



Humane Animal Rescue Force-Free Policy

Purpose

This policy establishes Humane Animal Rescue's commitment to force-free, positive reinforcement-based animal training and care as the only scientifically validated and ethically sound approach to animal behavior modification and handling.

Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers, staff, board members, foster caregivers, contractors, and any individual representing Humane Animal Rescue in any capacity, whether on-site, at offsite events, in foster homes, or in the community.

Policy Statement

Humane Animal Rescue is committed exclusively to force-free, positive reinforcement-based training and animal care methods. These methods are supported by current scientific research in animal behavior, learning theory, and veterinary behavioral medicine. All individuals representing our organisation must adhere to these principles in all interactions with animals under our care and when representing the organisation publicly.

Definitions

Force-Free Training: Training and behavior modification that does not use physical or psychological intimidation, including but not limited to physical corrections, leash corrections, alpha rolls, scruff shakes, spraying cats with water, scruffing cats, yelling at animals or any form of intentional pain or fear.

Positive Reinforcement: Adding something the animal finds rewarding following a desired behavior to increase the likelihood of that behavior recurring.

Aversive Methods: Any technique that relies on causing discomfort, pain, fear, or intimidation to modify behavior.

Required Practices

All representatives of Humane Animal Rescue shall:

1. **Use positive reinforcement** as the primary tool for teaching and modifying animal behavior
2. **Prioritize animal welfare** and emotional wellbeing in all interactions
3. **Create positive associations** through reward-based methods
4. **Respect animal body language** and communication signals
5. **Provide choice and agency** to animals whenever safely possible
6. **Use management and environmental modification** to prevent unwanted behaviors
7. **Seek to understand** the underlying cause of behavior rather than simply suppressing symptoms

Prohibited Practices

The following methods are strictly prohibited and may not be used, recommended, or endorsed by anyone representing Humane Animal Rescue:

Physical Corrections

- Choke chains, prong collars, or shock collars
- Leash corrections or "pops"
- Alpha rolls or physical dominance techniques
- Scruff shakes or physical intimidation
- Hitting, kicking, or any physical punishment
- Spraying with water or other substances as punishment
- Throwing objects at animals

Psychological Intimidation

- Yelling, screaming, or harsh verbal corrections
- Dominance-based training philosophies
- Flooding (forced exposure to fears)

- Withholding essential resources as punishment
- Intimidation tactics or "correction-based" methods

Equipment

- Shock collars (including citronella or vibration collars used aversively)
- Prong or pinch collars
- Choke chains or slip collars used for corrections
- Any equipment designed to cause discomfort

Exceptions for Safety

In genuine emergency situations where immediate intervention is required to prevent serious injury, reasonable physical intervention may be necessary (e.g., separating fighting animals). Such interventions:

- Must be the minimum necessary to ensure safety
- Should be followed by assessment and modification of management procedures
- Must be reported and reviewed to prevent future occurrences
- Do not constitute training or behavior modification

Public Representation

When representing Humane Animal Rescue publicly, all individuals must:

1. **Advocate for force-free methods** in all educational materials, social media, presentations, and public interactions
2. **Decline to endorse** trainers, products, or methods that contradict this policy
3. **Provide accurate information** about the scientific basis for positive reinforcement training
4. **Refer questions** they cannot answer to designated organizational leadership
5. **Model best practices** in all public interactions with animals

Scientific Basis

This policy is grounded in peer-reviewed research demonstrating that:

- Positive reinforcement training is more effective for long-term behavior change
- Aversive methods increase stress, fear, and aggression
- Force-free methods strengthen the human-animal bond
- Reward-based training supports animal welfare and emotional wellbeing

Organisations endorsing these principles include the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB), the Pet Professional Guild, and leading animal behavior researchers worldwide.

Acknowledgment

All volunteers, staff, and representatives must sign an acknowledgment that they have read, understood, and agree to comply with this Force-Free Policy.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Role: _____

This policy reflects Humane Animal Rescue's commitment to evidence-based, ethical animal care and our responsibility to advocate for the wellbeing of all animals in our community.