



## Volunteer Training

### Dog Walking Ratings

At PCAS each dog is rated on what type of walk they are:

- **GREEN** easy enough for anyone to handle, fairly easy to get out of the kennel, does not pull
- **YELLOW** proceed with caution: might pull slightly on lead, may not be used to a lead or have a bit of difficulty getting in or out of the kennel
- **RED** ONLY FOR EXPERIENCED VOLUNTEERS They pull, are extremely hard to walk, may be hard to get out of the kennel or may have other behavioral issues.

We use a similar system for volunteers.

When you have been signed off to volunteer independently you will have a **GREEN** rating to start. As you are able, you will move to a **YELLOW** and possibly in some cases to the **RED** level. **You should only be walking dogs at or below your level.**

The Shelter Staff will have a list of assigned levels. If you feel an error has been made in the judgement of your level of walking ability please talk to the trainer or the Shelter Manger and you may be able to be reassessed.

**Please do not purposefully violate this precaution or disciplinary action may be taken.**

You must fully complete all Volunteer Training before you begin walking dogs independently.

Please make an appointment via email ([nhoward@pickenscountyga.gov](mailto:nhoward@pickenscountyga.gov)) to get your training completed.



## **THE NOTHING EXERCISE OR A DAILY DOSE OF PEACE AND QUIET WITH A HUMAN:**

Go into the kennels and select any highly aroused dog. Slip a lead on and take him out to any quiet area. Give the dog a very specific and limited amount of leash to pull on – three feet is perfect. You should sit, but the dog can pace, wander, stand, try to jump up, whine, bark or roll over. Ignore the dog completely (not even eye contact) and say nothing. Be very specific about how much leash the dog can maneuver on. Don't let him yank your arm or let out a few more inches of leash. Turn your face away and pull down subtly on the lead if the dog tries to jump towards your face or onto your lap.

At some point, it may at first take 20 minutes or longer, the dog will lie down, sigh and settle down. Count to three seconds after he has settled, and then bend down and stroke him down his back, and speak quietly and soothingly, as if you are talking to a child in a library, in gentle hushed tones. Your touch should be firm, confident, and your fingers deep, like a one directional massage.

As soon as you pet him, he will probably break position and start fresh at being aroused and active. This is to be expected. Withdraw your attention, stroking and eye contact immediately, like retreating from a hot surface, and begin ignoring him again. He will settle back down much more quickly this second time. Your inclination will be to ignore him when he settles, since it feels like it is ruining the moment, that is not true. This is exactly the lesson he needs to learn. He needs to learn to handle human interaction calmly, and to receive no attention for being aroused. He will quickly learn to maintain his calm mood while you pet him.

You do not need to pet him continuously while he is settled. Every once in a while, for a few moments at a time at first, and then after a few days of these lessons he can be asked to settle down for longer and longer periods of time. After he has settled a few times for a few moments then he can go for a potty break, or a training session, or a long walk to the exercise yard. Being calm and peaceful will earn him activities and rewards. Being aroused and over-stimulated will get him ignored. Being calm and peaceful will get him adopted, being aroused and over-stimulated will not.

There are long-term shelter dogs who have simply lost their ability to calm down. They can no longer settle down. Their base-line level of arousal has been raised so much by the conditions at the shelter, that the dog that once was, is no more.

There are very few conditions more inhumane in which to house a dog.