



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUBSM

January 2, 2009

The Honorable Roy Wilson
Chair, Riverside County Board of Supervisors
County Executive Office
4080 Lemon Street - 4th Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

Dear Mr. Chair:

Concerned dog owners and citizens of Riverside County recently contacted the American Kennel Club regarding a proposal that will dramatically affect their ability to own dogs. We respectfully write to you on their behalf.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) was established in 1884 to promote the study, breeding, exhibiting, and advancement of purebred dogs. We now represent over 4,600 dog clubs nationally, including 462 clubs in the state of California. The American Kennel Club supports sound, enforceable, non-discriminatory legislation to govern dog ownership.

We understand that the Riverside County Board of Supervisors will be considering a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance that would require all dogs and cats to be spayed or neutered unless the owner qualifies for and purchases an intact dog license. Additionally, the ordinance would require the sterilization of any animal that was picked up by animal control, even on a first offense. This is unreasonable as even responsible owners can have an animal escape due to a mistake by a meter reader, gardener, friend or relative leaving the gate open. We agree that steps should be taken to address owners who habitually allow their animals to run at-large, but such a severe response is not justified by a single incident. Any animal that was the subject of 2 complaints would also have their intact license revoked. This allows one neighbor who does not like dogs or who has a problem with the owner to force sterilization of an animal without even requiring that the owner be issued a citation.

This issue is one of utmost importance to those who participate in our dog shows and events. In 2008, almost 14,000 responsible dog owners participated in 75 AKC-approved events held in Riverside County. When you take into account what these participants spend on hotel rooms, gasoline, food, souvenirs and entertainment the revenue generated by these events is easily over \$7 million annually. This figure rises further when one adds the additional thousands of dollars AKC clubs spend renting the various venues, and what is spent to bring judges to the area by paying their transportation, hotel, restaurant, and other expenses. Clubs will be reluctant to hold events in an area where an escaped dog would be sterilized on a first offense. Passage of a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance in Riverside County would send a clear message that our events are not welcome in your community.

The AKC opposes the concept of mandatory spay/neuter of purebred dogs. Instead, we support reasonable and enforceable laws that protect the welfare and health of purebred dogs and do not restrict the right of responsible breeders and owners. Mandatory spay/neuter is an ineffective solution to animal control problems because it

fails to address the heart of the issue—irresponsible ownership. These laws are extremely difficult to enforce and can be evaded by irresponsible animal owners who won't licensing their pets. This proposed ordinance will unfairly punish responsible owners who are already complying with local animal control laws, while irresponsible owners continue to make problems for the community and local shelters.

Local responsible breeders should be viewed as assets to their communities. These breeders make serious commitments to their animals by raising healthy, well cared-for dogs and by working to ensure that puppies are placed with responsible owners. These breeders are in a unique position to support new pet owners and exemplify responsible animal ownership. Responsible dog breeders and owners are models for their communities and should not be penalized by being forced to comply with burdensome regulations.

The AKC believes the answer to population issues is strict enforcement of leash and nuisance laws, rather than passage of new burdensome regulation. The key to resolving this issue is to implement and expand the wide range of programs available to educate the public about responsible breeding practices. The AKC and our local clubs would be pleased to assist you in developing public education programs for your community.

The American Kennel Club also opposes mandatory microchipping. As part of our ongoing efforts to promote responsible dog ownership, the AKC encourages dog owners to properly identify their pets. We believe, however, that the final decision about identification—whether by collar, tattoo or microchip—should be made by the owner, not the government. The AKC's Companion Animal Recovery is the largest microchip registry in the world and approximately 70-80% of our recoveries are due to the collar tag, proving that they are an effective way to reunite owners and lost pets.

AKC also has concerns about Riverside County operating a microchip registry. To be effective, a microchip registry should be independent and be open for calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year. It does not seem likely that Riverside County Animal Control is able to take on that responsibility. Microchips are only effective if they are enrolled in a national recovery database. Local databases are neither feasible nor effective because animals do not pay attention to political boundaries. Even within Riverside County those who live in incorporated cities would not be required to obey the county's ordinance so most local pets will not be in the database.

Finally, imposing new requirements and new costs on animal owners in this economy is likely to lead to a decrease in licensing and possibly an increase in relinquishments as residents who are struggling to pay the bills are unable to come up with the funds for expensive surgeries and microchip implantation.

As you and the members of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors consider this matter, the American Kennel Club and your constituent dog owners would be pleased to assist you in developing reasonable animal control regulations designed to ensure that dogs and their owners remain respected members of their communities. We invite you to review our public education programs, and we respectfully urge you not to proceed with this proposal.

Sincerely,



Sarah Sprouse
Manager, Government Relations

From: nboden@dc.rr.com [mailto:nboden@dc.rr.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 08, 2009 1:12 PM
To: Wilson, Roy
Subject: Ordinance 630

Dear Supervisor Wilson,

I am a very concerned animal lover. Never has the crisis facing our dog and cat companions been greater. Our shelters are stretched to the limit. Because of the state of the economy, more and more of people's pets are being abandoned. Typically there is no collar ID, no presence of a MICROCHIP and the animal has not been SPAYED or NEUTERED.

I am a long time member of HSUS and am a very active member of both ANIMAL SAMARITANS and LOVING ALL ANIMALS. We are united in our support of ORDINANCE 630. You must vote in favor of this ordinance. It is the only humane thing to do. We are all counting on you!

Sincerely,

Neal Boden

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