**Siskiyou Humane Society Canine Perfect Match Program**

Overview:

Adoption is the end goal of this program. They need to be achieved properly to ensure a successful lasting partnership of happiness & safety between human & dog. As animal care providers it is our responsibility to be advocates for the dogs in our care & do all we can to keep them happy, healthy & mentally sound in an unnatural environment during their stay. We always keep this in mind & incorporate it into everything we do, including the Adoption Process.

Goals:

Provide a safe and secure environment for the dogs to thrive in.

Identify the specific needs/wants of each dog in our care.

Identify the specific needs/wants of potential adopters.

Utilize program items to determine human/canine compatibility for successful adoption.

Items Used:

Temperament Evaluation

Canine Adoption Application

Canine Perfect Match Survey

Meet & Greet

Benefits:

Verify compatibility, safety, connection & happiness between human & canine to ensure a successful lifelong adoption match.

Achieve maximum Adoption success with minimum negative emotional/mental stress on the dogs.

Program Basis:

It is up to us to be advocates for the dogs in our care by providing them with positive and beneficial experiences and environments from intake through the finalizing of an Adoption or Transfer.

Strangers in the Kennels

Stimuli in the Kennels

See (Visual Stimulation):

* Avoid Overstimulation

Hear (Auditory Stimulation):

* Avoid Overstimulation

Smell (Olfactory Stimulation):

* Avoid Overstimulation
  + Reduce number of scents

Strangers in the Kennels

Lots of people are stuck in the "I just want to walk through the kennels and fall in love" days which has been proven to increase the stress, anxiety and reactivity of the dogs in the kennels as well as lead to failed adoptions and potentially dangerous situations for those involved. It is most important for us to be the best advocates for the animals in our care that we can be so we, along with many other shelters, have recognized this and moved away from this way of showing dogs so we can better support our animals during their stay with us.

By allowing strangers access to the kennels, we are not acting in the best interest of the dogs. The appearance of unfamiliar people in the kennels is often a very traumatic experience for the dogs residing there. With this comes not only the sight of unfamiliar humans, who the dogs may view as a threat, but triggering sounds & smells as well. Since this appearance is a disruption to the dog’s routine and intrusion to their safe/comfort zone this will often reinforce their beliefs that strangers or certain types of humans are dangerous or scary, which makes it harder to desensitize them to the outside world.

Many dogs that end up with us were found as strays. Since they cannot use words to answer our questions, we have no background on them, where they come from or who they have interacted with. If there has been abuse or trauma relating to a human in their past, we don’t know about we can only uncover it over time as we interact with the dog and expose it to various triggers. This often shows up in the form of a fear of human males, but can also include women, children and various characteristics such as height, weight, colored hair, tattoos or other visual identifiers.

Other forms of stimuli such as olfactory and auditory are introduced when a stranger enters the kennel. If a person smells like cigarettes, other animals or specific

Since we are unable to predict what will trigger a dog, we have to figure it out through process of elimination. We introduce them to things such as hats, sunglasses, various genders of humans slowly in a controlled manner to ensure everyone’s safety and minimize stress on the dog. Having strangers walk through the kennels does not follow this method and causes more harm than good.

Aside from the negative impact on the dogs, allowing people to walk through and see all the dogs is not beneficial to the human too. Many people are caught up on looks and will decided just by seeing a photo of a dog that it is the one for them when often it is far from that. This leads to people getting upset when they are told they cannot have a certain dog even though it is in the best interested of both parties due to incompatibility and potential safety issues. By following our Canine Perfect Match Program we can identify the needs of both the dogs and the humans and then make an informed suggestion of dogs for them to meet which will allow for a healthy, successful lifelong match

Stimuli in the Kennels

Kennels are often a stressful place due to the various sounds, smells and events that take place in them. By following our Kennel Enrichment Program we can provide the dogs with the best possible experience during their stay, minimizing their stress and anxiety. Protocol to introduce new stimuli can be found in the SOP for the Enrichment Program.

See (Visual Stimulation)

Visual stimuli are some of the most intense triggers for dogs in the kennels. Due to their limited field of vision, they often cannot see something or someone until they are in very close proximity in line with the front of their kennel gate. Introducing new stimuli into the kennels which appears suddenly in their field of vision and proximity can leave dogs feeling anxious or afraid or cause unwanted behaviors such as barking, growling, body slamming gates, spinning, hiding or other stress/fear behaviors.

Avoid Overstimulation

A visually overstimulated dog can present as being in a state of high alert, high arousal or shut down due to its perception of the visual stimuli.

It may interpret it as a play and begin attention seeking behaviors such as barking, gate jumping, hyperactivity or whining.

It may interpret it as a threat resulting in alert barking, constant licking, compulsive behaviors, inability to calm down, inability to sleep or settle, pacing, panting or shut down.

Take a moment to sit in each occupied run and take note of what you can see besides the walls and gate. This will help you get a better idea of what the dog experiences visually all day long and give you insight as to things you can change to make it a more ideal environment.

Hear (Auditory Stimulation):

During the daily kennel routine dogs are exposed to a variety of sounds and most will be able to identify them and become comfortable with them. They may hear the sound of the mop bucket being wheeled back to its storage place and begin to associate that sound with the feeding that follows, causing the One of the sounds that is generally

Avoid Overstimulation

An aurally overstimulated dog can present as being in a state of high alert, high arousal or shut down due to its perception of the auditory stimuli.

It may interpret the sound(s) as an exciting thing such as a person nearby or food coming and begin attention seeking behaviors such as barking, gate jumping, hyperactivity or whining.

It may interpret the sound(s) as a threat resulting in alert barking, constant licking, compulsive behaviors, inability to calm down, inability to sleep or settle, pacing, panting or shut down.

Take a moment to sit in each occupied run and take note of what you can hear. This will help you get a better idea of what the dog experiences aurally all day long and give you insight as to things you can change to make it a more ideal environment.

Reduction of Startling or Excessive Sounds

It is important to be mindful of the amount of noise you are making throughout the day as you are working. By keeping in mind the goal of producing minimal noise you can help keep the dogs in your kennel from being startled or frightened by a random noise generated from your tasks.

Doors

One of the most startling sounds that occurs in the kennels is the sudden loud sound from a door being closed loudly.

There are signs on every door in the building to remind you to be mindful of how you are closing the doors to minimize the chance of startling a dog who may already be stressed or was trying to sleep.

Over time dogs may begin to associate the sound of an opening/closing door with the appearance of a person or other event. Depending on the dog and its history this can either be a positive experience or a negative one. Dogs who are shy/fearful/reactive will usually engage in stress behaviors at the first notice of the sound.

Smell (Olfactory Stimulation) Avoid Overstimulation

A dog’s sense of smell is their strongest sense and one they rely on heavily to explore and learn about the world. A dog’s sense of smell is thousands of times better than ours. They possess up to 300 million olfactory receptors in their noses compared to the 6 million in ours.

Reduce number of scents  
In order to not overwhelm a dog’s olfactory senses or reduce the novelty of a certain scent you want to keep your kennels as free of heavy scents as possible.

Accel and other cleaning agents can have a strong smell so they should be cleaned up immediately and not left to sit too long. You may need to open a window or door during or after cleaning to get that strong unpleasant odor out of the kennels.

You don’t want to introduce multiple scents into the kennels at a time. If you are using a particular scent spray then you need to stick with just that one for the day and no others.

If you are cooking meat or other food in the kitchen you may want to leave the kitchen door open and even place a fan nearby to push the scent through the kennels for the dogs to smell. Be sure to give them a little of what they’re smelling afterwards if appropriate.

Some dogs may have negative attachments to the scents of certain hygiene products or the scents of other animals. Be aware of any heavy perfume, body wash or other scents on you when you’re in the kennels to avoid overwhelming a dog or creating an aversion to you.