

DON'T STOP THE CLOCK AT THREE DAYS

Under the Domestic Animals Act all shelters and pounds are required to hold lost and seized cats and dogs for a minimum of 8 days. After that time, they can kill or rehome them in accordance with the Act and the Code.

The RSPCA is advocating for a three-day holding period and are lobbying parliamentarians accordingly.

They say :

A prolonged shelter quarantine process only increases the likelihood of animals contracting diseases, prevents mandatory procedures like desexing from taking place and ultimately reduces the shelter's capacity to care for more incoming animals. They estimate it will save Councils around \$9 million per year and describe it as 'a simple change'.

What they are not saying is:

A shortened shelter (and pound) quarantine process means that a dog or cat can be rehomed -- or killed -- after that three days.

Away for the long weekend. Come back and your dog or cat is missing. You have three days to do the rounds of shelters – the LDH at North Melbourne, the RSPCA at Burwood, and let's not forget the people who refuse to take pets to those 'shelters' mentioned but take them to a shelter in another area where they think they might have more chance. You cannot rely on the listings at shelters – the microchip might not read, the description might be the wrong breed. You must physically visit yourself.

You work full time and can't get time off. Your dog may be dead or rehomed by the time you get there. And we can certainly supply instances of where pounds and shelters have not contacted microchipped owners at all, until they physically turned up and found their pet in the cages.

So the RSPCA reports 87 percent of dogs and cats are found by their owners in the first three days. What about the other 13 per cent? Was that your dog or cat? What if the dog is wandering for 2 weeks, you slow down your regular visits to all the shelters to once a week, the microchip has slipped and the animal attendant doesn't find it? Your pet was safe, but now is gone. You have no recourse.

Pounds in rural areas are only open limited times already and you may have to drive 60 kms to get there, and you work full time.

But this is only part of the problem.

This proposal relates to a three-day holding period for all pounds and shelters in Victoria. Most rural pounds are run on a shoestring and a couple of city ones likewise. Are they going to hold the dogs and cats for longer to give the rescue groups a chance to find carers, collect them, organise what needs to be done? No they will not. The North West rescue route is at breaking point already. Every week there is a gut-wrenching effort to find foster carers – and safety – for the dogs and cats that must leave the pounds the day of the run, or in most cases they are then killed if still there. Let us not say euthanasia, because this is purely convenience killing.

We should not forget that in 2011 a hard-fought battle was won when the law was amended to stop the time limit on how long a shelter or pound could hold an animal. Prior to that time if a pet was

not reclaimed or rehomed they had to be killed after 28 days. Why does it feel like we are moving backwards with the proposal from the RSPCA Vic

Because we are.

This will not help, as the RSPCA says the '*tens of thousands of animals who go through shelters every year*'. It will however help those shelters to run a nice in/out/minimum cost effort. It is generally the way it is done in the United States, and look at their kill figures. Why isn't the RSPCA saying: after three days we will have the right to move them into foster care situations till their eight days are completed, or longer, and their vetwork done, and we can then see how they are going? Because that would require effort and is not considered worth it.

Why are the RSPCA not advocating the opposite, a move that would save lives not kill. For example, that any surrendered dog or cat, who can currently be killed on the day of entry, must be kept the minimum of 8 days to give rescue groups and adopters the opportunity to assist these surrenders. Why kill at all except for totally irredeemable behaviour or health issues where pain cannot be relieved?

RSPCA, look past your budget and to the individual dogs and cats whose lives you are playing with. Did you even count how many dogs and cats would be in that 13 per cent you so readily discounted?

Rather, let's propose that no dog or cat be killed for at least fourteen days to give rescues the chance to do their magic.