



Humane Society of Western Montana
Position statements
Approved May 13, 2010

Pound Seizure

The Humane Society of Western Montana is opposed to transferring or selling shelter animals (known as Pound Seizure) for use in scientific research or experimentation. It is inhumane to use former pets for these purposes, and it breaks down the public's faith in the animal sheltering system. People who find animals, or who cannot keep their own pets, are less likely to bring those animals to the local shelter if they believe the pets may go to a research or testing facility. The result may well be abandonment of the unwanted pet.

Operational Policy:

The Humane Society does not release animals for the purpose of scientific research under any circumstances.

Breed-Specific Legislation

The Humane Society of Western Montana opposes any state or local law to regulate or ban dogs based on breed. We recognize that dangerous dogs pose a serious community problem requiring attention. However, scientific data do not support the effectiveness of breed-specific legislation, and these laws unfairly target responsible pet guardians and their dogs.

The Humane Society favors a breed-neutral, community-based approach that includes public education and effective enforcement of animal control laws.

Operational Policy

Each dog or puppy admitted to the Humane Society undergoes a SAFER™ (Safety Assessment For Evaluating Rehoming) test prior to entering the adoption program. The SAFER test, designed by the American Society for the Prevention

of Cruelty to Animals, is a widely used system for evaluating dog behavior to identify potential aggression in dogs. It also assists in appropriate placement regardless of breed.

Puppy Mills

The Humane Society of Western Montana opposes puppy mills. Puppy mills are defined as commercial facilities that mass-produce puppies for the pet shop industry, Internet sales, or other retail purposes. Puppy mills overlook ill health, genetic defects, and negative behavioral traits in favor of financial profit. Animals suffer in conditions caused by overcrowding inadequate shelter, poor sanitation, lack of food, water and veterinary care; long-term confinement; and lack of social and behavioral enrichment.

The Humane Society advocates for the adoption of animals from reputable shelters and rescue groups as a first option. We encourage anyone who purchases a pet to seek responsible breeders dedicated to improving health, condition and behavior of their animals and who assume lifetime accountability for these animals.

The Humane Society extends this position to the commercial mass production of any and all companion animals.

Spay/Neuter

The Humane Society of Western Montana strongly recommends that all companion dogs, cats, and rabbits, except those who are part of a responsible breeding program, be spayed or neutered.

Indiscriminate and irresponsible dog, cat, and rabbit breeding lead to millions of unwanted, abandoned and euthanized animals each year in the United States. Spaying and neutering is the most effective way to decrease these numbers, as well as to provide considerable health and behavioral benefits to the animals.

Spay/Neuter - Operational Policy

All animals available for adoption at the Humane Society will be spayed or neutered prior to adoption unless the treating veterinarian recommends temporarily deferring the procedure for health reasons. The animal will be altered as soon as advised by the treating veterinarian. Unaltered animals can be fostered with potential adopters, however, transfer of guardianship will not be completed until the animal has been spayed or neutered. To prevent the accidental breeding of young cats and dogs, we support pediatric or "early-age" spaying and neutering of animals as soon as they reach two months of age and two pounds in weight.

Trapping

The Humane Society of Western Montana opposes the use of all trapping devices that have the potential to cause pain and suffering of companion animals. Devices such as leg-hold and body-gripping traps cause intense capture stress, grievous injury and death. Traps are inherently non-selective and are capable of capturing any species, including pets.

Cosmetic and Elective Surgery

The Humane Society of Western Montana opposes elective and cosmetic surgeries and procedures that have no medical benefit and are based solely on the convenience of the animals' owners.

Unacceptable procedures include but are not limited to tail-docking, ear-cropping, and debarking. The Humane Society also opposes declawing, which often results in long-term pain and behavioral problems. Scratching is a normal part of cat behavior, and we believe that declawing cats should only be performed when medically necessary for the cat or the owner and all alternatives have been exhausted. We instead promote the use of scratching posts, nail trimming and Soft Paws and encourage people to seek professional behavioral advice.

Operational Policy

Humane Society adoption staff will encourage anyone interested in declawing to select a cat that has already been declawed. Adopters expressing their desire to declaw will be given information regarding the procedure itself and alternatives to declawing.

Training methods

The Humane Society of Western Montana opposes cruel or harsh training methods. We recognize that training techniques that involve physical and psychological intimidation can hinder effective training and damage relationships between humans and companion animals. The Humane Society opposes training equipment that can cause physical harm or unnecessary distress to the pet.

We believe training is an important component of having companion animals, and pets thrive in an environment that provides them with clear structure and communication. Therefore, the Humane Society advocates for training methods with an emphasis on rewarding desired behaviors and discouraging undesirable behaviors, using clear and consistent instruction.

Operational Policy

The Humane Society uses only positive training techniques in classes offered at the shelter. Volunteers working with shelter dogs are trained in and required to use positive training methods. Humane Society staff will provide information on reward-based training techniques to people seeking advice.