LOGAN NESER: Hi! Today we’re talking with Dr. Fuller about shelter SOPs. Dr. Fuller is the Chief Veterinary Officer at the Charleston Animal Society in South Carolina. Thank you so much for joining us today.

LUCY FULLER: Sure! Glad to be here.

LOGAN: Thank you. So our first question is: Can you share some of the challenges and struggles you have faced when creating SOPs for shelter medical operations?

LUCY: Well, aside from the normal, how is it best for staff to do things and what makes the most sense? I think the biggest challenge has been finding time to actually write the SOPs, get them like we want them, and pass them out to the staff and explain them. That is the thing that we’ve struggled with for a long time. I think that’s the thing many people cite as a big stumbling block, just the time to do it.

LOGAN: Yes, and thank you so much for taking time out of your busy day to be here with us. And how do you overcome these challenges, or attempt to overcome them?

LUCY: I think the-- of course, you have to have support from the people that you report to and support from those around you. And so, you have to be able to schedule time for yourself to do them. We always think, or at least I’m guilty of thinking, well gosh, I’m sure I’ll have time in the afternoon of such and such to do that. And then that afternoon, somebody says, “Oh, can you do this for me or that for me?” So scheduling time so that you’re busy on your calendars, that everyone can say “Okay, Dr. Fuller is doing something important. Let’s try not to bother her unless it’s an emergency.” So just scheduling that time physically on your calendar and making it a priority. You know for us, COVID really helped because we were able to do a big overhaul of all of ours, but I’d rather not wait for the next pandemic to update my SOPs.

LOGAN: Yeah, no. Absolutely. You mentioned time management, but do you have any pro tips for shelter vets that are trying to write SOPs for the first time for their staff?

LUCY: Sure. I mean, I think for us, for me, is it’s great how I think that they should do it but I’m not the one necessarily always doing the things that I’m asking my staff to do. So, talking to the staff, asking them how would this work best in your day, how would it, what do you think would work for getting lime dips done on intake for everybody, or where should we put the sink to do the lime dips? And so, getting them involved, because they’re the ones actually doing it. They have an idea of how their day flows, and as much as you think you know about how they do things, you probably don’t know all the little intricacies. I think that’s one of the biggest things that I have realized over the years makes the most sense, is get the staff to help you write them.

LOGAN: Yeah, and just being flexible, I guess, if they don’t work out or—

LUCY: Absolutely, right. Yeah, I mean flexibility of course. Yeah, and things change, you know? I’ve been here for 13 years and we have-- I feel like every year we’re doing something a little bit differently because we see how things work and how they don’t, and what’s important, too. There may be a new disease we have to worry about or new evidence that tells us we need to do things a different way, so you have to change your protocols to reflect that.

LOGAN: Well, thank you so much for joining us!