

General Information about EHS Medical Team and Shelter processes

The purpose of this communication is to highlight the expectations of a mutually beneficial relationship between EHS and the private practitioner engaged in post-adoption counselling.

Did you know . . . The Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) Medical Team is made up of a team of your veterinary colleagues – including 4 veterinarians, 8 RVTs (registered veterinary technologists), 4 VMAs (veterinary medical assistants) and multiple locum/volunteer veterinary professionals? This team cares for thousands of animals in need each year. At any given moment, this team is responsible for the well-being of up to 250 animals. Not surprisingly, this team works under limitations that private practitioners may not experience, while being held to the same standards as a private veterinary establishment under our mutual governing body. The ABMVA 'Policy for Humane Societies' (abvma.in1touch.org/site/legislation/council_policies) limits humane societies to provision of treatment and advice for **non-owned** animals only. This means that once an animal is adopted and has a responsible owner, we are limited in the provision of diagnostics, treatment and/or recommendations to adopters as sanctioned by the ABVMA (Alberta Veterinarian Medical Association).

EHS uses a principle called Asilomar Accords to help guide decision making surrounding the extent of care provided to a shelter animal with medical needs. This is based on the following definition of an adoptable animal *"all dogs and cats who are not "healthy," but who are likely to become "healthy," if given medical, foster, or behavioural care typically provided to pets by reasonable and caring pet owners/guardians in the community."*

In shaping your expectation of what a shelter may be able to provide, use the care concept of what your 'average client' would be able/willing to undertake. Decision making for dental procedures is a common example and our Dental Decision Overview document is available for reference. I.e: for every client that leaves with an estimate for dental x-ray +/- extraction/root canal of a discolored canine tooth, how many clients proceed with the recommendation? EHS treats anything that currently needs treatment however cannot possibly perform a dental prophylaxis for every animal that enters the shelter for example. Instead, basic education about appropriate preventative dental care is provided and EHS encourages discussion with their veterinarians after adoption for long term dental health.

EHS hopes to provide clarity with respect to common processes and procedures that are undertaken in the shelter environment in a few ways including these:

- EHS will publish policies surrounding relevant shelter protocols on EASAV (Edmonton Association of Small Animal Veterinarians) website including: retroviral testing protocols and a shelter approach to dental disease. EHS is open to recommendations for other documents that may be useful to our colleagues.
- EHS has published direct phone lines on the EASAV website to encourage veterinarians to contact the Medical Team directly with any post-adoption queries.
- As EHS is limited in the provision of treatment or advice for recently adopted animals, 'indemnities' are used as a means of establishing informed consent. These are included on the adoption contract and are intended to be a talking point at the post-adoption visit with the adopter's veterinarian.
- EHS provides a pet insurance trial post-adoption to help off-set any post-adoption concerns.

Here are a few ways that veterinarians can support their clients post adoption:

- Work with EHS to support owners through the sometimes rocky post-adoption phase.
- Understand that shelter animals may experience stress related disease such as viral upper respiratory tract infections, stress colitis, and appetite or behavior changes following placement in adoptive homes. Understand the appropriate treatment of these common shelter related ailments (I.e: Upper Respiratory Infection treatment).
- Help shape client expectations that shelter animals are not perfect but are perfectly lovable.