



Essential Capabilities of Animal Welfare of Arlington Volunteers

There are several animal care needs within the Animal Welfare League of Arlington that are typically fulfilled by volunteers who work with companion cats, dogs, and a variety of small mammals. To safely and effectively serve as a volunteer at the League, volunteers need to possess the following physical, mental, and emotional capacities:

Essential Physical Capabilities

- Quick reflexes and ability to use both hands simultaneously (example: open cage door while handling animal).
- High level of manual dexterity to leash/harness animals, handle small tools and to properly groom animals.
- Ability to travel unaided on unpaved, uneven, rugged and sometimes muddy and slippery exercise yard and lawn areas (when walking dogs outdoors).
- Ability to bend and squat in order to leash/harness and pick up an animal.
- Ability to stand for significant periods of time while walking dogs, assisting the public with visits, or cleaning cages/kennels.
- *Average vision to move safely around the building, to be able to observe animal body language without difficulty, and to be able to read notes on animals' paperwork.
- Average sense of smell and touch in order to assess body condition of animals, and to note signs of illness or injury.
- Ability to hear if animal is growling or making sounds indicating fear or pain.
- *Ability to speak and effectively communicate verbally as well as in written form.
- Ability to maneuver well in tight spaces and react and move quickly in order to prevent dogs or cats from escaping (example: ability to quickly pursue and retrieve any cats or dogs who have escaped from a kennel or cage). This requires average vision, hearing, steadiness of hands and body, quick reflexes, physical strength, and mental alertness.
 - Cats/Small Animals up to 30 lbs.
 - Dog volunteers must be able to control very large/powerful dogs (up to 110 lbs.) that often jump/pull and are often untrained.
- Capturing of loose and escaped animals with quick and quiet movements, and ability to use hands simultaneously with a blanket or net for capture.
- *Must not have strong allergies to dogs, cats or other companion animals that can't be managed by medication, or to chemicals used in grooming or cleaning.
- Ability to deal with strong and unpleasant odors, fleas, feces and possible wounds or injuries to animals in our care.
- *Ability to cope with a very loud environment due to animal noises.
- Must have the ability to judge an animal's reaction and to change voice to a soft or strong, authoritative tone in order to calm a dog's response or to give commands.

- Ability to push carts and barrels of laundry; load and unload washer and dryer; fold clean laundry and put away, reaching shelves from ground level up to six feet, using a step stool as needed.
- Possess immune system strong enough to tolerate exposure to zoonotic diseases such as ringworm and mange.

Essential Mental Capabilities

- *Ability to understand, remember and follow instructions and procedures.
- High level reading, writing, spelling and communication skills (example: understand words such as quarantine, euthanize and other common industry-related terms), and a mastery of the English language.
- Possess problem-solving capability.
- Ability to observe and evaluate response to handling for "matchmaking" purposes, as well as health and behavioral problems that are revealed during socialization.
- Must be aware of potentially dangerous situations when working with the animals, must be able to remain calm with animals who are upset; behave sensitively and confidently; show good judgment and act appropriately in these situations.
- *Ability to communicate well with citizens and provide customer service and education on topics reviewed during training
- *Ability to understand the role of the volunteer and accept the boundaries between the role of the volunteer and the role of the staff.
- *A very positive attitude and a solution-oriented approach.

Essential Emotional Capabilities

- Ability to cope with unexpected animal behavior without assistance.
- *Ability to cope with a highly emotionally charged environment with some animals that are homeless, abandoned and/or abused, as well as the reality that some of the animals in our care may be euthanized.
- *Ability to understand AWLA's policies and positions regarding companion animals, animal control, and other key animal welfare issues and an ability and willingness to appropriately and accurately represent those policies when interacting with the public or otherwise representing the AWLA.

Level of supervision

- *Once trained, must be able to work with minimal supervision, yet must recognize limitations in knowledge and abilities, and ask for help when needed.
- *Should be able to work independently as well as work within a team atmosphere with other volunteers and/or staff.

Other

- A fairly high level of experience and familiarity with cats, dogs and small companion animals and their anatomy, behavior and care is desirable.