
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 602
Author: Cortese (D)
Amended: 6/18/25 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE BUS., PROF. & ECON. DEV. COMMITTEE: 11-0, 4/21/25
AYES: Ashby, Choi, Archuleta, Arreguín, Grayson, Niello, Richardson,
Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Umberg, Weber Pierson

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

SENATE FLOOR: 36-0, 5/8/25 (Consent)
AYES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear,
Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez,
Grayson, Grove, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello,
Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern,
Strickland, Umberg, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener
NO VOTE RECORDED: Hurtado, Reyes, Rubio, Valladares

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0, 7/17/25 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Veterinarians: veterinarian-client-patient relationship

SOURCE: San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
California Veterinary Medical Association
San Diego Humane Society

DIGEST: This bill clarifies that a registered veterinary technician (RVT) may act as an agent of a veterinarian for purposes of establishing the veterinarian client patient relationship (VCPR) in a registered veterinary premise that is a public animal control agency or shelter, private animal shelter, humane society shelter, or society for the prevention of cruelty to animal shelter.

Assembly Amendments Add a definition of “private animal shelter”.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Veterinary Medical Board (VMB) under the Department of Consumer Affairs, to license and regulate veterinarians and RVTs, issue premises permits for veterinary hospitals and veterinary assistant controlled substances permits. (Business & Professions Code (BPC) § 4800 *et seq.*)
- 2) Prohibits a veterinarian from prescribing, dispensing, or administering a drug, medicine, application, or treatment of whatever nature for the prevention, cure, or relief of a wound, fracture, bodily injury, or disease of animals unless a VCPR exists, except when it is a wild animal or the owner of the animal patient is unknown. (BPC § 4826.6)
- 3) States that a VCPR exists if the client authorizes the veterinarian to assume responsibility for medical judgments regarding the health of the animal patient, the veterinarian possesses sufficient knowledge of the animal patient to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the animal patient's medical condition, and the veterinarian has assumed responsibility for making medical judgments regarding the health of the animal patient and has communicated with the client a medical, treatment, diagnostic, or therapeutic plan appropriate to the circumstances. (BPC § 4826.6)
- 4) Allows a veterinarian to authorize a RVT to act as an agent of the veterinarian for purposes of establishing the VCPR to administer preventative or prophylactic vaccines or medications, as specified, if all of the following conditions are met:
 - a) The RVT administers those vaccines or medications in a registered veterinary premise when the veterinarian is physically present.
 - b) When working at a location other than a registered veterinary premises, the RVT administers the vaccines or medications when the veterinarian is in the general vicinity or available by telephone and is quickly and easily available and the RVT has equipment and drugs necessary to provide immediate emergency care at a level commensurate with the provision of the vaccines or medications and the RVT examines the animal patient and administers the vaccines or medications in accordance with written protocols and procedures.

- c) The RVT examines the animal patient and administers preventive or prophylactic vaccines or medications in accordance with written protocols and procedures established by the veterinarian, as specified. (BPC § 4826.7(b))
- 5) Requires the VMB to adopt regulations establishing animal health care tasks and an appropriate degree of supervision required for those tasks that may be performed only by a RVT or veterinarian. (BPC § 4836(a))

This bill:

- 1) Revises the authority for a RVT to administer a specified vaccine or medication in a registered veterinary premises that is a public animal control agency or shelter, private animal shelter, humane society shelter, or society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelter when the veterinarian is in the general vicinity or available by telephone and is quickly and easily available, as specified.
- 2) Defines “private animal shelter” for purposes of this bill to mean a not-for-profit organization that has tax-exempt status under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, whose purpose and practice is, in whole or significant part, the care of animals and placement of animals into permanent homes through adoption.
- 3) Makes other minor and technical amendments.

Background

Veterinary Medicine. The practice of veterinary medicine is specified in statute (BPC § 4826) and includes actions such as diagnosing or prescribing a drug, medicine, appliance, application, treatment of whatever nature, for the cure or relief of a wound, fracture, bodily injury or disease of animals (including those actions of an RVT or a veterinary assistant under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian). Further, the law requires that any place where veterinary medicine, dentistry, or surgery is practiced, to obtain a premises permit from the VMB.

RVTs. RVTs are an essential part of the veterinary workforce, performing critical support tasks from drawing blood and running laboratory tests to operating radiographic equipment and administering medication. Under the direct supervision of a veterinarian, an RVT is also able to suture skin, extract teeth,

apply casts, or administer anesthesia. RVTs must register with the VMB to be authorized to provide those services within their standard of care.

Veterinary Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR). A major component of veterinary practice is the VCPR. The VCPR ensures that an animal has an established relationship with a veterinarian prior to receiving treatment from the veterinarian. The majority of states require a VCPR prior to treating an animal and most states require the VCPR to be established in person. The VCPR is an integral part of veterinary medicine and is intended to provide assurances that the client has authorized the veterinarian to assume responsibility for making medical judgments regarding the health of the animal.

In 2023, SB 669 (Cortese, Chapter 882, Statutes of 2023) authorized a RVT to establish the VCPR while acting as the agent of a veterinarian only to administer preventive or prophylactic vaccines or medications for the control or eradication of apparent or anticipated internal or external parasites (such as flea medications and vaccinations) if a number of conditions are met. The RVT and veterinarian must have written protocols and procedures. The RVT is required to collect data about the animal patient including the treatment, treatment plan, the diagnosis and assessment before or after, medications and treatment provided, among other requirements. The RVT and veterinarian must sign a statement authorizing the RVT to act as the veterinarian's agent and that the veterinarian will assume risk for the RVT's activities, and the documentation must be retained for all administrations.

This bill provides an update to the parameters of SB 669. This bill will authorize an RVT to administer preventive vaccines or medications in a registered veterinary premises that is a public animal control agency or shelter, private animal shelter, humane society shelter, or society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelter when the veterinarian is in the general vicinity or available by telephone and is quickly and easily available. Concerns arise that often times, many of these shelters find it difficult to have a veterinarian on location at all times to care for the animals as necessary, given the variations in animal care needs. This bill will help to ensure that animals in public and private shelters are able to quickly receive vital preventive vaccinations and medications consistent with the current standard of care requirements.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes
According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, this bill will not result in costs to VMB.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/13/25)

California Veterinary Medical Association (co-source)

San Francisco SPCA (co-source)

San Diego Humane Society (co-source)

Act 2 Rescue

Best Friends

CalAnimals

Council Member Caity Maple, Chair, Law and Legislation Committee, City of
Sacramento

County Health Executives Association of California

Social Compassion in Legislation

County of San Diego Animal Services

Forgotten Feline of Sonoma County

Friends of the Alameda Animal Shelter

Humane Society of Imperial Country

Humane World for Animals

Inland Valley Humane Society and SPCA

Joybound People and Pets

Marin Humane

Michelson Center for Public Policy

Napa County Animal Shelter and Adoption Center

Nine Lives

NorCal Boxer Rescue

NorCal GSP Rescue

Palo Alto Humane

Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

Pets in Need

San Gabriel Valley Humane Society

Santa Barbara Humane

Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter

The Dancing Cat

Town of Apple Valley Animal Services

Valley Humane Society

Woody Feral Cat Support Group

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/13/25)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: Supporters note generally that this bill will help alleviate veterinary access challenges.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0, 7/17/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, 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, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Alvarez, Bennett, Berman, Gallagher

Prepared by: Elissa Silva / B., P. & E.D. / 916-651-4104
8/14/25 16:22:54

**** END ****