

## **Whatcom Humane Society**

### **Tips and Tricks for Dog TLC (by volunteers for volunteers)**

#### **TIPS FOR WALKING DOGS:**

- 1) When you are going to take out a dog, make sure you feel **very comfortable** with that dog. If you feel ANY hesitation, find another dog.
- 2) When preparing to take a dog out, open up the poop bags. This will prevent you from fighting to open the bags when you are holding the dog.
- 3) If a dog is **mouthy**, but not treat motivated, consider picking up and bringing a rope toy from the kitchen on your walk to give the dog something else to mouth. Some dogs like to have a "job", so having the dog carry a ball also might work.
- 4) If you have a dog that tends to be reactive with other dogs when walking down the adoption corridor, pick up a pre-made Kong with peanut butter and treats from the kitchen when returning the dog to his kennel. Use the Kong as a lure by holding it in front of the dog's nose, directing him back to his kennel. This is also a useful tool to get dogs reluctant to go back into their kennel to go in willingly.
- 5) If you have a dog that is reactive when it sees other dogs, give your dog lots of little treats to distract your dog. The treats also help make that interaction a more positive experience (seeing another dog becomes a positive experience because your dog gets a treat each time leading to a less reactive dog each time).
- 6) For dogs toward the far end of the available kennels, you can take them out via the stray hallway rather than walking past all of the other adoptable dogs. This is especially important for safety when there are members of the public present.
- 7) When exiting through the gate by the outside stray yard, keep your dog on a short leash on the side away from the dog in the yard to prevent fence fighting. Have treats ready. If there is a very reactive dog in the yard and you are walking a dog-reactive dog, wait until that dog is put away—you may need to take another walk while you wait.
- 8) If there is a 2nd volunteer walking dogs, make sure that you keep your distance from each other so there aren't any reactions from the dogs.
- 9) When doing TLC with a dog, grab a brush from the grooming room. We need to do more brushing of the dogs since we no longer have a groomer. Let's keep the dogs looking great!! When done, place the used brush by the sink in the Food Prep area to be sanitized before the next use.
- 10) Always RECORD any events that happen on the **green sheet** notes so that other volunteers can see them. That way we all know what has worked or not worked for specific dogs, and what to watch out for. This is the only way we can effectively communicate. Always read the notes before you take out a dog that you have not walked for a day or two to help you stay safe.

- 11) Use OBJECTIVE language rather than subjective on the green sheets to describe behavior. For example, instead of saying the dog was reactive (putting a label on their behavior), describe what the dog actually did, i.e. the dog barked and lunged when it saw another dog.

#### **TIPS FOR ENTERING/EXITING KENNELS:**

- 1) When getting dogs in or out of the kennel, use your body to block them from escaping. With the smaller dogs, kneel down and get a hold of their collar and back them up into the kennel and shut the door behind you. You can also use treats to throw on the floor for treat-motivated dogs to get them away from the door.
- 2) If you have a dog that refuses to go back in his kennel after a walk, try to spend a long time exercising the dog and time his return to the kennel when his morning (7-8:00 am) or afternoon meal (3-4:00 pm) will be waiting in his kennel. You can also ask for help from Animal care staff to return him to his kennel if needed.
- 3) Some dogs are **escape artists** and are very fast at eating a treat that you have thrown on the ground and get to the door before you. Consider throwing several treats outside the dog's doggie door to give you more time. You can also try attaching the leash to just his collar in the Get Acquainted room and when you get to the kennel, toss the cookies far into the kennel then unclip his leash and close the door behind him without ever entering the kennel.
- 4) If the padlocks on the outside doors to kennels are locked, you can get the key from the front desk. If the door is locked when you get the dog out, remember to lock it again when you're finished.
- 5) If you are unfamiliar with a dog, a good way to allow them to "get to know you" a little bit before entering the kennel is by going to the outside kennel viewing area and letting the dog see you and sniff you through the gate. Remember to avoid direct eye contact and stand sideways. You can bend down (still sideways to the gate) and push treats under. This can be especially helpful for shy/fearful dogs.

#### **PLAY YARD TIPS:**

- 1) Always have plenty of treats and at least TWO balls or toys when playing with a dog in the exercise yard. When a dog is ball-obsessed, it's best to have a ball ready to throw as soon as s/he drops the other one--so that you can pick up the dropped one safely. **DO NOT TAKE A BALL FROM UNDER THE DOG'S NOSE. YOU MAY ACCIDENTALLY GET BITTEN!!!**
- 2) If there are members of the public in one of the exercise yards with a shelter dog, do not use the other yard. It's best to let them have uninterrupted time with the dog they're getting to know, and not subject them to any distractions.
- 3) If there is another volunteer in one of the exercise yards with a dog, ask the volunteer if it's okay to go into the other exercise yard with your dog. Sometimes a volunteer will know that those two dogs don't get along, and it's better to be safe than sorry. Experienced volunteers know not to approach the exercise yard if a reactive dog is in the other yard.

- 4) If there's another dog in the adjoining play yard and you don't know how the dog you are with will react, attach a leash to the dog's collar (if you are already in the play yard) or leave on the leash and harness if just entering. That way, if they start fence fighting you can pull your dog away from the fence and exit without having to grab the dog's collar and risk getting bitten (over excited dogs will sometimes redirect their excitement onto whatever is closest (fence, person etc) in the form of a bite. It's not uncommon).
- 5) When walking smaller dogs, watch for our resident red tail hawk. He likes to fly around you, checking out his dinner. **Avoid the play yard.**

#### **EARLY MORNING TIPS:**

- 1) If you are walking dogs in the morning when the dogs are in the back of their kennels, count the kennels so that you put the dog back in the correct one (there are no names on the backs of the kennels). You can also move the padlock onto the door to make it easier to remember the correct kennel. Walk the dogs quickly past the others to decrease reactivity.
- 2) If the tech is cleaning the front of the kennels, you can bring the dogs that are closer to the ends out for a walk so that you don't have to pass all of the other dogs.
- 3) If you are there alone in the morning and know you have a mouthy dog, you can try first using a chain leash so you don't get stuck out in the field with a dog pulling on the leash with his teeth.
- 4) Take out the harder red dogs only when someone else is walking dogs so that you can get help if needed. It wouldn't hurt to notify the animal care staff about your concerns and get their cell number so that you could call in an emergency. You could also call 911 and have them contact Animal Control in an emergency if no one was available to help you.
- 5) **Very dog reactive dogs:** Take them out early before there are any other dogs in the field. This allows them to have a positive experience and improves on their behavior. You would need to feel safe with these dogs (not jumpy, mouthy, or biting, for example) and have your cell phone with you, just in case you need help.