



May 15, 2014

Patricia Whelan  
Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti  
200 N. Spring St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Re: Los Angeles 127 Rabbit Breeder Case, Sherman Oaks, CA**

Video of Investigation: <http://youtu.be/AmpqCSruZFo>

Article: <http://www.examiner.com/article/time-running-out-for-easter-bunnies-squalid-la-breeding-facility>

Dear Patricia:

We are *formally* requesting that our Mayor and his officials intervene in the *Los Angeles 127 Rabbit Breeder Case at [address redacted]*. The public has received multiple conflicting and even false reports given by the Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) General Manager, Brenda Barnette. LAAS is stonewalling this case which has enough evidentiary documentation to be classified as an animal abuse case under California's Penal Code 597 PC. LAAS has further violated the Hayden Act by euthanizing one rabbit despite a petition from BWF to take in ALL rabbits from the breeder's case, ill or healthy. The LAAS gross mismanagement of this case has harmed and continues to harm animals, animal lovers, and LAAS' own reputation. The acts of LAAS in covering up, and even more egregiously, destroying evidence betray both their mission and the trust of the people and animals they're sworn to protect.

The manner in which LAAS has mismanaged this overt criminal display of animal cruelty, neglect and abuse is an embarrassment to, and an indictment on, the great City of Los Angeles. There is clear, convincing and uncontroverted evidence that information was not only contradicted, but also handled by LAAS with cavalier and unconscionable levels of unprofessionalism. The mission of LAAS is "to promote and protect the health, safety, and welfare of animals and people in our city." LAAS failed to do this for 127 rabbits. LAAS has not only a fiduciary responsibility to the City of Los Angeles, but a moral obligation to the City and its animals and citizens. We the public do not find it acceptable to be deceived and blatantly lied to.

The Los Angeles taxpayers expect to be treated with respect and dignity by the appointed officials of Los Angeles. Since LAAS has demonstrated that they are incapable of doing so, we are requesting the Mayor's Office review the attached data regarding the *Los Angeles 127 Rabbit Breeder Case, Sherman Oaks, CA*. Many of the rabbits that have not been destroyed by LAAS, or the breeder, need to be rescued at the breeder's premises immediately. It is our understanding the relocation of the breeder, [name redacted], is imminent (and he may have already moved) and the immediate rescue of the remaining rabbits, as well as, criminal investigation of this case remains extremely urgent. A lack of action on your part will lead to countless acts of animal cruelty (including death) by these breeders and continued gross and unconscionable mismanagement by LAAS in an effort to cover up, what amounts to complicity, by LAAS.

Your anticipated time and dedication to this case is greatly appreciated. Please confirm the receipt.

Respectfully,

Bunny World Foundation, Inc.

Enclosures: Examples of Conflicting/False Reports, Request for Public Records, and E-mail Correspondence between LAAS & BWF  
CC: Los Angeles Animal Service Board of Animal Services Commissioners, City of Los Angeles

4470 W. Sunset Blvd., Suite 482 Los Angeles, CA 90027

Tel 310.498.8600 Fax 310.822-1761

[www.bunnyworldfoundation.org](http://www.bunnyworldfoundation.org)

Examples of Conflicting/False reports by LAAS are as follows:

1. **On April 28, 2014, Brenda Barnette publicly reported that the case was “officially closed”**
  - a. On May 2, 2014, BWF requested the public records for this investigation. On May 2, Ross Pool approved the request, and wrote that BWF would receive the records on or before May 23.
  - b. On May 8, John D. Chavez, Assistant General Manager of LAAS, notified BWF that our request had been denied because “this is still an open investigation.”
    - *Is this case still open or is it “officially closed”?*
2. **LAAS publically defended the conditions of the rabbits, stating “One of the owners is terminally ill with cancer and they have been unable to maintain the rabbits as well as they would like.”**
  - a. In January 2014, the breeders [names redacted] were reported to LAAS by a third party. LAAS visited the premises and gave the breeders a “clean bill of health.” No acquisition of any rabbits resulted.
  - b. In March 2014, the “terminally ill” breeder, [Breeder #1, name redacted], requested assistance with his 57 rabbits. LAAS denied him for lack of space. On March 27, BWF and rescue partners helped and took *all* of his 57 rabbits. There are no longer issues regarding [Breeder #1, name redacted]. [Breeder #2, name redacted]’s 70 rabbits were left at the property.
    - *How can the breeder’s health be relevant to this case when the breeder in question is not ill? And even if [Breeder #2, name redacted] were terminally ill, how can LAAS expect that the conditions of the rabbits would improve as his health deteriorates?*
3. **On April 28, 2014, Barnette publicly stated: “Some rabbits had been placed with a rescue during the past week and the remaining 40 bunnies were in clean cages.”**
  - a. On March 27, 2014, 127 rabbits were present at the breeders’ property. BWF and rescue partners took 57. LAAS took 5, one of which was euthanized and four of which were pulled by BWF. There should be 65 rabbits remaining at the property, not 40.
  - b. Barnette has made it clear that LAAS took “none” and that that “some” went to rescues. She has yet to release the names of these rescues.
    - *Where are the 25 unaccounted for rabbits?*
    - *Why was the rabbit A1469345 euthanized rather than listed on the red alert?*
4. **It has been repeatedly reported that “under no circumstance can LAAS release unaltered rabbits to any rescue, foster or family.”**
  - a. New Hope Partners are, in fact, entitled to such spay/neuter services. In the years 2008-2013, LAAS entrusted BWF with hundreds of unaltered rabbits that had been confiscated by LAPD from illegal animal traffickers. Not a single pregnancy resulted.
  - b. On May 4, 2014, five unaltered rabbits were rescued from East Valley Shelter by BWF. Spay/neuter vouchers were issued.
    - *Does LAAS place unaltered rabbits with and provide vouchers to New Hope partners or not?*
5. **Brenda Barnette claims that LAAS has insufficient spay/neuter funds.**
  - a. It is well documented that spay/neuter budget is available and under-utilized. New Hope Partners are entitled to such spay/neuter services.
  - b. On May 4, 2014, spay/neuter vouchers were issued for the five unaltered rabbits rescued from East Valley Shelter by BWF.
    - *Did LAAS have the budget to spay/neuter 127 rabbits when BWF’s request was initially made on March 28? Does LAAS have the budget to spay/neuter 65 rabbits now? Why should the responsibility to spay/neuter fall solely on the rescues when funding is available from LAAS?*

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6. **Brenda Barnette claims that LAAS shelters have insufficient space to accommodate new incoming rabbits**
  - a. Starting March 27, 2014, BWF has closely monitored the rabbit cage availability at East Valley Shelter; video evidence shows that 12-18 rabbit housing units are continuously available.
  - b. On April 24, Barnette reported at the Commissioners meeting that they are acquiring a “few” rabbits at a time “because our bunny space is full at our shelters and we do not want to kill any bunnies for lack of space.” For reference of the meeting: <http://youtu.be/sI8F6M7xz1U>
    - *Does LAAS, East Valley Shelter specifically, have sufficient space to take in more rabbits or not?*
  
7. **Brenda Barnette claims that the rabbits in the breeders’ care are “highly adoptable.**
  - a. The breeder’s rabbits are sick and afflicted with chronic medical conditions and require continuous exotic veterinarian care. Sick rabbits are not “highly adoptable.”
    - i. BWF has provided LAAS with sufficient evidence of the breeder’s overt rabbit abuse and neglect, and of the rabbits’ deteriorating health conditions (broken bones, inoperable tumors, malnourishment, etc.). There is no doubt that the conditions are anything but “fine.” For reference: <http://youtu.be/AmpqCSruZFo>
    - ii. Dr. Gayle Roberts, an exotic veteran of Northwood Animal Hospital, has examined most of the breeder rabbits and issued a written statement declaring that these rabbits are in a state of neglect and abuse. Letter available upon request.
    - *Did LAAS accurately assess the health conditions of these rabbits on [Breeder #2, name redacted]’s property?*
  
8. **Brenda Barnette issued a warning to BWF that taking in any further rabbits can interfere with an ongoing investigation.**
  - a. BWF was told that if rabbits are taken in from the breeder via a warrant, they will be held as evidence for several months.
  - b. In an ongoing investigation, if an animal is taken under 597.1 of the Penal Code without consent of the owner a lien must be issued. The owner must continue to pay that lien to maintain ownership rights while DAS has the animal in evidence. If the owner pays the lien, DAS cannot give the animal away. If the owner does not pay the lien, he or she forfeits ownership of the animal.
  - c. If the owner surrenders an animal voluntarily, DAS can give the animal away.
  - d. One of the five bunnies LAAS took in and then released to BWF has broken bones [Scooter: A1468867]. Barnette stated in an email that “Whoever has that bunny took responsibility and stopped any investigation on that one animal. Talk with the group who pulled and see if they can bring cruelty charges against the owner. All power was taken out of our hands when someone took that bunny. I’m guessing that there isn’t even a microchip that proves where they got him.” This lacks accountability of rabbit placement. Accountability should be the cornerstone of all shelters.
    - *While BWF was warned not to interfere, why has Barnette claimed that other rescues have taken the rabbits? Did [Breeder #2, name redacted] refuse to voluntarily surrender the remaining 65 rabbits?*
  
9. **LAAS “Red Alert” Rabbit Protocol is misleading.**
  - a. On May 6, 2014, 17 rabbits were listed on red alert. Red alert constitutes a 48 hour period prior to euthanasia. Barnette stated that if LAAS shelters take in more rabbits, these 17 rabbits will be the first euthanized to make more space.
  - b. Rabbits should have equal red list protocols as cats and dogs. Listing 17 rabbits as a warning when the shelters have ample open rabbit cages is misleading.
    - *Are the rabbits placed on Red Alert because LAAS shelters lack space, or “just in case” they run out of space?*