

10F Animal Welfare RP
AF

Open-ended approval for pet control

4-27-94
New information could change law

By LANE WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

A law designed to control the dog and cat populations in Santa Cruz County will go into effect in November — maybe.

County supervisors yesterday approved an often-discussed, often-changed law, but left open the possibility of changing it.

Supervisor Jan Beautz indicated there could be some changes if opponents bring in information about how programs to reduce the pet population are working in other areas.

The law, the subject of numerous public hearings, requires a permit for caring for wild cats (two or more) and requires a \$15 annual fee for dogs and cats that haven't been spayed or neutered. The law is effective in the unincorporated areas.

The law prompted plenty of debate over the last few months between the SPCA, which proposed the law, and opponents who said they don't trust the SPCA and believe the pet population can be reduced without the law.

Approval came on a split vote, with Beautz, Gary Patton and Fred Keeley in favor and Walt Symons and Ray Belgard opposed.

Beautz suggested the six-month waiting period, saying opponents such as the Animal Rights Alliance could put together an alternative proposal. Symons suggested putting off passage of the law for four months for further study, but could only get support from Belgard.

Alliance representative Lynn Schmitt said after the meeting she hopes supervisors will consider the Alliance proposal put forth last fall.

Schmitt, who trains animals, said the Alliance believes the pet population can be reduced without

See PET / back of section ►

PET

Animal Welfare
RP APR 27 1994

► From Page 1

new laws. There is already a trend toward more spaying and neutering, Schmitt said, and the Alliance says it can raise money to support free and reduced-cost spaying and neutering.

Schmitt said she is willing to work with the SPCA, but other opponents have been less conciliatory.

In a letter to supervisors early this month, Dr. Naomi Kirschenbaum, president of the county Veterinary Medicine Association, said people have an "escalating frustration with the SPCA" because there's a perception that the SPCA "manipulates members of the veterinary community to achieve goals set by its policy makers."

The spay-and-neuter plan is based on vets providing some free spaying and neutering. Local vets "may be a very long way" from willingness to provide such work, Kirschenbaum said.

Petitions with hundreds of signatures opposing the law were turned in to supervisors yesterday. Other petitions on both sides of the issue were submitted earlier in the year.

Marilee Geyer, the SPCA's education director, said there has been some hysteria about giving too much power to SPCA officers.

"There's not going to be a feral (wild) cat SWAT team," she said. If the SPCA comes across somebody who is feeding wild cats, Geyer said, officers will work with the person to get the cats spayed and neutered and make sure they are healthy. There is no fee for registering.

A fine of \$100 could be imposed, but Geyer said the SPCA's goal is to reduce the number of wild cats, not collect fines.

The \$15 annual certification fee for dogs and cats that haven't been spayed or neutered has these requirements:

- The animal would have to be examined annually by a veterinarian and have rabies shots and other vaccinations.

- The animal must be properly housed.

- One litter of dogs and two of cats is permitted.

- The number of an animal's certification would have to be listed in any ads to sell the animal.

- An animal can't be sold or given away if it's less than 7 weeks old.

- Owners would be required to keep records on who buys kittens and puppies.