

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
SUBJECT: APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE SONOMA COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES REVISED FEES

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager's Office and Sonoma County Animal Services recommend that the Council, by resolution, approve and adopt the Sonoma County Animal Services revised fees effective July 1, 2026. This item has no impact on current fiscal year budget.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sonoma County Animal Services (SCAS) is proposing a series of fee increases to enhance cost recovery for services provided to residents within the jurisdiction it serves.

GOAL

This item relates to Council Goal #4 - Foster a Safe, Healthy, and Inclusive Community by supporting sheltering, rabies control, and field services provided by Sonoma County Animal Services within the City of Santa Rosa..

BACKGROUND/PRIOR COUNCIL REVIEW

Sonoma County Animal Services is responsible for enforcing city and county ordinances and state laws relating to animals. SCAS serves the City of Santa Rosa and unincorporated Sonoma County, covering approximately 1,575 square miles and nearly 500,000 residents, and operates an animal shelter that serves approximately 2,800 animals annually.

The skilled and dedicated staff protect the health and safety of people and animals by providing vital services including:

- licensing and vaccination,
- investigating and prosecuting animal cruelty,
- reducing pet overpopulation through spay/neuter programs and
- placing adoptable animals into caring homes.

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As needs evolve and costs change, SCAS continues to refine how it delivers services and how those services are funded, consistent with prior fee resolutions presented to Council, including:

- December 5, 2023 – Resolution No. RES-2023-195, approving and adopting the Sonoma County Animal Service Revised Fees
- July 9, 2019 – Resolution No. RES-2019-092, approving and adopting the Sonoma County Animal Service Revised Fees
- July 10, 2018 – Resolution No. RES-2018-117, approving and adopting the Sonoma County Animal Service Revised Fees
- July 11, 2017 – Resolution No. RES-2017-134, approving and adopting the Sonoma County Animal Services Revised Fees
- September 15, 2015 – Resolution No. 28690, adopting revised fees and approving time- limited amnesty for dog license fee and penalties.

ANALYSIS

A core part of the SCAS mission is ensuring that every animal has a chance for a healthy, stable home. SCAS recognizes that when fees are too high, fewer pets receive preventative care. This leads to longer shelter stays, higher operational costs, and fewer positive outcomes for animals. To address this, SCAS has prioritized affordability and accessibility alongside fiscal accountability.

The blended approach means:

1. Not all fees are set at the full cost of recovery and some services remain intentionally subsidized so that residents can continue to access critical animal services without substantial financial barriers.
2. Affordability drives positive outcomes. When community members can more easily afford to adopt or vaccinate their pets, animals stay healthier, shelter stays are shorter and facilities are less crowded, and it leads to better public health overall.

The County's goal is to recover the cost of provided services while keeping them affordable for the community. To achieve this, the County provides subsidies that reduce the amount residents pay for key services. These subsidies are built into the fee structure and funded through County support approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Subsidies help offset costs in several important areas:

- Adoptions: Lower fees encourage more adoptions, helping animals find homes faster.
- Licensing: Affordable licensing promotes compliance with County and City ordinances and responsible pet ownership.
- Spay/Neuter and Vaccination Programs: Reduced fees make preventive care accessible and support city-wide animal and public health.

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Most of the proposed fees for the FY 2026/27 fee increase by approximately 12% and these adjustments ensure fees more accurately align with the cost of each service provided. Fees which increase more than 12% are due to several factors including increased costs for veterinary pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and other animal care supplies.

Six new fees were added to provide the public with private cremation options for their pets and transport options for livestock:

- Private Pet Cremations 3-49lbs: \$115.00
- Private Pet Cremations 50-99lbs: \$150.00
- Private Pet Cremations 100+lbs: \$235.00
- Private Pet Cremation Processing: \$20.00
- ACO Pet Disposal Pickup: \$210.00
- Outside Livestock Transport: Variable
 - *Determined by animal size, transport distance, and level of care required.*

Some activities such as public patrols and compliance checks by Animal Control Officers are not billable to individual residents through fees. Sonoma County fully covers these costs, ensuring that critical animal safety and community protection services remain available to everyone.

By approving the adjusted fee schedule, the City supports:

- Financial sustainability for vital public services.
- Equitable access for all residents.
- A strong community partnership that keeps animals safe.

It is recommended by the City Manager's Office and Sonoma County Animal Services that the Council adopt the proposed fee schedule for FY 2026/27 to ensure SCAS can continue providing high-quality, life-saving services to protect animals and serve the Santa Rosa community.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fee adjustments for animal impound and boarding fees, license fees and other health/safety related charges are estimated to increase revenue for Sonoma County Animal Services by \$52,767.

The City of Santa Rosa will receive credit consistent with its County of Sonoma animal services agreement, for which ongoing General Fund expenditures were previously approved.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, the recommended action is not a “project” subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it does not have a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. In the alternative, the recommended action is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the recommended action may have a significant effect on the environment.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Sonoma County Board of Supervisors Animal Services Ordinance
- Resolution
- Exhibit A – Sonoma County Animal Services Revised Fee Chart FY26-27

PRESENTER(S)

Luke Faser, Administrative Analyst – City Manager’s Office
Brian Whipple, Director of Animal Services – Sonoma County Animal Services
Michelle Rene, Community Relations Supervisor – Sonoma County Animal Services