



Volunteer Policy

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Volunteer Policy

Index

- 1. Purpose**
- 2. Introduction to My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue**
- 3. Objectives**
- 4. Scope**
- 5. Policy Statement**
- 6. Definition**
- 7. Who can be a Volunteer**
- 8. Types of Volunteers**
- 9. The Value of Volunteers**
- 10. Embracing Diversity**
- 11. Recruitment of Volunteers**
- 12. Garda Vetting**
- 13. Roles and Responsibilities**
- 14. Volunteer Benefits**
- 15. Documents included in this Policy**
- 16. Code of Conduct**
- 17. Induction**
- 18. Claiming Expenses**
- 19. Managing Grievances**
- 20. Confidentiality**
- 21. Photography**
- 22. Use of Social Media**
- 23. Exit Interviews and References**
- 24. Review Period**



Volunteer Policy

1. Purpose

The Board of My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue is an organisation founded on the hard work, dedication and commitment of volunteers. Since our foundation in 2009, volunteers throughout our 3 sites have been the foundation on which we can deliver the care and love our animals deserve. Our volunteers are Board Directors, work on-site, fundraise on our behalf and support our events – they are an amazing group of people whom we rely on daily.

The purpose of a Volunteer Policy is to explain to our staff, funders and volunteers why volunteers are an important part of My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue. In addition, a Volunteer Policy will ensure that volunteers have a clearly defined support structure in which to work which outlines their roles, responsibilities and resources available to them in order to maximise their volunteering experience and personal wellbeing.

2. Introduction to My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue

The foundation of My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue came about as a result of a chance meeting in the summer of 2011 of Martina Kenny, Deborah Kenny and Cathy Davey in Memorial Park, Islandbridge, Dublin as they walked their dogs. That meeting was not only the start of a deep friendship but the beginning of a road which would lead to the saving of thousands of animals' lives and the founding of this unique charity.

Our charitable purpose is to:

“Set up, promote and operate an animal rescue centre located in Kildare and serving the island of Ireland, to facilitate the rescue, maintenance and rehoming of equines and occasionally other animals and act as a focus and promote raising community awareness of the need to prevent unnecessary suffering among equines and where possible all species of animals whether domesticated or wild”.

Our Mission:

Operating across three sites on the island of Ireland, our mission is to save as many animals as we can, to educate the humans who own them and to work with law enforcement agencies, animal welfare bodies and members of the public to achieve this.

We hope that, through this, Ireland can become a world leader in the area of animal health and welfare, a country that respects and cherishes the lives of those who share our world. We need to get to a place where our animal welfare laws are understood, respected and enforced by those entrusted with the task. We hope for a society with zero tolerance for animal neglect and abuse. We know we can get there.



Volunteer Policy

To these ends, we in My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue will rescue, rehabilitate, retrain and rehome equines. We will rescue, rehabilitate, retrain and rehome any other animals in need who cross our paths and we will work cooperatively with Government, law enforcement, non-governmental animal welfare bodies, the private sector and members of the public to achieve our goals..

3. Objectives

The Volunteer Policy is in place to:

- Provide a clear process for the recruitment and management of volunteer's across all three My Lovely Horse Rescue sites;
- Ensure that volunteers know what is expected of them at all times;
- Manage volunteer expectations;
- Promote transparency in all of our activities;
- Provide a safe, transparent and positive work environment that promotes volunteer wellbeing and personal growth consistently across all sites;
- Reiterate operational standards and behaviours;
- Support the volunteers help us to achieve our charitable purpose;
- Support the education of the public of the importance of animal welfare;
- Build a network of supporters that will assist us advocate for necessary legislative changes.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all of our volunteers, supported in its implementation by Board Directors and employees (including trainees and all agency workers) across all 3 My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue locations.

5. Policy Statement

My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue recognises the important role that volunteers undertake in creating a loving animal-centred organisation. In recognition of the vast contribution of our volunteers, we will actively promote the adherence to the volunteer-specific policies across all locations, thereby ensuring that the volunteering experience with My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue is always a positive one.

6. Definition

The definition of a volunteer is someone who freely gives of their time and expertise to assist, support or help an organisation without being paid.

7. Who can be a volunteer

Generally volunteers are people led by the desire to do good, or give back to society by volunteering to support a cause without remuneration. Volunteers share common traits like selflessness, dedication and focus on creating a meaningful impact.

Anyone can be a volunteer providing that they are:



Volunteer Policy

- Over 18, are under 18 and are accompanied by a guardian, or are a transition year student on work experience;
- Willing to give of their time to support a cause that they believe in;
- Happy to share their experiences and undertake the work needed;
- Open to work outdoors in all weather conditions;
- Adhere to the systems and procedures in the organisation;
- Respect their colleagues and all those they come into contact with as a representative of My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue; and,
- Focussed on providing the standard of care and love to our animals expected by the organisation.

8. Types of Volunteers:

Currently, My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue has a need for the following types of volunteers¹ :

- (i) On-Site – cleaning, grooming, exercising animals
- (ii) Workaway - volunteers who stay on-site for prolonged periods and receive accommodation and food for the duration (see Workaway Policy)
- (iii) Fostering – fostering animals for set periods of time until those animals find their permanent home;
- (iv) Working from Home in Fundraising/Marketing - hosting / supporting the running of a fundraising event or promotion (volunteers will have a clearly defined and pre-agreed role here)
- (v) Shop – supporting the running of our shop / sourcing of donations;
- (vi) Other – see footnote.

9. The Value of Volunteers:

Volunteers are the cornerstone of My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue. Our volunteers come from a broad cross section of society and are unified in their love of animals and in their concern for the need for legislative change to promote the rights of animals in the island of Ireland. Volunteers bring a unique insight to our work and serve a huge value as ambassadors for our charity raising awareness of what we do.

Our volunteers serve as:

- Board Directors;
- Yard supports;
- Groomers;
- Walkers;
- Administrators;
- Fundraisers;
- Retail personnel;

¹ Depending on business needs, we may on occasion seek additional volunteers outside those listed within this policy in order to meet specific “fixed purpose” volunteering requirements where specialist skills unavailable within the existing team are needed.



Volunteer Policy

- Event coordinators;
- Advisors;
- Advocates.

As a charitable organisation, the work undertaken by our passionate and committed group of volunteers is invaluable and hugely respected by all stakeholders involved in My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue.

10. Embracing Diversity

A love of animals is a common trait shared between people of all genders, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation; religious affiliation etc., In keeping with this, My Lovely Horse Animal rescue welcomes volunteers from every walk of life and encourages an environment of cultural respect and dignity for all.

11. Recruitment of Volunteers

The recruitment of volunteers will take place according to the needs of the organisation at any given time. All recruitment will be undertaken in a fair and transparent manner, promoting inclusivity and organisational best practice.

Volunteering roles will:

- Be advertised across a broad range of media (including the Workaway website, at the nearest Volunteer Ireland Centre and internally to our existing volunteers);
- Clearly outline the needs of the organisation, location, the individual skills and commitment of hours required;
- Detail the selection process (including Garda vetting);
- Agree the timeframe for decision-making;
- Detail the closing date for applications.

12. Garda Vetting

Due to the nature of the organisation, currently, as per the definition in the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, and subsequent verification with the National Vetting Bureau (NVB), My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue does not require volunteers to be Garda Vetted.

However, as the organisation evolves, we retain the right to bring Garda Vetting into our volunteer recruitment practices (including the retrospective vetting of all volunteers) in the event we have a legal necessity as interpreted by the law stated above. In this event, we commit to giving one month's notice to our volunteers of the commencement of this process.

For the purposes of clarification, in 2023, the Garda Vetting process (assuming no delays) can take up to six weeks.



Volunteer Policy

13. Roles and Responsibilities

My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue recognises the important role that volunteers play in our organisation. Without our volunteer's passion and commitment, we would struggle to provide the level of care and love to the animals in our care. We are deeply reliant and indebted to all of our volunteers who work so tirelessly across all 3 locations. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to ensure that we invest in the proper management of our volunteering programme ensuring that all volunteers are properly recruited, managed and have a positive experience when working as part of the team.

To this end, the role of Volunteer Manager exists and is responsible for the following:

- Works with Site Managers to develop a comprehensive volunteer needs assessment for site activities;
- Manages the recruitment, induction, training and management of volunteer activities on site;
- Monitors volunteers, and records skills, performance, availability and scheduling;
- Recruits volunteers through Workaway, local media, web, social media and outreach;
- Contacts Volunteer Ireland, educational institutes other non-profit groups for assistance in recruiting new volunteers;
- Works with Senior Management to develop a system of volunteer benefits and recognition programme by the end of 2024;
- Works with Senior Management and the Fundraising Manager, as necessary, to help with sponsorship of the volunteer programme;
- Develops a volunteer induction programme that supports all new volunteers in acclimatising to their role within the team and the organisation;
- Develops a Volunteer Manual for internal use that provides information and guidelines for staff; on scheduling procedures, job descriptions and expectations;
- Schedules volunteers into shift work based on site needs and organisational priorities;
- Contacts volunteers to confirm their shifts' start and end times;
- Works to keep volunteers properly informed about My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue through orientation meetings, group sessions, manuals, emails, text messages through WhatsApp groups and phone calls;
- Ensures proper reference checks are preformed according to Irish legislation and organisation recruitment policies;

14. Volunteer Benefits

Due to the unpaid nature of our volunteering roles, no benefit of any kind is given to the majority of our volunteers who work and return home on a daily basis from our main farm and from the Cork site.



Volunteer Policy

However, where we have a requirement for volunteers to live on site (main farm and pig rescue) in order for My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue to fulfil its charitable purpose (the 24x7x365 nature of the work), then the following benefits are applied:

- Accommodation* – (single or shared)
- Light and heat
- Food

*Shared accommodation requires a level of respect of colleague's rights and privacy which is dealt with in the Volunteer Code of Conduct. Failure to comply with the terms outlined in Workaway and Volunteer Agreements may be grounds for the termination of the volunteering experience.

15. Documents included in this Policy

The My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue Volunteer Policy comprises of the following:

- Volunteer Policy
- Volunteer Code of Conduct and Declaration of Compliance
- Volunteer Induction Checklist
- Volunteer Job Description Template
- Volunteer Consent Form
- Volunteer Reference Check Template
- Volunteering Experience Feedback Form

My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue retains the right to add to / amend the above suite of documents as the organisational requirements change or evolve. Where documents are altered or added to, we will circulate all relevant document to our existing volunteers and update our website as required.

16. Code of Conduct

My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue requires all volunteers to adhere to, and sign up to our Volunteer Code of Conduct and Declaration of Compliance.

This document outlines the expected behaviours and conduct in their official capacity as a My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue volunteer, and details the commitment of the organisation to ensure their dignity and respect and all times.

17. Induction

All My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue volunteers will receive an induction from the Volunteer Manager/a designated member of the team. The provision of a proper induction process allows:



Volunteer Policy

The new volunteer:

- Feel respected and part of the team from Day 1;
- Understand key policies and how the organisation runs;
- Transition more smoothly into their role;
- Achieve their objectives more efficiently; and,
- Feel confident in their contribution to achieving the organisations
- charitable purpose.

In turn, induction allows the organisation to:

- Identify and meet the volunteers objectives;
- Communicate that the volunteers ambitions are valued;
- Find out any additional training needs /supports the volunteer requires;
- Communicate the organisations ambitions; and,
- Build rapport with the volunteer from Day 1;

Induction will encompass;

An organisational overview including animal welfare protocols and veterinary needs;

- Review of the job description / expectations / timelines;
- Key personnel and mentoring / supports available;
- Critical policies i.e. Health and Safety (On-site safety protocols) / Code of Conduct / Animal Welfare etc.;
- Volunteer Objectives;
- Claiming Expenses;
- Social media use and communications (including a consent form); and,
- Tour of premises (where relevant);

Other items may be added to induction depending on the role being undertaken by the volunteer.

18. Claiming Expenses

If expenses are incurred by the volunteer in the undertaking of their duties then these can be reclaimed in accordance with the My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue Financial Control and Procedures Policy.

An example of this might be a volunteer using their personal vehicle to collect supplies / animals on occasion or we might reimburse lunch expenses to volunteers representing the organisation at events.

Approval from the relevant Manager (as per expense authorisation matrix) must be sought by the volunteer in advance of incurring the expense, otherwise their claim will be deemed to be invalid.

19. Managing Grievances



Volunteer Policy

Regardless of the tenure of the volunteer, in the event of a grievance arising, the volunteer should raise any issues or concerns with their designated manager, or alternatively the Chairperson of MLHAR.

20. Confidentiality

In the course of their work, a volunteer may come into possession of sensitive data i.e. donor banking information, medical conditions of other members of staff/ volunteers etc. It is critical that, in line with GDPR and internal data protection procedures, all information that comes into the possession of the volunteer in the course of their volunteering role is kept strictly confidential.

On investigation, any volunteer found to abuse the trust placed on them by My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue, or to have misused the sensitive data in their possession will have the relationship terminated immediately. Where the potential for criminal action exists, this abuse may be reported to the appropriate authorities.

21. Photography

In the course of volunteering duties, photographs will be taken for use across our social media platforms (Instagram / Twitter / Facebook), newsletters, magazine articles, donor letters etc. All volunteers will be asked to 'Opt in' or 'Opt out' of this. Any volunteers who do not give their consent to be photographed will have their wishes respected and will not appear in any photographs taken. Consent will be recorded as part of the induction process (see Consent Form).

*As social media platforms change, unless specifically informed by the volunteer that they want their image removed completely from all use, or, from use on a specific platform, we will take their consent as complete for the purposes of using their image in publications and promotions.

22. Use of Social Media

Unless specified in the job description, **representing My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue in any way on your social media platforms is not allowed.**

We ask that when representing your personal views on your social media accounts that you remain respectful to the organisation, your colleagues, other volunteers and our stakeholders.

23. Exit Interviews and References

Exit Interviews:

It is the policy of My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue to undertake Exit Interviews with all volunteers where possible. This is in order to learn about our volunteering programme in



Volunteer Policy

the hope of making improvements where they are lacking; or, developing areas further, based on positive feedback. (See Exit Interview Form).

References:

My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue will, where possible, provide a standard reference to volunteers who request one. This may take up to two weeks from the initial request given the very busy nature of all staff roles in managing the animals in our care.

A reference template will be completed by the volunteer's Manager or the Volunteer Manager if the primary point of contact is unavailable.

24. Review Period

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years to ensure that it reflects current legislation, best practice and that it is fit for purpose and is aligned to our charitable purpose.

Signed *Ali Davey*

Name Ali Davey

Signed *Eoin Cullen*

Name Eoin Cullen