

Unconventional Wisdom

Every issue we look at a bit of traditional animal sheltering “dogma” and analyze it to see if it is true. We also offer a No Kill alternative - what we call “No Kill Know How” to give a different perspective oriented toward preserving and protecting life. If we accept responsibility for the dogs and cats in our shelter instead of hiding behind conventional wisdom, we are better suited to meet the challenges involved with saving lives.

A CALL TO BAN THE GAS CHAMBER

Conventional Wisdom:

While sodium pentobarbital injection is the preferred method of killing dogs and cats in shelters, gas systems are acceptable if used correctly or for other species of animals.

No Kill Know How:

Webster’s dictionary defines euthanasia as “the act or practice of killing or permitting the death of hopelessly sick or injured individuals in a relatively painless way for reasons of mercy.” Unfortunately, in most shelter environments, animals are not solely being killed because they are hopelessly sick or injured, but rather as “population control.” In this environment, shelter killing—particularly of healthy and treatable animals—raises a host of ethical questions and dilemmas, many of which are being raised by the public in communities across the country.



At the very least, shelters who kill, particularly those which kill large numbers of animals, are obligated to ensure that employees are technically proficient, competent, skilled, compassionate, properly trained, and doing everything in their power to make sure the animals are as free from stress and anxiety as possible. The use of a gas chamber does not allow this.

A “relatively painless” death can only occur in an environment where sensitivity, compassion, and skill, combine with efforts to minimize distress and anxiety. By contrast, gas systems take time to kill—during which animals experience distress and anxiety, and can struggle to survive. They can result in animals surviving the gassing, only to suffer even more. And they take longer to kill if animals are young, old, or have respiratory infections, which is common in some shelters. They are designed for the ease of shelter workers, not care and compassion for the animals.

The use of such systems to kill animals is universally condemned by humane advocates and progressive shelters, and has been outlawed for dogs and cats in several states including New York and California.

According to Dr. Michael Moyer, V.M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania College of Veterinary Medicine:

There is no progressive sheltering agency of any scope or stature willing to philosophically embrace gas systems for the killing of any species of animals.

Sheltering is deliberately, inexorably, and philosophically moving away from mass killing as an acceptable method of dog/cat population control.

That there are technical features of one system that distinguish it from other such systems is irrelevant. Profit center analysis, head-to-head demonstrations, ease of use, load capacity—none of

these are capable of overcoming the humane and philosophical objection to mechanized death at the core of those who have moved away from this technology.

In short, they should never be used.

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