

<b>NORTON POLICE DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>GENERAL ORDER</b>
<b>SUBJECT: Animal Control Officer</b>	<b>NUMBER: 2-51</b>
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/09/2025</b>	<b>REVISED DATE: 09/24/2025</b>
<b>AMENDS/SUPERSEDES: GO 2-51, signed 1/19/24</b>	<b>APPROVED: <u>James C. Jan</u> Chief of Police</b>
<b>CALEA STANDARDS:</b>	<b>VLEPSC STANDARDS:</b>

**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this general order is to establish guidelines and procedures for the enforcement of animal-related laws and ordinances, the provision of animal control services within the City of Norton, and the responsibilities of the Animal Control Officer and other department members in handling animal-related incidents.

**II. POLICY**

The City of Norton Animal Control Officer is not a sworn police officer but is empowered under Virginia law to carry out all duties specific to animal control enforcement. The Animal Control Officer is responsible for the enforcement of all animal-related ordinances and laws and will provide a variety of other animal-related services that do not require officer status. The Animal Control Officer will, when possible, educate the public and the department on the importance of animal/wildlife control and safety and will assist other department members with animal-related calls for service. The Animal Control Officer's schedule will be determined by the Assistant Chief of Police or their designee. The Animal Control Officer will be required to assist officers in special assignments, calls for service, and traffic accidents when the department's need for these services requires extra manpower to complete the mission. The Animal Control Officer shall treat all person(s), within their scope of authority, in a civil manner, taking any necessary action to assure good order and protection of their property and rights.

In the absence of the Animal Control Officer, on-duty officers can act in their place when a situation calls for a response by the department.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

A. Animal Control Officer (ACO)

The Animal Control Officer is a state-certified officer with authority to enforce all local and state animal-related laws and ordinances.

B. Animal Bite

Any bite inflicted by a domestic or wild animal that breaks the skin of a human.

C. Domesticated Animal

Any animal traditionally kept as a pet or livestock, including but not limited to dogs, cats, cattle, horses, and similar species.

D. Euthanasia

The humane destruction of an animal in accordance with state law, city ordinances, and department policy.

E. Home Confinement Agreement

A department-approved agreement allowing an animal involved in a bite incident to be confined at the owner's residence in lieu of impoundment at the animal shelter, subject to the conditions set forth by the Animal Control Officer.

F. Impoundment

The lawful seizure, custody, and holding of a domesticated animal at the animal shelter or other designated facility.

G. Stray Animal

Any domesticated animal found running at large without identifiable ownership or control.

H. Wildlife

Any non-domesticated animal native to, or found within, the City of Norton.

**IV. JOB DUTIES**

The Animal Control Officer (ACO) is responsible for carrying out animal control functions within the City of Norton. Duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Pickup, transportation, and impoundment of stray dogs and other animals as necessary.
2. Patrol the City of Norton and determine the most appropriate method to capture and remove animals that are endangering citizens or other animals or causing damage to property.
3. Deal with all domesticated animals, attempt to locate the owner of problem domestic animals, and determine if the animals should be housed at the animal shelter.
4. Enforce local ordinances and state laws that relate to animals, issuing warnings and citations when appropriate to do so.
5. Complete all necessary paperwork when investigating animal bite complaints and contact the Health Department when required to do so.
6. Investigate and conduct follow-ups on all animal complaints, including complaints of animal cruelty.
7. Maintain the necessary paperwork of all animals that are impounded at the animal shelter.
8. Maintain and use animal traps as needed on the properties experiencing animal nuisance problems.
  - a. Traps will be checked at least once daily, and more frequently when practicable, consistent with animal welfare standards and available staffing resources.
9. Maintain all animal-related paperwork in accordance with state laws, city ordinances, and department policies.
10. Maintain all animal control equipment and ensure it is in proper working condition.
11. Remain current on all laws, ordinances, and procedures regarding domestic animals and their welfare.
12. Complete all assigned and scheduled training.

13. Conduct other duties as required or assigned.

## **V. ANIMAL BITES**

The Animal Control Officer will report all animal bites on the approved departmental animal bite form. As with any case report, the narrative should contain complete and accurate information. A copy of all animal bites will be maintained by the Animal Control Officer.

1. The Animal Control Officer should make every effort to identify the owner of the offending animal or, in the case of a stray animal, to capture it. If owner identity can be verified and the animal has a current rabies vaccination, the owner may be allowed to have the animal confined to the required 10-day confinement of the animal. The Animal Control Officer shall explain the approved Home Confinement Agreement to the owner and obtain the owner's signature.
2. If the owner refuses to agree with the Home Confinement Agreement, then the Animal Control Officer will take custody of the animal and transport it to the animal shelter for the required 10-day confinement.
3. Captured strays will be transported and confined to the animal shelter for the required 10-day confinement and the cage the animal is housed in will be marked appropriately.
4. The Animal Control Officer will contact the Wise County Health Department on all reported animal bite cases as soon as possible.

## **VI. IMPOUNDMENT OF DOMESTICATED ANIMALS**

1. The Animal Control Officer will accept animals from citizens to be released by the owner of said animals for the purpose of transporting the animal to the shelter, provided there is available space at the animal shelter. The Animal Control Officer will obtain the owner's signature of said animal prior to taking custody of the animal.
2. All captured domestic animals will be transported to the animal shelter in a timely manner to prevent undue strain on the animals.
3. If an animal is claimed by the owner, the Animal Control Officer will require the owner to present the appropriate tags, vaccination paperwork (provided within 15 days of release), and pay any required fees prior to releasing the animal back into the custody of the owner.
4. The Animal Control Officer will not seize or impound an animal determined to be located on the owner's property except if authorized by the court or unusual circumstances. This provision does not preclude the impoundment of an animal observed running at large when residents of the property are not readily available and the likelihood exists that the animal is aggressive and poses a threat to public safety.

## **VII. INJURED ANIMALS**

When on duty the Animal Control Officer will handle all cases of injured domesticated animals and will attempt to locate the owner of such animals. In cases where the owner of the injured animals cannot be located, the Animal Control Officer will transport the animals to the local shelter and/or veterinarian.

## **VIII. WILDLIFE COMPLAINTS**

The Animal Control Officer will be required to answer all wildlife complaints and notify the Department of Wildlife Resources when appropriate.

1. The Animal Control Officer will record all wildlife complaints.
2. If the animal is sick or injured, the Animal Control Officer will, if appropriate, coordinate with a licensed veterinarian or the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources to determine the most appropriate and humane course of action, which may include euthanasia.
3. The Animal Control Officer shall not loan out the department's traps to citizens who wish to trap wildlife.
4. The Animal Control Officer should, at all times, educate the public on wildlife, including the elimination of food sources to prevent the recurrence of complaints.

## **IX. UNIFORM**

The primary uniform for the Animal Control Officer will be BDU's except for during special events and by the direction of the department's administration, then the uniform will be a department issued class A uniform.