



*Sunshine's Friends
Cat and Dog Rescue*

Sunshine's Friends Cat and Dog Rescue

PO Box 314

Jessup, MD 20794-0314

EIN #: 46-3692420

an IRS 501(c)(3) charity

Website: www.sunshinesfriends.org

E-mail: info@sunshinesfriends.org

Phone: 410-796-7327

Standards of Care Manual for animals at SFCDR

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Introduction

Sunshine's Friends Cat Rescue and Sanctuary, Inc. (SFCRS) is doing business as (DBA) Sunshine's Friends Cat and Dog Rescue (SFCDR). We began our work in 2003 and incorporated under IRS rule 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization on October 14, 2014 serving the animals and citizens in Maryland. As such, SFCDR is committed to providing all animals in our care with the best care and welfare possible. We are primarily a foster-based organization with an intake and adoption facility located in Jessup, and adoption centers inside our partner pet stores. The number of animals we have rescued or aided has grown every year.

This Standards of Care document provides both current practices as well as future goals. It is intended to be read in its entirety so that information is not taken out of context and misunderstood. This document was created based primarily on:

- Title 15, MD Department of Agriculture, Subtitle 01, Chapter 11 "Animal Shelters – Standards of Care", Agriculture Article §2-1701 at seq., Annotated Code of Maryland (April 23, 2018);
- Association of Shelter Veterinarians, "Standards of Care in Animal Shelters", 2nd ed. (2022);
- Humane Society of the US (HSUS), Shelter Advocate Toolkit "The 5 Freedoms" (2010).

This document will be reviewed and updated periodically by the SFCDR Board of Directors. SFCDR staff and volunteers are expected to review the Standards of Care Manual for Animals at SFCDR on an annual basis. The Standards of Care Manual establishes only the standards and does not provide detail on how our organization operates. We strive to meet or exceed the standards outlined in this document at all times.

Mission Statement

Sunshine's Friends' mission (*the 5 R's*) is:

- To **RESCUE** abandoned community cats and dogs in desperate situations;
- To **REHABILITATE** the sick, the injured, and the abused;
- To **REHOME** cats, kittens, dogs, and puppies ready for permanent placement with a suitable guardian;
- To provide a loving **REFUGE** for cats and dogs that are not adopted; and
- To **REDUCE** local shelter intake by promoting spaying and neutering.

The Five Freedoms

Sunshine's Friends is committed to providing the best possible welfare and competent caregiving to animals so they have a high quality of life. We are also committed to the HSUS Five Freedoms:

1. **Freedom from Hunger and Thirst:** ready access to fresh water and a diet that allows them to maintain full health and vigor
2. **Freedom from Pain, Injury and Disease:** care that prevents illness and injury, and that assures rapid diagnosis and treatment if illness/injury should occur
3. **Freedom from Fear and Distress:** both a general environment and treatment that avoids mental suffering and stress
4. **Freedom from Discomfort:** an appropriate living environment, including protection from the elements and a comfortable resting area
5. **Freedom to Express Normal Behaviors:** sufficient space and proper facilities to move freely and fully, and to engage in the same types of activities as other animals of their species; ability to interact with – or avoid – others of their own kind, as normal

| | Freedom from hunger & Thirst | Freedom from pain, injury, disease | Freedom from fear and distress | Freedom from discomfort | Freedom to express normal behavior, socialization | Happiness: All mental and physical needs, most wants | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| High quality of life | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Always | Competent caregiving; welfare safeguarded, nurturing environment |
| Good quality of life | Yes | Yes | Yes | +/- | +/- | Often | |
| Borderline quality of life | Yes | +/- | +/- | +/- | No | Rarely | Borderline caregiving; animals at risk |
| Poor quality of life | +/- | +/- | No | No | No | Never | |
| A life not worth living | No | No | No | No | No | Never | Incompetent caregiving; animals suffer |

Cruelty typically prosecuted

Definitions

1. “Animal” means a dog or a cat that is kept temporarily or permanently at an animal shelter.
2. “Animal enrichment” means providing an animal with social contact, mental stimulation, physical activity and other activities that allow the animal to demonstrate species typical behavior and enhanced well-being.
3. “Animal shelter” or “shelter” means a physical structure that provides temporary or permanent housing for animals. SFCDR is a foster-based organization with an intake and adoption center as well as partner in-store adoption centers, and we have received a grant from the Maryland Spay and Neuter Grants Program during previous years.
4. “Fully clean” means to disinfect an area or an item with accelerated hydrogen peroxide or bleach disinfectants that kill harmful micro-organisms.
5. “Primary animal enclosure” means any structure used consistently to restrict an animal to a limited amount of space, such as a room, pen, crate, cage, kennel, or compartment.
6. “Run” or “dog run” means a dedicated area, either indoors or outdoors, that is enclosed by a fence or gate, where dogs may move about untethered and unleashed.
7. “Spot clean” means to clean only a stain or spot and generally involves using mild cleaning agents, such as soaps, detergents, and anti-bacterial disinfectant sprays.
8. “Transport carrier” means a portable enclosure designed to temporarily contain an animal that is being transported from one location to another.
9. “Veterinarian” means a veterinarian who is licensed, registered and in good standing with the Maryland State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.

Standards of Care

Animal Housing

Facility Buildings

We must ensure that our intake and adoption facility is a safe, structurally sound, and sanitary building that meets the following standards:

1. Our facility does not have any structural defects that could cause injury to animals or staff members handling animals;
2. Surfaces in animal areas, such as floors, junctions, walls, doors, are made of nonporous material that can easily be disinfected;
3. Ceilings are kept in good condition without leaks;
4. All areas where animals are kept have adequate ventilation and air filtration and be kept between 65 - 75°F;
5. We have written policies and protocols in place to maintain adequate capacity to prevent and eliminate overcrowding; and
6. Upon request, we will allow the MD Department of Agriculture to inspect the premises for compliance.

Outdoor Areas

The enclosed “catio” is treated the same as other rooms inside the facility, but it is exposed to fresh air, sunlight, and the elements. Refer to other sections of this document for cleaning, sanitization, feeding, enrichment, and enclosures.

Primary Animal Enclosures

At SFCDR, our intake and adoption facility is mostly “cage free”. We allow most of the animals in our care to roam freely, so the basic unit of a “primary animal enclosure” at our facility is a room. For those animals that are not allowed to roam, we use cages and crates that are at least “extra-large” with room for an elevated level/bed and enrichment items, in order to meet the standards below.

We ensure that any primary animal enclosure is structurally sound and maintained in a safe, working condition at all times; and that it enables animals to remain dry, clean, and shielded from extreme temperatures and weather conditions.

Our primary animal enclosures meet the following standards:

1. Primary animal enclosures provide sufficient space to allow each animal, regardless of size, to:
 - a. Hold their tails erect and their heads high when in a normal standing position;
 - b. Turn freely and easily stand, sit, stretch, and move their head, without touching the top of the enclosure;
 - c. Lie in a resting position with limbs extended;
 - d. Move up off the enclosure’s floor onto an elevated level/bed; and
 - e. Move about and assume a comfortable posture for feeding, drinking, urinating, defecating, and playing.
2. Food, water bowls, and any other items in a primary animal enclosure do not impede the animal’s ability to stretch out;
3. Primary enclosures allow any animal to sit, sleep, and eat away from areas of its enclosure where it may defecate or urinate;
4. Latches or other closing devices on a primary animal enclosure are secure enough to keep the animal in the enclosure, keep other animals out of the enclosure, and prevent injury, while allowing personnel to easily open the enclosure from the outside and, where applicable, from inside the enclosure;

5. A primary enclosure, temporary enclosure, and transport carriers that compromise the safety of animals or that have been identified as needing repair are prohibited from being used for permanent or temporary animal housing;
6. Transport carriers are not be used as a primary enclosure; we do place transport carriers inside cages to:
 - a. give the animals a space where they feel safe and secure while acclimating to the new environment; and
 - b. allow us to easily contain them for transportation, relocation within the facility, or when spot cleaning their primary enclosure.
7. All healthy animals are allowed exercise time in outdoor areas, where they are provided with appropriate shelter from the elements.
8. We prohibit the use of “drop boxes” for anonymous surrender of pets. Instead we use our Intake Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and Checklist for in-person surrenders when accepting animals into our care.

Standard Enclosure Items

For those few animals whose primary enclosure is a cage, the following standard items are included unless specified otherwise by a veterinarian:

1. Appropriately sized clean water and food bowls;
 - a. Stainless steel bowls are used for sanitation;
 - b. Disposable bowls are used for animals that are quarantined.
2. Clean bedding, which is checked every morning and evening;
3. Kuranda Bed elevated resting place;
4. Assigned carriers for cats (located in, above, or near each cage); and
5. Appropriately sized and clean litter boxes for cats, which are scooped 3 times per day.

Enrichment Items

Enrichment items are provided to all animals unless otherwise prescribed by a veterinarian. All new enrichment items must be approved by an SFCDR Director. Once approved, the item can be used, as needed, by staff and volunteers. Enrichment items will be inspected regularly and cleaned as necessary. Broken or excessively worn items will be disposed of in the trash.

Feeding and Watering

Dogs are fed two times daily with dry and wet food according to age and weight. Cats and kittens are given constant access to dry food. Canned wet food is provided up to four times daily to puppies, kittens, nursing mothers, and those animals that have been directed by a veterinarian. Feeding schedules and special diets are prescribed by a veterinarian as needed. Clean water is made available at all times.

Sanitation Practices

Facility Cleaning and Sanitation

SFCDR must ensure that our facility building, primary animal enclosures, and all other areas where animals are kept are sanitary and regularly cleaned to reduce disease transmission among animals, protect public human health, increase animal comfort, and meet the following standards:

1. All primary animal enclosures, Kuranda elevated beds, and stainless food and water bowls are fully cleaned and sanitized before a new animal is placed into the enclosures;
2. All animal bedding must be fully cleaned and sanitized before being used by a new animal and subsequently fully cleaned, as often as necessary;
3. All cages, Kuranda elevated beds, food bowls, and water bowls shall be spot-cleaned twice daily and fully cleaned as necessary;

4. All floors, junctions, walls, doors, and drains must be immediately sanitized and fully cleaned after coming into contact with feces, urine, vomit, or an animal known or suspected of having an infectious disease;
5. Only cleaners that are safe for animals and approved for veterinary and shelter use are used to clean primary enclosures, transport carriers, exercise areas, or any area of the facility where animals are present or likely to be present;
6. All chemicals are removed from the enclosure and is dried prior to placing an animal in the enclosure;
7. No animal or animal's drinking water or water bowl are left in an enclosure while cleaning chemicals are being used;
8. The facility's building and runs are kept reasonably free of flies, fleas, mosquitoes, rats, mice, and other vectors or nuisance species;
9. Filters in heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems will be inspected and cleaned regularly and replaced if necessary. Filters and plates in ionic air scrubbers will be inspected and cleaned regularly and replaced as necessary; the maintenance reminder timers on the units will be reset after cleaning.
10. All trash and recycling cans in areas of the facility where animals are located must have lids; and
11. All staff are trained in the facility's sanitation protocols, and a written record of that training is kept on-site and available for inspection. Refresher training will be conducted bi-annually.

Sanitary Storage

Dry dog food, cat food, and treats must be stored in airtight containers for use. Unopened bags of dry food are stored in the pantry or in tote bins with lids. Wet dog and cat food in unopened cans are stored on shelves in the pantry. When cans are opened the food should be served immediately. Cans that are only partially used must be covered with an airtight can lid or placed in a Ziplock bag; this food will be refrigerated and used as soon as possible. Wet food that has been served but not consumed must be picked up each night, with the exception of food for puppies, kittens and nursing mothers. Animal food that is past the "sell by" date will not be provided to an animal. Dishes and enrichment items brought to the kitchenette for washing are emptied of all food and organic matter before being placed on counters.

Clean bedding and enrichment items are stored in cabinets or tote bins with latching lids. Dirty bedding and enrichment items are placed into plastic bags and taken to the laundry room to prevent animals from coming into contact with them. Bedding or enrichment items that are damaged or soiled beyond repair and cleaning must be disposed of in the trash.

Personal Hygiene

Hand washing is the most effective method of preventing the transfer of germs that can cause illness in both people and animals. While hand disinfectants are useful, thoroughly washing hands with soap and water is the most effective means of preventing the transfer of germs to other people and to animals. Staff members and volunteers should arrive at work in clean clothes and have a change of clothing available as necessary. Protective gear such as disposable gloves, masks, shoe covers, gowns, and eyewear are available for use as needed or as directed by a veterinarian.

All staff, volunteers, and visitors must sanitize their hands after touching any animal at the facility. Whenever possible, staff should wear disposable gloves when handling sick or critical care animals and waste products. Protective eye and face wear should be worn by anyone handling dangerous animals.

Medical Standards

SFCDR must ensure that all animals are monitored, assessed, examined, and treated for medical conditions in a timely manner. Prevention of disease outbreaks, the well-being of the animals in our care and of our staff and volunteers is paramount. Medical standards include the following:

1. A veterinarian must supervise the medical care and treatment of all animals in our facility. We have partnered with several veterinarian practices within Maryland that fall into the following categories:
 - a. High Quality/High Volume Spay Neuter (HQHVSN) clinics;
 - b. Full-service veterinary practices;
 - c. Emergency/after-hours veterinary clinics;
 - d. Mobile veterinary practices and individual veterinarians willing to make “house calls”.
2. Any surgeries are performed in accordance with the Maryland Veterinary Practice Act and in a facility currently licensed and registered by the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners;
3. Our staff and volunteers must observe animals daily for signs of illness or injury, report this to a Director, and obtain treatment, as appropriate;
4. Clean water must be provided to all animals at all times;
5. All animals with parasites must be treated immediately with follow-up treatment(s) unless otherwise directed by a veterinarian;
6. Any animal appearing to be experiencing pain, suffering distress, rapidly deteriorating health, life-threatening problems, or suspected zoonotic disease shall be assessed by a veterinarian as soon as possible and treated or euthanized to prevent further distress or suffering;
7. Any animal with a suspected zoonotic disease that does not appear to be experiencing pain, distress, or deteriorating health, but that poses a threat to human health and safety, must be isolated to limit exposure to other animals and people, and must be assessed and treated by a veterinarian as soon as possible;
8. Any animal that is observed to be experiencing mental suffering, distress, or behavioral deterioration must be assessed and appropriately treated by a veterinarian in a timely manner or humanely euthanized;
9. Animals that can be handled safely will be provided with animal enrichment activities, whenever possible; and
10. Animal food that is past the “sell by” date will not be provided to an animal.

Disease Outbreaks

Every precaution must be taken to prevent a disease outbreak, however if an outbreak occurs at the facility, a Director may decide to quarantine a room. If the outbreak cannot be contained to one or two rooms, a Director, in consultation with a veterinarian, decides whether to close the facility, at least for that species. Closing the facility to a certain species means that no intake can occur – we will not accept any surrenders or strays of that species. Adoptions and transfers to other shelters are placed on hold until a veterinarian can assess the health of those animals. When a room is closed for quarantine, no one except trained and designated cleaning staff will be allowed in that room. Protective outerwear must be worn in the quarantine rooms. All items removed from a quarantined room, such as waste materials, are placed into a garbage bag which is sealed and immediately taken to the dumpster. Quarantine rooms may only disposable materials (bowls, towels, etc.). Bedding must be bagged inside the quarantine room before taking it the laundry for sanitization.

Equipment

Safety Equipment

SFCDR must ensure that anyone working with animals, including a volunteer, has the equipment necessary to handle all situations in a safe and humane manner, including the following:

1. Adequate ear protection, gloves, and other safety equipment to all staff members who handle animals or clean cages; and
2. Equipment that allows staff to restrain animals as humanely as possible while ensuring the safety of both the animal and the handler.

Scanners and Microchip Readers

All animals must be scanned within 24 hours of arrival at the facility for microchips unless it is unsafe to do so. Scans should also be performed prior to surgery, adoption, release to an owner, release to another rescue, and euthanasia.

Animal Handling

Behavior

The assessment of each animal's behavior begins at the time of intake and continues until the final disposition. An animal's behavior will vary based on its prior experiences, the situation it was recently removed from, the adjustment period in a new environment, etc. SFCDR staff and volunteers will monitor each animal's behavior daily through every type of interaction.

Animal behavior is categorized and the assessment is color-coded and annotated in our database and on each "cage card" hung in/on each primary enclosure. Color-coding is as follows:

- Green – friendly/social, can be handled by anyone;
- Yellow – shy but social, can be handled by anyone with caution or supervision;
- Orange – semi-feral/anti-social, only handled by experienced/trained staff or volunteers using proper restraint;
- Red – feral/dangerous, only handled by senior staff with special training/experience and wearing protective clothing, requires proper restraint.

Proper Restraint

Proper handling protects animals and people from injury and minimizes stress for all. Handling an animal is carried out as humanely as possible by trained staff and volunteers. The type and amount of restraint used must be appropriate for the individual animal and the specific situation. In all cases, the minimal amount of physical restraint needed to accomplish the task without injury to people or animals is used. All SFCDR personnel are trained in proper restraint with emphasis on how to use the minimum amount of restraint required.

Examples of equipment used for animal restraint include: leashes, collars, muzzles, towels and fleece blankets, squeeze cages, traps, cat nets, and cat gloves.

Dog Walking

Dog fosters and walkers are required to complete dog walking training and be approved for independent dog walking. Since dogs are walked in areas that is not enclosed, special care must be taken to ensure the dogs are properly restrained, remain under the walker's control, and do not escape or harm themselves, other people, or animals.

Cat Socializing

Cat fosters and handlers are required to complete cat socialization training and be approved for independent cat handling. Socialization is intended to make the cats more adoptable or suitable for "barn program" placement by moving them up the color-coded scale, for example from "yellow" to "green".

Events

Animal handlers at events are required to complete the appropriate animal training (dog walking and/or cat socialization training). Each handler must be approved for independent animal handling at events. Special care must be taken at events, especially those away from the main facility to prevent:

1. Injury to an animal, handler, or member of the public;
2. Escape of an animal.

Public Interaction

Fosters and persons handling animals and interacting with the public at the facility are required to complete the appropriate animal training (dog walking and/or cat socialization training) as well as matchmaking training, and be approved for independent matchmaker and adoption application approvals. All public interaction is done in a safe and humane manner and in a way that does not cause stress or harm to the animal or the public.

Feral Cats

Special consideration is given to the housing and handling of feral cats. Appropriate use of cage covers, cat dens, traps, squeeze cages, and sedatives can minimize stress and greatly reduce risk of injury to the animal or handler. Feral cats may be housed only for spay/neuter (including recuperation) through our community cat TNR program, while attempting to locate the caretaker, provide medical treatment, while they are nursing their adoptable kittens, or to find suitable working cat (“barn cat”) placement. Feral cats that cannot be released due to health, or be safely housed or handled for treatment, may be euthanized.

Dangerous Animals

We go to great lengths to ensure that the environment is safe for both humans and animals. Some animals present a higher risk of injury to people and other animals, including those with known bite or scratch histories, or animals that are anticipated to be aggressive. Special housing considerations are given to these animals and only specially trained directors, trainers, or staff are allowed to handle them.

Record Keeping

SFCDR must ensure that records are kept for each animal entering our care. We use Petestablished.com for our animal welfare organization (AWO) management software. Information must include (at least):

1. The animal’s species and unique identification number and name;
2. At least one photograph;
3. The estimated age of the animal;
4. Date of entry into our care;
5. Dates and explanation of all treatments and medical procedures; and
6. Final disposition (date and type).

Files

SFCDR believes strongly in paperwork reduction; we strive to use electronic files whenever possible and minimize the use of hard-copy, paper records. Our AWO management software stores electronic copies of animal records on-line and we keep a back-up copies on our computer system. We store original paper records for those items that are required by law, or until we transfer custody of an animal to an adopter or another organization.

Records that are typical of those held in our files include:

1. Intake records
 - a. Pet surrender form
 - b. Transfer from other organization
 - c. Treatment/care and observation/assessments records
 - d. TNR records

2. Medical records
 - a. Rabies certificate (signed by a veterinarian, with or without a metal tag)
 - b. Certificate of spay/neuter (signed by a veterinarian)
 - c. Vaccination records
 - d. Other medical records and lab test reports
3. Adoption records
 - a. Adoption applications (approved, disapproved, or pending)
 - b. Adoption contract
 - c. Promise to Spay/Neuter (for kittens too small for surgery)
4. Administrative records
 - a. Volunteer application and agreement
 - b. Staff personnel data
 - c. Training logs and records
 - d. Donor receipts
 - e. Financial data
 - f. State and federal tax-free charity (501(c)(3)) paperwork

Adoption

SFCDR has a very active adoption program with written protocols available for inspection. No animals are released for adoption unless they have been spayed or neutered, have current appropriate vaccinations including rabies, and are in good health. Our adoption program includes not only pet cats and dogs, but also a working (“barn”) cat program. Adoption records include:

1. An adoption application form;
2. An adoption contract;
3. Records of all medical procedures and treatments;
4. Educational information on pet ownership; and
5. Follow-up contact information for the organization and veterinarians.

Adoption procedures are detailed in our Adoption Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document.

Foster Program

SFCDR manages a robust foster care program in which many of the animals in our care are taken into foster homes temporarily rather than remaining at our facility. In addition to saving the lives of animals, this program was designed to achieve the following goals:

1. Raise underage kittens and puppies to an age where they may become available for adoption, providing bottle feeding if necessary, socialization, and special attention or training.
2. Socializing or training adult cats and dogs that are not presently suitable for adoption.
3. Provide special care to injured and/or sick animals until they heal and become adoptable.
4. Make space for other animals to be accepted into our care.

Animals available for fostering are identified by the staff. All foster parents and their homes are prescreened and those approved sign contracts with Sunshine’s Friends prior to housing any animals. The foster is trained by our staff and must follow all the applicable portions of this Standards of Care document.

Throughout the foster period, the foster parent must maintain contact with SFCDR, bring the animal(s) to our veterinarians for all scheduled vaccines and medical treatments, and communicate with staff about any relevant information regarding the animal(s) in their care. In the case of adoptable adult animals being fostered due to lack of space at the facility, the foster parent must bring the animal(s) to at least one adoption event each month and assist with placing the animal in a new home. Except for extraordinary situations, no foster placement will last longer than six months.

Animals placed in foster care are provided the same medical care as those housed at our facility. We are responsible for providing support to the foster parents, including training if requested, regularly scheduled medical appointments, medicines as needed, emergency medical services as available, and ongoing help with questions and issues that arise. We are responsible for following up on all foster placements and maintaining the follow-up information in the AWO management database. A foster placement may be terminated at any time by an SFCDR Director.

Detailed foster procedures are covered in our Foster Program SOP document.

Visitors

Most visitors to SFCRS have come to adopt a pet into a forever home. Other visitors may come for a variety of reasons, including facility repairs or contract work, group tours, rescues, and redemptions.

All visitors are directed and/or supervised throughout the facility by a staff member or trained volunteer to maximize safety of both people and animals. Staff and volunteers use this time with visitors as an educational opportunity, to convey information about SFCDR and the adoption process, and to answer any questions visitors may have.

We strive to ensure every visitor has a safe and positive experience. We view every visit as an opportunity to begin a long-term relationship with our organization that could include adoptions, spay/neuter, TNR, referrals, volunteering, donations, and life-long care for their pets.

Appendix

Internal Sunshine's Friends Documents

- SFCDR Intake Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and Checklist
- SFCDR Cleaning and Sanitization SOP
- SFCDR Animal Medical Care Handbook
- SFCDR Adoption SOP
- SFCDR PetSmart Adoption Center Guide
- SFCDR Foster Program SOP
- SFCDR Barn Cat Program SOP
- SFCDR Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Program SOP
- SFCDR Volunteer Handbook
- SFCDR Training Manual
- SFCDR Communication and Advertising Plan
- SFCDR Emergency Guide
- SFCDR Grant Writing Guidelines

External References

- Title 15, MD Department of Agriculture, Subtitle 01, Chapter 11 “Animal Shelters – Standards of Care”, Agriculture Article §2-1701 at seq., Annotated Code of Maryland (April 23, 2018);
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