

# ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF MUNICIPAL ANIMAL CONTROL

## A. Legal Requirements

1. New Jersey Revised Statutes (N.J.R.S.) 26:4-78 through 95 address rabies control and mandate that all bites and exposures to humans and animals be reported to the local department of health, which serves as the lead agency for rabies control activities.
2. New Jersey Statutes Annotated (N.J.S.A.) 4:19 subchapter 15 addresses dog licensing, a canvas to identify unlicensed dogs and animal control requirements. N.J.S.A. 4:19-17 through 35 addresses vicious dog situations. N.J.S.A. 4:19-15.16 through 15.16d specifically addresses animal control, as summarized below:

N.J.S.A 4:19-15.16-Requires the impoundment of any dog or other animal (including cats) off the property of the owner. Stray animals must be held for 7 days prior to adoption or euthanasia.

N.J.S.A. 4:19-15.16a-Mandates the promulgation of regulations concerning training for animal control officers. N.J.A.C 8:23A subchapter 2 lists the requirements for the animal control officers certification course and the animal cruelty investigator course.

N.J.S.A. 4:19-15.16b requires all municipalities to have a certified animal control officer to enforce the provisions of N.J.S.A. 4:19-15.16. Officers who complete the animal cruelty investigator course can be authorized by the municipal governing body to enforce the New Jersey animal cruelty laws.

N.J.S.A. 4:19-15.16c lists the powers of animal cruelty investigators.

N.J.S.A. 4:19-15.16d requires all animal cruelty investigators to forward a copy of signed complaints or summonses to the New Jersey Society to Prevent Cruelty to Animals (NJSPCA) within 5 business days.

**Note:** If animal control services are not under the purview of the Health Officer, it is essential that an oversight relationship with the Health Officer be developed to ensure an adequate response to rabies and vicious dog situations. In municipalities where animal control services are provided by a private agency, the Health Officer should be directly involved in contract review to ensure full compliance with all appropriate Statutes and regulations. This process should include an assessment as to whether animal control officers from the agency are certified, can respond quickly to calls and complaints considering the geographic locations involved, and if there is adequate impoundment space to meet the volume of animals from the municipality and all others under contract with the facility.

**B. Services** - can be divided into 2 categories: (1) animal control officer and (2) impoundment, which may both be provided by the same service unit agency, or which may be provided by 2 different units or agencies.

## 1. Minimum Animal Control Officer Services

- a. **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. It is important that responses are timely and that 24-hour on-call service is available for emergencies.
- b. **Capture** - of stray domestic animals, as well as wild animal rabies vectors (i.e., raccoons, skunks, groundhogs, foxes, and bats) threatening the safety and health of residents. Proper equipment (i.e., transportation vehicles, rabies poles, heavy gloves, a two way radio, official uniforms and badges, and humane capture animal traps) is essential to carry out the above duties.
- c. **Note:** Response to and capture of nuisance wildlife that are not threatening humans (i.e., healthy appearing raccoons in garbage cans, squirrels in attics, etc.) are NOT considered necessary services for municipal animal control to provide. Animal control officers should be able to educate residents over the telephone on how to modify their residences (i.e., cap chimneys, secure trash firmly, etc.) so as not to attract animal nuisances and refer them to agencies that can assist them.
- c. **Patrolling** - for stray cats and dogs (should be performed on a daily basis, even without complaints or reports.)
- d. **Investigation** - into reports of bite incidents and vicious dogs; seizure and impoundment of dogs meeting criteria under the State vicious dog law (N.J.S.A. 4:19-19-35.)
- e. **Confinement** - serving notices for the confinement of biting or bitten animals for rabies observation and monitoring these confinements, if authorized by the Health Officer (N.J.S.A. 26:4-82 and 83).
- f. **Evaluation** - of animals captured or picked up as to the need for veterinary emergency care.
- g. **Transportation** - of captured animals to impoundment facility; transportation vehicles must meet state regulations (see section 2a below). Sick or injured animals must receive immediate emergency veterinary care. If designated, provide transportation of rabies specimens to State Public Health and Environmental laboratory.
- h. **Keeping record** - to properly document all calls, activities, and animals picked up.
- i. **Education** - of the public (including schools and other groups) as to responsible pet ownership, rabies prevention, and the need for spaying and neutering of pets (pamphlets on rabies control and statewide spay/neuter programs are available free of charge from the NJDHSS and on the DHSS website).
- j. **Participation** - on local/county rabies task forces and other animal control related committees.

- k. **Canvass** - for unlicensed dogs and cats and take enforcement action when necessary.

## 2. Impoundment Facilities

- a. Facilities must meet State regulations (New Jersey Administrative Code 8:23A-1.1 through 1.13) governing sanitary conduct and operation. A copy of these regulations is available on the DHSS website.
- b. Facilities must have a large enough capacity to house animals obtained from their contract service areas.

**Note:** Most well run facilities usually have to perform euthanasia (i.e., humane destruction of unclaimed and unadopted animals at some point after their 7 day holding period) to ensure adequate space on an on-going basis for new arrivals. Facilities that do not, or only rarely, perform euthanasia, often have severe problems with overcrowding and disease control. Euthanasia policies should therefore be taken into consideration when reviewing contracts with various facilities.

- c. It is highly recommended that municipalities have, or contract with, facilities which are equipped to decapitate and prepare rabies specimens for shipment and have personnel adequately trained to safely perform this function. Otherwise, the municipality will have to pay a veterinarian for this service.
- d. Impoundment facilities must have a close relationship with a veterinarian. State regulation mandates that a veterinarian develop and supervise a disease control program at every licensed facility.
- e. Basic Impoundment Facility Functions:
  1. **Maintenance** - of impounded animals under sanitary conditions.
  2. **Redemption** - reuniting impounded animals with their rightful owners.
  3. **Evaluation** - of unclaimed, impounded, or surrendered animals as to their suitability for adoption.
  4. **Adoption** - of selected unclaimed impounded and surrendered animals.
  5. **Euthanasia** - humane destruction of animals (see discussion in section b. above).
  6. **Disposal** - of the remains of euthanized animals
  7. **Keeping record** - of the intake and disposition of all impounded and surrendered animals.
  8. **Acceptance** - of unwanted animals surrendered by residents for humane placement or euthanasia, if facility is operating as a shelter.
  9. **Education** - of members of the public visiting or contacting the facility (see section B.1i., above). Information on rabies (i.e., NJDHSS Important Facts About Rabies pamphlet) should be made available to all persons adopting animals and visiting the shelter or pound.