

Chicago Enters Spay/Neuter Movement

Legislation is introduced to mandate pet sterilization.

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Posted: May 20, 2008 2 a.m. EDT

A proposed ordinance would mandate that cats and dogs are sterilized before 6 months of age. Legislative efforts to make pet sterilization the law are springing up across the nation, with Chicago joining the ranks last week by proposing a spay/neuter ordinance of its own that states, "No person shall own, harbor or keep within the city of Chicago a dog or cat over 6 months of age which has not been sterilized."

Sponsors of the Chicago ordinance say their goals are to prevent attacks by packs of stray dogs and to reduce the dog population in the city's animal shelters. Opponents say pet sterilization should not be a mandate; they prefer voluntary methods.

Under the proposed ordinance, dogs and cats must be spayed or neutered at the age of 6 months. Violators get \$100 citations, and fines go up to \$500 if a pet is not sterilized within 60 days of the initial citation.

To be exempt, pet owners must hold breeding permits, have registered purebreds that are actively entered in competition or dogs that are being trained for competition. Exemptions also are made for service dogs, police dogs and military dogs.

Similar ordinances previously have been introduced to the city council, with no success. The reason for the revival of the ordinance was an incident that occurred in April involving five pit bulls that attacked a Southwest Side woman.