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Transport Protocol

Definitions

Source organization: An organization that is sending animals out on transport to another community.

Receiving organization: An organization taking in animals on transport from another community.

Purpose

With communities under shelter in place (SIP) orders, animal services should be an considered essential public service. Shelter operations including those focused on live outcomes such as adoption, foster, and rescue transfers should continue throughout this pandemic. Following NACA guidelines: Transport Transport/transfer in cases where shelters will become above critical capacity without these services, is considered an essential shelter service. Provided protocols are implemented that follow all CDC guidelines for sanitation and social distancing, transports can still safely continue to happen to ensure animals are not euthanized due to lack of a live outcome. There is no evidence of dogs and cats contracting COVID-19 or spreading it to other pets (Source: [CDC](#)). There are practical measures that can be put into place immediately to mitigate any transmission risk of COVID-19, therefore, all efforts should be made to ensure life or death transports continue.

Procedure

Immediately:

1. Flight & Ground Preparation, Transport, and Arrival:

- All transporters should follow the [CDC Prevention Guidelines](#) and should maintain safe distances from other people, avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth, and ensure all frequently touched surfaces are sanitized daily.
- Transporters should wash hands frequently following this [CDC Hand washing guide](#) and always wash hands after handling frequently touched surfaces such as gas pumps, steering wheels, door handles, doorknobs, phones, etc. If soap and water is not readily available,

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Due to COVID-19 Shelter in Place government mandates and to accomplish a 90% reduction in social interaction, while maintaining the practice that every pet who enters a shelter should receive urgent, individualized treatment and care, with the goal of a live outcome.

hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol should be used until the nearest handwashing station is available.

- Limiting groups of people congregating during transport preparation, departure, and arrival is crucial to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All staff and volunteers that are not necessary in the shelter should be working from home.
- Only the people that are essential to physically unload or load the transport should be present during departure and arrival.
- All personnel involved in loading or unloading vehicle(s) should be at least 6 feet from each other at all times.
- Essential staff and volunteers needed for transport should be split into teams and scheduled in groups so the same people are working together. (Ex: Team A, B, C)
- During transport preparation, staff and volunteers will need to work preferably in an open air space or in separate rooms, and separated by 6 feet in different stations. Ex: Foster check in, kennel labeling and preparation, health certificates etc all should be separated from each other. No more than 4 people should be working together at any given time.
- All animals should be relatively clean before going on transport, and after handling animals or cleaning kennels, people should thoroughly wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.
- All transport kennels should be thoroughly disinfected between animals and post transport, as should happen normally following best practices in sanitation. [Sanitation in Animal Shelters](#)
- For lifting heavy kennels into vehicles, no more than 3 people should be near each other during this process.
- During the load up of transport, the person should place animals directly into the vehicle themselves, instead of making close contact by handing off animals or kennels to another person.
- Ideally fosters and adopters will be scheduled for pickup after transport arrival so pets can move from one vehicle to the other.
- If dogs and cats are going to fosters' or adopters' homes, upon transport arrival, facilitate a "drive-through" style pick-up where the pet is brought out to their car. People can stay in their vehicle if they can maintain a 6 foot distance from the organization's representative (ie: larger vehicle's such as SUV's where the back door can be opened). For smaller vehicles, the person may need to stand outside their car while the animal is loaded up to maintain at least 6 feet from the organization's representative and the car inhabitants.
- Facilitate intake exams and any necessary vaccinations, preventatives etc. either in the transport vehicle or in the foster/adopter's vehicle with the car owners waiting outside, in order to minimize any congregation in the shelter unnecessarily.

2. Receiving organizations:

- **Follow all guidelines outlined in section 1 above for the preparation and arrival of animals on transport to ensure human safety and to prevent the spread of COVID-19.**
- If organizations have more available foster or adoptive homes than community animals needing rescue, and the organization is aware that animals are dying in other communities, every effort should be made to bring in transports from other organizations in need to fill these homes starting with the closest at risk animals first.
- Communicate the need to your community that fostering is critical, and recruit as many fosters as possible.
- Work closely with source shelters to determine if they are having to euthanize due to local government regulations preventing NACA guidelines from being followed or live outcomes being allowed directly to the public.
- Work closely with source shelters to confirm which animals are scheduled for transport and proactively market them to your community through photos and videos prior to arrival.

- Tag/Confirm as many animals as possible for adopters and fosters prior to their arrival instead of relying solely on kennel space for housing new intakes.
- Make it easy for the community to help by eliminating placement barriers. See [Open Adoption](#) and [Foster Protocol](#).
- According to [CDC Guidelines](#), unless the animal has been knowingly exposed to COVID-19, a bath is not necessary. If the animal has been exposed organizations should follow [Intake and Handling of Known COVID-19 Exposed Animal Protocol](#)

3. Source organizations:

This should apply to shelters who are facing euthanasia decisions due to lack of workforce, government policies that are causing the shelter to be full or layoffs.

- **Follow all guidelines outlined in section 1 above for the preparation and load up of animals on transport to ensure human safety and prevent the spread of COVID-19.**
- If allowed, send a plea to the community recruiting fosters that are willing to take a dog/cat into their home for a limited amount of time (~ 2 weeks). In the plea, outline the benefits of the short term commitment: (no adoption events, ideal for busy schedules etc). Follow up with all offers to help within 24 hours.
- Contact all existing partners to find out if their organization can schedule a transport with your organization, or increase the number of pets they can save on an upcoming trip.
- If organizations decline, ask if they would be willing to market your pets to their fosters or adopters to secure placements prior to arrival or if they have any other organizations they would recommend that can help.
- Ramp up outreach: Start by compiling a list of possible “leads” of contacts at national organizations* that can assist with matching your organization up to possible receiving partners. *Example national organizations: AmPA!, Best Friends Regional Director, Doobert partner map, etc
- Post your transport needs or route on network pages (AmPA Shelter & Rescue Support Page, Maddie’s Pet Forum, etc.) and ask if any partners would be willing to help by taking in any animals.
- Use the [Transport Partner Conversation Guide](#) as a template to ensure that the new partnerships are a good fit.
- If possible, in order to open kennel space, move any pet that is confirmed for an upcoming transport within 48 hours into temporary foster homes until their departure date.
- Focus efforts on transport within the state to decrease distance, cost, time, and resources. If there are no safe communities to transport to within the state, shift outreach efforts to out of state transport to the closest safe community.
- All animals should receive a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) or health certificate before interstate travel. All organizations should be aware of and follow all travel requirements of the destination state. These requirements as well as a listing of each state’s animal health officials can be found here: [USDA- APHIS Pet Travel](#)

Resources & Links

- Companion Animal Best Practices Transport Guidelines
https://cdn.ymaws.com/theaawa.org/resource/resmgr/files/2019/BP_Updated_March2019.pdf
- USDA APHIS Pet Travel Regulations:
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/pet-travel/interstate-pet-travel>
- Doobert uses technology to grow and strengthen transport programs by connecting rescue organizations and transport volunteers. Free to use: [Doobert.com](#)

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

AmPA! has virtual support services available for each of these protocols in the AmPA! COVID-19 Animal Shelter Preparedness Guide. For custom support or guidance on any of these protocols, or how to implement for your organization, contact us [here](#) and include "COVID-19 Support" in the message.