

AB 2133: Expanding Access to Cat Neuters

Bill Summary

This bill will allow Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs) to perform male cat neuter surgeries under the direct supervision of a California Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM). The bill specifies certain conditions that must be met, including the RVT performing the surgery in accordance with the written protocols and procedures established by the DVM.

Existing Law

Existing law and regulations state that RVTs may perform certain duties under the direct supervision of a DVM, such as dental extractions and anesthesia administration. Currently, RVTs may not perform surgeries, such as spay and neuter surgeries. "Direct supervision" means the DVM is on-site and readily available where the animal healthcare task is being performed.

Background

Veterinary care is increasingly expensive and inaccessible in California. Inequitable access to veterinary care is a threat to companion animal welfare. Lack of access to spay and neuter surgeries is contributing to pet overpopulation and shelters and rescues being overwhelmed with animals.

Cities and counties invest approximately \$400,000,000 annually to operate California's animal shelters, with much of these budgets coming from the state's general fund.

This Bill

This bill will allow RVTs to perform male cat neuters under the direct supervision of a California licensed DVM under the following conditions:

1. The RVT must review the cat's history to reasonably ensure the surgery is appropriate.
2. The RVT must perform the surgery in accordance with written protocols and

procedures established by the supervising veterinarian, who will have examined the cat and assigned the surgery to the RVT.

Why the Bill is Necessary Now

More spay and neuter surgeries are needed to battle the pet overpopulation crisis. Unfortunately, access to veterinary care is limited in California. Even state animal shelters find it difficult to attract veterinarians to service the animals in their care. The affordability and accessibility of veterinary care are problematic across California. The Veterinary Care Accessibility Project gave California a 47 out of 100 "Veterinary Care Accessibility Score" in 2021 — a failing grade.

Access to veterinary care is lacking not just in California but across the country. There are several factors at play. Number one is that there just aren't enough veterinarians - there aren't enough veterinary schools, the existing ones are very expensive which puts new vets in a lot of debt. And then there is the stress of being a vet - suicide rates among veterinarians are much higher than the general population. Consolidation of vet businesses across the country is also driving prices up as competition decreases.

It's important to consider AB 2133 in this broader context. It is not specifically about consumers wanting cat neuters and not being able to get them. Rather the goal is to increase the overall accessibility of spay and neuter services by alleviating a small piece of the burden placed on vets, freeing up time for them to focus on more complex care that only they can provide.

Support

Social Compassion in Legislation (Sponsor)

For More Information

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