

NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 22, 2010

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Supervisors grant initial approval to pit bull ordinance

In a move intended to reduce animal attacks, the number of animals in county shelters, and the number of animals destroyed by the county, an ordinance requiring virtually all pit bull and pit bull-type dogs in the unincorporated areas of San Bernardino County to be spayed or neutered won unanimous preliminary approval from the Board of Supervisors today.

The board will consider final approval on July 13. The ordinance would go into effect 30 days later.

About 20 percent of the dogs housed in county shelters are pit bull or pit-bull types, and about 20 percent of the dog bites reported in the county are from this breed. Almost 80 percent of pit bull and pit bull-type dogs housed in county shelters end up being euthanized – a higher percentage than any other breed.

“During the past five years, four people have been killed by these dogs. No other breed of dog has killed anyone in our county during that time,” said First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt, who worked with Third District Supervisor Neil Derry to create the ordinance.

“The intent of this ordinance is to control the overpopulation of pit bulls in our county. However, I do understand that the most important component to increasing the safety of our residents in relation to pit bulls is responsible pet care. And I hope one result of today’s ordinance will be increased awareness of the danger that results when dogs are not cared for correctly,” Supervisor Mitzelfelt said.

“This is the first step in dealing with a very dangerous breed,” Supervisor Derry said.

The ordinance was endorsed by PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the world's largest animal rights organization with more than 2 million members.

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PETA said its offices receives daily calls about pit bulls who are neglected and abused, many of whom, not surprisingly, “retaliate” by attacking, injuring and sometimes even killing people and other animals.

State law (California Health and Safety Code Sections 122330-122331) prohibits any breed of dog from being deemed potentially dangerous or vicious. However, the law allows local agencies to enact breed-specific programs for spaying and neutering to control over-population.

The ordinance would require all owners of pit bull and pit bull-type dogs over the age of 4 months to have their dogs spayed or neutered. Animals registered as purebred members of certain breeds would be exempt, as would law enforcement and services animals.

Pit bull owners would be required to spay or neuter their dogs within 30 days of implementation of the ordinance. Animal Care and Control will help pet owners comply with the ordinance by offering humane education and spay-neuter voucher to those who are eligible.

Each offense can carry a penalty of \$100 for the first offense, \$200 for the second offense and \$500 for the third or subsequent offenses.

For more information or to access San Bernardino County Animal Care and Control services call 1-800-472-5609, or visit the division’s website at www.sbcounty.gov/acc.