

# Fashion District's Outlaw Pet Markets

By Steven Mikulan, Friday, Aug. 21 2009 @ 12:04PM

Ed Fuentes has a well-documented story on BlogDowntown about the appalling conditions surrounding the small animals sold in L.A.'s fashion district. "At the corner of 12th and Maple," Fuentes writes, "two stacks of cages sit in the mid-afternoon August sun. Inside are baby rabbits with underdeveloped legs -- barely supporting their body weight -- shaking on top of wilted lettuce leaves."

These are "un-weaned baby rabbits . . . some as young as a few days old," whose new owners quickly discover their pets to be suffering from diarrhea. Fuentes quotes Randall Tampa, the local Business Improvement District's operations director, as claiming that "What people are buying are animals at the end of their lives."

Calling the would-be pets the "fashion district's other illegal inventory," Fuentes says the open-air sale of rabbits, fish and turtles has been a fact of district life since the 1990s. Its vendors are closely watched by what Fuentes characterizes as "pet cartels." High season is Easter, he says, when the bunnies are costumed and ducks join the caged menageries of iguanas, turtles and hamsters.

One of the few heroes to emerge in the article is Lejla Hadzimuratovic, an actress and PETA member who created the Bunny World Foundation, which cares for rabbits rescued from Santee Alley and its environs.