

Athens repeals pet license ordinance

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Registration said to cost more than it was bringing in

ATHENS - Dog and cat owners in the city won't have to register their pets with the city next year.

The City Council on Monday night repealed the section of the animal control law that requires pets to be registered.

City officials said the registration was costing the city more money than it was bringing in and that it was a duplication of services with a state health law that requires dogs to be vaccinated for rabies.

City Clerk John Hamilton said in a work session before the meeting that the \$3 registration fee for spayed or neutered cats and dogs and the \$6 fee for pets not spayed or neutered "didn't come anywhere close" to covering the city's costs for administering the program.

The fees generated \$4,000 this year and \$4,800 last year, he said.

Owners were required to register their pets in Hamilton's office each January, but won't have to next month after Monday night's council action.

"It costs more to enforce it than it's worth," said council President John Crutcher.

Councilman Ronnie Marks said local veterinarian Dr. John Pittman told him that there are between 20,000 and 25,000 dogs in the city, but only 1,500 registered.

The registration was added to the animal control law in 1986 to ensure that dogs were vaccinated, officials said. Crutcher said a dog with a rabies tag can be traced to its owner and serves the same purpose as the city registration requirement.

Animal control officers, who work out of the police department, will continue to respond to calls about stray or vicious animals, officials said.

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