



Primary Enclosure Checklist

The *ASV Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters*, 2nd ed. provides several guidelines for primary enclosures. This checklist can help you evaluate your organization's current enclosures in light of industry recommendations. If the animal's stay in the shelter is prolonged (i.e., greater than 2 weeks), there are additional requirements for enrichment and time out of the primary enclosure.

Must

- Have a variety of housing units available to meet the individual needs of animals, including physical, behavioral and medical needs
- Primary enclosures are structurally sound and maintained in safe, working condition to prevent injury and escape
- Animals able to make normal postural adjustments within their primary enclosure (standing and walking several steps, sitting normally, laying down at full body length and holding the tail completely erect)
- The primary enclosure allows animals to sit, sleep and eat away from areas of their enclosures where they defecate and urinate
- Housing provides animals remaining in the shelter long-term (i.e. more than 2 weeks) with additional space, enrichment and choice within their enclosure
- Enclosures with outdoor space protect animals from adverse weather; provide choice for thermoregulation; protect from predators; and prevent escape, theft or harassment
- **CATS** – Primary enclosures allow scratching, climbing and perching
- **CATS** – Litter box large enough to comfortably accommodate their entire body and allow for proper posturing

Should

- Multi-compartment enclosures are provided for the majority of animals housed in the shelter
- A soft resting place that elevates animals off of the floor is available for all animals
- All dogs and cats given the opportunity to hide within their enclosure
- **CATS** – Housing units elevated off the floor
- **CATS** – Cages face away from each other or be spaced more than 4 ft (1.2m) apart

Ideal

- Primary enclosures with indoor/outdoor access for most animals, especially when held long term
- **CATS** – Individual housing provides 11 ft² (1.0 m²) or more of floor space

Unacceptable

- Housing animals in an enclosure that would require the use of forceful animal handling equipment for daily cleaning and care
- Housing animals in facility spaces not intended for animal housing (e.g., bathrooms and hallways), except for a brief, emergency situation
- Use of tethering as a method of confinement for any animal
- Primary enclosures with wire-mesh bottoms or slatted floors
- The use of cages or crates intended for short-term, temporary confinement or travel as primary enclosures
- Stacking or arranging enclosures in a manner that increases animal stress and discomfort, compromises ventilation or allows for waste material contamination between housing units
- **CATS** – Individual adult housing that is less than 8 ft² (0.75 m²) of floor space

Additional Resources

[ASV Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters](#)