

Date of Hearing: July 2, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Esmeralda Soria, Chair

SB 312 (Umberg) – As Amended May 5, 2025

SENATE VOTE: 38-0

SUBJECT: Dog importation: health certificates

SUMMARY: Requires individuals to obtain and submit a health certificate (HC) to the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), and to the buyer, when selling or importing dogs into California, and requires the CDFA to retain, make available to the public, and post on the internet specified information related to the health certificates. Specifically, *this bill*:

- 1) Repeals current law contained in Health and Safety Code (HSC), and places and expands laws in the Food and Agriculture Code related to health certificates for a person selling, transporting, or importing a dog into California for the purpose of resale or change of ownership.
- 2) Requires that a person selling, transporting, or importing a dog into California for the purpose of resale or change of ownership obtain and submit a health certificate, completed by a licensed veterinarian dated no more than 10 days before the date on which the dog is brought into this state.
- 3) Requires that health certificates be submitted directly to the CDFA and the buyer of the dog.
- 4) Requires that a health certificate must include, but is not limited to, the following information:
 - a) The date of the examination;
 - b) A statement that the examination revealed no clinical evidence of infectious or communicable disease, including external parasites and fungi, and that, to the best of the veterinarian's knowledge the dog has not recently been exposed to such infectious or communicable disease;
 - c) Any vaccinations, treatments, or tests, and the results;
 - d) A statement that the dog has been properly immunized by a rabies vaccination within 12 months before the date of importation into the state, unless the dog is under three months old or a veterinarian certifies in writing that specified circumstances would endanger the life of the dog;
 - e) The number of dogs in the shipment;
 - f) A description of each dog, including breed, sex, and age;
 - g) The microchip number for each dog, if microchipped;

- h) The physical address for both the origin and destination of the dog in the shipment which shall not be a post office box, airport, parking lot, or other non-fixed location, as specified;
 - i) The signature, printed name, physical address, and state license number of the accredited veterinarian who examined the dogs in the shipment;
 - j) The full name and physical address, email address, and telephone number of the consignor, as defined, and the buyer; and
 - k) The United States Department of Agriculture license number associated with the breeder of the dog, if applicable.
- 5) Specifies that completion of an APHIS Form 7001 satisfies the health certificate requirements so long as it is completed within 10 days prior to import and contains all required information above.
 - 6) Authorizes the CDFA to utilize a different form of health certificate so long as it is completed within 10 days prior to import and contains all required information above.
 - 7) Requires that the person selling, transporting, or importing the dog into California submit the health certificate to the CDFA and the buyer via an electronic transmission.
 - 8) Requires the CDFA to develop, maintain, and make available to the public a searchable internet website that contains the information it receives on every submitted health certificate, except for street names, address numbers, and telephone numbers.
 - 9) Makes a health certificate received by the CDFA a public record, as specified.
 - 10) Requires the CDFA to make the submitted health certificates available upon request, without first requiring the submission of a public records request, as specified.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires a person who brings a dog, or imports dogs into this state for the purpose of resale or change of ownership, to obtain a health certificate that has been completed by a licensed veterinarian and is dated within 10 days prior to the date on which the dog is brought into this state. (HSC 121720(a)(1))
- 2) Requires the health certificate to be provided to a county health department and submitted to the county health department by any means acceptable to the receiving agency, as specified. (HSC 121720(a)(2))
- 3) States that the completion of a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) Form 7001 satisfies the health certificate requirement. (HSC 121720(b))

- 4) Authorizes county agencies to use the information on submitted health certificates, as it deems appropriate, and allows an entity to charge a fee for accepting the certificate, as required. (HSC 121720(d), 121722)
- 5) Exempts a person who brings a dog into the state that will not be offered for resale, or if the ownership of the dog is not expected to change, from being subject to the health certificate requirements. (HSC 121721(a))
- 6) Exempts the following sales or transfers from being subject to the health certificate requirements (HSC 121721(b)):
 - a) The import of a dog used for law enforcement or military work,
 - b) A guide dog, as defined by subdivision (d) of Section 365.5 of the Penal Code,
 - c) A dog imported as a result of a declared emergency as described by Section 8558 of the Government Code, or
 - d) An investigation by law enforcement of an alleged violation of state or federal animal fighting or animal cruelty laws.
- 7) Makes a person who violates the requirement to provide a health certificate guilty of an infraction, punishable by a \$250 fine, and authorizes enforcement personnel to issue an administrative fine or a correction warning, as specified. (HSC 121723)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to an analysis by the Senate Appropriations Committee, CDFA reports one-time contracting costs of \$520,395 to develop and launch a searchable web system and ongoing annual costs of approximately \$125,000 for software licensing and maintenance (General Fund and special fund). CDFA notes this IT project is anticipated to take approximately six months to complete.

COMMENTS: HCs, also referred to as a “certificate of veterinary inspection” (CVI) are required by the majority of states. One of the main purposes of these certificates is to help prevent the spread of animal diseases across state lines. Many state departments of agriculture and other state agencies have created rules and regulations, which govern the importation of livestock, companion animals, equines, and other animals. Current law requires a HC be filed with the county where the dog is offered for sale or the county where the individual resides who is acquiring the dog. However, current law does not require a county to create a standardized HC form or require counties to make HCs available on a county website.

Counties have various procedures for collecting the HCs. In addition, the HCs are not always available to the public, and it’s otherwise generally unclear what the counties are doing with the information from the certificates once received. The varied collection of HC data coupled with the lack of a single point of access for consumers, renders the collection of this data inaccessible and not as useful as intended. This bill seeks to increase consumer access to HCs, by transferring the collection of HCs from individual counties to the CDFA. Current law requires HCs be sent to county jurisdictions where the animal was to be delivered; however, because many out of state filers were not always able to locate or identify the correct county, they would send the HCs to CDFA. Because the CDFA receives CVIs for agriculture animals and livestock, and already had a system in place, it was likely the destination that made the most sense for people. However,

because the CDFA was not the designated agency for the collection of the HCs, they were not maintaining the records. Although current law provides an enforcement tool for not complying with the HC requirements, the landscape of non-compliance is difficult to assess. To date, the number of fines assessed through each county is unknown.

CDFA is responsible for a number of programs, which oversee the important agricultural systems in California, including plant and animal health, animal health and food services, fairs, dairy programs, and measurement standards. The animal health branch, under the CDFA is the State's organized, professional veterinary medical unit that protects livestock populations, consumers, and California's economy from catastrophic animal diseases, disasters that impact animals, and other health or agricultural problems. This bill will require the CDFA to make information on the HCs available to the public, including the disclosure of seller and buyer information.

This bill is one of several bills this legislative year intended to address issues raised in a September 12, 2024, Los Angeles Times article which highlighted the underground puppy and dog market in California. The article noted that often time buyers purchase animals online from what they believe to be a breeder in California, when in reality the animal is from another state where puppy mills are rampant, and offered for sale through a California broker with little knowledge from the prospective buyer, that the dog was not actually bred in California. There were instances in the article, which noted that some of those animals were sick or otherwise unhealthy.

This bill aims to enhance transparency on the HCs by enhancing the information required for a HC, including a physical address (that is not a parking lot or similar place), an email address, information about the seller and the buyer of the dog, and mandating the information be searchable and available on the CDFA's website. This information may help consumers research the source of a dog-i.e. does the dog have a HC on file, which would indicate the dog was not born in California. Additionally, a consumer should be able find information about past dog sales from the person they are seeking to purchase a dog from.

According to the author, California has been a longstanding leader in animal welfare, becoming the first state to prohibit the sale of purpose-bred puppies (typically acquired from puppy mills) in pet stores. However, dishonest sellers continue to exploit consumers through deceptive internet marketing practices and/or by posing as reputable local breeders. In reality, they import thousands of puppies from cruel out-of-state breeding operations, deceiving buyers and perpetuating the horrific puppy mill pipeline. Almost every state requires a health certificate for imported dogs to be uploaded to their state department of agriculture but California has never mandated sending these forms to the California Department of Agriculture, which has received and destroyed them for years. This health certificate information is crucial for consumers to confirm information about their dog, and for humane law enforcement agencies who work to investigate fraud during these transactions.

Supporters state, tens of thousands of puppies have been bred out of state, typically in so-called "puppy mills" and then sold (often online) and shipped to Californians, sometimes directly, and other times through brokers. Unlike other states, California has no record of these sales because it does not require shippers to file a copy of the dog's health certificate with the state. Other states make these records available online (in some cases), and through public records requests.

Given the high propensity for misleading consumers and the large volume of dogs entering the state, this health certificate information is in the public interest – for individual consumers to review to confirm information conveyed to them by sellers, or for animal protection and humane law enforcement agencies, that could use this information to zero in on brokers and others who may be deceiving consumers and, in some cases, selling sick animals.

The American Kennel Club, Inc. supports this bill if it is amended and notes, “The AKC supports making public information related to the health of animals along with the state in which the animal is being transported from. This can give the public assurance that the animals being brought into the state are healthy along with identifying the types of animals that are being brought into the state and where they come from. However, listing home addresses of buyers and sellers creates privacy concerns—including the risk of malicious actors being able to target specific people with easily accessible data.”

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Animal Legal Defense Fund
ASPCA
Calanimals
California Animal Welfare Association
Humane Society of San Bernardino Valley
Humane World for Animals
Inland Valley Humane Society & S.P.C.A.
Michelson Center for Public Policy
Pet Advocacy Network
Pets Lifeline
San Diego Humane Society
San Diego Humane Society and SPCA
San Francisco SPCA
SF SPCA
Social Compassion in Legislation
Valley Humane Society

Support If Amended

American Kennel Club, INC.

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Victor Francovich / AGRI. / (916) 319-2084