

To Whom It May Concern:

As a Wound Care Nurse I have seen that some of the worst infections among wound patients are animal bites, particularly among children. We very rarely see a serious wound from a scratch. When animals are not allowed to use their “warning” system they will go straight to “wound.”

When I first graduated from college I researched animal behavior in bears in Yosemite. During one encounter, I came around a hairpin turn in the trail almost bumping into a beautiful young adult female (our team had named her Brenda), so close I can tell you bear snot looks pretty much like people snot. Because I stood still, she took one look at me, backed off and proceeded to tear into a dead log with her claws, to displace her stress. Without her claws I bet I would have felt teeth.

Three very objectionable provisions (loopholes) of HB 3494 are:

- 1) Declawing and devocalization are “allowable if behavior modification fails, or allowed “as a last resort.” Devocalization (cutting of the vocal cords) exposes animals to lifelong misery, risk of horrific death from choking or inhalation of food and liquids into the lungs. There is credible evidence that declawing causes behavioral problems that often land the cat in a shelter (biting and house-soiling). Declawing is illegal in many countries. Since becoming illegal in 8 cities in California, there has been NO increase in the number of animals removed from homes and put in shelters. This provision only promotes irresponsible pet ownership and breeding.
- 2) Declawing is allowed to “protect human health” or “allowable if the animal’s claws present a danger to the owner’s health.” The CDC, NIH, Infectious Disease Society of America and the US Public Health Services have published statements that declawing of cats “is NOT recommended”, even in cases with HIV positive owners. Claw caps are among many ways to protect the owner without harming the animal. If someone is worried about his/her health, then why do they own a cat or dog?! Cats have been reported to bite more after being declawed, since their first line of defense has been taken away. Bites can be more dangerous than a scratch.
- 3) “Allowable to treat an emotional issue.” The ONLY ethical reason to cut vocal cords or toes is to treat a PHYSICAL ailment- a law that omits the word “physical” allows vets to declaw or devocalize for any reason, including “behavioral illness”! Barking/meowing and scratching are NOT pathological- they are normal behaviors that can become problematic when an owner ignores the animal’s needs. Anxiety- triggered vocalization can be managed with medications. Cutting vocal cords increases distress and as the animal becomes more desperate, it can become more destructive.

For more info on declawing: <http://www.pawproject.org/>

<http://stopdevocalizing.weebly.com/oregon-stop-this-bad-law.html>

My conclusion from my experiences is that a bill such as the one cited would be one of the stupidest things we could do. It is ignoring the end result (infected bites) and the cause (understanding animal behavior): haven’t we evolved our brains to help our species?

Please take all necessary steps to avoid this public health disaster: NOT TO COMMITTEE WITHOUT AMENDMENTS TO REMOVE ALL NON-THERAPEUTIC EXCEPTIONS.

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