



State of Maine Municipal Animal Control Best Practices

Legal Requirements (excerpts from Animal Welfare Laws) for Municipalities

- Chapter 725 Municipal Duties** 7 § 3941 through 7 § 3950-A list the different responsibilities of the municipalities must perform which include:
 - Posting of the laws for dog licensing by January 1st of every year
 - Appoint of a Certified Animal Control Officer
 - Lists the powers and responsibilities of an animal control officer.
 - Control of any dogs that are at large
 - Providing emergency medical attention to domesticated animals
 - Responding to complaints of any domesticated animal or any animal that is a threat to public health and safety
 - Designate an Animal Shelter for lost or stray animal found in the municipality to go to.
 - Adopt local regulations for animal issues that are not breed specific
 - Failure of the municipality to respond to complaints could result in fines against the town or city leaders up to \$500.00
- Chapter 721 Dog Licenses** 7 § 3921 through 7 § 3924 addresses dog licensing, licensing and permitting of wolf hybrids, fees associated with dog licensing, tags, kennel licensing, online dog licensing, and violations
 - All dogs kept in the State of Maine must be licensed by January 1st of each year
 - Late fees start on February 1st
 - Wolf Hybrids* can only be licensed if they had one prior to June 1st 2011. If not licensed by that time a wildlife permit is required by Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.
 - All dogs over the age of 6 months are required to be licensed
 - Proof of rabies immunization must be provided by the dog owner for it to be licensed
 - Spayed and Neutered dogs are only \$6, un altered dogs are \$11
 - Certified Service dogs, Search and rescue dogs, law enforcement dogs are exempt from the licensing fee**.
 - All towns can request to participate in the online dog licensing project
 - Monthly reports of dog licenses sold must be reported to Animal Welfare

- Owners of dogs that violate dog licensing laws can result in fines up to \$100
- Fines are collected by the towns and do not go to the State

*Wolf Hybrids are considered wild life after June 1st 2011 and MUST have a valid wildlife permit.

** They may not be exempt from any late fees or fines for failure to license the dog.

3. **Chapter 719 Uncontrolled Dogs** 7 § 3911 through 7 § 3915 addresses dogs at large, wolf hybrids abandoned or at large, disposition of the at large dogs, and violations of the uncontrolled dogs section.

- At large. "At large" means off the premises of the owner and not under the control of any person whose personal presence and attention would reasonably control the conduct of the animal
- Except when hunting it is unlawful to let dogs to be at large
- Laws pertaining to Wolf Hybrids found at large or abandoned are much stricter and need to be handled carefully, documentation of the event and notification of IF&W is recommended. The sale and transfer of Wolf Hybrids is prohibited.
- Dogs at large or "stray" shall be returned to the owner if known
- Dogs at large or "stray" shall be brought to the animal shelter designated by the municipality if the owner is unknown or cannot be located in a reasonable amount of time
- Stray dogs will be held for 6 days at the animal shelter before the shelter takes ownership of the animal.
- Owners of the stray dogs are responsible for all fees incurred by the dog
- Dogs that are severely sick, injured, or extremely vicious can be euthanized if the ACO or town clerk have been notified and a veterinarian states in writing that there is no possibility of recovery for a severely injured or sick animal or represents a clear danger to public safety
- Any person that violates this section can receive up to \$250 fine for 1st offence and up to \$500 for 2 or more violations.

4. **Chapter 727 Dangerous Dogs** Addresses how a dangerous dog is defined, what can be done when a report of a dangerous dog is made, and the confinement of a dangerous dog.

- A person may use force to protect themselves, another person or domesticated animal if there is a sudden and unprovoked assault by a dog up to and including lethal force.
- Any person has 30 days to make a written report of an assault or threatened assault by a dog to the Sherriff, local law enforcement, or the local Animal Control Officer.
- The ACO or Sherriff must investigate the complaint and issue a summons for keeping a dangerous dog, a court date must be given
- Notices to comply are issued by responders for the dog owners to properly contain the dog until the hearing.
- If the dog poses an immediate or continuing threat to the public, it can be seized thru an ex parte order and held at the owners expense*
- If the court determines the dog is dangerous, further restrictions will be place on the dog owner to contain the dog and prevent it from causing harm.

- If the dog owners fail to abide by the court order, a warrant can be issued by the court for the dog to be seized and destroyed at the owner's expense.
5. **Chapter 720 Rabies Prevention and Shelter Provisions** 7 § 3916 through 7 § 3919-E address the requirements for all dogs and cats to have a current rabies vaccination, disposition of cats and small animals at large, what to do when an owner is institutionalized or incarcerated, and setting up of temporary emergency animal shelters.
- An animal control officer may seize or humanely trap a cat or small animal that is cause of complaint and remove it to the municipalities designated animal shelter
 - Members of the public can bring found cats small animals and small animals to municipalities designated animal shelter
 - Every reasonable attempt will be made to try to reunite lost cats or small animals to their owners
 - If the cats are severely sick or severely injured they can be humanely euthanized so long as certain conditions are met
 - When an owner is institutionalized, all information about that person must be gathered by the responding officer to be given to the shelter so they may make the arrangements for the animals to be surrendered, transferred, or returned to the owner. *

Animal Control Best Practices

Timely response to calls and complaints from the public concerning lost, stray, injured, or nuisance domestic animals; also concerning suspect rabid wild or domestic animals and vicious dogs. The response to animal-related emergency calls should be rapid to control dangerous animals and minimize pain and suffering of sick and injured animals

Timely follow up to complaints and notice to complies concerning violations of the Animal Welfare laws.

Capture of stray domestic animals, as well as wild animal rabies vectors threatening the safety and health of residents. Proper equipment (i.e., transportation vehicles, rabies poles, protective gloves, uniforms and badges or credentials, and humane capture animal traps) is essential to safely carry out the above duties

Impounded Animals should be taken to designated animal shelter as soon as possible; all information on the animals should be given to animal shelter so they can try to reunite the animal with its owner. ACO's that fail to provide shelter with the correct or timely information may be held liable for any damage done to the animal.

Investigation of reports of animal bite and dangerous dog incidents, seizure and impoundment of dogs meeting criteria under the State dangerous dog law, and notifying Maine CDC of all suspect rabid animals and human bite and other rabies exposures.

Transportation of captured animals to the designated animal shelter for the municipality as soon as possible. Evaluate the animals for illness and injury at the time of containment and take them directly to a veterinary facility for treatment if necessary.

Keeping records to properly document all calls and activities. Time, date, location of the complaint, types of animals involved, type of complaint, and disposition of each animal or complaint.

Communication with your municipal leaders on animal issues affecting the community.

Canvass for unlicensed dogs and take enforcement action when necessary. Work with town clerk to establish list of unlicensed dogs in municipality for education and enforcement of licensing laws.

Public education for schools, the media and other groups regarding topics such as responsible pet ownership, rabies prevention, and the need for spaying and neutering of pets. Participation on local/county rabies task forces and other animal control related committees and groups is recommended

Minimum Equipment for the ACO

The right equipment, in serviceable condition, is essential for an animal control officer to perform his/her duties. Listed below is equipment that is recommended to properly equip the animal control officer:

1. Animal handling gloves - thick bite-proof gloves, elbow length (not welding gloves)
2. Control pole
3. Muzzle
4. Leash
5. Non-injuring live trap
6. Stretcher or blanket
7. Large and small cages for safe transporting live animals
8. Official identification card
9. Printed warnings and calling notices
10. Dog/cat food, water, and containers to hold them
11. Flea/ tick spray (bug repellent)
12. One gallon of bleach - equipment, cages and contaminated areas and surfaces should be washed with detergent and water, and disinfected with a freshly prepared solution of bleach (1/2 cup per gallon of water).
13. Long handle brush (toilet bowl brush)
14. Rubber gloves, elbow length
15. Plastic sheeting or body bag
16. Waterproof container
17. Safety goggles or full face mask, and protective covering for clothing

Additional equipment is needed for controlling, capturing and transporting suspected rabid animals. Contaminated areas where the suspected rabid animal's saliva, brain and spinal cord tissues (and possibly blood if the saliva, brain or spinal cord tissues have been mixed together due to shooting or other means) must be secured from humans and animals.

Animal Shelters best practices

Designated Animal Shelters must be licensed with the Animal Welfare Program and meet the standards of all rules and regulations of the State of Maine

Sanitary conditions must be maintained by the shelter at all times.

Stray animals. Designates shelters must make every reasonable attempt to reunite lost pets with their owners

Notification of Maine CDC of all suspect rabid animals and human bite and other rabies exposures.

Evaluation of unclaimed impounded or surrendered animals as to their health status and suitability for adoption.

Adoption of unclaimed impounded and surrendered animals.

Animal disease control and health care programs shall be established and supervised by a licensed veterinarian. All sick animals shall be separated from healthy animals. The veterinarian shall provide appropriate animal health care and assist facility management in preventing and responding to disease outbreak

Euthanasia of animals that are deemed unadoptable due to health or behavioral reasons.

Disposal of the remains of euthanized animals and other animal wastes.

Keeping records of the intake and disposition of all impounded and surrendered animals.

Provide public education, for schools, the media, and other groups, regarding topics such as responsible pet ownership, rabies prevention, and the need for spaying and neutering of pets.

Note: Animal Shelters and impoundment facilities should encourage adoption of animals by working collaboratively with adoption groups and other shelters to place adoptable animals into long-term homes as fast as possible in order to reduce the euthanasia rate at the facility. Animal shelters and impoundment facilities may have to periodically euthanize unclaimed and unadoptable animals to relieve pain and suffering, prevent over-crowding, and ensure that there is adequate capacity at the facility for incoming animals. Facilities that do not or only rarely perform euthanasia often have problems with overcrowding, which then results in increased animal stress, unsanitary conditions and disease transmission. Animals held long-term may become less socialized and ultimately become unsuitable for adoption.

Therefore, euthanasia policies should be taken into consideration when municipal officials review contracts with impoundment facilities.