

## **ADDENDA**

**RATIONAL SOLUTIONS**  
**to the Population Control of Dogs and Cats**

**By**  
**Gayle A. Hand**  
**&**  
**Alice E. Partanen**

**submitted to**  
**the San Mateo Community Animal Task Force**

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## PROPOSAL SUMMARY

**WHEREAS**, members of the San Mateo Community Animal Task Force agree that the euthanasia of healthy dogs and cats must end in San Mateo County;

**WHEREAS**, we recognize that unwanted births is only one of the components which contribute to the reservoir of unwanted dogs and cats; animals that stray and become permanently separated from their owners, and pets that are surrendered because people no longer can or want to keep them are two others;

**WHEREAS**, we recognize that this is a complex problem requiring an integrated solution,

**WE RESPECTFULLY SUBMIT** the following goal congruent program:

Provide for **Mandatory Neuter and Spay** of impounded free roaming and shelter adopted animals as an enforceable way to target those dogs and cats most likely to be indiscriminately breeding and thus causing unwanted births.

Establish an **Animal Population Trust Fund** with a portion of the proposed licensing/registration fees, thereby providing a means to facilitate the availability of services for low cost neuter and spay while assuring affordability and convenience **Without Cost to the County**.

Provide **Incentives for Licensing/Registration** so that more animals can be identified and returned to their owners if lost or stray. A **Discount Coupon for Reduced Cost Neuter and Spay and Microchip ID** may be two such incentives.

Support the Shelter to develop an aggressive **Adoption Outreach Campaign**. More animals placed into good homes equates to fewer animals euthanized.

Support the development of **Cooperative Educational Programs** which encourage permanent human-animal bonds. Veterinarians, Dog Fanciers, Cat Fanciers, and those working in Animal Protection Agencies share in common humane and animal control goals for **Responsible Pet Ownership**.

**FURTHER**, we recognize that there **Is Not a Single Answer** for this complex problem. Each component of the integrated solution outlined herein is dependent and interrelated upon the others for the end result: **Eliminating the euthanasia of healthy dogs and cats in San Mateo County**.

## **PROPOSAL OUTLINE**

**In order to fulfill our stated mission of reducing the number of animals euthanized in this county, the following goals must be addressed by additions, amendments or deletions to existing animal control and zoning laws; and/or changes in shelter, owner, breeder, or pet store policies:**

- 1. Decrease the number of unwanted births.**
- 2. Decrease the number of stray animals.  
Increase the number of lost animals reunited with their owners.**
- 3. Increase the number of animals adopted into permanent homes.  
Decrease the number of animals surrendered to the shelter.**

**Towards achieving these objectives, we recommend the following:**

**PART 1:  
TO DECREASE THE NUMBER OF UNWANTED BIRTHS**

**1. Establish by amendment to current law a greater differential license/identification fee for unaltered vs. altered animals. Establish a group license for multi-animal households and rescue groups which would provide tags or Microchip ID for each individual animal at discounted rate.**

Note: It is not the intent of the recommendation for differential licensing to ever be used as a way of taxing pet ownership out of existence. The above provisions are feasible only if the existing limit and zoning laws are modified.

Rationale: A more expensive fee to license or identify an unaltered animal may serve as a motivation for pet owners to alter their animals (1). More animals sterilized will result in a decrease in the number of unwanted births.

The provision for a group license will increase compliance in multi-animal households since many owners and rescue people may find individually licensing multiple animals to be cost prohibitive. Having all animals licensed/identified will increase the likelihood of their return to owner if ever lost or stray. More animals returned to owners will reduce the number euthanized.

**2. Establish an Animal Population Trust Fund via an ordinance that would require that an amount equal to 30% of all revenue generated by dog licensing fees, 50% of all revenue generated by group licensing fees, and 100% of all revenue generated by cat licensing/identification fees be placed into a dedicated trust to be used solely for low cost spay/neuter and public education for the purpose of reducing the number of unwanted animals in San Mateo County.**

The fund would be administered by the County Controller's office acting as Trustee. Copies of period end reports are to be sent to Animal Control. These reports would be public record. The Fund is to be an interest bearing, rollover account.

Funds are to be distributed via a Coupon for Discount Neuter/Spay that can be redeemed by participating Veterinarians in the community. Distribution of Coupon to owners paying licensing or identification fees would receive first priority. Those involved in Dog Rescue and Feral Cat Control Programs would also be eligible. If funds are sufficient, educational materials regarding neuter/spay could be paid for and distributed to Pet Stores, Breeders, Rescue Groups and other sources of pets in the county.

Rationale: It is believed that every dollar spent today on low cost spay/neuter will result in animal control cost savings of several fold in future years (3). The Animal

Population Trust can be operated without additional expense to the County because it will be funded by the proposed increase in dog licensing and cat identification fees. County revenue has not previously been used for this purpose; it is unfair to expect that the Shelter continue to bear the burden of all low cost neuter and spay.

Maximum utilization of available facilities and resources can best be accomplished by enlisting the participation of private sector veterinarians via a "Coupon" System for reimbursement from the Animal Population Trust (4)(5). Additionally, having a choice of provider with the hours and location most convenient to the owner may eliminate disincentives for neuter/spay.

Availability of a Discount Coupon may serve as an incentive for dog licensing and cat identification and in turn provide more money to the fund. Allowing participation of those involved in Dog Rescue and Feral Cat Control will result in more neuter/spay of those animals which are thought to be a major reservoir of animals producing unwanted births (6). Increased compliance with licensing and more animals altered will reduce animal control costs for the future.

**3. Mandate by County Ordinance that Peninsula Humane Society and any other non-profit animal welfare agencies with neuter/spay clinics alter all dogs and cats four months of age and older prior to adoption.**

Ask that the Shelter(s) petition their Board of Directors to consider a change in policy that would allow Early Altering (7 weeks) utilizing AHA guidelines (7).

Mandate by County Ordinance that all unaltered animals adopted from any non-profit animal welfare agency be placed with a written contract that requires sterilization as a condition for final transfer of ownership (8).

Mandate by County Ordinance that failure of shelters to honor provisions above will constitute a misdemeanor offense punishable by \$500 penalty. Fines would be placed into the Animal Population Trust.

Rationale: Compliance with neuter/spay agreement and reclaim of deposit reported by the Shelter is 70%. Although this is considerably higher than what has been reported elsewhere, the remaining 30% are major contributors to the reservoir of animals producing unwanted births (9). It is indefensible that shelters with an on site spay/neuter clinic would allow animals capable of reproduction to be placed into our community. The HSUS Guidelines for Responsible Pet Adoptions state that "The shelter must be able to confirm that at least ninety percent of its adopted animals are sterilized to ensure that the shelter itself is not contributing to the pet overpopulation problem"(10). Given the many uncontrollable factors that lead an owner not to alter their animals after adoption, the most effective means of ensuring sterilization would be to neuter or spay prior to adoption. For those not already sterilized, a written conditional contract would allow the adoptive facility to repossess the animal in order to have it neutered or spayed should the owner not be compliant.

**4. Request that Pet Stores sell pet dogs and cats with written spay/neuter contracts and suggest utilization of Limited Registration and Not for Breeding provisions whenever possible on registration papers.**

Rationale: It is thought that dogs and cats obtained from pet stores are sometimes allowed to breed in the misguided belief that just because the animal has papers it is worthy to be bred. A signed contract would ensure that the buyer has been fully informed that the animal is not appropriate for breeding. It communicates to public the message that pet dogs and cats should not be allowed to breed. If enforced, the number of unwanted births from this source of animals would be reduced.

**5. Recommend the formation of a coalition of local groups working to control Feral Cat Populations.**

Rationale: Feral cats are domestic cats which have reverted to a wild lifestyle. In urban areas they usually come from a reservoir of pet cats, many of which stray or are abandoned. (11) Often settling around sources of food and shelter, unsprayed females produce kittens—up to three litters a year. Unchecked the cats quickly outbreed resources. "Destruction of a cat colony only creates a vacuum soon filled by the surrounding high density of stray or urban feral cats. Trapping, neutering and returning a number of healthy adult cats to their site has proved successful at stabilizing numbers and alleviating the pest behavior problems, provided food sources are regulated." (12) This is a humane alternative to euthanasia for some cats.

There is a need for a coordinated distribution of information on how to set-up and manage controlled cat colonies. Uniform guidelines for notification procedure, trapping techniques and colony maintenance should be established and utilized.

**PART 2:**  
**TO DECREASE THE NUMBER OF STRAY ANIMALS**  
**TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF LOST ANIMALS REUNITED WITH THEIR OWNERS**

**1. Eliminate limit laws or provide for a supplemental permit process that will enable owners to legally keep more animals than current limit laws allow. The number of animals permissible should be determined by conditions not by an arbitrary law.**

Rationale: Limit laws are a deterrent to people licensing their pets. Limit laws keep people from seeking veterinary care (specifically Rabies Vaccinations) for fear of being reported to the County. Since limit laws are largely ignored, they make criminals out of animal lovers but do not serve their intended purpose. Limit laws are counterproductive to responsible pet ownership. Humane and nuisance issues do not need a specified number of animals to be determined or enforced.

Amending limit laws will facilitate increased compliance with licensing and thus promote responsible ownership. More animals licensed will increase the number of pets able to be reunited with their owners if lost and therefore reduce the numbers euthanized. It will also increase revenue to the County which can be utilized in programs to decrease the number of unwanted births through education, animal control, and spay/neuter incentives.

Amending limit laws will open up more homes to animals in need of adoption and thus reduce the number of animals euthanized.

**2. Establish a Microchip Identification program for Licensed Dogs and Registered Cats.**

Rationale: A Microchip may be an incentive for more owners to license or register their animals (12). Pet owners are becoming increasingly aware of the need for positive identification to protect their animals from loss or theft.

Historically collar and tags have been rejected by cat owners as being safety hazards for their pets. The Microchip eliminates those hazards. It holds the potential for widespread use since it has high-tech appeal. It also has the advantage of a National Registration at reasonable cost.

Properly identified lost or stray animals returned to owners will reduce handling and animal control costs. The program can be funded by a portion of the proposed increase in dog licensing and cat identification fees.



**3. Mandate by County Ordinance that every dog and cat adopted from the shelter be identified by Microchip Implant.**

Rationale: By implanting all adopted animals, the return rate of shelter placed animals can be monitored and responsible pet ownership promoted and enforced.

**4. Mandate by County ordinance that all dogs and cats be identifiable by tag, tattoo, or Microchip.**

Rationale: Although it is generally acknowledged that cats should be subject to licensing and restraint laws, we believe that public acceptance will be facilitated by a gradual introduction over several years. Many owners would not comply with licensing requirements because the license fee would be viewed negatively as a tax without perceived benefit or value to their pet.

We propose to begin with emphasis on identification in order to increase the number of stray or lost cats that can be reunited with their owners. We propose to offer lifetime registration with a Microchip for all who choose to voluntarily participate.

The availability of identification by Microchip may provide an incentive for cat registration and eventually even for licensing should state laws ever require verification of Rabies vaccination for cats.

Also, exhibition dogs who usually do not wear collars for aesthetic reasons and working dogs who do not wear collars for safety reasons would be identifiable.

**5. Establish a County wide Computerized Lost and Found list for missing or stray animals.**

Rationale: Current system perceived by public as inefficient and punitive to responsible owners who have become parted from their animals accidentally.

**6. Establish by amendment to current law a greater differential fee for the redemption of impounded animals that are unlicensed and additional penalties for allowing an unaltered animal to roam.**

Establish an Appeal board consisting of 3 members: 1 Animal Control, 1 Veterinarian, 1 public person. Written guidelines are to be developed which will delineate

possible exemptions.

Provide refund of a portion of the penalties and fees paid upon proof of completion of Responsible Ownership School.

Note: 2nd and 3rd occurrences with same owner but differing animals will still be subject to higher impound fees. Licensed Dogs and Registered Cats will have a longer guaranteed hold period of 10 days as an incentive for licensing. Penalties for impounded unaltered dogs and cats will be placed into the Animal Population Trust Fund.

Rationale: Higher impound fees penalize irresponsible owners who allow their pets to roam at large. Increasing impound fees for each reoccurring offense places a higher financial penalty on the repeat offender. But making a provision for attendance at at Responsible Ownership School (animal equivalent to Traffic School) gives the owner the opportunity to learn the reasons behind the need for keeping their animal safe at home. Similar programs elsewhere have reduced the rate of recidivism among irresponsible pet owners (13). Giving the owner the opportunity to attend the Responsible Ownership School will lessen the burden on the Appeal Board. For subsequent offenses, the owner will have fewer valid reasons for appeal.

**7. Mandate by County ordinance that unaltered animals found at large and impounded will be subject to mandatory sterilization at the owner's expense after the 3rd occurrence.**

An Appeal board will be established consisting of 3 members: 1 Animal Control, 1 Veterinarian, 1 public person. Written guidelines will be developed.

Rationale: This law communicates to the public the message that animals should not be allowed to roam at large. Altering prior to release will prevent the animal from contributing to unwanted births if ever allowed to roam in the future.

**8. Mandate by County ordinance that no person shall intentionally cause a dog or cat to be released from any confinement or restraint upon private property, from private cages or restraints temporarily placed upon public property, or from vehicles unless the dog or cat is in genuine need of medical care, food, water, warmth or physical protection from deprivation, neglect, obvious difficulty in enduring inclement or extreme weather or abuse. Violation of this section shall be a misdemeanor.**

Rationale: Fear of penalty will deter malicious release of dogs and cats.

**9. Ask that the Shelter petition their Board of Directors to consider a change in policy that would eliminate the use of the Outside Depository.**

Rationale: Since no other shelter in the region has such a depository, animals from outside the county may be dropped off and thus add to the number of animals our county must handle. Also, opportunities for education and counseling of owners about neuter/spay and responsible ownership are missed. The availability of the "drop box" condones irresponsible behavior towards animals (abandonment) under the guise of anonymity.

**10. Request that Veterinarians in the county offer a 5% discount on annual visits and vaccination costs to licensed or registered animals.**

Rationale: Will provide an additional incentive for licensing which could result in more animal identifies so that they can be returned to owner if lost or stray. More animals able to be returned will result in fewer animals euthanized.

**11. Recommend that dog licensing and cat identification fees be accepted at any Veterinarian office in the county.**

Rationale: Will facilitate Microchip Identification. Also, convenience may increase compliance with licensing.

**PART 3**  
**INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ANIMALS ADOPTED INTO PERMANENT HOMES**  
**DECREASE THE NUMBER OF ANIMALS SURRENDERED TO THE SHELTER**

**1. Request that Obedience Training Schools give a 5% discount to licensed dogs.**

Rationale: Incentive for training as well as licensing. Behavioral problems is one of the most frequently cited reasons for surrender (14). "Owners may not know that certain abnormal behavior can be eliminated or prevented by proper training, understanding, and use of the animal's natural behavior. Consequently, euthanasia for behavior problem is a major cause of death in pet animals." (15)

**2. Recommend that a 10% discount be given on 2nd year Dog Licensing upon proof of completion of Puppy Training, Obedience Training or Canine Good Citizen Training.**

Rationale: Incentive for training. Socialization and professional training of puppies and dogs will prevent behavioral problems from developing and thus ensure that the human-animal bond is not broken out of frustration and ignorance. A reduced number of animals surrendered or abandoned will decrease animal control costs and result in fewer animals euthanized.

**3. Request that the Shelter develop an aggressive adoption outreach campaign which should encompass the following components in order to to seek opportunities that will more efficiently heighten public awareness of the availability of shelter animals.:**

Sponsored Multi-media Advertising (especially SF Chronicle)

Satellite Adoption Facilities

Cooperative effort with regional shelters (and possibly pet stores) to distribute available supply of animals to meet differing demands

Fostering program for unweaned kittens and puppies

Fostering program to rehabilitate temporarily sick animals

Rationale: Adoption outreach and placement into responsible homes is not mutually exclusive. Concern that aggressive adoption advertising and outreach will lead to high rates of recidivism has not been validated when tracked under controlled circumstances. For example, under the North Shore Animal League Advertising Grant Program at the Humane Society of Santa Clara Valley the return to shelter rate was less than 2%. (16) These more aggressive programs raise the public's level of awareness about the availability of shelter animals which will result in

higher adoption rates. For example, under the grant mentioned above the adoption rate was increased by 31%.

Increased adoptions will decrease the number of animals euthanized. The emerging Animal Rights extremist belief that animals should not be marketed is counterproductive to the goal of increasing adoptions.

**4. Request that the Shelter reevaluate their adoption criteria and counseling procedures so that problem areas can be identified and addressed.**

Rationale: The public perceives that the current screening policy is too restrictive. Rather than reject potential adopters, it is preferable to identify problem areas and educate the potential adopter so that a "bad" home can be turned into a good one. Carol Moulton of the AHA states in a article published in The Animal's Agenda that in most cases "Turning down an adoption application did not prevent mistreatment of an animal, it only transferred the problem from a shelter animal to a non-shelter animal...had a shelter animal been adopted, he would at least have been sterilized" (17). A change in shelter policy would increase the number of animals adopted and thereby decrease the number euthanized.

**5. Recommend that local Breed Clubs provide seminars about differing traits of purebred and pedigree animals to Shelter Adoption Counselors.**

Rationale: Members of local breed clubs have knowledge that goes beyond that which can be gleaned from a book. Comprehensive and accurate information about the behavior and traits of various breeds would facilitate the the adoption Counselors' ability to match the right animal with the right person or family. The seminars would include hands on experience with different breeds so that adoption counselors could advise potential adopters what to expect from that breed. This would decrease the chances that the adopted animal would be returned to the shelter or abandoned.

An additional benefit would be enhanced recognition of purebreds by shelter staff so that the appropriate breed rescue clubs could be notified.

**6. Recommend reevaluation of existing Shelter/Rescue Contract with recognized breed clubs.**

Rationale: Existing Contract is prohibitive and prevents some animals from being rescued.

**7. Recommend that the Shelter consider restructuring animal confinement quarters in order to mitigate stress and to increase attractiveness of the animals.**

**Rationale:** Traditional methods of caging with banks of cages often facing one another cause excess stress to animals awaiting adoption. Cats in particular do not cope well with confinement or being in visual proximity to other cats. For this reason, cats often appear frightened and unsociable. This decreases their chance of adoption. In some shelters animals are euthanized after an arbitrary period of time in order to end their perceived suffering.

Larger, more attractive quarters would decrease stress. Additionally, if there were a greater distance between cages and/or the cages did not face one another, the possibility of contagious epidemics would be decreased. This would reduce the number of animals which must be euthanized for ill health after entering the shelter.

If potential adopters could enter the cat enclosures, the animals would feel more secure and appear more friendly. This would increase the number of cats adopted.

**8. Request that Pet Stores disclose to buyers expected costs of food, normal veterinary care, grooming, and licensing. Predicted size range and temperament characteristics should also be provided.**

**Rationale:** Reduces impulsive decisions. Lack of knowledge of what adult dogs and cats grow into often times leads to broken human-animal bonds and thus increases abandonment or relinquishment.

**9. Request that Pet Stores refer new owners to local representatives of appropriate breed clubs.**

**Rationale:** One of the disadvantages of pet shop sales is the lack of breeder counseling for the new puppy or kitten owner. Local breed club representatives could give the new owner advice and guidance concerning typical breed characteristics, optimal diet, care, and training. This will result in a stronger human-animal bond and reduce the likelihood of abandonment or relinquishment; and thus reduce the necessity for breed club rescue intervention or possible euthanasia.

**10. Pursue legislation that will prevent landlords from discriminating against pet owners.**

Rationale: A common reason cited for surrender is that the owner is moving and no pets are allowed. Increased availability of housing allowing pets would open many more home for adoptive animals (19)(20). (Similar laws were enacted in the 1970's that eliminated discrimination against families with children.)

## **IN SUMMARY:**

There are many variables affecting the number of animals euthanized in our county.

The number of births is only one of the variables.

There is a misconception that sterilization alone will decrease the euthanasia rate and that puppies and kittens are flooding into shelters. In fact, many of the animals in our shelters are neutered or spayed "teenagers" which have outgrown their cuteness and are manifesting behavioral problems that their owners have neither the skill or patience to control. (21) Many others are stray, unsocialized cats who are unsuitable for adoption. The reservoir of unowned, feral cats from which these cats come will not be affected by a law mandating neuter or spay.

"Were more pet owners to comply with restraint ordinances, to identify animals with traceable licenses and /or rabies tags to expedite their return home, and especially to make lifelong commitments to those animals they have chosen to care for, fewer pets would wind up as strays or owner-surrenders, thereby keeping those animals out of the shelters' 'overpopulation' pool." (21)

"Any animal control ordinance must balance the needs of society against the rights of all individuals involved in its enforcement, and the rights of defendants against those of victims. Its provisions must be constitutional..." (21) We question whether the San Mateo Ordinance as written meets these requirements.

Dogs and cats are an important part of life. They give and receive love. They enrich our human experience by teaching us the meaning of loyalty, tenderness and companionship. An animal control ordinance can help humans to fairly keep their mutual, reciprocal relationship with animals. However, it should do so without unfairly penalizing responsible owners and without making pets an endangered species.



The responsible planned breeding of purebred and pedigree dogs and cats is as important to society as the preservation of wildlife. These puppies and kittens are cherished for their predictable temperament and conformation. Dog and cat breeders and fanciers care for their animals. "They are as life affirming as anyone. They are worlds ahead in life affirmance over those who would solve the world's problem by sterilizing it, under the simple minded, and at root vicious, idea that without life there would be no suffering." (22) Dog and cat fanciers will not support any type of legislation aimed at sending "the message" that breeding is immoral.

The San Mateo County ordinance imposing a moratorium on breeding and mandating the sterilization of all dogs and cats does not recognize those areas unrelated to births. It is based on a false premise and flawed findings. It is coercive and misdirected. If allowed to stand, it is doubtful that it will impact in any significant way the number of animals euthanized. We, therefore, recommend that the ordinance be repealed and the foregoing proposals be implemented. This we believe will more appropriately address the Task Force mission of reducing the number of unwanted, healthy animals being euthanized.

There is a need to set up an ongoing monitoring system for the above proposals. We, therefore, recommend that data be gathered, a new shelter reporting system be implemented, and a model be used to help us understand the changing components of our County's animal population. (9) That model would be the measuring device by which we could determine success or failure.

"...until model data-acquisition patterns are developed to determine community pet populations and the dynamics affecting them, beleaguered animal control agencies will conduct little more than 'holding patterns' to reduce mass euthanasia. Animal control officers will remain, in effect, urban game wardens, maintaining the carrying capacity of urban environments for pets and culling a certain percentage of the surplus population each year so the remainder can survive on limited resources of food, shelter, and space."(21) **The problem will not ever be totally solved until it has been accurately and objectively defined.**

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