

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2574 (Alanis) – As Amended April 9, 2026

Policy Committee: Judiciary

Vote: 12 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

**SUMMARY:**

This bill updates the law regarding vicious and dangerous animals, by standardizing the procedural framework for vicious and dangerous dog determinations across all California cities and counties, and establishes a new “notice of rights” requirement for dog owners whose dogs are seized and impounded pending a hearing.

- 1) Directs, when probable cause exists to believe a dog is potentially dangerous or vicious, the chief officer of the public animal shelter, animal control department, or local law enforcement agency to petition the superior court for a hearing, while preserving local authority to establish an administrative hearing procedure as an alternative.
- 2) Eliminates the existing prohibition on a jury trial at the initial superior court hearing.
- 3) Directs appeals to the appellate division of the superior court, conducted de novo without a jury, applying the same evidentiary standard as the initial hearing.
- 4) Requires post-hearing notice to include explicit factual findings supporting the determination, and requires the court or hearing entity to post notice of each public hearing on its website at least five working days in advance.
- 5) Requires the agency providing the notice to maintain proof of service for at least six months following the exhaustion of all appeals.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) Costs of an unknown, but potentially significant, amount to trial courts (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) for increased workload associated with additional petitions and de novo appeals heard in superior court, and for jury trials at the initial hearing. By directing petitions to the superior court while preserving local authority to establish an administrative hearing procedure, the bill creates the potential for cases to shift to the superior court in jurisdictions that have not formally established an administrative procedure. Separately, by removing the existing prohibition on a jury trial at the initial hearing, the bill creates the potential for jury trial costs in cases where the owner or keeper requests a jury — more court-intensive than the current bench-hearing model. Statewide volume of contested cases is unknown. It generally costs approximately \$1,000 to operate a courtroom for one hour. Although courts are not funded on the basis of workload, increased pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may create a demand for increased General Fund support. The Judicial Council notes unknown

calendarizing impacts for the courts, citing concerns with the abbreviated timeline for notice, hearings, and appeals. The requirement to mail the determination specifically as first-class pre-paid postage would be an additional cost for postage and workload. Judicial Council reports additional costs of an unknown amount for workload to post notice of hearings both in the courthouse and on the court's website. The state budget provides annual General Fund backfills to the Trial Court Trust Fund to offset revenue reductions, totaling approximately \$117.3 million in 2025-26.

- 2) Costs (local funds), of an unknown but potentially significant amount, to local law enforcement and animal control agencies for the new notice-of-rights requirement, including drafting and serving the notice on each owner or keeper whose dog is seized and impounded, maintaining return-receipt or affirmation records for six months following exhaustion of all appeals, and producing the additional written factual findings required after each hearing. These costs are potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

The Legislative Analyst's Office has identified a General Fund structural deficit of approximately \$35 billion annually beginning in 2027-28.

#### COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

The purpose of AB 2574 is to improve transparency and procedural clarity in the process used by local authorities to determine whether a dog is potentially dangerous or vicious. This bill clarifies the notice requirements provided to dog owners and ensures that individuals are informed of their rights during administrative hearings.

By updating these proceedings, this bill seeks to promote consistency across jurisdictions and ensure that individuals receive clear information about the legal process affecting their animal. AB 2574 strengthens due process protection while maintaining the authority of local agencies to address public safety concerns.

- 2) **Background.** In 1989, following a series of high-profile incidents involving dog attacks, the Legislature adopted the existing framework for evaluating whether a dog is potentially dangerous or vicious. Under existing law, when an animal control or law enforcement officer has probable cause to believe a dog is potentially dangerous or vicious, the officer petitions either the superior court or, where the local jurisdiction has established one, an administrative hearing entity. The owner is served formal notice and may contest the determination at a hearing, and the hearing officer determines, by a preponderance of the evidence, whether the dog is dangerous or vicious. Existing Food and Agricultural Code Section 31683 expressly preserves local authority to adopt programs that incorporate all, part, or none of the state framework. As a result, substantive criteria — including most provocation defenses — and the qualifications and training of hearing officers are largely set by local rules.

This bill standardizes the procedural rules across all California jurisdictions, including charter cities, by overriding the local-control savings clause as applied to the bill's procedural provisions. The bill retains the preponderance-of-the-evidence standard at the initial hearing

and applies the same standard on appeal. The bill eliminates the existing prohibition on a jury trial at the initial superior court hearing, redirects the de novo appeal to the appellate division of the superior court, requires explicit written factual findings after each hearing, and creates the new notice-of-rights requirement for impounded dogs.

The California Animal Welfare Association and the County Health Executives Association of California have expressed concerns regarding the bill. The California Animal Welfare Association reports that jurisdictions currently operating under local dangerous dog ordinances would need to redesign hearing procedures, retrain staff, and revise ordinances to comply with the state framework, and that the bill's interaction with the superior court system could increase court involvement in cases currently handled entirely through local administrative hearings.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 793 (Schultz), of the current legislative session, revises the existing statutes regulating potentially dangerous or vicious dogs by, among other things, defining new terms, requiring determinations about whether a dog is vicious to be made by a clear and convincing evidence standard, requiring explicit findings on certain criteria, and establishing new statutory provisions for the regulation of provoked dogs. The bill was held on the Senate Appropriation Committee's suspense file.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Shiran Zohar / APPR. / (916) 319-2081