

After the Adoption

Are you liable for what happens once an animal leaves your shelter?

BY CHERIE TRAVIS



Animals come into shelters for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes they are found stray or abandoned with no known owner. Sometimes the owner can no longer handle the financial or physical challenge of caring for the animal. And sometimes, the animal has behavioral problems that force the owner to give her up.

The previous owner may warn you about a dog's temperament. You may see it for yourself while the animal is at the shelter. Or you may find out the hard way when a new owner complains that you gave him a dangerous pet!

In my last article ("Avoiding Adopter Roulette," March-April 2011), I discussed the duty of an animal shelter to ensure each pet is placed in a safe home with a responsible and caring owner. This column examines

the flip side: What responsibilities do animal placement groups have to make sure that the adopter is receiving an animal who will not harm him, his family, or anyone else?

This issue came up recently when a shelter president contacted me with great concern after an adopter threatened to sue the organization when her newly adopted dog bit her daughter. The shelter president was frantic that the adopter was threatening "a \$2 million lawsuit." So, this raises an important legal question: What liability does a shelter have after it has adopted an animal into a new home?

Though every adoption is unique, the determination of post-adoption liability can usually be broken down into three simple issues, listed in order of descending importance: (1) whether the shelter knew the animal was

dangerous; (2) whether the adopter knew of those behavioral problems before he agreed to accept his new pet; and (3) whether the shelter gave up actual control of the animal at the point of adoption.

The most important issue in this area of the law is whether the shelter knew that the animal had behavioral issues prior to placing the animal. You may learn that a behavioral problem exists if the past owner tells you about it at surrender. But you may often receive strays at the shelter, and in those cases there is no opportunity to speak with a past owner. You may also, during the animal's shelter stay, observe worrisome behaviors that could indicate a dangerous temperament. However, even the best shelter employee can miss subtle signs of behavioral abnormalities—so let's equip you with the knowledge to handle both situations.



Adoption No. 1: No Known Behavioral Concerns

Your shelter receives a cute, fluffy, little Pekingese who comes in as a stray. You follow all state laws and organizational policies, and the pup never shows any signs of bad tendencies. You find him a loving home with a responsible owner. You think everything is fine, until one day you get a call from the enraged adopter saying that this cute little dog bit the neighbor without provocation!

You feel bad about it, but is your shelter legally responsible? If your shelter finds a home for an animal who has never exhibited any behavioral problems before adoption, then it would seem unfair to hold you responsible for the actions of that animal after the adoption has occurred. Most courts would agree that a shelter is not responsible for the post-adoption behavior of an animal where there were no pre-adoption indicators of danger. Courts traditionally only hold a human responsible for the actions of an animal where that person has both (1) *control* over the animal, and (2) *knowledge* of the danger the animal poses. In most states, both requirements are necessary to find a party liable for the actions of a pet.

First, let's look at the control requirement. Since animals are considered property under the eyes of the law, it makes sense to use basic property law guidelines to determine these cases. In *Murphy v. Eddinger*, the Connecticut Superior Court explained that "courts are reluctant to extend liability when an individual does not exercise control over the property." Once you place an animal with a new owner, your shelter no longer has control over that animal. Even if you have procedures in place to monitor the post-adoption status of each animal, the post-adoption interaction will usually not be substantial enough to qualify as legal control or possession. Therefore, if you get sued for the post-adoption behavior of the animal, your strongest argument to the court is that you had no control over that animal. You can bolster this argument by adding language to your adoption agreement to make sure the adopter knows that the animal is now solely under his control and responsibility.

Now let's examine the knowledge requirement. As I said before, courts may impose liability where a party has knowledge of an animal's behavioral problems (but re-

member, this is usually only if that party also has control over the animal). In *Donchin v. Guerrero*, the California Court of Appeals discussed the knowledge and control elements in determining whether a landlord is responsible for the actions of one of his tenant's pets. In that case, the court said "a landlord who does not have actual knowledge of the vicious nature of a tenant's dog cannot be held liable when the dog attacks a third person." The court went on to say that if an attack is not reasonably foreseeable, then the landlord has no duty to prevent the attack.

The facts of that case provide some guidance as to how a court would determine the post-adoption liability of an animal shelter. The landlord in *Donchin v. Guerrero* was held responsible because he *knew* about the danger of the dog and *controlled* the premises where the dog and his owner lived. Both the knowledge and control elements were present, and the landlord did nothing to protect the other tenants. (He also lied and tried to cover up the fact that he knew the animal was dangerous—never a good idea to lie to a judge!)

Unlike a landlord, an animal shelter has absolutely no control over an adopter or his property. Thus, if your shelter has absolutely no knowledge of the animal's behavioral problems, then the court is unlikely to hold you responsible for post-adoption incidents. Practically speaking, it may be difficult to prove an absence of knowledge on your part. The best way to protect yourself is to include a daily log or report of each animal's temperament so that there is some documented evidence of the absence of any problem.

Adoption No. 2: Placing a Potentially Dangerous Animal

When you receive an animal into your shelter who exhibits any sort of aggression, your first duty is to fully evaluate the animal to determine whether it is suitable for adoption. Every shelter should already have safeguards in place to ensure that truly dangerous animals are not adopted out.

But what about animals who are not clearly dangerous, just potentially dangerous?

First, you should perform an internal audit of your evaluation procedures and make

sure that your staff is trained to identify and document both overt and subtle signs of behavioral issues.

Documenting all potential signs of danger before the adoption is one important way to avoid liability after the adoption, because when you know an animal is dangerous, disclosing that information to the new owner will likely shield you from any liability. In *DeLeon v. Commercial Manufacturing & Supply Co.*, the California Appellate Court stated "a duty to warn or disclose danger arises when an article is or should be known to be dangerous for its intended use, either inherently or because of defects."



Even though that case was referring to product liability (like exploding toasters or faulty chainsaws), the same rule can be applied to animal adoption. Normally, domestic pets—like toasters!—are not dangerous. If you know a specific animal has behavioral issues, it is just like a manufacturer realizing its toaster is dangerous. Once you disclose to the consumer (in this case the adopter) that the "product" (pet) has a malfunction (behavioral issue), then you are no longer responsible for their decision to accept that animal in its current condition. This is known under the law as "assumption of risk."

When a prospective adopter shows an interest in an animal with documented

behavioral concerns, that adoption counselor should go through the animal's file with the prospective adopter, including descriptions of all questionable past behavior. The adopter should be given an opportunity to fully discuss the animal's behavioral issues with the shelter's veterinarian and behaviorist. If the adopter still wants the animal, and the shelter feels it is a safe environment for both the animal and the owner, then it is acceptable to proceed with the adoption, and the adopter is "assuming the risk" of any future behavioral problems. The shelter may want to direct the adopter to behaviorists and trainers so that the adopter will continue to work on behavioral issues.

Disclosure is always a good practice, even to document an easily explained incident with the animal. For example, in my experience running a humane society, sometimes a cat may nip at or bite a volunteer who is trying to get the cat back into a cage. Most often, the volunteer will admit that the cat was growling and the volunteer failed to realize that she should wait for the animal to calm down before handling him. Regardless, my organization's policy is to disclose such incidents to the prospective adopter so there could never be a claim that we withheld information.

To ensure minimization of liability, your shelter should include two key components in the adoption agreement: (1) an acknowledgment on the adopter's part that he has fully read and understands the animal's history, and (2) that the adopter accepts all liability for any post-adoption behavior of the animal and "indemnifies" the shelter from any claims raised by third parties in relation to the animal's post-adoption behavior. Indemnification is a legal term that essentially means one party (in this case, the new owner) agrees to pay for or insure against any losses incurred by another party (the shelter). In situations where the animal is known to have bitten, following the aforementioned guidelines will provide the maximum safeguard against post-adoption liability.

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To summarize, the law will protect a shelter from post-adoption liability as long as the shelter is no longer in actual control of the animal at the time of the incident, and the shelter had no knowledge or fully disclosed the knowledge of a dangerous temperament before the adopter took the animal. So follow these steps to keep your shelter out of the doghouse: Make sure to keep a close eye on animals who exhibit minor aggression while they are in the shelter. Document any concerns and pass that information along to the new adopter. There's no harm in providing the adopter with everything you've observed so that they can make an informed decision.

Now, before any of you conclude that the safest path to eliminating liability would be to avoid any type of behavioral assessment, with the theory that "ignorance is bliss," know that that would be very unwise. Any good plaintiff's lawyer will make a compelling argument that shelters have a duty to evaluate animals placed for adoption. Since it is arguably now an industry practice to perform such assessments, a court could find that not doing so would constitute a breach of that duty.

If you are sued, hire experienced local counsel. You have heard this advice in my previous articles, but I can't emphasize how valuable an attorney with knowledge of local animal laws can be. [AS](#)



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FOOD DISPENSING TOYS

GOAL: To provide our dogs with enrichment when they are alone, and to teach dogs to enjoy eating their meals out of a Food Dispensing Toy (FDT) such as a Kibble Nibble, Stuffed Kong, PVC pipe FDT, Kong, Wobbler etc. This form of enrichment allows the dog to work for their food by pushing the FDT around on the ground to get the food to fall out. The best FDTs are toys that the dog does not destroy and are easy to clean and sanitize after each use.

INITIAL INTRODUCTION OF FDT:

- Do not disturb the dog while eating meals from a bowl for at least the first 2-3 meals.
- Closely monitor and record the dog's appetite on the Canine Enrichment Chronicle
- Once you have determined that the dog enjoys eating meals, give the dog the easiest type of FDT, usually a handmade PVC FDT. Feed this to the dog at mealtime in place of their usual meal.

NOTE: Do not use FDTs with dogs that have a history of food aggression (food, rawhides, pig's ear, etc.) unless approved by the behavior department.

RECORDING CONSUMPTION:

- During morning cleaning, staff remove the toy from the kennel and record food consumption on the Canine Enrichment Chronicle.

A (all)

S (for some)

0 (zero for none)

CONTINUING FEEDINGS:

- If the dog enjoys FDTs, the dog should receive one AT LEAST once daily, for as long as they are in the shelter.
- Consider a more challenging FDT as a dog gets skilled at eating meals out of them.
- ALWAYS monitor the dog's consumption of food from the FDT.

(recipes on next page)

RECIPES

GOAL: To provide our dogs with enrichment when they are alone, and to teach dogs to enjoy eating their meals out of a Food Dispensing Toy (FDT) such as a Kibble Nibble, Stuffed Kong, PVC pipe FDT, Kong, Wobbler etc. This form of enrichment allows the dog to work for their food by pushing the FDT around on the ground to get the food to fall out. The best FDTs are toys that the dog does not destroy and are easy to clean and sanitize after each use best FDTs are toys that are not destroyed by the dog and are easy to clean and sanitize after each use.

PVC FOOD DISPENSING TOY:

Give them a mix of dry with some wet food mixed into it very lightly so it doesn't stick to the toy. Fill the bottom with Dry Kibble, middle with a small amount of the wet/dry mix and fill the remainder with dry kibble.

KIBBLE NIBBLE FOOD DISPENSING TOY:

Mix in a very small amount of dry/wet mix and the rest is all dry kibble.

STUFFED KONG:

This is the best for wet/dry mix and is more challenging than the PVC and Kibble Nibble. Fill the bottom half with dry kibble and the top half with a dry/wet mix and then coat the opening with wet only to entice licking. Note that you will be unable to put an entire meal into a stuffed Kong, so you will need to provide multiple Kongs at mealtimes.

KONG WOBBLER:

Dry kibble only and the smaller the better. This is a more challenging FDT; use only after the dog is consistently and easily eating out of the easier FDT's.



Doggie Social Hour

How To Run A Playgroup In Your Shelter



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A PROGRAM OF THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON

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This manual is dedicated to Aimee Sadler, who taught and inspired us to provide enrichment for our shelter dogs through playgroups.

Doggie Social Hour Manual

Running a playgroup in your shelter

Introduction

Doggie Social Hour (also known as a Playgroup) provides dogs with exercise and social interaction with other dogs. Playgroups should occur one to two times daily. It is often most convenient to schedule this session during cage/kennel cleaning time. The benefits of playgroups include:

- **Freedom:** Off-leash and out of kennel time for dogs is invaluable for burning off energy and reducing stress so dogs are more relaxed during training and when meeting potential adopters.
- **Learning:** Interaction with their own species can help dogs to gain social skills that may improve their ability to play and interact with other dogs after adoption.
- **Improved Cleaning Efficiency:** Morning cleaning of kennels is easier when dogs are out in playgroups- less time and staffing is needed for play groups, than for walking dogs individually while kennels are cleaned.
- **Better Understanding Of Your Dogs:** Time spent in playgroup is time spent observing dogs; knowing more about our dogs allows shelters to do a better job finding the perfect home.
- **Fun:** Everyone enjoys seeing dogs have so much fun! If the public is watching a dog's personality in playgroup, this can also help enhance adoption.

Doggie Social Hour should:

- Take place in a large yard or room with enough space for each dog to freely run and play with other dogs.
- Include a secure introduction area, preferably an enclosure with double doors or gates, to facilitate safe movement of dogs in and out of the yard and prevent escape.
- Be consistent with your shelter medicine protocols. For example, shelters with moderate to high risk of disease may want to require that their dogs go through a quarantine period before being allowed in playgroups. Shelters with very low disease risk might allow dogs to enter playgroup at any time after they are vaccinated.



Participants

People Participants

Every playgroup requires a Leader, an Assistant and at least one Runner.

Leader: Supervises Playgroup

- Makes a list of dogs who will be in the playgroup and the order that they will be introduced to and removed from the group
- Prints the list and distributes copies to the assistant and runners/observers
- Indicates on the list any dogs with special concerns
- Approves participation of playgroup observers
- Has a brief discussion (at beginning of session) with assistant, runners, and observers to discuss introduction of dogs, order of introduction, and behavioral issues
- Wears leader vest which contains all needed tools (see pg 8)
- Carries a leash at all times
- Carries a few treats in pocket (treats are used when attempting to lure or motivate a dog to do something when other techniques are unsuccessful)
- Checks tools to be sure ready for use
- Checks the yard to ensure that all toys have been removed before playgroup starts
- Decides what safety equipment dogs need to wear (muzzles, gentle leaders, leashes, etc.)
- Responsible for supervising the introduction of all new dogs
- Responsible for controlling interactions/deciding when to break up fights between dogs
- Reports on the canine attendees' behavior and provides a summary to staff, which includes a list of dogs in the suggested order of introduction for the next day's leader

Participants (cont.)

Assistant: Assists Playgroup Supervisor

- Wears assistant apron (which contains all needed tools, see pg 8)
- Carries a leash at all times
- Carries a few treats in pocket (treats are only used when attempting to lure or move dogs to a desired location)
- Responsible for letting dogs in and out of introduction area/gate
- If sees leader moving briskly toward some dogs, joins leader to provide assistance if requested
- When not needed to observe/supervise dog interactions, the assistant is responsible for picking up after the dogs as they defecate

Runner: Brings Dogs To and From Yard; Takes instructions from Leader and Assistant

- Brings dogs from the kennel on a leash, no-pull head collar, or harness if necessary to gate door in the requested order on list
- Carries a treat bag, and ensures that dogs behave appropriately on way to playgroup (dog should sit at doors, etc)
- Brings the dog into the introduction area, when not occupied
- Remove leash, harness or head collar from dog if requested by the leader
- Opens the gate, so that the dog is able to enter the play yard at its own pace, without letting any other dogs into the introduction area
- If Runner enters the play yard, he or she needs to remove the treat bag (this is to avoid conflict amongst dogs over treats)
- After play time walks the dogs back to the kennels.
- Take instructions from Leader and Assistant regarding use of tools and when or which dogs should be removed from playgroup

Observer: Makes Observations During Playgroup

- Observes dogs while they play inside the yard.
- Does not carry treats
- Often an observer is present to learn

Participants (cont.)

Dog Participants

- Playgroups can include any dog in the shelter that is:

Friendly or behaves neutrally toward other dogs. Dogs that show signs of aggression to other dogs, can be taken on walks instead.

Healthy. Dogs with a contagious disease or who have not completed the shelter's initial quarantine period or vaccine protocol, cannot participate in playgroup. Pay careful attention to the health status of dogs transferred from other locations which have a history of higher disease rates.
- Dogs in playgroup should wear martingale style collars. These collars provide a loop for a person to hold onto when necessary. When fitted properly, they also prevent the dog from slipping out of the collar when they are pulling strongly on the leash.
- All dogs should be assigned to a behavior category, which summarizes their behavior toward other dogs in play group. After a dog's first playgroup session, the Leader assigns the dog to a category, which is written after the dog's name on the playgroup list.

Playgroup Dog Behavior Categories

DF: Dog friendly - good with all dogs

RP: Rough play- dogs that play rough and might overwhelm other dogs

DS: Dog selective- dogs that get along with some but not all dogs

QD: Quiet dog- dogs that like to go outside, but don't play and/or might avoid some other dogs

DA: Dog aggressive- dogs that are aggressive to almost all dogs

PD: Prey drive- dogs that chase small dogs

RG: Resource guarder- dogs that guard toys or sticks in yard (from other dogs)

Prey Drive (PD) and Resource Guarding (RG) are independent of other categories. The same dog can be assigned PD or RG and other categories.

If one dog bites (breaks the skin) or severely threatens (i.e., pins and stands over dog while vocalizing, despite no aggressive or assertive behavior by the victim) another dog, that dog must be excluded from playgroup until approved for re-entry by a supervisor (such as a playgroup leader, shelter manager, or behavior department).

Any aggression (show teeth, lift lip, growl, aggressive bark, snap, bite) toward a person in the play yard results in the dog being excluded from play group until approved for re-entry by a supervisor (such as a playgroup leader, shelter manager, or behavior department).

General Guidelines

1. A minimum of two people should always be in the yard during play group; two people are necessary to break up a fight if one occurs.
2. Never pet or interact with a dog if another dog is near. When people regularly give dogs attention, conflict between dogs can occur which could lead to a fight.
3. Limit human interactions with dogs as much as possible, other than to quietly praise good behavior (i.e., a shy dog who is finally leaving the gate area and walking toward you, or a dog who had a tense interaction with another dog and chooses to move away). Interaction is only allowed when approved by the playgroup leader.
4. If other dogs are showing intense interest in a fearful dog, it may be acceptable to let the dog 'hide' between your legs to give it a little down time. This should ONLY be done when instructed by the play group leader or assistant. In most situations, protecting the dog will intensify other dogs' interest and put the dog at higher risk.
5. All toys should be removed from the play group area. Dogs should not be allowed to play with toys or sticks with dogs in the play yard during doggie social hour, as toys can be a source of conflict between dogs.
6. Do not intervene in interactions between dogs unless:
 - The leader has asked you to intervene.
 - You've talked to the leader about something you see going on and have received permission to help monitor/manage the situation.
7. Don't let dogs run at the fence line, barking intensely or aggressively at other dogs or people walking by. There is a risk of redirected aggression toward other dogs or people in the yard in these situations.
8. Dogs should enter and exit the play group session in an order which decreases the likelihood of fights. Multiple 'mini' sessions may take place within a single doggie social hour, so that dogs can be separated into compatible groups.

Doggie Social Hour Safety Tools

- Shake cans* (can with coins in it, taped closed)
- Small water spray bottles which have been primed and are working*
- (2) Large air horns*
- Supply of small, medium, large muzzles (nylon or vinyl basket)
- Small, medium, large, extra large Gentle Leaders
- Leashes (Leader and Assistant should both carry a leash at all times during playgroup)
- Intervention kit: 'Y' pole, catch pole, Kevlar gloves, slip leads with caribeners (for attaching a dog to a fence), ammonia tablets
- (2) Two-way radios (so Leader can communicate with staff indoors, when needed)
- Garden hose connected to water supply, if available
- Vest/Apron, which keeps tools easily accessible. The leader and the assistant should wear a different type of item, so that both the leader and the assistant are easily identifiable by other people participating in a playgroup session.

Leader vest: the leader vest contains one shake can, one spray bottle, and one large air horn

Assistant apron: the assistant apron contains one shake can and one spray bottle.

*The following tools should only be used to interrupt an interaction that the leader believes may result in injury or significant stress. If used on a frequent basis, this indicates that better planning is needed with regard to the selection of dogs, and the order of introduction and/or removal from the group. Whenever possible dogs should learn (via reprimands from and interaction with) from other dogs. A dog should be excluded from playgroup if frequent use of aversives would be necessary to maintain safety.

- Spray bottle- spray dog on face
Advantage: water can be aversive and can be directed toward a single dog
Disadvantages: dog may not respond, dog may become fearful of the user or playgroup area
- Shake can- shaking can directly at/toward the dog
Advantage: noise can be aversive, and can be directed toward more than one dog simultaneously
Disadvantages: dog may not respond, other innocent dogs may also be punished; dogs may become fearful of handler or playgroup area.
- Air horn- a quick 'bop' or longer press of the air horn
Advantage: Noise can be aversive. Person with air horn does not need to be immediately adjacent to dog. Quick 'bops' of air horn are mildly aversive and can be effective at interrupting the start of an altercation.
Disadvantages: dog may not respond, affects many dogs in the play yard, dogs may become fearful of handler or playgroup area.

Introducing A New Dog To Doggie Social Hour

Some dogs can be quickly integrated into playgroup. These dogs include:

- Dogs with a history of friendly behavior toward other dogs on their behavioral history
- Dogs who are calm and quiet

1. Introduce the dog at the beginning of a playgroup session to a known stable and friendly play group dog (Dog 1) who has a play style that is unlikely to provoke an aggressive dog (for example, does not frequently mount or jump on top of other dogs when playing).
2. Take the new dog to the yard first, and let him/her explore for several minutes while dragging a leash. You may wish to leave a no-pull harness or Gentle Leader on the new dog if the dog is large and/or very strong.
3. One person picks up new dog's leash while remaining in the yard, and a second person brings Dog 1 into the gated introduction area. Allow the dogs to interact through the gate.
4. If aggression (from the new dog) occurs at any time, discontinue the introduction. Either choose a different friendly dog for initial introduction, choose a different method of introduction, or designate the new dog as a dog not allowed in playgroup.
5. Pick up Dog 1's leash, and bring Dog 1 into the main play yard, where the new dog is waiting on leash with handler.
6. Stop for at least 5 seconds with the dogs 10 feet away from each other, both on leash, and observe their body language. If signs of aggression are observed, discontinue the introduction.
7. If no aggression is observed, allow the dogs to greet each other, still holding both leashes. Keep leashes loose (slack in line) and do NOT allow the leashes to tangle. Handlers should stay 180 degrees away from each other.
8. If both dogs appear comfortable (no fear, anxiety, or aggression) and friendly, drop Dog 1's leash.
9. If both dogs remain comfortable after Dog 1's leash was dropped, remove Dog 1's leash and then drop the new dog's leash.
10. Additional dogs can be introduced, as long as the new dog remains comfortable and friendly. If not, remove the new dog and repeat introduction in a subsequent session and/or with different dogs.
11. Once the new dog has demonstrated a lack of aggression toward several dogs, the leash may be removed.



Introducing New Dog to Doggie Social Hour (cont.)

12. If the new dog is medium to large, the dog must also be introduced to a small dog, to evaluate for prey drive before allowing unlimited play group access. Small dog assessment:
 - a. Choose a small dog (less than 20 pounds) that likes to run.
 - b. Start the prey assessment during a regular play group session, preferably when multiple dogs are already out in the yard.
 - c. Place a leash on the new dog before introducing the small dog.
 - d. Allow the small dog into the yard, and observe the new dog's behavior.
 - e. If the new dog is whining, staring intently, and/or lunging at the small dog, the new dog might be inclined to chase, catch, and harm small dogs. Do not continue the introduction at this time. Evaluate the new dog with a small dog in a more controlled setting (with only the new dog and small dog present) and with a basket muzzle or Gentle Leader on the new dog. Allow the new dog to get closer to the small dog.

Depending on what happens, do one of the following:

If the dog's intensity continuously increases (more aggressively lunges) the closer it gets to the small dog, the new dog should not be allowed in play group when small dogs are present. Designate "PD" along with other classification on report.

If the new dog is uninterested or intensity does not increase, allow the dogs to greet each other, first on and then with the new dog's leash dropped. If the new dog is friendly toward, and does not pounce on or intently and continuously chase the small dog, the new dog can be allowed in playgroups with small dogs.

Introducing a Challenging Dog

Some dogs may benefit from a slow and careful introduction into playgroup. These types of dogs may include:

- Dogs which have been observed to behave aggressively around other dogs solely (and inconsistently) when on walks.
- Dogs which have shown minor and infrequent aggression to other dogs while in the shelter or on the dog's behavioral history
- Very energetic and excited dogs
- Dogs with an unknown history of interaction with other dogs (i.e., strays)

Prior To Playgroup

Take the new dog for a walk alongside another dog before attempting to introduce the dog to playgroup. If the dog shows friendly behavior toward other dogs while on walks, this is a sign that introducing the dog to play group may be successful. If the dog consistently behaves aggressively when it encounters other dogs outdoors, the dog is likely a poor candidate for playgroup.

Choose a known stable and friendly playgroup dog (Dog 1) with a play style that is unlikely to provoke an aggressive dog (for example, does not frequently mount or jump on top of other dogs when playing), for the new dog's initial playgroup introduction.

At A Challenging Dog's First Playgroup

1. The introduction should occur at the beginning or end of a playgroup session.
2. Take the new dog to the yard first, and let him/her explore for several minutes while dragging a leash.
3. Put a safety device on the dog, if indicated (see next page). Not all dogs will need a safety device. Using these safety devices occasionally has the added benefit of inhibiting outgoing and aggressive behavior, which can facilitate a smooth introduction.
4. Pick up new dog's leash, and bring Dog 1 into the gated introduction area. Allow the dogs to interact through the gate.
5. If aggression (from the new dog) occurs at any time, discontinue the introduction. Either choose a different Dog 1 for initial introduction, or designate the new dog as a dog not allowed in playgroup.
6. Pick up Dog 1's leash, and bring Dog 1 into the main play yard, where the new dog is waiting on leash with a handler.
7. Stop for at least 5 seconds with the dogs 10 feet away from each other and observe their body language. If signs of aggression are observed, discontinue the introduction.
8. If no aggression is observed, allow the dogs to greet each other, still holding both leashes (leash is attached to the new dog's gentle leader or collar, if the dog is not wearing a Gentle Leader (GL)).
9. Keep leashes loose (slack in line) and do NOT allow the leashes to tangle. Handlers should stay 180 degrees away from each other.

Introducing a Challenging Dog (cont.)

10. If both dogs appear comfortable (no fear, anxiety, or aggression) and friendly, drop and/or remove Dog 1's leash.
11. Next steps include (progression may vary, depending upon the individual dog and the safety device(s) used):
 - a. Drop the new dog's leash
 - b. Remove basket muzzle
 - c. Loosen GL so that it fits normally and appropriately (see below)
 - d. Remove GL
 - e. Remove leash
12. A second dog can be introduced if the new dog is comfortable and friendly. If not, remove the new dog and repeat introduction in a subsequent session.
13. The new dog must also be introduced to a small dog, to evaluate for prey drive before allowing unlimited play group access. Use muzzle and/or GL if necessary in this introduction, as you did with the initial introduction.

Safety Devices

Muzzle (basket muzzle, or loose fitting nylon muzzle): Use if the dog is large and difficult to control with unknown history, or if dog has a history of aggression. Avoid using a basket muzzle or loose fitting nylon muzzle during warm or humid weather. The dog cannot pant as easily as it can without the muzzle; this can result in heat stroke and/or death.

Gentle Leader (GL): The Gentle Leader may be fitted so that it has a tight fit around the nose, which inhibits the dog's ability to severely damage the other dog. Fitting the GL in this way will NOT prevent bites (and should never be recommended to the public for use as a muzzle). Do not ever fit the GL tightly around the nose of a dog, even for one minute, during warm or humid weather. This can result in heat stroke and/or death.

GL and muzzle: Place the GL on first, and the muzzle over the GL. Use both safety tools when you are certain you are going to need to do a slow introduction, as in step 11 above. The muzzle is removed once you know that it is NOT likely that the new dog will attack the friendly dog, but still need additional control and management of the new dog.

If the dog is pawing repeatedly at the device, use a different device or discontinue the introduction and work on desensitizing the dog to the device, at a different time before attempting reintroduction.

Intervention: Reducing Tension Between Dogs

With multiple dogs who don't know each other in a playgroup, conflict may arise.

When tension occurs, do NOT act immediately. Allow the dogs to work things out on their own whenever possible.

Options for intervening during tense interactions include:

- Pick up Leash- If dog has a leash on, person picks up the leash to remove the dog from the interaction or steps on the leash so the other dog can move away.
- Body blocking- person stands in front of fearful/avoiding dog and prevents instigator from approaching
- Drawing attention away- one or several play group people solicit all the dogs to follow them and play- via friendly voice and running in the opposite direction 'hey dogs, lets play!!'
- Voice- ONLY use voice if you can remain calm (only use a steady, low-pitched tone) - dogs will sense anxiety in your voice if you are not calm, which might increase their anxiety. To interrupt a tense altercation, say the dog's name or 'enough' to direct attention away from the other dog and toward you. Never yell or scream.

Intervention techniques that are recommended for specific circumstances include:

- A dog chasing another dog or standing on top of another dog continuously, despite the other dog giving body language signals that it does not wish to interact (fear, avoidance, submission): body blocking, voice, pick up leash, aversive tool (spray bottle, shake can, or quick bop of air horn)
- Two dogs with stiff body posture directly staring at one another: voice, pick up leash, aversive tool
- A dog attempts to interact with a fearful dog that is squealing or yelping: voice, pick up leash, aversive tool (spray bottle is preferred)
- A dog attempts to interact with a very fearful dog that does not wish to interact: body blocking, voice, pick up leash, aversive tool (spray bottle is preferred)
- Multiple dogs heading toward the introduction gate when another dog is entering, or multiple dogs heading toward an altercation: draw attention away

When A Fight Occurs:

1. Leader and Assistant **walk** toward the fighting dogs, while the leader activates the air horn.
2. Run ONLY if it is obvious that one of the dogs is being severely injured.
3. DO NOT yell/scream at, or hit the dogs.
4. If the dogs have not separated by the time the Leader and Assistant reach them, press the air horn again.
5. If at any point during the fight the dogs separate from each other, the leader should grab one dog's collar (or leash, if present) and the assistant grabs the other and DOES NOT LET GO (unless the dog attempts to redirect aggression onto the handler).
6. Leader and Assistant move the dogs away from each other, and attach the dogs' leashes as quickly as possible.
7. If the dogs are still fighting, follow the instructions for "Breaking Up A Fight" (next page) .

Breaking Up A Fight

It is important to differentiate a fight from an altercation. Altercations may involve growling, barking and aggressive posturing, but the dogs do not harm each other; oftentimes these do not require intervention. A fight involves the dogs grabbing each other's skin or body parts with the intent to cause injury. Remember that prevention is always best. Careful selection of the order of introduction and removal of dogs from playgroup should be done in an effort to prevent fights from occurring.

Breaking up a fight is dangerous. DO NOT ever attempt to pull a dog off of or away from the other dog when one of the dogs is 'attached' (biting and not letting go) to the other.

Grabbing the dog's collar puts you at risk of getting bitten, and attempting to pull the dog off after biting another dog while the dog continues to hold on, almost always worsens damage, by creating lacerations or tearing (as opposed to punctures). When in doubt, your safety is MOST important; do not put yourself at risk by touching the dogs.

When a fight occurs during playgroup, first try using an air horn to separate the dogs. (See Intervention: Reducing Tension Between Dogs)

Level Two: Breaking up a fight when an air horn doesn't work

1. If the air horn doesn't separate the dogs, REMAIN CALM!
2. The Leader picks up the back legs of one of the dogs and the Assistant picks up the back legs of the other dog.
3. As soon as one dog releases its hold, both handlers back away from each other (while still holding their legs), while circling. The purpose of circling is to cause the dogs to 'sidestep' (cross their front legs while walking), which will make it more difficult for them to redirect on to you and bite you.
4. Continue to back the dogs away from each other until one dog is in the introduction area.

Level Three: Breaking up a fight when level two doesn't work

If the dogs do not release their hold after their hind legs are picked up, try the following:

1. Put on kevlar gloves
2. Spray with water from hose
3. Use "Y" pole, to pin dog to ground

Keeping Track of a Dog's Behavior

- After conducting doggie social hour (playgroup), the leader should provide a summary of the session, including the order in which dogs entered and were removed from the yard and any behavior notes.
- Important behavioral observations (i.e., introduction to play group or any altercations) should also be recorded in the dog's shelter record
- Any changes to the dog's play category should be noted for the next playgroup.

Sample of a daily Doggie Social Hour summary:

Date: 06/04/2020			
Leader	Marianne	Runners	
Asst	Alana	Caitie & Leigh	
Dog Name	Play Category	Instructions	Notes
Chester	DF		
Max	DE		
Ace	DF		
Shadow	GD		
Munchkin	GD		
Smooxy	GD	intro back to group today	snapped at a couple dogs that got too much in his face - especially Ace
Osian	GD	intro to group	good with intro - but lifted his lip & growled a few times when too many dogs got near him at once
Joey			I noticed a difference when she was alone - she did not hide in the corner and she did not snap at any dogs. Once other rat terners came out she returned to the corner and snapped at Chester when he tried to play
Penny	GD		
Pejer (male black collar)			
		Ace out	
Tyrone	GD		
Frankie (female black collar)			
		Tyrone, Rat Pack, Max, Chester out	
Connor	RP-RC		
		Everyone out except Connor	
Blayvi			



How to Provide Enrichment for Shelter Dogs

bestfriends.org



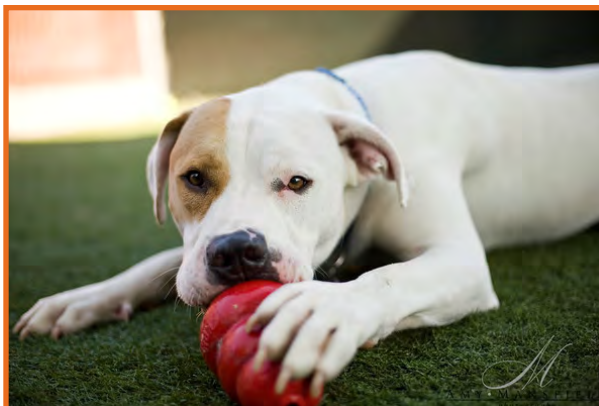
This action kit provides ways to increase the adoptability of shelter dogs by enriching their day-to-day lives in the shelter.

The shelter environment can be stressful for dogs, but shelter staff and volunteers can help ease that stress by providing enrichment opportunities and activities. Many of these enrichment activities also help dogs become more adoptable. Every dog needs our assistance to become more adoptable or to stay adoptable until he/she finds a wonderful home. You can make a big difference in shelter dogs' quality of life by adding enrichment with your time, attention and love.

1. Provide a variety of toys.

Note: To keep dogs safe, this enrichment activity should not be used in areas containing, or accessible to, more than one dog. If dogs are housed in groups, each dog should be given a private space to play with toys.

Dogs enjoy having toys or something to play with. Just make sure that easily destroyed toys, such as rope toys or stuffed toys, are never left with a dog who is unsupervised. Best Friends recommends Other Cuz Balls (made by JW Pet Company) because they are practically indestructible and have no appendages that dogs can chew off and swallow.



Food-dispensing toys. Dispensing toys are great for mental stimulation and they increase the time during the day when a dog has meaningful activities to engage in. You put treats or meals in the toy and the dog has to figure out how to get the food out. Most dogs are highly motivated, but be sure to start with easier toys that the dog can experience success with; too difficult a puzzle can increase frustration and promote loss of interest. As the dog's skills improve, he will enjoy more challenging toys. Try Treat Stiks (www.treatstik.com), Busy Dog Balls (www.busydogball.com) or Buster Cubes (www.bustercube.com). Premier Busy Buddy makes several types of treat-dispensing toys, available at pet supply stores. Kongs are durable rubber enrichment toys that can be stuffed with food. For more information, visit their website at www.kongcompany.com.

Chew toys. Dogs love to chew, so giving them appropriate things to chew is a great enrichment activity. Nylabone makes a variety of chew toys and interactive toys for dogs, providing them with hours of fun. Check out their products at www.nylabone.com. Nylabone and most other manufacturers recommend supervision for many of their products.

Ice-block toys. These "toys" will keep dogs occupied for hours and are a nice treat on a hot day. They are easy to make: Place a few toys in a bucket, fill the bucket with water, and freeze it. Another idea for a frozen treat: Freeze chicken or beef broth in popsicle molds or drinking cups. Be sure to always supervise the dog enjoying the treat.

2. Play hide-and-seek.



Note: To keep dogs safe, this enrichment activity should not be used in areas containing, or accessible to, more than one dog. If dogs are housed in groups, each dog should be given a private space when playing hide-and-seek.

It's not just kids who love this game — dogs love it, too! Keep dogs mentally and physically active by making them think and search for their treats. Some suggestions:

- Bury toys or treats in a sand box.
- Place toys or treats in ladles and hang from trees.
- Place toys or treats in logs or other hiding places in play yards.

3. Go on outings.

If your shelter allows dogs off-site, take a dog to lunch or take one along when you're on a break or running an errand. The goal is to get them out and about, seeing and experiencing new things, and interacting with the public.

Another idea: Give a couple of dogs some social time by asking a co-worker to walk dogs with you off-site. The first step to providing this type of enrichment is to introduce the dogs carefully and safely, with the awareness that dogs often lack social skills when meeting each other. For more details on how to introduce dogs, read "Helping Shelter Dogs to Meet Each Other Successfully" in the resources section at the end of this action kit. Besides providing social opportunities, encouraging dogs to interact politely also helps them become more adoptable.

At my shelter, we have Wednesday walkabouts, excursions in which we take adoptable dogs wearing "Adopt Me" vests out for a walk in places like shopping centers or parks. It's great for enrichment and also makes our adoptable dogs more visible to the public, increasing their chances of adoption. We even hand out the dogs' "business cards" to people interested in contacting us for more information.

Cordelia Mendoza

Best Friends Shelter Coordinator
County of San Diego Department
of Animal Services
Carlsbad, California

4. Set up group play sessions.

Group play is a great way to get the dogs exercised and keep them mentally happy and healthy. A half-hour of group play is the equivalent of a two-hour walk. As with tandem walks, you'll need to introduce the dogs carefully to prevent any problems.

Before participating in group play sessions, you should learn how to monitor play groups and gather the tools you'll need for the play sessions. For more details on setting up and monitoring group play, read "Playing with a Purpose" in the resources section of this action kit. A local or staff trainer can help you learn more about dog body language to better decide which dogs are ready for play groups.

Always monitor a group play session closely and be sure to take into consideration the reproductive status of the dogs and also vaccination status to avoid passing contagions.



Aimee Sadler, a veteran animal trainer specializing in behavioral problems, is the behavior and training program director for the Longmont Humane Society in Colorado. Aimee says play groups are a natural way for dogs to blow off steam, and the group interactions allow them to teach each other how to behave. Giving dogs physical and mental stimulation means they will become better socialized and more adoptable. For more about Aimee, go to www.longmonthumane.org, and for more details on play groups, read "Playing with a Purpose" in the resources section of this action kit.

5. Teach basic manners and life skills.

Some shelter dogs come from backgrounds where they didn't have the opportunity to learn social skills. Teaching them basic manners and life skills provides mental stimulation and helps them to become more adoptable. All dogs should have skills such as these:

- Walking well on a leash
- Not jumping up to greet people
- Sit, stay, leave it and come
- Name recognition



You could also try teaching some silly tricks, like how to do a high-five. When teaching a dog any new skill, remember to make it fun for the dog. Be patient, stay positive, and reward success with plenty of praise and treats. For more details on training, check out the resources in Best Friends' online pet care library at bestfriends.org/theanimals.

Shelter staff and volunteers can teach dogs these skills on an individual, informal basis or you could start a shelter manners class taught by a trainer. The class could be held regularly — once a week, perhaps — with volunteers or staff members each responsible for bringing a dog to the class. The added advantage of a group manners class is that it helps shelter dogs develop good relationships with both people and dogs.

For more information on helping very shy dogs, read "Techniques for Helping Feral or Shy Dogs" in the resources section.

Our training classes are all volunteer-based. We have a core group of volunteers who take this very seriously and come regularly. They know they are saving lives! We have classes on Monday, Tuesday and Friday mornings and Wednesday afternoons. The classes are geared toward helping dogs to improve their social skills and gain their Canine Good Citizen certification. The volunteers who participate each take one of the dogs from the kennel and bring the dogs to class. It doesn't always have to be the same handler with the same dog.

According to the American Kennel Club, which sponsors the Canine Good Citizen program, it is "designed to reward dogs who have good manners at home and in the community." We test for Canine Good Citizen status about once a month. For lots more information about the Canine Good Citizen program, you can go to www.akc.org/events/cgc.

Connie Johnson
Best Friends Shelter Coordinator
Hillsborough County Animal Services
Tampa, Florida

6. Keep a treat bucket handy.

Keeping a bucket full of treats handy is a good way to reinforce good behavior in dogs. A treat bucket is a nice way to help enforce the training rules, while also involving everyone (staff, volunteers, the public) in the training process. And when prospective adopters come to see them, the dogs will sit politely when the people approach.



We have a bucket attached to the front of the kennel that holds the treats and has a sign saying, "Please help train me. Only give me a treat if all four of my feet are on the ground." This helps train dogs not to jump up on people. The treat bucket is available all the time, for staff, volunteers and the public to use.

At our shelter, we also create ice-block treat buckets, for the dogs to enjoy when the weather is warm. I place various items, such as toys and some treats, in a bucket and then fill it with water, and then I freeze the whole thing. A dog can be occupied for quite a while as he licks the ice to get at the toys and treats.

Kirstyn Northrop Cobb
Best Friends Shelter Coordinator
Washington Humane Society
Washington, D.C.

7. Help dogs with return-to-run resistance.



A common scenario at shelters everywhere: You've taken a dog out of his run for a bit and now it's time for him to go back in. The dog puts on his brakes, tries to back out of his collar, lies down and won't move. You try to pull him and he starts to growl. What to do? Read "Coping with Return-to-Run Resistance" in the resources section for some ideas on how to help dogs who are resistant to going back into their runs.



8. Offer a variety of smells and sounds.

As with people, soothing smells and sounds can help dogs relax. For stress relief, introduce aromatherapy – such as lavender, chamomile, valerian or dog-appeasing pheromones (DAP). You can get vent system aromatherapy or even plug-ins for the shelter. DAP is a spray or plug-in that provides an effective way to control and manage unwanted canine behavior associated with fear and/or stress. Try different types of aromas; some dogs have favorites. Also, try playing some light classical music CDs or recorded sounds of ocean waves or rain. Again, experiment with different sounds to see what works best.

To help reduce kennel stress, my shelter sometimes uses Thundershirts. The Thundershirt's gentle, constant pressure has a calming effect on the dog. For more information about this product, go to thundershirt.com.

Cordelia Mendoza

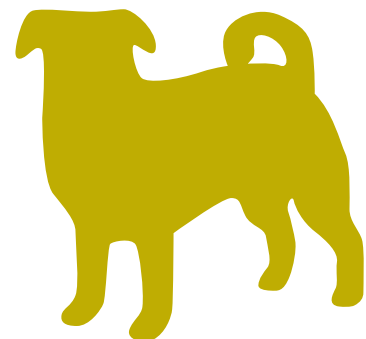
Best Friends Shelter Coordinator
County of San Diego Department
of Animal Services
Carlsbad, California

9. Think outside the box.

The number of ways that you can enhance shelter dogs' well-being is limited only by your imagination. "Rainy Day Activities" (in the resources section) has some additional fun ideas for you to try.

Because we see a disproportionate number of pit-bull-terrier-type dogs entering our shelter, we wanted to highlight them to show our community that, just like any other dog, they are individuals and make wonderful companions. We have a Pit Bull Ambassador Program in which we feature adoptable dogs. To determine whether a dog is a good candidate for the program, we do a SAFER assessment. (Go to www.aspcapro.org/aspca-safer.php for more information.) If the dog passes all of the tests, he becomes a Pit Bull Ambassador. We promote the dog as much as possible and he is routinely taken out into the community for sleepovers and to attend events and other activities.

Connie Johnson
Best Friends Shelter Coordinator
Hillsborough County Animal Services
Tampa, Florida



Disclaimer: This publication is for educational purposes only. Some of the methods described in this publication may contrast with each other. Any training or socialization program has inherent risks of personal injury and should be carried out by certified professional dog trainers. Best Friends Animal Society does not warrant the effectiveness of these techniques or guarantee results from any training program or shelter program modeled on these techniques, nor shall Best Friends be held liable for any injury or damage resulting from same.

Resources

The following attached resources can help you in your efforts to provide enrichment to shelter dogs:

- Helping Shelter Dogs to Meet Each Other Successfully
- Playing with a Purpose
- Techniques for Helping Feral or Shy Dogs
- Coping with Return-to-Run Resistance
- Rainy Day Activities

For more information about training and enrichment, check out Best Friends' online pet care library:

www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/petcare

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Helping Shelter Dogs to Meet Each Other Successfully

By Sherry Woodard

Dogs are naturally social animals, but that doesn't mean they all have the necessary social skills to meet each other politely. Why would you want shelter dogs to meet and get along with each other? Well, shelter dogs can experience stress when housed in runs individually, so one way to provide some social time for the dogs and reduce stress is to take them for walks together or set up play sessions. The first step to providing these types of enrichment is to



introduce the dogs carefully and safely, with the awareness that dogs often lack social skills when meeting each other. If a shelter houses dogs in groups, the initial introduction of a new dog can be done the same way.

To proceed with the meeting, have each dog on lead with a calm, relaxed handler. Keep the leads loose. A tight leash interferes with a dog's ability to move naturally, and it can add a feeling of vulnerability by limiting his ability to move away at will or add frustration at not being able to approach the other dog. In addition, pulling on the leash might communicate to the dog that the handlers are fearful or anxious about their meeting. Don't let the dogs rush up to each other; avoid face-to-face greetings (a rude way of meeting) by keeping them 8 to 10 feet apart.

As the dogs approach each other, watch their body language closely. A polite greeting involves making very brief eye contact and then looking away. Some very well-adjusted social dogs will ignore the other dog. If no eye contact is made or the dogs just briefly glance at each other, the handlers should casually walk side by side, keeping the dogs moving. I allow them to get close, even sniffing each other, but not touching or greeting face to face.

If the dogs stiffen their bodies, stare into each other's eyes with their hair up, bare their teeth or lunge at each other, the handlers (if they're comfortable doing this) can help the dogs by keeping them moving or creating a greater distance between the dogs. The dogs should be kept far enough apart so that they can't touch and at a distance from each other that allows them to relax enough to occasionally break focus on the other dog.

If at any point the handlers become uncomfortable, they should stop. End the walk when the dogs have calmed down, and try again later with short walks just like this. The goal is to build on any positive experience that occurs. Each time the dogs go out together, they may become more relaxed around each other and may be able to walk closer to each other.

However, if the dogs continue to react in negative, defensive ways, to keep them and all other dogs safe, house them only with dogs they are comfortable with. At Best Friends, we continue to socialize them and help them improve their skills with walks and classes in Dogtown.

At Best Friends, dogs may live in groups of four or five, so we introduce many dogs in this way. Once each dog in a group has successfully walked with the new dog, the handlers walk the new dog into the run with the last dog. The handler who has the new dog on lead drops the leash and allows it to drag. If any of the other dogs showed behavior that concerned us while being walked with the new dog, we have that dog drag a leash, too. The leashes are for safety — to grab if needed.

We watch the group for at least a couple of minutes before un-clipping the leash(es), and we continue to watch for at least 10 minutes before looking away or leaving the run. Also, as we watch, we don't give too much attention to any of the dogs or start playing with them with their toys; the idea is to create a calm atmosphere, not cause excitement. For many introductions, we remove distractions — such as toys — from the run to reduce the number of potential reasons for conflict.

One thing to keep in mind: Shy and/or fearful dogs do not always show us their true behavior when we are with them. When we exit the run to watch more from outside their space, they may be more comfortable and have different behavior than what we have seen.

If more walks are needed before everyone is comfortable (both humans and dogs), then we have the dogs live separately and walk them for multiple days. At Best Friends, the new dog is removed from the run at night and is re-introduced in the morning. This is the routine for the first week for most new dogs at the Sanctuary. Since unsupervised dogs sometimes make bad decisions, this routine helps keep the dogs safe. After a week of being closely monitored by the staff, if no concerning behavior has occurred, the new dog may start sleeping in the shared space. We also restrict the run to staff only (no volunteers) for the one-week period. This practice gives the dogs and the staff a somewhat calm first week to become friends.

Remember, dogs often need our help to learn proper social behavior. Many dogs need practice meeting other dogs to become comfortable and without continuing to practice, they will lack the skills to relax and enjoy new dog friends.

Besides providing social opportunities, encouraging dogs to interact politely also helps them become more adoptable. Every dog deserves our assistance to become more adoptable and to stay adoptable until he/she finds a wonderful home. You can make a difference in shelter dogs' quality of life by adding enrichment with your time, attention and love.

Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior and training consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.

Disclaimer: Best Friends Animal Society is not responsible for any injuries to anyone using the techniques described in this article. Any person using the techniques described here does so at his/her own risk.

Playing with a Purpose

Aimee Sadler shows shelters how to socialize dogs through play groups

BY JAMES HETTINGER



Aimee Sadler, an animal trainer who specializes in play groups to socialize dogs and straighten out problem behaviors, finds an attentive audience at Longmont Humane Society in Colorado.

At the Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter (BARCS), animal care attendant/enrichment coordinator Brian George has a simple summation of the play groups the shelter began running earlier this year: “It’s about letting dogs be dogs, you know?”

Dogs in the BARCS play groups run and play in fenced yards furnished with hoses, small plastic swimming pools, sand, beach umbrellas, basketballs, volleyballs, and tennis balls—“everything we can think of,” George says.

“When they’re out in play group, it’s great stimulation for them physically and mentally,” he explains. “So when they’re back

in the kennel in their cages, their cage behavior is just really improved. The better behaved they are in the cage, the better their chances are of getting adopted.”

The play groups, which have quickly become an essential part of the enrichment program at the shelter, grew out of a two-day training session conducted at BARCS last spring by Aimee Sadler, a veteran animal trainer specializing in behavioral problems.

The director of training and behavior for both the Longmont Humane Society in Colorado and the Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation in New York, Sadler travels the

country teaching shelters how to implement play groups. Having grown up in a home with multiple dogs, she says the approach comes naturally to her. Some shelters resist the idea, fearing that fights will break out. Sadler shows them that the groups can be run safely, no matter what breeds you have, if you divide the dogs according to compatible play styles.

Sadler touts what she sees as the many benefits of play groups. They’re a natural way for dogs to blow off steam and counteract the stresses of shelter life. Through group interactions, dogs teach each other how to behave, addressing such problems as resource guard-

ing, dog-on-dog aggression, and on-leash reactivity. Letting dogs “get their ya-yas out together” is a more efficient use of staff and volunteer time than having people walk dogs individually, Sadler notes, and cleaning the kennels can go quicker if the timing is coordinated with play group so that the cages are empty.

Some may worry about the possibility of play groups causing an increase in disease transmission, but Sadler asserts that more enrichment means less stress, which equates to less disease. It’s important to vaccinate dogs upon intake, and to limit play groups in the event of medical concerns such as the presence of parvo. Your medical team and your behavioral team need to work together and be flexible, Sadler advises. Each shelter should take its resources into consideration and weigh the program’s risks and benefits.

In the excerpted interview below, Sadler discusses her techniques with *Animal Sheltering* associate editor James Hettinger.

Animal Sheltering: How did you first get into play groups for dogs?

Aimee Sadler: I think I was born into it. Seriously. My mom always rescued dogs. We had a farm in upstate New York, and I remember we had like 17 dogs at one point, hanging out. They all came in the house at night, so they weren’t kept in kennels. That’s how I was raised, around animals like that. It just always felt very intuitive and natural to me.

Can you walk through a typical scenario at a shelter?

When I’m teaching shelters, a lot of times they say, “Do you want to walk through the kennels, and see the dogs’ behavior in the kennels, to pick which ones you want me to bring out to play group?” And the notion that I’m trying to get across to everybody is: That’s not going to tell me anything meaningful. Their behavior behind the barrier, or on the leash, has nothing to do with their ability



Dogs taking part in play groups at the Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter get to release their physical and mental energy while learning social skills.

to be social with dogs once they actually have access to them. There’s tons of dogs here—let’s just let them play.

Everybody’s afraid of dogfights or people getting injured, but if you’re handling things correctly, you don’t create [panic and pull] dogs apart. That’s how bad injuries often occur, by handler error, more than the dogs actually doing it to each other. They get into arguments, just like we do, and they work it out, and they can settle disputes, and they can build a skill set in settling disputes.

It’s really nice if you have a couple of yards that are attached, so that you can divide dogs based upon play style. I focus more on that than on actual size. I don’t do anything based on breed—nothing. It’s more just taking a look at them when they come in and doing a quick visual assessment of what you think they’re going to be. We’ve learned that we can’t really predict, but the handler gets to decide: That dog looks edgy; that dog looks like it’s going to need more one-on-one support; or that dog looks like he’s just so happy to play, but he’s pretty rowdy, so let’s not put him in with these more gentle dogs. Then eventually the goal is we open up that space and let everybody flow together.

At the Longmont Humane Society, we’re

averaging about 100 dogs on site. On average, about 80 of them are rated to go to play groups. So we have this pool of socialized dogs who rotate around and meet multiple dogs, and as a result of that, there’s an amazing service that we provide to the community. If somebody has a dog that’s been deemed dog-aggressive—either they’ve had an incident, or they’re just afraid of their dog’s behavior—we have this pool of socialized shelter dogs that we can [use to] help smooth out their dog-aggression issues—[whereas] it’s not appropriate for them to go to a dog park, for example. You don’t want somebody bringing their dog-aggressive dog to the dog park to try to work it out. So it’s actually a phenomenal support system for the community that we happen to specialize in socializing dogs and letting shelter dogs play.

And we have dogs who have been sent to us from other places in the country, that were taken in from cruelty, fight busts, hoarding cases—intact dogs of every breed that then help us smooth out dogs in the community that are having problems. They’re actually like therapy dogs for other dogs.

It’s about using play groups to let the animals show us who they want to be when there isn’t someone there to give them information about how they should behave.

How do you go about ironing out some of their aggressive behaviors?

Sometimes I’ve identified, “You know, that dog is just going to launch on anyone. They don’t care if it’s male or if it’s female.” So I’ve



Play groups can help show shelter staff which dogs get along well with each other. When you know more about their dog-to-dog social skills, you can make better adoption matches, notes trainer Aimee Sadler.

[q&a]

identified that dog as dog-aggressive. It's rare that that happens. Muzzles are a really great way to start. You can prevent them from following through, reinforcing the behavior of fighting, and you pick other dogs who will be able to emotionally and physically withstand this one being incredibly rude. With a muzzle, you don't have to worry about the damage. As a handler, you don't have to overhandle the situation. You're setting them up to be able to step out of it and let another dog teach them: "That is ridiculous. Don't be doing that to me." And you choose dogs that are going to communicate clearly with that one, and teach them another option.

It depends on what dogs you have available. It's important that you have the right kind of dogs to communicate clearly with the one that's having the trouble. Sometimes you need dogs that are very strong in their personalities, very assertive, and then sometimes you want dogs that are so happy-go-lucky playful they're like, "Dude! What's your problem? Chill out." You have to pick which one you think is going to suit. That comes from experience. This is definitely something you have to have some intuition about. It's not something that I'll ever write a manual [about]—it's more basic strategies, basic principles of learning, basic personality types and play styles in dogs, and then getting a feel for how to put that together for yourself.

And I can't tell you that I've been successful every single time, that every dog that's sent to me for dog-aggression issues, I'm able to resolve that issue. Sometimes what I can do is actually identify, "Yes, this dog is actually dog-aggressive—it will fight with a male or a female, and I can tell you that unequivocally, because I've given them an opportunity to show me something different, and this is what they choose to do." Sometimes that's the answer, and whether that dog is an adoption candidate then depends upon what agency is responsible for [him], what community they're going into, [and] what adoption follow-up resources are available.

What do the dogs get out of this style of play?

They get to burn energy in a different way than going on a walk with somebody. If you think about coming out of a small enclosure, and then being on a 6-foot leash, and going



Kimm Tarantino, a volunteer at the Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter, watches two dogs burn off some energy in a play yard.

for a 15-minute walk, that's probably, for a lot of dogs that have arousal issues, more of a frustrating experience—frustrating for the handlers and the dogs. But this actually allows them to get their ya-yas out differently—full physical and mental expression.

So your message has generally been well-received?

There's an intuitive piece to letting dogs run around and play in large groups. Some people are truly scared of it; they've either had bad experiences, or it doesn't feel natural to them. Some people just have a really strong resistance to it. I always coach shelters: Don't make the decision that, "OK, our training and behavior person is the one that's going to run play groups," because maybe that person doesn't feel comfortable with it. But maybe you have a kennel attendant that's like, "Hey, I worked in doggie day care before. I love doing this stuff." Allow for a natural comfort level and natural intuition about it to take the lead. Because then you'll be more successful, rather than trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

The overall goal is you'll have better-adjusted dogs and a higher release rate?

Yes, definitely a higher release rate, because it helps you to combat behavioral deterioration from a typical kennel environment.

[And] let's say you're getting taxed for space. Now you can start putting dogs together and having them cohabitate in a healthier, more appropriate way, and the process of how you get there is also faster. It used to take two kennel supervisors, they'd do their best guess to think which dogs would do OK together, and then they would go outside and walk them on a leash next to each other, and then they'd do an on-leash introduction, and then they'd put them in the kennel, and sit and observe them for 15 minutes. We're talking about two staff people for 30 minutes, to try to get two dogs to live together.

Now, they run out to play group, we notice, "Oh, those two are playing great together, so when that one goes in, instead of putting him in No. 37, go ahead and put him back in No. 46, with Eddie." So it's just an efficiency thing there. You have much more comprehensive information about what their dog-to-dog skills are. We can tell [potential adopters], "Here's our population of dog-social dogs." We can do much better adoption matches.

Am I advocating stuffing as many dogs into kennels as possible, as a result of play groups? No. But what I'm suggesting is there's a possibility that you might have many dogs living in your single dog runs who would be much happier with a companion with them. If that's the case, identify that, and don't make an across-the-board policy that we won't let dogs live together unless we're overcrowded, because you might be missing an opportunity to better enrich a couple of dogs.

What would be your pitch to a shelter that had heard about play groups and wanted to know more?

The pitch is that, remember, it's actually the more natural state for a dog to be in. They are supposed to be pack animals. And that the benefits far outweigh whatever risks you have in the back of your mind. I can't promise anybody that dogfights won't happen, but the big picture is we've been doing it all over the place, and everybody's feeling a huge relief as a result of implementing a program like this. **AS**

Techniques for Helping Feral or Shy Dogs

By Best Friends trainers

There are a number of techniques that can be employed to help feral or shy dogs overcome their fear of people.

“People Are Good” Method

The goal with this technique is to show the dog that humans are a valuable resource and directly provide for his needs. When using this method, total separation from other dogs



is indicated if the other dogs are interfering with the dog’s feeding and other interactions. Some feral/shy dogs gain confidence and progress well with other dogs present; others progress more slowly with other dogs around because they have canine support and a “buffer” to distance them from the scary humans.

Here are the steps:

1. Bring the dog his food every day on a regular schedule, so the dog realizes that food appears at a particular time each day. You also want to remove the food bowl each day after a period of time, to accustom the dog to eating within a predictable window of time.
2. Watch to see if he will eat in your presence. You want to work up to hand-feeding, which may take several steps. For example:
 - Eating when he is in sight of you
 - Eating when you are in his run
 - Eating when you are next to him in his run
3. When he is comfortable with eating when you are next to him, offer hand-feeding. Be patient: It is OK if he doesn’t take the food from your hand right away. Dogs frequently need to assess a change in situation before trying a new behavior. Some dogs find it easier to begin with you outside the run, offering hand-feeding through the fence. Continue to offer the food by hand throughout that session; do not return to using a bowl. At the next regular mealtime, offer hand-feeding again. Once he starts accepting hand-feeding, continue to hand-feed all his meals at the regularly scheduled times.
4. When the dog is comfortable with hand-feeding, slowly work your way up to petting him. Pet him on the side of his body and head rather than reaching over him to pet him on the top of his head or back.
5. When the dog is comfortable with you petting him, gradually introduce additional people and have them repeat the process, starting at step 1.

Effective Use of Space

You can use space to help a shy or feral dog become less fearful around people. To increase the dog's opportunities for positive experiences with people:

1. Use a run no larger than 10 x 10 feet or 10 x 20 feet.
2. If the dog can walk on leash, tether him to you for periods during the day while you go about normal activities.
3. Allow the dog to "hang out" off-leash with people in an enclosed space.

In the above situations:

- Don't focus on the dog: don't talk to him, stare at him, or solicit attention.
- Be prepared to reward the dog for behaviors you would like to encourage, such as making eye contact with you, moving closer to you or wagging his tail. His daily ration of kibble or treats are a handy reward for these behaviors.

Management

Here are some suggestions for managing shy or feral behavior in dogs:

1. Leave a long drag leash on the dog to make it easier to interact with him or limit his freedom to roam.
2. Use an e-collar to prevent him from digging out from under the fence.
3. Isolate him from your other dogs while you're at home (put him in a separate room or crate).
4. Hand-feed all his meals to him, to help him associate people with daily sustenance.
5. Avoid making any gestures toward him that he could consider threatening. Use non-threatening body language and postures:
 - Don't stare directly at him.
 - Don't make sudden movements.
 - Approach him by walking on a curve rather than in a straight line toward him.
 - Turn sideways and bend down rather than towering over him.
 - Pet him on the side of his body and head rather than reaching over him to pet him on the top of his head or back.
6. Use a trail of treats to encourage him to take small steps closer to people, starting with yourself.
7. Allow the dog to approach people on his own, rather than forcing him to tolerate someone.
8. Give the dog a routine; structure helps a dog feel more comfortable. For instance, have a set schedule for hand-feeding his meals, giving him walks, sitting with him to toss treats, handling and petting him (when he is ready).

9. If it doesn't frighten the dog, you can use a clicker to help the dog learn. You can start by clicking immediately before hand-feeding him a piece of kibble, and click for each piece you give him. The dog quickly learns to associate the clicking sound with food, a good thing. As the dog gets more comfortable, you can use the clicker to mark calm behavior, or any behavior that is an improvement over his current fearfulness. A clicker is effective because it is a unique, consistent sound, but you can also use a word, such as "yes" or "good," in the same way, as long as you use it consistently to mark a behavior the instant it occurs, rather than before or after the behavior.
10. Teach the dog simple behaviors to ask for things that he wants, whether it's the chance to go outdoors, or to be given his food bowl or a chew toy. This is a way to build a dog's confidence and develop a good working relationship with him, which helps reduce tensions and anxieties that may arise because of a dog's uncertainties.

Coping with Return-to-Run Resistance

By Sherry Woodard

Note: This resource is directed at helping dogs in shelters and rescue groups, not personal pets, who should live in our homes as family members.

A common scenario at shelters everywhere: You've taken a dog out of his run for a bit and now it's time for him to go back in. The dog puts on his brakes, tries to back out of his collar, lies down and won't move. You try to pull him and he starts to growl. What to do?



First, don't get into a physical fight with a dog because you may both be injured. Here are some ways to help him feel better about going back into his run:

- Carry treats, his favorite toy, or some of his regular food with you. After he has eliminated, while walking back, hold a toy (maybe a rope toy or loaded treat tube) or give small treats to help him stay busy enjoying something.
- Toss a few high-value treats in his run as you take him out – a surprise for him to find upon returning to the run.
- Go back into the run with him and stay for a few minutes. Time spent with you in his run will become very special to him.
- If someone else has walked him, surprise him by going in and visiting without him coming out.
- To build trust, give the dog part or all of his daily meals by hand-feeding him instead of putting his food in a bowl.
- If possible, walk back to his run from a different direction sometimes.
- If possible, move him to another run to live. Having different sights and sounds can make returning to the run more palatable.

Things you can do while in his run:

- Introduce aromatherapy – lavender, chamomile, dog-appeasing pheromones (DAP) – for stress relief. Try different ones; some dogs have favorites.
- If he enjoys touch, try petting, brushing and massage. If he is touch-challenged and needs hug therapy, please read “Teaching Your Dog to Enjoy Touch.”
- Play soothing music or read out loud to promote calm.
- Teach and practice responding to basic cues (see “Teaching Your Dog Basic Cues”) to keep the dog engaged and thinking.

If possible, go for outings with the dog – car rides, sleepovers, or trips to places where he can romp on a long leash, dig somewhere appropriate, play in water, find hidden toys, or enjoy a Kong or other treat-dispensing toy. Think outside the box: Can he spend a little time in someone’s office? Can he go on lunch dates with staff or volunteers?

Besides helping to reduce return-to-run resistance, many of the above activities help dogs become more adoptable. Every dog needs our assistance to become more adoptable or to stay adoptable until he/she finds a wonderful home. You can make a difference in shelter dogs’ quality of life by adding enrichment with your time, attention and love.

Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior and training consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends’ No More Homeless Pets mission.



RAINY DAY ACTIVITIES

Pit Bull Hall's dedicated team of handlers came up with this list of 47 ways to keep our adoptable shelter dogs entertained on those long, rainy days.

1. Have indoor play parties with the agility equipment. Tunnels are fun!
2. Walk the dogs in the rain and take photos of them looking miserable (It might help them get adopted, right?)
3. Catch up on old issues of People Magazine with a dog on your lap or on a tie-down. Give him a chew toy to gnaw on while you read.
4. Bounce ten tennis balls off the walls of an empty room for crazy fun.
5. Practice enforcing 'Sit' up and down and up and down the lobby.
6. Play 'Find it' - Hide kibble under blankets and towels.
7. Practice long down stays in the kitchen while stuffing Kongs.
8. Use a mini Flirt Pole or teaser pole. Same rules would apply as when you use the Flirt Pole outside.
9. Bring a basket full of hats, wigs, boas and clothes for the dogs and let the public play dress up with your dogs in the lobby. Photos, photos!
10. Place little piles of treats on the ground and practice leave-it as you walk by them.
11. Teach a dog to pick up toys. Once he has it down, tell him to "Go get the toy", then call him over to the toy bin & tell them to 'Drop' for a treat. Repeat.
12. Blow bubbles! Dogs love trying to pop them. If you want you can tell the dog to "wait." give a release command & then let them go for it. When they've popped them all, ask the dog come sit by your side & start all over again. Stand on a chair to get maximum bubble-height.
13. Play soccer in the rain using a soccer ball, jolly ball or basketball.
14. Work on getting perfect Sit-Stays while you open the door and put the leash on. Turn and walk and make sure they stay put until released!
15. Teach the basic touch command & then get the dog to touch various things around the shelter.
16. Expose dogs to everyday items like crutches, wheelchairs, umbrellas that open.

[More Rainy Day Ideas on Back](#)

More Rainy Day Ideas:



Rainy Day Tip #13

Play soccer in the rain using a soccer ball, jolly ball or basketball!

17. Tug-rope play: Reinforce 'Leave it!' 'Take' 'Out' and 'Sit.'
18. Recall/Stay game. Put dog in a sit/stay, walk away a short distance & call them just as you start to run away. When they catch you they get a reward. If the dog breaks the stay, no treat or reward & the dog has to start all over again.
19. Bring a dog with you to fold towels in the laundry room. Fun for them, warm for you.
20. Make 'kibble cubes:' Hide kibble in an egg carton, duct tape closed, put carton in a box, duct tape closed and then in a bigger box. Let dogs rip them to shreds and make a photo-worthy mess.
21. Teach them to weave through your legs using a food lure.
22. Work on the 'Look' command while sitting near shelter cats or barking dogs.
23. Teach dog to spin by luring them around in a circle.
24. Work on potty training. Reward with special a food treat for going outside and put a cue to it like, "Go potty"
25. Tickle-Me-Pitty! Wrap the dog in a blanket when you put him to bed and give him a good tickle.
26. Water Bottle Hockey. Drop some kibble in a couple of water bottles, screw on the caps and let dog have a fun and rowdy hockey game.
27. Teach dog to catch a treat. They're usually really bad at this but you'll have fun watching treats bounce off their nose as they try their hardest.
28. Put the dog in a down stay and practice having him stay with distractions; Run around him, jump over him, crouch down, do jumping jacks, etc.
29. Take a dog on a field trip to the pet store to pick out a new toy.
30. Give a dog a bath and work on good bath time manners.
31. Hand feed them their dinner or breakfast and make them earn it by doing sits and downs and other commands for each piece of kibble.
32. Work on having the dogs respond to down and sit without food lures.
33. Fill a baby pool full with stuffed animals and let the dog dive inside.
34. Bring a snack along and work on having the dog do a down stay at your feet while you eat your snack.
35. Pick up a book on T-Touch or dog massage and try out the techniques.
36. After you've taught a dog a cute trick, bring them to the lobby to perform for shelter visitors.
37. Teach them to play dead by luring them on to their side from a down position.
38. Put a dog on your lap and work on handling them everywhere with no mouthing.
39. The Leave-it Hand Game - Fun way to teach a dog to give you good eye-contact, teach "leave-it" & take treats from your hand softly.
40. Work on having the dog greet people at the front door without jumping up. Have visitors treat and pet for sitting nicely.
41. Examine their mouth, run a finger on their gums, lift up their lips and play with their ears as a way to make them comfortable with routine vet checks.
42. Teach the dog to go to his bed in his run on command by giving the command "Go to bed" and luring him to the bed and then into a down on the bed for a treat.
43. The Crate Game: Great way to train a dog to fly into the crate when told. Leave door open on crate, have dog sit next to you (unleashed), throw a treat inside, tap the front of the crate with your finger and say "Crate!" After the dog has eaten the treat tell them to stay & then tell them to come to you & sit for a treat. Repeat the process & soon the dog will be flying into the crate for a yummy treat.
44. Try a Crate Race between two dogs!
45. Teach the Army Crawl by putting them in a down and using a food to lure them forward.
46. Rainy days are a great excuse for a pedicure and ear cleaning. Find a big puddle for crazy mud fun then come back inside for a bath. Share those before and after mud photos on the website with dog's bio!
47. Find a big puddle for crazy mud fun then come back inside for a bath. Share those before and after mud photos on the website with dog's bio!

For more information, visit www.BADRAP.org and www.AnimalFarmFoundation.org



OREGON
HUMANE
SOCIETY

Cat Owner Questionnaire

1067 NE Columbia Blvd
Portland, Oregon 97211
503-285-7722
Fax 503-285-0838
www.oregonhumane.org

No one knows and loves your cat the way you do! In order to find the most appropriate home for your cat, please provide as much detail as possible about history, past veterinary care, likes, dislikes, and quirks of your feline friend. Behavioral and medical issues do not necessarily create problems, but failing to disclose them certainly does!

Has your cat bitten in the last ten (10) days? _____

General Information

Shelter Arrival Date: _____

Cat's Name: _____ Cat's age or approximate age: _____

Cat's Sex: Male Female Unsure

Is cat spayed/neutered? Yes No Unsure

What kind of I.D. does your cat have? Tattoo (If so, where is it located) _____
 Microchip

Is the cat declawed? Front All Not declawed

If declawed, when was it done? As a kitten As an adult

History

Why are you surrendering your cat? _____

If surrender reason is behavioral, please explain: _____

If we could help you resolve this issue would you be interested in keeping the cat? _____

How long have you owned your cat? _____

Including yours, how many homes has this cat had? _____

Where did you acquire this cat?
 Found as a stray From OHS Another shelter Breeder
 Born in my home Newspaper Ad Friend/relative Pet Store
 Other _____

Medical History

Did the cat see a veterinarian at least once per year? Yes No Not sure

If so, which clinic? _____

Is the cat current on vaccinations? Yes No Not sure

Has this cat ever had surgery? Yes No Not sure

If yes, please explain: _____

Has the cat been diagnosed with and/or treated for any of the following: (*check all that apply*)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upper respiratory infection | <input type="checkbox"/> Allergies | <input type="checkbox"/> Heart murmur | <input type="checkbox"/> Tumors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Epilepsy or seizures | <input type="checkbox"/> Organ failure | <input type="checkbox"/> Thyroid disease | <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Urinary tract infection | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain) _____ | | |
-

Personality

How would you describe your cat most of the time? (*check all that apply*)

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly to family | <input type="checkbox"/> Very active | <input type="checkbox"/> A clown | <input type="checkbox"/> Couch potato |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly to visitors | <input type="checkbox"/> Playful | <input type="checkbox"/> Aloof | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shy to family | <input type="checkbox"/> Talkative | <input type="checkbox"/> Affectionate | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shy to visitors | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet | <input type="checkbox"/> Lap cat | <input type="checkbox"/> Playful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More like a dog | <input type="checkbox"/> Fearful | <input type="checkbox"/> Fearless | <input type="checkbox"/> Solitary |

Play Style

How does your cat like to play? (*check all that apply*)

- Plays gently, does not usually use teeth or claws
 - Likes to play rough, may bite or scratch
 - Likes to chase & pounce with variety of toys
 - Likes things that crackle, such as paper bags
 - Likes to play hide & seek
 - Will fetch items like bottle caps or toys
 - Chases bugs or moths
 - Likes to play in or around water
 - Likes to learn tricks for treats
 - Likes to play with other cats
 - Likes to play with dogs
 - Not interested in play
 - Other _____
-

Lifestyle & Home Life

What areas of your home did the cat have access to? (*check all that apply*)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indoors only | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors only | <input type="checkbox"/> Indoors at night | <input type="checkbox"/> Garage or basement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indoors in cold weather | <input type="checkbox"/> In barn or shed | <input type="checkbox"/> Screened porch | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors in warm weather | <input type="checkbox"/> Indoors with access to outside | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Where did your cat spend most of his or her time? (*check all that apply*)

- | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen | <input type="checkbox"/> Living room | <input type="checkbox"/> Garage or basement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At the window | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors only | <input type="checkbox"/> Barn or shed | <input type="checkbox"/> Where people are |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | | |

If this cat has lived with other cats, how did they interact? (*check all that apply*)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adored each other | <input type="checkbox"/> Played together | <input type="checkbox"/> Sniffed noses | <input type="checkbox"/> Groomed each other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slept near each other | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignored each other | <input type="checkbox"/> Rough with others | <input type="checkbox"/> Fought with injuries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fought without injuries | <input type="checkbox"/> Gentle with others | <input type="checkbox"/> Caused this cat stress | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peacefully coexisted | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain) _____ | | |

If this cat has lived with dogs, how did they interact? (*check all that apply*)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adored each other | <input type="checkbox"/> Played together | <input type="checkbox"/> Sniffed noses | <input type="checkbox"/> Groomed each other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slept near each other | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignored each other | <input type="checkbox"/> Cat feared dog | <input type="checkbox"/> Fought with injuries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fought without injuries | <input type="checkbox"/> Dog chased cat | <input type="checkbox"/> Caused this cat stress | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cat rubbed on dog | <input type="checkbox"/> Cat tormented dog | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoided each other | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peacefully coexisted | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain) _____ | | |

Has the cat regularly been around children? Yes No Unsure

If yes, indicate what ages: 0-2 yrs. 3-5 yrs. 6-10 yrs. 11-18 yrs.

If this cat lived with children under the age of 7, how did they interact? (*check all that apply*)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cat actively avoided child | <input type="checkbox"/> Child could pet cat | <input type="checkbox"/> Mutual adoration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ignored each other | <input type="checkbox"/> Cat & child played together | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cat hissed or growled at child | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Have the experiences with the cat and child(ren) always been positive? Yes No

If no, please explain: _____

Is this cat more comfortable with: Women Men Kids
 Teenagers Seniors Loves all people

How would you describe the ideal home for your cat? _____

Please tell us some things you truly love about this cat? _____

Are there any quirks or habits you are not fond of in your cat? _____

Does the cat do any of the following? (*check all that apply*)

- Jump on counters Scratch furniture Chew Plants
 Scratches doors/cabinets Chew personal items Climb curtains
 Other _____

How did you attempt to correct this problem? _____

Dietary Habits

What is the cat's favorite brand of food? _____

Which does your cat eat? Dry only Canned only Combination of dry & canned
 People food _____

What type of treats does your cat enjoy? _____

How often is your cat fed? Food always available Designated mealtimes

Litter box Habits

We ask so many questions about litter box use because it is one of the main reasons cats are surrendered. Please help us by giving as much detailed information as possible. Sometimes a change in environment may be just what the cat needs, and sometimes there are more serious health or behavior issues involved.

Does your cat have access to a litter box in the house? Yes No
If no, did your cat use the bathroom outdoors? Yes No

If sometimes, how often does the cat make mistakes? _____

Is the litter box: Covered Uncovered

Where is the litter box(s) located in the house? _____

Please describe the accidents:

- Urinates outside the box Urinates on clothing/furniture
 Defecates outside the box Sprays on walls/furniture
 All of the above Other _____

How often was litter box scooped? Every day Every few days Weekly Rarely

What type(s) of litter was used? Unscented Scented Clumping
 Non-Clumping Crystals Clay Pine Yesterday's News
 Other _____

Are there other animals in your home?

- No Other cats Dogs Birds Rodents

If other cats, how many shared a litter box?

- One Two or more Many cats shared Multiple boxes for multiple cats

If litter box accidents were an issue, when did they begin?

- Past month Past year Ongoing

Can you pinpoint an event(s) that might have influenced or triggered inappropriate litter box use? _____

Please describe the measures you have taken to correct this problem. _____

Has your cat been to the veterinarian to rule out infection or underlying health issues? Yes No

If yes, what was the outcome? _____

Please tell us any additional comments about your feline friend. _____

Oregon Humane Society Dog Owner Questionnaire

[Close this window and return to the OHS Web site](#)

We need your help to find the best possible home for your dog. Please complete the information below as thoroughly and carefully as possible. Your dog will appreciate it!

ID#	Dog's name	Dog's age	Weeks	months	years
Male	Neutered male	Female	Spayed female	(please circle one)	
Has dog bitten in the last 10 days?					
Why are you giving up your dog?					
If the reason is behavior, list the behavior and the things you have tried to solve it.					
Where did you get this dog?					
How long has this dog lived with you?					

General Lifestyle

Where do you leave your dog when he/she is alone?
When you are home?
What is the longest period of time your dog spends alone?
Is this successful? If not, why?
For how many hours each day does a person interact with your dog?
Where is your dog when you are at home watching television?
Where is your dog when you are having dinner?
Where does your dog sleep at night?
Do you trust your dog loose indoors, unsupervised? If no, why?

Is your dog potty-trained? If no, please explain
How does your dog tell you he needs to go potty?
Have you ever used a crate for your dog? When & why?
Do you trust your dog outside unsupervised? If no, why?
What type of confinement do you have?
If you have a fence what type is it? Wood Cyclone Other How tall?

Household History

What types of animals has your dog lived with? (please include sex, species, etc.)
Please describe how they got along.
Does your dog: (please circle) ignore, play with, or exhibit bossy behavior with other pets?
Does your dog spend time unsupervised with these pets?
What types of animals has your dog visited/played with?
When is your dog not good with other animals?
Has your dog ever seen horses or livestock? What was his reaction?

Children

What ages of children has your dog lived ? Visited with?
When is your dog not good with children?
Would you say he/she is: (please circle) playful friendly tolerant afraid shy rough not around
Any comments about your dog with children?

Other Information

What are your dog's shining qualities?
How would you describe your dog's personality?
List 5 things that your dog loves.
What are his/her favorite activities?
Please describe what daily exercise your dog is given.
Has your dog received obedience training?
Has your dog attended a training class? If yes, explain
What commands does your dog know?
How often do you: bathe your dog? Trim nails? Take him to a groomer?
Does your dog travel well in the car?
Where does your dog stay when you go on vacation?
Is there anything else you would like to say about your dog?

Health

Who is your dog's veterinarian? At which clinic?
Has your dog been vaccinated within the last year? Which?
Does your dog have a current rabies vaccination?
Is your dog receiving any form of flea control? Please specify.

Does your dog have an illness or condition we should know about?

What do you feed your dog? How much?

Questions to help receiving and animal services

What is your dog's reaction to visitors at the door?

How long does it take him to calm down when someone comes to the house?

Has your dog ever nipped at anyone? If yes, who?

If yes, under what circumstances?

Has he/she ever bitten and drawn blood?

If yes, please explain.

Is there any part of your dog's body that he/she doesn't like touched?

What has the dog done to show you he/she doesn't like it?

Have you ever petted or approached when he/she is eating? If yes, what is the response?

Is he/she better or worse with particular people or children?

Can you take trash or food out of your dog's mouth if he/she has stolen something?

Who can safely do this?

Has your dog done anything that you have had to discipline him for?

Has your dog ever killed a cat or any other animal?

Does he/she chase: (please circle) adults kids squirrels cats bicycles other

Is your dog aggressively protective of his/her: (please circle) food home yard family bed car