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### **Fees for some pet licensing to drop**

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FORT WORTH - City officials hope to make it easier for Fido and Garfield to get their shots and tags.

With the number of rabies cases rising and the public increasingly at risk, health officials are dropping the cost of some licensing fees.

They hope the move will encourage more people to register - and vaccinate - their animals.

"This is a serious situation with the number of rabies cases we've seen this year," said James Agyemang, manager of the city's Animal Care and Control division.

"We can assume that if animals aren't licensed, they're probably not vaccinated either."

Rabies cases in Tarrant County have doubled, from 45 last year to 90 since January, said Jason Lamers, spokesman for the city's Public Health Department.

The concern is heightened by the fact that only 7.8 percent of the city's estimated 228,387 pets are licensed and vaccinated, records show.

"That's horrible because of the number of rabies cases we're having in the city," Lamers said. "Vaccination is a barrier between wildlife and human beings. It's protection for the pets but also protection for the families."

Initially, the city charged higher fees for registering pets that hadn't been sterilized, hoping to encourage residents to spay or neuter their animals.

That plan backfired - and created a potentially dangerous situation - when many pet owners would not pay for the higher-priced licenses, Agyemang said.

So the city is throwing out the different sets of fees for sterilized and nonsterilized pets.

Licenses will now cost \$7 annually whether or not animals have been sterilized. That's a \$5 savings for unsterilized pets, records show.

If pets are picked up by animal control officers, pet owners will now pay \$10 to reclaim their animals - a \$5 savings for owners of nonsterilized