

Cobb County Police Department

Policy 6.06

ANIMAL CONTROL

Effective Date: October 1, 2019	Issued By: Chief C.T. Cox
Rescinds: Policy 6.06 (November 1, 2017)	Page 1 of 4
The words “he, his, him,” which may appear in this policy, are used generically for clarity and ease of reading. These terms are not meant to imply gender and relate to all employees of the Department.	

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the utilization of the Cobb County Animal Control Unit.

I. BARKING DOG COMPLAINTS

Generally, the Animal Control Unit responds to all barking dog complaints. However, based on the nature of the call, and time of day, a police officer may be dispatched to assist Animal Control. Should a police officer arrive before the Animal Control officer:

- A.** The police officer may issue a citation when appropriate.
- B.** If the police officer is unable to contact the owner of the barking dog, he should pass along pertinent information to the Animal Control officer for follow-up.
- C.** If the police officer determines that a barking dog needs to be impounded, the Animal Control officer will make the impound.

II. ANIMAL-TO-HUMAN BITES

- A.** The police officer should make every effort to determine where the animal that did the biting might be located. If the animal is still on the scene, the officer should attempt to secure the animal in a fenced-in area or otherwise contain the animal.
- B.** An Animal Control officer should be notified of the incident and requested to respond to the scene.
- C.** If the victim has been taken for medical treatment, the responding Animal Control officer will be notified.

III. ENDANGERED / INJURED ANIMALS

- A.** When a police officer observes a domesticated animal in any dangerous environment, he should call out Animal Control and, if possible, keep the animal under observation until the Animal Control officer arrives.

- B.** When a police officer encounters an injured animal, he should never attempt to touch or move the animal until Animal Control has arrived. Injured animals may panic and seriously injure the police officer. Never make sudden movements or loud noises around the animal as this also may cause panic in the animal.

IV. AGGRESSIVE ANIMALS

- A.** Any officer coming into contact with an aggressive or barking canine should not make eye-to-eye contact or attempt to “stare down” the canine as this is perceived as a threat by the animal. The animal may then take an offensive attack position.
- B.** If a police officer is placed in a position where an animal (usually a domesticated dog) is becoming aggressive, he has several defensive options:
 - 1. Use OC spray aimed at the eyes of the animal. If OC spray is used, the police officer should inform the Animal Control officer before an attempt is made by the Animal Control officer to capture the animal.
 - 2. Use the expandable baton as a defensive weapon or a “bite stick.” Draw and expand the baton in the normal manner. The noise of the baton being extended may cause the animal to back down. If the animal continues to advance, it is recommended to strike the animal across the nose which usually causes it to back down. Striking the animal on the body will not be effective due to the amount of fat present. If the animal is still approaching menacingly, the officer can push the baton into the animal’s mouth. Studies by the manufacturer show that when the animal bites down on the metal it should release and back away.
 - 3. Use an electronic controlled device (ECD) aimed at the body of the animal. If an ECD is used, the police officer should inform the Animal Control officer before an attempt is made by the Animal Control officer to capture the animal.
 - 4. If an animal, either domestic or wild, must be destroyed due to aggressive behavior, the procedures in Section V below should be followed.

V. ANIMAL DESTRUCTION

There may be occasions when an animal is by temperament vicious; or is infected with rabies or other disease, and may not respond to the above defensive methods, and the officer must use deadly force to defend himself or others from harm by the animal. Additionally, there are many occasions in which an animal must be destroyed as a humanitarian gesture due to severe injury. Animals should not be destroyed in view of the public, especially children, unless no other recourse is available. Officers should also be aware of other environmental concerns such as buildings, passing vehicles, etc., before shooting. **SHOOTING A DOMESTICATED ANIMAL SHOULD BE A LAST RESORT.**

- A.** If an officer discharges his firearm at an animal, he will:
 - 1. Notify his supervisor;
 - 2. Request the assistance of Animal Control as appropriate or necessary;
 - 3. Complete an Incident Report;
 - 4. Complete a Use of Force Statistical Report; and
 - 5. The supervisor will contact the Crimes Against Persons Unit if charges other than a county ordinance violation may be pending, or a more in-depth investigation is warranted.
- B.** If an animal, either domestic or wild, must be destroyed due to aggressive behavior, the officer should try to avoid shooting the animal in the head. In order to test an animal for rabies, the brain must be intact.

VI. ANIMAL CAPTURE AND IMPOUND PROCEDURES

If a police officer is dispatched to, or becomes involved in a situation where an animal needs to be impounded for the protection of the animal, or for protection of the public, the police officer should follow the procedures below:

- A.** The police officer should make a request through the Communications Center for an Animal Control officer to respond to the location.
 - 1. In situations involving non-aggressive or non-biting domesticated animals where the owner can not care for the animal (e.g. injury, arrest, etc.), the police officer should make every effort to find someone designated by the owner to take care of the animal (i.e. a neighbor, friend of the owner, etc.) before resorting to calling out Animal Control officers.
 - 2. If the owner is unable to communicate, or the designated person is unavailable or unable to come to the scene within a reasonable time, the police officer should initiate the Animal Control call-out procedures. If possible, the owner should be advised by the police officer to contact the Cobb County Animal Shelter if the pet has been impounded.
- B.** The requesting police officer should relay all pertinent information to the communications operator regarding why the Animal Control officer is needed, and what kind of animal is involved. This information allows the Animal Control officer to make sure he has the proper equipment and any necessary assistance to handle the situation.
- C.** If possible, the police officer should ensure the animal is either secured, or in a place where it cannot harm humans or other animals, until the Animal Control officer arrives.

- D.** When the Animal Control officer arrives, he will take charge of the capture, removal, and/or care of the animal involved according to the established policies of the Animal Control Unit and any applicable laws. The police officer may assist the Animal Control officer if requested to do so.
- E.** If the owner is not available, the police officer should give the Animal Control officer all pertinent information regarding the owner, an alternate party authorized by the owner to retrieve the animal from the shelter if the owner can not, and any special medications or treatments the animal(s) may need while impounded if known.
- F.** Unless released by a supervisor or the Animal Control officer, the police officer should remain on the scene of the incident until the Animal Control officer has completed his task.
- G.** The Animal Control officer will only relinquish custody of an animal (dead or alive) in accordance with Animal Control policies and procedures. Police officers may not release animals that are under the care/custody of Animal Control officers.