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October 20, 2015

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**SPAY AND NEUTER PROGRAM FOR CATS AND  
MICROCHIPPING OF CATS  
(ALL SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS)  
(3-VOTES)**

**SUBJECT**

Approval of the recommended amendments to Title 10 of the Los Angeles County Code, requested by your Board, will require the spaying or neutering of cats, and microchipping of cats, in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD:**

1. Amend Los Angeles County Code § 10.08 Definitions: add "Alter", Amendment to "Cat", add "Competition Cat", add "Custodian", amend "Dog", add "Neuter", delete "Shall and May", and add "Spay."
2. Amend Los Angeles County Code § 10.20 to add cats to the existing ordinance requiring dogs to be spayed or neutered.
3. Amend Los Angeles County Code §10.20 to add cats to the existing ordinance requiring dogs to be microchipped.
4. Introduce, waive reading, and adopt the attached Ordinance.

**PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Background: The proposed amendments are in response to the Board's February 17, 2015, motion

requesting an ordinance requiring the spay and neutering of cats, modeled on the County's successful mandatory spay and neutering of dogs.

**Animal Overpopulation:** The Department of Animal Care and Control (Department) is overwhelmed with cats. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-15, the Department impounded 28,911 cats. During that year 21,055 cats were euthanized. Despite strong efforts to place cats into new homes and reunite lost cats with their owners, there are still not enough adoptive homes to absorb this surplus. The best way to reduce the euthanasia of cats is to reduce the numbers entering animal care centers. The most effective way to reduce unwanted breeding of cats is to require they be spayed or neutered.

**Public Health and Safety:** Uncontrolled breeding of cats causes colonies of cats that can serve as vectors for public health concerns. Rabies, flea-borne typhus, parasites, and other diseases can infect these animals and become transmissible to humans. Reducing the number of unwanted and unowned cats will reduce the likelihood of these disease outbreaks.

**Animal Identification and Reunification:** The returned to owner rate for lost cats is very low, only 1.6 percent for FY 2014-15. The vast majority cats are not identified with tags or microchips. Many cat owners do not like to put collars on their cats for the fear of having the cat's collar becoming caught on an object, result in harm or death to the cat. Therefore, most cats are unidentified when they arrive at an animal care center. Further, many owners do not begin searching for their lost cat until many days after the cat has become missing and may not even come to the animal care center to look for their cat.

By requiring the microchipping of cats, the Department will be able to return lost cats to their owners immediately. This will reduce the number of cats euthanized in County animal care centers. Microchipping of animals has become a customary practice - millions of dogs and cats, horses, livestock, birds, wildlife, and endangered species are chipped. Microchipping is a simple, non-surgical procedure. The microchip, which is approximately the size of a grain of rice, is injected underneath the skin with a needle. There is no anesthesia required and even the smallest animals such as fish, puppies and kittens are safely microchipped. Microchipping of dogs has been required in Los Angeles County since 2006.

Hundreds of thousands of lost pets have been reunited with their distraught families because the pets were microchipped. While tags can become lost or damaged and tattoos can fade or be altered, microchips provide permanent identification with unique numbers that cannot be changed. Due to the presence of a microchip, the Department has reunited families with pets that had been missing for up to five years.

Microchipping of cats is an important element of this ordinance because it is not easy to verify the spayed status of a female cat. By requiring the microchipping of cats the Department will be able to fairly and correctly denote the cat's identify and research its medical records to verify sterility.

### **Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals**

Adoption of these ordinance changes will support the organizational goal of operational effectiveness (Goal 1) by contributing to the reduction of the euthanasia of cats in County animal care centers.

This ordinance change was also written in accordance with the County's Plain Language Initiative and amends various sections using plain language to make this Title more understandable.

### **FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING**

There will be no fiscal impact to the Department. Enforcement of the requirements of this ordinance will be performed by staff currently enforcing the mandatory spay/neuter and microchipping program for dogs. Long term positive impact could be the reduction of incoming cats at County animal care centers, thereby reducing the Department's cost in caring for these animals.

The Department has also established a low-cost spay/neuter voucher program for low-income cat owners. These owners may obtain a \$50 voucher to offset the cost of the cat sterilization fee. The vouchers may be redeemed at participating veterinarians, low-cost spay neuter clinics, and Department low-cost clinics. In many cases, the cost for surgery averages between \$50 to \$80 at low-cost clinics. Therefore, the co-pay for cat owners will be minimal.

### **FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

The purpose of the proposed ordinance is to reduce uncontrolled breeding of cats and thereby reduce cat euthanasia and the strain on Los Angeles County's animal care centers in caring for these animals. Fewer stray and unwanted cats will improve public health and safety.

The proposed ordinance establishes a mandatory spay and neuter program for cats and requires microchipping of all cats. All cats will be required to be spayed or neutered unless one of the following applies:

1. A veterinarian determines that the surgery is unsafe due to age or infirmity.
2. The cat is a "competition" cat.

The exemption of "competition" cat is a cat which is used to show, compete, or breed, and which is recognized by and registered with an approved cat breed registry. In addition, a competition cat must do one of the following:

1. Compete in at least one sanctioned cat show per year; OR
2. Earn a title in their area of competition from a sanctioning cat registry; OR
3. The owner must be a member of a purebred cat breed club, approved by the Department, which maintains and enforces a code of ethics for cat breeding.

This ordinance also prohibits the breeding of more than one litter per female cat per year and no more than five litters per female cat during her lifetime. This restriction comports with generally accepted breeding principles that are customary in the codes of ethics of purebred cat breeder associations.

The sale and transfer of unaltered cats is also regulated; owners must report the births, sales, and transfers of cats.

The County of Los Angeles has required the licensing of cats for decades. This ordinance change will allow cat owners to continue to purchase licenses for altered or unaltered cats, based on the revised requirements.

Enforcement: This ordinance will be enforced through the Department's licensing enforcement program and by responding to complaints from the public.

### **IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)**

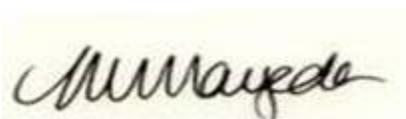
Approval of these recommendations will reduce the euthanasia rate of cats and reduce operating costs because fewer cats will be impounded. This ordinance change was also written in accordance with the County's Plain Language Initiative and amends various sections using plain language to make this Title more understandable. Low-cost spay/neuter vouchers will be made available to low-income residents to assist them in complying with these requirements.

### **CONCLUSION**

Approval of the recommended changes to Title 10 of the County Code will enhance the Department's ability to protect public safety by reducing stray cats, reduce the euthanasia rate of cats, and reduce operating costs because fewer cats will be impounded. The use of the Plain Language Initiative makes this ordinance more understandable for the public. Financial assistance is available for low-income residents in order to comply with this ordinance.

Please return one adopted copy of this letter to the Department of Animal Care and Control.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Mayeda", is centered on a light yellow rectangular background.

MARCIA MAYEDA

Director

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Enclosures

c: Auditor-Controller  
Chief Executive Office  
County Counsel  
Executive Office