

VBSPCA Shelter Operations Philosophy

The VBSPCA is a wholistic, adoption-focused shelter that accepts owner surrendered animals from throughout the Hampton Roads region. We also accept transfers of animals from other shelters in the region and beyond in order to help promote adoption and prevent euthanasia of animals in areas where shelters do not have the space to accommodate them. We take in over 4,000 companion animals each year, and we aim to find adoptive homes for approximately 90% of those animals.

Our adoption focus means we work to find homes for all the healthy and treatable animals under our care, with euthanasia generally reserved for untreatable and unmanageable animals. Our wholistic approach to increasing adoptions and preventing euthanasia of companion animals includes:

- Providing high volume, low-cost spay/neuter services
- Recruiting, training and supporting a network of foster care providers for animals
- Collaborating with other shelters and rescue groups
- Intensive marketing and adoption promotions, including off-site adoption events
- Medical and behavioral rehabilitation by staff veterinarians and behaviorist
- Extensive use of volunteers, including a behavior modification team who work to resolve barriers to adoption
- Extensive Humane Education programs that teach compassion and responsible pet ownership
- Public relations and community outreach
- Increasing returns of strays to owners by referring all stray animals (except unweaned kittens and puppies) to the public shelter, so that owners of lost pets need only search at one location

We have an open door relinquishment policy. We do not require appointments for owners to surrender their pets, and we attempt to take all animals that are brought to us. Animals are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and we accept all animals that can be housed and managed with the resources available to the shelter. Animals that have bitten within the past 10 days are referred to the public shelter.

Sometimes owners come to us to surrender animals for whom owner requested euthanasia is a more compassionate option. We are opposed to animals being exposed to the stresses of a shelter environment when untreatable health problems or unsafe behavior prevent them from being adoption candidates. We also find that some owners have difficulty making end-of-life decisions for older animals for whom euthanasia is the most humane alternative. We provide counseling to owners in these circumstances, and we offer compassionate euthanasia in our clinic, with owner present if desired, as an alternative that prevents unneeded suffering.

If after counseling, an owner of a medically untreatable or behaviorally unrehabilitatable animal still prefers to surrender their pet rather than request a compassionate euthanasia, we will accept the animal into the shelter and will inform the owner that euthanasia is the probable outcome. If owners do not wish to relinquish their pet to us, they may be counseled regarding other resources, such as breed-specific rescues, or public shelters.

Despite our best efforts to find forever homes for all the animals that come into our care, some animals after being accepted into the shelter become untreatably ill and must be euthanized. Others may develop or display behavior or emotional problems that make them unsafe or

unsuitable for adoption into a home. Those animals are also humanely euthanized. Our philosophy is compassion-based, with alleviation of suffering and quality of life being our prime considerations when making the difficult, but sometimes necessary, decision to euthanize an animal.

Our goal is to be fully transparent about our policies, and we are very proud of our outcomes. People evaluating our services should know that it is very rare that we do not accept an animal, and the vast majority of the animals we accept are successfully placed in loving homes.