



Volunteer Manual

Welcome to the SPCA Cincinnati Volunteer Program!

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Shelter Activities

3949 Colerain Avenue in Northside

Cincinnati, OH 45223

Open Noon – 6 PM Monday through Saturday, Closed Sundays and Holidays

Volunteer Hours – Noon - 5 PM Monday through Saturday, No volunteer hours on Sundays and Holidays

11900 Conrey Rd.

Sharonville, OH 45249

Open Noon - 8 PM Monday through Friday, 9 AM – 5 PM Saturday, Noon-5 PM Sunday

Closed Holidays

Mobile Adoption Unit

Check the website for dates and locations near you

Foster Program

Christina Hamberg, Foster Coordinator

Phone: (513) 755-7778

CAAP Program

Shana Bockelman, Program Coordinator

Email: sbockelman@yahoo.com

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Welcome to the SPCA Cincinnati Volunteer Program!

We appreciate your willingness to volunteer with the SPCA. To maximize the results of your efforts, we ask that you follow a few guidelines while representing the SPCA and that you honor the beliefs, philosophies, and goals of the SPCA with your actions as well as your words.

Since 1873, our sole purpose has been to prevent the suffering of animals. This suffering comes in many forms. Your goal as a volunteer is to preserve the rights of individuals to be guardians of companion animals, to educate them in responsible care, and to promote the adoption of shelter animals whenever possible.

As a representative of the SPCA, you will be looked upon as an expert, whether you are a new volunteer or a seasoned veteran. It is important that we maintain consistency as a group in everything we say and do to avoid misinterpretation and confusion.

You may experience situations that are confusing or in conflict with your desires. It will be helpful if you try to look at the entire scenario, as opposed to the problem at hand. It can be a frustrating challenge for many, but, for those who persevere with the dedication, energy, and enthusiasm that they set out with, the rewards can be immense. Because you so generously give of your time as a volunteer, you positively influence your community and others, and, for this, we thank you.

Please read each section of this volunteer manual thoroughly so we may all pull in the same direction to end the suffering of animals through needless euthanasia, abandonment, neglect, and mistreatment.

When you are presented with a problem or question you are unfamiliar with, do not struggle with an answer. Instead, refer to an experienced SPCA representative for direction. Please do not feel as though you are the fifth wheel and disappear, but rather listen to the response from our experienced personnel so you may be able to handle the situation on your own the next time it arises.

About the SPCA

SPCA History

SPCA Cincinnati is a charitable, non-profit organization, which was founded in 1873 when “beasts of burden” (horses and mules) were used for power to do all types of work. As a result, these animals were occasionally driven beyond their limits, sometimes abused, or even worked to death. Compassionate leaders of our community came together to abolish the inhumane treatment of horses and mules. While the majority of the animals we handle at the SPCA are dogs and cats, we are prepared to handle and take in any living animal in need and turn no animal away.

SPCA Mission

“We turn no animal away”. We are advocates for animals... speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves. We provide programs and services that encourage the bond between animals and people. We offer refuge, medical care, nourishment and a second chance for homeless animals. We protect animals from cruelty, neglect, carelessness, ignorance and irresponsibility.

SPCA Vision

We continually strive to strengthen the human-animal bond and improve the welfare of animals by fostering humane care and treatment of all animals. Through humane education and animal protection, we improve the quality of life in our community.

Population Served

SPCA Cincinnati provides services not only to Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati, Ohio, but to the entire tri-state. This service area covers a population of over 900,000 people and an area of over 500 square miles. The SPCA relies upon private donations and receives no tax money to operate nor does the United Way subsidize us in any way.

Hours of Operation

Colerain - Open Noon – 6 PM Monday through Saturday, Closed Sundays and Holidays

Volunteer Hours – Noon - 5 PM Monday through Saturday, No volunteer hours on Sundays and Holidays

Sharonville - Open Noon - 8 PM Monday through Friday, 9 AM – 5 PM Saturday, Noon-5 PM Sunday. Closed Holidays

Fees

Adoption Fees are as follows:

Puppies up to 6 months \$110.00 plus Dog License \$13.75

Dogs 6 months and over \$90.00 plus Dog License \$13.75

Kittens up to 6 months \$110.00

Cats 6 months and older \$90.00

Adoption fees include: a veterinary examination, tested for worms and a wormer administered if needed, preventative inoculations, animal is spayed or neutered, dogs are given microchip and cats are tested for feline leukemia. Total price also includes the county tag for dogs.

SPCA Programs

Adoptions

In 2008, the SPCA handled 17,383 dogs and cats. Good homes with concerned, qualified families were found for several thousand of them. Efforts are continually being made to improve our adoption percentage.

Animals come to the SPCA when owners turn them over to us or if they are brought in stray. As animals are brought in or while they are being held as stray, notations of temperament, characteristics, and traits are noted on their record as well as information pertaining to health, age, and gender.

Each animal receives a health and temperament evaluation, and the decision is made whether to place the animal up for adoption. Once approved for adoption, the animal is vaccinated, wormed, and placed in an adoptable kennel. Once an animal is placed up for adoption, it is never euthanized unless its temperament or health fails and is not able to be rehabilitated.

Off-Site Adoptions

Nearly every weekend, our Mobile Adoption Unit travels the city setting up at a variety of off-site locations to offer animal adoptions and distribute educational material to individuals who are unable to come to our Colerain Avenue shelter.

Pets for People

Qualifying senior citizens who do not presently own a companion animal may adopt an adult dog or cat (over six months of age) from the SPCA for the price of a license, if required, thanks to the generosity of Purina.

Companion Animal Access Program (CAAP)

Volunteers and their well-mannered companion animals visit area nursing homes, hospitals, mental health facilities, and children's homes to visit with residents who are temporarily or permanently unable to experience the benefits of animal companionship.

Humane Education

Staff and volunteers visit area schools and organizations to talk about responsible animal care and safety around animals, promote spaying/neutering, raise awareness of the positive benefits of animal companionship and promote the keeping of companion animals as a lifetime commitment. Tours of the shelter are available upon request.

Foster Program

The SPCA frequently receives animals that are convalescing or too young for adoption. If these animals were to be kept at the shelter, they would take up valuable cage space that can be continually used for other animals. Foster Volunteers care for animals that are in recovery, rehabilitation or maturing in their home until the animals are ready to be adopted. Last year 402 animals found homes because of the kindness and dedication of Volunteers in the Foster Program. In addition, the SPCA will foster companion animals from private individuals who are currently seeking relief from domestic violence in a local shelter that does not have facilities for their animals.

Development

SPCA Cincinnati frequently does fundraising efforts to help defray the costs of caring for the animals. Your help is greatly appreciated and necessary many times for events to take place and this office will notify you anytime we can benefit from your help. All fundraising that takes place at SPCA Cincinnati **MUST** be done with acknowledgement from the SPCA Development Office prior to any publication of a benefit for SPCA Cincinnati.

Obedience Training

Adopters of dogs from the SPCA are eligible for a five-week obedience course at the Sharonville shelter at a reduced rate of \$50, instead of the regular \$100 charged to others, compliments of “Doggie Diva” Training. We also help solve obedience problems and unruly animal behavior at no charge.

SPCA Services

Receiving and Lost and Found

The animal intake area located off the Hoffner Street entrance to the shelter takes in animals brought to the shelter. Conrey takes animals in at the front desk during weekdays and at the rear entrance on School Road on weekends.

A Lost and Found directory is maintained to help return animals to their homes. (An updated list of Breed Rescue organizations is also available for others with missing pets.) Every animal brought in to the SPCA is scanned upon admittance for the presence of any identifying microchips or tags. Any dog found running at large with a license can be recovered by their owner by calling 513-946-DOGS (3647).

Ambulance Services

The SPCA transports wild or companion animals that are sick, injured, or distressed for medical treatment by a network of caring and concerned veterinary hospitals if the owner's whereabouts are unknown. This service is available 24 hours a day, every day.

Veterinary Services/Spay and Neuter Clinic

The SPCA staff veterinarian and technicians provide care for all animals in our shelter. Each animal offered for adoption is given an examination and any necessary vaccinations. Also, spaying and neutering is performed on all adopted animals.

Any animal that has not already been altered prior to adoption must be spayed or neutered within two months of adoption or after it reaches six months of age. A spay/neuter certificate is provided by the SPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic for any adopted animal that has not been altered. There is no additional charge for the certificate.

Investigations and Inspections

The SPCA serves as the entity responsible for investigating animal cruelty cases and for securing the necessary additional action from the appropriate enforcement, inspection, and/or legal departments. Full-time Humane Officers investigate (and prosecute, if necessary) the multitude of cases of mistreatment or neglect of animals, which are reported to us each year.

Animal Control

Under a contract with Hamilton County, we assume responsibility for enforcing state laws requiring the licensing and confinement of dogs and the protection of the public against animal nuisance and hazards. All dogs that come into the shelter as strays are required by law to be held for three days. The SPCA holds them for four days plus the day they came in to give the public the opportunity to claim their animal. There are no requirements for cats. However, stray cats

that are brought into the shelter by the public are usually held for a minimum of three days. Barking dog and pooper scoop ordinances are primarily enforced by the local police.

Animal Control activities are supported by the Dog and Kennel Fund, which consists of fees paid for licenses. **The humane work of the SPCA is solely dependent upon private donations.**

Wildlife Rescue

The SPCA provides rescue of trapped animals and the return of wild animals to their natural habitat. The SPCA also aids in the control of animal diseases by working cooperatively with various local boards of health.

Licensing

Every dog over the age of 3 months must have a license by January 31st of every year. Any dog that moves into the county has 30 days to be licensed. This license will help the animal be returned to his home in the event he becomes separated from his owner. A portion of the price of the license goes into the Dog and Kennel Fund. Without licensing fees, Animal Control could not exist which would result in the indiscriminate breeding of animals running at large, no consequences for the inhumane treatment of confined animals, and public nuisances.

It is necessary for each person we come in contact with to tactfully be asked if they have a current dog license. Most people will appreciate the fact that you are asking since the cost of failing to obtain a license or display the license can result in a \$100 fine. If an animal is picked up off its property without being under the control of its guardian, the fine will double. Failure to provide adequate food, water, and shelter is another area where citizens will break the laws.

Shelter Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Volunteer Age Restrictions

To Volunteer with SPCA Cincinnati you must be 15 years of age or older. Volunteers under the age of 18 must furnish a parental consent signature and be accompanied by an adult when volunteering. Certain activities such as grooming require a Volunteer to be a minimum of 18 years of age.

Responsibilities

As volunteers you are responsible for treating all animals in our facility kindly, gently and professionally. Volunteering is a commitment and we ask that you take it very seriously and conduct yourselves accordingly. The policies of the SPCA must be supported both inside and outside of the shelter.

Areas of Access

The auditorium, cat room, puppy room, side yard, and courtyard of the main shelter are available for volunteer activities during volunteer hours.

Attendance

Each volunteer will make a commitment to certain shifts, certain hours and certain duties. You all have committed to a minimum of six months. In the event you cannot make it in to volunteer, you need to call the development coordinator at (513) 442-9336 as soon as possible. If you fail to show up for a shift with no notice, you will be contacted by the development coordinator. If you fail to show up for three or more shifts with no notice you will be asked to resign.

It is very important that all volunteer time is recorded. Please be sure to sign in when arriving and sign out when leaving.

Alcohol and Drugs

It is prohibited and illegal to sell, use, possess, or transfer a controlled substance or alcohol on SPCA premises. All volunteers are prohibited from volunteering while under the apparent influence or effects of controlled illegal substances or alcohol. If you must use a prescription drug that affects the ability to perform work in a safe and productive manner you must notify the development coordinator prior to volunteering. The SPCA will determine whether you can remain a volunteer and what restrictions are deemed necessary.

Harassment

Any act of harassment, sexual, racial or other, verbal, nonverbal or physical, will not be tolerated. Volunteers found responsible for harassment will be terminated from the program.

Accidents or Injuries

Any accident or injury occurring during a volunteer shift must be reported to the development coordinator immediately. Bites are considered an injury and must be reported. We recommend staying current on having a tetanus shot.

Dress Code

Appropriate attire includes shorts or pants, your SPCA blue and white t-shirts and closed-toed shoes. Clothes should be clean and neat, and sandals or heels should not be worn.

If you choose to wear shorts, please make sure they are close in length to the knee

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted in any public area including restrooms. There should be no smoking while handling the animals.

Visitors

Volunteers may NOT bring friends to assist them with handling the animals.

Resignation

Please schedule a meeting with the development coordinator to discuss your volunteering experience and to provide the SPCA with valuable feedback on the program.

Volunteer Opportunities

Cat Socialization specialist
Dog Socialization specialist
Greeter
Development Assistant
Mobile Adoption Unit
Humane Education
CAAP

There are many roles a volunteer can take that will help us increase our adoption rates. No role is more important than another as they are all integral. Adoption is a numbers game. The more exposure an animal has, the more social it becomes. The more inquiries it gets, the more helpful information is given out. Every way you participate, whether you are a Socialization specialist, Greeter, Cleaner or in the Development office, will contribute to our success. The rewards and gratification may not always be an immediate adoption, but efforts will not be in vain as many times people return to complete adoptions after they have taken the time to consider the responsibilities. If nothing else, the animal's quality of life is enhanced from volunteer interaction while in our care.

To help you decide where your volunteer efforts can help the most, please take a moment to read the responsibilities of the five positions referred to thus far. Your volunteer assignments will be given based on schedule, interest and experience. Not everyone is ready, nor willing, right away to jump in and start pulling dogs from their kennels.

Please note that all volunteers are responsible for the removal of any animal waste created while animals are out of their kennels. Please clean up while working with the dogs, and put waste in the garbage cans.

Socialization Specialists

Socialization specialists encourage animals to relax and unwind from the stress of being kenneled. Volunteers ignore bad behavior and reward good behavior, such as sitting, walking on a leash, and maintaining eye contact with treats, verbal praise, and therapeutic touch. Volunteers are instructed how to safely encourage positive behavior by recognizing and utilizing calming signals as well as the animal's own non-verbal language. Roughhousing with the animals is prohibited as it perpetuates the animals staying in a heightened state of arousal. This, in turn, prohibits the animals from exhibiting traits and characteristics that will enhance their opportunity for placement.

Greeters

Greeters meet and greet visitors. These volunteers direct visitors to their particular areas of

interest and inform them that, when they find an animal they are interested in, they should note the red tag number around the animal's neck. With this tag number, visitors can obtain information on the animal from the front counter area. They help to keep cage cards updated. This volunteer opportunity is excellent for individuals with limited mobility, good communication skills, and for those who enjoy meeting the public.

Development Assistant

Is data entry your calling? We can always use assistance with entering important data into the computer system. The Development Assistant can volunteer Monday through Friday between 8 AM and 5 PM. You may also be asked to sort through paperwork, file, stuff envelopes, make copies, etc. You will be working directly with the employees in the development office.

Mobile Adoption Unit

Nearly every weekend, our Mobile Adoption Unit travels the city setting up at a variety of off-site locations to offer animal adoptions and distribute educational material to individuals who are unable to come to our Colerain Avenue shelter. Volunteers are needed to walk around with adoptable animals and talk to patrons about them. Volunteers meet the mobile unit at the off-site location. This is a fun way to volunteer out in the community.

Humane Education

Staff and volunteers visit area schools and organizations to talk about responsible animal care and safety around animals, promote spaying/neutering, raise awareness of the positive benefits of animal companionship and promote the keeping of companion animals as a lifetime commitment. Volunteers meet the coordinator at the shelter and depart together to the humane education site.

CAAP

Volunteers and their well-mannered companion animals visit area nursing homes, hospitals, mental health facilities, and children's homes to visit with residents who are temporarily or permanently unable to experience the benefits of animal companionship. The first step to become CAAP certified is to get your dog Canine Good Citizen certified. This program is an AKC program and testers are all over Hamilton County. One that we will be using is Tina Caldwell. You can reach her at 885-4664. You can see what the test entails at this website...

http://www.akc.org/events/cgc/training_testing.cfm. Once you have completed this certification you will contact the development coordinator or CAAP coordinator and we will set up a time for you to have your dog evaluated for the CAAP certification. This test sees how the dogs react to situations that may come about in a nursing facility or hospital. The CGC test is \$10 and our test is \$10. Once you have passed you will receive a certificate and dog bandana to be worn by your dog while participating. One other requirement is that your dog must be current on all vaccinations. We ask that you commit to a facility near your home for at least six months with one visit per month. We are very excited to get this program under way!

Animal Socialization Guidelines

Look before you leash! Always check the cage card, computer, or ask the office staff to check for any notations regarding an animal's temperament **before** removing a dog from its kennel. Note the dog's body language and make sure you are comfortable removing that animal from its kennel. Some dogs may not be good with certain sizes or types of people or other dogs.

NEVER remove a dog from the stray kennels at the Main Shelter (CAGES 41-80) or from the stray kennels at the Sharonville Shelter (Kennel 4).

Always return the animals to the cage they came from. Returning a dog to the wrong cage may be harmful to the dog. Animals are separated by gender and temperament. It is a good idea to keep pen and paper with you and record the cage and tag number of every dog you remove. **Please take this very seriously!!!** Failure to adhere to this guideline may result in termination of your volunteer privileges.

One person may only remove one dog at a time. If you are working with another volunteer, you may each take out a dog from the same kennel, but they must go to separate play yards. Two dogs can not be in the same play yard at one time. **Dogs from separate kennels should always remain on a leash and kept from interacting if they are in the side yard at the same time. Dogs should never be left unsupervised in a play yard.**

Keep track of the dogs that you walk on the chart next to the volunteer sign in sheet by drawing a line through the kennel # on the chart of the dogs you walk. This way the same animals won't get walked all the time and others ignored if everyone refers to the chart before socializing animals.

Check the yard before entering. Make sure the gate is closed at the far end of each yard and that the fence does not have any holes under it or between the posts where a small dog may escape.

Puppies and kittens are not to be moved about. Since young animals' immune systems are still in development, we ask that you not carry or walk any animal under the age of 4 months around the shelter. Exposure to adult animals' waste and germs can cause illness. Please love them at their cages.

Signing Up to Volunteer Using VIC

1. Go to www.spcacincinnati.org
2. Click on the volunteer link on the left hand side
3. Click on the Volunteer Information Center link at the top of the page (this will direct you to a new page in the Volunteer Information Center (VIC))
4. Enter your username (your full e-mail address – for example – name@spcacincinnati.org) and password (your seven digit cell phone number – if no cell phone, home phone number)
5. Click on My Schedule
6. You can either select a certain duty and see when shifts are available or select a date from the calendar to sign up for a certain shift.
7. To remove yourself from the schedule, select the shift from the calendar you would like to remove and click remove me.

You can also change your profile information via the My Profile Tab and log off-site hours (if they haven't already been logged) using the time sheet function.

Understanding Dogs

Many new dog owners make the mistake of trying to communicate with dogs in the same way they communicate with people - verbally. To fully appreciate dogs and their capabilities is to understand the differences between us and them, to be able to communicate by reading the dog's body language and understand why they do the things they do.

Physical Characteristics

Since dogs can't speak, they use all of their senses to communicate and understand. A dog's eyes are the window into its soul. Through a dog's eyes, you can tell if it is healthy (bright and clear) or ill (red, clouded by inner eyelid or by discharges), dominant (will not break eye contact) or submissive (will not look at you very long), frightened (pupils dilated and bulging), angry (pupils contracted with white visible) or friendly (you'll know them when you see them).

Dogs' eyes are different than a human's in that they do not see vivid colors and are offset a bit to give them better peripheral vision. This is vision that is needed for them to detect movement. Before they were domesticated, movement meant dinner. Dogs instinctively respond to sudden movements so it is always important to move slowly around dogs. Still, since their eyes are slightly offset, they do not focus as clearly as ours.

To compensate for less than perfect vision, a dog's sense of smell is many times better than a human's. One look at their nose and it only makes sense that, since they have a much longer nose than we do, it would contain many more nasal receptors to pick up scents. These receptors are capable of picking up scents from a mile or more away. Knowing this, it is easy to believe that dogs can pick up scents from humans and other dogs emitted when we are tired, frightened, angry, happy, anxious, etc. that we can't smell. Since a dog can't ask questions, he uses his sense of smell and his ability to distribute scents to help him understand his surroundings. His sense of smell allows him to say "Hello" and determine the mood of those he meets. Scent glands "strategically" located beneath the tail and in the pads of his feet allow him to communicate by distributing his own scents. This is why dogs wag their tails and scratch the ground with their feet.

A dog's hearing is much better than a human's. The ears are bigger and their movement can be controlled, allowing them to hone in on the direction sounds come from. At birth, dogs understand that making noise causes a response. They whimper to get attention from their mother. This is why dogs often relax and respond to higher pitched voices used by humans.

Body Language

Dogs communicate with each other using facial expressions, body postures, and vocalizations. They have their own "language" that is universal among all dogs everywhere. Dogs exhibit

many non-verbal signals for others to interpret their moods and intentions. Some are very obvious. An aggressive animal will try to make himself appear larger by raising the hair on his back, putting his ears erect, and extending his tail straight. It will often move his tail slowly side to side to distribute the scent being released from the glands below his tail. Many people misinterpret tail movement as a friendly wag, but that is not always the case. On the other hand, a fearful dog will often do the opposite by laying his ears back to the side of his head, crouching down to appear smaller, and tucking his tail between his legs to conceal the scent of fear he may be emitting.

Other signs are less obvious and very subtle, such as licking their nose or yawning or sniffing the ground. While easily seen, the message the dog intends to send to others is that he means no harm or that the environment is too chaotic and he would like for things to calm down. Dogs display a minimum of 15 calming signals that are meant to encourage or discourage interaction.

Calming Signals

Calming signals help us understand dogs better, but they are very subtle. They are used by dogs to avoid threats, to tell us to calm down, or to calm down things that they perceive as unpleasant. Dogs use them to calm themselves when they feel nervous, stressed, afraid, or uneasy. They also use them to make other dogs feel safer and to indicate they mean no harm and want to be friends. Examples of calming signals are turning the head, turning the body away, moving slowly, assuming the play bow position while standing still, sitting down, lying down, yawning, nose licking, freezing, splitting up, sniffing, shaking off, scratching, curving their body, or approaching in an arched route.

One of the most helpful ways to modify behavior of shelter animals is by using calming signals to evaluate the animals as well as to get scared dogs to relax and learn to trust. Trust from the animal must be present before training can take place. You can actually encourage a dog to calm down by yawning, licking your lips, or even lying or sitting down. Being able to spot when a dog is using calming signals has also been helpful in creating training strategies for specific dogs and pointing out relationship problems between owners and dogs. Calming signals can actually be used to eliminate behavior problems in some dogs.

All dogs respond to the use of calming signals. Dogs who are pushy and rude are usually the ones who have not been around other dogs much, causing them to lose their ability to use calming signals. They can relearn them if put in an environment with another dog fluent in dog language.

Threatening Signals

So, if calming signals are used by dogs to avoid threats, then the first thing we need to know is what a dog might find threatening. The threatening signals dogs show to each other are staring, walking straight on, stooping over, growling, barking, attacking, and showing teeth. Dogs become stressed when they are approached too quickly or approached straight on instead of in a wide curve or from the side. Someone bending over them, a dog or person growling or making angry sounds, or simply being too rough can also be threatening. Talking loud is the equivalent

of barking loud. It is often perceived as a threat. Consider how sensitive a dog's hearing is. Quiet your voice. It doesn't matter what your intentions are if the dog perceives your voice or behavior as threatening.

Stress

Humans get stressed in situations in which they do not feel they can cope, such as when something is threatening them and they are not sure about their ability to manage. Calming signals help us to see when a dog feels stressed. Try to alleviate the stress in the dog's life in order to solve a health or behavioral problem. For example, there are dogs that are simply pushy and rude or crazy off-the-wall dogs that jump all over us and paw at us and bark. Consider going down to their level or, if they are too overbearing, do what they would do to you if they wanted to be left alone, that is, turn around. Turning your back or turning away from a dog means "leave me alone" in dog language. To reinforce your lack of interest, swish your hand behind you as you leave. This is similar to a tail swish that a dog would use to say "stay away". Once your dog becomes accepting of this reaction on your part, tell him to "stay" while turning your back and swishing your hand, and, before long, you will have a dog who knows the meaning of "stay".

Sometimes people get louder and jump around to make a dog go faster or to get him to play. If a dog is stressed, you will usually get the opposite response. Do not jump around or roughhouse with a dog to "fire him up" as the dog will actually get slower to calm you down. This is why a dog given a command in a harsh voice will usually respond more slowly. He wants to calm the anger in your voice. Point this out to those owners who speak harshly to their dogs. Speak calmly and quietly to owners even when they are loud. They will quiet themselves, and you can point out the difference in the behavior of their dog when this happens.

Try to make a dog comfortable by kneeling at or stooping to his level with your side to him. Glance at him and wait for him to come to you. Likewise, you can turn your back to a nervous dog, but let him come to you. Do not look at the dog much as he may find it threatening. Try to soothe the dog by petting him or talking to him while he gets acclimated to his surroundings. Do not allow others to talk soothingly to him while he is scared as that sends a message to him that he should be scared, but, at the same time, remember that talking loudly will increase the dog's stress.

Aggression

Aggressive dogs are not dominant dogs. Dominant dogs are not aggressive. In the wild, it would not support survival of the group for the dominant dog to be aggressive. Dominant dogs are confident. Insecure middle ranking dogs with poor communication skills are aggressive - just like in groups of people! Do not use the words "dominant" and "aggressive" interchangeably. If a dog is stressed, he will show calming signals, but, if the source of the stress cannot be escaped, the stress may cause a dog to become aggressive. If the stress is not removed, they will aggress more and more quickly and become more violent until they are stressed for so long that they have to "explode".

Aggression is a symptom. Stress is the cause. Dogs don't invite conflict. They do everything they can to avoid it.

Granted, you still need to work with them, but if you adjust your attitude, what you feel in your heart about the dog, this will create in you a new compassion which will be transmitted to the dog. Never approach aggressive behavior as a battle, as you will lose.

Establishing the leader

When a dog meets another animal, human, dog or otherwise, it is necessary for the dog to know where his role is and how he fits into his new surroundings. They must determine where they fit in the "pack". Their way of saying "Hello", "Have we met before?", and "Are you friendly?" is by sniffing for familiar scents. They engage in a brief game of "sniffy butt", the easiest way for a dog to determine the intentions of others. This is followed with a series of exchanges by the dogs to determine who is going to be the leader. Frequently, they will bump into each other or start to wrestle by perhaps trying to put a leg over the shoulder of the new dog. These actions are meant to express dominance. If the new animal counters with the same kind of move, the aggressor will usually respond with a more intense act of dominance or back off with a play bow, which is a calming signal to the other animal. When an animal initiates the bump or wrestling move and the new dog submits by rolling over or licking, the initiator knows that it will be the alpha dog and playtime begins.

All dogs go through this when introduced, and, by allowing this natural process to take place, the dogs will usually determine the leader themselves. It is extremely important to remain calm during the introduction for, if you get anxious or fearful or if you panic, you will release human body chemicals that the dogs may detect and mistake as scents coming from the other dog and escalate their aggression. The best way to introduce two dogs is on neutral ground with both controlled on a leash. Be prepared to switch and untangle the leashes as the dogs circle and go through the motions. When this is not possible, another good method is to temporarily confine the new dog in a dog crate while the resident dog is allowed to sniff through the crate or interact at its own pace without feeling he has to defend his territory.

Using Calming Signals in the Animal Shelter Environment

Shelter animals come to us with questionable pasts. If they are strays, we only know what they tell us through dog language. If they are brought in by their previous owners, we can get basic information, but the temperament and behavior traits need to be taken "with a grain of salt". For example, they may have been brought in because "they destroyed the furniture", but what is often not said is that the owner may have left the dog unattended for prolonged periods of time, had a change in routine, or any number of other reasons that could have actually initiated the bad behavior. Likewise, excuses that the dog was "not trainable" may reflect the owner's lack of knowledge or effort. Notations about temperament can be considered, but, again, do not take them "as gospel". They may get along with some children or not like some men, but that may not be all children and all men. For safety's sake, you must approach every shelter animal as if you know nothing about it. Use your skills of communication to build trust in an animal that has

been abandoned by everyone that it ever trusted - until now.

Using calming signals, approach the animal using the arched approach he would use when approaching you. Speak softly and in a high pitch. Be reassuring as his mother would. The kennel environment is an extremely stressful environment where dogs will try to exhibit any calming signal they know to lessen the excitement. Kennelled animals have a tendency to jump trying to lick your face. If possible, kneel down to his level to try to calm him. Observe the animal before attempting to handle him. Check our records to evaluate his history. Watch for lack of calming signals and the presence of threatening signals. In the event you encounter a threat, do not attempt to interact with that animal. Watch the eyes. Do they follow you? Does he appear interested? Will the dog break eye contact with you first or does he not look at you at all? Once you are confident about handling the animal, remove him from the cage and seek a quiet place to continue the interaction. Remember, this animal is still an unknown. Take caution to always have an escape route, a hand near the head to redirect any sudden signs of aggression, and a taut rope for best control.

How Cats Communicate

Although cats have a reputation for being solitary animals, they have developed an elaborate system for communicating with each other. Scent, body language, touch and sound help one cat learn about another. Your cat will use the same tools to communicate with you. Your cat will tell you what he needs through vocalization and body language.

Following Their Noses

Odors are one of the most important ways your cat learns about his environment and other cats in it. If your cat lived outside, he would use urine to scent-mark his territory, backing up to an object, squirting urine on it and leaving the pungent odor for any feline passers-by to smell. While not having the effect of keeping other cats away, urine marks alert other cats to the presence of the marking cat. If you've had your cat neutered before he began spraying, he should not urine mark inside your home, but he may use his sense of smell in other ways to identify his space. Depositing facial pheromones by rubbing his cheeks on objects increases your cat's comfort level and helps him navigate around his environment. If you have more than one cat, you will notice them butting heads and rubbing their cheeks on the other. Only cats comfortable with each other will engage in mutual rubbing.

Body Language

Your cat uses body movements and facial expressions to let you and other cats know what's on his mind. To determine what your cat is thinking, look at his body language as a whole rather than simply one aspect of it. For example, if your cat's pupils are dilated, it may mean your cat is becoming nervous or agitated, or it may mean that he is simply trying to increase his vision in low light. A relaxed, content cat will turn his ears forward; half close his eyes and purr. When he becomes more alert, his eyes open completely and his whiskers will stand out. If your cat is afraid, he will draw his ears back and begin to fold them down. His pupils will dilate. An agitated and aggressive cat has completely dilated pupils, flattened ears, taut facial muscles, forward sweeping whiskers and bared teeth. He is ready to either scare off an intruder or to fight with one. To a cat, staring is intimidating behavior, and your cat will stare at another cat if he feels threatened. To prevent your cat from feeling threatened when you gaze at him, slowly blink your eyes to indicate that the look is benign rather than belligerent. A defensive cat will be poised for action. He may arch his back and puff up his hair to appear larger. If your cat feels totally relaxed with another cat or with you, he will roll over and bare his belly – a sign of total submission. Be careful, though. Just because he shows you his belly doesn't mean he wants it rubbed. Some cats enjoy belly rubs while others don't and forcing the issue may make your cat aggressive. He may claw your hands. Moving his tail is another way your cat sends non-verbal signals. A tail held high above a cat's back is a sign of dignity and self-respect. A cat holding his tail in a lowered state says that he is relaxed and content. A rapidly flicking tail indicates annoyance and

ambiguity.

Cat Talk

In the wild, cats have two sets of language – one to communicate between mother and offspring and another to communicate with other adults in the cat's territory. The pitch, intensity, frequency, rapidity and volume of the meowing reflect your cat's different emotional states or physical needs. The more rapid, intense and loud the vocalizations are, the more panicked, scared and anxious your cat may be. Conversely, the slower and less intense the vocalizations are, the more confident or potentially assertive your cat is. Your cat's vocal patterns will fall into three categories. The first is murmur patterns, including purring, that indicates a calm, friendly state. Vowel patterns indicate a need for food or other needs and desires. Loud, strained, intense sounds that include hissing, growling and screaming are associated with mating or aggression toward a human or other animal.

Why Cats Purr

When your cat climbs into your lap, tucks in his paws and begins to purr, all is right with the world. This is one thing we love about our cats: that feeling of contentment they share with us. When they become soft purring bundles of warm reassuring fur, we feel calmer and more peaceful. We may not always hear it – a soft vibrating rumble – but we can feel it. But why do cats purr? And what produces this characteristic sound? According to veterinarian Bruce Fogle, author of *The Cat's Mind*, the original function of purring was to enable a kitten to communicate with his mother that all is well. A kitten is able to purr by the second day of life, and although he can't meow and nurse at the same time, he can purr and nurse. And the mother cat often purrs back, probably to reassure the kitty. There are many theories to explain how the purr is generated. Some feel that it is a vibration of the soft palate at the back of the mouth due to increased blood flow. One study determined that purring results from nerve activation within the voice box. Veterinarian Neils C. Pederson, author of *Feline Husbandry* says purring originates from within the central nervous system and is a voluntary act. In other words, cats purr only when they want to. Purring is an integral part of the feline communication system and occurs for a variety of reasons. It is classified within the “murmur vocalization” group, which involves sounds produced by a cat while the mouth is closed. In addition to purring, this group includes grunting, calling and acknowledgment murmurs. Domestic cats and some wild cats like pumas and mountain lions (almost any big cat that cannot roar) are all able to purr. As the cat matures, the meaning of the purr changes. Some cats purr to indicate contentment or pleasure, but badly frightened cats purr, severely ill cats purr, and female cats purr while delivering their kittens. It is not uncommon for cats to purr around the time prior to death. This final purring may indicate a state of anxiety or possibly euphoria, which has been described in terminally ill people. Animal behaviorists believe that when cats purr under stressful circumstances they are reassuring or comforting themselves, much like humans sing to themselves. Frightened cats may purr to communicate submissiveness or non-aggressive intentions. A feral cat may purr to signal that he will not attack and other cats need not feel threatened. Older cats may purr when they play or approach other cats, signaling that they are friendly and want to come closer.

How Cats Play

Cats, like all mammals, engage in play as youngsters and continue to do so as adults. Play is a complex learning activity that helps kittens develop social relationships and hone their physical and mental skills.

Social Play

Social play is how kittens learn to interact with their littermates, their mother, other cats, other household pets and you. During social play, kittens test their world and learn their place in it. Kittens develop personality traits that accompany them into adulthood based on their playful interactions. As a kitten grows, social play with littermates is replaced by social play with a human caregiver if given the opportunity.

Object Play

Poking, batting and tossing small objects are ways kittens learn about prey and develop the survival skills they might need if they have to provide for themselves. You may see your kitten stomp on her toys, flip them and circle them once they land – acts that mimic overpowering and killing a prey animal for food. Object play teaches a cat how the world and things in it feel, what is animate and what is inanimate. She may jump up from her toys as if invisible rays emanate from them, sending her into fits of delight and discovery.

Locomotor Play

The running and jumping of locomotor play helps a kitten increase strength, coordination and flexibility. Locomotor play stimulates a cat's appetite while helping to keep her physically fit. It eliminates boredom; and a good, active play session at night can help reduce a cat's nighttime activity, which often keeps an owner awake. The active cat is a confident cat. In addition to the physical lessons play teaches kittens and cats, play also teaches emotional ones. Kittens learn that playing is just plain fun and that it feels good to run, jump and cavort with other cats and animals, including human ones.

A Lifetime of Play

During a kitten's first 4 weeks, she will be too busy nursing, sleeping and learning to see and hear to want or be able to play. During that time, a crinkly or jingling ball will have no effect on her. She will not be able to focus her vision to watch a moving object and will not have the strength and coordination to chase a flicking wand toy. She will be too fragile to engage in games. After 4 weeks of age, it's safe to play with your kitten. During the age of 7 to 8 weeks, kittens are most active and will continue to play actively until 12 to 14 weeks. Play comes naturally to kittens, but an adult that prefers to eat and sleep may need some encouragement from you. Playing with your cat increases the bond you share and is a good way to learn about her. Play also provides an

outlet for her energy and wards off potential behavior problems caused by too much time and too little for your cat to do. Cats will frequently attack ankles to encourage interactive play.

Toys for Cats

Playing with your kitten will help her establish a closer relationship with you, so provide her with safe toys. Cats are individuals with different energy levels. A toy that appeals to one may not appeal to another. Many cats enjoy chasing a small fabric swatch attached to the end of a fishing pole toy that mimics a moth in flight. Pole toys with larger stuffed animals at the end are difficult to chase and may even frighten some cats. Roll a ping pong ball in the bathtub to see if the game interests your cat. You may even find your cat bringing a crumpled piece of paper back to you in her own version of "fetch." If you have more than one cat, play with all of them to prevent squabbles.

Know what objects are safe as toys. Consult your veterinarian if you have any doubt. Like toys for a human toddler, pet toys shouldn't be too heavy for your pet to handle but they should be large enough so they can't be swallowed. Also, make sure they're not made of a toxic substance.

Cats may consume small toy parts as well, so be cautious of very small attachments, strings, buttons and bells.

Give your cat a paper sack or a box with holes cut into it so she can invent games for herself. You may find her chasing imaginary playmates in her own world of make-believe. How the two of you play is only limited by the imagination.

Imagination is Key

A pet's imagination is boundless. All animal play is spontaneous and whimsical. Animal games are without many rules and mainly just for pleasure, although much of animal play is meaningful, teaching life's lessons. Play has been noted in animals in the wild as well as in pets, and enjoyment seems to be the only theme.

Use your imagination as well. For example, cats respond primarily to movement. Therefore, any lightweight, small object may be a toy to chase and pounce on. Make up a game with your pet, follow his natural antics and build on his "variations on a theme" concept.

A Cat's Senses

Smell

Your cat's sense of smell is superior and one of the most important ways in which he navigates, communicates and investigates his environment. Cats have 200 million odor-sensitive cells in their noses compared to about 5 million for humans. Your cat will be able to detect the presence of cats outside the home by scent as well as any animals with which you've come into contact simply by smelling your clothing. Your cat will use odor in the form of urine marking and skin

secretions to mark territories and objects in their environments. Your cat will use his ability to smell rather than taste to determine if the food you've offered him is something he wants to eat.

Sight

Your cat can see in only one-fifth the light that you can but not in total darkness. That eerie glow you see when your cat's eyes reflect light is due to a layer of cells, called the *tapetum lucidum*, that underlie the retina of his eyes. These cells enable a cat to see form and movement in low light that humans might not see, thus enabling a cat to hunt for prey at night. Although your cat's ability to distinguish separate objects (visual acuity) is only one-tenth that of yours, he can discern movement at a faster rate than you do. This ability to see movement where there is little or none is what attracts cats to television because, on the TV screen, even smoothly- or slow-moving objects appear jumpy to a cat.

Hearing

Your cat's ears function like mini-satellite dishes, rotating to pick up sounds and funneling them to the brain. Observe your cat listening to a conversation in your home or commotion outside. His ears move back and forth as he listens, and his ability to hear is exceptional. If you've ever wondered how your cat could find a mouse in your house, sound may be one reason. The upper range of hearing in cats is about 60 to 65 kilohertz (kilocycles per second), which enables cats to hear their kittens and the ultrasonic calls of rodents. Humans hear about 8.5 octaves while a cat hears about 10, which is why some high-pitched noises, such as certain types of music, may agitate your cat. What may appear as two separate sounds to a person may appear as one sound to a cat. In spite of your cat's ability to hear a broader range of sounds than you do, he requires five degrees of separation to distinguish between two separate sounds while you can differentiate sounds that are only 0.5 degrees apart.

Touch

Your cat's sense of touch encompasses his entire body just as yours does. One of your cat's more important touch apparatus are his whiskers, which appear on his cheeks, lips and above his eyes. Whiskers act as sensory devices, contributing to your cat's ability to hunt in low light. A cat with no whiskers may be unable to navigate. Your cat will benefit from being touched. Stroking or petting your cat evokes a physical and emotional response. His heart rate slows, and his body relaxes. When your cat touches you by rubbing against you, he is depositing scents on you and marking you as part of his domain – the feline way of saying, "You're mine."

Taste

In spite of their reputation for being finicky when it comes to food, cats have less ability to differentiate among tastes than humans do. While you have about 9,000 taste buds, your cat has a mere 473. Your cat's taste buds are found in the mushroom-shaped papillae at the tip and sides of his tongue and in cup-shaped papillae at the back of his tongue. Your cat's appreciation of food is

due more to his ability to smell rather than taste.

Your cat's taste will respond not only to flavor, but also to a food's texture and temperature. Food that is not room temperature is a turnoff to most cats and may be the genetically programmed as a result of the cat's wild ancestors and natural instinct for eating recently killed prey.