



HOWARD COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL (HCAC)

Standards of Care

December 2016

Howard County Animal Control is responsible for enforcing both county and state animal related laws. Howard County Animal Control investigates animal cruelty cases, rescues endangered animals, accepts unwanted pets, administers a pet adoption program, conducts humane education programs and operates the county's animal shelter. Volunteers assist with operations by taking the animals for walks, giving the animals personal attention and assisting with the adoption process. Howard County Animal Control shelters all types of homeless animals until new homes and new lives are found through adoption.

1. ANIMAL HOUSING

A. DOGS AND CATS

1. Cage Size, Design and Materials

Cage Size – Primary enclosures must provide sufficient space to allow each animal, regardless of size, to make normal postural adjustments (e.g., turn freely and easily stand, sit, stretch, move their head, without touching the top of the enclosure; lie in a resting position with limbs extended; be able to get away from defecation, and move about and assume a comfortable posture for feeding, drinking, urinating and defecating). Food, water bowls and litter boxes (for cats) should not impede the animal's ability to stretch out. Dogs should be able to hold their tails erect when in a normal standing position.

Design – The primary enclosures must be structurally sound and maintained in safe, working condition to properly confine animals, prevent injury, keep other animals out, and enable the animals to remain dry and clean. There must not be any sharp edges, gaps, or other defects that could cause injury or trap a limb or other body part. Secure latches, locks or other closing devices must be present.

Materials – Only non-porous surfaces that can be easily disinfected and that are durable enough to withstand repeated cleaning are used in all animal areas.

In certain situations, the above requirements are not practical or appropriate.

These situations include:

- transport;
- decreased space required for medical reasons as determined by a veterinarian;
- temporary pre/post-surgical confinement (24-48 hours total); and
- intake processing;
- large intake of animals at one time due to impoundment from Animal Control, public emergency/disaster, etc.

2. Ventilation and Air Quality

The air exchanges in the cat areas and dog kennels are 100 percent fresh air flow. To ensure proper function, air handler maintenance is performed routinely by Howard County Facilities and air filters are changed once a month or more frequently if needed.

3. Temperature and Humidity

Temperatures are maintained between 60 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Adjustments in temperature and humidity due to individual breed, hair coat, medical condition, and age are made as needed. This is typically accomplished by relocating the animal, adjusting the thermostat, and providing fans, heaters or warmer bedding materials.

4. Drainage

Drains function properly to readily remove waste and water from dog kennels and from all other rooms of the shelter.

5. Lighting

Facilities should be designed to offer as much natural light as possible, but when artificial light is the only source it should approximate natural light in composition, duration, and intensity. Periods of darkness are equally important and should mimic as closely as possible the natural pattern of sleep. Lighting is provided in each animal room during the day and turned off at the end of the day to mimic natural light cycles. Emergency lighting is on throughout the building for the safety of emergency staff.

6. Noise Control

Loud and sudden noises can cause stress to shelter animals and staff. The following steps to help reduce noise and are taken wherever possible:

- Housing dogs and cats in separate areas, ideally with no ability for either species to hear one another.
- Reduce barking by playing soft music in the dog kennel area.
- Educating the staff and public about the need to speak softly around the animals.
- Reducing dog barking by providing enrichment for the dogs.
- Maintaining all mechanical equipment in good working order to reduce noise and vibration.

7. Emergency Equipment

An up-to-date list of necessary emergency equipment is maintained by the Kennel Supervisor at all times. The Kennel Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate equipment is available, maintained in good working order and is stored in the proper location when not in use.

8. Standard Enclosure Items

The following standard enclosure items are in every cage unless specified otherwise by staff or the contracted veterinarian:

- Appropriately sized clean water and food bowls
- Clean bedding
- Elevated beds for dogs
- Toys
- Appropriately sized and clean litter boxes for cats.

9. Feeding and Watering

Adult dogs are fed once daily. Dogs under one year of age are fed twice daily. Cats are fed dry food in the morning and canned food in the evenings. Kittens are fed dry and canned twice daily. All animals are given fresh water upon arrival to the shelter. Water is replenished as needed throughout the day. Adjustments to the feeding schedule are made depending on the body condition and medical needs of the animal.

10. Enrichment

Enrichment items are defined as items or actions that stimulate normal behavior and reduce stress and boredom. Enrichment items are provided to all animals unless otherwise determined by staff. Play Groups for the dogs and cats in the shelter are used as part of the comprehensive enrichment program to provide an outlet for energy and to promote positive social interactions. All Play Groups are coordinated by staff experienced in animal behavior.

B. Domestic Others and Livestock

This category includes, but is not limited to, birds, ferrets, pigs, chickens, goats, rabbits, lizards, snakes, fish, guinea pigs, hamsters, etc. Each of these individual species are housed and fed according to standard husbandry practices and veterinarian recommendations for each species. Whenever appropriate enrichment items are offered to these animals. HCAC does maintain several outdoor livestock enclosures for the rare occasions that these animals are impounded to the facility.

2. CAGE INFORMATION

Every animal has a cage card detailing basic information about the animal, including identification number, name, breed, age, and gender; spay/neuter status, date of intake, reason for intake and an evaluation of the animal's temperament.

Special charts are placed on certain animals with special medical or behavior needs to monitor the progress of that animal.

Additional cage signs may be used to provide essential information regarding medical conditions, behavioral concerns, handling notification, or the animal's status, including availability for adoption or special requirements for adopting certain animals.

3. SANITATION

This document uses the word "sanitation" to mean a combination of cleaning and disinfection. HCAC maintains sanitary conditions to prevent the transfer of disease and to maintain the overall health of the shelter population.

A. DEFINITIONS

1. **Cleaning-** The act of physically removing organic matter (feces, urine, food particles, etc.). An area that has been cleaned should look physically and visibly free from debris. However, harmful pathogens may still be present after cleaning.
2. **Disinfection-** The process of killing pathogens in a given area.

B. PROCEDURES

1. Shelter in General

All common area floors are swept and disinfected every morning and throughout the day as needed using a disinfectant formulated to kill animal related pathogens. Urination or defecation "accidents" on common area floors are cleaned and disinfected immediately.

Trash containers are changed daily and/or as needed throughout the day.

All restrooms are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected each day.

2. Dog Kennels

Dog cages are fully cleaned and disinfected every day, with the animal removed from the cage. All enclosure items, with the exception of the raised beds, are replaced daily. The raised beds are cleaned and disinfected with the cage. A power wash system is utilized to maximize the effectiveness of the cleaning. After the initial cleaning, the dog kennels are spot cleaned throughout the day as needed.

Floors and outdoor concrete walkways in the dog areas are power washed and disinfected daily.

3. Cat Cages

Cats are moved to vacant new cages each day. Each new cage has a fresh litterbox, blanket, toys and food and water bowls. Special enrichment items may

be moved along with the cat to the new cage. All items are removed from the old cage for cleaning and disinfecting. A disinfectant is sprayed on the cage, allowed to stand for 15 minutes prior to the entire cage being hosed using warm water.

After the initial cleaning, litterboxes and/or cages are spot cleaned as needed throughout the day.

The floors in the cat areas are hosed and mopped throughout the day as needed.

4. Domestic Others

Each cage is completely cleaned or spot cleaned each day. Shelving is cleaned and disinfected daily. Floors are mopped and disinfected daily and as needed throughout the day. Cages are completely disinfected in between each animal.

5. Exam

Exam area cages are cleaned and disinfected after each animal.

Counters, tables and equipment are disinfected daily and disinfected between each animal.

Floors are disinfected, hosed and mopped daily and as needed throughout the day.

6. Laundry Room

Laundry is washed, dried and folded throughout the day. The floor in the laundry room is swept and mopped with disinfectant daily and as needed.

7. Outdoor Areas

Feces are picked up immediately and placed in outside, lined trash cans. These cans are emptied daily and taken to the dumpster.

8. Food Prep Area

All animal bowls are disinfected and washed.

All non-laundry enrichment items are disinfected and washed.

Sinks and counters are disinfected and wiped down after use.

Floors are swept and mopped with a disinfection solution.

9. Euthanasia

All tables and equipment are disinfected and wiped down after each use.

Floors are disinfected, hosed and mopped once a day. Floors are mopped with a disinfection solution as needed throughout the day.

Walk-in freezer is disinfected and cleaned monthly.

10. Personal Hygiene

Hand washing is the most effective method of preventing the transfer of germs that can cause illness in both people and animals. While hand disinfectants are useful, thoroughly washing hands with soap and water is the most effective means of preventing the transfer of germs to other people and animals.

Staff has the use of protective gear such as disposable gloves, masks, shoe covers, gowns and eyewear as needed.

C. PEST AND RODENT CONTROL

Regular extermination services are provided by the County's approved contractor on a monthly basis or sooner if an issue arises.

4. INTAKE OF ANIMALS

Accurate and consistent record keeping and tracking of all animals housed at the Howard County Animal Control facility are essential for overall care, control, evaluation and safety of the animals. Animals may be brought to the Animal Shelter by private citizens or by the Animal Control Officer Staff. Animals are processed the same day that they arrive at the shelter unless they are brought into the facility within one hour of closing or by the emergency on-call Animal Control Officer.

- A. Each animal is assigned an intake number via the shelter software program. A full description of the animal along with the person information surrendering the animal to the facility is entered into the software program. A temporary cage card is printed out.
- B. The animal is placed into an appropriate kennel. Nursing mothers and their young are housed in a cage together. Animals from the same household or litter may be housed together at the discretion of the Shelter Staff. Animals are given fresh water and food.
- C. Animals are medically and behaviorally evaluated and photographed by the appropriate Animal Handlers and/or Supervisory Staff. All dogs and cats are given an ID collar as a means of identification. Any animal requiring immediate veterinary services is transported to the staff veterinarian. All other animals are physically inspected and all findings are documented in the shelter's software program. Any necessary medical, behavior or temperament charts are placed on the cage in addition to an updated cage card if necessary.
- D. At Large, Stray and Abandoned animals are checked for any forms of identification. They are examined for tattoos and scanned for microchips during intake. Any tags, microchips or bands are researched for possible owner information. Lost reports are cross-checked for any possible matches and the animal is advertised in the newspaper.
- E. All dogs and cats are vaccinated, wormed and parasite controls are administered on intake examination. Cats are tested for Felv/FIV if placed up for adoption.

- F. Owner requested euthanasia's and feral cats without identification are immediately euthanized.

5. ANIMAL HANDLING

A. PROPER RESTRAINT

Proper handling protects animals and people from injury and minimizes stress for all. Handling an animal is carried out as humanely as possible by trained staff. The type and amount of restraint used must be appropriate for the individual animal and the specific situation. In all cases, the minimal amount of physical restraint needed to accomplish the task without injury to people or animals is used. Thus, all animal handlers are trained in proper restraint with emphasis on how to use the minimum amount of restraint required.

B. EQUIPMENT

Animal handlers have equipment at their disposal for use which includes leashes, collars, muzzles, control poles, towels, squeeze cages, nets, pole syringes, gloves, etc.

C. DOG WALKING

Dog walkers are required to complete dog walking training and be approved for independent dog walking.

D. CAT SOCIALIZING

Cat handlers are required to complete cat socialization training and be approved for independent cat handling.

E. PUBLIC INTERACTION

Persons handling animals and interacting with the public at the shelter are required to complete the appropriate animal training (dog walking and/or cat socialization training). All public interaction is done in a safe and humane manner and in a way that does not cause stress or harm to the animal or the public.

F. BEHAVIOR

The assessment of each animal's behavior begins at the time of intake and continues until the final disposition. An animal's behavior will vary based on its prior experiences, the situation it was recently removed from, the adjustment period in a new environment, etc. HCAC staff and volunteers monitor each animal's behavior daily through all types of interactions.

G. DANGEROUS ANIMALS

HCAC goes to great lengths to ensure that the environment is safe for both humans and animals. Some animals present a higher risk of injury to people and other animals, including those with known bite or scratch histories, venomous snakes,

reptiles, various types of wildlife or exotic animals, and animals that are anticipated to be aggressive. Special housing considerations are given to these animals and only specially trained staff is allowed to handle them.

Every effort is made to transfer exotic animals and wildlife to a facility with expertise in their handling and care as quickly as possible. Animals with a known bite history are housed in dog or cat bite quarantine rooms, where only assigned staff can clean, feed, and handle them. Animals displaying threatening or dangerous behaviors on intake are also placed in dog or cat quarantine areas. Dogs known to be highly aggressive are housed in such a way that they can be shifted from one cage to another using a shift door, thus preventing the possibility of the dog getting loose and minimizing danger to staff handling these animals. Only qualified staff handles these animals. HCAC will not knowingly place an animal with aggressive tendencies or that has been deemed dangerous or vicious into the adoption program.

6. VETERINARY CARE

A. PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE

HCAC focuses on the prevention of disease by rapid diagnosis and treatment of ill and potentially contagious animals. Preventative measures are accomplished through the use of appropriate vaccination protocols, internal and external parasite control, and nutritional support (proper nutrition for stage and state of the animal). All medical protocols are carried out by Animal Handlers under the direction of the contracted veterinarian. Animal Handlers perform complete physical examinations as well as evaluate nutritional changes to diet. Animal Handlers administer medical care as prescribed by that veterinarian. The population is evaluated daily for contagious and infectious diseases and the decisions made are based on individual as well as population needs. Emergencies are evaluated as quickly as possible. Animals may be treated at the shelter, humanely euthanized, or sent to the contracted veterinarian.

Precautions taken to control the spread of disease include:

- Disposable gloves are worn when touching animals and/or hands are washed after touching an animal and before touching another animal.
- Disposable protective gear such as gowns/gloves are worn and changed between handling contagious animals.
- Dogs on medication for infectious illness (such as kennel cough) are walked last and only in a designated area.

- All articles in cages that are not disposable are disinfected as well as washed before being placed in another cage.
- Food and water bowls and enrichment items are washed and disinfected as soon as they enter the kitchen area.

B. DISEASE OUTBREAKS

When a disease outbreak occurs in the shelter, the Kennel Supervisor, Administrator or contracted veterinarian may decide to quarantine a room. If the outbreak cannot be contained to one or two rooms, the Administrator may decide to close the shelter, at least for that species. Closing the shelter to a certain species means that any animal of that species will not come into contact with the public or volunteers. When a room is closed for quarantine, only animal handling staff and designated cleaning staff will be allowed in that room. Protective outerwear is worn in these rooms. All items removed from a quarantined room, such as waste materials, are placed into a garbage bag which is sealed and immediately brought to the dumpster outside of the shelter.

7. SURGERY

In most cases, dogs and cats having surgery are fasted overnight prior to surgery. Exceptions include emergency surgery, surgery performed on puppies and kittens, and other situations deemed appropriate by the contracted veterinarian. All surgeries are performed off site at the contracted veterinarian's practice. Dogs and cats are spayed or neutered when they weigh two pounds or more. Animals that are pregnant, are in heat, have a pyometra, or have a mild upper respiratory infection may still undergo anesthesia and surgery at the discretion of the veterinarian.

8. EUTHANASIA

A. POLICY

Euthanasia is performed at HCAC as a last resort and in a humane manner as possible. No more than three medical and animal care staff members that are certified, or trained, in euthanasia to assist are allowed to be present during the euthanasia process. This is to ensure a smooth and stress-free environment for the animal as well as the person(s) performing euthanasia.

B. SELECTION

Each animal is evaluated on an individual basis for its potential to be reunited with its owner or to be placed into the adoption, foster, rescue programs, or other live release options. Those animals unable to participate in any of these programs or

that cannot be reunited with their owners are considered for euthanasia. Lastly, holding periods, as required by law, are followed.

C. PROCEDURES

1. Training/Certification

Employees performing euthanasia are trained and certified through an approved organization. Once this training is completed, the employee is then supervised in his or her ability to humanely perform the euthanasia. The employee then undergoes a final evaluation before receiving approval and certification by the Administrator.

2. Environment

The room in which euthanasia takes place is clean and private and maintained as a stress-free environment. Only one euthanasia is performed at a time. Only one animal is in the euthanasia room at a time so that euthanasia is performed in a quiet, calm environment. The only exception to one animal in the room at a time is when a mother animal is being euthanized along with her under-aged offspring. In these cases, the mother animal is euthanized first.

3. Microchip Scan

All animals are scanned upon entry to the shelter for microchips in an effort to identify them. Because these technologies are imperfect, scans are also performed prior to euthanasia.

4. Drugs

Only drugs approved by the contracted veterinarian are used for euthanasia. An animal may be sedated before injecting the euthanasia solution. Euthanasia solution, which is a barbiturate, is given in a vein once the animal is calm and sedated or in the heart or the peritoneum. If the intracardiac route is chosen, euthanasia does not take place until the animal is in a comatose state.

5. Record Keeping

All drugs utilized in euthanasia are recorded in the drug logs. These logs are maintained in a file for 10 years.

9. ADOPTIONS

All dogs, cats and ferrets adopted from HCAC are eight weeks of age or older, current on vaccinations, microchipped and altered. All rabbits are spayed/neutered and microchipped prior to adoption. Other species of animals vary depending on their needs. The goal of the HCAC's adoption program is to place as many animals as possible into suitable homes and prepare adopters for the responsibilities of pet ownership. This is accomplished by screening all potential adopters for past Animal Control violations,

reviewing adopters' histories in the Animal Control databases, requiring identification and proof of address, reviewing current and previous pet history, contacting leasing agencies and requiring adopters to be at least 18 years of age. Potential adopters are required to visit with the animal outside of the cage prior to the completion of the adoption application. Once the application is completed, the adopter has 48 hours to have other household members visit with the animal and to complete all requirements for the adoption. An interview is scheduled with all adoption where the staff goes over all animal care, medical history for the pet including vaccinations, medications, and follow-up care. Animals are surgically altered prior to leaving the shelter unless determined unfit for surgery by the contracted veterinarian. If an animal is not able to be altered prior to going home, the adopter is given a deadline date in which to have the surgery completed. Educational handouts, medical history, and an adoption agreement are provided to the adopter. HCAC utilizes adoption promotions throughout the year to increase public awareness and encourage responsible people to adopt. HCAC reserves the right to deny adoption to persons not having the knowledge or ability to properly care for the animal or who have a history of animal abuse/neglect or have a history of turning animals into shelters.

10. VISITORS

All visitors to HCAC are free to enter the adoption areas unescorted during adoption times. During non-adoption hours or to non-public areas visitors are supervised through the building by a staff member to maximize safety of both people and animals.

11. ANIMAL HOLDS

Animals arriving at the shelter are subject to various State and County requirements as to the length of time they must be held prior to being made available for adoption.

1. STRAY ANIMALS

Impounded stray animals are held for 5 business days prior to adoption or transferring to another organization and 10 days prior to euthanasia.

2. OWNER-SURRENDERED ANIMALS

Owner-surrendered animals are not subject to a required holding period. When an owner surrenders an animal, he or she immediately relinquishes all rights to the animal and the animal may be immediately placed up for adoption, transferred to another organization, or humanely euthanized.

3. ANIMALS LEFT BEHIND AFTER EVICTIONS/ABANDONED ANIMALS

Animals left behind when owners are evicted from their homes are considered to be abandoned. All abandoned animals are held 10 days before being placed up for adoption, transferred to another organization or humanely euthanized.

4. INVESTIGATIONS

Some animals are the subject of investigations by Animal Control Officers or the police for various reasons (suspicions of cruelty, abuse, neglect, fighting, etc.). The amount of time an animal is held varies as investigations are conducted and completed.

5. BITE QUARANTINE

HCAC follows state and county regulations for animals that have bitten a person or another animal and are suspected of being a potentially dangerous animal or rabies carrier. Animals that have bitten must be quarantined for 10 days at home or at the shelter as directed by Administrator or the Health Department. If an owned animal that has bitten is quarantined at the shelter, the minimum holding period is 10 days from the day of the bite. If the animal that has bitten is a stray animal and no owner is identified within 10 days, the animal may be euthanized at the end of the quarantine period. Only trained and approved staff are allowed access to quarantined animals; this includes bite cases as well as animals quarantined for rabies evaluation and/or infectious disease. Limited personnel access is mandatory to safeguard others from potential injury (bite, scratch, or infectious disease) as well as to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

6. EMERGENCY HOLD

HCAC does not offer regular boarding to the public due to space constraints at the shelter; however, during an emergency (natural disaster, fire, flooding, domestic violence situation, etc.), short-term holding can be provided.

12. PERSONAL HEALTH

A. STAFF VACCINATION

All high risk staff handling animals at HCAC must be vaccinated against rabies. It is recommended that all staff be current on tetanus. Vaccinations may be administered by the Howard County Health Department or an individual's personal physician. To ensure that staff maintains effective protection against rabies, blood is drawn every two years after the initial vaccination and titers are determined by the Howard County Health Department. Individuals with non-protective titers require re-vaccination. Tetanus vaccines must be given every ten years. Staff exposed to either rabies or tetanus must seek immediate medical attention and may require re-vaccination.

B. ZONOSIS

Zoonotic diseases are those that can be transmitted by non-human animals to humans. There is the potential for the transmission of zoonotic diseases at any animal shelter. Zoonotic diseases that are commonly of concern at shelters like are

rabies, intestinal parasites, leptosporosis, cat scratch disease, ringworm, and sarcoptic mange among others. The most effective way to decrease the risk of zoonotic disease caused by bite or scratch wounds is to immediately recognize potentially dangerous animals. Any animal that is fearful or in pain can potentially bite, scratch, or otherwise injure a person or another animal. To minimize the risk of injury, all animal care staff and volunteers must be adequately trained in handling animals, and be able to recognize the signs of potentially dangerous behavior. Additionally, hand washing is extremely important in preventing transmission of disease. All staff, volunteers, and visitors must wash their hands thoroughly after touching any animal at the shelter. Whenever possible, staff should wear disposable gloves when handling animals and their waste products. Food and beverages are not to be consumed in animal areas. Human food items and dishes are not housed in the same sink as dog or cat dishes and litter boxes. Human food must not be stored in the same refrigerator as animal food or biologics/medications. The risk of disease outbreak is minimized by providing animals with medications to eliminate internal and external parasites as well as vaccinations against specific diseases. These tools are vital to protect the health of shelter staff, volunteers, and visitors.

C. NOISE PROTECTION

Ear plugs are available to staff and volunteers. Ear plugs are encouraged when working in areas of high noise.

D. REPORTING INJURIES

All injuries that occur at HCAC or while working on behalf of HCAC, must be reported immediately to a supervisor. This includes any bite, scratch, or other injury that occurs. An incident report will be filled out.