

# Tri-County Animal Shelter (TCAS) **Standards of Care**

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# Standards of Care

## I. ANIMAL HOUSING

### A. DOGS AND CATS

#### 1. Cage Size, Design and Materials

Cage Size – Primary enclosures should 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 should 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 should not be any sharp edges, gaps, or other defects that could cause injury or trap a limb or other body part. Secure latches or other closing devices should be present. A soft resting place or elevated bed should be provided for each animal.

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.

#### **Standard Enclosure Items May Include:**

- Appropriately sized clean water and food bowls;
- Bedding or an Elevated resting place;
- Assigned carriers for cats (stored in, above or near each cage); and
- Appropriately sized and clean litter boxes for cats.

In certain situations, the above requirements are not practical or appropriate. These situations may include:

- Transport;
- Intake processing;
- Decreased space required for medical reasons as needed
- Temporary pre/post-surgical requirements
- Large intake of animals at one time due to impoundment from Animal Control, public emergency/disaster, etc

**Small Mammals, Reptiles, and Exotics:** housed in appropriate enclosures for species.

**Birds:** housed in cages appropriate to the species, including perches appropriately sized for their feet.

#### 2. Heating, Ventilation, and Air Quality

Animals will be provided adequate ventilation, by natural or mechanical means, and the ambient temperature will be compatible with the health of the animal.

### 3. 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.

### 4. 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.
- 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.

### 5. Feeding and Watering

Animals will be fed nutritious food daily in accordance with the specific needs of the species based on age, weight and physical condition. Reptiles may be excluded from the daily feeding requirements based on species needs.

Clean water is available at all times unless directed otherwise by a veterinarian.

### 6. Enrichment

Enrichment items are defined as items or actions that stimulate normal behavior and reduce stress and boredom. When appropriate these items and actions will be provided.

## II. CAGE INFORMATION

Every cage contains a cage card detailing basic information about each animal occupying the cage, including identification number, breed, age, gender, spay/neuter status, physical description, and cage number.

Additional cage signs may be used to provide essential information regarding medical condition, behavioral concerns, handling notifications, or the animal's status, including availability for adoption.

## III. SANITATION

This document uses the word "sanitation" to mean a combination of cleaning and disinfection. TCAS maintains sanitary conditions to mitigate the transfer of disease, which could result in an outbreak that could potentially lead to the closure of a portion of the facility. Proper sanitation is the foundation of every preventative medicine program.

### 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. Urination or defecation “accidents” on common area floors are cleaned up and disinfected immediately.

Garbage, trash, and recycling are placed in appropriate bins and removed at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed.

### **2. Dog Cages**

Dog cages are fully cleaned and disinfected every day, with the animal separated from the cleaning area by the guillotine door. All enclosure items, with the exception of Kuranda beds, are replaced daily. Kuranda beds are cleaned with the cage.

Dog cages are spot cleaned throughout the day as needed.

### **3. Cat Cages**

Occupied cat cages are spot-cleaned daily. New litter is provided and food and water bowls are cleaned and refilled. If the bedding and shoe box is not soiled or wet, it is shaken out and reused. The cage and perches are wiped clean. In some cases, additional cleaning of the cage may be required.

After the initial cleaning, litter boxes and/or cages are spot-cleaned as necessary throughout the day.

All cat cages are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to placement of a new cat.

Floors in cat areas are swept and disinfected each day and throughout the day as needed.

### **4. Intake Rooms**

Intake rooms are cleared of any used carriers, boxes, and crates each evening. All counters are fully cleaned and disinfected daily. Floors are swept and disinfected each evening and throughout the day as needed.

Intake equipment is cleaned and disinfected after each usage.

### **5. Laundry Room**

Laundry is washed and dried, folded, and stored throughout the day.

### **6. Crates and Carriers**

Occupied crates and carriers used for temporary housing or transport of animals are spot cleaned as needed. All crates and carriers are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to being used for a new animal.

### **7. 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 to animals.

Staff arrives at work in clean clothes and has a change of clothing available as necessary. Protective gear such as disposable gloves, masks, shoe covers, gowns, and eyewear are available for use as needed.

## IV. INTAKE PROCEDURES

Each animal, upon arrival, goes through an intake process. Animals entering the shelter may be held as strays, be placed for adoption, transferred to another organization, or humanely euthanized.

### DOGS AND CATS

An animal's general physical condition is evaluated upon arrival and any emergency medical issues are addressed. The animal's age is estimated, and its nutritional needs are determined. Each animal is checked for identification: e.g. microchip, tattoo, tags, etc. The animal is vaccinated and parasite controls are administered. The demonstrated behaviors and actions of the animal are also noted. A record is established and housing is assigned in the TCAS database for the animal. A cage card specifically identifying that animal is posted on the cage.

### A. OTHER ANIMALS

An animal's general physical condition is evaluated upon arrival and any emergency medical issues are addressed. The physical and nutritional needs are assessed, and the animal is assigned appropriate housing. If proper housing and/or care cannot be provided to the animal by TCAS, every effort is made to transfer exotic animals and wildlife to a facility with expertise in their handling and care as quickly as possible.

## V. 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 should be appropriate for the individual animal and the specific situation.

### B. EQUIPMENT

Examples of equipment used for animal restraint are as follows: leashes, collars, muzzles, control poles, towels, squeeze cages, traps, cat nets, cat grabbers, pole syringes, wall rings, and cat gloves.

### C. FERAL CATS

Special consideration is given to the housing and handling of feral cats. Appropriate use of cage covers, cat dens, traps, squeeze cages, and sedatives can minimize stress and greatly reduce risk of injury to the animal or handler..

### D. BEHAVIOR

The assessment of each animal's behavior begins at the time of intake and continues until the final disposition. All adoptable dogs will undergo a behavior assessment test to include a food test and dog test. 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. TCAS staff and volunteers monitor each animal's behavior daily through all types of interactions.

### E. DANGEROUS ANIMALS

TCAS goes to great lengths to ensure that the facility 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 under a rabies quarantine or animals displaying threatening or dangerous behaviors on intake are housed in dog or cat quarantine areas, where only assigned staff can clean, feed, and handle them.

TCAS will not knowingly place an animal with aggressive tendencies or that has been deemed dangerous or vicious into the adoption program.

## **VI. VETERINARY CARE**

### **A. PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE**

TCAS focuses on the prevention of disease, rapid recognition 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). The population is evaluated daily for contagious and infectious diseases and the decisions made are based on individual as well as population needs. Veterinary consults are obtained when merited.

Individual animals are assessed for their state of health and nutritional status, as well as the population as a whole. Individual animals, groups of animals, and whole rooms may be placed under a health or medical quarantine. The decision to quarantine and the length of quarantine is determined by the Supervisor.

Emergencies are evaluated as quickly as possible. Animals may be treated at the shelter, humanely euthanized, or sent to a local 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. This decreases the risk of disease transmission from fomites, which are objects that are able to transmit infectious organisms (e.g. parasites, bacteria, viruses, fungi) from one animal to another; they may include toys, food and water bowls, hair, and clothing, to name a few.
- Disposable protective gear such as gowns or smocks are worn and changed between cleaning of each cat room.
- All articles in cages that are reusable are disinfected as well as washed before being placed in another cage.
- Bins used in rooms (garbage cans, litter cans) are disinfected regularly.

### **B. DISEASE OUTBREAKS**

When a disease outbreak occurs in the shelter, the Supervisor may decide to quarantine an entire room. When a room is closed for medical quarantine, no one except medical 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 taken to the dumpster outside of the shelter.

## VII. ANIMAL HOLDS

Stray animals arriving at the shelter are subject to various State and County requirements as to the length of time they must be held for reclamation by their owner

### 1. STRAY ANIMALS

The day the animal arrives at the shelter, unless its prior to operating hours, and days the shelter is closed to the public do not count for purposes of the holding period. After the holding period, the animal becomes property of the shelter and thus may be placed for adoption, transferred to another organization, or humanely euthanized.

#### Lost and Found Program

TCAS is committed to reuniting lost and found pets with their families. Lost and found reports are entered into the TCAS database to be compared to the stray animals that arrive each day. All lost and found pets are held for the state mandated hold time in order to provide the owner time to come find them or for TCAS to reunite them with their families. If no one claims them as their own, the animal gets released to TCAS and evaluated for placement.

TCAS makes every effort to return animals to their rightful owners. To ensure that an animal is returned to its rightful owner, owners may be asked to provide medical or vaccination history or a photograph of the pet. Owners will be asked to verify the city and major cross streets where the pet was lost; and the date when the pet was last seen. When reclaiming their pet, owners must bring a government issued ID and must be 18 years of age. Animals will not be released to a minor.

### 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 for adoption, transferred to another organization, or humanely euthanized.

### 3. INVESTIGATIONS

Some animals are the subject of investigations by Animal Control or the police for various reasons (suspicions of cruelty, abuse, neglect, etc.). The amount of time an animal is held varies as investigations are conducted and completed. TCAS cares for these animals during the investigation period, and the animals are released when Animal Control clears them from the investigation.

### 4. RABIES QUARANTINE

TCAS follows the Health Department regulations for animals that have bitten, scratched or otherwise exposed a person or another animal and are suspected of being a rabies carrier. Animals must be quarantined at home, at the shelter, or as directed by the Health Department. If an animal is quarantined at the shelter, the minimum holding period is 10 days from the day of the exposure but may be longer as determined by the Health Department.

Only qualified staff are allowed access to quarantined animals. Limited personnel access is essential to safeguard others from potential exposure to (bite, scratch, or infectious disease) as well as to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

## 5. EMERGENCY HOLD

TCAS 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 may be provided on a case by case basis as determined by the Supervisor. Owners are encouraged to utilize other resources and find other alternatives for housing.

## VIII. ADOPTIONS

Animals adopted from TCAS are eight weeks of age or older, current on vaccinations, microchipped and altered. The goal of the TCAS 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 reviewing adopters' histories, requiring identification and proof of address, and requiring adopters to be at least 18 years of age. Animals are surgically altered prior to being placed into the adopter's home. Educational handouts, medical history, and an adoption agreement are provided to the adopter.

TCAS utilizes adoption promotions throughout the year to increase public awareness and encourage responsible people to adopt. The adoption program is evaluated on a periodic basis to ensure the needs of the animals and the adopting community is met.

### Rescue Partner Program

TCAS recognizes relationships with approved rescue groups is an important aspect of a successful adoption program. TCAS depends on adoption and rescue partnerships to help save the lives of countless homeless pets, including underage and special needs animals.

## IX. EUTHANASIA

### A. POLICY

Euthanasia is used as a last resort and performed in a humane manner, as needed, to maintain a manageable population of healthy, treatable, and adoptable animals. Rarely are animals euthanized due to a lack of space.

### B. SELECTION

Each animal is evaluated on an individual basis for its potential to be reunited with its owner or participation in TCAS's adoption or rescue programs. Those animals unable to participate in any of these programs or that cannot be reunited with their owners are considered for euthanasia.

### C. PROCEDURES

#### 1. Training/Certification

Employees performing euthanasia are trained and certified through a program approved by the Maryland Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners. Once this training is completed, the employee is then monitored in his or her ability to humanely perform the euthanasia.

#### 2. Microchip Scan

All animals are scanned for microchips in an effort to identify their owners, during the intake process and prior to any disposition including adoption, return to owner, transfers to rescues and euthanasia.

#### 3. Drugs

Only drugs approved by the State of Maryland are used during the euthanasia process. Animals may be sedated before injecting the euthanasia solution in order to provide sedation, analgesia, and anesthesia. Euthanasia solution, which is a barbiturate, is given once the animal is calm, either in the vein, in the heart (intracardiac) or



the peritoneum. If the intracardiac route is chosen, euthanasia does not take place until the animal is sedated and is in a comatose state.

#### **4. Record Keeping**

Records for each euthanized animal are kept as required by state and federal regulations.

### **X. PERSONNEL HEALTH**

#### **A. ZOONOSIS**

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 TCAS are intestinal parasites, Rabies, Cat Scratch Fever, Ringworm, Brucellosis, Lymes Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Leptospirosis, and Sarcoptic mange, among many 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. Only those staff qualified to work with such animals may interact with them. 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 must be adequately trained in handling dogs and cats, and be able to recognize the signs of potentially dangerous behavior.

Additionally, hand washing, with soap, is extremely important in preventing transmission of disease. All staff, volunteers, and visitors must wash their hands thoroughly with soap, after touching any animal at the shelter. Whenever possible, staff should wear disposable gloves when handling animals and their waste products. Those staff performing such tasks as preparing animals for rabies examination must wear protective eye wear, gowns, and gloves.

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 at TCAS 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. Immuno-suppressed humans are at an increased risk for infection by zoonotic diseases. These individuals are strongly advised to discuss their working/volunteering at an animal shelter with their human medical care provider.

#### **B. REPORTING INJURIES**

All injuries that occur at TCAS must be reported immediately to a supervisor per county procedures. This includes any bite, scratch, or other injury that occurs. The proper agency forms will be filled out and that person is advised to seek help from a human medical doctor.

### **XI ADMINISTRATION**

**Transparency:** Must provide quarterly statistics as requested.

**Data Tracking:** TCAS will track information in accordance with the requirements of the Maryland Department of Agriculture quarterly request form. This information is as follows: number of animals entering care, species, and status upon entering care (stray/owner surrender/ owner requested euthanasia) and disposition of animals (adoptions/rehabilitation/rescue, return to owner, euthanized). These reports will be made available on the TCAS website.



