

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 24, 2025

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2025–26 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 867

Introduced by Assembly Member Lee
(Coauthor: Senator Wiener)

February 19, 2025

An act to add Section 4830.9 to the Business and Professions Code, relating to healing arts.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 867, as amended, Lee. Veterinary medicine: ~~animal~~ *cat* declawing.

Existing law makes it a misdemeanor for any person to perform surgical claw removal, declawing, onychectomy, tendonectomy, or similar procedures on a cat that is a member of an exotic or native wild cat species, except solely for a therapeutic purpose.

Existing law, the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act, establishes the California Veterinary Medical Board to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine, which includes performing a surgical operation upon an animal. A violation of the act is a crime.

This bill would prohibit a person from performing a declawing or similar procedures on any cat ~~or other animal~~ unless the person is licensed as a veterinarian pursuant to the act and the veterinarian is performing the declawing for a therapeutic purpose, as defined. The bill would require a veterinarian, if they determine declawing is necessary for a therapeutic purpose, to file a written statement with the board that includes, among other information, the purpose for performing the procedure, and would require the veterinarian to also provide a copy of the statement to the owner of the ~~animal~~ *cat*. Because

a violation of these provisions would be a crime under the act, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program. The bill would also make a veterinarian’s violation of the bill’s provisions subject to discipline by the board.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: yes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 4830.9 is added to the Business and
2 Professions Code, to read:

3 4830.9. (a) For purposes of this section, the following
4 definitions apply:

5 (1) “Declawing” means any of the following:

6 (A) An onychectomy, dactylectomy, phalangectomy, partial
7 digital amputation, or any other surgical procedure in which a
8 portion of ~~an animal’s~~ a cat’s paw is amputated to remove the
9 ~~animal’s~~ cat’s claw.

10 (B) A tendonectomy, or surgical procedure in which the tendons
11 of ~~an animal’s~~ a cat’s limbs, paws, or toes are cut or modified so
12 that the claws cannot be extended.

13 (C) Any other procedure that prevents the normal functioning
14 of ~~an animal’s~~ a cat’s claws.

15 (2) “Therapeutic purpose” means a medically necessary
16 procedure to address an existing or recurring infection, disease,
17 injury, or abnormal condition in the claws, nail bed, or toe bone,
18 which jeopardizes the ~~animal’s~~ cat’s health. “Therapeutic purpose”
19 does not include a procedure performed for a cosmetic or aesthetic
20 purpose or to make the cat ~~animal~~ convenient to keep or handle.

21 (b) Notwithstanding any other law, a person shall not perform
22 a declawing on any cat ~~or other animal~~ unless both of the following
23 conditions are satisfied:

24 (1) The person is licensed as a veterinarian pursuant to this
25 chapter.

1 (2) The veterinarian is performing the declawing for a
2 therapeutic purpose.

3 (c) If a veterinarian determines that declawing is necessary for
4 a therapeutic purpose, the veterinarian shall prepare and file a
5 written statement with the board setting forth the purpose for
6 performing the procedure and providing the date on which the
7 procedure was performed. The veterinarian shall also provide a
8 copy of that statement to the owner of the ~~animal~~ *cat*.

9 (d) A veterinarian who fails to comply with this section shall
10 be subject to discipline by the board, which shall make a
11 determination as to whether or not to impose penalties, including,
12 but not limited to, fines, suspension of license, or revocation of
13 license.

14 (e) Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to preempt any
15 local ordinance prohibiting the procedures identified in subdivision
16 (d) nor any penalties imposed for a violation of such an ordinance.

17 SEC. 2. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to
18 Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because
19 the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school
20 district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or
21 infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty
22 for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of
23 the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within
24 the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California
25 Constitution.