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Remember:

- Saving lives requires a shelter to keep animals healthy and happy, make the shelter more inviting for the public, and for animals to move through the system as quickly as possible.
- Animals who become sick reduce a community's ability to save lives.
- And while it is impossible to completely eliminate disease-causing pathogens in a shelter environment, a thorough cleaning and disinfecting protocol can vastly reduce their impact.
- Adequate and thorough cleaning is necessary to maintain a healthy shelter population. Combined with good ventilation (and a comprehensive vaccination protocol), they can dramatically reduce illness.
- A good cleaning protocol reduces workload over time by allowing animals to remain healthy and therefore move quickly through the shelter system.
- In addition, saving lives is the shelter's primary mission. This can only be accomplished if animals can be kept healthy.
- Finally, all shelter animals deserve cleanliness and proper care—even if they are scheduled to be killed.

To begin with, cleaning and disinfecting is not the same thing. Cleaning is accomplished with a detergent that removes dirt and debris so they do not interfere with the disinfecting process. Disinfecting is accomplished with a chemical solution that destroys microorganisms. Some commercial disinfectants used by shelters are compromised in their effectiveness by organic material such as feces and hair, which is why it is important to thoroughly clean before they are applied.

Daily Recommendations:

- All kennels, cages, and runs must be cleaned daily with (hot) water and a broad-spectrum disinfectant proven to be effective against various bacteria and viruses common in a shelter environment.
- Each enclosure should be cleaned, scrubbed, and disinfected each and every day.
- A combination of chlorine bleach mixed with water (in a 1:32 dilution) works well. That translates into ½ cup of bleach for every 1 gallon of water.
- It is important that only one or two people do the measuring so there is consistency. (Higher concentrations of bleach can cause respiratory irritation that is uncomfortable for the animals and contributes to disease.)
- And it is vital that it is mixed up fresh daily and covered in an opaque container as light reduces its effectiveness over time.
- We did not store this for use the following day. It was discarded at the end of the day.

- This concentration works to kill parvovirus and calicivirus, the two most difficult to kill viruses in a shelter environment.
- However, the efficacy of the disinfectant is compromised unless all fecal/organic matter is removed and the area cleaned with a detergent beforehand.

Disinfectant:

- For cats, a daily bleach (1:32 ratio of bleach to water) solution is to be used.
- For dogs, an alternating system is to be used as follows:
- Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday: a bleach (1:32 ratio of bleach to water) and detergent (any household detergent);
- Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday: Parvocide and detergent. (This reduces the corrosive effects of the bleach.)
- However, if there is parvovirus in a kennel or in the shelter, use only the bleach solution until it is eliminated (and only after thoroughly cleaning the areas with a detergent).

Protocol for Cats:

- Remove cat from cage.*
- Remove all food and water dishes, toys and other materials.
- Using a brush or paint scraper, remove all caked on debris, fecal matter, and bodily fluids from all walls, floor and doors.
- Wipe with clean damp towel (never reuse towels or wipes for more than one cat cage).
- Thoroughly spray cat cage, doors, and all surfaces with bleach solution.
- Let stand 5 minutes.
- Wipe with clean towel (never reuse towels or wipes for more than one cat cage).
- Restock kennel with clean litterbox, clean bowls, fresh water, clean toys, as appropriate even if the same cat is in the cage.
- Do a physical inventory of all animals.
- Perform the following duties throughout the day: re-fill water bowls as needed; re-feed as needed; spot clean inside and outside cages as needed.

Protocol for Dogs:

- Move dogs to one side of the kennel and close the connecting guillotine doors.*
- Manually remove all feces (do not liquefy feces and wash down the drain to avoid clogging and pathogen build up).
- Remove all food and water dishes, toys and other materials except for Kurunda beds.
- Fill and attach the cleaning solution sprayer.

* Animals should not be exposed to water or disinfectant. During cleaning, all animals should be placed in separate holding areas or in carriers; animals should never be left in the cage or kennel. Make sure enclosures are completely dry before animals are returned to them.

- Spray runs floor, walls, chain link with detergent.
- Scrub with stiff bristled brush including caked on debris on all walls, floor, and kennel door.
- Rinse.
- Spray runs with bleach solution/disinfectant.
- Let stand for 5 minutes.
- Rinse.
- Flush the drains.
- Squeegee.
- Spray and wipe doorknobs.
- Restock kennel with clean bowls, fresh water, toys, as appropriate.
- Do a physical inventory of all animals.
- Perform the following duties throughout the day: re-fill water bowls as needed; re-feed as needed; spot clean inside and outside kennel runs as needed.

In order to reduce pathogens:

- All toys should be cleaned daily.
- All bowls should be cleaned and sanitized daily.
- Use disposable food and litter trays.
- Replace and wash all bedding daily.
- Use disposable rags to clean cages or use rule of one cage use only.

In addition, as germs are tracked by human and animal traffic throughout the shelter—by hands, on doorknobs, clothing, carriers, examination tables, and vehicles and so on—the following areas must be cleaned every day:

- Main lobbies and hallways.
- Dog runs, including central walkways, walls, gates, etc.
- Cat rooms, including floors, doorknobs, etc. as well as cages.
- Infirmary areas.
- Intake areas.
- Medical areas.
- Other indoor animal areas including grooming, e-room, and visiting (get acquainted room).
- Exercise yards.
- Vehicles.
- Carriers and transport cages.
- Bedding.
- Dishes.
- Toys.
- Tools such as poop scoops, etc.
- Storage facilities.

This is generally a simpler process:

- Manually remove all trash, feces, and spot-clean urine.

- Sweep floors.
- Mop with a combination detergent and bleach combination.
- Counters should be sprayed with a commercial product and wiped by office support staff every morning.

However, once per week prior to disinfection, kennels should be cleaned and scrubbed with a degreaser.

At all times, employees should use disposable gloves, wash hands between cages, and waterless hand washes should be available in every room.