



POLICY AND PROCEDURE NO. 406

Animal Control Policy & Procedure

Date Issued: March 11, 2024

Date Effective: March 11, 2024

4 Pages

PURPOSE:

It is the purpose of this policy to define the role and provide guidelines for the Worcester Animal Control Officers. This policy will also establish use of force guidelines when dealing with dangerous, diseased, and/or seriously injured animals for the Animal Control Officer (ACO). ACO may possess, carry, and use authorized weapons for the purpose of disposing of sick, injured, or dangerous animals.

DUTIES OF ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS:

Answer and respond to all calls for service from the public and from the Communications Division. Patrol City streets in a marked vehicle and investigate animal complaints and concerns regarding animals, both domestic and wild. Monitor complaints on the AC voice mail system.

Capture loose and stray dogs or other domestic animals and, if known, return them to their owners. If unknown, transport the animal to an appropriate facility. Educate owners of the applicable laws and regulations regarding stray and loose dogs, and issue citations as necessary.

Respond to reports of domestic or wild animals in distress or trapped in unusual places and attempt to rescue. ACO's may then return the animal to the owner (if known); release animal back to the wild; or transport the animal to an appropriate facility for further veterinary care and/or shelter.

Respond to calls regarding sick or injured wild animals in the city. Determine the animal's health and attempt to capture the animal, or, if needed, properly euthanize the animal. If euthanizing the animal is not necessary, transport the animal to a willing accepting facility or rehabilitator. If the wild animal is found to be in an acceptable condition the animal may be released back into the wild.

Inform and educate residents of the methods of preventing wildlife problems at their home or in their yards. Inform residents of the available links on the city website for additional resources in resolving conflicts with wildlife.

Assist Police Officers in investigating calls relevant to cruelty to animals. In cases of negligence, attempt to resolve problems by educating owners. Assist Police Officers in pursuing criminal complaints for animal cruelty when appropriate. ACO will prepare an incident report documenting what actions were taken.

Assist other agencies and Police Officers in rescuing, removing, and/or controlling animals involved in emergency situations or any other special situations. If an ACO takes custody of an animal, he/she will do so in accordance with the law and document actions taken in an incident report.

Participate in “Dog Hearings” conducted by the Dog Hearings Officer of the City of Worcester. Provide testimony as required by any court or during any deposition.

Provide emergency care to injured animals. When warranted, transport injured animals to proper facilities for treatment. If the owner of an injured domestic animal is present, the ACO should try to remain in an advisory capacity, considering any unnecessary suffering (cruelty) to the animal, and aid the owner.

Advise the Police of any applicable law changes regarding animals and procedures in animal control. AC will ensure that the Animal Control information which appears on the City’s website is accurate and up to date.

Advise citizens of animal vaccination clinics and other veterinary services that are available for City residents. When available, participate in programs designed to educate the public on rabies and other health or community issues regarding animals.

ACO may attend training, conferences, workshops, and meetings, related to animal control issues to maintain their continuing education credits and enhance their skills. Maintain certifications in CPR and Basic Life Support and other skills as required. ACO shall also attend annual firearms / Shotgun training and certification.

Records must be kept on all complaints, actions, or events requiring the services of the ACO. These records will consist of Incident Reports, CAD comments in Police Server, and/or items entered in the Animal Control Daily Journal.

Perform all other duties as directed by proper authority.

USE OF FORCE AND THE ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER:

When encountering a dangerous, diseased, or seriously injured animal an ACO may use a firearm, animal snare, or other appropriate equipment to expeditiously euthanize the animal when such an act is reasonably necessary to lessen the threats to the public and end the needless suffering of the animal. Euthanasia of the animal should be conducted with discretion. The ACO may need to move the animal to a safer, more appropriate location to euthanize the animal to ensure the safety of the public and to avoid unnecessary alarm or disturbance to the public. The ACO shall document the discharge of a weapon in the form of an Incident Report and an IDC to his / her Commanding Officer.

The ACO will not fire upon a fleeing animal. An exception to this rule is if the ACO reasonably believes that the animal’s continued freedom poses a clear and substantive threat to public safety, and the act can be accomplished safely. ACOs shall take all reasonable safety precautions before discharging a weapon.

When an ACO reasonably believes that they or another person is about to be attacked by an animal, and the circumstances are such that serious bodily injury or obvious threatening disease is likely, the ACO may use deadly force to stop the threat from the animal. All reasonable safety precautions must be taken prior to the use of any force.

When an ACO encounters a seriously injured wild animal (non-domestic), and reasonably believes that the animal should be euthanized to avoid further suffering, and transport to a veterinary facility for euthanizing is not practical, the ACO may use their firearm or shotgun to euthanize the animal.

If an ACO encounters an injured domestic animal (dog, cat, etc.) the ACO shall make reasonable efforts to locate the animal's owner. Being mindful of the animal's condition (suffering), the animal may be transported to an appropriate veterinary facility for care in accordance with the law. At the facility or scene, the animal may be scanned for a "chip" to assist in determining ownership. If neither of the above is possible or practical, and it appears that the animal is fatally injured the ACO may euthanize the animal if it can be done using all reasonable safety precautions.

Complaints of nuisance wild animals should be referred to private, licensed exterminators. ACO's may respond to advise the complainant and refer them to resources which are available to help in resolving conflicts with wildlife. If immediate action is required, trapping of the animal is the preferred method of removal. The animal may be returned to the wild in accordance with the law or sent for testing if human exposure is suspected.

When an ACO must euthanize an animal, and the animal is suspected of biting or scratching a human, dog, or cat, the ACO should attempt to not shoot the animal in the head. The head and brain may be needed for testing purposes.

FIREARMS PROCEDURES:

An ACO may discharge a weapon under the following circumstances:

- For authorized target practice with weapons authorized by the Worcester Police Department.
- To euthanize a dangerous animal or an animal that has been injured and is suffering.
- For all lawful purposes, including defense of themselves and others, when the ACO believes no substantial risk to the public.

The ACO must be annually trained on all Department issued weapons. The training shall include a live fire qualification segment. A record of this training shall be kept by the Training Division.

ACO's who find it necessary to discharge firearms in any situation shall exercise due care for the safety of persons and property in the area. Children should not be present, and the act should be shielded from public view as best as possible.

Whenever an ACO is required to euthanize a dangerous or badly injured animal through the discharge of a firearm, the ACO will immediately notify the Officer in charge. The ACO shall also submit an Incident Report and an IDC regarding the use of the firearm according to current departmental procedures. The report will detail the name of the ACO, and names of other people involved, the circumstances under which the firearm was used, and the owner of the animal, if known. Also included in the report and IDC will be the identification of the weapon used, number of rounds fired, and the location(s) where the rounds struck.

Assigned shotguns will be securely stored at the Worcester Police Department. Shotguns may be securely stored in the Animal Control vehicle while the vehicle is staffed and being used for active patrol.

LAW ENFORCEMENT POWERS AND DUTIES:

Animal Control Officers may be appointed as Special Police Officers. However, their powers and duties are restricted to on-duty hours and limited to the enforcement of laws related to animal restraint, cruelty, neglect, and licensing. They are not empowered to make arrests, effect seizures, or serve warrants. ACO's do not have the status of sworn police officers but may perform limited duties consistent with their position as an ACO.

Per:

Paul B. Saucier
Chief of Police