

RESOLUTION No. 17-4914

A RESOLUTION OF THE WEST HOLLYWOOD CITY COUNCIL URGING THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) TO ONCE AGAIN PUBLISH ANIMAL WELFARE INSPECTION REPORTS.

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD DOES HEREBY RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

WHEREAS, on February 3, 2017, the new leadership of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) removed an online database that included animal welfare inspection reports and other information documenting animals killed, injured, or mistreated at facilities such as zoos, fairs, exhibits, performance animal training centers, puppy mills, and research laboratories; and

WHEREAS, the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the removal of the information and argued that the removal of public documents from its official web page was due to privacy concerns and ongoing litigation; In addition, in statement released on February 7, 2017, the USDA clarified that the decisions are not final and that adjustments may be made regarding information appropriate for release and posting; and

WHEREAS, the USDA stated that the information will still be available to any member of the public by filing a public records request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA); however, it is widely known that FOIA requests can be costly, time consuming and can take weeks, if not months, to be fulfilled by a federal agency; and

WHEREAS, removing public access to information concerning the treatment of animals will potentially lead to the harm of animals as the public and particularly animal rights' advocacy groups will have no ability to take action to protect and advocate for the welfare of animals; and

WHEREAS, the removal of such reports, which amounts to a blackout of information, which will hide important facts about potentially dangerous operations of corporations, and whether or not such violations have been corrected and violators sanctioned; and

WHEREAS, beyond the potential harms for animals, which in and of itself is a serious issue, this new federal policy runs counter to the public's interest in accessing information held by governmental agencies such as the USDA; and

WHEREAS, blocking easy access to government-held, public information hinders taxpayers' abilities to be informed as to whether or not APHIS is doing their job to protect animals; and

WHEREAS, American taxpayers ought to have quick and easy access to this information so that they can make informed decisions about the treatment of animals before visiting public attractions such as zoos, fairs, or water parks where animals are the attraction; and

WHEREAS, over the years, the City of West Hollywood has taken numerous steps to bolster transparency and increase the public's access to information held by the City; and

WHEREAS, the City of West Hollywood has rolled out an innovative "Open Data" initiative that will hopefully result in a more informed and engaged community; and

WHEREAS, the City of West Hollywood has a long track record of enacting and supporting legislation aimed at protecting the well-being of animals; and

WHEREAS, the City of West Hollywood is the first city in United States to declare itself a "cruelty-free" city, and the first city in North America to ban the barbaric practice of declawing; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of West Hollywood does hereby urge the USDA to publish once again animal welfare reports so as to increase transparency of governmental acts, and facilitate the public's interest in knowing which corporations have committed acts of cruelty against animals, and whether or not these corporations have been sanctioned.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council does urge federal and state elected and appointed officials to take a stand against the USDA's actions.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of West Hollywood at a regular meeting held this 21st day of February, 2017 by the following vote:

AYES:	Councilmember:	D'Amico, Duran, Horvath, Mayor Pro Tempore Heilman, and Mayor Meister.
NOES:	Councilmember:	None.
ABSENT:	Councilmember:	None.
ABSTAIN:	Councilmember:	None.



LAUREN MEISTER, MAYOR

ATTEST:



YVONNE QUARKER, CITY CLERK

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