
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
BUSINESS, PROFESSIONS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
Senator Angelique Ashby, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 631
Author: Lee
Version: July 9, 2025
Urgency: No
Consultant: Elissa Silva

Hearing Date: July 14, 2025

Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Animals: animal shelters: transparency

SUMMARY: Requires an animal shelter as defined, to post specific data points about animals taken in on its website or a third-party website, as specified. Encourages private rescue groups to post similar data as required by the shelters.

Existing law:

- 1) Requires all public animal shelters, shelters operated by societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and humane shelters that contract to perform public animal control services to provide the owners of lost animals and those who find lost animals with all of the following:
 - a) Ability to list the animals they have lost or found on “Lost and Found” lists maintained by the animal shelter;
 - b) Referrals to animals listed that may be the animals the owners or finders have lost or found;
 - c) The telephone numbers and addresses of other animal shelters in the same vicinity;
 - d) Advice as to means of publishing and disseminating information regarding lost animals; and
 - e) Telephone numbers and addresses of volunteer groups that may be of assistance in locating lost animals. (Food and Agricultural Code (FAC) § 32001(a))
- 2) Requires all public and private animal shelters to keep accurate records, for at least three years, on each animal taken up, medically treated, or impounded and requires the records to include all of the following information and any other information required by the California Veterinary Medical Board:
 - a) The date the animal was taken up, medically treated, euthanized, or impounded;
 - b) The circumstances under which the animal was taken up, medically treated, euthanized, or impounded;

- c) The names personnel who took up, medically treated, euthanized, or impounded the animal;
 - d) A description of any medical treatment provided to the animal and the name of the veterinarian of record; and
 - e) The final disposition of the animal, including the name of the person who euthanized the animal or the name and address of the adopting party. (FAC § 32003)
- 3) Defines “Animal shelter” to mean a public animal control agency or shelter, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelter, humane society shelter, or rescue group. (FAC § 30503.5)
- 4) Defines, “Rescue group” to mean a for-profit or not-for-profit entity or a collaboration of individuals that removes dogs from a public animal control agency or shelter, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelter, or humane shelter, or rehomes a dog that has been previously owned by any person other than the original breeder of that dog. (FAC § 30503.5)
- 5) Makes every person who willfully abandons any animal to be guilty of a misdemeanor, except for the release or rehabilitation of native California wildlife pursuant to statute or regulations of the California Department of Fish and Game, now named the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). (Penal Code (PC) 597(a).

This bill:

- 1) Defines “animal shelter” for purposes of this bill to mean a public or private animal control agency or shelter, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelter, or humane society shelter.
- 2) Defines “rescue group” for purposes of this bill to mean a for-profit or not-for-profit entity with at least one of its purposes being the sale or placement of animals that have been removed from a public or private animal control agency or shelter, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelter, or humane society shelter, or that have been previously owned by a person other than the original breeder of that animal.
- 3) Requires an animal shelter to collect and record all of the following information:
- a) The number of animals taken in with separate categories for dogs, cats, and other animals.
 - b) The source of intake separated by category, including, but not limited to, stray animals, surrendered by owner, or transferred from another animal shelter.
 - c) The outcomes for all animals separated by category, including, but not limited to, returned to owner, adopted, transferred to another organization, euthanized, died

in care, or dead upon arrival.

- 4) Requires the information required to be collected in 3) above to be updated at least once per quarter and handled as follows:
 - a) If an animal shelter has an internet website, the animal shelter shall post the information on its internet website and the information shall remain publicly accessible on the internet website for at least five years.
 - b) If an animal shelter does not have an internet website, the animal shelter shall make the information publicly available, upon request, for at least five years.
- 5) Encourages rescue groups to post the data required for shelters to help develop a holistic picture of the pet overpopulation crisis.
- 6) Encourages Animal shelters and rescue groups with local contracts for animal care are encouraged to make the information available in a downloadable spreadsheet format, as specified.
- 7) States that it is the intent of this bill to require public and private animal control agencies and shelters, societies for the prevention of cruelty to animal shelters, and humane society shelters to report specified data, and to strongly encourage rescue groups to report specified data.
- 8) Makes findings and declarations related to the role shelters play in caring for animals in need while also helping to address the pet overpopulation crisis and the importance of data collection related to stray and unwanted animal intake and outcomes.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, The California Animal Welfare Association, representing animal shelters, reports minimal costs, as shelters already collect the information required by this bill, and there is a free tool a shelter can use to post the data on its website automatically. However, by mandating the collection and publication of the information, this bill eliminates an animal shelter's ability to stop collecting and reporting the required information, thus imposing ongoing costs of an unknown amount. If the Commission on State Mandates determines provisions of this bill constitute a state-mandated local program, the state would be required to reimburse local governments for the costs of implementing this bill.

COMMENTS:

1. **Purpose.** Social Compassion in Legislation is the sponsor of this bill. According to the Author, "The official state pet is the 'Shelter Pet.' This bill will help provide important data about shelter animals so that resources are better optimized to find more pets their forever homes. State, local jurisdictions, and nonprofits invest hundreds of millions of dollars in our shelter system to save animals' lives. Yet the data these entities rely on to direct these resources is no longer available...This transparency will ensure that the state and other entities are able to direct funding efficiently to shelters with the greatest need, while also giving policymakers a more

complete picture of the pet overpopulation problem to make informed policy decisions.”

2. **Background.**

Animal Shelters. Current law FAC § 17005(a) provides that it is the policy of the state not to euthanize an animal if the animal can be adopted into a suitable home. Adoptable animals include only those animals eight weeks of age or older, that have manifested no sign of a behavioral or temperamental defect posing a health or safety risk or otherwise make the animal unsuitable for placement as a pet.

An animal shelter is defined in (FAC § 30503.5) as a public animal control agency or shelter, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelter, humane society shelter, or rescue group. Animal control shelters are generally regulated under various provisions in the FAC, the Civil Code and the PC. Public animal control shelters are mandated to provide "necessary and prompt veterinary medical care to animals housed in an animal control shelter" to care for adoptable animals and protect the public. Current laws specify the timeframes for holding animals for owner reunification before adoption, rehoming or euthanizing the animal, and provide requirements for spaying and neutering before animals are adopted or sold.

Since the passage of the Hayden Law in 1998, the aim of California shelter laws are to help return a lost or stray animal to its home, rehome the animal, or find an alternative non-profit or other entity to take the animal prior to a shelter's last resort of euthanasia. There are approximately 290 private and public shelters in California, which take in stray, lost, abandoned, or surrendered animals. Shelters are primarily operated by local governments. Public shelters are subject to local funding, and managed by county or city, or city and county employees. Often times, these shelters are staffed with a volunteer workforce and contract with licensed veterinarians or registered veterinary technicians to provide necessary healthcare services to the animals in shelter care.

Shelters are currently required to keep accurate records on each animal taken in, medically treated, or impounded. Pursuant to FAC § 32003, shelters must record the date the animal is taken up, treated, impounded or euthanized and the record must include the circumstances of each along with a record of the personnel who provided the care and a description of any medical treatment provided. Lastly, the final disposition of the animal and the name of whoever provided euthanasia. However, the records are not always publicly available or updated. In addition, animal shelters are not mandated to *report* data about personnel or workforce, the animal care received, or provide information specific to the animal population they interact with, leaving a potential void in official statewide data. Because there is not a mandated statewide central data-reporting agency for animal shelters, most data collected are estimates. In an effort to ensure more accurate and accessible data about animals in shelters in California, this bill would require shelters to provide information on its website about the number of animals that have been taken in by the shelter, whether it's a dog, cat or another type of animal, the outcome of the animal (adopted, euthanized, transferred, etc.). The information on these animals must be made publicly accessible and updated quarterly. The bill would recommend

that the information be made available in a downloadable spreadsheet to help interested parties aggregate statewide data more easily.

As recently amended, this bill will apply only to public or private animal control agency or shelters, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelters, or humane society shelters. Instead of mandating that private rescue groups report the data, this bill will simply encourage private rescues to report, the same data points as animal shelters. A comprehensive collection of data from all groups that take in unwanted or rehomed animals will help provide a more comprehensive picture of animal intakes and outcomes and pet overpopulation in California.

Shelter Animals Count provides a national database of animal shelter statistics. However, because there is not a mandate for shelters to report the data, Shelter Animals Count relies on the voluntary reporting from shelters and rescue groups. According to Shelter Animals Count's *2024 Annual Analysis*, 5.7 million dogs and cats entered shelters in 2024. The analysis notes that the numbers are down 11% from 2019; however, that number represents only a 1% decrease from 2023. In a November 22, 2024, Los Angeles Times article, it reported that from January to September 1, 124 dogs were euthanized at the city's six shelters, a 72% increase from the previous year. The article noted that the euthanasia of some of the animals was about a lack of resources to care for the animal as opposed to animal illness or other behavioral issues. The opportunity to collect statewide data will assist in assessment and understanding of public shelter operations across California, which may provide insight into where the best animal outcomes occur and where additional resources may be necessary.

3. **Related Legislation.** AB 1482 (Castillo of 2025), requires an animal shelter to provide public notice regarding the adoption availability of any animal and requires the Department of Food and Agriculture to conduct a study on overcrowding of state animal shelters, among other topics. AB 1482 also makes changes to state law pertaining to dog breeders. (Status: *This bill was held in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations*)

AB 2012 (Lee of 2024) would have required the CDPH to collect specified data from public animal shelters as part of their annual rabies control activities reporting, and authorized the CDPH to contract out this requirement to a California accredited veterinary school. (Status: *This bill died in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.*)

AB 2265 (McCarty of 2024) would have, among other things, required that all animal shelters provide public notice at least 24 hours before a dog or cat is scheduled to be euthanized, to be posted daily on their internet website or Facebook page, and that the notice be physically affixed on the kennel of a dog to cat scheduled to be euthanized, as well as mandated time certain that a dog or cat must be spayed or neutered by an animal shelter upon being given to a foster. (Status: *This bill died in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.*)

SB 1358 (Nguyen of 2024) requires the CDPH to collect and report specified data from public animal shelters as part of their annual rabies control activities reporting. (Status: *This bill died in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.*)

SB 1459 (Nguyen of 2024) would, among other things, require public animal control agencies and shelters in counties with a population greater than 400,000 to publish and update specified data on their internet website, and exempt a veterinarian or registered veterinary technician from prosecution if they willfully release a cat as part of a trap, neuter, and release activity. (Status: *This bill died in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.*)

AB 1988 (Muratsuchi, Chapter 96, Statutes of 2024) authorizes a puppy or kitten relinquished to a public or private animal shelter by the purported owner can be made immediately available for release to a nonprofit organization, animal rescue organization, or adoption organization.

AB 2425 (Essayli of 2024) would, among other things, require an animal shelter to provide public notice regarding the adoption availability of any animal, and require the Department of Food and Agriculture to conduct a study on certain topics, including overcrowding of state animal shelters. The bill would also make changes and additions to state law pertaining to dog breeders. (Status: *This bill died in the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions.*)

ACR 86 (Kalra, Chapter 51, of 2023) encourages the state and local municipalities to develop and fund high-volume spay and neuter clinics across the state to provide sterilization services, and also urges other actions relating to pets, including actions to control animal breeding and encourage spaying and neutering. .

AB 595 (Essayli of 2023) would have required that all animal shelters provide public notice at least 72 hours before euthanizing any animal with information that includes the scheduled euthanasia date and required the CDFA to conduct a study on animal shelter overcrowding and the feasibility of a statewide database for animals scheduled to be euthanized. (Status: *This bill died in the Assembly Committee Appropriations*)

SB 669 (Cortese Chapter 882, Statutes of 2023) authorized a veterinarian to allow an RVT to act as an agent of the veterinarian for the purpose of establishing the veterinarian-client-patient relationship to administer preventive or prophylactic vaccines or medications for the control or eradication of apparent or anticipated internal or external parasites by satisfying specified criteria.

AB 485 (Williams, Chapter 557, Statutes of 2015) created a voluntary tax return checkoff to provide revenue to a Prevention of Animal Homelessness and Cruelty Fund, which allocates money to local animal shelters to support spay and neuter activities and eliminate dog and cat homelessness.

SB 1323 (Lieu, Chapter 375, Statutes of 2014) appropriated money collected from the Pet Lover's License Plate Program to the Veterinary Medical Board for the sole and exclusive purpose of funding grants to providers of no-cost or low-cost animal sterilization services.

4. **Arguments in Support.** Social Compassion in Legislation writes in support and notes, "AB 631 will give stakeholders visibility into the numbers of animals entering and exiting our state's animal shelters and rescues, while helping to ensure funds

are spent effectively and efficiently. Additionally, this data will give lawmakers a better picture of the pet overpopulation problem as they move forward with legislative solutions, as well as ensure animal shelter and rescue data is available in the unfortunate event of a zoonotic disease outbreak.”

Humane World for Animals writes in support and notes, “The data points outlined in this bill are standard figures tracked by nearly all organizations and, when used widely, can help states and regions identify community-based solutions.”

The American Kennel Club writes in support and notes, “AB 631 is a simple, easy-to-understand bill that will lead to improved animal welfare and allow policymakers to address any discovered areas of need in the animal shelter system.”

San Diego Humane Society writes in support and notes, “By aligning data practices across agencies, AB 631 will help identify emerging trends, improve resource allocation, and strengthen efforts to reduce euthanasia and improve outcomes for animals in care.”

A broad coalition of supporters note, “AB 631 will give the state, local jurisdictions, and philanthropic organizations the visibility they need to ensure funds are most effectively and efficiently targeted, while giving lawmakers a complete picture of the pet overpopulation problem as they move forward with legislative solutions, as well as ensure animal shelter data is available in the unfortunate event of a zoonotic disease outbreak.”

5. **Arguments in Opposition.** Fix our Shelters writes in opposition and notes, “Most concerning, the bill does not require shelters to report how many stray animals are turned away at their doors—a number crucial to understanding intake trends, unmet community needs, and the accuracy of reported live release rates. This omission creates an incomplete and potentially misleading picture of shelter performance.”

Angels Furry Friends Rescue writes in opposition and notes, “If the goal of AB 631 is true transparency, public shelters and contracted agencies must be held to a higher standard. They should be required to:

- Publish monthly intake/outcome data - Maintain historical data accessible to public
- Track and report animals turned away
- Maintain a public-facing website (with state support for those lacking resources).

6. **Additional Comments.** Animal Rescuers for Change and All Beings Cooperative Rescue, support this bill if it is amended and notes, “Transparency is essential—but it must be accompanied by a clear understanding of the distinct roles and resources of public shelters versus private rescue organizations, and by the creation of a comprehensive data collection, centralized data system to enable effective action.”

SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION:

Support:

Social Compassion in Legislation (source)
American Kennel Club, INC.
Animal Rescue Mission
Animal Wellness Action
Berkeley Animal Rights Center
Better Together Forever
Compassionate Bay
East Bay SPCA
Feline Lucky Adventures
Giantmecha
Greater Los Angeles Animal Spay Neuter Collaborative
Hugs and Kisses Animal Fund
Humane Society of Imperial County
Humane Society of San Bernardino Valley
Humane World for Animals
Inland Valley Humane Society & S.P.C.A.
Joybound People & Pets
Latino Alliance for Animal Care Foundation
Leaders for Ethics, Animals, and the Planet
Los Angeles Democrats for the Protection of Animals
Marin Humane Society
NY 4 Whales
Pibbles N Kibbles Animal Rescue
Plant-based Advocates
Project Minnie
San Diego Humane Society and SPCA
Santa Barbara Humane
Seeds 4 Change Now Animal Rescue
Start Rescue
Stray Cat Alliance
Students Against Animal Cruelty Club - Hueneme High School
The Canine Condition
The Fix Project
The Pet Loss Support Group
Underdog Heroes, INC.
Valley Humane Society
Women United for Animal Welfare
Woods Humane Society

Opposition:

Angel's Furry Friends
Fix Our Shelters
Lucky Pup Rescue

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