
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
Senator Dr. Susan Talamantes Eggman, Chair

BILL NO: AB 332
AUTHOR: Lee
VERSION: April 12, 2023
HEARING DATE: June 14, 2023
CONSULTANT: Melanie Moreno

SUBJECT: Rabies control data

SUMMARY: Requires the California Department of Public Health to collect specified rabies control program data.

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), directed by a state Public Health Officer (PHO), to be vested with all the duties, powers, purposes, functions, responsibilities, and jurisdictions as they relate to public health and licensing of health facilities, as specified. Gives the PHO broad authority to detect, monitor, and prevent the spread of communicable disease in the state. Requires CDPH to examine the causes of communicable disease in man and domestic animals occurring or likely to occur in this state. [HSC §131050, §120130, et seq., §120125]
- 2) Requires each county board of supervisors to appoint a local health officer (LHO). Requires LHOs to enforce and observe orders and ordinances of the board of supervisors, pertaining to the public health and sanitary matters, orders, including quarantine and other regulations, prescribed by CDPH, and statutes relating to public health. [HSC §101000 and §101030]
- 3) Requires dog owners, after the dog is four months old, to secure a license every two years as provided by ordinance of the responsible city, city and county, or county. Requires dog owners, after the dog is three months old, to at intervals of time not more often than once a year, as prescribed by CDPH, procure its vaccination by a licensed veterinarian with a canine antirabies vaccine, as specified. Permits local governments to specify the means by which a dog's owner is required to provide proof of the dog's rabies vaccination. Requires local governments to maintain or provide for the maintenance of an animal shelter system and a rabies control program for the purpose of carrying out and enforcing this requirement. [HSC §121690]
- 4) Requires public and private animal shelters to keep accurate records on each animal taken up, medically treated, or impounded, including the following information and any other information required by the California Veterinary Medical Board (VMB):
 - a) The date the animal was taken up, medically treated, euthanized, or impounded;
 - b) The circumstances under which the animal was taken up, medically treated, euthanized, or impounded;
 - c) The names of the personnel who took up, medically treated, euthanized, or impounded the animal;
 - d) A description of any medical treatment provided to the animal and the name of the veterinarian of record; and,
 - e) The final disposition of the animal, including the name of the person who euthanized the animal or the name and address of the adopting party. [AG §32003]

This bill: Requires CDPH to collect rabies control program data from each city, city and county, or county annually, or quarterly if deemed necessary, including:

- a) Total number of dogs and cats licensed;
- b) Number of public rabies vaccinations administered;
- c) Number of domestic dogs and cats received by local animal control authorities, including, but not limited to, number surrendered by owner, by the public, or transferred from other shelters;
- d) Number of domestic dogs and cats discharged by local animal control authorities, including, but not limited to, number reclaimed by owner, adopted, relinquished to a rescue organization, euthanized, died, or transferred to another shelter;
- e) Animal bite data deemed necessary;
- f) Animal rabies quarantine data deemed necessary; and,
- g) Any other data deemed necessary by CDPH.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

CDPH estimates annual costs of \$100,000 to cover salary, benefits, equipment and operating expenses for personnel to manage collection of the required information from all local governing entities (General Fund).

By increasing the data collected from local governments, this bill creates a state-mandated local program. If the Commission on State Mandates determines this bill constitutes a reimbursable state mandate, the state will be required to reimburse local governments for their costs to comply with this bill (General Fund). The dollar amount of combined costs for local governments to provide data to CDPH are not known, but are likely negligible.

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Author's statement.* According to the author, the official state pet is the "Shelter Pet." This bill will help provide important data about shelter animals so that resources are better optimized to find more pets their forever homes. State, local jurisdictions, and nonprofits invest hundreds of millions of dollars in our shelter system to save animals' lives. Yet the data these entities rely on to direct these resources is no longer available. This transparency will ensure that the state and other entities are able to direct funding efficiently to shelters with the greatest need, while also giving policymakers a more complete picture of the pet overpopulation problem to make informed policy decisions.
- 2) *Background.* CDPH's Division of Communicable Disease Control (DCDC) works to promptly identify, prevent and control infectious diseases that pose a threat to public health, including emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, vaccine-preventable agents, bacterial toxins, bioterrorism, and pandemics. According to the DCDC website, rabies is a rare but serious disease caused by the rabies virus, which can infect the brains of both people and animals. Once people and animals are infected with the rabies virus, they almost always die. Each year in California, rabies is found in about 200 mostly wild animals. Rabies infects very few humans in the United States and California. Since 1980, rabies has been reported in 15 people in California. According to DCDC, because there is no treatment for rabies once symptoms begin, it is very important to prevent rabies in the first place. To prevent rabies, DCDC recommends that people vaccinate pets against the rabies virus and keep them up-to-date on their shots, prevent bites from animals, especially wild or unfamiliar animals, wash

animal bite wounds immediately with soap and water, and talk to a healthcare provider right away if bitten by an animal.

According to author and sponsor, CDPH collected the data required under this bill from 1995 to 2016, and made it publically available. CDPH's stated the reason for ceasing the collection of this data is:

[T]he epidemiology of rabies has transformed from a disease of chiefly domestic dogs to exclusively wildlife reservoirs (bats, skunks)... the role of domestic animals in rabies transmission risk, and the informative value of animal shelter data toward rabies control, has diminished significantly.

- 3) *Animal shelters.* Animal shelters in California are operated by local governments and private, nonprofit entities, and overseen by local governments. Public animal shelters run by cities and counties vary in oversight, and are sometimes part of the public health department, sometimes the sheriff's department, and sometimes the "community services" department, among others. Shelters keep records on each animal within their facility, as required by the VMB. California regulation (17 California Code of Regulations §2606) mandates that all bites from animals susceptible to rabies be reported to the LHO, whether or not the animal is suspected of having rabies. Veterinarians must report confirmed or suspected cases of rabies in animals to the LHO immediately. Following consultation on a suspect case of rabies, LHOs facilitate testing of specimens for rabies, as well as provide guidance on risk assessment and management of persons who had contact with the suspected rabid animal.
- 4) *UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program.* Launched in 2000, the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program's stated mission is to "serve as change agents who inform and inspire shelter leaders to implement a humane, community-centered approach to animal care and shelter management; focused on prevention and grounded in science." In January 2021, the program received \$50 million in state funds through the budget for a five-year program called the "Animal Shelter Assistance Program." According to a UC Davis press release about the funding, the new program will provide critical funding for shelters, perform onsite and virtual consultations, and offer expert-led training. The program represents a promise kept and emphasizes the governor's commitment to help communities realize the state's long-held policy that "no adoptable or treatable animal should be euthanized."
- 5) *Support.* The sponsor of this bill, Compassion in Legislation, and numerous supporters state that from 1995 through 2016, CDPH collected all of the categories of data required under this bill from our state's animal shelters. This data helped give local and state policymakers an idea of the scope of the pet overpopulation problem. In 2016, the Department's report showed that the state's shelters euthanized 158,191 dogs and cats combined. Understanding at what shelters the majority of euthanasia were taking place also helped the robust California rescue community direct their resources to areas most in need. Starting in 2017, the Department reduced the categories of data to exclude those pertaining to animals received and discharged, making it nearly impossible to know how many animals our state's shelters were handling each year. It is estimated that our local and state governments spend over \$400 million on operating animal shelters. That figure does not include the incalculable millions spent by nonprofit rescue organizations who pull dogs, cats, and various other animals from shelters before they are euthanized in order to save their lives and find them a loving home. Compassion in Legislation further writes that this figure does not include the \$50 million dollars combined in 2021 and 2022 the state funded to UC Davis to support our state's animal shelters efforts to reduce euthanasia rates, in addition to the approximately \$488,000

granted out annually through the Pet Lover’s License Plate Fund for spay and neuter, and another \$184,000 from the Prevention of Animal Homelessness and Cruelty Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund also for spay and neuter. Supporters contend that this bill will give the state, local jurisdictions, and philanthropic organizations critical visibility into shelter needs to ensure funds are most effectively and efficiently targeted, while giving lawmakers a complete picture of animal intakes and outcomes by region as they propose legislative solutions.

- 6) *Support if amended.* San Diego Humane Society writes with a “support with amendments” position that they “feel strongly about amendments ... that would strengthen these reports and increase reliability, transparency, and visibility into shelter operations,” as follows:
 - a) Require the Department to publicly post online the data from the reports;
 - b) Require reporting shelters to certify that their data is true and correct;
 - c) The following clarification in the intake reporting requirements: Number of live domestic dogs and cats received by local animal control authorities, public shelters, or non-profit shelters with municipal contracts, including, but not limited to, number surrendered by owner, number of stray animals surrendered by the public, or transferred from other shelters; and,
 - d) The following clarification in the outcomes reporting requirements: Number of domestic dogs and cats discharged by local animal control authorities, public shelters, or non-profit shelters with municipal contracts, including, but not limited to, number reclaimed by owner, adopted, relinquished to a rescue organization, euthanized, died, or transferred to another shelter.

- 7) *Amendments.* The author requests that the Committee approve amendments to permit CDPH to place parameters around the collection of the data required under this bill, as follows:

On page 3, between lines 23 and 24, insert:

(B) The department may do any of the following:

- (i) Require each city or city-contracted animal care and control agency, and county or county-contracted animal care and control agency, to certify that the data they submit is true and correct.
- (ii) Determine an annual or quarterly date by which each city, city and county, or county shall report collected rabies control program data to the department.
- (iii) Determine an annual date by which the department shall publicly post on its internet website rabies control program data collected from

SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION:

- Support:**
- Social Compassion in Legislation (sponsor)
 - Animal Legal Defense Fund
 - California Animal Welfare Association
 - California State Treasurer Fiona Ma
 - Central Coast Herding Dog Rescue
 - Coastside Feral Care
 - Compassionate Bay
 - Do Good International
 - Faith Action for All
 - German Shepherd Rescue of Orange County
 - Grassroots Coalition

Holstein's Haven Calf Rescue
Humane Decisions
In Defense of Animals
Los Angeles Alliance for Animals
Linked Up For Animals World
Michelson Center for Public Policy
Milo Foundation
Our Honor
Outta the Cage
Plant Based Advocates: Los Gatos
Project Minnie
Rabbits in Need, INC.
Shelter Transport Animal Rescue Team
Singer Sanctuary
Soul 2 Soul Animal Rescue
Take Me Home
The Animal Rescue Mission
TippedEars
UnchainedTV
Vegan Flag
Women United For Animal Welfare
584 Individuals

Oppose: None received.

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