



CITRUS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

A Nationally Accredited Law Enforcement Agency

—SHERIFF—
JEFFREY J. DAWSY



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Changes Slated for Citrus County Animal Services

Starting Tuesday, Sept. 1, the Citrus County Sheriff's Office will assume responsibility for the field operations and enforcement elements of the county's Animal Services division.

In an effort to combine resources, consolidate government and provide more efficient and effective animal services to the community, Sheriff Jeff Dawsy and members of his command staff worked closely with county commissioners and key administrators to amend the Citrus County Animal Services ordinance.

As a result of these changes, animal control officers (ACOs) will now come under the umbrella of the Sheriff's Office. They will be part of the agency's Patrol Special Operations, under the direction of Capt. Mike Richie.

Animal control officers are authorized to investigate violations of state and local laws relating to animal care, management or cruelty either on public or private property. They also may issue citations for these infractions.

Amendments to the county ordinance currently state that all dogs, cats and ferrets at least four months of age or older must be registered with Animal Services and be issued a county animal license tag, unless exemptions apply. Additionally, these animals must have a

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current and complete rabies vaccine certification.

ACOs have the authority and are required to impound any animal that is in violation either of any section of the ordinance or is on the loose. The same applies if any animal is seemingly infected with rabies.

Any person who has been bitten by a dog, cat or other animal or has knowledge of someone being bitten is asked to report the incident to the Citrus County Health Department as soon as possible. If the owner cannot properly keep the animal under acceptable rabies quarantine, then ACOs will remove the animal to the county's animal shelter for confinement.

Investigating barking dogs or animals consistently at large in neighborhoods comes under the ACOs' responsibilities concerning public nuisance animals.

Canines previously designated as dangerous dogs that attack or bite will immediately be impounded by ACOs and turned over to the proper authorities for evaluation.

To summarize, Sheriff's Office animal control officers will proactively investigate and respond to complaints involving animals that are abused, dangerous or a nuisance to the citizens of Citrus County. They have the authority to remove these animals and issue citations for violations of the county's Animal Services ordinance.

Normal operating hours for the Sheriff's Office ACOs will be from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., seven days a week. Officers will be on call from 11 p.m. until 7 a.m. for any emergencies that may arise. Citizens need only call 911 to ask for assistance.

Animal control officers also will work closely with the agency's community resource officers to attend civic meetings and promote responsible pet care in an effort to control the county's animal population.

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All other animal-related services will remain with the Animal Services division now under the umbrella of the Citrus County Community Support Services Department, directed by Cathy Pearson.

For instance, the division will continue to operate the animal shelter at 4030 S. Airport Road in Inverness. Personnel will retain the responsibility of handling pet adoptions, promoting the need to spay and neuter pets, plus disposing of unadoptable, impounded animals in a humane manner. New dangerous-dog classifications will remain an action by the county staff. Inquiries about lost pets also should be directed to Animal Services at 726-7660.

According to Sheriff Dawsy, he has every reason to believe that this new assignment of services will be a good way of doing business and better serve the citizens of Citrus County by managing the county's animal population more effectively and efficiently.

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