



# Animal Welfare Position Statements

March 31, 2017

## Humane Society of Charlotte Animal Welfare Position Statements

The Humane Society of Charlotte has developed animal welfare position statements that express the society's view regarding the appropriate treatment of non-human animals. These positions are based on a belief that all animals deserve our respect, compassion, and consideration of their psychological and physical well-being. The position statements adopted by the society are based on empirical evidence and scientific research that establishes animals' capacity to feel pain and suffer.

**Animals in Circuses:** The Humane Society of Charlotte is opposed to using wild or exotic animals in circuses, carnivals or other traveling animal shows. Animals used in traveling shows are often confined to small cages that not only limit mobility and make it difficult or impossible to engage in species typical behaviors, but the unnatural and exploitative nature of these shows often inflict undue stress, neglect and isolation on animals that are wild in nature. Many travelling shows are unregulated and have historically led to animal abuse, human-animal conflict and death. The unregulated breeding of wild and exotic animals in circuses or traveling shows also leads to surplus animals that end up in the black market animal trade, canned hunting arenas, or other unfortunate environments.

**Animal Exploitation for Financial Gain, Entertainment, etc.:** The Humane Society of Charlotte is opposed to the use of animals in any form of entertainment that puts the animal at risk of suffering stress, pain, injury, or death. HSC is opposed to exhibitions or presentations of animals in circuses or travelling menageries, including petting zoos. The Humane Society of Charlotte believes that wild animals have well-established psychological, behavioral and environmental needs. HSC believes that when these needs cannot be met, the animals should not be used – ie, for entertainment / financial gain such as circuses, traveling shows, rodeos, petting zoos, etc.

**Animal Fighting:** HSC condemns and opposes any activity or event in which animals are encouraged or allowed to fight another animal or a human. Included in these activities are dogfights, cockfights, bullfights and bear wrestling.

**Animals in Give-aways or Won in Contests:** The Humane Society of Charlotte opposes any contest or auction which encourages the distribution of animals to any member of the public. This includes giveaways in any public forum such as special events, fundraisers, fairs or carnivals.

**Assistance Animals:** Assistance animals are specially trained companion animals that assist individuals with physical, visual or hearing limitations. HSC endorses, supports and encourages this unique example of the human/animal bond. As with any companion animal proper training techniques (see Humane Society of Charlotte's approved training techniques) should be utilized for assistance animals and all their medical, physical and psychological needs should be met by their human companion or caregiver.

**Breed Specific Legislation:** The Humane Society of Charlotte opposes breed-specific legislation, as it has shown to be an ineffective method to protect the public from vicious or dangerous dogs and penalizes responsible dog owners. HSC also opposes breed-specific regulations imposed by insurance companies and landlords that either disqualify or charge higher rates to owners with specific dog breeds. Breed bans (pure or mixed breed) and breed specific legislation discriminate against certain types of dogs without regard to an individual dogs' temperament or behavior. These laws establish a prejudice and make it very difficult or impossible for animal shelters to place certain dog breeds. HSC believes responsible pet ownership and community involvement with animal welfare legislation are the most effective methods of ensuring pets and people coexist safely together.

**Community Cat Management:** The most pressing cat issue in Mecklenburg County is the large population of unsterilized outdoor cats. This results in many cats without permanent/conventional homes living in outdoor populations, quickly producing ongoing generations of cats. Free-roaming cat populations generally consist of a mixture of truly feral cats, semi-socialized cats and lost and abandoned pets. Most attempts to eradicate free-roaming cat colonies have failed; cats that are removed are replaced through reproduction, movement of the remaining cats and the addition of lost and abandoned animals, who repopulate the vacated space. At this time the most humane, effective and financially sustainable strategy for controlling free-roaming cat populations is trap-neuter-return (TNR), whereby free-roaming cats are trapped, sterilized, vaccinated, and returned to their colony of origin.

It is HSC's position that *unsocialized* community cats are best served by focusing resources on trap-neuter-return-monitor (TNRM) and return to field (RTF) programs, distribution of exclusionary devices (such as fencing and keeping garbage bins closed) and deterrents, and public education concerning the humane management of community cats. *Socialized* community cats are best served by placement into new homes whenever possible. In all cases, community cat programs involve sterilization which decreases nuisance behaviors and increases welfare. The alternatives to community cat programs, including trap-euthanize strategies, have been shown to be impractical, ineffective, and often inhumane. Euthanizing healthy cats is no longer an acceptable option.

The Humane Society of Charlotte supports and promotes humane and effective strategies for humanely managing community cat populations, including programs involving trap-neuter-return-monitor (TNRM) and return to field (RTF). Such community cat programs not only provide life-saving options for cats who might otherwise be euthanized when admitted to a shelter but also can stabilize, and even reduce over time, the population of community cat colonies. Programs that attempt to use lethal control to eliminate cat populations are inhumane, ineffective, and wasteful of scarce resources.

**Companion Animal Identification / Microchipping:** The Humane Society of Charlotte supports and encourages implanted microchips in companion animals. When combined with visible identification tags, microchips have proven to be the most reliable method of reuniting lost or stray animals with their human companions. We support and encourage efforts to implement universal (ISO standard) microchips in companion animals and the utilization of universal microchip scanners. HSC also supports the use of collars and visible ID tags and urges owners to monitor collars for proper fit and safety from potential entrapment hazards of collars.

**Dog Racing:** The Humane Society of Charlotte opposes dog racing and any other animal racing industry that places animals in danger for profit.

**Dog Tethering:** The Humane Society of Charlotte opposes tethering dogs; the practice of leaving dogs outside and unattended by use of a restraint such as a rope, chain or cord. Tethering exposes dogs to extreme temperatures, inclement weather, unreliable access to food, water or shelter and can impose injury or even death due to entanglement or strangulation. Dogs restrained in such ways can and have become aggressive due to constant confinement, lack of socialization with humans, and an inability to escape from danger. HSC's Community Outreach programs are at work in our community to help those that may need other resources for tethering.

**Domestic and Companion Animals (Cats, Dogs, Small animals and Birds (exotics)):** Companion animals are domesticated animals that have been selectively bred to live in a mutually beneficial relationship with humans and are kept primarily for the purpose of companionship whose physical, emotional, behavioral and social needs can be readily met as companions in the home, or in close daily relationship with humans. Examples include dogs, cats, horses, rabbits, ferrets, birds, guinea pigs and other small mammals, small reptiles and fish. Where they may be kept legally and responsibly, domestic bred farm animals such as goats, pigs and sheep can also be considered companion animals. The Humane Society of Charlotte recognizes the legitimacy of the human/companion animal bond and that both people and animals benefit from this relationship. HSC supports ownership of companion animals only when there is adequate personal responsibility to ensure that these animals are cared for appropriately. The acquisition of a companion animal should be carefully considered by adults who are committed to the responsibility of meeting all the basic needs and providing compassionate care for the lifetime of that animal.

**Housing for Companion animals:** While the Humane Society of Charlotte supports and encourages cats and dogs to be kept indoors as loved and integral members of the family, we recognize that some cats and dogs maybe be kept outdoors. If this is the case, all animals should be protected from any dangers from weather, predators, neglect, cruelty from people, and parasites and disease. Any outdoor pet should be cared for and protected from any of these threats by ensuring appropriate environments that include proper housing, nutrition, [socialization](#) and medical care, and should be permanently identified as a member of the family with some form of visible identification and a microchip.

**Pet Overpopulation and Spay/Neuter:** To reduce overpopulation, HSC strongly recommends all pet owners spay/neuter their animals. HSC supports, encourages and participates in shelter spay and neuter programs and trap and release programs. The Humane Society of Charlotte also supports and practices early age spay and neuter and mandatory pre adoption sterilization programs. Over three million healthy cats and dogs are euthanized in United States' animal shelters each year due to overpopulation. At least double that amount roam free, continue to reproduce and contribute to pet overpopulation. There are over six million cats and dogs entering shelters in the United States each year. Studies have shown that the most effective method of reducing pet overpopulation is to increase the number of owned cats and dogs that are spayed or neutered. Every animal adopted from the Humane Society of Charlotte will be spayed or neutered before being adopted. Spaying and neutering at-risk free-roaming and feral populations of cats and dogs have also proven to reduce the numbers of cats and dogs entering shelters and ultimately those euthanized.

**Prepubescent Neutering:** The Humane Society of Charlotte supports early-age sterilization of all shelter animals. Spaying and neutering prior to adoption of puppies and kittens is essential for controlling pet overpopulation and decreasing the number of animals entering shelters. HSC supports pre-adoption and early age sterilization on cats and dogs over eight weeks of age and weighing a minimum of two pounds.

**Puppy Mills / Mass Breeding:** HSC opposes “puppy mills,” for-profit facilities which mass-produce puppies for retail purposes. These facilities routinely subject animals to adverse conditions, such as overcrowding and inadequate sanitation, food, water, socialization and veterinary care. Sub-standard breeding practices often lead to genetic defects or hereditary disorders, and these defects along with other health issues and/or negative behavioral traits are often overlooked in favor of financial profit. The Humane Society of Charlotte opposes the mass breeding of puppies/kittens for profit and the purchase of them by pet store or internet retailers.

**Training methods:** The Humane Society of Charlotte supports humane training methods that improve communication between animal and the guardian. Improved communication is achieved through an understanding and recognition of how animals learn, incorporating kindness and humane treatment. Humane training can be accomplished through the use of lures and rewards to improve communication. We support the use of techniques and training aids that allow guardians to manage behaviors and train their animals without causing undue stress or anxiety.

**Working Animals (Drug dogs, police dogs, search and rescue):** The Humane Society of Charlotte supports the use of working animals only when they are properly trained and humanely treated. It is important to HSC that any working animal in a potentially dangerous occupation be afforded every consideration for their safety and be provided with protective equipment when necessary. The society believes that no working animal should be asked to perform solo duties that are certain to result in serious injury or death. As with any companion animal, working animals should have all their medical, physical and psychological needs met by their human companion or caregiver and should extend beyond their period of service.

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