

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 2,500 companion animals each year, and we aim to find adoptive homes for at least 90% of those animals.

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

- Providing high quality, 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 to make harder to place animals available to new adopters
- Intensive marketing and adoption promotions, including off-site adoption awareness events
- Medical rehabilitation by staff veterinarians
- Extensive use of volunteers to provide enrichment and exercise to shelter animals
- 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 municipal shelter, so that owners of lost pets need only search at one location

The Virginia Beach SPCA accepts all canines, felines, and small animals that can be housed and managed with the resources available to the shelter. We do require appointments to take in owner surrendered animals, and each animal is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Animals that have bitten within the past 10 days are referred to the municipal shelter. Stray animals, except unweaned kittens and puppies, are also referred to the municipal shelter.

It is our mission to eliminate animal suffering, and 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. In these cases, we counsel owners about the nature of the circumstances, and euthanasia can be the most compassionate option. We also find that some owners have difficulty making end-of-life

decisions for older pets. We provide counseling to owners and our clinic offers compassionate euthanasia 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' mental and/or physical health will decline rapidly in a shelter environment. Some may get untreatably ill, and some may develop behavior or emotional problems that make them unsafe or unsuitable for adoption into a home. These animal cases are put before our Asilomar Committee, a committee that is in place to fairly evaluate animals as an individual. The committee is made of individuals throughout our organization with varying areas of expertise. When an animal is submitted to the committee, that animal's entire history is reviewed by the committee, and each member meets with the animal. The committee members then vote on the best outcome for that individual animal- whether that be a behavior modification plan in our own shelter, transferring the animal to a rescue partner, or in cases of suffering, safety concerns, or a poor prognosis, humane euthanasia.

Our philosophy is driven by compassion, 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 that over 90% of our animals are adopted into loving homes. And our vision will always be focused on ending animal homelessness