

ANIMAL WELFARE REPORT

BACKGROUND:

On February 2, 2011, the Board of Supervisors amended Section 4-100 Definitions, of Chapter 4, Animals and Fowl of the Albemarle County Code. Specifically, the ordinance amends the definitions of “adequate shelter”, “adequate space”, and “treatment/adequate treatment” as follows:

- **4-100(5) Adequate shelter**—amended to provide examples of structures that are not adequate shelters. Such inadequate shelters include metal barrels, plastic barrels, airline crates, carrying crates, and dog houses with no floors. This amendment addresses reported animal shelter concerns.
- **4-100(6) Adequate space**—amended to further define the length and weight of a tether and/or a running line. Specifically, the allowable length of a tether for an animal is increased from three (3) times the length of the animal to five (5) times the length of the animal, and such tether must have a swivel at both ends, weigh no more than 1/8 the animal’s weight, and multiple animals shall have their own tether. A pulley or running line shall be at least fifteen (15) feet in length, and less than seven (7) feet above the ground in such a manner to protect the animal from injury and prevent the line from becoming entangled with other objects or animals. When there is more than one animal on a pulley or running line, each animal shall have its own tether on the pulley or running line. This amendment addresses reported animal welfare concerns.
- **4-100(38) Treatment or adequate treatment**—amended to state that tethering a dog six months old or younger, and tethering a female dog in heat is not deemed to be adequate treatment. It is also amended to include ways in which an animal may be transported in an open-bed truck in order for such transportation to be deemed adequate treatment of the animal. This amendment addresses reported animal welfare concerns.

Prior to these amendments, the Albemarle County Police Department (ACPD) had two Incident Based Report (IBR) clearing codes to capture animal-related calls-for-service. Those codes were “Dog Bites” and “General Animal Calls”. After the amendments, several additional codes were created to enhance the capturing of specific animal-related calls. The following tracking codes were implemented on April 1, 2011:

- (310) Animal bite
- (311) Animal welfare/neglect
- (312) Animal hazard
- (313) Animal stray
- (314) Animal running at large
- (315) Animal aggressive
- (316) Animal nuisance
- (317) Animal in vehicle
- (318) Animal extra patrol
- (319) Animal other

These codes are also further differentiated by defining the type of animal involved, [A] dog, [B] cat, [C] livestock, [D] wildlife and [E] other.

DISCUSSION:

Since April 1, 2011, the following information was extracted from the Police Department’s records management system and computer aided dispatch (CAD) system related specifically to dogs:

Animal Control calls-for-service (Dog specific)		
Code	# of Calls	Type
310 A	102	Bites
311 A	110	Welfare
312 A	63	Hazard
313 A	311	Stray
314 A	166	Running @ Large
315 A	115	Aggressive
316 A	153	Nuisance
317 A	89	Dog in Vehicle
319 A	143	Other
Total	1252	

Of the 1,252 dog-related calls for service, roughly 16% or 199 are related to the “welfare” of dogs. These were captured in the 311A “Welfare” and 317A “Dog in Vehicle” categories. Of the 110 Welfare calls-for-service, 33% or 36 were initially reported as tethering issues. Of those, only 7 were verified to be tethering issues, 22 found no tethering issues and 7 calls had no disposition. Of these 36, 2 criminal charges were placed and it should be noted that neither charge was directly related to tethering but to other violations that were discovered by the investigating Animal Control Officer.

The other 74 calls-for-service in the “Welfare” category were reported to be issues regarding neglect and sheltering. There were no charges placed as a result of any of these calls.

Of the 89 calls-for-service related to “Dogs in Vehicles”, 54 were determined to be unfounded. 30 were handled with educational opportunities, 2 had no disposition and 3 resulted in charges.

It should also be noted that 43% of dog related calls-for-service appear to be related to dogs running at large. This includes data found in the “Stray”, “Hazard” and “Running at Large” categories. Of those 540 calls, 49.8% or 269 were found to be in rural areas. The other 50.2% or 271 were reportedly in designated “leash-law” areas.

In reference to the 315A “Aggressive Dog” category, there were 115 related calls-for-service. The 310A “Dog Bite” category recorded 102 calls-for-service. Of those 217 calls-for-service, 43 met the criteria for dangerous/vicious dogs. Of those 43, the Animal Control Officers pursued designation on 10 of these incidents. Of those 10, 6 were deemed “Dangerous Dog”, 1 is currently under advisement, 1 is awaiting court and 2 were deemed not dangerous.

When asked about any additional amendments that would benefit the welfare of dogs in the County, Animal Control Officers noted that staff should explore changing a part of the welfare code that addresses dogs in the back of open-bed pickup trucks. When the ordinance was written, the wording only addressed dogs in crates and dogs tethered in the back of trucks. This was apparently written with the intention to address loose dogs in the back of the truck. The County Attorney’s Office has interpreted the current wording to read that dogs could, in fact, be loose, which may not address the issue of safety in transporting dogs in this fashion. They further noted that any amendment should apply only to public highway transportation due to the speeds involved, distraction, the risk of dogs jumping out causing a road/traffic hazard or the risk of dogs being thrown from a vehicle if involved in an accident.