

Humane Society – Animal Intake Procedures

1. Purpose. The reason for our shelter's existence is to take in animals from citizens and Animal Control Officers from within xxxx County. Once we have received an animal it is then our responsibility to maintain control and identity of that animal throughout its time in our facility; care for that animal in a humane manner; hold the animal in accordance with applicable state laws; release the animal to its rightful owner if properly identified; adopt the animal to a good home upon the completion of its 'hold' period; and if no other alternatives exist, provide for the humane euthanasia of that animal.

2. Attitude. While it is not always easy to take in animal after animal, knowing many of them will not find homes, public support is critical, so treat our human clients as you would like to be treated. Many people have rescued an animal from the side of the road or a bad situation making them partners in our efforts to help animals in need. Others have had animals show up on their property and it is no fault of theirs they cannot provide that animal a home. Owner surrenders are often the most difficult so try to keep in mind that at least they think highly enough of our shelter to bring that animal to us. If you are having a bad day or a difficult time with a particular turn-in, ask another shelter staff member to take over the turn-in. If a customer does become belligerent or difficult, get the Director or more seasoned staff member to assist. Positive attitudes will be more beneficial to us and our animals in the long run when customers feel we are an organization worthy of their continued support. Remember – people talk to people and word of mouth is the most cost-effective public relations and advertising we have.

3. Record Keeping. Proper identification and intake procedures are absolutely vital to the operation of our shelter as the first step upon the animal's arrival to our facility. Proper identification can facilitate re-uniting an animal with its owner, allows for effective tracking of the animal during its time in the shelter, eliminates errors and facilitates successful adoptions through proper breed identification.

4. Who we support. Our shelter is here to support the animals and citizens of XXXX County. We are what is known in the sheltering world as an Open Admission Humane Shelter with Animal Control Contracts. Open Admission means we do not turn away an animal in need with only one exception (see para 4 - #1 RULE), which means we take in injured, vicious, diseased, maladjusted, feral and perfectly healthy and normal animals. We are a shelter for all domestic animals to include dogs, cats, birds, small mammals (guinea pigs, hamsters, mice, gerbils, etc), pet type reptiles, and livestock (horses, goats, pigs, cattle, etc).

a. Limitation. We are NOT a wildlife rehabilitation center and should not take in native or exotic wildlife unless absolutely necessary. If we do take in a wild animal we will then work to move that animal to a licensed wildlife rehabilitation person/center or contact local, state or federal wildlife enforcement officers for assistance.

b. Animal Control Contracts. We have contracts with the following municipalities to receive, hold and dispose of animals IAW with all applicable state and local laws:

- 1) XXXX County (covers all areas not covered by the other ACOs below)
- 2) City of xxxxxx
- 3) City of xxxxxx
- 4) City of xxxxxx

c. Animal Control Officers (ACOs). The ACOs will provide all applicable information on the animal(s) they are bringing in to include additional rules prior to the owner reclaiming that animal such as the ACO first talking to the owner and giving final approval for the reclaim. We also hold animals for pending cruelty cases the ACO may be pursuing and need as much information as possible from the ACO on how we need to work together to ensure a successful prosecution.

d. In general we do not take in animals from outside of XXXX County. One of the first questions that must be asked when someone comes in with an animal or calls us about turning one in is where they live. They must provide proof of their residency (Driver's License or other valid ID of their residence) at the time of the turn-in and they can be denied an intake if they refuse to provide identification. If they are not residents of XXXX County or the animal was not found in XXXX County, then we need to direct them to their county's animal sheltering agency. IF we choose to take in an animal(s) from outside the county, then we must have a minimum of a \$25 donation per adult or per litter to take that animal(s). Exceptions to this are at the approval of the Director or the Office Manager or senior staff member present or Board President. While we are here to help animals, do not let a person's threat to abandon or do harm to an animal force us to intake from outside the county and as diplomatically as possible try to inform that person that such acts are illegal and punishable under state cruelty laws. Our primary mission is to help animals in need, but we do have to be careful about taking in too many animals from outside of our county as every additional animal received takes space from another animal in need and results in the sad and continuing need for euthanasia.

5. #1 RULE of Intake. We CANNOT take in any animal that has bitten or severely scratched a human within the preceding two weeks. Alabama law is very clear that any animal that has bitten or scratched a human must be either quarantined under the direct observation of a licensed veterinarian at the owner's or exposed person's expense, or that same animal must be humanely euthanized and sent for Rabies testing to the appropriate state laboratory. We do not have a veterinarian on the staff of our shelter so are not authorized to take in an animal with a bite exposure. There will be NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE as we will not violate state laws. It is imperative that the first question we ask of someone wanting to turn in an animal is if it has bitten or scratched anyone. Intake personnel need to be very aware that all too often people try to conceal this from us – asking questions in a leading manner and paying close attention to the animal and the people can often give clues to the true reason for the turn-in. If there is any doubt or suspicion that the people turning the animal in are not being truthful, get an experienced staff member or the Director involved immediately. Call either the xxxxx ACO or the County ACO for assistance if necessary. And if possible, once this rule is explained to the people, try to get their names and the name of the veterinarian they say they will be taking that animal too. Assist them by calling the veterinarian if necessary. We do want to do what we can to ensure they will comply with Alabama State Laws and not endanger others.

6. Intake Form. The intake form is used to capture as much information as possible about the animal(s), the reason for its turn-in and the identification of the person turning it in. Our Intake Forms are pretty self-explanatory – start at the top and go through every question/area. Below lists critical points:

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a. Intake Date and Available Date - These two dates will either be the same date or there will be an eight-day differential.

1) Animals brought in as strays or found animals, brought in by ACOs, found in our catch cage must be held for a period of seven days to allow time for an owner to reclaim their pet. There are some exceptions to this that senior staff or the Director will make, but if in doubt – HOLD FOR EIGHT DAYS. Example – an animal brought in as a stray on 1 Jan '07 would have an Available Date of 8 Jan '07.

2) Animals brought in by their owners as an “Owner Surrender” do not require a hold period so their Intake and Availability Dates are the same. Obviously feral cats also do not require a hold period. ACO’s may also tell us there is no need to hold an animal, but if in doubt – HOLD.

b. BITE Question. At the top of the Intake Form is our question about that animal biting a human – check the appropriate box and if yes and over ten days prior to turn in, make sure to write the date of the bite.

c. Physical description. This portion is absolutely critical to us maintaining control of this animal throughout its stay in our shelter and being able to potentially link the animal up with its owner via a lost report we may have on file. Use one intake form per species – i.e, do not place both a dog and a cat on the same intake form even if being brought in by the same person. For multiple animals (of the same species) and/or litters of puppies and kittens record the number, how many of each sex and their colors descriptions (by sex). Keeping track of puppies and kittens is far more onerous than tracking adults, so as much information as possible up front will reduce errors down the road. Most of this is self-explanatory but does require a working knowledge of breeds, color descriptions used for breeds, etc. Examples are:

1) Species – Dog, Cat, Horse, Bird, Reptile, Cow, Pig, etc. Ensure separate species are recorded on separate intake forms.

2) Breed – German Shepherd, Dachshund, Domestic Short Hair (DSH), Persian, Quarter Horse, Grade Horse, Guinea Pig, Iguana, Goat, Brangus, Pot-Bellied Pig, etc. Breed identification is the bane of animal control officers and sheltering agencies. And since 75-80% of most of our animals are mixed breeds, figuring out the ‘mixes’ can be challenging at best. Before you get too exotic with an identification keep in mind the typical dog breeds found in our area. It may be tempting to call that unique looking dog or cat some rare breed, but you should be realistic as to the chances of a rare Chinese Foo Dog or a Norwegian Forest Cat showing up at our facility. The most popular dog breed in the USA is the Labrador Retriever so a significant percentage of our dogs and puppies are lab mixes. Other common breeds for dogs in our area are Shepherds, Border Collies, Australian Cattle Dogs, Bulldogs, Pit Bulls, Chows, Feists. Most cats are simply Domestic Short Hair (DSH) of various colors. Improper breed identification can lead to missed reunifications and disappointed adopters when the miss-identified breed’s behavior does not live up to their expectations.

3) Sex – Male or Female, then spayed or neutered if known

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- 4) Age – if a stray, use best judgment looking at teeth, condition, behavior, etc
 - 5) Color – Black, Chocolate, Blonde, Tan Brindle, Blue Merle, Calico, Olive Tiger, Chestnut, Sorrell, Black & White, White with one black eye patch and black tail, etc. **DON'T SHORTCUT COLOR DESCRIPTIONS** - this may be the one area that distinguishes litter mates from another or from another in the facility or gets a pet back to its owner.
 - 6) Coat – Short, Long, Wavy, Curly, Woolly, Wiry, etc
 - 7) Ears – Erect, Cropped, Dropped, Semi-Erect, etc.
 - 8) Tail – Long, Docked, Curled, etc
 - 9) Size – try to use estimated weights (10 lbs, 25 lbs, 80 lbs) rather than small, medium, large as large to one person may be medium to another.
 - 10) Other physical characteristics – Declawed, three-legged, scars, missing teeth, torn ears, tattoos
 - 11) Collars/Tags – note type (leather, nylon, bandanna), color, accoutrements (bells, patterns, imbedded decorations), and any tags. If there are ID tags, record ALL information.
 - 12) Rabies Tag – Note the tag number, year and veterinary contact info. In the event this is a stray, call the veterinarian to identify the animal's owner.
 - 13) Miscellaneous – note things like 'chain attached to collar,' 'rope around neck', duct tape on right front foot, etc.
 - 14) Health Remarks – healthy, mange, severely emaciated, obese, eyes matted shut, coughing, etc
 - 15) Immunization History – in case of owner surrender try to get all past immunization history to include heartworm preventive status.
 - 16) Microchip – scan the animal for a microchip and if one is found, annotate the number and manufacturer on the intake form. If the animal has a chip, the very next step is to call that chip company to start the re-unification process.
 - 17) Picture – if at all possible taking a picture of the animal(s) at intake is the optimal addition to written physical descriptions.
- d. Reason for Turn-In. The reason for turn-in can help with identification (behavior) and is important to the care of the animal in the shelter. Potential adopters also want to know how the animal came to be at the agency. Ask the customer why they are turning an animal in to us. Get them talking in the case of an owner surrender as there may be more to this turn-in than their initial reason. Capture any information they share about the animal, its behavior and reason for

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turn-in. Ask them where they got their pet in the first place and how long they have had this animal and write that on the form. Even in the case of strays, if they have had it around their house, pets, children for a few days, they know more about it than we do.

e. Other.

1) Temperament – friendly, shy, vicious, feral, semi-feral, skittish, calm, active, etc.

2) Training – leash trained, housetrained, no training, hunts deer, herds sheep, etc.

3) Other - good with other dogs, chases cats, loves children, prefers women, chases cows, kills chickens, hates small dogs, digs out of fence, etc. Get everything you can here from the owner or rescuer.

f. Customer Information and Signature. Anyone turning in an animal must fill out the bottom of our form with their name, address, phone number AND SIGNATURE. This is important as they are signing that all the information they have provided is true and that this animal has not bitten anyone. In the case of an owner surrender, their signature relinquishes their future rights to that animal. Their information and signature helps protect our shelter in the event they change their mind later, try to make claims against us, etc. Even ACO's sign the bottom of our forms.

7. Donation. We do not charge a fee to drop off an animal if the person is an XXXX County resident, but ask each person to donate to us for taking that animal from them. Advice is not to ask them “if they will donate,” but to ask them politely “how much can you donate today to help us care for this animal?” Asking in this manner leads to more donations from our customers and we need all of the financial ‘intake’ we can get to be able to keep our doors open. When a customer does give a monetary donation, annotate the amount in the appropriate place on the bottom of the form. Also fill out a receipt for their donation - give them the original and staple our copy of the receipt and their cash, check or credit/debit receipt to the Intake Form. Don't forget to thank them for their donation.

8. Intake Form Disposition. Once the intake and cage card is complete, place the Intake Form and any attached items in the wood box in the right corner of the top shelf under our front counter. Our office manager will process the form from there and file it in our “animal inventory” files.

9. Other Items. Many people will also bring us medical records, toys, food, bedding, collars, leashes, heartworm preventive, medications, crates, etc with the animal being turned in. Annotate everything being donated with that pet to the Intake Form.

a. Medical Records, Rabies/ID tags – Attach these items to the Intake Form either by stapling them to the form or placing them in a small plastic bag and then stapling to the form. Tags have a tendency to come off during an animals stay in our kennels, so it is best to keep any tags with the intake form.

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b. Food/Treats. Unless the animal is on a medically indicated diet, we are not able to feed the animal the same food brought in by the owner. We will utilize that food within the shelter like all other donated food. In the event the animal is in need of a special food for medical/health reasons, mark the food clearly with the animal's name and intake number and let the animal care staff know of the requirement.

c. Toys/Leashes/Beds. Try to keep all of these items together and in one central place in the office. Make sure these items are noted on the Intake Form and the Cage Card so that we can pass these items to the new adopter for that animal.

d. Heartworm Preventive/Flea Treatments – these are to be kept with the Intake Form or other items belonging to that pet to pass to the new adopter. They are not to be used up for other animals in the shelter unless that animal has to be euthanized.

10. Cage Cards.

a. White (normally) 4" x 6" Cage Cards. Located on the shelf under the front counter. Once an Intake Form is complete, transfer all appropriate info to the Cage Card. This card will follow the animal throughout its time in our shelter and is how we keep track of that animal. Information must match between the Intake Form and the Cage Card. Shelter Control Number, Dates, Description, Reason for Turn-in and notation of how the animal came in (i.e. XXXX Co. ACO; xxxxx ACO; found on Turnbull Road; found in Catch Cage; showed up at 322 Hillcrest Lane, XXXX; owner surrender due to allergies, etc) must be on the card. Write and highlight any special rules such as (ACO must talk to owner prior to approving release; do not euthanize; call rescuer before euthanizing; hold for court case; do not place with another dog or cat; etc).

b. Orange Cage Cards. In the event of a vicious or feral animal we have Orange Cage Cards (at the back of the card box) that can be used to get attention and we also have "Will Bite" or "Use Caution" type stickers to be put on this or a white card.

c. Ensure the filled-in Cage Card goes with the staff/inmate taking the animal back for housing and care.

11. Communication. Very often another staff member or one of our Work Release Inmates will be the ones actually taking control of an animal to settle it into our shelter. Ensure those personnel are made aware of any temperament or behavior issues that might endanger them. Examples of this are a vicious animal; feral animal; dog that attacks other dogs or cats; dog that has never had a collar or leash on; injured animal; etc.

12. Feral Cats in Traps. When a customer brings in a cat in a trap or a cage, do NOT let them try to take that animal out of the trap/cage. Shelter staff or inmate will take that animal IN ITS TRAP/CAGE to the back to safely transfer it to a holding cage and will then bring the trap/cage back to the customer.

13. Follow-On Adoptions. With few exceptions, people turning in their own pets cannot adopt another animal from us. In most cases, some effort on their part could have allowed them to

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keep the animal they are surrendering in the first place, so we do not generally feel they are a good adoption candidate. The Director will approve any exceptions to this rule.

14. Intake Forms Sequencing. Before starting a new Intake Form or Pad make sure you stay in numerical sequence. Failure to keep our numbers in order will cause tremendous confusion in record keeping and could even cause us to miss identifying a lost report to an animal in our shelter.

15. Safety.

a. Safety needs to be uppermost in everyone's minds. Do not assume that any dog, cat, bird, hamster, etc is friendly. Most will be somewhat scared and confused at the sudden change in their surroundings. Our shelter is a very chaotic, noisy and scary environment to any animal first coming in and they might react in a variety of ways to include trying to fight, bite, scratch or flee. Do not always take the word of the human customer as to the nature of even their own animal. Many people are trying to hide the true nature of their pet, or they are unaware of how a scared animal might act, so err on the side of caution when dealing with that animal.

b. Dangerous Animals. If someone has brought in a potentially unsafe animal, get that animal out of the public area first to protect customers and staff. If you see a dog being brought in by someone that seems out of control or you suspect might not be good around other dogs, cats or people, stop them at the door before they bring the animal inside and get a staff member or inmate to take control of that animal outside.

c. If the dog goes crazy on a leash, stop, try to calm the animal by simply letting it be still and get a staff member/inmate to get a catch pole so the dog can be safely moved. This is completely at the discretion of the shelter staff and NOT the owner or person bringing the dog in.

d. Keep small to medium crates in the office to take in cats. Some clients will carry a cat in not in a crate or cage and getting that cat into a crate is safest for all concerned. Even a friendly, but scared cat can hurt someone.

e. Animals in vehicles. For the most part, let the customer remove an animal they have brought in from their vehicle. Until they have signed that animal over to us it is not ours, and we do not need to be assuming liabilities for damage to their vehicle, other people, or the animal itself in trying to get it out of their vehicle. For this, common sense must apply as the 80+ year old lady might need help carrying a cat in a crate, or the dog in the back of a truck may happily jump out on a leash. Be aware that many dogs may also be very protective of the vehicle they are in. and will not let a stranger reach in to get to them.

f. Remember – if an animal bites one of our staff or an inmate, that animal will be euthanized and sent off for rabies testing. This would be a shame if it was just a friendly, but scared animal that was handled incorrectly. If you do not know how to handle an animal that may not be friendly or easy to handle, get another staff or inmate who does. This protects not only us, but the animal as well.

16. Injured animals.

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a. Remember Safety! Injured animals may react by trying to bite, scratch, fight or flee. Handling injured animals is at a minimum a two person task.

b. Muzzling. Prior to moving an injured animal, get an appropriate sized muzzle and muzzle the animal to protect humans from being bitten.

c. If the animal is so severely injured that moving it should be done with the maximum amount of care, get our animal stretcher, leashes and blankets. Carefully slide the muzzled animal to the stretcher or into a crate if necessary from the vehicle it came in. Do not carry a severely injured animal if at all possible to avoid further damage to bones, spine, nerves, organs, etc.

d. For a severely injured animal, immediately call one of our local supporting veterinarians and transport that animal to the one that can take it for treatment (shelter Director or senior staff approval in absence of the Director) or euthanasia (per prognosis by vet and approval by the Director or senior staff in absence of the Director).

e. If the injury appears to be minor and shelter staff is capable of cleaning and treating the injury, carefully move the animal to a kennel/cage, let it settle in for a bit, then pursue treatment. If in doubt – take the animal to a veterinarian. Approval for veterinary treatment is by the Director or the senior staff member present in the absence of the Director.

17. Animal Disposition. Many people will want us to guarantee the adoption of an animal or think that by donating money they can secure an adoption for an animal. We must diplomatically explain to people turning animals in that we cannot make promises about being able to find homes for this animal as there are simply too many being turned in and all do not find homes. While we want the public to turn to us when they are in need, we also do not want them to leave thinking we can do something we cannot. This is a very subjective area as some animals will be much more adoptable than others. Not all puppies and kittens will be adopted due to sheer numbers and sickness that is more of a challenge with young animals. If, upon telling a customer that we cannot promise their animal will be adopted and they decide they do not want to turn that animal in, let them take their animal, but also try to help them with the better ways to find the animal a home such as having it spayed or neutered first, not advertising it as free, posting it at their vet offices, etc. This is our one area with the public where we simply must try to educate them on the realities of pet ownership, overpopulation, spay/neuter, etc.

18. Consoling Customers. Some people have to turn in an animal of their own due to circumstances out of their control. In these instances they are turning to us as the place of last resort in hopes we can help their pet. While we may or may not be able to place that animal, how we treat that person will go a long way in helping them come to grips with what is understandably an emotionally wrenching decision. Spend some time with these people, empathize with them if the situation justifies it and let them say goodbye to their pet. Sadly in the numbers we deal with, most could keep the pet if only they wanted to, but for the few who honestly have no choice, put yourself in their place and treat them accordingly.

18. Confidentiality. Information as to who brought an animal in to us or who adopted an animal from us is confidential and not to be released to the public. Our intake form has a block for an owner surrendering an animal to us to say if they would like to be contacted by a potential adopter or not. If they check this block yes, then we can give a potential adopter their phone number so they can talk. Understand that protecting identity of people turning in or adopting animals is to prevent potential conflicts between neighbors, estranged family members, etc. It is o’k to tell someone where an animal came in from or that it was picked up by a particular ACO.

19. Shelter Entries. On the right side of the Intake Form are grey colored areas for our internal use to track vaccinations, de-worming, heartworm testing and preventive, flea treatments, and final disposition.

a. Vaccinations and de-worming. Enter appropriate dates for our in-shelter immunizations and de-worming.

b. Heartworm testing and Preventive. Enter date and results of the heartworm test and dates for preventive while in the shelter.

c. Flea Treatments. Enter dates for any dips, Ivermectin (for cat ear mites) or Frontline, etc for flea treatments.

d. Final Disposition. This is the larger block where we track adoptions, released to rescue (RTR), returned to owner (RTO), died, or euthanasia.

1) For each adoption, RTR or RTO place a small green dot sticker in the block and annotate the date. For a rescue release also write RTR and for a return to owner write RTO. For intakes with more than one animal, also write the sex and color of the animal being adopted to help keep track of who was adopted and the remaining animals.

2) For each animal that either dies or is euthanized, place a small red dot sticker in the block and the date. For intakes with more than one animal, also write the sex and color of the animal that died or was euthanized to help keep track of any remaining animals. In the event all animals on that intake form are euthanized together, note the number of animals next to the red sticker and date ensuring it matches the number received.

e. Upon adoption or euthanasia of the last animal on the intake (in case of multiple animals), attach that intake form to the adoption paperwork so the office manager can close out that Intake Form and animals from her computer program. Place the completed paperwork per the office manager’s system so that Petpoint can be updated and the papers filed appropriately.