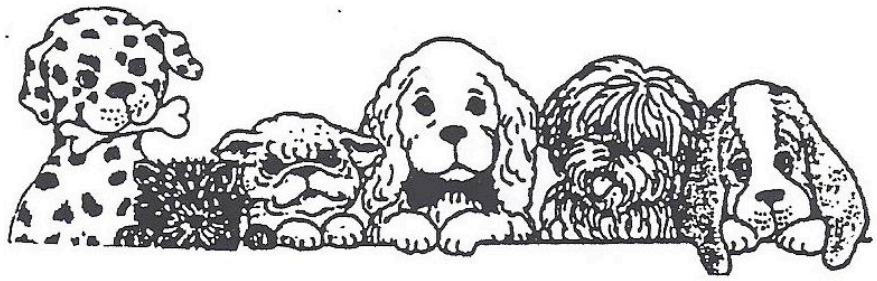
PART IV

Visiting With Puppies and Kittens



HUMANE CARE OUR FIRST CONCERN

We cannot help people if we are hurting the animals. If there is anything that interferes with the animal's welfare, STOP VISITING. Explain to the residents why you must stop; if it is for the welfare of the animal, they will understand. Tell them you will be back another time.

HOW WE HELP THE PUPPIES AND KITTENS

Between the ages of five and eighteen weeks it is important that a puppy or kitten have lots of experiences (good ones) and meet lots of people. This is called socialization. Usually a pet that has been well socialized is adaptable and good with people. Many of the young animals that come to the Cedar Bend Humane Society have had little or no socialization experience. Some are afraid of people. What we are doing is good for the young animals and if done in a nurturing and caring way will help to ensure a healthy temperament as they grow. If we offer a traumatic experience, this too will mark the rest of their lives. IT IS ESSENTIAL THESE EXPERIENCES BE GOOD.

A puppy that cowers in the back of the kennel may be scared the first time a human takes it out of the kennel. Handle it gently. Sit with it, love it. Take good care of it. When it is ready, take it on a visit. Chances are the next time someone comes to the kennel door, that puppy will run to the front, wagging its tail. And that puppy will be more adoptable!

Many programs do not allow members to work with puppies and kittens from Humane Societies for various reasons. One concern is stress. A pet visit is a big, new experience. The puppy or kitten will hear, smell, and see many new things. It will experience some stress. Small bits of stress in nurturing environments are beneficial. If the animal becomes too stressed (see the manual), stop visiting. Keep it positive.

Another concern is zoonotic diseases. Young animals have fragile immune systems. It is easy for them to pick up a disease, and it is also easy for them to transmit diseases. It is important that the animals you take to visit have been screened for health and have had all initial shots. It is also important that they are not introduced into a situation that could be dangerous.

Take good care of the puppies and kittens.

WORKING WITH PUPPIES or KITTENS FROM CEDAR BEND HUMANE SOCIETY

PREPARATION

You will need to contact the Humane Society and sign up for one of the Volunteer Training Sessions.

The puppies and kittens that we are able to work with from the Humane Society have been approved by the medical technician for both temperament and health. They may be prepared for visiting by the staff by bathing them, and if necessary, clipping their toenails OR you may have to prepare them.

TO RESERVE PUPPIES AND KITTENS FOR A VISIT

You must call the Cedar Bend Humane Society to reserve the puppies and kittens for each visit.

To reserve: Call the shelter 24 hrs. prior to the visit and give the designated person at the shelter the following information

1. The number and kind of animals desired
2. The time and person picking up the animals
3. The location of the visit

Guidelines for the use of puppies and kittens from the Humane Society include

- CBHS staff will choose an appropriate shelter pet according to the nature of the requested off-site visit. These decisions may depend upon the availability of requested animals and the nature of the off-site visit.
- Requested puppies and kittens must be 12 weeks or older to participate in an off-site visit. (Pets younger than 12 weeks have received minimal vaccinations. Stress and environment change may lead to extreme fatigue and/or illness inhibiting adoption chances).
- Shelter pets over the age of 4 months of age must have a current rabies vaccination prior to participating in an off-site visit.
- CBHS staff will provide the requested pet with a brief physical exam to ensure the animal is healthy and parasite free prior to participating in an off-site visit.
- CBHS staff may refuse the request for any shelter animal for an off-site visit for any reason at any time.
- No cats over the age of 12 months with claws will be allowed to attend off-site visits unless approved by the Co-Directors or head medical technician.
- Volunteers should arrive at the CBHS approximately 45 minutes prior to scheduled off-site visit to allow plenty of preparation time.
- Volunteers will be allowed access to the CBHS bathing area. It will be the responsibility of the volunteer to bath and/or groom requested shelter pet. CBHS staff will make sure the appropriate grooming and/or bathing supplies are available to Volunteers at desired time.

- Also call the shelter again about one hour before your visit to confirm that reservation or to make any changes necessary.
- Reserve on Friday for Saturday or Sunday. Call again about one hour before your visit to confirm the reservation.

IF YOU MUST CANCEL FOR ANY REASON,
CALL THE SHELTER AND INFORM THEM

THE CEDAR BEND HUMANE SOCIETY
NUMBER: 232-6887

TRANSPORTING THE ANIMALS

Volunteers will be provided with a travel bag, furnished with pet supplies to take along with the pet on an off-site visit.

Transport all animals in crates. This is the safest means of transportation for the animals and for you. LEAVE THE ANIMALS IN THE CRATES. Contrary to what many think, most animals (especially the young ones) do not mind the crates. In fact, they feel safe and comfortable in them. If they are crying or barking, there is another reason.

All dogs and cats will be kept on leashes at all times.

IF PROBLEMS OCCUR,
STOP THE CAR,
GET OUT AND CHECK.

AT THE FACILITY

First, take the puppies out of the crate and exercise them outside. This gives them a chance to go to the bathroom.

IF THEY DO ELIMINATE, CLEAN UP AFTER THEM. Equipment is provided in the Pet Pack for this purpose. There are plastic bags for picking up waste, and paper towels. Deposit the refuse in an appropriate place or bring it back to the shelter for deposit. Check with the Activity Director for an appropriate place. ß. The smell has a way of penetrating the plastic over time.

CHECK CRATES

When you arrive at the facility, check the crates for any accidents. Clean the crates if a problem exists.

TO RETURN THE ANIMALS

Transport animals back to the shelter in the same crates they came in. When you get to the shelter, follow the guidelines at the shelter for putting the animals away. RETURN THE PET PACK TO ITS PROPER PLACE.

PUPPY/KITTEN PACK

The Pet Pack is available at the Cedar Bend Humane Society for volunteers working with puppies and kittens. This a blue back pack full of necessary goodies for a pet visit. If a Pet Pack is not set out, be sure to ask for one. The packs can be carried during the visit in

a way that your arms and hands are free for carrying the puppy or kitten.

Included in the Pet Pack:

Paper towels/Wet Wipes
Clean-up bags
Toys for dogs/cats
Brush/comb
Lap towel for residents
Leashes
Water Dish

FOR KITTENS: Ask for a cardboard disposable litter box that will go in the crate.

Check before you leave to be sure all the supplies you need are in the pack. Please contact the P.E.T. P.A.L.S. Coordinator when items need to be replaced.

PROBLEMS

•The Humane Society is not ready for you when you arrive.

Be patient. There may have been emergencies or problems at the shelter, the communication trail may have broken down, or the animals you were planning on taking may have just been adopted. There are many reasons things may not run smoothly. Remember, the first priority of the shelter staff is their job at the shelter. P.E.T. P.A.L.S. is NOT the first priority. In most cases, however, problems can be worked out in a hurry by friendly staff. If problems persist, please talk with your team leader or call the P.E.T. P.A.L.S. coordinator.

•Things are not as you were told they would be when you arrive at the shelter

For example, you were told the puppy would be prepared and ready in a crate and it is not. Quietly do your best to remedy the situation and prepare for the visit. (See above)

•Puppies get car sick

Although this does not happen often, it is normal. Usually it is minor and you can clean it up easily and the puppy feels better as soon as it is out of the car. If it is severe, do not take the puppy on the visit.

•Noisy in the car

This is normal and may happen often. Try not to listen. Sometimes singing or playing the radio will help. Usually the animal will be noisy on the way, but on the way home it is tired and will sleep. If the noise is a signal of distress, stop the car and check out the situation.

•The animal is not appropriate for the visit

First read the section on discipline in the manual. If the animal is not suitable for a visit, return the animal to the crate and do not visit. If the animal is extremely frightened, take care of the animal, soothe it and do not visit.

•Animal escapes

Begin by using preventative measures. When exercising puppies use a leash as a back up. Stay with the puppy at all times. Do not take kittens outside for exercise. Put a light lead on the kittens also. Exercise in a safe and enclosed area.

If the animal does escape, inside or outside, remain calm. DO NOT CHASE IT. Animals become frightened and run…and some just love a chase. Get down to ground level and call the animal. Entice it to come. If it is scared, try to clear the situation so all is calm and then approach it. If you can't get the animal, call the shelter.

•Someone hurts the puppy or kitten

The volunteer must always be close enough to monitor and control the situation, but sometimes there are surprises. The well being of the animals and the safety of the person are our first concerns. Quickly remove the animal and administer first aid. Return to the shelter as soon as possible and report the problem. Be sure to communicate with residents and staff if they may be troubled by the situation and assure them that all is well. Report incident to the Team Leader or P.E.T. P.A.L.S. Coordinator.

•Exhaustion

It is hot in the nursing homes, and the young animals are not use to so much activity. It is important to keep an eye on the animal at all times and offer frequent water. If the animal tires, end the visit. A half hour visit is long enough. Read the manual on animal stress, and be familiar with the signs.

For more information on handling problems on visits, read the P.E.T. P.A.L.S. Training Manual's section on problems.

Volunteers will return the shelter pet by the designated time.

REMEMBER, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PUPPIES AND KITTENS ON THESE VISITS WILL INFLUENCE THE REST OF THEIR LIVES … FOR BETTER OR WORSE.

IT MUST BE FOR THE BETTER

MANAGING ANIMALS ON A VISIT

A P.E.T. P.A.L.S. visit can be a very important time in the life of a young animal. The gentle affection from friendly people is a major factor in the socialization of the animal. Just as important, though, is the appropriate handling of inappropriate behavior. The pet visit is not meant to be an obedience training session, but there are some things a volunteer can do to insure that the young animal does not learn bad habits or to misbehave.

If the puppy or kitten is excited and hyperactive, make sure you stay calm. Sit down with the animal. If it is a puppy, hold it gently, but firmly. Talk quietly to it to calm it. A kitten may resist firm holding. Sit with it, giving it the freedom to move about on your lap. Talk quietly to it also. If the behavior persists, make sure the puppy or kitten is not thirsty or needs to relieve itself.

Perhaps a bit of exercise will help. If still a problem, put the puppy or kitten back into its crate for a short time and then try again.

If a puppy snaps or bites, first try holding its muzzle gently but firmly. Look it in the eyes and say, "Stop it." If that does not work and the puppy's behavior is extreme, place the puppy on the floor, and hold the puppy down with your hand over the neck and withers area (don't press). Hold until the puppy calms down. This is called the "Alpha Wolf" and is what a wild canine would do when disciplining her young. In other words, you are speaking the language of the animal. Another way to do this is to hold the scruff of the neck and hold the pup up, hind legs on the floor, front legs off, and gently shake while saying "Stop It." If these techniques do not change the puppy's behavior, put the animal back into the crate and do not use it on the visit. Tell someone at the Humane Society.

If a kitten continues to be overly playful or hyperactive, restraint will only make the behavior worse. Let the kitten continue to play with you until it feels safe. Keep your game calm. When you can handle it gently and it is comfortable, it is ready to visit. If it does not reach this point, put the kitten back into the crate and end the visit.

SOME VERY IMPORTANT THINGS FOR VOLUNTEERS TO REMEMBER

P.E.T. P.A.L.S. volunteers have been trained to take animals to visit people. In our training, we cover a lot of material. This material is covered in even more depth in our manual. Here we have pulled the most important "things" each P.E.T. P.A.L.S. volunteer needs to remember on a pet visit.

The safety and health of our animals and the people we visit is our primary concern

- Do not work with an unhealthy or stressed animal.
- Do not work with an aggressive or overly afraid animal.
- Never put animals or people in risky situations.
- Have your "pet pack" available with items important for on-the-spot care of your pet.

Each volunteer will work with one animal at a time.

P.E.T. P.A.L.S. IS A COMMITMENT

The residents, the facility and P.E.T. P.A.L.S. are counting on you.

Clean up messes.
If major problems occur, end the visit.
Always stay with your animal.
Always have your animal under control.
Communication is very important.
Communicate with team leaders, care facility staff and coordinators.
Communicate about problems and questions
Respect confidentiality ALWAYS.
Continue your education about AAA/T.
Read and review the Manual, the Newsletter and other AAA/T materials.ß