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Update date: 3/30/20 to reflect the most current information¹

Stray Hold Protocol

Purpose

In order to prepare for the potential impact that COVID-19 could have on shelters due to an increase of intake or a decrease in live outcomes, it is imperative that animals not remain in the shelter any longer than required. Implementation of finder foster, reservations, and fast-tracking processes will help to minimize the length of stay.

Procedure & Metrics

Intake

- Most states mandate a minimum 72-hour hold for strays, while owner-surrendered pets can be available instantly.
- As a courtesy, most shelters extend the hold period for pets with owner identification. During times of crisis, shelter leadership should discuss waiving this extended hold period.
- All efforts must be made to identify owners and contact them the same day. This includes but is not limited to microchip follow through, accessing utility records, driving to last known address and walking pets around the neighborhood where they were found to see if they are recognized.
- Information from finders and owners must be collected. Animals should be evaluated by admissions staff and made available with the information at hand. When there is an unknown, shelters must state "we don't have information regarding ..." instead of holding a pet until the information can be found out.

Return To Owner

- If pets are taken to the area they were found in, as an attempt at RTO, the team member should bring with them any related paperwork including a medical record of any vaccines given or microchip implantation, resources for improving containment and any documentation that requires a signature.
- Citations should be avoided for the animal at large whenever possible, so as to avoid discouraging reclamation.

Stay Hold

- Ensure all pets are visible to the public both online and in person. If your shelter houses stray or unevaluated pets out of sight, those areas need to be opened and accessible with appropriate signage.

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Due to COVID-19 Shelter in Place government mandates and to accomplish a 90% reduction in social interaction, while maintaining the practice that every pet who enters a shelter should receive urgent, individualized treatment and care, with the goal of a live outcome.

- Allow reservations or adoption commitments during the hold period. By accepting a deposit and completing appropriate paperwork, an interested party can commit to adopt a pet and get it out of the shelter the day that ownership transfers.
- Allow staff and volunteers to interact with pets on stray hold. This provides methods for gathering information, marketing and finding a potential adopter sooner.

Foster/Rescue

- Adopt a finder to foster protocol that allows finders to hold a pet with support from your organization. These pets must be visible online and finders must understand that the pet remains custody of the shelter to be returned upon demand, until the end of the stray hold.
- Allow rescues to foster pets during their stray hold by creating a kennel called “rescue”. These pets should be visible online and rescues must understand that the pet remains custody of the shelter to be returned upon demand, until the end of the stray hold.

AmPA! has virtual support services available for each of these protocols in the AmPA! COVID-19 Animal Shelter Preparedness Guide. For custom support or guidance on any of these protocols, or how to implement for your organization, contact us [here](#) and include “COVID-19 Support” in the message.