

Virginia Animal Control Association Code of Conduct



An Animal Control Officer acts as an official representative of government with rights, powers, duties and authority conferred by statute who is obligated and trusted to abide by, work within, and enforce the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and their respective jurisdiction. The fundamental duties of an Animal Control Officer include serving the community, providing protection for the public and animals, and enforcing laws in that regard.

An Animal Control Officer shall perform all duties incumbent upon the position without fear or favor and with impartial consideration and respect for every individual's status, sex, race, religion, political belief or aspirations. Animal Control Officers must conduct themselves in a manner above reproach that does not bring discredit to their agencies or themselves. An Animal Control Officer's character and conduct while off duty must always be exemplary, thus maintaining a position of respect in the community in which he or she lives and serves.

Animal Control Officers will never allow personal feelings, animosities or friendships to influence official conduct. Laws will be enforced appropriately and courteously and, in carrying out their responsibilities, Animal Control Officers will strive to obtain maximum cooperation from the public. Animal Control Officers will conduct themselves in appearance and deportment in such a manner as to inspire confidence and respect for the position of public trust they hold.

An Animal Control Officer will use responsibly the discretion vested in his or her position and exercise it within the law. The principle of reasonableness will guide the Animal Control Officer's determinations. The Animal Control Officer will consider all surrounding circumstances in determining whether any legal action shall be taken.

Animal Control Officers must exercise a consistent and wise use of discretion, based on professional animal control competence, to preserve good relationships and retain the confidence of the public. When difficulty in choosing between conflicting courses of action arises, it is important to remember that education or advice, rather than enforcement action or arrest, (which may be correct in appropriate circumstances), can be a more effective means of achieving a desired outcome.

An Animal Control Officer will never employ unnecessary force or violence, only using such force as is necessary and reasonable in the discharge of duty to protect the public, animals or the Animal Control Officer. While the use of force is occasionally unavoidable, every Animal Control Officer will refrain from unnecessary infliction of pain or suffering and will never engage in cruel, degrading or inhumane treatment of any person or animal.

Animal Control Officers may see, hear, or learn confidential information in the performance of their duties. Individuals have a reasonable right and expectation to privacy and confidentiality. Such information shall remain and be kept confidential excepting where legal, ethical or performance of duty obligations require otherwise.

An Animal Control Officer will not engage in acts of corruption or bribery, nor will an officer condone such acts by other Animal Control Officers. The public demands that the integrity of all public servants to be above reproach. Animal Control Officers must, therefore, avoid any conduct that might compromise integrity and that undercut the public confidence in an agency. Respect from the public cannot be bought; it can only be earned and cultivated.

An Animal Control Officer or agency may be one among many organizations that may provide law enforcement services to a jurisdiction. It is imperative that an Animal Control Officer assist colleagues fully and completely with respect and consideration at all times.

Animal Control Officers will be responsible for their own standard of professional performance and will take every reasonable opportunity to enhance and improve their level of knowledge and competence. Through study and experience, an Animal Control Officer can acquire the high level of knowledge and competence that is essential for the efficient and effective performance of duty. The acquisition of knowledge is a never ending process of personal and professional development that should be pursued constantly.