

Citrus County Animal Services Volunteer Manual 2009-2010

Citrus County Volunteer Handbook

Introduction

Welcome to Citrus County Animal Services. We are proud to have you join our team! This handbook is loaded with information to help you learn about us and will serve as your guideline as you begin your volunteer work with us.

Feel free to ask questions! We believe all questions are important, so please do not hesitate to ask.

- Animal Services is a county funded service provided by the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners.

Mission Statement

To maintain a healthy and inviting animal shelter, to provide basic care of impounded animals, provide excellent customer services, quarantine animals for public safety.

Our Vision

To build a community in which all animals are valued and family life is enhanced through relationships with pets.

Your volunteer service will benefit our animals and the community in many ways. You'll be a part of our mission: finding great homes for great pets. It is incredibly rewarding to see an animal you've worked with and loved find his forever home. The volunteer opportunities are endless, and we know you can find something here that will suit your talents.

Volunteers are a vital and valuable component of CCAS mission. As such, volunteers are expected to be familiar with and adhere to our policies and procedures. Please read this manual carefully and ask senior staff if you have any questions.

Services

Animal Services serves the entire county of Citrus and handles over 7000 animals annually. Our services include adoptions, school education programs, offsite adoptions,

information referral, lost and found pets, sale of dog licenses, bites and bite prevention, obedience classes for all adopters, euthanasia, and issuance of citations when warranted.

On some days we take in as many as 50 unwanted cats and kittens. Of course, not all of these animals can be saved. However, those that are strong and healthy receive general care and vaccinations in hopes of a forever home. Our canine population is not far behind.

We care for our canine friends in much the same way. All that are deemed adoptable receive a general health check and vaccinations for hopes of placement. AS is an open admission shelter which means we will turn no animal away.

Our canines are assessed for temperament after they have been with us for a couple of days. We hold all dogs and cats for 5 days (unless they are unhealthy and in pain) to give owners a chance to locate a lost pet. On the 6th day animals are the property of Citrus County and are offered to the general public for adoption, and 3 days later to rescue groups. We are mandated by the state as to how many animals we can have in our kennels, and we must adhere to that statute. All animals are to be sterilized within 30 days of adoption, and some are even transported directly to the vet the client has chosen.

Shelter Hours

Closed on Sunday

Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 10:00 am phones only 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Thursday evening	5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Saturday	8:00 am – 10:00 am phones only 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Telephone: 352-726-7660

Fax: 352-726-4120

Website: www.citruscritters.com

Services and Programs

Pet Adoptions: AS adopts hundreds of animals each year to loving families. We work to create lifelong relationships between people and pets, place dogs, cats, and furry friends into loving homes where they will receive quality, stable, lifelong care. We try to accommodate Rescue Groups so they might help us place animals that may not have any other options. Some canines would not make good family dogs and need special homes. We work with rescues and specialty kennels to place those canines.

Shelter for Unwanted Animals: We take in all animals brought to us within Citrus County. We take in dogs that are released by their owners. We are the only shelter in Citrus that will take any animal of any kind from dogs to cattle to snakes and more. The Sheriff's Office Animal Control Officers pick up stray animals daily and respond to dog

bites and many other citizen calls. There is no set time limit as to how long we keep an animal. We evaluate each animal, and keep it as long as we can. AS does not handle wildlife unless poses a threat (bitten) to a human and rabies is suspected.

Animal Cruelty Investigation: Preventing animal cruelty and neglect is critical. The Sheriff's Office Animal Control Officers investigate reports of cruelty against all animals and work with local law enforcement to ensure timely results, to the fullest extent of the law. The officers attempt to educate offenders; but if that fails, they may issue citations or invoke mandatory court.

Humane Education: Working with the citizens of Citrus and our youth creates outstanding pet owners. We offer ongoing education for area classrooms that focuses on pet care and ownership, as well as preventing dog bites and other animal-related injuries.

Animal Foster Service: We are working on a foster program and hope to have it up and running at full speed by 2010.

License Sale: AS sells dog, cat, and ferret licenses within Citrus County. The cost is \$5.00 for a sterilized animal and \$25.00 for a non-sterilized animal.

Lost and Found: AS can work with you to find your lost pet. We file lost-and-found reports and cross reference them as we take in stray animals.

Bite Reports: We work together with the Sheriff's Office Animal Control Officers, our local Health Department, and Environmental Health to report and enforce quarantines.

Adoption Policies

- * We recommend appropriate facilities to contain pets.
- * We require adherence to all laws and ordinances.
- * We encourage family household members to be present.

- * We strongly encourage all children less than 10 years of age to be present at some point during the adoption process.
- * We encourage other family-owned pets to meet and get acquainted with the prospective new family member.
- * We require that landlords approve pet ownership and number of pets.
- * We require that all animals receive regular vet care/visits-not yearly vaccinations, because this varies from one veterinarian to another. If adopters currently own pets, there should be evidence of regular veterinary visits.
- * We highly recommend that all adopted animals be seen by a veterinarian within 48 hours.
- * We do not allow adopting a pet for another person.
- * You must be at least 18 years old to adopt a pet. We do not adopt to college students living in temporary housing.
- * We encourage pets to be primarily kept indoors. Many animals prefer to be outside for extended periods. Adoption decisions will be made based on each animal's behavior, breed, and any other extenuating circumstances. Cats may be kept inside or outside, but owners must adhere to all county ordinances.

- * Adopters must have a valid identification (drivers license, photo id).
- * Adopters must have a working telephone number or cell phone in household.
- * A family member in the household must be gainfully employed full time or show proof of their ability to finance animal-care expenses (food, vaccinations, accidents, etc..).
- * Dogs will not be placed to serve ONLY as guard dogs or hunting dogs, and cats will not be placed to function ONLY as mousers or barn cats.
- * Adoption fees will vary.

Euthanasia – Why is it necessary?

Euthanasia is probably the most difficult subject to understand at the shelter. Most people would rather not even think about it when considering working at the shelter. Yet it is a very real part of working at a shelter, and therefore, something we want to face up front. There are countless numbers of dogs and cats breeding indiscriminately in our community, and there are just not enough homes for all of the unwanted animals. As a result, too many animals are just left to starve to death, or die after being hit by a car, poisoned, or attacked by a predator.

Animals brought into the shelter are cared for in the most humane manner possible, with food, shelter and most importantly, many people to give them the care and attention they need. In many cases, the time spent at the shelter is the best time of their lives. Some of these animals have never known a loving voice or a caressing hand. They come in shaking from fear and cower in a corner. Usually by day 2-3 they are looking for that gentle hand that has been touching them for the past couple of days and then the tail will begin to wag. To help you further understand the concept of euthanasia, we have compiled some common questions and answers about euthanasia.

What does the term “euthanasia” mean? “A good death”.

Why do you have to euthanize animals?

Every year in the US, animal shelters euthanize 13-15 million animals. The main problem is animal overpopulation as there are simply too many animals and not enough homes available. This is the reason that CCAS strongly urges animal owners to have their pets spayed or neutered. We **require** any animal adopted from us to be sterilized. It is the law in Florida that all animals adopted from shelters be sterilized. Of course there are other reasons for euthanasia, such as; sick, very old, severely injured or aggressive, to name a few.

What are some common reasons for surrendering animals to CCAS?

He won't listen to me.
 I can't housebreak him.
 I'm moving.
 My landlord said no pets.
 I have too many animals.
 My wife is allergic to her.
 He tears up the house.
 I just got new carpet.

I don't have any time for the animal.
 He doesn't get along with other dogs.
 The kids won't take care of him.
 She has fleas.
 I can't afford to take care of him.
 We got a divorce.
 He barks all the time.
 I just got new furniture.

She gets hair all over.
He is too big.

Just don't want him anymore.
can I change him for a smaller dog?!!

Who decides which animals are to be euthanized?

The final decision to euthanize is made by the staff veterinarian. The age, health, temperament and available shelter space are all major considerations. At no time will you as a volunteer ever be involved in any of the euthanasia process.

How are animals euthanized?

Euthanasia is done by injection. There are usually two euthanasia technicians. One is a holder and comforts the animal, while the other administers a tranquilizer. The pain to the animal is minimal (like a vaccination injection) and he feels a slight pin prick and then falls into a deep sleep (the same injections that are given to sedate prior to surgery). The lethal injection is then administered and death occurs in seconds.

Doesn't it bother the staff to have to euthanize so many animals?

Anyone who works in an animal shelter is a special kind of person. They are the type of person who loves animals, and are, in fact, usually owners of several pets of their own. This, of course, makes it all the more difficult to euthanize any animal, but especially healthy, pet quality animals. Shelter workers at CCAS (and all over) are torn by the conflicting emotions of knowing they are doing the only thing possible to correct pet overpopulation problems which they did nothing to create, and at the same time suffering from the pain and even some guilt about it. Added to this is the extra pain caused by friends, relatives, and even total strangers who seem to look down on them as some kind of heartless monster who must somehow enjoy it or else why would they do it. Sometimes this attitude is subtle and sometimes it is blunt. These attitudes add to the difficulty of coping with the emotional side of euthanasia.

As a volunteer it is important to consider these facts when dealing with shelter personnel. Please do not add to the difficulty by telling the staff, "Make sure you don't put this one down! He's so cute!" or asking, "Why didn't Fifi make it?" Careless (though well intentioned) comments such as these could cause added pain to a staff member (especially one who is carrying out someone else's orders!)

What if I can't deal with all of the animals that need to be euthanized?

At CCAS, we make every effort to keep volunteers from being aware of the euthanasia process. It is never done in the public areas of the shelter and you, as a volunteer, will not be exposed to anything involving euthanasia. *If, at any time, you feel uncomfortable or have any questions, please feel free to ask for a consultation with a senior staff member or the staff Veterinarian.*

Medical Treatment

Citrus County Animal Services is proud to announce that we now have a veterinarian on staff for the first time in over 30 years. Dr. Julie Rosenberger comes to us from the

Tampa Bay region after graduating from the University of Florida. Dr. Julie makes every effort to personally examine the shelter animals daily, but also relies heavily on her committed staff and volunteers to help check and maintain the animal's health daily. All incoming adoptable animals are given vaccinations, de-worming, flea treatment, and an antibiotic injection. A majority of diseases that we see in a shelter environment include respiratory infection and parasite infestations. Because of this it is important that we practice good hygiene and gloves are always available. We make every effort to adopt out healthy animals, but we highly recommend that all adopters take their new pet to their veterinarian within 48 hours for a full health check.

Remember that Citrus County Animal Services offers a vaccination clinic on Thursday evenings from 5:00-6:30pm. Ask the front office staff for more details or to schedule an appointment for your pet.

Dress Code

We must insist, unless you are a senior volunteer (been with us for a year or more or have logged in over 1000 hours) that you wear long sleeve shirts and pants. This is not only for your protection, but also for the animals. If you are scratched by an animal and it breaks the skin we **MUST** quarantine that animal for 10 days. Puppies are going to jump, kittens are going to scratch and adult dogs that have had no training (90%) are going to pull on the leash and jump up for attention. Please abide by this rule, if only for the pets well being; pet in quarantine can not be taken out of the cage/adopted until the quarantine is over. Wear clothes that can get dirty or furry. Wear closed toed shoes with soles that will not slide on the concrete. Dangling jewelry is likely to become snagged and can be a hazard (may also be damaged or broken).

You must wear a name tag stating that you are a volunteer.

Training

Before beginning your wonderful journey with the fuzzy and furry, you must attend a general Volunteer Orientation which is scheduled as needed. During this orientation, each volunteer will receive a copy of this volunteer manual, a volunteer application, and a time sheet. (All of our volunteers go through Nature Coast Volunteer Center.) The basic orientation class will last approximately 2 hours. During this orientation, you will be instructed on all shelter information needed to be a volunteer, be given a brief tour of our shelter and lastly, we will demonstrate how to open kennels to retrieve dogs and how to properly collar/leash dogs.

General Information

Parking is across from the main building.

You may use the lunchroom/lounge, refrigerator (please label your food), microwave, etc...

Sign in and out to document your time spent with us.

Smoking is only allowed at the picnic table out of view of the public eye.

Ladies and men's rooms are equipped with large showers if you would like to change your clothes before you go home.

Dog Guidelines

Why are shelter dogs different? Dogs in a shelter are not the same as your dog at home. Your dog knows his surroundings and is familiar with your moods and what your expectations are. Dogs in our shelter are in a confusing situation. They are in an unfamiliar setting, surrounded by other dogs and handled by strangers.

Many different people might handle one dog during the course of the day. With staff and volunteers working together, we can reinforce good behavior that will help our dogs find wonderful homes. Always follow the guidelines of the staff. Our kennel staff knows our dogs very well. For example, if you are told that a certain dog can only be handled by more experienced volunteers; you must accept the judgment of the staff. We will be happy to train you to become an experienced volunteer, but we do not want either you or our dogs to be placed in a dangerous situation.

Always use caution when dealing with the dogs. Be alert to your surroundings. Be aware of what each dog is telling you. If you pick up signs that a dog is nervous or fearful, remove him from the situation immediately.

Shelter dogs are not the same as your family pet. It is easy to misinterpret what they are telling us. When a dog licks the muzzle of another dog, it is a sign of submission from a dog within a pack. Pushing a dominant dog to give a kiss or to receive a hug may be asking for a nip. Hugging a dog tells him that you are dominant. Your dog at home might accept your behavior, while a strange dog may see your behavior as a challenge.

Remember, the role of our volunteers is to keep the animals in our care as stress free as possible and to avoid situations that promote inappropriate behavior.

- Check the dog's kennel card first; is it color coded either by a marker or cloth pin?
- Know your color codes.
- If a kennel card says "staff only" do not enter that kennel.
- If a kennel card says "do not touch" that means DO NOT TOUCH. Do not put your fingers into the kennel or touch the dog in any way.
- Handle only one dog at a time.
- Choose a dog appropriate for your size and skill level. If the dog is walking you; the dog is too much for you to handle or you are not skilled for this size/type dog.
- Maintain control of the dog at all times.
- Do not handle a dog that makes you feel uncomfortable or nervous; the dog will know!
- Before you remove a dog from a kennel, make sure that the leash you are about to use is in good repair.
- When removing a dog from a kennel, open the door and have a leash ready to slip over the dog's head and adjust as needed. Keep your voice soft and even.

Always approach the dogs calmly and encourage them to be CALM and QUIET before you remove them from the kennel.

- Do not allow dogs to jump up for play bite. Correct them calmly. Never HIT a dog. Remember, we want them to learn good habits, so that we can find good homes for them.
- Never leave a dog unattended. Whether you are walking, bathing or playing with a dog, you must be with the dog at all times. Do not turn the dog over to someone else, but take the dog back to the kennel yourself. Remember, when you take a dog out, you are responsible for that dog until you return it to the kennel.
- Never take a dog out of the kennel for a citizen, without first checking with the staff.

Cat Guidelines

Cats are not dogs. They respond to stimuli in different ways and have different ways of showing their stress and happiness. Volunteers are critical in helping them to be happy and well adjusted during their stay here. A few tips on general cat behavior and on cat behavior in a shelter environment can be helpful in learning to handle them properly.

From the familiar housecat to the 500 pound tiger, felines are social animals. Domestic cats form bonds with their owners, as well as with other cats and species in their household.

Cats have especially expressive body language. Arching the back and puffing up the tail are warning signs: The cat is telling you to stay away! Hissing, flattening ears and backing away are defensive signs.

Vocal communications also clues us in to what a cat is thinking. A hissing, growling or spitting cat should not be handled. Purring is generally associated with contentment, but cats often purr when they are stressed. Sick or injured cats also purr.

When cats first arrive at the shelter, they are often stressed. They are in an unfamiliar, frightening environment. Volunteers can help reassure the cats and put them at ease. Speak softly and keep your voice even. Pet them gently. Move slowly around them. Handle them firmly and with confidence, but carefully. If you are assigned to work with a cat that is exhibiting frightened behavior, leave it alone and report this to the staff. They will give it time to calm down and will work with it later.

Once cats have been here a while and have calmed down, they often seek attention. Do not underestimate how important you are, if you spend time grooming and petting cats. Never go home thinking that you didn't do anything important because you "just played with the cats." What you did is very, very important!!

- Reinforce good Behaviors. Don't tolerate things that you might tolerate from your own cats (play biting, etc...)
- Discipline by tone of voice or by placing two fingers on the cat's forehead with a gentle push – no hitting or yelling!

- Keep your volume level low. Don't get excited. Monitor visitors, especially children, for too much noise or activity.
- If a cat escapes from its cage or the observation room, follow it and say "loose cat" as you walk (not run). Others will join you in the catching the escapee.
- Pay attention to the cat's body language. Cats aren't always predictable.
- Take health precautions. Obey signs regarding sick rooms, wash hands often; don't touch your eyes, etc...
- Report observed behavior or health problems, including fur mats, excessively long claws, etc...
- Brushing is good. Ask for help in dematting, if it is serious.
- Wear old clothing. Watch out for earrings and contact lenses.
- Fill water bowls, if empty. It's ok to give a few treats to the cats.