

Memphis Mulls Mandatory Sterilization for Dogs, Cats

Certain cats would be exempt from the proposed spay/neuter law.

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Several ordinances are under consideration for pet control issues.

A Memphis City Council committee has recommended mandatory spaying or neutering of cats and dogs. The full council is expected to vote on the issue on Tuesday, Sept. 28, 2010.

The ordinance, which was approved by the Committee on Public Services and Neighborhoods earlier this month, would require dogs that weigh 30 pounds or more and cats over the age of 6 months to be spayed or neutered. It provides exemptions for police dogs; service dogs; hunting dogs; dogs or cats certified by a licensed veterinarian as having a health reason for not being spayed or neutered; dogs or cats boarded in a licensed kennel or business; and dogs or cats registered with the American Kennel Club, Cat Fancier Association or other recognized registry or trained and kept for the purpose of show, field trials or agility trials.

"There is an element of overpopulation prevention that comes by this naturally, but the key here is in public safety," said councilman Shea Flinn, the ordinance's sponsor, during the Aug. 10 committee meeting on the spay/neuter law.

Owners of unaltered animals would have to pay a one-time \$200 permit fee. The permit authorizes the whelping of no more than one litter per female dog in any 12-month period and no more than one litter per domestic household in any 12-month period.

Violators of the spay/neuter law would be subject to a \$50 fine and court costs. The fine would be waived for first time offenders if proof is provided that the dog or cat is or has been spayed or neutered by the date of the hearing. For second time offenders, the court may enforce the \$50 fine plus costs, hold the owner in criminal contempt, and require the owner to prove that the animal has been spayed or neutered.

The council also is expected to consider several other ordinances, including one that would require a dog that has bitten or attacked to be spayed or neutered within 30 days, another that would raise the annual dog license fee from \$15 to \$35 for unaltered animals and eliminate the \$5 fee for sterile animals, and one that would require dogs restrained by tie-outs or overhead cable runs to be spayed or neutered.

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) has issued an industry alert on the spay/neuter proposal in which the organization states that the decision to sterilize a pet should be made on a case-by-case basis by pet owners after consulting with their veterinarian.

Interested parties can listen to the Committee on Public Services and Neighborhoods' Aug. 10 discussion on the proposed ordinances [here](#).

The Sept. 28 council meeting will be broadcast live on the council's website, and then archived for those who wish to listen to the meeting at a later date.