

NEWS, PETS

# Long Beach Animal Care Services now has a dedicated foster program



by **Kate Karp**  
Dec 30, 2022



Long Beach Animal Care Services foster coordinator Tabare Depaep cuddles Albert. You can help get Albert ready for a forever home. Courtesy Long Beach Animal Care Services

New Year's is just two days off, and I was thinking about sneaking in a resolution to foster a shelter pet now that Long Beach Animal Care Services finally has its very own foster program. But that's banal and even iffy

because people break resolutions all the time. Anyway, you surely want to foster from the shelter now that they have a dedicated foster program.

A foster program was one of the 186 shelter-improvement recommendations made in [a lengthy shelter audit](#) that culminated in 2019. It was ultimately included in the [strategic plan](#), and it became a reality on March 28—doghouses can be built in a day, but not Rome or a ton of meaningful improvements. Foster programs help shelter pets to become socialized and ease their stress. Even in the best possible shelter environment, cats, dogs and bunnies can't be happy if they're shut up in a kennel for most of the day. Additionally, kennel space is at a premium, and fostering pets frees up kennel space for public-intake shelters like LBACS.

## Meet the foster program lead

Coordinator Tabare Depaep is delighted to be heading the new program.

“When I came to the shelter, we had no official foster program, and we are building it from scratch,” Depaep said, arguably with no pun intended. “Our supplies were limited, but we’ve been getting donations and training foster parents to take care of bottle baby kittens, medical-needs cats and dogs—like amputees, and lots of trial adoptions. I love repeat fosters because they already know what they are doing, but the one-time fosters that turn into adoptions are wonderful, too.”

Depaep’s credentials and experience are as diverse as patterns on a tortoiseshell cat—and, in fact, she best describes herself as an indoor cat—but they comprise a compassionate human being. A SoCal native with an NYU law degree, Depaep became a human foster-care attorney for children in dependency courts. She’s represented foster parents in adoptions of children in difficult cases. She’s assisted families through the childbearing period from pregnancy to birth and after, including bonding with the baby, and she has attended over 250 human births.

But she’s a doula to pets as well as to humans.

“I’ve been fostering bottle baby kittens since 1994 for every rescue group known to man or beast,” she said. “Bottle feeders are in high demand, so I made a lot of connections that helped me get the job at the city shelter when this position opened up. During the pandemic, I started fostering pregnant dogs and have attended 12 dog births. and animal. That project has been the best blending of my birthing skills and my fostering skills. It’s so much fun to see the puppies grow, tended by their mama.”

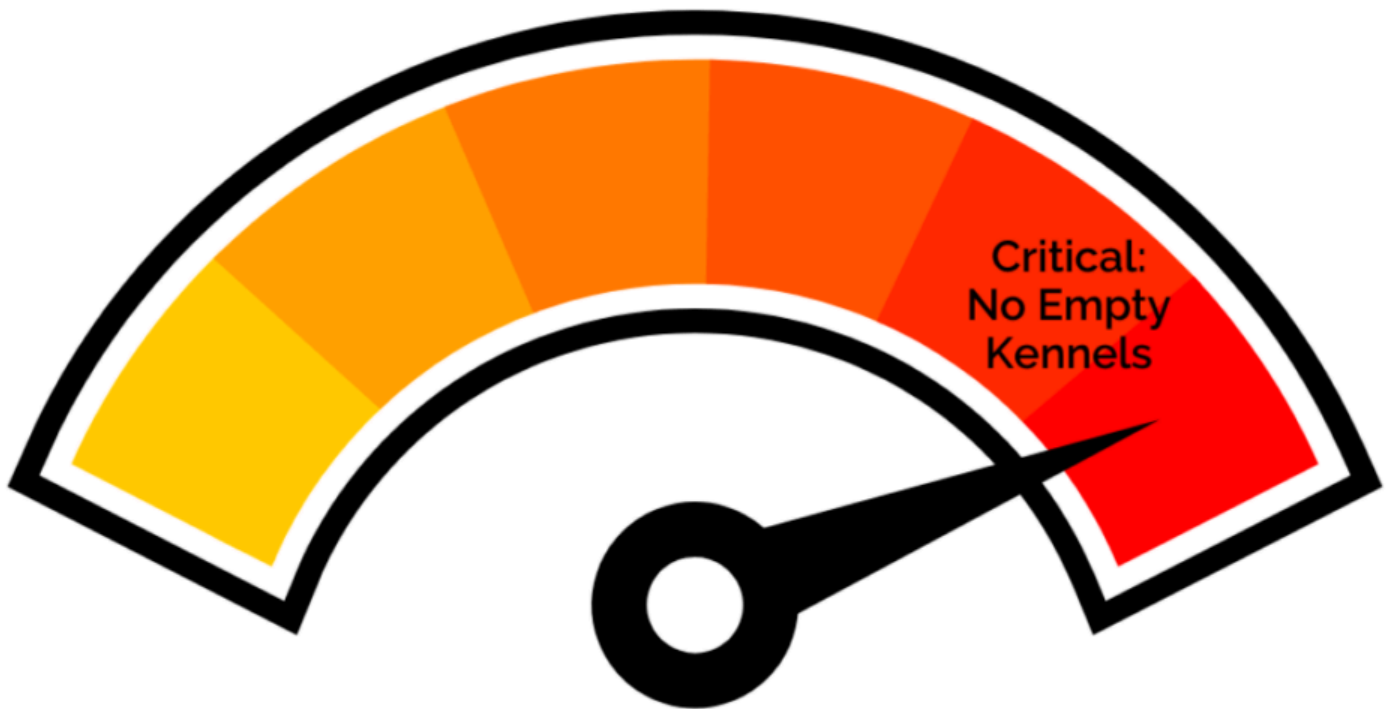
Depaep currently oversees 55 fosters and says that fostering is “great for the pets.”

“They’re in a home environment, which is what we want for them long-term anyway, and they’ve got more one-on-one care than they would in a congregate care setting (in this case, a facility in which a number of pets are housed in private kennels in one space, with limited opportunity for individual attention or mobility),” she said. “They’re not open to getting whatever parasite or disease that an animal who comes in later to the shelter has, and it’s a lot less stressful because all the animals who are in congregate care are, by virtue of simply being in a cage, already stressed, no matter how well they’re doing.”

## **Fostering helps ease overcrowding in a shelter**

Depaep said that the foster parents she works with often help find forever adopters by using their own social media and network of friends. This reduces the strain on the shelter’s capacity and allows the staff to take in and help the next animal that comes in with extreme medical attention or finding the owner. Space, as said, is at a premium.

# How full is Long Beach Animal Care Services?



“We are stuffed to the gills—we have over 100 dogs,” Depaep said. “We have five or six dogs housed in offices, which is not ideal for them or the people trying to work with the dogs barking and asking for attention. We have and far fewer cats right now because it’s not kitten season, so we have some availability.”

But the available space for cats will immediately evaporate with kitten season.

Depaep's house pets include a Chihuahua who gave birth in her closet (she filmed the birth) and dog named Frodo who is congenitally missing one digit on his paw, like his namesake character in "Lord of the Rings."

"I also have a cat named Charlie who was a foster-fail 15 years ago—I'd bottle-fed him and then gave him to myself as a present," she said.

"Foster fail," of course, is the puckish term for adopting the pet you've agreed to temporarily house. It's not uncommon, and is wonderful for the pet, but there is a slight drawback for the shelter.

"This unfortunately takes them out of the running for being another foster placement—for a while at least, while they're dealing with a new pet in the home," Depaep said. "They can still come back to foster, but I recommend that they let their new pet settle into the home and really become a pet and not just a transient foster. Then, they can see if their new pet would be open to sharing their home with another foster."

But don't let that stop you when it happens.

## **What qualities would a human need to be an effective foster?**

"Patience and a willingness to learn," Depaep said. "A lot of our animals come out pretty stressed, and they need some time to decompress. Fosters need the understanding that it'll take the animal some time to reveal their true character.

"Lots of our dogs suffer extreme anxiety when you leave the house," she added. "The foster needs to realize that it's going to get better—we just need to give it time. My bottle-feeding kitten fosters need to learn to bottle-feed, which I teach them. It's sort of a learned skill—I can show you how to do it, but then you and the animal need to practice. Stimulating kittens is new for fosters—they don't know that they have to stimulate their genital area to get them to go pee and poop [**Author's note:** this isn't as icky as it sounds], and they may never have dispensed medicine to such a young kitten."

But won't that cost the foster money?

"Omigod, that's the part I'm most excited about," Depaep said. "We provide equity for the people who want to foster—you don't have to have money to do it."

The shelter provides dog beds, dog kennels, cat carriers, cat litter and litter boxes, the food and pays for all medical expenses. Depaep also said she makes offsite vet appointments for fosters and uploads all the

veterinary records to the pet's record so that when the pet's adopted, there's a full medical record for the adopter.

“My foster phone is charged and by me 24/7,” she added. “When I'm on vacation, it goes to a supervisor. My fosters know that they can reach out at 3:00 in the morning if something's gone terribly wrong and they need help immediately.”

## **It's taken an involved community, and it always will**

The toughest thing about fostering isn't learning to crate-train a reluctant dog or expressing an anal gland. It's saying goodbye. Depaep acknowledges that.

“The difficulty is ‘giving away’ the animal you've put so much time and love into,” she said. “Some people don't want to foster because they're afraid of that moment when they leave the shelter and leave behind their quasi-pet.”

“I can't reassure them that it won't happen, but I try to walk them through with delicacy and sensitivity about how they're feeling about it,” she added. “I've been there, too. I remember crying in New York City when I left the ASPCA without my first litter that didn't get adopted from my contact, and I had to leave them to be shown for adoption.”

But if they do go back, Depaep reminded, shelters still complement social media platforms and networks of friends—they have people coming in looking to adopt. Shelters will probably never be perfect places, but an involved community steers them in that direction. A very vocal community helped bring programs like this one into being. Now, we need to continue the success. A thousand toasts to you if you step up, and may the New Year's Day hair of the dog be actual hair of the dog, who came in from LBACS and who's curled up next to you. Cats and rabbits, too, of course.

**If you have the heart and the space in your home, Depaep asks you to contact her at [Tabare.Depaep@longbeach.gov](mailto:Tabare.Depaep@longbeach.gov) to meet potential fosters and fill out the foster care agreements. More info about the foster program is available [here](#).**

**If fostering isn't on your New Year's resolution list, the shelter welcomes donations such as KMR formula powder and anything newborn-kitten related, nail clippers, toothbrushes (“to brush their fur like their mom's tongue”) and small stuffed animal “moms,” into which the staff and volunteers will insert [Calmeroo](#) beating hearts. Bring them to the shelter at 7700 E. Spring St. at the entrance to El Dorado Park. There is no parking fee for shelter guests.**

## Virtually pets

You can foster many of the pets on LBACS' home page or [social media pages](#). Better yet, you can adopt them even if you foster. Bob Dylan's statement, "There's no success like failure," is fitting here, but I quibble with "failure's no success at all" if he's singing about foster failure. Foster coordinator Tabare Depaep and a couple of über-volunteers will introduce you to five cuddly candidates.

"How's tricks, **Simbili?**" ID#A689081, 4-year-old female pittie mix.

IMG 0290

Kate Karp



Watch on

**Selina's** trick is cuddling! ID#A686900, 4-year-old female pittie mix.

If you foster **Cairo**, LBACS will supply his special diet. No, you can't adopt John. The animals need him.  
ID#A683671, 2-year-old male domestic medium hair orange tabby.

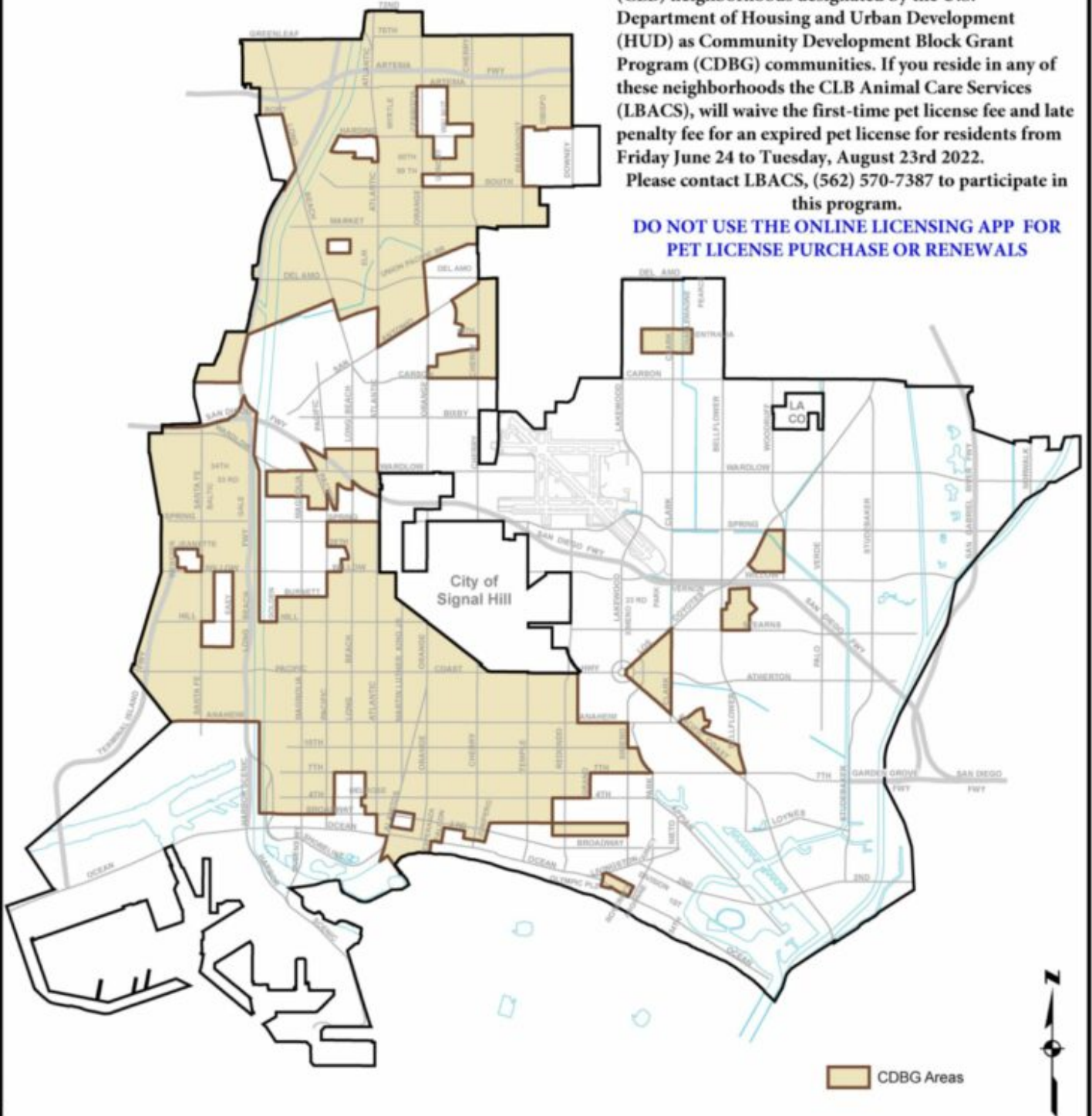
Even while eating, **Simbah** is a lovely gentleman. ID#A690218, 5-year-old male domestic shorthair.

The shelter needs fosters for rabbits—the Bunny Barn is low on kennel space, too, and a couple of rabbits have moved into the Cat Cottages. Here's **Arthur**, who's just a baby. Ain't he kyoooooot? He needs a foster to help him gain two pounds so that he can be neutered. ID#A690668, domestic American male, just a few months old.

# A helping paw

The shaded areas below represent City of Long Beach (CLB) neighborhoods designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) communities. If you reside in any of these neighborhoods the CLB Animal Care Services (LBACS), will waive the first-time pet license fee and late penalty fee for an expired pet license for residents from Friday June 24 to Tuesday, August 23rd 2022. Please contact LBACS, (562) 570-7387 to participate in this program.

**DO NOT USE THE ONLINE LICENSING APP FOR PET LICENSE PURCHASE OR RENEWALS**



City of Long Beach, California  
**Community Development Block Grant  
 (CDBG) Areas**



Department of  
Technology and Innovation GIS

Effective April 1, 2019

Disclaimer  
 This map of the City of Long Beach is intended for informational purposes only. While reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the data, the City assumes no liability or damages arising from errors or omissions. This map is provided without warranty of any kind. Do not make any business decisions based on this map before validating your decision with the appropriate City office.

This map determines eligibility for pet-license-amnesty program.

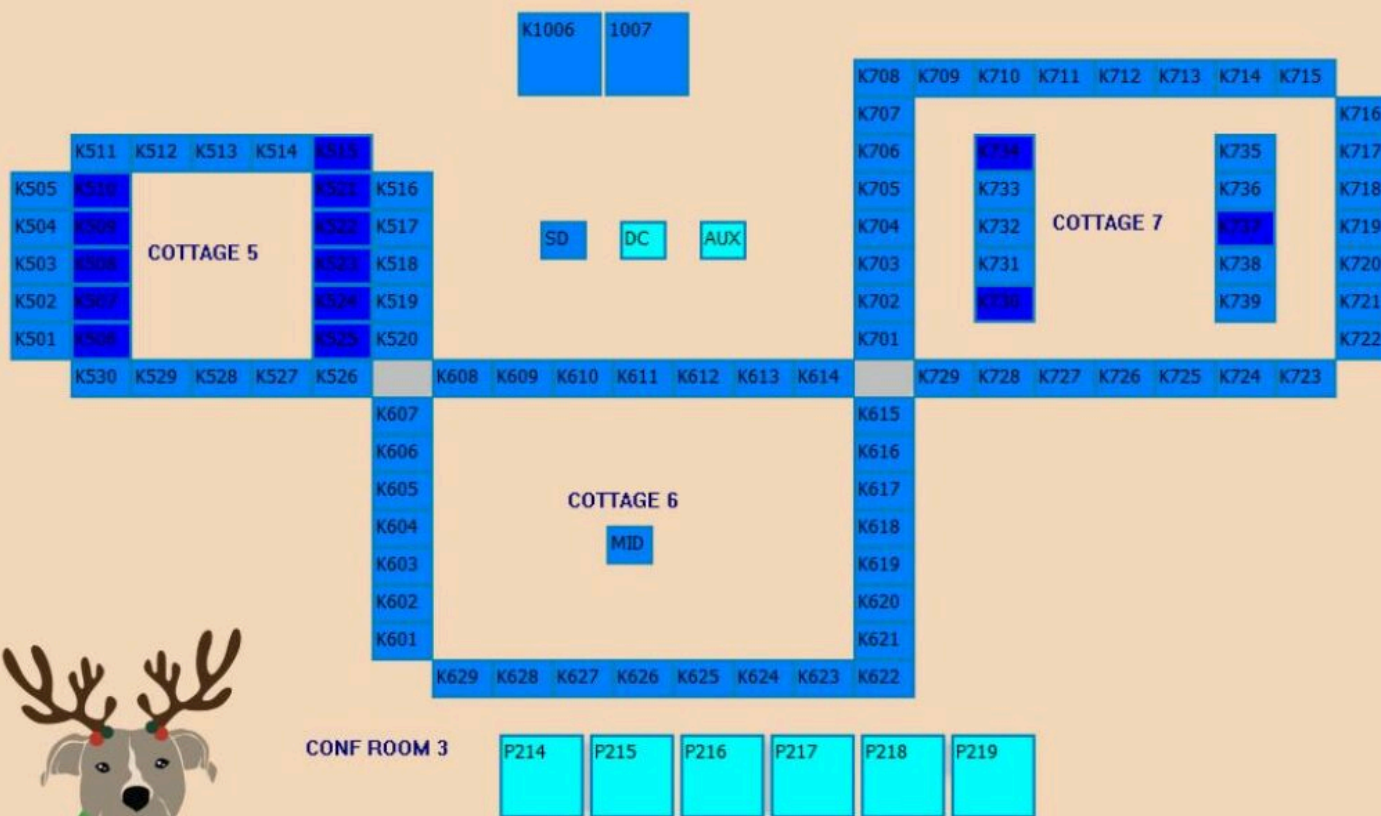
## **Pet license amnesty extended to Dec. 31**

This is it—last days! The city of Long Beach has extended the [fee and penalty waivers](#) for pet licenses to Dec. 31. Anyone living in the highlighted Community Development Block grant neighborhoods, as shown on the above map, may request a waiver by phone at 562-570-7387, by applying by mail at 7700 E. Spring St., or in person at the shelter. The waiver program is not available online. [Visit this link](#) and access the drop-down menu with the title “Do I Qualify for A Free New Pet License?” for details. Call 562-570-7387 for additional information.

Foster for a while—or forever!

# URGENT CAPACITY:

There are no available dog kennels at Long Beach Animal Care Services. Help us make kennel space by fostering and adopting during the howlidays.



**\*As of 12/8/2022**

The more than 300 LBACS dogs, cats and bunnies need your help, as The Scratching Post stresses.

The city of Long Beach's commitment to Compassion Saves means that animals in our care can live and thrive. We need our community to show its support of Compassion Saves by fostering, adopting, volunteering,

and donating. The graphic shows a map of the shelter's dog cottages. The darker the blue, the more dogs in the kennel.

LBACS has reached **urgent capacity** with the influx of incoming animals to the shelter during the holidays. There is no more kennel space to take in more dogs at the shelter. To maintain the LBACS Compassion Saves model of helping those in greatest need—the sick, injured and abused—your help is needed to keep the healthy and lost pets out of the shelter. If you are interested in adopting, please email [PetAdopt@longbeach.gov](mailto:PetAdopt@longbeach.gov) or [apply to foster here](#).

These nonprofits also regularly feature cat, dog and rabbit adoptions. As of now, adoptions are mainly by appointment. Click on the links for each rescue in case of updates or changes. These organizations operate through donations and grants, and anything you can give would be welcome. Please suggest any Long Beach-area rescues to add to the list. **Keep in mind that the rescues are self-supporting and need donations and volunteer help. Most of them cannot accept found or unwanted pets. Contact [Long Beach Animal Care Services](#) for options.**

- [Ally's Animal Network](#)
- [Bunny Bunch](#)
- [Cat Cove](#)
- [Friends of Long Beach Animals](#)
- [Fix Long Beach](#)
- [Feline Good Social Club](#)
- [German Shepherd Rescue of Orange County](#)
- [Helen Sanders CatPAWS](#)
- [Ho'ola Dog Rescue](#)
- [House of Broken Cookies](#)
- [Jellicle Cats Foundation](#)
- [K-9 Kismet](#)
- [Little Lion Foundation](#)
- [Live Love Animal Rescue](#)
- [Long Beach Animal Care Services](#)
- [Long Beach Spay and Neuter Foundation](#)
- [Newborn Feline Rescue](#)
- [Pet Food Express Cat Adoption Center](#)
- [Pug Rescue of Korea](#)
- [SAFE Rescue Team](#)

- [Seal Beach Animal Care Center](#)
- [Sparky and the Gang Animal Rescue](#)
- [spcaLA](#)
- [Stray Cat Alliance](#)
- [Wrigley Kittens](#)
- [Zazzy Cats](#)

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