Stress Reduction Protocol for Dogs

The shelter is a very stressful place for dogs and efforts should be made to reduce stress whenever possible.

All dogs should be provided with soft bedding in their kennels.

DAP (Dog Appeasing Pheromone) – a synthetic canine pheromone that has been shown to reduce stress in dogs. DAP collars are the best option for shelter dogs as the diffuser usually is ineffective in a large kennel area. Place a collar on any dog that appears to be having a hard time adjusting the shelter environment.

Noise levels should be kept to a minimum. Using clicker training, you can teach your shelter dogs that being quiet can earn treats. The "Click for Calm" program involves shelter staff walking up to each dog daily and "clicking" if they are quiet and then delivering the treat. If the dog barks or jumps up onto the kennel door, the person should simply walk away. Behaviors that are rewarded are repeated; behaviors that chase you away, should go away. Please refer to www.clickertraining.com for more information.

Soft soothing music should be played in the kennels during the day. Music has been shown to reduce stress in dogs. The music should be turned off at night as dogs need quiet and darkness to sleep well.

Social contact with humans is important for stress reduction. Talking to them quietly and petting them gently can go a long way to reducing stress. Gentle massage can also be beneficial.

Time out of the cage is important. Giving the dogs time in the outside pens or in an office can be beneficial for stress reduction.

Routine and predictable schedules – dogs feel better when they learn a routine. Keep the routine for feeding time, walking time, playtime, and training time as consistent as possible.

Physical exercise goes a long way to reduce stress. The dogs should be walked daily and encouraged to run and play as often as possible.