



# TOWN OF APPLE VALLEY

## TOWN COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

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**To:** Honorable Mayor and Town Council **Date:** September 13, 2016

**From:** Gina Schwin-Whiteside **Item No:** 14  
Director of Animal Services  
Animal Services Department

**Subject:** CUTTING OFF OUR SUPPLY - SPAY/NEUTER INCENTIVE PROGRAM  
AND LICENSING LATE FEE AMNESTY

**T.M. Approval:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Budgeted Item:**  Yes  No  N/A

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### RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the Town Council authorize the Director of Animal Services to implement the CUTTING OFF OUR SUPPLY - SPAY/NEUTER INCENTIVE PROGRAM AND LICENSING LATE FEE AMNESTY, including approving discounts in adoption fees, microchips, return-to-owner fees, amnesty on dog license late fees (one (1) year only) and spay/neuter vouchers when donations have been secured to offset the discounts without impacting the operating budget of the Department.

### SUMMARY:

Providing shelter animals permanent loving homes is a priority for the Department. Apple Valley Animal Services (AVAS) has implemented numerous programs to increase the numbers of adoptable pets leaving the shelter. However, staff has not observed a significant drop in the numbers of stray and unwanted animals being impounded at the Town's Municipal Animal Shelter. Implementing programs that address shelter overpopulation is a critical component to reducing euthanasia and the costs of providing animal sheltering services. The "Cutting Off Our Supply - Spay/Neuter Incentive Program" will target community pets before they have litters, decrease the chances that the pets will be relinquished to our shelter and stabilize long-term costs for sheltering unwanted

animals. The Town's outreach program to increase live release rates at our shelter are impacting our euthanasia rates. Staff believes that more must be done to improve the lives of the animals in our community. This program will support the efforts of the Department to continue lowering euthanasia rates. Most important, it will provide opportunities for pets needing placement during a month when our animal shelter population increases.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The Apple Valley Town Council has placed a high priority on meeting State mandates for animal control and sheltering by providing a Municipal Animal Shelter that has raised the bar for humane treatment/housing of stray and unwanted animals in our community. The level of care we provide is not only expected by our residents, it has been demanded by the citizens we serve and animal welfare advocates across the nation. Primarily, local taxes, fines & fees and donations fund many of the amenities provided in our community by the Town of Apple Valley, including the Municipal Animal Shelter. It is important that we control the costs to provide animal services for our residents and ensure that not all taxpayers carry the burden of choices made by individual pet-owners. Voluntary spay/neuter of owned animals is one of those choices that can significantly influence the population of animals in our community, which drives the level of services we must provide at our local shelter.

The greatest expense to animal shelters and a key factor in determining the size of a facility is the number of cats/dogs impounded by a jurisdiction on an annual basis. In 2015, Apple Valley Animal Services (AVAS) handled 6,869 cats/dogs (2498 cats and 4371 dogs; these numbers include intakes for San Bernardino County, including live and deceased cats/dogs and citizen holding strays). Controlling pet overpopulation has been identified by AVAS as a fundamental aspect in maintaining and hopefully, reducing the annual costs for providing animal services to our community. "*The capture, impoundment and eventual destruction of unwanted animals costs taxpayers and private humanitarian agencies over a billion dollars each year.*" (American Veterinary Medical Association).

Providing a solution to pet overpopulation was balanced with providing a freedom of choice for animal owners in the Town of Apple Valley. Therefore, when considering a mandatory spay/neuter law, it was decided by the Town Council to adopt a Voluntary Spay/Neuter program that allowed pet owners to choose whether or not they altered their dogs. This program rewards pet owners that voluntarily alter their animals with a lower annual license fee to license their dogs. Apple Valley Animal Services' also provides incentives and assistance to encourage the voluntary spay/neuter of community pets, including free spay/neuter vouchers with every unaltered dog license.

In regards to the licensing of unaltered dogs in the Town of Apple Valley: Starting in July 2014, all dog owners that licensed an unaltered dog were advised that the fee to license an unaltered dog would increase the second year the unaltered dog was licensed. As an incentive, every owner of an unaltered dog was offered a free spay/neuter voucher to have their dog altered. Each owner of an unaltered dog was provided the freedom to choose whether to alter his or her pet. However, every pet owner was notified that an additional unaltered fee of \$75.00 would be required, if the dog was not spayed/neutered prior to renewal. **The annual fee to license an altered dog is \$12.00.**

Approximately 7.6 million companion animals enter animal shelters nationwide every year. Of those, approximately 3.9 million are dogs and 3.4 million are cats. Each year, approximately 2.7 million animals are euthanized (1.2 million dogs and 1.4 million cats).

**CUTTING OFF OUR SUPPLY:** Reducing the number of unwanted animals that come into our shelter annually and decreasing the numbers of animals we have to euthanize because there are no available homes is only possible by cutting off our supply. The Town's Voluntary Spay/Neuter program is a positive step in reducing the numbers of unwanted animals being born and that end up in our shelter annually. Pet owners that work to help control the pet population numbers in our community are rewarded with lower annual license fees for helping reduce the numbers of unwanted animals coming into our shelter.

AVAS staff is proposing an event called Cutting Off Our Supply that will take place during the months of October, November and December. When fundraising efforts to cover incentives for pet owners to license and alter their pets is successful, staff will approve discounts in adoption fees, microchips, return-to-owner fees, amnesty on dog license late fees (one (1) year only) and spay/neuter vouchers. These incentives will only be made available when donations have been secured to offset the discounts without impacting the operating budget of the Department.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Staff recommends adoption of the Cutting Off Our Supply event - October 2016 through December 2016. This event will provide incentives for pet owners to alter their cats/dogs, which will reduce the numbers of unwanted litters being born in our community. Further, increasing the number of pets that are licensed and microchipped, will improve the chances of animals being reunited with their owners should they become lost and brought to our Shelter.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Funds for the Cutting Off Our Supply event will be made available from the Apple Valley Community Resource Foundation Animal Services' fundraising activities, including but not limited to Cruisin' Fur Critters, Furball and other donations. All discounts in fees will be fully covered by fundraising dollars. This will ensure that there is no impact to the operating budget of the Animal Services Department.