



Residents' Input Sought on Animal Ordinance Concepts

In 2008, city police officers were forced to use their weapons to subdue an aggressive animal 27 times.

Between 2006 and 2008, more than 3,300 reports of bites by an aggressive animal were reported.

Those are significant numbers and represent the significant potential risk to the public from stray aggressive animals.

Concepts recently presented by the city's Code Compliance staff aim to be proactive in addressing the growing number of stray animals - particularly large, aggressive dogs - in the city.

New approaches could include:

- adding an "aggressive dog" designation defining animal behavior that will trigger mandated enhanced safeguards, preventive measures and penalties
- establishing minimum pen sizes for dogs
- establishing variable fencing enclosure requirements based on the height and weight of animals, with required maintenance and self-locking gates
- giving Animal Control officers authority to seize animals tethered or chained
- requiring all dogs and/or cats to be spayed or neutered unless they have a valid intact-pet permit
- requiring microchips for all pets unless a medical waiver is granted by a veterinarian
- restricting relocation to Fort Worth of any "dangerous dogs" from other communities.

Changes to the fines and fees schedule could include:

- making available a new three-year microchip pet license (with a three-year rabies vaccination)
- making available a provisional license, offered by Animal Control field officers
- making available a late license fee for unlicensed animals claimed at the Animal Care and Control Center
- adding an annual intact-pet permit fee
- adding an annual aggressive dog registration fee
- increasing the cost of fines for dangerous dogs and unrestrained dogs.

As well, Animal Control is using a new, nonlethal net gun which, when fired, deploys a net that entangles aggressive loose animals, making them easier to capture, and is considering re-implementing the use of dart guns in extreme cases.

The public can offer input on the concepts during a series of open meetings:

6-9 p.m. Thursday, May 14 - Fort Worth Botanic Garden, Dorothea Leonhardt Lecture Hall, 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd.

6-9 p.m. Tuesday, May 19 - Travis Avenue Baptist Church, 3028 Lipscomb St.

6-9 p.m. Thursday, May 28 - Meadowbrook United Methodist Church, Community Life Center, 3900 Meadowbrook Drive

6-9 p.m. Thursday, June 4 - Goodwill Industries, Community Garden Room, 4005 Campus Drive

9 a.m.-noon Saturday, June 6 - Fort Worth Botanic Garden, Dorothea Leonhardt Lecture Hall, 3220 Botanic Garden Blvd.

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