



Pet Store Owners in California are Required to Sell Dogs, Cats and Rabbits from Animal Shelters or Non-Profit Rescue Organizations--The Pet Rescue and Adoption Act goes into effect on January 1, 2019

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As of January 1, 2019, in California, pet store owners will be required to sell dogs, cats and rabbits from “. . . a public animal control agency or shelter, society for the prevention of cruelty to animal shelter, humane society shelter, or rescue group that is in a cooperative agreement with at least one private or public shelter” instead of breeders. The new law also requires that these pets be spayed or neutered. Stores can be subject to a \$500 civil penalty for each violation if they do not comply.

Over 200 cities, towns and counties in the United States have passed codes, ordinances or regulations over the years to bar the sale of cruelly bred animals at pet stores. However, California is the first state to pass such legislation.

One of the goals of the Pet Rescue and Adoption Act is to reduce the trafficking of animals from commercial breeding facilities that mass-produce animals for sale to the public and through pet stores. Animal breeding facilities that sell their animals to pet stores are required to be licensed and inspected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), however the licensing and inspection standards are quite low. Furthermore, the USDA removed from their website all breeder licensing and inspection data. Therefore, it is more difficult for pet store owners to obtain updates and information about breeders they may buy their animals from, such as reports of animal abuse.

Furthermore, the bill will help promote the rehoming of animals in our local animal care centers. According to the ASPCA, approximately 6.5 million pets enter U.S. animal shelters nationwide every year--approximately 3.3 million are dogs and 3.2 million are cats. Each year, approximately 1.5 million shelter animals are euthanized (670,000 dogs and 860,000 cats), and not all for reasons of illness or temperament. Assemblymember Patrick O’Donnell (D – Long Beach), who co-wrote the bill states, “This is a big win for our four-legged friends, of course. But also for California taxpayers who spend more than \$250 million annually to house and euthanize animals in our shelters. . .”

The new law also requires pet stores to maintain records documenting the source of each dog, cat or rabbit the pet store houses or sells for at least one year. The public animal control agencies or shelters shall have access to those records. On the cage of each dog, cat or rabbit, the pet stores are required to post signs listing the name of the entity from which each animal was obtained.

The new law does not prevent individuals from purchasing pets from private breeders. Groups that opposed the bill argued that this bill does not distinguish reputable private breeders from the breeders that are known as “puppy mills” or “kitty factories” which breed animals in poor conditions for profit.

Here is the language of the Pet Rescue and Adoption Act added to the Health and Safety Code:

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB485

Over time, we hope to witness less number of pets and animals that will be mistreated or euthanized.