

# Purebred bill is a step in the right direction

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A bill has just been introduced that will require all pets over 4 months old to be spayed or neutered unless it has been registered as a "purebred" with specific groups.

The California Healthy Pets Act (or Assembly Bill 1634) is legislation we, at the Riverside County Department of Animal Services, believe is necessary. The bill's intent is to have an impact on the more than 400,000 animals that are euthanized in California animal shelters every year.

We share similar views with a Merced veterinarian, Dr. Jon Klingborg, who has written in support of the bill and has tried to address some of the issues from opponents. Klingborg said he believes opponents of AB1634 seem to fall into four different groups:

Opponents think this bill

- discriminates against them.
- discriminates against certain pets.
- goes too far.
- doesn't go far enough.

Dog breeder groups opposed to AB1634 feel they will bear an unfair burden of this new law. The bill will require dog breeders to purchase a breeder's permit after they have proven their animal is registered as a purebred. To date, we have not heard anyone suggest a dollar amount for this permit - these folks are just plain against the notion of having to pay anything for the "right" to breed their pet.

However, breeders may have forgotten their high school economics lesson about supply vs. demand. If there are fewer puppies or kittens available, then the price for those pets will increase.

Some cite opposition to AB 1634 because it unfairly discriminates against "mixed breed" dogs. Mutts can be great pets. It would be fantastic if this bill ended the euthanasia of 400,000 animals overnight and California subsequently faced a "mutt shortage." But we agree with Klingborg's assessment: This won't happen. Irresponsible pet breeding still will take place, mutts still will be born, and mixed breed dogs still will deserve to find good homes.

Other opponents feel this bill goes too far. They seem to believe that this bill infringes on the "right" to freely choose whether to have their pet fixed. These people don't want to pay a fee to keep their pet intact.

Well, we all pay for the "right" to do certain things. Businesses pay for licenses, drivers pay a fee for their licenses and car registration, etc. Why should dog or cat breeders be exempt from this?

Though there are many responsible breeders of pets, there are far more who aren't responsible. We encounter on a daily basis people who want to breed their dog because "it would be fun for the kids" or "everyone loves her personality."

Statewide, animal control programs cost taxpayers about \$250 million every year. Do we all have the "right" to continue to breed our pets "just because," or should we attempt to curb the waste of animal lives and human resources? We must push for legislation that attempts to accomplish the latter.

Some naysayers are against AB1634 because it doesn't go far enough. They correctly point out that this bill doesn't have any impact on the unowned feral cats that are reproducing in every community, and we shouldn't adopt a bill until it does.

Some problems are so big that they can't all be solved at once. County animal control agencies have made feral cats a low priority because they have other, more immediate problems to resolve. Klingborg is right: Animal control agencies would tackle the feral cat issue if they had the resources to do so. By reducing the number of stray dogs and litters being dumped at shelters, they finally may have the ability to solve that problem as well.

Depending on your perspective, there are either 400,000 or 250 million reasons to do something constructive about the pet overpopulation problem. AB1634 may not be perfect, but it is the most reasonable approach we've seen in a long time.

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