

## **Augusta/Richmond County, GA—Mandatory Spay/Neuter Vote TUESDAY (10/21/14)**

*October 17, 2014*

Dear Legislative Liaisons, Club Officers, Judges, and Dog Owners,

Please forward this message to concerned animal owners in Augusta/Richmond County, Georgia.

The Augusta/Richmond County Commission is scheduled to vote on mandatory spay/neuter and other problematic [amendments to the animal services ordinance](#) at its next meeting on Tuesday, October 21, 2014. **Concerned animal owners are urged to immediately contact Commission members and respectfully ask them to VOTE NO on the proposed animal control ordinance.** (See contact information, below.)

Provisions of concern include, but are not limited to:

**Mandatory surgical sterilization would be required for dogs and cats** six months and older unless the owner holds an unaltered animal permit. Certain dogs would be exempt, including “registered” service dogs, “actively competitive” show or hunting dogs, and dogs with serious health conditions. Advanced age would *not* be considered an exempted health condition. Intact dogs no longer actively competing would *not* be exempt from permitting. Permit holders would be required to comply with all requirements (please note the “adequate space” requirements, below) and make the permit available for inspection at all times. The permit could be revoked without due process of law upon “receipt of information” of any violation of the animal control ordinance. Hearings regarding revocation would be conducted by a hearing officer designated by the Board of Commissioners and not before a court of law.

**A definition of “adequate space” would require 100 square feet of space per dog.** As written, it would be a violation to enclose a dog in a crate for house training; to confine a dog in a bedroom or kitchen that is less than 100 square feet; or to house a dog in a standard kennel run of less than 100 square feet, even if the dog is provided regular access to a larger exercise area, leash walking, or play time in a dog park.

**Broadly written requirements for “necessary veterinary care” could make it a violation if an owner does not provide veterinary treatment to an animal that shows signs of a very minor illness or that is *suspected* to have suffered an injury.** This provision would require a greater level of health care for animals than is required for children.

**Keeping a diseased or “crippled” animal could be a violation.** The Animal Services Department would be empowered to impound and destroy animals believed to suffer from a “dangerous disease” or “incurable painfully crippling condition” with no notification to the owner. Animals under “active veterinary care” would be exempted; however, what would qualify as “active veterinary care” is not defined. Further, an animal owner would not have the opportunity provide proof of veterinary care for an animal that was seized and immediately destroyed without notice.

**Overly broad definitions of “harbor,” “own,” and “owner” could hold operators of boarding kennels, grooming shops, veterinarians, and training facilities liable as the “owners” of animals in their care.** Of concern to co-owners, the definition of “owner” states, “If any animal has more than one owner, any one of such owners may be prosecuted for violations whether or not any other owners are also prosecuted.”

**Unclear and potentially conflicting** definitions of “an animal running at large” and “running at large or straying” that could prohibit an animal owner from allowing a dog to be off-leash on the fenced property of a friend or neighbor or during training.

**Better solutions are available.** Rather than mandating spay/neuter of pets and imposing other intrusive and costly requirements on responsible dog owners, lawmakers should instead focus on increased

enforcement of existing leash laws, animal cruelty laws, and anti-dog fighting laws. Strict enforcement of fair and reasonable laws will better serve the community by preventing irresponsible owners from allowing their pets to run loose (which can lead to accidental breeding), punishing dog fighters, and protecting the health and welfare of citizens and their pets.

**What you can do:**

- Contact Commission members and respectfully ask them to VOTE NO on the proposed animal services ordinance.
- Attend the Commission meeting and express your opposition to the proposed ordinance. Please contact the Clerk of Commission at (706) 821-1820 for information about speaking at the meeting.

**Next Commission Meeting:**

October 21, 2014

2:00 p.m.

530 Greene Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Augusta, GA 30901

Meeting agenda information can be found online at <http://www.augustaga.gov/530/Agenda-Books> (click "Agree" to advance to agenda page) or by contacting the Clerk of Commission's office at (706) 821-1820

**Resources:**

[Mandatory Spay-Neuter Issue Brief](#)

[Issue Analysis: \*Why Mandatory Spay/Neuter Laws are Ineffective\*](#)

[Issue Analysis: \*The Value of Responsible Dog Breeders\*](#)

**Contact Information:**

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For questions, please contact AKC Government Relations at (919) 816-3720 or [doglaw@akc.org](mailto:doglaw@akc.org).