



Pet Helpers Adoption Center: Behavior Matrix/Protocol

Category	Definition	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Aggression - Dog to Dog	<p>Off leash interactions with other dogs resulting in conflict. Inability to notice common dog social cues.</p> <p>Includes selective dogs that can coexist with other dogs. May show fear based reactivity due to lack of socialization or genetics.</p> <p>Look for: Hard stare, growling, snarling, lunging, pinning, and/or overall offensive body posturing.</p>	<p>Aggression due to lack of socialization. Determine if aggression is specific to gender, type of dog, size, etc.</p> <p>Guidance of a social helper dog.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both on leash (tandem walks) and off leash (play yard). • Attempt with various kinds of dogs. • Goal: some type of solicitation (attention, play) 	<p>If behavior can be interrupted and dog is able to work with handler at reasonable distance from the other dog (approx. 10 feet)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training “look” & “leave it” in a minimally distracting environment • Establish a threshold to determine where the workable and unworkable zones are. • DS/CC to further lessen the threshold. 	<p>If the dog is unable to redirect attention towards the handler. If behavior results in hospitalization and/or death of another animal.</p>
Aggression - dog/human	<p>A complex series of behaviors leading up to a reaction that intends harm to humans.</p> <p>Look for: Threatening signals, such as growling, hard stares, ears back, stiff body, as well as escalating to bites with varying degrees.</p>	<p>Determine if there are any patterns in the behavior and who the behavior is being displayed to.</p> <p>Tooth contact on skin but no puncture (Level 1 & 2 on Ian Dunbar’s bite scale)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand feeding (both in kennel; 	<p>If patterns are identified in who behaviors are toward. Determine if behavior can be redirected and dog is able to focus on the handler at a distance approaching threshold (approx. 20-25 feet).</p> <p>Level 3a on Ian Dunbar’s bite scale.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one handler 	<p>Unable to interrupt behavior. Level 3b or higher on Ian Dunbar’s bite scale.</p>



		<p>and out if safe to remove.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify any triggers. Confidence building/obedience 	<p>directly working, positive and indirect interactions with other ACTs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DS/CC to identified triggers. 	
Aggression - Cat to Cat	Vocalizations, hissing, scratching, biting, tail twitching, stiff body, dilated eyes. Recommended to be in an only cat home.	<p>Redirectable, responsive to tools. If specific to place or type of person, consider moving locations or limiting triggers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the interactions closely with periodic interventions 	<p>Advancing towards target, low vocalizations, responsive to corrections occasional, piloerection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce cat to different community room 	<p>Low threshold to visual perceived threats, not responsive to redirection, unsettled in presence of other cats</p>
Aggression - cat/human (non feral)	Issues with humans that can include vocalization, hissing, scratching, biting, etc could be as a result of undersocialization.	<p>Hissing, swatting, cowering, hiding. Overall, based in fear or overstimulation (defensive aggression)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase space thereby increasing choice 	<p>Fractious behavior, attempting to bite, actively fleeing, wall climbing/cage jumping.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the TNR option as needed. 	<p>Active aggressive (offensive) moving towards target.</p> <p>If triggers are unmanageable, unidentifiable, unprovoked aggression and TNR is not an option.</p>
Aversion to Handling	Reacts negatively to the anticipation of being touched or when being touched. A dog may react defensively to only being touched in certain areas (i.e. paws, ears, mouth) or on many areas of their body.	<p>Lip licking, whale eye, dilated pupils, shivering/shaking, quick turns, flinching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using Fear Free 	<p>Growling, other vocalizations, attempt to flee, airsnap, swatting, and overall defensive responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using low restraint 	<p>Attempting to bite, muzzle punching, overall offensive responses.</p> <p>If an animal poses an extreme risk to</p>



	Freeze, growl, hiss, flee, air snap, bite or show other defensive behaviors when restricted or resistance is applied.	Handling methods to limit stress responses	<p>techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counter conditioning • Muzzle training 	handlers, sedation might be the safest option during medical assessments.
Barrier Reactivity (includes on leash and in kennel behavior)	Reactivity through fence, kennel, and/or windows towards other dogs, humans or other triggers. Displayed as barking, growling, lunging, snapping, and the potential to redirect onto handler.	<p>Barking and growling while staying in place as trigger passes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat Buckets(drive by treats). • Adding Privacy Filter • Begin hand feeding if reactivity is due to fear. 	<p>Approaching the barrier with the addition of snarling (deescalates when trigger is not present)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office foster to assess if behavior is generalized. • Offsite foster 	<p>Actively trying to get toward the trigger (body slamming the door). If barriers were not present contact would be made. Does not deescalate when the trigger is no longer present.</p> <p>If contact is made during handling (level 3 or higher)</p>
Bite History-dog/dog, human	Upon intake to shelter, the dog has a known bite history toward humans and/or animals. Questions to be considered; did the bite require vet visit? If so, what treatment is given? Was the issue between resident dogs? Was a trigger present? Is this a result of mismanagement?	<p>Snapping, air bite, either no contact made to skin or contact has been made but the skin was not broken.</p> <p>If minimal damage occurred and/or was due to handling and/or management error.</p> <p>Level 1-2</p>	<p>Shallow skin punctures can be multiple punctures.</p> <p>Level 3a</p>	<p>If it results in another dog being hospitalized or killed. Unprovoked bite</p> <p>Level 3b or higher</p>
Compulsive Behaviors	Presence of stereotypic behaviors such as spinning, tail chasing, self-mutilation, barking, shadow chasing, licking, etc. If behaviors are difficult to interrupt, disrupt daily life	Mild compulsive behavior that can be easily redirected with minimal interaction. Behavior seizes for a significant	Moderate compulsive behavior that is harder to redirect and becomes frequent.	When compulsive behaviors are more consistent than species-specific behaviors.



	and cause physical and mental damage.	amount of time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase enrichment • Decrease time spent in kennel (ie. office foster, doggie day out) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put into a different environment • Explore behavioral medication or offsite foster. 	If another environment produces no change and quality of life is compromised.
Defensive Aggression/ Fear Aggression	Barks, growls, bares teeth with fearful body posture (lowered head, tucked tail, ears back, whale eye) while attempting to increase distance between a perceived threat.	Cowering, lip licking, averted eye contact (lowered head, tucked tail, ears back, whale eye) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand Feeding • Treat Buckets (drive by treats) 	Growling, bares teeth, air snaps, retreats. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DS/CC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Treat and Retreat • Confidence Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Agility Yard • Helper Dog 	Level 3 or higher on Ian Dunbar's bite scale. If staff or volunteers cannot safely handle or the behavior becomes offensive.
Deterioration / Shelter Stress	Unable to display species specific behaviors (eat, drink, play, etc). Animals begin to mentally deteriorate and therefore physically deteriorate. Deterioration includes a decline in behavioral responses stemming from increased length of stay, stressors, and lack of/too much social interaction. Shut down is a shorter period of time where no positive or negative changes occurs (typically seen in the first few days of a animal's arrival) Refer to High Arousal - Dog (page 6) for jumpy/mouthy deterioration.	Not eating from the bowl, minimal solicitation to handlers or other animals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand feeding • Helper dog • Increase time spent out of the kennel (Doggie Day Out, Office Foster) • Consider behavioral medications 	Not eating, not soliciting attention from handlers or other animals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off site foster care, if determined to shelter specific behaviors • Reassess behavioral medications 	If no improvements are made, consider quality of life for long stay dogs (4 weeks after medication is monitored)



<p>Fear (Non Feral)</p>	<p>Displays fearful behaviors such as tucked tail, lack of eye contact, hiding in the back of the kennel, “pancaking”. Improvement would be logged by dogs being fearful but showing social signs to select/few individuals. Becomes comfortable in a consistent, stable environment.</p> <p>Distinction between feral and non feral would be the level of solicitation and capability of handling.</p>	<p>In the kennel the dog would be actively retreating from stimulus, no vocalizations, chooses avoidance behavior (no eye contact, whale eye, displacement behaviors)</p> <p>If the handler approaches and attempts to solicit attention, the dog will accept handling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hand feeding ● Helper Dog ● Increase in Cognitive Enrichment and/or Confidence Building 	<p>In the kennel remains stationary, dog continues to display escalating warning signals such as low vocalizations (whining, growling), eye contact (hard stare).</p> <p>If the handler approaches and attempts to solicit attention, body is stiff and continues to show uncomfortable body language with no improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider behavioral medications ● Increase time spent out of the kennel (Doggie Day Out, Office Foster) ● Consider a socialization foster. 	<p>Dog is actively fleely, will not allow contact, defecates in an attempt to flee. Dog might airsnap/attempt to bite.</p> <p>If foster is not an option, after 2 weeks of training in the shelter with no improvements, consider QOL.</p>
<p>Feral Dog</p>	<p>Dogs that were raised in an area with minimal to no human contact, especially during the critical puppy development phases. Deterioration is likely to be expected as they are in the confinements of a shelter environment. Fight or flight response is triggered immediately</p>	<p>Dog shows neutral to fear response when exposed to physical contact. Stiff body, feral mouth, tail tucked,</p> <p>Consider the role that genetics play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Socialization Foster ● DS/CC to presence of 	<p>Dog might attempt to slowly retreat or scan for exits from physical contact. Dog might not consume food in the presence of a human.</p> <p>Vocializes, showing signs of touch sensitivity and overall moderate fear responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify specific triggers for the animal (avoiding flooding) 	<p>With proximity to humans, dog might defecate or rapidly attempt to exit/retreats. Might escalate into fear based offensive aggression.</p> <p>Refer to deterioration, Consider QOL</p>



		humans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand feed 		
Feral Cat	<p>Cats that were raised in an area with minimal to no human contact, especially during the critical kitten development phases. Deterioration is likely to be expected as they are in the confinements of a shelter environment. Fight or flight response is triggered immediately.</p>	<p>Cat might freeze/ become catatonic in response to handling. Overall nocturnal behavior patterns to avoid the presence of humans.</p> <p>Consider the role that genetics play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialization Foster/Chart • DS/CC to the presence of human • Offer a longer period of decompression before attempting to interact 	<p>Upon proximity, cat might hiss, swat, spit, growl</p> <p>May witness hissing, spitting, swatting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore TNR options 	<p>Upon proximity, cat becomes offensive to their perceived threat, actively seeking escape/refugate. Cat will likely attempt to bite or make contact.</p> <p>Refer to deterioration, Consider QOL,.</p>
High Arousal - Dog	<p>Due to environmental stressors, dog displays increasingly high energy which is consistent with jumping on handlers, mouthing handlers, grabbing the leash with varying levels of redirectability/steerability.</p>	<p>Is able to be redirected quicker than the other stages by verbal intervention and body communication. Dog is jumpy/mouthy with little to no pressure.</p> <p>Adolescent high-energy dogs need more mental and physical exercise. High energy behaviors may increase when appropriate outlets and coping skills are neglected.</p>	<p>High arousal, difficult to redirect. Tools and/or defensive handling needed. Includes tug, leash biting, jumping at people, and excessive mouthiness with pressure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chain leash • Leash Link • Actively utilizing defensive handling • Increase time spent out of the kennel (Doggie Day Out, Office Foster) 	<p>High arousal, unable to redirect (ie, ripping clothing, Level 3+)</p> <p>If bite follows or if handlers are unable to work with or did not change behavior, consider QOL</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk with a toy, treats • Increase cognitive enrichment • Increase physical exercise 		
High Arousal - Cat	Becomes over aroused during interactions. Can escalate to biting or scratching	High arousal, quick recovery. (ex: play time can safely break up or end when you stop)	High arousal, slow recovery (ex: charging the door, not picking up social cues that play time is over).	Consider QOL
Prey Drive	Instinctive inclination to find, chase, and kill small animals.	Excessive chasing, stalking, pouncing but able to be redirected, refocus, and handled with no further concerns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Leave It” exercise • Emergency U-turns • “Look” or other focus exercises 	Might have killed a wild animal such as squirrels, birds etc <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DS/CC • Implement defensive handling • Recall Activities 	If an animal has killed another animal, which is a pet or actively seeks prey out.
Offensive Aggression	Behaviors to decrease distance. Barks, growls, bares teeth with forward body posturing (high tail, direct eye contact, ears erect, muzzle punch, weight bared to the front) while charging and/or moving towards target.	Barks, growls, air snapping, forward body posturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal will be designated specific handlers, limited contact and managed exposure • Drive by treats • 		Attempting to bite/makes contact.



<p>Resource Guarding/ Possessive Aggression</p>	<p>Aggression directed towards a person or animal when the dog feels threatened that a person or animal will take away valued resources.</p> <p>May or may not be shelter specific behaviors.</p> <p>May include; food, water, space, people, toys, bones and other objects with perceived value.</p>	<p>Body stiff, hoovers, whale eye when the trigger is in proximity to perceived high value items.</p> <p>Safer scores as 1-2, minimal intervention as long as retests do not show a progressively worsening score.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hand feeding ● Provide different mechanisms to consume from ● Increase in mental and physical. 	<p>Management on objects such as food, toys, and treats. Space or people may be more challenging and may need to be in an only pet household.</p> <p>Safer scores 3-4 (growls, body blocks, tense body, whale eye)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safer Modifications ● Free Feeding 	<p>If an animal begins to expand guarding behaviors and becomes difficult to manage/handle in the shelter.</p> <p>Safer Score 5 (biting)</p>
<p>Separation Anxiety</p>	<p>Distress when left alone that results in harm and damage done to self and property. May urinate or defecate on themselves.</p> <p>Improvements are logged by less destructive tendencies, less time restless (standing, barking, jumping, other vocalizations).</p>	<p>Increase in restlessness, vocalizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase time out of kennel with DS/CC to people coming and going in short durations ● Crate added to the kennel ● crate games ● Increase in cognitive enrichment 	<p>Continuous vocalization, pacing, excessive salivation, mild-moderate damage to property. Escapes confinement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider foster opportunities ● Consider behavioral medications. 	<p>Severe damage done to self and property.</p>