

California Mandatory Spay or Neuter Bill Moves Forward

If enacted, most cats and dogs older than 4 months would have to be spayed or neutered.

Posted: May 25, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

The California Healthy Pets Act, which would require most cats and dogs in the state older than 4 months to be spayed or neutered, is one step closer to reality.

The mandatory spay or neuter bill is now headed to the state Assembly floor after successfully passing through an appropriations committee. It will be heard by the full Assembly during the week of June 4.

If passed into law, cats or dogs of a recognized breed raised for show, sport, service, law enforcement or rescue are exempt from the mandate.

In addition, licensed dog or cat breeders could apply for a permit to keep their animals intact. Local jurisdictions would determine the permit's cost.

Opponents of the mandatory spay or neuter bill, including the American Kennel Club, the Pet Industry Joint Counsel and the North American Police Work Dog Association, say the law is too broad. Opponents say the bill is financially burdensome and cumbersome to hobby breeders who might raise only a couple of dogs or cats per year.

Supporters say, however, that a mandatory spay or neuter law would save taxpayers millions of dollars, reduce the number of animals euthanized within the state and protect residents from bites and other health hazards related to strays.

Introduced by Rep. Lloyd Levine (D-Van Nuys), the mandatory spay or neuter bill has the support of many California-based animal rescues and shelters, as well as the California Veterinary Medical Association.

"Every year, hundreds of thousands of perfectly healthy and adoptable pets are euthanized by overcrowded shelters that are unable to find them good homes," Levine said. "We need a common sense approach to solve this problem."

If enacted, violators would face a \$500 fine. The money raised from permits and fines would fund the state's enforcement of the program, as well as free or low-cost spay and neuter efforts.

If passed, the law would take effect April 1, 2008.