

**MOORPARK CITY COUNCIL  
AGENDA REPORT**

**TO:** Honorable City Council

**FROM:** Dave Klotzle, City Engineer/Public Works Director   
Prepared by: John Brand, Senior Management Analyst 

**DATE:** September 11, 2014 (CC Meeting of 09/17/2014)

**SUBJECT:** Consider Authorizing Ventura County Animal Services to Utilize Administrative Citations to Enforce Title 6 of the Moorpark Municipal Code (Animals) to Support the Animal Services in the City

**BACKGROUND**

Ventura County Animal Services (VCAS), through a contract with the City of Moorpark administers and enforces certain aspects the City's animal related Municipal Code sections and provides sheltering services for domestic animals. In 2006 the City of Moorpark established a program of administrative citations to encourage compliance with the provisions of the code. In 2009 the County of Ventura amended its Code of Ordinances to allow for the issuance of administrative citations for Animal Code violations such as leash law and licensing. Staff is requesting the City Council's authorization for VCAS to begin to utilize its administrative citations to assist in the continued enforcement of the City's animal related Municipal Code sections.

**DISCUSSION**

In March, 2014 newly appointed VCAS Director Tara Diller authorized an upgrade to the computer software that VCAS uses for animal shelter information management. Included in the upgrade for the licensing and finance and software modules was the capability for administrative citations to be generated automatically along with the fourth notice of a delinquent license. VCAS has requested authorization to utilize its new automated administrative citation process in the City of Moorpark to assist in its ongoing enforcement efforts. The City and VCAS focus on voluntary compliance and continuously communicate with dog owners to try to obtain compliance during license delinquency periods or after the initial notification for the need to license or vaccinate a dog. The City uses administrative citations to increase compliance with health and safety violations in the areas of licensing, rabies vaccination, and leash law.

If approved, beginning in October, 2014 VCAS will institute an innovative approach to pet license enforcement through the use of a new automated delinquent animal license citation program. The automated citation program is designed to ensure that owners keep their pet ownership information up-to-date, pay their pet license fees on time and comply with the state and local laws pertaining to pet ownership and rabies certification. Applying to pet owners who have not responded to three mailed license renewal notices, the automated citation program will issue a fourth notice that includes a fine. VCAS will match the City's bail schedule for the fines.

The civil penalty for failure to comply is \$100 for the first offense, \$200 for the second offense, and \$500 for subsequent violations. Each violation also includes a \$25 administrative fee to offset the cost of processing the violation. VCAS will administer citations from the beginning to end including appeals, administrative hearings, and special hardship provisions. VCAS will utilize the administrative citations as another tool in its current automated license notification process, as needed. Without the ability to issue administrative citations, current license enforcement relies primarily on voluntary compliance, which hinders VCAS' and the City's ability to address egregious or habitual violators.

Gaining compliance from delinquent pet owners can be a cumbersome and very time consuming process. In FY 2013-14 there were 86 City administrative citations issued for animal code violations: 67 for failure to license; 9 for dog at large; 6 for leash law violations; 2 for animal noise; and 2 for failure to comply with Nuisance hearing Findings and Orders. In addition to greater efficiency and saving City staff time, it is estimated that the additional enforcement tool could extend the City's license compliance to additional households and could yield additional annual licensing revenues that may reduce the General Fund subsidy of the animal compliance program.

Violations related to licensing, rabies vaccinations, and leash law increase the incidents of strays, unclaimed animals at the shelters, and possible rabies exposure, which impacts public health and safety and leads to increased costs to the City. The VCAS automated citation process is consistent with the goal of increasing public health and safety and decreasing the City's animal services administration and enforcement costs.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Authorize Ventura County Animal Services to utilize administrative citations to assist in the continued enforcement of the City's animal related Municipal Code sections.