



THE CAT FANCIERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

World's Largest Registry of Pedigreed Cats

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The Honorable Gloria Negrete McLeod
Chair, Senate Local Government Committee
State Capitol, Room 5046, Sacramento, CA 95814

Attention: Peter Detwiler, Committee Consultant

FAX: 916-322-0298

AB1634, "California Healthy Pets Act", Amended July 3 - OPPOSED

Dear Senator Negrete McLeod;

The Cat Fanciers' Association opposes AB 1634, as amended 7/3/07. We request inclusion in the listed opposition for the Bill Analysis in your committee.

CFA, founded in 1906, is the largest and most respected registry of pedigreed cats in the world, with member clubs throughout the United States, Canada, Japan, Europe and elsewhere. CFA licenses cat shows, promotes recognized breeds, provides funds for feline health studies and is a resource for information related to pet population dynamics and public attitudes regarding the value of cats. Our organization objects to government mandated spay/neuter of privately owned cats. We have, however, for many years encouraged responsible sterilization of pet cats and unowned feral cats.

AB 1634 targets pet owners; whereas the reproduction related to homeless cats in shelters or those on the streets in California communities will not be affected. We believe this bill will actually increase the numbers of free-roaming unowned cats throughout the state. Such a mandate would be costly to the jurisdictions as demonstrated in communities with similar laws such as Santa Cruz. We urge complete rejection of this ill conceived legislation that has been designed to "send a message" at any cost.

AB 1634 prohibits a person to OWN or POSSESS a cat or dog over 6 months of age that has not been sterilized. The greatest number of animals in our shelters and the highest percentage of shelter animals euthanized are cats. Solving the real problems of why these cats are in shelters requires a

more innovative approach - not the “quick fix” media-hyped AB 1634 mandate that applies a one-size-fits-all law to be forced on all 536 jurisdictions whether they want this or not. Our primary perspective related to AB 1634 and cats is addressed here.

1. **Most cats do not have owners to comply with AB 1634.** Although the majority of dogs kept as pets are purebred, at least 94% of owned cats are “randombred” not pedigreed. According to the National American Pet Product Manufacturers Association (APPMA) pet owners survey of 2006 approximately 33% of cat owners obtain their cats because they are strays who walk up to their door.

Thousands of free-roaming randombred cats are found in every California community reproducing unchecked. Many of these cats are feral (wild and cannot be touched). They are not recently abandoned cats but have been surviving as street cats for generations. Every spring people bring litters of feral kittens into the shelters, and most are killed because they are too young to survive. **AB 1634 will do nothing to change this.** In fact this bill would increase the numbers of unowned cats. Whenever there is fear of a fine or high fee people tend to ignore these cats rather than trap them, neuter/spay and return. TNR (trap/neuter/return) is considered by CFA and many other organizations to be the most humane method to effectively reduce their numbers. San Francisco, San Diego and San Jose are examples of communities that realized this many years ago and have seen positive results.

AB 1634 imposes a fine of \$500 on a person who POSSESSES an intact cat. Unowned cats may be fed or “possessed” but they will not be sterilized without free or low cost veterinary services available in all communities as well as programs to provide training and traps. The few clinics that provide affordable spay/neuter have waiting lists or will not handle feral cats making it difficult currently to help those willing to alter and care for these cats. AB 1634 would make this situation much worse. Imagine a person seeing a pregnant stray cat at their door – the fear of a fine for “possessing” an intact cat is a deterrent to taking in a stray cat in need. Spaying the cat within 30 days may not be an option.

2. **No law that targets OWNERS of cats will make any difference in shelter intakes of cats.**

Many years ago cats were simply considered mouse catchers. Some were abandoned or allowed to mate unchecked. Now cats are cherished family pets. We know from 11 studies that 87% to 95% of owned cats are now sterilized. It is obvious that cat owners are responsible to a very high degree. Cats do not make good indoor pets if intact because of constant heat cycles and male cat spraying. **Assistance with low cost or free spay/neuter** is the only way to further reduce the numbers of unaltered owned cats, not an unenforceable law such as AB 1634.

3. **AB 1634 will be costly for jurisdictions.** ALL 536 local jurisdictions in California will need to review their local ordinances and create procedures to comply with AB 1634. No city or county is in compliance with the exact provisions in this bill today although some have permits, licenses or higher fees for intact animals. Every jurisdiction will need to spend substantial money before any expected revenue. Jurisdictions will want reimbursement from the State for these expenses. Communities with long range plans and good programs in place, like San Francisco or San Diego have had success without a complicated intact permit bureaucracy. Santa Cruz has an intact certificate law and shelter costs have increased over 100%. So called “complaint driven” laws are expensive for communities when neighbor squabbles turn into cat complaints. This creates ill will in our neighborhoods when animal control has more urgent public safety or cruelty matters that need response and resources.

4. **AB 1634 will be costly for animal control and shelters.** There is no reliable shelter reporting in California. We question claims that mandated spay/neuter will reduce shelter and euthanasia costs when current costs to house and euthanize dogs and cats is not known.

- Data presented by sponsors is based on the California Department of Health Services Rabies Control reporting, which is incomplete. Even though reporting is required by CA Code many counties and cities have not consistently provided activity reports over the last 10 years. The information has been incorrectly extrapolated and exaggerated by sponsors of AB 1634.
- Costs for handling and euthanasia of cats and dogs vary greatly among animal control agencies and shelters throughout the state. To determine statewide costs per-animal other than pure speculation is impossible. Considering a per-animal cost of \$308 (City of Los Angeles), which includes overall shelter operation figures or a \$108 average per cat or \$84 average for dogs (County of Santa Clara Animal Control) for housing and surgery would result in a per year cost that is drastically different (approximately \$86 million vs. \$250 million).
- There would not be a savings for shelters in California even if fewer animals were to be handled, which is already happening in many parts of the state without mandatory spay/neuter laws. Fewer animals handled should mean dogs and cats can be kept longer and made more adoptable. Many shelter costs are fixed such as educational programs and cruelty investigations. As shelter operations improve budgets should be used for humane changes, dog training, increasing shelter hours so more animals can be reclaimed or adopted, holding animals longer, instituting behavior modification programs, treating diseases, increasing off site adoptions, foster programs, disaster planning, public safety measures and other life saving programs. This is what we, as a society, expect animal services to provide for our communities. Cutting costs for animal care is not necessarily a desirable goal.

5. **Breeders of pedigreed cats cannot meet conditions for exemption to be able to obtain an “intact permit”** . Cats do not “belong” to a registry such as the Cat Fanciers’ Association. CFA has member clubs. Sponsors of AB 1634 repeatedly state that the proposal “exempts” pedigreed cats. This unfortunately is not true. Breeders of home raised pedigreed cats are not “businesses”. They would not qualify for the “business license” exemption. The only other condition to enable cat breeders to obtain exemption requires pedigreed cats or kittens to compete in shows or prove they have earned a title. Many cats valuable in breeding programs cannot be shown in cat shows yet they are needed for breed health or genetic diversity. Scottish Fold cats are bred to non-folded eared cats for health reasons. The tailless Manx breed produces kittens with partial or even full length tails. Japanese Bobtails are imported from Japan and cannot be shown but are important in some breeding programs. And there are cats who simply don’t like to go to cat shows yet they may have outstanding qualities needed for breeding. We value our rare, historic and beautiful breeds and know that many fine breeding cats would be lost for future generations because of AB 1634.

The fee for an intact permit is left to each jurisdiction. Sacramento County has already established an arbitrary \$150 per cat or dog to allow breeding. For breeders providing home-raised kittens a yearly fee on each cat is an unjustified tax, especially when individuals are not in a profit making business. AB 1634 also interferes with common practices of cats from out of state owners sent to California for stud service, lease arrangements or show exhibition.

6. **Choice is important when it comes to pets.** The decision to add a pet to one's life is an extremely important one to both humans and the cat. People should have the ability to select a pedigreed cat when predictable characteristics are desired. A lap-sitting Burmese may be perfect for a quiet senior person or a high energy Abyssinian would best suit an active family household full of children, parties and dogs. With fewer breeders in California the option of a cat selectively bred with historic appearance and known background will be either too expensive or else these cats would have to be ordered sight unseen through the Internet from out of state. Few pet stores handle imported kittens because cats are highly susceptible to upper respiratory disease when young so even this would not be a reliable future source for kittens of pedigreed breeds.

In California, as in most of the United States, owned cats are sterilized at a very high rate – AB 1634 is misdirected and not necessary. The free-roaming, unowned population of cats and their unweaned kittens constitute the highest numbers of cats euthanized in California shelters. AB 1634 will only increase the thousands of unowned cats when they are ignored by those who fear penalties thus adding to the cats taken into our shelters and the expense to jurisdictions. Progressive alternatives to legislation are needed in California to solve this problem.

We urge you to not allow AB 1634 to go forward. Further amendments cannot rectify this ill conceived bill. The price is too high for pet owners, unowned cats and local governments.

Please feel free to contact me for further information.

Sincerely yours,

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