



# Surgical and Cosmetic Procedures on Companion Animals

## Position

Calgary Humane Society supports only those surgical procedures that are medically necessary for the health, welfare, or quality of life of an animal. The Society does not support or permit cosmetic or non-therapeutic procedures. These include, but are not limited to, declawing, ear cropping, tail docking, devocalization, tendonectomy, cosmetic dentistry, body piercing, tattooing for decorative purposes, and other elective surgeries.

Calgary Humane Society strongly encourages veterinarians, breeders, and animal guardians to pursue humane, evidence-based alternatives to unnecessary surgical alteration. This includes the use of humane training, behaviour modification, environmental enrichment, and appropriate veterinary care to address behavioural or physical concerns.

The Society also advocates for the continued removal of cosmetic alterations from breed standards and supports legislation, veterinary policies, and educational efforts that promote the humane treatment of animals and prevent unnecessary surgical modification.

## Rationale

Calgary Humane Society's mission is to protect animals and promote their welfare through enforcement, education, advocacy, and care. Performing or condoning unnecessary surgical procedures contradicts these principles and exposes animals to pain, stress, peri-operative and post-surgical complications with no therapeutic benefit.

Many of the procedures described in this position statement interfere directly with an animal's natural communication and behaviour. Dogs rely on their ears and tails to express social cues and emotional states, and barking is an essential form of communication used to signal excitement, fear, or alertness. Similarly, scratching is a normal and necessary behaviour for cats—it helps them stretch, mark territory, and maintain claw health. Altering or suppressing these natural behaviours through unnecessary surgical procedures not only removes vital means of communication but can also lead to frustration, anxiety, and long-term behavioural challenges.

In Alberta, the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association (ABVMA) has established a policy (effective July 1, 2019) prohibiting veterinarians from performing elective or non-therapeutic surgical procedures, including ear cropping, tail docking, declawing, cosmetic dentistry, body piercing, and devocalization. This policy reflects the recognized ethical and welfare concerns associated with cosmetic or unnecessary surgical interventions on animals.

Calgary Humane Society aligns its practices with these professional standards, ensuring that all surgical procedures performed on animals in its care are solely to benefit the animal's health and wellbeing.

By limiting surgical intervention to what is medically necessary, Calgary Humane Society upholds its commitment to compassion, ethical stewardship, and the prevention of unnecessary suffering.

## References

[Alberta Animal Health Source – Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Canadian Veterinary Medical Association – Position Statements](#)

[Global News – Alberta Veterinarians Vote to Ban Unnecessary Surgery](#)