



Back Where They Belong

***Contracts, Jurisdictions, Fees and
Local Ordinance Considerations to
Promote Return to Home***

Cole Wakefield, Executive Director
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Maddie's® Million Pet Challenge
UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program



Working With Local Government/ Ordinances to Prioritize RTO



Know your local and state laws and regulations - read them for yourself

Find your own State Statutes using the ***Michigan State Animal Legal and Historical statute search tool***

Another great resource is the HASS Government Communications Toolkit: ***Getting Started***



“Animal-Services Agency has the sole discretion to return any animal to the animal’s owner or caretaker of a community cat, with or without impoundment. Animal-Services Agency has the sole discretion to waive any fees that may be assessed.”

- Best Friends Animal Society suggested language



<http://tinyurl.com/D1B1Resources>

Sheltering is a Public Service

- Animal shelters are not meant to be revenue generating or cover their own costs
- Animal shelters are a VITAL public service
- Nearly all well-operated animal shelters lose money



Fees and Fines are Not Your Friends

Fees and fines do not:

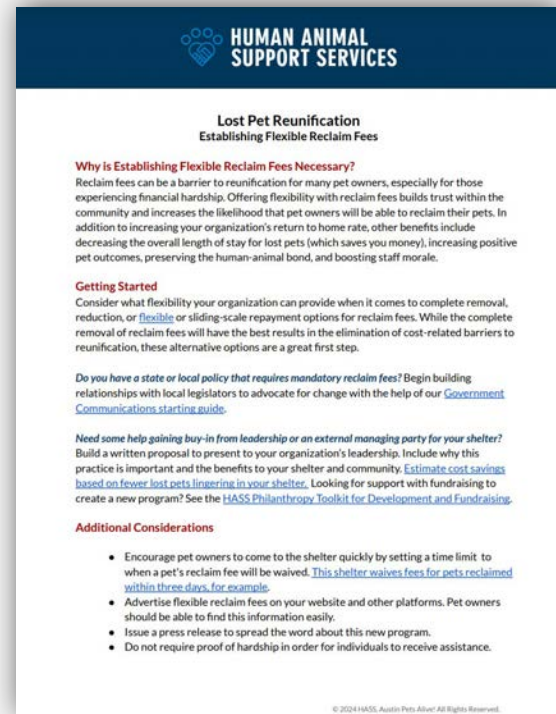
- Discourage violations
- Recoup the cost of care of the animal
- Reduce the number of animals coming into the shelter
- Solve the problem



Pilot Programs to Eliminate Fees

- Must be in writing
- Program must be well structured
- Should include metrics for measuring impact and determining success

The HASS Playbook is a great resource



HUMAN ANIMAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Lost Pet Reunification Establishing Flexible Reclaim Fees

Why is Establishing Flexible Reclaim Fees Necessary?
Reclaim fees can be a barrier to reunification for many pet owners, especially for those experiencing financial hardship. Offering flexibility with reclaim fees builds trust within the community and increases the likelihood that pet owners will be able to reclaim their pets. In addition to increasing your organization's return to home rate, other benefits include decreasing the overall length of stay for lost pets (which saves you money), increasing positive pet outcomes, preserving the human-animal bond, and boosting staff morale.

Getting Started
Consider what flexibility your organization can provide when it comes to complete removal, reduction, or flexible or sliding-scale repayment options for reclaim fees. While the complete removal of reclaim fees will have the best results in the elimination of cost-related barriers to reunification, these alternative options are a great first step.

Do you have a state or local policy that requires mandatory reclaim fees? Begin building relationships with local legislators to advocate for change with the help of our [Government Communications starting guide](#).

Need some help gaining buy-in from leadership or an external managing party for your shelter? Build a written proposal to present to your organization's leadership. Include why this practice is important and the benefits to your shelter and community. [Estimate cost savings based on fewer lost pets lingering in your shelter](#). Looking for support with fundraising to create a new program? See the [HASS Philanthropy Toolkit for Development and Fundraising](#).

Additional Considerations

- Encourage pet owners to come to the shelter quickly by setting a time limit to when a pet's reclaim fee will be waived. [This shelter waives fees for pets reclaimed within three days. For example:](#)
- Advertise flexible reclaim fees on your website and other platforms. Pet owners should be able to find this information easily.
- Issue a press release to spread the word about this new program.
- Do not require proof of hardship in order for individuals to receive assistance.

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<http://tinyurl.com/D1B1Resources>

We spend all of our time talking about animals.
We need to reframe the conversation.



A Tale of Two Pitties

City A: Total cost = \$500



City B: Total cost = \$50



Resources & References

1. HASS Playbook
2. HASS Government Communications Toolkit
3. Animal Legal & Historical Statute Search Tool
4. Lifesaving Animal Service Contracts - Best Friends
5. Municipal Pet Policy Toolkit - Humane Pro
6. “More Than a Furry Companion: The Ripple Effect of Companion Animals on Neighborhood Interactions and Sense of Community”
7. “Punishment to Support: The Need to Align Animal Control Enforcement with the Human Social Justice Movement”



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Thank You!

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