

Assembly Bill 240

California Spay-Neuter Fund

Assembly Member Ash Kalra

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill (AB) 240 would establish the California Spay-Neuter Fund to finance low-cost spay-neuter operations throughout the state of California. The Fund would be subsidized by a \$200 annual charge to pet food manufacturers for each dog and/or cat food label they have on file with the State Department of Public Health.

BACKGROUND

Spay and neuter surgeries are routine operations that sterilize dogs and cats, preventing them from creating offspring. Consequently, these surgeries are generally regarded as one of the most effective means of reducing animal shelter overcrowding. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused spay-neuter efforts to backslide, resulting in a potential deficit of 2.7 million surgeries nationally.¹ In turn, shelters are now at risk of being overwhelmed with animals they cannot care for, thereby increasing the likelihood that they euthanize otherwise adoptable pets.

California is not exempt from this plight. In 2016, the California Department of Public Health reported that local animal control authorities euthanized 58,454 dogs and 99,737 cats.² Sadly, these outcomes have likely worsened as spay-neuter practices wane.

Without assistance, a spay-neuter surgery could cost up to \$550, a prohibitive cost for many lower-income pet owners.³ Meanwhile, many organizations that offer reduced-cost spay-neuter services do not have the resources to meet demand, forcing them to put pet owners on months-long waitlists.⁴ California has attempted to address these issues with the Pet Lovers License Plate Program but has not been able to raise sufficient funds. Even now, the program is only offering \$488,000 for the 2023 grant application cycle.⁵

Other states have explored effective solutions to the spay-neuter issue. Currently, Maine, Maryland, and New Mexico impose a fee on every product line of commercial dog or cat food sold in their jurisdiction.

¹ [Decrease in spay-neuter surgeries during pandemic may undermine pet welfare » Shelter Medicine Program » College of Veterinary Medicine » University of Florida \(ufl.edu\)](#)

² California Department of Public Health, "California Local Rabies Control Activities Annual Report", 2016

³ [How Much Does It Cost To Neuter Or Spay A Dog? - DodoWell - The Dodo](#)

⁴ [Several Bay Area Animal Shelters at Capacity – NBC Bay Area](#)

⁵ [2023 Pet Lover's License Plate Program - California Grants Portal](#)

The money collected through these fees is then used to fund low-cost spay-neuter programs. Maryland has had especially good results, as its program is correlated with a 12.1% decrease in stray animal intakes and a 49.7% decrease in euthanasia due to lack of shelter space.⁶

SOLUTION

AB 240 would create the California Spay-Neuter Fund within the State Treasury. The money collected by the Fund will be appropriated to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), which will establish parameters for offering the funds to eligible partners through competitive grants and/or set allocations. "Eligible partners" will include public animal shelters, private animal shelters with public contracts, and nonprofits for whom spay-neuter is a primary activity. Grant recipients must primarily use any money they receive for spay-neuter services. They will also be required to report annually on how they used the funds and the outcomes that use produced.

The California Spay-Neuter Fund will be subsidized by pet food manufacturers, who would pay an annual \$200 charge on each dog and/or cat food label they have on file with the State Department of Public Health. Any manufacturer who makes less than \$75,000 in verifiable gross annual sales would only have to pay a single \$200 annual charge, no matter how many labels they have on file.

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⁶ [Maryland Spay and Neuter Grants Program Annual Report-August 2014](#)