

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF STANISLAUS

ACTION AGENDA SUMMARY

DEPT: Animal Services

*Dave Young*  
*Out*

BOARD AGENDA # \*B-22

Urgent

Routine

AGENDA DATE June 3, 2008

CEO Concurs with Recommendation YES  NO

4/5 Vote Required YES  NO

(Information Attached)

SUBJECT:

Approval to Set a Public Hearing on July 15, 2008 at 6:35 p.m. to Introduce and Waive the First Reading of an Ordinance To Amend Chapter 7.50 Animal Services Fees, to Adopt Fees Set Forth in Department of Animal Services 2008 Fee Schedule, to Repeal Chapter 7.52 Veterinary Services and to Adopt a Two Tier Fee Schedule for the Stanislaus County Alternative to Euthanasia (SCATE) Program

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Set a Public Hearing on July 15, 2008 at 6:35 p.m. to Introduce and Waive the First Reading of an Ordinance To Amend Chapter 7.50 Animal Services Fees, to Adopt Fees Set Forth in the Department of Animal Services 2008 Fee Schedule, to Repeal Chapter 7.52 Veterinary Services Fees, and to Adopt a Two Tier Fee Schedule for the Stanislaus County Alternative to Euthanasia (SCATE) Program.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Animal Services is requesting amending fourteen existing fees, adding twelve new fees and the remaining fees collected by the Department will remain unchanged. These fees will generate approximately \$320,984 - \$534,708 of additional revenue on an annual basis. Currently the Department of Animal Services retains fees that are collected from city residents to offset shelter costs. The additional revenue will be included in the Animal Services 2008-2009 Final Budget. If approved, these fees will be effective 30 days after the adoption of the ordinance.

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BOARD ACTION AS FOLLOWS:

No. 2008-397

On motion of Supervisor Monteith, Seconded by Supervisor O'Brien

and approved by the following vote,

Ayes: Supervisors: O'Brien, Monteith, DeMartini and Chairman Mayfield

Noes: Supervisors: None

Excused or Absent: Supervisors: Grover

Abstaining: Supervisor: None

1)  Approved as recommended

2)  Denied

3)  Approved as amended

4)  Other:

MOTION:

\* Please note that the table on page 7 of this staff report contains a typographical error regarding the proposed fee amounts. The correct fee amounts are as follows: "\$72.00 for Low income SCATE vouchers, and \$140.00 for Standard SCATE vouchers"

*Christine Ferraro*

ATTEST: CHRISTINE FERRARO TALLMAN, Clerk

File No. ORD-55-H-5

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**FISCAL IMPACT:** Continued

This chart represents the overall estimated revenue increases in the Animal Services budget.

	<b>Fiscal Year 2006-2007 Actual Revenue</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Revenue with proposed Fee increases</b>	<b>Estimated Revenue Increase</b>
Animal Services Fees	\$546,147	\$772,440	\$226,293
SCATE Fees	\$ 29,793	\$106,862 (Low)	\$ 77,069
		\$320,586 (Standard)	\$290,793
Vaccination/License fees	\$0	\$ 17,622	\$ 17,622
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$575,940</b>	<b>\$896,924 to \$1,110,648</b>	<b>\$320,984 - \$534,708</b>

**DISCUSSION:**

Animal Services fees were last updated in 2004. In 2005, the Board of Supervisors approved additional fees as part of the new Pet Overpopulation Ordinance.

A survey of the eight comparison counties has been completed and reveals that Stanislaus County generally charges fees that are 25% - 50% below the average by the comparison counties. It is notable that while Stanislaus County has the lowest adoption fees of seven of the eight comparison counties, we provide more services such as an Adoption Coupon and a free bag of dog or cat food with the adoption of a dog or cat than all the other counties.

In general, Animal Services is requesting to raise existing fees to the average or near average level of the comparison counties. The comparison counties survey results are attached as;

- Addendum A, "Adoption Fees Survey";
- Addendum B, "License Fees Survey",
- Addendum C, "Reclaim/Impound Fees Survey";
- Addendum D, "Miscellaneous Fees Survey"; and
- Addendum E "Vaccination Fee Survey".

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**Amended Fees**

The specific fees that Animal Services is requesting to be amended are:

<b>Amended Fees</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
Reclaimed/Impound fees for dog/cat 1 <sup>st</sup> time	\$35.00	\$40.00
Reclaim/Impound fees for dog/cat 2 <sup>nd</sup> time	\$55.00	\$65.00
Reclaim/Impound fees for small livestock	\$30.00	\$45.00
Reclaim/Impound fees for large livestock	\$50.00	\$75.00
Board and care of all animals	\$8.00/day	\$15.00/day
Quarantine fee	\$30.00	\$50.00
Microchip fee	\$17.00	\$20.00
Owner surrender fee	\$25.00	\$30.00
Routine Exam now called Level One Veterinary Care Fee	\$55.00	\$35.00
Extensive Care now called Level Three Veterinary Care Fee	\$110.00	\$135.00

On June 3, 2003 the owner surrender fee was adopted by the Board of Supervisors, per C.S. 843. However, the fee appears to have been omitted in error in the July 9, 2004 publication of the Animal Services fees ordinance. It is recommended that this omission be corrected as well as amending the fee.

**Adoption Fees**

As noted earlier, Stanislaus County has the lowest adoption fees for both cats and dogs than seven of the eight comparison counties. If Stanislaus County were to raise its adoption fees to the average of the comparison counties, dog adoption fees would increase from \$75.00 to \$116.00 and cat adoption fees would rise from \$45.00 to \$82.00.

Animal Services recommends an increase to dog adoption fees from the current rate of \$75.00 to \$90.00, which will result in Stanislaus County still having a fee lower than seven of the eight comparison counties and providing an incentive to increase adoptions. The Department proposes to maintain cat adoption fees at the current fee if \$45.00, since the number of cat adoption rates over the last several years are significantly lower than the number of dog adoption rates. The department, therefore, would like to provide an incentive to increase adoptions.

<b>Amended Fee</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
Dog Adoption Fees and Deposits	\$75.00	\$90.00

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Total revenue in Fiscal Year 2006-2007 for dog adoption fees was \$306,049. Total revenue for dog adoption fees with the new proposed fee schedule would be 409,942, for a net increase of \$103,893.

Pet Overpopulation Ordinance Fees

The Pet Overpopulation Ordinance was implemented in October 2005. One provision of that ordinance created an increased annual dog license fee, for an unaltered dog license of \$100.00. County policy was to instill greater responsibility to owners for having an unaltered dog by making the unaltered license over 80% more expensive than an altered license. This County policy was in keeping with existing State of California policy, which also sanctions having an unaltered animal, by (1) requiring adopted animals to be spayed or neutered and (2) imposing State fines on impounded animals that are unaltered. The existing spay and neuter fines in the current Title 7, Chapter 7.50, Section 7.50.030 are required by Food and Agriculture Code Sections 30804.7 and 31751.7. Those fines would remain the same as set forth in these code sections.

Animal Services compared the licensing patterns of altered licenses versus unaltered licenses for the time frame of October 2005 to March 2008 in an effort to determine the effectiveness of this component of the Pet Overpopulation Ordinance. The results of that review are attached as Addendum F, "Altered/Unaltered Licenses Issued Monthly Comparison Chart." During the first year of the ordinance the monthly number of unaltered licenses issued ranged from 802 – 441. As a percentage of all licenses issued per month, during that first year, unaltered licenses ranged from 27.9% to 35%. During the last twelve months, or the third year of the existence of the ordinance, the number of unaltered licenses issued per month dropped to 548 - 299 with the numbers totaling less than 400 per month during the last eight months. As a percentage of all licenses issued during the last twelve months, there was a decrease to a range of 24% to 17.7%.

Raising the license fee for an unaltered animal has gradually increased the percentage of licensed altered dogs from 70% to 82%. Therefore, Animal Services requests to further raise the license fees for unaltered dogs in an attempt to further achieve the State and County policy of having the maximum number of cats and dogs altered. The suggested fees are:

<b>Amended Fee</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
Annual Dog License – Unaltered	\$100.00	\$150.00
Two Year dog License – Unaltered	\$180.00	\$250.00
Three Year License – Unaltered	\$260.00	\$350.00

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Total revenue in Fiscal Year 2006-2007 for all the fees for the categories discussed above was \$240,098. Total revenue for those same categories if these proposed fees had been in effect and the number of unaltered licenses decreased by 10% would have been \$362,498, for a net increase of \$122,400.

Over a period of years, if the unaltered license fee increases have the desired results, revenue in this category will begin to drop as pet owners begin to spay and neuter their animals and purchase \$12.00 licenses rather than \$150.00 licenses.

**New Fees**

As a result of hiring a full time County Veterinarian, Animal Services will be providing more in-house medical treatments and vaccinations to strays and impounded animals that ultimately will be reclaimed by owners. Costs would be recovered by the County when the owners reclaim their animal. These fees are based upon the County Veterinarian's estimate of actual costs for services provided. Animal Services has never charged for these services before, nor tracked them as individual expenditures, so there is no historical basis upon which to project an estimated amount of future revenue.

<b>New Fees</b>	<b>Fee</b>
Rabies Vaccination	\$6.00
DHPP Vaccination	\$10.00
FVR-CP Vaccination	\$10.00
Bordatella Fee	\$10.00
Deworming Fee	\$10.00
Frontline Flea Treatment	\$10.00
Level Two Veterinary Care Fee	\$60.00
Level Four Veterinary Care Fee	\$220.00
Level Five Veterinary Care Fee	\$370.00
Pick up or trip charges for large livestock	\$75.00

**Stanislaus Alternative to Euthansia (SCATE) Fees**

The SCATE program was first instituted in December 2001 with the original fee of \$30.00 per voucher. In March 2002 the fee was raised to \$40.00 and was last raised in July 2004 to \$50.00. Animal Services and the Northern San Joaquin Veterinary Medical Association (NSJVMA) negotiated a new fee structure for the fees private veterinarians could bill to Animal Services for providing spays and neuters pursuant to the SCATE vouchers. This new fee structure became effective July 1, 2007. The fee schedule is attached as Addendum G.

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When the fees veterinarians charged the County were raised, the County did not raise the price of the SCATE vouchers. For years the SCATE Program voucher fee combined with the existing spay and neuter fines in Section 7.50.030 collected since 2001 generated enough revenue to be self-sufficient. However, as veterinary medical costs increased, the number of vouchers sold increased, but SCATE voucher fees remained low, the County General Fund began to subsidize the program. With the higher veterinary fees listed in Addendum G, the average cost for spay and neuter soared to \$136.00 per surgery. Only \$15.00 (\$5.00 prior to August 2007) of the pet owners' \$50.00 SCATE voucher fee goes toward surgery costs. The remaining fee amount pays for licensing, microchipping and vaccinations.

Under the current fee structure, pet owners are only paying for 11% of their pet's surgery costs. While this is a huge incentive to purchase a SCATE voucher, it turns spay and neuter into a government responsibility rather than a pet owner responsibility.

The financial burden to the County was exacerbated between December 2006 to September 2007 when the SCATE vouchers were sold over the counter at Animal Services. Prior to that time, SCATE vouchers were only sold at the monthly County sponsored vaccination/license clinics held in varying Cities throughout the County. The number of vouchers sold at monthly clinics was kept low by the limited hours of the clinic and/or limiting the number of vouchers sold. The year prior to the "over the counter" process, 1,486 SCATE vouchers were sold. During the nine months they were sold "over the counter" the number sold tripled to 4,450. This increase in the number of vouchers sold, coupled with the huge disparity between the cost of the voucher and the actual veterinary medical costs created a costly program. While there is an incentive to public participation to encourage a reduction in the huge amount of unwanted animals it can not be a government only solution. Cities are also being asked to participate in the SCATE program in the future.

In December 2007 the Board of Supervisors supplemented the Animal Services budget by \$225,000 to cover SCATE medical costs. This amount was funded by projected revenues to the program and existing cash in the trust fund. In February 2008 the Board of Supervisors supplemented from the County general fund the Animal Services budget an additional \$100,000 to cover SCATE veterinary costs and existing expenditures. SCATE vouchers were not sold in May 2008 and staff will evaluate the availability of funds for a June 2008 clinic.

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Animal Services recommends creating a two-tier SCATE voucher fee schedule and increasing fees as follows:

<b>New Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
Low income SCATE vouchers	\$72.00
Standard SCATE voucher	\$140.00

The low income price of \$72 reflects what a low income pet owner would be paying for 25% of the surgery costs. The standard fee of \$140 reflects what a pet owner would be paying for 75% of their surgery costs. The new fees are still an incentive to participate in SCATE, as these rates are still lower than what the citizen would have to pay if they did not use SCATE.

Thus, the new structure is projected to accomplish three goals:

- A higher volume of voucher sales means more spay and neuters which meets the Board of Supervisors desire to reduce the pet overpopulation problem in Stanislaus County.
- It places greater financial responsibility on the pet owner reducing the risk of having to subsidize program.
- The program still provides an incentive for people to participate due to the affordability of the voucher.

Currently, the sole eligibility to purchase a standard voucher is being a resident of Stanislaus County and that the animal will reside in Stanislaus County. Eligibility to purchase a low income voucher would have the same residency requirements, plus presentation of one of the following types of documents or a similar government issued or utility company billing that has already predetermined the person to be low income:

- Medi-Cal Card (Benefits Identification Card or BIC)
- Food Stamps EBT Card (California Golden State Advantage Card)
- Pacific Gas & Electric CARE utility bill (California Alternate Rates for Energy)
- Telephone bill with low income designation ("Lifeline")

Animal Services would not create its own criteria for low income eligibility, nor would it create any review or arbitration process for persons who do not already have some other form of generally recognized government or utility company designation as being low income. Animal Services will not create any formulas of income versus number of persons in the household, nor will it do independent comparisons of other criteria in an attempt to determine who is or is not low income.

Animal Services currently sponsors one vaccination/license clinic per month. These clinics are held at twelve different locations so that as many communities in the County

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as possible have access. The clinics are closely tied to the SCATE Program in two ways. First, the door-to-door education teams canvas the specific city or community where the upcoming clinic will be held. The teams promote the SCATE Program while doing the canvassing and the citations. Second, the SCATE Vouchers are only sold at these once a month clinics.

State law requires that a licensed veterinarian administer vaccinations. Northern San Joaquin Veterinary Medical Association (NSJVMA) supplies the veterinarians who administer the vaccinations. NSJVMA also supplies the rabies vaccine used at the clinics. The \$6.00 fee for a rabies vaccination is retained entirely by NSJVMA as their payment for providing the veterinary service.

Animal Services can provide this veterinary service through its own in-house full time and/or part-time veterinary staff on an hourly County salary basis rather than a \$5.00 per animal basis. The cost to the County would be two thirds less than the current private vendor method. The cost savings would be applied to the spay and neuter program, increasing the number of spay and neuters that could be provided.

Some local veterinarians do donate their time at the clinics and like to participate in the clinics that occur in their community as a community service. If the County veterinarians become the primary providers of vaccinations at the clinics; local veterinarians will still be welcome to participate.

**POLICY IMPACT:**

Approval of this agenda item adopting and amending fees will address the Board of Supervisors' priority of A safe community and Efficient delivery of public services by ensuring that the Department of Animal Services is appropriately charging fees to maintain the current level of services to the public.

**STAFFING IMPACT:**

There are no staffing impacts associated with this item.