

Mandatory Spay-Neuter Approved in Southern California City

Laguna Woods City Council OKs proposal, which would make it illegal for cats to run loose unless they are sterilized.

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New regulations in Laguna Woods, Calif., would make it mandatory for cats 6 months and older to be altered. A plan for mandatory spay-neuter regulations has been approved by the city of Laguna Woods in Orange County, Calif.

The ordinance preliminary approved April 15 by the City Council applies to the sterilization of cats and dogs 6 months and older. The issue will come back to the City Council for formal approval in May. The proposal establishes the following: Local laws prevent dogs from running loose in the city; the proposed ordinance would make it illegal for cats to run loose in the community unless they are spayed or neutered. Citation penalties are \$100 to \$500, depending on frequency of violation. Such fines would be in addition to any fine levied for the primary violation. Any unaltered animal impounded by Animal Services would need to be spayed or neutered before it could be released, according to a city report. The owner or custodian of a cat or dog that is unable to be spayed or neutered without a high chance of suffering serious bodily harm or death because of age or health risks must get written confirmation of that fact from a California licensed veterinarian, the ordinance states.

In addition, dog owners may obtain an unaltered dog license, issued by Animal Services if the manager determines that certain conditions are met. For example, if the dog participates in competitions, is used by a law enforcement agency, or is a qualified assistance dog.

Owners of unaltered cats older than 6 months must have the animal spayed or neutered, or provide a certificate of sterility, or show that the cat is a competition cat.