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Assemblymember Ash Kalra and Social Compassion in Legislation introduce AB 2133

New legislation will address pet overpopulation by expanding access to cat neuter services

February 6, 2024 – Today, **Assemblymember Ash Kalra (D-San Jose)** introduced **AB 2133**, sponsored by **Social Compassion in Legislation (SCIL)**. The 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), following written protocols and procedures established by the supervising DVM.

COVID exacerbated California's already severe pet overpopulation crisis by reducing the availability and affordability of veterinary care, including spay and neuter services. Shelter surrenders have increased in the wake of the pandemic as well, as people return to work or move to different homes or states and relinquish their "Covid pets," many of which were purchased from breeders rather than adopted, thus being unaltered.

Increasing access to spay and neuter services is key to getting pet overpopulation under control. Allowing RVTs to perform cat neuters is an important step in the right direction.

"Amidst the pet overpopulation crisis, we must take steps to increase the availability of affordable and accessible neuter services," said **Assemblymember Kalra**. "AB 2133 will allow registered veterinary technicians to perform cat neuters, increasing the pool of professionals who can render this essential service to responsible cat owners and crowded animal shelters."



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RVTs are already authorized to administer anesthesia for sterilization surgeries, which is widely viewed as the “riskiest” part of the procedure. Moreover, they are allowed to perform dental extractions, a more complicated operation than cat neuters.

“Under current state regulations, supervising veterinarians are responsible for the competency of RVTs to perform allowable animal health care tasks,” said **Richard Johnson, DVM, former Veterinary Medical Board member, and CEO of All God's Creatures Teaching Hospital and Surgery Center.** “DVMs already ensure their RVTs can induce anesthesia, perform dental extractions, suture tissue, and perform incisions – all the individual tasks involved in a cat neuter procedure. With direct supervision, there is no reason trained RVTs should not be able to perform these surgeries. We need all hands on deck to get the pet overpopulation problem under control. RVTs can be some of those hands.”

“We cannot fix the shortage of veterinarians overnight. That is a long-term problem that must be tackled from multiple angles over time,” said **Judie Mancuso, Founder and President of Social Compassion in Legislation and former Veterinary Medical Board member.** “But right now, we have a pet overpopulation crisis that needs immediate solutions. By expanding the duties of RVTs, this bill will increase the capacity of DVMs to complete more complicated spay and neuter surgeries.”

“The California RVT Association (CaRVTA) is pleased to support AB 2133,” said **Nancy Erlich, RVT and Regulatory and Legislative Advocate for CaRVTA.** “The supervision required by the bill will ensure that RVTs have the skills and guidance necessary to perform this relatively safe procedure. Veterinarians will benefit by being able to use their time more productively, RVTs will have incentive to increase their skillset for career advancement, and clients will benefit by being able to have their cats neutered in a timely and cost-effective manner.”

Expanding the scope of practice of RVTs to include male cat neuter surgeries, performed under the direct supervision of a DVM, is a



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modest proposal that adds another tool to California's toolbox for fighting pet overpopulation and saving animals' lives.