



Humane Society of Western Montana

Saving Every Animal. Every Time.

Position statements

Updated May, 2013

Pound Seizure

The Humane Society of Western Montana is opposed to transferring or selling shelter animals (known as Pound Seizure) for use in scientific research or experimentation. It is inhumane to use former pets for these purposes, and it breaks down the public's faith in the animal sheltering system. People who find animals, or who cannot keep their own pets, are less likely to bring those animals to the local shelter if they believe the pets may go to a research or testing facility. The result may well be abandonment of the unwanted pet.

Operational Policy:

The Humane Society does not release animals for the purpose of scientific research under any circumstances.

Breed-Specific Legislation

The Humane Society of Western Montana opposes any state or local law to regulate or ban dogs based on breed. We recognize that dangerous dogs pose a serious community problem requiring attention. However, scientific data do not support the effectiveness of breed-specific legislation, and these laws unfairly target responsible pet guardians and their dogs.

The Humane Society favors a breed-neutral, community-based approach that includes public education and effective enforcement of animal control laws.

Operational Policy

Each dog or puppy admitted to the Humane Society undergoes a SAFER™ (Safety Assessment For Evaluating Rehoming) test prior to entering the adoption program. The SAFER test, designed by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, is a widely used system for evaluating dog behavior to identify potential aggression in dogs. It also assists in appropriate placement regardless of breed.

Animal Fighting

The Humane Society of Western Montana condemns animal fighting. Animal fighting is broadly defined as any sport, exhibition or attraction in which humans induce, encourage, allow or force one animal to fight another, or to fight a human. Such activities unnecessarily expose both people and animals to stress, pain, injury, or death. We believe that animal fighting encourages insensitivity and acceptance of the brutal treatment of animals for entertainment and profit. The Humane Society supports strict enforcement of existing law and advocates for the addition of felony-level penalties for spectators of animal fighting events.

Commercial Breeding

The Humane Society of Western Montana advocates for the adoption of animals from reputable shelters and rescue groups as the first option. We encourage anyone who purchases a pet to seek responsible breeders dedicated to improving health, condition and behavior of their animals and who assume lifetime accountability for these animals.

The Humane Society opposes commercial breeding facilities that mass-produce puppies and any other companion animals. Such breeding facilities overlook ill health, genetic defects, and negative behavioral traits in favor of financial profit. Animals suffer in conditions caused by overcrowding, inadequate shelter, poor sanitation, lack of food, water and veterinary care; long-term confinement; and lack of social and behavioral enrichment.

The Humane Society supports oversight of shelters, breeders, boarding, daycare and rescue facilities by a government agency or professional organization.

Spay/Neuter

The Humane Society of Western Montana strongly recommends that all companion dogs, cats, and rabbits, except those who are part of a responsible breeding program, be spayed or neutered.

Indiscriminate and irresponsible dog, cat, and rabbit breeding lead to millions of unwanted, abandoned and euthanized animals each year in the United States. Spaying and neutering is the most effective way to decrease these numbers, as well as to provide considerable health and behavioral benefits to the animals.

Spay/Neuter – Operational Policy

All animals available for adoption at the Humane Society will be spayed or neutered prior to adoption unless the treating veterinarian recommends

temporarily deferring the procedure for health reasons. The animal will be altered as soon as advised by the treating veterinarian. Unaltered animals can be fostered with potential adopters, however, transfer of guardianship will not be completed until the animal has been spayed or neutered. To prevent the accidental breeding of young cats and dogs, we support pediatric or “early-age” spaying and neutering of animals as soon as they reach two months of age and two pounds in weight.

Trapping

The Humane Society of Western Montana opposes the use of all trapping devices that have the potential to cause pain and suffering of companion animals. Devices such as leg-hold and body-gripping traps cause intense capture stress, grievous injury and death. Traps are inherently non-selective and are capable of capturing any species, including pets.

Cosmetic and Elective Surgery

The Humane Society of Western Montana opposes elective and cosmetic surgeries and procedures that have no medical benefit and are based solely on the convenience of the animals’ owners.

Unacceptable procedures include but are not limited to tail-docking, ear-cropping, and debarking. The Humane Society also opposes declawing, which often results in long-term pain and behavioral problems. Scratching is a normal part of cat behavior, and we believe that declawing cats should only be performed when medically necessary for the cat or the owner and all alternatives have been exhausted. We instead promote the use of scratching posts, nail trimming and Soft Paws and encourage people to seek professional behavioral advice.

Operational Policy

Humane Society adoption staff will encourage anyone interested in declawing to select a cat that has already been declawed. Adopters expressing their desire to declaw will be given information regarding the procedure itself and alternatives to declawing.

Training methods

The Humane Society of Western Montana opposes cruel or harsh training methods. We recognize that training techniques that involve physical and psychological intimidation can hinder effective training and damage relationships between humans and companion animals. The Humane Society opposes training equipment that can cause physical harm or unnecessary distress to the pet.

We believe training is an important component of having companion animals, and pets thrive in an environment that provides them with clear structure and communication.

Therefore, the Humane Society advocates for training methods with an emphasis on rewarding desired behaviors and discouraging undesirable behaviors, using clear and consistent instruction.

Operational Policy

The Humane Society uses only positive training techniques in classes offered at the shelter. Volunteers working with shelter dogs are trained in and required to use positive training methods. Humane Society staff will provide information on reward-based training techniques to people seeking advice.

Euthanasia

The Humane Society of Western Montana acknowledges euthanasia of companion animals as an acceptable means of alleviating and preventing suffering. We oppose euthanasia for means of population control or for lack of space. Because overpopulation is the most significant contributing factor leading to euthanasia, we work with the community to provide education and information about responsible pet ownership, preventive medical care, compatible pet selection and affordable spay and neuter and training programs.

Euthanasia shall only be considered for animals with untreatable physical, emotional or behavioral issues after all reasonable options have been explored. These options include

- Cooperating with other placement facilities
- Foster programs
- Veterinary care
- Behavioral training

Euthanasia should only be performed by skilled professionals who have been trained and certified in administering injectable euthanasia solution. We consider injection by sodium pentobarbital to be the only humane method for euthanasia of companion animals. Pre-medication should be used to reduce fear and anxiety and eliminate the need for restraint. Euthanasia should not be performed in the presence of live animals. It is essential that the proper steps are taken by trained staff to verify that death has occurred.

Animal Testing

The Humane Society of Western Montana recognizes the present necessity of using animals in biomedical research and testing and advocates for the continuing development of alternatives.

As long as animals are used in laboratories, we believe that all studies must be scientifically and ethically justified. Every study must be designed to avoid or minimize pain and distress to the animal, with a clear-cut expectation that the experiment will contribute significantly to knowledge and action that will ultimately save the lives of

humans and animals. We do not endorse using animals to test consumer products such as cosmetics and household cleaners.

In any research using animals, there should always be a written experimental protocol that is reviewed by a licensed veterinarian. This should include humane husbandry, which provides physical and mental enrichment and medical care along with consideration for elimination of pain and relief of stress and suffering of the animals.

The fewest number of animals and the least traumatic approaches possible must be used. Every effort should be made to eliminate redundant studies and therefore reduce the number of animals used in research.

Fireworks

The Humane Society of Western Montana believes the use of fireworks by individuals in communities where people and pets live together should be illegal. Fireworks displays should be enjoyed only through scheduled professional shows that occur in the safe, controlled environments with advance notice to the public for the benefit of concerned pet owners.

While fireworks are an American tradition, their unregulated use in cities and towns causes undue stress to both animal and shelters. Extremely anxious companion animals can bolt from home in search of a safe place and can be injured or killed. This results in a nationwide average of 30 to 60 percent increase in lost pets July 4-6. Only an average of 14 percent of these pets are reunited with their families following the holiday. Animals displaced or disoriented by fireworks may be turned over to local shelters, occupying valuable kennel space, consuming staff time and wasting donated funds and tax dollars.