



CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND TO HOLD PUBLIC FORUM ON PROPOSED ANIMAL REGULATIONS

**** PUBLIC FORUM SET FOR TOMORROW, SEPT. 20TH ****

****TAKE ACTION NOW!!****

The Issue:

The County Commissioners of Charles County, Maryland will be holding an “informal public forum” TOMORROW, Tuesday, September 20th, to discuss proposed animal regulations that would raise breeder fees by more than 700%! The proposal, Bill No. 2011-07, sets forth provisions restricting dog ownership based on breed, imposes new standards of care, and raises licensing fees for pet owners, pet shops, groomers, commercial breeders, animal fanciers, boarding facilities and others. The Commission also plans to hold a “work session” on this bill with the County Director of Emergency Services and Chief County Animal Control Officer on October 4th.

While this *PetAlert* summarizes various provisions of the bill, those interested in its impact are encouraged to read the [complete text of the bill](#) to fully understand all of its ramifications.

The Impact:

Commercial Breeding Facilities and Commercial Animal Establishments

This proposal **raises** licensing fees for commercial breeding facilities and commercial animal establishments. The bill defines a “commercial breeding facility” as “any person, partnership, corporation or other legal entity that owns or possesses breeding stock of four or more unneutered male or unspayed female animals or any combination thereof, for the purpose of charging a fee for stud services or offspring.”

A “commercial animal establishment” is “any person, partnership, corporation or other legal entity engaged in the training, grooming boarding, sale, transfer, auction, or other delivery of any animal/animal services. This includes, but not limited to any pet shop, grooming shop, zoological park, circus, performing animal exhibition, boarding or breeding facility; and any person, partnership, corporation or other legal entity engaged in the training, leasing, or sale of guard dogs.”

The proposed fee schedule for boarding and breeding facilities is as follows:

- Boarding facility authorized to house fewer than 10 dogs or cats: \$100;
- Boarding facility authorized to house 10 or more but fewer than 13 dogs or cats: \$200;
- Boarding facility authorized to house 50 or more dogs or cats: \$250;
- Breeding facility authorized to house fewer than 10 adult animals: \$200;
- Breeding facilities authorized to house 10-49 adult animals: \$750;
- Breeding facilities authorized to house 50+ adult animals: \$1,500;
- Pet shop: \$250;
- Auction: \$300;
- Zoological Park: \$350;
- Circus: \$250;
- Grooming Shop: \$200;
- Petting Zoo: \$300;
- Guard Dog Training Center: \$300; and
- Dog/Cat Show: \$100.

NOTE: Please be aware that the increase in breeder facility licenses is **five times** current fee levels for up to 49 animals and more than **seven times** fee levels for facilities with 50 or more animals. Any entity that does not comply with licensing requirements faces a \$250 fine.

Breed Specific - Dangerous Dog Language

This proposal specifically defines “pit bulls” as potentially dangerous animals. The Commissioners define a “pit bull terrier type dog” as any of the following:

- American Pit Bull Terrier (Pit Bull);
- Staffordshire Bull Terrier;
- American Staffordshire Bull Terrier;
- American Bulldog;
- Dogs which have the appearance of being predominantly of the breeds of dogs listed above; and
- Dogs that have been registered, licensed, adopted, rescued, transferred, vaccinated or referred to on veterinary or other records as a pit bull terrier type of dog at any time.

The listed breeds are automatically subject to all county dangerous dog provisions **EVEN WITHOUT** the finding by the Animal Matters Hearing Board that is required for restricting other breeds of dogs as “dangerous dogs.” The proposal also provides a list of criteria owners of a dog designated as a “dangerous dog” must follow, including certain tethering restrictions, mandatory spay/neuter and microchipping, as well as a requirement to display signage at each entrance and exit

of the premise at which a dangerous dog is housed. The posting must include, in at least three-inch block lettering on signs 8½ x 14 in., in legible bright colors, the message: “DANGEROUS DOG”

Any person who fails to comply with these regulations in the keeping of a dangerous and/or vicious or potentially dangerous animal faces fines of up to \$1,000.

Pet Owner Licensing – Cats

Current county animal laws require “any person firm or corporation that owns, keeps or harbors a dog four months or older to obtain a license from the county.” The Commissioners are now proposing that cats be included in this licensing mandate. Cat licensing would require the same prerequisites as dog licensing, including valid rabies certificates, mandatory spay-neuter, and annually license renewal obligations.

The bill also increases the annual fee for BOTH dog and cat licenses as follows:

- Unneutered male: \$25;
- Unspayed female: \$25;
- Neutered male: \$5; and
- Spayed female: \$5.

Any dog or cat owner found in violation of these licensing requirements will be subject to a \$50 fine.

PIJAC Position:

PIJAC supports reasonable requirements for pet ownership necessary to assure public health and safety, but opposes restrictions that in effect merely curb or eliminate pet ownership. Exorbitant license fees and unnecessary permit requirements represent inappropriate exercise of government authority and infringe on the right to own pets. Restrictions that target the breed of a dog, as opposed to its behavior, do not advance public safety. The breed of a dog does not dictate its disposition, which is determined by training and care of the animal.

Recommended Action:

The public forum planned for tomorrow, September 20, 2011, will be held at 5:30 p.m. at:

Charles County Government Building
First Floor
200 Baltimore Street
La Plata, Maryland 20646.

Anyone affected by this bill and everyone who support the right to keep pets are urged to ATTEND THIS MEETING and [contact individual County Commissioners](#) to let them know that this proposal does not serve the public interest but, rather, compromises pet ownership. **Request the Commissioners to provide a commitment to vote AGAINST this proposal!**

If you have further questions about this proposal, contact PIJAC’s Bambi Nicole Osborne by telephone at 202-452-1525, ext. 105 or via email at Bambi@pijac.org.