



**HUMANE**  
DUBUQUE REGIONAL  
**SOCIETY**

**125**  
YEARS OF SAVING LIVES

# Cat Handling Volunteer Handbook



## Mission

Support, enrich,  
and connect  
animals in need to  
the people that  
love and care for  
them.

## Vision

The Dubuque Regional  
Humane Society envisions a  
community where all animals  
are treated with respect and  
compassion, and companion  
animals have a permanent and  
loving home.

## Visiting Hours

**Monday:** Closed to public  
**Tuesday - Friday:** 12pm - 6pm  
**Saturday:** 11am - 5pm  
**Sunday:** 1pm - 4pm

4242 Chavenelle Road, Dubuque, IA 52002  
563.582.6766

## **INTRODUCTION**

This handbook is meant to help inform volunteers on what to look for during their animal duties in the shelter. Shelters are inherently stressful and the goal is to make sure we take into consideration the signs the animals are giving us when we handle/work around them.

**By taking the animal's lead, we can help reduce their stress as well as reduce the risk of a bite happening.**

### **Animal Handling Duties**

All duties included in Shelter Crew, in addition to:

- Assist staff in providing premium animal care and enrichment
- Maintain sanitary kennels and building by cleaning up after animals
- Interact safely & independently with animals
- Socialize and brush adoptable cats
- Welcome and positively interact with visitors
- Model ideal conduct and accept feedback
- Use consistent handling techniques and promote good behavior
- Assist Shelter Crew volunteers during their first 3 hours
- Encourage fellow volunteers to adhere to all policies and procedures
- Positively represent the DRHS's mission and vision
- Adhere to wearing appropriate attire suitable to volunteer activities
- Possess the physical ability necessary to handle the animal you've chosen to interact with

**Please note: trained/advanced handlers are NOT to lead or perform adoption counseling visits. Adoption counseling requires training and is to be done by DRHS staff and specifically-trained volunteers only.**

## Handling Opportunities

- **Feline Cleaning and Socializing:** clean cat kennels, cages, and lounges, in conjunction with the staff assigned to those areas and provide cats with socialization, playtime, and brushing with focus on longer-stay cats
- **Off-Site Adoption Event Assistant:** off-site events expose adoptable animals to new environments, with hopes for the right family to pass by! Volunteers assist and handle adoptable animals during events while promoting the services and mission of the DRHS.
- All volunteers, no matter their status, are expected to uphold shelter cleanliness
- Be aware of the needs in terms of shelter crew-associated tasks, including but not limited to:
  - Dishes in all animal care areas (front cats, holdings, food room)
  - Laundry (front cats and back)
  - Maintaining clean floors (sweeping and mopping)
  - Collecting recycling and garabages



# **Volunteer Levels of Cat Handling**

## **Trained Handler**

Trained handlers have received training on basic feline body language and handling techniques and should have a strong understanding of the shelter's cleaning processes and handling guidelines. Trained handlers may handle available cats that are located in the front cat area. For animals with "adoption pending/on hold", "adopted", spot cleaning may be conducted with socialization to a minimum. For 'Caution' sign cats, proceed slowly. There is no socialization for rabies observation sign cats or Working Cats.

## **Advanced Handler**

To become an Advanced Handler, Trained Handlers must have at least 100 hours of Cat handling-related service, as well as additional Advanced Handling training. Advanced cat handlers may handle available cats and potentially help with cats located in holding areas once appropriately trained) and/or cats with 'Caution' signs.

Advanced handlers should possess more in-depth handling techniques for more advanced cats and be an exemplary leader for other trained handler volunteers, upholding cleaning standards and practices.

## **Skilled Handler**

The Skilled Handler title is a title that is earned and not automatically given. This is a small group of experienced and CONSISTENT handlers who represent fellow volunteers, gather feedback from other volunteers about the program, share their concerns and ideas with the Volunteer Coordinator, and dedicate efforts for creating and advancing a successful, positive, and exciting volunteer program.

Should be equipped to handle most cats, depending on situation, as well as provide adoption counseling services upon training.

# THE SPECTRUM OF Feline Fear, Anxiety, and Stress



## SEVERE SIGNS - FIGHT/ AGGRESSION (FAS LEVEL 5)

- Offensive aggression: pupils constricted or dilated, cat leaning forward, ears forward, moving forward, whiskers forward, tail is an inverted L (first inch of tail is horizontal with ground then the tail drops down), rump raised higher than front (on tip toes), staring, may be growling
- Defensive aggression: ears back, pupils dilated, hunkered down, tail tight or tucked or tail thrashing, whiskers back, hissing, lips pulled back, staring, furrowed brow, could be swatting

## SEVERE SIGNS - FLIGHT/FREEZE/FRET (FAS LEVEL 4)

- Flight: actively trying to escape, pupils dilated, ears back, whiskers back, tail down and bottle brushed, fleeing, turning to look at stimulus
- Freeze/Fret: tonic immobility, dilated pupils, body flattened and tense, tail tucked, increased respiratory rate, ears back, staring, whiskers back

## MODERATE SIGNS (FAS LEVEL 2-3)

- Ears further to the side, more pupil dilation but not completely dilated, increase in respiratory rate, brow furrowed, looking at stimulus instead of looking away, tail tight to body, possible tip of tail moving some, whiskers back, body crouched and leaning away

## MILD/SUBTLE SIGNS (FAS LEVEL 1)

- Avoids eye contact, turns head away without moving away, partially dilated pupils, head held just slightly down, slight brow furrowing, whiskers slightly back, ears partially to the side, body shifted slightly away, tail closer to body with possibly some slight flicking

## PERKED/INTERESTED/ ANXIOUS? (FAS LEVEL 0-1)

- Looking directly but not intensely, tail up and winding, mouth closed with loose lips, ears perked forward, whiskers forward, slight pupil dilation

## RELAXED (FAS LEVEL 0)

- Sleeping
- Neutral: ears in neutral position, brow soft, eyes soft, mouth closed with relaxed lips, body loose, tail carriage U-shaped, pupils normal dilation
- Friendly greeting: tail up and winding, may elevate rear end slightly by standing on toes, ears neutral, forward, or slightly back, might have squinty eyes, brow relaxed, might cheek mark or rub on person or object

FAS LEVEL 4-5

FAS LEVEL 2-3

FAS LEVEL 0-1

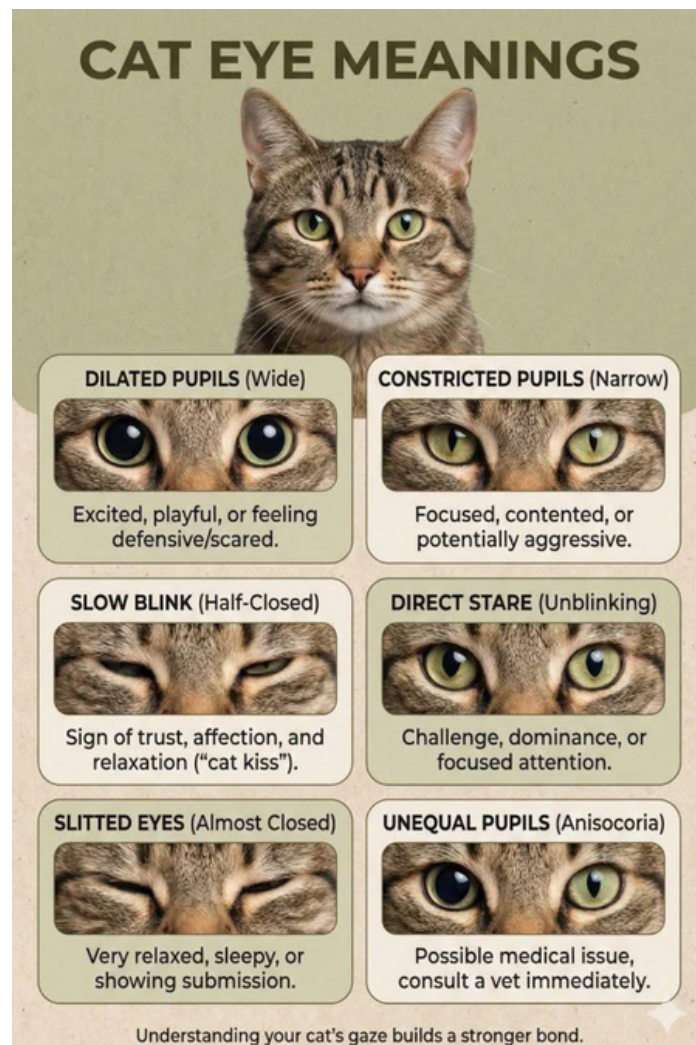
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All Volunteer Handlers are expected to know what to look for when working around and handling felines. If you are ever unsure on a cat's body language, make sure to ask since we always want to prevent escalating a cat's stress level, which leads to a bite risk.

## **Feline Body Language Basics**

### **EYES**

- Happy: may be round or partially closed, and their pupils narrow like slits, may have slow blinks
- Stressed: eyes may appear wide or narrowed
- Fearful: A fearful cat's eyes widen, and their pupils dilate due to the effects of the fight-or-flight response.
- Aggressive: A cat who is about to become aggressive may have widened eyes with enlarged pupils, or their eyes might be narrowed. They may stare directly at their foe to keep the potential danger in sight.



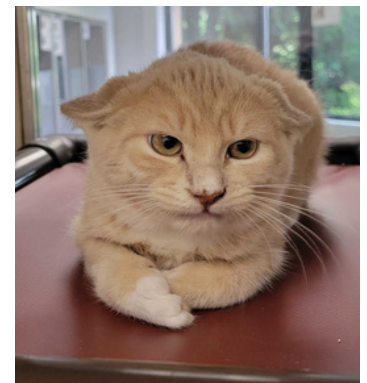
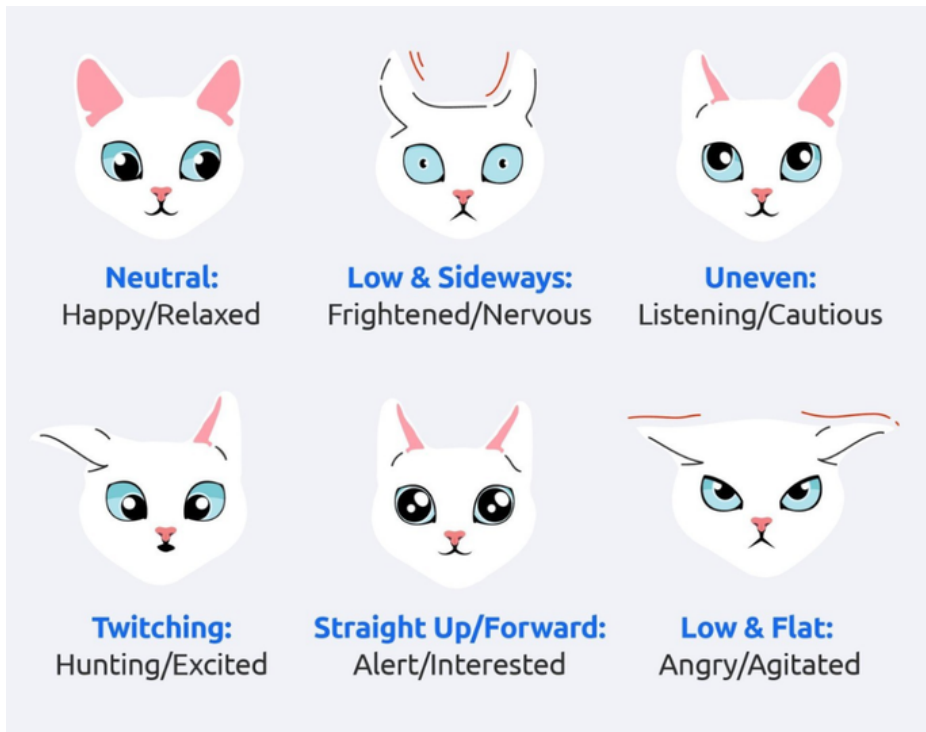
## WHISKERS

- Stressed: whiskers may be held further forward than normal.
- Fearful: whiskers may be pulled back flat against their face.



## EARS

- Happy/playful: ears are upright and facing forward.
- Stressed: ears may be rotated to the sides ('airplane ears') or angled backward.
- Fearful: ears are often angled backward or sideways. The further back a cat's ears are pinned, the more terrified they are.
- Aggressive: ears will be turned back or flat against their head and their whiskers might be flat against their cheeks or pushed forward.



## TAIL

- Happy: A tail that is pointed straight up with a curl at the tip
- Stressed: The cat may hold their tail close to their body or thrash and thump it when feeling stressed or annoyed
- Fearful: A fearful cat may wrap their tail tightly around or underneath their body
- Aggressive: flick or thrash their tail, puffed up

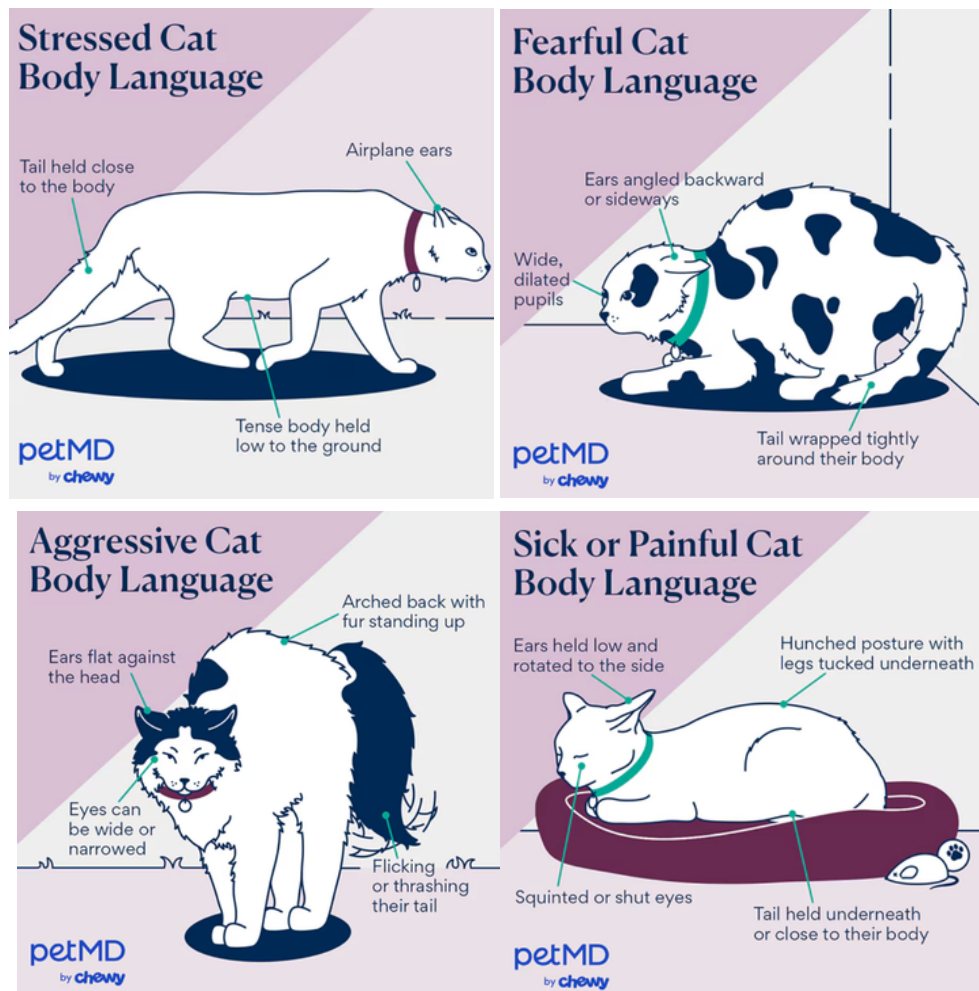


## VOCALIZATION

- Happy: A cat may purr to express their contentment and pleasure, meow when greeting someone or asking for something like food or attention, or trill (which is like a high-pitched purr) to show they are friendly
- Fearful: When a cat feels threatened, they may growl and hiss to warn the threat to back off. Hissing is mostly an involuntary reflex that occurs when a cat is scared or startled. As their fear increases, cats may let out a loud, drawn-out yowl followed by a shriek to indicate that they are about to defend themselves.
- Aggression: A cat often attempts to avoid resorting to aggression by growling and/or hissing. But if these warnings are not heeded, then a cat may spit, a sudden and explosive burst of noise that is often accompanied with a lunge or swat. Like hissing, spitting is an involuntary reaction.

## BODY POSTURE/MOVEMENT

- **Happy:** posture is typically loose, with their limbs and tail stretched out away from their body when lying down. Showing their belly probably means that they feel safe—though this is not necessarily an invitation for a belly rub! A happy cat may cuddle up or knead you with their paws.
- **Stressed:** cat may have a stiff and tense body held low to the ground. May also engage in displacement behaviors—meaning normal behaviors (such as licking their lips, scratching, grooming, and yawning) that are performed out of context—to cope with underlying stress. Stressed cats may also urinate or defecate outside of the litter box.
- **Fearful:** may initially make themselves look smaller by crouching low to the ground and scrunching up their body.
- **Aggressive:** They may try to make themselves look as large and as intimidating as possible by arching their back and letting their fur stand up (an involuntary reaction to fear called piloerection).



## Feline Warning Signs:

- Rapidly twitching/flicking tail
- Stiffened legs
- Arched back
- Hair standing up
- Ears turned sideways, backward, or completely flattened against the head
- Pupils extremely dilated
- Hard, fixed stare
- Low-pitched growling/yowl/hissing/spitting

## Understanding Cat Body Language (3 zones)

### Green Zone

*When a cat is in this zone, they're feeling calm and secure. They're likely resting or exploring an environment they feel comfortable in*

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p><b>SLEEPING / RESTING</b></p> <p>EYES: Closed to open<br/>HEAD: On surface or over body<br/>TAIL: Extended or loosely wrapped<br/>EARS: Normal or forward<br/>SOUNDS: None or purr</p>                                                               |  <p><b>RESTING</b></p> <p>EYES: Open, relaxed<br/>BODY: Lying on belly or sitting<br/>HEAD: On surface or over body<br/>TAIL: Extended or loosely wrapped<br/>EARS: Normal or forward<br/>SOUNDS: None or purr</p>     |
|  <p><b>PERKED AND INTERESTED</b></p> <p>EYES: Looking directly but not intensely<br/>BODY: Back is horizontal<br/>HEAD: Head slightly down<br/>TAIL: Closer to body, may flicker slightly<br/>EARS: Perked forward<br/>EYES: Pupils slightly dilated</p> |  <p><b>EXPLORING</b></p> <p>EYES: Open, staring but not intensely<br/>BODY: Back is horizontal<br/>HEAD: Over body<br/>TAIL: Up and winding or loosely down<br/>EARS: Normal or perked<br/>SOUNDS: None or "meow"</p> |

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## Yellow Zone (Caution)

*When a cat is in this zone, they're feeling moderately anxious and stressed. While in this zone, they're alert and likely uncomfortable in their current environment. When your cat is in this zone, consider whether you can remove or redirect them.*

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                |
| <b>AROUSED / MILDLY ANXIOUS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>FRIGHTENED</b>                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>TRYING TO FLEE</b>                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>EYES:</b> Wide open, avoiding eye contact<br><b>BODY:</b> Shifted away<br><b>HEAD:</b> Turns head away<br><b>TAIL:</b> Closer to body, may flicker slightly<br><b>EARS:</b> To the side<br><b>EYES:</b> Pupils slightly dilated | <b>EYES:</b> Fully open, pupils dilated<br><b>HEAD:</b> Little or no movement<br><b>TAIL:</b> Tucked, hair standing<br><b>EARS:</b> To the side<br><b>BODY:</b> Flat, tense / tight<br><b>SOUNDS:</b> None | <b>EYES:</b> Pupils dilated<br><b>HEAD:</b> Turned toward stimulus<br><b>TAIL:</b> Close to body, hair standing<br><b>BODY:</b> Poised to flee, back arched<br><b>SOUNDS:</b> None, meow, hissing |

## Red Zone

*When a cat is in this zone, they're over threshold, they're stressed, terrified and may exhibit offensive or defensive aggressive behavior due to this. It is critical that you remove the trigger and if that isn't possible, remove them (by luring) into a safe, comfortable space to calm.*

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>FIGHT / TERRIFIED</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>FIGHT / TERRIFIED</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>EYES:</b> Fully open, pupils fully dilated<br><b>HEAD:</b> Lower than body<br><b>TAIL:</b> Tucked, hair standing<br><b>EARS:</b> Forward<br><b>BODY:</b> Leaning forward, thrashing<br><b>SOUNDS:</b> Growling, hissing | <b>EYES:</b> Fully open, pupils fully dilated, staring<br><b>HEAD:</b> Lower than body<br><b>TAIL:</b> Tucked, hair standing<br><b>EARS:</b> Forward, back<br><b>BODY:</b> Pulled back, arched back<br><b>SOUNDS:</b> Growling, hissing |

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## To keep our animals happy and healthy:

- **SANITIZE/WASH:** To prevent transmittable diseases, wash hands between each animal you interact with. Whenever spot cleaning, gloves should always be worn and switched from each kennel.
- **READ:** All signs posted throughout the building include important information regarding animals in our care (pay attention to "not available" or "caution" signs for cats).
- **WATCH:** All animals you interact with at the shelter may be unpredictable. It is important to learn fearful animal body language and behavior to be safe while interacting with animals. Back off when needed and take the animals' lead.
- **PRAISE:** Animals in our care should receive praise when showing positive behaviors. Promoting shelter manners gets the animals into homes faster. Treats are a great tool to use, in moderation, as long as we are paying attention to dietary restrictions.
- **REPORT:** Regardless of severity, all injuries, and most importantly, **bites** must be reported to the Front Desk Staff (or Volunteer Coordinator) to handle the situation accordingly. Report irregular or unusual behaviors in animals, such as blood, vomit, diarrhea, lethargy, cough, nasal/ocular discharge, or skin abnormalities to Front Desk Staff or Volunteer Coordinator.

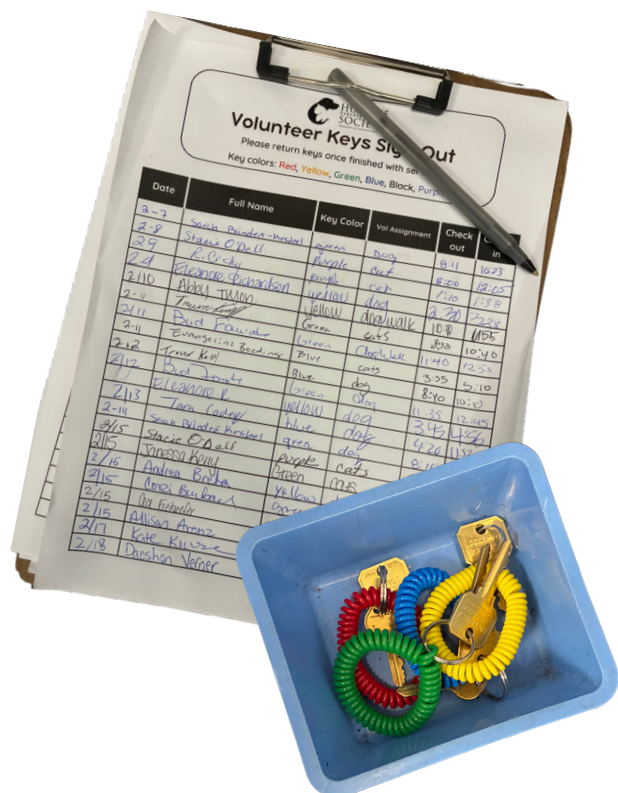
| Cat's Meow Lounge - 3                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                              | Gold                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <br><small>Animal ID: A0059964699<br/>Microchip: 941010005097572</small> | Gender:                                                                                      | I am a Spayed Female |
|                                                                                                                                                             | Age:                                                                                         | 1y                   |
|                                                                                                                                                             | Color:                                                                                       | Orange White Tiger   |
|                                                                                                                                                             | Weight:                                                                                      | 8.60 pound           |
|                                                                                                                                                             | Price:                                                                                       | \$10                 |
|                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Working Cat: "Hire" me for pest control in your barn, warehouse, shed, property, etc.</b> |                      |

| I'M ON A SPECIAL DIET |              |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Reason:               |              |
| Food Type:            | Purina S+S   |
| How much:             | 1 scoop/bowl |
| How often:            | 2x a day     |

**Caution!**

## Trained Handler Reminders

- Shelter Crew members are NOT to handle or socialize animals
- Check out cage keys by filling out the sign-out sheet and always return keys before leaving the shelter
- Do not leave animals unattended (in visitation rooms)
  - Unless there is an emergency AND the animal is in a secure area
- Animals' toys should be kept in their kennel, for safety and sanitary purposes
- Volunteers are not permitted to give animals ANYTHING EXTRA in their kennels (this includes blankets, extra toys, extra food bowls, etc.) due to safety concerns and some animals having strict requirements, unless specifically approved to do so.
- Please refrain from cellphone use while interacting with an animal
  - With the exception being photography



## General Feline Cleaning

- All cat handlers are expected to help maintain clean kennel and living areas of the cats - cleaning and socializing should always go hand-in-hand
- Every interaction should be calm and intentional - loud noises and quick movements can cause more stress to already stressed-out cats
- The goal is to open the kennel door as minimal as possible - constantly opening and closing the door can be stressful for the cats
- Always take into consideration where the cat is located and what their body language is showing before you open the kennel to clean -if the cat is in a portaled kennel, utilize shutting the portal for ease of cleaning
- Always be aware of notes on cage card (on both the front and backside of the kennel).
- **Cats should never wander/free roam during cleaning**
- If the cat can remain in the kennel and out of the way as you clean, this is ideal and the least stressful option (close portal as necessary)
- If the cat is trying to escape or too overstimulated, they should be removed from their kennel and safely placed in a carrier during the cleaning (if there is a portal, close portal to clean)
- Prior to picking up a cat (to place in carrier or relocate in kennel during cleaning), first give them a chance to get to know you by offering the back of your hand to sniff or rub up against
- If a cat is not allowing you to put them into a carrier - showing negative body language - note this behavior with staff and move on to a different kennel.



## **General Feline Cleaning**

- When cleaning kennels, gloves MUST be worn and switched/replaced for each kennel
- Do not use the same litter scoop or wash cloth for different litter boxes/cages - once you've scooped a litter box, use a different scoop for the next cage
- Don't spray anything into an occupied kennel or lounge - instead, spray into a clean washcloth and then enter/clean the living space
- Clean kennels top to bottom - start cleaning in top kennel then move to bottom kennel since debris can fall into the bottom kennel easily
- Start by using a dry washcloth to wipe off cat tree of any debris; move on to dust the kennel floor and bring all debris to front corner of kennel
- Wet a clean washcloth with water and use it to pick up dry debris, as well as wipe down cat tree, including tubing and bottom/underside, and kennel floor
- With a clean litter scoop, analyze the litter box and scoop any clumps of urine/feces that you see, wiping down the inside sides of box with a new wet washcloth if there are feces marks
- If a litter box is extremely dirty from diarrhea or if the litter is powdery and not clumping anymore, replace the litter box with a new one and fresh litter (litter should be approx. 3 inches deep), located in the tote bin on the bottom of the cleaning cart



- Check kennel grates and wipe as needed if there is debris or filth present
- Wipe down the glass within the kennel (glass cleaner is fine to use but should NEVER be sprayed in an occupied living area; warm water and soap can also be used to clean glass)
- Refill water bowls and/or replace water if it is dirty
- Spot cleaning in lounges - spot clean floors, as well as any surface (use washcloth and rescue or soap)
- Scoop litter boxes - can use the same scoop in one lounge (make sure to change scoop from lounge to lounge, as well as gloves and washcloths)
- Check corners and ledges for dust/hair
- Carpeted or rope-like surfaces can be cleaned with a wire or slicker brush to remove excess cat hair

### **Cat Handling and Socializing**

- ALWAYS be aware of cats' visual body language and vocal cues
- Do not attempt to handle cats you have not been trained for (working cats, cats with 'Caution' signs)
- When handling a cat, you should ALWAYS have a visual of the cat - never reach into a kennel without a clear sight of the cat
- Do NOT stick your fingers/hands into kennels as you pass - this also goes for the public - kindly remind them if you see this.
- Always wash your hands in between socializing different cats
- Cats with visual symptoms of illness (eye discharge, snot, etc.) should NOT be socialized - please alert a staff member if you see this so that we can seek medical interventions

- Socialization is permitted at the entrance/door of the kennel/atrium and within the Cat's Meow Lounges (with the cats who live in the lounge)
- If public visitations are happening, make sure you are giving space to the staff person and visitor
- Children (including volunteers 12 - 15 years old) are not allowed to be with cats without an adult present
- Choose cats that need extra socialization, brushing, or are longer-stay cats - mark off cats that you've socialized on the white board hanging in the laundry room (this white board is used by volunteers only, not ACT staff)

### **Using a Cat Carrier**

Best practices for putting a cat into a carrier:

- Use a top-load carrier whenever possible
- Use two people if you can (one to hold cat, one to hold carrier)
- Tip the carrier up right so you can lower the cat down into carrier backwards (may have to lightly \*scruff and hold back legs If possible when lowering down)
- You can throw treats in the carrier first and see if kitty goes in on their own to relieve stress
- Use a towel whenever you need to (as long as it's proper towel technique)
- As always, move on to a different cat if the cat is showing negative body language or if you are not able to get them into a carrier safely

Carriers should be wiped down after each use, with a washcloth and either warm water/soap or cleaning solution (what we use to mop --> refill spray bottles via back hallway mop closet)

**Scruffing should be the rare exception, NOT the norm - ONLY if there is a situation in which scruffing is the only alternative to prevent a cat from biting. In general, ACTs should refrain from scruffing and use alternative handling.**



## Alternatives to Scruffing

### Lateral Recumbency

For relaxed cats who do not require restraint or only minimal restraint.

Allows for full body access.



### Burrito Wrap

For fearful and anxious cats.

Allows hind end access and medial saphenous venipuncture.



### Back Wrap

For cats you must sneak the towel over.

Allows head and hind end exams.



### Half Burrito Wrap

For cats who enjoy towel wraps without their heads covered.

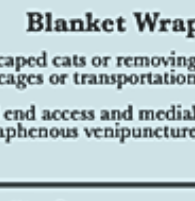
Allows head, chest, and hind end exams.



### Chin Rest

For help restraining cats for subcutaneous fluids.

Allows head and hind end exams.



### Scarf Wrap

For rear end, hind legs, abdomen, and head exam.

Allows cephalic catheterizations.

### Blanket Wrap

For capturing escaped cats or removing fearful cats from cages or transportation.

Allows hind end access and medial saphenous venipuncture.

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## **If A Cat Escapes/Gets Loose:**

- Depending on the cat's temperament, there are multiple approaches to catching and placing them back into their kennel/or carrier. The main thing to keep in mind is to always stay calm and approach the cat quietly and slowly - do NOT chase the cat or use sudden movements.
- Even the friendliest cats can quickly become overwhelmed in situations where they've gotten loose/are in a new environment - i.e. not their kennel enclosure.

1. **Ensure Security:** make sure the area is secure and that no doors will be opened, causing further stress or risk of cats escaping into different areas of the shelter.
2. **Approach Calmly:** if the cat is social and lets you approach (welcoming pets, purring, etc.) safely pick them up and put them back into their kennel/a carrier. If the cat is panicked, hissing, running, etc., this approach will not work. Proceed with options below.
  - a. **Towel Method:** if the cat is within reach but skittish, gently throw a large towel over the cat, grabbing them, and securing their body. Always secure the neck area, being aware of where the cat's head is and reducing their ability to lash out/bite.
  - b. **Close Off Areas with Carrier/Feral Box:** use a carrier or feral box by slowly creating less and less space for the cat to wander. The cat may go into the box willingly, or you can gently use a wall to eventually close the cat into the box. Remain calm and go slow securing the carrier/feral box shut with the cat enclosed.
  - c. **Bite Gloves:** if you can close the cat off into a corner (being aware of a cat's ability to jump/run for your own safety) bite gloves can be worn to grab the cat - always make sure you have a secure and safe hold of the cat - if not possible, move on to using a net.
  - d. **Net:** Only staff should use the net as a tool - Find a staff member to help if the situation calls for the use of a net.



## **If A Bite/Severe Scratch Occurs**

- Immediately secure the cat into the kennel, if safe to do so.
- Go to the front desk (or find a staff person if there aren't any front desk there) to report the bite/incident and seek appropriate medical care.
- **All bites/wounds should be clearly photographed and documented.**
- Volunteers will need to fill out an incident report (goes through what happened and when, who was involved, etc.) as well as a bite report (what is required by law to be filed with Animal Control/The City of Dubuque).
- Any staff or volunteer who experiences a confirmed bite incident may be temporarily suspended from animal handling duties until retraining and reassessment are completed.

**Failure to report bites, attempted bites, or mouth-based behaviors is considered a serious safety violation and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.**

- By accurately and objectively reporting an incident (bite or not), we can learn from the situation and help alleviate it from happening again.
- It can also help us learn about each cat and will inform adoption restrictions that can lead to successfully finding the animal the best fit in a future home.

## Handbook Acknowledgment/ Receipt

The Feline Handling Handbook describes important information about the DRHS, specifically about handling any animals in the care of, and I understand I should contact the Volunteer Manager regarding any questions not answered in this handbook. Accordingly, either I or the **DRHS may terminate the relationship at will, with or without cause, at any time for noncompliance of any policies and procedures.** This handbook and the policies and procedures contained herein supersede all prior practices, oral or written representations, or statements regarding the terms and conditions of my volunteer agreement with the DRHS. I understand policies and practices may be changed at any time by the DRHS. I understand it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it.

### Potential Risks of Handling Cats

By handling or interacting with cats, I understand and acknowledge that certain risks exist, including but not limited to:

- Scratches and bites
- Allergic reactions
- Transmission of zoonotic illnesses (such as ringworm, cat scratch disease, or other infections)
- Minor bruising or injury from physical contact

I acknowledge that these risks have been explained to me, that I understand them, and that I accept full responsibility for any injury or illness that may occur as a result of interacting with cats.

### Release of Liability Waiver

I hereby authorize the Dubuque Regional Humane Society (DRHS) to seek Emergency Medical Treatment in case of accident, injury or illness. I acknowledge my understanding that the handling of animals and other volunteer activities may place me in a hazardous situation and could result in injury and I assume that risk. I agree to hold harmless the DRHS and any employees and/or members of the Board of Directors of said agency from any liability whatsoever arising from my participation in the DRHS Volunteer Program. In consideration of being allowed to participate in the DRHS Volunteer Program, I hereby release the DRHS, its employees, officers and directors from any liability for injuries I might receive in my volunteer activities on behalf of the DRHS. I understand that I must complete the Volunteer Orientation process and sign a Volunteer Agreement before I will be allowed to volunteer for the DRHS.

As a volunteer of the DRHS, you may have access to confidential information, which is not generally known to or accessible by the public. Disclosure of confidential information is not permitted. This non-disclosure applies during and after your volunteer time with the DRHS. Any copying, reproducing or distributing of confidential information in any manner must be authorized by management. Confidential information remains the property of the DRHS. Understanding that public relations are an important part of a volunteer's activities on behalf of the DRHS, I hereby authorize the DRHS to use any photographs of me in its possession for public relation purposes.

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Volunteer Signature

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Date

---

Volunteer Name (print)

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Guardian Signature (if volunteer is under the age of 18)

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Date

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Guardian Name (print)