

Assembly Bill 1885

Veterinarian Recommendation and Cannabis for Animal-Use

Assemblymember Ash Kalra

SUMMARY

AB 1885 would allow veterinarians to recommend the use of cannabis on an animal patient for potential therapeutic effect or health supplementation purposes and requires the Veterinary Medical Board to adopt guidelines for veterinarians to follow in recommending the use of cannabis-derived products on an animal within the veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

The bill also allows cannabis products intended for use on an animal to be accessed in licensed dispensaries if they adhere to cannabis regulations and relevant manufacturing, packaging, and labeling standards.

BACKGROUND

Cannabidiol (CBD) and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) can be naturally derived from cannabis and have been shown to provide a variety of clinical benefits with existing therapeutic modalities. Human consumption of cannabis has led to relief from various medical conditions, and preliminary research has identified derivatives in cannabis to be similarly useful in addressing pain, anxiety, inflammation, nausea, loss of appetite, and seizures in animals.

While clinical trials and studies on cannabis have been limited due to its legality, there have been consistent findings demonstrating its safety and efficacy on animals. Notably, Cornell University researchers in 2018 released clinical findings involving a CBD-based product, concluding it was safe and efficacious for pain in dogs with osteoarthritis, chronic joint pain, and geriatric patients.

These pain-relieving effects also extend to other cannabinoids including THC, which may have additional analgesic properties via direct central nervous system effects. While the experience of many veterinarians and anecdotal reports from pet owners support a variety of therapeutic applications of cannabis for animal use, because of the lack of clear authorization under existing law, many pet owners are currently engaging without clear recommendations or guidance from their veterinarians.

The Medicinal and Adult-Use Cannabis Regulation and Safety Act (MAUCRSA), among other things, provides a comprehensive regulatory framework for the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, testing, retail sale, and delivery of cannabis in California. However, MAUCRSA does not recognize pet cannabis products, meaning products cannot be manufactured, tested, or sold explicitly for pet or animal use.

The Veterinary Medicine Practice Act provides for the licensure and regulation of veterinarians and the practice of veterinary medicine by the Veterinary Medical Board. That act allows veterinarians to discuss the use of cannabis for animal patients and includes prohibitions against conflicts of interest with a licensed cannabis business (*AB 2215, Chapter 819, Statutes of 2018*).

SOLUTION

AB 1885 enables state-licensed veterinarians to recommend the use of cannabis on animals in their practice without fear of the Veterinary Medical Board taking disciplinary action. Seeking a veterinarian recommendation can better inform a pet owner's decision on how best to use cannabis products for animal use and promote safe, responsible use.

The bill will also require the Board to establish guidelines for veterinarians to recommend the use of cannabis on an animal patient. Similar guidelines for physicians recommending cannabis were developed by the Medical Board of California.

Lastly, to ensure cannabis products for use on animals can be available to consumers in a regulated market, AB 1885 adds these products to the definition under MAUCRSA. This will enable cannabis products to come to market that are safe and clearly labeled for pet use with appropriate dosage instructions for pets.

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