

Discourse_ Making Life at the Shelter Less Ruff

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Working as a Dog Rescue and Behavior (DRB) Internship at the Yolo County Animal Shelter is definitely one of the best communities to be a part of. As a new intern, you may be asking yourself “What exactly will I be doing as a Rescue and Behavior Intern?”, and the answer is rather simple. Basically you will help train and promote stray dogs to potential adopters. An average shift you will cover as a DRB Intern would be to spend about twenty minutes with each individual dog in the play yard outside, evaluating basic personalities and abilities through interaction and stimulus (treats and toys). In other words, you will be playing with dogs all day. How cool is that! Depending on the dog, this time could be spent playing fetch, giving much needed belly rubs, and/or teaching basic commands such as sit and stay. It is important to be aware of each dog’s personalities and traits to be able to fit them with the perfect adopter, which is where the DRB interns come in. Without us, there would be a bunch of sad pups unable to find a family that appreciates how much they love fetch or when you itch them right below their ears. In order to reach our common goal of getting all the dogs in our shelter adopted, we use many forms of communication that benefit the overall well being of each dog, and will also help keep you safe as a new intern dealing with potentially harmful situations.

There is a whiteboard in our main adoption room you will need to be aware of that is the main source of communication between the interns. It lists each dog's name, their specific location on the adoption floor, the time they were last outside in the play yard, and a few key notes about each specific dog's personality and behavior for that day. This whiteboard can record everything from "Loves squeaky toys" to "Still needs to learn sit/stay command." Below is a picture of what this whiteboard looks like so you can get a better understanding about its use:

Name ID#	OUT		COMMENTS	TRAINING NOTES
	AM	PM		
Little Girl	Foster	Becky	10/14/17 mellow love-bug shy, but SUPER sweet CUDDLE! OK DOGS. OK CATS. OK OLDER KIDS	House trained crate trained
Blue Bandit	STRAY	STRAY	big goof loves to play + cuddle OK DOGS. OK CATS	
Maisy	10:40		a little shy, but SUPER sweet CUDDLE! mellow love-bug NO CATS	gentle taking treats good on leash knows sit loves cheese!
Blue	11:20		a tad shy, but a total sweetie VERY Treat motivated Not into toys! OK DOGS	
Sadie	Foster	Michelle	independent, but super sweet likes but scratches LOVES OTHER DOGS	good on leash knows sit
Princess Diana	11:20		Slow, sweet, gentle GIVES TONS of kisses Likes balls, Squeaky toys, tug doesn't like biscuits	knows sit
Roger	10:40		Social; happy + friendly goofy ball of fun loves to give kisses affectionate	Do not give soft toys will rip apart HARNES

At the beginning of each of your shifts at the shelter, you will need to read this whiteboard. These bits of information help maintain order and will help inform you on what to work on during each shift with each specific dog. With knowledge of the time each dog was outside last, you can take out the dogs who have not been out for the longest period of time. The two right columns explain each dog's strengths and weaknesses, which help you be aware of what to work on with each individual dog for them to become the best version of themselves for future adopters. Additionally, before any potential adopter can start paperwork to adopt any dog, you will need to show them this whiteboard so they are aware of how each dog behaves. Without this version of discourse in our community, it would be nearly impossible to match a family with the

dog to fit all their needs, thus leading to less adoptions and/or more returned adoption dogs.

A picture of this whiteboard is posted daily on a closed facebook group for DRB Interns. Let another intern know if you need to be added to this group because it is another main form of communication between our community members. Additionally to the daily whiteboard post, community members can share quality pictures or videos of the dogs we are promoting to adopters at the time, new ideas for improvement of the internship program, and even changes to scheduled shift times. These purpose of these posts are to stay informed about the internship and maintain order throughout the program. The order maintained in this program will be reflected in each dog's behavior and attitude, hopefully urging potential adopters to adopt them. In this day of age when almost everyone has a social media, it is important for you to utilize this easy and instant form of communication. Below is an example of a few of the useful posts that have been shared through our page:



Another genre of communication is a weekly newsletter that our internship director sends out reflecting on the previous week. The newsletter usually includes updates on all the dogs and if their progress at the shelter as well as any announcements going forward into the next week. Using this knowledge, you will be aware of what to work on for the following week with each dog or if they may have been adopted or put in a foster home. This is a screenshot of what is normally included in this newsletter:

Stray update! See the bottom of this post for a special project I'm looking for help with.

THANK YOU Gwen and **Alexis** for helping make sure all the stray dogs got out today!

PRINCE: Lexi worked with Prince, who really stepped up his training game when meatballs were at stake. We started the walk-around steps of the sit-stay.

LEONARD: Leonard was doing great today and was barely mouthy at all. He is in stray but available for adoption.

REMY is back in adoption. He is really stressed-when we took him into our office he fell asleep for over an hour.

RUSSELL played with Pibble today, it was a decent match. He is in stray but I believe also available for adoption.

Blue Bandit went to foster yesterday!

It is important for us as DRB Interns to use a wide variety of communication because you never know what a day may bring. One day all of the dogs can be well behaved and you will simply need to let them out to enjoy the fresh air and space, and other days you will have to work with new challenging dogs who are very rowdy and untrained. While we love the shelter dogs, it is important for you to understand that they don't always love us, so being cautious in every situation is very important. This may be the most important aspect as you start your training shifts, so it is beneficial to gain familiarity with these forms of discourse as soon as possible in order to keep yourself safe and

maintain the safety and wellbeing of the dogs. Being briefed by other interns about potential hazards or warning signs they noticed in a particular dog during their shift is important information to be relayed. If you notice a potential hazard, you will need to utilize one of these methods of discourse to prevent anything from going wrong during the next scheduled shift.

Overall, successful and frequent discourse as a DRB Intern is the main reason why the animal shelter runs smoothly and maintains organization. Different genres of discourse allow the ability for more dogs to be promoted to potential adopters through knowledge you gain through your own experiences as well as the shared experiences of other interns on the variety of platforms of communication. In the end, the best thing we could ask for as DRB interns is that each dog ends up in a happy, thriving home, and now that you are apart of our community, you can help us make that happen.