

RESOLUTION #11—2023
Regular Annual Session

Submitted by
Board of Directors

SUPERSEDE POLICY ON CANINE DEVOCALIZATION

RESOLVED that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) House of Delegates adopt the policy on Canine Devocalization ([attachment 1](#)) which will supersede the current policy ([attachment 2](#)).

Statement about the Resolution

The Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) reviewed the policy and considered the information provided in the AVMA Literature Review on the [Welfare Implications of Canine Devocalization](#), as well as the relevant positions of valued allied organizations when evaluating the welfare effects of devocalization on dogs.

It was noted that devocalization provides no benefits for dogs but has the potential to cause harm through surgical complications and masking behavior without addressing the underlying cause. Therefore, debarking is not an acceptable treatment for excessive barking. The AWC believes that situations where a client's housing is at risk because of nuisance barking are best addressed through behavioral modification or rehoming, rather than through debarking, which threatens the dog's welfare. While many committee members would prefer to use the word 'opposes' instead of 'strongly discourages' in the proposed revision, the committee recognizes the need for some flexibility in the rare situations where behavior modification and medications are not sufficient.

The proposed policy redirects the emphasis from the rare and marginal conditions under which devocalization may be ethically justified, to the need for AVMA to discourage convenience devocalization as a nontherapeutic procedure that negatively impacts the welfare of the dog. The approach to the revised policy and its language are aligned with that of policies addressing comparable nontherapeutic procedures performed on dogs such as [tooth removal](#) and [ear cropping and tail docking](#), as well as [declawing of domestic cats](#).

Financial Impact: **None**

	Board of Directors	House Advisory Committee	Reference Committee #2	House of Delegates
Recommend Approval	X	X	X	X
Recommend Disapproval				
Recommend Referral to...				
No Recommendation				
Recommend Postpone Indefinitely				
(use this space for additional narrative, if needed)				