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Pet overpopulation

Revised Assembly bill would help address this growing problem.

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Dogs and cats cannot speak for themselves, so let's let the numbers speak for them.

1 million: unwanted and abandoned cats and dogs born in California every year

800,000: number of pets abandoned in California every year

400,000: cats and dogs euthanized every year

35,726: Dogs and cats euthanized in a year by Fresno and Clovis shelters, serving about 875,000 residents.

15,000: dogs and cats euthanized every year in Tulare County

1,100: dogs and cats taken annually from Valley shelters by St. Louis Cardinals manager Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation in Walnut Creek.

8,000: animals spayed or neutered by Fresno's nonprofit HOPE animal shelter since June.

Money talks. Listen to this:

\$2.75 billion: 10-year cost in California for all cats and dogs entering shelters.

\$250 million: taxes spent every year to shelter and euthanize pets.

\$2.8 million: Fresno city and county contribution to the SPCA.

\$1: spent on spay and neutering saves \$18.72 in future animal control costs over a 10-year period.

Looking for a good number?

AB 1634: legislative proposal called the Healthy Pets Act would require the spaying and neutering of most cats and dogs by the time the pet is 4 months old. Exemptions are allowed for purebred dogs and cats whose owners obtain a permit; dogs who work as guide dogs, service dogs or signal dogs; dogs who are used by law enforcement agencies; dogs and cats whose vets determine that due to age, health or illness it is unsafe to spay or neuter them.

This is legislation which we had opposed earlier because there was no allowance for breeding mongrels. That concern has been addressed. Mixed-breed pets can be bred so long as the breeder gets a permit.

The bill is before the Assembly's Business and Professions Committee today and we now support it.

It's not a perfect fix; feral animals are still going to be a problem and the chronically underfunded county animal control operations won't be helped by this. But the numbers of problem pets should decline significantly when this bill becomes law.

Progress should be seen within a few years. It's a proven strategy: Santa Cruz County saw a 50% drop in shelter populations after a mandatory spay and neuter law was adopted.

If only all problems could show progress so quickly.

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