



ACO Core Competencies Training Guide





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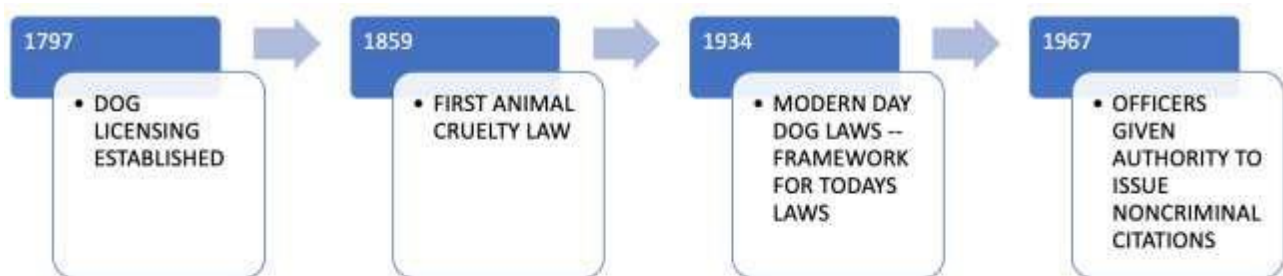
COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of these sessions, you will be able to:

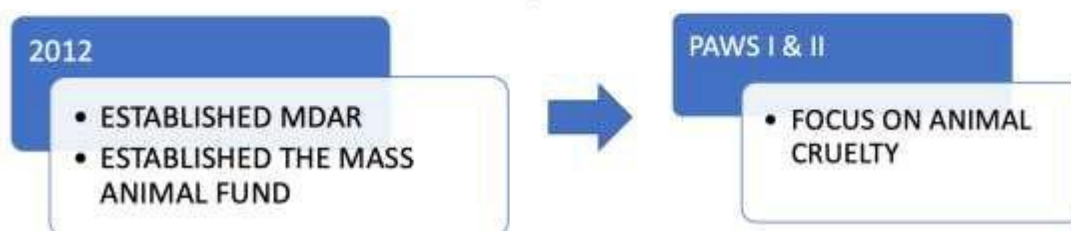
- Discuss the sections in the current MGL that contain the majority of ACO duties and responsibilities.
- Identify the registration and licensing requirements for dogs.
- Discuss the requirements for kennel licenses.
- Identify rabies vaccination requirements.
- Discuss the identification of nuisance/dangerous dogs and the correct steps in dog control.
- Discuss the importance of the tethering and confinement MGL.
- Discuss chapter 272 animal cruelty laws and investigations.
- Know the roles of Animal Inspectors (AIs) and why cooperation with ACOs is essential.
- Know reporting requirements and complete an intake report.
- Understand an ACOs responsibility and restrictions in responding to wildlife situations.
- Gain basic animal handling knowledge.
- Learn about preparing for emergency situations.
- Learn de-escalation techniques.
- Write a clear and concise standard incident report.

ANIMAL CONTROL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

MGL TIMELINE



LAWS IN SECTION 140 REMAINED MAINLY UNCHANGED FROM 1975-2012, BUT COUNTY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE DISSOLVED IN 1990'S LEAVING MUNICIPALITIES ON THEIR OWN WITH NO FUNDS, NO INSPECTIONS





LICENSING, RABIES VACCINATIONS, AND KENNELS

Activity --What I Know

Directions:

- Answer the questions as best as you can.
- As we go through the next section, check your answers. If you were incorrect, or if you didn't know the answer, write the correct answer in the space provided.

Question	My Answer	Wait, I want to change it!
All dogs require licenses when they reach what age?		
To get a license all dogs need proof of what?		
If a six-month or older dog is acquired, by an owner or foster home, how many days before they have obtain a license?		
What animals must be vaccinated for rabies?		
If a municipality doesn't have its own shelter, where can they hold their animals?		
What are the two things an ACO MUST make sure get completed when returning a dog to an owner?		
Under the MGLs what are three things that could lower a license fee?		
When determining kennel capacity for licensing, what things should you take into consideration?		
Which of the following are valid reasons for a veterinarian to issue an exemption for the rabies shot? a. Immune mediated disease b. Owners don't believe in vaccinations. c. Anaphylaxis - severe allergic reaction d. Animal is fractious at the time of the exam		
(True or False?) Dogs must have a license, but it is not necessary for them to wear it in public.		
A Kennel license is required if they are ____or more dogs over 3 mo. on the property.		
What is the maximum fine for an unvaccinated dog, cat, or ferret?		



UNCLAIMED ANIMALS--NO OWNER FOUND AFTER 7 DAYS

Options (Municipality and ACO)		
Option 1- Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for liability • Behavior and health status must be assessed. • Can apply for MAF voucher to spay/neuter 	Notes
Option 2 - Transfer the Animal to registered shelter/rescue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check list of licensed shelter/rescues at Mass.gov • CANNOT Transfer to a research facility, broker, or a pet shop 	Notes
Option 3 - Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by a vet or under vet supervision, gunshot only allowed in true emergency situations. • Barbiturates are the only acceptable means in non-emergency situations 	Notes

Abandoned Animals Key Points

What are the three types of housing circumstances that must checked for animals?	
What are the ACO responsibilities for abandoned animals?	

BY-LAWS / ORDINANCES

- § 104-23 Incorporation of statutory provisions.
- Except as specifically modified in this article, the provisions of the applicable sections of MGL c. 140 shall be incorporated into and apply to this article, as well as any other section of Massachusetts General Laws referenced herein.

What can a municipal bylaw not do?



ACO ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Directions:

- Check each task that is the responsibility of an ACO.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Conduct kennel inspections for licensing purposes, for personal, and commercial kennels
<input type="checkbox"/>	Issue dog and kennel licenses
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adjust license fees
<input type="checkbox"/>	Catch and confine stray dogs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete intake form for any animals taken into custody
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure municipal animals are held in a safe and sanitary location
<input type="checkbox"/>	Actively seek the owner for stray dogs; check for microchip, tattoo, or other ID; check the licensing lists for dogs with a similar description
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enforce dog licensing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take in animals from outside municipality for adoptions/placements
<input type="checkbox"/>	Issue rabies quarantines
<input type="checkbox"/>	Investigate dangerous/nuisance dog complaints
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine and set maximum number of dogs allowed on a kennel license
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take in animals that are discovered in a private housing facility that doesn't allow animals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Return to owner, or work obtain legal custody of an animal in municipal care, when an owner is known.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take in animals from boarding or veterinary facilities, in cases where an owner brought them in but did not pick them up.



MGL Chapter 140 sec 157A Dangerous and Nuisance Dogs

Key Points

Complaints	Who can issue a complaint and who should it be issued to?	
Hearings	Does the municipality have to have a hearing if one is requested?	What is needed before the Hearing?
Options	What are the three rulings that can be given by the hearing authority?	
Orders	How does what can be ordered for a nuisance dog differ from orders for a dangerous dog?	
Change of Location	What happens if a dangerous dog moves to another MA town?	What about out of state?
Change of Ownership	What needs to be done for a dangerous dog to be rehomed?	
Penalties	What are they?	What would the ACO need to have to seize the dog?

If a nuisance or dangerous dog hearing is requested, what steps should the ACO take?



MGL CHAPTER 140 SECTION 174E - TETHERING LAW

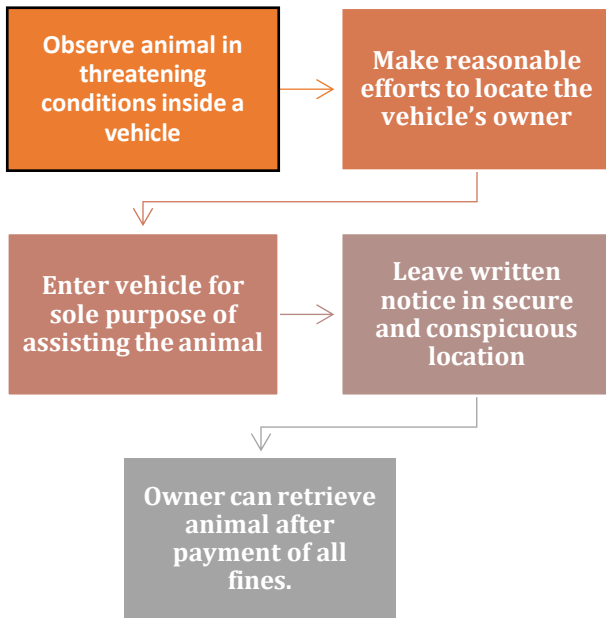
Key Points

Key Section	<p>(f) No person owning or keeping a dog shall subject the dog to cruel conditions or inhumane chaining or the tethering at any time. For the purposes of this subsection, "cruel conditions and inhumane chaining or tethering" shall include, but not be limited to, the following conditions:</p> <p>(1) filthy and dirty confinement conditions including, but not limited to, exposure to excessive animal waste, garbage, dirty water, noxious odors, dangerous objects that could injure or kill a dog upon contact or other circumstances that could cause harm to a dog's physical or emotional health;</p> <p>(2) taunting, prodding, hitting, harassing, threatening, or otherwise harming a tethered or confined dog; and</p> <p>(3) subjecting a dog to dangerous conditions, including attacks by other animals.</p>
What are some scenarios that could be cited under the tethering and confinement law?	
Importance of this law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows punishment for offenses in situations where the abuse or neglect does not rise to a felony level. • Allows officers to build a stronger case in court by showing a history of lower-level offenses. • Allows officers to address common issues in animal control.
What are some of the tethering restrictions listed?	
What is required for adequate outdoor enclosures?	
What are the requirements for shelter?	

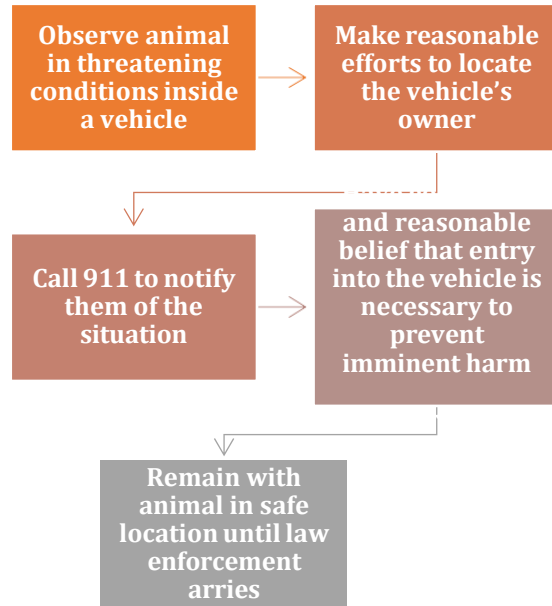


MGL CHAPTER 140 SECTION 174F - VEHICLE CONFINEMENT

ACO STEPS



CIVILIAN STEPS



WHAT IS THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CIVILIAN ACTION AND ACO/LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION?

Penalties

What steps should be taken after an animal needs to be removed from a vehicle?



CHAPTER 272 - ANIMAL CRUELTY



What are the four basic needs of animals?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

CRITICAL
POINTS WHEN
INVESTIGATING
ANIMAL
CRUELTY

How do violations of Chapter 140 laws, differ from violations of Chapter 272 laws?

Who has the authority to enforce Chapter 272 sec. 77-81, animal cruelty violations?

Exigent
Circumstances

List some examples of exigent circumstances?

What should immediately happen for any animal seized under exigency?



SERVICE ANIMALS -

Service Animal Activity

A service animal means any *dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability."

Directions: Below are three types of assistance animals, draw a line from the type of assistance animal to the statements that apply

Service Animal	Must comply with all vaccination and licensing requirements
Emotional Support Animal	Is allowed in housing that may have animal restrictions
	Can only be a dog, mini horse or specially trained monkey in MA
Therapy Animal	Can not be charged a licensing fee under the MGLs
	Can provide comfort to many different individuals and is often allowed in hospital and school settings
	Performs a task for a disabled individual
	Can be asked to leave if not under handler's control
	An owner may have more than one

Scenario:

A young man enters a library with a dog. What are the two things that can be asked

1. _____
2. _____

Note: *In MA, entities must make reasonable modification in policies to allow individuals with disabilities to use miniature horses if they have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for individuals with disabilities.



PAWS - CRIMINAL VIOLATIONS

Abandoned Animals Key Points

What are the three types of housing circumstances that must be checked for animals?	
What are the ACO responsibilities for abandoned animals?	

Abuse Reporting Key Points

Who MUST report animal abuse?	Who MAY report animal abuse?
ACO responsibilities	

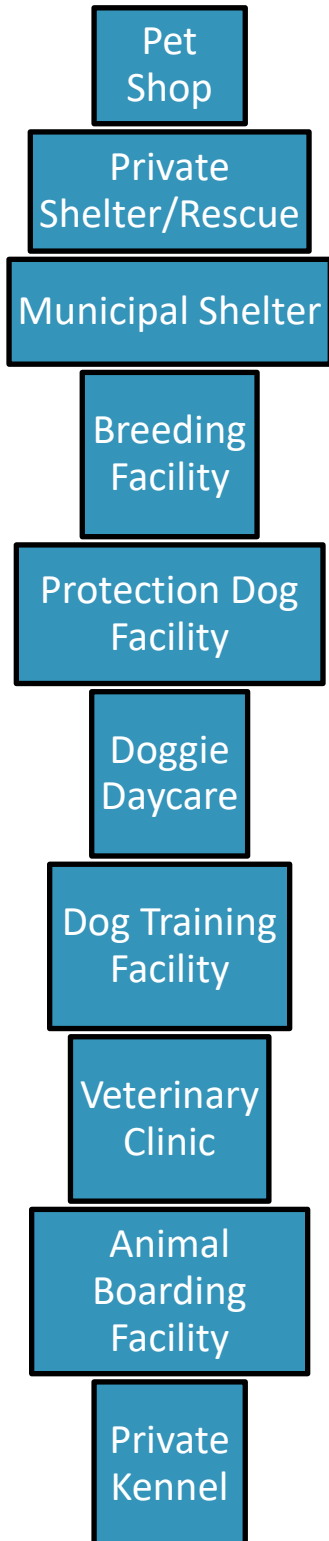
CHAPTER 129 AND MDAR Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources

MDAR	The health and safety of the Commonwealth's domestic animals is the Division of Animal Health's primary responsibility.
What are some things that MDAR is responsible for?	
Animal Inspector Role	serves as an agent of the Department of Agricultural Resources – MGL Chapter 129 statutes. Can one person be an ACO and AI?
Rabies Circle which tasks are the AIs responsibility	<p>Issues Quarantine Handles Bite Reports Releases Quarantine</p> <p>Reports to MDAR Gives Medical Advice Investigates Dangerous Dogs</p> <p>Captures Animal for Testing Enforces Rabies Regulations</p> <p>Conducts Barn Inspections</p>



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Directions: Below are types of organizations that hold animals, draw a line from the type of organization to the statements that apply. Some statements may work for multiple organizations.



Has animals for sale, that are the offspring of their own animals on premise.

A place or premises where Animals are kept for the purpose of either wholesale or retail sale, import, export, barter, exchange, or gift.

An organization that would need a Kennel License if they house dogs, so they must be inspected by ACO, prior to licensing and renewal.

All Complaints should be reported to the MDAR's Division of Animal Health

A nonprofit with 501cs status

Must have an operating license through MDAR.

Acquires animals and offers for sale or placement but is not a nonprofit.

Is inspected by MDAR Inspectors

Is licensed to adopt out animals through compliance and licensing under 330 CMR 30.00

Is exempt from 330 CMR regulations but able to house animals (from its municipality) and has the ability to develop an adoption program (from its municipality) under MGL Chapter 140 sec. 151A.

May be used to house municipal animals **IF** they hold a valid kennel license and has an appropriate place to keep the animals separate from other animals during the stray hold period.



WILDLIFE

Mass Wildlife has statutory authority to enforce MGL Chapter 131 & 131A, so ACOs need to obtain authorization to address most wildlife issues. Below are some examples of wildlife calls and a response. Is the response one that the ACO would need to get MassWildlife permission for prior?

Scenario	Response	YES	NO
There is a report of a fox that bit a person in their backyard.	The ACO captures the fox with a rabies pole, contacts the AI and brings the fox to a vet for euthanasia and testing.		
There is a call about a baby deer found at a playground.	The ACO captures the baby deer and since it appears to be underweight, they bring it to a local rehabber.		
A sick coyote is seen near the train station, it appears to have a skin condition	The ACO sets a trap, captures the coyote, and brings it to a veterinarian for treatment.		
There is a call about a hawk that has been sitting on a fence in a backyard. The owner is concerned about her small dogs.	The ACO goes out to check on the situation and they spot a bird feeder also in the yard. The ACO gives the homeowner information about why feeding wildlife can be harmful.		
An individual calls about stating that they have a groundhog in a trap and want it removed.	The ACO takes the groundhog to the town forest and releases it.		

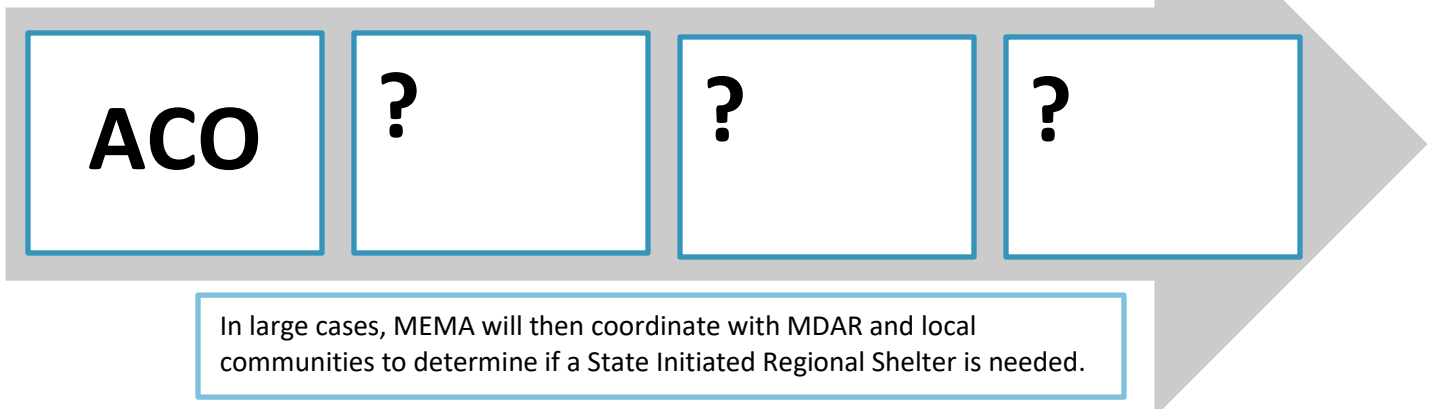
What is an ACO's best tool when it comes to responding to calls about Wildlife? _____

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Scenario:

Parts of your municipality are in a flood zone. It has been raining for days and a house near a riverbank needs to be evacuated, they have two dogs that need temporary placement. Your town has the ability to house a few dogs at your municipal shelter, but as the waters rise more homes need to be evacuated and more animals need housing.

After the ACO, in what order should the following agencies be contacted? **MEMA, Local Emergency Management Director, MEMA Regional Office**





ANIMAL BEHAVIOR, CAPTURE & SAFE HANDLING

Circle True or False for the Statements below		
Dogs primarily use verbal communication to display how they are feeling.	TRUE	FALSE
If a cat has dilated pupils, flattened ears and appears fluffed it is displaying signs of fear.	TRUE	FALSE
The ONLY humane trap is a live trap.	TRUE	FALSE
All ACOs have the authority to carry chemical weapons and firearms.	TRUE	FALSE
There are 4 main types of capture equipment: extended reach equipment (rabies, poles, nets), traps (box, drop), physical barriers (gloves, blankets) and chemical (injectables).	TRUE	FALSE

PUBLIC RELATIONS & OFFICER SAFETY

Verbal de-escalation is an important tool to use during a potentially dangerous or threatening situation in an attempt to prevent a person from causing harm to us, themselves, or others.

Cross out anything that isn't a verbal de-escalation tactic below:

Verbal De-escalation Tactics

Empathize with the Individual and try to understand things from their point of view.

Provide positive motivation to encourage a solution.

Minimize the Individual's concerns, by telling them it's not issue.

Try changing the conversation by refocusing the individual on something positive.

Give the Individual choices to help resolve the issue.

Simply listen to what the individual is saying.

Try to make sure your body language is not threatening.

Let the individual know right away that they are facing citations and penalties.

Use physical force.

Pre-judge the individual and the situation and make sure you go into the conversation with your mind made up.

Make the individual aware that you are there for their safety and the safety of the animals and ask for their help.

Use a distraction to resolve tension.

Use positive and helpful statements like: "Please, tell me more so I can better understand how I can help you."



REPORT WRITING AND RECORD KEEPING

RECORD REQUIREMENTS:

Under Chapter 140 Sec. 151A(b) each animal control officer shall forward a copy of their intake records to the town or city Clerk every _____ days. Copies of these records shall be kept in the town or city clerk's office for _____ years.

In accordance with Chapter 140, Section 151A, you must maintain a record of **each animal** that comes into your possession. MDAR has designed ACO intake forms that are available for use and that meet all the reporting requirements **if filled out in full**. Keep in mind intake reports are not complete until there is a clear IN and OUT.

Who needs an intake form?

Domestic Animal (ALL) INTAKE FORM NEEDED

- Any domestic animal taken in as a stray , owner Surrender, transfer (through mutual aid), for euthanasia or through a seizure
- even DOAs (Dead on Arrival)

Wildlife INTAKE FORM NEEDED

- Any wildlife that is taken in temporarily for transport to a licensed rehabber, for return to field, or for euthanasia/testing

Deceased Wildlife

- For most deceased wildlife a simple log is sufficient

MDAR Intake forms can be found through the links below. In addition to intake forms, ACOs should be completing kennel inspection forms, bite/incident reports, financial records, daily logs, & citations issued.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT

ANIMAL INTAKE FORM



AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

< This is a standard animal intake form.

This is an animal intake > and custody form (created in 2023) that has a second page for surrenders, transfers, adoptions and fees.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT






INTAKE / CUSTODY FORM



AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES



When describing an animal in your intake forms, and reports, it is important to state the physical characteristics. For stray posts on social media, descriptions are important, but remember to leave out at least one identifying feature in case you need it to confirm ownership of the animal.

				
<p>Type</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dog • cat • other 	<p>General Appearance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breed type • weight • size • unusual features 	<p>Coat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • color • markings • length • texture 	<p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • puppy /kitten • adolescent • adult • senior 	<p>Sex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male • female • spayed/neutered
<p>← Always describe the animal in detail since breed guesses are wrong 70% of the time! →</p>				

ISSUING CITATIONS AND WARNINGS

Citations for animal violations TRUE or FALSE?		
Animal Control officers get the authority to issue citations from their municipal bylaws.	TRUE	FALSE
For a first offense, often a verbal warning is sufficient.	TRUE	FALSE
A citation needs to contain at least the following information: officer's name, animal owner's name, address, phone number and DOB, type of violation, date, time and location of violation.	TRUE	FALSE
It is important to make sure your town bylaws don't conflict with the MGLs and are updated regularly, to help ensure that violations written don't get dismissed.	TRUE	FALSE

Work with your municipality to obtain warning/citation booklets or forms.



INCIDENT REPORTS

Reports should be written for any incident where you are gathering information, responding to a call/complaint, or when you are conducting an investigation.

All reports should be clear, concise, and well organized. Take the time to organize the facts, and collect information that answers who, what, when, where, how, and why.



Use Identifiers!

- People(s)-Name, DOB, Phone #, License #, Address
- Animal(s)-Name, Breed, Description, ID #, Age



Be Clear!

- Start with an opening sentence, that states who is writing the report, the date/time and where and why you are responding.
- Write in chronological order.
- Write in everyday speech.
- DON'T forget to proofread!

Below are parts of a sample incident report for reference.

Opening paragraph: set the why and introduce who is writing the report and who they are speaking with

On 24 Sept. 2022, I, Animal Control Officer (ACO) Moore, was dispatched to 125 Lake Street in the area of Mill View Pond, Wakefield for a reported found dog with an injury. Upon, my arrival at approximately 1400 hrs, I observed a male restraining a small size, solid tan chihuahua-type dog wearing a green harness on his lap. The male (reporting party) was identified as Mr. Simon Simple of 1 Birdy Lane in the Town of Wakefield. Mr. Simon identified himself with his MA driver's license number 12456 and provided 871-77-7777 as a contact phone number.

Body of the report: avoid unnecessary opinions, tell the facts in chronological order, stick with simple language and terms

Mr. Simple stated that he was walking the Mill View Pond hiking trail when he heard what he described as a soft bang and a loud yelp. Mr. Simple stated that he immediately left the trail and went about 100 feet to the tree line just off 125 Lake Street. At the tree line, Mr. Simple said that he saw the chihuahua-type dog laying on the shoulder of the southbound lane of the road whining. A silver Toyota RAV 4 with a yellow kayak on top was on the opposite side of the road about 20 yards away. As Mr. Simple stepped out of the tree line, the



RAV 4 quickly pulled back on the road and headed northbound. Mr. Simple stated that he then approached the dog laying on the ground, who growled softly but remained in place. When he reached the dog, he observed a fresh wound on the dog's leg. Mr. Simple stated that the dog stopped growling after about a minute and then the dog allowed him to carefully pick him up. Mr. Simple stated that he then moved over to an area of grass about 10 yards from the road sat down, placed the dog on his lap, and called the Wakefield Police line to report the incident. Mr. Simple said that the dog calmly stayed in his lap until my arrival which was a 10 min wait.

I briefly examined the dog in Mr. Simple's lap, and he appeared to be young and neutered. The dog was wearing a green harness that buckled on top without any tags. I observed a fresh 4-inch open wound on the dog's left hind leg thigh area, and he also had a dime-sized amount of blood near his lower lip on his left side, which appeared to be an abrasion-type injury. The dog appeared bright and alert at the time but was softly whining. I scanned the dog with my HomeAgain scanner and no microchip was found. I picked up the dog with a towel (he flinched slightly when touched) and placed the dog into a 20-inch vari-crate. Once the dog was secured in the back of my animal control vehicle, I thanked Mr. Simple for reporting the incident, handed him my contact card, and let him know that I was immediately taking the dog to a local veterinary clinic for care. Mr. Simple said he would call to follow up.

I transported the dog to Best Puppies Veterinary Clinic at 1 Canine Lane, Wakefield. Upon arrival, the dog was seen immediately by Dr. Pupper, who recognized the dog as Charlie, owned by Mrs. Sarah Salty of Marsh Ave, Wakefield. While Dr. Pupper was examining Charlie, the staff called Mrs. Salty who arrived at the clinic within 5 mins. Before leaving the clinic, I spoke with Mrs. Salty who provided her MA driver's license #123456 and phone number of 777-62-2222. Mrs. Salty stated that Charlie is an escape artist and that he must have sneaked out the backdoor while she was showering. Mrs. Salty said Charlie is licensed in Wakefield but that she forgot to put the tag on his harness. I said I would follow up with her tomorrow to check on how Charlie is doing and left the clinic. Once in my vehicle, I called in the description of the Silver RAV 4 to Sgt. Harold of the Wakefield Police and let them know that a full report would follow for a possible canine hit and run on Lake Street.

Conclusion: try to wrap up any loose ends you can, and state if additional tasks are still needed. Don't forget, to sign your report.

On 25 Sept. 2022, I called Mrs. Salty at 1000 hours. Mrs. Salty stated that Charlie is at home and is doing well. She reported that Charlie received 10 stitches to his left thigh and had the wound dressed near his lip, but that he had no additional injuries. Mrs. Salty said that Dr. Pupper will recheck him later in the week, but that she expects him to heal quickly. Mrs. Salty provided Charlie's Wakefield 2022 dog license number 45 and said that the tag is now securely on his harness. I explained to Mrs. Salty that provided the police department with a description of the vehicle that potentially struck Charlie, and asked Mrs. Salty to give the Clinic permission to release Charlie's veterinary exam records so that they can be attached to this report. Mrs. Salty granted permission and records were obtained, see attached.

This report was given to Sgt. Harold on 25 Sept. 2022. To date, there have been no matches on the RAV 4 Vehicle. The investigation will be ongoing in the event further information becomes available.

Submitted by, ACO Moore, 25 Sept. 2022



QUICK REFERENCE CONTACT LIST

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources

100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Michael Cahill MDAR

Animal Health Director 617-626-1794
Michael.Cahill@mass.gov

Dr. Lorraine O'Connor

MDAR Chief Veterinarian Health Officer
617-626-1791
L.OConnor@mass.gov

Dr. Margaret Gabour

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(617) 626-1795
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Sheri.Gustafson@mass.gov

Kyle Baron

Mass Animal Fund Community Liaison
617-626-1790
Kyle.Baron@mass.gov

Ashley Kraft

MDAR Rabies Program Coordinator
617-626-1810
Ashley.Kraft@Mass.gov

Elsie Colon

MDAR Pet Shop Program Coordinator
617-626-1795
Elsie.Colon@mass.gov

Patricia Cabral

MDAR Shelter and Rescue Coordinator
617-626-1786
Patricia.Cabral@mass.gov

Carry Shulock-Sexton

MDAR Animal Disease Traceability
617-626-1797
Carry.Shulock-Sexton@mass.gov

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Epidemiology Program 617-983-6800

State Public Health Laboratory

305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
617-983-6385

Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game

Mass Wildlife
508-389-6300
mass.wildlife@mass.gov

Tufts Wildlife Clinic

Bernice Barbour Wildlife Medicine Building
200 Westboro Road, North Grafton, MA 01536 508-839-7918

New England Wildlife Center

500 Columbian Street, South Weymouth, MA 02190
781-682-4878

Cape Wildlife Center

4011 Main Street, Barnstable, MA 02630
508-362-0111

MSPCA Law Enforcement Department

350 South Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02130
617-522-6008 or 800-626-5808

ARL Law Enforcement Department

617-226-5610
cruelty@arlboston.org

Massachusetts State Police

508-820-2300

Massachusetts Environmental Police

800-632-8075

Massachusetts Emergency Management

Agency Headquarters
400 Worcester Road, Framingham, MA 01702
508-820-2000

Northeast

365 East Street, Tewksbury, MA 01876
978-328-1500

Southeast

12 Administration Road, Bridgewater, MA 02324 508-427-0400

West/Central

1002 Suffield Street, Agawam 01001
413-750-1400