

Sonoma County Animal Services Partnership
Animal Ordinance Review Workgroup – Meeting Notes
 November 19, 1:00 - 3:00pm
 415 Humboldt Street, Santa Rosa – Humboldt Conference Room

Present: Brian Ness, Brigid Wasson, Darryl Roberts, Doris Duncan, Ellen Bauer, Esther Molina, Jennifer Kirschner, Mark Essick, Richard Pope, Sandi Potter, Sheri Cardo and Becky Lunders (facilitator)

Topic	Discussion	Action/Decision
Review proposed ordinance changes	Between meetings, workgroup members researched existing ordinances in CA counties and came with ideas on what we might want to adapt as we revise the Animal Ordinance in Sonoma County. Reports by category are listed below.	
Licensing	<p>Licensing dogs is required by state law and local ordinance for all dogs 4 months and older. Brian Ness recommended “a carrot not a stick” approach to getting people to license their pets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to make it easy for people to be compliant and license their pets (multi-year license or lifetime license)? • Consider waiving higher unaltered license fee for first year of animal’s life (aka Puppy License), since they are just getting their shots and are not altered yet. • Incentivize people who have unaltered pets through education and low-cost spay-neuter certificates. • Encourage cat owners to license and market it as a “ticket home” if they get lost. At the same time, provide outreach on low-cost spay/neuter. • Consider a fee schedule where the fee goes down for multiple animals. Create a user-friendly License Fee Chart clearly shows fees for multiple animals and also information about number of animals allowed for residents, pet facilities, and kennels. <p>Ellen explained that license fees are approved by the Board of Supervisors and city councils through a separate fee hearing process. Fees are set to approximate full-cost recovery, meaning they are intended to cover the cost of licensing and mandated shelter and field services.</p>	<p>For now, the group agreed to consider an approach to licensing that encourages greater participation rather than adding new mandates that may be challenging to enforce.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not require mandatory licensing of cats, but promote this as a benefit to animal, owner and system. • Consider how to use license fees to create more incentives to get people in the license system and to maintain compliance. <p>Sheri had an idea of a promotional campaign “A Litter Free Sonoma County”. Becky will share this idea with the Communications & Outreach Workgroup.</p>

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Spay / Neuter	<p>Jennifer, Brian & Sheri did research on this and brought forward these ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sonoma County RECOMMENDS spay/neuter (but it's not mandatory) • We offer programs and services to make it easy for people to get their pet altered. • Love Me Fix Me – this community service allows us to identify pets and guardians and get them into the system (so they can be invoiced each year by licensing). 	<p>Recommended changes to the ordinance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add something to say spay neuter is strongly encouraged, but not mandatory • Remove breed specific mandatory spay/neuter (pit bull clause)
Standards of Care	<p>Darryl & Richard researched this area. The following information was shared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards of Care in the ordinance should reflect the general areas of concern, referencing the specific details of standards developed by AVMA and other reputable animal welfare organizations. • Mark Essex cited CA penal code 597 that addresses the “failure to provide care”. He also noted the CA code also covers dogs left in hot cars and dogs tethered in the bed of a truck. These could be referenced and should be consistent with whatever standards are included in the ordinance. • Need to develop accompanying public education materials and checklists for enforcement. The educational piece needs to be short and simple – keep it to one page, make it interesting to read • We may want to add language that the animal's condition should not be a nuisance. 	<p>We had consensus on two areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a general section on Standards of Care that references specific standards developed by AVMA or other recognized animal welfare experts or organizations. • Creating an educational document that can inform people about specifics and a check list/tool for enforcement. <p>Darryl and Richard will continue to work on this.</p>
Limit Laws	<p>The group briefly discussed that surrounding counties do not have any specific limits on cats. Richard's preliminary research suggested that counties that allow higher limit laws actually have fewer problems. He suggested that we look into raising the limit for dogs to 5 and remove the limit on cats. He reported that research indicates there is no correlation between limit laws and hoarding.</p> <p>Note: The “ad hoc pet limit workgroup” convened earlier in 2013 also recommended removing the limit on cats.</p>	<p>Around Limit Laws, the group is considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No limit on # of cats (paired with education and standards of care) • Consider raising the dog limit to 5. Sandi Potter will investigate if that would be possible to do without requiring a major environmental review.
Barking Dogs	<p>Becky, Brigid & Ellen met with Jennifer Phillips to learn more about the Barking Dog Ordinance that is being used in Orange County. The basics of the ordinance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an administrative /educational approach (rather than criminal/punitive). It has been successful in Orange County in addressing barking complaints more quickly and with few resources. 	<p>The group recommends we adopt the Barking Dog Ordinance being used in Orange County.</p>

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Wildlife	<p>Doris brought forward the CA trapping laws that apply to wildlife.</p> <p>She feels it is very important that an educational campaign be delivered to shelters around trapping laws so they know how to react when they get calls.</p>	<p>Doris recommends we reference something in the Sonoma County ordinance regarding trapping of nuisance wildlife.</p> <p>In an outreach/education effort, Becky will work with the Data Group to make sure information about what to do with wildlife has a place on the SoCoAnimals.org web page.</p>
Recruitment of a Vet to the Workgroup	Darryl has been in communication with Dr Richard Bachman and he has agreed to read through meeting notes and offer input.	Darryl will share meeting notes with Dr Bachman and be the point of contact for input.
Next steps	<p>Communication recommendations to Animal Services Partnership for feedback and input.</p> <p>Continue research and create an updated version of the ordinance with proposed changes (version 2 – V2).</p>	As a member of the Animal Services Partnership, our Chair Brigid will take our recommendations to the group at the December 12 th meeting.
Next meeting	<p>Agenda Items for next meeting include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from Animal Services Partnership on ideas for proposed changes • Service Dog-related ordinance discussion • Prepare to send changes to County Counsel for review in January • Nonprofits, shelters, rescues & zoning working together (look at possibility of waived or reduced fees based on community benefit) 	Next meeting is Wednesday, December 18th from 2-4pm at the Public Health Division office at 415 Humboldt St, Suite B, Santa Rosa.