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Report to the Board of Animal Services Commissioners

Brenda Barnette, General Manager

COMMISSION MEETING DATE: June 25, 2013

PREPARED BY: Brenda Barnette,
General Manager

REPORT DATE: June 23, 2013

SUBJECT: SPAYING DOGS IN LATE TERM PREGNANCY

BOARD ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

Make dogs in late term pregnancy available to New Hope partners as Department fosters or to Department foster volunteers if fosters are available.

BACKGROUND:

The Department of Animal Services spays pregnant dogs regardless of where they are in their gestation. This practice seemed to develop from a belief that it is better to prevent any animal births at all to reduce the number of dogs in Los Angeles.

DISCUSSION:

The spaying of late term pregnant dogs results in puppies being born by the equivalent of a C-section. They are able to survive on their own, but these puppies are immediately put to death in our shelters.

Some agencies restrict spaying pregnant dogs to those who have not reached the third trimester¹. Sterilization of pregnant dogs during the third trimester can create additional surgical risks for the dog. Some organizations do not believe it is humane to put puppies that are capable of surviving to death rather than allowing them to live.

¹ A dog's gestation cycle (pregnancy) lasts from 60 to 64 days. The third trimester begins around week seven (42 days) and is how we define late term pregnancy.

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SPAYING DOGS IN LATE TERM PREGNANCY

June 25, 2013

The Department has a growing foster volunteer program. Some of our New Hope partners have requested pregnant dogs and have been turned down until after the dog is spayed. The City of Los Angeles has an ordinance preventing pet stores from buying and re-selling mill-bred animals. The pet stores are expected to get their dog and cat “inventory” from shelters and rescues. The Department has been asked to develop a business friendly relationship with local pet shops so they can obtain good pets from City shelters for their customers.

RECOMMENDATION:

To balance the need to spay all dogs in late term gestation, while humanely addressing the live puppies that result from late-term spaying and safeguarding the mother dogs’ health, the Department recommends:

1. Prohibit third trimester spaying if a foster is available². Dogs in late term gestation would be allowed to give birth in the shelter and/or placed in a foster home to give birth if an experienced foster is available. The mother dog would be returned to the shelter when the pups are weaned at six weeks old and her litter would be returned to the shelter at eight weeks for spay/neuter surgeries. These puppies will not be available to New Hope partners and rescues. These puppies could provide dogs for pet stores or they could be adopted from one of our six City shelters.
2. New Hope partners could also serve as foster volunteers for the Department for the pregnant mother, and subsequent litter. The dog and the puppies would be owned by the Department. If the New Hope partner chooses, they can return them to the shelter for spay/neuter surgery and then adopt them for the regular fees. The New Hope partner can have the dog and the puppies altered and after the Department receives proof that all have been spayed and neutered, they can be transferred to the New Hope Partner at no additional charge.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Fostering puppies until they are eight weeks old, and returning them to Animal Services to be adopted out, represents additional revenue opportunities through adoptions to the public or through pet shops. However, at this time, it is too early to determine what this potential revenue could be.

Approved:

Brenda Barnette, General Manager

² Third trimester or late term pregnancy would be determined by a veterinarian through a physical examination or radiograph as determined by the veterinarian.

SPAYING DOGS IN LATE TERM PREGNANCY
June 25, 2013

BOARD ACTION:

_____ Passed

Disapproved _____

_____ Passed with noted modifications

Continued _____

_____ Tabled

New Date _____