



Volunteer Handbook

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to the Flathead County Animal Shelter! We are so happy to have you onboard!

Volunteers are such a vital part of our team. With you by our side, we can help make the lives of homeless pets better. We can be successful in getting our furry friends into their forever homes.

Our volunteer program is for individuals over the age of 18. Due to safety concerns, we do not allow minors to volunteer.

Although our staff is dedicated and knowledgeable, extra helping hands and hearts are necessary to the important work in which we are involved. Every activity that you perform, whether directly handling the animals or not, improves the quality of their lives while at the shelter and decreases the length of their stay here. We look forward to working with you and getting to know you!

We want you to have fun with us while being safe, so if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to talk to our Volunteer Coordinator or another staff member.

Welcome aboard, and again, thank you!

Sincerely,

The team at Flathead County Animal Shelter



About Us

The Flathead County Animal Shelter is overseen and administered by the Flathead City-County Health Department. We are a managed admission shelter and adoption center, providing humane care and a safe haven to homeless dogs and cats residing in Flathead County while they await permanent, loving homes. We also care for animals being held for legal and criminal cases. FCAS is the only municipal animal shelter for Flathead County, and has been in operation since 1983.

FCAS is responsible for the following:

- The sheltering and care of abandoned, stray, impounded, and surrendered cats and dogs of Flathead County.
- Assisting with the enforcement of Flathead County ordinances relating to the keeping, restraint and humane treatment of cats and dogs.
- The education of the public concerning proper animal care and responsible animal ownership.
- The responsible placement of adoptable cats and dogs.

Flathead County Animal Shelter

225 Cemetery Road

Kalispell, MT 59901

P. (406) 752-1310 F. (406) 752-1546

Flathead.mt.gov/animal

fcas@flathead.mt.gov

Sheriff's Office/Animal Control

P. (406) 758-5610 ex.#1

HOURS OF OPERATION:

- Tuesday: *12pm - 5pm by appointment only*
- Wednesday: *12pm - 5pm by appointment only*
- Thursday: *12pm - 5pm by appointment only*
- Friday: *12pm - 5pm by appointment only*
- Saturday: *11am - 4pm by appointment only*
- Sunday & Monday: *Closed. Phone messages checked and calls returned. Stray intake and reclaims available.*
- *Closed on all Federal Holidays*

Confidentiality Policy

Some volunteers may have access to confidential files and computer records. Volunteers are not permitted to share such information with family members, friends, or other members of the public. Volunteers are also not permitted to share any information in relation to any legally held animals, as this could jeopardize any court proceedings.

Animal Representation and Social Media

To promote the adoptability of the animals currently at the shelter in the most consistent manner, it is imperative that all questions relating to the animal's history and personality be directed to a member of staff. Volunteers are welcome to share the basic facts about an animal based on information provided by shelter staff but please refrain from representing an animal in a manner based on assumption or conjecture.

If you choose to identify yourself as a FCAS volunteer or discuss the animals or matters related to FCAS on any social media platform or blog, many readers may assume that you are speaking on behalf of FCAS. Considering this possibility, your communications should be transparent, ethical, and accurate.

Please make it clear to your readers/followers that the views you express are yours alone, and that they may not reflect the views of FCAS. Please respect the fact that we deal with confidential and sensitive subject matters, and we ask that you refrain from divulging sensitive material.

Comments posted by others on social media that may be perceived as negative should be directed to a shelter staff member. Please do not respond to such comments.

Only images of adoptable animals are permitted to be posted online. Other animals that reside at FCAS include stray or lost pets awaiting pick up, the sick, infirmed, the young, and those involved in a legal hold. Exposure of animals that are not available for adoption could result in public confusion.

Please talk to the Volunteer Coordinator or the Lead Animal Handler if you have any questions about what is appropriate to include in social media.

If you are contacted by a reporter or representative of any television, radio, newspaper, or magazine or by any other media representative regarding FCAS, please direct them to the shelter director.

Workplace Safety

All policies of the Flathead County Animal Shelter and the Flathead City-County Health Department apply as appropriate (e.g. confidentiality of information, weapons, drugs, etc.). Failure to follow policies will result in termination as a volunteer.

Health and Safety

- You must be comfortable and confident around animals.
- Sanitize hands before and after handling each animal to help stop the spread of disease and illness.
- Immediately notify staff of sick animals.
- Immediately notify staff of any bite, scratch, or any other injury. You may be required to fill out any bite/incident reports.
- Staff will identify which animals are safe to handle.
- Wearing closed-toed shoes is required at all times.
- Any quarantine/isolation/nursery areas may be entered ONLY with prior staff approval.
- FCAS uses an accelerated hydrogen peroxide cleaner that can be harsh to exposed skin. Gloves are recommended while using any cleaners or chemicals.

Injury Protocols

At FCAS, we take injuries seriously. There are different protocols in place to safeguard against injuries, but accidents do happen. If you are injured while volunteering, immediately inform staff and ask for an incident report.

If you are bitten by an animal, Flathead County requires that a Bite Report be filed with the Health Department per Flathead County Ordinance, regardless of the nature of the bite. Said animal will then be placed in a 10-day quarantine.

While we take every step to prevent bites in our shelter, animals are animals, and there is always a risk of a bite. It is imperative that we take steps to reduce any potential bite risks, as not only is it traumatizing for us to be bitten, but it is doubly so for the animals. Volunteers are required to follow all protocols and instructions put forth by staff while at FCAS.

Volunteer Opportunities & Descriptions

Kennel Cleaning

Assist staff during the morning kennel cleaning. This includes, but is not limited to animal rotations, kennel sanitization, feeding, watering and yard maintenance. The start time for this position is between 7:30am – 8:00am and continues through the morning until all kennels are clean and all animals are cared for. Opportunities for kennel cleaning are scheduled every day of the week and include both the dog runs and the cat rooms.

Grounds Maintenance

Help keep the yards and grounds of FCAS clean and maintained through yard work, parking lot maintenance and other tasks.

Janitorial

Other janitorial duties can include but are not limited to laundry, dishes, cleaning bathrooms, cleaning floors, wiping counters and windows, and other janitorial tasks FCAS might need.

Animal Socialization

Help staff socialize and exercise the dogs and cats. This position is considered “in-house”, and does not include things like sniffer walks and special events. Dogs can be played with in yards or side rooms (if there is not already an animal in that room). Cats are played with in the appropriate cat room. Staff will notify volunteers of any animal that is not available for socialization.

Dog Training

Help improve dog adoptability by reinforcing positive training methods and cues.

Sniffer Walks

Take dogs out for outings off FCAS grounds to a pre-approved location. Not every dog qualifies for sniffer walks, and staff will help match an available dog to a sniffer walk volunteer.

Office Assistance

Aid staff administrators by helping with data entry and collection, answering phones, filing and paperwork support. Office volunteers should have some basic computer skills and good communication skills.

Special Events Assistance

Help us spread the word about responsible pet ownership and the animals we have available for adoption. This includes events such as parades, fundraisers, etc.

Photography

Help promote our available pets through photography. Photography volunteers can share the photos they take through social media to help promote our pets. FCAS reserves the right to ask for any image to be taken down and asks that any photo taken of available pets be sent to staff for website submission.