



Friday, October 16, 2015

**For Immediate Release**

Media Contacts:

Kathy Shillinglaw, MADACC, (414) 649-8640, kshillinglaw@madacc.org

Angela Speed, WHS, (414) 431-6104, aspeed@wihumane.org

## **Wisconsin Humane Society and Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission in support of legislation to help seized and stray animals in Wisconsin**

**Milwaukee, WI** - The Wisconsin Humane Society and Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission (MADACC) issued a joint statement today in support of LRB 1926/1, a bill proposed by Representative John Spiros (R-Marshfield) pertaining to holding periods for seized and stray animals.

### **LRB 1926/1 Saves Animals' Lives**

The Wisconsin Humane Society and Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission (MADACC) support LRB 1926/1. The bill would protect animals from forced long stays in local animal shelters, whether the animals are seized in cruelty, fighting, and hoarding cases, or come to facilities as stray animals. When animals are forced to stay in shelters for long periods, they face increased medical risk and psychological stress. This bill addresses all types of holds comprehensively, to improve conditions and live release rates for animals in Wisconsin shelters.

First, LRB 1926/1 prevents seized animals from being confined indefinitely as "evidence" while court cases are unresolved. An animal's condition even a few days after seizure is irrelevant in court. But in the past, shelters have been required to hold animals for as long as years while cases move through the court system. This is harmful to animals and expensive for taxpayers. LRB 1926/1 provides a process to allow animals to leave the shelter much sooner.

Second, LRB 1926/1 reduces Wisconsin's long forced hold for stray animals. Currently, stray animals must be held for seven days under Wisconsin law – eight days in practice, because the law does not count the day of initial impoundment. LRB 1926/1 allows shelters to find homes for safe and healthy animals on the animal's sixth day in the shelter, after the animal is held for a four day stray hold, plus the day of initial impoundment.

### **Why a shorter stray hold?**

Wisconsin has one of the longest stray holds in America. Most states have stray holds between three and five days. The long required hold is harmful to animals because it causes undue stress and illness. Just 3% of cats and 27% of dogs were claimed by an owner at MADACC in 2014. The majority of

### **3 Key Facts**

**1. By allowing shelters to find new homes sooner, this bill would save the lives of more Wisconsin animals.**

**2. Just 1% of animals entering MADACC are reclaimed on days five through seven of the stray hold.**

**3. Wisconsin has one of the longest stray holds in the country.**

animals who come into Wisconsin shelters sit unclaimed, stressed from being in an unfamiliar environment, exposing them to illness and behavioral issues, when shelters could be finding them new homes. This measure would put Wisconsin nearer the national average and improve animals' outcomes.

Key benefits of a shortened stray hold include:

- **Saves animals' lives.** Long stray holds make animals sick, because they overcrowd shelters. Disease and overcrowding in turn cause unnecessary shelter deaths. Disease and overcrowding are the leading causes of preventable euthanasia in impoundment facilities.

**Why do long holds cause overcrowding?** It's pure math. Imagine a city where 5,000 animals become stray in a year. If each one spends ten days in the local shelter, the shelter will have 137 animals in care every single day. (5,000 animals x 10 days / 365 days). If the same 5,000 animals need to spend seven days in the shelter, the shelter's daily population drops to 96. The more crowded the shelter, the more germs it contains, the more stressed the animals become, and the more animals become sick – all because they came to the shelter that was supposed to help them.

- **Improves live release for animals.** Wisconsin has one of the highest stray holds in the nation, which negatively impacts the animals in our state. A 90% live outcome rate is often spoken of as the mark of a "no-kill" community. Many factors affect a community's live outcome rate; the primary factor is poverty. But no large community with a 90% live outcome rate has a stray hold as long as Wisconsin's. Examples are:<sup>i</sup>
  - Austin, TX, 93%; 3 day stray hold
  - Oregon Humane Society, Portland, OR, 93%; 3 day stray hold
  - Hamilton County, IN, 90.3%; 4 day stray hold
  - Kansas City, MO; 93%, 5 day stray hold
  - Boulder, CO: 93%, 5 day stray hold
- **Gets animals home just as quickly.** Long stray holds don't significantly help animals get home. The majority of animals are reunited with their families on days one through four of the state stray hold. In fact, 74% of dogs and 52% of cats reclaimed at MADACC in 2014 went home in the first two days of their stray hold. Only 114 of the 11,221 dogs and cats who entered MADACC in 2014 -- just 1% -- were reclaimed on days five through seven.
- **Saves tax dollars.** Long stray holds cost taxpayers money. The stray hold law requires municipalities to hold, and pay for the care of, animals for a specified time. The longer the time, the more taxpayers pay, and the fewer funds are available for other critical functions. In the extra days required by a long hold, taxpayers are paying a high price for an extremely small number of animals.

---

<sup>i</sup> Sources for live outcome rates:

Austin, <https://www.austintexas.gov/blogs/Reports/2037/Animal%20Services%20Statistics%20&%20Reports>

Oregon Humane Society, <http://www.oregonhumane.org/about-us/life-saving-statistics/>

Hamilton County, IN, <http://www.hamiltonhumane.com/about-us#fact-sheet>

Kansas City, MO, <http://kcpetproject.org/about-kansas-city-pet-project/statistics/>

Boulder, CO, [https://www.boulderhumane.org/sites/default/files/AsilomarHSBV2014\\_0.pdf](https://www.boulderhumane.org/sites/default/files/AsilomarHSBV2014_0.pdf)