
Asilomar Accords and Adoptability Guidelines

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BCSPCA
SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Animal Care Services Department

Asilomar Accords and Adoptability Guidelines

Executive Summary

OUR MISSION: To protect and enhance the quality of life for domestic, farm and wild animals in British Columbia.

Purpose

This document provides an executive summary for BC SPCA Policy: Asilomar Accords and Adoptability Guidelines. For a full version of this document or other documents referenced, please contact the BC SPCA Animal Health team at ah@spca.bc.ca.

Background

The [Asilomar Accords](#) were established in 2004 in a collaborative effort to establish a uniform method for collecting and reporting shelter data with the goal of saving the lives of all healthy and treatable companion animals entering shelters. The BC SPCA (<http://www.spca.bc.ca/>) operates 35 Community Animal Centres across the province of British Columbia that rescue an average of 20,000 companion animals per year.

Over the past decade, the BC SPCA has consistently increased annual medical budgets for shelter animal care to enable animals to be saved who in the past may have been euthanized for treatable medical and/or behavioural problems. Examples of major and/or contagious conditions that can now be treated include skeletal trauma requiring surgical intervention, severe dental disease, feline calicivirus, and ringworm. However, some animals still enter the care of the BC SPCA with complicated and/or chronic medical or behavioural conditions, and in some cases these animals cannot be treated and are euthanized. The BC SPCA has accomplished steady improvement in live release rates, which, for 2023, are at 91% for dogs and cats. Both are well above North American averages.

In 2014 the BC SPCA began the process of implementing the Asilomar Accords data collection system at all of our sheltering facilities. This process is part of ongoing efforts to save more companion animals, assure consistent operational practices, utilize resources to help the greatest number of animals possible, and promote transparency and collaboration. Data from other communities that have implemented the Asilomar Accords show increased community live release rates for shelter animals.

Collecting and reporting Asilomar Accords information is powerful because organizations can improve lifesaving capabilities by analyzing outcome data for different Asilomar Categories, identifying where treatable animals are not currently able to be treated, and putting resources in place to start treating and saving these animals.

Process and Guidelines

The Asilomar Accords define the following animal categories: Healthy, Treatable-Rehabilitatable, Treatable-Manageable, and Unhealthy & Untreatable. Implementing the Asilomar Accords involves

creating guidelines for assigning animals to these categories based how the broader community views the treatability of medical and behavioural conditions.

In order to create these guidelines for BC, the BC SPCA conducted an online survey, followed by a community meeting. The results of the survey and meeting are available upon request and are summarized in the Asilomar Category column of Appendix A.

The Asilomar Category does not determine the outcome or adoptability of an animal. This can only be determined at the level of an individual organization and is based on organizational resources, public safety, and ability to maintain good welfare during the shelter stay.

The Adoptability Guidelines provide support and direction for BC SPCA adoptability decisions by designating conditions as Adoptable, Potentially Adoptable, and Not Adoptable (see Adoptability Category column of Appendix A). The Adoptability Category information reflects current BC SPCA practices.

This information is included in these Guidelines to provide a consistent reference for Community Animal Centre staff across the province.

These Guidelines contain the following sections:

Definitions. Defines the Asilomar Accords categories and BC SPCA adoptability terms listed above. These will be used for reporting and decision-making purposes.

Asilomar Accords and Adoptability Evaluation Matrix. Provides information on how to assign animals with various medical and behaviour conditions to the correct Asilomar Accords category. Provides support for determination of adoptability based on condition(s).

Intake, Exit, and Shelter Buddy Procedures. Contains procedures for recording and tracking Asilomar Accords category assignments in BC SPCA shelter software.

Goals

In February 2016, all BC SPCA Community Animal Centres started assigning Asilomar Accords categories to shelter animals at intake and at exit. The Asilomar Category definitions established for these Guidelines reflect views across BC, and are not BC SPCA-specific. Data gathered through this process allows more fulsome understanding of the health statuses and needs of animals entering our facilities, as well as the outcomes we are able to provide to animals in each category. The results indicate that although the proportion of animals entering shelter care with medical and behavioural conditions has increased, our ability to provide care and live outcomes has increased or remained excellent over time. These annual statistics can be viewed here: <https://spca.bc.ca/programs-services/leaders-in-our-field/professional-resources/for-shelters/>.

The BC SPCA encourages other animal sheltering and rescue organizations in BC to join this effort to implement the Asilomar Accords and share data. By working collaboratively and planning resources, more animals can be treated and saved.

The Adoptability Guidelines offer a consistent reference in determining adoptability. This is a necessary step as the BC SPCA ensures equitable care to animals entering shelters, maximizing life-saving capacity. The adoptability section will be updated regularly to reflect current practices as more conditions are able to be treated.

These resources will require community involvement and may include fundraising, facility updates/new facilities, development of foster care and alternative placement options, cultivation of community

veterinary relationships, and transferring animals between facilities and organizations. Animal shelters are part of the community, and the community is part of animal sheltering.

The ultimate, long-term goal of implementing these Guidelines is for decisions regarding shelter animal treatability and adoptability to mirror the opinions held by the larger community, so that all healthy and treatable shelter animals who do not pose a risk to public safety can be rehomed.