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CHIEF VETERINARIAN

October 17, 2022

The Honorable Eric Garcetti  
Mayor, City of Los Angeles  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 303  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attention: Ms. Heleen Ramirez, Office of the Mayor

**RE: CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) NOTICE OF EXEMPTION (NOE) RELATED TO DRAFT ORDINANCE AMENDING THE LOS ANGELES MUNICIPAL CODE TO REQUIRE DOMESTICATED PET RABBITS TO BE SPAYED OR NEUTERED (COUNCIL FILE NO. 07-1212-S7)**

Recommendation for Council Action, subject to the approval of the Mayor:

**DETERMINE** that the adoption of the ordinance requiring domesticated pet rabbits to be spayed or neutered is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 because the ordinance would further reduce euthanasia in the City's animal shelters and combat rabbit overpopulation in the City at large.

Discussion:

The City Council is considering the adoption of an ordinance that would amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code to require domesticated pet rabbits to be spayed or neutered on the same basis as dogs and cats. The draft ordinance was transmitted to the City Council by the Office of the City Attorney on October 12, 2022. The Department of Animal Services determined that the ordinance is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act. Please refer to the attached Notice of Exemption (NOE).

Fiscal Impact:

There is no impact on the City's General Fund.

If you have any questions on this matter, please contact Curtis Watts, Assistant General Manager via e-mail at [curtis.watts@lacity.org](mailto:curtis.watts@lacity.org).

Respectfully submitted,

Annette G. Ramirez  
Interim General Manager

"Creating a Humane LA"

**AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

Visit our website at [www.LAAnimalServices.com](http://www.LAAnimalServices.com)

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
 DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES  
 221 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 600  
 LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012  
**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT**  
**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**  
 (Articles II and III – City CEQA Guidelines)

Submission of this form is optional. The form shall be filed with the County Clerk, 12400 E. Imperial Highway, Norwalk, California, 90650, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21152(b). Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21167(d), the filing of this notice starts a 35-day statute of limitations on court challenges to the approval of the project.

<b>LEAD CITY AGENCY AND ADDRESS:</b> City of Los Angeles c/o Department of Animal Services 221 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 600 Los Angeles, CA 90012	<b>COUNCIL DISTRICT</b> All Council Districts
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<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b> Rabbit Sterilization Ordinance: Amendment to the Los Angeles Municipal Code to require the sterilization of all owned pet rabbits within the City of Los Angeles	<b>LOG REFERENCE</b>
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**PROJECT LOCATION:** The Project (ordinance) will apply to all areas within the boundaries of the City of Los Angeles.

**DESCRIPTION OF NATURE, PURPOSE, AND BENEFICIARIES OF PROJECT:** The Ordinance establishes the City's official policy that mandatory sterilization is the City's preferred method of addressing the City's pet rabbit population. The Ordinance outlines the provisions for the mandatory sterilization of all owned pet rabbits within the City of Los Angeles.

<b>CONTACT PERSON</b> Annette Ramirez	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (213) 482-9558
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**EXEMPT STATUS: (Check One)**

**STATE CEQA STATUTE & GUIDELINES**

STATUTORY EXEMPTION(S)  
Public Resources Code Section(s) \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION(S) (State CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15301-15333 / Class 1-Class 33)  
CEQA Guideline Section(s) / Class(es) 15308 / Class 8

OTHER BASIS FOR EXEMPTION (E.g., CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) or (b)(4) or Section 15378(b) )  
\_\_\_\_\_

**JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT EXEMPTION:**

Additional page(s) attached

None of the exceptions in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 to the categorical exemption(s) apply to the Project.

The project is identified in one or more of the list of activities in the City of Los Angeles CEQA Guidelines as cited in the justification

**IF FILED BY APPLICANT, ATTACH CERTIFIED DOCUMENT OF EXEMPTION FINDING**

<b>SIGNATURE:</b>  Annette Ramirez	<b>TITLE:</b> Interim General Manager Department of Animal Services	
FEE: \$75.00 _____	RECEIPT NO.	REC'D BY
		DATE

# CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) NARRATIVE

## Project Description

The proposed project involves the adoption of a new City of Los Angeles ordinance that makes the sterilization of pet rabbits mandatory.

In 2008, the Los Angeles City Council approved an ordinance mandating that all owned dogs and cats in Los Angeles be spayed or neutered, with certain specified exceptions. This ordinance, which now is featured in Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 53.15.2, has contributed to the reduction in euthanasia in the City's animal shelters. In the years since adoption of the Spay/Neuter ordinance, the population of rabbits entering the shelters has grown to the point where the shelter system's capacity to house rabbits pending adoption is stretched thin.

The City of Los Angeles, along with rabbit activists and advocates, believe that expanding the spay/neuter requirements imposed on dogs and cats in 2008 to include pet rabbits would be a useful aid in combating rabbit overpopulation.

## State CEQA Guidelines Section 15308, Class 8

The State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines section 15308 establishes a categorical exemption for "actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment (CEQA Guidelines, section 15308)."

The proposed project, an ordinance requiring the sterilization of owned pet rabbits, is exempt from CEQA Guidelines under Section 15308 as the ordinance would further reduce euthanasia in the City of Los Angeles's animal shelters and combat rabbit overpopulation in the city at large. The reduction in the rabbit population would result in fewer environmental impacts over time, as evidenced by similar results from the spay/neuter requirements imposed on dogs and cats, thereby assuring the protection of the environment. (See also, by analogy, the environmental impact report on free-roaming cats certified by the City Council in 2020 which demonstrated less impacts from the spay/neutering of free-roaming cats, at: <https://eng.lacity.org/about-us/divisions/environmental-management/projects/citywide-cat-program>.)

In addition, the proposed project does not authorize or expand any new construction, as the ordinance is limited to the sterilization of pet rabbits.

## CEQA Section 15300.2 Exceptions to Categorical Exemptions

As explained below, the proposed project does not satisfy the criteria for exceptions to the application of Section 15300, Class 8 of the State CEQA Guidelines:

### Exceptions to Exemptions

The State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines section 15300.2 outlines six exceptions to the use of a Categorical Exemption:

- (a) **Location.** Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located - a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply to all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

This exception is not applicable to this proposed project, which qualifies for a Class 8 categorical exemption and is not covered by the location exception.

- (b) **Cumulative Impact.** All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.

Based on the record for this proposed project and to the knowledge of Department staff, there are no similar rabbit sterilization or other similar projects in the City over time. As a result, the adoption of an ordinance requiring the sterilization of owned pet rabbits will not result in a significant cumulative impact of a succession of projects of the same type and in the same place, and therefore this exception does not apply.

- (c) **Significant Effect.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

Based on the record for this proposed project and to the knowledge of Department staff, there are no unusual circumstances that would create the reasonable possibility that the activity would have a significant effect on the environment. The City of Los Angeles adopted a similar ordinance mandating the sterilization of dogs and cats in 2008, and therefore this proposed project is not unusual. Since its adoption, the dog/cat sterilization ordinance has not had any significant effect upon the environment. The rabbit sterilization ordinance is very similar to the dog/cat sterilization ordinance. As described previously, the rabbit sterilization ordinance will not foreseeably result in a significant impact to the environment. Therefore, this exception does not apply.

- (d) **Scenic Highways.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.

This exception is not applicable to this proposed project, because rabbit sterilization typically occurs indoors and not in a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway.

- (e) **Hazardous Waste Sites.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

This exception is not applicable to this proposed project, because rabbit sterilization typically occurs indoors and not on a listed hazardous waste site.

- (f) **Historical Resources.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

This exception is not applicable to this proposed project, because rabbit sterilization typically occurs indoors and would not affect historical resources.

## **CEQA Findings**

Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15308, the adoption of a City of Los Angeles ordinance mandating the sterilization of owned rabbits is categorically exempt from CEQA. Additionally, none of the exceptions to the categorical exemption identified in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply. The proposed ordinance will have no direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect environmental impacts.