

**Cat Writers Association, Inc. 2005 Conference
Public Affairs Panel, Saturday, November 19, 2005
Presentation by
Sharon A. Coleman, President, The Animal Council**

The Animal Council (TAC) formed in 1990 from opposition to the San Mateo County Pet Overpopulation Program ordinance (POP – altering, breeding regulation.)

The previous year (1989,) California enacted a dog breed specific preemption prohibiting local government from enacting any programs for dogs discriminating as to breed. In 2005, California Senate Bill 861 modified the preemption to allow cities and counties to enact ordinances with breed discriminatory spay/neuter and breeding requirements. As local jurisdictions revise ordinances, amendments are and will be made to cat provisions that would not be otherwise considered.

* TAC analyzed the POP proposal, researched the alleged substantiating facts and evaluated alternatives. With a matching grant from the Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc. (CFA) TAC published and distributed a book, Perspectives on Legislative Approaches to Animal Control (1991.)

* TAC continued and expanded its work to the state and national levels, was designated a state organization for canine legislation by The American Kennel Club and in 1997 began the first email distribution list for legislative material.

* TAC's public web site <http://www.theanimalcouncil.com> includes a growing collection of historic and current source material and references, including republication of the original book that is as relevant on population issues now as 1991.

TAC's focus is preservation of the right to breed as an inherent part of the right to own cats, dogs and other animals as a legacy of mutual benefit to man and animals. This approach involves the entire range of issues involving animals and consideration of the underlying socio-economic and political dynamics that affect public policy. For example:

* All cats from ferals to pedigreed make up a total supply subject to market forces that influence the outcomes of regulation in unexpected ways.

* Cats have many differences from dogs, yet are often equated to dogs with unintended and undesirable consequences.

2005 has been a prime year for the “equivalent effect” in conjunction with controversial issues – a trend that will probably continue. For example:

- * There are no kitty equivalents of the large scale puppy producers or any market similarities, yet cats as species are included in the federal Animal Welfare Act, and cats have been included in the now infamous PAWS bill.

- * Dangerous dog and “Pit Bull” ordinances are being expanded with unique, new provisions to which cats can be or are being added.

- * Millbrae (CA,) one of 20 cities in San Mateo County had no limit law or cat licensing/rabies law (California law does not require rabies vaccination for cats) and had rejected the County’s “POP” for 15 years. The County’s animal control contract recently required all cities to enact basic provisions of amendments to the dangerous animal ordinance. The new, part time Millbrae Police Chief presented the entire POP including cat licensing/rabies/breeding permit plus his own provisions for 3 dogs/3 cats/4 each of other species limits subject to discretionary police permit for more. The only actual problem that finally surfaced was a resident’s complaint about a small doorstep neighborhood cat colony managed by Trap/Neuter/Return, but this turned out to be a dispute between neighbors about parking and non-animal issues. The City Council unanimously passed this ordinance thinking that Trap/Neuter/Return does not belong in a “suburban environment.” Enforcement will be complaint driven as distinguished from the policy driven “trap and kill” unconfined cats ordinance in Akron, Ohio. However, Millbrae residents may trap cats they can attract onto their own property so that trap and kill of cats is a default byproduct of complaint driven enforcement.

- * San Francisco has unanimously approved a new ordinance based on California SB 861, enacted at its request. The Pit Bull portion requires altering any “ pit bull” as defined that does not meet the requirements for a draconian breeding permit which contains elements that have never been previously legislated. Very likely these new provisions will be replicated elsewhere and extended to all dogs as well as cats.

Interest in these high profile controversial public policy issues has led to proliferation of new web sites, group lists and blogs of varying quality and presenting challenges for research and writing on controversial cat and dog issues.