



Potter League™
Enriching Lives

Potter League for Animals Euthanasia Policy

The Potter League for Animals is committed to ending the unnecessary euthanasia of adoptable and treatable animals and takes the decision to euthanize an animal very seriously. Our commitment to the animals in our care means we are willing to pursue all reasonable efforts in order to provide for their well-being.

The Potter League is an open admission shelter and does not euthanize any adoptable or treatable animal for time or space. We do however acknowledge there are some instances where euthanasia is the best or only humane option for an animal in our care. Each animal in the care of the Potter League is evaluated as an individual and assessed under the circumstances as a whole. Euthanasia is only considered after an appropriate investigation of other viable and reasonable options.

For the purpose of this policy, the Potter League uses the definitions of healthy, treatable and unhealthy/untreatable as defined by the Asilomar Accords. Shelters that save all healthy and treatable dogs and cats in their care are meeting the standard of care typically provided in their own community. Shelters that go beyond this to save a portion of the “unhealthy & untreatable” are exceeding their community’s standard of care and thus setting an example of humane treatment. If possible and when resources are available, the Potter League will support and save unhealthy and untreatable animals. We strive to be a shelter that leads, not just follows, our community.

Euthanasia is only performed when there is a consensus that it is the most humane offering for the animal in question or the only reasonable option to ensure staff or community safety. It is never a decision that is made without the utmost consideration for all of the factors, as we know them.

Animals who are suffering mentally, emotionally or physically may be candidates for euthanasia. Animals with a poor prognosis, protracted painful recovery, incurable illness, are non-responsive to treatment or if treatment is not reasonably available, are candidates for euthanasia. Animals who are deemed to pose an unacceptable danger to other animals, themselves or the public are candidates for euthanasia.

To determine the most appropriate course of action for those animals in our care, we consider the following:

- Is the animal in pain or distress, and is there hope of alleviating this pain to allow for a reasonable quality of life?
- What are the prospects of providing the animal with a quality of life that fulfills his/her basic physical and psychological needs?
- If the needs of the individual animal cannot be met fully, are there potential legitimate benefits to other animals, such as species preservation, that might justify keeping that particular animal alive?
- Does keeping the animal in his/her present condition and circumstances present significant health or safety risks to other animals or people? Can these risks be minimized or avoided while still affording the animal a reasonable quality of life?
- Given the fiscal and practical limitations faced by the Potter League, does keeping the animal alive reduce the ability to care humanely for other animals in need?
- The Five Freedoms are now accepted as guidelines for the welfare of all animals and are a model that is applicable across species and situations. For this reason the Potter League will consider the Five Freedoms in all care and euthanasia decisions:
 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, Injury or Disease* - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment
 4. *Freedom to Express Normal Behavior* - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind
 5. *Freedom from Fear and Distress* - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering

Each animal admitted to the Potter League will continue to be evaluated in its entirety, taking into account both behavior and medical conditions. The Potter League's Pet Evaluation Matrix and Definitions & Terminology documents are available to help guide decisions about medical and behavior concerns. The Pet Evaluation Matrix (PEM) is a list of specific, commonly seen medical and behavioral conditions that may occur in individual sheltered animals. The Potter League's PEM categorizes the conditions as healthy, treatable-rehabilitatable, treatable-manageable or unhealthy & untreatable using Asilomar Accords definitions based on the standard of care an individual pet owner in our community would provide their pet. The Potter League strives to set an example by meeting - and exceeding - the standard of care provided by pet owners in the community. The PEM also provides more confidence to community stakeholders, enabling everyone to have a better understanding

of our lifesaving progress and compare it to others. The Potter League is also able to get a better handle on the health and behavior of its population, thereby enabling us to better determine the resources we will need to provide for the care of animals.

The Potter League considers quality of life paramount. We do not believe indefinite cage confinement or indiscriminate placement is in the best interest of our companion animal friends. We work hard to avoid euthanasia, and continually examine reasonable and responsible alternatives before an animal is euthanized.

We are often asked: “Are you a no-kill shelter?” The answer is: No we are not, for two primary reasons. While we don’t euthanize healthy animals, we object to the “no-kill” label because it divides shelters and people that need to work together to focus on what matters, which is saving as many pets’ lives as possible. Second, many “no-kill” shelters limit their admission of animals—either by the number of animals allowed into the shelter or by age, health or temperament. At Potter League for Animals, we turn no animals from our service area away. We are committed to serving as a compassionate safety net for *all* pets and *all* people at *all* times. We are an “open-admission” shelter offering all animals a refuge, regardless of whether we believe that animal is “adoptable.” Unlike “limited-admission” shelters, we do not turn animals away at the door. This means that we sometimes must make difficult euthanasia decisions.

Despite the current reality of euthanasia as an outcome for some animals, we believe it is possible and imperative that we bring an end to euthanasia of healthy and treatable animals. The need for euthanasia has not been created by the Potter League and other shelters caring for unwanted animals. Rather, euthanasia is a community and societal problem that the Potter League, by its very mission, must deal with and attempt to reduce or solve. We recognize that the only real, sustainable and humane way to end euthanasia of healthy animals in shelters is to cut off the supply of homeless animals—working at the roots by spaying and neutering, offering behavior counseling for pet owners, and providing humane education and guidance for both children and adults. The Potter League for Animals’ goal is to keep pets and people together, and we strive to do all we can to repair the broken bonds between a human and his or her companion animal.

Procedure to carry out euthanasia:

Given the sensitivity of euthanasia and the Potter League’s requirement to maintain transparency and objectivity, the euthanasia of any animal [including those for owner requested euthanasia] must be approved via signature by the Director of Operations and the Executive Director. Medical, veterinary consultation and behavior reports are discussed and compiled by animal care staff, and they are summarized into one Euthanasia Summary and submitted for approval. The summary and all related backup documents are reviewed by the Director of Operations and Executive Director prior to written authorization for euthanasia.

The appropriate department manager initiates the euthanasia process based on input and discussion with involved staff members of his or her department and the veterinarian. All appropriate approvals and signatures are obtained.

The safety of the staff, as well as the comfort of the animal, is paramount and will be considered when determining how the procedure is performed. Staff will strive, under the direction of the Animal Care Manager, to use all options available to minimize the stress to the animal and to maximize safety of the staff. Pre-tranquilization will be considered in all cases where it will help achieve these goals.

Animal care staff will get the animal from its kennel or cage and take the necessary time to calm the animal prior to the euthanasia procedure. The euthanasia process will be conducted in a manner humane and respectful to the animal. Euthanasia is performed solely by a licensed veterinarian, following the current edition AVMA Guidelines for Euthanasia. In almost all cases compassionate euthanasia will be completed by lethal injection. After the euthanasia is completed, the animal will continue to be handled in an appropriate and respectful manner.

In the event of a medical emergency and/or to alleviate severe suffering, euthanasia may be performed prior to obtaining all signatures at the request of or under the guidance of a veterinarian.

Approved by the Board of Directors: July 19, 2016