





Gene Lauer, Director of Environmental Resources indicated in his memo commenting on this legislation that female cats and dogs are commonly spayed at six months of age while the males are not normally neutered until nine months of age, the time at which the male sexual organs normally mature.

Also, all of our neighboring jurisdictions require dogs to be licensed at four months of age which is consistent with the national trend in animal control.

The present fee is \$8.00 for licensing a cat or dog in the County. However, as an incentive for owners to have their pets sterilized the County offers a discount on the license if the animal is sterilized.

Mrs. Holzer indicated the law discourages people from buying the dog tags. Some residents may wait until the animal has reached the age for safe sterilization therefore allowing them to receive a discount on the tags.

The Health Officer wrote in his memo dated January 30, 1991 " Because rabies is endemic in the wild animal population of Maryland, the focus must be on age of rabies vaccination. The spaying and neutering of animals is an important secondary goal, and should be promoted through other incentive plans."

The Committee agreed there was some inconsistency in the fee structure yet understood the importance of having the animals receive the proper vaccinations against rabies at the time of licensing. It was suggested the Department of Environmental Resources needed to address the problem of the discount.

Staff was directed to draft a letter to the Department recommending that if a pet is neutered during the first year of the animal's life and is licensed at the current \$8.00 fee then the owner is entitled to a reduced fee for the second year license equal to the amount saved if the animal had been neutered at the time of the first year licensing (\$3.00). In the following years the pet owner would pay only \$5.00 for each license since the animal would be neutered.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION/FISCAL IMPACT**

**(Includes reason for proposal, as well as any unique statutory requirements)**

Dog and cat owners are currently required to license their pets at four months of age. This legislation increases this age to six months, in order to make the licensing requirement consistent with the age at which these animals may be spayed and neutered.