

# Women in animal control— Interview with Betty Denny Smith

by Charlene Drennon



Smith

Surfside Newspaper

Smith has been director of Los Angeles County Animal Control since January, 1976. She was interviewed by Charlene Drennon of the HSUS West Coast Regional Office.



Drennon

DRENNON: Los Angeles Co. covers 5000 square miles, 25 cities, as well as unincorporated areas, and Animal Control has over 200 employees. Isn't it unusual for a woman to be the director of such a large animal control department?

SMITH: Yes, there are very few women animal control directors. Five years ago, there weren't any women animal control officers to speak of, but today, there are women officers in many of the departments.

DRENNON: What are your suggestions to a woman who would like to train to be an animal control director?

SMITH: She should get the most complete education she can. It's important that she learn about all animals and animal behavior, not just dogs and cats. She should take business courses, and learn about budgets, laws and labor issues. She must know how to deal effectively with people. It would also be to her advantage to work in a shelter.

DRENNON: What was your background?

SMITH: I have had a varied background, and I think it's important that women training for such a position do so. I majored in business administration in college. I served on the board of the Pet Assistance Foundation for several years, and was one of the founders and president of VSA, a volunteer group chartered to work in the Los Angeles city shelters. I lobbied in Sacramento for animal welfare legislation for several years, and served on numerous county and state committees on upgrading animal control.

DRENNON: What accomplishments are you most proud of in your two years?

SMITH: Many new programs have been started, including humane education, and we have added four spay clinics. I am most proud of our disease prevention program, our euthanasia program using sodium pentobarbital and the addition of eight animal health technicians to our shelters.

DRENNON: I understand your shelter at Agoura (Calif.) is considered a model shelter.

SMITH: Yes, it is. It was opened in November, 1976, and we've involved local citizens extensively there. We are fortunate that the group Actors and Others for Animals financed pilot programs at Agoura for distemper inoculations and euthanasia by sodium pentobarbital injection. These programs have been extended throughout the county.

DRENNON: What is the potential employment picture for women in animal control work?

SMITH: Almost unlimited. Government, through affirmative action programs, is actively seeking qualified women for positions at every level.

DRENNON: Do you find that women animal control officers have special problems in the field?

SMITH: Not generally. Usually, the public is kinder to women.

DRENNON: What about handling large animals?

SMITH: So far, the women are doing fine.

DRENNON: How are women at enforcement?

SMITH: Very effective. Often people will accept citations more readily for women. All officers are trained to use citations as an education process for the offender.

DRENNON: Here's the jackpot question, Betty. Would you want your daughter to go into animal control work?

SMITH: Absolutely. It is frustrating and demanding work, sometimes heartbreaking. But it is very rewarding to know that you are doing a difficult job in a humane manner. □

---

JOB OPPORTUNITY - Division Chief, Los Angeles County Animal Control. Direct supervision of animal care centers and enforcement of state and local laws governing animals. Applicants should have management experience with an animal control agency or humane society doing animal control work, must have demonstrated administrative ability, and must be able to coordinate training programs. Salary approximately \$23,000. Send resumes immediately to Clarence Shaw, Dept. of Personnel, 222 N. Grand, Los Angeles, Calif. 90012. □

---

## CETA benefits those who prepare



If you're planning to apply for a grant through CETA - the Federal Comprehensive Employment Training Act - be prepared to show that you know what to do with it.

CETA grants pay the salaries of long-term unemployed persons while they receive on-the-job training with local groups, up to one year. The salary maximum is \$10,000. The local organization is able to carry out a project that wouldn't be possible otherwise, and in some cases, hires the trainees for permanent jobs. CETA grants are available to municipal agencies as well as private organizations.

Claude Bowen of the CETA office in Harford Co., Md., advises grant applicants to show "hard-nosed administrative ability" to supervise the employees. The grant application must be for a specific project with results that will be measurable. Also, most of the money goes to actual salaries and not to administrative costs - so the grant recipient must be prepared to handle such needs as tools and supplies.

Continued on next page