



## **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, and Perry Counties is a daunting task. With only one full time officer and two support staff, decisions must be made to prioritize the large volume of calls received each day. The first goal in most cases is educating the person who has the duty of care of the animal(s) 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.

Ideally, the person with duty of care of the animal(s) would correct any violations. This is a very productive outcome because it ensures the animal(s) will have access to everything required by law, and it is the least disruptive outcome for the animal(s) involved. If the person with duty of care of the animal(s) is not willing or able to make the corrections ordered by the officer, few options are available. On rare occasions, the animal(s) can be seized if the conditions that exist warrant a seizure. Then the animal(s) will be held at the Humane Society as living, breathing evidence, pending the outcome of a trial in which forfeiture of the animal(s) 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 fines, jail time, forfeiture of the animal(s), prohibition of ownership of animals, and restitution for care provided for any animal(s) seized. In most cases, the sentence imposed is determined by a District Magistrate hearing the case.

Being a Humane Police Officer is a very rewarding yet difficult job. You must be able to set your emotions aside and approach complaints objectively. 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 animal cruelty and want to report it, certain information is vital. Be sure to have an exact address, description of the animal(s), and suspected type and duration of the cruelty or 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.**

**To report a case of animal cruelty, contact HSHA's Cruelty Department at (717) 564-3320 ext. 104. Complainants will need to provide: Your name, exact address of location of complaint, nature of complaint, name of owners if possible, duration of violation.  
All complainant information is kept strictly confidential.**

*This document is being provided for informational purposes only and is not intended as legal counsel.*

### **BUILDING A BETTER COMMUNITY FOR PETS AND PEOPLE**