

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY CODE REGARDING DOGS

In an effort to improve public safety and reduce the number of stray dogs overwhelming our animal shelters, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has passed an ordinance that requires all residents of unincorporated areas in Los Angeles County to have their dogs spayed or neutered and have an identification microchip implanted in each dog. The measure applies to **all dogs over the age of four months kept in unincorporated (non-city) areas of Los Angeles County.**

Contract Cities

The following cities have adopted the Spay & Neuter Ordinance: [Cities](#)

Spay/Neuter

This ordinance was passed to promote and protect public safety from the threats presented by stray dogs, as well as to reduce the number of dogs flooding our animal shelters that are subsequently euthanized. Low cost services are available and financial assistance is available to qualified individuals.

Unsterilized dogs are creating a crisis in Los Angeles County. Stray dogs are public safety hazards, and unsterilized dogs are more likely to stray. Stray dogs can bite or attack people or other animals, cause traffic accidents, spread disease, damage property and harm the quality of life for residents in a community. During the last fiscal year 23,799 stray dogs were impounded by this department.

Unneutered males search for mates and are attracted in packs when female dogs come into heat. One female in heat, even if confined, can make an entire neighborhood unstable by attracting packs of male dogs intent on breeding. These situations often become dangerous.

Unsterilized dogs can create unplanned litters, and there are not enough available homes to absorb this surplus. The Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control is overwhelmed with dogs. In Fiscal Year 2004-2005 the department impounded 40,174 dogs, more than any other animal care and control agency in the nation. During that year 18,804 dogs were euthanized. Despite strong efforts to place dogs into new homes and reunite lost dogs with their owners, there are still not enough adoptive homes available. This department is committed to a "no-kill" philosophy. However, in order to reach

that goal we must first greatly reduce the numbers of dogs flooding our shelters. This ordinance will help us reach that goal by reducing the number of dogs born or running loose in Los Angeles County.

Spaying and neutering also presents many health benefits for dogs. Certain types of cancers in dogs are eliminated by spaying and neutering. Sterilized dogs are less likely to roam and therefore less likely to be lost, hit by a car, injured in a fight, or abused.

By spaying or neutering your dog, you are helping solve the problem of pet overpopulation and protecting your dog from potential harm. However, since some dogs cannot be spayed or neutered for certain reasons, this ordinance has exemptions for these cases. These are:

1. Dogs which are unable to be spayed or neutered without a high likelihood of suffering serious bodily harm or death due to age or infirmity. Written confirmation from a licensed veterinarian is required to qualify for this exception.
2. Dogs used by law enforcement agencies for law enforcement purposes.
3. Service or assistance dogs that assist disabled persons.
4. Competition dogs. A Competition Dog is a dog which is used to show, to compete or to breed, which is of a breed recognized by and registered with the American Kennel Club (AKC), United Kennel Club (UKC), American Dog Breeders Association (ADBA) or other [approved breed registries](#). The dog or owner must also meet ONE of the following requirements:
 - a. The dog has competed in at least one dog show or sporting competition sanctioned by a national registry or approved by the department within the last 365 days; or
 - b. The dog has earned a conformation, obedience, agility, carting, herding, protection, rally, sporting, working or other title from a purebred dog registry referenced above or other registry or dog sport association approved by the department; or
 - c. The owner or custodian of the dog is a member of a department [approved purebred dog breed clubs](#), which maintains and enforces a code of ethics for dog breeding that includes restrictions from breeding dogs with genetic defects and life threatening health problems that commonly threaten the breed.

If you believe your dog meets one of these exemptions, please complete and return an [Exemption Application](#).

Microchips

Under this ordinance all dogs must have an identification microchip. Microchip implantation and registration is available to all dog owners FREE of charge thanks to a generous donation from the Found Animal Foundation. You may

obtain your free microchip and registration at any Los Angeles County animal shelter. Please call ahead to confirm microchip clinic hours. [Microchip Schedules](#)

Positive identification that cannot be lost, falsified or altered is essential to reuniting lost pets with their families. 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. Each microchip has a code number embedded in it. When a special, hand-held scanner is passed over the area where the microchip has been implanted, the scanner “reads” the microchip and displays its unique code number. That number is stored in a database that contains the owner contact information.

Hundreds of thousands of lost pets have been reunified 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, this department has reunified owners with pets that had been missing for as long as five years.

Low-Cost Assistance

Part of this new ordinance includes a \$50 voucher program for senior citizens and low-income residents who have a state-issued California Advantage Card. [S/N Discount Voucher Request](#) Our agency also has a list of veterinarians who offer low-cost spay and neuter surgeries and accept the vouchers our agency will issue as part of this program. [Participating Veterinary Offices](#)

We also will conduct low-cost spay and neuter programs for dogs at many of our County shelters and we are working with a wide variety of animal welfare groups who are active in low-cost spay-and-neuter efforts. Ongoing spay/neuter opportunities will be made available, and we encourage you to check our website and with your local County shelter to find out opportunities in your area.

In addition, Actors and Others for Animals currently provides FREE spay or neuter services for all Pit Bulls and Rottweilers. Call (818) 755-6045 or (818) 755-6323, or visit their website at www.actorsandothers.com for more information.

Effective Date of Enforcement

This ordinance became effective on June 1, 2006. The current grace period has been extended until March 1, 2007 to allow dog owners adequate time to comply with the new requirements. However, owners of stray dogs that are impounded at a County shelter during the grace period will be required to comply immediately. After the grace period has ended, dog owners will be expected to be in compliance with this ordinance.

Fines and Penalties

A first violation of this ordinance is an infraction punishable by a fine not to exceed \$250. If the owner fails to correct the underlying cause of the violation within 30 days after being notified of the violation, it shall be deemed a second violation. A second violation is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment in the county jail for a period not to exceed six months or by a fine not to exceed \$1,000, or by both such fine and imprisonment. Each subsequent violation shall be considered an additional misdemeanor.

The full text of this ordinance is available on our website. If you still want more information, please visit your local County shelter, write to us at 5898 Cherry Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90805, or e-mail us, using the link on our website homepage. You may also contact us by telephone at (562) 256-7104. Staff is available to assist you Monday through Thursday from 6:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's) – Click on link below:

[Spay & Neuter FAQ's](#)

[Microchip FAQ's](#)

[Low Cost Services FAQ's](#)

[Registries and Breed Clubs FAQ's](#)

[License Fees FAQ's](#)