



County of Monterey

Item No.

Board Report

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

Legistar File Number: PAR 25-013

September 30, 2025

Introduced: 9/10/2025

Current Status: Agenda Ready

Version: 1

Matter Type: Preliminary Analysis
Report

Consider a preliminary analysis report in response to **Board Referral No. 2025.10** seeking to enact a Spay and Neuter Ordinance for cats and dogs to address pet overpopulation, euthanasia rates, and overcrowded shelters with minimal staffing.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Receive a preliminary analysis report in response to **Board Referral No. 2025.10**;
- b. Provide direction on a preferred referral processing option:
 - i. Proceed with completion of referral as outlined in preliminary report;
 - ii. Proceed with completion of referral based on modifications by Board;
 - iii. Return to Board with a more comprehensive analysis of referral and anticipated effort for completion; or
 - iv. Rescind referral.
- c. Provide further direction, as appropriate.

SUMMARY:

Board Referral No. 2025.10 was issued by Supervisor Alejo and assigned to the Health Department on August 26, 2025. This referral seeks to enact a mandatory Spay and Neuter Ordinance for dogs and cats to address concerns regarding overpopulation of unwanted pets, impacts on already overcrowded local shelters, and euthanasia rates. In the County of Monterey, the City of Seaside is the only jurisdiction with a Mandatory Spay and Neuter Ordinance requiring cats over 5 months and dogs over 6 months of age to be spayed or neutered. The City of Seaside adopted a mandatory Spay and Neuter Ordinance in November 2024, and it went into effect December 2024. There are other jurisdictions throughout California that have variations of a mandatory spay and neuter ordinance and how those ordinances have affected local populations of dogs and cats has yet to be evaluated by staff.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS:

Background:

Board Referral No. 2025.10 was assigned to the Health Department on August 26, 2025, to explore feasibility of adopting a mandatory Spay and Neuter Ordinance to reduce unwanted pet population, overcrowding in local animal shelters, and euthanasia rates. In January 2023, the County of Monterey and the City of Salinas executed a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) forming the Hitchcock Road Animal Services (HRAS) agency reporting to a JPA Board of Directors with two

representatives each from the County of Monterey and the City of Salinas. HRAS staff will present this Board Referral to the JPA Board of Directors at their meeting on September 18, 2025, seeking their direction, as efforts towards recommending a County Ordinance be adopted will impact HRAS operations.

Project Description:

HRAS staff have initially researched and explored feasibility of recommending a mandatory Spay and Neuter Ordinance. In ideal situations, mandatory ordinances may reduce pet overpopulation, decrease shelter euthanasia rates, improve public safety with fewer animals running at large, reduce risk of cancers and infections for altered animals, and over time, may result in cost savings for local municipalities. Conversely, mandatory ordinances may be difficult to enforce without adequate funding and staffing, may be challenging for lower income residents to comply with mandate if they don't have access to low-cost services, may discourage pet ownership, and may result in negative health outcomes for some breeds if sterilization is performed on much younger pets. With or without a mandatory ordinance, ensuring there is ample and consistent availability and access to low-cost services coupled with public awareness and education does positively impact pet and shelter overpopulation and reduce euthanasia rates. It is important to note that state and national organizations such as Cal Animals, ASPCA and Best Friends do not recommend mandatory spay and neuter ordinances due to lack of correlation between ordinance, ability of jurisdiction's ability to enforce, and outcomes expected.

Staff intend to review other jurisdictions' mandatory ordinances, their best practices and data, as well as challenges faces. HRAS staff will also conduct further analysis of investments needed to expand access to low-cost services and staffing levels, consult with the HRAS Advisory Committee and seek JPA Board of Directors direction prior to returning to the Board of Supervisors with an updated response to this Referral.

Estimated Project Cost:

HRAS staff need 6-9 months to further research feasibility of implementing a Mandatory Spay and Neuter Ordinance for the County of Monterey and plan to return to the Board with an update in by May 2026.

Staffing Level Estimate:

HRAS staff need 6-9 months to further research feasibility of implementing a Mandatory Spay and Neuter Ordinance for the County of Monterey and plan to return to the Board with an update in by May 2026.

Departmental Challenges:

For the public to successfully comply with a Mandatory Spay and Neuter Ordinance, there needs to be consistent access to low-cost spay and neuter services as well as ample internal departmental resources. HRAS staff need to conduct an updated assessment of availability of veterinary services in Monterey County and cost for surgeries. With the current shortage of veterinarians, the public may experience long wait times for clinic appointments and may have to travel long distances to access a clinic. Affordability may also pose a challenge for many of our residents as the average cost for a clinic visit and surgery is around \$500 per pet. Staff also need to analyze what additional staffing will be

needed for both office and field operations to ensure successful enforcement. Lastly, the HRAS JPA Board of Directors will need to take a position on whether to move a Mandatory Ordinance forward as additional resources will be needed to be made available to ensure the successful implementation of a Mandatory Ordinance.

Proposed Response Date:

HRAS staff need 6-9 months to further research feasibility of implementing a Mandatory Spay and Neuter Ordinance for the County of Monterey and plan to return to the Board with an update in by May 2026.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

The proposed project is targeted to 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.

Mark a check next to the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives

- ☐ Economic Development
- ☐ Administration
- ☒ Health & Human Services
- ☐ Infrastructure
- ☐ Public Safety

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

Attachments:

Preliminary Analysis Report

Board Referral No. # 2025.10