

Humane Society of Elmore County News - 9 Apr '18

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Executive Director

This week (8-14 Apr '18) is National Animal Control Officer (ACO) Appreciation Week and we ask that you please thank your local ACO for his/her hard work helping both animals and people. In Elmore County each of our city and county ACO's are alone in their work to enforce state and local laws, help animals in need, protect the health and safety of people, and resolve issues involving animals. We know their departments appreciate their contribution to public safety as they interact with people and animal alike, often in risky situations involving injured, scared or aggressive animals.

Animal Control Officers often go far beyond just capturing wayward animals as they deal with dog and cat bite/attack cases, mediate disputes between neighbors over animal issues, round up loose livestock that have gotten out of pastures, investigate animal cruelty and neglect cases, work with their fellow law enforcement on other cases where animals are often innocent victims, investigate and often seize abandoned pets, etc. All areas of Elmore County have a containment or "leash law" for dogs and Wetumpka & Tallassee add to that with a "leash law" for cats. City noise ordinances and barking dogs are often at crossed paths and some towns have limits on the number of pets in city zoning ordinances. And some, but not all of our cities restrict livestock within city limits.

Our Animal Control Officers are dedicated professionals who deserve respect from the public they serve – some are Alabama Peace Officer Standards and Training (APOST) certified officers and some have attended specialized animal control training at the state and national level to learn about things like safe capture techniques, animal identification, disease issues, legal issues, investigative techniques, court proceedings, rabies control, public education, wildlife and exotics, and so much more. Animal issues often put them in harm's way from both animals and people and their call volume often means they have to triage cases to deal with the most serious, or potentially serious, the quickest.

In Alabama we now have a new state-wide law to aid in the protection of people from dangerous dogs. If a court establishes that a dog is dangerous, but hasn't caused serious physical injury or death, the owner could be allowed to keep the dog but must register the animal annually with animal control or the county health department, have the dog spayed or neutered, have the animal permanently identified with a microchip or tattoo, and obtain a \$100,000 bond protecting against injuries by the dog. If a dog that has been previously declared dangerous kills a human being, the owner of that dog can be charged with a class B felony. Courts are further given the authority to order the animal to be humanely euthanized. There is, of course, much more to this new law, but suffice that those owning dogs that are aggressive to humans need to take notice and take all steps to protect the public from those dangerous dogs so no other person is maimed or killed.

As we work ACO's daily, we say thank you to each and every Animal Control Officer for all they do to help animals and people throughout Elmore County – your hard work is greatly appreciated.