

Standard Operating Procedures



Approved by
Commissioner's Court
on February 8, 2022
Robert Blaschke
County Judge

Mission Statement - Refugio County Animal Control's main function is to prevent the spread of rabies through investigation of animal bites, quarantine or testing of bite animals, public education of vaccinations, enforcement of county ordinances and enforcement of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

Internal Employee Mission Statement - The employee mission of the Refugio County Animal Control Services is to balance the health, safety and welfare needs of the people and animals in Refugio County. Through our mission, we will educate the public about responsible companion animal ownership, aggressively investigate animal cruelty cases, provide compassion and humane care for unwanted, stray, abused, and abandoned animals in Refugio County, and give adoptable animals a second chance at a forever home.

Our Vision is to create and preserve a safe community through education, enforcement and leadership.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Personnel Policies and Procedures

The County of Refugio has developed consistent and uniform Human Resources Policies and Procedures. Every employee has a copy of these policies and procedures. **You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the contents of your county manual as well as your Animal Care Services manual.**

1.2 Animal Control Policies and Procedures

Animal Control strives to promote self-esteem, good working relationships, responsiveness to public needs, increased efficiency and pride in a job well done, by providing uniform and consistent Policies and Procedures. Animal Control Standard Operating Procedures Manual is designed to establish a system of appropriate procedures to be followed by all employees of Animal Control. *Animal Control's Standard Operating Procedure Manual does not supersede any Refugio County Procedure.* **All employees are expected to adhere to instructions listed in the manual and non-adherence could result in disciplinary action.** This Manual represents the majority of Animal Control Policy however, is subject to change with updates and policy changes.

1.3 Animal Regulations – Refugio County

Refugio County Animal Control staff shall enforce all Ordinances for Austwell, Bayside, Refugio, Tivoli, Woodsboro and the Texas Health and Safety Code.

1.4 County Property

All items purchased by or donated to Animal Control is County Property. All donated items are for use at the Shelter. Disposable items (food, paper products, plastic products, toys, etc.,) not used by the Shelter can be donated to other entities, Shelters, foster homes, senior citizens or disposed of.

1.5 Mission Statement for Animal Control

To reduce the stray animal population by promoting responsible pet ownership, pet adoption and the caring treatment of all animals. To enhance public safety and reduce the threat of disease through vector control and by conducting fair enforcement of all laws and ordinances.

Mission Elements:

- Administer animal code compliance
- Pick up stray animals
- Care for in-custody animals
- Promote pet adoption and pet ownership
- Control stray animal populations

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1.6 Values Statement

Working as a team, we will share the following values:

- To respect individual dignity and rights;
- To manage finances responsibly;
- To incorporate a high degree of ethical integrity and professionalism in our day-to-day operations;
- To develop innovative measures to address community needs;
- To establish a safe working environment; and
- To provide opportunities for education, open communication and appreciation with respect to County employees.

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2. Accident Reports and Personal Safety

2.1 Teamwork and Common Sense

A need exists for recognizing and following good safety principals and practices. To accomplish this, management will provide reasonable safeguards to ensure a safe working environment. **No job is so important and no order is so urgent that staff cannot take time to use common sense to safely perform their duties.** The cooperation of employees and management in observance of this policy will provide safe working conditions and accident free performance. Ignorance of safety practices, policies, and procedures will not be accepted as an excuse for neglect or the use of unsafe practices in performance of the employee's job. Staff should check shelter/truck gear and equipment routinely and report defects to the County Judge.

Personal safety is a matter of teamwork and common sense and any personal injuries are to be reported **immediately**. It is your duty to work safely, efficiently, and to develop safe work habits and environments. Think safety at all times - look at a job before starting and check for hazards and dangerous situations. Be familiar with safety procedures and always wear specialized safety apparel. ***Do not take shortcuts and never place yourself in a dangerous situation - wait for help, if needed.*** Presence of hazards or unsafe conditions or equipment should be reported as soon as discovered to the County Judge. Staff has the right to refuse to do a job if they feel it will endanger their safety, or that of others. Management will later review the situation.

2.2 Reporting Accidents

In the event of an accident, injury, or equipment damage the employee will immediately report the incident to the County Judge.

Accidents are divided into four categories. (Personal, Vehicle, Equipment and Property)

A. **Personal Injury.** An accident in which you suffer an injury, which may or may not require medical attention or result in lost time. If an injury appears life threatening, contact 9-1-1 immediately. In all cases of injury, look for these items and take care of them in this order: Lack of breathing, heartbeat, bleeding, shock, burns, fractures, and minor wounds.

1. **Emergency Guidelines.**

- Keep the person lying down.
- If the person is in shock, cover with blanket, towel or jacket and keep them still.
- Do not give fluids to unconscious or partially unconscious persons.

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- Keep others from crowding around and give encouragement to the injured.
- Employees who are injured on the job will report the accident to the County Judge, after calling 911.
- Employees receiving injuries requiring the services of a physician should notify the County Judge before reporting for medical care or if an emergency, as soon as possible after arriving at the emergency facility.
- If the accident involves serious bodily injury or occurs outside normal business hours, the employee should be transported, if necessary, by ambulance to the nearest hospital.
- Use common sense.

2. Reporting Injury

Any injury on the job, regardless of how minor (animal bites, etc.), will be reported **within twenty-four (24) hours**. Failure to do so may result in interruption or loss of Worker's Compensation benefits.

- B. **Vehicle Accident:** Refugio County has an accident policy in place. In the event of a vehicle accident follow the County's policy.
- C. **Equipment Damage:** An incident involving damage to a County vehicle or piece of equipment, but without collision or contact with another vehicle, equipment, property or person.
1. Immediately notify the County Judge.
- D. **Property Damage:** In the event of an accident involving damage to any public or private property, such as fence, mailboxes, utility structures...etc. Immediately notify dispatch, stating the problem. If applicable leave your business card on the resident door with a brief description of damage or if citizen is at home give them your business card so they can contact you regarding the accident.

2.3 Safety Apparel

All employees should utilize proper safety clothing and equipment. **Failure to observe proper safety apparel rules will result in disciplinary action.** Staff is required to take at least minimum safety steps whenever appropriate and wear proper equipment. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- A. **Dust Masks** should be worn as necessary when cleaning.
- B. **Earplugs** should be worn as **employee and Supervisor deem appropriate.**
- C. **Leather Gloves or Rabies Gloves** are to be worn when dealing with all stray cats,

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- wildlife, and any fractious animals either during the removal from your vehicle, transfer of cages during the cleaning operation, or removal for euthanasia.
- D. **Goggles or Safety Glasses** must be worn when a job site warrants it and a situation calls for it.
 - E. **Restraint poles** will be used when handling stray, quarantine animals or fractious dogs and the restraint pole or EZ Napper can be used with cats.
 - F. **Safety Vests - Fluorescent** vests or shirts will be worn on all job sites in or near all traffic areas, medians and rights-of-way. State Law requires that all employees wear reflective vests when working in traffic.

2.4 Material Safety Data Sheets

Whenever the Shelter purchases a chemical, insecticide, paint, thinner, or other “hazardous” material, a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) explaining the proper usage and hazards of the particular product is provided. Prior to using these products, review the sheet and be aware of the precautions specified. Copies of these sheets will be updated and placed in a three-ring binder located near the entry door of the kennel building.

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3. CITIZEN SERVICE

Animal Control is committed to serving the citizens of Refugio County. Refugio County employees are expected to always act in a courteous and professional manner.

3.1 Customer Service/Teamwork

It is our intention for Animal Control to have an excellent reputation for maintaining high standards of **customer service**. As a member of the Animal Control Team, you are expected to strive to maintain a positive attitude and a professional image. *Citizen Service is the single most distinguishing factor of our County organization. Your attitude determines appearance, job performance, team spirit and the quality of your work.* How your attitude translates into citizen service reflects not only on the Division, but also upon the entire County organization. In the eyes of the public, you *are* the Refugio County Animal Control. "Teamwork - Excellence - Pride" is our byline. "Quality Service One citizen at a Time" is the standard of service and professionalism that is expected of all RCAC employees. Management recognizes the input you can provide. You are encouraged to evaluate your duties and "the system" and make any reasonable recommendations you feel would enhance your performance, work environment, job duties or the performance of the Animal Control Team. You may discuss your ideas directly with the County Judge.

3.2 Handling Complaints

As a rule, most citizens initiating a complaint are calling because they are upset. Have patience and help them in a calm and professional manner. If a complaint is ignored, a bad situation worsens. If a complaint receives prompt and careful attention, the Division will be able to provide better service to the citizens. All complaints are to be received in a courteous manner. Dispatch and Administration normally receives complaints via telephone, e-mail or referral by another Department. When a complaint involves more than one Department, Animal Control will work with that Department to resolve the problem.

3.3 Handling Violations

Violations are reported by Animal Control employees or by calls received from citizens. A request is generated so an Officer can attempt to make initial **personal contact** with the citizen. If no one is home then leave a door tag with your business card (if available) attached at the residence, providing notification of the problem and a date to resolve the violation within seven (7) calendar days.

3.4 Lost/Stray Notices posted by citizens

Officers performing neighborhood patrols should document information on lost dogs and cats posted in patrolled neighborhoods. When Officers return to the Shelter they can determine if the animals are at the shelter. This is good customer service and if the animal

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is at the Shelter, it would not only insure that the animal gets back home but would allow staff to verify current rabies vaccination and city license.

3.5 Public Relations

You must always be conscious of public image and conduct yourself in such a way as to represent your Division and the County in the most positive manner while in your County vehicle or while in uniform. Remember that in the eyes of the public ***YOU ARE*** the County. Maintain a positive work ethic, pride in your work and the realization that ***CITIZEN SERVICE*** is the reason our organization exists.

In the event that you cannot resolve a problem with a citizen and the potential for conflict arises, remove yourself from the situation and call dispatch for assistance.

3.6 Telephone Calls

The initial contact of many citizens in need of assistance is made by the telephone. Answer the telephone in a courteous voice, informing the caller of Division reached and **your name**. For example: "Good afternoon. Animal Control, this is (your name), may I help you?"

The manner in which you conduct yourself on the telephone will greatly impact the citizen's image of the County, Animal Control and yourself. If possible, phone calls are to be answered **within three rings**.

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4. Daily Operations

4.1 Introduction - Local Rabies Control Authority (LRCA)

Refugio County Animal Control is designated by statute as the Local Rabies Control Authority and reports to the County Judge and City Mayors. Animal Control adheres to enforcement of all State laws and City/County Ordinance.

4.2 Animal Emergency Care

If an animal is injured during normal business hours the Officer will make every attempt to locate an owner or medical rescue for the animal. The 72 hour stray hold will not apply to animals requiring emergency veterinarian care. Animal Control is not an Animal Care Service and will not provide or pay for veterinary services.

Animals injured during on call will be evaluated by the responding officer. If the animal is suffering and not likely to survive it will be euthanized. If at all possible an attempt to locate a medical rescue should be done the following morning.

4.3 Children at Shelter

The Animal Shelter is a quarantine area and children will not be allowed to enter the kennel area.

4.4 Cleanliness of Kennel Cages

Condition of cages is a primary area the public will view and make a determination of how animals are being treated. Animals that have food, water, and clean cages will present a positive image to the public and allow a positive perception to develop regarding care of the animals. Cleanliness should consist of **more than the initial morning cleaning** of cages. All Shelter staff should be aware of citizen perceptions and should periodically monitor cages and fenced run area. If necessary clean, or take necessary action to maintain sanitary conditions for animals. The on-call officer will be designated to clean the kennels for the week. Cleaning should be done at the start of the shift. The animals should be check at the end of the shift to insure they have water for the night. Any dirty kennels should be cleaned at this time also.

4.5 Collars - put on all Animals

Any animal having a collar (whether surrendered or picked up in the field) should continue wearing their collar while at the Shelter. If the collar is dirty, tattered, too tight or

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embedded; remove it and discard.

4.6 Coyotes

You cannot catch a coyote with a snare pole, please do not attempt this. You will not attempt to dart a coyote and TPWL discourages this. In the event that the coyote is a nuisance, Animal Control will contact TPWL Biologists for recommendations. Should animal control come in contact with an injured Coyote, it will be considered a wild-animal and humanely euthanized. Staff should attempt to educate the public and inform citizens not to let their cats or small dogs run loose.

Coyotes are rarely aggressive and are terrified of people. **There has NEVER been a recorded Coyote attack in Texas.** The only times that coyotes are threatened is when people get too close and corner them, and they just want to escape. They are in this area because they are hungry and their homes are eliminated by home building. It is common for them to eat cats, mice, and other vermin but NOT PEOPLE.

In the event that we have more than 10 sightings in a month, officers will contact TPWL biologists to start a program for our area.

4.7 Deceased Animals - Bag

Deceased animals either picked up in the field or those at the Shelter should be bagged. The issue of decaying matter is a nuisance and health issue; the bagging of the deceased will aid in lowering of flies and odor that could become a problem in the summer.

4.8 Dispatch – Radio Operations

Field Officers will receive calls while in the Field from the police dispatcher. At no time will Officers argue or complain with dispatcher regarding their assigned calls. Proper and appropriate radio etiquette and language are expected of all Officers and staff. Officers are prohibited from using slang or excessive verbiage.

4.9 Donations

The County Judge has approved the acceptance of donations.

4.10 Equipment Issued and Responsibility

Truck equipment is the fiscal responsibility of the Officer who is assigned the truck. If the truck doors are not locked and equipment is stolen/damaged, RCRA will hold the Officer responsible. Any personal items left in the trucks are the owner's responsibility and Animal Control and Refugio County are not responsible if something is lost/stolen.

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4.11 Facility Location

The Animal Shelter operates out of the Woodsboro Landfill located at 187 Landfill Rd. Woodsboro, Texas 78393.

The mailing address is 808 Commerce St. Refugio, TX 78377.

4.12 Hours of Operation

The hours of operation may periodically change to accommodate special needs. The current hours of operation are Monday-Friday 7:00am -4:00pm

4.13 Inclement Weather

City services will be maintained, if possible, during inclement weather such as in storms, hurricanes, ice storms, etc.

Unnecessary travel will be avoided during inclement weather.

4.14 Livestock

Livestock calls are to be handled by the Police Department or Sheriff's Office. If requested an officer may assist but will not take custody of livestock.

4.15 Micro Chip - Scanning for Micro Chips

Officers should check for existing tags, tattoos (inside the lip, flank, and ear), microchips, or any other type of identification. All animals should be scanned a minimum of three times as indicated below. This scanning will include the entire body as some chips can migrate down the shoulder.

- **First scan:** Officers will scan when animal is brought to Shelter or with Owner Surrender Animals (in case they are really not the Owner) or cats and dogs (alive or deceased) picked up in the Field.
- **Second scan:** Kennel staff will scan all live and deceased cats and dogs upon entry into the shelter.
- **Third scan:** Staff will scan prior to euthanasia.

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4.16 Muzzle Instructions –“Tying a Muzzle”

If a muzzle is available please use it. This muzzle can be very useful in protecting Animal Control Officers from animals that may have cause to try and bite. Material (such as a leash) for a muzzle should always be on hand in case you need to make one. **NOTE: All injured animals should be muzzled and then the muzzle removed after animal is loaded into truck or carrier.**

4.17 On-Call Status and On-Call Vehicle Use

The primary purpose of "on-call" is to provide assistance to Fire and Police Dispatch and citizens who request emergency service after hours.

- **Working on-call shift is a requirement for all Officers.**
- On-call hours will vary depending on need.
- Animal Control provides dispatch with a listing of “on-call” Officers.
- Employee must be able to respond to any location **within one-hour** from the time a call is received.

4.18 Open Records Request

The Public Information Act was adopted by the Texas Legislature to ensure the public has access to documents relating to operations of its governments. All open records requests have to be in writing and if staff receives a request please give the request to the County Judge’s Office.

4.19 Purchases

Authorized staff, shall purchase all equipment and supplies as needed. All receipts will be turned in to the Auditors Office as soon as possible after purchase.

4.20 Receiving Animals

Officers are to put healthy animals in their designated areas and provide fresh water and food.

Adult Dogs

- Healthy impounded dogs will be put in approved stray areas only.
- Unhealthy impounded dogs will be in holding areas that would assist with disease prevention.

Puppies

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- Healthy impounded puppies will be kenneled with their mother if she is present.
- Unhealthy puppies will be placed in holding areas that would assist with disease prevention.

Adult Cats

- Healthy adult cats will be relocated to be used as barn cats or will be offered for adoption. Refugio County Animal Control does not currently have an area to house stray cats.

Kittens

- Healthy kittens will be relocated to be used as barn cats or will be offered for adoption.

Wildlife

- All wildlife will be given fresh food & water. Wildlife that is meant to be relocated MUST NOT be left in a trap for more than 24hrs.
- Although some wildlife appears “cute,” it will NOT be handled for pleasure. PPEs and bite prevention gloves must be utilized when handling wildlife and traps containing wildlife.
- Skunks will not be relocated and should be humanely euthanized in the field or upon intake. Bats will not be relocated and should be humanely euthanized and processed accordingly if exposure is present.
 - Food for Wildlife (most common)
 - Opossums – Wet cat food
 - Squirrels – Dry cat food

5. Administrative Operations

5.1 Adoption Policy

Dogs and cats may be discharged from Animal Control by being adopted, redeemed or transferred to rescue. The adoption fee is \$25.00. Adoption animals are animals that have either been placed at the shelter by a previous owner or impounded as a stray and have not been claimed by their owner within the 3-5 day holding period and deemed adoptable by staff. Citizen adoptions are handled on a “first-come, first-serve” basis, the day the animal becomes available.

All adopters must agree to Spay/Neuter any animal adopted.

Animal Control **does not hold** animals, promise any dates or times and informs each customer it is a “first-come, first-serve” basis. However, in order to assist animal adoptions, if a citizen is adamant to adopt an animal and cannot get the animal until later in the day, then staff has the authority to:

- Adopt the animal.
- Have the citizen pay the entire adoption fee in advance on the day it is available.
- Put up a sign that animal has been adopted.

A. Rescues/Placement Groups

An animal is available to a qualified rescue group if the rescue group is established with the shelter **and the animal is in need of going to a rescue group.**

Any registered rescue group can adopt an animal for **no fee.**

The rescue group will be responsible to Spay/Neuter any animal rescued.

It is staff's responsibility to assure rescue groups are registered with the Shelter. If a rescue person does not have a copy of the 501 (c) (3) on file, then staff doesn't adopt to them until they have met the guidelines as stated in procedure. They can adopt the animal as any citizen can adopt, but they would not get the animal at no charge.

B. Very Important Pets (VIP) animals

Animals that have been at the Shelter for 7 or more days are considered very important pets. Staff should use all resources to get these VIP animals adopted or to a Rescue groups. The adoption fee for these animals will be \$15.

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5.2 Animal Abandoned at Shelter

If an abandoned animal has a known owner, the Staff will contact the owner or responsible party **at least twice** (preferably by telephone and a door tag) requesting that they claim their animal. Abandonment charges may be pursued for failure to comply.

5.3 Animals Appearance

Adopting quality and clean animals should be a major goal for Shelter staff. Staff can give stray or adoptable animals a bath, groom and de-flea. Having animals that look good will help get the animals adopted.

5.4 Animal Behavioral Evaluation

Upon the owner surrender the animal should be tested to determine if it can be safely adopted. If the animal is too aggressive and cannot be safely adopted it is to be euthanized after checking for a microchip.

5.5 Animal Holding Days at Shelter

Holding period for animals is as follows:

- Owner Surrender: Have staff evaluate, and if adoptable animal will **be immediately ready for adoption.**

Persons who have been feeding and taking care of animals for 3 days or longer will be considered owners. Less than 3 days, the animal will be classified as stray and the following stray surrender policy will apply.

- Animals with no collar or microchip will be held for 3 days (72 hours from time of pick up) for an owner to claim before adoption.
- Animals with a collar or microchip will be held for 5 days (120 hours from time of pick up) for an owner to claim before adoption.
- Animals under 4 months of age will not have a stray hold and will be available for adoption at time of pick up.

Following is how to calculate the 3 day holding period for stray animals.

- The day animal is picked up is day one. Example: pickup dog/cat on Saturday then Saturday is day one.
- Add 3 (three) days **after** the date the animal is brought in.
- Don't count Holidays as part of the days.

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5.6 Animals Returned

Animals may be returned to Shelter during regular business hours. Animal Control cannot refund money for adoptions.

Staff will decide if the citizen is eligible to adopt another animal, and if they are not eligible staff will inform citizen that they are not eligible to adopt an animal.

5.7 Complaint Calls

Whoever receives an animal complaint call is responsible for handling the call. Most calls will come in through the Dispatch Center.

5.8 Dangerous and Vicious (D&V)

Staff must first research the incident before a citizen files a D&V affidavit. Per County Ordinance, *Dangerous animal* means any animal that:

1. Makes an unprovoked attack on a person that causes bodily injury and occurs in a place other than an enclosure in which the animal was being kept and that was reasonably certain to prevent the animal from leaving the enclosure on its own; or
2. Commits unprovoked attack in a place other than an enclosure in which the animal was being kept and that was reasonably certain to prevent the animal from leaving the enclosure on its own and those acts cause a person to reasonably believe that the animal will attack and cause bodily injury to that person.

If the above has been met, the citizen can file an affidavit with an Animal Control Officer. The affidavit is to be notarized by a notary public. A hearing will be set to determine if D&V applies to the incident. Notification will be made to the owner of the animal by an Animal Control Officer. The owner of the animal(s) must then have the animal in a quarantine environment pending the outcome of the hearing.

5.9 Priority Calls

A. Emergency calls

Calls involving an urgent situation such as animal attacks, animal bites, injured animals, or high-risk wildlife inside the home should be responded to on a priority one basis.

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B. Stray animal calls

Animals at-large are considered a priority but not above the emergency-type call. Public contact is important. It shall be the responsibility of the responding Officer to make phone contact with the complainant or if complainant gives approval for the Officer to visit with them then the Officer should stop by the complainant's residence and visit with them.

C. Dead animal calls

This includes animals that are deceased on public roadways, private and public property. These types of calls are a low priority, but do need to be attended to as soon as possible. Owned deceased animals should be brought to Animal Control by the owner. Dead animals are not to be transported on a vehicle with live animals.

D. Complaint calls

Complainant calls consist of: restraint, sanitation, noise, wildlife and cruelty. Officers should respond to these calls within forty-eight (48) hours unless immediate attention is needed. Due to the diplomacy necessary in handling complaint calls, each Officer is cautioned as to the possibility of an adverse reaction. Contact with citizens whose animals are the cause of a complaint shall be made aware that a complaint has been filed with Animal Control. They should be informed as to the nature of the complaint and precautionary steps they might take to correct the problem. *"The name of the informant may not be given out, because they do not fall under the Open Records Act of Texas."* A written warning or citation will be issued if violations are noted. A follow-up call to complainants is recommended within seventy-two (72) hours to notify of complaint status or remedy to close the complaint.

5.10 Evaluating Shelter Dogs

All dogs entering the shelter should be temperament tested to see how they react to people and other dogs. This information is critical to the adoption and rescue process.

5.11 Fees

The following fees will apply.

Impound fee \$35.00 for first day and \$5.00 for each additional day.

Owner surrender fee \$50.00

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Quarantine fee \$35 for first day and \$10 for each additional day.

Adoption fee \$25.00.

5.13 Internet Posting of Animals

The Shelter's Internet website should be updated as needed. Animals **available for adoption** should have photographs posted on the Shelter's website so citizens can view available adoptable animals.

All animals will be posted on Shelter's website on impound.

5.14 Lost/Stray/Found

Maximum efforts to identify and locate the owner of an impounded animal should be instituted by Animal Control personnel.

- Officers obtaining animals should check and trace any existing tags, tattoos, microchips, or any other type of identification.
- Microchip scanning will occur at the Animal Control facility regardless whether the animal is a stray or is owner surrendered.
- If identification is found, staff members or Officers will attempt, within twenty-four (24) hours, to contact the appropriate agent or person that the identification is registered to, so that they can obtain owner information. If owner information is obtained, the owner should be notified by phone, voice mail, door tag, and/or in person and these attempts to notify the owner should be documented. At least two attempts should be made to notify the owner of an impounded stray animal.

Lost, stray, and found impounded animals will be placed in stray kennels and held for three (3) calendar days so owners have the opportunity to redeem them. Boarding fees will be charged for business days (open to the public) only. One day (or any part of any day) consists of the 24-hour period from 12:01 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.

5.15 LRCA (Local Rabies Control Authority) Incidents

- **KENNELS:** The Quarantine Kennels are clearly marked with required placards. The quarantine area has the required SOP manual inside the room that is available for review of staff or officials at any time.
- **QUARANTINE:** In the event that a quarantined animal is in the kennels the

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building will be prohibited and inaccessible by the public. Only authorized staff may access this building once it has been shut down for quarantine.

REPORTS: Incident (bite/scratch/exposure) reports are to be done in any instance where a person or pet may have come into contact with one of the five rabies carrying species (bat, coyote, fox, raccoon, and skunk). If possible contact exists with above five, the animal will be submitted for testing. Depending on the circumstance other domestic and livestock may require ship and test. Officers taking a ship-and-test specimen to McCoy's for shipment, please make sure date taken to McCoy's is noted on the back of incident report under "Head shipped" and include your initials and date.

LRCA Officers will be in charge of the LRCA observations twice a day. On weekends or days Shelter is closed, Officer on duty is to check and update LRCA observations. Below is a guideline to assist Officer who is daily updating the LRCA book.

- The Officer who does the LRCA observation needs to go through each LRCA sheet. If the animal is in the shelter, indicate that you checked the animal for the day you are doing the sheet and indicate a.m. or p.m.
- If the animal is at a vet's office and it is a 5 day check or 10 day release, please call the vet and mark accordingly. Shelter does not call vets everyday – only on the 1st, 5th and 10th day for the release.
- If the animal is a stray and Officers need to patrol, make sure other officers are aware to look for the animal. If you find the "stray" animal, bring it back to the shelter, log it in and mark the book accordingly. If Officer has time, take the animal by the victim's house for them to identify to make sure we have the correct animal in quarantine or take photos and email to the victim. If Officer does not have time to take the animal by victim's residence, please call the victim once you arrive back at the shelter and make arrangements for them to identify the animal.
- Most importantly, please make sure that you read ALL the notes on the back of the report before calling an owner in the morning. If arrangements have been made by another Officer for the owner to bring the animal in or have it at a vet's office by a certain time later that day, do not call them again until after that arranged time. Give the owner time to comply with the arrangements they have already been given.
- On the final day of quarantine, call and or mark the appropriate place on the report – the victim **MUST** be called to notify them that the animal has cleared quarantine. If the animal is a stray, and we have not apprehended the animal, advise victim to consult their physician.

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- If the animal is owned, call the owner to let them know they may pick up their animal. If the animal is owned and at the shelter quarantine, call the victim and the owner

Ship-and-test results should be attached to the LRCA incident report located under pending "DSHS" results located in the back of LRCA book.

If the owner of quarantine animals brings their animal(s) to the shelter, Administrative staff will notify them of all charges and any possible citations. This benefits Animal Control Staff and the Owner as the Owner will know the charges prior to getting their animal out of quarantine.

5.16 Open Records Request

The Public Information Act was adopted by the Texas Legislature to ensure the public has access to documents relating to operations of its governments. Any form of **written** request should be accepted as a request for public information, regardless if the request is emailed, faxed or received in the mail. There is no legal requirement that any request be notarized and any requirement to do so may be construed as an unlawful delay in responding to a request for public information.

Each written request is processed case by case.

- All requests for information must be **made in writing** and must specify exactly what they are requesting. All requests for records are given to the **County secretary**.
- Staff has **ten business days** to respond to an open records request.

Incident (bite/scratch/exposure) reports – when processing a request for information regarding an incident report, you can only provide the name and address. You must block out:

- Phone numbers.
- Driver's license number.
- Date of birth of any individual.

Owner's Address - If someone calls finding an animal with city registration take their name and phone number. **Staff will contact the owner** and request them contact the finder. *Do not provide the finder with any information.*

Registration Information – Shelter cannot release registration information to persons or companies desiring a mailing list. Registry of dogs and cats is confidential information per Health and Safety code 826.0311.

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If there is a question whether information is exempted from the Public Information Act, contact the County Secretaries office.

5.17 **Owner Definition**

State law states a person is owner/guardian of an animal if they housed or fed an animal for seventy-two (72) hours. County Ordinance defines the owner as someone who has taken care of the animal for at least three (3) days. Often time's people will feed an animal out of pity and then resort to contacting animal control when they cannot locate the owner of an animal. Use discretion and understand that penalizing someone for trying to do the right thing is not good customer service. Always provide them with the local rescue contacts.

5.18 **Owner Redemption**

Owner redeemed animals are those animals that are being claimed by their owner after being impounded. The owner may claim animals by completing the following:

- Furnishing a valid driver's license/identification.
- Being at least 18 years of age.
- Paying impound and boarding fees.
 - The daily board fee will be charged for "business days" (when the Shelter is open to the public).
 - For two owned animals in the same kennel, the charge is calculated as if only one animal.
 - Animals returned to the Owner before being placed into a kennel (animals still on the truck) the Owner is not charged the boarding fee.
 - Once an animal is **put into** a kennel boarding fees will be charged.
- Providing proof of current Rabies Vaccination and City Registration or receiving a citation or warning.

Current City Registration would allow staff to know that rabies vaccination proof had been submitted when City tags were issued. If rabies vaccination or current registration cannot be shown, staff will issue a written warning (if it is the first impound), and allow owner to take their animal(s). This allows the owner to redeem their animal(s) and provides them with seven days to acquire a rabies vaccination for the animal(s). If the owner returns within seven days to show proof of rabies vaccination and purchases a City Registration (if they live in an incorporated city), then the warning will be closed. Otherwise, a regular citation will be issued by the Officer who wrote the warning.

5.19 **Owner Surrender**

Staff receiving an animal will discuss the animal's health and temperament with the owner. Based on this discussion the animal may not be suitable for adoption. At this point the owner should be informed that the animal will have to go to a rescue group or **may** be

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euthanized. Staff cannot promise or guarantee that the animal will go to rescue.

If the Owner decides to surrender the animal then they must show a valid driver's license or valid identification and a copy of this identification should be documented. This would prove valuable in case an animal has been possibly stolen or involved in a domestic dispute.

It is the responsibility of staff to inform citizens that euthanasia is a possible outcome, and Animal Shelter staff **will not** follow-up with phone calls to discuss the disposition of their animal. If the owner has released the animal to Animal Control, they have given up their ownership rights.

If the animal is deemed adoptable the following should be performed.

- List the animal as available on the Animal Control website.
- Contact rescue groups that may be interested in the animal.

5.20 Protective Custody Impounds

Protective custody animals will be kept for a period of Five (5) business days. Upon completion of the time provided, if no other arrangements have been made with the Animal Control the animal will be considered abandoned and become the property of Refugio County Animal Control.

Some reasons to have protective custody impounds are owners are incarcerated or unable to care for their animal due to mental or physical conditions. Impounds from deceased owners are property of the estate and should be cared for until written notification can be obtained from the executor of the estate. The executor should be sent a certified letter informing them they can claim the animals, release the animals to the shelter or indicate who will be claiming the animals. Usually there is no charge for protective custody impounds, however, each case will be reviewed to determine if any fees are due.

5.21 Rescue Groups - Contact

Daily, all animals should be reviewed to determine how long they have been at the shelter. Every effort should be made to find homes for animals that have been at the Shelter the longest. **If animals have been at the Shelter for at least three adoptable days then staff may contact Rescues.**

If a Rescue Group indicates they want an animal, staff can indicate on the cage when the animal will be picked up. If the Rescue Group can't pickup the animal by the specified date then they must notify the shelter, in writing, when they will take the animal.

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If a rescue group is unable to take said animal within a **five day (5) period** (or the assessed time frame), then said animal will be placed in a qualified foster home.

Animal disposition due to disease outbreaks

Unfortunately, unhealthy stray animals eventually will be brought into the Shelter and staff will experience times when these animals expose healthy Shelter animals to various diseases. Good cleaning and reducing cross-contamination reduces but will never eliminate animal exposure to these diseases. Due to the Shelter's limited area for putting incoming animals and the timeframe for exposure to diseases such as distemper and parvo, every precaution must be taken to avoid exposure of healthy animals to sick animals. Once the extent of disease is determined Management should make a determination for all new incoming animals. If a decision is made not to accept any incoming animals or to let existing animals go to rescue or foster homes staff will immediately contact rescue groups and inform them of the Shelter's circumstance.

Sick or Aggressive Animals

Normally, sick animals may not be released due to the public safety and possible cross contamination to outside healthy animals. However, some rescues have funding to take these sick animals directly to a Veterinarian Clinic and if staff discusses the Animal's health with the group and they can provide medical treatment then this will be documented and the animal could be released to the rescue group. **Aggressive animals will not be released to anyone. They are a liability and a possible public danger.**

5.22 Sterilization Program

Sterilization of an adopted animal is required under Texas State law, *V.T.C.A., Health and Safety, Chapter 828*. All adoptions will be contingent upon the adopter agreeing to spay or neuter the animal.

Citizens that fail to comply with their sterilization contract will receive a sterilization citation.

5.23 Volunteers

Due to liability issues volunteers will not be permitted at this time. The County Judge may at his discretion allow volunteers to assist with animal care.

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6. KENNEL OPERATIONS

6.1 Introduction

All staff should assist with cleaning animal cages.

A. Kennel Staff (Animal Control Officers)

Primary duties include:

- Wash and sanitize all dog kennels in the morning and throughout the day as needed and at night prior to feeding.
- Provide fresh water for all animals.
- Feed animals at the beginning of the shift and at the end of the shift, except puppies/kittens who need food at all times. Any adult animal that is emaciated will have food available at all times.

Other duties listed in alphabetical order include (but not limited to):

- Assist with bathing and grooming animals.
- Assist with euthanasia as needed.
- Bag and remove feces from yard and take to outside dumpster.
- Empty trash cans.
- Clean live animal traps.
- Inventory supplies.
- Monitor and replenish inventory of food, litter, and cleaning supplies.
- Perform minor equipment/kennel repairs/ traps.
- Perform ship and test of rabies samples.
- Sanitize cages, flooring, doors and windows.
- Scan animals for micro chipping.
- Show animals to potential adopters
- Exercise animals in fenced yard.
- Wash all animal food bowls and water pails.

6.2 Animal Assessments

All dogs and cats coming into the Shelter should be evaluated for adoptability. The officer shall determine if an animal is adoptable.

If an Animal is considered not adoptable, a decision should be made to contact rescue or perform euthanasia. If not eligible for rescue then euthanasia is needed.

If strays are not redeemed within three (3) days, and the animal is deemed adoptable, the

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animal will be listed as available for rescue or adoption on the Animal Control website with updated photos of the animal.

6.3 Beds/Mats

When a dog is put into one of the kennels, staff putting the dog into the kennel should provide a bed or mat for the dog. Any staff observing a dog chewing on bed or mat should pick up the bed or mat and put up signs indicating "I chew my bed". If the dog chews on bedding, they do not get a mat. Please adhere to posted "I chew my bed" signs.

If mats are not available then large towels or a blanket can be put down for injured, old, or dogs needing surgery. To pick up towels, staff should use snake or cat tongs or the end of a broom handle. Beds or mats should be washed down in the cages to remove all debris. Staff **will** sanitize mats/beds before being used with a different animal.

6.4 CLEANING CAGES PROCEDURES

A. Introduction

Cleaning needs to be performed in a specific order to reduce cross contamination. As Animal Control employees, everyone has a role to be animal caretakers and be included in the cleaning and sanitizing process.

Clean all cages in the following order:

1. Quarantine dogs & cats.
2. Adoptable dogs.
3. Stray dogs.

While cleaning staff needs to wear safety equipment. All staff cleaning kennels must wear the recommended proper cleaning attire, approved boots, ear plugs, gloves, or goggles. **No exceptions are to be made regarding the wearing of safety equipment.**

While cleaning, be aware of the animal's health and if any visible health problems are noticed, notify a Supervisor. Beds or mats may need to be sanitized.

Health problems to watch for include the following:

- Blood in stool or urine.
- Discharge from eyes or nose.
- Runny eyes or nose.
- Third eyelid showing.
- Loss of weight.
- Coughing or sneezing.
- Vomiting.
- Lethargy or any other health issues not mentioned.

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B. Puppy/Kitten

- Remove bowls.
- Clean cages.
- Disinfect cages.
- Wash bowls.
- Provide fresh water.
- Provide food.

C. Cat - Isolation and Quarantine

Follow the above cleaning procedures, but use bite/rabies gloves, restraint devices, squeeze net or other humane methods as needed.

D. DOGS - Adoptable and Stray

- Evaluate stray dogs that have been at the shelter on their fourth or fifth day. If qualified staff determines they are considered adoptable list them on the Animal Control Website as available for rescue or adoption with an updated photo.
- Scan for microchip
- Evaluate stray dogs to determine if any conditions warrant euthanasia.
- Prior to cleaning cages, move dogs to an empty kennel, crate, or fenced yard. Animals may remain in kennel while spot cleaning however, do not get dogs wet.
 - Due to possible illness of Shelter dogs, it is recommended not getting the dogs wet and to eliminate standing water. Squeegee water off of floors, walls, and beds.
 - DOGS MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE KENNEL PRIOR TO CLEANING. – put them in a clean kennel. If time allows, place dog in exercise yard.
 - Quarantine dogs **will not** be removed from the quarantine building.
- Remove each food bowl and empty remaining contents into appropriate trash containers.
- If deep cleaning is needed, sanitize the food and water dishes.
- ***NEVER HOSE DOGS DOWN WITH WATER or throw water from the***

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water bowls on animals. Part of staff's job is to take care of animals in Shelter's custody. If dogs or puppies get wet during initial or spot cleaning then they will need to be dried off.

- Scoop feces FIRST before spraying kennels.
- Rinse all waste and urine into the drains.
- Add current cleaning solution into spray bottles. Attach the spray bottle to the water hose and spray walls, floor, and the bed for each kennel, occupied or not.
- Leave the disinfectant on the kennel floor at least ten minutes.
- Rinse the disinfectant after ten minutes and squeegee the kennel floor.
- Refill each dog water bowl with fresh clean water, as needed.
Staff will put out fresh food prior to leaving for the day (4:00pm) or as needed.
- New animals received after feeding time, will receive fresh food and water.

ANY STANDING WATER SHOULD BE REMOVED WITH A SQUEEGEE.

E. DOGS - Isolation and Quarantine

Anyone handling any quarantine animal must wear gloves and goggles at all times when feeding, watering, and cleaning. These animals are in isolation due to suspected illness or rabies.

Dogs in isolation needing medicine prescribed by a Veterinarian may be administered by qualified staff. Friendly, housebroken dogs may be walked on a leash by authorized staff, but must not have contact with other dogs, citizens or volunteers. To prevent cross contamination, clean your shoes with disinfectant.

Quarantine kennels should be given the same attention as the above procedures. Also, any visible health problems or change in temperament should be reported immediately to a Supervisor. Some signs of clinical and dumb rabies are:

- Attacks on inanimate objects.
- Dazed staring.
- Limb paralysis.
- States of confusion or stupors.
- Unable to drink water.
- Unable to or difficulties in swallowing.
- Depression.

IF ANY DOG DIES PRIOR TO THE END OF THE TEN (10) DAY QUARANTINE PERIOD, THE HEAD MUST BE SENT TO DSHS FOR RABIES TESTING.

F. Flushing Dog Drain

Dogs waste, hair and other debris is often hosed into the drain. Once all dog

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kennels are cleaned then the drain needs to be flushed.

Staff should spray the water hose full force into the drain opening at least one full minute to flush the drain.

6.5 Euthanasia

Any dog or cat that requires euthanasia should be transported to the Sinton Veterinary Clinic or any other licensed veterinarian to be humanely euthanized.

Owned animals are not euthanized on demand. Refugio County Animal Control is not an Animal Care Service. Advise the citizen that they need to contact their personal veterinarian.

6.6 Insect Control

To fulfill the requirements of DSHS insect control regulations pertaining to monthly applications of insecticide, Permethrin will be sprayed throughout the kennel area on the first business day of each month.

6.7 Inspection of Cages

The public and Animal Shelter management expect animals at the shelter to have fresh water, food, and clean cages. In order to assure that animals have this environment kennels will be cleaned at the start of each shift. On holidays and weekends the on-call officer is responsible for cleaning. Spot cleaning of all cages and kennels will be performed regularly throughout the day.

6.8 Inventory Kennel Operation

Staff should take a daily inventory of all Kennel supplies. Staff should maintain a minimum of two-week inventory of supplies, or depending on lead-time and shipping, Staff may need to maintain a monthly supply. Never allow cleaning supplies, animal food, or litter to run out.

6.9 Quarantine Animals – Special Food

When citizens bring in special food for their quarantine animals, staff needs to be diligent in feeding quarantine animals their special food. Due to medical issues, the Shelter could face some major problems if an animal is fed the wrong food. Staff should indicate special needs on a clipboard attached to the front of appropriate kennel indicating the special needs for the animal. Any special food is to be placed on top of the animal's kennel.

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6.10 Rabies Quarantine

In compliance with *Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 826, Rabies Control Act, Rules of the Board*, entities which operate quarantine facilities must implement minimum standard operating procedures. Each quarantine facility shall specify in writing, how each of the minimum standards will be accomplished. More stringent standards may be implemented by each quarantine facility.

6.11 Sanitizing – Manual Instructions

To clean and sanitize bowls:

- Fill a sink with hot soapy water.
- Place empty food bowls into the hot soapy water.
- Scrub bowls that have been soaking to remove debris.
- Put the bowls in the sink with hot water and rinse each bowl with hot clean water.
- Fill up a sink with a mild water bleach solution.
- Put the rinsed bowl into the sink of bleach water so that each bowl can be sanitized by leaving in the bleach water for ten (10) minutes.
- Stack each bowl separately to air dry.

6.12 Ship and Test Process

Any Officer bringing in an animal for ship-and-test needs to fill out DSHS form G-9. High risk animals known for being a rabies carrier involved in a possible rabies exposure need to be sent to Austin for rabies testing. Anyone trained can perform the animal decapitation and take to McCoy Veterinary Clinic in Sinton, TX for shipment to Austin. Follow the instructions as listed in Title 25, Health Services part I. Texas Department of Health Chapter 169.33, Submission of Specimens for Laboratory Examination. The following is the procedure for HFL.

- Use gloves, face shield, and plastic apron.
- The party should already have the pre-exposure shots.
- Use a knife to do the initial cut, place the head in a plastic sealed bag.
- Mark on the outside of the bag the ID number or incident number.
- Place the first bag in a second bag and mark the ID number or incident number.
- Place newspaper and frozen gel packs between the head and the cardboard outer box shell.
- Fill out the Rabies Submission Form G-9.
- Place stickers on sealed box from: Refugio County Animal Control to DSHS.
- Call the shippers notification hotline number.
- Take to the shipping facility.

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- Wash hands and arms thoroughly when finished.

Prepare the specimens and seal up the box. After shipment is taken to McCoy's get an estimated time of arrival.

Contact DSHS at 1-800-252-8163 and provide them with the following information:

- Current date and time.
- Senders name and city.
- Exact # and animal type.
- ID# or incident #.
- Method of shipment.
- Estimated time of arrival.
- Shelter phone 361-526-4434

Once the testing is completed, Austin will verbally contact the Shelter with the results and then send a written copy which is attached to the LRCA report. Staff will inform the exposure victims of the test results.

6.13 Walking Animals

Since dogs are social animals, efforts should be made to periodically walk them in the enclosed exercise areas. This greatly increases the chance of the animal(s) getting adopted, and owners will have less stress in animals adjusting to their new home if the animal is house trained. This would require adoptable animals to be walked at least once a day. Many animals come to the shelter already house trained, and if left to relieve themselves in their kennels, chances of them being returned to the shelter for not being house trained will be high. Urine, bladder and colon problems may occur if the animal will not eliminate in their cage. Animals that are house trained should have a sign on their kennel cage indicating such and must be walked daily. *Dogs that get along can be allowed in the fenced yard together.* As little as thirty (30) seconds a day can reinforce to a dog that it is loved.

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7. FIELD OPERATIONS

7.1 Introduction

Field Operations consists of Animal Control Officers working outside the shelter, patrolling the County and responding to dispatched calls to enforce County Ordinance, and handling citizen requests. Basic job responsibilities for Officers and LRCA are the following (listed in alpha order):

A. Officers

- Assists in keeping shelter and shelter grounds clean.
- Assist with public education programs as necessary.
- Completes various reports, complaints, worksheets.
- Investigates citizen complaints, animal bites, scratches, possible rabies exposure and cruelty cases.
- Issues citations and warnings for non-compliance to City/County Ordinance.
- Patrols the County to enforce Texas State laws and City/County Ordinance.
- Performs all duties associated with Administrative, Kennel and Field Operations.
- Performs euthanasia and ship and test.
- Represent the County in Municipal and County Court regarding City/County ordinance violations.

B. LRCA

- Discussions with citizens regarding LRCA incidents, Dangerous animals, City Ordinance, policies and State laws.
- Performs all duties associated with Administrative, Field and Kennel Operations.
- Prepares court documentation.
- Reviews, revises, recommends, and implements changes to City ordinances, policies, and procedures.

7.2 Animals Receiving Process

A. Strays

County Ordinance grants the animal control authority or any Police Officer to take up and impound any animal found at large in violation of this chapter. If the owner, keeper, or harbinger of such animal is known or can be readily ascertained, Animal Control Officer should notify them by telephone, personal service, certified mail, or door tag no later than twenty-four (24) hours following such impoundment or after obtaining owner information. If there is a match with microchips, collars or flyers, please contact owner and inform owner the Shelter

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has impounded their animal and explain the Shelter's redemption process and fees charged. Document contact date and time.

Unhealthy or injured animals will be scanned for a microchip. Depending on some injuries the animal may need to be put into quarantine cages, area away from public view or in some cases may need to be euthanized. If the animal has a microchip and must be euthanized the owner is to be notified and any collar or tag will be returned to them upon their request.

B. Wildlife

If Officers trap wildlife (Opossum, squirrel, armadillo) they are to release the animal near a water source. No employee may take any wildlife home.

For all animals please do the following:

- Leave any tags and collars on animals.
- Scan for microchips.
- Place animal in appropriate cage or kennel.
- Provide food/water.
- Provide bedding or mat according to procedure.
- Document date animal available (remember: Calculation of the three (3) or five (5) day holding period for stray animals. You add three or five days after the date the animal is brought in. Count the day you bring in the animal as day one).

After an Officer impounds an animal its photo will be placed on the Animal Control website for the owner to locate.

7.3 Calls Mandatory

Field Officers receive animal related calls throughout their shift and need to use common sense when handling these calls. The highest priority calls need to be run immediately and other calls completed as time permits.

Priority calls - listed in alphabetical order and **not by priority**:

- Animals attacking people or pets.
- **Visible** animals in the residence- high risk (bat, coyotes, foxes, raccoon or skunks)
- Animal injured (struck by car, severe injuries...etc.)
- LRCA incident (stray at large).
- LRCA incident (stray confined).
- Police and Fire assist (aggressive dog – paramedics can't get in to treat

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victim).

- Police and Fire assist (dog in car – stressed).
- Police and Fire assist (drug arrest).
- Stray dogs (playgrounds, schools, parks, neighborhoods).

Secondary Priority calls - Emergency calls that are less than primary priority, are to be ran before “other calls”. These include, (listed in alphabetical order) and not by priority:

- Police and Fire assist (accident and victim taken hospital).
- Police and Fire assist (deceased victim, needs Shelter to take animals).
- Trapped animal in inclement weather (unless resident places trapped animal in garage or has it protected from weather).
- Welfare or cruelty complaint.
- Wildlife inside house and **visible** (not in attic, garage, shed yard or chimney itself does not qualify).

All “**other calls**” are handled in a priority manner starting with:

- Animals at large.
- Complaints reports (depending on weather and type of problem).
- Confined strays.
- LRCA incident (owned).
- Police and Fire assist (dog in car – not stressed).
- Trapped - consider weather conditions.

There should not be an excessive number of calls not completed each day. Low priority calls may be forwarded to the next shift if appropriate to do so. **Emergency/priority calls will not be forwarded, but completed the same day in a timely fashion.**

If it is at the end of your shift and you receive a very *high priority call* you may run the call and then fill out your time sheet indicating why you handled the call. If you don't run the call, then the On-Call Officer would have to be contacted and this would delay service. Again, as an Officer you should use common sense to make this decision.

7.4 **Calls Pushed Back**

To clarify running calls, please be advised that while you are on duty please *run all calls* until your shift is completed. Obviously run high priority calls first and then use common sense for all other calls. Prioritizing your work load according to procedure is the Officers responsibility. Due to the number of calls, some calls will be pushed back and may be transferred to other Officers. Some types of pushed back calls are listed below in alpha order.

- Barking complaint.
- LRCA incident animal with owner/victim still at hospital (take incident report over the phone and explain quarantine process).
- Restraint complaint

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- Trapped animal in fair weather.
- Unsanitary complaint.
- Wildlife not in house. (Refer to appropriate wildlife specialist.)

7.5 Calls Postponed

Due to the amount of calls an Officer receives, an Officer may not have the opportunity to complete all their assigned calls. Any calls pending from the previous day will be handled at the beginning of the next shift unless a higher priority call is received.

7.6 Citation Issuance Procedure

When someone redeems their animal from the shelter, if the animal is not current on their rabies vaccination or registered with the city, either a citation is issued depending on prior impounds or a warning is issued. If a warning is issued, the owner is given seven (7) days to return to the shelter in person to comply with their warning. If the owner does not comply, a citation is issued.

7.7 Citations – Types

Citations are issued to pet owners who are in violation of Texas State Law and/or City/County ordinances. Pet owners or custodians must be at least 18 years of age. All citations are to be signed and turned in within 24 hours of issuance. Some reasons for issuing citations are listed below.

A. City Registration

- This citation is issued to any resident who doesn't have a **current** City Registration tag for their animal.
-

B. LRCA Incidents

- If the animal is not current on vaccinations a citation is *always issued*. A warning for current city registration is acceptable.

C. Other citations

- Welfare, unsanitary conditions, livestock, wild or prohibited, etc. These are issued at the Officers' discretion.

D. Repeat offenders

- No proof of current city registration

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- No proof of current vaccination
- Animal at large
- Welfare
- Nuisance by waste, owners on scene of a loose dog call, loose dogs in City parks, dog park, police assist (dogs locked in cars).

E. Restraint

- Animals at large and followed home or released off the truck (to an owner 18 or over) will be given a warning, unless prior impounds or complaints of no restraint are noted. In this case issue an animal at large citation. Never place an animal in a backyard even if you are 100% sure it lives at the residence. Officer may ask neighbors, or if animal has tags, Officer will contact dispatch and confirm address. *Example of why you do not want to guess at where a dog lives: If an Officer guesses and puts the animal in an incorrect yard due to an open gate and leaves a door tag, the family could have a child that comes home from school or play and notices the animal in the backyard and while approaching the dog is attacked by a strange dog.* Always be safety minded. The location and time animal(s) was seen at-large needs documented on citation. Third and fourth impounds will also result in a citation being issued from the shelter with the impounding Officer's name, date, time and location of offense.

F. Vaccination

- This citation is issued to a guardian who owns animals that can't provide **proof of current** rabies vaccination. This citation is issued upon redemption of the animal from the shelter for a second, third or fourth impound, and for all animals involved in incident (bite, scratch or rabies exposure) cases. If this citation is issued in the field, it will be at the Officer's discretion depending on priors.

7.8 Complaints – Types

Complaints are assigned to Field Officers on duty and Officers need to have initial contact made within 24 hours of receiving the complaint unless the animal is in imminent danger. The following is a partial list of common complaints listed in alphabetical order:

- Cruelty/Welfare
- Noise.
- Restraint.
- Unsanitary conditions.
- Wild/prohibited.

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The owner should comply with proof of vaccination and city registration within seven (7) days to avoid possible citations. If unable to contact owner, Officer will leave a 48-hour "Notice to Contact" door tag so that the owner can contact the officer. If complaint calls cannot be resolved then please notify Supervisor or Manager so they can assist.

7.9 Door Tags

When using the door tag for LRCA incidents, fill out the tag and leave it on the resident's door. If possible slide the tag between the door and weather stripping instead of the door handle.

If an Officer leaves a door tag, citation or warning, it is his responsibility to follow up.

Violation

No current City tag displayed	48 hour
Pet not restrained	48 hour
Fence/gate will not restrain pet	48 hour
Animal impounded	48 hour
(Redemption fee will apply)	
No proof of rabies vaccination	48 hour
Animal nuisance by waste	48 hour
Animal nuisance by noise	48 hour
Incident (bite, scratch, rabies exposure)	24 hour
Animal welfare/cruelty	24 hour

7.10 Euthanasia in Field

In emergency circumstances, it may be necessary to euthanize an animal in the field. Examples are a severely injured animal or an aggressive animal that cannot be captured. Field euthanasia should be performed out of view of the public.

7.11 Forms Used

Description of forms commonly used at Animal Control. Forms should never be allowed to run out.

A. Adoption Contract

Contract citizens must fill out when they adopt an animal from the Shelter.

B. Animal LRCA Incident Reports

Form filled out for animal bites, scratches or possible rabies exposure. The form is

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to be kept in the incident report for the duration of the investigation and is not to be removed until the report has been cleared.

C. Door Tag

This tag is to be left at the residence when an Officer is unable to make contact with an animal owner or complainant. The Officer should check appropriate boxes and/or write an explanation on the back of the door tag and indicate specific hours for contact purposes and date needed for compliance.

D. DSHS – Severe Bite/Attack Form

DSHS form sent to State of Texas regarding severe bite attacks.

E. Fee Receipt

Form used to record fees paid for redemptions, adoptions and other services.

F. Leave/Overtime Request

Form used by staff when requesting vacation, sick time, comp, overtime, or bereavement leave.

G. Owner Surrender – Canine/Feline Profiles

Form used by owners surrendering their animal so staff has information regarding pet and owner.

H. Quarantine Release Form

Form used if home quarantine granted so owner can sign after the ten (10) day release.

7.12 Handling of Calls

Officers are to handle all calls in a timely manner by priority and not by time a call is received. Low priority calls may be held until the next shift if not practical to run before the end of shift. Officers should use good judgment and appropriate discretion when evaluating these issues.

- Animals attacking people or pets.
- Animals **in the residence**-high risk (bat, coyotes, foxes, raccoon or skunks.)
- Animal injured.
- LRCA incident (stray at large).

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- LRCA incident (stray confined).
- Police and Fire assist (aggressive dog – paramedics can't get in to treat victim).
- Police and Fire assist (dog in car – stressed).
- Police and Fire assist (drug arrest).
- Stray dogs (playgrounds, schools, parks, neighborhoods).

A. Animals in Attics or Walls

Refugio County Animal Control does not participate in the removal of wildlife or vermin inside of homes or walls. Animals trapped in walls are the resident's responsibility. Under no circumstances may an Officer cut into a wall, flooring, climb on top of a roof, move any furniture, other property, or climb a ladder to enter an attic.

B. Birds

Injured hawks, owls, etc., can hurt an Officer or citizen if not handled properly. Officers should wear gloves and use the net on the truck to effectively capture the bird. An Officer may also use a cotton towel or blanket. Once the animal has been captured, the bird should be transferred to a certified rescue.

Amos, Anthony	Port Aransas	Birds (incl. raptors)	361-442-7638 / 361-442-7638
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Parsons, Pamela	Corpus Christi	Birds (excl. raptors)	361-854-6710 / 361-854-6710 (after 5:30pm)
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C. Cats

Officers should always wear gloves prior to and during the handling of cats. To pick up a cat, hold the cat by the scruff of the neck and back legs. Place cat in the carry cage and place on the truck. A restraint pole may be used on feral or aggressive cats and a towel can be used for sick, or injured cats. Cats in traps should be transferred to a transfer cage by running them from the trap to the transfer cage.

If responding to a stray cat call and the Officer cannot apprehend the cat, then the complainant may use a live box trap to catch it. If an Officer can apprehend the cat, gloves are to be worn, and a carry cage should be readily accessible. Usually the officer makes **one physical** attempt to capture a loose cat. If that fails, a live box trap is recommended to the complainant.

If a citizen traps a cat in their own personal trap and the Officer has concerns of

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the animal escaping during transfer, get permission or leave a door tag to take both animal and trap to unloading destination. Return the trap the same day.

Keep in mind that cats are Free Roaming in the State of Texas. Trapping a cat in a trap will not solve the complainants cat related problems. Offering other solutions can be helpful.

- If complainant has a problem with cats urinating in his bushes, he might try using moth balls in the shrubs to keep the cats away.

D. Deceased Animals

When picking up dead animals from the streets please make your vehicle visible by using the truck's hazard flashers. The truck should be parked on the shoulder of the road if possible. If not, park in the lane that the animal is in. Wear your safety vest, pick up the animal, and leave the scene as quickly as possible. If on a highway, park your vehicle on the shoulders. Do not park on the highway. If possible, have another Animal Control truck present or contact the Police Department. When picking up a deceased animal from a residence, use gloves, plastic bag and proper discretion (as you would want your pet handled).

E. Dog Impound

(Stray animals) - Apprehending stray dogs presents problems because dogs are able to evade capture by darting between houses and escaping into fields where vehicles cannot travel. In attempting to capture stray dogs, Officers should:

- Keep the animal out of traffic. Stop the chase because if an animal is hit by a vehicle and the animal control truck is present, the public will view the Shelter as being at fault.
- Try to contain the dog in an enclosed area.
- If a resident is home, ask them if you may enter the backyard if the animal can be contained.
- Use the restraint pole or snappy snare.
- Use gloves anytime an animal is handled.
- Place the restraint pole or leash over its head/shoulder before walking to the truck.
- Use caution while handling the animal.
- A cage door should be open prior to placing the dog on the truck.
- A restraint pole is to be properly attached to the animal's neck/shoulder.
- Muzzle the dog if necessary and take muzzle off once animal is on vehicle.

When placing a dog onto the truck, grab the scruff of the back end or support

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animal weight from underneath by hand or use a towel if fractious and lift onto the truck. Never choke an animal in any way by lifting the animal by the neck. Please remember someone is always watching. If placement cannot be done alone, call for another Officer to assist. After the dog is in the cage, then remove the restraint pole or leash. Lock the truck cage door to protect the dog and the public.

Hot Weather

If a dog is apprehended after being chased and is overheated, ask a citizen to use their yard water hose and wet the dog down and give the animal water to drink. If the homeowner is not home to request using their water hose return to the Shelter immediately and cool the dog.

Heat exhaustion or stroke can happen in the field or on Shelter trucks and without immediate assistance the animal will receive brain damage and euthanasia would be needed. If heat stroke or exhaustion is suspected submerge the dog in cool water or apply ice packs on the inside of upper part of dog's body. Alcohol can be poured on the pads of the dog's feet. You may use a rectal thermometer to monitor the dog's temperature as a dog's normal temperature is 102°.

Cold Weather

Officers should put towels, sheets or blankets in their vehicles during cold weather. Use these supplies for old, sick, injured or young animals. Transport these types of animals to the Shelter within the hour or sooner. If the animal is wet from rain, creeks, swimming pool, etc., use something to cover the animal. At the Shelter place a dry towel in the cage with the animal.

F. Extractions

Prior to any extractions, the Officer will check to determine if resident is at home. If anyone is at home discuss the issues with the resident. If an extraction is still necessary, contact a Police Officer. A Police Officer needs to be on the scene for your protection and as witness in the event problems arise. Some reasons for extraction are the following:

- If an animal or citizen's health and safety are in immediate danger. Some examples are: prior bites or the animal has been deemed dangerous/vicious.
- The animal ran into an enclosed structure such as a fenced back yard.
- The enclosure is not structurally sound and will not keep the animal

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- properly confined.
- Once the animal has been placed into custody, and the owner is not at home, Animal Control Officer will leave a door tag regarding the situation.

Pictures must be taken of the escape route and/or the fence condition to justify the animal's removal.

G. Inhumane Treatment of Animals

An Officer shall investigate to determine if the animal is being treated inhumanely.

The 2022 Safe Outdoor Dog Act requires:

- Adequate shelter from elements of the weather (3 sides/roof with opening facing south).
- Shelter must be free of standing water.
- Accessible fresh water.
- Bans the use of heavy chains for tethering.

Additionally, you should check:

- Condition of the animal.
- Sanitation.
- Other conditions which may constitute cruelty.

Removal of an animal deemed as cruelly treated or inhumane **may only be done with a seizure warrant or by owner surrender**. If the animal is in **imminent danger, such as a life threatening condition** the animal may be taken into custody **with a seizure warrant to follow**. This requires concurrence of the County Judge. Officers should document time, date, when, where, why, and what they observed. Pictures should be taken when appropriate to prove your case.

H. Injured/Sick

Officers will respond to injured/sick animal calls as a priority call. Care must be taken in handling injured animals so as not to inflict further injury or pain to the animal, and for the safety of the Officer.

- First responsibility of the Officer is to carefully assess the situation, and form a plan of action.
- Wear leather- type gloves.
- If possible, muzzle the animal with a leash, rope, or cloth. This will minimize any snapping and injuries.
- Place animal onto the truck by way of carrying, stretcher, or transfer

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- cage.
- Remove the muzzle as soon as possible so the inhibiting of breathing by the animal is kept to a minimum.
- An injured animal **with** a local **veterinarian tag** on shall be taken to that veterinarian if they are open.
- If possible, have the veterinarian write down their opinion for Shelter records.
- Return to the shelter as soon as possible.

If the animal is severely injured, such as immobility, bone extrusions, gunshot wounds, etc., the animal may be euthanized. Take pictures and keep with the appropriate impound data sheets to support the animal's condition. If the animal appears to be sick in any way, it should be isolated if at all possible.

I. Iguanas & Non-Venomous Lizards

While wearing gloves, pick the iguana up with one hand under the mid-section and the other hand at the base of the tail. Place iguana in transfer cage and impound the animal. These reptiles are cold blooded and need to be transferred to an approved rescue immediately or Officer should provide proper care to maintain warmth.

J. Livestock

Livestock roaming city streets or highways are the responsibility of the County Sheriff's Office. Animal Control is not to impound any livestock.

Livestock involved in bites need to be quarantined for thirty (30) days and most of the time this can be done on the owner's land/pasture.

Deceased livestock **are the owner's responsibility** to remove from their property. If Animal Control has to obtain assistance from other county departments to remove dead livestock from public roadways, and if the owner is known, they will be assessed removal fees, plus any additional fees by the other agency.

K. Shelter animals

- Handle all animals at the shelter with a leash, gloves, or restraint pole.
- The public is not allowed inside individual animal cages.
- Employees are to remove the animal when working in the cage. If you are unable to handle an animal by yourself, get assistance.

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L. Snakes

Snakes are unpredictable and often hard to determine if it is venomous. ACOs should not handle snakes if at all possible. Unless the snake is an immediate threat to the public health or peace, it should be left alone. Often snakes are in yards to eat vermin (mice) and cockroaches. The pests may be in the yard due to people feeding birds or pets outdoors. The quickest way to rid the problem is remove the food source. Try educating the public on why they have snakes in their yard first. We do not climb trees; crawl under houses or into confined spaces. Calls of that nature should be referred to pet control companies.

When capturing snakes do the following:

- Wear gloves.
- Practice caution even when using snake tongs.
- Place the snake in a secure container for transport to an undeveloped area for release.
- In the event a poisonous snake is found, extreme caution should be used and the snake should be transferred to safe location, away from the public. Do not bring the snake back to the shelter.

M. Stray Calls

When responding to stray animal calls do the following.

- Check the area for any and all strays.
- If requested, make personal contact with the complainant.
- If any strays are located, the first responsibility is to apprehend the animal.
- If you are unable to apprehend the animal, attempt to determine where the animal lives by following it home.
- After an animal has been “At-Large”, if the animal has entered an enclosed yard and is believed to reside there, check to determine if the resident is at home. If a resident is not at home, the Officer may remove the animal and leave the resident a door tag informing them of the removal.

N. Turtles

Officers must wear gloves.

- Turtles can be captured by grabbing them in the middle of the shell. Always be cautious of the hind legs. They do carry bacteria and can cause infections.
- Turtles should be released near appropriate bodies of water.

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O. Wildlife

When receiving complaints on wild animals such as squirrels, raccoons, skunks, opossums, armadillos, etc., use a live box trap to attempt to capture the animal. If the animal is inside the dwelling **and is visible** (not in the walls or attic), the Officer should attempt to capture the animal, remove it, and release it away from the residence. Skunks and Raccoons are only euthanized when appropriately confined, such as a live box trap or a small enclosure of home, business or structures. To prevent being sprayed by the skunk, ACOs should attempt to cover the cage with a black trash bag. Do not seal the bag, the animal will suffocate.

Coyote calls will be responded to in residential neighborhoods during daylight hours. It may be necessary to contract with a licensed Trapper to minimize coyote activity or contact TPWL biologists to start a reduction program. Officers should make a loud noise and run the coyote back to a nearby wooded area. However, if the coyote is sick or injured and a safe capture can be performed then do so. **Officers must use common sense and not spend thirty (30) minutes trying to catch a healthy wild animal. ACOs are not trained in handling Coyotes and should not attempt to dart or catch a coyote.**

Wild "high risk" animals (involved in a bite or scratch) will **not be quarantined**. They will be euthanized and shipped to DSHS for testing. The exception to this rule is ferrets. Ferrets will be quarantined as stated by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS).

To see a copy of the current Endangered Species, go to the below TPWL link:
<http://www.tpwl.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/rehab/protected/>

7.13 Handling Possible Rabies Exposure Animal

The public's health and safety is the number one mandate for Animal Control as the Shelter is the Local Rabies Control Authority for the State of Texas. The major aspect of that responsibility is the capture and quarantine or testing of a possible rabies exposure animal. A possibly rabid animal call is on the level of priority Police or Fire Department assistance call and can supersede those calls depending on the situation. Beyond capturing the possibly rabid animal, safely transporting the animal to the Shelter is of prime importance.

1. Always use gloves when dealing with a possible rabies exposure animal or one of the five rabies carrier species (e.g., bat, fox, coyote, raccoon, and skunk).
2. Prepare the truck bin and any other necessary equipment before attempting to handle the animal.

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3. For animals in a trap or carrier (e.g., cat, ferret, fox, raccoon), do not transfer the animal to another carrier. Instead, ask the resident if the entire trap/carrier can be transported to the shelter where the animal can be removed safely in an enclosed area to prevent escape. The empty trap/carrier can then be returned to the resident. If a towel or blanket was used to capture the animal, place the entire package into the transfer carrier and secure the carrier in a truck bin. The animal can be safely removed later at the shelter.
4. Skunks are euthanized in the field in the original container. We do not attempt to catch unrestrained skunks.
5. Small animals (e.g., bat) should never be transferred to a metal cage carrier. Instead, the animal can be placed in a minnow bucket or other bucket with a lid that will close securely. If the animal was caught using a net and there is too great of a risk to transfer the animal, the entire net can be placed into a bag or pillowcase and tied closed to secure the animal.
6. ***PREPARE THE SHELTER CAGE OR KENNEL PRIOR TO UNLOADING THE ANIMAL.***
7. When unloading the animal, open the bin door carefully to ensure that the animal does not have the opportunity to escape if it already freed itself from the original carrier.
8. DSHS recommends any domestic animal (owned or stray) known to be bitten by a positive rabid animal to be euthanized for ship and test.
9. Livestock: While the County is not equipped to transport livestock, a possible rabies exposure to livestock can be resolved by contacting the owner and placing the animal into the proper Large Animal Quarantine Facility.

7.14 Injured Animals

RCAC is not an ambulance service for animals and will not transport an injured animal upon owner request. If the animal has a collar or microchip, attempt to make contact with the owner. Advise the owner of the problem and let them know that they can pick the animal up and transport to a veterinarian themselves.

Do not give unstable animal(s) food or water, they may go in shock and choke to death.

7.15 Kennel Responsibility

Caring of the animals is a primary duty for **ALL STAFF**. Some of the duties are listed

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below. These duties are listed in alphabetical order and not the order that the duties should be performed.

- Assist with reconciling the animals.
- Assist with euthanasia.
- Cleaning dog kennels.
- Cleaning dog quarantine kennels.
- Cleaning & sweeping of the bay area.
- Cleaning of fenced exercise yard.

If an Officer assists with cleaning, please follow the cleaning order as listed in section 7.4 “Cleaning Cages Procedures” section “A”.

Prior to their shift ending Officers should make sure all shelter animals have water and spot clean the kennels.

7.16 Local Rabies Control Authority (LRCA) Incidents

Being the Local Rabies Control Authority, Officers have to fill out an LRCA incident report for any possible rabies exposure. The purpose of incident reports, quarantine, or shipping an animal is to determine if the animal was **capable** of transmitting the Rabies virus at the time the exposure occurred. Once an animal involved in an LRCA incident is captured and in an Officer’s possession then it is the Officers responsibility to ensure that the animal arrives at the Shelter for quarantine.

LRCA incident report (is high priority) and impound paperwork should be completed. When taking an incident report, use the LRCA incident form. This allows staff to obtain as much information as possible on the initial contact. Some animal incidents can be dealt with over the phone, unless the incident animal is at-large. If the victim is in the Emergency Room, attempt to arrive before the victim is released. If time is of the essence, at a minimum get the following:

- Did incident occur in Refugio County?
- Name.
- Address.
- Phone numbers of victim.
- Owner of animal, if known.
- Breed, color, sex, and name of animal.
- Hospital name, treating Doctor, and type of wound.
- Photos of the wound.

There is no need to spend exhaustive time on the phone. Just get the necessities because most of the conversation is not being heard or understood due to the fact the victim is in the Emergency Room and probably more concerned with other issues. Explain to them

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someone will follow up with a phone call the next day. The balance of the report can be completed after spending more quality time with the individual.

If the animal involved in the incident is at-large, dispatch an Officer to the area immediately. The Officer needs to impound the animal as soon as possible. If the animal cannot be apprehended or an owner is not known or located, then a live box trap must be set.

If the incident animal does not belong to the owner, but another person, then contact the owner of the incident animal immediately in person, by phone or leave a 24 hour door tag. Every effort needs to be made to get the incident animal into quarantine or ship and test.

All incident animals must be quarantined for 240 hours, either at the animal shelter or at an approved veterinary clinic. Home Quarantines are not recommended and may only be offered or approved by the actual LRCA. On all quarantine animals, the animals will be monitored and checked by an Animal Control Officer according to DSHS procedures and the Officer will document these visits on the incident report form. This will allow staff to review the status of quarantine animals. **The animal should not be vaccinated against rabies during the quarantine period.**

All reports and notes should be extremely thorough. This information may be needed at a later date in court or during the investigation stage.

A. Home Quarantine

There is ***absolutely no discussion or granting*** of home quarantine by staff. The LRCA will review each quarantine incident and if age or health of an animal is a concern, then the LRCA or their designee may discuss options with the animal's owner.

B. Shelter Quarantine

An animal should be quarantined at the Animal Shelter if the animal is either:

- At large.
- Not currently vaccinated, and registered.
- If quarantined at the shelter, the animal **shall be viewed twice daily** according to Texas Department of Health procedures.

If the animal was impounded at-large at the time of the incident full charges apply (impound fee and daily board). If the animal was picked up directly from the owner or the owner brought the animal to Animal Control, then staff will only charge daily board fees.

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C. Veterinarian Quarantine

If the animal is being quarantined at an approved veterinarian clinic, it is Shelter staff's responsibility to call on the specified days. A clinic representative or the attending veterinarian may give the result of the quarantine check. If the animal is not vaccinated, then when the animal is cleared, the veterinarian may vaccinate it and the owner will pay the cost. For veterinarian quarantine, the owner must pay the veterinarian fees.

7.17 On-Call Duty

The primary purpose of "on call" is to provide assistance to Fire and Police Dispatch and citizens who request emergency service after hours. On call hours begin at 4:00 p.m. and ends at 7:00 a.m. on the following morning. Officers should have blank forms at their home to complete LRCA incident calls. Otherwise, if the calls have to be run other necessary equipment and supplies should be in your assigned vehicle.

The Animal Control Officer assigned "on-call" should:

- Be available for calls at all times during their rotation.
- Maintain contact with dispatch so they know your location, phone number or pager number.
- County truck is to be used for all on-call responses.

Response to emergency calls by an Animal Control Officer contained herein is department policy. The Officer should be familiar with these procedures and adhere to this policy. If special conditions arise which are not covered in the procedures, use judgment and decide what needs to be done. All non-emergency calls are to be held until the following morning.

When a call is received by dispatch, do not discuss policy with the dispatcher unless to inform the dispatcher that the type of call they are giving you is not handled as an emergency after hour call. If you are receiving calls not considered an emergency by Animal Control after hours, obtain the information necessary to make contact with the citizen requesting assistance.

The Officer "on-call" will follow up on the request by making contact with the citizen by phone or in person, whichever the situation dictates. When contact is made, the Officer should use good judgment and respond accordingly to the situation.

The "on-call" Animal Control Officer should respond to the following, but not limited to these particular calls. The following is to provide an outline of the criteria that should be used by Officers.

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- **Fire and crime scenes**, and to Police Officers arresting individuals who have an animal needing to be placed in Shelter custody.
- **Animals creating immediate traffic hazard** - loose, injured, or stray livestock on main roadways.
- **Trapped animals**, especially in extreme weather conditions or that have been involved in a bite, scratch or possible rabies exposure.
- **"High risk" wildlife that are visible** - (bats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons and skunks), inside a dwelling or garage. Yards and cars are not considered a dwelling.
- **"High risk" wildlife** that may have been injured or killed by a family pet.
- **LRCIA incident** in which **human** exposure has occurred through a bite, scratch, or from exposure from an animal that can transmit the rabies virus. These would include but are not limited to: cats, dogs, bats, coyotes, ferrets, foxes, raccoons, skunks.
- **Sick and injured animals** (domesticated and wildlife) that will not vacate the area on their own or are in pain and are suffering.

The Officer should not respond to "low priority" or "low risk" type calls, but should respond to them the following morning. Officer judgment and discretion is essential in this determination.

7.18 Owner Notification

Animal Control Officer or any Police Officer may impound any animal found at large in violation of this chapter. If the owner, keeper, or harbinger of such animal is known or can be readily ascertained the Animal Control Officer shall notify him/her by telephone, personal service, certified mail, or door tag no later than twenty-four (24) hours following such impoundment or after obtaining owner information. If there is a match with microchips, collars or lost and found, please contact owner. Document date and time of notification.

When Field Officers bring in an animal wearing tags please do the following:

- Keep tags and collars on the animals. (**DO NOT REMOVE tags**).
- Write owner information or contact information on the kennel card then date and initial the card.

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7.19 Owner Surrender Field

Advise citizens that paperwork has to be filled out regarding their animal behavior traits, vaccination records and other information prior to evaluating their animal for adoption. If it is an Owner Surrender request for euthanasia then inform them that RCAC does not euthanize animals on demand and they should contact their veterinarian if this is something they want done. Unless an emergency exists and the Officer feels that immediate euthanasia is warranted.

There will be certain situations when an Officer is required to take an Owner Surrender in the field. Several reasons are: owner is fearful due to the animal biting, showing aggression, citizen is disabled or a senior citizen. When this happens please have the Owner fill out the Animal profile sheet and have the citizen show you their driver's license. The Owner's driver's license number must be indicated on the profile sheet and the Owner must sign the profile sheet indicating they are the owner/custodian of the described animal.

7.20 Patrol

When all dispatched calls have been serviced, Officers will patrol areas that have complaints of loose dogs, initiate calls via patrol and conduct special patrol for violations of city/county ordinance.

7.21 Rabies Testing

Remember the Shelter is the LRCA and Public Health and Safety is our main purpose. An animal that dies during quarantine or any wild "high risk" animal shall be submitted for rabies testing. An animal whose disposition changes and there is reason to believe the animal is infected with the virus may also be tested. **Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)** in Austin does not charge for rabies testing and the County incurs only shipping costs. Owners are required to pay the established fee for shipping and testing due to staff time in preparation and to cover shipping charges. For no reason will any suspected animal not be tested. The process to perform a ship and test is listed under Kennel Operations.

7.22 Weapons for Self Defense Against Animals - Officers

ACO's are confronted daily with situations where control must be exercised. Such control may be achieved through verbal negotiation or the use of force. The gauge for the necessary force to use is the amount of resistance that must be overcome. Force may be applied through the use of a person's body, weapons, equipment, and/or other instruments.

A. Tranquilizer Guns and Blow darts:

The use of tranquilizer guns or blowpipes, as with any piece of equipment, requires proper

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training. Inappropriate use of the tranquilizer gun and dependency on its use should be avoided.

Tranquilizer guns and blowpipes do have value in certain circumstances, though with inherent danger; e.g., killing the animal or causing injuries to an animal, officer, or bystander. For these reasons, the Texas Animal Control Association recommends that tranquilizer equipment be used only after the officer has received proper training, and then only as a last resort when other methods of capture have failed.

All tranquilizer equipment should be used as described by the manufacturer and under the direction of a trained user.

All darts that projected through the gun, and did not hit the designated target **MUST** be located. Due to the drugs inside the syringe projectile, the darts are extremely dangerous and could potentially be lethal to a child, adult or other animal.

Darts **may not** be shot over 15ft away from projected target. After 15ft, they lose velocity and the risk of losing the dart increases.

Darts may not be shot in high grass or around water. Targets must be in an open area away from people.

Any tranquilizer guns owned by Refugio County Animal Control will be kept in a secure location and separate from the tranquilizing drugs.

B. Electro-Muscular Disruption Devices:

RCAC relies on The Texas Animal Control Association to provide advice on trends, equipment use and opinions of certain devices. TACA is opposed to the use of Electro-Muscular Disruption (EMD or Taser) devices in the capture, control, or handling of animals. The false implication that because they are “non-lethal” they are “safe” may lead animal welfare agencies toward unnecessary reliance on EMD devices, which are traditionally intended to be used on a standing vertical human, and not designed to be used on animals. Newer models “designed for animals” have an amperage output seven times that of the devices intended to be used on humans.

TACA discourages animal control from the use of these devices as a substitute or supplement to current acceptable animal handling tools or techniques. The animal control field already has established tools and methods specifically for handling animals within a non-lethal framework. Any professional animal handler or agency receiving and employing proper training should find these devices unnecessary and ineffective and should refrain from their use.

The risk to health, safety, and public perception posed by such weapons presents a serious

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liability to any agency and certainly outweighs any potential benefit they would provide. There is no need to incorporate EMD devices into animal control work.

Animal Control is intended to safely capture, confine, transport, and ensure the protection of animals in the field. The reported effects of EMD devices on animals are varied: brief immobilization and retreat are typical, and there are reports of these devices causing physical harm or death. The cited risks of safety and health, and the animal's tendency to retreat, suggest that EMD devices are less effective than humane animal restraint.

Animal Control Officers are prohibited from using this type of device in the performance of their duties.

C. Pepper Spray & Citronella:

ACO's may encounter situations in which they are the targets of an animal attack while discharging their routine duties. In appropriate situations, the proper use of chemical agents/pepper spray will enable ACO's to effectively control a potentially dangerous situation. Animal Control Officers may not carry pepper spray unless they have been properly trained by a DSHS and TACA approved training entity. Once training is provided the ACO may carry pepper spray.

ACO's may not take the pepper spray out of their holster while in a building or dwelling.

Citronella spray is a non-lethal and approved means of chemical spray that is effective in the approved situations. ACO's may carry Citronella.. All regulations outlined above also apply to the use of Citronella.