

Sponsors:
Senate: Zeldin, S6167
Assembly: Zebrowski, A3431-A



LOHV League of Humane Voters of New York
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Prohibits Devocalization of Dogs and Cats

Statement of Problem:

Sometimes dogs and cats must undergo vocal cord surgery to treat disease, like cancer, or to correct a birth defect. But when performed solely to stifle the animal's voice, referred to as devocalization, that is an act of cruelty long banned throughout most of Europe and since 2010 in Massachusetts. Scarring is normal after soft tissue is cut by any means; just a little in the throat can block the airway, subjecting animals to great risks regardless of the vet's skill, the instrument used, or the surgical route. Devocalization offers no benefit to the animal or society. Cutting a dog's or cat's vocal cords does not improve an owner's financial, health or marital problems or prevent animals from biting or house-soiling, the leading reasons for relinquishment to pounds; New York shelters and rescue groups have documented receiving devocalized animals. Because it is easy for the owner, profitable for vets, devocalization discourages the harder work of responsible animal care and training, which both contains vocalization and is vital for the wellbeing of animals and communities alike.



Summary Proposal:

This bill prohibits vocal cord surgery on dogs and cats except when necessary to treat or relieve a physical illness, disease or injury or to correct a congenital abnormality causing the animal physical pain or harm and cannot be remedied by other veterinary care.

Detailed Proposal:



This bill prohibits vocal cord surgery on dogs and cats except when necessary to treat or relieve physical conditions causing the animal medical harm. This cannot be construed to allow for any "behavioral" conditions.

Any person performing devocalization of a dog or cat or causing devocalization to be performed in violation of the provisions of this law shall be punishable by imprisonment for one year or a fine of up to five thousand dollars or both.

Any veterinarian who performs a surgical devocalization procedure in violation of the provisions of this law shall be subject to the revocation or suspension of his or her license in addition to the above penalties.

Any entity or person that sells a devocalized animal without prior written notice shall be guilty of a deceptive trade practice under the provisions of the general business law.

Just a Thought or two:

"Subjecting our 'best friends' to an invasive procedure to mask their natural voices is undeniably an act of cruelty with serious consequences for people as well as animals. Access to devocalization discourages the harder work of responsible selection, care, training and supervision of dogs and cats. *That* is what keeps animals out of pounds, and prevents an array of unwanted behaviors that burden municipalities, from soiling public property to biting."

Brian Shapiro, Ulster County Legislator (Ret.); Executive Director, Ulster County SPCA

Animals use different sounds to communicate different messages. Because devocalization eliminates or reduces vocal distinctions, people may not know when a dog or cat is angry or afraid, about to attack. Few can accurately read an animal's body language, especially when it's not their own. Imagine kids racing up to pet a (devocalized) dog in the park, unaware his strange sounds mean, "Stay away or I'll bite." Even a small dog can do big damage to a child or frail senior.

Kelly McCartney, Director of Animal Control, City of Buffalo