EUTHANASIA

The Trenton Animal Shelter shall aspire to be a no-kill animal shelter which does not kill healthy or treatable animals even when the shelter is full, *reserving euthanasia for terminally ill animals or those considered dangerous to public safety.*

Euthanasia is an emotional and heart-wrenching process for those involved. It's a decision no one wants to make or carry out. Quality-of-life is our guiding principle. Humane euthanasia of animals - a practice acknowledged by most animal protection organizations as an acceptable means for alleviating or preventing suffering – is still necessary due to the nature and condition of animals received at our shelter and those in the surrounding communities. Euthanasia is defined as the act of inducing humane (rapid and painless) death.

Euthanasia shall be only performed at an off-site licensed veterinary facility. The animal's physical condition (including weight) shall be documented in writing by the supervising veterinarian or veterinarian prior to performing the procedure.

We sincerely wish that every animal that comes to us could be adopted to a caring, responsible home. Unfortunately, not every animal that we receive in our shelter is adoptable. We use our experience and protocols to evaluate an animal's needs. Each animal who comes to us is evaluated in its entirety; taking into account both behavior and medical conditions. As it pertains to euthanasia, it is the policy of the Trenton Animal Shelter that animals be handled with respect and sensitivity and protected from stress, fear, discomfort, and pain.

We also recognize the adoptability of animals in shelters may be impacted by:

- temperament;
- previoushistory including age, breed, health, and bite history;
- requirements ordered by the courts;
- community safety.

Our evaluation process assesses an animal's behavior, temperament, and health. The evaluation process is a tool to help the Shelter Manager, Humane Enforcement Officer, Veterinarian, Health Officer, and Community Rescue Representative to assess an animal's behavior.

This information is used to determine if an animal is healthy, treatable, or unhealthy/untreatable:

- Healthy animals that rate high in the evaluation are adoptable;
- Treatable animals may be borderline but could respond with treatment medically or behaviorally; or
- Unhealthy/untreatable animals are clearly sick, have poor or no quality of life or are unsafe for the community.

Animals may display behavior patterns or have physical conditions that would make them difficult to care for at the shelter or in a home environment. Some animals may be dangerous to people or other animals and it would not be in the best interest of Trenton or the community to place such animals.

Evaluators will clearly document the specific reasons for euthanasia decisions based on the language used in the guideline. All animals scheduled for euthanasia will be scanned for a microchip and checked for a tattoo. If the animal is a stray, a final search will be conducted in lost animal reports.

In an effort to be transparent and to improve communication, three (3) to seven (7) days notice will be given to any active volunteer who has a relationship with an animal of the Trenton Animal Shelter's intention to euthanize because of the animal's behavior.

Alternatives

Alternative options will always be reasonably explored for animals initially accepted for adoption but that fail to continue to meet the criteria for adoptability. The shelter works with many reputable rescue organizations, rehab organizations, sanctuaries, and breed placement partners who may also be able to assist.

Criteria for evaluating animals for euthanasia

It is critical for staff and volunteers who do not make euthanasia decisions to understand the pain, emotion, and guilt associated with this role. The decision-makers face a difficult task, and their decisions must be respected.

We strive to be compassionate, fair, and professional as we accept the responsibility for managing the hundreds of homeless animals that enter our shelter each year. Determinations regarding some animals are clearer than others. To assist the staff who must perform that role, criteria are listed below that may help in those grueling moments.

Stray Animals

Strays are kept for 7 days before we can make the decision to place the animal up for adoption, or consider euthanasia. However, if the animal is suffering due to severe injury or illness, the animal may be euthanized before the hold period ends only with a veterinarian's recommendation and written approval. Records must be clearly noted with the medical reasons for euthanasia.

If the animal is neither ill nor claimed, he or she can be considered for adoption, transferred to partner shelter or rescue organization, remain at the shelter, or be euthanized on the eighth day according to the NJ State Laws. The Trenton Animal Shelter will not euthanize any animal just for space.

Illness or Injury

Animals may be considered for euthanasia if:

- their injuries or illness is untreatable;
- treatment is cost prohibitive for the average person in our community (i.e. severely broken bones, broken backs, and extensive burns); or
- keeping the animal alive would result in pain or a poor quality-of-life.

Other circumstances may also affect euthanasia decisions:

- If a veterinarian has noted that an animal has a serious illness or communicable disease (i.e.

rabies);

- If an animal is suffering, euthanasia is to be performed on the same day. The kennel staff must advise the veterinarians immediately of any sick, injured, or suffering animal; or
- 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.

Stray Animals Euthanized before Stray Period or Brought in Dead on Arrival (DOA).

File a copy of the euthanasia record in the animal's file.

Carefully and respectfully bag the animal and place the bag in the freezer with a HOLD sign filled out and taped to the bag. This will prevent the animal from being picked up by the crematory service until the stray period is over.

Any DOAs picked up are handled in the same manner.

Aggressive Animals

Any animal regardless of its size, sex, or breed who is known to be aggressive or exhibits signs of unprovoked, offensive aggression towards people or other animals posing a risk to public safety may be euthanized. Determination of aggression can be made from past history, day-to-day interaction with the staff and volunteers, and through a behavior evaluation.

Aggression includes:

- offensive and threatening behaviors
- actual attacks resulting in bites
- lunging at humans, in some instances
- baring teeth, in some instances
- exhibiting other characteristics that may make it a poor family companion for the average adopter

Generally, cats may need more time (more than seven days) to adjust to the surroundings and noises. They should be placed in a quiet cage, with the front covered with a towel, and then re-evaluated after they have been given time to relax.

EUTHANASIA POLICY

Trenton Animal Shelter Policy – Recommendation for Euthanasia

I. PURPOSE: To provide guidelines for the determination of humane euthanasia of animals in shelter.

II. APPLICABILITY: Any animal in the shelter being considered for humane euthanasia.

III. POLICY: The following criteria will be used when evaluating animals in the shelter for euthanasia.

a. Trenton Animal Shelter does not euthanize due to time or space constraints, reserving euthanasia for animals who are suffering mentally or physically, terminally ill, or considered dangerous to themselves, other animals, and/or humans.
b. Euthanasia may be considered when there is a deteriorating medical and/or behavioral condition that is causing suffering to an animal: if shelter veterinarian and/or administration determines that a pet is suffering from medical conditions that are not able to be medically treated to maintain a comfortable and quality life.
c. Euthanasia will be considered for animals exhibiting behaviors that are beyond management that are deemed unsafe to other pets, people, and to itself.
    i. Dog-dog aggression: If dog is unable to redirect attention towards a handler or if behavior results in hospitalization/death of another animal.
    ii. Dog-human aggression: Unable to interrupt behavior and/or level 3 bite on Ian Dunbar's Dog Bite Scale. Level 4 or higher bite on bite scale.
    iii. Bite history to human: Using Ian Dunbar Dog Bite Scale, some level 3 bites, and level 4 or higher.
    iv. Offensive aggression: Dog exhibits behaviors including but not limited to barks, growls, bares teeth with offensive body postures (high tail, direct eye contact, ears erect, muzzle punch) while charging and/or moving forward.

IV. Ian Dunbar's Dog Bite Scale:
a. Level 1. Obnoxious or aggressive behavior but no skin-contact by teeth.
b. Level 2. Skin-contact by teeth but no skin-puncture. However, may be skin nicks (less than one tenth of an inch deep) and slight bleeding caused by forward or lateral movement of teeth against skin, but no vertical punctures.
c. Level 3. One to four punctures from a single bite with no puncture deeper than half the length of the dog's canine teeth. Maybe lacerations in a single direction, caused by victim

pulling hand away, owner pulling dog away, or gravity (little dog jumps, bites and drops to floor).

d. Level 4. One to four punctures from a single bite with at least one puncture deeper than half the length of the dog's canine teeth. May also have deep bruising around the wound (dog held on for N seconds and bore down) or lacerations in both directions (dog held on and shook its head from side to side).
e. Level 5. Multiple-bite incident with at least two Level 4 bites or multiple-attack incident with at least one Level 4 bite in each.
f. Level 6. Victim dead.

V.

VI. The above list concerns unpleasant behavior and so, to add perspective:

a. Levels 1 and 2 comprise the vast majority of dog incidents. The dog is certainly not dangerous and more likely to be fearful, rambunctious, or out of control. Quickly resolve the problem with basic training (control) — especially Classical Conditioning, numerous repetitive Retreat n' Treat, Come/Sit/Food Reward and Backup/Approach/Food Reward sequences, progressive desensitization handling exercises, plus numerous bite-inhibition exercises and games. Hand feed only until resolved; do NOT waste potential food rewards by feeding from a bowl.
b. Level 3: Prognosis is fair to good, provided that you have owner compliance. However, treatment is both time-consuming and not without danger. Rigorous bite-inhibition exercises are essential.
c. Levels 4: The dog has insufficient bite inhibition and is very dangerous. Prognosis is poor because of the difficulty and danger of trying to teach bite inhibition to an adult hard-biting dog and because absolute owner-compliance is rare. Only work with the dog in exceptional circumstances, e.g., the owner is a dog professional and has sworn 100% compliance. Make sure the owner signs a form in triplicate stating that they understand and take full responsibility that: 1. The dog is a Level 4 biter and is likely to cause an equivalent amount of damage WHEN it bites again (which it most probably will) and should therefore, be confined to the home at all times and only allowed contact with adult owners. 2. Whenever, children or guests visit the house, the dog should be confined to a single locked room or roofed, chain-link run with the only keys kept on a chain around the neck of each adult owner (to prevent children or guests entering the dog's confinement area.) 3. The dog is muzzled before leaving the house and only leaves the house for visits to a veterinary clinic. 4. The incidents have all been reported to the relevant authorities — animal control or police. Give the owners one copy, keep one copy for your files and give one copy to the dog's veterinarian.
d. Level 5 and 6: The dog is extremely dangerous and mutilates. The dog is simply not safe around people. Recommend euthanasia because the quality of life is so poor for dogs that have to live out their lives in solitary confinement.

THE DUNBAR DOG BITE SCALE
Levels 1-6

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

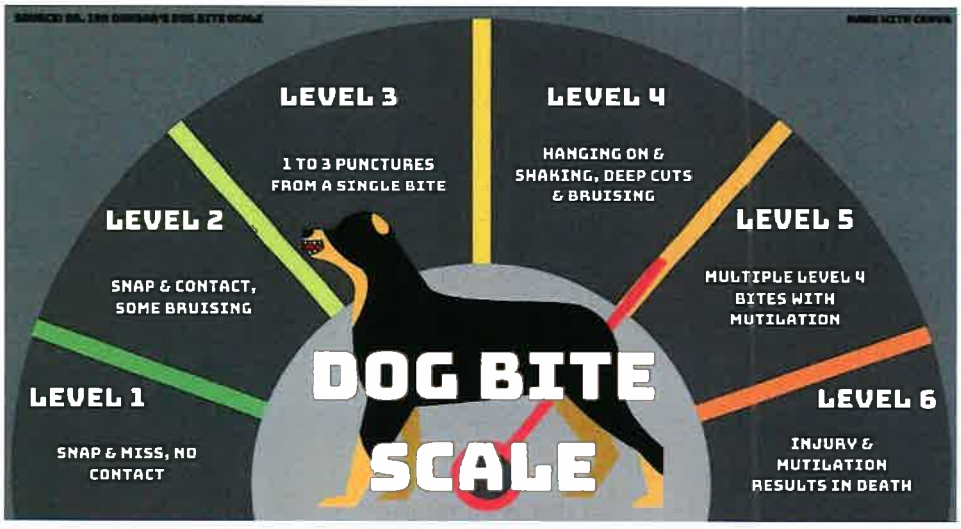
5. 

6. 

AnimalWised

BITE LEVELS

Level 1: aggressive but no skin contact.
Level 2: teeth make contact, but do not break the skin.
Level 3: a single bite with shallow wounds.
Level 4: a single bite with deep wounds.
Level 5: multiple bites with deep wounds.
Level 6: death of the victim and/or flesh consumed.



EUTHANASIA PROCEDURE

Euthanasia of any animal for any reason is not performed at the Trenton Animal Shelter. All euthanasia will be performed at an off-site veterinary facility/hospital.

When recommendation for euthanasia is made for a dog based on behavior, a *Canine Euthanasia Recommendation Form for Dogs with Demonstrated Aggression (Appendix 14, pgs. 154-155)* form must be completed and signed by all indicated administrators/management.

1. Euthanasia is scheduled at offsite veterinary hospital.
2. Transportation arrangements are made with our Humane Enforcement/ACOs.
3. Euthanasia is performed by a licensed veterinarian. Once euthanasia is performed, the *Euthanasia Form (Appendix)* must be completed for file and arrangement for cremation is made.
4. All documentation is kept in animal's record.
5. Outcome is entered in Shelter manager. *(See Shelter Manager Procedures)*