February 28, 2018

Dear Councilmember Paul Koretz:

Thank you for your interest in the proposal under consideration by Los Angeles Animal Services Board of Commissioners to feed a plant-based diet to Los Angeles City shelter dogs. Below are key facts supporting *why* Los Angeles should strongly consider this scientifically driven initiative, which will benefit both shelter dogs and environmental health:

1. There are 163 million companion animals in the US that consume livestock products, as a key part of their diet. This accounts for 25% - 30% of the total environmental impact from animal agriculture in the US, the majority of which comes from dog food[1].

2. A 2006 United Nations study points to animal agriculture as the leading cause of anthropogenic climate change, fundamentally questioning the sustainability of food animal production practices[2].

3. To meet the dietary demands of companion animals, the US produced around 18 billion pounds of meat-based dog food products in 2015 alone; and kills an estimated 2 billion animals for dog food every year[2].

4. Meat consumption by dogs and cats in the US generates about 64 million tons of carbon dioxide a year; this is equivalent to the climate impact produced by driving 14 million cars over a one year period[1].

5. In addition to the adverse environmental impacts, unacceptable levels of toxins, cancer-producing molecules, heavy metals, and pathogenic bacteria have been found in many meat-based commercial diets[3].

6. Furthermore, at least 48 of these harmful molecules have been found in the blood and urine of dogs at levels that are at least 5 times higher than in people[4].

7. The City of Los Angeles has the unique opportunity to address this complex and urgent issue by proposing a diet that is more environmentally friendly, healthier and more humane to feed the shelter dogs under its care.

8. Dogs can process both meat and plant-based foods, but they do not require meat to thrive[5].

9. Commercial plant-based diets exist that can fully meet all canine dietary requirements, including that of shelter dogs[6].

10. Sprint-racing sled dogs undergoing extreme exercise over a 4 month period maintained their health eating exclusively a balanced plant-based diet, supporting the fact that dogs can thrive without a meat-based diet[7].

11. The current diet used by the Los Angeles City Shelters contains a large quantity of nutrients from grains and other plant-based elements, demonstrating that dogs can digest these ingredients and absorb all necessary nutrients.

12. Any diet could be detrimental for dogs, if not well balanced, does not meet industry standards, and if the feed company does not conduct nutritional and/ or safety tests on a regular basis, on their food. Chicken (meal) an ingredient in the food currently used at LA City Shelters, is a known reservoir for arsenic according to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

13. There have been numerous occasions where the FDA needed to recall meat-based pet food products due to contamination with pathogens or toxins, or incorrect and harmful amounts of vitamins and/or amino acids.

14. Alarmingly, in some cases (e.g., the most recent FDA recall in Feb. 2018) humans became ill by handling meat-based pet foods contaminated with Salmonella[8].

15. Finally, there is zero evidence to substantiate the claim that these types of incidents are more common, or that they even have occurred, with plant-based dog foods.

Note: scientific references (superscript in the text) are available upon request

We sincerely urge you to switch adult dogs in the Los Angeles City shelter system to a well-balanced plant-based diet. Your decision would constitute positive change for the dogs' health, lower the environmental impact from unnecessary meat consumption, and spare the lives of animals currently being killed to feed shelter dogs. Thank you for your consideration!

Respectfully,

Sherstin Rosenberg, DVM
Happy Hen Chicken Rescue
Email: sherstinr@yahoo.com
Tel.: (805) 458-6102

Armaiti May, DVM
Dr. May's Veterinary House Calls
Email: kind_dvm@yahoo.com
Tel.: (310) 614-3530

Note: scientific references (superscript in the text) are available upon request