



Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association

Importation

Introduction:

Through aggressive spay/neuter and education campaigns, many animal shelters in Massachusetts no longer euthanize healthy/adoptable dogs due to lack of space. However, most animal control facilities and many shelters in Massachusetts are often full to capacity with dogs available for adoption. We should not confuse this tremendous accomplishment - controlling dog populations such that unwanted litters of puppies are an uncommon sight in Massachusetts animal shelters, with the reality - that there are actually an abundance of healthy, adoptable, adult and adolescent dogs in our shelters. In fact, many Massachusetts shelters are often full to capacity with local, adoptable dogs.

Many other states have not been as successful with population control as Massachusetts. In many regions of the US, healthy/adoptable adult dogs and puppies are euthanized due to overpopulation. For this reason, transportation of dogs and puppies from regions with very high euthanasia rates (for non-medical/non-behavioral reasons) into regions with low euthanasia rates (for non-medical/non-behavioral reasons) has become a common practice.

While the practice of importing dogs and puppies into Massachusetts has the potential to save thousands of lives, it also has the potential to cause a great deal of harm. The following guidelines have been developed by the MVMA's Animal Welfare Committee for several reasons: to protect public health; to protect the health of local dogs (both owned and sheltered); and to advocate for the welfare of the animals (both local and imported). These guidelines are also intended to help to protect

adopters and their families by preventing the adoption of dogs and puppies with severe behavioral and medical conditions.

Guidelines:

Shelter and Animal Selection for Importation

Massachusetts' shelters and rescue organizations should take measures to work with reputable, responsible exporting shelters/rescues. The exporting shelter should have a strong spay/neuter campaign to help combat overpopulation in their community. Accessible and affordable spay/neuter options should be available in the community, to help decrease the number of dogs, especially puppies, entering the shelter. The exporting shelter should spay/neuter prior to adoption at their facility (local adoptions); this should be considered a requirement of the exporting shelter. Ideally, dogs and puppies would be spayed and neutered before importation to eliminate the risk of: transporting pregnant dogs which may then be allowed to have their litters in Massachusetts and transporting intact dogs who are adopted out intact in Massachusetts and allowed to procreate.

Individual Animal Selection for Importation

Each animal should have a health exam (performed by a licensed veterinarian) five (5) days prior to export – a valid health certificate for travel should accompany the animal. Each animal shall be deemed to be free of any signs of infectious disease at that time. The minimum requirement for vaccination should include a dhpp vaccine, bordetella (intranasal) vaccine, and deworming. Ideally, dogs would have received a dhpp booster 2 - 4 weeks after an initial dhpp vaccine. All animals over the age of three (3) months should receive a rabies vaccine before export. At minimum, 48 hours should lapse between any surgical procedure and transport. Animals must be at least eight (8) weeks of age for transport.

All dogs six (6) months of age and older must be tested for heartworm disease before export. Each dog should be tested with both an antigen test and concentrating microfilaria test. Microfilaremic dogs should not be imported. The importing shelter should be required to receive permission from MDAR (Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources) before a heartworm positive dog (which is no longer microfilaremic) may be imported into Massachusetts.

In addition to the health certificate, each animal's complete health record (including vaccines, fecal evaluations, deworming, disease testing, veterinary exams, microchip number, spay/neuter status, etc.) should accompany each animal.

Each individual animal should receive a documented, standardized behavioral evaluation before exportation. A copy of the behavioral evaluation should be included with each animal's individual health record. Care should be taken such that each animal selected for importation will meet the behavioral requirements for the importing shelter in Massachusetts.

Upon Arrival in Massachusetts

Dogs must be isolated in an MDAR approved quarantine facility for 48 hours upon arrival in Massachusetts. A list of approved facilities can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/agr/animalhealth/ApprovedEntities.htm>.

Upon arrival, each animal should receive a documented physical exam. Veterinary care should be available on arrival for any animal requiring care. At the end of the 48 hour quarantine, a licensed veterinarian must examine each animal and provide in writing a health certificate stating they are in good health and appear to be free from infectious disease.

Before adoption, a standardized and documented behavioral evaluation shall be performed on each animal. All animals shall be spayed or neutered prior to adoption. All animals shall be microchipped. The Massachusetts shelter/rescue should be listed

as the implanter and registered with the microchip company to allow for permanent trace back to the importing shelter.

In the event that an adoption does not work out, regardless of reason, the importing shelter shall take back the animal. There should not be a fee associated with a returned adoption. Should an imported animal end up in another shelter or rescue in Massachusetts, the importing shelter must take the animal back if requested. If requested, the importing shelter is responsible for transporting the imported dog from any Massachusetts shelter or rescue within 3 days of such request.