



Recommendation for Action

File #: 22-1530, Agenda Item #: 2.

4/21/2022

Posting Language

Approve an ordinance amending the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Animal Services Office Operating Budget Special Revenue Fund (Ordinance No. 20210811-001) to accept and appropriate \$65,000 in grant funds from the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists for SARS-CoV-2 surveillance and capacity building where humans and animals interface in the environment.

Lead Department

Animal Services Office.

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$65,000 is available from the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. A fiscal note is attached.

Prior Council Action:

August 12, 2021 - Council approved Ordinance No. 20210811-001, which approved the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Animal Services Office Operating Budget

For More Information:

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Additional Backup Information:

Council approval of acceptance of this grant will allow the Austin Animal Center and the Austin Humane Society to partner to test community cats for SARS-CoV-2.

This is important because the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19, is believed to have emerged from an animal source and, subsequently, has been identified as zoonotic and capable of infecting a wide range of mammals. Species that are susceptible and have been naturally infected with SARS-CoV-2 include companion animals (cats, dogs, ferrets), farmed animals (mink), captive animals in zoos, sanctuaries, and aquaria (tigers, lions, snow leopards, cougars, fishing cats, puma, gorillas, binturong, coatimundi, otters), and free-ranging wildlife (mink, white-tailed deer).

There are currently no federal requirements for zoonotic SARS-CoV-2 reporting or notification of test results, which has limited national efforts to systematically identify strengths and weaknesses in surveillance infrastructure and estimate the significance of zoonotic SARS-CoV-2 events in the pandemic. Therefore, the goal of this work is to balance the use of resources (personnel, funding, equipment, and supplies) to conduct animal surveillance with the need to better understand the public health implications of zoonotic SARS-CoV-2 transmission.

The Community Cats program is a partnership between the Austin Animal Center and the Austin Humane Society (AHS) to assist the residents of Austin and unincorporated areas of Travis County with spay/neuter and vaccination of community cats. The Community Cats program was established in 2014 and continuously expands the number of community cats served by the program each year. Since cats are known to be

susceptible and have been naturally infected with SARS-CoV-2 and the Community Cats program is well established, this combination of animal population and established program provides an excellent foundation for building surveillance infrastructure not just for SARS-CoV-2, but for future zoonotic diseases.

To build on this foundation to create a surveillance infrastructure for SARS-CoV-2, the actual testing for SARS-CoV-2 is required. AHS will perform this testing at the same time AHS performs the spay/neuter and vaccinations services for the Community Cats program. The purpose of this grant's funding is to cover the additional costs of the testing for SARS-CoV-2.

Strategic Outcome(s):

Health and Environment