



**BARC**

ANIMAL SHELTER  
& ADOPTIONS

# BARC Volunteer Handbook

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*Ashley Butterworth, Volunteer Coordinator  
2017 Edition*

# Welcome!

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Welcome to the BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions Volunteer Program. Being a volunteer is extremely rewarding, educational and fun. You can have a significant positive impact on the lives of homeless animals. Giving a puppy a bath, reading to cats, or getting your favorite L.O.S dog adopted will touch your heart and keep you coming back for more. It's especially rewarding to see how the animals respond immediately to the love they receive while they are at the shelter.

As a result of the volunteer program, dogs get walked regularly and cats are more socialized. Animals get placed in foster homes when they are too young to adopt or need to recuperate from injury or illness; or just need a little more socialization. Most importantly, because of volunteers, many dogs' and cats' lives are saved. The BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions Volunteer Program was created for the animals.

## **Thank You!**

Thank you for giving us your time and for giving the animals your attention! We appreciate your commitment to help us help them and we know that your time is valuable. Each of you may have different reasons for wanting to be a volunteer, but all of you choose to volunteer at BARC because:

- Your desire to care for those cats and dogs desperately needing positive human interaction
- Your wish to help find homes for animals that deserve a second chance
- You want to be a part of making our community more responsible for our pets
- You want to help save lives

As a volunteer, you are a valuable asset to our organization and to the many animals which need loving homes. Our goal is to continually expand our community outreach program, placing more animals into good homes. The time and energy you contribute by volunteering helps us achieve these goals.

Since your support as a volunteer is extremely important, your decision to participate must be made with the full understanding of the commitment and responsibility it demands. This handbook has been prepared for you as a reference guide. It contains information regarding our policies & procedures, tools for working with the public and how to safely handle shelter animals. Please read it carefully so you will be well equipped to answer questions knowledgeably and to provide quality care to the animals at the shelter.

Thank you for giving your time and energy to the animals at BARC. We hope that the time you spend here will be as rewarding to you as it is beneficial to the animals you help.

# About BARC

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BARC is the City of Houston's Animal Shelter and Adoption Facility. BARC is the only city shelter in Houston required by law to accept every animal that comes through our doors regardless of breed, temperament, health conditions, and circumstance (from owner surrender, stray pickup, rescued or confiscated animals). We have built a best-in-class team that stewards our mission of professionalism, responsibility, compassion, commitment, integrity, and accountability

BARC is dedicated to pet adoption and a live release initiative. In addition to sheltering and providing veterinary care to all animals brought to the shelter, we work diligently to place these animals in new homes. We collaborate and coordinate with our Houston Pet Rescue groups and through social media networks to cast the widest possible adoption net. We also provide intensive neo-natal and adult pet fostering programs, along with hands-on volunteer training classes and continuous workshops.



We are committed to promoting responsible pet ownership through spaying/neutering, microchipping, vaccinations, and training class services. Campaigns and programs to educate and raise community awareness about these services are ongoing.

Houston has the largest urban land area in the U.S. Its size and unique characteristics create challenging circumstances in regards to animal population and control. In addition to a year-long breeding season that steadily increases the area's animal population, our semi-tropical climate serves as an incubator for fleas, ticks and other parasites harmful to animals. Houston is an urban metropolis, but it is also home to various species of wild animals and reptiles including coyotes, bobcats, bats, raccoons, opossums, skunks, foxes, snakes and even alligators. Because of this, rabies outbreaks are a special concern. A rabies vaccination is required to license your pet, and a pet license is mandatory in Houston. BARC serves as the licensing facility. We work hard to educate the public about rabies prevention and about co-existing with our extensive wildlife population.

Our goal is to provide animal control and care services that minimize fear, pain, stress and suffering to animals in and out of the shelter and we work to ensure safe and healthy human-animal interactions. We work closely with the City of Houston Police Department and Houston Animal Control to respond to animal cruelty and abuse reports, behavioral complaints, dog bite cases and animal/gang related issues.

# What does BARC do?

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## Placement of Pets through Adoptions & Rescue Groups

- We make dogs and cats available for adoption at our shelter and at various off-site adoption events throughout the city. Animals are transferred to registered rescue groups for free!
- Standard Adoption Fees
  - Dogs - \$50                      Puppies (4 months and under) - \$75
  - Cats - \$20                      Kittens (4 months and under) - \$20

## Lost and Found

- People who have lost pets should be encouraged to come to BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions and look through the stray kennels which contain hundreds of animals.
- If BARC picks up an animal with an ID tag or microchip, BARC staff will call the owner or contact the agency that issued the rabies tag in order to get the pet back to its home

## Pet Licensing – the law in Houston

- A pet license identifies and protects your pet in case it becomes lost. Even indoor pets can get out and become lost. The City of Houston Municipal Code requires that anyone owning a dog or cat four months of age or older must have his or her pet licensed and vaccinated against rabies every year. You are required to renew your license yearly and keep updated.

## Rabies Prevention

- Call 311 to report possible exposure including bites and scratches from unvaccinated animals.
- Animals that have bitten or scratched need to be quarantined for public safety.

## Animal Cruelty

- Citizens must report acts of cruelty and neglect. Cruelty to an innocent animal is often a training ground for child abuse or domestic cruelty and they can occur hand in hand.
- The basic needs of an animal require that they have access to food, water, shelter and exercise. If the dog or cat is deprived of these, 311 will create a formal report and an Animal Control Officer will investigate.

## Owner Surrender

- Some owners cannot or choose not to fulfill the commitment they made when they brought an animal into their home. We try to inform owners of all the alternatives to surrendering their pet so they can make a decision that's best for the animal.
- Owner surrenders are accepted at the shelter every day from 12-5:30 pm except for Mondays & Thursdays. All owner surrenders must be brought to our facility located at 3200 Carr Street, Houston, TX 77026.

# Volunteering at BARC

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## Who can volunteer at BARC?

Volunteers must be 13 years of age or older. Volunteers 13-15 years old must volunteer with a parent or guardian at all times. 16 and 17 year olds can volunteer on their own after attending orientation with a parent or guardian. No minor can volunteer with or handle adult dogs.

## What can you do for BARC?

On the following pages, you'll see a variety of job descriptions. Look through them, and then talk to the Volunteer Coordinator who will help you to decide where you are needed most based on your background and your interests.

We are looking for committed volunteers who can participate in BARC activities at least once a month if possible. While not required, regular participation helps the animals at BARC and keeps you connected with the rest of the BARC team.

If you can't come in at regularly scheduled times, there are other ways you can volunteer. We always need help with special events and donation drives. Be sure to check your email for upcoming events and opportunities to get involved at BARC.

## Process to Volunteer at BARC:

- 1. Register Online** at <https://app.volunteer2.com/Public/SignUp?organizationGUID=0af131a9-a682-4f05-b006-d11538ee08bd&signupFormId=1>. The link listed here directs you to the BARC setup portal on the [www.MyVolunteerPage.com](http://www.MyVolunteerPage.com) website. Fill out the profile information to complete the initial registration as a volunteer. After creating your account, you can quickly log into your account via [www.MyVolunteerPage.com](http://www.MyVolunteerPage.com).
- 2. Sign Up for Orientation** through the volunteer server, on the link listed above, sign up to attend an initial on-site BARC Volunteer Orientation. Currently, the class is offered four times a month. The class lasts 3 hours and includes a classroom presentation, shelter tour and an hour of mandatory hands-on volunteer time. This class is a pre-requisite to performing any of the volunteer activities offered. Volunteers must wear long pants and closed-toed shoes to volunteer with BARC to prevent injury. Use the gate at 2700 Evella Street to enter the facility and proceed to the BARC Classroom, in the admin building, for the orientation.
- 3. Sign Up for Volunteer Activities.** Assignments for a variety of volunteer duties are posted on the volunteer web page ([www.MyVolunteerPage.com](http://www.MyVolunteerPage.com)) and you are able to schedule yourself for various activities and shifts that fit your lifestyle and schedule. Once you have completed the initial volunteer orientation, log in to the volunteer server and self-schedule yourself for any and all activities, orientations, or tasks you are interested in participating in for BARC – these can be on-site or off-site.

# Scheduling Your Service

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## Daily Closing Time

All volunteers must be off the BARC property no later than 5:30 pm each day, and will not be allowed on premise earlier than 9:00 am for scheduled volunteer activities, assigned through the on-line volunteer scheduling system.

## Log Your Volunteer Service Hours

Log your volunteer hours on [www.MyVolunteerPage.com](http://www.MyVolunteerPage.com) after completing your volunteer service assignments. Logging time is important for the shelter for grant purposes, community support, and program development as well as volunteer appreciation. The hour log can also be used to submit to schools, businesses and organizations for proof of completion of required volunteer service hours.

## Missing Shifts

Your support matters – the animals and the BARC team are counting on you. Therefore, missing volunteer shifts is unacceptable. Missing volunteer assigned shifts leaves spots available that could have otherwise been staffed by other volunteers. You can change your volunteer assignment on-line 24 hours prior to the assignment date and time, if you find that you are unable to fulfill a previously scheduled activity. If you are unable to remove/change your assignment online, you must contact the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. Missing 3 or more assigned shifts without notification will result in your removal from the BARC Volunteer program.

## Contact Information

It is important to keep your contact information up to date at all times. Therefore, volunteers should notify the Volunteer Coordinator of changes in address, phone number, emergency contact or email address in a timely manner.

# Code of Conduct

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## Respectful Behavior

As a member of the BARC team, you are a representative of BARC's brand and image and are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner. You must be respectful and courteous in your interactions with the public and with staff. Disrespectful or unprofessional behavior, sexual harassment, threats, disparaging remarks, discrimination or vulgar language will not be tolerated and you may be asked to cease your volunteer work as a result of such conduct. This code of conduct applies to online and/or written material as well as personal interactions with staff, other volunteers, and members of the public. Bottom line - commit to providing excellent customer service to our visitors, staff, and fellow volunteers.

## Non-BARC Guests/Pets

It is not appropriate to bring children who are not registered BARC volunteers or your own pets to the facility while you are performing volunteer activities. All BARC volunteers must first register online, complete the initial volunteer orientation, sign the volunteer agreement, and have approval from the Volunteer Coordinator to proceed with further activities.

## Privacy Policy & Conveying Correct Information

Information pertaining to BARC records or specific cases is strictly confidential and may not be discussed with others. Please refrain from offering the public information on fees or policies unless you are sure you have current, accurate information. When in doubt, always refer the person to BARC staff. Volunteers are not to disclose any confidential information (contact, personal information, financial, etc.) of shelter customers or staff members. Only BARC approved signage and messaging are allowed on premise, at BARC events or online. Do not write notes or messages on kennel cards, on paper signs or affix any other signs or messages without prior approval from BARC management.



## Dress Code

Come prepared with the mindset that anything that you wear will get dirty. When working with animals you're advised to cover as much skin as possible to avoid scratches, exposure to zoonotic communicable illness, ringworm, mange (scabies), fleas and/or ticks. As a BARC volunteer, you are required to wear the following during each volunteer activity for BARC:

- **BARC Volunteer ID badge** – this will be assigned to you once you have completed the Volunteer orientation and show up for your first shift. One time volunteers will not receive BARC shirts or badges, but should wear appropriate clothing – long pants, comfortable, closed-toe shoes (preferably tennis shoes) and a comfortable shirt.
- **BARC volunteer shirt** it is imperative that all volunteers be dressed in BARC apparel so that they are consistently recognizable to the public. *Only BARC shirts are to be worn by volunteers while on scheduled activities.*
- **Long pants** are required – jeans, khakis or other long pants, no shorts, skirts, skorts, or other garments that expose portions of the leg to potential scratches or scrapes.
- **Comfortable close-toed shoes** – no sandals or flip flops.



## Parking

The front entrance at 3200 Carr Street is for public guests only. All volunteers will use the 2700 Evella Street entrance and park behind the South Dog Adoption Building or Cat Adoption Building. When entering the 2700 Evella entrance, be prepared to show your BARC volunteer badge or valid identification (if you have not yet received a badge). Do not block fire lanes or park in unmarked areas – park in designated areas only. When parking behind South building by the warehouses please do not park in numbered spots as those are reserved for large ACO vehicles. Cars parked in fire lanes or unmarked areas may be towed at the owner's expense.

## Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in all buildings and facility grounds. Volunteers who wish to smoke must do so off of City property (outside the gates). While working at off-site events as a BARC Volunteer, you may not smoke except when on breaks and out of public view.



## **Drugs and Alcohol**

Under no circumstances shall a Volunteer work at our facility or off-site event under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If suspected of being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, you will be asked to leave immediately and will be subject to termination from the BARC Volunteer Program.

## **Cell Phones**

While you are here, we want you to keep your focus on the animals in your care and the customers in need of assistance. BARC discourages the use of cell phones and mobile devices that create unsafe situations and we don't want your phones damaged by water when bathing animals or from being dropped. Volunteers are prohibited from using their cell phones while interacting with BARC customers. If it is necessary for you to have your cell phone with you while volunteering, set the ringer to vibrate or silent, and use your cell phone in non-working areas only. Ear buds, headsets, and headphones shall not be used at any time while volunteering with BARC. Use of cell phones while working with the public may result in corrective action.

## **Animal Care**

It is expected that BARC Volunteers will treat all animals in the shelter's care with compassion and gentleness. Ask for assistance from BARC staff when needed, and use caution at all times. When handling an animal, volunteers must always have the appropriate kennel card with them for that animal. Do not hand write messages on kennel cards – notify BARC staff of any observations or information you feel may need to be noted for an animal. Volunteers are not to diagnose medical cases, remove sick animals from the shelter without permission from the director, or take any animals from the shelter without proper documentation and approval from the front counter or foster/rescue office. Any volunteer doing so will be subject to dismissal.

## **Injury**

You are responsible for your own health and welfare, so be sure to mind all signs and safety precautions. If you are injured while at BARC, you must notify the Volunteer Coordinator or Manager on Duty immediately.

## **Complaints**

Your point of contact regarding volunteering or shelter activities is the Volunteer Coordinator. Bring your concerns and questions to them first. If you have a complaint regarding a staff member or an issue with BARC policy, immediately bring it to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator so it can be resolved. If you are not satisfied with the resolution, you may take your complaint to the Manager on Duty for BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions and you may appeal any issues directly to Greg Damianoff, Director for BARC.

If you have difficulties working with other volunteers or staff members, bring the situation to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator or Manager on Duty as soon as possible. We want to resolve issues so that we can all work effectively as a team. Immediately report anything you interpret as harassment from staff, volunteers or the public to the Volunteer Coordinator or Manager on Duty to ensure your safety and the safety of everyone on the premises.

# Discipline

## Overview

The purpose of the disciplinary policy and procedure is to set and maintain standards of conduct within BARC, and in doing so, ensure that all volunteers are treated fairly and consistently. It is designed to help and encourage all volunteers to achieve and maintain satisfactory standards of conduct. Where deemed appropriate, disciplinary measures may be taken when volunteers behave in a way that detracts from our ability to deliver a quality service to our customers, contradicts our code of conduct or in any other way perceived to adversely affect our company, objectives or reputation.

This policy establishes an equitable and consistent approach to violations of BARC's code of conduct by:

- ensuring the counselling takes place to reinforce the expected performance or conduct standards
- establishing a process under which warnings may be issued and discussed providing for disciplinary action where performance or conduct does not improve

## Three Strike/ At Will Policy

All volunteers covered by this Handbook serve at the pleasure of BARC and are considered "at will." In such an "at will" volunteer relationship, either the volunteer or volunteer coordinator may terminate the volunteer relationship at any time without notice. Each party will endeavor to give the other notice, but it is not required. Depending on the severity of the infraction, BARC can choose to take the necessary steps in its "three strike" policy. BARC can choose to bypass any of these steps at any time in the disciplinary procedure if BARC deems it necessary. Please see below for each step in BARC's "three-strike" policy:

### 1. First or formal verbal warning

If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, the volunteer will be given a written warning or performance note. Such warnings will be recorded but disregarded after three months of satisfactory service, providing there have been no subsequent disciplinary issues.

### 2. Written warning

If the conduct is regarded as more serious or the volunteers work or conduct is considered unsatisfactory after they have received a formal verbal warning, a disciplinary meeting may be called.

After a period of 6 months, if no further disciplinary action has been found necessary and the breach has been resolved, the warning will expire.

### 3. Termination

If the volunteer's work or conduct fails to improve, or where the allegation is particularly serious, the volunteer coordinator will give you a verbal notice of dismissal from your volunteer duties.

# Working with BARC

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## Media Relations

Volunteers are specifically prohibited from speaking on behalf of BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions any representative of the media. All media questions are handled by Ashytn Rivet-Ashtyn.Rivet@hosutontx.gov

## Authorized Areas

Volunteers, Fosters and Rescue Partners are permitted to access the public areas of BARC at any time. Admittance is prohibited to restricted areas such as the back half of the domed Hold/Evaluation building, including but not limited to the wards, quarantine, and intake; the restricted areas of the Dog Adoption building, including but not limited to the puppy room, storage rooms, and Animal Care Technician or other staff work rooms; the Cat Building including but not limited to designated employee only areas. Some volunteer activities may include access to restricted areas, but only for the described volunteer activity during the assigned time period only. At no time are any volunteers, fosters or rescues to walk through or spend time in unauthorized areas, unless they are escorted at all times by a BARC staff member.

## Euthanasia

Euthanasia is an unfortunate occurrence at BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions. It is always our last option and we always strive to place an animal into a good home if available. We hope that more Houstonians will visit BARC and adopt than those who come to BARC to turn-in animals. We also hope that through spay/neuter efforts and humane education; there will be far fewer cats and dogs needing homes.

As a volunteer for BARC, you may be exposed to animals facing euthanasia, even though you will never have to witness it. BARC uses a humane sodium pentobarbital solution injected intravenously. Whether or not you personally agree with the practice, this is a day-to-day reality at the shelter. Our staff has to deal with its administration and its after-effects on a daily basis.

If you are not comfortable in this atmosphere, supporting BARC as it strives to make Houston a more humane community, this may not be a positive volunteer experience for you. You may be better suited to volunteering at another worthy animal shelter or agency in the area.

## Disease Control

BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions is responsible for ensuring public safety including rabies control and other zoonotic disease containment. As a volunteer at BARC, you must be sure to wash your hands frequently as well as clean all animal handling equipment thoroughly to prevent the spread of disease in the shelter.

If you are bitten or scratched, you must report the incident to Bite Case and the Volunteer Coordinator. Be sure to have the identity (record number or animal ID) of the animal ready. The animal may be quarantined for observation. You are responsible for your own personal health and are advised to seek medical treatment from your doctor.

# Community Groups & Events

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## **Activities & Events**

BARC schedules and plans activities and events (on-site as well as off-site) for adoptions, awareness and other outreach initiatives several months in advance. As such, BARC has established protocols, procedures, branding standards and assigned resources. Any and all activities and events, either on the BARC premises or as represented as BARC in the public must be coordinated, and approved by BARC management at least 45 days in advance. Unscheduled or impromptu activities or events will not be supported or endorsed by BARC.

## **Volunteer Groups or Organizations**

Any groups or organizations wishing to hold an event or group volunteer project must contact the Volunteer Coordinator in advance to make such arrangements. Groups will not be allowed to assemble at an event or on-site and promote their business, cause or messaging without prior approval from BARC Management.

## **Rescue Groups**

While we hope we can find homes for all the animals that come into the shelter, in reality, we receive many more than we have people who want to adopt. That's where rescue groups come in. Rescue groups are organized 501(c)3 groups that transfer animals from the shelter into their program to care for and place the animal into a permanent home. BARC currently partners with over 130 rescue groups in the Houston area.

All rescue groups that wish to transfer an animal from BARC must complete a Rescue Group Application and be approved by the Rescue Coordinator via [BARC.Aid@houstontx.gov](mailto:BARC.Aid@houstontx.gov). There is no charge to registered rescue groups to transfer animals from our facility into their care. All transfer requests are handled through [BARC.Aid@houstontx.gov](mailto:BARC.Aid@houstontx.gov), which is monitored 7 days a week from 9am-5pm.

# Volunteer Activities

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## **Adoptions Host**

Assist the public at the shelter and offsite locations with questions and help facilitate introductions between potential adopters and animals.

## **Adoption Counselor**

Review applications from potential adopters and conduct an interview to determine a good fit. Additional training is required for this activity.

## **Reading to Paws**

Reading to Paws is a program where volunteers will read to animals and interact with them in a calm environment. This activity is help prepare animals for their future homes and lets them come out of their kennels in a more "normal" setting.

## **Cat Castle Assistant**

In the cat castle, volunteers will be assisting staff with their daily routines such as cleaning kennels, prepping meet and greet rooms, and making enrichment items. Volunteers will also be socializing cats by reading with them, petting them, or playing with toys.

## **Dog Walking**

Volunteers will take dogs from their kennels and bring them for walks around the BARC campus. They can also utilize designated dog runs to let dogs off leash to play or have a potty break.

## **Puppy Nursery Assistant**

Volunteers will assist staff with prepping the puppy nursery for the day. They will also assist the potential adopters with puppy interactions.

## **Photographer/Photographer's Assistant**

The photography team works together to photograph all of our animals in the facility. Assistants will help bring animals from their kennels to the photographer.

## **Offsite Events**

Volunteers will go to select offsite adoption locations and help the public with any questions they have and also help facilitate meet and greets between animals.

## **Surgery/ Vet Staff Assistant**

Help the surgery team prep tools and animals for surgery

## **Community Outreach (block walking / Healthy Pets healthy streets)**

A team assembles with staff to walk to educate and enhance the community's awareness of responsible pet ownership and promote spay and neuter initiatives.

# Community Support

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## Donations

We are not a private, non-profit organization and have a very limited budget as part of the city government that is supported by our citizens' tax dollars. We have a responsibility to all the citizens to use our funds as wisely as we can.

Donations may be brought to the security shack at 2700 Evella St, anytime from 9-5:30 pm every day. Large donations (too heavy, bulky, or numerous) should be scheduled through the volunteer coordinator. Email [barcvolunteers@houstontx.gov](mailto:barcvolunteers@houstontx.gov) to make arrangements to offload them using the rear gate. You may also bring donations with you when you are scheduled to volunteer.

All supplies donated must be unexpired and unopened to be usable. BARC is always in need of the following items

- Dawn dishwashing liquid
- Flea Shampoo
- Small hand towels
- Newspapers
- Kong toys and other sturdy, washable dog toys
- Wand-type, interactive cat toys
- Washable, plastic, ball-type cat toys
- Natural rawhide chews
- HE (high efficiency) liquid laundry detergent
- Dryer sheets
- Tough, empty plastic bottles such as Gatorade or bleach bottles
- Unopened, unexpired peanut butter
- Tennis balls
- Air freshener
- Paper bags
- Cardboard boxes
- Fabric softener
- New unopened toothbrushes
- Newspapers
- New, unopened rubbing alcohol
- New unopened hydrogen peroxide
- Construction paper
- Markers – sharpies, washable, etc.
- Plastic Storage Bins
- Webcams

- Kitten and puppy nursing bottles
- Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR)
- Puppy Milk Replacer (Esbilac)
- Canned and dry cat and dog food
- Canned and dry kitten and puppy food
- Natural dog and cat treats
- Advantage flea and tick medicine
- Capstar flea and tick medicine
- Litter and litter boxes
- Leashes and collars
- Nail grooming equipment
- Dog & Cat Brushes
- Benches
- A-frame Ladders
- Large containers for plants
- Pooper-scoopers