

DOG HANDLING

A handbook for SGA Volunteers





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Welcome to the Saving Great Animals Volunteer Program!

The Volunteer Program will save the lives of many dogs who would otherwise not have homes or would be euthanized.

Time spent in our care at Doug's Place is crucial for these dogs and will help them begin the journey that will lead to adoption and to their forever home!

Our community of volunteers is a wonderful resource for these dogs in need and your support can enrich their lives in many ways!

Volunteers come to Doug's Place with a love for animals. Many feel comfortable with their handling skills after having pets of their own. It is important to remember animals in a shelter will not act like the pets in your home. Rescue animals come in to a brand new environment with no familiar smells, bedding, people, or noises. It takes time for dogs to adjust to new faces, sharing communal space, and the smells and sounds of a strange place. It's important to know the signs of stress and fearful behavior to insure volunteers remain safe, while the animals are kept as comfortable as possible.

Please review this guide carefully. You will be working with living beings and your safety and theirs is paramount.

Thank you for your support!

Volunteer Requirements

- Must be 18 years of age or older
- A proven understanding of basic dog language
- A proven understanding of what your body language tells the dog
- Approved as a 'Doug's Place' volunteer by SGA staff
- Wear appropriate attire
- Communicate all valuable findings with staff, including dog likes, behavior or medical concerns
- Follow all rules and guidelines as outlined by SGA



Dog Walking Levels

All dogs will go through a basic behavior evaluation. This is when staff will test for different traits and assess the temperament of the dog. Based on the evaluation, the dog will receive a walking level.

SO - Staff only - no volunteers will handle this dog



Level 1 - little to no concerning behaviors. Walks OK on a leash. No management issues.



Level 2 - May be a larger dog with the ability to pull on leash.



Level 3 - Evaluation shows there are behaviors that need an expert handler with a behavior modification plan in place to help this dog be successful.

Getting Familiar with the Equipment

Flat collar

Most dogs will wear a flat collar while at Doug's Place. This hold their tag.



Martingale collar

Some dogs will wear a martingale collar. This collar tightens when you pull on the leash in order to prevent escapes.



Slip lead

Slips leads are used to form a loop around the dog's head. This allows handlers to take dogs out of the kennel with our placing their hands near the dog's mouth.



Harness

A harness is used for most dogs on walks. All dogs must wear a second leash around their collar on walks AT ALL TIMES.



Greeting a New Dog

Make a Great First Impression!

- Approach from an angle. Turn sideways.
- Bend at the knees to get at the dog's level.
- Never lean over a dog. Looming can be intimidating.
- Stay relaxed and soft as dogs can read your body language.
- Do not offer the back of your hand to sniff. It is very unsettling for dogs.
- Do not stare at the dog's face.
- Keep your face away from the dog's face at all times.
- Do not take a dog's food or high value item (toys, treats etc).

HOW TO GREET A DOG (AND WHAT TO AVOID)

Appropriate greetings are common sense. Imagine if someone greeted you the way many people greet dogs!



Dr. Sophia Yin, DVM, MS

The Art and Science of Animal Behavior

For additional free dog bite prevention resources visit www.dr.sophiayin.com.

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Please also review our Fear Free Handling Course to help you learn more about body language and safe handling.

Puppy Protocol

Different precautions are used with puppies to ensure they remain healthy while in our care.

- Only towels and blankets may be used in the kennels. No potty pads should be used in the kennel. Potty pads may be used in living room area only.
- Do not leave soft toys or stuffed animals in the kennel - only hard toys.
- Puppies under 12 weeks may not enter the yard. They can be in the x-pen by the sliding door only. Puppies may not go on walks.
- Keep treats to a minimum. Too many treats cause diarrhea and tummy upsets.
- Do not give dental chews or other ingestible bones.
- Follow feeding and medication instructions as noted on the board.



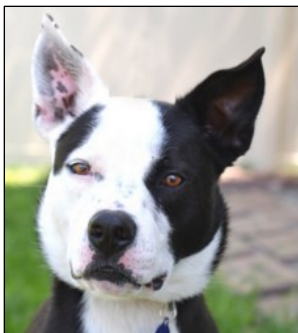
Introduction to Body Language

A dog with a wagging tail is not necessarily friendly, nor is a growling dog necessarily vicious. It is important to understand what a rescue dog is telling us to ensure our interactions are not only safe but enjoyable for the dogs.

Take the time to observe first. This will make the time spent more enjoyable and you will become stronger in your handling skills. Observe the whole picture. Study the ears, mouth and tension in the face. Look at the body position and tail together.

If at any time you are unsure of the dog's behavior, contact one of SGA's staff for assistance.

A dog's Ears



Ears up, forward - Alert



Ears back - Submissive or Cautious



Flat back - Fearful or Defensive



Airplane ears - Mixed Emotion

A Dog's Mouth

An air snap is a warning. If a dog bites the air near you this is a sign that they mean business. They did not bite you because they don't want to, but you have been warned that they will bite if needed. Heed this warning and give the dog space.



Open mouth - relaxed or playful



Closed mouth - tension (also seen in face)



Tongue flicks, lip lick - Signs of stress

A Dog's Tail

The height of the tail as well as the speed of its wag has meaning. Some breeds (malamutes, pugs) have a high carriage of their tail. For these types of breed the tail will not be your strongest indicator of the dog's mood. Note: this section is best explained by demonstration, not still images.



High tail, quick tight wag - Aroused



Neutral tail, relaxed wag - neutral height straight at attention, is alert and attentive



Low, tucked tail - Stress, fearfulness



Neutral tail, still - relaxed

Behavior of a Fearful Dog

A different combination of the following behaviors will appear for different dogs:

Head: avert their gaze, lower or turn their head

Body: lower their body, slump, roll over, urinate

Tail: tail tucked between their legs, low tail wag

Ears: ears flattened back; for flopped ears look at the base of the head

Mouth: pant, bark, sniff the floor, excessively salivate, yawn, lip licking

Remember that dogs do not want to be comforted the way a friend would. Hugs, overcrowding or cornering will only make the dog more uncomfortable. Give a fearful dog space. Turn your body away from them, keep your voice low and avert your gaze.



Behavior of an Aggressive Dog

An aggressive dog is often easy to spot. Once you are interacting with a dog it is important to continue reading the body language to ensure the dog isn't becoming aggressive. Ignoring signs of fear often leaves the dog feeling they have no choice but to act out in aggression for fear of their own safety.

Defensive aggression: A dog showing aggressive behaviors who is not acting on its threats is letting you know it has the ability to become aggressive if the need presents itself. Respect the signs being given and allow the dog space.

Head: an aggressive dog is facing you. A defensive aggressive dog may have its head turned.

Eyes: stare, whale eye

Body: tense, stiff, lunging, biting, air snapping

Head: teeth bared, growl, body aligned towards you



Behavior of a Happy Dog

One behavior spotted on this list does not mean the dog is happy. Be sure to see several of these behaviors working together to read a happy dog.

Head: relaxed muscles in the face. Looks to you when called.

Body: Looking forward, play bow, a looseness or wiggle in the walk

Tail: neutral, wide range slow wag.

Ears: loose relaxed ears. Not noteworthy forward or back.

Mouth: loose, open mouth or closed without tension.



Dog on Dog Aggression

If you encounter a dog on dog fight, follow these guidelines:

- Do not try to separate the dogs on your own
- Do not grab for collars - a re-directed bite can occur
- Never put yourself between the dogs
- If you have control on the leash, hold it and call for help
- You may try to stop the fight by making loud noises, yelling, banging bowls or throwing a blanket over the dog's head to disorient
- If a hose is nearby, spray water on the dogs





Dog on Human Aggression - off leash dog

- Do not run! Remain calm and move slowly.
- Avert your eyes and turn your body.
- Cross your arms slowly and stand with legs together. "Be a tree".
- Take handful of treats and toss them away from you.
- "Feed" your leash, coat or article of clothing to the dog.

Dog on Human Aggression - leashed dog

- Run the leash through something to get the dog away from you.
- Keep arms rigid and hold the dog away from your body - short enough they cannot reach your legs or hands.
- Do not yell at the dog. Adding aggression to aggression will create more aggression.

The Do's and Don'ts

OBSERVE: Always start with observing the dog within the kennel. If there are concerning behaviors that you are not trained or comfortable to work with, do not take the dog out of the kennel.

GET ACQUAINTED: Let the dog get used to your presence, smell and voice. Give a treat if needed. Once the dog appears more calm than aroused, you may begin the process to take the dog out.

NO PUNISHMENT: We do not use aversive methods with any dogs. At no time are you to strike an animal, jerk on the leash or yell at the dog.

NEVER CORNER A DOG: At any time for any reason. If a dog will not approach you, it does not want to go with you. Allow the dog space and respect their signals.

KENNELS: Avoid stepping into the kennel when an adult dog is showing signs of discomfort. The kennel is their space. They should willingly come out. There are exceptions to this with very anxious dogs or feral dogs going through rehab.

WALKS: Any time a dog is on a walk TWO leashes must be worn - one on the collar and one on the harness, in order to prevent escaped. A slip lead is the best choice to use around the dog's neck.





Emergencies

In case of emergency, contact SGA staff immediately:

Lily Piccora, Volunteer Coordinator

Jacintha Sayed, Director

Rachel Miller, Accounting Manager

Perrin Kaplan, President

If you have been bitten by a dog:

- Stop the wound from bleeding by applying direct pressure with a clean, dry cloth.
- Wash the wound. Use mild soap and warm, running water. Rinse the bite for 3 to 5 minutes.
- Apply an antibacterial ointment to the wound. This may help reduce the risk for infection.
- Put on a dry, sterile bandage.
- Go to urgent care if needed.