

Legislation Would Protect Pets

California State Senate Bill 353 would authorize judges to add pets to protective orders sought by battered women.

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Proposed legislation would help protect pets from abuse. (Stock photo) California Senator Sheila Kuehl (D) recently introduced Senate Bill 353, which would allow judges to include pets in protective orders awarded to domestic abuse victims. Kuehl said she introduced the bill, in part, in response to research that links animal abuse to domestic violence.

“As an aspect of control over their victim, a batterer will often threaten to hurt or kill their [victim’s] pet,” Kuehl said. “All this bill does is say, as part of a protective order, the court has the ability to include the animal.”

Fifty-four percent of the respondents in a Utah State University survey of battered women said their abusive partners had injured or killed their pet. An additional 18 percent said their abusers had threatened to harm their pet. Allowing judges to include pets, including livestock, on a protective order gives victims another option for handling an abusive situation, Kuehl said.

Maine passed similar legislation last year, becoming the first state to do so. Vermont and New York have similar laws on the books.