

# The American Sporting Dog Alliance

*The Unified Voice of Sporting Dog Owners Nationwide*

## Vote Delayed On Chicago

# Spay And Neuter Mandate

***Many Dog Owners Apathetic While Bob Barker Brags That Ordinance 'Will Spread Like Wildfire'***

by JOHN YATES

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CHICAGO – (July 30 2008) A joint committee of Chicago City Council has delayed voting on a proposed mandatory spay and neuter ordinance until September in order to allow enough time for both sides to testify. More than four hours of testimony was heard Tuesday, but the committees ran out of time before many people could speak.

The September meeting date has not been set, but Finance Committee Chairman Ed Burke (D-14<sup>th</sup>) said that everyone who has signed up to testify would get a chance to speak. Aldermen Burke and Virginia Rugai (D-19<sup>th</sup>) are cosponsors of the ordinance, which would require all dogs and cats to be spayed or neutered at six months of age. The ordinance allows some exemptions for an annual fee of \$100 per dog or cat, but imposes strict limitations, and subjects applicants to home inspections and criminal background checks for every family member.

Thus far, 31 people have signed up to speak against the ordinance, compared to 52 animal rights activists who will speak in favor of it.

Animal rights groups packed the meeting with supporters and brought in speakers of national prominence, including Judy Mancuso and celebrity television personality Bob Barker, who have been active in trying to get a statewide pet sterilization law passed in their home state of California. The head of the Illinois Chapter of the radical Humane Society of the United States, Jordan Matyas, and Paula Fasseas, founder of the elite and wealthy PAWS rescue program in Chicago, also addressed Council in support of the ordinance.

Mancuso and Barker are known for their emotional presentations that stir audiences, and Barker received a standing ovation. Both are closely linked to animal rights groups that want to eliminate animal ownership, farming of animals and hunting.

In contrast, dog ownership advocates did not show up in force for the meeting and were outnumbered by animal rights activists by a two-to-one margin. About 100 animal rights activists attended the meeting, but only about 50 people came to oppose the ordinance.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance and other organizations launched a large-scale public information campaign in the weeks prior to the committee meeting, but dog owners, cat owners and sportsmen simply did not turn out for the meeting. National research suggests that there are more than 300,000 dog owners in Chicago.

Apathy has plagued advocates for dog ownership since the beginning of the animal rights push several years ago. This has caused animal rights legislation to advance in California, Pennsylvania and other states, and a spay/neuter mandate to be passed into law in Dallas this past June.

Polls show clearly that a vast majority of ordinary Americans oppose mandatory pet sterilization. Polls showing overwhelming opposition to spay/neuter mandates this year were sponsored by *Parade Magazine*, MSN/NBC, California newspapers and, just this week, by the *Chicago Tribune*. At this writing, 70 percent of the 8,768 participants in the Chicago poll had voiced opposition to the proposed ordinance.

While opposition to these kinds of laws has consistently been overwhelming, animal ownership advocates also have shown a strong tendency to shun involvement in the political process that can either defend their rights or take them away.

Barker, interviewed after the meeting, said the goal of animal rights groups is to use a Chicago ordinance as a springboard to passing similar ordinances in other cities, and also to pass a statewide spay/neuter mandate in Illinois.

"If you pass this ordinance here there will be cities all over the Midwest and coasts that will pass this as well, and we really need this legislation," Barker said. "...It will spread like wildfire."

With the bitter lesson of Dallas in mind, the American Sporting Dog Alliance emphatically urges dog owners and professionals, sportsmen and farmers to get involved now. We are asking these people to write letters to elected

officials, attend meetings, speak out, write letters to the editor, network with other dog owners, participate in message boards and to join at least one of the several fine organizations that are fighting for your rights.

Opponents of the Chicago ordinance who testified Tuesday did an excellent job of delivering the facts, although perhaps some of them lacked the charisma of the public relations pros and TV stars from California.

Very effective oral and written testimony in opposition to the ordinance was presented by the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association, and the 1,000-member Chicago Veterinary Medical Association. Both groups of veterinarians came out strongly against the ordinance.

"Although the ordinance's stated goals to reduce the number of unwanted pets and gang activity are laudable, the reality is that it (the ordinance) will have no effect on these problems. Instead, it will create some serious public health concerns, cause many animals to be denied necessary health care, and will trample on the personal property rights of conscientious pet owners," Dr. Steve Dullard, ISVMA Legislative Committee Chair, told the aldermen.

"The idea that mandatory spay/neuter will change a gangbanger's behavior or that dog bite injuries will vanish is absurd," he said. Those are two reasons that Burke and Rugai cite as justifications for the ordinance.

Barker said that all that the veterinarians care about is money, and Mancuso dismissed the medical testimony by claiming that most rank and file veterinarians favor the ordinance.

Dr. Shannon Greeley, speaking for the Chicago veterinarians, said the entire membership of CVMA is opposed to the ordinance, not just the board. Greeley testified that the problems with the ordinance could have been avoided if City Council had asked veterinarians to participate in the planning process.

Some aldermen left the room when the veterinarians were testifying, and Alderman Michele Harris suggested that the veterinarians were merely piqued because they were not involved in planning the ordinance.

Dr. Greeley said the issue is not simply that veterinarians were offended. She said the real issue is that veterinarians have the expertise and experience to help council create workable programs.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which operates many animal shelters around the country, also is opposed to mandatory pet sterilization, Dr. Greeley said.

Here is the ASPCA's position statement: "The ASPCA supports programs that provide incentives to the public to spay or neuter their companion animals. The ASPCA does not support local laws that mandate the sterilization of all cats and dogs."

Steve Dale, a local animal behavioral consultant and radio talk show host, countered the inaccurate assertions in Barker's and Mancuso's testimony. Dale said similar ordinances have failed everywhere they have been tried. Most recently, he said, the Durango, Colorado, animal control director told him that a new ordinance there was a complete failure.

Other speakers questioned the city's ability to pay for enforcing the ordinance. Before the hearing on the ordinance, the aldermen were informed that the City of Chicago has a projected multi-million budget shortfall this year and will have to lay off employees.

Chicago Animal Care and Control Executive Director Sandra Alfred spoke in favor of the ordinance, but questioned the city's ability to pay for enforcement.

Several aldermen expressed other kinds of reservations about the ordinance.

"We can't even enforce the licensing of our dogs in the city," said Alderman Bob Fioretti (D-2). He said that he doubts 10-percent of the dogs in the city are licensed, because people know that the city does not have the manpower to do the job.

Alderman Ray Suarez (31st), said it is another example of government interference in private lives. Alderman Freddrenna Lyle (6th) expressed concern that under the ordinance she wouldn't be able to mate her Lhasa Apso with another cute dog unless she obtained a breeders license.

## What You Can Do To Help

Please contact local organizers to coordinate your participation and plug into what we are doing. They are Karen Perry ([ouilmette4@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ouilmette4@sbcglobal.net)), Margo Milde ([mrm1206@yahoo.com](mailto:mrm1206@yahoo.com)) and Michele Smith ([msmith@cmscrescue.com](mailto:msmith@cmscrescue.com)).

It is very important for dog owners to contact City Council members before the September committee meeting. This ordinance can be stopped if strong opposition arises from every neighborhood in Chicago, and from all segments of the dog community. Letters sent to the aldermen by surface mail are the most effective, followed by faxes and phone calls. Emails are the least effective. Even if they are brief, personal letters are much more effective than form letters.

Here is a link to the web pages of each of the aldermen, where you will find contact information:

<http://egov.cityofchicago.org/city/webportal/portalProgramAction.do?programId=536879154&channelId=-536879035&topChannelName=Government>.

Here is a link to City Council Committees: <http://www.chicityclerk.com/standingcommettee.php>. Tuesday's meeting will involve both the Committee on Finance and the Committee on License and Consumer Protection. This web page gives links to each committee member.

Next, please contact your friends and members and officers of any clubs or organizations you belong to that can help. These include dog clubs, sportsmen's clubs, farmers' groups and firearms rights organizations. Hunters, farmers and firearms enthusiasts know that these kinds of laws stem from animal rights groups that also want to eliminate hunting, raising animals for food and the right to keep and bear arms.

In addition, please join a dog owners' rights advocacy organization that reflects your personal concerns and priorities.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance represents owners, hobby breeders and professionals who work with breeds of dogs that are used for hunting. We are a grassroots movement working to protect the rights of dog owners, and to assure that the traditional relationships between dogs and humans maintains its rightful place in American society and life. Please visit us on the web at <http://www.americansportingdogalliance.org> or contact us at [asda@csonline.net](mailto:asda@csonline.net).

The American Sporting Dog Alliance also needs your help so that we can continue to work to protect the rights of dog owners. Your membership, participation and support are truly essential to the success of our mission. We are funded solely by the donations of our members, and maintain strict independence.

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Have You Joined Yet?

The American Sporting Dog Alliance

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Please Email Us At: [asda@csonline.net](mailto:asda@csonline.net)

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