



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** David Sykes

**SUBJECT:** ANIMAL LICENSE AMNESTY

**DATE:** 05-23-11

Approved

Date 5/31/11

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** Citywide

## RECOMMENDATION

Approval of an ordinance authorizing an animal license amnesty program from September 1, 2011 through October 31, 2011 suspending all animal license citation activity, and waiving late fees.

## OUTCOME

1. Increased animal licensing and rabies vaccination compliance.
2. Increased revenue in the Animal Care and Services Division and increased cost recovery for the overall program.

## BACKGROUND

The Animal Care Center opened in October 2004. At the time of the opening, the Animal Care and Services Division (ACS) conducted a license amnesty similar to the one proposed in this memo. The 2004 amnesty was a success and was also designed to orient the public to the services being provided at the new facility. License revenue the year before the amnesty was \$445,000 and increased to \$625,000 (+40%) the next year due to the amnesty program.

In 2008, ACS began requiring that Veterinarians provide the rabies vaccination information for each client on a monthly basis in order to meet State and City requirements for licensing. This change and continuing outreach regarding the program have produced significant increases in licensing revenues, from \$743,000 at the end of FY 2007-08, to an estimated \$1,400,000 by the end of FY 2010-11.

In 2009, the City Auditor's office produced a series of recommendations for Animal Care and Services. In particular, there was emphasis on the animal license program. San Jose requires that all owned dogs and cats be licensed. The recommendations related to animal licensing focused on improved processes, improved collections, and improved outreach. The report also identified significant potential gains in revenue through a more proactive pursuit of higher rates of license compliance.

Currently, outreach is limited to Veterinarian contacts, creation of a brochure and, beginning July 1, online licensing. Current rates of license compliance in San Jose are estimated to be a little over 20% for dogs (41,000 current licenses) and 7-8% for cats (14,500 current licenses). As detailed in the Audit report (<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/auditor/AuditReports/0909/0909.pdf>), most of the revenue for animal licensing remains uncollected and there are significant future opportunities to continue to increase collection and compliance.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Outreach Plan**

To publicize this license amnesty, ACS intends to distribute a direct mailer to all San Jose households, post information on the City's website, publish announcements in local newspapers, and maximize local coverage in the media through public service announcements and media alerts. Funding for advertising/postage will come from the existing budget and non-profit grants.

### **Amnesty Program**

The City of San Jose requires that owners of adult dogs and cats vaccinate and license their pets. However as mentioned above, it is estimated that only about 20% of dogs and less than 10% of cats are currently licensed. Licensing laws ensure that rabies vaccinations are current, provide a mechanism for identification of stray animals, and serve to offset some of the costs associated with the animal services program. Failure to vaccinate or license a dog or cat can result in citations with fines ranging from \$100 to \$250 and/or a misdemeanor charge. Late charges can also be imposed adding to the cost of non-compliance. State law requires that the fee for a non-sterilized dog be at least double the fee charged for a sterilized dog. The higher fee for a non-sterilized dog is intended to encourage the spaying and neutering of dogs and assign more animal control costs to pet owners who have chosen not to sterilize their animals.

The Department proposes to suspend citation fines and late fees for a period of 60 days (September 1, 2011 through October 31, 2011) as an incentive for pet owners to voluntarily comply with licensing requirements. It is anticipated that this waiver of fees/fines will increase the likelihood that pet owners will license their dogs and cats, visit the Animal Care Center, learn about programs offered by the Animal Care and Services Division and provide an opportunity to promote the Division's animal adoption program. In addition, the Division intends to offer several low cost and/or free rabies vaccination clinics. As an added incentive, ACS intends to partner with a non-profit group, using private funds, to provide a monetary inducement(s) through a random drawing at the end of the amnesty for residents that license or renew their license during the program.

### **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP**

This proposal would improve overall dog and cat licensing and increase cost recovery for Animal Care and Services. Results of the amnesty would be detailed in the ACS semi-annual report to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee.

### **COST IMPLICATIONS**

ACS estimates that an amnesty program will collect about \$250,000. The revenue associated with licensing is ongoing for several years with a slight annual decline as pet owners move or no longer own the pet. The cost of the direct mailer and outreach is expected to be approximately \$60,000 and funded through budgeted funds and private grants.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST**

- Criterion 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater.
- Criterion 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City.
- Criterion 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach.

The content of this memo was discussed and endorsed at the February 16, 2011 public meeting of the Animal Advisory Committee, an 8-member group of community members. It was also discussed at a town hall meeting hosted by the Committee on April 20, 2011 and advertised through posting via City Clerk and email notifications. This memorandum will be posted on the City's Internet webpage for the June 14, 2011 Council agenda.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the Finance Department.

### **CEQA**

Not a project, File No. PP10-066(e), Services that involve no physical changes to the environment

/s/

DAVID SYKES  
Acting Director of Public Works

For questions, please contact JON CICIRELLI, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, at (408) 794-7223.