



Date: April 1, 2024

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Brent Dennis, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Program Preparation and Partnership for Kitten Season**

Springtime in Long Beach ushers in kitten season, which is one of the most challenging times that Long Beach Animal Care Services (LBACS) faces each year. Beginning in Spring, and ending in Fall, the Summer months are a grueling time for kitten and cat advocates. Kitten season refers to the time of year when cat breeding is at its highest and the spread of feline focused diseases are rampant. As a result, LBACS receives thousands of neonatal kittens who are too young or too sick to survive without 24/7 intervention. During this time, shelter workers brace themselves for the possibility of increased euthanasia, in the absence of having around-the-clock care.

Each kitten season, LBACS partners with nonprofits who can provide the necessary care for neonates. LBACS's most significant community partner that assists with the critical interventive care of neonatal kittens is the Little Lion Foundation (LLF). Each year, LLF intakes an average of 500 kittens from LBACS into their nursery. Other groups, such as Helen Sanders Cat Paws and Kitty Bungalow, also step in when they can to assist with neonatal kittens. In recent years, LBACS has developed a foster program, which includes members of the public temporarily caring for neonatal kittens in their home. Even with all this effort, LBACS still has a gap in lifesaving, which unfortunately results in hundreds of kittens being euthanized each year, predominantly during kitten season.

Melanie Wagner, LBACS Bureau Manager, and Claudia Otis, founder and CEO of the LLF, convened last Fall to take a closer look at the lifesaving gap data. They found that a lot of the underage kitten euthanasia happens when kittens come into LBACS near the end of day, or overnight, when there are no resources or staff available to find a positive outcome as quickly as needed.

In response, the Bottle Baby Brigade was formed by LLF, in partnership with LBACS. The Bottle Baby Brigade is an emergency foster program aimed at closing the lifesaving gap and reducing euthanasia. Fosters, who are trained by LLF's kitten nursery team, will make themselves available to accept LBACS neonates for 1-5 days and provide LBACS' foster coordinator the opportunity to find a long-term foster family or additional rescue placement. LLF and LBACS' foster coordinator recently partnered to host a foster training class at Long Beach's Pet Food Express store on March 16, 2024. Future dates will be promoted, as scheduled.

The Bottle Baby Brigade was made possible by funding from Best Friend's Rachel Ray grant to the LLF nursery to provide positive outcomes for up to 400 more kittens this season. LBACS and LLF foundation encourage the community to sign up at either of the organization's websites

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and learn how to become an emergency bottle feeder. All supplies are provided to fosters, and the term for fostering is shorter than the traditional foster commitment of 1-2 months.

Additionally, LBACS will often encounter community members who find neonatal kittens and are willing to care for them until they are of adoption age. Often, this is done by community members to support not bringing them into the shelter system. Thanks to LBACS's partnership with Helen Sanders Cat Paws, LBACS is provided with Kitten Kits to give out to Good Samaritans who want to care for found kittens. Kitten Kits include formula, heating pads, bottle and nipples, a blanket, and instructions for care. Community members are also given spay and neuter vouchers for each found kitten, as well as resource information for LLF, who provides adoption support once the kittens are old enough.

Kitten season is hard on every kitten and the Long Beach community, but through planning, prevention, and partnerships, it is LBACS's goal to diligently work towards building progressive programs that support kitten lifesaving, community empowerment, and prevention through spay and neuter. If you have any questions, please contact Brent Dennis, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine, at (562) 570-3170 or Brent.Dennis@longbeach.gov.

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