

**§3919-A. Procedure for acceptance and disposition of cats by animal shelter**

An animal shelter to which a cat is taken may accept the cat unless the shelter is in quarantine. An animal shelter accepting a cat shall comply with the provisions of this section. [PL 2001, c. 363, §3 (NEW).]

**1. Cats with identification.** An animal shelter that accepts a cat with cat identification shall make a reasonable attempt to notify the owner by telephone or by sending a written notice within 24 hours of accepting the cat. Except as provided in subsections 4 and 5, the animal shelter shall hold the cat for a period of 6 days beginning on and including the day of acceptance. If the owner claims the cat within the 6-day period, the animal shelter shall release the cat to the owner upon payment of any municipal impoundment fee and actual fees incurred for food, shelter and veterinary care. Upon expiration of the 6-day period, ownership of the cat is vested with the animal shelter and the animal shelter may then handle the cat as a homeless cat for disposition in accordance with subsection 2. [PL 2001, c. 363, §3 (NEW).]

**2. Homeless cats.** When an animal shelter accepts a cat under section 3919 and that cat does not have cat identification, the animal shelter shall hold the cat for not less than 48 hours or, for feral cats, not less than 24 hours. After the 24-hour or 48-hour period, the animal shelter may treat the cat as a homeless cat and may:

A. Except as provided in section 3938-A, offer the cat for adoption, sell or give away the cat; or [PL 2007, c. 439, §9 (AMD).]

B. Otherwise dispose of the cat humanely in accordance with Title 17, chapter 42, subchapter 4. [PL 2003, c. 405, §8 (AMD).]

An animal shelter may not sell or give a cat to a research facility. [PL 2009, c. 343, §11 (AMD).]

**3. Owner's claim after 6-day period.** An owner may reacquire a cat at any time prior to its disposition under subsection 2 upon payment of any municipal impoundment fee and actual fees incurred for food, shelter and veterinary care and any other reasonable fee imposed by the animal shelter. [PL 2001, c. 363, §3 (NEW).]

**4. Euthanasia for severely sick or severely injured cat or small animal.** A humane agent, an animal control officer or an animal shelter may authorize in writing the immediate euthanasia of a severely sick or severely injured cat or small animal upon determining that the following conditions are met:

A. The animal control officer of the municipality where the cat or small animal was found has been notified or, if the cat or small animal has identification, the owner of the cat or small animal has been notified; and [PL 2015, c. 223, §4 (AMD).]

B. A veterinarian states in writing that the cat's or small animal's recovery from its injury or illness, given reasonable time and reasonable care, is doubtful or that the cat or small animal presents a danger to the public. [PL 2015, c. 223, §4 (AMD).]

Notwithstanding paragraphs A and B, a veterinarian may authorize immediate euthanasia if, in the veterinarian's judgment, there is no possibility of recovery for a severely injured or severely sick cat or small animal. [PL 2015, c. 223, §4 (AMD).]

**5. Immunity.** A veterinarian, a humane agent, an animal control officer or an animal shelter, including a person employed by an animal shelter, is not civilly liable to the owner of a cat or small animal for the loss of that cat or small animal resulting from actions taken in compliance with this section.

Nothing in this subsection grants to an animal shelter or person any immunity from liability arising from the gift, sale or other transference of a cat or small animal to a research facility in violation of subsection 2.

[PL 2015, c. 223, §5 (AMD).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2001, c. 363, §3 (NEW). PL 2003, c. 405, §8 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 439, §§9, 10 (AMD). PL 2009, c. 343, §11 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 223, §§4, 5 (AMD).

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