

# BLOOMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

### DOG BITE/ATTACK INVESTIGATION

Reviewed by: Asst. Chief Aaron Veerman	Effective Date: July 9, 2025
Authorized by: Chief Jamal A. Simington	Revision Date: March 7, 2025

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this SOP is to establish specific guidelines for investigating a dog bite or attack. The need for a thorough investigation and proper documentation of these incidents has recently become more significant. The increasing popularity of specific breeds of "fighting" dogs, the frequent occurrence and severity of dog bite/attack incidents, the vulnerability of certain groups (i.e., children and senior citizens), and the appeal process accompanying the declaration of a dog as either "vicious" or "dangerous" demand that these cases receive a consistently professional response. Therefore, the following procedure will be used.

#### PROCEDURE

All dog bite/attack reports will be assigned to and investigated by a patrol officer in a timely manner. The assigned officer should ensure that the victim(s) receives proper medical attention and that the dog is not currently a threat to public safety. The McLean County Animal Control Warden should be summoned to seize the dog if running at large.

Dog bite/attack incidents may be emotionally charged events. Victims and family members, especially if the victim is a child or an elderly person, may be afraid, or even outraged. Similarly, the dog's owner may appear defensive, try to minimize the seriousness of the incident, or blame the victim. Considering the range of possible emotional states, the parties should be interviewed separately, when possible.

Any person may file a report (complaint) seeking to have a dog declared dangerous, vicious, or subject to euthanasia (source City Ordinance 8-208 Chap 8, Section 83). If any person chooses to file a report (complaint), the assigned officer **MUST** take a report. It should be noted that an actual bite does not need to occur for a report to be made. If the reporting person believed the dog behaves in a manner that a reasonable person would believe poses a serious and unjustified threat of physical injury or harm to a person or companion animal, a report must be taken.

In the event an officer is dispatched to a dog bite report where nobody is willing to file a report, yet the officer observes a dog bite has taken place, the responding officer will do the following:

- a) If the bite causes great bodily harm, permanent disability, or disfigurement, the officer must write a report, and the officer must inform the victim of their legal responsibility to inform Animal Control of the bite incident.

- b) If the bite does not cause great bodily harm, permanent disability, or disfigurement, no report is needed if there is no complainant. However, the officer must inform the victim of their legal responsibility to inform Animal Control of the bite incident.

If a report is to be filed, the assigned officer will conduct and document interviews with the victim(s) and all witnesses. The assigned officer shall take photos of the dog/dogs involved in the incident as well as any injuries suffered by any animal or person resulting from the incident. From these interviews, the officer will note information about other prior incidents involving aggressive behavior by the same animal. If the animal has been involved in any reported or unreported attack or bite incidents, the officer should identify any such prior victims and witnesses. This information may be useful in determining whether to declare the animal "dangerous" or "vicious" or neither.

An actual bite does not have to occur to find that a dog is vicious. If the dog attacked, but did not bite, be very specific when describing the attack. Charging, snarling or growling, and the baring of teeth would be important points to mention. Such information may also be used in a court proceeding if the dog's owner appeals the "vicious" or "dangerous" dog declaration. Determine exactly where the attack or bite occurred, whether on public or private property, or on the premises where the dog resides. Determine whether the attack or bite was provoked or unprovoked. Photographs should be taken of injuries and of the dog when possible. If the dog has escaped from some type of enclosure such as a fenced yard, or has broken a chain, this should be documented and photographed.

The assigned officer should ensure that the dog's owner is informed of the state statutory requirement to immediately confine the dog for 10 days and to have the animal evaluated by a veterinarian at the beginning and end of the confinement period, if the dog bit a person (Note: If the incident was dog on dog/cat and no person was bit, no confinement is required). If the dog's rabies vaccination is current, it may be confined in the home. If the rabies vaccination is not current, State statutes require the animal be confined with a veterinarian or Animal Control. The dog's owner should be given the telephone number for McLean County Animal Control: **888-5060**. The officer should inquire about the status of the dog's rabies vaccination, make that information available to the victim, and note it in the report.

Any applicable citations, such as **Permitting Dog to Run At Large** or **Failure to Register a Dog**, should be issued. The assigned officer shall be responsible for conducting any follow-up interviews and/or issuing any city ordinance violations that may not have been issued at the time of the incident.

The Assistant Chief of Administration may assign a reviewing officer or supervisor to review each dog bite/attack report for a recommendation of a declaration under the city ordinances.

The reviewing officer/supervisor will read over all information provided in each incident. The reviewing officer/supervisor will assign further follow-up investigation to the initial officer. If no other follow-up is needed, the reviewing officer/supervisor will recommend to the Assistant Chief of Administration, in BPD letter form, if any declaration (no declaration, dangerous, vicious, or subject to euthanasia) is to be made against the dog. The reviewing officer/supervisor will also attach the incident report with the recommendation to the Assistant Chief of Administration. The reviewing officer/supervisor will complete a supplemental report showing they have reviewed the

case (a synopsis of the incident, reason for the designation) and noted a recommendation has been sent to the Assistant Chief of Administration.

If the reviewing officer/supervisor recommends "no declaration" and receives the same from the Assistant Chief of Administration, nothing further is needed, and the case will be closed appropriately.

**Or**

If the reviewing officer/supervisor recommends a "Dangerous Declaration" and receives the same from the Assistant Chief of Administration, the reviewing officer/supervisor will confirm with McLean County Animal Control that the owner of the dog did in fact purchase the "dangerous dog tag". The dog bite database (located on the F drive) will need to be updated by the reviewing officer, confirming the declaration, the dog tag had been purchased, and the city ordinance guidelines for a dangerous dog have been met, shall be completed.

**Or**

If the reviewing officer/supervisor recommends a "Vicious Declaration" and receives the same from the Assistant Chief of Administration, the reviewing officer/supervisor will confirm with McLean County Animal Control that the owner of the dog did in fact purchase the "vicious dog tag" and have complied with the city ordinance guidelines. The dog bite database (located in the F drive) will need to be updated by the reviewing officer confirming the declaration, the dog tag had been purchased, and the city ordinance guidelines for a vicious dog have been met shall be completed.

**Or**

If the reviewing officer/supervisor recommends a "Subject to Euthanasia Declaration" and receives the same from the Assistant Chief of Administration, the reviewing officer/supervisor will follow the city's ordinances and complete a supplemental report of the outcome.

If there is an appeal made by the dog owner that has been declared at any point during this process, it will be the duty of the reviewing officer/supervisor to work with the City Attorney and complete a supplemental report of what the outcome of the case is and follow up with any requirements the dog owner may have to complete.