



# THE ANTI-CRUELTY SOCIETY

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A Commitment to Caring *Since 1899*

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# PHYSICAL EXAM TRAINING MANUAL

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## Welcome to the Physical Exam (PE) Volunteer Program!

As a PE volunteer, you will have the opportunity to assist the veterinarians in the examination of animals and facilitate the process by which they are placed for adoption.

### Importance of Following Procedure and Policy

As a volunteer it is important that you follow all procedures and policies. These have been compiled from the knowledge and experiences of other ACS volunteers and staff, and have been created in an effort to protect the animals, volunteers, staff and general public while at The Anti-Cruelty Society.

If at any time you have questions, issues or concerns please bring them to the attention of the Volunteer Manager.

### A Note About Euthanasia

As discussed during the new volunteer orientation and Level 1 Programs, The Anti-Cruelty Society is an open admissions shelter that accepts all animals without discrimination.

The Anti-Cruelty Society believes that euthanasia is a humane alternative to many situations. Agreeing with this concept on an intellectual level is different than when a volunteer sees the decision being made.

As a Physical Exam volunteer, you will not participate in euthanasia of an animal, but you will be exposed to situations in which the decision is made by veterinarians to euthanize an animal. As a result you will understand the criteria for, and necessity of, euthanasia.

### PE Program Prerequisites

After having completed 25 hours in a level 1 volunteer program, you are eligible to join the PE program. Once you have completed training, you may begin volunteering.

### Online Scheduler

Because PEs are primarily performed on weekends, **volunteers are required to schedule their shifts in advance**. Ideally there should be no less than 2, and no more than 3 volunteers scheduled per shift. If you must cancel a shift that you have already signed up for, please remove your name from the schedule as soon as possible so that other volunteers will have the opportunity to sign up and the shift can be adequately covered. If your availability only allows you to come in on a specific day, and that day already has 3 volunteers scheduled, consider signing up for another upcoming weekend. If your schedule is flexible, please attend

a session on a different day where there is greater need.

### **When You Can Volunteer**

On weekends, PEs are consistently done between the hours of **10am – 2pm**.

During the week, specific hours are determined by the veterinarian's availability and this is difficult to predict in advance. The best plan is to come in and let the vet know you are available to do PEs and proceed to work in another volunteer program that you have already trained for. Please be aware that there will be week days that PEs are not performed due to the availability of the veterinarians.

### **Where to Meet**

When you arrive to begin your PE shift, meet fellow volunteers and the veterinarian in the pharmacy area of the clinic. The veterinarian will give you further instruction on which animals he/she wants to begin with.

## **General Information**

### **Contact with the Public**

The shelter may be open to the public during the hours PE's are conducted and animals are routinely moved through public areas. Volunteers should never allow visitors to meet or handle an animal that is being transferred to or from the clinic. Until the exam is complete and the test results are in, it may not be known if the animal will be available for adoption. If it does not pass the exam, it may be euthanized.

### **Safety**

If at any time an animal is showing signs of aggression or excessive fear and you are not comfortable, do not attempt to get the animal out of his kennel. Notify the vet and let him/her determine if the animal needs more time to adjust to the shelter environment prior to his PE.

If at any time an animal bites you, you must report the bite immediately to the veterinarian or manager on duty. *There are no exceptions to this rule.*

### **Determining When an Animal is Eligible for PE**

The veterinarian, and/or volunteers in conjunction with the veterinarian, will determine which animals are ready for their PE. An animal must be eating regularly, having normal urine and stool and not be vomiting prior to PE. In most instances, the veterinarian or an experienced volunteer will have indicated which animals are ready. If you are unsure which animals are ready, please ask the veterinarian or another volunteer for assistance.



**Image 1:** Head lock restraint for blood draw/vaccinations



**Image 2:** Volunteer (left) holding off a vein



**Image 3:** Veterinarian (front) drawing blood as volunteer holds off vein

## Dog Physical Exams

### Locate a Dog Scheduled for PE

Dogs ready for PE may be located in any of the following areas: Dog Adopts, Receiving, Dog Holding Room 1, Dog Holding Room 2 and Dog Rehab. Be sure to ask the veterinarian which area he/she would like you get dogs from. Once you have located a dog ready for his exam, place a "PE in Progress" card in the dog's kennel card holder in place of the kennel card which you will take with you. This will alert staff to hold this kennel open for the return of the dog and avoid any confusion as to where the dog may be. Remove the dog from his kennel and proceed to the pharmacy area in the clinic. If a dog is uncomfortable using the stairs, use the elevator instead.

For safety and to help minimize the spread of disease, **do not allow dogs to make contact with other dogs**. Ask a staff member or volunteer to shorten the leash to prevent the dogs from touching one another as you walk past. All dogs need to be leashed even if you intend to carry them.

Once you reach the pharmacy area, wait with your dog in the hallway of the clinic, out of sight of the dog currently undergoing his physical.

### Responsibilities During the Physical Exam

When the vet is ready, enter the PE area, give the kennel card to the vet and walk the dog onto the scale for a weight.

When lifting a dog onto the examining table, place one arm under the dog's abdomen and the other under its neck. This places most of the dog's weight into your arms and prevents you from losing your grip should it start to wiggle. If a dog weighs more than you can comfortably lift, ask for assistance. Larger dogs will probably be examined at floor level. Ask for the vet's preference.

First, the veterinarian will perform a visual and tactile exam and listen to the heart. While using the stethoscope, volunteers should be silent. If the dog is panting, gently reach up and hold the mouth shut (because the heartbeat is difficult to hear when a dog pants).

Next, if no serious problems have been detected, it will be time to draw a blood sample for a heartworm test and administer vaccinations. Reach under the dog's neck with your right arm, taking hold of his head at the broadest part, near the ear. Draw your right hand up behind your neck, thereby anchoring your hand (encircling the dog's head and anchoring your grip will prevent the dog from being able to snap at either you or the vet). Lean over the dog's back with your upper body and reach over into his left elbow with your hand to hold off a vein. Reach gently into the inner part of the dog's elbow, press down firmly and rotate your hand outward. *(See images 1-3 on previous page.)*

During this entire process, keep your hands out of reach of the animal's mouth in case it should snap in response to pain and **if at anytime during this process, you feel yourself losing your grip on the dog, alert the vet immediately.** Do not let go of the dog without first warning everyone.

Once enough blood is drawn, the vet will instruct you to let go of your grip on the elbow, the needle will be withdrawn and with your thumb you will place pressure at the puncture point to prevent bleeding. If possible, try and apply pressure to this site for at least 30 seconds. If any bleeding does occur, you can clean up the dog's leg with a cotton ball and some hydrogen peroxide.

Next, the vet will administer a rabies vaccination during which you will repeat the head-lock restraint. The exam is then over. Lift the dog to the ground with one arm under the abdomen and the other under the neck and place him on the floor. For his safety, do not permit the dog to jump from the table.

### **Responsibilities After the Physical Exam**

Volunteers should take the kennel card and a "Waiting for Test Results" sign from the veterinarian, who will inform the volunteer if the dog will go back to the kennel he came from or to an open kennel in Dog Adopts.

If the dog will be going to the dog adoption room, locate an available kennel of appropriate size. An available kennel will not already have a kennel card on it (check both sides) and should have been cleaned and sanitized by kennel staff. Note the kennel number and tell the vet the number so the dog's new location can be updated in the computer system.

Place the kennel card in the plastic card holder with the "Waiting for Test Results" sign in front of the card so it can be seen easily. Obtain a bowl for water and fill it. Puppies and small dogs should be placed in smaller cages lined with newspapers.

When returning a dog to his original kennel, make sure it is the same kennel they were originally taken from. This will help to limit the spread of illness.



**Image 4:** “Scruffing” cat for restraint



**Image 5:** Volunteer (right) holding cat's foot and tail while applying pressure to hold off cat's vein



**Image 6:** Veterinarian (front) drawing blood as volunteer holds off vein and restrains cat

## Cat Physical Exams

The routine cat PE parallels that of the dog PE with the exception that volunteers must wash hands between touching every cat and only one cat should be taken out at a time.

### Responsibilities During the Physical Exam

Cat physical exams are conducted in the examination area between the cat holding rooms located upstairs. Take a cat from its cage along with the kennel card and bring both to the PE room. Cats should be lifted from their cage by holding on to the scruff or back of their neck and beneath the cat to support its weight. Never lift a cat by its scruff.

Hand the kennel card to the vet for review and place the cat on the scale for a weight and then onto the exam table. The vet will perform a visual and tactile exam and listen to the cat's heart. While the vet is listening to the heart, try to stop the cat from purring if necessary. Techniques to stopping a cat's purring include, briefly plugging a nostril(s), waving a cotton ball soaked with alcohol or turning on water.

If no serious problems have been detected, blood will be drawn for a feline leukemia test and a rabies vaccination will be administered. Scruff and place the cat on its side on the table with one hand. Stretch the cat up and outward, to keep the front paws away from the vet. With your other hand, hold the cat's upper back leg and tail and press into the middle of the cat's thigh on the lower leg with your pinkie finger (*see images 4-6 above*). This occludes the vein for the vet to draw blood. Following the blood draw, the rear leg vein needs to be held off at the puncture site for at least 30 seconds if possible as it may continue to bleed, especially in kittens.

### Responsibilities After the Physical Exam

Return the cat along with its kennel card to the cage it originally came from and place a “Waiting for Test Results” sign prominently atop the kennel card. PE volunteers will not bring cats to the cat adoption room. Staff will transfer them to the appropriate area once test

results are recorded and space becomes available.

## **Volunteer Etiquette**

### **Introduce Yourself**

Introduce yourself at the beginning of your shift to other volunteers, clinic and shelter staff whom you speak and work with. There are a large number of volunteers, introducing yourself will help everyone get to know one another.

Let other volunteers and the clinic staff know how long you have been a PE volunteer so they can provide the proper level of support.

### **Help Clean Up**

Dogs and cats urinate and defecate all the time around the shelter, clinic and in their cage. If this happens while you have an animal out, finish what you are doing and come back to make sure someone has cleaned up the mess. This helps us maintain a clean, safe environment for both people and animals.

### **Ask Questions**

If you have any questions while volunteering, it is important to ask. If unsure of a policy or procedure ask a staff member or other volunteer for help. A lot is covered during the training process and you will learn more with each time you volunteer, it is important to know and learn the correct answers so no mistakes are made and incorrect information is not provided to others.

Please contact the Volunteer Manager or your PE trainer if you encounter a situation needing clarification or resolution.

Do not provide information to the public unless you are sure it is correct.

## **Thank You and Good Luck**

Now that you have completed your training for the Physical Exam volunteer program, you are ready to help the animals. A lot of information was covered in this manual and in your training. Please do not hesitate to ask questions regarding policy, procedures or pertaining to your volunteer experience.

Your efforts in the Physical Exam program significantly contribute to the successes The Anti-Cruelty Society continues to have with caring for companion animals.

The staff and animals thank you for all that you do.