

Blackdog Club

Volunteer Safety and Animal Handling Guidelines

Our goal is to keep volunteers and animals safe. All volunteers must complete orientation and follow these guidelines during every shift.

1 Follow Staff Direction

- Check in with staff when you arrive and before leaving.
- Work only with assigned animals and perform tasks you have been trained and authorized to complete.
- Follow posted kennel instructions. Never remove warning signs or change an animal's housing without permission.
- Volunteers under 18 must follow assigned supervision requirements.

2 Dress for Safety

- Wear closed-toe shoes with good traction and clothing suitable for cleaning and working with animals.
- Avoid dangling jewelry and secure long hair.
- Use gloves and other protective equipment as directed. Gloves do not replace handwashing.

3 Approach Animals Carefully

- Approach calmly and allow the dog to notice you before making contact.
- Avoid sudden movements, hugging, putting your face near a dog's face, or reaching over its head.
- Never disturb a dog that is eating, sleeping, caring for puppies, or guarding food or toys.
- Stop and notify staff if a dog freezes, stiffens, growls, snaps, repeatedly retreats, or otherwise appears frightened or uncomfortable. Never punish a growl.

4 Keep Animals Secure

- Use only staff-approved leashes, collars, and harnesses. Ask staff to check the fit if you are unsure.
- Secure the dog before opening its kennel, and keep gates and doors closed and latched.
- Where double gates are provided, close one before opening the next.
- Do not leave a leashed dog unattended or wrap the leash around your hand or body.
- Never allow dogs to interact or share an exercise area without staff approval.
- Do not take animals off the property without authorization.

5 Prevent Bites and Fights

- Never place your hands between fighting dogs or grab their collars during a fight.
- Call for staff immediately and follow the rescue's trained emergency procedure.
- Do not chase an escaped dog. Alert staff immediately and follow their directions.
- Never attempt to handle an animal beyond your training or comfort level.

6 Protect Animal Health

- Wash your hands between animals and after cleaning, handling waste, or removing gloves.
- Follow isolation and quarantine instructions. Use designated supplies and protective equipment.
- Do not give medications, treats, outside food, or supplements without approval.
- Report coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, wounds, limping, unusual behavior, or changes in appetite promptly.
- Never mix cleaning chemicals. Follow product labels and staff instructions for dilution, contact time, rinsing, and keeping animals away.

7 Work Safely

- Use safe lifting techniques and request help with heavy animals, crates, or supplies.
- Keep walkways clear and report slippery floors, damaged equipment, or broken fencing.
- Follow staff limits for outdoor activity during heat, cold, or severe weather.
- Do not volunteer while impaired by alcohol, drugs, or anything that affects safe handling.

8 Report Injuries and Emergencies

- Report every bite, scratch, fall, escape, or other incident to staff immediately, even if it appears minor.
- Wash bites and scratches promptly with soap and running water and seek medical evaluation as appropriate.
- Call 911 for a serious injury or immediate threat to life, then notify staff.
- Know the location of first-aid supplies, emergency contacts, and exits.

9 Adoption Event Safety

- Handle only your assigned dog and follow the event coordinator's instructions.
- Check that collars, harnesses, and leashes fit securely before unloading dogs. Keep dogs leashed or in secured crates at all times.
- Maintain space between dogs. Do not allow greetings with other animals without staff approval.
- Ask visitors to approach calmly. Allow petting only when the dog appears comfortable, and require children to remain with a supervising adult.
- Never leave a dog unattended or hand its leash to a visitor without staff approval.
- Provide water, shade, and rest breaks. Notify staff if a dog shows signs of stress, illness, overheating, or fatigue.
- Share only verified information about each dog. Refer questions about behavior, medical history, applications, and adoption decisions to authorized staff.
- Release a dog to an adopter only after authorized staff confirm that all adoption requirements are complete.
- Report bites, scratches, escapes, or other incidents immediately. Follow staff directions and the event location's emergency procedures.
- Secure dogs in approved crates or vehicle restraints during transport. Never leave animals unattended in a vehicle.

10 Dog Grooming and Bathing Safety

- Groom or bathe only dogs assigned by staff, using approved products and equipment.
- Review the dog's handling instructions and any medical restrictions before beginning.
- Use a nonslip surface and comfortably lukewarm water. Keep water and shampoo out of the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.
- Use gentle handling and secure equipment as trained. **Never leave a dog unattended in a tub or on a grooming table, or use restraints that restrict breathing.**
- Stop and contact staff if a dog struggles, freezes, growls, snaps, or shows signs of distress. Never force the dog to continue.
- Rinse thoroughly and towel-dry gently. Use dryers only with staff approval and training; never use unmonitored heated drying equipment.
- Nail trimming, clipping, ear cleaning, and removal of mats require specific staff authorization and training. Never cut mats with scissors or insert tools into the ear canal.
- Report skin irritation, wounds, parasites, painful areas, or unusual lumps to staff. Do not apply treatments without approval.
- Clean and disinfect tools, tubs, and work surfaces between dogs. Keep electrical equipment away from water and promptly dry slippery floors.

Volunteer Acknowledgment

I have read and understand these guidelines. I agree to follow staff instructions, ask for help when unsure, and promptly report safety concerns and incidents.

Volunteer Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____