

The Truth about Cats and Dogs: Vaccinations, Licenses, Service, Revenue

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North Carolina law authorizes local governments to collect an animal license fee on all cats and dogs living in their jurisdiction. However, data from several animal licensing programs show that large populations of cats and dogs are going unlicensed. Consequently, local governments are tapping into only a small portion of a potential revenue stream. This article suggests that, by using rabies vaccination records as the basis for a licensure database, an animal licensing program can increase the number of animals it licenses and the amount of revenue it raises from licensure. The government also can increase the number of animals vaccinated for rabies and thus improve its service to the community.

Background

Animal services of local governments, which include control of animals, sheltering of animals, and control of rabies, may be funded through a combination of general fund appropriations, donations, fines, charges, and animal license fees. As is common with most local government services, animal services typically require increased funding each year to provide a constant level of service to a growing population. Of the revenue sources just listed, animal license fees not only are a steady and predictable income stream but also permit the program some degree of financial independence from the volatility of annual budget appropriations.¹

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A county or a municipality may levy animal license fees at its discretion to recoup the expense of operating an animal service program.

Licensing of animals and control of rabies are two separate functions in North Carolina local government. The state has delegated responsibility for rabies control to county public health departments.² It expects health departments to maintain records of rabies vaccinations on the animals inoculated in their jurisdiction and to offer annual rabies clinics to encourage animal vaccination. In North Carolina, owners of domesticated cats and dogs are required to have their pets vaccinated against rabies every three years, and vaccinated pets must wear a vaccination tag on their collar. The licensed veteri-

narian or the certified rabies vaccinator who administers the vaccine must submit a rabies vaccination certificate to the local health department as proof of vaccination.³

Although the county must protect the public from rabies, all other animal services are provided as a matter of choice by each county or municipal government.⁴ The animal licensing fee is an optional charge for municipal and county governments. Through the enactment of a local ordinance, local governments may require pet owners to purchase a license for each cat and dog they own.⁵

A local government has many options in designing its licensing program. For example, it may choose to do any of the following:

Table 1. Licensure Compliance, by Jurisdiction

Animal Licensing Jurisdiction	Number of Licensed Dogs and Cats	Number of Dogs and Cats in Jurisdiction*	Percent of Licensed Dogs and Cats
North Carolina			
Asheville ^{††}	951	29,272	3
Cary	6,396	39,715	16
Charlotte Metro [§]	33,879	252,906	13
Cumberland County [†]	31,521	124,663	25
Durham County	33,920	86,810	39
Forsyth County [†]	33,000	124,527	27
New Hanover County	45,000	63,530	71
Orange County [‡]	20,284	44,506	46
Raleigh	9,091	116,704	8
Rocky Mount [†]	3,086	24,778	12
Wilson County [†]	5,500	29,796	18
Out-of-State			
Fort Wayne, Ind.	12,867	86,674	15
Houston, Texas	70,000	768,906	9
King County, Wash. [‡]	135,906	445,598	30
Marin County, Calif. [†]	20,015	101,140	20
Miami–Dade County, Fla. [†]	100,000	929,365	11
San Diego County, Calif.	162,789	1,204,979	14

* These numbers are calculated from an American Veterinary Medicine Association formula for estimating pet populations using human populations in an area.

† The number of cats and dogs currently licensed is estimated from the amount of licensure revenue because the actual figure was not available.

‡ This jurisdiction licenses only dogs.

§ Charlotte licenses for itself, Huntersville, Mint Hill, and Pineville and the unincorporated areas of Mecklenburg County.

¶ The total number of dogs and cats in this jurisdiction has been adjusted to reflect that the county does not license for all the incorporated municipalities.

- Charge a lower fee for sterile animals than for fertile ones⁶
- License dogs only or both dogs and cats
- Charge different rates for dogs and cats
- Require annual renewal of licenses or impose a one-time permanent license fee
- Require that animals wear their license tags on their collar, or issue no license tags at all
- Collect license fees in the animal services office or through the local government’s tax office

In brief, North Carolina’s “animal control laws are permissive, giving cities and counties the authority to determine

how much animal control they wish to undertake.”⁷ The only consistent factor is that current rabies vaccination records on all vaccinated animals must be maintained by the animal control or health department of the county in which the animal resides.

Analysis of Sample Animal Licensing Programs

Relatively few localities in North Carolina require pet licensure. I included Asheville, Cary, Charlotte, Cumberland County, Durham County, Forsyth County, New Hanover County, Orange County, Raleigh, Rocky Mount, and Wilson County in the study on which I based this article.⁸ Also, I chose six renowned programs from outside

North Carolina as potential benchmarks for the North Carolina programs: Fort Wayne, Indiana; Houston, Texas; King County, Washington; Marin County, California; Miami–Dade County, Florida; and San Diego County, California.⁹

To evaluate the effectiveness of licensing programs, it is necessary to determine how many animals in their jurisdiction they license and vaccinate. A formula created by the American Veterinary Medicine Association allows one to estimate the cat and dog populations in an area on the basis of the human populations there. One then can compare the estimated pet population with the number of licensed animals and vaccinated animals reported by an animal service program. On average, the programs in North Carolina license 25 percent of the animals estimated to be living in their jurisdictions (see Table 1). The out-of-state programs, with an average licensure rate of 16.5 percent, appear to perform similarly to the North Carolina programs. However, the animal populations in those areas are, on average, about 400 percent larger than those in the North Carolina jurisdictions.¹⁰ As for rabies vaccinations, on average, the North Carolina jurisdictions vaccinate 48 percent of cats and dogs in their jurisdictions (see Table 2, page 42).¹¹ Data on rabies vaccinations for five of the six out-of-state programs studied were not available, so no comparison is possible.

Regarding revenue collection, out-of-state programs significantly outperform North Carolina programs in supporting their budget with license fees. For out-of-state programs, revenue from licensure covers nearly 40 percent of a program’s expenditures, on average. In North Carolina, revenue from licensure accounts for less than 20 percent (see Table 3, page 45).

Strategy to Increase Animal Licensing

Most operators of animal licensing programs are aware that large numbers of unlicensed animals live in their jurisdictions. However, they struggle with how to increase compliance with licensure requirements. On the basis of my analysis of the animal programs in this

Table 2. Vaccination Compliance, by Jurisdiction

Animal Licensing Jurisdiction	Number of Vaccinated Dogs and Cats	Number of Dogs and Cats in Jurisdiction*	Percent of Vaccinated Dogs and Cats
North Carolina			
Asheville	NA	29,272	—
Cary [†]	11,607	39,715	29
Charlotte Metro [†]	125,459	252,906	50
Cumberland County	NA	124,663	—
Durham County	46,000	86,810	53
Forsyth County	35,000	124,527	28
New Hanover County	52,590	63,530	83
Orange County	28,111	44,506	63
Raleigh [†]	34,108	116,704	29
Rocky Mount	NA	24,778	—
Wilson County	NA	29,796	—
Out-of-State			
Fort Wayne, Ind.	NA	86,674	—
Houston, Texas	NA	768,906	—
King County, Wash.	NA	445,598	—
Marin County, Calif.	NA	101,140	—
Miami-Dade County, Fla.	300,000	929,365	32
San Diego County, Calif.	NA	1,204,979	—

NA = not available

* These numbers are calculated from an American Veterinary Medicine Association formula for estimating pet populations using human populations in an area.

[†] The number of dogs and cats with rabies vaccinations was estimated from county rabies data and set in proportion to the human population.

page 46). The pet population statistics of the American Veterinary Medicine Association show that there are more cats than dogs in any given area.¹² Therefore, animal programs are losing more than half of their potential revenue by licensing dogs only. Many localities do not license cats because of great resistance from cat owners.¹³ However, cats contribute to both pet overpopulation and the expense of animal shelters, and cat owners can benefit from the pet-identification and other services that licensure offers.

A second question is what the license fees should be. Among all the programs in this study, the average one-year license fees are \$7.45 for sterile dogs, \$19.85 for fertile dogs, \$8.00 for sterile cats, and \$22.25 for fertile cats (for the fees of each jurisdiction, see Table 4). The fees should be kept as low as possible so as not to deter pet owners from licensing their pets because of the expense. All local governments should offer waivers of the fees for citizens of low income, senior citizens, and citizens with special needs. Also, local governments should market licensing as a service with special benefits for pet owners who have complied with the licensure requirement, such as waivers of impoundment fees (for a discussion of this and other tools for implementing a licensing program, see the sidebar, opposite).

A third question to address is whether to operate the licensing program in-house or by contract with a private firm. Animal licensing programs should consider which of these options would be more cost-effective. Although in-house licensing may bring in more net revenues, many programs do not have the resources to make the initial investment in computer software and hardware, staff salaries and benefits, training and computer support, and supplies. Contracting licensure out has none of these expenses, but it may be accompanied by difficulties in record sharing and reduced net revenues due to payment to the contractor. (For a more detailed discussion of the issues involved, see the sidebar on page 44.)

Create a database: Animal licensing programs wishing to cross-reference vaccination and licensure data have the

study, I recommend a three-step strategy to build a more effective licensing program:

1. Link rabies and licensure records in a database
2. Increase the number of animals vaccinated for rabies
3. Enforce the licensure requirement

The key to this strategy is the use of rabies records to target the population of pet owners. Rabies records should form the basis of the licensing program because they are the most accurate, current, and comprehensive listing of animals living within a local jurisdiction. In the North Carolina animal licensing programs discussed in this article, almost twice as many animals are vaccinated as are licensed. The reason for the higher vaccination rate

may be the state’s legal requirement for rabies vaccinations or widespread knowledge of the health threats that rabies presents.

Step 1: Link rabies and licensure records in a database

Licensing requires both operating a licensing program and contacting the pet-owning public. An animal control program should consider the size of the population it serves, its current financial situation, its current information management system, and the availability of staff in making decisions about licensing methods.

Formulate program features: The first question to address is whether to license both dogs and cats. All the programs in this study license dogs, but only 60 percent license cats (see Table 4,

GENERAL TOOLS FOR ANIMAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

The following tools are currently used by animal licensing programs in this study. Any animal service program can adopt these tools to improve its quality, regardless of the use of animal licensure. The most important factor in evaluating the tools is to find those that are best suited to your area, the size of your pet population, your budget, and the priorities of your governing board.

Don't charge a tax; sell a service: If you choose to implement an animal license fee, make a commitment to provide desired services in return. For example, use the revenue to buy software and equipment that will allow pet owners to use the Internet to search pictures of lost animals at the local shelter. Waive the impoundment fee the first time an animal with a valid license is picked up by animal control. Return lost pets with valid licenses to their homes if they are picked up in the neighborhood instead of taking them to the pound. Wait a minimum of three weeks before euthanizing animals with valid licenses, or adopt a no-euthanization policy.

Change your name: Share your attitude about animal services by adopting a friendly program name. Many animal programs in North Carolina simply carry a name like Carolina County Animal Control. A better option might be Carolina County Animal Care and Control.

Incorporate new technology: Telephone and computer systems are more convenient than the mail for many pet owners today. Allow pet owners to use the Web or an automated telephone system to renew their licenses. Post a downloadable license application form on your Web site. Make your Web page friendly and welcoming with information about your program and also with information of interest to pet owners. (For information and suggestions on Web site creation, visit the Web site of the Humane Society of the United States, www.hsus.org/programs/companion/animal_sheltering/currentissue/may_jun99/feature_article4.html.)

Use local government ordinances: An ordinance is your legal authority to enforce compliance and to gain buy-in from management and elected officials. Ordinances should thoroughly address all aspects of the locality's animal services, including fines, licensure, shelters, and dog seizure. They also can be used to convey the general philosophy of the program. An example from Charlotte is this statement: "Escalating fees and other sanctions are measures that have been adopted to protect the citizens of Charlotte and to declare that the ownership of dogs entails publicly related responsibilities."¹ Many local governments also choose to specify in the ordinance that licensure revenue be used to support the expenses of animal service operations.

Do not use a tax collection or revenue office: A tax collection or revenue office may not be the ideal unit to collect animal license fees. Many tax collection and revenue officers confide that their staff's time is better spent following up on unpaid property taxes and other sources of revenue that are more significant in size than animal license fees. Also, in most jurisdictions that use the tax office to collect license

fees, the data on licensing are on the property tax form and are slow to be disseminated to the animal licensing program because of the large number of tax payments received at the beginning of each tax year. If an animal licensing program is unable to collect and manage animal license fees, it may wish to investigate contracting options.

Use a rabies tag or a microchip in place of a license tag: Many programs in this study did not advocate the use of a separate license tag for two reasons. First, very few owners actually attach it to the pet's collar once received. Second, the envelopes, postage, and labor to send the tags are very expensive. Orange County stopped mailing tags because it cost the county \$12,000 annually for fewer than 30,000 tags.

Instead of a license tag, animal programs recommend either using just the rabies tag or implanting microchips in animals. A rabies tag number can easily serve as a pet's license tag number. Because animals are required by law to wear a tag showing a current rabies vaccination, there is a greater chance that these tags will be displayed on the animal. The animal control agency can quickly identify the owner of a lost pet if all rabies records are kept in a database.

Implanting microchips in animals also is becoming a common practice. This new technology allows any agency equipped with microchip-reading equipment to access an animal's records without the need of a license or rabies tag number. Microchips permit animal control officers to identify immediately the animal they pick up, and return it to the owner while they are still in the vicinity. Marin County, California, currently uses microchips instead of tags. Many programs, such as the one in Asheville, put microchips in all the animals adopted from the animal shelter for free. Microchips are a great compromise with the cat-owning community. Many owners refuse to license their cats, arguing that they cannot make a cat wear a collar or a license; microchips are easily implanted in any dog or cat.

Stagger license renewals by month: Some animal licensing programs bill owners once a year for license renewal, all at the same time. Others bill one fourth of owners, say, in March, another fourth in June, another fourth in September, and the last fourth in December. Many animal programs strongly advise that programs billing this way switch to a monthly schedule. Renewal would then occur on the anniversary of the animal's rabies vaccination or birth month. This schedule allows the program to process the incoming payments in a timely fashion.

Offer multiple-year renewals: Allow pet owners to renew licenses for one, two, or three years at a time. Staff in Marin County, California, believe that multiyear licensing has increased the county's revenues and number of licensed animals because pet owners tend not to renew with just the one-year licensing option.

Note

1. CITY OF CHARLOTTE MUNICIPAL CODE ch. 3, art. II, § 3-9(a6).

option of designing and building a custom program or purchasing an existing software program.¹⁴ Before investing in software, the licensing program should take into consideration the number of records that it will manage, the hardware available, and the cost of the software. Some software programs are not able to manage large amounts of data effectively, and others may require more memory and faster operating systems than are available to the licensing program. Also, the cost of the software, installation of it, and training and support to use it may deter some animal licensing programs from making this investment.

Obtain rabies records: Because each locality operates its animal licensing program autonomously, gaining access to records is likely to be the most difficult task in implementing step 1 for counties and municipalities alike. Veterinarians do not always comply with the state law requiring them to submit rabies records to the designated county program. In these situations, staff of animal licensing programs should use the list of state-issued rabies tags to identify the veterinarians from whom rabies certificates have not been received. They then can ask the county attorney to write a letter making the veterinarians aware of the requirement.

Many veterinarians have expressed concern about releasing the names of their clients. Staff of animal licensing programs should reassure them that rabies records may not be used for commercial purposes.¹⁵

For municipalities in North Carolina, obtaining rabies records poses even greater difficulties than for counties because they have no legal right to the information.¹⁶ Municipalities must find a way to work with the county animal control department to get the records. Arrangements might include operating under an interlocal agreement for animal licensure, sharing the expense of data entry, or distributing rabies certifi-

OPERATING ANIMAL LICENSURE IN HOUSE OR BY CONTRACT

Operating a licensure program requires that an animal services program perform many functions, including entering data, generating bills and notices, mailing licenses and notices, depositing payments, and keeping books. These tasks, particularly entering data and mailing items, are not only expensive to perform but also very time- and staff-intensive.



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A dog receives a microchip.

If a program opts to perform all these tasks in house, there are two important factors to consider regarding operations: additional staffing needs and recurring annual expenses. In-house licensing requires that several staff members devote their time solely to data entry and mailings. As the licensing program expands and the need for data management grows, more of these personnel will be needed. Recurring annual expenses, such as those for database training, computer upgrades and maintenance, supplies, mailing materials, and postage, often are left out or underestimated in budget projections. One-time expenses, recurring annual expenses, and revenues should all be carefully estimated for accurate reporting to management.

Some programs may prefer to contract out part or all of their operations. Contracting for printing and mailing, for example, may reduce costs and staff time because aside from data entry, printing and mailing are likely to be the most expensive and time-consuming tasks of animal licensure. By contracting with a private firm to print and mail license-related materials, an animal licensing program can reduce its labor costs and take advantage of bulk-rate savings for supplies and postage.¹

For other animal licensing programs, the expense or the demands of in-house licensure may require that the program contract for the complete operation. For example, Petdata is a private firm that specializes in handling animal licensure operations for local governments.² In exchange for a portion of licensure fee revenue, Petdata will perform all data entry, printing and mailing, and fee collection.³

However, there are several factors to consider before contracting out the operation. First, complications may arise with gaining access to rabies records. For example, it may be difficult for a municipality to get the county to release the respective rabies certificates to a private contractor.⁴ Second, the local government

must decide whether its net revenues will be greater by contracting all operations out or performing them in house. The amount retained by the contractor depends on the number of licenses paid, the rate set for the license fee, and the total amount of fees collected.⁵ Finally, local governments must account for the expenses related to contract management. Net revenues for contracted operations should reflect this cost.

Notes

1. Orange County currently contracts for all its printing and mailing with a company in Fayetteville. The county compiles all the data for new and renewal notices and electronically downloads the information to the contracted company. The company then prints and mails bills for new licenses, renewals, and delinquent accounts. Orange County's expenditures for printing and mailing have been reduced from 10 cents per piece of mail to 5 cents by contracting these tasks out. The animal licensing program now spends less than \$12,000 annually for all its license-related mailings.

2. For more information on Petdata, visit www.petdata.com.

3. Petdata staff would not release the average amount that the firm retains per paid license but did say that in the case of Raleigh, it was less than 50 percent of the license fee.

4. Before making a firm agreement with a contractor, the municipality will want to negotiate an agreeable arrangement with the county—for example, that it will bear the expense of data entry for all the records if the county will release them.

5. Petdata targets animal licensing programs serving human populations of more than 100,000 because the corresponding number of licenses maximizes the revenue of both Petdata and the animal program.

Table 3. Revenue Collected, by Jurisdiction

Animal Licensing Jurisdiction	Animal Services Budget for FY 2000*	Revenue from Licensure for FY 2000	% of Budget Supported by License Fees
North Carolina			
Asheville†	\$ 980,023.52	\$ 9,511.62	1
Cary	125,000.00	4,250.00	3
Charlotte Metro	4,200,000.00	391,477.50	9
Cumberland County	542,444.60	153,494.00	28
Durham County	975,775.00	258,658.00	27
Forsyth County	1,017,227.00	249,294.00	25
New Hanover County	474,000.00	235,000.00	50
Orange County	744,001.00	108,000.00	15
Raleigh	600,000.00	69,146.00	12
Rocky Mount	112,900.00	30,860.00	27
Wilson County	247,089.75	16,500.00	7
Out-of-State			
Fort Wayne, Ind.	\$1,299,707.00	\$64,402.00	5
Houston, Texas	3,200,000.00	599,995.00	19
King County, Wash.	2,699,037.00	2,202,562.00	82
Marin County, Calif.	1,817,455.00	200,392.50	11
Miami-Dade County, Fla.	4,400,000.00	3,400,000.00	77
San Diego County, Calif.	8,044,493.00	2,910,946.00	36

* The large discrepancies among budget figures reflect the variety of programs and services provided by each jurisdiction. Program expenditures may include any combination of animal shelter and animal control costs, including personnel, equipment, and overhead.

† The revenues are low because the licensing program is in its first year.

cates to the locality that would do the licensing (rather than keeping them all in the county office).¹⁷ Although pet owners can be reached without rabies records, methods that would produce good results, such as door-to-door canvassing and mass mailings, are very expensive given the expected return in revenue.

Obtain licensure records: Animal licensure records also may be difficult to obtain, depending on the method the locality uses to collect the related revenue. Many localities collect animal license fees through their tax collection or revenue office. In these cases, licensure records may not be easily separated from property tax records or may not be available in an electronic format that will easily link them to rabies records. Ideally, licensure records are handled by the animal licensing program and are separate from any other fee or tax

documents (for more information on independent handling of licensure records by animal services programs, see the sidebar, opposite).

Step 2: Increase the number of animals vaccinated for rabies

The challenge in increasing the number of animals vaccinated is to reach pet owners and educate them about the need for vaccination. Information from the programs in this study indicates that the most successful methods for increasing vaccinations are low-cost rabies clinics and media campaigns. Canvassing and traveling neighborhood clinics, although more expensive, also are used by some localities.

Conduct clinics or other events:

Low-cost rabies vaccination clinics are particularly effective at reaching pet owners. State law mandates that the county agency responsible for animal

control host one rabies clinic each year. Forsyth County has had great success at increasing the number of vaccinated animals by hosting two low-cost rabies clinics per year at its animal shelter. The county sets up computers in the shelter and immediately enters the new records into its database. These clinics increase the county’s vaccinated animal population by 400 to 700 pets annually.

Increase public awareness of rabies vaccination requirements: Government-sponsored clinics are successful in part because the local government uses the media to inform citizens. Pet owners are not always aware that state law requires their pets to be vaccinated and receive regular rabies boosters. Many will vaccinate their pets only on announcement of a rabid-animal sighting.¹⁸ Owners of pets that stay indoors often do not maintain regular vaccinations because they do not think that their pets can be infected. Animal licensing programs should use television, radio, and newspapers both to educate pet owners on the threat of rabies and to announce rabies clinics as easy opportunities to get pets vaccinated.

Canvassing and neighborhood rabies clinics also increase the number of vaccinated pets. Canvassing requires sending animal control officers and other staff door-to-door to check for current rabies tags. Some jurisdictions announce in advance the dates that they expect to canvass a neighborhood, giving pet owners an opportunity to vaccinate their pets before the arrival of the canvassing team. Other jurisdictions send their canvassing teams out unannounced but use the opportunity to check animals and offer rabies education to pet owners. Owners with animals that are not current on their vaccinations are given a few weeks to comply before a citation is issued. One drawback to canvassing is that it is an expensive investment in time and personnel.

Neighborhood vaccination clinics are a successful way to reach out to smaller groups of pet owners. These clinics involve a vehicle equipped with the necessary vaccination supplies traveling to different areas of the jurisdiction to administer vaccinations on site. However, these clinics must be

Table 4. Animal License Fees, by Jurisdiction

Animal Licensing Jurisdiction	Dog		Cat	
	Sterile	Fertile	Sterile	Fertile
North Carolina				
Asheville	\$5.00	\$15.00	—	—
Cary*	10.00	20.00	\$10.00	\$20.00
Charlotte Metro	7.50	25.00	7.50	25.00
Cumberland County	7.00	15.00	—	—
Durham County	5.00	25.00	5.00	25.00
Forsyth County	5.00	25.00	—	—
New Hanover County	9.00	18.00	9.00	18.00
Orange County	5.00	10.00	5.00	10.00
Carrboro†	8.00	15.00	8.00	15.00
Chapel Hill†	8.00	15.00	5.00	10.00
Chapel Hill annex in Durham†	3.00	5.00	—	—
Raleigh	7.00	14.00	7.00	14.00
Rocky Mount	10.00	10.00	—	—
Wilson County	3.00	3.00	—	—
Out-of-State				
Fort Wayne, Ind.	\$4.00	\$25.00	\$4.00	\$25.00
Houston, Texas‡	10.00, 2.00	25.00	10.00, 2.00	25.00
King County, Wash.§	15.00	55.00	15.00	55.00
Marin County, Calif.¶	7.00, 13.00, 18.00	20.00, 39.00, 57.00	—	—
Miami-Dade County, Fla.	20.00	32.00	—	—
San Diego County, Calif.¶	10.00, 17.00, 23.00	25.00, 41.00, 53.00	10.00, 17.00, 23.00	25.00, 41.00, 53.00

Note: All fees are for one year unless otherwise noted.

* These are one-time fees. Cary's licenses are permanent; there is no renewal involved.

† Orange County issues licenses for this municipality, but it sets its own fee schedule.

‡ For sterile pets, Houston charges \$10.00 for the first license, \$2.00 for the annual renewals.

§ King County's \$55.00 fee for a fertile animal includes a \$25.00 voucher for a spaying or a neutering.

¶ Fees represent one-, two-, and three-year licenses.

announced in advance to ensure maximum turnout. Traveling clinics may be the best option to serve neighborhoods identified by canvassing teams as having high numbers of unvaccinated animals.

Step 3: Enforce the licensure requirement

With a well-established base of rabies records, the final step is to license the identified animals and promote the licensing program to the public.

License vaccinated animals:

Matching vaccination and licensure records will reveal pet owners who are not in compliance with licensure require-

ments, either because they have not renewed their animal's license or because they have vaccinated their animal but not licensed it. Program staff can generate appropriate notices on the basis of the matching and mail them to owners.

Increase public awareness of the licensure program: Just as with rabies vaccinations, pet owners must be informed of the requirements for animal licensure. Whereas some pet owners simply neglect to vaccinate their pets, many are completely unaware of their responsibility to license their pets. All the methods previously mentioned for increasing the number of rabies vaccina-

tions also can increase licensure. Many animal licensing programs offer both vaccinations and licenses at their rabies clinics. Others host special events just for licensing. For example, the Humane Society of Marin County, California, hosts Be Kind to Animals Week, during which it waives late fees for owners who have not complied with licensing requirements. Several other programs offer similar amnesty opportunities for noncompliant pet owners.

Canvassing and media campaigns also can be used to increase licensure. By going door-to-door, animal control teams are able to check for rabies vaccinations and inform pet owners of their requirement to license. Many programs collect completed license applications and fees while canvassing neighborhoods. Media announcements can be used to inform large numbers of citizens about licensure requirements. Cary, North Carolina, spent several weeks advertising its new requirement for cat licensure. When the date requiring licenses for cats had passed, not only had many pet owners licensed their cats, but the number of licensed dogs had actually doubled. By simply informing the pet-owning public of the licensure requirement, Cary was successful in increasing the number of licensed pets.

Partner with veterinarians: Veterinarians should be included in the effort to increase licensure. Not only can their participation increase the number of licenses, but it also can improve relations between them and the local government. Animal licensing programs should offer incentives to veterinarians for their participation. For example, Marin County, California, creates information packets and distributes them to area veterinarians. The veterinarians receive \$2 for any paid license application picked up from their office.¹⁹ Wake County Animal Control provides its veterinarians with free rabies tags each month. This practice has the added benefit of allowing program staff to communicate regularly with veterinarians. San Diego County, California, advertises the names and the locations of cooperating veterinarians on its Web site and refers pet owners to these veterinarians through the mail or over the telephone.

Conclusion

Animal licensing programs in North Carolina have yet to reach their maximum revenue potential. By increasing the number of licensed animals through the use of rabies records, these programs will increase the number of licensed and vaccinated pets in their jurisdictions, improve their service to the community, and increase their revenues.

The recommendations offered in this article must be adapted to fit animal licensing operations for each program. Variations will be necessary depending on the services a program provides, the size of the pet population, the size of the annual budget, and the sentiment of pet owners.

Notes

1. Revenues from animal taxes are typically included in a local government's general fund unless the governing body enacts an ordinance to dedicate the revenues to the animal services department. (For the use of local government ordinances for this purpose, see the sidebar on page 43.)

2. The responsibility for rabies monitoring and control may be placed in another department if the animal control program is not housed in the health department. For example, in Wake County, rabies control falls under the Animal Control Division of the Department of Environmental Services.

3. N.C. GEN. STAT. § 130A-189 (hereinafter G.S.).

4. Although a county and each incorporated municipality within it may all operate separate animal programs, a locality often enters into an interlocal agreement with another locality to provide joint services. Interlocal agreements are most common with animal licensure and animal sheltering. Animal control functions, such as abating animal nuisances and responding to calls about vicious animals, often are handled separately by each local government's animal control office or law enforcement office.

5. G.S. Chs. 153A and 160A authorize local governments to create ordinances for their jurisdiction on any number of matters, including animal abuse, dangerous animals, animal license fees, animal shelters, and contracts for animal services.

6. Setting separate fees for sterile and fertile animals is called "differential licensing." Localities may choose this option to encourage owners to spay or neuter their pets.

7. BEN F. LOEB, JR., ANIMAL CONTROL LAW FOR NORTH CAROLINA LOCAL GOVERNMENTS 5 (Chapel Hill: Inst. of Gov't, The Univ. of N.C. at Chapel Hill, 1997).

8. Several of these localities have entered into interlocal agreements to serve the area.

For example, Charlotte operates the animal control program for Huntersville, Mint Hill, Pineville, and the unincorporated areas of Mecklenburg County. Durham County Animal Control serves both Durham city and the unincorporated areas of the county. Carrboro and Chapel Hill contract with Orange County for animal control services. Hillsborough does not because it does not have an animal licensure ordinance.

9. The American Humane Association recommended these localities as having exemplary animal licensure programs. The association also recommended the programs operated by Palm Beach County, Florida; Pittsburgh; and San Mateo County, California. However, these localities were not able to provide the necessary data for inclusion in this study.

10. Of the programs in this study, the average North Carolina program licenses 20,239 animals, whereas the average out-of-state program licenses 83,596 animals.

11. Four North Carolina programs were unable to provide rabies data and are not included in the reported statistics.

12. Statistics of the American Veterinary Medicine Association (available at www.avma.org/cim/estimate.htm) indicate that 53 percent of households own dogs, and 60 percent cats.

13. These owners argue that license revenues are used disproportionately to support dog operations, including dog control, nuisance complaints, and dog sheltering. They also contend that cats should be able to roam freely and cannot be expected to wear a license tag.

14. For a review of current software options, see *Finding Software for Your Shelter*, ANIMAL SHELTERING, May/June 2000, p. 24. It can be ordered from the Humane Society of the United States or downloaded from the society's Web site, www.animalsheltering.org.

15. Under G.S. 130A-189 it is not a violation of the law for a county to provide rabies data to a municipality, a nonprofit, or a contracted company to use for licensure, "provided that the information . . . will not be used for commercial purposes."

16. Under G.S. 130A-189, rabies records are sent "to the county agency responsible for animal control."

17. This study found no licensing programs that shared or distributed rabies vaccination records except those participating in interlocal agreements.

18. As the Orange County animal control director pointed out, rabies vaccinations soar at the announcement of a rabid-animal sighting and fall in the absence of any publicity about rabies.

19. Although some programs allow veterinarians to collect license fees on the animals they serve, several programs report that they have found it difficult to manage the arrangement and collect the fees. This relationship is not recommended.

at the
Institute



Ammons Appointed to Lead MPA Program

Former Director Allred Moves to Associate Provost Position

In September 2001, Professor David N. Ammons, a specialist in local government productivity, was appointed to a five-year term as director of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program. The program is housed in the School of Government.

In making the appointment, Michael R. Smith, dean of the school, said Ammons "is recognized nationally as a leader in the field of public administration and is deeply committed to maintaining and enhancing the academic excellence and reputation of the MPA Program."

Ammons replaces Professor Stephen Allred, program director since 1995 and a School of Government faculty member since 1986. Allred recently was appointed associate provost of UNC-Chapel Hill.

Ammons's primary focus is local government performance measurement, benchmarking, and productivity improvement. He is the author of several books, including the 2001 release *Municipal Benchmarks: Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards* (Sage Publications).

Ammons has served in various



New MPA Program Director David Ammons

JON GARDNER