
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 519
Author: Berman (D), et al.
Amended: 7/2/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE BUS., PROF. & ECON. DEV. COMMITTEE: 6-0, 6/30/25
AYES: Ashby, Archuleta, Arreguín, Menjivar, Smallwood-Cuevas, Umberg
NO VOTE RECORDED: Choi, Grayson, Niello, Strickland, Weber Pierson

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0, 5/5/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Pet broker sales

SOURCE: American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, San Diego Humane Society

DIGEST: This bill prohibits a pet broker, as defined, from selling, offering for sale, or adopting out a dog one year or younger, cat or rabbit, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Prohibits a pet store operator from selling a live dog, cat, or rabbit in a pet store unless the animal was obtained from a public animal control agency or shelter, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelter, humane society shelter, or rescue group that is in a cooperative agreement with at least one private or public shelter, as specified. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) § 122354.5)
- 2) Prohibits an online pet retailer, as defined, from offering, brokering or making a referral for a loan or other financing for the adoption or sale of a dog, cat, or rabbit. (HSC § 122191).
- 3) Defines “pet dealer” under the provisions of law pertaining to the retail sale of dogs or cats to mean a person engaging in the business of selling dogs or cats,

or both, at retail, and by virtue of the sales of dogs or cats is required to possess a permit pursuant to Section 6066 of the Revenue and Taxation Code. (HSC § 122125(b))

- 4) Requires every dog dealer, as defined in HSC § 122300 that sells registered dogs or that claims that the dogs being sold are registered or are registerable with a dog pedigree registry shall post conspicuously within close proximity to the dogs offered for sale, a notice containing the following language in at least 100-point type: “Pedigree registration does not assure proper breeding conditions, health, quality, or claims to lineage.” (HSC § 122305)

This bill:

- 1) Prohibits a “broker” as defined, from making available for sale, adoption or offering to sell a dog under one year of age, a cat, or rabbit.
- 2) Defines the following for purposes of this bill:
 - a) “Animal rescue group” to mean any not-for-profit organization that has tax exempt status under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, whose mission and practice is, in whole or part, the rescue and placement of animals into permanent homes and meets both of the following:
 - b) Does not breed animals, and,
 - c) Does not obtain animals in exchange for compensation from any person that breed or broker animals.
 - d) “Broker” to mean a person or business that sells, arranges, negotiates, or, processes either in person or online, the sale of dogs, cats, or rabbits bred by another for profit. This includes facilitating the transfer of a dog, cat, or rabbit for profit.
 - e) “public animal control agency or shelter” to mean any facility operated by or under contract with any governmental entity for the purpose of impounding or harboring seized, stray, homeless, abandoned, or unwanted dogs, cats, rabbits, or other animals.
- 3) Exempts the following from the provisions of this bill:

- a) The sale, transfer, or adoption of an animal by a governmental agency.
- b) The transfer of ownership of a guide, signal, or service dog.
- c) Public animal control agency or shelter, or animal rescue group.
- d) Nonprofit organizations engaged in youth education related to animal care and rearing.
- e) A sale or transfer of an animal conducted on or behalf of the bona fide owner to a new owner, so long as there is no more than three occurrences annually.

Background

Pet Brokers. According to the ASPCA, a “dog broker or ‘puppy dealer’” is a middleman distributor who obtains puppies in bulk from commercial breeders and re-sells them to retailers.” Currently, there are no prohibitions preventing a broker from purchasing a puppy or kitty from a “puppy mill or kitten factory” and selling that animal to a consumer in California. Pet brokers are required to hold a Class-B license from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

California already prohibits the retail sale of live cats, dogs, or rabbits at pet stores unless the animal is sourced from an animal control agency, shelter or animal rescue group. With the enactment of AB 485 (O'Donnell, Chapter 740, Statutes of 2017), California became one of the first states in the nation to ban the sale of certain live animals in pet stores and instead promote the rehoming of animals through shelter and rescue organization partnerships with pet supply retailers. AB 485 specifically prohibits the sale of dogs, cats, or rabbits in a retail pet store unless the animal was obtained from a public animal control agency or shelter or rescue group as defined. While AB 485 addressed retail sales in this state at traditional retail pet stores, it did not address the online retail animal marketplace.

Generally, California regulates the sale of animals through the Polanco-Lockyer Pet Breeder Warranty Act (Warranty Act) and the Lockyer-Polanco-Farr Pet Protection Act (Protection Act). The Warranty Act is applicable to California breeders and the Protection Act applies to retail sales in stores. California's breeder and pet retail sales laws are intended to ensure the consumer has recourse should any problems arise with respect to the health of the animal after the animal is purchased. The Protection Act also includes specific requirements to ensure consumers have information about the pet's origins and the health and safety of the

animals prior to purchase and while in the care of the pet retailer. California does not license dog breeders in this state. Instead, dog breeders are authorized to operate if they meet the definition of breeder and comply with the requirements specified in the Warranty Act. Pet dealers are regulated and defined under the Protection Act, and those laws ensure that when selling a pet to a consumer, pet dealers must provide purchasers with written information about the animal's health, including any known illnesses or conditions. Additionally, under the Protection Act, before any dog or cat is sold, the dog or cat must be examined by a licensed veterinarian to ensure it is free from contagious diseases and fit for sale. The Protection Act also outlines consumer remedies in the event a purchased animal is found to be ill or affected by a congenital or hereditary condition within 15 days of sale, in which case the consumer may be entitled to a refund, an exchange, or reimbursement for veterinary costs. The law also imposes recordkeeping requirements, obligating dealers to retain documentation regarding the source of animals, veterinary treatments, and sales transactions for a specified period.

Pet brokers may not be defined as a pet retailer in the Protection Act or defined as a breeder in the Warranty Act and therefore are not subject to the same requirements under either act. This bill defines a pet broker as a person or business that sells, arranges, negotiates, or processes, either in person or online, the sale of dogs, cats, or rabbits bred by another for profit. This includes facilitating the transfer of a dog, cat, or rabbit for profit.

Federal Animal Welfare Laws. The federal Animal Welfare Act, passed by Congress in 1966, establishes minimum standards for the care and treatment of animals bred for commercial sale, exhibited to the public, used in biomedical research or commercial transport. According to information from the USDA, businesses that buy or sell warm-blooded animals, exhibit to the public, transport animals commercially, or use the animals for research, teaching, testing, or experiments must be licensed and/or registered under the jurisdiction of the USDA. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), under the USDA is responsible for overseeing the commercial dog breeding industry. Breeders who sell to a pet store or consumers over the Internet are required to hold a license. There are exemptions to the USDA/APHIS licensure requirements including pet retail stores, working dog dealers (unless wholesale), direct sales, hobby breeders, among a few specified others. Licenses issued by the USDA/APHIS are valid for three-years and license holders may increase the number of animals under that license in increments of 50 at any time during the three-year license period without obtaining permission or a new license. As noted by various animal welfare organizations, federal laws provide a minimal level of specificity for animal care

and violations are routinely found in many commercial breeding organizations, while others operate underground making enforcement of the laws difficult and challenging.

LA Times Investigative Report. A 2024 investigative report by the *Los Angeles Times* titled “Inside California’s Brutal Underground Market for Puppies” exposed loopholes being exploited by some breeders and pet sellers that allow them to serve as brokers, reselling or arranging the sale of dogs bred in “puppy mills”. Through analysis of more than 88,000 certificates of veterinary inspection—or “travel certificates”—from states throughout the country, the *Times* identifies more than 71,000 were imported into California. Individual pet dealers and businesses then rebrand and resell these imported dogs as “California-bred” to unknowing consumers. According to the report, many of these pets develop future health problems and consumers have little knowledge as to the original source of their pet, nor recourse for the fraudulent sale.

The article noted that often time buyers purchase animals online from what they believe to be a breeder in California, when in reality the animal is from another state, and offered for sale through a broker with little knowledge from the prospective buyer, that the dog was not actually bred in California.

This bill contains exceptions for dog over a year, procurement by government agencies, such as police dogs, as well as the transfer of a guide, signal or service dog. This bill exempts private or publicly operated animal shelters, human societies, and rescue organizations, and those that acquire animals for educational purposes. In addition, this bill makes it clear that a bona fide owner can sell to another so long as there are no more than three occurrences per year.

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

SUPPORT: (Verified 7/2/25)

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (co-source)

San Diego Humane Society (co-source)

Best Friends Animal Society

CalAnimals

Michelson Center for Public Policy

San Francisco SPCA

Social Compassion in Legislation

Valley Humane Society

OPPOSITION: (Verified 7/2/25)

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Black Brant Group
Bluffton Decatur Waynedale
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association
California Cattlemen's Association
California Houndsmen for Conservation
California Rifle and Pistol Association
California Waterfowl Association
Cumback Veterinary Service
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
East Holmes Veterinary Clinic
Girard Animal Hospital
Hoosier Hills Veterinary Services
King Veterinary Clinic
Pet Advocacy Network
Pratt Veterinary Services
Safari Club International
San Diego County Wildlife Federation
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter - Safari Club International
Sparta Road Veterinary Clinic
Sugar Creel Veterinary Clinic
Thompson's Veterinary Center
Walnut Creek Veterinary Clinic
Mzuri Safari Club
Puppyspot Group, LLC
Riverside County Sheriff's Office
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association
Numerous Individuals

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The sponsors and a coalition of supporters note, “Despite California’s existing laws prohibiting retail pet store sales of dogs, cats, and rabbits unless sourced from shelters or rescues, investigative reporting has revealed that a significant number of animals continue to enter the state through unregulated online sales conducted by predatory third-party sellers. These brokers act as middlemen for large-scale commercial breeding operations, commonly referred to as puppy and kitten mills, where animals often endure inhumane conditions, including overbreeding, lack of veterinary care, and poor living environments that result in severe health and behavioral issues.”

“AB 519 provides a solution by defining brokers within California’s pet laws and explicitly prohibiting them from selling or transferring-for-profit a dog, cat, or rabbit bred by another entity. Importantly, this bill does not impact consumers’ ability to obtain pets from responsible breeders, shelters, or breed-specific rescues. Rather, it closes a predatory loophole that enables consumer fraud and perpetuates animal cruelty”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Black Brant Group, California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association, California Houndsmen for Conservation, California Rifle and Pistol Association, California Waterfowl Association, Delta Waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited, Safari Club International, San Diego County Wildlife Federation, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter - Safari Club International, Mzuri Safari Club, Tulare Basin Wetlands Association write in opposition and note, “We oppose this measure because it would unnecessarily limit the availability of hunting and other working dogs used by our members. While many hunters acquire their dogs (which include both puppies and started adult dogs) directly from a breeder, others may opt for assistance from third parties such as dog trainers, including through the use of a broker. Reasons for this would include, but are not limited to, the buyer not having sufficient connections, familiarity, or education regarding reputable breeders or adoption agencies - especially those from outside of California.”

PuppySpot Group LLC, is opposed unless amended and notes, “AB 519, as written, threatens to dismantle this process and disrupt access to healthy, well-bred puppies for California families—particularly those seeking specific breed traits for allergy concerns, service animal needs, or personal preferences. We believe this bill penalizes responsible, transparent operations while doing little to prevent the underground or unregulated sales that put animal health and consumer trust at risk.”

Pet Advocacy Network writes in opposition and notes, “Like you, we are committed to ending irresponsible breeding and improving animal welfare outcomes. However, rather than curbing unethical, unlicensed, and unregulated breeding, AB 519 would punish responsible, licensed brokers—many of whom are the most transparent and accountable actors in the pet marketplace—while doing little to stop the very sellers this bill seeks to address.”

Numerous out-of-state veterinary clinics write in opposition and note, “In my capacity, I have examined, vaccinated, and cleared puppies for transport, ensuring their health and wellness prior to travel. Brokers that I have worked with operate

under strict animal welfare protocols and demonstrate a strong commitment to the safety and wellbeing of the animals in their care. Their services help breeders reach families throughout the state and the country, while maintaining high standards of health verification, transportation logistics, and placement integrity.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0, 5/5/25

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

NO VOTE RECORDED: Bains, Ellis, Macedo, Ta, Tangipa

Prepared by: Elissa Silva / B., P. & E.D. / 916-651-4104
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**** END ****