

Legislation – What’s Hot

By Kelly Crouch, CFA Legislative Information Liaison

Sharon Coleman, CFA Legislative Legal Analyst

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Unaltered Cat Licenses, Breeder Permits, and More Changes Adopted by Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Winnipeg, the largest city and capital of Manitoba, Canada, adopted significant amendments affecting fanciers to its Responsible Pet Owners By-law (called an ordinance in the U.S.) in May 2022, which will go into effect on July 1. These amendments include intact licenses, breeder permits, and other items important to fanciers. For geographic context, the province of Manitoba is just north of North Dakota with a population of about 1.369 million. Winnipeg’s population is about 750,000, more than half that of the province.

A Manitoba fancier first notified the CFA Legislative Group of the effort to amend the by-laws in 2021, piquing our interest. The CFA Legislative Group has previously worked on Canadian issues in British Columbia and Ontario and, in doing so, learned there are both differences and similarities about everything in Canada, some very nuanced and some not. In addition to calling their ordinances by-laws, they spell our “license” as licence. We will use license with an “s,” but readers who look at Canadian materials will see the spelling is “licence.” It should be no surprise to Canadians that over the years, British Columbia and Ontario have more often presented legislative issues. A significant approach in Canadian animal law, beginning with farm animal law, was the adoption of industry operating standards. Known as [Codes of Practice](#), these are available on the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association website. Also developed were Codes of Practice for both Canadian Kennel Operations and Canadian Cattery Operations to provide recommended standards of care feasible for actual use. In most provinces, these have been incorporated by reference into law as reasonable and generally accepted practices, although in Manitoba the Animal Care Regulation for the [Animal Care Act](#) incorporates and references the various Codes into its provincial law without being referenced in the Act itself. Thus, although provincial and city residents are subject to province law including the Codes, Winnipeg residents will now be subject to the amended By-law that exceeds the Code requirements.

The Winnipeg City Council adopted a by-law [amendment](#) to its Responsible Pet Owner By-law after a lengthy process of [public engagement](#). The first new provision of significance to fanciers is the pet license and intact pet license for cats and dogs six months of age. To obtain a license the owner and cat must meet a myriad of requirements including having active veterinarian care, rabies vaccination, and other owner and cat responsibility requirements. If any cat or owner fails to meet all these requirements, the cat must be sterilized. The cost of a 12-month intact cat license is \$52.00 Canadian (currently \$0.79 of USD). Next, a resident cat owner who “intends to use a specific female cat for breeding purposes” must obtain a valid cat breeding permit at \$232.30 Canadian for each female animal used for breeding. The permit is for the lifetime of the cat, but the cat is limited to one litter per year and up to four litters during its lifetime. Permittees are subject to inspections as well as the requirements of all pet licenses and excess license permits for anyone wanting to own more than six companion animals, only four of which may be dogs. The breeding permit cost and limits are the same for dogs except for the fee: \$80.00 Canadian for a 12-month intact permit. While the litter restrictions would not be ideal for all female dogs, it is undesirable for cat breeding due to reproductive physiology that differs from dogs. The Code of Practice for Canadian Cattery Operations” lists

the only physical restriction for breeding queens is that they “be at least 80% of their usual body weight at maturity” and that “breeding may continue as long as the queen is physically and mentally healthy” (Code, p. 16). [Dr. Susan Little](#), one of the reviewers of A Code of Practice for Canadian Cattery Operations, also wrote “Feline Reproduction and Breeding Management” in which she states that most queens will have two litters per year under optimum conditions (Feline, p. 3). She also states breeding programs should focus on the avoidance of pyometra and other issues which can be caused by repeated unbred estrus cycles. This can be accomplished by “interfering as little as possible with the normal reproductive patterns of cats,” a goal potentially thwarted by the limitations mandated by the breeder permit (Feline, p. 5).

When applying for the [breeder permit](#), the applicant is also agreeing to abide by the [Manitoba Animal Care Act](#). Much of the Act deals with standards of care, transportation requirements, and the duties of animal protection officers. But it also has requirements for breeder licensing, kennels, and pet stores. In Part 5, Section 25.1 “no person shall operate companion animal breeding premises except under the authority of a license issued by the director for that purpose.” Companion animal breeding premises is defined as “premises where more than the prescribed number of female companion animals that are capable of reproduction are kept.” Those who can satisfy the director that they do not meet the threshold because the animals are not kept for breeding purposes may be exempt from licensing. Section 39(j) of the Act authorizes the Executive Council member charged with administering this Act, the minister, to prescribe the number of female companion animals capable of breeding necessary to meet or exceed the threshold for licensing. The Winnipeg application also requires a “letter from a veterinarian supporting the breeding of the specific dog or cat or proof of purebred breed registration.”

Other by-law changes of potential concern to cat owners include the “at risk” designation for animals of problematic owners, temporary or permanent restrictions on ownership by “at risk” owners, and changes to sterilization or impound requirements. While Canadians can seem more amenable to government regulation than Americans, the effects may be just as detrimental in Canada as a damper on the pedigreed cat fancy.

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