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- Photo Galleries
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- Opinion
- Business
- Community
- Living
- Celebrations
- El Sol
- Nation/World
- Travel
- Technology
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SOAPBOX

### State bill favors pet adoptions over death

By GARY W. TRISCORNIA

The California Healthy Pets Act, AB 1634, is the best opportunity we have to finally put an end to the senseless killing-by-euthanasia of adoptable dogs and cats. Last year in Monterey County 1,926 highly adoptable, mostly young dogs and cats met an untimely death in the loving arms of animal care professionals. Why? Because they were born into a community that would not or could not provide them with lifelong homes.

Some were born because parents wanted "our children to experience the miracle of life."

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How ironic.

Others were the product of fast-buck artists looking at a litter of adorable pups as a paycheck. A few came from homes where legitimate personal circumstances made keeping them impossible.

They were the cream of the crop, the very best of the best, the most adoptable of the 4,992 dogs and cats

euthanized in Monterey County in 2006. They were Boxers, Chihuahuas, Australian Shepherds, Cocker Spaniels, Persians, Siamese, and many other pure bred and best-of-all-breeds mixed breed dogs and cats. They died simply because there were too many animals and not enough homes.

The Healthy Pets Act mandates the sterilization of dogs and cats with exceptions made in the form of "intact permits" for animals whose owners are engaged in activities that focus on improving the breed of dogs or cats or particular lines or types of service dogs. Decisions regarding fees and qualifications required for "intact permits" are made at the local level and not dictated from Sacramento. Fees will not be punitive. They are capped at levels not to exceed amounts reasonably necessary to fund the program.

Responsible breeders with the best interests of their breed at heart should support AB 1634. It will help put the quick-buck, back yard breeders who have given us aggressive golden retrievers, dysplastic German shepherds, deaf Dalmatians and other breed distortions out of business. Instead, the American Kennel Club opposes this bill, not to protect its best and most responsible breeders, but to protect the revenue it receives in the form of purebred registrations from backyard and commercial breeders.

Taxpayers who oppose the Healthy Pets Act because it means more government regulation should consider the sharply reduced need for taxpayer-funded construction and operation of animal-control facilities. Fewer dogs and cats born means significantly fewer taxpayer dollars spent on animal control.

The cost of sterilization will not be a burden. A portion of civil penalties collected for violating the act will fund low- and no-cost sterilization and supplement existing voucher and low-cost sterilization programs. The pet owner will benefit from a healthier, longer-living pet that is less likely to roam or be afflicted with cancers and whose aggressive tendencies, if any, will be muted.

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RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN

The SPCA of Monterey County deals routinely with an overpopulation of cats, as Katie Moore does here in this October 2002 photo.

ONLINE

SPCA OF MONTEREY COUNTY:

[www.SPcAmc.org](http://www.SPcAmc.org).

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Gary Triscornia

Urge your elected representatives to save thousands of pets' lives by voting for the California Healthy Pets Act.

**GARY W. TISCORNIA is the executive director of the SPCA of Monterey County.**


**STORYCHAT** 

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