



***NYSAPF is the voice of New York's humane societies, SPCAs, non-profit and municipal animal shelters as well as animal welfare organizations which focus on homeless animals.***

## **MEMO IN SUPPORT OF A.9803A (Santabarbara)/S.7464 (Marchione) The Expedited Adoption Bill for Cats**

The members of the NYS Animal Protection Federation support A.9803 which would expedite the adoption of stray and owner surrendered cats brought in to New York's animal shelters. This bill would save millions of dollars at our shelters as well as improve the quality of life for the cats in our care.

Currently, New York's animal shelters have to hold all cats brought in. In New York City, the hold time is 72 hours. For the rest of the state, it is five to seven days. The Federation is proposing that owner surrendered cats and cats who come in without identification be put up for adoption or transfer within three days following assessment and spay/neutering as long as the shelter routinely provides spay/neuter services.



The mandatory holding period is intended to give unidentified lost cats a chance to be reclaimed by owners searching for them at their local animal shelter. We have found, however, that only 5% of the cats that come into New York's shelters are reclaimed by their owners. In fact, 70% of all cats that come into the shelter are either owner surrender or stray cats. Of these cats, 90% are adopted. Our goal is to get them adopted more quickly and hopefully increase that rate.

The average length of stay for these cats in New York shelters is 32 days for cats under one year and 46 days for cats over one year. Consequently, the number of Care Days in 2015--the number of total days individual cats are cared for in one year in our shelters--is 1,945,633 days. If the costs per day to care for one cat is \$10.00 (and most would argue it is significantly higher) the cost to 88 sheltering organizations across New York minimally exceeds \$19.4M annually.

Shelter administrators know that longer mandatory holding times do not serve the best interests of the cats, the organizations caring for them or the communities in which they reside. Shelter stays are very stressful places for cats and can have significant negative impacts on not only their health and well-being but also their chance at a successful live outcome. Most sheltering facilities house cats in high-density environments where they have daily exposure to animals with unknown medical histories and disease risk. At the same time, many animals admitted to shelters have had little or no preventive care prior to admission. These factors, coupled with the direct effects of significant stress, create a situation where there is a high potential that sheltered cats will become infected with a variety of contagious diseases, including upper respiratory infections, ringworm, and panleukopenia.

The practice of taking in stray cats and holding them for 5-7 days is outdated and does not serve cats, animal shelters, municipalities, or the community. Amending current legislation to allow shelters alternatives to outdated solutions is an important step in helping New York State implement humane practices concerning animals in our communities. Without alternatives it is very possible that private shelters may be forced to stop accepting stray cats increasing the burden on municipalities tremendously.

