

Strategies to Reduce Euthanasia of Impounded Dogs and Cats Used by Victorian Councils

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2012/3-2017 Data from DAM Plans

VIC DOGS	Intake	Reclaimed %	Rehomed %	% rehomed after reclaimed	Transfer %	Live Release %	Euthanased %	Year data collected
Dept of Local Govt	39,672	59	15	36	0.7	75	14	2012-13 79 Websites
VIC CATS	Intake	Reclaimed %	Rehomed %	% rehomed after reclaimed	Transfer %	Live Release %	Euthanased %	Year data collected
Councils	29,132	7.2	19	21	0.3	27	57	2012-13 Council Websites

Conclusions

- Victorian pounds could get to zero euthanasia in next 5 years for dogs – nearly 40% have $\leq 10\%$ euthanasia
- “Cats will need alternative strategies to decrease intake if to get to zero euthanasia of healthy & treatable animals”



Aims of Study

- To analyse data from the current 2017-2021 DAM plans of all 79 Victorian councils with available data.
- To conduct a survey to examine policies, practices, and attitudes of council staff.

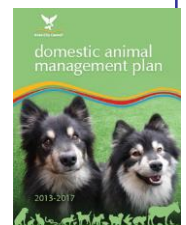
Question?

- What are councils with low euthanasia rates doing compared to those with poorer outcomes for animals?





Data Collection

- Data for intake, reclaim, rehome & euthanasia were obtained from each council's Domestic Animal Management Plan between Nov 2017 & March 2018
- 70 of 79 had analysable statistics
- 35 of 79 completed questionnaire
- Strategies to decrease intake & increase reclaim & rehome






RESULTS






Amazing news: Dogs

- 8% average euthanasia
- 74% (52/70) of councils
 - euthanasia \leq 10%
 - live release \geq 90%
 - quoted as representing zero euthanasia of healthy & treatable animals
- Top quartile (25%) of pounds have achieved \leq 3% euthanasia (\geq 97% live release)

And not so good news


- Bottom quartile euthanasia rates \geq 11-40%






Bad news: Cats

- 48% average euthanasia
- Only one < 10%
- **And Terrible news**
- Worst quartile have euthanasia rates 67-98%






What influenced euthanasia?

- No effect of operation type - full service vs. transfer to welfare agency immediately or after hold period
- Dogs small differences between demographics:



Urban metropolitan & urban fringe lower than urban regional & rural agricultural

Admissions

Dogs

- Average intake 7.5 dogs/1000 residents
- Range 0.7 to 25

Cats


- Average 7.6 cats/1000 residents
- Range 0 to 28

Intake:

Urban metropolitan & urban fringe lower (than urban regional & rural agricultural)

Influence of intake euthanasia?

- Cats – higher the intake the higher the euthanasia rate ($p=0.02$)
- No effect for dogs
- Domestic Animals Act 1994 – must impound
- Dogs returned directly to owner counted in intake but not at risk of euthanasia as not physically impounded
- Recommendation – counted separately





Strategies to decrease intake: Desexing programs



- 40% (14/35) ran subsidised desexing directly or with other organisation eg RSPCA programs but mostly *ad hoc*
- Targeted to low income –owner still pays 67%
- Banyule – free desexing mainly cats, mainly low SOE
- Opinions regarding where efforts should be focused to reduce euthanasia- 34% suggested desexing programs for dogs & 51% for cats.
 - Studies reveal it is more effective for cats than dogs³



Reclaim – returned to owner



Reclaimed



Dogs

- Average 73%, Q3: 87%-100%
- 5 years ago = 59%

Cats

- Average 13%, Q3: 17%-59%
- 5 years ago = 7%

Higher reclaimed:

Urban metropolitan & urban fringe
The more dogs & cats reclaimed, the fewer euthanased (p <0.001)

Strategies to increase reclaim

- Immediate transfer council held animals at council offices until 8.30pm for pick up & open on weekends
 - 77% of reclaimed animals were returned or picked up at council office (33% after transfer)
- = Reclaimed - 92% dogs, 26% cats
- If not registered, could fill out paperwork at time returned home or picked up



Strategies used to increase reclaim by owner- microchipping

- 2014 study from RSPCA Qld
 - Only 28% of stray dogs & 9% stray cats had microchip
 - 37% had incorrect data
 - reclaim significantly higher if microchip with accurate contract details
- 17% held microchipping events to increase proportion with microchip & accurate contact details




Lancaster, 2015, Animals.



Rehomed – adopted/sold/transferred






Proportion rehomed of unclaimed animals

Dogs

- Average 71%, Q3: 84%-100%
- 5 years ago: 36%

Cats

- Average 45%, Q3: 67%-91%
- 5 years ago: 21%
- No difference between operation types or demographics
- The more rehomed, the less euthanased (p <0.001)




Views on time to Get to Zero


Provided adequate resources, zero euthanasia of all healthy & treatable

	Dogs	Cats
<10 years	57%, 20/35	34%, 12/35
10- <20 years	3%, 1/35	11%, 4/35
20- <30 years	0%, 0/35	3%, 1/35
30- <40 years	0%, 0/35	6%, 2/35
Never	17%, 6/35	29%, 10/35
Unsure	14%, 5/35	11%, 4/35

25% of councils have 0-3% euthanasia for dogs!




- Those who believe they could never get to zero, had significantly higher euthanasia for cats (p=0.007)
- "If you believe you can, you can. If you believe you can't, you won't"
- Euthanasia rates of < 10% are achievable by doing things differently.



Comments.....

- "We started managing dogs in the 1970's but have only started managing cats since the 90's. There is a 20 year lag existing in people's understanding of cat management"
- "Cats breed too much and not enough stringent laws"
- "Incoming cat numbers are a problem because irresponsible owners"
- BUT - 90% of kittens & 80% of adults stray!!!!




Views on Trap-Neuter and Return

"Targeted TNR programs can reduce pound cat intake by 66%"
 "TNR can result in stabilization or modest reduction of colony size & healthier cats".
 Do you think it could be effective?

Response to TNR	Percent, proportion of respondents
Effective	40%, 14/35
Ineffective	54%, 19/35
Unsure	6%, 2/35

Comments:
 - Wildlife impacts even if they were neutered
 - Large cat numbers would prevent any effectiveness
 - Needs research

Levy JK, Isaza NM, Scott KC, Veterinary Journal, 2014
 Levy JK, Gale DW, Gale LA, JAVMA, 2003



Limitations

- 70/79 data on DAM - biased to municipalities with better outcomes for animals
- DAM Plans not up to date with data
- Participation rate 44% for survey of contacted councils could lead to bias (79 councils contacted)

Recommendations

Decrease entry

- Change legislation to allow direct return to owner even if not registered – complete paperwork when returned
- Comprehensive, community-orientated door-knocking — registration, microchip (update details) & trial providing tag with phone numbers & engrave on site
- Implement targeted desexing programs to decrease cat & dog admissions
- LOOK at data – where are highest intakes/1000 residents
- Where is it costing you time & money?

Recommendations

Increase reclaim

- Immediate photo of found dog put on Facebook/website & provide to shelter
- Make it easy for pet owners to have correct identification & registration – reminders by SMS, email,
- Microchipping days etc



Recommendations

Increase rehome

- Work with rescue agencies
- Promote a community approach -fostering, rehabilitation, & volunteer programs
- Pet shops (most not thought of it or not in favour)
- Advertise animals for rehoming on Pet Rescue –it's free
- Extended opening times for reclaim/rehome



Conclusions

- 74% of Victorian councils have achieved “zero euthanasia” for dogs
 - Top quartile - 93%-100% live release
 - **Cats – 48% euthanasia**
 - “Cats will need alternative strategies to decrease intake if to get to zero euthanasia of healthy & treatable animals”
 - Community-based cat management programs =Targeted desexing of cats in high intake areas
- Convert semi-owners to owners – cats desexed & microchipped



The Need for Transparency

- Mandated reporting of cat & dog outcomes by Victorian legislation enables monitoring of progress & identifying effective strategies for municipality.
- Guides use of council resources to improve outcomes for cats, dogs, staff & the community.
- Should include all welfare agencies
- Need consistency & standardization:
- Intake: Stray/owner surrendered, Juveniles & adults
- Outcomes - direct return to owner, reclaim, rehomed, transfer, euthanased, “in care”



Questions?

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