**Volunteer Handbook**



***Open Doors***

***Open Hearts***

**Monday through Friday**

**10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

**Saturday and Sunday**

**10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**3839 W. Burnham Street**

**West Milwaukee, WI 53215**

**(414) 649-8640**

**(414) 763-6234 (fax)**

[**www.madacc.org**](http://www.madacc.org)

**A Welcome from Our Volunteer & Community Outreach Coordinator**

Welcome to the Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission (MADACC) volunteer program. We know you have many options as a volunteer, so we appreciate that MADACC is the organization you want to serve.

You will be joining a team of caring and enthusiastic individuals dedicated to the welfare of animals in our community. Whether it is doing laundry and dishes, dog walking, fostering, special events, etc., the work you will do for MADACC has an immediate and tangible impact on the lives of the animals in our care.

**– Kate Hartlund**

**A Welcome from Executive Director**

Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission (MADACC) is one of the most challenging and rewarding organizations to be a part of in our local animal welfare community.

Each day we are asked to confront animal neglect and abuse, to care for stray and abandoned animals and to do all we can to ensure our animals are given the opportunity to get a second chance at finding a forever family. We cannot do this without the help of our community volunteers. Our staff is so grateful for all that the volunteers do for us and look forward to working with you to provide a better life for the animals at MADACC.

**– Karen Sparapani**

**History**

MADACC opened August 1, 1999 to provide animal care and control services for the 19 municipalities (cities and villages) of Milwaukee County, after the Wisconsin Humane Society terminated its contract with the county to provide animal control services.

MADACC is an intergovernmental entity that consists of a Board of Directors with representation from each municipality as well as a seven-member Operations Committee. Under the direction of the Board of Directors, MADACC's Executive Director is responsible for managing the comprehensive animal care and control program for the 19 municipalities in Milwaukee County, with an annual budget of approximately $3 million and 36 employees.

**Mission**

To provide animal regulation and care services which protect the health, public safety and welfare of the people and animals in Milwaukee County.

**About Us**

MADACC is an open-admission animal shelter that currently rescues and assures safe, temporary shelter and veterinary and humane care for more than 10,000 stray, unwanted, abandoned, mistreated and injured animals each year - more than any other animal care and control shelter in Wisconsin.

MADACC provides a central location for owners to find and recover their lost pets, rescues strays and removes dangerous animals from public areas, providing effective animal control services by active enforcement of Wisconsin State Statues pertaining to animal welfare.

**What Does MADACC Do?**

MADACC rescues and holds stray (lost pets), injured, sick, mistreated or dangerous domestic animals. We operate a dispatch office to receive complaints of stray animals in the community.

The Wisconsin Humane Society takes injured wildlife and owner surrenders.

**What Happens to the Animals?**

* Upon admittance, stray animals are scanned for a microchip, given a health exam, dewormed and vaccinated, given food, water and clean bedding.
* Its photograph is posted onto MADACC’s website, www.madacc.org, which is updated hourly from 8 a.m. to midnight daily.
* By law, animals are sheltered for a minimum of 4 days.
* If unclaimed after the four-day stray hold, adoptable animals are evaluated for health and temperament and offered to local shelters, breed placement groups, or placed into foster care. Prior to the four-day hold ending, animals can be evaluated for pre-select adoption or foster care.
* The Pre-Selection Adoption program identifies animals at intake that do not have identification such as a collar or microchip, that are less likely to be reclaimed, and who have an extremely adoptable personality, to be offered for adoption while they are being held on stray hold. Should an owner reclaim the animal, the adoption will be voided, and the potential adopter can have a full refund or apply the fee to the adoption of another animal. If an owner does not reclaim the animal, the animal will be spayed/neutered and vetted as soon as possible to the first day it came off stray hold. We do this to make sure as many animals can leave as soon as possible, again, to have resources available for animals that continue to come into our facility.
* MADACC has a full adoption program that utilizes traditional adoption procedures or pre-select.

**Other Services Offered**

* Dog & Cat licensing
* Milwaukee County dog park tags
* Live trap rentals
* Low-cost Spay & Neuter services
* Vaccines
* Microchip identification
* Rabies quarantine (10-day observation period)
* Euthanasia (owner request)
* Safe Keep (ex. owner is arrested, hospitalized, house fire, illegal exotic pets, etc.)

**MADACC Fees**

**Low-cost spay and neuter program:** for Milwaukee County residents.

* female dog $125
* male dog $125
* female cat $70
* male cat $70

Sign-up for surgeries and services is done on a first come, first serve basis, and must be done in person at MADACC (3839 W. Burnham St., West Milwaukee) before the surgery date. All fees must be paid up-front, at which time a surgery date will be scheduled. No refunds.

**Vaccinations: Rabies, Da2PPV and FVRCP** $15 – must be current with Milwaukee County license

**Testing: Heartworm and FIV/FeLV** $25 - at time of surgery only

**Microchips:** $25

**Euthanasia:** Provided for owned sick or injured animals - $125

If a pet dies at home, and is brought to MADACC (no pick-ups) - cremation is $5

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**Friends of MADACC** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting community awareness and improving the welfare of Milwaukee County’s homeless animals.

The vision of Friends of MADACC is to:

* Reunite a greater percentage of lost pets with owners.
* Help more homeless animals find new forever homes.
* Improve quality of life for animals.
* Promote community awareness.
* Control pet overpopulation

If you are interested in volunteering for Friends of MADACC, please email them at friends@madacc.org.



**The Cats' Voice,** a MADACC volunteer group**,** was established on March 9, 2011. The Cats' Voice is dedicated to providing and promoting the health and stabilization of area cats. They provide education to the community on key topics related to cat health and welfare through seminars, materials and an active Facebook page. They also organize on-site adoption events in the MADACC conference room. If you are interested in volunteering for The Cats’ Voice you can email them at catsvoice@madacc.org.**Volunteering at MADACC**

The MADACC volunteer program operates on a system with two levels. We do this so that volunteers become familiar with shelter protocols, and responsibilities increase as you progress.

**Tier 1: (minimum of 4 hours required service before progressing to other positions)**

**Animal Care Assistant**

**Purpose:** Assist shelter staff in maintaining a clean and sanitary environment for the health and comfort of the animals in the shelter.

**Responsibilities:** Animal Care Assistants assist the Animal Care Attendants with cleaning and sanitizing all food bowls, water bowls, litter pans, white boxes, and laundry. Other tasks may include sweeping, mopping, cleaning windows and emptying garbage.

**Qualifications:** Ability to follow specific cleaning protocols; ability to bend, lift, reach, and stand for long periods of time; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation; Tier 1 Training

**Scheduling: 2 hours shifts**

**Tier 2: (select from the following after 4 hours of Animal Care Assistant service complete)**

**Community Outreach Volunteer**

**Purpose:** Big heart for animals but short on time? MADACC needs friendly, outgoing, animal-loving people to represent MADACC at fairs, festivals and farmer markets throughout the year around
Milwaukee County.

**Responsibilities:** Community Outreach Volunteers answer questions about the work we do at MADACC, hand out educational materials, and tell people about our programs and upcoming events. This position is a great alternative (or addition) to a weekly volunteer commitment. If you are a student, you will get great public speaking experience while supporting the animals! You will set up or tear down at the end of the shift and are responsible for bringing the COV materials.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation, Tier 1 training, COV training, shadowing sessions. Email Kate at khartlund@madacc.org

**Scheduling:** Two-to-five-hour shifts (you choose events to attend based on a current event schedule) usually on a Saturday or Sunday with some weekday opportunities. Time commitment is flexible.

**Kitty Koncierge**

**Purpose:** Assist Animal Care Attendants with providing morning water and meals to resident cats and kittens. Monitor the appetite and overall health of the cats and kittens in order to assist the Veterinary staff.

**Responsibilities:** Kitty Koncierge team members will work in the morning before Animal Care Attendants begin cleaning the cat kennels. They are responsible for making sure all cats/kittens have fresh water. They will then prepare meals for all cats/kittens. While the cats/kittens are eating, Kitty Koncierge team members will make notations for the Veterinary staff on areas of concern to include: not eating, nasal or eye discharge, scratching or hair loss, etc.

**Qualifications:** Experience working with cats/kittens preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific feeding protocols; ability to track observable phenomenon via note-taking; patience and understanding of cats and their behavior; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation, Tier 1 Training, Basic Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

**Scheduling: None**

**MADACC Volunteer Adoption Counselor**

**Purpose**: There is only one thing better than seeing pets leave the shelter with their new families, and that is helping to make it happen! If you enjoy working with people and would like to help secure loving homes for MADACC shelter animals, consider becoming a Volunteer Adoption Counselor! Please note that this position requires direct contact with dogs and cats; those with serious allergies or mobility issues will not be a good fit for this volunteer opportunity.

**Responsibilities:** Actively reaching out to and interacting with the general public, specifically talking with prospective adopters to find out what they are looking for in a pet. Interacting/getting to know the animals and talking with prospective adopters about them to make the best possible match. Providing high quality customer service to people who visit MADACC. Working with staff and other volunteers to increase adoptions. Photographing adoptions and keep record of positive adoption stories. Helping people through the adoption process, sharing information about animal care and behavior, reviewing adoption profiles, having conversations with applicants in a non-judgmental manner, making decisions to finalize or deny and adoption, and communicating with the applicant in such a manner that maintains a courteous and friendly attitude even when declining a request to adopt. Willingness and ability to learn about cat and dog behavior, common issues, and ways to address them in order to make good adoption matches and to keep animals in homes. Assisting with the cleaning of animal areas and equipment as needed, including spot cleaning of animal and public areas throughout the day. Monitoring the health of the animals on an ongoing basis and rapidly identifying any health problems or conditions (medical or behavioral) and immediately reporting it to the supervisor or veterinary technician. Treating all animas humanely, properly, and with compassion at all times, regardless of the situation or circumstance and promoting a humane and caring attitude towards all animals. Maintaining a friendly demeanor and providing good customer service while assisting with adoptions. Working courteously and cooperatively with other staff members and volunteers.

**Qualifications:** Strong interpersonal skills. The ideal person for the role would be personable, outgoing, patient, professional, and able to get along well with a variety of people. Excellent written and oral communication skills. Affection for animals and concern for their welfare. Ability and initiative, working with minimal supervision and direction. Maturity, good judgement and a professional personal appearance. Flexibility, ability to manage multiple tasks. The ability to remain pleasant and calm even in stressful situations. The ability to ask appropriate questions to gather information along with the ability to feel and show empathy for others. The ability to learn about and understand each animal as an individual with his or her own personality, good or bad habits, past experiences (if we know them), etc. Familiarity with animals, knowledge of animal behavior or experience volunteering or working with a rescue group, humane society, foster care involvement or other animal welfare agency a plus. Comfort and ability working with animals of unknown disposition and whose who may exhibit medical and other problems.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation, Tier 1 Training, Basic Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

**Scheduling: Scheduled shifts, Mon-Fri: 11-1:30 pm, 1:30-4 pm, 4-6:30 pm. Sat/Sun: 11-1:30 pm and 1:30-4 pm.**

**Dog Walker**

**Purpose:** Provide resident dogs with at least 15 minutes of exercise a day.

**Responsibilities:** Dog Walkers will teach basic skills to the dogs they are interacting with, to include not jumping at the kennel door, sit, waiting at doors, proper greetings when meeting new people, etc. Dog Walkers will also note both positive behaviors and behaviors needing modification on each dog’s profile, as well as notify the Veterinary staff of any health concerns.

**Qualifications:** Experience working with dogs preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific dog walking and training protocols; ability to track observable phenomenon via notetaking; patience and understanding of dogs and their behavior; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation, Tier 1 Training, Basic Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

**Scheduling: Scheduled shifts, Mon-Fri: 10-12 pm, 12-2 pm, 2-4 pm, 4-6 pm.**

**Sat/Sun: 10-12 pm, 12-2 pm, 2-4 pm.**

**Photographers**

**Purpose:** Provide photos of adoptable animals and photos to replace original intake photos as necessary.

**Responsibilities:** In teams of two, photographers will produce quality photos of assigned dogs and cats. Dogs will be photographed in areas designated by staff, and cats will be photographed on cat towers in each of the cat wards. Areas and equipment must be cleaned and sanitized between animals.

**Qualifications:** Experience working with animals preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific animal handling protocols; ability to follow specific cleaning and sanitation protocols; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation, Tier 1 Training, Basic and Advanced Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

**Scheduling: TBA**

**Spay/Neuter Assistant**

**Purpose:** Assist Veterinary staff with spay/neuter surgeries for the low-cost spay/neuter program and adoption program.

**Responsibilities:** Spay/Neuter assistants assist with the check-in of surgery animals, pre-surgery tasks, and monitor the recovery of animals.

**Qualifications:** Experience working with animals preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific animal handling protocols; ability to lift at least 50lbs; ability to work individually and as a team; comfortable with taking direction; patience and understanding of animals and their behavior; ability to follow specific cleaning and sanitation protocols; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation, Tier 1 Training, Position-specific training

**Scheduling: Email** **khartlund@madacc.org** **about openings**

**Kitty Koncierge – Supper Club**

**Purpose:** Volunteers will provide the final evening checks on the cats in our care before we close for the evening and will report to the Veterinary Assistants on duty for guidance or to report concerns in real time.

**Responsibilities:** Volunteers are responsible for making sure all cats/kittens have fresh water and clean litterboxes. They will then restock the cat wards with food/bowls/trays/garbage bags, and other necessary supplies time permitting. Volunteers will note concerns including vomiting, nasal or eye discharge, diarrhea, scratching or hair loss, or behavior changes.

**Qualifications:** Experience working with cats/kittens preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific cleaning protocols; ability to track observable phenomenon via notetaking; patience and understanding of cats and their behavior; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation, Tier 1 Training, Basic Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

**Scheduling: M-F 5-7pm and Sat/Sun 3-5pm.**

**Intake/Treatment Team – INTERVIEW REQUIRED**

**Purpose:** Assist medical department staff with various tasks associated with the intake of new animals, care of animals in custody, and in the various outcomes for animals such as adoption discharge, reclaims and other assistance as needed.

**Responsibilities:** Volunteers will assist the MADACC medical team with a variety of duties to include restocking supplies, cleaning, transporting animals to and from the kennels, feeding neonates, bathing, data entry and other duties as needed.

**Qualifications:** Experience working with animals preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific animal handling protocols; ability to lift at least 50 lbs.; comfortable taking direction; patience and understand of animals and their behavior; ability to follow specific cleaning and sanitation protocols; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation, Tier 1 Training, Basic and Advanced Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

**Scheduling: TBD**

**MADACC’s Canine Last Call Team**

**Purpose:** Volunteers will provide the final evening checks on the dogs in our care before we close for the evening and will report to the Veterinary Assistants on duty for guidance or to report concerns in real time.

**Responsibilities:** Volunteers will be assigned a dog ward or wards, population dependent, to do walk throughs ensuring all dogs have fresh water, that there are no enrichment toys left in the kennels overnight which could be considered a choking hazard, report medical concerns to Veterinary Assistants (diarrhea, bleeding, lethargy, nasal or eye discharge, scratching, hair loss, vomiting, or behavior changes) and pick up poop where necessary so that dogs are comfortable for the evening. Volunteers will then restock their assigned wards with food/bowls/trays/garbage bags, and other supplies as necessary, time permitting.

**Qualifications:** Experience working with animals preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific animal handling protocols; ability to lift at least 50lbs; ability to work individually and as a team; comfortable with taking direction; patience and understanding of animals and their behavior; ability to follow specific cleaning and sanitation protocols; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation, Tier 1 Training, Basic and Advanced Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

**Scheduling: M-F 5-7pm and Sat/Sun 3-5pm.**

**Administrative Team**

**Purpose:** Assist the Client Care department with a variety of tasks depending on what is needed. This will include answering the door, various administrative tasks, and acting as a “Host/Hostess” in the front lobby to better assist and direct the needs of our clients.

**Responsibilities:** Volunteers will function as a first point of contact for clients entering the facility. They will be responsible for maintaining the dog and cat adoption waitlist and contacting the next adopters in line as well as performing dog and cat escorts for the public. The Front Office Assistant may also be asked to perform administrative tasks such as filling, restocking, making copies, etc.

**Qualifications:** Experience working in customer service preferred; present a professional appearance and a friendly manner; courteous and personable when dealing with the public; comfortable with taking direction; ability to follow specific protocols; ability to maintain confidentiality; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

**Training:** Volunteer Orientation, Tier 1 Training, Position-specific training.

**Scheduling:** Morning, afternoon, and evening shifts available. Two-hour shift minimum required

**Volunteer Policies**

**Before You Arrive**

Volunteers may assist in the facility any time between 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The shelter is closed to volunteers on holidays.

Wear comfortable clothes that you don’t mind getting dirty, stained, wet or snagged. You should wear long pants and sturdy, non-skid, closed-toe shoes for your own safety and protection.

If you are pregnant or if you have any condition that might compromise your immune system, you must notify your physician of your intent to volunteer at the shelter. Your doctor may want you to limit or stop your volunteering, or s/he may have medical advice/precautions for you.

We are not responsible for the loss or theft of your personal belongings. Please keep any items of value on your person or locked in your vehicle. You are welcome to keep belongings in the Volunteer Coordinators office.

**In The Facility**

When you arrive, please sign-in on the clip board at the VOLUNTEER desk.

You will then log-in using your pin number (Received at first volunteer shift) on the volunteer computer.

Please wear your volunteer name tag at all times while in the facility.

Volunteers must be polite, courteous and helpful when dealing with staff and the public. Please refer all questions regarding policies and procedures with which you are not familiar to a supervisor or to the Volunteer Coordinator. It is extremely important that the public not be misinformed and that you report any potential conflict to a supervisor.

Please follow all staff directives and do not represent yourself as a MADACC employee.

Any discussion regarding MADACC policies, procedures, and/or activities should be held in private with staff and/or supervisor(s).

Volunteers should not get involved in conflicts between staff and citizens.

Camera phones and other recording devices are not allowed to be used unless permission is obtained from the Executive Director.

MADACC volunteers are ONLY allowed to interact with approved animals after the proper training (dog walking or adoption counseling) has been completed. Interacting includes sticking fingers in cages, opening cage doors, petting animals, etc. Any deviation from this policy will result in termination of volunteering at MADACC.

Absolutely NO volunteers in quarantine rooms, treatment area, euthanasia room or the unloading area unless escorted by a MADACC employee.

**On Your Way Out**

* Return any leashes, signs or other materials to the appropriate areas
* Sign out on the volunteer computer and the volunteer clip board

**General Guidelines**

If a bite or scratch breaks your skin, or any injury occurs, notify a supervisor immediately. If a supervisor is not available, please go to the front desk and ask to speak to a vet tech.

If you suspect an animal is sick or injured, please notify a vet tech or a supervisor immediately.

Always wash/sanitize your hands between handling animals in order to reduce the spread of disease.

**Sanitation and Disease Prevention**

The health of the animals in our facility is a priority. Everyone must follow sanitation guidelines in an effort to minimize disease transmission. The opportunity for animals to be transferred into an adoption program increases when they are healthy. Therefore, it is in their best interest to keep them as healthy as possible. The following are some guidelines to follow regarding sanitation.

* Always wash and sanitize hands between animals. There are hand washing sinks in the break room and bathrooms. There are liquid hand sanitizer dispensers in each kennel room.
* Walk dogs in and out of building following procedures.
* Do not reach into cages to pet animals. This can spread disease.
* Dispose of dog feces in appropriate trash containers. Do not leave any feces on the ground.
* Only occupy volunteer designated areas of the building. Stay out of off limit areas. This is to minimize the spread of disease transmission. The off limit areas are the quarantine rooms, treatment area, euthanasia room, and the unloading area.
* If you observe any illness in an animal please notify the vet tech staff.

MADACC reserves the right to terminate a volunteer’s service at any time, with or without warning. The following will result in termination:

* Theft
* Substance abuse
* Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on premises
* Having any illegal contraband in your possession while on premises
* Discourtesy/rudeness to another volunteer, staff member or citizen
* Any act of cruelty to an animal
* Careless, negligent performance of volunteer duties
* Altering a kennel card in any way
* Interfering verbally or physically with an employee or member of the public
* Sexual harassment
* Deviating from sanitation/disease prevention guidelines
* Unauthorized photography or audio/video recording in non-public areas of the MADACC building
* Interacting with animals not approved for socialization without explicit authorization from a supervisor
* Disclosure or removal from the premises of confidential MADACC information. Confidential information includes information, in any form, related to MADACC’s operations and finances, management, employees, animal owners, animal claimants, animal attack victims, animal euthanasia, animal bite records, animal medical records, animal behavioral records, and similar information, which is not generally known by or readily available to the public. Confidential information also includes any codes, passwords, usernames, or other identification or information necessary to access any of the MADACC’s computer files, e-mail accounts, voicemail systems, and other systems and accounts belonging to MADACC.

If you have a problem or question, please talk to the Volunteer Coordinator or a supervisor. If neither is available, please go to the front desk and ask to speak with a vet tech.

**Smoking Policy**

For health and safety considerations, MADACC prohibits smoking in MADACC facilities. If you wish to smoke you may do so outside of the building.

**Contact with the media**

The Executive Director or designated supervisors shall be responsible for all official contacts with the news media, including answering of questions from the media. If you are approached by a member of the media you may politely refer them to the Executive Director.

**Grievances**

Any and all complaints regarding MADACC, its employees or its policies will only be accepted if written, signed and given to the Volunteer Coordinator.

**Why Does MADACC Euthanize Animals?**

Euthanasia is the term used for humanely putting an animal to death. Euthanasia is an

unfortunate reality in many shelters around the country, and particularly for open-admission animal shelters and animal control facilities.

MADACC is an open-admission animal control facility. As such, MADACC never turns a stray animal away regardless of its age, medical condition, breed, physical condition, temperament or the current kennel space available.

MADACC works with shelters and rescues across the state, with the goal of transferring as many adoptable animals as possible into their adoption programs. In addition, MADACC has a robust adoption program. MADACC staff is proud of the fact that every animal is treated as an individual, and they provide the best humane care for every animal that enters the shelter.

Animals may be euthanized at MADACC because they are sick or injured. While their medical condition may be treatable, it may not be financially realistic for us to do so, or the animal’s prognosis may be poor. What is treatable for an animal living at home with its owner may not be treatable when the animal is living in a stressful shelter environment. Placing these animals with responsible shelters and rescues with the resources to treat these animals is an option utilized whenever appropriate.

Animals may be euthanized because they possess behaviors that make them poor candidates for

adoption. MADACC has a responsibility not only to the animals of Milwaukee County, but also to the people who will be adopting these animals, and the people who share a community with them. We cannot in good conscience adopt out animals that are potentially dangerous, or who have severe problems adapting to change. Our staff is well-versed in animal behavior – while a volunteer may feel that an animal is “fine”, our staff that works with these animals throughout the duration of their stay, may see something that a non-professional could miss.

It is very difficult emotionally for our staff to have to make the decision to euthanize any animal, and then to have to perform the procedure. Euthanasia is not taken lightly and it can raise the stress level of the employees a great deal. Volunteers are asked to respect our employees and the difficult decisions they make on a daily basis. We recognize that you may not always understand the reasons as to why an animal was euthanized, but it is highly inappropriate to confront the MADACC staff and make their jobs even more difficult by questioning them or challenging them on a euthanasia decision. You are to consult with the Volunteer Coordinator, Shelter Manager or Executive Director only. Likewise, if you are unsure what has happened to an animal you’ve gotten to know here, you are not to ask the staff. The reason is simple - if there was an unhappy ending to that animal’s story, we don’t expect the employees to relive the event for each curious volunteer. It is far too stressful for staff in an already stressful job. Please see the Volunteer Coordinator and you will be given an honest answer and will have the opportunity to discuss your feelings and any concerns you might have.

We also ask that you be very careful and use discretion when discussing your feelings about a particular sad ending with other volunteers. Dwelling on the negative isn’t good for anyone’s morale and often leads to the spread of inaccurate information as the story gets retold down the line. You will hear of sad endings, but never lose sight of the happy endings. They far outnumber the sad ones. Employees and volunteers should focus on their successes and be proud that what they’re doing is ensuring more pets are finding their forever homes.

**Zoonotic Diseases**

**Worker Safety in the Animal Shelter\***

**Zoonosis**

Zoonosis is the term used to describe diseases that can be passed from animals to humans and vice versa. This is an issue of special importance to staff who work in animal shelters because of the unknown background and high incidence of disease in shelter animals. Veterinary staff who work in animal hospitals, zoos and laboratories, for example, know more about the medial history of their patients than shelter workers dealing with large numbers of stray animals on a daily basis. There are at least 200 known zoonotic diseases, and more are being continually added to the list. Fortunately for most shelter workers dealing mainly with dogs and cats, the list of zoonotic diseases to be concerned about is much shorter than 200. The good news is also that most of these diseases can be avoided or their impact minimized by following a few straightforward rules.

The single most effective thing you can do to avoid contracting a disease from an animal or from the shelter environment is to

**ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER HANDLING ANYTHING.**

In addition, make certain to wash before handling any food or putting your hands in your mouth or up to your face and eyes.

Most diseases are spread through the oral route or by penetration through breaks in the skin or mucus membranes. This one simple step of hand washing will prevent the spread of most diseases by avoiding the route of infection. This is not fool proof, however, as some disease organisms can penetrate intact skin or are inhaled.

Other precautions:

* Wear gloves when cleaning and disinfecting cages, food and water bowls, litter pans, etc. This is especially important if you have any open wounds on your hands and arms. Wash your hands after removing the gloves. There may have been a break in the gloves.
* Seek prompt medical attention for any scratches, bites or wounds received while volunteering.
* Use gloves and the proper equipment when handling dangerous animals to avoid injury.
* Wash and disinfect any wounds received immediately and seek professional attention.
* Avoid self-treatment.
* Wash hands using iodine based disinfectant soaps.
* According to the CDC, in order to wash ones’ hands properly, hands should be lathered and rubbed together vigorously for at least 10-15 seconds, and then rinsed thoroughly under a forceful stream of warm water.
* Avoid eating food in areas where animals are housed or treated.
* Avoid letting animals lick your face or wounds.
* Pregnant women should avoid cleaning litter boxes because of the risk of contracting Toxoplasmosis. The risk is actually minimal and most cases of Toxoplasmosis are not transmitted to humans from cat feces, but from ingestion of contaminated or undercooked meat. Prompt daily cleaning of the litter box disposes of fecal material before it becomes infective. However, to be on the safe side, this duty should be assigned to others.
* If you do become ill, let your physician know that you work with animals.
* If you don’t know if a disease or condition is zoonotic or not, assume that it is and treat it accordingly. Wear gloves and masks, isolate the animal, wash hands, and DISINFECT, DISINFECT, DISINFECT!
* It should always be remembered that most people who work with or own animals do not contract any of these diseases. The people most at risk are the elderly, young children and people who are immune-compromised, such as HIV patients or people taking immunosuppressive drugs. The rewards obtained from the human animal bond far outweigh the risks of becoming ill from contact with animals.
* It is important to recognize the signs that an animal is sick. Some signs are more obvious than others. Important symptoms of disease may include: Depression, pale gums, loss of appetite, dehydration, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, ocular and nasal discharges, reddened eyes, hair loss or reddened skin, shaking the head, coughing, sneezing, lethargy, straining to urinate or defecate, blood in the stool or urine, lumps or swellings, penile or vaginal discharges, neurological problems like star gazing, head tilt, head pressing, seizuring, etc.
* Diseases are transmitted by a number of mechanisms. Most diseases are either caused by bacteria, parasites, viruses, or fungi (the causative agent of ringworm) and are transmitted by the fecal-oral route or through breaks in the mucus membranes or skin. Staff should understand the modes of disease transmission in order to keep themselves healthy and safe.
* The most commonly encountered diseases are caused by direct contact with infected tissues, aerosolized particles, contaminated feces, urine or saliva, or through contact with grooming utensils, etc. Fomites are one of the most common ways diseases are transmitted and one of the most overlooked mechanisms. They are particularly dangerous when dealing with viruses or fungi that can survive in the environment for long periods of time and are resistant to routine disinfecting techniques.

\*Dr. Lila Miller, DVM, Sr. Director. Animal Services & Vet Advisor, ASPCA. Worker Safety in the Animal Shelter, April 20, 1990. (http://www.petfinder.com/for-shelters/worker-safety-animal-shelter.html)