

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: 07/10/2006		Item Number: <u>A-2</u>	
AGENDA ITEM: Discussion of Los Angeles County Ordinance Amending Title 10 – Animals, of the Los Angeles County Code, Establishing a Mandatory Spay and Neuter Program for Dogs and Requiring that all Dogs over the Age of Four Months be Implanted with an Identifying Microchip			
Contact Person/Dept.: Akil Manley / Shelly Wolfberg		Phone Number: (310) 253-6015 / (310) 253-6008	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☐	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒	Attachments: ☒
Public Notification: Master Notification List (07/05/06)			
Department Approval: Martin R. Cole (07/05/06)		CAO Approval: Jerry B. Fulwood (07/05/06)	
City Controller Approval:			

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council discuss the Los Angeles County Ordinance Amending Title 10 – Animals and direct staff as deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND:

On May 2, 2006 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors ("the Board") adopted County Ordinance No. 2006-0029 effective on June 3, 2006 for unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County ("the County"). The measure requires adult dogs to be spayed or neutered, and implanted with an identifying microchip. The purpose for the mandatory spay and neuter provisions, which are required of all dogs over the age of four months, is to reduce the number of stray animals in Los Angeles County's animal shelters. The goal of the microchip provision is to provide positive, reliable on-body identification for dogs that will expedite their return to owners. Compliance for mandatory spay/neuter and micro-chipping programs is September 3, 2006.

As adopted by the Board, the measure applies only to the unincorporated areas of the County. Components or the entire measure could be adopted by Council to align the City's local ordinances with the County.

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

DISCUSSION:

In fiscal year 2004-2005, 81 stray dogs from the City were picked up by the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control (LACDACC) and impounded at the Carson Shelter. Once housed at the Carson Shelter, only 26 were reclaimed by their owners, while 38 were placed in new homes. The low reclamation rate is due, in part, to dogs lacking identification and owners not being notified. By establishing mandatory spay/neuter and micro-chipping programs, penalties for noncompliance, and new license fee structure for dog licenses, the County's ordinance is intended to reduce the number of impounded stray dogs, decrease the euthanasia rate, and reduce program operating costs.

Mandatory Spay and Neutering

The measure amends Los Angeles County Code § 10.20 to add Part 4, *Mandatory Spay and Neutering Program for Dogs*. The *Mandatory Spay and Neutering Program* is designed to encompass the non-shelter animal population to reduce the number of animal impounds and the number of animals euthanized at Los Angeles County animal shelters. Depending on the size of the dog, the cost for spaying/neutering ranges from \$80 to \$300 for a private veterinarian and \$35 to \$45 at the Carson Shelter. To offset surgery costs at private hospitals, the County is funding a voucher in the amount of \$50 that will be offered to residents over the age of 50 and low-income pet owners.

The *Mandatory Spay and Neutering Program* does not apply to all dogs. Dogs that are determined by a veterinarian that the surgery is unsafe due to age or infirmity, used by law enforcement agencies, certified service dogs and purebred dogs registered with recognized breed clubs are exempted under the measure.

To enforce this provision, a stray unaltered dog that is impounded by the County will be spayed or neutered prior to being reclaimed by its owner, unless the owner demonstrates compliance with the ordinance. The cost for spaying or neutering will be at the expense of the owner. When a current unaltered dog license expires the owner will have to show compliance through documentation of spaying or neutering before a license is renewed.

Mandatory Micro-chipping

The measure also amends Los Angeles County Code § 10.20.185 to add *Micro-chipping of Dogs Required*. Micro-chipping is a simple, non-surgical procedure to assist with positively identifying and reuniting stray dogs with their owners. The microchip, which is approximately the size of a grain of rice, is injected underneath the skin with a needle. While tags can become lost or damaged and tattoos can fade or be altered, microchips provide permanent identification with unique numbers that cannot be changed. There is no anesthesia required, and even the

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

smallest dog can be safely micro-chipped. Some of the benefits of the micro-chipping provision are the following:

- *Animal Control Officers Identifying Stray Dogs in the Field.* County Animal Control Officers would be able to scan stray dogs, and if the dog is micro-chipped, gather the necessary information from a national registry to attempt to contact the owner and deliver the dog to the owners while out in the field, which will decrease the City's housing costs. Fines can be immediately assessed for violation of leash law and return-to-owner fee.
- *Micro-chipping Increases the Holding Period of a Stray Dog.* The County holding period of a stray dog housed at a shelter is five days, while the holding period for a micro-chipped dog is extended to ten days.
- *Stray Dogs Found in Neighboring Cities.* Animal Control Officers in neighboring cities would be able to scan for a microchip for stray dogs found in their jurisdiction, and, if present, the respective Animal Control Officer would be able find out where the dog was originally micro-chipped and contact Los Angeles County for animal pick up and sheltering.

The cost for micro-chipping a dog is approximately \$60 at a private veterinarian hospital. To lower the cost of micro-chipping to dog owners, the Found Animal Foundation of Los Angeles has donated 1 million microchips for dogs and lifetime registration for dog owners with current licenses and proof of vaccinations. The County is currently scheduling free microchip clinics throughout the County. Micro-chipping clinics are offered at convenient times and locations to provide pet owners easy access to obtain microchips for their pets. The County is willing to conduct an initial simultaneous microchip/vaccination/license clinic for Culver City.

To enforce this provision, unmicro-chipped dogs that are impounded by the County will be micro-chipped prior to being reclaimed by their owners, unless owners can demonstrate compliance with the ordinance. The cost for micro-chipping will not be at the expense of the owner. When a current dog license expires the owner will have to show compliance through micro-chipping documentation before a license is renewed. To provide residents an opportunity to receive a free microchip at no cost, the City has the option to set the enforcement date of this provision to follow a scheduled citywide microchip clinic.

Breeding Limits

The Los Angeles County Code prohibits the breeding of more than one litter per female dog per year, and no more than five litters per female dog during her lifetime. This restriction is consistent with generally accepted breeding principles that are customary in the codes of ethics of purebred dog breeder associations. The sale and transfer of unaltered dogs is also regulated and owners must report the births, sales and transfers of these animals.

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Compliance and Penalties

To assist with the enforcement of the measure's requirements, penalties will be assessed for violations of any of the provisions of the ordinance with a fine not to exceed \$250 for the first infraction; and a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment in the county jail for a period not to exceed six months or by a fine not to exceed \$1,000 for the second infraction. Each subsequent violation within one year shall be considered an additional misdemeanor.

Increased Fees

Lastly, the ordinance amends Los Angeles County Code § 10.90.010 to establish a new fee structure, effective September 3, 2006, for altered and unaltered dog licenses to recover the costs of enforcement and to subsidize a low-cost dog sterilization fund. This fee structure applies to dogs in the unincorporated areas of the County. The ordinance raises each dog license fee, which is to be set aside into a low-cost spay/neuter assistance fund. The license fees have increased from \$15.00 to \$20.00 for an altered dog and \$20.00 to \$60.00 for an unaltered dog. Of the license fee increase \$5.00 will be used to pay for three additional veterinarians at department shelters to provide low-cost sterilization surgeries for the public and to fund the spay and neutering voucher program. Currently, the City's licensing fee structure is \$20 for altered and \$40 for unaltered dogs.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

No negative fiscal impact is anticipated. The fee modifications may generate unanticipated revenue, while the mandatory programs may potentially decrease program costs.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance Amending Title 10 – Animals of the Los Angeles County Code

MOTION:

That the City Council:

discuss the Los Angeles County Ordinance Amending Title 10 – Animals and direct staff as deemed appropriate.