

Prologue

Michael Banyard -Urban Animal Management Conference Convenor

What is UAM?

Urban Animal Management is best defined as all of those activities that the community uses to maintain, care for and control companion animals which live in our cities and towns. These activities are as diverse as educating primary school children about responsible animal ownership and the euthanasia of unwanted animals. Its not surprising therefore that Urban Animal Management (UAM) means different things to different people - however from the community point of view, if we are to make meaningful progress in this area, we must assume a holistic approach and be aware that no single UAM program can possibly resolve all the complex aspects of the problem.

Who needs UAM?

UAM is important to all the community not only animal owners. It is clear that effective UAM procedures have a direct benefit to non-owners as the education of the public and the control of stray animals helps to protect their right to live in our cities without being worried by the nuisance of animals. By the same token that does not mean that non-owners should be able to walk the streets and never see a dog or cat. One can consider the analogy of the motor car. Not all people choose to own and drive a motor car but clearly the community sees enormous benefits despite the substantial list of problems.

One special group who needs to have a detailed knowledge of UAM techniques are our local government councillors and politicians and their advisers. They need to be aware that not only does UAM have many facets to it, but each facet has many potential solutions and all do not have equal merit. The community needs to be aware of these options and have some knowledge of the success or otherwise of these projects so decisions can be made within communities as to which projects are likely to suit. The other group who have a clear need for knowledge are the animal control officers and the environmental health officers. Because these community workers are exposed to the daily implementation of legislation they have special knowledge of the success of these programs and of community attitudes to companion animals.

Knowledge and research

The community is helped in its endeavours if the information base available is large and well researched. In this regard, UAM has been noted for its ability to generate instant experts -a few moments thought on any aspect and the solutions are obvious! Unfortunately, areas as complex as this with many interacting biological and social forces often defy simple analysis. To illustrate this point it is worth considering the relationship between a perceived problem and the damage done. Using an example cited by Dr Braysher in this volume, the interaction between rabbits, sheep and the environment was shown not to be simple. Thus the competition between rabbits and sheep for pasture is not linear and just reducing rabbit numbers per se may have little cost benefit. Similar paradoxes were shown to exist with feral pigs and the relationship between very low rabbit numbers on some rangeland species of acacias. Similar non-linear relationships will almost certainly exist within our urban environment with cats and wildlife and urban strays. Thus these relationships often defy simple logic and there is no substitute for careful studies which answer problems clearly and definitely for the particular community .

These proceedings

Ms Doreen Culliver's contribution to these proceedings is much appreciated. The proceedings will help to lift our awareness of the problems and the potential solutions. They will also focus thought on the problems which will lead to further study and analysis. This incremental process will contribute directly to the well being of all members of our urban community, most importantly our animal friends. In conjunction with the proceedings of the previous meetings a valuable library of information on UAM is developing.

UAM 1994 Support Organisations

**The Australian Veterinary Association
Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association
Petcare Information and Advisory Service
Cyanamid Websters
Australian Nature Conservation Agency
ACT Parks and Wildlife Service**

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