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Proposed California spay and neuter legislation aims to reduce cat overpopulation

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Judie Mancuso doesn't just talk about California's pet overpopulation crisis; she is committed to doing something about it. [Social Compassion in Legislation](#), the nonprofit organization she founded in 2007, focuses on reducing pet overpopulation through legislation. Among the organization's most recent efforts is SB 250 the Pet Responsibility Act. Authored by California Senate Majority Leader Dean Florez, SB 250 aims to reduce pet overpopulation and euthanasia in the state.



SB 250 aims to decrease the growing shelter cat population

As it relates to dogs, SB 250 requires that they be spayed or neutered unless their owner or guardian obtains an unaltered dog license when they license their animal. SF Cat Examiner talked to Mancuso about what SB 250 means for cats and why her organization believes this bill will achieve a reduction in their overpopulation.

SF Cat Examiner: Why the need for SB 250 as it relates to cats?

Mancuso: The cat overpopulation problem is extreme. The latest California figures we have from 2007 indicate that total cat intake in shelters across the state was 335,284. Of this figure, shelters euthanized 212,680 cats.

SF Cat Examiner: How will SB 250 affect cats and cat ownership?

Mancuso: SB 250 affects cats that roam – that is cats that go outside. The bill requires if your cat goes outside, you need to spay or neuter it. If you want your cat unaltered for the rest of its life, you need to keep it indoors.

SF Cat Examiner: What happens if someone's unaltered, roaming cat is impounded by local animal control?

Mancuso: If your cat is roaming and picked up by local animal control, you can have it sterilized at

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the shelter, if the facility has a clinic, or you can take it to your own vet. You will need to show the shelter that you have scheduled an appointment with your vet. Then within 15 to 30 days after you take your cat out of the shelter, you need to come back and show the sterilization certificate. If you don't show up with a certificate, there could be follow up on the part of the shelter.

SF Cat Examiner: How will the bill affect feral or homeless cats on your property?

Mancuso: Lots of people feed or abandoned family cats in their neighborhood. If a cat is on your property for 30 days and you are feeding it, the cat is considered yours and it is your responsibility to have it sterilized.

SF Cat Examiner: What about feral cat colonies?

Mancuso: Most feral colonies are on public property, and the bill does not apply to feral or homeless cats on public property. However, if a colony is on your property, you are required to have the cats sterilized.

SF Cat Examiner: How do you know that spay and neuter legislation works in a community?

Mancuso: Let's take a few examples of the effectiveness of spay and neuter ordinances. In 1995, Santa Cruz County enacted its spay and neuter ordinance. Over a ten-year period, the intake for dogs and cats decreased 64 percent. Since the city of Los Angeles enacted its spay and neuter ordinance in October of 2008, low-cost spay and neuter clinics that previously were underutilized now have a waiting list. That tells us that people were not motivated to sterilize their animals prior to the ordinance even when services were offered at a significantly reduced cost or were free

SF Examiner: What would you say to people who oppose legislating spay and neuter?

Mancuso: We have a pet overpopulation crisis and my organization through all our studies attributes this to the fact that too many people are not taking responsibility to sterilize their animals. Where spay and neuter bills are enacted, our research indicates that individuals voluntarily comply and the numbers of animals coming into shelters decline. People like to be law-abiding citizens.

SF Cat Examiner: Where does the bill stand now?

Mancuso: The bill is headed to the full Senate floor for a vote.

To find about more about SB 250, visit <http://www.yesonsb250.com/sb250-home.php>



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