

Date of Hearing: April 14, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS

Marc Berman, Chair

AB 1733 (Lee) – As Introduced February 5, 2026

SUBJECT: License and registration renewal: continuing education.

SUMMARY: Specifies that both six hours of self-study and four hours of pro bono spay or neuter services may be credited toward the required 36 hours of continuing education for veterinarians seeking license renewal.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Provides for the regulation of veterinary medicine under the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act (Act) and prohibits the practice unlicensed of veterinary medicine. (Business and Professions Code (BPC) §§ 4800-4917)
- 2) Establishes the Veterinary Medical Board (VMB) within the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to license and regulate the veterinary medicine profession. (BPC § 4800)
- 3) Declares it is unlawful to practice veterinary medicine in California unless the individual holds a valid, unexpired, and unrevoked license issued by the VMB. (BPC § 4825)
- 4) Requires all veterinarians engaged and employed as veterinarians by the state, or a county, city, corporation, firm, or individual to secure a license issued by the VMB. (BPC § 4828)
- 5) Requires the VMB to adopt regulations delineating animal health care tasks and an appropriate degree of supervision required for those tasks that may be performed solely by an RVT or licensed veterinarian. (BPC § 4836(a))
- 6) Requires that, among other things, an individual licensed to practice veterinary medicine graduate from a veterinary college recognized by the VMB, or receive a certificate from the Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG) or the Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence (PAVE). (BPC § 4846(a)(1))
- 7) Clarifies that, if the veterinary college from which an applicant is graduated is not recognized by the VMB, the VMB shall have the authority to determine the qualifications of such graduates and to review the quality of the educational experience attained by them in an unrecognized veterinary college. (BPC § 4846.1)
- 8) Requires that, with limited exceptions, the VMB issue renewal licenses only to those applicants that have completed a minimum of 36 hours of continuing education in the preceding two years. (BPC § 4846.5)
- 9) Authorizes that six of the required 36 hours of continuing education may be earned by doing either, or a combination of, the following:
 - a) Up to six hours taking self-study courses, which may include, but are not limited to, reading journals, viewing video recordings, or listening to audio recordings; or

- b) Up to four hours providing pro bono spaying or neutering services for a public animal control agency or shelter, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelter, humane society shelter, or rescue group, as specified.

THIS BILL:

- 1) Authorizes a veterinary licensee to credit six hours taking self study courses, as well as four hours of providing pro bono spay and neuter services, toward their required 36 hours of continuing education for purposes of license renewal.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill is keyed fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:**Purpose.**

This bill is sponsored by the **California Animal Welfare Association**. According to the author:

AB 1733 supports animals, shelters, and the veterinarians who serve them by modernizing continuing education requirements. By valuing volunteer service, this bill supports more veterinarians in partnering with shelters and rescues organizations, helping to expand access to lifesaving spay and neuter. AB 1733 strengthens animal welfare outcomes while supporting the professionals who generously donate their time to protect animal health and prevent overpopulation.

Background.

Veterinary Licensure. Licensed veterinarians provide health care to many different types of animals, from pets such as dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, hamsters, snakes, and lizards, to agricultural livestock such as cattle, poultry, fish, goats, pigs, and horses. Similarly to human medicine, there are recognized specialties within the veterinary profession: surgery, internal medicine, microbiology, pathology, and more. Additionally, many veterinarians specialize in care of a specific subset of animal species or populations, such as snake and reptiles, small mammals, equine care, exotic animals, and shelter medicine. With such diversified training available, licensed practitioners of veterinary medicine can operate in a range of environments. They can work in private clinical practice, or engage in public service as wildlife health specialists, agricultural inspectors, disease control workers, or working directly for a public animal control agency or animal shelter. Notably, veterinarians are the only licensed professional in California with the ability to perform sterilization surgery on animals. Further, the Koret Shelter Medicine Program under the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine leads national research and veterinary program recommendations related to sterilization outcomes, particularly in shelter settings.

As a condition of renewing their license, veterinarians in California must complete a minimum of 36 hours of continuing education every two years. Current law an extensive list of statutorily approved CE providers, including American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) accredited colleges and associations, government agencies, certain nonprofit conferences, and more. Additionally, veterinarians may earn up to four hours of the required 36 hours of continuing education biennially by providing prop bono spaying and neutering services “under the supervision of a public animal control agency or shelter, society for the prevention of cruelty to

animals shelter, humane society shelter, or rescue group.”, and can earn six hours by completing self-study courses including “reading journals, viewing video recordings, or listening to audio recordings.”

However, current law limits veterinarians to only crediting 6 total hours of continuing education toward either of these options, or a combination of the two. In other words, if a veterinarian completed 4 hours of pro bono spay and neuter services, they can only credit two hours of self-study toward their continuing education. Or if a veterinarian already completed six hours of self-study, they are unable to credit any additional time they may spend performing pro bono sterilization services. The author and sponsors argue that licensees are less likely to provide volunteer services with this current limitation, and this depresses the pool of available volunteer veterinarians.

Efforts to Encourage Pet Sterilization. Over the past several years, California has made efforts to humanely reduce animal overpopulation and encourage the spay and neuter of dogs and cats across the state. In 1998, the Legislature enacted Senate Bill 1785 by Senator Tom Hayden, which formally established that the State of California’s policy is “that no adoptable animal should be euthanized if it can be adopted into a suitable home” and “that no treatable animal should be euthanized.” As part of these goals, and overall efforts to reduce pet overpopulation that leads to euthanasia, this bill and subsequent legislation established a mandate that no public or private animal shelter, humane society, rescue group or other nonprofit shall adopt out any dog or cat that has not been sterilized, subject to very limited exceptions.

Since 2012, California has established two primary funding streams to support animal welfare and sterilization. The Pet Lover’s License Plate program directs specialty plate proceeds to a grant program for low-cost or no-cost animal sterilization at eligible veterinary facilities. In 2023, this program distributed approximately \$488,000, with individual awards ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000. Additionally, AB 485 created a voluntary tax return checkoff in 2015 for the Prevention of Animal Homelessness and Cruelty Fund. These funds assist local animal control agencies and shelters in their efforts to eliminate pet homelessness and provide spay and neuter services. In 2022, the checkoff generated over \$308,000, resulting in roughly \$250,000 in grants with individual awards between \$7,500 and \$22,500

More recent, after a successful campaign by the sponsor of this bill and the VMB, a Pet Lover’s License Plate program was established in 2012, and in 2014, SB 1323 (Lieu) was enacted to allocate the proceeds from purchases of this specialty license plate to fund a grant program to eligible veterinary facilities that offer low-cost or no-cost animal sterilization services under the VMB. The most recent distribution of grant funding in 2023 allocated approximately \$488,000. This consisted of an estimated amount of \$25,000 – \$50,000 per award.

The Legislature enacted AB 485 (Williams) in 2015 to create a voluntary tax return checkoff to provide revenue to a Prevention of Animal Homelessness and Cruelty Fund. This checkoff allocates money to local animal control agencies and shelters to support spay and neuter activities and to prevent and eliminate dog and cat homelessness. In 2022, a total of \$308,449 was contributed through the checkoff, and approximately \$250,000 was awarded that year to eligible agencies, with an estimated amount of \$7,500 – \$22,500 per award.

In February of 2022, the California for All Animals program was launched to advance marketing and outreach efforts designed to engage shelters in every region of the state that met the goals outlined in the Animal Shelter Assistance Act. \$15.5 million in grant awards have since been

awarded, along with \$12.5 million for in-person visits, trainings, outreach, and program expenses. Grant funding is prioritized for programs to increase low-cost and free spay/neuter services, access to low cost and free veterinary care to prevent owner relinquishment to animal shelters, and programs that reunite lost pets with their owners and incentivize making adoption accessible for all communities.

In 2023, the Assembly and Senate passed ACR 86 authored by Assemblymember Kalra. This resolution puts a spotlight on the national and statewide pet overpopulation crisis, noting the increase in pet adoptions and purchases throughout the COVID-19 pandemic which exacerbated these issues. This resolution also notes the lack of low-cost and free spay and neuter options, as well as disparities in access to veterinary care. This resolution made a commitment to pursue policies that increase the availability of low-cost, high volume spay and neuter and encourage more out-of-state veterinarians and RVTs to perform and assist with sterilization.

Most recently, the Legislature passed SB 1233 (Wilk, Chapter 613, Stats. Of 2024), which authorizes veterinary schools in California to develop and offer a high-quality, high-volume spay and neuter certification program as elective coursework to enrolled students. Among other requirements, the program would need to make low- or no-cost sterilization services available to the public, with priority access based on “socioeconomic status”, while ensuring the training and care provided by the program is consistent with generally accepted standards in the profession. There are currently two accredited veterinary schools in California: the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, and the Western University of Health Sciences. Notably, UC Davis oversees the Koret Shelter Medicine Program (KSMP), with research specializing in the state’s adoption outcomes and shelter management improvement. Among other research projects and initiatives, KSMP administers the \$50 million “California for All Animals” grant program established in the 2020-21 budget which aims to fulfill the state’s goal that no healthy animal is euthanized in a shelter.

Continuing the Legislature’s efforts to encourage low-cost access to pet spay and neuter services, this bill seeks to expand the amount of volunteer hours that a veterinary licensee can credit toward their continuing education requirements. Specifically, this bill removes the statutory cap limiting six total hours being obtained through either pro bono veterinary services or conducting self-study. In effect, this will allow a veterinary licensee to credit *both* four hours of pro bono spay and neuter services, *and* six hours of self-study, toward their mandatory 36 hours of continuing education. The author and sponsors contend that this will encourage more licensees to perform pro bono spay and neuter services.

Current Related Legislation. AB 1999 (Kalra) would amend the “ownership exemption” in the Veterinary Medical Practice Act; establishes “shelter veterinarian”, “retired veterinarian” and “retired volunteer veterinarian” license categories and associated fees; clarifies terminology related to the practice of veterinary medicine via telemedicine; clarifies that the veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR) can be established on an annual basis; and requires specified information related to corporate ownership disclosures when renewing a veterinary premises registration. *This bill is currently pending in this committee.*

AB 2010 (Soria) would specify that “high-quality, high-volume spay or neuter services”, as defined, that are performed in a registered veterinary premises are not required to comply with specified standards, including a requirement for equipment for viewing radiographs. *This bill is currently pending in this committee.*

Prior Related Legislation. AB 1502 (Berman, Chapter 195, Statutes of 2025) extended the sunset date for the California Veterinary Medical Board to January 1, 2030, and enacted various revisions in response to the Board’s sunset review.

SB 1233 (Wilk, Chapter 613, Statutes of 2024) authorizes a California veterinary medical school to develop a high-quality, high-volume spay and neuter program to be offered as elective coursework to their students, and to make services through the program available at low- or no-cost to the public.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:

This bill is sponsored by the *California Animal Welfare Association (CalAnimals)*, who write: “CalAnimals is proud to sponsor this measure because it represents a thoughtful, targeted improvement to current law that will increase access to care, support animal shelters, and help address pet overpopulation in a practical and cost-effective way.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:

There is no opposition on file.

POLICY ISSUE(S) FOR CONSIDERATION:

Hours credited toward pro bono services. The author and sponsors of this measure contend that removing the limitation of 6 hours for combining self-study and pro bono services will encourage more licensees to perform such services. However, this bill does not increase the amount of actual time a licensee can perform and credit pro bono services; only that they no longer have to credit it alongside self-study hours. It is unclear how many veterinarians are not pursuing any amount of pro bono services because they already completed self-study courses, as opposed to how many complete four hours and then seek additional self-study. As such, it is unclear what impact this bill will have in meaningfully increasing the pool of available volunteer veterinarians compared to the current status quo. Therefore, the author and sponsor may wish to consider increasing the amount of time a veterinarian can perform pro bono services for credit toward their continuing education.

REGISTERED SUPPORT:

California Animal Welfare Association (*Sponsor*)
Social Compassion in Legislation

REGISTERED OPPOSITION:

There is no opposition on file.

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