

Behavior Designation



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Behavior Designation

In order to clearly communicate information regarding an animal's behavior while in the shelter, a designated category will be assigned. This category is determined based on information collected in several ways on an on-going basis during the animal's stay in the shelter:

1. Intake questionnaires/information sheets
2. Observations during medical exams and treatments
3. In-shelter observations from staff and volunteers
4. SAFER assessments for dogs and consistent cage observations for cats

An overall assessment of the suitability for placement based on behavior is made by the behavior staff, incorporating in-shelter observations from staff and volunteers, previous history (when available), and the observations from the SAFER assessment for dogs. For dogs, the selection is made and updated, as needed, by the staff performing the SAFER assessments. For cats, the selection is made and update, as needed, by the Feline Behavior Assessors or the shelter supervisors. Any changes to the status will be identified and updated during the daily rounds by the shelter supervisor. The Asilomar status and overall status, using one of the five designations may need to be revised by the behavior staff or supervisor as additional information becomes available, particularly from the observations of the staff and volunteers. As such, the designation may be revised several times during the course of an animal's stay. The overall placement decision is made based on individual assessment of an animal, its health, behavior and needs of the shelter.

Initial Medical Behavior Evaluation

An animal's behavior during his or her medical examinations does not give a full picture of his or her behavior. However, this initial observation does provide valuable insight to some aspects of a pet's behavior and these are particularly important in helping staff and volunteers handle the animal appropriately during the initial part of their stay.

The animal's behavior during the initial veterinary exam is noted in a separate entry and using different language than that used to describe the overall behavior of the animal. One of the following five categories will be selected and entered by the medical team each time a medical examination is performed. The status will be updated by the medical department (e.g. vet, vet assistant or tech) as needed, based on the behavior observed at the time that the examination is performed and may be revised several times during the course of an animal's stay.

- **GREEN** animals are those animals who were relaxed, easy to handle, and who showed no concerning behavior during the exam.
- **BLUE** animals are those animals who were tense and nervous but mostly still and relatively easy to handle.
- **YELLOW** animals are those animals who were nervous, actively resisted examination, and required the use of restraint equipment or techniques, but did not exhibit aggressive behaviors.
- **ORANGE** animals are those who required the use of restraint techniques and/or equipment and did exhibit aggressive behaviors.
- **RED** animals are those who exhibited severe aggression and required the use of significant restraint and/or sedation.

Placement Status Descriptions

- **B – Beginner home** animals are those cats and dogs without significant concerns in their previous history, in-shelter observations, and SAFER assessment. The information available suggests that this animal is unlikely to need significant training or management and that the adopter is not likely to need specialized knowledge or experience to meet the individual animal's needs.
- **A – Average home** animals are those cats and dogs are those dogs without significant concerns in their previous history or in-shelter observations and, for dogs, who have only minor areas of concern based on the SAFER assessment observations.
- **E – Experienced home with specific counseling** animals are those cats and dogs with some concerns in their previous history or in-shelter observations, and/or for dogs who exhibited some concerning behavior during their SAFER assessment. Cats and dogs with behaviors that would preclude placement in a home with small children for safety or humane reasons will be categorized as **EA – Experienced home, no children, with specific counseling**.
- **R – New Hope partner placement only** animals are those cats and dogs with concerns in their previous history or in-shelter observations (including a previous bite history) and/or for dogs who exhibited aggressive behavior during their SAFER assessment or could not be safely assessed. This category may also apply to animals that require training and/or behavior modification before they can be placed in a permanent home.
- **NP – Not available for placement** designations may apply to those cats and dogs with serious concerns in their previous history or in-shelter observations, including severe and unpredictable aggression; a significant or damaging bite history; significant, dangerous aggression to other animals; and those who pose a significant threat to public safety.

Asilomar Definitions (for statistical use only)

- Healthy animals are those who do not require medical, behavioral, or foster care to make them ready for adoption. This includes all dogs and cats who are eight weeks of age or older and do not have any sign of disease, injury, or behavior that could pose a health or safety risk or otherwise make the animal unsuitable for placement as a pet.
- Treatable-manageable animals are those who are not likely to become healthy but could have a good quality of life if provided with treatment for their condition comparable with that typically provided in the community, provided the animal does not pose a risk to the health or safety of other animals or people.
- Treatable-rehabilitatable animals are those who are likely to become healthy if provided with treatment for their condition compatible with that typically provided in the community.
- Unhealthy-untreatable animals are those who either have a behavioral or temperamental characteristic that poses a health or safety risk or otherwise makes the animal unsuitable for placement as a pet, or are suffering from a disease, injury, or congenital condition that adversely affects the animal's health and will not become healthy or treatable even with a level of care typically provided in the community.