


Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual		Standard Operating Procedure
Effective Date December 31, 2022		APD.SOP.3043 Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Squad (ACEP)
Applicable To: All Employees		Review Due: 2026
Approval Authority: Chief Darin Schierbaum		
Signature: Sign by DS		Date Signed: 12/30/2022

## Table of Content

1.	PURPOSE	4.8	Community Involvement	
	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>		<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>	
2.	POLICY	4.9	Injured and Deceased Animals	4
	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>	4.10	Aggressive Canines	5
3.	RESPONSIBILITIES	4.11	Wildlife, Exotic Animals, and Endangered Species	5
	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>	4.12	Humanitarian Euthanasia of Animals	5
4.	ACTION	4.13	Animal-to-Human Bites	5
4.2	Court Procedures and Arrests	4.14	Equine Incidents	5
4.3	Fulton County Environmental Court (FCEC)	5.	DEFINITIONS	6
4.4	Fulton County Superior Court	6.	CANCELLATIONS	6
4.5	Dekalb County Courts	7.	REFERENCES	6
4.6	Clayton County Courts	8.	SIGNIFICANT CHANGES	6
4.7	Training	9.	APPENDIX	6
	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>			

## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Squad (ACEP) is to investigate crimes involving animals, promote educational measures, and interact with animal rights advocacy groups within the City of Atlanta for the prevention of animal cruelty.

## 2. POLICY

The Atlanta Police Department will investigate incidents involving the mistreatment of animals, as well as incidents where animals have caused harm to humans within the City of Atlanta.

## 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 The ACEP Squad will be assigned to the Domestic Violence (DV) Unit of the Major Crimes Section (MCS) of the Criminal Investigation Division (CID).
- 3.2 The CID Commander may assign supervisors, investigators, SPOs, and officers to ACEP, with the approval of the Chief of Police.
- 3.3 The MCS Commander will monitor the activities of the ACEP Squad and report the units progress to the CID Commander.
- 3.4 The DV supervisor will submit a written report on the progress of the unit weekly to the DV Commander. If a sergeant has not been assigned to the ACEP Squad, the reporting responsibilities will fall to the most senior SPO, investigator, or officer.



Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual  
APD.SOP.3043  
Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Squad (ACEP)



- 4. ACTION
  - 4.1.1 The investigation and prosecution of animal involved crimes is the primary objective of the ACEP Squad.
  - 4.1.2 The ACEP Squad will investigate crimes involving:
    - 1. Animal cruelty and neglect;
    - 2. Animal endangerment;
    - 3. Animal to human bite incidents; and
    - 4. Incidents involving aggressive animals.
  - 4.1.3 The ACEP Squad will response to active animal related calls for service, investigating until an arrest is made or until all lead have been exhausted.
  - 4.1.4 Any officer not assigned to the ACEP Squad that is dispatched to an animal related call for service will investigate the incident, and if probable cause is present with the suspect on the scene will make an arrest. A copy of the incident report and arrest ticket will be forwarded via email to the ACEP Squad.
  - 4.1.5 In cases where the initial incident report (no probable cause or suspect at scene) was taken by a beat officer, a correspondence will be sent via city email advising the ACEP Squad supervisor of the case. The case number will be included in the e-mail. The DV Unit supervisor will assign the case an ACEP Squad officer or investigator, and they will proceed with the follow-up investigation.
  - 4.1.6 A case file will be opened and retained with every complaint, investigation, and arrest made by the ACEP Squad.
  - 4.1.7 The ACEP Squad will be responsible for contacting the city and county courts so to keep abreast of the status of the prosecution and disposition of misdemeanor and felony animal related crimes.
  - 4.1.8 If an officer suspects or sees that there is animal abuse in a home it is important to check on the welfare of the other occupants of the house including the spouse, any children, and any elderly in the home. Depending on the situation the officer should contact DFACS (Department of Family and Children Services) or the Department of the Aged. The Georgia Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-33.(HAVEN) or 1-800-334-2836 GCADV.org. (See section 5.9 for further information regarding the correlation between animal cruelty and domestic violence.)
- 4.2 Court Procedures and Arrests
  - 4.2.1 An officer investigating an animal-related crime may utilize discretion and issue a copy of charges or make a physical arrest, depending on the nature of the offense.
  - 4.2.2 Fulton County Animal Services will retain animals that are seized as evidence in crimes involving animals that occur in the City of Atlanta, Fulton County.



Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual  
APD.SOP.3043  
Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Squad (ACEP)



- 4.2.3 DeKalb County Animal Services will retain animals that are seized as evidence in crimes involving animals that occur in the City of Atlanta, DeKalb County.
- 4.2.4 Clayton County Animal Services will retain animals that are seized as evidence in crimes involving animals that occur in the City of Atlanta, Clayton County.
- 4.2.5 Municipal Court
- 4.2.6 Citations will be submitted to the City of Atlanta Municipal Court only when:
  - 1. The animal owner has relinquished custody of the animal; or
  - 2. The arrestee is not the owner of the animal that the offense was committed against.
- 4.3 Fulton County Environmental Court (FCEC)
  - 4.3.1 The FCEC is for all non-felony animal related cases that have been charged by the issuance of a copy of charges. No physical arrest cases are tried in this court.
  - 4.3.2 The FCEC is held the first and third Wednesday of every month.
  - 4.3.3 The FCEC judge has the authority to bind-over a case to the State Court of Fulton County.
  - 4.3.4 If the arrestee requests a jury trial, the case will be bound-over to the State Court of Fulton County.
  - 4.3.5 If the case is bound-over to the State Court of Fulton County, the arresting officer must file a copy of the citation with the court clerk.
- 4.4 Fulton County Superior Court
  - 4.4.1 Superior Court is for all felony animal cruelty cases requiring a case intake submission.
- 4.5 Dekalb County Courts
  - 4.5.1 Dekalb County courts do not accept copies of charges in misdemeanor or felony cases.
  - 4.5.2 The officer must swear out a warrant at the Dekalb County Jail via the Electronic Warrant Interface (EWI) System.
  - 4.5.3 Upon approval of the warrant, the defendant can be booked directly into the Dekalb County Jail.
  - 4.5.4 If the defendant is not in custody, the warrant must be flagged. This can be completed at the Dekalb County Jail.
  - 4.5.5 Refer to Section 4.5 of APD.SOP.3030 "Arrest Procedures" for all Dekalb County arrest procedures.
- 4.6 Clayton County Courts



Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual  
APD.SOP.3043  
Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Squad (ACEP)



- 4.6.1 Persons arrested for animal related violations of state law at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (HJAIA) in Clayton County, both felony and misdemeanor charges, will be transported to the Clayton County Detention Center.
- 4.6.2 Refer to Section 4.6 of APD.SOP.3030 "Arrest Procedures" for all Clayton County arrest procedures.
- 4.7 Training
  - 4.7.1 The ACEP Squad will provide ongoing training to community groups and law enforcement officers so they may be informed as to the city, county, and state laws recognizing animal cruelty and its link violence against humans.
  - 4.7.2 The ACEP Squad shall provide ongoing training and educational material to all sworn personnel to educate them about animal cruelty. The training material shall emphasize identifying elements of animal cruelty laws and their prevention.
  - 4.7.3 All recruits will take the POST certified course, "Law Enforcement and Animal Encounters" while in their basic mandate training at the Atlanta Police Academy. The class will be taught by a POST certified instructor who is assigned to the ACEP Squad.
- 4.8 Community Involvement
  - 4.8.1 The ACEP Squad is responsible for promoting education measures, developing partnerships, and working with the community while actively encouraging citizen involvement in identifying animal related crime and public safety issues.
  - 4.8.2 The ACEP Squad shall conduct animal cruelty identification and prevention seminars in the City of Atlanta, particularly in neighborhoods where animal complaints are prevalent. An agenda of these seminars shall be submitted to the DV Unit Commander and MCS Commander for approval prior to the event.
  - 4.8.3 Any cruelty identification and prevention seminars conducted outside of the City of Atlanta must receive prior approval from the CID commander.
  - 4.8.4 The ACEP Squad and the Hispanic Liaison Officer shall provide bilingual animal cruelty prevention information and programs to the community.
  - 4.8.5 The ACEP Squad shall host animal cruelty prevention meetings in the six (6) Zones of the city, to give citizen's an outlet to voice their concerns and receive the latest information regarding animal cruelty and prevention.
- 4.9 Injured and Deceased Animals
  - 4.9.1 Any officer who observes a domesticated animal injured as a result of a crime, will notify their supervisor, and advise communications to start Fulton County Animal Control (City of Atlanta, Fulton County incidents), Dekalb County Animal Control (City of Atlanta, Dekalb County incidents) or Clayton County Animal Control (Airport incidents only).
  - 4.9.2 The officer, when possible, is to keep the injured animal under observation until the appropriate county animal control arrives.



Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual  
APD.SOP.3043  
Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Squad (ACEP)



- 4.9.3 Any officer who observes a deceased animal on a public sidewalk, roadway, or property, will advise communications of the dead animal's location and request the Department of Sanitation for removal. The officer is not to touch the dead animal in any way.
- 4.10 Aggressive Canines
- 4.10.1 Any officer encountering an aggressive canine should avoid eye contact or attempt to "stare down" the canine.
- 4.10.2 If the officer is placed in a situation where the aggressive canine is a threat to the safety of the officer or any citizen, they may use force to defuse the situation. Any force used will be in compliance with all department directives:
1. APD.SOP.3010 "Use of Force;"
  2. APD.SOP.3040 "Weapons;"
  3. APD.SOP.3041 "Investigating Police Discharging Towards Animals;" and
  4. APD.SOP.3042 "Conducted Electronic Weapon."
- 4.11 Wildlife, Exotic Animals, and Endangered Species
- 4.11.1 Any officer who encounters wildlife, exotic animals, or endangered species that are injured, aggressive or pose a danger to the community will advise a supervisor of the situation, raise communications, and request an agent of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- 4.12 Humanitarian Euthanasia of Animals
- 4.12.1 Under no circumstances is an officer to deploy lethal force upon an animal as an act of humanitarian euthanasia. The officer will notify a supervisor, raise communications to request the appropriate agency (Fulton County Animal Control, Dekalb County Animal Control, Clayton County Animal Control, or the Georgia Department of Natural Resources) and make an incident report documenting the agency who assumed responsibility of the incident.
- 4.13 Animal-to-Human Bites
- 4.13.1 Calls involving the injury of a human by an animal will require the responding officer to notify a supervisor, raise communications and request EMS.
- 4.13.2 When possible, the officer will attempt to keep the animal at the scene and make appropriate notifications. Any force used will be in compliance with all department directives:
1. APD.SOP.3010 "Use of Force;"
  2. APD.SOP.3040 "Weapons;"
  3. APD.SOP.3041 "Investigating Police Discharging Towards Animals;" and
  4. APD.SOP.3042 "Conducted Electronic Weapon."
- 4.14 Equine Incidents



Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual  
APD.SOP.3043  
Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Squad (ACEP)



- 4.14.1 Any officer who encounters an incident involving the maltreatment and/or abuse of horses, will notify the ACEP Squad for guidance. The officer will ensure aid is rendered to the horse and the incident is properly investigated.

5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 Animal: Shall not include any fish.

- 5.2 Euthanasia: The act or practice of killing or permitting the death of hopelessly sick or injured animals in a relatively painless way for reasons of mercy.

- 5.3 Exotic Animals: Refers to a species which is not native or indigenous to the owner's locale, and "pet" is a companion animal living with people.

- 5.4 Wildlife: Living things and especially mammals, birds, and fishes that are neither human nor domesticated.

- 5.5 Endangered Species: a species at risk of extinction because of human activity, changes in climate, changes in predator-prey ratios, etc., especially when officially designated as such by a governmental agency such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Go to <https://www.fws.gov/endangered> for list of all endangered species recognized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

6. CANCELLATIONS

APD.SOP.3043 Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Unit (ACEP),  
effective December 4, 2018

7. REFERENCES

APD.SOP.3010 "Use of Force"  
APD.SOP.3040 "Weapons"  
APD.SOP.3041 "Investigating Police Discharges towards Animals"  
Cobb County Police Department, Policy 6.06 "Animal Control"  
OCGA § 16-12-4 "Cruelty to Animals"

8. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

The entire policy went through major revisions.

9. APPENDIX

9.1 Directory

1. Fulton County Animal Control  
860 Marietta Blvd, NW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30318  
Information: (404)613-0358  
Adoptions: (404)613-0353  
Rescue Groups: (404)613-9157



Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual  
APD.SOP.3043  
Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Squad (ACEP)



As of the end of August 2018, the Fulton County E-911 Dispatch directly dispatches them to the animal control officer(s) on duty. Any APD officer can directly call 404-730-7911 or 404-613-4954 and request assistance or they can also use their radios to have our 911 dispatch contact them for us. Because they are all dispatched from the Fulton County E-911 Center there will be recordings of when they were called and verification that a unit was indeed dispatched.

2. Dekalb County Animal Control  
3280 Chamblee-Dunwoody Road  
Chamblee, Georgia 30341  
Field Enforcement: (404)294-2939  
Cruelty Report Hotline: (404)294-2996  
Rescue Groups: (404)294-2963  
Lifeline Animal Project: (404)294-2949
3. Clayton County Animal Control (Airport Incidents Only)  
3199 Anvil block Road  
Ellenwood, Georgia 30294  
(770)347-0210  
1396 Government Circle  
Jonesboro, Georgia 30260  
(770)477-3509  
[Rescue.coordinator@claytoncountyga.gov](mailto:Rescue.coordinator@claytoncountyga.gov)
4. Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
Law Enforcement Division
  - a. Region I (City of Atlanta, Fulton County and Airport, Clayton County Incidents)  
781 Red Top Mountain Road  
Acworth, Georgia 30102  
(770)529-2424
  - b. Region II (City of Atlanta, Dekalb County Incidents Only)  
2150 Dawsonville Highway  
Gainesville, Georgia 30501  
(770)535-5499

The Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Divisions (DNR) can be reached at 706-557-3317 or 706-557-3213 from 8-4:30 Monday through Friday. After those hours you can call the above listed numbers which go to the emergency line which will then be able to contact an on-call person for assistance. The DNR can be contacted for wildlife such as coyotes, bears, deer, and other large animals including any domestics.

5. The Atlanta Humane Society  
981 Howell Mill Road, NW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30318  
(404)875-5331
6. PAWS Atlanta  
5287 Covington Highway  
Decatur, Georgia



Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual  
APD.SOP.3043  
Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Squad (ACEP)



(770)593-1155

7. AWARE  
4158 Klondike Rd  
Lithonia, GA 30038  
Hours: Open every day from 10am-7pm

8. Awarewildlife.org

AWARE Wildlife Center (Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort) assists citizens and officers with injured wildlife such as hawks, owls, possums, squirrels, birds, turtles, and other small wildlife. They can be reached at 678-418-1111 though for a faster response they highly suggest emailing them for assistance at [help@awarewildlife.org](mailto:help@awarewildlife.org). You must contact them before you bring an animal to them.

9. Chattahoochee Nature Center  
9135 Willeo Road  
Roswell GA 30075  
(770)992-2055 ext. 239  
Hours: Mon-Sat 10am-5pm Sun Noon-5pm  
[wildlifeclinic@chattnature.org](mailto:wildlifeclinic@chattnature.org)  
[Chattnaturecenter.org](http://Chattnaturecenter.org)

10. Ahimsa House

Offers assistance for pets of domestic violence survivors. Ahimsa house serves the entire state of Georgia though their officers are located in Tucker, GA. They offer assistance for individuals who are actively seeking safety from domestic violence and can offer up to 60 days of care (ex: vet care and housing) for animals. They have a 24-hour crisis line 404-452-6248 which is the very best way to reach them. They can also be reached Mon, Tues, and Thursday from 9-5 at 404-496-4038. Their website is [ahimsahouse.org](http://ahimsahouse.org).

- a. Emergency shelter for animals of any kind while their owners reach safety from domestic violence.
- b. Veterinary care for pets with injuries and other health conditions due to the abuse, as well as preventive veterinary care and spay/neuter Forensic veterinary examinations to document abuse and assist in prosecuting abusers.
- c. Assistance in transporting pets to accompany their owners to safety (both within GA and across the country).
- d. Pet food, pet supplies, payment of pet deposits in transitional housing, and other assistance victims may need Crates and other pet supplies for domestic violence shelters, including shelters that have their own on-site housing for pets.
- e. Assistance in including pets in safety planning.
- f. Legal advocacy to assist victims in listing their pets on temporary protective orders.





Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual  
APD.SOP.3043  
Animal Cruelty Enforcement and Prevention Squad (ACEP)



9.2.1 Georgia State Laws

1. OCGA § 16-12-4(d) Cruelty to Animals:
2. OCGA § 16-12-4(d) Aggravated Cruelty to Animals:

9.2.2 City of Atlanta Ordinance

1. Sec. 18-123. Cruelty to Animals.
2. Sec. 18-124. Running at Large
3. Sec. 18-124.- Tethering

9.2.3 Environmental Fulton County Animal Codes

1. Sec. 34-204.- Cruelty to animals
2. Sec. 34-205.- Running at Large.
3. Sec.34-205.- Tethering.