

# Fresno County supervisors to decide animal control contract

By Marc Benjamin  
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Fresno County supervisors on Tuesday will discuss a three-year, \$3.76 million contract with a new animal control contractor that has its roots in animal rescue.

The proposed contract is with Fresno Humane Animal Services, which has evolved from the Fresno-based Animal Compassion Team rescue organization. ACT operates a shelter and runs an adoption program.

The contract, which begins Oct. 1, has an opportunity for two one-year extensions beyond the initial three-year term.

The first year requires start-up expenses, including new vehicles, and will cost \$1.4 million; the second and third years of the contract will cost \$1.175 million per year, according to the Fresno County contract.

Brenda Mitchell, president and co-founder of the Animal Compassion Team, said the group is both excited and nervous about the contract.

“We only get one shot at this,” she said. “We have a lot of pressure from people to do what no one else has been able to do.”

Mitchell has joined with local veterinarian Lee Ann Dumars to submit a plan that she said will change the way animal control is provided in the Valley. The agency also intends to hire animal control professionals from the Fresno area, Mitchell said.

\$3.76 million

The three-year cost of Fresno County’s new animal control contract

She said efforts will be made to improve animal education and enforcement, while offering quality medical care and working with outlying communities.

“We are going to target areas where we have problems,” she said. “We know we have our work cut out for us.”

Daniel Bailey, who operates California Animal Control Services, has been working under the county’s animal control contract since June. He took over for Liberty Animal Control Services after it filed for bankruptcy in May.

He also applied for the contract and was upset by the recommendation. Since taking over for Liberty, he said, he has slashed euthanasia by more than half.

“They are on the wrong track and they made the wrong decision,” Bailey said, referring to the county staff recommendation in favor of awarding the contract to Fresno Humane Animal Services. “I will still be there for Fresno and they go forward with this disastrous idea.”

In previous interviews, Bailey said a rescue group carries out a different mission than an animal control organization.

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Fresno County Supervisor Henry R. Perea

Supervisor Henry R. Perea said he is comfortable with the recommendation to the supervisors.

“I have a lot of respect for our current vendor, I think he’s done a very good job,” he said of Bailey. “I don’t think it’s an indication that he has not been performing satisfactorily, it’s an opportunity for a new vendor to come in with a different focus.”

Fresno County received four proposals. The others were from California Animal Control Services;

Valley Life Animal Control, a Clovis group overseen by Andrew Little and connected with veterinarian Dr. Charles Wilkins, also was part of the Liberty team; and

the Central California Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The SPCA had the county’s animal control contract until 2012 when the agency said it wanted to get out of the animal control field. The city later reached an agreement at a higher price with SPCA. Liberty was the only group to submit a proposal to the county at that time.

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