

This Chapter Covers:

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- ◆ **Objectives of Animal Control**
- ◆ **Philosophy of Professionalism**
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History of Animal Control

To gain control of certain animals, humans first had to tame them. To tame wild animals, humans took them from their mothers at an early age and raised them. Humans controlled the breeding of these animals for many generations, and the animals became dependent on humans for their basic needs. They were then known as domestic animals. Sometimes tamed animals returned to being wild animals when they became adults because of their instincts. Feral animals are animals that escaped from domestication and became wild.

Dogs and cats were probably the first animals to be domesticated. Smaller livestock, such as sheep and goats, followed. Next were cattle, pigs, and horses. It is believed that many animal control problems began immediately after animals were domesticated, including:

- × animal bites,
- × territorial conflicts,
- × feral animal communities,
- × disease transmission, and
- × nuisance animals.

Introduction (Basic)

These problems are a growing concern within the dog and cat populations all over the country. For instance, there are millions of dog bites every year in the United States. Some solutions to these problems include passing and enforcing good animal control laws, having strong overall animal control programs, and training professional animal control officers (ACOs).

Objectives of Animal Control

Design animal control programs to ensure that animal owners are responsible. Pets that do not receive proper care can create many problems in a community:

- ✦ **spread of injury and disease:** bites, rabies, and other zoonoses.
- ✦ **vehicle damage.**
- ✦ **public nuisances:** barking, howling, and spreading trash.
- ✦ **pollution:** animal waste.
- ✦ **property damage:** digging in lawns and gardens and injuring or killing livestock, wild animals, and birds.

Animal control programs can reduce these problems while making sure that every pet is treated in a humane manner. **No living creature deserves to be abused.** Animal control programs also educate people about the problems associated with the overpopulation of unwanted pets. There are not enough caring homes for all of the animals born each year. Approximately 15 million dogs and cats are euthanatized in animal shelters each year in the United States. Animal owners need to accept the responsibilities that accompany animal ownership. Effective animal control programs which emphasize public education will result in increased levels of personal, pet, and community health and well-being.

Introduction (Basic)

Philosophy of Professionalism

An animal control officer is a professional. All professionals, no matter what their job, have certain characteristics:

- × dependability,
- × credibility,
- × dedication,
- × good judgment,
- × neat appearance,
- × specialized knowledge and skills,
- × ability to deal with other people, and
- × a desire to improve themselves through education.

Strive to maintain a positive attitude about your work and to be a professional ACO in speech, actions, attitude, and appearance. Deal with people in a polite but firm manner. A professional ACO enforces laws and ordinances by being respectful, fair, and consistent. Always handle and care for animals in a safe, humane manner. Never vent your frustrations and anger on the animals in your care.

Remember: It is not the animal's fault. People are the basic problem in animal control, not animals.

Animal control officers have a high level of public visibility and contact. People, including supervisors in your agency, respect a professional appearance. If at all possible, wear a uniform with visible identification. If your agency does not have a uniform, wear neat, clean street clothes. Your vehicle and impoundment facility must also look professional. Keep them clean, in good repair, and organized in appearance.

Introduction (Basic)

Gaining the respect of the people in the community is the first step in getting public support and cooperation for the animal control agency. Public support is essential for a good animal control program.

Training Requirement

Animal control officers dealing primarily with enforcing laws related to animal control must satisfactorily complete a basic training course that has been approved by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). After this has been achieved, the ACO must complete 30 hours of DSHS-approved continuing education during each 3-year period. For details on training requirements, refer to Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 829, Animal Control Officer Training, in the law section of this manual.