

# TAKOMA PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - GENERAL ORDERS



TITLE: <b>ANIMAL COMPLAINTS</b>	NUMBER: <b>619</b>
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**01 Purpose:** To set forth the City regulations, and the corresponding sanctions, regarding animal complaints.

**02 Policy:** Calls for service involving animal complaints will not be considered insignificant. Complaints may involve dogs at large, unlicensed dogs or general nuisance animals. In all of these cases, as well as other animal complaints, officers will enforce the City Ordinance (#1995-36) as directed by this General Order.

**03 Dogs and Other Domestic Animals:**

**A. License Requirements:** An owner of any dog of the age of four (4) months or over, within the City, must license the dog in accordance with the regulations of Montgomery County.

**B. Control Requirements:**

**1. Running at large:** “AT LARGE shall mean [an animal] a dog off the premises of its owner and not either leashed or otherwise under the immediate control of a responsible person capable of physically restraining the animal. A dog trained to respond promptly and reliably to voice commands shall be deemed to be under the immediate control of the person to whose voice commands it responds if that person is in immediate proximity of the dog.”

**a. No owners of dogs shall permit the dog(s) to be at large.**

**b. If a dog is found to be at large, the County Police Animal Services Division shall be notified. Officers encountering dogs at large may take such steps as are necessary to humanely restrain the dog in order to protect humans, other animals and property.**

**c. Animal Control will be immediately notified when calls for “dog at large” are confirmed. Officers will monitor the dog, as manpower and time constraints permit, until Animal Control arrives.**

**04 Officer Responsibilities:**

A. An officer may issue a citation for a municipal infraction if the officer:

1. Observes a violation of the Charter, Code or regulation of the city; or
2. Receives an affidavit citing the facts of the alleged incident.
3. Officers are encouraged to issue warnings for initial violations, and escalate to citations for subsequent, repeat violations.

**06 Municipal infractions:**

A. Animal Control infraction for the city can be found in Chapter 15 of the Takoma Park Municipal Code

B. Any Animal Control infraction in Chapter 15 of the Takoma Park Municipal Code is a Class C offense.

1. Class C violations carry a \$200.00 fine for a first offense, and a \$400.00 fine for repeat offenses.

**07 Safety:** Officers must remain cognizant of the dangers associated with calls for service involving animals. The possibility of rabies should be considered under these circumstances.

**08 Rabies:**

A. Calls for suspicious animals will not be considered insignificant, and officers responding to these calls will act promptly. Rabies has reached epidemic level in the wild animal environment, and there exists a strong probability that both humans and domestic animals will be exposed to the disease. The animal most frequently found rabid is the raccoon; but rabid skunks, foxes, squirrels, cats and bats have also been captured.

B. After infection with the rabies virus, a period of a few days to several months can pass before signs of the disease show. Toward the end of the incubation period, the animal can spread rabies, sometimes even before symptoms appear.

C. In any animal, the first sign of rabies is a marked change of behavior, with the animal becoming either unnaturally withdrawn or unnaturally approachable.

D. In “furious” rabies, the animal is excited, aggressive, irritable and may snap at anything in its path. The animal loses all fear.

**E.** In “dumb” rabies, the animal will appear unusually tame, affectionate and friendly. Staggering, convulsions, spitting, frothing at the mouth, and gradual paralysis are sometimes noted. Many animals have marked change in voice.

**F.** In all situations involving live or dead animals that may be rabid, the officer will:

1. Make extra effort to locate the animal if it is not present when he/she arrives
2. Detour citizens from the area to prevent contact with the animal, whether it is alive or dead.
3. Ensure that the animal does not escape or in any way endanger the officer or the community.
4. If any wild, or suspected rabid animal, has had any physical contact with any human or domestic animal, utilize any resources to prevent the animal from escaping, including, as a last resort, shooting the animal.
5. Wild animals in traps, raccoons in particular, still have the ability to bite or scratch if not handled properly. Wild animals can easily bite through leather gloves. If an officer must deal with a trapped animal, a pole or other long object should be placed through the trap handle.
6. The removal of animals from private property shall be the responsibility of the property owner, unless there is evidence of rabies. If the animal is found dead on a State Road, the Sates Highway administration will be contacted. If the animal is found dead on other County roadways, the County Police Animal Services will be contacted. Contact the City Public Works Department for animals found dead on City property.

**G.** In cases of animal bite, responsibility for impounding the animal, if required, lies with Animal Services. Officers will provide reasonable assistance as necessary to confine the animal until Animal Services personnel arrive.

**H.** Use of a weapon will be a last resort when attempting to contain a possibly rabid animal.

1. The officer will weigh all safety factors prior to this action.
2. The officer using a weapon will take care to preserve the animal’s brain, if possible, as it is needed for laboratory confirmation of rabies.
3. If an officer shoots an animal, he/she will:
  - a. Notify Animal Services to pick up the carcass.

- b. Remain with the dead animal until Animal Services arrives.
- c. Do not touch the animal or allow anyone else to touch the animal.
- I.** In all cases involving live or dead animals where rabies is even a possibility, notify Animal Services and remain on the scene until their personnel arrive.
- J.** It is state and federal law that all animal bites be reported to the appropriate county Health Department for investigation. All exposures, including bites, scratches and contact with saliva, carry the potential for transmitting rabies, and must be reported to the Health Department.
- K.** Officers will complete an Animal Bite Report, obtain a Takoma Park Police case number, and forward the report to Administrative Services, unless handled by Animal Services Division officers.
- L.** It is imperative that the address where the animal will be quarantined for ten (10) days be completed and the report signed by the owner of the animal. If the animal is impounded by Animal Services, the Animal Services address must be placed in the “place of impoundment” space.
- M.** Officers will explain the “conditions of quarantine” to the animal owner. These guidelines are listed on the Animal Bite Report.
- N.** If the Animal Bite Report cannot be served for any reason, and several attempts have been made, the “owner copy” will be sent to Animal Control so that they can attempt to serve the owner’s copy to the owner.
- O.** Administrative Services will ensure that the Health Department’s copy is forwarded separately from Animal Services’s copy within 24 hours of exposure.