
Bureau of Animal Health and Welfare

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Memorandum

To: WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
From: ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, BUREAU OF
ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE
Date: 3/20/2020
Subject: Sterilization Requirement under the Illinois Animal Welfare Act

Under section 225 ILCS 605/3.3(a) of the Illinois Animal Welfare Act, licensed animal shelters and controls cannot adopt or release any dog or cat that has not been sterilized or microchipped. An exemption exists under 225 ILCS 605/3.3(a)(2) which states a dog or cat can be adopted if a licensed veterinarian certifies that the animal is too injured or sick or it would be detrimental to the health of the animal. The licensee and the adopter must also execute a written agreement that the animal will have the required procedures completed within 14 days of a veterinarian deeming the animal healthy enough for the procedures.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture recognizes that animal shelters, animal controls and veterinarians are facing unique challenges during the COVID-19 event. Decisions are being made to protect staff and the public while also providing essential services for animals and the community at large. To that end, many clinics have stopped all elective surgeries at this time, including spay and neuter procedures. As a result, the Illinois Department of Agriculture will allow shelters and animal controls to utilize 225 ILCS 605/3.3(a)(2) for the COVID-19 event. A licensed veterinarian must certify that the animals were unable to be altered prior to adoption due to COVID-19 requiring sterilization surgeries to be delayed. Furthermore, the licensee must ensure that they and the adopter agree in writing that the animals will be altered within 14 days of elective surgeries being resumed at the clinic. The licensee will be responsible for verifying this requirement is met.