



**AGENDA SUBMITTAL TO SOLANO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

<b><u>ITEM TITLE</u></b>		<b>BOARD MEETING DATE</b>	<b>AGENDA NUMBER</b>
Read the proposed ordinance by title only and waive further reading by a majority vote; Introduce an ordinance amending the Solano County Code to prohibit open field coursing within Solano County		April 25, 2006	17
<b>Dept:</b>	County Counsel / CAO	<b>Supervisorial District Number</b>  All	
<b>Contact:</b>	Steve Ingram / Veronica Ferguson		
<b>Extension:</b>	6140/ 6107		
	<b>Published Notice Required?</b>	Yes _____	No <u>X</u> _____
	<b>Public Hearing Required?</b>	Yes _____	No <u>X</u> _____

**DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:**

1. Read the proposed ordinance by title only and waive further reading by a majority vote; and
2. Introduce a proposed ordinance amending Chapter 4 of the Solano County Code relating to Animals and Fowl to add Section 4-25 Prohibiting Open Field Coursing within Solano County.

**SUMMARY:**

At the February 28, 2006 meeting, the Board directed staff to prepare an ordinance that would prohibit the practice of open field coursing within Solano County without interfering with the ability of farmers to control agricultural pests. The attached ordinance prohibits the practice of using coursing dogs to take rabbits, hares and foxes except for purposes of managing livestock, taking animals injuring growing crops, hunting as permitted by the Fish & Game Code, and training dogs, provided that no more than one coursing dog may be used at a time to take rabbits, hares and foxes for training purposes.

**FINANCING:**

Implementation of this ordinance will require enforcement by County Animal Control Officers and Sheriff Deputies. Due to the limited nature of this activity, it is not anticipated that enforcement will require additional costs to the County.

**DISCUSSION:**

Coursing is the practice of using dogs to flush out, chase, and kill jackrabbits and other small game animals. Open field coursing is a competitive form of coursing in which jackrabbits are

flushed out and multiple dogs are set loose to compete to catch and kill the jackrabbit. The dogs receive points for how hard they pursue, for turning the rabbit, and for killing the rabbit.

Open field coursing is not prohibited under California law as it exists today. Jackrabbits occurring naturally are defined under state law as “resident small game.” (Cal. Code Regs. § 257.) Fish and Game Regulations entitled, “Methods Authorized for Taking Resident Small Game,” provide that “coursing dogs may be used to take rabbits.” (Cal. Code Regs. § 311.)

The inhumane aspects of open field coursing prompted Assemblywoman Lonnie Hancock to introduce AB 2110, which, if approved by the Legislature, would prohibit coursing throughout California except for purposes of managing livestock, taking animals injuring growing crops, hunting as permitted by the Fish & Game Code, and training dogs. The Board of Supervisors has taken a position of support on the bill and the City of Vacaville is also listed in support. In the event AB 2110 is not adopted by the Legislature, the attached ordinance would impose a prohibition only within Solano County.

The attached ordinance is similar in structure to AB 2110 and would generally prohibit the practice of open field coursing within Solano County. To avoid any detrimental impact on farmers, the ordinance permits coursing dogs to be used for the management of livestock and to take agricultural pests, including rabbits, hares and foxes that injure growing crops. In addition, the ordinance permits coursing dogs to be used by hunters to take rabbits, hares and foxes as expressly permitted by state law and also permits dog trainers to engage dogs in coursing, provided that no more than one dog may be used at a time to take a rabbit, hare or fox for training purposes.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

The Board could choose not to adopt the ordinance and instead wait for the State Legislature to take further action. This would allow open field coursing to remain legal within Solano County provided that the participants were in possession of valid hunting permits and were not trespassing or violating any other laws. Any new state law such as AB 2110, would regulate this activity in the future.

The Board could also choose to modify the ordinance. This option is also not recommended as staff have drafted the ordinance to be consistent with proposed State legislation and the recommended ordinance has been reviewed by members of the Agricultural Advisory Commission.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

The Animal Care Division of the General Services Department and the Agricultural Commissioner both contributed to and reviewed this ordinance, and the Agricultural Advisory Commission considered a draft of the ordinance and recommended (4-3) that the Board adopt the ordinance. County Counsel prepared the ordinance.

**DEPARTMENT HEAD SIGNATURE:**

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**Michael D. Johnson, County Administrator**

**Attachments:** An Ordinance Amending Chapter 4 of the Solano County Code Relating to Animals and Fowl to Add Section 4-25 Prohibiting Open Field Coursing within Solano County

