

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



ITEM: 3.8
(ID # 25023)

MEETING DATE:
Tuesday, May 21, 2024

FROM : EXECUTIVE OFFICE:

SUBJECT: Executive Office: Support Assembly Bill 2133 (Kalra) and Senate Bill 1233 (Wilk) to increase veterinary service workforce, [All Districts] [\$0]

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

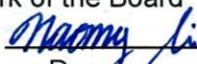
1. Authorize the Board Chair to sign letters of support for proposed legislation that seeks to increase veterinary service workforce pathways, to help address pet overpopulation and improve animal welfare, including Assembly Bill 2133 (Kalra) and Senate Bill 1233 (Wilk).

ACTION:Policy

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Perez, seconded by Supervisor Jeffries and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended.

Ayes: Jeffries, Spiegel, Washington, Perez and Gutierrez
Nays: None
Absent: None
Date: May 21, 2024
xc: E.O.

Kimberly A. Rector
Clerk of the Board
By: 
Deputy

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BACKGROUND:

Summary

The Riverside County Department of Animal Services (DAS) is focused on improving the lives of people and animals in Riverside County. To that end, DAS is committed to the welfare of all animals in our care. We are dedicated to, among other things, achieving a 90% live release rate.

Under the direction of the Board of Supervisors and the leadership of Director Erin Gettis, DAS has made many improvements and investments, including:

- Improved Facilities
 - o Reopened the San Jacinto Animal Campus last November to add shelter space.
 - o Added new spay and neuter surgery suite at the Coachella Valley Animal Campus.

- Increased Community Access to Veterinary Care
 - o Ordered two spay and neuter buses for mobile surgeries to make these surgeries more accessible to rural residents.
 - o Held wellness clinics in unincorporated, underserved, high-stray communities.
 - o Provided 729 trap, neuter and release surgeries for the community cat program in 2023.

- Reduced Animals Entering the Shelter
 - o Created Pet Support Program to find out why pet owners and finders were taking their animals to the shelter, and whenever possible, to support those pet owners with the tools to keep their pets at home. These support tools include pet food, access to low-cost veterinary care, fee assistance and landlord pet deposits. This program has been hugely successful resulting in more than 5,800 pets avoiding the shelter.
 - o Launched the “5,000 Cat Challenge” to reduce euthanasia of cats by 5,000. The Board of Supervisors supported and adopted a corresponding resolution to trap, neuter and return all healthy stray cats to the communities they live in.
 - o Partnered with PetCo Love Lost facial recognition software and reunited nearly 500 lost pets to their owners.

- Strengthening Relationships with Partners
 - o Received funding from UC Davis and Petco Love to assist people and their pets, including pet food, veterinary care and even paying for their pet deposits, including \$235,000 in grants received.
 - o Built a coalition of shelter providers in Riverside County focused on regional efforts, resources, training, and life-saving strategies.
 - o Worked with regional and local rescue groups to transfer animals out of the shelter and into homes. These transfers include large animal rescue operations stemming from natural disasters and emergency situations. For instance, last month more than 80 horses were rescued and adopted to new owners.
 - o Coordinated large scale transfers to other counties and states as a result of overcrowding and during natural disasters to relieve overcrowding.

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- Added Staffing
 - o Increased permanent veterinarian staffing to four, to support spay and neuter surgeries. This resulted in the department performing more than 11,100 spay or neuter surgeries in 2023, which is the highest annual number since the pandemic.
 - o Created Pet Counselor positions to provide staff that work directly with pet owners and finders to assist them the tools and resources to keep their pets at home and out of the shelter system.
 - o Filled 28 new positions to perform shelter operations in the reopened San Jacinto shelter.
 - o Recruited a rescue coordinator to focus on communicating with rescue groups to increase rescue opportunities. In 2023, more than 4,200 animals were saved by rescue groups. We're on pace to exceed this number with more than 2,400 animals to date in 2024 saved by rescue groups.

As a result of these efforts, DAS has gone from a 66% live release rate in 2023 to today's 80% live release rate, on the way to our goal of 90%. While significant progress has been made, it is important to note that we cannot do this work alone. One area in which we need assistance is to increase the availability of veterinary services.

There is a shortage of veterinarians across the United States. Specifically in California, a statewide survey has highlighted a significant shortage impacting shelters. In 2023, 344,000 shelter animals in California did not have adequate access to veterinary care staff. The survey revealed that 68% of shelters could not consistently provide complete care for common conditions, and 40% of shelters could not provide consistent access to spay and neuter services. This shortage has led to increased euthanasia of healthy and treatable animals at more than a third of California shelters.

There are currently two laws being proposed in the California state legislature to address the lack of access to veterinary care, aiming to ensure more pets can live healthy lives:

- Assembly Bill 2133: Authored by Assembly Member Ash Kalra, AB 2133 proposes amendments to the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act under the Business and Professions Code. Specifically, the bill seeks to expand the roles of registered veterinary technicians (RVTs) by allowing them to perform neuter surgeries on male domestic cats under specific conditions. This change aims to alleviate some of the procedural burdens on licensed veterinarians, allowing them to focus on more complex veterinary care.
- Senate Bill 1233: Authored by Senator Scott Wilk, SB 1233 proposes the creation of high-quality, high-volume spay and neuter certification programs within the University of California and the Western University of Health Sciences. This bill aims to enhance veterinary education by incorporating advanced surgical training in spay and neuter procedures for students, licensed veterinarians, and registered veterinary technicians. The overarching goal is to improve the efficiency and quality of spay

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and neuter services across the state, particularly addressing pet overpopulation and improving animal welfare.

The Executive Office is recommending the support of these two bills to enhance our efforts to achieve a 90% live release rate.

Impact on Residents and Businesses

The proposed legislation would expand access to quality veterinary care, addressing the shortage of skilled professionals and helping reduce the unwanted animal population, to the benefit of all residents and businesses.

ATTACHMENTS

Assembly Bill 2133 (Kalra)

Senate Bill 1233 (Wilk)