

The Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) OPPOSES AB 1634 as amended 5/31/07

Summary:

WHAT WILL THIS BILL DO: Mandates sterilization of all cats and dogs by 4 months of age with only limited exemptions to allow pet owners to obtain an "intact permit". The fee is unknown.

1. AB 1634 gives government the authority to determine whether to spay or neuter a pet cat or dog, and at what age. These decisions should remain the pet owner's choice, with veterinary advice.
2. The bill severely penalizes breeders of pedigreed cats. Few if any can meet the conditions to obtain an intact permit. Many cats essential to healthy breeding programs cannot enter cat shows. Rare breeds raised in California will be lost.
3. The cat fancy nucleus educates, contributes to shelters, breed rescue, feral cat programs and helps raise the value of all cats. Cat shows bring millions of dollars to the State. All of this would be diminished.
4. Most cats/kittens in shelters are the result of unowned cat reproduction, freeroaming strays or cats relinquished for human personal problems. This bill will not result in a decrease in homeless cats. In fact the numbers of cats in shelters would dramatically increase.

WHAT WILL THIS BILL COST TO JURISDICTIONS – There will be substantial expense related to creating and preparing for new ordinances in all 536 cities and counties costing millions.

1. Staff time and legal expense; town hall meetings for public input; public hearings in every community. Execute a study to determine administrative costs; public hearings to establish fees.
2. Create an enforcement mechanism, public outreach, forms.
3. Establish low cost spay/neuter services to enable citizens to comply.
4. Establish a local breeder license program.

AB 1634 WILL BE COSTLY FOR ANIMAL CONTROL – Accurate shelter reporting of data is not consistently available in California. Costs for handling animals in shelters vary in each jurisdiction.

1. The numbers of cats/dogs in shelters has been decreasing over the last 10 years without mandatory spay/neuter, while human population has increased. As fewer animals come into shelters they should be kept longer and made more adoptable. Fixed costs will remain the same or increase - not decrease.
2. Every complaint means response and staff time. AB 1634 will greatly increase complaints.
3. Unowned cats will be ignored rather than trapped and neutered for fear of \$500 fines. More unweaned kittens and feral cats will be handled by animal control.
3. Similar laws have meant dog licensing rates decrease resulting in loss of revenue.

WHY YOU SHOULD OPPOSE AB 1634 – Each jurisdiction in the State has different problems. A "one size fits all" complicated scheme of permits, licensing and punishment is not needed in communities with pet-friendly positive programs in place.

1. Enforcement will be nearly impossible. Complaint driven laws create ill-will in a community.
2. Mandated sterilization doesn't work. A similar law in Rhode Island, for cats only, has been a failure. Almost no one has applied for a permit. Montgomery County, MD, repealed a breeder permit and high intact pet license in 1999 after licensing rates plummeted; and there was no increase in spay/neuter. Santa Cruz, California saw animal control cost skyrocket after a similar law was passed.
3. A high percentage of owned cats are already sterilized (87% to 95%). Education does work.
4. A law that mandates spay/neuter with \$500 fines is unfair to low or moderate income pet owners who may not be able to find affordable or safe surgery.
6. Programs that have worked will be curtailed in order to comply with this mandate.