



NEWS RELEASE



City of Los Angeles Department of Animal Services
221 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 500, Los Angeles, California 90012 / www.LAAnimalServices.com

CONTACT: Public Relations Office
818.515.4596

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 19, 2007

BORDER PUPPY TASK FORCE EVALUATES PUPPIES AT BORDER CROSSINGS

Consumers Beware of Purchasing Puppies from Unknown Sources

Los Angeles – LA Animal Services participated again this year in the Border Puppy Task Force (BPTF), comprised of 18 California animal welfare and law enforcement agencies. The results of a two-week statistic gathering operation conducted at the Otay Mesa and San Ysidro ports of entry which began on Labor Day are now available. The collaborative operation, now in its third year, was organized to analyze animals transported from Mexico to the United States.

Thousands of underage puppies, many toy breeds, are brought into the U.S. for re-sale via the border crossing stations annually. Many are later discovered to be sick, potentially creating a health epidemic for animals and people in the U.S. Adding to this problem are the inhumane breeding and transportation issues, an animal overpopulation problem that is already prevalent in the U.S., and the fact that people may spend thousands of dollars on veterinary bills for a puppy in very poor health, which oftentimes die. The situation may call for new laws to protect people and animals. Some of the issues are the threat of rabies, zoonotic diseases that can be transferred to humans, new disease epidemics, inhumane living and transportation conditions, and fraudulent business transactions by dealers and brokers with unsuspecting buyers.

BPTF officers were at the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa border crossings from September 3, 2007 through the 16th gathering data. In the last several years there has been a growing trend with the popularity of smaller and “designer” breeds of dogs and as a result, there has been an increase of puppies coming from the Mexico border to sell in California, where the markup can be as much as one-thousand percent.

“Buyers should beware when purchasing puppies at swap meets, in parking lots, and answering ads online or in throw away newspapers. These animals can cost from \$300 to \$1,000 and may be under age, sick and carrying diseases that are not initially visible,” said Ed Boks, general manager, for LA Animal Services.

During the two-week operation, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers directed drivers with animals to the secondary inspection area where humane officers and animal control officers

We create happiness by bringing pets and people together!

interviewed people and gathered statistics on the animals, their origin and destination. Drivers provided veterinary health records and depending on the circumstances, were either cleared for entry, sent back to Mexico, or the animals were relinquished by owners, and in severe inhumane circumstances, were impounded.

“Many times these animals are not being taken care of properly and the sellers, brokers and transporters may face animal cruelty charges,” said Boks. “It is also unlawful to smuggle animals into the United States, which is a federal crime.”

The BPTF is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), The California Department of Health Services (DHS) and Los Angeles and San Diego County Health Departments. The findings from the two-week period will be reviewed by the CDC and DHS for quarantine and health issues. The task force will be following up on contacts made during the border operation and are exploring the feasibility of maintaining a long term presence working alongside CBP Officers. Agency heads across the state are looking at potential laws that will make it tougher to smuggle puppies into California.

About the Border Task Force

The Border Puppy Task Force (BPTF) is a consortium of California animal welfare and law enforcement agencies working together for the well-being and protection of animals that are brought from Mexico into the United States through California entry border points. The BPTF is working in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control, California Department of Health Services, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services and San Diego County Department of Health Services and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agencies.

Border Puppy Task Force Participants

Chula Vista Animal Services
City of Los Angeles Animals Services
Humane Society of San Bernardino Valley
Inland Valley Humane Society and SPCA
Los Angeles County Animal Care and Control
National City Animal Control
North County Humane Society
Orange County Animal Services
PAL Humane Society
Riverside County Animal Services
Sacramento County Department of Animal Services
San Diego County Department of Animal Services
San Diego Humane Society and SPCA
San Francisco Animal Care and Control
San Jose Animal Services
Southeast Area Animal Control Authority (SEAACA)
spcaLA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Los Angeles)
SPCA of Monterey County

Health Agencies

California Department of Health Services (DHS)
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
Los Angeles County Department of Health Services
San Diego County Department of Health Services

2007 Operation Statistics (Totals for San Ysidro and Otay Mesa Ports – two shifts, two week operation)

Total Animals Seen - 2061 (including cats and hamsters)

Puppies Under 3 months of age - 157

Puppies 3 to 6 months of age - 231

Puppies 6 to 9 months of age - 173

Dogs 9 months or older - 1485

Quarantine Forms Issued - 401

Dogs/Puppies Impounded - 22

Note: Two of the impounded dogs had to be euthanized in the field due to the severity of their illnesses or injuries. The youngest dog impounded is a Chihuahua, approximately 2 weeks old.

###

Photos available – email Captain Reyes at aaron@seaaca.org

Contact Dan DeSousa at (619) 767-2624 to view impounded puppies.

The administrative or media relations offices for any participating agency may be contacted for comments.

**For more information or assistance call LA Animal Services at
1-888-452LA-PET1/1-888-452-7381
(TTY Hearing impaired: 877-875-8205) or visit the website at www.LAAnimalServices.com.**

We create happiness by bringing pets and people together!