



Howard County Department of Police

Animal Control Division:

Animal Control Laws Summary

Below is a summary of selected requirements of the county's Animal Control Laws:

VACCINATION: Pet owners must continuously maintain a rabies vaccination for dogs, cats and ferrets that are four months of age and older.

LICENSES: All dog and cat owners must purchase Howard County annual licenses for their pets. Each pet shall wear the license tag attached to a collar or harness. Pets properly tattooed, micro chipped or ear tagged are exempt from the requirement of wearing the license tag, but the purchase of a license is still required.

LEASH LAW: A domesticated animal must be on a leash and under the control of a responsible person. This person must be capable of immediate and effective restraint when not on the owner's property. Owners are responsible for immediately removing pet defecation when off their own property.

FEMALE ANIMALS: A female domesticated animal "in heat" must be confined indoors or in a properly ventilated building or other secured outdoor enclosure. **Spaying or neutering is not required, but is highly recommended.**

BARKING: Owners are responsible for preventing their dogs from barking to the extent that it disturbs neighbors.

ODOR PREVENTION: Pet owners must remove an accumulation of defecation from their property to prevent annoying odors.

STREET DISTURBANCE: Owners must prevent their pets from disturbing garbage placed for disposal or chasing vehicles.

APPROPRIATE CARE: Animals must be provided with proper drink, ventilation, shelter, shade, protection from the elements, sanitary conditions, veterinary care and nutritious food in sufficient quantity.

FENCING: Fencing must be properly maintained.

WILD/EXOTIC ANIMALS: Wild or exotic animals are **not** permitted as pets. Included in this category are the offspring of domesticated animals bred with a wild or exotic animal.

THREATENING BEHAVIOR: Domesticated animals must not be permitted to threaten the safety or welfare of other domesticated animals or people. Domesticated animals are considered to be exhibiting threatening behavior when they endanger the life or health of another domesticated animal or person, attack a domesticated animal or person, or otherwise molest and interfere with a person's freedom of movement in a public place.

ANIMAL TRAPS: Humane animal traps must be properly used and checked frequently throughout the day.

INTENTIONAL INJURY OR ABANDONMENT: A person may not poison or abandon a domesticated animal and may not cruelly kill, deliberately injure or torment any animal.

FIGHTING: Encouraging animals to fight, raising animals for fighting or participating in animal fights are not permitted.

INJURING AN ANIMAL WHILE DRIVING: A person who injures or kills a domestic animal while driving must stop, if safety permits, and render assistance as is practical. The driver should notify Animal Control immediately.

ANIMAL CONTROL DUTIES: No person may interfere with an Animal Control employee in the performance of his/her duties.

VIOLATORS: Violators of the Animal Control Laws may be issued civil citations with monetary penalties of \$25-\$500. Criminal penalties can include up to three years in prison and a \$5,000 fine, pet impoundment, and/or mandatory appearances before the Animal Matters Hearing Board.

THE AFFIDAVIT PROCEDURE: A citizen who has personally observed a violation of any provision of the Howard County Animal Laws may wish to file an affidavit. An affidavit is a sworn statement that a violation has been witnessed. **An affidavit may not be filed anonymously.** An affidavit form may be obtained from Animal Control. After the form is completed by the witness, also known as the complainant, it should be returned to the Animal Control Division for processing.

Once the affidavit is filed, the alleged violator is, in most circumstances, assessed an appropriate monetary penalty through issuance of a civil citation. The affidavit accompanies the issued citation and must identify the complainant's name, address and telephone number. Upon request, phone numbers may be withheld from the defendant.

THE APPEAL PROCESS: The recipient of a citation issued by an Animal Control representative as a result of an affidavit may elect to appeal the citation. The recipient, also known as the appellant, must contact the Animal Control Division in writing within fifteen (15) days after the citation is issued indicating the intent to appeal. The Animal Control Division then schedules a hearing before the Animal Matters Hearing Board.

THE ANIMAL MATTERS HEARING BOARD: The Animal Matters Hearing Board (AMHB) is comprised of seven Howard County residents appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. The AMHB meets to hear cases involving alleged violations of the Howard County Animal Control Laws. Once cases are heard, board members render a decision to uphold, modify, or reverse an imposed penalty. The Board may also recommend or order measures to abate further problems or complaints.

The AMHB notifies the appellant of its decision thirty (30) days after hearing. Any complainant or appellant who is aggrieved by the decision of the AMHB may request in writing, within thirty (30) days a hearing before the Howard County Board of Appeals.