

Adopting pound pets could become more costly

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Friday, 13 November 2009 14:55 -



State law requires spaying, neutering.

When stray animals are brought to the city pound and not claimed, Gothenburg Animal Hospital employees try to find homes for adoptable ones.

The Gothenburg Animal Hospital serves as Gothenburg's city pound.

Now, because of a new state law that changes how animals are handled at city pounds statewide, it will be more expensive to adopt a dog or cat.

"It will be much more costly," said Gothenburg Animal Hospital owner and veterinarian Roger Dudley.

Under a Gothenburg City Council proposal driven by state law, all adopted cats and dogs must be spayed or neutered.

Members discussed the proposal at their Nov. 3 meeting but took no action.

The proposal requires payment of adoption, vaccination, spay or neuter fees that are included with language about adoption, impoundment and euthanasia.

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Vaccination fee now paid

New pet owners now pay a \$44 adoption fee to help pay for rabies and distemper vaccinations.

The new law would require payment of an adoption fee, which has not yet been determined, and for a \$26 rabies vaccination.

Because of the increased cost, Dudley said there may not be as much as an incentive for people to adopt pets from the pound.

For example, depending on the size of a dog and its sex, spay and neuters could range from \$70 to \$100 or more.

The cost for the same surgery for cats would be from \$50 to \$85.

Written agreement needed

In addition, the proposal requires a new pet owner to agree in writing to have the animal spayed or neutered within 10 days of the dog or cat reaching six months if the pet is too young when it's adopted.

Likewise, if the pet is too young for a rabies vaccination, the owner must agree in writing to have it done within 10 days of the animal's three-month birthday.

Written proof of the action must be presented at the police department.

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Failure to spay or neuter an animal within the required time will result in a violation and subsequent fine and order to have the animal spayed or neutered.

One last clause in the proposal requires the owner of any animal impounded and/or not claimed to pay boarding and/or euthanization fees.

“Once in awhile, we know the owner who doesn’t want to spend the money to get their pet out,” Dudley said. “Now the city could charge them.”

Dudley said the city currently pays the Gothenburg Animal Hospital \$10 a day for cats and \$12 for dogs to board strays only if they are euthanized but not if they are adopted.

If an owner claims his or her pet, he or she pays the city which reimburses the Gothenburg Animal Hospital, he said.

As part of the new state law, the Gothenburg Animal Hospital had to be certified as a city pound last summer which meant inspection of its holding facility by a state official.

Days for strays drop

A proposed change in the city’s disposition of impounded animals law decreases the number of days an animal can be held until it’s euthanized or put to sleep.

Dudley said it used to be four days with the understanding the clinic could keep an animal longer if it was adoptable.

“We try to find homes for most of them,” he said, noting that cats are more easily adopted than dogs. “And adult dogs and cats are harder because people want cute, young animals.”

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He said that a compromise was reached that the pound can keep an animal another three days if it's deemed adoptable.

Now the city pays for four days of boarding. If the clinic keeps a pet longer for adoption, the business is not reimbursed.

Vet wants to find homes

Dudley said he struggles with the number of days he can keep animals before they're euthanized especially since dispatch has moved to North Platte.

Local police secretary Ira Suhr is on duty during the week to field inquiries about lost pets but not on weekends.

"A pet could be lost Thursday night and the owner looks for it Friday," he explained. "We could have it and after the weekend, it's time would be up."

Because some cats roam, owners may expect their pet to return after a few days.

Since he's been in the veterinary business, Dudley said he doesn't think problems with stray dogs have increased but cats have.

"Cats continue to multiply and that's difficult to shut down," he said. "There are so many, I don't know what could be done."

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