

February 2017

The ACO Voice

A Monthly Magazine from Animal Control Training Services
The Only National Monthly Magazine Dedicated to Animal Control

That's How We've Always Done It



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What Are You Handing Out?

By Lauren Malmberg

Most animal control agencies hand out a good deal of informational pamphlets, handouts, brochures, and more in their daily work. We also use preprinted citations, bite reports, and notices. These items can either add or detract from your professional image and can mean the difference between a person understanding what is expected and not getting it at all. Everything we use in the field should enhance a citizen's comprehension and should forward our image that is expert and proficient.

Take a look at your paperwork. Anything you hand out to the public should be regularly reviewed with an eye to its effectiveness. Although in our technological age, we are going "paperless," it's simply not feasible to tell people to go to a website for information when they're in a highly emotional state. You need to have something to give them that they can refer to when they're less agitated.

Any paperwork used in animal control must be free of error. Typographical or grammatical errors raise questions about your expertise and can even threaten the successful prosecution of a citation. (I'm only too aware of this when I printed thousands of citations with trial spelled as trail. We got lots of good-natured and not-so-good-natured comments from the public on that one.) In any case, whatever you give to the public must be error-free. It can be tough to proofread your own writing, but that is no excuse. Every document must be proofread multiple times, hopefully by more than one person. Some tricks to effective proofreading include: reading it out loud, reading it backward, and letting it sit a day or two before proofreading. What a nightmare to print thousands of a document with the wrong fine amount or misspelled words!

Continued on Page 4

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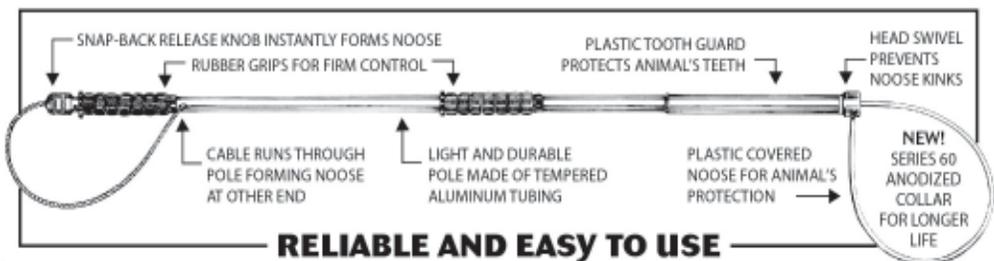
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Secondly, our paperwork needs to effectively communicate its message. Obviously, with citations and other official records, particular protocols must be maintained and certain language used. However, setting those official records up so that they can be easily read and understood is still possible. These official records can be written to draw the reader through the necessary elements in a logical fashion. Consider how confusing a speeding ticket can be; how can you make your citation easier to understand?

Our informational handouts must be understood by all types of readers. Remember, you are communicating with people with little or no schooling as well as those with significant education. People of all levels of learning should be able to read any handout and understand it. While our ordinances are often written in “legalese,” in our materials for the public we should include the ordinance language and also a synopsis of what that language means. Notices of compliance must be coherent and clear as well. Citizens should be able to read and understand completely what is required for them to do or not do. To make your directives and information obvious, follow these tips:

- Write in a conversational tone. Use the first person (you) voice and write as if you were talking to someone.
- Keep the technical language and big words to a minimum. Write simply and plainly – this goes a long way to avoiding any confusion.
- Because we work with the law, you sometimes must quote the ordinance directly. Since ordinances can be written in legal language, you can sum up the section in more simple language to ensure the reader gets it.
- Use bullet points when you can rather than long, lengthy paragraphs. Most people can more easily understand short, direct statements laid out in this fashion.
- Ask someone outside your organization to review your documents. We sometimes don’t see confusing elements because we’re too close to the situation. We know what we mean – even if the reader doesn’t.
- Be sure to review and update your handouts regularly for any confusing or puzzling sections.
- If you have areas that will be filled out, ensure the space to write is large enough to accommodate all the information necessary.
- Consider providing handouts in Spanish as well as English. Many times, this makes communication with a non-English speaking citizen much easier. Have your documents written and proofread by a multilingual individual for coherence.

- Ensure each document has your logo, official department name, address, phone, and e-mail. It’s not good form to hand out materials without some sort of official designation.

Whether you disseminate bite confinement protocols, notices to appear, animal care instructions, or other pertinent information, each form, brochure, or letter should be written as clearly and concisely as possible. Your documentation supports your good work and helps you to be as effective as possible.

Tracking Dangerous and Vicious Dogs - The Scent Goes Cold!

By Jeffrey Clemens, ACTS

Most animal control departments have county ordinances and city codes that address the behavior of dangerous and vicious dogs. These ordinances define what constitutes a dangerous or vicious dog as well as outlining the declaration process and ownership responsibilities. The one area that is absent from these laws is that if a dog is designated in one county or city jurisdiction, the designation only applies to the area where the incident occurred. In other words, a dog can be declared in jurisdiction A and then be transferred into jurisdiction B, whereupon the designation and ownership requirements do not apply. Although agencies require that if the dog dies, is sold, ownership is transferred or the dog is relocated, the designating agency be notified, this however, does little if any to protect public safety. Hopefully in the future, laws can be enacted so that no matter where the designation originated, the ownership requirements would apply to any and all jurisdictions.



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That's How We've Always Done It

By Jeffrey Clemens, ACTS

I'm sure that most everyone has heard the saying, "that's how we've always done it." There may be great value and truth within in this statement, but there is also room for improvement. What I am referring to is the way in which animal control departments respond to certain types of animal-related calls.

Take the leash law for example: Most city and county jurisdictions have implemented a leash law that prohibits a dog from running at large on private property, any street, highway, roadway, or public place. When a person reports a dog at large, it falls into one of two camps. The violation is either in progress at the time of the call or it is being reported after-the-fact. This presents several challenges to the responding ACO. If the ACO is responding after-the-fact, enforcement becomes difficult. The violation is not occurring, nor did it occur in the officers presence. The ACO is limited in their ability and effectiveness to properly enforce the law. The most common response is that the ACO can contact the animal owner and give them a verbal or written warning. But is this really effective? Is it the best use of the ACO's time when often they have more serious types of calls to respond to?

If we were to compare the enforcement work of animal control to that of traditional law enforcement, we would see that very few, if any, would be responding to infractions that did not occur in the presence of the officer. Can you imagine being contacted by a police officer at your front door and advised that your neighbor reported that you didn't come to a complete stop at the stop sign, or that you drove faster than the posted speed limit on your way to work the day before? Unless the reporting party is willing to sign the citation, little if anything can be done. Whether it is a stop sign violation or a leash law violation, both fall under a "common knowledge" concept. Providing a verbal warning does little in the way of truly addressing the issue.

So what could be offered as an alternative option that is more effective? Answer: When a leash law call comes into the department, the dispatcher can ask if the dog at large is in progress? If so, an officer can respond in hopes of witnessing the violation and addressing it accordingly either by impounding the animal or identifying the owner and implementing the enforcement of the leash law. If the violation is not in progress and the owner's address is known by the reporting party, a formal letter

can be sent to the residence advising of the allegation. If the nuisance is an ongoing issue, the call can be effectively addressed by means of serving an abatement order or having the reporting party sign the citation as being the one who observed the violation. Most individuals are reluctant to do the latter. The goal and objective of this proactive versus reactive approach is to be more effective in enforcement, prioritize the ACO's workload and promote public and officer safety.



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The Right to Rescue Act

By Jeffrey Clemens, ACTS

California recently amended Penal Code Section 597.7 with the "Right to Rescue Act." The law now provides legal immunity for a person who damages a car in a good faith effort to save an animal from dangerous conditions while trapped in a hot car.

597.7 (a) A person shall not leave or confine an animal in any unattended motor vehicle under conditions that endanger the health or well-being of an animal due to heat, cold, lack of adequate ventilation, or lack of food or water, or other circumstances that could reasonably be expected to cause suffering, disability, or death to the animal.

(b) (1) This section does not prevent a person from taking reasonable steps that are necessary to remove an animal from a motor vehicle if the person holds a reasonable belief that the animal's safety is in immediate danger from heat, cold, lack of adequate ventilation, lack of food or water, or other circumstances that could reasonably be expected to cause suffering, disability, or death to the animal.

(2) A person who removes an animal from a vehicle in accordance with paragraph (1) is not criminally liable for actions taken reasonably and in good faith if the person does all of the following:

(a) Determines the vehicle is locked or there is otherwise no reasonable manner for the animal to be removed from the vehicle.

(b) Has a good faith belief that forcible entry into the vehicle is necessary because the animal is in immi-

nent danger of suffering harm if it is not immediately removed from the vehicle, and, based upon the circumstances known to the person at the time, the belief is a reasonable one.

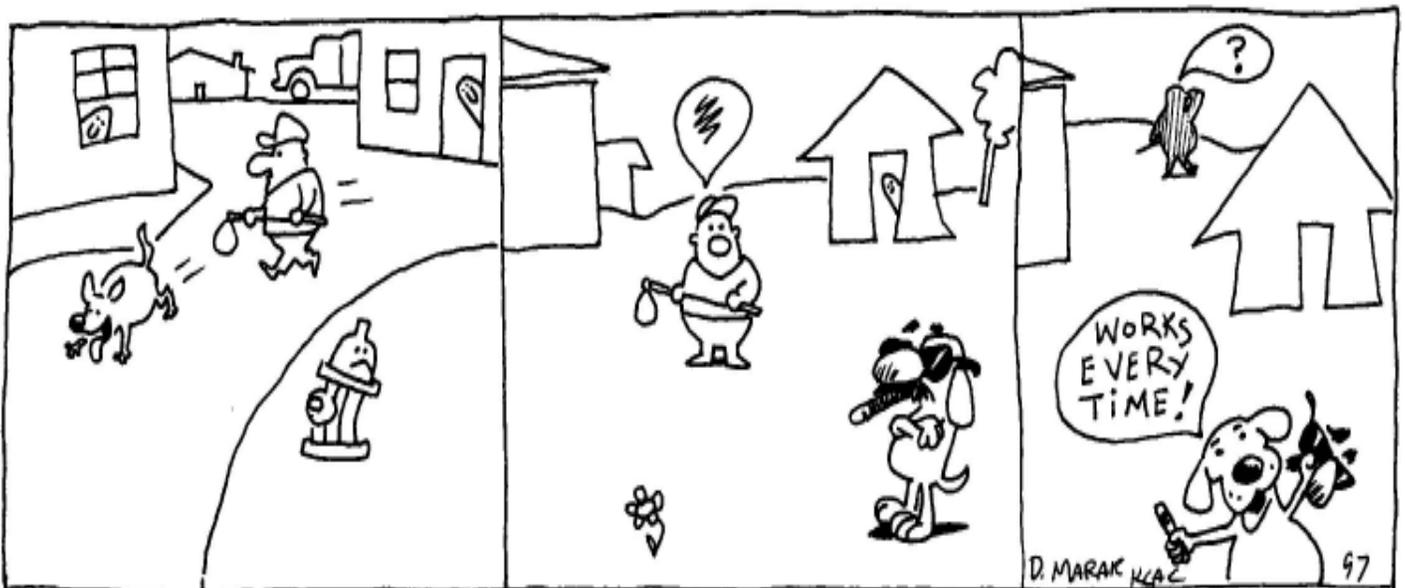
(c) Has contacted a local law enforcement agency, the fire department, animal control, or the "911" emergency service prior to forcibly entering the vehicle.

(d) Remains with the animal in a safe location, out of the elements but reasonably close to the vehicle, until a peace officer, humane officer, animal control officer, or another emergency responder arrives.

(e) Used no more force to enter the vehicle and remove the animal from the vehicle than was necessary under the circumstances.

(f) Immediately turns the animal over to a representative from law enforcement, animal control, or another emergency responder who responds to the scene.

(g) Unless the animal suffers great bodily injury, a first conviction for violation of this section is punishable by a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars (\$100) per animal. If the animal suffers great bodily injury, a violation of this section is punishable by a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars (\$500), imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding six months, or by both a fine and imprisonment. Any subsequent violation of this section, regardless of injury to the animal, is also punishable by a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars (\$500), imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding six months, or by both a fine and imprisonment.



ACTS Training Schedule

For a registration form, visit www.aco-acts.com or call 913-515-0080

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification

Hosted by the Palm Springs Police Department

February 13-17, 2017 - Palm Springs, California

Schedule of Training: State Laws, County Ordinances and City Codes; Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Officer Safety and Self Defense; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Evidence Law and Collection; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification

Hosted by Hall County Animal Services

March 20-24, 2017 - Gainesville, Georgia

Schedule of Training: State Laws, County Ordinances and City Codes; Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Officer Safety and Self-Defense; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Evidence Law and Collection; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment

Animal Control Protective Equipment Training

Hosted by Oxford Division of Police/Animal Control

March 22-23, 2017 - Oxford, Ohio

Schedule of Training: Baton/Bitestick Certification; Chemical Immobilization Certification

Training Program for Animal Control Professionals

Hosted by Rio Rancho Animal Control

March 27-31, 2017 - Rio Rancho, New Mexico

Schedule of Training: Officer Safety and Self-Defense; Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Baton/Bitestick Certification; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Interview and Investigation Techniques; Investigative Techniques for Cruelty and Neglect Complaints

Chemical Immobilization Certification

Hosted by Alameda County Sheriff's Office Animal Services

March 29 and March 30, 2017 - Dublin, California

Schedule of Training: Chemical Immobilization Certification (repeated on Day 2)

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification

Hosted by the Colorado Association of Animal Control Officers

April 17-21, 2017 - Golden, Colorado

Schedule of Training: State Laws, County Ordinances and City Codes; Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Officer Safety and Self Defense; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Evidence Law and Collection; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment

ACTS Training Schedule

For a registration form, visit www.aco-acts.com or call 913-515-0080

Animal Control Officer Training

Hosted by the Illinois Animal Control Association

April 27-28, 2017 - Aurora, Illinois

Schedule of Training: Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment; Officer Safety and Self-Defense

Michigan Association of Animal Control Officers

Spring Training Conference

May 1-2, 2017 - Thompsonville, Michigan

Schedule of Training (Presented by ACTS): Officer Safety and Self-Defense; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing

Training Program for Animal Control Professionals

Hosted by the Wisconsin Animal Control Association, Inc.

May 4-5, 2017 - Green Bay, Wisconsin

Schedule of Training: Illegal Animal Fighting; Understanding the "Link" in Animal Abuse

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification

Hosted by the Deming - Luna County Humane Society

May 8-12, 2017 - Deming, New Mexico

Schedule of Training: State Laws, County Ordinances and City Codes; Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Officer Safety and Self-Defense; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Evidence Law and Collection; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment

Training Program for Animal Control Professionals

Hosted by Livingston County Animal Control

May 10-11, 2017 - Pontiac, Illinois

Schedule of Training: Chemical Immobilization Certification; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment

Animal Control Protective Equipment Training

Hosted by Howard County Animal Control

May 22-23 and May 24-25, 2017 - Columbia, Maryland

Schedule of Training (May 22-23): Officer Safety and Self-Defense; Baton/Bitestick Certification

Schedule of Training (May 24-25): Officer Safety and Self-Defense; Baton/Bitestick Certification

ACTS Training Schedule

For a registration form, visit www.aco-acts.com or call 913-515-0080

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification

Hosted by Oxford Division of Police/Animal Control

June 5-9, 2017 - Oxford, Ohio

Schedule of Training: State Laws, County Ordinances and City Codes; Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Officer Safety and Self Defense; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Evidence Law and Collection; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment

Training Program for Animal Control Professionals

Hosted by White County Public Safety Department

July 17-20, 2017 - Helen, Georgia

Schedule of Training: Understanding the "Link" in Animal Abuse; Investigative Techniques for Cruelty and Neglect Complaints; Interview and Investigation Techniques; Pepper Spray Certification; Baton/Bitestick Certification

Basic Animal Control Officer Certification

Hosted by Kershaw County Department of Safety/Emergency Services

October 2-6, 2017 - Camden, South Carolina

Schedule of Training: State Laws, County Ordinances and City Codes; Tactical/Interpersonal Communication; Officer Safety and Self-Defense; Basic Animal Control Officer Investigations; Evidence Law and Collection; Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing; Safe Handling of Aggressive and Dangerous Dogs; Safe Animal Handling/Capture and Restraint Equipment

Animal Control Officer Training

Hosted by the Illinois Animal Control Association

November 2-3, 2017 - Bloomington, Illinois

Schedule of Training: Interview/Investigation Techniques; Evidence Law and Collection; Challenging Encounters in Animal Control

Hosting ACTS Training

Want to host an ACTS training program? ACTS would be honored to offer training for your agency and area agencies. We can tailor the training to your local needs. If you haven't already done so, review our training catalog for a list of training topics. Visit www.aco-acts.com and click on the "training" tab. You can "build" a program based upon what you feel your group would most benefit from. Pick and choose the topics and the number of days for training. We are flexible in our offerings. As the hosting agency, your agency would receive 2 complimentary registrations for every 10 paid. ACTS can also promote the training to area agencies and provide registration forms. There is no cost to the agency to host training, unless you choose to register your own employees for the training, outside of any comps that you might receive. ACTS welcomes the opportunity to assist with your training needs. Let us know how we can help - info@aco-acts.com