

Los Angeles Pets Feel Economy's Pinch

Spay-neuter vouchers for city's low-income pet owners suspended due to budget deficit.

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The shelter system in Los Angeles, Calif., has suspended the distribution of vouchers for spay-neuter programs as a result of the current economic downturn, L.A. Animal Services said this week.

"With an alarming increase in the number of dogs and cats entering the city's system in 2008, we need to maintain staffing levels to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of animals and people in the city of Los Angeles," according to a news bulletin on the department's website. Citing a \$150,000 budget deficit, the "only recourse" was to make cuts in the spay-neuter coupon and mobile programs.

The department suspended the distribution of \$30 discount and \$70 free coupons at this time. Coupons already distributed will be honored.

The move comes after the city implemented a new mandatory spay-neuter ordinance, which became effective April 2008 with a grace period until Oct. 1, 2008. The voucher program was part of an effort by L.A. Animal Services to help low-income residents comply with the law.