

Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue

Volunteer Handbook

(revised 10/28/2018)



Welcome

**Welcome!**

Thank you for choosing Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue! We rely solely on volunteers, and your contribution has a direct impact on our ability to rescue abandoned and unwanted animals. There are many volunteer opportunities available, including assisting with fundraising, providing transportation and actually caring for the animals.

Ahimsa (pronounced Uh-HIM-sa) is a concept popular in eastern religions, and means to do no harm, in thought or deed, to any living creature. Ahimsa Haven was incorporated in 1999 and is licensed by the Department of Agriculture as an animal rescue. We also have our 501(c)3 non-profit status from the Department of Revenue.

Founded as a foster-based rescue that financially supported Winchendon Animal Control, Ahimsa Haven opened its first shelter in 2013. In addition to the facilities in Templeton and Winchendon, we also use foster homes to shelter animals while they await forever homes.

We believe in finding the best match between families and the animals in our care. This means a more stringent application policy than some other shelters and rescues. All potential adoptive parents must show a consistent history of vaccination for prior pets (including heartworm preventative), and a stable residence of more than 1 year. Our organization does not condone the breeding of companion animals under any circumstances.

If you know of someone looking to adopt a pet, remember that we require a completed Adoption Application (available on our website). In the case that an adoption doesn’t work out, we require that the animal come back to us, regardless of how long ago the animal was adopted.

You’ll find more information about our organization on our website, [www.ahimsahaven.org](http://www.ahimsahaven.org/), including animals available for adoption (updated daily) upcoming events and tons of other information.

We look forward to working with you. Thank you for helping us save lives!

Nicole Roberts, President



Mission Statement

**Mission**

To rescue, rehabilitate and rehome companion animals.

**Motto**

To do no harm, in thought or deed, to any living creature.

**Values**

* We believe that companion animals are a part of their human family.
* We believe in finding the best match between the animals in our care and adoptive families.
* We believe that all pets should be spayed or neutered.
* We believe in working with local animal control agencies and rescue groups to help place animals.
* We believe in using positive training methods.
* We believe exercise and leadership are key to a successful human and animal relationship.

**Termination Policy**

Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc. reserves the right to terminate a volunteer’s service at any time, with or without notice. The following are some occurrences that may result in termination:

* Insubordination
* Stealing
* Use of alcohol or controlled substances
* Discourtesy/rudeness to another volunteer, staff member or citizen.
* Misrepresenting Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc. in any way
* Unauthorized communication with media sources regarding shelter policies or practices
* Negligent or abusive handling of an animal
* Careless or negligent performance of duties, including **failure to report for or perform duties without notice.**



Volunteer Guidelines

**General Guidelines**

This handbook is meant as a guide to help us all represent Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue in an informed and positive manner. We ask that you do your part by:

* Avoiding criticism/negativity to the public about Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue and its policies and/or members. If you have an issue or concern, please ask a supervisor!
* Refraining from foul language.
* Treating the public respectfully, including pausing personal conversations to make a potential adopter/donor feel like a priority.
* Wearing an apron, I.D. badge, or other provided device to identify yourself as an Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue volunteer.
* Dressing appropriately. Closed-toe shoes are required for animal handling tasks, and suggested for non-animal handling tasks.
* Refraining from promoting or soliciting for other businesses, organizations, political parties or religions while volunteering with us.
* Acting appropriately, professionally and positively on social media platforms in regards to Ahimsa Haven and animal welfare (see Volunteer Policies).



Volunteer Guidelines

**Social Media**

Our goals in the use of social media are to help get animals in our care adopted more quickly and raise support and public awareness of our rescue. Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue has a Facebook page, so liking it (and it’s posts), and sharing it’s content is the best way you can help. Please avoid foul language, negativity or judgement in commenting on these posts. Also, avoid viral animal posts designed to insight/provoke negativity, especially those with graphic or disturbing content. All posts you may make that involves Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue or animal welfare should directly relate to our goals.

**Drugs and Alcohol**

Drugs (including tobacco) and alcohol are not to be used by volunteers during activities. The sale, use, possession or transfer of a controlled substance or alcohol during volunteering is prohibited.

**Vehicle Usage**

Volunteers who must use their own vehicles in the pursuit shelter business will not be covered against accidents and injury. All drivers are required to have a current driver’s license and auto insurance.

**Media Contacts**

If you are contacted by a reporter or representative of any TV, radio, newspaper or magazine reporters, or by other media reps, you need to direct him or her to the President. No staff member or volunteer may make statements to any member of the press without permission of the President.



Our Commandments

**Commandments of Shelter Conduct**

This is a guide for both volunteers and visitor.

1. Vistors shalt not pick up the kitties. Not all cats enjoy being held. Attempts at hugging, cuddling or holding cats (who are not in their home environment and therefore stressed) invites injury.
2. Thou shalt not climb into a dog run to cuddle with a dog. This is their only personal space.
3. Thou shalt not put thy face within close proximity to any animal.
4. Thou shalt treat the animals with kindness at all times. Hitting, yelling and other forms of torment will not be tolerated.
5. Thou shalt not introduce dog treats or toys in the presence of other dogs. This reduces the temptation for conflict.
6. Thou shalt not forcibly pull cats out of enclosures or hiding places. Please respect their personal space.
7. Thou shalt closely supervise children under 18 AT ALL TIMES, to ensure they are adhering to all commandments.

**The Reality**

Personal injury is an inherent risk of interacting with shelter animals. Animals can be unpredictable. Animals here are under stress. **You are at risk of injury.**



Bites + Scratches

**Protocol for Bites and Scratches**

Aside from the risk of rabies, bites and scratches can lead to serious infections requiring hospitalization. Therefore, in the event that a volunteer or visitor is bitten or scratched by an animal, following procedures must be followed:

* All cuts, scratches, bites and abrasions must be immediately and thoroughly flushed and washed in copious amounts of warm, soapy water. The incident must be immediately reported to an Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue supervisor, regardless of the severity of injury.
* The injured party will be urged to seek medical attention. If the injured person refuses to seek medical attention, he/she must sign a statement to that effect, which will be attached to the Incident Log. Medical costs will be the responsibility of the volunteer.
* IN CASES OF BITES: **The animal must be immediately isolated in its enclosure, and have no further interaction with the public, regardless of the severity of injury.** The enclosure should be labeled as such. The local health department will be contacted and their procedures regarding rabies quarantine will be followed. This will require a minimum of ten days confinement. Failure to comply with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' protocol on bite incidents can result in the loss of our "approved shelter" status and closure of our shelter.
* **Failure to report an injury, or follow the protocols outlined here, will result in immediate dismissal.**



Disease

**The Presence of Disease**

We vaccinate each animal upon entry (if no vaccine history is available) to limit widespread disease in the population and protect each individual animal as much as possible, but vaccines are not a guarantee against infection.

Disease can be transmitted in several ways, and we must work diligently to prevent transmission as much as possible. The 5 main modes of disease transmission are:

* Direct contact (one animal to another, such as nose to nose)
* Fomite (indirect) transmission (germ transmission on an inanimate object, such as a mop, hand, shirt)
* Aerosol (in the air, such as via a fan)
* Droplet (sneezing, coughing, less than 1 meter distance transmission)
* Vector (via a flea, mouse, tick)

**Common Diseases**

Common diseases seen in shelter environments include: feline upper respiratory infection and canine infectious upper respiratory disease (kennel cough). These are spread mainly through aerosol, droplet transmission and through fomite transmission, such as via the hands, feet and even on clothing of staff and volunteers.

**Limiting Transmission of Disease**

Please wash your hands (use hand sanitizer) between handling each animal and/or wear disposable gloves. Sanitizer bottles and dispensers are located throughout the kennel area. You do not have to sanitize your hands between the mother and puppies or kittens in a litter, but you must do so before you interact with another dog or cat.

Other diseases, such as parvovirus in dogs and panleukopenia (the cat form of parvo virus), are spread mainly through fomite transmission of bodily secretions, such as vomit and feces. These viruses are very environmentally hardy and can be difficult to eradicate from the shelter environment if proper sanitation procedures are not in place.

Staff or volunteers who observe animals exhibiting any signs of illness (such as diarrhea, vomiting, sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge etc.) should immediately notify the kennel supervisor or vet clinic staff.



Limiting Disease

**Everyday Practices that Help Prevent Spread of Disease**

Additional everyday practices that can help to prevent the spread of disease include:

* Report any animal that appears sick to the kennel supervisor or the vet clinic immediately. Signs to watch for are:
  + Diarrhea or vomiting
  + Eye or nasal discharge
  + Sneezing or coughing
  + An animal that hasn’t eaten in 24 hours
  + Lethargy (lack of energy) or unresponsiveness
  + Dehydration or excessive drinking
  + Abnormal gait or muscle control or signs of obvious injury
  + Excessive salivation
  + Blood in stool
  + Animals that haven’t urinated in a day or defecated in 3 days
* Wash your hands between animals.
* Do not let animals housed apart interact or touch noses.
* Immediately pick up all feces once a dog has defecated on the grounds.
* After picking up feces, wash and then disinfect any cement or solid surface.
* Any time you disinfect, rinse or wipe the area thoroughly.
* Wash the laundry and dishes according to the posted written protocol.
* Don’t keep dirty dishes lying around – take them to the dirty dish bin quickly.
* Change trash liners on a regular basis; don’t let the trash receptacles overflow.
* Sanitize equipment such as coaxing sticks between cats; disinfect control poles and pooper scoopers between use.



Safety

**Animal Handling Safety**

This information is a general overview of safe animal handling practices. When handling animals, be sure to:

* Take your time.
* Don’t over stimulate the animal.
* Remember that the animal may perceive a threat, even though you do not intend to threaten.

With any animal:

* Inform a supervisor immediately if an animal is displaying signs of aggression and/or may be a threat to other animals or people.
* Wear protective gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and shoes with closed toes (no sandals) to reduce the degree of injury from bites and scratches. **If you have questions, ask a supervisor.**

**If you do not feel comfortable handling an animal, DON’T!!** Get a supervisor to help you - don’t risk getting dragged, scratched or bitten!

Board of Directors



**Nicole Roberts, President**

As a 16+ year resident of Templeton, Nicole's community connections have been a great benefit to the shelter. She's been an employee of Salvadore Chevrolet for several years and is a licensed Real Estate agent. She currently works for the Town of Winchendon. Nicole also serves on Ahimsa's Operations and Fundraising committees.

Contact Nicole: n\_roberts@comcast.net

**Brenda Bourque, Treasurer**

Brenda serves as Ahimsa's Treasurer. Her career in banking makes her a great candidate to oversee our finances. She is the Assistant Vice President at Federal Family Savings and works closely with that institution's Board of Directors. She is a devoted cat parent.

Contact Brenda: burkie50@hotmail.com

**Ed Poulin, Vice President & Secretary**

Ed started volunteering for Ahimsa in 2013 in order to help his daughter gain volunteer hours for high school. Quickly, working at Ahimsa Haven became a family affair with his wife and son joining in to help. Ed spent much of the last decade caring for his children while his wife kept the family afloat. Prior to that he was a Thermodynamics Engineer for Lockheed Martin. Currently, he is working part-time at PetSmart in Leominster, Massachusetts to fund his growing comic book collection and his family's ever increasing menagerie. Ed also serves on the Operations and Fundraising committees.

Contact Ed: ednmich@aol.com

**Erin Lovett**

Erin serves as Animal Care Coordinator for Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue. A graduate of Massachusetts College of Art, she has several years’ experience in animal health and handling in the veterinary practice setting, where she also designed and implemented fundraising initiatives and collaborative efforts with local shelters and rescues. She has also worked as feline care manager at Baypath Humane Society. Erin also serves on the Operations committee.

Contact Erin: kittymepink@yahoo.com

**For Your Records**

**Care and Caution Agreement**

Interacting with shelter animals exposes you to injury and illness.

It is expected that volunteers conduct their duties with care and caution, to reduce the risk of illness and injury to themselves, to the animals they care for, and to the public. This includes (but is not limited to): keeping animals under safe control at all times; practicing good sanitation habits and disease control preventatives; watching each individual animal for signs it gives you and handling appropriately; and making use of the information provided on each animal's cage card and by electronic or verbal communication when making choices on how to handle (or not handle) the animal.

Volunteers who do not conduct their duties with care and caution will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate dismissal.

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Volunteer Signature Print Date

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Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc. Rep. Print Date



For Your Records

**Volunteer Release**

1. I understand that I will be handling animals while providing my volunteer services for Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc. and their participating rescue partners and therefore there exists a risk for personal injury. On behalf of myself, my heirs, personal representatives, and executor, I release, discharge, indemnify and hold harmless Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc., its agents, servants and employees from any and all claims, causes of action or demands of any nature or cause connected with my volunteer contract. This could include any costs, attorney’s fees and court costs incurred by Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc. in connection with my volunteer services based on damages or injuries which I may incur in any way while volunteering. Such damages are not limited to but may include animal bites, accidents, injuries and personal property damage.

2. I agree to release, discharge, indemnify and hold Ahimsa Haven Inc. harmless for any and all damage to my personal property while providing my services on a voluntary basis to Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc., its agents, servants and employees.

3. I understand that public relations are an important aspect of volunteer work at Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc. I, therefore, agree on behalf of myself, my heirs, personal representatives, and executors to allow Ahimsa Haven Inc. and its agents to use any photographs, video or film taken of me for use in public relations efforts. Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc. will use all reasonable efforts to notify me but notification is not required for the photographs, video or film to be used for public relations purposes.

**I** (Print Name)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **HAVE READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT AND I WILLINGLY COMPLY WITH ALL OF ITS CONDITIONS.**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Date Volunteer Signature

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:

Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc. Representative Signature

**Parent or Legal Guardian Release** (Volunteers 18 or younger)

As the parent or legal guardian of the above volunteer, I give my full consent to allow my child or ward to volunteer services for Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc. and its agents as described in the above volunteer contract. I have read and fully understand the terms and conditions in this volunteer contract. On behalf of myself and my child or ward, I agree to all the terms and conditions outlined in this volunteer contract. I agree to be present and supervise all activities undertaken by my child or ward, to ensure they comply with the terms and conditions outlined in the Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue, Inc. volunteer handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date Parent or Guardian Signature



**Emergency Contacts**

**In Case of Emergency (Voluntary information)**

Every once in while we need to contact someone on your behalf in case of emergency. We ask that you please submit the following. It is up to you, of course, but we would appreciate any information you can provide that would help us in case something happens to you.

Thank You,

Nicole Roberts, President

**Your Name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact Name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact Number(s)**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact Email**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Medical Information That Might Be Useful For Us To Know (ex. allergic to bee stings...)

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