

Pickens County Animal Shelter Dog Friend Volunteer Manual

Around the Shelter

Cleaning Up

Volunteers and staff must work together to keep the dogs' environment clean and healthy. As you are walking or exercising dogs it is your responsibility to pick up after them. Please be sure to use the "Doody" scoops that are located by the back door of quarantine. Bagged feces should be disposed of in the outside dumpster.

If you notice a dog's kennel is dirty while taking it out, please spot clean the area as much as possible. If the kennel is very dirty please notify a member of the kennel staff.

Fenced Pen and Get Acquainted Rooms

The fenced pen area can offer shelter dogs a great opportunity to run and play. However, dogs may not be left unsupervised in the fenced pen or the outside Get Acquainted area if at all possible. All volunteers must LATCH the outside gates with extra care. An open gate is an escape waiting to happen.

Priority use for the fenced pen and the outside Get Acquainted area is for potential adopters and staff. Please vacate these areas immediately if asked.

Please limit your time in the fenced pen to ensure that all dogs have the opportunity to enjoy them. Priority is given to adopters meeting animals when all outside pens are full.

When exercising a dog in the fenced area, volunteers are responsible for cleaning up feces and disposing of it in an approved manner. All toys and bowls should be removed from the pen at the end of the play session so as to minimize disease transmission from dog to dog.

Off Limit Areas

In addition to the intake areas, Shelter Friends should not walk dogs through the lobby or adoptable cat areas. Please use only the back-side door to take dogs in and out of the building. No volunteers may leave the premises with a PCAS dog!

Out & About

Logging Dog Walks

When you take a dog out of its kennel for a walk or enrichment, please log your name/initials on the Shelter Friends walking list that is located in the dog room. There is also a space to share notes about the animal. This should be used to share information that other volunteers may find helpful. Please do not note medical concerns. The staff does not monitor this list and you should tell a kennel staff member directly about any medical or behavior concerns you notice with an animal.

Dog to Dog Interactions

Dogs other than kennel mates may not be socialized together.

Due to the increased safety risks involved, volunteers should never allow dogs to interact. PCAS Kennel Staff oversees dog to dog interactions when pairing dogs as kennel mates and is the most knowledgeable about which dogs can socialize with each other.

Only one animal per adult volunteer may be socialized at any time. One volunteer may not take out multiple dogs at the same time. Kennel mates may be taken out together with separate volunteer handlers.

Dog and Volunteer Interaction

Absolutely NO methods other than positive reinforcement are to be used while working with PCAS dogs. Use of negative reinforcement training methods can result in the termination of volunteering privileges.

Absolutely NO rough housing with dogs is permitted. This behavior increases the chances of a bite and decreases the chances of a dog being adopted. Our goal in working with the dogs is to create a calm and safe environment for them during their stay at the shelter.

Inappropriate behavior in a dog should be immediately reported to a staff member. If you are unable to control a dog, return it to its kennel and report the issue to a kennel staff member. Allowing a dog to continue to behave inappropriately will reinforce the unacceptable behavior and lessen its chances of getting adopted.

It's About Time

Most dogs would appreciate a nice long time with you. Spending 15-20 minutes with each dog during your visit does more good than spending just a few minutes with as many dogs as you can. Always remember that our goal is to reduce stress, and the more we work with each dog the more opportunities they have to feel safe and relax.

Some dogs may need a few initial moments in the fenced pen to run off excess energy and play a game of fetch. Others may enjoy a nice slow walk with breaks to reinforce training techniques (sit, down, down on a hand signal etc.) Still some quiet souls prefer to sit in the outside Get Acquainted area with you while they slowly come out of their shells. Take cues from your dog and you'll know exactly what to do.

Remember if a dog is too much and you are having trouble controlling it the best thing is to return it to its kennel even if it has only been out a few minutes.

Treats and Other Motivators

Treats can be an excellent motivator for shelter dogs. Volunteers are welcome to use the donated treats available in the dog food room. When treating a dog, break the treats into tiny bite sized pieces. Dogs do not need a large treat and the smaller they are the more "work" you can do before they have had too many. Please use treats judiciously so that no one dog gets too many treats and it causes stomach upset.

Many dogs respond well to other forms of positive reinforcement as well. Don't forget to use attention and play to reward dogs for a job well done.

Inclement Weather

During extremely hot or cold weather you may need to reduce the amount of time you spend outside with each dog. Please use your best judgment and clues from the dog! A good rule of thumb is to limit a dog's time outdoors to 10-15 minutes when the weather is enough to make you uncomfortable for very long.

You can still spend time in the dog room with a dog when weather is questionable.

Please refrain from walking when it is raining or extremely wet outside (water is still puddling). It is a safety hazard for walkers, dogs and patrons to have slick wet floors.

Choose Your Dog Wisely

Shelter Friends Dog Walking Levels

Dogs at PCAS are designated as **Green**, **Yellow** or **Red** walks according to the level of difficulty they exhibit when removed from their kennel, leashed and walked. This is also the means of rating the levels of training a Shelter Friend Volunteer must have in order to handle them. No volunteer may handle a dog assigned to a higher level than their training.

Green: all volunteers should be able to handle dogs at this level. They walk nicely on a leash and are easy to get in and out of the kennel.

Yellow: these dogs require additional handling techniques to get in and out of a kennel and may not be totally comfortable with leash walking or may pull slightly when walked.

Red: these dogs require expert handling to train them in proper walking manners and may walk easier while wearing a harness. They most likely pull hard on the leash when walked and may have other behavioral issues.

Walking levels for individual dogs are listed on the walking check list in the dog food room on the Shelter Friends bulletin board. If a dog is not rated please do not walk it unless you are a **RED** walker. **RED** walkers will walk dogs and assign them a rating as soon as they are able.

All volunteers begin at **GREEN** level. After exhibiting successful dog walking for several hours of volunteer work walkers may be moved up to the next level. Volunteers interested in moving up to the next walking level should speak to the Assist Director or the Director.

Dogs Recovering from Surgery or on Medication

Dogs recovering from spay/neuter surgery should not be allowed to get wet or run in the fenced area off leash for 10 days following the procedure. They run the risk of tearing or dissolving sutures or contracting infection at the surgery site. Please find calm ways to interact with these dogs during this period.

Do not interact with dogs on medication. If a dog has a sign indicating it is taking medications – please do not remove it from its kennel! If a potential adopter asks to see a dog that is on medication please refer them to kennel or adoption staff.

Puppies

Dogs under 6 months of age must have **TWO** sets of DDAPV Vaccinations before leaving their kennel.

Volunteers may not handle puppies under 6 months of age unless they are listed on the walking list in **BLACK** ink – indicating that they have received all necessary vaccines.

Puppies that have only received one vaccination are indicated in **BLUE** ink.

If a potential adopter asks to see a puppy, please refer them to kennel staff who may allow them to go into the kennel to interact with that puppy.

Volunteers are not to interact with any puppy UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES! Puppies are off limits to all staff that interact with older dogs to avoid contamination and health issues for all of the animals concerned.

New Dogs

Dogs are given a 5 day adjustment period when coming into the adoption building from the intake department. Volunteers do not interact or walk these dogs until that initial adjustment period is over.

The staff will place **ORANGE** signs on the cage cards indicating that these dogs are not able to go for a walk.

Additionally, the dogs will be marked in **RED** on the Shelter Friends walking list. Please pay close attention to the list and avoid walking dogs that are adjusting to the kennel area.

If a dog's name is NOT listed on the Shelter Friends walking list – that dog is NEW and has come up since Tuesday and will therefore NOT BE ABLE TO BE WALKED until the next week.

Dog Guidelines

Approximately 90% of adolescent and adult dogs turned into shelters are given up for behavior problems. My guess is that the percentage is even higher because a lot of the strays picked up were abandoned for the same reason. Training can definitely make a difference in a dog having a good home or ending up as a statistic in a shelter. It can make a huge difference in a newly adopted dog becoming a treasured family member or being repeatedly brought back to the shelter.

Ideally, a dog in training would be worked with several times a day every day until he becomes proficient at responding to

behavior cues. Training any dog only one day a week is a daunting task, and is made more difficult by the fact that our training session is also the dog's primary exercise period for the week and that we cannot oversee how others handle the dogs.

So, can we really expect to successfully train any dog under such unfavorable conditions? The answer is often yes, but not always.

For the dogs that come to the shelter with some manners, we can reinforce their training and help them to retain these manners. But what about those dogs who demonstrate no canine etiquette whatsoever or the high-energy dogs who can't keep still for more than a few seconds? Well, believe it or not, past experience has proven that, yes, we can help many of these dogs learn some basic manners.

The following training guidelines cover those basic behaviors, which will make any dog more appealing to prospective adopters. (Note: Some behaviors, such as potty training, nipping, or leash aggression cannot be addressed under the current training conditions.).

When you take a dog out of its kennel, wait for the dog to settle down before you enter the kennel. This may take a few minutes, but waiting until the dog stops barking and/or jumping before entering will teach the dog that calm gets attention.

If you know the dog sits on cue, ask for the sit before entering. Try asking for it even if you don't know. If the dog won't settle down, walk away from the kennel, then return a few seconds later. While this may seem time consuming, a dog that can remain calm in his kennel when people approach will be very appealing.

Once you're in the kennel with the door closed, again, wait for the dog to calm down before you put the collar and leash on. If

the dog is jumping or barking, simply turn your back to him. When he settles down, try again. The dog must have “four on the floor” (all four paws on the floor) before you put the collar and leash on. It’s amazing how quickly the dog will learn to control himself.

Finally, the dog must exit the kennel in a somewhat controlled fashion. When you reach for the door, if the dog starts jumping or barking, take your hand off the door and step back. Then try again.