal-watch/29704-failure-to-provide-adequate-funding-for-spay-neuter-is-penny-wise-and-pound-foolish>

Failure To Provide Adequate Funding For Spay/Neuter Is “Penny Wise And ‘Pound’ Foolish.”

Jeffrey Mausner October 14 2024



ANIMAL WATCH - The following is what I said at the Board of Animal Services Commissioners meeting on October 8, 2024 (with minor additions and edits, and with hyperlinks inserted). The recording of the meeting is [hyperlinked here](#), and my statements are at 10:30 and 1:44:30 in the recording.

THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES MUST NOT ABANDON ‘NO-KILL’

Since about 2012, the policy of the City of Los Angeles has been to achieve No-Kill at the six city-run animal shelters. Every Mayor, every City Council since 2012 has recognized that policy. In 2017, the City Council reconfirmed the City’s commitment

to No-Kill in Council File 17-0170. The Tarzana Neighborhood Council filed a Community Impact Statement in support.

What is No-Kill? It does not mean that no animals will be killed at the shelters. In particular, it **definitely does not mean that dangerous dogs will be adopted to the public or kept at the shelters in a manner that endangers staff or volunteers.** As stated in the [City Council's 2017 resolution](#), "a no-kill community is generally considered as saving 90 percent or more of the cats and dogs coming through the sheltering system." As stated by [Best Friends](#), "A 90% save rate is the nationally recognized benchmark to be considered 'no-kill,' factoring that approximately 10% of pets who enter shelters have medical or behavioral circumstances that warrant humane euthanasia rather than killing for lack of space."

The goal of No-Kill is that **no healthy adoptable dogs, cats, and rabbits are killed for lack of space.**

Those advocating for doing away with the No-Kill policy, those using the current crisis to advocate for doing away with the policy, are incorrect when they say that No-Kill allows for adopting and keeping dangerous dogs. The 10% margin is specifically to prevent that. I'm a volunteer at the West Valley Shelter; I've been a volunteer for 12 or 13 years. My friends are volunteers and staff at the shelters. We are the last ones who want dangerous dogs adopted or kept at the shelters in conditions that could endanger us or the public.

No-Kill cannot and should not be abandoned! The touted alternative for No-Kill, so called Socially Conscious Animal Sheltering, has no guidelines for the number of animals that can be killed and allows the killing of friendly, safe, healthy adoptable dogs for lack of space. There is no goal to be met for live/save rate, which results in easier killing of dogs and cats. **Stand up to maintain No-Kill as the policy of Los Angeles City shelters!**

I'll note that Los Angeles County Shelters (as distinct from City Shelters) follow so called Socially Conscious Animal Sheltering, and the County shelter conditions are worse than the City shelters, even though they kill more dogs and cats. Riverside County Shelters follow so called Socially Conscious Animal Sheltering, and their shelter conditions are much much worse than the L.A. City shelters, even though they kill many more dogs and cats.

So this is directed to the Mayor, City Council, CAO (the City Administrative Officer), as well as the Commission and Department -- please, don't even think of going down the road of replacing No-Kill with so called Socially Conscious Animal Sheltering.

If we are going to maintain the 90% or greater live/save rate of No-Kill, and have safe, humane City shelters, **more funding and more enforcement of spay/neuter is absolutely essential.**

In 2019, I wrote an article for CityWatch entitled [Crucial City Funding: Spay and Neuter Saves Money and Lives](#). The article contained statistics from the Humane Society website: Female cats can breed three times a year and have an average of 4 kittens per litter. Dogs can breed twice a year with litters of 6-10 puppies. In seven years, one unspayed female cat and her offspring can produce 420,000 cats and one unspayed female dog and her offspring can produce 99,000 dogs.

I followed that with the following statement: “While this is just the statistical possibilities and the numbers would be much less in the real world, it is clear that failure to spay/neuter just a few dogs and cats will lead to the birth of hundreds, if not thousands, of homeless dogs and cats over several years. Failure to provide adequate funding for spay/neuter of thousands of animals is the height of penny wise and ‘pound’ foolish.”

The CAO, the City Council, and the Mayor did increase funding for spay/neuter a little, but not nearly enough. Funding for spay/neuter, even in good years, has never exceeded even five hundredths of one percent of the City’s budget. In a 10 to 12-billion-dollar budget, just a few million dollars, at most, for spay neuter each year.

And little is being done to stop backyard breeders and importation of puppies from puppy mills outside of California. I’m sure you’ve all seen the recent [Los Angeles Times article about this](#). The Animal Services Department doesn’t have the personnel and resources to adequately enforce spay/neuter, stop backyard breeders, and stop importation of puppies.

The Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates have asked for increased funding for spay/neuter year after year. [2019](#) (pages 26-29); [2020](#) (pages 25-30); [2022](#) (pages 19-23); [2024](#) (pages 14-26).

Failure to adequately fund spay/neuter will lead to the killing of many healthy adoptable dogs and cats and end the possibility of Los Angeles being a No-Kill City, with safe and humane animal shelters. If spay/neuter had been adequately funded in 2019, 2020, 2021, or any year since, we wouldn’t be in this mess, and it wouldn’t have cost nearly what it is going to cost now. And it’s only going to get much worse and much more expensive if the people who decide the City budget don’t come through and adequately fund spay/neuter now. Stop being penny wise and ‘pound’

foolish. Yes, there are deficits, but there is a \$12 billion budget to try to find another \$12 to \$15 million to adequately fund spay/neuter, one tenth of one percent of the City budget.

If you don't get this under control right now, by the time the Olympics rolls around in 2028, you're going to have thousands of stray dogs and cats out on the street and/or a record of killing thousands of dogs and cats. Either way, how is that going to look for the reputation of the City hosting the 2028 Olympics? Not to mention the hundreds or thousands of animal activists who are going to be demonstrating at Olympic events because Los Angeles is a Kill City which also leaves stray dogs and cats on the street to be run over, eaten by coyotes, or starve to death.

(Jeffrey Mausner (www.mausnerlaw.com/) is on the Executive Committee of the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (VANC) where he serves as the Liaison to the Los Angeles Animal Services Department; he is 2nd Vice President of the Tarzana Neighborhood Council and Chair of its Animal Welfare Committee. He also volunteers at the West Valley Animal Shelter. A retired attorney, law professor, and former U.S. Justice Department Federal Prosecutor; Jeff has received numerous awards, including the 2023 Guardian of the Animals Award and a 2024 Special Commendation from the California Legislature. He co-founded the Global Anti-Dog Meat Coalition. This article is written in his private individual capacity, not on behalf of the Animal Services Department.)