

2. Receiving an Animal Cruelty Complaint

Overview

Most of the animal related complaints you receive will stem from violations of Title 13, Section 352, which deals with neglect and abuse. They will generally involve the failure to provide proper sustenance, which means the animals:

- are not being fed or watered adequately,
- are lacking an appropriate shelter,
- are lacking clean air to breathe,
- are living in unsanitary conditions, or
- are needing adequate veterinary attention.

Though many complaints will be anonymous, you should still investigate them. Most anonymous complaints are legitimate; people often refuse to give their names because they fear reprisal from their neighbors. You should note that completely anonymous tips are generally considered to be less reliable than known individuals, but may be enough if the tips are detailed, demonstrate knowledge not readily known, and can be at least partially corroborated by the humane officer. Names may be kept confidential if the humane officer explains in detail how he has corroborated the information given (i.e. demonstrate why this person's information is reliable in this instance), or the humane officer may give historical information about the reliability of this person if the officer has relied on information provided by this person before.

Questions to ask with regard to animal complaints

Regardless of whether the complaint is anonymous or not, ask the following questions:

- What is the name and address of the alleged abuser? (Obtain this if at all possible.) Can you describe what he looks like?
- What types of animals are involved in the complaint, and how many of them are there?

- Why do you believe the animals are being abused or neglected?
- Where are the animals confined? an apartment? house? barn? pen?
Can the animals be seen from the road side or through a window?
- When was the last time you saw the animals?
- What were the weather conditions at the time of the abuse or neglect?
Was the weather extremely hot or cold?
- Are you willing to sign a sworn statement as to what you saw?
- Do you know of additional witnesses that I can interview?
- What are the **explicit** directions to the location of the complaint? (It is especially important in rural areas to get an exact description of house (its color, one story - two story,) road, and landmarks to get to the property.) See also page 14 in Chapter 1, Be Prepared, “Animal-Related Questions”.

Based on the response to these questions, you can determine the laws which may be being violated and the urgency of the situation.

Is there a time limit to investigate the complaint?

You should investigate the complaint as soon as possible to bring relief to the animals that are suffering.