

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** January 13, 2023

**To:** City Council

**From:** Cynthia Martinez, Senior Assistant City Attorney II  
Tony Doan, Supervising Code Inspector

**RE:** Yakima Municipal Code Chapter 6.20 Revision (Animal Control)

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Attached is a proposed Yakima Municipal Code Chapter 6.20 revision. Code Enforcement, Animal Control Officers, and City Legal have spent the past six months working on this revision to have it reflect current practices, streamline procedures, and address emergent issues. We are pleased to share this working draft with you for comment.

The proposed changes:

- Strengthen dangerous dog definition
- Remove potentially dangerous dog classifications
- Remove levels of animal behavior
- Unify animal impound appeal timelines
- Increase and streamline dog license fees
- Reduce, "Poultry at Large," to an infraction, subject to a fine instead of a crime
- Increase the threshold for a Barking Dog violation
- Added Human Responsibility for Cats regulations
- Updated the impound notice
- Increased the time of license suspension to three years for problem pet owners

Drafting cat owner and caretaker regulations is a challenging task. There are volumes of cat regulatory schemes from different jurisdictions. Some are longer than our current chapter 6.20 and include licensing requirements for cats. However, due to animal control staffing limitations, we opted to draft a simpler statutory framework that would provide some additional tools to encourage the reduction of the feral and roaming cat population, whilst allowing for residents to engage in humane practices to aid cats in need, and at the same time hold cat caretakers responsible for creating a nauseous situation.

Trap-Alter-Return (also called Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR) programs are recognized throughout the country, have previously been publicized by the City of Yakima in press releases, and are seen as a humane way to manage cat populations. There was a nonprofit in the Yakima area dedicated to this practice, but due to lack of volunteers and money, no longer exists. However, there are vets that offer trap-alter-return discounts in our community. The proposed regulation

allows an individual to engage in this behavior without assuming legal ownership of the cat. However, at times Trap-Alter-Return does lead to ownership.

Dog Licensing has been adjusted to offer two term options for the license holder. Dog owners will be able to choose between 1 and 3 year license durations. A prerequisite to licensing is proof of rabies vaccination. This vaccination expires every 3 years. The three year license allows for dog owners to get a discounted license fee, which also creates a more efficient process for the animal owner and the City. This proposed licensing language will assist in the City's plan to offer an online licensing portal that is user friendly and has the potential to increase the number of dogs that are licensed in the City of Yakima.