



The Use of “No-Kill” Terminology

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The Association of Shelter Veterinarians supports the development of animal shelter operational policies based on an organization’s capacity for humane care and available resources, regardless of organizational philosophy. The guiding principle in the provision of humane care should always be animals’ needs, which remain the same regardless of an organization’s mission or challenges in meeting those needs.

Many shelters employ “no-kill” or “adoption-guarantee” terminology to describe humane work. This terminology lacks a clear and consistent definition which may result in confusion, misperception, or discord within communities. Definitions of “no-kill” vary along a spectrum and may include policies that prevent euthanasia of animals for lack of housing, those that prevent euthanasia of behaviorally or medically healthy animals, those that prevent euthanasia of animals with conditions considered treatable by reasonable pet owners in their community, or those that prohibit euthanasia of animals at all costs. As such, the ASV discourages the use of terminology that defines an organization based on euthanasia practices.

Euthanasia of companion animals is a tool to prevent animal suffering. In any sheltering facility, including those that identify as “no-kill”, humane euthanasia may be necessary to control suffering in animals with untreatable medical or behavioral conditions or in the interest of public safety. Additionally, euthanasia of healthy and treatable companion animals is sometimes utilized in order to maintain a shelter’s capacity for humane care. When an organization’s capacity for care is exceeded, animal suffering ensues.