

Animal Control Ordinance Getting Tough On Strays

BY TERRY POPE

Several changes approved by the Brunswick County Board of Health Monday night promises to put more bite into the problem of controlling stray animals in rural communities. If approved by the commissioners

on July 1, the amendments to the county animal control ordinance will increase animal redemption fees for repeat offenders and allow the department to start issuing \$25 citations to pet owners. The changes also help to identify animals that are a

public nuisance and also allows citizens to file complaints against the nuisances and their owners.

The five changes were prepared by County Attorney David Clegg and Brunswick County Health Director Thomas Blum stemming from citizen complaints at a recent county commissioners' meeting. Residents of the Sea Trail community appeared before the commissioners last month requesting that something be done to help limit the number of stray dogs and cats in their neighborhood.

The ordinance changes "allows the individual citizens to come forward" with their complaints, Blum said. "The courts are more averse to back you up if you have a very specific ordinance."

The first in a series of changes approved Monday calls for increasing animal redemption fees for impounded animals. On first impoundment, a \$5 fee is charged for dogs and \$2 for cats. On second impoundment, a \$25 fee will be charged for dogs and \$8 for cats, under the new ordinance. On third or subsequent impoundment

within a one-year period, a \$50 fee will be charged for dogs and \$25 for cats. All fees are in addition to fines issued by the Brunswick County Animal Control personnel.

If citations are issued to pet owners, the department will then "carry the case the rest of the way" in court for the complainants, Blum said. "They don't have to hire a lawyer and carry the case to court. We do get into some very nasty situations sometimes, even among family members."

Another change in the ordinance outlines when an animal is considered a public nuisance. A public nuisance is 1) any animal which damages the property of anyone other than its owner, including, but not limited to, turning over garbage containers or damaging gardens, flowers or vegetables; 2) any animal which is a vicious animal; 3) maintaining dogs in an environment of unsanitary conditions; 4) any animal which is diseased and/or dangerous to the public health and 5) any animal which jumps on, chases,

snaps at, attacks, or threatens pedestrians, bicycles or vehicles, joggers, runners and is not in an enclosure or under restraint.

Failure to confine a female dog while in heat in a building or secure enclosure so that she will not be in contact with another dog, is also considered a nuisance under the new ordinance. However, it does not prohibit the intentional breeding of animals within an enclosed area.

Citizens having problems with an animal that has become a public nuisance may file a formal complaint with the animal control department, which will investigate all reported cases. Under the citizen complaint ordinance, residents must take an oath setting forth "the nature and date of the act, the apparent owner of the animal, the address of the said apparent owner and a description of the animal doing such act."

The local health director or animal control officers are given the authority to issue citations to any person if there is probable cause to believe that their animal has violated the or-

dinance. Citations may be either served in person or sent by registered mail.

Citations will allow the individual to pay the \$25 fine no less than 72 hours after it is received in person, or six days after it is mailed. If the violator does not appear in response to the citation, the animal control supervisor may seek a warrant for his or her arrest for violating the animal control ordinance.

"That would be under the control of the district attorney's office," Blum said. "It would really be out of our hands at that point."

The ordinance will also allow warning citations to be issued prior to actual citations.

Another ordinance change will allow the animal shelter to provide suitable board and care for impounded animals the shelter is not equipped to care for, such as livestock, or more exotic pets.

"We don't have a provision authorizing us to deal with some of the other animals we have had to deal with in the past," Blum said.

Health Director Receives 'Good' Job Rating

BY TERRY POPE

The Brunswick County Board of Health spent more than an hour Monday night behind closed doors evaluating health director Thomas Blum's performance.

When the board returned from executive session, Chairman John Madison said Blum had received good marks overall. The evaluation must be compiled, he added, for the county commissioners to inspect.

"Basically, overall we're very pleased with the job he's done," Madison said.

The evaluation was requested by the county commissioners, Madison said. It allows the health board members to rate the director, to show areas where he scored good or areas where he needs improvement.

Blum left the meeting before the six board members entered into executive session to discuss his evaluation. The meeting was moved from the health building to the public assembly building because the air conditioner was broken in the health department.

The board also heard Monday from Bolivia resident Teddi Neal who is organizing the Brunswick County Animal Welfare League. The league will help raise funds and care for animals impounded at the department's animal control shelter in Supply.

Neal asked that board members request additional funds from the county commissioners to help expand the animal shelter. A petition the group has begun circulating throughout the county to that effect has been well-received and will be presented to commissioners at their meeting tonight (Thursday), Ms. Neal said.

Ms. Neal said the group is seeking county funds to help expand the

animal shelter, volunteers to help work in the shelter and donations to help feed and expand the stays of animals in the shelters.

"The main thing is getting a large enough shelter," Ms. Neal said. "I'm hoping you will approve of our attempt."

Board Chairman James Madison said the only problem at this point is that the health department's budget has already been presented to the commissioners.

"We can't go back and change it," Madison said. "They can change it though, if they feel there is enough public support for doing so."

Board member Bill Rabon said he does not think commissioners will award funds for building an expansion at the shelter, but may be willing to set aside funds to have plans prepared this fiscal year.

"I don't think the government moves that fast," Rabon said. "Where are you going to put it? Who's going to build it? How much is it going to cost? It all takes time."

Board member Joe Stevenson said he supports the need for an expanded shelter, but he did not think the commissioners "are going to stick that in their budget."

In other business Monday, the board approved two referral agreements between the county schools Jobs Training Partnership program and the Brunswick Technical College Human Resources Program.

A policy prohibiting the use of a tranquilizer gun on farm animals was also adopted. Tranquilizer guns are only to be used under the supervision of an N.C. Wildlife officer or a member of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department.

Calendar Of Events

Thursday, June 13

MAKE-UP TECHNIQUES WORKSHOP at the Brunswick County Library meeting room in Southport. Participants should bring their own cosmetics and mirror, no charge, 5 p.m.-6 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING by the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners on the proposed 1985-86 county budget, at the public assembly building, Brunswick County Government Center, 7 p.m.

BRUNSWICK COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL meets at the public assembly building, Brunswick County Government Center, 7 p.m.

ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE meeting has been moved from the public assembly building to the courthouse, Brunswick County Government Center, because of the county budget hearing, 7:30 p.m. Notices will be posted indicating which room.

BRUNSWICK COUNTY REPUBLICAN WOMEN meet at Republican Headquarters, Bolivia, for a program by Margaret Shelton, president of the Brunswick County League of Women Voters, 7:30 p.m.

GAME NIGHT at the American Legion Post one mile south of Shallotte on U.S. 17, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, June 14

GAME NIGHT at the Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department, 8 p.m.

Saturday, June 15

TOWN CREEK VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD sells barbecued pork and fried chicken plates at the station, located on U.S. 17 at the intersection with N.C. 87 South at Winnabow, beginning at 11 a.m., for \$3 each.

MISS AND LITTLE MISS N.C. FOURTH OF JULY PAGEANT sponsored by the N.C. Fourth of July Festival Committee, at Hatch Auditorium, N.C. Baptist Assembly, Caswell Beach, 8 p.m. Admission is charged.

GAME NIGHT at the Calabash Volunteer Fire Department, 8 p.m.

GAME NIGHT at the Brunswick County Fishing Club, Sunset Harbor, 8 p.m. Hotdogs and hamburgers available at the clubhouse from noon until 6 p.m.

Sunday, June 16

TEE-OFF, JIMMY SIMPSON INVITATIONAL GOLF TOURNAMENT at Marsh Harbour Golf Links, for the benefit of the Brunswick County Special Olympics program, 2 p.m. For more information, call Simpson at 754-9197.

Monday, June 17

BRUNSWICK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS meets in its chambers, Brunswick County Government Center, 6:30 p.m.

RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION for Brunswick County meets at the RDC office, Brunswick County Government Center, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 18

HOLDEN BEACH COMMUNITY WATCH meets at the town hall at 10 a.m.

OCEAN ISLE BEACH COMMISSIONERS meet in regular session at the town hall, 4 p.m.

TRAINING SESSION for potential Brunswick Buddies volunteers, Room 113, Brunswick County Courthouse, 6 p.m.-9 p.m.

Wednesday, June 19

BRUNSWICK TOASTMASTERS, CLUB 5095 meets at the Ship's Chandler Restaurant, Southport, 7 a.m.-8 a.m. Guests welcome.

PUBLIC HEARING on the proposed 1985-86 Shallotte town budget, in conjunction with the regular aldermen's meeting at the town hall, 7:30 p.m.

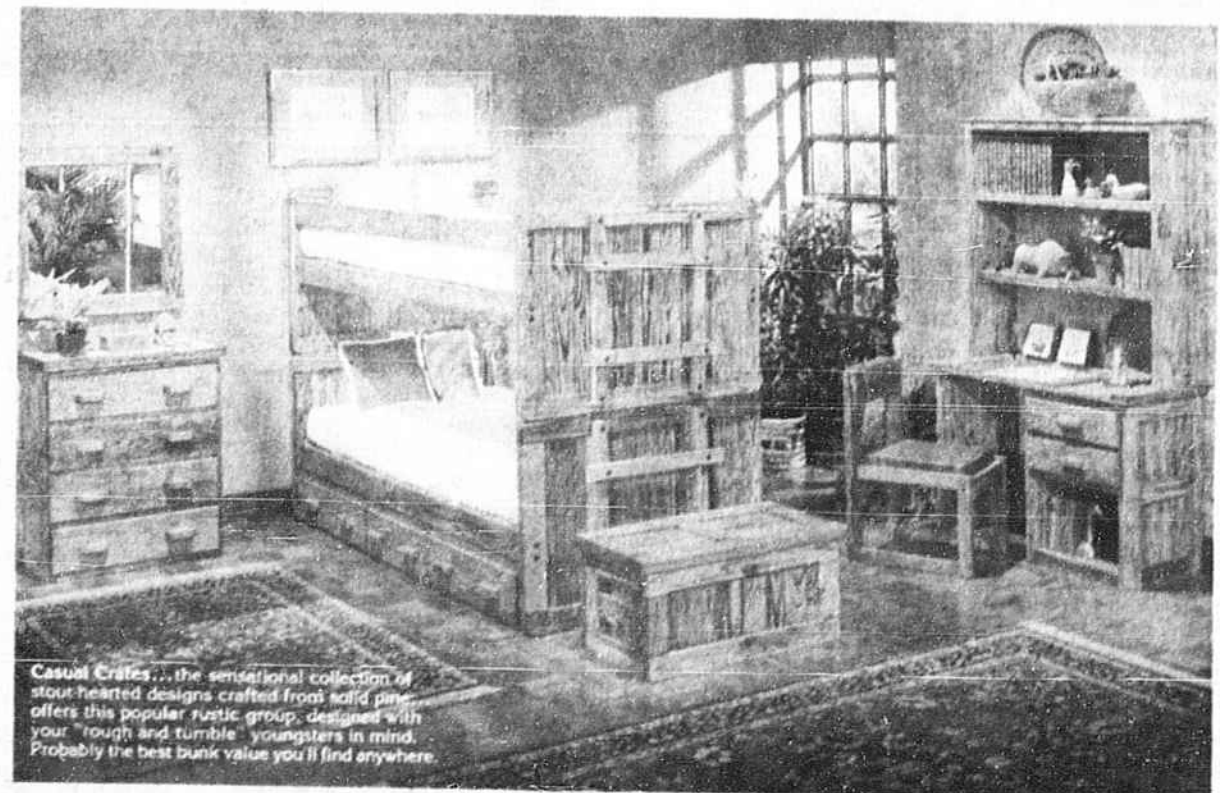
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