



The Humane Society of Harford County, Inc.

# Standards of Care

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***We wish to thank the staff, board, and volunteers of BARCS for allowing HSHC to use their Standards of Care document as a template.***

## Introduction

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The Humane Society of Harford County, Inc. (HSHC) is a nonprofit organization that serves the animals and citizens of Harford County, Maryland. As such, HSHC 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 both current practices as well as future goals. It is intended to be read in its entirety so that information is not taken out of context and misunderstood.

This document will be reviewed and updated annually. HSHC staff and volunteers are expected to review the Standards of Care on an annual basis.

The Standards of Care establishes only the standards and does not provide detail on how HSHC works. That information is defined in HSHC Standard Operating Procedures.

HSHC strives to meet or exceed the standards outlined in this document whenever possible. Appendix B includes goals for future improvements.

### **HISTORY OF HSHC**

The Humane Society of Harford County was formed in 1946 by a dedicated group of citizens in Fallstown (now called Fallston) led by Mrs. Elsa Voss. Mrs. Voss spearheaded efforts to provide temporary housing for animals that once lived in comfortable homes. Many of these animals were abandoned or left as strays when their guardians were sent to war or relocated out of the area. The group also noted that adult dogs and cats roaming free in the county were reproducing at will. As the homeless animals continued to multiply and roam the county, they became a nuisance. The larger and more aggressive dogs gathered in packs and searched for food. Sheep, chicken and other tame farm animals fell prey to the packs of dogs. Mrs. Voss intervened by gathering some of these dogs and housing them in an improvised home near Jarrettsville.

Mrs. Voss and a group of her friends found a permanent home for the pets in an old farmhouse on Connolly Road. Kennels with indoor and outdoor runs were added to the farmhouse. The residents of the property, Mr. and Mrs. Boniface, served as caretakers and kennel workers for the facility.

Today, HSHC is an open admission shelter that serves the citizens and animals of Harford County. It takes in approximately 4,500 animals each year. The animals that HSHC 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 outreach, and tracking lost and found pets. HSHC also provides families the opportunity to adopt a companion animal that is in need of a permanent loving home.

Each year HSHC makes progress toward its vision that no healthy or treatable animals be euthanized in Harford County. HSHC'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 rescue network to transfer animals to other organizations; 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 provides care and enrichment to the animals. The "Phoenix Fund" was created to generate resources to treat sick and injured homeless animals that enter HSHC's doors each year. HSHC also seeks partnerships with local and national animal organizations in an effort to work on animal welfare issues.

In April 2016, a brand new 19,000 square foot, state of the art shelter was opened on the same 26 acres of land as the original shelter, replacing the outdated shelter.

## MISSION AND VISION

*The Humane Society of Harford County promotes the humane treatment of homeless, stray and abandoned animals by providing shelter, care, adoptions and community education.*

HSHC's vision is to end pet overpopulation and to advocate for the humane treatment of animals. HSHC envisions a shelter where all healthy and treatable animals find new homes, where they are housed in a low-stress, comfortable environment, where spay/neuter surgeries are performed on shelter pets prior to their adoption, where residents can turn in times of personal crisis for help with their pets, where citizens are educated on the proper care of animals, and where abused and neglected animals can receive the love and care they need to recover. Working in close partnership with the Harford County government, Animal Control (under the direction of the Harford County Sheriff's Office), rescue organizations, local veterinarians, our volunteers and foster homes, and the citizens of Harford County, HSHC is confident that it can and will achieve its goals.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

HSHC is run by an Executive Director under the direction of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is responsible for general oversight of the organization, but the Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the shelter. All staff and volunteers report to the Executive Director.

HSHC employs talented professionals who conduct the day to day operations of the shelter. Staff positions range from the animal care staff focusing on the needs of the animals, to the adoption counselors working directly with the public. HSHC's present staffing is as follows:

Administrative Staff: The administrative staff consists of the Marketing Coordinator, Contractual Bookkeeper, Development Assistant, and Administrative Assistant. Their roles are generally related to business operations, fundraising, public relations, and special events management. The Executive Director manages the administrative staff, as well as the Shelter Veterinary Director and Shelter Operations Director.

Veterinary Operations Staff: The veterinary staff consists of the Veterinary Technicians and Assistants; all of whom are managed by the Shelter Veterinary Director. All medical protocols used at HSHC are developed and/or approved by the Shelter Veterinary Director, in concert with the Shelter Operations Director. These include intake procedures, selection of medications and biologics, euthanasia technique, special diets and feeding, health assessments, the use of cleaning compounds. He/she is responsible for placing an animal, room, or shelter under quarantine and deciding when that quarantine is lifted. Additionally, the Shelter Veterinary Director performs or coordinates all spay/neuter and other surgery of shelter pets, and oversees any other veterinary care of shelter pets by private practice veterinarians, when needed.

Shelter Operations Staff: The shelter staff consists of the Foster & Rescue Coordinator, Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator, Cattery Manager, Animal Care Technicians and Adoption Counselors; all of whom are managed by the Shelter Operations Director. The Shelter Operations Director works closely with the Shelter Veterinary Director to ensure that animal care staff are following his/her directives, and helps develop, implement, and ensure all protocols related to animal care and enrichment.

Volunteer Staff: HSHC depends on the assistance of volunteers every day. The volunteers assist in the daily operations of the shelter and their duties include but are not limited to: walking dogs, socializing cats, cleaning, laundry, interacting with customers, introducing animals to potential adopters, working at community events to raise funds and awareness for HSHC, and fostering of shelter pets.

# 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; 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 condition 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 or Kuranda beds are available in all cat cages.

Materials – Only non-porous surfaces that can be easily disinfected and that are durable enough to withstand repeated cleaning 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 a veterinarian
- Temporary pre-/post-surgical confinement (24-48 hours total)
- Temporary housing due to evacuation/emergencies including but not limited to natural disasters or fire
- Intake processing

#### 2. Ventilation and Air Quality

The standard acceptable level of air exchange is 10-20 room air exchanges per hour with fresh air. To ensure proper function, air handler maintenance is performed quarterly and air filters are changed once a month.

#### 3. Temperature and Humidity

Temperatures are maintained between 60 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Relative humidity ranges from 30% to 70%.

Adjustments in temperature and humidity due to individual breed, hair coat, medical condition, and age are made as needed. This is typically accomplished by relocating the animal, providing fans or space heaters, providing appropriate pet clothing, and/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 and are taken wherever possible:

- Housing dogs and cats in separate areas, ideally with no ability for either species to hear one another.
- Adjusting the public address system in each animal room to the lowest decibel level practical.
- Placing air handlers outside and in the ceiling to reduce noise.
- 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.
- Refraining from slamming doors or throwing/dropping items during cleaning or other daily activities.
- Turning music off at night.

## 7. Emergency Equipment

An up-to-date list of necessary safety and emergency equipment is maintained by the Shelter Operations Director at all times. The Shelter Operations Director 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 Shelter Operations Director is also responsible for ensuring that all necessary staff and volunteers are properly trained to handle and use the equipment.

## 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 (unless deemed medically unsafe by the veterinarian)
- Appropriately fitted collars on all dogs
- Assigned carriers for cats (stored in, above or near each cage)
- Enrichment items (see item 10 in this list for definition)
- Appropriately sized and clean litter boxes for cats

## 9. Feeding and Watering

Dogs are fed two times daily with dry food according to age and weight. Cats are given constant access to dry food. Canned food is provided to puppies and kittens (10 weeks and younger), nursing mothers, and other dogs and cats as directed by the veterinarian. Feeding schedules and special diets are prescribed by the staff veterinarian as needed. Clean water is available at all times unless directed otherwise by a staff veterinarian.

## 10. Enrichment

Enrichment items are defined as items that stimulate normal behavior and reduce stress and boredom.

Enrichment items are provided to all animals unless otherwise prescribed by a staff veterinarian. All new types of enrichment items must be approved by the Shelter Operations Director. Once approved, the item can be used, as needed, by Animal Care staff and volunteers.

Play Groups for the dogs in the shelter will soon be used as part of a comprehensive enrichment program 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' interactions. There are many benefits of play groups, including stress reduction, reduction of barrier reactivity, reduction of on-leash reactivity and better adoption matches. Play Groups will be managed by shelter staff tasked with enrichment, and Dog Enrichment Team volunteers, and follow guidelines from Aimee Sadler's "Playing for Life" program.

Dogs selected to participate in play groups must be at least five months old, not on medications for upper respiratory infection, and screened prior to entering the yard for signs of aggression. Dogs are admitted at the discretion of the Play Group leader based on their knowledge of the dog's behavior and comfort level.

## **B. EXOTICS**

Animals brought to HSHC that are not dogs or cats are hereafter referred to as exotics. This category includes, but is not limited to: birds, rodents, rabbits, lizards, snakes, turtles, and fish.

The Shelter Veterinary Director will determine all aspects of care for exotics, including cage size, temperature, humidity, feeding, and other care decisions. The veterinary medical department maintains a contact list of veterinary experts for exotics.

## **II. CAGE/KENNEL INFORMATION**

Every occupied animal enclosure 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, reason for intake, and physical description.

Additional cage signs may be used to provide essential information regarding medical and behavioral concerns and/or handling status. 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. HSHC 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, food particles, etc.) 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 a given area.
- 3. Sterilization** - The killing of all microbes; this is what is done for surgical instruments.

### **B. PROCEDURES**

#### **1. Shelter in General**

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

Garbage and trash is bagged and removed at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed.

## **2. Dog Kennels**

Dog kennels are fully cleaned and disinfected every day, with the animal removed from the kennel. All enclosure items, with the exception of Kuranda beds, are replaced daily. Kuranda beds are cleaned with the kennel.

After the initial cleaning, dog cages 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 cages that house a seriously ill animal with an infectious disease are cleaned per specific guidelines set by the Shelter Veterinary 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. Cat Cages**

Cat cages are spot-cleaned daily. Cats are left in cages during cleaning when possible to reduce stress. New litter is provided and food and water bowls are cleaned and refilled. If the bedding is not soiled or wet, it is shaken out and reused. The cage and perches/Kuranda beds are wiped clean with a paper towel without bleach or special cleansers. In some cases, additional cleaning of the cage may be required and the cat may be removed.

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 placement of a new cat, or once a week.

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

Cat cages that house animals with a known infectious disease are cleaned as prescribed by the Shelter Veterinary 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.

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

## **4. Cat Communal Rooms**

Cat communal rooms are spot-cleaned daily. New litter is provided and food and water bowls are cleaned and refilled. If the bedding is not soiled or wet, it is shaken out and reused. In some cases, additional cleaning of the room may be required and the cats may be removed. After the initial cleaning, litter boxes and/or cages are spot-cleaned as necessary throughout the day. All cat communal rooms are fully cleaned and disinfected once a week.

## **5. Surgical Areas**

All surgical areas, including the prep area, surgical tables, and the recovery area are fully cleaned and disinfected daily.

Surgical instruments are cleaned and then sterilized after each usage.

## **6. Euthanasia Room**

All areas of the Euthanasia Room, including tables and counters, are fully cleaned and disinfected daily.

**7. Dog Intake/Dog Exam/Cat Intake & Exam/Animal Control Dropoff**

These rooms are cleared of any used carriers, boxes, and crates each evening. All counters and cat cages are fully cleaned and disinfected daily. Floors are swept and disinfected each day and throughout the day as needed.

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

**8. Lobbies/Breakroom/Bathrooms/Hallways**

The front and rear lobby areas and hallways are cleared of any used carriers, boxes, and crates each evening. All counters and shelves are fully cleaned and disinfected once a week. Brochures and other marketing materials are restocked as needed by the adoptions staff. Floors are swept and disinfected daily and throughout the day as needed. Trash from these areas is taken out at the end of each day and paper goods, soap, etc. are restocked at the end of each day and as needed throughout the day. Any vomit, blood, urine or feces on floors or counters is cleaned up and disinfected immediately.

**9. Laundry Room**

Laundry is washed and dried, folded, and stored throughout the day.

**10. 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.

**11. 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 a staff veterinarian.

**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 warm water is the most effective means of preventing the transfer of germs to other people and to animals.

Hand sanitizer used at HSHC must contain at least 60% ethyl alcohol.

Staff arrive at work in clean clothes and have 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 Shelter Veterinary Director.

**C. PEST AND RODENT CONTROL**

**1. Exterminators**

Regular extermination services, using safe and humane methods, are performed each month.

**2. Animal Food**

Dishes and enrichment items brought to the kitchen for washing 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 refuse, including soda cans, empty food containers, and so on, is collected and put into trash bags each evening. All garbage and trash bags are removed from the building prior to closing.

#### **IV. INTAKE PROCEDURES**

Upon arrival, each animal entering HSHC is placed either into a permanent cage, if the intake process has been completed, or into a temporary cage until the intake process is completed. Until the intake process is completed, animals that arrive in transport carriers are moved to temporary cages within two hours of arrival. 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. Animals less than four months of age are provided water and food immediately upon arrival, and animals over four months are provided water and food within two hours of arrival. Dogs that arrive overnight are walked when staff arrives in the morning. The Shelter Veterinary Director performs a physical examination on every animal that enters the shelter. When the Shelter Veterinary Director is on vacation or otherwise unavailable for a period of time, other licensed veterinarians are scheduled in his/her absence to perform this function. The intake process is generally completed within 24 hours and the animal is moved from the temporary cage to permanent housing.

##### **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 animal is vaccinated and parasite controls are administered. The general behavior of the animal is also assessed. A photograph of the animal is taken with as little manipulation of the animal's face/body as possible (ie: no scruffing of cats). A record is established in PetPoint for the animal, and all information is entered immediately along with the photo. If the animal was brought in as a stray, the date, approximate time, and location of where the animal was found must be entered into the animal's profile, along with the date which the stray hold will end. Housing is assigned and entered into PetPoint and a cage card specifically identifying that animal is posted on the cage. These processes are performed by the shelter veterinary staff.

##### **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. These processes are performed by the shelter veterinary staff. If proper housing and/or care cannot be provided to the animal by HSHC, every attempt is made to place the animal with a rescue, zoo, or aquarium immediately by the Foster & Rescue Coordinator.

#### **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 and volunteers. 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, towels, squeeze cages, cat nets, 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 events training, and be 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 cat dens, traps, squeeze cages, and sedatives can minimize stress and greatly reduce risk of injury to the animal or handler. Feral cats may be housed only while attempting to locate the caretaker or transfer to a TNR partner, provide medical treatment, or find suitable barn placement. Feral cats that cannot be released due to health may be humanely euthanized.

**H. DANGEROUS AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ANIMALS**

HSHC 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, and various types of wildlife or exotic animals. Special housing considerations are given to these animals and only specially trained staff is allowed to handle them.

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

Animals deemed dangerous by Animal Control that must be held for a court case are housed in dog or cat quarantine rooms, where 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 in order to give them time to settle in.

Dogs known to be highly aggressive are housed in such a way that they can be shifted from one cage to another using a shift door, thus preventing the possibility of the dog getting loose and minimizing danger to staff handling these animals. Only qualified staff may handle these animals.

**VI. VETERINARY CARE****A. PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE**

The veterinary staff focuses on the prevention of disease and rapid diagnosis and treatment of ill and potentially contagious animals. Preventative measures are accomplished through 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 shelter or veterinary staff under the direction of the Shelter Veterinary Director, who performs a physical examination on every animal that enters the shelter. When the Shelter Veterinary Director is on vacation or otherwise unavailable for a period of time, other licensed veterinarians are scheduled in his/her absence to perform this function.

Individual animals are assessed for their state of health and nutritional status, as well as the population as a whole. Individual animals, groups of animals, and whole rooms may be placed under quarantine. The decision to quarantine a room and the length of quarantine is made by the Shelter Veterinary Director. The population is

evaluated daily for contagious and infectious diseases and the decisions made are based on 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 a veterinary partner hospital.

Precautions taken to control the spread of disease include:

- Disposable gloves worn when touching animals and/or hands 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.
- Lint rollers are available to roll clothing that may make contact or be exposed to the fur of an animal before touching another animal.
- Dogs on medication for infectious illness (such as kennel cough) are walked last and only in a designated area.
- When socializing cats with infectious disease (such as upper respiratory tract infection), the encounter takes place in the cat's cage instead of the socializing room.
- 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.
- Only disposable litter boxes are used (except in communal rooms). They are disposed of in sealed garbage bags, unless otherwise directed by a staff veterinarian.
- Food and water bowls and enrichment items are washed and disinfected as soon as they enter the kitchen area.

## **B. DISEASE OUTBREAKS**

When a disease outbreak occurs in the shelter, the Shelter Veterinary Director may decide to quarantine a room. If the outbreak cannot be contained to one or two rooms, the Shelter Veterinary Director, in consultation with the Executive Director, decides whether to close the shelter for intake/adoptions, at least for that species. Closing the shelter to a certain species means that Animal Control cannot bring any animal of that species to HSHC, except for the purpose of euthanasia, and that HSHC will not accept any surrenders or strays of that species. In such situations, HSHC attempts to work with other area shelters and rescues to enlist their help so owners that must surrender animals during this time period are able to do so. HSHC may also employ use of a temporary trailer. 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 are fasted overnight prior to surgery. Exceptions include emergency surgery, surgery performed on puppies and kittens, and other situations deemed appropriate by the Shelter Veterinary 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 veterinarian. 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 into PetPoint. All controlled substances and the amount used are recorded in the controlled substance log book. Animals wake up in the surgical room and are offered a small amount of food when surgical staff deems appropriate. Post-operative care instructions, along with any medications

prescribed, are sent home with adopted animals. Animals staying at HSHC 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 at HSHC in a humane manner as needed to maintain a manageable population of healthy, treatable, and adoptable animals. Euthanasia for space is always an absolute last resort, when all other options have been exhausted. The Executive Director, Shelter Operations Director, and Shelter Veterinary Director must jointly approve all euthanasia decisions. The signature of the Executive Director as well as either the Shelter Veterinary Director or Shelter Operations Director is required on the euthanasia approval forms.

Only two to three medical staff and/or animal care staff that are certified in euthanasia or are trained to assist are allowed to 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 Executive Director may make special exceptions to this policy in his/her discretion.

The Responsible Individual listed on the Maryland Department of Agriculture Animal Control Facility License must be euthanasia certified, per Maryland State Law.

### B. SELECTION

Each animal is evaluated on an individual basis for its potential to be placed in HSHC's adoption, foster, or rescue programs. Animals deemed inappropriate to be placed for adoption, foster, or rescue are considered for euthanasia. These typically consist of dangerous animals, animals who are suffering with end-stage terminal illness, or animals suffering from a catastrophic injury.

If an animal is to be euthanized, one of the following five Asilomar categories is entered into PetPoint: Healthy (H), Treatable-Rehabilitatable (TR), Treatable-Manageable (TM), Unhealthy-Untreatable (UU), or Owner Requested Euthanasia (ORE). When animals must be identified for euthanasia to make space available in the shelter, selection is based on the potential for treatment, adoption, or rescue for that specific animal as compared to the rest of the population. Thus the UU animals are selected first, followed by TM animals. Those in the categories of TR and H are the last to be selected.

Lastly, holding periods, as required by law, are considered:

- Harford County law: Stray dogs **not wearing a current Harford County license tag** are held for a period of not less than 96 hours (four days), excluding Sundays and County holidays, before a disposition is decided. Dogs suffering pain from medical emergencies may be euthanized prior to the 96 hours.
  - *The stray hold period begins on the day after the animal arrives at HSHC (internal policy).*
- Harford County law: Stray dogs **wearing a current Harford County license tag** are held for a period of not less than 192 hours (eight days), excluding Sundays and County holidays. Dogs suffering pain from medical emergencies may be euthanized prior to the 192 hours. The owner of the licensed dog shall be notified of the impoundment by the Sheriff by certified mail to the address of the owner indicated upon the license application. The notice shall be sent within 72 hours of the impoundment and shall give the owner 120 hours from the date of the notice in which to redeem the dog.
  - *The stray hold period begins on the day after the animal arrives at HSHC (internal policy).*

- There are no laws regarding cats or other animals in Harford County code, therefore the stray hold period for cats and other animals follows Maryland law. Stray cats and other animals are held for 72 hours (three days) before a disposition is decided, except animals suffering pain from medical emergencies may be euthanized prior to the 72 hours. The stray hold period begins on the day after the animal arrives at HSHC (internal policy).
- Bite quarantine animals are either euthanized and the rabies sample sent out for testing, or are held for a minimum of 10 days for observation. The bite quarantine period begins on the day after the animal bites the victim. The animal remains on bite quarantine until the Harford County Health Department releases the animal from the bite quarantine.
- Animal Control investigations require various hold periods.

**C. PROCEDURES**

**1. Training/Certification**

Employees performing euthanasia are trained and certified through an organization approved by the Maryland Department of Agriculture’s State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners. Once this training is completed, the employee is then supervised in his or her ability to humanely perform the euthanasia. The employee then undergoes a final evaluation before receiving approval and certification by the Shelter Veterinary Director.

**2. Environment**

The room in which euthanasia takes place is clean, private, and maintained as a stress-free environment. Only one euthanasia is performed at a time, and whenever possible, only one animal is in the euthanasia room at a time so that euthanasia is performed in a quiet, calm environment. Any cages in the room face away from the area where the euthanasia is performed, for when this is not possible.

**3. Microchip Scan**

Attempts are made to scan all animals upon entry to the shelter for microchips, in an effort to identify them. Medical or behavioral issues may prevent scanning upon intake in rare cases. Because these technologies are imperfect, scans are also performed prior to surgery. If euthanasia is elected, the animal is scanned while under sedation, for the presence of a microchip.

**4. Drugs**

Only drugs approved by the Shelter Veterinary Director are used for euthanasia. Animals are 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. Euthanasia does not take place until the animal is in a comatose state.

**5. Record Keeping**

Records for each euthanized animal are maintained for five years.

**IX. ADOPTIONS**

All animals adopted from HSHC are eight weeks of age or older, microchipped, and current on age-appropriate vaccinations. The goal of the HSHC 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 reviewing adopters’ histories in PetPoint, 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 help match animals to the appropriate households. Each adopter meets with an adoption counselor to discuss any known behavior and medical knowledge of the animal(s), care of their new pet(s), acclimation into the new home, and to answer any questions prior to finalizing the adoption. Veterinary staff also goes over all medical history for the pet including vaccinations, medications, and follow-up care. If an animal is not altered prior to going home, the

adoption counselor will provide a HASP certificate to the adopter, and will then follow up on that animal's progress until it is altered. Educational handouts, medical history, and an adoption agreement are provided to the adopter.

HSHC 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 animal and the adopting community are met.

## X. VISITORS

Visitors to HSHC may walk unescorted through the public areas of the building, but a staff member or trained volunteer must be present if a visitor wishes to visit with a dog out of its kennel, or a cat out of its cage. Visitors may be unsupervised in the cat communal rooms, although it is preferable to have a staff or trained volunteer available whenever possible. 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 HSHC and the adoption or redemption process, and to answer any questions visitors may have. This is an important educational opportunity for all visitors to the shelter.

## XI. FOSTER CARE

HSHC manages a foster care program in which certain animals are taken into homes temporarily. 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
2. Provide special care to injured and/or sick animals until they become adoptable
3. To make space for other animals at the shelter to reduce the possibility of euthanasia

Animals available for fostering are identified by staff. All foster parents are screened, and sign contracts with HSHC prior to housing any animals. Throughout the foster period, the foster parent must maintain contact with the Foster & Rescue Coordinator, bring the animal(s) in for all scheduled vaccines and medical treatments, and communicate with the Foster & Rescue Coordinator about any relevant information regarding the animal(s) in their care. A Foster Helpline is in place so that foster parents can contact a staff member 24/7. In the case of adoptable animals being fostered, the foster parent is strongly encouraged to bring the animal(s) to HSHC events as often as possible, and assist with placing the animal in a new home. Except for extraordinary situations, no foster placement will last longer than six months.

Animals placed in foster care are provided the same medical care, and behavioral enrichment is encouraged, as those housed at the shelter. HSHC 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. HSHC is responsible for following up on all foster placements and maintaining the follow-up information in PetPoint. Foster placement may be terminated at any time by HSHC, 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.

### 1. STRAY ANIMALS

- Harford County law: Stray dogs **not wearing a current Harford County license tag** are held for a period of not less than 96 hours (four days), excluding Sundays and County holidays, before a disposition is decided. Dogs suffering pain from medical emergencies may be euthanized prior to the 96 hours.
  - The stray hold period begins on the day after the animal arrives at HSHC (internal policy).

- Harford County law: Stray dogs **wearing a current Harford County license tag** are held for a period of not less than 192 hours (eight days), excluding Sundays and County holidays. Dogs suffering pain from medical emergencies may be euthanized prior to the 192 hours. The owner of the licensed dog shall be notified of the impoundment by the Sheriff by certified mail to the address of the owner indicated upon the license application. The notice shall be sent within 72 hours of the impoundment and shall give the owner 120 hours from the date of the notice in which to redeem the dog.
  - The stray hold period begins on the day after the animal arrives at HSHC (internal policy).
- There are no laws regarding cats or other animals in Harford County code, therefore the stray hold period for cats and other animals follows Maryland law. Stray cats and other animals are held for 72 hours (three days) before a disposition is decided, except animals suffering pain from medical emergencies may be euthanized prior to the 72 hours. The stray hold period begins on the day after the animal arrives at HSHC (internal policy).

After the specified hold period is up, the animal becomes property of the shelter and thus may be placed up for adoption, transferred to another organization, sent into foster care, 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/she immediately relinquishes all rights to the animal and the animal may be immediately placed up for adoption, transferred to another organization, sent into foster care, or humanely euthanized.

**3. ANIMALS LEFT BEHIND AFTER EVICTIONS/DEATHS**

Animals left behind when an owner is evicted or dies are treated as stray animals and are held for the legally-required stray hold period. Owners may reclaim pets left behind in an eviction, and family members may reclaim pets of a deceased owner.

**4. ADMINISTRATIVE HOLDS**

Some animals are the subject of investigations by Animal Control 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 by Animal Control. HSHC cares for these animals during the investigation period, either in the shelter, or in foster care when appropriate, but they are not the property of HSHC until they are no longer considered evidence in a case. Only Animal Control or the judicial system may grant that determination, unless the legal owner relinquishes the animal to HSHC. Once HSHC obtains ownership of the animal through one of these methods, it may be placed up for adoption, transferred to another organization, sent into foster care, or humanely euthanized.

**5. BITE QUARANTINE AND DANGEROUS ANIMALS**

HSHC follows State and County regulations for animals that have bitten a person or another animal and are suspected of being a potentially dangerous animal or rabies carrier. Owned dogs and cats that have bitten must be quarantined for 10 days at home or humanely euthanized, as directed by Animal Control. If euthanasia is directed, a specimen is sent for rabies testing. If a dog or cat that has bitten is brought to and quarantined at the shelter, the minimum holding period is 10 days from the day of the bite but the holding period may be longer as it will not be lifted until the investigation is completed by Animal Control and the animal is released from hold by the Harford County Health Department.

HSHC will not quarantine animals with a known owner at the shelter.

If the animal that has bitten is a stray animal and no owner is identified within the specified stray hold period (as defined in item 1 in this section), the animal may be humanely euthanized and sent for rabies testing.

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**

HSHC does not offer regular boarding to the public due to space constraints at the shelter; however, during an emergency (natural disaster, fire, flooding, domestic violence situation, etc.), short-term holding in temporary cages may be provided 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. Crates may be loaned out on a temporary basis for this reason to Harford County residents, at no charge.

### **XIII. PERSONAL HEALTH**

#### **A. STAFF VACCINATION**

All staff handling animals at HSHC must be vaccinated against rabies. Vaccinations will be administered by the Harford County Health Department (HCHD). Vaccinations are provided at no cost to the employee or HSHC, however the employee will be financially responsible for reimbursement of all vaccination costs to HCHD if they should fail to complete the full three shot series. To ensure that staff maintain effective protection against rabies, blood is drawn every two years after the initial vaccination and titers are determined by HCHD. Individuals with non-protective titers require re-vaccination. Staff exposed to rabies must seek immediate medical attention and may require re-vaccination. Coordination of vaccination and titer testing is made between the Executive Director and HCHD. New hires must provide proof of vaccination and/or a recent titer test if they have already been vaccinated.

#### **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 are therefore required to attend yearly training provided by HSHC on zoonotic disease where emphasis is placed on minimizing risk and prevention of infection. Zoonotic diseases that are commonly of concern at shelters like HSHC are rabies, intestinal parasites, leptospirosis, cat scratch disease, ringworm, and sarcoptic mange, among others.

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, and especially those that are 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/veterinary staff and volunteers must be adequately trained in low-stress animal handling, and be able to recognize the signs of potentially dangerous behavior.

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

Food and open beverage containers are not to be in animal areas. Human food items and dishes are not housed in the same sink as dog or cat dishes. Human food must not be stored in the same refrigerator as animal food or biologics/medications. Beverages with tight-fitting lids are permitted in animal areas.

The risk of disease outbreak at HSHC 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 medical care provider. In many cases, work can be found that is helpful for HSHC but also safe for the individual.

#### **C. NOISE PROTECTION**

Ear plugs are available to staff and volunteers. Ear plugs are encouraged when working in areas of high noise such as dog kennels.

#### **D. REPORTING INJURIES**

All injuries that occur at HSHC or while working on behalf of HSHC must be reported immediately to a supervisor. This includes any bite, scratch, or other injury that occurs. A report will be filled out and that person will be advised to seek help from a human medical doctor, and in some cases may be required to go to an urgent care facility or emergency room.

### **XIV. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

In the event of an emergency situation at HSHC, every effort is made to protect all staff, volunteers, and animals. The Executive Director (or his or her designee) implements the emergency response as appropriate. When this occurs, the Executive Director is responsible for all decisions regarding the emergency response. The Executive Director maintains contact with Harford County's emergency preparedness team, local weather advisory groups, the board of directors, and staff. In addition, the Executive Director directs information released to 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 resources and social media.

In preparation for a weather-related emergency, the building is secured by placing sand bags around all doorways (if flooding is a concern), 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 unanchored supplies around the building are brought into the shelter or barn(s) and stored as appropriate.

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

In some cases, such as minor flooding, a partial evacuation may be appropriate. In such cases, HSHC will seek overnight foster parents to remove as many animals as possible. Staff will remain at the shelter during the event to care for the animals.