



STANDARDS OF CARE DOCUMENT

Calvert County Government, Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter

Standards of Care Document

The Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter is an open admission animal shelter managed by the Animal Shelter Division, The Animal Shelter Division reports to the Department of Public Safety for Calvert County Government (CCG). The mission of the shelter is to meet the five freedoms and to safely rehome animals into the community.

In accordance with 2-1703 and 2-1705 of the Maryland Agriculture laws for Animal Shelters, Calvert County Government has in place the following Standards of Care. The document makes every effort to remain consistent with the latest Association of Shelter Veterinarians' [Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters](#) and the current guidelines prepared by the Professional Animal Workers of Maryland (PAWS).

The five freedoms that the Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter strives to meet:

1. **Freedom from hunger or thirst** by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor;
2. **Freedom from discomfort** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area;
3. **Freedom from pain, injury or disease** by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment;
4. **Freedom to express (most) normal behavior** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the animal's own kind and;
5. **Freedom from fear and distress** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

The document is meant to be read in its entirety so that information is not taken out of context or misunderstood. It is not meant to replace the Standard Operating Procedures for the organization.

Management and Recordkeeping

Establishment of Policies and Procedures

The Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter, hereafter referred to as animal shelter, will maintain Standard Operating Procedures to direct the actions of shelter employees. The procedures will include, but are not limited to:

1. Clearly defined mission;
2. Policies and procedures;
3. Protocols that reflect current information;
4. Minimum training requirements
5. Clear chain of supervision
6. Proper management of animal care
7. Veterinary protocols reviewed by a licensed veterinarian.

Management Plan

The management plan for the animal shelter will ensure;

1. That medical and surgical care of animals will be performed or supervised by a licensed veterinarian;
2. Communication of the responsibility and accountability structure will be provided to staff and volunteers;
3. Only those with the appropriate training and knowledge will be given responsibility for certain tasks and;
4. Management decisions should always consider resource allocation, population health, and individual animal welfare.

Training

Animal shelter staff and volunteers must obtain training and demonstrate proficiency before being assigned skilled tasks. The staff and volunteers of the animal shelter will be provided opportunity for continuing education. All trainings and certification documentation will be maintained by the animal shelter.

Animal Identification

Each animal that enters the Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter will be assigned a unique identifying number upon intake establishing a record for the animal while it is in the care of the animal shelter. This number shall be affixed to the animal while in the custody of the animal shelter unless, the animal is unsafe to handle or the shelter's method of affixing the number would cause harm to the animal. Any action taken with or on behalf of the animal will be documented in the animal's record under the unique identifying number.

Primary Enclosure

Animal enclosures in the animal shelter will be structurally sound and maintained in safe, working condition to properly confine animals, prevent injury, keep other animals out and enable animals to remain dry and clean. The animal enclosures will provide sufficient space to allow each animal, regardless of species, to make normal postural adjustments. Animals will be able to lie in a comfortable position with limbs extended, move about and assume a comfortable posture for feeding, drinking, urinating and defecating. All surfaces in the enclosure will be non-porous to allow easy disinfection and, be durable enough to withstand repeated cleanings.

Animals will be housed in a manner that will allow them to sit, sleep, and eat away from areas where they defecate and urinate.

Crates or cages will not be stacked in a manner that would increase animal stress or discomfort. If cages are stacked, they must not compromise ventilation or allow animal waste to fall from the cage above to the cage below.

Any outdoor space will be properly enclosed to prevent animals from escaping.

Animals that are housed beyond 1-2 weeks will be provided more opportunity for mentally and physically stimulating enclosures.

Heating, Ventilation, and Air-Quality

Ventilation systems will be adequately maintained to ensure clean air is provided in all areas of the animal shelter. The temperature of the animal shelter will be maintained at American Veterinary Medical Association recommendation of 60 – 80 degrees Fahrenheit, with the relative humidity between 30-70%.

Animals will be monitored routinely, and necessary measures will be taken if an animal appears too hot or too cold.

Sound Control

Staff and volunteers will be instructed to avoid creating excessive noise during routine activities. Sound absorbent materials will be utilized in the animal shelter.

Drop Boxes

Unattended drop boxes, where live animals are placed by the public in receptacles for later intake, are not used since they may result in suffering and death.

Population Management

Capacity for Care

Capacity of care is determined by the number of primary enclosures in the shelter and adequate staffing or volunteer work hours to sufficiently meet the basic needs of animals in the shelter. In addition to meeting the basic needs of the shelter animals, there must be adequate staffing to promptly provide intake exams and vaccinations; and allow necessary prompt movement of animals throughout the shelter.

The animal shelter, in keeping with ideal standards, will work diligently to maintain housing capacity below the maximum capacity for care. It is considered unacceptable for animal shelters to operate and maintain care for a number of animals that is outside of its capacity for care.

Protocols for Maintaining Adequate Capacity for Care

Policies and protocols will be provided to maintain adequate capacity for care. Policies will provide a means for balancing admission with the available outcomes. Inspections of all animals will be completed daily to routinely evaluate and monitor adequacy of capacity and to identify needs for housing, care, or service. Appropriate interventions will be made before animal numbers exceed the capacity for care and housing.

Monitoring Statistical Data

Monthly statistics will be maintained to track the intake and outcomes of animals by type and by each species.

Sanitation

Cleaning and Disinfection

The staff and volunteers of the animal shelter will follow sanitation protocols that are developed considering the facility, animal population, training, and equipment. The protocols will be based on current knowledge and recommendations developed specifically for animal shelters. The protocols will address the transmission of fomites by equipment, staff, volunteers and visitors to the shelter.

The protocols for the facility will ensure that be cleaned in order of susceptibility of disease and potential risk to the general population, starting with the most susceptible animals and ending in those who carry the highest risk of transmitting infectious disease.

Protocols will be revised as needed when handling an outbreak in order to address specific pathogens. Products that have not been independently validated against un-enveloped viruses or other pathogens of concern will not be solely used for disinfection.

Other Cleaning

Staff and volunteers will be instructed to dispose of feces immediately while walking dogs.

Foster caregivers will be provided with instruction and guidance to minimize spread of disease or contamination from ill animals to their homes.

Rodent/Pest Control

Food and other animal materials will be maintained in sealed bins and containers to prevent access by rodents or insects. Solutions to rodent or pest concerns will be carried out in the most humane, safe and effective method possible.

Medical Health and Physical Well-Being

Veterinary Relationship and Recordkeeping

Medications and treatments will only be administered with the advice of a veterinarian or in accordance with written protocols provided by a veterinarian. All drugs will be dispensed in accordance with federal and state requirements.

Documentation will be made in each animal's record when medical care is rendered.

All health care practices and protocols will be developed in consultation with a veterinarian, ideally one familiar with shelter medicine.

Considerations at Intake

Every animal's health, medical and behavioral status will be evaluated upon intake. All possible information from prior owners or person turning in the animal will be solicited. All information obtained will be added to the animal's record.

All cats and dogs will be scanned for a microchip upon intake. Any owner information obtained upon animal intake will be pursued immediately to expedite the reunification of pets and their owners.

Once animals have been evaluated they will be separated by species, age, physical health status and behavioral health status.

Vaccinations

Animal vaccine schedules will be determined in consultation with a veterinarian, ideally one with knowledge of shelter medicine. Vaccinations performed at the animal shelter will be documented in each animal's record.

Vaccinations & Parasite Control

Animal vaccine schedules and dewormer schedules will be determined in consultation with a veterinarian, ideally one with knowledge of shelter medicine. Vaccinations and dewormer performed at the animal shelter will be documented in each animal's record.

Emergency Medical Plan

An emergency medical plan will be in place and reviewed by a licensed veterinarian. Staff will be trained to recognize conditions that require emergency care.

Pain Management

Staff will be trained to recognize pain symptoms in animals. When adequate pain relief cannot be achieved, the animal will be transferred to a facility that can meet the animal's needs or humane euthanasia will be provided.

Monitoring and Daily Rounds

Animals in the shelter will be monitored daily to assess their health and well-being. Their urination, defecation, consumption of food and water, attitude, and behavior will also be monitored.

Any animal observed to be in pain, suffering, distress, rapidly deteriorating health, experiencing life-threatening problems, or have zoonotic medical conditions will be assessed and managed appropriately in a timely manner. Any of the previously listed medical concerns and any treatment provided will be documented in the animal's record.

Nutrition

Fresh clean water will continuously be provided and changed daily for all animals in their primary enclosures. Water will be withheld if necessary for medical procedures.

Food that meets the nutritional needs of the animals will be provided in the amount and frequency required for each age, condition, or species.

Food and water will be placed in the enclosure in an effort to prevent contamination from debris, feces, or urine.

Food storage and preparation areas will be kept clean and sanitary.

Population Well-Being & Response to Disease and Illness

Health concerns that effect the population of animals after entry to the facility will be assessed and documented to monitor trends related to specific health problems.

Any animal that exhibits illness in the animal shelter will be isolated from the remainder of the population to prevent transmission of the pathogen and to allow for monitoring and veterinary treatment.

In the event of severe or unusual outbreaks veterinarian evaluation and recommendation will be sought.

When releasing sick or infectious animals from the shelter, full disclosure will be made to the person or organization receiving the animal.

Medical Treatment

Medical protocols for management of common diseases in the animal shelter will be developed in consultation with a licensed veterinarian, ideally a veterinarian familiar with shelter medicine.

Regardless of legal status or ownership status, an animal in the custody of the animal shelter will receive access to treatment to alleviate illness or suffering. If the suffering cannot be alleviated euthanasia may occur.

Those providing medical veterinary treatment will be adequately trained and skilled to perform their tasks. They will also have access to the necessary resources to perform assigned tasks.

Medical decisions will be based on a number of criteria including, but not limited to:

- The ability to safely and humanely provide relief;
- The duration of the treatment;
- The prognosis for recovery;
- The likelihood of placement after completion of treatment;
- The number of animals that need to be treated and;
- The expense and resources available.

Any veterinary treatment provided for an animal in the custody of the animal shelter will be documented in the animal's record.

Considerations on Intake

In an effort to alert staff to the presence of potential behavioral problems or staff safety concerns, all incidents of aggressive behavior, as well as the context of the behavior, will be solicited and thoroughly documented in the animal's record. Every effort will be made to obtain a thorough behavioral history and reason(s) for relinquishment of incoming animals.

When the animals are incoming and/or, in the evaluation process, care will be taken to avoid unnecessary stress on the animals.

Behavioral Evaluation

Although every effort to obtain behavioral history is attempted, it is acknowledged that all information may not be available or, be provided by previous owners.

The behavior evaluations of animals begin at the time of intake and routinely continue throughout the stay in the animal shelter. Staff will be trained to recognize body language and other behaviors that indicate animal stress, pain, and suffering.

All dogs that are safe to handle will receive a systematic behavioral assessment to determine the appropriateness of re-homing or suitability for transfer to another organization.

Any behavioral information or observations obtained through intake, systematic evaluations, or routine monitoring will be documented in the animal's record.

A standard form will be used to document scheduled behavioral assessments. Such assessments will be comprised of techniques and methods approved by veterinarians and/or an animal behaviorist. Any information obtained during the assessment will not invalidate information received from owner/finder at intake, or observations made by staff/volunteers while the animal is in the custody of the animal shelter.

In-Shelter Care

Animals will be provided with space to urinate and defecate away from where they eat and rest. They will be provided with sufficient space to allow them to stand and walk several steps and sit or lie down at full body length.

Young animals will be given attention to ensure proper socialization.

Animals that are in the shelter long-term will be provided with options for alternative housing and/or greater enrichment opportunities.

All animals will be provided with regular social contact, mental stimulation, and physical activity. Social interaction will be balanced with the need to prevent the spread of diseases and the need to keep staff, volunteers, and public safe from injury.

Any animal exhibiting mental suffering, distress, or behavioral deterioration will be appropriately treated in a timely manner or euthanized if treatment resources are unavailable.

Behavior modification is labor intensive and time-consuming, as the practice must occur over a period of time to be successful. Only when adequate resources are available and, if the animal is not dangerous, may behavior modification training be provided. Any training that occurs in the shelter will be completed utilizing positive reinforcement and/or methods adhering to scientific principles that do not cause harm or distress to the animal.

Lights will be turned off at night and be turned on during the day to maintain normal circadian rhythms.

Animals that are believed to be dangerous will not be rehomed.

When space is available shy, poorly socialized, feral and geriatric cats – or animal showing signs of stress – will be housed in separately in calm and quiet areas.

Group Housing

Group housing of cats will require a sufficient amount of food, water, bedding, litter boxes, and toys for the population. Rooms with group housing of cats will provide elevated space and hiding places.

Only dogs that lived together before entering the shelter shall be allowed to share the same kennel space. Dogs that are housed together will be provided with sufficient resources of food, water, bedding, and toys.

Animals that are fearful or aggressive towards other animals, are stressed by the presence of other animals, require individual monitoring or are ill and require treatment will not be placed in group housing.

Animal Handling

General

Animal handling will be as humane as possible for the individual animal and situation.

Restraint

Employees will receive training that teaches them how to humanely handle animals.

Location and Timing

Animal handling will be as humane as possible to prevent escape of the animal.

Equipment

Catchpoles will not be used for routine restraint of cats. Equipment and cages will be assessed for risk of harm to animal before its use.

Euthanasia

General

Each individual animal will be treated with respect. The euthanasia method in the shelter will quickly induce loss of consciousness followed by death and ensure the death is as free from pain, distress, anxiety, or apprehension as possible.

The euthanasia method used in the shelter will be reliable, irreversible, and compatible with all species, age and health status of the animal.

The identity of each animal will be verified with certainty before euthanasia. This will include multiple scanning of the animal for a microchip and a thorough review of animal identification and shelter documents.

The shelter will document the animal's size, weight, temperament, drug dose, needle, syringe, and restraint method used.

Safety and emotional well-being of staff members performing euthanasia will be considered.

Euthanasia Techniques

Staff members will abide by all rules, regulations, and laws regarding the tracking of euthanasia medications.

Only AVMA approved methods will be utilized when performing humane euthanasia.

Environment and Equipment

Equipment includes a table that can be readily disinfected, a good light source, a universal microchip scanner, hair clippers, stethoscope, needles, syringes, muzzles, and humane restraint equipment.

A secure, isolated area free from distractions and interruptions will be designated for humane euthanasia.

Only staff members directly involved in the euthanasia process will be allowed in the area when the procedure is being performed.

Record-Keeping and Controlled Substances

A record log will be kept documenting each animal's identification, amount of euthanasia solution and pre-euthanasia drugs received, dispensed, remaining, and the identity of the person performing the euthanasia.

All drug records will be kept, maintained, and logged as required by federal, state, and local laws.

Staff Training

Any staff member assisting or performing euthanasia will be certified through a PAWS approved euthanasia by injection training course. Compassion fatigue trainings will be offered to staff members certified in humane euthanasia.

Spaying and Neutering

General

Consideration will be given to individual animal health or circumstances when it comes to creating the need for exception to the required spay/neuter policy.

If spaying and neutering is available in the animal shelter, by a veterinarian, cats and dogs must have the surgery completed prior to release unless there are medical or legal exceptions.

If spaying and neutering is unavailable within the animal shelter, a program will be implemented to ensure animals are spayed or neutered within a reasonable time of the adoption date.

Adopters that fail to participate in the adoption spay or neuter program will be banned from further adoption.

Veterinary Medical Guidelines

Spaying and neutering procedures will be performed by a licensed veterinarian only.

Every animal patient will have any and all medical procedures performed by a veterinarian documented in the animal's record.

All controlled substances will be maintained according to DEA requirements.

A veterinarian will be make the final decision regarding acceptance of any patient for surgery based on a physical examination and medical history if available as well as the capacity for the surgery schedule.

Veterinarian will weigh the risks and benefits of spaying or neutering patients with mild infectious or non-infectious medical conditions.

Surgery and Anesthesia

Appropriate enclosures to provide safety at all stages of sedation and anesthesia will provided for each animal before and after surgery.

Veterinarians performing surgery will ensure area is equipped and animals under their care are monitored.

Veterinarians are required to follow the surgery and anesthesia requirements set forth in the Guidelines for Standards of Care for Animal Shelters published by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians.

Documentation

Each animal that is spayed or neutered at the animal shelter will be provided with a certificate documenting the procedure.

Animal Transport

General

The shelter does not have a dedicated transport program at this time.

General

The shelter and its staff will comply with federal and state occupational and safety regulations regarding chemical, biological, and physical hazards in the workplace.

Hearing protection will be provided for employees working in loud environments.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) will be supplied to staff and volunteers handling chemical or biological agents.

Hand washing will be encouraged for visitors and required for staff after handling animals.

Smoking will be prohibited within the animal shelter.

Zoonoses

Enclosures of animals with suspected zoonotic disease will be clearly marked to indicate the condition and necessary precautions to be taken.

The shelter will provide periodic staff and volunteer training and information on the recognition of potentially zoonotic conditions and the means of protecting others from the exposure.

Shelter will provide literature in an accessible location to educate the public about zoonotic diseases.

Handwashing stations will be available for the public.

Animal Related Injuries

Shelter staff and volunteers will be trained to identify potential rabies exposures and understand the regulations that apply to reporting and managing bites to humans and animals.

Every person presenting an animal to the shelter will be asked if the animal has bitten anyone or had contact with wildlife within the last 10 days.

Cages of animals with aggressive, potentially dangerous, or dangerous animals will be clearly marked to advise caution.

Aggressive, potentially dangerous, or dangerous animals will be housed in a separate secure area, not accessible to the public without escort, and in a manner to prevent handling or requiring the animal to be removed from the enclosure.

A thorough investigation of individual circumstances will be undertaken before consideration is given to re-homing an animal with a history of biting or threatening behavior.

Incoming animals will be examined for bite wound(s). Any animals who have been exposed to rabies will be reported and managed in accordance with the Maryland State Rabies Compendium and in accordance to Calvert County Health Department requirements.

Staff members who routinely work with companion animals or wildlife animals will be required to obtain and maintain rabies pre-exposure vaccinations.

Animals that believed to be dangerous will not be re-homed.

All behavioral concerns will be required to be documented and discussed with potential owners or rescues before adoption or placement.

Emerging Diseases and Anti-Microbial Resistance

Antibiotics will not be used as preventative or as substitute for good animal health management.