BLUEFIELD VA POLICE DEPARTMENT

BLUEFIELD, VA

Animal Control General Order 80

**1.1 Purpose and Scope**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for members when dealing with animal control   
related issues/calls for service and to set forth procedures regarding animal control services, the   
handling of injured animals and the abatement of animal nuisances.

All members of the police department are responsible for the safety of our community and should   
familiarize themselves with the related town codes regarding animal issues.

**2.1 Animal Control Officer Responsibility**

The animal control officer (ACO) shall be responsible for the enforcement of town ordinances relating to   
animals, and for appropriately resolving animal problems. ACO's responsibility is limited to   
domesticated animals.

Even though the primary responsibility for related calls for service will be with the ACO, all other sworn   
officers will still be responsible to assist the ACO when necessary, and to respond when the ACO is not   
immediately available.

Officers may detain animals by reasonable means when it is safe to do so until an ACO arrives.

Due to the hazards of handling animals without proper equipment, responding officers should generally   
not attempt to capture or pick up any animal without having the proper equipment. The ACO vehicle   
will be maintained at the department unless engaged in a call.

An officer may take the ACO vehicle or necessary equipment from the ACO vehicle to the call to safely   
assist in capturing the animal. Examples of when a sworn member may need to consider acting   
immediately if no ACO is immediately available to respond:

* There is a threat to public safety. The mere presence of an animal control division does NOT   
  alleviate each and every officer's responsibility to protect the public by reasonable and   
  necessary means.
* When the animal has bitten someone, officers should take measures to confine the animal if   
  possible to prevent further injury
* When the animal is a traffic hazard
* When the owner/handler has been arrested and there is no alternative placement for the   
  animal
* When the animal is gravely disabled

In emergency circumstances the on-call ACO may be called to assist with the impoundment of the   
animal with the shift supervisor's approval.

**3.1 Animal Cruelty Complaints**

The ACO and/or other officers shall investigate reports of animal cruelty.

Generally the ACO will handle most of these types of investigations, including any required follow-up   
reports initially taken by officers and referred to them. Although, any officer may take immediate   
action, including enforcement and/or impoundment of any animal when necessary.

**4.1 Stray Animals**

Stray dogs are generally the only domesticated animal that this department will respond to. Officers   
who respond to a report of a stray dog and are able to contain it, shall first attempt to identify the   
owner prior to impoundment. *(i. e.* name tag on collar, information from neighbors, etc.)

If possible to determine ownership and locate the owner, the dog may be returned to the owner. The   
officer has the discretion on whether or not to issue the owner a summons and/or make a referral to   
the animal control division.

Repeat offenses from the same dog/owner shall be referred to animal control for follow-up,

**5.1 Animal Bite Reports**

All animal bite reports will initially be responded to by the officers on duty. All animal bite reports will   
be reported/referred to Animal Control. Upon arrival at the scene, every officer shall attempt to safely   
contain the animal. If the owner is known, and can be contacted, they shall be informed that the animal   
must be properly confined and restrained on their premise until appropriate follow-up by an ACO can be   
completed. If the animal cannot be safely confined on the owner's premises the animal shall be   
impounded and quarantined at the Tazewell County Animal Shelter or other designated location.   
Photographs of the offending animal will be taken when it is safe to do so whether or not the animal is   
left at the premises of the owner.

If the animal is vicious toward the officer, the officer has the right of self-defense and may stop the   
threat by reasonable and necessary force required to stop the threat. If rabies is suspected or it can be   
determined that the animal has not had rabies vaccinations, and lethal force is required, all officers shall   
make every effort not to shoot an animal in the head. The carcass of the deceased animal shall be   
maintained until the arrival of the animal control officer to submit for necropsy. All incidents where a   
firearm was used to destroy an animal shall be forwarded to Animal Control.

Notice of the incident and contact information needs to be left at the scene of the residence if   
applicable. Any shooting of a companion animal should be documented in an incident report.

**6.1 Injured Animals**

When any injured domesticated animal is brought to the attention of any officer, all reasonable   
attempts shall be made to contact the owner or responsible handler. When an owner or handler cannot   
be located and the animal is in need of veterinarian care, the ACO shall be notified to handle the call as   
per their standard operating procedures.

**Domesticated animals are not to be euthanized by firearm.** ACO officers shall be notified to pick up the   
animal and take it to the veterinarian for disposition.

**7.1 Public Nuisance Calls Related to Animals**

Officers shall respond to complaints of nuisance animals including, but not limited to, barking dogs,   
loose and/or vicious dogs. Appropriate enforcement action may be taken by the officer or the officer   
may inform the complainant of a referral to Animal Control. In the event that a nuisance complaint   
cannot be satisfactorily completed by the officer, the call/incident should be forwarded to the ACO for   
follow-up when they return to duty.

**8.1 Wildlife**

All officers are "ex-officio" game wardens. Wildlife complaints are to be handled by on duty officers   
unless an animal bite has occurred. Injured wildlife can be humanely destroyed by firearm unless they   
are "Raptor" type species. In the event an officer encounters an injured Raptor, VADepartment of   
Game and Inland Fisheries are to be notified for collection of the animal to be transferred to a   
rehabilitation center.

**9.1 Animal Control Vehicle**

The animal control vehicle will be maintained and equipped with necessary tools for safely controlling   
and transporting animals. No animal control equipment is to be removed from the Animal Control   
vehicle without authorization. When equipment is used and/or removed it shall be cleaned and   
returned to the vehicle immediately upon completion of the task. If the vehicle is used to transport any   
animal it is to be cleaned with the designated cleaner to prevent spread of disease and returned to   
storage area after being refueled.

**10.1 Enforcement Actions**

Generally, it will be the discretion of the officer, or the ACO as to the proper type of enforcement action taken,   
such as a citation, warning, etc. Animal Control is to be informed of animal control calls and their   
disposition. Referral sheets for Animal Control calls can be forwarded to Animal Control officers for   
follow-up during scheduled duty.

One of the primary purposes of the Animal Control Division is the education of the public concerning the   
ordinances and their importance to the community and animals. Compliance to the ordinances, for the   
welfare of the community and animals rather than strict enforcement to punish offenders is one of the   
goals of the ACO.

The Shift Supervisor shall authorize the call out of off-duty Animal Control Officers.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Police