

## Council Comment – It’s raining cats and dogs at Animal Services!

The White Rocker  
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NOTE: I know all our friends in East Dallas will enjoy this important message from Andy Allen, one of our city’s leading animal advocates. GARY GRIFFITH

Obedying the law is good for animals and it makes you a good neighbor.

The more people I meet, the more I realize how important our animals are to all of us. Especially in District 9 we are truly devoted to our cats and dogs! At the same time, many of us don’t appreciate what a wonderful resource our Animal Services Division is. And sometimes, we don’t fully understand our responsibilities as pet owners and good neighbors.

For example, did you know that Dallas Animal Services is the **best deal in town for adopting** wonderful cats and dogs? Lots of people complain about the city’s euthanasia rate, but they don’t even think of Animal Services when they want to adopt! Adoption fees are much lower at Animal Services than just about anywhere else – only \$92 for a dog and only \$62 for a cat.

Here’s what those fees cover: veterinary examinations, first

set of vaccinations, spay or neuter services, City of Dallas registration, 30-day health insurance, a microchip, a bag of dog or cat food and a free leash for the dog. All that, and the animal too! (If your new puppy or kitten is younger than 3 months, it won’t be sterilized yet – but you’ll be required to have it spayed or neutered within 30 days.)

**Speaking of spaying and neutering**, did you know that any Dallas resident on public assistance can have his or her pet **sterilized for free**? Animal Services has applications on hand and a list of participating clinics – and the city picks up the cost! Its part of our effort to curb pet overpopulation, making Dallas a better place for people and animals alike. Tell your friends and neighbors...we all know someone who can qualify for the program.

It’s a challenge for our Animal Services staff to keep up with all the stray dogs and cats in Dallas, and it’s a sad situation for the animals. That’s why we developed the spay/neuter program – and that’s why we have laws **pertaining to animals**. Animal Services is responsible for enforcing these laws. Penalties can range from citations to fines and, in the case of felonies, even jail time.

Here are a few examples that you may not be aware of:

- All pet cats, dogs and ferrets must be vaccinated against rabies. It’s up to you and your veterinarian whether you choose the one-year or the three-year vaccine, as long as the pet is vaccinated.
- All cats and dogs must be registered annually with the City of Dallas.
- All cats and dogs must be confined to their owner’s property – either within the house or by a fence. (I’ve yet to meet a cat that can’t scale a fence, so consider keeping your cats in the house. It’s the safest place to be.)
- Animal cruelty is against the law! Provide your pets with plenty of food, water, shelter and love.
- Be a good neighbor – obey the law. Carry a baggy when you walk your dog so you can pick up as you go along. And make sure your dog isn’t barking any longer than 15 minutes, whether it’s outside or in the house.

Its easy to be a good pet owner and a good neighbor. All you have to do is obey the laws, have your cat or dog “fixed” and love your pet. Dealing with the other types of animals though, can be a bit more complicated. Here in District 9, for example, many of you have asked me about coyotes and feral cats.

Dallas has just enacted a new law permitting “trap-neuter-return” for feral cats. TNR, as it’s called, has proven more effective in other cities than the old “catch-and-kill” approach. Its just impossible to catch all feral cats, no matter how many officers we have. It makes more sense to let people catch the cats, have them “fixed” and then return them to their colony, so more cats don’t move into

the same territory and resume breeding.

Please understand, though, not just anyone can do this. If you are interested in becoming a colony manager, you must consult with Animal Services and get permission. You will be required to have the cats vaccinated for rabies when they are fixed and to continue feeding them, so they don’t move elsewhere. If you want more details, you’re encouraged to call the Manager of Animal Services.

As for those **coyotes, they’re just a fact of urban life.** Our District 9 representative on the Dallas Animal Shelter Commission, Julie McKinney, assures me that coyotes are much more prevalent than we realize, even in cities. As with feral cats, we can’t hope to hunt

down every single coyote. Instead, Animal Services asks that you notify them if there’s a problem coyote in your area. And keep in mind, the only way you can be sure to protect your pets is to keep them safe indoors.

For more information on any of these regulations, log onto [Dallascityhall.com](http://Dallascityhall.com) or call 214-670-8246. And remember, next time you’re in the market for a new furry friend, check out the great cats and dogs at either of the two city shelters: 8414 Forney Road, east of Buckner; or 525 Shelter Place, across from the Dallas Zoo. You’ll be glad you did.

**Andrea Allen is former chairman of the Dallas Animal Shelter Commission and a District 9 resident.**

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