



Cat Cuddler Handbook



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

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 just want to refresh your memory.

Becoming a Cat Cuddler is much more than simply spending time with the cats. Next to the staff, the volunteer Cat Cuddler generally has the most consistent contact with shelter cats and therefore is able to provide many valuable services. As a Cat Cuddler you might notice something in a cat that needs to be reported to the staff. Your interaction with the cats can also benefit the Adoption Counselors. By following the procedures outlined in this handbook, and as instructed in your orientation and training, the cats will become accustomed to being handled and brushed or combed by people sometimes for the first time in their lives.

Hours: Cat cuddling hours are 11:30 am – 5:30 pm every day. HOV is closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

Feline Health: We are very glad to have so many people volunteering. With the increase in the number of volunteers handling cats and in our continuing effort to prevent feline disease from entering or exiting the adoption areas, we need you to follow the Cat Cuddling Protocol below. For your peace of mind, please know that our adoptable cats are vaccinated against rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, panleukopenia, and chlamydia. We strongly recommend that you have your own cats current on these vaccinations as well.

Cat Cuddling Protocol

- Before coming to visit with our cats, be aware of where you have been prior to your visit. If you visit a boarding facility, a vet clinic or have a sick cat at home, please take precautions and change your clothes before coming to visit the cats at the shelter. Disease can be transmitted both ways; your contact with our shelter cats is essential but please be aware that you can bring disease to our cats, and may take home infection as well.
- When interacting with cats in the adoption room, please use the hand sanitizers on the wall to disinfect your hands between cats.
- Groom cats with the brush or comb in their cage. Then remove all the hair and leave the comb or brush with that cat. Please do not mix toys or brushes from one cage to another. If a cat has a wand or interactive toy in his/her cage, use it with that cat and then leave it. Do not use with other cats.
- You may take a cat out of its cage if it is comfortable with that much handling - some cats will want to come out and some will not, so please be considerate of their needs! The only area you can take a cat to play with it is the "Get To Know You" room at the far end of the adoption room. You may never have more than one cat out at a time, and they should not be placed in any other rooms.

These few preventative measures will make a huge impact on people spreading disease from one cat to another. We would rather be proactive than reactive with our cat care, so be part of the solution, not the problem!

Things to remember:

- Always let the Front Desk know immediately if a cat has gotten loose in the Adoption Room, if you see someone mistreating a cat in any adoption area, or if a customer needs help in any adoption area. Please do not try to answer specific questions about the animals for customers.
- Cat Cuddlers are encouraged to share the experience with younger members of their families, but the trained volunteer must be responsible for the cat at all times – never give a young child a cat to handle by themselves! Cat Cuddlers younger than 13 years of age must have a trained adult volunteer with them at all times while they are volunteering.

- Please do not give the cats any treats. Cats are extra sensitive to the stress of a shelter and any diet change can cause illness in the cat and/or extra messes for the staff.
- HOV is not responsible for lost or stolen items. We recommend that you lock any unnecessary clothing items, bags, purses, etc. in your vehicle.
- If a Cat Cuddler is seen not following the guidelines of this handbook when handling shelter cats, the privilege of Cat Cuddling could be revoked. The purpose of this program is to improve the each cat's stay at the shelter by reducing their stress, and giving the one-on-one time they need.

Signing in

All volunteers need to record their hours each shift on the clipboard located below the white board in the hallway. Nametags are located on the Cat Cuddler board in the hallway going to the Cat Adoption Room on the left. Please wear a nametag at all times.

Concerns

Animal concern forms need to be filled out completely and placed in Angela's office so that staff can follow up on any health or behavior concerns.

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.

STAFF Only Areas

All staff –only areas are clearly marked and often locked. Volunteers are not allowed in any staff-only area.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR

Please remember that any cat that is hissing, growling or hiding is not ready to be picked up and petted quite yet. Respect this preference and do not try to force an interaction from a cat who is uncomfortable. Many cats have preferences for who they will open up to (some like women better, some do not take to children, etc.) and for your safety and to lower their stress level, please respect them!

ENDING YOUR SHIFT

Returning Supplies

Please pull hair out of brushes and place back in the cat cage. Sign out on the Volunteer Hours Sheet. It is recommended that you wash your hands and change your clothes before handling your pets at home.

THE CATS 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