



Volunteer Handbook

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Welcome

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with RSPCA ACT. Volunteers are valued and vital members of the RSPCA ACT team. Volunteers play an active part in supporting the team to improve the welfare of animals in our care and to assist in preparing them for their forever homes.

This handbook will provide you with valuable information and answer many of your questions in relation to your volunteering journey with us.

We have many areas of opportunity for volunteers to assist our team which you will learn a little more about in this document.

Our team treats our volunteers with gratitude and respect and they will assist you with your training and growth within the shelter.

We are sure that you will find your volunteering experience with us rewarding and enjoyable.

About RSPCA ACT

RSPCA ACT was formed in 1955 and offers a range of services to the communities of Canberra and the surrounding region. RSPCA ACT is governed by a Board of elected members and managed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). We are a not-for-profit, non-government community organisation and rely on donations, grants and other funding for support.

What do we do?

- Care for thousands of animals every year at our shelter
- Accept and rehome surrendered and stray animals via our adoption program
- Offer temporary homes for animals with a variety of needs through our foster program
- Investigate animal cruelty complaints and deliver animal welfare advice
- Run public dog and puppy training classes
- Provide a retail store open six days a week
- Run a public five-star cat boarding facility - Tango's Place
- Offer emergency short term boarding
- Assist with desexing of pets through our Veterinary Clinic
- Deliver children's educational programs
- Run numerous fundraising events throughout the year

The Five Freedoms

At RSPCA ACT, we believe that all animals deserve a life worth living. The Freedoms are based in animal welfare law, and are as follows:

1. **Freedom from hunger and thirst** by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
2. **Freedom from discomfort** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. **Freedom from pain, injury or disease** by prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. **Freedom to express normal behaviour** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. **Freedom from fear and distress** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

Volunteer Commitment

We ask that volunteers commit to volunteering with us for a minimum **6-month period**. This is due to the fact that much time, energy and resources are involved in engaging and training volunteers.

Whilst we acknowledge that circumstances can change and you may need to cease volunteering within this period, we ask you to consider carefully whether you believe you'll be able to commit prior to commencing your volunteer training.

For animal-based roles, you must also declare that you can meet the 'RSPCA ACT Essential Capabilities of Volunteers in Animal-Based Roles'. This document can also be found on our website.

What to expect

All potential volunteers are required to attend a volunteer induction program which covers non-role specific information relevant to every volunteer. This also includes a tour of the shelter. During this time, you are free to ask as many questions as you like and then decide if you wish to go ahead with the onboarding process. Please note these sessions occur during normal business hours.

You will be provided with training in your area by one of our team, you may need to do some pre reading prior to attending your training which will be emailed to you with your training confirmation. You will also be advised of your regular volunteer roster which will be in line with your availability.

Volunteer Roles

Volunteers like yourself provide invaluable assistance in many different areas and are an indispensable part of our organisation. Due to the popularity of volunteering with the RSPCA ACT we may not have a position available in line with your availability, as such we can add you to our waitlist where you will be advised of available positions as they arise.

Volunteers work with RSPCA ACT between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm every day of the year, including weekends and public holidays. Volunteer roles include:

- Kennels - Volunteers assist with cleaning the kennels area, laundry, feeding and sitting with the dogs. Occasionally, a puppy socialising role is available



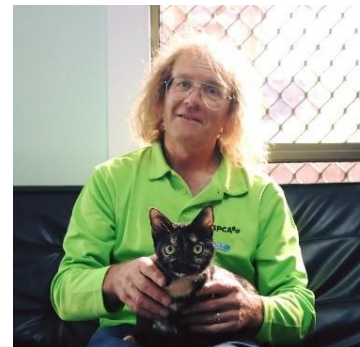
- Dog Walking - Volunteers for this role will need to complete the dog walker specific application form. If successful you will need to attend a two-hour theory session followed by two, two-hour practical sessions

- Domestic - Volunteers assist with cleaning both indoors and out, changing straw, bedding, food and water as well as preparing food for a variety of birds and other animals which could include: guineapigs, rats, reptiles as well as some small farm animals including fowl

- Cattery and Pocket Pets - Volunteers assist with cleaning, laundry, feeding and socialising the cats and kittens, bunnies and ferrets

- Events - RSPCA ACT has a wide range of events which we run over the year including Million Paws Walk and Cupcake Day. We are always looking for volunteers to get involved in the lead up to events as well as at the events themselves

- Pet Adoption Centre - Volunteers assist with the general operation of the Pet Adoption Centre (PAC) by distributing donated items around the shelter, unpacking stock and assisting with general cleaning and tidying of the customer facing areas



- Tangos Place - Volunteers assist with cleaning, laundry, feeding and socialising of cats and kittens in care in the boarding facility

- Vet Clinic - Volunteer vets and vet nurses donate their time to our vet clinic and support our staff to treat and assist animals in need. We also have kennel hands to assist in cleaning and laundry tasks. Vet clinic volunteers need to be studying vet nursing or vet science to be considered

- Gardening and Maintenance - Volunteers assist with gardening, cleaning and a wide range of maintenance tasks around the shelter

- Administration - Volunteers help out with an array of administrative tasks including putting together information packs, data entry, making phone calls, mail-outs and assisting with other projects

- Dog and Puppy Training School - Volunteers assist with the set-up, coordination and pack down of classes

- Children's Education Programs - Volunteers provide assistance to the facilitator of the program. Tasks may include shelter tours, interacting with animals, preparing food/bedding for animals and creating enrichment items
- Foster Care - Volunteers at RSPCA ACT are engaged to provide foster homes for cats, kittens, dogs and puppies. Foster carers are always required, but are especially vital during kitten season. If you are interested, please see our foster carer page for more information
- New Roles - At times new positions are created to assist our team, this includes areas such as laundry hands, transcription and other roles not yet developed, keep an eye on our website for new and innovative positions



Starting your volunteer shift

Staff and volunteers are not permitted to park in the Pet Adoption Centre car park as this is reserved for RSPCA ACT customers, parking is available along Kirkpatrick Street.

When arriving for morning shifts, entry is through the side gate near the Vet Clinic which is open by 8:30 am. On Sundays and public holidays, a combination lock is placed on the gate. Sunday/PH volunteers will be emailed the code.

Please ensure that you sign in at the start of your shift and sign out as you finish your shift.

Please also ensure that during your shift that mobile phones are turned off or switched onto silent prior to starting your shift. Please do not answer calls, make calls or text while working with the animals. If you are expecting an important call or need to make one, please use the designated break areas. The use of personal listening devices (ie: headphones) are not permitted while onsite due to safety reasons

Attendance

If you are unable to attend your shift, please send an email to the Volunteer Program Coordinator (volunteers@rspca-act.org.au), even if it is short notice. This applies to weekends and public holidays as well as weekdays. We understand that life happens, but where possible the more notice you can give of impending leave the better. If you have prior notice of absence from your shift, please let the volunteer coordinator know in advance so we are able to cover your shift.

Dress Code

Volunteer uniforms are available for purchase at a cost dependent on the items, name badges are provided to all volunteers upon commencement and must be worn on all shifts. Long trousers of sturdy material as well as fully enclosed footwear must be worn at all times in all weather. RSPCA ACT has some wet weather equipment, such as gumboots and rain coats available for use by volunteers in the kennels and domestics areas.

RSPCA ACT provides PPE such as ear plugs, gloves face masks and goggles for volunteers as required.

Please be aware of sun safety, and wear a broad-brimmed hat and sunscreen for any roles which involve being outside.

During events such as natural disasters, emergencies or the Covid-19 please ensure you follow all staff directions, policies and procedures.

Moving around the shelter

Volunteers are required to only access areas that they are authorised to do so, some areas will only be accessible to staff for various reasons. Some of these areas include:

- Isolation wards for sick animals
- Leave to settle areas for new arrivals
- Inspectorate animals
- Emergency boarding
- Veterinary Clinic - (unless you are a current clinic volunteer)
- Whelping
- Areas as signposted

Interacting with the Public

If you are approached by a member of the public who has questions while you are volunteering, refer them to a staff member. If you are asked about a specific animal, for example a dog you're walking, tell them that it's a lovely dog, and that for further information they will need to speak to a staff member.

Photography

With the exception of authorised volunteer photographers, we ask that volunteers do not take photos of animals in our care unless you have been given permission to do so from your team leader. You will need to seek permission each time as we need to ensure the privacy of animals in our care. You will also need to seek permission to take any photos onsite and at events.

Social Media Policy

RSPCA ACT has a strict Social Media policy which is applicable to all volunteers and staff. We do have animals in care that are part of our emergency boarding program or animals in our care that have arrived via the inspectorate team, these require discretion and privacy and as such we need to abide by privacy laws.



You will receive additional information in relation to this policy when you attend your orientation. Some of the most important points to remember are listed below. **Please do not:**

- Post photos or videos of any kind taken at the shelter or at RSPCA ACT events on your personal social media account
- Post photos of your foster animals on your personal social media if you are fostering shelter animals
- Post messages, photos or videos, or make or respond to comments on behalf of RSPCA ACT on Facebook
- Include RSPCA ACT logos or trademarks on posts

Counselling Service



RSPCA ACT's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, Converge International, offers a counselling service for all staff and volunteers. It is free and completely confidential.

You are able to speak to someone on the phone, via internet chat programs such as zoom or face to face. You can contact Converge International

on 1800 337 068 or via the website: www.convergeinternational.com.au.

Bullying, Discrimination, Harassment

RSPCA ACT aims to provide an environment free of all forms of bullying, discrimination and harassment.

- Bullying can be defined as the repeated victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening behavior by an individual or group.
- Discrimination involves treating someone unfairly because of a personal attribute such as gender, race, disability, illness.
- Sexual harassment can involve unwanted touching, propositions, inappropriate telephone calls, persistent requests for dates or staring.

You do not have to endure any form of bullying, discrimination or harassment from the public or staff. Speak to the Volunteer Program Coordinator if you feel at all uncomfortable or victimised whilst volunteering with us.

Incident reporting

In the case of an accident, incident or injury you must notify a member of staff and complete a report form. As a volunteer you are covered under our insurance, however we must notify our provider within 24 hours of the incident.

Emergency Procedures

In the case of an emergency, please follow staff directions. The customer car park in front of the PAC is the main emergency assembly point. Make your way to the car park as quickly as possible and be sure to alert other staff members and volunteers as they might not have received the message or heard the announcement. If this area is unsuitable for evacuation, please follow staff direction as we have additional assembly points available.

Following Rules and Staff Direction

It is very important to follow staff direction and to observe rules when volunteering, in order to:

- Ensure the safety of people and animals
- Assist in delivering consistency with processes and training
- Prevent or slow deterioration in behaviour for animals
- Maintain or improve adoptability for animals

You cannot pick and choose which rules you listen to and adhere to. If you are unsure of what to do, or if you don't understand why a rule is in place, ask a staff member. If you fail to follow instructions from staff members, consequences could include no longer being able to volunteer

Work Health and Safety

The majority of our volunteer roles involve physical work and it is very important to be aware of your physical limits and ensure that you are not pushing yourself beyond them.

Immediately report all accidents, incidents and near misses to staff, including bites.

In the case of an emergency, please follow staff directions. The PAC car park in front of the PAC is the meeting point in which to gather.



You cannot pick and choose which rules you listen to. If you are unsure of what to do, or if you don't understand why a rule is in place, ask a staff member. If you fail to follow instructions from staff members consequences could include no longer being able to volunteer.

It's important to assess any load which you plan to lift and ensure that you follow manual handling guidelines as per your training

There are many trip and slip hazards around the shelter and it is important to always be aware of your surroundings. In the warmer month's snakes can also be a problem. Please keep an eye out and report any sightings to staff.