



Monterey County

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
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Salinas, CA 93901

Board Report

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Receive an oral report from the Monterey County Health Department Animal Services Administrator regarding options to fund mobile spay/neuter clinics.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

Receive an oral report from the Monterey County Health Department Animal Services Administrator regarding options to fund mobile spay/neuter clinics.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

Monterey County has a need to increase the number of low-cost spay/neuter surgeries available to residents for both their owned pets and community feral cat populations if there is to be a reduction in the unwanted animals that end up in local shelters. Most animals ending up in local shelters are not spayed or neutered. Specifically, this past kitten season was especially challenging for local shelters, including Monterey County Animal Services. From May 1 through December 1, 2019, cat intake was up about 10% from last year. And despite adoptions, return-to-owner increases, and a Return to Field program being soft rolled out for community cats, euthanasia of underaged kittens still increased. There are simply not enough adoptive and foster homes to save them all. Increasing spay/neuter services will help by stopping the births in the first place.

The benefits of spaying and neutering (or altering) pets are well known. Dogs that have been altered are less likely to roam, have reduced behavior issues and live longer. It is also cheaper to license pet dogs as required by law in most cities and counties than in Monterey County. For cats, both feral and friendly, altering reduces behaviors such as fighting, spraying and the unmistakable howling that comes from a cat in heat. For both cats and dogs, spaying and neutering prevents unwanted and unplanned litters of kittens and puppies that end up in local animal shelters each year. Having more pets spayed and neutered within the community will enable Animal Services to better utilize our limited resources for proactive community support, versus spending time and resources caring for unwanted litters, animal nuisance complaints and lost pets.

Most pet owners want to be responsible and not contribute to the pet overpopulation problem. However, when local veterinarians charge approximately \$200-\$400 for a dog spay or \$75-\$125 for a male cat, feral or not, many of our County residents do not have the ability to pay for the procedure. Furthermore, many people cannot afford to take time off work to take their animals to the half-day procedure, thereby further decreasing the chance of spaying and neutering. This is where mobile spay/neuter clinics help. Typically, mobile clinics offer very specific reduced-cost spay/neuter options as they bring their mobile surgical vehicle to an easily accessed community location. This allows for a

targeted approach in neighborhoods that typically have the biggest need for the reduced cost and easily accessible services. In other words, mobile spay/neuter options create a convenience, both economical and physical, for pet owners that traditional brick and mortar clinics cannot; they bring the veterinarian to you or at least, relatively close to you.

There are not many mobile spay/neuter operations available in or around Monterey County. However, when looking at options for mobile clinics, there were several factors that were considered:

- Cost to the County
- Cost to the pet owner for services provided
- Ability to meet local rabies reporting requirements
- Ability to provide transparent statistics on clinics
- Ability to ensure that funds identified for Monterey County residents were used for Monterey County residents

At this time, there is one option in Monterey County for mobile spay/neuter that is appropriate for Animal Services and Monterey County to support. The “Big Fix” is a collaborative effort of local animal organizations dedicated to improving the spay/neuter access within Monterey County via mobile spay/neuter clinics. It began as a collective effort to spay/neuter feral cats in Moss Landing over the summer and has gained momentum with more clinics and funds being secured. In four pilot clinics this fall, 165 feral cats and owned pets were spayed/neutered, vaccinated and microchipped. All the agencies below supported these clinics with something, either staffing, supplies, outreach, clinic operations or even assistance getting animals there. It’s a real collaborative effort to get done what individually was proving to be very difficult for all agencies participating. Those involved, two primary partners and six contributing partners, and their contributions are:

- Animal Friends Rescue Project (AFRP), a nonprofit organization, owns a mobile spay/neuter vehicle and is a primary partner.
- The SPCA for Monterey County (SPCAMC), a nonprofit organization, has veterinary and support staff to operate a mobile vehicle and is a primary partner.
- Monterey County Animal Services (MCAS), a County department, is providing vaccinations for all clinics supplies so there is no additional charge to the pet owner as well as additional surgical supplies and is a contributing partner.
- Salinas Animal Services (SAS), a City department, is providing use of City Community Center locations for Salinas clinics and is a contributing partner.
- Peace of Mind Dog Rescue (POMDR), a nonprofit organization, is contributing microchips for all clinics so there is no additional charge for the pet owner and is a contributing partner.
- Spay Ca Now, a nonprofit organization, is providing database entry and clinic development and is a contributing partner.
- Friends of Community Animal Services (FoCAS), a nonprofit organization, is providing funds for clinic supplies and assisting in promotion and is a contributing partner.
- Community Cat Allies (CCA) is providing event promotion and assistance with feral cat trapping and transportation as needed and is a contributing partner.

The 2020 goal of the “Big Fix” is to provide no less than two low-cost spay/neuter clinics per month

around and within jurisdictions in Monterey County for the 2020 calendar year, seeking to spay/neuter over 900 animals. Locations are set based on areas that have been identified by partners as areas in need. For example, Prunedale, East and North Salinas and South County cities are areas that are already on the schedule and as the year moves on, more will be identified.

All partners understand the importance of keeping the cost to the pet owner as low as possible. Pet owners will be charged \$25 per pet for the spay/neuter surgery, vaccines and microchip. Those funds will be collected by the SPCA as the financial lead and will be used to offset costs to this program. The clinics for feral community cats were at no cost to those bringing in the cats and they all received the surgery, vaccinations and an ear tip. (Ear tipping of feral cats is the universal sign that the cat has been spayed or neutered.) The "Big Fix" is also able to meet local rabies certificate reporting requirements, provide clinic statistics and ensure that funds that were directed to be used by residents within Monterey County and its cities will be received by those residents.

The cost per clinic is approximately \$3000 for staff and medical supplies with the estimate for the remaining six months of the 2019-20 fiscal year to be roughly \$36,000. The SPCA for Monterey County has secured funding for these mobile clinics during this time period. Due to veterinary staff limitations, even with additional funding at this time, this program is not able to provide more than two clinics per month. Due to that limitation, Animal Services is not requesting any funding for this project at this time. However, Animal Services will be providing support in the form of vaccinations (~\$9,000) and some additional surgical equipment (~\$7500), which will be funded within the department's current budget.

It is important to note that Monterey County Animal Services does have a physical spay/neuter clinic on site at the Animal Services Center at 160 Hitchcock Road in Salinas. However, that clinic is currently only staffed with a part-time veterinarian and registered veterinary technician and not able to provide any low cost spay/neuter services for the public nor provide any mobile services. Surgeries are limited to in-house adoptions, community cats and City of Salinas adopted animals (by agreement). Increasing funding for a full-time veterinarian and registered veterinary technician is currently being explored with the City of Salinas in order to provide additional spay/neuter opportunities that may include some services for the public. Mobile spay/neuter clinics are not part of those discussions at this time.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The partners involved in the collaborative effort, along with Animal Services, to bring more mobile spay/neuter clinics to Monterey County, a.k.a. the "Big Fix", are Animal Friends Rescue Project (primary partner), The SPCA for Monterey County (primary partner), Salinas Animal Services (contributing partner), Friends of Community Animal Services (contributing partner), Peace of Mind Dog Rescue (contributing partner), Spay Ca NOW (contributing partner) and Community Cat Allies (contributing partner).

FINANCING:

The Health Department Animal Services Bureau is not asking for any funding at this time. The cost of vaccinations and additional surgical supplies have been identified within the department's current budget.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Check the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives:

Economic Development:

- Through collaboration, strengthen economic development to ensure a diversified and healthy economy.

Administration:

- Promote an organization that practices efficient and effective resource management and is recognized for responsiveness, strong customer orientation, accountability and transparency.

Health & Human Services:

- Improve health and quality of life through County supported policies, programs, and services; promoting access to equitable opportunities for healthy choices and healthy environments in collaboration with communities.

Infrastructure:

- Plan and develop a sustainable, physical infrastructure that improves the quality of life for County residents and supports economic development results.

Public Safety:

- Create a safe environment for people to achieve their potential, leading businesses and communities to thrive and grow by reducing violent crimes as well as crimes in general.

Prepared by: Cindy Burnham, Animal Services Administrator, 8796

Approved by: Elsa Jimenez, Director of Health, 4526

Attachment:

Report is on file with the Clerk of the Board