Internal Notification Process for Behavioral Euthanasia

at Austin Pets Alive!

Stephanie Bilbro Director of Operations, Austin Pets Alive!



Why is a protocol needed?

- Many staff and volunteers are invested in our dogs and their outcomes
- APA! strives to be transparent with internal stakeholders about the animals they are working with every day
- We want to communicate directly so that people aren't hearing "through the grapevine"
- We want the communication process to be consistent and timely



When do we use this protocol?

- When we have decided to euthanize a dog for behavior concerns
- When we have decided to euthanize a dog for medical or quality-of-life concerns
- When a dog dies unexpectedly in our care
- When a dog is diagnosed with a terminal illness and/or becomes a hospice case, and euthanasia is expected/imminent

In most cases, this applies to dogs who have been onsite at our shelter for 30+ days, or is considered a long-stay dog in our care overall (including time in foster).



What we include in communications

- A good picture of the dog
- The specific incident that triggered a conversation and decision, if applicable
- A summary of the dog's history and timeline with APA!, including overall behavior concerns
- Positive details about the dog's personality and time at APA!, including notes from close friends if available
- Timeline for euthanasia and offer of keepsake (paw prints)



Where we share notifications

- An opt-in, staff-only Gmail group
- An opt-in volunteer email group through our volunteer management system
- A staff and volunteer opt-in Facebook group



I'm sorry to bring you such sad news, but Brooks has unfortunately been diagnosed with osteosarcoma and is declining rapidly today. The clinic team has given him some strong injectable pain medication and will continue to utilize all the pain meds to try to keep him comfortable, however they worry they will not be able to keep him comfortable for long. Osteosarcoma is a very painful, malignant, and fast spreading cancer.

We know this doesn't give much time for his fri... See more





A message from Sarah M.

Hi all,

It is with great sadness that we have to announce our decision to move forward with behavioral euthanasia of our sweet Shelton. Unfortunately, due to the intensity and regularity of his previous bites, and his consistent displays of aggression upon his return to his tiny home on-site, we do not feel that he is safe to place in a home and have found no other options for rescue, rehabilitation, or sanctuary. Shelton first came to APAI as a behavior. See more





Other considerations and tips

- If someone is aware of a prior foster or adopter that may want to be notified of a euthanasia, a manager or friend may reach out
- If there was anything especially upsetting or gruesome about a case, those details will be left out of larger group messaging
- Notifications do not include any assumptions or personal speculation about a case or a cause of death
- Remember that anything you send out has the potential to be shared and seen by the general public





Feel free to contact me!

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