

Transporting and Handling PAW Dogs

For handlers: before and after the show

- At your first couple of shows, you may just be asked to help out generally, but after that you can volunteer to hold a dog. Don't ever feel put down if you are listed as an extra holder at first. There is much you can do to help, it gives us a chance to get to know you, and you can see how things work at the shows.
- Help the Show Set-Up Person (usually at the PAW Info Table) with filling water bowls and act as an extra handler to give other handlers a break
- Come to the show early. Transporters may need help loading and unloading, since they are often transporting more than one dog.
- During the show, stay close to experienced volunteers and listen to their responses to inquiries from the public. Learning what to do and what to say/not say is very important.
- Spend time with the dogs, getting to know them, in preparation for handling them or telling prospective adopters about them.
- At the end of the show, consider offering to help a transporter get their dog to the car.
- Also, please consider helping to pack away the PAW table, signs, etc, and tidy up our space.

More Info for New handlers

- When you start handling dogs at shows, let the Show List Coordinator and Set-Up Person (at the show) know your comfort level with dogs (e.g., prefer smaller or quieter ones) and any physical limitations you might have in the show environment.
- When you are assigned a dog, go to the website to look at the bio. You'll want to be able to talk to prospective adopters about the dog (e.g., basics like age, breed, history, and temperament), and also so you know whether to keep him/her away from children or other dogs, if these are an issue.
- Some stores have chairs to lend and some don't, so bring your own if it's important to have one. Also, please bring at least two bags for poop!
- See the "At the show" section below for further information about handling a dog at shows.

For transporters: before and after the show

- Let the Show List Coordinator know if you can transport a dog to a show (or to a vet for treatment); the Dog Coordinator or a Kennel Coordinator typically makes appeals for vet transportation.
- Use the appropriate collar or other restraint when transporting and handling PAW dogs. Dogs can slip out of a flat collar, so they should also be fitted with a body harness or the type of collar that tightens when the dog pulls (*not* a choke chain, but a fabric one, also called a martingale or greyhound collar).
- ID tags are crucial! An escaped dog with no tags is in extra trouble. If you don't have a PAW tag available, you can temporarily borrow a tag from your own dog, provided it has a legitimate address/phone number on it. Or get a tag from the machine at the petstore – many handlers keep a couple of extra tags on hand. These tags should include PAW's phone number in addition to the volunteer's contact information.

- Restrain dogs when they are riding in your car. They can create hazards while you drive, or may jump out and get loose when you stop. Most dogs need to be crated or otherwise secured in the car. (If they are tied down, it should not be with the leash attached to a choke chain.) Consider using a seat-belt harness, available online and in most stores. You can also secure the leash in the car door, so it can be grabbed before door is opened. A final option is to attach a seatbelt through the loop of the leash or through the dog's harness.
- Have the leash in hand before opening the car or releasing the seat belt!
- Never leave dogs unattended in cars; they can suffer and possibly suffocate, even when it's not hot outside.

At the show

- For strong pullers, there are self-correcting body harnesses or head collars (Haltis, Gentle Leaders). But use one of these **only if** it is properly fitted and if you fully understand how it works, including limitations that could allow a dog to escape.
- For dogs that continuously pull and choke themselves throughout a show, use a harness. Ask a senior volunteer or set-up person to help you get one.
- Set up your chair at a reasonable distance from other volunteers. NEVER assume another dog will get along with your dog or vice versa. Dogs that are fine together in a yard can be reactive on leash.

- ✓ Always keep your dog close and in control.
- ✓ Never let go of the leash.
- ✓ Watch out for the potential to nip someone or to fight with another dog.
- ✓ **Pay attention**—customers often don't watch where their dogs are as they walk along.

Corrections:

- ✓ no hitting for any reason;
- ✓ keep corrections proportionate to the behavior;
- ✓ except in rare instances where necessary for safety reasons, no rough handling.

Acceptable corrections include (reasonable) yank of leash, stern "no," physical restraint that does not hurt the dog, or a squirt with a water spray bottle. Ask an experienced volunteer for help if necessary.

- Be aware of and courteous to customers at all times, and make sure neither you nor the dog blocks aisles. Be especially aware of customers with dogs or children. They are there to shop and may not have expected a store full of dogs. Just assume that, if anything happens, it will be seen as PAW's fault. Therefore, if a customer isn't watching his/her dog, move the PAW dog out of the way. Make sure customers' children don't overwhelm PAW dogs. You can do this either by moving your dog away or you can use the situation to teach the child how to meet strange dogs.
- Pay particular attention to children—some dogs react badly to children, parents don't always supervise, and kids can move fast. Don't hesitate to ask visitors politely to keep their children at some distance until you can see how the dog is responding. If at any time it seems that a dog is getting upset by a child's attention, you can be very assertive about telling them to step away or having the parent intervene.

- The table is usually staffed by seasoned volunteers. The table has adoption applications, a binder of all of our dogs and other information. It should also have anything you need for the dogs, including toys and treats.
- Feel free to work with your dog (e.g., teach him/her to sit). If feeding treats to other PAW dogs, first ask the foster or handler if it is OK. Don't let a dog have too many treats - it can make them sick.
- Don't give rawhides or other chews—they can trigger a fight. Do not give large treats—pieces that hit the floor can also cause fights. (In special cases where it's judged that a dog needs something to chew on to combat frustration in the show environment, this will need to be far removed from other dogs & closely supervised.)
- Most dogs love being brushed, and many of ours need grooming attention. Ask the show set-up person for grooming implements, but go slowly at first and make sure your dog welcomes this.
- A show is no place for rough play. If dogs are playing roughly, even if they're enjoying it, they should be restrained or separated so as not to cause a disturbance in or outside the store. Avoid tug-of-war and other rough human-to-dog games too.
- It is best to stay above the dog's level so he/she knows you're in charge.
- Keep your face away from the dog's face and monitor visitors in this regard. Shows are stressful and dogs can behave unpredictably.
- Give the dog a potty break at least once an hour, as well as regular access to the water bowl.
- If your dog seems overwhelmed or needs a break (i.e., barking or restless), feel free to walk him/her around the store or outside (just let the Set-Up Person or other volunteers know where you will be).
- If your dog has an accident in the store, immediately clean it up. The info table should have paper towels, as we try not to use Petsmart or Petco supplies. However, use the "oops" stations if needed, as it is best to simply clean it up as quickly as possible. The stores also have mops we can use for bigger messes.
- Don't take the dog into the cat section; this can traumatize the cats, and it is not a true test of how a dog will react to cats in a home.
- If you find yourself with a dog you're having trouble handling, don't hesitate to ask a senior volunteer or the table person to help you arrange a trade.

Talking with potential adopters

- We try to strike a balance between encouraging interest and conveying that there are no guarantees we'll adopt this dog to the applicant. Do *not* try to persuade an ambivalent person to apply for a dog.
- Let prospective adopters know that we evaluate each application on its own merits, trying to find the home that is best for *that particular dog*.
- If more than one visitor is interested in the dog, try to balance things so everyone gets to spend some time with the dog. Some prospective adopters will try to monopolize a dog in the hope of discouraging others or gaining priority for their application. After a reasonable time, thank them for coming and state that you now need to let others see the dog.

- Read the PAW dog adoption policy to understand PAW's policies. A major responsibility of dog handlers is to explain adoption procedures to prospective adopters – application, vet check, house check, adoption fee, etc.
- Generally, we don't give a lot of information re: how applications are evaluated or policies on issues like letting dogs off-leash in unfenced areas. We want adopters to be honest in their answers on the adoption application, rather than telling us what they think we want to hear. However, if asked whether we require a fenced yard, you can say "it depends on the dog" (an experienced volunteer can often give an opinion on whether the dog of interest needs a fenced yard; this allows prospective adopters who don't have a fenced yard to consider other PAW dogs). Do feel free to educate people – in a polite and low-key manner – about issues like invisible fences and unattended dogs left outdoors
- For security reasons, we do NOT tell show visitors/prospective adopters the names of the kennels we use.
- You do not need to know all the answers. You can always flag down a more experienced volunteer to provide information about the dog you're handling or about PAW adoption procedures.
- Listen to potential adopters. If the person seems very interested in adopting the dog you are holding and/or has filled out an application, please pass along any comments to the person at the PAW table. Try to get a family name in these cases. *Your feedback will be important when the adoption committee are considering that application.*
- Never hand a dog's leash over to a visitor or potential adopter. We don't know how dog-savvy they are or if they intend to take the dog; there can also be liability problems, as they have not signed a PAW volunteer agreement. Instead, if they want to take the dog for a walk, invite them to walk with you while you hold the leash.

Be observant

- Keep an eye on customers, their dogs, and their children.
- If you're handling a dog outdoors on a warm day, be aware that the dog should not be without shade for more than 5-10 minutes. If it seems too hot for the dog you're handling, move him/her indoors or at least go into the store to cool off at regular intervals.
- If you see any signs of illness, injury or aggression, let the Dog Coordinator, Medical Coordinator or another senior volunteer know immediately.
- Finally, remember that it is easy to get distracted talking to other volunteers or to prospective adopters, so that you fail to pay close attention to the dog you are handling. Keep your attention on your dog at all times.

Thank you for volunteering with PAW!