



## FACT SHEET - AB 2716 Reduced Puppy Licensing Fees



The easiest, fastest and least expensive way to get dogs out of the California shelters, reduce shelter expense and reduce euthanasia is to get dogs home to their owners when they are lost. Unlike cats, almost all dogs are owned. Microchip manufacturer Scherling Plough reports that the Number One cause of Pet Deaths is getting lost. One in three pets will be lost; without identification 90% will not be returned to their owners.

The best form of identification is the dog license but currently only about 21% of the dogs in California are licensed. Current state law requires licensing and rabies vaccinations by four months of age and sets the rate for obtaining an altered license at 1/2 of the regular licensing rate. However, as a matter of policy, many municipalities and animal control groups charge an unaltered licensing fee up to 10 times or more of the altered licensing rate. As a result, California's licensing numbers reflect a population that does not comply.

Currently there are approximately 9,220,000 dogs in California and statistically about 10% or 922,000 of those are puppies. Although 92% of Californians who can afford it sterilize their dogs, owners typically, for medical reasons, have not done so by the age of four months. So owners must make a decision about paying a rate that can be 10 times higher to license their puppy or to wait until it is altered. The purpose of this bill is to provide an incentive for puppy owners to license their puppy right away for a one time reduction in rate. This bill would have the following impact:

- It would get these dogs onto the system and allow them to be returned to their owners if lost. They would not be a burden on the shelter system as a result of simply being lost.
- It would ensure shelters a stream of revenue from these dogs. Currently we are losing most of these dogs from the system altogether because once the decision is made not to license, it becomes the de facto behavior.
- It would give shelters information on these dogs to remind people, well ahead of the next licensing date, that the rate will be higher unless the animal is altered prior to the licensing renewal, thus promoting voluntary spay and neuter.
- It would allow veterinarians to also be more proactive in reminding their clients to license their dogs because those clients would not experience the high differential on dogs that would be better served by being older than 16 weeks before being sterilized. Many veterinarians recommend not sterilizing owned dogs until after 6 months of age.
- If 50% of the puppies in California were licensed annually at a rate of \$15, this would add \$5,993,000 in license fee income to local governments. Assuming a ten year stream of income, this nearly \$60 million dollars would have a positive impact without any additional enforcement activities.
- It would allow low-income people to comply with the law.

It is anticipated that AB 2689 will ultimately call for rabies and licensing at 13 weeks of age. That makes passage of this bill even more critical. Many veterinarians oppose sterilization of 13 week old puppies.

More and more shelters and municipalities have come to realize that licensing is not only additional revenue but it is also the answer to the overcrowding in shelters and the resulting euthanasia. Without Hayden funds to pay for longer stays and more evening and week-end hours to allow owners to look for lost dogs, we need to revisit how we do our licensing. AB2716 provides the shelters the flexibility they need to promote puppy licensing and increase their revenues.

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