



# **Volunteer**

# **Manual**

# Welcome to the Animal Friends Humane Society Volunteer Program!

**\*PLEASE NOTE** If you are required to do court ordered community service you need to contact the Operations Manager to set up your hours. The volunteer program does not cover court ordered community service.

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## Shelter Location

1820 Princeton Rd.

Hamilton, OH 45011

Open 11 AM – 4:30 PM Friday through Tuesday, 1 PM – 7 PM Wednesday and Thursday Closed on Major Holidays, if volunteer opportunities are available on a holiday you will be notified via e-mail.

**Volunteer Hours** – 9 AM - 4 PM Friday through Tuesday, 11 AM – 6:30 PM Wednesday and Thursday, volunteer hours on Major Holidays only when notified via e-mail

## PetMobile Adoption Unit

Check e-mail, e-flyers and website for dates and locations

## **Welcome to the Animal Friends Humane Society Volunteer Program!**

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

AFHS was established in 1952 and is the only open-admission shelter in Butler County. Our mission is to promote humane principles, to protect lost, homeless, abandoned and mistreated animals, and act as advocates for animals in our communities. Prior to opening the animal shelter over a half century ago, stray dogs were kept (until they could be claimed or destroyed) in a shack on a Middletown city dump and in a small block building on County fairgrounds in Hamilton.

The original shelter was enlarged in 1986, so that more animals could be sheltered at once. Other upgrades over the years include an in-house veterinary clinic for spaying, neutering and medical treatment and the purchasing of a PetMobile trailer and van in which volunteers take adoptable animals to public events on a regular basis. Most importantly, we have developed an active volunteer program where adults and children 16 years of age or older assist in various capacities from walking dogs and socializing cats to raising funds at annual events.

As a representative of AFHS, 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 that you have a clear understanding of the volunteer policies and procedures. We want you all to be safe, have fun, and enhance the daily experiences of the wonderful animals housed in our facility.

# About Animal Friends Humane Society

## **AFHS Background**

The Animal Friends Humane Society is Butler County's largest, oldest non-profit animal shelter. On a typical day we house 200-300 animals. We are the only open admission shelter in Butler County. Open admission means we take all pets, from aggressive animals, to friendly animals, to deceased pets. Local support helps the 6,000 animals we serve a year.

## **AFHS Mission**

Our mission is to promote humane principles, to protect lost, homeless, abandoned and mistreated animals, and act as advocates for animals in our communities.

## **Population Served**

Animal Friends Humane Society provides services to Butler County, OH, and to anyone interested in providing a forever home to our furry friends.

## **Fees**

Adoption Fees are as follows:

- Puppies up to 4 months \$150.00
- Dogs 5 months and over \$125.00
- Purebred Dog \$175.00
- Senior Dogs 7 years old and over \$75.00
- Kittens up to 4 months \$100.00
- Cats 5 months and older \$80.00 – ALL CATS AND KITTENS CURRENTLY \$10.00 –
- Purebred Cat \$100.00

All animals have received a temperament evaluation, preventative inoculations, microchip and spay/neuter. Dogs are heartworm tested and cats are feline leukemia tested. Adopted animals go home with a current county license (for dogs), a free bag of Hills Science Diet food and a 30 day free-trial of 24PetWatch Pet Insurance.

# AFHS Programs

## Adoptions

In 2015 AFHS handled 6,101 animals. In 2016 we handled 6,556 animals, and in 2017 we handled 6,212 animals. Good homes with concerned, qualified families were found for several thousands of them. Efforts are continually being made to improve our adoption percentage.

Each animal receives a health and temperament evaluation, and the decision is made whether to place the animal up for adoption. Once an animal is placed up for adoption, it remains there unless its temperament or health changes.

## Off-Site Adoptions

Nearly every weekend, our PetMobile sets up at a variety of off-site locations around the county. There we offer animal adoptions and distribute educational material to individuals interested in our cause.

## Community Cat Program

Community cats are un-owned cats that live outdoors in the community, and can be friendly or feral. In 2012, AFHS implemented a Community Cat Program where we SNR (Shelter, Neuter, Return) community cats that are unable to be placed into our Adoption Program. Information is gathered during intake and these cats are evaluated to ensure they are suitable to continue living a free-roaming lifestyle. Prior to releasing these cats back to their familiar environment, they are spayed/neutered, ear tipped to identify them as altered, and Rabies vaccinated.

Our Community Cat Program works to improve the lives of free-roaming and feral cats in our community and reduce the unnecessary euthanasia of healthy cats that are not suitable for adoption. Some benefits of a Community Cat Program are:

- Mating behaviors like roaming, yowling, spraying, and fighting is reduced
- No more unwanted litters of kittens
- Rodent control
- Decreased overpopulation of feral cats as colonies diminish in size over time

## 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**

AFHS 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.

## **Development**

AFHS 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. All fundraising that takes place for AFHS **MUST** be done with acknowledgement from the AFHS prior to any publication of a benefit for Animal Friends Humane Society.

## **Carole's Canine Companions**

A new program has been established to encourage interaction between animals and senior citizens in the Hamilton community. Dr. Carole Kuhn has developed a fund called 'Carole's Canine Companions' with the help of the Animal Friends Humane Society and the Hamilton Community Foundation. Currently the fund is servicing those senior citizens at Berkeley Square, Westover, and Jamestowne. The Animal Friends Humane Society, with the help of its volunteers, is taking selected dogs and cats on regular visits to both Berkeley and Westover. While the fund is currently in its beginning stages, the goal is to expand the scope to accommodate many more senior citizens' organizations in the future.

# AFHS Services

## Receiving and Lost and Found

AFHS takes in all animals brought to our shelter. A Lost and Found directory is maintained to help return animals to their homes. (An updated list of other local welfare organizations is also available for others with missing pets.) Every animal brought in to AFHS is scanned upon admittance for the presence of any identifying microchips or tags. Any dog found running at large with a license can be reunited with their owner by calling (513) 887-3160, or the phone number on the license tag, or visiting [www.butlercountyauditor.org](http://www.butlercountyauditor.org).

## Veterinary Services/Spay and Neuter Clinic

AFHS provides care for all animals in our shelter during their stay. Each animal offered for adoption is given an examination and any necessary vaccinations. Also, spaying and neutering is performed on all adopted animals.

Our clinic also offers AfterCare for treatment of ailments that arise within the first fourteen days of adopting at no additional charge.

## Animal Control/Dog Wardens

The Butler County Dog Wardens assume responsibility for enforcing state laws requiring the licensing and confinement of dogs and the protection of the public against animal nuisance and hazards. We are contracted by the county to provide a safe haven for the animals the wardens bring in. All dogs that come into the shelter as strays are required by law to be held for three days to give the public the opportunity to claim their animal. There are no requirements for cats.

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

## 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 hefty fine. If an animal is picked up off its property without being under the control of its guardian, the fine will increase. Failure to provide adequate food, water, and shelter is another area where citizens will break the law.

# Shelter Volunteer Policies and Procedures

## Volunteer Age Restrictions

To Volunteer with Animal Friends Humane Society you must be 16 years of age or older. Volunteers under the age of 18 must furnish a parental consent signature.

## Responsibilities

As volunteers you are responsible for treating all animals in our facility kindly, gently and professionally. Volunteering is a privilege, not a right. We ask that you conduct yourselves accordingly. The policies of the AFHS must be supported both inside and outside of the shelter.

## Areas of Access

Front Lobby, Dog Adoption, Cat Adoption, Laundry (for the purpose of doing loads of laundry), get acquainted room, play yards, and areas surrounding the building designated for walking are available to volunteers during volunteer hours. Please do not attempt volunteer activities in other areas of the shelter. A first offense will result in a warning and a second offense will result in termination from the volunteer program.

## Attendance

You are not required to commit to a volunteer schedule. However, we do ask that you try to come in as often as possible, with a minimum of 4 hours per month. These animals rely on volunteers for daily exercise, love and affection.

It is very important that all volunteer time is recorded. Please be sure to sign in to Volgistics (our volunteer database) when arriving and sign out when leaving. Sign in using the computer located in the last office across from the men's restroom. Your sign in number is your 7-digit telephone number you provided on your volunteer application. Do not use your area code when signing in. Please allow one to two weeks from the orientation for us to enter your information in the volunteer database. Unfortunately, you are not able to start volunteering until you have been entered in the database. You will receive an e-mail with your sign in number once you have been entered in the database, and at that point you may begin volunteering. Only hours recorded in Volgistics will be validated for school/community service. If you need a letterhead to verify your volunteer hours, please contact the Outreach Coordinator.

**\*Please note\*** The orientation hours will only count as hours recorded if you volunteer regularly through our program. If you do not log any volunteer hours in volgistics, your orientation hours will not be considered valid and we will not provide a letterhead for those hours.

## Alcohol and Drugs

It is prohibited and illegal to sell, use, possess, or transfer a controlled substance or alcohol on AFHS 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 a manager prior to volunteering. AFHS 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 front office 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, 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\***

Animal Friends Humane Society apparel and 'VOLUNTEER' t-shirts is available for purchase. See front office for details.

## **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.

# Volunteer Opportunities

Cat Socialization  
Dog Socialization  
Mobile Adoption Unit  
Fundraising Events

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 in the success of our program. 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 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 positions referred to thus far. 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.

## **PetMobile Adoption Unit**

Nearly every weekend, our PetMobile Adoption Unit goes to local stores and events. Volunteers are needed to walk around with adoptable animals and talk to patrons about them. Volunteers meet the PetMobile unit at the off-site location. This is a fun way to volunteer out in the community.

## **Fundraising Events**

Fundraisers are crucial for our organization. They bring in funding which allows us to continue caring for the thousands of homeless animals of Butler County. Our events are a huge success due to the many volunteers who help with them. Volunteer activities vary based on event.

# Animal Socialization Guidelines

**Look before you leash!** Always check the cage card **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. Be aware of the date the animal was spayed/neutered. Animals recently spayed/neutered should not jump and run excessively. They also cannot get their incision wet within ten days of surgery.

## Be Aware of Signs on Kennels

- **Clean/Dirty** – This cage is empty and is either clean or dirty and will be cleaned the next day
- **Cage Cards** – Cat or Dog- lists personal information for this animal
- **Please do not remove from cage I've just had surgery** – This animal cannot be removed from its cage until this sign has been removed by staff. This animal is able to visit with potential adopters.
- **I'm still healing** – This animal had surgery the day before and should not have extensive exercise. This sign stays for 10 days from surgery date.
- **I do not feel Well** – This animal cannot be removed from its cage until this sign has been removed by staff. This animal is able to visit with potential adopters.
- **Ok for Adoption** – This animal has finished medication and can take part in socialization.
- **Monitor** – Please inform staff if this animal appears to be getting worse (coughing, sneezing, discharge, etc.)
- **Do Not Walk** – This animal cannot be removed from its cage until this sign has been removed by staff. This animal is able to visit with potential adopters.
- **Need Fecal/Need Urine Sample** – Please advise kennel staff if a fecal or urine sample is available. We can only assess samples Monday through Friday before 4 PM. If you see a sample outside of those hours, please disregard.
- **No Food/No Food AM** – This animal is having surgery tomorrow and cannot have food or treats.
- **Special Diet** – This animal is on a special diet/feeding schedule and should not be given treats.
- **Puppy** – This animal cannot be removed from its cage. To view this animal a potential adopter must fill out an adoption questionnaire first. Cage also has a red lock.
- **Do Not Use** – This cage is being quarantined and cannot be used.
- **Walked/Play Yard** – This animal has been walked or in the play yard today.
- **PetMobile** – This animal is currently on the PetMobile.
- **Visiting Nursing Home** – This animal is visiting a nursing home but will return shortly.
- **Volunteer Signs** – These signs will be in the larger sleeves. They are specific directions for that animal.

## Never remove a dog from the Stray Wing.

**Always return the animals to the cage they came from.** Returning a dog to the wrong cage may be harmful to the dog. 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, and walk them together. **Dogs from separate kennels should always remain on a leash and kept from interacting!**

**Animals are never to be left unsupervised!** We encourage our animals to build relationships with people. Walking or playing with them is a great way to do so. Please do not leave an animal alone in a play yard or get acquainted room.

**Puppies are not to be moved around. Kittens can be taken out of their cages as long as they stay in C Adoption.** 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.

**Guillotines are used by staff members only.** Please do not use the guillotine doors.

**Quiet Time:** Quiet time is held once a day in dog adoption. This is 30 minutes of decompression time for our adoptable dogs. The lights will be turned off, soft music will be playing, and each dog will have some kind of snack like treat filled Kongs. At this time, there are no volunteers allowed to be in dog adoption. Dogs need to be returned to their cages 5 minutes prior to the beginning of Quiet Time.

**Quiet Time hours:**

Friday – Tuesday : 2:00PM-2:30PM

Wednesday – Thursday : 3:00PM-3:30PM

**Please provide your own lead.** The collars on the dogs are not weight-bearing collars and therefore, we must use slip leads to walk the dogs. Below is a list of places to purchase a slip lead for use while volunteering. You can also purchase one from us. Thank you for your help in this matter.

Drs. Foster & Smith

Dogs.com

Doggonegood.com

Dogstuff.com

Search for Slip Lead (Be sure it is not the martingale type)

**Notify staff immediately if you see one of the following...**

- Loose stool, blood in stool or worms in stool
- Green ocular or nasal discharge
- Coughing/sneezing
- Sores, wounds or injuries

**PLEASE DO NOT** feed our animals dry food, canned food or leftovers. We monitor their feeding to assure they are healthy.

**Only 3 volunteers may be in the cat room at a time.** The cat room is small, and too many volunteers can become overwhelming for patrons looking to adopt. If others are already volunteering in the cat room, please find another area of the shelter to help in.

**PLAY YARDS:** No more than ONE dog in the play yard unless you are trained to do dog play groups. You can find toys in the laundry room to take to the play yard. Do not loiter in the yard. You are there to play with the dogs!

**Please stay busy...** we appreciate you taking the time to socialize our animals and assist with needs throughout the shelter. We just ask that you stay busy throughout your volunteer shift. If you do not have anything to do, please ask the front office staff if anything needs to be done. If there is nothing to do, please sign out. We will not allow volunteers to 'hang out' throughout the shelter. If you are not staying busy you will be asked to leave.

# First Day Volunteering

1. Go down the first hallway on your left to the **last door on the left**.  
You do not have to tell the front office that it is your first day unless you need help.
2. Use the computer to type in your **7-digit number**. (No area code)
3. You may go up to the front office (or ask me if I am there) and ask to be placed with a Senior Volunteer to be instructed on how to do things.
4. If not, you are free to go socialize the animals.
5. Read **all** signs and make sure you can handle the animal before getting it out.
6. Only get **one** dog or cat at out at a time.
7. You may take the dogs out the back two side doors or into any of the three play yards.
8. When you are done with volunteering, go back to the computer and sign out.

(If you do not sign out, it does not count your hours.)

## Tips for your first day:

- Do not overdo it. Take your time. You do not have to meet every animal.
- If you are confused, nervous, or worried about making a mistake, just ask for help!
  - There is plenty of people to ask for help. Volunteers, staff, or me!
- We have all accidentally let a dog loose in adoption. Do not panic! Do not get dishearten! Some dogs are just wiggly and get out faster than we expect.
- Get to know the shelter for your first day. Just try to get comfortable with the trails, play yards, and animals.
- If you have any problems with your first day, send me an email and I can further explain anything for you!
- Have fun!

# 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

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. Kenneled 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 genetically programmed as a result of the cat's wild ancestors and natural instinct for eating recently killed prey.