|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| T:\Melinda - RCACP Docs\RCACP Logo.png | Type of Directive  **Policy and Procedure** | | Number  1.1 | Page  1 - 5 |
| Subject  **RCACP Animal Intake Policy** | | | Date  08/01/23 |
| Amends | Rescinds | | |
|  | | | |
| Authorized By: Mike Warner Interim Executive Director  RCACP Board of Directors | | | |
| **This policy is for Department use only and shall not apply in any criminal or civil proceedings. Violations of this directive will be the basis for Department administrative sanctions.** | | | | |
|  | | | | |

**I.**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish an operational procedure to handle animal intake at the Regional Center for Animal Care and Protection (RCACP)

**II.**

**POLICY**

The Regional Center for Animal Care and Protection (RCACP) policy provides shelter for stray dogs running at large as defined in the Virginia Code §3.2-6546 and those deemed abandoned by their owner. RCACP will also provide a service for owner surrender of companion animals when the owner is no longer able or willing to keep the animal and provide housing for seized and court case animals for Animal Control Officers. This policy only extends to the residents of Roanoke City, Roanoke County, the Town of Vinton, and Botetourt County. The Executive Director is authorized to cease intakes not required by the Code of Virginia if space is not available.

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR INTAKE OF STRAYS**

**DOGS**

RCACP will accept stray dogs brought to the shelter if the dog is found in the service area.

When a resident arrives at the shelter with a stray dog, the front desk staff shall create a Custody Record in our software management system (ShelterNet). The following animal information shall be included in the system to help locate an owner:

1. The location where found.
2. Description of the animal to include, gender, color, type, identifying marks.
3. Any identification to include, collar, tags, tattoo, license, microchip, or any other identification to be used to locate an owner.
4. Name, address, and phone number of the finder.

**All finders will be required to sign a disclosure indicating whether or not the animal has bitten a person or an animal while the animal has been in their custody. All owners who surrender a dog must also indicate whether or not the dog has ever been deemed “Dangerous” or “Vicious.”**

The dog shall be taken to the intake staging area in Bay 3 of the shelter. Food, water, and bedding will be placed in the kennel with the dog. A photo will be taken, and the kennel will be marked with any caution signs if needed.

RCACP veterinary staff will be notified to start the vetting and vaccine process.

When an animal is relinquished to the shelter, the following shall occur:

1. The intake staff shall perform an initial inspection of the animal to determine its health and overall temperament.
2. All pets will be scanned to determine if they are microchipped and the microchip shall be researched to determine or verify ownership.

If there is no identification, staff will check lost reports to search for an owner. If an owner can be identified, RCACP front desk staff will make every effort to notify the owner to arrange a safe return.

Stray dogs are held at the shelter following the Virginia Code §3.2-6546. This code requires a stray hold with no identification for five full days. If the owner is known or the dog has some form of identification, then a full ten days stray hold is required before RCACP can take ownership.

**IMPOUNDMENT CRITERIA FOR CATS**

Once RCACP staff determines that the cat is ill, injured, declawed, aged, malnourished, in danger or needs medical attention, or if the cat has identification (a collar, tags, tattoo, microchip), staff shall intake the cat into the shelter. The following animal information shall be included in ShelterNet to help locate an owner:

1. The location where found.
2. Description of the animal to include, gender, color, type, identifying marks.
3. Any identification to include, collar, tags, tattoo, license, microchip, or any other identification to be used to locate an owner.
4. Name, address, and phone number of the finder.

**All finders will be required to sign a disclosure indicating whether or not the animal has bitten a person or an animal while the animal has been in their custody.**

The cat shall be taken to the cat intake room and given food, water, and bedding. A photo will be taken, and the cat will be entered into ShelterNet. RCACP veterinary staff will be notified to begin the vetting and vaccine process.

If there is no identification, staff will check lost reports to search for an owner. If an owner is identified, staff will try to search for and notify the owner.

Stray cats are held at the shelter following the Virginia Code §3.2-6546. This code requires a stray hold with no identification for five full days. If the owner is known or the cat has some form of identification, then a full ten days stray hold is required before RCACP can take ownership.

When an animal is relinquished to the shelter, the following shall occur:

1. The intake staff shall perform an initial inspection of the animal to determine its health and overall temperament.
2. All pets will be scanned to determine if they are microchipped and the microchip shall be researched to determine or verify ownership.

**RCACP does NOT accept healthy stray, outdoor, feral, or free-roaming community cats.**

When a citizen contacts the shelter regarding relinquishing a found cat or kittens, the front desk staff will discuss the shelter cat intake policy and determine if any of the following are applicable:

1. The cat is healthy and has no identification.
2. The cat is healthy and has an ear tip, marking it as part of a managed community cat colony.
3. The cat is healthy, feral, and over the age of eight weeks.
4. Litter of neonatal kittens that may have a mother. The citizen will be asked to return the kittens to where they were found and watch for the mother's return.

If any of the above listed reasons are present, staff shall inform the resident of the shelter's policy to **NOT** intake the cat. Staff will explain this policy by using hand-outs provided by Alley Cat Allies which details the vacuum effect it has in the community. Staff should encourage the resident to contact Angels of Assisi or the Roanoke Valley SPCA to follow up on a TNR program.

If a person arrives at the shelter with a cat and refuses to take the cat back with them after our policy is explained, the front desk supervisor will be notified to further discuss the issue with the resident. During this dialogue with the resident, if any threats are made that indicate harm will be done to the cat, the supervisor shall impound the cat into the shelter.

Once RCACP staff determines the cat does not qualify for impoundment, staff shall take a Found Report and ask the person to return the cat to the exact location it was found. If the cat was close to a busy road or a potentially dangerous area, staff should instruct the resident to return the cat to a safe place nearby.

A Found Report shall also be taken if a resident inquires on the phone rather than in person. Based on the information obtained, staff will instruct the resident to either leave the cat where it was found, or to bring the cat into the shelter if they are concerned for its welfare.

**EXOTIC ANIMALS**

RCACP accepts some exotic and pocket pets as owner surrenders and all abandoned or stray small companion animals, including small mammals, reptiles, and birds (other than wildlife). Intake procedures and custody records are the same as for dogs and cats, except there are no intake vaccinations.

An owner-surrendered exotic animal or pocket pet can be turned away if RCACP has no space or means to care for the animal.

RCACP accepts stray or abandoned poultry and limited livestock. RCACP has partnered with Angels of Assisi to hold most of our livestock intakes. Angels of Assisi has a farm within our jurisdiction to maintain custody.

Intake procedures and custody records are the same as for dogs and cats, except there are no intake vaccinations.

RCACP does **NOT** accept healthy or injured wildlife. The resident can contact Southwest Virginia Wildlife Rescue or Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

**IV.**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR INTAKE OF OWNER SURRENDERED PETS**

RCACP accepts owner-surrendered pets by appointment only, based on shelter space, from current residents within our service area. The owner requesting this service will be given other options before making an appointment, including contact information for local shelters that may have space, access to affordable vet care, and access to pet food pantries.

If the owner chooses to still relinquish the pet, they will be asked to provide information about their pet, including species, age, medical and behavioral history, and reason for surrender. Based on this information, an appointment will be given to the owner.

RCACP staff will require the owner to fill out a behavior profile to be filed with the pet's intake paperwork, along with all medical documents associated with the pet. Staff will include any safety and medical issues in ShelterNet and place any caution signs on the kennel, if needed.

**All owners surrendering a pet must sign a disclosure indicating whether or not the animal has bitten a person or an animal while the animal has been in their custody.**

During the initial vetting process, if RCACP staff discovers that the pet being surrendered has severe medical issues (skin problems, emaciation, apparent illness, wounds, etc.) as a result or suspected result of abuse or neglect, the on-duty supervisor shall evaluate the pet and determine if an Animal Control Officer should be informed.

When the on-duty supervisor determines that a pet is in danger of being abandoned or the situation warrants immediate surrender, they may impound the pet without an appointment.

When a pet is relinquished to the shelter, the following shall occur:

1. The intake staff shall perform an initial inspection of the animal to determine its health and overall temperament.
2. All pets should be scanned to determine if they are microchipped and the microchip shall be researched to determine or verify ownership.

**V.**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR INTAKE OF OWNER REQUESTED EUTHANASIA ANIMALS**

RCACP can provide this service to our residents within our service jurisdictions. Staff should inform the resident that the RCACP veterinarian will evaluate the animal first to determine whether or not euthanasia is the appropriate disposition for the animal. RCACP will not be able to accommodate any owner’s request to be in the room during euthanasia.

If the owner is unwilling to sign the pet over to RCACP without assurance of euthanasia, they will be referred to Angels of Assisi for assistance.

**REFERENCES CITED:**

Virginia Code §3.2-6546. County or city public animal shelters; confinement and disposition of animals; affiliation with foster care providers; penalties; injunctive relief.

B. The governing body of each county or city shall maintain or cause to be maintained a public animal shelter and shall require dogs running at large without the tag required by Virginia Code §3.2-6531 or in violation of an ordinance passed pursuant to Virginia Code §3.2-6538 to be confined therein. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the confinement of other companion animals in such a shelter. The governing body of any county or city need not own the facility required by this section but may contract for its establishment with a private group or in conjunction with one or more other local governing bodies.

Virginia Code §3.2-6500. Definition.

“Companion animal" means any domestic or feral dog, domestic or feral cat, nonhuman primate, guinea pig, hamster, rabbit not raised for human food or fiber, exotic or native animal, reptile, exotic or native bird, or any feral animal or any animal under the care, custody, or ownership of a person or any animal that is bought, sold, traded, or bartered by any person. No agricultural animal or game species, or animal actively involved in bona fide scientific or medical experimentation shall be considered a companion animal for the purposes of the chapter.