



Training Playbook: Daily Rounds: Planning a Pathway

Introduction

Historically, “daily rounds” in animal shelters have usually been something reserved for medical personnel or for supervisory staff to ensure that proper cleaning and sanitation has been performed. While these are critical components of daily rounds, there is much more that can be gained from daily rounds in terms of reducing length of stay and securing more positive outcomes.

We owe the animals in our facilities the best possible care each and every day they are with us, and we also owe it to them to reduce their need to stay with us as much as possible. Daily rounds should be seen as the pathway to these goals by ensuring that we provide not only the medical attention they may need, but also observing and monitoring the animals’ behavior patterns, food and water consumption, and elimination patterns.

Planning a pathway also includes identifying concerns that may be best resolved through a foster home or even a transfer to another agency, and identifying potential opportunities to promote animals for quick adoption, such as featuring them on social media or taking them to upcoming events. Basically, the goal is to keep the animals happy, healthy and sound, while working to move them out of your care.

Program Overview

A daily rounds program starts with selecting the people who will conduct the walk-throughs. Daily rounds should be done as a group (rather than several people randomly doing it individually), so that lists can be made, issues can be discussed and decisions can be made on the spot. Ideally, representatives from the medical, foster/rescue, behavior and adoptions areas should be present. Many shelters are limited in these types of positions, however, so at a minimum, someone with an eye on these topics and a level of authority in those areas should participate.

Once the team is assembled, a shelter population list should be generated so the team can ensure that the information on each animal is current and any notes that need to be made can be done. Generating this list can usually be done easily through your shelter software.

Ideally, the walk-through should be conducted early, before or at least during the daily cleaning. This gives the team the opportunity to view how much food and water was consumed, any urine or feces that may be present, whether or not the animal appears healthy, and if there are any other issues to note.

The walk-through is also an opportunity to check in with caregivers and ask if they have observed anything that concerns them or what their thoughts are in general about the well-being and personality of the animals. Caregivers are often the staff members who interact with the animals the most, since they deal with the animals daily, yet all too

often, they are overlooked as a source of valuable information, such as whether an animal is eating or seems to be losing weight.

When evaluating the animals, the daily rounds team should pay attention to how each animal is behaving. Does the animal appear scared, friendly and gregarious, defensive? Behaviors such as spinning, jumping and excessive barking can be indicators that a dog's needs aren't being met and a behavior plan should be created for that dog.

Observing an animal's behavior will help staff determine if the animal can be placed immediately into the adoption program; or may benefit from some in-depth enrichment and/or behavioral modification before adoption; or would be best served by placement in a foster home to bring her out of her shell or to help her recover from an illness.

The daily rounds team should also assess the condition of the kennels. Is each kennel clean and safe, does it have bedding and some toys or other enrichment items? (Enrichment should be given both in and out of the kennel. Both physical and mental enrichment are essential to reducing stress-induced illnesses and a key to adoptability.) Another question to ask and answer: Is this the right kennel location for this animal? For instance, is a shy cat housed at eye level right in the middle of the cat room, with no place to hide, or is a highly reactive dog housed in the first run? These are concerns that can affect the animals in negative ways, increasing the likelihood of stress-induced illnesses or heightened behavior issues.

Some shelters conduct similar types of walk-throughs, but avoid animals on stray-holds until the hold period ends. But the stray-hold period is actually the ideal time to start planning the animal's pathway. If the animal's pathway has been planned, it can be put into place immediately after the stray-hold is over.

From the data perspective, the daily rounds team should check whether the information on the population sheet is accurate. Does it match the kennel card? Is there even a kennel card at all? Are caregivers able to enter behavior notes and if so, are they doing that? Have vaccinations and other standard medical procedures all been performed and are they up-to-date? Is there a potential owner who has been notified and if so, when? Should additional calls be made today?

Once the evaluation of all these items for an individual animal is complete, someone on the team should write down any notes or issues that need to be addressed and identify whose responsibility it is to correct them. Then the team can move on to the next animal.

When all the animals have been evaluated, it is then ideal to create a master list of all the animals' needs and distribute the list through email to the shelter's supervisory team, with deadlines for when each issue should be resolved. Some agencies install a large whiteboard where issues can be listed on a daily basis, so everyone can see what needs to be done prior to the end of a shift.

While conducting daily rounds in this way may sound very time-consuming, it really isn't, especially once a few have been done and staff get into the habit of doing them.

Program Composition

The following describes workforce needs, internal and/or external resources, and any other additional steps that should be taken into consideration for successful program implementation:

- The team should conduct rounds with a daily population printout and clipboards with pens for taking notes.
- Members of the daily rounds team should include representatives from the adoption, medical, behavior and foster/rescue programs (or staff with authority in those areas). It's also a good idea to have a representative responsible for marketing the animals online participate in daily rounds at least weekly.
- Cage cards or identifying markers can be placed on kennels to indicate issues that need to be addressed.
- The agency should compile a list of current foster families and rescue groups, with notes indicating what types of animals they will take.

Conclusion

Running an effective daily rounds program is not as difficult or time-intensive as most people imagine. The results will be a shorter length of stay for the animals in your care as well as a healthier population with increased potential for adoption. The additional resources below will help you get to the next level once you commit to this program.

If you need further assistance or clarification, please reach out to your [regional strategist](#), [regional director](#) or the Best Friends National Shelter Support team at team2025@bestfriends.org.

Additional Resources

- Best Friends operational playbook on [Feline Housing and Enrichment](#)
- Best Friends operational playbook on [Canine Care and Enrichment](#)
- Best Friends operational playbook on [Animal Flow](#)
- Best Friends operational playbook on [At-Risk Animals](#)
- UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program information on [Daily Shelter Rounds](#)