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Resolution Comments

From: Cara Bunning [cara.dvm.nyc@gmail.com]
To: Resolution Comments
Cc:
Subject: Comment on Animal pop control
Attachments:

Sent: Thu 1/27/2011 1:03 AM

Dear Ms Bryant

As a practicing veterinarian in NYC I have always thought that the price of the dog license in New York was ridiculously low. I am very glad to hear that your department is going to raise the New York dog license fee as the majority of people in NY can certainly afford a fee that is at least \$25 - \$50. Obviously people who can show proof of their very low income should be able to have this higher fee waived, but the funds that this fee could generate for the city would be substantial, and could be allocated to different areas of animal welfare, like the shelters and the low cost neuter programs.

Substantial fines for not having a dog license should be implemented, as this could give law enforcement an excuse to investigate any suspected cases of abuse or neglect.

The shelters in New York are disproportionately filled with Pitt Bull mixed dogs and it is clear that they are being bred for dog fighting in certain areas of NYC. Moneys raised from fines for not having a dog license can help fund law enforcement agencies to investigate and stamp out dog fighting rings and Pitt Bull breeding for this purpose.

Unless you are an animal lover, money is the incentive for everything.

The first step is raising the dog license fee substantially. The next step is to make the fine for not having a license quite high (therefore people will take notice). If the moneys raised from the fines are given to law enforcement then you have a law enforcement that actually wants to enforce this law. The fine money could be allocated to a law enforcement body that is dedicated to stamping out breeding for dog fighting and dog fighting itself. This would hit the overpopulation problem at it's core and we actually might see a difference in the overpopulation of unwanted Pitt Bulls in the shelters of New York. Isn't that the whole point?

Thank you for your time,

Cara Bunning, DVM
Loving Hands Animal Hospital
1382 Second Ave
New York, NY 10021
(212) 396 0096

#2

520 Eighth Avenue, 7Fl.
New York, NY 10018
michellev@aspc.org
F. 917.386.6497
www.aspc.org

Michelle Villagomez
Senior Manager of NYC Advocacy
Government Affairs & Public Policy



February 3, 2011

Rena Bryant, Secretary to the Board of Health
New York City Board of Health
125 Worth Street, CN-31
New York, NY 10013

Re: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's proposal on an Animal Population Control Program

Dear Secretary to the Board of Health Bryant:

Enclosed please find the comments of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) on the proposal on Ch. 29 the Animal Population Control Program.

§ 29-01 Authority to Establish and Expend Funds

Recent developments at the State level have presented New York City with an opportunity to invest in its animal care and control program. In these times of budget cuts to city services, including NYC Animal Care and Control, this fee increase could prove to be a boon for the City and its animals.

The ASPCA supports programs that provide incentives to the public to spay or neuter their companion animals. The ASPCA offers low-cost spay/neuter surgery via five fully-equipped mobile veterinary clinics. Our mission is to put an end to the tragic euthanasia of adoptable animals within New York City's five boroughs by addressing the animal crisis at its source- in the heart of the city's local communities. We recognize that many of the most serious overpopulation and animal health crises arise in neighborhoods with limited access to veterinary care, the ASPCA brings these services directly to the community. In 2010 our mobile spay/neuter clinics performed 29,802 surgeries at a cost to the ASPCA of \$4.1 million dollars. Approximately 35% of the surgeries performed were for rescue groups, including Animal Care and Control.

WE ARE THEIR VOICE.™

Our commitment to helping NYC's animals is the reason we supported this change at the state level as well as Intro. 328. We believe that the increase in the licensing fee for unaltered dogs will encourage people to spay or neuter their pets, and will serve as a much needed contribution to the soon to be established City animal population control fund, which will benefit AC&C. This legislation has the potential to raise much needed revenues for a City animal population control fund and program, but in order to make this as effective as it can be; there needs to be an increase dog licensing compliance.

According to the Fiscal Year 2010 Mayor's Management Report- 99,400 licenses were issued in FY 2010. DOHMH estimates that it has not licensed over 400,000 dogs or 80% of dogs in the City. They estimate that there are 500,000 dogs in the City of New York. This number may in fact be much greater; however for purposes of demonstration we will use the numbers previously reported. Failure to implement an effective dog licensing program has resulted in a loss to the City of millions of dollars in revenue annually. If we were able to achieve 50% compliance, the City could stand to raise approximately \$3.7 million; at 75% compliance it could raise approximately \$5.6 million. These figures were calculated based on the results from the 2009-2010 American Pet Product Manufacturers Survey, which found that 75% of their respondents had altered dogs.

In order to maximize the benefits of keeping the licensing surcharge in New York City, we have to work to increase compliance with the dog licensing requirement. Many factors contribute to the extremely low rate of dog licensing in New York City. One of the key factors is lack of awareness of the license requirement. We believe that if presented with options and greater access to licensing, and knowing that a part of the fee will go towards helping fund AC&C programs that people will in fact license their dogs. We are supportive of any efforts made to establish and support programs to educate pet owners about licensing requirement, the importance of spaying and neutering pets, and responsible pet ownership.

Other municipalities dealing with this problem have increased compliance with their dog licensing statute by enacting public education campaigns in conjunction with short amnesty periods, where people can license their pets for free. Riverside, CA instituted an amnesty program from July- August in order to get pet owners into their database. It has been an effective program, and it will be easier for them to send out renewal notices in the future. If we

were to institute an amnesty period, we would be able to get more dogs registered and into the system, making it easier to reach them next year for their license renewal.

A well-funded animal population control program would likely reduce the number of dogs and cats euthanized, and reduce potential threats to public health and safety.

§ 29-02 Definitions

Spay/neuter services

We would like to ensure that the animal population control program include vasectomies and chemical FDA approved chemical methods of sterilization. The ASPCA performs vasectomies and is anticipating the reintroduction of a chemical sterilant for male dogs. Both of these techniques address the animal overpopulation problem.

§ 29-03 Eligibility Requirements

The eligibility criteria for our Mobile Spay/Neuter Clinics are in line with what the Department has proposed. Residents of the five boroughs with proof of public assistance such as Welfare, Medicaid, Medicare, SSI, Disability, Food Stamps, or Public Housing qualify. Unemployment does not qualify. If a person does not have proof of public assistance, a \$99 per animal fee is required. We provide the spay/neuter surgery, rabies and distemper vaccines as well as aftercare. We have a 24 hour call center where registered vet techs triage calls and either refer callers to a recheck at a mobile clinic or refer them to emergency care (either at Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital or other facilities).

Please contact us if you would like any additional information on how perform outreach and implement our spay/neuter program. We look forward to discussing how to increase license compliance, education, and awareness of these very important issues.



LINDA B. ROSENTHAL
Assemblymember 67th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIR
Subcommittee on Mitchell-Lama

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TESTIMONY OF
NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLYMEMBER LINDA B. ROSENTHAL
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
ANIMAL POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAM PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD
FEBRUARY 15, 2011

The statewide Animal Population Control Fund (APCF) was created to offer free and low-cost spay and neuter services to municipalities in order to reduce shelter populations and to diminish the incidences of unnecessary euthanasia of shelter animals. Although hailed as a model program and subsequently emulated by other states, the Fund fell victim to shortsighted “sweeps” over several budgeting cycles, and was thereby rendered incapable of meeting its stated responsibilities.

Given the state’s inability to safeguard this revenue, I proposed that New York City would be a more capable administrator of the Fund for use with animals in the City, and introduced legislation in 2009 to authorize this reform. While this reform overwhelmingly passed the Assembly that year, the bill became the victim of gridlock in the wake of the Senate coup that disrupted legislative activity. In 2010, I took no chances, and inserted identical language into the State’s 2010-2011 State Fiscal Year Transportation and Economic Development budget.

My objective has been accomplished, and I am pleased that the City has successfully secured the share of the now-eliminated APCF to which it is entitled. With available funding for this program limited to the roughly \$159,515 state allotment and revenue projections from the recently increased animal licensing fees uncertain, it is crucial that this startup capital be allocated in the most effective and sensible means possible – specifically, this funding must be used for the stated purpose of actually performing spaying and neutering services rather than promoting their existence.

While it is unfortunate that too few New Yorkers understand the link between the failure to spay or neuter their animals and the inhumane consequences that may result, the importance of this service is best illustrated through good works and good deeds. An effective spay and neuter program that funds efforts in all five boroughs will quickly accrue community acclaim, media coverage and substantially increased awareness. Although a promotional campaign offers some value, I wish to convey to the Department that my intent in transferring the administration of these funds to the City was for them to be used for the most direct activity for which they can be allocated: actual spaying and neutering services.

As the original sponsor of the program, I am deeply invested in its success. I look forward to working with the Department to reduce our City’s shelter population and if necessary, to enact other legislative modifications to strengthen this effort’s effectiveness.