

Dog and Cat Licensing Improvements

Background: Since 1995, the City & County of Denver has had an ordinance requiring pet owners that reside in the city to license dogs and cats over 6 months of age.

The advantages of pet licensing include:

- Enables Animal Care & Control to quickly reunite missing pets with their owners;
- Identifies to strangers that a lost animal has an owner and needs to be returned to its family;
- Provides revenue to help fund Animal Care & Control Operations

Animal Care & Control offers one-year (\$15) and three-year (\$40) pet licenses, as long as pet-owners can show proof that their animals are current on their vaccinations. Licenses are available on-line, through the mail, as well as in person at the shelter. In 2009, 18,892 animal licenses were issued in Denver.

Problem: It is estimated that less than 10 percent of the city's owned dogs and cats are licensed. Even with a dedicated marketing campaign to increase licensing awareness (2007), these numbers have not changed significantly.

Currently, the fine for having pets out of compliance is \$75, which is not significant enough to encourage owners to obtain a license. It is also inconvenient for many pet owners to have to show their vaccination records to obtain a license. Additionally, successful models where pet owners do not have to show proof of vaccination have significantly higher compliance rates. In Calgary, Canada dog licensing rates average 93 percent and 52 percent of cats.

Proposal: We would like to amend the city's pet licensing ordinance to:

- No longer require owners to show proof of vaccination to obtain a pet license;
- Include a licensing display exemption for cat owners who microchip their pets;
- Include a separate violation for giving false information when applying for a license

Roll Out/Outreach Plan: Once these changes are in place, Animal Care & Control will implement an aggressive outreach plan, and enhance current efforts to make licensing an easier process. These efforts will include:

- Renewal notices automatically sent out
- Easy Payment options
- Online licensing and renewal
- Increasing the number of locations where licenses are available:
 - Pet Shelters
 - Recreation Centers
 - Veterinarians and Veterinary Hospitals
 - Off-site Licensing Events
 - In the field

Additionally, Animal Care & Control staff will be assuring licensing compliance by:

- Follow-up all license non-renewals
- Officers can check for valid licenses via radio dispatch
- Park Patrols
- Impounded dogs and cats may not leave facility without a license
- 1-year license included in all dog and cat adoptions

The Licensing Advantage

- Enables Animal Care & Control to quickly reunite missing pets with their owners
- Identifies to strangers that a lost animal has an owner and needs to be returned to its family
- A licensed animal is one phone call away from going home