

Discontinuation of Onsite Cat Testing

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Research for the shelter's updated
protocol.

As of **September 7th, 2018**, the
Behavior Department will no longer
be conducting onsite cat testing for
adoptable dogs.



A foster kitten curls up beside a dog.

Reasons for Discontinuation

Stress to office cats. Dog interactions can cause undue stress to a shelter cat, causing an issue in regard to humane care. We strive to provide the lowest stress and most humane care for all animals at the shelter.

This informal assessment lacks scientific support. A standardized assessment that predicts the behavior of dogs with cats does not currently exist.

Creates unrealistic expectations in adopters. Per the ASPCA (2017), “Dog-cat introductions are unlikely to inform us about behavior in the home.” When adopters are provided with a “pass” or “fail” statement regarding the Cat Test, this places unrealistic expectations on the behavior of the shelter dog with their resident cat. Often, adopters then dismiss any education about gradual introductions provided to them by their Adoption Counselor.

Conversely, a dog that tests aggressively at the shelter during their Cat Test may have ideal interactions with a cat in a home environment following gradual introductions.

Variability. The shelter dog may respond differently to the adopter's cat than they did to the test cat. Additionally, the test cat may respond very differently to the shelter dog than the adopter's cat.

Research demonstrated that cats antagonized dogs more than dogs did cats! When pet owners were surveyed about how their dogs and cats got along, [these were the results](#), with most owners feeling their dogs and cats got along “amicably” (Psychology Today, 2018).

Alternatives to Onsite Testing

Manage adopter expectations by emphasizing education. Focus should be placed on adopter education during the adoption counseling process. Leading sources, such as the ASPCA, the American Kennel Club, and Best Friends Animal Society advocate use of gradual introductions between dogs and cats. By providing a Cat Test at the shelter, we are contradicting the very education we are providing to adopters. *See the Behavior Department Dog-to-Cat Introduction information sheet for guidelines.*

Collect and share in-home behavior observations. Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior! The shelter regularly collects information from sending shelters, foster homes, and owners surrendering their pets. All of this information is documented in Petpoint for easy reference in Placement Recommendation memos and Pet Personality Profiles (PPPs).

Provide post-adoption support. The Behavior Department actively provides *free* support for all customers that contact us! We regularly assist customers with integrating dogs and cats into the same household.

Resources

Gradual dog-to-cat introductions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTRjCFm2tUE>

<https://www.americanhumane.org/fact-sheet/introducing-dogs-to-cats/>

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/home-living/home/dog-chases-cat-dogs-and-cats-living-together/>

<https://bestfriends.org/resources/how-introduce-dog-cat>

<https://www.animalhumanesociety.org/behavior/how-introduce-dog-and-cat>

Evaluating multi-pet homes and predictive assessments:

[https://www.journalvetbehavior.com/article/S1558-7878\(17\)30239-3/fulltext](https://www.journalvetbehavior.com/article/S1558-7878(17)30239-3/fulltext)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/all-dogs-go-heaven/201807/how-well-do-dogs-and-cats-really-get-along>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/canine-corner/201703/why-do-dogs-react-cats>

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/09/080908135916.htm>

ASPCA Pro statements:

<https://www.aspcapro.org/blog/2017/05/05/can-we-predict-which-dogs-are-danger-cats>

<https://www.aspcapro.org/blog/2017/05/04/fido-good-cats>