

Meeting Minutes of Annual DCO Meeting / Saturday December 5, 2009

Meeting opened at 10:05AM in Madison County Health Department Training Room

Attending; Terri Stoner, Gary Gardiner, Larry Butts, Peter Camuglia, Sheila Garrett & Kim Muehlenbein (DCO's), Geoff Snyder & Ginny Zombek, Environmental Health

Guests; Debbie Jones, Clerk (T) West Winfield, Ross Arena & Bill Pulaski, CNY SPCA

Introductions & Sign In conducted. **Request made to provide Wanderer's Rest w/ complete contact list for all DCO's**

Debbi Jones spoke of her work with local DCO's, licensing & renewal notices. Discussed problems with Albany, NYS Dog license reporting system. Reconciling reports, non-reporting of deceased pets. Noted practice of having notices posted in newspaper re; loose dogs in a neighborhood.

Clerk can issue civil summons (non-criminal) & impose \$15 fine (max.) as administrative fee if delinquent re; license.

Future meeting suggestion; Invite rep from A&M to discuss NYS data base & reporting system, extend invitation to Town Clerks

Bill Pulaski discussed appearance tickets, warrants & dog seizures. Judge may or may not fine, individuals cited often fail to report to court or don't pay fine, warrant may be issued, law enforcement not likely to act on such warrants unless involved with other criminal action, low priority. A&M Article 7 re; Dog seizures discussed. DCO can seize only if owner agrees and surrenders animal, otherwise must have judges order. Dogs & cats deemed personnel property. A DCO has duty to investigate, but cannot "trespass". Cannot remain on property after being told to leave by owner, or deemed trespass.

Importance of completing appearance tickets and forms emphasized. Ticket is an "invitation" to come to court. Complaint & Information form must be accurately completed. (3) forms needed, DL 41, 42 & 43. Dog does not have to bite, threat of harm sufficient. Complaint filled out by victim, endorsed by DCO. Have witnesses fill out general statement form, include police report. Information sheet must be provided to court, judge assigns dated / time of hearing & signs, Hearing notice served by DCO. Pink sheet filled out by DCO, judge fills in decision. Dangerous dog case file must be retained 12 years.

Ross Arena discussed animal cruelty issues. A&M Article 26, only peace officer can enforce, only certified peace officer can become AC Investigator, who can issue warrants. Explained in CNY, Investigators services paid by Onondaga Co., other Counties must have law enforcement respond, although both Ross & Bill will respond to questions / inquiries in Madison Co. Main complaint is shelter law violations, Section 353B, fine ranges from \$50 - \$75. Travel time and finding owners not at home is drain on resources, door tags found to be effective.

Suggestion; develop generic door tags for DCO's, similar to MCDOH.

Discussed importance in being aware and documenting observations. Dangerous dogs often associated with criminal activity, DCO's need to have good rapport w/ local law enforcement, report any criminal activity observed. Guard dogs often used at meth lab sites. Also that most animal cruelty is reported to be conducted by individuals with history of child abuse, exhibits dangerous or abusive tendencies.

Suggestion for future topic; Presentation on meth lab awareness for DCO's

New vicious dog breed's being found in area, used for protection & dog fighting; Johnson American Bulldog, Canary Island Dog.

Discussion on new DCO Certification law, bills passed by senate & assembly, amends A&M law to require training, examination & certification of all DCO's. Bill includes standards for training, applicability, requires all DCO's be certified by 7/01/2010.

Action item; Advise Town Clerks / Supervisors re; pending DCO certification requirements

Rabies clinic summary provided. Pet immunizations up 20% from 2008, last clinic scheduled for 12/12/09 at Vets Field, Oneida. Noted many other County's now requesting \$10 – 15 donation.

Rabies in wildlife discussed. Noted 8 of 57 specimens submitted to date in 2009 positive for rabies, including 5 raccoons, 1 cat, 1 bat & 1 skunk. Noted rabies is endemic in Madison Co., data supports importance of DCO / ACO work.

Noted change in rabies post exposure treatment protocol, only 4 shots now required. Also provided information regarding pre-exposure treatment & having titers checked. DCO's are in FREQUENT RISK category, per MMWR recommendations, and should have titers checked every 2 years. Gary Gardiner noted he has not received Pre-Exp treatment, and requested letter from DOH to Town advising of recommendation and cost.

Action Item; Prepare letter to all Town's citing Pre Exp rabies treatment recommended for all DCO's and cost of treatment if provided by DOH.

Discussed Rapid Rabies Screen test, and not being endorsed by NYSDOH due to false positives and lack of efface testing. Test believed no longer being produced or promoted.

Animal Disease Surveillance Report initiative discussed, intent to identify disease in animals that pose risk to humans, desire for input from DCO's, etal. All in attendance indicated desire to received monthly report.

Wander's Rest topics included update on rear entry door, has been replaced but new motion detection light not operable. WR has indicated it will be corrected. DCO's noted no inside light or switch readily accessible upon entering rear of complex, closest light switch > 50 ft. from entryway, dark conditions hamper animal delivery afterhours. Also lack of ready food / water / amenities for delivered animal. Shelter was leaving dedicated supplies at rear entry area, now not always available.

Lack of concrete pad and sidewalk to rear door also problem, causes muddy conditions and tracking into facility. Needs sidewalk from parking lot to rear door.

Other discussion involved occasional lack of cages available for DCO dogs delivered, desire to have satellite site for southern end of county, re-locate or construct new shelter at Landfill, more centrally located.

Action item; draft memo of WR issues for BOH / BOS attention.

Protocols for animal bite reports discussed, copies of forms, policies, responsibilities distributed to those in attendance. Criteria for and importance of 10 day confinement periods discussed.

Issues related to pets owned by Amish discussed. Many fail to immunize pets for rabies or license dogs. Compliance varies from Town to Town, some more open to discussion than others. Sheila Garrett expressed concern for horses used by Amish, driven hard, beasts of burden. No incidents of abuse noted.

Kim Muelinbien noted NYS moving towards paperless reporting / record keeping. Noted copies of A&M Reg's / Manuals no longer distributed in hard copy, must be downloaded from website and printed.

ACO vs DCO status discussed briefly, pro's and con's of both discussed, all seemed in favor of moving towards ACO designation, but concerns expressed over dealing with exotic animals, farm animals, etc. MCDOH would prefer ACO status be extended to domestic pets (cats and dogs), and issues with feral cats, lack of cat licensing requirements, etc. were discussed.

Meeting ended at 1:30 PM, heavy duty welding gloves for use in handling dogs distributed to all DCO's in attendance.

Follow up; Call received from CNY SPCA with desire to engage in negotiations with Madison County to extend education, spay & neuter & animal cruelty investigation services into Madison County. Organization has seen considerable increase in animal cruelty complaints received from Madison County. All law enforcement involved w/ animal cruelty issues must be trained, use of SPCA officers may reduce training costs.

Suggested submitting letter describing services, benefits to Madison County, request to meet to discuss further. EH Director will distribute to all parties of interest (Sherriff, BOH, BOS, Criminal Justice Committee, DSS, Mental Health, Co. Administrator, etc.) and gauge interest in having presentation provided.