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Council members back mandatory spaying, neutering

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Offering accounts about their own pets, Los Angeles City Council members gave qualified support Tuesday to a statewide measure that would require pets to be spayed or neutered and initiated a plan for a similar city ordinance.

AB 1634, proposed by Assemblyman Lloyd Levine, D-Van Nuys, is designed to reduce the number of unwanted cats and dogs that are euthanized each year by requiring all pets be spayed or neutered by the age of four months.

The council's action came after Councilman Bill Rosendahl was assured that provisions would allow breeders who paid a \$100 licensing fee would be able to continue to own unaltered pets.

"We shouldn't punish the responsible pet owner," Rosendahl said, recalling how he bred one of his dogs and gave the puppies to responsible owners.

Rosendahl said he also was concerned the law would give too much power to Animal Control officials to go after pet owners.

Councilman Herb Wesson, who sponsors a pet giveaway twice a month, told of his anguish when one of his dogs died and he urged the council to back the measure.

"The least we should do is make sure we keep this debate going," Wesson said.

Ed Boks, director of the city Department of Animal Services, said the measure is needed to reduce the unwanted pet population.

"We are not going to be ... going after animal owners," Boks said. "We will respond to complaints and where we know there are problems."

Without the measure, Boks said he and other animal control officials are concerned that the number of animals euthanized each year will grow beyond the 800,000 that are killed now in California.

Councilman Tony Cardenas urged the council to back the measure.

"Unfortunately, dogs and cats do not have a legislature speaking for them," Cardenas said.

Councilman Richard Alarc n said he will study bringing a measure before the council that would allow the city to implement a four-month spay or neuter requirement without waiting for the state to act.

The city this year is expected to issue about 44,000 vouchers to pet owners for spay or neutering services.

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