

Kennel Worker Safety Meeting Kit



What's At Stake

Occupations like groomers, trainers, rescue workers, and veterinarians may kennel animals such as cats and dogs. Animal handling, unpredictable animal behavior, and repetitive cleaning, feeding, and treatment tasks mean that kennel workers need training, proper equipment and facility design, along with safe work practices.

What's the Danger

The Nitty – Gritty of Kennel Worker Safety

Animal assessment and PPE. Before you handle an animal, assess its health, stress level, and body language. A gentle animal can turn aggressive if startled, so protect yourself and the animal by using personal protection and handling tools. When working with cats, wear long sleeves and gauntlets to protect your arms. Use the appropriate glove for hand and finger protection from punctures (sharp cat teeth) or crushing (large dog bites).

Handling Tools. Use handling tools like a lead or leash to move or exercise gentle dogs. Cat tongs safely and humanely move aggressive and/or feral cats. A tether pole moves gentle and aggressive animals while keeping them away from your body. Secure animals by collar hooks or in the kennel/cage before you release them. Consider muzzles when you must closely handle animals for medical treatment or exams.

To avoid bites and scratches, don't lean on, walk close to, or place your fingers or face in or near a cage or kennel. Ideally, kennel and cage doors should open outward to avoid getting trapped inside a kennel or crushed between the door and jamb if an animal launches against the door.

Medical Procedures. During medical treatment, secure animals to the exam table or at floor level. Before you give an injection, secure a dog in a collapsible treatment chute or tethered at multiple points. For highly aggressive animals, use a safety stick pole for injections. Wear eye protection and a face shield to avoid splashes.

Ergonomics. Prepare yourself for unexpected animal movements that can push or pull you and cause strains and sprains. Use a wide foot stance for stability. Wear safety boots or shoes with non-slip soles for traction and protection from heavy animals. Hold small, gentle animals firmly and as close to the body as possible when transporting them or giving treatments. Don't lift larger animals; use ramps to move them into cages, trucks, and exam tables.

Facility Design Infrastructure. Proper facility design can prevent injuries. Surfaces

like stainless steel, solid surface, or formic, are washable and easy to disinfect. Use non-slip surfaces for walkways. Put wheels on cage units that you frequently move. Stacked cages with sealed compartments and removable waste trays reduce cleanup and avoid drips and contamination. Clip-on water and food bowls prevent tipping and waste.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

KENNEL SAFETY GENERAL TASKS

- Perform job tasks efficiently without rushing.
- Remain on task at all times unless your help is needed by a technician or doctor.
- Smile and maintain an even, friendly demeanor while on the job.
- Handle stress and pressure with poise and tact.
- Show respect for clients, team members, and animals (alive or deceased) at all times.
- Have the physical strength and ability to stand for an entire shift when needed and be able to lift pets and objects weighing up to 50 pounds without assistance, handle repetitive up-and-down or back-and-forth motions, and work while bending. Assist in lifting patients weighing more than 50 pounds.
- Maintain a list of tasks and engage in productive work during slow periods.
- Assist other employees as needed. Avoid waiting for coworkers to ask for assistance.
- Be willing and able to teach other staff members kennel skills.
- Conduct tours of the practice and/or kennel. Before each tour, ensure that the facility is orderly, and that staff and patients are prepared for tours.
- Be prepared to handle any pet or facility emergency that may arise, weather-related emergencies.
- Be aware of and on the lookout for things that could be considered abnormal regarding any and all of the hospitalized or boarding animals.
- Restrain pets in a manner that allows necessary work to be performed, minimizes stress to pets, and ensures the safety of pets and people.
- Know how to identify fractious pets. Notify technicians or doctors before handling these types.
- Aid veterinarians and technicians in evaluating incoming animals through examinations and health tests. Assist in administering immunizations.
- Maximize pets' comfort with a gentle and reassuring manner. Ensure birds and exotic pets' needs and environmental conditions are met, including proper housing, perches, bedding, and diet.
- Provide all patients with clean, soft bedding and fresh water.
- Walk dogs on a double leash within the fenced back area. Ensure that they are restrained and under your control.
- Provide individual or group playtime for boarders at clients' request and as directed by the practice or kennel manager. Ensure pets' safety and well-being at all times.
- Prepare meals according to clients' instructions, and feed animals. Note the volume of food eaten or rejected on cage cards or kennel logs.
- Withhold food and water from pets scheduled for or recovering from surgical procedures and anesthesia.
- Rinse and refill water pails and dishes at least once daily. Wash and disinfect them as needed during pets' stays.
- Monitor pets and kennels/cages for urine, feces, vomit, and blood. When noted, clean pets, runs, play areas, litter pans, and cages or runs immediately. Note incidents on cage cards or kennel logs.
- Collect and save urine and fecal samples as requested.
- Continuously monitor pets in your care. Pay particular attention to signs of distress, illness, or injury.
- Know the key symptoms of emergency medical problems likely to be exhibited by

boarders.

- Maintain hospital building and grounds cleanliness, alerting practice owner or manager if repairs are needed.

FINAL WORD

Any good dog boarding facility will proudly display their certifications, qualifications, and awards. You'll quickly be able to establish their reputation and time in the field. A kennel that doesn't have any kind of certifications or policies in place may keep you wondering how reliable they are, so be sure to check.