TRI COUNTY VOLUNTEER
DOG WALKING GUIDE

Tri County Animal Rescue
100% No Kill

Welcome Volunteers!

Volunteers are essential to Tri-County Animal Rescue's mission - to rescue, rehabilitate, and rehome stray, abandoned, and mistreated dogs and cats. We are a 100% no kill shelter and are always looking for passionate, capable individuals to help care for our rescues.

Many of our dogs come from difficult backgrounds—they may be fearful, untrained, or have behavioral challenges. Some may jump, nip, pull on the leash, or act unpredictably. Regardless of size, always expect the unexpected and follow all safety guidelines.

Your role as a volunteer is critical to helping achieve our mission. With patience and consistency, your efforts help them build trust, learn manners, and get one step closer to finding their fur-ever homes.

Requirements to be a volunteer:

- You are at least 18 years old
- You can attend the two-hour volunteer orientation class
- You are able to pay for a volunteer t-shirt and badge ($30)
- You are physically able to stand/walk for long periods, squat, bend, twist, and lift at least 20 lbs.
- You are able to volunteer at least 4 hours per month
- You are able to read, write and communicate clearly

What you will need

Having the proper gear and supplies is essential for your safety and the well-being and care of our rescues. Before handling any dog, make sure you're equipped with the approved leash, collar or harness, and any additional items required for that specific dog. Wearing closed-toe shoes and appropriate clothing is also a must. These tools not only help you maintain control during walks but also create a safer, more predictable environment for the dogs—many of whom are still learning trust and boundaries. Being prepared ensures a positive experience for both you and the animals in our care.

Hours of Operation:

The shelter is always open 4:00 AM- 4:30 PM for our volunteer dog walkers rain or shine including holidays.

REQUIRED VOLUNTEER GEAR

VOLUNTEER T-SHIRT	TWO NAME BADGES	WHISTLE WITH STRAP	TWO LEASHES
		Tucked into your shirt	1. *6 ft. Loop Leash* 2. *6 ft. Regular Leash*
SMALL MARTINGALE COLLAR	**POOP BAGS**	**DRY ERASE MARKER**	**CLOSED TOE SHOES**
With snap buckle	*Supplied for you by volunteer sign-in sheet*	*Supplied for you by volunteer sign-in sheet*	*Clothing & shoes will get dirty, smelly, damaged*

Orientation

The first step to becoming an approved dog walker is attending our two-hour orientation class. This session will give you all the information you need to safely and confidently work with our rescue dogs.

After orientation, you'll be paired with an experienced volunteer for a one-on-one session. Together, you'll determine your comfort level and be assigned a walking level of 1, 2, or 3—based on your ability and confidence. This number will be displayed on your name badge and helps ensure a good match with the dogs.

Dogs are rated 1 through 3 based on their size, behavior, and handling needs. For example, if you're certified at level 3, you're approved to walk dogs at all levels (1, 2, and 3). After consistently volunteering for at least two months (minimum one hour per week), you can request a reassessment to move up a level if you're interested.

Dog Rating	**#1**	**#2**	**#3**
What you need to know about this dog	For animal enrichment program volunteers only	Dog is friendly and walks well on the leash or small dog less than 35 pounds not a lot of physical effort to control.	Dog is friendly doesn't know how to walk with the leash, will pull hard, chase things, run all over the place, tangle the leash around your legs, escape artist (could be a smaller dog) or bigger dog over 40 pounds that pulls hard, a lot of physical effort to control.

Dog Rating	**#4**	**#5**	**#6**
What you need to know about this dog	Big extraordinarily strong dog, could knock you down or behavior issues big or small. Dog will jump on you while you are trying to walk, nippy, terrified of people or people selective.	Dog is difficult, has behavioral problems.	**STAFF ONLY** – Green Room Dogs or dogs with STAFF ONLY sign

Rules & Processes

Our rules are in place for one reason: to protect you and the animals in our care. Many of our rescues come from uncertain or traumatic backgrounds and may react unpredictably to new people, environments, or situations. By following the established guidelines and procedures, you help create a consistent, structured setting that reduces stress for the animals and keeps everyone safe. Even if a rule may seem small, each one plays a part in building trust, promoting positive behavior, and ensuring that every interaction is safe and productive—for both you and the dogs.

At arrival:

- Make sure you have your required volunteer gear.
- Enter the kennel through the side door if the shelter is not open to the public that day.
- Sign in for your shift via the desktop computer at the front desk. Don't forget to sign out before you leave.

MOST IMPORTANT RULE TO FOLLOW

It is IMPERATIVE that you read ALL of the signs on EACH and EVERY dog's cage door!

Always take the time to read the notations on cage cards, walk sheets, and trait charts—they contain essential information for the safety and care of each dog. These notes will tell you the dog's name, when they last went outside, how they interact with other dogs, and whether they're nervous and need extra space. They also flag any medical concerns, such as heartworm or recent surgeries, with instructions like "3 short walks per day" or "5 minutes minimal activity." In these cases, it's critical to limit physical exertion, as raising the dog's heart rate could jeopardize their recovery. That means no play yards, play groups, or extended outdoor time for these dogs.

Other rules to follow:

- If there's no cage card, do not walk the dog unless you ask the staff first.
- Please allow 30 minutes - 1 hour in between walks, to allow the dog to cool down - especially in the summer months where all walks should not exceed 10 mins of minimal activity or 5 minutes of vigorous playtime.
- If you notice anything out of the ordinary on your dog (ticks, scabs, rash, etc.), please report it to the front desk.
- If you get bit --try to contain your dog in a play yard or pen—and go to front desk for assistance.

Other rules to follow (cont.):

- One dog per volunteer--If there are two dogs in a run, get another volunteer to walk the second dog. Dogs get overly excited to go out, and often one ends up getting loose.
- No family or friends may walk dogs with you. They must go through the same process as you did to become a volunteer.
- Do not let the public pet your dog.
- Never erase staff written notes, or write housebroken on a dog's chart. While they might be doing very well in their training, they can still have accidents in their new home. This could potentially mislead an adopter, causing them to be upset with staff and even sometimes return a dog.
- If a dog gets loose, blow your whistle then scream "LOOSE DOG"!
- The property gate must be closed to ensure they don't run into the street
- Alert anyone you see that your dog is loose & do not chase them.
- Showing dogs to potential adopters -- staff must ask you.
- Staff may ask you to show a dog-- you can say no if you're not comfortable
- If a client asks you to take a dog out, first verify with the front desk that they are approved to see that dog.
- When showing a dog, do not let a client walk the dog on leash, unless they are inside a pen.

Front desk and puppy room dogs:

Please ask the staff if any of these dogs need to be walked and which ones do not like to be picked up since these dogs must be carried outside.

Please do not go behind the desk without asking a staff member first, since these dogs are often not socialized yet.

Kennel/Runs:

- If a dog refuses to walk or listen to you, never force/drag, or reprimand a dog.
- If you are a #1, you will be working mostly with the dogs in the front. If you want to work with the dogs up front anyways (especially puppies), do that prior to interacting with the dogs in the kennels. This is for the safety of the puppies since they are not vaccinated yet, we cannot expose them to any diseases the back kennel may have.
- Never use your cell phone while you are walking a dog includes earbuds, headphones, speaker, etc.
- Never disturb a dog while eating as they could be food aggressive.

Kennel/Runs:

Step by Step Process

- Before entering the cage, read the cage card and all signs. If there is no cage card ask the staff.
- Double check the # assigned to the dogs.
- Make sure you have 2 leashes (1 loop & 1 clip), whistle, and poop bags.
- Clip one of your name badges to the gate/cage "Out for a walk with," and be sure to remember the dog's name.
- Look around make sure no dogs or people are around entering the cage opening the gate as little as possible, keeping an eye on the dog. Some want to escape as soon as the door opens. Do not turn your back to the dog until the gate is latched behind you, making sure it's all the way down.
- Approach the dog with caution and care. If they run away from you, look timid - don't corner them - turn side-ways, avoid eye contact, come down to their level, and see if they will come sniff you.
- Never raise a hand over the dog's head to pet him/her until you know the dog well--this can be perceived as a threat.
- If the dog stays back in the back, do not go get him/her— just turn sideways, get low, stay by gate, and (without staring) let them come to you.
- If the dog growls or shows teeth, try again another day.
- Put the loop leash on first so you can maintain control of the dog, then clip the other leash on the collar/harness (most dogs have collars/harnesses, but if not then use your martingale collar) put your hand thru the leashes, and wrap them around your wrist keep the leashes short.

- Before unlatching the run door to head outside, look both ways to make sure there is no loose dog or other person bringing in/taking out another dog. Only one dog should be out in the main area, if you see someone coming in, go back to his/her run.
- Exit the cage, keep leashes short, keep the dog away from other dogs in cages, walk them against the wall quickly towards the exterior door closest to his/her kennel.
- Once outside, all dogs must remain on the property. You can walk anywhere except the actual cemetery grounds or the area around the Rescue Unit trailer (this is where the quarantined dogs are kept/ walked).

Kennel/Runs:

Step by Step Process (cont.)

- Do not let the dogs walk on the pavement in summer months, it is extremely hot and damages the pads on their paws. You can check the asphalt with your hands to see how hot it is.
- Keep dogs away from outdoor cat houses, hedges, cars, gazebo, anywhere a cat might hide, other dogs, wildlife, and people.
- Pick up poop (shorten the leash so they do not bolt) and throw it away in trash bins. **If dog has diarrhea (quite common in dogs when they arrive), do your best to pick it up. If you see anything out of the ordinary or are just concerned, fill out a medical request form.
- Do not allow dogs to interact with each other (even on leashes) without prior consent from staff or long term volunteer.

- Do not allow dogs to dig or damage landscaping.
- Walk inside the shelter using the same door you exited - peek into the window/ open door slowly make sure no dog/person is coming out or a dog is loose inside, be aware of your surroundings and ensure the leash is short enough.
- Double check that you are returning the dog to their the correct run, look for your name tag, and make sure there's not another dog in the run.
- When putting dog back, always close the latch behind you before unleashing, and while keeping an eye on where your dog is, back yourself out. The trick is leaving one leg in the way to keep the dog from pushing past you. You may need to grab his/her collar/harness, so they do not try to escape while you are leaving.
- Do not turn around facing out while leaving---dog can escape quick--Always face your dog when exiting!! **If the dog runs to the food or water bowl before you remove the leash, wait until they finish drinking or eating.
- Once you are out, make sure the latch is all the way down.
- Write your initials and time you return the dog and P (pee) or PP (pee & poop) on the cage card. Remove your badge off the front of cage.

Run dogs still in quarantine:

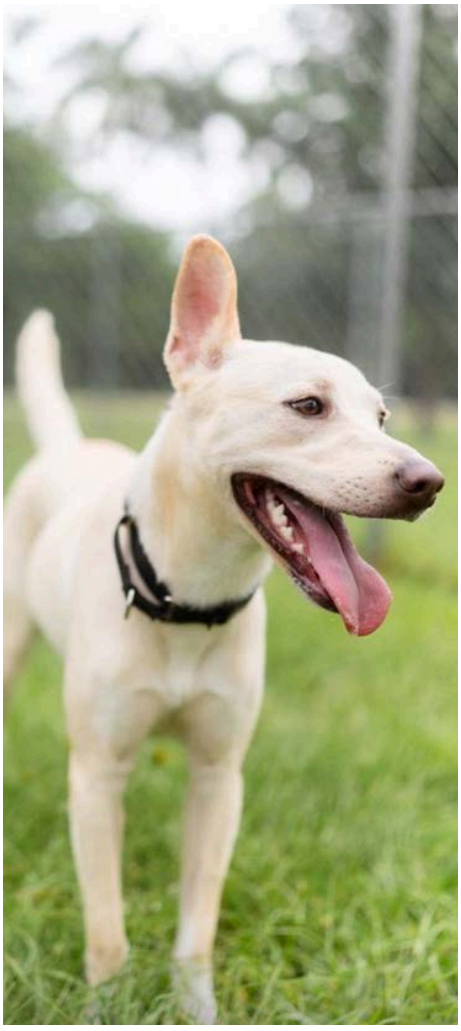
- Due to space limitations, some dogs will need to wait out their two-week quarantine in the back runs inside the kennels. It is extremely important to follow Quarantine Policies for the safety of all dogs. No one wants to be responsible for cross contamination resulting in getting other dogs sick - which delays their adoption, or in the worst-case scenario, causing them to pass away. It could take 10 days for symptoms to emerge which is why we quarantine for 2 weeks. If you would like to learn more, please look up online a few of the common diseases: canine distemper, canine influenza virus, and canine parvovirus. Puppies are high risk because they may not be fully vaccinated and will not have titers and antibodies built up yet.
- Walk/ interact with the dogs in quarantine last, then leave the shelter immediately without unnecessary travel to other areas.
- Do not use the play yards for these dogs.
- Be extra diligent in picking up poop.
- Use hand sanitizers after each dog.
- Change clothes/ shower before interacting with dogs at home or other dogs in the community.

Use of play yards:

- Make sure there are no other dogs running around the yard or hiding behind trees---Do not leave your dog unattended for any reason. Always be in view of shelter doors so other volunteers see that the play yard is being used.
- Do not unleash the dog until you are both in the playpen with both gates latched.
- Put fresh water in the water bowls and fill kiddie pools---hoses are in pens.
- If your dog poops or if you see poop that was left by someone else, please pick it up.
- Do not leave the play yard until the dog is leashed.
- Do not stand behind a tree, talking over the fence where someone coming in the gate cannot see you.

Safety Guidelines

- Volunteering as a dog walker at Tri-County Animal Rescue requires adherence to safety guidelines that protect both volunteers and dogs. Volunteers are assigned levels based on experience and dog handling skills to ensure appropriate matches with dogs of varying behaviors and sizes.
- Volunteer and dog rating system: Volunteers receive a walking level from 1 to 5, displayed on their badges, which corresponds to the difficulty of dogs they can handle. Dogs are rated from 1 to 6 based on size, behavior, and handling needs, with higher levels indicating more challenging dogs requiring experienced handlers. Dogs rated level 6 are only handled by staff. Volunteers can request reassessment to move up levels after consistent volunteering.
- Safety precautions: Volunteers should read all notes on the cage cards and follow specific instructions, approach dogs calmly and confidently, use proper leash equipment for control, and understand canine body language to recognize signs of fear or aggression. Resource guarding behaviors should be managed by trading items rather than forcibly removing them.
- Avoiding risks and incident handling: High-risk situations such as feeding times, pain, or presence of puppies should be handled cautiously to prevent aggression, including redirected aggression (dog is highly aroused/frustrated by something). In case of a dog bite, secure the dog, inform the staff and seek medical care at the Lois Pope Clinic if open. Document the incident: date and time, witness, location and nature of the incident including the dog's behavior and any contributing factors to aid future prevention. If the Lois Pope Clinic is not open, head back to the shelter, apply pressure with a clean paper towel to stop bleeding, wash the wound using soap, rinse the bite for 3-5 minutes, apply antibacterial ointment to the wound, put on a dry, sterile bandage. Proceed to medical professional if needed. First aid kits are found under the bathroom sink. We're working on a process if antibiotics are needed.
- Health and reporting requirements: Volunteers should maintain up-to-date tetanus vaccination (@CVS) as recommended by the CDC due to common exposure risks. Additionally, all dog bites must be reported by medical and veterinary professionals to local authorities/animal control. When this happens animal control can prevent Tri-County from adopting the dog and they will spend the rest of their life in the Green Room.



DOGGIE LANGUAGE

starring Boogie the Boston Terrier

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Final thoughts:

Everyone will be given a # on their name tag. You may only walk dogs within this # or less. You can always sit in the runs with the dogs up to a #3 dog rating.

- After two months of consistently walking our dogs (1 hour or more each week), you can be evaluated by your Instructor/Mentor or by a Kennel Staff Manager to walk a higher #. There is a HUGE jump from a #2 to a #3 dog; therefore, some volunteers may never go up.
- Our #4 and #5 dogs are for our volunteers that have been with us for a very long time and/or are at the shelter 5+ hours or more every week while having extended experience with our more difficult dogs.

Please understand that sometimes there may not be many dogs within your #. You have to be patient and come back when we do another rescue. The easy ones always get adopted fast. A lot of our dogs come in so sweet and innocent (#1 or #2) and within days, they come out of their shell and can be a higher # (which means you cannot walk this dog) or the reverse happens, and their number can decrease over time as they become more comfortable – which is why you always double check a dog's number rating.

Thank you for being an important part of our team!

Volunteers are the backbone of Tri-County Animal Rescue. Your time, compassion, and dedication make it possible for us to provide love, care, and second chances to animals in need. Every walk you take, every kennel you help keep clean, and every kind interaction you share plays a vital role in helping our rescues heal and find their forever homes.

We truly couldn't do what we do without you. Thank you for being an essential part of our mission and for making a meaningful difference—one paw at a time!