



TOWN OF APPLE VALLEY TOWN COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

To: Honorable Mayor and Town Council Date: August 14, 2012

From: Gina Schwin-Whiteside, Animal Services Item No: 14

Subject: SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAM

T.M. Approval: _____ Budgeted Item: Yes No N/A

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Provide direction to staff with regard to the Town's approach to a community-wide spay/neuter program.

SUMMARY:

During the last few months, the Animal Services Department has implemented numerous programs aimed at increasing pet-owner responsibility and decreasing the numbers of animals that enter our Municipal Shelter. Research shows that population control within a community does effect the numbers of animals entering animal shelters. Advocates from both sides argue that their methodology is the basis for declines in shelter population numbers.

Arguably, there are many factors that effect outcomes, such as economics, spay/neuter incentives, education, and population trends. The fundamental objective of every animal welfare organization, whether publically or privately funded, is "**Reducing Euthanasia**".

Apple Valley Animal Services is committed to implementing approaches to "Save Lives" and has actively promoted responsible pet-ownership through low-cost vaccination clinics, mandatory spay/neuter of animals adopted from our shelter, and free/reduced cost vouchers for altering pets. Regardless of adopting a "Voluntary Spay/Neuter Program" or a "Mandatory Spay/Neuter Program", access to affordable spay/neuter services is critical for long-term efficacy in reducing animal intakes at our Municipal Shelter.

METHODOLOGIES:

Animal Services staff was asked to prepare a staff report regarding spay/neuter programs for the Town Council. Two approaches were researched by ITT Technical Institute students completing their internship hours at our Municipal Shelter. Staff examined the two methodologies presented, read position statements from various animal advocacy/support groups, and reviewed available statistical data from agencies implementing voluntary or mandatory spay/neuter programs. To provide a foundation for Council discussion and direction, we are providing the following brief descriptions of the two methodologies:

“Mandatory Spay/Neuter Program” – Spaying and neutering is mandatory for dogs and cats over the age of 4 months. Exemptions are provided for animals whose health would be endangered by the procedure and for animals owned by city-licensed breeders. The former must be confirmed by a licensed California veterinarian.

“Voluntary Spay/Neuter Program” – Spaying and neutering is voluntary for dogs and cats over the age of 4 months. A differential licensing program for dogs and cats is typically in place. This means that owners of unaltered animals pay a significantly higher rate than owners of altered animals for annual licenses. Additional differentials are applied to return-to-owner fees when impounded, which includes State Mandated fees for unaltered animals running at-large.

Considerations for both programs should include enforcement costs. Mandatory spay/neuter programs require field canvassing. Our current number of field officers has decreased, which has impacted our town-wide canvassing efforts. Additional field staff would be required to ensure compliance. The statistical data on mandatory spay/neuter laws is still being analyzed by numerous organizations regarding effects on shelter intakes and euthanasia.

APPLE VALLEY ANIMAL SERVICES VOLUNTARY SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAM:

The Town of Apple Valley currently has a voluntary spay/neuter program methodology in place. The incentives to encourage spay/neuter have evolved over the years. Staff, closely monitors community participation and presents recommended changes to the Town Council as needed. Our current approach includes:

- Differential Dog Licensing Fee: \$75 Unaltered; \$12 Altered
- Mandatory Spay/Neuter for all animals adopted from our Municipal Shelter (Does not include Rescues)
- Differential Return-to-Owner Fee (Dog): *Includes State Mandated Fee:* \$212 Unaltered; \$80-\$104 Altered/Unlicensed; \$Free Altered/Licensed/First Offense

- Differential Return-to-Owner Fee (Cat): *Includes State Mandated Fee:* \$70 Unaltered; \$35 Altered/Unlicensed; \$Free Altered/Microchipped/First Offense
- Free Spay/Neuter Voucher provided for every unaltered animal licensed
- Reduced Cost Spay/Neuter Vouchers for dogs/cats, which include rabies vaccination, microchip, 1-year dog license (permanent for cats), and a free spay/neuter.
- Free Spay/Neuter Vouchers for dogs/cats to qualifying Apple Valley Residents (This incentive is on tonight's agenda for authorization and is fully funded through grant funds)

RECOMMENDED CHANGES/INCENTIVES

- Differential Return-to-Owner Fee: \$110 Unaltered Dog; \$40 Unaltered Cat – When the animal owner decides to have the animal altered before it is returned. The owner would be required to pay the fee upfront and pick the animal up after surgery at the designated animal hospital.
- Mandatory Spay/Neuter for all animals adopted from our Municipal Shelter (Reduced Rate for Rescues pulling animals between day 6 through day 10 of the impound)
- Differential Dog Licensing Fee Increase for Unaltered Dog: \$75 year one; \$150 year two; \$150 year three plus \$250 Breeder Permit
- 3-Month Amnesty on late fees for dog licenses.

EXAMPLES OF ADOPTED ORDINANCES

Hesperia

- Any impounded animal shall be spayed or neutered at the guardian's expense before being returned, with the exception of properly tagged and licensed dogs, unless those dogs have been found loose off their guardians' property on three or more occasions in a three-year period.
- Any impounded animal shall be properly licensed at the guardian's expense before being returned.
- Licensing charges are \$50 a year for unaltered dogs and \$12 for spayed or neutered dogs.

6.08.020E Any dog found running at large, running loose, or unrestrained off the owner's property shall be required to be spayed or neutered and properly licensed, at the owner's expense before being returned to their owner.

Exception: Any properly tagged and licensed dog shall not be required to be spayed or neutered as above unless found running at large, running loose, or unrestrained off the owner's property on three or more occasions in a three-year period

Belmont

- City Code outlines a differential licensing program for dogs and cats, as follows: unaltered dogs \$21 (\$.50 toward Animal Population Trust Fund), unaltered cats \$11, spayed/neutered dogs \$11, spayed/neutered cats \$6.
- Having unaltered animals also requires that a breeding permit be obtained for \$25.
- Guardians of unaltered animals are required to pay higher redemption fees when their animals are impounded at shelters. The impound charge is \$20 for a spayed/neutered animal and is \$40 for an unaltered animal (\$30/\$60 if an animal is not licensed). Each time impounded, the fee increases: second offense, \$30/\$60, third offense \$90/\$100, fourth offense \$120/\$140 and fifth offense and up \$150/\$170.
- If an animal is impounded twice in a three-year period, he or she will be sterilized before being released back to the guardian.