

# California Healthy Pets Act - AB 1634

## Proponents data raises authenticity questions

By Angie Niles

From the moment the California Healthy Pets Act was introduced, animal shelter data and shelter population trends became critically important topics. As a trained mathematician, I am inherently interested in numbers but these data sets are all the more intriguing because the advocates and opponents of AB 1634 interpret the data to support opposite conclusions.

Proponents claim that reduction in shelter animal impound and euthanasia rates can be achieved only by mandatory spay/neuter laws and point to shelter data from Santa Cruz County where such a law was passed to prove their case. Opponents point to an already existing trend of dramatic reductions in shelter euthanasias as proof that mandatory spay/neuter programs are unnecessary.

As a result, I have been analyzing shelter intakes and euthanasia rates from California counties for the last several weeks to determine what is actually going on.

During the course of this study, which will be reported on in further detail in an update to this report, it became clear that the dog and cat impound data used by supporters to promote this bill **do not match** Santa Cruz County shelter data reported, by law, to the California Department of Health Services - Veterinary Public Health Section. Please see the following graphs showing the discrepancies between the Santa Cruz County impound data for dogs and cats as reported to the CDHS-VPHS and the data used by supporters of AB 1634. The curves do not match. This author searched exhaustively for other data sources in an attempt to understand where CA Healthy Pets Act advocates obtained their data: no other data sources that are known to this author matched.

It is difficult to reconcile the severity and pattern of the deviation between the CA Healthy Pets Act data from that of the only credible data source available, CDHS-VPHS. My conclusion, in the absence of any clarifying information is that data used by CA Healthy Pets Act advocates is falsified. The CA Healthy Pet Act data is consistently offset in such a way as to indicate a downward trend where none exists. There are additional inconsistencies in the CA Healthy Pets Act dog and cat impounds in Santa Cruz County chart that are troubling to anyone who knows what to look for and who has done their due diligence. The original AB 1634 CA Healthy Pets Act chart and graph containing what appears to be falsified data and other questionable claims can be found at this website.

<http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a40/CA-HealthyPetAct/SantaCruzStats.pdf>

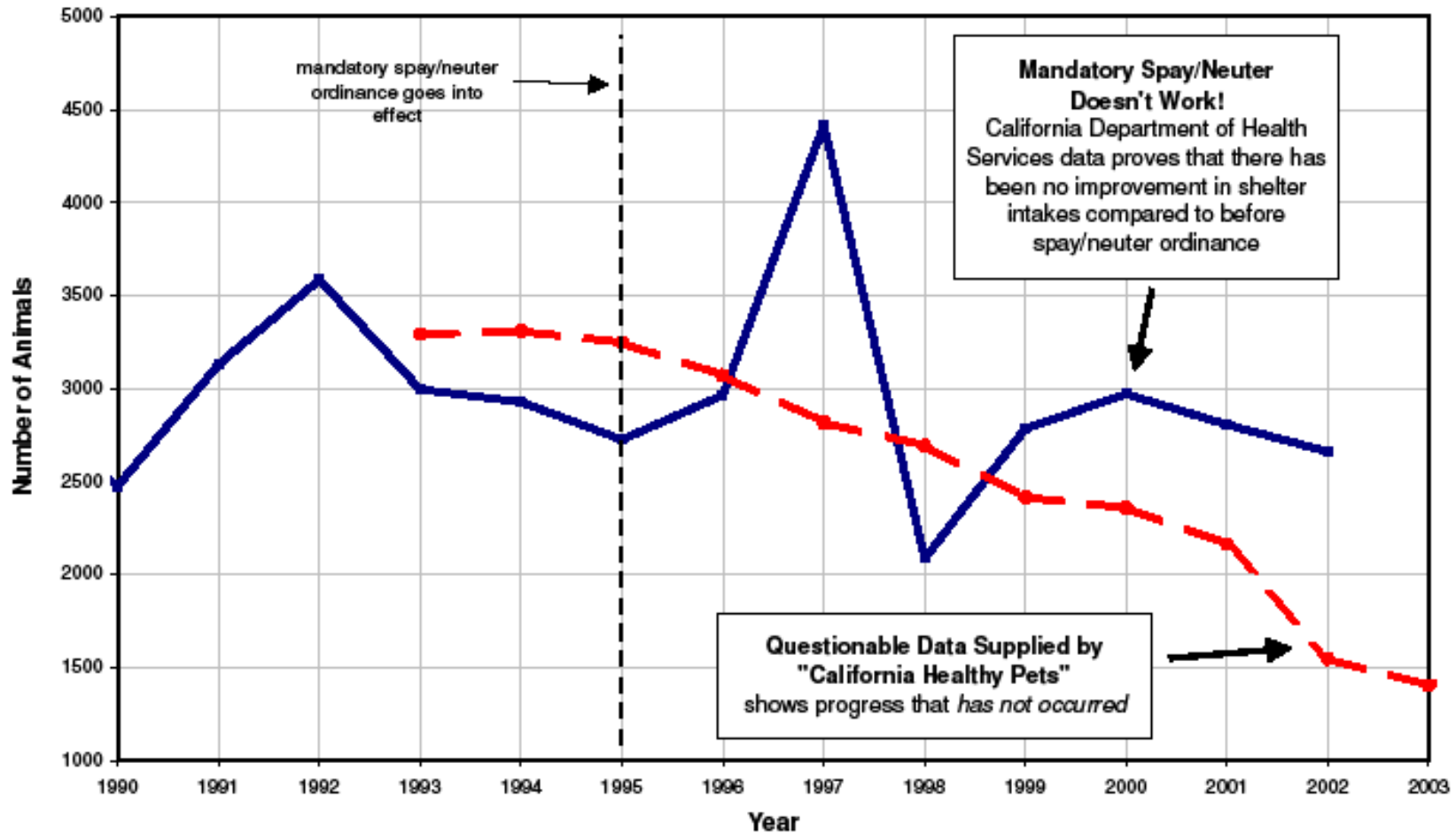
The results of this study indicate that the fundamental premise of this bill claiming a nexus between pet birth rates and shelter euthanasia rates and its corollary that lowered birth rates via mandatory spay/neuter will result in lowered euthanasia rates is not supported by the facts.

AB 1634 is singular in its approach. It does not address any of the top nine reasons that people relinquish pets to shelters in the first place. <http://www.petpopulation.org/top10.html> Therefore it cannot lower shelter impound rates and, subsequently, euthanasia rates through behavior modification or assistance programs that affect these top causes. The intent of AB 1634 is to force reduction of shelter euthanasia rates by reducing the supply of pets available irrespective of demand until no animals are relinquished to shelters. Using that approach, AB 1634 would have to be applied nationally - if not internationally - in order to quench supply. Since AB 1634 is only statewide, it diminishes neither the supply of nor the demand for dogs and cats in absolute terms, although it is likely to reduce the supply of California-bred pets. It merely shifts the suppliers to underground operations and/or out of state sources. **Under AB 1634, shelter euthanasia rates can only drop to zero when the absolute numbers of dogs and cats drops to zero.**

It is my studied opinion that because AB 1634 fails to address the true causes of shelter relinquishment that lead to euthanasia, no amendments can fix this bill. Additionally, society will become encumbered with the unintended consequences of AB 1634 while never achieving the stated goal.

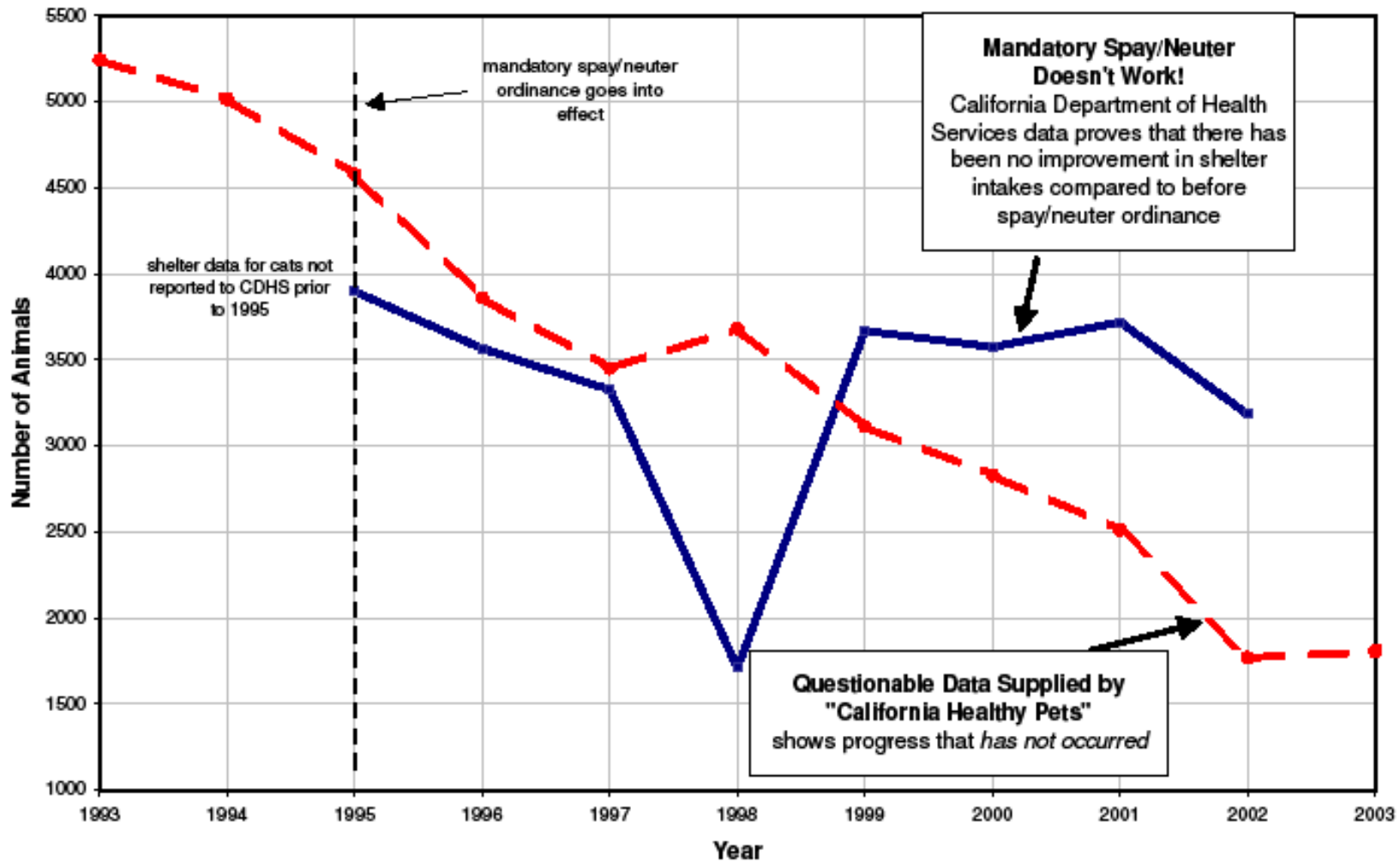
Note: Data used for this study was obtained from the California Department of Health Services – Veterinary Public Health Section, The National Animal Interest Alliance Shelter Project and the Animal Council.

**Santa Cruz County Shelter Intakes of Dogs  
Discrepancy Between California Department of Health Services Data and Claims by "California  
Healthy Pets" Coalition**



Sources:  
California Department of Health Services, Veterinary Public Health Section  
"California Healthy Pets" data from <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a40/CA-HealthyPetAct/SantaCruzStats.pdf>

**Santa Cruz County Shelter Intakes of Cats  
Discrepancy Between California Department of Health Services Data and Claims by  
"California Healthy Pets" Coalition**



Sources:  
California Department of Health Services, Veterinary Public Health Section  
"California Healthy Pets" data from <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a40/CA-HealthyPetAct/SantaCruzStats.pdf>

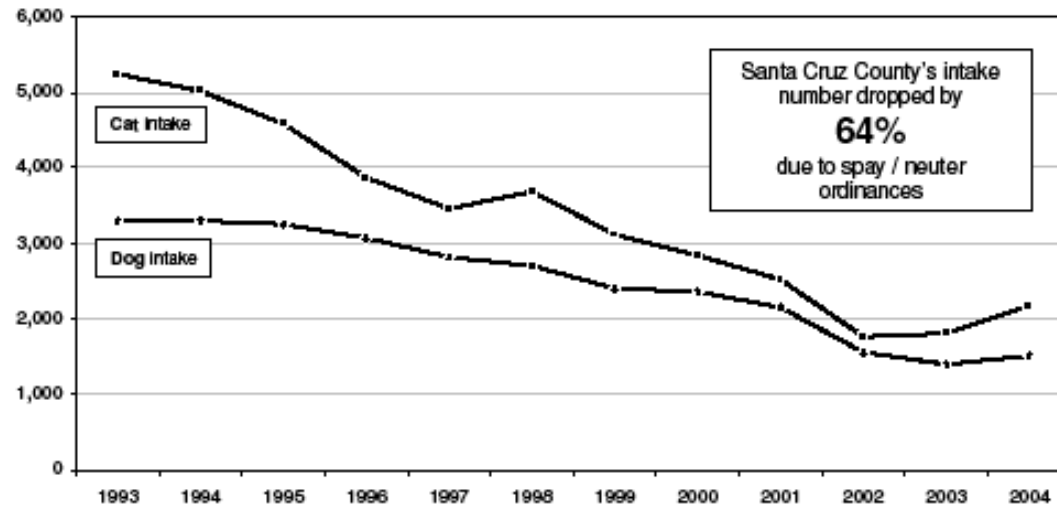
# Dog and Cat Impounds in Santa Cruz County

January 29, 2007



In the mid 1990's the County of Santa Cruz implemented a mandatory spay and neuter ordinance in effort to reduce the high number of animals its shelters took in each year.

Santa Cruz Country – Animal Shelter Intake



	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Dogs entering Santa Cruz shelters	3,293	3,309	3,247	3,070	2,817	2,693	2,415	2,359	2,162	1,546	1,403	1,503
Percent of dogs entering shelter authorized	30%	30%	28%	27%	20%	20%	18%	19%	16%	14%	16%	17%
Dogs authorized per 1,000 residents	4.9	4.9	4.4	4.0	2.7	2.5	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.0	1.0	1.2
Cats entering Santa Cruz shelters	5,245	5,016	4,578	3,861	3,451	3,682	3,113	2,830	2,511	1,769	1,805	2,165
Percent of cats entering shelter authorized	62%	60%	59%	52%	48%	41%	37%	36%	37%	31%	45%	49%
Cats authorized per 1,000 residents	16.3	14.8	13.2	9.8	8.0	7.3	5.5	4.8	4.4	2.5	3.8	4.9

Note: Service for the City of Watsonville (pop 50,000) was established late in 2004. During the entire service period, the City of Capitola (pop 10,000) had not adopted the provisions of the County S/N ordinance. Total service area population from 1993 to 2004 grew from 200,850 to 211,000 people.

The Impound data labeled Dogs entering Santa Cruz Shelters and Cats Entering Santa Cruz Shelters and corresponding graph contains questionable data. It does not match Santa Cruz County Impound data reported, by law, to the CDHS-VPHS.