

The Animal Health Trust

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Introduction

The Animal Health Trust (AHT) looks to actively recruit potential volunteers from all sections of the community and place them within the AHT's volunteer involving projects.

The AHT believes that volunteers make a valuable contribution to the organisation. We want to recognise this contribution through this policy by providing clear guidelines as to what volunteers may expect of the AHT and vice versa.

In line with our values, the AHT seeks to involve volunteers to:

- Maintain close relationships with its stakeholders
- Ensure that the services that it offers, both internally and externally, are delivered at the highest level
- Grow its sum of knowledge and its portfolio of findings, and disseminate them widely
- Treat every employee with care, respect and integrity
- Communicate effectively and openly with staff and stakeholders
- Develop individuals and promote teamwork
- Maintain the highest ethical standards
- Ensure that its funds are utilised to achieve the best return on investment

Principles

This Volunteering Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- The AHT will ensure that volunteers are properly supported and that mechanisms are in place for them to actively contribute to the organisation's aims.
- The AHT does not seek to introduce volunteers to replace paid staff.
- The AHT expects that employees at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.
- The AHT recognises that volunteers expect meaningful, enjoyable and rewarding tasks and perhaps personal development opportunities. The AHT will seek to help volunteers meet these expectations as well as providing the training for them to do their volunteering effectively.

Recruitment of Volunteers

The AHT will not recruit volunteers to replace paid staff. In general, we recruit volunteers for specific projects to complement the work that paid staff do.

- All volunteers will be asked to complete an application form, provide references and attend an informal interview.
- The AHT will treat all information collected in this process with strict confidentiality and any details will be made accessible to the volunteer on written request.

- All volunteers will receive an induction, during which they will be provided with written and verbal information, copies of organisational policies and procedures and will be encouraged to discuss any issues arising from these.
- All volunteers will have a named employee who will discuss their particular skills and suitability for the volunteer role and how best their potential as a volunteer might be realised.
- This named employee will provide support to volunteers to help settle them into their chosen activity and will continue to offer support and supervision to the volunteer during their time with the AHT.

Equal Opportunities & Diversity

The AHT operates an equal opportunities policy in respect of paid employees and this will also be applicable to volunteers. All volunteers are required to make a commitment to equal opportunities and will be supported in its practice.

We want to encourage interest in becoming a volunteer with the AHT from all sectors of the community without favour or discrimination in respect of nationality, race, marital status, religious beliefs, gender or political beliefs.

We will try to find appropriate tasks or activities for all volunteers who apply. However the AHT does not commit itself to accept all offers of help; the AHT will give a volunteer the reasons for declining their services and where possible refer them to another organisation that might be better placed to help them.

Our aim throughout this policy is to ensure that volunteers are treated in a fair and consistent way.

Commitment

The AHT recognises that volunteers will often need flexible arrangements regarding the amount of time and level of commitment they are able to give. We will try to work within these constraints. Whatever the level of commitment a volunteer is able to give we will recognise and value their contribution.

In return the volunteer will be expected to follow the letter and spirit of the AHT's policies and procedures and to meet mutually agreed time commitments, or to give notice if this is not possible.

Volunteers are free to leave their voluntary role at any time although we do ask for 48 hours advance notice as a courtesy to enable alternative arrangements to be found.

We will always try to match what a volunteer feels able to undertake with our organisational needs. We will provide a warm welcome to volunteers, give adequate support and ensure that the volunteers' expectations are met when they join us.

Volunteer Agreement

Volunteers will be asked to sign a copy of a volunteer agreement which acts as a safeguard both for the volunteer and for the AHT.

The agreement is not to be seen as a contract. The AHT does not intend any employment relationship to be created, either now or at any time in the future.

Induction and training

When volunteering with the AHT, volunteers will be informed about:

- the work that the AHT does
- what the AHT is trying to achieve
- the way we work with volunteers

Volunteers will also need to understand the tasks or projects in which they will be involved, some of which may need some particular skills.

Volunteers will be given a specific role description.

Volunteer will be encouraged to attend relevant training.

Support

All volunteers will have a named employee within the AHT who will provide regular contact – to feed back on progress, discuss future tasks and development and air any problems.

The AHT aims to support volunteers by giving them the information they need about:

- safety in their voluntary placement
- any training needs of the volunteer
- AHT policies in place
- the guidance and support we provide
- how volunteers can raise matters about which they are concerned
- how we deal with complaints from or about a volunteer
- the systems we use, for example on how we reimburse expenses

Limitations of AHT Volunteering Opportunities

Whilst we are a leading animal health charity, we are regrettably unable to offer volunteering opportunities that give direct access to animals. Our clinics treat and nurse intensive care cases which must be cared for by highly qualified specialists.

Nevertheless, many of our fundraising events, such as helping on our stand at Crufts, do bring staff and volunteers in close contact with pets belonging to the general public so an affinity with animals is advantageous in such situations.

Many of the volunteering opportunities have a restricted number of places. We therefore encourage volunteers to apply and register their interest as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

Expenses

Volunteers will be reimbursed for travel and other approved expenses. To claim expenses, supporting receipts must be provided.

Resolving Concerns

The AHT aims to identify and resolve problems at the earliest possible stage.

The volunteer should speak in the first instance to their named employee or a member of the Human Resources team about their concerns. We aim to respond speedily. We will adopt the same approach if a complaint is received about a volunteer.

In cases where the actions of a volunteer warrant serious concern, appropriate action will be taken and if it becomes apparent that the relationship between the AHT and a volunteer is not working out, it may be necessary to end the arrangement without notice.

If the services of a volunteer are no longer appropriate the AHT reserves the right to end his/her involvement. In this eventuality the volunteer will normally be informed of the reason.

Insurance

All volunteers will be covered by the AHT's Employers' and Public Liability insurance whilst they are engaged in any voluntary work on AHT's behalf.

Health and safety

Volunteers are covered by the AHT's Health and Safety Policy, a copy of which will be provided for each volunteer. Training and a health and safety induction will be provided to all new volunteers. The AHT's Health and Safety Manager will also carry out risk assessments for every volunteering opportunity.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff.