

Ten Lives Cat Rescue - Euthanasia Policy

Effective Date: 1st October 2024

Approved By: Ten Lives Cat Rescue Board of Directors

Reviewed By: Meg Murphy

Next Review Date: October 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines and ethical considerations for the euthanasia of cats under the care of Ten Lives Cat Rescue. Euthanasia decisions are made with the highest regard for the cat's quality of life, and this policy ensures that the procedure is performed humanely and only when necessary, as a last resort.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers, foster caregivers, and veterinary partners of Ten Lives Cat Rescue involved in decisions surrounding euthanasia. It governs when and how euthanasia is considered and performed, ensuring it is done in a responsible, compassionate, and medically sound manner.

3. Guiding Principles

Ten Lives Cat Rescue is committed to the following principles when considering euthanasia:

1. Humane Treatment:

- All cats deserve humane and compassionate care throughout their lives, including at the end of life. Euthanasia is performed only when necessary to relieve suffering and when no other viable options remain.

2. Best Interest of the Cat:

- The well-being of the cat is always the top priority. Euthanasia is never a decision made lightly, and it is only considered after all reasonable medical and rehabilitation efforts have been explored.

3. Medical and Behavioural Considerations:

- Euthanasia is primarily considered for cases involving severe, untreatable medical conditions or irreversible behavioural issues that severely impact the cat's quality of life or pose a safety risk.

4. Ethical Decision-Making:

- Decisions regarding euthanasia are made ethically and transparently, with input from veterinarians, foster caregivers, and the rescue's leadership team, while respecting the dignity of the animal.
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4. Criteria for Considering Euthanasia

The decision to euthanize a cat may be considered under the following circumstances:

- 1. Severe Medical Conditions:**
 - Cats suffering from untreatable or terminal medical conditions (e.g., advanced cancer, organ failure) where treatment options are exhausted or unavailable, and where continued life would involve unmanageable pain or suffering.
 - 2. Chronic Pain or Suffering:**
 - Cats experiencing chronic pain or suffering that cannot be alleviated through medical intervention, causing significant loss of quality of life.
 - 3. Feral Cats with Untreatable Conditions:**
 - Feral or semi-feral cats suffering from severe injuries or untreatable diseases, where humane care and long-term treatment are not feasible or would result in ongoing suffering.
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5. Euthanasia Decision-Making Process

The decision to euthanize a cat is made through a careful and structured process involving key stakeholders:

- 1. Veterinary Consultation:**
 - A licensed veterinarian must evaluate the cat and provide a detailed assessment of its medical condition. Veterinary records, diagnostic tests, and expert opinions will be considered.
 - 2. Advisory Panel Review (When Possible):**
 - In non-emergency cases, an advisory panel consisting of the rescue's leadership, the cat's foster caregiver, and any relevant medical professionals will review the veterinarian's findings and discuss the best course of action.
 - 3. Consideration of Alternatives:**
 - Before making a final decision, all reasonable alternatives to euthanasia (e.g., medical treatment, palliative care, transfer to a sanctuary) must be considered.
 - 4. Final Approval:**
 - The final decision to proceed with euthanasia must be approved by the rescue's senior leadership team after reviewing the veterinarian's assessment and recommendations.
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6. Emergency Situations

In cases of emergency where a cat is suffering from acute, untreatable pain or life-threatening conditions (e.g., traumatic injury, acute organ failure) and immediate euthanasia is necessary to prevent further suffering, the following guidelines apply:

1. Veterinary Judgement:

- A licensed veterinarian may make the decision to perform euthanasia in an emergency situation where the cat's suffering is extreme and delaying euthanasia would cause additional harm.

2. Notification of Leadership:

- Whenever possible, the veterinarian will notify Ten Lives Cat Rescue's leadership prior to the euthanasia. If immediate action is required, notification must occur as soon as possible following the procedure.
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7. Procedure for Euthanasia

The euthanasia procedure must be performed with the highest standards of care, ensuring the cat's comfort and minimizing stress:

1. Humane Methods:

- Euthanasia must be performed by a licensed veterinarian using humane methods as outlined by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' guidelines. Intravenous injection of an approved euthanasia solution is the preferred method.

2. Calm Environment:

- The procedure should be performed in a quiet and calm environment, whenever possible, to minimize stress for the cat.

3. Presence of Caregivers:

- When appropriate, and in non-emergency situations, foster caregivers or rescue staff may be present during the procedure to provide comfort to the cat.
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8. Post-Euthanasia Protocols

1. Record Keeping:

- Detailed records must be maintained for every euthanasia performed, including the cat's medical history, reasons for euthanasia, and the veterinarian's assessment. This documentation must be submitted to Ten Lives Cat Rescue for review and filed for future reference.

2. Body Handling and Cremation:

- Following euthanasia, the cat's remains must be handled respectfully. Ten Lives Cat Rescue will work with veterinary partners or cremation services to ensure the

appropriate handling of remains, including cremation or other agreed-upon methods.

3. Grief Support for Caregivers:

- Ten Lives Cat Rescue acknowledges that euthanasia can be a difficult and emotional experience for caregivers. Counselling resources or grief support may be made available to foster caregivers and volunteers who require it.

9. Special Considerations

1. Euthanasia of Feral Cats:

- For feral cats that cannot be safely handled, humane euthanasia methods (e.g., sedation prior to euthanasia) must be used to reduce stress and ensure the cat's well-being throughout the process.

2. Public Sensitivity:

- Ten Lives Cat Rescue is committed to transparency but recognizes that euthanasia can be a sensitive topic. Public communication regarding euthanasia decisions will be handled thoughtfully, emphasizing the commitment to humane care and the cat's best interests.

10. Review and Amendments

This policy will be reviewed annually, or as needed, by the Board of Directors and veterinary partners. Any amendments to the policy must be approved by the board and take effect immediately upon approval.