

Board of County Commissioners

Work Session: Animal Services Ordinance Revisions Proposal

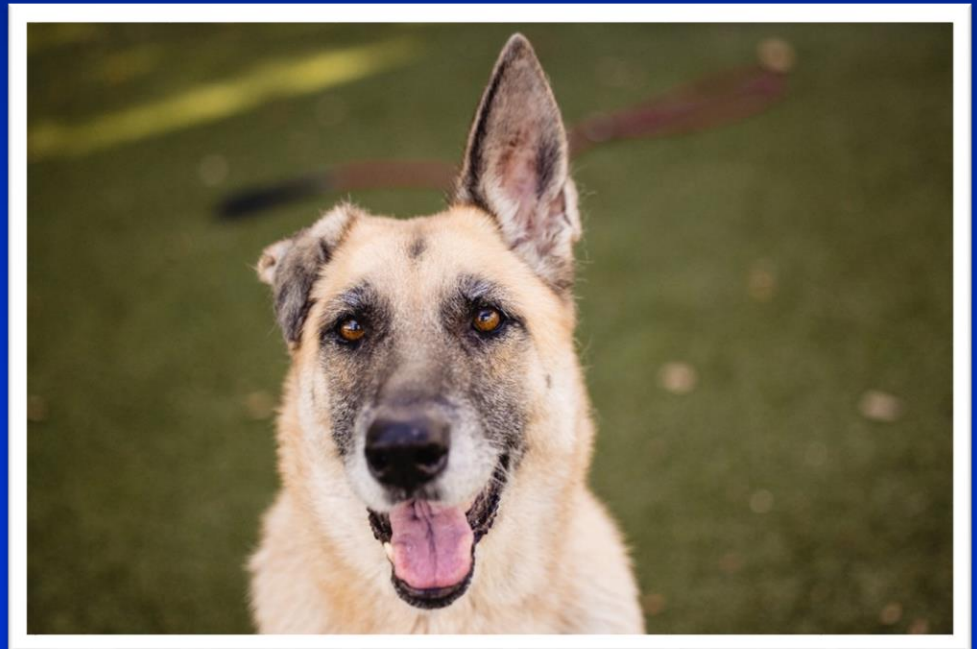


November 18, 2025



Presentation Outline

- **Purpose**
- **Background**
- **Suggested Changes**
- **Summary**





Presentation Outline

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Purpose

- Ordinance last experienced major revisions in 2005.
- To address longstanding animal welfare issues in the community, Animal Services is proposing ordinance changes which will:
 - Broaden mandatory spay/neuter, to reduce the number of unwanted/unplanned litters of pets.
 - Increase enforcement opportunities related to unethical sales of puppies and kittens.
 - Promote responsible pet ownership through increasing mandatory pet microchip identification.
 - Update stray hold times in order to be consistent with benchmark and neighboring counties.
 - Codify the current trap-neuter-return program.
 - Ensure compliance with the newly enacted CS/HB 593 related to “dangerous” dogs.



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Background

- Animal Services is the only physical shelter for misplaced dogs and cats in Orange County.
 - No stray animal is turned away, regardless of medical challenge or behavior concern.
 - Stray animals are picked up by staff 24/7 or brought to the shelter by residents at any time it is open to the public.
 - Intake via surrender is available with an appointment after rehoming consultation.



Background

■ What is “no kill?”

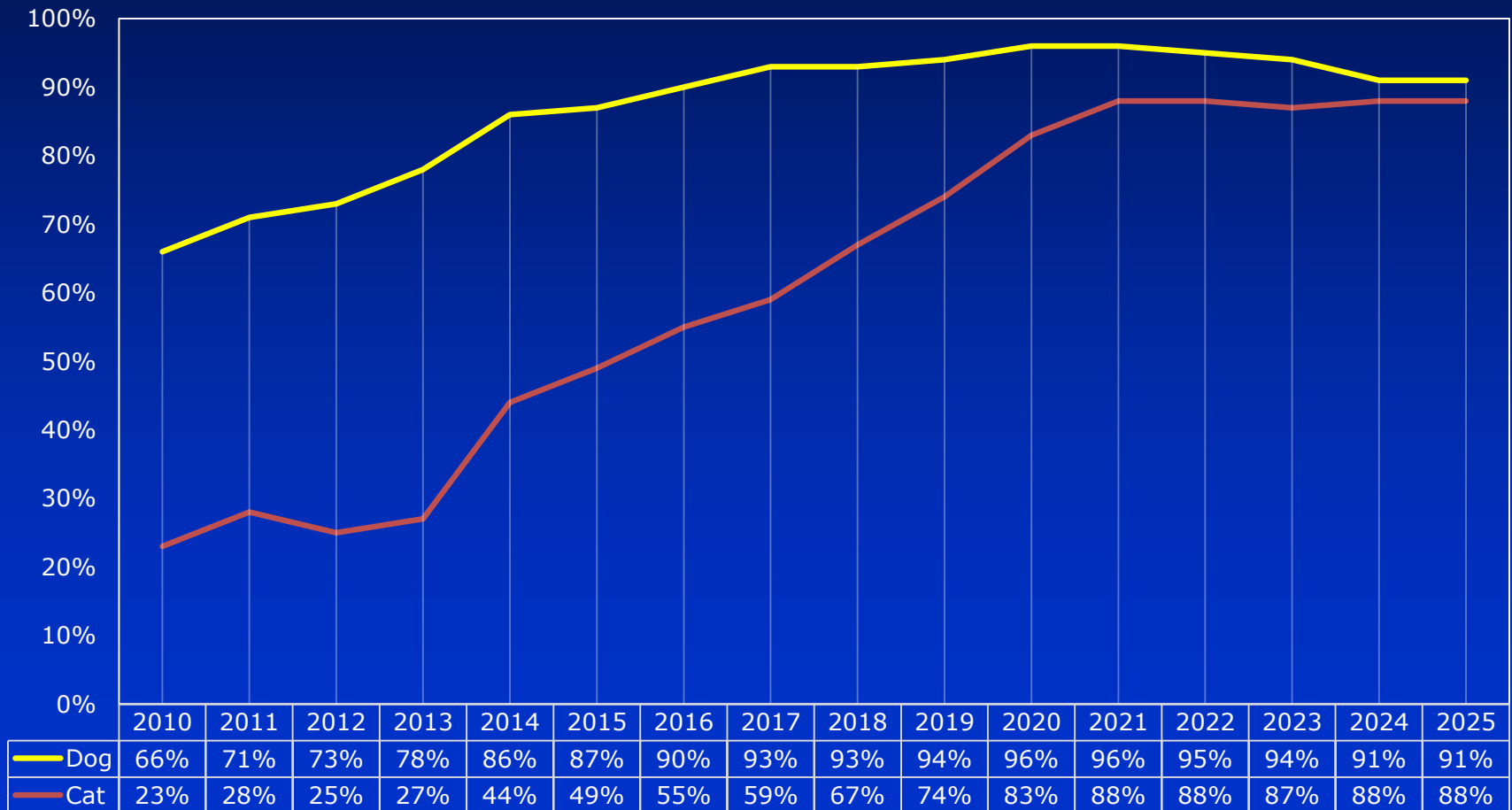
- Best Friends Animal Society, a national animal welfare organization, has set the “no kill” benchmark at a 90% save rate, stating:
 - *A total save rate of 90% for all animals in a shelter system is a simple, effective method for measuring a community's progress toward no-kill. It's an important metric, and it's used in service of a core goal: saving the life of every animal who can be saved. Overall, the number of pets who are suffering from irremediable medical or behavioral issues that compromise their quality of life and prevent them from being rehomed typically does not make up more than 10% of all pets entering the shelter system.*

Any community operating at or above a 90% save rate deserves the designation of no-kill.



Background

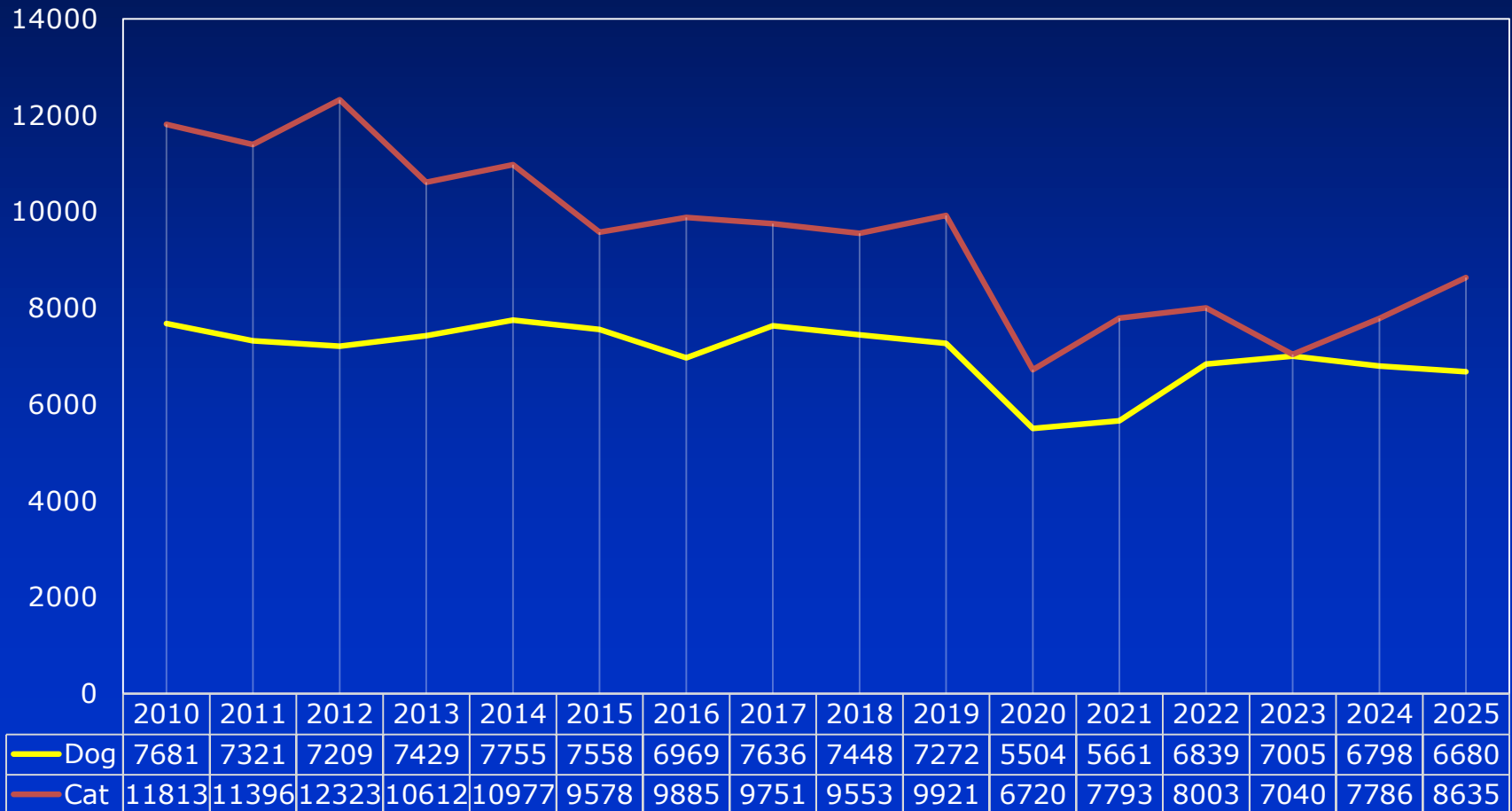
Live Release Rate Percentage for Dogs and Cats





Background

Total Dog and Cat Impounds





Background

Organization Name	Species	Intakes	Adoptions
1. Orange County	Dog	6,082	3,924
2. Hillsborough County	Dog	4,578	3,889
3. Miami-Dade County	Dog	6,448	3,680
4. Lee County	Dog	4,437	1,376
5. Pasco County	Dog	4,509	824

Organization Name	Species	Intakes	Adoptions
1. Hillsborough County	Cat	8,261	5,030
2. Orange County	Cat	6,854	4,893
3. Miami-Dade County	Cat	26,337	3,459
4. Lee County	Cat	4,525	1,089
5. Palm Beach County	Cat	5,792	958

Data from 2024, provided by Shelter Animals Count. Ranked by quantity of adoptions.



Background

■ Shelter-Based Services and Programs:

- Adoptions
- Foster Care
- Rescue Placements
- Pet Reunifications
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Microchipping & Rabies Vaccination Services
- Heartworm Disease Sponsorship
- Playgroups
- Behavior Team





Background

- Community Focused Services and Programs:
 - Spay/Neuter Voucher Program
 - Intake Diversion
 - Satellite Adoption Centers
 - Trap/Neuter/Return
 - Educational Outreach
 - Media Partnerships
 - Wait Til 8 Kitten Diversion
 - Boarding Facility Partnerships





Background

- By the Numbers (FY25)
 - 67,619 shelter visitors
 - 34,577 requests for citizen response handled
 - 15,417 domestic animal impounds
 - 11,889 pet adoptions, reunifications and other live release outcomes
 - \$77,500 awarded in grants to non-profit organizations helping Orange County pets
 - Animal Services has 110 full-time employees
 - Support networks include 402 foster parents, 330 volunteers and 127 rescue partners



Background

■ Animal Services Advisory Board

- The Advisory Board's purpose is to provide recommendations to Animal Services.
- The seven-person group meets once monthly. Members appointed with Commission input.
- The Animal Services Advisory Board shared unanimous support for these proposed changes in September 2025.





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Suggested Changes

- Mandatory Spay/Neuter On First Impound
- Minimum Requirements For Pet Sales
- Updating Minimum Stray Hold Timeframes
- Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)
- Mandatory Microchipping On Reclaim
- “Dangerous Dog” Language



Suggested Changes

■ Mandatory Spay/Neuter on First Impound

– Concern

- 86% of pets are intact at time of impound, reflecting that the vast majority of community pets are intact.
- Intact pets reproduce, resulting in unplanned for/unwanted litters of puppies/kittens, a portion of which will go on to experience homelessness and require shelter resources.
- Intact animals are more prone to problem behaviors (aggression, wandering) and certain health conditions.

– Solution

- Spay/neuter is the most effective, proactive measure to prevent unwanted/unplanned litters of puppies and kittens.
- Spay/neuter helps alleviate problem behaviors including public safety concerns and promotes pet health.
- Animal Services would like to require sterilization upon first impound, with certain rare exceptions.



Suggested Changes

- **Mandatory Spay/Neuter on First Impound**
 - Spay/neuter (with certain rare exceptions) is mandatory in these jurisdictions:
 - Palm Beach County, Volusia County, Monroe County and Citrus County (cats only)
 - Spay/neuter is required (with certain rare exceptions) after first impound of a pet in these jurisdictions:
 - City of Jacksonville, Clay County, Collier County and Marion County
 - Exceptions typically include pets that are registered show animals, medically unfit, utilized by law enforcement, a guide dog or service dog or in cases where a veterinarian with a pre-established relationship with the pet certifies they are of quality to be bred.
 - Animal Services proposes mirroring these exemptions and requiring mandatory spay/neuter for stray impounds only.



Suggested Changes

- **Mandatory Spay/Neuter on First Impound**
 - Spay/neuter is currently required upon second impound of a pet.
 - Approximately 90 dogs are subject to mandatory sterilization annually. By changing the requirement to occur on first impound, we estimate an additional 700 dogs will be sterilized each year.
 - Because this change will require additional staffing to support the increased surgical volume, an estimated lead time of approximately one year will be needed for implementation.



Suggested Changes

■ Minimum Requirements for Sale of Pets

– Concern

- Residents have expressed concern for unethical sales of pets, “backyard breeders” driven by profit rather than responsible breeding.
- Existing state law establishes parameters for the sale of pets, including the requirement of health certificates, certain vaccines, information on the pet “lemon law” and a minimum age of sale of eight weeks of age.
- This wording is not present in Chapter 5 of the Code of Ordinances, limiting the ability for Animal Services Officers to cite violators.

– Solution

- Animal Services would like to mirror the language of Florida State Statute 828.29 in the local ordinance and establish citation costs for these violations, proposing it as Category II violations.



Suggested Changes

- Minimum Requirements for Sale of Pets
 - These municipalities have ordinances reenforcing the Florida State Statute:
 - Broward County
 - Hillsborough County
 - Palm Beach County
 - City of Jacksonville
 - Pasco County
 - Brevard County
 - Volusia County
 - Osceola County
 - Lake County
 - Collier County
 - Alachua County



Suggested Changes

■ Updating Minimum Stray Holds

- Benchmark shelters have reduced stray hold period to allow animals to flow through shelter faster.
- Examples of similar ordinances in other municipalities:
 - Palm Beach County: States cats without identification (such as tag or microchip) can be immediately processed for placement, no holding period required. Cats with identification and dogs are to be held 4 days.
 - Miami-Dade County: States dogs and cats with identification are to be held for 3 days. The confinement period for puppies specifically is 24 hours. There is no minimum confinement period for unmarked cats.
 - Broward County: States dogs and cats without identification shall be held for 3 business days. There is no confinement period for puppies and kittens less than 4 months of age.



Suggested Changes

■ Updating Minimum Stray Holds

- Examples of similar ordinances in other municipalities:
 - Lake County: States dogs with no identification are to be held 72 hours, dogs with identification are to be held 120 hours. Cats without identification, cats participating in trap-neuter-return program and puppies and kittens under four months of age do not have a hold time.
 - Brevard County: States animals are to be held for five days, excluding day of capture/intake and official holidays.



Suggested Changes

■ Updating Minimum Stray Holds

– Current stray holds:

Stray Dogs (with identification)	5 Working Days
Stray Dogs (without identification)	3 Working Days
Stray Cats (with identification)	5 Working Days
Stray Cats (without identification)	3 Working Days

– Proposed stray holds:

Stray Dogs (with identification)	5 Calendar Days
Stray Dogs (without identification)	3 Calendar Days
Stray Cats (with identification)	3 Calendar Days
Stray Cats (without identification)	1 Calendar Day
Stray Cats (participating in TNR program)	No Hold
Puppies/Kittens (under 4 months of age)	No Hold



Suggested Changes

■ Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

– Concern

- Current ordinance has outdated language on nuisance trapping, which Animal Services discontinued approximately 5 years ago.
- Current ordinance does not have language on trap-neuter-return, which is now the industry standard. Animal Services has operated a successful TNR program for a decade.

– Solution

- Animal Services would like to remove language regarding nuisance trapping and codify language representing the current trap-neuter-return program.

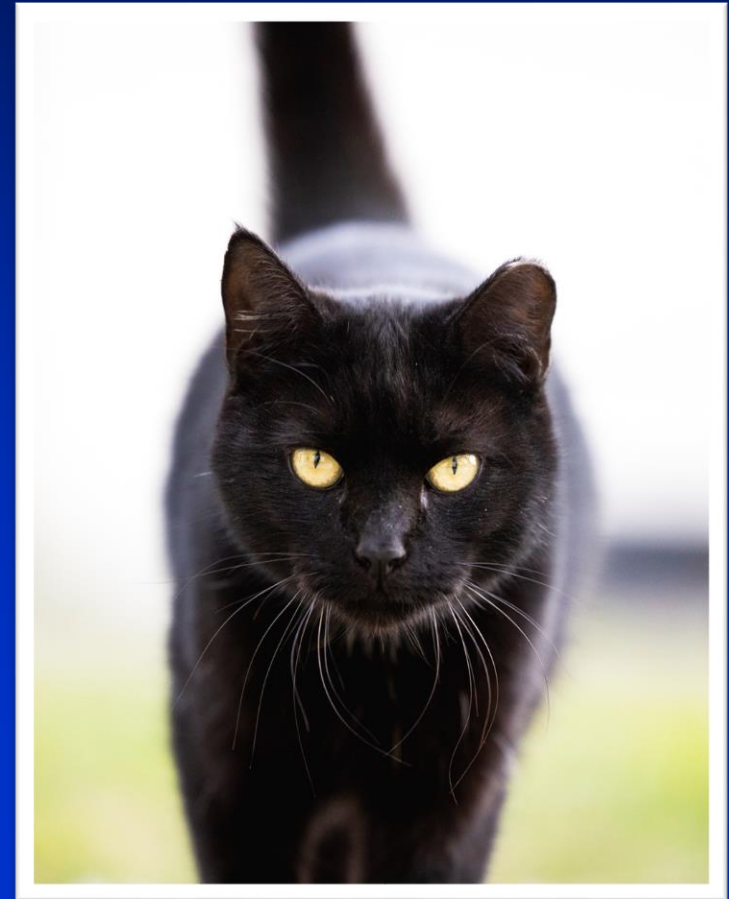


Suggested Changes

▪ Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

– TNR programs are offered through these municipalities:

- Miami-Dade County
- Broward County
- Palm Beach County
- Duval County
- Pinellas County
- Lee County
- Volusia County
- Sarasota County
- Seminole County
- St. Lucie County
- Lake County
- Hernando County
- Sumter County





Suggested Changes

■ Mandatory Microchipping on Reclaim

– Concern

- Animal Services would like to promote microchip identification.
- Animals that have strayed and been impounded at the shelter may become loose again. Animal Services would like to be able to reunite these pets with their families as quickly as possible.

– Solution

- Animal Services would like to have this required for all pets reclaimed from the shelter, in order to expedite future reclaims and conserve shelter resources.
- This would result in approximately 1,500 pets being microchipped. The established individual fee for this service is \$15, which would be paid by the pet owner.

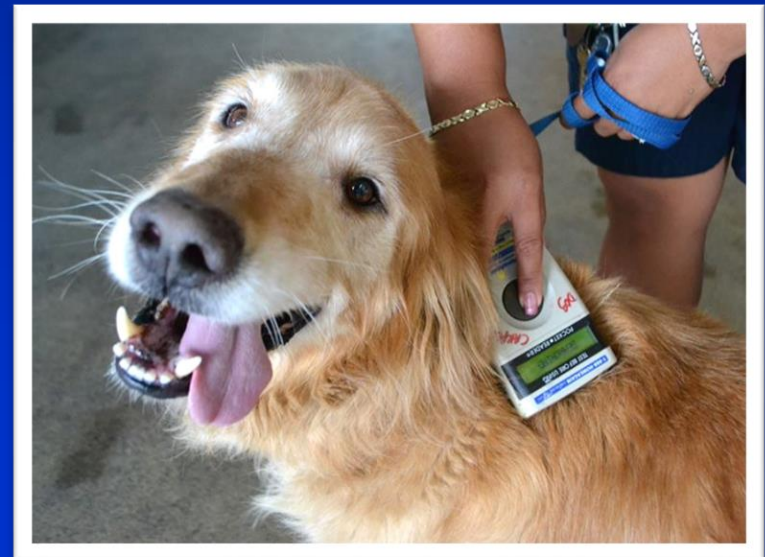


Suggested Changes

■ Mandatory Microchipping on Reclaim

– Microchipping is required in these municipalities:

- Miami-Dade County
- Palm Beach County
- Hillsborough County
- City of Jacksonville
- Polk County
- Lee County
- Pasco County
- Brevard County
- Volusia County
- Manatee County
- Lake County
- Marion County
- Collier County
- St. Johns County
- Leon County
- Alachua County
- Hernando County
- Indian River County





Suggested Changes

- “Dangerous Dog” Language
 - In the interest of public safety, dog attacks are investigated by Animal Services and dogs can be declared “dangerous” if they meet the threshold for classification as defined by Florida State Statute 767.11.
 - Once classified “dangerous” the owner must comply with specific housing and handling requirements, as well as an annual inspection and fee, to mitigate the potential for future attacks.



Suggested Changes

- “Dangerous Dog” Language
 - Concern
 - In May 2025, CS/HB 593 was approved by the Governor and became effective on July 1, 2025.
 - New law has updated requirements, resulting in opposition with current County Code.
 - Solution
 - Animal Services would like to update the ordinance to reflect these changes and ensure compliance with the new statewide law.



Suggested Changes

- “Dangerous Dog” Language
 - The amended law changed the following:
 - Owners of dogs declared “dangerous” must obtain at least \$100,000 in liability insurance coverage.
 - Dogs that have inflicted a level 5 and higher bite on the Dunbar Bite Scale are required to be held at the shelter through the duration of the “dangerous dog” investigation and any potential hearings and appeals.
 - Modifies the current penalty for an owner from a third-degree felony to a second-degree felony when a dog that has previously been declared “dangerous” attacks and causes severe injury or death to a human.



Suggested Changes

- “Dangerous Dog” Language
 - The amended law changed the following:
 - The intentional remove of microchip identification from a dog declared “dangerous” is a third-degree felony.
 - Any person who resists or obstructs an animal control authority in a “dangerous dog” investigation commits a first-degree misdemeanor.
 - Maximum fine for violation of the “dangerous dog” Florida State Statute is \$1,000.
 - Requires dogs with a known “dangerous propensity” to be housed in a “proper enclosure” defined in law.



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Summary

- Proposed ordinance changes will:
 - Broaden mandatory spay/neuter, to reduce the number of unwanted/unplanned litters of pets.
 - Increase enforcement opportunities related to unethical sales of puppies and kittens.
 - Promote responsible pet ownership through increasing mandatory pet microchip identification.
 - Update stray hold times in order to be consistent with benchmark and neighboring counties.
 - Codify the current trap-neuter-return program.
 - Ensure compliance with the newly enacted CS/HB 593 related to “dangerous” dogs.
- Animal Services is seeking guidance on adopting ordinance revisions. Public hearing planned for January 13, 2026.