



National Animal Care & Control Association

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NACA Statement on Releasing Unaltered Pets from Animal Shelters During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In light of the request by the U.S. Surgeon General for human and animal organizations to suspend ‘non-essential’ surgeries to preserve critical medical supplies, the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine, in collaboration with other leading schools of shelter medicine, issued a [recommendation for animal shelters](#). NACA supports and expands upon this initial statement.

If shelters are unable to or decide for any reason not to alter pets during the COVID-19 Pandemic, they should continue providing live outcomes for sheltered cats and dogs.

The lack of immediately available spay and neuter services should not be a reason for shelter euthanasia. Further, anticipated personnel and supply resource depletion in shelters dictate that essential services and lifesaving capacity be preserved by reducing the number of animals in custody as quickly as possible. This should be done by expediting the movement of animals to adoptive or foster homes and not extending the stay of animals in the shelter for spay or neuter surgery.

Depending on state and local laws, three possible ways to outcome unsterilized pets include:

- Adopt out pets unaltered and provide vouchers for future use to get the pet spayed or neutered. Staff and volunteers can provide follow-up after the COVID-19 Pandemic to ensure pets get altered once surgeries can be performed.
- Outcome pets as ‘foster-to-adopt.’ This means they live with their new family but aren’t officially ‘adopted’ until they can return for their spay/neuter appointment or provide documentation of sterilization by another provider.
- If the organization does not have the resources to provide spay and neuter in the future, they should consider releasing animals unaltered with a list of low-cost spay and neuter services in the community.