Alexandria’s Animals and the Law

Assisting Our Community

The AWLA’s Animal Services is tasked with enforcing municipal codes and ordinances around pets and wildlife, which you can read more about below. But Animal Services’ first goal is to educate and help our community to understand this legislation to best care for the animals and people of Alexandria. Pet owners may not be aware of the statutes in the City of Alexandria, but where possible, Animal Services would prefer to educate them on these laws and the reasoning behind them, rather than issue fines for each violation. Do you have questions about Alexandria’s Animal ordinances? Contact us for more information.

Animal Abuse and Neglect

Animal Services officers work to ensure the safety of animals in the City of Alexandria. As well as assisting sick and injured animals in the city, our officers work with the Alexandria Police Department, the Commonwealth’s Attorney and the City Attorney to enforce city and state laws and codes regarding animal cruelty. Studies have shown that if an animal is being abused or neglected in a household, there is a nearly 90% chance that a human in the same home is also experiencing abuse. By working with law enforcement from the earliest stages, as well as Child Protective Services and Domestic Violence outreach where appropriate, Animal Services can help to protect not only animals but also citizens in need in the City of Alexandria.

Dangerous and Vicious Dogs

Animal Services is responsible for responding to dog bite incidents in the City of
Alexandria, including dogs biting humans, dogs biting other dogs and dogs biting owned cats. Read more about what to know about dog bites in Alexandria here.

In Alexandria, most dogs involved in bite incidents are not deemed to be “dangerous” or “vicious” by the city court.

A dog that is deemed to be **dangerous** is defined as “a canine or canine crossbreed that has bitten, attacked, or inflicted injury on a person or has bitten, attacked, inflicted injury or killed a companion dog or cat.” A biting dog will not be considered “dangerous” if, upon investigation, a law-enforcement officer or animal control officer finds that (i) the injury upon a person consists solely of a single nip or bite resulting only in a scratch, abrasion, or other minor injury; (ii) no serious physical injury, as determined by a licensed veterinarian, has occurred to the dog or cat as a result of the attack or bite; (iii) both animals are owned by the same person; or (iii) such attack occurred on the property of the attacking or biting dog’s owner or custodian. Read more about Virginia’s dangerous dog registry here.

A dog that is deemed to be **vicious** is defined as “a canine or canine crossbreed that has (i) killed a person, (ii) inflicted serious injury to a person, or (iii) continued to exhibit the behavior that resulted in a previous finding by a court or, on or before July 1, 2006, by an animal control officer as authorized by ordinance that it is a dangerous dog, provided that its owner has been given notice of that finding.” Read more about Virginia’s vicious dog definition here.

**Alexandria’s Animal Ordinances**

AWLA’s Animal Services team enforces animal laws for the City of Alexandria as well as statutes for the state of Virginia. Here are some of the ordinances they follow to assist Alexandria’s Animals:

- **5-7-32 RUNNING AT LARGE PROHIBITED**
- **5-7-38 INOCULATION AGAINST RABIES**
- **5-7-42(2) URINATION AND DEFECATION ON PRIVATE PROPERTY**
- **5-7-42(3) URINATION AND DEFECATION ON PUBLIC PROPERTY**
- **5-7-42(4) NOISY DOGS PROHIBITED**
- **5-7-47 ANIMAL LICENSE REQUIRED:** You can register your cat or dog online
here.

5-7-37 CONFINEMENT OF A BITING ANIMAL
Virginia State Code 3.2-6570 CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
Virginia State Code 3.2-6503 CARE OF COMPANION ANIMALS BY OWNER
Virginia State Code 3.2-6504 ABANDONMENT OF ANIMAL