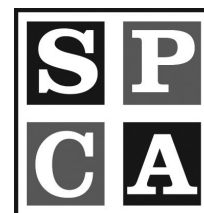


# **Canadian Standards of Care in Animal Shelters: Supporting ASV Guidelines**

*Facilitated and published by the  
Canadian Advisory Council on National Shelter Standards*

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Association québécoise des SPA et SPCA for the French translation of this document.

# Canadian Standards of Care in Animal Shelters: Supporting ASV Guidelines

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## ASV Guidelines

Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters (hereafter referred to as Guidelines), published in 2010 by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (hereafter referred to as ASV), has provided the global animal welfare community with a comprehensive tool that helps organizations align their activities with recommended practices on all aspects of care. The document, which references American legislation, nonetheless aims to provide “information that will help any animal welfare entity meet the physical, mental and behavioral needs of the animals in their care ... [and] identify minimum standards of care, as well as best and unacceptable practices” (Forward to Guidelines). Even though the organized animal welfare movement has had a lengthy history in the USA, there is no national regulation of shelters in the USA, and the ASV Guidelines was the first document to be made available to the sheltering industry.

## Canadian Context

In Canada, animal sheltering has evolved from the historic animal control model with resultant

high euthanasia rates to a more diverse scope of activities, ranging from animal control to long-term palliative care facilities and everything in between. Similarly, the term “shelter” is used for humane societies and Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), as well as for organized rescue groups, including home-based, long-term rescue or foster organizations.<sup>1</sup>

Though various pieces of provincial legislation guide or direct some sheltering activities, no comprehensive, unified Canadian guideline or standard exists. The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) has published its own companion animal care guidelines for veterinarians’ use, but it lacks the authority to set standards. And while veterinary medical facilities are regulated provincially in Canada, few shelters employ a veterinarian and not many are inspected against standards. Therefore, as is the case in the USA, the care of animals in Canadian shelter environments remains unregulated at the national level.

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<sup>1</sup> Canada’s first animal shelter was the Canadian SPCA formed in Montreal in 1869 by a group of prominent citizens. The stated objective of the society was “to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the dominion of Canada.” However, it was not until 1914 that the society acquired its first shelter. During their early years, the primary concern of the SPCA was improving the treatment of workhorses. Just a few short years later, the Ontario SPCA (as the Ontario Humane Society) was formed in 1873. “In 1882, Nova Scotia became the first place in North America to pass laws for the prevention of cruelty to animals, the same year that Great Britain enacted their first animal cruelty laws. The Acts of Nova Scotia in 1824 made provisions for public whipping to be the punishment for persons convicted of cruelty to animals. The Nova Scotia Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals became an incorporated society in 1877” (Nova Scotia SPCA, n.d. History of the Nova Scotia SPCA. Retrieved from <http://www.spcans.ca/about-us/history.html>). The Toronto Humane Society formed in 1886. The British Columbia SPCA Act and the formation of its sheltering organization both occurred in 1895. Provincial Animal Welfare Acts have been updated over the years, most recently in Ontario (2009) when Standards for Animal Care were included under the OSPCA Act in a Regulation.

## **Recommendation of the Canadian Committee for ASV Guidelines Review**

In 2013, at the invitation of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, a group of over 40 Canadians from 22 organizations representing shelters, animal services, veterinarians and animal welfare NGOs and with expertise as senior administrators, directors of operations, animal control and care specialists, and regulators gathered as a Canadian Advisory Council on National Shelter Standards. A plan was set for the development of an inaugural document for standards on animal care for Canadian shelters. A smaller group, the “Canadian Committee for ASV Guidelines Review” (CCAGR), was formed to conduct a review of the Guidelines as the first step in the development of an inaugural Canadian document.

Overall, after a thorough analysis of each section of the Guidelines, the Committee concluded that the practical content of the document is indeed transferrable to and appropriate for use in Canada (with the understanding that, where American federal or state legislation is cited, Canada’s statutes and provincial legislation must be substituted).

As a result of the CCAGR’s analysis—and recognizing that the ASV Guidelines were created by an esteemed group of veterinary authors representing academia, public health, shelter management and shelter medicine, who performed an exhaustive literature review of world-wide resources and studies—the Canadian Advisory Council on National Shelter Standards recommends the adoption by Canadian shelters of the *ASV Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters*, with the inclusion of a *Canadian Shelter Reference Guide* (see Appendix 1).

This document should be viewed by all in the animal welfare community as a tool for use by Canadian shelters that aspire both (a) to follow best practices and (b) to end those practices that are no longer considered acceptable as soon as possible. In instances where best practice cannot be achieved, shelters should commit to the continual review of their practices and to making every effort to meet the

recommended standards contained in the Guidelines:

*Shelters should not focus solely on the limited number of unacceptable practices or call outs that have been separately highlighted. These represent summary points that draw attention to some issues of great concern but do not provide sufficient basis for thorough evaluation of a program. (ASV Guidelines section on “How to Use This Document”)*

Recognizing the vastness and diversity of Canada and the aim of supporting the Guidelines to be inclusive rather than divisive, it may not be possible in all situations to stop, “without delay”, some practices that are considered unacceptable, but it is understood that these conditions must be phased out in order to enhance animal care and welfare.

## **Acknowledgment**

The development of the ASV Guidelines involved years of extensive scientific review and debate by the Guidelines’ authors, and the Guidelines offer a balanced and realistic interpretation of how best to manage both the individual care needs of an animal as well as the protection of the overall health and well-being of the entire shelter population.

The role of shelter medicine as a specialty has grown in recent years, not only in terms of the knowledge and skill sets of those involved, but also with regard to desired outcomes and expectations. As shelter medicine continues to evolve, so too will best practices in the industry. These Guidelines allow for future revisions or improvements based on emerging information and experience. They are provided here to a Canadian audience with permission of the Association of Shelter Veterinarians, for which we are most grateful.

## ***Date of Canadian Advisory Council on National Shelter Standards review:***

September 12, 2013

## ***Appendices:***

1. *Canadian Shelter Reference Guide for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters*
2. *Membership of Canadian Committee for ASV Guidelines Review*

# Appendix 1

## Canadian Shelter Reference Guide for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters

Updated as of July 30, 2013

Section of ASV Guidelines Document	Relevant Canadian References
Management and Record Keeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See provincial veterinary regulatory body policy and bylaw documents for guidance</li> </ul>
Facility Design and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Code of Practice for Canadian Kennel Operations (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2007)</li> <li>• A Code of Practice for Canadian Cattery Operations (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2009)</li> <li>• CCAC guidelines on laboratory animal facilities – characteristics, design and development (Canadian Council on Animal Care, 2003)</li> <li>• See provincial veterinary regulatory body policy and standards for veterinary facility requirements where veterinarians work on-site</li> </ul>
Population Management	No specific Canadian national reference at this time
Sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Infection Prevention and Control Best Practices for Small Animal Veterinary Clinics</i> (Canadian Committee on Antibiotic Resistance, CVMA, and Centre for Public Health and Zoonoses, University of Guelph, 2008)</li> </ul>
Medical Health and Physical Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Code of Practice for Canadian Kennel Operations (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2007)</li> <li>• A Code of Practice for Canadian Cattery Operations (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2009)</li> <li>• Vaccination Protocols for Dogs and Cats – Position Statement (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2011)</li> <li>• Pain control in Animals – Position Statement (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2007)</li> <li>• Antimicrobial Use in Animals – Position Statement (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2009)</li> <li>• Relevant guidance from Health Canada regarding use of prescription, controlled, and off-label medication</li> <li>• See provincial veterinary regulatory body policy and standards for veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR) and relevant legislation on veterinarians and “herd health” models for shelter clients</li> </ul>
Behavioral Health and Mental Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humane Training Methods for Dogs – Position Statement (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2009)</li> </ul>

Group Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Code of Practice for Canadian Kennel Operations (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2007)</li> <li>• A Code of Practice for Canadian Cattery Operations (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2009)</li> </ul>
Animal Handling	No specific Canadian national reference at this time
Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Euthanasia – Position Statement (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2006)</li> <li>• CCAC Guidelines on Euthanasia of Animals Used in Science (Canadian Council on Animal Care, 2010)</li> <li>• A Code of Practice for Canadian Kennel Operations (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2007)</li> <li>• A Code of Practice for Canadian Cattery Operations (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2009)</li> <li>• <i>Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, S.C. 1996, c. 19</i></li> <li>• Check provincial regulations, bylaws, and policies for other relevant information</li> </ul>
Spaying and neutering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neutering of Dogs and Cats (spay and castration) – Position Statement (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2012)</li> <li>• <i>Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, S.C. 1996, c. 19</i></li> </ul>
Animal Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Health of Animals Act, S.C. 1990, c.21 and Regulations</i></li> <li>• A Code of Practice for Canadian Kennel Operations (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2007)</li> <li>• A Code of Practice for Canadian Cattery Operations (CVMA Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, 2009)</li> <li>• Animal transport mandated under provincial jurisdictions; Ministry responsible may vary from province to province</li> </ul>
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial Occupational Health and Safety Acts</li> <li>• Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System guidance documents</li> <li>• Canadian Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Foundation</li> <li>• <i>Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations</i></li> <li>• Relevant guidance from Health Canada</li> <li>• Relevant guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada</li> <li>• The Canadian Food Inspection Agency compiles a table listing positive rabies tests by province</li> </ul>

# Appendix 2

## Membership of Canadian Committee for ASV Guidelines Review

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Chief Executive Officer  
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