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From the Los Angeles Times

L.A. is set to require pet sterilization

City Council gives its initial OK to mandate the spaying or neutering of dogs and cats that are 4 months or older.

By Carla Hall
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The Los Angeles City Council voted 10 to 1 Friday to approve mandatory sterilization of most dogs and cats at the age of 4 months or older, and city officials pledged low-key enforcement driven by complaints. The ordinance must get a second reading in a week, but it is expected to pass.

The measure, initiated by Councilman Richard Alarcon, offers exemptions for animals of licensed breeders, show animals and service animals.

Veterinarians who believe that sterilizing certain dogs and cats is too risky, or that four months is too young an age, can provide a letter to get the animals exempted.

The council decision Friday was greeted by cheers and a standing ovation from about 100 supporters, most wearing bright yellow stick-on badges proclaiming their position.

Proponents as well as dozens of critics filled the Van Nuys City Hall room where the council met Friday. Those in favor of mandatory sterilization and those against the measure spoke passionately and staked their positions on their concerns for healthy dogs and cats.

"The bottom line . . . is that all of you are here to save animals' lives," said Councilwoman Wendy Greuel.

In the end, only Councilman Bill Rosendahl voted against the measure. He said the proposal made sense for cats because "there are a lot of cats running around neighborhoods," but it did not for dogs, which he said sometimes need more time to mature.

Rosendahl said the Los Angeles Animal Services department should focus first on licensing more dogs. (At most, 20% of the city's dogs are estimated to be licensed.)

He lambasted Animal Services General Manager Ed Boks for not concentrating on getting more officers out into the city to register dogs. Rosendahl's remarks prompted Boks to reply, "He's upset we're not banging on doors to get animals licensed, but he doesn't want us banging on doors to check if animals are neutered."

Among those testifying in favor of the measure was former game show host Bob Barker, whose private foundation has donated millions of dollars for spay and neuter services. "Mandatory spay-neuter is a necessity," Barker said. "For decades, I closed every 'Price Is Right' urging viewers to have their pets spayed. . . . I'd like to think all of us working together would be enough. But it's not enough. We need legislation."

Assemblyman Lloyd Levine (D-Van Nuys), the author of a similar state bill, told the council that half a million dogs and cats are euthanized in California shelters each year, a figure that proponents of mandatory sterilization believe would be reduced if pet owners were forced to alter their animals.

Some said they wanted more time to judge their dog's personality before deciding whether to breed the animal either for show or service. They contend that the law would not stop irresponsible pet owners.

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