

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 2010 (Soria)
As Amended April 22, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Specifies that "high-quality, high-volume spay or neuter services," as defined, that are performed either in a registered veterinary premises, or by a veterinarian employed or contracted with a veterinary premises in a temporary setting, are not required to take place in a facility that complies with specified standards, including the requirement for a separate room for aseptic surgeries.

Major Provisions

- 1) Establish that "high-quality, high-volume spay or neuter services," as defined, shall not be required to take place in a facility that complies with the following premises standards:
 - a) A requirement for a separate room that is reserved for aseptic surgical procedures that require aseptic preparation,
 - b) A prohibition on open shelving in the area in which the aseptic surgical sterilization procedure is performed, and
 - c) A requirement for equipment for viewing radiographs.
- 2) Define "high-quality, high-volume spay or neuter services" as "the aseptic surgical sterilization by a veterinarian, including the supervision by the veterinarian of presurgical preparation and recovery of the animals, of 20 or more dogs, cats, or rabbits, or any combination thereof, within 12 consecutive hours."

COMMENTS

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 recently, 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.

Registered Veterinary Premises. Notwithstanding rare circumstances, all veterinary medicine in California must be rendered at a registered veterinary premises. Premises can include a building,

kennel, mobile unit, or vehicle. Additionally, a mobile unit or vehicle can operate without the need for independent registration if they operate from a building or facility that is, in itself, a registered veterinary premises. In order to obtain a veterinary premises registration, the owner must submit an application that includes the name of each owner or operator of the premises, including the type of corporate entity, if applicable, the name of the premises, and the name of the responsible licensee manager who is to act for and on behalf of the registered premises.

Moreover, current law requires that all premises where veterinary medicine, dentistry, or surgery is being practiced, and all instruments, apparatus and apparel used in connection with those practices, be "kept clean and sanitary at all times", and conform to minimum standards established by the CVMB. These standards, contained in 16 CCR Div. 20, Section 2030, require that among other things, anesthetic equipment in accordance with any procedures performed shall be maintained in proper working condition and available at all times, and that all premises have appropriate drugs and equipment readily available to treat an animal emergency. Regulations further establish that, specific to a veterinary premises that provides aseptic surgical services, there must be a means for viewing diagnostic imaging during surgery, and that open shelving is prohibited in the surgical room, among other requirements. Finally, regulations further mandate that a mobile veterinary premises that provides aseptic surgical services shall have a room that is distinct from the others and specifically reserved for such procedures.

While workable for most scenarios of veterinary medicine, the author and sponsors of this bill argue that current veterinary premises regulations are too restrictive to accommodate "high-quality, high-volume spay and neuter" (HQHVSN) procedures. Specifically, the sponsors of this measure seek to provide HQHVSN procedures in a "Mobile Animal Surgical Hospital" (MASH) setting, such as a community center or gymnasium. They contend that MASH clinics allow for a more efficient flow of animals and exponential increase in the number of animals that can be safely and quickly sterilized. However, current veterinary premises regulations—particularly, the requirement for a separate surgical suite for aseptic procedures—make it difficult for MASH clinics to operate in temporary or community-based settings.

Sponsors such as the San Francisco SPCA and the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA would like to work with organizations like Animal Balance—a nonprofit organization that works with veterinarians to provide "pop-up" MASH clinics across the country—to provide low- and no-cost HWHVSN services across California. As such, the author and sponsors have put forward this measure to specify that HQHVSN services shall not be required to comply with certain veterinary premises regulations, including the requirement for a separate room that is reserved for aseptic surgical procedures, the requirement to maintain equipment for viewing radiographs, and the prohibition on open shelving in the area in which the aseptic surgical sterilization procedure is performed. For purposes of these exemptions, the bill defines HQHVSN services as "the aseptic surgical sterilization by a veterinarian, including the supervision by the veterinarian of presurgical preparation and recovery of the animals, of 20 or more dogs, cats, or rabbits, or any combination thereof, within 12 consecutive hours."

According to the Author

"California's pet overpopulation crisis continues to strain communities across the state. The challenge is particularly acute in rural regions throughout the Central Valley, where access to affordable spay and neuter services may be hours away and out of reach for many families. While advancements in veterinary surgical practices offer hope in addressing this growing crisis, California regulations prevent High-Quality, High-Volume Spay and Neuter (HQHVSN)

services from being used to its maximum potential, dramatically limiting its ability to provide relief to the communities that need it the most. AB 2010 provides a practical solution by removing unnecessary regulatory barriers to HQHVSN, while still upholding high standards of care and safety. This provides a simple, common-sense fix to allow HQHVSN at the scale needed to meet the public need, relieve our overcrowded shelters and save the lives of countless animals."

Arguments in Support

This bill is co-sponsored by the *American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)*, the *San Diego Humane Society and SPCA*, the *San Francisco SPCA*, and *Animal Balance*. In a joint letter of support, they write: "Every spay or neuter surgery performed today prevents countless future births. By expanding access to high-quality sterilization services, AB 2010 will reduce shelter overcrowding, decrease euthanasia, relieve financial strain on families and local governments, and improve animal welfare outcomes statewide.

Arguments in Opposition

This bill is opposed by *Top Cat Rescue*. They write: "Cats need all the help they can get but if HQHVSN field clinics, or MASH-style models are appropriate, those standards must be developed through the Veterinary Medical Board's multidisciplinary advisory process — not through legislation that bypasses expert oversight."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, the Veterinary Medical Board anticipates minor and absorbable costs to revise regulations; update inspection procedures, materials, and training; and provide education and outreach to licensees.

VOTES

ASM BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS: 18-0-1

YES: Berman, Johnson, Addis, Ahrens, Alanis, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Chen, Elhawary, Hadwick, Haney, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Lowenthal, Macedo, Nguyen, Pellerin

ABS, ABST OR NV: Caloza

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Bauer-Kahan, Calderon, Caloza, Ellis, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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