

From: Ann [REDACTED]

To: Crayton, Monique (BOS); Calvillo, Angela (BOS); Torres, Michael Angelo (DPH - Contractor)

Ken [REDACTED]

?

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

To the San Francisco Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee, San Francisco Board of Supervisors, and the San Francisco Dept. of Public Health:

Attached is a statement of public comment from Dr. Ken [REDACTED], a San Francisco veterinarian, regarding the proposed 1 year spay and neuter requirement for all dogs in the City.

Please read it and include it in your deliberations as to whether this legislation, as written, serves the best interest of the dogs it will affect.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this most important issue regarding the health of our beloved dogs.

Yours,

Ann Belden

Written Public Comment

Proposed Mandatory Spay/Neuter Ordinance

Ken [REDACTED] San Francisco, CA 94114

Executive Summary

I support the goal of reducing animal suffering and shelter overcrowding. However, a universal spay/neuter mandate is not supported by current veterinary science and does not address the root causes of overpopulation.

Sterilization outcomes vary by breed, size, and timing, and may increase health risks in some dogs. Additionally, neutering is not a reliable solution for aggression.

More effective approaches focus on access to care, targeted programs, and community support. I respectfully urge consideration of a more flexible, evidence-based strategy.

## Introduction

I am a San Francisco resident since 1984, a licensed veterinarian providing in-home end-of-life care for companion animals throughout the Bay Area, a founder of Pets Are Wonderful Support (PAWS), and a past member of the San Francisco Animal Care & Control Commission.

I write in support of the goals behind this ordinance—reducing animal suffering, preventing unwanted litters, and alleviating shelter strain. These are urgent and worthy aims.

However, the current proposal does not fully reflect contemporary veterinary science and risks being less effective than available alternatives. I respectfully ask this body to consider a more targeted, evidence-informed approach.

### 1. Mandates Alone Don't Solve Overpopulation

Spay/neuter is a proven tool—but shelter overcrowding is driven primarily by:

- Economic hardship
- Limited access to veterinary care
- Lack of behavioral support A mandate that does not address these root causes treats the symptom, not the disease.

Community-based, subsidized access models have consistently outperformed enforcement-only approaches in both compliance and outcomes. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) affirms that program design and accessibility are critical to effectiveness.

### 2. The Science No Longer Supports a Universal Standard

This is the most important point I want to leave with you:

Sterilization is not biologically neutral for all dogs.

Peer-reviewed research—including multiple breed-specific studies from UC Davis (Hart et al., 2013–2020) and a landmark PLoS ONE study (Torres de la Riva et al., 2013)—documents significantly increased risks of orthopedic disease and certain cancers in early-neutered large and giant breeds.

A universal mandate removes a veterinarian's ability to make individualized medical recommendations.

At minimum, the ordinance should include a clear and accessible medical exemption process.

Key Evidence:

- Hart et al. (UC Davis, 2013–2020): Increased joint disorders and certain cancers in early-neutered large breeds
- Torres de la Riva et al. (2013, PLoS ONE): Increased hip dysplasia and cranial cruciate ligament tears in neutered Golden Retrievers

### 3. Neutering Is Not a Reliable Safety Tool

The ordinance may be premised, in part, on the belief that neutering reduces aggression. The evidence does not consistently support this.

The American College of Veterinary Behaviorists states clearly:

Neutering alone is not a reliable treatment for aggression.

Research by Farhooody et al. (2018, *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*) found gonadectomy associated with increased fearfulness and some aggressive behaviors in certain contexts.

Public safety arguments for this mandate are not strongly supported by current science.

#### 4. Trust Is a Public Health Asset

Policies perceived as punitive discourage engagement.

When pet owners distrust institutions, they disengage from veterinary care entirely—the opposite of what this ordinance intends.

Effective animal welfare policy is built on partnership, not enforcement.

#### A More Effective Path Forward

The evidence supports a strategy that:

- Expands access to low-cost spay/neuter services
- Targets high-risk and underserved populations
- Provides behavioral support to reduce surrender
- Partners with veterinary professionals rather than constraining them

Both the AVMA and ASPCA endorse this community-centered model as the most sustainable approach to population control.

#### Conclusion

This ordinance comes from a place of compassion—and so does my opposition to it in its current form.

I urge this body to pursue an approach that:

- Expands access
- Supports families
- Respects veterinary science
- Honors the human–animal bond

I am available to advise on evidence-based alternatives and welcome further dialogue.

#### Selected References

- Hart BL et al. (2013–2020). Breed-specific effects of neutering on joint disorders and cancers. University of California, Davis
- Torres de la Riva G et al. (2013). Effects of neutering on joint disorders and cancers in Golden Retrievers. PLoS ONE
- Farhooody P et al. (2018). Aggression and behavior in gonadectomized dogs. Frontiers in Veterinary Science
- American Veterinary Medical Association. Spay/Neuter Policy Statements
- American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. Position Statements
- American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Community Spay/Neuter Guidance

Ken 

A Beloved Farewell

Noah [REDACTED]

Torres, Michael Angelo (DPH - Contractor)

?

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

March 16, 2026

Commission of Animal Control and Welfare  
Michael Angelo Torres – Chairperson

RE: Ordinance (File #251162) to amend the health code, requiring all dogs over a certain age to be spayed, neutered

Dear Chair Torres:

My name is Noah [REDACTED], and I am a long-time San Francisco resident of D11 and dog owner. I am reaching out today to request you withdraw your support for a proposed mandatory spay/neuter ordinance for all dogs (Ordinance File #251162). Please advocate for science and the choice of responsible dog owners in our neighborhood. Science and San Franciscan CHOICE should be considered in the debate of this ordinance.

I support reducing shelter intake and euthanasia, but a one-size-fits-all surgical mandate ignores the evolving veterinary science on reproductive hormones and long-term health. Recent reviews and cohort studies show that the health impacts of gonad removal are complex and highly individual, varying by breed, sex, and age at surgery (Arroube & Pereira, 2025).

First, there is growing evidence that keeping a dog intact, or at least delaying sterilization, can reduce the risk of certain orthopedic problems. Large cohort work in popular breeds like Labradors and Golden Retrievers has shown that early neutering (especially before 12 months) is associated with significantly higher rates of hip dysplasia, cranial cruciate ligament tears, and elbow dysplasia compared with intact dogs, sometimes increasing joint disorders four- to five-fold. These joint diseases are painful, expensive to treat, and can permanently reduce mobility and quality of life (Hart, Hart, [et.al](#) 2014).

Second, several studies suggest that lifetime exposure to natural hormones may be protective against some cancers and other chronic conditions. A long-term database analysis of tens of thousands of dogs found that sterilized dogs had higher odds of dying from certain cancers and autoimmune diseases, while intact dogs were relatively less likely to die from these causes. More recent work on hormone-sparing

approaches, such as vasectomy or ovary-sparing spay, has found that dogs with longer exposure to their natural hormones had reduced odds of a range of health problems and nuisance behaviors and lived longer than those who had their gonads removed early in life. In other words, completely removing hormones is not the only way to be a responsible owner and may in some cases trade one set of health risks for another (Hoffman, Creevy, et. al 2013).

Third, major evidence reviews now emphasize that the risks and benefits of neutering are not uniform and that decisions should be made case-by-case between an owner and their veterinarian, considering breed, size, intended activity, and individual medical history. For some dogs, especially small mixed breeds, early spay/neuter may be appropriate. For others, particularly large or athletic dogs, the best choice for long-term joint and cancer risk may be to remain intact longer, use a hormone-sparing procedure, or time surgery later in life. A blanket legal mandate removes that nuance and forces owners and vets to follow the law rather than the science for the individual dog in front of them (Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, 2026).

This ordinance also risks unintended welfare consequences. Owners who are wary of the health trade-offs or cannot obtain timely surgery may avoid licensing, delay vet visits, or even relinquish dogs rather than comply, undermining the goals of responsible ownership and good veterinary oversight. More effective and less intrusive alternatives exist, such as targeted low-cost or free sterilization programs in high-intake neighborhoods, voluntary age- and breed-specific guidelines, education about accidental litters, and support for hormone-sparing sterilization options that prevent reproduction without removing the health benefits of natural hormones.

As a responsible pet owner, I want to work with my veterinarian to choose the approach that best balances my dog's individual cancer, orthopedic, and behavioral risks—not be compelled by law into a surgery that may increase certain serious health problems. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to reject this ordinance in its current mandatory form and instead pursue evidence-based, community-supported strategies that reduce shelter intake without sacrificing canine health and owner autonomy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Noah [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

San Francisco, CA 94134

## References

Arroube, A., & Pereira, A. F. (2025). Dog Neuter, Yes or No? A Summary of the Motivations, Benefits, and Harms, with Special Emphasis on the Behavioral Aspect. *Animals: an open access journal from MDPI*, 15(7), 1063. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani15071063>

Hart, B. L., Hart, L. A., Thigpen, A. P., & Willits, N. H. (2014). Long-term health effects of neutering dogs: Comparison of Labrador Retrievers with Golden Retrievers. PLOS ONE, 9(7), Article e102241. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0102241>

Hoffman, J. M., Creevy, K. E., & Promislow, D. E. (2013). Reproductive capability is associated with lifespan and cause of death in companion dogs. PloS one, 8(4), e61082. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0061082>

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Knowledge. (2026, February 19). Benefits and risks of neutering pets – What is the evidence? <https://www.rcvsknowledge.org/resource/benefits-and-risks-of-neutering-pets-what-is-the-evidence/>

**From: Nadine** [REDACTED]

**To: Torres, Michael Angelo (DPH - Contractor)**

Wed 4/8/2026 5:03 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Commissioners

My name is Nadine [REDACTED] born and raised in san francisco. For about 25 years , I have been doing feral cat trapping (TNR) and cat rescue as a volunteer, And have regularly dealt with San Francisco ACC.

I have noticed for some time now that there are either NO CATS available for adoption from ACC or just one or two. There are ALWAYS dogs available for adoption. What is the reason for this? I know that rescue partners like the SFSPCA take many adoptable cats from ACC for their program-- But do they take ALL of them?

At the same time, looking at the recent euthanasia statistics for ACC, I noticed that quite a few stray or owner surrendered cats have been euthanized the SAME day or the next day. State law requires shelters to hold these animals for FOUR DAYS, unless the animals are suffering or incredibly vicious. I find it impossible to believe that so many stray cats or cats who are owner surrendered in San Francisco would be Immediately determined to be suffering or vicious.

This is of great concern to those of us who care about animals. I will definitely raise this issue again but would like to have answers from ACC. Thank you.

Nadine [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

San Francisco CA 94118