

Humane Society of Elmore County News
8 Apr '13

This week (7-13 Apr '13) is National Animal Control Officer Appreciation Week and we invite everyone to please take a few minutes to thank your supporting Animal Control Officer (ACO). Almost every town in Elmore County and the county itself has an individual who focuses on Animal Control issues which not only protects animals but humans as well. These individuals go far beyond the old days of the 'dog catcher' as they work to enforce state and local laws, help animals in need, protect the health and safety of people, and resolve issues involving animals.

Animal Control Officers often find themselves going far beyond just capturing wayward animals as they mediate disputes between neighbors over animal issues such as roaming dogs and cats, livestock getting out of pastures, aggressive pets in adjoining yards, loose pets causing property damage and more. In the county areas state laws apply but each municipality adds their own ordinances to the mix. While there is no containment (leash) law in the county (and we so wish our County Commission would adopt the state Containment Law for dogs), each municipality does have a leash law for dogs and Wetumpka adds to that with a leash law for cats. City noise ordinances and barking dogs are often at crossed paths and some towns, such as Millbrook, have no restrictions on livestock in the city limits.

For livestock owners the state actually has some very prescriptive fencing laws and while gates may accidentally get left open, or fences can break, repeated escapes by livestock because of run down or ill-constructed fences can result in charges for the owner as loose livestock can present a deadly hazard on roadways. And while there are fence laws so that livestock stays safely contained from public areas, owners of livestock also have laws that allow them to use deadly force to protect their animals from attacking dogs. Home owners are also allowed to protect themselves, their families or pets from attacking/threatening dogs, but homeowners need to also know that they cannot use deadly force against a dog just because it is crossing their yard or getting into the trash.

There are both felony & misdemeanor cruelty laws to help protect animals and while most think these are just for dogs and cats there are cruelty laws for livestock as well. In all of these aforementioned issues there is a human pet/livestock owner involved and this puts Animal Control Officers into situations that are often volatile and emotional. Sadly in late November 2012, 14 year veteran ACO Roy Marcum in Sacramento County, California was killed as he accompanied a bank official as part of an eviction proceeding. This dedicated officer was solely there to help a dog that was supposedly in the house and lost his life as a result.

Sadly Animal Control Officers tend to be overlooked by people until they are needed which is truly a shame as we have some very dedicated officers who truly want to help animals and help people at the same time. Some of our area officers have even paid for training out of their own pocket as there is plenty to learn about in the animal control field such as safe capture techniques, animal identification, disease issues, legal issues, investigative techniques, court proceedings, rabies control, public education, wildlife and exotics, and so much more. These officers are a vital part of our communities and help keep our cities and county safe so please thank them for their service and for the work they do day and night. Since you might not cross paths with your supporting ACO this

week perhaps go to our shelter Facebook (Humane Society of Elmore County) this week and say thanks to these officers – we will make sure they see the posts.