NACA Statement on Releasing Unaltered Pets from Animal Shelters During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In light of the request by the U.S. Surgeon General for human and animal organizations to suspend ‘non-essential’ surgeries to preserve critical medical supplies, the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine, in collaboration with other leading schools of shelter medicine, issued a recommendation for animal shelters. NACA supports and expands upon this initial statement.

If shelters are unable to or decide for any reason not to alter pets during the COVID-19 Pandemic, they should continue providing live outcomes for sheltered cats and dogs. The lack of immediately available spay and neuter services should not be a reason for shelter euthanasia. Further, anticipated personnel and supply resource depletion in shelters dictate that essential services and lifesaving capacity be preserved by reducing the number of animals in custody as quickly as possible. This should be done by expediting the movement of animals to adoptive or foster homes and not extending the stay of animals in the shelter for spay or neuter surgery.

Depending on state and local laws, three possible ways to outcome unsterilized pets include:

- **Adopt out pets unaltered and provide vouchers for future use to get the pet spayed or neutered.** Staff and volunteers can provide follow-up after the COVID-19 Pandemic to ensure pets get altered once surgeries can be performed.
- **Outcome pets as ‘foster-to-adopt.’** This means they live with their new family but aren’t officially ‘adopted’ until they can return for their spay/neuter appointment or provide documentation of sterilization by another provider.
- **If the organization does not have the resources to provide spay and neuter in the future, they should consider releasing animals unaltered with a list of low-cost spay and neuter services in the community.**
NACA Statement on Animal Control Functions During the COVID-19 Pandemic

For the safety of our officers and the public they serve, NACA is advising all officers to take extra measures to mitigate the short and long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures include protecting themselves properly to reduce risk of spreading the virus, as well as working to manage and minimize the number of new animals entering our shelters.

As members of the public safety community we have an obligation to perform our sworn duties during disasters both natural and man-made. To that end, NACA recommends the following:

*High priority/emergency calls:* At this time, officers should continue to respond to emergency and high priority calls. High priority/emergency calls include law enforcement assistance, injured or sick stray animals, cruelty and neglect complaints, bite complaints, and dangerous and aggressive dog complaints.

*Non-emergency calls and activities:* Officers should suspend low priority/non-emergency activity. This includes non-aggressive stray animal pick-up, leash law and licensing complaints, barking and nuisance complaints, trapping and transport of community cats, and conflict mitigation scenarios.

*Shelter intake reduction:* Animal control agencies should take active measures to reduce non-essential shelter intake. Measures taken should include returning pets in the field instead of impounding them, suspending non-emergency owner surrender intake, and encouraging owners who are ill to keep their pets at home whenever possible.

*Personal protective equipment:* Animal control officers should be provided with personal protective equipment (PPE) for cases requiring a response to a location with someone who is sick or has been exposed to COVID-19. Officers should make every effort to not enter the home of anyone who is known to have been exposed to the virus.

For ongoing information, please continue referring to all updates from the Centers for Disease Control: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)
NACA Statement on Cat Intake Protocol Recommendations During COVID-19 Pandemic

The most likely impact of COVID-19 on shelters is a trend of average or increased intakes combined with reduced foster, adoption and rescue outcomes. This can quickly lead to overcrowding and shelters being forced to euthanize for space. As COVID-19 impacts on shelters continue, it is the recommendation that animal control agencies suspend intake of healthy stray and community cats, except for the purposes of sterilization and release. Officers should cease any activity involving trapping and intaking healthy community cats. Animal control organizations should continue to take in cats that are sick and injured, or are in immediate danger, as in the case of cats that are victims of neglect or cruelty. Further, for cats involved in hoarding situations, it is the recommendation of NACA that cases are evaluated on an individual basis, to determine the immediacy of need based on condition of the cats and living premises. Animal control agencies may consider deferred or staggered intake in cases where cats do not require immediate medical attention. In cases where there are a lot of cats at one residence, but cats are not in immediate danger, animal control agencies may consider sheltering some or all of the cats in place, at the cats’ existing home, while strategically managing intake timing to bring in a few cats at a time. This managed intake process should be considered as long as there is not an immediate threat to public safety or the safety of the cats.

For more information and guidance please visit https://www.nacanet.org/covid19/