



Euthanasia Policy

Revision Date: 9/1/2016

Effective Date: 2/24/2003

Purpose

To establish a standard vision and policy statement for decision-making in the case of euthanasia of shelter animals

Authority

Multnomah County Code 13.505 (E) (2) states: "An animal held for the prescribed period and not redeemed by its owner or keeper, and which is neither a dangerous or exotic animal or in an unhealthy condition, may be released for adoption subject to the provisions of MCC 13.506."

Multnomah County Code 13.505 (E) (3) states: "The director shall dispose of animals held for the prescribed period without redemption or adoption only by humane means."

Policy

All potential candidates for euthanasia shall be referred to the Shelter Review Committee to evaluate each animal on an individual basis. Animals will never be euthanized for lack of space in the shelter. Every effort will be made to find a live outcome for every animal, except in cases where the animal is likely to be a danger in the community or where humane euthanasia is the only way to end an animal's mental or physical suffering. Shelter Review is not required in cases of medical emergencies where humane euthanasia is deemed necessary by medical staff and has been authorized by a manager.

Shelter Review

1. The Shelter Review Committee will review case histories of animals for any of the following situations:
 - a. **Medically Humane Euthanasia:** End-stages of a disease and/or extremely severe injury requiring high levels of care and management. For these cases, cure or reversal is highly improbable and management is difficult.
 - b. **Behavioral Issues:**
 - I. Dangerous behaviors which create a risk for humans or pets in the community
 - II. Animals experiencing an unmanageable level of stress or anxiety resulting in a poor quality of life.
 - c. **Bite History:** Information of previous aggressive behavior resulting in a bite to a person or severe injury to another animal.
2. The Shelter Review Committee shall consist of at least three (3) persons with a minimum of the Director or the Shelter Manager, a representative from the species-appropriate behavioral team, and one other manager. Medical cases will include input from a shelter veterinarian.
3. All pertinent information is considered, including but not limited to: owner/finder reports of behavior outside the shelter, behavior assessment within the shelter, previous bite history, current mental and physical state, options for transfer or foster care, and available resources.

4. Animals may be placed on Shelter Review by any staff member. The criteria for placing on Shelter Review is:
 - a. A bite history to a person
 - b. Unsafe behavior in the shelter (e.g., staff unable to assess, give health exam, etc)
 - c. Extreme animal aggression, such as previous injury to another dog or cat; killing livestock, etc.
 - d. Medical conditions requiring more the \$750
 - e. Hospice dogs and cats that have been in the shelter longer than 2 weeks.

5. **Shelter Review Information:** The following information, when available, shall be submitted to the Shelter Review Committee for consideration:
 - a. Behavior Evaluation-- If an evaluation cannot be completed safely, the assessor will note the behaviors and a second assessor will attempt to evaluate.
 - b. Owner Surrender forms and Finder notes.
 - c. Bite history/investigation reports, including a photo if available. The Committee will review bite severity using the Dunbar Bite Scale.
 - d. Complete medical history.
 - e. Dog -to-dog assessments, if relevant.
 - f. Adoption history
 - g. Review of environmental factors, including the kennel environment, home environment (adoption, foster), and other settings.
 - h. Review of history of incidents
 - i. Other factors, including length of stay in the shelter, age, fertility status, behavior consultations and training, quality of life, rehabilitation, management options, and available resources.

6. **Euthanasia Recommendation Guidelines/Considerations:** The following information will be considered by the Shelter Review Committee. Each case will be considered on an individual basis with outcomes and recommendations based upon the specifics of each situation.
 - a. Previous recorded incident of causing serious damage to a human (Dunbar bite scale 3 or higher)
 - b. In-shelter behavior which indicates an unmanageable likelihood to injure another animal or human.
 - c. The quality of life is poor due unmanageable anxiety or fear.
 - d. Placement or transfer has been sought, no resources are available and the animal shows signs of deteriorating in the kennel.
 - e. A cat is an outside living cat and is FeLV or FIV positive and/or has a medical issue that requires on-going treatment which cannot be provided due to feral/outdoor-living status.

Animal Handling During Euthanasia

1. MCAS shall meet or exceed minimum standards for animal handling during euthanasia as established by the Oregon Veterinary Medical Board.
2. All animals shall be handled to minimize stress to the animals while maximizing safety of personnel. All animals shall be handled with the least amount of physical restraint necessary to provide for humane and safe euthanasia. Animals that cannot be handled with a limited amount of physical restraint may be given a chemical restraint. Handling includes all aspects of moving an animal from one area to another.
3. Animals shall not be handled by the scruff of the neck, with control sticks, muzzles, or other devices unless the animal is fractious or otherwise potentially dangerous.
4. A minimum of two persons shall be required for any IV (intravenous) injection. One person shall be the Certified Euthanasia Technician and one or more persons shall be a handler. The handler does not have to be a Certified Euthanasia Technician, but the handler should be trained in safe, humane animal handling techniques.
5. The only approved method of euthanasia of animals at the MCAS is through humane application of sodium pentobarbital by a state-certified euthanasia technician. Aggressive or fractious animals may be tranquilized to minimize stress and if the euthanasia technician is concerned about the possibility of being bitten she may administer a lethal dose of sodium pentobarbital by pill.
6. All animal bodies shall be sent to a private contractor for incineration unless an animal's owner has expressly requested the return of the body for subsequent burial according to state or local laws.

Area and Materials

1. The MCAC Shelter shall have specified areas designated for euthanasia.
2. Lighting shall be bright and even. The air temperature shall be within a reasonable comfort range for both the personnel and the animals and there shall be adequate ventilation.
3. No other animals will be present at the time of euthanasia.

Owner Requests

1. Multnomah County Animal Services does not offer euthanasia to pet owners as a service. We recommend that this service be performed by their veterinarian. In special circumstances the animal may be euthanized at the shelter (for example, a dog quarantined at the shelter that isn't safe to transport to a veterinarian, or may pose a risk to the public or veterinarian).

Approved by: _____
Jackie Rose, Animal Services Director