



Volunteer Manual

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Welcome!

Welcome to Rabbitats Rescue Society! We appreciate your willingness to share your time and talents to help care for our bunnies. As a 100% volunteer-based organization, we rely on the dedication of individuals like you to ensure the well-being of the animals in our care.

We understand that volunteering at an animal rescue can be challenging, but it is also incredibly fulfilling. Your love for animals has led you here, and we hope that you will develop a strong commitment to the welfare of our rabbits and to working alongside our staff to achieve our goals.

Volunteering with animals can be an emotional journey, with both highs and lows. But the joy of giving back to those who cannot help themselves makes it all worth it. Remember that your skills and commitment can make a real difference in the lives of our bunnies and in our community.

We are excited to work with you, and please do not hesitate to reach out if you need any assistance during your time as a volunteer.

Thank you for choosing to support Rabbitats Rescue Society, and we look forward to partnering with you in this important work.

Sincerely,

The Rabbitats Rescue Society Team

Purpose

The purpose of Rabbitats Rescue Society is to rescue abandoned and feral domestic rabbits in the Metro Vancouver area, provide them with necessary medical care, socialization, and shelter, and ultimately find them loving forever homes or incorporate them into our sanctuary colonies. The organization also seeks to raise awareness about the issue of abandoned rabbits and the importance of responsible pet ownership. In addition, Rabbitats Rescue Society works to control the population of feral rabbits in the area through humane methods such as trapping, spaying and neutering, and relocation. The overall goal of the organization is to improve the welfare of rabbits and reduce their suffering in the Metro Vancouver community.

About this Manual

We created the Rabbitats Volunteer Manual to introduce you to our organization and to provide you with essential information about volunteer requirements and policies that affect your involvement with us. The policies outlined in this manual apply to all volunteers of Rabbitats Rescue Society. Adherence to these policies is considered a requirement for ongoing volunteer work.

This manual is a summary of our non-animal-related policies, presented for informational purposes only, and should not be construed as a contract for volunteering. As a volunteer, it is your responsibility to read, comprehend, and follow the guidelines in this manual. We aim to provide you with an atmosphere that supports your personal and professional growth while working with us.

Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Volunteer Portal

Rabbitats' Volunteer Portal is found at <https://rabbitats.org/volunteer-portal/>. Here, you'll find the necessary documentation, forms to sign, calendars, and forums for each shelter and administrative roles.

We request you to register an email and password to log into this portal. There are **X forms** to fill out and agree to *before your first shift*.

- Volunteer Manual Agreement
- Volunteer Information Form
- **Possibly more once portal is complete*

Attendance

We ask volunteers to commit to a regularly scheduled **X-hour shift per week**. Volunteers may also sign up for additional shifts, provided they have good attendance during their scheduled shift.

We require all volunteers to sign in on the appropriate sheet upon arrival and sign out after completing their service.

We ask that all volunteers be reliable and notify the appropriate forum on the Rabbitats' volunteer portal as soon as possible if they cannot make their shift. Preferably at least 2 days ahead of time, or first thing in the morning for sick days. Regular monitoring of calendars and forums for urgently needed help is requested if you're able, to help us fill gaps in time slots.

Please remember that we are all volunteers, and the animals depend on us for their care. Of course, we understand that emergencies happen. However,

consistent failure to arrive on time for your shift, or to notify us in a timely manner for missed shifts, will result in us requesting you not to return.

Volunteer Behaviour & Attitude

Volunteers must:

- Take their commitment seriously.
- Agree to conduct themselves in a professional manner with the animals, co-volunteers, staff, and the public. Rabbitats is an inclusive organization; we will not tolerate discrimination and negativity toward someone due to their age, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or any other self-identifying feature.
- Maintain a professional and positive attitude at the shelter, at events, and on social media groups.
- Keep all volunteer, adoptee, any other application/form data confidential.
- Occasionally, members of the public may enter the shelter, or you will be interacting with the public at events. Be friendly, warm, and courteous to the public, and put them at ease.
- Be neat and accurate.
- Ask for assistance with any questions to which you are not sure of the absolute correct answer.
- Understand your own rights – if at any time you feel uncomfortable with how someone is acting and you do not feel safe approaching them to informally discuss, please reach out to a Board Member of your choice with confidence. See [Volunteer Conflict Resolution](#) for more information.

Volunteer Service Records

Keeping track of your volunteer hours is important, not just for record-keeping purposes but also for our ability to obtain funding and report to the board.

OFF-SITE VOLUNTEERS: Every time you volunteer with Rabbitats at events, Meet & Treats, admin work, or anything not related to at-shelter activities, you must document your hours through our **volunteer service record on the Volunteer Portal.**

SHELTER VOLUNTEERS: Please make sure to sign in and out at the beginning and end of your shift using **???? located at the ????**

Thank you for helping us keep accurate records of your valuable contributions!

Volunteer Dress

Rabbit care is messy work! Please wear comfortable clothes you don't mind getting dirty (or potentially bunny-chewed!) and are easy to wash. There may be a time when members of the public may visit the shelter, so please do not wear clothing with rude or offensive language. Wearing of shorts is not recommended for your safety. Shoes must have covered toes. Large hoop or dangling jewelry represent a safety hazard and should not be worn.

Volunteer Personal Property

Rabbitats is not responsible for loss, theft, or damage of personal items. Volunteers are advised not to bring excessive amounts of cash or valuables with them. ****Do we have protected areas for personal belongings?****

Media Procedures

To maintain accuracy in information distribution and branding, it is essential that volunteers do not talk to the media about their work at Rabbitats unless it is coordinated as a direct part of your role.

Media is anything that will be printed, broadcast, or televised about Rabbitats.

We welcome any contacts or story ideas you may have.

Please refer to the Social Media section in this document for policies specific to that medium.

Suggestions

Make suggestions! We welcome your ideas as a means of improving our operations. Suggestions can be made through the Suggestion Form on the Volunteer Portal.

Standards of Conduct

Rabbitats' volunteer policies and standards of conduct are important, and the organization regards them seriously. All volunteers are urged to become familiar with these policies and standards and are expected to follow them while performing their duties and conducting shelter business.

Please note that any volunteer who deviates from these rules and standards will be subject to corrective action, up to and including immediate termination (please refer to Grievances and Conflict Resolution for more information).

While not intended to list all the forms of behaviour that are considered unacceptable in the workplace, the following are examples of rule infractions or misconduct that may result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination (please note, 'workplace' includes any shelter, clinic, public event, online forums, or any other location or media involving Rabbitats' services and operations):

- Any inhumane treatment or harm caused to Rabbitats' animals or animals served through our clinics.
- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property.
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Possession, manufacture, distribution, sale, transfer, dispensation or use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace.
- Fighting or threatening violence in the workplace.
- Boisterous or disruptive activity in the workplace
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of property
- Disrespectful conduct
- Violation of safety or health rules

- Smoking outside designated areas
- Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment
- Unauthorized use of telephones, or other Company-owned equipment
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information
- Violation of personnel policies
- Unsatisfactory conduct

Drug-Free Workplace Policy

Rabbitats recognizes alcohol and drug abuse as potential health, safety and security problems. It is expected that all volunteers will assist in maintaining a work environment free from the effects of alcohol, drugs or other intoxicating substances. Compliance with this substance abuse policy is made a condition of volunteerism.

Volunteers are prohibited from the following when reporting to shelters, or for any off-site events:

- The unlawful use, possession, transportation, manufacture, sale, dispensation or other distribution of an illegal or controlled substance or drug paraphernalia.
- The unauthorized use, possession, transportation, manufacture, sale, dispensation or other distribution of alcohol.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substance (“controlled substance” means a drug or other substance as defined in applicable federal laws on drug abuse prevention).
- If a volunteer reports to Rabbitats in a condition giving reasonable cause to suspect the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, the volunteer will be asked to leave the premises immediately. Further incidents will result in termination of volunteer services.

Violence-Free Workplace

It is Rabbitats' policy to provide a workplace that is safe and free from all threatening and intimidating conduct. Therefore, the shelters will not tolerate violence or threats of violence of any form in the workplace, at work-related functions, or outside of work if it affects the workplace.

This policy applies to Rabbitats volunteers, affiliates, customers, guests, vendors, and persons doing business Rabbitats. It will be a violation of this policy for any individual to engage in any conduct, verbal or physical, which intimidates, endangers, or creates the perception of intent to harm persons or property.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Physical assaults or threats of physical assault, whether made in person or by other means (i.e., in writing, by phone, fax, social media, or e-mail).
- Verbal conduct that is intimidating and has the purpose or effect of threatening the health or safety of a co-worker.
- Possession of firearms or any other lethal weapon on Society property, in a vehicle being used on Society business, in any Society owned or leased parking facility, or at a work-related function.
- Any other conduct or acts which management believes represents an imminent or potential danger to workplace safety/security.

Anyone with questions or complaints about workplace behaviors which fall under this policy may discuss them with the Volunteer Coordinator or a Board Member if a Coordinator is not available.

Workplace Harassment Policy

Rabbitats' policy is to provide a work environment that is free from harassment. Therefore, Rabbitats will not tolerate harassment based on age, race, gender, gender-identity, color, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, covered veteran status, sexual orientation, status with respect to public assistance, and other characteristics protected under provincial, federal, or local law. Such conduct is prohibited in any form at the workplace, at work-related functions, or outside of work if it affects the workplace. This policy applies to all Rabbitats volunteers, clients, customers, guests, vendors, and persons doing business with the organization.

Sexual harassment is one type of prohibited harassment which warrants special mention.

Sexual harassment has been defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made a term or condition, either explicitly or implicitly, of an individual's employment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting that individual's employment; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Examples of conduct prohibited by this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Unwelcome sexual flirtation, advances, or propositions.

- Verbal comments related to an individual's age, race, gender, gender-identity, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or weight.
- Explicit or degrading verbal comments about another individual or his/her appearance.
- The display of sexually suggestive pictures or objects in any workplace location including transmission or display via computer or smart phone.
- Any sexually offensive or abusive physical conduct.
- The taking of or the refusal to take any personnel action based on an employee's submission to or rejection of sexual overtures; and
- Displaying cartoons or telling jokes which relate to an individual's age, race, gender, gender identity, color, religion, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.

If you believe that you are being subjected to workplace harassment, you should:

1. Tell the harasser that his or her actions are not welcome, and they must stop, if you feel comfortable enough to do so.
2. Report the incident immediately to your supervisor/manager or a Board Member
3. Report any additional incidents or retaliation that may occur to one of the above resources.

Any reported incident will be investigated. Complaints and actions taken to resolve complaints will be handled as confidentially as possible. Appropriate actions will be taken by Rabbitats to stop and remedy any and all such conduct, including interim measures during a period of investigation.

Retaliation of any kind or discriminating against an employee or volunteer who reports a suspected incident of harassment or who cooperates in an investigation is prohibited. An employee or volunteer who violates this policy or

retaliates against an employee or volunteer in any way will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination.

Smoke-Free Environment

Smoking is not permitted at any time in Rabbitats' work areas, including Company vehicles or customer or client areas. Smoking is allowed outside of the building, but smokers must be at least 5 feet away from doors and building entrances. Smokers should be considerate of other volunteers, customers, and members of the public.

Confidentiality

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the extent to which certain information, including but not limited to donor and client information, euthanasia policies, internal operations of Rabbitats, and adoption information, will be kept private and confidential by Rabbitats, its volunteers, staff, and contractors, to fulfill the mission and goals of the organization.

Confidentiality of Rabbitats' business

Rabbitats expects and requires all volunteers, staff, and contractors to keep confidential any sensitive or proprietary business-related information belonging to the Society, which has not been released to the public domain or generally made known to all stakeholders.

The confidentiality policy includes the sharing of private information between staff and volunteers. Such information includes but shall not be limited to:

1. Donor information such as donation amount, addresses, telephone numbers or other personal information

2. Policies and procedures regarding the care of the animals
3. Decisions made regarding the euthanasia process
4. Disclosure of information which could defame, damage or reasonably damage the reputation of the Rabbitats or its relationship with the public.
5. Confidential information of customers, volunteers or employees including but not limited to addresses, phone numbers, donations or personal information.

State of Social Media

Rabbitats recognizes the benefits of social media and appreciates online expression and encourages an online presence using sound judgement. This policy will set forth guidelines that colleagues should follow for all online communications in reference to Rabbitats and applies to any person associated with the Society including but not limited to: employees, volunteers, contract employees, interns, temporary employees, etc.

Rabbitats volunteers are free to publish or comment via social media in accordance with this policy. Employees and volunteers are subject to this policy to the extent they identify themselves as being associated with Rabbitats.

Guidelines and Usage:

Employees and volunteers are encouraged to share available animals on their social media to promote adoptions and help foster the mission and vision of Rabbitats. Remember you are associated and can be construed as representing the overall organization in public forums of this nature. Discretion should be used to prevent any misconceptions.

Employees and volunteers are encouraged to use the following guidelines when using social media:

- Apply a “good judgment” test for every activity related to online communication. Think of the following:
 - Could your posting negatively affect Rabbitats’ partnerships within the community, adopters and potential donors?
 - Could what you are posting possibly limit adoptions and/or donations by community members?
 - Could your posting potentially harm the relationship between the shelter and its surrounding community?
- All posts should display professionalism, be respectful and truthful

Social Media and Photography

Rabbitats’ maintains these policies to maintain our message pertaining to standards care of domestic rabbits and management of feral populations.

Photos and videos depicting inappropriate actions or comments are extremely detrimental to the reputation of the Society.

Social media is a very public forum and can also be educational. Photos that depict inappropriate handling of rabbits will send the wrong message to uninformed people.

Volunteers are expected to abide by the rules listed below.

Volunteers must get the express consent of the staff prior to taking photos of the animals, procedures, education programs, and events. All submitted photos may be used by Rabbitats for promotional purposes.

Preferred Photos: (These are examples from a humane society, not sure what sort of pictures are preferred)

- Depict rehabilitation in action.
- Depict medical conditions that result in the need for rehabilitation. These types of photos are good for credibility of our work.

- Demonstrate key concepts that are aligned with our messaging (proper care and handling, management, etc)
- Depict outreach such as educational programming and events.
- Show baby animals. Studies show that people will look longer at these photos than those of adult animals.

Photos that are NOT Permitted:

- Persons picking up and cuddling or posing with rabbits in a manger suggest the rabbit has not voluntarily initiated the contact
- Depict inappropriate animal or human behaviour
- Our goal is to keep rabbits out of cages; however, occasionally this might be required due to lack of space, moving, cleaning, etc. Please do not post pictures of rabbits in cages.

Shelter Volunteers Must:

- Ask permission BEFORE taking photos, explaining what pictures they're are interested in taking.
- Obtain permission BEFORE sharing photos.

Violators will receive disciplinary notices and possible termination.

Confidentiality and Disparagement

It is acceptable to talk about your volunteer work and have a dialog with the community, but it is not acceptable to publish confidential information. We require that information or opinions related to the internal operations of the Society is treated as confidential and that no disparaging or misinformed statements are made online that would damage or reasonably damage Rabbitats' brand and reputation. Internal operations and support services are to be treated as confidential and not to be disclosed.

For example: donors, customers, partners, or suppliers and identifying customers, partners, or suppliers by name.

Communication Protocol

In the event you are made aware of misrepresentations, as appropriate, or receive any questions about the Society please advise the Board of Directors.

Updates on official Society accounts are only to be made by designated users within the Society.

Responsibility

Any material presented online in reference to the Society by any volunteer is the responsibility of the poster. We encourage all communication to be made in an identifying manner, to establish above all else. Along with clear identification, volunteers must state that any opinion is yours individually and not that of Rabbitats. Please use discretion when identifying something as opinion rather than fact.

Mobile Device Policy

When at the Shelter or events, we request that volunteers please turn their phone onto silent or vibrate mode (especially if you have a loud ring tone). If you need to take a call, please do so outside of animal areas or in direct view of the public at events.

Volunteers at either Domestic Shelter may need their phone to communicate with other members of their team – this is permissible. Unless in the event of calling for aid during an emergency, mobile devices shouldn't be used while supervising an animal outside of its regular enclosure. All attention should be kept on the animal.

Safety Policies and Procedures

Rabbitats wants to ensure that our volunteers remain safe and injury-free when accidents are preventable. We expect our volunteers to refrain from horseplay, careless behaviour and negligent actions. It is Rabbitats' policy to maintain a safe and secure working environment for all volunteers, visitors and contractors.

While working, volunteers must observe safety precautions for their safety and the safety of others. All work and public areas must be kept clean and free from clutter and debris. Any hazards or potentially dangerous conditions must be corrected immediately or reported to a supervisor or a Board Member.

If you are involved in an accident, you must comply with the following procedure:

- Report incident occurring at the shelter to the Shelter Manager or Trainer immediately, or a Board Member if these are not available
- Fill out an incident report regardless of the severity of the injury
- Rabbitats is not financially or legally responsible for volunteer injuries on-site, at off-site events, or obtained during fostering.
- It is recommended that in the case of an injury that involves broken-skin, medical care is obtained
- Incident reports can be found in the Volunteer Portal and in the Shelters.

Please adhere to all rules and procedures learned throughout your training to reduce the chance of injury while working with the animals. Failure to do so may result in injury to you or other people and animals or dismissal from the volunteer program.

Emergency Action Plan

Does this exist already?

Grievances and Conflict Resolution

At Rabbitats, we're all about growth and improvement, which is why our Volunteer Program focuses on positive feedback instead of punishment. If you accidentally violate one of our policies or procedures, we'll have a friendly chat with you to help you get back on track. We'll work together to achieve compliance that everyone can be happy with. However, if there are repeated violations, we may need to have additional discussions or even terminate your volunteer service. Please keep in mind that serious violations, such as animal abuse, abusive or threatening behavior towards other volunteers, or disclosing confidential information, will result in immediate termination of service. We take these things very seriously because our top priority is the safety and well-being of our animals and volunteers.

Volunteer Conflict Resolution

Policy

At Rabbitats, we understand that problems and misunderstandings can arise, and we want to create a supportive environment where our volunteers can voice their concerns. If you have any issues, we encourage you to use the following procedure to address them and seek resolution.

Procedures

Informal Resolution

At Rabbitats, we understand that problems, misunderstandings, and frustrations can arise in the workplace. We want our volunteers to feel comfortable bringing

any concerns to our attention, so we have a procedure in place for resolving them.

Our first step is always to try and achieve an informal resolution through direct consultation with all parties involved. We encourage volunteers to talk to each other and try to work out any issues through open discussion.

If an informal resolution cannot be reached, we offer mediation as a voluntary process of dispute settlement. Mediation is conducted by a **Board member** based on the comfort level of those involved with the mediator. We want to stress that volunteers who participate in mediation still retain the right to file a formal grievance later if informal attempts to resolve the problem have not been successful.

While mediation is best suited for resolving interpersonal conflicts and disagreements, it is not intended to be used for alleged violations of agency policies, misconduct by volunteers, or failure to meet performance standards. In such cases, Rabbitats reserves the right to conduct a formal investigation and take appropriate corrective action as needed.

If informal attempts to resolve a complaint or conflict are not successful or are not appropriate given the nature of the problem, a volunteer may commence a formal complaint through the grievance procedure outlined in our volunteer manual.

Formal Grievance Procedure

1. Please fill in the Formal Grievance Form on the volunteer portal. This form is monitored by Rabbitats' Board Members ONLY.

**If your grievance is with a Board Member, please directly email one or more of the other Board Members (the choice of who is yours).

- Sorelle Saidman – sorelle@rabbitats.org

- Deanna Hamm – deanna@rabbitats.org
 - Shannon Reeb – shannonreeb@rabbitats.org
 - Terence Wong – terencewong@rabbitats.org
 - Mavis Tai – mavistai@rabbitats.org
2. Upon receipt of the formal complaint, a Board Member will schedule a meeting with the volunteer within one week to discuss the complaint. Within approximately one week after the discussion, the Board Member will issue a decision both in writing (email) and orally to the volunteer filing the complaint.

*Please note that as we are ALL volunteers, this timeline might be extended, depending on circumstances at the time.

3. If the volunteer is dissatisfied with the decision of the Board Member, the volunteer may, within one week, appeal this decision in writing to the Board. The Board may then call a meeting with the parties directly involved to facilitate a resolution. We may gather further information from involved parties.
4. If volunteer fails to appeal from one level to the next level of this procedure within a reasonable time limit, the problem shall be considered settled on the basis of the last decision and the problem submitted by the volunteer shall not be subject to further consideration.

Because problems are best resolved on an individual basis, the conflict resolution procedure may only be initiated by individual volunteers and not by groups of volunteers.

No one will be retaliated against for filing a complaint under this procedure. All complaints must be made in good faith.

Grievances may include (but are not limited to):

1. Animal mistreatment: Concerns about the mistreatment of animals, including neglect, abuse, or inadequate care **outside of the Standards of Rabbit Care document that has been approved by the Board of Directors.**
2. Communication breakdowns: Problems with communication between volunteers or with the public
3. Lack of resources: Volunteers may report concerns about a lack of resources such as food, supplies, and adequate staffing to care for the animals (again, outside of the Standards of Rabbit Care).
4. Health and safety: Concerns about the health and safety of the animals, volunteers, and public, including risks related to disease transmission, animal behavior, and inadequate personal protective equipment.
5. Discrimination or harassment: Grievances related to discrimination or harassment, such as inappropriate comments, behaviors, or actions towards volunteers or staff members based on their race, gender, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics.
6. Volunteer expectations: Issues related to the expectations and roles of volunteers, including unclear or changing expectations and inadequate training.

Corrective Behaviour

Corrective action may be taken if the volunteer's work is unsatisfactory. Corrective action is within the discretion of the Shelter Manager and/Board Members and may include:

- Additional supervision
- Reassignment and/or retraining with possible suspension
- Referral to another volunteer position
- Dismissal from the Rabbitats' volunteer program

Volunteer Dismissal

Volunteers who do not adhere to the policies and procedures as outlined in this manual or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment are subject to dismissal. Dismissal is within the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator and/or Board of Directors.

End of Volunteer Service Policy

If at any time you wish to end your volunteer position for any reason, please fill out the appropriate form on the Volunteer Portal as soon as possible. If you prefer, you may also directly email a Board Member. We may ask for you to fill out an exit survey. This provides valuable feedback to improve our program.