

## California Mandatory Spay-Neuter Bill Advances

**If enacted, most dogs and cats more than four months old would have to be spayed or neutered.**

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

The legislation now heads to the state Assembly floor after successfully passing through an appropriations committee. It will likely be heard by the full Assembly during the week of June 4.

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

In addition, licensed breeders could apply for a permit to keep their animals intact. The cost of the permit is to be determined by local authorities.

Opponents of the bill, including the American Kennel Club, the Pet Industry Joint Counsel, several dog clubs and the North American Police Work Dog Association, say the law is too broad, is financially burdensome and cumbersome to hobby breeders who might only raise one or two litters per year.

Supporters say, however, that a mandatory spay-neuter law would save the 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 bill has the support of many of the state's 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. 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.