



Policy Manual

This manual is intended to provide a general understanding of Great Falls Animal Shelter policies.
It may not be able to answer every question or predict every situation.
Please contact staff with questions not addressed in this manual.

GFAS Policy Manual

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Contact Information

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Facebook – GreatFallsAnimalShelter

***Office Hours**

Monday – Friday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

***Kennel Viewing & Adoptions Hours**

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: 11 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Thursday: 2 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Saturday: 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Closed Sundays and All City/ Federal Holidays

Hours are subject to change



GFAS Policy Manual

INTRODUCTION

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

GFAS 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 GFAS has the ability to house 114 animals at one time, yet the average monthly intake is 131 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 ensure an animal adopted is placed in a responsible, loving, and forever home. The following adoption policy is utilized.

1. After the required holding time (*See “Intake 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. 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 in a ‘first come first serve’ manner. At 11 a.m. on the day the animal becomes available for adoption, the 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 ensure they are making the right decision. If this approved applicant does not return to the GFAS 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)
3. Once the Approved Applicant chooses to adopt an animal an Adoption Contract is completed with the staff.



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- a. Please see the GFAS 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 GFAS 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 will be required. Please inquire with staff.

ADOPTION RETURN POLICY

The goal is for every animal at the GFAS to be placed in a responsible, loving and forever home. Staff 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) days of the adoption and written documentation from the veterinarian is required. Any acquired veterinarian expenses will not be refunded.
2. If there are compatibility issues between the adopter and the new pet, the adopter may return the animal to GFAS and exchange for another available animal of their choosing, at no additional cost. This exchange must occur within thirty (30) days of the adoption. No monetary refunds will be given.
3. Please see the Owner Surrender policy, if the adopter has had the adopted animal in their possession longer than thirty (30) days.

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 re-homing.

The GFAS does not accept any surrendered animals that have potentially infectious disease or illness, or have extreme behavior issues, including but not limited, to biting or signs of aggression.

When an owner deems it necessary to surrender their animal to GFAS, the animal becomes the property of the GFAS and the animal’s former owner cannot determine the disposition of the animal. The GFAS will perform its own assessment of the surrendered animal according to the following policies and procedures and determine the disposition of the animal.



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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 surrender fee per animal or per litter (see GFAS Fee List for the most current fees) assessed to help offset the cost of processing the animal for entrance to the GFAS. The average cost for care and housing an animal until adoption at the GFAS is \$265. GFAS would appreciate any additional monetary donations, above and beyond the surrender fee, to help cover the cost of caring for the pet until a new home can be found.
4. 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 GFAS Fee List.
5. The **Remorse Policy** does not apply to owners who have chosen to surrender their animal due to Redemption Fees.
6. The surrendered animal will be available for adoption after a 24-hour hold time.
7. Animals that the owners believe to have aggressive behaviors will not be accepted. It is the owner's responsibility to seek out training for the animal or a more suitable home. If the owner believes euthanasia is the right decision, it is the owner's responsibility to seek this service from a veterinarian.

INTAKE 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 surrendered animals.

The GFAS does not accept any animals that have potentially infectious disease or illness, or have extreme behavior issues, including but not limited, to biting or signs of aggression.

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 taken to the GFAS. GFAS makes every attempt to reunite a stray animal with its owner; the following policy is utilized to attempt to ensure this.



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1. Every animal entering the GFAS shall have an Intake Sheet and a Health Check Form completed. An intake number is assigned and vaccinations are given. The animal is placed in a kennel where it is kept while waiting to find its owners or a new home. The intake sheet will include the following:
 - Location found.
 - Animal description and other information such as collar, injuries, identification etc.
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 GFAS 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 a pet owner chooses to surrender, rather than redeem their animal, Surrender Fees will apply.
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 its owner, however in order to offset costs associated with the operation, redemption fees are assessed. Please see the GFAS Fee List for redemption fees. To ensure the animal is reunited with its 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 another individual pickup the animal at the GFAS, the owner must write a statement allowing this particular individual to pay the fees and pickup 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.



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2. When reclaiming a pet, the owner will look through the kennels to verify GFAS has his/her pet. Once the appropriate 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 provide proof, it may be obtained by calling their veterinarian. If the required proof cannot be verified, then owner will be charged additional redemption fees.
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 his/her animal, without officially surrendering the animal to GFAS, the owner 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 GFAS and numerous participating local veterinarians offices. A City license is not required for pets residing outside the city limits. Please see the GFAS Fee List for current licensing fees.

If a stray animal is picked up by Animal Control or taken to the GFAS, the animal is immediately checked for identification. If the identification is current the owner is immediately contacted and the animal can be taken home if it is still with an Animal Control Officer. If it has already been through the intake process at the GFAS the owner can pick the animal up as soon as possible to keep the accumulation of fees to a minimum.

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

1. Multiple Animal Permit
2. Hobby Breeder Permit
3. Wild Animal License Certificate (Initial Registration)
4. Wild Animal License Annual Certificate
5. Beehive Owner/Beekeeper One-Time Registration
6. Beehive(s) Annual License
7. Commercial Kennels (Coordinated with Planning & Community Development)

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.

All animals leaving GFAS will receive a rabies vaccination or voucher to be redeemed at a local veterinarian's office.



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EUTHANASIA POLICY

The number one priority of the GFAS is to have as many animals as possible redeemed, adopted, placed in foster homes or with rescues. However, there are times when an animal's health, disposition and temperament do not allow for these choices.

After reviewing the animal's quality of life and after careful consideration with the Veterinary Technician, GFAS Contracted Veterinarian and Operations Director, the decision to humanely euthanize will be considered as the final act of kindness.

There may be situations, however where euthanasia is court mandated.

Euthanasia services are NOT offered to the public.

CREMATION SERVICES

The GFAS offers cremation services to members of the public when their beloved pet has died. The cremation process is performed in a respectful and dignified manner by the caring staff at the GFAS. Staff is available to help pet owners chose the best cremation option for you and your family. Please see the GFAS Fee List for current cremation service fees (www.greatfallsmt/animalshelter).

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)

DONATION POLICY

All donations are accepted and greatly appreciated by the GFAS. We currently have three different accounts that can accept monetary donations. All three accounts are funded exclusively on donations and are tax deductible. Memorial donations may also be set up to honor a family member or pet. Please contact the GFAS with donation or tax deductible questions. You may also visit the website at www.greatfallsmt.net

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Volunteers can play a very important role in the operation of GFAS. All citizens interested in becoming a volunteer at GFAS must complete a Volunteer Application. These applications are at the GFAS or may be found on the website at www.greatfallsmt.net. Once the application is accepted all volunteers will complete Volunteer Orientation and training.

