

CENTRAL ALBERTA
HUMANE
SOCIETY

POSITION
STATEMENTS

**The statements contained within reflect the official
position of the Central Alberta Humane Society on
animal welfare related issues**





Position Statements

Purpose

The following Position Statements represent the views of Central Alberta Humane Society on various issues that impact animals. The purpose of the Position Statements is to provide clarity regarding the views of the Society on such issues, and to educate animal guardians and policy makers to improve the welfare of all animals. As only the Alberta SPCA can legally enforce provisions outlined in animal cruelty legislation in our Province, the Society has no legal authority to enforce these Position Statements.

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Definitions

Companion animals: Domesticated animals that have been selectively bred to live and thrive in mutually beneficial relationships with humans.

Feral cats: non socialized cats who may be one or more generations removed from a home environment and who may subsist in a colony of similar cats living on the fringes of human existence. Feral cats have missed the window of developmental opportunity during which they could be socialized to live with people.

Puppy or Kitten Mill: A breeding operation where profit is given priority over the humane treatment of the animal.

Free-Roaming Cats

Position:

The Society does not support the practice of allowing non-feral cats to roam outdoors without supervision. The Society recommends that non-feral cats only be allowed outdoors with appropriate supervision, either in an enclosed area or secured with a leash.

Rationale:

Indoor cats are generally healthier and live longer than cats that are allowed to roam. Cats that roam are exposed to numerous dangers, including but not limited to contracting diseases, ingesting poisonous substances, being prey for other animals, being injured or killed by vehicles or humans, or becoming lost. Unsterilized cats that are allowed to roam significantly contribute to the problem of animal overpopulation.

Feral Cats

Position:

The Society encourages legislation that enforces cat licensing in hope to diminish domestic cat owners from allowing their cats to roam freely and contribute to the feral cat population.

Rationale:

Feral cats are the product of human neglect and live in colonies in alleys, dumps, and parks. Feral cats have a shorter life span than house cats, as they do not have the necessary skills to survive in the wild. The Society supports programs that include live trapping, spay/neuter, vaccinate, and release, along with community education about responsible pet care.

Cosmetic and Elective Surgeries

Position:

The Society is opposed to the surgical alteration of companion animals for cosmetic or behavioural reasons, except procedures performed by a licensed veterinarian to alleviate suffering or for reasons of welfare. Opposed procedures include tail docking, ear cropping, devocalization, and declawing.

Rationale:

There is no evidence that cosmetic surgeries provide any benefit to animals. Cosmetic procedures cause unnecessary pain and suffering to the animal, and puts the animal at risk for life-threatening complications. A number of veterinary associations have banned members from performing cosmetic surgeries and see these procedures as inhumane and unnecessary. Removal of a dog's tail interferes with the animal's ability to balance and communicate body language.

Devocalization prevents animals from exhibiting their natural behaviour and hinders their ability to communicate. Devocalization may result in infections, laryngeal paralysis, and airway stenosis. Scratching with claws is a normal feline behaviour used for olfactory and visual communication, as well as claw maintenance. Cats who are declawed are at risk for excessive bleeding, infection, exposure of remaining toe bone, and distorted claw regrowth. Devocalization and declawing simply masks the symptoms of a behavioural issue, and there are alternative humane solutions to treating the underlying cause. The Society recommend owners work with a qualified trainer for excessive barking issues. Alternate options to declawing including regular nail trimming, plastic nail caps, and the use of scratching post or box.



Euthanasia of Shelter Companion Animals

Position:

The Society does not support euthanasia of healthy, adoptable companion animals. However, The Society accepts the use of humane euthanasia for shelter companion animals when no other viable options exist to prevent the unnecessarily suffering of an animal. Main reasons for euthanasia would be if the animal is severely sick or injured with a poor prognosis; there is severe unpredictable aggressive behaviour toward people; or advanced age with significant medical or behavioural problems.

Rationale:

The Society is a managed admissions shelter that accepts companion animals, which includes those that may be ill, have behavioural issues, or pose a risk to the community. The Society does not have time limitations placed on an animal's stay in the shelter.

The Society exercises every reasonable option to support successful placement of animals in the community, including foster care, surgical procedures, and partnering with other Humane Societies/Rescues who have the resources to rehabilitate the animal.

Humane euthanasia is considered on case-by-case basis, and the Society acts in the best interest of the animal's wellbeing. The decision to humanely euthanize is made by qualified staff, including the Animal Care Manager, Executive Director, and/or a veterinarian, and the process is carried out to ensure the least possible pain, fear, and anxiety of the animal.



Spay and Neuter of Companion Animals

Position:

The Society supports pediatric (early age) sterilization of all companion animals that are not intended for responsible breeding purposes, whether sold or adopted, prior to moving them to their permanent homes.

The Society has a mandatory spay/neuter policy for all adopted animals. Generally, alterations will be done prior to animals being placed in adoption.

Rationale:

Sterilization of companion animals is crucial to combat companion animal overpopulation and reduce the need to euthanize homeless animals. Further, Sterilization reduces marking, aggression, and roaming of companion animals, as well as reduces the risk of diseases influenced by hormones.



Abandonment of Companion Animals

Position:

The Society condemns the abandonment of any animal. Abandonment happens when an owner or caretaker of an animal leaves that animal in a public or private place without intending to return for it and without making provisions for its continued care.

Rationale:

Abandoned animals regularly die of starvation or dehydration, exposure to the elements, being hit by vehicles, or being killed by other animals. Abandoned animals can severely suffer, since they are not adapted to living on their own and fending for themselves.

Abandoned companion animals may attack people or other pets. Unsterilized abandoned animals also contribute to the problem of animal overpopulation.

Abandoning a helpless animal is inhumane. Pet owners can surrender unwanted pets to the Society, other local animal rescue agencies, or find them a new home.

Abandonment of an animal is an offense under the *Animal Protection Act* (Alberta) and the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

Transportation of Companion Animals

Position:

The Society supports the safe supervised transport of companion animals in vehicles. Companion animals that need to travel outside of the vehicle should be confined in a properly sized and ventilated crate that is secured to the vehicle. Companion animals that are being transported inside the vehicle should be restricted from movement, either by use of a proper crate or the use of an animal seatbelt.

Rationale:

Companion animals that are transported in an open area are at risk of falling out of or being thrown from the vehicle during sudden stops or accidents, jumping from the vehicle into traffic, or, in the case of being tethered, strangulation if the companion animal falls or jumps outside of the vehicle.

Companion animals that are not properly restricted from movement inside the vehicle can be distracting to the driver, increasing the potential for an accident. Animals left in unattended vehicles can be taunted or stolen, and can be subjected to extreme temperatures which can put the animal at risk for injury or death.

Leaving animals in vehicles

Position:

The Society opposes the confinement of an animal in a vehicle for any period during hot weather. The Society opposes the confinement of an animal in a vehicle for any period during cold weather. The Society opposes the confinement of an animal for an extended period during any type of weather temperature.

Rationale:

A vehicle can reach temperatures as high as 51°C during hot weather within 10 minutes. An animal that is left in a hot vehicle can suffer symptoms of heat stroke including heavy panting, dizziness, rapid pulse, excessive thirst, weakness, muscle tremors, vomiting, and possibly death. These symptoms can come on within minutes of an animal left in a hot vehicle (even with the windows rolled down, parking in shade, and access to water).

An animal left in a vehicle during cold weather, it not any better than hot weather. Vehicles retain the cold and animals can possibly freeze to death in a cold vehicle.

Leaving an animal in an unattended vehicle can result in the theft of your animal or possible carbon monoxide poisoning, if the vehicle is left running,

The Society encourages pet owners to leave your animals at home if you know you will leave them in your vehicle for any period unattended.

Animal Fighting

Position:

The Society is opposed to the use of animals for fighting or blood spectacles, e.g. dog fighting, bull fighting, and cock fighting.

Rationale:

Animals that are used for fighting are often isolated and given drugs to alter their natural behaviour. Animals that are forced to fight each other often suffer severe injuries or death. Animal fighting promotes insensitivity to animal suffering over human entertainment and profit.

Guard Dogs

Position:

The Society opposes the use of companion animals as guard dogs. Any dog trained to be aggressive is a risk to the public and/or other animals.

Rationale:

Positive human interaction and frequent socialization is important for a dog's quality of life. Dogs that are trained to be aggressive encourage the stigma against specific dog breeds.



Dangerous Dogs & Breed Specific Legislation

Position:

The Society is opposed to breed specific legislation, and supports legislation and programs that encourage informed, responsible dog ownership.

Rationale:

Many factors can contribute to a bite from a dog, including insufficient socialization, lack of proper training, health issues, or lack of supervision. The Society believes that dog owners should be held accountable for their dog's actions.

A dog of any breed can potentially be aggressive. Even though they are a domestic animal, a dog is still an animal, and supervision is essential around children.

Laws banning specific breeds encourage and promote "breed specific fear", which increases the stigma against specific dog breeds.



Responsible Guardianship for Companion Animals

Position:

The Society believes that it is the responsibility of the owner to provide humane welfare for the life of that animal. Organizations/breeders should be held to this standard as well.

Rationale:

Responsible guardianship for companion animals should include:

- Regular veterinary visits throughout the lifetime of the pet (pet insurance is highly recommended)
- Spay/neuter & regular vaccination
- Proper nutrition & regular exercise, mental/social stimulation
- Appropriate grooming care
- Current licensing, identification, and adherence to all applicable municipal bylaws
- Routine socialization & use of positive training & reinforcement methods
- Safe and weather appropriate shelter provided at all times (preferably in the owners home)
- Ongoing education about the animals needs



Animal Testing

Position:

The Society is opposed to use of animals for the testing of cosmetics, household products, food and beverages, or any other consumer products.

Rationale:

Animal testing negatively affects the physical, mental, and emotional well being of animals. The Society strongly endorses the development and use of non-animal testing alternatives in education and science.



Companion Animals as Prizes or Gifts

Position:

The Society opposes giving of companion animals as prizes or unsolicited gifts.

Rationale:

When acquiring a companion animal, the intention should be to provide that animal with a full and healthy life. A companion animal should not be acquired if the well being of the animal is not being considered, or is being given as an unsolicited or surprise gift. Proper planning and preparation should be considered before making this long-term decision. Parents should be prepared to assume full responsibility when acquiring a companion animal for their child or family.



Long-term Confinement of Companion Animals

Position:

The Society is opposed to the long-term confinement of companion animals.

Rationale:

Long-term confinement is detrimental to animals' physical and psychological wellbeing.

Tethering of Dogs

Position:

The Society opposes prolonged, continuous tethering of a dog. This is viewed as neglectful and inhumane.

Rationale:

Tethering can increase aggression towards humans and other dogs. The Society strongly supports humane alternatives to tethering including keeping pets indoors or in an enclosed area (such as a fenced yard or large run). Pets should be supervised and under control at all times when spending time outdoors. Tethering of dogs creates safety issues, as dogs are unable to flee from threats which may force them to respond with attacking people and other animals.



Wolf/Dog Hybrid

Position:

The Society is opposed to keeping Wolf/Dog Hybrids as pets.

Rationale:

A Wolf/Dog is a cross between a domestic dog, and a wolf. Depending on the breeding, a Hybrid can have low, medium, or high content wolf. Regardless of the level of wolf content, Hybrids are vastly different from a domestic dog. If a Hybrid were surrendered to the Society, the organization would not consider adoption, and make all attempts to relocate the Hybrid to a facility that is experienced and equipped to care for the animal.



Source for Acquiring a Companion Animal

Position:

The Society strongly encourages adoption through reputable shelters, rescues, or responsible breeders. The Society opposes obtaining companion animals from puppy or kitten mills.

Rationale:

When considering acquiring a pet, extensive research should be conducted on the organization or breeder, as well as the animal. Some breeders have been known to lack transparency when caring for their animals. It is the responsibility of the pet owner to make sure they are acquiring a pet from a reputable organization/breeder.