

**OPERATING PROCEDURES**  
**GRATIOT COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL SHELTER**

Effective March 5, 2019

## **I. Hours of Operation**

The Gratiot County Animal Control Shelter (“the Shelter”) shall be open to the public during at least a part of each day Monday through Friday, as staffing allows. Hours shall be posted on the department website and on the Shelter door. During open hours, the Shelter is open to receive animals, for animal visits, for adoptions and for the purchase/sale of dog licenses.

## **II. Animal Intake**

A. The Shelter is a limited open Shelter seeking to strike the best balance between service to the community and humane treatment of all animals. The Shelter will only receive into its population as owner-surrenders mammals with actual or potential weight of under 150 pounds.

B. The Shelter will not receive the following as owner-surrenders or as strays unless the animal represents a threat to public safety:

1. Feral cats, loosely defined as a cat that will not allow human touch. Shelter staff shall exercise their judgement in making the determination.
2. Kittens under two pounds and/or estimated to be less than eight (8) weeks old.
3. Puppies under two pounds and/or estimated to be less than eight (8) weeks old.
4. Kittens if Shelter is at capacity, i.e. ten kittens or two litters.
5. Pot belly pigs of any weight or variety
6. Gravely ill or injured animals unless received as a part of an animal control cruelty investigation.
7. Animals brought by residents of other counties.
8. Birds/fowl.

C. Owner Surrender

1. Except for those listed in paragraph B, above, owners may surrender their animals to the Shelter provided the animal appears to be uninjured and in good health. Once surrendered, owners relinquish all property rights over the animal.
2. Owner-surrendered animals will be available for immediate adoption.
3. An owner who surrenders an animal and then changes his/her mind may reclaim the animal if it is still in the shelter population provided:
  - a. The owner pays a reclaim fee, and
  - b. The animal showed no signs of abuse or neglect when surrendered.

D. Stray Animals. A stray is any animal found wandering by an Animal Control Officer or a member of the public and is brought to the Shelter. Except for those listed in paragraph B, above, shelter staff have the discretion to refuse to receive into the Shelter

population any animal other than a dog if, in the judgement of Shelter staff, the animal is likely not a stray and returning it to the location where found will not unduly risk harm to the animal. Strays received into the Shelter population must be held for four business days, after which the animal will be available for adoption. Strays shall be photographed upon intake and posted as soon as possible on the Shelter Facebook page and identified as a probable stray. Other methods for publicizing animals shall be used at the discretion of Shelter staff.

- E. Any animal received into the Shelter population shall be registered as to type (e.g. cat or dog), breed, gender, color, fur characteristics (e.g. color, length), approximate age weight, status (i.e. owner relinquishment, stray, or quarantine) and any unusual or distinctive characteristics that could aid an owner in identifying and reclaiming an animal. The animal shall be photographed. Form attached.
- F. GAIN or other foster resources shall be immediately contacted to determine if the organization can receive a dog, cat, puppy or kitten that the Shelter will not receive into its population under these Operating Procedures.

### **III. Disposition of Animals**

Animals processed and received into the Shelter population will leave the shelter either through adoption, return to owner, transfer, release to a foster agency, or euthanasia, following any required quarantine or hold period. Gratiot County does not sell, nor otherwise supply, live animals for research to any organization.

- A. Adoption. In addition to returning animals to their owners, it is the preference of the Shelter that animals be adopted to qualified, capable members of the public.
  - 1. All reasonable efforts shall be made to promote animals available for adoption through social media outlets, community resources, special events and by maintaining accessible hours at the Shelter.
  - 2. Adopters shall be advised of their responsibility to spay or neuter unaltered animals and be provided resource information for accomplishing this. The Shelter adopts the procedure provided in MCL 287.338a.
  - 3. No guarantee is made as to the health of an adopted animal or its ability to serve in a particular capacity (e.g. hunting, service to a disabled person).
  - 4. Adopted animals may be returned to the Shelter or exchanged for another within seven (7) calendar days if it has not proven suitable for the home environment. If the animal is returned in good health within seven (7) calendar days, the adoption fee will be refunded. If the animal appears to be ill or injured, the fee will not be refunded.
- B. Return to Owner. Reasonable efforts shall be made to identify the owner of animals that come to the Shelter and to make a prompt return. Such efforts may include

speaking with neighbors in the area where an animal is sighted, publicizing animals on social media outlets, checking for implanted chips, and checking lost animal reports. Persons claiming ownership must provide proof of such ownership. Proof may include license tags, veterinary records, pictures (if several and the animal is shown over time), receipts or registration papers. Owners must pay a reclaim fee for return if the animal has been taken into the Shelter population.

- C. Transfer or Foster Release. Every effort shall be made to transfer animals out of the shelter and to a foster or otherwise more suitable placement within twenty-four (24) hours for cats and kittens and forty-eight (48) hours for dogs. It is a Shelter priority to cultivate resources and establish cooperative relationships with animal foster resources in the community.
  
- D. Euthanasia. Gratiot County believes that euthanasia is a procedure best performed by veterinary professionals. Trained and certified shelter staff will perform euthanasia where not to do so would be inhumane, or it is required as an animal control matter. Wherever performed, euthanasia is considered by Gratiot County to be a disposition of last resort.
  - 1. No animal taken into the Shelter population shall be euthanized in less than four (4) calendar days, unless
    - a) the animal is gravely ill or injured where withholding of euthanasia is determined by Shelter staff to be inhumane;
    - b) a cat has a history of not using a litterbox and evidence (e.g. appointment discharge notes) is produced that the animal has received veterinary care and the problem persists. Under these circumstances, Shelter staff will perform the euthanasia, but will first encourage owners to have a veterinarian perform the procedure.
  - 2. A gravely ill or injured animal brought to the Shelter by an owner may be euthanized by Shelter staff as a service, but the animal shall not be considered an intake to the Shelter population.
  - 3. Owner requested euthanasia shall only be offered as a service to the public in the following circumstances:
    - a) The individual presenting the animal can offer verification of ownership; and
    - b) The owner can verify that he/she has contacted at least two veterinary offices, can name those offices, and represents that an appointment for euthanasia cannot be obtained in less than 48 hours.; unless
    - c) The animal is injured and the delay incurred by contacting a veterinary clinic would, in the judgement of Shelter staff, be inhumane.
    - d) Shelter staff may, at their discretion, perform a euthanasia without the owner providing evidence of attempts to contact veterinary offices if the owner can provide reasonable evidence that he/she is without the financial

means to utilize a veterinarian for the procedure and alternative financial resources, such as those offered by Gratiot Animals in Need (GAIN), are not timely available.

4. An animal that becomes ill while in the Shelter shall be isolated from other animals if space allows. Staff shall make every effort to identify a foster resource for housing and care of the animal. If such a resource is not available, Shelter staff may euthanize the animal if, in their judgement, the animal has become unadoptable or represents a threat to other animals in Shelter care.
5. Owner-requested euthanasia shall be by appointment only between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.
6. Gratiot County is committed to using the most humane method of euthanasia, balancing this consideration against the safety of Shelter staff in conducting the procedure and the cost of the various methods.

#### **IV. Shelter Hygiene**

The overriding objective is to limit the transmission of disease, while also maintaining a clean and inviting shelter environment. The following practices must be rigidly adhered to.

- A. Handling of animals.
  1. Shelter staff and members of the public may wish to handle multiple animals during a visit. Hands must be thoroughly cleaned by washing or use of hand sanitizer after handling one animal and before handling the next.
  2. Any toys or equipment used with one animal must be sanitized before being used with another animal or in another area of the Shelter.
  3. Animals should be monitored. Any animal that appears to be unwell should be isolated from other animals if space allows.
- B. Kennel care
  1. All food and water dishes must be sanitized prior to being placed in service of another animal.
  2. Cats.
    - a) Litter boxes shall be scooped at least once each day—more frequently if used by multiple cats. Loose litter shall be cleaned from areas outside the litter box.
    - b) Spills of food or water shall be wiped clean at least once each day.
    - c) Kennel surfaces shall be wiped down daily with an animal-safe disinfectant or detergent.
    - d) Shake out bedding or other materials to remove food or litter. Provide clean bedding if needed.
  3. Dog kennels.

- a) Removal fecal material in the morning and as needed throughout the day. If tools are utilized to remove solid material, sanitize tools prior to utilizing on another kennel.
  - b) Clean all kennel surfaces with a scraper or brush and with animal-safe disinfectant or detergent, used according to directions, once each day. Kennels shall be thoroughly hosed.
  - c) Scrapers, brushes and other tools shall be sanitized after cleaning kennels.
  - d) Clean bedding and other soft items as needed. At a minimum, shake out bedding and replace with fresh when needed.
4. Dog runs.
- a) Each run shall be thoroughly cleaned daily.
  - b) A run shall be cleaned after one animal leaves the area and before another is admitted to the area.
  - c) Remove all solid fecal matter as needed throughout the day.
  - d) Utilize an animal-safe disinfectant or detergent and hose to clean all surfaces daily. Allow the disinfectant or detergent to remain on the surface for the contact time necessary for the agent to work. Then rinse thoroughly.
- C. Other areas.
- 1. All floors throughout the Shelter shall be mopped with an animal-safe disinfectant or detergent daily. Separate mops shall be used for the dog and cat areas in the Shelter to avoid a transfer of contaminants from one area to another.
  - 2. All trash receptacles shall be covered and bags shall be removed and replaced at least weekly. No feces or other organic matter shall remain in an indoor trash receptacle longer than one week. Bag removal shall be at more frequent intervals if necessary to prevent or eliminate odor.
  - 3. All tools and cleaning devices shall be sanitized after use in one area and prior to use in another area.

**V. Animal Care**

- A. Feeding. All animals shall be fed age, size and weight appropriate quality and quantities of food each day. Guidance should be taken from the animal food container regarding quantity and frequency of feedings. Lids shall be on food containers at all times between feedings.
- B. Exercise.
  - 1. Dogs shall be released from kennels and permitted to freely move about, or shall be walked on a leash, at least twice daily on weekdays for 30 minute intervals. Dogs shall be allowed exercise during feeding and cleaning visits on weekends.

2. Dogs under six months of age shall not be permitted to interact, sniff, touch noses or have other contact with any other dog. Contact with other persons during exercise shall also be limited.
3. Cats shall be kept in kennels of sufficient size to allow the animal to move freely about. Cats shall be provided enrichment opportunities by having access to active toys such as hard surface balls.

**VI. Staff Care**

Gratiot County cannot guarantee the health of any animal brought into the Shelter. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that staff receive vaccinations against rabies at intervals recommended by health care providers. Gratiot County will provide reimbursement or pay co-pays for costs of such vaccines.

**VII. Donations**

- A. The Shelter will receive donations from the public of cash, food and products necessary for the care of Shelter animals or maintenance of the facility. Donations are to be used only for these purposes.
- B. All donations shall be identified on a donations form and an estimated value of the goods shall be noted. This information shall be logged by Shelter staff and a copy is to be given to the donor.
- C. Donations of food, bedding and other animal care items may be re-donated to resources in the community if the Shelter has an excess of products or there is a family in dire need (e.g. fire in home destroyed all food and animal bedding).

**VIII. Financial Matters**

- A. Fees shall be collected as specified in the Fee Schedule approved annually by the Board of Commissioners. Payment may be tendered by cash, check, credit card or money order.
- B. Receipts shall be provided and a copy retained for every financial transaction.
- C. Funds in all forms shall be deposited with the Treasurer no less than once each week. For security reasons, every effort shall be made to limit the amount of cash on the premises at any given time.
- D. All policies of Gratiot County shall apply to Shelter staff and operations.