

California Spay-Neuter Bill Hearing Set for Today

Lawmaker introduced legislation to help reduce pet overpopulation.

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California Senate Bill 250, also known as the Pet Responsibility Act, is set for a hearing today, April 15, in the Senate Local Government Committee.

State Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, introduced SB 250 in February as a step toward reducing pet overpopulation. SB 250 follows a similar bill (AB 1634), which failed to pass out of the Senate in August 2008.

Specifically, SB 250 requires that dogs 6 months or older be spayed or neutered, unless the owner obtains an unaltered dog license or provides a certificate of sterility, and cats 6 months or older be spayed or neutered if the owner allows the animal to roam outdoors. Animals may be exempt if they are likely to suffer harm from the surgery because of age or illness.

The bill also states that if a dog or cat is transferred or sold, the license number must be documented for the new owner.

A penalty for owning an unaltered animal can only be issued when the unaltered animal is concurrently cited for some other violation (i.e. failure to possess a current canine rabies vaccination of the subject dog, leash law violations, tethering violations, etc.), according to the bill. Citations for the unaltered animal states that it must be spayed or neutered.

In addition, the bill states that impounded animals not in compliance with the law must be spayed or neutered (by the shelter or a private veterinarian) to secure release of the animal.

Bill sponsor Judie Mancuso, founder of the nonprofit group Social Compassion in Legislation, said SB 250 will reduce euthanasia rates as well as save money for California taxpayers. More than \$250 million is spent housing and euthanizing homeless dogs and cats in California, according to bill supporters.

However, PetPAC, a group that helped defeat the previous bill, maintains that SB 250 will result in a reduction of dog licenses, cost taxpayers millions in increased shelter and enforcement costs, and result in more dogs being euthanized.

The American Kennel Club and Alley Cat Allies also oppose the bill.

SB 250 will be heard at 11 a.m. at the Capital in Sacramento in Room 112.