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Dispositions of Animals – Euthanasia

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Guideline Statement

NACA considers lethal injection of sodium pentobarbital, administered by competent, trained personnel, to be the only method of choice utilized for humane euthanasia of animal shelter dogs and cats. NACA acknowledges that there are agencies legally restricted in their ability to obtain sodium pentobarbital. In such cases the alternative must be to seek out local veterinarians to provide euthanasia services utilizing sodium pentobarbital. NACA condemns the use of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen, nitrous oxide, argon, or anesthetic gases as well as physical methods such as electrocution, gunshot, and blunt force trauma for animal shelter euthanasia of dogs and cats.

Basis for Guideline

Sodium pentobarbital meets more of the criteria set by the American Veterinary Medical Association Guidelines on Euthanasia than any other method of euthanasia. Until a more sophisticated method meeting all the criteria are met, it is the responsibility of those performing euthanasia to use the best method now available and to use it with skill, compassion, and consistency.

Guideline Recommendation

Euthanasia should be performed by a minimum of two persons and only by persons who are trained in humane euthanasia procedures and can demonstrate their ability in accordance with methods put forth in training approved by the National Animal Control Association, the Humane Society of the United States, the American Humane Association, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, The American Veterinary Medical Association, or an accredited educational institution. NACA very strongly urges agencies that are unable to legally obtain sodium pentobarbital, to work diligently towards passing legislation which would allow direct purchase of euthanasia drugs by licensed shelters, and require training and certification of staff.

The foregoing Guideline has been affirmed as duly adopted by the NACA Board of Directors.

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