Shelter Guidelines: Animal Transport

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians’ Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters

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Many models: All can work

- Shelter to Shelter
- Shelter to rescue to foster
- Shelter to individual to adoption
- Foster clubs / foster programs
- Many sources to single destination
- Many sources to multiple destinations
- Large volume multi-shelter systems
- Relay run
Risks

- Stress of transport may increase susceptibility to infection or increase viral shedding.
- Potential to spread infectious diseases along animal transport corridors and to new destinations.

Risks

Risk of exposure to infectious disease is increased when animals who originate from multiple sources are transported in the same vehicle.
Every model has some risk!!

Benefits of risk balancing

Awaiting a rescue decision then…

aware that he’s got it made!
Who do we need to look out for?

See the forest and ALL the trees

- Individual animals
- The whole group of animals
- Organizations on both ends
- Humans on both ends

Maintain health for animals and humans while maximizing capacity to save lives.

Preventive planning for health, welfare, and safety is key.
Who needs protection at the source?

1. Animals waiting
2. Other animals in the source shelter
3. Health of the source organization

During transport?

Transfer animals and pass-through communities

- Exposure risk
- Stress
- Other health and safety risks
Who needs protection at the destination?

1. Animals in destination shelter / organization / home
2. Animals and humans in destination community
3. Health of the destination organization

Evaluating organizations for participation
(*Yours or someone else’s*)

- Intake, animal flow through, and capacity
- Sanitation and disinfection practices
- Vaccination practices - Vaccination on intake is essential
- Infectious disease protocols
- Veterinary assistance available?
- What kinds of animals are available? Good match? Potential for adoption?
- Can a coordinator be designated?
- Is treatment available?
- Is isolation or separation possible?
- Need for assistance
- Differences in regional / local disease prevalence
- Vehicles!!!
***Space and turn around time***

It is always a collaboration
Relationship building

Prevention and communication create solid working relationships

Make a collaborative plan that reduces care days

• Foster holding
• Try not to stock up too early
• Transfer early and often
• Consistent plans help most
Pathway planning

- Think about transfer/transport as a regular outcome (outlet) not as a last resort
- Include transfer in your pathway planning

Disaster situations

- “Exceptions may be necessary for transport in emergency situations, where short-term compromises may have to be made.”
- “Preplanning for potential disasters is recommended to minimize deviation from accepted transport practices.”
- “Compromises should not be made when there is ample opportunity to plan.”
Responsibilities for participants:
General

- Outline responsibilities in detail
- Clear direct communication
- Written records allowing “trace back”
- Written guidelines

Transfer points

- “A contact person must be identified at each transfer point.”
What to include in an agreement?

- Selection criteria
  - Medical
  - Behavioral
- Transport requirements
- Destination requirements

Animal selection process

- Think BIG picture
- Imagine yourself on the other end
- Avoid temptation to mislead
- COMMUNICATE!
- Select early and plan
Animal selection process

- Adoption potential
- Health problems
  - Health screening performance record
- Behavior evaluation
  - Behavior screening performance record
- Trust and relationship building (again)
- Building trust saves lives!
- Time in shelter
- Age associated risk
- Vaccine records
- Treatment history
- Comingling history

Know the regulations

- “It is recommended that transporters become familiar with the import requirements for all destinations, which, for states in the United States, are usually regulated by the state Departments of Agriculture and/or Health.”
CVI and Rabies vaccination

• “For interstate transport, current rabies vaccination is an import requirement for dogs in all states in the United States. The majority of states also require rabies vaccination for cats.”

• Age / species related (12-16 weeks and older)

• “A valid Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (e.g., health certificate) is also required by most states.”

Responsibilities: Point of Origin

• Preventive health care program
• Vaccination on intake
• Treatment for external and internal parasites
• Health records
• Identification
Monitoring

• Examined for problems within 24 hours of departure

• “Animals’ health and behavior, as known at the source shelter, must be accurately described and communicated.”

In need of treatment?

• “In order to minimize the risk of infectious disease and optimize welfare, animals should be in good health at the time of transport.”

• “However, transportation of animals with illness can be justified when life-saving resources, such as medical care and placement opportunities, are available at the destination and when measures can be taken during transport to provide for their comfort, health, and safety.”
During Transport: Primary Enclosure

Provide:
• Adequate space
• Comfortable environmental conditions
• Good air quality

Avoid:
• Acceleration and deceleration stresses
• Cornering
• Noise or vibration

Adequate Space?

• “Large enough for animals to stand and sit erect, to turn around normally while standing, and to lie in a natural position.”
• “Enough space for each occupant to lie down comfortably at the same time without needing to lie on top of each other.”
• “Unfamiliar animals must not be transported together in the same primary enclosure.”
Primary Enclosure

- Good Ventilation
- No sharp edges
- Absorbent bedding
- Safe and confined
- Enclosures must be secured
- Flooring must prevent injury, discomfort, and leakage of fluids into other enclosures

Puppies and kittens

- Prevention of exposure to temperature extremes
- Hydration
- Nutrition (no fasting)
- Infectious disease exposure
- With their mama (under 8 weeks, unless orphans)
Sedation

• “Animals should not be sedated unless recommended by a veterinarian because this can make them more vulnerable to hypothermia, dehydration, and injury.”

• “If animals are sedated, veterinary guidance must be provided for their care.”

Transport: Vehicles

• Evaluate as part of the planning process.

• Always before you roll.

• “Vehicles must, at minimum, adhere to all federal or local statutes, recognizing that these regulations may not be sufficient to ensure animal safety and welfare.”
Vehicles

During Transport: Vehicles

- Crates and cages must not be stacked upon each other in a manner that:
  - increases animal stress and discomfort
  - compromises ventilation
  - allows waste material to fall from the cage above into the cage below
  - interferes with care and observation
  - hinders emergency removal
During Transport: Vehile

- Protection from the weather and extremes of temperature.
- Ambient temperature should be kept above 60°F (15.5°C) and below 80°F (26.6°C) (as in stationary facility)
- Heating and cooling in the cargo space
- “A thermometer should be placed in the animal area of the vehicle at the level of the animals.” (NFHS)

During Transport: Vehile

- “Particular attention must be paid to provision of shade, as a vehicle parked in full sun, even in comfortable temperatures, can rapidly exceed safe temperature levels.”
During Transport: Vehicles

• Fresh air
• Free of exhaust fumes

“Placing unconfined or tethered animals in the back of an open pickup truck for transport is unacceptable and illegal in many jurisdictions.”
Transporter responsibilities during transport

• “The vehicle driver or animal attendant must have sufficient training in animal health, welfare and safety issues to recognize and respond to animal needs during transport.”

Observation

• Observed and allowed to rest every 4-6 hours (NFHS)

• Observations as often as possible but not less than every 4 hours (USDA / APHIS)

• “Animals should not be left unattended when it may be detrimental to their health and safety.”
Travel distance

- No federal regulations limit distance for companion animals
- 28 Hour Law for livestock
- Risk to animal health and welfare increases with distance
- “Maximum transport time to an intermediate or final destination shelter should be no more than 12 hours (NFHS 2010).”

Sleepovers

- Requires unloading
- Provide food and water overnight
- Provide exercise and rest overnight
Feeding

- Meet the individual nutritional needs of the animals.
  - At least every 24 hours for adults
  - More frequently for animals under 6 months old.

- Requirements for food and water may be increased during transport, compared to normal nutritional needs.

Water

- Available at all times
- Not less than every 4 hours
- Coincides with observation stops
Maintaining sanitary conditions

- As often as necessary to prevent soiling of the animals

- Plan ahead in case animals must be removed in order to clean
  - Ensure safety
  - Prevent escape

Destination:

- Enough trained personnel ready to receive and evaluate animals upon arrival
- Documented physical examination
- Veterinary care
- Adequate housing prepared for the arriving animals
Isolation / Intake Quarantine

- Legal requirements
- Health status
- Source of animals
- Infectious disease risk
  - Incubation periods
- Balance with detrimental effects of increased LOS
  - For individuals
  - For the whole shelter
  - Effect on capacity

Case study

- Successful adoption center in an urban community
- High demand for puppies and dogs but low community dog intake
- Rare puppy intake
- Pit bull terriers most common intake breed
- Nearby shelters
  - High intake / especially puppies
  - Ongoing problems with parvovirus
Established Ongoing Collaboration

- Mentoring
- Feedback system
- Funding / training for vaccination on intake
- Volunteer foster coordinator
- On deck foster system
- Transports are scheduled at 1 week intervals
- Adult dogs are transported ASAP
- Puppies transported straight from foster care
- Average LOS in foster is about 2 weeks

What other assistance does the source community need?
Flow through plan

• Moved as cohorts through the destination shelter
• Careful monitoring / rapid response
• Adopter education / reporting
• Risk evaluation if parvo shows up
• Limited isolation / treatment available

Results

• Parvo is rare in destination shelter, foster homes or adoptive homes
• Most transported animals are adopted within 3-5 days
• Adoption of destination community pit bull terriers increased
  – Increased foot traffic and community perceptions
• Source community intake decreasing
Thanks!

• For the miles driven
• For sending them on their way
• For being there when you said you would
• For the commitment to safety
• For the coordination and the planning
• For the gas money and pit stops
• For going to get a bigger vehicle
• For all your caring…

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