

Sacramento County Animal Shelter

Volunteer Manual

January 2012
Rev 1





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Welcome!

Thank you for volunteering your time with the Sacramento County Animal Shelter!

As a team, staff and volunteers care for more than 15,000 animals every year that come to us as strays, surrendered by their owners, and confiscations for cruelty, neglect and abandonment. The time and talent of many animal-loving volunteers like you are essential for providing them quality care and a chance for a new and happy life. Whether you work with the animals, the public, or behind the scenes, you are helping more than you know!

We're all here for one thing, the animals, and together, we can make a difference! This Volunteer Manual is intended to be a guide toward our mutual goals of meeting the needs of the animals and the people we serve throughout Sacramento County. As you begin your volunteer service, you may have many questions, and this handbook provides much of the general information necessary to help make your time spent as a volunteer a positive experience.

We have an amazing volunteer force that is a huge part of our shelter family, and we are happy to have you with us!

Sincerely,

David Dickinson
Interim Director

Celeste Ingrid
Volunteer Coordinator

GENERAL SHELTER INFORMATION

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MISSION

To care for and improve the lives of our shelter animals, and to support staff and daily operations through teamwork and dedication to the shelter's overall mission of making a difference to the animals and people within our communities.

SHELTER HISTORY

Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation was established in the early 1960's, and was originally designed to simply house stray animals temporarily. Since its humble beginnings, the department has grown to encompass a full range of animal care and public services.

More than 15,000 animals enter our shelter each year, coming to us as strays, abandoned, owner-surrenders, confiscations for cruelty and neglect, and animals requiring protective custody. While dogs and cats are the greatest of our shelter population, rabbits, reptiles, exotic animals, livestock, and a host of wildlife also depend on our services.

We are comprised of committed and compassionate staff and volunteers working together to build a better community for animals and people through education and action.

LOCATION: 3839 Bradshaw Road, Sacramento, CA 95827

HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS:

General Shelter Main Number:	368-PETS (7387)
Volunteer Coordinator:	875-5848 desk line 202-1699 cell
County Central Operator: (for after hours animal emergencies only)	875-5000
Fax Number:	875-5519

WEB SITE: www.SacCountyShelter.net

FACEBOOK PAGE: From www.facebook.com, simply do a search for "Sacramento County Save Our Shelter". You can also go to the shelter's web site and click the FB button.

SHELTER HOURS: The shelter is open to the public Wednesday-Sunday.

Wednesday	12:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Thursday	12:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Friday	12:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Saturday	12:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Sunday	12:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
CLOSED Monday/Tuesday & Most Holidays	

GETTING STARTED

ORIENTATION and INTERVIEWS: All prospective volunteers must attend a New Volunteer Orientation to learn about our shelter, the various volunteer opportunities and how to get involved. The orientation is also an educational session providing important and useful information about sheltering and animal issues in general. Orientation dates are posted on our web site.

Subsequent to attending orientation, prospective volunteers will usually be scheduled for a Get-acquainted Interview with the Volunteer Coordinator. This is usually done in small groups, but individual interviews may also be scheduled. The purpose of the interview is to talk more in depth about prospective volunteers' interest in volunteering, expectations and about any applicable experience or skills that they may have. This helps us best match prospective volunteers' interests and experience with the current needs of the shelter.

TRAINING: Upon acceptance into training, prospective volunteers must successfully complete required training specific to the area(s) in which they wish to volunteer.

For dogs and cats, training usually consists of three 2-hour sessions to be completed in consecutive weeks, with supportive mentoring sessions as may be needed.

For the barn animals, significant prior experience with horses/livestock/farm animals is required to volunteer in this area. Training is based upon the prospective volunteer's past experience, but is generally one 2-hour session.

For other critters such as rabbits/pocket pets and reptiles, some previous handling experience is usually required, and training is generally one 2-hour session.

Trainings for non-hands-on animal tasks are based upon the type of project, (e.g., data entry, phone calling, laundry, etc.)

FOLLOW-UP MENTORING: There is occasionally need for new volunteers to receive additional one-on-one mentoring with a lead volunteer to ensure full understanding of and comfort with policies/procedures. Ours is a busy shelter with lots of information to process in initial training. If you have been asked to further mentor with an existing volunteer, please do not take it personally, but rather understand that our first and foremost priority is everyone's safety, followed by smooth shelter operations and a pleasurable volunteer experience for you. New volunteers are also encouraged to request additional assistance if at any time they feel working with another volunteer will be beneficial to their comfort or effectiveness in their volunteer role.

CROSS-TRAINING: Following initial training, we generally require new volunteers to be active in one primary area (usually dogs or cats) for a period of 45 days before cross-training in a new area. This helps ensure the volunteer has a firm understanding of the role and responsibilities in each area before moving on to another.

Volunteers are encouraged to cross-train in various areas to build skills and enhance their volunteer experience.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF ME?

Shelter volunteers are very special people with varied qualities and talents. We seek to attract, train and nurture caring, responsible people able to effectively support shelter operations. (See also *Basic Shelter Policies for all Volunteers, pages 13-17.*)

In addition to a love of animals, most importantly all volunteers must:

- Abide by shelter policies and procedures
- Be dependable with their commitments
- Demonstrate a positive attitude and work ethic
- Represent the shelter in a professional manner at all times
- Be respectful of staff, fellow volunteers and the public
- Treat and handle the animals humanely and appropriately
- Work as a team with staff and fellow volunteers to support and enhance the shelter
- Respect the confidentiality of sensitive shelter information
- Always be factual with information about the shelter/animals when speaking to the public
- Accept direction with professionalism
- Offer realistic and constructive ideas and solutions

MINIMUM TIME COMMITMENT/VOLUNTEER STATUS

APPLICANT/PROSPECT: Following orientation/interviews, applicants selected for training are considered to be in a prospective volunteer status until after successful completion of basic training in their initial area of interest.

ACTIVE VOLUNTEER:

New Volunteers: Following completion of training, we require a minimum commitment of 10 hours per month for at least 6 months. This provides adequate time for new volunteers to become comfortable in their roles and acclimated to the shelter. New volunteers who complete initial training, but fail to begin actively volunteering within 30 days, will be removed from the volunteer email lists and name badges will be removed for re-use.

Existing Volunteers: For any volunteer to be considered active, we generally require a minimum commitment of 10 hours per month. Those who are unable to commit to 10 hours per month, but who demonstrate commitment by volunteering periodically on an on-going basis are still considered shelter volunteers.

INACTIVE VOLUNTEER: Those who have been previously active, but have not consistently maintained the minimum monthly commitment for a period of 60 days are considered to be in an inactive volunteer status, unless prior arrangements have been approved.

LAPSED VOLUNTEER: Anyone remaining in an inactive status after 60 days will be considered lapsed and removed from the online volunteer tracking/scheduling system, active volunteer email lists, and name badges will be removed for re-use, unless prior arrangements have been approved. Lapsed volunteers may still occasionally receive general shelter update emails and announcements, unless they request to be removed from this general list.

Lapsed and Inactive volunteers may be required to repeat or refresh training dependent upon length of absence and/or significant policy/procedural changes that may occur.

HOW DO VOLUNTEERS HELP?

Volunteers are an extremely important component of our shelter and serve a number of essential functions to better the lives of the animals and assist in general shelter operations.

Whether you work with the animals, the public or behind the scenes, you are improving the quality of life for the animals, increasing their chances of adoption and helping us to provide excellent animal-related services to our community. **Volunteers really do make a difference!**

Opportunities include:

- “Woof-Walkers” dog walking, socialization & care
- “Purrfect Pals” cat socialization and care
- “PB SOC” (Pit Bull Socialization and Obedience Crew)
- “Bunny Buddies” rabbit socialization and care
- Livestock/horse care and barn maintenance
- Morning feeding/cleaning and afternoon cage refreshing
- Fostering/sponsoring animals in need of temporary in-home care
- Helping adult cats via the LAPCATS adoption/sponsor care program
- Information Host/Greeting
- Mobile adoptions
- Bathing & grooming
- Adoption counseling
- Adoption follow-up calling
- Transporting animals (mobile events, Channel 10 “Pet of the Week”, outside vet appointments, etc.)
- Fundraising & Special Events
- Lost & Found coordination
- Taking enticing photos, writing creative personality profiles and posting online
- Clerical support, including computer work and phone calling
- Laundry
- Kong stuffing
- Sewing projects such as bandanas & bedding

DESCRIPTIONS OF POPULAR VOLUNTEER ROLES

The following are basic descriptions of the most popular volunteer roles, although in our busy shelter there are often a variety of other needs. Please don't hesitate to inquire if you have an idea, notice something to be done, or if you'd like to offer to help with a special project!

“Woof-walkers” Dog Walking/Socialization

Dogs are social animals and require lots of interaction; volunteers spend time with our dogs on leisurely walks, playing ball, and working on basic obedience. Volunteers must possess basic dog-handling skills and successfully complete four consecutive 3-hour training sessions addressing safety, policy/procedure and handling/behavior.

“Purrfect Pals” Cat Socialization

Petting, playing and socializing with our cats can help put them at ease in the shelter. Purrfect Pals volunteers also help refresh cages to keep the kitties comfortable. Successful completion of three consecutive 2-hour training sessions addressing safety, policies and procedures and handling/behavior is required.

“PB SOC” (Pit Bull Socialization and Obedience Crew)

Pit bulls/mixes are the greater of most any municipal shelter's dog population, and the first to succumb to the stresses of shelter life. We are proud to have a core group pit bull-savvy volunteers using positive reinforcement training to increase their adoptability, and to prepare them for successful adoptions by maintaining their mental health in the shelter and teaching them skills to facilitate a positive transition from shelter life to a home environment.

“Bunny Buddies” Rabbit and Pocket Pet Socialization

Don't forget the buns! Bunny Buddies provide care and attention to our rabbits and small animals such as Guinea Pigs, hamsters, and sometimes even friendly pet rats! Volunteers clean and refresh cages and rabbit litter boxes, and ensure proper food, water and toys, as needed. Some prior handling experience is preferred, in addition to successful completion of one 2 hour training session.

Horse/Barn Animal Care

The shelter takes in a wide variety of livestock and barn animals, including horses, pigs, goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, and more! For safety, existing solid experience in caring for and handling these types of animals is required, in addition to completing basic training for applicable policy/procedure.

Daily Animal Care

The most basic of functions within the shelter is the daily care of the animals. Following completion of initial cat, dog, rabbit or livestock training, volunteers are invited to train on morning feeding/cleaning and afternoon cage refreshing protocols. To help in this area, volunteers must be able to commit to a schedule of at least one morning each week, usually 3 hours.

Information Host

Our Information Hosts welcome visitors and assist them with completion of the adoption application, help finding lost animals, answering general questions about animals' adoption status, shelter hours, etc., and providing important information on resources such as low-cost spaying/neutering and vaccinations. Training consists of three 2-hour group or individual sessions. (Please note that Information Host and Adoption Counselor are two different roles requiring separate training.)

Mobile Adoptions

We periodically hold offsite adoptions at community events, local pet stores, and other venues to promote our shelter animals. Volunteers assist by helping to transport and set-up/take-down tables, chairs, pop-up tents and supplies, as well as handle animals at the events and assist with adoptions.

Foster Care/Sponsor Care

Throughout the year, the shelter takes in many animals that cannot be immediately placed for adoption because they are too young or have medical or behavioral issues that first need to be addressed. Foster/sponsor care providers give these animals a chance for a new life by going into temporary care in their home until they are ready to be adopted. There are two ways to help in this area; 1) provide foster care for shelter animals in need until they are ready to come back to the shelter for adoption, or, 2) provide sponsor care for adult shelter cats that have been taken into the LAPCATS offsite adoption program until they're ready to go up for adoption at the LAPCATS Elk Grove Petsmart adoption center. Basic animal handling skills and experience are required and training consists of an initial 2-hour Foster Care Provider Workshop and additional advanced level training, as needed. *(See also Foster Program and LAPCATS Program, page 20)*

Photographing/Internet Posting

Work with other volunteers to take enticing photos and write creative descriptions of animals for the shelter's Web site, Petfinder.com or cross-posting to rescue organizations. This role requires that the volunteer have their own digital camera and good knowledge of its settings, and the ability to upload and edit photos from their home computer. Additionally, volunteers must successfully complete basic animal handling training (e.g., dog, cat or rabbit), have good writing skills and complete a required Photo Class and subsequent mentoring sessions at the shelter.

Adoption Counseling

Making appropriate matches between adopters and animals is critical to ensuring positive life-long matches. Adoption volunteers must have actively volunteered for a period of six months, demonstrated substantial breed-specific behavior/care knowledge, have good customer service and communication skills, successfully complete the Adoption Counseling training, and be approved by staff.

Clerical Assistance

Clerical volunteers assist with essential projects including adoption follow-up calling, data entry, mailings and general office work. Some projects can be done from home. Training is based upon the nature of each project.

Fundraising /Special Events

We're always seeking enthusiastic and professional people with a variety of skills and experience to help raise funds for the shelter and assist with special events. Due to budget cuts, the shelter is becoming increasingly dependent upon private and corporate donations to operate. Please see the Volunteer Coordinator or Division Manager for more information about getting involved.

Humane Education

Help educate children and adults in our community about animal issues through in-school and in-shelter presentations. Volunteers must be free of a criminal record, undergo a background check, and have good communication skills with children, as well as basic animal skills/knowledge.

Sewing

We often having sewing projects such as making cat beds (pattern and instructions are provided), mending torn bedding, re-sizing over-sized comforters, and making attractive bandanas for the dogs. If you know how to sew and have your own machine, let us know. This is a great way to help from home!

Kong Stuffing

Kongs are wonderful for giving dogs "something to do" by stimulating their minds and giving them a way to channel their energy. Help clean and stuff Kongs with peanut butter and goodies as a special treat to help dogs pass the time while at the shelter. You can also donate peanut butter for stuffing.

SCHEDULING/VOLUNTEERING TIMES

SCHEDULING: The shelter is very flexible as to the days/times volunteers wish to donate their time; however it is appreciated when volunteers can commit to a weekly schedule.

The volunteer program uses an online scheduling system called Volgistics that allows volunteers to self-schedule in roles for which they've completed training. The system also allows volunteers to see where others are scheduled and where there might be "holes", so they can better schedule their time where it's most needed. As well, knowing when fellow volunteers will be in is beneficial for anyone interested working with a buddy volunteer.

If you are unable to commit to a weekly schedule or provide advance notice of your volunteer time, of course you are always encouraged to come in as your schedule allows during open shelter hours. The animals are not picky about when they will see you; they just want to see you as much as possible!

Canceling a Volunteer Commitment: If you have scheduled yourself for a general volunteer duty such as laundry, dog-walking or cat socialization and cannot fulfill the commitment, as a courtesy to fellow volunteers, please remove yourself from the applicable schedule and with as much advance notice as possible. For duties that have critical time requirements such as scheduled morning feeding/cleaning, special events and mobile adoptions, a minimum of 24 hours notice is required.

VOLUNTEER TIMES: With the exception of those pre-scheduled for volunteering activities such as morning feeding/cleaning, morning dog-walking, clerical assistance or a specific project, for safety and security volunteers are generally only allowed to volunteer during regular business hours, unless prior arrangements have been made. See the Volunteer Coordinator for more information on volunteering outside of normal shelter hours. *(See Shelter Hours, page 6.)*

BASIC SHELTER POLICIES FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS

The following policies apply to all volunteers and are in place for your safety, and that of the animals, staff and public, as well as for effective and secure shelter operations. If you are ever unsure of a policy, procedure or have a general question, please don't guess... always feel free to ask the Volunteer Coordinator, any staff member or experienced volunteer for assistance!

We recognize that it may be difficult to keep from getting involved in all that is going on around you; however it is important that volunteers keep their involvement confined to the responsibilities of the role(s) in which they've been trained. Consult the Volunteer Coordinator if you are faced with a situation that is beyond the scope of your role.

Disregard or violation of any policy within this manual or communicated in other verbal, electronic, or written format may be cause for action, up to and including termination of volunteering with Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation.

Professionalism

One of the most basic volunteer expectations is to represent the shelter and the volunteer program positively, and to be an ambassador in support of the shelter. Volunteers are shelter representatives when dealing with the public, fellow volunteers and staff, and as such are expected to conduct themselves professionally and respectfully at all times. Inappropriate behavior and/or conduct will not be tolerated.

Use of Shelter Keys

For security and safety, volunteer keys must be checked out/in using the Key/Leash Log located in the volunteer workroom. **No exceptions.** This applies to everyone, and even if the key is only needed for a few minutes. If you accidentally take keys home, please simply inform the Volunteer Coordinator and return them as soon as possible.

Logging Volunteer Time

Recording volunteer time is not only great for seeing how many hours our dedicated volunteers put in each month in the various areas, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors requires volunteer hours to be tracked for their annual report of county-wide volunteer contributions. Each time you volunteer in the shelter, please be sure to promptly record your time using the Volgistics online scheduling/tracking system. For volunteers who do mobile adoptions, contribute time from home with projects such as adoption follow-up calls and sewing, or do fostering, please either record your time in Volgistics next time you're in the shelter, or email the Volunteer Coordinator with your time.

Day-use Lockers/Personal Belongings

Volunteers are welcome and encouraged to use the day-use lockers in the volunteer workroom to secure personal items while volunteering. Please bring your own lock and remove the lock and all items before leaving. If leaving items in your vehicle, please lock them in your trunk/keep out of site. Please note that the shelter assumes no responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged personal items.

Parking

Volunteers are to park in the large lot on the south side of the shelter which is known as the staff/volunteer parking lot, near the staff entrance. Please reserve the parking spaces in front of the shelter for shelter visitors.

Approved Volunteers

There is a process to becoming a volunteer beginning with attending a New Volunteer Orientation and successful completion of applicable training. Unless otherwise approved by the Volunteer Coordinator for special projects, all volunteers must follow these steps. Similarly, unless they have been pre-approved, please do not bring children or friends along when volunteering.

Volunteer Attire

To be recognized by staff and the public, volunteers must wear either their volunteer T-shirt/sweatshirt or volunteer apron and their name-tag while volunteering. Like staff, volunteers are the “face of the shelter”, and the position is highly-visible, usually with frequent public interaction, so an appropriate professional appearance is required. As important, proper clothing is also a safety precaution against preventable scratches/injuries that can lead to an animal being taken off the adoption floor and placed into mandatory 10-day quarantine if the skin be broken.

Please also remember the following:

- Wear comfortable clothing/shoes that may get wet/dirty
- Closed-toe shoes at all times
- Long pants or capri’s (no shorts)
- No spaghetti strap/tank tops
- No stained, ripped/torn clothing
- Be clean-shaven (neat beards, mustaches)
- Long hair should be tied back
- No dangling jewelry
- Dress weather-appropriate (layers are often advisable)
- No sunglasses or large hats are to be worn in animal housing areas (can impair vision and/or can frighten animals and provoke defensive behaviors)

Staff-Only and Sensitive Areas of the Shelter

For safety, security and disease spread prevention, there are several restricted areas of the shelter that require approval for access. These areas include the Veterinary Unit, Euthanasia Room/area, Quarantine and Protective Custody Kennels, Feral Cat Rooms, and Medical Isolation Rooms. In addition, for privacy, staff restrooms/locker rooms and private offices are restricted areas. Volunteers must respect all restricted and staff-only areas, and are asked to keep in mind that staff often have serious, sensitive and difficult tasks to perform, and thus, there is a need for not only privacy in some situations, but also quiet, personal space to get away from the regular shelter operations.

Social Media & Networking Sites

Volunteers must exercise caution when using social media networking sites to ensure that personal opinions are not perceived to be those of Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation, and do not reflect negatively upon the shelter. In addition, posting of confidential/sensitive information or circumstances relating to the shelter, animals, legal investigations and/or pet-owner information is strictly prohibited. Caution should be used when uploading photos that display staff, fellow volunteers, or members of the public. Posting of photos or information pertaining to animals still within mandatory hold periods or involved in legal cases is prohibited. Volunteers should not assume that because their social networking profile is private that their information will remain discreet, and should not expect privacy when posting on sites such as Facebook, irrespective of the privacy settings that they choose.

Talking to Media

Volunteers may not communicate to the news media (television, radio, newspapers or online) as an official or unofficial spokesperson of shelter without prior approval from shelter management. All inquiries from the media should be referred to shelter management or the Sacramento County Media and Communications Office.

Public Representation of the Shelter

Without prior approval, volunteers are not to act on behalf of, or formally represent the shelter in terms of initiating shelter-related events or participation in other agencies’ events representing the shelter.

Handling Animals

For safety, volunteers may only handle animals approved for adoption, and only those they have been approved to handle through successful completion of applicable training sessions. Never handle any animal that is beyond your experience, comfort level or physical ability.

Removing Animals from the Shelter

Volunteers may not remove animals from the facility for any reason, unless prior approval has been given by shelter management.

Moving Animals within the Shelter

To prevent the spread of illness/disease and to avoid errors in kennel inventory, volunteers are not to move animals from their assigned cages/kennels without staff approval.

Confidentiality

Volunteers may at times have access to or be exposed to sensitive or confidential information related to the shelter, including but not limited to the animals, adopters, pet owners, staff, fellow volunteers, legal filings, shelter donors, and the public we serve. This may include information deemed confidential by federal and state laws. As a general policy volunteers are prohibited from discussing, printing or releasing such information.

Confiscated Animals / Legal Filings

The shelter often houses animals that have either severely injured or killed another animal or even human, and the victim, representative or witness will often file what's called a "Vicious Animal Affidavit" against the owner of the accused animal. We also confiscate many other types of animals for cruelty/neglect or for abandonment. Many of these cases are subject to legal proceedings. Volunteers are strictly forbidden to discuss any information related to such cases and may not express personal opinions or observations about animals' (or owners') temperament/behavior, especially when speaking with members of the public or animal owners. Any such comments or information released can be used in court, and volunteers are subject to testifying in any applicable legal case, which may negatively affect the outcome. Please remember that we are mandated to protect not only animals, but people, and it is our duty to advocate for the animals in some cases and for people in others, based strictly upon the case facts.

Stray/Unavailable Animals

While an animal is within its stray-hold or has an unavailable status for any reason, for security and privacy, volunteers are not to release or discuss any information related to the animal and/or possible owner.

Stray/Confiscate Animal Walk-thrus

When a member of the public comes in looking for a lost or confiscated pet, or believes they have located their pet in the shelter or online, there is an important process to be followed to ensure that the correct animal goes home with its rightful owner, as well as to ensure appropriate fees are paid and there are no conditions preventing the release of the animal (such as investigations, bite holds or legal restrictions).

Walk-thrus in general stray hold areas of the shelter may only be performed by volunteers trained on proper procedure and approved to do so. Otherwise, all such requests are to be directed to staff. **Walk-thrus in the Quarantine and Protective Custody areas may only be performed by staff.**

As part of this process, it is important that at no time volunteers divulge any information that could be used to falsely claim ownership, such as where the animal was found, or details about microchip/identification, spay/neuter status, etc., and that an animal is never handed over to anyone without the direction of staff and a receipt showing applicable fees have been paid.

Feeding Animals / Treats

Staff and volunteers assigned to daily animal care are responsible for the feeding of the animals. Please do not otherwise feed animals without staff approval, as some may be on special diets or have restrictions due to medical conditions, or food may be being withheld in preparation for surgery/medical procedures.

To avoid digestive upset, the shelter generally only feeds Science Diet brand pet food for consistency. *Quality commercial treats may be given in reasonable amounts to available adoptable animals, however keep in mind that often multiple volunteers may work with an animal, which increases their treat intake and chances for digestive upset. With the exception of very small pieces of hotdog or cheese for training purposes, all other human food is prohibited. Any chew-type treats must be of appropriate size and type for the animal to prevent serious injury such as choking. The safest chew treats for our dogs are peanut butter-stuffed Kongs (and only extra-large Kongs in the Auggie Doggie kennels).

***Animals within hold periods, those in protective custody and owned animals in Quarantine areas are not to be given treats of any type.** Incoming animals are already experiencing transition to Science Diet brand from whatever they were eating prior to coming into our care, and giving treats during this time increases their digestive upset. Also, many of the owned animals being held in protective custody and quarantine have dietary restrictions imposed by the shelter or requested by the owners.

Chameleon Database

The shelter uses a database system called Chameleon to maintain animal and person records. Unless trained and approved, volunteers are not allowed to access the system. Trained and approved volunteers are not to input or edit records without prior approval.

Volunteer Insurance/Injuries

The majority of the shelter’s policies are in place for general safety and injury prevention. However, should an injury occur, please report it to the Volunteer Coordinator or other supervisor immediately. The volunteer’s own personal insurance is considered primary coverage, and the County’s insurance secondary. If the volunteer does not have personal insurance, the County’s insurance would take effect.

Driving Related to Shelter/Volunteering Activities

Volunteers using personal or County-owned vehicles for shelter/volunteer program activities, must possess a valid California driver’s license and current vehicle insurance, and are required to obey all traffic laws, including obeying speed limits and parking regulations, using seat belts, and not using cell phones/texting in any form while driving.

Any traffic violations that may occur while driving personal vehicles for shelter/volunteer program activities are the driver’s responsibility. This includes parking citations.

When a volunteer uses a personal vehicle for shelter/volunteer program activities, the primary coverage for that vehicle is the volunteer’s personal auto policy. The County’s insurance program is secondary to personal auto policy.

Cell Phones and iPods/Other Electronic Devices in the Shelter/Shelter Events

For safety and professionalism, the use of cell phones, iPods or similar electronic devices is prohibited while handling animals/general volunteering. However, cell phones may be used when necessary in the non-public areas of the shelter, or away from main event activities.

Conflict Resolution

The shelter is committed to a teamwork atmosphere. If you have any issues with staff, other volunteers or the public, please discuss them directly with the Volunteer Coordinator. If the problem involves the Volunteer Coordinator, then speak directly to the Shelter Director. Issues can usually be resolved in an informal manner. It is important to quickly resolve problems that arise so that all volunteers and staff are able to work in a positive and constructive environment for the benefit of the animals and effective shelter operations.

Sexual Harassment

The County of Sacramento is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free from sexual harassment. All County employees, agents, contractors, and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in sexual harassment. The County or its designee shall promptly investigate complaints of sexual harassment. County employees, agents, contractors, and volunteers shall cooperate fully with all investigations of sexual harassment and shall not retaliate against complainants or witnesses.

Smoking

The shelter is a smoke-free environment. No smoking is allowed within the facility or near public areas of the facility, and is restricted to within personal vehicles or in designated smoking areas in the rear of the building.

Drug-Free Workplace

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance while performing volunteer related work for the County of Sacramento is prohibited.

Discrimination

The County of Sacramento is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free from discrimination. All County employees, agents, contractors, and volunteers are prohibited from discriminating against any applicant or employee in a protected group/status. The County or its designee shall promptly investigate complaints of discrimination. County employees, agents, contractors, and volunteers shall cooperate fully with all investigations of discrimination and shall not retaliate against complainants or witnesses.

Volunteers' Personal Pets in Vehicles

While the shelter strongly discourages leaving pets unattended in vehicles, regardless of temperatures, we recognize that some volunteers would like to exercise their dogs in our public dog park after volunteering. If you do bring your dog with you to use the dog park, please only do so in mild temperatures, and ensure windows are open enough to allow proper ventilation and that water is provided as needed. Volunteers are subject to all standards of the law with regard to pets in vehicles, and any animal deemed by an Animal Control Officer to be in peril, or possible peril, is subject to immediate removal from the vehicle and the owner subject to citation.

Moral and Ethical Treatment of Animals

The shelter expects high standards of moral and ethical treatment of all animals in our community and beyond, including but not limited to, the animals under its care. Volunteers are expected to adhere strictly to these same standards.

Theft and Removal of Shelter/County Property

The removal of shelter/County property, including donations and animals, without prior supervisor approval is prohibited. .

Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary issues involving volunteers may be handled verbally or in writing (electronic or hard-copy), and may result in warning, suspension or termination of volunteer status, depending on the nature of the issue and/or severity.

INFORMATION SHARING AND VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Morning “Bow-Wows”

When time permits and there is information to be shared amongst staff and volunteers as to the day’s activities, updates or special announcements, we often hold what we call our Morning Bow-Wow just prior to opening for all who are working in the shelter that day. Our goal is to keep lines of communication open and share information relevant to the day’s topics.

Volunteer Potlucks

To allow volunteers an opportunity to get better acquainted, and to give everyone an opportunity to ask questions and talk with key shelter staff in a relaxed setting, we periodically hold casual evening potlucks. In addition, smaller potluck meetings are often held for specific groups of volunteers to discuss issues and ideas related to their area of volunteering such as for all Woof Walkers or Purrfect Pals volunteers.

Volunteer Recognition Events

Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner

Active volunteers are recognized annually for their efforts at a hosted evening banquet to honor the incredible amount of time, work and support they give to the shelter and the animals. Your time is valuable and we appreciate YOU!

Annual Board of Supervisors Outstanding Volunteers Recognition Ceremony

In addition to our annual recognition dinner, each year the shelter selects an individual volunteer or group of volunteers who has shown outstanding commitment and performance during the previous year. The honoree(s) is recognized as part of a County’s Annual Board of Supervisors Outstanding Volunteers Recognition Ceremony that takes place each April in the Board’s chambers downtown.

SHELTER SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Pet Licensing

By law, in Sacramento County, all owned dogs and cats over the age of 4 months, must be licensed. The shelter accepts and processes new and renewal licensing in the shelter, online, by mail and via many veterinary hospitals. Please see www.SacCountyShelter.net for details and also for the flyer, "The Benefits of Licensing". While licensing is often perceived as a penalty or of no real benefit, the reality is that licensing makes up the largest portion of the shelter's revenue and is directly responsible for keeping the shelter operational. Licensing comes with a host of benefits, such as immediate return of a lost pet if it is found by an animal control officer and waiving of impound fees if it is brought to the shelter. Licensed stray pets are held for redemption for 10 days instead of the standard 3 days for unlicensed pets. At the time of a County licensed pet's last days, the shelter will provide no-cost euthanasia services. These are just a few of the benefits of licensing.

Low-cost Spay/Neuter Services

With pet over-population being one of the most critical of all animal issues within our communities, we offer several low-cost spay/neuter services through a voucher program for qualifying residents of unincorporated Sacramento County, including the cities of Citrus Heights, Galt and Isleton.

Feral Cats

- Caretakers receive a voucher good for spay/neuter surgery. (Limit two vouchers per application.)
- No co-pay or income restrictions.

Domestic Cats, Pit Bulls/Mixes and Other Dog (Limit 4 vouchers per household.)

- Owners receive a voucher good for surgery, rabies vaccination, and 1-year County animal license.
- Domestic Cats : Co-pay \$10, No income restrictions for owners.
- Pit Bulls/Mixes: Co-pay \$15, No income restrictions for owners.
- All Other Dog Breeds: Co-pay \$15, Household income limit \$35K/year.

Low-cost Vaccination and Microchipping Clinics

In an effort to assist residents with keeping their pets' vaccinations and animal licenses current, and also to offer microchipping for permanent identification should they become lost, the shelter offers a clinic every 3rd Thursday of the month from 5:00-7:00 p.m. The shelter works closely with VIP Petcare to provide a full range of vaccination, microchipping and disease testing services, and preventative care products. Although the shelter closes at 5:30 p.m., the front desk remains available until 7:00 p.m. on this day to facilitate subsequent licensing following receipt of a rabies vaccination.

Pet Pantry Community Food Bank

In an effort to assist pet owners struggling to provide food for their animals, the shelter offers a community pet food bank. The goal is to help keep pets together with their people, as many would otherwise be surrendered to shelters for lack of the ability to purchase food. For pet owners in such need, the shelter will provide food support, for as long as there is true need and there is no abuse of the program. Donations of unopened quality brand food (canned and dry) for cats and dogs of various breeds and sizes are always welcome!

Cruelty/Neglect Investigations

One of the most difficult, yet satisfying, aspects of our Animal Control Officers' duties are investigations into cruelty and neglect. Our officers are trained in investigations, evidence collection, report writing and interrogation. From starvation and abandonment cases, to those involving some of the more egregious crimes including torture, animal fighting, and even bestiality, we are the front line in defending the lives of our animal friends. These victims cannot speak for themselves so it is our job to be their voice and represent their interests. Suspected cases of animal cruelty or neglect within Sacramento County can be reported 24/7 by calling 916-368-7387.

Foster Care Program

Among the thousands of animals the shelter takes in each year, hundreds are in need of temporary care outside of the shelter for a variety of reasons such as being too young for adoption, needing recovery from surgery or injury, modification of minor behavior issues, or simply for a lack of cage space or to give long-timers a break from the shelter for stress-relief. Fostering periods can be anywhere from a few days to a few months, depending upon the situation. The shelter matches each animal's needs with the skills, experience level and home environment of each Foster Care Provider to best ensure a successful fostering experience. The first step to fostering is to attend a New Volunteer Orientation, followed by a Foster Provider Training class and shelter management approval.

LAPCATS Program

This special feline adoption program run by a small group of volunteers is an acronym for "Laguna Adoption Program for County Animals and TEAM in Sacramento". LAPCATS saves hundreds of lives every year, by taking in many adult cats (and occasionally kittens) from our shelter. The felines LAPCATS take are often otherwise in danger of euthanasia due to medical conditions that require treatment outside the shelter. LAPCATS then places them into sponsor care (similar to foster care) until full health and final vetting are achieved. Once ready for adoption, they are showcased within the LAPCATS adoption center inside the Elk Grove Petsmart from where they will then find permanent adoptive homes. Volunteers are needed to staff the adoption center 7 days a week in the capacities of customer service, socialization, and cleaning/feeding, and especially to provide temporary sponsor care to cats in need.

Rescue Program

When possible and appropriate, the shelter makes every attempt to transfer to approved rescue organizations animals that have been deemed unadoptable for health, behavior or age related reasons, or when rescue is needed due to lack of space or length of time at the shelter. These animals may have greater opportunity for adoption or fostering through outside organizations that often have different resources or adoption criteria than the shelter. However, like shelters, most rescues are constantly at capacity, as there are just too few adopters for the numbers of animals needing homes, unfortunately. Most rescue groups are breed-specific in their interests, although there are mixed-breed rescue groups. Approved rescue groups may also pull adoptable animals after they have first been available to the public, generally for two business days. However, the shelter reserves the right to decline rescue of adoptable animals and continue to make them available for adoption at the shelter. Conversely, the shelter may release animals to rescue groups upon their first date of availability if shelter space is limited.

Lost & Found Assistance

Sadly, most of the animals ending up in shelters are owned strays. We offer assistance to owners searching for them through an online lost and found reporting system. If an animal is either lost or found, the person can register the pet online at www.Petharbor.com. Once registered, owners searching for lost pets will begin receiving emails the moment a pet matching their pet's breed and description enters any of the shelters they have previously selected from a list. Conversely, if a good citizen finds a pet they are willing to hold onto until the owner is found, they can register the found pet online and will be connected with potential owners who have reported a lost pet that matches the description.

Safe Place Pets - Domestic Violence Protective Custody

The bond between humans and pets can be so strong that often domestic violence victims are hesitant or will refuse to leave, even when their lives are in danger, if it means they would have to leave their pets behind. As a special service to Sacramento County residents, we offer temporary shelter and care for pets whose owners are seeking refuge from domestic violence when there is no alternative caretaker. The program provides temporary secure, confidential pet care while the family transitions into safety.

In addition, we will also coordinate with applicable agencies to provide basic planning assistance to people thinking of leaving an abusive home with an animal. Such planning includes ensuring that the animal is up-to-date on vaccinations and that the owner has all records (including license information, veterinary records, etc.) and checklist of any supplies, medication, or other items the animal needs.

T.E.A.M. “Critter Outfitter” Pet Boutique

The shelter’s non-profit affiliate, T.E.A.M., which is an acronym for “Teaching Everyone Animals Matter”, operates a wonderful pet supply boutique called Critter Outfitter just inside the shelter’s doors. The store offers many of the products adopters may need for their new pets, such as leashes and collars, training equipment, toys, pet clothing, and fun accessories. Plus, adopters receive a 20% discount on all purchases for up to 14 days after adoption! Proceeds from Critter Outfitter go toward TEAM’s mission of supporting the needs of the animals.

TEMPERAMENT TESTING

Also referred to as a T-Test or Behavior Evaluation (BE).

All of the adoptable dogs and most adoptable cats that you may handle here have been temperament tested to evaluate behavior, personality, and temperament before they are made available for adoption.

It is our goal to make the shelter as safe as possible for the animals, employees and public, and to help ensure only safe animals are being made available for adoption. This testing also helps us to see animals' specific traits and characteristics that enable us to best match them to the most suitable adopters, and thus reduce the chances of them being returned. However, remember, no test can predict the way an animal will react in all circumstances or once they are in the home environment. Once settled into a home, some animals will display behaviors that we did not see here in the shelter.

“MEET YOUR MATCH” (MYM) ADOPTION SYSTEM

“Meet Your Match” is a system of evaluating an animal's behavior and traits and then matching them to an adopter's preferences. On the animal side of the assessment, we test for various behaviors, such as excitability/activity level and drive, possessiveness over food/objects, ease of handling, and attentiveness to people. The assessment results in the animal being scored a color; purple, orange or green. On the human side, we require each prospective adopter to complete an Adopter Survey which asks several questions about what traits they are seeking in a new pet. The Adopter Survey is scored, also resulting in a color determination of purple, orange or green, which then relates to similarly scored animals that may match their desires. While there is no requirement that a “purple adopter” adopt a “purple cat, it does provide a good starting point for productive adoption counseling dialogue and making positive adoption matches.

EUTHANASIA POLICY

Euthanasia is the practice of humanely ending an animal's life, and is the most unfortunate reality in any shelter. By law, euthanasia in California shelters is administered by a quick and painless injection from caring shelter staff. Volunteers are not directly exposed to or involved in euthanasia.

However, whenever possible, attempts are made to avoid euthanizing by sending animals into foster care, placing dogs into our canine behavior rehabilitation program, working with approved rescue groups, and transferring animals to other shelters that may have greater space and/or resources.

If you ever have questions about an animal's status or a euthanasia decision the shelter has made, please first talk to the Volunteer Coordinator. Because kennel management and kennel care staff already have the daily burden of making and carrying out these difficult decisions, it may be difficult for them to talk you about the animal's situation

General Euthanasia Policy

The shelter's general policy is to hold adoptable animals for as long as their health and temperament remain sound – and for as long as there is appropriate cage space and adequate staff /trained volunteers to properly care for them. With animals that have been deemed adoptable, there is no set "final date", and it is very rare that we euthanize strictly for space; it is usually for behavior or medical issues, or lack of an appropriate foster home or available rescue group.

The shelter reserves all rights to make euthanasia decisions when an animal is not deemed a good adoption candidate due to health, behavior, or for lack of cage space or other shelter resources. However, as long as the animal is not a threat to public safety or is not immediately suffering medically, it is available for rescue to approved rescue groups.

How You Can Help

The more volunteers we have helping staff with morning feeding/cleaning and assisting with adoptions, the more animals we are able to care for and find homes for on a daily basis. It is also with the help of our volunteer foster care providers we are able to spare so many that would otherwise not have a chance for adoption. However, the flip-side is that there have to be as many adopters as there are animals needing homes; so balancing over-population realities with resources is one of our most difficult tasks.

Remember: If there is a particular animal you absolutely want to save, and are realistically in a position to save, in the event they become scheduled for euthanasia, **please speak up to a supervisor as soon as you have that thought.** We will then place a note in that animal's record and contact you if they are in danger. Once contacted, you will usually need to come in within 24 hours to adopt (or in some cases be able to foster if there is no serious behavior issue).

Emotional Support

Most people find that working in the shelter is far more rewarding and emotionally easier than they first imagined. However, volunteering in any shelter can be emotionally challenging at times and many volunteers find talking over issues with other volunteers can help to relieve some of the stresses. The shelter encourages volunteers to support one another and to feel free to ask questions when clarification of circumstances may be needed. However, please first talk to the Volunteer Coordinator when sensitive issues arise or you have questions about an animal's status or euthanasia decision the shelter has made.

SHELTER FAQs

What do Animal Control Officers do?

Our Animal Control Officers, also called ACOs or Field Officers, are primarily responsible for 24/7 activities outside of the shelter (“in the field”), such as rescuing loose animals off the streets, investigating cases of cruelty and neglect, and ensuring pet owners are in compliance with local and state animal laws. When needed, they are also often called to assist with daily animal care duties within the shelter.

Who are the other uniformed staff the shelter?

Our Animal Care Attendants, also called ACAs or Kennel Attendants, are responsible for the daily care of the animals, such as feeding, cleaning, medicating, processing the intake of new incoming animals, moving animals, conducting behavior evaluations, customer service processing applications and performing euthanasia.

How is the shelter functioning after large budget and staffing reductions the past few years?

We have managed to overcome many of these challenges by greatly streamlining our operations with a focus on becoming less dependent upon the County’s General Fund. With the help of our strong and dedicated volunteer force that works hand in hand with our very experienced staff, we’ve made an art of “working lean and working smart”! Also by fully utilizing a comprehensive, state-of-the-art database that allows us to maintain and track records down to very minute details, we’ve been able to set measurable goal and results, streamline processes and significantly increase licensing revenue as well as trend out seasonable revenue trends to better prepare for our future. Over the past two years, the incredible generosity of the community through financial donations has greatly increased and has allowed us to sustain several key animal care and field officer positions. We are truly grateful for our donors’ support.

How large is the shelter’s jurisdiction?

We are responsible for all animal sheltering and welfare issues within just under a 1,000 square mile area of Sacramento County. Our jurisdiction is as far reaching as the Delta/Isleton area, Galt, Wilton, Elverta, Rio Linda, South Sacramento, Fair Oaks and Citrus Heights.

You are an “open-admission” shelter, what does that mean?

As a municipal shelter (governmental/non-private), we are primarily funded by tax-payers and pet licensing revenue. We are mandated to accept any animal from within our jurisdiction, and thus do not have the flexibility of limiting our intake when space runs short, restricting certain breeds, or turning away sick/injured/aged/too young animals that may not fit general adoption criteria. We are here to serve the people and pets in our community and take pride in assuming that obligation.

How does Sacramento County Animal Care differ from other shelters in the area?

We are the largest shelter in the area and service Sacramento County as described above, while the City of Sacramento Animal shelter services Sacramento City residents. Both are similar municipal, open-admission shelters, but with respective jurisdictions. The Sacramento SPCA is a private, limited admission sheltering organization that primarily accepts owned animals, or transfers in animals from other shelters throughout the state; however they do also contract with the cities of Rancho Cordova and Elk Grove to provide sheltering services for stray animals from those areas.

Donating to the Shelter

There are two ways to donate to help the animals and the shelter....

Donate to the Shelter

The shelter is extremely grateful for financial donations, as well as donations of usable items and supplies toward the care of the animals. Donations to the shelter are tax-deductible, and our Federal Tax ID number is 94-6000529.

Due to significant budget reductions over the past few years, the shelter has had to become less dependent upon the County's General Fund and increasingly dependent upon financial donations to continue to provide quality animal care services for the 15,000 animals that come to us every year. In addition to critical daily animal care items such as food, vaccines and medicine, donations help us to continue to investigate cases of animal cruelty and neglect. This is an especially crucial program, as we are the only agency within unincorporated Sacramento County that investigates and prosecutes these types of animal welfare violations. Donations also support our Community Spay/Neuter Program, Pet Pantry Community Food Bank, and Safe Place Pets Domestic violence protective custody services, and help retain key animal care staffing that would otherwise be subject to cuts.

There are many ways to donate to the shelter. Please see our website at www.SacCountyShelter.net under the "Help the Animals" link for more information on donation options, including planned giving options that allow shelter friends to leave a legacy of support to the shelter, scheduled automatic monthly giving, and a "Wish List" of physical items frequently in need.

Donate to T.E.A.M.

Teaching Everyone Animals Matter, (TEAM) is a non-profit affiliate of the shelter. TEAM supports the animals in many ways by facilitating special medical treatment through outside veterinary agencies that are able to provide services beyond the shelter's scope of ability, as well as purchasing special medicines and medical equipment. TEAM also graciously supports many of the needs of the volunteer and foster care programs, and the medical and care supply needs of the LAPCATS program.

Just inside the shelter's doors, you'll notice a fabulous pet boutique called Critter Outfitter, which offers many of the products adopters may need for their pets, such as leashes and collars, training materials, toys, pet clothing, and other fun accessories. Plus, adopters receive a 20% discount on all purchases for up to 14 days after adoption! Proceeds from Critter Outfitter go toward TEAM's mission of supporting the needs of the animals. Donations to TEAM are also tax-deductible and their Federal Tax ID number is 91-1825374.



GENERAL VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT & RELEASE

I (print name) _____ hereby understand and agree that my role with Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation is that of "VOLUNTEER". I understand that the term VOLUNTEER means a person who freely serves the County of Sacramento in a voluntary, unpaid/uncompensated capacity.

General Agreement Terms and Conditions

1. I agree to participate as a volunteer for the Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation, I affirm that I am over the age of 18, or have the consent of my parent or legal guardian.
2. I understand that the behavior of domestic animals is sometimes unpredictable and that some domestic animals are capable of inflicting serious personal injury or death, as well as extensive property damage. I fully understand and agree to assume all risks involved in any and all duties that I may perform for Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation in my volunteer capacity. Such duties may include, but are not limited to, animal handling, animal care, shelter custodial/maintenance duties, and other foreseeable volunteer duties.
3. Because of the nature and extent of possible duties as a volunteer, I understand and acknowledge that Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation recommends receiving a tetanus vaccination prior to the start of my duties; I acknowledge that I should discuss being vaccinated against tetanus with my physician before I begin my duties as a volunteer.
4. I have read and acknowledge receipt of the Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation Volunteer Manual ("MANUAL") and agree to comply with the policies and procedures set forth, therein, as well as any additional information, rules, policies, or procedures that may be otherwise communicated to me in verbal, electronic, or written format. I agree that if I do not fully understand a policy, I will clarify with applicable shelter staff before acting in a manner which may be contrary to the posted policies and procedures.
5. I fully understand that I have the right to terminate my volunteer status at any time and acknowledge that Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation may terminate my volunteer status at any time and for any reason.

Waiver of State Compensation, Benefits; Incident Reporting

6. I acknowledge that my volunteer status with the county is classified as an unpaid employee, and that I am ineligible for Workers Compensation coverage if injured while volunteering. I understand that I will not be compensated monetarily for the work I do while volunteering with Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation. I agree that, for any accident or injury that I may be a party to or witness, I will make a report to the Volunteer Coordinator or other shelter supervisor immediately so an accident or injury report can be completed.

Initials/Date

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Confidentiality

- 7. I understand that I may have access to and/or be exposed to information, including, but not limited to: the animals, adopters, staff, fellow volunteers, legal filings, shelter donors, and the public the shelter serves, which may be confidential by federal and state laws.
- 8. I agree to hold confidential any such information and understand such information is not to be shared with any unauthorized person or agency unless otherwise authorized by Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation management. I acknowledge that a violation is cause for termination as a shelter volunteer, and in some cases, may be cause for legal prosecution.

Image Release

- 9. I acknowledge that Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation and the County of Sacramento Media and Communication Office may at times take photos or video that includes volunteers at the shelter and/or at related offsite events and activities; I hereby grant permission to Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation and to the County of Sacramento to use my likeness, name and/or record of my participation in volunteering for the purpose of documentation or representation of the volunteer program and/or shelter operations and activities. I understand this release is applicable for the duration of my volunteering with the shelter and extends indefinitely, unless I expressly notify the Sacramento County Animal Care & Regulation otherwise.

Acknowledgement of Understanding

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the terms and conditions of the foregoing volunteer agreement and that I will comply with the same.

Signature of Volunteer / Parent or Guardian (if applicable)

Date

Signature of Sacramento County AC&R Volunteer Coordinator

Date