

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: July 25, 2018

TO: Honorable Members of the Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso *Sharon M. Tso* Council File No: 18-0130
Chief Legislative Analyst Assignment No: 18-07-0673

SUBJECT: Found dogs and cats.

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Request the City Attorney to draft an ordinance amending the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) to allow private citizens to provide home care for a found dog or cat that is not wearing a license tag for up to 30 days as set forth by the policy approved by the Board of Animal Services Commissioners on September 26, 2017.

SUMMARY

On June 20, 2018, the Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee requested a report on the feasibility of amending the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) to allow private citizens to provide home care for a found dog or cat that is not wearing a license tag for up to 30 days.

On September 26, 2017, the Board of Animal Services Commissioners approved a policy change that would create a mechanism for private citizens to provide shelter for and take care of found dogs and cats, upon notifying the Department of Animal Services (DAS) of the animals. This policy change would:

- Give lost animals home care, and medical care if appropriate.
- Keep animals out of the shelter; allow DAS to work with residents who are concerned or refuse to turn animals in to the shelter for fear the animal will not be claimed or placed.
- Expand the Department's foster program and increase community involvement in helping find animals' owners, and meanwhile, allowing animals to be held in less stressful environments.

In order to implement this policy change, the LAMC needs to be amended.

BACKGROUND

LAMC Section 53.09 states that after finding an animal on the loose, a person must, within four hours or within two hours thereafter if the animal is attached or hitched to a vehicle, give notice to DAS or a police officer, that they have such animal in their possession, and provide a description of the animal, where it was found, and where it is confined. If requested to do so by the Department, the finder shall surrender such animal to the General Manager or their duly authorized representative upon demand.

Therefore, a new ordinance would be required to effectuate the policy changes approved by the Board of Animal Services Commissioners on September 26, 2017. The policy changes set forth the following conditions that a community member must agree to before providing temporary home care for a found dog or cat:

1. To notify the closest City Animal Shelter after finding an animal within four hours or within two hours thereafter if the animal is attached or hitched to a vehicle, that they have such animal in their

possession, and provide a description of the animal including weight, where they found and where they have confined the animal.

2. To provide a picture (2 poses preferred) of the animal to the shelter for posting within 4 hours. The picture will be posted on the LAAS website with the description and will indicate that the pet is being temporarily sheltered in a home waiting to find the owner and to call the shelter if you believe this is your pet to arrange a meeting at a shelter to see the pet.
3. To go to a veterinarian or one of the six City animal shelters and have the animal weighed and scanned for a microchip within 4 hours.
4. To be willing to be a Good Samaritan and make sure that any medical needs are taken care of at their own expense understanding that a refund can be requested from the owner if the owner is located.
5. To make and distribute posters with the pet's picture and their contact information in the area where the animal was found within 4 hours of finding the pet.
6. After 30 days, the person providing home care must either decide to keep the animal and get it vaccinated, altered and licensed (dog) OR they must surrender the animal to one of our six LA City animal shelters.
7. Finder must agree to keep the animal at the location provided for the full 30 days and any changes must be filed with LAAS City shelter.
8. If the animal is lost or stolen, it must be reported to the LAAS immediately.
9. If requested to do so by the Department, the finder shall surrender such animal to the General Manager or their duly authorized representative upon demand.
10. If the found animal has any medical needs, the finder must obtain veterinary care at their own expense, and a record verifying that an injured animal received treatment immediately by a licensed veterinarian must be submitted to the LAAS Chief Veterinarian within 24 hours at the shelter, along with the diagnosis, type of treatment, and prognosis by the vet. If the owner is located, the owner can be expected to reimburse the finder for any medical expenses incurred on behalf of the animal.
11. After 30 days but before 32 days, they either decide to keep the animal and get it vaccinated, altered and licensed or they surrender the animal to one of the six City animal shelters.
12. If finder returns animal to owner in their neighborhood, they must immediately notify LAAS and provide the name and address of the owner.

Additionally, the finder assumes liability of the animal during the 30 day period that he or she is providing care for the animal. This includes medical issues faced by the animal, injuries or harm caused by the animal, and damage caused by the animal should it escape. If the animal is pregnant, the Department will determine whether the finder can provide a suitable whelping environment for the offspring, which will become property of the Department. The finder may not provide home care for an animal if doing so would cause the finder to be in violation of the 3 dog and 3 cat Los Angeles City limit.



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