



ACT RESCUE & FOSTER

5 February 2019

Chris Steel, MLA
ACT Minister for City Services

Dear Minister

Domestic Animal Services desexing policy

ACT Rescue & Foster (ARF) would like to highlight the potentially unintended consequence of the current desexing policy implemented by Domestic Animal Services (DAS).

As you are aware, desexing is not performed on site at DAS. Instead, adopters of DAS dogs are issued with a voucher for desexing to be provided by RSPCA ACT. There is no enforcement of the voucher system, it is entirely up to an adopter whether they use their voucher or not. Unfortunately, the strict penalties for owning a dog that is not desexed in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) do not always give owners the incentive to desex their dogs.

A key barrier for adopter using their vouchers are the considerable waiting periods for adopters of DAS dogs to use their desexing vouchers at RSPCA ACT. The current waiting period is more than a month. This is problematic as a lot can happen in a month. For example, the dog may come into season and/or escape their yard.

Indeed, ARF recently encountered a former DAS dog, adopted about 10 months ago, which was left, pregnant, in the front cages at Queanbeyan Pound. Soon after, she gave birth to 14 puppies; 10 survived. These 10 puppies have since been adopted out intact, due to their age. This sadly exemplifies the limitations of an "opt-in" desexing model.

As you are aware, desexing is essential to reduce the number of neglected or abandoned dogs in the ACT. We strongly suggest you consider an alternative model for desexing DAS dogs.

An approach adopted with success by other pounds in the region, including Queanbeyan and Goulburn pounds, is to ensure that dogs are desexed before they are adopted out. In the case of DAS, this could involve a ranger dropping an adopted dog at a relevant veterinarian clinic to be desexed. The adopter could then pick up their dog, desexed, from the vet clinic and take it home. This model is a surefire way to ensure that the ACT Government's DAS desexing policy is in line with its legislative framework.

Another option is to allow desexing vouchers to be used at a broader range of Canberra vets. Having a broader range of service providers would help to meet the demand for desexing and overcome the waiting periods for desexing at RSPCA ACT. We hope you will consider these alternatives in the interests of reducing the number of unwanted dogs in the ACT and surrounds.

We look forward to your response.

Kind regards

Wendy Parsons
President, ACT Rescue & Foster
(for the ARF Committee)