



Animal Alliance
of Canada

A Brief to Winnipeg City Councillors:

The Political, Animal Services, and Scientific Case Against Pound Seizure

August 2002

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Executive Summary

1. Animal Alliance of Canada (AAC), in association with Environment Voters (EV), is running 3rd party campaigns in the 23 October 2002 Winnipeg civic elections to help elect candidates who will end pound seizure in Winnipeg, and implement “best practices” animal services programs. The campaigns are a consequence of municipal politicians rejecting all efforts of AAC to discuss the pound seizure issue with them.
2. Pound seizure is the practice of pounds and shelters selling lost and homeless companion animals — dogs and cats — to research facilities. Winnipeg, which sells animals to the University of Manitoba, is one of the few jurisdictions left in Canada that still promotes the practice.
3. More than half the voters in Winnipeg share their homes with companion animals and are, therefore, adversely affected by Council’s pound seizure policy.
4. Council is responsible to the voters of Winnipeg and not the few University of Manitoba researchers who benefit from the current pound seizure policy. Voters hold Councillors accountable in the civic elections, not researchers.
5. Pound seizure has been shown to undermine animal services programs, and exacerbate animal control problems and the associated public health issues.
6. The majority of Canada’s and the world’s most respected researchers, research institutions, and medical schools reject the use of random source animals as unethical, scientifically unsound, and uneconomic.
7. AAC asks Winnipeg City Council to end pound seizure and implement a “best practices” animal services program similar to Calgary’s.
8. AAC and Winnipeg animal protection groups continue to be prepared to meet with the Mayor and Councillors to further discuss this issue, and its political, ethical, and animal services implications.

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Introduction

Within this complex society, new standards evolve which, by and large, mark our progression to a higher plane of civilization. Perhaps in bidding a grateful, but not reluctant farewell to the use of random-source dogs and cats as research animals, we will better serve the full spectrum of all the many facets of society that together establish it as civilized, and ever more so, as decades roll by.

David H. Neil, B.V.Sc, M.R.C.V.S.
Division of Health Sciences Laboratory Animal Services
Faculty of Medicine, University of Alberta (1989)

The purpose of this brief is two-fold:

1. to present the case against pound seizure — the practice of selling lost and homeless companion animals to research facilities — in order to persuade Winnipeg City Council (Council) to abolish pound seizure in Winnipeg, and,
2. to inform Council that Animal Alliance of Canada (AAC) — with the strategic and campaign management support of Environment Voters (EV) — will be campaigning in the 23 October 2002 Winnipeg civic elections to help elect candidates who will end pound seizure in Winnipeg and implement “best practices” animal services programs.

Animal Alliance of Canada is a non-profit organization committed to protecting animals. AAC has earned the trust and support of tens of thousands of people who share their homes with companion animals, and who are deeply concerned about how municipalities, like Winnipeg, protect companion animals and

provide animal services. AAC is campaigning across Canada to ban pound seizure. Further information about AAC, its policies, and campaigns is available at its web site: <http://www.AnimalAlliance.ca>

Environment Voters is unique in Canada. EV is a non-profit organization that specializes in electoral politics: campaigning — usually at the constituency level — to elect incumbents and political parties with good environmental and animal protection records, and to defeat those with poor ones. Further information about Environment Voters and its previous election campaigns is available at EV's web site: <http://EnvironmentVoters.org>

AAC's opposition to pound seizure is shared by all Canadian humane societies and, according to one poll, perhaps as much as 75% of the public. The City of Winnipeg remains one of the few jurisdictions left in Canada that promotes pound seizure. Winnipeg also has the dubious distinction of supplying animals to research in the absence of any legal requirement to do so. Indeed, there are municipalities in Ontario and Alberta that choose to disregard provincial laws that require them to surrender animals to research facilities because they are aware of the serious problems caused by pound seizure.

For sound ethical and management reasons, pound seizure is now well-understood to be not only incompatible with, but also antithetical to, modern, effective companion animal protection, services, and control. For equally sound scientific, economic, and moral reasons, many researchers, prestigious research facilities, and medical schools in North America and Europe do not experiment on animals acquired from pounds — so-called “random source” animals. In some cases these respected institutions are acting voluntarily; others are simply obeying the law.

As will be shown below, the pound seizure policy of Winnipeg Council ill-serves the people and voters of Winnipeg, undermines Winnipeg's animal services programs, contributes to public health problems, and causes unnecessary risk and suffering to companion animals.

Pound Seizure and the Winnipeg 23 October 2002 Civic Election

The person who has rescued a lost puppy but cannot keep it may not wish to turn it over to the tender mercies of the medical school, which gives no public account and permits no publicity on what goes on behind the closed doors of its animal house. People should have a choice in the matter.

Editorial, Winnipeg Free Press
26 March 1989

More than half of the voters in Winnipeg live with companion animals and are, therefore, adversely by Council's pound seizure policy. Animal Alliance of Canada protects the interests of companion animals and their owners. For the past three years, AAC has tried to raise the pound seizure issue with the Premier of Manitoba, the Mayor of Winnipeg, and Winnipeg City Councillors. Earlier this year, AAC asked repeatedly to appear before Winnipeg City Council, or the responsible committee, to make the case for Council ending pound seizure. All requests for meetings were ignored or denied, without cause or discussion. Indeed, even getting Councillors to return telephone calls or respond to e-mails proved difficult. However, in a clear denial of due process, Councillors entertained presentations by University of Manitoba researchers — the direct and only beneficiaries of Council's pound seizure policy — and attended a supervised tour of the University's facilities.

Consequently, AAC — in association with Environment Voters — is preparing to run independent 3rd party campaigns in selected wards and, perhaps, in the mayoralty contest in the 23 October 2002 Winnipeg civic elections. The purpose of the campaigns is to help elect candidates who will end pound seizure in Winnipeg, and be more responsive to animal welfare issues and the organizations that help protect animals and represent the interests of companion animal owners.

As in most Environment Voters campaigns, EV will target individual Councillors and, possibly, the Mayor. Polling and research will decide which issues — pound seizure and/or others — will be emphasized in various wards. The final selection of target wards will be made closer to nomination day, 25 September 2002, and subsequent to candidate research and interviews, issue research, and initial polling.

Results from federal and provincial elections and by-elections since 1999 show that Environment Voters' campaigns routinely shift 4-6% of the vote. The voting history data from Winnipeg suggest that in a number of wards the winners on October 23rd will likely be decided by less than 6%. And, with the two strong candidates now running, the mayoralty race will likely be closer than in 1998.

It was with sincere regret that AAC and EV made the decision to campaign in the Winnipeg civic election. Every effort was made to avoid it. Every means was tried to persuade City Councillors to review their pound seizure policy. Every AAC entreaty to Winnipeg City Councillors was rebuffed. Winnipeg City Councillors and the Mayor of Winnipeg left AAC with no recourse but 3rd party campaigning in the 23 October 2002 civic election.

Winnipeg's Pound Seizure Policy, Companion Animal Owners, and Voters

It is true that many animals in pounds who are not adopted will be euthanized. But this is certainly not an argument in favor of pound seizure. First, it is precisely those animals who are most adoptable that experimenters tend to choose. They prefer docile, well-socialized, medium-sized animals, precisely the animals likely to be adopted.

Neal D. Barnard, M.D., President
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Washington, D.C.

Few elected officials would disagree that a responsible politician's first duty is to the voters who elected him or her. This, after all, is a core ideal of democratically elected government. Politically, this means that incumbents are held accountable during elections for their performance, decisions, and public policy initiatives. In the case of pound seizure, if voters consider the current policy ill-founded they will hold individual Winnipeg City Councillors accountable not the University of Manitoba researchers who are the only beneficiaries of the policy.

Too often companion animal bylaws are based on the premise that dogs and cats are nuisances to be controlled and are, therefore, disposable. Animal services is founded on a model of "waste disposal." The rationale behind pound seizure stems from this outdated attitude towards companion animals. While some companion animals can, indeed, cause problems, and reasonable controls are needed, the fact is that most dogs and cats are important, vital members of

people's homes and families. For many people, home and family are empty — incomplete — without a companion animal. Recognizing this, most progressive municipalities — Calgary, Vancouver, Toronto, Boston, New York, and Washington, to name just a few — have implemented animal services policies that stress making their communities “animal friendly,” and encourage responsible companion animal guardianship through education and positive regulations. This enlightened attitude not only helps people who share their lives with companion animals and helps keep dogs and cats safe, but also significantly reduces conflicts with, and the anxieties of, non-companion animal owners.

The love that most people have for companion animals is often denigrated or dismissed as frivolous, particularly by those who view them as a nuisance or would put them to uses other than companionship. The quality and strength of the love that most people have for companion animals should not be underestimated, particular by elected officials. Many people make enormous sacrifices in time, emotional commitment, and money to insure the comfort, safety, and health of their companion animals.

This unstinting love that people have for dogs and cats can extend beyond the home and family to an animal who is a stranger, but treated cruelly. For example, recently Animal Alliance of Canada helped rescue Maia, an Anatolian shepherd who was shot twice, hit by a car, and left for dead on the road. Seeing what looked like a dead wolf, an off-duty police officer stopped to pull the body off the road. When he approached the animal, Maia wagged her tail. In a desperate attempt to save her life, the police officer lifted the badly injured animal into his car, and took her to the nearest veterinarian.

Following wide media coverage of the plight of Maia, thousands of people spontaneously contributed tens of thousands of dollars to AAC to help pay for the months of veterinary care and many operations that saved Maia's life, and returned her to health. She is now with a loving new family, thanks to AAC's adoption program and the support of thousands of caring people.

Love for companion animals is well-founded. Most people — even those who do not currently live with a companion animal — have fond childhood memories of a loving family dog or cat, and recall how these animals enriched their lives.

When developing companion animal policies, the prudent and responsible politician will respect the deep love that people have for companion animals, and will help develop animal services programs that build on that love. On a more

pragmatic level, failing to do so can be a serious political mistake. An American Medical Association study (cited by Dr. David H. Neil of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Alberta) showed that while almost 75% of the public may accept, in principle, the use of animals in research for certain purposes and within certain parameters, only 25% condoned using animals from pounds and shelters. This means that in Winnipeg, a majority of voters — both companion animal owners and non-owners — would likely oppose Council's pound seizure policy, if they were aware of it and its animal services implications. Based on AAC's experience in other municipalities, Winnipeg voters who live with companion animals would be adamantly against the policy, and would support actions to end it.

Consequently, Winnipeg City Council — whose first responsibility is to the voters and companion animal owners of Winnipeg and not the University of Manitoba — should follow the lead of other progressive cities and ban pound seizure.

The Adverse Effects of Pound Seizure on Animal Services

Management and employees of shelters and pounds are adversely affected [by pound seizure], as well. In consultation with numerous jurisdictions, we have never seen an effective animal control program in any city or country which permitted pound seizure.

Neal D. Barnard, M.D., President
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Washington, D.C.

The objection that most voters and companion animal owners in Winnipeg likely have to Council's pound seizure policy and Council's responsibility to them are just two of the many reasons why Council should ban pound seizure. A third reason is the adverse effects that pound seizure has on animal services programs.

The seemingly pragmatic argument for pound seizure is that if a pound animal is going to be killed anyway, and every effort has been made to adopt the animal out, why not make it available to research? After all, there's no point in wasting a perfectly good animal, and what harm can come from it?

The argument is not only simplistic, but misleading and harmful. If Council is committed to a progressive, “best practices,” animal services program — which Winnipeg voters and companion animal owners have a right to expect — the current pound seizure policy fatally undermines that goal.

Effective animal services programs are only possible with the whole-hearted, enthusiastic support and confidence of companion animal owners, animal services staff and management, and the general public. Pound seizure undermines public confidence and support, and demoralizes animal services personnel. The reason is that most people who share their homes with companion animals or work in animal services tend to have a deep affection for dogs and cats, and the very thought of them being experimented on is anathema. Many people will not take a lost or homeless companion animal to a pound that sends animals to research. According to Neal D. Barnard, M.D.,

“When people know that pound seizure is routine, they tend to leave animals on the streets. These animals are likely to breed more litters, carry parasites, or contract diseases such as distemper or rabies, which, in turn, can aggravate public health problems. Studies in New Mexico and Washington, D.C. showed that pound release practices erode public confidence in animal control facilities. A tough job gets tougher.”

Barnard’s experiences are echoed in the policy statements of many groups involved in animal services. The policy statements of the Kansas City, Missouri-based National Animal Control Association and the Tampa-based Florida Animal Control Association are typical:

“The National Animal Control Association opposes pound seizure laws (which mandate the sale of animals from shelters to research).

- “1. Such laws infringe upon the rights of animal shelters to determine the fate of animals in their care.
- “2. Such laws hinder the efforts of progressive animal shelters to promote animal welfare in a collective atmosphere of public trust.
- “3. Animal research is clearly a personal decision which should be decided by individual animal owners without involvement of animal shelters.”

“The Florida Animal Control Association recognizes that many in the field of medical research believe that there is a need for the use of live animals in experimentation. However, FACA believes that the practice of pound seizure undermines the effectiveness and public trust in animal control and protection programs. For these reasons FACA opposes pound seizure laws that require either public or private animal control or protection facilities to release animals for animal experimentation.”

Based on its years of working closely with people staffing pounds and shelters, AAC can testify that shelter personnel are deeply troubled by sending animals to research. Most find it difficult even euthanizing animals, but they can morally justify it with the knowledge that they did their best to find the animal a new home, and that the animal’s end will be gentle and humane. When the animal is sold to a research facility, however, he or she is utterly abandoned to an undeserved and uncertain fate. And, despite the calm assertions of researchers, shelter workers know there is no guarantee that the animal will not suffer in cruel, chronic experiments. No one should underestimate the insidious and debilitating effect that sending innocent animals to research can have on a caring person who works in animal services. Some cope with the cumulative emotional effects by resigning. Others become inured to the suffering, often to the detriment of their own emotional well-being, and to the compassion and dedication that their job demands. In the end, the animals suffer — animals whose only crime was being homeless or lost.

In AAC’s 10 years of experience with the pound seizure issue, in every case where pound seizure was banned, animal services programs and adoption rates improved, and euthanization rates declined. Data from Calgary, Alberta, where Animal Services stopped giving to research in 1993 is indicative and compelling.

Calgary, Alberta Animal Services Statistics 1984-1999

(Source: City of Calgary Animal Services)

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Animals impounded	4237	4102	4006	3841	3703	3068	2583	2433	2154	3063	3433	3637	4170	5241	4971	5005
Sold to university	300	282	219	291	256	217	154	152	73	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Returned to owner or adopted	2375	1917	2179	2379	2468	2162	1855	1804	1731	2742	3254	3460	3929	4932	4706	4767
Euthanized	1450	1747	1413	991	825	605	508	348	253	182	83	71	100	118	82	127

(NOTE: Totals may appear incorrect. A small number of animals identified as "Others" – which include, for example, animals still held at the end of a year – have been omitted for clarity.)

When pound seizure was routinely practiced in Calgary in the mid to late 1980s, only about 50-60% of impounded animals were returned to their families or adopted; 30-40% were euthanized. By 1999, almost 97% of animals were being returned to their families or adopted, and the euthanization rate dropped to around 2%. Another important direct benefit enjoyed by Calgarians because of their Councillors' decision to implement a progressive animal services program, which included a pound seizure ban, is the decline in dog bite incidents: from 1.03 bites per 1,000 in 1984 to 0.45 bites per 1,000 in 1998 – a 56% decline.

The reason for these improvements is that when communities adopt animal services policies that use "best practices," and serve the best interests of the animals and companion animal owners – rather than the interests of researchers – public support increases, and pride, morale, and job performance improves among animal services staff. This in turn results in lower costs and dramatically improved effectiveness of animal services programs.

The evidence from across North America is unequivocal. By failing to ban pound seizure and implement "best practices" animal services programs, like those in Calgary, Toronto, and other progressive municipalities, Winnipeg City Councillors are failing the voters of Winnipeg who share their homes and families with companion animals.

The Research Community and the Pound Seizure Dilemma

The “pet factor” may actually be disclosing something important for our inquiry, namely that communication of a sort does go on between humans and other species and that this is important support for the view that animals ought to be treated as subjects and not merely as objects. People who protest against animal experimentation (and other “uses” of animals) out of their appreciation of their pets ought not to be dismissed out of hand as hopelessly sentimental and biased, but rather might be seen as contributing to an emerging discussion about the role of communication in alerting us to the presence of a moral dimension in the relationship between humans and animals.

Report of the Ethics Subcommittee (1995)
University [of Alberta] Animal Policy and Welfare Committee

Despite what some researchers might say, there is considerable disagreement and disquiet in the scientific community about the ethics, science, and economics of using lost companion animals acquired from pounds and shelters for experimental purposes. A full discussion is beyond this brief, but a number of issues can be highlighted to help clarify the debate.

Because the concerns about using lost companion animals in research are so valid, academic institutions like the University of Alberta, and intramural researchers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in the United States make no use of pound animals. The rapidly growing list of medical schools that no longer use dogs — random source or purpose bred — includes: Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, Harvard Medical School, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Mayo Medical School, Stanford University School of Medicine, and Yale University School of Medicine. In Canada, most medical schools do not use live animal laboratories, including the University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine, the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine, and Queen’s University School of Medicine. European researchers stopped using animals from pounds decades ago. Indeed, one 1984 paper by the Italian researchers Mantovani and Ioppolo carried the title: “*A Useless and Superseded Experimental Animal: The Stray Dog.*”

Lawrence A. Hansen, M.D., Associate Professor of Pathology and Neuroscience at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine (UCSD) said,

“Some argue that no one wants to kill dogs, but it is a necessary evil for medical education. But since graduates of Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and the Mayo Clinic medical schools (and most others in the U.S.) have become pretty good physicians without killing dogs, it's hard to avoid concluding that dog vivisection is not necessary. Once you remove the ‘necessary’ from necessary evil, only the evil remains.”

“As an alumna of UCSD School of Medicine, class of 1976, I agree that doglabs for the physiology/pharmacology course should be modified, so as not to utilize live dogs. I remember my doglab of 25 years ago very clearly: Everything could have been taught in the absence of the dog, much as we learned the other aspects of the course material. The thought of those large, healthy dogs, one for each four students, being sacrificed without apparent justification still haunts me. I wish the alternative ways of teaching the course had been employed then,” said Leslie A Mark, M.D., Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine, Division of Dermatology, UCSD.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH publication 72-333),

“In addition to altering experiment results, the use of pound dogs may also increase research costs, in spite of the initial low cost of the dog....The cost of the dogs is a minor part of the expense, yet the untimely death of each subject dog escalates the overall cost of experimentation.”

Dr. David Neil, University Veterinarian, Faculty of Medicine, University of Alberta explains, in part, why lost or homeless companion animals seized from pounds make poor experimental animals, and why their use can make for bad science:

“[W]e really are not in a position to genetically define the random-source animal. Furthermore, we are unable to provide health records, or clinical history for these animals. If indeed, we had such information, it may well be that more of these animals would be disqualified for use at time of receipt.”

Neal D. Barnard, M.D. argues that:

“The problems [caused by using animals from pounds and shelters] may cause experimental results to be uninterpretable. As a result,

more animals are then used in repeat experiments. So rather than save money or animals' lives, the use of animals from this source often costs more money and more animals' lives."

Perhaps the most candid expression of the conflicted positions within the research community was expressed by the University [of Alberta] Animal Policy and Welfare Committee in their 1995 report:

"The dramatic conflicts between extremists in the animal rights and scientific communities which have been highlighted in the media have not contributed to resolving the debate. While most researchers deem animal experimentation not only necessary but ethically defensible, many express personal reservations about some of what is being done.

"We continue to believe that clarity is not served by posturing or adopting strategies for winning at all costs. But we also know that opinions on this question are held very strongly and that behind the passion lie very laudable values. At least we choose to operate on this assumption, even though self-interest and economic gain may not be far beneath the surface for any of us. We do not claim to have all the answers, but we do not shirk from raising the questions for the scientific community which are embedded in the current cultural turmoil about animal experimentation. "

Within the research community itself, there is wide disagreement about the scientific value, the economic benefits, and the ethical rationale of using lost and homeless companion animals in research, in particular, and animal experimentation in general. As the University of Alberta Animal Policy and Welfare Committee reported,

"We believe it to be an essential part of our responsibility as members of the University community that we discuss the ethical dimensions of our work in an open and non-defensive manner. To do otherwise is only to court the public's worst suspicion: that we cannot transcend our own self-interest any better than anyone else."

The debate is further fuelled by two other factors. The first is that too often mistakes are made, and loving companion animals are sent to research facilities

before distraught families have an opportunity to find them. In the past in Alberta and more recently in Ontario, grieving owners learned too late that their companion animals had been sold to researchers. As the Edmonton Sun reported on 29 January 2000 in an interview with Roger Simms, head of the Edmonton SPCA, "At least a dozen family pets come close to dying on a University of Alberta lab table every year, due to mistakes made at the city pound" said Simms. "It's got to be 12 dogs a year easily. And we'll never know how many fell through the cracks — weren't caught before they were put down."

Secondly, the motive behind much of the research community's defense of pound seizure is political and strategic, having less to do with the merits of actually ending pound seizure and more to do with the fear that bans on pound seizure might encourage further restrictions on their use of animals.

Many Winnipeg City Councillors may not feel entirely competent to pass judgement on these issues — issues that challenge some of the best informed scientific minds in Canada. Yet, by virtue of its current pound seizure policy, Winnipeg City Councillors have, in fact, chosen sides in the scientific and research communities' on-going debate. And, Council has chosen the wrong side, as more jurisdictions, scientists, medical schools, and scientific agencies — after thoughtful review of all the relevant factors — end the practice of pound seizure.

Pound seizure, for Winnipeg Councillors, is not a scientific, or even a medical research issue, as some researchers might like to characterize it. It is a political and public policy issue — an animal services issue. No critical research will suffer if researchers are denied the use of lost and homeless companion animals. The random source animal policies of too many of the this country's and the world's most distinguished researchers and research institutions attest to that fact. Indeed, critical and important research does not rely on the use of animals of unknown history, from an unreliable source dependent on the hope that some municipal governments will operate poor quality animal services programs.

Winnipeg City Councillors owe no allegiance to the few researchers at the University of Manitoba who benefit from the current pound seizure policy, and whose irresponsible insistence on using pound seizure undermines animal services. Councillors do owe their allegiance to Winnipeg voters who, like the most people in Canada, are likely strongly opposed to lost and homeless companion animals being used in research.

Conclusion

The evidence against pound seizure is compelling and unequivocal. The damage pound seizure causes to municipal efforts to provide effective animal services is well-documented, as is the improvement in animal services when pound seizure is banned. The evidence that some researchers use to defend pound seizure is dubious and misleading at best; self-serving and knowingly wrong at worst. There is no evidence that banning pound seizure has any negative impact on critical medical research, or in any way puts human health at risk. Quite the contrary, human health is put at greater risk when municipalities fail to use “best practices” in their animal services programs.

Politically, pound seizure is an abrogation of the responsibilities that municipal politicians have to their voters — a majority of whom share their lives with companion animals — particularly so because, in all cases the decision to permit pound seizure is based either on a bias against compassion for animals and the organizations that protect them or faulty and incomplete analyses of the issue.

It is our sincerest hope that the case for ending pound seizure in Winnipeg presented above will be appreciated by Winnipeg City Councillors, and that Council will have the opportunity before the civic elections on October 23rd to reconsider its policy and end pound seizure.

Animal Alliance of Canada and Winnipeg animal protection groups continue to be prepared to meet with the Mayor and Councillors of Winnipeg at their convenience to further discuss this issue, and its political, ethical, and animal services implications.

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