Date: November 30, 2016

From: Shelly Simmons, Division Manager for Animal Care

To: South Carolina Pet Care & Humane Study Committee

Re: Decreasing & Eliminating Stray Holds to Live Outcomes for Animals in SC Shelters

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to come to the Pet Care & Humane Study Committee meeting on October 27th, and share with all of you some of the challenges our animal shelter faces. During the presentation and discussion that day, I was asked to provide sample language for the committee to review when considering the prospect of decreasing and/or eliminating stray holds for some animals that are impounded into animal shelters throughout the State of South Carolina.

While it seems counterintuitive that holding animals for a shorter period of time will increase the number of lives saved in animal shelters, the reality is just that—a shorter stray hold for most animals will save lives. Disease and overcrowding are the leading causes of preventable euthanasia in South Carolina animal shelters.

The overwhelming majority of lost pets that arrive in animal shelter facilities across the U.S. are reclaimed by their owners within the first 3 days, if they are ever reclaimed at all. Even animal shelters with robust lost and found coordination efforts see this same trend. At Greenville County Animal Care, we have a designated employee and a team of volunteers whose only job is to reunite lost pets with their people. We have designed a user-friendly online lost and found reporting system and cross check a multitude of lost and found websites and social media pages daily. Despite these efforts—which is much more than most animal shelters have the resources to do—our return to owner rates remain low at 3% of the incoming population.

Sadly, cats have a dismal return to owner prospect once they enter into shelter facilities, with just 1% of cats in most South Carolina shelters reclaimed by their owners. Cats are 7-10 times more likely to find their way home when they are returned to the location they were found (known as their "home area") while also responsibly spaying or neutering and vaccinating them prior to their return.

Litters of puppies and kittens under 5 months of age that are turned into shelters as "strays" are rarely- if ever- reclaimed by owners. This is because most litters of puppies and kittens are not lost pets but instead are unwanted and abandoned offspring of citizens' pets that are breeding indiscriminately. I have worked in an animal shelter for 20+ years and in that time, I have never seen a litter of puppies or kittens reclaimed by their owner—not even once.

Reducing the length of stray hold time to a live outcome for animals entering a shelter facility without a traceable form of identification will alleviate crowding and reduce the incidence of disease transmission, thereby saving lives. Eliminating stray holds for puppies and kittens under the age of 5 months as well as eliminating stray holds for cats entering a shelter facility without a traceable form of identification will also save lives.

A shorter stray hold period will also save tax dollars. The longer the hold period, the more taxpayers pay, and the fewer funds are available for other critical life-saving programs and services that animal shelters can provide to animals and citizens. Taxpayers are paying a high price for the very small percentage of animals reclaimed from shelters by their owners, which is typically 5% or less of the incoming stray population in South Carolina.

By shortening and/or eliminating the required time a shelter must hold an animal before it is able to undergo the process of rehoming or adoption, South Carolina will make a strong statement that we are serious about saving the lives of homeless pets. By offering longer stray hold periods for pets that are positively identifiable when they enter into a shelter facility (i.e. wearing a current rabies tag, a pet ID tag, microchipped, tattooed, etc.), we are sending a crucial message to citizens of the importance of traceable identification on their animals as an essential part of pet ownership.

On the next several pages, I have provided sample verbiage and included some data that may help guide the committee as it decides whether or not to pursue a change in state law regarding stray holding periods for animals.

Kindest regards,

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Proposed verbiage for consideration:

SECTION 47-3-60. Disposition of impounded animals.

(A) The required holding period for stray animals impounded by any public or private sheltering agency shall be at least three (3) days, unless otherwise provided in this section;

     (1) If a stray animal is impounded with a license tag, rabies tag, microchip, tattoo, or other form of positive identification, or belongs to a known owner, the animal shall be held for owner redemption for a period of five (5) days;

     (2) Litters of animals or individual members of a litter of animals up to five (5) months of age, including the nursing mother when appropriate, and unweaned animals without any form of identification and without a known owner may be adopted or transferred to a private sheltering agency or rescue group for the purpose of adoption immediately after impound.

     (3) Irremediably suffering animals may be euthanized without delay, upon a determination made in writing and signed by a veterinarian licensed to practice medicine in this state. Remediably suffering animals without any form of identification and without a known owner may be euthanized or transferred to a private sheltering agency or rescue group for the purpose of medical treatment and rehoming immediately after impound when the impounding agency is unable to alleviate the animal's suffering and maintain minimum quality of life standards for the duration of the stray holding period;

     (4) Cats without any form of identification and without a known owner may be surgically sterilized, ear-tipped, and vaccinated against rabies virus, and then returned to its outdoor home area immediately upon impoundment.

U.S. Stray Hold Periods by State

(as of January 2015)

Alaska	72 hours with no ID/120 hours with ID	=3 no id/5 w. id
Arizona	72 hours	=3
Arkansas	5 days including day of impoundment	=5
California	4 days + 1 day for impoundment	=5
Colorado	5 days	=5
Connecticut	7 days	=7
Delaware	72 hours	=3
Florida	4 days (no hold on animals under 4 months)	=4 adults/0 <4mo.
Georgia	5 days	=5
Hawaii	48 hours	=2
Idaho	6 days	=6
Illinois (Chicago)	Dogs no ID 3 days; Cats 0 days; Both w. ID 5 days	=3/0 no id/5 w. id
Indiana	7 days	=7
Iowa	3 days	=3
Kansas	5 days	=5
Kentucky	3 days	=3
Louisiana	4 days	=4
Maine	6 days	=6
Maryland	5 days	=5
Massachusetts	7 days	=7
Michigan	4 days no ID/7 days w. ID	=4 no id/7 w. id
Minnesota	5 days	=5
Mississippi	5 days	=5
Missouri	5 days	=5
Montana	72 hours no ID; 96 hours w. ID	=3 no id/4 w. id

Nebraska	72 hours	=3
Nevada	4 days	=4
New Hampshire	96 hours	=4
New Jersey	7 days	=7
New Mexico	3 days	=3
New York (NYC)	72 hours	=3
North Carolina	72 hours	=3
Ohio	5 days	=5
Oklahoma	72 hours	=3
Oregon	72 hours	=3
Pennsylvania	48 hours	=2
Rhode Island	5 days	=5
South Carolina	5 days	=5
South Dakota	3 days no ID; 5 days w. ID	=3 no id/5 w. id
Tennessee	3 days	=3
Texas	3 days	=3
Utah	3 days no ID; 5 days w. ID	=3 no id/5 w. id
Vermont	3 days	=3
Virginia	5 day no ID; 10 days w. ID	=5 no id/10 w. id
Washington	5 days	=5
West Virginia	7 days	=7
Wisconsin	7 days + 1 day impoundment	=8
Wyoming	72 hours	=3

Average stray hold period for animals in shelters across the U.S.   **4 days**

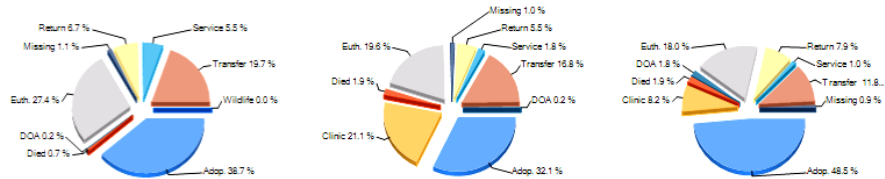**Average Return to Owner Rates separated as follows:**

1) Greenville County (1 agency reporting)

2) South Carolina (72 agencies reporting)

3) United States (2,522 agencies reporting)

Shelter Statistics - Outcome

Start Date: January 01, 2016
End Date: December 31, 2016

does not include your shelter's data   does not include your shelter's data

USSC16 Greenville County Animal Care	Your Shelter					South Carolina (72 organizations)					United States (2522 organizations)				
	Dog		Cat		Other	Dog		Cat		Other	Dog		Cat		Other
	< year	year+	< year	year+		< year	year+	< year	year+		< year	year+	< year	year+	
Person															
A) Have Email Address	1,066	1,758	1,165	666	16	11,841	12,014	9,640	4,917	318	225,332	302,294	266,467	180,279	20,476
B) Have Phone Number	1,137	2,326	1,654	929	18	16,805	24,037	13,031	8,542	579	285,278	503,307	336,051	264,977	35,548
C) Have ZipCode	1,138	2,322	1,647	927	18	17,000	24,120	12,899	8,340	561	283,946	498,940	333,088	258,165	33,974
Totals by Outcome															
Adoption	1,054	1,689	1,224	684	17	10,650	9,867	9,347	4,879	390	233,277	313,483	292,831	200,124	27,810
Clinic	0	0	0	0	0	6,027	10,267	3,645	3,190	1	37,855	61,612	37,765	42,790	965
Died	16	17	36	8	2	233	240	903	623	32	4,174	4,624	20,286	10,389	2,412
DOA	4	7	4	6	2	9	58	9	31	22	710	14,828	935	13,267	9,016
Euthanasia	61	656	1,498	1,076	21	942	5,356	4,154	10,868	192	22,153	123,468	68,336	160,352	22,941
Missing	15	36	45	26	10	17	497	35	568	23	229	2,476	692	3,915	432
Return To Owner	85	647	19	63	0	550	4,550	144	671	96	15,172	132,832	5,062	18,920	1,906
Service	2	26	428	206	0	31	61	508	1,213	156	1,019	4,073	4,821	12,152	444
Transfer	587	1,058	401	330	9	4,908	7,437	3,050	2,878	179	63,978	94,940	43,468	48,889	8,820
Wildlife	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	91	0	0	0	0	11,110
Total	1,824	4,136	3,655	2,399	62	23,367	38,333	21,795	24,921	1,182	378,567	752,336	474,196	510,798	85,856

Earliest entry: 1/2/2016
Latest entry: 11/29/2016

Daily Use Date: 12/12/2012
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This data shows that the average return to owner rate in South Carolina YTD in 2016 is 5.5%.

Further separated by cat and dog, the average return to owner rate in South Carolina is:

Cats   1% YTD in 2016 – based on intake of 49,085 cats in SC animal shelters.

Dogs   8% YTD in 2016 – based on intake of 63,557 dogs in SC animal shelters.

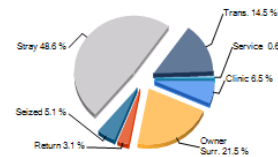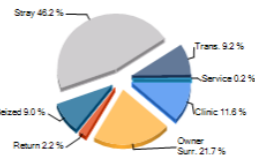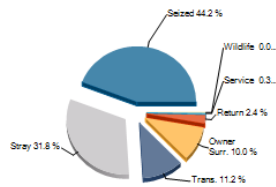**Animal Care Days for Stray Animals in South Carolina Shelters**

- Animal shelters spend a minimum of $8- $12 per day to care for a stray pet.

- In South Carolina, there have been 5,188,015 reported animal care days for stray pets housed in animal shelters YTD 2016.

- This equates to $200M – 311M spent to care for the reported stray pets in South Carolina animal shelters YTD 2016.

- By reducing a stray hold from a 5 day minimum to a 3 day minimum, $75M - $125M in savings could be realized and put to use for more purposeful programs and services, such as spay and neuter programs to reduce pet overpopulation.

PetPoint
DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Shelter Statistics – Animal Care Days by Intake Type

Start Date: January 01, 2016
End Date: December 31, 2016

USSC16	Your Shelter					South Carolina (72 organizations)					United States (2522 organizations)				
Greenville County Animal Care	Dog		Cat		Other	Dog		Cat		Other	Dog		Cat		Other
	< year	year+	< year	year+		< year	year+	< year	year+		< year	year+	< year	year+	
Intake Type															
Clinic	0	0	0	0	0	348595	322247	195044	95461	607	1420916	4905918	1011370	3142424	10341
Owner Surrender	1928	6531	5898	5030	300	455004	504384	402674	408409	31430	5630237	9334291	8339424	9993549	1348736
Return	304	3351	371	767	0	32337	86543	21113	44351	464	516979	2367197	466453	1635481	44203
Seized	9790	36913	21842	17756	347	203916	300736	101013	121437	20168	1049776	3758519	1073952	1639064	718155
Service	6	489	77	99	0	102	67	32	734	0	31252	213091	132935	103457	14069
Stray	9646	14874	27482	10308	70	649424	1164137	767874	1183549	76671	11322353	20020010	22112458	23135053	1685140
Transfer	1830	15793	1830	2562	0	197048	295394	142840	126873	1098	5854984	8421076	5490644	3311265	347771
Wildlife	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16203	0	0	0	0	420612
Total															
	23505	77952	57500	36523	717	1886427	2673508	1630591	1980813	146642	25826498	49020101	38627235	42960293	4589027

does not include your shelter's data

Seized 44.2 %
Wildlife 0.0...
Service 0.3...
Return 2.4 %
Owner Surr. 10.0 %
Trans. 11.2 %
Stray 31.8 %

Stray 46.2 %
Trans. 9.2 %
Service 0.2 %
Clinic 11.6 %
Owner Surr. 21.7 %
Return 2.2 %
Seized 9.0 %

Trans. 14.5 %
Service 0.6...
Clinic 6.5 %
Owner Surr. 21.5 %
Return 3.1 %
Seized 5.1 %
Stray 48.6 %

Earliest entry: 1/2/2016
Latest entry: 11/29/2016

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