

A day in the life of a rehomer

I arrive at Oak Tree at 8am, looking forward to seeing my animals and my human friends. I head straight down to the kennels to take the dogs out for their morning toilet break. I take the housetrained ones first as I know they'll be bursting to go, having held it all night. The dogs who have been here a bit longer tend to be the ones who have accidents in their kennels, but they will pick it up again quickly once they get rehomed. Today Fletcher and Ted get to go first; they are in the same kennel as they came in together and clearly love each other, so we wouldn't separate them and they will be rehomed together. After a lovely greeting from two very excited dogs, I just take them on a short walk to the grass near the kennels, as I have lots to get on with and the volunteers will take them for longer walks later. Toby has had a poo in his kennel, so I clean that, then spend 5 minutes trying to get Tess' harness on, as she is very over excited about going out! Our behaviourist Gemma has



written a programme for Tess to try and get her to be calmer around her harness, so I follow that; ignoring her and leaving her kennel when she jumps up. Eventually she sits calmly for a treat and lets me get the harness on.

Once they have all been out, I move onto their breakfast. Today, Joey is having different food as he is on a special diet for a kidney problem so I feed him first. Then all the others, measuring out their dry food according to their size. I change all their drinking water, then go back to collect the empty bowls, and record if any dogs haven't eaten. My colleague Sam is doing the cats today, so she will be cleaning their litter trays, feeding them, changing their water and cleaning the pens just like I am doing with the dogs.



My least favourite part of the day is next: cleaning the kennels. It might not be fun, but it's really important to get it done thoroughly as it keeps all the animals safe and stops them stinking. I realise that Toby had also had a wee in his bed, so I chuck his blankets in the laundry, clean his bed and get him fresh blankets from the storage room. He has an introduction

with a potential new family later, so I want him to smell nice and fresh! I



get through 2 kennels, then check my watch and realise it's time for our morning staff meeting, so I head up to the Tea Room with the other small animals staff.

We give the rest of the team an update on which cats and dogs are doing anything interesting today, and listen to what the other departments are up to. I say that Toby has a viewing with a potential new family today, which we're excited about because he has been here a few months and we are keen to get him into a home. I also mention that Fletcher and Ted are seeing the vet, as they are new arrivals, and that Pudsy the tortoiseshell cat had a successful introduction yesterday, so is being collected today by her new owners. We all say happy birthday to Lulu from Fundraising, then I head back down to the kennels to finish the cleaning. Just as I arrive back at the kennels, a volunteer, Jeff arrives to help with the dogs. So after saying hi, I update him on the new arrivals, then he goes off to start walking the dogs while I get on with the remaining cleaning.

This takes me till lunchtime and I go to wash my hands hearing my tummy rumble and feeling very ready for a sit down and a rest. I catch up with the other small animals staff, and we head up to have lunch in the conservatory as Gemma wants to order food from the Tea Room. I quickly pick up a last minute present for my niece from the gift shop, as she loves animals as much as I do, and I like knowing the money is going towards helping animals at Oak Tree, rather than in someone's pocket at another shop.

I feel refreshed after my lunch and ready to get on with the rest of the day. Before I've even tidied up my things, my 1pm appointment arrives and checks in with reception. I quickly tidy up, then head over to introduce myself and sit down with them in the conservatory. They are interested in adopting a dog and they sound like they could offer a great home. They have a big garden and someone home during the day, but we don't have any dogs that are suitable for them right now. I thank them for coming, keep their form on file and tell them to keep an eye on the website for any dogs that they think would be a good match. That way, if a suitable one comes in, they will be all ready to rehome straight away.

I grab a quick cup of tea, then head back down to the kennels to work with my dogs. Each dog gets assigned a caseworker when they arrive, so we can make sure they have a smooth journey through Oak Tree, and nothing gets missed. It's great because it means we can really get to know our individual dogs and then have a say in what happens to them and make sure they get everything they need. However, it does mean that we get really attached and it's sometimes hard to say goodbye when they leave. But we always know they are going to the best possible home for them, and often the new owners send us updates or even bring them back to visit, which is always lovely.



I get Joey out. I'm so pleased I'm his caseworker as I love lurchers and he is such a sweetie. Gemma our behaviourist has written a plan to build up his confidence, as he was a bit shy when he first arrived. I sit with him in his kennel playing and making a fuss of him before heading out with him to see what sights, sounds and smells we can find. He cowers and hides behind me when the tractor comes down the yellow brick road towards us, but we just stop and wait for it to go passed while I chuck a few treats on the floor so he associates the whole thing with a more positive experience. He recovers quickly and we carry on. We see a pony being led into the Sand School up ahead and he is again unsure, but I encourage him to go a bit nearer whilst still keeping a safe distance away. He manages it and I reward him with more treats; he is definitely getting more confident day by day and I think he'll make a lovely pet for someone who has lots of time and patience for him. I take Joey back to his kennel and head to the computer to write up the notes from the interview with the people wanting a dog, and Joey's progress.

I get a call on my walkie talkie to say that Pudsey's new owners are here to collect her, so I head up to reception to go through the paperwork with them before they take her home. I get them to sign the forms, and let them know what food and litter she has so there aren't too many big changes at once, then we head down to the cattery together to get Pudsey. They have brought their own cat carrier with a cosy blanket, so I put her into that and am touched to see how excited their little girl is to get her new cat home. After saying goodbye to Pudsey, I head back to the computer to finish updating



Pudsey's record on our system, which enables us to keep track of all the animals in and out of Oak Tree.

Its 4 o'clock now, so it's time to start getting the animals ready to be left for the night. I am on cats duty this afternoon, so I head to the cattery, while Sam takes her turn getting the dogs ready for bedtime. I spot clean any litter trays that need attending to, then feed all the cats their dinner, making a note if any haven't eaten much during the day, or have upset tummies. Barbara our cattery volunteer lets me know that Coco was off his food yesterday, so I pay particular attention to his bowl, but he seems to have more than made up for it today! I check all their pens as I go, looking out for any broken toys or anything that could be dangerous, and checking they have enough clean blankets to snuggle up for the night.

It's the end of another exhausting, but fantastic day. I love working with the animals every day, and couldn't imagine doing anything else. I switch off the cattery lights and walk back to my car for the journey home, ready to start it all again tomorrow.