

Medical Reserve Corps Disaster Animal Response Team

Restraint and Handling Animals during a
Disaster Shelter Operation

Agenda

Why Train in Animal Handling



Work as a Team



Be Prepared & Be Aware



Animal Inflicted Injuries



Animal Handling -Dogs and Cats

Why Train in Animal Handling

Following a disaster, abandoned and stressed animals create risks for responders

Infectious disease risk increases when abandoned pets roam freely following a disaster

Animals help reduce owner trauma, sense of displacement, and long-term post traumatic stress

Evacuation operations are more effective when families and pets are treated as an intertwined unit

Pets Matter, Because People Matter...



Personal safety is ALWAYS the number one priority

Work As a Team – Ask for Help

If owner is present,
use them to help
guide to where the
animal needs to go.

Seek Assistance
unless you are
experienced.

**STOP – ASK FOR
HELP**
if you are
nervous/scared

Only handle
animals you are
comfortable with.
Ask For Help

**If you get hurt, Call for
Help. Leave animal in
safe place and get
medical attention.**



Personal safety is ALWAYS the number one priority

Preparedness in Action

Access the Situation

- Team Size – Buddy System
- Can the animal be contained?
- What happens after contained?
- Is the animal acting aggressively?

Utilize Calming Animal Signals

- Remain Calm – Show No Fear – Act Indifferent
- Move and Breathe Slowly– Meditation
- Approach with body turned sideways
- **Utilize the owner to reduce stress and help.**

Moving The Animal

- Watch for signs of stress
- Use treats as motivation to lure
- Allow animals to come to you
- Always use as little restraint as possible

Avoid These Handling Practices

- Avoid prolonged direct eye contact
- Don't loom over body
- Don't reach out to touch collar
- Call for help for aggressive animals

Animal-Inflicted Injuries

In the event of any animal attack, report to your MRC-DART supervisor

If facing an aggressive animal, use calming signal and back away slowly

If possible, put an object or distance between yourself and the animal

Throw treats behind the animal. Back away; do not run away

If you fall, curl up and cover your head

Do not scream or yell

Animal-Inflicted Injuries

Wash any animal scratch, bite, or injury immediately with soap and water

Administer first aid as appropriate

Seek immediate attention for any bite or scratch.

Report all injuries to your supervisor immediately and seek professional medical attention

Animal Handling – Compliant Dogs Only

Dog Body Language

How to Greet an Unknown
Dog

Leashing a dog using a
Slip Lead

What Not To Do When Dog
Is Wearing a Slip Lead

How Dogs Communicate

Observe the **dog**

- What is the dog doing?
- What does the dog look like when "neutral"/"at rest"?

Observe the **environment**

- What is the context (what are they responding to)?
- Where/when did the behavior occur?
Who was there?

What's the **function** of the behavior?

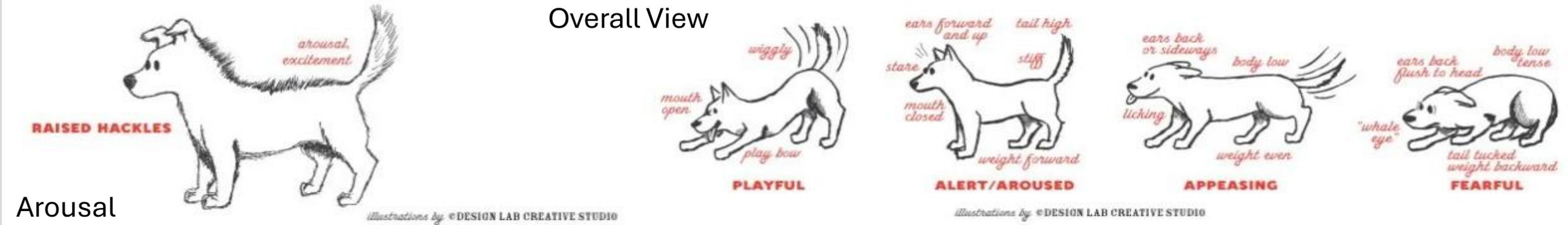
- What is the outcome (consequence) of their behavior?
- What are they "asking" for?





Dog Body Language

Overall View



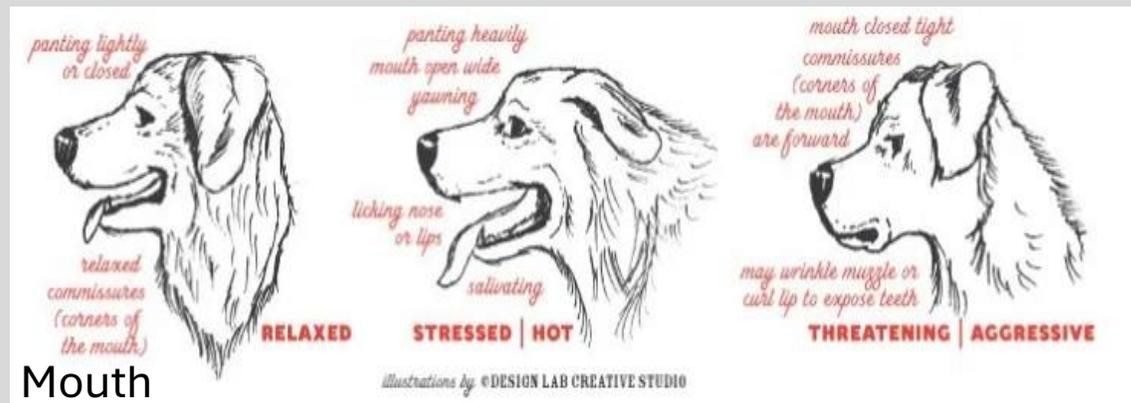
Arousal



Ears



Eyes



Mouth



Tail

How Dogs Communicate



How Dogs Communicate

Reading their eyes



<https://www.dewinn.wordpress.com/2013/06/04/the-street-of-stillness/>

Reading their Ears

How Dogs Communicate



How Dogs Communicate



Reading their Mouth

How Dogs Communicate



Reading their Tail

How Dogs Communicate



Reading Posture and Movement

How Dogs Communicate



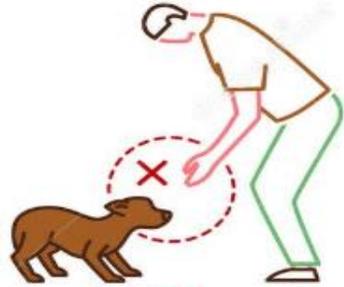
<https://blogprobbertraining.wordpress.com/2012/08/07/body-language-draft-1/>

How Dogs Communicate



How to Greet an Unknown Dog

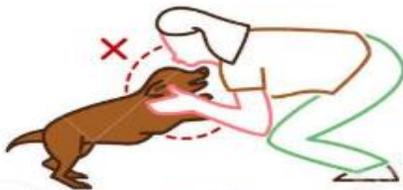
HOW **NOT** TO GREET YOUR DOG



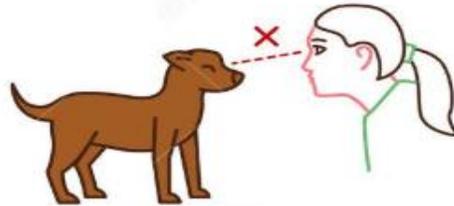
DON'T
LEAN OVER THE DOG & STICK A HAND IN HIS FACE



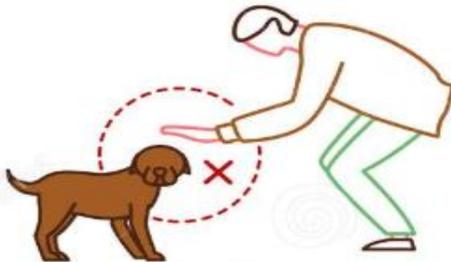
DON'T
GRAB OR HUG HIM



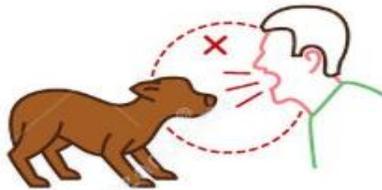
DON'T
GRAB HIS HEAD & KISS HIM



DON'T
STARE HIM IN THE EYE



DON'T
LEAN OVER THE DOG & STICK A HAND ON TOP OF A HEAD



DON'T
SHOUT IN HIS FACE

THE CORRECT WAY TO GREET A DOG



NO EYE CONTACT
LET THE DOG APPROACH WHEN HE WANTS
KEEP SIDE OR BACK NON-THREATENING POSITION TOWARDS THE DOG



PET HIM ON THE SIDE OF HIS BODY OR FACE
STROKE HIM ON HIS BACK

What is a Considerate Approach?

Consider how the animal perceives the environment (sensory experience)

Consider how an animal perceives our behavior (our intentions don't matter!)

Maximize choice and control over outcomes

- Prepare for every interaction (do you have the information and tools you need?)
- Can the owner or a friend help?
- What adjustments are feasible, in this moment?



Considerate Approach

DO

Keep your torso upright, bend at the knees

Angle your body slightly away, avert gaze

Kneel, stand, or sit in a chair

Toss food underhand/behind the dog

Speak softly, move calmly/deliberately

DON'T

Hinge at the hips, loom over

Hold direct eye contact, face head on

Sit all the way on the floor, kiss or hug

Lure closer with treats, reach into their space

Speak loudly, move quickly or "rile" up!





Placing a Slip Lead on a Compliant Dog

Using a pre-made slip lead (a sturdy band with a metal ring sewn securely into one end), prepare the lead by placing the end of the lead through the metal ring, creating a very large loop (lasso).

Make the loop so large that you can slip it over the dog's head without bending over. The goal is not to bend over, which would place your face too close to the unknown dog's head.

Slip the large loop over the dog's head and pull up on the long end of the lead. The loop will slip down around the dog's neck and gently pulling the lead up will ensure it is snugly placed around the dog's neck.

Do not pull so hard that you are jerking the dog's head or making the lead too tight. This movement should be careful yet gentle

Hold the lead with both hands. One hand should be holding the lead midway between the dog and your body. Your dominant hand should be holding the end of the lead.



Using a Slip Lead to
Leash a Compliant Dog

Never Do When Dog Is Wearing a Slip Lead

1

Never use a slip lead on a puppy or very small dog

2

Never tie a dog to an object with a lead

3

Never leave a dog unattended when it is on a lead

4

Never allow the dog to pull hard and constantly on a slip lead as it may damage its throat

5

If a dog becomes so frightened that it continues to pull with its neck on a lead, you must remove the lead completely and leave the dog behind.

A close-up photograph of a ginger cat with a plaid bow tie. The cat is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

Cat
body language

Animal Handling – Compliant Cat Only

Cat Body Language

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graph TD; A[Cat Body Language] --> B[Approaching a Cat to put into a Carrier]; B --> C[Pillow Case Method to Crate a Cat]; C --> D[Swaddle (Burrito) Wrap Method to Crate a Cat];
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Approaching a Cat to put into a Carrier

Pillow Case Method to Crate a Cat

Swaddle (Burrito) Wrap Method to Crate a Cat

Cat Body Language

Tail:

- **High & Straight (slight curve):** Happy/Confident/Friendly greeting
- **Tucked:** Fearful, Insecure, submissive
- **Puffed/Arched:** Terrified or defensive
- **Slow Swish/Flick:** Curious, mildly irritated (STOP Petting!)
- **Rapid Thrashing/Wagging:** Angry, overstimulated, Give Space

Ears:

- **Forward & Relaxed:** Alert, Interested, Calm
- **Swiveling/Twitching:** Annoyed, Listening intently.
- **Pinned Back (Flat):** Afraid, angry, defensive Give SPACE

Eyes:

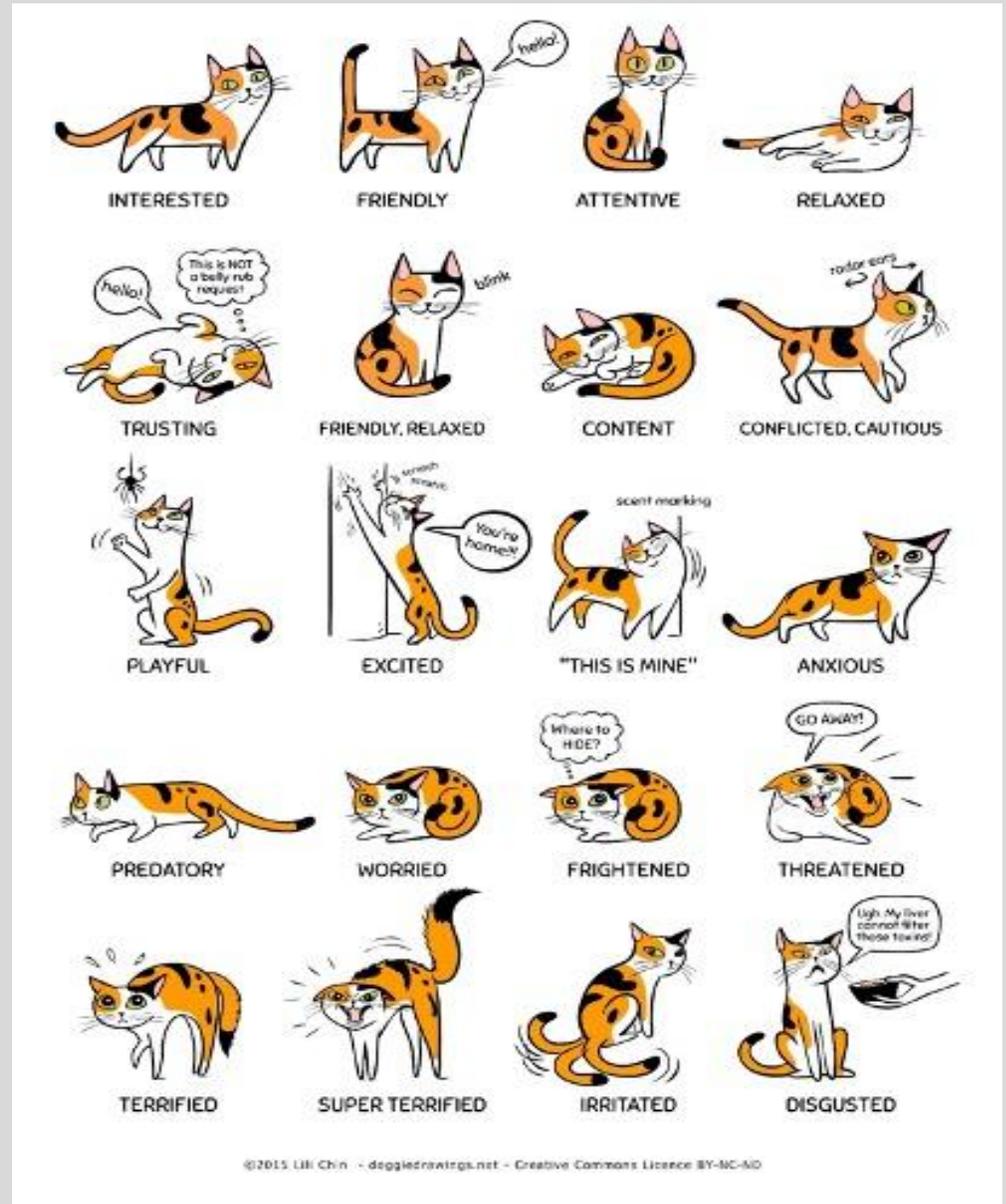
- **Slow Blinks (“Cat Kisses”):** Affection, trust, relaxed
- **Narrow Pupiled (in bright light):** Content, focused
- **Wide Pupils (especially in low light):** Excited, Fearful, Aggressive– Give SPACE

Body & Posture

- **Relaxed, Loafing, Kneading:** Content, Happy
- **Stretched out, High on Paws:** Confident or ready to Pounce/Attack
- **Arched Back, Fur Raised (Piloerection):** Defensive, Scared, Aggressive
- **Tense Muscles, Tucked Tail:** Fearful, anxious, Stressed – Give SPACE

Vocalizations:

- **Meows:** Primarily for humans (Hello, Feed me, Attention)
- **Purring:** Contentment, but also self soothing when in pain or stressed.
- **Hissing/Growling/Spitting:** Clear Warning of Fear, Distress, or Aggression, Give SPACE



Crating a Friendly Cat Video -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGEKCHNkD-4>



Approaching and Crating a Cat Pillowcase Method

- **If owner available ask them to put the cat in the carrier.**
- **Stick your finger out for the cat to come and sniff to introduce yourself.**
- **If can't get near cat, put a towel or pillowcase over his body first to calm the cat down.**
- **Open the carrier so the door is open, facing the ceiling. Gather the pillowcase together like an accordion into your two hands.**
- **In a gentle, fluid movement, unfurl the pillowcase as you place it over the cat's head and then down around it's body.**
- **Swiftly close the end of the pillowcase while gently guiding the cat-pillowcase down head-first into the carrier.**
- **Remember to support cat's hind end at all times.**

If you do not have a carrier for the cat, secure the top of the pillowcase with a twist tie or cord to transport. Support the bottom of the cat when transporting.



Approaching and Crating a Cat Swaddling (Burrito) Wrap Method

- **If owner available ask them to put the cat in the carrier.**
- **If no carrier available, use the Pillowcase Method**
- **Stick your finger out for the cat to come and sniff to introduce yourself.**
- **If can't get near cat, put a towel or pillowcase over his body**
- **Open the carrier so the door is open, facing the ceiling. Gather the pillowcase together like an accordion into your two hands.**
- **In one fluid movement, gently but confidently wrap the towel around the cat like a burrito – with only their head sticking out. You will need to hold the towel securely so you don't hurt the cat, but it can not gain traction with its back legs to squiggle out.**
- **Put the cat in tail first in the carrier with the towel intact. They will unwind themselves.**

Approaching and Crating a Cat



How to make A KITTY BURRITO

Give cats a better practice experience by using a towel wrap. Use these steps to safely wrap and restrain a cat for treatment.



1 Place a towel lengthways on the exam table. Place the cat two-thirds the way on the towel, head facing away and tail end toward you.



2 Take the shorter end of the towel and fold over the kitty, leaving her head out and wrapping the legs.



3 Tuck the towel beneath the cat.



4 Take the longer end of the towel and fold over the kitty, making sure to tuck the towel all the way underneath and over the top of the cat again.



5 You should be able to hold the end of the towel to prevent unwrapping. At this point, only the cat's head should be out for pilling and other treatment.



6 If you need to trim the cat's nails, repeat the steps above, extending one leg outside the wrap. This will take some time to accomplish, but it will prevent anyone from being hurt.

Alternately, if you see your cat prefers to have only her head covered to calm her and give her the sense she's hiding, you can gently place the towel over her shoulders and head. Some cats become very tractable when you do this. And remember, practice makes perfect, so try this on calm cats first to improve your technique.

Swaddling/Burrito Method Video -

[To watch video](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS308iuDPcc>



Using Pillow Cat Method -

[To watch video](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmzG7_8Yemc



Key Takeaways

Always observe both the dog and the environment. WTF?

These are **not** our dogs at home, and stress impacts behavior!

Apply a considerate approach and situational awareness, to every interaction!

Be prepared with what you need!



Thank you
very much!

Jean Gillan
Animal Control
Officer for
Randolph

David Schwarz
DVM
State of Ma.
Animal
Resource Team

Liisa Jackson
Regional
Medical
Reserve Corps
Unit Leader

Thank you to
HCAM for
filming

How to Greet a Dog (and What to Avoid)

Appropriate greetings are common sense. Imagine if someone greeted you the way many people greet dogs!

Human to Human INCORRECT



Avoid reaching into their safety zone.



Avoid rushing up.



Avoid interactions without asking.



Avoid staring at people. This is scary.



Avoid looming over.



Avoid reaching into personal space.



Avoid close interaction if the person is afraid of you.



Avoid touching inappropriately.

Human to Dog INCORRECT



Avoid reaching in or towards the dog's car.



Avoid rushing up.



Avoid interacting with unfamiliar dogs, especially if they're tied up.



Avoid staring at or approaching head-on.



Avoid leaning over or towards dogs even when you change position to squat or get up.



Avoid reaching your hand out for the dog to sniff.



Avoid petting if the dog looks nervous or tense. Just admire him instead.

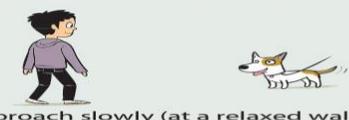


Avoid hugging, kissing, and patting roughly. This is too familiar and disliked by many dogs.

Human to Dog CORRECT



Stand a safe distance away so that you are not a threat.



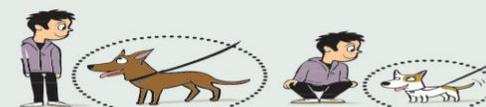
Approach slowly (at a relaxed walk).



Ask if you can interact first.



Approach sideways and look using your peripheral vision.



Stay outside the dog's bubble and present your side to the dog.



Let the dog approach at his own rate.



It's OK to pet the dog if he looks relaxed, comes up to you, and solicits your attention by rubbing against you.



Pet gently.

Approaching and Crating a Cat

Stand the carrier up so the door is open, facing the ceiling. Make sure you are wearing gloves and goggles

Hold a lightweight towel with two hands. Calmly approach the cat with the towel from behind or from the side.

In one fluid movement, gently but confidently wrap the towel around the cat like a burrito – with only their head sticking out. You will need to hold the towel securely so you don't hurt the cat, but it can not gain traction with its back legs to squiggle out.

Slip the tail end of the towel-wrapped cat into the carrier and swiftly shut the door. Don't unwind the towel – they will do it themselves.

Burrito Wrap for Crating a Cat



Agenda

- Why Train in Animal Handling
 - Tools
 - Animal Handling Tools
 - Animal Calming Signals
 - Ask For Help
 - Seek assistance unless you are experienced
 - Stop if you are nervous/scared - Ask for help
 - Don't try to handle an animal you are not comfortable with – Ask for Help
 - If you get hurt, leave the animal where it is if safe too and get medical help for yourself.
- Approaching Unknown Animals
 - Use Calming signal to help determine if aggressive, stressed or scared
 - Move slowly, Breath slowly, talk in a soft, calm voice
 - Approach with body turned sideways
 - No direct eye contact – look quickly then look away while keeping animal in side view.
 - Work With the Animal
 - Allow animal to come to you by throwing treats their way.
 - Do not loom or grab an animal by the collar.
 - If animal shows signs of aggression, throw a handful of treats behind them for them then back away slowly.
- Dog Body Language
- Cat Body Language
- Crating a Dog
 - Using a Slip Lead on Compliant Dog
 - When not to use a Slip Lead
 - Use Treats or toys to lure into crate.
- Crating a Cat
 - Using Taco Wrap Method
 - Using Towel Method
- Signs to look for aggressive animals – what to do
- Signs to look for non-aggressive animals - W

Context

Environmental Conditions

Transitions

Other dogs

Strangers

Resources

Other animals

Invasive handling

Car rides

Pain/physical discomfort

Distance

Duration

Intensity



When confronted with non-aggressive animals:

Approach with your body turned **sideways**

Use a slip leash to control a dog, use a towel or pillowcase to pick up a cat

Always wear your PPE – gloves and eye protection

Use as little restraint as possible

IMPORTANT: Never attempt to approach or restrain an **aggressive** animal.