

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

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TUESDAY IS ANIMAL ADVOCACY DAY IN THE LEGISLATURE

Many pet owners can attest to how difficult it can be to get their pet to the vet. In remote and rural parts of the state, that difficulty can be insurmountable for some.

Two California lawmakers — Assemblywoman Laura Friedman, D-Burbank, and Assemblyman Josh Lowenthal, D-Long Beach — have introduced a bill, AB 1399, to fix that, by allowing veterinarians to hold appointments via telemedicine.

“We are facing a crisis in California when it comes to caring for our most vulnerable cats, dogs and other pets,” Friedman said in a statement. “Veterinarian shortages are leading to overcrowded and unsafe conditions at our state’s shelters, imperiling the health of our animals.”

The lawmaker added that telemedicine is a safe and proven way to deliver medical care to pets.

AB 1399 is just one of a handful of bills that are the subject of Tuesday’s “Animal Advocacy Day” at the Capitol. Animal welfare advocates and lobbyists gather to raise awareness of certain bills aimed at helping pet owners.

Other bills being touted on Tuesday include AB 781 and AB 1215.

AB 781, by Assemblyman Brian Maienschein, D-San Diego, would make it so that when cities designate an emergency evacuation, heating or cooling shelter, they must also designate a shelter that takes pets.

“No Californian should have to choose between safely evacuating during an emergency and staying with their animals,” Maienschein said in a statement.

As for AB 1215, by Assemblywoman Wendy Carrillo, D-Los Angeles, that bill would create a Pet Assistance and Support Program that would award grants to shelters for unhoused people or victims of domestic violence to provide shelter to pets as well as people.

“People with pets who are experiencing homelessness or trauma related to domestic violence often have a difficult time finding housing due to shelters or programs not allowing animals,” Carrillo said in a statement. “...The human connection to a pet is undeniable and can provide hope and emotional support amid someone’s most stressful moments.”