



FLORIDA KEYS SPCA

Critter Camp Handbook

Florida Keys SPCA
The Center for Animal Welfare & Education
5711 College Rd.
Key West, FL 33040
305 294-4857
Fkspca.org

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FKSPCA Info

The Florida Keys SPCA (FKSPCA) was established in 1999. We have shelter locations in Key West and Marathon and serve over 2,000 animals annually. Pet adoptions are just one of the many services we offer. FKSPCA strives to act as a resource on all companion animal-related issues by providing a range of services including: pet adoptions, spay/neuter and low-cost wellness services, Trap-Neuter-Return programs for community cats, volunteer and foster programs, behavior counseling, humane education, and a Safe Haven program for pet owners escaping domestic violence or experiencing other types of crises.

In 2019, the brand new FKSPCA Center for Animal Welfare & Education opened. We are proud to present children's education programs including Tales with Tails Reading Groups, Youth Club, and several day camps throughout the year during summer and holiday breaks.

If you would like to schedule a behind-the-scenes tour of the FKSPCA facility with our Development Director during camp drop-off or pick-up, please contact Jennifer Rockford at jennifer@fkspca.org in advance.

Humane Education Contact Info

Humane Education Coordinator: Crystal Ruffo

Email: Crystal@fkspca.org

Phone: 305 294-4857

Camp Hours

Monday-Friday

9 am to 3 pm

Drop Off & Pick Up Procedures

Camp will be held in the Education Room of the FKSPCA Center for Animal Welfare & Education on Stock Island. Parents must park and walk their children to and from the Education Room, located on the first floor adjacent to the Front Lobby. Please use the building's main entrance. We ask that you report directly to the Education Room as our main facility will be closed to the public at the time of drop-off.

To ensure the safety of our campers, an authorized person must sign their child IN and OUT before and after each session.

Anyone picking up a camper must show a photo ID and be listed on the Authorized Pick-Up List for every day of camp. When registering, please list all approved persons including yourself. Anyone under the age of 16 cannot be authorized to sign a child out of camp.

Photo ID is not necessary at the time of drop off.

If you need to add a name to the Authorized Pick-Up List, a parent/guardian may add the name in-person at drop off or pick up, email crystal@fkspca.org, or call 305 294-4857 and speak with Critter Camp staff.

Drop off will begin 10 minutes before camp and end 10 minutes after camp hours.

Late Policy: Children must be signed out of Critter Camp promptly at 3 pm. After 3:10 pm, a late pick-up fee of \$1 per minute will be applied.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency that requires you to pick up your child early from camp, please call 305-294-4857 and speak with Critter Camp staff prior to pick up.

Dress Code

Campers should dress in clothes that are appropriate for active and sometimes messy activities. Appropriate footwear should be closed-toe and non-slip. Athletic shoes are recommended.

Sunscreen

Because Critter Camp includes outdoor activities, sunscreen must be worn daily and will be reapplied throughout the day. Parents/guardians must sign a sunscreen waiver allowing staff to assist in applying sunscreen as needed. Sunscreen will be applied to exposed skin, including but not limited to: face, tops of ears, bare shoulders, arms & legs. Parents/guardians are responsible for supplying their child with sunscreen daily, the FKSPCA does not provide sunscreen.

Photography & Recording

The Media Release form in the registration packet states that you give permission to the FKSPCA to use, without limitation or obligation, photographs, film footage, or audio/video recordings that include your child's image or voice for purposes of promoting the FKSPCA. This includes, but is not limited to: media pitches and FKSPCA publications such as brochures, newsletters, display boards, website or other electronic media. If you choose to decline permission, please inform the Camp Director in writing at crystal@fkspca.org

Lunch, Snacks, & Drinks

Parents/guardians are expected to provide a water bottle, lunch, and morning & afternoon snacks daily. Refrigeration is available, but please do not provide items that need to be heated. Pizza is provided on Fridays. If you would prefer your camper eat something other than pizza, please prepare a lunch for Friday as well.

Special Needs

FKSPCA strives to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all children. We will accommodate physical, academic, and social needs of individual children to the best of our ability. The staff to child ratio of FKSPCA camp is 1:12; all children must be able to operate within this ratio. The FKSPCA cannot accommodate children who require 1:1 care.

Please complete the space on the registration form to indicate any special needs. Please provide as much information as possible to help us better meet the needs of your child. Please let us know prior to the start of camp if your child has an IEP, 504b, or behavioral plan.

Allergies

Critter Camp is held on a campus that houses more than 200 dogs, cats, and other animals, therefore, camp is not recommended for children with allergies to pets or pet dander.

Various camp activities and materials such as dog and cat treats may include known allergens such as peanuts, tree nuts, milk, and fish. If your child has any known allergies, please list them on the registration form so that necessary accommodations can be made. (If your child has a prescription for an Epinephrine auto-injector, please see the section below on the subject of medication.)

Medication

If your child has an allergy that may require the use of an Epinephrine auto-injector, you must complete and return a Medication Authorization Form to the FKSPCA Humane Education Coordinator prior to the first day of camp.

- Epinephrine auto-injector must be clearly labeled with the child's full name.
- Parents must hand medication to the Camp Director at the time of drop-off and Director will return medication at the time of pick-up.

If your child has a condition such as asthma that requires the use of a rescue inhaler, you must complete and return a Medication Authorization Form to the FKSPCA Humane Education Coordinator prior to the first day of camp.

- Child must be able to use the rescue inhaler by themselves without assistance. Staff will supervise your child taking the medication but cannot assist.
- Parents must hand medication to the Camp Director at the time of drop-off and Director will return medication at the time of pick-up.

The Camp Director will carry necessary emergency medication with them.

FKSPCA staff cannot administer any non-emergency prescription or non-prescription medication to your child. If your child must take a prescription or non-prescription medication during camp hours, a parent or guardian must come to the FKSPCA to administer the medication.

If your child is sick and at risk of spreading illness to others, we ask that your child stay home. If your child has a fever, they must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to camp.

Camp Policies

We ask that all campers adhere to FKSPCA Critter Camp policies and rules at all times so that camp can be an enjoyable and educational experience for all.

Our camps promote compassion for both pets and people, and campers are expected to show kindness and compassion to animals, staff members, fellow campers, volunteers, customers and themselves at the FKSPCA. The FKSPCA will help campers understand the appropriate ways to behave at FKSPCA and how to appropriately interact with animals.

FKSPCA Critter Camp Rules

All campers must agree to the following:

As a kid who cares about animals, my community, and myself, I will always:

- Be kind to pets and the people who love them
- Listen to and follow directions
- Stay with my group
- Remain calm and quiet in the presence of animals
- Wait my turn
- Speak calmly
- Show respect for the FKSPCA campus and help keep it clean
- Stay safe, learn, and have fun!

Behavior Management

Our staff uses positive behavior management, however, if a camper cannot show appropriate behavior or breaks camp rules, a time-out and removal from the group may occur. If negative or disruptive behavior continues, our staff will contact a parent/guardian to help remedy the situation. We may ask for a child to be picked up early and, in some cases, the child may be asked not to return if behavior does not improve. FKSPCA will not issue refunds for any days missed.

Interacting with Pets in the Shelter

Campers may have the opportunity to interact with dogs and cats at the FKSPCA, depending on factors that would permit an appropriate pet to be available. While FKSPCA does our best to provide a calm, stress-free environment for homeless pets, there are several factors that we are unable to control. This can cause animals in the shelter to experience levels of stress unlike pets who are in homes.

We encourage you to have this discussion with your child prior to camp:

Cats and dogs at FKSPCA are waiting for their new families. They are in an unfamiliar place. Sometimes when we go to a new place, it can be scary and overwhelming. The staff and volunteers at FKSPCA do a great job at helping them feel more comfortable, and as a camper, that is part of your job too. Remember that the dogs and cats at FKSPCA might be scared, so you should not run up to them, put your face or hands close to their heads, or make a lot of noise. Please listen to your counselors when they tell you how to interact with a dog or cat you are meeting for the first time. They may not act like our pets at home but that is okay, because with your help, they are going to find new homes where they can relax and be comfortable.

Camp Checklist

What to Bring:

- Morning & Afternoon Snacks
- Lunch
- Reusable water bottle
- Sunscreen
- Raincoat/poncho if rain is expected
- Any medication including epi-pens and inhalers that your child may need.
(Please see Medication section above)

What Not to Bring:

- Money or objects of monetary/sentimental value
- See section about phones/cameras below

FKSPCA is not responsible for any items that are lost, stolen, or damaged.

Phones/Cameras:

Phones are permitted at parent/guardian's discretion, but must remain silent and put away during camp.

Cameras (or phones that may be used as cameras) may be carried, but can only be used when permitted by a staff member. Photos taken behind-the-scenes or that feature animals not listed as available for adoption may not be posted on social media, websites, blogs, etc.

If at any time the camera or phone becomes a distraction or is not being used appropriately, campers will be asked to put it away and not use it for the remainder of the day. If the item continues to cause a problem, FKSPCA counselors reserve the right to collect the item and return it at the end of the day.

Florida Keys SPCA Mission Statement

The Florida Keys SPCA, the Center for Animal Welfare and Education, is dedicated to promoting the humane treatment of all animals through compassionate care, adoption, education, population control, and humane law enforcement.

More information about the Florida Keys SPCA is available at www.fkspca.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I register for FKSPCA Critter Camp?

- Registration is available online at www.fkspca.org
- Payment is due at the time of registration
- Registration closes approximately one week prior to the 1st day of camp

What if I need to cancel?

- Cancellations must be made at least two weeks prior to the camp start date and must be received in writing via email to Crystal@fkspca.org or hand delivered to qualify for a 50% refund. A processing fee may occur for refunds.
- The FKSPCA will not issue refunds if registered students miss camp dates.
- The FKSPCA reserves the right to cancel camp due to insufficient enrollment. In that case, refunds will be issued.
- The FKSPCA will not refund for severe weather unless FKSPCA cancels camp.

What if I need to change my child's camp dates?

- A request for a date change must be made at least two weeks prior to the camp start date and must be received in writing via email to crystal@fkspca.org or hand delivered.
- Date change requests can only be made if space is available.

Do you pro-rate registration fees?

- At this time, the FKSPCA is unable to pro-rate or discount camp fees for full week camps. Camps that are not a full five day week are charged at a daily rate.

Can I drop off my child late or pick them up early?

- If you must pick up your child early, or if your child is going to be late, please be sure to communicate this with staff in advance.
- If your child will be late on a field trip day, please make arrangements to drop them off at the field trip location or at the FKSPCA after the camp group returns from the field trip.

What's a typical day at camp?

Camp is different each day. Typical activities may include:

- Indoor and outdoor games
- Crafts and making toys/items for the animals
- Lessons relating to animal behavior or care
- Guest speaker presentations with FKSPCA staff
- Learning about general wellness and common veterinary procedures in our Dogwood Wellness Clinic
- Learning to care for pets of all ages, including neo-natal puppies and kittens

- Field trips to various community organizations such as the Sheriff's Animal Farm, the Key West Wildlife Center, The Key West Aquarium, and more
- Age appropriate videos during a lesson and Movies on Pizza Fridays

Who designs your camp curriculum?

- FKSPCA camp curriculum is written by our Humane Education Coordinator, Crystal Ruffo. We also use a variety of materials available from several nation-wide animal welfare organizations including the ASPCA, Best Friends Animal Society, and Maddie's Fund. Our camp curriculum is designed to empower children to care for pets in their homes and community. Camp is designed to help children have fun while they learn about caring for domestic animals and local wildlife.

Who will work with my child at FKSPCA Critter Camp?

- FKSPCA Critter Camp Director is Crystal Ruffo. She holds a current certification in First Aid and has been Florida DCF background checked to provide child care.
- The Florida Keys SPCA performs background checks on all employees and volunteers.
- Your child may interact with FKSPCA staff or volunteers during guest speaker sessions, behind-the-scenes tours, etc.
- Your child may interact with employees or volunteers of other animal-related community organizations during field trips.

Will my child get to play with dogs, cats, and other FKSPCA animals?

- Animal interactions will be provided daily. Due to the nature of our mission, a dog who is suitable to interact with children may not be available on a given day.
- Not every activity will include animals. The goal of camp is to provide an engaging and exciting educational experience by using a variety of methods.

What is the age range for camp?

- The FKSPCA Critter Camp welcomes children between the ages of 7 years to 12 years at the time of the first day of camp.

What is the maximum capacity of camp and what is the staff to child ratio?

- The FKSPCA camp capacity is 12 children. The FKSPCA strives to operate at a staff to child ratio of 1:6, with a maximum ratio not to exceed 1:12 at any given time.

If my child interacts with animals at the FKSPCA, should I worry about my pets at home?

- FKSPCA takes safety protocols very seriously in order to provide a safe and clean environment for our animals, staff, volunteers, and customers. While it is not likely that your child will encounter sick animals at FKSPCA, we do recommend that children wash hands and change clothing before interacting with pets at home after a day of camp. It's always a good idea to update your pets' vaccines on an annual basis. Please consult with your Veterinarian to ensure your pet is up to date on recommended vaccinations.

Is FKSPCA a no-kill shelter? Will you talk about euthanasia?

- FKSPCA is a private, non-profit open admission shelter. We accept all animals and do not turn any animals away. We have no time limits on our adoptable animals and we do not euthanize for space. Animals are assessed both behaviorally and medically before they are placed in the adoption program. Unless there are medical or behavioral issues that develop deeming an animal un-adoptable, the animal will stay in our adoption program until they find their forever home. The FKSPCA also works closely with other animal welfare agencies and transfers animals that may be more suited to a breed specific rescue.
- FKSPCA camp curriculum aims to teach children how to provide compassionate care to animals in their homes and communities. It does not focus on euthanasia, although for older children, it may be included in discussion. It may also be brought up by another camper. FKSPCA staff is trained to handle this discussion in a thoughtful and sensitive manner.
- If you would like resources for discussing animal welfare with your children, contact Humane Education Coordinator Crystal Ruffo at crystal@fkspca.org