



SANDTON

POLICY ON EUTHANASIA

THERE ARE NO "DEATH ROWS" AT SPCAs

Claims continue to circulate that there are "death rows" at SPCAs. The most recent "proof" being put forward are visuals taken by a misguided person who photographed the admission and release forms on the quarantine kennels / block at an SPCA. In another instance, the visuals circulating were of the boarding section of an SPCA.

THERE IS NO "SET TIME" FOR KEEPING AN ANIMAL

This is a misunderstanding based on the so-called "pound period". When a stray/lost animal is taken to the SPCA, the local by-laws prescribe how long the animal must be kept **before it can be put up for adoption if not claimed by its original owner**. When the pound period expires, it does not mean that the animal is euthanased. It means the animals can be legally adopted.

THE SPCA PERSPECTIVE ON EUTHANASIA

From the Greek: - *eu* = "well", *thanosos* = "death"

Meaning the act of causing death painlessly / an easy and painless death.

The SPCA movement's Statement of Policy "is opposed to the euthanasia of fit and healthy animals but accepts the reality that humane destruction is necessary. Euthanasia must be carried out by qualified personnel using approved and humane methods and with the greatest compassion."

The number of animals admitted to SPCAs, especially because of uncontrolled breeding, means that euthanasia will continue to be an unavoidable responsibility. There are not enough suitable, responsible homes available.

Euthanasia is generally accepted as a means to end suffering. The SPCA definition of suffering includes lifelong incarceration, lack of bonding with humans or its own kind, compromising any of the "five freedoms" including the freedom to express natural behaviour, plus mental suffering which includes but is not limited to kennel or "captivity" stress.

The sad reality is that "any port in a storm" is not an option. Finding someone to take an animal to avoid euthanasing it is irresponsible. SPCAs permit adoptions to a **permanent home**. This is often misconstrued as SPCAs not permitting adoptions outside their area of operation. A recent example was when an SPCA declined an adoption application not because it was out of town but because the person offered to take two Pekingese dogs to put them out on her plot until she could find homes for them.

People are misguided when they state they wish to take an animal based on an image or an emotional (some would say pressurised) appeal, especially if they are told or have been led to believe that euthanasia might be imminent. People need to meet the animal and to take

into careful consideration all aspects of what has to be a commitment and responsibility for the rest of the dog's life.

Keeping animals for an indefinite period is inhumane. Over and above the confinement is the fact that dogs in particular need interaction and bonding with people. Dog showing signs of what is known as kennel stress can develop behavioural problems which may never be overcome: - rendering the animal even less likely to be "adoptable" or to settle in a home.

It is often put forward that SPCAs need to run along "no kill" lines, as takes place elsewhere including in our own country. The term NO KILL may be misleading. The temptation is to take its meaning literally but the most commonly used definition is, "a place where all adoptable and treatable animals are saved and where only injured, terminally ill, unadoptable or non-rehabilitatable animals are euthanased." So, they do euthanase. In certain instances where claims of no euthanasia whatsoever are made, the reason is that the shelters are selective in their admission. By comparison, SPCAs are obligated by law to admit any animal brought in. No animal may be turned away.

An animal turned away from a welfare organisation may not be euthanased but there are fates worse than euthanasia. Drowning in buckets and dams, poisoning, giving animals to staff and instructing them to kill, the proliferation of brokers with the export demand and market, backyard breeding using caged "breeding bitches", being taken for experimentation the demand for animals for snuff movies, the legal practice of Satanism, hanging – and being left to fend for themselves until they die of starvation or from untreated injuries and illness. These are the alternatives and examples of each can be given to back up these statements or claims. The practices above are far more common that you might think.

The definition of an animal sanctuary is where an animal is taken to live out its natural life. Generally speaking, sanctuaries do not euthanase except in cases of severe illness or injury. Sanctuaries, however, do not handle the numbers of animals that come in to SPCAs. The increasing number of animals being brought to SPCAs is noted as an additional factor, especially the significant increase in pure-bred dogs, plus animals that originated from pet shops. To put it bluntly, SPCAs are doing the dirty work for breeders, pet shops and others who breed, sell or trade in animals.

Wanting to save animals is an understandable aim for people working in welfare. But reality has to be taken into account. What are the animals being saved for or from, especially if it is known that the chances of homing them responsibly are slim.

It is a sad fact that currently there is no alternative. Until such time as breeding is controlled and trading in animals for profit is curtailed, animals will be dependant upon the SPCAs to step in and treat the consequence and not the cause. The blame should be placed fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the irresponsible people causing the problem which includes the "we just wanted her to have one litter" types and the "he's male. It doesn't matter if he is unsterilised" contingent.

The best way of dealing with this issue is to address the core problem: - sterilisation. The bottom line is that the SPCA movement places quality of life and welfare of the animal as paramount. In terms of euthanasia, someone has to do it.

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