



Dorchester County Dog Control
829 Fieldcrest Road
Cambridge, MD 21613

Standards of Care 12/2016

Mission Statement:

As a sub-unit under the Dorchester County Sheriff's office, the Mission of Dog Control in Dorchester County is to maintain a standard of care for animals within the county set by Maryland law and our County codes. We also aim to provide service to any stray or injured dogs. We see to their medical and physical needs, and give shelter and new healthy homes to these dogs.

Standards of Care

I. DOG HOUSING

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 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 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 standard acceptable level of air exchange 10-20 room air exchanges per hour with fresh air. To ensure proper function, air handler maintenance is performed in the spring and fall of each year and air filters are changed at least twice a month.

3. Temperature and Humidity

Temperatures are maintained between 60 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Relative humidity ranges from 30% to 70%.

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 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.

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:

- Adjusting the public address system in each animal room to the lowest decibel level practical.
- 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 safety and emergency equipment is maintained by the Animal Care Manager at all times. The Animal Care Manager is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate equipment is available, maintained in good working order, and stored in the proper location when not in use. The Animal Care Manager is also responsible for ensuring that all necessary staff and volunteers are properly trained to handle and use the equipment. Emergency drills are conducted on a regular basis and a record is made and stored that describes the event, the outcome of the drill, and any resulting actions that are needed.

8. Standard Enclosure Items

The following standard enclosure items are in every cage unless specified otherwise by a veterinarian:

- Appropriately sized clean water and food bowls;
- Clean bedding;
- Elevated resting place;

9. Feeding and Watering

Dogs are fed two times daily with dry food according to age and weight. Canned food is provided to puppies (10 weeks and younger), two times daily for nursing mothers, and other dogs as directed by a veterinarian. Feeding schedules and special diets are prescribed by the veterinarian as needed. Clean water is available at all times unless directed otherwise by a veterinarian.

10. Sanitation

This document uses the word “sanitation” to mean a combination of cleaning and disinfection. Dorchester County Animal Control maintains sanitary conditions to prevent the transfer of disease, which could result in an outbreak that could potentially lead to the closure of a portion or all 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.

3. Sterilization - The killing of all microbes

PROCEDURE FOR CLEANING

Indoor areas:

All common area floors are swept and disinfected every morning and throughout the day as needed, using disinfectants approved by the Animal Control Supervisor. 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.

Dog cages are fully cleaned and disinfected every day, with the animal removed from the cage.

After the initial cleaning, dog cages are spot cleaned throughout the day as needed.

The cages of healthy puppies are cleaned first, followed by healthy dogs, sick puppies, and sick dogs.

Dog cages that house a seriously ill animal with an infectious disease are cleaned per specific guidelines set by the Veterinary Medical Director; this often includes multiple disinfections. This work may be done with the assistance of cat staff to minimize the potential for disease transfer to other dogs within the shelter.

Floors in dog areas are swept and disinfected each day.

Occupied crates and carriers used for temporary housing of animals are spot cleaned as needed. All crates and carriers are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to being used for a new animal. Crates and carriers used for animals carrying infectious disease are marked appropriately and are disinfected three times.

Outdoor Areas:

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

11. PEST AND RODENT CONTROL

1. Exterminators

Regular extermination services, using safe and humane methods, are performed twice each month. All humane rodent traps will be checked and emptied

2. Animal Food Dog food in cages is picked up before the shelter closes each night, with the exception of food for puppies and nursing mothers.

Dishes and enrichment items brought to the kitchen for washing are emptied of all food and organic matter before being placed on counters. All food is stored in sealed containers, including dog and cat treats.

3. Garbage and Trash

All non-recyclable refuse, is collected and put in trash bags each evening. All garbage and trash bags are removed from the building prior to closing

II. INTAKE PROCEDURES

Upon arrival, dogs are placed in kennel runs, if the intake process has been completed or into a temporary cage until the intake process is completed. Until the intake process is completed, animals that Animal Control brings in that are in transport carriers are moved to temporary intake cages within two hours of arrival. A temporary cage is large enough to allow the animal to lie in a rested position, easily stand, and have access to water and food bowls. All animals are provided water immediately upon arrival. Animals less than four months of age are provided food immediately upon arrival, and animals over four months are provided food within two hours of arrival. Dogs that Animal Control brings in overnight and that are placed in temporary cages are walked when staff arrives in the morning. The intake process is completed within 24 hours and the animal is moved from the temporary cage to kennel runs.

An animal's general physical condition is evaluated upon arrival and any emergency medical issues are addressed immediately. The animal is weighed, the 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 general behavior of the animal is also assessed. A record is established in for the animal via a file and all information is entered immediately.

III. 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

Examples of equipment used for animal restraint are as follows: leashes, collars, muzzles, control poles (used for dogs only), towels, squeeze cages, traps, cat nets, pole syringes, wall rings, tie-outs, and cat gloves.

C. 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. Animal Control staff monitor each animal's behavior daily through all types of interactions.

D. DANGEROUS ANIMALS

Animal Control 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.

IV. VETERINARY CARE

A. PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE

The Animal Control officers focus on the prevention of disease and 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 Veterinary offices that work with Animal Control. Licensed veterinarians perform complete physical examinations and surgeries, as well as prescribe medications and nutritional changes to diet.

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 quarantine. The decision to quarantine a room and the length of quarantine are made by the Veterinarian or Animal Control Supervisor. 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 nearby Veterinary Clinics, or humanely euthanized.

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 are worn and changed between handling each ill animal. Lint rollers are used on all clothing that may make contact or exposed to the fur of an animal before touching another animal.
- 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.

B. DISEASE OUTBREAKS

When a disease outbreak occurs in the shelter, the Animal Control Supervisor/Officer may decide to quarantine a room. If the outbreak cannot be contained to one or two rooms, the Animal Control Supervisor decides whether to close the shelter, at least for that species. Closing the shelter to a certain species means that Animal Control cannot bring any animal of that species in, except for the purpose of euthanasia. In such situations, Animal Control attempts to work with other area shelters and rescues to enlist their help so owners that must surrender animals during this time period are able to do so. When a room is closed for 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 brought to the dumpster outside of the shelter. Quarantine rooms use only disposable materials (bowls, towels, etc.).

V. EUTHANASIA POLICY

Euthanasia is performed at Dog Control as a last resort and in a humane manner as needed to maintain a manageable population of healthy, treatable, and adoptable animals.

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. The Executive Director may make special exceptions to this policy at his or her discretion.

B. SELECTION

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

If an animal is to be euthanized, one of the following five Asilomar categories is entered into the Dog Control database for tracking purposes: Healthy (H), Treatable-Rehabilitatable (TR), Treatable-Manageable (TM), Unhealthy-Untreatable (UU), or Owner Requested (ORE). When animals must be identified for euthanasia to make space available in the shelter, selection is based on the potential for both treatment and adoption for that specific animal as compared to the rest of the population. Thus the UU animals are selected first, followed by TM animals. Those in the categories of TR and H are the last to be selected and only if all other live outcome options have been exhausted.

Lastly, holding periods, as required by law, are considered:

- All animals without a known owner are held for 120 hours before a disposition is decided, Exceptions apply to the following:
- Animals under 12 weeks of age may be placed into homes immediately
- Animals experiencing pain and suffering, and are not able to be treated, may be humanely euthanized
- Bite quarantine animals are held for a minimum of 10 days or until Animal Control completes its investigations.
- Animal Control investigations require various hold periods.

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 Veterinary Medical Director.

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.

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 during the medical intake process, prior to spay/neuter surgery and prior to any disposition including adoption, return to owner, and transfers to rescues. If euthanasia is elected, the previously unidentified animals are rescanned before being euthanized (by two different staff members) for the presence of a microchip.

4. Drugs

Only drugs approved by the Animal Control Supervisor are used for euthanasia. An animal may be sedated before injecting the euthanasia solution in order to provide sedation, analgesia, and

anesthesia. 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

Records for each euthanized animal are kept in a locked file cabinet for a designated period of time.

VI. ADOPTIONS

All animals adopted from Dog Control are eight weeks of age or older, current on vaccinations, microchipped and altered. The goal of the Dog Control 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 Dog Control database, requiring identification and proof of address, and requiring adopters to be at least 18 years of age. The adoption counselor also goes over all 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 a veterinarian. If an animal is not able to be altered prior to going home, the adoption counselor will make an appointment for the animal to come back at a later date for surgery and will then follow up on that animal's progress until it is altered.

VII. ANIMAL HOLDS

Animals arriving at the shelter are subject to various State and City 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 120 hours. The day the animal arrives at the shelter, unless its prior to operating, and days the shelter is closed to the public do not count for purposes of the holding period. After 120 hours, the animal becomes property of the shelter and thus may be placed up for adoption, transferred to another organization, or humanely euthanized.

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

Animals left behind when owners are evicted from their homes are considered to be property of the landlord. When signed over by the landlord, they may be treated as owner-surrendered animals. If the animal is not signed over by the landlord, or if the manager chooses to hold the animal based on its circumstances, the animal will be treated as a stray animal.

4. INVESTIGATIONS

Some animals are the subject of investigations by Animal Control 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. Dog Control cares for these animals

during the investigation period, and the animals are released when they are no longer needed as evidence in a case.

VIII. PERSONAL HEALTH

A. STAFF VACCINATION

All high risk staff handling animals at Dog Control must be vaccinated against rabies. It is recommended that all staff be current on tetanus and talk to their personal physicians for further recommendations on rabies vaccinations. Vaccinations may be administered by the Dorchester County Health Dept. 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 Dorchester 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 Dog Control 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. 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 and volunteers must be adequately trained in handling dogs 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. Those staff performing such tasks as preparing animals for rabies examination must wear protective eye and face wear as well.

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 Dog Control is minimized by providing animals with medications to eliminate internal and external parasites as well as vaccinations against specific diseases.

C. REPORTING INJURIES

All injuries that occur at Dog Control, or while working on behalf of Dog Control, must be reported immediately to a supervisor. This includes any bite, scratch, or other injury that

occurs. An incident report will be filled out and that person will be advised to seek help from a human medical doctor.

IX. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In the event of an emergency situation at Dog Control, every effort is made to protect all staff, volunteers, and animals. The Supervisor implements the incident command emergency response structure when appropriate. When this occurs, the Supervisor is responsible for all decisions regarding the emergency response, and maintains contact with the Mayor's emergency preparedness team, local weather advisory groups, the board of directors, and staff and volunteers. In addition, the Executive Director informs the public of the shelter closing as well as accessibility to shelter animals and/ or housing of animals; this information will be conveyed through the County's reverse call system, the shelter's voicemail, and social media.