

Hunting with dogs may be banned in California

By Hannah Madans, Sacramento Bee

WILTON – When Josh Brones turned on his pickup truck, Tanner, Sequoia and Dollar began to bark.

The three are treeing walker coonhounds, and these hunting dogs were ready to hunt. As Brones let them out of their kennel one by one, each ran a lap around the truck and then jumped into a crate in back.

“They’re living animals with this overwhelming desire to get out and run and get out and hunt, and it would be tremendously selfish to deny them that opportunity,” Brones said Tuesday. He was about to take them to a Glenn County spot just west of Maxwell where he often hunts.

His canines, and others like them, are central to the controversial practice of using dogs to hunt bears and bobcats. Senate Bill 1221, by Democratic Sen. Ted Lieu of Torrance, would ban their use. The Senate narrowly passed the measure, 22-15, in May. It’s now pending in the Assembly.

“Using dogs to hunt bears and bobcats is cruel to the dogs,” Lieu said in an interview Thursday. “It is cruel to the bears. It is cruel to the surrounding wildlife, and it violates what is known as fair chase.”

It’s a hot-button issue, with Brones and the 5,200-member nonprofit called California Houndsmen for Conservation, of which he’s president, opposing the bill. Joining them are hunting and sportsmen’s groups as well as cattlemen’s associations. Opponents have packed Capitol hallways and legislative committee rooms during hearings.

Just as fervent on the other side are the Humane Society of the United States, which sponsored the measure, and other animal and environmental organizations.

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