



Wisconsin Federated Humane Societies, Inc. Position Statements

WFHS Vision Statement:

"We are a cohesive network of humane organizations working together to end animal cruelty."

WFHS Mission Statement:

"Providing resources and opportunities, dedicated to promoting and advancing the humane care of all animals"

Organizational Goals:

Promote leadership development opportunities
Enhance shelter management skills
Expand prevention of cruelty to animals' initiatives
Increase the WFHS's organizational capacity

WFHS Board of Directors has adopted the following Position Statements to promote and guide humane organizations and individuals in Wisconsin to further the Societies mission by striving for the best possible treatment of animals. The Board encourages comment and suggestions to improve and update these Position Statements:

- Animal Fighting/Blood Events
- Animals in the Classroom
- Cat Protection Laws
- Commercial Endorsements
- Companion Animal Containment Systems
- Companion Animal Identification Programs
- Companion Animals in Rental Housing
- Cosmetic Surgery and De-clawing of Cats
- Dog Auctions
- Easter Chicks, Rabbits and Other Baby Animals for Holiday Sale
- Euthanasia
- Feral Cats/Neuter and Return
- Ferret Adoptions

- Giveaways for Commercial Promotion
- Legislation Banning Specific Breeds
- Overpopulation of Companion Animals
- Pound Seizure
- Pre-adoption Sterilization of Shelter Animals
- Prepubescent Neutering of Sheltered Kittens and Puppies
- Puppy Mills and Mass Breeding
- Rabies Vaccinations
- Rodeos
- Sale of Animals in Pet Stores
- Service Animals
- Show Dogs and Cats
- Spay/Neuter Clinics
- Tranquilizer Guns
- Wild Animals as Companion Animals/Exotic Companion Animals

Animal Fighting/Blood Events

WFHS is opposed to any contest between animals or between humans and animals. Such activities unnecessarily expose both people and animals to stress, pain, injury or death. WFHS believes that blood sports encourage insensitivity and acceptance of the brutal treatment of animals for entertainment and profit. Further, WFHS supports legislation, which prohibits and penalizes blood events, including but not limited to the following activities: bullfighting, cockfighting, coon on a log, coon in a hole and dog fighting.

Animals in the Classroom

WFHS discourages the practice of live animals being purchased and kept full-time in the classroom for the purpose of the education. Although valuable educational messages can be disseminated through classroom experiences with animals, the biological and social needs of resident animals may be neglected. Because classroom animals may be subject to stress, discomfort or abuse, student contact with the animals must always be supervised. Teachers are ultimately responsible for the care of animals in their classroom and maintaining them in a suitable environment. They must also insure suitable long-term arrangements at the end of the school year, school recesses or when the animals are no longer appropriate for the classroom.

Cat Protection Laws

Due to the increase in cat ownership and in the numbers of unwanted and stray cats coming through humane societies, WFHS encourages the passage of cat protection laws similar to those in effect for the protection of dogs. WFHS encourages communities to pursue the following:

- licensing programs that would promote spay/neuter
- proper identification
- rabies vaccinations on a designated schedule
- stray cats being held a minimum of 7 days
- owners who will be responsible for injury or damage caused by their cat

Commercial Endorsements

WFHS is an impartial organization that does not endorse commercial products, services or facilities in any manner that could be construed as sanctioning or approving the product, service or facility for promotional purposes. WFHS lacks the resources for ongoing testing/monitoring that would be essential to a “stamp of approval.”

Companion Animal Containment Systems

Containment systems for cats and dogs are designed to confine animals to specific areas without the use of visible barriers. They operate by automatically delivering electrical stimulation as a deterrent to roaming outside of predetermined boundaries. Systems of this type should be used with great caution. They need to be evaluated to make sure that aggression, extreme fear and general behavior suppression and pain are not exhibited by the animal.

Companion Animal Identification Programs

WFHS promotes companion animal identification that enables owners to be reunited with their companion animals in the fastest and most efficient manner. This would prevent illness, injury and stress to both people and animals. An efficient identification system could shorten the time animals spend in holding facilities, thus enhancing public health and safety and minimizing cost to the community.

Licensing of dogs and cats is one such method. A significant difference in the license fee between altered and unaltered companion animals can be used to promote and encourage spay/neuter and in turn, diminish the animal population in shelters and animal control facilities.

WFHS supports micro-chipping identification systems for all companion animals, which ultimately lead to reuniting lost animals with their owners. Standardization of the identification technology and cooperation among the animal serving community is beneficial to animals and the community that will realize greater safety and efficient animal control.

Companion Animals in Rental Housing

WFHS is aware that lack of appropriate housing opportunities that include companion animals may force people to give up their beloved companion animal/s. WFHS supports public practices and policies that encourage landlords to allow animals to reside in rental properties. By promoting responsible companion animal ownership and limiting restrictions on companion animals in housing to cases in which a valid nuisance or proven violations of ordinances or sanitation codes exist, arbitrary and unnecessary exclusions will be eliminated.

Cosmetic Surgery and Declawing of Cats

WFHS opposes cosmetic surgery that is performed solely for the purpose of owner convenience or alteration of the animal's appearance, with no benefit to the animal. Such procedures include tail docking and ear cropping in dogs, if performed for non-medical reasons. WFHS does not recommend that cats be declawed as a routine procedure, but only as a last resort when other methods of preserving animal or human safety have been tried and have failed.

Dog Auctions

Dog auctions are the means by which puppy mills sell off old, non-producing and unwanted dogs. Often these auctions are used by the breeders to “cull” their stock to raise money to buy young dogs and start the cycle of misery all over again. Although animal rescue efforts to purchase dogs at auctions are beneficial for the individual dogs obtained, it perpetuates the problem and tends to create a seller’s market. WFHS opposes purchasing dogs from auctions. It is the same principle as buying a dog at a pet store and it contributes to the demand for puppy mill dogs and perpetuating this industry of suffering.

Easter Chicks, Rabbits and Other Baby Animals for Holiday Sale

WFHA opposes the sale of baby rabbits, chicks, ducklings, goslings and all other living animals that are sold as holiday novelties when they are babies with the intent to discard prior to reaching adulthood. In addition, it is cruel to promote many of these animals as appropriate companion animals. Many of them die as a result of neglect, ignorance, or mishandling or end up at animal shelters or abandoned. WFHS opposes this practice because it promotes insensitivity toward animals and teaches children and adults both to devalue them. Education, policies, practices and legislation that result in ending animal exploitation should all be actively pursued.

Euthanasia

WFHS recognizes that for a variety of complex conditions that exist in our society and for merciful reasons, animal euthanasia is necessary. While humane societies make every effort to place suitable animals in quality adoptive homes, animal adoption may not always be a realistic option. For some animals, euthanasia may be the only humane alternative.

WFHS believes that only a veterinarian or certified euthanasia technician should perform euthanasia using prescribed and approved injectable drugs and techniques. WFHS supports legislation that requires the certification of persons administering euthanasia.

Feral Cats/Neuter and Return

WFHS supports programs to humanely reduce the population of free-roaming stray and feral cats. WFHS encourages humane treatment and responsible pet ownership of cats; encouraging cats to be kept in the home as companion animals. Free roaming and feral cats are exposed to a high incident of diseases and trauma, may expose the public to zoonotic diseases, and prey on wildlife. WFHS recognizes however, that many cats, owned and un-owned inhabit the outdoors. To help reduce these breeding populations of outdoor cats, it is necessary as a humane organizations and municipal animal control facilities to work with all populations of cats.

Where WFHS encourages all cats to be kept as companion animals, defined as animals kept with an owner in a home and not allowed to roam without supervision, it recognizes that feral cats defined as a cat that has been born in the wild and /or forsaken by the original owner for an extended period of time live in our communities and require humane intervention.

WFHS will:

- Advocate for cats to be kept indoors, under the owner’s supervision, whenever possible.
- Encourage permanent identification systems, microchips, tattoos, for all cats.

- Support programs requiring free roaming cats be spayed or neutered, identified and licensed according to municipal laws.
- Support programs to reduce cat populations using both trap and removal methods and non-lethal methods such as trap, neuter and return (TNR). TNR programs should be considered carefully as a part of a strategy only as an interim solution to reduce the generational suffering of outdoor breeding populations of cats. It recommends TNR be done only in the case where a caregiver will accept the responsibility of the established outdoor cat population. That caregiver should be the property owner and will provide food, water, medical care and shelter as needed.

WFHS does not advocate that colonies be established and maintained on public lands. WFHS encourages the operation of affordable spay or neuter programs to encourage sterilization of all cats. WFHS encourages education of the public in responsible cat ownership.

Ferret Adoptions

WFHA recognizes the ferret as a domestic pet. However, owners should exhibit caution in exposing ferrets to other animals and children. Supervision and discretion around children and other animals is critical. WFHS also stresses the proper and humane treatment of ferrets when kept as pets and that they should never be released into the wild.

Giveaways for Commercial Promotion

WFHS opposes the practice of contests, raffles and other forms of companion animal giveaways or lotteries to promote sales by attracting chance or impulse acquisition of companion animals. Giveaways that result in animals being distributed with no knowledge or control of the persons who will receive them or how and where they will be cared for or treated is inappropriate.

Legislation Banning Specific Breeds

WFHS opposes laws that ban individual breeds because they are both unfair and ineffective. Rather than breed specific laws or ordinances, animal control laws should be enforced that punish irresponsible owners - people who purposefully encourage or train an animal to be aggressive or through neglectful practices, allow a dog that is dangerous to harm people or property. WFHS believes dog owners must be held fully accountable for any harm or damage that their companion animals do to people, property and other animals.

Overpopulation of Companion Animals

WFHS is aware that the overpopulation of companion animals has created an imbalance between the numbers of homeless animals and responsible individuals willing to adopt them. This situation has resulted in the suffering and destruction of thousands of animals each year in Wisconsin.

WFHS believes that the sterilization of companion dogs, cats and rabbits, the development of humane community policies, effective animal control and enforcement and community education are all vital to end overpopulation of companion animals.

Pound Seizure

Pound seizure, the practice of surrendering animals from public and private shelters to biomedical research laboratories, training institutes, pharmaceutical houses or other organizations that use animals for experimental, teaching or testing purposes, breaks the link of trust between companion animal owners, the public and animal shelters. A breach of trust between a humane organization or shelter and the public could result in animals being abandoned in a manner that would endanger them or the public.

WFHS is opposed to pound seizure or any measure that results in pain, suffering or injury being inflicted upon a companion animal, including activities that would jeopardize the physical or psychological well-being of animals.

Pre-adoption Sterilization of Shelter Animals

WFHS supports the practice of spaying or neutering all companion animals, including puppies, kittens, cats, dogs, rabbits and other small animals, prior to placement in adoptive homes, unless health considerations, as determined by a licensed veterinarian, dictate otherwise. If pre-adoption sterilization is not possible, a commitment through policies and practices to insure that the surgery is performed at the soonest possible time should be vigorously pursued by the shelter.

Prepubescent Neutering of Sheltered Kittens and Puppies

The urgency to sterilize all animals before they can contribute to our society's already overpopulated animal community has resulted in advanced spay/neuter procedures, including prepubescent sterilization procedures. Because research continues to indicate that there is no negative physical or behavioral impact on animals in which prepubescent spay/neuter procedures have been performed, WFHS endorses the use of the procedure to end animal suffering.

Puppy Mills and Mass Breeding

WFHS opposes the mass breeding of companion animals for the commercial companion animal market because of the potential for animal suffering. These mass breeding operations, commonly known as puppy mills, add to the existing companion animal overpopulation problem in many communities. The excessive and indiscriminate breeding with no regard for genetics often causes health and temperament problems in many mass breeding establishments while the exposure to extreme weather conditions, lack of adequate veterinary care and filthy housing are common problems. In addition, isolation and lack of human contact often result in animals that are not properly socialized.

WFHS supports law enforcement, legislative and educational efforts to eliminate puppy mills and other mass breeding operations in the state of Wisconsin.

Rabies Vaccinations

WFHS endorses legislation mandating the pre-exposure rabies vaccination of all companion animals and maintains that such legislation is an essential component of operative animal control programs. Furthermore, WFHS believes preventive vaccinations to be a fundamental element of responsible companion animal ownership.

Rodeos

WFHS is opposed to any contest between animals or between humans and animals, as animals and humans are exposed to stress, pain, injury or death. WFHS believes that rodeos encourage insensitivity and acceptance of the brutal treatment of animals in the name of profit and entertainment.

Sale of Animals in Pet Stores

WFHS is opposed to the sale of the following in pet stores: companion animals of any age purchased directly or via a wholesaler from mass breeding establishments or puppy mills, wild-caught birds, wild indigenous or exotic animals and pieces of reef that were collected live.

WFHS commends the efforts of pet stores who work with humane organizations and breed placement groups by featuring in-store advertising of adoptable animals, including satellite adoption programs, photo boards, videos, etc.

Service Animals

WFHS recognizes the value of companion animals in the assistance of special-needs individuals. In order to have a professional, human assistance program, the following criteria must be followed:

- The animal's owner and/or another designated person must accept responsibility for insuring that the animal's medical, physical, behavioral, and psychological needs are met.
- Selection of assistance animals must be based on a sound knowledge of their specific physical, behavioral and psychological characteristics. The animal must be able to carry out desired tasks without invasive physical manipulation, such as teeth pulling, debarking, etc. Sterilization is recommended.
- Programs that provide temporary housing and care for assistance animals must ensure that the needs of the animals are being properly met.
- Training of animals to perform tasks for their new owners must be based on positive reinforcement rather than on physical punishment such as striking, choking or electric shock.
- The program must take responsibility for placement of animals that fail the program or are retired.

Show Dogs and Cats

WFHS recognizes sanctioned cat and dog shows when staged under the authority of a major cat or dog registry, kennel club, training school or humane organization. Conformation, obedience, agility, fly ball, field trials, lure coursing, tracking and Frisbee competitions are legitimate sporting events.

However, WFHS supports only shows or trials where humane treatment is used in showing, training and transporting dogs or cats.

WFHS does not support any activities that pit animals against each other in a combat mode or where conditions or treatment is inhumane.

Spay/Neuter Clinics

The tragic overpopulation of companion animals has resulted in significant animal suffering, many healthy or treatable, sociable animals are unwanted by the society that has allowed them to be born. The single most effective tool to end the suffering caused by overpopulation is to spay or neuter companion animals. WFHS supports the efforts of animal welfare organizations and veterinarians that provide spay/neuter education and opportunities.

Tranquilizer Guns

WFHS opposes the use of tranquilizer guns in routine animal control work as there are too many variables as to the animal's age, weight and physical conditions when estimating dosages. WFHS believes that in most cases, wild or stray animals may be captured with more conventional equipment that does not jeopardize the safety of the animal or the public. However, WFHS recognizes that tranquilizer guns are suited to use by experts and in circumstances that would otherwise result in great harm to humans or the animal.

Wild Animals as Companion Animals/Exotic Companion Animals

WFHS believes that no animal taken from the wild should be kept as a companion animal. Keeping indigenous wild animals as pets is illegal in Wisconsin. No animal that has not been genetically controlled over a very long period of time, should be captured, confined or deliberately bred as a companion animal. Many such animals suffer during capture, transport or confinement. In addition to promoting animal suffering, these animals can be a burden to animal control agencies and society when they are no longer wanted; their special needs are not being met or when they have become a danger to their caregivers and/or the general public.

This policy does not pertain to wild animals under the care of a trained and licensed rehabilitator responding to animals that are ill, injured or orphaned.

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