



Cat Handling Manual

Updated:03/05/2022

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Section 1: Introduction

Overview

This manual's purpose is to provide the necessary information for proper and safe cat handling. Volunteers are an essential part of Helping Hands Humane Society and what it accomplishes! HHHS structures its programs to best suit our mission and needs. It is also fundamental to the program that all safety concerns and needs are met. We want to provide the utmost care for any animal who comes through our doors as an organization one of the many ways we accomplish this is by providing education and training to our community, staff, and volunteers. The cat handling program is split into 3 different levels. The different levels will entail which activities a volunteer may do and what animal a volunteer can handle. This program is performance-based and advancement is based on such. The primary goal is to provide the best care for our cats during their stay. Thank you for choosing to volunteer with our cats.

Contacts

For all questions and concerns surrounding the HHHS Dog handling program, please contact:

Shelby Reich, Volunteer Coordinator

shelbyr@hhhstopeka.org

785-233-7325 ext.103

Other animal care contacts:

Lindsay Roth, Behavior Specialist

lindsaymhhhs@gmail.com

785-233-7325 ext.104

Margaret Price, Manager of Admissions/Kennel Staff

margaretp@hhhstopeka.org

785-233-7325 ext.117

Section 2: Policies and Procedures

Animal Handling Policy

It is expected that all HHHS volunteers treat all animals with care, compassion, and respect. It is also required that before handling any animal a volunteer takes the corresponding training. Volunteers are not to take any animal from the shelter without approval from HHHS staff. While we understand that volunteers have the best of intentions, it is ultimately the responsibility of the staff to make policy and procedure decisions concerning the shelter and the animals in our care.

Cat Disease and Contagion Prevention

To help prevent and stop the spread of disease and contagion between cats we as that volunteers select only 1 out of the 4 cat areas to work in per day. In addition to limiting the areas of interaction we also ask that volunteers wash their hands in between each cat they handle. You do not need to wash your hands in between each cat in the cat colonies, because they already interact with each other daily.

General Cat Handling Rules and Conduct

1. Never feed a cat from your hand. (This is one of the number one ways a bite occurs in the shelter)
2. Always **trust your instinct**. If you are uncomfortable handling a cat it is safer for you and the cat if you don't.
3. Only get cats out that you are comfortable with and if a cat reacts poorly to the stroller they should be put back in their kennel.
 - a. If a cat seems too scared or shy to get out they can still read to it and use the back scratcher while leaving them in their kennel.
4. **Most cats don't like to be held**, so if you are picking them up to put them in a crate or stroller you should have everything ready to go so the transfer is as quick as possible.
5. **Never try to catch a cat**. If a cat tries to jump from your arms do not try to catch them or restrain them. This will always cause more damage and injury, instead, just let them go and pick them up after they are on the ground.
6. **Clean up your mess**. If a cat makes a mess in a socialization room or pet taxi, make sure to clean up after them. (Use rescue on pet taxis or strollers)
7. Sanitize any area that a cat touches.
8. You can only do one cat area per day, and you should wash their hands between cats (except in the colonies)

- a. You can do cats and dogs on the same day but start with cats because dogs find their smell interesting, but cats find the smell of a dog stressful.

Volunteer Activities Policy

Although uncommon, HHHS reserves the right to demote or remove a volunteer from specific activities if the volunteer is deemed unfit or is compromising the safety of the animals or people around them. Any member of the HHHS admin team can ask a volunteer to stop or step down from the activity they are engaging in and continuance or renewal of those activity privileges may require the volunteer to be paired with another volunteer or further education. Suspension of participating in the activity may also be deemed permanent.

Potential Adopter Policy

Adoptions are a very important part of HHHS and as representatives of HHHS, we as that you follow several guidelines.

1. It is best practice for adoption counselors to make first contact with potential adopters. This is for several reasons:
 - a. Not everyone is suitable to adopt
 - i. This can be hard to discern when first meeting someone, but adoption counselors are able to look at their profile and see more than what is on the surface.
 - b. They are able to see a more complete view of their lifestyle.
 - i. When an adopter fills out a profile they are able to see more about how a person lives and how they expect an animal to integrate into their life.
2. Try not to make black and white statements about an animal, outside of what is on their kennel card. This is for several reasons:
 - a. Animals may act one way with one person and completely different with another.
 - i. For example, an animal may be very cuddly with one person, but might not be when it is a child or another person.
 - b. It also helps reduce confusion for potential adopters.
 - i. That way it is not two different representatives of HHHS saying two different things.

Animal Intake Policy

Volunteers are not allowed to take an animal from someone who is bringing in a stray or surrendering. This is because intake needs to speak to the individual and receive information about where they were found or other general information about the person and animal. In the case of emergency (like a person threatening to abandon an animal) please tell the individual that you are going to get a staff member and then find the closest staff member. At that time the staff member will take it from there.

Section 3: Level 1 Cat Handling

Overview

The first level is the basic training of cat handling and is concerned with basic safety. The key items taught in this level are:

- Cat Kennel Areas
- Cat carriers and stroller instructions
- How to carry and hold a cat
- General rules and policies surrounding cat handling
- Cat body language

This level grants volunteers the opportunity to:

- Socialize with cats
- Get a cat in and out of their kennel
- Bring a cat to a socialization room

Level 1 Cat Handler Checklist

These items must be completed and there must be approval from the volunteer coordinator in order to become a level 1 cat handler.

- [Cat Body Language](#)
- [Cat Handling Quiz](#)
- Level 1 Cat Handling Class

Level 1 Cat Handler Rubric

CAT HANDLING

HELPING HANDS HUMANE SOCIETY

Name: _____

Trainers Name:

Date: _____

Aprox. Time :

Skill:	Needs Work:	Expected:	Excelling:
Retrieving a cat from their kennel			
General cat handling			
Putting a cat into a pet taxi/ stroller			
Putting a cat back into their kennel			
Follows general rules and policies			
Follows instructions			
Knows how to read a kennel card			
	+1	+2	+3

Additional comments :

For Volunteer Coordinator

Score:

Quiz score:

Pass/Fail :

Cat Kennel Areas

1. Cat Colonies

This area is the 2 rooms located by the front desk that features an open area design where a cat can roam and interact with other cats. Cat Colony 1 is dedicated to younger cats and Cat Colony 2 is dedicated to older cats. This is one of two areas where cats are allowed to interact with one another.

2. Cat Parlor

This area is the kennel located by the play yard. Cat Parlor holds 63 individual kennels that are built into the wall. Any age of adoptable cat can be housed in this area. There is an additional steel bank of kennels that is located in

the corner. These kennels are used for vet overflow and the cats in these kennels are not to be handled without expressed permission from a staff member.

Cats are not allowed to roam free in Cat Parlor to help prevent the spread of contagions and diseases

3. Cat Playaround

This area is located up in the front lobby and is 4 large, moveable kennels located by the windows. Cat of any age can be housed in these kennels. Please do not socialize with the cats with the door open, instead if you would like to socialize with one of the cats, take them to an open socialization room.

4. Catagon

This area is the octagonal area located in the center of the adoptions. Litters of kittens are what is normally housed there, but that is all dependent on the space we have available.

Kennel Cards

Helping Hands Humane Society Kennel Card		1 Munchkin			
2 Animal ID: 97830 HHHS Tag: 107718 Shelter Tag: 3 Status: Adopted Altered					
4 Current Location: - #					
5 Date In Shelter: 12/3/2018		7 Type: Dog Breed: Terrier Mix Primary Color: Cream Secondary Color: Sex: Spayed Female Age: 1 Year 6 Months 2 Weeks (approx) Weight: 7.4 lbs			
8 Distinguishing Features / Markings: 95600007764093					
 No Dogs					
9 Adoption Summary: I'm MUNCHKIN! I am a super smart lovable girl! I love people and want to be everyone's best friend. I am a bit of a drama queen sometimes and can be a little timid around high energy dogs. I do not do well with large dogs, I need a home that is small dog only.					
If you are interested in adopting this animal please provide the Animal ID number found on the upper left hand corner of this Kennel Card to an Adoption Center Representative and they will be happy to assist you.					
Vet Treatment Type		Date Given			
Strongid T		12/3/2018			
Recombitek C4		12/19/2018			
Recombitek C4		12/27/2018			
Recombitek C4		1/15/2019			
Naramune-2		1/15/2019			
Strongid T		2/6/2019			
Mirab Rabies 1 TT		2/6/2019			
Recombitek C4		2/6/2019			
Recombitek C4		2/19/2019			
Vet Treatment Due		Date Due			
Naramune-2		7/15/2019			

Every animal at HHHS has a kennel card and an Identification Number. The ID number is used to keep track of the animal in our online database. The kennel card is one of the first places you should start when trying to find out information about an animal. It tells you important information, like an animal's age, and should be checked before removing an animal from their kennels.

1. Animals Name

2. Animal ID Number for Online Database

3. The status of the animal (this is sometimes not up to date on the paper version and can be a past status of the animal.)

4. Current location - Kennel Number and Kennel location

5. The date that an animal was admitted into the shelter
6. Photo of the animal (Every animal at our shelter has some type of identification photo to help distinguish them from similar-looking animals.)
7. This information is about breed, weight, and age (age is the number one thing that you should look for because if an animal is under 6 months they cannot go outside)
8. This is where you will find restrictions for adoptions, like no dogs, no cats, or no small children. This can help you determine the best time and area to socialize with a cat.
9. This is a summary of the animal's adoption profile that can tell you a little about their behavior, preferences, and personality.

Behavior Forms and Concern Forms

These are all forms that we use across the shelter as a way to communicate an animal's activity, personality, or concerns for their health.

Behavior Forms

These forms can be found for cats and dogs, located with their kennel cards, and are one of the many ways volunteers communicate with staff. Behavior forms are used as a way to note things about a dog's personality or behavior. This documentation is a very helpful tool for adoption staff, to be able to help a dog find their forever home. The behavior form for dogs comes in 2 colors:

Blue: The cat is over 6 months old

Red: The dog is under 6 months old and cannot go outside to the play yard

Dog Behavior			Dog Behavior		
Date	Activity	Comments	Date	Activity	Comments

Volunteer Concern Forms

This form is used to express concern about an animal's health or behavior. The forms can be found in the Volunteer Coordinator's office. This form is entered into shelter buddy, which is the animal tracking and care system that we use. From there that concern is either followed up by the vet or behavior team.

Volunteer Concern Form

Pet Name: _____

Date: _____

Pet ID Number: _____

Concern Type: Behavior Medical Grooming Other

Kennel Number: _____

Staff/Volunteer: _____

Describe the concern to be addressed:

Please return this card to the Volunteer Coordinator's office

How to Remove a Cat from Their Kennel

Steps:

1. Get the correct equipment
 - a. Stroller/Pet Taxi
 - b. Toys
2. Check their Kennel Card
 - a. Check age
 - i. They must be over 6 months old to be able to go into a stroller
 - b. Signs
 - i. Makes sure that the cat is not on hold for a potential adopter.
 1. Another way that this can be communicated is by them having no kennel card
3. Make sure that a cat is comfortable with you touching them before picking them up.
4. Hold both of the back feet when holding them
5. Transfer them to the carrier.

Key Points

- Only interact with cats that you are comfortable with. It is safer not only for you but for the animal as well
- If you use a socialization room, stroller, or pet taxi, please clean up after yourself.
- Do not feed a cat directly from your hand. This is the number one way bites occur with cats.

Cleaning

Cleaning is one of the many ways that help prevent infections and contagions across our shelter and if you use any socialization room you must clean up after yourself. There are several things that we use to help us clean.

- Rescue
 - This is an animal safe disinfectant that we use on many things like:
 - Pet taxis
 - Cat toys
 - Kennels
- Bleach water
 - We use this on multiple things across the shelter like
 - Food bowls
 - Floors and hard surfaces
 - This is what we use to mop our floors and is kept in the mop buckets

What is FIV?

FIV stands for feline immunodeficiency virus. FIV typically causes a weakening of the cat's immune system. It is the same class of virus as HIV (a lentivirus); however, only cats can get FIV. People and dogs cannot.

How do cats get the feline immunodeficiency virus?

The most common route of infection is a deep bite wound from an FIV-positive cat to another cat. It can also be transmitted via blood, in utero, and from the milk of an infected mother cat. It is very rare for cats to get FIV just from being around infected cats, sharing food bowls, or from a person touching an FIV-positive cat and then touching an FIV-negative cat. Many FIV-positive cats and FIV-negative cats live together in the same home for years without spreading the virus to the non-infected cats.

What are the signs of FIV infection?

There are no specific signs of FIV infection. FIV-positive cats have a weaker immune system, so they are more prone to getting infections, such as upper respiratory infections, ringworm, and

dental disease. Other than that, FIV-positive cats tend to live normal lives and have a normal length of life.

How do I know if my cat has the virus?

There are no obvious signs of FIV, so the only way to know is to do a blood test. The most common screening test is an ELISA test (often called a SNAP test) done by your veterinarian. This test looks for antibodies to FIV. An antibody is a protein made by the cat in response to FIV infection. A cat can test positive as early as two to four weeks after exposure, but in some cases, it can take up to eight weeks.

Kittens under six months of age may test falsely positive after having received antibodies from their mothers, either in utero or via milk. It can take up to six months for these antibodies to go away. Thus, it is a good idea to retest a kitten testing positive after reaching six months of age.

Can FIV be treated?

There are no proven treatments to rid a cat of FIV. Most FIV-positive cats handle the disease well, but it is important to concentrate on treating the secondary illnesses.

What can be done to prevent the spread of FIV?

Cats should be kept indoors, so they do not fight with an FIV-positive cat. Depending on where one lives, the rate of FIV-positive cats ranges from four to 24 percent. An FIV-positive cat can live with an FIV-negative cat as long as neither cat is a fighter, or if the FIV-positive cat has no teeth. (FIV-positive cats commonly have severe dental disease, which often means it is necessary to remove all their teeth.)

There is a vaccine for FIV, but some do not recommend it because the vaccine does not have the best efficacy and, after a cat is vaccinated for FIV, the cat will test positive for the virus. At this point, no test can differentiate whether a cat tests positive for FIV from the vaccine or from having the infection. In some areas, if a cat escapes and is picked up by local animal control and then tested, the cat may be killed because of a positive test.

Can FIV-negative and FIV-positive cats live together?

Yes, as long as the cats get along and do not fight. The risk of an FIV-positive cat spreading the virus to an FIV-negative cat can be minimized by putting both cats in separate rooms until you are confident that they will not fight with each other. Spaying or neutering your pets will also reduce any risk.

Can cats with the virus have a good and long life?

Yes, FIV-positive cats can live normal lives, both in quality and duration. They just need to be monitored for infections and dental issues. But if they're well cared for, they can be healthy, happy, wonderful pets.

* Cited from bestfriends.org *

When the Ears Speak, Listen!



1) Relaxed and Happy



2) Alert, Listening Intently







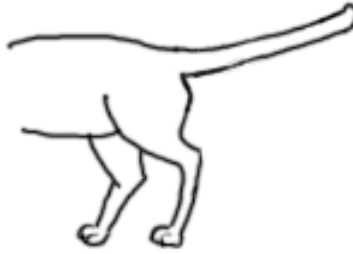







3) Agitated and Nervous



4) Frightened, in Attack Mode

catsmeowblog.com

The Telltale Tail

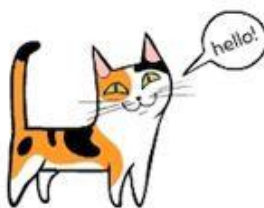
friendly and content 	non-threatening, unsure 	derisive 
friendly, but unsure 	amicable, not fearful or aggressive 	defensive aggression 
angry 	potentially aggressive 	submissive 
very happy to see you 	excited, angry or irritable 	alert, interested 

catsmeowblog.com

CAT LANGUAGE



INTERESTED



FRIENDLY



ATTENTIVE



RELAXED



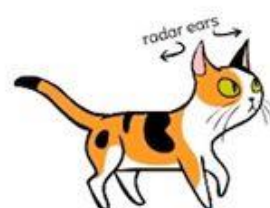
TRUSTING



FRIENDLY, RELAXED



CONTENT



CONFLICTED, CAUTIOUS



PLAYFUL



EXCITED



"THIS IS MINE"



ANXIOUS



PREDATORY



WORRIED



FRIGHTENED



THREATENED



TERRIFIED



SUPER TERRIFIED



IRRITATED



DISGUSTED

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Section 4: Level 2 Cat Handling

Overview

The second level addresses more complex issues like behavior. The key items taught in this level are:

- Feral cats vs. stray cats
- How to interact with feral cats
- Common cat behaviors

This level grants volunteers the opportunity to:

- Help socialize more feral cats
- Address more serious behavior problems

Level 2 Cat Handler Checklist

These items must be completed and there must be approval from the volunteer coordinator in order to become a level 1 cat handler.

- Level 2 Cat Handling Quiz
- Level 2 Cat Handling Class

Stray Cats vs. Feral Cats

Located below you will find some helpful tips on how to tell the difference between stray and feral cats.

Additional information for feral cats in our area:

TCCF- Topeka Community Cat Fix is an organization that helps with the sterilization of feral cats in our community. After sterilization, they will tip their left ear and be returned to the area in which they were found.

ACO is not allowed to pick up cats apart of the TNR program unless they are severely injured.

Stray Cats vs. Feral Cats

Stray and Pet cats are socialized to people.

They may approach people, houses, porches, or cars.

- Will live alone, and not a part of a group



- Might walk and move like a house cat (tail up) and is friendly

- Answer to a human, "Meow"

- Will be out mostly during the day

- Will look dirty, no ear tip

- May approach toys or food placed near the cage

- May respond to household sounds (cat food cans or bags being opened)

- May growl and hiss to show anxiety



Feral Cats are not socialized to people.

They will not approach anyone and they will likely seek hiding places to avoid others.

- May belong to a colony



- May crawl, stay low to the ground, protect their body with their tail

- Won't "talk" or respond, beg or purr

- More likely to be nocturnal, than out during the day

- Will probably have a clean, well-kept coat; will have an ear-tip (part of TNR*)

- Will ignore people and toys, even food if possible, won't show interest in household sounds

- Will more likely lash out if threatened or cornered (including ears back and dilated eyes)

- Only about 10% of feral cats are neutered
*If there is a litter, they are more likely to be feral cats



The Clifton Health Department is a contractual health agency serving the Township of Little Falls.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

The cat population is over populated. Spaying or neutering community (both stray & feral) cats, using the *Trap-Neuter-Release* program, will help reduce the over-population.

What is Trap-Neuter-Release?

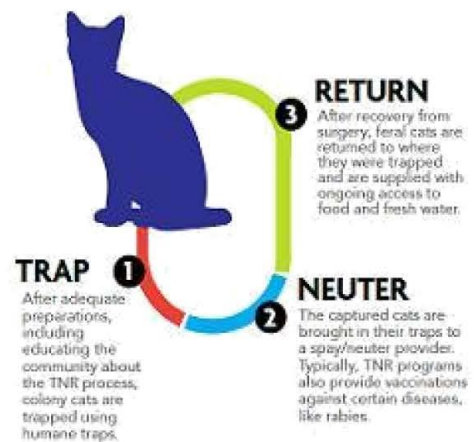
Trap-Neuter-Release is a program that is designed to reduce the number of community cats and improving the overall quality of life for cats, wildlife, and people.

Problem: The cats in the community are over-populated.

Solution: T-N-R, being a proven humane and effective way, to control the population growth.

How does TNR work?

- Humanely trapping cats
- Spaying or neutering them
- Vaccinating them against rabies
- Surgically removing the tip of their ear
(to recognize they have been spayed/neutered)
- Returning cats to their homes



Resources:

*People For Animals, 973-282-0890
pfaonline.org



Friends of the Shelter
900 Clifton Ave.
Clifton NJ 07013

Sources and References:

www.alleycat.org
Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)
PetSmart, Infographic of TNR

LIVING WITH CATS



living with community/feral cats

WHAT IS TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN?

- Humane traps are used to take community cats to a spay/neuter clinic to be spayed or neutered and vaccinated.
- Cats receive a left ear tip, a universal symbol of a fixed cat.
- Cats are returned to their original territory.

TNR IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE SOLUTION:

- The population will be controlled with no new litters and will decrease naturally over time.
- Cats are vaccinated.
- Annoying behaviors like howling, fighting and marking will stop or decrease dramatically. The odor of male cat urine is reduced.
- It's humane

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CAT?

A community cat is a free roaming cat which may be friendly or feral (unsocialized), but is living outdoors and thriving.

SEEING COMMUNITY CATS IN YOUR YARD?

Community cats, like all animals, stay where there is food and shelter (naturally occurring or provided by humans). These tips will help you keep cats from undesirable areas. If you enjoy having cats in your yard, use these tips to help them become good neighbors.

REMOVAL & FEEDING BANS DO NOT WORK

Removal attempts may temporarily reduce the number of cats in a given area, but unsterilized survivors continue to breed and other cats move into the now available territory. Year after year, cats are killed, but the population is never controlled. Fixing cats stops population growth and prevents new cats from moving in.

Discontinuing feeding will not make the cats go away. Cats bond to their territory and are opportunistic scavengers that can, if necessary, survive on garbage. Under a feeding ban, the cats suffer as they search for new sources of food.

Pet Community Center and Metro Nashville Animal Care & Control (MACC) are participating in a program to provide more effective cat population control. **Instead of being euthanized, healthy community cats over 12 weeks old brought to MACC will be neutered, vaccinated, and returned to their territory.**

LIVING WITH CATS

HELPING CATS BECOME GOOD NEIGHBORS

Contact Pet Community Center to get the cats fixed.

Secure trash lids. Open cans attract wildlife that will get into your trash as well.

Block areas under porches and sheds with chicken wire or lattice. Repair holes in crawlspaces. Places that attract cats for shelter will look attractive to wildlife too.

Feed the cats on a regular schedule if a neighbor isn't already doing so. Set out only enough food for the cats to eat in 30 minutes so wildlife isn't attracted. Feed during daylight hours, and keep feeding area tidy.

Establish a litter box by filling the soil or putting sand in a discreet location in your yard. Regularly remove deposits. Spray areas that urine odors with white vinegar or an enzymatic spray like Nature's Miracle® or Simple Solution® from pet stores.

Provide a shelter, like a small doghouse, if a neighbor isn't already doing so.

Gradually move shelters and feeding stations away from areas where you don't want the cats and into a secluded, discreet area of your yard.

HUMANE CAT DETERRENTS:

- Apply cat repellent fragrances- orange or lemon peels, citrus spray, coffee, vinegar, tobacco, lavender, lemongrass, citronella, or eucalyptus.
- Use an ultrasonic cat repellent like CatStop™ or motion-activated water sprinkler like ScareCrow™.
- Place plastic carpet runners spike up, chicken wire, latticework, pinecones, river rocks, or Cat Scat™ in soil in flower beds.
- Use a car cover to keep cats off your car.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND KITTENS:

- Stop and observe. The best place for kittens younger than eight weeks old is with their mother, if at all possible. Monitor the kittens for several hours to see if the mother cat is away hunting.
- Kittens over 8 weeks old can be trapped, spayed/neutered, and returned to their home territory with monitoring from a caretaker.
- Visit petcommunitycenter.org/kittens/ for more information.

OUR MISSION:

Pet Community Center is dedicated to strengthening the human-animal bond through accessible veterinary care and support services.

THIS PROGRAM IS SUPPORTED BY:



Pet Community Center is a 501(c) nonprofit charity. Through the generosity of donors we are able to offer high quality services at low cost. To support our work with a gift, please visit: petcommunitycenter.org/donate



943-B Dr. Richard G. Adams Dr. • Nashville, TN 37207
(615) 512-5001 • petcommunitycenter.org

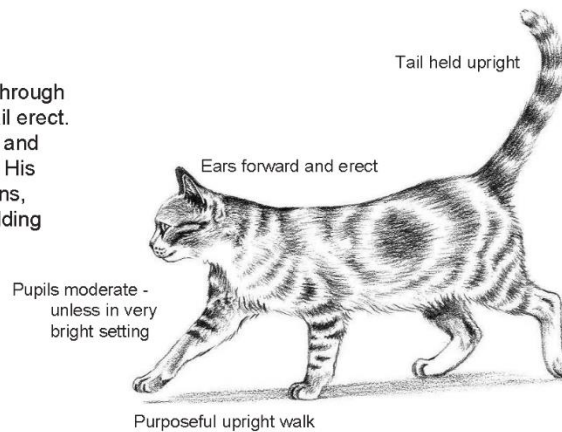


Cat Body Language

<http://www.aspcapro.org/feline-ality.php>

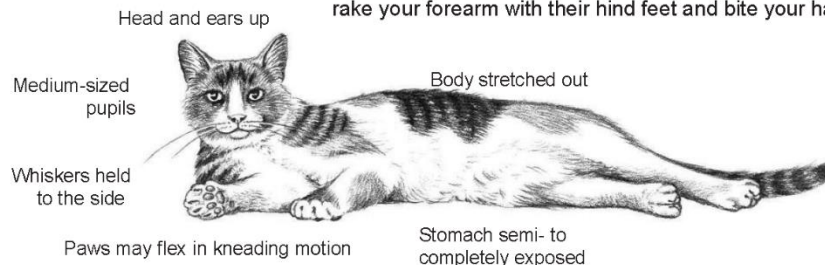
the confident cat

The confident cat purposefully moves through space, standing straight and tall with tail erect. He is ready to explore his environment and engage those he meets along the way. His upright tail signifies his friendly intentions, while his ears are forward and erect adding to the cat's alert expression.



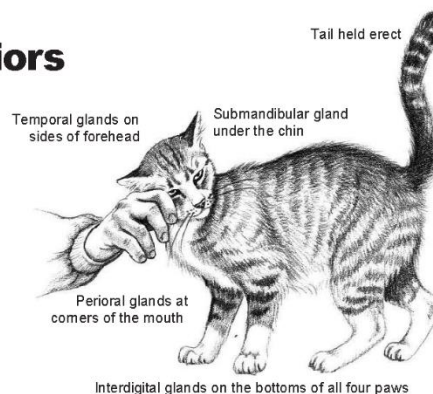
the confident cat at ease

When relaxed, a confident cat stretches out on his side or lies on his back exposing his belly. He is in a calm but alert state and accepts being approached. His entire posture is open and at ease; but beware, not every cat that exposes his abdomen will respond well to a belly rub. Some will grasp your hand with their front paws, rake your forearm with their hind feet and bite your hand.



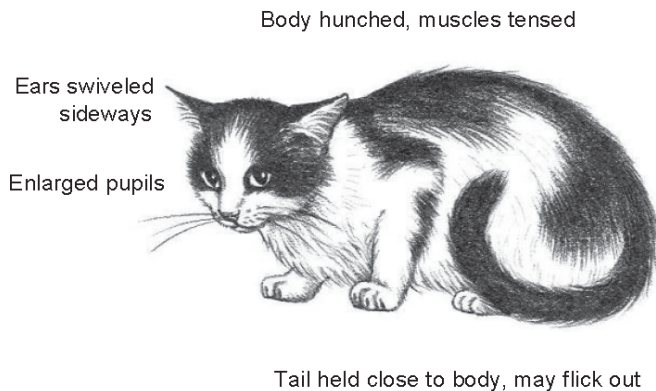
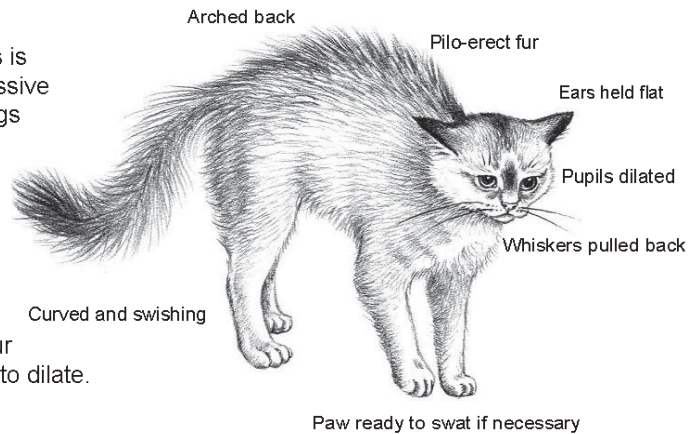
distance-reducing behaviors

Distance-reducing behaviors encourage approach and social interaction and are meant to telegraph to others that the cat means no harm. The act of rubbing against a person's hand or another cat (scent marking) to distribute glandular facial pheromones from the forehead, chin or whisker bed is calming and seems to guarantee friendly interaction immediately afterward. The tail is usually held erect while the cat is scent-rubbing.



distance-increasing behaviors

The goal of distance-increasing behaviors is to keep others from coming closer. Aggressive interactions are avoided when the warnings are heeded. Conflicted cats lack the confidence to stare down and charge others. Instead, they assume a defensive threat posture, warning others away by appearing as formidable as possible by arching their backs, swishing their tails, and standing sideways and as tall as possible. Fear and arousal causes their fur to stand on end (pilo-erection) and pupils to dilate.

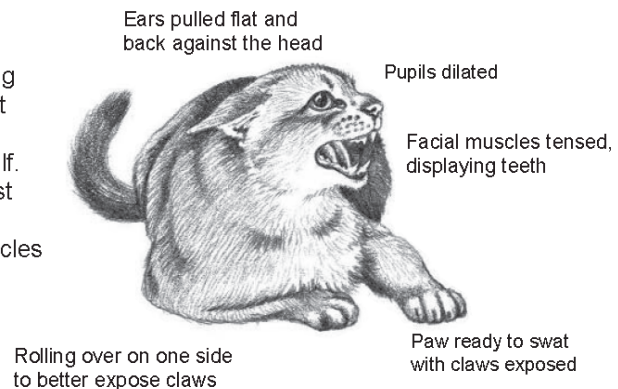


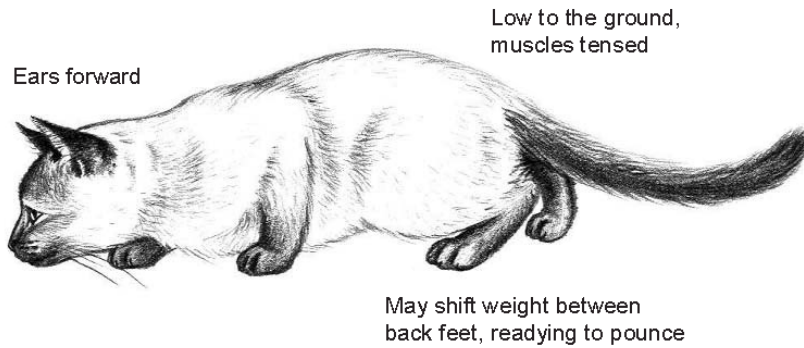
the anxious cat

When a cat becomes anxious, he crouches into a ball, making himself appear smaller than usual. Muscles are tensed and the cat is poised to flee if necessary. The tail is held close to the body, sometimes wrapped around the feet. The head is held down and pulled into the shoulders.

defensive aggression

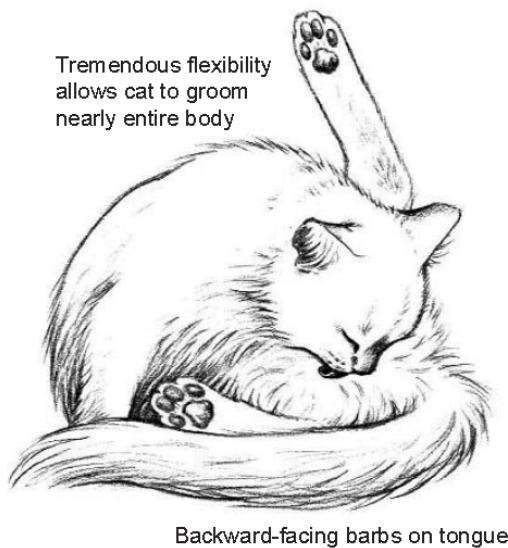
The pariah threat is another distance-increasing posture. When a cat determines that he cannot escape an unwanted interaction with a more dominant animal, he prepares to defend himself. The ears are pulled back and nearly flat against the head for protection and the head and neck are pulled in tight against the body. Facial muscles tense, displaying one weapon - the teeth. The cat rolls slightly over to one side in order to expose the rest of his arsenal - his claws. He is now ready to protect himself.





the predator

Even when fed two meals a day, cats are still predators. The predatory sequence is stalk, pounce, kill, remove, and eat. When stalking prey, a cat may stealthily move forward or lie in wait, shifting his weight between his hind feet. When movement is detected, the cat pounces on his prey and delivers a killing bite. He may then take the fresh-killed prey to a quiet place to eat – or a female may take it to her kittens. Even cats that don't hunt for their meals still enjoy chasing moving objects, including toys and, in some cases, human body parts.



the groomer

Cats spend 30 to 50 percent of their waking time grooming. Backward-facing barbs on the tongue act as a comb to loosen tangles and remove some parasites. Beyond maintaining the cat's coat, grooming also relieves tension and promotes comfort. Licking also facilitates cooling off in warm weather.

Section 5: Level 3 Cat Handling

Overview

The first third level, like the second level, gives the opportunity to learn more about cat behaviors. The key items taught in this level are:

- Cat behaviors
- How to interact with a fearful cat

This level grants volunteers the opportunity to:

- Help socialize cats that are currently unadoptable
- Help with more complex cat problems

Level 3 Cat Handler Checklist

These items must be completed and there must be approval from the volunteer coordinator in order to become a level 3 cat handler.

- Level 3 Cat Handling Class

Overstimulation in Cats

Does your cat behave aggressively when you pet or handle them? Overstimulation refers to a cat's normal response to being touched in areas or ways the cat finds uncomfortable, or that have gone on for too long. Many cats exhibit overstimulation or petting-induced aggression. Cats vary enormously as to the extent and duration to which they like petting or handling. They also vary greatly in the number and intensity of warning signals they will give before reacting aggressively toward their handler.

Overstimulation also may happen when play behavior escalates to aggression. This often happens when humans play in inappropriate ways with cats such as rough petting, or playing chase games with their hands.

It is important to follow guidelines for a healthy way to pet and play with cats. Here are the key points for petting:

- Keep your petting sessions short. If you know your cat doesn't like to be petted a certain way or in a particular area, avoid doing so. Cats will tell you if they are enjoying it or getting irritated. Even if you feel okay with the level of aggression, they are stressed and are trying to communicate that. Ignoring the warnings reinforces biting behavior and will increase aggressive incidents and/or intensity in the future.
- Only pet your cat in the areas they truly enjoy. Most cats like to rub their faces or bodies on an offered hand, but do not appreciate long strokes over their bodies. It is important to know your cat. If they get aggressive when petting the tail base, stay around the head for petting. (Also see presentation '[Feline Communication: How to Speak Cat](#)')
- Observe your cat for signs of overstimulation and impending aggression. Common signals to look for include: tail swishing, skin twitching over the back, flattening of the ears, tenseness, dilated pupils, low growl, walking away and lying down.
- Stop petting at the first sign of any of these early warning signals. You can do this by calmly dropping your hands to your sides. If your cat is very agitated, walk away from the cat. If your cat is on your lap, stand up slowly and let them gently slide off.
- Wait sometime before attempting to pet again. Some cats only take a few minutes to settle down, while others can take several hours.
- Punishment is not the way to address this behavior problem. Never yell at or hit as this will not help. It will only make your cat fear you or become even more aggressive.

This document was created by the San Francisco SPCA with a grant from Maddie's Fund®.

Aggression in Cats Toward People

Is your cat biting or scratching you, stalking and pouncing on you? Is he biting you after you have been petting him for a short period of time or after you touch him in a certain place? Don't despair: There are ways to deal with aggressive behavior in cats.

Below are some general recommendations for dealing with feline aggression problems. Before treating your cat's aggressive behavior at home, make an appointment with your veterinarian. Occasionally, medical problems that can cause pain or irritability will lead to aggression; treating these conditions may resolve the behavior.

Some displays of seemingly aggressive behavior are actually normal ways for cats to communicate. Cats use behaviors such as biting, scratching, and pouncing to tell other cats that they do not wish to interact, to protect their territory or valuable possessions (including food), and in play. Cats may hurt people or other animals simply because they don't know how to play appropriately. Your cat may need to be taught more desirable ways to interact or you may need to help him become more comfortable in certain situations so he doesn't feel the need to communicate in an undesirable manner.

Causes of cat aggression

Because we are not privy to cats' thoughts and feelings, it's not always possible to know what's causing aggressive behavior. In addition, aggression is a complicated subject that behavior experts are still learning about. With that said, there are several known causes behind aggressive behavior in cats, including these:

- Fear
- Play and excitement
- Redirection
- Dislike of petting
- Pain and sensitivity

Fear. Sometimes the best offense is a good defense! This is true of our fearful cats. When a cat feels threatened, he may act in ways to defend himself. This is the most common type of aggressive behavior, so keep in mind that the goal when you're developing a behavior modification plan is to make your cat feel comfortable, not threaten him further.

Play and excitement. Some cats have a hard time distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate play. Forms of play that may be appropriate with their littermates may make us bleed. These cats often have difficulty controlling themselves and may not have learned the self-control necessary to regulate their play before it causes injury.

Redirection. Have you ever been so upset with someone at work that you go home and yell at a family member? That's called redirection: You can't take out your frustration on who or what is upsetting you so you pick on someone else. Cats sometimes do this, too.

Dislike of petting. Some cats show a high sensitivity to being petted in certain places, and their annoyance can flair up in an instant. For example, some cats behave aggressively when touched on the rear end or when being petted while sitting on someone's lap. The reasons behind this behavior are not well understood, but these cats sometimes learn to accept petting for short amounts of time.

Pain and sensitivity. Numerous medical conditions can cause pain and discomfort. Just as we might lash out to protect ourselves from pain or anticipated pain, cats do the same.

Protecting yourself and your cat

The first step is preventing your cat from harming you. Trim her toenails (or, if necessary for safety, take her to your veterinarian or groomer for a pedicure) so that if she scratches, she will do less damage.

The next step is to identify the triggers for the aggressive behavior. Write a list of all the circumstances surrounding the onset of the behavior, including the time of day and day of the week, interactions with other animals and people, activities involving your cat, sounds, and

smells. Once you've identified them, avoid the triggers (when possible) while working on resolving the undesirable behavior.

Many of the warning signs a cat shows are common to the species, but individual cats may also have their own distinctive signals. Pay attention to your cat's body language and learn to recognize the signals that occur shortly before your cat attacks. For some cats, this means dilated pupils and a change in ear position. For other cats, it means a rapidly swishing tail or a crouched, tense body posture. The goal is to recognize the signs that your cat displays before she behaves aggressively and to stop interacting with her before she gets to that point. You may get hurt by ignoring the warning signals.

Benefits of enriching the environment for cats

Enrichment of the cat's living environment can have multiple benefits for cats showing undesirable behaviors. It can relieve boredom and frustration, stimulate the mind, and provide an appropriate form of play and energy release. Many undesirable behaviors can be curbed by providing your cat with enough enrichment options. Keep in mind, though, that some forms of enrichment may not be appropriate depending on your cat's triggers, so make sure you are providing enrichment that doesn't cause your cat to be overly aroused or fearful.

How can you make your cat's life more exciting? Here are some ideas:

- Create a toy box for your cat, but keep it out of her reach. Toys that are available all the time quickly become boring. Cats love novelty and rapid movement. Rotate the toys in and out of her box every three days, so that she is only allowed to play with the toys for a few days, and then a few new and exciting toys arrive.
- Scent is important to cats, and can make a toy more exciting. Carry small toys around with you before you give them to her so that they acquire your scent, or put them outside in the garden so that they acquire the scent of the outdoors. Some cats love the smell of catnip toys. You can buy food-dispensing toys that provide your cat with entertainment without your direct involvement.
- Interactive toys (toys that you have to manipulate in order to make them fun, such as a feather attached to a wand and a string) tend to maintain cats' interest for the longest period of time. If you have an active cat, you should play with her for a minimum of 20 minutes twice daily. Don't ever use toys that involve using your hand (or any other body part) as an object of play, since you could encourage aggressive behavior by teaching your cat that it is permissible to play with (i.e., attack) your hands.

Additional suggestions for helping an aggressive cat

Managing the behavior by avoiding all circumstances that cause aggressive behavior is an appropriate solution if you are staying safe and your cat does not seem emotionally troubled. If management has improved the situation, then don't feel obligated to take further steps. However, you should seek professional help if the situation has remained static or is worsening, or if your cat has unavoidable triggers or seems anxious on a regular basis. There are veterinarians who

specialize in cat care and certified feline behavior consultants. One of these professionals can offer help to you and your cat while keeping everyone safe.

In the meantime, basic behavior modification techniques that you can try include:

- Reinforce incompatible behaviors: Your cat cannot scratch your leg if he's using his scratching post.
- Reinforce behaviors you like: Reward him for calm behaviors.
- Refocus your cat's attention before he acts inappropriately: Try crinkling his favorite bag of treats or opening a small can.
- Pair scary things that are unavoidable with yummy treats: When the dishwasher being turned on means he's going to get a tuna treat, the noisy appliance becomes less scary to your cat.

Additional things that you may want to try include Feliway pheromone products and a calming collar. It's also a good idea to consult with your veterinarian. She may suggest nutritional supplements (e.g., Nutri-Calm, Zylkene, Solliquin), a change in diet or prescription medication.

There are some techniques that you should always avoid. Steer clear of the following and seek additional advice if the professional you're working with recommends them:

- Do not punish your cat. Punishment may not only cause your cat to be more aggressive, it will damage your relationship. Even punishments that are considered mild should be avoided, including spritzing a cat with a spray bottle, throwing items at the cat (or elsewhere) to cause a noise, shaking a can with something noisy in it, and prolonged isolation.
- Do not push your cat past his comfort level because it is likely to cause setbacks and hinder his progress.

Finally, put yourself in your cat's shoes: Think about how he might be feeling and try to understand his behaviors from his point of view. It's important to remain patient and supportive of your cat while keeping everyone safe. There are many professionals with considerable experience working with these issues so you can take comfort in the fact that this is not a problem unique to your cat.

*cited from the Best Friends Network

Euthanasia

HHHS admits over 6,000 animals each year. Many of these animals have medical or behavioral issues that are quite severe and necessitate difficult decisions. Euthanasia is considered only when all other realistic alternatives have been exhausted. It is never a decision that's made lightly. The problem of euthanasia does not exist solely for HHHS. Nearly 1.5 million animals are euthanized per year in shelters across the nation. The primary goal of HHHS is to be a

resource for animals with nowhere else to go and to find the best possible outcome for each of those animals. The performance and consideration of euthanasia are conducted by HHHS in accordance with the guidelines set forth by The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), and state and federal laws.

For the purposes of HHHS, euthanasia is the process of providing a painless, comfortable death to an animal. Euthanasia is a term derived from the Greek word eu meaning good and thanatos meaning death. A "good death" for HHHS requires that the animal undergoes the process as free of stress as possible and in a quick and painless manner.

The primary reasons HHHS must do euthanasia are a service to the community or because of severe health or behavioral issues. Euthanasia of dangerous animals protects the health and safety of our community. It's always a last resort and all other options are explored first.

Animals come into the shelter for a variety of reasons. Some come in as strays and others are owner surrenders. Owners surrender their pets for numerous reasons: moving, having a baby, pet behavioral issues, or simply not having enough time for the animal. Despite the surrender reason, it is HHHS policy that no animal from Shawnee County is turned away. The organization is an open-admission facility that admits every animal seeking refuge. Due to the open-admission policy, HHHS admits more animals than most other shelters in Kansas. The reality is that because we admit all animals some will have serious health or behavioral issues that require euthanasia.

Decisions about euthanasia are never done lightly and only after all other options have been perused. First, we look at working with other rescues, getting assistance from local veterinarians, or placing the animal in a foster home. Euthanasia decisions are made by a committee that includes our executive director, our veterinarian, and our behavior team.

Animals are selected based on their behavior, health, and temperament. It is not the policy of HHHS to choose animals to be euthanized simply to make space. If you have additional questions pertaining to euthanasia, please contact the HHHS Executive Director Kathy Maxwell at kathym@hhhstopeka.org or (785) 233-7325. HHHS believes in the importance of thoroughly understanding such a complex and emotional topic. Resources are available to answer all of your questions.

Section 6: Safety and Health

Overview

The first priority when handling any animal is personal safety and health. The second consideration is the health and safety of the animal and the animals around them.

This means that numerous things have to be considered before handling an animal including:

- Personal Risk
- Environmental factors
- Contagion and Disease Management
-

Personal Risk

When handling any animal at the shelter it is first important to take an evaluation of yourself. This step requires a volunteer to be aware of one's ability and limitations and choose to handle an animal that fits within that range. This helps not only reduce the risk of personal injury, but also helps reduce the risk of injury to people and animals around you.

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors are something that an animal handler must be aware of at all times. It can include a wide variety of things depending on where you are handling an animal at. Some of the main things to be aware of are:

- Tripping Hazards
- Inclement Weather
- People and Animals Around you

The best way to handle any environmental factor is to be aware of potential hazards and to know and voice your plan when confronted with them.

Contagion and Disease Management

THANK YOU for volunteering your time and talents to help make our shelter more like home for our amazing animals! There are a few important things to remember about the shelter and our animals; there are a large number of animals in a fairly small space, and our animals come in with completely unknown medical histories. This makes disease prevention key in the health of our animals--and you are a part of that too!

Zoonotic illnesses are diseases humans can get from animals. Many infectious diseases can spread from animals to people, and some of these can come from your pet.

Know that getting diseases from a pet is pretty uncommon and that you can prevent most of them with some very simple steps.

The most important thing you can do to help prevent the spread of disease is to wash your hands! Wash them thoroughly and between each animal.

The most common way diseases are spread in an animal shelter is via fomites. Fomites are inanimate objects that can carry diseases. Most common fomites: dog dishes, toys, beds, bedding, human hands, shoes, cell phones, door handles, and clothing. Some important steps for you to take (other than washing your hands!): Have a specific pair of shoes that you only wear to the shelter, change your clothes as soon as you get home, and disinfect your cell phone, keys, car door knobs/steering wheel with bleach wipes.

It is important to understand that you can not only spread disease within the shelter, but you can spread disease to your animals at home. Make sure your animals are up-to-date on their vaccines. Don't let them jump on, kiss, or sniff your clothing or shoes after being at the shelter. If you are concerned about your animals, please take them to your regular veterinarian for assistance.

Some zoonotic diseases are:

Rabies: Caused by a virus and spread through bites, rabies is a disease that affects the nervous system and is generally fatal. Although rabies can be spread from pets such as a dog or cat, you are more likely to get it from a wild animal. Tell the Volunteer Coordinator immediately if an animal bites you.

Toxoplasmosis: You are most likely to get toxoplasmosis from eating partially cooked meat or from contact with animal feces while gardening, but you can also get it from contact with contaminated cat feces. It is a protozoan organism; if you are pregnant or getting ready to become pregnant, it is particularly important to be aware of this disease.

Hookworms and roundworms: These are intestinal parasites routinely found in dogs and cats, particularly kittens and puppies. The worms' eggs or larvae are passed from pets through stool. You can pick them up through your skin from walking barefoot, playing outside, or handling feces and not washing your hands.

Tapeworm: Most human tapeworm infections arise from ingestion of contaminated meats. However, children can pick up tapeworm parasites from cats and dogs by accidentally swallowing a flea infected with tapeworm larvae. Tapeworm segments may show up in stool or around the anal area on a pet or human; they look like grains of rice. The single most important control for tapeworms is to control fleas on your pet and in the environment.

Ringworm: Not really a worm, ringworm is caused by a fungal infection within the top layer of the skin. It is very contagious and dogs, cats, horses, other animals, and humans can pass ringworm. On skin, ringworm causes a ring-shaped, reddish rash that may be dry and scaly or wet and crusty. It may also be itchy. Although it's difficult to prevent, ringworm responds well to self-care and treatment. It is estimated that 30% of cats are subclinical carriers of ringworm, meaning they have the fungus on them but are not showing any signs or symptoms.

Thank you for all you do! Written by Dr. Jami Grace, HHHS's Veterinarian 2-19-2016

Emergencies

Cat Fights:

Cat fights are uncommon at HHHS, but we do want every volunteer to have a plan of action, just in case they happen to be in this situation. The number one thing to be concerned about is personal safety. We want you to take care of yourself above everything else. We encourage volunteers to follow these steps if ever in that situation.

1. Remove yourself from the environment
 - a. Sometimes simply standing up and walking away will stop a cat fight if they are fighting for attention.
2. Call for help
 - a. Tell any staff member what is happening because they are trained to handle the situation
3. Do not intervene
 - a. Do not try to pull the cats off of each other. This normally only leads to more injury.
 - b. to get them separated, but do not enter into the yard.

4. Stay calm
 - a. This is easier said than done, but try to stay as calm as possible.

Bites

Although uncommon bites do happen and should be immediately reported. When a cat bite happens at the shelter it does not mean that the cat is going to be euthanized, but is important to report, because the cat gets put on a two-week quarantine to make sure that they are not a carrier of any diseases. If you do get bitten there is a bite wash kept in a couple of areas of the shelter that can help prevent the development of any infection.

Section 7: Conclusion

Any of the material covered in this manual can be changed at any time to suit the needs of the shelter. If there are any questions concerning any material covered please contact Shelby Reich the Volunteer Coordinator.

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with our cats!