



Policy Manual

Last Revised 3/22/2012

This manual is intended to provide a general understanding of our shelter policies. It will not be able to answer every question or predict every situation. Please contact the shelter staff with any questions.

GFAS Policy Manual

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City of Great Falls Animal Shelter

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***Office Hours:** Monday – Saturday, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm
***Kennel Viewing & Adoptions:** Mon – Sat, 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Closed All City Holidays

Hours are subject to change



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INTRODUCTION

The City of Great Falls Animal Shelter (GFAS) Policy Manual has been created to provide a general understanding of our shelter policies. It will not be able to answer every question or predict every situation. Please contact a shelter staff member with any questions.

SHELTER DESCRIPTION

The GFAS is operated by the City of Great Falls and is operated as a municipal animal shelter, which serves the residents of Great Falls, Cascade County and surrounding areas. The shelter has the ability to house 114 animals at one time, yet the average monthly intake is 191 animals. GFAS uses many resources to try and find homes for every adoptable animal either by adoption, foster home or rescue group.

ADOPTION POLICY

The GFAS makes every effort to insure an animal adopted from the shelter is placed in a responsible, loving, and forever home. To attempt to insure every animal is placed in an appropriate home the following policy is utilized.

1. After the required holding time (*See “Impoundment Policy” page 6 for hold times*), the animal is placed on PetFinder.com and is available to the public for adoption.
2. Anyone interested in adopting an animal is required to complete an Adoption Application. Applications may be submitted in person, email or fax. Verbal applications are not accepted.
 - a. Applications are only accepted from the intended owner. Applications will not be accepted for animals being adopted as a gift.
 - b. A citizen can complete an adoption application at any time for any animal. The shelter staff will time and date stamp each application and then either mark it approved, denied, or pending.
 - c. Adoption Applications are valid for thirty (30) days.
 - d. Generally, each animal is adopted on a “first come first serve” manner. At noon on the day the animal becomes available for adoption, that said animal will be adopted to the first approved applicant.
 - e. Once the applicant is approved, they may place a 24-hour hold on the animal they are interested in to insure they are making the right decision. If this approved applicant does not return to the shelter and officially adopt the said animal, that animal will be adopted to the next approved applicant on the list.
 - f. The submitting of an Adoption Application does not guarantee eligibility to adopt. Here is a list of a few eligibility requirements:
 - i. Current rabies vaccination is required on pets already residing with the applicant.
 - ii. Current City license is required on pets already residing with the applicant.
 - iii. Landlord approval is required (if applicable)



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3. Once the Approved Applicant chooses to adopt an animal an Adoption Contract is completed with the Shelter staff.
 - a. Please see the Shelter Fee List for adoption prices.
 - b. All animals being adopted from GFAS must be altered (spayed or neutered). In most cases, when the animal being adopted has not been altered, the shelter will transport the animal to the veterinarian the day after the adoption (or the earliest available time) and the new owner will be able to pick up their newly adopted pet directly from the veterinarian. In the few instances where the animal may not be able to be altered at that time (too young), an alter deposit may be required. Please inquire with the shelter staff.

ADOPTION RETURN POLICY

The goal of the GFAS is for every animal at the shelter to be placed in a responsible, loving and forever home. The GFAS understands that in some cases, the adoption may not be the “right fit” for the pet or the new owner. The following policy is utilized to allow adopters to return the pet to the safety of GFAS.

1. If after the initial veterinary examination, per the adoption contract, the animal is deemed in such poor health that major medical treatment is required; the adopter may return the animal to GFAS for a refund of the adoption fees or may exchange the animal for another available animal of their choosing. This refund or exchange must occur within ten (10) business days of the adoption and written documentation from the veterinarian is required. Any acquired veterinarian expenses will not be refunded.
2. City of Great Falls residents concerned about whether or not an animal may be a “good fit” for their home and family are encouraged to participate in the “Paws-Ability Program.” This is a seven (7) to fourteen (14) day trial period for animals and their potential owners. Candidates must submit an application, be approved and pay the appropriate fees. Eligible animals for the program must be at least six months of age, available for adoption and altered (either before or at the time of adoption). At seven (7) days, the potential new owner has the option of adopting, returning the animal or determining if an additional seven (7) day extension is needed. At the end of the fourteen (14) day trial period the new owner has the option of officially adopting the animal or returning it for a full refund. Those interested in participating in the “Paws-Ability Program” should see a GFAS staff member for more information.
3. For those who have chosen to not participate in the Paws-Ability Program and are interested in returning an adopted animal, Please see the Owner Surrender section of this Policy.

OWNER SURRENDER POLICY

GFAS understands situations arise where an owner can no longer care for their pet. In these instances the GFAS encourages owners to seek out as many resources as they can to assist them. Sometimes neighbors and/or other family members can assist in finding a new home for the pet. Veterinarians and/or local pet stores may assist in training if behavioral issues are the need for



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re-homing. When an owner deems it necessary to surrender their animal to GFAS, the following policy is utilized.

1. The owner will complete an Owner Surrender profile to provide as much information to GFAS about their animal as possible. The staff needs to know the animal's behavior and current living situation. This will aid GFAS in finding a new appropriate home for this animal.
2. GFAS will also need any veterinary records available. If the owner does not have records available the staff will need to know the name of the veterinary office used. GFAS should be able to receive copies of the records. This will also aid in finding a new appropriate home for this animal and to verify what vaccinations this animal has been given and other related issues concerning the animal.
3. There will be a \$10 surrender fee assessed to help offset the cost of processing the animal for entrance to the shelter.
4. The average cost for care and housing an animal is \$265. The staff will encourage the owner to make a donation in whatever amount can be afforded at the time to help cover the cost of caring for the pet until a new home can be found.
5. Once an animal is surrendered to GFAS, that animal becomes property of GFAS, and the previous owner relinquishes all rights to obtain further information on the disposition of that animal. However, GFAS does have a **24-hour Remorse Policy**. If the owner surrenders their animal to GFAS and decides they would like their animal back, within 24-hours of the surrender, GFAS will return the animal to their owner. Cost of Care and Processing fees may apply. Please see the Shelter Fee List.
6. The **Remorse Policy** does not apply to owners who have chosen to surrender their animal due to Impoundment/Redemption Fees.
7. The surrendered animal will be available for adoption after a 24-hour hold time.

IMPOUNDMENT POLICY

GFAS is responsible for the housing and care of animals brought in by City of Great Falls Animal Control, strays found by the surrounding area citizens and owner surrenders. Please visit www.greatfallsmt.net for the current City Animal Ordinances (Title 6 Animals, Chapter 8 Animals) and more information on why an animal may be impounded at the shelter. GFAS makes every attempt to reunite a stray animal with their owner; the following policy is utilized to attempt to insure this.

1. Every animal entering the Shelter shall have an Impoundment Sheet and a Health Check Form completed. An impound number is assigned and vaccinations are given. The animal is placed in a kennel where they are kept while waiting to find their owners or a new home. The impoundment sheet will include the following:
 - Location found.
 - Animal description and other information such as collar, injuries, identification etc.



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2. Every animal is scanned for a microchip. If GFAS finds this animal has a microchip a staff member will attempt to contact the current registered owner. If this is unsuccessful, the animal will be available for adoption after a 96-hour hold time (excluding Sundays and holidays).
3. If the animal is wearing a collar with a rabies tag, license tag, or any other identification tag, the Shelter staff will proceed to try and contact the owner using any and all contact information available. If this is unsuccessful, the animal will be available for adoption after a 96-hour hold time (excluding Sundays and holidays).
4. If the animal does not have any identification tags or microchip, the animal will be available for adoption after a 72-hour hold time (excluding Sundays and holidays).
5. If the animal was owner surrendered, that animal will be available for adoption after a 24-hour hold time (excluding Sundays and holidays).
6. In the event that a pet owner chooses to surrender an animal, in lieu of paying impoundment fees the owner may choose to adopt the animal, but will be required to submit a GFAS Adoption Application and is subject to the GFAS Adoption Policy and all associated fees. Each animal at the shelter is adopted on a “first come first serve” manner; as such the GFAS cannot guarantee the animal surrendered will be available for adoption.
7. The steps to reclaim a lost pet are listed below in the Redemption Policy.

REDEMPTION POLICY

GFAS makes every attempt to reunite a stray animal with their owner, however in order to offset costs associated with the operation, redemption fees are assessed. Please see the Shelter Fee List for redemption fees. To insure the animal is reunited with their correct owner the following policy is utilized.

1. No one except the owner of the animal may redeem the said animal.
 - a. If the animal’s owner is out of town and wants to have an individual pick-up the animal at the shelter, the owner must write a statement allowing this particular individual to pay the fees and pick-up the animal. (Emails and faxes with a signature are a valid form of communication)
 - b. If there are any discrepancies of ownership, the owner must provide proof of ownership. Forms of proof may be a veterinarian bill with the owner name and animal description, rabies vaccination proof from their veterinarian, or a City license proof.
2. When reclaiming a pet, the owner will look through the kennels to verify GFAS has their pet. Once their pet has been located the owner will display a valid picture ID, complete the redemption paperwork and provide proof of current rabies vaccination and proof of current City license. If the owner does not have these proofs, it may be obtained by calling their veterinarian. If the required proofs cannot be verified, the owner will be charged additional redemption fees. The total redemption fees are calculated by adding the four categories below:
 - a. A Per Visit fee is assessed. That fee is doubled if proof of City license is not verified.



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- i. If the owner purchases a City license at time of redemption, the Per Visit fees shall be charged at the lower ‘Licensed’ rate. Note - City licenses can only be sold with proof of rabies vaccination.
 - b. A Rabies Deposit is assessed if the animal does not have a current rabies vaccination. The owner will have thirty (30) days to reclaim the deposit fees by providing proof from the veterinarian the rabies vaccination has been given. The refund will be received via mail in 15-20 business days.
 - c. A one-time Processing fee is assessed to all animals entering the shelter.
 - d. Cost of Care fees are assessed as a daily charge congruent with the number of days the animal stayed at the shelter. Please see the Shelter Fee List for more details.
3. After all redemption paperwork has been completed and all redemption fees have been paid the animal and owner are reunited to go home.
4. If the owner chooses to leave their animal in the shelter, without officially surrendering the animal to GFAS, that person may face legal charges.

LICENSE POLICY

Pursuant to current City Ordinance (Section 6.8.040 – Dog and Cat Registration) all dogs and cats over the age of six (6) months, must be licensed. A City license cannot be sold without proof of a rabies vaccination. City licenses may be purchased with proof of rabies vaccination at the Great Falls Animal Shelter and numerous participating local veterinarians. A City license is not required for pets residing outside the city limits. Please see the Shelter Fee List for current licensing fees.

- A current City license is the best way to ensure a pet is returned to their owner. If a stray animal is picked up by Animal Control or taken to the Shelter, the animal is immediately checked for identification. If the identification is current the owner’s are immediately contacted and the animal can be taken home if they are still with an Animal Control Officer. If they have already been impounded at the Shelter the owner can pick the animal up as soon as possible and keep the accumulation of fees down to a minimum.

Pursuant to City Code (6.8.080 & 6.8.090) other animal licenses or permits may be required for purchase, including:

1. Multiple Animal Permit
2. Hobby Breeder Permit
3. Commercial Kennel License

RABIES VACCINATION POLICY

Pursuant to current City Ordinance (Section 6.8.030 – Vaccination required) all dogs, cats, ferrets, and horses over the age of six (6) months, must have a current rabies vaccination. Rabies vaccinations must be administered by a licensed veterinarian. Enforcement issues pertaining to an animal that has bitten a human or other animal is done by Animal Control Officers under the authority of the City of Great Falls Police Department.



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EUTHANASIA POLICY

It is the goal of the Great Falls Animal Shelter to have as many animals redeemed, adopted, placed in foster homes or with rescue groups as possible. GFAS respects quality of life for its animals and in some cases humanely euthanizing an animal is the final act of kindness that can be shown to dangerous animals, animals involved in bite cases, feral animals, or animals sick with an illness not treatable using available resources. However, humanely euthanizing any animal is viewed as an alternative, only after careful consideration of the Operations Director and Shelter Veterinarian, and only as a last resort. To insure no animal is prematurely euthanized without exhausting every resource the following procedure is followed.

1. GFAS cannot euthanize an animal until its stray hold time of 72-hours has passed or if deemed necessary by the GFAS contracted veterinarian.
 - a. This does not mean the shelter veterinarian will automatically euthanize. Many factors are involved before the decision is made.
 - b. During this 72-hour hold time (96 hours if the animal has identification) the shelter staff tries to make contact with any possible owners.
 - c. If no contact is made with an owner the animal will be placed up for adoption after the 72-hour or 96-hour hold time; whichever is applicable.
 - d. If space becomes an issue (after the applicable hold time) and an animal has not been adopted, been placed in a foster home, or been placed in a rescue group, GFAS may consider that animal unadoptable.
2. The Operations Director or other appointed staff member and the contracted shelter veterinarian must authorize every animal being humanely euthanized by the shelter contracted veterinarian.
3. Every animal being euthanized will be scanned for a microchip for a third time before being humanely euthanized to insure a possible identification cannot be found.
4. Any animal that has received an euthanasia recommendation due to pain from injury or illness will be euthanized immediately to prevent prolonged and unnecessary suffering. The euthanasia must be authorized by the Operations Director and the shelter contracted veterinarian.
5. Any animal that has a confirmed contagious illness and cannot be isolated for the stray period will be immediately euthanized. The euthanasia must be authorized by the Operations Director and the shelter contracted veterinarian.
6. Any feral animal will be humanely euthanized by the contracted shelter veterinarian as these animals are considered unadoptable.
7. Any animal that has been involved in a bite case will be humanely euthanized after all the appropriate court cases and approval has been met.

CREMATION SERVICES

Pursuant to current Montana statutes and rules, there are restrictions on the manner in which a deceased animal may be disposed of. (ARM 17.8.604, MCA 75.5.605, MCA 75.10.212-214)



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The Great Falls Animal Shelter offers cremation services, not only to the shelter animals that have been humanely euthanized, but also to the public for when their loved ones have crossed the 'Rainbow Bridge'. We treat all animals with dignity, respect and compassion, and we apply these same ethics when their lives have ended. GFAS will not euthanize an animal for the public. Contact a local veterinarian for this service. Please see the Shelter Fee List for current cremation services fees.

DONATION POLICY

All donations from the public, whether monetary or tangible, are accepted and greatly appreciated. A separate account has been set up to accept monetary donations for the GFAS. A receipt will be written for the value of the donation for the patron's records. Memorial donations may be set up in a person's or animal's memory. Please contact a staff member with questions. All checks must be written to the GFAS or the City of Great Falls Animal Shelter. Any checks written to the Humane Society cannot be accepted, as we are separate entities.

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Volunteers can play a very important role in the operation of a shelter. All citizens interested in becoming a volunteer at GFAS must complete a Volunteer Application. These applications are at the Shelter or may be found on our City of Great Falls web site, www.greatfallsmt.net. Once the application is accepted all volunteers will complete an extensive Volunteer Orientation and detailed training before entering the Volunteer Program.

