

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

DATE: AUGUST 9, 2006

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: GREG RAMIREZ, CITY MANAGER

BY: NATHAN HAMBURGER, ASSISTANT TO THE CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE NO. 06-337; AMENDING ARTICLE III, CHAPTER 3, SECTION 3300, ANIMAL CONTROL REGULATIONS, OF THE AGOURA HILLS MUNICIPAL CODE, AND ADDING MANDATORY SPAY/NEUTERING AND MICROCHIPPING FOR ALL DOGS

As part of the General Services Agreement with Los Angeles County, the City of Agoura Hills utilizes the Department of Animal Care and Control for all services related to animal control. The agreement includes the pick up of dead animals on city streets, the collection and housing of stray animals, spay and neutering services for the public, and emergency animal rescues. The existing Agoura Hills Municipal Code relating to Animal Control Regulations was established by adopting the Los Angeles County Code (Title 10 – Animals). The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has adopted several amendments to this Code (currently only effecting unincorporated areas) and is requesting its municipal counterparts to adopt these new regulations to allow for similar enforcement within all of the municipalities served.

At the May 2, 2006 meeting of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, amendments to the County's Code, regarding animal control, were approved that establish a mandatory spay/neutering and microchipping programs for all dog breeds in all of the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County (Ordinance No. 2006-0029). The program requires that all dogs over the age of four months be spayed or neutered and microchipped and was adopted with the intention of regulating the number of unwanted animals that flood into the local animal shelters each year. There are several exceptions to this program that allow for approved purebred dog breeders or "show" animals that compete in registered dog shows to avoid the mandatory spay or neutering and microchipping program. In addition, the changes to the County Code allow for dogs who may suffer serious bodily harm or death from being either spayed or neutered, due to their age or infirmity to obtain an unaltered dog license.

Unsterilized dogs are creating a crisis in Los Angeles County. Stray dogs are public safety hazards, and unsterilized dogs are more likely to stray. Stray dogs can bite or attack people or other animals, cause traffic accidents, spread disease, damage property and harm the quality of life for residents in a community. During the 2005-06 Fiscal Year 23,799 (about 220 of these within the Agoura Hills boundaries) stray dogs were impounded by the Animal Care and Control Department.

Unneutered males search for mates and are attracted in packs when female dogs come into heat. One female in heat, even if confined, can make an entire neighborhood unstable by attracting packs of male dogs intent on breeding. These situations often become dangerous.

Unsterilized dogs can create unplanned litters, and there are not enough available homes to absorb this surplus. The Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control is overwhelmed with dogs. In Fiscal Year 2004-2005 the department impounded 40,174 dogs, more than any other animal care and control agency in the nation. During that year 18,804 dogs were euthanized. The City of Agoura Hills pays for any stray dogs that are collected within our city boundaries including any housing costs prior to their euthanization. Despite strong efforts to place dogs into new homes and reunite lost dogs with their owners, there are still not enough adoptive homes available. The Animal Care and Control Department is committed to a “no-kill” philosophy. However, in order to reach that goal it is important to first greatly reduce the number of dogs flooding our shelters. This ordinance will help reach this goal by reducing the number of dogs born or running loose in Agoura Hills in alliance with Los Angeles County.

Spaying and neutering also presents many health benefits for dogs. Certain types of cancers in dogs are eliminated by spaying and neutering. Sterilized dogs are less likely to roam and, therefore, less likely to be lost, hit by a car, injured in a fight, or abused.

The process of microchipping involves implanting a small chip, about the size of a grain of rice, under the dog’s skin through a non-surgical procedure. The microchip allows for the animal to have on-body identification so that their owner’s information can be tracked easily and allow for a quicker return of any lost animal to its owner. Contact information relating to the identification number found in the chip can easily be changed or updated when a pet owner moves, if the animal is sold, or resides with a new owner.

The Agoura Animal Shelter offers spay or neuter and microchipping services through their clinic and in addition, offers vouchers for senior citizens and low-income residents who may need assistance in affording these services for their pets.

The Law Enforcement Committee has reviewed this request from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and is supportive of bringing this item to the entire City Council to seek approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff respectfully recommends the City Council waive the first reading in full and introduce, by title only, Ordinance No. 06-337. The second reading and adoption of the ordinance is proposed to be on August 23, 2006.

Attachments: Ordinance No. 06-337
Title 10 of Los Angeles County Code – Animals