



THE ANTI-CRUELTY SOCIETY

A Commitment to Caring *Since 1899*

Volunteer Department

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Special Project: Cat Rehab

Introduction

Welcome to the Cat Rehab Project!

As a member of the Cat Rehab team you will have the opportunity to help cats who are sick with Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) to retain their best qualities while providing them with much needed socialization.

Working closely with our Clinic Rehab team, Cat Rehab volunteers engage with pre-selected felines to help ensure their ongoing social, emotional, mental, behavioral, and physical well-being.

Cat Rehab Volunteer Responsibilities:

- 1) Tend to each cat's physical needs.
- 2) Provide cats with one-on-one enrichment
- 3) Document activities and notes when needed.

Training Requirements

- 1) Volunteer Orientation
- 2) Animal [Body Language Videos](#)
- 3) Review of Volunteer Handbook & Program Manuals
- 4) Formal training and experience in a Level 1 cat program
- 5) Demonstrated aptitude with cat handling and enrichment

Safety Guidelines

Always read the kennel card and additional notes before interacting with ANY resident animal. Remember to follow all other volunteer guidelines (such as dress code) for safety when interacting with the animals.

For your safety, the safety of the cats, please do not perform care duties you have not received instruction for via an Anti-Cruelty Society staff member or volunteer mentor.

If you have cats of your own at home, be sure that they are current on all of their vaccinations before you begin to volunteer with our the sick cat population.

For the safety of other cats in the building, cats in the Rehab center cannot be taken of the Rehab room, as doing so will spread the virus to healthy cats.

Cat Bites

If at any time you are bitten by a cat it should be reported immediately to a manager on duty. Animals who bite, and draw blood, must undergo a 10 day rabies quarantine on-site per the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Animals who bite are typically reassessed after the rabies quarantine to ensure their continued adoptability.

Importance of Following Procedure and Policy

As a volunteer it is important to follow all procedures and policies. These have been compiled from the knowledge and experiences of other Anti-Cruelty Society volunteers and staff. They have been created in an

effort to protect the animals and people who interact with them. Adhering to these procedures will assist you with your volunteer responsibilities.

If at any time you have any questions, issues or concerns, please bring them to the attention of the Clinic or Volunteer Services Department.

Failure to follow volunteer guidelines may result in immediate dismissal from your program.

Emotional Considerations

Working with animals can become emotionally exhausting at times. Whether seeing a pet sit in their cage for an elongated stay, or parting with an animal upon their adoption, there are many emotional considerations to keep in mind when working directly with the animals.

Whether you feel overwhelmed by an animal's adoption return, or a recent relinquishment, it's important to focus on the positives and what you can personally do to make an impact in each animal's life. Whether they are here for a short period of time, are transferred out to one of our partners, or euthanized, you have a unique opportunity to care for that pet during your volunteer visit.

Cat Rehab volunteers should also note that not all of the cats who are housed in the Rehab Room may become available for adoption through the Society. We are an "open-admission" facility, which means that every companion animal in need of shelter and care is welcome here. We offer all animals refuge, regardless of whether we believe that animal is adoptable. We are dedicated to preventing animal suffering and cruelty and to providing quality care for every animal.

While this means that thousands of pets will make their way through our doors and into permanent adoptive homes this year, it also means that some will not. Some cats may require additional medical or behavioral treatment, which may result in transfer to another organization or, if unavailable, euthanasia.

For this reason volunteers need to take extra consideration in their involvement in this project before participating. The emotional weight of working in these spaces is much greater than that of the adoption rooms and we want everyone to know this in advance.

Euthanasia is an emotional and heart-wrenching process for those involved. It's a decision no staff member wants to make or carry out. For this reason, volunteers must respect decisions as they are made. Failure to do so may result in a volunteer's removal from the project, or a discontinuation of the Cat Rehab socialization effort.

Getting Started

Once you have completed the required training for the Cat Rehab effort, your volunteer profile will be updated with your new qualifications and you will be ready to begin!

When You Can Volunteer

Cat Rehab volunteers may be in the shelter 7 days a week between 10:00 am and 6:00 pm.

Where You Can Volunteer

Cat Rehab volunteers will spend their time working with cats who are currently housed in the Cat Rehab room.

Working with Anti-Cruelty Society Staff and Other Volunteers

When you enter Cat Rehab, introduce yourself as a special project volunteer to the personnel in the room. Anti-Cruelty Society staff members are in the room to tend to the cats, feed and clean. Please ask a staff member for assistance before taking on any responsibilities that are not outlined in this manual.

Volunteers should note that staff have priority access to the Cat Rehab rooms at any given time. If you are working in a space where a staff person is cleaning or feeding, please give them a wide berth and respect their space.

When You Arrive

1) Sign in at the front desk

2) Store personal items

- Store your belongings in the provided lockers within the Volunteer Office. Be sure to bring your own lock – these are not provided.

3) Collect supplies

- Collect supplies you may need for your program like hand sanitizer, toys and treats. Supplies and enrichment materials can be found in the Holding rooms and Volunteer Office. If there is something you need but cannot find, please contact a member of the Animal Behavior & Training team or the Volunteer Department.
- Grab a volunteer apron.
- Locate your ID Badge.

4) After locating your badge and supplies you are ready to begin. Once prepared, go directly to the Cat Rehab area and introduce yourself to staff who are also assigned to that space.

Before Leaving

1) Disinfect and replace supplies

- Be sure discard disposable toys (like kibble-filled toilet paper tubs) , place grooming supplies and reusable toys in the Cat Rehab kitchen sink and put away any special foods you may have used.

2) Store badge and apron

- Head back to the volunteer office and put away your ID Badge, taking off the clothing clop, and place the apron in the hamper. Please make sure apron pockets have been emptied.

3) Log your hours

- Using a volunteer computer, open a browser window and go to the following website:
www.myvolunteerpage.com.
- It is important that all hours volunteered are entered. Volunteer hours are tracked and reported monthly and annually.
- You are also welcome to log your volunteer hours from home.

Cat Rehab Socialization Responsibilities

Procedural Notes

Working in the Rehab room is a different experience, and because there's a unique animal population present, there are special protocols that each volunteer must keep in mind during each visit:

- Volunteers should only work in the Rehab area *after* interacting with healthy cats, and not vice versa. Under no circumstance should a volunteer work with a sick cat and then interact with a healthy cat afterwards.
- Volunteers should work with each cat in-kennel and should not remove cats from the room.
- Reinforcing the positive adoptable behaviors of individual cats with treats is welcome and encouraged. Please remember to use treats in moderation and only when appropriate.
- Volunteers communicate their observations about specific cats using the provided whiteboard in the room. If you there is a cat who needs immediate attention or help, please let staff know directly. Otherwise include your notes on the whiteboard.
- Note that the clinic team may be adding your notes into the cat's official Pet Point profile. For this reason, it is important to be descriptive rather than diagnostic. I.e. instead of writing "Squeekers was scared today," write "Squeekers was at the back of his kennel and pulled away when I tried to pet him."
- Supplies and enrichment materials can be found in the Rehab room and Volunteer Office. If there is something you need but cannot find, please connect with a Rehab or Volunteer Services staff member.
- Suggestions for socialization may include: In-kennel clicker training, gentle massage, brushing, reading the cat a book or a simple petting session.
- You're not alone in your efforts! AB&T and Rehab staff may spray Bliss Miss on cages, add Rescue Remedy to water bowls, will assist cats in eating and/or do other socialization as needed. Reach out to staff should you need help or have questions about a specific cat.
- As when you work with cats in other parts of the building, it's important to wash your hands between animals and to not re-use tools between cats without proper disinfection.

1) Tend to each cat's physical needs.

Helping cats eat: Some of the cats who are in the Rehab Rooms may be so stressed that they are not eating – which can lead to devastating health consequences. One of the main goals for Cat Rehab volunteers is to ensure that each cat is taking in some kind of food. Alternative foods can be obtained by asking rehab staff.

If you find a cat with a specific food preference, please note it on the white board and tell a Rehab Staff member.

Grooming: If there is a staff note or request for a cat to be groomed, gather the appropriate supplies from the Clean & Preen room or the Volunteer Office. If a cat is fractious, do not attempt to groom them. All grooming should be contained to the cat's kennel and volunteers should remain aware of their subject's body language at all times.

Used grooming tools should be placed in the Cat Rehab sink for staff to disinfect. Do not bring used tools out from the room unless they have already been cleaned.

Bedding and Water: Check that each kennel is stocked well with blankets or towels and that each water dish is full. When refilling water bowls be careful not to touch the kennel bars with the can tip. Clean bedding and towels are located in the laundry room. Soiled towels should be placed in the hamper in the Cat Rehab area.

2) Provide cats with one-on-one enrichment.

Activities: Below is a list of activities that staff and volunteers perform with cats in the Cat Adoption room. These same games and interactions can be performed in the Rehab Room, when appropriate.

Toys: Check that every cat has a toy in their kennel and distribute as necessary. Toys that are worse for wear should be discarded. Toys can be found in the Volunteer Office or laundry area. Dirty toys should be placed in the Cat Rehab sink for staff to disinfect.

Read a Book: Help cats who are stressed in their kennels relax by sitting outside their cage and reading to them. Here's a quick breakdown of how this is done:

- Pick a good book. (Children's books are wonderful. So are romance novels.)
- Grab a stool/milk crate and place it near the cat's kennel (best to be at one side or the other of the kennel).
- Sit, offering a sideway presentation.
- Don't directly face the cat or their kennel.
- Introduce yourself to the cat.
- Read for about 5 – 10 minutes only.
- Take your leave.
- Move on to the next cat.

Treat Training: Grab a treat pouch and kibble or treats broken into small bits. Wait for a positive behavior, such as eye contact, quiet, sitting, and other attentiveness. Identify, or mark with a soft 'yes', and reward

desirable behavior with a piece of food. Ignore undesirable behavior. Do not make a verbal request for a specific position, call the cat, or lure them into position. Just wait until they offer a better behavior. Be sure to treat after every ‘yes.’

Enrichment Menu: Implement an activity from the Enrichment Menu, found at the end of this handbook.

Socialization Supplies

Remember to utilize a variety of supplies such as toys, brushes, and straws located in the volunteer office for your socialization time with the cat. These supplies can be found in the white Cat Program cabinets against the back wall.

- If any of the supplies are running low, please notify the Volunteer Services Department.
- Supplies must be disinfected or discarded after each use (that is, between cats) unless you are leaving the toy with the cat in their kennel. Leave used toys in the Cat Rehab sink for staff to disinfect.
- When using treats, they should be given in small amounts and used to create a relationship with the cat and to reward social behavior. If a cat responds positively to the treats, you should make a note of the type on the orange sheet. This will help the next volunteer know exactly when and what type of treats the cat was given.

3) Document activities and notes.

Document any important notes about your socialization session on the volunteer white board within the main rehab area. This way the next group of volunteers knows which cats need more attention, react best to certain foods, may be having a rough day, etc. Staff will also reference your notes so make sure they’re legible and mark your initials after them as well as the date.

Note that the clinic team may be adding your notes into the cat’s official Pet Point profile. For this reason, it is important to be descriptive rather than diagnostic when describing certain behaviors. I.e. instead of writing “Squeekers was scared today,” write “Squeekers was at the back of his kennel and pulled away when I tried to pet him.”

If you should note any behaviors that may jeopardize the safety of any personnel, please bring them to the attention of a staff member immediately.

Cat Profiles & Handling

The following procedures are the standards for all staff and volunteers working with cats and should be followed at all times. Consistency is key.

Kennel Cards

Kennel cards in the rehab area are located in a file organizer in the main space and are filed by the cat’s cage number. The kennel card is the most important document for each cat, as it contains all health, temperament, and behavior information for an animal. If at any point you do not understand, cannot read, or have forgotten what a notation or symbol means – ask a shelter staff member. .

Volunteers should not write on the kennel cards.

Kennel & Board Signage

In addition to the kennel card, you should remain aware of the cat's physical condition and attitude, as well as additional notes that may be present on either the cat's cage or on the staff's white board outside of the animal housing rooms.

Addressing Problem Behaviors:

Interrupt and redirect any undesired behaviors. For example, offer a toy to cat who is play biting. Feel free to ask questions of the room staff or Animal Behavior & Training team if you are unsure of how to interact with an animal or if you have concerns about an animal's behavior.

Hygiene

Hygiene is a vital aspect of your responsibilities as a Cat Rehab volunteer.

- Volunteers are required to wash their hands before and after each cat encounter.
- Use the sink and wash area in the Cat Rehab room to wash hands between animals.
- In addition, hand-washing is required if a volunteer comes in contact with a fomite (i.e..any object that may potentially be carrying a germ), feces, blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, exudates or articles contaminated by these substances.
- Wash hands before eating, drinking or smoking; after using the restroom; after cleaning animal cages or animal-care areas; and whenever hands are visibly soiled.
- Disinfect any surface or tool that has come into contact with a cat after each use. For assistance disinfecting, ask a staff member for a quick demonstration of the current method being utilized.

Conclusion

On behalf of the animals and staff - thank you in advance for the time and energy you will be giving to our Holding Room cats!

Your efforts will help sick cats recover from their illness at a much faster rate! The Cat Rehab environment is incredibly stressful for the cats, and every little thing we can do to help them adjust will relieve some of this stress. No doubt, human interaction is the best medicine for some of these cats, and even just hearing a calm, soothing, kind voice will help a cat open up and become well again.

As a group of elite volunteers, we appreciate your efforts to work with these cats on a regular basis and hope you understand that the progress you make with the cats—no matter how small—goes a long way for both the cat and its eventual adopter.

