

## **Rabbits, Turtles, Iguanas Rescued from L.A. Street Corner**



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"Easter Animals" Rescued from L.A. Street Corner (Courtesy: LAPD / March 18, 2010)

LOS ANGELES -- Police have seized more than a hundred animals, including 35 miniature rabbits, 79 turtles, 1 parrot, and 6 iguanas, that were being sold illegally on a street corner in downtown Los Angeles.

"The illegal sales of animals is a perennial problem in the Fashion District, especially as certain holidays approach, like Easter," according to LAPD Lt. Paul Vernon.

Demetrio Plumamena, 46, was arrested for for felony, animal cruelty, Vernon said.

Uniformed LAPD officers, assigned to the patrol the Fashion District in downtown Los Angeles, noticed Plumamena assembling animal cages on the sidewalk along the 1200 block of Wall Street on Saturday, March 13, according to Vernon.

The officers arrested Plumamena initially based on a city ordinance of illegal street sales, but when city animal services officers evaluated the caged animals it was apparent they were malnourished, and the cramped, caged conditions constituted animal cruelty.

"The biggest concern here is for the animals' welfare and how they are treated," Lt. Vernon explained.

"But humans' health and safety is also a concern because these animals can pass on disease."

Police warn the public not to buy animals off the street. Tropical water turtles are known to be carriers of salmonella.

Most animals purchased off the street tend to be in poor health and often do not survive more than a week with their new owners.

"Patronizing these animal traffickers only encourages them to sell more animals," Lt. Vernon added.

Police encourage the public to report illegal sales of animals to their local animal services department or the local police.

Anyone wishing to remain anonymous can call Crimestoppers at 800-222-TIPS (8477).

Tipsters may also contact Crimestoppers by texting to phone number 274637 (C-R-I-M-E-S on most keypads) with a cell phone. All text messages should begin with the letters "LAPD."

Tipsters may also go to [LAPDOnline.org](http://LAPDOnline.org), click on "webtips" and follow the prompts.

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