



Tips to prepare for housing and care of animals from hoarding cases:

If your shelter is preparing for animals coming in from a hoarding case, below are some important things to consider when caring for these animals in a shelter setting. Please note that every group of animals is different and will come with their own unique set of requirements, but these are some general tips to get you started.

- Criminal cases:
 - If the animals are seized from an open investigation, their disposition must be determined by the court. Measures should be taken to ensure the security of the animals while in the shelter's care.
 - While the animals are being held as live evidence, it is important that only authorized personnel take photos and/or share information pertaining to the case so not to compromise confidential information.
 - It is imperative that evidence pertaining to the case be properly collected, documented, and tracked as it changes hands. Consult with legal authorities for advice on documentation and sharing of information regarding the animals.

- Medical considerations:
 - Assume extra precaution with animals upon intake as they may be carrying enteric, dermatologic, and/or respiratory diseases, or may be more susceptible to contracting illness due to their weakened immune systems. When staff or volunteers are handling animals directly, use proper PPE protocols as some diseases may be zoonotic. If possible, avoid having people who are closely interacting with this population handle other animals within the shelter.
 - Be prepared to support animals with varying health and medical concerns due to neglect. Malnutrition is common in animals seized from such cases, so ensure you can meet the proper dietary requirements of animals who are underfed and/or emaciated. Consult with a veterinarian for an assessment and feeding program for animals who have a BCS of 2 or lower. Monitor these animals closely for refeeding syndrome.
 - Animals from hoarding situations are often under-socialized and experience moderate to severe fear, anxiety and stress (FAS) in a shelter setting. For animals who are exhibiting signs of severe FAS, consider sedated exams to handle the animal more safely and avoid causing further distress.
 - Continue to document animals' medical conditions while in your care, not just on intake. Treat photos of conditions, medical records, sample collections, etc. as evidence, and remember that veterinarian opinion is fundamental to any legal case.

- Housing considerations:

- Upon intake, quarantine hoarding case animals from other animal populations within the shelter in the event of presentation of illness. Consult with a veterinarian to determine the proper length of quarantine based on symptoms displayed by the animals and the environment they came from.
 - While animals are acclimating to your shelter environment, the less movement, the better. Try to keep animals in the same kennel if possible as they will become more comfortable with the routine of their environment, and changes in this routine can cause additional stress.
 - Animals experiencing FAS in a shelter setting can be flight or escape risks. Take measures to prevent escape by placing animals in kennels with tops and secure kennel gates with a secondary latch like carabiners. Have tools accessible to use in the event of a loose animal such as a hog board, clamshell cat nabber, or backup crate.
 - Be mindful of the stress of novel stimuli and, if possible, use visual barriers and/or white noise. Turn lights off in housing areas to give animals a break over lunch or in the evenings. Add a crate, cat den, appropriately sized cardboard box, or other hiding place for animals who are showing signs of FAS. There is evidence that lavender or chamomile essential oils can have calming effects for dogs as well. You can add an essential oil diffuser to rooms dogs are housed in, or spray diluted oils on the kennel walls. (*Be sure to only use dog-safe oils*) For cats, use plug-in Feliway diffusers or spray Feliway on bedding or kennel walls.
 - Inform staff and volunteers that these animals will likely struggle with the presence of people. Set up “drive by” treat buckets on the kennel fronts of animals who are particularly struggling and have them toss a treat to the animal when they pass by to help slowly form a positive association with humans. The animal does not have to approach or take the treat from the person when they are present.
 - Oftentimes pairing a fearful animal up with another, more outgoing and social animal can help bring them out of their shell. Consider co-housing options if your kennel setup allows after the animal has been assessed for behavior with others. Separate animals when receiving meals or food-based enrichment.
 - When animals are cleared medically, if legally allowed, identify experienced fosters that can assist with the socialization of these animals. Be aware that these animals may be flight risks and plan accordingly by microchipping if possible before they leave the shelter.
- Enrichment and handling:
 - Most animals from hoarding situations have not been familiarized with walking on a leash and can shut down, gator roll, or leash bite when trying to do so. Slowly introduce leashing and positively reinforce the dog often when doing so. Start with baby steps and work at the dog’s pace to avoid flooding (exposing a fearful or fearfully aggressive dog to a stimulus which they are afraid of but cannot escape, making the fear worse). Clip leads with martingale collars or harnesses are sometimes more comfortable for fearful dogs, since a slip lead must be placed over the head. The use of a martingale collar or harness with a safety clip or carabiner attached to a collar are preferable for these dogs, as they may be flight risks and can back out of standard flat collars and become loose. Use rolling crates for movement until the dog is comfortable walking on a leash.
 - Proper mental stimulation is important for all animals in a shelter environment, but especially those experiencing a higher level of FAS to help prevent worsening of

behavior. Provide long-lasting enrichment items in-kennel such as goughnuts, knucklebones, benebones/nylabones, or frozen enrichment like stuffed kongs or pupsicles for dogs. For cats, provide toys stuffed with catnip, crumpled paper, pipe cleaners, cat kongs, or bottle caps with frozen diluted tuna water.

- *Note: caution should be used with hard enrichment items for animals with broken or worn-down teeth, and to ensure pieces are not being ingested.*

- Depending on their temperaments, taking dogs out of their kennels for regular exercise can help to bring down stress levels. Walks in quiet areas, time in outside yards, or playgroups for dogs who have been assessed and cleared for dog-dog interactions are all great options. For dogs who require more caution when handling, try setting up a scent work course in an area where the handler can be behind a barrier or fence while the dog gets some out of kennel, physical and mental stimulation.
 - For animals who may benefit from a decrease in stimulation, or if they experience FAS when leaving their kennel, assign volunteers or staff to read to them in their kennel during down time, play calming music, or blow bubbles for them.
 - Set aside small amounts of time to do things like play with a feather toy for cats or do short training sessions with dogs to help with kennel presentation when the time comes that they are placed up for adoption. This can be done with direct or indirect contact with the animals. These small efforts add up over time, and with patience and persistence, you will see the animals come out of their shells.
- Safety measures:
 - Due to the psychological distress these animals are likely dealing with, always use extra precaution when handling. Staff and volunteers who are handling the animals should be well-trained on animal body language and ensure proper handling methods, utilizing necessary tools for safety such as bite-resistant gloves.
 - Notify other staff or volunteers when these animals are moving throughout the shelter so there are no accidental run-ins with other animals or unfamiliar people. If possible, use a radio to communicate movement.
- Additional considerations:
 - Psycho-pharmaceuticals can be another helpful tool to manage behavioral concerns if all other options to maintain the animal's mental health have been exhausted. Consult with a veterinarian on which medications to use for specific cases, as well as legal authorities before prescribing. Ensure all medications and follow ups are documented in the animal's medical record. Once started, do not discontinue these medications without determining a weaning protocol. Inform potential fosters or adopters that animals will require follow up to continue or cease these medications.