

Animal Care and Control Budget Priorities Fact Sheet

The health and well-being of unwanted animals in King County is a budget priority. The Executive's 2008 budget priorities seek to add \$1.037 million in new resources for Animal Care and Control. Recent Council policy (Ordinance 15801) establishes a maximum euthanasia rate of 20 percent for 2008 - nearly a 50 percent reduction from the current rate of 38 percent. As a result, an estimated 2,000 more animals will require greater health care, longer shelter stays and ultimately, placement into permanent homes.

The Executive proposes a multi-tiered approach that will require new resources, increased community participation, value-added services and greater pet owner accountability.

Capital investments & improvements:

- Status quo at the Crossroads shelter is not an option. Invest resources from Crossroads in the Kent shelter and close the eastside shelter. Establish a public/private partnership to handle strays and for adoption opportunities to meet customer needs in east King County.
- \$180,614 in funding for the development of an Animal Care and Control Facilities Master Plan that addresses recommendations made by the Citizens' Advisory Committee, Animal Control staff, and other experts in animal care and building design. The plan will include a long term solution for the Animal Shelter facility in Kent.
- \$500,000 added to an existing maintenance project that will provide immediate benefit to the health and well-being of the animals until a long term facility solution is implemented, and include:
 - An upgraded heating, ventilation and air conditioning system (HVAC)
 - Separate isolation areas for sick cats and dogs
 - Separation of cats and dogs within the main shelter
 - Remodel of the front counter to minimize contact between incoming and outgoing pets
 - Repairs to the flooring, doors, drains, etc.

Increase compliance with pet license requirements

Responsible pet owners license their pets and the license revenues offset the cost of animal care and control in King County. Unlicensed pets are harder to return to their owners, and often end up in the shelter. Each pet entering the shelter costs an average of \$200 to support.

- The Executive's proposed budget seeks to establish a "zero tolerance" policy with regard to unlicensed pets. It is time to hold owners of unlicensed pets accountable for failing to follow the law and license their pets.
- Establish a \$125 fine for owners of unlicensed pets similar to the City of Seattle's program. An estimated 70 percent (328,000) pets in King County are unlicensed (based on number of households). Controlling intake and reducing the number of animals entering the shelter by more successfully reuniting pets with their owners is an effective strategy for reducing euthanasia.
- Implementation of the zero tolerance policy will be preceded by an amnesty period to allow pet owners of unlicensed pets the chance to license without the threat of a fine.

- Resources to launch an aggressive public education campaign to announce the policy change, explain the amnesty period, and the benefits of licensing.
- In its third year of using a \$125 fine for enforcement, the City of Seattle policy has resulted in \$250,000 more in pet license sales and approximately \$125,000 in new revenue from fines.

Invest \$150,000 in pet health care, well-being, and staffing

Reducing euthanasia rates will result in an increase in the number of pets at the Kent shelter. Longer durations at the shelter require additional basic resources during peak seasonal demand.

- The Executive's proposed budget seeks to fund extra help for shelter support during peak seasons like the spring and summer.
- Increased funding for medications to prevent and treat disease among shelter animals.
- Increased funding for pet food.

Expanded volunteer/foster care program

To care and shelter 2,000 more animals next year, a task King County government cannot bear alone, coordination and management of expanded volunteer and foster care programs is essential.

- The Executive's proposed budget seeks to expand current efforts, by hiring a part-time volunteer/foster care program coordinator using existing resources. In the past several years, a strong volunteer program has proven to be a valuable and mission critical part of operating the shelter. Such a program would not be possible without the cooperation and support of the employees that operate the shelter on a day to day basis, the Animal Control Officer's Guild that represents shelter staff, agency management, and of course the desire of citizens to volunteer.

Enhance Animal Control services with four additional FTEs (\$206,772)

King County Animal Care and Control launched a pilot program in 2007 to provide additional services to contract municipalities. Many municipalities have expressed an interest in contracting for enhanced services which include park patrol, school grounds patrol, off leash violations, and barking dog complaints.

- The Executive's proposed budget seeks to add four Animal Control Officers supported by contract revenues for enhanced animal control services.