

Humane Society of Elmore County News – 9 Oct '17

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Executive Director

With the many storms that have come through our area lately, now is the time for livestock & pet owners to check their fences. Rain and wind significantly increase trees falling and limbs breaking which can lead to wandering livestock (or dogs) if these trees take out chunks of fence. And face it, no one wants to be out picket pounding or fence mending in 95 degree heat, so the milder temperatures right now are another good reason to completely walk/inspect fence lines.

Now besides keeping livestock and pets safe, good fencing keeps humans safe too. Have you ever hit an animal in a vehicle? That is something most of us dread, not only because of the injury or death of the animal, but the damage to our vehicles and possible injury to ourselves and passengers. It is, however, one thing to hit a small wild animal or domestic pet, but an entirely different matter to hit something as large as a cow or horse. Alabama deer are probably the most common larger animal hit by automobiles and adults and can range anywhere from 60-200 lbs. Many reading this can likely attest to the damage hitting a deer can do to a vehicle, but multiply that 5-10 or more times for hitting a horse or cow that might weigh 1000 - 2000 lbs!

Loose livestock is sadly too common in Elmore County and it could sadly only be a matter of time before someone is seriously injured or killed from hitting loose horses or cattle on one of our roadways. Owners of livestock not only have a neighborly obligation to keep their animals contained, they also are required to maintain adequate fencing by Alabama State Law so that these animals don't endanger the public or themselves.

Section 3-5-2 of the Alabama Code makes it unlawful for the owner of any livestock to knowingly, voluntarily, negligently or willfully permit such livestock to go at large either upon the premises of another or upon the public lands, highways, roads or streets. Furthermore, any person(s) owning or having the possession, custody or control of any livestock who unlawfully and knowingly permit the same to run or be at large, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. There is no "open range" in Alabama for livestock.

Alabama Code takes this even further and defines minimally required fencing in explicit detail for cattle, horses, or all livestock in general. This means that owners with fencing that does not comply with Alabama Law and who don't take the effort to repair or build a fence to the "Code" could find themselves in a courtroom for damages caused by their livestock as a result of them continually getting out. This law is not directed at those 'one-time' instances of a tree falling and taking out a section of fence, or a gate being accidentally left open – we all know animals don't exactly understand property lines at those times. But we have far too many property owners with fencing that is in severe disrepair or doesn't even come close to meeting the Code and, consequently, have livestock that escape often, endangering the public and tying up law enforcement time that could be better spent elsewhere. For the sake of people and animals alike, if you own livestock, please make sure your fences and gates are adequate to contain your animals and that you make immediate repairs in the event of a breach. If you are not familiar with the legal fencing requirements in Alabama email the shelter at hselco@bellsouth.net and we will send you that excerpt from the Code of Alabama.

Make sure you have marked your calendar to join us next Tuesday, 17 October, at our Humane Society's Annual Meeting. We begin at 6 pm, Trinity Episcopal Church, 5375 Hwy 231, Wetumpka, AL 36092 and will be electing new officers as well as reviewing our accomplishments in the past year and looking ahead to 2018. This meeting is for our members and those interested in becoming members of our Humane Society so hope to see you there!

