



# A Day in the Life of a Kennel Hand



## Opinion



By Salote Naiula

Salote Naiula is a junior vet assistant and Kennel-Hand.



Nail clipping. Photos: Animals Fiji



Strays and overpopulation are often the result of irresponsible pet ownership, which is why animal shelters exist as one of the solutions.

An animal shelter is a temporary haven for abandoned and stray animals. It assists them find their forever homes.

Sadly, some animals are seen as unwanted or even “hideous” by society.

Here at Animals Fiji, and at shelters around the world, we work to restore these animals’ dignity and help them find loving families.

After graduating from college, I wasn’t sure how to turn my passion for animal husbandry into a career.

The Government needs qualified professionals, but you can’t become one overnight! I did some research online about basic animal care and discovered the role of a Kennel Hand.

While being a Kennel Hand might sound tiring at first, it’s actually a very interesting and rewarding job. At first, I thought it would just be bathing and walking dogs. But at Animals Fiji, you’re so much more than that – you’re a lifeline to these animals.

Our shelter cares for both feline (cat) and canine (dog) species, whether they’ve been surrendered by their owners or are strays. Each animal has a unique story, and every staff member gets to know them. Strays and overpopulation are often the result of irresponsible pet ownership, which is why animal shelters exist as one of the solutions. The best solution being to desex any dog or cat you have as a pet.

### A typical day at the shelter

We work a standard eight-hour shift, from 8am to 5pm with a one-

hour lunch break. But what exactly do we do during those eight hours? The shelter is divided into sections: Quarantine, Puppy Nursery, Puppy Pen, Cat Rooms 1 and 2, and Dog Pens 1 and 2 – a total of six areas. Each new animal follows specific intake procedures.

■ **Intake:** When animals arrive, they undergo a veterinary examination. All their medical records are kept and go with them when they’re adopted.

■ **Quarantine:** This is an animal’s first stop. They stay in quarantine for a minimum of two weeks to monitor their health and behavior. Many animals come in with internal and external medical conditions.

Isolation helps prevent these from spreading to other animals. Staff working in quarantine take special precautions to avoid interacting with other areas of the shelter.

During quarantine, animals receive any necessary treatments, such as deworming, vaccinations, and medicated shampoos for skin problems or fleas and ticks. Sometimes, infections take longer than two weeks to clear, so close observation is crucial.

■ **Moving to General Population:** After quarantine, puppies move to the Puppy Nursery or Puppy pen, cats and kittens go to the cat rooms and dogs go to the dog pens with other shelter animals.

Each animal has a personal record sheet that we use to track their progress. We take their weight and temperature every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday.



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Fridays are also bath days, and they get flea and tick treatment every other week. We perform daily health checks, looking for any problems with their ears, skin, fur, eyes, teeth, and legs.

This includes checking for earwax, ticks, discharge from the eyes, signs of dental problems, and any limping or injuries. If we find anything concerning, we report it to the veterinarians for their advice and possible treatment.

■ **Finding Forever Homes:** Prior to being available for adoption, all shelter animals undergo the crucial step of being sterilised or desexed. This preventive measure plays a significant role in curbing the population of unwanted dogs and cats in Fiji.

As a Kennel Hand, one of the most gratifying aspects of our role is wit-

nessing the transformative power of adoption. Each day, we witness these resilient animals patiently awaiting their chance to be embraced by a loving family.

Kennel Hands play an indispensable role in this process, ensuring that every animal is in optimal health, well-adjusted, and ready for their new chapter in life. From meeting with potential adopters to answering inquiries and facilitating matches, we take pride in guiding families to their perfect furry or feathery companion.

Witnessing the joyous departure of a contented animal with their new family reaffirms the profound impact of our dedication and care. It serves as a poignant reminder that our efforts can truly transform the lives of these deserving animals.

### Animal Care & Enrichment

■ **Feeding:** We feed the animals first thing in the morning, followed by cleaning their enclosures. Dogs get walked twice a day, no matter the distance – they love exploring! Puppies are also walked, and they enjoy being outside in harnesses. Cats generally prefer to stay in their enclosures, where they can watch out the windows or sun themselves on their external window cages. All the animals appreciate attention, so we play with them, cuddle them, and even read them books (though they might not always be interested!). Each animal has its own personality, and there’s never a dull moment. Occasional disagreements happen, but we break them up and use distractions like more

exercise to get their energy out in positive ways! We encourage visitors to come and meet the animals, as they love new faces.

■ **Diet:** The animals have different diets. For breakfast and lunch, they get dry food – Pedigree for dogs and Whiskers Pro for cats. Dinner is a warm, cooked meal of meat dust (80 per cent meat, 20 per cent rice) with mixed vegetables, peels, cassava, and peas (when available). Feeding schedules vary by age. Puppies need four meals a day, kittens need three, and adult dogs and cats eat twice

### Join the movement

Interested in making a difference? Whether through volunteering, donations, or adopting a furry friend, there are countless ways to get involved and support the incredible work being done at Animals Fiji Shelter.

At the end of the day, as the sun sets and the animals settle in for the night, the staff at Animals Fiji Shelter can rest assured knowing they’ve made a difference in the lives of those who need it most.

Animals Fiji helps animals all around Fiji, with clinics in Savusavu, Labasa, Nadi and Lautoka, and they also hold outreach clinics in other areas.

If you want to support Animals Fiji in their work or to find out more about Animals Fiji’s services, contact their Savusavu Clinic at (+679) 998 6253 or Nadi Clinic at (+679) 993 6647 or visit their website at [www.animalsfiji.org](http://www.animalsfiji.org).

Source: Animals Fiji