

W. Ron DeHaven, DVM, CEO
American Veterinary Medical Association
email: rdehaven@avma.org
ph: 800-248-2862, ext 6775

American Veterinary Medical Association
Headquarters
1931 North Meacham Road, Suite 100
Schaumburg, IL 60173-4360
ph: 800-248-2862; fax: 847-925-1329

American Veterinary Medical Association
Governmental Relations Division
1910 Sunderland Place, NW
Washington, DC 20036-1642
ph: 800-321-1473; fax: 202-842-4360

Douglas Aspros, DVM, President-elect
American Veterinary Medical Association
email: daspros@bondanimalhospital.com
ph: 914-949-8860; fax: 914-949-3478

Bond Animal Hospital
250 Central Avenue
White Plains, NY 10606
ATN: Douglas Aspros, DVM

Dear Drs. DeHaven and Aspros,

Devocalization — the cutting of vocal cord tissue just to alter or remove a dog or cat's voice — is widely considered an act of animal cruelty even when performed by a veterinarian.

Compassionate people everywhere urge the AVMA to join animal shelters, advocacy groups and caring veterinarians who oppose use of vocal cord surgery as behavioral intervention.

Attitudes about animals have evolved, including awareness that surgery to mask behavior is patently cruel. We hope AVMA will evolve too.

At present, AVMA is poised to vote on a policy that will hurt more animals.

The proposed position condones devocalization if used as a "final alternative." It is unacceptable for any animal to undergo a needless procedure with long-term risk for breathing and swallowing problems, gagging, coughing, pain and corrective surgeries. Moreover, no vet can possibly know if a guardian pursued proper care, along with all other options. AVMA's position legitimizes vocal cord surgery merely to stifle an animal's voice, a choice that is never humane.

And sadly, devocalization does not ensure a home for any dog or cat. In some cases, it has led to euthanasia or abandonment.

I urge AVMA to adopt the humane position of concerned veterinarians who oppose vocal cord surgery under all circumstances, except to treat a life-threatening physical ailment like cancer.

AVMA should advise the public that vocal cord surgery is always dangerous and never an acceptable way to cope with barking or meowing. As part of this humane position, AVMA ought to stress wise selection of dog or cat types, responsible sheltering and training, and the lifetime commitment involved in their care.

This stance encourages compassionate and conscientious stewardship of companion animals. Sanctioning devocalization does not.

Sincerely,