

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA**

For the Agenda of:
March 23, 2010
Timed: 10:00 a.m.

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Department of Animal Care and Regulation

Subject: Introduce Ordinance Requiring Veterinarians To Report Rabies Vaccinations To
The Department Of Animal Care And Regulation

Supervisory
District: All

Contact: Pat Claerbout, Director, 875-5051

Overview

The Department of Animal Care and Regulation (Animal Care) reviewed strategies to increase revenue, including the mandated reporting of rabies vaccinations from veterinarians and a revenue enhancing concept, "Point of Sale or Transfer Licensing Enforcement Assistance" (POSTLEA), proposed by a community member, Mr. Ted Sorich. Outreach has been conducted with advocates and veterinarians in the community.

Recommendation

Request the Board to introduce the attached Rabies Vaccination Reporting Ordinance adding Section 8.20.045 to Chapter 8.20, Title 8 of the Sacramento County Code relating to the reporting of rabies vaccinations, and waive full reading of the ordinance and continue to April 6, 2010 for adoption.

Measures/Evaluation

Mandated reporting of rabies vaccinations will increase Animal Care's database of owned animals in the community, increasing license compliance. Each owner of an unlicensed pet will be notified by letter of the requirement to license their pet; follow-up will occur for non-compliance. Increased license compliance will generate more revenue into Animal Care to further reduce the Department's dependency upon the General Fund to support Animal Care functions. Impounded animals that are wearing a current license can be reunited with their owners quicker, further reducing the cost of shelter care for that animal. Animal Care will track revenue and compliance rates, as well as changes in the returned to owner rate of impounded shelter animals.

Fiscal Impact

Animal Care anticipates that by adopting the ordinance, license revenue will increase by \$315,205 during the Fiscal Year 2010-11, further reducing Animal Care's dependency upon the General Fund to support Animal Care functions.

BACKGROUND

In April 2007, the Board approved the Animal Overpopulation Ordinance, which created an incentive for pet owners to sterilize their pets and regulate the sale of dogs and cats. During the development of the ordinance, a mandate to report rabies vaccinations by veterinarians was included. Due to concerns raised by the veterinarian community, this requirement was removed from the ordinance with the recommendation that the current program of voluntary license sales at veterinary hospitals be monitored and reviewed at a later date.

Also, during the development of the ordinance, the POSTLEA concept was introduced by Mr. Sorich for inclusion in the Animal Overpopulation Ordinance. After review, it was decided to not include the POSTLEA concept into the ordinance because it was found to be repetitive of other sections of the ordinance and would be difficult to enforce. Mr. Sorich has continued to bring forward his POSTLEA concept to Animal Care and members of the Board as a method to increase revenue.

DISCUSSION

POSTLEA

Animal Care has analyzed the potential for revenue from the POSTLEA concept. POSTLEA would require adoption of an ordinance requiring purchasers of pets to report to Animal Care the names and addresses of the sellers or transferors of these pets. As an incentive to report the seller or transferor, the reporting person would receive a free one-year license (\$15.00). Animal Care staff would input the information into the licensing system and produce a report of unlicensed animals. Animal Control officers would then follow up to achieve compliance increasing revenue needed to offset General Fund support of Animal Care's functions. Volunteers would also be used to canvas neighborhoods to educate the public on licensing regulations. Mr. Sorich describes the POSTLEA concept as "using volunteers to educate the public about why spay/neuter and licensing compliance is needed and incentivize/motivate new animal buyers and transferees in point of sale transaction."

Mr. Sorich has presented the POSTLEA concept not only to Animal Care, but also to the City of Sacramento Animal Services and the Sacramento SPCA to gain their support for the program. Animal Care staff has analyzed the POSTLEA concept and discussed its potential with the Sacramento City Animal Services and the SPCA, along with many other professionals in the industry. The analysis indicates that the POSTLEA concept would not generate any substantial additional revenue. Current County ordinance requires that all sellers of dogs or cats must provide the license numbers of their animals to the buyers. To date, Animal Care has not had any reports from purchasers that the animals they bought were unlicensed. Based on the results of a cooperative program with the Sacramento SPCA where County residents adopting animals receive a free one-year license, it appears an incentive of \$15.00 would not change the reporting rate nor would a free one-time license result in repeat license purchases. In addition, due to the current staff reductions, staffing levels do not provide for any follow up for this level of complaint. A far more effective vehicle to capture the information of all newly-acquired pets would be through mandatory rabies vaccination reporting from veterinarians.

Mandatory Rabies Vaccination Reporting From Veterinarians

Introduce Ordinance Requiring Veterinarians To Report Rabies Vaccinations To The Department Of Animal Care And Regulation

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The California Animal Care of Health Services mandates through Title 17 of the Health Code that all counties provide for a rabies control program. Rabies control is primarily achieved through dog and cat immunization and licensing. County ordinance requires that every person owning or having custody of a dog or cat over four months of age be rabies immunized and licensed.

Currently, residents comply with these requirements voluntarily or after being cited for a violation of the County ordinance. County licenses can be purchased at the shelter, by mail, online, at neighborhood service centers, or at participating veterinary clinics. Participation of veterinarians in the sale of licenses is voluntary, with only 13 out of 42 hospitals in the unincorporated area currently participating. In Fiscal Year 2008-09, a total of 16,295 were sold, and of these, only 1,610, or 10%, were sold by veterinarians.

The current license compliance rate averages 14%, which will generate \$398,026 in revenue in Fiscal Year 2009-10. In the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2009-10, we have seen a substantial decrease in our licensing revenue. Comparisons with other cities' and counties' license compliance rates show a marked increase in compliance rates and increased revenues for jurisdictions that have implemented mandatory rabies vaccination reporting. Currently, there are 28 jurisdictions within the state that have mandatory rabies vaccination reporting.

In 2006, the City of Sacramento implemented mandatory rabies vaccination reporting, which increased its license sales from 12,815 licenses in 2006 to 25,746 in 2007. The City has a current overall compliance rate averaging 19%. Contra Costa County, which implemented mandatory reporting many years ago, has a license compliance rate of 26%. The City of San Jose adopted mandatory reporting in 2008 and estimates that its licensing revenue will have increased from \$750,000 to \$1.5 million within a 12 to 18-month period.

Animal Care has conducted outreach to the veterinarian community regarding this proposed ordinance change and invited their participation and feedback. Staff attended the February meeting of the Sacramento Valley Veterinarian Medical Association (SVVMA) and spoke on the need for the ordinance, details of the requirement while inviting feedback, as well as extending an invitation to a follow-up meeting on February 18, 2010 at the shelter. An announcement of the February meeting was sent to all veterinarians in the County that would be affected by the ordinance.

Only two veterinarians attended the meeting, one being the current president of the SVVMA, Dr. Ken Pawlowski. Dr. Pawlowski indicated that he had heard concerns from some of the association members, and was hoping to work towards a solution of increasing the number of veterinarians voluntarily selling licenses rather than moving forward with an ordinance at this time. Staff indicated willingness to work with the SVVMA with a goal to streamline whatever process moved forward and to continue working collaboratively with the SVVMA in the future.

Animal Care has very few avenues by which to increase revenue to support its activities. Fees are reviewed annually and adjusted as appropriate. Many of the services provided to the public, such as the adoption program, cannot fully recover the program's total cost. If adoption fees are increased above the area norm, citizens will no longer adopt from the shelter. Increasing license compliance is the one area that Animal Care can focus on and generate substantial revenue. While Animal Care respects the concerns of the veterinary community, and in the past has

provided them the opportunity to voluntarily increase license sales, the statistics from other jurisdictions clearly indicate that mandatory vaccination reporting does increase license compliance. Concerns voiced by veterinarians, such as fewer animals being vaccinated or loss of clients to clinics in areas that do not report, although duly noted, have not been documented by the veterinarians.

To implement a successful vaccination reporting process, Animal Care will work closely with each veterinary hospital to find a process that is best suited for its individual staff. The monthly vaccination reports can be submitted by mail, fax, or electronically. Signage will be provided to each hospital to indicate to its clients that the hospital is complying with County Code by providing rabies vaccination information to Animal Care.

MEASURES AND EVALUATION

Mandated reporting of rabies vaccinations will increase the Animal Care's database of owned animals in the community. Each owner of an unlicensed pet will be notified by letter of the requirement to license their pet; follow-up will occur for non-compliance. Increased license compliance will generate more revenue into Animal Care to further reduce the Department's dependency upon the General Fund to support Animal Care functions. Impounded animals that are wearing a current license can be reunited with their owners quicker, further reducing the cost of shelter care for that animal.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Animal Care estimates that a compliance rate increase of dog licenses to 26% and cats to 3.7% would generate \$835,000 in total license revenue by Fiscal Year 2011-12. With efficiencies that have been implemented by Animal Care staff in licensing processing, such as online renewal and bar code scanning; Animal Care's current staffing levels could process the increase in licenses. License sales will be tracked monthly to closely follow trends. The increased revenue will further reduce our dependency upon the General Fund to support Animal Care functions.

Respectfully submitted,

PAT CLAERBOUT, Director
Animal Care and Regulation

APPROVED:
STEVEN C. SZALAY
Interim County Executive

By: _____
PAUL J. HAHN, Administrator
Municipal Services Agency

Attachment: Ordinance