

Michigan Humane Society

Introduction, Beliefs & Principles, and Position Statements

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I. Introduction

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) mission is to improve and save lives through compassionate care, community engagement, and advocacy for animals. Through pursuit of this mission, MHS will protect animals and meaningfully affect societal views to enhance consideration, respect, and compassion for all animals.

The relationship between human and nonhuman animals is complex. Opinions vary on what that relationship “should” be among different individuals.

The intent of the MHS *Beliefs & Principles* and *Position Statements* is multi-fold. First, to provide clarity about and communicate the organization’s point of view on broad tenets (*Beliefs & Principles*) and on specific topics (*Position Statements*) for the benefit of the Board, staff, volunteers, supporters and the general public. Second, to provide direction to management and staff, and encourage creative and realistic implementation of these *Beliefs & Principles* and the *Position Statements* into the Strategic Plan and daily operations. Third, to encourage adoption of these points of view by the public.

For the purpose of this document: **Beliefs** are defined as broad underlying concepts held to be true; **Principles** are the corresponding code of conduct; and **Position Statements** define our intentions regarding specific topics and circumstances.

II. Beliefs & Principles

Belief: We believe in the interconnectedness of all life. We recognize that all life has intrinsic value. Every action within the web of life results in consequences, both intended and unintended. **Principle:** We seek to foresee the implications of our acts and deeds. We will strive to minimize harm and to balance the interests of humans, animals, and the environment in which we live.

Belief: We believe in the possibility of a “humane” society. **Principle:** Our intentions, words, and deeds will consciously reflect consideration, honesty, respect, fairness, compassion, and responsibility toward ourselves, other people, animals, and the environment. To quote Jane Goodall, “Then indeed we shall stand at the threshold of a new era in human evolution – the realization of our most unique quality: humanity.”

Belief: We believe humans have a responsibility to consciously consider, respect, care for and protect animals and the environment. The collective impact that individuals have upon animals

and the environment is staggering. Principle: We are obligated to act on behalf of the animals and environments affected by the consequences of our deeds.

Belief: We believe humans have an impact on all animals. The more dependent animals are upon humans for their well-being, the more vulnerable they become. Companion animals, being totally dependent upon humans, are among the most vulnerable. Principle: We will strive to ensure that all companion animals have human guardians to provide love and care for their physical, medical, behavioral, and emotional well-being for the duration of their natural lives.

Belief: We believe in an inclusive attitude that focuses on similarities between people and organizations to collectively accomplish good deeds and to acknowledge and consider differing views for the benefit of all. Principle: We will strive to create and maintain alliances because we know that we are stronger and can accomplish more together than we can individually. Although we will hold true to our own beliefs and principles and may offer rationale to influence others, we will maintain an attitude of openness to new information and respect the right of people and organizations to make their own choices.

III. Position Statements

A. About Us

Who Do We Serve?

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) serves both animals and humans. MHS' focus is primarily companion animal [1] issues. We will cooperate and collaborate with expert organizations that support our *Beliefs & Principles* with regard to human, companion animal, farm animal, wild animal, and environmental issues. The very nature of the relationship between companion animals and humans causes the services we provide to invariably affect both animals and humans. Our activities often have a meaningful impact on the greater community and on society.

Animal Admission

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) will adhere to admission practices that will maximize successful outcomes for animals in the community.

¹ For purposes of this document, companion animals are those who have been habituated to living with humans, formed a mutually beneficial emotional bond with their human family, are cared for primarily for the purpose of companionship, and are typically of a species that have been exclusively bred as companions such as dogs and cats. However, the category may include birds, rabbits, ferrets, horses, or other traditionally domesticated animals. The distinction to be made between domestic animals and companion animals, regardless of the species, is that companion animals are cared for primarily for the purpose of companionship, and domestic animals often are cared for primarily for a utilitarian purpose. Service and working dogs, even though they may be cared for primarily for utilitarian purposes, are companion animals. We have specifically selected the term companion animal over pet because it better describes the relationship between the animal and human(s).

Owner surrender: MHS endorses the practice whereby a guardian schedules an appointment to relinquish an animal. This will provide an opportunity to explore other options and services available to the guardian that may prevent the surrender of an animal. MHS understands that there are times when keeping a companion animal is not possible. MHS will accept any companion animal regardless of health, age, breed, temperament, behavior, or other characteristic and involve the guardian as a partner in determining the best outcome for the animal.

Stray animals: MHS believes the best chance for reuniting a lost pet with its guardian rests with the animal being surrendered to the designated public authority for that purpose where the guardian would be searching. MHS will not routinely accept stray animals unless there is a contract with a specific designated public authority to be that authority's animal control facility.

If the person who found the stray animal is not a resident in one of the MHS contract cities/townships but found the animal in one of these cities/townships, the animal should be taken to the designated public authority for that purpose.

Field Services: Regardless of ownership status, MHS field services may admit animals to the shelter when there is a critical or at-risk situation in order for the animal to receive care.

With respect to animals outside our ability to provide appropriate care and housing, we will seek safe passage to a qualified shelter, wildlife rehabilitator, or sanctuary.

Use of Resources

The allocation of the Michigan Humane Society's (MHS) personnel and financial resources is determined by the Board of Directors and Management through the MHS *Beliefs & Principles* and *Positions* that guide the Strategic Plan, which in turn guides the Budget. MHS maintains careful financial and management controls to ensure adherence to its *Beliefs & Principles*, *Positions Statements*, Strategic Plan, and Budget.

Service Area

The Michigan Humane Society's (MHS) primary service area for direct care services such as sheltering, veterinary care, cruelty investigations, and emergency rescue is the greater Detroit metropolitan area, with the exception of areas where these services are provided by other qualified animal welfare organizations or entities. Services such as humane education, law enforcement training, legislative advocacy, and collaborative efforts, including cruelty investigations and disaster relief, are extended outside the direct service area to the state or national level based upon MHS' strategic goals. MHS is open to the potential expansion of its direct service area should the need and opportunity arise if doing so will enhance and improve animal welfare.

Sheltering and Capacity for Care

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) advocates an approach that maximizes each animal's opportunity for a live outcome and reduces unnecessary euthanasia, while at the same time balances circumstances where an animal would have a poor quality of life or could not be placed safely into the community. MHS believes that such an approach is in the best interest of the animals and the community at large.

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) believes that all facilities that house and care for animals do so without exceeding the organization's capacity for care. Utilizing this concept is essential to meet the animals' basic husbandry and medical needs as well as their social and behavioral requirements. Failure to do so can lead to inhumane housing conditions and increased disease prevalence.

Humane Education

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) believes that humane education fosters a society where one's actions reflect consideration, honesty, respect, fairness, compassion, and responsibility toward oneself, other people, animals and the environment.

MHS is committed to embracing and advancing beliefs, principles, and actions that help people learn how to put their highest humane values into action. Education provides accurate information and fosters curiosity, creativity, and thoughtful consideration so that people are empowered to make choices and take action for the balanced benefit of themselves, other people, animals, and the environment. MHS is committed to developing an internal culture based on these principles of humane education and providing humane education programs for children, adolescents, and adults.

The measure of success for humane education is heightened awareness of and consideration for humane values, beliefs, and principles. MHS will collaborate with other organizations that work to increase awareness and understanding of humane values, beliefs, and principles.

Collaboration

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) seeks to build cooperative relationships with companion and non-companion animal organizations, social service organizations, and public and private interests, including governmental agencies, to advance the importance of companion animal issues and to seek greater protection and appreciation for companion animals. The issues to be addressed regarding companion animals exceed the resources and scope of any individual organization. The community of companion animal organizations in our immediate service area, state, and nation are best served by cooperating in common causes. In addition to companion animal organizations, MHS seeks to build cooperative relationships with all interests that impact the treatment of companion animals. A collective voice will be more easily heard

and will have a vastly greater impact on companion animal guardians, the animal industry, and the community at large, both public and private.

B. Michigan Humane Society Veterinary Centers and Policies

Michigan Humane Society Veterinary Centers

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) operates veterinary centers dedicated to providing quality care to companion animals. Veterinary services are provided both to the animals sheltered by MHS as well as the general public. A full range of veterinary services is provided at the MHS veterinary centers to allow for the diverse type of services required for the life-long care of companion animals. In addition, quality veterinary care is essential in achieving program success in the shelter, wildlife, and cruelty investigation divisions.

MHS believes strongly that all animals should receive veterinary care regardless of the client's financial state. MHS will work with indigent clients in order to ensure that their animals are provided appropriate veterinary care. The level of financial support given to clients is based on necessity and resources available to MHS.

Cosmetic Surgery

Cosmetic surgery is the altering of animals solely for the sake of appearance. This type of procedure has no medical benefit to the animal while causing undue pain and physical stress. The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) considers cosmetic surgery to be inappropriate to perform under any circumstances.

Declawing/Tendonectomy

Declawing is the amputation of a cat's nails including the connecting bone, while a tendonectomy is the severing of the tendons that extend the nails. Both surgical procedures are intended to prevent cats from causing damage by scratching. Neither procedure provides any direct medical benefit to cats, and, like all surgical procedures, it can produce post-operative discomfort and pain. The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) discourages the declawing or tendonectomy of cats and will not perform these procedures in our veterinary centers. MHS advocates for behavior modification and noninvasive options to prevent damage due to cats' scratching behaviors.

Reproductive Veterinary Procedures

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) discourages the use of procedures to promote reproduction of companion animals and will not perform these procedures in our veterinary centers. Instead, MHS advocates for the sterilization of companion animals.

Spay/Neuter

It is commonly understood and well documented that the reduction of population through spay/neuter programs is a key element of the solution to the destruction of homeless companion animals. Additionally, taken as an aggregate, spaying/neutering generally has health and behavioral benefits. A spay/neuter program consisting of education as well as affordable and accessible veterinary care is required to alleviate the continuing excess of homeless companion animals.

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) is committed to initiatives that increase spay/neuter and spay/neuter programs. With few exceptions, animals adopted from MHS must be sterilized before going to their new homes. If a temporary medical exemption is provided, a deposit must be collected to ensure compliance. MHS supports the State of Michigan statute that mandates that all shelters must make provisions to ensure that animals adopted from their shelters are spayed/neutered.

Companion Animal Cloning

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) does not support the cloning of companion animals. We recommend that families visit their local shelter to adopt a homeless companion animal in need of a caring family and home. While it is difficult to lose a companion animal, cloning does not reproduce the personality or characteristics of the animal who was lost.

C. Animal Guardians

Guardian

While the Michigan Humane Society (MHS) recognizes that the current trend in many animal rights and animal welfare organizations (as well as some states and municipalities) is to use the term “guardian” instead of “owner” to denote the legal relationship between a human and a nonhuman animal, for the purposes of this document, the use of the term “guardian” is meant solely to reflect a loving, caring attitude and relationship whereby individuals who choose to keep a companion animal provide a nurturing environment for the animal for the duration of the animal’s life. It is not intended to imply any legal relationship or particular legal status or standing.

Companion Animal Guardian Responsibilities

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) is committed to helping people keep and care for their companion animals by providing assistance, information, and training in all aspects of companion animal guardianship, from the decision to adopt and the selection process to appropriate physical care, health care, socialization, and behavior training. People must understand and embrace the responsibilities of companion animal guardianship. Often, reasons given for relinquishing companion animals to shelters point directly back to an initial

misunderstanding or misconception of what it takes to be a responsible guardian to the animal. The commitment the guardian family makes to their companion animal is to provide love and care for the animal's physical, medical, behavioral, and emotional well-being for the duration of the animal's life.

Selecting a Companion Animal

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) encourages potential guardians to carefully consider their lifestyle and expectations prior to selecting a companion animal. Some of the aspects to be considered are housing/space requirements for the animal, time available to spend caring for/playing with/training the animal, activity level of the animal, expenses required for general care (including veterinary needs), and accommodations required by the animal during family absences. The entire family must be committed to the companion animal. A commitment from only one member of the family will likely result in difficult times for the family as well as the companion animal. Whether considering a goldfish, a hamster, a cat, or a dog, families who select the companion animal that best meets their expectations are more likely to keep that animal for life.

MHS encourages the public to consider adopting a companion animal from an animal shelter or other organization that specializes in rehoming animals. Humane organizations and shelters are uniquely able to provide information on many types of animals and offer a wide variety of animals for adoption. Shelters and humane organizations have purebred animals, mixed breeds, and older animals who are likely to have had some basic behavior training and can fit wonderfully into the right home.

MHS uses trained evaluators to assess the temperament/behavior of all animals prior to being made available for adoption and uses trained adoption counselors to consult with potential guardians regarding their lifestyle, expectations, and companion animal selection to ensure the appropriate choice has been made for the benefit of both the companion animal and guardian.

MHS encourages potential companion animal guardians to work with a trained adoption counselor from a shelter or humane organization to aid them in selecting a companion animal who meets their lifestyle needs and expectations.

Socialization and Behavior Training

A guardian's responsibilities to his or her companion animal include understanding and supporting the particular animal's social and behavioral needs. It is important that companion animals be appropriately socialized with people and other animals. A lack of socialization and other behavior problems in adolescent animals, many of which are preventable or easily corrected, often are cited as a primary reason for relinquishing an animal. To prevent and resolve behavior issues, guardians must understand the social and behavioral needs of their companion animals and be skillful in humane training techniques.

To help reduce behavior problems in companion animals, the Michigan Humane Society (MHS) strongly recommends socialization, behavior, and training assistance. Resources are available on line at <http://www.michiganhumane.org/pet-care/behavior-assistance/>.

Health and Medical Care for Companion Animals

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) advocates that all companion animals receive preventative health care. Depending on individual species needs and requirements, MHS advocates that animal guardians utilize the SIMPLE format for providing preventative health care to their companion animals.

S – sterilize to prevent unwanted litters

I – immunization against infectious disease

M – microchip to provide unalterable identification

P – parasite control

L – life choices that are essential to good health, such as diet and exercise

E – examinations on a routine basis

Companion animals by their very nature are dependent on their guardians to meet their physical and emotional needs. Guardians who choose to have a companion animal assume the responsibility for their animal's health care and medical needs. Companion animal guardians have a legal obligation to vaccinate their animals against diseases as required by law as well as to provide medical care should their animals become sick or injured.

D. Euthanasia and Alternatives

The Destruction of Homeless Companion Animals

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) is committed to eliminating the unwarranted destruction of homeless companion animals and will actively work toward a time when all companion animals, with the exception of those who are hopelessly sick or injured, vicious, or otherwise pose a public or animal health hazard, can leave shelters with guardians who will provide love and care for the physical, medical, behavioral, social, and emotional well-being of their companion animals for the duration of the animals' lives.

In order to stop the destruction of homeless companion animals, we must work to change society's expectations. Society, companion animal guardians, and shelters themselves traditionally have expected that shelters should assume complete responsibility for homeless animals, regardless of circumstances. It is simply not possible or realistic to expect shelters to solely accept this responsibility. Ending the tragedy of the destruction of homeless companion animals will take a concerted effort by the entire community. It requires shelters, animal control, guardians, breeders, veterinarians, all parts of the companion animal industry, governments, and society as a whole to actively take responsibility for their role in ending the need for the destruction of homeless companion animals.

MHS is committed to fostering the collaboration required to end the destruction of homeless animals as a solution to too many homeless companion animals.

Euthanasia Standards

When euthanasia of an animal is necessary, it is to be done with care, consideration and concern for the comfort and dignity of each animal's individual circumstances. In most circumstances, intravenous injection with sodium pentobarbital is the preferable method currently available. Euthanasia should be performed only by properly trained personnel following published standards of care by recognized authorities, such as the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) or the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).

Animal Hospice

In veterinary medicine, euthanasia has been the standard for ending an animal's life in a humane manner. In recent times, there has been a greater understanding of animals' psychological and physical needs as well as pain management. Consequently, this has led to hospice care being provided for animals in end-of-life situations. MHS is in support of this approach in companion animal care in circumstances where the animal's psychological needs and pain and suffering can be properly managed.

Sanctuaries

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) supports the activities of responsible animal sanctuaries as a place of refuge where injured, abused or displaced wild, domestic, or companion animals are provided appropriate lifetime care or, when possible, rehabilitated and returned to the wild in cases of wild animals or made available for adoption in cases of companion animals. A responsible animal sanctuary is one where: an environment as natural, spacious, and enriched a setting as possible in comparison to the species' natural habitat is provided; lifetime care for the physical, emotional, social, and behavioral needs of each individual and group are provided; appropriate steps are taken to correct problems that lead to abnormal behavior; the well-being of the animals always takes precedence over other considerations; humane euthanasia is considered when the quality of life and prognosis so indicates; high standards of animal care through continuing education are maintained; and efforts are made toward education and promotion of animal issues.

E. Use of Animals

Farm Animals

Farm animals are sentient beings. So-called factory farming, [2] which employs high-density or confinement practices, creates an ethical dilemma for society. While factory farming produces

2 "Factory farming is intensive mass production and slaughter of animals for food in circumstances designed solely for cost and handling efficiency with little or no regard for the animals."--Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare.

large quantities of inexpensive food products, it generally is based on a variety of inhumane animal husbandry practices and can cause a negative environmental impact. Many farm animal welfare organizations are attempting to build public awareness and offer alternatives that maintain high production without treating animals inhumanely or excessively polluting the environment.

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) endorses the efforts of farm animal welfare organizations that inform the public of the plight of farm animals and advocate humane handling and care of farm animals during every stage of their lives. This includes maintaining a living environment free from discomfort, stress, or pain as well as meeting the physical, medical, behavioral, and social needs of farm animals.

Although farm animal welfare is not our primary focus, MHS will establish working relationships with local and national organizations that share our beliefs and principles by cooperating in education opportunities and as partners when farm animal issues present themselves.

Research Animals

The use of animals in research presents a complex ethical dilemma for society. While animal research has led to scientific progress and medical advances, it also has entailed suffering for many animals.

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) supports anti-vivisection organizations that nonviolently work to bring about viable alternatives and appropriate care for research animals by taking into consideration their physical, medical, behavioral, and emotional needs; minimizing their discomfort; and eliminating pain throughout the animals' lives. MHS recognizes and applauds the strides made in the development of alternatives to the use of animals for research and the growing number of "cruelty free" products.

MHS believes that all animal research programs should have peer-reviewed animal impact assessments to determine if a non-animal model can be utilized and when animal research must be used, employing procedures that will minimize animal pain and suffering. All pertinent laws must be followed when conducting animal research, including approval by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees.

MHS opposes the unethical practice of pound seizure/pound release and promotes the enactment of local, state, and federal laws to prevent the sale or transfer of companion animals from public or private shelters or animal control to animal dealers or to research, testing, or teaching institutions. The unknown background of these animals typically makes them poor research and testing subjects. All animals, especially companion animals because of their unique social bonds with people, can become stressed, frightened, and sick when they are subjected to extensive handling, kenneling, transporting, and ultimately the confinement typical in a laboratory environment.

Although research animals are not our focus, MHS will maintain an open line of communication and share education opportunities with anti-vivisection organizations that share our beliefs and principles.

Service Animals

Service dogs must be cared for in a manner that meets all of their physical, medical, and psychological needs. Service dogs provide various types of assistance to humans and work as guide/seeing eye dogs, medical alert dogs, mobility assistance dogs, police dogs, and search and rescue dogs. They are specially bred or selected and trained extensively to provide invaluable services to individuals or the community. The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) supports existing law and future legislation that provides protection, support, and rights of public access for service dogs; sets clear standards for qualification for and identification of service animals; and facilitates access to service dogs for those in need. MHS works with reputable groups seeking to adopt potential service dogs into their training programs.

Use of Animals in Sport and Other Legal and Entertainment-Oriented Activities

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) supports mutually fulfilling activities that strengthen the bond between companion animals and their guardians with the understanding that the welfare of the animal takes precedence over the entertainment, recreational, or competitive aspects of the activity. MHS emphasizes the responsibilities of animal guardians to provide love and care for the animal's physical, medical, behavioral, and emotional well-being for the duration of the animal's life.

MHS is opposed to entertainment-oriented activities that exploit or cause harm or suffering to animals during any aspect leading to, during, or after the activity, including, but not limited to: transportation, excessive confinement, inappropriate training methods, use of excessive force, overwork, tools that produce pain, or use of drugs that mask pain or enhance performance. Many racing events, rodeos, and animal circuses take part in activities that routinely utilize unnecessarily exploitive and harmful practices towards animals.

Zoos

The ideal place for wild and exotic animals is in their natural habitats. However, most developed nations support zoos in one form or another. The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) acknowledges that zoos have developed as a part of our society and supports the efforts of responsible zoos. Responsible zoos are those that strive to: provide species-specific environments that simulate natural habitats as closely as possible for the benefit of the animals; treat individuals, species groups, and their collective animal communities with consideration for their physical, medical, emotional, social and behavioral needs; avoid obtaining animals from the wild; engage in breeding for the purpose of protecting endangered species; ensure surplus animals regardless of species are only sold, traded, or given to other responsible zoos, accredited sanctuaries, or institutions committed to humane care or, in cases

when appropriate sanctuary cannot be secured, humane euthanasia is considered when the quality of life and prognosis so indicates; provide continuing education of staff regarding animal care, enrichment, behavior, habitat, and husbandry; educate the general public on the needs of animals and their roles in ecosystems; and promote the interest of wildlife.

Breeders

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) opposes mass breeding, puppy mills and irresponsible breeders, whether “backyard”/hobby or professional. Although MHS strongly encourages people to adopt animals from a shelter or rescue group, we acknowledge responsible breeding that fulfills a community need and that meets the following criteria: use of husbandry practices that ensure physically and temperamentally healthy offspring and limit the number of offspring to ensure adoption; properly care for the physical, medical, emotional, social, and behavioral needs of adults and offspring; disclose any physical or behavioral breed characteristics, qualities, and problems; properly socialize offspring with animals and humans; carefully screen adopters; require that adopted animals be spayed/neutered with the exception of breeder-supervised individuals; promote and teach responsible companion animal guardianship and the provision of love and care for the physical, medical, behavioral, and emotional well-being for the duration of the animal's life.

Hunting

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) is opposed to the arbitrary killing of animals for the sole and exclusive purpose of recreation, which is commonly known as “sport” hunting. In order for hunting to be acceptable, MHS believes that it must be done in order to fulfill an essential need of humans, animals, or the environment; for instance, to provide food or to balance the environmental ecosystem. MHS is specifically opposed to trophy hunting, which promotes the killing of animals in order to attempt to achieve record-setting specifications, and canned hunting, which is the killing of confined animals who have no means of eluding the hunter and who are often surplus zoo animals or animals habituated to humans because they are fed and confined by humans until it is time for the hunt.

MHS urges those who do hunt to abide by a code of ethics that includes: obtaining the necessary license(s) and observing applicable state and local law; acquiring the necessary skill levels and making the choice to ensure that the animal is killed instantaneously and with a minimum of pain; knowing the limitations of their chosen weapon so as to lessen wounding rate; hunting in a legal, safe, ethical, and non-wasteful manner; and reporting illegal poaching activities.

MHS believes that sport fishermen also should abide by a similar code of ethics as it relates to the fish, the environment, and the actions of the fisherman.

Although limiting or prohibiting animal hunting is not our primary focus, MHS will maintain a supportive relationship with organizations that share our principles and beliefs to protect

animals from irresponsible hunting. MHS supports open dialogue between and among individuals and organizations holding differing views in an effort to humanely balance the needs of people, animals, and the environment.

MHS is opposed to the creation of hunting seasons on additional species without the approval of the general electorate.

F. Animal Cruelty and Neglect

Cruelty

Animals are sentient beings with feelings and emotions. It is wrong to treat animals in a manner that does not consider their physical and emotional wellbeing. The treatment of animals should always be consistent with the Five Freedoms of animal welfare. The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) works with the community and law enforcement agencies to prevent, investigate, rectify, and/or prosecute cases of animal cruelty. MHS will advocate for the appropriate protection of animals under the law.

MHS strives to educate the greater community, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and judges to appreciate that the underlying characteristics of cruelty are the same regardless of whether the victim is an animal or a person.

The Relationship between Violence Towards Humans and Towards Animals

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) recommends that the greater community treat violence towards animals with the same concern as violence towards humans. It is well documented by scientists, psychologists, and criminologists that the same biological, psychological, and environmental influences foster violence towards humans and animals. Referred to as “The Link,” violence towards animals is a strong indicator of violence towards people.

MHS is committed to promoting the importance of The Link for parents, school systems, law enforcement agencies, social/psychological agencies, the judicial system, and the greater community to understand the significance of the relationship between violence toward animals and humans. MHS will, whenever possible, refer cases of violence towards animals to local social welfare and law enforcement agencies for intervention as well as possible prosecution.

Animal Hoarding

Hoarding is a recognized psychological disorder. An animal hoarder is described by Tufts University as:

One who accumulates a large number of animals; who fails to provide minimal nutrition, sanitation, and veterinary care; fails to act on the deteriorating conditions of the animals or the

environment; and who fails to act on or recognize the negative impact of the collection on their own health and wellbeing.[3]

In no way is hoarding considered a legitimate form of sheltering or rescuing animals. All cases of suspected animal hoarding should be reported to the appropriate animal welfare organization and adult protective services.[4]

Animal Fighting

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) is vehemently opposed to the blood sport of animal fighting and works diligently and closely with law enforcement agencies to expose and prosecute known animal fighters. Typical fighting animals are dogs and cocks. The brutality and cruelty animal fighting inflicts affects the entire community. An animal suffering severe, debilitating, and often mortal wounds is only the surface of the world of animal fighting. The layers below are many – illegal gambling, drugs and firearms are commonplace. Children are often spectators of the brutal violence and cruelty, which cause these children to be desensitized about accepting, engaging in, and even promoting street fights, thus creating a generational perpetuation of this activity. The irresponsible breeding and subsequent training of fighting animals results in the propagation, enhancement, and exploitation of “fighting” traits -- tenacity, aggression, unpredictability, and viciousness.

G. Animal Laws and Enforcement

Legislation and Enforcement

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) is committed to being a voice for animals by acting as an advocate both within the State of Michigan and elsewhere as needed to promote the passage of legislation, issuance of regulations, and use of the judicial system that will serve to protect the interests of animals. MHS will focus its efforts primarily on companion animal issues and review other legislative initiatives on a case-by-case basis. MHS will collaborate with other animal organizations to raise awareness among voting constituents regarding animal issues in the legislature.

MHS also recognizes that statutes, by themselves, are meaningless without public support and, ultimately, enforcement of those statutes by prosecutors and the judicial system. Therefore, MHS will educate the public about responsible animal guardianship; encourage and cooperate with local law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, the judiciary, and regulatory agencies to

3 Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium (HARC), *Animal Hoarding: structuring interdisciplinary responses to help people, animals, and communities at risk* (2006); available on line at <http://vet.tufts.edu/wp-content/uploads/AngellReport.pdf>.

4 Pound Seizure/Pound Release is the practice of selling live companion animals from shelters or animal control facilities for research, testing and teaching typically at a very cheap rate.

prosecute individuals engaged in unlawful behavior involving animals; and ultimately work toward stricter enforcement of existing and future statutes.

Breed Specific Legislation

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) opposes legislation that would prohibit the private ownership of dogs or other restrictions solely based on breed (“breed bans”).⁵ Such legislation usually is directed at breeds commonly exploited for dog fighting or guarding of illegal practices. Because virtually any breed can be purposely bred and trained to promote fighting or otherwise aggressive temperaments, breed specific laws are not an effective solution to improve public safety or to address the core issue. The heart of the issue is not the breed of dog, but rather the intentions and actions of some breeders, trainers, and guardians. MHS strongly urges the enforcement of existing dog-fighting laws. We also strongly urge the enforcement of existing dangerous animal laws that permit communities to hold guardians accountable when their animals cause the death of or injury to a person.

Limitation on Pet Ownership Ordinances

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) is opposed to ordinances that limit the number of companion animals an individual or household may have and do not take into account the importance of allowing the temporary possession of companion animals by individuals who are functioning as foster homes.

While many well-meaning communities have passed pet limitation ordinances in an effort to protect the public from perceived nuisances caused by companion animals, MHS believes that enforcement of general anti-nuisance laws is preferable to penalizing the majority of guardians who care for their animals in a responsible manner. Some communities have passed pet limitation ordinances in an attempt to prevent individuals from becoming “hoarders/collectors” of companion animals. It should be noted that hoarders represent a very small minority of the general public.

Pet limitation ordinances prevent many good, responsible guardians from adopting additional companions who they are in a position to properly care for, resulting in more needless companion animal deaths in local animal control facilities and shelters.

H. Animals at Large

Animal Control

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) supports and encourages the shifting role of animal control agencies from being merely a public health or law enforcement agency to that of a more proactive member of the animal welfare community and the community at large.

⁵ Currently, these restrictions typically target “pit bull” and “pit bull type” dogs. The term “pit bull” is generic and actually encompasses several breeds, such as American Staffordshire Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Bull Terrier, Pit Bull Terrier and dogs with these breed mixes.

Shifting the paradigm from “animal control” to “animal care” will require increased focus on adoption programs to place companion animals into loving homes; the formation of education programs, collaborative programs with volunteers, rescue groups and shelters; and attention to animal health, including physical and emotional well-being and disease issues. This shift in philosophy also mandates that animal control agencies not engage in practices such as pound seizure/pound release and that whenever euthanasia of animals deemed not to be behaviorally or medically sound is required, that the procedure be carried out in a humane manner in accordance with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) or American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) guidelines for euthanasia. This paradigm shift should not detract from the animal control agencies’ primary responsibility to ensure public health and safety.

As animal care and control agencies are mandated under local ordinances and are responsible for the enforcement of the state’s Dog Law of 1919, the responsibility for adequately funding animal care and control agencies also must lie directly with local and state governments and not the private sector in order to ensure that animals within their jurisdiction are being cared for in the most humane manner. Lost and stray animals should be cared for by animal control agencies to ensure the greatest chance of being reunited with their guardians unless contractual arrangements are made designating another organization for this function.

MHS is committed to continuing, to the extent possible, to work in cooperation and collaboration with these statutorily-charged agencies for the good of the animals throughout Michigan.

Community Cats

For purposes of this document, community cats are defined as free-ranging cats. Generally, these will include feral cats, stray cats that were once owned but now are abandoned, or a pet cat running at large. The acceptance of these cats in a community can be extremely controversial and ranges from individuals that welcome them to coexist to those that advocate for their elimination. These populations have proven themselves to be able to survive without human intervention and be reproductively active. Many of these cats are unsocialized and cannot be placed in adoptive homes. Additionally, the return-to-owner rate for these cats is low. Trap and remove programs are ineffective. For these reasons, the issue of community cats has been frustrating not only to animal control and animal welfare organizations but to the general public as well.

Although there is no clear solution to this problem, MHS will advocate for support and conduct programs that are proven to save lives and enhance animal welfare of community cats. Where appropriate, community cats will either be eligible for placement into a home or working environment, be entered into a trap-neuter-release program where the cat is released to a colony caregiver, or into a shelter-neuter-return program where a cat is returned to its original environment after sterilization.

Companion Animal Identification/Microchipping

Every year, thousands of companion animals in Michigan become lost. Without accurate identification, there is little hope to reunite lost companion animals with their guardians. The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) emphasizes the importance of accurate identification for all companion animals and supports the use of collars and tags and microchips. Animal control shelters, animal protections shelters, law enforcement, and veterinarians should have access to a universal scanner to check for microchips. It is essential that companion animals be microchipped and wear visible ID tags on their collars with up-to-date contact information (and a valid license if required by law). Even indoor-only companion animals should be microchipped and wear accurate ID tags in case they accidentally get outside.

I. Wild and Exotic Animals

Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) is committed to helping injured, sick, or orphaned wildlife by providing information, short-term care, and transfer to other licensed wildlife rehabilitators for ongoing care and eventual release to the wild. Because each species of animal has unique care requirements, it is important for the general public to understand that the best place for injured sick or orphaned wildlife is with a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. The keeping of wild animals by those who are untrained/unlicensed often results in the animal's death. Also, there are many dangers associated with handling wild animals, such as sustaining personal injury, contracting a zoonotic disease, or transmitting a disease to other domestic animals. It is illegal to keep wildlife unless you are a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

In circumstances where injured, sick, or infant wildlife is found, a licensed wildlife rehabilitator should be contacted immediately for instructions, transfer, or pickup. A licensed wildlife rehabilitator can be found by contacting the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or MHS.

Living in Harmony with Wildlife

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) is committed to helping people live in harmony with wildlife by providing information regarding the prevention and resolution of conflicts with wildlife, as well as appreciation of the beauty, lessons, and pleasures that wildlife offer people. It is important for people to understand that the most effective way to avoid the destruction or inconvenience that can be created by wildlife is by understanding and eliminating the factors that attract and cause wildlife to interfere with one's home or property. MHS provides information on how to protect homes and property from wildlife at <http://support.michiganhumane.org/site/PageServer?pagename=wildlifeHarmony>.

Wild, Hybrid, and Exotic Animals

Wild, hybrid, and exotic^[6] animals should not be kept as companions. When wild, hybrid, or exotic animals are kept as companions, in most cases, the animals suffer. They have specific dietary, habitat/environment and social/psychological needs that the average owner cannot fulfill. Furthermore, they are a potential threat to the safety of people and other animals both physically and by disease transmission. A large proportion of wild, hybrid and exotic animals are disposed of when the animals become too large, too expensive, become aggressive/destructive, or the owners tire of the responsibility. Unfortunately for these unwanted animals, there are only a limited number of accredited zoos or sanctuaries, and most of the animals are destined to be euthanized.

J. Animal Transportation and Restraint

Transportation of Animals

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) urges that animals' safety and comfort be ensured whenever they are transported in passenger or commercial vehicles. MHS opposes the transportation of any animal in an open vehicle because animals transported in this way are subjected not only to adverse weather, wind, flying debris, etc., but also can be easily injured if the vehicle makes any abrupt movements and can cause accidents when other vehicles try to avoid an animal who has fallen onto the road. In addition, MHS recommends that companion animals be transported within personal vehicles in a way that prevents them from moving about the inside compartment of the vehicle, because this poses a safety hazard to both the animal and the driver. Acceptable restraint methods include placing the animal in a travel carrier that is secured to the vehicle's seatbelt system and seatbelt restraints designed specifically for animals. At no time is it acceptable to transport an animal within the trunk of a vehicle.

While both federal and state laws govern the commercial transportation of animals, as noted above, MHS promotes consideration for the safety and comfort of the animals being transported. For example, vehicles and trailers should be clean and in good working condition and provide non-slip flooring and adequate space for the animals. Animals should be protected from extreme weather conditions, and adequate ventilation should be provided at all times. Other humane commercial animal handling measures, such as not mixing genders, age groups, species, etc. also are important to minimize stress on the animals and prevent fighting injuries, death, damage to the vehicle, or the driver's loss of control of the vehicle.

The ability to place homeless animals will vary by region whether it is locally, intrastate, interstate, or even internationally. Often, many animal lives can be saved by transporting

⁶ Wild animals are those not specifically bred over many generations to adapt to human confinement, company, or control. Hybrids are wild animals bred with domestic animals. Exotic animals are wild animals not native to North America.

animals from a region where there is a surplus of adoptable animals to an area where there is a shortage. MHS supports and participates in these life-saving programs provided they do not result in the increased euthanasia of animals in the destination communities and that all applicable laws are followed pertaining to the transport of the animals across jurisdictional lines.

Tethering

Tethering is the practice of tying an animal with a rope, chain, or similar device to restrict its movement.

Tethering, on a temporary basis, can have legitimate uses. However, long-term tethering can result in an increased risk of health problems, failure to recognize medical issues, neglect, and the development of behavioral problems and aggressiveness.

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) believes the use of tethering as a primary method of restraint or confinement of an animal is inhumane and opposes its use.