



ORANGE COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA
ANIMAL SERVICES

1601 Eubanks Road
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

<http://orangecountync.gov/animalservices>

phone: (919) 942-7387
fax: (919) 918-2393

Proposed Fee Changes FY 2015-2016

1. Multiple Cat Adoption – Peak Season

Under the currently approved fee schedule, Animal Services offers adopters who adopt two cats at the same time a fee reduction on the second cat. The reduced adoption fee for the second cat is \$50.00 instead of the regular price of \$95.00. This applies only for cats adopted during the peak season of April through October when the shelter's cat population is at its highest.

We would like to modify this fee to allow the adoption of second and subsequent cats for free when one cat is adopted at the regular price. As with the existing Second Cat – Peak Season adoption fee, this would only apply during our busiest months of April through October. The fee reduction is intended to offer an incentive for people to adopt multiple cats at a time when the shelter's animal population is at its fullest. Any loss of adoption fees will be offset by increased numbers of positive outcomes and a related reduction of the costs of housing cats for additional days. This also potentially lessens the number of animals that must be euthanized.

2. Discretionary Adoption Fees

Under the currently approved fee schedule, Animal Services has the ability to offer reduced adoption fees for cats (\$50.00 instead of \$95.00) and dogs (\$60.00 instead of \$115.00) during special adoption events throughout the year. Several of the events (Cat Adoption Month, Adopt a Shelter Dog Month, and Home for the Holidays) coincide with national campaigns to encourage adoption of shelter pets. Other events include adoption specials for Valentine's Day, Spring, and Back to School. The typical duration of each event is one month.

We would like the discretion to set adoption fees between \$0.00 and \$95.00 for cats and \$0.00 and \$115.00 for dogs. The intent is to create greater flexibility for marketing our adoption events in new and innovative ways, and to compete with the adoption fees of other animal shelters in the surrounding area.

Our research has shown that many other agencies in the area are offering adoption specials at rates below the amounts set in our current fee schedule. Additionally, shelters are tailoring specials to fit the needs of their situations rather than relying on a schedule planned at the beginning of the year. The feedback we received indicates that the adoption specials are helping to increase animal placements, build public interest and keep the specials feeling fresh, relieve pressure on the shelters at times when capacity is nearing, and offer chances to showcase animals that are not being quickly adopted. Examples of adoption specials include: \$20.00 cat adoptions in Chatham County, \$5.00 cat adoptions and pick-your-own-price adoptions in Durham, "long timer" specials in Wake County, and weekend-long events held by Burlington Animal Services.

Any loss of adoption fees that result from adoption special events will be offset by increased numbers of positive outcomes and a related reduction of the costs of housing animals for additional days. This also potentially lessens the number of animals that must be euthanized. The Adoption revenue line

item will be monitored closely to try to hold any revenue deficits within 10% of budgeted amount, and the frequency, duration, and fee reductions of events will be structured with this goal in mind.

3. Protective Custody Boarding Fee

Animal Services occasionally receives animals in situations deemed as “protective custody” in which the pet’s owner enters a state in which s/he is unable to care for the pet. In these instances, the pet is brought to the Animal Services Center for temporary housing because no other option for assuring the pet will receive care exists. Examples of protective custody cases have included house fires, flash floods, and automobile accidents resulting in hospitalization of the pet owner. Commonalties shared by these types of situations are that they arise through no fault of the pet owners and the impoundment of the animals is not a result of a violation of the Animal Control Ordinance.

According to the Animal Control Ordinance, owners or keepers of domesticated animals shall be responsible for and pay all expenses, boarding costs, redemption privilege taxes, and costs associated with the animal’s impoundment prior to reclaiming the animal. Under the current fee schedule, the options for boarding fees are a \$10.00 / day fee for stray animals and a \$15.00 / day fee for quarantined animals.

We would like to adopt a new fee in the amount of \$0.00 to assess as protective custody boarding for animals held under “protective custody” subject to guidelines approved by the Animal Services Director. We have found this to be consistent with the practices of other shelters in the surrounding area including Burlington Animal Services, Chatham County Animal Services, and Wake County Animal Center.

4. Protective Custody Shelter Redemption Fee

Animal Services occasionally receives animals in situations deemed as “protective custody” in which the pet’s owner enters a state in which s/he is unable to care for the pet. In these instances, the pet is brought to the Animal Services Center for temporary housing because no other option for assuring the pet will receive care exists. Examples of protective custody cases have included house fires, flash floods, and automobile accidents resulting in hospitalization of the pet owner. Commonalties shared by these types of situations are that they arise through no fault of the pet owners and the impoundment of the animals is not a result of a violation of the Animal Control Ordinance.

According to the Animal Control Ordinance, owners or keepers of domesticated animals shall be responsible for and pay all expenses, boarding costs, redemption privilege taxes, and costs associated with the animal’s impoundment prior to reclaiming the animal. The current fee schedule sets the shelter redemption fees at \$10.00, \$50.00, \$100.00, or \$200.00. The redemption fees progress up the scale for each successive time an owner recovers a particular animal.

We would like to adopt a new fee in the amount of \$0.00 to assess as protective custody shelter redemption for animals held under “protective custody” subject to guidelines approved by the Animal Services Director. We have found this to be consistent with the practices of other shelters in the surrounding area including Burlington Animal Services, Chatham County Animal Services, and Wake County Animal Center.

5. Boarding Fee for Euthanized Quarantine Animals

Animal Services routinely houses animals that are held in quarantine for a period of observation after they have bitten a human or been exposed to rabies. In many instances, the owner of a biting animal

does not elect to recover the pet after its release from quarantine, and the pet is euthanized due to the history of aggressive behavior. When an unvaccinated animal is exposed to rabies, North Carolina statute dictates that the pet must be destroyed unless the owner arranges for it to be placed in quarantine for up to six months. The same is true for currently vaccinated animals that do not receive a rabies booster in the specified timeframe following an exposure.

According to the Animal Control Ordinance, owners or keepers of domesticated animals shall be responsible for and pay all expenses, boarding costs, redemption privilege taxes, and costs associated with the animal's impoundment prior to reclaiming the animal. According to the current fee schedule, the boarding fees amount to \$15.00 / day for quarantined animals.

We would like to adopt a new fee in the amount of \$0.00 to assess as the boarding fee for euthanized quarantine animals. Animal Services does incur costs for caring for the animals during the quarantine period, but experience has shown that in many cases the boarding fees will not be received outside of a formal collections process. Additionally, it seems like adding insult to injury to ask a pet's owner to pay for these quarantine boarding fees immediately following the emotionally challenging time of losing their pet.

6. Shelter Redemption Fee

Under the currently approved fee schedule, Animal Services maintains a tiered fee for stray animals recovered from the Animal Services Center by their owners. The present structure specifies that owners must pay the following fee to reclaim a pet from the custody of Animal Services: \$10.00 for 0 previous recoveries, \$50.00 for 1 previous recovery, \$100.00 for 2 previous recoveries, or \$200.00 for 3 or more previous recoveries.

An ordinance amendment is being proposed to the BOCC that adds a differential within each tier that relates to the pet's reproductive status, namely, whether they are sterilized or reproductive. The proposed fees are as follows: \$25.00 / \$50.00 for 0 previous recoveries, \$50.00 / \$100.00 for 1 previous recovery, \$100.00 / \$200.00 for 2 previous recoveries, or \$200.00 / \$400.00 for 3 or more previous recoveries. Additionally, the proposed shelter redemption fee for reproductive animals recovered on 2 or more previous instances includes a \$100.00 spay/neuter deposit. The deposit is refundable if the owner provides Animal Services with proof of sterilization within 90 days from the date of recovery. Staff anticipates an increase in revenue of \$8,000.00 as a result of the proposed fee structure.

7. Microchip Redemption Fee

Under the currently approved fee schedule, Animal Services offers microchip implantation and registration as an elective service for adopters and partners as part of the final placement of animals and to pet owners generally during select low-cost rabies vaccination and microchip clinics. The established fee for a microchip is \$25.00.

An ordinance amendment is being proposed to the BOCC for a microchip redemption fee, which would be assessed as a requirement for all stray cats and dogs recovered from Animal Services (unless the animal already has a microchip at the time of recovery). The intent of the new fee is to help Animal Services identify the owners of some stray animals in hopes that more of them can be recovered from the shelter or returned to their owners in lieu of being impounded. Staff anticipates an increase in revenue of \$11,000.00 as a result of the proposed fee.

8. Pet Tax Exemption

Orange County's Animal Control Ordinance provides that animal license privilege taxes may be set annually as part of the County's budget. According to the current fee schedule, the annual pet tax for sterilized dogs and cats is \$10.00 compared to \$30.00 for non-sterilized cats and dogs. In 2012, a new fee was approved that assesses a \$0.00 annual license privilege tax for sterilized pets owned by senior citizens.

Animal Services partners with the County's Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide low-cost spay / neuter services to residents who receive public assistance. DSS staff provided feedback indicating that many of their clients who would qualify for these programs express a reluctance to participate because they are concerned about getting "entered into the system" and having to pay the annual licensing tax. Staff at the Durham Animal Protection Society conveyed that Durham County decided to end their licensing program two years ago due to a similar concern shared by some citizens that was deterring them from vaccinating pets for rabies.

We would like to adopt a new fee in the amount of \$0.00 to assess as the annual license privilege tax for sterilized pets owned by citizens receiving public assistance subject to guidelines approved by the Animal Services Director. We hope this new fee would remove the perceived barrier that is keeping us from reaching people we would like to target with low-cost spay/neuter resources while also encouraging compliance with vaccinating pets for rabies. The cost of sheltering dogs and cats that could have been prevented by sterilizing pets through this program far outweighs any revenue lost by licensing at the existing rates. Additionally, the information from DSS and Durham suggests that we are not receiving licensing revenue from these citizens now anyway since they are avoiding the things that trigger our pet tax notices.

| | | Burlington Animal Services | Charlotte Mecklenburg Animal Care & Control | Chatham County Animal Services | Durham Animal Protection Society | Forsyth County Animal Control | Wake County Animal Center |
|--|----------------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| Adoption Specials / Flexible Adoption Fees | Adoption Specials | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| | Reduced Fees | 1/2 price | Variable | \$20.00 | Discretionary | Variable | full price - cost may be offset by sponsorship |
| | Examples | weekend events during spring, summer; specials around Christmas | Based on need, typically run for 1 month or more | Need driven (shelter full of cats = cat adoption special) | weekend events, 2-week events, month-long events; variable pricing including \$5, half price, pick your price | Use sliding scale to promote adoption of older pets, specials for handicap or pets from cruelty cases | "Long timer" special |
| | Promotion | Facebook, flyers, media releases, social media shares / placement partners, city newsletter & water bills | Social media, press release, vet offices, city & county distribution lists | Facebook, flyers at Health Dept | Social Media, Social Media shares, word of mouth, ads in local papers | | volunteers, Twitter, Facebook, webpage, TV spots on local stations |
| | Guidelines | At discretion of Animal Services Director | Need based | Need based | Need based | | No formal criteria, need based |
| | Financial Impact | Increased revenues due to higher number of adoptions | Not considered - do not look to generate funds | No | Fundraise for events - budget donations to cover cost of events and decide duration and marketing strategy | Increased 3% | N/A |
| | Effect on Placements | Increased placements | | Most events produce results (getting animals adopted, reducing shelter population) | Increase placements - used to sustain adoption during fall, place older kittens and other harder to place pets | Increased 29% | Events seem to help |
| | Other Considerations | Short duration generates interest and keeps things fresh; single weekend events can be overwhelming for staff | | | Pick your price event worked well - avg \$45, only 1 person wanted free pet then donated \$400 after adopting, some people pay more than regular adoption fee | nonprofit group may sponsor adoption fees to offset costs | Is it the special event or the reduced fee that is driving placements? |
| Fee Waivers | Examples of fees | Recovery, boarding, euthanasia | recovery, boarding | recovery, boarding | recovery, boarding | boarding | recovery, boarding |
| | Authority to Waive | Yes | Most staff have authority to waive fees; OAs are able to negotiate | Waive 1st day board if recovered same-day; anything else requires supervisor approval | No - these fees go to County per contract and are set by ordinance; able to fundraise to cover costs of fees in special circumstances | Yes - can determine how to calculate fees owed and how to handle recovery | RTO - no, set by ordinance; have discretion w/ boarding, but prefer to work out payment plan rather than waiver |
| | When? | At discretion of Animal Services Director - could be difference between RTO vs. E&D, may allow adoption rather than RTO | Ex. waive reclaim fees if owner pays \$80 fee for Humane Society to sterilize pet | Waive fees if owner is not at fault (ex. accident, hospitalization) and impound not related to ACO violation | | payment plans, issue civil suit for violation that can be dismissed if payment is received | No charge for protective custody |
| | Other Considerations | Good outcome overrides revenue concerns | | | | Negligible financial impact | |
| Licensing | Licensing Program | No | Yes | No | No, stopped ~2 years ago - licensing deterred people from getting rabies vaccine for pets because they would then be entered into the system | Yes | No |
| | Exemptions | | Seniors, Military, could have other groups | | Senior citizen exemption if pet was altered | Handicap assistance dogs, working dogs that are LE or public safety, animals in custody of nonprofit | |
| | Guidelines | | None in writing | | | Current on rabies | |
| | Communication | | Website, front desk | | | webpage, Facebook, community events, clinics and annual campaigns, ACOs | |
| | Financial Impact | | None | | | | |
| | Negative Perception | | No public resistance | | | No public resistance | |
| Other Considerations | | | | | | | |