



## CHARLOTTESVILLE-ALBEMARLE SPCA JOB DESCRIPTION

**Position: Animal Care Lead**  
**Job Status: Non-Exempt**  
**Reports to: Animal Care Manager**  
**Revision Date: June 29, 2026**

### Position Summary

The Animal Care Lead provides operational and behavioral leadership within the Animal Care department. This role helps ensure the humane daily care of all animals in shelter custody while advancing strategies that reduce stress, support physical and emotional well-being, shorten length of stay, and increase successful placements and pet retention.

The Animal Care Lead oversees daily workflow, supports and trains Animal Care staff, coordinates animal housing and movement throughout the facility, and leads enrichment and behavior initiatives for both dogs and cats. This position serves as a working leader and models best practices in animal care, humane handling, communication, safety, and cross-department collaboration.

### Leadership & Operational Oversight

- Provide daily oversight and direction to Animal Care staff to ensure appropriate care, sanitation, safety, and humane treatment standards.
- Assist the Animal Care Manager with scheduling, coaching, training, performance feedback, and staff development.
- Help assign and prioritize daily responsibilities based on animal needs, staffing, and shelter operations.
- Serve as acting Animal Care Manager when assigned.
- Ensure compliance with Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services animal facility regulations and organizational policies.
- Model safe work practices, professional conduct, accountability, and respectful communication.
- Identify operational or animal welfare concerns and promptly communicate them to the appropriate manager or medical team.

### Animal Care & Shelter Operations

- Oversee the daily care, housing, movement, and population flow of dogs, cats, and other animals in shelter custody.
- Evaluate housing assignments and recommend adjustments based on health, behavior, stress level, compatibility, and individual animal needs.
- Conduct regular well-being rounds in collaboration with clinic and management staff.
- Monitor animals for changes in health, appetite, behavior, comfort, or emotional well-being and ensure concerns are promptly documented and reported.

- Ensure accurate and timely data entry in the shelter database, including care notes, behavior observations, enrichment activities, and animal movement.
- Confirm that current photos, biographies, behavior information, and adoption summaries are available for animals awaiting placement.
- Monitor and order food, litter, enrichment materials, cleaning products, personal protective equipment, and other operational supplies.
- Ensure transport vehicles, equipment, animal housing areas, and workspaces are clean, organized, and ready for use.
- Perform the responsibilities of an Animal Care Associate as operational needs require.

## **Animal Behavior, Enrichment & Placement Strategy**

- Develop, implement, and evaluate enrichment and cognitive-health initiatives for dogs and cats.
- Ensure animals receive appropriate daily enrichment based on their species, age, health, behavior, and individual preferences.
- Lead and document canine playgroups and other structured dog-to-dog interactions when appropriate.
- Support feline enrichment, socialization, handling, group-housing assessments, and stress-reduction practices.
- Recognize and respond appropriately to canine and feline body language, fear, stress, overstimulation, and other behavioral indicators.
- Train staff and volunteers in humane handling, species-appropriate enrichment, playgroup participation, feline socialization, behavior observation, and safe interaction practices.
- Develop individualized care and placement plans for long-stay animals and animals with behavioral, medical, or environmental support needs.
- Work with the Adoption, Foster, Clinic, and Pet Retention teams to identify appropriate placement pathways and reduce barriers to adoption.
- Coordinate or support meet-and-greets, foster placement, field trips, sleepovers, adoption follow-up, and other placement-support activities.
- Provide pet retention counseling and practical resources to help owners address common canine and feline care or behavior concerns.
- Ensure behavioral observations are objective, clearly documented, and communicated to the appropriate teams.

## **Collaboration & Communication**

- Work cooperatively with members of the public, staff, volunteers, fosters, adopters, rescue partners, and vendors.
- Maintain professional, respectful, and educational interactions that promote the organization's mission and animal welfare standards.
- Communicate animal care, medical, behavior, and operational information accurately and promptly across departments.
- Participate in departmental meetings, training, and case discussions as assigned.
- Remain calm, mission-focused, and solution-oriented during emergencies, high-volume periods, and emotionally challenging situations.
- Support a workplace culture that values teamwork, accountability, safety, inclusion, and respect.

## **Physical Requirements & Work Environment**

- Ability to safely lift and transport animals, supplies, and materials weighing up to 60 pounds, with assistance when appropriate.
- Ability to bend, squat, kneel, reach, climb stairs, and stand or walk for extended periods.
- Ability to safely handle dogs and cats of varying sizes, temperaments, health conditions, and behavior histories.
- Regular exposure to disinfectants, cleaning chemicals, animal allergens, loud noise, odors, waste, and animal-related hazards.
- Rabies pre-exposure vaccination required unless an approved waiver is completed.
- Availability to work weekends, holidays, and varying schedules as assigned.
- Ability to respond appropriately to animal emergencies, bites, scratches, escape risks, and other shelter-related safety concerns.

## **Qualifications**

- High school diploma or GED required; bachelor's degree in animal science, animal behavior, shelter management, or a related field preferred.
- Minimum of two years of professional animal care, shelter, veterinary, boarding, rescue, or related experience required.
- Supervisory, team-lead, training, or leadership experience preferred.
- Experience working with both dogs and cats in a shelter, veterinary, rescue, boarding, or similar environment strongly preferred.
- Experience conducting canine playgroups and supporting feline enrichment, socialization, or behavior programs preferred.
- Working knowledge of canine and feline behavior, body language, enrichment, stress reduction, and humane handling practices.
- Ability to provide clear direction, coach employees, address concerns, and make sound decisions in a fast-paced environment.
- Strong organizational, documentation, communication, and problem-solving skills.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office and shelter database systems.
- Valid Virginia Driver's License and acceptable driving record required.