



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Updated December 2021

SHELTER HOURS:

Tuesday – Friday 12:30pm-5:30pm and Saturday 12:30 to 4:30

Closed on Sunday & Monday

Mail:

Great River Rescue
1612 Carr Lake Rd SE
Bemidji, MN 56601

Email:

Director: director@greatriverrescue.com

General information: info@greatriverrescue.com

Phone:

218-751-7910

Website:

<https://www.greatriverrescue.com/>

Visit us any time Tuesday through Friday, 12:30 - 5:30 pm and Saturday 12:30 to 4:30 pm using our appointment system.

We are a 501c3 licensed facility, and all donations are tax deductible.

Thank you for caring about your area animals. We appreciate your support!

Directions to Great River Rescue:

Follow Paul Bunyan Drive SE (old Hwy 2, not Hwy 197), east toward Hwy 2, turn right at Carr Lake Rd SE(aka County Road 404) on the edge of the Industrial Park.

Our mission statement: Great River Rescue transitions dogs and cats to loving homes, serves as a community resources, and advocates for kind, responsible pet care.

Our vision statement: envisions a society of responsible animal guardians in which every animal is treated with respect and care.

Value Statements: Care, compassion and empathy for animals and people.

Accountability to high standards of professional and ethical behavior.

Respect and kindness with every decision and interaction.

Brief Shelter History

Great River Rescue was established in 1977 by a group of concerned citizens who felt a need for an organization that would provide shelter to homeless animals. We are proud to be a “no-kill” shelter. The “no-kill” policy ensures that animals are not euthanized except for untreatable illness, court order, or veterinarian recommendation.

Since 1977, Great River Rescue has helped thousands of companion animals with a second chance at life. We are very proud of our efforts to rehome abandoned, surrendered and stray companion animals and the service we provide to our community. Over the past several decades we have honed our services to provide an even greater quality service for more than 400 animals per year.

Currently, the shelter offers several services including taking in stray or unwanted animals, adopting out animals in need of homes, fostering animals before they can be adopted, providing quality animal care to all animals in our shelter, administering necessary vaccinations, and ensuring all animals are spayed or neutered prior to adoption. We also hold several community events throughout the year and have a vibrant volunteer program with over 150 volunteers participating yearly.

Current Members of our Board of Directors (2021)

Ann Mork - Board Chair
Ara Gallo- Vice Chair
Jeanne Edevold-Larson - Treasurer
Kevin Johnson - Secretary
Kendis Scharenbroich – Member
Eric Sundem – Member
Jaimee Towers – Member
Barbara Godding – Member
Dr. Eric Thorsgard - Member

Great River Rescue Welcomes You!

Joining Great River Rescue community affords you the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of all the homeless pets that come to our shelter. You, as a volunteer, are a valued and necessary factor in the long-term continuation of the shelter. Without your physical help and emotional caring, we could not survive.

Volunteers are one of the lifelines of our community; they help spread the word about our organization and the animals' needs. Volunteers also improve our operations by providing services that would otherwise be fiscally and physically impossible.

Being a volunteer is rewarding, educational, exciting and fun. You can have a huge impact on the lives of homeless animals. In many cases, this is the first time someone has truly cared for them. The time and energy contributed by volunteers keep our programs functioning. Since your support as a volunteer is so important, your decision to participate must be made with the full understanding of the commitment and responsibility it demands.

Thank you for giving your time and energy to the animals at GRR. We hope the time you spend here will be as rewarding to you as it is to the animals.

General Practices and Policies:

Great River Rescue takes-in, cares for, and adopts out companion dogs and cats. Animals come from a variety of sources:

- Local pounds (City of Bemidji, Township, Cass Lake)
- Owner Surrender – Owners who can no longer provide adequate care
- Strays from areas without animal control
- Transfer from other agencies

Every animal is examined upon intake and provided with high quality care including:

- Core vaccinations
- Dewormer
- Flea/tick treatment
- Spay/neuter surgery
- Microchip
- Social enrichment
- Any other special veterinary care needed

Animal are adopted to homes with loving caregivers through the following process:

- Potential adopters set up appointments and meet with pets
- Shelter staff interview potential adopters
- Potential adopters complete an adoption application
- Animals are sent home
 - If animals have not yet been spayed/neutered they go home as a foster pet

- If animals have been spayed/neutered they are officially adopted

Other Services

Great River Rescue strives to be a community resource regarding animal welfare needs. Other services we provide include but are not limited to:

- Lost/found pet resources
- General pet care resources
- Low cost spay/neuter program – Pet Fixers
- Educational outreach

We are a Private, Nonprofit Organization

As a private, nonprofit organization we depend on the support of our community to continue to accomplish our mission. Fundraising events and activities are crucial to raising the funds we need. Consistent outreach is also important to spread our impact.

General Safety Guidelines

At Great River Rescue, safety is of utmost importance. We want to ensure that all staff, volunteers, adopters, other visitors and animals feel safe and secure at our shelter. In order to promote safety, we have created the following safety guidelines. Please respect these rules and do your best to follow them.

Preventive Measures

- Pay attention when moving an animal through the shelter. Always look before entering a room with an animal for another animal that may be present.
- Only take out one pet at a time. Occasionally, litters may be taken out together with staff approval.
- Loudly announce the entrance of a dog into any public space. For example, when bringing a dog in the lobby say, “Dog on the Floor!”
- Dogs must always be on a secure leash when in the shelter building and not in their kennel. Hold the leash firmly and extend it only a few feet.
- Dogs must only enter the lobby through the front door.
- Pay attention to and respect kennel notices. Animals often have special notices on their kennel regarding behavior concerns.

- Only handle animals for which you have approval. Note the tiered system for identifying who may handle which animals. Pets have colored dots on their kennel cards. Dogs also have colored tape on their collars.
 - Green – Any staff or volunteer may handle this animal. Clients may handle with staff approval/supervision. These pets are generally social and get along well with humans and other animals.
 - Yellow – Staff only, Level II and Mod Squad volunteers, and Level I volunteers who have volunteered at least 10 total hours in the previous 6 months. These pets are shy/independent and may need more acclimation time to feel comfortable in their environment and around new people.
 - Red – Staff only. These animals are easily over-aroused and have a difficult time calming down or being handled.
 - Blue - Staff only. These animals have specialized behavior needs.

Personal Protective Equipment

- Always wear long pants and close-toed shoes when handling animals.
- All kennel staff wear whistles during their shift. The main purpose of the whistles is to break up a dog fight should one occur. Whistles may also be blown to alert staff to other emergency situations.
- Blow horns are available at various locations on the premises and should only be used to break up a dog fight.
- Bite gloves are available and are to be worn when animals have shown any tendency to bite. Bite gloves should be worn during the initial stages of an intake.
- Cat portal covers can be used when attempting to clean a cat kennel with a cat that has shown the tendency to bite or scratch. Portal covers also help prevent the spread of infectious disease.
- Scrub tops, bottoms, shoe covers and latex gloves should be worn when entering quarantine with an animal that is noted to possibly have an infectious disease. Special notices will be posted when these items should be worn.
- Catch poles and feral cat nets are available for dangerous dogs and cats.

General Reminders

- Never put yourself in the middle of a dog fight. Try to separate dogs by alarming them and diverting their attention.
- Never try to pick up or otherwise handle a defensive cat. Use the feral cat net or set up a live trap if a dangerous cat escapes.
- Only handle animals if and when you feel safe and confident to do so.

- Pay attention to dog and cat body language and respect it.
- Remember that animals can be unpredictable.

Dress Code

The dress code may change depending on which part of the shelter the volunteer is working. For most activities, casual, professional attire is appropriate, and should include:

- Close-toed footwear that completely encloses the foot, worn with socks.
- Long trousers.

Not appropriate: Tank tops, bare midriffs, torn or overly tight jeans, sandals, dangling jewelry, shirts with offensive logos or slogans.

Volunteer Rules

General Rules

- The ultimate goal is to ensure that the animals are happy, healthy, and well-socialized. This improves their chances for adoption and reduces the amount of time they spend in the shelter.
- Volunteers must be 16 years of age or over to work on their own. Volunteers aged 13 – 15 must be accompanied by an adult while volunteering.
- Potential volunteers must fill out a volunteer application, sign a release and waiver of liability form and pay a non-refundable \$15 application fee. The fee helps cover the costs associated with conducting volunteer training sessions. Parents of kids ages 13 – 15 will only need to pay one fee for them and their child.
- Volunteers must attend one of our volunteer training sessions or view our online training to begin work as a volunteer. Anyone who has not returned to volunteer for one year must re-take the training.
- All volunteers agree to allow Great River Rescue to conduct a sex offender registry check on them in the interest of safety of all volunteers and staff.
- Volunteers agree to keep information gathered in regards to Great River Rescue business confidential.
- Volunteers are asked to schedule their shifts through our Volgistics volunteer system. The calendar can be found on greatriverrescue.com at the volunteer page.

Animal Handling Rules

- Volunteers must demonstrate responsible and kind treatment to animals.

- All staff and volunteers are required to wash hands (use sanitizer) between visits with each animal.
- All volunteers are responsible for understanding dog and cat body language. There are examples at the end of this booklet.
- Volunteers should be very careful when moving animals around the shelter. Only one animal can be handled at a time. Animals should not be moved into or through an area where there is another animal outside of its kennel, even if it is on a leash.
- Volunteers must alert staff of animals with fleas, ear mites, runny eyes, sneezing, coughing, diarrhea, scratches, bites, etc.
- Volunteers must alert staff of any animal behavior concerns observed. There posters later in this handbook to help you objectively describe the behaviors you see.

Volunteer Responsibilities and Privileges

- All volunteers must check-in at the front desk before beginning their session.
- ALL volunteers must track their hours. When arriving at GRR, volunteers can “clock-in” through VicPortal. Hours volunteered away from the shelter can be logged through VicNet.
- Volunteers will receive special “GRR Volunteer” key chains. These key chains should be worn in a visible place while volunteering.
- Volunteers must report ANY injury to staff, no matter how minor.
- Volunteers who are sick or have a sick pet at home should not come in to work.
- Volunteers must adhere to the privileges allowed them based on their level (Level 1 vs Level 2 volunteers and Mod Squad). An outline of privileges is given later in the handbook.
- Volunteers must not use any cleaning chemicals without staff permission or authorization otherwise.
- Volunteers must not answer any phone without staff permission or authorization otherwise.
- Volunteers should answer questions from customers the best they can. However, volunteers should be honest and not give information unless they know for certain. Volunteers can direct customers to GRR staff with questions.
- All media inquiries should be referred to the Executive Director.
- Volunteers should use online Social Media for positive commentary about GRR. Complaints and other concerns should be addressed directly with the Executive Director.
- We prohibit the sale, use, possession, or transfer of a controlled substance or alcohol on our property. We prohibit smoking in the shelter. Smoking is allowed only outside the

building at least 25 feet from the entrance. We do NOT allow smoking on the dog trails or in the dog runs. Deposit your butts in the proper receptacles.

- Volunteers are not allowed to bring their personal pets to the shelter unless authorized by the Director.
- Volunteers should park at the far ends of the lot and leave the spaces closest to the door for potential customers.

If a volunteer does not adhere to shelter policies and rules, our staff may ask the volunteer to re-locate or the volunteer may be dismissed.

Social Media Policy

Representing Great River Rescue

Anything that uses the name of Great River Rescue also represents the entire organization. A social media presence helps to build and shape Great River Rescue's brand. It is not a personal forum, but a place where the writer can use personal experiences and ideas to inspire and motivate people to support the mission of Great River Rescue. All your public comments on social media sites should reflect the organization's mission to serve the best interest of companion animals. When GRR employees or volunteers choose to use social media, they must be aware of the following guidelines because of their connection to Great River Rescue. Employees are required to be professional and courteous in their dealings with social media.

The social media guidelines are as follows:

1. That employees and volunteers are personally responsible for what they post through social media.
2. When talking about Great River Rescue, the employee or volunteer should always identify his or her name and role. If applicable, the employee or volunteer should make it clear he or she is not representing the organization.
3. When employees or volunteers are posting personally, they should include a disclaimer stating that the posted content expresses the view of the individual and not Great River Rescue.
4. In all cases, employees or volunteers should respect applicable law, including copyright and trademark laws.
5. Employees or volunteers should not disclose confidential or sensitive information, or use a social media to insult, embarrass or expose any organization, donor, co-worker, another GRR or anyone associated with these parties.
6. Employees or volunteers should not cite or reference donors, other employees, volunteers or supporters without proper consent.

7. Employees and volunteers may not use slurs, personal insults or obscenity or engage other conduct that is inconsistent with Great River Rescue's mission.
8. Do not pick fights with, violate the privacy of or make offensive remarks about others.
9. Employees and volunteers should be encouraged to state facts accurately and cite appropriate sources.
10. Employees and volunteers should avoid using public social media sites, such as LinkedIn or Facebook, to have informational-sharing exchanges with other Great River Rescue employees or volunteers. Personal email is a better forum for such exchanges.

Volgistics

Volgistics is an online software designed to help nonprofits manage their volunteer programs. Volgistics offers a number of tools that are not only useful for Great River Rescue, but also for our volunteers. Some tools include:

- VicTouch – a sign-in portal where volunteers can quickly and easily log-in for their shifts.
- VicNet – a volunteer portal where volunteers can keep their information updated, view volunteer opportunities, sign-up for shifts, view their history, receive and send messages, and more.
- Communication tools and preferences – receive updates about shelter opportunities and activities through your portal, via email, or text message.

Once you complete your volunteer application, volunteers receive links with user guides for setting up and using their VicNet portal.

Volunteer Levels

All levels answer to and report directly to the Director and are responsible for following ALL GRR rules.

Level One Volunteers: Volunteer must complete a Level one volunteer training. Trainings are generally held on the second Wednesday of the month at 6 pm and last about one hour.

GREEN LEVEL – volunteers receive a green GRR keychain.

1. May wash windows, sweep floors, clean up sidewalks or yard, put toys away, refill toilet paper or paper towels, organize collars and leashes, water flowers, shovel sidewalk, or do various other regular shelter tasks.
2. General cleaning, washing animal dishes and litter pans, and laundry, mopping floors, empty trash, clean bathroom, sanitize leashes and collars.
3. Socialize cats and dogs that are “green” and not otherwise labeled as Staff Only or Do Not Handle

4. Walk dogs that are “green” and not otherwise labeled as Staff Only or Do Not Handle
5. Scoop litter boxes or pick-up dog poo
6. Handle animals at off-site locations for events and interact with the public after receiving information from an event leader or GRR director
7. Transport animals as needed
8. Takes pictures for advertising, website, and Petfinder.com use after receiving approval from the shelter’s director
9. Help put up posters/flyers around town
10. Join outreach committee, animal welfare committee, or other committees
11. Help mailings: fold, address, sort. Help with thank yous, write appreciation notes to donors to send with receipts, write newspaper articles –we can help with suggestions (all submissions require board approval.)
12. Hold animals so staff can take pictures of new incoming animals for profile
13. Mowing, trimming, repairs/maintenance such as carpentry or plumbing or electrical or maintaining trails

Level Two Volunteers: Must complete a Level 2 volunteer training. Volunteers must have completed the Level 1 training, and worked a minimum of 40 hours. **BLUE LEVEL – volunteers receive a blue GRR keychain**

1. May do all of green level activities plus...
2. Socialize animals in the intake areas or otherwise not up for adoption
3. Brush extremely matted cats/kittens or dogs & trims nails
4. Assist with cleaning cat/dog kennel areas after volunteers are done with an animal: disposing of animal hair, cleaning equipment used and returning it to its proper area. Spraying combs/brushes with bleach/disinfectant. Washing kitty litter scoops.
5. Assist with feeding schedules as assisted by staff
6. Work with animals independently and teach obedience
7. Walk and socialize dogs that have special behavior needs
8. Give baths to dogs/puppies, brushing, disposing of hair, cleaning equipment, cleaning area after finished. Please check with staff before giving a bath.
9. Advanced dog training/positive reinforcement training
10. Follows extra sanitation procedures to work with sick/injured animals WITH staff
11. Follows extra caution for working with the cleaning chemicals used on GRR property
12. Has permission to enter the warehouse at all times
13. Assist employees with daily cleaning of quarantine/medical rooms
14. Administer basic medications and apply ointments as requested by shelter staff
15. Assist qualified personnel with vaccinations and intake procedures

Fully or Specialty Trained Volunteer: Someone with specialty training for a certain area of need at the shelter or for working with animals.

1. Has talked with the Director and made specific arrangements to help with special shelter needs. Some of those needs may include...
2. Create promotional materials; brochures, ads, posters, flyers, etc
3. Assist with newsletter
4. Grant writing
5. Web design and management
6. Social media networking
7. Animal behavior assessments
8. Veterinary consultations
9. Pick up doggy bank money at various locations and deposit at the bank.
10. Any other reasonable, relative duties as may be assigned

Mod Squad Members: Mod Squad is a volunteer-driven dog behavior modification and training program. Prospective members must apply separately to join this program and attend special volunteer training sessions. Volunteers must have spent a minimum of 3 months volunteering for at least 6 hours every month before applying to the Mod Squad. Call the shelter or stop at the front desk for more information.

Pet Fixers: Pet Fixers is a low-cost spay/neuter program for qualified pet owners and caretakers. Clinics are typically held on the first or second weekend of the month from April to November. Special training is needed for volunteers to help at Pet Fixers. Volunteers are needed for various shifts including Saturday and Sunday mornings and afternoons. Typical tasks include cleaning and sanitizing equipment, helping bring animals in for surgery, giving take-home instructions to owners, answering phones, and doing laundry.

Volunteer of the Month

Each month, one volunteer is chosen for their exemplary service during the previous month. That volunteer is recognized on our volunteer board and given a certificate of appreciation on behalf of Great River Rescue. The volunteer will also be recognized on our Adopt-a-pet Ad in the Pioneer. Volunteers will also receive recognition for reaching the following levels of service:

- 10 hours contributed
- 40 hours contributed
- 100 hours contributed
- One year anniversary

Short-Term Fostering

Great River Rescue promotes a short-term fostering program which includes overnights, weekend stays, and field trips. Short-term foster caregivers must be certified Level I volunteers and have an approved foster home application. Short-term fostering gives our pets a break from shelter life, and helps us learn more about their personalities. To learn more about this program contact us at fostercare@greatriverrescue.com.

THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING WITH GRR. IF YOU EVER HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT US THROUGH YOUR VICNET PROFILE OR EMAIL INFO@GREATRIVERRESCUE.COM

DOGGIE LANGUAGE

starring Boogie the Boston Terrier



ALERT



SUSPICIOUS



ANXIOUS



THREATENED



ANGRY



"PEACE!"
look away/head turn



STRESSED
yawn



STRESSED
nose lick



"PEACE!"
sniff ground



"RESPECT!"
turn & walk away



"NEED SPACE"
whale eye



STALKING



STRESSED
scratching



STRESS RELEASE
shake off



RELAXED
soft ears, blinky eyes



"RESPECT!"
offer his back



FRIENDLY & POLITE
curved body



FRIENDLY



"PRETTY PLEASE"
round puppy face



"I'M YOUR LOVEBUG"
belly-rub pose



"HELLO I LOVE YOU!"
greeting stretch



"I'M FRIENDLY!"
play bow



"READY!"
prey bow



"YOU WILL FEED ME"



CURIOUS
head tilt



HAPPY
(or hot)



OVERJOYED
wiggly



"MMMM...."



**"I LOVE YOU,
DON'T STOP"**

Objective Terms to Describe Dog Behavior

Eyes

- Blinks
- Looks away
- Open wide
- Pupils dilated
- Relaxed
- Round
- Squints
- Stares
- Whale eye

Ears

- Back
- Forward
- Neutral
- Relaxed

Tail

- Broad, wide wags
- Held tight to body/tucked
- High, fast wags
- Low
- Neutral, at spine level
- Neutral, hanging
- Small wags, tail tip wags

Mouth

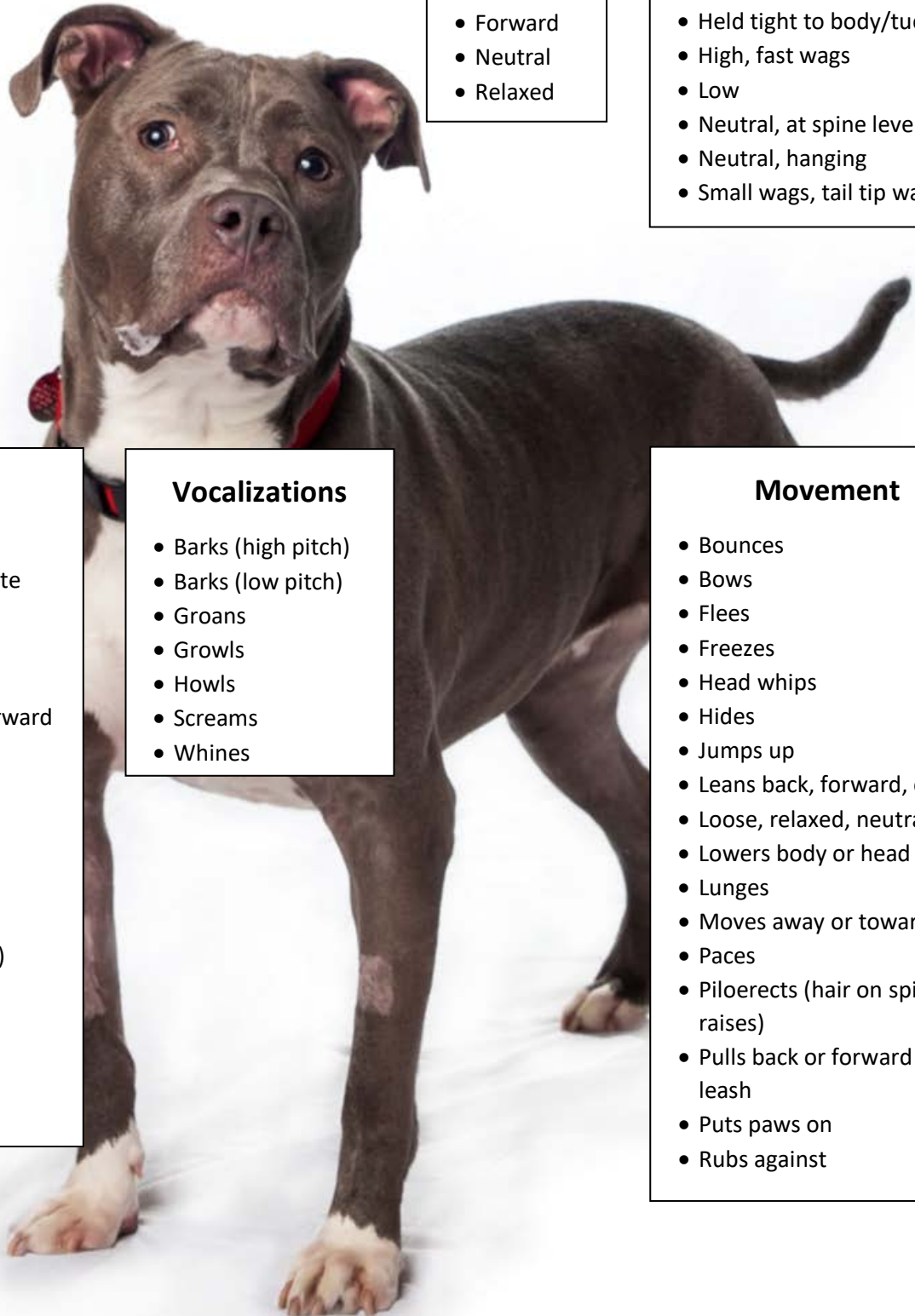
- Air snaps
- Bites or tries to bite
- Chatters
- Closed
- Closed, relaxed
- Corners of lips forward or back
- Licks lips
- Lifts lip
- Muzzle punches
- Open, relaxed
- Pants
- Pursed (short lips)
- Salivates
- Shows teeth
- Softly mouths
- Yawns

Vocalizations

- Barks (high pitch)
- Barks (low pitch)
- Groans
- Growls
- Howls
- Screams
- Whines

Movement

- Bounces
- Bows
- Flees
- Freezes
- Head whips
- Hides
- Jumps up
- Leans back, forward, or into
- Loose, relaxed, neutral
- Lowers body or head
- Lunges
- Moves away or toward
- Paces
- Piloerects (hair on spine raises)
- Pulls back or forward on leash
- Puts paws on
- Rubs against



CAT LANGUAGE



INTERESTED



FRIENDLY



ATTENTIVE



RELAXED



TRUSTING



FRIENDLY, RELAXED



CONTENT



CONFLICTED, CAUTIOUS



PLAYFUL



EXCITED



"THIS IS MINE"



ANXIOUS



PREDATORY



WORRIED



FRIGHTENED



THREATENED



TERRIFIED



SUPER TERRIFIED



IRRITATED



DISGUSTED

Objective Terms to Describe Cat Behavior

Ears

- Back
- Flat
- Forward
- Neutral

Eyes

- Almond-shaped
- Blinks
- Closed
- Looks away
- Open wide
- Pupils dilated
- Relaxed
- Round
- Squints
- Stares

Mouth

- Bites or tries to bite
- Licks lips
- Open, showing teeth
- Panting
- Tongue flicks
- Whiskers forward
- Whiskers splayed wide

Vocalizations

- Chatters
- Chirps
- Growls
- Hisses
- Purrs
- Screams
- Spits
- Trills

Tail

- End flicks
- Loose, relaxed
- Question-mark
- Slaps
- Straight up
- Taps
- Tucked under or around body
- U-shape downward
- Up over back

Movement

- Creeps
- Freezes
- Lays on side
- Leans into
- Low posture
- Piloerects (hair along spine raises)
- Relaxed
- Sits
- Skin twitches
- Tense

Paws

- Bats
- Claws in
- Claws out
- Kneads, "Makes biscuits"
- Neutral
- Reaches gently
- Scratches
- Swats
- Touches gently
- Tucked under body

