

A Municipal Approach
to a Self-Sustaining
Community Animal Welfare
& Enhanced License Compliance
Program



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INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE

The goal of this document is to suggest methods by which your municipality may enhance its ability to meet its legal and ethical responsibilities for the care and management of animals in your community without expending tax dollars. These suggestions will help your municipality generate funds and reduce costs, which will help sustain animal welfare programs without increasing the financial burden on taxpayers.

Additionally increased license compliance further protects the community from zoonotic diseases such as rabies. The generation of increased funds will be through higher compliance with licensing, and where necessary, fees for noncompliance with licensing requirements.

Money invested in Animal Welfare programs can reduce future costs by reducing unintended animal reproduction, increasing return-to-owner ratios and thereby reducing impound needs and animal control response demands. For a targeted discussion of managing community/feral cats, please see the document available through Sustainable Jersey entitled “A Municipal Guide to a Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate and Manage Program.”

Many of the concepts in this document have been adopted from the successful Calgary, Canada program. They have achieved a 90 percent license compliance rate for dogs and a 55 percent compliance rate for cats ¹. Calgary Animal Services are completely self-funded through license fees, adoption fees, penalties and fundraising. Calgary attributes the success of their model to a shift in focus from compliance and enforcement, to one of community engagement, education and support.

Core Components of the Calgary Model

Participation by dog and cat owners, local officials, animal related groups and animal control officers is essential.

Calgary Animal Services

- Do not have breed specific legislation
- Do not have pet limit laws
- Do provide valued services rather than simply punishing citizens into compliance
- Do ensure buy-in and cooperation among community stakeholders
- Do extensive education and PR campaigns on responsible pet ownership
- Do offer convenient licensing opportunities and modest fee differential for intact pets

There is a focus on:

- Providing information about being a responsible pet owner
- Educating the community about what behavior is required and why
- Creating laws that demonstrably support animal and community wellbeing
- Avoiding laws that do not demonstrably support animal and community well being
- Ensuring the community knows that laws are enforced and compliance expected
- Making it easy for pet owners to do the right thing

Further information about the benefits of using educational and community support approaches vs. enforcement to achieve compliance can be found in the article, “Out of Control and Into Compassion,” which focuses on Mark Kumpf, then president of the National Animal Control Association (since renamed to the National Animal Care and Control Association) in *Sheltering Magazine*, 2009. The article can be accessed at: www.animalsheltering.org/resources/magazine/jul_aug_2009/out_of_control_into_compassion.pdf

¹2011 Presentation by Calgary Animal Services “The City of Calgary Animal & ByLaw Services” provided to International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

WHY YOU NEED THIS PROGRAM

This guide will assist you in making your animal welfare program self-sustainable. Additionally, it will help the community understand issues relating to the health and welfare of animals.

BACKGROUND

There are approximately 8.9 million people in New Jersey living in 3.2 million households with 2.70 residents² per household. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) 2012 Sourcebook, 50.7 percent of New Jersey Households own pets³. On average one out of every two homes in your community has at least one pet. There are about 330 owned dogs and cats per square mile, on average, in New Jersey. Add to this the other types of pets, from fish to horses, as well as wildlife issues, marine mammal or farming activities in your area, and community cats, and the potential community response is a large responsibility. There are Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that lend a great deal of assistance, such as wildlife rehabilitators, shelters, rescues and sanctuaries among others, although these are ultimately community issues that require a community response.

When it comes to estimating “community” or feral cats, estimates vary widely. Feral cats are not socialized to humans, usually born outdoors and congregating in groups where they reproduce unchecked. According to the Humane Society of the United States, feral cats are “extremely fearful of people and not welcoming of human attention, making them unsuitable for home environments.”

New Jersey is estimated to have between about 600,000 to 1,400,000 feral cats. To estimate the number of these cats in your community, you may either divide your human population by 15 (PetSmart Charities) or by six (UC Davis). There are many factors that affect feral cat populations – retail areas & geography are two examples. Please see the Sustainable Jersey document, *A Municipal Guide to a Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate and Manage Program* (found in the Resources section of Sustainable Jersey’s

“Companion Animal Management action) for a guide to managing this issue in your community.

Does this pose an issue/challenge for each municipality? **A RESOUNDING YES!**

In New Jersey every municipality is required to have a certified animal control officer on duty 365 days per year to respond to reports of any stray dog or other animal such as cats off the property of the owner, capture it, and impound it. In addition, under N.J.S.A.4:19-15.16 any dog or other animal (e.g., cats) off the property of the owner reported to, or observed by a certified animal control officer (ACO) to be ill, injured, or creating a threat to public health, safety or welfare, or otherwise interfering with the enjoyment of property shall be impounded.

Ownership of the animal shall be traced and owners notified that the dog has been impounded. All impounded animals must be held for seven days at a licensed impoundment facility (pound) prior to adoption or euthanasia except for surrendered animals that can be transferred to a rescue organization or a foster home with seven days of impoundment. As a result of this mandate and the work of non-profit entities across the state, New Jersey has achieved recognition as a national leader in achieving low dog and cat intake and euthanasia in impound facilities and shelters.⁴ While this success should be celebrated, better funding for Animal Control and community human-animal conflicts is needed. In addition to funding shortages, New Jersey continues to face additional challenges from a growing population, wildlife and feral cat issues, increasing pet ownership trends, language barriers, natural disasters and continued residential and industrial growth, forcing native animals out of their habitat.

Animal Control funding may be achieved by licensing compliance, to the extent that Animal Control is self-sufficient and does not need to rely on funding from tax revenues. In New Jersey, all dog owners are required to have a dog license from the municipality⁵. Compliance with this requirement is estimated at 15 percent. Cat owners are not mandated by the state to have licenses but rather municipalities have the ability to have cat licensing requirements and about half of New Jersey municipalities do require licensing. Unfortunately, the

² U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts www.quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/34000.html. Accessed 5/10/14

³ American Veterinary Medical Association U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook, 2012 Edition

⁴ New Jersey’s euthanasia rate per capita is less than one-third of the national average. New Jersey’s euthanasia of dogs and cats is 3 animals per human thousand based on 2012 data from the NJ Department of Health survey while the national average is 10 animals per human thousand based on the estimate of 3,000,000 animals dogs and euthanized across the country.

⁵ NJSA 4:19-15.2. Exceptions exist only for those who qualify for and obtain a kennel license.

compliance rate is often far less than the low rate of dog licensing compliance. So, what can be done to increase licensing compliance to increase revenue to support effective community animal issue response? This guide will offer ideas and methods that have proven successful elsewhere to increase compliance.

First – Estimate the Compliance in Your Community

For your convenience, St. Hubert’s Animal Welfare Center has estimated the number of dogs and cats in every municipality in New Jersey and provided this document to Sustainable Jersey. It may be accessed at www.sustainablejersey.com/fileadmin/media/resources/AIC_documents/New_Jersey_2012_Census_and_Ownership_Stats.pdf

To calculate the figure directly:

Dog population estimate: multiply your human population by 0.156. For example, if the human population of a municipality is 10,000 residents, there are approximately 1,560 owned dogs in that municipality⁶.

Cat population estimate: multiply your human population by 0.169. For example, if the human population of a municipality is 10,000 residents, there are approximately 1,690 owned cats in that municipality⁷.

Compare your estimates to the number of licenses, being sure to add both one year and three year licenses together if your municipality offers those options.

SETTING GOALS:

Since each municipality has a unique population, the results above should be viewed as estimates, the accuracy of which is dependent on some of the unique features of your area. Nonetheless they are a valuable guide and based on Census data and the AVMA.

Dog licensing fees are up to the municipality within the parameters set by the State under NJSA 4:19-15.12. Cat licensing is not addressed in statutes. It is recommended that rather than increasing licensing fees to the maximum, e.g. \$21 per year for dogs plus other fees, that you work to increase licensing compliance through measures to attract those not in compliance (versus punish those who are). Multiply the licensing fees by the difference between the dog and cat population estimate and the number of licensed cats and dogs and that is, roughly, the additional revenue that can be accessed through increased licensing compliance. While that figure represents full compliance, which is not realistic, look at how much revenue even 50, 60, or 70 percent compliance would generate. The City of Calgary has achieved 90 percent compliance on dogs and 55 percent compliance on cats⁸. Set a multi-year goal with the following recommendations:

- Dedicating 100 percent of the revenue raised from enhanced licensing compliance to animal control and welfare programs is an investment toward reducing expenses over the long term and builds support from the community.
- Setting up a graduated fee structure for licensing which sets a pre-determined fee for the first license, with additional licenses offered at discounted rates, (or free after the fourth animal) to encourage compliance.
- Ordinances establishing cat licensing should clearly dedicate all revenue to animal welfare and animal control programs as is required for dog licensing.
- Any ordinances should be specifically written to prevent any lapsed funds generated from dog licensing to go to general funds after the three year lapse referred to in the statute.



⁶ US Census Bureau estimates 2.7 person per NJ Household in the American Community Survey, 2012 AVMA U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook. New Jersey estimates 32.4 percent of household have 1.3 dogs. One divided by 2.7 multiplied by .324 multiplied by 1.3 = .156 dogs per capita.

⁷ US Census Bureau estimates 2.7 person per NJ Household in the American Community Survey, 2012 AVMA U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook. New Jersey estimates 25.3 percent of household have 1.8 owned cats. One divided by 2.7 multiplied by .253 multiplied by 1.8 = .169 owned cats per capita.

⁸ 2011 Presentation by Calgary Animal Services “The City of Calgary Animal & ByLaw Services” provided to International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). Note: Licensing in Calgary does not require proof of rabies vaccination.

CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE JERSEY'S ANIMALS IN THE COMMUNITY ENHANCED COMPLIANCE PROGRAM

The Concept Is Very Simple

Increase the perceived value of the license: The thrust of the Calgary model is primarily that licensing revenue can be increased substantially by encouraging voluntary compliance through incentives. Calgary is a large city (population 1,082,230, according to the CY 2011 census). In 2012, Calgary raised \$5,196,000 from dog and cat licensing alone, or \$4.74 per capita. In a NJ municipality of 25,000 residents, a comparable licensing rate with comparable fees would raise \$118,500/year. Calgary's dog license fees are higher than the NJ statutory maximum, while its cat license fees are comparable to those of many NJ municipalities. Even assuming all license fees at half the amount of Calgary's, achieving a similar licensing rate could mean over \$59,000/year in licensing fees for a municipality of 25,000. Additionally, because of their fund raisers and check-off contributions, Calgary was able to raise money to provide a wide range of resources including:

- "Free Ride Home" – Licensed animals get a "Free Ride Home" if they're picked up running-at-large. The Animal Control Officers literally pick up the animal and rather than impound the animal – at real expense of manpower, care and cleaning as well as facility expense – the animal is driven home. There is no fee charged for the pick up. While this may be a revenue loss on some ends from the impound charge, the impound charge in New Jersey does not cover the real expenses associated with impounding the animal, let alone the stress on the animal and the family.
- Discount books or cards – In Calgary, the municipality worked with businesses to create a mutually beneficial program whereby people with a license could obtain a coupon book or card that provides discounts at designed businesses, including veterinarians, pet supply stores, hotels, restaurants, home & garden, entertainment, automotive and personal care vendors. A dedicated website was created for the "I Heart My Pet" program and may be accessed at www.iheartmypet.ca. This site can be considered a model for your use.
- Your municipality could develop local coupon books that could be given to pet owners that purchase a license.

Remove Barriers to Licensing

- Eliminate pet limit laws if you have them in place. Limit laws are viewed as arbitrary by the community and there is no evidence to support that pet limits impact animal cruelty or hoarding. Rather, they drive residents underground and create tension with the municipality. Zoning, cruelty and health codes all address problem properties. This is discussed further later in this document.
- Getting to town hall Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm does not work for many pet owners. Having to photocopy licenses and mail forms to the town creates a nuisance and obstacle to compliance. The Calgary licensing system is not based on rabies vaccination, but because New Jersey requires licensing for dogs, efforts to increase your compliance must facilitate the ease of accessing a vaccine, such as rabies clinics, and providing verification as well.
- Add venues where people may license their pets, as well as the ability to apply for licenses online. This is a critical component of increasing licensing. Veterinarians should be requested to inform their clients of the requirement and advantages of licensing their pet, and to have registration forms available to give to them.
- To start the program, create a onetime Pet License Amnesty Month where pet owners can license their pets without fear of penalties, late fees or summonses. This has proven successful in the Calgary program.
- Hold weekend and evening licensing events. Your local shelter or rescue may be willing to provide free manpower, especially if the revenue is used to fund animal welfare programs in the community, especially spay & neuter.
- Institute a graduated scale of licensing fees to encourage owners to license all animals in their home. While license fees for dogs must still include the statutory fees, establishing fees for licensing of multiple cats is easier. Such fee scales could range from 50 percent of the fee for the second cat and 25 percent for the third, or cap the fee at three or four cats and provide licenses to additional household cats without charge for cats or for the minimum statutory fee for dogs. If this is done, it is recommended that the lower fees for

additional animals be offered only for neutered animals, to encourage neutering. Some communities in NJ use special single fee cattery licenses for individuals who have larger number of cats, often specifying six or more.

- For continuing compliance, offer auto-renew, e-mail notifications and convenient methods to make the process easier, faster, and less expensive for owners. Remind people in water bills, newspaper ads and other venues to renew licenses and repeat the message.
- In towns where there is a cat licensing requirement, micro chipping can be accepted as an alternative means of identification to collars and tags, if the chips are registered and the numbers provided on the license applications.
- Another method of raising revenues for animal welfare programs is to place a check box on the license application asking pet owners to donate funds in addition to the licensing fee.

Increase fines for non-compliance: While the Calgary model is mostly about education and incentives, it carries a big stick, too. Failure to license a pet can result in \$250 fines⁹. Reporting inaccurate statements on the license application – such as falsely reporting spay and neuter status – is up to a \$500 fine. As the Calgary model relies on self-reporting on the application, the fine is intended to be a backstop for honest responses.

In addition to these recommendations directly related to increasing licensing compliance, Calgary embarked on an educational campaign on animal welfare issues to work to reduce human-animal conflicts in the first place.

We have provided a Community Animal Welfare Education Press Release kit as part of Sustainable Jersey's Animals in the Community Education action under the Resources section (www.sustainablejersey.com). These press releases may be modified for your community and used to educate your residents on a variety of subjects, including:

- Benefits of pet registration and licensing
- Why spay or neuter my pet?
- Training your dog to be a good citizen and family member
- Dangerous substances in the home
- Your pet feels cold too-protecting your pet from cold
- Pet safety in hot weather

- How do I choose a family pet?
- How to avoid puppy mills
- Common myths about cats
- Children and animals
- Winter holiday tips for pet owners and others
- Nutrition for your pet
- Becoming a seeing eye dog family
- Your annual rabies clinic

We recommend that you release one press release each month to your local newspapers. In addition to the direct good that comes from having the animals treated properly, proper understanding of such issues as leaving your pet in the car during a hot summer day will lead to fewer incidents of your animal control or police having to respond these types of calls.

Also included in this package are some materials addressing the advantages of having a pet licensed. These materials may be distributed to schools, libraries, veterinary offices, and pet supply stores in your community. Some of the materials may be left at homes during the completion of the census. One of the educational pieces emphasizes safety of the owner's pets, talking about a license as a free ride home if for any reason their pet becomes lost.

How to Canvass

An Animal Census should be an ongoing process for the municipality. Animal Control officers and volunteers should be engaged in conducting the census on a regular basis. Edison found it helpful to hire college students to assist in the census and their salaries were offset by additional revenue generation. The responsibility to conduct a census lies with the municipality and each town can designate an official to conduct and organize it. Towns that have shared services agreements can include this requirement in those agreements. When an animal is noted to be on the premises and there is no record of its registration, a compliance letter should be sent explaining all of the advantages of voluntary compliance, but also noting the potential fines involved in noncompliance. There will, unfortunately, be occasions where you may have to take an individual to court to force compliance. Those fees generated will further assist in your animal welfare program. After studying the impact of court fines

⁹ Calgary Licensing website, 2014. www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Documents/Animal-Services/Licensing-a-cat-or-dog/animal_licence_form.pdf Accessed July 19

and the cost of licensing, the City of Calgary, Canada, increased its fines for failure to license. The “tipping point” is the amount of the fines, i.e. the dollar number at which residents became unwilling to take the chance of noncompliance and the fees were raised to that amount.

By collecting license fees and investing them back into your community, your municipality will be able

to improve services to animal owners and to the community in general. In addition, an undue financial burden will not fall upon the general taxpayer. In Calgary, the efforts led to 95 percent voluntary compliance and 5 percent enforcement.

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO FACILITATE REGISTRATION AND RAISE FUNDS

Special Notes to Encourage Compliance

In municipalities in NJ, colony licenses may require the micro chipping of feral cats which can serve to both identify them and determine their vaccination status.

Repeal Any Pet Limit Law: As previously mentioned, one recommendation that would facilitate the success of this model would be to repeal any pet limit ordinance that exists. Pet limit ordinances have been determined to be unconstitutional in Minnesota and Pennsylvania. Beyond this, however, they discourage licensing and the generation of revenues, by making residents with multiple pets fearful of reporting their animals to the municipality. Some municipal officials want pet limit ordinances because they believe they will prevent hoarding cases. However, hoarders have a mental illness and often disregard all laws regarding animals, from licensing to sanitary code provisions to abuse and neglect statutes. Pet limit laws do not prevent hoarders from keeping large numbers of animals in bad conditions, but they do discourage residents who responsibly care for multiple animals from reporting those animals to the municipality and paying licensing fees. They are therefore counterproductive.

Many of these concepts have proved successful in Calgary Canada and can be easily adopted by New Jersey municipalities. In Calgary, the outcome of these measures was that the number of stray dogs and cats entering the shelters was reduced, because ACOs now were able to return more animals to their owners. This had a two-fold effect. With a reduction in animals filling up cages, the shelter could focus more on community out-reach programs, quality re-homing of those animals that still were impounded, and achieve a major reduction in the euthanasia rate. In addition, ACOs could spend more time addressing nuisance and neglect

cases, and become more community based in their approach. In Calgary, the result was that public opinion became positive towards Animal Control and Animal Control officers became viewed as true public servants.

Exempt Feral Cats from Individual Licensing and Consider Establishing Colony Licenses

Individual licensing was devised for pet animals, not for feral cats that are cared for by volunteers or nonprofits, and is incompatible with managing feral cat populations. Calgary found, in the development of its successful model, that it was necessary to explicitly exempt feral cats from individual licensing in order for the community to accept cat licensing and for individuals feeding feral cats to come forward and cooperate with getting them neutered and vaccinated through a TNVM program. Colony caregivers, helping with TNVM programs often find it difficult to individually license each cat in a colony on an annual basis. There are alternative methods of tracking vaccinations of cats in colonies managed through TNVM, including but not limited to colony registration through a colony license which establishes requirements for the care of the animals and safety of the community as well establishing record keeping requirements. These colony licenses should have no fee or a minimum fee. For additional methods of addressing the control of feral cats in your community please refer to “A Municipal Approach to a Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate and Manage Program” (found in the Resources section of Sustainable Jersey’s Companion Animal Management action – www.sustainablejersey.com/actions).

Raise Additional Revenues

Another way to increase revenues through licensing is to include a voluntary donation line on the license

applications. If your municipality will be spending licensing revenue on animal welfare programs intended to save homeless animals, you can advertise this fact and solicit donations on license applications. Maricopa County, Arizona, found that, once they did this, most residents rounded up their license fees to the nearest \$10 increment, and the county now raises an additional \$30,000 every month.

Evaluating Success

The most obvious indicator of success is monitoring the number of registrations. Other indicators would be the Rate of Return-To-Owners, euthanasia numbers, lost and found reports and the number of animal related complaints.

Additional Potential Programs

Additional programs that could be considered in a comprehensive approach to addressing animal concerns and municipal costs are pet retention programs, coordinating with rescues to take animals after the seven day hold period; establishing lost and found protocols that will coordinate with surrounding municipalities, shelters and rescue groups. Fundraising projects can also be popular and successful ways to also raise needed funds.

Below you will find a sample municipal handout for the Free Ride Home flyer.

Protect Your Pet



Free
Ride
Home

Assure your pet's safety and your piece of mind by licensing your pet. Animal control will know who to contact to transport your pet home.

License your pet by calling _____

or contact [www._____](http://www._____.)

Paste your municipal emblem
and address here



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