



## ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAMS

LA Animal Services is not immune to the current economic downturn. The City of Los Angeles is facing a \$500 million deficit. Every department is being asked to consider severe budget cuts – cuts that may amount to as much as 30% before the ongoing Fiscal Year 2010 budget process is over.

The Department started to feel the pain last year when City Council approved a \$200,000 reduction to the spay/neuter coupon and mobile programs in the '08 FY Budget. Then in response to many dire economic forecasts the City Council cut another \$100,000 from this year's programs in December '08. Most recently, the City Council directed the Department to make up a deficit in our Salaries Account understanding this would require further reductions to our spay/neuter funding. The salary deficit is the result of a \$414,000 budget cut that was paid for by a City plan requiring employees to take six mandatory furlough days this fiscal year. However, the mandate was rescinded and the funding was not restored. Instead we are being asked to make up this deficit through our own expense and spay/neuter funds.

The Department has saved over \$100,000 of this shortfall to date. Another \$150,000 has been identified through belt-tightening in our expense accounts. With an alarming increase in the number of dogs and cats entering the City's system in 2008 we need to maintain staffing levels to ensure the health, safety and welfare of animals and people in the City of Los Angeles. Since we cannot afford to lay any employees off and our attrition rate is very low our only recourse is to make up the remaining \$150,000 deficit through another reduction in our spay/neuter coupon and mobile programs.

This being the case, the Department is suspending the distribution of all \$30 discount and \$70 free coupons at this time. We are taking this step because there is a reasonable expectation that the City may cut our spay/neuter funding for some or all of the remaining fiscal year.

Coupons already distributed will be honored. However, to ensure we do not issue coupons for which we may not have funding, we have asked our animal care centers and rescue partners to stop distributing coupons as of March 10, 2009. All unused coupon books must be returned to the Department for auditing purposes. We have notified the Sam Simon Foundation to cease sterilizations that depend on City reimbursement. We will, however, continue to fund The Amanda Foundation's efforts on behalf of the City.

Once we know what the final funding cut is we will be in a position to better assess available revenues and resume distribution of coupons to the extent that we are confident we have funds.

Spay/neuter funding for the next fiscal year is unknown at this time. The Department maximizes every opportunity to express the importance of spay/neuter programs to reduce pet overpopulation and the long term cost of animal services. However, the City is facing a daunting challenge that will undoubtedly result in significant service reductions and even layoffs. As is the case at all levels of government at this time emergency measures must be taken. More than ever before it is important for all of us to pull together as a community to ensure our animals are not left behind.