

California City Moves Closer to Mandatory Spay-Neuter

The Huntington Beach City Council voted in favor of drafting an ordinance that would require pet owners to alter and microchip their dogs.

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In a controversial decision, the Huntington Beach City Council voted 4-3 in favor of drafting a resolution that would require pet owners to spay, neuter and microchip their dogs and cats.

The purpose of the ordinance would be to reduce uncontrolled breeding of both dogs and cats, to more humanely manage the city's pet population and reduce the strain on Orange County Animal Care Services' resources, according to a staff report prepared by Huntington Beach Police Chief Kenneth W. Small.

A spay and neuter exemption would apply if special circumstances were met. That is, if a veterinarian deemed the surgery unsafe; the animal is used for law enforcement purposes; the animal is a service animal and assists the disabled; or if the pet is deemed a "competition" animal.

The proposed ordinance defines a competition animal as a pet that is used to show, compete or breed, and is recognized by – and registered with – an approved dog or cat breed registry.

Those in violation of the ordinance would be fined \$150, and up to \$500 if the violation continued to go uncorrected. The legislation would allow pet owners a one-year grace period before any fines would be issued, which would give the city time to evaluate the effect of the ordinance and allow the public time to prepare, the staff report states.

Opponents of the ordinance say this legislation creates a "nanny government" and infringes on individuals' rights. Those in favor of the ordinance say this legislation would reduce the number of animals euthanized.

"The goal is noble, no one wants to see [animals] suffering," says Councilman Don Hansen, who voted against the ordinance, "but I don't think it's going to be effective ... And it's very intrusive."

Small will finalize the language of the ordinance, and it will return to the city council for a vote.

-Heidi Hatch, Associate News Editor for DogChannel.com