



Vicki Lubrin – License Manager
Licensing Division
3000 Rockefeller MS 306
Everett, WA 98201

425-388-3505
fax: 425-259-2777

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2005

County Set to Canvass for Unlicensed Pets

Goals are to reunite pets and owners, and promote responsible pet ownership

Beginning in mid-June, teams of college students will fan out across the suburbs of unincorporated Snohomish County to conduct a pet canvass in order to maximize opportunities to reunite lost dogs and cats with their owners through having them properly licensed.

Among the 300,000 residents of the unincorporated county there may be as many as 75,000 dogs and cats according to survey figures. With this initial canvassing project the goal is to license a minimum of 25,000 pets. Currently, only about 15,000 dogs and cats are licensed by the county. This is the first of yearly pet canvassing projects in order to eventually contact all households in Snohomish County about the requirement to license dogs and cats as well as providing information on other animal issues and services.

“Our primary goal,” said Bob Terwilliger, Snohomish County Auditor, “is to reunite lost pets with their owners because it will save owners and taxpayers alike a lot of heartache and money.” Equally important, he said, is the opportunity to encourage responsible pet ownership. The canvassers will be promoting the advantages of licensing and will be leaving pet licensing forms and other information with residents.

“When our animal control officers find a stray unlicensed pet, it can cost the owner a \$250 fine (with a mandatory court appearance), plus the cost of apprehension, impoundment, boarding and licensing to retrieve their pet,” said Terwilliger.

Licensed and microchipped pets, however, usually get a free ride home from the county’s animal control officers. “If the animal is licensed, it can be returned directly to the owner, saving the owner the cost of impounding the animal”, said Terwilliger.

Neighbors who find a lost and licensed pet can obtain pet owner information by calling the Auditor’s lost pet hotline (**425-388-3627 - press option 2**) 24-hours a day, or by using the pet license tag search option any time on the county’s web site (**www.co.snohomish.wa.us** & search for pet tag.).

Taxpayers pay a significant cost for stray and abandoned pets, said Terwilliger. “Last year, county government spent about \$310,000 in shelter service fees for the 5,105 lost, stray, unwanted or abandoned cats and dogs taken to local animal shelters by County residents and Animal Control in 2004. All of these pets were from unincorporated neighborhoods and homes.”

Over the last 10 years, Snohomish County has spent nearly \$1.8 million on shelter costs for 57,345 impounded or abandoned pets. Although many pets were returned to their owners or found new homes, large numbers of unwanted pets ultimately had to be euthanized, said Terwilliger.

“Our canvassers will also be talking to pet owners and distributing literature promoting responsible pet care. In particular, they will promote the importance of spaying and neutering non-breeding animals to reduce the number of unwanted, abandoned and feral pets,” said Terwilliger.

The county’s animal license fees are deliberately structured to encourage spaying and neutering, he said. Annual license costs range from \$36 for an adult unaltered dog or cat to \$16 for an altered pet. License fees here are lower than the fees

in comparable Washington counties. Snohomish County, unlike most other local jurisdictions, offers significant discounts for pets with microchips, \$18 and \$8, respectively. The Snohomish County Animal Advisory Board sponsors two free microchip clinics annually for Snohomish County resident cats and dogs. Senior citizens also get additional discounts in many license categories.

For complete information on how to license your pet, call 425-388-3627 – press option 3 - or on the web go to **www.co.snohomish.wa.us** & search for pets.

###

Additional information, please contact Vicki Lubrin, Licensing Manager, at 425-388-3505 or vicki.lubrin@co.snohomish.wa.us .