



# SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS



538.01

## ANIMAL-RELATED CALLS FOR SERVICE

12-13-2024

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to establish guidelines for employees of the Sacramento Police Department (SPD) when interacting with animals and responding to calls for service that involve animals.

### POLICY

It is the policy of SPD to be responsive to the needs of the community regarding animal-related issues when animal control is unavailable. This includes enforcing local, state, and federal laws relating to animals such as animal cruelty and appropriately resolving or referring animal-related problems.

### PROCEDURE

#### A. GENERAL

1. Providing animal control services is generally the primary responsibility of animal control officers (Animal Control) and include:
  - a. Handling animal-related matters during periods when available:
    - (1) Non-emergency matters, generally 0800 hours to 1800 hours.
    - (2) Afterhours emergency responses are subject to approval of an animal control supervisor and may include, but are not limited to, animals:
      - (a) Unconfined and posing an imminent threat to public safety.
      - (b) Sick, injured, or at risk of death if left unattended.
      - (c) Victim of cruelty or criminal neglect.
      - (d) Owner under arrest or incapacitated and unable to care.
  - b. Ongoing or persistent animal-related nuisance complaints (e.g., barking dogs) should:
    - (1) If reasonable, be scheduled with Animal Control for handling during available periods for investigation and resolution.
    - (2) Be requested with the 311-call center or relayed via the Communications Division.
2. In the performance of their duty, the chief animal control officer and their deputies are vested with the powers and immunities specified in Penal Code §§ 830.0 and 836.5 for the specific purpose of enforcing Sacramento City Code, Title 9, Chapter 9.44 (Animals) and applicable state laws.
  - a. Animal control officers have vested authority to:
    - (1) Issue infractions, misdemeanors, and administrative penalties.
    - (2) Effect arrests.
    - (3) Serve warrants.
  - b. Animal control officers shall complete necessary reports (e.g., crime, arrest, and clear-up reports) for actions taken.

#### B. OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Officers responding to or assisting with animal-related calls for service shall:
  - a. Determine the appropriate actions to control the situation.
  - b. Request Animal Control via the Communications Division for dangerous animals.
  - c. Provide reasonable treatment to animals in their care (e.g., food, water, shelter).
  - d. Complete reports of stolen animals.
  - e. Complete other crime-related reports.
2. Based on the hazards of handling animals without proper training or equipment, responding officers should not attempt to capture or pick up any animal and keep the animal under observation until the arrival of animal control.



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3. Officers should consider taking action to prevent danger to the public or any person (e.g., attempting to confine an animal) before the arrival of animal control in the following situations when an animal:
  - a. Has bitten a person.
  - b. Creates a traffic hazard.
  - c. Has been seriously injured.
4. If the owner or handler of an animal is under arrest or incapacitated, officers should find appropriate placement with the following considerations:
  - a. The arrestee's expected incarceration period is shorter than a reasonable period that the animal needs appropriate care.
  - b. With consent, coordinate temporary placement with a relative or neighbor.
  - c. If temporary placement is unavailable or the owner denies or cannot provide consent, officers should:
    - (1) Request animal control to respond.
    - (2) Take the animal to a designated animal care facility and shall complete an Evidence and Property Booking Receipt (SPD 779). Copies of the form shall be left with the animal care facility and provided to the owner. Receipts shall contain the following information:
      - (a) Description of the animal.
      - (b) SPD call number.
      - (c) Impounding officer information.
      - (d) Location where animal was placed.
      - (e) Instructions to contact Animal Control within 48 hours.

## C. COMMUNICATIONS CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. When receiving animal-related calls, Communications Division personnel shall ascertain all known facts which led the complainant to believe an animal presented an imminent danger to a person or other animal. Officers shall be dispatched to investigate any case involving imminent danger. Imminent danger includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. The possibility of an injured person.
  - b. The possibility of a crime in progress.
  - c. A loose animal that is a public safety hazard.
2. All other animal-related calls within the City shall be directed to 311 (24 hours a day).

## D. ANIMAL CRUELTY COMPLAINTS

1. Primary responsibility for the enforcement of laws relating to cruelty to animals should be enforced by Animal Control. This includes, but is not limited to, Penal Code § 597 et seq. (e.g., cruelty to animals, failure to care for animals).
2. If Animal Control is unavailable, SPD shall conduct an investigation relating to all reports of animal cruelty and act in accordance with:
  - a. Applicable search and seizure law.
  - b. General Order 526.01 (Search and Seizure)
  - c. Reference Manual 526.01 (Search and Seizure Manual)
  - d. Penal Code § 597.1
3. Officers may assist Animal Control when requested in the following circumstances:
  - a. A known subject or owner has a violent history or is uncooperative.
  - b. In-progress cruelty involves a weapon, overt violence, or Animal Control personnel requests assistance for their safety.
    - (1) Animal Control officers only carry equipment intended for use against animals.
  - c. Forced entry is necessary due to exigent circumstances.

## E. ANIMAL BITE REPORTS



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1. Animal Control shall have primary responsibility for animal bite calls. If the biting animal is loose, Animal Control should be requested to respond as soon as possible.
  - a. An immediate response by Animal Control is only required if the biting animal is currently loose and a public safety risk.

## F. STRAY DOGS

1. Animal Control shall have primary responsibility for stray dog calls.
2. If a stray dog has a license or can otherwise be identified, the owner should be contacted, if possible.
3. If the owner is contacted, the dog should be released to the owner and a citation may be issued by SPD, if the officer deems it appropriate.
4. If a dog is impounded, it shall be transported to the appropriate animal care facility.

## G. DECEASED ANIMALS

1. Animal Control shall have primary responsibility for calls related to deceased animals.
2. If safe, officers should remove deceased animals from roadways if they cause a traffic hazard.
3. Officers shall alert 311 to the location of a deceased animal and request Animal Control to respond for removal.

## H. INJURED ANIMALS

1. Animal Control shall have primary responsibility for calls related to injured animals.
2. When an officer becomes aware of an injured domesticated animal, all reasonable attempts should be made to contact an owner or responsible handler.
3. If an owner or responsible handler cannot be located, the animal should be taken to a veterinarian and notice shall be given to the owner in accordance with Penal Code § 597.1.

## I. VETERINARY CARE

1. If Animal Control is unavailable and it is safe to do so, injured animals should be taken to a veterinarian as follows:
  - a. During business hours, the animal should be taken to the city animal shelter provided by 311.
  - b. After hours, animals should be taken to the authorized veterinary emergency and critical care service clinic provided by 311.
2. Officers shall not attempt to provide veterinary care if an injured animal presents an imminent danger to a person or other animal.
3. Each incident shall be documented with remarks on the call for service to include the name of the reporting party, veterinary care facility, and the name of the person an animal was released (if applicable).

## J. INJURED WILDLIFE

1. Animal Control shall have primary responsibility for calls related to injured wildlife.
2. SPD shall contact 311 to advise Animal Control of injured wildlife.
  - a. If safe and available, officers should attempt to keep observation of skunks, bats, racoons, or coyotes that appear sick. These animals are rabies vectors and create a potential public health risk if not impounded by Animal Control.

## K. RESCUE OF ANIMALS IN VEHICLES

1. If an animal is left unattended in a vehicle and appears to be in distress, officers may enter the vehicle for the purpose of rescuing the animal.
2. Pursuant to Penal Code § 597.7(d), officers should:
  - a. Make a reasonable effort to locate the owner before entering the vehicle.
  - b. Take steps to minimize damage to the vehicle.
  - c. Refrain from searching the vehicle or seizing items except as otherwise permitted by law.
  - d. Leave a copy of a completed SPD 779 form with the vehicle with the following information:
    - (1) Location of impounded animal.



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(2) Name and badge number of the involved officer.

- e. Make reasonable efforts to contact the owner or secure the vehicle before leaving the scene.
- f. Take the animal to an animal care facility, a place of safekeeping, or veterinary care facility (if applicable).

### L. DESTRUCTION OF ANIMALS

1. When an owner requests that an animal be destroyed, the officer shall direct the owner to contact a local veterinarian to have the animal euthanized.
2. A 311 request may be entered, but the city shelter does not take owned or surrendered animals unless the animal:
  - a. Has injured a person or other animal.
  - b. Is suffering from illness or injury.
3. When an officer requests that an unowned, injured animal be destroyed, the officer shall notify 311 and request Animal Control to respond.