Welcome to Volunteer Training Step 2: Animal Handling Training

Building a community of caring by helping pets and educating people.
Our Goals

What We’ll Cover Today

• Thinking Like an Adopter
• Body Language Basics
• Successful Handling
• Handling Logistics
• Animal Handling Pledge
• Volunteer Training Step 3
Our Goals

Before or No Training

- Why don't you do what I say?
- I have told you so many times!!
- Why is my person always frustrated and yelling???

Positive Reinforcement Training

= HAPPY RELATIONSHIP

- You understand me and make me feel safe!

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Our Goals

Adoption Goal:
To increase adoptions by minimizing each animal’s length of stay and prevent returns by making successful adoption matches.
Our Goals

Training Goal:
To equip people to safely handle animals in a way that reduces an animal’s stress, promotes adoptable behaviors, and encourages placement success.
Let’s get to know each other

• Pick an adjective that begins with the first letter of your name
• Combine that with your first name
• Now add your program to the end
  – Silly Stephanie, Dog Adopts
  – Loopy Lydia, Cat Adopts
Thinking Like An Adopter

Looking from an adopter’s perspective to encourage adoption placement.

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Thinking Like An Adopter

What kind of behaviors are appealing to adopters?

Ask yourself - what does the public think of this pet? How can I help this animal get adopted faster?

What kind of behaviors may deter someone from adopting?

Our responsibility as handlers is to prevent and manage behaviors that may turn people away from a particular animal.
Ways to enhance adoptable behaviors:

1) Reinforce desirable behaviors
   o Mark the behavior every time they’re doing something an adopter will like
     ▪ Say “yes” or click
   o Provide rewards within 1-2 seconds
     ▪ Offer praise
     ▪ Give a treat
     ▪ Grant access
     ▪ Provide life rewards
Thinking Like An Adopter

Enhancing Adoptable Behaviors: Cats

Snap your clicker every time you see a desirable behavior.
Snap your clicker every time you see a desirable behavior.
Thinking Like An Adopter

Ways to enhance adoptable behaviors:

2) Improve kennel presence
   - Draw shy animals forward
   - Reinforce good manners
   - Set them up for success
     - Don’t reinforce poor behavior by granting access
Thinking Like An Adopter

Kennel Presence: Cats

Describe what these cats are doing that adopters may find appealing?
Thinking Like An Adopter

Kennel Presence: Dogs

What behaviors are these handlers rewarding to encourage adoptable traits?
Thinking Like An Adopter

Ways to enhance adoptable behaviors:

3) Advertise the animal
   - Keep adoptable animals in the public eye
   - Show off their good manners
   - Actively train the animal
   - Curb unappealing behaviors
Body language as an ongoing conversation.

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Body language as conversation:

- Actions speak louder than words
- Snapshot of current emotional state
- Handler must actively interpret changes
- Each handling experience is new
Body Language Basics

Accurately interpreting body language leads to:

• Prevention of injury
• Increased handling success
• Enhanced adoptability
• Reduction of stress

  o 3 responses to stress:
    ▪ Fight
    ▪ Freeze
    ▪ Flight

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Cat Body Language

• What are some of the signs of a friendly cat?
  o Ears pointed slightly forward
  o Whiskers sideways
  o Smooth hair coat
  o Vertical tail
  o Head bumping
  o Vocal murmurs
  o Exposed belly

• Should you approach this cat?
• How would you approach this cat?
Cat Body Language

• What are some signs of an aroused cat?
  o Potentially playful or predatory
  o Ears pricked forward
  o Pupils dilated
  o Forward, fanned out whiskers
  o Chattering

• Should you approach this cat?
• How would you handle this cat?
Cat Body Language

- Signs of a stressed cat
  - Dilated pupils
  - Raised fur
  - Whipping or tucked tail
  - Stiff, tense
  - Crouched body
  - Hissing, growling, spitting

- Should you approach this cat?
- How can you help this cat?
Describe the body language each cat is displaying.
Body Language Basics

Stressed Cats

Describe the body language each cat is displaying.

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Dog Body Language

- What are the signs of a relaxed dog?
  - Irises are easily visible
  - Soft gaze
  - Relaxed or open mouth
  - Loose lips and tongue
  - Mid or low tail carriage
  - Gentle tail wag
  - Smooth hair coat

- Should you interact with this dog?
- How would you approach this dog?
Dog Body Language

- What are the signs of a playful dog?
  - Overall relaxed body language
  - Neutral body positioning
  - Play bows
  - Wiggly demeanor
  - Tail up but loose
  - Exaggerated movements

- Should you engage with this dog?
- How would you handle this dog?
Body Language Basics

Dog Body Language

• What are some signs of an alert dog?
  o Ears forward
  o Tail in a mid or high position
  o Closed mouth
  o Eyes wide, fixed gaze
  o Scoping out situation
  o Rigid body

• Should you engage with this dog?
• How would you handle this dog?
Body Language Basics

Dog Body Language

• What are some signs of a stressed, defensive dog?
  o Fearful, shut down
  o Whale eyes, diverted gaze
  o Ears pulled back, flattened
  o Panting, salivating, yawning, lip licking
  o Tail tucked or up against belly
  o Excessive shedding
  o Shaking, cowering, crouched, tense
  o Weight centered on back legs
  o Front paw lifted
  o Rolled over to expose belly

• Should you handle this dog?
• How can you help this dog?
Dog Body Language

• Signs of a stressed dog and possibly offensive dog
  o Dilated pupils, raised eye veins
  o Eyes focused, may stare
  o Ears perked up and raised high
  o Mouth closed, lips forward and tense
  o Weight centered on front legs
  o Tall body, neck raised
  o Hackles raised
  o Stiff tail, stiff wag
  o Whining, barking, growling
• Should you engage with this dog?
Body Language Basics

Playful Dog

Describe the body language the dog is displaying.
Body Language Basics

Friendly Dog

Describe the body language the dog is displaying.

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Describe the body language the dog is displaying.
Successful Handling

Setting yourself, and animals, up for success.

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Successful Handling

Reasons We Handle Animals

• Provide basic daily care
• Deliver medical services and maintain health
• Address mental, behavioral, emotional needs
• Promote and facilitate adoptions

Examples of reasons why we handle:

• Morning dog walking
• Physical examinations
• Cat socialization
• Off-site adoption events

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Successful Handling

Handling Philosophy:

- Make it a positive experience
  - Stress is contagious
  - Respect the animal’s personal space
  - Don’t use harsh words or physical discipline
  - Don’t force the interaction
  - Don’t dominate
  - Refrain from using commands
  - Have fun!

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Successful Handling

Handling Philosophy:

• Reward animals for desirable behaviors
  o Use praise, access, life rewards, or treats

• If animal shows undesirable behaviors:
  o Interrupt or redirect using available tools
  o If you can’t manage the behavior, return the animal to their kennel
  o If you can’t—ask for help!
Successful Handling

Handler Responsibilities

• Remain attentive
  o Stay engaged with the animal
  o Avoid distractions
  o Capture positive behaviors

• Keep everyone safe
  o Read kennel available documentation
  o Keep the animal appropriately restrained
  o Be aware of your surroundings
  o Wear proper attire
  o Ask for help

• Share important observations with personnel
**Handler Approach**

- **Your Demeanor**
  - Do: Approach slowly from the side
  - Do: Use a leisurely pace
  - Don’t: Run towards the animal
  - Don’t: Surprise the animal
  - Don’t: Reach over their head

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Successful Handling

Handler Approach

• Your Posture:
  o Do: Remain in their field of vision
  o Do: Keep your body free of tension
  o Do: Ensure good footing
  o Don’t: Loom over animal
  o Don’t: Face them head on
  o Don’t: Make big movements
  o Don’t: Make yourself vulnerable
  o Don’t: Sit on the floor or in doorways
Successful Handling

Handler Approach

• Your Behavior:
  - Do: Use a soft, low tone of voice
  - Do: Use your peripheral vision
  - Don’t: Over-talk
  - Don’t: Be too loud
  - Don’t: Stare at the animal
  - Don’t: Use your cellphone
  - Don’t: Ignore the animal
Handling Logistics

Taking what you’ve learned and putting it into practice.

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Handling Logistics

Before Handling an Animal

• Be prepared with supplies
  o Treats and toys
  o For Cats: Catnip, grooming tools
  o For Dogs: Clicker, leash, bandana, poop bags

• Additional Equipment
  o Dog Harnesses
  o Cat Wands

• Check In With Staff
Handling Logistics

Before Handling an Animal

- Read animal-specific information
  - Dog & cat trackers
  - Kennel signage. Don’t handle if the following sign is present:
    - Adoption Pending
    - Waiting for Test Results
    - I’m Adopted!
    - I am not available at this time
    - Hold for BSR
    - Temporary Housing
  - Read kennel card
  - Read behavior reports, if available
Handling Logistics

While Handling a Cat

• Do:
  o Reinforce adoptable behaviors
  o Watch the cat’s body language
  o Be mindful of your handling approach
  o Ask for help if the cat gets loose

• Don’t:
  o Force out a stressed cat
  o Allow cat to perch on shoulders
  o Walk around the room with the cat
Handling Logistics

Removing a Cat from the Kennel
Handling Logistics

While Handling a Dog

• Do:
  o Reinforce adoptable behaviors
  o Watch dog’s body language at all times
  o Ensure dog is leashed before opening door
  o Maintain secure hold on leash at all times
  o Yell “loose dog” if dog becomes loose
  o Clean up after each dog
  o EAC: Unlock and lock kennel doors

• Don’t:
  o Take out an overstimulated dog. Wait for calm.
  o Linger in the room or in front of other kennels
  o Drag the dog by the leash
Handling Logistics

Removing & Returning Dogs to Runs

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Handling Logistics

Removing Dogs from Small Kennels

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Handling Logistics

After Handling an Animal

- Ensure kennel latch is secure
- Wash hands
- Disinfect toys, dispose of one time use items
- Utilize trackers
- Record and share observations
- For dogs: Mark daily care cards
- For cats: Disinfect used surfaces
- Take a deep breath!

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Handling Logistics

Frequently Asked Questions:

• What do you do if an animal becomes too much for you to handle?
• What do you do if you are bitten or scratched?
• What should you do if an animal gets loose?
• When can I just play with the animals?
• What do I do if I see someone mishandling an animal?
• Who do I talk to if I have an observation to share?
Handling Logistics

Available Tools & Resources

- Volunteer Handbook
- Program Cheat Sheets
- Volunteer Resources web page
- Society Staff:
  - Shelter Managers
  - Animal Behavior & Intake
  - Volunteer Services
  - Trainers & Mentors
- Weekly Volunteer Newsletter
- Volunteer Facebook page
Animal Handling Pledge

Make the commitment to safely handle animals and improve their adoptability.

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Animal Handling Pledge

1. I pledge to set the animals up for success by actively and consistently engaging them in a way that will enhance their adoptability.
2. I pledge to familiarize myself with the animals’ information before handling them.
3. I pledge to reward and reinforce desired behaviors.
4. I pledge to keep my animal appropriately restrained.
5. I pledge to be aware of my immediate surroundings and to take every precaution needed to ensure everyone’s safety.
6. I pledge to actively prevent undesirable behavior and discontinue activities if I am not able to interrupt or redirect it.
7. I pledge to document activities as requested.
8. I pledge to notify managers or Animal Behavior & Intake of significant behavioral changes.
9. I pledge to ask for assistance should an animal become too much for me to handle.
10. I pledge to utilize only training methods for which I’ve received instruction from The Anti-Cruelty Society.

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Next Step: Program Training

Volunteer Training Step 3

✔ Volunteer Orientation
✔ Animal Handling Training
☐ Program Training
☐ Solo Session
Thank You!

What’s next? Program Training

• Choose a training date
  o Only 1 program to start. You can cross-train after 25 hours

• We’ll send you a confirmation email
  o Read the email in its entirety
  o Do your assigned reading in advance or you’ll be asked to reschedule your training session for another date
  o Come in dress code or you’ll be asked to reschedule

• Contact your trainer if you need to cancel
  o No calls no shows forfeit the ability to complete training

Final step: Solo Session

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Next Step: Program Training

Available Training Dates

- Everyday Adoption Center
  - Date
  - Date

- Volunteer Guides
  - Date
  - Date

- Cat Care
  - Date
  - Date

- Cat Adopts
  - Date
  - Date

- Dog Care
  - Date
  - Date

- Dog Adopts
  - Date
  - Date

- Community Programs
  - Date
  - Date

Once you’ve completed your form, turn it in, and you’re free to go!

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