

# LIFESAVING POLICY ON EUTHANASIA

## EUTHANASIA DEFINED

The word euthanasia is defined as: The act or practice of painlessly ending the life of an animal that has a terminal illness, injury or incurable condition, as by giving a lethal drug.

At this organization we use the word "kill" when referring to the taking of an animal's life for reasons other than the definition above. When you, as a representative of this agency, speak to the public, you may find that some people are not familiar with the word "euthanasia" or its many euphemisms such as "put to sleep" or "put down". For clear communication employees are encouraged to use the words "kill" and "euthanasia" when appropriate. In clear cases of terminal illness, pain and suffering, it is appropriate and recommended for you to use the word "euthanasia".

## EUTHANASIA DECISION MAKING & TRACKING CODES

At ORGANIZATION, euthanasia decisions are made by only a few key individuals. All shelter animal euthanasia decisions must be approved by the (ASSIGNED PRIMARY STAFF). (ASSIGNED PRIMARY STAFF) are almost always available via cell phone or text message. In the extraordinary event that (ASSIGNED PRIMARY STAFF) is not available, an animal in severe distress can be euthanized with the approval of the (ASSIGNED SECONDARY STAFF). The euthanasia must be reported to the (ASSIGNED PRIMARY STAFF) immediately via email or text message.

THIS ORGANIZATION utilizes euthanasia tracking codes to keep accurate records of the disposition of animals. Any animal euthanized must be assigned the appropriate code.

- 10 = Owner Surrender, non-savable medical condition
- 20 = Owner Surrender, non-savable behavior condition
- 30 = Savable medical condition (On Arrival)
- 35 = Non-savable medical condition (On Arrival)
- 40 = Savable behavior problem
- 45 = Non-savable behavior problem
- 60 = Savable Medical Condition (Acquired In-Shelter)
- 65 = Non-savable Medical Condition (Acquired In-Shelter)
- 90 = Wildlife, non-savable
- 99 = Healthy, No space available

These definitions should be utilized based on an honest assessment of each animal's medical or behavioral ability to be saved and not based on subjective notions of adoptability. In cases of doubt, the default shall be a preference for lifesaving.

Additionally and importantly, these tracking codes do not prescribe euthanasia decisions. For example, an animal with cancer, deemed non-savable may still be successfully cared for, transferred or adopted to an individual or organization capable of providing hospice care. Critically, it must never be assumed that any animal should be killed simply because it has a non-savable condition. All efforts for treatment, rescue or foster care should be made and documented and recorded in an animal's computerized records before a decision to kill the animal is made.

Codes are divided into "savable" and "non-savable". To determine the appropriate euthanasia code, the person making the determination must start at the top of the list and choose the first code that is correct for that animal. Codes are listed in priority order, beginning at the top. For example, a dog

that is sick with a non-savable disease, and is also aggressive would be categorized as "35, non-savable medical". This is because a medical condition may be causing a change in behavior and is why "35" comes before "40" or "45" on the list.

**SAVABLE:** "Savable" shall include cats and dogs who are healthy or who have treatable or manageable behavior or medical conditions.

**Healthy:** "Healthy" shall include any non-vicious cat or dog that is at least eight weeks of age and is not sick or injured. Conditions such as fleas or pregnancy do not change the animal's status from being healthy since they are resolved through professionally standard, routine shelter care, such as flea preventative and spay or neuter surgery, and do not require out of the ordinary care. Healthy also includes animals who are exhibiting behaviors considered normal for dogs or cats such as house soiling, territorial marking, barking, chewing, digging or scratching behavior. Likewise feral and free roaming cats who are inhibited in social interactions with humans are not exhibiting abnormal behavior for the species. As long as a feral or free roaming cat is healthy, he meets the definition.

A dog or cat does not have to be cute and cuddly or easy to place to meet this definition. Healthy is not the same as easy to adopt. The animal may be blind, deaf, old, or missing a limb, or she may be a breed that certain organizations may choose not to adopt out, but as long as the animal is reasonably healthy and reasonably not vicious, she meets the definition.

**Treatable and Manageable:** "Treatable" or "Manageable" shall include any cat or dog that is younger than eight weeks; or has a medical or behavioral condition whose prognosis for rehabilitation is either excellent, good, fair, or guarded. A dog or cat does not have to be "cured" to be treatable. Manageable animals include those who cannot be cured but whose condition can be managed. For instance, a diabetic cat may never be cured but she is likely to live a normal life if given insulin shots.

**NON-SAVABLE:** "Non-savable" shall include: (1) cats and dogs who are sick or injured and whose prognosis for rehabilitation is poor or grave and (2) vicious dogs who have a propensity to or history of causing grievous bodily harm to humans or other animals whose prognosis for rehabilitation is poor or grave.

Non-savable animals include irremediably suffering animals. An irremediably suffering animal is any animal with a medical condition who has a poor or grave prognosis for being able to live without severe, unremitting pain.

## LIVE EXIT GOALS

While we recognize that animals may be deemed non-savable, it is the stated goal of this organization to achieve a live exit for all animals.

Prior to euthanizing or killing an animal, all efforts must be made and documented in each animal's record regarding veterinary consultation, medical testing, rescue contacts, declined rescue responses, behavior evaluation, behavior history, hospice/sanctuary care etc.

## OWNER'S REQUESTS FOR EUTHANASIA

THIS ORGANIZATION has ceased the practice of performing owner's requests for euthanasia. This policy change was made to ensure all animal disposition's are in accord with our mission to save lives. While many euthanasia requests are for valid, non-savable conditions, others are simply for convenience or for unfounded reasons.

While an animal with a non-savable condition may be euthanized at THIS ORGANIZATION, any animal surrendered to the shelter is considered an "owner surrender" and the ultimate disposition of the animal is at the discretion of this organization. Any fee that may be collected is a surrender fee or donation and not a fee for euthanasia service.

ORGANIZATION staff may not kill an animal without cause and without exploring all rescue and rehabilitation options. If it is found, after veterinary or behavioral review, that an owner is surrendering an animal to the shelter with a non-savable condition, owner surrender resulting in euthanasia may be

an option.

#### EUTHANASIA TRACKING CODES:

##### 10 = OWNER SURRENDER, NON-SAVABLE MEDICAL CONDITION

These are animals whose owners have surrendered them to the shelter with the intention of euthanasia because they have been diagnosed with a condition that has a poor or grave prognosis for recovery or who may be suffering from severe age related debilitation that is no longer manageable.

##### 20 = OWNER SURRENDER, NON-SAVABLE BEHAVIOR CONDITION

These are animals whose owners have surrendered to the shelter with the intention of euthanasia because their pet has demonstrated a propensity or history of causing grievous bodily harm to humans or other companion animals whose prognosis for rehabilitation is poor or grave.

##### 30 = SAVABLE MEDICAL CONDITION (ON ARRIVAL)

These are animals that have been diagnosed with a treatable/manageable medical condition but we may not have the ability to isolate, treat and/or manage.

##### 35 = NON-SAVABLE MEDICAL CONDITION (ON ARRIVAL)

These are animals that have a non-savable condition. A non-savable condition is a condition that has a poor prognosis for recovery. Examples include end stage kidney failure, liver failure, end stage cancer or extensive injuries from an accident or fire.

##### 40 = SAVABLE BEHAVIOR CONDITION

These are animals that have a treatable or manageable behavior condition such as kennel aggression, kennel stress or overly fearful animals, including feral cats. Feral cats are demonstrating behavior that only presents a danger when confined.

##### 45 = NON-SAVABLE BEHAVIOR CONDITION

These are vicious dogs that have a propensity to or history of causing grievous bodily harm to humans or other companion animals, whose prognosis for rehabilitation is poor or grave and that pose a significant danger to staff, volunteers, adopters or the community at large. Very rarely a cat may be determined by a veterinarian to have a non-savable behavior condition.

##### 60 = SAVABLE MEDICAL CONDITION (ACQUIRED IN-SHELTER)

These are animals that have been diagnosed with a treatable/manageable medical condition acquired as a result of their stay in the shelter but we may not have the ability to isolate, treat and/or manage.

##### 65 = NON-SAVABLE MEDICAL CONDITION (ACQUIRED IN-SHELTER)

These are animals that have a non-savable condition that developed (or occurred in the case of an injury) during their stay in the shelter. A non-savable condition is a condition that has a poor prognosis for recovery such as end stage kidney failure, liver failure, end stage cancer or extensive injuries from an accident or fire.

##### 90 = WILDLIFE, NON-SAVABLE

Although ORGANIZATION is not a licensed rehabilitator, members of the public occasionally bring injured wildlife to the shelter. In the event that the animal is irremediably suffering, not a protected species and cannot reasonably and humanely be transported to a wildlife rehabilitator, the animal may be euthanized.

##### 99 = NO SPACE AVAILABLE

Animals who are killed for no reason other than a lack of housing within the shelter and no foster care is available.

#### VETERINARY SERVICES AND EUTHANASIA

Any veterinary service utilized by ORGANIZATION shall serve to provide veterinary evaluation reports. Specifically, the veterinarian should report on a sick or injured animal's prognosis for recovery.

Although a veterinarian may recommend euthanasia in the case of an irremediably suffering animal, it is not the responsibility of the veterinarian to choose which animals will be killed and it is the sole responsibility of the administrative staff to select or set policies for the selection of animals that will be killed.

#### BEHAVIOR SERVICES AND EUTHANASIA

Any behavior service utilized by ORGANIZATION shall serve to provide behavior evaluation reports.

Specifically, the behavior evaluator should report on an animal's personality and potential for aggression. Although a behavior evaluator may recommend euthanasia in the case of a vicious dog, it is not the responsibility of the behavior evaluator to choose which animal will be killed and it is the sole responsibility of the administrative staff to select or set policies for the selection of animals that will be killed.