



2023 California Legislative Session Off to a Record Start

This year, California legislators set a record start to the legislative session by introducing the highest number of bills in over a decade. By the February 17 bill submission deadline, over 2,610 bills were recorded, marking a significant jump from the 2,000 introduced in 2022. Of those bills, 1,040 were introduced as “spot” bills—or placeholder measures—meaning that 40% of the bills that will be considered in 2023 have yet to be fully articulated to the public. Consequently, new legislation that could impact the veterinary profession may still emerge through one or more of these “spot” bills.

CVMA’s lobbyist Christina DiCaro has reviewed every 2023 bill to determine which should move forward to the CVMA legislative team. That team, which includes CVMA lobbyists, key staff, the Executive Committee, and Legislative Committee

co-chairs Dr. Dayna Wiedenkiller and Dr. Brent Wooden, closely monitors all bills and represents the CVMA in meetings with legislative staff and bill sponsors. On February 24, the legislative team discussed over 30 such bills to assess their impact on veterinary medicine, animal health and welfare, and employer/employee relations. Ultimately, the legislative team referred nearly all of those bills for review by the CVMA Legislative Committee. The CVMA Legislative Committee will discuss each bill at their March 17 meeting and recommend positions to the CVMA Board of Governors. The Board will then vote on official CVMA positions at its March 25 meeting.

Among the bills being followed by the CVMA this session, the following are of particular importance:

AB 814 (Lowenthal) Veterinary Medicine: animal physical rehabilitation.

Sponsored by a small group of physical therapists, AB 814 was introduced as a “spot” bill and includes language citing the “intent of the legislature to authorize a veterinarian to refer an animal to a licensed physical therapist holding an advanced certification to provide animal physical rehabilitation under the supervision of the veterinarian.” There is no additional language contained in the bill at this time. In conversations with the author’s office and bill sponsor, it is likely that this bill will ultimately resemble AB 3013-Chu, which failed in 2018. That bill would have amended California’s Veterinary Medicine Practice Act to create an “animal rehabilitation facility” where animals would be treated under the supervision of a physical therapist through the referral of a veterinarian. Physical therapists would only have been required to earn a certificate from a program accredited by the Veterinary Medical Board and the Physical Therapy Board in order to practice on animals. It would have also allowed for the creation of an animal physical rehabilitation assistant position under the supervision of the physical therapist.

While the CVMA has yet to take an official position on this bill, historically it has been strongly opposed to the referral model and believes that it is in the best interest of the animal patient for a veterinarian to supervise care. With a referral, the patient would be seen by a physical therapist over a period of visits and the physical therapist would determine whether there are health issues, if the animal is in pain, and whether they should send the animal back to the veterinarian. The CVMA strongly believes that only a veterinarian has the education, skills, and experience to make these determinations, and that the proposed referral model not only puts animals at risk, but puts undue liability risks on the referring veterinarian. Physical therapists are educated in human medicine. A certification in animal physical therapy does not give those therapists the necessary education or experience to make independent decisions regarding the care and treatment of an animal patient.

Status: This bill will be scheduled for review by the Assembly Business and Professions Committee.

AB 1232 (Connolly) Department of Food and Agriculture: resilient and higher-welfare grant program.

This bill tasks the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) with creating and implementing a grant program to support the implementation of higher standards of care and more climate-smart farming practices. The bill would require the CDFA to establish an annual competitive grant application process that enables producers and processors seeking to improve farm animal welfare to apply to the CDFA for financial assistance. Grant priority would be accorded based on the satisfaction of specified qualifying criteria.

As currently written, the bill creates new defined terms relating to the higher welfare grant program. Among those terms are “animal welfare certification” and “higher welfare”—both of which specify when and how antibiotics may be administered to animals.

The CVMA was actively involved in shaping California’s judicious antibiotic use and stewardship laws in 2014 and 2015, when

then-senator Jerry Hill sponsored bills supporting the veterinarian’s professional judgment in the judicious use of antibiotics. Legislation passed at that time also set California apart from other states by requiring that all veterinarians take at least one unit of continuing education every four years on the topic of the judicious use of antibiotics.

The CVMA will be reaching out to the author’s office to clarify language in AB 1232 pertaining to antibiotic use.

Status: This bill will be scheduled for review by the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

AB 669 (Cortese) Pets and veterinary services: emotional support dogs.

While this bill is also currently a “spot” bill, the CVMA is communicating with the author and sponsors about its potential to become a vehicle to expand scope of practice for California’s Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs).

The topic of RVT scope of practice has been discussed not only at the CVMA, but was also a significant item of analysis at the California Veterinary Medical Board (VMB) in 2022. The CVMA will continue to actively engage the author and stakeholders on this priority topic.

Status: This bill will be scheduled for review by the Assembly Business and Professions Committee. ■

2023 Legislative Calendar

January 4	Legislature reconvenes
January 10	Deadline for Governor to submit budget
February 17	Last day for bills to be introduced
May 28	Last day for bills to pass out of house of origin
July 1	Last day for policy committees to meet and hear bills
July 14	Budget bill must be passed by midnight
September 8	Last day to amend bills on the Floor (general session)
September 14	Last day for each house to pass bills
October 14	Last day for Governor to sign or veto legislation



CVMA Legislative Action Center

For specific information on bills or to track CVMA-monitored bills through the legislative process, visit the CVMA’s online Legislative Action Center in the Advocacy section of cvma.net.