



“Bunny Buddy” Handbook



Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter
1549 East Cameron Bridge Road
Bozeman, Montana 59718
(406) 388-9399
www.heartofthevalleyshelter.org

Introduction

Welcome to the Heart of the Valley volunteer team! Whether this is your first volunteer assignment at HOV or one of many, we hope this information will prove useful in your training. Please use it as a tool and refer to it often if you are not sure of a procedure, or simply want to refresh your memory.

Pet rabbits need to be handled often if they are to remain socialized to the presence of humans. Long periods of time without human contact will make them turn more skittish when they do meet someone. By following the procedures outlined in this handbook, and as instructed in your orientation and training, you can help the rabbits become accustomed to being handled by people - sometimes for the first time in their lives.

Hours: Bunny Buddy hours are 11:30 am – 5:30 pm every day. HOV is closed to the public on: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and every Sunday.

Bunny Handling Protocol

1. SET UP YOUR BUNNY PLAY PEN.

You will be shown how to do this in orientation. Find a nice quiet place at the south end of the hallway to securely lay out the “X-Pen” barrier. Then stock it with anything you'd like to use during your time with the bunnies: toys, treats, a soft blanket, a brush, etc. Also, make sure to have the rabbit's litterbox in the pen with you.

2. MOVE ONE RABBIT (OR SET OF ROOMMATES) AT A TIME IN A CLOSED CARRIER.

Even rabbits who have lived together their entire lives may not tolerate each other's presence, so only take one rabbit out at a time. (The ONLY exception to this is two rabbits who are currently living in the same cage.) The rabbit should ONLY be moved in a closed carrier or crate – never in a basket or in your arms!

3. SUPERVISE THE RABBITS AT ALL TIMES.

Remember: your main goal is to help socialize these rabbits so that (1) they have an increased likelihood of being adopted, and (2) they have an easier time bonding with humans in their new homes. Exercise is a side benefit, but what they really need is to be handled by humans in a safe and enjoyable way. We will cover holding and handling rabbits in the orientation.

It is also important that the rabbits enjoy their interactions with you, so please stay inside their comfort zone so that they associate human contact with a pleasant experience.

Please do not EVER leave a rabbit alone in the enclosure for any length of time. If you need to go to the restroom, for instance, then you must place the rabbit in the carrier

and transport it back to its cage. Shelter visitors may have cats or dogs in the lobby, and we don't want vulnerable bunnies in the hall for them to harass.

4. WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED, CLEAN UP!

This is a critical step! After you have gone, many more visitors will be walking through the hallways, and an unsightly animal shelter is a very big turn-off to potential adopters. Clean-up includes any urine or pellets left by the rabbits, as well as pieces of treats or food – you will probably have to sweep each time you come play with the bunnies. All cleaning tools are in the rabbit adoption room. If you need a mop and bucket, a staff member can show you where they're located.

Things to remember:

- HOV is not responsible for lost or stolen items. We recommend that you lock any unnecessary clothing items, bags, purses, etc. in your vehicle.
- The privilege of being a Bunny Buddy may be revoked at any time if you do not follow the directions provided by this handbook, the orientation, or shelter staff.

Signing in

All volunteers need to record their hours each shift on the computer in the volunteer office.

Name Tags

Nametags are located in the volunteer office. Please wear a nametag at all times.

Concerns

If you observe something with a bunny that you believe should be looked at or evaluated by the HOV staff, then please use an Animal Concern Form. Animal Concern Forms need to be filled out completely and placed on the bulletin board in the volunteer office.

Injuries

Please report any injury you receive immediately to the Volunteer Manager, or other Manager on duty. Reporting bites or scratches from animals gives us a more complete understanding of the animal and its needs, and we also want to take care of your needs!

Staff- Only Areas

All staff-only areas are clearly marked and often locked. Volunteers are not allowed to enter any staff-only area unless directed to do so by staff.

THE BUNNIES AND THE STAFF THANK YOU!

We hope your volunteer experience with us will be a long and rewarding one. Volunteers play a significant role in enhancing any animal's stay at the shelter, and will make them more adoptable. We couldn't do it without you!

For questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Volunteer Manager at any time:

Angela Sandoval
(406) 388-9399 extension 105
volunteer@heartofthevalleyshelter.org