



County of Monterey

Item No.13

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Legistar File Number: ORD 26-005

June 09, 2026

Introduced: 5/26/2026

Current Status: Scheduled PM

Version: 1

Matter Type: Ordinance

Introduce, waive first reading, and set June 23, 2026 at 10:30 a.m. as the date and time to consider adoption of an ordinance amending Chapters 8.04 and 8.08 of the Monterey County Code to require spaying and neutering of dogs and cats, while allowing certain exceptions.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors introduce, waive first reading, and set June 23, 2026 at 10:30 a.m. as the date and time to consider adoption of an ordinance amending Chapters 8.04 and 8.08 of the Monterey County Code to require spaying and neutering of dogs and cats, while allowing certain exceptions.

SUMMARY:

Board Referral No. 2025.10 was issued by Supervisor Alejo and assigned to the Health Department on August 26, 2025. This is an update on the referral process to date and the first hearing of the attached draft mandatory spay/neuter ordinance in the unincorporated areas of Monterey County as requested by the Board of Supervisors.

DISCUSSION:

Board Referral No. 2025.10 was issued by Supervisor Alejo and assigned to the Health Department on August 26, 2025. Hitchcock Road Animal Services (HRAS) staff presented this Board Referral to the HRAS Board of Directors (the HRAS Board) on September 18, 2025, meeting. The HRAS Board briefly discussed the Referral and discussion related to having more information come back in the future. On September 30, 2025, staff presented to the County Board of Supervisors (the County Board) with intent to come back within 6-9 months.

At the November 20, 2025 meeting, staff presented the HRAS Board with information on spay/neuter ordinances in general, common industry understanding regarding the challenges that are found to impact the effectiveness of such ordinances as well as feedback from other California agencies with existing ordinances and their current 25/26 staffing and community challenges. The HRAS Board requested staff to bring this topic to the HRAS Advisory Committee for discussion and possible recommendations prior to discussing it themselves.

The HRAS Advisory Committee had this item on the January 8, 2026 regular meeting, February 12, 2026 special meeting and the March 12th regular meeting. The Advisory Committee received similar information as provided at the HRAS Board regarding. Robust public comment was received at each of these meetings including from members of the animal rescue community, City of Seaside Police Department (Chief Nick Borges and ACO Alex Kjellgren), SPCA for Monterey County (Director

Scott Delucchi), Santa Cruz Animal Services (current General Manager Amber Rowland) and SNIPbus (Owner Melanie Scherer and SNIP Board Member Lisa Sears).

At the March 12, 2026 meeting, the Advisory Committee voted 5-1 in support of a recommendation that highlighted the importance of spay/neuter but were not in support of an overall mandatory spay/neuter ordinance at this time, with noted resource concerns that influenced the recommendation. Instead, the Advisory Committee suggested other options to achieve the goals outlined in the referral. These included continuing to support opportunities for low cost spay/neuter opportunities, updating existing County ordinances related to kennels and females in heat, adding a requirement for spay/neuter for animals found roaming at large or otherwise impounded upon second incident to HRAS and to consider a community-based stray dog and cat management plan as outlined in the HRAS strategic plan.

On March 23rd, their recommendation was presented to the HRAS Board. The HRAS Board then held a special meeting on May 11th to further discuss and weigh in on the proposed ordinance drafted prior to presentation to the Board of Supervisors. The HRAS Board had brief discussion and agreed to move the draft forward as is with no other direction for staff. The HRAS Board of Directors remains available for future input as it relates to Animal Services operations should the Board of Supervisor's request it.

Attached is a draft mandatory spay/neuter ordinance provisions for dogs and cats for unincorporated Monterey County for the Board's review. This ordinance took into account the referral language: "A county spay and neuter ordinance would require most dogs and cats in unincorporated areas to be surgically sterilized, with reasonable exemptions for licensed breeders, working animals, and those with medical conditions."

Staff and legal counsel reviewed multiple ordinances throughout the state regarding best practices, including ordinances of the City of Seaside and the County of Santa Cruz. The SPCA for Monterey County provided feedback on the exemptions and the Sheriff's Department was provided with the same opportunity.

Lessons learned from the existing Rooster Keeping Ordinance were also taken into consideration, specifically, that the issuing of citations or creation of a new administrative process does not create compliance without adequate follow-up and management.

The draft ordinance:

Amendment to section 8.04.010 to insert the definitions of "spayed" and "neutered".

Amendment to section 8.08 to include "and Mandatory Spaying and Neutering".

Key provision: No person shall own, harbor or keep within the unincorporated area of the County, a dog or cat over the age of six months, which has not been spayed or neutered unless such person qualifies for an exemption.

Mandatory language used given the purpose of this ordinance to mandate owners spay/neuter their pets. Other examples use this term and "required" interchangeably.

This age was selected as a common age for requiring spay/neuter of cats and dogs. Santa Cruz requires 6 months as does the City of Seaside for dogs.

This does not include an unaltered animal certificate program. This ordinance requires compliance, a breeder/kennel permit or an exemption.

This does not include feral cats as defined in section 8.04.101. It is recommended to separately consider the adoption of a “community cat” related ordinance to address this population of animals when other ordinance updates are made.

Exemption provisions:

Dogs that have been deemed Potentially Dangerous or Vicious or dogs and cats that are repeat offenders of other title 8 sections do not qualify for an exemption.

Exemptions are included for law enforcement and search and rescue, dogs and cats certified by a veterinarian as having a health reason for not being spayed or neutered dogs and cats under current 8.12 County of Monterey permits and nonresidents or temporary visitors.

Enforcement and management:

HRAS will educate pet owners on this new ordinance and continue to provide all available resources for spay/neuter. When applicable, Animal Control Officers may issue citations. Follow up and management of this program and citations will be handled by support staff within HRAS.

Resource updates:

Staff remain concerned about the availability of resources, both internally and within the community, necessary to meet compliance standards and effectively address the issues outlined in this referral. Key challenges include the ongoing veterinary shortage that impacts our veterinary community, the rising economic pressures and housing challenges impacting residents, staffing limitations and the need for greater access to affordable and equitable spay/neuter opportunities.

This work supports the County of Monterey Health Department 2025-2028 Strategic Plan Goal(s):

Goal 4: Deepen Organizational effectiveness and support long term sustainability.

It also supports the following of the ten essential public health services, specifically:

Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/COMMITTEE ACTIONS:

The Office of County Counsel has reviewed this ordinance and has made some updates since the HRAS Board of Director review.

FINANCING:

There is no impact to the General Fund with this action at this time. Additional staffing for Field Services and related resources may be needed at a later time to address kennel/breeding permits and citation management.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS:

This ordinance seeks to improve the health of animals in the community tying in the Well-being and

Quality of life.

Mark a check next to the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Plan Goals:

☒ Well-Being and Quality of Life

☐ Sustainable Infrastructure for the Present and Future

☐ Safe and Resilient Communities

☐ Diverse and Thriving Economy

Prepared by: Cindy Burnham, Animal Services Administrator, 769-8796

Approved by: Elsa Mendoza Jimenez, Director of Health Services, 755-4526

Attachments:

Board Report

Draft Ordinance

Presentation