

Six Pets Might Be the Cutoff in W.Va. City

Pet owners with more than three dogs and three cats could face \$1,000 fine per day under proposed ordinance.

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Owning more than three dogs and three cats in the city of Beckley, W.Va., might cost residents \$1,000 per day in fines under a proposal to amend an ordinance. The plan, announced this week at a Beckley Common Council meeting, has staff at an area shelter bracing for a pet overflow.

Tom Robertson, a humane officer at the Humane Society of Raleigh County, says that setting a new limit on the number of dogs and cats per household will burden the shelter. The staff must euthanize animals on a daily basis, he says, and the revised measure would result in a higher euthanasia rate.

"We will be inundated with all kinds of dogs and cats," he says. The shelter has the capacity to house 30 dogs, 10 kittens, nine puppies and five cats.

As it stands, the ordinance has a loophole that makes it OK to own several pets, if no more than three of each go outdoors. Robertson says many people have anywhere from eight to 15 animals in their possession, which has led to neighbor complaints.

With a staff of four at the shelter, he says there likely will not be enough manpower to deal with the expected deluge of dogs and cats. For now, he said they will wait and see whether the proposal moves forward.

The measure must first go before city planners and council members. Members of the public would have an opportunity to voice any concerns before the council makes a final decision.

What remains to be seen, Robertson says, is whether a new ordinance would solve the issue of keeping large numbers of pets. "Nothing on the books is worth anything if it is not being enforced," he says.