

ANIMAL BEHAVIORIST

DEFINITION

Under direction, manages, develops and evaluates animal behavior policies, procedures and practices; supervises assigned staff and volunteers; develops and implements animal behavior assessments, animal enrichment activities, kenneling and training plans; collaborates with Veterinary and animal care staff to monitor animal behavior and temperament to maximize successful animal outcomes; works with the community on behavior approaches to animals; and performs related work as required.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED/EXERCISED

Receives supervision from the Director or designee. Exercises supervision over assigned staff and volunteers.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

The Animal Behaviorist is a single level classification focused on managing, developing and evaluating animal behavior policies, procedures and practices in the Animal Center. Responsibilities include developing, implementing and evaluating animal behavior policies and procedures consistent with best practices and guidelines; supervising assigned staff and volunteers; developing animal behavior and temperament assessments for appropriate intake and kenneling; identifying behaviors and underlying causes and working with the animals to train and correct the behaviors; developing animal enrichment activities including socialization and mental stimulation exercises such as playgroups and exercise plans; collaborating with Veterinary and animal care staff on monitoring animal behavior and temperament progress; working with staff and the public to maximize successful placements and outcomes for animals to remain in their homes and providing education on animal behavior approaches; and performing related work as required.

Incumbents must demonstrate initiative, tact, and sensitivity in education and awareness of animal services resources and must be able to communicate effectively with diverse groups.

Incumbents will be required to work nights, evenings, weekends, and holidays and respond to after-hours emergencies as needed; will be exposed to a working environment with animals (primarily dogs and cats) which may lead to possible exposure of unpleasant odors and noises, allergens, interactions with animals, and possible exposure to zoonotic diseases; and will be required to handle and restrain animals humanely and safely using approved protocols and practices.

EXAMPLES OF IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL DUTIES

May include, but not limited to, the following:

Manages, develops, monitors, and evaluates animal behavior policies, procedures and practices; supervises staff and volunteers including prioritizing and assigning work; coaching, conducting performance evaluations; ensuring employees follow policies and procedures; maintaining a healthy and safe working environment; and, making hiring, termination, and disciplinary recommendations.

Develops and implements animal behavior assessments utilizing best practices associated with animal behavior training and correction; identifies behaviors and underlying causes and works with animals to correct the behaviors through focused training; recommends appropriate kenneling based on behavior assessment; provides basic obedience training as needed.

Develops animal enrichment activities including facilitating animal playgroups to promote socialization; identifies toys and exercises for mental stimulation; identifies animal exercise plans for physical activity and health to ensure a safe environment.

Monitors animal progress in behavior assessments; collaborates with Veterinary and care staff on behavior modification plan; documents activity logs and any ongoing concerns for continued correction or other outcomes.

Assist with animal meet and greet for potential adoptions, foster and rescue opportunities; informs the interested party regarding animal temperament, behavior and training; provides resources and training opportunities to owners seeking to surrender their animal to try and retrain the animal in the home; follows up with interested parties including the public for any concerns with animal behavior and temperament.

Receives and responds to public inquiries; provides education and information to staff and the community regarding animal behavior and temperament and resources; makes presentations; participates in special community events.

Research and monitor updates to laws, rules, regulations and best practices affecting animal behavior and assess the impact on Animal Center policies and procedures.

May consult with other organizations, consultants and contractors regarding animal temperament and behavior resources, best practices and training opportunities.

Operates two-way radio, cellular devices, computer hardware and software and other equipment.

Oversees equipment utilization for behavioral assessments and monitors the replacement or repair; monitors and orders supplies as needed.

Compiles and prepares reports and documentation on activities; maintains records and enters data in the kennel management software system, maintains activity logs and completes statistical analyses on the performance and outcomes of animal assessments and behavior correction.

Participates and assists in the preparation of the Animal Center budget.

May utilize equipment such as animal catch pole, leashes, harnesses, muzzles, and other physical restraints when necessary.

May assist in cleaning and disinfecting kennel areas, equipment, vehicles along with feeding and exercising animals.

May assist in completing adoption transactions which include processing payments including cash, checks, and credit cards and issue receipts; receives in kind donations and provides donors with forms; receives monetary donations from donor, enters information into the kennel management software system; prepares and issues receipts; balances receipts and provides to financials staff for processing. May transport animals throughout the Animal Center, to/from vehicles and other off-site facilities and events as needed.

May administer first aid and emergency treatment for animals as needed; may assist in performing humane euthanasia and handling deceased animals under the guidance of Veterinary staff.

May be required to handle and restrain animals humanely and safely using approved protocols, personal protective equipment (PPE) and practices including assisting in cleaning and disinfecting kennel areas, food dishes and equipment along with feeding and exercising animals.

Performs related duties as required.

JOB RELATED AND ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

Knowledge of:

Principles of supervision, training, and performance evaluation.

Principles and practices of record keeping and database management.

Budget development and administration.

Methods in developing workflow processes, standard operating procedures and program schedules.

Applicable Federal, State and local laws, codes, regulations and ordinances governing the treatment, care, impounding and licensing of animals.

Principles and safe work practices of humane animal care and handling including the use of equipment.

Animal behavior techniques, health and symptoms of common diseases; Rabies controls laws and principles of public health related to animal diseases.

Various breeds and behavior of dogs, cats, and other domestic animals.

Safety policies and safe work practices.

Principles and practices of effective customer service.

Basic recordkeeping practices and computer applications.

Current trends and issues affecting animal services including community resources and outreach opportunities and industry best practices for animal behavior and temperament correction and training.

Skill/Ability to:

Select, supervise, train and evaluate staff.

Research information and make policy and procedural recommendations consistent with best practices and efficiencies.

Read, understand, interpret and apply regulations, ordinances, laws, departmental policies, rules, regulations and industry best practices affecting animal behavior, temperament and health.

Develop and implement animal behavior and temperament assessments; work with animals to correct behaviors including identifying underlying causes and utilizing positive reinforcement techniques.

Monitor animal temperament and behavior for symptoms associated with aggressive or sick animals.

Engage with the community in education and awareness on animal behavior and temperament resources such as vaccinations, rabies control, pet ownership responsibilities, spay/neuter, rescue and adoptions.

Engage with pet owners for training opportunities to ensure successful placements and retain animals in their homes.

Physically restrain, apprehend and handle a wide range of animals including aggressive wild, under-aged or deceased animals safely, properly and humanely.

Lift and restrain animals up to and over 50 pounds; walk, sit and/or stand for extended periods of time with or without reasonable accommodation.

Observe and maintain a safe working environment in compliance with established safety programs and procedures.

Safely and effectively operate the tools and equipment used in the care and handling of animals including a two-way radio, animal catch poles, leashes, muzzles and harnesses.

Prepare clear and concise reports, records, correspondence, activity logs and other written materials.

Communicate effectively both orally and in writing.

Establish and maintain effective working relationships with staff, community members, organizations and stakeholders in the course of work.

May work outdoors and in various weather conditions.

Operate modern office equipment including computer hardware and software applications and kennel management software systems.

May be required to handle and restrain animals humanely and safely using approved protocols, personal protective equipment (PPE) and practices.

Operate a motor vehicle safely.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Education:

Possession of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in animal behavior, animal science, animal education or a closely related field.

Experience:

Three (3) years of professional experience in the care, handling and assessing the behavior of various animals in an animal centric setting.

OR

Two (2) years of professional experience in creating and implementing Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA), fear-free, and evidence/science-based approaches to animal management, behavior modification, and training.

Private pet ownership is not qualifying experience. Additional qualifying experience may substitute for the required education on a year-for-year basis subject to approval by the Director of Personnel Services and the appointing authority.

If qualifying solely with experience, a High School diploma or GED equivalent is required at time of appointment.

Special Requirement(s):

Possession and continued maintenance of a valid California Driver's License may be required at time of appointment.

A valid Veterinary Assistant Controlled Substance Permit (VACSP), issued by the Veterinary Medical Board of the State of California, may be required upon direction of the appointing authority.

Within six (6) months of appointment, incumbents will be required to complete Euthanasia Training consistent with California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Section 2039.

Within one (1) year of appointment, incumbents will be required to obtain and maintain certification(s) from a recognized pet training organization, subject to approval by the Director of Personnel Services and the appointing authority.

APPROVED: (Signature on File) _____ DATE: 5/23/2024
Director of Personnel Services

NEW: TJM:vp 5/20/2024