

# Los Angeles Times

## Illegal animal sales continue in L.A.'s Fashion District

by Lindsay Barnett

Despite the efforts of the LAPD and the Business Improvement District to [eradicate illegal animal vendors from downtown L.A.'s Fashion District](#), the practice of selling live animals on the street -- unweaned baby rabbits, turtles and birds, among others -- continues.

On Easter Sunday -- perhaps a poetically appropriate day for a bunny rescue -- Los Angeles police officer Matthew Shafer, while completing routine rounds, happened upon a man rustling plastic in a van parked in a Wall Street garage. Suspicious, Shafer went to investigate -- and found that the van contained a whopping 118 turtles. In the van parked next to the one with the turtles, Shafer discovered 23 underage rabbits.

The situation is hardly an unusual one; illegal animal sales are a long-running problem in the area. Worse still, many of the animals sold there are babies too young to be taken from their mothers; others are sick or malnourished. Our colleague Carla Hall reports:

When animal services officials can certify that animals are in bad condition, their vendors can be charged with animal cruelty -- as was Raymundo Hernandez, the man Shafer arrested in the parking garage.

The confiscated rabbits were turned over to Lejla Hadzimuratovic of L.A.-based rescue group the [Bunny World Foundation](#).

Hadzimuratovic and a group of Bunny World volunteers will attempt to nurse the babies back to health. (On the menu: a mixture of kitten formula, goat milk and colostrum pills. Despite the TLC they'll receive from the dedicated team, it's unlikely that they'll all survive.)

The group has also [put out a call for volunteers](#) to provide foster care for rabbits confiscated from Santee Alley and to help socialize them so they can be adopted into new homes. Also on its wish list: donations of baby-bunny necessities like towels and blankets, heating pads and incubators.

**Learn more about the effort to stop illegal animal sales in Santee Alley in The Times' local news blog, [L.A. Now](#), and check out a [photo gallery](#) for images of rescued animals.**