

SURGICAL DECISION-MAKING RUBRIC

The following criteria should be evaluated to determine whether pursuing an advanced procedure is within an organization's capacity for care. Use this color-coded rubric to visualize the potential impacts of each factor. The rubric is intended to support a holistic assessment when making surgical treatment decisions in a shelter.

If there is significant concern in any single category, the more accessible procedure is recommended.

The more accessible procedure should also be considered when concerns are present across multiple categories.

CRITERIA	THINGS TO CONSIDER	RATING		
PROGNOSIS	<i>Is the expected outcome good to excellent with the advanced procedure?</i> Consider likelihood of return to pain-free function, risk of chronic complications and number of anesthetic events required.	☐ Good/Excellent Prognosis	☐ Mixed Prognosis	☐ Guarded/Poor Prognosis
LENGTH OF STAY	<i>Will the advanced procedure significantly increase LOS compared to the accessible surgical option? (In most shelters, over 2 weeks can be considered a significant increase in LOS.)</i> Consider prolonged hospitalization, activity restriction, postoperative care, delayed adoption or transport eligibility.	☐ Minimal Increase to LOS	☐ Increase to LOS, but not Significant	☐ Significant Increase to LOS
BEHAVIOR	<i>Will the advanced procedure impair the ability to maintain the animal's behavioral health and well-being?</i> Consider underlying behavior conditions, staff safety, predicted impact of prolonged LOS/hospitalization/activity restriction, capacity for enrichment and the availability of foster caregivers.	☐ Minimal Behavior Concerns	☐ Moderate Behavior Concerns	☐ Significant Behavior Concerns
RESOURCE AVAILABILITY	<i>Does the shelter have the resources to support the advanced procedure?</i> Consider skilled surgeon availability or funding to support offsite hospitalization, staff time for postoperative care, required special equipment/imaging, foster or medical housing capacity and adopter/transfer outcomes available to continue care if needed.	☐ Sufficient Resources	☐ Some Resource Concerns	☐ Insufficient Resources
POPULATION-LEVEL IMPACT	<i>Would the advanced procedure meaningfully limit care to other animals?</i> Consider operating room and surgeon capacity to provide care to shelter and community animals, financial health of the organization, staff fatigue and burnout, reduced shelter intake capacity and shelter crowding.	☐ Minimal Impact to Shelter Population	☐ Small Scale Impact to Shelter Population	☐ Significant Impact to Shelter Population

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RECOMMENDATION:	☐ Proceed with Advanced Procedure	☐ Consider Accessible Procedure	☐ Proceed with Accessible Procedure
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