



Five Acres Animal Shelter Essential Capabilities of Volunteers

Volunteering to help animals is extremely rewarding but can also present some challenges. Below are the essential abilities a volunteer needs, to safely participate in the Five Acres Animal Shelter volunteer program. Completion of our Volunteer Application indicates you believe you possess the basic capabilities.

Essential physical capabilities of ALL volunteers

- Ability to work in the presence of potential allergens including peanut butter, cat, dog, and small animal dander as well as cleaning chemicals, that can be managed by medication
- Ability to deal with strong or unpleasant odors, fleas, feces and possible wounds or injuries to animals in our care
- Ability to stand for significant periods of time during shift
- Ability to reach, bend, squat and stand frequently and for extended periods of time, to pick up bins, feed animals, move cages, clean, etc.
- Average vision, smell, hearing, steadiness of hands and body and physical strength (example: average sense of smell and touch to assess body condition of animals, and to note signs of illness or injury. Ability to hear if animal is growling or making sounds indicating fear or pain, or if you hear calls of alarm such as audible warnings from others or sirens)
- Ability to move safely around the building, and to observe animal body language without difficulty.
- Ability to wash and dry dishes
- Ability to cope with a very loud environment
- No known concerns about tolerating exposure to zoonotic diseases such as ringworm and mange

Additional Physical Capabilities of volunteers directly handling animals:

- Ability to walk unaided on various terrain & surfaces, including unpaved, uneven, rugged, and sometimes muddy and slippery terrain.
- Ability to use both hands simultaneously (example: open cage door while handling animal).
- A high level of manual dexterity to leash, harness or hold animals and handle small tools.
- Ability to maneuver well in tight spaces and react quickly in order to prevent animals from escaping their enclosures.
- Must be able to physically lift a moderate amount of weight, i.e. bags of food/litter, or animals of small/medium size.

Essential Mental Capabilities of ALL volunteers:

- Ability to understand, remember and follow both written and verbal instructions.
- Reading, writing, spelling, and communication skills (example: understand words such as 'quarantine')
- Ability to speak and effectively communicate with other volunteers, staff, and members of the public
- Possess problem-solving capability
- Once trained, must be able to work independently with minimal supervision yet be able to recognize limitations and ask for help when needed. Should be able to work independently within a team atmosphere with other volunteers and staff.
- Must be able to understand and read shelter signage and effectively communicate verbally as well as in written form.
- Ability to observe animal's reactions and evaluate the proper response to handle behavioral problems that are revealed during socialization.
- Ability to be aware of/recognize a potentially dangerous situation when working with/around animals, remain calm with animals who are upset, behave sensitively and confidently; show good judgment and act appropriately in these situations.
- Ability to deal with strong and unpleasant odors, and to cope with a very loud environment due to animal noises.

Essential Emotional Capabilities of ALL volunteers

- Ability to cope with unexpected animal behavior without assistance.
- Ability to understand, receive, incorporate, and sustain instruction, feedback and constructive criticism.
- Ability to cope with a highly emotionally charged environment.
- Ability to understand Five Acres Animal Shelter policies and positions regarding companion animals, and other key animal welfare issues and an ability and willingness to represent those policies when interacting appropriately and accurately with the public or otherwise representing Five Acres Animal Shelter.
- Ability to cope with unexpected animal behavior without assistance
- Possess a professional and positive attitude with a "Solutions, Not Excuses" and "Seek first to understand, then be understood" approach when facing challenges.