Memorandum

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Date: September 2, 2008

To: Honorable Chairman Bruno A. Barreiro
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Item 12(B)5

From: George M. Burgess
County Manager

Subject: Courtesy Renewal Notices Status Report

Earlier this year (January 2008) the Board of County Commissioners approved the amendment of Chapter 5 of the Code of Miami-Dade County pertaining to Animal Services. The changes to the Code were made to address contradictory language, vague information and a number of other issues including the establishment of an annual hobby breeder's license (as opposed to a lifetime license), an increase in the redemption fee for unsterilized pets, the designation of the pet's license anniversary date, and a $5 surcharge to each civil penalty to be used to supplement the training of Animal Control Officers.

The Department also made a key change in the ability to cite instead of warn in the absence of a history of compliance. This change has created confusion relative to the customary sending of courtesy renewal notices. This change in the Code was predominantly made to address pet owners that purposely failed to license and vaccinate their pets in an effort to evade the regulatory process. In the old process, any pet owner that purposely failed to license and vaccinate his/her dog, required the issuance of a 30 day warning. Whereas, a lawful and abiding pet owner (regardless of history of compliance) that was a few days late for license renewal and rabies inoculation, would receive a civil citation. The Department believes that this is a highly inequitable process. The revisions to the warning requirement give the Department the option of citing the constituent who was not historically compliant and is a more equitable and consistent scenario.

Through a departmental policy and mandate of my office, Animal Services is issuing Courtesy Renewal Notices to all pet owners duly licensed in Miami-Dade County (see attachment). Currently, Animal Services sends an average of 15,000 Courtesy Renewal Notices per month as reminders to pet owners that their dog is due for a rabies inoculation and/or license.

Lastly, the ability to cite habitual offenders instead of warn provides an incentive for all pet owners to vaccinate their pets against rabies and thus increasing both animal and public safety.

Assistant County Manager

Attachment