



Create date: 3/12/20

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

Owner Rehoming Protocol

Definitions

PASS Program- PASS stands for Positive Alternatives to Shelter Surrender. Program to connect pet owners with resources to prevent surrenders to the shelter.

Intake Diversion – Program that intercepts people who physically come to surrender or turn pets into PACC and provides resources to divert them to other organizations or to help the owner keep the pets or find a new home themselves.

Neighborhood Pet Support – Proactive outreach conducted in target neighborhoods and areas

Pet Support Call Center – Program that receives calls about lost and found pets, inquiries about surrendering pets, and requests for assistance

Purpose

In the event of shelter shut down due to COVID-19, a plan and protocol should be in place to keep pets with their people, or help people to rehome their own animals without surrendering to the shelter, whenever this is a safe option for animals and people. This protocol was created for use during an outbreak of coronavirus, but it can be used to help shelters continue to save lives during any type of emergency that impacts normal operations.

Keeping pets out of the shelter by helping owners rehome their own pets allows for the shelter to use their kennels for other animals and enables them to continue saving lives even if adoptions are unable to continue.

Procedure

Immediately:

1. Inform intake staff and pet support staff on the importance of minimizing the number of animals entering the shelter through owner surrenders in preparation for a potential shelter closure.
2. Determine a staff member who can set up infrastructure in your organization to implement a PASS program or revise current procedures to prepare for shelter closure and the event of having limited staff.

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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.

- Create a document outlining how people can reach you about surrendering an animal.
- Onboard staff to record calls in shelter software, including the owner's name, address, phone number, and a brief explanation of the situation in the memos.
- Process to follow-up with pet owner 30 days after calls and assistance.

Provide the following support to owners to rehome their own animals in preparation of Shelter Closure and/or Limited Staff (see below for more detail)

1. Information about the risk and implication of surrendering an animal to the shelter during a shelter closure or with limited staff.
2. Assist with marketing owned animal(s).
3. Help community members market their own animal(s).
4. Connect the owner to other resources.
5. Provide basic supplies to owners.
6. Organize crowdfunding rescue groups and/or resources to help them rehome their animal, raise medical funds to keep their pet(s).
7. Implement social media guidelines for PASS.

1. Information about the risk and implication of surrendering an animal to the shelter during a shelter closure or with limited staff:

Talking points:

- Covid 19 has caused mass hysteria and in some cases, shelter shutdowns, which may lead to unnecessarily death and killing of shelter pets, including their own animal.
- Keeping pets out of the shelter allows the shelter's use of kennels for other animals and enables continued lifesaving, even if the shelter shuts down.
- By rehoming their own animals they are ensuring their own animals safety and the continued safety of the pets who enter the shelter.
- Shelter Pet Lifesaving is a community ethic and sometimes shelters don't have all the resources they need to implement plans that allow them to save the most lives and will rely on owners to do everything they can to keep pets from entering the shelter.

2. Shelter Markets Owned Animals

- A staff member or volunteer may be needed to market animals on social media that are needing to be rehomed or who need temporary foster when the timeline is short, the situation is desperate and/or the person does not have access to the internet.
- Use social media to market pets for people, as you would pets in your care.
- In order to post a compelling story collect specific information about their animal and the situation.
- You can create a form or a canned response to collect this information quickly.
 - Save information as a canned response in your email, so that volunteers and staff have it readily accessible.
 - Create an inbox and/or google voice line for shelter surrenders.

3. Help Community Members Market Their Animals

Community members who reach out for help with rehoming their pet or with finding a temporary foster may be willing and able to market their pet themselves, but need guidance.

- Understand the situation
 - What is their timeline?
 - What is the situation?
 - If the need isn't immediate and the person has access to a smartphone or computer and the internet, help them to market their pets themselves.
- Provide information to help them identify resources and find suitable placement.
 - Connect them to the Adopt-A-Pet Rehoming Program
 - Provide Facebook and social media posts templates

4. Connect to Other Resources

Community members may reach out to shelters to surrender animals when they need help and don't know where else to turn.

- Listen to their story and figure out how we can help them, even if that help is just connecting them with another resource.
- Reach out to other organizations, businesses, and departments in your community for help with:
 - Crisis intervention, domestic violence and medical care for humans
 - Dog and cat food and supplies
 - Supplies for animals that live or spend outside, fence building, dogs houses, shade, etc.
 - Low-cost veterinary care
 - Local trainers
- Create a list of resources, business, contact information and what they can help with

5. Provide Basic Pet Supplies

- If it is possible to provide people with litter, food, crates and other supplies to keep their animals, do this
- Reach out to your community for help with collecting supplies.
- Reach out to rescue groups to see if they can lead this mission.

6. Organize Crowdfunding

Many people need to surrender their pets due to a lack of funds to support themselves and/or the costs of their animals, especially when the animal has a medical emergency.

For Medical Emergencies

- Reach out to local low-cost private clinics for collaboration and help.
 - Create a list to share with the public.
- If it's an emergency, help them to create a crowdfunder:
 - Ask for a photo of the pet and an email or phone for contact.
 - Find out exactly what is wrong with the animals.
 - Post on FB asking if anyone can contact the person to help.
 - If the animal is already at a vet clinic, share that clinic's phone number so that people can call there directly to make a donation.
 - Make sure people know to contact the person directly.

- Provide adequate information about the situation.

You will need to monitor the comments. People tend to have LOTS of questions and comments about the medical emergencies.

For Pet Deposit

If someone calls because they are in a situation in which they would have to give up their dog or cat because they cannot afford a pet deposit, then offer to help raise it for them.

- Collect information about the person:
 - Name & phone number of the apartment manager
 - The person's apartment number
 - Name of person on the lease
 - Apartment name and address
 - Photo of their dog or cat
 - Name of dog or cat
 - Amount of deposit
- Call the apartment manager
 - Inform them this person cannot afford their pet deposit, and that we will raise it for them.
 - Verify the following:
 - That the dog breed (or the cat) can actually be at the apartment (some apartments have breed or size restrictions)
 - The amount of the deposit
 - Where the money should be sent when it is raised, and to whose attention.
- Creating and sharing the crowdfunder:
 - Use a reputable crowdfunder, like --
 - Include all of the information gathered
 - Once the fundraiser has been created, share it on social media and have the owner share it, too
 - In your post ask people to help [your shelter names] keep this pet with their owner.
 - Keep an eye on the fundraiser and posts.
 - If the funds have not been raised in 3 days, re-post it and plea again.
 - Continue this until the full amount has been raised.
 - Once fully raised, send to the vet or the housing manager.

Social Media Guidelines

Networking on Social Media

- Building a dedicated network of followers on social media is the MOST important thing you can do for this program to be successful.
- People want to feel engaged and part of the process.
- When you create a post, go back to it throughout the day to check the comments, and respond whenever possible.
- Thank them for their help, notice their comments, respond when you can.

What Can I Post About?

- You can post about nearly any situation we'll get calls or emails about.
- People connect emotionally with stories. Tell the stories of those you've helped successfully often.

When Posting about a Dog or Cat (for rehoming or temporary foster)

- Always state what city a dog or cat is in and always use the owner or finder's email address (or phone if they approve that) for people to contact.
- You must put these things in each post:
 - What city they are in
 - Age
 - Personality:
 - Are they good with other dogs? cats? Kids? People? are they house-trained, crate trained, healthy, spayed/neutered/vaccinated?
 - Tell something cute about their personality.
 - Use the "info needed to post your pet" canned response. It has all of these questions.

When you post any dog or cat make sure you check back during the day for comments, questions, etc. You cannot answer all of them, but you can remind them to contact the owner/finder via the contact information you put in the post. Sometimes our followers are APA! people and they will offer to help. If you don't watch for their comments and respond they will stop offering.

Example Rescues Resources

When trying to help a community member rehome an animal, it's a great idea to reach out to relevant rescues in the area. Remember to simply google or search FB for the breed and rescues such as "Pit bull rescue Texas" , etc.

Pitbull and large breed friendly housing	http://love-a-bull.org/resources/housing/	
Pitbull rescue	http://love-a-bull.org/ http://www.reunionrescue.com/	
Small breeds	www.smallchancerescue.com	
Shih-Tzu (Lhasas and Pekingese) Rescue	www.weerescue.org	
Great Dane Rescue	www.pawsofaustin.org	
Cattle Dog Rescue	www.texascattledogrescue.com	

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.