

NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
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For more information, contact
David Wert, Public Information Officer
(909) 387-4717
dwert@sbcounty.gov

Board declares 'Spay Day USA 2011' to raise awareness

The Board of Supervisors today declared Feb. 22 "Spay Day USA 2011" in an effort to reduce the number of unwanted dogs and cats and recognized the efforts of people and organizations that support animal care in the county..

Countless animals die each year in San Bernardino County because of abandonment, neglect, abuse, starvation, or cruelty. Of those that make into one of the 14 shelters that serve the county, 62 percent were not claimed by their owners or adopted and had to be euthanized. Most animals who enter the county's shelters are young, healthy, and friendly, but must be euthanized because there aren't enough good homes.

The county, its 24 cities, and various non-profit agencies will spend more than \$30 million this year to care for unwanted animals.

"The spaying and neutering of dogs and cats helps solve this tragic and costly problem by reducing the number of dogs and cats that end up in shelters," said Brian Cronin, Division Chief for the County of San Bernardino Department of Public Health Animal Care & Control Division.

"Stray dogs pose a health and safety hazard to the public, which is why I brought forward the ordinance that requires the spaying and neutering of all pit bull breeds," said Third District Supervisor Neil Derry, who said today he plans to bring forward an ordinance that would extend the requirement to all breeds.

San Bernardino County was one of the first counties in Southern California to establish a spay/neuter voucher program to help residents in the unincorporated areas afford to spay and neuter their pets. Those interested in the voucher program can call toll-free 1-888-767-2550 for more information.

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Spay Day USA 2011 is a national event sponsored by the Humane Society of the United States in which veterinarians, humane societies, animal control agencies and national and local animal welfare organizations join together to advocate the spaying and neutering of dogs and cats.

Cronin also acknowledged the efforts of Animals aRe First Fund (ARFF) to provide support to the county's Animal Care and Control program. ARFF is a federally recognized non-profit organization formed in 2004 to support the Department's Animal Care and Control program. In recent years ARFF has supported public awareness campaigns and has covered the cost of spaying and neutering animals adopted at off-site pet adoption events, including 285 dogs and cats in 2010.

In 2010, ARFF donated \$15,000 to provide 150 spay/neuter vouchers to pit bull owners to offset the cost of sterilization and encourage compliance with the county's recently enacted mandatory pit bull spay/neuter ordinance and \$25,000 to fund capital improvements at the Devore Animal Shelter, such as the addition of a commercial dishwasher, new water heaters, and related plumbing.

Through the Combined Giving Campaign, in 2010, ARFF raised \$37,596 from donations received from 371 County employees. In 2011, it is anticipated that 397 County employees will be donating to ARFF through the Combined Giving Campaign.

At Cronin's recommendation, the Board of Supervisors today also recognized the Sharon Kae Strauss Estate for making a donation to fund programs that encourage animal adoptions in the county.

"If not for the support offered by the public, such as the generous donation made by the Sharon Kae Strauss Estate, the County's Animal Care and Control Program would find it difficult, if not impossible, to provide the required services to the people and pets they serve," Cronin said.

The Animal Care and Control program provides animal shelter services for the unincorporated areas of San Bernardino County, and the contract cities of Big Bear Lake, Highland, Rialto, and Yucaipa.