BEST PRACTICES: KENNEL ENRICHMENT

ANIMAL FARM FOUNDATION
As animal care providers it is our responsibility to keep our shelter dogs healthy, happy, and sound in an unfamiliar environment until they are adopted. Through a kennel enrichment program, staff and volunteers will engage dogs and keep them well, both physically and mentally. Enrichment is a vital part of any successful adoption program. Our resources will help you get started today.

For more information, please visit our website: [www.animalfarmfoundation.org](http://www.animalfarmfoundation.org)

or contact us at: [info@animalfarmfoundation.org](mailto:info@animalfarmfoundation.org)
WHAT IS KENNEL ENRICHMENT?

Enrichment is a process (not a one time event) for creating a more positive, productive experience for the dogs in your shelter. Enrichment for shelter dogs is designed to support their sensory and social needs in order to help reduce boredom, stress, and undesired behaviors. It also aims to add value to your shelter dogs by teaching them basic manners, giving them the confidence and training necessary to make a good impression on adopters and succeed in the real world.

WHY IS ENRICHMENT IMPORTANT?
No matter how good a shelter is, it still isn’t a home. Living in a shelter can be stressful for dogs, especially those who stay for two weeks or longer. It’s our responsibility as animal care providers to keep our shelter dogs happy, healthy, and sound until we can send them home with adopters. Enrichment is a vital component of a successful adoption program.

Unhappy, frustrated, or bored dogs will not show well in their kennels and potential adopters will be put off by their kennel-induced behaviors. Enrichment helps to counter these behaviors by making the dogs’ environments more stimulating and challenging through the use of toys, puzzles, sensory games and any other novel experiences, such as playgroups.

When your dogs are healthier and happier, they’ll get adopted faster!

HOW DO ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS WORK?
Have a Plan: Because shelters are hectic places, it’s important to plan ahead to have an enrichment game
plan in place, before your dogs’ needs become critical. You can do this through the following steps:

- Train your staff to recognize the early signs of stress
- Recruit and train volunteers to work with and support your dogs
- Network with other shelters and rescues, as well as breed clubs, trainers, and other professionals
- Solicit donation of enrichment items for the community
- Build a network of trained foster homes

FEED THE SENSES:
Just like humans, dogs have fives senses. Ignoring your dogs’ sensory needs may lead to stress and undesirable behaviors. Here’s how to address each one:

- **Sound** is the most highly developed canine sense. Dogs can become agitated and nervous just from hearing other dogs bark.
  - Keep your kennel quiet with “Click for Quiet” games in which quiet dogs are rewarded with a positive “YES!” (or clicker sound) and a treat and barking dogs are ignored. This is a great project for volunteers.
  - Play soft or soothing music to help keep dogs quiet. Try classical music or music created specifically for dogs.

- **Smell** is how dogs greet the world. Shelters not only smell like other animals, but are often full of chemical odors that are unpleasant for dogs.
  - Have dogs use their sense of smell for “Nose Games”:
    - Create “Find It” puzzles made from treats hidden in blankets, towels or rags. You can also play nose games outside. Hide treats in a fenced in yard, then cheer them on as the dogs sniff out the rewards.
    - Use interactive toys or make your own! Take PVC pipe elbows, drill a few holes in them (big enough for treats to fit through) and the dog will sniff out, and then move the toy around to get the treats to fall out.
    - Fill a spray bottle with water and 10-20 drops of an essential oil, such as lavender, vanilla, or almond. Spray a fine mist on their beds, blankets, or kennel walls. Rotate the scents to keep the dogs engaged.

- **Sight** can be tricky, because no matter how long the dog is in your shelter, the environment never becomes natural. Some dogs may be stressed by dogs or humans passing by their kennels.
  - For reactive dogs, place barriers at the front of their kennel or on the sides (poster board, sheets, shower curtains, etc.) and have people toss treats as the pass by to help the dog associate the traffic flow with treats.
  - For all dogs, it is important to give them an occasional change of scenery and a break from the kennel environment: a stroll around the parking lot, an afternoon at the front desk or in someone’s office, or a play date. Consider moving dogs to different kennels, so they’re in a new area of the shelter.

- **Touch** is important to dogs and often shelter dogs don’t get enough human contact. We rush in to exercise them or give them food, but for
get to just sit and touch them. Patting and massaging dogs, especially in a quiet space, helps promote a better mental and emotional state.

- Enlist volunteers to work as “quiet time” companions for your dogs. Have them sit in the dog’s kennel for 10+ minutes to pet and massage them. They can even bring a book and read to them! Not only does the massage feel good, but the dogs will learn how to stay calm in the company of people.

- **Taste** is closely linked with their sense of smell. Some dogs may ignore food in the shelter environment.

- If a dog is ill, this can affect their sense of smell and they might ignore meals. To help get the dogs interested in eating, try adding broths, like chicken or beef, to their food or serve alone.

- Broth can also be used to soak rags or tug toys. Freeze them and give as a special treat. These are especially good for teething puppies!

- Some dogs tend to inhale their food. Feeding from Kongs adds an element of stimulation to eating can help slow them down. Milk jugs, bottle or PVC pipes can also become feeding puzzles.
Shelter life is B-U-S-Y! It may seem impossible to add another item to your daily to-do list, but enrichment can be simple, fast, and inexpensive. The dogs will benefit from even the smallest changes. They will experience less boredom and show better in their kennels. Make the commitment to the dogs, and then reach out for support. You’ll find volunteers who want to do hand-on work, donors who will purchase items from your Wish Lists, and foster homes who will provide temporary relief for your dogs.

Here are some simple, effective ideas for beginning an enrichment program TODAY:

- Instead of feeding one large meal, feed two small ones a day.
- Plastic bottles can become treat dispensers or toys to flip and chase around the kennel. Just add kibble and give them the bottle.
- Play “Through a Dog’s Ear” cd. Available for free to shelters.
- Reward quiet dogs with a quick bit of praise and a treat. Ignore loud, barky dogs.
- Collect used, almost empty, peanut butter, cream cheese, and yogurt containers from staff and volunteers. Let the dogs lick them clean.
- Give each dog a Kuranda Bed, so they have a platform to perch on. Ask for donors to give beds to your dogs. ([http://kuranda.com/donate](http://kuranda.com/donate))
- Use old ice cube trays or Dixie cups to create small, yummy ice treats: put a few pieces of kibble, yogurt, peanut butter or treats in the bottom, fill with broth and freeze.
• Smear a Kong toy with peanut butter or cream cheese and hand it over to one of your most stressed dogs for a quick and satisfying treat.
• Spray a food-scented aerosol air freshener in the air as you walk through the kennels to stimulate their sense of smell. Avoid spraying directly on the dogs or using floral scents.
• Hold an Enrichment Supply Drive and collect anything from Kongs and Nylabones to PVC pipes, peanut butter, milk jugs, plastic bottles, blankets and towels.
• Have volunteers and staff do dog social walks, so that in addition to exercise, dogs can spend some time getting to know their “roommates” on parallel walks.
• Do some short basic obedience training sessions. You can do this in or outside of their kennels. 5 minutes is perfect! Always end on a positive note.
• Bring a dog into your office for a little while. Kennels are noisy and they’ll appreciate a quiet place to nap or get some attention from a new friend.
• Sprinkle a tiny amount of dry spices on the dog’s bedding, so they have something interesting to sniff.
• Take a dog for a car ride when you go on a coffee run. Adopters love to know how dogs behave in the car!
• Set up an Amazon.com wish list to facilitate specific donations.
• Give dogs a change of scenery by switching them to different kennels.
• Sign up for the Kong Seconds program for discounted rates on Kong toys: Contact slucero@kongcompany.com with the subject: KONG Seconds Order for more info
• Sign up for the Nylabone shelter program for discounted rates on Nylabone toys. Contact the Donation Coordinator: (http://www.nylabone.com/about/nylabone-programs/)
• Bring a radio into the kennels and tune in to a classical music channel.
• Add an essential oil, such as lavender, to a spray bottle filled with water. Walk through the kennels and mist the air with a new scent.
• Add a chair to a kennel housing a small dog, so they have a choice to sit on something new.
• Hang a wind chime near the kennels, so the dogs have something pleasant to listen to.
• Blow bubbles in the kennels for visual stimulation.

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS:
Monmouth County SPCA:
Monmouth County SPCA is an open admission shelter in New Jersey that recently attended an Animal Farm Foundation internship, where we talked about enrichment and how it benefits shelter dogs.

Here’s what one of the internship participants had to say only a couple weeks after returning:
We’re busy with enrichment snack feedings at 1 pm when the public comes in, which keeps the dogs busy and therefore showing better. [Two staff members] are clicker training and we have volunteers saying “yes” to the dogs for calm behavior and tossing in a piece of kibble to reward the dogs.

Monmouth County SPCA is proving that enrichment doesn’t have to be difficult, time consuming or expensive to have great results for shelter dogs and staff!
CREATIVE OUTLETS FOR ENRICHMENT

BUSY BUCKETS:
Fill an empty water bucket or other small pail with things to do, smell and taste and even the dog’s meal. Pack each item very tightly into the bucket so that it will be a challenge for the dog to remove them. Some ideas for bucket items: a stuffed kong, a beef-broth soaked rag, a ball, a Nylabone, a water bottle or PVC pipe with a few treats, etc.

ICE TREAT:
These can be made in large buckets or old milk jugs that have been cut in half, cups, ice cube trays, or any other container. Choose a size that suits your dogs’ needs and can serve the most dogs. This treat is used to feed an entire meal or even an entire day’s food, so keep portions in mind. If you are using a large container, the first step will also involve inserting a chain or rope, so that the finished ice treat can hang from the side of the kennel.

How to:
• Place some kibble in the bottom of the container.
• Fill with water or broth so that it just covers the food.
• Freeze until hard.
• For larger containers, you can remove from the freezer and add things like: a ball or toy, some treats, peanut butter, a rag soaked in broth, etc.
• Add more water and freeze until totally frozen.
• Remove and let defrost enough so that the ice block or cube can break free of container.
• Distribute to shelter dogs (for larger ice treats, hang from the side of the kennel to avoid a slippery floor).

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KONGS:
These can be used as treats or for entire meals. To make meal time more challenging, mix the kibble with a small amount of water and fill Kong, then put it in the freezer. Frozen Kongs will take the dogs longer to eat and requires some energy to work out the food. This is a great project for volunteers to do each day. You can also purchase large used freezers on Craigslist or ask for a donation of one, so that you always have a supply of frozen Kongs ready to go. If you are out of Kongs, consider using marrow bones (uncooked) or even PVC pipe.

**Note:** Whenever you feed from a toy or puzzle, be sure that at there is an air hole so that dog’s tongue cannot get stuck in the object. (Kongs should have an air hole at the opposite end, but for PVC and other found object be sure to drill one.)

TOWEL SHREDDING TOY:
If you have a bedding-shredder in your kennel, don’t just take away his blanket privileges. Instead, take a towel and put peanut butter smeared biscuits in the middle. Roll up the towel and knot it, then let the shredder go to town. This is also a great way to use linens that are too far gone to use as bedding.

SCENT STICKS:
Use plastic PVC piping with end caps and drill holes along the length of the pipe. Fit the caps securely so that they cannot be removed, and then fill with anything smelly that might be fun to sniff, but isn’t to be ingested (hay, lavender, grass clippings, etc).

REAL LIFE ROOM:
Create a home-like environment in your shelter where dogs can go to relax. Use a conference room, small office, or an out building to set up a living room type experience for your dogs. Add a couch and some chairs, a rug, and a couple of crates. Ask your donors to help you furnish the room or connect with a local second hand store to see if they have furniture they can donate. Dogs will love having an on-site spot for play and relaxation. And volunteers and adopters will enjoy spending time getting to know the dogs in this comfortable environment.

SLUMBER PARTY PROGRAM:
Long term fostering can be difficult to find, but dogs benefit from even a single night out of the shelter. Enlist foster families to provide one night or weekend sleepovers with your dogs. Have them fill out a questionnaire after their night together, so potential adopters can learn more about the dogs.

OUR HOW-TO ENRICHMENT VIDEOS ARE AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING AND SHARING AT:
https://vimeo.com/animalfarmfoundation
PLAYGROUPS!

What's an effective way to enrich the lives of shelter dogs? Allowing them social time with the other dogs in your shelter!

WHY PLAYGROUPS?

Playgroups are an excellent tool for increasing the quality of life for many shelter dogs. Some shelters may have fears about letting dogs play or interact with one another, but socialization for dogs can be one of the most valuable forms of enrichment. Not only do the dogs enjoy and benefit from their time playing together, but it's an effective way to exercise and enrich many dogs at one time, instead of (or in combination with) working with the dogs individually. In addition, staff and volunteers will learn more about each dog’s dog-dog social skills. This important piece of information will help dogs go home faster.

“Socializing the dogs in groups provides both mental and physical stimulation for the dogs. When the dogs are satisfied this way, their stress levels go down and they show better in their kennels. Dogs who show better go home faster. Play groups also help the staff and volunteers get to know the dogs better and, therefore, can make better dog-dog and family matches.” – Bernice Clifford, AFF Behavior and Training Director

Some of the benefits of group play, according to Aimee Sadler, creator of the Success Through Socialization program, are:

- mental and physical energy burned through intense social interaction
- decreased territorial behavior within the shelter
- decreased on-leash reactivity to other dogs
- increased attention and focus in training
- staff’s time-resource maximized

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For more information, please see our video series with Aimee Sadler on our Vimeo channel.

- Part One: Basics and FAQs
- Part Two: Benefits
- Part Three: Breeds and Play Styles

All three parts are available for viewing and sharing at: https://vimeo.com/animalfarmfoundation

Or visit our website for further playgroup resources, including a link to the Center for Shelter Dog Studies Playgroup Manual.

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS:
Baltimore Animal Rescue & Care Shelter (BARCS)
BARCS is an open admission city shelter serving the Baltimore, MD area. The BARCS Pit Crew, in addition to lots of kennel enrichment, also started shelter dog playgroups. BARCS realizes that human AND animal contact are a normal part of many dogs’ lives and contributes to a better quality of life in the shelter. Playgroups are one of the highest value forms of enrichment for social dogs.
Inspired, but still not sure if you can get an enrichment program started?

FAQS ABOUT ENRICHMENT:

Won’t the peanut butter, etc. upset the dog’s stomachs?
Dogs with allergies or sensitive stomachs might have loose stool if the treats are given in large amounts, but in small amounts the majority of dogs are not affected.

Aren’t the plastic bottles and jars dangerous?
The plastic materials will certainly get crushed and dented, maybe even punctured by the enthusiastic dogs, but dogs are unlikely to ingest them. As previously mentioned, please make sure any toys or feeding objects have an air hole to avoid tongues getting stuck. If in doubt, observe the dog before leaving him alone. Remove labels and plastic rings (from caps).

Won’t things like shredding lead to bad habits or behaviors?
Dogs who like to shred are going to do so if left without direction. By giving the dogs a specific task (find the treats) as an outlet, they are less likely to shred indiscriminately.

 Aren’t enrichment programs expensive?
They don’t have to be. Create toys from common household items. Use discount programs (available from companies such as Kong and Nylabone) to purchase new toys. Ask your donors for gifts of enrichment items – they’ll love to support programs that enhance the quality of life for the dogs. Hint: Don’t forget to take photos of your dogs enjoying the donated toys, so the public can see how much you value their support.
Aren't enrichment programs time consuming?
If you're short on time, volunteers are perfect helpers for these programs. Young or old, anyone can stuff or clean Kongs, braid rope toys, and click for quiet. Many volunteers will be excited about their chance to help in this way.

Won't the dog toys, used multiple times, spread disease between the dogs?
If this is a concern at your facility or if there is no reliable way of sterilizing the toys (such as: a diluted bleach solution and rinse, or in a dishwasher or washing machine), try using one-time only toys, such as closed cardboard boxes that are filled with treats that the dogs tear them up or plastic bottles.

What if we're not allowed to give the dogs toys?
Enrichment can be done through music, scents, clicker training, walks, and meals.
Here we discuss some basic enrichment tools that engage the dog’s senses of touch and taste. Chew toys are important for both puppies and adult dogs. Providing all dogs with good “chew” habits early on will help prevent chewing on unacceptable objects. Food toys provide an oral outlet along with mental stimulation while the dog works for his meals.

**KONG® TOYS**

Kong® toys come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are easy to stuff. When starting dogs out on these toys, make it fairly easy for them to get their food reward by filling the toy with kibble and topping it with wet food. As the dog gets the concept of the Kong®, make it harder to remove the food by mixing the wet and dry food together and then stuffing the Kong®. Eventually, you can stuff the Kong® and freeze it, making the food treat last for several minutes. For puppies, freezing the toy also feels nice on teething gums.

**Make Your Own!**

Substitute the Kong® toy with an old marrow bone. Stuff it in the same way as you would a Kong® and freeze it for a fun treat.
**TUG-A-JUG™**
Premiere® makes a number of different food toys, but the Tug-a-Jug™ is an Animal Farm Foundation favorite. Fill it with kibble or treats and watch your pup pull on the tug toy to get his meal out of the jug! Other great toys from Premiere® include Kibble Nibble™, Bouncy Bone™ and many of the other products in the Busy Buddy® line.

**Make Your Own!**
Take a juice bottle with a wide mouth and drill a hole into the bottom of it for your tug toy. Use the capped end to fill it with kibble and treats.

**LINKABLES™**
Another great product from Premiere® that is a very good toy for mental stimulation as the dog never knows which hold will deliver the treat. You can change the shape and use as many or as few pieces as you like, so the toy is constantly different and changing, keeping the dog interested longer.

**Make Your Own!**
Go to the plumbing section of a hardware store and get PVC pipe. Make sure you purchase some elbow joints and ends. Put them together in different shapes, capping the end and drilling some holes in the sides where treats are able to fit through. This is a nice rugged toy that will last a lifetime!

**KOOL DOGZ ICE TREAT MAKER™**
The Kool Dogz Ice Treat Maker™ comes with some toys to freeze as well as a recipe and instructions on how to create the perfect treat to keep the dog busy and interested for hours. This is not only a great form of enrichment but is especially useful on a hot day, providing your pooch with relief from the heat. Fill this treat with both food and toys and other chews, which will provide endless entertainment as your dog uncovers each surprise and frees it from the ice.
Make Your Own!

Use a water bucket or whatever you have that you can fill and freeze. Line the bucket with wet food, peanut butter, or even cream cheese – whatever will get the dog interested in licking the ice and beginning to uncover the other treats. Put kibble, treats and your dog’s favorite toys in the bucket and add a chain, rope or cord for easy hanging. Stick it in the freezer overnight, then remove, hang and watch your dog enjoy his new treat!

You will discover most dogs enjoy working for their food. Using different types of toys will keep the dog’s mind engaged. There are many more toys on the market than are listed here, and all can be creatively replicated at home with some imagination and limited, inexpensive supplies.
Click for Care™….  
An Easy Steps Clicker Series by Karen Pryor

Make your Shelter a Bark-Free Zone

Constant barking is stressful for owners, patients, and staff. A small shift in routine management can reduce the noise level to zero.

Preparation

- Hang a small envelope of kibble or treats and a clicker outside each enclosure. Or have kennel employees wear clickers on their wrists or belts.
- Ask anyone who is frequently in the kennel area to use the following clicker procedures:

Steps

1. If a dog is barking, approach the dog, wait until the barking stops even for a split second, click, treat, and move on. Or…
2. If a dog is barking persistently, don’t look at it; instead, click and treat its quiet neighbors, just once, and move on.
3. If a barking dog stops when he sees you coming, click and toss treat. Wait a few beats, watching the dog. Click and treat, again.
4. Mark kennels of persistent barkers with a colored tag or ribbon; ask staff to click and treat any periods of quiet from those dogs.
5. Click persistent barkers for any of the following behaviors: looking away, lying down, backing away from gate.
6. Be patient. Habitual barkers may get worse, temporarily, before they give in and offer silence as the new way to get attention.
7. In traditionally noisy moments, such as mealtime, click quiet dogs before feeding. Feed barkers last, and only after a click.

Ask staff to click occasionally for quiet on an irregular basis; unpredictable clicks and treats will maintain behavior strongly.

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Karen Pryor’s Clicker Training™. Positively. Amazing™

Send all pet owners home with clicker training!.  Getting Started: Clicker Training Kits for Dog and Cat Kits have everything owners (and their pets) need to get clicking