

FVHA Position Statements

Revised 2012

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Animal Fighting

So-called "sports" that involve pitting animals against animals or humans against animals continue to thrive in certain areas, whether legal or illegal. Dog fighting, cock fighting, bull fighting, bear wrestling, coon-on-a-log, coon-in-a-hole, hunts where animals are used to pursue, capture, or kill other animals, and other such events result in abuse, maiming, and painful death for thousands of animals each year. These cruel, barbaric events almost always end in the death or serious injury of an animal. Such organized and willful abuse of animals is contrary to the values of a humane, aware and caring society.

FVHA condemns and opposes all such blood sports and calls for an immediate end to legal acceptance of blood sports and for strong enforcement of laws that now exist banning these brutal activities. FVHA appreciates the efforts and support of elected officials to create stronger and more comprehensive laws providing for the enforcement of animal fighting prohibitions.

Animals in Research

While scientific progress has resulted from many animal experiments, FVHA looks forward to the time when such experiments become unnecessary or obsolete. Until alternative research methods are available and applied, and as long as animals continue to be used in laboratories, FVHA will hope for the strictest accountability in research procedures and in the procurement, treatment, maintenance and disposition of all species of laboratory animals.

In any research project using animals, there should always be a written experimental protocol that is reviewed by a licensed veterinarian and that includes appropriate humane husbandry and medical care along with due consideration for elimination of pain and relief of stress and suffering of the animals. There should be a clear-cut expectation that the experiment will contribute significantly to knowledge that will ultimately benefit humans and animals and, in rare cases where pain, stress, or suffering cannot be completely avoided, the benefits must be clearly and objectively demonstrated to outweigh any pain, stress or suffering experienced by the animals, which must be kept to an absolute minimum level and for only the shortest period possible. With all cases, the fewest number of animals and the least traumatic approach possible must be used.

FVHA supports the development and application of alternative methods of research and testing to reduce the number of animals required, refine existing techniques and procedures to reduce or eliminate pain and stress in laboratory animals, and replace animals in research with *in vitro* methods where available.

FVHA opposes laws that allow for the requisitioning of unwanted or lost animals from pounds and shelters for experimental purposes. The availability of shelter animals to

research laboratories and medical schools inevitably destroys public confidence in shelters and contributes to abandonment of animals by individuals who fear that such animals may be subjected to painful use. All animals that are in the possession of a shelter or animal control agency should be returned to their rightful owners, placed in suitable homes or humanely euthanized.

Captive Wildlife Animals

FVHA encourages environmental and ecological policies that protect as many species as possible from exploitation and extinction. FVHA views wild animals as integral and valuable parts of the earth's environment. Wildlife worldwide deserves room to live normal, species specific lives with protection from exploitation.

FVHA recognizes that wildlife is likely to be kept in captivity in zoos. Zoos can provide first hand information about wild animals and protect endangered species. These animals must at all times be treated humanely and be provided the opportunity to live as naturally as possible. Wild animals whether in captivity or in the wild require space, food, shelter, air and water, as well as the company of other members of their species. In order to promote health and well being of captive wildlife it is hoped that ample exercise, variety in daily activities, freedom from abuse and spacious environmentally stimulating habitats in which to live are components of wildlife conditions.

FVHA opposes those zoo exhibitions where the animals' confinement bears no resemblance to their natural habitats, is unsanitary or otherwise inflicts stress or suffering. Attention to the following criteria must be used: appropriate space requirements, shaded resting and exercise areas for the size and age of the animal, source of natural lighting and dark cycles which approximate light conditions of their natural habitat, regular water changes and availability, efficient ventilation, regular feeding of properly stored food according to the biological requirements of the species, regular health monitoring for illness or injuries, sensible handling and transporting to avoid unnecessary stress, regular relief from public display, encouragement of species appropriate interactions to prevent anxiety.

FVHA supports humane and responsible wildlife research programs that seek to better understanding of their behavior, nutritional requirements, reproduction and health. Programs that kill or endanger these animals for research purposes cannot be tolerated as acceptable.

Cat Protection

An increase in the cat population has been accompanied by an increase in problems experienced by and with cats in our communities. Cats housed in shelters are less likely to be reclaimed or placed in new homes than dogs and are more likely to be

ethanized. Realistically the feral cat colonies continue to be displaced by developments thereby considered as nuisances in neighborhoods resulting in live trapped wild cats being surrendered to animal shelters across the country.

In order to provide cats with the protection they deserve, FVHA agrees the passage of cat protection laws equal or similar to those currently in effect in most areas for the protection of dogs would help the increasing problems of cats both domestic and feral.

Such laws would include:

- Licensing programs designed to promote neutering;
- Proper identification required on cats at all times;
- Stray holding periods of seven days or more;
- A rabies vaccination requirement; and
- Holding owners responsible for proper control of their cats.

Chemical Immobilization in Animal Control Work

The use of remote-delivered chemical compounds for restraint and capture of feral, fractious or elusive animals is employed by many animal control agencies. Improper usage of chemical immobilization equipment may result in injury, suffering or death of animals.

FVHA recommends the use of chemical immobilization only as a last resort. If chemical immobilization is to be used:

- Officers must be properly trained and certified;
- The most modern, safe and effective equipment, procedures and drugs must be used; and
- Veterinary advice must be immediately available at all times during the procedure.

Control of Nuisance Bird Populations

In some areas of the United States, including many urban areas, large concentrations of pigeons or migratory birds pose significant nuisance to humans. In many cases, government agencies and individuals have attempted drastic bird population reduction programs. FVHA opposes any bird control program which uses poison or compounds that cause unnecessary suffering, injury or death.

FVHA encourages agencies responsible for bird nuisance complaints to use available, practical alternatives which assure both a humane and effective solution.

Dangerous Dog Laws and Breed-Specific Regulations

FVHA believes that no breed of dog automatically poses a high risk of attack, and that it is unjust to punish loving, responsible dog owners merely because of a breed's reputation.

FVHA supports efforts to protect members of the community from dangerous animals and encourages communities to hold pet owners responsible for any injury caused by animals in their care.

FVHA encourages dog owners to undergo basic obedience training with their pets and to socialize them with people and other animals from an early age. By definition, dangerous dogs are dogs that, without provocation, have attacked or behaved in a terrorizing manner. In order to protect the public from these types of animals, communities may legitimately enact "dangerous dog" laws. Such laws may impose reasonable restrictions on dogs proven to be dangerous, such as housing requirements, fencing, leash length restrictions, muzzles, posted warning signs, sterilization, additional licensing, behavior training and liability insurance requirements.

FVHA opposes legislation that seeks to ban a particular breed of dog.

Euthanasia

FVHA considers euthanasia by injection (EBI) of sodium pentobarbital administered by trained technicians to be the only acceptable method for euthanasia of dogs and cats in animal shelters.

Events and Contests Involving Animals

FVHA is concerned that community events or contests, organized for profit or entertainment, involve the abuse of animals. Often these events include animal fighting, chasing or racing, and such events run contrary to FVHA's central belief that animals should not be harmed or endangered for the sake of human entertainment.

FVHA opposes animals used for entertainment in such events are directly abused by being excessively used, injured, chased, beaten, grabbed at, squeezed, kicked or killed for the sake of the event. Breeding animals for such purposes contributes to unwanted overpopulation problems; in addition, the potential for neglect is great in the areas of transportation and care of the animals before and after the event.

Sadly, these events can have a desensitizing effect on children, making them unsympathetic to the suffering of other life forms and allowing them to believe that animal abuse is acceptable. FVHA opposes all such events or contests that feature or

involve the abuse of animals of any breed or species, including live lures, and any legislation that would legalize such practices.

When animals are involved in entertainment, they must be treated humanely at all times and they must be transported in a humane and safe manner that includes security from injury, sufficient space, frequent stops for natural exercise and rest, and appropriate provision of water, environmental temperature, air quality, and food, plus attention to cleanliness and hygiene needs.

Farm Animal Welfare

FVHA supports the principle that every animal subjected to full, direct human control should have an opportunity to experience an environment for which its own species is predisposed in order to develop into a physical and psychological healthy being. All farm animals must have access to adequate air and water and to a food supply that matches their biological requirements, housing that is sufficiently safe and spacious, appropriate levels of environmental complexity, regular supervision and health care, and sensible handling in all stages of life, including during slaughter.

Feral Cats

FVHA has a concern for the humane treatment and responsible ownership of cats. Recognizing that the population of unwanted cats is large, FVHA strongly supports policies and programs that may work to reduce the overpopulation and abandonment of cats in a humane manner.

In some cases, the most humane solution is euthanasia. FVHA opposes any methods that are inhumane, including poisoning and traps that inflict injury. FVHA also recognizes the concern for pursuing non-lethal alternatives for cats that are not suitable candidates for adoption, and therefore acknowledges that interim programs may be needed to provide these cats with sterilization, disease prevention, safety and sanctuary.

FVHA does not support the placement of socialized cats (e.g., those that can be handled and relate to humans) in feral cat type colonies because life on the street is not acceptable for socialized cats. The goal of any cat management program should be the eventual elimination of feral cat colonies, and FVHA strongly supports trap, neuter, and return programs.

Hunting and Trapping

FVHA strongly opposes any animal hunt where the target animal is confined or tame, in which the hunter fires on an animal with a remotely controlled weapon, or which uses animal traps that cause indiscriminate and unnecessary suffering. These practices involve no sport or skill, are denounced by true hunters and outdoorsmen, and result in painful deaths to thousands of unsuspecting animals, many of whom have been tamed and are unafraid of humans.

Canned hunts involve the release of animals into small, confined areas where they can be shot by paying hunters. This practice involves no sport and no skill on the part of the hunter. The animals victimized by canned hunting have no chance of escape and are often very tame. Most true hunters scorn canned animal shootings as unfair and unsporting.

Steel-jaw leg hold traps utilize steel bands with sharp teeth that snap onto the limb of any animal that walks across them. Animals caught in such traps are generally not killed immediately; most either die of exposure, starvation or are killed by the hunter upon return to the trap. These traps are especially cruel because animals have been known to chew off their own paws and legs in order to escape. Moreover, steel-jaw leg hold traps cannot differentiate between which types of animals they catch. The animals that are caught may be unwanted by the trapper, may be protected by hunting or endangered species laws, or may be a family pet.

Permanent Pet Identification

FVHA believes that all pets should have identification. Tags still serve useful purposes in identifying animals and their owners as well as for licensing and rabies vaccination certification. In addition to the use of tags, permanent identification of all pets, using such methods as micro-chipping, is highly recommended by FVHA as a method that offers the best long-term solution to pet identification and the efforts of shelters to reunite pets with their human families.

Pet Overpopulation

Every year, millions of cats and dogs are euthanized in our nation's animal shelters because there are more companion animals than there are responsible homes for them. Preventing the proliferation of these unwanted pets would dramatically decrease their numbers and the resulting unavoidable deaths.

FVHA believes that no dog or cat adopted from a shelter should be allowed to reproduce. Furthermore, given the current prevalence of breeding operations and the already-existing overpopulation of dogs and cats, failure to spay or neuter one's own

animal is reckless and irresponsible. Only pet owners with a responsible desire to breed their animal and the means to place each and every animal in a loving home should keep unsterilized pets.

In order to effectively deal with the rampant pet overpopulation problem, FVHA believes that all dogs and cats adopted from public or private animal care and control agencies should be spayed or neutered. Therefore, FVHA supports any passage of state laws or local ordinances mandating that all dogs and cats adopted from public or private animal care and control agencies be sterilized.

The research on the physical, behavioral, and short- and long-term effects of prepubescent neutering in dogs and cats shows no adverse results. FVHA supports the practice of prepubescent spaying and neutering as a feasible solution to decreasing pet overpopulation and the tragedy of resulting deaths.

Puppy Mills and Mass Breeding Position Statement:

The mass indiscriminate breeding of dogs for the commercial pet store industry has resulted in large scale breeding operations known as "puppy mills."

In the course of these for-profit breeding operations, animals suffer abuse and physical stress, exposure to the extremes of weather, and lack of sufficient nutrition and water. The dogs live in filthy conditions that foster disease, and most are denied proper veterinary care. Adults are bred excessively and often spend their entire lives in small wire runs or wood cages.

For the puppies, neglect of emotional needs due to lack of socialization, isolation and the trauma of transportation at an early age is a serious problem. In addition, ignorance or indifference to good breeding practices may result in dogs with genetic problems.

FVHA opposes the mass indiscriminate breeding of puppies for the pet store industry because of the suffering and exploitation of the dogs involved and because of the unnecessary addition of hundreds of thousands of animals to an already tragic overpopulation of companion animals.

FVHA looks forward to the elimination of mass indiscriminate breeding establishments in the state of Wisconsin through enforcement of current laws and regulations, enactment of legislation, and public education to eliminate the market for such animals, and applauds elected officials who have made this issue a priority.

Transportation of Animals

Animals of all breeds and species must be transported in a humane and safe manner that includes safety and security from injury, sufficient space, frequent stops for natural exercise and rest, and appropriate provision of water, environmental temperature, air quality and food, plus attention to cleanliness and hygiene needs.

Transportation in Open Vehicles: The transportation of pets in open vehicles is dangerous for both the animals and the public. While riding in the open vehicle, pets are exposed to wind and weather extremes, and are also at risk of injury or death from jumping or falling from a moving vehicle. Animals that jump or fall from truck beds in traffic create a hazard for drivers who must rapidly brake or swerve to avoid collision with them.

FVHA opposes transportation of all animals in open vehicles and looks forward to the passage of local and state laws prohibiting this method of transportation.

Wild and Exotic Animals as Pets

Wild animals are those not specifically bred over many generations to adapt to human confinement, company or control. Exotic animals are wild animals not native to North America. When wild or exotic animals are kept as pets, the result is usually tragic for the animal and often negative for the owner. Lack of knowledge about behavioral traits, social needs and proper nutrition lead to inadvertent abuse. For many of the larger wild or exotic species, the cost of feed, veterinary care, and handling equipment and confinement facilities may be prohibitive for most owners and leads to negligence and suffering or death of the animal when they are not adequately provided.

Furthermore, individuals exposed to captive wild or exotic animals may suffer disease, injury or death. This occurs when owners become overconfident with wild animals, either assuming they will remain as affectionate as adults as they were when young or believing they have tamed and trained the animals well enough to defuse their dangerous instincts.

FVHA opposes the deliberate capture and confinement or the breeding or hybrid breeding of wild or exotic animals as pets.

FVHA believes that this practice of keeping wildlife as pets must cease and that appropriate professional organizations be given the responsibility for the care of such animals that are usually unsuitable for release as a result of being kept as pets. FVHA supports education programs that teach children and adults about the issues associated with the practice of keeping wildlife as pets.

Excerpts taken from American Humane Association, Animal Protection Division