

Stronger Pet Laws Approved in Washington

Provisions call for increased licensing fees for pets not spayed or neutered.

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A new bill aims to protect cats and other animals in Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C., animal cruelty and control laws just got tougher.

On Tuesday, the city council unanimously approved B17-89, introduced by councilmember Mary M. Cheh, which includes a provision to increase licensing fees for pets that are not spayed or neutered. The bill is the culmination of an initiative by George Washington University Law School's Animal Welfare Project launched in 2004.

The bill also includes stiffer penalties for spectators at dogfights (making it a felony instead of a misdemeanor) and allows for courts to order those found guilty of animal cruelty to seek counseling.

The measure also includes a section that requires law enforcement and child and protective service workers to report suspected pet abuse, or when they see an animal at the home of someone who's suspected of abusing a child, adult or pet.

Other provisions called for in the ordinance: Require permits for commercial breeders who raise and sell 25 animals per year.

Require the inclusion of pets in disaster plans.

Increase licensing fees for animals that are not spayed or neutered, to encourage sterilization and reduce the euthanasia of unwanted puppies and kittens.

Establish licensing, immunization, insurance and notification requirements for commercial guard dogs.

Sets up a spay/neuter fund to assist lower-income residents in gaining access to these services for their pets.