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Anne Fawcett is a lecturer in the School of Life and Environmental Sciences (formerly the Faculty of Veterinary Science) at the University of Sydney and a companion animal veterinarian. She also has a long standing interest in unusual and exotic pets.

She has written over 30 peer-reviewed articles on veterinary ethics and aspects of primary veterinary care and has co-written a textbook of veterinary ethics with Dr Siobhan Mullan (5M, forthcoming).

She has a strong interest in animal welfare, and is a Diplomate of the European College of Animal Welfare and Behaviour Medicine (in Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law) as well as a Member of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists (in Animal Welfare).

Anne blogs at www.smallanimaltalk.com

Abstract

Keynote

Shelters, pounds and rescues have changed over the last 20 years, but have they changed enough? Shelters are more proactive, and less reactive, but are they simply sleeker, better run versions of their former selves? Where are Council run “pounds” on this continuum? Healthy animals, particularly cats, continue to be euthanased. We know that increased length of stay is associated with poorer welfare and in some cases development of health and behaviour problems which reduce the chances of adoption.

There are some big questions we need to ask, but it can be hard to contemplate the bigger picture when most people working in the sector are working IN the problem rather than ON it. Yet, if we don't want to be doing the same thing in 20 years, we need to think creatively, now, about how we need to change. How do experiences at the coalface close our minds to what we don't know?

This provocative talk will explore how stray and relinquished companion animal management service providers will look and operate in the future, whether animal shelters, pounds and rescue groups are the right answer to the problems of animal “overpopulation” and urban animal management. How has our thinking about sheltering companion animals changed? What are the alternatives? How can the sector provide sustainable, high welfare facilities and services while chasing their own redundancy? What basic assumptions that are operated under can be challenged and rethought?