

Good Morning,

My name is Kathy Pobloskie and I am an advisor with Lost Dogs Illinois. Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to speak today.

The vast majority of animals in shelters come from two sources. Strays, which are lost pets, and surrenders. We are here today to talk about lost pets. In fact, the ASPCA estimates that 40 – 60% of animals in shelters are lost pets. Most of these pets do not need a new home, they simply need to go home.

Proactively reuniting lost pets with their owners should be one of the main focuses of animal control departments. When barriers prevent people from reclaiming their lost pets, the system fails. I would like to talk about one of those barriers. That barrier is inconsistency.

Currently the range of fees for Cook County stray holding facilities vary from \$7 per day on the low end to \$36 per day on the high end. Microchips (which are required to reclaim) range from \$20 to \$35 and does not include the additional cost of registration. Vaccines can cost up to \$29 per vaccine. Each municipality also has it's own impoundment fees, fines, licenses, etc. One of the main reasons for dogs being left at a shelter is cost. By the time the owner locates them, they cannot afford to reclaim them. It is not unusual for costs to reclaim your dog to be well over \$100 for a 24 hour stay at "the pound". Then of course, there is a strong likelihood that your dog will come down with an upper respiratory infection common in crowded municipal shelters. Add veterinary costs on top of the above fees also.

Start to multiply this by a few days and pretty soon you could be looking at what could equal the car payment or rent or prescription costs or groceries for the family. Don't forget – not everyone has a credit card or money in the bank. They might need to wait until the next payday to come and get their dog. Pretty soon, it's become more than they can afford.

Cook County stray holding facilities are also inconsistent in their stray holding periods. They range from 3 days to 7 days. Many people work two jobs or jobs that prevent them from getting to the facility during normal business hours to check to see if their dog is there. Your dog could be adopted out, transferred to a rescue, or even worse, killed, because you did not figure out the "system" in time. It is not uncommon for lost dogs to travel and cross into a different jurisdiction.

Standardizing fees and stray holding periods to enable the highest number of lost pets be reclaimed by their owners would go a long way to improving Cook County Animal Control. Pets are family members. Give citizens a chance to keep their families whole. This will also help save the more than 9000 animals that are killed in America's shelters every day.

Thank you.

Kathy Pobloskie