



Animal Complaints

.01 Policy

Officers will respond to calls for sick, wounded, dangerous, vicious, or rabid animals as well as animal bites. Communications shall direct routine animal complaints to the Code Enforcement Section. The Prince George's County Animal Management Division is responsible for impounding animals.

Officers will provide reasonable assistance to confine animals pending the arrival of an animal control officer.

.02 Terms

Dangerous or Vicious Animal: Any animal that has attacked, bitten, or injured an individual, or an animal that has shown a propensity to attack human beings without provocation.

Pit Bull Terrier: A Staffordshire Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, American Pit Bull Terrier, a dog having the predominant appearance of one of the above breeds, or a dog registered at any time as a pit bull terrier.

.03 Governing Legislation and Reference

Governing Legislation:

Maryland Criminal Law Article, §3-201.

Prince George's County Code, Subtitle 3, §3-101.

Prince George's County Code, Subtitle 3, §3-116.01.

Prince George's County Code, Subtitle 3, §3-137.

Prince George's County Code, Subtitle 3, §3-185.01.

Forms:

Animal Bite Reports (PGC Form Z-6).

Animal Control Violation Notice (PGC Form MI 9).

Use of Force Report (Form 624).

Void Notice (Form 685).

.04 Procedure

A. Animal Bites

The Prince George's County Health Department monitors animal bites by warm-blooded animals for rabies infection. The Bladensburg Police Department assists the Health Department by completing Animal Bite Reports and forwarding them to the Animal Management Division and the Health Department within 24 hours.

Officers shall complete an Animal Bite Report when a bite, scratch, or exposure to saliva through an open wound or mucous membrane has occurred, even when the victim or their family owns the animal.

Officers shall attempt to find the animal, and ensure that it is quarantined. The owner of the animal shall be served with their copy of the Animal Bite Report.

Officers shall notify the owner of the Conditions of Quarantine and complete this section of the form. If the owner refuses to agree to the conditions and sign the quarantine agreement, the officer shall notify the owner that this will result in the seizure of the animal by the Animal Management Division. The officer shall write, "REFUSED" in the owner's signature line on the form.

The victim shall be provided with their copy of the Animal Bite Report and advised to contact the Health Department.

When the animal owner is known, but the officer believes that the owner will not or cannot comply with the conditions of quarantine, the officer shall immediately contact the Animal Management Division through Communications and stand by for their arrival.

A supervisor shall review and approve the Animal Bite Report, and ensure that it is faxed to the Animal Management Division and the Health Department within 24 hours. The supervisor shall then sign the reverse of the Animal Bite Report. When fax equipment is not in operation, the supervisor shall ensure the Animal Management Division and Health Department are notified by telephone. The

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"Police Department" copy shall be forwarded to the Records Section.

Incomplete Animal Bite Reports must still be faxed to the Animal Management Division and the Health Department within 24 hours. Once completed, the report shall be faxed again.

B. Rabid, Dangerous, and Vicious Animals

Any mammal can contract rabies. Raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, groundhogs and unvaccinated cats and dogs are particularly susceptible. Rabid animals may be aggressive, unusually friendly, paralyzed, or sick. A lack of motor coordination in the rear legs may be a sign of rabies.

The disease may be transmitted to other animals or humans through a scratch or bite that breaks the skin, or other exposure to saliva through open wounds or mucous membranes. An officer or citizen can contract rabies by touching the fur of a rabid animal or by touching an animal that has fought with a rabid animal.

Domestic Animals

Domestic animals may be confined on the owner's premises for the duration of the quarantine period provided by law following exposure to a rabid animal. The Animal Management Division may take the animal into custody.

Officer Responsibility

If an officer becomes aware of a dangerous or vicious animal that is contained and poses no immediate threat, the officer shall complete a Case Report and note Animal Management Division in the "COPY TO" block. A supervisor shall ensure the report is faxed to the Animal Management Division within 24 hours.

Officers responding to calls involving dangerous or vicious animals which pose an immediate threat, and those suspected of being rabid shall attempt to find the animal and contain it without endangering himself or the public. Once contained, officers shall notify the Animal Management Division through Communications, and remain on the scene until an animal control officer arrives. Citizens shall be detoured from the area pending their arrival. If the animal cannot be confined and poses an immediate threat to public safety, the officer shall destroy the animal.

If the animal cannot be located, officers shall complete a Case Report that includes a thorough description of the animal and its behavior, and forward it to the Animal Management Division within 24 hours.

Destroying Animals

The preferred method of destroying animals is by shotgun, preserving the head when rabies is suspected. If a shotgun is not available, officers may use another authorized firearm.

Where an officer discharges a firearm for the purpose of humanely destroying an injured animal, the involved officer will complete a Case Report, and a use of force report including the Discharge of Firearms portion. A use of force review shall not be conducted.

If an officer destroys an animal for any other purpose, a use of force review shall be conducted.

Any discharge of a firearm to destroy an animal under this section requires notification to the Chief of Police. The Chief shall determine the level of response by CID, if any. If CID does not respond, all reports shall be forwarded to the Chief of Police, through the chain of command by the reviewing supervisor.

Pit Bull Terriers

Ownership Prohibited (County Code. Section 3-185.01)

Prince George's County law prohibits the ownership, keeping, and harboring of pit bull terriers in the County. An exception is granted under the law to individuals who possessed a pitbull terrier prior to November 1, 1996, under the following conditions:

- The animal shall be registered by the administrator of the Animal Management Division, and must always wear a tag provided by the administrator;
- The owner must pay a \$50.00 annual fee to the administrator;
- The owner must keep the dog within a building or kennel; and,
- Whenever the dog is removed from the building or kennel, it shall be secured by an unbreakable leash and maintained under the control of an adult.

An individual may temporarily hold a pit bull terrier for the purpose of showing the dog in a place of public exhibition, contest, or show

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sponsored by a dog club or association.

Violations

Violations of the County Code pertaining to pit bulls are criminal offenses. Any individual found in violation may be fined up to \$1,000.00 or sentenced to not more than six (6) months of imprisonment.

Officers shall not issue criminal citations for violations of this act since the penalties exceed those enumerated for such citations. Officers wishing to place charges against an animal owner in these cases must make a full-custody arrest.

D. Animals Used for Assault

Persons who intentionally inflict injury upon others by causing an animal to attack them are subject to arrest under the criminal charge of assault. These cases shall be handled by on-scene officers or by CID investigators.

E. Assisting Animal Control

The Animal Management Division has primary responsibility for enforcing animal control laws. When its employees investigate incidents and have probable cause to believe violations have occurred, they may apply for criminal charges. The Police Department will assist animal control officers only after a warrant has been issued.

Other violations of State or County laws and regulations not amounting to criminal charges are the responsibility of the Animal Management Division. Their investigative staff has authority to conduct investigations and obtain arrest or search warrants under State law and the County Code.

F. Animal Control Violation Notice

Officers may use the Animal Control Violation Notice to cite owners of animals when violations of the County Code are observed. This form contains all animal related offenses, including:

- §3-134 Excessive noise by animal
- §3-135 Animal running at large
- §3-141 Theft of animals
- §3-145 License required for dog, cat, or ferret
- §3-180 Cruelty to animals
- §3-186 Failure to vaccinate for rabies

In addition to any reports written as a result of an animal complaint, officers shall refer citizens with animal complaints to the Animal Management Division.

When an officer receives an Animal Control Violation Notice book, the officer shall complete the receipt record, and forward it to the Records Section. Officers shall not lend, borrow, or share violation booklets.

Upon issuing a violation notice, officers shall inform the violator that complete information and instructions are printed on the reverse side of the violator's copy. Violators shall be referred to the Animal Management Division for other questions.

If an officer makes an error while writing a violation notice, the officer will complete a Void Notice, and forward the form and Void Notice to the Chief of Police.

G. Arrestee in Possession of an Animal

Officers will contact the Animal Management Division to assist with the removal of animals in the possession of an individual arrested or detained when no one else will take responsibility for it. The notification will be documented on the Case Report.

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HISTORY: Adopted July 1, 2013

This General Order supersedes all other orders and memoranda in conflict therewith.

Authority:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles L. Owens". The signature is written in a cursive style with large, looping letters.

Charles L. Owens
Chief of Police