



# Bay County Animal Control & Shelter

## A strategic plan to implement Best Practices

The mission of Bay County Animal Control is to deliver with outstanding customer service:

Enforcement of animal welfare laws and ordinances;

Promotion of humane treatment for animals; and

Adherence to best practices for the care and rehoming of animals in our care.

September 2017

# Strategic Planning Committee

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# Executive Summary

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## BAY COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

JAMES A. BARCIA  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Debra Russell, Director  
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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I would like to thank County Executive Jim Barcia for allowing me the opportunity to carry out his vision for Bay County Animal Control. One of his primary objectives upon taking office in January 2017 was to implement best practices at Bay County Animal Control. With that goal in mind, I have had the privilege to act on behalf of Mr. Barcia as Chairman of the Animal Control Strategic Planning Committee.

Although the work of this Committee is on-going, the group drafted this Strategic Plan to Implement Best Practices which identifies areas that need improvement in order to reach our goal of saving the lives of dogs and cats that are healthy and treatable, reducing the number of cats by spaying & neutering and increasing our adoption rates.

Although many of the recommendations outlined in this Plan Document will take time to implement, others are already taking place. Replacing outdated software, improving the layout of the facility to reduce the stress and illness of animals, partnering with non-profit agencies to offer low cost spay and neutering, recommending increased Shelter staffing and working cooperatively with animal rescue agencies in outreach are currently taking place at Bay County Animal Control.

On behalf of the County Executive, I would like to sincerely thank our Bay County Animal Control staff and dedicated Committee members for their continued support and contributions in providing Best Practices at Bay County Animal Control.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debra Russell".

Debra Russell  
Administrative Services Director

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## Chapter 1 – Setting the stage

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**1.1 Background** - In September 2016, County Executive elect James Barcia attended the *Getting to the Goal No Kill* conference in Flint. At the conference, he met with representatives of the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance (MPFA), producers of the conference, and expressed a desire to have Bay County Animal Control and Shelter move to a no kill status. He was looking at how to develop a plan that he could present to the County Commission for implementation. One of MPFA's services as a statewide not for profit, with the goal of making Michigan a no kill state for healthy and treatable homeless cats and dogs in shelters, is to assist in the preparation of strategic plans toward the goal of no kill. County Executive Elect Barcia requested assistance from MPFA for the preparation of such a plan for Bay County.

In January of 2017, after taking office, the County Executive formed a committee of Animal Control/Shelter County employees and Bay County animal advocates to work with the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance to develop a Strategic Plan. The Executive requested that the plan be prepared within six months so recommendations which might have budget implications could be considered by the County Commission as part of the FY 2017/2018 budget consideration process.

As a part of the plan development process, performance statistics were gathered and reviewed. Dr. Jeff Fortna, one of only two veterinarians in Michigan to hold the prestigious Maddie's Shelter Medicine Certificate from the University of Florida toured the shelter, interviewed staff and provided the report which can be found in the appendix of this plan, suggesting shelter improvements. Committee members watched two webinars on Community Cats:

- <http://www.maddiesfund.org/making-the-case-for-community-cats-part-one.htm>
- <http://www.maddiesfund.org/making-the-case-for-community-cats-part-two.htm>

The committee members also read:

- Guidelines for Standards of Care for Animal Shelters produced by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians - <http://www.sheltervet.org/assets/docs/shelter-standards-oct2011-wforward.pdf>
- National Animal Care and Control Association Guidelines - [http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.nacanet.org/resource/resmgr/Docs/NACA\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.nacanet.org/resource/resmgr/Docs/NACA_Guidelines.pdf)

The committee reviewed shelter statistics on intake, adoption, return to owner, transfers, and euthanasia along with animal control statistics concerning field activities, complaints and prosecutions. The committee also reviewed national recommended staffing levels to current county employees. The eleven programs of no kill equation was also reviewed and discussed.

This plan document is the compilation of recommendations of the Strategic Planning Committee

concluding their six months of assessing existing conditions, research, monthly homework and meetings.

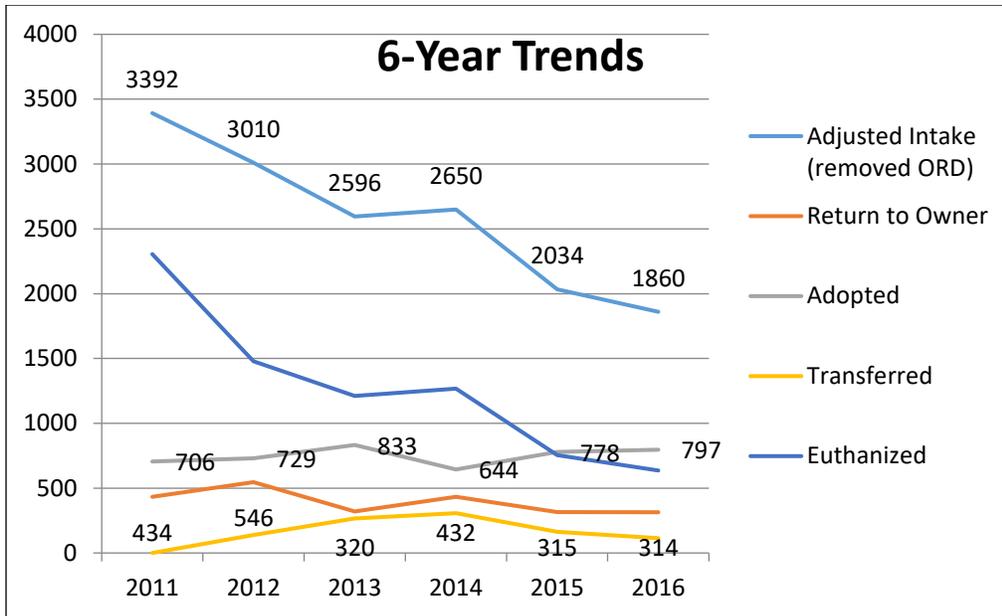
**1.2 Defining No Kill** – There is much confusion by the public about animal welfare in general. Common terms such as shelter or rescue are often used interchangeable when there are substantial differences. It is therefore not surprising that when more complicated terms such as no kill are used, the public and even those in the animal welfare community often apply their own source of reference and/or make inaccurate assumptions about what it means. The term no kill means saving the lives of all cats and dogs in a shelter that are healthy and treatable. Euthanasia is therefore defined as the practice of intentionally ending a life in order to relieve pain and suffering and is reserved for animals that are too sick for treatment or are vicious and cannot safely be rehomed and therefore would have no quality of life.

When shelters incorporate best practices, the result is saving all healthy and treatable animals and the *live release* of animals in their care is 90% or better of the intake or considered no kill.

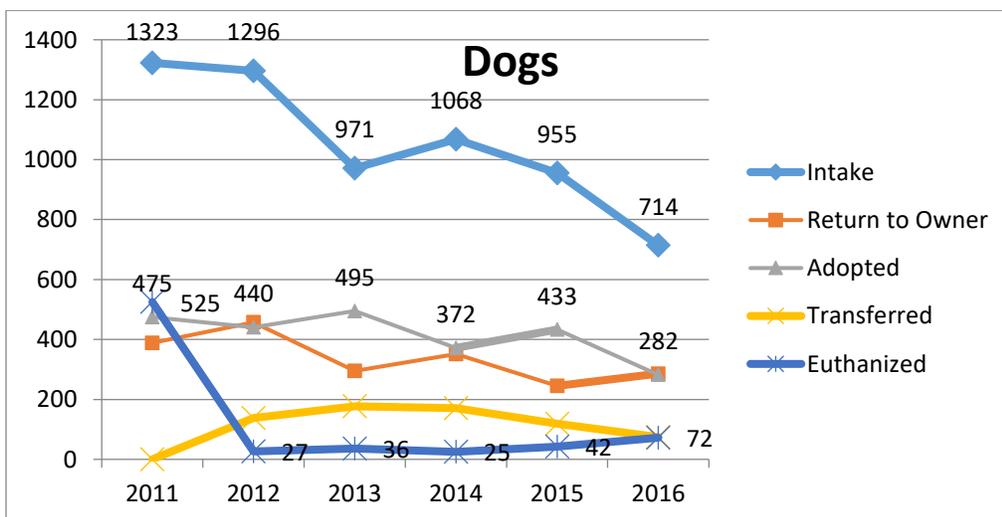
Michigan shelters have drastically improved in the last decade. In 2007 almost 250,000 animals were entering Michigan Shelters and 118,000+ were being euthanized. In 2016 intake was reduced to just over 142,000 with just over 20,000 animals being euthanized. Sixty of Michigan’s 83 counties are now performing at no kill levels. Three counties don’t have shelters and of the remaining 20 shelters, more than half are operating at a live release rate of 80% or better.

**1.3 Shelter Statistical Performance** – Annually the Bay County Animal shelter submits to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development a mandated report indicating dog and cat intake and disposition. A historical summary of that information is found below:

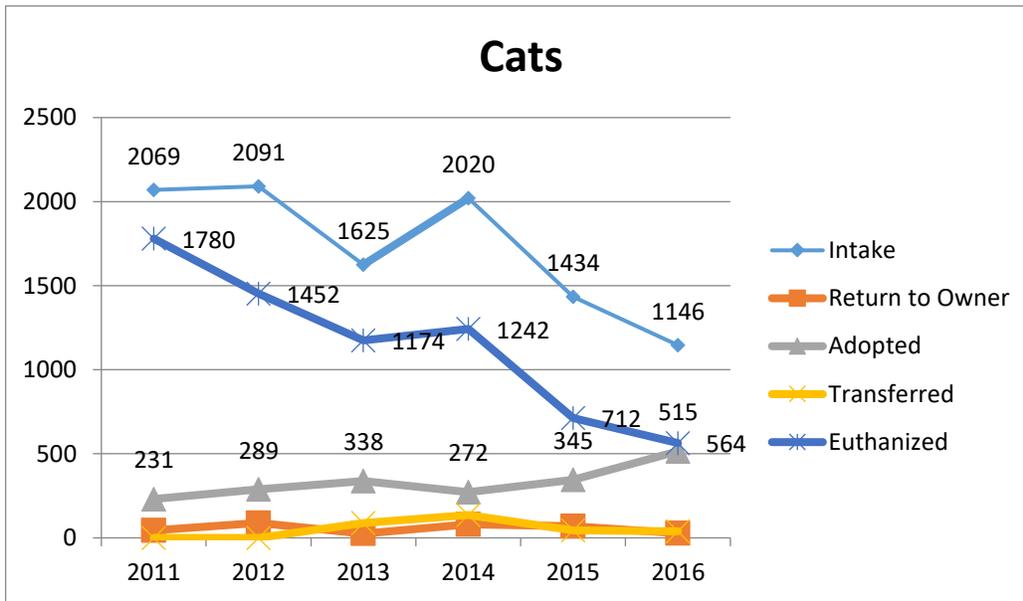
<b>Six Year Trends</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Adjusted Intake (removed ORD)	3392	3010	2596	2650	2034	1860
Return to Owner	434	546	320	432	315	314
Adopted	706	729	833	644	778	797
Transferred	0	138	266	307	164	113
Euthanized	2305	1479	1210	1267	754	636
Live Release Rate	<b>33.09%</b>	<b>48.86%</b>	<b>53.97%</b>	<b>52.19%</b>	<b>62.51%</b>	<b>65.81%</b>



Dogs	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Intake	1323	1296	971	1068	955	714
Return to Owner	389	457	295	351	245	286
Adopted	475	440	495	372	433	282
Transferred	0	138	177	171	119	74
Euthanized	525	27	36	25	42	72
Live Release Rate	<b>62.20%</b>	<b>97.46%</b>	<b>96.41%</b>	<b>97.28%</b>	<b>94.99%</b>	<b>89.92%</b>



<b>Cats</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Intake	2069	2091	1625	2020	1434	1146
Return to Owner	45	89	25	81	70	28
Adopted	231	289	338	272	345	515
Transferred	0	0	89	136	45	39
Euthanized	1780	1452	1174	1242	712	564
Live Release Rate	<b>13.42%</b>	<b>20.66%</b>	<b>27.80%</b>	<b>28.25%</b>	<b>39.25%</b>	<b>50.79%</b>



Several important conclusions were made from the information above:

- Intake is declining – a goal of shelters following best practices.
- Adoptions are increasing - a goal of shelters following best practices.
- Return to owner has leveled.
- Dogs do better than cats at getting out of the shelter alive.
- Number of dogs and cats euthanized is decreasing – a goal of shelters following best practices.
- Life-saving measures are needed for cats.

With the exception of 2011, the live release rate of dogs in the shelter were at the no kill levels. Although there has been much improvement in the live release for cats from 13% in 2011 to 51% in 2016 there is substantial improvement that is needed to bring cat live release to a no kill level. The committee prioritized efforts toward improving live release for cats.

## Chapter 2 - Cats

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**2.1 What we didn't know about cats** – Until the recent past, there has been little understanding or appreciation of sheltering cats. They were treated for the most part as small dogs. However, they are a very different species and as we are learning they have very different needs. Simple things like proper spot cleaning of their cage or providing adequate cage space can make the difference between a healthy cat and a cat with chronic illness in the shelter.

Perhaps it is due to their independent nature, that people have abandoned cats at a rate far exceeding dogs. Many abandoned cats have adjusted to their environment living outdoors, with and without caretakers, often with offspring reverting to feral behavior. Unlike dogs, cats are very territorial – domestic or feral they rarely wander beyond their territory unless chased or frightened. Learning more about the species, we now know that we can't shelter cats like dogs and besides being inhumane it is a waste of time and money to try to eliminate feral/community cats them by trapping and killing them.

**2.2 Best Practices for cats** - The committee watched two webinars on Cats. The presenter was national expert Dr. Kate Hurley of U.C. Davis. Dr. Hurley presented best practices concerning both domestic and feral/community cats. The committee recommends that the following best practices for cats be instituted at Bay County:

- The lending of traps for feral and community cats only be continued when in conjunction with a Trap, Neuter, Release program.
- The shelter not accept trapped cats for any purpose.
- Healthy lost cats be left in the field as they have a 60% chance of being returned to their owner and when taken to the shelter have only a 2% chance of being reunited.
- Trap, Neuter (Vaccinate) and Release (TNR) programs are the only effective method of reducing the number of feral and community cats and that the shelter support and supplement the work of the Humane Society in their TNR efforts.
- Adequate size enclosures or cages for cat housing be instituted at the shelter.

The shelter staff in July 2017 discontinued lending traps and instituted a policy of managed intake for cats.

## Chapter 3 – Priority Goals

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The Committee identified a number of priority goals and actions the shelter needs to institute to achieve best practices and advance toward no kill. The following is a list of the 1<sup>st</sup> year priority goals that should be complete by the end of 2018. Each goal contains a rationale, key steps to accomplish the goal, who is responsible for getting it done and potential costs/budget.

### 3.1 Spay/Neuter

***Institute a process with All About Animals Rescue to insure all shelter dogs and cats are spay/neutered prior to public adoption.***

***Rationale & Key Steps:*** Best Practices require that all animals adopted from the county are spayed/neutered and rabies vaccinated. The law currently allows for contract adoptions, however the deposit required is only \$25. There is no incentive for those that adopt to redeem the deposit. Spay/Neuter procedures can cost \$100's of dollars depending on which procedure, species and size of dog. Lack of incentive is evident by the amount of funds, between \$32,000 and \$35,000, that the county has from unredeemed deposits that by law must be spent on spay/neuter. The law requires the county to follow-up on unredeemed deposits which is staff intensive. All About Animals Rescue (AAAR) is a high volume/low cost spay/neuter clinic performing over 25,000 procedures a year. In September, AAAR will be opening a new clinic in Flint which will provide transport from Bay County. AAAR has also offered free spay/neuter for one year to Bay County Animal Control for any cat the shelter returns to field.

AAAR has become an approved vendor of the county. Once the clinic opens arrangements will need to be made for standardized pick-ups and animals within the shelter will need to be identified and scheduled.

***Responsible:*** Shelter Director.

***Cost/Budget:*** No additional funding is anticipated. Unredeemed funds can be used to start the program. Adoption fees can be increased for animals already sterilized providing for a revolving fund for future procedures.

***Support through education and advocacy the Bay County Humane Society's Trap/Neuter and Release program.***

***Rationale & Key Steps:*** Best Practices include animal shelters having a Trap, Neuter and Release (TNR) program or Shelter, Neuter Release program for healthy feral/community cats and displaced or lost healthy cats. The Bay County Humane Society currently conducts a TNR program. Also AAAR has extended to the county free spay/neuter for a Shelter, Neuter Release SNR program for one year. There is some concern that fully

engaging in such a program without an update to the current county Animal Ordinance may not be appropriate. At the same time, the county will not want to miss the opportunity offered by AAAR for the one year free service for SNR.

Animal Control and the Shelter can collaborate with Bay County and their TNR program in a variety of ways from promoting their program, distributing information, to even a more active role in assisting in returning cats to the field once fixed.

The Shelter Director should meet with the BCHS board and volunteers of the TNR program to identify ways the shelter and staff can support the current BCHS TNR program and identify ways the two organizations can collaborate on such a program when the new county Animal Ordinance is in place.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director

**Cost/Budget:** None

### 3.2 Pet Retention

*Develop and implement an interview process/relinquish form to determine what animals might best be served by providing resources to keep the animals with their owner.*

**Rationale & Key Steps:** Reducing shelter intake is a best practice for sheltering. It is not unusual for an owner to relinquish an animal because of a change in life circumstances. Perhaps they cannot afford to purchase food or can't find someone to watch their pet as they have surgery or need to vacate current housing. Many of these pet owners do not want to give up their pet, they have just run out of options. A relinquishment process that includes strategic questions to better understand the reason the person has brought their pet to the shelter provides the opportunity to direct them to alternate sources for help and avoid a shelter intake.

A relinquishment form (and conversation interview process) should be prepared/amended to capture this important information. Standard Operating Procedures for intake should include interview questions that might capture this information.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director

**Cost/Budget:** None

*Inventory resources and collaborate with county businesses and not for profits to provide low-income pet owner with resources (free food, low cost spay/neuter, vaccination clinics, pet friendly housing, etc.) to keep their pet.*

**Rationale & Key Steps:** Reducing shelter intake is a best practice for sheltering. Having a comprehensive and updated list of resources is a great tool for the shelter. The shelter

already has a list started however further investigation and research will be necessary to have a comprehensive list. Of critical importance is information on pet friendly housing or emergency temporary housing.

A meeting with representatives of the Bay County Realtor Association maybe assist in identifying pet friendly housing. Meetings with area churches may help to identify volunteers that might be willing to house someone's pet on a temporary basis.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director

**Cost/Budget:** None

### 3.3 Public Relations/Community Involvement

*Expand community outreach, education, and public relations with schools, churches, veterans, senior citizens etc. for the purpose of increasing humane education, increase shelter volunteers and community support of the animal shelter.*

**Rationale & Key Steps:** Shelters following best practices and saving lives are embraced by the community. Repeatedly the animal welfare community has witnessed support above and beyond for the shelter in terms of volunteers, sponsorships, financial contributions etc. when a shelter commits to life affirming programs. Residents want to be part of an organization that is doing right by the animals. Getting the word out and establishing new relationships requires community outreach and education.

Many organizations welcome public speakers. Initially the shelter director will need to lead the charge for community outreach scheduling presentations to church groups, community service groups and business organizations such as the chamber. Prior to scheduling presentations two important tools will need to be developed: a 15 minute PowerPoint presentation describing the mission and function of animal control which also describes the shelter, improvements and future plans along with a handout which describes how to get involved and help. Eventually expanded reach out efforts can be supported by volunteers and shelter staff through programs such as tabling/having animals available for adoption at community events, elementary classroom presentations, participation in community parades, etc.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director

**Cost/Budget:** None

*Expand social media to promote humane education and visibility of adoptable animals, etc.*

**Rationale & Key Steps:** Social Media is a great free tool to get the word out. A plan of action is needed to leverage this tool to spread the word on animals available for adoption, lost & found animals along with humane education. The shelter's Facebook

page has 160 followers, the county's Facebook page has 4,525 and the Humane Society of Bay County's Facebook page has over 7,000 followers. A photo of a stray animal posted only on the shelter's page has a maximum direct exposure of 160 followers however developing a plan of action and agreement where both the county site and the Humane Society agree to share the post, automatically direct social media exposure expands to over 11,500 social media followers. Many social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) can be linked so that one posting can go to a variety of sources at the same time. Many shelters combine the efforts of several volunteers to post on Petfinder, Adopt a Pet, and social media. Some volunteers come to the shelter several times a week just to photograph animals, while others volunteers gather associated information to make the actual post on social media. A standard annual editorial calendar should be created and followed recognizing standard messaging such as licenses renewals, care of pets in hot or cold weather, what precautions to take for 4<sup>th</sup> of July and fireworks, adopt a dog month, etc. that is posted when appropriate.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director

**Cost/Budget:** None

### 3.4 Volunteers

*Develop a robust community supported volunteer program.*

**Rationale & Key Steps:** Shelters are able to accomplish great lifesaving measures with an army of unpaid staff commonly known as volunteers. However successful volunteer programs rely on structure including an application, a manual, training, job descriptions, contract agreement (waiver) and recognition. Successful shelters engage volunteers well beyond walking dogs and socializing cats or assisting in cleaning kennels. Volunteers can plan events, keep social media current, groom and train animals, transport animals, you name it – a volunteer can do it.

Key steps in developing a successful volunteer program is to begin with or update if already available an applications, manual, training, job description, contract agreement and plan for an annual recognition program/event. A handful of job descriptions should be developed for key areas needing expansion with volunteers or new areas. Additional job descriptions can be added as program areas launch and grow. Most shelters either employ a volunteer manager or tap the services of an engaged volunteer to oversee the program. The job description of the volunteer manager will be a priority.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director

**Cost/Budget:** None

### 3.5 Proactive Redemptions

*Implement a program to increase lost animals - Returned to Owner - including in the field return, field postings, Lost/Found sites, etc.*

**Rationale & Key Steps:** Best Practices include an aggressive return to owner program. Such programs include steps that AC officers take in the field to take a stray directly back to the owner if they can be identified. Certainly tagged animals or having microchip scanners in AC vehicles can help in this regard. Additional actions can include inquiring of people in the neighborhood if they know the owner of the dog. Laminated bright colored posters that can be clipped to fencing or staked like a garage sale sign, personalized with a marker with the date and animal description, can be posted by Animal Control and displayed for several days in the location where the animal was picked-up. Social media and websites devoted to lost and found animals have been very effective in reuniting owners with their lost pets.

The director should develop a plan of action as to priority actions that can be taken to enhance current efforts to reunite lost pets. The use of social media and volunteers should be pursued to increase staffing capacity and maximize efforts that have no financial implications. The use of technology such as microchip scanners, remote internet connection to license records, and use of tablets to maximize field returns should be considered.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director

**Cost/Budget:** None

### 3.6 General/Administrative

*Evaluate, purchase, install and train for new shelter/animal control software and purchase of support hardware, such as computer tablets strategically located in the shelter, to increase shelter efficiencies and reporting.*

**Rationale & Key Steps:** An up to date and a robust shelter management software is critical to saving lives, tracking progress and making informed decisions as to program changes or initiation. Every day an animal is in the shelter costs money but if you don't have the tools to even determine the average length of stay, types of shelter illness or other important data – it is impossible to determine what changes or improvements are necessary. The shelter is in need of new shelter management software, training for maximizing the use of the software – especially in generating critical reports to determine change and improvements. Also hardware that supports an efficient operation should be purchased. Wireless capabilities in the shelter and on field vehicles

is needed. Tablets are a great tool to be able to record the administration of medications and feeding, observation of potential problems or issues, etc. while with the animal as opposed to making notes to enter later or running back and forth to a computer station.

**Responsible:** Shelter Manager and the County Information Technology Department

**Cost/Budget:** Most shelter management programs and needed modules can be purchased for less than \$2,000. Some have annual fees, while others only have a purchase fee. Wireless technology and tablets to access the server or cloud should be available for less than \$3,000.

***Increase shelter staff to include a part-time Vet Tech/Trainer and full-time Kennel Attendant and clerical staffing.***

**Rationale & Key Steps:** National standards for shelter operations were applied to the operations of the shelter and the results indicated that an additional full-time kennel attendant was needed. Although there are no national standards concerning clerical staffing or on-site medical assistance, a single clerical for the shelter operation provides no back-up for vacation or illness, in addition task demands are beyond what can be accomplished by one person. Shelter medical needs are being picked up by volunteers and Animal Control officers. Although volunteers are very important to the operations of the shelter, medical assistance should only be passed on to volunteers under the direction of trained medical personal. In addition having Animal Control staff perform kennel attendant duties or duties of a medical staff is an inefficient use of their expertise and time. Standards of care are reduced when inadequate staffing is provided. Kennels cannot adequately be cleaned which can lead to the spread of disease, vaccinations or medications are not administered in a timely manner, feeding is not properly tracked and/or inefficient use of trained staff is tapped to fill the void.

**Responsible:** Administration and Board of Commissioners

**Cost/Budget:** Approximately \$46,000 per year for a part-time kennel attendant and a part-time vet tech.

***Increase the shelter director position to full-time***

**Rationale & Key Steps:** As evidenced by the number of priority best practice goals needing implementation for the shelter, leadership and management is key to the success. A part-time director does not have the capacity to attend to standard operating duties including backing up staff when needed (from answering the phone, processing an animal intake, to attending to an animal need), attending to administrative functions, overseeing staff and performance appraisals and developing new programs and processes including community outreach. The position of Director of Animal Control Director needs to be filled as a full-time position.

**Responsible:** Administration and Board of Commissioners

**Cost/Budget:** NA

*Require annual training of all shelter/animal control staff to keep abreast of changing practices and protocols, through seminars, conferences and webinar.*

**Rationale & Key Steps:** The field of animal welfare and sheltering is fast track transitioning to a sophisticated professional field. Skills such as conflict resolution to highly technical processes need to investigate for prosecution and insure evidence accuracy is needed for Animal Control officers. Knowledge in animal behavior, medical responses, standards of care and the management of intervention programs is essential for shelter staff. Fortunately there are increasing educational opportunities. Memberships in professional organizations and receiving their newsletters and publications help to keep current in this quickly changing field. Membership is recommended for the Shelter Director with the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA) and membership with the National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA) and Michigan Animal Control Association for the Animal Control Officers should be considered. At least every two years the director should attend one of the national animal welfare conferences and staff should rotate and attend Michigan conferences and workshops. All Animal Control Officers in addition to the Michigan Certification requirements should obtain training in the three different week long training academy sessions offered by NACA. SAWA also offers the Certified Animal Welfare Administrator (CAWA) program which independently validates and recognizes those who can demonstrate that they possess the experience and competencies required for practice as a high-level manager working in animal sheltering and field services.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director

**Cost/Budget:** \$3,000 - \$5,000

*Provide separate functional areas for animals – adoption, stray ward, quarantine, etc. as identified in the report from Dr. Jeff Fortna.*

**Rationale & Key Steps:** Best practices requires that separate functional areas – adoption, stray ward and quarantine be provided within the shelter for both cats and dogs to minimize the spread of illness and keep animals healthy and safe. A change in how the shelter is currently being deployed is needed to accomplish this separation which may also include the installation of shield plates to keep the public away from stray ward animals. In addition, cage size for cats does not meet the minimum requirements as outlined by the Guidelines for Standards for Shelter Care issued by the Association of Shelter veterinarians. Portals can be added between cat cages to provide for minimum standards, however it will decrease the shelter's capacity for cats. Since cat intake is not

required by state law, the decrease in capacity can be addressed through managed intake for cats along with previously suggested best practices.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director, Building and Grounds

**Cost/Budget:** Cost to be determined by Building and Grounds

**Update the county animal control ordinance to include best practices – including Trap, Neuter, Return /Shelter, Neuter, Return, anti-tethering, etc.**

**Rationale & Key Steps:** The County's animal control ordinance needs updating to reflect best practices. Provisions which need further consideration, amendment or incorporation include stray hold, cat licensing, provisions for TNR and SNR. In addition, research has identified that dogs that are tethered for long periods of time and are often referred to as resident dogs are responsible for the majority of bite and attack cases. Consideration should be given to anti-tethering provisions to increase public safety and reduce bites. Increasingly up to date ordinances are providing provisions and increased penalties for dogs that are repeatedly at-large or bite requiring spaying/neutering on a first offense for biting and the second offense for being at-large.

The administrator along with shelter staff and Corporate Counsel will work to update the Animal Control ordinance for presentation to the Board of Commissioner for approval.

**Responsible:** Administrator, Corporate Counsel, and Board of Commissioners

**Cost/Budget:** None

**Develop written protocols/Standard Operating Procedures**

**Rationale & Key Steps:** In 2006 a General Orders & Operations Manual was prepared for Animal Control. The vast majority of these orders and operation are dated and no longer applicable. New written protocols/Standard Operating Procedures are needed both for the shelter and field operations. The following is a list of priority written protocols which should be prepared by the end of 2018.

### **Animal Sheltering**

- Adoption Policy
- Animal Handling Restraint/Safety
- Animal Intake Procedure
- Feeding Protocols
- Lost/Found Reporting
- Medical Protocol for Incoming Animals
- Cleaning Protocol
- Animal Enrichment Protocol
- Rabies Quarantine Procedures
- Transfers to Partner Shelters/Rescue Groups

Treatment Protocol for Sick/Injured Animals

**Euthanasia**

- Euthanasia Determination
- Euthanasia Certification/Procedures
- Euthanasia in the Field
- Owner Requested Euthanasia

**Field Operations**

- Emergency Operations Procedures
- Field Training Officer Program
- General Investigations and Complaints
- Officer Safety/Training Requirements
- Patrol Activity Priorities
- Radio Communications
- Report Writing
- Return of Impounded Animals in the Field

**Personnel**

- Volunteers – Manual, Job Descriptions, etc.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director

**Cost/Budget:** None

***Establish an on-going Friends of the Shelter organization to advise the County Executive and Commission on shelter concerns/issues and to assist staff with the implementation of Best Practices.***

***Rationale & Key Steps:*** The development of this strategy was accomplished with the monthly support and assistance of a working committee. The continuation of such a committee can assist the Shelter Director in implementing the identified goals. Such a committee can not only work as a brainstorming and resource group but can also be a working group that will assist in the research and preparation of plans, policies and documents.

**Responsible:** Shelter Director

**Cost/Budget:** None

### 3.7 Schedule

The following schedule can help provide a guide as to when various items will be worked on and completed.

Priority Goals Implementation Schedule				SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Spay Neuter																			
	Prior to adoption			■	■														
	Support TNR											■	■	■	■				
Pet Retention																			
	Intake process													■	■				
	Resource Inventory									■	■	■	■						
Community Involvement																			
	Expand Outreach							—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Use Social Media							■	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Volunteers																			
	Manual, support items				■	■	■	■	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Proactive Redemptions																			
	Plan/Action								■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
General																			
	New software			■	■	■													
	Additional staff							■	■										
	Full time director							—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Training/Education plan						■												
	Shelter changes																		
	AC Ordinance update											■	■	■					
	Written Procedures			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Support Committee			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

## Chapter 4 – Additional Recommendations and Action Items

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The committee is recommending the following changes/actions to be implemented as soon priority efforts in Chapter 3 are accomplished and staffing resources are available.

### Spay/Neuter

***Collaborate with All About Animals Rescue to develop and offer a low-cost spay/neuter program for all low-income Bay County residents.***

***Institute a Shelter/Neuter/Release program for unadoptable cats within the shelter's care.***

### Comprehensive Adoption Programs

***Increase adoptions of cats through marketing and collaborative programs with the community such as matching with seniors.***

### Medical and Behavior Programs

***Establish collaborations, programs and funding so that all treatable animals are given the opportunity for rehabilitation.***

### Volunteers

***Establish and implement a volunteer supported basic manner training for dogs to increase their "adoptability" and provide enrichment programs to keep dogs and cats mentally and physically healthy for adoption and transfer.***

### General/Administrative

***Develop and update written protocols/Standard Operating Procedures***

***Transitions Friends of the Shelter group to a 501 (c)(3) not for profit organization to assist the shelter in funding and operations.***



## Bay County Animal Control and Care Center

Chairperson Russell and Members of the Animal Control Strategic Planning Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity of visiting your facility May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017. It was a pleasure to meet each of you and learn about your organization. You are to be commended on accepting the challenge of improving the lives of animals in your care. I was notably impressed by the interest of the personnel and volunteers in this assessment process, the quiet shelter environment, the elimination of night drop boxes for the public, and the improved canine live release rate that you have obtained. Improvements are already happening in your space.

The purpose of this report is to encourage your organization towards best practices in animal sheltering. There are four areas that warrant immediate attention, and they have been outlined in this document. These areas involve animal separation, sanitation, vaccination, and feline housing. These areas were addressed in this report because of things that were observed or discussed during the visit. They can be implemented immediately and require minimal cost to you. Discussion of these items with your veterinarian on record would be prudent.

Intermediate and long-term goals for your facility were also considered. Development of these ideas will involve further discussion and planning. Intermediate goals for your facility would include the following:

- 1) Sterilization prior to adoption;
- 2) Community cat management;
- 3) Shelter software for evaluation of population statistics;
- 4) Parasite control program;
- 5) Enrichment and welfare program;
- 6) Feeding program;
- 7) Behavioral assessment training;
- 8) Microchipping animals.

Long-term goals would entail:

- 1) Veterinary personnel (Licensed veterinary technician, veterinarian, etc.);
- 2) On-site veterinary clinic and/or sterilization suite;

Your feedback and questions are anticipated and welcomed. There are generally more solutions than one in animal sheltering. Implementing best shelter practices for the purpose of saving lives is our mutual goal. Together we can make that happen!

Sincerely,  
Jeffrey J Fortna, DVM, MS



## **ANIMAL SEPARATION FOR BEST PRACTICE**

Animals entering shelters should be separated by species, age, and health status for proper maintenance of their health and welfare. The separation of species is clearly accomplished at your facility, and there is apparent effort at separating the ill animals from the healthy animals. The following suggestions are made to improve animal health, shelter flow, and shelter operations.

With three conjoined rooms of cats, it would seem reasonable to have each of them serve a specific purpose. Doors would ideally separate them for clear delineation of space and minimization of disease spread. To hasten matters, a simple sheet would be a “quick fix” and provide a visual reminder for staff. They could be labeled, in order from front to back, as follows: Adoption, Intake and Isolation.

**ADOPTION ROOM:** This room showcases healthy animals that are ready to leave your shelter. Animals in this room would be adoptable animals that were vaccinated on intake, stayed through their stray hold period, and are ready for adoption. This room would be open to the public, and these cats would be the “first seen” by the public.

**INTAKE ROOM:** This room showcases animals that are healthy and are moving towards adoption. Intake animals would be newly admitted, freshly vaccinated at intake, and waiting their stray hold period. This room would be second in the order of succession. The public could view these animals, but they would have to walk through the healthy, adoptable animals first.

**ISOLATION ROOM:** This room showcases animals that are ill. These animals could be anywhere in the flow of the sheltering process. This room would ideally not be open to the public unless escorted there by staff. Personal protective equipment (gloves, gowns, and booties) should be worn to handle and work with these cats in any fashion.

Finally, this scenario leaves a needed space for cats waiting their **BITE QUARANTINE** period. One consideration for these animals would be to place them in cages in one of the small cat rooms that are currently used as a feline play area. This would allow the space to be locked and only observed by personnel. An added benefit to this situation is that a “feline escapee” would be relatively confined to a small space.

Similar concepts must be addressed for dogs in your facility. Four areas must be considered: Adoption, Intake, Quarantine, and Isolation. The following suggestions are made for your current accommodations.



**ADOPTION:** These cage spaces would be located at entry into the main canine shelter space. Potential customers will see adoptable dogs straight away.

**INTAKE:** These cage spaces would be located to the outside of the cat rooms. These cages would be used for large or small dogs, as they are guillotine style configuration. This will allow for ease of sanitation during their stray hold period. These animals would be viewable to the public. (If additional space is needed, they could be placed along the back wall of the shelter where bite quarantine animals are housed.)

**BITE QUARANTINE:** These cage spaces would be along the back wall of the shelter where you currently house such animals. These animals are away from public viewing.

**ISOLATION:** These cage spaces would be located in the back room where you currently have your drop boxes located. While this is not the most ideal space, it does remove your ill animals from the adoptable, intake, and bite quarantine population. Should ill animals be located in this room, euthanasia will have to occur in another space where animals are not housed. Further, if ill animals are in this room, animals that have been dropped off by law enforcement over the evening hours should be walked around the building and through the sally port to enter the shelter. The goal would be to keep ALL healthy-appearing animals out of that space if ill animals are present. Personal protective equipment, as with the cat isolation room, is necessary when working with animals in this space. Any contact with the ill animals warrants use of such equipment (gowns, gloves, booties).

**NOTE:** Moms and their offspring should be housed together and away from the remaining population. These little ones are at greatest risk of illness. The giant breed dog kennel would be an acceptable spot for a canine mom/litter. A "catio" style cage (large cage for cat/kittens) would be appropriate for mom and kittens. This cage could potentially be placed in the community/education room during peak kitten season.



## SANITATION FOR BEST PRACTICE

Good sanitation practices are important for maintaining humane housing and healthy environments for animals in shelters. The sanitation procedure is relatively straightforward, though attention to products used, items to be sanitized, and order of sanitation is essential. Verbal discussion on this matter occurred, but it was not witnessed in action. For this reason, it is prudent to address this topic.

The quaternary ammonium disinfectant, like the one used in your facility, is frequently utilized in shelter environments. While this type of product will do a satisfactory job, it is critical to understand its appropriate use and its limitations. Careful attention to a standard sanitation protocol is essential. The concept is basic:

- 1) Remove all stool, urine, secretions, etc., and rinse with water;
- 2) Scrub all surfaces with soap and rinse with water;
- 3) Disinfect (allowing a 10 minute contact time), rinse with water, and air dry.

***These three steps must be applied to all items in the shelter***—cages, floors, walls, hallways, fixtures, food bowls, toys, litter boxes, litter scoops, leashes, canine and feline communal play spaces, etc. Deviation from these specific steps will potentially subject the population to an illness.

Limitations of the quaternary ammonium compounds include their inconsistent effectiveness against parvovirus and panleukopenia, as well as their ineffectiveness against calicivirus and ringworm. In the face of an outbreak in your facility, alternate disinfectant products should be considered. Mixing disinfectant products is not advised and may be harmful to animals and personnel. A long-term goal for your facility may be the exclusive use of accelerated hydrogen peroxide over the use of a quaternary ammonium product.

Daily sanitation within the shelter should follow a fairly strict order to minimize spread of disease to those that are most vulnerable. The order is as follows:

- 1) Puppies and kittens, along with their nursing moms;
- 2) Healthy adult animals (e.g., adoption, intake, and quarantine spaces);
- 3) Unhealthy animals (e.g., isolation spaces).

While spot cleaning is acceptable practice, appropriate daily husbandry is necessary for sanitary conditions. By all means, complete sanitation of a particular cage or kennel is necessary between animals.



## VACCINATION FOR BEST PRACTICE

Vaccines are vital lifesaving tools in the preventive healthcare program of your shelter. While there are minor variations from shelter to shelter in the vaccinations that are used, there are core vaccines that are recommended by the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP), the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), and the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) for animals in shelters. Core vaccines for cats include feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia (RCP). Core vaccines for dogs include distemper, adenovirus 2, parvovirus, parainfluenza (DA2PP) and *Bordetella bronchiseptica* (Bb). All vaccinations should be documented on the individual animal medical record of the patient when administered. Vaccinations at your facility are being administered, but the variety, type, and timing of vaccination warrants attention.

The variety, type, timing, and frequency of the aforementioned vaccinations are crucial to a successful vaccination program. Subcutaneous, modified live vaccines (MLV) are warranted for RCP (cats) and DA2PP (dogs). An intranasal, modified live *Bordetella bronchiseptica* and parainfluenza vaccination is recommended for dogs. ***All of these vaccinations must be administered to all animals before or at the time of intake to maximize their efficacy.*** Frequency of vaccine administration is dependent on the age of the animal at the time of admission to the shelter. Details of such will be attached to this document on a protocol sheet.

It is recommended that all dogs and cats be vaccinated for rabies upon entry or prior to shelter release according to manufacturer's recommendation and in conjunction with local and state law. Killed or recombinant vaccines may be used.

There are other vaccines that may be considered in shelter care, but they are considered non-core vaccines. Vaccines of this type (e.g., canine influenza virus, feline leukemia virus) are generally recommended in specific situations and may be considered in your future. Supervision and oversight of all vaccinations selected should be at the discretion and direction of the veterinarian on record for the shelter.

*DISCLAIMER: The use of vaccinations on injured, ill, or pregnant animals must be at the discretion of the veterinarian on record. Discussing and outlining a plan of action regarding these specific situations will expedite the optimal care of animals in your facility. The use and implementation of all veterinary biologics and therapeutics are subject to local, state, and federal regulations.*



## VACCINATION PROTOCOL

	<b>CANINE VACCINATIONS</b>	<b>FELINE VACCINATIONS</b>
<b>ADULT</b> (greater than 5 months of age)	<b>DA2PP (MLV)</b> -administer before or at intake  <b>BORDETELLA &amp; PARAINFLUENZA (Intranasal, MLV)</b> -administer before or at intake  <b>RABIES (Killed)</b> -administer at entry or prior to release from the shelter -administer per manufacturer's recommendation and state/local law	<b>RCP (MLV)</b> -administer before or at intake -revaccinate two weeks after initial vaccine  <b>RABIES (Recombinant or Killed)</b> -administer at entry or prior to release from the shelter -administer per manufacturer's recommendation and state/local law
<b>JUVENILE</b> (less than 5 months of age)	<b>DA2PP (MLV)</b> -administer before or at intake -administer beyond 4 weeks of age -revaccinate every 2 weeks until 20 weeks of age  <b>BORDETELLA &amp; PARAINFLUENZA (IN, MLV)</b> -administer before or at intake -administer beyond 4 weeks of age -if 4-6 weeks of age at intake, repeat in 2 weeks -if 6-20 weeks of age, repeat in 1 year  <b>RABIES (Killed)</b> -administer at entry or prior to release from the shelter -administer beyond 12 weeks of age -administer per manufacturer's recommendation and state/local law	<b>RCP (MLV)</b> -administer before or at intake -administer beyond 4 weeks of age -revaccinate every 2 weeks until 20 weeks of age  <b>RABIES (Recombinant or Killed)</b> -administer at entry or prior to release from the shelter -administer beyond 12 weeks of age -administer per manufacturer's recommendation and state/local law



## **FELINE HOUSING FOR BEST PRACTICE**

While there are many components to optimal feline welfare in animal shelters, appropriate housing for cats is high on the list. Suboptimal cat housing incites stress, and stress leads to illness. Provision of a spacious, protective, and appropriately configured housing environment for cats augments their physical and behavioral welfare.

Individual feline housing spaces should have eleven square feet of solid floor space. This is accomplished by adjoining two traditional cages with a porthole. Several of the cages in your facility have these portholes, but not all of them. It would be recommended to convert all cages to this adjoined design. If side-by-side cages are not feasible, a vertical configuration could also be utilized. In addition to the reduction of stress with this housing design, there are the added benefits of cleaning efficiency and personnel safety.

Aside from the space itself, other features to consider in feline housing units are a litter box, food/water bowls, a resting spot, a hiding spot, and a perch. The litter box should be placed two feet away from food/water bowls, as well as the resting spot. This is much easier to accomplish in housing units with multiple compartments as described above. The use of a medium cardboard box placed inside the housing unit fosters a safe and protective hiding space for the cat. Further, placing a soft blanket or towel inside that box will also provide a resting spot. It may even serve as a perch if there is ample height within the cage! If cardboard boxes are not feasible, the use of a paper bag may serve as a hiding spot, as well as a sheet draped over half the cage. There are many possibilities to enhance the feline housing space, but all of these suggestions will augment feline health and welfare.

### **REFERENCES**

- Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, ASV 2010
- Infectious Disease Management in Animal Shelters, 2009
- Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff, 2nd Edition, 2013
- 2011 AAHA Canine Vaccination Guidelines
- 2013 AAFP Feline Vaccination Advisory Panel Report



## EUTHANASIA FOR BEST PRACTICE

The topic of euthanasia in animal sheltering facilities is one of difficulty for most people in the animal welfare industry and local community. The organization's mission and values will help assist the development of policies and procedures for this necessary practice. Consideration of every facet of the euthanasia process should be deeply scrutinized for optimal outcomes: patient selection and purpose for the procedure, techniques and materials utilized, and staff training. Addressing these issues surrounding humane animal euthanasia will make for a concise and intentional organizational use of this process.

Animal selection and purpose for the procedure should be articulated to the extent possible. Often, living documents or guidelines are created within an organization to establish which animal situations warrant euthanasia (trauma, illness, behavior, public health risk, legal mandate, owner request, etc.). Creating such a guideline allows personnel a template for action. Not only will it help in eliminating the guesswork on the difficult decision-making process of euthanasia, it will allow the organization to be unified and transparent in their processes. Articulating a euthanasia guideline does not imply that every situation listed therein will end in euthanasia. Opportunities will arise that permit life-saving alternative measures (rescue efforts, foster care, benevolent donations, e.g.), and those opportunities should be pursued to the extent possible.

Efficient and proficient euthanasia techniques are of utmost importance. This will minimize stress and suffering for animals and humans. The brief description of the euthanasia method implored at your facility is appropriate, though details of the process should be explored. The method of euthanasia utilized should be consistent with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines on Euthanasia. The most humane methods for euthanasia include intravenous (IV) or intraperitoneal (IP) injection of sodium pentobarbital. Implementation of the IP injection technique should only be used with pure sodium pentobarbital and limited to cats, kittens, and small puppies when IV injection techniques are not practical or possible. Further, these animals should be placed in quiet, dark, confined areas and closely monitored to ensure a smooth loss of consciousness and subsequent death. Fearful, stressed, painful, and aggressive animals should be sedated prior to euthanasia with an intramuscular (IM) injection of a ketamine and xylazine mixture. The individual use of ketamine, xylazine, or acepromazine as sedative agents is not recommended for euthanasia. Specific medication selection, usage, dosing, record keeping, and storage are subject to the direction of the veterinarian on record as well as state and federal regulations.



A designated room has already been selected for your facility and should be sufficient to perform the task of euthanasia safely. The room should have no other use, house no animals, and be equipped with all necessary supplies to perform the specific task of euthanasia. An exhaustive list of required items can be referenced below. A particularly helpful and descriptive document is provided by The Humane Society of the United States and entitled, *Euthanasia Reference Manual*. One specific concern regarding equipment in your facility is that of a scale. While a scale may be present, it was not observed during the site visit. A current and accurate animal weight is necessary to perform the task of euthanasia proficiently.

Staff training is warranted for physical and emotional wellbeing. Technical training required for performing euthanasia is described in the Michigan Public Health Code 333.7333(c). Additional resources in gentle physical restraint, medication administration, and confirmation of death may also be referenced in the previously mentioned manual. It would behoove the organization to seek out additional resources within your community for grief counseling of all shelter personnel.

### **REFERENCES**

- Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, ASV 2010  
 Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff, 2nd Edition, 2013  
 Shelter Animal Health, VME 6811, University of Florida, Fall 2014  
<http://www.shelternvet.org/position-statements>  
<https://www.avma.org/kb/policies/documents/euthanasia.pdf>  
<https://www.animalsheltering.org/sites/default/files/content/euthanasia-reference-manual.pdf>  
[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(01nwaibbbkigwyh13ibinssb\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=mcl-333-7333](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(01nwaibbbkigwyh13ibinssb))/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=mcl-333-7333)



## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (TEMPLATE) FOR EUTHANASIA

- 1. Perform euthanasia with an assistant.** Two people should be utilized for safety, efficiency, and transparency of processes unless a true emergency dictates otherwise.
- 2. Wear personal protective equipment.** The use of gowns and gloves will provide protection for the euthanasia technician, minimize the transmission of disease when present, and decrease the stress of those animals sensitive to odors.
- 3. Confirm animal to be euthanized.** The euthanasia technician will verify the animal to be euthanized with the appropriate authority within the organization. This will entail confirming stray-hold or quarantine dates when applicable. The animal's description and identification marker (microchip, collar, tattoo) must be verified prior to procedure.
- 4. Weigh the animal to be euthanized.** This will allow proper dosing of medications and an efficient euthanasia process. If dealing with fractious animals, always estimate weight on the high side.
- 5. Withhold food for two hours prior to sedation.** The removal of food prior to the sedation process will minimize the risk of vomiting and animal stress. In emergency situations, this may not be avoidable.
- 6. Prepare sedative agent for administration.** If a sedative agent is warranted and/or necessary, utilize the sedative per veterinarian directive.
- 7. Restrain animal accordingly.** Restrain the animal intended for euthanasia in a manner that reduces stress and augments human safety. The least amount of restraint to perform the technique is expected.
- 8. Administer the sedative.** With the animal appropriately restrained by an assistant, the euthanasia technician will administer the sedative agent IM. If safe restraint is not possible, the animal to be euthanized should be restrained with a device that is appropriate for its size, weight, and disposition.
- 9. Monitor the animal.** The animal should be monitored following the administration of the sedative. The sedative process may take up to 15 minutes. Once sedation has occurred, approach the animal and evaluate sedation with a gentle touch near the eye (blink reflex) or a firm toe pinch (toe withdrawal reflex). Neither should elicit a response from the animal. If it does, additional sedative is warranted.



10. **Administer euthanasia solution.** The sodium pentobarbital may be administered through IV or IP techniques at the dose prescribed by your veterinarian.
11. **Monitor the animal after euthanasia.** Cessation of heartbeat, respirations, and reflexes *imply* death. This will occur within two minutes. If not, additional sodium pentobarbital is required.
12. **Verify death.** Use of a stethoscope to verify death is necessary. Once death is confirmed, the animal may be placed in a plastic bag for appropriate disposal.
13. **Complete paperwork.** Record keeping of all medications and procedures are necessary for organizational and legal purposes.