

# **ANIMAL SHELTER BEST PRACTICES**

## **Animal Shelter Ad Hoc Committee**

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# **ANIMAL SHELTER BEST PRACTICES**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The needs of companion animals in shelters go far beyond the basic necessities of food, water, and shelter. Social isolation and lack of mental stimulation can result in profound consequences to the wellbeing of cats and dogs and contribute to serious behavioral issues such as noise sensitivity, fearfulness, inattention/impulsivity, compulsion, separation anxiety, or aggression. This causes problems when the animals are placed in homes in the community. Caretakers' lack of understanding about the effects of social isolation and lack of mental stimulation on pets often makes these problems worse.

If their exercise and mental stimulation needs are met, we often see decreases in these “behavior problems.” An enrichment-based shelter model greatly improves animal welfare while at the shelter and can improve pet behavior in the home, leading to both enhanced adopter satisfaction and increased public safety.

### **1.2 Background**

Research continues to accumulate information about the needs of companion animals. A couple of recent scientific studies quantify the overwhelming prevalence of anxiety-based behaviors in dogs and cats and shows how these behaviors are exacerbated by the lack of knowledge of caretakers.<sup>1</sup> If shelter caretakers are uninformed about how to provide what companion animals need, shelter dogs and cats suffer as a result.

Animals in shelters have little to no control in most aspects of their lives. Where they live, what they eat, and when they can relieve themselves are dictated to them, and many of their normal behaviors are considered unacceptable. Often they are alone for upwards of 10 to 12 hours, and have little to no access to the outside world or any other sort of variety of experiences. Consequently, there is increased boredom, stress, and anxiety that is demonstrated in “behavior problems.” This is a huge disservice to our animal companions. Efforts must be made to allow our pets to act like dogs and cats through natural behaviors, such as playing, sniffing, chasing, and chewing. If their exercise and mental stimulation needs are met, “behavior problems” often decrease, improving adoption rates and return rates. It’s also worth mentioning that if more time is spent learning about and respecting the signs of a dog’s fear or stress, we would see far fewer bites to humans and other animals. Although there are exceptions to this, dogs do not bite “out of nowhere” and generally provide ample opportunity to avoid conflict.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the need for an enrichment-based shelter model is clear, both to greatly improve animal welfare while they are at the shelter and to improve pet behavior in the home, increasing public safety and enhancing adopter satisfaction.<sup>3</sup>

## **2.0 VISION AND GOALS**

The best animal shelters have well-thought-out visions and goals from which to operate. Examples are provided in the following two subsections.

## **2.1 Sample Vision**

A thoughtful vision could be:

Our community evolves into a socially conscious animal community that ensures that every unwanted or homeless pet has a safe place in which to shelter and be cared for, physically and emotionally, until they find their forever home.

## **2.2 Sample Goals**

Most animal-welfare-based shelters have goals similar to the following.

1. Ensure that the facility is clean and well-maintained and provides a safe and healthful environment for our animals, staff, volunteers and the public.
2. Implement the best enrichment practices for our shelter, provided by well-trained and compassionate staff and volunteers.
3. Implement programs to increase adoptions and reduce length of stay for pets at the shelter; develop transfer programs to both receive animals into the shelter and transfer animals out to other shelters and organizations to increase adoptions and save lives throughout our area.
4. Implement programs to provide support to pet owners and keep pets in home and reduce surrender rates to the shelter.
5. Implement a vigorous volunteer program that provides well-designed training and mentoring to volunteers.
6. Implement adoption counseling programs to improve pet matching, reduce returns and surrenders, and enhance adopter satisfaction.

These shelters also support broader goals such as the ones provided below.

1. There is support for laws defending animals against cruelty and neglect.
2. There is a full understanding of the consequences of all animal legislation.
3. Shelter staff value animals and provide compassionate care.
4. Shelter staff seek expertise from trusted animal welfare organizations and professionals.
5. Shelter staff adhere to the “Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters” published by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians,<sup>3</sup> including the Five Freedoms (i.e., Freedom from Hunger and Thirst, Freedom from Discomfort, Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease, Freedom to Express Normal Behavior and Freedom from Fear and Distress).

## **3.0 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

At a high-level humane animal shelter, policies and operations are focused on providing an enrichment-based environment and reduction of stress for all animals in its care. Everything from feeding and cleaning to all human interactions and play groups focus on minimizing stress and providing frequent opportunities for positive mental and physical stimulation. This includes a daily examination to assess the physical and emotional well-being of every animal in the shelter; access to timely, high-quality veterinary care; and a weekly assessment of each animal to plan

for adoption, transfer, or behavior modification as needed. In addition, detailed plans for enrichment and social contact are implemented as described below. The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement provides guidelines for animal enrichment.<sup>4</sup>

**“Enrichment is given the same significance as other components of animal care, such as nutrition and veterinary care, and is not considered optional.”**

### **3.1 Animal Care Policies and Procedures**

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters (“ASV Guidelines”)<sup>3</sup> is the basis for most policies at animal-welfare-based shelters, including the highly acclaimed Santa Fe Animal Shelter, which uses the practices for daily animal enrichment and social housing that are described below.

#### **1. Behavioral Health and Mental Well-Being (pp. 26-30)**

This section of the ASV Guidelines includes intake procedures, behavior evaluation, shelter daily routines, enrichment and socialization, and, when needed, behavior modification.

- a. Intake procedures include the collection of as much information about past history and reasons for relinquishment as possible. Ideally, an open-ended oral interview method should be used (this elicits more information than a written questionnaire or yes/no questioning). For stray animals, any available information from citizens or animal control or police officers should be recorded. This information has great value to inform staff on how to best meet individual animal needs. The intake process also should be designed to minimize stress for the animal involved; for example, the critical item in reducing stress on intake cats is to isolate them from spatial, visual, and auditory contact with dogs.
- b. Assessment of animal behavior begins at the time of intake, with staff noting signs of stress, anxiety, fear, or aggression and continues with both daily kennel observations and more formal behavioral assessments. Ongoing evaluations of stress levels and behavioral issues are used to determine if the animal can be safely handled and humanely housed in a shelter environment. Although formal behavioral assessments have not been scientifically proven to predict specific behaviors in the home, the information obtained during such testing is often useful both in determining behavioral needs while in the shelter and matching animals with appropriate adopters. Cats can be assessed by observing behavior to enhance in-shelter care as well as to identify appropriate placements.
- c. Daily routines include predictable routines and positive experiences each day. Because feeding and playtime are highly anticipated positive events, they are a top scheduling priority for shelter staff. Stressful events, when unavoidable (e.g., cleaning, vet care) are scheduled to allow calm and relaxation between situations that cause stress responses. In addition, maintaining normal circadian rhythms (i.e., providing a dark and quiet environment during night-time hours) is essential to managing stress in shelter animals.
- d. Enrichment and socialization are key to providing an advanced standard of humane care for shelter animals. A minimum standard of 1 to 2 hours of enrichment per day

per animal is implemented. The only proven way to reduce stress and improve well-being in a shelter environment is to provide physical and mental stimulation that encourages species-typical behavior (for example, chewing on bones and sniffing the ground for dogs or scratching posts for cats) on a daily basis. Daily positive social interactions with people are essential for both cats and dogs—whenever possible, animals interact with the same caregiver on a regular basis to enhance stress reduction and maximize behavioral data collection.

Other enrichment opportunities include hunting for food as well as positive olfactory, visual, auditory, and tactile stimulation. **Note that daily husbandry (feeding, vet care, and cleaning) does NOT constitute enrichment and does not address the animals' daily social needs.**

- e. For animals with behavioral issues that are amenable to in-shelter modification, an individualized strategy is developed and implemented by qualified professional trainers. Effective behavior modification programs are not punitive and use positive reinforcement, desensitization, and operant conditioning and counter-conditioning, sometimes in conjunction with anti-anxiety medication prescribed by a licensed veterinarian.

## **2. Group Housing and Play Groups (pp. 31-32)**

Group housing and play groups have multiple benefits. They provide opportunities for positive interactions with other animals, including play, companionship, and socialization. This is an important component of an enriched and varied environment that can greatly reduce stress and enhance welfare. Both group housing and daytime play groups require careful selection and monitoring by staff or trained volunteers to recognize subtle signs of stress to prevent negative interactions. **Random grouping of animals in shelters is an unacceptable practice.**

## **3.2 Additional Policies**

### **3.2.1 Euthanasia Policy**

All euthanasia decisions, except for those made by a licensed veterinarian for reasons of extreme suffering, are made by a shelter euthanasia committee. This is for the protection of the animals, the community, and the decision-makers. The euthanasia committee shall consist of a minimum of three people: a licensed veterinarian familiar with the shelter operations; the shelter manager or their designee; and a third person, such as an experienced volunteer, an animal humane organization member, a professional trainer, or a member of another shelter's staff.

Clearly written criteria for euthanasia, including medical, behavioral, or public safety reasons, is followed for all euthanasia recommendations.

Each member of the committee can oppose euthanasia for a specific animal provided they can develop a plan within 48 hours to work with other committee members, veterinary professionals, professional trainers, and other rescues or shelters to ensure a humane and safe outcome for that animal.

No euthanasia decisions are postponed for more than 48 hours without the concurrence of the entire committee. Every animal continues to receive humane care while awaiting euthanasia.

### *3.2.2 Legal Hold and Custodial Cases*

These animals are evaluated and receive the same care (including medical, handling, and enrichment as much as possible given their temperament and needs) as other animals in the shelter. They are not subjected to social isolation or other inhumane treatments.

## **4.0 ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCE**

Animal control ordinances are written to provide more focus on animal welfare and public safety rather than primarily on animal control issues. In addition, specific fee schedules are omitted, which allows for more flexibility and easier updates.

Prohibitions on tethering (chaining) animals for extended periods of time is part of an animal control ordinance, as is a prohibition on transporting animals in the open bed of a pickup truck without a well-secured crate or a humane and well-secured harness approved by the Center for Pet Safety Tests.

A tethering provision in an animal control ordinance enhances public safety. Numerous studies have demonstrated that tethered dogs become more aggressive and are more likely to attack people and other dogs while tethered or when they escape from their tether. It is also dangerous for the dog as they can get tangled up and be injured. (See the Center for Pet Safety's test results for harnesses in Reference 5.)

A cost-of-care provision is also part of the ordinance to ensure that negligent or abusive pet owners are responsible for the pet's upkeep while legal proceedings are under way with appropriate restitution provisions for pet owners cleared of all charges.

Provisions similar to those in the Calgary Responsible Pet Ownership Ordinance<sup>6</sup> are a good example of what animal-welfare-based animal control ordinances can cover. This ordinance is based on five precepts.

1. License and provide permanent identification for cats and dogs.
2. Spay or neuter pets.
3. Provide information and facilitate access to training, physical care, socialization and medical attention for pets.
4. Do not allow pets to become a threat or nuisance in the community.
5. Provide education and information about how to procure your pet ethically, from a credible source.

If licensing (Item 1) is adopted, (1) increasing the spay/neuter deposit and (2) making the licensing fee for unneutered dogs and cats to 2–3 times the cost of licensing. Requiring animals to be neutered may decrease both unwanted litters and incidents between the public and roaming animals. It would also emphasize to owners the added responsibility and vigilance needed when owning unneutered animals.

## **5.0 TRAINING**

In the best humane animal shelters, the Shelter Manager and the head of the training and behavioral staff have nationally certified credentials. All staff involved in behavioral assessments and enrichment that involve play groups have completed a series of training courses that focus

on these topics. Staff and volunteers regularly update their training through workshops, seminars and online classes on a yearly basis. Also, a humane animal shelter promotes the following:

1. All shelter staff attend trainings so that they fully understand the stressors in the shelter environment and the effects of stress on dogs and cats.
2. All shelter staff receive training in animal enrichment, including play groups, food games, sensory stimulation, and social housing.
3. All volunteers also receive training and mentoring in basic animal behavior and animal enrichment.
4. All shelter staff are trained in conducting behavioral profiles, including surrender histories, medical histories, kennel observations, and validated behavioral assessments.
5. All shelter staff are trained in adoption counseling, including matching programs, adopter interviews, adoption follow-up, and use of adoption information packets.

## **6.0 VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

A humane shelter will have a strong volunteer program with multiple levels of community interaction available.

The shelter will have an organized structure to place volunteers according to their desires and strengths. The volunteer program is headed by an experienced volunteer coordinator and includes such things as a volunteer code of conduct, release forms, and graded levels for interacting with shelter animals. Opportunities for volunteers can range from enriching the lives of shelter dogs and cats by playing with them to phone calls following up on adopted animals to fundraising events. The volunteer coordinator provides skills training and mentoring in a structured program to ensure that both volunteers and animals are safe and have enjoyable experiences. Volunteers can also participate in educational opportunities for schools and civic groups in areas such as animal safety and basic care.

## **7.0 ANIMAL ENRICHMENT**

Enrichment has been proven to reduce stress in animals at shelters. This is desirable because it makes for easier cleaning routines, increased adoptions and decreased length of stay, improved health and improved safety for both animals and humans. The best humane animal shelters often adopt the practices and philosophies found in the Best Friends Humane Animal Control Manual, especially Appendices K, “Enrichment for Cats,” L, “Enrichment for Dogs,” and N, “Volunteer Programs.”<sup>7</sup>

In humane shelters, the individual level of stress in animals is evaluated through both observation and validated measurement tools. It is then reduced by careful work habits (staff moving slowly and calmly with reduced noise during chores); safe, comforting environments (places for shy animals to withdraw, comfortable beds, options for cats to get up to elevated places); and enrichment (exercise, socialization, novel stimuli).

Enrichment is provided through comprehensive daily stimuli and is matched to the needs of individual animals. It includes food puzzles, toys, scent therapy, exercise, human contact, catnip,



chew toys, boxes to hide away in, and/or clicker training. Successful animal shelters often include the following practices.

1. Use social housing options and play yards/rooms to provide daily social enrichment for dogs and cats that are selected for social interaction.
2. Provide enrichment toys for kennels and play rooms/yards.
3. Interactions such as petting, playing and walks with staff or volunteers
4. Provide appropriate enrichment for animals in isolation because of disease, behavioral problems, or legal issues.

## **8.0 TRANSFER PROGRAMS**

A well-designed transfer program is one of the most critical and innovative programs at humane shelters—it is literally a lifesaver. Many shelters are overwhelmed with certain breeds or ages of dogs and cats for whom there is not a strong demand, which leaves those animals in facilities for too long and at risk of being euthanized. Meanwhile, other shelters and rescue groups may have demand for these animals in their communities. By transferring healthy, socialized animals, these animals may find a wider audience and their forever homes.

A successful transfer program relies on strong relationships between transfer partners built on carefully thought-out agreements and information-sharing. The agreements address formal transfer of legal ownership; health records; background information such as why an animal was surrendered, as well as its age, breed, sex, temperament, suitability, and socialization; available space in the shelter; and other relevant conditions. In this way, adoptable pets that are overlooked in one shelter have a chance at adoption in another shelter.

## **9.0 FOSTER PROGRAMS**

Foster programs are a critical component of a humane, well-run animal shelter and serve multiple goals. Reasons for fostering dogs and cats include medical fosters, hospice for shelter animals at the end of their lives, early-life fosters for young puppies and kittens, and helping animals cope with special needs like excessive shyness, or trauma from abuse.

Medical fosters help animals recovering from major surgeries or treatable diseases such as heartworm infestations. Hospice foster homes provide end of life care and comfort for elderly and severely ill animals suffering from conditions for which there is no effective medical solution. Special needs animals may become more adoptable if they are given extra care and behavioral support to recover in a home environment.

It is difficult to almost impossible for puppies and kittens under 4 months of age to thrive in a shelter environment, especially newborn and neonatal puppies and kittens. This is due to several factors, including susceptibility to disease, amplified by the fact that stray or neglected pets giving birth are often unvaccinated and cannot provide any immunity to their nursing offspring; the need for a warm, controlled environment until the baby animal is old enough to maintain its own body temperature and eat consistently on its own; and the need for a nursing mother to have a quiet, safe environment in which to care for her offspring. The stress and noise of a shelter can result in nursing mothers' milk to dry up or the mother abandoning or harming the offspring. At the same time, without frequent, daily handling and positive exposure to a variety of novel

stimuli, baby animals often develop lifelong fears and anxiety or an inability to adjust properly to a home environment. This kind of positive exposure and handling is nearly impossible to achieve in a busy shelter setting.

Therefore, it is essential for every shelter to develop a robust network of knowledgeable, caring foster parents who can provide proper care for pregnant mothers, newborns and very young puppies and kittens, as well as to provide home management for animals in need of more involved medical and/or hospice or other special needs.

**An extremely important component of a foster program policy is that foster parents who meet shelter requirements and have given extensively of their time and selves be allowed first priority to adopt the shelter dog(s) or cat(s) in their care.**

## **10.0 OVERSIGHT BOARD**

A permanent oversight board is an important part of shelter operations. An oversight board reviews shelter policies and procedures, helps analyze shelter data, and assists with strategic planning. The shelter and humane community vision and goals inform all planning and policy decisions.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY OUTREACH, MARKETING, AND PARTNERING**

An excellent animal shelter is an active partner with the community.

A shelter's outreach activities should include the following.

1. Adoption promotions and marketing. Develop creative marketing campaigns to increase the visibility of the shelter and market adoptable pets more effectively. This should include partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and nearby shelters.

Some examples of promotions found to be effective in other shelters include “two-for-one kitten” adoptions and “adopt a senior cat or dog and get a free vet checkup.” Local businesses can host mobile adoptions or have a “cat of the month” housed at their store. Local veterinarians and pet supply stores can provide coupons for vet care, obedience classes, boarding, food, and toys for new adopters. There are also opportunities to work with other shelters and national rescue organizations to spotlight adopting a shelter pet.

2. Responsible pet owner programs. Provide important information during adoption such as the benefits of keeping cats indoors, multi-pet management, and suggestions for safe interactions between children and pets. Also, a shelter can partner with local trainers to provide public education programs like responsible dog and cat ownership; how to create a humane, pet-safe community; and the pitfalls of purchasing pets from puppy mills or pet stores. Shelters can share information about local pet supply outlets, doggie day care and boarding options, and local trainers.
3. Spay/neuter education and access. Provide pet owners and adopters with information about the benefits of surgically altering their pet, as well as information about state and national pet overpopulation. Shelters can work with local veterinarians to provide discounted spay/neuter surgeries and provide owners with financial or transportation

assistance if needed. Follow-up is provided to owners of intact pets to discuss their decision to not neuter and make them aware of the special needs of unneutered pets.

4. Adoption counseling and follow-up programs. Provide trained adoption counselors to talk to each potential adopter and help match the pet to the adopter's lifestyle and expectations. Counselors also answer questions on how to help the new pet adjust to the home, how to introduce them to children and other pets, and what pet supplies are needed and so on.

All adopters receive follow-up calls after 1 day, 1 week, and 1 month from adoption counselors to offer support and resources are offered so that an adoption does not fail. Counselors identify serious issues that might lead to harm to the pet, other animals, or people so that the adopted pet can be removed from the home if it is warranted.

5. Business and landlord education programs. Work with national organizations like the American Kennel club (AKC) and local trainers to educate local businesses, landlords and homeowner associations about the advantages of having well-behaved, well-cared-for pets in the community. Develop programs such as the AKC Good Citizen so that pets can be trained and evaluated to standards recognized by the community as indicating a well-behaved pet.
6. Surrender prevention programs. Provide surrender prevention counseling to explore the resources that can help owners keep their pet, such as financial assistance, behavioral evaluation, training programs, and emotional support. These may also include things like help to build a more secure fence, transportation to the vet, or temporary custody of an animal if the owner is in the hospital.

## 12.0 INSPECTIONS AND METRICS

A humane, high-quality shelter should have appropriate oversight and engage in an ongoing planning process to ensure that (1) improvements to facilities, policies and procedures, training, and operations are being assessed on a continuous basis and (2) plans for improvements are designed and implemented. For proper oversight and future planning, a high-quality shelter adopts metrics that quantify its operations in a way that allows the shelter to address established goals. These goals, in turn, ensure that the shelter both fulfills its mission and meets the community's vision for the shelter.

The planning and oversight should involve input from a permanent advisory board that is briefed regularly and provides input on the appropriateness of both chosen metrics and plans for improvements. There should also be regular reviews of the shelter and its operations by upper level management as well as reviews by external animal sheltering and animal protection experts. Public input on shelter operations should be solicited regularly as well. Reviews should address a wide range of facility issues, including financial issues, staffing issues, and policies and procedures, as well as adoption success rates and public safety concerns.

Metrics should assess both disposition of animals (return to owner, adoption, transfer, euthanasia) and length of stay and in-shelter care requirements such as enrichment, health care, and disease prevention.

## **12.1 Inspections**

A high-quality, humane shelter undergoes a variety of inspections to assist in maintaining humane standards.

1. One-time reviews
  - a. Calculate humane-care capacity for dogs and cats using accepted methods
2. Annual reviews
  - a. External review by an animal protection or similar organization
  - b. Internal review by local government management
  - c. Strategic planning updates
3. Quarterly reviews by the Oversight Board
  - a. Facility issues
  - b. Budget issues
  - c. Staffing issues
  - d. Policies and procedures
  - e. Public input
  - f. Metrics

## **12.2 Metrics**

A high-quality shelter keeps records of a variety of metrics.

1. Live release rate
  - a. Must be linked to behavioral assessment program designed to protect public safety (see “Perils of Placing Marginal Dogs”<sup>8</sup>).
2. Length of stay
  - a. Have no time limit for euthanasia but must ensure adequate enrichment for long stays and alternate plans for pets with low demand in our area
  - b. Constantly improve plans to reduce length of stay, including mobile adoptions, adoption promotions, transfer programs, and foster-to-forever programs.
  - c. Provide and measure timely access to vaccinations, disease testing, microchipping, and surgical alterations to ensure that shelter stays are as short as possible. NEVER adopt out animals before they are fully vetted, chipped, and altered.
3. Enrichment
  - a. Perform weekly and monthly reviews of individual pet records to ensure that each animal receives adequate daily enrichment (1 hour of interactive play or affection for dogs, 2–3 types of sensory stimuli for cats). This must include quarantined and impounded cats and dogs.
4. Disease prevention
  - a. Perform weekly and monthly reviews of new cases of disease (including upper respiratory infections (URIs) and ringworm for cats and kittens and parvo and distemper for dogs and puppies) and implement modifications to cleaning and isolation protocols as needed to reduce contagious disease infections.

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## **APPENDIX A: SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOS ALAMOS COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER FACILITIES**

1. We recommend the dog kennel area be reconfigured to ensure that dogs can exit or enter without close exposure to barking, lunging dogs. We further recommend barriers or some other system be used so that dogs are not threatened with barking/growling/lunging behaviors by dogs across from them. We also recommend that dogs be provided with a place to retreat from over-stimulation, such as a crate or bench. This will greatly reduce stress levels to all the dogs in the kennel area as well as to the staff.
2. Given the possibility of escapes and conflicts of shelter dogs from the local dog park, we recommend a large area with an 8- to-10-foot-high fence be added to the shelter for a safe play/exercise yard for dogs. When enrichment-trained staff have been hired, they can use the yard for appropriately supervised play groups. There is space at the north end of the shelter land where this might be placed. It may also be possible to negotiate with the Los Alamos Dog Obedience Club (LADOC) for use of their side yard. This option might involve the Shelter/County paying for appropriate improvements to the yard and developing procedures to ensure animal health and safety.
3. We recommend making the changes recommended in Appendix B from a fire protection engineer to improve emergency egress and other safety issues.
4. We recommend improving the shelter heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to reduce the risks of disease transmissions especially in the communal cat area.
5. We recommend adding an outdoor “catio” to the west side of the cat room. Outdoor time will greatly increase the cats’ mental stimulation by adding new sights, smells, and sounds and ability to practice natural behaviors.

## **APPENDIX B: COMMENTS BY J. LATAILLE, FIRE PROTECTION ENGINEER, BASED ON JANUARY 21, 2020, TOUR OF LOS ALAMOS COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER FACILITY**

### **Los Alamos County Animal Shelter Desirable Facility Changes**

The changes described below would bring the Los Alamos County Animal Shelter more in line with other shelters, as well as make the facility easier to operate and maintain. Some of these changes would require only minimal funds, while others would require more substantial commitment. Making these changes would benefit not only the animals, but also the county, shelter workers, county residents, and animal owners and adopters.

#### **Exterior<sup>1</sup>**

Relocate outside storage that is near exterior walls and exits of the facility (NFPA 80A).

Improve permanent drainage around the building, particularly the southwest corner.

#### **Interior Layout/Use<sup>1</sup>**

Remove storage from the mechanical room (NFPA 1), building egress paths (NFPA 101), and animal areas (including isolation rooms, meet and greet areas, and inside the indoor dog pens).

Increase existing space for storing shelter supplies.

Increase existing space for animals, including cat and dog pens and areas for socializing, assessment, and behavioral modification.

#### **Mechanical**

Improve temperature control for all shelter areas.<sup>2</sup>

Provide separate ventilation systems for isolation areas used to house animals with illnesses having airborne transmission.\*

#### **Electrical**

Increase the number of electrical outlets in the cat room (NFPA 70) and wherever additional outlets would make it safer and/or more convenient to use electrical equipment.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Plumbing**

Improve delivery of hot water to the cat room.<sup>4</sup>

Return the solar hot water heater to service.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Existing facility design cannot accommodate this.

<sup>2</sup>After a nonworking heater was restored to service, this has improved.

<sup>3</sup>An electrical outlet has been added in the cat room.

<sup>4</sup>To be looked into

## **Plumbing, continued**

Modify the hose systems for cleaning the outside dog pens.<sup>5</sup>

- Provide separate outlets for every pen or two pens, and connect shorter hoses to each outlet. (Hosing down the pens would then no longer require snaking long hoses through the fences.)
- Feed the hose outlets from an exterior self-draining manifold with ball drip, and connect the manifold supply valve inside the building. (The piping would then not need to be heated during the winter when the supply valve is closed, and the cold water in the building would no longer be hot. During below-freezing periods, hoses would still need to be disconnected from the outlets when not in use.)

Other ways of making the hose systems easier to use and maintain could also be considered.

## **Life Safety<sup>4</sup>**

Check the direction of door swings in the main egress corridor and change if required by code (NFPA 101). (One door might need changing.)

## **Fire Protection**

Keep fire extinguishers unobstructed and serviced (NFPA 10).<sup>6</sup>

Keep the fire alarm system in service (NFPA 72).<sup>7</sup>

Provide code-required types and numbers of spare sprinkler heads for the building sprinkler system, particularly the dry heads protecting the eaves of the building (NFPA 13).<sup>4</sup>

## **General<sup>8</sup>**

Conduct and maintain records for code-required inspection, testing, and maintenance of all building systems. (The County might already be keeping these records.) Note: Inspection, Testing and Maintenance (ITM) requirements are in the codes applying to the individual systems.

## **Long Term Desirable Shelter Additions**

Add a new (nonpublic) wing to keep animals that are not yet ready for adoption. (This wing could include its own isolation areas, including outside quarantine pens for dogs.)

Consider additional expansion projects to add more space for animals, storage, and other facility needs.

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<sup>5</sup>Hoses are now being run from inside the building, so there is no freezing concern and the pipes are no longer heat traced. This works only if not using outside pens during cold weather.

<sup>6</sup>Extinguishers could be made more accessible.

<sup>7</sup>The fire alarm system is now in full service.

<sup>8</sup>Not addressed at this tour



## **Codes Related to this Report**

New Mexico Building Code and adopted codes:

- NFPA 1, Fire Prevention Code
- NFPA 101<sup>®</sup>, Life Safety Code<sup>®</sup>
- Uniform Mechanical Code
- Uniform Electrical Code
- Uniform Plumbing Code

National Fire Protection Association Codes:

- NFPA 1, Fire Prevention Code
- NFPA 10, Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers
- NFPA 13, Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems
- NFPA 70<sup>®</sup>, National Electrical Code<sup>®</sup>
- NFPA 72<sup>®</sup>, National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code<sup>®</sup>
- NFPA 80A, Recommended Practice for Protection of Buildings from Exterior Fire Exposure
- NFPA 90A, Standard for the Installation of Air-Conditioning and Ventilating Systems
- NFPA 90B, Standard for the Installation of Warm Air Heating and Air-Conditioning Systems
- NFPA 101<sup>®</sup>, Life Safety Code<sup>®</sup>

## **About the Author**

BS in Physics from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, MS in Electrical Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Associate Degree in Risk Management

Licensed Professional Engineer in five states, including New Mexico

Thirty-five years of experience in fire protection engineering, including its mechanical, electrical, chemical, civil, and structural aspects. Job duties included writing fire hazard analyses and risk assessments for existing facilities; preparing hydraulic, fire dynamic, fire resistance, egress, and other calculations; reviewing drawings and specifications for new facilities; conducting field walk downs for checks of construction progress and system installation; witnessing final system testing; and generating construction project punch lists.

Member of the Society of Fire Protection Engineers. Elected Fellow in 1997, served on the Publications Committee and on the *Fire Protection Engineering Journal* Editorial Advisory Board, chaired the Engineering Licensing Committee, served on the Board of Directors. Recipient of several awards, including the Hat's Off Award, the President's Award, and the D. Peter Lund Award.

Served on twelve National Fire Protection Association code-writing committees that were responsible for preparing twenty codes and standards

Publications include chapters in several editions of the *NFPA Fire Protection Handbook*, chapters in several other NFPA handbooks, *Fire Protection Engineering in Building Design* (Elsevier Science – Plant Engineering, 2003), *Fire Protection of Storage Facilities* (NFPA, 2006).

## **APPENDIX C: LOCAL TRAINING RESOURCES FOR SHELTER STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Given the work schedules and duties of the Los Alamos County Animal Shelter staff and the time constraints for many volunteers, local animal behavior training resources need to be available. Below are suggestions for nearby training opportunities for staff and interested volunteers.

We recommend that one or more of the Los Alamos County Animal Shelter staff, including the shelter staff person assigned to be the Volunteer Program Coordinator, the lead shelter behavioral evaluator and trainer, and a core group of 10 to 15 volunteers undergo a suitable training program from a local trainer.

One such program is offered by trainer Almudena Ortiz Cue of CHACO Dog training in Tesuque, New Mexico, which is a short travel time from Los Alamos County. The training encompasses 2 full days and 2 half-days, and the major topics include (1) fear and aggression in shelter dogs, (2) play groups for shelter dogs, and (3) building and managing effective foster programs. Ms. Cue's training program can accommodate up to 20 individuals per session and can be tailored to meet the specific needs of Los Alamos County Animal Shelter staff and committed, experienced volunteers at the Los Alamos County Animal Shelter. The training can be conducted over 2 to 3 weekends or can be conducted in a single weekend extending from noon on Friday until noon on Monday. The estimated cost is about \$5600.

Ideally, both Shelter Manager and the head of the training and behavioral staff should have nationally certified credentials. All staff involved in behavioral assessments and enrichment that involves play groups should have completed a 32-hour or more training course that focuses on these topics. We are not currently aware of local availability of this type of training.

## **APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE HANDBOOK FOR AN ANIMAL SHELTER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**



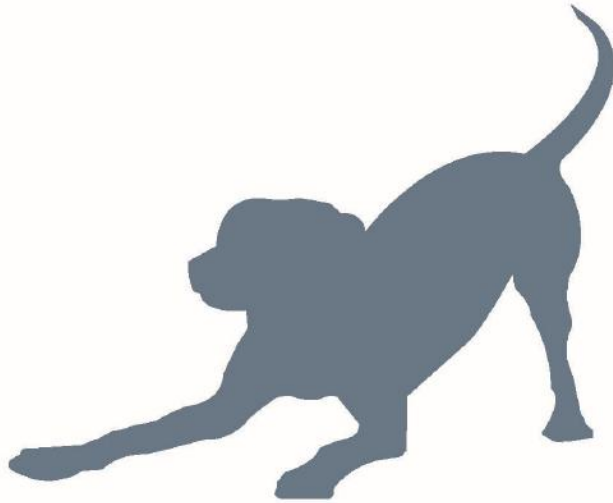
## **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

January, 2015

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## **WELCOME!**

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Welcome to the Williamson County Animal Center! After attending orientation we hope that you will further consider becoming a volunteer with us. The desire to help animals has brought you to us as a volunteer. We hope that you take with you a better understanding of animal sheltering, animal welfare and animal care issues. Our volunteers are our link to the community and we rely on you to advocate for the shelter and animal issues within our community. Volunteers are an essential part of sheltering. We value your help greatly. Thank you for considering volunteering at our shelter. We hope that you will find your experience here rewarding and educational.

## **ABOUT OUR SHELTER**

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Williamson County Animal Center is a government run shelter. We are an agency of Williamson County, Tennessee. Williamson County Animal Center provides animal care and control services for the entire county. We intake animals whose owners are unable to keep them and stray animals that are brought in by county residents or our Animal Control Officers. We provide adoption services to the general public and we work with rescue groups to place animals. All of our cats, dogs and some of our small and exotic animals are spayed or neutered and vaccinated as applicable before adoption. All of our cats are tested for Feline Leukemia and FIV and all of our dogs are tested for heartworm. Our adoption process is designed to facilitate placement of animals in safe, loving, permanent homes.

## **SHELTER MISSION STATEMENT**

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Williamson County Animal Center strives to enhance the quality of life in our community through education initiatives designed to prevent pet overpopulation, to provide compassionate enforcement of current laws relating to the treatment of animals, to place animals in our care with loving and responsible owners, and to work toward the elimination of neglect and abuse of domestic animals within our jurisdiction.

## **WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS DO?**

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Volunteers are an essential part of our shelter and our mission. We appreciate you!! There are many volunteering opportunities, each one with its own duties. Many volunteers choose to start volunteering within the shelter by assisting with animal care. Here is a list of what volunteers can do at the shelter.

- Walk dogs and continue the training or behavior modification set in place by volunteers and staff.
- Foster a dog or cat at your home. This gives us an idea of how they will behave in a home and gives them a break from the kennels.
- Socialize with the cats in our adoption areas. Play interactively with toys, groom and brush the cats, get to know their personalities and report their likes and dislikes to the staff!
- Groom or bathe a dog (ask the staff first please). This makes them more appealing for adoption.
- Participate in the Canine-ality or Feline-ality personality testing program to help us assess and place the animals with guardians who will suit their personalities and energy levels.
- Throughout the day in the cat adoption areas swap dirty litter boxes with new ones, replenish water in cages.
- Become a greeter/matchmaker for individuals interested in adoption of one of our pets.
- Help at off-site adoption events.
- Help with visits to and from schools, scout troops, etc.
- Assist staff in cleaning adoption area and cat cages.

These are just some of the things that need to be done on a daily basis at the shelter. Each day is different! There is always something to be done, so please ensure that your time volunteering with us maximizes your positive impact on shelter operations. You can always ask a staff member if you are unsure of our needs that day. There are also other volunteer activities such as fundraising and education programs that can be done outside the shelter. If you are interested in such activities please see the Volunteer Coordinator.



## **VOLUNTEER LEVELS (DOGS)**

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### **RED**

- Has completed orientation & initial training
- Walks only red-coded dogs
- May participate in other volunteer activities as designated by the volunteer coordinator

### **BLACK**

- Upon completing 40 hours of volunteer work within a three month period, if a Red Apron volunteer has shown respect for fellow volunteers, our rules and structure and has shown a positive attitude toward serving our animals and community you may be invited to take a proficiency exam
- Upon passing the proficiency exam, volunteer will be promoted to Black Apron
- Black Aprons may walk all Red dogs and most Green dogs but may not be allowed to walk certain Green dogs, which will be marked accordingly
- Willing to participate in shelter activities designed to increase adoptions
- Required to work at one adoption event per year
- Willing & able to walk all but the most difficult dogs
- Expected to apply basic dog training skills to make dogs more adoptable
- Be willing to help potential adopters select a well-matched pet for their home

### **GREEN**

- Reserved for those willing to take a leadership position in the organization
- Serve as a mentor to other volunteers
- Willing to assist & train Red aprons
- Required to work at two adoption events each year
- Willing & able to work with the most difficult animals
- Serve as a liaison between volunteers and staff in a constructive capacity
- Must maintain a consistent level of commitment to retain green status
  - if not able to maintain a 6 to 8 hour per week schedule must go back to Red or Black. An extended absence may require starting at Red apron level at the coordinator's discretion.
- Designated by volunteer coordinator with input from volunteers & staff



Dogs will remain color-coded Red & Green. Black apron volunteers should walk only the dogs they feel comfortable handling and should not walk any Green dogs that are designated for special handling. Shelter management reserves the right to change the volunteer level downward or upward if it is believed to be in the best interest of the shelter and, most importantly, the animals.



## **VOLUNTEER LEVELS (CATS)**

### **RED**

- Has completed orientation & initial training
- Socializes cats/kittens inside or on cat porch
- If you are comfortable with people, help potential adopters
- May participate in other volunteer activities as designated by the volunteer coordinator

### **BLACK**

- Upon completing 40 hours of volunteer work within a three month period, if a Red Apron volunteer has shown respect for fellow volunteers, our rules and structure and has shown a positive attitude toward serving our animals and community you may be invited to take a proficiency exam
- Upon passing the proficiency exam, volunteer will be promoted to Black Apron
- Black Aprons may work with all adoptable cats within their comfort zone. If you are fearful of a cat you should not work with it.
- Willing to participate in shelter activities designed to increase adoptions
- Required to work at one adoption event per year
- Eligible to be trained in Feline-ality testing and perform the testing if interested
- Be willing to help potential adopters select a well-matched pet for their home

### **GREEN**

- Reserved for those willing to take a leadership position in the organization
- Serve as a mentor to other volunteers
- Willing to assist & train Red aprons
- Required to work at two adoption events each year
- Willing & able to work with the most difficult animals
- Serve as a liaison between volunteers and staff in a constructive capacity
- Must maintain a consistent level of commitment to retain green status – if not able to maintain a 4 to 8 hour per week schedule must go back to Red or Black. An extended absence may require starting at Red apron level at the coordinator's discretion.
- Designated by volunteer coordinator with input from volunteers & staff

**All volunteers should only work with cats they feel comfortable handling and should not handle cats that are designated for special handling unless approved to do so. Shelter management reserves the right to change the volunteer level downward or upward if it is believed to be in the**

## **VOLUNTEER DOS AND DON'TS**

- SIGN IN & OUT ON THE VOLUNTEER LOG AT THE VOLUNTEER ENTRANCE
- WEAR THE APPROPRIATE COLOR APRON AT ALL TIMES WHEN VOLUNTEERING AT THE SHELTER
- KEEP POOP BAGS IN YOUR APRON & CLEAN UP WHENEVER NEEDED
- WEAR APPROPRIATE CLOTHING AND SHOES (NO FLIP-FLOPS OR SANDALS)
- HELP POTENTIAL ADOPTERS GET THE INFORMATION THEY NEED
- DO NOT ENTER THE PARTS OF THE BUILDING THAT ARE OFF LIMITS TO VOLUNTEERS, SUCH AS QUARANTINE & IMPOUND
- USE THE SCHEDULING SOFTWARE (VOLUNTEERSPOT.COM) TO PLAN YOUR VOLUNTEER SHIFT IF YOU ARE A CAT VOLUNTEER
- SHOW UP TO WORK RAIN OR SHINE! THE ANIMALS DEPEND ON YOU TO GET TIME OUT OF THEIR KENNELS.
- PLEASE DO NOT USE THE SHELTER AS A PLACE TO SOCIALIZE WITH YOUR FRIENDS. FOCUS ON HELPING THE ANIMALS WHILE YOU ARE HERE. ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS TO BECOME VOLUNTEERS TOO!
- ALTHOUGH WCAC HAS STAFF TO CLEAN THE KENNELS & CAT CAGES, THE ANIMALS DON'T SOIL THEIR PLACES ON OUR SCHEDULE. IF A KENNEL OR CAGE NEEDS CLEANING, PLEASE DO IT. ASK A GREEN APRON TO SHOW YOU HOW.
- USE COMMON SENSE; IF YOU ARE UNCOMFORTABLE OR AFRAID TO DO SOMETHING, DON'T DO IT. ASK FOR HELP.
- REPORT ANYTHING THAT CONCERNS YOU TO THE STAFF OR GREEN APRON VOLUNTEERS. (MEDICAL ISSUES, INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR, ETC.)
- REPRESENT YOURSELF AND THE SHELTER ACCORDING TO THE VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT INCLUDED IN THIS MANUAL.
- MOST IMPORTANTLY, REMEMBER WHY WE ARE ALL HERE – TO HELP THE ANIMALS FIND HOMES AND HAVE THE BEST POSSIBLE QUALITY OF LIFE WHILE IN OUR CARE! STAY FOCUSED ON THAT GOAL AND USE YOUR TIME WISELY. VOLUNTEERS ARE A HUGE PART OF THAT PROCESS & WE NEED YOU!

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## **ADOPTION PROCEDURES**

The staff members handle adoptions at our facility. Volunteer input is always welcome regarding animal personalities, likes and dislikes etc. If there is a concern about a potential adopter please feel free to pull a staff member to the side and voice your concerns. Ultimately the decision is up to our trained adoption staff. If someone is interested in adopting an animal, one of our staff adoption counselors will ask them a series of questions to see what kind of animal they are interested in adopting and what their lifestyle is like (for example kids or no kids, pets or no other pets). The staff or volunteers will then show the potential adopter the animals that might be compatible with them. WCAC currently utilizes the ASPCA Canine-ality system of assessing a dog's behavior and ASPCA Feline-ality program to assess cat behavior. If the person decides that they would like to visit with a particular animal then the staff member will give them a pre-adoption application. Customers are not allowed to handle the animals until they have completed an application to adopt.

This application does not guarantee a finalized adoption. It's designed to provide a little more information about the person. Within 24-48 hours, the application will be approved or denied by staff. If staff approves the application, the adoption fee is paid and the adoption paperwork is finalized. Never promise or guarantee an animal to anyone. Currently, we do not hold animals for people unless there are special circumstances approved by the Director or Community Relations Coordinator.

Effective 1/1/2013, WCAC does not release animals to the adopter before they are spayed or neutered. The only exceptions to this policy are: (1) Puppies or kittens weighing less than three pounds. Prior to release a surgery date will be scheduled for the animal to return for surgery. (2) An animal that is suffering from a medical condition that is contagious or is unsafe for the pet to undergo surgery at the time of release. In that case the animal will be released, allowed to recuperate from the condition and returned for the spay/neuter surgery.

**Please note that the shelter reserves the right to refuse an adoption for any legally permissible reason.**



## **SURRENDER PROCEDURES**

We are a County Agency and an open admission facility. If an owner wishes to surrender a pet and is a resident of Williamson County, we are required to accept the animal. We require the person to complete an owner surrender questionnaire so that we can determine what type of new adoptive home the animal would be suitable for. The person will be required to show official identification with his/her name and address.

## **HOLDING PERIODS**

Once a new animal is brought into the shelter it is given a Capstar for fleas, vaccinated, and dewormed. It is then put into our Quarantine area (provided it appears healthy). The animal will be held for a period of time in this area to determine health and temperament and until all necessary medical work is completed. If an animal comes in that appears unhealthy but has a treatable condition, it will be provided with vet care and placed in the Isolation area until it is healthy. For the health and safety of our animals, staff and volunteers, only staff members are permitted in the isolation and quarantine areas. Animals in these areas are to be handled by staff only for disease control purposes and liability reasons because at this point they have not been behavior tested. Tennessee state law requires that all stray domestic animals be held for a period of no less than three days so that a potential owner can locate them or in case the animal is diseased or has been exposed to disease. WCAC policy is to hold all strays for five business days before we can prepare them for adoption.

Following the five day quarantine period, the animal may be behavior tested. WCAC currently utilizes the ASPCA "SAFER" methodology. This testing gives us a quantifiable method for assessing the behavioral traits of the animal.

After an animal is deemed ready for adoption it will be placed in one of our adoption areas. It is our goal to provide the necessary requirements for it to remain mentally and physically healthy. There is no pre-determined length of time in which the animal has to be adopted. Again, as long as physical and mental health is maintained an animal can be sheltered until it is placed in a loving permanent home.

It is our goal to ADOPT ALL ADOPTABLE ANIMALS. If an animal's mental or physical health declines and cannot be improved, or an animal is deemed too aggressive or ill for adoption, staff, in consultation with other animal health and behavior professionals may choose to humanely euthanize the animal. Aggression and mental health issues are determined by our trained staff (and on occasion professional trainers). Physical issues are determined by one of our veterinarians. It is our duty and priority to provide a good quality of life for our animals. Only the Director, the staff veterinarian, or, in the Director's absence, the Community Relations Coordinator may authorize the euthanasia of a domestic animal. As discussed below, this is not a decision that is ever taken lightly, but is sometimes an unfortunate necessity.

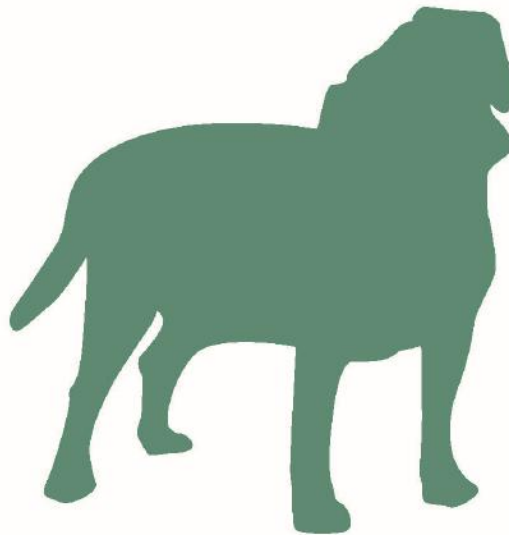
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## **EUTHANASIA**

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Euthanasia is an unfortunate but necessary part of animal sheltering. Millions of lost, abused, unwanted and abandoned animals come into shelters every year. We do our best to place every adoptable animal that comes to our shelter. Animals that are diagnosed with life threatening illnesses, extreme medical problems or display aggression towards other animals or people are not placed for adoption. In these cases the animal is euthanized using a humane method of lethal injection of sodium pentobarbital. This injection is administered intravenously and is an overdose of the anesthetic. Only veterinarians and state-licensed technicians may administer the injection. The procedure is quick and painless. The staff is with the animals until the very end. It is the most humane and painless method of euthanasia available.



## **DO VOLUNTEERS TAKE PART IN EUTHANASIA?**

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No, we do not expect or allow volunteers to take part in euthanasia.

When the decision is made by staff to euthanize an animal it is an extremely difficult one. The staff is here because we love animals and want to do our best to make the world a better place for them. Every animal deserves a home. If an animal is not adoptable and cannot be provided with an acceptable quality of life, we feel that it is not humane to let them linger indefinitely in the shelter. While volunteers do not take part in the process, you will need to be able to come to terms with the fact that it does happen.

Volunteers are expected to show consideration to the staff that is involved in euthanizing animals. If you would like to discuss euthanasia or our policy further, please see the Director.

## **WHAT IF A PARTICULAR ANIMAL IS GONE WHEN I COME IN?**

---

Please ask the staff about the animal. If you are only volunteering once a week the animal may have been adopted out another day. If the animal was euthanized we will be honest with you about it and let you know the reason why.

## **ARE WE CONSIDERED A NO-KILL SHELTER?**

---

The most accurate answer is we are striving to minimize euthanization at our shelter and are committed to do everything in our power to avoid the euthanization of healthy, adoptable animals. Unfortunately, there is still much debate on the definition of "no-kill", often due to lack of agreement on the definition of "adoptable animals". As a government agency, our statistics are a matter of public record and we are proud to say they show a steady positive trend for the last several years. We are pleased to say our Live Save Rate in 2014 was 92.3% for all cats and dogs that entered WCAC.

Our shelter is an "Open Admission" shelter. This means that we do not turn away sick, injured or aggressive animals that are brought in by the residents of our county or the Animal Control Officers. We do not deny admission because of age, breed, or any other reason as long as the people bringing in the animals are residents of our county. All animals will receive the best care, respect and treatment at our facility. We will do our best to prepare an animal for an adoptive home. Often animals come to us with behavior problems or terminal illnesses or injuries. We will do whatever is reasonably within our capability to rehabilitate these animals. Unlike some shelters, we do not have funding for professional behavioral and/or rehabilitation specialists. In the instance where an animal is terminally ill or injured and suffering, or so aggressive that it poses a risk to the public, we will make the responsible choice to humanely euthanize those animals. All reasonable efforts will be exhausted before such a decision is made. We believe every animal has the right to be free of suffering and the right to be placed in a loving and caring home. For those very reasons we believe it is not fair to indefinitely house animals that are unable to be rehabilitated.

There is no time limit for the adoptable animals at our shelter. Once an animal is placed up for adoption and remains mentally and physically healthy, it will remain at the shelter or in one of our approved foster homes until it is adopted.

## **FOSTERING**

---

One of the most important things a volunteer can do to help save animal lives is fostering. There are a number of reasons we often need fosters:

- Overcrowding at the shelter
- Controlled environment needed for medical treatment
- Providing experience in a home so we can tell adopters more about him/her
- Temporary living space while waiting for rescue transport

We provide all the basics the animal will need such as crate, food, and medicine. It is important to note that all animals released into the temporary custody of WCAC approved foster homes are the legal property of Williamson County Animal Center and remain the property of WCAC while in the foster home. WCAC makes the final determination of all decisions concerning the animal, such as adoption approvals and medical treatment. Foster animals needing medical attention during business hours must be brought to the staff veterinarian at WCAC. After hours, they must be taken to a medical facility designated by WCAC. Unapproved medical expenses will not be reimbursed by WCAC.

To be considered as a foster, please request a Foster Application. After it is approved you will be placed on file as a potential foster and will be contacted as needs arise. The application allows you to specify preferred size, age, species, and so on. Fosters must also sign a Medical Care Guidelines agreement which provides information regarding medical treatment of the foster animals.





## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

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### **What should I do if a shelter animal bites me?**

Please report it right away to shelter staff. If the skin is broken we will provide first aid or recommend that you see a doctor. Be sure to explain the circumstances of the bite accurately so that we can properly assess the behavior of the animal. By State law a bite report must be completed and the animal may be quarantined for ten days.

### **What should I do if I have a health concern about an animal?**

We have a Vet Check Request procedure that will be explained in your hands-on training session. Please understand that soft stool is usually not a concern, but bloody stool or diarrhea can be. If you see worms in the feces, use the drawings in the volunteer lobby to identify the type of worm.

### **How long should a dog walk last?**

Typically, a ten or fifteen minute walk is adequate. One lap around the gravel path is good for most dogs, but smaller or older dogs may need less and high energy dogs may need more. If there are enough volunteers to easily walk the dogs in a shift, spend more time if you want to. If we are short of volunteers in a shift, the focus needs to be on getting all the dogs out so the walks may have to be shorter.

### **Should I try to teach basic commands like sit and stay?**

Absolutely. Don't try to be Cesar Milan, but remember your main job is to make the animals more adoptable. That includes helping them become better leash walkers and at least learning "sit".

### **Can dogs play together in our play yards?**

Not unless the dogs share a kennel inside. The exception is that Green Aprons, based on their knowledge of the dogs, are allowed to put two dogs together when monitored carefully.

### **Can more than one cat at a time play on the cat porch?**

Only if those cats are listed as compatible playmates on the chart inside the adult cat room. Ask a Green Apron for help if you have questions.

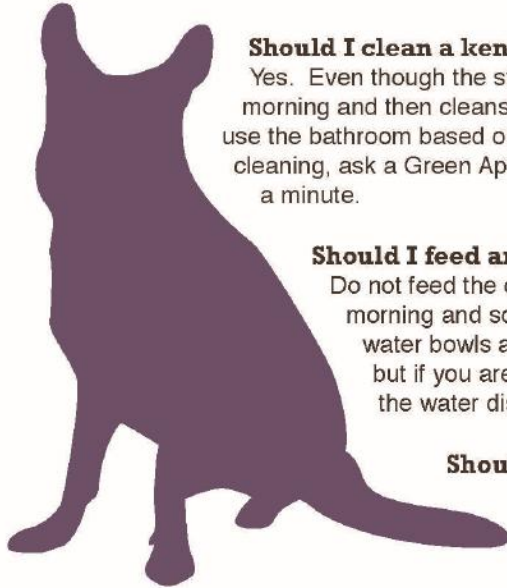
### **Can I take a dog into the public parks (*Maggie's Bark Park and Rascal's Run Around*)?**

No, those parks are for the public. Because we don't know anything about the temperament or medical history of the dogs the public brings in, we do not allow our dogs to mingle with them. If a public dog approaches you while you are walking a shelter dog, do not allow the dogs to interact. Please use Hank's Meet and Greet (green dog run) or Itchy's if you want to let a shelter dog off leash to play.

### **Can I leave a dog unattended in Hank's or Itchy's?**

Do not leave them unattended. Some of our dogs are very athletic and can climb fences or dig under them. Please do not allow a dog to dig in our parks.





**Should I clean a kennel if I notice it's dirty?**

Yes. Even though the staff cleans and sanitizes each kennel every morning and then cleans as necessary throughout the day, the dogs don't use the bathroom based on our schedule. If you see that a kennel needs cleaning, ask a Green Apron to show you how. It's easy and only takes a minute.

**Should I feed and water the dogs if their bowls are empty?**

Do not feed the dogs. They are fed the full day's quantity each morning and some of them may be on restricted diets. All the water bowls are checked periodically and at the end of the day, but if you are concerned, especially in hot weather, you may fill the water dish.

**Should I feed and water the cats if their bowls are empty?**

Do not feed the cats. Many of them are on restricted diets or require special food. You may fill an empty water dish if you wish.

**What times of day are the most volunteers needed?**

Dog Volunteers are especially needed in the mornings between 7:00 AM and 9:00 AM, and in the afternoons between 3:30 PM and 6:00 PM, but they are welcome at all times between 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM on weekdays, 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM Saturdays, and 7:00 AM – 2:00 PM Sundays and holidays. Cat Volunteers are needed during all adoption hours, which are 10:00-6:00 PM weekdays, 11:00-3:00 Saturdays. They are also needed on Sundays and holidays from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM.

**What does it mean when a dog or cat is going to Rescue?**

It means that dog or cat is effectively adopted. We work with only the most reputable rescue groups and have working relationships that have been developed over a period of years. Our Rescue Coordinator, Karen Menzyk, has found homes for hundreds of dogs and an occasional cat over the last fifteen years. Many of our rescue dogs go to northern states such as Maine because they have stringent spay and neuter laws and licensing requirements that are enforced and have created a situation where demand exceeds supply. They rescue dogs from southern states where traditionally we have done a poor job of spaying and neutering, thus we have an excess supply of dogs.

**Do cats get rescued too?**

Absolutely. The difference is they usually find homes in this area.

**What is the Rescue Waggin' program?**

We are proud to have been selected to participate in this program which is run by PetSmart Charities. Each month we send a number of dogs (usually 8 to 20) via Rescue Waggin' transport to shelters in the North Central U.S. where they have a shortage of adoptable animals. These shelters have adoption policies similar to our own and the dogs are typically adopted very quickly. Programs like this allow us to avoid euthanizing for space.

**Is there a specific place I should park when volunteering?**

Please leave the spaces closest to the front door open for potential adopters. Parking is available along the driveway (except in front of the fire hydrant) and in the Columbia State lot next to the soccer field.

**Why doesn't the shelter accept surrendered animals on Saturdays?**

It's a staffing problem. We have one animal control officer on duty on Saturday and he or she must leave the building often on calls. When an animal is surrendered, it rarely has medical records so we must vaccinate upon intake to protect the animals already in the shelter. We don't have the staff to safely intake animals on Saturday. For now on Saturdays we are open as an adoption center only.

**Why do I need to record my hours when I volunteer?**

Some of the grant programs available to us require that we provide an accounting of our volunteer involvement. Also, many of our volunteers want us to track their hours for community service. The sign in sheets are how we track hours. It also helps us detect patterns and determine when we need to build up our volunteer participation.

**Where can people see photos of adoptable animals?**

On our website at [www.adoptwcac.org](http://www.adoptwcac.org), click on Adoptable Animals. We also feature pets from time to time on our Facebook page, which is Williamson County Animal Center. We have added a button on our Facebook page that says "Petfinder Adoptable Animals" that shows the same information.

**What will I learn at the hands-on training that I don't learn at the Orientation Class?**

The Orientation Class is set up to provide general information about the shelter and to educate potential volunteers about the various jobs that are available. The hands-on sessions are very important to help new volunteers learn the basics of a job. For example, dog walkers are shown how to properly hold a leash, how to safely enter and exit the building with a dog, what to do when you encounter another dog walker in the building or outside, how to remove dogs from their kennels safely and return them the same way, etc.

**What should I do to help potential adopters?**

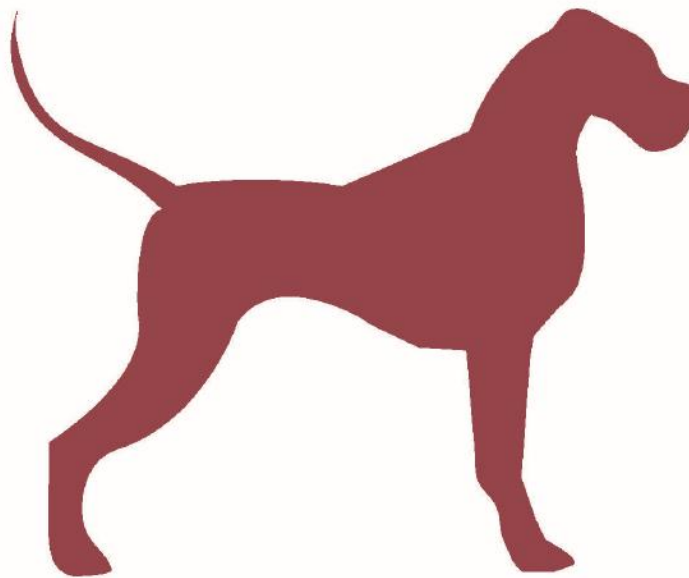
Treat them as if you work in a retail establishment. Provide them a high level of service by asking if you can answer any questions about a particular dog or cat. Perhaps ask them why they are looking at a certain dog. Don't be judgmental – try to help. If you are not comfortable talking to people or feel you don't know enough to be helpful, ask someone else to help them.

**Does the shelter handle wildlife?**

Other than domestic animals, we only take in skunks and bats. Tennessee State Law requires that we euthanize all skunks and bats upon intake due to risk of rabies. If the skunk or bat had contact with a person or domestic animal, it is sent to a State laboratory for rabies testing. If a resident has trapped rats, mice, reptiles, amphibians, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, or ground hogs WCAC will not handle these animals. We instruct the residents to safely release the animal. If a resident has foxes, coyotes, bobcats, weasels, river otters, birds of prey, venomous snakes or large wildlife we instruct the resident to contact Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency for assistance.

**Do I put my own animals at risk by volunteering?**

As long as your pets are current on vaccinations there is minimal risk. We advise that they get the bordatella (kennel cough) vaccine if they are not currently getting that one. You should wash and sanitize your hands often at the shelter. Please ask if you would like more information on common shelter diseases.



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Thanks again for considering becoming a volunteer for  
Williamson County Animal Center.

We truly appreciate your willingness to give of your time and talents  
for the benefit of these special creatures.

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## **VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT**

By signing this agreement, I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to the following Williamson County Animal Center (WCAC) Volunteer Code of Conduct:

- I understand that the goal of the volunteer program at WCAC is to engage and educate the public on the mission & philosophy of WCAC, to support shelter activities, and to provide supplemental care and enrichment for the lives of shelter animals and that my actions and attitudes should always further these goals. I understand that I can and should always seek guidance if I am ever unclear about the mission, philosophy or practices of WCAC.
- I agree to conduct myself in an appropriate and professional manner while volunteering for WCAC, following & publicly supporting WCAC program, policies and practices. In my capacity as a volunteer, I agree to consistently conduct myself in a manner consistent with humane treatment of WCAC animals and professional interaction with WCAC employees, patrons, other volunteers, and members of the public.
- I understand that WCAC welcomes & relies upon volunteer feedback. If I am ever in disagreement with any philosophy, policy or practice of WCAC, I agree to use the appropriate, established communication channels to share my concerns or feedback. The channels are, in order:
  1. Communicate first with the Volunteer Coordinator.
  2. If I feel my concern was not addressed at this level, I will then communicate it directly to the Director.
- I understand that I am responsible for reviewing all the materials given to me at orientations and trainings, including the New Volunteer Manual. If I have any questions or do not understand anything in the materials, I agree to ask the Volunteer Coordinator.
- I know that as a WCAC volunteer, I represent Williamson County Animal Center, and I promise not to engage in any activity or communication that may cause harm to the reputation of WCAC. I agree to be a role model for the humane treatment of animals, at home and in all places as well as while working with the shelter animals.
- I agree to accept supervision, direction and support from the WCAC staff and understand that they will provide me with feedback to help me perform my volunteer duties most effectively and safely, and in the best interest of the animals I am volunteering for.
- I understand that failing to observe the above agreements could result in my dismissal from the volunteer program, and that I can be removed at any time at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator or Director.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian (*For volunteers under the age of 18 only.*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **\*\*\* VOLUNTEER RELEASE FORM \*\*\***

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**Williamson County Animal Center**  
106 Claude Yates Drive  
Franklin, Tennessee 37064  
615-790-5590

I have volunteered to care for, walk, and interact with the animals at the Williamson County Animal Center. As a volunteer, I agree to follow all rules, policies, and procedures of Williamson County Animal Center while volunteering for WCAC in any capacity.

I assume all risk associated with volunteering, and understand that Williamson County Animal Center offers no warranty or guarantee as to the animals' physical condition, health, or ability to cohabitate with persons or other animals. I agree to indemnify and hold Williamson County harmless from any and all damage to myself or my property, or the person and property of third persons, resulting from my volunteering for WCAC in any capacity. I assume responsibility for my own safety during these activities.

**PRINT NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **TELEPHONE** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**IF UNDER 21, PARENT'S SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_

**IS THIS FOR REQUIRED COURT COMMUNITY SERVICE?** \_\_\_\_\_

**IS THIS FOR REQUIRED SCHOOL COMMUNITY SERVICE?** \_\_\_\_\_

**NUMBER OF HOURS REQUIRED** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE HOURS ARE TO BE COMPLETED** \_\_\_\_\_

**SCHOOL** \_\_\_\_\_

**COORDINATOR** \_\_\_\_\_

**TELEPHONE NUMBER OF COORDINATOR** \_\_\_\_\_

**YOU MUST SIGN IN AND OUT ON THE PROVIDED DAILY HOURS LOG TO RECEIVE CREDIT FOR HOURS WORKED.**

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