

California Spay-Neuter Bill Officially Dead

Watered-down version not worth pursuing, sponsor says.

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Drastic changes made to the California Responsible Pet Ownership Act left no reason to try to get votes for it by the Aug. 31 deadline, bill sponsor said. Supporters of a bill that sought to mandate the spaying or neutering of cats and dogs in California said they wanted to make a big impact on the state's pet population. After several amendments to the measure, however, Assembly Bill 1634 officially died Friday because the cosponsors decided not to back the latest version.

The bill, formerly known as the California Healthy Pets Act and then cited as the California Responsible Pet Ownership Act, was granted reconsideration last week, meaning it was eligible for another vote as it stood.

Judie Mancuso, campaign director and sponsor of the bill, said the drastic changes made to the bill as it went through the local government committee left no reason to try to get votes for it by the Aug. 31 deadline.

Recent amendments to the bill sought to mandate microchipping for certain problem pets and to give pet owners license fee discounts for microchipping and spaying or neutering their pets.

"Yes, I'm bummed, obviously," Mancuso said Friday. "But what I do focus on is all the victories we had along the way."

She pointed out that in the city of Los Angeles, a mandatory spay-neuter ordinance goes into effect Oct. 1. Additionally, cities across the nation, including Chicago, are working on similar ordinances inspired by AB 1634.

Meanwhile, Bill Hemby, the head of PetPAC, a group that fought the measure from the start, said the bill's defeat in the State Senate protects the rights of pets and their owners.

"By defeating AB 1634 in California," Hemby said in a statement Thursday: "Pet owners sent a strong message across this nation; we will fight to protect our dogs and cats from irresponsible mandatory sterilization laws which will result in more dogs and cats being sent to animal shelters and euthanized."