



# San Bernardino County

## Legislation Text

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**File #: 10471, Agenda Item #: 68**

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**REPORT/RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
OF SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY  
AND RECORD OF ACTION**

**July 9, 2024**

**FROM**

**JOSHUA DUGAS, Director, Department of Public Health**

**SUBJECT**

Adoption of an Ordinance Relating to Changes to Existing Laws Necessary to Implement a Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return Program

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Adopt ordinance relating to existing laws concerning control, impoundment, and abandonment of cats necessary to implement a Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return program, which was introduced on June 25, 2024, Item No. 148.

(Presenter: Joshua Dugas, Director, 387-9146)

**COUNTY AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

**Provide for the Safety, Health and Social Service Needs of County Residents.**

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Approval of this item will not result in the use of Discretionary General Funding (Net County Cost). The update to the ordinance will allow the Department of Public Health (DPH) to operate a Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return program, also known as the Community Cat Program. The Community Cat Program will allow residents to trap, spay/neuter, vaccinate and return to the community, cats living in the unincorporated areas of the county without violation of County laws regarding abandonment and control of animals as currently written. The update to the ordinance is non-financial in nature. Contracts associated with Community Cat Program services will be brought to the Board of Supervisors (Board) separately.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The DPH Animal Care Division provides animal care services for residents in the unincorporated areas throughout San Bernardino County. DPH is working to implement widespread initiatives to enhance services through robust outreach and education, spay and neuter vouchers to residents, a kitten foster program, and a Community Cat Program. These new and enhanced initiatives are expected to be fully operational in the fall of 2024. In order to provide sterilization and vaccination care to community cats, DPH introduced an update to the San Bernardino County Code at the Board meeting on June 25, 2024 (Item No. 148).

Revisions to the San Bernardino County Code are necessary due to the ambiguity of the current code. Currently, an individual or rescue group that returns a community cat to the outside area where it was originally collected, would be in violation of the County's laws concerning control and abandonment of animals.

Community cats are described as free-roaming cats who may be cared for by residents of the immediate area. They consist of a mixture of feral cats, semi-socialized cats, and occasionally abandoned pets. In a community cat colony, one unspayed female cat can have approximately three litters of kittens each year. When these cats are spayed/neutered and vaccinated, it improves their health by reducing unwanted litters, fighting, and the incidence of disease.

The Community Cat Program works to reduce the incidence of healthy community cats being euthanized at County shelters, which is a key component of the initiative. Once spayed or neutered and vaccinated, the cat will be identifiable by an ear notch indicating that they can no longer reproduce and have been vaccinated. Community members will make an appointment, at no cost, with a DPH veterinary contractor, mobile unit, or obtain a spay/neuter voucher, to have the healthy community cat sterilized and vaccinated, then return it to its outdoor home. This would not eliminate DPH's ability to pick up cats or kittens creating a health and safety concern, or on the rare occasion for nuisance reasons.

With the adopted change to the County Code, a resident who returns a community cat to the outside area from where it was collected, following treatment in the Community Cat Program, will not have violated the County's laws concerning control and abandonment of animals. These updates will allow community cats to be sterilized and vaccinated without being transported and kept in a County shelter. Implementation of the Community Cat Program will improve the health and well-being of cats throughout the region, and reduce the need for shelter resources, allowing DPH to care for more sick and injured animals.

On June 25, 2024 (Item No. 148), the Board found the ordinance is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because it can be determined with certainty that the adopted ordinances will not have a significant effect on the environment.

**PROCUREMENT**

Not applicable.

**REVIEW BY OTHERS**

This item has been reviewed by County Counsel (Daniel Pasek, Deputy County Counsel, 387-5455) on May 31, 2024; Finance (Carl Lofton, Administrative Analyst, 387-5404) on June 19, 2024; and County Finance and Administration (Robert Saldana, Deputy Executive Officer, 387-5423) on June 21, 2024.