



MADISON COUNTY, VIRGINIA  
**STANDARD OPERATING POLICY**

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SUBJECT:  
**ANIMAL CONTROL POLICY**

APPROVED:

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 County Administrator

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I. POLICY

It shall be the policy and mission of Animal Control to support responsible pet ownership, humane treatment of animals, compliance with statutes and ordinances for the control and protection of animals.

II. PURPOSE

To define the mission and objectives of Madison County Animal Control.

III. PROCEDURES

A. PERSONNEL

- 1. Animal Control personnel shall render services and assistance to citizens upon request regarding domestic animals. Personnel will be charged with protecting the public and the animals of Madison County.

## B. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The primary responsibilities of Animal Control officers shall be as follows:
  - a. Enforce the laws for the protection and control of domestic animals.
  - b. Promote the safety and welfare of citizens and animals.
  - c. Prosecute offenders of animal code violations.
  - d. Remove stray, nuisance, abused, and injured domestic animals from the County.
  - e. Enforce rabies inoculation of dogs and cats and county licensing of dogs.
  - f. Reunite impounded lost animals with their owners whenever possible.
  - g. Educate the public regarding responsible pet ownership, laws, and ordinances for the care and control of animals, and the problems of pet overpopulation.
  - h. Cooperate with other animal care and control agencies for the welfare and protection of citizens and animals.
  - i. Enforce the quarantine of animals that have bitten or scratched a human, or that have been exposed to a potentially rabid animal.
  - j. Assist the Health Department in the control of rabies and other diseases spread by animals.
  - k. Cooperate with the Sheriff's Office and other outside agencies as necessary and appropriate.
  - l. Strive for and support professionalism in the field of animal control.

## C. CONDUCT

1. Animal Control Officers (ACOs) will always conduct themselves, both on and off duty, in a professional manner.
  - a. No employee shall, by act or omission, bring discredit on Animal Control.
  - b. Each staff member of Animal Control shall demonstrate via their own conduct and care of their own pets, their support of the mission and goals of Animal Control.

## D. ENFORCEMENT

1. Animal Control shall enforce applicable laws under the State and County codes in response to citizen complaints regarding animals. In addition, ACOs shall take preventive actions wherever appropriate and lawful during their routine patrol duties.
  - a. Enforcement must be directed towards those who, by violating animal laws and ordinances, interfere with the rights and personal safety of others and to those violations that foster additional and more serious crimes.
2. ACOs must exercise judgment and discretion in the enforcement of laws and ordinances, especially when limited resources are available or an area of law is ambiguous.
  - a. ACOs must also be aware of alternative methods that may effectively accomplish the same purpose.
  - b. Regardless of the nature of enforcement action taken, ACOs shall remain objective and impersonal in all contacts with offenders.

## E. UPDATE OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Periodically, the Supervisor will update goals and objectives for Animal Control and disseminate this information to all personnel.

## F. TRAINING

1. The ACO shall complete a basic animal control course that has been approved by the State Veterinarian as set forth in state law and shall discharge the duties and responsibilities of the position.

2. Additional training is required for the ACO to be in compliance and maintain their certification as set forth in state law.
3. Additional training may be required or requested by the County Administrator or the Chief ACO.

G. IMPOUNDING ANIMALS AT THE SHELTER

1. All animals impounded at the shelter should be checked in using an MCAS Intake Form with the appropriate information.
  - a. Every intake form should contain all available information as listed with special attention to the correct location of capture.
  - b. Officers should make an effort to locate the owner if possible.
2. Shelter personnel may be requested to assist with unloading if necessary and will administer vaccinations and kennel placement.

H. RETURNING OF IMPOUNDED ANIMAL AT SHELTER

1. ACOs should not release any animal to its owner until the owner has met the Shelter requirements.
2. The owner custodian of the animal must present proof of current rabies vaccination and ownership.
3. If the owner cannot supply current rabies certification or license, a summons will be issued.

I. IMPOUNDMENT OF CATS

1. Cats are not normally picked up by animal control unless they have bitten or scratched or are injured or sick.
2. All other incidents should be assessed according to circumstances.

J. COLLECTION OF INJURED DOMESTIC ANIMALS

1. ACO should examine the animal to determine its injuries and follow all necessary precautions when handling such animals.
2. During transit, the ACO should contact the veterinarian's office and advise them of the animal's condition.

If the animal has owner identification and time permits, ACO should attempt to make contact

K. INJURED WILD ANIMALS

All wildlife calls shall be directed to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries or Wildlife Center of Virginia.

L. TRAPPING WILDLIFE

1. Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries guidelines strongly discourage the trapping of wildlife to relocate and release in the wild once captured. The guidelines recommend the animal be destroyed to prevent the spread of rabies.
2. Citizens with private traps are responsible for the disposal of the animal.

3. ACOs will not lend traps to citizens for capturing nuisance wildlife. Wildlife cases will be referred to U.S.D.A. Wildlife Management.

#### M. TRAPPING OF DOMESTIC ANIMALS

1. Citizens may contact the animal shelter to borrow traps if available.
  - a. The person who borrows the trap is required by law to check it daily.
2. Traps should be set in a secure location and monitored.
  - a. Traps are to be checked at least once within a 24-hour period or in accordance with state guidelines.
  - b. If ACO is not available, arrangements should be made for its closure before the end of duty.
  - c. No traps shall be loaned out to trap wildlife.
3. Any damages should be reported immediately to the Chief Animal Control Officer and documented.

#### N. BARKING DOGS

Madison County, VA does not currently have a noise ordinance pertaining to barking dogs. However, the ACO can conduct a welfare check on the animal(s) if the ACO feels is appropriate in addressing the matter.

#### O. LIVESTOCK IN ROADWAYS

1. Every effort should be made to locate the owner of straying livestock.
  - a. Upon arrival, ACO's should attempt to confine the animal back where it belongs and inform the owner of any damages they witness that need repair such as fence repairs.
2. If the ACO is unsuccessful in locating where the livestock belongs or unable to safely contain the animal on location. The ACO shall seize and remove the animal in accordance with Code of Virginia to a safe location and contain.

#### P. INJURED LIVESTOCK

No ACO can authorize the veterinarian care of any injured or sick livestock whether with a known or unknown owner without the approval of the supervisor.

#### Q. DANGEROUS OR VICIOUS DOGS

1. It is the responsibility of the ACO to investigate all dangerous or vicious dog reports in accordance with the Code of Virginia.
  - a. The responding officer will take action as soon as possible to ensure the safety of all involved.
  - b. The officer will verify that the dog is dangerous or vicious and generate a report with all information and pursue appropriate court action.
2. If the owner is known, the officer will verify rabies vaccination and County license and advise the owner of the situation. The ACO may impound the dog pursuant to state law and/or County Ordinance.
3. If the owner of the dog is unknown, the officer will capture and impound the dog. The officer will attempt to locate the owner at a later time.
4. If the situation is such that a citizen or officer is being attacked, destruction of the dog may be necessary.

## R. ANIMAL BITES

1. In the case of dogs or cats that have bitten humans, law establishes a 10-day quarantine period.
  - a. The animal in question will be kept in quarantine and under observation for a period of ten days to see if the animal becomes sick or dies.
  - b. This does not apply to wild animals which may be destroyed immediately and tested for rabies.
2. The responding officer will take a report on all animal bite cases and assess if the biting animal is a “dangerous” or “vicious” dog pursuant to the Code of Virginia. If the dog is, the ACO will take appropriate action.
3. ACO will follow-up on all animal bite cases by completing a VDH exposure report and delivering a copy the Health Dept.
  - a. The Virginia Dept. of Health is responsible for all testing and the release of the animal in quarantine.
  - b. The VDH will not test wild animals unless they have bitten a person or domestic animal.

## S. EUTHANIZING ANIMALS

1. In cases where animals must be euthanized in the field:
  - a. Safety and humane interest must always be observed.
  - b. Great care must be taken in the discharge of firearms to euthanize any animal.
  - c. During an motor vehicle accident (MVA) involving livestock and owner of the animal cannot be located, and the animal is severely injured. It shall be the duty of the ACO to euthanize the animal to prevent any further suffering.
  - d. Departmental policy will be followed in each case.
2. Euthanizing animals other than in the field will be the responsibility of the animal shelter.

## T. KILLING OF LIVESTOCK / POULTRY BY DOGS OR WILD ANIMALS

1. When a complaint is received of dogs/wild animals attacking livestock, it shall be the duty of ACO to respond immediately.
2. The officer will take the following action:
  - a. Verify that livestock has been killed or attacked by dogs.
  - b. Attempt to locate dogs and capture.
3. A case report will be completed detailing the facts of the preliminary investigation.
  - a. Photographs should be taken of the scene, dogs, livestock and damage.
  - b. Evaluate for further legal proceedings.
4. The Animal Control Officer will be responsible for the follow up investigation of the case.
  - a. If ownership of the dog cannot be determined, the owner shall notify Animal Control regarding compensation for livestock or poultry killed by dogs.
  - b. It is the responsibility of the owner to dispose of the dead animal. If the owner cannot dispose of the carcass, ACO will arrange for disposal at the owner’s expense.

## U. CRUELTY / DEAD ANIMALS

1. An officer will generate the initial case report.

2. It is the responsibility of Animal Control to investigate the allegation.
  - a. Photograph and video or otherwise document the animal and the environment.
  - b. If the allegation is confirmed, the animal may be removed and transported to the shelter. The owner will be responsible for cost of care or disposal of the animal.
3. The ACO may place charges after the investigation is complete and has been reviewed by the supervisor or after consultation with the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office if a supervisor is not immediately available.

#### V. LARCENY OF ANIMALS

1. Animal larceny cases will be investigated by Animal Control with the assistance of the Sheriff's Office.

#### W. ANIMALS INSIDE OF VEHICLES DURING HOT WEATHER

1. During hot weather, animals inside vehicles can rapidly become over heated and die. When such calls are received, an officer should respond immediately.
2. On arrival at the vehicle, the officer should determine if the animal is in distress by looking at physical signs:
  - a. Excessive panting
  - b. Lethargic
  - c. Does not respond to verbal or physical stimuli
3. If not in distress:
  - a. Ask witnesses for a statement to determine how long the animal has been inside unattended.
  - b. Determine if windows are open enough to allow proper ventilation or access.
  - c. Determine if water is available to the animal. This is not required by law but is a good thing to have.
  - d. Obtain a temperature reading inside the vehicle with a infrared thermometer.
  - e. Take photographs if criminal charges are possible and document vehicle information.
  - f. In the animal is removed, a note should be left on the vehicle giving the officer's name and where the animal has been taken.
  - g. Take the animal to the shelter and place an animal warden hold on the animal.
    - 1) This requires the approval of an ACO before the animal can be released to the owner.
    - 2) This allows the ACO to take appropriate action, summons or warning, to prevent the situation from recurring.
4. If the animal is in distress:
  - a. If the animal must be removed, contact the on-duty supervisor for permission.
  - b. If the vehicle is locked, advised the on-duty supervisor and request the Sheriff's Office to respond to unlock the vehicle.
  - c. If the animal will require emergency treatment, contact the veterinarian's office and advise them of the situation.
  - d. Take the animal to the shelter and place an animal warden hold on the animal.
    - 1) This requires the approval of an ACO before the animal can be released to the owner.
    - 2) This allows the ACO to take appropriate action, summons or warning, to prevent the situation from recurring.

X. VEHICLE USE AND MAINTENANCE

1. The Animal Control Officer assigned vehicle will be used for responding to calls for service, transporting animals, etc.
  - a. Personnel authorized to operate and maintain the vehicle and its equipment will be trained when issued the vehicle.
  - b. Equipment required for the vehicle include, but is not limited to:
    - 1) Animal Crates
    - 2) Catch Pole
    - 3) Cat Tongs
    - 4) Flashlight
    - 5) Infrared Thermometer
    - 6) Leashes
    - 7) Fencing Repair Materials
    - 8) First Aid Kit
    - 9) Fire Extinguisher
    - 10) Reflective Vest/Raincoat