

Temporary Spay/Neuter Adoption Policy Changes

Operations Department, March 2020

Effective immediately and until further notice, the BC SPCA will be suspending our pre-adoption spay/neuter policy ONLY where a lack of elective veterinary services prevent access to spay/neuter.

As part of the community response to Covid-19, many veterinarians in British Columbia are (voluntarily, for now), cancelling elective procedures such as spay and neuter surgeries due to a lack of staff availability and the need to conserve PPE for the human healthcare field. It is likely this practice will become more wide-spread in BC communities, or it may even become government-mandated at some point.

In order to remove barriers to timely and successful adoptions, the BC SPCA will adopt out cats, dogs, and rabbits who have not been spayed or neutered, with the understanding that their new owners will have them spayed and neutered as soon as possible when such services are offered again in their communities. The BC SPCA will issue spay/neuter certificates for such adoptions, and the BC SPCA will assume financial costs of spay/neuter when the surgeries are performed. As these animals will be formally adopted, any other veterinary costs that may come up will be the responsibility of the animal's new owners.

Temporary SOP – Adopting Animals Without Spay/Neuter

While it is possible that non-emergent veterinary services will become unavailable everywhere in the province, some branches are still able to access these services. Adoption of intact animals with spay/neuter certificates should only be done if spay/neuter services are unavailable.

1. Branch Managers: Contact your veterinary care providers for an update on their capacity to provide elective surgery services in the coming weeks & months.
2. If services are limited but not unavailable, prioritize as follows:
 - a. Female cats – due to cat overpopulation risk
 - b. Male cats – due to high likelihood of urine marking, which is problematic for owners
 - c. Female dogs – due to heat cycle, the risk for pregnancy is lower than for cats
 - d. Male dogs – behaviour problems such as marking, humping, and roaming are the major risks, lowest risk for any category.
 - e. Rabbits of both sexes – rabbit housing management makes it easy to avoid unintentional rabbit breeding
3. Processing adoptions for intact animals:
 - a. Discuss with adopters that given normal access to veterinary services, it is SPCA policy to not adopt out cats, dogs, or rabbits who have not been spayed and neutered.
 - b. Adopters must read & sign the Medical Disclosure: Adoption of Intact Cat, Dog, or Rabbit during adoption.

- c. Provide all adopters of intact animals with a Spay/Neuter Certificate and a Living with an Intact Cat, Dog, or Rabbit info sheet. Otherwise adoptions proceed as normal.
4. Animals in Foster-To-Adopt awaiting spay/neuter
 - a. If elective vet services have been suspended in your community, branches should contact all homes with FTA animals who are just awaiting spay/neuter, and process adoptions as above. It is not an option to continue to leave animals in FTA if the only outstanding treatment is spay/neuter.
5. Keep a log for follow-up with adopters to see how animal is doing and if they were able to get a spay/neuter appointment.
 - a. Branch managers stay in communication with veterinary care providers, and ask to be notified when elective spay/neuter services will be offered again to the public.
 - b. When services are offered to owned animals again, branch staff should contact animals adopted without spay/neuter under this temporary policy and inform owners of services being available. Adopters should be told their spay/neuter certificates will be valid for a limited period of 2 months. If owners wait to spay/neuter until after that period, the BC SPCA will not cover the costs of the procedure.
 - c. Continue to contact adopters on a weekly basis until spay/neuter has been confirmed, then update Shelter Buddy record with spay/neuter status.