



Death often only answer

It can be a happy story.

A young boy's pet dog is lost. His family searches the neighborhood for the family pet only to come up empty-handed. With nothing to lose they drive out to the Humane Society to see if the missing dog might be there. An ecstatic smile flashes across the young boy's face as the missing dog is found.

It can be a happy story, but it doesn't always work out that way.

The Capitol Humane Society of Nebraska, 2320 Park Blvd., sees a lot of happy stories and unfortunately, some sad ones. While people can adopt dogs and claim lost ones, a large number of the animals that the Humane Society receives must be killed, according to Greg Thomas, Operations Supervisor.

According to Thomas, about 1,000 dogs come through their kennels each month. Fifty percent of them are strays that are picked up by the city and the other half are turn-ins—dogs that are turned in because the owners can no longer take care of them.

"We encourage everyone to bring in their pet to us rather than just dumping it (the pet) someplace," Thomas said. "Because of the regulations that exist today, a turned-in pet has a good chance of being adopted, but a stray dog that is picked up doesn't have nearly as good of a chance."

THOMAS SAID that, according to city regulations, before a stray dog can be adopted it must be spayed or neutered, given shots and licensed, which adds up to about \$100 per animal.

"We don't have enough funds to pay for all of that and people won't pay \$100 for a stray, while turn-in dogs can be sold for anywhere between \$8 and \$35," Thomas said.

Nevertheless, no matter how inexpensive adopting a dog may be, every day the Humane Society is forced to kill a number of animals.

According to Thomas, rough estimates are that 35 percent of the dogs they receive are adopted by new owners, 40 percent are claimed by their original owner and 25 percent must be killed.

"A stray dog has only 72 hours after it is brought in to be claimed or we have to kill it," Thomas said. "Turned-in puppies have 14 or more days while they are being administered their shots and turned-in dogs have four to five months depending on their type and temperament."

Bernard L. Patton, director of the Humane Society, explained how the animals are killed.

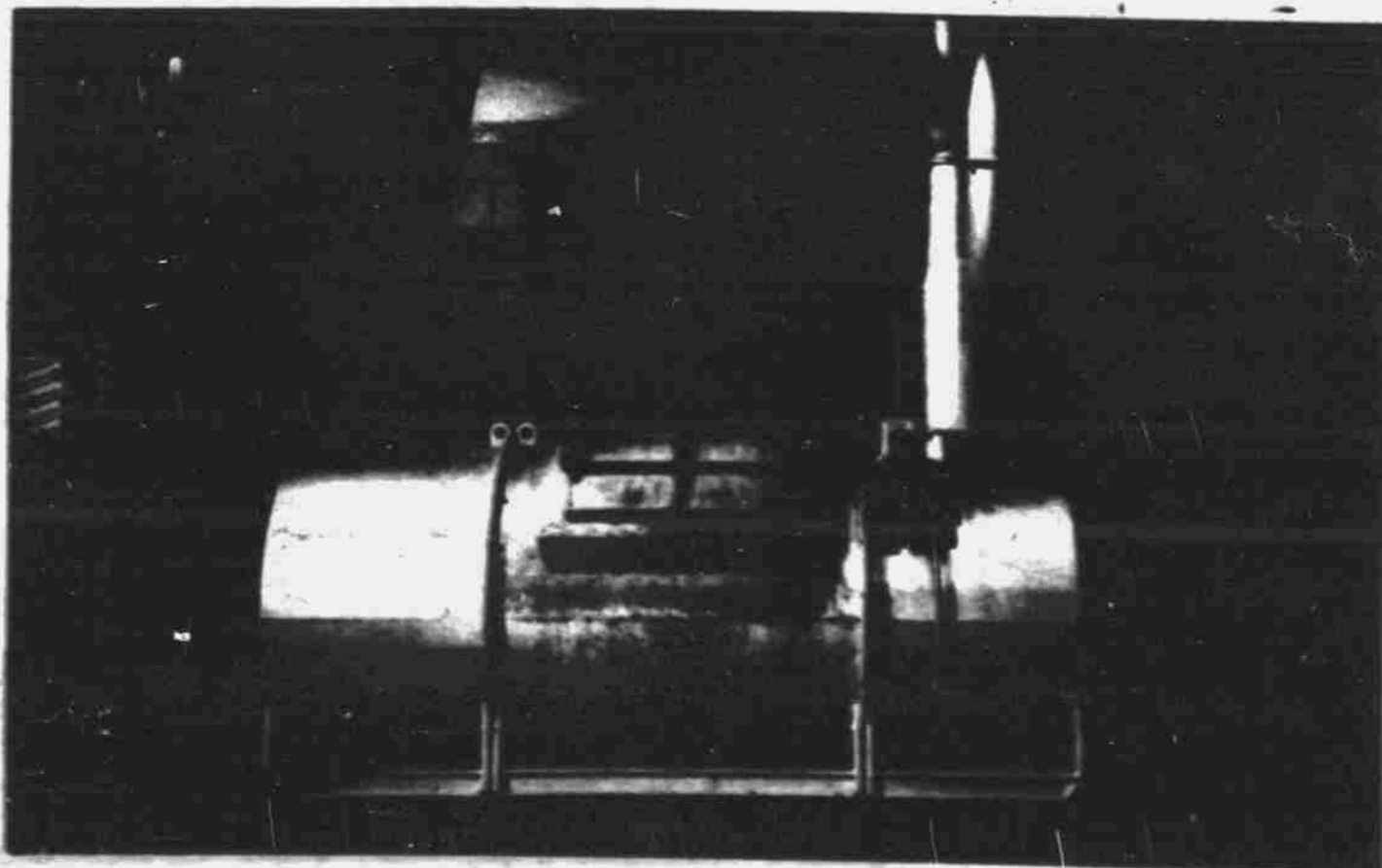
"The animals are killed through

decompression, a very humane method," Patton said.

THE MACHINE used is similar to ones used by the Navy and the Air Force where pilots are in the machine to see how long it is before they black out, but are then quickly revived with oxygen, Patton said.

"The difference is that the animals are not revived and then their bodies are cremated," Patton said. "They feel no pain and it is easier for the people operating the machine because they have no direct contact with the killing of animals."

"People have misconceptions that when their dog is spayed or neutered they lose all their energy, become lethargic and that it's bad for them, but that's not at all true," Thomas said, "animal welfare isn't an animal problem, it's a people problem."



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