



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: 1st and 4th Districts
Department No.:
For Agenda Of: 04/22/08
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Tme: 1 hour on 05/06/08
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department 1st District Supervisor Carbajal
Director(s) 4th District Supervisor Gray
Contact Info: Jan E. Glick, Animal Services Director – 681-5284

SUBJECT: Local Spay/Neuter Ordinance Report

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence: N/A

As to form: Select_Concurrence

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

Set a hearing for May 6, 2008 to:

- a) receive a report on the status of a local spay/neuter ordinance for Santa Barbara County and provide policy direction to staff on further development of such an ordinance, and if warranted
- b) authorize the Public Health Department - Animal Services to initiate outreach efforts to receive public input on the draft ordinance, and
- c) direct Public Health Department – Animal Services to return to the Board for further consideration of a local spay/neuter ordinance based on public input including an operational plan for implementation

Summary Text:

For a number of years, concerned community members, animal volunteer groups, and animal services professionals have expressed interest in a local spay/neuter ordinance as a means of reducing the number of unwanted animals currently housed in animal shelters and elsewhere in the Santa Barbara County.

As a result, the Animal Services program of the Public Health Department in collaboration with animal volunteer groups from across Santa Barbara County, undertook research on spay/neuter ordinances in other jurisdictions with the objective of bringing a local spay/neuter ordinance to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. An ordinance has been drafted and County Counsel has reviewed the initial draft. The goal of the local ordinance is to reduce pet overpopulation and arrest the growth of the associated costs.

Animal Services desires to seek input on the draft ordinance in community forums. These forums will allow residents to respond to the draft ordinance, share information about experiences in other communities, and discuss concerns. This input is essential to bringing forward an ordinance that is responsive to the unique needs of our communities. An outreach plan will be developed to engage interested groups and residents. Once input from the community and other stakeholders has been received, the ordinance language will be finalized and brought to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

Background:

Spay and neuter ordinances typically set an age at which the animal is required to be spayed or neutered, this usually ranges between 4 and 6 months. Typical exemptions that will allow the owner to leave the animal unaltered usually include:

- Veterinary medical exemption
- Purebred and/or show dogs and cats
- In county temporarily
- Working dogs (law enforcement, service, search and rescue, herding and others if determined)
- Breeding permit, if breeding

Penalties are generally termed “fix-it” tickets that include a term of 30 or 60 days to allow the owner to obtain an appointment. Non-compliance is followed by administrative fines, usually with an escalating scale. Ordinances often include a component to subsidize low income spay and neuter to assist in hardship cases.

A number of counties and cities across the nation have enacted mandatory spay/neuter ordinances. Within California, such ordinances have been enacted in the Counties of Santa Cruz, San Mateo, Lake, Stanislaus, Sacramento, and Los Angeles. California cities that have enacted such ordinances include Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Sacramento, Agoura Hills, Santa Clarita, La Puente, Palmdale, Walnut, and Clearlake. Within Santa Barbara County, the City of Lompoc’s spay/neuter ordinance was enacted in October 2006.

The concept of a Santa Barbara County spay/neuter ordinance was originally brought to the Public Health Department for consideration in late 2006 by concerned community members, animal volunteer groups, and animal services professionals interested in reducing the number of unwanted animals currently housed in animal shelters and elsewhere in the County. These stakeholder groups began researching ordinances in place in other jurisdictions and assessing the support locally for a spay/neuter ordinance.

In 2007, AB 1634 (California Healthy Pets Act) was introduced in California which would require owners to spay/neuter most dogs and cats. Animal Services, along with interested community members, attended County Legislative Committee meetings to seek support for AB 1634. The Legislative Committee recommended a support position on AB 1634 and this item was put on the 2008 Legislative Priority list. When this recommendation came before the full Board on December 11, 2007 the Board indicated that it preferred the preparation of a local ordinance that could better reflect the needs of the residents of Santa Barbara County and voted to remove AB 1634 from the County’s 2008 Legislative Priorities. AB 1634 became a two-year bill which is still under consideration at the State level.

Animal Services staff, animal groups, and citizens returned to their earlier efforts to explore a local spay/neuter ordinance for Santa Barbara County. Initial meetings were held with community stakeholders to guide the development of a local ordinance. As a result of these efforts, a draft

spay/neuter ordinance was prepared and reviewed by County Counsel. The next step is to initiate outreach efforts to receive public input on the draft ordinance to include:

- Community forums inviting residents in all regions of the County.
- Letters to organizations with interest in animal related issues offering to come and speak to their local groups. This includes groups that may be in opposition to a proposed spay/neuter ordinance.
- Prepared materials in English and Spanish
- Presenting information on Channel 20 for residents who are unable to attend forums but are interested in learning more.

Once the outreach process has been completed, Animal Services will incorporate feedback into the draft ordinance which will be brought before the Board of Supervisors.

Based on the experience of other jurisdictions and analysis conducted by Animal Services, a local spay/neuter ordinance can be implemented and enforced without increasing staffing levels and within current resource levels.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Receiving this report has no fiscal or facilities impact. Outreach will not require additional general fund resources.

Staffing Impacts:

The outreach plan will be accomplished with existing Animal Services staff and volunteer resources. There are no additional positions proposed.

Authored by:

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Deputy Director