

Daily Shelter Rounds

Daily shelter rounds allow staff to ensure the best possible care for cats and dogs in the system. Here's what your rounds should include.

Purpose of “daily shelter rounds”

Daily shelter rounds are performed to ensure that each animal, each day, receives the care and attention they need to move as safely and efficiently as possible through the shelter. Shelter rounds include not only medical and behavioral care but also logistical needs to move the animal through their shelter stay. As such, shelter rounds are distinct from and more inclusive than, [daily monitoring of animal health and behavior](#).

Daily shelter rounds are also distinct from veterinary rounds, which focus on examining animals identified as having a medical concern. Veterinary rounds should follow daily shelter rounds and daily monitoring to respond to any concerns identified in those processes. Performing daily rounds can have a dramatic impact on length of stay (LOS), which in turn can decrease shelter crowding, lower disease levels, and costs, and improve animal care and wellness as problems are identified and quickly addressed.

Instructions for daily shelter rounds

Assess each animal daily and ensure that all needed steps have been taken for that animal that day, including:

- Accurate description and photograph of animal in computer system and posted to web
- Vaccination, internal and external parasite control on intake and follow up as needed
- Contact of owner or follow up on identification
- Behavioral and/or medical care to alleviate suffering and improve wellbeing
 - Initiation, monitoring response to, or discontinuation of treatment
- Movement throughout shelter- promptly when needed but with a goal of minimal housing changes for improved wellbeing, especially for cats.
- Spay/neuter surgery or other medical procedures required before adoption
- Foster placement when needed for improved wellbeing, e.g.

- behavioral stress or for recovery during medical treatment.
- Rescue group contact and pick-up
- Euthanasia – decision and timeline

On a daily basis, include staff who are able/empowered to assess clerical issues (e.g. paperwork, owner contact process, issues with legal holds); medical issues; and behavioral issues. At least once a week, the shelter assessment should include the shelter manager, veterinarian and director (or equivalent positions) working together.

Perform daily rounds early in the day if possible (prior to cleaning, especially if a monitoring system is not in place) at a time when interruptions will be minimized. The assessment includes a look at the overall condition of each ward or holding area (smell, cleanliness, noise, overall presentation to adopters) and attention to each animal's paperwork, cage/kennel, and an assessment of the animal's physical and mental condition. For group-housed animals (including litters), specifically note each animal in the group and briefly assess them as described below, the same as for individually housed animals. At least every two weeks, perform a more detailed evaluation of each individual animal still in the shelter.

Components of daily shelter rounds

Items needed -

- Animal inventory print out (for shelters using a software system, daily rounds is a good time to reconcile paper and computer records, animal location, etc.)
- [Daily to do or action list](#) to note any concerns discovered during daily rounds as you walk through the shelter
- Laminate cards can be used to visually flag animals for follow-up in addition to being put on the action list, e.g. “needs medical eval” or “move up to adoption”
- Camera to document issues for follow up if needed
- Cage cards and ID bands on each animal help facilitate the daily rounds process

Evaluate the following:

Overall ward -

- General repair and evaluation of hazards (e.g. windows and doors all functioning correctly)

- General impression of cleanliness
- Odor
- Temperature
- Subjective assessment of HVAC with further investigation if unusual odor or temperature concerns are noted (HVAC should also be formally inspected on a routine basis)

Paperwork/computer record -

- Is the paperwork current, in accord with the computer record, and is the animal accurately described? (E.g. gender, description, age, identification, weight)
- Are intake and due out dates on the paperwork accurate?
- Is there any paperwork on the cage that might unduly discourage adopters (e.g. describing behavioral or medical issues that have since been resolved?)
- Is there any indication on the paperwork that the animal has a behavioral or physical condition that will present special challenges for adoption (e.g. a description that the animal was surrendered for a serious behavior problem)? If so, is there information for adopters describing what steps have been taken to mitigate the problem or other information that might encourage the animal to be considered for adoption?
- Does the photograph accurately depict the animal sufficient for recognition by an owner?
- For animals awaiting rescue/adoption, has an appealing photograph and description of the animal been provided?

Location/status -

- Is the animal's location within the shelter and in the computer record in accord with one another?
- Is the animal in the correct location within the shelter based on its physical condition, behavioral and hold status? For example, is the animal past their stray hold but still in a holding area rather than an adoption area? Is it in a treatment area even though it has recovered from the illness being treated?

Cage/kennel -

- What is the condition of the animal's environment?
- Is there evidence of illness, such as diarrhea or sneeze marks on the walls? If so, has this been reported through the appropriate channels and is the animal under treatment?
- Are the housing conditions safe, with no damage to the kennel,

- watering system, bed, food dishes etc. that could harm the animal?
- Does the environment provide the basics for daily comfort/alleviation of stress?
 - Warm and dry?
 - Presence of hiding place?
 - Bed?
 - Toy?
 - Clean food and water?
- Is the environment humane for the amount of time the animal has been held?
 - If the animal has been in that kennel for more than 2-4 weeks, does it have enrichment equivalent to that expected in an adoptive home (e.g. room to move about, stretch to full length, choice of hard and soft surfaces for resting, toys and access to human contact and exercise on a daily basis)?

Flow through -

- Have all needed steps been taken to contact owners/interested parties/rescue?
- Has follow up been performed on any notes on the paperwork or in the record? (e.g. rescue called, pickup time scheduled)
- Does the animal need any service to move to the next step towards an outcome?
 - E.g. spay/neuter, medical testing, physical movement to another area of the building, sign off of quarantine, euthanasia
- Is there a barrier that needs to be addressed to help move the animal through the shelter? (e.g. adoption promotion, [adoption ambassador](#), move to an off-site center, need to look for rescue, etc.)

Animal -

- Does the animal have any physical condition, such as pregnant, geriatric, juvenile, neonate, requiring special care or environmental considerations? If so, is this being provided? (e.g. appropriate food, bedding, nesting box, foster care contact)
- Is there any evidence of pain or illness? If so, has this been reported and is the animal being treated appropriately?
 - If the animal is on treatment, has an appropriate recheck date been scheduled?
- Is the animal current on all required vaccines, external and internal parasite control, including intake and revaccination/retreatment as needed?
- Does the animal show signs of acute stress or fear? If so, have all

possible steps for remediation been implemented, such as the provision of a hiding place, bed, movement to a quieter area of the shelter, or plans for transfer to foster care?

- Does the animal have any special dietary needs? If so, is the correct type and amount of food being provided?
- Is the animal comfortable and contented? Does it need a bed, toy, note for special care and attention from volunteers, etc.?
- Is there evidence of kennel stress or other chronic or emerging behavioral concerns? If so, have these been reported through the appropriate channels and a treatment/remedy implemented?
- Is there anything about the animal's behavior or appearance that might deter adopters, such as a very dirty or matted hair coat or aggressive barking at by-passers? Note a specific remedy on the action list if so (e.g. schedule for grooming, move to another kennel with less foot traffic).

Re-evaluation of animals held long-term

Perform a more extensive evaluation of each animal's physical and mental condition and wellbeing at least every two weeks. Take the animal out of the kennel, run your hands over the body to look for weight loss, wounds, sores or other physical problems, and reassess the animal's overall well being. Ideally also weigh animals every two weeks while in the shelter, as weight loss or gain is a common problem in long-term housed animals. Schedule a full physical exam by a veterinarian at least every six months or more often if indicated (e.g. chronic medical condition, geriatric animal).

Daily rounds action list

Except in emergencies (e.g. a severely ill animal is identified that needs immediate action to prevent exposure or other animals or relieve suffering), action on animals should not be taken during rounds. Instead, maintain a "[daily action list](#)" noting every single animal that needs action taken to make sure it is in the right location, with current paperwork/computer record, description, and photograph, is scheduled for any needed procedures at a definite time, all needed contacts have been made (owner reclaim, rescue etc.), the animal is housed safely and appropriately and is receiving all required medical and behavioral care.

Most actions should be completed on the same day they are noted. Occasionally, it will be necessary to schedule the animal for an action on a defined date in the near future (e.g. spay/neuter surgery prior to release, pick up by rescue). When scheduled, note this on the animal's paperwork

and in its computer record so the action does not need to be re-recorded unless it fails to take place on the day scheduled.

The action list can double as a medical log for the veterinarian, or a separate medical log can be used. Actions requiring veterinary review can be highlighted for easy identification. If the veterinarian does not come in daily, note on the action list the date that the veterinarian is expected to check the animal.

Make copies as needed if several people will be working from the action list throughout the day. Review the action list at the end of each day (generally by the shelter manager). Because most actions will be completed on the same day they are noted, it may be easier to rewrite actions carried over from the previous day on a new action list. No more than 2-3 days worth of action lists should be kept at any one time.

If actions routinely carry over from one day to the next simply because staff time is not adequate, this is an indication that scheduling or planning needs to be reevaluated. Delaying procedures does not save staff time since they will ultimately have to be done and in the meantime, the animal will stay longer (increasing daily staff requirements) and will experience a delay in receiving needed care.

Additional Resources

Here are some wonderful additional resources to help your shelter implement daily rounds:

- ASPCApro webinar on [Daily Rounds – how to decrease length of stay](#)
- HSUS Shelter Medicine Fellowship presentation – [Maximizing movement through your shelter: daily rounds round-up](#)
- [Daily To-Do List template](#)