



Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 25-1868A, Version: 1

Subject:

Proposed amendments to Chapter 14, Pinellas County Code-Restoration of Definitions, Enhancement of Retail Pet Sales Oversight, Modification of Public Nuisance Animal Reporting, and Modernization of Impoundment Protocols During Emergencies and Disasters.

Recommended Action:

Conduct a public hearing for the proposed ordinance updates on the augmentation and clarification of Pinellas County Code.

- Ordinance updates to strengthen, modify, and modernize Chapter 14.
- Approve definition updates and new definitions in Section 14-26 Definitions.
- Approve ordinance updates on the augmentation and clarification of code of section 14-29 Pet Dealerships; kennels; and hobby breeders.
- Approve ordinance updates on the augmentation and clarification of code of section 14-30 Public Nuisance Animals.
- Approve ordinance updates on the augmentation and clarification of code of section 14-48 Impoundment.
- These amendments to the County's ordinances have no fiscal impact on the County.

Strategic Priorities:

Healthy and Safe Communities

Improve public health

Enhance community safety

Smart Service Delivery

Improve efficiency of service delivery through technology

Pursue continuous improvement

Summary:

The proposed changes to Chapter 14 are brought forth to address sections of the code in need of clarification and augmentation regarding animal welfare in Pinellas County.

In response to BOCC feedback during the February 2025 workshop and subsequent stakeholder forums in March 2025, PCAS has developed the following recommendations to strengthen section 14-29 as it pertains to Retail Pet Sales:

1. Increased Animal Welfare Standards in Retail Pet Stores

a. Housing

Incorporating, at minimum, 50% solid flooring in every kennel

b. Health

Standardized Protocols Submitted during Inspection:

Cleaning & Sanitation

Veterinary Care: includes after hours & holidays

Disaster Plan

Animal Enrichment

c. Reporting

Point of sales and Official Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (OCVI) submitted via electronic portal created by the Department

Puppy deaths reported within 3 business days & necropsy submitted to Department within 3 days of completion

Dog and Cat transport list submitted monthly

d. Inspections

Increased to 2 unannounced, formal permit inspections

2. Pet Dealer Permit Suspension and Revocation

Each Animal Welfare Violation, under sections 14-32 Cruelty or 14-35 Neglect, results in the maximum allowable citation fee (currently \$500) and up to 7-day Pet Dealer Permit suspension pending an investigation. A PCAS Officer will follow-up within 3 business days to assess compliance. The permit suspension can be renewed for an additional 7 days if the violation has not been corrected or if a contagious or infectious disease is present.

3. Consumer Protection

a. Requires pet stores to post a notice directing consumers to view Florida's Pet Lemon Law.

b. Each OCVI must also be posted on each puppy's kennel detailing the breeder, transporter, pre-existing health conditions, and vaccinations.

In addition to revisions concerning 14-29, the department would also like to correct a previous administrative error which resulted in the removal of the following Definitions to section 14-26:

- Feral Cat Colony Caretaker
- Humane Organization
- Humane or Humanely
- Private Animal Non-Profit Organization
- Removing voice & visual commands from the definition of Physical Control
- Quarantine
- Unsanitary Conditions

The Department is also asking for the Board's consideration for the following additional revisions to Chapter 14 related to public nuisance animals and impoundment practices:

1. The Department would like to add the submission of video and/or photographic documentation in addition to one affidavit as an acceptable means of reporting a nuisance animal to section 14-30 (Public Nuisance Animals).

2. The department recommends revisiting Section 14-48 (Impoundment) to establish a

standardized 14-day hold time for all animals impounded during a declared local state of emergency. This change would replace the previous requirement of 10 days for stray animals and 30 days for possibly owned pets. The Department further proposes the removal of the 120-day post-disaster reclaim provision, as it presents unnecessary hardship for PCAS and its rescue partners at a time of heightened capacity needs during disaster recovery periods.

Importantly, the department has never had to invoke the 120-day return clause, but it has inhibited rescue partners from transferring out cats and dogs, leading to increased length of stay and disease outbreaks at the shelter. Since this language was initially added to the ordinance post-Hurricane Katrina, Pinellas County has proactively enhanced pet preparedness education and expanded pet-friendly transportation and sheltering measures to reduce the incidence of pets being left behind during an evacuation, rendering the extended provision redundant and administratively burdensome.

Background Information:

The issue of strengthening Chapter 14, specifically 14-29 (Retail Pet Sales) was recommended due to concerns brought to the Commission from citizen advocates. PCAS conducted a comprehensive review of applicable pet breeding industry standards, as well as relevant federal, state, and local regulations, transportation requirements, and consumer protection statutes. Additionally, PCAS convened two stakeholder sessions, attended by retail pet store owners, representatives from four local non-profit animal rescue organizations, and a licensed veterinarian. These forums facilitated constructive dialogue regarding the Department's preliminary recommendations and provided valuable insight.

The proposed ordinance updates for Chapter 14 are intended to strengthen regulatory oversight of the retail sale of dogs and cats within Pinellas County, rectify an administrative oversight involving the removal of definitions, and update sections 14-30 (Public Nuisance Animals) and 14-48 (Impoundment) to reflect current standards and practices.

Staff affirms the recommended ordinance updates align with the County's strategic plan and are both reasonable and enforceable..

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Staff Member Responsible:

Jennifer Renner, Director, Animal Services

Partners:

N/A

Attachments:

Ordinance Update - Redline Version
Ordinance Update - Clean Copy
Chapter 14 Ordinance Revisions Presentation