

# Animal Talk Volunteer Handbook

Welcome, and thanks for volunteering your time at Animal Talk Rescue and Pet Shop! We could not function without our volunteers, and this is an introduction to how things work around the shop.

**Sanitation is key.** You must repeatedly sanitize your hands either by washing them with soap and water in the kitchen sink or by spraying them with one of the many bottles of bleach water found around the store. This **must** be done between handling cats or else we risk transmitting an infection from cage to cage. Get used to spraying down your hands often--it is absolutely necessary to prevent transmission of disease.

There are also hand sanitizer pump bottles located around the store, but these are for *customers only*. If you see a customer sticking their fingers into a cat cage, gently remind them to use the hand sanitizer before and between touching cats, and please monitor their actions to insure they don't transmit something from one enclosure to the next.

Hand sanitizer cannot be used before touching birds, reptiles, small animals--anything that is not a cat! It can be toxic, so the rule of thumb is for you and the customers to rinse your hands well with hot soapy water before and after handling these creatures.

Generally, volunteers that are under 18 start off by working with the birds, reptiles, and small animals, as well as fulfilling tasks like folding laundry, washing and sanitizing crates, sweeping and mopping the store, and washing dishes. Volunteers 18 and over (and sometimes those 13-17 that have demonstrated responsibility and initiative) are trained on cleaning and caring for the cats. Once a cat-trained volunteer feels comfortable, they will be trained to administer medications and handle the feral or antisocial cats.

**A quick word on safety:** please be gentle and cautious when you work with **any** of the creatures in the store. All animals are equipped with defense mechanisms, and if they feel threatened, they will use them! Watch for teeth and claws, and always use your best judgment.

This handbook is divided into sections that you can read a bit at a time, learning as you go.

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## 1. Where to Find the Cats

At Animal Talk Rescue, the cats are in one of four situations. There are Windows, Crates, Rooms, and Fosters. Fosters are cats or kittens that are being cared for in individual homes outside the store, so you won't deal with them often, though they do come in from time to time to be readied for or shown for adoption.

### Windows

The windows are the first cats that customers see when they come into the store, so it's important to keep them tidy and shiny. They are built-in enclosures with glass in the front and wire doors in the back, and have carpeting which is cut to fit and is changed out at least once a week or whenever needed. The cat windows are located in the Kitchen (the room with the refrigerator and dish sink) and in the Small Animal Room (with the tanks of mice, hamsters, and the sink where we clean litter boxes and anything else needing complete sanitation).

### Crates

The crates are in the Fish Room (look for the fish tanks), the Office (look for the filing cabinets), the Grooming Room (look for the scale and the table), and the Bathing Room (in the very back, near the large tub which is used for bathing animals or sterilizing crates). The Office, Grooming, and Bathing Rooms are considered a quarantined area and the general public is not allowed back there. Crates in the Fish Room (and occasionally in the front store area, when space is a concern) are for kitties that are potentially up for adoption, but not ready to be moved into a Window or a Room just yet. When you are fully trained on cat care, you may be asked to "show" cats, i.e, demonstrate proper sanitation to the potential adopters, and introduce the cats or kittens to them.

### Rooms

The rooms are cat sanctuaries that we provide to give our more long-term kitties space, comfort, and lots of companionship. As you enter from the front of the store, they are located in the Fish Room and labeled 1, 2, and 3. Rooms 1 & 3 (on the left and the right, respectively) can be done in either order--prioritize based on messiness and need. Room 2 (in the middle) must always be done **last** because it is the home of the previous ringworm cats. There is a very slight chance of transmitting anything, but it is always best to be on the safe side.

## 2. Basic Cat Care at Animal Talk Rescue:

In the Kitchen, where pretty much all of the caretaking takes place, there are 4 slots on the counter divided by yellow lines. When you work in the Kitchen, you'll use a slot and sanitize it with bleach water and a scrap of paper towel before & after placing anything in that slot. Please don't monopolize these spaces--pick one and work within it, and keep it sanitized for the next person who may use it.

When we say "scrap" of paper towel, we mean it! Literally tear off only as much of a paper towel as you need, and use hand towels (located in a cupboard in the Small Animal Room) as much as possible. Think of it this way: Animal Talk Rescue is a self-supporting non-profit, and the more we avoid waste, the more resources we have to take care of the cats. You'll notice lots of tips on how we avoid waste in the following sections.

### Feeding cats

We feed all our cats, other than those with special dietary needs, Nutro Natural Choice Adult kibble. It has a high enough protein content that it is suitable for cats and kittens alike. The regular cat kibble is located in a large white plastic dispenser on the left-hand side of the Kitchen.

**Don't waste food!** Make it as clean as you can by removing damp food or litter bits and depositing these in the garbage. Transfer the remaining food into a clean bowl and mix in some fresh dry kibble. Wash the dirty bowl out and dry it in the dish rack.

Adult cats need no more than 1/4 cup of dry food per day and giving them this amount allows us to monitor how much they are eating. There is a small measuring cup to be used for depositing the correct amount--give one scoop of food per adult cat in the enclosure you're working on. Three adult cats should be given 3/4 of a bowl, etc.

Kittens & cats under a year old, however, should be given as much food as they desire. There is a large metal scoop used for filling the bowl to the rim. If you see an enclosure with multiple young kitties that is completely out of food or water, please refill those bowls and even give them an extra bowl of whatever they need.

### Special diets

Be sure to check the door of the enclosure for signs that indicate special diets. It is extremely important that the kitties get the food and nutrients they need, and if you don't know exactly what food to give, just let a senior volunteer or staff member know and we'll get it taken care of.

The special dry kibble foods are located above the regular cat food on the left side of the kitchen. They are either in tupperware dispensers, or in the orange metal cans. If a diet calls

for wet food, those cans are in the cabinet above the litter pan sink--check to make sure you are giving the right kind of wet food, and store any unused canned food with a lid in the refrigerator.

## **Water**

To fill a water dish, rinse the bowl out thoroughly, place one teaspoon of L-Lysine powder in the dish (or a tablespoon if it is one of the large room bowls), and refill with fresh cold tap water. L-Lysine is kept in a white plastic container to the left of the dish sink, and is an amino acid which boosts kitty immune systems, much like a vitamin.

If you find yourself with some spare time towards the end of the day, please find the pitcher in the kitchen, fill it with 3 teaspoons of L-Lysine and clean cold tap water, and go around refilling ALL the cats water dishes. Kitties can never have too much access to water! Be sure not to handle the cats while you do this, to avoid transmitting anything.

## **Litter boxes**

Animal Talk Rescue uses Feline Pine pellet litter, and it is completely changed out every day. Before you empty the box, check the stools for extreme diarrhea or blood and report to a staff member if you see anything of that nature. We might want a stool sample, so don't dispose of that litter until you've checked up. If it's free of such stools, dump the used litter into the garbage can.

Either spray the pan with bleach water and wipe it out with a paper towel, or for a very messy box, wash it out completely in the litter pan sink, located in the Small Animal Room. Always bleach the rims and the bottom of the box too. *Never* wash anything that has fecal matter on it in the dish sink.

When you refill the litter pan, use only the slightest layer of Feline Pine. It literally expands to 5 times its size after being used, so all you need is barely enough to cover the bottom. You should still be able to see the bottom of the box through the litter!

Additional items such as scratching posts, toys, balls, and anything else in the enclosure must also be cleaned, sanitized, and dried before replacing.

## **What to do if a cat gets out**

Whenever you open the doors to the rooms or any enclosure, watch for cats that might feel like bolting to go on an adventure! If a cat gets out and starts to run from you, stay calm and clearly call out to the front of the store "**Door!**" or "**Cat Out!**" so that we can quickly shut the front door and work together to return the kitty home. Do NOT attempt to catch the cat yourself as he or she will be terrified and may scratch or bite--get an experienced staff member, preferably Missy. Follow the cat with your eyes at all times. Make sure the front door is closed and guarded until we have the kitty contained. Do not chase, but if you are in a position to, try to encourage the

escapee towards the back of the store and away from the front door. Typically it will go into the Office, Bathing, or Grooming Room and we can quickly shut those doors.

## **Medications**

Animal Talk takes in cats from all over--ferals, strays, and cats with special needs &/or diets. Occasionally, as you check the door of the enclosure you are working on, you will come across cats that need medications administered as part of their daily routine. We don't ask that you do this yourself until you are comfortable, but please do alert a senior volunteer or staff member of any kitties in need of meds. You are welcome and encouraged to observe how the different kinds of medicines are administered as part of your training.

Also, if you are working with a cat and feel that he or she is in need of some medical attention, please let us know. Look for signs such as sneezing, coughing, hacking or furballs, swollen, red, or crusty eyes/nostrils, bloody stools or excessive vomit, and the spirit or lethargy of the cat in question. Just write down the location and a description of the problem of this cat, and we can attend to it and address it as necessary.

## **Summary**

These are the basics of cat care, but at Animal Talk, we want you to feel comfortable with the cats and socialize, care for, and love them as much as possible. As long as you have sanitized properly with bleach water before and after, please feel free to brush, pet, and talk to the cats; they love it!

### 3. Cleaning Cat Windows

First take note of the signs on the door. If it says Feral/Missy Only/Will Strike, let a staff member know if you are not yet comfortable handling this window--you don't need to do it, but it still needs to get done. This is the same if there are medications that need to be administered: you don't need to do it yourself if you are not yet trained, but please ensure that it is seen to by a senior volunteer or staff member.

Open the door(s) cautiously, to make sure the cats don't jump out in excitement. Use the litter box as a "waiter's tray" and put the food/water dishes, toys, scratching pads, etc into it. Choose a slot, sanitize it, and put the litter box and accessories onto it--*never* set it on the floor. Clean and fill the dishes and litter box as described above, remembering to sanitize the bottoms of the box and dishes as well.

To clean the window enclosures out, use a paper towel or a brush to remove anything from the carpet, paying close attention to the edges, and always check under the carpet itself. Small messes and stains can be cleaned with a sponge and Nature's Miracle (a spray bottle of pet odor/stain remover which is located under the litter pan sink). If the carpet is severely stained, let someone know and we'll show you how to change it out.

Check the kitties for general health concerns--including their medications--and brush them if they seem to need it. Spray a paper towel with water and wipe off the inside of the window and the walls. Replace the clean food, water, litter box, and accessories, and congratulations! You have just cleaned a window. Remember to sanitize your slot and your hands and arms before moving on to the next enclosure.

## 4. Cleaning Cat Crates

Crates are basically the same as Windows, except that we use clean towels to cover the floor of the cage. When you clean a crate, collect the food, water, and litter box, and then roll as much of the mess/loose litter into the towel as possible and tuck it into the litter box. Please remember to shake the towel out into the garbage can and pry messes off with paper towels before putting it into the dirty laundry bag, which is located in front of the litter pan sink.

Usually you will have to clean out crates more thoroughly than windows, so find a garbage can, a roll of paper towels, a spray bottle of water, and get in there! Collect the loose litter with paper towels and completely wipe up any messes--dispose of all of it in the garbage can you brought with you. Your goal is to get the inside of the crate as clean and dust free as possible. If you find that kittens are overwhelming your attempts to clean out the enclosure, you can also put them into a small crate while you clean their big one out thoroughly. Remember to sterilize the small crate afterwards if you decide to do this--see the section below for instructions on how to properly sterilize a crate.

After the bottom of the crate is as clean and dry as possible, get a towel either from one of the numerous bags of clean laundry found about the store, or in the cupboards of clean folded towels in the Grooming Room. Try to match the size of the towel to the crate, and fold it in such a way that it lies *as flat as possible while covering every inch* of the bottom of the crate. Fit it neatly, but if the cat refuses to move out of the way, just do the best you can.

Replace the food, water, litter, and toys into the enclosure. We like to have the water on the **hinge** side of the door, closest to the front, with the food right behind it, and the litter box as far back into the crate as the kitties will permit. If a cat refuses to move, just place the box as flat as you can in the crate. Then dust and wipe down all the edges and rims of the crate, pat the kitties, and you're done.

Again, sterilize your hands, arms, and kitchen slot with a spray of bleach water before moving on to the next enclosure.

### **Sterilizing crates**

First disassemble the larger crates by unscrewing or unsnapping them, and separate them into the three components: top, bottom, and door. Collect the crate screws and return them to the crate screw drawer under the main front counter. Spray and scrub the crate parts thoroughly in the Bathing Room tub until they are completely free of stains and litter dust. Then saturate the crates inside and out with bleach water and leave them to sanitize for 10 minutes--use this time to tidy the Bathing Room, sweep the floors, and complete other small tasks. Return to the tub and rinse the crates thoroughly, paying close attention to the seams and edges. They are then placed upside-down on the table in the Bathing Room in order to drain and dry. Once dry, they are returned to their appropriate storage areas.

## 5. Cleaning the Cat Rooms

Working in a room is challenging, but fun. You are literally entering the cat's environment and working one-on-one with them. We encourage you to spend at least a good half hour in each room, get to know the cats as you clean, and brush them if you like.

You must always wear **only** sterile rubber clogs while in each room. The reason for this is that cats eat off the floor at times, and we can drag all kinds of parasites into the room on our street shoes. Would you want to eat off your shoes? The standard procedure is to spread a large clean towel out in front of the room you are going to work on, and use that as your completely sanitary area for working. The sanitized rubber clogs can touch the floor of the room, and the towel, but **never** the unsanitary tile floor of the store. You step in and out of the room by leaving your street shoes on the tile floor and slipping into the clogs on the towel. If you forget and step onto the tile floor in your clogs, don't worry about it, but *spray the bottom of them with bleach water and wipe them with a paper towel before returning to the room.*

Each of the three rooms has an individually labeled bucket of cleaning supplies, and we keep these buckets in the Office along with the sterilized rubber clogs. Each bucket should contain: a broom, a dustpan, a roll of paper towels, two spray bottles: detergent and water, a curry brush (jagged metal hoop with handle), and something to brush and groom the cats with. It's also a good idea to have a sponge in there. Make sure you have everything, grab your bucket, carefully slip into those clogs, and enter the room.

First off, gather up the food and water dishes, litter boxes, toys, scratching posts, anything easily movable, and place them onto the towel outside the door.

Grab that curry brush and start completely scraping down the cat posts for fur and litter dust--you'll be surprised at how much comes up! As you scrape the posts, you might have to gently nudge the cats out of the way--feel free to pet or brush them as you do this. Don't forget to scrape the base and the edges of the posts as well. Look for messes on the posts and the floor, spray them with detergent or Nature's Miracle, and clean the stains as deeply as you can with a sponge, scrub brush, and paper towels. All messes and clumps of fur can be disposed of in one of the dirty litter pans while you work in the room.

The next task is to clean every surface of the room--we'll give you a pass on the ceiling if you can't quite reach it. Spray the walls with detergent and scrub them thoroughly (good thing you remembered that sponge).

Wipe down the entire inside and outside of the glass doors with water and paper towels, or use a sponge and detergent if the glass is messy or crusty.

Sweep the floor, every nook and cranny and especially under the cat posts, as well as the entire inside and outside edge of the door frame. Whenever needed, the edges must be cleaned out with a scraper and the vacuum or the glass doors start to stick in the frame.

When the room is as clean and tidy as you can make it, get back into your street shoes and return to the kitchen. Clean and sanitize a slot (or two, if available) and refill the food and water dishes (about 1 tablespoon of L-Lysine is good for those big bowls of water).

Clean and refill the litter boxes--don't forget to clean and sanitize the lids if they need it. An inch of litter or less is appropriate for the room boxes, but no more than that--remember that tomorrow the box will be filled with five times the amount of litter you put in today.

Replace the food, water, litter boxes, and toys into the room—always put the bowls on the floor, not on a shelf (where cats could knock it off). Double check to make sure you covered everything--if you leave paper towels or anything in the room that doesn't belong there, the kitties *will* chew it to bits.

Please then wash and sanitize all the tools in the bucket, refill the bottles and paper towels if necessary, rinse and dry the bucket itself, and return the complete bucket to the Office. The clogs you used are sanitized in the dish sink and dried in the dish rack for the next person to use.

Check the board (located on the wall next to the glass door) for medications or notes about the cats. Make sure the kitties get the medicines they need, whether you administer them yourself or find someone else to do it.

## 6. Small Animal, Bird, and Reptile Care

Animal Talk is not just a rescue for cats, it is a pet shop that provides interesting and exotic animals for purchase, as well as their basic supplies, necessities, and toys. Caring for these creatures is complex, but rewarding in and of itself. Usually, we take care of the Store Animals in the afternoon, after all the cats have been tended to. Do your best to share the limited space we have in the Kitchen, and clean up after yourself as you go! Sweep up messes, wipe down counters, and leave a thoroughly tidy workspace for the next people to use the Kitchen.

The following is a basic summary of how to care for the Store Animals.

### Birds

The birds need clean food and water every day, and their cages need cleaning at least once a week or as often as needed. Each bird always gets fresh **filtered** water from the refrigerator dispenser located on the freezer door. Remove the food and water dishes and clean them well. Scrape the top layer of empty seed shells from the food dish into the garbage, taking care not to waste any food, and top them off. The individual cages are labeled with what food they get. Canaries get canary seed located on the black wooden Kitchen shelf, parakeets & cockatiels get seed from the orange canister above the cat food which is labeled "Parakeet", etc. Some birds get Zupreem pellets, also located on the Kitchen shelves. If you don't know what food to give, just ask.

To clean a bird cage:

Sanitize a slot and place all the cages from one shelf upon it--use a stepladder if you can't reach the cages easily. Work from the top shelf down, and once you have cleared off the shelf, sweep loose seed and bedding into a garbage can. Then spray and wipe down all the surfaces of the shelf, window, and walls with water--never bleach. If you don't have a lot of space to work on the kitchen counter, it is appropriate to do one side of the shelf at a time.

Make sure all of the birds are on their perches and off the cage floor. Then gently remove the top wire part of the cage with the birds still in it, and set it aside on top of a paper towel to catch messes. Spray, scrub, and thoroughly rinse the base and tray of the birdcage in the litter pan sink, away from the birds themselves. Dry the base & tray with a clean hand towel and line with appropriate bedding. We use paper towels for the small cages, or corncob mix for the larger ones, which is located in the middle garbage can under the kitchen counter. Carefully replace the cage frame with the birds in it to the cage base. Move the cages back to their proper places on the clean shelf and replace their clean food and water dishes, and the locks if necessary. Then move on to the next shelf.

Check **all** of the bird cages to see if they need food, water, or cleaning--including those cages on top of the microwave or on the high shelf above the kitchen counter.

## **Rats, mice, gerbils, hamsters, and guinea pigs**

These fun creatures are found in several places: on the shelves in the Small Animal Room, above the refrigerator, and sometimes in cages out in the front store area. Often, especially in the springtime, we will have baby animals, and it is important to be gentle, quiet, and respectful of them. If there is a towel over a cage, or a new arrival to the store, NO PEEKING.

### **Food and Water**

The rats, mice, gerbils, and hamsters get Small Animal Food mix which is in the grey labeled canister by the bathroom door.

The guinea pigs are in the bottom glass window across from the litter pan sink, and in one or more cages out in the front store area. Their food is located in a grey tub with a flip-top lid underneath the glass tanks of mice and hamsters in the Small Animal room and you can give them hay as a treat (find it in the large garbage can where we keep the bedding over by the mice tanks). Baby guinea pigs may only have pure alfalfa hay.

Open their cage cautiously (you don't want to get bitten or have to catch a loose animal), remove the food dish, scrape off any loose bedding or debris from the surface of the food into the garbage can, put the cleaned food into a clean metal dish, and mix in some fresh food until the bowl is almost full. Again, *don't waste food*. Wash the dirty dish out and dry it in the dish rack.

Every day, all water bottles or dishes should be emptied, rinsed, and refilled with clean cold tap water--don't just top it off, the water gets stale, slimy, and moldy. Once a week their bottles should be soaked in the dish sink and rinsed thoroughly before filling and replacing. If a cage of animals is completely out of water when you go to change it, please refill and give them an extra bowl or bottle of water as you see fit--animals can never have too much access to water.

### **To clean a small animal cage:**

You will need: a clear slot or two on the counter, a clean and empty litter pan sink (check it before you start), a clean and empty tank or plastic container to keep the animals in while you clean their cage, Zodiac flea powder, clean handtowels/rags (use ONLY these and not paper towels when working with the small animals) and fresh bedding.

Transfer the animals carefully to an empty holding tank or container which you have lined with paper towels, and make sure the lid is secure. Remove their food and water and clean/refill as described above. Be sure to wash and dry all accessories (toys, tubes, plastic huts, etc) in the enclosure as well.

Dispose of the dirty bedding into the garbage, taking care not to spill it on the floor, and scrape out the bottom with a squeegee or a dustpan. When you have removed as much debris as

possible from the cage bottom, you will then wash, sanitize, and dry it with a hand towel in the Bathing Room tub, which is located in the very back of the store. Remember to declog, clean, and rinse the Bathing tub after you have washed out a cage--we bathe cats in there!

Once the cage is completely clean and dry, sprinkle some Zodiac flea powder onto the bottom (the can is usually found on the black wooden kitchen shelves above the dish sink). It doesn't take much, think of it like salt and just use enough to lightly dust the bottom of the cage. Refill with appropriate bedding to an inch or less depth, and mix in the flea powder with your hands. The bedding is kept in a large garbage can to the right of the bathroom door. Use pine shavings for most of the store animals (the mice, guinea pigs, rabbits, chinchillas, and hamsters), and reserve the more expensive Carefresh paper bedding for delicate or baby animals such as hedgehogs and sugargliders. Rats get grey Carefresh paper bedding. If you're not sure what bedding to use or where it is, just let a staff member know.

Gently return the animals, food, water, and accessories to the cage and replace the top. Clean off the shelf or floor where you found the cage, and put it back. Make sure that the water and food are visible (so we can easily check to make sure they are kept full) and that the lock is securely on the cage. Wash out the tank you used to keep the animals in, and line it with paper towels before putting the next set of animals into it.

Sweep up any bedding or messes on the floor, sterilize your counter slot, and move onto the next cage. ***Always clean up after yourself before you leave for the day.***

## **Other Store Animals:**

### **Hedgehogs**

Hedgehogs are typically kept in glass tanks across from the windows in the main store area. They eat Special Diet food, which is a small dark pellet in a tupperware dispenser located above the cat food. As above, remove loose bedding and damp food from the surface of the food dish, place the remaining food into a clean dish, and top off with fresh food. Hedgehogs need plenty of fresh tap water, so check their bottles often and clean/refill as described above. To clean a hedgehog enclosure, use the colorful Carefresh paper bedding and handle the hedgehogs very carefully when transferring them--please find someone to show you how to do this the first time.

### **Bunnies**

The food for the bunnies is in the white plastic dispenser under the regular cat kibble in the Kitchen. Double check them often to make sure they're full on food and water--the baby bunnies go through it quick--and give them an additional bowl or bottle of clean food or water if you think they need it. The bunnies can have hay, but be sure the baby bunnies only get pure alfalfa hay until they are fully grown.

## **Chinchillas**

There are several chinchilla cages located under the birds in the kitchen, and sometimes out in the front store area. They each get fresh tap water, hay, and chinchilla deluxe food, which is in a tupperware container on the shelf above the regular cat food in the kitchen.

Clean the chinchilla cages as described above, but take extra care when transferring the chinchillas to a holding tank--they are very quick! The chinchillas get pine shavings for bedding and you may give them hay as well.

Occasionally, you can give the chinchillas a bath, where you use a special purple plastic "bathtub" and a dry dust powder bath. Ask an experienced volunteer or staff person to show you how it's done.

## **Sugargliders**

The sugargliders are on the high shelf above the main kitchen counter. They are delicate, exotic, and require a special diet. The sugargliders are the only creature other than the birds that require **filtered** water from the freezer door of the refrigerator.

Find a stepstool and remove their dishes from the cages--you'll notice locks on the cages; this is because they can escape! Sometimes the locks stick; get help if you need it.

Prepare their food by mixing together: veggies from the top shelf of the freezer (carrots, peas, green beans, and corn), diced fresh apples from the refrigerator crisper drawer, and a handful of regular cat kibble for protein. Some of the cages require two dishes of food. If we are low on fruits or frozen veggies, please let a staff member know. Wash and rinse their dishes well before refilling them with the food and filtered water, and remember to replace the locks.

## **Reptiles**

The reptiles (ball python, geckos, tegus, and "Boot" the skink) and the tarantulas are found in the Fish Room, both in tanks above the glass tortoise case and in the wooden glassed-in cabinets under the hermit crabs. They are relatively easy to care for, requiring only a constant supply of fresh water, and feeding several times a week.

To water them, first find the pitcher in the kitchen and rinse and fill it with clean tap water. Gather the water dishes from all of reptile & tarantula habitats, scrub and rinse them well in the litter pan sink (NOT the dish sink), then replace and refill them to the rim with the fresh water from the pitcher.

Please also spray down the dirt in the tupperware moisture chambers of the geckos. This is where they go to rehydrate and loosen their skin for shedding.

Reptiles are typically fed Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays with crickets dusted in reptile vitamin powder. Feeding these creatures is very specific, so if you'd like to feed or observe the feeding process, let a staff person know and we'll show you how it's done.

### **Hermit crabs and amphibians**

Find a water spray bottle, empty and refill it, and add three drops of Start Right dechlorinator, a small bottle usually located on the black wooden shelves in the Kitchen. This is used to moisten the habitat of the hermit crabs (the glass tank above the wooden enclosures in the Fish Room). Soak everything well and refill their dishes with treated water and then spray the habitat of the fire-bellied toads (found in the Kitchen under the birds) and refill their water dish to the rim.

Wipe down all the glass surfaces of all the reptile, hermit crab, and amphibian enclosures with water and a hand towel, inside and out.

## 7. Conclusion and Basic Store Guidelines

When you volunteer at Animal Talk Rescue and Pet Shop, we encourage you to take initiative: see what needs doing and get it done, but always feel free to ask questions if you're not sure about the correct procedure.

### What to do when you think there is nothing to do:

- Check the food, water, cleanliness, and basic necessities of **all** the animals in the store and double check them throughout the day. Animals often need their water refilled, especially during the hotter summer months.
- If you see a customer needing assistance, offer to help or find a staff member for them.
- Check to see if a staff member on duty needs an errand or a specific task done.
- Sweep every floor and surface that needs it, and please do this often. Move things out of the way and sweep under them as well. Grab the canister vacuum (usually in the office) and vacuum up all the edges of the floor and the cat crates.
- When the store is thoroughly swept and relatively free of customers, wash and wipe down the tile floor with bleach water. Do this in stages so as to keep a dry path to walk on throughout the store.
- Wash & put away the dishes and look around for anything at all that could use cleaning.
- Refill all the spray bottles. Completely empty the bleach bottles, carefully pour enough bleach into them to cover the bottom of the bottle, and fill to the top with cool tap water.
- Wipe down all counters with bleach water; and clean all the glass surfaces with Windex, including the inside and outside of the front door and display windows. Take care not to wipe off anything about the animals that is written on the glass, and **NEVER** spray bleach or chemicals near the animals themselves.
- Dust, straighten, and organize the store shelves to display merchandise to its best advantage. Keep in mind that the revenue of Animal Talk Pet Shop goes to support the Rescue, and the more we are able to sell, the more resources we have to take care of the animals.
- Unpack boxes of merchandise, price it (a staff member will show you how), and stock in the appropriate area.
- Empty all of the small garbage cans into the large one in the kitchen and clean and dry the cans themselves.

- Take out the garbage and recycling. The bins are located in the alley behind the store at the far left end and are labeled Animal Talk. Use the yellow push-cart, which is kept in the Small Animal Room, and take someone with you to help you lift it into the dumpster.
- Empty and clean out all of the sinks. They clog easily, so dispose of the clogged matter into the garbage by hand and scrub the sinks until clean. The litter pan sink has a metal strainer in it to keep bedding and debris from going down the drain as much as possible, so be sure to clean out and rinse the strainer as well.
- Wash and sterilize crates in the Bathing Room and scrub down the bathing tub.
- Wash, sterilize, and reassemble syringes, and place them into the drawer under the scale in the Grooming Room.
- Fold laundry, separate into stacks of size and type, and put away in the appropriate places:
  1. Bath towels are kept in the lower cupboards in the Grooming Room.
  2. Hand towels and washcloths go into the cupboard above the litter bags in the Small Animal Room and in the large blue plastic bin in the Office.
  3. Cloth sacks, pouches, and hammocks for small animals are tucked into the upper shelf of the hand towel cupboard.
  4. Folded shirts, smocks, and assorted non-towel linens (pillowcases, blankets, etc) go into the cupboard under the scale in the Grooming Room, labeled "Volunteer".

You are welcome to wear a volunteer t-shirt or polo while you work at Animal Talk if you don't want to get bleach or anything on your street clothes. Just remember to put the shirt into the dirty laundry bag when you are done.

After all of the animals are fed and cared for, and the store is clean, we have the time to pet and brush and love on the cats, which is always something to do, provided you have properly sanitized of course.

Again, we'd like to thank you for all that you do for these special creatures.