

KERN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Issue: 26-12

TRAINING BULLETIN

DATE: February 18, 2026

California Senate Bill 221 - Expansion on definitions of "Credible Threats" regarding Stalking

Effective January 1, 2026, California Senate Bill 221 amended PC 649.9 to include threats to the safety of a victim's pets, support pets, service animal, or horse. The amended language is covered under subsection "g" of PC 649.9 and reads as follows:

646.9(g): *For the purposes of this section, "credible threat" means a verbal or written threat, including a threat performed through the use of an electronic communication device, or a threat implied by a pattern of conduct or a combination of verbal, written, or electronically communicated statements and conduct, including threats to a person's pet, service animal, emotional support animal, or horse, made with the intent to place the person that is the target of the threat in reasonable fear for their safety, or the safety of their family, and made with the apparent ability to carry out the threat so as to cause the person who is the target of the threat to reasonably fear for their safety or the safety of their family. It is not necessary to prove that the defendant had the intent to actually carry out the threat. The present incarceration of a person making the threat shall not be a bar to prosecution under this section. Constitutionally protected activity is not included within the meaning of "credible threat."*

Previously, California law only recognized credible threats made against a person or their "immediate family" as a basis for stalking charges. This bill closes a loophole often used by abusers to intimidate and control victims by threatening their companion animals.

This legislation brings California's Penal Code (Section 646.9) into alignment with the federal stalking statute, which already includes threats to animals as a component of stalking.

All personnel of the Deputy Sheriff (including Reserves), Detentions Deputy, Park Ranger, and Community Service Technician (CST) ranks are required to review and acknowledge this training bulletin no later than **Friday, March 20, 2026.**