
CONSENT

Bill No: AB 463
Author: Michelle Rodriguez (D), et al.
Amended: 6/13/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE HEALTH COMMITTEE: 9-0, 6/11/25

AYES: Menjivar, Valladares, Durazo, Grove, Limón, Padilla, Richardson, Rubio, Wiener

NO VOTE RECORDED: Gonzalez, Weber Pierson

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: 13-0, 7/1/25

AYES: Umberg, Niello, Allen, Arreguín, Ashby, Caballero, Durazo, Laird, Stern, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-0, 5/15/25 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Emergency medical services: dogs and cats

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill permits an ambulance operator to transport a police canine or search and rescue dog that is injured in the line of duty to a veterinary clinic if there is no other person requiring medical attention or transport at that time, and permits an emergency responder to provide basic first aid to a police canine or search and rescue dog while the dog is being transported. Provides emergency responders with immunity from criminal or civil liability for any injury to the canine that occurs during the transportation or administration of medical care.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes licensing requirements for the operation of ambulances, issued by the California Highway Patrol, but exempts ambulances owned or operated by a fire department of a federally recognized Indian tribe. [Vehicle Code (VEH) §2510, et seq.]
- 2) Limits the civil liability for any act or omission, other than an act or omission constituting gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct, of any person who, in good faith and not for compensation, renders emergency medical or nonmedical care or assistance at the scene of an emergency (known as the Good Samaritan Law). Specifies that the scene of an emergency does not include emergency departments and other places where medical care is usually offered. [Health and Safety Code (HSC) §1799.102]
- 3) Limits the civil liability of various types of professionals who render emergency medical services at the scene of an emergency, including emergency medical services (EMS) providers, law enforcement officers, firefighters, and registered nurses, so that these professionals are only liable for acts or omissions performed in a grossly negligent manner or for acts or omissions not performed in good faith. Specifies that a public agency employing these personnel are not liable for civil damages if the person providing the EMS is not liable. [HSC §1799.106]
- 4) Establishes the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act, and prohibits any person from practicing veterinary medicine unless the person holds a valid, unexpired, and unrevoked license as a veterinarian, or is the bona fide owner of the animal. [Business and Professions Code (BPC) §4811 and §4825]
- 5) Defines the practice of veterinary medicine as including, among other things, administering a drug, medicine, appliance, application, or treatment of whatever nature for the prevention, cure, or relief of a wound, fracture, bodily injury, or disease of animals. [BPC §4826]
- 6) Establishes that a violation of the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act is a misdemeanor, and is punishable by a fine of between \$500 and \$2,000, or by imprisonment in a county jail for up to one year, or both. [BPC §4831]
- 7) Permits emergency responders to provide basic first aid to dogs and cats, notwithstanding the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act, to the extent that the provision of that care is not prohibited by the responder's employer. Specifies

that this does not impose a duty or obligation on an emergency responder to provide care to an injured animal during an emergency. [HSC §1799.109]

- 8) Defines “basic first aid to dogs and cats” as providing immediate medical care to a dog or cat by an emergency responder in an emergency situation to which the emergency responder is responding, that is intended to stabilize the cat or dog so the cat or dog can be transported by the owner as soon as practical to a veterinarian for treatment and which is provided through:
 - a) Administering oxygen;
 - b) Managing ventilation by mask;
 - c) Manually clearing the upper airway, not including tracheal intubation or surgical procedures;
 - d) Controlling hemorrhage with direct pressure; and,
 - e) Bandaging for the purpose of stopping bleeding. [HSC §1799.109 (d)(5)]
- 9) Defines a “search and rescue dog,” for purposes of a provision of law prohibiting discrimination against the handler of a police canine unit or a search and rescue dog in lodging, dining, or transportation, as a dog that is officially affiliated with, or sponsored by, a governmental agency and that has been trained and approved as a search and rescue dog, or that is currently registered and approved for search and rescue work with a search and rescue team affiliated with the California Emergency Management Agency, including a dog that is in training. [Civil Code §54.25]

This bill:

- 1) Permits a person licensed to operate an ambulance, or a person who operates ambulances owned or operated by a fire department of a federally recognized Indian tribe, to transport a police canine or a search and rescue dog that is injured in the line of duty to a veterinary clinic or similar facility if there is no other person requiring medical attention or transport at that time.
- 2) Requires, to the extent feasible, the handler of the police canine or search and rescue dog to accompany the animal during transport to maintain control of the animal during transport.
- 3) Permits an emergency responder to provide basic first aid to a police canine or search and rescue dog that is injured in the line of duty while the police canine or search and rescue dog is being transported to a veterinary clinic or similar facility.

- 4) Exempts an emergency responder who is providing first aid to an injured police canine or search and rescue dog while the dog is being transported to a veterinary clinic or similar facility, who acts in good faith and not for compensation, from being subject to criminal or civil liability for any injury to the canine that occurs during the emergency transportation or administration of medical care. Specifies that this does not apply to an act or omission by an emergency responder that constitutes gross negligence or wanton misconduct.
- 5) Specifies that an emergency responder who provides basic first aid to an injured police canine or search and rescue dog while the dog is being transported does not render transportation or care “for compensation” for the purpose of this bill, notwithstanding their receipt of compensation or other services as a result of their employment.
- 6) Specifies that this bill does not require an ambulance to transport, or an emergency responder to provide first aid to, a police canine or search and rescue dog, and prohibits a contract for the provision of emergency medical response or transport from containing, as a condition of award, a requirement to provide care or transport to police canines or search and rescue dogs.
- 7) Requires an ambulance operator that elects to provide transport to police canines or search and rescue dogs to develop policies regarding the transport of canines, including what additional equipment should be carried by the ambulance and any necessary decontamination procedures following transport of the animal before returning the ambulance to human patient use. Requires the policies to be submitted to, and approved by, the local EMS agency.
- 8) Defines “police canine” as a canine that is owned, or the service of which is employed, by a state or local law enforcement agency, a correctional agency, a fire department, a special fire district, or the State Fire Marshal for the principal purpose of aiding in the detection of criminal activity, flammable materials, or missing persons, the enforcement of laws, the investigation of fires, or the apprehension of offenders.
- 9) Defines “search and rescue dog” as having the same meaning as an existing provision of law prohibiting a handler of a search and rescue dog from being denied service based on the presence of the dog in lodging establishments, eating establishments, or public transportation.
- 10) Makes minor and clarifying changes to provisions of existing law governing immunity from civil liability for emergency responders who provide basic first aid to dogs and cats.

Comments

Author's statement. According to the author, police canines are more than just working animals—they are dedicated partners in law enforcement, risking their lives to protect officers and the public. These highly trained dogs play a vital role in law enforcement operations, from apprehending dangerous suspects and locating narcotics to shielding officers from harm. Their contributions save lives every day. Yet, when they are seriously injured in the line of duty, they are often denied timely, life-saving medical care due to outdated and restrictive legal frameworks. These threats are not theoretical. In Los Angeles, three police canines were recently injured during a violent standoff, each requiring immediate emergency treatment. In Vacaville, a K-9 was shot while confronting an armed suspect, underscoring the grave dangers these animals face. Despite their sacrifice, current law frequently prevents emergency medical personnel from administering care or transporting injured canines to veterinary facilities. Instead, officers are left scrambling for alternative transport—delaying care and reducing the likelihood of survival. This status quo is unacceptable. Police canines are not disposable tools; they are trusted members of law enforcement teams who deserve the same urgency of care extended to any first responder. It is time to address the gaps in current law and ensure that these animals receive the prompt medical attention they need and deserve when injured in the line of duty.

Background

Journal article on EMS and animal care. A report entitled “EMS Safety and Prehospital Emergency Care of Animals” was published in 2021 in the journal, *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*. According to this report, several U.S. states now allow EMS personnel to provide some form of emergency care to animals, with some state legislation limited to law enforcement canines, while other states include pets. As of the date of the article, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi, and New York allow ambulance transport of injured law enforcement canines if no human patient needs the ambulance. Colorado and Ohio enacted laws in 2014 and 2016, respectively that allow EMS personnel to provide emergency medical care to a dog or cat being transferred to a veterinarian. The report states that in the wake of these new laws, a significant void was created: there are no standardized EMS protocols for the safe prehospital care of law enforcement canines or pets, and the importance of safety when working around animals cannot be overstated. Most EMS personnel lack training by veterinary professionals to properly handle an injured pet or working dog, which presents a potential risk to the health of both EMS personnel and animal patients. The article states that the risk of injury to EMS personnel can be substantially reduced by the correct placement of a basket

muzzle, which is necessary to have on hand. The article states that EMS personnel may be able to provide life-saving treatment to an injured animal, as they often have the required equipment and knowledge to save an animal's life. The article states that the three most common life-saving and easily accessible treatments are as follows:

(1) administration of naloxone to a canine patient that is experiencing a suspected opioid overdose, administered intranasally or intramuscularly; (2) oxygen and ventilator support with a canine patient who is suspected to have hypoxemia, or if the patient has suffered respiratory arrest, via loose fitting face masks or alternate delivery device to the nose and mouth; and, (3) hemorrhage control and fluid therapy, with a tourniquet or applied pressure, or an isotonic solution administered intravenously. However, this bill limits care to basic first aid, and so of these treatments, administration of oxygen and ventilation by mask, as well as direct pressure and bandaging to control hemorrhage, would be permitted, but naloxone administration and intravenous fluids would not be allowed.

Regarding transport, the article points out that transport destinations for animal patients is unlikely to be previously determined or programmed into vehicle GPS. Veterinary clinics may not have the appropriate equipment or staff to treat a severely injured animal, and not all facilities are open continuously. Ideally, a board-certified veterinary criticalist and a board-certified veterinary surgeon would be available at all times, but in the absence of specialists, an experienced emergency veterinarian should be contacted. The article states that transporting an animal with severe trauma to a clinic that is not equipped to handle this type of care will prolong the time until necessary interventions can be initiated and may increase patient mortality. The article states that establishing and building a relationship with the nearest, appropriately equipped veterinary emergency facility prior to an incident will be invaluable for communication and will enable an EMS agency to properly plan for potential animal patients. Finally, the article points out that ambulance decontamination protocols also need to be established for the vehicle to safely return to use for human patients.

Three-year pilot project in San Bernardino County. AB 1776 (Steinorth, Chapter 272, Statutes of 2018) permitted the County of San Bernardino to conduct a three-year pilot project to authorize emergency transportation in an ambulance for police dogs injured in the line of duty to a veterinary medical facility, if there was not a person requiring medical attention at the time the request was made to transport the police dog. The dog's canine handler was required to accompany the injured dog and was responsible for rendering any first aid to the dog during transport. As a

result of a sunset clause, the pilot program became inoperable and was repealed on January 1, 2022. The Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency was required to collect data on the number of police dogs transported under the pilot program, and the outcome of those reports, and submit a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2022. However, according to the Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency, no dogs were transported during the pilot program, and therefore no report was submitted.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

Senate Rule 28.8

SUPPORT: (Verified 7/14/25)

Arcadia Police Officers' Association
Brea Police Association
Burbank Police Officers' Association
California Ambulance Association
California Association of School Police Chiefs
California Coalition of School Safety Professionals
California Narcotic Officers' Association
California Professional Firefighters
California Reserve Peace Officers' Association
California State Sheriffs' Association
California Veterinary Medical Association
Claremont Police Officers' Association
Corona Police Officers' Association
County of Mono Board of Supervisors
Culver City Police Officers' Association
Fullerton Police Officers' Association
Los Angeles School Police Management Association
Los Angeles School Police Officers' Association
Murrieta Police Officers' Association
Newport Beach Police Association
Palos Verdes Police Officers' Association
Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association
Pomona Police Officers' Association
Riverside County Sheriff's Office
Riverside Sheriffs' Association
Santa Ana Police Officers' Association

OPPOSITION: (Verified 7/14/25)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: A large coalition of law enforcement organizations, which include a number of police officers associations from various cities and counties, support this bill, stating that police canines often face dangerous situations in the line of duty, putting them at risk of serious injury, yet emergency medical personnel are often restricted in their ability to provide immediate care or transport. This bill will ensure that police dogs can receive faster medical attention. The California Professional Firefighters and the California Ambulance Association also support this bill, making similar arguments.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-0, 5/15/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Carrillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Alanis, Arambula, Bennett, Caloza, Castillo, Jeff Gonzalez, Hart, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Stefani

Prepared by: Vincent D. Marchand / HEALTH / (916) 651-4111
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