

Highlights of

The Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, Second Edition (2022)



Introduction

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' (ASV) Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters was originally published in 2010. This second edition, published in 2022, incorporates important updates based on the growing body of animal sheltering science and recommendations rooted in practical experience. These Guidelines were written for organizations of any size or type who provide temporary housing for companion animals.

- The term *shelter* used here includes foster-based rescues, nonprofit humane societies and SPCAs, municipal animal services facilities, and hybrid organizations. The Guidelines are also applicable to any organization that routinely cares for populations of companion animals, including sanctuaries, cat cafés, vet clinics, pet stores, dog breeding operations, research facilities (including universities), and service, military, or sporting dog organizations.
- The term *personnel* is used here to include all paid and volunteer team members caring for animals in shelters. This document is intended to guide all personnel, including administrative, medical, behavior, and animal care staff; volunteers; foster caregivers; sole operators; and those filling any other role that supports animal well-being.

The Guidelines are not a detailed manual for shelter operations. Rather, the aim is to provide guidelines for the establishment of standards of care based on the animals' needs, while allowing shelters to determine exactly how those needs are met. The organization's mission or mandate, resources, challenges, and community needs will impact the options available. The document's focus is limited to the care of cats and dogs; similar operational principles can be applied to meet the unique needs of other species.

Each Guidelines section contains key actionable statements which are also available as a checklist on the shelternet.org website. The key statements use an *unacceptable*, *must*, *should*, or *ideal* format.

- *Unacceptable practices* need to be avoided or prevented without exception
- *Must practices* are necessary to ensure humane care
- *Should practices* are strongly recommended, and compliance is expected in almost all circumstances
- *Ideal practices* are implemented when resources allow

The ASV recognizes that each organization is uniquely situated and faces challenges that may impact their ability to implement the practices recommended. The ranked format of statements allows organizations to set priorities for improving their operations and facilities by identifying those most critical to animal health and welfare.

The key actional statements alone are not sufficient to guide policies and protocols. The document provides additional recommendations and valuable context for understanding the intended purpose of these statements. The document should be read in its entirety because concepts build upon one another. The references and appendices provide access to more information as well as the science and research behind specific recommendations.

This document is based on the Five Domains Model, an approach to assessing animal welfare that puts focus on creating opportunities for positive experiences in addition to mitigating negative ones within the domains of nutrition, environment, health, behavior, and mental state. This framework keeps animal needs as the guiding principle behind all recommendations.

The ASV offers this document as a tool to help shelters connect to expert guidance and measure themselves against a common standard, to help personnel find compassion satisfaction, to solidify the shelter's role in supporting their community, and to elevate the welfare of animals in their care. Shelters should be aware that state and local laws and regulations may supersede the recommendations made here.

See the [full guidelines for references and supporting documents:](https://jsmcah.org/index.php/jasv/issue/view/2)
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