



Animal Cruelty: Behind the Scenes

The Humane Society Cruelty Division is dedicated to ending neglect and abuse of domestic animals in the Greater Harrisburg area. Covering Dauphin, Cumberland, Perry, and Northern York Counties is a daunting task. With one full time officer, decisions must be made to prioritize the large volume calls received each day. The first goal in most cases is educating the owner of the animal to make the necessary corrections to the violations at hand. Most individuals simply do not know Pennsylvania Cruelty Laws, which essentially state an animal must have access to food, water, shelter, sanitary living conditions, and necessary veterinary care.

If the animal owner is not willing or able to make the corrections ordered by the officer, many options are available. The animal can be surrendered to the Humane Society in lieu of prosecution (this is a very productive outcome and the animal is immediately removed from the neglectful situation.) On rare occasions, the animal can be seized if the conditions that exist warrant a seizure. Then the animal will be held at the Humane Society as living, breathing evidence, pending the outcome of a summary trial in which forfeiture of the animal will be requested upon conviction.

Most cases received by the Humane Society Cruelty Division are resolved without the court being involved. However, if charges are filed the individual faces a fine ranging from \$50 to \$750 and up to 90 days in jail. The sentence imposed is determined by the District Magistrate hearing the case.

Being a Humane Police Officer is very rewarding yet difficult job. You must be able to set your emotions aside and play by the book. Many times you must walk away from an appalling situation and go through the appropriate channels to try and save an animal's life.

If you suspect cruelty and want to report it, certain information is vital. Be sure to have an exact address, description of the animal, and suspected cruelty and duration of the neglect. All information is confidential, but you must leave your name and phone number in the event the officer has any questions. If the situation you are reporting needs an immediate response, call your local police department. Any police officer in the state of Pennsylvania can enforce Cruelty Laws.

Remember, you may be the animal's only voice.

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