

Missy's Rescue  
Volunteer Handbook  
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#### Welcome to Missy's Rescue & Animal Talk!

Animal Talk was opened January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1990. In that first month we realized that there was a very strong need for a place that the public could also release unwanted pets of all kinds. The **previous** pet store that had been in that location had posted a sign that stated, "All animals left on the doorstep would be sent to animal control." This sign was removed! But rescue work had begun. The first litter of kittens we took in that month unfortunately were leukemia positive so began an ever expanding program of Leukemia testing and education on how to trap neuter and return feral cats. But it wasn't just cats in need, many animals came to us from many situations. Now we have become a very important resource for education and help for the public.

Our hopes are that by working with us, not only will you learn about animal care but that you will learn more about what is needed to help move the nation forward into a no-kill era.

#### Our Best Foot Forward

Once you've spent a little time working with animals you will realize that like working with children, we are always CLEANING! We want Animal Talk to feel as clean and sanitary as possible, so clean up after yourself as you go. Here are a few other guidelines to keep us at our best:

- Periodically (yes, it may seem like every 5 minutes) sweep the floor in the back and up front.
- Avoid vacuuming or making loud noises while someone is holding a animal (even across the building).
- Avoid discussing upsetting business or your private life in the presence of the general public, such as the health of an animal. Keep in mind we take in animals from other shelters that were about to be euthanized because they are already sick and from the general public that may not have had appropriate care. We are not here to judge or criticize, we are here to educate and help.
- Try not to describe how disgusting a cage or animal is. Remember that sound travels throughout the building; someone at the front can hear everything you say, especially in the kitchen area.

#### Dress Code

The rule of thumb is: dress as if you are volunteering to finger paint with kindergartners.

- Wear clothes that can get dirty, we use a lot of bleach.
- Dress appropriately (no mid drift shirts, etc).
- No facial rings, studs are OK (nothing a cat could rip off your face).

## General Rules

- No treats without Missy's permission.
- Always check the cage cards for medicine or special diets. If you don't feel comfortable with or don't know how to follow an instruction, ask someone else to do it! It still needs to get done.
- Tell Missy or a lead volunteer if you cannot clean a particular cage, such as a feral or fungal cage. If a cage is labeled "Missy Only" do not open the cage, but please remind her that it needs to be done.
- Please do not leave your personal belongings at Animal Talk when you are not there.
- Respect your fellow volunteers.

## Time Commitment

We know that you are volunteering your time, and we are extremely grateful that you do. At the same time, we ask that you give the same level of respect to us that you would to a paying job. No-show volunteers cause great strain on the volunteers that do show up and have to pick up the slack. We understand that things do come up, we're only asking you to do your best to follow through so we can make sure all the animals are properly cared for every day.

- Respect the commitment you make when you schedule yourself to work.
- Please do not cancel less than 3 days before the shift, excepting emergencies.

## Sanitation Protocols

It is very important to follow strict sanitation procedures when cleaning cages, this really is a matter of life or death. If a deadly virus comes in on one cat, strict sanitation can prevent a wide spread problem. New volunteers will learn the procedure for cleaning a cage at orientation, but to get you started, here are the most important rules:

- Never put any item from an animal's cage anywhere but the work table. NEVER on the floor!
- Always wash your hands between every cage. We DO NOT use hand sanitizers, they can be toxic to a lot of the animals.
- Bleach the counter before and after you use it.
- Always sanitize dust pans before they go back on the wall or before using them in any cage.
- Treat every animal as if he has a deadly disease that you don't want to pass to the next animal.

## Checking General Health

An important part of cleaning cages is doing a general on-the-spot evaluation of an animal's health. Here is a list of behaviors and symptoms to watch for. If you see any of these, unless you know it's already been noted (such as on the cage card) report it to Missy.

- Lack of appetite
- Lethargy
- Yellow skin
- Diarrhea
- Dehydration
- Drooling
- Vomiting
- Congested nose
- Goopy eye(s)
- Weight loss
- Any behavior that you believe is out of character for that animal.

Missy's Rescue does not use an adoption application before meeting pets but there are certain requirements for adoption or sale, and there is contract to be filled out for all animals. Such as, for cats and kittens we require indoor homes only, a 15-20 year commitment, a house or apartment that allows cats, and no known allergies (with some exceptions where someone has done an allergy test'). Indoor homes are particularly important, as the risks from cars, dogs, disease and coyotes (even in the city) are steadily increasing. It is illegal for your animals to leave your property without restraint/supervision, and this is not to mention the detrimental effects domestic cats have on our natural ecology.

- Only pre- trained volunteers may show an animal.
- Every type of animal has different requirements and you must know these before showing them to visitors.
- Indoor homes only is nonnegotiable.
- We do not send kittens under six months of age home alone, there must be another playful cat or dog in the home.
- Holds are usually only allowed for 24 hours.
- Missy's permission is required for any hold.
- Never show an animal that is not ready.

#### About Feral Cats

Missy does Trap Neuter Return of feral cats, at different stages of socialization. A feral cat is a domestic cat that was born a stray without human contact. They see people as a threat and they react accordingly. Young feral kittens socialize quickly, older cats take more time. No one, other than Missy, is allowed to work them.

## Some Common Medical Issues

There are certain medical issues that we see more often than others, here are a few examples:

**Ringworm** – Ringworm is not a worm but rather a fungus that is very common in kids, cats, gardeners, and wrestlers. Ringworm is not life threatening for a healthy cat, but it can spread from cats to other animals and humans. Ringworm is often identified when a cat is losing patches of fur or has a flaky patch of skin.

There are usually no animals with active Ringworm spots in the building, but we often have cats that have previously had the fungus and may still carry a spore that could pass to other animals, including people. These cages are marked with a tag that says “Previous Fungal” or “Previous Ringworm”. We ask that all Ringworm cages be cleaned last to prevent spread to other animals. If you ever suspect that you have contracted Ringworm, please let us know! It is contagious to all mammals.

**Feline Upper Respiratory infection (URI)** – A URI is a “kitty cold”. It has similar symptoms to human colds and, although highly communicable between cats, will not affect other animals or humans. Several different microorganisms can cause a URI but only three can result in more severe symptoms that may require treatment. These are Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus and Bordetella. They are transmitted via secretions from the cat’s mouth, nose, and eyes. The irritation to these moist membranes causes characteristic sneezing and discharge from the eyes and nose. This discharge is usually light but occasionally the discharge is thick, the cat has a fever, and loses its appetite. The symptoms usually last from 7-10 days but can last for several weeks. Some cats become carriers of URIs and have mild recurrences when under stress. Most kittens and cats in the building are vaccinated against these diseases, unless they are too young or unhealthy to be vaccinated.

**Dehydration** – Dehydration will occur when the animal is either not taking in enough water (like with the loss of appetite) or losing too much water (through frequent urination, diarrhea, or fever). Dehydration can be identified by lifting the loose skin over the lower back. If an animal is hydrated, the skin should snap down quickly when released. If the skin remains lifted when released or slowly settles down over the body, the animal is probably dehydrated. If you suspect this, report it to Missy.

Thank you for signing up to volunteer and taking the time to read this document. There are more resources available if you want to continue to expand your knowledge and training. We hope to see you soon!