

Ottawa Humane Society
Animal Welfare Position Statements

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1.0 COMPANION ANIMALS

1.1 Domestic Companion Animals

The Ottawa Humane Society (OHS) encourages the keeping of domestic animals as companions when:

- the animal lives indoors as part of the family or at minimum is provided with human supervision and attention on a regular and daily basis along with adequate shelter, fresh food and clean water;
- the animal is given daily exercise appropriate to its needs and is not continuously tethered or confined within an inadequate area. The methods and equipment used for these purposes must be humane and must not be likely to cause the animal any physical or mental harm;
- the animal is spayed or neutered, and receives the appropriate veterinary care, including immunization;
- the animal is under owner control when off its property and is not allowed to run at large; and,
- the animal has the appropriate identification.

1.2 Indoor Cats

In addition to the above, recognizing the many risks to cats when outdoors unsupervised, the Ottawa Humane Society strongly recommends that cats be kept indoors. If allowed outdoors, cats should be in a securely enclosed area or supervised on a harness. The OHS firmly believes in the education of the public to the benefits of keeping cats indoors, not the least of which are better health and a much longer life expectancy. The OHS supports the creation and enforcement of municipal bylaws to discourage owners from allowing their cats to roam outdoors unsupervised.

1.3 Spay/Neuter

The Ottawa Humane Society recommends the spaying/neutering of cats and dogs by duly licensed veterinarians as a necessary requirement for population control and for the health of the animal. The OHS urges all organizations involved in the sale or adoption of dogs and cats to incorporate a mandatory spay/neuter program as part of the sale or adoption procedure.

The OHS recommends that all licensing authorities offer differential rates for licensing and/or identification of animals so that owners of spayed/neutered companion animals are provided with a discount from the fees paid by owners of unsterilized animals. Such a differential has been proven to increase the incidence of spayed/neutered animals and thus to reduce the numbers of unwanted and abandoned animals, and municipal enforcement and control costs.

1.4 Companion Animal Identification

The Ottawa Humane Society advocates the proper identification of companion animals by methods such as a collar and tags, microchip insertion and tattoos that are humanely administered by qualified personnel using procedures causing little or no discomfort or distress to the animal.

1.5 Harmful Breeding Practices

The Ottawa Humane Society is opposed to the selective breeding of companion animals that produce changes in bodily form and/or function that are detrimental to the health and/or quality of life for the animal.

1.6 Wild or Exotic Animals as Companion Animals

The Ottawa Humane Society strongly supports the banning of the sale, importation or trade of any exotic animals or wildlife for use as a companion animal or display. The OHS joins the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) in urging the federal, provincial and municipal governments to pass legislation banning the keeping, importation and sale of exotic animals or wildlife.

The OHS considers the following animals suitable as companion animals:

In urban dwellings: Dog, cat, guinea pig, rabbit, mouse, rat, gerbil, golden hamster, chinchilla, budgerigar, canary, pigeon, common cage birds (captive-bred only), psittacines such as parrots (captive-bred only), finches (captive-bred only), aquarium fish (captive-born only), and ferrets.

In country dwellings with access to fields or paddocks: Horse, donkey, pig, sheep, goat, cattle, llama, alpaca, domestic fowl, goose, duck (mallard or muscovy), turkey, guinea fowl, and peafowl.

1.7 Position Statement on Palliative Care

The Ottawa Humane Society believes that owners whose companion animals suffer from incurable illness are responsible either for providing suitable palliative care (that is, comfort measures, including medication, to manage pain) for that animal or, should that not be an option, for providing for the humane euthanasia of their companion animal if the animal's suffering cannot otherwise be alleviated.

Willfully neglecting or failing to provide suitable care for an animal, regardless of the animal's life stage or prognosis, constitutes an offence under the *Criminal Code of Canada* and may result in charges.

The Ottawa Humane Society believes that, because many animals do not exhibit pain in an apparent manner, the owner cannot alone make a determination of their animal's level of suffering. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the pet owner to consult with a veterinarian regarding any decisions around palliation and/or euthanasia.

Should an owner opt for palliative care for their companion animal, they are responsible for consulting with a veterinarian to establish a care plan for that animal and for regularly following up with a veterinarian to assess the animal's condition, including providing for any veterinary treatment required to meet the animal's needs. For example, dentistry may be required to alleviate suffering caused by dental problems in an older animal.

During the time that palliative care is administered, the owner is responsible for ensuring that all of the animal's usual and developing care needs are met to keep the animal clean and comfortable. Owners should be aware that, as an animal's health declines, these needs may become time-consuming and onerous. The animal may require toileting on a frequent basis, including throughout the night, may require additional grooming (including more frequent bathing, clipping of hair and nails) and hand feeding.

Palliative care remains a viable option only as long as an animal's pain can be managed as determined by a veterinarian and only as long as an owner remains able to meet the usual and developing care needs of the animal; thereafter, the only humane option is euthanasia.

The Ottawa Humane Society recognizes the pain and heartache involved with the loss of a beloved companion animal but cautions that owners must always place their animal's welfare above their feelings for that animal.

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Author: OHS advocacy committee

2.0 EUTHANASIA

The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association estimates that tens of thousands of dogs and even more cats are euthanised each year in order to deal with over-population and the

lack of appropriate homes. Although spay and neuter programs have been in place for many years in Canada, the number of unwanted pets remains unacceptably high. Thus, while the responsibility of the Ottawa Humane Society is first and foremost to provide a safe haven for unwanted and lost animals, the above factors necessitate resorting to euthanasia on a fair and compassionate basis.

The Ottawa Humane Society supports the practice of euthanasia for animals to terminate severe or incurable suffering.

2.1 The OHS reluctantly accepts that euthanasia of fit animals may be necessary where:

- the animal is seriously aggressive, a threat to others or to itself;
- the animal is not suitable for adoption as determined by OHS staff; and/or
- the animal cannot be accommodated in a temporary or adoptive home.

2.2 The OHS condones only those methods of euthanasia that:

- are performed by trained and qualified personnel;
- are appropriate for the species and condition of the animal; and,
- cause little or no distress to the animal.

The OHS firmly opposes any techniques or methods that do not meet humane principles and cause unnecessary fear, apprehension or pain to the animal.

Euthanasia of owned animals is not within the mandate of the OHS. The use of veterinary services is recommended in such cases, however, discretion is always exercised to ensure that the best interests of the animal are met.

3.0 EAR CROPPING, TAIL DOCKING, DECLAWING AND OTHER SURGICAL MUTILATIONS

The Ottawa Humane Society is opposed to the mutilation of animals for cosmetic purposes and supports the abolition of such practices. It is also opposed to any other unnecessary surgical procedure that is painful, distressful or restrictive of the function of the body part involved.

The OHS will continue to discourage animal owners from sanctioning and adopting such practices through public education and working with like-minded stakeholders, e.g. Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA), Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS). The OHS will actively participate in efforts to eliminate the cause(s) of these practices, particularly as regards to amending Canadian Kennel Club regulations requiring animals to undergo such procedures in order to conform to breed standards for showing.

The Ottawa Humane Society is opposed to the declawing of cats.

4.0 PUPPY MILLS

The Ottawa Humane Society strongly condemns the existence of "puppy mills" where animals are continuously bred to produce the greatest number of offspring with little or no regard for the health, safety and well-being of the animals. The OHS joins the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) in encouraging the provincial and federal governments to pass legislation banning "puppy mills" and creating severe penalties for those convicted of owning such establishments.

5.0 COMPANION ANIMAL SUPPLIERS

The Ottawa Humane Society recommends that companion animal suppliers restrict their stock of live animals to domestically raised birds, fish and small mammals.

The OHS strongly encourages the adoption of companion animals from agencies such as humane societies, animal welfare organizations and local shelters or pounds.

The OHS encourages the provincial government to license and regulate the operation of all companion animal suppliers, and recommends that the industry and government establish a Code of Practice for the operation of companion animal supply stores, including quality standards for the care, housing and treatment of animals in such establishments.

The OHS is opposed to the exhibition and sale of companion animals in environments that promote impulse buying, and result in stressful and/or unhealthy conditions for the animals.

6.0 ANIMALS AS PRIZES OR GIFTS

The Ottawa Humane Society joins the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) in the belief that the acquisition of an animal should be a deliberate and conscious decision where the primary consideration is the well-being of the animal. The OHS is therefore opposed to the awarding of any live animal as a prize or unsolicited gift.

7.0 AGGRESSIVE OR DANGEROUS ANIMALS

7.1 Breed Specific Legislation

The Ottawa Humane Society does not advocate legislation that names specific animal breeds as being inherently dangerous or aggressive. The OHS encourages and supports responsible breeding, rearing and training of all animals to prevent and/or control aggressive behaviour.

No healthy animal admitted to the OHS shelter will be euthanised for reasons other than those indicated in the OHS position statement on euthanasia. All animals admitted to the shelter will be subject to regular shelter procedures, regardless of breed.

7.2 Municipal Bylaws

The Ottawa Humane Society recognizes that the development of municipal bylaws concerning aggressive or dangerous animals in certain well-defined circumstances is advisable and recommends that they be actively enforced. However, these bylaws must clearly define 'aggressive' and 'dangerous' and must apply to all animals, not only those of a certain breed.

Animal owners are responsible for knowing the content and requirements of the municipal bylaws to which they are subject, and should in the case of a vicious animal:

- indicate the presence of a vicious animal on their property; and,
- respect existing muzzling, leashing and fencing bylaws.

The OHS believes that it is the responsibility of the owner to ensure their animal does not endanger other animals or the community at large.

8.0 WOLF-DOG HYBRIDS

The Ottawa Humane Society is opposed to the keeping and breeding of wolf-dog hybrids. It acknowledges that some are kept as companion animals and recommends that they be permitted to live out their lives, provided that:

- they are kept in suitable conditions that, to the extent possible, meet the animals' physical, social and psychological needs, as well as the requirements for public safety;
- they are spayed or neutered and permanently identified with a microchip implant if possible;
- they receive proper veterinary care at all times, including preventive, if available; and,
- if they are presented to a humane society, they are brought to the Wildlife Centre for care and it is recommended that they not be placed elsewhere.

Proper information should be made available to the OHS clients who request information regarding wolf-dog hybrids as companion animals, and they should never be recommended as companion animals to any client.

9.0 FERAL CATS

The Ottawa Humane Society recognizes that feral cats cannot be defined as “wildlife” in that they not a naturally occurring wild species. Rather, feral cats are domestic animals that, due to human neglect, have been forced to live as wild animals. As such, their care is society's responsibility.

The OHS supports the definition of feral cats presented by Alley Cat Allies: *Feral cats are the wild offspring of domestic cats and are primarily the result of pet owners' abandonment, failure to confine or failure to spay or neuter their animals allowing them to breed uncontrolled. Feral cat colonies can be found in either rural or urban type areas. They are elusive and do not trust humans.*

The OHS believes that, given the poor quality of life feral cats typically lead, as well as broader concerns such as the environmental impact and public health, the goal of feral cat management programs should be to gradually eliminate feral cat colonies by a process of “aging out” their members. In this scenario, colonies would be maintained in a healthy state and prevented from reproducing, leading to the eventual attrition of members.

The OHS supports feral cat management programs that adopt a ‘stabilize and maintain’ approach. This approach provides a multi-faceted way of dealing with the issue, including:

- the diversion of cats and kittens deemed suitable for rehabilitation and eventual adoption;
- the maintenance of healthy cats deemed unsuitable for adoption through a ‘trap, spay/neuter, vaccinate and release program’, including subsequent monitoring and care; and,
- the euthanasia of diseased animals whose health is deemed unrecoverable or whose illness poses immediate jeopardy to other cats (specifically, felines who test positive for infectious FELEUK and FIV and/or who exhibit definitive behaviour consistent with rabies).

The OHS is convinced that to be effective any feral cat management program must address the underlying cause(s) of feral cat colonies. This can be accomplished by an ongoing public awareness and education initiative that would emphasize, among other things, the consequences of allowing cats to roam freely. The goal of such an initiative would be to lower the incidence of stray/feral cats, thereby preventing new colonies and also the repopulation of existing groups.

Given the origin of feral cat colonies, the OHS strongly believes that the management of these animals is a responsibility to be assumed not only by the OHS but also by the municipality and the community. It is imperative, however, that the OHS obtain the cooperation and collaboration of key stakeholders in order to manage the feral cat situation effectively in both the short and long-term. Coordinated action by the OHS, municipalities and citizens will lead to a solution for the City of Ottawa and could also serve as a “best practices” model for other jurisdictions.

10.0 ANIMALS IN ENTERTAINMENT OR DISPLAY

The Ottawa Humane Society is opposed to the use of animals in all forms of entertainment or displays that may cause them to suffer.

The OHS is opposed the use of animals in circuses, entertainment and displays, as well as the capture and captive breeding of wild animals for entertainment purposes.

The OHS believes, in particular, that animals performing or on display in a travelling environment will be deprived of a normal existence and may lack proper attention to their physical, psychological and social needs.

The OHS contends that the following are detrimental to the well-being of animals:

- travel or confinement that impairs the animals’ basic needs including the lack of exercise and other physical requirements, the inability to express natural behaviours and lack of appropriate socialization;
- the use of abusive, cruel or stressful training techniques, devices or agents to cause the animals to perform; and,
- the administration of any drug for non-therapeutic purposes in order to alter the performance or behaviour of the animals.

The OHS does not oppose certain events where displays do not cause such suffering. For instance, the OHS does not oppose the holding of agility trials where animals are not made to suffer.

10.1 Rodeos

The Ottawa Humane Society is opposed in principle to rodeos and is working towards the ultimate abolition of this activity.

The OHS will actively pursue every means in its power to reduce and end the suffering of animals used in rodeo events by:

- opposing additions of new events that are likely to cause pain, suffering or injury to animals to existing rodeos;
- opposing further proliferation of rodeos and rodeo events into regions where they are presently not held and/or where they are not a tradition;
- opposing those events that **involve the roping of any animal**;
- opposing events that involve wrestling or fighting with any animal;
- opposing the use of any device that is likely to cause pain, suffering or injury, and that is employed solely to alter the animal's natural behaviour or performance; and,
- opposing the continuance to completion of any event once an animal has been injured in the course of the event (e.g., animals injured during chuckwagon races).

10.2 Spectator Blood Sports

The Ottawa Humane Society strongly condemns the use of animals in all blood sports such as bullfighting, dogfighting, cockfighting and similar events.

The OHS will work actively to discourage the promotion and attraction of such events through public education and awareness, and will also enforce existing legislation to prosecute those who organize, fund, attend or participate in such events. The OHS will continue to advocate for stronger penalties under the law to assist with its efforts in this regard.

10.3 Greyhound Racing

The Ottawa Humane Society opposes the training of greyhound racing dogs through the use of live rabbit lures and negative reinforcement procedures. The OHS is also opposed to the inhumane living conditions imposed on some racing greyhounds and to the destruction of greyhounds that are not potentially successful competitors or who have been retired from the track.

10.4 Games

The Ottawa Humane Society strongly opposes the use of animals in games such as “greasy pig catch”, “catch the rooster” or similar competitions held at events such as fairs, exhibitions and school recreation days.

10.5 Marine Mammals

The Ottawa Humane Society opposes any confinement of animals that causes them physical or mental pain or suffering, or fails to meet their health, behavioural and environmental needs.

The OHS believes the capture and confinement of marine mammals for any purpose other than to treat injuries or provide rehabilitation prior to release back to their natural habitat does not meet these needs and accordingly causes them to suffer. The OHS supports the work of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) to prevent the capture of these animals for exhibition in aquaria and similar public displays.

The OHS supports and encourages public education about marine mammals, provided such efforts do not involve removing these animals from or disturbing them in their natural environment or family groups.

The OHS supports all steps, including the passage of appropriate legislation, which afford greater protection for marine mammals in their natural habitat.

11.0 HUNTING

11.1 Hunting - General

The Ottawa Humane Society condemns the hunting of animals for sport. The OHS is opposed to the hunting of animals with the help of dogs to chase and/or kill other animals.

11.2 Training and Trialing of Hunting Dogs

The Ottawa Humane Society is opposed to compounds for the training and trialing of hunting dogs because these environments cause significant stress, injury and sometimes death to the prey and dogs.

The OHS is also concerned that captive-bred wild animals are used to stock these compounds, and that such animals have reduced flight responses and instincts with which to defend themselves.

12.0 TRAPPING AND FUR FARMING

The Ottawa Humane Society is opposed to the trapping and/or farming of animals for fur and the merchandising of articles produced from animal fur.

13.0 WILDLIFE

The Ottawa Humane Society is opposed to the trapping and removal of wildlife from their habitat, including wildlife living in urban areas, except when required to prevent injury or further injury to wildlife. To prevent animals from taking up residence in buildings, buildings should be animal-proofed. The removal of wildlife, particularly during the spring birthing season, may be counterproductive and could result in the death by starvation of young animals left behind in inaccessible locations.

Where wildlife must be removed to prevent injury or further injury, the use of humane live-trapping methods should be employed and the advice of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre obtained.

The OHS works collaboratively with specialized wildlife agencies in the city. Most public calls regarding wildlife are directed to the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre with the exception of wild bird calls, which are directed to the Ottawa Wild Bird Care Centre.

14.0 FARM AND AGRICULTURAL ANIMALS

The Ottawa Humane Society accepts the raising or husbandry of agricultural food animals or fowl where all possible means are taken to alleviate stress and suffering, and when close confinement (also known as factory farming) is not practised. The OHS believes that close confinement systems do not provide the physical, psychological and social needs of farm animals, and encourages the agricultural industry to adopt more humane farming methods.

The OHS recommends that the physical alteration of farm or agricultural animals (e.g., removing horns and castration) only be carried out when absolutely necessary under the supervision of, or by, a veterinarian. The OHS is opposed to the de-beaking of fowl, amputation of animals' tails and punching of animals' ears for identification purposes.

The OHS recommends the slaughter of food animals as close as possible to their place of residence to lessen stress and injuries during transit.

The OHS believes that the recommended codes of practice for the care and handling of agricultural livestock as defined by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada and the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies should be considered the minimum standard acceptable, and that efforts should be made to amend legislation and improve practices where new information, evidence or technology would result in a better quality of life and more humane treatment for the animals.

The OHS is opposed to any method of slaughter of any farm-food animal which causes pain or suffering and which does not render the animal totally unconscious for the full period prior to death.

The OHS is opposed to:

- (a) current “privatization” of community livestock veterinary inspection scheme in Ontario;
- (b) health and welfare inspection of livestock by “lay inspectors” (employees of auction) only at community auction premises;
- (c) transport and direct marketing of weak, emaciated, sick or injured (crippled/lame) livestock in Ontario and from community auction premises;
- (d) marketing of “downer” cows at community livestock auction markets in Ontario;
- (e) marketing immature (bobby) calves at community auction markets;
- (f) marketing of animals with gross (enlarged) hereditary (congenital) abnormalities such as umbilical hernias (especially in swine);
- (g) the use of electrical prods on livestock at auction sales;
- (h) the particular handling and confinement methods such as crowding large numbers of livestock into holding pens at auction markets;
- (i) the confinement of livestock of different species, ages, gender and sexual maturity in the same pen. This usually results in overt aggression leading to injuries such as broken horns, skin wounds, etc.;
- (j) especially long distance transport of livestock as currently exists (over 15 hours by truck in some instances) from community auction markets to final destinations (abattoir); and,
- (k) docking of tails of dairy cattle.

The OHS recommends:

- (a) continued Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) veterinary livestock inspection as currently exists at community auction premises (*Livestock Community Sales Act & Regulation 729*);
- (b) increased enforcement of regulations, especially pertaining to farm animal welfare (*Livestock Community Sales Act & Regulation 729*);
- (c) partnership of humane organizations (OHS, OSPCA) with both federal (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) and provincial government (OMAFRA) for ongoing surveillance of farm animal welfare problems, in particular at community livestock auction markets;
- (d) humane euthanasia of “downer” cows (no exceptions) on transport trucks or at community livestock auction markets in Ontario; and
- (e) overall, more attention to be paid to the five freedoms of animal welfare in relation to farm animals:
 - e.1 freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition;
 - e.2 freedom from discomfort;
 - e.3 freedom from pain, injury & disease;
 - e.4 freedom from fear and distress; and,
 - e.5 freedom to express normal behavior.

15.0 ORGAN/TISSUE USE IN SHELTER ANIMALS

The purpose of the Ottawa Humane Society is to provide a safe refuge for animals that are lost, stray, abandoned or otherwise neglected. The majority of these animals have the potential to become loving pets and every effort is made to ensure they find appropriate homes.

The OHS considers the use of any animal under its care, living or dead, for the procurement of any organ or tissue, for any reason, contrary to this purpose and will not undertake such an act. This includes the process of blood transfusion from a healthy animal even though this procedure would not be expected to affect the animal's health.

16.0 XENOTRANSPLANTATION

The Ottawa Humane Society has concerns about the implications of cross-species transplants and urges that a moratorium be invoked until all the humane, ethical, scientific, social, medical and legal ramifications have been fully explored and regulatory guidelines enacted. Furthermore, the OHS advocates the promotion of alternatives over and above the pursuit of animal donor programs.

Recognizing that clinical trials are already underway, it becomes critical that issues relating to animal welfare not be ignored. The OHS insists that if experimentation on live animals is carried out that it meet the guidelines of the Canadian Council on Animal Care, including guidelines on euthanasia. The needless or irresponsible sacrifice of animals in the quest for a medical breakthrough cannot be justified.

17.0 GENETIC ENGINEERING

The Ottawa Humane Society is concerned about the possible effects of genetic engineering on animals and their environment, and its ethical implications.

The OHS supports stringent regulatory controls on the biotechnology industry and seeks national and international debate by governments, industry, animal protection organizations and the public on the ethical, environmental, economic and social implications of genetic engineering.