

Animal Control Audit

Objective

Are animal control officers dispatched effectively? Are citations written correctly and collected? How does the City inform citizens about animal control ordinances and contact information?

Background

Animal Control was performed for many years by the Warren County Sheriff's Department. The City contracted with Warren County for a deputy sheriff position from 1995 until 2004, when the City hired its first Animal Control Officer within the Police Department. Animal Control services moved to the City's Neighborhood and Community Services Department (NCS) in 2014 and continues to enforce animal related ordinances under the Code Enforcement Division.

Audit Recommendations

Utilize technology available to transition from paper citations, add required language from Chapter 2 and make the citation process easier for Animal Control Officers to issue. This should also improve staff's ability to track persistent offenders, provide reporting capabilities and create process for repeat offense citations. The webpage should be reviewed and updated to clearly state how to contact animal control and provide other vital information in a clear fashion.

For the further audit details, contact Deborah Jenkins, City Internal Auditor at Deborah.Jenkins@bgky.org

What Was Found

Finding #1: Animal Control citations are outdated, do not contain required language from Chapter 2 of the City's Code of Ordinances, and are routinely deemed uncollectible and written off as bad debt.

Animal control officers are using multipage paper violation notices created by BGPD prior to the transition to NCS in 2015. They do not contain all language required for City citations and there are no collection actions taken, so they are routinely written off as bad debt.

Finding #2: The City's Code of Ordinances lists penalties for second and third offenses; however, there were no records found of ever writing a second or third offense. Management states this is because the citation structure does not track the number of offenses.

Within Chapter 5 (Animals) of the City's Code of Ordinances, second and third offense violation fines are listed for each violation under 5-4.01. While reviewing citations, no second or third offenses were found dating back through 2011. Management stated that the current paper forms and manual process does not track the number of offenses so none have been issued, even to suspected repeat violations. Clarification is also needed as to what constitutes a repeat offense. Is it by person, specific animal, household, etc.?

Finding #3: The Animal Control page of the City's website is outdated and refers citizens to report items to the "Bowling Green Police Department Animal Control", even though this function has been within NCS since 2015. The page does not include appropriate contact information or other pertinent information for citizens.

The page has not been updated since the page was shifted from BGPD to NCS in 2014. According to Information Technology staff, there were no changes other than moving it to NCS. Prior to the move to NCS, the webpage was last updated in 2007.