

Dog, cat breeding-ban measure resurrected

SPCA hopes proposed law will get better reception this time

By DENISE FRANKLIN
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LIVE OAK — A puff of acceptance, not a howl of resistance, is what the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals hopes to hear about its proposed breeding ban.

In 1992, the Santa Cruz SPCA put 4,334 homeless dogs and cats to death, and the agency's latest proposal is aimed at reducing this number.

The SPCA met opposition two years ago from veterinarians and breeders when it proposed a breeding ban that called for owners of dogs and cats to have them spayed or neutered within six months unless the animal was a purebred.

That proposal was put on hold after Jody Paterniti became SPCA executive director April 1991.

Since then, Paterniti and the agency's director of education, Marilee Geyer, have been meeting with various groups to come up with a law everyone can accept.

"It wasn't easy," Paterniti said of meeting with the various groups, some with long histories of hostility toward the SPCA. "We both have battle scars."

But after getting together with breeders, dog and cat fanciers, the Santa Cruz County Veterinary Association, and the Farm Bureau, and holding five community meetings, Paterniti believes they have drafted an acceptable ordinance.

"In essence, it came from the community. We set out at these meetings with no preconceived notions, ..." said Geyer. "We wanted something they support, will work, and will pass."

Unlike the former proposal, the new one doesn't discriminate against mixed-breed dogs and cats.

Under the new proposal, breeders who agree to meet certain

Highlights of SPCA's proposed breeding ban

The pet overpopulation ordinance proposed by the Santa Cruz SPCA would not allow ownership of a cat or dog over age six months that has not been spayed or neutered unless the person does one of the following:

- Agrees to certified breeder guidelines and receives a certified breeding number from the SPCA. This number will appear in any public advertisement for the sale of puppies or kittens.

- Pays a \$100 annual fee for a breeding permit. Those with breeding permits don't have to follow certified breeder guidelines, but can produce only one litter or not more than five offspring within 12 months.

- Is training a service, police, hearing or guide dog.

- Is breeding dogs for a specific purpose such as herding, guarding herds or flocks, or performing search and rescue

work.

The proposed ordinance would also:

- Make it illegal to sell or give away animals in public places. This includes dogs, cats, fish, reptiles, birds or other animals.

- Require dog or cat owners to be 18, unless they have parental consent.

- Forbid businesses to use animals as inducements by offering them as prizes.

- Require information on dogs and cats be given to purchasers. The information, including spaying and neutering information, would be provided by the SPCA.

- Make licensing more convenient by allowing owners of spayed or neutered dogs to purchase a two-year license instead of a one-year license.

— Denise Franklin

guidelines would not be required to purchase a breeding permit. All they would have to do is show a breeding number issued to them by the SPCA in all their advertisements.

Those who don't agree to the guidelines would have to buy a \$100 permit annually to breed their pets.

Those with permits could produce only one litter or no more than five dogs or cats in a 12-month period or be fined if they

don't get their pets spayed or neutered.

First-time offenders would be given a "fix-it ticket." If they got their dog or cat "fixed," they wouldn't have to pay the fine. No amount has been set yet.

The proposal also addresses the selling and giving away of animals, how old a pet owner must be, giving away animals as prizes, information that must be given to purchasers of dogs and cats, and dog licensing.

Breeder Lynn Schmitt, president of the San Andreas Kennel Club, was among those who met with the SPCA. She will bring the proposal to club members for endorsement next month.

"We are feeling comfortable (with the ordinance)," Schmitt said. "A lot of the issues they have raised ... are very, very good."

Schmitt said breeders want to make sure the ordinance doesn't "tie our hands, that it allows us to continue the process of any breeding that the American Kennel Club breeders do."

Paterniti said she and Geyer met with the Farm Bureau because of long-standing hostilities toward the SPCA, particularly over the ban on leg-hold traps, which the SPCA endorsed.

"The Farm Bureau has a lot of clout in South County, so we need to keep them posted over what we are doing," she said.

Since the SPCA doesn't have the money to go pick up strays, Farm Bureau members wonder how it can take on this additional responsibility, Farm Bureau Executive Director Jess Brown said.

Farm Bureau member John Pisturino, a Watsonville cattle rancher, said a lot of farm kids raise working dogs and he doesn't want to see this forbidden. He was pleased to hear the law would allow those under 18 to own a dog with parental consent.

Outlawing the sale or giving away of pets in public places "kind of bothers us, too," Pisturino said. And he doesn't believe the law, as it now stands, should forbid the giving of fish and reptiles as prizes.

"They are talking about dogs and cats and here they bring in fish and reptiles, too," he said.

The law would affect all areas where the SPCA is contracted to



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

The Santa Cruz SPCA hopes proposed pet-breeding curbs will reduce the need to kill pups like these.

operate — the unincorporated county, the cities of Santa Cruz and Scotts Valley, and perhaps Capitola.

Paterniti said she hopes the county Board of Supervisors and city councils in Scotts Valley and Santa Cruz adopt the proposed ordinance by the end of this year.

She also hopes Capitola, which has a contract with the SPCA only to shelter animals, will adopt it.

Geyer said a similar law in San

Mateo County has cut down on the number of pets that have to be killed. The law there only affects unincorporated areas, not cities.

According to the Peninsula Humane Society, since its ordinance went into effect on March 1, 1992, it has had to kill 227 fewer dogs and cats than it did during the same period in 1991.

Before enacting its law, San Mateo County was putting to death approximately 10,000 animals annually.