

Humane Society of West Michigan 2026 Summer Camp Information and Policies Handbook



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Cancellation Policies:

Cancellations made **21 or more days before the first day of a camp session** will receive a refund, less a **\$50 administration fee per registration**. The **refund deadline is 11:59 p.m., 21 days before the session begins**.

Cancellations made **after this deadline are non-refundable**.

Registrations can be transferred from one camp to another, if the camp has availability, and the age criteria is met. Registrations can't be transferred between campers.

2026 Camp Season

PREVIEW WEEK: WELCOME TO CAMP

Monday–Thursday | June 1–4 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: See daily breakdown below

Monday – Vet Camp & Junior Vet Camp Preview

Tuesday – “Fun”draising for Animals Preview

Wednesday – Media Mutts Preview

Thursday – Humane Ed CSI Preview

Cost: \$75 per day

Preview Week gives campers a fun introduction to Humane Society summer camps. Each day highlights one of our most popular and immersive camp themes through games, crafts, animal time, and special activities. Please see camp line-up below for descriptions and age requirements.

ARTS & ANIMALS

Week 2 | June 8–11 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 7–12

Creative projects inspired by animals and empathy. Campers explore self-expression through art while learning how animals experience the world.

Stimuli Level:  Low–Medium

Noise Level: Low

Movement Level: Low–Moderate

Group Intensity: Calm, individual and small-group focused

Notes:

Great for campers who enjoy quiet creativity and gentle discussion. Ideal for sensitive, introverted, or easily overwhelmed campers.

 **VET CAMP**

Week 3 | June 15–18 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 11–15

Campers explore animal health, anatomy, preventative care, and enrichment. This camp is best for older or returning campers with strong interest in veterinary care.

Stimuli Level:  Medium–High

Noise Level: Moderate

Movement Level: Moderate

Group Intensity: Fast-paced, high focus

Notes:

Best for motivated campers who enjoy science, structure, and hands-on learning. Not ideal for campers who struggle with long focus periods or frequent transitions.

 **“FUN” DRAISING FOR ANIMALS**

Week 4 | June 22–25 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 7–15

Campers learn how fundraising helps animals through hands-on projects. The week includes creative work and a mini public marketplace on the final day. This camp has lots of controlled chaos (noisy and busy). Campers spend the week making artisan items to sell on the final day.

Stimuli Level:  High

Noise Level: High

Movement Level: High

Group Intensity: Very busy and social

Notes:

This is one of our most energetic camps. Best for creative, outgoing campers who thrive in busy, collaborative environments.

PAW PATROL: HOLIDAY & HEAT SAFETY

Week 5 | June 29–July 2 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 5–12

A safety-focused camp covering summer heat, travel, fireworks, and holiday pet care. Activities are designed to be informative, empowering, and age-appropriate.

Stimuli Level:  Medium

Noise Level: Moderate

Movement Level: Moderate

Group Intensity: Balanced

Notes:

A great fit for a wide range of campers. Structured, active, but not overwhelming.

MEDIA MUTTS

Week 6 | July 6–9 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 7–12

Campers create animal-themed media while learning advocacy and positive storytelling. This is a high-energy camp with mixed media, movement, and creativity. There will be lots of singing and dancing for a publicly viewed music video.

Stimuli Level:  High

Noise Level: High

Movement Level: High

Group Intensity: Very expressive and social

Notes:

Best for campers who love performing, being silly, and working in loud, active groups.

JUNIOR VET CAMP

Week 7 | July 13–16 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 5–10

A gentle introduction to animal care for younger campers. Focuses on kindness, empathy, daily care routines, fear-free handling, and STEM dramatic play.

Stimuli Level:  Medium-High

Noise Level: Moderate-High

Movement Level: Moderate

Group Intensity: Gentle and supportive

Notes:

Perfect for first-time campers or younger children who need structure and nurturing guidance.

 **HUMANE EDUCATION CSI**

Week 8 | July 20–23 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 7–12

A mystery-themed camp where campers solve animal care cases through observation, teamwork, and humane education principles.

Stimuli Level:  Medium-High

Noise Level: Moderate

Movement Level: Moderate-High

Group Intensity: Fast-paced and collaborative

Notes:

Great for problem-solvers and kids who enjoy role-play and active teamwork.

 **ANIMAL PLANET**

Week 9 | July 27–30 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 5–12

Campers explore animals from around the world, their habitats, and adaptations.

Stimuli Level:  Low-Medium

Noise Level: Low

Movement Level: Low-Moderate

Group Intensity: Calm and flexible

Notes:

One of the best options for sensory-sensitive or shy campers.

 **HUMANE HEROES**

Week 10 | August 3–6 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 5–12

Campers learn about the people and animals who help every day — including service dogs, responders, trainers, and animal welfare professionals.

Stimuli Level:  Medium

Noise Level: Moderate

Movement Level: Moderate

Group Intensity: Balanced

Notes:

A strong all-around camp with engaging but not overwhelming activities.

 **HUMANE EDUCATION EXPLORERS**

Week 11 | August 10–13 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 7–12

Focused on empathy, responsibility, and making kind choices for animals at home and in the community. Calm, thoughtful activities with strong discussion elements.

Stimuli Level:  Low

Noise Level: Low

Movement Level: Low

Group Intensity: Reflective and discussion-based

Notes:

Best for campers who enjoy learning through action, teamwork, and real-world scenarios, and who can shift between calm focus and active participation.

CAMP FINALE: BEST OF THE BEST

Week 12 | August 17–20 | 9:00am–4:00pm

Ages: 5–15

A celebration week featuring favorite activities, games, crafts, and animal time from throughout the summer. A joyful wrap-up to camp season.

Aftercare:

Aftercare is offered to any campers who are attending that day of camp. It runs from 4-5pm and costs \$10 per day. We do not hang out with animals during aftercare. We will set out art supplies and a snack each day. Snacks will be items like goldfish crackers, Welch's fruit snacks, etc. We will have options available for campers with dietary restrictions or allergies.

Drop off and pick up policies:

Camp doors open at 8:50 am and camp activities are under way by 9:10. Pick up is at 4pm daily (or 5pm if you have registered for aftercare). When you arrive at the HSWM; follow the driveway to the right near the pond. You will keep following the sidewalk to the right for the camp doors. You must walk your camper to the doors and wait for check in. Campers will only be released to those names you have added to our registration. If any pick-up information needs to be altered (early pick up, add aftercare, new name on list) make sure to tell the camp director when you drop your camper off.

Camp Capacity:

Each camp has a capacity of 40-45 campers and Fun Fridays has a capacity of 35 campers. We will have a waiting list for our more popular camps this year.

Counselors and junior counselors:

All camps are overseen daily by the Humane Education Coordinator joined by three full time counselors and 4-5 junior counselors. Junior Counselors are 13-16 years old and trained through the Teen Club program. JCs assist with crafts, games, and animal time. They go through a certification process where

they receive animal training as well as best practices to create the best experience for your camper.

Every camp has activities, animal time, crafts, games, guest speakers:

Every camp will have a whole morning or afternoon with as many kinds of shelter animals we have. This may include dogs, cats, rabbits and other small animals. We will also have a guest speaker, crafts for all age levels, games inside and outside and activities promoting the theme of the camp. We will have these items on the itinerary daily. If for some reason we are limited with animals in the shelter, we have education ambassador dogs and cats that can hang out with campers! There will be time with animals every day of camp and Fun Fridays.

Health Policy:

If your camper is not feeling well, has a temperature, is showing signs of gastrointestinal distress, coughing or other signs of illness; please keep them home. If they show signs of illness at camp, we will contact the parent or guardian for pick up.

We are not allowed to distribute medications. If your child takes medication during camp hours, it will have to be self-administered. You will need to inform us prior to the start of camp that your camper will be taking medications and at what time. We can offer reminders and support.

Behavior disclaimer:

While campers may choose not to participate in each activity we offer, campers are expected to be engaged with the group while at camp. To make the experience of our programs a positive one for all campers and staff, we have adopted the following policy (from Animal Humane Society) to manage chronic behavior incidents, camp disruptions, and/or safety issues:

- Camp staff will document chronic behavioral or disruptive incidents during the camp day. If staff document multiple incidents involving disruption of the whole group, including ongoing verbal abuse or inappropriate language, the camper leaving the group, or refusal to follow a camp counselor's directions, a parent or guardian will be contacted.

- If camp staff notes one behavior incident in which a camper endangers themselves, other campers, or staff, a parent or guardian will be

contacted. Any incidence of fighting or physical violence, including using an object as a weapon, will result in immediate dismissal.

- We will support your child the best we can to make camp as successful as possible. However, campers who are consistently unable to follow our behavior guidelines after parent/guardian contact has been made, may be asked to leave for the day or dismissed for the remainder of the camp session.

- No refunds will be available to campers who are dismissed for behavioral reasons.

Inclusion:

(verbiage from American Humane Society)

We strive to include as many people as possible in our mission to strengthen the bond between animals and the humans who love them. We understand that our campers have different needs, and we try to help every camper have the best experience possible in our programs. During registration, please include as much information as possible regarding helpful information, strategies, or accommodation requests you may have for your child.

While we have the desire to accommodate every need, it is important for us to be upfront about our limitations as a staff: we do not currently have the capacity to offer 1:1 camper-staff support. Also, while our staff includes many skilled youth workers, we are not mental health professionals, nor are we licensed in special education.

Lunch, snacks, water bottle:

Camper(s) will need to bring lunch. (Due to our limited resources please pack a cold lunch as we do not always have a way to heat things up). We will also have an afternoon break if you choose to send your camper with a snack. Please also send along a water bottle and provide the utensils your child will need for their lunch. If you have registered for aftercare, we will provide a light snack.

Your camper will have access to a filtered water cooler to refill water bottles.

What to wear:

Please have your camper(s) wear closed-toed shoes. They may also want to bring or wear long pants and full-length shirts for animal time. Sometimes kittens and puppies may accidentally scratch when playing with the

campers. We will not go outside if it is raining or in extreme heat. Please do not send your camper with a ball cap as they scare some dogs.

Valuables/Cell phone policy:

Please do not send your camper with valuables (ipads, video games) as we are not responsible for their loss or destruction. Campers will not be allowed to use electronic devices during camp hours. We have counselors who take pictures for the camp page; if your camper wants a picture of, or with, a particular animal. If you send your camper with a cell phone or smart watch, we will ask that they remain in their bags during camp hours. Any accommodations to be made for this must be approved by the camp director.

Privately owned animals:

Please leave your furry family members in the car or at home, for their safety and the safety of our shelter animals.

Animal time policy/education dogs:

We know animal time is the highlight of camp! Animal time will occur each day. Some days animal time may be limited based on the animals we have in the shelter at the time of camp. Animals chosen for animal time are assessed and safe to be used. We also have camp dogs and cats and guest speakers who will also be bringing along animals that the campers can interact with. Throughout the camp there will be plenty of animal interaction.

Photo release:

Photos of your camper may be used on social media, our website or other promotion and communication. If you would like your camper to be excluded from this, please let us know, in writing, prior to the first day of camp. Campers participating in Media Mutts and Fundraising camp will be participating in music videos and short promos to be used on our social media pages and website.

Facebook page:

We have a Facebook page to share camp photos. It is private and only parents/guardians are allowed to join.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/hswmcamp/>

Please list who your camper is when the question prompt appears. If you do not answer the questions and we can't verify that your camper is registered, your request will not be approved.

Donations:

We encourage campers to bring in donations of pet food, supplies, toys or monetary gifts. We will celebrate the donations brought in with a special appreciation prize on Thursday. We run on donations and the campers are always happy to hear how many animals their donations feed, how many vaccinations they provided, and how they have impacted the future of the shelter animals' lives.