

Packed meeting for pet-breeding proposal

By KATHY KREIGER
Sentinel staff writer

SCOTTS VALLEY — Animal lovers had no trouble agreeing on the problem: too many cats and dogs being born.

What to do about it is another matter. Then the fur flew.

More than 130 people packed Scotts Valley City Hall on Wednesday night at the first public discussion of what could be the county's first pet-breeding ordinance.

"This ordinance will save lives ... and taxpayers' dollars, as we kill less and less animals," said Jody Paterniti, executive director of the Santa Cruz Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which wrote the ordinance.

"The majority of animal births are unplanned," said Alice Partanen, a Pescadero councilwoman who helped write a counter proposal that would provide free spaying and neutering for cats. "... Historically, these types of approaches don't work."

The City Council postponed a decision until its first meeting in December because Councilman Michael Shulman had to leave early.

Shulman is a leading proponent of the ordinance, defending it Wednesday to those who testified against it. Councilman Joe Miller,

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— Jody Paterniti, SPCA

whose daughter is a SPCA worker, said he also supports the ordinance. Mayor Gina Koshland and Councilwoman Peggie Lopez both said they have "serious concerns" about the ordinance, while Councilman David Schmidt said he thinks it needs some rewriting.

The same ordinance is in line for consideration by Santa Cruz County and the cities of Santa Cruz and Capitola. The county Board of Supervisors will hear a report and set a public hearing at its Nov. 9 meeting.

The ordinance would require every cat and dog over six months old to be spayed or neutered unless its owner has a breeding permit. Service, guide or police dogs would be exempt.

Violating the ordinance would result in a \$150 to \$500 penalty.

The ordinance is the culmination of 2½ years of work by the local SPCA and borrows from a similar breeding ban in San Mateo.

SPCA workers and other supporters of the ordinance were frequently emotional as they detailed what it's like to kill healthy dogs and cats — more than 4,000 in Santa Cruz County last year.

Six dogs and 14 cats were killed at the SPCA shelter earlier in the day, said Marilee Geyer, who described herself as a certified euthanasia technician.

Opposing the ordinance are dog and cat breeders, local kennel clubs, the Santa Cruz County Veterinary Medical Association and the county Farm Bureau.

"This ordinance is clearly aimed at breeders of pure-bred dogs," said Scotts Valley dog breeder and educator Sue Seden. "It's making more paperwork for those already trying to be responsible and not addressing the real problem of irresponsible owners."

Other opponents of the ordinance say it won't do anything about what they say is the real problem: stray and feral cats.

Proposed breeding limits

Sentinel staff report

Here are the key provisions of a proposed pet overpopulation ordinance:

- All cats and dogs older than six months must be spayed or neutered unless their owner has a breeding permit.

- Giving away or selling animals in a public place would be prohibited.

Two types of breeding permits will be issued.

- A Level 1 (so-called "responsible breeders") permit would require: veterinary inspection of animals; initial shots before their young could be sold; animals not of breeding quality be spayed or neutered before they're six months old;

prospective buyers to sign an agreement to have their pets spayed or neutered by six months of age; breeders to agree to take back animals at anytime during the animals' lifetime.

The SPCA would issue a breeding permit number to those who meet its standards. A \$20 annual fee has been proposed.

- A Level 2 permit would be available at a proposed cost of \$150 for those unable or unwilling to meet the Level 1 standards.

All breeders would be limited to one litter per year per adult female, or a maximum of five offspring, whichever is greater.