

Ferret lovers want to own pets legally

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

It's a new year, a new administration at the Capitol, and the ferret lobby has a new strategy.

Short on cash and support in the Legislature and stymied by procedural requirements at the Fish and Game Commission, a coalition of ferret legalization supporters is hoping a new argument on the cost of the state's ban on the pet will gain traction.

"I think that there's very little doubt that the ferret ban is doing economic harm," said Pat Wright, founder of legalizeferrets.org. "But the question is how much economic harm?"

California, which first prohibited ownership and transportation of the species in 1933, is now the only state in the continental United States where the slender European polecat cousins are outlawed. Despite decades of lobbying by ferret owners and enthusiasts, the state maintains its stance that legalizing the small carnivores presents environmental and safety concerns.

Estimates on the state's illegal ferret population vary significantly, but pet industry experts estimate one quarter of ferret supplies sold in the country come from California shelves.

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