



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB®

December 7, 2023

**Re: American Kennel Club Comments on Bakersfield Draft Ordinance.**

Dear Members of the Bakersfield City Council:

The American Kennel Club (AKC) writes today to follow up on our November 28 letter to reiterate our concern for the proposal before the City Council that would lead to home inspections for some city residents based simply on the number of pets they own, and would discourage responsible dog ownership and hobby breeding due to onerous administrative burdens. On behalf of the AKC, our four local Bakersfield area kennel clubs and the many responsible dog owners in the city, **we respectfully ask you to not proceed with this proposal, while well-intentioned, would have a significant negative impact on dogs, dog owners and the local economy.**

The AKC understands the issues facing Bakersfield's animal shelter system. We believe the best way to reduce the shelter population is to educate and incentivize responsible pet ownership along with strong and fair enforcement mechanisms of current state and local laws.

We respectfully ask that you consider AKC's major concerns:

- **Under Section "Chapter 6.06 to the Bakersfield Municipal Code related to Dog Kennels", AKC has concerns that establishing kennel regulations for city residents owning more than three pets could see them treated as if they were a commercial business, including inspections of private homes.** It should also be noted that this could be an unnecessary and significant cost and administrative burden for both the city and the impacted dog owners. When other jurisdictions have attempted to regulate a significant number of dog owners, it has proven costly and extremely difficult to enforce. ***Instead, AKC encourages enforcement of current state and local laws regarding the keeping of animals that ensure proper care and treatment of all animals, regardless of how many are owned.***
- Section "6.09.010 Breeder permit required" states that a breeder permit will not be issued to those with dogs under twelve months or over seven years of age. **Unfortunately, this language is not breed or situation specific; all dogs should be checked over by a licensed veterinarian to determine whether breeding makes sense or not—irrespective of arbitrary age restrictions.** Furthermore, by raising the financial and administrative burden on city residents who occasionally breed a litter of dogs, the likely effect will be to reduce the number of responsible breeders using best practices—leading to more sicker dogs that will end up in the city's shelter system.
- Under Section "6.07 – Mandatory Spay & Neuter", AKC is concerned that requiring puppies to be sterilized at six months of age could lead to significant health concerns later in life. This is an important health decision that should be made in conjunction with a veterinarian. We encourage you to [view our brief handout](#) that outlines the many reasons that mandatory spay/neuter laws are ineffective and potentially harmful to dogs. Furthermore, AKC also has concerns that in Section "6.04.040 Dog license—Required— Vaccination.", the proposed language talks about licensing a dog at three months whereas in Section "6.07.030 Mandatory spaying/neutering", it refers to spaying or neutering puppies at six months.

*To address Bakersfield's concerns while maintaining a clear and understandable set of rules for residents to follow, AKC proposes the following amendments to the draft ordinance before you:*

- **Instead of focusing on an onerous kennel licensing regime for city residents based solely on the number of pets owned, AKC believes stronger enforcement of general care and conditions is both easier for the city to enforce and allows for greater protection of animal welfare.**
- **Instead of raising the financial and administrative burden on city residents who are already attempting to comply with local laws, encourage best practices concerning dog breeding and use existing rules and regulations to address bad actors.**
- **AKC strongly believes that responsible dog ownership includes adherence to all local laws. AKC *also* believes—and cannot stress enough—**public outreach and education are key**. If the Bakersfield City Council seeks to increase the prevalence of dog owners spaying or neutering their dogs, **resources should instead be directed toward making sure low-cost spay/neutering programs are both fully funded, and the service is known to city residents. Also, inclusive and equity centered education and outreach is a missing component of the draft ordinance. It is critical, and AKC strongly encourages, dedicated outreach in the community to ensure maximum compliance with written law.****

The AKC appreciates the Bakersfield City Council's attention to this issue and for their passion for the welfare of animals. Thank you for reviewing and considering our concerns and recommended amendments on this proposed ordinance.

Regards,



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