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## **Personal Safety Equipment Recommendations**

Animal Control is a public safety agency. These agencies receive tax dollars to provide the people in our communities with a safe and secure environment where animals are concerned. First and foremost is keeping citizens safe from dangerous animal situations. Everything else is secondary to ensuring the safety of citizens and the safety of the staff in providing this protection.

By the very nature of the job, Animal Control Officers are presented with safety considerations from the dangers associated with human and animal interaction. Each piece of protective equipment helps an officer serve the public and maintain safety. ACTS recognizes that there is no such thing as a "one-size-fits-all-tool". The better trained and properly equipped an Animal Control Officer can be will result in enhanced officer safety, improved public service, injury prevention and reduced liability.

## **Use of Capture and Restraint Equipment in Animal Control Work**

Since Animal Control Officers typically have as much public contact as their law enforcement counterparts, it is imperative that personnel have access to safe and modern equipment. This equipment includes vehicles used for transporting, as well as, personal safety equipment and animal safety equipment. Capture and restraint equipment should be based upon the species of animals handled by the agency, which is usually determined by legal requirements and agency policies. Designated staff members should train entry-level employees on the use of equipment, and this training should be documented. The officer's primary consideration in any capture situation should be the officer's safety, the public's safety and the animal's safety.

To assist with maintaining knowledge, departments should be involved with in-service training for their officers and maintain any and all required certifications. In addition, agencies should continually solicit input from field personnel (not just supervisors) on what types of equipment upgrades they require. Employees should be held accountable for materials utilized during their shift of duty. All equipment should be inspected regularly for damage/deterioration. In addition, the Animal Control Field Supervisor should verify that all field officers have been issued the same type of equipment.

## **Animal Control Training Services Personal Safety Equipment Recommendations**

### **Use of Portable Radios in Animal Control Work**

Contrary to popular belief, Animal Control's communications system is an integral part of the department's operations, not an auxiliary function. The effectiveness of the communications system is a critical factor in the delivery of humane animal services and the protection of all field officers. All components of a communications system, including the telephone system, command and control operations, radio communications (both mobile and portable), and personnel, must work properly if the system as a whole is to function efficiently.

Since most Animal Control Officers do not carry sidearms and are not trained in self-defense techniques, the portable radio is the only "safety net" the officer can rely on to call for help when confronted by a hostile citizen or a vicious animal. Injuries and assaults involving Animal Control Officers continues to increase, prompting many employees to file lawsuits against employers for failure to properly train or equip.

All Animal Control Officers should be provided with portable radios in addition to fix-mounted vehicle radios. Officers should also be required to carry issued radios at all times while on duty. Field personnel should communicate their location with the dispatcher during any call or follow-up, day or night, regardless of the nature or the type of call. Communication personnel should be offered formal training in the use of communication software and equipment, telephone etiquette and public relations. Officers should also receive training in proper radio protocols. Written policies should be established regarding the use of communication equipment and dispatching procedures.

### **Use of Emergency Vehicle Lighting in Animal Control Work**

Emergency vehicle lighting is common in Animal Control work, providing a warning of a hazard when the vehicle is stationary. These lights may be dedicated emergency lights, such as a beacon or a light bar, or may be modified stock lighting, such as a wig-wag or arrow-stick, and are additional to any standard lighting on the vehicle such as hazard lights.

In Animal Control work, Field Service Delivery Vehicles (FSDV's) should be equipped with an over-cab beacon or light bar. Vehicles which are equipped with an animal containment unit (such as produced by the Swab Wagon Company), should be equipped with an over-cab beacon or light bar, supplemented with a rear-mounted light bar, beacon, wig-wag or arrow stick. Since some Animal Control related deaths involve personnel being struck by vehicles, Animal Control Training Services endorses the use of red or blue lights, where available for use by law (officers should not use these lights to run "hot" or abuse traffic laws – they are intended to be used in a non-emergency state as added protection and safety when working in high traffic areas). All FSDV's should also offer a back-up alarm.

## **Animal Control Training Services Personal Safety Equipment Recommendations**

### **Use of Ballistic Body Armor in Animal Control Work**

Evidence exists that confirms that officers wearing body armor have an increased chance of survival. Since there is an increasing threat of violence nationally to Animal Control personnel, Animal Control Officers should be provided ballistic body armor to wear while in the field as an added safety option. Animal Control Officers should also receive proper training and instruction on the care, maintenance and use of ballistic body armor. A mandatory vest wear policy should be established in order to protect officers from needless injuries or death. Since officer safety is directly related to proper fit and coverage, ballistic body armor must be custom fitted to the wearer. Ballistic body armor should be replaced at the end of its warranty period or at the first sign of damage or wear.

### **Use of Pepper Spray (Oleoresin Capsicum) in Animal Control Work**

Pepper Spray is one of the most widely used, non-lethal self-defense options available to protect Animal Control Officers around the world. When used properly, Pepper Spray, also referred to as O.C. spray (Oleoresin Capsicum) is extremely effective on both humans and animals to prevent being assaulted or attacked. Pepper Spray may be used as non-lethal deterrents to deal with aggressive dogs, wildlife, or hostile people in accordance with specific training and agency policies. Any situational response with Pepper Spray should be performed in accordance with agency training, policies and procedures. Under no circumstances should an Animal Control Officer should be permitted to carry or use Pepper Spray without certified training. In addition, agencies should offer a written policy which includes a deployment protocol (what qualifies an animal for Pepper Spray deployment), post-deployment veterinary care and a list of animal species that are disqualified from Pepper Spray deployment (Pepper Spray should never be used on cats).

### **Use of the Bitestick/Baton in Animal Control Work**

For many departments the Bitestick/Baton is the highest use of force option available for an Animal Control Officer to protect themselves and the public against an attack from vicious and dangerous dogs. Any situational response with the Bitestick/Baton should be performed in accordance with agency training, policies and procedures. Under no circumstances should an Animal Control Officer should be permitted to carry or use a Bitestick/Baton without certified training, to include safety considerations from both the human and animal perspective. In addition, agencies should offer a written policy which includes a deployment protocol (what qualifies an animal for Bitestick/Baton deployment), post-deployment veterinary care and a list of animal species that are disqualified from Bitestick/Baton deployment (such as domestic cats, small-sized dogs, etc.).

## **Animal Control Training Services Personal Safety Equipment Recommendations**

### **Use of the Taser (CEW's) in Animal Control Work**

The Taser™ offers an alternative to the use of lethal force in response to a direct attack by an aggressive animal. The device has been proven to be highly effective in deterring and stopping an attacker. The Taser™ is becoming more useful and common within the Animal Control profession, offering a less-lethal use of force option, not only to prevent an animal attack, but also for the safe capture and restraint of vicious and dangerous dogs. The Taser™ device may be deployed against an animal as part of a plan to deal with a potentially dangerous animal, such as a dog, if the animal reasonably appears to pose an imminent threat to human safety and alternative methods are not reasonably available or would likely be ineffective. Any situational response with the Taser™ should be performed in accordance with agency training, policies and procedures. Under no circumstances should an Animal Control Officer should be permitted to carry or use a Taser™ without certified training. In addition, agencies should offer a written policy which includes a deployment protocol (what qualifies an animal for Taser™ deployment), post-Taser™ veterinary care and a list of animal species that are disqualified from Taser™ deployment (such as domestic cats, small-sized dogs, etc.).