



CITY COUNCIL REPORT

DATE: 3/03/2016
TO: Mayor and Councilmembers
FROM: Police Chief Kevin Treadway, Deputy Police Chief Dan Musselman
CC: Josh Copley, Shane Dille, Leadership Team
SUBJECT: Animal Control and Leash Laws



This report is in response to a request for further information on leash laws and public outreach.

DISCUSSION

The current leash law reads as follows: "Every person owning or having charge, care, custody or control of any dog of any age shall keep such dog exclusively upon his or her own premises; provided, however, that the dog may be off such premises if it is under the control of a competent person and restrained by a chain, leash, rope or cord of sufficient strength to contain and control such dog (**6-02-001-0001A**).” A violation of this section is a class two misdemeanor and is punishable by a fine of not less than fifty dollars (\$50.00).

With the unseasonably warm weather in February 2016, we saw a significant increase in citizens on our urban trails system and recreating outdoors. Many of these citizens have been in the company of their pets. To address the increase in this activity, our ACO Officer recently adjusted his hours on Saturday, coming in early to try to patrol the urban trail system in a proactive effort to address any violations of the leash law. We will continue this effort as weather permits.

Planned outreach and mitigation efforts regarding animal leash laws will consist of:

- A reminder to keep dogs on leash posted in our City Scape (mid-May)
- Maintaining a link on the City of Flagstaff web page for Dog and Animal regulations
- Close patrolling our urban trails and parks for leash law violations, with ACO's and Officers educating citizens when violations are observed
- The Police Department Facebook page links to the Coconino Humane Shelter
- ACO/Humane Shelter information booth at National Night Out in August 2016
- Information table at Cal-Ranch Adoption Day
- Placing hanging door flyers in certain neighborhoods with Leash law problems.
- Re-assigning the ACO hours or days off, depending on high call times of animal violations.
- Sending a Public Service Announcement (PSA) on our Leash laws to The Arizona Daily Sun.
- Giving a PSA on the leash laws the next time we get a radio spot.
- Presentations at community groups, and schools on animal safety
- Request pet stores to post outreach posters on responsible pet ownership.

BACKGROUND

The Police Department currently has one Animal Control Officer (ACO), who is assigned to work Tuesday through Saturday from 9:00-5:00. We have occasionally adjusted the ACO's hours to work earlier or later depending on citizen requests. In 2008, the Department had two ACOs, as it has had for many years prior to that. We cut one of the two positions in order to meet the 19% reductions that year, and have not been able to replace the other ACO. Uniformed Patrol Officers respond to animal calls when the ACO is off-duty. Officers are limited in addressing dogs off leash proactively, as they are often responding to calls for service of a higher priority. We are currently experiencing a 10% increase in police calls for service over the past two years with a reduction of seven (7) uniformed patrol officers since 2008.

In 2015, A total of 2,413 ACO related calls were received by the Department, and the ACO handled 822 calls, and Patrol Officers handled 1,591 (2/3 of all ACO calls). The ACO impounded 95 animals out of a total 508 impounds, with Patrol Officers impounding 413 animals. We have had our ACO conduct in-service training to Officers to educate them with these types of calls. Leash law violations tend to be seasonal, with more citizens out with their pets during the warm weather than colder winter months.

We have written the following citations for dogs off leash:

- 2016 year to date: five (5) total, four (4) by the ACO and one (1) by officers.
- 2015: 21 total, 15 by the ACO, six (6) by officers.
- 2014: 38 total, 25 by the ACO and 13 by officers.

We have written the following citations for vicious dog at large:

- 2016 year to date: one (1) by the ACO, one (1) by an Officer
- 2015: six (6) total, none by the ACO and six (6) by Officers
- 2014: seven (7) total, two (2) by the ACO, and five (5) by Officers

In the summer of 2015, the community experienced a heightened awareness of dog related calls following an incident where four dogs attacked two smaller dogs out on a walk with its owner. Two of the aggressive dogs were shot by a witness, and one of the victim dogs was killed in the attack. This was followed two weeks later by a second incident where an aggressive dog attacked a jogger. We saw a significant increase in media attention following these incidents and repeated calls from the public and council members to increase patrols related to leash laws. It should be noted however that these two incidents as well as several others were the result of dogs escaping their enclosures, not pet owners walking their pets in violation of leash laws.

In response to these incidents and public concerns, we did the following throughout 2015:

- A link was established on the City of Flagstaff web page for Dog and Animal regulations
- We verified "Dogs must be leashed" signage at the majority of our parks
- We verified that signage is placed at various points along the urban trail system
- The Police Department's Facebook page links to the Coconino Humane Shelter
- We provided an ACO/Humane Shelter information booth at National Night Out in August
- An information table was established at the Cal-Ranch Adoption Day
- Regular reminders to keep dogs on leash were made via media releases on dog bite incidents.

- We re-assigned the ACO hours or days off, depending on high call times of animal violations.
- Close patrolled our urban trails and parks for leash law violations, with ACO's and Officers educating citizens when violations were observed
- The Police Department Facebook page linked to the Coconino Humane Shelter
- We placed hanging door flyers in certain neighborhoods with leash law problems

This report is for information only.