

Virginia State Crime Commission

Animal Control Officers

2007

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS

2007 UPDATE

Last year, the Crime Commission was mandated by House Joint Resolution 116, patroned by Delegate Terry Kilgore, to review animal control officer program training, funding, and the need for regulation. Statewide survey results indicated that training, both the adequacy of training and the availability of regional training opportunities, were concerns for the majority of responding localities, among other cited issues. As a result, the Animal Control Officer Committee was created to address the study mandate, discuss the issues cited in the survey and develop recommendations for improving animal control in the Commonwealth.

Animal Control Officer Committee members include representatives from the following organizations: Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of the State Veterinarian, Division of Risk Management within Virginia's Department of Treasury, Virginia Municipal League, Virginia Association of Counties, Virginia Animal Control Association, Virginia Sheriffs' Association, Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, and Crater Regional Training Academy.

The full committee met three times throughout 2007, on March 21st, June 13th, and December 5th, and reported on its progress to the Crime Commission at the December 13th meeting. Two additional smaller workgroup meetings were also held in July and October. Committee members heard presentations from the following: Virginia Animal Control Association, Department of Criminal Justice Services, Crater Regional Training Academy, and Office of the State Veterinarian. Recognizing that animal control officer duties have increased over the past years, the Committee focused on training and safety issues. Specifically, members were provided with detailed information on the animal control officer Job Task Analysis

("JTA") that was created by the Department of Criminal Justice Services in 2001 to revise minimum training standards. Committee members reviewed and compared the current required training standards, established and maintained by the Office of the State Veterinarian, to discern animal control officer duties, training needs, and liability issues.

Based on all of the meetings, it was determined that the Office of the State Veterinarian may not be the proper oversight agency for animal control officers. Additionally, a need exists for increasing the training standards from 84 to 120 hours, which the Crater Regional Academy has accomplished without negative feedback from the localities. The Committee unanimously agreed that more work needs to be done and committed to continue to meet in 2008. It was also agreed at the last meeting to invite representatives from the Virginia Department of Health and the Farm Bureau to serve on the Committee.