A similar crisis is occurring in other communities. In Elkhart, Ind., there is a new ordinance prohibiting exotic animal pets. The Elkhart County Humane Society has worked for passage of the ordinance, which states that exotic and wild animals "should not be kept in a manner to endanger the health or safety of the public or the safety or well-being of the animals themselves." Fines are $50-$500 for a first offense, and law officers can take possession of wild animal pets until the owner makes arrangements for their removal. A cougar purchased as a pet in Elkhart had to be euthanized because of behavioral problems.

The Lubbock (Texas) Humane Society distributes a pamphlet to explain the pet overpopulation problem and what the individual can do to help. The title is "The Pet Crisis in the Lubbock Area," which gets the attention of people who don't realize that there is a crisis.

The pamphlet stresses the cost to taxpayers of handling and destroying surplus animals, appealing to non-pet owners as well as owners. In a section on lost pets, phone numbers of the local radio stations that announce lost and found pets are listed. (Lubbock Humane Society, P.O. Box 2192, Lubbock, Texas 79408.)

Sentry dogs in Los Angeles are now under the control of the City Department of Animal Regulation. A new ordinance sets up an Examining Committee to screen and license sentry dog trainers and develop a system for licensing each sentry dog working in Los Angeles.

The committee is made up of experienced trainers and an animal welfare representative. The ordinance is intended to protect the public from buying or renting improperly trained guard dogs. It will also prevent such inhumane training practices as snapping rags in dogs' faces, putting electric shock collars on them, and feeding them gun powder (which supposedly makes them mean). (Los Angeles Department of Animal Regulation, 111 East First St., Los Angeles, Calif. 90012)

Animals picked up by humane officers in Ann Arbor, Mich., are housed at the Humane Society of Huron Valley shelter. Persons who find their lost pets at the shelter but refuse to claim them because of the fees involved are prohibited from owning a pet for one year. (The impounding fee is $10, board is $4 per day and the ticket fine is $15.)

When owners come to look for lost pets, they must show identification and are let into the kennel area by a buzzer security system. If an owner refuses to pay to reclaim the pet, his or her name and address are turned over to the Ann Arbor police humane officers. The officers look for signs of pets when they are in the neighborhoods of those on the list, and can confiscate pets when they violate the one-year period. (Humane Society of Huron Valley, 3100 Cherry Hill Rd., Ann Arbor, Mich. 48105)

In Franklin County, Va., a circuit court judge has ordered the dog warden to stop the practice of shooting dogs that remain impounded after five days, according to the Alleghany Humane Society, Inc.

The judge told county officials to use drug injection for euthanasia under a veterinarian's supervision. The ruling was the result of a suit brought by concerned citizens and the efforts of Walt Lane, vice president of the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies, Inc.

Chicago dog walkers must carry and use some device to clean up pet excrement or be fined $25, according to a Chicago Tribune report. Plastic disposal bags are being made available at city parks, but a newspaper or handkerchief will also fulfill the requirement.

Police and animal control officers have enforcement powers and are strictly enforcing the ordinance to make citizens aware of it early.

Course for investigators

A program in Virginia is helping humane investigators and encouraging cooperation between humane groups and the state veterinarian's office.

The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies, Inc. and the Virginia State Veterinarian's Office have developed a home-study course for humane investigators, which covers the areas of animal control and welfare laws, investigation procedures, euthanasia and general animal care.

Home study allows volunteer investigators with limited funds to participate and allows the trainees to set their own schedules.