

## **AB 1634-OPPOSITION**

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Twenty five years of experience in trying to find solutions to the problems of animal relinquishment and euthanasia leads me to request that you to reject this ill conceived bill which can not solve these problems and, more likely, will worsen them.

AB 1634 is based on seven **false** premises which will be addressed in more detail by later speakers.

### **1. That current policies and programs are not working.**

The numbers of dogs entering and being euthanized in California shelters has dramatically decreased over the last 30 years in the face continued population growth. Unfortunately, the number of cats impounded and euthanized has not decreased significantly in the last 10 years.

We have two entirely different dynamics which require very different approaches if we are to be successful and AB 1634 does nothing to reduce the numbers of cats in shelters.

### **2. That the numbers of animals impounded and euthanized is due to a “Pet Overpopulation Problem.”**

The study done by the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy found that the top five reasons for animal relinquishment were moving, landlord issues, cost, lack of time for pet and inadequate facilities. None of these factors are influenced by the purported “overpopulation” of pets and AB 1634 does nothing to help pets remain in their homes.

If the animals in the shelter were due to “overpopulation;” we would find desirable puppies available in shelters, there would be no market for internet and pet store puppies, their would be no need for shelters to import puppies and puppy smugglers and brokers would be out of business due to market saturation. There is, in fact, a shortage of healthy, well bred and socialized puppies and kittens in California.

### **3. That being sexually intact equates to being bred.**

We know that for personal reasons many owners choose not to surgically alter their pets and they are never bred. It is improper that the government impose its will on these responsible citizens in the absence of any public benefit.

### **4. That neutered animals are healthier physically and behaviorally.**

Recently published data indicates that for a significant percentage of dogs this is not the case.

### **5. That mandatory spay/neuter will significantly reduce shelter impounds and euthanasia and that Santa Cruz is an example of its success.**

MSN is a documented failure. Analysis of the Santa Cruz data and the rejection of this policy by its originator; the Peninsula Humane Society, the No Kill Community, Best Friends Sanctuary, and many other groups refutes this assumption.

## **6. That mandatory spay/neuter will greatly reduce the Animal Control costs.**

Analysis of animal control data indicates that most costs are the fixed costs of facilities, administration, equipment, staff and retirement benefits. The continuous rise in California animal control costs in the face of decreasing numbers of animals impounded refutes this assumption.

## **7. That the law will not involve veterinarians in enforcement.**

The requirement for veterinarians to write letters of exemption and to turn in rabies certificates indicating the reproductive status of the animal to animal control identifies the owners of intact animals. The public will correctly view veterinarians as enforcers.

## **SPECIFIC VETERINARY CONCERNS**

- **This law would intrude into the Doctor/Client/Patient relationship.**

This is an invasive procedure accomplished under general anesthesia with significant risk to the patient and there are significant physical and behavioral consequences for some animals. For these reasons this decision should not be mandated by the state but, rather, be made by the owner after discussion with their family veterinarian.

- **In many jurisdictions with mandatory spay/neuter owners have tried to drop out of the system by not licensing their animals.**

Many owners know that veterinarians are required to turn in copies of rabies certificates and may decide to forego needed rabies boosters, thereby creating an increased public health risk.

- **The contentiousness of this bill has driven apart the groups that contribute to and desire to solve this dilemma. If we are to be successful in solving this problem, we need to bring these groups together in developing innovative programs in the future.**

If passed, this law will be unfair to the economically disadvantaged. They are the least likely to neuter their pets, see animal control as a threat, and have limited access to low cost clinics. We need to find ways to help this group enjoy the benefits of pet ownership.

If passed, communities in California will no longer have access to Maddie's Funds. It is their policy to not provide funding for mandatory governmental programs. "Maddie's Fund is committed to volunteerism" and is intended to foster innovative collaborative programs like the CVMA Feral Cat Sterilization Program that resulted in the sterilization of almost 200,000 cats over a 3 year period. To date Maddie's Fund has provided over 19 million dollars to communities in California.

If passed, this bill will eliminate many local sources of healthy, well bred and socialized pets. Because it will not decrease the demand for puppies and kittens, the bill leaves the people of California vulnerable to puppy mills, unregulated internet sales, sellers of smuggled animals and unscrupulous brokers of animals from out of the US. These poor quality pets will be a burden and an expense and many will end up in our shelters.

Finally, it is my belief that locally developed, voluntary, collaborative, supportive and science based programs always out perform punitive coercive ones.

Thank you for your kind attention. As a veterinarian, past president of the CVMA and an animal advocate I ask you to vote **AGAINST** this bill.