

Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter, Inc. (BARCS)

Standards of Care

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Introduction

Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter, Inc. (BARCS) is a nonprofit organization that serves the animals and citizens of Baltimore. As such, BARCS is committed to providing all animals at its shelter with the best care and welfare possible given available resources. 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 by a committee of BARCS volunteers, staff, and board members. Committee members were selected based upon their expertise, ability to provide thoughtful debate, and willingness to contribute an extraordinary amount of time reviewing documents, performing research, writing, and participating in many meetings.

This document will be reviewed and updated periodically by the BARCS Board Program Committee. All recommended changes will be submitted to the board of directors for review and approval. BARCS staff and volunteers are expected to review the Standards of Care on an annual basis.

The Standards of Care establishes only the standards and does not provide detail on how BARCS works. That information is defined in BARCS Standard Operating Procedures.

BARCS strives to meet or exceed the standards outlined in this document whenever possible. Appendix A includes goals for future improvements.

HISTORY OF BARCS

Prior to becoming the independent nonprofit BARCS in 2005, the animal shelter was known as the Baltimore City Municipal Animal Shelter. Then and now, the shelter served over 655,000 residents and 350,000 companion animals. Like many city agencies, the animal shelter had to compete with other agencies for the limited funding and resources available through the Baltimore city government. This meant that the animal shelter was often placed as a last priority and as a result, it was woefully underfunded and understaffed. This translated into poor husbandry practices, poor customer service, a poorly maintained building, and astonishingly low adoption rates.

In response to the need to improve the shelter and make the conditions more humane, Baltimore City committed to dividing the shelter into two separate organizations: The Bureau of Animal Control and Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter, Inc. (BARCS). The Bureau of Animal Control remained a public city agency responsible for responding to all animal issues outside of the shelter. The Bureau's responsibilities include bringing strays to the animal shelter, impounding vicious animals, investigating rabid animal reports, handling enforcement of animal laws, and responding to animal cruelty complaints.

The new organization, BARCS, was officially formed and recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2005 and was tasked with the operation of the shelter itself. The board of directors consisted of a small group of community members and government officials. The Board hired an acting executive director to begin the shelter's transformation. In 2006, BARCS became the responsible organization for overseeing all shelter operations and programs. In 2007, all shelter staff became BARCS employees and the shelter increased its hours of operations. New employees were hired, husbandry practices were improved, life-saving programs and services were created, and facility improvements were made. BARCS significantly increased the number of animals saved from 240 dogs and cats in 2005 (under Animal Control), to over 8,000 in 2015. From 2006 through 2015, BARCS has saved over 72,000 dogs and cats.

Today, BARCS is an open admission shelter that serves the citizens and animals of Baltimore City. It is the largest companion animal shelter in Maryland, taking in over 11,000 dogs and cats and approximately 1,000 exotic species,

wildlife, and small mammals each year. The animals that BARCS cares for are typically lost, abandoned, abused, neglected, or surrendered by their owners. The shelter's services include providing housing and care to homeless animals, public education and outreach, tracking lost and found pets, providing resources to help keep pets in their homes, offering low-cost vaccinations and microchips, and providing low cost or free spay/neuter surgery for owned pets and community cats. BARCS also provides families the opportunity to adopt a companion animal that is spayed/neutered, vaccinated, and in need of a permanent loving home.

Each year BARCS makes progress toward its vision that no healthy or treatable animals be euthanized in Baltimore City. BARCS' compassionate employees and dedicated volunteers operate a foster program to care for sick, injured, and underage animals, and to help with space constraints; a rescue network to transfer animals to other organizations; a volunteer program to assist in all areas of the shelter; and an offsite adoption program to make adoptable animals accessible to the public. The shelter's medical team and animal care staff provides care and enrichment to the animals.

In 2006, the "Franky Fund" was created to provide treatment to the dozens of emergency medical cases BARCS receives each week. In 2008, BARCS built an onsite surgical clinic where spays/neuters and other surgeries are performed. In 2014, the "Medical Care Fund" was created in order to provide daily medical care to all the shelters animals for things like spay and neuter surgeries, antibiotics, vaccinations, test kits for a various diseases, and preventative medication for issues like fleas or worms. Both of these Funds generate resources to provide preventative care and to treat thousands of sick and injured homeless animals that enter BARCS' doors each year.

BARCS has established, and continues to seek, partnerships with local and national animal organizations in an effort to work on animal welfare issues. BARCS is also founding members of the Baltimore Animal Welfare Alliance (BAWA) and the Anti-Animal Abuse Commission in Baltimore. BARCS has partnered with many organizations such as Best Friends Animal Society, PetSmart Charities, and the Petco Foundation to increase focus on pit bull advocacy, spay/neuter, adoption, pet retention, and other life-saving programs.

MISSION AND VISION

The mission of BARCS, a nonprofit shelter, is to accept and care for all animals in need and promote responsible pet ownership for a more humane community in Baltimore City.

BARCS' vision is to become a model open-admission animal shelter and a valued resource for the people and animals of Baltimore. BARCS envisions a shelter where all healthy and treatable animals find new homes, where they are housed in a low-stress, comfortable environment, where spay/neuter surgeries are offered at low cost to the Baltimore community, where residents can turn in times of personal crisis for help with their pets, where citizens are educated on the proper care of animals, and where abused and neglected animals can receive the love and care they need to recover.

Working in close partnership with the City, other rescue organizations and shelters, local veterinarians, and the citizens of Baltimore and beyond, BARCS is confident that it can and will achieve its goals.

BARCS is also committed to providing the best welfare to animals possible and is also committed to the Five Freedoms:

1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst by constant access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor.
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 or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. Freedom to Express Normal Behavior by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and companionship.
5. Freedom from Fear and Distress by ensuring conditions and treatment that avoid mental suffering.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

BARCS is run by an Executive Director under the direction of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors consists of individuals who are committed to the mission of the organization and play a crucial role in the governance of the organization. The Board of Directors is responsible for working with the Executive Director to determine the mission for the organization and monitor the organization's management, financial, and programmatic performance. The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the shelter. All staff and volunteers report to the Executive Director via the Director of Operations and their respective Managers.

BARCS employs talented professionals who conduct the day to day operations of the shelter. (See Appendix B for organizational chart.) Staff positions range from the animal care staff focusing on the needs of the animals to the customer service representatives working directly with the public. BARCS' present staffing is as follows:

Management Team:

The Executive Director is the chief executive officer of BARCS and the chief spokesperson for BARCS. The Executive Director is responsible for the overall management of BARCS and is the liaison to Baltimore City. In addition the Executive Director is responsible for resource and program development, external relations (including public representation of BARCS), government relations, and development of new ideas and programs. The Director of Operations, Director of Communications, Veterinary Medical Director, and the Development Director work together with the Executive Director to carry out the programs.

Medical Staff: The Medical staff provides preventative care, surgery, and medical treatment to every animal that enters the shelter. All medical protocols used at BARCS are developed and/or approved by the Veterinary Medical Director; these include, but are not limited to: intake procedures, selection of medications and biologics, euthanasia technique, special diets and feeding, health assessments, and the use of cleaning compounds. Additionally, the Veterinary Medical Director is responsible for placing an animal, room, or shelter under quarantine and deciding when that quarantine is lifted.

Animal Care Staff: The Animal Care staff provides care and enrichment for the animals at BARCS. Their duties include, but are not limited to: providing food and water to the animals, providing clean housing and enrichment, doing laundry, and general cleaning of kennel areas. They also show animals to potential adopters and assist owners with finding their lost companions. The Community Cat Program Team also traps outdoor cats for spay/neuter and vaccinations and works toward a live-outcome for our less social cats through trap/neuter/return, working cat program, and the barn program.

Program Staff: The Program staff works directly with shelter visitors and guests at our offsite animal adoption locations and adoption events. Their responsibilities include assisting guests in the adoption process, educating guests, and teaching responsible pet ownership. Program staff also manages the foster program, provide behavior assistance and alternative placement, and coordinate the transfer of animals to rescue partners.

Customer Service Staff: Customer Service representatives are responsible for the administrative work of the shelter and they work directly with the customers. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited: to working with customers who are potential adopters, claiming lost pets, redeeming impounded animals, and purchasing pet licenses. They also provide resources for pet retention to help keep pets with their families. Additionally, they answer phone and email inquiries from the public and handle all data entry and customer transactions.

Development Staff: The Development staff conducts all fundraising activities to ensure the future growth of the organization. Their duties include, but are not limited: to developing and executing annual fundraising plans,

exploring alternative funding sources, writing grants, managing events, and cultivating and nurturing relationships with corporate sponsors, foundations, and individual donors.

Volunteer Staff: BARCS depends on the support of volunteers every day. The volunteers assist in the daily operations of the shelter and their duties include, but are not limited to: walking dogs, socializing cats, cleaning kennels, assisting in surgery, interacting with customers, introducing animals to potential adopters, working our low cost public vaccinating and microchip clinic, and working at community events to raise funds and awareness for BARCS.

A manager leads each of these departments. All of the managers together compose BARCS' managerial staff who report directly to the Director of Operations and the Executive Director.

An organizational chart is included as Appendix B.

Standards of Care

I. ANIMAL HOUSING

A. DOGS AND CATS

1. Cage Size, Design and Materials

Cage Size – Primary enclosures must provide sufficient space to allow each animal, regardless of size, to make normal postural adjustments (e.g., turn freely and easily stand, sit, stretch, move their head, without touching the top of the enclosure; lie in a resting position with limbs extended; be able to get away from defecation, and move about and assume a comfortable posture for feeding, drinking, urinating and defecating). Food, water bowls and litter boxes (for cats) should not impede the animal's ability to stretch out. Dogs should be able to hold their tails erect when in a normal standing position.

Design – The primary enclosures must be structurally sound and maintained in safe, working condition to properly confine animals, prevent injury, keep other animals out, and enable the animals to remain dry and clean. There must not be any sharp edges, gaps, or other defects that could cause injury or trap a limb or other body part. Secure latches or other closing devices must be present. For cats, vertical as well as horizontal dimensions are important, as cats show a preference for spending time on raised surfaces and high structures rather than on the floor. Therefore, perches, dens, or a shelf are available in all cat cages.

Materials – Only non-porous surfaces that can be easily disinfected and that are durable enough to withstand repeated cleaning are used in all animal areas.

In certain situations, the above requirements are not practical or appropriate. These situations include:

- transport;
- decreased space required for medical reasons as determined by a BARCS veterinarian;
- temporary pre/post-surgical confinement (24-48 hours total); and
- intake processing;
- large intake of animals at one time due to impoundment from Animal Control, public emergency/disaster, etc

2. Ventilation and Air Quality

The standard acceptable level of air exchange 10-20 room air exchanges per hour with fresh air. To ensure proper function, air handler maintenance is performed in the spring and fall of each year and air filters are changed at least twice a month.

3. Temperature and Humidity

Temperatures are maintained between 60 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Relative humidity ranges from 30% to 70%.

Adjustments in temperature and humidity due to individual breed, hair coat, medical condition, and age are made as needed. This is typically accomplished by relocating the animal, adjusting the thermostat, and providing fans or warmer bedding materials.

4. Drainage

Drains function properly to readily remove waste and water from dog kennels and from all other rooms of the shelter.

5. Lighting

Facilities should be designed to offer as much natural light as possible, but when artificial light is the only source it should approximate natural light in composition, duration, and intensity. Periods of darkness are equally important and should mimic as closely as possible the natural pattern of sleep. Lighting is provided in each animal room during the day and turned off at the end of the day to mimic natural light cycles.

6. Noise Control

Loud and sudden noises can cause stress to shelter animals and staff. The following steps to help reduce noise and are taken wherever possible:

- Housing dogs and cats in separate areas, ideally with no ability for either species to hear one another.
- Adjusting the public address system in each animal room to the lowest decibel level practical.
- Educating the staff and public about the need to speak softly around the animals.
- Reducing dog barking by providing enrichment for the dogs.
- Maintaining all mechanical equipment in good working order to reduce noise and vibration.

7. Emergency Equipment

An up-to-date list of necessary safety and emergency equipment is maintained by the Animal Care Manager at all times. The Animal Care Manager is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate equipment is available, maintained in good working order, and stored in the proper location when not in use. The Animal Care Manager is also responsible for ensuring that all necessary staff and volunteers are properly trained to handle and use the equipment. Emergency drills are conducted on a regular basis and a record is made and stored that describes the event, the outcome of the drill, and any resulting actions that are needed.

8. Standard Enclosure Items

The following standard enclosure items are in every cage unless specified otherwise by a staff veterinarian:

- Appropriately sized clean water and food bowls;
- Clean bedding;
- Elevated resting place;
- Assigned carriers for cats (stored in, above or near each cage); and
- Appropriately sized and clean litter boxes for cats.

9. Feeding and Watering

Dogs and cats are fed two times daily with dry food according to age and weight. Kittens under 12 weeks of age are given constant access to dry food. Canned food is provided to puppies (10 weeks and younger), two times daily for felines, nursing mothers, and other dogs as directed by a staff veterinarian. Feeding schedules and special diets are prescribed by the staff veterinarian as needed. Clean water is available at all times unless directed otherwise by a staff veterinarian.

10. Enrichment

Enrichment items are defined as items or actions that stimulate normal behavior and reduce stress and boredom.

Enrichment items are provided to all animals unless otherwise prescribed by a staff veterinarian. All new enrichment items must be approved by the Veterinary Medical Director. Once approved, the item can be used, as needed, by Animal Care staff.

Play Groups for the dogs in the shelter are used as part of a comprehensive enrichment program to provide an outlet for energy and promote positive social interactions. The purpose of this program is to allow dogs to express normal social behavior and for staff to observe the dogs' interactions. There are many benefits of play groups, including reduction in stress, barrier reactivity and on-leash reactivity. Playgroups also improve adoptions and our rescue partners accepting animals into their programs. Play Groups are overseen by the Enrichment Coordinator and guidelines for playgroups follow Aimee Sadler's "Success through Socialization" program.

Dogs selected to participate in play groups must be at least 5 months old, not on medications for upper respiratory infection, and screened prior to entering the yard for signs of aggression. Dogs are admitted at the discretion of the Play Group leader based on their knowledge of the dog's behavior and comfort level.

B. EXOTICS

Animals brought to BARCS that are not dogs or cats are hereafter referred to as exotics. This category includes, but is not limited to, birds, gerbils, hamsters, ferrets, rabbits, lizards, snakes, opossums, turtles, raccoons, squirrels, and fish.

In most cases, exotics are housed in the facility for less than 72 hours. A staff veterinarian or the Veterinary Technician Manager will determine all aspects of care for exotics, including cage size, temperature, humidity, feeding, and other care decisions. The Program Manager maintains a contact list of experts for exotics.

II. CAGE INFORMATION

Every cage contains a cage card detailing basic information about each animal occupying the cage, including name, identification number, breed, age, gender, spay/neuter status, date of intake, reason for intake, physical description, and cage number.

Every dog cage also contains a behavior and feeding chart that is used to monitor the animal on a daily basis, as well as enrichment charts used to track the enrichment the animal receives throughout a given day. For cats, these charts are kept in a binder in their respective cat room.

Additional cage signs may be used to provide essential information regarding medical condition, behavioral concerns, handling notifications, or the animal's status, including availability for adoption, pending investigations, and any quarantine information. The information on these signs supersedes any other cage cards.

III. SANITATION

This document uses the word "sanitation" to mean a combination of cleaning and disinfection. BARCS maintains sanitary conditions to prevent the transfer of disease, which could result in an outbreak that could potentially lead to the closure of a portion or all of the facility. Proper sanitation is the foundation of every preventative medicine program.

A. DEFINITIONS

- 1. Cleaning** - The act of physically removing organic matter (feces, urine, food particles, etc). An area that has been cleaned should look physically and visibly free from debris. However, harmful pathogens may still be present after cleaning.
- 2. Disinfection** - The process of killing pathogens in a given area.
- 3. Sterilization** - The killing of all microbes; this is what is done for surgical instruments.

B. PROCEDURES

1. Shelter in General

All common area floors are swept and disinfected every morning and throughout the day as needed, using disinfectants approved by the Veterinary Medical Director. Urination or defecation “accidents” on common area floors are cleaned up and disinfected immediately.

Garbage, trash, and recycling are placed in appropriate bins and removed at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed.

2. Dog Cages

Dog cages are fully cleaned and disinfected every day, with the animal removed from the cage. All enclosure items, with the exception of Kuranda beds, are replaced daily. Kuranda beds are cleaned with the cage.

After the initial cleaning, dog cages are spot cleaned throughout the day as needed.

The cages of healthy puppies are cleaned first, followed by healthy dogs, sick puppies, and sick dogs.

Dog cages that house a seriously ill animal with an infectious disease are cleaned per specific guidelines set by the Veterinary Medical Director; this often includes multiple disinfections. This work may be done with the assistance of cat staff to minimize the potential for disease transfer to other dogs within the shelter.

Floors in dog areas are swept and disinfected each day.

3. Cat Cages

Cat cages are spot-cleaned daily. Cats are left in cages during cleaning when possible. New litter is provided and food and water bowls are cleaned and refilled. If the bedding is not soiled or wet, it is shaken out and reused. The cage and perches are wiped clean with a paper towel without bleach or special cleansers. In some cases, additional cleaning of the cage may be required and the cat may be removed.

After the initial cleaning, litter boxes and/or cages are spot-cleaned as necessary throughout the day.

All cat cages are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to placement of a new cat.

The cages of healthy kittens are cleaned first, followed by healthy cats, sick kittens, and sick cats.

Cat cages that house animals with a known infectious disease are cleaned as prescribed by the Veterinary Medical Director. This may require multiple disinfections and the assistance of the dog staff to minimize the possibility of disease transfer to other cats in the facility.

Floors in cat areas are swept and disinfected each day and throughout the day as needed.

4. Surgical Areas

All surgical areas, including the prep area, surgical tables, and the recovery area are fully cleaned and disinfected daily. Floors are swept and disinfected each morning before starting surgery, and throughout the day as needed.

Surgical instruments are cleaned and then sterilized after each usage.

5. Rainbow Room

All areas of the Rainbow Room, including tables and counters, are fully cleaned and disinfected daily. Floors are swept and disinfected each morning, and throughout the day as needed.

6. Intake Rooms

Intake rooms are cleared of any used carriers, boxes, and crates each evening. All counters and cat cages are fully cleaned and disinfected daily. The intake area for dogs is cleaned and disinfected between each dog. Floors are swept and disinfected each morning and throughout the day as needed.

Intake equipment, including cages, is cleaned and disinfected after each usage.

7. Receiving Area

The receiving area is cleared of any used carriers, boxes, and crates each evening. All counters and shelves are fully cleaned and disinfected daily. Floors are swept and disinfected throughout the day as needed and at the end of each day. Any urine or feces on floors or counters is cleaned up and disinfected immediately.

8. Laundry Room

Laundry is washed and dried, folded, and stored throughout the day. Any unfinished laundry at the end of the day is stored in sealed hampers or bagged and sealed.

9. Crates and Carriers

Occupied crates and carriers used for temporary housing of animals are spot cleaned as needed. All crates and carriers are fully cleaned and disinfected prior to being used for a new animal. Crates and carriers used for animals carrying infectious disease are marked appropriately and are disinfected three times.

10. Outdoor Areas

Feces are picked up immediately and placed in outside, lined trash cans. These cans are bagged daily and taken to the dumpster.

Certain outdoor areas may be temporarily closed per directives from a staff veterinarian.

11. 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 arrives at work in clean clothes and has 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 the Veterinary Medical Director.

C. PEST AND RODENT CONTROL**1. Exterminators**

Regular extermination services, using safe and humane methods, are performed twice each month.

All humane rodent traps will be checked and emptied daily.

2. Animal Food

Dog food in cages is picked up before the shelter closes each night, with the exception of food for puppies and nursing mothers.

Dishes and enrichment items brought to the kitchen for washing are emptied of all food and organic matter before being placed on counters. All food is stored in sealed containers, including dog and cat treats.

3. Garbage and Trash

All non-recyclable refuse, is collected and put in trash bags each evening. All garbage and trash bags are removed from the building prior to closing.

IV. INTAKE PROCEDURES

Upon arrival, dogs are placed in kennel runs and cats (not selected for Trap Neuter Return, TNR) are placed in a cat suite, if the intake process has been completed or into a temporary cage until the intake process is completed. Until the intake process is completed, animals that Animal Control brings in that are in transport carriers are moved to temporary intake cages within two hours of arrival. A temporary cage is large enough to allow the animal to lie in a rested position, easily stand, and have access to water and food bowls and a litter pan as needed. All animals are provided water immediately upon arrival. Animals less than four months of age are provided food immediately upon arrival, and animals over four months are provided food within two hours of arrival. Dogs that Animal Control brings in overnight and that are placed in temporary cages are walked when staff arrives in the morning. The intake process is completed within 24 hours and the animal is moved from the temporary cage to kennel runs and cat suites as appropriate.

A. DOGS AND CATS

An animal's general physical condition is evaluated upon arrival and any emergency medical issues are addressed immediately. The animal is weighed, the age is estimated, and its nutritional needs are determined. Each animal is checked for identification: e.g. microchip, tattoo, tags, etc. The animal is vaccinated and parasite controls are administered. The general behavior of the animal is also assessed. A record is established in the BARCS database for the animal and all information is entered immediately. Housing is assigned and entered into the BARCS database and a kennel card specifically identifying that animal is posted on the cage.

B. EXOTICS

An animal's general physical condition is first evaluated and emergency medical issues are addressed immediately upon arrival. The physical and nutritional needs are assessed, and the animal is assigned appropriate housing. If proper housing and/or care cannot be provided to the animal by BARCS, every attempt is made to place the animal with a rescue, zoo, or aquarium immediately.

C. FERAL AND COMMUNITY CATS

Cats are evaluated upon arrival by a manager, vet tech, or BARCS community cat team to determine eligibility for the Trap Neuter Return (TNR) program. These cats must appear healthy, over 3 pounds and 3 months of age, of good body weight and have lived outdoors. Cats that are eligible for the program are placed into cat traps that are lined with newspaper, given food and water and placed in the Community Cats trailer. The cats are scheduled for surgery as soon as possible. Cats that have minor medical conditions may be held and treated prior to scheduling surgery and return.

V. ANIMAL HANDLING

A. 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. 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. Thus, all animal handlers are trained in proper restraint with emphasis on how to use the minimum amount of restraint required.

B. EQUIPMENT

Examples of equipment used for animal restraint are as follows: leashes, collars, muzzles, control poles (used for dogs only), towels, squeeze cages, traps, cat nets, pole syringes, wall rings, tie-outs, and cat gloves.

C. EVENTS

Animal handlers at events are required to complete the appropriate animal training (dog walking and/or cat socialization training) as well as reading and signing the events training materials. Each handler is approved for independent animal handling at events.

D. DOG WALKING

Dog walkers are required to complete dog walking training and be approved for independent dog walking.

E. CAT SOCIALIZING

Cat handlers are required to complete cat socialization training and be approved for independent cat handling.

F. PUBLIC INTERACTION

Persons handling animals and interacting with the public at the shelter 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. 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.

G. 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 through the Community Cat Program, while attempting to locate the caretaker, provide medical treatment, or find a suitable barn placement. Feral cats that cannot be released due to health, or be safely housed or handled for treatment, may be euthanized.

H. 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. BARCS staff and volunteers monitor each animal's behavior daily through all types of interactions.

J. DANGEROUS ANIMALS

BARCS goes 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, venomous snakes, reptiles, various types of wildlife or exotic animals, and animals that are anticipated to be aggressive. Special housing considerations are given to these animals and only specially trained staff is allowed to handle them.

Every effort is made to transfer exotic animals and wildlife to a facility with expertise in their handling and care as quickly as possible.

Animals with a known bite history are housed in dog or cat bite quarantine rooms, where only assigned staff can clean, feed, and handle them. Animals displaying threatening or dangerous behaviors on intake may be placed in the general population with special precautions and appropriate signage in order to give them time to settle in.

Dogs known to be highly aggressive are housed in such a way that they can be shifted from one cage to another using a shift door, thus preventing the possibility of the dog getting loose and minimizing danger to staff handling these animals. Only qualified staff handles these animals.

BARCS will not knowingly place an animal with aggressive tendencies or that has been deemed dangerous or vicious into the adoption program.

VI. VETERINARY CARE

A. PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE

The Medical Staff focuses on the prevention of disease and rapid diagnosis and treatment of ill and potentially contagious animals. Preventative measures are accomplished through the use of appropriate vaccination protocols, internal and external parasite control, and nutritional support (proper nutrition for stage and state of the animal). All medical protocols are carried out by Veterinarian Technicians under the direction of the Veterinary Medical Director. Licensed veterinarians perform complete physical examinations and surgeries, as well as prescribe medications and nutritional changes to diet. Veterinarian Technicians, however, are trained and able to make initial assessments of animal condition, convey this information to a staff veterinarian, and administer care as prescribed by that veterinarian.

Individual animals are assessed for their state of health and nutritional status, as well as the population as a whole. Individual animals, groups of animals, and whole rooms may be placed under quarantine. The decision to quarantine a room and the length of quarantine are made under the direct supervision of a staff veterinarian and overseen by the Veterinary Medical Director. The population is evaluated daily for contagious and infectious diseases and the decisions made are based on individual as well as population needs.

Emergencies are evaluated as quickly as possible. Animals may be treated at the shelter, humanely euthanized, or sent to a participating Franky Fund hospital.

Precautions taken to control the spread of disease include:

- Disposable gloves are worn when touching animals and/or hands are washed after touching an animal and before touching another animal. This decreases the risk of disease transmission from fomites, which are objects that are able to transmit infectious organisms (e.g. parasites, bacteria, viruses, fungi) from one animal to another; they may include toys, food and water bowls, hair, and clothing, to name a few.
- Disposable protective gear such as gowns are worn and changed between handling each ill animal. Lint rollers are used on all clothing that may make contact or exposed to the fur of an animal before touching another animal.
- Dogs on medication for infectious illness (such as kennel cough) are walked last and only in a designated area.
- When socializing cats with infectious disease (such as upper respiratory tract infection), the encounter takes place in the cat's cage instead of the socializing room.
- All articles in cages that are not disposable are disinfected as well as washed before being placed in another cage.

- Bins used in rooms (garbage cans, litter cans) are disinfected regularly.
- Only disposable litter boxes are used. They are disposed of in sealed garbage bags (unless otherwise directed by a staff veterinarian).
- Food and water bowls and enrichment items are washed and disinfected as soon as they enter the kitchen area.

B. DISEASE OUTBREAKS

When a disease outbreak occurs in the shelter, the Veterinary Medical Director may decide to quarantine a room. If the outbreak cannot be contained to one or two rooms, the Veterinary Medical Director, in consultation with the Executive Director, decides whether to close the shelter, at least for that species. Closing the shelter to a certain species means that Animal Control cannot bring any animal of that species to BARCS, except for the purpose of euthanasia, and that BARCS will not accept any surrenders or strays of that species. In such situations, BARCS attempts to work with other area shelters and rescues to enlist their help so owners that must surrender animals during this time period are able to do so. When a room is closed for quarantine, no one except medical and designated cleaning staff will be allowed in that room. Protective outerwear is worn in these rooms. All items removed from a quarantined room, such as waste materials, are placed into a garbage bag which is sealed and immediately brought to the dumpster outside of the shelter. Quarantine rooms use only disposable materials (bowls, towels, etc.).

VII. SURGERY

In most cases, dogs and cats having surgery at BARCS are fasted overnight prior to surgery. Exceptions include emergency surgery, surgery performed on puppies and kittens, and other situations deemed appropriate by the Staff Veterinarian. In preparation for surgery, the animals are moved to enclosures reserved for surgical patients, and are scanned again for a microchip. The animals are given premedication which includes analgesia and sedation; the actual drugs vary according to species and the individual animal. An induction agent is given to dogs that are then intubated and placed on gas anesthesia. Cats are generally given gas anesthesia by mask or injectable anesthetics. The animal is then prepared for surgery. Additional pain medication may be given as prescribed by the veterinarian. The weight of the animal, any findings during the physical exam, doses of medications and the surgical procedure performed are recorded for each animal and entered into the BARCS database. All controlled substances and the amount used are recorded in the controlled substance log book. Animals wake up in the surgical room and are offered a small amount of food when surgical staff deems appropriate. Post-operative care instructions, along with any medications prescribed, are sent home with adopted animals. Animals staying at BARCS receive a daily post-operative check for one week. Dogs and cats are spayed or neutered when they weigh two pounds or more. Animals that are pregnant, are in heat, have a pyometra, or have a mild upper respiratory infection may still undergo anesthesia and surgery at the discretion of the surgeon.

VIII. EUTHANASIA

A. POLICY

Euthanasia is performed at BARCS as a last resort and in a humane manner as needed to maintain a manageable population of healthy, treatable, and adoptable animals.

No more than three medical and animal care staff members that are certified, or trained, in euthanasia to assist are allowed to be present during the euthanasia process. This is to ensure a smooth and stress-free environment for the animal as well as the person(s) performing euthanasia.

The Executive Director may make special exceptions to this policy at his or her discretion.

B. SELECTION

Each animal is evaluated on an individual basis for its potential to be reunited with its owner or participation in BARCS' adoption, foster, rescue programs, community cat program, barn program, working cat program, or other live release options. Those animals unable to participate in any of these programs or that cannot be reunited with their owners are considered for euthanasia.

If an animal is to be euthanized, one of the following five Asilomar categories is entered into the BARCS database for tracking purposes: Healthy (H), Treatable-Rehabilitatable (TR), Treatable-Manageable (TM), Unhealthy-Untreatable (UU), or Owner Requested (ORE). When animals must be identified for euthanasia to make space available in the shelter, selection is based on the potential for both treatment and adoption for that specific animal as compared to the rest of the population. Thus the UU animals are selected first, followed by TM animals. Those in the categories of TR and H are the last to be selected and only if all other live outcome options have been exhausted.

Lastly, holding periods, as required by law, are considered:

- All animals without a known owner are held for 72 hours before a disposition is decided, Exceptions apply to the following:
 - Animals under 12 weeks of age may be placed into homes immediately
 - Animals experiencing pain and suffering, and are not able to be treated, may be humanely euthanized
 - Ear tipped cats may be returned to their community immediately
 - Outdoor cats may be altered, vaccinated, ear tipped, and returned to their community immediately
- Bite quarantine animals are held for a minimum of 10 days or until Animal Control completes its investigations.
- Animal Control investigations require various hold periods.

C. PROCEDURES

1. Training/Certification

Employees performing euthanasia are trained and certified through an approved organization. Once this training is completed, the employee is then supervised in his or her ability to humanely perform the euthanasia. The employee then undergoes a final evaluation before receiving approval and certification by the Veterinary Medical Director.

2. Environment

The room in which euthanasia takes place is clean and private and maintained as a stress-free environment. Only one euthanasia is performed at a time. Only one animal is in the euthanasia room at a time so that euthanasia is performed in a quiet, calm environment.

3. Microchip Scan

All animals are scanned upon entry to the shelter for microchips in an effort to identify them. Because these technologies are imperfect, scans are also performed during the medical intake process, prior to spay/neuter surgery and prior to any disposition including adoption, return to owner, and transfers to rescues. If euthanasia is elected, the previously unidentified animals are rescanned before being euthanized (by two different staff members) for the presence of a microchip.

4. Drugs

Only drugs approved by the Veterinary Medical Director are used for euthanasia. An animal may be sedated before injecting the euthanasia solution in order to provide sedation, analgesia, and anesthesia. Euthanasia solution, which is a barbiturate, is given in a vein once the animal is calm and sedated or in the heart or the peritoneum. If the intracardiac route is chosen, euthanasia does not take place until the animal is in a comatose state.

5. Record Keeping

Records for each euthanized animal are kept in a locked file cabinet for a designated period of time.

IX. ADOPTIONS

All animals adopted from BARCS are eight weeks of age or older, current on vaccinations, microchipped and altered. The goal of the BARCS adoption program is to place as many animals as possible into suitable homes and prepare adopters for the responsibilities of pet ownership. This is accomplished by screening all potential adopters for past Animal Control violations, reviewing adopters' histories in the BARCS database, requiring identification and proof of address, and requiring adopters to be at least 18 years of age. Potential adopters complete an application which is used to determine eligibility for adoption and to provide information to help tailor an individual adoption class. An adoption class is where each adopter meets with an adoption counselor to discuss any known behavior and medical knowledge of the animal(s), care of their new pet(s), and acclimation into the new home, and to answer any questions prior to finalizing the adoption. The adoption counselor also goes over all medical history for the pet including vaccinations, medications, and follow-up care. Animals are surgically altered prior to leaving the shelter unless determined unfit for surgery by a staff veterinarian. If an animal is not able to be altered prior to going home, the adoption counselor will make an appointment for the animal to come back at a later date for surgery and will then follow up on that animal's progress until it is altered. Educational handouts, medical history, and an adoption agreement are provided to the adopter.

BARCS utilizes adoption promotions throughout the year to increase public awareness and encourage responsible people to adopt. The adoption program is evaluated on a periodic basis to ensure the needs of the animals and the adopting community is met.

X. VISITORS

All visitors to BARCS are directed and/or supervised through the building by a staff member or trained volunteer to maximize safety of both people and animals. Visitors may be here for a variety of reasons, including facility repairs or contract work, group tours, adoptions, rescues, and redemptions. Staff and volunteers use this time with visitors as an educational opportunity, to convey information about BARCS and the adoption or redemption process, and to answer any questions visitors may have.

XI. FOSTER CARE

BARCS manages a foster care program in which certain animals are taken into homes temporarily rather than remaining in the shelter. 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 adoption, providing bottle feeding if necessary, socialization, and special attention.
2. Provide special care to injured and/or sick animals until they heal and become adoptable.

3. Make space for other animals at the shelter.

Animals available for fostering are identified by the Foster Coordinator or managerial staff. All foster parents are pre-screened and sign contracts with BARCS prior to housing any animals. Throughout the foster period, the foster parent must maintain contact with the shelter, bring the animal(s) in for all scheduled vaccines and medical treatments, and communicate with shelter 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 shelter, the foster parent must bring the animal(s) to at least one BARCS events each month and assist with placing the animal in a new home. Except for extraordinary situations, no foster placement will last longer than three months.

Animals placed in foster care are provided the same medical care as those housed at the shelter. BARCS is 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. BARCS is responsible for following up on all foster placements and maintaining the follow-up information in the BARCS database. A foster placement may be terminated at any time by BARCS, and foster animals that have been returned to the shelter are subject to the same space limitations and euthanasia criteria as all other shelter animals.

XII. ANIMAL HOLDS

Animals arriving at the shelter are subject to various State and City requirements as to the length of time they must be held prior to being made available for adoption.

1. STRAY ANIMALS

Impounded stray animals are held for 72 hours. The day the animal arrives at the shelter, unless its prior to operating, and days the shelter is closed to the public do not count for purposes of the holding period. After 72 hours, the animal becomes property of the shelter and thus may be placed up for adoption, transferred to another organization, or humanely euthanized.

2. OWNER-SURRENDERED ANIMALS

Owner-surrendered animals are not subject to a required holding period. When an owner surrenders an animal, he or she immediately relinquishes all rights to the animal and the animal may be immediately placed up for adoption, transferred to another organization, or humanely euthanized.

3. ANIMALS LEFT BEHIND AFTER EVICTIONS

Animals left behind when owners are evicted from their homes are considered to be property of the landlord. When signed over by the landlord, they may be treated as owner-surrendered animals. If the animal is not signed over by the landlord, or if the manager chooses to hold the animal based on its circumstances, the animal will be treated as a stray animal.

4. INVESTIGATIONS

Some animals are the subject of investigations by Animal Control or the police for various reasons (suspicions of cruelty, abuse, neglect, fighting, etc.). The amount of time an animal is held varies as investigations are conducted and completed. BARCS cares for these animals during the investigation period, and the animals are released when they are no longer needed as evidence in a case.

5. BITE QUARANTINE AND DANGEROUS ANIMAL HEARINGS

BARCS follows state and city regulations for animals that have bitten a person or another animal and are suspected of being a potentially dangerous animal or rabies carrier. Animals that have bitten must be quarantined for 10 days at home or at the shelter as directed by Animal Control. If an owned animal that has bitten is quarantined at the shelter, the minimum holding period is 10 days from the day of the bite but the holding period may be longer as it will not be lifted until the investigation is completed by Animal Control. If the animal is deemed potentially dangerous or vicious by Animal Control, Animal Control will hold a hearing and the animal will remain under quarantine until the hearing is completed. If the animal that has bitten is a stray animal and no owner is identified within 72 hours, the animal may be euthanized and sent for rabies testing at the discretion of the Staff Veterinarian, Executive Director, Director of Operations, Managerial Staff, or Animal Control Director.

Only trained and approved staff are allowed access to quarantined animals; this includes bite cases as well as animals quarantined for rabies evaluation and/or infectious disease. Limited personnel access is mandatory to safeguard others from potential injury (bite, scratch, or infectious disease) as well as to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

6. EMERGENCY HOLD

BARCS does not offer regular boarding to the public due to space constraints at the shelter; however, during an emergency (natural disaster, fire, flooding, domestic violence situation, etc.), short-term holding in temporary cages may be provided on a case by case basis as determined by the Executive Director or his or her designee. Owners are encouraged to utilize other resources and find immediate alternatives for housing.

7. CONDITIONAL RELEASE

Animals released to an owner may have a conditional release requirement. This means the Veterinary Medical Director may require the owner to seek some type of medical care follow-up with their regular veterinarian and provide proof of completion to BARCS. Conditional Releases are also set by Animal Control for things like mandatory spay/neuter, housing repair, etc. If any of these requirements are not met, Animal Control will re-impound the animal.

XIII. PERSONAL HEALTH

A. STAFF VACCINATION

All high risk staff handling animals at BARCS must be vaccinated against rabies. It is recommended that all staff be current on tetanus and talk to their personal physicians for further recommendations on rabies vaccinations. Vaccinations may be administered by the Baltimore City Health Department or an individual's personal physician. To ensure that staff maintains effective protection against rabies, blood is drawn every two years after the initial vaccination and titers are determined by the Baltimore City Health Department. Individuals with non-protective titers require re-vaccination. Tetanus vaccines must be given every ten years. Staff exposed to either rabies or tetanus must seek immediate medical attention and may require re-vaccination.

B. ZOONOSIS

Zoonotic diseases are those that can be transmitted by non-human animals to humans. There is the potential for the transmission of zoonotic diseases at any animal shelter. Staff is therefore required to attend yearly training provided by BARCS' Veterinary Medical Director on zoonotic disease where emphasis is placed on minimizing risk and prevention of infection. Zoonotic diseases that are commonly of concern at shelters like BARCS are rabies, intestinal parasites, leptosporosis, cat scratch disease, ringworm, and sarcoptic mange among others.

The most effective way to decrease the risk of zoonotic disease caused by bite or scratch wounds is to immediately recognize potentially dangerous animals. Only those staff qualified to work with such animals may

interact with them. Any animal that is fearful or in pain can potentially bite, scratch, or otherwise injure a person or another animal. To minimize the risk of injury, all animal care staff and volunteers must be adequately trained in handling dogs and cats, and be able to recognize the signs of potentially dangerous behavior.

Additionally, hand washing is extremely important in preventing transmission of disease. All staff, volunteers, and visitors must wash their hands thoroughly after touching any animal at the shelter. Whenever possible, staff should wear disposable gloves when handling animals and their waste products. Those staff performing such tasks as preparing animals for rabies examination must wear protective eye and face wear as well.

Food and beverages are not to be consumed in animal areas. Human food items and dishes are not housed in the same sink as dog or cat dishes and litter boxes. Human food must not be stored in the same refrigerator as animal food or biologics/medications.

The risk of disease outbreak at BARCS is minimized by providing animals with medications to eliminate internal and external parasites as well as vaccinations against specific diseases. These tools are vital to protect the health of shelter staff, volunteers, and visitors. Immuno-suppressed humans are at an increased risk for infection by zoonotic diseases. These individuals are strongly advised to discuss their working/volunteering at an animal shelter with their human medical care provider. In most cases, work can be found that is helpful for BARCS but safe for the individual.

C. NOISE PROTECTION

Ear plugs are available to staff and volunteers. Ear plugs are encouraged when working in areas of high noise.

D. REPORTING INJURIES

All injuries that occur at BARCS, or while working on behalf of BARCS, must be reported immediately to a supervisor. This includes any bite, scratch, or other injury that occurs. An incident report will be filled out and that person will be advised to seek help from a human medical doctor.

XIV. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In the event of an emergency situation at BARCS, every effort is made to protect all staff, volunteers, and animals. The Executive Director (or his or her designee) implements the incident command emergency response structure when appropriate. When this occurs, the Executive Director is responsible for all decisions regarding the emergency response, and maintains contact with the Mayor's emergency preparedness team, local weather advisory groups, the board of directors, and staff and volunteers. In addition, the Executive Director informs the public of the shelter closing as well as accessibility to shelter animals and/ or housing of animals; this information will be conveyed through the City of Baltimore's 311 system, the shelter's voicemail, and social media.

In preparation for a weather-related emergency, the building is secured by placing sand bags around all doorways (if flooding is a concern), closing all windows and internal and external doors, closing window blinds, turning off all computers, unplugging electrical devices, and ensuring clean towels and blankets are on hand. The property is secured by closing and locking all play yard gates and bringing all supplies and toys inside. All trash cans and other supplies around the building are brought into the shelter and stored in the garage as appropriate. The shelter maintains a working generator at all times.

When necessary, all animals are placed into transport cages and evacuated to a secondary location where temporary housing is established. The shelter's animals are prepared for evacuation by fitting collars and labeled neck bands on

all dogs and fitting labeled neck bands on all cats. Staff and volunteers will remain at the off-site location to monitor and care for the animals until it is determined by the incident commander that it is safe to return to BARCS.

In some cases, such as minor flooding, a partial evacuation may be appropriate. In such cases, BARCS will seek overnight foster parents to remove as many animals as possible. Any remaining shelter cats will be moved to the top cages. Temporary crates will be set up in the conference room and hallways to remove dogs from drainage areas. Staff will remain at the shelter during the event to care for the animals.

Appendix A: Future Goals for Standards of Care

BARCS strives to provide the best care for animals and the best environment for its staff, volunteers, and visitors. BARCS recognizes the need to continue to make improvements and, as such, seeks resources, including funding, on a continual basis in an effort to make positive changes at the shelter. The following is a list of goals identified by a committee of staff, volunteers, and board members. This list will evolve as resources are obtained, items are achieved, and new technologies become available.

STAFFING

Increase overall staffing to grow and improve all programs. See Appendix B for goal staffing levels and hours of operation.

ANIMAL HOUSING

In the current shelter building, replace HVAC systems, replace existing public announcement system, and improve current phone system, and create separate housing for exotic animals.

As identified in a needs assessment prepared in 2007 examining the possibility of a new shelter building: Larger dog runs that do not face each other, indoor/outdoor runs for dogs, larger individual cat cages and free roaming cat rooms, increased number of animal rooms with fewer animals per room, natural lighting in all rooms, modernized ventilation and air quality controls.

SANITATION

Increase staffing in Animal Care Department in order to complete cleaning prior to opening the shelter and better maintain environment throughout the day. Install shift doors in all dog cages and sinks in every animal room, replace all cat cages with cages on wheels, and double the capacity of laundry room equipment.

INTAKE PROCEDURES

Increase staffing in Medical Department to allow the completion of the intake process immediately upon arrival (which requires overnight staffing and additional technicians on duty 24 hours), provide additional medical treatment, provide assistance to the staff veterinarians, and have the ability to bathe and groom incoming animals as directed by staff veterinarians.

SURGERY

Larger surgery suite with pre and post op areas that are private and have separate recovery and holding areas for dogs and cats, public animals, and community cats.

ADOPTION PROGRAM

Increase staffing in the Program, Customer Service, Medical, and Animal Care Departments to increase the speed and efficiency of the adoption process, which will make cages available more quickly to newly arriving animals. Conduct follow-up on all adopted animals to assist with keeping the animals in their new homes.

MATCHMAKING

Design building and cages to keep visitors safe without requiring a staff or volunteer escort.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Replace all cat cages with suite style cages on wheels. Relocate the shelter to a location that is less prone to flooding.

Appendix B: Organizational Chart

