**PET-RELATED CONFLICT PROCEDURES**

A clear and fair conflict resolution process within the shelter will aid in managing any conflicts that arise. This process should be understood and followed by all staff members and residents.

Dealing with conflicts related to pet behaviour requires a balanced approach that considers the safety and well-being of staff, residents, and the pets. It is essential for staff to be empathetic and patient in conflict resolution to create a supportive environment for all shelter residents.

Situations in which staff or residents should seek the assistance of a supervisor to assist in resolving the conflict:

* Safety is at risk. If there is any immediate threat to the safety of individuals or animals involved, seek assistance immediately. Safety should always be the top priority including if there is harassment, threats, or any form of abusive behaviour.
* When direct communication between the staff member and the resident becomes unproductive, and no progress is being made in resolving the conflict.
* Repeated Incidents. When conflicts related to the pet's behaviour are recurring or escalate over time.

**Conflict between residents based on pet behaviour**

Conflict between residents at the shelter based on pet behaviour can be a sensitive issue that needs to be addressed promptly and effectively. In the event that this occurs, staff are instructed to:

* Ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals, including the resident, staff member, and any pets.
* Encourage residents to seek staff assistance when they encounter pet-related conflicts rather than attempting to handle them on their own.
* Encourage open and respectful communication between residents who are experiencing conflicts related to pet behaviour. Guide civil and non-confrontational discussions to help residents express their concerns, feelings, and needs.
* Make sure all residents are aware of the clear guidelines and rules regarding pet ownership within the shelter. Identify shelter policy that outlines acceptable pet behaviours and responsibilities, such as cleaning up after pets, controlling them on leashes, and respecting shared spaces.
* Outline designated areas within the shelter where pets are allowed, such as outdoor play areas or pet-friendly rooms and ensure pets are not in areas outside of these. This can help reduce conflicts over shared living spaces.
* Ensure that the pet owner/guardian is aware of resources available to them to address pet behaviour issues.
* If pet owner/guardians or residents consistently violate pet-related rules and guidelines, implement consequences such as warnings, loss of pet privileges, or, in extreme cases, requesting the owner/guardian and their pet(s) leave the shelter.
* Conduct regular check-ins with residents to address any ongoing conflicts and assess their progress in resolving issues related to pet behaviour.
* Keep records of pet-related incidents and conflicts, including dates, times, and descriptions of the issues (see Pet Incident Form).

**Conflict between resident and staff based on pet behaviour**

Consider involving a supervisor or management to facilitate a discussion between the staff member and the resident. This can help identify common ground and solutions.

When a conflict arises between a staff member and a resident based on the behaviour of a resident's pet, management are instructed to:

* Remind all staff members and residents of the shelter's mission and the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment for survivors of domestic violence, which includes the support of pets of survivors.
* Ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals, including the resident, staff member, and any pets.
* Listen to both the staff member and the resident involved in the conflict. Gather information on the specific incidents, concerns, and perspectives of each party.
* Review and clarify the shelter's policies and guidelines related to pet behaviour and pet ownership with both the staff member and the resident and/or pet owner/guardian.
* Ensure that both parties understand their respective rights and responsibilities.
* Collaborate with the resident to address and manage their pet's behaviour through training, behaviour modification, or professional assistance.
* Ensure that the resident is aware of resources available to them to address pet behaviour issues.
* Provide support and supervision to the staff member involved in the conflict, addressing any concerns or stress they may be experiencing. Ensure that the staff member's rights and well-being are protected.
* Monitor the situation after resolution to ensure that the conflict does not recur and that any agreed-upon solutions are implemented.
* Keep detailed records of the conflict, including dates, times, and descriptions of incidents. Document any steps taken to address the issue (see Pet Incident Form).

**Conflict between pets**

When a resident's animal displays aggressive behaviour at the shelter, prioritize the safety and well-being of all individuals, including both the residents and their pets. In the event that this occurs, staff are instructed to:

* Ensure immediate safety. If the aggressive behaviour poses an immediate threat to anyone's safety, including the pets, take necessary steps to secure the area and protect individuals from harm. Immediately separate the animals engaged in the conflict.
* Assess the situation, and the behaviour of the animal (or animals if more than one is involved), and try to determine the cause of aggression. Is the pet feeling threatened, anxious, or provoked by something specific? Identification of the trigger for the behaviour can aid in arriving at a resolution.
* Discuss the pet's behaviour with their owner/guardian. Discuss the safety concerns, triggers for the pet’s behaviour, and potential solutions with the owner/guardian.
* Regularly assess the pet's behaviour and the effectiveness of the interventions.
* If solutions are not successful, and the pet's aggression remains a significant issue, explore alternative placement options, such as with a trusted friend or family member, an animal welfare organization, or a foster home.
* Document each incident, including observations, actions taken, and communications with residents (see Pet Incident Form).

**If there are concerns about abuse and/or neglect:**

If the concerns are around neglect (e.g., not cleaning out the litter, not feeding pet, not walking dog, etc.):

* Have a conversation with the owner/guardian about what resources they may need to care for the animal properly.
* If the owner/guardian is not able to care for their pet at this time, work with the resident to make arrangements for an alternate place for the pet(s) to stay, for example, local rescue or BC SPCA.
* If the owner/guardian is not caring for the pet(s), and is not receptive to a conversation around need, remind them about the Pet Agreement and shelter rules which require them to care for the animal. If they are not able or willing to care for their pet at this time, work with the owner/guardian to make arrangements for an alternate place for the pet(s) to stay.

If the concerns are around abuse (e.g., overly harsh discipline, hitting or kicking the pet):

* Remind the owner/guardian that abusive behaviour of any kind is not allowed at the shelter. A conversation about what may have precipitated the behaviour is worthwhile.
* In cases where shelter staff identify abusive or neglectful behaviour towards animals by a resident, the resident may be required to seek alternative housing for the well-being and safety of the pet. [Agency] staff is committed to assisting residents in finding suitable alternative accommodation and providing support throughout the transition process, ensuring the best interests of both residents and their pets.