



The Humane Society of Charles County (HSCC)

# Standards of Care

Revised July 2022

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## Introduction

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The Humane Society of Charles County, (HSCC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that serves the animals and citizens of Charles County and surrounding areas. As such, the HSCC is committed to providing all animals at its shelter with the best care and welfare possible given available resources.

This *Standards of Care Document* provides is intended to be read in its entirety so that information is not taken out of context and misunderstood. The Standards of Care establishes only the standards and does not provide detail on how the HSCC works. That information is defined in the HSCC Standard Operating Procedures.

The HSCC strives to meet or exceed the standards outlined in this document whenever possible.

### HISTORY OF HSCC

In 1975 a small group of community volunteers realized that the existing county animal shelter was not able to save those animals most in need and so conceived of an organization committed to the protection of injured, neglected, and abused animals that might otherwise perish without intervention. These selfless volunteers became The Humane Society of Charles County and set up shop in a garage. Incorporated in August 1979, the HSCC was created as an independently funded 501(c)3 non-profit charitable organization based on a deep respect for all life, animal, and human. From the beginning, we have held, and still hold, a deep commitment to care for animals and serve the community by offering love, support, and safety to the animals and treating everyone with dignity and respect. The HSCC employees, volunteers, and Board members share a common passion for ensuring that animals in our care and those needing our care are given every opportunity to thrive and find a loving home.

The population of Charles County has more than doubled since our incorporation and the number of homeless, injured, and neglected animals needing our care has increased more than anyone could have imagined. Today, the HSCC is an open admission shelter that serves the citizens and animals of Charles County and surrounding areas. We take in over 2,500 dogs and cats and approximately 200 exotic species and small animals each year. The animals that the HSCC cares for are typically lost, abandoned, abused, neglected, or surrendered by their owners. The shelter's services include providing housing and care to homeless animals, public education and community outreach, tracking lost and found pets, providing resources to help keep pets in their homes, offering low-cost vaccinations and microchips, and providing low-cost or free spay/neuter surgery for owned pets and community cats. The HSCC also provides families the opportunity to adopt companion animals that are spayed/neutered, vaccinated, and in need of a permanent loving home.

Each year the HSCC makes progress toward its vision of no more homeless pets in Charles County. The HSCC's compassionate employees and dedicated volunteers operate a foster program to care for sick, injured, and underage animals, and to help with space constraints, a volunteer program to assist in all areas of the shelter, and an offsite adoption program to make adoptable animals accessible to the public. The shelter's medical team and animal care staff provide care and enrichment to the animals. The community outreach team traps outdoor cats for spay/neuter and vaccinations and works toward a live outcome for our less social cats through the trap/neuter/return and the barn program.

Still, while we have increased our capacity to house and care for homeless, injured, and neglected animals over the years, we recognize that we have not kept pace with the needs of the community. As an open admission shelter, we do not have enough onsite space to house all the animals that come into our shelter. We do not have an isolation care unit that would allow us to safely quarantine highly infectious animals. We operate on a narrow margin, often at a loss, and

rely on a variety of grants and donations to sustain community services including low and no-cost spay-neuter programs benefitting those in need and must rely on high-cost outside treatment options for critical care cases.

Considering these challenges, we continue to aggressively pursue ways to better support the community and the animals we serve. We are actively developing plans to increase our capacity to care for animals and improve community awareness and engagement on the humane issues that impact our community. In this endeavor, we are fortunate to have visionary partners such as the St Charles Business Park Association who has leased land to the HSCC at a monumentally discounted rate so that we can proceed with a plan to create a community dog park, build an isolation care unit, and expand our existing facility to more than double our current onsite capacity.

The HSCC has also established and continues to seek, partnerships with local and national organizations to work on animal welfare issues. The HSCC has partnered with many organizations such as Best Friends Animal Society, PetSmart Charities, the Petco Foundation, and the United Way of Charles County to increase focus on humane education, bully breed advocacy, and spay/neuter, adoption, pet retention, and other life-saving programs.

A critical part of successfully realizing our goals of increasing our capacity to care for homeless, injured, and neglected animals and improving service to our community is the involvement of the people we serve. Donations of time, labor, money, equipment, and skilled services help enhance our ability to provide improved quality of life to animals in our care and contribute to a healthy and happy community. The lifesaving work we do would not be possible without the shared commitment to our core values of love, support, and care for the animals, respect for all, and selfless service to our community.

## **MISSION AND VISION**

It is the Mission of the Humane Society of Charles County to provide shelter and care for homeless, injured, and neglected animals through adoption, fostering, community partnerships, education, and affordable spay-neuter and vaccine services.

It is our Vision to create a community where animals are cherished and no longer need us for protection and shelter.

In upholding the Mission and Vision of the Humane Society of Charles County we work with these Values:

- To always be compassionate and caring
- To foster respect and understanding of all life
- To protect, rescue, adopt and care for animals
- To create partnerships for animal welfare
- To educate the community on animal welfare issues

## **FUTURE GOALS**

The HSCC strives to provide the best care for animals and the best environment for its staff, volunteers, and visitors. The HSCC recognizes the need to continue to make improvements and as such, seeks resources, including funding, on a continual basis to make positive changes at the shelter.

GOAL I: To continue to provide outstanding services to our community with dignity and compassion

GOAL II: To promote a clear understanding of our mission and the needs it addresses in the community

GOAL III: To develop the resources we need to effectively serve our community and other agencies

GOAL IV: To deploy effective management, human resources and leadership approaches as a way of maximizing resources and assuring quality services.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The HSCC is run by an Executive Director under the direction of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors consists of individuals who are committed to the mission of the organization and play a crucial role in the governance of the organization. The Board of Directors is responsible for working with the Executive Director to continue the mission for the organization and monitor the organization's management, financial and programmatic performance.

The Executive Director is the chief executive officer of the HSCC and the chief spokesperson for the HSCC. The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the shelter. All staff and volunteers report to the Executive Director via their respective Managers. The Medical Director, Humane Education Manager, Kennel Manager, and Business Manager work with the Executive Director to carry out the daily operations.

The HSCC employs talented professionals who conduct the day-to-day operations of the shelter. Staff positions range from the kennel staff focusing on the needs of the animals to the customer service representatives working directly with the public as well as the humane education instructors who take our message of compassion and kindness into the community.

In addition, the HSCC depends on the support of volunteers every day. Volunteers assist in the daily operations of the shelter and their duties include, but are not limited to, walking dogs, socializing cats, cleaning kennels, interacting with customers, introducing animals to potential adopters, working our low-cost public vaccinating and microchip clinic, and working at community events to raise funds and awareness for the HSCC. Community Outreach volunteers trap outdoor cats for spay/neuter and vaccinations and work toward a live outcome for our less than-social cats through trap/neuter/return (TNR) and the barn program.

# Standards of Care

## I. ANIMAL HOUSING

### A. DOGS AND CATS

#### 1. Cage Size, Design and Materials

Cage Size – Primary enclosures must provide sufficient space to allow each animal, regardless of size, to make normal postural adjustments (e.g., turn freely and easily stand, sit, stretch, move their head, without touching the top of the enclosure; lie in a resting position with limbs extended; be able to get away from defecation, and move about and assume a comfortable posture for feeding, drinking, urinating, and defecating). Food, water bowls, and litter boxes (for cats) should not impede the animal's ability to stretch out. Dogs should be able to hold their tails erect when in a normal standing position.

**Design** – The primary enclosures must be structurally sound and maintained in safe, working conditions to properly confine animals, prevent injury, keep other animals out, and enable the animals to remain dry and clean. There must not be any sharp edges, gaps, or other defects that could cause injury or trap a limb or other body part. Secure latches or other closing devices must be present. For cats, vertical as well as horizontal dimensions are important, as cats show a preference for spending time on raised surfaces and high structures rather than on the floor. Therefore, perches, dens, or a shelf are available in all primary enclosures for cats.

**Materials** – Primary enclosures are constructed using only non-porous surfaces that can be easily disinfected and that are durable enough to withstand repeated cleaning and are used in all animal areas.

In certain situations, the above requirements are not practical or appropriate. These situations include:

- transport
  - decreased space required for medical reasons as determined by the HSCC Medical Director
  - temporary pre/post-surgical confinement (24-48 hours total)
- Intake processing
- large intake of animals at one time due to impoundment from Animal Control, public emergency/disaster

## **2. Ventilation and Air Quality**

To ensure proper function, air handler maintenance is performed in the spring and fall of each year and air filters are changed weekly.

## **3. Temperature**

Temperatures are maintained between 60- and 80-degree Fahrenheit.

Adjustments in temperature and humidity due to individual breed, hair coat, medical condition, and age are made as required. This is typically accomplished by relocating the animal, adjusting the thermostat, and providing fans or warmer bedding materials.

## **4. Drainage**

Drains function properly to readily remove waste and water from dog kennels and from all other rooms of the shelter.

## **5. Lighting**

Facilities should be designed to offer as much natural light as possible, but when artificial light is the only source it should approximate natural light in composition, duration, and intensity. Periods of darkness are equally important and should mimic as closely as possible the natural pattern of sleep. Lighting is provided in each animal room during the day and turned off at the end of the day to mimic natural light cycles.

## **6. Noise Control**

Loud and sudden noises can cause stress to shelter animals and staff. The following steps to help reduce noise are taken wherever possible:

- Housing dogs and cats in separate areas, ideally with no ability for either species to hear one another.
- Educating the staff and public about the need to speak softly around the animals.
- Reducing dog barking by providing enrichment for the dogs.
- Maintaining all mechanical equipment in good working order to reduce noise and vibration.

## 7. Emergency Equipment

Necessary safety and emergency equipment are maintained by the Kennel Manager is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate equipment is available, maintained in good working order, and stored in the proper location when not in use. The Kennel Manager is also responsible for ensuring that all necessary staff are properly trained to handle and use the equipment. Emergency equipment training is conducted for new employees and annually thereafter. A record is made and filed in the employee file that describes the event, the outcome of the training and any resulting actions that are needed.

## 8. Standard Enclosure Items

The following standard enclosure items are in every cage unless specified otherwise by a staff veterinarian:

- Appropriately sized clean water and food bowls
- Clean bedding
- Elevated resting place
- Assigned carriers for cats (stored in, above, or near each cage)
- Appropriately sized and clean litter boxes for cats.

## 9. Feeding and Watering

Dogs and cats are fed two times daily with dry food according to age and weight. Kittens under 12 weeks of age are given constant access to dry food. Canned food is provided to puppies (10 weeks and younger), two times daily for felines, nursing mothers, and other dogs as directed by Medical Director Feeding schedules and special diets are prescribed by the Medical Director as needed. Clean water is always available unless directed otherwise by the Medical Director.

## 10. Enrichment

Frequent walks and play time for the dogs in the shelter are used to provide an outlet for energy and promote positive social interactions. The purpose of this program is to allow dogs to express normal social behavior and for staff to observe the dogs' behavior. All healthy, non-aggressive dogs are walked and given outside free play time a minimum of once per day, weather permitting.

All healthy, non-aggressive cats are allowed free-roam time, outside of cages on a rotating basis for a minimum of 4 hours per day. Cats are pre-screened and placed in social groups based on temperament and compatibility. Enrichment items are defined as items or actions that stimulate normal behavior and reduce stress and boredom.

Enrichment items are provided to all animals unless otherwise prescribed by the Medical Director. All new enrichment items must be approved by the Kennel Manager. Once approved, the item can be used as needed by kennel staff.

Field trips and temporary foster care are provided to animals who would benefit from time away from the shelter environment.

## B. EXOTICS

Animals brought to HSCC that are not dogs or cats are hereafter referred to as exotics. This category includes, but is not limited to, birds, gerbils, hamsters, ferrets, rabbits, lizards, snakes, opossums, turtles, raccoons, squirrels, and fish.

The Medical Director or the Kennel Manager will determine all aspects of care for exotics, including cage size, temperature, humidity, feeding, and other care decisions. The Kennel Manager maintains a contact list of experts for exotics.

## II. CAGE INFORMATION

Every cage contains a cage card detailing basic information about each animal occupying the cage, including name, identification number, breed, age, gender, spay/neuter status, date of intake, the reason for intake, physical description, and cage number, and picture of the animal.

Additional cage signs may be used to provide essential information regarding a medical condition, behavioral concerns, handling notifications, or the animal's status, including availability for adoption, pending investigations, and any quarantine information. The information on these signs supersedes any other cage cards.

## III. SANITATION

This document uses the word "sanitation" to mean a combination of cleaning and disinfection. The HSCC maintains sanitary conditions to prevent the transfer of disease, which could result in an outbreak that could potentially lead to the closure of a portion or all of the facility. Proper sanitation is the foundation of every preventative medicine program.

### A. DEFINITIONS

- 1. Cleaning** - The act of physically removing organic matter (feces, urine, and food particles, ). An area that has been cleaned should look physically and visibly free from debris. However, harmful pathogens may still be present after cleaning.
- 2. Disinfection** - The process of killing pathogens in each area.
- 3. Sterilization** - The killing of all microbes

### B. PROCEDURES

#### 1. Shelter in General

All common area floors and offices are swept and disinfected every morning and throughout the day as needed, using disinfectants approved by The Medical Director. Urination or defecation "accidents" on common area floors are cleaned and disinfected immediately.

Garbage, trash, and recycling are placed in appropriate bins and removed at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed.

#### 2. Dog Kennels

Dog kennels and runs are fully cleaned and disinfected every day, with the animal removed from the cage. All enclosure items, except for Kuranda beds, are replaced daily. Kuranda beds are cleaned with the cage.

After the initial cleaning, dog kennels are spot cleaned throughout the day as needed.

The cages of healthy puppies are cleaned first, followed by healthy dogs, sick puppies, and sick dogs.

Dog kennels that house a seriously ill animal with an infectious disease are cleaned per specific guidelines set by The Medical Director this often includes multiple disinfections. This work may be done with the assistance of cat staff to minimize the potential for disease transfer to other dogs within the shelter.



Floors in dog areas are swept and disinfected each day.

### **3. Humane Education Room**

Exotic animal cages are cleaned and disinfected daily as specified by the Kennel Manager and Medical Director

New litter is provided, and food and water bowls are cleaned, disinfected, and refilled for all animals.

After the initial cleaning, litter boxes and/or cages are spot cleaned as necessary throughout the day.

All cages are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to placement of a new animal.

Floors in the Humane Education Room are swept and disinfected each day and throughout the day as needed.

Cat trees are cleaned and disinfected daily.

### **3. Cat Free Roam Room**

Cat cages are fully cleaned and disinfected every day, with the animal removed from the cage. If the bedding is not soiled or wet, it is shaken out and reused. New litter is provided, and food and water bowls are cleaned, disinfected, and refilled.

After the initial cleaning, litter boxes and/or cages are spot cleaned as necessary throughout the day.

All cat cages are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to the placement of a new cat.

The cages of healthy kittens are cleaned first, followed by healthy cats, sick kittens, and sick cats.

Floors in cat areas are swept and disinfected each day and throughout the day as needed.

Cat trees and toys are cleaned and disinfected daily.

### **4. Kitten Room**

Kitten cages are fully cleaned and disinfected every day, with the animal removed from the cage. If the bedding and toys are not soiled or wet, they are shaken out and reused. New litter is provided, and food and water bowls are cleaned, disinfected, and refilled.

After the initial cleaning, litter boxes and/or cages are spot cleaned as necessary throughout the day.

All kitten cages are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to the placement of a new kitten.

The cages of healthy kittens are cleaned first, followed by healthy cats, sick kittens, and sick cats.

Floors in kitten areas are swept and disinfected each day and throughout the day as needed.

Cat trees are brushed daily

### **7. Lobby**

Exotic animal cages are cleaned and disinfected daily as specified by the Kennel Manager and the Medical Director

New litter is provided, and food and water bowls are cleaned, disinfected, and refilled for all animals.

After the initial cleaning, litter boxes and/or cages are spot cleaned as necessary throughout the day.

All cages are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to the placement of a new animal.

All counters and shelves are fully cleaned and disinfected daily. Floors are swept and disinfected throughout the day as needed and at the end of each day. Any urine or feces on floors or counters is cleaned up and disinfected immediately.

The lobby is kept clear of any used carriers, boxes, and crates. Donations are cleared from the lobby at the time of drop-off.

#### **5. Intake, Holding, and Quarantine Rooms**

Intake and holding rooms are kept clear of any used carriers, boxes, and crates. All counters and cat cages are fully cleaned and disinfected daily. Floors are swept and disinfected each morning and throughout the day as needed.

Intake equipment, including cages, is cleaned and disinfected after each usage.

Cat cages are fully cleaned and disinfected every day, with the animal removed from the cage. If the bedding is not soiled or wet, it is shaken out and reused. New litter is provided, and food and water bowls are cleaned and refilled.

After the initial cleaning, litter boxes and/or cages are spot cleaned as necessary throughout the day.

All cat cages are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to the placement of a new cat.

The cages of healthy kittens are cleaned first, followed by healthy cats, sick kittens, and sick cats.

Floors in cat areas are swept and disinfected each day and throughout the day as needed.

Cat cages that house animals with a known infectious disease are cleaned as prescribed by the staff veterinarian. This may require multiple disinfections and the assistance of the dog staff to minimize the possibility of disease transfer to other cats in the facility.

#### **8. Laundry Room**

Cat cages that house feral animals and those with a known infectious disease are cleaned as prescribed by The Medical Director. This may require multiple disinfections and the assistance of the dog staff to minimize the possibility of disease transfer to other cats in the facility.

Laundry is washed and dried, folded, and stored throughout the day. Toys are placed in mesh bags prior to washing or drying to protect equipment. Any unfinished laundry at the end of the day is stored in industrial laundry hampers.

#### **9. Crates and Carriers**

Occupied crates and carriers used for temporary housing of animals are spot cleaned as needed. All crates and carriers are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to being used for a new animal. Crates and carriers used for animals carrying infectious disease are marked appropriately and are disinfected three times.

#### **10. Outdoor Areas**

Feces are picked up immediately and placed in outside, lined trash cans. These cans are bagged daily and taken to the dumpster.

Certain outdoor areas may be temporarily closed per directives from the Medical Director or the Executive Director.

#### **11. Surgical Areas**

All surgical areas, including the prep area, surgical tables, and the recovery area are fully cleaned and disinfected daily. Floors are swept and disinfected each evening, and throughout the day as needed.

Surgical instruments are cleaned and then sterilized after each usage.

#### **12. Personal Hygiene**

Hand washing is the most effective method of preventing the transfer of germs that can cause illness in both people and animals. While hand disinfectants are useful, thoroughly washing hands with soap and water is the most effective means of preventing the transfer of germs to other people and to animals.

Staff arrives at work in clean clothes and has a change of clothing available as necessary. Protective gear such as disposable gloves, masks, shoe covers, gowns, and eyewear are available for use as needed or as directed by the Kennel Manager.

### **C. PEST AND RODENT CONTROL**

#### **1. Exterminators**

Regular extermination services, using safe and humane methods, are utilized as needed.

All humane rodent traps will be checked and emptied daily.

#### **2. Animal Food**

Dog food in cages is picked up before the shelter closes each night, except for food for puppies and nursing mothers.

Dishes and enrichment items were brought to the kitchen for washing and disinfecting. Dishes are emptied of all food and organic matter before being placed on counters. All food is stored in sealed containers, including dog and cat treats.

#### **3. Garbage and Trash**

All non-recyclable refuse is collected and put in trash bags each evening. All garbage and trash bags are removed from the building prior to closing.

## **IV. INTAKE PROCEDURES**

Upon arrival, dogs and cats are taken into the intake office until the intake process is completed. Cats are placed in an intake cage. When necessary, dogs may be placed directly into a temporary dog run or kennel until intake has been completed. A temporary cage is large enough to allow the animal to lie in a rested position, easily stand, and have access to water and food bowls and a litter pan as needed. All animals are provided water immediately upon arrival. Animals less than four months of age are provided food immediately upon arrival, and animals over four months are provided food within two hours of arrival. The intake process is completed within 24 hours and the animal is moved from the temporary cage to kennel runs and cat cages as appropriate.

#### **A. DOGS AND CATS**

An animal's general physical condition is evaluated upon arrival and any emergency medical issues are addressed immediately. The animal is weighed, the age is estimated, and its nutritional needs are determined. Each animal is checked for identification: e.g., microchip, tattoo, tags, etc. The general behavior of the animal is also assessed. If safe to handle, the animal is vaccinated, and parasite controls are administered. If the animal is not immediately safe to handle, a cooling-off period of 24-48 hours may be given prior to vaccination and parasitic control administration. Extremely dangerous animals may be transferred prior to vaccination to ensure the safety of staff. A record is established in the HSCC database for all animals and all information is entered immediately. Housing is assigned and entered into the HSCC database and a kennel card specifically identifying that animal is posted on the cage.

#### **B. EXOTICS**

An animal's general physical condition is first evaluated, and emergency medical issues are addressed immediately upon arrival. The physical and nutritional needs are assessed, and the animal is assigned appropriate housing. If proper housing and/or care cannot be provided to the animal by the HSCC, every attempt is made to place the animal with a rescue, zoo, or aquarium immediately.

#### **C. FERAL AND COMMUNITY CATS**

Cats are evaluated upon arrival by the intake staff, medical technician, or the HSCC community outreach team to determine eligibility for the Trap Neuter Return (TNR) program. These cats must appear healthy, over 3 pounds and 3 months of age, of good body weight, have lived outdoors, and have a capable colony caretaker. Cats that are eligible for the TNR program are placed in a designated cage with a feral cat box and given food, water, and litter. The cats are scheduled for surgery as soon as possible. Cats that have minor medical conditions may be held and treated prior to scheduling surgery and return.

### **V. ANIMAL HANDLING**

#### **A. PROPER RESTRAINT**

Proper handling protects animals and people from injury and minimizes stress for all. Handling an animal is carried out as humanely as possible by trained staff. The type and amount of restraint used must be appropriate for the individual animal and the specific situation. In all cases, the minimal amount of physical restraint needed to accomplish the task without injury to people or animals is used. Thus, all animal handlers are trained in proper restraint with emphasis on how to use the minimum amount of restraint required.

#### **B. EQUIPMENT**

Examples of equipment used for animal restraint are as follows: leashes, collars, muzzles, control poles (used for dogs only), towels, squeeze cages, traps, cat nets, pole syringes, wall rings, tie-outs, and cat gloves.

#### **C. EVENTS**

Animal handlers at events are required to complete the appropriate animal training (dog walking and/or cat socialization training) as well as read and sign the events liability waivers. Each handler is approved for independent animal handling at events.

**D. DOG WALKING**

Dog walkers are required to complete dog walking training and be approved for independent dog walking.

**E. CAT SOCIALIZING**

Cat handlers are required to complete cat socialization training and be approved for independent cat handling.

**F. PUBLIC INTERACTION**

Persons handling animals and interacting with the public at the shelter are required to complete the appropriate animal training (dog walking and/or cat socialization training.) All public interaction is done in a safe and humane manner and in a way that does not cause stress or harm to the animal or the public.

**G. FERAL CATS**

Special consideration is given to the housing and handling of feral cats. Appropriate use of cage covers, cat dens, traps, squeeze cages, and sedatives can minimize stress and greatly reduce the risk of injury to the animal or handler. Feral cats may be housed only for spay/neuter through the Community Outreach Program while attempting to locate the caretaker, provide medical treatment, or find a suitable barn placement. Feral cats that cannot be released due to health, or be safely housed or handled for treatment, may be released to another facility or euthanized.

**H. BEHAVIOR**

The assessment of each animal's behavior begins at the time of intake and continues until the final disposition. An animal's behavior will vary based on its prior experiences, the situation it was recently removed from, the adjustment period in a new environment, etc. the HSCC staff and volunteers monitor each animal's behavior daily through all types of interactions.

**J. DANGEROUS ANIMALS**

HSCC goes to great lengths to ensure that the environment is safe for both humans and animals. Some animals present a higher risk of injury to people and other animals, including those with known bite or scratch histories, venomous snakes, reptiles, various types of wildlife or exotic animals, and animals that are anticipated to be aggressive. Special housing considerations are given to these animals and only specially trained staff can handle them.

Every effort is made to adopt out or transfer exotic animals to a facility with expertise in their handling and care as quickly as possible.

Animals on bite quarantine are housed in accordance with the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene regulations. Only assigned staff can clean, feed, and handle them. Animals displaying threatening or dangerous behaviors on intake may be placed in the general population with special precautions and appropriate signage in order to give them time to settle in.

Dogs known to be extremely aggressive are housed in such a way that the possibility of the dog getting loose and danger to staff is minimized while handling these animals. Only qualified staff handles these animals.

HSCC will not knowingly place an animal that has been deemed dangerous or vicious into the adoption program.

## VI. VETERINARY CARE

### A. PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE

The Medical Staff focuses on the prevention of disease and rapid diagnosis and treatment of ill and potentially contagious animals. Preventative measures are accomplished with the use of appropriate vaccination protocols, internal and external parasite control, and nutritional support (proper nutrition for stage and state of the animal). All medical protocols are carried out by medical technicians under the direction of the Med Tech Supervisor. The Medical Director performs complete physical examinations, and surgeries, and prescribes medications and nutritional changes to diet. Medical Technicians are trained to be able to make initial assessments of animal conditions, convey this information to the Medical Director, and administer care as prescribed by that veterinarian.

Individual animals are assessed for their state of health and nutritional status. Individual animals, groups of animals, and whole rooms may be placed under quarantine. The decision to quarantine a room and the length of quarantine are made under the direct supervision of The Medical Director. The population is evaluated daily for contagious and infectious diseases and the decisions made are based on the individual as well as population needs.

Emergencies are evaluated as quickly as possible. Animals may be treated at the shelter, humanely euthanized, or sent to WE Care Hospital Southern Maryland for immediate emergency care.

Precautions taken to control the spread of disease include:

- Disposable gloves are worn when touching animals and/or hands are washed after touching an animal and before touching another animal. This decreases the risk of disease transmission from fomites, which are objects that are able to transmit infectious organisms (e.g., parasites, bacteria, viruses, fungi) from one animal to another; they may include toys, food and water bowls, hair, and clothing, to name a few.
- Disposable protective gear such as gowns are worn and changed between handling each sick animal.
- Dogs on medication for infectious illness (such as kennel cough) are walked last and only in a designated area.
- When interacting with cats with infectious diseases (such as upper respiratory tract infection), cats remain in the kennel, when possible, instead of being removed.
- All articles in cages that are not disposable are disinfected as well as washed before being placed in another cage.
- Bins used in rooms (garbage cans, litter cans) are disinfected regularly.
- Litter boxes are washed when soiled and thoroughly disinfected in an area separate from food and water containers. Litter is disposed of in sealed garbage bags (unless otherwise directed by a staff veterinarian).
- Food and water bowls and enrichment items are washed and disinfected between uses.

### B. DISEASE OUTBREAKS

When a disease outbreak occurs in the shelter, the decision may be made to quarantine a room. When a room is closed for quarantine, no one except medical and designated cleaning staff will be allowed in that room. Protective outerwear is worn in these rooms. All items removed from a quarantined room, such as waste materials, are placed into a garbage bag which is sealed and immediately brought to the dumpster outside of the shelter. Quarantine rooms use only disposable materials (bowls, towels, etc.).

## VII. SURGERY

In most cases, dogs and cats having surgery at the HSCC are fasted overnight prior to surgery. Exceptions include emergency surgery, surgery performed on puppies and kittens, and other situations deemed appropriate by the Medical Director. In preparation for surgery, the animals are moved to enclosures reserved for surgical patients and are scanned again for a microchip. The animals are given premedication which includes analgesia and sedation; the actual drugs vary according to species and the individual animal. An induction agent is given to dogs that are then intubated and placed on gas anesthesia. Cats are generally given gas anesthesia by mask or injectable anesthetics. The animal is then prepared for surgery. Additional pain medication may be given as prescribed by the Medical Director. The weight of the animal, any findings during the physical exam, doses of medications, and the surgical procedure performed are recorded for each animal and entered in the HSCC database. All controlled substances and the amount used are recorded in the controlled substance logbook. Animals wake up in the surgical room and are offered a small amount of food when the surgical staff deems appropriate. Post-operative care instructions, along with any medications prescribed, are sent home with adopted animals. Animals staying at HSCC receive a daily post-operative check for one week. Dogs and cats are spayed or neutered when they weigh two pounds or more. Animals that are pregnant, are in heat, have a pyometra, or have a mild upper respiratory infection may still undergo anesthesia and surgery at the discretion of the surgeon.

## VIII. EUTHANASIA

### A. POLICY

Euthanasia is performed as a last resort at the HSCC when required to prevent pain and suffering.

No more than three medical and animal care staff members that are certified, or trained, in euthanasia to assist can be present during the euthanasia process. This is to ensure a smooth and stress-free environment for the animal as well as the person(s) performing euthanasia.

The Medical Director may make special exceptions to this policy at his or her discretion.

### B. SELECTION

Each animal is evaluated on an individual basis for its potential to be reunited with its owner or participation in the HSCC's adoption, foster, rescue programs, community cat program, barn program or other live release options. Those animals unable to participate in any of these programs or that cannot be reunited with their owners are transferred to Tri-County Animal Shelter or considered for euthanasia.

Euthanasia is performed only when deemed medically necessary for humane reasons in consultation with a licensed veterinarian or if an animal is unable to be safely transported for medical or behavioral reasons. Sick, injured or very old animals must receive veterinarian approval prior to transfer. No animal will be allowed to suffer inhumanely or be transferred to avoid euthanasia if euthanasia would be more humane.

In addition, holding periods are considered:

- All animals without a known owner are held for 5 days before a disposition is decided. Exceptions apply to the following:
  - Animals under 12 weeks of age may be placed into homes immediately
  - Animals experiencing pain and suffering, and are not able to be treated, may be humanely euthanized

- Ear-tipped cats may be returned to their community immediately
- Outdoor cats may be altered, vaccinated, ear tipped, and returned to their community immediately
- Animals transferred to another facility when holding space is not available
- Bite quarantine animals are held or transferred in accordance with Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene regulations.

### **C. PROCEDURES**

#### **1. Training/Certification**

Only a licensed veterinarian performs euthanasia.

#### **2. Environment**

The room in which euthanasia takes place is clean and private and maintained as a stress-free environment. Only one euthanasia is performed at a time. Only one animal is in the euthanasia room at a time so that euthanasia is performed in a quiet, calm environment.

#### **3. Microchip Scan**

All animals are scanned upon entry to the shelter for microchips to identify them. Because these technologies are imperfect, scans are also performed during the medical intake process, prior to spay/neuter surgery and prior to any disposition including adoption, return to owner, and transfers to rescues. If euthanasia is elected, the previously unidentified animals are rescanned before being euthanized (by two different staff members) for the presence of a microchip.

#### **4. Drugs**

Only drugs approved by a licensed veterinarian are used for euthanasia. An animal may be sedated before injecting the euthanasia solution in order to provide sedation, analgesia, and anesthesia. Euthanasia solution, which is a barbiturate, is given in a vein once the animal is calm and sedated or in the heart or the peritoneum. If the intracardiac route is chosen, euthanasia does not take place until the animal is in a comatose state.

#### **5. Record Keeping**

Records for each euthanized animal are kept for a designated length of time.

## **IX. ADOPTIONS**

All animals adopted from HSCC are eight weeks of age or older, current on vaccinations, microchipped and altered. The goal of the HSCC adoption program is to place as many animals as possible into suitable homes and prepare adopters for the responsibilities of pet ownership. This is accomplished by screening all potential adopters for past Animal Control or contractual violations, reviewing adopters' histories in the HSCC database, requiring identification and proof of address, and requiring adopters to be at least 18 years of age. Potential adopters complete an application which is used to determine eligibility for adoption and to provide information to ensure an appropriate match. The adoption counselor goes over all medical history for the pet including vaccinations, medications, and follow-up care. Animals are surgically altered prior to leaving the shelter. If an animal is not sexually receptive or mature or is not able to be altered prior to going home, approval may be given for foster placement with the adoptive family on a case-by-case basis. If approved, the adoption counselor will make an appointment for the animal to come back for surgery and will then follow up on that animal's progress until it is altered. No adoption may be finalized until the animal is altered unless determined unfit for surgery by The Medical Director. Educational handouts, medical history, and an adoption agreement are provided to the adopter.



The HSCC utilizes adoption promotions throughout the year to increase public awareness and encourage responsible people to adopt. The adoption program is evaluated on a periodic basis to ensure the needs of the animals and the adopting community is met.

## **X. VISITORS**

All visitors to HSCC are directed and/or supervised through the building by a staff member or trained volunteer to maximize the safety of both people and animals. Visitors may be here for a variety of reasons, including facility repairs or contract work, group tours, adoptions, rescues, and redemptions. Staff and volunteers use this time with visitors as an educational opportunity, to convey information about the HSCC and the adoption or redemption process, and to answer any questions visitors may have.

## **XI. FOSTER CARE**

The HSCC manages a foster care program in which certain animals are taken into homes temporarily rather than remaining in the shelter. In addition to saving the lives of animals, this program was designed to achieve the following goals:

1. Raise underage kittens and puppies to an age where they may become available for adoption, providing bottle feeding if necessary, socialization, and special attention.
2. Provide special care to injured and/or sick animals until they heal and become adoptable.
3. Make space for other animals at the shelter.

Animals available for fostering are identified by medical, intake, or managerial staff. All foster parents are pre-screened and sign contracts with the HSCC prior to housing any animals. Throughout the foster period, the foster parent must maintain contact with the Foster Care Coordinator, bring the animal(s) in for all scheduled vaccines and medical treatments, and communicate with shelter staff about any relevant information regarding the animal(s) in their care. In the case of adoptable adult animals being fostered due to a lack of space at the shelter, the foster parent must bring the animal(s) to at least one HSCC event each month and assist with placing the animal in a new home. Except for extraordinary situations, no foster placement will last longer than three months.

Animals placed in foster care are provided the same medical care as those housed at the shelter. The HSCC is responsible for providing support to the foster parents, including training if requested, regularly scheduled medical appointments, medicines as needed, emergency medical services as available, and ongoing help with questions and issues that arise. HSCC is responsible for following up on all foster placements and maintaining the follow-up information in the HSCC database. A foster placement may be terminated at any time by the HSCC, and foster animals that have been returned to the shelter are subject to the same space limitations and euthanasia criteria as all other shelter animals.

## **XII. ANIMAL HOLDS**

Animals arriving at the shelter are subject to various State and County requirements as to the length of time they must be held prior to being made available for adoption. Minimum hold time for stray animals in Charles County is 72 hours. The HSCC hold times meet or exceed those required by law.

### **1. STRAY ANIMALS**

Stray cats and dogs are held for 3 days. After 3 days, excluding days the shelter is closed to the public, the animal becomes property of the shelter and may be placed up for adoption, transferred to another organization, or humanely euthanized.

## **2. OWNER-SURRENDERED ANIMALS**

Owner-surrendered animals are not subject to a required holding period. When an owner surrenders an animal, he or she immediately relinquishes all rights to the animal and the animal may be immediately placed up for adoption, transferred to another organization, or humanely euthanized.

## **3. ANIMALS LEFT BEHIND AFTER EVICTIONS**

Animals left behind when owners are evicted from their homes are property of the landlord. When signed over by the landlord, they may be treated as owner-surrendered animals. If the animal is not signed over by the landlord, or if the manager chooses to hold the animal based on its circumstances, the animal will be treated as a stray animal.

## **4. INVESTIGATIONS**

Some animals are the subject of investigations by Animal Control or the police for various reasons (suspicions of cruelty, abuse, neglect, fighting, etc.). The amount of time an animal is held varies as investigations are conducted and completed. The HSCC may care for these animals during the investigation period if kennel space is available, and the animals are released from custody when they are no longer needed as evidence in a case.

## **5. BITE QUARANTINE AND INFECTIOUS ANIMALS**

HSCC complies with the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, 2016, and the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 10.06.02 Rabies. In general, unvaccinated dogs, cats, and ferrets exposed to a rabid or suspected rabid animal will be euthanized consistent with Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) recommendations. Any domesticated mammal that has bitten a person, or any other dog, cat, or ferret shall be quarantined for a period of not less than ten calendar days following the date of the bite. For unvaccinated dogs and cats with bites or wounds of unknown origin, a strict four-month quarantine period is implemented. A six-month quarantine period for unvaccinated ferrets with wounds of unknown origin is implemented. Dogs and cats with a documented history of rabies vaccinations are kept under observation for 45 days. In all cases, quarantine is provided by the HSCC if appropriate housing is available, the animal may be humanely euthanized to prevent suffering, or the animal may be released to an MDMH-approved, foster, rescue, or shelter.

Only trained and approved staff are allowed access to quarantined animals; this includes bite cases as well as animals quarantined for rabies evaluation and/or infectious disease. Limited personnel access is mandatory to safeguard others from potential injury (bite, scratch, or infectious disease) as well as to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

## **6. EMERGENCY HOLD**

During an emergency (natural disaster, fire, flooding, domestic violence situation, etc.), the HSCC may provide short-term holding in temporary cages on a case-by-case basis as determined by the Executive Director or his or her designee. Owners are encouraged to utilize other resources and find immediate alternatives for housing due to limited space.

## **XIII. PERSONAL HEALTH**

**A. STAFF VACCINATION**

It is recommended that all staff handling animals at HSCC be current with their tetanus vaccine. Vaccinations may be administered by the Charles County Health Department or an individual's personal physician. Staff exposed to either rabies or tetanus must seek immediate medical attention and may require re-vaccination.

**B. ZONOSIS**

Zoonotic diseases are those that can be transmitted by non-human animals to humans. There is the potential for the transmission of zoonotic diseases at any animal shelter. Staff is required to attend yearly training provided by The Medical Director on zoonotic disease with an emphasis placed on minimizing risk and prevention of infection. Zoonotic diseases that are common are rabies, intestinal parasites, leptospirosis, cat scratch disease, ringworm, and sarcoptic mange

The most effective way to decrease the risk of zoonotic disease caused by bite or scratch wounds is to immediately recognize potentially dangerous animals. Only those staff qualified to work with such animals may interact with them. Any animal that is fearful or in pain can potentially bite, scratch, or otherwise injure a person or another animal. To minimize the risk of injury, all animal care staff and volunteers must be adequately trained in handling dogs and cats and be able to recognize the signs of potentially dangerous behavior.

Additionally, hand washing is extremely important in preventing the transmission of disease. All staff, volunteers, and visitors must wash their hands thoroughly after touching any animal at the shelter. Whenever possible, staff should wear disposable gloves when handling animals and their waste products. Staff performing such tasks as preparing animals for rabies examination must wear protective eye and face covering as well.

Human food items and dishes are not housed in the same sink as dog or cat dishes and litter boxes. Human food must not be stored in the same refrigerator as animal food or biologics/medications.

The risk of a disease outbreak at the HSCC is minimized by providing animals with medications to eliminate internal and external parasites as well as vaccinations against specific diseases. These tools are vital to protect the health of shelter staff, volunteers, and visitors. Immuno-suppressed humans are at an increased risk for infection by zoonotic diseases. These individuals are strongly advised to discuss their working/volunteering at an animal shelter with their human medical care provider. In most cases, work can be found that is helpful for the HSCC but safe for the individual.

**C. NOISE PROTECTION**

Ear plugs are encouraged when working in areas of high noise.

**D. REPORTING INJURIES**

All injuries that occur at the HSCC or while working on behalf of the HSCC must be reported immediately to a supervisor. This includes any bite, scratch, or other injuries that occur. An incident report will be filled out and that person will be advised to seek help from a human medical doctor.

**XIV. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

In the event of an emergency at HSCC, every effort is made to protect all staff, volunteers, and animals. The Executive Director (or his or her designee) implements the incident command emergency response structure when appropriate. When this occurs, the Executive Director is responsible for all decisions regarding the emergency response and maintains contact with the Charles County Animal Control Services, local weather advisory groups, the Board of

Directors, and staff and volunteers. In addition, the Executive Director informs the public of the shelter closing as well as accessibility to shelter animals and/ or housing of animals; this information will be conveyed through the shelter's voicemail and social media.

In preparation for a weather-related emergency, the building is secured by closing all windows and internal and external doors, closing window blinds, turning off all computers, unplugging electrical devices, and ensuring clean towels and blankets are on hand. The property is secured by closing and locking all play yard gates and bringing all supplies and toys inside. All trash cans and other supplies around the building are brought into the shelter and stored in the garage as appropriate. Generators are tested and gas is purchased to ensure that heat and emergency lights will be available.

When necessary, all animals may be placed into transport cages and evacuated to a secondary location where temporary housing is established. The shelter's animals are prepared for an evacuation by fitting collars and labeled neck bands on all dogs and fitting labeled neck bands on all cats. Staff and volunteers may remain at the off-site location to monitor and care for the animals until it is determined by the Executive Director that it is safe to return to HSCC.

In some cases, such as heavy snow, a partial evacuation may be appropriate. In such cases, the HSCC will seek overnight foster parents to remove as many animals as possible. Temporary crates will be set up in the lobby and hallways as needed to ensure all animals are located in areas supported by the generator(s). Staff will be assigned to provide care for the animals during the event.