

Chicago Mulls Pet Spay-Neuter Ordinance

Proposed legislation would require dogs and cats to be sterilized at six months of age.

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Legislative efforts to make pet sterilization the law are springing up across the nation, with Chicago joining the ranks last week by proposing a spay-neuter ordinance of its own that states, "No person shall own, harbor, or keep within the city of Chicago a dog or cat over six months of age which has not been sterilized."

Sponsors of the Chicago ordinance say their goal is to prevent attacks by packs of stray dogs and to reduce the dog population in the city's animal shelters. Opponents say pet sterilization should not be a mandate, and prefer voluntary methods.

Under the proposed ordinance, dogs and cats must be spayed or neutered at the age of six months. Violators get a \$100 citation, and fines go up to \$500 if the pet is not sterilized within 60 days of the initial citation.

To be exempt, pet owners must hold breeding permits, have registered purebreds that are actively entered in competition or dogs who are being trained for competition. Exemptions also are made for service dogs, police dogs, and military dogs.

Similar ordinances have previously been introduced to the city council, with no success. The reason for the revival of the ordinance was an incident that took place in April involving five pit bulls who attacked a Southwest Side woman.