

## Euthanasia Policy

The vision of the Florida Keys SPCA is to inspire and engage the community to end animal suffering. We accomplish this through our mission: The Florida Keys SPCA is dedicated to the protection of abandoned, unwanted and mistreated animals by providing a safe environment, health care and adoption service.

Euthanasia is not considered for adoptable animals that have been relinquished to the Florida Keys SPCA. Our commitment to the adoptable animals in our care means that we are willing to pursue all reasonable efforts in order to provide for their well-being.

For the purpose of this policy, adoptable shall include those animals that at, or subsequent to, the time the animal is taken into possession, have manifested no signs of a behavioral or temperamental defect that could pose a health or safety risk or otherwise make the animal unsuitable for placement as a pet, and have manifested no sign of disease, injury, congenital or hereditary condition that adversely affects the health of the animal, or that is likely to adversely affect the animal's health in the future or requiring any medical or behavioral intervention.

Should an animal enter our shelter that does not fit the adoptable criteria we will make every reasonable effort to evaluate the potential of adoptability and use necessary resources to ensure that the animal is given every opportunity to become adoptable.

Euthanasia because of lack of space is **not** an acceptable option. Euthanasia is to be considered only after a reasonable and appropriate pursuit of all other viable options. Euthanasia is only performed when there is a consensus that it is the most humane offering for the animal in question or the only reasonable option to ensure staff or community safety. It is never a decision that is made without the utmost consideration for all of the factors, as we know them.

Animals who are suffering mentally, emotionally or physically may be candidates for euthanasia. Animals with a poor prognosis, protracted painful recovery, incurable illness, are non-responsive to treatment or if treatment is not reasonably available, are candidates for euthanasia. Animals who are deemed to pose an unacceptable danger to other animals, themselves or the public are candidates for euthanasia. The euthanasia process is initiated by the Animal Care, or Behavior department staff, based on input and discussion with involved staff members of his or her department.

Each animal admitted into the Florida Keys SPCA's adoption program will continue to be evaluated in its entirety, taking into account both behavior and medical conditions. A condition that may not necessitate euthanasia on its own, when present in combination with other issues (such as a medical condition occurring with behavior issues), may lead to the decision to euthanize.

Alternative options will always be reasonably explored for animals initially accepted for adoption but that fail to continue to meet the criteria for adoptability.

Some examples of options to pursue include, but are not limited to: cooperating with other placement facilities, assisting with appropriate foster care or adopting the animal with a medical or behavior waiver. In some cases, the director or assigned representative will be responsible for contacting previous private party owners (unless they have requested that they not be contacted). If the previous owner wishes to reclaim the animal in question, it will be discussed and considered.

If an animal is not meeting the FKSPCA's adoption criteria for any reason during their stay, they will be placed on a watch list for review and initiation of appropriate rehabilitation or alternative placement.

### **Euthanasia Protocol**

Euthanasia for animals originally accepted into our adoption program is based on the following criteria:

#### **Medically Necessitated Euthanasia:**

Euthanasia is considered for animals who are suffering from a contagious, serious or chronic illness. Euthanasia may also be requested for injured animals that are suffering or cannot be treated with reasonable efforts to avoid unnecessary suffering.

In all cases of euthanasia for medical reasons, the director or assigned representative will sign the euthanasia request upon consultation and recommendation from treating veterinarian. In the event of a medical emergency and/or to alleviate severe suffering, euthanasia may be performed prior to obtaining all signatures at the request, or under the guidance of a veterinarian.

Examples of conditions which may necessitate euthanasia are: fading/collapsing kittens, organ failure, feline leukemia, feline immunodeficiency, feline infectious peritonitis, chronic debilitation, certain congenital abnormalities or defects, or any serious/chronic illness with a poor prognosis or not reasonably responsive to treatment. Quality of life and risk to the health of other animals and humans will be considered in the decision.

#### **Behaviorally Necessitated Euthanasia:**

Euthanasia request for behavioral reasons may be generated by a concern that the animal poses an unmanageable threat to staff and public safety or to other animals or by a concern for the quality of life an animal is likely to achieve when behavior modification regimes cannot lessen the exhibition of severe distress.

Examples where euthanasia may be considered include:

- **Injury Inflicted:** Animals who at any time during their stay at the Florida Keys SPCA inflict injury to a person or another animal through biting or severe scratching (cats). Each injury incident will be immediately reviewed and assessed on an individual basis for on-going safety considerations. An animal assessment will be made by the department manager of behavior and training or their

designee in partnership with the director or their designee. Dogs whose bites are considered isolated incidents will be returned to the adoption program after the required quarantine period and further behavior assessment.

- **Threatening Behavior:** Animals who at any time during their stay at the Florida Keys SPCA display threatening behavior with an intent to intimidate or harm a person or another animal. Each incident will be immediately reviewed and assessed on an individual basis to determine potential for escalation to causing injury. Assessment will be by the manager of the behavior and training department or his/her designee in partnership with the director or their designee. Animals whose threatening behaviors are considered isolated incidents will be observed regularly according to a written plan developed by the behavior and training department manager in cooperation with the animal care department. Complete behavior re-assessment by the manager of behavior and training and the director is required before re-entry to the adoption program.
- **Intolerance of Handling:** Animals, who cannot tolerate normal handling or kennel housing procedures, displayed by extreme fearfulness or extremely rough responses, requiring more than a reasonable amount of accommodation. Reasonable accommodations include, but are not limited to: slower handling, use of treats or other motivations, removal from kennel or cage for cleaning procedures, limiting contact to selected staff members, changing location for handling procedures, environmental enrichment, kennel shields, limited muzzling for medical procedures, etc.
- **Distress:** Animals who exhibit distress to the point of self-injury. This may take the form of not eating, self-mutilation, constant vocalization, constant pacing, elimination problems, etc. All efforts will be made to improve their environment in an attempt to provide some relief to the animal. If we cannot find a way to make the animal more at ease, euthanasia may be the kindest option to end this suffering.

If any of the above situations is considered symptomatic of an underlying treatable behavior or temperament issue, the animal will be removed from the adoption program for intensive “special needs” training prior to a formal proposal for euthanasia. “Special needs” training can be considered only as current space and resources allow and will not be available in every situation. Complete behavior re-assessment by the manager of behavior and training and director is required before re-entry to the adoption program.

In all cases of behaviorally necessitated euthanasia, the requesting behavior and training manager, and the director will document reason for and all viable options explored on the animals record before signing approval.

### **Procedure Upon Decision to Euthanize:**

Once all reasonable efforts have been exhausted, the euthanasia authorization process is initiated by 5 p.m.\*, which for the purpose of this document will be the end of business day. Anyone who has questions or input about an animal scheduled for euthanasia is encouraged to discuss their concerns with the director and/or the manager of behavior and training.

If there is a difference of opinion between the manager of behavior and training and the director (for behavior/temperament reasons), or the veterinarian and director (for medical reasons), about whether said animal should be euthanized, it is at the responsibility of the director to resolve this issue.

If the director approves the request as the only alternative for the animal, she will return the signed request to the euthanasia technician to proceed with the euthanasia. The euthanasia technician will schedule the animal to be euthanized in no less than 24-hours and no more than 48-hours (unless there is an extenuating circumstance). In the event of an extenuating circumstance, the 48-hour time period may be extended by the director. Animals that are to be euthanized will be assured the following upon completion of the euthanasia approval.

All animals:

- Will be given special foods and/or treats, as prescribed by the behavior, and animal care staff.
- Will be given soft, comfortable bedding and toys.
- When appropriate, the animal will receive visits from staff and volunteers.
- When appropriate, the behavior staff and/or animal care staff will spend quality time with the animal. This special time may involve going on a long walk (if a dog), playing in the play yard off leash (if a dog), spending quiet time in the room or engaging in an activity specifically tailored to meet the needs of the animal.

After the euthanasia is performed, the animal care staff member will complete the documentation of used drugs in the log book and in the computer on the animal's record.

\*If the animal poses an immediate and serious danger to animals and/or people or in the event of a medical emergency, euthanasia will be performed immediately, with paperwork and authorization to be finalized within 24-hours.

### **Procedure to carry out euthanasia:**

The safety of the staff, as well as the comfort of the animal, is paramount and will be considered when determining how the procedure is performed. Staff will strive, under the direction of the director, to use all modalities available to minimize the stress to the animal and to maximize safety of the staff. Pre-tranquilization will be considered in all cases where it will help achieve these stated goals.

When approved by the director and the manager of behavior and training, a member of the behavior and training department (BRAT) may be present for euthanasia necessitated for behavior/temperament problems. Due to space constraints, this will be on a limited basis.

The designated animal care staff member will get the animal from its kennel or cage and take the necessary time to calm the animal prior to the euthanasia procedure. The euthanasia process will be conducted in a manner humane and respectful to the animal. Euthanasia is performed solely by Certified Euthanasia Technicians, following the AVMA and HSUS guidelines. After the euthanasia is completed, the animal will continue to be handled in an appropriate and respectful manner.

For euthanasia appointments, please contact:

305-294-4857, [info@fkspca.org](mailto:info@fkspca.org)

For information about this policy, please contact:

Director, Tammy Fox

305-294-4857, [tammy@fkspca.org](mailto:tammy@fkspca.org)