



College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

Position Statement: Feral Cat Ear Tippingⁱ

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Council Statement

The CVBC bylaws do not currently include the ear tipping of cats in the prohibitions for cosmetic alterations. On review of materials presented, the Council acknowledges the value of the practice of ear tipping to the continued welfare of managed feral cats when performed under the appropriate surgical & anesthetic conditions by a registered veterinarian. Council does not identify ear tipping as “cosmetic alteration”.

The CVBC Bylaws

The bylaws regarding Cosmetic Alterations¹ (s. 231) define “ear cropping” as the removal of part or all of the pinnae or auricles of the ear of the dog and prohibit registrants from performing ear cropping for any reason, other than to treat an injury or a disease of the pinnae.

Explanation

“**Ear tipping**” is the removal of the distal 1 centimeter of the (usually left) ear for the purposes of distance-identification of a “managed” feral cat. It is performed by a veterinarian in conjunction with the sterilization of the cat, under sterile surgical conditions and with the benefits of anesthesia and analgesia.

Ear tipping is a broadly-accepted and utilized means of identifying that a feral cat has already been sterilized and is a part of a managed population. It spares the cat the stress of unnecessary handling and potential repeated (unnecessary) surgery by allowing individuals to recognize from a distance that it has already been sterilized. It also serves as a means of feral cat population monitoring. Although ear tipping is not *medically necessary*, it contributes to the welfare of managed feral cat populations by preventing cats from the unnecessary stress of re-capture. This assessment is supported by the CVMA’s Position Statement on “Free Roaming, Abandoned, and Feral Cats”² and by the International Companion Animal Management Coalition in its “Humane Cat Population Management Guidance” document³.

The Council thanks the Society of BC Veterinarians’ Board and Animal Welfare Committee for providing a considered opinion on this issue.

¹ CVBC Bylaws, Part 4 – Ethics and Standards, s. 231 *Cosmetic alterations*

² CVMA Position Statement on Free Roaming, Abandoned, and Feral Cats (pub. April 2014)

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/free-roaming-abandoned-feral-cats-position-statement>

³ International Companion Animal Management Coalition’s “Humane Cat Population Management Guidance” (pub. 2011)

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/ifaw-pantheon/sites/default/files/legacy/ICAM-Humane%20cat%20population.pdf>

ⁱ Council approved the “Position Statement: Feral Cat Ear Tipping” on January 25, 2019