

EUTHANASIA POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The City of Sugar Land is committed to provide quality care for every animal in its animal shelter, to prevent animal suffering, and to safeguard its animal and human population. This Euthanasia Policy and Procedures provides guidelines and criteria that shall be considered and followed in making and implementing all animal euthanasia decisions. A consistent and documented decision-making process is necessary for fairness to the animals, and to prevent abuse of the euthanasia process.

Humane euthanasia of animals - to alleviate or prevent severe suffering, or to protect other animals and humans from animals with severe behavioral issues - may be necessary for medical or behavioral reasons. Animals which may be euthanized shall be treated with respect and sensitivity, and protected from stress, fear, discomfort, and pain.

EUTHANASIA DECISIONS

The health, medical condition, temperament, and behavior of each animal in the care of Animal Services shall be evaluated on an individual basis. Euthanasia may be considered only when the animal is:

- suffering mentally, emotionally, or physically, with a poor prognosis for recovery, or with anticipated protracted painful recovery from injury or illness; or
- deemed to pose an unacceptable danger to other animals, itself, or humans.

It is the policy of the City of Sugar Land that an animal shall not be euthanized because the City's Animal Shelter has insufficient capacity to care for the animal, or because the animal has been a resident of the Animal Shelter for an extended period of time.

The evaluation of each animal shall be conducted by the Animal Shelter Supervisor and/or Veterinarian. The results of the evaluation will assist the Animal Services Management Team (Animal Services Manager, Animal Shelter Supervisor, and the Veterinarian employed by Animal Services), to assess the animal's health, medical condition, temperament, and behavior. Information from the evaluation shall be promptly documented in the Animal Profile section of Chameleon and be available in the euthanasia decision-making process.

THE DECISION MAKERS

Medical euthanasia shall be recommended by the Veterinarian and signed off by the Animal Shelter Supervisor or their designee.

Behavioral euthanasia shall be recommended by Animal Shelter Supervisor or their designee and signed off by the Veterinarian.

The final decision to proceed with euthanasia shall be made only by the Animal Services Management Team.

Anyone involved in evaluating an animal for possible euthanasia shall promptly document the specific reasons for euthanasia recommendations or decisions, and shall provide that documentation to those making the final decision. Staff members and Animal Shelter volunteers may bring questions about euthanasia decisions directly to the Animal Shelter Manager or the Director.

Although an animal may be considered for euthanasia, if euthanasia is not immediate, the animal should be kept comfortable and shall be given medications to increase its comfort and reduce its pain. Alternatives to an animal's euthanasia shall be reasonably explored, including cooperation with other placement facilities, animal rescue groups, breed placement partners, and foster homes.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING ANIMALS FOR EUTHANASIA

Stray Animals

Strays are kept in accordance with state law and as defined in the Animal Services Standard Operating Procedures before we can make the decision to place the animal up for adoption, for fostering, for rescue transfer or final case for euthanasia. However, if the animal is suffering due to severe injury or illness, the animal may be euthanized before hold period ends with a veterinarian's approval. Records must be clearly noted with the medical reasons for euthanasia. (See next page for the full policy.) If the animal is neither ill nor claimed, the animal can be considered for adoption, transfer to partner shelter, or to remain at the shelter.

Illness or Injury

Animals can be considered for euthanasia if:

- their injuries are severe or illness is untreatable
- treatment is cost prohibitive (i.e. severely broken bones, broken backs, and extensive burns)
- keeping the animal alive would result in unrelievable pain or a significantly poor quality-of-life

Other circumstances may also affect euthanasia decisions:

If an animal is suffering, euthanasia must be performed on the same day. The kennel staff must advise the veterinarian immediately of any sick, injured, or suffering animal. If the animal has an injury or condition that is painful but not life-threatening, he or she is to be medicated to relieve the pain.

Euthanasia Procedure

Euthanasia procedures must be performed only by a licensed veterinarian.