



County of Santa Cruz

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March 30, 1994

Sharon Coleman
P.O. Box 168
Milbrae, California 94030

Dear Ms. Coleman,

Thank you for your letter of March 19, 1994, concerning the Santa Cruz County pet overpopulation ordinance. I appreciated having the opportunity to review your comments.

As you probably know, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors approved the pet overpopulation ordinance in concept on March 22, 1994. The ordinance will be returned to the Board for final approval on April 12, 1994 and has an effective date of July 1, 1994.

The overpopulation of dogs and cats is a complex issue facing local governments across our nation. It is an issue filled with passionate belief on all sides of the issue. The only thing which all parties appear to agree upon is that too many animals are being needlessly euthanized. In complex, emotional situations like this, it becomes the responsibility of government to forge a pathway through the brambles by listening to each party's concerns, analyzing their points, and determining whether or how those particular issues can be addressed. I believe that we have met this responsibility with the Santa Cruz pet ordinance.

In addition to lengthy public hearings and associated extended input, county staff have reviewed the ordinance section by section with representatives of the veterinary community, the Animal Issues Alliance, the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, and the SPCA. Each participant made changes to the ordinance, and no participant got everything he or she wanted into or out of the ordinance. The ordinance which was submitted to the Board of Supervisors contained numerous compromises. Members of the Board of Supervisors then made additional changes to the ordinance to address concerns of their own. I believe that this has been a fair process in which all parties were given the opportunity to contribute.

I would like to respond to the two specific areas which you discussed in your letter. Your first point concerned the necessity for any ordinance to have a rational nexus to the purpose of the regulation, clear standards, and disciplinary actions designed to further the purpose of the regulation. County Counsel was very active in drafting the ordinance and the many revisions which were considered. The ordinance as approved by the Board complies with all legal requirements.

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Your second point concerned the involvement of third party organizations in the determination of exemptions. The possibility of allowing a third party to determine exemptions was suggested as one way of reducing governmental intrusion into the operations of private breeders. This option was not included in the ordinance, primarily due to liability concerns expressed by breeder and veterinarian representatives and the difficulty of administering such an approach. Your thoughts concerning legal liability will be taken into consideration in future discussions on such an option.

Thank you again for your letter.

Very truly yours,



Susan Mauriello
County Administrative Officer

SAM/DP:ts/coleman

cc: Jody Paterniti, SPCA
Rahn Garcia County Counsel