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Support legislation to reduce strays



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Animal Files
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Last Saturday, while serving as guest co-host on "The Pet Place" radio show (as I do from time to time), I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with Judie Mancuso, the spokeswoman for the California Healthy Pets Act (AB1634). For those of you not yet familiar with this very important proposed legislation, I will summarize what it is all about.

Annually in our state, close to a million pets are abandoned – some in shelters, some in public parks, some out on public roads and highways. It's a staggering and shameful fact that worsens with each year. This is not a made-up statistic. It is a number that has been compiled using the public records of animal control agencies and humane societies from every city and county in California.

According to Mancuso, taxpayers spend approximately \$250 million annually to care for these pets. Indirectly, the cost is actually much higher because a significant number of stray animals are involved in bites to humans – and other animals – which result in medical and veterinary costs for individuals. It is difficult to estimate the actual dollar amount for these circumstances, but it is considerable. For me, the monetary cost takes a back seat to the reality that most stray and abandoned animals that end up in shelters are euthanized.

There is a way that both the loss of taxpayer money and the loss of life can be very much reduced, and it is something that Maryanne Dell and I have written about in numerous columns. Two words – spay and neuter! Unfortunately, we're not having much success changing the general public's attitude on this issue. I suspect that the people who read our columns already support spaying and neutering.

This is where the California Healthy Pets Act comes into the picture. This proposed state law, authored and introduced by Assemblyman Lloyd Levine (D-Van Nuys), would require that most cats and dogs be spayed and neutered by 4 months of age. Animals that would be exempt from these requirements are guide dogs and other service dogs, including police and rescue canines, pets whose age or state of health (as determined by a veterinarian) make them unfit for sterilization surgery, and purebred pets whose owners have obtained special permits.

More than 200 animal control agencies, humane societies, rescue organizations, veterinary associations and other animal advocacy groups have given their support for this bill. On April 17, the Los Angeles City Council unanimously voted to support AB1634. Still, it is going to take much more support for this piece of legislation to become law.

It is important for all of you who care about animals to write to your own city councils and the Orange County Board of Supervisors and ask them to support the California Healthy Pets Act. Additionally, send a letter (not an e-mail) to your state Assembly member. Mancuso

recommends that all letters be positive and friendly and not more than a page in length.

Letters may be sent to your own representative via Levine at this address:

Assemblyman Lloyd Levine

Van Nuys State Building

6150 Van Nuys Blvd., Suite 300

Van Nuys, CA 91401

There seems to be a lot of momentum behind this bill, but the key to its passage will be support from the general public. Please take the time to send out a letter. Your words can help save many lives and millions of tax dollars.

For more information about the California Healthy Pets Act, visit www.cahealthypets.com.

Contact the writer: jefari@fea.net

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