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Contra Costa: Loose dogs may get snipped, chipped

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MARTINEZ -- Contra Costa dog owners who let their canines roam unchecked may have their pets snipped and chipped.

The county board of supervisors unanimously introduced an ordinance Tuesday mandating that dogs picked up by animal control officers after a prescribed number of at-large offenses will be surgically spayed or neutered and outfitted with a tracking microchip. The board is scheduled to adopt the new rules May 17.

The proposal arose out of a call last year for the county to alter pit bulls in the wake of crippling and fatal attacks.

But county officials say the problem of loose, dangerous and untraceable dogs, along with persistent and costly euthanasia of unwanted animals, extends to unlicensed pets of all breeds.

The proposed ordinance would require:

- All unlicensed and unaltered dogs that are picked up be altered and microchipped before they are returned to their owners.
- All licensed and unaltered dogs that are picked up the first time be microchipped before being returned to owners. If picked up a second time in three years, the dogs will be altered before owners may reclaim them.
- Owners of dogs that cannot be altered for medical reasons will have to provide veterinary confirmation. Dog owners, in the form of fees for the surgery and the microchips, would pick up the bulk of the \$161,214 cost of the program.

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