

'No Kill by 2012' Goal Draws Opposition

Proposed changes to the San Antonio's animal code would raise fees and restrictions for dog breeders.

Posted: September 24, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

The City of San Antonio Animal Care Services Department revealed that it euthanizes between 40,000 and 50,000 dogs and cats each year, many of whom are unwanted litters of puppies and kittens. In an effort to reduce these numbers, the department launched a strategic plan to make the city a no-kill community by 2012.

The comprehensive plan was approved last year by the city council, and strategies include increasing community awareness, owner responsibility, reducing the number of stray animals, securing funds, promoting best practices among animal care organizations and implementing new public policies and ordinances.

As part of the plan, the Animal Care Services Department has proposed changes to the city's animal code, some of which are drawing opposition.

The proposed code calls for higher registration fees for unsterilized animals, a \$10 per year fee for sterilized animals and \$75 per year for unsterilized animals. In addition, owners of unaltered dogs would be required to obtain an intact permit each year, which would cost \$50. And anyone who breeds a dog or cat would be required to obtain a litter permit, which would cost \$75 per litter with a limit of one litter per year.

The American Kennel Club opposes these changes, stating they would, in effect, make sterilization mandatory because only a small number of people could afford the high fees, and that these additional burdens on breeders are unnecessary.

The Animal Care Services Department states that the goal of the law is to reduce the numbers of euthanized animals. The department releases weekly statistics of animals taken in and reported that between Sept. 9 and Sept. 15 of this year, it took in 724 animals, adopted out 57 and euthanized 624.

The Animal Care Services board held public meetings last month, and after review, the city council will vote on the proposed changes.