



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **ASSOCIATION OF SHELTER VETERINARIANS RELEASE STANDARDS OF CARE IN ANIMAL SHELTERS**

### ***Guidelines for Protecting Health and Well-Being of Sheltered Animals***

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) has just released “Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters”, the first comprehensive report of its kind. The Guidelines are the outcome of two years of work including an exhaustive review of scientific literature by a task force of 14 shelter veterinarians. The authors hope that shelters and communities will look to this document to ensure that all animals in shelters everywhere are properly and humanely cared for. The Guidelines are intended as a positive tool for shelters and communities to review animal care, identify areas that need improvement, allocate resources and implement solutions so welfare is optimized, euthanasia is minimized, and suffering is prevented.

“The guiding principle was always animals’ needs which remain the same regardless of the mission of an organization or the challenges involved in meeting those needs.” said Sandra Newbury, DVM, chair of the Shelter Standards Task Force.

The foundation for the Guidelines is the “Five Freedoms”, developed in 1965 in the United Kingdom as a result of a report by the Brambell commission (which later became the Farm Animal Welfare Council) to address welfare concerns in agricultural settings. The Five Freedoms are now recognized to have much broader application across species. The Five Freedoms are:

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

The Guidelines are intended to apply to the full spectrum of sheltering programs from brick and mortar facilities to grass roots rescue efforts or home based programs.

“The guidelines are designed to achieve outcomes that protect the health and well-being of sheltered animals without defining how individual shelters reach those outcomes,” said Lila Miller, DVM, a Task Force member and an editor of the report. “The report is designed to allow shelters flexibility in achieving these goals.”

The report provides recommendations for 12 broad areas of animal sheltering and care: management and record keeping, facility design and environment, population management, sanitation, medical health and physical well-being, behavioral health and mental well-being, group housing, animal handling, euthanasia, spay/neuter, transport, and public health.

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) is an international organization whose mission is to improve the health and well-being of animals in shelters through the advancement of shelter medicine. ASV currently consists of over 750 member veterinarians and 22 student chapters around the globe. A copy of the Guidelines and more information on ASV can be found at [www.sheltervet.org](http://www.sheltervet.org).

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