

June 3, 2008

Crowd cheers as Santa Clara votes to support statewide spay and neuter bill

The Santa Clara Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 today to pass a resolution in support of Assembly Bill 1634, the California Healthy Pets Act.

Although the bill has attracted support from a wide array of California cities and humane societies, Santa Clara is the first county to take a position on the legislation. Board of Supervisors Chair Pete McHugh, author of the county resolution, asked his colleagues to “consider that nearly one million unwanted dogs and cats enter the State’s animal shelters each year and more than half of them are euthanized. AB 1634 offers a humane, sensible and cost-effective solution to controlling pet overpopulation.

“AB 1634 will also reduce costs to taxpayers, who pay a staggering \$250 million a year to house and euthanize the State’s unwanted population of dogs and cats,” McHugh said.

The bill, which aims to significantly reduce the number of animals that are euthanized in the state’s animal shelters, requires pet owners to have their dogs and cats spayed or neutered by the age of six months. It has already passed out of the State Assembly and awaits a hearing later this month in the Senate Local Government Committee.

“This measure will prevent the needless killing of hundreds of thousands of animals a year while simultaneously saving taxpayers millions of dollars,” said Assemblyman Lloyd Levine (D-Van Nuys), the bill’s author.

“Since last year, our coalition has been working with stakeholders and other members to strengthen Assembly Bill 1634,” said Levine, who serves as Chair of the Assembly Select Committee on Animal Welfare. “At the same time, we’ve continued to keep the door open to

listen to the legitimate concerns of the bill's detractors. I am confident that with the work we've put in, 2008 is going to be a successful year for our bill, which in turn means good things for our state's budget and animal shelters."

AB 1634 asks that most dogs and cats in the state of California be spayed or neutered. "More than 20 common-sense exemptions are provided in the bill for purebreds and mutts, including provisions for show and sporting dogs, law enforcement dogs, dogs used in search and rescue, pets that are too old or in poor health, and guide, service and signal animals," said Judie Mancuso, the Campaign Director of the California Healthy Pets Coalition, and one of the bill's co-sponsors.

"The facts of this issue are really very simple. We have overcrowded shelters that are costing taxpayers millions of dollars annually, and spaying and neutering is a tried and true approach," Mancuso said. "This is the right legislation at the right time – a humane, common-sense and taxpayer-friendly solution to a real and costly problem. The needless killing of over 500,000 healthy animals and the waste of hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars each year must end. With both the state and local governments facing critical budget decisions, we need to look for savings wherever we can."

Dan Soszynski, the Executive Director of the Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority, believes a similar ordinance in the City of Santa Cruz, "has been successful in reducing the euthanasia rate; the ordinance allowed us to 'get tough' with backyard breeders and reduce the numbers entering our shelter. These laws are an effective and significant tool."

Jody Cramer, a former Santa Cruz SPCA Director, argued that "From both the humane aspect and the cost aspect, (AB 1634) is absolutely the right thing to do. There are a number of years worth of statistics for those who are skeptics to look at about how these (spay and neuter laws)

have helped. They have saved the lives of many animals and have saved people who do this work from having to kill them.”

The California Healthy Pets Act is supported by elected officials, law enforcement and fire department agencies, cities, city and county agencies and employee unions, humane societies and SPCAs, veterinarians and veterinary hospitals, national and international animal welfare organizations, celebrities and other public figures, rescue organizations, animal specialist and professionals, business and chambers of commerce, and tens of thousands of individual supporters, Mancuso stated. For more information on the legislation, visit the organization’s web site at www.cahealthypets.com.