



Our Mission:

We are committed to saving lives and reducing suffering of homeless dogs and cats through education, advancement of knowledge and shelter outreach.

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Shelter Watch



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From the Clinical Director's Desk

I've been thinking a lot about standards and goals these days --- no coincidence since the recent publication of the "Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters" has many shelters professionals abuzz (see p. 2). I like to tell veterinary students that shelter medicine -- and sheltering in general -- is an on-going, elaborate, exciting problem-solving practice. However, I was surprised to hear that several shelter professionals deemed the document written by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians to be an unattainable, even "pie-in-the-sky" vision beyond what most shelters can be. I cringe in writing those words.

Certainly the document brings to light challenges in caring for homeless pets, but regardless of an organization's mission or resources, it is vital to come back to what constitutes humane care for each and every animal in our charge. We all know organizations providing exceptional care on a shoe-string budget; likewise we know others with deep coffers struggling with lack of knowledge and guidance. This document -- an

exhaustive product of two years of hard labor by 14 of our most informed shelter veterinarians -- begins a conversation that will undoubtedly go on for years to come. There might even be some arguments. But in the end, we will have improved the lives of our shelter residents and decreased animal suffering.

I say it is time to roll up our sleeves, sharpen our pencils, and get to solving some problems.

Best regards,
Elizabeth Berliner, DVM



Humane Use of Control Poles: Bill Brothers, Pres., Humane Services International

A control pole is one of the most basic tools for safe handling of fractious or dangerous animals. Its purpose is to control the head - the biting area - to prevent such an animal from biting you or anyone nearby. It's essentially a tighten-able noose at the end of a pole and is typically tightened around the neck of a difficult animal.

Use of a control pole is very important in those situations where an animal may present a

hazard to the safety of individuals. Yet there are two important concerns with control poles. One is that they are not designed for use on certain species and two is that they are easy to use inhumanely.

Control poles are mostly designed for use on dogs. They are not designed for use on cats, for example, or other similar species. There

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Humane Use of Control Poles: (continued from Page 1)



The newly designed "quick release" control pole.

"The Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters is an extremely detailed document describing minimum and ideal standards for all aspects of care of sheltered animals."

Thumbs Up!



The Guide is available free online!

are better capture and control tools for cats (to be covered in a future article). If a control pole *must* be used on a cat or other small species, be sure part of the noose goes under at least one armpit so as to prevent choking and injuring the animal.

A common problem in applying a control pole is that the handler tightens the noose too quickly and too tightly causing injury to the neck of the animal and the feeling on the animal's part that it is being choked, leading to panic and usually further injury - not to mention an even more fractious and difficult-to-control animal. It is important for the handler to stay calm at all times and to not over-tighten the noose. If the pole is applied too tightly, it must be loosened enough to help the animal relax - not an easy thing to do.

A great step forward in control pole technology involves the recent introduction of the "quick release" pole which instantaneously releases the animal when the handler

pulls the release handle. This 100% guarantees the animal can be released quickly and in all circumstances.

Don't:

- Lift, drag, or pull any animal on a control pole.
- Choke any animal.
- Use on cats or other smaller animals except in emergency and only very carefully.

Do:

- Apply the noose carefully and not too tightly.
- Use only to control the head from biting.
- Lift animals with your arms while controlling the head.

Resources:

ACES - 800-338-2237 - www.animal-care.com

Ketch-all - 877-538-2425 - www.ketchall.com

*Bill Brothers is the President of Humane Services, International and works closely with the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at Cornell.

Shelter Standards: Dr. Kate Riley

For those who work in animal sheltering, we are often so busy facing the daily challenges of caring for animals in need that it is difficult to step back and look at the bigger picture: what are we doing well, and how can we improve? There are many books, websites, and magazines on the subject, but it can be time-consuming to keep up to date, and decide what is relevant to your own shelter or organization.

In December 2010, the Association of Shelter Veterinarians published "Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters", an extremely detailed document describing minimum and ideal standards for all aspects of care of sheltered animals. It is available for free online, and reading and discussing the material should be a priority for anyone in shelter medicine or administration. The guidelines include not only medical care and housing, but everything from paperwork to public health. Scheduling some discussion time for specific sections as part of regular staff meetings may be a good way to go through the document.

All of the guidelines are based around the Five Freedoms, defined in the UK in 1965 by a group discussing agricultural animal care:

- Freedom from Hunger and Thirst – by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor.
- Freedom from Discomfort – by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease – by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- Freedom to Express Normal Behavior – by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- Freedom from Fear and Distress – by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

The complete document can be viewed and downloaded at: <http://sheltervet.org/>
Click on "ASV Shelter Standards"

“Treating” Shelter Dogs: Healthy, Shelter Friendly Treats, Part II: Dr. Elizabeth Berliner

Last month we talked about why the provision of dog treats in the shelter is more complicated than giving treats at home, to owned animals. This month, we address which types of treats are best in the shelter, and why.

Recommended treats suitable for *daily* use in the shelter:

- Plain dog biscuits or milk bones. High-quality, palatable biscuits are available, and their use is encouraged. Remember to use small-sized ones or pieces of larger biscuits, as dogs don't recognize the difference in size.
- Kongs® with less than a teaspoon of peanut butter, squeeze cheese, or cream cheese. Filling the Kong® is equivalent to a human eating an entire jar of PB. Not healthy.
- Enrichment cubes, balls, or other devices with kibble or biscuits or a few small pieces of “richer” treats mixed in (e.g., cheese cubes, small chunks of Pupperoni®, etc).
- Baby carrots, thin apple slices (not cores or seeds), air popped popcorn pieces.

Treats appropriate for training sessions or medical exams:

- A couple of chunks of a “richer” treat (i.e., ½ a Pupperoni® or Snausage® cut into small pieces, very small slices of cheese or lean turkey). Pieces should be no bigger than your pinky fingernail
- Small amounts of squeeze cheese for pilling, etc.

Treats that should *not* be offered in the shelter environment:

- Real bones of any kind. There are serious health risks that accompany these treats, including but not limited to intestinal obstruction, impaction, pancreatitis and self-

injury -- not to mention behavioral concerns with resource guarding.

These are not safe for most dogs.

<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm208365.htm>

- Pigs ears or rawhides. Again, these carry serious risks of esophageal or intestinal obstruction, intestinal upset, and recently have been linked to salmonella outbreaks.
- Raw meat. While some people advocate raw diets in their own pets, these are not suitable for feeding in an uncontrolled shelter environment, and are likely to lead to gastrointestinal upset in shelter pets.
- Human foods known to be unsafe for dogs. Chocolate, macadamia nuts, grapes, sugarless products containing xylitol, and raisins are just a few of the human foods that can be deadly for dogs. When in doubt, avoid human food.
- Expired products, or bags that have been open and contaminated by rodents. The potential for illness is too great to make feeding these a good idea.

Shelter dogs deserve lots of love and attention, and even edible treats. However, ultimately the shelter's mission is also to keep them healthy in the medically and behaviorally challenging environment of the shelter. While diarrhea, vomiting, or even an intestinal obstruction in an owned pet at home is upsetting and can be expensive, in a shelter setting it can result in removal from the adoption floor; ongoing, expensive treatments; and even euthanasia. Being smart about treats can be lifesaving for shelter residents.

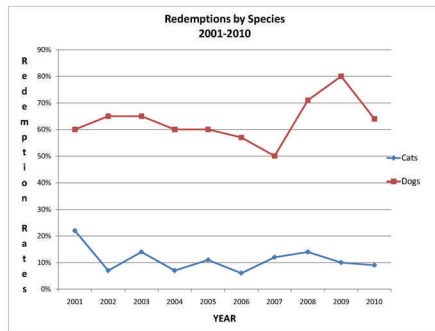


Encourage the use of healthier treats like apple slices and baby carrots.

“Being smart about treats can be lifesaving for shelter residents.”



Small amounts of a “richer” treat are recommended for training sessions or medical exams.



“A collar and ID tag: one of the least expensive ways an owner can protect his/her cat and most reliable ways to ensure the cat will be returned to the owner if lost.”



Harley shows off his collar and personalized ID tag.

Numbers Count: Dr. Jan Scarlett

How successful is your shelter at returning lost animals to their owners? With estimates of return-to-owner rates of approximately 50% for dogs and 4% for cats nationwide, there is plenty of room for improvement and for saving lives. The first step to improving your return-to-owner rate is identifying

how well you are doing now. Since successful returns differ so dramatically between dogs and cats, look at your data for each species separately. Determine how many stray dogs were impounded last year at your shelter and how many dogs were returned to their owners. A little simple math (the number of returned dogs divided by total stray dogs impounded) will provide you with the % of stray dogs that you

successfully returned to their homes. Repeat the process for cats. To refine your numbers, if your shelter identifies likely feral cats, remove the feral cats from your denominator of stray cats when calculating your return-to-owner rates. Once you have a baseline rate, consult with other shelters or websites offering suggestions to enhance your efforts to get previously owned animals back to their owners (see below). Also, you don't have to track return-to-owners rates only by year. You can do them by other time frames (e.g., by month) as well. The shelter can track its success in a spreadsheet like Excel® or on paper. Put the data you have been inputting to use helping you set goals and track progress!

Resource: Improving your return-to-owner rates: <http://www.aspcapro.org/return-to-owner.php>

Visual Pet Identification: It's not just for dogs!: Kelly J. Garner, MA

Of the 3-4 million cats that enter animal shelters each year, it is estimated that less than 4% of those of unknown origin (stray/lost) are reunited with their owners. The most common reason for this alarming statistic? The lack of visual identification, both **a collar and tag**, for cats. If an owned cat gets lost, a collar and tag tells anyone who finds that pet that he/she is not a stray and provides a way to contact the owner. It's one of the least expensive ways an owner can protect his/her cat and most reliable ways to ensure the cat will be returned to the owner if lost. So why don't owners consider getting a collar and tag for their cat? Perhaps it is as simple as a lack of understanding that cats can, in fact, wear collars! A recent study by Dr. Linda Lord, assistant professor of Veterinary Preventive Medicine at The Ohio State University and lead author, found that of the 538 cats enrolled, 391 (72.7%) successfully wore collars for the 6-month duration of the study and that only 18 (3.3%) of the 538 caught their collars in their mouths, foreleg or other object. Of those 18, only one (0.1%) experienced difficulty as a result, which most likely occurred because his breakaway collar did not function as designed. For the vast majority of cats, any problems that may occur as a result of wearing the collar will most likely happen within the first few days after placement. Owners should watch carefully during the first few days to identify the small proportion of cats that cannot wear collars safely. Data from the study by Dr. Lord suggest that getting a cat to wear the collar may be the

easy part; the hard part is in educating owners/adopters that cats can wear collars and of the importance of visual identification in the event the cat gets lost, which can and does happen to indoor-only cats. What can we do? Help spread the word: post flyers, print handouts, add cat collars to your shelter's wish list, counsel adopters on the importance stressing collars and tags as part of responsible pet ownership for cats and we can hopefully improve the return-to-owner rate for lost cats!

Resources:

Journal article by Dr. Lord: <http://avmajournals.avma.org/doi/pdfplus/10.2460/javma.237.4.387>

Sample flyer: http://www.animalsheltering.org/resource_library/magazine_articles/jul_aug_2010/mouth-pieces_love_your_cat_tag_your_cat.html

Articles:

http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/all_animals_cat_collaring.pdf

<http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips/collars.html>

<http://www.aspcapro.org/blog/2011/01/tagging-matters-more>

Enrichment for Shelter Cats: Kelley Bollen, MS, CABC

Environmental enrichment is so critical for caged cats as they have very little to do when confined in such a small space. While dogs may manifest their confinement anxiety and boredom with more active behaviors like barking, jumping, or spinning, cats are more stoic and tend to go inward in these situations. Because of this behavioral response, shelter staff may see a cat that is comfortably resting and think all is well. But the cat may simply be shut down due to the lack of physical and mental stimulation.

Getting the cats out of the cage occasionally is important. I recommend that cats who are housed in cages be allowed at least 15 minutes out of their cage twice a week. They can spend time in a visiting room, an office or just a sectioned off area in the cat room - but they need a chance to stretch their muscles and walk around. Keeping a cat in a small cage for weeks without this opportunity is not humane.

Each caged cat should be provided with a few toys to bat around. These can include commercially available cat toys like balls and stuffed mice, but things as simple and cheap as pipe cleaners, bottle caps and cotton balls can serve the same purpose. Catnip can also be provided to the cats a couple of times each week. Not all cats respond to catnip and a small percentage are over stimulated by it so observations should be made

after giving it out. Make notes on the cage card indicating which cats find catnip interesting and cause them to “mellow out”.

Providing auditory stimulation by playing music in the cat rooms is also recommended but remember that some music (classical) is more soothing than other types. Make sure you turn the music off at night so the cats can get adequate sleep. Playing a CD of bird songs for a few minutes each day is another way to stimulate the cat’s auditory sense.

To stimulate the cat’s visual sense you can provide interesting things for the cats to watch outside of their cages. Placing a bird feeder outside the window of the cat room, or an aquarium inside the room gives them something interesting to look at, but remember that these will require some maintenance. A few other simple and inexpensive options include blowing bubbles in the cat room a few times each day or setting a perpetual motion toy on a stool and setting it into motion each day for a few minutes.

Remember, it doesn’t have to cost a lot of money or take a lot of time to enrich the animals in your shelters. It just takes a few creative ideas and an enthusiastic staff.

Events Calendar

February 2011						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
Intern experience at Erie Co. SPCA →						
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Intern experience at Erie Co. SPCA →						
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Intern experience at Humane Society at Lollypop Farm →						
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Midwest Veterinary Conference →						
27	28					
→						



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