The Five Freedoms and Shelter Wellness

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters

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Today’s Presentation

- Overview
- The Five Freedoms & Medical Health Section
- Discussion of typical shelter challenges
- How standards can help
- Translating a document into everyday actions
Medical Health and Physical Well-Being

- Veterinary relationship & recordkeeping
- Considerations on Intake
- Vaccinations
- Emergency medical care
- Pain management
- Parasite control
- Monitoring and daily rounds
- Nutrition
- Population well-being
- Response to disease or illness
- Medical treatment of shelter animals

The Five Freedoms

1. **Freedom from Hunger and Thirst** - by ready access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigor.
2. **Freedom from Discomfort** - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. **Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease** - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. **Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour** - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. **Freedom from Fear and Distress** - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.
What Are the Challenges?

- 4-6 million dogs and cats enter shelters/yr
- 4000-6000 animal shelters (?) exist in the US
- Many types of shelters (public, private, rescue)
- No umbrella organization
- Little oversight or regulation
- Unknown how many veterinarians are employed by shelters
- Huge differences in mission, treatment, budget

What Are the Challenges?

- Shelter operations are an interwoven puzzle
  - Population Management
  - Wellness Protocols
  - Facilities
  - Recognition and Reporting of Health Concerns
  - Veterinary Treatment Protocols
  - Spay/Neuter
  - Welfare Issues

- Veterinarians should be integrally involved
Shelter Veterinary Relationship

- Shelter medical programs must include veterinary supervision
  - A formal relationship with a veterinarian should be in place
  - Develop all health care practices and protocols in consultation with a veterinarian
  - Ideally a shelter experienced veterinarian
  - Written standard operating procedures (SOPs) in keeping with professionally accepted standards

Poll Question 1:

a) My shelter has a formal veterinary relationship.

b) My shelter does not have a formal veterinary relationship.

c) I am not affiliated with an animal shelter.
Shelter Medical Records

- Accurate medical records are essential
- Medical and behavioral histories should be taken (when possible)
- Medical care must be documented
- Many software programs make this easy

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FREEDOM FROM DISCOMFORT

- by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area

What Are the Challenges?

Problems must be recognized
Environment must exist
Considerations on Intake

• Each animal should receive a health evaluation at intake and regularly thereafter
  – Checks for signs of infectious disease
  – Checks for problems requiring immediate attention
  – Exams should be documented in medical record
  – Allow shelter acquired problems to be distinguished from pre-existing conditions

Monitoring and Daily Rounds

• Rounds must be conducted at least once every 24 hours by a trained individual
  – Food and water consumption
  – Urination and defecation
  – Attitude
  – Ambulation
  – Illness
  – Other problems
  – Group housed animals at feeding time
• If in care > 1 month, weight and BCS monthly
• Veterinary exams biannually
• Geriatric, ill, debilitated on a case basis
How Can Standards Help?

Show Me the Standards!

“Just wanted to share some exciting news. Today is the launch of our Doggy Wellness hour…Take a look at the brochure we have posted on our website which outlines it in brief for people to see…This is a way we hope to be able to accommodate our daily rounds as well as monitor all of our dogs during feeding time. We have a consistent feeding time every day now, so we will let you know how it works out.”
Show Me the Standards!

Doggy Wellness Hour Results

• No negative comments from public so far
• Reduced medical problems and costs
• Reduced staff stress and increased opportunity for kindness
• Positive publicity for shelter
• Combined with other efforts, animals moving faster and live release rate increased

FREEDOM FROM HUNGER AND THIRST

• by ready access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigor
What Are the Challenges?

• Shelters receive all:
  – Ages
  – Species
  – Sizes
  – Life stages
  – Physical health states
  – Activity levels

Old supplies and insufficient food storage areas are challenges
What Are the Challenges?

Good intentions are not enough

Shelters often lack training, protocols, and monitoring

What Are the Challenges?

“At least 3 dogs were observed to be completely unable to eat because they were housed with other dogs that were defending the food, either through overt or subtle aggression.”

-- Shelter evaluation report

Overcrowding and understaffing
Nutrition

• Fresh clean water and proper food are basic requirements
  – Clean water accessible at all times
  – Food that is consistent with nutritional needs and health status
  – Food and water in appropriate dishes
  – Healthy adults dogs and cats fed at least once per day
  – Healthy puppies and kittens fed small amounts

Nutrition

• Food intake must be monitored daily
  – Veterinary evaluation/treatment of animals displaying inappetance or wt gain/loss
  – Separate housing or feeding of animals who guard food or prevent access by cage mates
  – Veterinary input when developing a feeding protocol for a population of animals
Show Me the Standards!

• Written feeding protocol

“Can we stop feeding the puppies their mid-day meal? They’re fat and robust now.”

“they aren’t as crazy for food during their behavior evaluation.”

FREEDOM FROM PAIN, INJURY, DISEASE

• by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment
Acute & Chronic Pain in the Shelter

What Are the Challenges?

Assessing Pain IS a Challenge!

“A complex phenomenon involving pathophysiological and psychological components that are frequently difficult to recognize in animals.” (ACVA 2006)

“Recognizing and alleviating pain in a wide variety of species can be difficult and complex”

“Although there are multiple scales and scoring systems...there is no accepted gold standard system for assessing pain in animals.”
What Are the Challenges?

- Many pain medications are controlled or have side effects
- Shelter drug access may be limited
- Many shelters receive animals after hours when veterinarian not present

Pain Management

It is **EVERY** shelter's responsibility!

Pain must be recognized and treated to alleviate suffering. Failure to provide treatment for pain is unacceptable.

Assume that if a procedure is painful in human beings than it must be also be painful in animals."

When adequate pain relief cannot be provided, transfer to a facility that can meet the animal's needs or humane euthanasia must be provided.
Emergency Medical Care

- An emergency medical plan must be in place
  - Appropriate and timely veterinary medical care
  - Prompt pain management
  - Humane euthanasia by qualified personnel as permitted by law
  - Either on site or via transfer to another facility

Poll Question 2:

a) My shelter has an emergency medical care plan.

b) My shelter does not have an emergency medical care plan.

c) I am not affiliated with an animal shelter.
FREEDOM FROM PAIN, INJURY, DISEASE

No single disease response can suit every circumstance

A disease response plan should include:
• Minimizing transmission to unaffected animals or people
• Ensuring appropriate care of affected animals

Disease – What Are the Challenges?

Animals often arrive:
• Ill
• Pregnant
• Parasitized
• Injured
• Unvaccinated

Even healthy animals entering new, expertly designed facilities risk becoming ill without a functional medical healthcare program.
Vaccinations

• Animals must be vaccinated at or prior to intake with core vaccines
  • Follow guiding principles
    – FVRCP
    – Da2PP, Bordetella
    – Rabies when longterm or exit
  • Pregnancy and mild illness are generally not contraindications
  • MLV recommended
  • Revaccination
  • Tailor specific protocols with veterinary supervision

Parasite Control

• A parasite control program should be developed with the supervision of a vet
• Treatment guided by parasite lifecycles and surveillance testing
• Treatment for internal and external parasites common to the region and for any obvious detrimental parasite infection they are harboring
• Ideally on entry and regularly throughout their stay
• Minimally, all dogs and cats must be dewormed for roundworms and hookworms before leaving the shelter
Poll Question 3:

a) My shelter vaccinates all animals on intake (within 24 hrs).

b) My shelter does not vaccinate on intake.

c) I am not affiliated with an animal shelter.

Disease – What Are the Challenges?

Facilities may not be ideal
Segregation

• Beginning at intake, animals should be separated by species and age as well as physical and behavioral health status
  – <20 wks from adult
  – Species
  – Healthy from clinically ill

Isolation

• All facilities should have means of humane isolation that will not put other animals at risk (on site or transfer)

• Even animals with mild clinical signs of contagious disease should not be housed in the general population

• No isolation?
  – Exposure of population vs. euthanasia must be weighed
Disease – What Are the Challenges?

Protocols should support individuals

AND maintain an overall healthy population

Disease – What Are the Challenges?

Balancing individual animal and population welfare is hard
Disease – What Are the Challenges?

- Measurements of success vary
- Statistics are not uniform
- Indicators are not always tracked
- Goals are not always set

Population Well-Being

- Animal health plans must be reviewed in response to changes observed in animal health, illness or deaths
  - Monitor frequency of specific problems
  - Set realistic goals
  - Develop targeted strategies
  - Monitor effectiveness of medical health programs
Population Well-Being

- Track morbidity (incidence of specific disease(s))

- Track mortality (death not related to euthanasia)
  - 0.75% (0.18%-1.61%)\(^1\)
  - <2% cats, <1% dogs\(^2\)
  - Numbers in excess require immediate measures for control

- Track specific problems

\(^1\) HSUS Lied Animal Report
\(^2\) Virginia Department of Agriculture Statewide Statistics

Disease – What Are the Challenges?

**New York City animal shelters scramble after strep outbreak kills dogs**
BY Lisa L. Colangelo
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER
Wednesday, January 7th 2009, 12:00 AM

**Distemper outbreak at Georgetown, TX animal shelter**
January 7, 2010 by News Reporter
Due to a distemper out break 24 dogs have been euthanized.
Diagnosis

- Diagnosis of specific pathogens should be sought in the event of:
  - severe disease
  - unusual conditions
  - outbreaks
- Necropsy/histopathology when animals die from unexplained causes

Outbreak Response

- Exposed
  1. Clinically ill/at risk
- Not exposed
  1. Not showing signs, low risk
Outbreak Response

Ideally, animal movement should stop until a targeted control strategy can be implemented.

Vaccination, sanitation, movement, etc should be reviewed to ensure measures are effective shelter-wide.

Animals should be monitored twice daily during an outbreak.

Outbreak Response

- Follow all laws
- Release to public – open disclosure
- Depopulation as a last resort – explore all other avenues
  - Transmission
  - Morbidity
  - Mortality
  - Public Health
Disease – What Are the Challenges?

Medical Treatment of Shelter Animals

- Shelters are responsible for safety of animals, people and environment when treatment is needed

- Effective and safe medication use
  - Reasonable diagnosis
  - Proper administration
  - Monitoring disease course
Medical Treatment of Shelter Animals

- Those providing treatments must have training
- Policies for disease problems after adoption
- Professional supervision for prescription drugs
- All treatments recorded
- Protocols to provide immediate care when legal status is an issue

Medical Treatment of Shelter Animals

- Treatment decisions should be based on:
  - Ability to safely and humanely provide relief
  - Prognosis for recovery
  - Likelihood of placement
  - # of animals to treat
  - Duration of treatment
  - Expense
  - Resources
Medical Treatment of Shelter Animals

The routine prophylactic use of antimicrobials should never be used as a substitute for good animal management.

AVMA policy: AAHA/AAFP Basic Guidelines of Judicious Therapeutic Use of Antimicrobials
http://www.avma.org/issues/policy/jtua_aafp_aaha.asp

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Any “Take Homes”?

Take a moment and type into the chat box something you are “taking home” from this session!

New idea…
Something to try…
Concept to look into…
Challenge to overcome…
Other….

Want to Know More?

Please join our next session
April 28, 2011 - 3 pm EST

Dr. Sandra Newbury ~ Shelter Math and Population Planning
www.ASPCApro.org/asv