



Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of Regulatory Services

Date: March 11, 2008

To: CM Don Samuels, Chair of Public Safety and Regulatory Services Committee

Subject: Public Safety and Regulatory Services Committee directed staff to report back with a strategy for increasing the number of pets that are licensed in the City of Minneapolis.

Recommendation: Receive and file.

Previous Directives: NA

Prepared by:

Lori Olson, Deputy Director, Environmental Management
Dan Niziolek, Manager Animal Care and Control

Presenters in Committee:

Lori Olson, Deputy Director, Environmental Management
Dan Niziolek, Manager Animal Care and Control

Approved by:

Burt Osborne, Director

Financial Impact

- No financial impact
- Action requires an appropriation increase to the ___ Capital Budget or ___ Operating Budget
- Action provides increased revenue for appropriation increase
- Action requires use of contingency or reserves
- Action is within the Business Plan
- Action requires a change to the Business Plan
- Other financial impact – Fine and fee increases for cost recovery.

Community Impact

Neighborhood Notification
City Goals
Comprehensive Plan
Zoning Code
Other

Supporting Information

Minneapolis Animal Care & Control (ACC) is working to develop strategies to increase annual pet licensing in Minneapolis. We are looking at a variety of ways to increase licensing by making it easier and more accessible to our residents.

Currently, less than 5% of Minneapolis pets (cats and dogs) are licensed. Of the 107,000 dogs estimated to be living in Minneapolis, 9,007 were licensed in 2007. The numbers are significantly lower for our feline population with only 124 cats licensed out of the 115,000 plus cats in the city.

Animal Care and Control reviewed current research and other municipalities' practices of licensing pets. Research on pet licensing points to the importance of the following strategies for increasing the percentage of animals licensed:

- Ease, availability, and multi-modes for purchasing licenses;
- Marketing/educating the benefit of pet licensing;
- Significant consequences for violators;
- Outreach;
- Incentives;
- Partnerships.

Research of other municipalities, demonstrated that their strategies encompassed practices that fell in these categories. The most common include: on-line pet licensing, door to door canvassing regarding pet licensing, significant fines for non-compliance, multiple locations for purchasing licenses (i.e. vets and neighborhood service centers), discounts for seniors, options of one or multi-year licenses, marketing campaigns promoting the benefits of pet licenses, and offering a holistic animal care and control program.

Animal Care & Control has also met with a stakeholder group composed of veterinarian clinics, dog daycares and pet stores to collect their input onto how Animal Control can increase licensing.

I. Best Practice Research

Four programs were looked at most closely: Washington County Oregon, Seattle, Washington, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Calgary Alberta.

- **Washington County, Oregon**

Licensed approximately 43,000 dogs in 2007, representing an estimated 40% of their dog population. This was a 40% increase from the 36,000 dogs they licensed in 2006. They attributed the increase to a number of factors:

1. License renewal process includes sending out a late notice to all owners who failed to renew on time.
2. On-line licensing – Chameleon module (same data system as Minneapolis ACC).
3. Significant marketing campaign, including purchase of domain name “licenseyourpet.com” supported by marketing budget of more than \$30,000,
4. Door to door canvassing (2 interns during the summer). Handout mailer.
5. Strong partnership with their vets - who sell approximately 20% of their licenses.
6. Significant penalty for no license - \$300 to \$500

7. Offer 1, 2, and 3 year license options; representing 60%, 21%, and 19% respectfully.

- **Seattle, Washington**

Licensed 50,000 dogs in 2007, representing an estimated 30% of their dog population. This is up from approximately 19% in 2004. They license approximately 10% of the city's cat population. They attribute their success to:

1. On-line licensing (introduced in 2005) represents approximately 50% of their transactions.
2. Ease of licensing – 15 vet clinics offer licensing (clinics paid \$5), able to license over the phone (386-PETS) extended hours (7am-9pm),
3. Added 7 staff – 2 clerical, 3 Animal care staff, and 2 enforcement staff.
4. Offer 1 and 2 year licenses and Senior discount
5. License renewal process includes sending out a late notice (entitled "Collection Notice") to all owners who failed to renew on time.
6. Enforcement which includes \$125 civil citation for no license; will stop out at addresses of owners who have not renewed their license.
7. Direct mailing (20,000) – 2%-3% response rate.
8. Licensing disconnected from rabies in 2002.
9. Free transportation home to licensed animals.

Seattle Animal Control has gone away from canvassing due to headaches of managing field staff doing door to door canvassing.

- **St. Paul, Minnesota**

Licensed approximately 20% to 30% of their pet population in 2007. Fairly stable over the last few years. They attribute their success to:

1. On-line licensing
2. Partnership with Vets and Pet Stores who sell pet licenses (paid for selling).
3. Licenses sold through their office as well as the downtown licensing bureau.
4. Enforcement which includes the issuing of criminal citations resulting in a fine of \$80.
5. Offer lifetime licenses.

- **Calgary, Alberta**

Licensed approximately 100,000 dogs in 2007, representing an estimated 90% of their dog population. They attribute their success to:

1. Buy in by the community by making animal licensing a valuable commodity, backed by enforcement and an aggressive and dedicated education effort.
2. Ease of licensing (24/7) – online, through 311, shelter, and mail.
3. All proceeds from licensing and fines go to Animal Services. Last year they were able to fully support their operations and give \$250,000 to their Humane Society.
4. Promotes Responsible Pet ownership program, including strong educational efforts.
5. Promotes value of licensing – Pays for the holistic animal care and control program; including education programs and animals being returned to their owner. They initially offered free ride home, now small fee. 88% of dogs picked up are returned home, about half are returned home without going to shelter.

6. Strong enforcement - \$250 fine. This is a criminal cite. Failure to appear in court results in Bench warrant. Animal Service officers are Sworn Peace Officers.
7. Staff dedicated to licensing.
8. Sizeable marketing campaign, in excess of \$50,000; including items for officers to give out to people engaged in responsible pet ownership.

II. Strategies for Minneapolis Animal Care & Control

There are a variety of strategies that Minneapolis Animal Care & Control could offer to increase pet licensing. Below we have outlined the strategies based on those available within current resources and those that would require additional resources.

• Current Resources

The following strategies could be implemented with little to no additional cost to the program.

Incentives:

- Senior discount - 50% reduction
- "Sibling Discount" (discount for second pet) - 30% reduction
- Lifetime License - keep existing program
- Offer "free ride home" to any pet picked up by Animal Control
- No need to wear tags; required to be in possession by owner/custodian, unless animal microchipped.

Ease and Availability:

- Licensing conducted by Minneapolis Development Review
- Licensing conducted by Vets and Pet Stores
- Allow for self certification of rabies vaccination

Increased Consequences for Violators:

- Increase the penalty (\$100-\$200 administrative citations)
- "Fix-It Ticket" – portion of fine goes toward license

Marketing/Advertising:

- Work with Communications Department on marketing/educating campaign on the benefits of pet licensing
- Utility billing insert for December 2009 (renewal time)

• Additional Resources

The following strategies require additional resources to implement, including additional FTEs and 'special project' dollars.

Incentives:

- Late notice reminders to folks who don't respond to renewal notices
- Create licensing benefit for micro-chipping

Ease and Availability:

- **On-line licensing – approximately \$25,000 one time cost or ongoing user fee**
- Purchase domain name "license your pet Minneapolis"
- Shift from January-to-January annual licensing to annual licensing based on the date of purchase

Increased Consequences for Violators:

- Increased enforcement – increase patrols and random stops

Marketing/Advertising:

- Citywide direct mailing campaign
- Develop significant marketing campaign, including radio, newspaper, and bus shelter posters
- Work with other municipalities for metro-wide marketing campaign
- Canvassing with pet license applications and information – door-to-door (houses with visible pet presence)
- Develop holistic animal care and control program, including Responsible Pet Owners Program and youth education programs
- Hire one new FTE dedicated solely to resources, which includes pet licensing, grants, donations, developing partnerships, and education programs

Based on the discussion and direction from today's committee meeting, staff will bring forward ordinance amendments for some of the no-cost strategies (senior discounts, etc.) in the near future.