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ASSEMBLYMEMBER, SEVENTY-SEVENTH DISTRICT

Assembly Bill 1648

Animal Evacuations

Summary

Where a city or county requires a permit to keep an animal within its jurisdiction, AB 1648 requires an animal owner as a condition for obtaining the permit to create and submit an animal wildfire evacuation plan.

Background

In recent years California has experienced catastrophic wildfires of historic proportion devastating both Northern and Southern California. These disasters, among other things, tragically highlight the serious need for preparing and executing evacuation plans for animals. In the chaos of wildfire, animals were, and will be left to suffer and perish, in the absence of pre-planning by their owners. Furthermore, when animals are not evacuated by their owners, first responders and “good Samaritans” are put in danger while trying to save those animals.

The sheltering and protection of animals is the primary responsibility of their owners. As the effects of climate change worsen, wildfires are expected to occur more often, and with greater ferocity. This is our new normal.

Unfortunately, we learned from the recent wildfires that people are unprepared to protect their animals, as many died unable to escape. Having a plan in place increases the chance that animals will be saved in the event of a catastrophic wildfire.

At the state level, Cal. Gov. Code § 8608 requires the Office of Emergency Services to approve, adopt, and incorporate the California Animal Response Emergency

System (“CARES”) program. The CARES program makes available certain resources regarding disaster preparedness—but does not impose any requirements upon animal owners. California Governor's Office of Emergency Services describes CARES as “an operational guidance to assist with all aspects of animal care and control in the event of a disaster or emergency. In addition, CARES provides resources for the public, for animal businesses, for shelters, and for emergency planners.”

Yet this resource is not being utilized by many jurisdictions or animal owners.

This Bill

Certain jurisdictions require a person to apply for a permit if they have over a certain number (as determined by that jurisdiction) of animals under their care. For instance, in Santa Barbara County, an individual is required to have a permit if they own four or more dogs or cats. This bill would require the issuing entity to ask if the applicant has an emergency evacuation plan. The level of sophistication of the evacuation plan required would be determined by the respective local agency.

Support

Social Compassion in Legislation (Sponsor)

Contact Info

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