



THE ANTI-CRUELTY SOCIETY

An **OPEN DOOR** to **COMPASSION**

POST SURGICAL RECOVERY MANUAL



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Volunteer Services

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Post Surgical Recovery Program!

Volunteers in this program will have an opportunity to play a vital role in helping clinic patients, and the staff who service them, in the post spay/neuter surgical recovery process.

Volunteer assistance with Post Surgical Recovery has helped The Anti-Cruelty Society achieve thousands of spay/neuter surgeries annually.

Volunteers in this program help and handle animals that are undergoing surgery including:

- Animals adopted from The Anti-Cruelty Society to be taken home by an adopter.
- Society animals going to the adoption rooms.
- Animals brought to the Society by organizations without surgical resources.
- Families with animals utilizing our Clinic's low cost spay/neuter services.

Program Objectives

Volunteers fulfill a wide variety of needs within our Clinic– but the main focus of PSR volunteers is:

1. To assist the Veterinarians and Veterinary Assistants in the care of animals in the surgical recovery process.
2. To prevent complications following surgery by monitoring vital signs and assisting in each pet's recovery to a conscious state.
3. To maintain a constant flow of animals in and out of our surgical operating room.

Program Training Steps

1. **Observation Session:** Provides an overview of the program before receiving hands-on training.
2. **Hands-On Training:** 6-8 hands-on training sessions that will show you the ins and outs of the various procedures. We aim to schedule the sessions as close together as possible.
3. **Solo Session:** Once you've completed your hands-on training, and have indicated you feel comfortable moving forward, the Volunteer Services team will help you schedule your solo session. The Volunteer Services team will connect with volunteers following your solo session to see how things went and if you're ready to volunteer on your own in the program.

Importance of Following Procedure and Policy

As a volunteer it is important that you follow all procedures and policies. These have been compiled from the knowledge and experiences of other volunteers and staff, and have been created in an effort to protect the animals, volunteers, staff, and public while at The Anti-Cruelty Society.

Adhering to these procedures will assist you with your volunteer responsibilities and experience. If at any time you have any questions, issues or concerns, please bring them to the attention of the Volunteer Services Department.

Animals in the Clinic may be experiencing stress as a result of surgery, illness, or simply being confined to an unfamiliar environment. For this reason it is vital that volunteers follow the policies and procedures that are outlined in this manual.

It is also important to read an animal's body language before handling them. If an animal displays any aggressive behaviors such as: growling, striking, lunging, snapping, it is best to leave that animal alone to avoid an incident that could lead to injury and/or potential euthanasia of the animal. Some hospitalized animals may not be social, so pay particular attention to their tail, ears, and body posture.

About the Anti-Cruelty Society Clinic

Our Clinic largely serves animals undergoing spay/neuter surgeries including shelter animals and recently adopted pets with medical issues. Our Clinic also serves animals for owners that qualify for our low income services, were in the adoption room and became ill, or are out-of-state transfers waiting for their physical exam. Our Clinic has five to seven veterinarians on staff and additional vet technicians and assistants who provide treatments throughout the building.

The veterinary assistants feed animals twice daily: in the mornings between 8:00-10:00am and in the afternoons between 2:00-4:00pm. In addition to other medical treatments, the Clinic staff also perform surgeries, and other medical services to shelter, privately-owned, and recently adopted animals.

Volunteering in the Spay/Neuter Clinic

As a volunteer in the Post Surgical Recovery Program you will be helping the staff and the animals tremendously. The experience you gain and contribute will be exciting and educational. Please listen to all the staff members around you and ask questions at any time. Communication is extremely important, especially in the Clinic which is a high pressure, sensitive area. The Anti-Cruelty Society staff members are in the Clinic to prep. and recover the pets alongside you.

As a volunteer you will be focusing on post-surgical recovery. Other tasks, such as injections, blood draws, taking X-rays, adjusting IVs, etc., are the responsibilities of Clinic staff. Even if you have the experience, Society insurance and liability policies forbid it.

Volunteering with this or any program at The Anti-Cruelty Society should be a pleasant and fulfilling experience. Please do not undertake any task that you do not feel comfortable doing.

- If asked to bring an animal from its cage to the surgical prep area and the animal displays an aggressive behavior, such as growling, do not force the animal out or put yourself in a position where you may become injured.
- Get help! Never put yourself in a vulnerable situation.
- Please ask a staff member for assistance with handling pets or if you are in doubt of a procedure. Asking questions will help to prevent problems.
- When volunteering in this area, you may witness the sudden death of an animal as a result of complications due to anesthesia or surgical trauma. It is important that you understand the sensitivity of where you will be volunteering and the various situations you may witness as a result.

Volunteer Mentor Program

Experienced volunteers wear a yellow badge signifying that they are volunteer mentors. They are available to answer any questions or assist new volunteers in any way. Volunteers will be able to see a mentor's schedule on the web site and new volunteers are encouraged to schedule their first volunteer sessions around a mentor's schedule.

GETTING STARTED

When You Can Volunteer

Post Surgical Recovery volunteers will be working in their program Monday-Friday during surgery time frames, usually 10:00 am – 3:00 pm.

Holidays: There are no adoptions or surgeries on major holidays. Volunteers will be notified of additional schedule changes through the weekly Volunteer Newsletter or via email.

What to Wear While Volunteering

When you are volunteering the following dress code must be adhered to:

- Wear The Anti-Cruelty Society's volunteer T-shirt or any Society logo
- top. Wear long pants (not shorts).
- Wear closed toe, rubber-soled shoes. Sandals are not allowed.
- Wear your volunteer ID badge and make sure it is visible at all times.
- As a safety precaution, volunteers in the Post Surgical Recovery Program do not wear a volunteer apron

Where You Can Volunteer

Post Surgical Recovery volunteers will spend the majority of their time working with pets in the post-surgical area. In addition, volunteers will be assisting to move animals to and from kennels within the clinic. Your program trainers will review each room with you as well as specific space protocols that you will need to follow.

Before You Volunteer:

Volunteers are encouraged to schedule their upcoming volunteer shifts using the online scheduler tool on the volunteer department page of the Anti-Cruelty web site. This will enable other volunteers to better schedule their shifts around the shelter to meet the organization's needs. A program trainer will explain the process for scheduling a volunteer shift.

When You Arrive:

- Sign in at the front desk.
- Store personal items and collect supplies in the Volunteer Office.
- Put on your badge and collect supplies as needed.
- Head to the Clinic and check in with staff in the surgery prep area.

Whenever in the Clinic area, always look through the door's window before entering a room. This will alert you to any loose animals, dogs tied out, and/or people working just on the other side of the door.

Before Leaving:

- Notify staff and other volunteers in the Clinic that you are leaving. This way personnel knows how many people are currently in the rooms and that you are no longer available to assist them with the animals.
- Log your hours in your Volunteer Profile. Using a volunteer computer, open a browser window and go to the following website: www.myvolunteepage.com. Log your hours under Clinic > Post Surgical Recovery.

POST SURGICAL RECOVERY PROCEDURES

Initial Recovery Steps & Procedures

For the animals spayed/neutered in the OR, after the surgery is performed, a vet technician will carry an animal from the operating room to a recovery table. Note that most animals will be placed on their sides with the exception of "pushed in" snout breeds like Pugs or Persians who are instead placed on their stomachs.

After the animal has been placed on the table, please follow these steps:

1. Check to see that the animal is breathing and that gums and/or tongue are a healthy pink.
 - If they don't appear to be, ask a technician to check the animal.
2. Check the informational sticker on the animal's head – this may tell you to treat ears, fleas, or indicate special precautions. Medication is available for ear mites, an infection and/or surgical glue if instructions indicate it's necessary.
3. Clean the blood from the incision area taking extra care to avoid sutures.
4. To help the animal wake up, it is important to stimulate them in a number of ways:
 - Rub the chest and neck area
 - Rock the animal from side to side periodically to prevent bloat
 - Gently blow in their ears or on their face
5. Double check that the animal is still breathing. If the animal is still sedated check the following:
 - Check to see if the ears appear to be a healthy pink and free of wax or other build up.
 - If necessary, you may clean the ears with cotton swabs and cleaner.
 - Medication is available if there are mites.
 - Trim the nails. Be careful not to trim them too short or they may start to bleed.
 - If this occurs, use a medicated styptic swab to clot the bleeding.
6. Check, once again, that the animal is still breathing and its gums and/or tongue are a healthy pink.

Potential Issues or Concerns

- If there is blood from the incision, apply pressure with some dry gauze until it stops. Notify a vet tech if it doesn't!
- If you suspect something may be wrong with the animal, such as labored breathing or a pale tongue or gums, get a technician immediately!
- Timing is essential. Never try to evaluate a condition on your own.
- If you notice any fleas, bumps, or rashes, etc., notify a technician.
- Some animals feel cold and will shiver, if so wrap them in a towel.
 - If you are concerned that the shivering appears severe ask a technician to take a look. You may be asked to apply a hot water bottle to help raise the body temperature back to normal.
- It's common for an animal to release their bladder/bowels or to vomit, while recovering. If vomiting does occur, please notify a technician.
- If you see an animal going to vomit, be sure to leave the intubation tube in, as this will help prevent possible asphyxiation. Move the animal towards the edge of the recovery table so its head can hang down to ensure any vomit is ejected.

Secondary Recovery Steps & Procedures

1. Check to see if the animal is waking up.
2. Watch for swallowing and a chewing action.
 - Do not remove the tube until certain the animal is doing this!
 - If you are unsure, ask!
 - **Do not remove the breathing tube of an animal that is not responsive!**
3. To remove the tube, deflate the cuff and gently pull it out of the animal's mouth.
 - Animals with a short snout i.e. appear to have a "pushed in" face, such as a Pug or a Persian, usually need the tube in longer as they may have difficulty breathing.
4. Some animals hallucinate or experience a "bad wake-up", i.e. they are difficult to handle, agitated, scared, etc. **Please be very cautious.**
 - Even the sweetest dog can act aggressively toward you in this state.
 - For your own safety, animals should face away from you during recovery so they don't jump up and accidentally injure you.
 - If this happens the animal will thrash about, so try to hold it down to prevent it from crashing to the floor and injuring itself.
 - **YELL FOR HELP.** If you feel the animal or situation is too dangerous, move out of the way and yell for help again.
 - Do not put yourself at risk. Though this doesn't happen often, you should always be prepared.

Final Recovery Steps & Procedures

- Once the breathing tube has been removed from a breathing animal, you may take the animal back to their cage. Note that cat neuters are not intubated.
- At times, you may find yourself with several recovering animals in front of you at once.
 - If you feel overwhelmed, ask for help.
 - If you need to put one animal in his/her cage while another is recovering on the table, ask someone else to watch the animal on the table, while you return the other to their cage.
 - Do not leave the recovery table until that person has moved over to take your place.
 - Never leave an animal unattended.
- Each animal has an informational sticker on their forehead with information such as the cage number they came from/going back to, the type of surgery performed, the animal's weight, etc.
- Read the identification sticker to know where the animal is to be taken to (cage number, room location) and their weight before lifting them from the recovery table.
- Never leave an animal unattended on the recovery table, please notify someone to take your place before stepping away.

ADDITIONAL CLINIC NOTES

Vocabulary

- Female dogs and cats are spayed.
- Male dogs and cats are neutered.

Location of Surgeries

Male cats are sometimes neutered in the surgical prep area. A sterile operating room is not necessary for this procedure. Male/female dogs and female cats will be spayed or neutered in the sterile operating room.

In the Holding Rooms

There are several rooms used to hold cats and dogs prior to and after surgery. While in a holding room, check on the other animals to make sure they're breathing regularly and easily, especially those who have returned from surgery.

- Watch for blood around the incision area.
- If there is discharge or bleeding, notify a vet technician immediately.
- If there is any excrement in the cage and you feel comfortable with the animal and the state they are in, please clean it.
- This is also a good time to wash your hands.
- You should wash your hands after touching EACH animal, to prevent possible transmission of contagious disease.

Safety & Hygiene

“Sanitation is very important in reducing the spread of disease among shelter animals. Anyone who handles or touches any animal or its environment has the potential to spread disease. Depending on the disease, infectious particles may be in the animal’s fur, saliva, urine, feces, and vomit, in the air or on the surface of the cage. By touching any of the animals or the materials in its cage, these particles can remain on your skin or glove and be transmitted to another animal if the hands are not washed thoroughly and gloves are not changed between animals. In a shelter situation some of the diseases such as parvovirus can result in euthanasia or the death of an animal, anyone who improperly handles an animal may be contributing to a possible deadly outcome for the animal.” (Shelter Medicine)

Volunteers are asked to follow the basic hygiene guidelines below to prevent the spread of germs and pathogens throughout the Clinic and beyond.

- **Thorough Hand Washing:** Volunteers should thoroughly wash their hands with soap and hot water after every animal encounter or after handling something that came in contact with an animal. Rubbing your hands together for at least 10 seconds, and then putting on a new pair of gloves, is a good basic practice. The longer your contact time with soap, the more thorough the hand washing.
- **Minimize Clothing Contact:** If you are working with a dog or cat that sneezes and sprays mucus on your gown, apron or lab coat, change in to a clean top before working with another animal.
- **Protecting Personal Pets:** If you have animals at home, you may want to change into clean clothes and shoes before entering your home in order to prevent contaminating your animal. Some volunteers bring a change of clothes to the Society and change here before leaving. Other volunteers keep a bag at their door and use it to stow shoes and clothes as they return home. In addition to bringing a change of clothes volunteers should also ensure their personal pets are up-to-date on all their vaccinations before you begin volunteering anywhere in the organization.
- **Segregating Supplies:** Many diseases and parasites are passed through stool which is why proper supply segregation is important. Please minimize the transfer of items from room to room to help reduce the spread of infections. Some transfer of supplies such as litter may be unavoidable.

Additional Safety Notes

- Wear long pants, not shorts. Long-sleeved shirts are suggested.
- Wear shoes with good treads since the floors are often wet, sandals are not allowed.
- Under the effects of anesthesia, animals may act differently than they would normally. For example, a regularly friendly dog may be skittish or fearful and act aggressively. To avoid an unnecessary bite or scratch, keep a safe distance and do not play with the animals that may be tied out awaiting ,or recovering from, surgery.
- Never put your fingers inside the mouth of an animal during recovery. Animals can clamp down without even knowing they did.

- Know what weight limit you feel comfortable lifting and do not surpass it. A 40 pound dog feels more like 50 pounds when moving about in your arms.
 - No one should lift any animal over 35 pounds without assistance.
 - Remember to lift with your knees, not your back, to avoid injuring yourself.

CONCLUSION

The Anti-Cruelty Society performs thousands of spay/neuter surgeries each year. Volunteers help ensure this process runs smoothly and that the maximum number of animals can be cared for successfully while in our Clinic.

The program provides the opportunity to gain valuable skills and experience, while helping the Society team work to control the pet population. Please remember that you are not alone in this environment. You will always be surrounded by Society staff and volunteers. If at any time you need assistance, ask for it. If you notice a volunteer or staff member in need of help offer your assistance to them.

Thank you for wanting to help and for lending a hand to care for the animals. Your time and effort in our surgical recovery program is needed and greatly appreciated!

