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The Truth About Cats & Dogs that end up in Council Pounds

Finally some significant data on just how many cats and dogs end up on death row at Council Pounds. A first-ever compulsory survey by the Department of Local Government has uncovered the frightening reality of just how many companion animals are put to sleep. A total of half those that wound up in the pound system were either re-united with their owners or rehomed through the efforts of rescue organisations and the limited resources council staff. That's a staggering 24,003 animals that were put to sleep within NSW—a rate of 66 per day.

The figures for 2006-07 comes from the council-by-council figures that were produced from the first ever compulsory survey of pounds following amendments to the Local Government Act in January last year. Across NSW 39.8% of the 36,871 dogs and 71.4 % of 13,045 cats in pounds were euthanased.

The figures show vast differences in the way that animals were treated depending on the pound. For instance country areas had council pounds with almost complete euthanasia rates. Forbes pound had a 100% euthanasia rate and other country councils that were close included Walgett and Berrigan. Apparently no cats get a reprieve from death row from Broken Hill, Leeton and Cootamundra.

Gosford, Pittwater, Mosman, The Blue Mountains and Hastings have a 'no kill' policy and all these councils reported negligible or no death rates within their facilities. Blacktown council's figures topped a whopping 3448 cull of cats and dogs or 74.75% of the animals that were impounded.

The figures are chilling yet not surprising to those on the front line of rescue. Many breed specific welfare and rescue organisations reported a significant increase in the dogs they took in from pounds throughout NSW before and around the Christmas period. Doggie Rescue, run by Monica Biernacki, has reported an increase of fluffy crosses that have been dumped en-masse—with whole litters of unwanted and abandoned pups. Take a quick look at Doggie Rescue's site and the amount of Foxy Xs, Maltese Xs, Chihuahua Xs, Terrier Xs and even more mutts is scary.

Perhaps the message of de-sexing isn't getting through to people. The questions lie as to whether these are the results of the 'jumped fence' from backyard breeders or the results of young animals being dumped once passing their cuteness quotient or the chore and cost of regular grooming and clipping for the fluffier varieties of designer crosses. In country areas, many of the types of dogs impounded are those trained in the dubious 'sport' of pig hunting.

Often when people think of rescuing a dog from 'death row' they immediately consider larger and more prominent rescue organisations rather than a local pound. Hopefully these compulsory yearly surveys will show a sharp decrease in the amounts of deaths within pounds.

We also hope that there is an upward swing of microchipped animals reunited with their families, education that de-sexing reduces the number of unwanted animals and potential pet owners researching where their pet has come from. Let's hope that we're not becoming a nation that views companion animals as disposable chattels.

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Total number killed 2006-07 and percentage of impounded dogs and cats killed		
Blacktown	3448	74.75%
Tamworth	958	85.69%
Bathurst	950	78.38%
Coffs Harbour	835	60.68%
Bankstown	827	55.95%
Liverpool	771	29.43%
Wagga Wagga	667	47.44%
Broken Hill	651	75.07%
Wyong	651	50.62%
Hawkesbury	613	33.77%
Fairfield	583	38.76%
Griffith	546	68.25%
Cowra	518	88.85%
Goulburn Mulwaree	449	53.58%
Walgett	443	98.44%
Leeton	443	87.90%
Forbes	428	100.00%
Rockdale	428	49.03%
Wollongong	425	39.42%
Cessnock	419	47.08%

Source: Department of Local Government survey data