

Nev. bill would OK medical marijuana for pets

By Michelle Rindels, AP

CARSON CITY – Pets might soon be able to use pot under a bill introduced Tuesday in the Nevada Legislature.

Democratic state Sen. Tick Segerblom is sponsoring the measure that would allow animal owners to get marijuana for their pet if a veterinarian certifies the animal has an illness that might be alleviated by the drug.

Segerblom said he's concerned that some animals might have adverse reactions, but "you don't know until you try," he said.

Some veterinarians who have given cannabis to sick and dying pets say it has relieved their symptoms, although the substance hasn't been proven as a painkiller for animals.

Los Angeles veterinarian Doug Kramer told the Associated Press in 2013 that pot helped ease his Siberian husky's pain during her final weeks, after she had surgery to remove tumors. Kramer said cannabis helped his dog, Nikita, gain weight and live an extra six weeks before she was euthanized.

"I grew tired of euthanizing pets when I wasn't doing everything I could to make their lives better," Kramer told the AP. "I felt like I was letting them down."

The proposal is in its earliest stages and faces several legislative hurdles before it could become law. The pot-for-pets provision of SB372 is part of a larger bill that would overhaul the state's medical marijuana law, removing penalties for drivers who have marijuana in their blood and requiring training for pot-shop owners.

Segerblom said he added the provision after being approached by a constituent.

State Sen. Mark Manendo, a fellow Democrat and animal rights advocate, said he hadn't heard of the practice of giving marijuana to animals and is concerned about its safety.

"That gives me pause," he said. "Alcohol is bad, chocolate is bad for dogs."

His own dog died in his arms at age 15, and the experience was difficult and emotional, he said.

But "I don't know if I would've given him marijuana," Manendo said.