Job Description

Chief Veterinarian

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Department: Veterinary Services
Reports to: Executive Director
Direct Reports: Staff Veterinarians (currently 2)
Clinical Oversight: Relief Veterinarians
Status: Full-time, exempt
Schedule: 10-hour shifts; weekend availability preferred

MISSION
Foothills Animal Shelter's mission is: Providing support to our surrounding community through education, services that strengthen the human-pet bond, and humane care for the animals we serve.

VALUES
All employees and volunteers are expected to embody the Shelter's Values which are to have honesty and integrity in all that we do, with the following values as our guide:

- **Stewardship:** Assume responsibility and ownership for our actions within our shelter and our community.
- **Positive Culture:** Create a safe, supportive environment for the health, wellbeing, and development of staff and volunteers.
- **Openness:** Nurture an innovative, inclusive, and creative environment that cultivates conversations and relationships that actively work towards the future.
- **Team Oriented:** Build relationships, embrace teamwork, and foster collaboration in pursuit of our Mission.

POSITION SUMMARY
Foothills Animal Shelter's Chief Veterinarian provides medical leadership and high-quality veterinary and surgical care for animals in the Shelter's care and a limited number of community-owned animals. As a member of the Shelter's leadership team, the Chief Veterinarian establishes medical standards, guides veterinary protocols and practices, and contributes their expertise to organizational planning and decision-making.

The Chief Veterinarian directly supervises and mentors staff veterinarians, fostering a collaborative learning environment that supports professional development, clinical excellence, and the growth of future shelter medicine professionals. Working in close partnership with the Veterinary Services Manager and Director of Animal Behavior and Sheltering, this position ensures that veterinary care supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of individual animals while considering the needs and resources of the broader shelter population.

This is a primarily clinical position, with approximately 75% of time dedicated to hands-on veterinary practice, including surgery, medical rounds, treatment, and emergency care. The Chief Veterinarian balances clinical responsibilities with medical leadership, teaching, and collaboration across the organization.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Medical Leadership

- Serves as a member of the Shelter's leadership team, contributing veterinary expertise to organizational planning, policy development, and decision-making.
- Establishes, evaluates, and maintains standards of veterinary and surgical care, ensuring consistent application of current shelter medicine best practices among staff and relief veterinarians.
- Maintains and updates the Shelter's shelter medicine journal, veterinary procedures, and disease prevention and control protocols.
- Exercises independent professional judgment in the diagnosis, treatment, and medical care of shelter animals, including medical euthanasia decisions.
- Provides medical leadership in population health, infectious disease prevention and management, and the appropriate allocation of veterinary resources.
- Collaborates with the Director of Animal Behavior and Sheltering to ensure medical decisions support individual animal wellbeing, population health, and shelter operations.
- Partners with the Director of Animal Behavior and Sheltering and Executive Director to evaluate significant changes in veterinary care practices, considering medical benefits, operational capacity, animal wellbeing, and organizational resources.
- Partners with the Veterinary Services Manager to support effective veterinary workflows, appropriate medical staffing, and consistent implementation of veterinary protocols and standards.
- Provides professional medical guidance and consultation to staff veterinarians and other shelter personnel.

Veterinarian Supervision, Mentorship, and Professional Development

- Recruits, interviews, hires, and supervises staff veterinarians, establishing clear expectations and providing ongoing coaching, performance feedback, and professional development.
- Provides clinical oversight and guidance to relief veterinarians, ensuring familiarity with Shelter protocols, standards of care, and medical practices.
- Fosters a supportive, collaborative environment in which veterinarians are encouraged to ask questions, share knowledge, develop their skills, and continuously improve their practice.
- Provides clinical mentorship and guidance to staff veterinarians, supporting the development of medical judgment, surgical proficiency, and shelter medicine expertise.
- Develops and maintains opportunities for veterinary interns and externs to gain meaningful, supervised experience in shelter medicine, considering the educational value, available resources, and benefit to the organization.
- Cultivates relationships with veterinary schools and training programs to identify mutually beneficial learning opportunities that support the Shelter's veterinary capacity and introduce future veterinarians to careers in shelter medicine.
- Creates opportunities for veterinary personnel to learn from one another and participate in ongoing professional development.
- Models professional accountability, constructive communication, and an optimistic, solutions-focused approach to challenges.

Veterinary Services

- Provides direct veterinary and surgical care for shelter animals, including sterilization surgeries, dentistry, medical examinations, treatment, and other surgical procedures.
- Oversees the medical care of approximately 150–200 shelter animals daily, working collaboratively with staff veterinarians and veterinary personnel to prioritize and coordinate care.
- Conducts medical rounds, evaluates treatment progress, and maintains accurate and timely medical records in the Shelter's database.

- Provides emergency medical care to injured and critically ill animals brought to the Shelter.
- Evaluates and makes medical recommendations regarding quality of life, prognosis, treatment options, and humane euthanasia.
- Serves as a veterinary subject matter expert for animal cruelty and neglect cases within Jefferson County, working with city and county animal protection officers to evaluate, document, and provide testimony regarding animals involved in legal proceedings.
- Supports the provision of veterinary services for community programs, including vaccine clinics and other services offered through the Shelter.
- Models Fear Free veterinary practices and promotes handling, treatment, and care approaches that minimize fear, anxiety, stress, and pain.
- Maintains regular and reliable attendance to support essential daily veterinary operations and continuity of animal care.

Interdepartmental Collaboration

- Works closely with the Director of Animal Behavior and Sheltering to support medical care decisions, animal wellbeing, and effective management of the shelter population.
- Partners with the Veterinary Services Manager to align clinical priorities with department operations, staffing capacity, workflows, and resources.
- Collaborates with the Behavior Resources Manager and behavior team to support the physical and emotional wellbeing of animals, including the appropriate use of behavioral medications and coordination of medical and behavioral treatment plans.
- Provides medical guidance and training to animal care, shelter services, and behavior personnel on topics including disease prevention, vaccinations, medications, quarantine and isolation, and other practices that support animal health.
- Collaborates with the Better Together Program Manager to support community veterinary services and initiatives that help pets and families remain together.
- Works with shelter services personnel to coordinate care for animals undergoing medical treatment and ensure appropriate communication with community members.
- Supports the development team by identifying appropriate animal stories and providing veterinary expertise for fundraising and community communications.
- Collaborates with transfer partners and other animal welfare professionals to share knowledge, support animal health, and promote effective shelter medicine practices.
- Communicates openly and constructively with colleagues across departments, recognizing and respecting the expertise and responsibilities of other shelter professionals.

Training and Organizational Support

- Provides veterinary training and consultation to staff and volunteers as appropriate to their roles.
- Trains and certifies qualified shelter personnel in euthanasia skills and procedures.
- Supports the veterinary technician apprenticeship program through clinical instruction, skills assessment, and certification of competencies.
- Provides veterinary expertise and instruction to support safe and effective animal handling, medical procedures, and disease control practices.
- Encourages ongoing learning and skill development among veterinary personnel and other shelter teams.

Resource Stewardship

- Contributes veterinary expertise to the development of the annual Veterinary Services budget and the evaluation of equipment, supplies, and other clinical resource needs.

- Collaborates with the Veterinary Services Manager to ensure veterinary resources are used effectively and responsibly.
- Considers medical necessity, animal wellbeing, available resources, and organizational priorities when evaluating treatment approaches and veterinary practices.
- Identifies opportunities to improve the quality, efficiency, and sustainability of veterinary services.

Safety and Compliance

- Promotes and follows established safety guidelines and veterinary practice standards to support a safe working environment for staff, volunteers, community members, and animals.
- Ensures medical practices comply with applicable veterinary laws, regulations, and professional standards.
- Maintains appropriate protocols for the safe handling, administration, and documentation of controlled substances and other medications.
- Identifies and addresses medical safety concerns and collaborates with appropriate managers to improve training, procedures, and compliance.
- Supports appropriate infection prevention, zoonotic disease management, and occupational safety practices.

Other Duties

This job description is not designed to cover or contain a comprehensive listing of activities, duties, or responsibilities required of the employee. Duties, responsibilities, and activities may change at any time with or without notice.

QUALIFICATIONS

Education and Experience

- Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM/VMD) from an AVMA-accredited school of veterinary medicine.
- Current veterinary license in good standing, or eligibility for licensure in Colorado.
- Must hold or be eligible to obtain a current DEA registration and maintain appropriate professional liability insurance.
- Minimum of five years of post-DVM clinical experience, including shelter medicine experience.
- Minimum of two years of experience supervising or providing clinical leadership to veterinarians or other veterinary personnel. Veterinary team management preferred.
- Demonstrated interest and ability in teaching and mentoring veterinary professionals, with sound judgment in developing learning opportunities that balance educational goals with organizational needs and resources.
- DABVP (Shelter Medicine Practice) preferred.
- Fear Free Shelter certified or ability to obtain certification within 60 days of employment.

Skills and Abilities

- Strong clinical and surgical skills, including the ability to practice effective, resource-conscious veterinary medicine in a high-volume shelter environment.
- Thorough understanding of shelter medicine principles, including population health, infectious disease management, and the relationship between individual animal care and shelter operations.
- Ability to exercise sound independent medical judgment while recognizing when decisions require broader organizational collaboration.
- Genuine interest in teaching and mentoring veterinary professionals at varying stages of their careers.
- Ability to supervise, coach, and develop staff veterinarians, establish clear expectations, and provide constructive performance feedback.

- Ability to translate veterinary knowledge and current shelter medicine research into practical, effective protocols and procedures.
- Strong interpersonal and written communication skills, including the ability to explain medical considerations clearly to colleagues without veterinary training.
- Ability to collaborate constructively with professionals from other disciplines, value differing perspectives, and work toward shared organizational goals.
- Ability to navigate disagreements professionally and participate productively in difficult decisions involving animal care and wellbeing.
- Ability to balance clinical responsibilities, mentorship, and organizational leadership while managing time and priorities effectively.
- Ability to approach challenges with curiosity, flexibility, sound judgment, and a solutions-focused mindset.
- Ability to maintain professional composure and effectiveness in emotionally challenging situations, including emergency care and euthanasia decisions.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality when handling sensitive medical, personnel, and organizational information.
- Ability to learn and use shelter management software and maintain accurate medical records.

Physical Requirements

- Ability to stand and walk for extended periods on hard surfaces with minimal sedentary work.
- Ability to bend, twist, kneel, and squat frequently throughout the shift.
- Ability to lift, carry, and move up to 50 pounds regularly throughout the shift.
- Ability to handle dogs of all sizes on leash, including dogs weighing over 100 pounds.
- Ability to work in confined spaces, including animal kennels and housing areas.
- Ability to work safely on wet and slippery floor surfaces throughout the shift.

Working Conditions

- Ten-hour shifts; weekend availability preferred; schedule may include holidays.
- Exposure to anesthesia gases, medications, controlled substances, and x-ray radiation.
- Exposure to noise, odors, chemical fumes, animal hair, and dander.
- Exposure to common allergens including animal dander, feathers, hay/straw, latex, peanut butter, dairy products, and other food items used for animal enrichment.
- Exposure to zoonotic diseases and infectious agents through contact with animals and bodily fluids.
- Exposure to cleaning chemicals, disinfectants, and sanitizing agents.
- Exposure to emotionally challenging situations involving sick or injured animals, euthanasia procedures, and end-of-life decisions.
- Frequent handwashing and use of personal protective equipment as required.
- Potential exposure to animal bites and scratches.
- Work performed in areas with high levels of noise.