

# Cherokee County Animal Shelter

Volunteer Handbook

Rural Municipal Open-Entry Shelter



## Welcome

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with us. As a rural municipal, open-entry shelter, we are committed to serving our community and the animals who depend on us.

We are open entry, which means we accept all animals that we have space for — regardless of age, breed, medical condition, or behavioral challenges. This makes our work both incredibly important and incredibly demanding.

Our Mission:

**To provide care, comfort, and compassion to stray, abandoned, and unwanted animals while doing our part to help find them forever homes.**

Volunteers are essential to fulfilling this mission. Every clean kennel, every walk, every kind interaction helps move an animal one step closer to adoption.

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## What We Need Most

Our biggest need is reliable help keeping animals:

- Clean
- Comfortable
- Mentally enriched
- Socialized and adoption-ready

Consistency is critical. Animals thrive on routine, and your dependability makes a direct impact on their well-being.

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# Volunteer Expectations

## Professional Conduct

- Treat staff, fellow volunteers, adopters, and animals with respect
- Follow all staff instructions
- Maintain confidentiality regarding shelter operations
- Refrain from posting negative or misleading information about the shelter

## Reliability

- Arrive for scheduled shifts on time
- Notify the shelter as early as possible if you cannot attend
- Sign in and out each visit

## Dress Code

- Closed-toe shoes (required)
  - Comfortable clothing that can get dirty
  - No dangling jewelry
  - Long hair secured
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# Safety First

Animal welfare begins with human safety.

## General Rules

- Never place fingers inside kennels
- Never open a kennel without proper training
- One animal out at a time unless directed by staff
- Report bites, scratches, or concerns immediately

## Dogs (Adoption Floor Only)

Volunteers do NOT handle intake animals.

- Ensure kennel door is securely latched before removing leash
- Use proper leash technique
- Keep dogs separated unless directed otherwise
- Watch for signs of stress (whale eye, tucked tail, growling, avoidance)
- Return dogs calmly to kennels

## Cats (Adoption Floor Only)

- Be aware of door-dashers
  - Close doors securely behind you
  - Sanitize hands between rooms
  - Handle gently and confidently
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## Cleaning & Sanitation Protocol

Clean environments reduce disease and stress.

### Cleaning Order

1. Healthy adoption animals
2. Special care animals (if assigned)

### Basic Kennel Cleaning Steps

- Secure animal safely
- Remove soiled bedding
- Dispose of waste properly
- Apply disinfectant and allow proper contact time
- Rinse and dry as directed
- Provide clean bedding and fresh water

Always follow staff instructions regarding disinfectant use.

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## Enrichment & Socialization

Enrichment reduces stress and increases adoptability.

Volunteers may assist with:

### Dogs

- Leash walks
- Yard time (if approved)
- Basic command reinforcement
- Toy rotation
- Positive interaction and calm socialization

## Cats

- Gentle play sessions
- Brushing (if tolerated)
- Toy enrichment
- Quiet companionship

Document any notable behaviors for staff.

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## Public Interaction

Volunteers represent the shelter.

- Be friendly and welcoming
- Direct medical or adoption questions to staff
- Do not promise holds or outcomes
- Avoid discussing shelter policy unless trained to do so

If unsure, always defer to staff.

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## Emotional Wellness

Shelter work can be emotionally challenging.

Not every situation has a happy ending. We focus on the lives we can impact and improve.

If you feel overwhelmed: - Speak to a staff member - Take a break - Step outside for fresh air

Compassion fatigue is real. Taking care of yourself allows you to continue caring for the animals.

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## Emergency Procedures

### In Case of Injury

- Notify staff immediately
- Complete incident report

## In Case of Dog Fight or Escape

- Do not intervene physically
- Alert staff immediately

## Severe Weather or Facility Emergency

- Follow staff instructions
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## Social Media Guidelines

- Positive posts are encouraged
  - Do not post animals that are not publicly available
  - Do not share medical or behavioral details without approval
  - Represent the shelter professionally
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## Volunteer Growth Opportunities

With experience and demonstrated reliability, volunteers may be offered additional responsibilities.

Opportunities may include: - Event assistance - Adoption support - Photography - Specialized enrichment programs

Consistency and trust are key.

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## Final Thoughts

Every animal in our care arrived here because they had nowhere else to go.

Because we are open entry, we do not get to choose who needs us — but we can choose how we care for them.

Your time, patience, and compassion matter more than you know.

Thank you for standing with us and for the animals.