



**EPIC**  
**Outreach**  
Educating PEOPLE. Inspiring COMPASSION.

EPIC Outreach  
POSITION STATEMENTS  
UPDATED JUNE 2017

**BREED SPECIFIC LEGISLATION**

EPIC Outreach opposes legislation that bans or places restrictions on particular dog breeds without regard to the temperament and behavior of individual dogs.

EPIC Outreach supports the adoption of healthy, behaviorally sound dogs of all breeds, including Pit Bulls, to new homes. EPIC believes that dogs should be considered for adoption based on their individual temperament, rather than their breed.

**COSMETIC SURGERY, DECLAWING & DEBARKING**

EPIC Outreach is opposed to cosmetic surgery that is performed solely for the purpose of guardian convenience or to alter the animal's appearance. Such procedures include tail docking, ear cropping, and tail myotomy, if such surgeries are performed for nonmedical reasons.

EPIC Outreach is opposed to declawing domestic cats and debarking surgery in dogs to modify behavior. EPIC Outreach recommends that nonmedical methods of preventing undesirable behaviors be used.

**FERAL CAT MANAGEMENT**

EPIC Outreach discourages cat guardians from allowing their cats to roam free, but recognizes that feral cats exist in our community. EPIC also recognizes the need to humanely control the feral cat population.

EPIC Outreach believes that Trap-Neuter-Return is currently the most humane and effective method available to manage feral cat populations. When properly implemented, TNR can reduce colony size without creating a vacuum effect that creates the opportunity for more feral cats to move into the territory. Additionally, TNR eliminates many nuisance cat behaviors like spraying, yowling and fighting. Through TNR, cats are vaccinated and caregivers continue to monitor the population so that new cats are sterilized and unhealthy cats are removed from the colony.

**PET STORES**

EPIC Outreach believes that the primary purpose of pet stores should be the sale of pet-related supplies, rather than the sale of live animals. EPIC supports partnerships between pet stores and reputable animal shelters or rescues to match adoptive families with homeless animals. Pet stores that choose to sell animals should meet the highest standards of care and should hold their animal suppliers to the same high standards. This includes appropriate housing, sanitary conditions, and proper care and humane treatment of all animals by knowledgeable

personnel. In addition, retail establishments should make every attempt to place for sale only those animals which are of sound physical and mental health, and to properly educate the consumer with regard to the animal's continued care and well-being.

EPIC Outreach is opposed to the importation and sale of wild and exotic animals in pet shops and department stores.

### **POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT TRAINING**

EPIC Outreach supports positive reinforcement training methods that are based on and kindness for both respect the animal and guardian. Positive reinforcement training utilizes rewards such as food, praise, petting and play. EPIC Outreach opposes training methods and equipment that cause pain, fear and unnecessary stress or discomfort.

### **PUPPY MILLS AND MASS BREEDING**

EPIC Outreach opposes the mass breeding of dogs for the commercial pet market. Mass breeding operations, commonly known as puppy mills, add to the existing overpopulation problem and often produce animals with health and behavior problems. Many such operations produce puppies without concern for the physical, social, or emotional needs of animals in their facilities. Isolation and lack of human contact often results in animals that are not properly socialized, and may be difficult to place for adoption when they are no longer of breeding age. Animals at these facilities are commonly exposed to extreme weather conditions, lack adequate veterinary care, and are housed in filthy conditions. Unsuspecting consumers often obtain puppy mill puppies facing an array of immediate veterinary or behavior problems, or harboring genetic diseases that do not appear until years later.

EPIC Outreach supports law enforcement, legislative and educational efforts to eliminate mass breeding and other subpar breeding operations.

### **SOURCES OF COMPANION ANIMALS**

EPIC Outreach strongly encourages families to consider adopting a companion animal from an animal shelter. Those seeking a specific breed should locate a responsible breed rescue or breeder. Responsible breeders focus on a select breed(s) and become experts in their health and temperament. They also take lifetime responsibility for the animals they have bred.

### **TETHERING**

EPIC Outreach opposes tethering by chain or tie-out as a primary means of confinement for dogs. Continuous tethering is detrimental to a dog's behavioral well-being, causing territorial behavior that could pose safety hazards to people and other animals. Additionally, there are many physical risks associated with tethering, including strangulation and entanglement.

### **EDUCATION CLASSROOM ANIMALS**

EPIC Outreach believes that live animals should be maintained in the classroom only for the purpose of humane education and that they should be kept in suitable environments in accordance with their social and biological needs. Because classroom animals can be subject to mishandling, student contact with these animals should always be supervised, and provisions

should be made for the animals' care when school is not in session. Teachers are ultimately responsible for the care of classroom animals, including long-term arrangements at the end of the school year, or when the animals are no longer needed in the classroom.

EPIC Outreach believes that the use of live animals in educational presentations and demonstrations, whether or not in a classroom, can make a lasting, positive impression on children and adults. Animals used for this purpose should be maintained in suitable environments in accordance with their social and biological needs, and every effort should be made to minimize the stress and discomfort of the animals throughout their transport and display.

### **DISSECTION IN K-12 BIOLOGY STUDIES**

EPIC Outreach is opposed to the dissection of animals as part of the elementary and secondary school curriculum. EPIC recognizes the importance of biology studies in school curriculum and believes that biology curricula should promote a respect for all animal life. EPIC believes that dissection of animals at this age level may be inconsistent with the development of a general appreciation of, and respect for, animals. Additionally, there is a waste of animal life that results from dissection exercises in school biology programs.

EPIC Outreach believes that alternative lessons and teaching materials should replace the dissection of animal specimens whenever possible in pre-college biology studies. In cases where dissection is deemed necessary, EPIC Outreach believes that the procedures should be demonstrated by classroom instructors only.

### **DISSECTION OF LIVE ANIMALS IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

EPIC Outreach recognizes the importance of medical education pursuits that seek to improve human and animal health. Sophisticated technology exists to create meaningful teaching experiences which replace live animal dissection. EPIC Outreach believes that dissection of live animals is inconsistent with general appreciation and respect for animal life and should be avoided if alternatives are available and when no new and substantive information will be gained to benefit human and animal health. Additionally, there is a waste of animal life that results from such procedures.

### **ANIMALS IN ENTERTAINMENT**

EPIC Outreach opposes the use of wild animals for the purpose of entertainment. EPIC believes that maintaining wild animals in unnatural conditions is insensitive and potentially inhumane, and that entertainment activities like circuses, fairs, parades, travelling exhibits, and roadside menageries subject wild animals to stresses such as unnatural living conditions, rigorous travelling, constant exposure to new surroundings, and potentially abusive training.

### **ANIMAL FIGHTING**

EPIC Outreach is opposed to any sport or event that involves pitting animals or humans against animals resulting in intentional injury or death. Blood sports such as dog fighting, cockfighting, bullfighting and other brutal contests cause injury and suffering to the animals involved.

Animal fighting is also closely linked to many other criminal activities. EPIC Outreach supports anti-fighting laws and strong enforcement of these laws.

## **DOG RACING**

EPIC Outreach is opposed to dog racing because it is often linked with cruel practices. Some trainers still use live rabbits or other animals despite laws and regulations that prohibit such methods. The Greyhound racing industry overbreeds dogs, resulting in the euthanasia of dogs who are unable to be placed into homes. In addition, injuries may be sustained by racing dogs.

## **RODEOS**

EPIC Outreach is opposed to rodeos and other entertainment events that produce pain, injury or stress to animals. The competitiveness of these events can result in the abuse and mishandling of the participating animals. Rodeo animals commonly are subjected to pain and stress and ongoing risk of injury. Furthermore, rodeos may encourage insensitivity to the abusive treatment of animals for the purpose of sport.

## **BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH AND TESTING OF ANIMALS**

EPIC Outreach recognizes that, historically, animals have been used in biomedical research and testing toward the end of improving human and animal health. EPIC Outreach also recognizes that such research can involve significant suffering by the animals used and that alternatives to animal testing should be developed and used whenever possible. EPIC believes that all testing involving live animals must meet the Federal Animal Welfare Act standards at a minimum.

## **PERSONAL CARE AND HOUSEHOLD PRODUCT ANIMAL TESTING**

EPIC Outreach is opposed to the use of animals in product testing. Animals used in the testing of personal care and household products are often subjected to pain and stress to determine the harmful effects of the products. Fortunately, many household products which are not tested on animals are now available. EPIC Outreach encourages consumers to buy products labeled "cruelty free."

## **USE OF SHELTER ANIMALS IN RESEARCH**

EPIC does not release live animals for research purposes of any kind. EPIC also opposes legislation mandating release of live impounded animals from shelters for the purpose of research or testing. EPIC Outreach often supports humane studies conducted within shelter environments to better improve animal welfare and animal sheltering practices, for example research that focuses on improving stress levels while an animal is in a shelter environment. We oppose, however, the use of shelter animals, whether domestic or wild, as a source for research unrelated to the welfare of shelter animals.

## **FACTORY FARMING**

EPIC Outreach recognizes that some livestock are raised and marketed for food and resulting by-products, and believes that there must be a humane standard of care for those animals. EPIC Outreach encourages consumers to learn how their animal related food products were produced and supports companies and products that use humane standards of care for farmed animals.

## **ANIMAL-FRIENDLY MENU POLICY**

Our current guiding principles are to treat all living things as we ourselves would wish to be treated. Kindness: To demonstrate compassion and respect for all living creatures. EPIC Outreach does not support industries that raise and slaughter animals for food, as these animals often live in inhumane and even torturous conditions. Given the above, whenever possible every effort will be made to entirely serve food at events that is either vegetarian or entirely plant-based. When hosting events at venues that serve meat, every effort will be made to choose venues that have at least one vegetarian or plant-based option on the menu to encourage this choice of food. While not all EPIC Outreach staff or volunteers follow plant-based or vegetarian diets, EPIC Outreach is an organization dedicated to animals and their well-being.

## **FURS**

EPIC Outreach is strongly opposed to the farming, trapping, and killing of furbearing animals for the garment industry. Trapping and killing animals to produce fur garments and fur-trimmed objects causes immeasurable suffering and pain to wild animals. Ranch animals spend their short lives in small cages, denied interaction with other animals to avoid damage to the pelts. The stress of close confinement and lack of natural activity sometimes causes unnatural behavior such as excessive pacing and self-mutilation. In addition, methods of killing the animals are often inhumane. Because many consumers are not aware of the cruelty involved in bringing fur products to market, EPIC Outreach supports efforts to educate the public to eliminate the demand for these products.

## **HUNTING**

EPIC Outreach is opposed to the hunting of any living creature for fun, trophy, profit, or for sport. However, EPIC Outreach recognizes the long history of hunting, and believes that despite opposition, this tradition will continue. Recognizing that animals do suffer as a result of hunting, EPIC Outreach believes that it is the responsibility of each individual hunter to execute a quick and decisive kill. For this reason, EPIC strongly advocates hunter instruction that incorporates humane education into its curriculum.

## **STEEL JAW LEGHOLD TRAP**

EPIC Outreach supports a ban on steel jaw leghold traps. These cruel devices cause excessive pain and suffering to animals. Non-targeted animals, both domestic and wild, may be caught in these traps as well and suffer injury or death.

## **WILD AND EXOTIC ANIMALS AS PETS**

EPIC Outreach is opposed to the capture, confinement, and deliberate breeding or hybrid-breeding of wild animals, either native or exotic, for the purpose of selling or maintaining them as pets. EPIC considers exotic animals to be species not native to its homeland (ie Florida, Georgia, Texas etc.), and wild animals to be animals that are indigenous to our region and not typically domesticated. Most wild animals are protected under state and federal laws and cannot legally be taken from the wild or possessed by the general population.

Exotic and wild animals have complex physical and behavioral needs, and these needs are difficult to meet when these animals are kept as pets. In addition, some exotic and wild animals are dangerous and could put their owners or the community at risk of disease, injury or death. Exotic animals are occasionally surrendered to EPIC Outreach and, in those instances, we seek placement where their unique physical and behavioral needs can be met.

### **WILDLIFE IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS**

Continuing human encroachment on wild animal habitats has resulted in increased encounters between humans and wild animals. In order to adapt to living in human-altered environments, wild animals often seek sites such as chimneys, attics, and eaves to live or build nests.

Homeowners can minimize many of these conflicts with wildlife by capping their chimneys and keeping their homes in good repair. EPIC Outreach encourages people to seek advice about humanely co-existing with wildlife from knowledgeable sources and to make every effort to treat wild animals with respect and kindness.

### **WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**

Wildlife populations are best kept in balance by maintaining natural ecosystems. EPIC Outreach recognizes, however, that there has been widespread alteration of natural environments in many regions. EPIC Outreach acknowledges that human intervention may be necessary to alter the number, distribution, or behaviors of some animals in order to prevent unwanted or dangerous behaviors, protect human and animal health and safety, and protect or restore ecological integrity. When intervention is necessary, actions should address the root causes of the specific concerns at the locations where they are happening. Ideally, such actions incorporate an integrated approach based on non-lethal methods such as habitat modification, public education and involvement, non-toxic repellents, behavior modification, animal exclusion methods, and animal contraception.

### **ZOOS**

EPIC Outreach is opposed to zoos that hold captive animals for the use of entertainment or breeding purposes. However, EPIC Outreach recognizes the long history of zoos and believes that despite opposition, this tradition will continue. EPIC acknowledges that zoos can seek to benefit animals in the long-term. Zoos can serve to educate the public, research important care and management practices for captive wild animals, and preserve endangered or threatened species.

EPIC Outreach believes that in order to justify their existence, zoos must serve a meaningful purpose, maintain the animals in exhibits most closely resembling their natural habitat, and make every effort to meet the biological, behavioral, and social needs of the captive animals. EPIC also believes that guidelines that set forth the purpose of maintaining each species should be established.

EPIC Outreach is opposed to substandard zoos, commonly referred to as roadside zoos and menageries. Most of these attractions exist solely for public amusement and operate in a manner inconsistent with modern zoological practices.

