

Oregon Coast Humane Society Policies and Procedures

Policy Name:	Animal Welfare Committee Policies and Procedures
Adopted Date:	
Effective Date:	
Last Review/Approved Date:	

The Animal Welfare Committee exists to provide guidance, assistance and support to the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers of the Oregon Coast Humane Society (OCHS) in accordance with its mission, practices and procedures.

The scope of the Committee may include but will not be limited to issues involving the medical treatment of, socialization of, adoption of, and the behavior of shelter animals.

The focus of the Committee is the overall welfare of the animals under the care of the OCHS.

The Committee will:

- Assist the shelter staff in areas including research of medical and behavior issues through the use of licensed or certified experts in their fields.
- Assist the shelter staff in the development of standards and protocols.
- Cooperate with and coordinate activities with other standing committees within the OCHS.

OCHS Adoptability Policy

Adoptable is defined as dogs and cats who are healthy and have been reasonably well socialized. There is no age maximum. These are simply healthy and friendly animals who will make suitable pets for the average adopter.

Treatable is defined as dogs and cats who aren't adoptable (by the definition above) when they come to the shelter but who could become adoptable with reasonable efforts. This would include unweaned animals as well as sick or injured animals who, with reasonable veterinary care, could become suitable pets for the average adopter. This would also include animals with socialization problems who, with reasonable efforts at behavior modification and training, could become suitable pets for the average adopter.

Non-Adoptable is defined as dogs and cats who can be defined under one or more of the following categories:

1. Animals who are suffering from incurable or painful conditions where the long term prognosis is grave or poor as determined by a veterinarian.
2. Animals who are suffering from an untreatable medical condition that could pose a threat to other animals in the community.
3. Animals who have a history of aggression or biting that could pose a threat to public safety after all medical issues have been ruled out and the animal has been assessed by a licensed behaviorist.

In all three of the above categories, the animal in question should be referred to the Animal Welfare Committee for review and recommendations.

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Committee Organization

The Committee shall consist of not less than four nor more than twelve appointed members. Appointment to the Committee shall be consistent with OCHS Bylaws.

The President of the Board is an ex-officio member and can vote as any other member when the vote is by ballot. The Shelter Manager is a non-voting member of the Committee.

Removal of a Committee member shall be consistent with OCHS Bylaws.

Committee Meetings

1. The committee will meet as needed. A meeting may be called to order when a quorum is present. A quorum of the committee shall consist of a majority of the voting members of the Committee.
2. Minutes of all committee meetings shall be taken by a person agreeing to do so. Said minutes should be forwarded to the Secretary of the Board of Directors who will distribute those minutes as needed at Board meetings and retain copies in the OCHS records.
3. Committee meetings shall be open forums whose members hear and consider information from all points of view on the diverse matters which impact animal welfare. Interested attendees will be given the opportunity to speak on issues before the Committee.
4. To call a meeting, the Committee chair or the designated representative shall contact by phone or email all committee members.

Animals Referred to the Animal Welfare Committee

When an animal is referred to the Committee, the Committee shall operate under the following guidelines:

- 1) Any party may refer any shelter or foster care animal to the Committee for deliberation by submitting an Animal Referral Form or any other written means that states the name of the animal and the nature of concern. The referral forms are available at the shelter. Referrals must be turned in to the Shelter Manager with a copy forwarded to the Committee chairperson immediately without question. Validity of the referral is for the Committee to determine.
- 2) Chronic medical conditions that present special issues to adoptability or where there exists a question of quality of life shall be referred to the Committee for recommendation.
- 3) Any life-threatening communicable disease condition that presents a health risk to other shelter population animals shall be referred to the Committee for recommendation.
- 4) Non-aggressive behavioral issues that present special issues to adoptability or where there exists a question of quality of life shall be referred to the Committee for recommendation.
- 5) Any issue of aggressive behavior towards, or reported attack of, any person by an animal in the shelter or foster care shall be referred to the Committee for recommendation.
- 6) Any issue of aggressive behavior by an animal in the shelter or foster care that results in an injury to another animal shall be referred to the Committee for recommendation.
- 7) When a meeting is required to evaluate a declining medical condition including a recommendation for euthanasia, or an incident of attack by an animal, the AWC Chairperson(s) and the Shelter Manager will be

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notified immediately by staff. Should the AWC Chairperson(s) and Shelter Manager not be immediately available, staff is instructed to call the Board President or Vice President. If they cannot be reached, staff is instructed to call any Board Member. The Shelter Manager will meet with the members of the AWC as soon as possible to review the recommendations. In the event of a recommendation for euthanasia, the AWC and the Shelter Manager have the right to request a second opinion from an outside veterinarian if the animal in question is not in need of urgent medical care.

- 8) If the AWC chair or Shelter Manager is unable to call a meeting as directed within these procedures, the President of the Board shall have the authority to call a meeting.
- 9) The Shelter Manager is responsible for preparing a report on the animal under review. The report will include any pertinent information from a licensed veterinarian, certified animal behaviorist, or other members of the staff familiar with the animal.
- 10) When an animal is under review, the Shelter Manager or another member of the shelter staff familiar with the animal in question shall be that animal's advocate and, if a member of the AWC, may abstain from that particular vote.
- 11) No staff member, volunteer, or member of the public shall be harassed, criticized, reprimanded, or disciplined for making a referral to the committee.
- 12) In the case of an animal that a certified animal behavior specialist has determined to be dangerously aggressive or unpredictable with aggressive behaviors, adoption options will be considered to an adult-only household with no other pets. The AWC may evaluate the possible placement of said animal into a sanctuary, permanent foster, or other program(s) capable of handling animals with known aggressive behaviors.
- 13) Committee members not familiar with an animal may observe that animal prior to meeting to discuss its case and possible dispositions.

Euthanasia

When euthanasia is considered the following guidelines shall apply:

- 1) When euthanasia is recommended by an attending veterinarian, staff in attendance will immediately notify the Shelter Manager or the AWC Chairperson(s) by telephone or in person. If neither party is available, staff will immediately notify the President or the Vice President of the Board. If neither party is available, staff will notify any member of the Board. Said notification will be by telephone. The Shelter Manager will meet the AWC Chairperson(s) as soon as possible to review the recommendations. The AWC has the right to request a second opinion from an outside veterinarian if the animal in question is not in need of urgent medical care.
- 2) Any decision to euthanize an animal to alleviate suffering on an emergency basis must be made without fear of reprisal for such action. No staff or volunteer shall be threatened or disciplined for opposing or assisting the euthanasia.
- 3) As a matter of general policy, OCHS does not support the euthanasia of adoptable animals due to age, length of stay within the shelter or for the purposes of shelter population control.
- 4) It is the responsibility of the AWC to conduct meetings and make recommendations for or against the non-emergency euthanasia of an animal. In the case of a disposition vote, notification must be posted at the Shelter no less than 24 hours before the disposition meeting. When euthanasia is considered, a quorum of the AWC must be present of which a majority must vote for euthanasia in order to issue a recommendation to the Shelter

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Manager and the Board of Directors. All ballots regarding euthanasia shall be conducted by written secret ballot with the Shelter Manager or designee as the neutral observer to validate the ballot. The final decision to euthanize shall be made by the Shelter Manager or, if the Shelter Manager is unavailable, by majority vote of a quorum of the Board of Directors.

- 5) Where the adoptability of an animal is an issue based upon chronic medical or behavioral issues, the AWC shall deliberate the disposition of that animal after all reasonable alternatives have been attempted including appropriate medical options, rehabilitation or transfers to a sanctuary.
- 6) Ordered euthanasia shall be performed as soon as practical in the case of rapidly declining medical conditions or not later than 72 hours or the close of business, three business days following determination in the case of behavioral issues or non-emergency medical cases. Where veterinarian based euthanasia is required, a longer period may be allowed if local service is not available and scheduling is an issue.
- 7) Euthanasia within the shelter facility shall only be performed by a person certified to perform euthanasia in accordance with and in the manner described under the State of Oregon guidelines. No staff member or agency volunteer shall conduct any animal euthanasia outside of the shelter facility.
- 8) In the case of ordered euthanasia, no shelter staff shall be ordered to participate in any euthanasia with which they disagree. In such cases, a local veterinarian shall perform euthanasia.
- 9) Upon the death of an animal the Shelter Manager or, if unavailable, the President of the Board of Directors, shall provide notice to the staff. The Shelter Manager and President of the Board of Directors, with the advice of the Animal Welfare Committee, shall prepare a written public statement within 24 hours of the animal's passing to let the public know of the death. When appropriate, this statement may include medical information about the animal.