

**RECOMMENDED MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR**  
**ANIMAL SHELTERS IN NEW MEXICO**  
**Submitted to the Animal Sheltering Board**  
**February, 2012 and Revised June, 2012**

**Introduction**

The Animal Sheltering Board (ASB) was created in 2007 by the New Mexico State legislature under the **Animal Sheltering Services Act [Chapter 77, Article 1B NMSA 1978]** (The Act). ASB was chartered to provide recommended standards for humane housing and treatment of New Mexico's shelter animals and to create rules guiding the humane euthanasia of animals in the State's animal shelters.

The standards presented below are a compilation of guidelines developed in November 2007 by New Mexico animal welfare experts (listed in the Appendix) brought together by Animal Protection of New Mexico, "Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters" (GSCAS) published in 2010 by The Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) and "Facility Housing and Design" published in 2010 by the University of California, Davis, Koret Shelter Medicine Program (Koret). It should be noted that these Guidelines were developed from multiple scientific studies conducted by ASV in shelters throughout the country.

**Overview**

The overriding principles guiding these recommended standards also include the American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) Animal Welfare Principles stating "Animals should be treated with respect and dignity throughout their lives" (AVMA 2006) and the GSCAS use of the Five Freedoms For Animal Welfare (Farm Animal Welfare Council 2009) shown below:

1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst	by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor
2. Freedom from Discomfort	by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
3. Freedom from Pain	by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment
4. Freedom to Express Normal Behavior	by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of an animal's own kind
5. Freedom from Fear and Distress	by enduring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering

As shelters work towards incorporating these standards, a key element for success is the development and use of written protocols to achieve and maintain these standards. All staff and volunteers must have access to and be trained on these protocols. Further, it is the recommendation of the ASV that a veterinarian be involved in the development of these protocols and in the supervision of medical and surgical care of the animals.

As shelter management and community's consider these recommendations, it is important to point out that according to the Koret shelter design standards, "The type of housing encountered in a shelter is arguably the single most important factor in determining the quality of an animal's experience in that environment. Housing impacts the animal 24 hours a day and affects everything from stress level and disease risk to food intake and sleep quality."

While it is understood that New Mexico has a pet overpopulation problem, shelter management must take on the challenge of making best efforts to provide effective adoption and foster programs in order to move animals through the shelter as quickly as possible. The ASV Guidelines and Koret studies have demonstrated in shelters across the country, that overcrowding in shelters leads to increased stress which leads to an increase in illness. Calculating capacity

takes into account staffing as well as cage space. The National Association of Animal Control Officers (NACA) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) recommend a minimum of 15 minutes of care time per day for feeding and cleaning each animal housed in the shelter (9 minutes for cleaning and 6 minutes for feeding (ASV). To calculate optimal shelter capacity, see “calculating shelter capacity” at [www.sheltermedicine.com](http://www.sheltermedicine.com).

The goal of these recommended standards is to provide shelter animals covered by The Act humane treatment, safe and adequate facilities, and proper care to ensure their health and well-being while in the shelter’s care.

## **1. STRUCTURAL STANDARDS**

All exterior structures and fencing should:

- A. be constructed of building materials that will ensure the establishment of a sound physical structure.
- B. be maintained in good repair.
- C. protect animals kept therein from injury and ensure containment of animals within the shelter.
- D. exclude the entry of outside animals and unauthorized persons.
- E. include four solid walls on all buildings to protect animals from weather conditions and prevent entry of unauthorized persons.
- F. include fencing constructed sufficiently to prevent dogs from jumping or climbing or digging to escape.

## **2. FACILITY STANDARDS**

- A. Animal housing areas should be physically separated from places where food and drink for human consumption are prepared, served or stored.
- B. Interior building surfaces should be constructed and maintained so that they are impervious to moisture and may be readily cleaned.
- C. Animal food storage and equipment cleaning areas should be physically separated from animal housing.
- D. Reliable and adequate electric power and/or gas should be provided for lighting, air circulation, heating and cooling.
- E. Reliable and adequate potable (drinkable, clean, fresh) water should be provided. Back flow preventers should be installed on any threaded faucets where hoses may be attached for the purpose of cleaning the facility or on the main water line serving the facility.
- F. Noise control should be considered for the well-being of the animals as well as visitors, volunteers and staff. Excessive noise contributes to adverse behavioral and physiological responses. (ASV) Dogs and cats are more sensitive to noise than humans, with cats being more sensitive than dogs. Cats are adversely

affected by the sound of barking dogs. Noise mitigation should include a) housing cats away from the sound of dogs, b) facility modifications to minimize or contain barking, c) training staff to minimize slamming cage doors and d) using music to reduce animal stress. It is worth noting that in one study, “heavy metal music” was shown to increase barking while classical music reduced it (Wells 2000).

- G. Readily accessible washrooms or sinks should be provided to maintain personal hygiene among animal caretakers. A two-compartment sink in good repair should be provided for washing and sanitizing equipment used for animal care and feeding. A tub should be available to wash any animal that becomes soiled, in order to avoid the use of hoses for cleaning animals.
- H. Indoor housing for animals should be sufficiently heated or cooled to protect animals from extreme temperatures, and to provide for their health and comfort at all times. The ambient temperature should be consistent with the requirements of the specific species: i.e., 70 - 72 degrees Fahrenheit for dogs/cats/other domestic animals. Birds and reptiles require individual lighting and heating to be housed correctly.
- I. Indoor housing for animals should be adequately ventilated with fresh air to minimize odors and moisture and to provide for the health and comfort of the animals at all times. Kennels should have fresh air ventilation providing ten or more air changes per hour in animal housing areas or may recycle air through a filter system.
- J. Water supply should allow for hose hook-up, to readily reach all parts of animal housing. Water pressure should be adequate for cleaning of animal housing areas.
- K. A suitable method should be provided to rapidly eliminate excess water from animal housing facilities. If drains are used, they should be properly constructed and kept in good repair. If closed drainage systems are used, wastewater should be disposed of by connection to a sanitary sewer or any approved sewage disposal system.

### **3. ANIMAL ENCLOSURE STANDARDS**

- A. Primary enclosures defined: Primary enclosures are those animal enclosures (within the exterior building) in which the animal normally eats, eliminates, rests, and sleeps.
- B. Primary enclosures must provide sufficient space to allow each animal, regardless of species, to make normal postural adjustments, e.g., to turn freely and to easily stand, sit, stretch, move their head, without touching the touch of the enclosure, lie in a comfortable position with limbs extended, move about and assume a comfortable posture for feeding, drinking, urinating and defecating. In addition, cats and dogs should be able to hold their tails erect when in a normal standing position. (ASV)
- C. Primary enclosures should allow animals to be able to see out, but also provide the opportunity to avoid visual contact. (ASV)

- D. All animals housed at the shelter should be confined to a primary enclosure at all times unless under the direct supervision of shelter personnel or a qualified, appointed volunteer.
- E. Primary enclosures should be structurally sound and maintained in good repair and sanitary condition to protect the animals from injury and disease. They should be constructed and maintained to enable the animals to remain dry and clean and to provide convenient access to food and clean water. Latches must be secure and in good working order so that animals cannot escape.
- F. The floors of the primary enclosures should be constructed to prevent injury to the animals, and to ensure adequate drainage and prevent pooling of fluids within the primary enclosures for dogs. Wire-mesh bottoms or slatted floors in cages are not acceptable.
- G. For enclosures that allow animals access to both inside and outside areas, guillotine or other doors that separate the two enclosure sections should be in proper working order.
- H. Floors in dog runs should slope to drain liquid out of runs and prevent pooling or puddles in the runs or walkways. The slope should be  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch per linear foot.
- I. There should be solid walls between dog runs to prevent water and waste material from flowing from run to run. The solid walls should be of a height sufficient to prevent nose-to-nose contact of animals between the runs. In addition, fencing or other materials that allow for airflow should be used above the solid walls (vertically and horizontally) to provide a protective barrier at least six feet high between runs, to prevent dogs from jumping over, except in the case of “real-life” rooms which are dog rooms each with its own self-contained heating/cooling/air exchange and drainage systems.
- J. All solid surfaces of the dog runs should be constructed of a material (such as concrete, stone, cement block, brick, or metal) that is water resistant and can be cleaned and sanitized. Concrete floors, sealed, not painted, are preferable because they can be cleaned and disinfected most effectively. All fencing materials should be water-resistant and of materials that can be easily cleaned and sanitized. Consideration must be given to gauge and spacing of any fencing materials used. Chicken wire, barbed wire and wood should never be used.
- K. Primary enclosures (individual cages) for cats should be made of stainless steel, fiberglass, or other impervious material that is water-resistant and can be cleaned and sanitized. (Chicken wire, barbed wire, and wood should never be used.) The cages should have a solid floor, sides, and top. The front should be designed to maximize light and airflow.
- L. Space Requirements for Cats - Cats must be able to assume normal postures. Cats housed in cages with 11 square feet of floor space were found to be significantly less stressed (and therefore more healthy) than those housed with only 5.3 square feet of space (the typical dimensions of most commercially available cat housing). (ASV)

- M. Primary enclosures should provide at least 28" by 30" (5.8 sq. ft.) of clear floor space (excluding space occupied by bed, food and water dishes and litter boxes). Ideally a hiding box is incorporated which means the compartment should be about 3 feet wide. The height should be at least 30" to allow the cat to stand on its hind legs and fully extend its front legs without touching the top on the cage. (Koret)
- 1) The size of the primary enclosure for single cats should provide 2 feet of triangulated distance between the litter box, resting area and feeding area. (ASV)
  - 2) When there is more than one cat in a cage, such as a nursing mother with kittens, additional floor and vertical space should be provided.
- N. Feral cat boxes or other box-like structures, which allow for hiding places within the cage, should definitely be considered to reduce stress for all cats.
- O. Litter boxes should be provided for cats in their primary enclosure, with soiled litter disposed on as needed basis, at a minimum once a day. Litter boxes may be disposable, or reusable if they are cleaned daily and sanitized before used by another cat.
- P. If cats are to be moved from one location to another, it is highly recommended that the carrier be covered with a towel or sheet to reduce stress and thus susceptibility to illness.
- Q. If colony rooms are used to house cats, follow the guidelines listed below:
- 1) There should be at least 18 square feet of floor space per cat and the opportunity to maintain a distance of 3 to 10 feet distance between themselves and other cats. This does not include perches or walkways, but can include outdoor access in temperate climates assuming cats have 24-hour access to indoors. (Koret)
  - 2) Cats whose vaccination history is unknown should be evaluated for health and behavior, vaccinated, and isolated for at least 24 hours for observation before being placed in cat colony rooms.
  - 3) Separate unsterilized males from females.
  - 4) Young kittens should never be housed with adult cats in colony rooms.
  - 5) Nursing mothers and their kittens should never be housed in colony rooms.
  - 6) Include one 12-inch by 18-inch cat litter pan for every three cats or five kittens. Ideally, the litter pan should be stainless steel so it can be sterilized. Plastic litters boxes cannot be sufficiently disinfected and therefore can be the source of disease transmission.
  - 7) Have water and dry food available at all times.
  - 8) Equip colony rooms with shelves or resting boxes; provide cages with open doors for animals that prefer to be isolated.

9) Use materials that are stainless steel, fiberglass or other materials that are water resistant and can be cleaned and sanitized. Wood should not be used.

10) Provide clean bedding materials on a daily basis.

M. Care should be taken to ensure that animals are not able to escape from their primary enclosure. Special attention must be given when housing animals that are aggressive, under quarantine, or under protective custody. Condition of all enclosures should be monitored daily and various types of locks (from nose-proof or paw-proof to those requiring keys) should be considered.

N. Primary enclosures should house preferably one (1) animal (for optimum disease control) but certainly no more than two (2) compatible, non-breeding animals per enclosure, except when litters are housed with their dams or colony housing (as designed above) is used.

O. Space Requirements for Dogs – In considering these guidelines, it is important that the animal be able to assume normal postures and engage in normal behaviors such as playing and moving freely about without encountering another dog. The space should be large enough to accommodate bedding and food and water bowls:

1) Floor space:

a) A dog that is very small, such as a toy breed or puppy, should have a minimum of four square feet of flat floor space.

b) A dog that weighs between 15 and 30 pounds should have a minimum of eight square feet of flat floor space.

c) A dog that weighs between 30 and 65 pounds should have a minimum of 12 square feet of flat floor space.

d) A dog that weighs more than 65 pounds should have a minimum of 20 square feet of flat floor space.

2) Vertical space: Enclosure height should be a minimum of 1 ½ times the height of the dog at the shoulder.

3) If more than one dog occupies the same primary enclosure, space should be figured for the first dog, with each additional dog needing an additional one-half of the minimum square footage required. Further, if beds are used, there must be one bed for each dog to prevent guarding by dominant dogs such that less dominant dogs are prevented access.

4) When the recommended space requirements for dogs are not met due to shelter configuration, the dog should be exercised for a period of not less than 20 minutes, twice daily. For dogs that require an opportunity to exercise, a written plan should be on file and each exercise session noted.

- R. Isolation facilities must be provided for animals with infectious diseases. Generally, about 10% of the total housing should be designated for this purpose. This housing should be of equal quality to other housing in the shelter. To minimize contamination, this housing should be double-sided so that cleaning can take place without removing the animal. Ideally, hand washing stations should be present in all isolation facilities.
- S. Enrichment is a means of improving the environment and behavioral care for animals in confined care. The purpose of enrichment is to reduce stress and improve well-being by providing physical and mental stimulation, encouraging species-typical behaviors (e.g., chewing for dogs and rodents and scratching for cats). Enrichment should be given the same significance as other components of animal care, such as nutrition and veterinary care, and should not be considered optional (ASV).
- T. Outdoor Primary Enclosures:

It is *not* recommended that primary enclosures be exclusively outdoors and especially not for very young, old, sick or injured animals. (Primary enclosures are those animal enclosures in which the animal normally eats, eliminates, rests, and sleeps.) However, when this is necessary:

- 1) A structurally sound, *weatherproof* enclosure with adequate shade and ventilation should be made accessible to any animal housed exclusively outdoors. Shelter must be provided so that animals stay warm and dry during cold weather and stay shaded and cool during hot weather. Such shelter shall be a water resistant and windproof structure of suitable size to accommodate the animal(s) and allow retention of body heat during cold weather. Such shelter should also have a water resistant door covering or offset doorway to minimize drafts, provide proper ventilation, and be made of a durable material with a solid floor raised off the ground to prevent water entry.
- 2) A structure that provides adequate shelter might not provide adequate shade. For example, a doghouse within a fenced area may protect the dog from the wind and rain, but may be too hot inside when exposed to direct sunlight during the warmer months. Shade should then be provided and the animal must be able to rest in the shade, outside of the interior structure but still within the fencing or run.
- 3) A shaded area should be provided to all animals housed in an outdoor primary enclosure for protection from the direct rays of the sun. The shaded area should be proportional to the size of the animal and should be positioned so that maximum shade protection is provided.
- 4) Sufficient clean, absorbent bedding material in addition to other means of protection from weather should be provided for the health and safety of the animal and shall prevent strong odors from forming.

- 1) Floors of outdoor enclosures may be constructed of gravel, sand, soil, or preferably of a solid material such as concrete, *since it is not possible to sanitize or disinfect gravel, sand, or soil.*
- T. Tethering dogs is not an acceptable alternative to an enclosure. Temporary, short-term tethering of dogs may be employed while cleaning the primary enclosure or in the event of an emergency, such as a fire or flood, until transport to another facility can be arranged. Care should be taken to ensure the safety of the dog while it is tethered. (Cats should never be tethered.)
- U. Animals placed in crates or carriers even for a short time must have ample space to stand up, turn around and lie down. Crates and carriers must be disinfected and dried after each use and before another animal is placed in the crate or carrier.

#### 4. SANITATION STANDARDS

- A. Written sanitation protocols should be developed to provide consistent and thorough sanitation of the facilities. Ideally, sanitation protocols should be developed and reviewed periodically in consultation with a veterinarian familiar with shelter medicine practices. Protocols should be updated to take into account current knowledge in the field.
- B. To prevent contamination of animals and to reduce disease hazards and odors, animal waste should be removed from primary enclosures daily *or more often as necessary.*
- C. Cages, kennels, containers, equipment, and other items should be cleaned daily to maintain sanitary conditions. One of the most effective methods is to wash all surfaces with a dilution of 1 part bleach to 30 parts water, rinse after ten minutes and allow the surface to dry. Care should be taken to ensure that this exact ratio is followed not only because it has been proven to be most effective, but also to protect animals from chemical injuries. Since bleach can cause respiratory problems for cats and it can also corrode stainless steel, quaternary disinfectants should be used instead in those cases. *Animals must be removed from the enclosures during the cleaning process* and precautions taken to avoid cross contamination.
- D. To minimize the spread of disease, cleaning should be carried out in the following order, from first to last:
  - a. Healthy puppies and kittens and healthy and nursing bitches and queens
  - b. Healthy adult animals
  - c. Unhealthy animals
- E. To minimize the spread of disease, water and food containers and all other utensils should be cleaned and sanitized using generally accepted methods such as the use of heat and chemical sanitizing solution. These containers should be cleaned and sanitized as often as necessary to maintain sanitary conditions, however food pans must be cleaned between each use. If sinks are the only means for cleaning, water and food bowls must be soaked and washed separately



from litter pans with water and disinfectant changed between water/food bowls and litter pans.

- F. When cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting, product manufacturer instructions should always be followed precisely. Never mix bleach with quaternary ammonia compounds, as mixtures hazardous to both animals and people will result. Certain mixtures may render the products ineffective, as well. Pine products and fumes are extremely toxic to cats and should never be used around them or to clean cat enclosures, bowls, etc. (See [www.sheltermedicine.com](http://www.sheltermedicine.com) or [www.animalsheltering.org](http://www.animalsheltering.org) for more detail.)
- G. Mopping should be avoided if possible to reduce the spread of pathogen transmission. When mopping cannot be avoided (if hosing is not possible), then the disinfectant solution should not be used from one housing area to another (ASV).
- H. Water and food bowls should be made of metal. Plastic is not recommended because it may be chewed and ingested and may retain harmful contaminants.
- I. Animal and food waste, soiled bedding, debris, and other organic waste should be stored in closed containers and disposed of so that vermin infestation, odors, disease hazards, and nuisances are minimized. Such waste should be removed at least weekly from the facility. Any reusable trash containers should be regularly sanitized and disinfected.
- J. Pens and runs using absorbent or loose flooring such as sand, gravel, or soil should have such materials replaced as often as necessary to attempt to maintain sanitary conditions. Because it is not possible to sanitize or disinfect these organic materials, it is all the more important to remove and replace areas that become soiled with urine and/or fecal matter, when the surface is muddy, when puddles of water are present, or when odors and vermin (such as ants and flies) are present.
- K. Building and grounds should be kept clean, in good repair, and free from trash.
- L. Weeds should be mowed or cut down in areas where animals are kept or exercised.
- M. An effective program for the control of insects, ectoparasites, and avian and mammalian pests should be maintained.
- N. Unopened supplies of food should be stored off the floor and be adequately protected against infestation or contamination by vermin. Opened supplies of food should be stored separately in closed waterproof containers.
- O. Animal bedding should also be stored off the floor and be adequately protected against infestation or contamination.
- P. Dead animals at the facility should be stored and disposed of in strict compliance with applicable state laws/local ordinances and in a way that will not cause a disease hazard or nuisance. **(See Animal Sheltering Rules NMSA Title 16.24.3.8m.)**

- Q. A suitable method should be provided to rapidly eliminate excess water from animal housing facilities. If drains are used, they should be properly constructed and kept in good repair. If closed drainage systems are used, wastewater should be disposed of by connection to a sanitary sewer or any approved sewage disposal system.

## 5. CARE AND HANDLING STANDARDS

### A. FOOD AND WATER

- 1) Animals should be fed twice daily (except when advised otherwise during veterinary treatment or in cases of malnutrition when smaller portions throughout the day are needed) to avoid medical problems associated with overeating. The food must be free from contamination, palatable, and of sufficient quality and nutritive value to meet the normal daily requirements for the condition, size, and age of the animal. Refrigeration should be provided for perishable food.
- 2) Uneaten food must be discarded after 24 hours. Food that has been offered to an animal and remains uneaten must not be fed to other animals (ASV).
- 3) Care should be taken not to underfeed or overfeed animals.
- 4) Special consideration regarding types of food and frequency should be given to puppies, kittens, older animals, and nursing dams.
- 5) Malnourished or emaciated animals may need an increased food intake, but introduction of food must be regulated and increased gradually, preferably with veterinary guidance.
- 6) Animals must be provided potable (drinkable, clean, fresh) water at all times (except when water must be withheld under special veterinary care).
- 7) Food and water containers should be accessible to the animal and located to minimize contamination by excreta or other material. These containers should be cleaned daily. Disposable food containers may be used *only if discarded after each use.*
- 8) Food and water containers should be of a size appropriate to ensure accessibility based on the size of the animal
- 9) Spoiled, moldy food or food contaminated with feces, droppings, or insects should never be used. Food left in food bowls from the previous day should be disposed of, disposable bowls discarded, and non-disposable bowls cleaned.

### B. CLASSIFICATION AND SEPARATION

- 1) Animals housed in the same primary enclosure (where they eat, eliminate, rest, and sleep) should be maintained in compatible groups, with the following additional restrictions:

- a) Primary enclosures should house preferably one (1) animal but certainly no more than two (2) compatible, non-breeding animals per enclosure, except when litters are housed with their dams.
  - b) A female in season (estrus) should not be housed in the same primary enclosure with a male.
  - c) An unaltered male should not be housed in the same primary enclosure with an unaltered female.
  - d) Any dog or cat exhibiting an aggressive disposition should be housed individually in its primary enclosure and the enclosure appropriately marked for protection of shelter personnel.
  - e) Animals under four months of age should not be housed in the same primary enclosure with adult animals other than their dams. *Attempts should always be made to keep nursing mothers and their babies as removed from other animals as possible, to allow them privacy, to protect them from unwanted intrusion and noise, to alleviate fear/aggression, and to promote their general well being.*
  - f) Dogs should not be housed in the same primary enclosure with cats, nor should dogs or cats be housed in the same primary enclosure with any other species of animals.
- 2) Animals that have bitten a human must be quarantined pursuant to applicable New Mexico state law (**see NMSA 1978 § 77-1-6 and 77-1-10**) and local municipal or county ordinance. A veterinarian should be consulted. Animals under quarantine for observation of rabies symptoms after a bite incident should be physically separated from all other animals. Because most turn out to be healthy animals, often with owners, these animals should never be housed with animals under treatment for a communicable disease. Such quarantine area should have a separate ventilation system and should only be accessible to shelter personnel or owners accompanied by shelter personnel.
  - 3) Animals diagnosed and/or under treatment for a communicable disease should be physically separated from healthy animals to minimize dissemination of disease. Such area should have a separate ventilation system.
  - 4) Cats should be housed in a separate building if at all possible, or at the very least in a separate room that is as far-removed as possible from any room containing dog runs.

## **6. OTHER CARE CONSIDERATIONS**

- A. Sheltered animals must always be handled safely and humanely to prevent injury, distress, and spread of disease to both to the animal and personnel. Adequate

animal handling equipment such as transfer cages, nets, catch poles, syringe poles, etc. must be available and kept clean and in good repair to ensure the safety of staff and animals. Staff should be trained in current humane and sanitary animal handling techniques. (Please see Shelter Resource List, pages 20-21.)

- B. The minimal amount of physical restraint needed to accomplish the task without injury to people or animals should be used for the minimal duration necessary (ASV).
- C. The use of catch poles for routine restraint of cats, including carrying or lifting, is inhumane and poses significant risk of injury to the animal; therefore they must not be used for such purposes. Humane traps, purpose-designed boxes or nets should be used for handling fractious cats or cats who appear unused to handling (ASV).
- D. Cats should be provided with clean bedding in each cage. Bedding should be replaced when soiled or wet, and also for each new animal introduced to the enclosure.
- E. Bedding or platforms should be provided to dogs on an as-needed basis. Particularly, clean bedding should be provided to old, young, ill, or injured dogs. Bedding should be replaced when soiled or wet, and also for each new animal introduced to the enclosure. Only single layer bedding should be used for puppies and kittens, to prevent accidental suffocation.
- F. Nursing dams should be provided with a whelping box if possible. If a shelter is unable to provide one, it should be noted that as long as nursing dams have adequate bedding, warmth, and cleanliness, they seem to do fine. If the cost of a whelping box is prohibitive, it is fairly simple to fashion one out of the bottom of a very large travel kennel, use a plastic kiddie pool or one can be built. Bedding should be provided in the whelping box and replaced when soiled or wet. The whelping box should be large enough for the dam to stretch out and nurse her offspring. *Attempts should always be made to keep nursing mothers and their babies as removed from other animals as possible, to allow them privacy, to protect them from unwanted intrusion and noise, to alleviate fear/aggression, and to promote their general well being.*
- G. Animals should be cleaned and groomed on an as-needed basis, while keeping in mind that medical issues need to be treated, especially when an animal has a matted coat that can cause pain, skin or eye irritation, or trap fecal matter. Bathing may be necessary to prevent or treat parasites/insects. Basic grooming also ensures that claws are not so long as to hinder movement or cause pain to the animal. An animal that needs help in this regard should not be made to wait until the shelter determines the dog to be its "property," as no animal should be allowed to suffer while in the care of the shelter.

- H. Care must be taken to ensure that animals are not squirted or hosed with water, not put in contact with chemicals, and not placed back in a wet or damp enclosure.

**7. DISEASE CONTROL/ HEALTH/ VETERINARY CARE STANDARDS**

- A. No animal should ever be allowed to suffer due to lack of veterinary care.
- B. Failure to provide treatment for pain is unacceptable (ASV).
- C. Animals should be examined at the time of impound for injury and signs of disease - under the guidance of a veterinarian, if possible - and treated immediately if in pain or distress. Training is needed in this regard, and if shelter personnel are unsure or in doubt, they must be encouraged to immediately call someone qualified to assist. If sick/injured animals cannot be provided veterinary care in a manner timely enough to stop their pain and suffering, they must be humanely euthanized at once.
- D. Some common signs of illness, injury or parasitic infestation in dogs and cats that may warrant veterinary care include:
  - 1) Eyes are watery, appear swollen, or show discharge
  - 2) Ears are red or inflamed, show discharge, or have a foul odor
  - 3) Nose shows discharge (mucous, blood, or pus), or is crusty, congested, or blocked
  - 4) Gums are swollen or inflamed, teeth are loose or brown, or mouth has a foul odor.
  - 5) Animal is sneezing, coughing, or wheezing
  - 6) Animal has fleas or ticks, skin shows swelling or lesions
  - 7) Animal limps, or does not place weight on a limb
  - 8) Animal is thin or obese
  - 9) Animal has wounds, abscesses, cuts, or abrasions
  - 10) Body temperature that is abnormal
  - 11) Animal has vomiting or diarrhea
- D. Have a trained and experienced staff member, a veterinary technician, or a veterinarian available to check animals and to provide care. Instruct every staff member to note and record all symptoms of possible illness and to bring them to a supervisor's attention at once.
- E. Animals should be observed daily for signs of disease or distress. An animal suspected of having an infectious disease should be physically separated from other susceptible animals until the condition is determined to be non-infectious.
- F. When animals are brought to the shelter after normal working hours, a system should be in place to care for injured and sick animals during that time. Shelters should enter into a contract with a local veterinarian who can be available on call, and there must, at a minimum, be a licensed euthanasia technician (see Section 13 for more information) on call 24 hours per day for emergency situations.
- G. Animals with obvious signs of serious disease, injury, or distress that cannot be addressed, as well as aggressive animals, should be humanely destroyed. It may

be necessary to euthanize an animal for humane reasons even if the holding time requirements have not been met, as it is unacceptable to allow an animal to suffer while in the shelter's care.

- H. Dogs and cats should be dipped or sprayed for fleas and ticks as necessary, according to the season and region of the state, and according to manufacturer instructions concerning different treatment strengths depending on size, age, or health of animal.

## 8. VACCINATIONS

- A. It is strongly recommended that all dogs and cats be vaccinated upon initial impound at animal shelters. A veterinarian or trained staff member should administer the following core vaccines:

- 1) Dogs:

- a) DA2PP or DHPP vaccine: to provide protection against distemper, adenovirus-2, parvovirus, parainfluenza. Adult dogs should be vaccinated once upon intake. Puppies should be vaccinated starting at 4-6 weeks of age and revaccinated every 2-4 weeks until 16-18 weeks of age.
- b) Bordatella bronchiseptica vaccine: to protect against “kennel cough” for puppies and adult dogs.

- 2) Cats:

FVRCP vaccine: to provide protection against feline herpesvirus, feline viral rhinotracheitis, feline calicivirus, and feline panleukopenia. Adult cats should be vaccinated once upon intake. Kittens should be vaccinated starting at 4-6 weeks of age and revaccinated every 2-4 weeks until 18 weeks of age.

- B. All animals should be considered unvaccinated unless a documented medical record exists. Special consideration should be given to animals with medical conditions, pregnant animals, and animals less than 4 weeks old. (For more information, consult with your staff or consulting veterinarian or the Association of Shelter Veterinarians website.)
- C. Recognizing financial constraints common to many shelters, the “core” vaccines noted above should be administered *at the very least* at the time of adoption, *but for purposes of optimum disease control, vaccination upon impound is necessary.*
- D. Rabies vaccinations may be given at the time of adoption or by the adopter’s veterinarian, depending on local municipal or county ordinance.
- E. Rabies vaccinations must be administered pursuant to applicable New Mexico state law:

**NMSA 1978 § 77-1-3 Vaccination of dogs and cats required.**

Any person who owns or keeps a dog or cat over the age of three months in this state shall have the dog or cat vaccinated against rabies as prescribed by

regulation of the health and environment department [department of health]. All antirabies vaccine shall be administered by or under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian who shall issue a serially numbered certificate and tag for each such administration.

**See also NEW MEXICO ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, Title 7 (Health), Chapter 4 (Disease Control [Epidemiology]), Part 2 (Animal Control Requirements).**

## **9. RECORDKEEPING STANDARDS**

- A. Records should be kept for each animal impounded, for each that is accepted as an owner-surrender, each animal that is brought to the shelter by a member of the public as a stray and for each that is otherwise acquired.
- B. Records should include the date acquired, manner of acquisition (animal control officer, public intake, owner surrender, etc.), description and identifying characteristics including species, breed, color, age, weight, sex, and any background information (including tag and/or microchip information), reason for impoundment or relinquishment, veterinary care, disposition of the animal, date of redemption, adoption, transfer of ownership, or euthanasia, and the name address and telephone number of the receiving person or entity.
- C. Collars, tags, or other potentially identifiable "gear" should be kept on the animal or in the animal's file during the impound time.
- D. Each animal should be identifiable by use of cage/run cards and/or identifying collars.
- E. Ideally, two photographs should be taken of each animal and maintained with its records and posted on its cage, to aid in identifying an animal and to minimize the possibility of a euthanasia mistake.
- F. Shelters should maintain records for a minimum of two years from the date of an animal's final disposition.

## **10. COMMUNITY ACCESS AND SERVICE STANDARDS**

- A. Shelters should be accessible to residents seeking to reclaim their animal or adopt an animal. Hours open to the public should be clearly marked on the facility. The facility's telephone and address should be listed in local telephone directories and if possible, the shelter should have a website with all pertinent information as well as listings of lost or found animals and animals available for adoption. It is recommended that shelters be open to the public at least one weekend day, and at least two days until at least 6:00 p.m. (or have both Saturday and Sunday hours).
- B. Municipal Shelters should have provisions for animals dropped off after hours, but care must be taken so that animals are protected from injury, theft, and the elements. Similarly, provisions should be made for after-hours entry, impoundment, and treatment procedures for animal control officers to follow. Sick or injured animals must be attended to by trained personnel at once due to both the potential for unalleviated suffering of the animal as well as liability for the shelter.

- C. When an animal has visible identification upon impound or a microchip, shelter personnel should make every attempt to contact the owner. Each animal must be scanned for the presence of a microchip and the number entered into the animal's record. Further, if a microchip is found, the shelter must, in the case of owner surrenders, determine if the surrendering owner matches the name on the microchip to ascertain if the animal has potentially been stolen. In the case of stray animals, the shelter must promptly attempt to contact the owner to whom the chip is registered first by phone, and in the event no contact can be made via phone, then the shelter must send a letter to the address listed on the microchip registration.
- D. In addition to being scanned at intake, animals must be rescanned prior to final disposition and if that disposition is euthanasia, scanning must be done per the rules pertaining to euthanasia in **Title 16 Chapter 24, Part 3, "Duties of Licensee and Certificate Holders."**
- E. Stray animals without identification preferably should be held for at least 5 days to give an owner sufficient time to reclaim the animal. Stray animals with identification (tag, tattoo, and/or microchip) preferably should be held for 10 days to allow the shelter sufficient time for notification and the owner sufficient time to reclaim the animal. Shelters should refer to their local municipal or county ordinance, which often addresses the *minimum* holding time required.
- F. Animals in protective custody through law enforcement situations must be in locked areas (with appropriate signage) that meet the above standards and are inaccessible to the public. Depending on the type of case, an owner may be allowed to visit the animal/s. It is recommended that shelters take the initiative and discuss in advance with their governing city or county administration and district attorney or prosecutors to determine what financial arrangements (bonding or other) can be made in the event of large numbers of animals and/or lengthy stays to pay for costs incurred by shelter. This is especially important in cases dealing with hoarding or other abuse situations.

## 11. SHELTER PERSONNEL STANDARDS

- A. All shelter employees should be trained in all aspects of their responsibilities. (Please see Shelter Resource List, pages 20-21.)

Training topics should include but are not limited to:

- 1) Animal health and disease control
- 2) Humane care and treatment of animals
- 3) Control of animals in an animal shelter
- 4) Transportation of animals
- 5) Disease recognition
- 6) Animal Breed identification and behavior
- 7) Pre-adoption evaluation, temperament testing
- 8) Adoption policies and procedures
- 9) Handling, capture and restraint techniques
- 10) Personnel safety and use of equipment
- 11) Euthanasia



- B. Shelter personnel should be provided with a comprehensive standard operating procedures (SOP) manual. (Please see Shelter Resource List, pages 20-21.) The SOP manual should outline all shelter policies and procedures, as well as duties for each position.
- C. Shelter personnel shall adhere to New Mexico's anti-cruelty law at all times: **NMSA 1978 § 30-15 -1 et seq.**

**§ 30-18-1. Cruelty to animals; extreme cruelty to animals; penalties; exceptions.**

- A. As used in this section, "animal" does not include insects or reptiles.
- B. Cruelty to animals consists of a person:
  - (1) negligently mistreating, injuring, killing without lawful justification or tormenting an animal; or
  - (2) abandoning or failing to provide necessary sustenance to an animal under that person's custody or control.
- C. As used in Subsection B of this section, "lawful justification" means:
  - (1) humanely destroying a sick or injured animal; or
  - (2) protecting a person or animal from death or injury due to an attack by another animal.
- D. Whoever commits cruelty to animals is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of **Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978**. Upon a fourth or subsequent conviction for committing cruelty to animals, the offender is guilty of a fourth degree felony and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of **Section 31-18-15 NMSA 1978**.
- E. Extreme cruelty to animals consists of a person:
  - (1) intentionally or maliciously torturing, mutilating, injuring or poisoning an animal; or
  - (2) maliciously killing an animal.
- F. Whoever commits extreme cruelty to animals is guilty of a fourth degree felony and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of **Section 31-18-15 NMSA 1978**.

See also:

- 30-18-1.1 Seizure of animals; notice.**
- 30-18-1.2 Disposition of seized animals.**
- 30-18-1.3 Costs.**
- 30-18-2, 30-18-2.1 Repealed.**
- 30-18-3 Unlawful branding.**
- 30-18-4 Unlawful disposition of animal.**
- 30-18-5 Illegal confinement of animals.**
- 30-18-6 Transporting stolen livestock.**
- 30-18-7 Misrepresentation of pedigree.**
- 30-18-8 Killing unbranded cattle; killing, without bill of sale, cattle bearing brand of another person; penalty.**
- 30-18-9 Dog fighting and cockfighting; penalty.**
- 30-18-10 Exclusion.**
- 30-18-11 Unlawful tripping of an equine; exception.**
- 30-18-12 Injury to livestock.**
- 30-18-13 Injury to a police dog, police horse or fire dog; harassment of a police dog, police horse or fire dog.**
- 30-18-14 Livestock crimes; livestock inspectors to enforce.**
- 30-18-15 Intracardiac injection prohibited on conscious animal.**

- D. Protective gear and appropriate animal handling equipment should be readily available to employees.
- E. Shelter personnel should wash their hands frequently in order to protect themselves and the animals. Hand sanitizers, first aid kits, and eyewash stations should be made available to all employees, volunteers, and visitors.

## **12. ADOPTION STANDARDS**

- A. Shelters should establish adoption fees. A responsible adoption program should be developed and implemented. In the event a shelter decides to waive specific adoption fees, the shelter must use appropriate adoption guidelines as described below to ensure the adopter is qualified to own a pet.
- B. Shelters should develop criteria for potential adopters and for unsuitable adopters. Adopters should sign a contract under which they agree to provide a specified level of care.
- C. Shelters should learn temperament-testing procedures to ensure that animals are "fit" for adoption and to facilitate the best possible match between adopters and animals. (Please see Shelter Resource List on pages 20-21.)
- D. Adoption screening program should include discussion of whether the animal and potential adopter are suitable for each other.
- E. In the event shelters offer animals for adoption that have not been pre-sterilized, the shelter must comply with New Mexico state law **NMSA 1978 § 77-1-20**:

### **§ 77-1-20. Sterilization agreement and sterilization deposit required**

A. No animal shall be released from an animal shelter to an adopting person unless a sterilization agreement has been signed and a sterilization deposit has been paid, as provided in Subsections C and D of this section.

B. In addition to any adoption fee charged, a sterilization deposit of at least twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) shall be imposed on the adoption of each animal from an animal shelter.

C. Animals less than six months of age shall be released only upon payment of the adoption fee and a sterilization deposit and after the adopting person has signed an agreement stating he will have the adopted animal sterilized when it is no older than six months of age.

D. Adult animals over the age of six months shall be released only upon payment of the adoption fee and a sterilization deposit and after the adopting person has signed an agreement stating he will have the animal sterilized within thirty days of the date of adoption.

E. Any required sterilization deposit shall be reimbursed only upon presentation by the adopter of a valid receipt from a veterinarian proving that the animal was sterilized within the required time period.

F. An unsterilized animal reclaimed by its owner may be released without being sterilized upon minimum payment of the twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) for the sterilization deposit and impoundment fees imposed by the shelter, and the owner shall sign an agreement stating he/she will sterilize the animal within thirty days after release, obtain a breeder permit or its equivalent. The sterilization deposit shall be reimbursed only upon presentation by the owner of a valid receipt from a veterinarian proving that the animal was sterilized within the required time period.

- F. Policies should be developed and every care should be taken not to adopt, transfer, or release intact animals.
- G. Shelters should consider a program to microchip all adopted animals.
- H. Reasonable care should be taken to adopt or transfer only those animals free of disease and untreatable injury.
- I. Shelters should make every effort to work to place animals with recognized rescue organizations and responsible sanctuaries.

### 13. **EUTHANASIA**

- A. The legislature of the State of New Mexico passed the **Animal Sheltering Services Act [Chapter 77, Article 1B NMSA 1978]** in 2007 establishing the Animal Sheltering Services Board, since renamed the “Animal Sheltering Board” (ASB). The board was chartered with writing rules to govern the licensing of euthanasia agencies, certification of euthanasia instructors and euthanasia technicians and with the administration of humane euthanasia in New Mexico shelters. **Title 16, Occupational and Professional Licensing Chapter 24 Animal Sheltering, Parts 1 – 6** was approved by ASB on July 1, 2009. These rules have the effect of law and must be incorporated into the protocols and practices of all animal shelters that fall under its jurisdiction.

Therefore, the above cited rules for euthanasia are hereby incorporated into these recommended shelter standards. While these shelter standards are recommendations, the euthanasia rules are requirements.

## SHELTER RESOURCE LIST

A crucial responsibility of the Animal Sheltering Services Board will be to determine how to help animal shelters and shelter personnel throughout New Mexico obtain no-cost or extremely low-cost resources so that they can readily comply with the provisions of the Animal Sheltering Services Act. The following list represents suggested areas for the board to explore and suggested links for more information in a format that might be helpful to distribute to shelters or make available on the board's website, along with the shelter standards and euthanasia regulations:

### RULES AND REGULATIONS REGARDING ANIMAL SHELTERING

[www.rld.state.nm.us/animalsheltering](http://www.rld.state.nm.us/animalsheltering)

Animal Sheltering Services Act [Chapter 77, Article 1B NMSA 1978]

Title 16, Occupational and Professional Licensing Chapter 24 Animal Sheltering

City of Albuquerque, The Humane and Ethical Animal Treatment Ordinance (HEART)

[www.cabq.gov/pets/rules-tools/heart-ordinance](http://www.cabq.gov/pets/rules-tools/heart-ordinance)

### HOW-TO SERIES, STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES, BEHAVIORAL TRAINING, TEMPERAMENT TESTING, ADOPTION ISSUES

[www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org)

[www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)

[www.nacanet.org](http://www.nacanet.org)

[www.animalsheltering.org](http://www.animalsheltering.org)

[www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com](http://www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com)

### TRAINING RESOURCES, PUBLICATIONS

[www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org)

[www.nacanet.org](http://www.nacanet.org)

[www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)

[www.aspc.org](http://www.aspc.org)

[www.peta.org](http://www.peta.org)

[www.bestfriends.org](http://www.bestfriends.org)

### POUND SEIZURE IN NEW MEXICO

[www.banpoundseizure.org/home.shtml](http://www.banpoundseizure.org/home.shtml)

[www.idausa.org/facts/poundseizure.html](http://www.idausa.org/facts/poundseizure.html)

[www.peta.org/factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=33](http://www.peta.org/factsheet/files/FactsheetDisplay.asp?ID=33)

### EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, PHARMACEUTICALS

[www.animal-care.com](http://www.animal-care.com)

[www.deerskinanimalcontrol.com](http://www.deerskinanimalcontrol.com)

[www.vetmeddirect.com](http://www.vetmeddirect.com)

[www.shopmedvet.com](http://www.shopmedvet.com)

[www.spah.com](http://www.spah.com)

[www.medicalartspress.com](http://www.medicalartspress.com)

[www.twmedical.com](http://www.twmedical.com)

### SAMPLE FORMS, SOFTWARE

[www.animalsheltering.org](http://www.animalsheltering.org)

[www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org)  
[www.asPCA.org](http://www.asPCA.org)  
[www.bestfriends.org](http://www.bestfriends.org)

PUBLIC FUNDING FROM LOCAL/STATE SOURCES

[www.nmml.org](http://www.nmml.org)  
[www.nmcounties.org](http://www.nmcounties.org)  
[www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org)

PRIVATE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

[www.foundationcenter.org](http://www.foundationcenter.org)  
[www.bestfriends.org](http://www.bestfriends.org)

STATE STATUTES, CITY/COUNTY ORDINANCES

[www.nmlaws.org](http://www.nmlaws.org)  
[www.apnm.org](http://www.apnm.org)

SHELTER MEDICINE, SANITATION, NUTRITION, ENRICHMENT, EXERCISE

[www.sheltermedicine.com](http://www.sheltermedicine.com)  
[www.animalsheltering.org](http://www.animalsheltering.org)

DOG AND CAT BREED INFORMATION

[www.pets-place.net/BreedProfiles.html](http://www.pets-place.net/BreedProfiles.html)  
[www.dogbreedinfo.com](http://www.dogbreedinfo.com)  
[www.lovemypet.com](http://www.lovemypet.com)

NEW MEXICO BREED RESCUE GROUPS

[www.petroglyphsnm.org](http://www.petroglyphsnm.org)

NON-PROFIT BOARDS, FUNDRAISING, HUMAN RESOURCES, INSURANCE

[www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)  
[www.managementhelp.org](http://www.managementhelp.org)  
[www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)

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