

SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO
ANIMALS (SPCA) OF NORTH BREVARD
May 26, 2009

POSITION STATEMENT

PURPOSE:

- Prevention of cruelty to animals
- Provide for humane education to the community
- Provide for sterilization and care of animals through a low-cost spay/neuter and wellness clinic
- Perform sterilization for free for homeless animals that are turned in to the SPCA.
- Assist or subsidize sterilization of animals whose owners cannot afford to pay which is done on a case by case basis as funds are available
- Seek suitable homes for animals without owners

POLICY:

- It is the policy of the Society to provide humane care and treatment for all animals needing protection in the area served by the Society; to seek to return lost animals to their owners; to seek suitable homes for animals without owners; to be an information resource of animal cruelty and abuse.
- The SPCA recognizes the importance of life to all living creatures and will protect the life of all animals under their care and will only consider taking an animal life under the following conditions:
 - To end the life of an animal that is in pain and suffering
 - To end the life of an old animal with badly failing health
 - To stop the spread of a contagious disease on the premises that poses a threat to other animal's health and life
 - To end the life of an animal that is vicious and poses a danger to people and other animals
- Support legislation to enforce mandatory spay/neutering of pets in Brevard County based on the irrefutable evidence that this is the only proven method of achieving a true no-kill environment.
- Promote adoption of pets in shelters rather than purchasing puppies/dogs from pet stores or puppy mills.
- Pet ownership should result from a thoughtful-conscious decision to bring a companion animal into the family with a willingness to make a lifetime commitment to the animal.

ANIMALS AS GIFTS OR PRIZES

The SPCA of North Brevard is supportive of the adoption or acquisition of an animal when the primary consideration is the acquisition of a permanent family pet.

Therefore, the Society opposes the adoption of live animals as gifts or prizes and incentives for commercial promotions. In these situations, there is no knowledge or control of the person who receives the animal, the conditions in which it will live or the use to which it will be put. In addition, there is no opportunity to educate the new owner about caring for the animal or about local animal ordinances. Such situations depreciate the value of an animal's life. In addition, the Society is opposed to the sale of "seasonal or holiday" animals such as baby rabbits and chicks that are sold in conjunction with Easter. Many of these animals suffer and die due to starvation, improper food, cold, abuse, over-handling or neglect.

BANNING OF SPECIFIC BREEDS OF DOGS

The SPCA of North Brevard recognizes dog attacks as a significant community concern. Many communities believe the solution to preventing severe dog attacks is to label, restrict or ban certain breeds of dogs as potentially dangerous.

The Society believes it is unreasonable to characterize an entire breed population by the behavior of those animals implicated in attacks on people. In addition, the characterization and ban do little to prevent severe dog attacks since the real causes and events that contribute to an attack are masked by the issue of breed and not seriously addressed.

While many circumstances contribute to a dog attack, specific factors, such as not having the pet spayed or neutered, play a critical role in canine aggression toward people. To minimize this potential, the Society believes dogs:

SHOULD be socialized as family pets, living within one's home.

SHOULD participate with their owner's in behavioral training based on positive reinforcement techniques.

SHOULD be spayed or neutered as puppies.

SHOULD NOT be acquired for fighting.

SHOULD NOT be used to project a "tough" image.

SHOULD NOT be mistreated, neglected or abused.

SHOULD NOT be consistently chained.

SHOULD NOT be allowed to roam loose.

Finally, with the exception of law enforcement personnel in the performance of their official duties, dogs SHOULD NOT be permitted, encouraged, or trained to behave aggressively toward other animals or people.

The Society believes all parents/guardians have the responsibility to teach their children how to safely interact with animals and to monitor their children while in the presence of animals, whether familiar to the child or not.

BREEDING/SELLING OF DOGS AND CATS

The SPCA of North Brevard identifies pet overpopulation as a significant community problem and, for this reason, opposes the apathetic, careless and/or irresponsible breeding or selling of dogs and cats. Each year, thousands of unwanted animals, purebreds and mixed breeds, are put to death or die - starved or diseased - having been discarded and left to their own resources.

The Society believes those who breed an animal have a responsibility to see to it that the offspring receive lifetime, loving care. In addition, breeders have the responsibility to discuss responsible pet ownership, including the need to spay or neuter, as well as local animal ordinances with the new owner. Breeders should investigate the potential adoptive home to ensure that the environment is adequate for the animal.

The Society believes stores that sell animals have a similar responsibility and must provide appropriate housing, nutrition, medical care, nurturing, socialization, and exercise for the animals in their care. In addition, stores that sell animals have the responsibility to discuss responsible pet ownership, including the need to spay and neuter, as well as local animal ordinances with the new owner.

The Society finds the sale of companion animals from puppy mills and/or other irresponsible breeders unacceptable under any conditions.

DECLAWING OF CATS

THE SPCA of North Brevard recognizes that scratching is a natural behavior of cats. Cats may be defenseless without full use of their claws if they, either intentionally or unintentionally, go outdoors. Scratching damage to household furnishings can be minimized or avoided by routine clipping of the claws, the use of claw covers and by redirecting the cat's activity to acceptable surfaces.

The SPCA of North Brevard believes the declawing of cats (onychectomy) and the severing of digital tendons (tendonectomy) to be elective surgical procedures that are without benefit to the cat. Because of the discomfort associated with any surgery and potential future behavioral or physical effects, the Society generally disapproves of routine declawing or tendonectomy surgery in lieu of alternative solutions to prevent household damage.

As with any elective surgery, the client should be advised of all advantages, disadvantages and available options. Veterinarians have an obligation to provide cat owners with complete education with regard to declawing prior to performing the procedure. Declawing is not a medically necessary procedure in most cases. While rare in occurrence, there are inherent risks and complications with any surgical procedure including, but not limited to, anesthetic complications, side effects associated with analgesics, hemorrhage and infection. If a cat is declawed, they should be housed indoors at all times.

FREE ROAMING HOUSE CATS

The SPCA of North Brevard believes all companion animals should be maintained in loving homes with the physical and nurturing care they need. The Society is strongly in favor of keeping all pet cats indoors. The Society believes cats are safest when sheltered from disease, attacks by other animals or people, traffic, and all other outdoor dangers. In addition, it is the duty of anyone taking responsibility for the health and well-being of an indoor cat to provide a stimulating and interesting living environment.

Finally, the Society strongly believes that spay/neuter surgery for all cats is critical to preventing overpopulation and that regular veterinary care, including annual exams, tests and vaccinations, is critical to maintaining the health and well-being of all pet cats.

FIGHTING OR 'BAITING' OF ANIMALS

The SPCA of North Brevard is unalterably opposed to so-called blood sports, such as dog-fighting, cock-fighting, bull-fighting and similar spectacles. In addition, the Society is opposed to "baiting" of animals or so called bloodless sports which tease, torment and stress animals.

The Society maintains that all of these animal contests or activities are inhumane due to harassment, suffering, and torture of the animals forced to participate. Torture of animals for fun and/or sport is degrading and unfit for a civilized society.

PET OVERPOPULATION

Every year, millions of cats and dogs are euthanized in our nation's animal shelters because there are more companion animals than there are responsible homes for them. Preventing the proliferation of these unwanted pets would dramatically decrease their numbers and the resulting deaths.

To ensure that all adopted animals are unable to reproduce, surgery should be performed prior to all animals leaving for their new homes.

The SPCA of North Brevard believes no dog or cat adopted from a shelter should be allowed to reproduce. Furthermore, given the current prevalence of breeding operations and the already existing overpopulation of dogs and cats, failure to spay/neuter one's own animals is irresponsible.

In addition, the support of spay/neuter operations through low-cost spay/neuter clinics has proven to be an effective way to counter pet overpopulation. The reduction in cost serves to motivate both those who cannot and those who will not pay the "market" price for the operations.

FERAL CATS

The SPCA of North Brevard supports the stabilization and reduction of the feral cat population. The Society supports trap/neuter/return as the most humane strategy for managing feral cats. Healthy adult cats too wild to be adopted are returned to their familiar habitat under the lifelong care of committed volunteers.

The Society supports feral cat colonies located where the cats are not endangered and the feeding and continued support will be less visible to the public in order to limit abandonment of additional cats. Finally, the Society strongly believes that spay/neuter/ surgeries for all cats is critical to preventing overpopulation.

Approved by the Board of Directors May 26, 2009