

the veterinarian's role in

# Animal Welfare

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APRIL 2010



AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



## **AVMA ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITTEE**

The AVMA helps veterinarians keep abreast of the scientific, ethical, and public policy aspects of animal welfare decision-making. Its Animal Welfare Committee is charged with identifying, prioritizing, and studying animal welfare issues of importance to the Association and the profession of veterinary medicine.

The AVMA Animal Welfare Committee was established in July 1981. In April 2006, based on a recommendation from the AVMA's Animal Welfare Governance Task Force, the AVMA Executive Board approved a revised charge, composition, and structure for the Committee to enable it to better assist the AVMA's leadership and membership in responding effectively and proactively to emerging issues. The actions and activities of the Animal Welfare Committee are guided by the AVMA Animal Welfare Principles, which appear on page 1 of this policy brochure.

The Committee has 18 members, who represent the American Animal Hospital Association, American Association of Avian Pathologists, American Association of Equine Practitioners, American Association of Corporate and Public Practice Veterinarians, American Association of Feline Practitioners, American Association of Bovine Practitioners, American Association of Swine Veterinarians, American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners, American Society of Laboratory Animal Practitioners, American Society of Veterinary Medical Association Executives, Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, Association of Shelter Veterinarians, Association of Avian Veterinarians, aquatic animal medicine, humane or animal welfare organizations, state veterinary medical associations, Student AVMA, and zoo and wildlife medicine.

The following policies are current as of April 2010. AVMA policies are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Please visit the AVMA's Animal Welfare webpage at [www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare) for the most current version of policies.

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# **AVMA ANIMAL WELFARE PRINCIPLES**

(Approved November 2006)

The AVMA, as a medical authority for the health and welfare of animals, offers the following eight integrated principles for developing and evaluating animal welfare policies, resolutions, and actions.

- The responsible use of animals for human purposes, such as companionship, food, fiber, recreation, work, education, exhibition, and research conducted for the benefit of both humans and animals, is consistent with the Veterinarian's Oath.
- Decisions regarding animal care, use, and welfare shall be made by balancing scientific knowledge and professional judgment with consideration of ethical and societal values.
- Animals must be provided water, food, proper handling, health care, and an environment appropriate to their care and use, with thoughtful consideration for their species-typical biology and behavior.
- Animals should be cared for in ways that minimize fear, pain, stress, and suffering.
- Procedures related to animal housing, management, care, and use should be continuously evaluated, and when indicated, refined or replaced.
- Conservation and management of animal populations should be humane, socially responsible, and scientifically prudent.
- Animals shall be treated with respect and dignity throughout their lives and, when necessary, provided a humane death.
- The veterinary profession shall continually strive to improve animal health and welfare through scientific research, education, collaboration, advocacy, and the development of legislation and regulations.

## **GENERAL**

### **Responsible Use of Animals for Human Purposes**

(Approved July 2006)

Resolved, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) affirms the responsible use of animals for human purposes, such as companionship, food, fiber, education, exhibition, and research conducted for the benefit of humans and animals, is consistent with the principles of the Veterinarian's Oath. These principles include: (*continued on following page*)

- The protection of animal health,
- The relief of animal suffering,
- The conservation of animal resources,
- The promotion of public health, and
- The advancement of medical knowledge.

## **Regulations and Policies Regarding Animal Use**

(Approved July 2002; revised June 2007)

In exercising its leadership role in assuring the health and well-being of animal populations in the United States, the American Veterinary Medical Association will work to prevent promulgation of regulations and implementation of policies that increase regulatory burden without clearly benefiting the welfare of animals or protecting the food supply and/or the public at large. As a matter of principle, the AVMA will promote the veterinary expertise of its members and their right to exercise professional judgment in using that expertise to ensure appropriate care and treatment for animals under their charge.

## **Establishing Public Policy to Ensure Animal Well Being**

(Approved January 2010)

### **Process**

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) supports the use of appropriately constituted expert bodies to establish public policy on animal welfare. Such standard-setting bodies should strive for continual improvement of animal care systems through comprehensive evaluations that are based on sound science, with appropriate consideration for the practical implementation of their recommendations and societal preferences regarding animal use.

We further believe that such standard-setting bodies, and related public policy, should be established through regular legislative and regulatory processes, which, by design, include opportunities for appropriate stakeholder engagement.

Although the AVMA recognizes the value of ballot initiatives, which provide an important opportunity for direct public engagement and help ensure the legitimacy of the democratic process, it does have concerns about using ballot initiatives to establish public policy on issues that do not lend themselves to "yes" or "no" answers. Ballot initiatives are poorly designed for addressing complex issues (e.g., setting animal care standards) in that they are narrow in their mechanism of effect, limit the amount and detail of information that can be  
*(continued on following page)*



provided to the public, and offer minimal opportunities for expert input. To achieve their desired objectives, regulatory actions related to animal care and welfare need to arise from a consensus built via a greater public understanding of animal needs and industry practices, and a greater industry understanding of public attitudes and ethical needs. The "yes" or "no" responses required by ballot initiatives may be destructive of this type of mutual understanding and the related campaigns tend to entrench opposing camps and focus attention on differences in opinion, rather than shared goals.

Whereas ballot initiatives can precipitate a polarizing public debate based on incomplete information, legislative and regulatory processes typically engage multiple experts and viewpoints and facilitate discussion. The latter contributes to responsible recommendations that can be practically implemented, and the end result benefits animals, those in the animal use industries and consumers.

### **Composition of Standard-Setting Bodies**

Representation on standard-setting bodies established via regular legislative and regulatory processes should be well-balanced, both in technical expertise and viewpoint. Balance is essential to ensure good outcomes for animal care and to achieve public acceptability and support.

Technical expertise on standard-setting bodies allows animal care decisions to be made that appropriately address the variety of factors impacting animal well being, including access to quality food and water in appropriate amounts; protection of animals from disease, injury, predators, and adverse environmental conditions; provision of sufficient space and opportunity to allow animals to perform necessary species-typical behaviors; proper handling and transportation; and, when needed, timely euthanasia. As animal care experts, veterinarians and animal welfare scientists bring to the table not only their technical understanding of animals' physical and mental needs, but also an appropriate focus on balancing those needs with animal use practicalities and public expectations. Veterinarians and animal welfare scientists, who have been professionally trained to responsibly advance animal care, should thereby be given substantial opportunity for representation.

Varying constituencies and viewpoints also deserve representation on standard-setting bodies, because they facilitate and can help ensure complete discourse. A diverse set of individuals can raise questions and concerns that help ensure all pertinent issues are addressed. Membership should include practical expertise from the animal use industries, as well as individuals representing animal protection groups and the general public. The number of individuals from each community should be balanced so as to ensure appropriate representation of their respective interests.

## **Ownership Vs Guardianship**

(Approved May 2003; revised April 2005)

Terminology Describing the Relationship Between Animals and Their Owners.

The American Veterinary Medical Association promotes the optimal health and welfare of animals. Further, the AVMA recognizes the role of responsible owners in providing for their animals' care. Any change in terminology describing the relationship between animals and owners, including "guardian," does not strengthen this relationship and may, in fact, harm it. Such changes in terminology may adversely affect the ability of society to obtain and deliver animal services and, ultimately, result in animal suffering.

## **Animal Abuse and Animal Neglect**

(Approved November 1995; revised April 2000, November 2009)

The AVMA recognizes that veterinarians may observe cases of animal abuse or neglect as defined by federal or state laws, or local ordinances. The AVMA considers it the responsibility of the veterinarian to report such cases to appropriate authorities, whether or not reporting is mandated by law. Disclosure of abuse is necessary to protect the health and welfare of animals and people. Veterinarians should be aware that accurate record keeping and documentation of these cases are essential. The AVMA considers it the responsibility of the veterinarian to educate clients regarding humane care and treatment of animals.

## **Pain in Animals**

(Approved April 2001)

The AVMA believes that animal pain and suffering are clinically important conditions that adversely affect an animal's quality of life. Drugs, techniques, or husbandry methods used to prevent and control pain must be tailored to individual animals and should be based, in part, on the species, breed, age, procedure performed, degree of tissue trauma, individual behavioral characteristics, degree of pain, and health status.

## **Physical Restraint of Animals**

(Approved November 2001; revised June 2007)

Humane and safe physical restraint is the use of manual or mechanical means to limit some or all of an animal's normal voluntary movement for the purposes of examination, collection of samples, drug administration, therapy, or manipulation. The method used should provide the least restraint required to  
*(continued on following page)*

allow the specific procedure(s) to be performed properly, should minimize fear, pain, stress and suffering for the animal, and should protect both the animal and personnel from harm. In some situations, chemical restraint may be the preferred method. Whenever possible, restraint should be planned, formulated, and communicated prior to its application.

## **Use of Electro Muscular Disruption Devices (EMDDs) on Animals**

(Approved April 2010)

EMDDs (including stun guns and devices known by trade name "TASER®") should not be used on any animal for routine capture or restraint.

EMDD's may be used as a defensive tool to provide an Animal Control *or* Law Enforcement Officer with non-lethal force in response to aggressive dogs or similar sized animals in accordance with agency training, policies and procedures. EMDD's can be lethal and should not be used on cats or other small animals.

For additional information on electro muscular disruption devices, please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/taser\\_devices\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/taser_devices_bgnd.asp)

## **Euthanasia of Animals that are Unwanted or Unfit for Adoption**

(Approved April 2000; revised November 2007)

The AVMA is not opposed to the euthanasia of unwanted animals or those unfit for adoption, when conducted by qualified personnel, using appropriate humane methods as described in the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia.

## **AVMA Guidelines for Veterinarians and Veterinary Associations Working with Animal Control and Animal Welfare Organizations**

(Approved November 2007)

### **Statement of Position**

Veterinarians, veterinary associations, animal control agencies, and animal welfare organizations have a common bond in the preservation of the life, health, and general well-being of animals of all species.

Veterinary medical associations, animal control agencies, and animal welfare organizations should promote responsible pet ownership and proper, humane care of animals through published literature and individual counseling by their members and staff. *(continued on following page)*

## **Recommendations to Veterinarians and Veterinary Associations**

It is recommended that veterinarians and veterinary associations participate in the activities of animal control and animal welfare organizations. This can best be accomplished through membership and active participation in animal control and animal welfare organizations and by offering advice, professional services, and veterinary skills to these organizations and/or their representatives.

Professional skills and services should be offered to animal control and animal welfare organizations at the local, state, and national levels to ensure a coordinated effort and maintain communication. When offering professional services to such organizations, a veterinarian's or veterinary association's recommendations, decisions, and actions must conform to accepted standards of veterinary practice and the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Veterinarians and veterinary associations must decide for themselves whether to cooperate with animal control and animal welfare organizations to provide special plans and/or services, such as health examinations, surgery, immunizations, and/or advice on matters such as sanitation and disease and parasite control. The scope of professional services and detailed contractual arrangements to provide these services must be worked out in advance to the mutual satisfaction of the animal control or animal welfare organization and the veterinarian or veterinary association concerned. Such plans and professional services, when agreed upon, must give the veterinarian responsibility for making medical recommendations in accord with patient needs. In addition, contractual agreements should be consistently adhered to and reviewed on a regular basis.

When a veterinarian is presented with an animal for evaluation and care, the veterinarian must confer with the responsible agent of the animal control or animal welfare organization and explain the diagnosis, recommend optional methods of treatment, if any, offer a prognosis, and discuss anticipated costs of treatment. The two parties should consult periodically on the progress of each case to preclude misunderstandings as to the extent of care, or the fees to be incurred. Fees for services should be determined by the veterinarian and the animal control or animal welfare organization as negotiable items. Veterinarians must not render less than their usual high quality services, regardless of the fee charged.

# **ANIMALS USED IN ENTERTAINMENT**

## **Animals Used In Entertainment, Shows, and for Exhibition**

(Approved November 2007)

The AVMA supports the humane and ethical use of animals in spectator events, shows, exhibitions, motion pictures, and television in accord with existing federal, state, and local animal protection laws. The AVMA encourages all organizations involved with animals in spectator events, shows, exhibitions, motion pictures, and television to develop, implement, and enforce appropriate guidelines or standards to ensure humane treatment of these animals, including provision of veterinary care.

Further, the AVMA recommends that any spectator events involving animals be conducted in a manner that minimizes injury and that veterinary care be provided or be readily available. Examples of such events include but are not limited to animal exhibitions, dog racing, dog sled racing, field trials, horseracing, polo, and rodeo.

The AVMA condemns the fraudulent use of drugs, non-nutritive agents, or procedures intended to alter performance, conformation, appearance, or other functions of animals in competition. The Association urges its members to report such activities to the appropriate authorities.

The AVMA also condemns the use of live animals for training racing dogs, and the practice of “soring” as defined by and covered under The Horse Protection Act, 15 U.S.C §§ 1821-1831; 9 C.F.R ch.1, parts 11, 12.

## **Animal Fighting**

(Approved November 1999; revised April 2000, June 2007)

The AVMA condemns events involving animals in which injury or death is intended. The AVMA supports the enforcement of laws against the use and transport of animals and equipment for fighting ventures. Further, the AVMA recommends that animal fighting be considered a felony offense. The AVMA encourages veterinarians to collaborate with law enforcement with respect to recognition, enforcement, and education.

# **ANIMALS USED IN RESEARCH AND TEACHING**

## **Use of Animals in Research, Testing, and Education**

(Approved 1983; revised November 1995, November 2007)

The AVMA recognizes that animals play a central and essential role in research, testing, and education for continued improvement in the health and welfare of human beings and animals. The AVMA also recognizes that humane care of animals used in research, testing, and education is an integral part of those activities. In keeping with these concerns, the AVMA endorses the principles embodied in the "Three R" tenet of Russell and Burch (1959). These principles are: refinement of experimental methods to eliminate or reduce animal pain and distress; reduction of the number of animals consistent with sound experimental design; and replacement of animals with non-animal methods wherever feasible.

The use of animals in research, testing, and education is a privilege carrying with it unique professional, scientific, and moral obligations, and ethical responsibilities. The AVMA encourages proper stewardship of all animals, but defends and promotes the use of animals in meaningful research, testing, and education programs.

The AVMA condemns all acts of violence, vandalism, or intimidation directed toward individuals, facilities, or tertiary organizations affiliated with the use of animals in research, testing, or education.

## **Safety Testing**

(Approved November 1991; revised June 2002, November 2008)

The AVMA supports the research and development of safe and efficacious drugs, vaccines, chemical compounds, and medical devices that benefit humans and animals through humane and responsible safety testing, using scientifically valid principles and procedures.

The AVMA supports research, development, and validation of alternative testing methods that replace animals, reduce the numbers of animals used, and/or refine animal use to minimize pain and/or distress. The AVMA endorses activities that are designed to evaluate the scientific validity of new alternative test methods. However, the AVMA supports the protection of human and animal health and will continue to oppose activities that seek to eliminate animal-based safety assessments that are not based on sound scientific principles.

## **Use of Random-Source Dogs and Cats for Research, Testing, and Education**

(Approved 1983; revised June 1991, April 2000, November 2007, January 2010)

The carefully controlled use of random-source dogs and cats contributes greatly to improving the health and welfare of both animals and human beings.

Therefore, the AVMA believes there is ample justification for prudent and humane use of random-source dogs and cats in research, testing, and education, provided that:

- The institution conducting such research, testing, or education has met all legal requirements and guidelines pertaining to the acquisition, care, and use of dogs and cats for these purposes;
- The investigators have thoughtfully examined the need for such dogs and cats and have appropriately selected the species and carefully determined the number required to meet the needs of the protocol;
- Adequate safeguards are used to ensure that only appropriately screened dogs and cats are obtained legally; and preventive measures are taken to optimize the health of dogs and cats used in research, testing, and education.
- Class B dealers are used to obtain random-source dogs and cats only when viable alternatives do not exist; and
- Alternative sources are explored and supported that will ultimately eliminate the need for Class B dealers as a source for random-source dogs and cats used in search, testing, and education.

## **USDA-APHIS Animal Welfare Program**

(Approved 1983; revised May 2003, April 2009)

The AVMA supports enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act for the protection of animals (as designated by the Secretary of Agriculture) used for nonagricultural research, testing, teaching, or exhibition. The AVMA encourages adequate funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to conduct activities necessary to ensure compliance with the Act.

## **Use of Animals in Precollege Education**

(Approved November 1989; revised June 2002, November 2007)

The AVMA endorses the following “Principles and Guidelines for the Use of Animals in Precollege Education,” as prepared by the Institute of Laboratory Animal Research (ILAR), Commission on Life Sciences, National Research (*continued on following page*)

Council, National Academy of Sciences, and National Academy of Engineering.

“Live demonstrations and experiments involving animals in precollege education are valuable ways to excite children about science. ILAR believes that the judicious use of animals in these setting should continue, as long as it is appropriately planned and supervised and does not interfere with an animal’s health and well being. Many schools have modified the use of animals in their teaching programs in response to concerns of society, and many more are contemplating such changes.

To help schools implement these changes, ILAR has recommended a new set of principles for the use of animals in precollege science projects. Providing explicit guidance on planning, supervision, animal care, and avoidance of pain and discomfort, the principles are in line with current approaches to the use of animals in higher education and research. Although the principles are not legally binding, ILAR believes these can help improve the scientific integrity of precollege research and encourage more humane treatment of animals.

The humane study of animals in precollege education can provide important learning experiences in science and ethics and should be encouraged. Maintaining classroom pets in preschool and grade school can teach respect for other species, as well as proper animal husbandry practices. Introduction of secondary school students to animal studies in closely supervised settings can reinforce those early lessons and teach the principles of humane care and use of animals in scientific inquiry. The National Research Council recommends compliance with the following principles whenever animals are used in precollege education or in science fair projects.

### **Principle 1**

Observational and natural history studies that are not intrusive (that is, do not interfere with an animal’s health or well being or cause it discomfort) are encouraged for all classes of organisms. When an intrusive study of a living organism is deemed appropriate, consideration should be given first to using plants (including lower plants such as yeast and fungi) and invertebrates with no nervous systems or with primitive ones (including protozoa, planaria, and insects).

Intrusive studies of invertebrates with advanced nervous systems (such as octopi) and vertebrates should be used only when lower invertebrates are not suitable and only under the conditions stated below in Principle 10. *(continued on following page)*



## **Principle 2**

Supervision shall be provided by individuals who are knowledgeable about and experienced with the health, husbandry, care, and handling of the animal species used and who understand applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

## **Principle 3**

Appropriate care for animals must be provided daily, including weekends, holidays, and other times when school is not in session. This care must include:

- Nutritious food and clean, fresh water;
- Clean housing with space and enrichment suitable for normal species behaviors;
- Temperature and lighting appropriate for the species.

## **Principle 4**

Animals should be healthy and free of diseases that can be transmitted to humans or to other animals. Veterinary care must be provided as needed.

## **Principle 5**

Students and teachers should report immediately to the school health authority all scratches, bites, and other injuries; allergies; or illnesses.

## **Principle 6**

Prior to obtaining animals for educational purposes, it is imperative that the school develop a plan for their procurement and ultimate disposition. Animals must not be captured from or released into the wild without the approval of the responsible wildlife and public health officials. When euthanasia is necessary it should be performed in accordance with the most recent recommendations of the American Veterinary Medical Association's Guidelines on Euthanasia. It should be performed only by someone trained in the appropriate technique.

## **Principle 7**

Students shall not conduct experimental procedures on animals that:

- Are likely to cause pain or discomfort or interfere with an animal's health or well being. (*continued on following page*)

- Induce nutritional deficiencies or toxicoses; or
- Expose animals to microorganisms, ionizing radiation, cancer-producing agents, or any other harmful drugs or chemical capable of causing disease, injury, or birth defects in humans or animals.
- In general, procedures that cause pain in humans are considered to cause pain in other vertebrates.

### **Principle 8**

Experiments on avian embryos that might result in abnormal chicks or in chicks that might experience pain or discomfort shall be terminated 72 hours prior to the expected date of hatching. The eggs shall be destroyed to prevent inadvertent hatching.

### **Principle 9**

Behavioral conditioning studies shall not involve aversive stimuli. In studies using positive reinforcement, animals should not be deprived of water; food deprivation intervals should be appropriate for the species, but should not continue longer than 24 hours.

### **Principle 10**

A plan for conducting an experiment with living animals must be prepared in writing and approved prior to initiating the experiment or to obtaining the animals. Proper experimental design of projects and concern for animal welfare are important learning experiences and contribute to respect for and appropriate care of animals. The plan shall be reviewed by a committee composed of individuals who have the knowledge to understand and evaluate it and who have the authority to approve or disapprove it. The written plan should include the following:

- A statement of the specific hypotheses or principles to be tested, illustrated, or taught;
- A summary of what is known about the subject under study, including references;
- A detailed description of the methods and procedures to be used, including experimental design; data analysis; and all aspects of animal procurement, care, housing, use, and disposal. (*continued on following page*)

## Exceptions

Exceptions to principles 7 through 10 may be granted under special circumstances by a panel appointed by the school principal or his or her designee. This panel should consist of at least three individuals, including a science teacher, a teacher of a nonscience subject, and a scientist or veterinarian who has expertise in the subject matter involved.<sup>1</sup> At least one panel member should not be affiliated with the school or science fair, and none should be a member of the student's family."

<sup>1</sup> In situations where an appropriate scientist is not available to assist the student, the Institute of Laboratory Animal Research (ILAR) might be able to provide referrals. Write to ILAR, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20418, or call (202) 334-2590.

## COMPANION ANIMALS

### Dog and Cat Population Control

(Approved November 2004, revised April 2009)

The population of dogs and cats in the United States currently exceeds the capacity of our society to care and provide homes for them as companion animals. As a result, millions do not have homes and are euthanatized annually by animal control agencies, humane organizations, and veterinarians in private practice. Dogs and cats that are not adopted can become victims of trauma, starvation, or disease. The AVMA concludes that dog and cat population control is a primary welfare concern of our society.

#### A. Public Policy

The AVMA does not support regulations or legislation mandating spay/neuter of privately owned, non-shelter dogs and cats. Although spaying and neutering helps control dog and cat populations, mandatory approaches may contribute to pet owners avoiding licensing, rabies vaccination and veterinary care for their pets, and may have other unintended consequences.

The AVMA believes that state and local governments must evaluate their needs and resources to develop appropriate and effective dog and cat population control programs. This would include:

1. Providing sufficient funding to animal control agencies to facilitate:
  - a. Strict enforcement of existing animal control laws, and  
(continued on following page)

- b. Licensing of all dogs and cats.
- 2. Prohibiting the sale or adoption of intact dogs and cats by humane organizations and animal control agencies.
- 3. Promoting surgical and nonsurgical sterilization of intact dogs and cats. Just as for other veterinary medical and surgical procedures, veterinarians should use their best judgment in recommending at what age sterilization should be performed for individual animals.
- 4. Requiring licensing, rabies vaccination and permanent identification through microchipping.

B. Research

- 1. The AVMA encourages research into the development and use of nonsurgical methods of sterilization.
- 2. The AVMA encourages research to better define and quantify the dog and cat overpopulation problem.

C. Education

- 1. The AVMA supports public education campaigns that help pet owners be more responsible and concerned.
- 2. Comprehensive public education campaigns to prevent relinquishment require the commitment and cooperation of state and local governmental agencies, humane organizations, and veterinary associations.
- 3. Education to prevent relinquishment should include tenets of responsible pet ownership, including appropriate selection, the importance of spaying and neutering, keeping pets indoors or in restricted environments, preventing or solving behavioral problems, and consulting with veterinarians for information on these issues.
- 4. The AVMA encourages all independent sources of pets (e.g., breeders, pet shops, shelters, animal control facilities, private individuals) to educate new owners about the importance of surgical or nonsurgical sterilization and regular veterinary care.
- 5. Schools of veterinary medicine and veterinary technology should emphasize the prevention and/or solution of behavioral problems and other factors leading to dog and cat relinquishment.

## **Pediatric Spay/Neuter of Dogs and Cats**

(Approved 1994; revised April 1999, April 2004, April 2009)

The AVMA supports the concept of pediatric spay/neuter in dogs and cats in an effort to reduce the number of unwanted animals of these species. Just as for other veterinary medical and surgical procedures, veterinarians should use their best medical judgment in deciding at what age spay/neuter should be performed on individual animals.

## **Free-roaming Abandoned and Feral Cats**

(Approved November 2004; revised November 2005, November 2009)

The AVMA encourages and supports actions to eliminate the problem of free-roaming abandoned and feral cats. As a result of irresponsible societal attitudes, millions of these cats exist in the United States. Unfortunately, most of these cats will suffer premature mortality from disease, starvation, or trauma. Their suffering is of sufficient magnitude that it constitutes a national tragedy of epidemic proportions. These free-roaming abandoned and feral cats also represent a significant factor in the mortality of hundreds of millions of birds, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. This population of cats also poses a zoonotic disease risk for the public.

### ▪ **Encouragement of State and Local Ordinances**

The AVMA strongly supports reducing the number of unowned free-roaming abandoned and feral cats through humane capture (with placement in homes where appropriate) by local health departments, humane societies, and animal control agencies. All free-roaming abandoned and feral cats that are not in managed colonies should be removed from their environment and treated in the same manner as other abandoned and stray animals in accord with local and state ordinances.

State and local agencies should adopt and enforce ordinances that:

- Prohibit the sale or adoption of intact cats by humane organizations and animal control agencies.
- Require licensing, rabies vaccination, and permanent animal identification through microchipping of all cats.
- Encourage that owned cats be kept indoors, in an outdoor enclosure, or on a leash. Cats in rural areas must be confined to the property.
- Prohibit public feeding of intact free-roaming abandoned and feral cats.
- Prevent establishment of managed cat colonies in wildlife-sensitive ecosystems. *(continued on following page)*

- **Managed Cat Colonies**

The AVMA neither endorses nor opposes appropriately managed cat colony programs.

- An insignificant percentage of the total number of unowned free-roaming and feral cats are being managed by humane organizations. Consequently, the reduction in the total number of free-roaming cats these programs will effect is insignificant.
- Managed colonies should be considered an interim solution to the problem of feral, free-roaming cats—the first step toward reducing the size of the colony through attrition.
- The AVMA opposes placement of managed cat colonies on public lands or in any area that could threaten at-risk wildlife or in areas that may pose a zoonotic risk to the public.
- Should managed cat colonies be established, natural or artificial restrictive barriers should be employed to protect both cats and native wildlife.
- If sanctuaries for feral cats exist or are to be built, the AVMA encourages properly designed and maintained facilities. High quality care is imperative and overcrowding must be avoided.

- **Research**

- The AVMA encourages research into the production of an environmentally safe and effective oral or parental contraceptive vaccine.
- The AVMA encourages research that better defines the impact of free-roaming cats on native wildlife populations.
- The AVMA encourages research into the causes of animal abandonment by the public.

- **Education**

- The AVMA encourages public education that reduces abandonment of domestic cats and eliminates public feeding of unowned and free-roaming feral cats.

## **Free-Roaming, Owned Cats**

(Approved June 2001)

The AVMA strongly encourages owners of domestic cats in urban and suburban areas to keep them indoors.

## **Declawing of Domestic Cats**

(Approved March 2003; revised April 2009)

Declawing of domestic cats should be considered only after attempts have been made to prevent the cat from using its claws destructively or when its clawing presents a zoonotic risk for its owner(s).

The AVMA believes it is the obligation of veterinarians to provide cat owners with complete education with regard to feline onychectomy. The following points are the foundation for full understanding and disclosure regarding declawing:

- Scratching is a normal feline behavior, is a means for cats to mark their territory both visually and with scent, and is used for claw conditioning ("husk" removal) and stretching activity.
- Owners should provide suitable implements for normal scratching behavior. Examples are scratching posts, cardboard boxes, lumber or logs, and carpet or fabric remnants affixed to stationary objects. Implements should be tall or long enough to allow full stretching, and be firmly anchored to provide necessary resistance to scratching. Cats should be positively reinforced in the use of these implements.
- Appropriate claw care (consisting of trimming the claws every 1 to 2 weeks) should be provided to prevent injury or damage to household items.
- Surgical declawing is not a medically necessary procedure for the cat in most cases. While rare in occurrence, there are inherent risks and complications with any surgical procedure including, but not limited to, anesthetic complications, hemorrhage, infection, and pain. If surgical onychectomy is performed, appropriate use of safe and effective anesthetics and perioperative analgesics for an appropriate length of time are imperative. Pain management is necessary (not elective) and required for this procedure. Multimodal pain management is recommended, and there should be a written aftercare plan. The surgical alternative of tendonectomy is not recommended.
- Temporary synthetic nail caps are available as an alternative to onychectomy to prevent human injury or damage to property. Plastic nail caps are usually applied every 4 to 6 weeks.
- Declawed cats should be housed indoors. (*continued on following page*)

- Scientific data do indicate that cats that have destructive scratching behavior are more likely to be euthanatized, or more readily relinquished, released, or abandoned, thereby contributing to the homeless cat population. Where scratching behavior is an issue as to whether or not a particular cat can remain as an acceptable household pet in a particular home, surgical onychectomy may be considered.
- There is no scientific evidence that declawing leads to behavioral abnormalities when the behavior of declawed cats is compared with that of cats in control groups.

For additional information on declawing of domestic cats, please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/declawing\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/declawing_bgnd.asp)

## **Ear Cropping and Tail Docking of Dogs**

(Approved July 1999, revised November 2008)

The AVMA opposes ear cropping and tail docking of dogs when done solely for cosmetic purposes. The AVMA encourages the elimination of ear cropping and tail docking from breed standards.

For additional information on ear cropping of dogs, please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/dogs\\_ear\\_cropping\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/dogs_ear_cropping_bgnd.asp)

[http://www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/ear\\_cropping\\_canine\\_otitis externa\\_faq.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/ear_cropping_canine_otitis externa_faq.asp)

For additional information on tail docking of dogs, please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/dogs\\_tail\\_docking\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/dogs_tail_docking_bgnd.asp)

[http://www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/canine\\_tail\\_docking\\_faq.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/canine_tail_docking_faq.asp)

## **Canine Devocalization**

(Approved June 2002; reaffirmed April 2008)

Canine devocalization should only be performed by qualified, licensed veterinarians as a final alternative after behavioral modification efforts to correct excessive vocalization have failed.



## **Removal or Reduction of Teeth of Dogs as a Method of Reducing Bite-Related Injuries**

(Approved November 2004, revised April 2010)

The AVMA is opposed to removal or reduction of healthy teeth of dogs as a method of reducing bite-related injuries. This approach to managing aggression does not address the cause of the behavior. The welfare of the patient may be adversely affected because the animal is subjected to dental procedures that are painful, invasive, and do not address the problem. Removal or reduction of teeth for nonmedical reasons may also create oral pathologic conditions.

In addition, dogs may still cause severe injury with any remaining teeth, and removal or reduction of teeth may provide owners with a false sense of security. Injury prevention and the welfare of the dog are best addressed through behavioral assessment and modification by a qualified behaviorist.

## **Transport of Dogs in Open Cargo Areas of Pickup Trucks**

(Approved June 2001; revised April 2008)

Transport of dogs, loose or tethered, in open cargo areas of pickup trucks is not safe. Properly secured, size-appropriate kennels that are appropriately ventilated and allow climatic conditions suitable for a dog's breed and conditioning to be maintained are the preferred means of transport of dogs in open cargo areas of pickup trucks.

For additional information on transport of dogs in open cargo areas of pick up trucks, please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/dogs\\_trucks\\_bgnd.pdf](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/dogs_trucks_bgnd.pdf)

## **HORSES**

### **Humane Transport of Equines**

(Approved April 2008)

Studies published in peer-reviewed journals and the professional experience of veterinarians indicate that more equines are injured during transport in double-deck trailers than in single-deck trailers. The AVMA supports the use of best practices when transporting animals and therefore opposes the use of double-decked trailers to transport equines. In addition, the AVMA encourages state *(continued on following page)*

and federal agencies that govern the transport of equines to adopt rules, regulations, and enforcement provisions that ensure equines are transported humanely.

In general, the AVMA believes conveyances used to transport equines must:

- Be designed, constructed and maintained to protect the health and welfare of the equines being transported at all times;
- Accommodate segregation of stallions and aggressive equines so that no stallion or aggressive equine can come into contact with other equines on the conveyance;
- Have sufficient interior height to allow each equine on the conveyance to stand with its head extended to its fullest normal postural height;
- Not comprise animal cargo space that is divided into two or more stacked levels (conveyances with collapsible floors may be configured to transport equines on one level only, so long as the collapsed configuration meets the height requirements previously specified);
- Provide adequate ventilation;
- Contain no sharp protrusions that can injure horses;
- Be equipped with doors and ramps of sufficient size and location to allow safe loading and unloading;
- Be loaded so that each equine is provided with sufficient space to shift its weight as needed, and is not crowded in a way that is likely to cause injury or discomfort; and
- Afford secure footing for equines during loading, offloading, and transport.

## **Transportation and Processing of Horses**

(Approved May 2003, re-endorsed November 2008)

The AVMA endorses the American Association of Equine Practitioners' policy on transportation and processing of horses, which reads as follows:

“The AAEP advocates the humane treatment of all horses and believes the equine industry and horse owners have a responsibility to provide humane care throughout the life of the horse. However, a small percentage of horses are ultimately unwanted because they are no longer serviceable, are infirm, dangerous, or their owners are no longer able to care for them. The AAEP recognizes that the processing of unwanted horses is currently a necessary aspect of the equine industry, and provides a humane alternative to allowing the horse to continue a life of discomfort and pain, and possibly inadequate care or abandonment. The AAEP encourages, fosters and provides education regarding  
*(continued on following page)*

responsible ownership and management that will reduce the number of unwanted horses. In addition, the AAEP supports and commends the efforts of equine retirement facilities and adoption groups.

Regarding the care of horses destined for processing, the AAEP's position is that these horses should be:

- Treated humanely and with dignity;
- Transported to the production facility according to the guidelines approved by the United States Department of Agriculture in 2002;
- Euthanized in a humane manner in accordance with the guidelines established by the American Veterinary Medical Association.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the AAEP recognizes that human consumption of horsemeat is a cultural and personal issue and does not fall within the purview of the association, whose mission is the care of the health and welfare of the horse throughout its life."

<sup>1</sup>American Veterinary Medical Association. AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia. Available at: [www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/euthanasia.pdf](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/euthanasia.pdf).

## **Practice of Soring**

(Approved May 2003, re-endorsed April 2009)

The AVMA endorses the American Association of Equine Practitioners' position on the practice of soring, which reads as follows:

"The AAEP condemns the practice of 'soring,' as legally defined in the Horse Protection Act of 1970 (HPA), to accentuate a horse's gait for training or show purposes. The AAEP supports the efforts of APHIS in the application and enforcement of the HPA as outlined in the APHIS Horse Protection Operating Plan and strongly recommends imposing sufficient sanctions to prevent these practices. As legally defined in the HPA, 'soring' refers to:

- An irritating or blistering agent has been applied, internally or externally, by a person to any limb of a horse;
- Any burn, cut, or laceration has been inflicted by a person on any limb of a horse;
- Any tack, nail, screw, or chemical agent has been injected by a person or used by a person on any limb of a horse; or (*continued on following page*)

- Any other substance or device has been used by a person on any limb of a horse or a person has engaged in a practice involving a horse, and, as a result of such application, infliction, injection, use, or practice, such a horse suffers, or can reasonably be expected to suffer, physical pain or distress, inflammation, or lameness when walking, trotting, or otherwise moving, except that such term does not include such an application, infliction, injection, use, or practice in connection with the therapeutic treatment of a horse by or under the supervision of a person licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the State in which such a treatment was given.”

## **Use of Horses in Urban Environments**

(Approved May 2003, re-endorsed 11/2008)

The AVMA endorses the American Association of Equine Practitioners’ policy on the use of horses in urban environments, which reads as follows:

“The AAEP recognizes the unique issues of horses working in an urban environment, i.e. mounted patrols, tourist carriages and taxi/limousine services. Horses engaged in these activities require special work and living conditions and precautions for their safety and well-being. Urban environments present health and welfare hazards that may preclude their use, such as pollution, concussion, climactic extremes, and load factors.

Provisions should be prepared for each jurisdiction concerning work hours, workloads and living conditions, standards of driver training, and passenger safety. Annual examination by competent equine veterinarians for condition, freedom from lameness or disease, and appropriateness of living conditions and transport should be performed and recorded. Appropriate licensing standards should be established and adhered to by local authorities.

The veterinarian is the most qualified individual to manage the health care needs of the horse. The owners and caregivers of horses working in urban settings should have a relationship with a veterinarian who can respond appropriately to all emergencies, including those in which humane euthanasia is required. In the absence of a veterinarian in such a situation, the AAEP acknowledges that it may be necessary for licensed, qualified animal control or trained law enforcement personnel to perform euthanasia.”

## **Management of Mares Used in the Pregnant Mare Urine (PMU) Collection Industry**

(Approved June 2001; re-endorsed November 2007)

The AVMA endorses the American Association of Equine Practitioners' position statement on management of mares used in the pregnant mare urine (PMU) collection industry, which reads as follows:

“Through on-site investigations and peer review of ongoing research, the American Association of Equine Practitioners believes the collection of urine from pregnant mares and care of their offspring as prescribed by the recommended Code of Practice\* represents responsible management of horses to produce a commodity for the benefit of mankind that should not result in abuse, neglect, or inhumane treatment of horses.”

\*The AVMA reviewed the 2007 edition of the *Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Horses in PMU Operations* as developed by the PMU Study Committee and published by Manitoba Agriculture and Ayerst Organics (available at: [www.naeric.org/inc/pdf/codeofpractice.pdf](http://www.naeric.org/inc/pdf/codeofpractice.pdf))

## **Therapeutic Medications in Racehorses**

(Approved June 2001; re-endorsed June 2007)

The AVMA endorses the American Association of Equine Practitioners' policy on therapeutic medications in racehorses, which reads as follows:

“The AAEP policy on medication in pari-mutuel racing is driven by our mission to improve the health and welfare of the horse. The AAEP policy is aimed at providing the best health care possible for the racehorses competing under the current rules of racing in jurisdictions throughout the United States and Canada while ensuring the integrity of the sport. The AAEP expects its members to abide by the rules of all jurisdictions where they practice. The AAEP condemns the administration of non-therapeutic or unprescribed medications to racehorses by anyone. The AAEP believes that all therapeutic medication should be administered to racehorses by or under the direction of a licensed veterinarian. Health care decisions on individual horses should involve the veterinarian, the trainer and owner with the best interests of the horse as the primary objective.

The AAEP strongly encourages continued research in determining the therapeutic levels and appropriate withdrawal times that represent responsible use of medication in the racehorse. The AAEP is aware of the dynamics of the development of new products, as well as the continuing evaluation of current medications, and will continue to evaluate its policy based upon available  
*(continued on following page)*

scientific research and the best interests of the horse.

In order to provide the best health care possible for the racehorse, veterinarians should utilize the most modern diagnostic and therapeutic modalities available in accordance with medication guidelines designed to ensure the integrity of the sport. To this end, the following are the essential elements of the AAEP policy concerning veterinary care of the racehorse:

- All racing jurisdictions should adopt uniform medication guidelines, testing procedures with strict quality controls and penalty schedules that strive to protect the integrity of racing as well as the health and well being of the horse.
- Stimulants, depressants and local anesthetics or other numbing agents present in a horse at the time of a race should be strictly forbidden.
- Products present in a horse at the time of a race that have been proven to interfere with accurate and effective post-race testing should be strictly forbidden.
- Detection of pharmacologically-insignificant levels of therapeutic medications should not constitute a violation of medication rules.
- No medication should be administered on the day of the race with the exception of furosemide (Salix®).
- In the absence of a more effective treatment for exercise-induced pulmonary hemorrhage, the AAEP supports the use of furosemide as a day-of-the-race medication for certified bleeders.
- The AAEP encourages proactive and constructive communication between regulatory bodies and practicing veterinarians and other industry stakeholders.
- The AAEP believes that all veterinarians should use judicious, prudent, and ethical decisions in all treatments to ensure the health and welfare of the horse.
- The AAEP endorses increased surveillance and enforcement of the above-mentioned regulations.”

## Therapeutic Medications in Non-racing Performance Horses

(Approved November 2003, reaffirmed November 2008)

The AVMA endorses the American Association of Equine Practitioners' policy on therapeutic medications in non-racing performance horses, which reads as follows:

“The AAEP policy on medication in non-racing performance horses is driven by our mission to improve the health and welfare of the horse. It is aimed at providing the best health care possible for horses competing under the current rules in various disciplines while ensuring the integrity of the sport. The AAEP expects its members to abide by the rules of all jurisdictions where they practice.

The AAEP condemns the administration of non-therapeutic or unprescribed medications to performance horses by anyone. The AAEP believes that all therapeutic medication should be administered to performance horses by or under the direction of a licensed veterinarian.

Health care decisions on individual horses involve the veterinarian, the trainer and the owner with the best interests of the horse as the primary objective.

The AAEP strongly encourages continued research in determining the therapeutic levels and appropriate withdrawal times that represent responsible use of medication in the competing horse.

The AAEP is aware of the dynamics of the development of new products, as well as the continuing evaluation of current medications, and will continue to evaluate its policy based upon available scientific research and the best interests of the horse. In order to provide the best health care possible for the performance horse, veterinarians should utilize the most appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic modalities in accordance with medication guidelines of the sport. To this end, the following are the essential elements of the AAEP policy concerning veterinary care of the performance horse:

- It is recognized that various performance horse disciplines have differing regulations concerning medication guidelines. The AAEP urges members to abide by these regulations and to work with the governing bodies to develop and enforce such regulations. The establishment of guidelines backed by testing procedures with strict quality controls should be the goal to protect the well being of the horse and the integrity of the sport
- The AAEP encourages proactive and constructive communication between regulatory bodies, practicing veterinarians and other industry stakeholders. The AAEP offers its expertise to all performance horse organizations for assistance in establishing medication guidelines for their respective disciplines. *(continued on following page)*

- The use of medications for the purpose of stimulating, depressing or numbing a horse at the time of competition should be forbidden. It is recognized that some governing bodies allow for the emergency use of local anesthetics for strictly medical purposes within the normal withdrawal time for such agents. Such procedures must be very closely controlled.
- Products present in a horse at the time of performance that have been proven to interfere with accurate and effective post-performance testing should be strictly forbidden.
- The AAEP endorses the use of quality-controlled testing procedures by all performance horse organizations. Detection of pharmacologically insignificant levels of therapeutic medications should not constitute a violation of medication rules.
- Governing organizations have developed guidelines for the use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents in their sports. It is the opinion of the AAEP that the use of multiple NSAID agents is not in the best interest of the health and welfare of the horse. Performance horse governing bodies are encouraged to regularly reevaluate their regulations in light of this recommendation.
- The AAEP believes that all veterinarians should follow a judicious, prudent, and ethical decision-making process.
- The AAEP endorses increased surveillance and enforcement of the above-mentioned regulations.”

## **WILDLIFE AND EXOTIC ANIMALS**

### **Elephant Guides and Tethers**

(Approved April 2008)

Elephant guides are husbandry tools that consist of a shaft capped by one straight and one curved end. The ends are blunt and tapered, and are used to touch parts of the elephant's body as a cue to elicit specific actions or behaviors, with the handler exerting very little pressure. The ends should contact, but should not tear or penetrate the skin. The AVMA condemns the use of guides to puncture, lacerate, strike or inflict harm upon an elephant.

Tethers provide a means to temporarily limit an elephant's movement for elephant or human safety and well-being. Tethers can be constructed of rope, chain, or nylon webbing, and their use and fit should not result in discomfort or  
*(continued on following page)*



skin injury. Forelimb tethers should be loose on the foot below the ankle joint, and hind limb tethers should fit snugly on the limb between the ankle and knee joints. Tether length should be sufficient to allow the elephant to easily lie down and rise. The AVMA only supports the use of tethers for the shortest time required for specific management purposes.

For further information on welfare implications of elephant training please visit AVMA's website at:

[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/elephant\\_training\\_bgnd.pdf](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/elephant_training_bgnd.pdf)

## **Trapping and Steel-jawed Leghold Traps**

(Approved April 2008)

The AVMA opposes the use of conventional, unmodified steel jawed leghold traps. Legitimate science and management practices that necessitate the capture of wildlife should employ the most humane traps and techniques. Such traps and techniques should reduce injury and stress, minimize pain and suffering to wildlife, and prevent capture of nontarget animals.

For further information on welfare implications of leghold trap use in conservation and research please visit AVMA's website at:

[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/leghold\\_trap\\_use\\_bgnd.pdf](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/leghold_trap_use_bgnd.pdf)

## **Removal of Antlers (Velveting)**

(Approved November 1994; revised April 1999, November 2008)

The AVMA recommends that if amputation of the growing, living antler of a member of the family Cervidae (e.g., deer, moose, elk, caribou) is to be performed, it must be conducted humanely, and within the bounds of a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship. The procedure must minimize stress and pain to the animal with the use of humane handling and analgesia, while protecting the animal against excessive blood loss, risk of infection, or fly strike.

For additional information on removal of antlers (Velveting), please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/deer\\_velvet\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/deer_velvet_bgnd.asp)

## **Declawing Captive Exotic and Wild Indigenous Cats**

(Approved November 2003, reaffirmed November 2008)

The AVMA opposes declawing captive exotic and other wild indigenous cats for nonmedical reasons.

## **Removal or Reduction of Canine Teeth in Captive Nonhuman Primates or Exotic and Wild (Indigenous) Carnivores**

(Approved November 2003; revised April 2004, June 2007)

The AVMA is opposed to removal of canine teeth in captive nonhuman primates or exotic and wild (indigenous) carnivores, except when required for medical treatment or scientific research approved by an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Reduction of canine teeth may be necessary to address medical and approved scientific research needs, or animal or human safety concerns. If reductions expose the pulp cavity, endodontic procedures must be performed by a qualified person.

To minimize bite wounds, recommended alternatives to dental surgery include behavioral modification, environmental enrichment, and changes in group composition.

## **FOOD ANIMALS**

### **Transport, Sale Yard Practices, and Humane Slaughter of Livestock**

(Approved October 1984; revised April 2001, November 2008)

- Care must be observed when loading and unloading livestock to avoid injury and stress. Physical abuse of animals must not be tolerated under any circumstances. Designing and constructing chutes that accommodate behavioral characteristics of respective animal species will facilitate loading and unloading.
- Sick and injured animals should be separated and handled appropriately.
- Sorting, grouping, and penning in sale yards should be performed so that minimal stress is induced.
- Pens, alleys, and weighing scales should be constructed to permit safe and proper handling.
- Adequate protection should be provided from adverse environmental conditions.
- Consideration should be given to providing food, water, rest, and protection during all types of transportation. (*continued on following page*)

- Safe and adequate vehicles should be used for transporting animals. Time limits during transit, as specified by state and federal regulations, must be observed.
- Policies, procedures, and surveillance should be enforced to reduce occurrence and transmission of infectious diseases.
- The AVMA supports governmental regulations pertaining to humane slaughter of food animals, and supports research on improved practices for humane slaughter.

### **Disabled Livestock**

(Approved June 2001; revised June 2002, November 2003, November 2006, June 2008, April 2010)

The AVMA recommends that disabled livestock be handled humanely in all situations.

### **Ambulatory Animals**

- If an otherwise healthy animal has been recently injured, and the animal is ambulatory, it should be treated, shipped directly to a state or federally inspected slaughter plant, humanely slaughtered on the farm (where state laws permit), or euthanatized. Injured, ambulatory animals should not be commingled with other animals during transport.
- Care should be taken during loading, unloading, and handling of these animals to prevent further injury or stress.

### **Nonambulatory Animals**

- At no time is a nonambulatory animal to be dragged.
- If an animal is down on a farm:
  - If the animal is not in extreme distress and continues to eat and drink, the producer should contact a veterinarian for assistance and provide food, water, and appropriate shelter and nursing care to keep the animal comfortable.
  - If the animal is in extreme distress and the condition is obviously irreversible, the animal should be euthanatized immediately or humanely slaughtered on the farm (where state laws permit).
- If an animal is down at a nonterminal market (e.g., sale yard or auction):
  - If the animal is not in extreme distress, but is disabled, treatment measures should be initiated. *(continued on following page)*

- If the animal is in extreme distress or the condition is obviously irreversible, the animal should be euthanatized immediately
- If an animal is down at a terminal market (e.g., slaughterhouse or packing plant):

Animals that are down should be euthanatized immediately and not taken to slaughter. However, if swine are down, and are not in extreme distress or do not have an obviously irreversible condition, they may be allowed up to 2 hours to recover. Acceptable interventions to assist in this recovery include rest, cooling, or other treatments that do not create drug residue concerns.

## **Electroimmobilization**

(Approved November 1987; revised April 2001; reaffirmed April 2008)

The AVMA does not support the use of electroimmobilization for animal restraint.

For additional information on electroimmobilization, please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/electroimmobilization\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/electroimmobilization_bgnd.asp).

## **CATTLE**

### **Castration and Dehorning of Cattle**

(Approved April 2008)

The AVMA recognizes that castration and dehorning of cattle are important for human and animal safety when cattle are used for agricultural purposes. Because castration and dehorning cause pain and discomfort, the AVMA recommends the use of procedures and practices that reduce or eliminate these effects, including the use of approved or AMDUCA-permissible clinically effective medications whenever possible. Studies indicate that preoperative use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents and local anesthetics reduces pain and distress associated with castration and dehorning.

- Both dehorning and castration should be done at the earliest age practicable.
- Disbudding is the preferred method of dehorning calves. Local anesthetic should be considered for other dehorning procedures.
- Elastrator rubber banding techniques have been associated with increased chronic pain and should be discouraged. High tension-banding systems may be used with appropriate veterinary supervision and/or training in those situations where surgical castration may predispose to postsurgical complications. (*continued on following page*)

- There are a number of acceptable castration techniques utilized by the cattle industry. The castration method used should take into account the animal's age, weight, skill level of the technician, environmental conditions, and facilities available, as well as human and animal safety.

Research leading to new or improved techniques that reduce or eliminate pain and distress associated with castration and dehorning, or development of viable alternates to castration and dehorning, is encouraged.

For additional information on castrating cattle, please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/castration\\_cattle\\_bgnd.pdf](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/castration_cattle_bgnd.pdf).

and on dehorning and disbudding cattle, please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/dehorning\\_cattle\\_bgnd.pdf](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/dehorning_cattle_bgnd.pdf).

## **Tail Docking of Cattle**

(Approved April 2004, reaffirmed April 2009)

The AVMA opposes routine tail docking of cattle. Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal, and that tail docking can lead to distress during fly seasons. When medically necessary, amputation of tails must be performed by a licensed veterinarian.

For additional information on tail docking of cattle please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/tail\\_docking\\_cattle\\_bgnd.pdf](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/tail_docking_cattle_bgnd.pdf).

## **Ovariectomy in Cattle**

(Approved June 1994; reviewed March 2004, revised April 2010)

Ovariectomy or “spaying” in cattle is a surgical procedure performed to avoid unwanted pregnancy of animals in areas where females cannot be segregated from males and where extensive grazing conditions prohibit control of estrus through feed additives. The AVMA considers flank ovariectomy, if performed without anesthesia, to be inhumane. Ovariectomy by colpotomy is the preferred technique. When ovariectomy is deemed necessary the procedure should be performed using appropriate restraint and aseptic technique. Research leading to new or improved techniques that reduce or eliminate pain and discomfort associated with ovariectomy, or development of viable alternatives to ovariectomy, is encouraged.

For additional information on ovariectomy in cattle please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/ovariectomy\\_cattle\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/ovariectomy_cattle_bgnd.asp)

## **Veal Calf Management**

(Approved January 2009)

Individual housing during the neonatal period facilitates sanitation, disease control and individual attention for observation and treatment. Individual housing must allow the calf to turn around comfortably and to assume normal postures.

Calves should be housed in groups by 10 weeks of age to facilitate normal behaviors, including social interaction. Like individual housing, group housing must allow all calves to turn around comfortably and to assume normal postures.

Calves must be fed diets that provide adequate energy, protein and minerals to maintain good health and positive growth. Diets must be balanced to prevent nutritional deficiencies and their consequences, including but not limited to iron deficiency with subsequent anemia. Water must be provided from birth. Dry feed must be provided for rumen development and to allow the normal process of rumination. All calves must be fed colostrum after birth.

Housing must be ventilated to provide fresh air and to prevent buildup of ammonia or pathogens. Floors and bedding must be clean, dry and maintained to prevent injuries, and allow calves to maintain normal body temperature in cold weather.

For additional information on veal calf husbandry, please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/veal\\_calf\\_husbandry\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/veal_calf_husbandry_bgnd.asp)

## **SHEEP**

### **Docking of Lambs' Tails**

(Approved July 2000; reaffirmed November 2005, revised November 2009)

Lambs' tails may be docked for cleanliness and to minimize fly strike, but cosmetic, excessively short tail docking can lead to an increased incidence of rectal prolapse and is unacceptable for the welfare of the lamb. We recommend that lambs' tails be docked at the level of the distal end of the caudal tail fold and at the earliest age practicable. Because tail docking causes pain and discomfort, the AVMA recommends the use of procedures and practices that reduce or eliminate these effects, including the use of approved or AMDUCA-permissible clinically effective medications whenever possible.

For additional information on docking of lambs' tails, please visit:

[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/lamb\\_tail\\_docking\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/lamb_tail_docking_bgnd.asp)

# SWINE

## Pregnant Sow Housing

(Approved June 2005)

Pregnant sows (including gilts) are kept in a variety of production systems. The industry has moved toward gestation stall (crate) housing, because gestation stalls increase caregiver productivity, require lower capital investment, and are easier to manage than some indoor group housing systems.

The AVMA recognizes that veterinarians approach the issue of pregnant sow housing from different viewpoints based on personal and societal values. Some veterinarians are opposed in principle to close confinement of animals, some are opposed in principle to the use of animals for food, and some work with the swine industry to maintain animal health and productivity.

This position statement is based on consideration of animal welfare as assessed through the scientific literature and professional judgment and experience.

Concerns that commonly arise regarding animal welfare are that:

- Animals should function well in the sense of being healthy and thriving,
- Animals should feel well, especially by prevention of serious pain, hunger, fear, and other forms of suffering, and
- Animals can live in a manner consistent with the nature of their species.

Each of these elements needs to be considered when drawing conclusions about animal welfare.

The science of animal welfare includes assessments of physiology, behavior, production and health. A review of the literature indicated the following:

- **Physiology**—Gestation stalls do not induce a physiologic stress response compared to group housing for pregnant sows.
- **Behavior**—Sows show different behavior when housed in gestation stalls as compared to some group pens because of restricted movement, reduced caloric consumption, reduced opportunities to forage, absence of bedding, and restricted social interaction.
- **Production**—Sows kept in gestation stalls have production performance not different than sows kept in groups.
- **Health**—The rate of sow injury is reduced in gestation stall housing compared with group housing. Industry experience indicates that other aspects of health are predominantly affected by factors other than the housing system. (*continued on following page*)

The science and professional judgment indicate that we cannot consider housing systems in isolation from other important factors that influence animal welfare.

These include:

- **Management**—This by itself is a major determinant of animal welfare. Some housing systems can be expected to work well at one level of management, but not at another.
- **Feeding system**—With concentrated diets, there is a need to limit feeding to avoid health problems, but this can result in chronic hunger, restlessness, motivation to forage, and competition for food. Systems that might work well with one feeding system may not work well with another.
- **Environmental features**—Certain environmental features allow sows to occupy their time and escape from aggressive group mates. How well a housing system functions may depend on whether such features are present.
- **Type of sow**—There are important genetic differences in temperament that affect how well sows function in different housing systems. There are also individual differences; a housing system that is good for more dominant animals may not be favorable for less dominant ones.

## **Conclusions**

- Given the number of variables and large variation in performance within both group and stall systems for pregnant sows, no one system is clearly better than others under all conditions and according to all criteria of animal welfare.
- Sow housing systems should:
  - Minimize aggression and competition among sows;
  - Protect sows from detrimental effects associated with environmental extremes, particularly temperature extremes;
  - Reduce exposure to hazards that result in injuries, pain, or disease;
  - Provide every animal with daily access to appropriate food and water;
  - Facilitate observation of individual sow appetite, respiratory rate, urination and defecation, and reproductive status by caregivers; and
  - Allow sows to express most normal patterns of behavior. (*continued on following page*)



- All systems have advantages and disadvantages for welfare. Current group systems allow freedom of movement and social interaction. However, these same systems, when they fail to work well, lead to problems, especially in the areas of aggression, injury, and uneven body condition. When they lack manipulable material, sows in group systems are also unable to forage. Current stall systems minimize aggression and injury, reduce competition, allow individual feeding, and assist in control of body condition. Stalls, however, also restrict movement, exercise, foraging behavior and social interaction. Because the advantages and disadvantages of housing systems are qualitatively different, there is no simple or objective way to rank systems for “overall” welfare.
- To address animal welfare in the long term, advantages of current housing systems should be retained while making improvements to overcome problems identified. Improvements should be adopted as soon as:
  - The technology is sound enough that producers can adopt it with confidence,
  - The skills needed to operate the systems are understood and available, and
  - Systems are economically viable.

For additional information on housing pregnant sows, please visit:  
[http://www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/sow\\_housing.tfr.pdf](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/sow_housing.tfr.pdf)

## **Swine Castration**

(Approved October 1984; revised November 2003, April 2010)

Castration of swine can help control aggressive behavior and improve the palatability of pork. Current U.S. swine markets do not allow for mass marketing of uncastrated male pigs. Castration is a painful surgical procedure and should be performed as early as possible, preferably by 14 days of age. Surgical wounds should be healed prior to weaning. After 14 days of age, swine should be castrated using analgesia and/or anesthesia. The AVMA recommends the use of procedures and practices that reduce or eliminate pain, including the use of approved or AMDUCA-permissible clinically effective medications whenever possible. The AVMA encourages development and implementation of practical analgesic and anesthetic protocols for, and alternatives to, swine castration.

For additional information on practices performed on piglets, please visit:  
[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/practices\\_piglets\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/practices_piglets_bgnd.asp)

## **Tail Docking and Teeth Clipping of Swine**

(Approved April 2010)

Tail docking is performed to prevent tail biting and cannibalism among pigs. Tail docking should be performed as early as possible, but by 14 days of age.

Teeth clipping is performed as necessary to prevent trauma to the sow's teats and snouts of other piglets (due to the presence of sharp canine teeth at birth). Farms may minimize the need for clipping piglets' teeth altogether by cross fostering between litters.

The AVMA recommends the use of procedures and practices that reduce or eliminate pain, including the use of approved or AMDUCA-permissible clinically effective medications whenever possible.

## **POULTRY**

### **Layer Hens Housing Systems**

(Approved October 1984; revised November 2001, April 2010)

Laying hen housing systems must provide feed, water, light, air quality, space and sanitation that promote good health and welfare for the hens. Housing systems should provide for expression of important natural behaviors, protect the hens from disease, injury and predation, and promote food safety. Participation in a nationally recognized, third-party audited welfare program is strongly advised.

For additional information on layer hens housing system, please visit:  
[http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/laying\\_hen\\_housing\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/reference/backgrounders/laying_hen_housing_bgnd.asp)

### **Beak Trimming**

(Approved November 1994; revised November 2001, November 2009)

Beak trimming of poultry should be practiced only when necessary to prevent feather pecking and cannibalism. Only trained and monitored personnel should perform beak trimming, using proper equipment and procedures that minimize pain, prevent excessive bleeding, promote rapid healing and prevent infection. The AVMA encourages the development of alternative practices, including genetic selection, or management of light or nutrition, which may reduce or eliminate the practice of beak trimming.

For additional information on beak trimming, please visit:  
[http://www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/beak\\_trimming\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/beak_trimming_bgnd.asp)

## **Induced Molting of Layer Chickens**

(Approved July 2002; revised July 2004, November 2009)

Induced molting of commercial layer chickens must be a carefully monitored and controlled procedure, with special attention paid to flock health, mortality, and bird weight. Neither water nor food should be withdrawn to induce molting. Acceptable practices include reduction of photoperiod (day length) and specific nutrient restrictions that result in cessation of egg production. Induced molting extends the productive life of commercial chicken flocks and results in a substantial reduction in the number of chickens needed to produce the nation's egg supply.

For additional information on induced molting of layer chickens, please visit: [http://www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/induced\\_molting\\_layer\\_chickens\\_bgnd.asp](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/induced_molting_layer_chickens_bgnd.asp)

## **Use of Water-Based Foam for Depopulation of Poultry**

(Approved November 2006)

The AVMA supports the use of water-based foam as a method of mass depopulation for poultry in accord with the conditions and performance standards outlined by the US Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS). The following summarizes the conditions under which USDA APHIS has approved the use of water-based foam for depopulation of poultry:

1. Use of water-based foam is considered an appropriate method of depopulation of floor-reared poultry (i.e., broiler chickens and turkeys) in accord with USDA APHIS performance standards ("USDA APHIS Performance Standards for the Use of Water-Based Foam as a Method of Mass Depopulation of Domestic Poultry" [Appendix]); and
2. Animals are infected with a potentially zoonotic disease; or
3. Animals are experiencing an outbreak of a rapidly spreading infectious disease that, in the opinion of state or federal regulatory officials, cannot be contained by conventional or currently accepted means of depopulation; or
4. Animals are housed in structurally unsound buildings that would be hazardous for human entry, such as those that may result from a natural disaster. *(continued on following page)*

Mass depopulation refers to methods by which large numbers of animals must be destroyed quickly and efficiently with as much consideration given to the welfare of the animals as practicable, but where the circumstances and tasks facing those doing the depopulation are understood to be extenuating. Euthanasia involves transitioning an animal to death in a manner that is as painless and stress-free as possible. The AVMA currently considers that destruction of poultry using water-based foam is a method of mass depopulation and not a form of euthanasia. The AVMA supports additional research to evaluate whether water-based foam can be accepted as a form of euthanasia.

## **APPENDIX**

### **USDA APHIS Performance Standards for the Use of Water-based Foam as a Method of Mass Depopulation of Domestic Poultry**

(These dynamic Performance Standards are currently based on objective and subjective measurement. They are intended to be guidelines used to evaluate any type of water-based foam and foam delivery system used for depopulation of poultry until such time that sufficient biometric, engineering, and welfare data can be gathered to establish thorough performance standards.)

1. In order to comply with current animal welfare considerations and optimal operating procedures, USDA APHIS has developed these minimum standards which all water-based foam systems used for mass depopulation of poultry must meet or exceed by performance measurement until further notice. The field application of water-based foam used for depopulation as stipulated by these standards is currently approved for use with floor-reared poultry and as conditionally stipulated in Standard 11. Floor-reared poultry is defined as poultry not housed in cages (e.g., broiler chickens and turkeys), but may not necessarily include all types of poultry (e.g., waterfowl, see Standard 11). Approved experimental protocols to adapt this method for use in caged poultry (e.g., laying hens) and broaden its application to other poultry types are not restricted by the official position of USDA APHIS on the use of water-based foam for depopulation of poultry nor these standards. Note that these standards will be revised as further information becomes available.
2. Water-based foams used for depopulation must be:
  - a. Readily available;
  - b. Environmentally safe;
  - c. Biodegradable; (*continued on following page*)

- d. Compatible with carcass disposal methods;
  - e. As non-irritating as possible to poultry mucosa; and
  - f. Of no significant risk to human health.
3. Foam delivery systems must produce foam that is of the appropriate consistency and density to completely occlude the upper airway of domestic poultry; so that when immersed in the foam, airway occlusion occurs in a rapid and overwhelming manner such that birds do not unduly struggle. At this time, the desired bubble size from water-based foam used for poultry depopulation should not exceed 0.625 inches (1.58 cm) and preferably should be smaller. Note: Bubble diameters exceeding 0.33 inches (0.84 cm) may not be appropriate for the depopulation of all types of poultry or may not provide 100% depopulation of the target birds. It is intended that systems developed pursuant to this Standard will provide broad species depopulation capability, but may be limited by the developer to specific species or applications. If the foam used to depopulate does not meet the requirements as stipulated in Standard 9, then its use must be limited to those types of poultry where it has been shown to meet the criteria in Standard 9.
4. The water-based foam must be fluid enough:
- a. To engulf or negotiate any building supports or structures,
  - b. To surround the birds without cavitations that may be generated by bird movement, and
  - c. Be of a consistency (fluidity) that is readily inspired by the birds.
- Fluidity in foam is equated to the expansion ratio and the moisture content; to be suitable for depopulation of poultry, the expansion ratio required ranges from 25:1 to 140:1. Note that foams exhibiting expansion ratios exceeding 120:1 may not be appropriate for depopulating all types of floor-reared poultry. Importantly, foam exhibiting expansion ratios below approximately 35:1 may not accumulate to sufficient depth to cover the target species. If the foam used to depopulate does not meet the requirements as stipulated in Standard 9, then its use must be limited to those types of poultry where it has been shown to meet the criteria stipulated in Standard 9.
5. The water-based foam must have sufficient body to be able to accumulate to at least 6 inches (15 cm) over the mean height of the types of poultry being depopulated. In cases such as full grown turkeys depths up to at least 54 inches (137 cm) may be required. *(continued on following page)*

6. The application of the water-based foam must be performed in a manner that disturbs the birds as little as possible and avoids panic, “piling” or overcrowding.
7. Water-based foam of the proper consistency as outlined in sections 2-4 must be capable of being generated using a wide variety of water qualities across a broad range of dissolved solids, salinities, pH, and hardness factors. It is important to note that at present, the primary limiting factor of the speed at which the depopulation event can be conducted, is the availability of an adequate water supply at the site of depopulation.
8. Water-based foam must demonstrate a residency time (persistence) of no less than 30 minutes (regardless of climatic conditions or solar exposure) to ensure that all birds have been properly dispatched.
9. In terms of the time to death and total percentage of the population killed when water-based foam is used on any type or age of poultry, the foam system employed must result in the death of 95% of the birds within 7 minutes or less after the birds have been completely submerged in the foam. If 100% of the birds have not been depopulated after 15 minutes post-submergence, then contingencies must exist to dispatch the birds as humanely and quickly as possible in accordance to currently accepted euthanasia methods.
10. Water-based foam delivery systems must perform reliably and reproducibly in accordance with the criteria detailed in performance Standards 2-9 under a wide range of climatic and operating conditions. Climatic conditions may include ambient indoor temperatures ranging from 0° C (32° F) to 44° C (110° F) and relative humidity ranging from 10% to 100%. Poultry housing situations vary widely including large surface areas and multistory housing. Strategies must be developed to address these variances before attempting to depopulate with foam.
11. There are many species of fowl, including waterfowl (e.g., ducks and geese) and other gallinaceous birds (e.g., guineas and quail) used for food, eggs, or other purposes where current data on the use of water-based foam for depopulation are lacking. However, water-based foam may be conditionally used in depopulating these particular types of fowl if:
  - a. The foam and delivery system meets the criteria detailed in Standards 2-10 and, (*continued on following page*)

- b. The system demonstrates killing times, killing rates, behavioral responses, and physiological responses comparable to those which would normally be observed when water-based foam is used to depopulate common farm-reared poultry where foaming has been shown to be effective (i.e., broiler chickens and turkeys).

However during the foaming of species where reaction to foam is unknown, if adverse reactions are observed that are more extreme than those seen with farm-reared poultry (i.e., broiler chickens or turkeys), or prolonged killing times or killing rates not consistent with Standard 9 are encountered, then foam should not be used to depopulate that particular species of fowl. If a question of suitability on the use of foam in a particular species arises, then the determination of whether foam may be applied to a particular species will be made by the USDA Incident Commander and the ranking USDA Animal Welfare officer detailed to the outbreak, or the State Veterinarian.

- 12. Components of water-based foam delivery systems must be able to withstand chemical disinfection, and all parts of the water-based foam delivery system that enter contaminated houses must be able to withstand stringent cleaning and decontamination measures. In some cases the water-based foam may also be used for decontamination purposes.
- 13. Water-based foam delivery systems should either be adaptable for multiple types of poultry housing or be marketed for use that is limited to specific types of poultry and/or housing.
- 14. Water-based foam delivery systems should be portable and constructed of components that are easily serviceable and/or replaceable. Portable by this standard is intended to mean easily transportable from one site to another by any conventional means.







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