



# CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH

## City Council Interoffice Communication

**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Council Members  
**From:** Keith Bohr, City Council Member *KB*  
**Date:** April 10, 2007 *CF*  
**Subject:** ***H-ITEM FOR APRIL 16, 2007, CITY COUNCIL MEETING –  
MANDATORY SPAY, NEUTER, AND MICROCHIP ORDINANCE***

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### STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

Millions of dogs and cats are killed every year because not enough homes exist for these pets. Many of these are puppies and kittens -- the offspring of family pets. Pet overpopulation is a preventable problem that everyone can help solve simply by spaying or neutering his or her pets. Spaying and neutering is a safe surgical procedure performed by veterinarians that prevents animals from reproducing.

Orange County, as contracted to do on behalf of 21 Orange County cities, picked up 29,690 stray animals in 2006. Despite commendable efforts by the county to reunite these animals with their owners, or to adopt them out to new owners, the county still had to euthanize more than 12,000 dogs and cats in 2006.

The most cost effective method of reducing these numbers is to have the county and all cities adopt a "Mandatory Spay, Neuter and Microchip Ordinance," which will dramatically reduce the number of cats and dogs produced and would increase the number of lost pets returned to their owners. That would minimize the numbers that are ultimately euthanized. In an effort to minimize the number of unwanted animals in Orange County and Huntington Beach specifically, I am making the following recommendation.

### RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Direct city staff to research the costs and other issues associated with adopting a Mandatory Spay, Neuter and Microchip Ordinance similar to the one adopted by the county of Los Angeles in 2006. It is my ultimate goal to adopt such an ordinance in Huntington Beach. However, I do understand that there are a number of issues, policies, procedures, and costs that must be determined before such an ordinance can be successfully drafted, adopted, and implemented.

### BACKGROUND:

The city of Huntington Beach currently contracts with the county for animal control services. For FY 2006-07, the city is estimated to pay the county \$433,000 for these services. Services include: protecting public health from animal diseases, dog licensing, picking up stray and/or injured animals (24/7), transporting injured wildlife to rehabilitation centers, rabies control, investigating animal cruelty cases, adoption services for unclaimed strays, and responding to animal nuisance complaints and coordinating resolution.

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In 2006, the county picked up 29,690 stray animals. Of those, 13,660 were dogs, of which 4,014 (29%) were reclaimed by their owners; 5,236 (38%) were adopted; and 2,378 (17%) were euthanized. The total number of cats picked up totaled 13,069. Owners claimed 272 (2%) cats, 3137 (24%) cats were adopted, and 8,371(64%) were euthanized.

The breakdown for Huntington Beach's contribution to the above totals in 2006 is as follows:

Huntington Beach animals picked up by the county.

- 803 cats; 582 dogs = 1,628

Huntington Beach animals euthanized by the county.

- 351 cats; 105 dogs = 456

A grand total of 456 cats and dogs were euthanized originating from Huntington Beach. That is just too many "pets" being killed.

The county of Los Angeles adopted a Spay and Neuter Ordinance in 2006. In addition, the city of Sacramento and county of San Bernardino recently adopted similar ordinances. At this time, Orange County has not adopted such an ordinance nor have any of the other cities in the county. I am hopeful that with Huntington Beach's adoption of an ordinance the county and other cities will follow suit and all cities will benefit accordingly. It should be noted that Santa Cruz County adopted a similar ordinance over ten years ago and has reduced the number of animals euthanized by 50%.

#### **FAQ'S ABOUT SPAYING AND NEUTERING:**

*How many litters can a pair of animals produce?*

One unsprayed cat and one non-neutered cat can produce 420,000 cats in 9 years if all offspring remain non-sterilized! Besides a reduction in animal populations, spaying/neutering has other positive effects on pets including DECREASING:

- Aggression and temperament problems (but not protectiveness)
- "Spraying" (urine marking) by male cats
- Desire to roam in search of a mate, get into fights or run away
- Risks of cancer (uterine, mammary and prostatic) as the animal ages
- Annual cost of licensing a dog reduced to \$21 (an unaltered dog costs \$75)

*Would there be exceptions for dogs with health issues or for breeders?*

Yes, since some dogs cannot be spayed or neutered for certain reasons, this ordinance would provide exemptions for these cases. These would include:

1. Dogs which are unable to be spayed or neutered without a high likelihood of suffering serious bodily harm or death due to age or infirmity. Written confirmation from a licensed veterinarian is required to qualify for this exception.
2. Dogs used by law enforcement agencies for law enforcement purposes.
3. Service or assistance dogs that assist disabled persons.

4. Competition Dogs. A Competition Dog is a dog which is used to show, to compete or to breed, which is of a breed recognized by and registered with the American Kennel Club (AKC), United Kennel Club (UKC), American Dog Breeders Association (ADBA) or other approved breed registries. The dog or owner must also meet ONE of the following requirements:
  - a. The dog has competed in at least one dog show or sporting competition sanctioned by a national registry or approved by the department within the last 365 days; or
  - b. The dog has earned a conformation, obedience, agility, carting, herding, protection, rally, sporting, working or other title from a purebred dog registry referenced above or other registry or dog sport association approved by the department; or
  - c. The owner or custodian of the dog is a member of a department approved purebred dog breed clubs, which maintains and enforces a code of ethics for dog breeding that includes restrictions from breeding dogs with genetic defects and life threatening health problems that commonly threaten the breed.

#### **MICROCHIPS:**

Under the proposed ordinance all dogs would be required to have an identification microchip. Positive identification that cannot be lost, falsified, or altered is essential to reuniting lost pets with their families. Microchipping of animals has become a customary practice – millions of dogs and cats, horses, livestock, birds, wildlife, and endangered species are chipped. Microchipping is a simple, non-surgical procedure.

The microchip, which is approximately the size of a grain of rice, is injected underneath the skin with a needle. There is no anesthesia required, and even the smallest animals such as fish, puppies and kittens are safely microchipped. Each microchip has a code number embedded in it. When a special, hand-held scanner is passed over the area where the microchip has been implanted, the scanner “reads” the microchip and displays its unique code number. That number is stored in a database that contains the owner contact information.

Hundreds of thousands of lost pets have been reunified with their distraught families because the pets were microchipped. While tags can become lost or damaged and tattoos can fade or be altered, microchips provide permanent identification with unique numbers that cannot be changed.

#### **POTENTIAL FINANCIAL BENEFITS:**

Huntington Beach pays \$27.50 per animal that is picked up. Last year the total charge for animals picked up was \$44,770. While it is not possible to accurately forecast how many dollars will be saved based on the implementation of the proposed ordinance, it would not be unrealistic to assume those savings could be in the tens of thousands of dollars.

xc: Penny Culbreth-Graft, City Administrator  
Paul Emery, Deputy City Administrator  
Bob Hall, Deputy City Administrator  
Joan Flynn, City Clerk  
Ken Small, Chief of Police

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