



ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER [ACO]- SOP			
<u>Subject</u>	<u>Standard Operating Procedure [SOP]</u>	<u>Classification</u>	<u>Unclassified</u>
<u>Directive No</u>	1.03B	<u>Effective</u>	24 AUG 2015
<u>Additional Directives</u>	ACO Job Description 1.02B	<u>Review</u>	ANNUALLY
<u>Standards/References</u>	MDAR Animal Laws (2019)	<u>Revision</u>	24 APR 2024
<u>Issuing Authority</u>	<div> Bryan C. Haughey Chief of Police</div>	<div></div>	
<u>Record of Revisions</u>			
06/25/2019, 09/01/2020, 07/14/2021, 07/26/2022, 04/24/2024			

Summary:

The purpose of the Standard Operating Procedure, [SOP], is to guide the Animal Control Officer, [ACO], in carrying out complex routine operations. While keeping in mind that the circumstances of each incident or investigation may vary, following the steps of an SOP will ensure that best practices are followed and that the quality of output is paramount. The prescribed methods contained herein are designed to attain maximum efficiency and uniformity and to comply with the current standards and accepted practices of the animal control industry.

The ACO is a part-time civilian employee appointed by the Board of Selectmen¹⁰ and reports directly to the Chief of Police. The ACO is a trained professional in the field and must successfully complete the Massachusetts Animal Fund Animal Control Officer Training Institute Program requirements and must complete and maintain any other training and certification that is required by law or the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture MDAR.¹¹

The ACO shall be responsible for the enforcement of Massachusetts General Laws¹² and the Town of Holland bylaws that are applicable to the position. This document shall be utilized in addition to other directives that are issued by the Chief of Police from time to time.¹³

Responsibilities:

1. Referrals and Calls for Service:

¹⁰ Pursuant to [M.G.L. c. 140 § 151](#)

¹¹ ACO Resources: [Training Requirements](#), MDAR web

¹² Specifically §136A to 174F

¹³ The ACO shall be considered an employee of the Department in matters relating to Department policies, procedures, rules, and regulations. Directives are established according to Rule 1 of this Department's Rules and Regulations and shall remain in full force and effect as amended unless rescinded

There are several ways in which the ACO will receive information, complaints, and calls for service concerning animals. The ACO shall respond to all complaints in a timely manner with a helpful and positive attitude.¹⁴

- a) Public Complaints- In many instances the ACO will receive complaints from the general public by a call to the Dispatch Center, a message to the ACO voicemail, or e-mailing the ACO. The voicemail shall be set up to call the ACO's phone advising them when there is a message. It shall be the ACO's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate call forwarding system is set up and that the Police Department and Dispatch Center are notified when duty status changes.¹⁵
- b) Dispatch/Officer Referral- In some instances the dispatcher or officer is instructed to contact the ACO voicemail or the ACO's phone directly. It shall be the ACO's responsibility to notify the Police Department and Dispatch Center when duty status changes in order to ensure that the appropriate alternate is contacted. Although the Police Department may be available to provide assistance, and in some circumstances may respond to an incident, such as a life or death situation, or an incident in which there is a serious risk of injury, the ACO shall be expected to handle calls for service without assistance from a police officer.
- c) Phone Calls- Many complaints or questions received can be easily resolved through phone calls. In these instances, the ACO shall still initiate a call for service log entry or incident report in the same manner in which they would if they responded to an incident or complaint in person.

2. Investigations:

Although the ACO shall be expected to initiate and conduct investigations involving animals, the ACO shall notify their immediate supervisor at the commencement of any type of criminal investigation that he/she initiates. The Police Department employs its own Investigations Division and all criminal complaints that are requested shall be submitted to the appropriate Clerk Magistrate's Office through the Department's Court Officer – Police Prosecutor. The Investigations Division may work with the ACO during the process; however, will not be expected to assume full control of the investigation unless the supervisor determines it is necessary.¹⁶

3. Documentation and Incident Reports:

Under Massachusetts General Laws, ACO's need to compose, keep, and maintain a system of records that fully and correctly discloses detailed information of all animals taken into ACO custody. In addition, it is important to keep activity, incident, and

¹⁴ Professional Guidance- ACO Core Competencies: [Public Relations and Officer Safety](#)

¹⁵ The ACO shall adhere to Rule No. 13 of this Department's Rules and Regulations concerning e-mail and voicemail systems. The general ACO voicemail is extension #350 of the Police Department main phone line, (413) 245-0117, and shall be presented as such

¹⁶ Professional Guidance- ACO Core Competencies: [Animal Laws and Regulations](#), 2023 Guide

lost/found information on record. The ACO shall create and maintain a record of all calls facilitated, including all calls received and responded to in person, by telephone, by e-mail, or by any other means.¹⁷

The ACO shall generate an Incident Report¹⁸ in the following circumstances:

- any situation involving animal cruelty or abuse;
- any situation that may result in criminal or civil proceedings;
- any nuisance or dangerous dog complaint;¹⁹ and
- any incident involving an animal that results in serious personal injury, death, or property damage to an animal or a human.

The ACO shall complete and submit all incident reports to the ACO supervisor no later than seven [7] days after the incident unless directed otherwise.

On a monthly basis, the ACO shall complete and submit an ACO Activity Report.²⁰

4. Animal Intake Procedure:

The ACO shall adhere to the current standards set forth by law and professional guidance for every animal they take in. The ACO shall inspect, photograph, and scan each animal for a microchip. The ACO shall ensure that all animals are appropriately cared for and provided with water and food as necessary. The ACO shall be responsible for cleaning any area that houses an animal and the current standards outlined by law and professional guidance shall be followed regarding hold periods and care/release procedures. The ACO shall generate and maintain an Animal Intake Form²¹ for any animal caught, confined, or otherwise taken into the ACO's custody.

The ACO must actively seek out the owner of any animal taken in.²²

5. Animal Bite (Human Victim):

The ACO shall adhere to the current standards set forth by law and professional guidance for every animal bite they are made aware of. The ACO shall generate and maintain an Animal Bite Report²³ and the appropriate rabies exposure forms as necessary for any animal that bites a human. Quarantine regulations shall be followed

¹⁷ [ACO Resources: Forms and Reference Guides, MDAR web](#), Professional Guidance- ACO Core Competencies: [Records and Report Writing](#)

¹⁸ [ACO Resources: Forms and Reference Guides, MDAR web- Animal Control Incident Report](#)

¹⁹ [M.G.L. c. 140 § 157](#)

²⁰ [ACO Resources: Forms and Reference Guides, MDAR web- Monthly Activity Report](#). Monthly Activity Reports shall be submitted to the ACO supervisor no later than seven (7) days from the end of the previous month unless directed otherwise

²¹ [ACO Resources: Forms and Reference Guides, MDAR web- Animal Intake Form](#)

²² Professional Guidance- ACO Core Competencies: [Animal Laws and Regulations](#), Duties and Responsibilities, 2023 Guide

²³ [ACO Resources: Forms and Reference Guides, MDAR web- Animal Bite Report](#)

and the ACO shall be expected to work closely with the Animal Inspector and make appropriate referrals to them.

6. Unrestrained/Loose Dogs:

In accordance with Town bylaws, any dog, whether licensed or unlicensed, shall be effectively restrained by a leash or other suitable device and accompanied by a suitable person when in or upon, any way, public street or property within the Town. It shall be the responsibility of the ACO to ensure that any loose dog is picked up and impounded or immediately returned to the owner.²⁴ The ACO must actively seek out the owner of any dog they catch or impound.²⁵

Police officers shall not be relied upon or expected to catch or confine loose or roaming dogs, however, in an unavoidable situation where a police officer does take action, the decision to impound the dog or immediately release it to the owner shall be left to that officer's discretion.

7. Injury to Animal/Person:

The ACO shall be expected to quickly respond to any situation in which an animal or person is injured or in immediate danger. The ACO shall follow the rules of the road at all times and follow the appropriate procedures set forth by law and the current standards of the animal control industry when caring for and transporting injured animals.

8. Rabies Control:

The ACO shall adhere to the Rabies Control Program which is distributed by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources MDAR for all deceased rabid and suspected rabid animals and shall ensure proper notification is made to the appropriate member of the municipality Board of Health and Animal Inspector, as outlined in the program.²⁶

9. Wildlife/Non-Domestic Animals:

The ACO shall be expected to respond by providing advice and education for wildlife situations by following the appropriate procedure set forth by law and the current standards of the animal control industry. The ACO shall not be expected to take any action involving wildlife or the keeping of wild animals that is in conflict with the laws and regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and may only take the actions that are permitted by those regulations.²⁷

²⁴ The ACO shall make and maintain a record for all unrestrained and loose dogs that includes the pertinent information of the dog owner. Professional Guidance- ACO Core Competencies: [Records and Report Writing](#)

²⁵ Professional Guidance- ACO Core Competencies: [Animal Laws and Regulations](#), Duties and Responsibilities, 2023 Guide

²⁶ [Rabies Control Program](#), MDAR web

²⁷ Professional Guidance- ACO Core Competencies: [Wildlife](#)

10. Nuisance/Dangerous Dog:

Any person may file a complaint that a dog owned or kept in the Town is a nuisance or dangerous, provided that the reason for such complaint is in accordance with the parameters outlined within the laws of the Commonwealth. Such complaint shall be filed in writing to the hearing authority and the hearing authority shall investigate or cause the investigation of the complaint, to include an examination under oath of the complainant at a public hearing to determine whether the dog is a nuisance or dangerous.

Any nuisance or dangerous dog complaint received by the ACO, or referred to the ACO by the hearing authority, shall be investigated by the ACO in the same thorough manner as all other investigations that he/she conducts.²⁸

11. Fine Collection and Stipend Distribution:

Any fine or fee collected by the ACO shall be turned in to the Police Department within [7] days of collection. The ACO shall document in writing the date, the amount collected, and the name of the person the fine or fee was collected from, and submit the same to the Operations Division Commander, or other personnel as directed, within [7] days of collection.

All checks, notes, or money orders, shall be made out to the Town of Holland and any agreed-upon collection fee payment will be distributed as a part of the ACO's regular pay schedule.

12. Vehicle Use:

The ACO may be assigned a Town-owned vehicle to be utilized exclusively by the ACO in connection with the performance of his/her duties as ACO. All attendant operating, maintenance, and insurance expenses will be paid for by the Town.

The ACO shall be responsible for the general care of the vehicle, including ensuring its cleanliness and appropriate fluid levels. The ACO shall also be responsible for completing vehicle utilization logs as directed by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.²⁹

²⁸ [M.G.L. c. 140 § 157](#). Pursuant to bylaw, any dog which habitually barks or howls in a manner that is disturbing to citizens between the hours of 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM shall be declared as a nuisance dog

²⁹ The ACO shall adhere to Rule No. 9.7 of this Department's Rules and Regulations concerning vehicle use