

NEWS RELEASE
April 18, 2006
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Acting on a unanimous 4-0 vote, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors gave preliminary approval to a new measure that requires all adult dogs kept in unincorporated Los Angeles County to be spayed or neutered and implanted with an identifying microchip.

"This measure, one of the first of its kind in the nation, will have double benefits," said Marcia Mayeda, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control, which drafted the ordinance.

"Its mandatory spay and neuter provisions, which are required of all dogs over the age of four months, will help reduce the numbers of unwanted animals flooding into our shelters," Mayeda said. "The Found Animal Foundation of Los Angeles has promised to pay for the microchip and lifetime registration for 1,000,000 dogs in Los Angeles County. We are truly grateful for their generous offer of support."

"The microchip provision will provide positive, reliable on-body identification for dogs, speeding their return to owners."

During 2004-05, the County's Department of Animal Care and Control, the largest public animal control agency in the nation, impounded more than 40,000 dogs. More than 24,000 of those animals were unsterilized, stray dogs, found running at large and raising public safety concerns by their behavior. Once housed in County shelters almost 19,000 dogs had to be humanely euthanized because the agency could not find their owners or was unable to place them in new homes.

"Our agency is very much in agreement with the 'No Kill' animal care philosophy that is gaining wider and wider acceptance in the general public," Mayeda said. "And, at the same time, we understand the practical realities of animal control; our agency has been doing this for almost 70 years. In order to euthanize fewer animals – with the goal of euthanizing no animals – we first have to drastically reduce the number of animals coming into our shelters."

Like all public animal shelters in California, the County shelters have been spaying and neutering all adopted animals prior to placement. That program has led to dramatic drops in the number of animals coming into the shelter system. But, Mayeda noted, it is not enough. "Most animals in the community do not come from shelters and most animals are not spayed and neutered," she said.

"That means we are constantly receiving a new flow of animals every day at every shelter."

The mandatory spay and neuter ordinance is designed to encompass the non-shelter animal population to reduce the number of animal impounds and the number of animals humanely euthanized at Los Angeles County shelters. Tuesday's Board action, which must be ratified by a vote on the enabling ordinance, slated for May 2, does not include all dogs. Dogs used by law enforcement agencies, certified service dogs and purebred dogs registered with recognized breed clubs are exempted under the measure.

"We recognize that organizations such as the American Kennel Club, the United Kennel Club and others have a legitimate reason for keeping animals registered with them intact," Mayeda said.

"And, we are confident that the rules enforced by those groups and the care and concern shown by their members reflect their dedication to animals, so they are worthy of exemption."

The mandatory spay and neuter measure also adjusted the County's annual dog license rates to \$20 for dogs that have been altered and \$60 for dogs that have not been spayed or neutered.

Proceeds from licensing will help pay for low-cost spay-and-neuter operations to encourage compliance, Mayeda noted.

"Our intent is not punitive," the director said, "we want to encourage compliance and everything in the ordinance was crafted with that in mind."

As adopted by the Board, the measure applies only to the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, which includes more than 1 million residents of the entire county.

"We hope, as this measure proves its success, every city in Los Angeles County, as well as cities outside the county, will adopt local ordinances, based on our model," Mayeda said.

"We think this measure will be a major step toward ending the humane euthanization of animals in shelters and transforming the 'No Kill' goal from dream to reality."

A copy of the new ordinance is posted on the homepage of the Department's website at: <http://animalcontrol.co.la.ca.us>

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